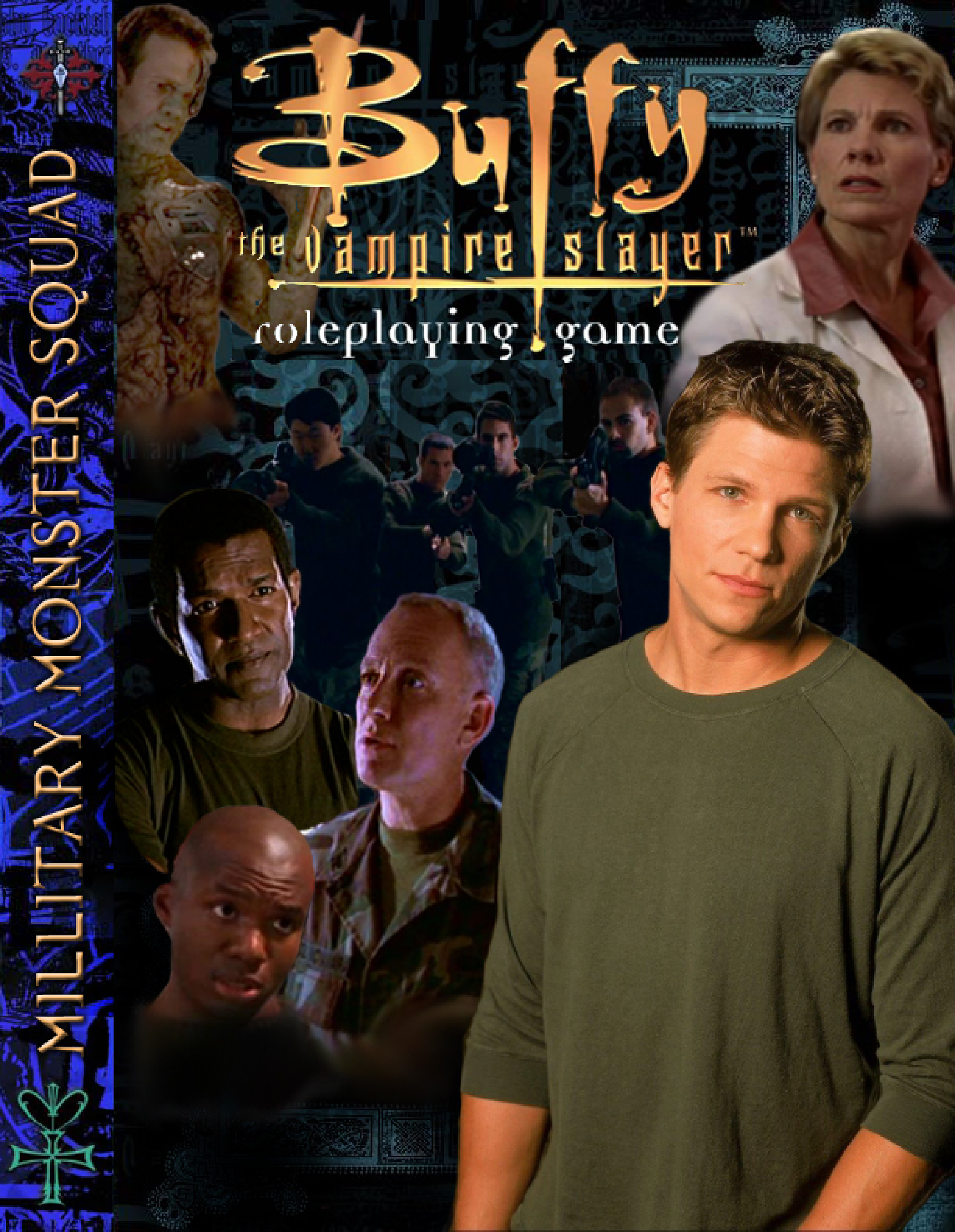


roleplaying game

MILITARY MONSTER SQUAD





Buffy

the vampire slayer™
roleplaying game

MILITARY MONSTER SQUAD





Buffy
the vampire slayer™
roleplaying game

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Buffy is hip and tuned in. No Buffy game would be complete without a slew of pop culture references. These references are intended solely to help players capture the look and feel of Buffy in their games. No violation of copyright or trademark ownership is intended.

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Comments and questions can be directed via the Internet at www.btvsrpg.com, via e-mail at eden@edenstudios.net or via letter with a self-addressed stamped envelope.

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*In every generation
there is only one slayer.
Get born before dark.*

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I Welcome to the Initiative

Riley: You know who I am. The rest . . . what I do . . . I can't tell you.

Buffy: Well, then let me. You're part of some military monster squad that captures—demons, vampires, probably have some official sounding euphemism for them, like unfriendlies or non sapiens.

Riley: Hostile Subterrestrials.

Buffy: So you deliver these HST's to a bunch of lab coats, who perform experiments on them, which among other things turn some into harmless little bunnies. How am I doing so far?

—4.11 Doomed

The Initiative.

For anyone steeped in Buffy lore, the name conjures up many images. Kevlar-suited commandoes Clark Kenting their way through college. Crusty professors creating demonic bioweapons beneath a seemingly innocent fraternity house. Guns, gadgets, and the government—all in one easy-to-swallow package. Over the course of the show the Initiative has evolved from a bunch of lab coats poking around inside demons' brains to a strike force that deals with supernatural menaces across the world—ghostbusters on steroids.

This is a guide to the Initiative and the threats that it faces on a daily basis. The Scooby gang may be keeping us safe from the Hellmouth, but there's a whole world of trouble beyond Sunnydale. The U.S. government isn't the only organization that's tried to harness supernatural forces as weapons, and the Initiative isn't even the only branch of the government dabbling in the dark arts. Raise your hand if you remember Marcie, the invisible girl. What? No one? Well, that was her problem in the first place, wasn't it? In any case, Military Monster Squad serves many purposes. It provides a slew of information on incorporating the Initiative into a Sunnydale series—adding more options for Initiative Commando characters and some sweet material about using Walsh's boys in a Season Four setting. But it also focuses on how to run a series based on commando action in the Buffyverse—giving your players an opportunity to get out of Sunnydale for a little while, exchanging their tweed and schoolbooks for Kevlar and grenades. So read on! It's time to reveal the things the government doesn't want you to know . . .





SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Buffy (sarcastically): Oh, great! A book!

—1.8 *I Robot, You Jane*

Military Monster Squad is packed with twelve essential vitamins and minerals, along with five chapters of useful information. Here's how it breaks down:

Chapter One: Welcome to the Initiative is what you're reading right now. It covers the standard opening stuff you've come to love and admire in Buffy RPG books. It also gives you a homework assignment—a briefing document covering the history and the structure of the Initiative. Memorize it and eat it once you're done.

Chapter Two: You're in the Army Now provides new material for creating Initiative characters—whether you're putting together a squad for active duty or just looking to occupy a Sunnydale ex-commando. This includes new Qualities, Drawbacks, and applications for skills. It concludes with twelve new archetypes—ready-to-go characters so you can Avengers Assemble on a moment's notice.

Chapter Three: Tools of the Trade opens the doors to the arsenal of the Initiative. That Bond guy has nothing on the green beret ghostbusters! Need a taser rifle? An ectoplasmic pulse generator? It's all in here. Of course, this chapter also includes equipment used by other organizations. The latest incarnation of the Initiative may not go in for behavior modification chips—but there are others who aren't shy about taking advantage of Maggie Walsh's inventions.

Chapter Four: Sunnydale Ops provides all the information you need to bring the government into your Sunnydale series, whether you want to use the college commandos of Season Four or the hardened soldiers of Season Five and beyond.

Chapter Five: Hell On Earth takes a look at the challenges that commando characters have to face on a daily basis. Global conspiracies? Breeder demons spreading like a plague? Rogue mystics? If it's out there, it's in here. These threats are intended for a commando series, but most can be dropped into Sunnydale—as long as you don't mind things getting a little messy.

Chapter Six: Strike Force HST discusses the ins and outs of running a commando series—the types of missions that Cast Members may deal with and the differences between life in Sunnydale and the conspiracy-laden world of the Initiative.

Chapter Seven: The Monarch's New Clothes presents a ready-to-play Episode featuring lots of secret organizations, big guns, and nasty demon technology. It can be used to take the Djinn Series (as seen in other Buffy RPG books) up another notch or can be adjusted to fit your Series.

But wait! There's more! Act now and you'll get an **Appendix**, absolutely free! The appendix contains a glossary of military lingo, in case you don't know your alpha from your tango. It's chock full of terms guaranteed to make your stuffed shirts sound a little more stuffy. We've also put in some conversion notes for those using the organizations from this book with the Angel RPG. Now how much would you pay?

CONVENTIONS

Giles: These musty old books have a great deal more to say than in any of your . . . fabulous web pages.

Ms. Calendar: Hmm. (turns blank pages) This one doesn't have a whole lot more to say.

—1.8 *I Robot, You Jane*

We have taken certain liberties here to make this book easier to follow. Try to follow along.

TEXT

This book looks different depending on what's going on. As words make up the bulk of what's in here (hence the appellation "book"), you can bet that when the words change their look, something important just happened. The stuff you are reading now is standard text. It covers general explanations and narrative sections.

Buffy: It's so unfair. I mean, it's like Big Brother can spy on you all the time, and the second I have something to say, no one will listen!

Dawn (muttering): Sounds more like Big Sister.

—5.4 *Out of My Mind*

It's those pithy sayings that make the BTVS TV show so engaging. Anyway, as you probably noticed, quotes appear like this with the speaker's name up front. The citation includes the season and episode separated by a period, and the title just after.

Other words are set off from the standard text like this. These boxes contain additional but tangential information, or supplemental charts and tables.





These fiction sections or cut scenes give you a better appreciation for the types of tales that can be told during *BtVS RPG* sessions. They cover settings and situations different from those you may be familiar with from the TV series. None of this stuff should be construed as adding to the Buffyverse in an official way. We are just making these stories up. You don't need to read them to understand this book or the Buffyverse mythos, but you should find them an enjoyable "slice of the

Other words, mostly stats, are set apart in this way. These boxes hold Quick Sheets for monsters, and some even contain full character information.

DICE

As you've probably noticed, dice are central to the *BtVS RPG*. D10 means a ten-sided die. Multipliers are given after the dice notation. For example, D10 x 4 means roll one ten-sided die, and multiply that total result by four. As the math whizzes among you have already guessed, this generates a number between 4 and 40.

GENDER

You English majors know that the guy reference (he, him, his) is customarily used for both male and female. Lots of folks think that's part of the whole male domination societal thing, and don't like it muchly. On the other hand, saying "he or she" all the time is clumsy and way-too-PC for us. Given that this is a game about Vampire Slayers—you know "the one girl in all the world who . . ."—we're going to use the gal reference (she, her) whenever a generic designation is needed. That ought to send the military historians and manual-writers out there right around the bend.

MEASUREMENTS

The Initiative is, at least in theory, a branch of the United States Army. So we are going parochial and using the Imperial system. For our worldly aficionados, rough conversions may be found by multiplying miles by 1.5 to get kilometers (instead of 1.609), equating meters with yards (instead of 1.094 yards), halving pounds to get kilograms (instead of multiplied by 0.4536), and so on. The *BtVS RPG* is about story and dialogue, not statistics and dimensions. All that measurement stuff won't come up very often.

BRIEFING MATERIALS

Willow: Not with Riley. With the Initiative. I mean, there's a bunch of stuff about them we still don't know.

Buffy: I know that . . . Like what?

Willow: Well, what's their ultimate agenda? I mean, okay, yeah, they neuter vampires and demons. But then what? Are they gonna reintegrate them into society? Get them jobs as bagboys at Wal-Mart?

Buffy: Does Wal-Mart have bagboys?

—4.13 *The 'I' in Team*

We could tell you about the Initiative ourselves, but hey, what do WE know? So instead we're going to share a few chapters of this USTARU briefing manual with you. Trust us, it's all on the up and up, acquired through proper channels. So, put yourself in the combat boots of a new recruit. Perhaps you've been plucked out of the Special Forces. Perhaps you were rescued from a vamp attack and your rescuers saw your potential. Whatever the case, it's time to get acquainted with the new Initiative.

got conspiracy?

Since you picked up this book, you're probably into *Buffy* and want to know more about the Initiative. If your interests run a bit broader, and you want more of *X-Files*-style-government-meets-hostile-non-human-threats-wrapped-in-a-conspiracy stuff, boy do we have a treat for you. Eden produces a full-bodied, conspiracy-oriented game called *Conspiracy X*. It's all about aliens, the supernatural, and government cover-ups. It uses a more detailed version of the **Unisystem** game system but, leaning on the conversion notes in the *BtVS Corebook* and the *Magic Box* you should be fine merging the two games. Hey, it might just be what you need to add that certain level of spookiness and unpredictability to your game. Check it out on your local game store's shelf, or at www.conspiracyx.com. Oh, and remember you did not hear it here first. We disavow all knowledge of this conversation.





canon alert

As we've mentioned before in the *BTVS RPG* the only canonical Buffyverse material is what you see on your TV. Still, many important questions are left unanswered by the boob tube. For example, while we know the Initiative is still out there in some form—hey, Riley, Sam, and Graham are all part of it—we don't know for certain what it's called these days. That's not very helpful when you want to run your own commando squad, so we're going to provide you with a heaping helping of non-canon material. Pretty much everything in this book is speculation—and not just about what's not shown on TV. Can you really trust anything the government tells you? How many explanations have you heard for Roswell over the years (and we're not just talking about the TV series here)? *Military Monster Squad* presents a possible world—but it's the prerogative of the director to adjust the truth behind the scenes. Perhaps Monarch doesn't exist. Perhaps the government is dealing with men from Mars. If you don't like a group or an explanation, change it! Keep the Cast on their toes!

As a general rule, "The Initiative" refers to the organization seen in Season Four—Maggie Walsh and her college commandos. What we know about the group active in Season Five and beyond is that it's "not the Initiative." Since it's kind of awkward to be part of a group without a name, or to simply refer to your gang as not-something-else, we've decided to make up our own name. We're going to call it USTARU (u-star-u). That stands for the United States Subterrestrial Activity Response Unit. Hey, prove us wrong—we dare you.

WELCOME TO
THE INITIATIVE





TOP SECRET

Welcome to the battlefield.

You may have already met the enemy. If not, you've got some ugly surprises ahead. We're the last line of defense between the world as you know it and the forces of Hell. Vampires, werewolves, and every kind of monster you've ever seen in the movies or in your nightmares—they're out there and they're even worse than you thought. You've been chosen because someone thinks you've got what it takes to fight this battle. They're wrong. You're not ready for this. You're only human and the things you'll be facing aren't. A sharpshooter badge isn't worth a damn against a creature that can shrug off bullets and suck out your soul at fifty paces. Odds are you'll be dead by the end of your first day in the field. But you're all we've got and this is a war we can't afford to lose. So do me a favor and prove me wrong.

If you want to survive, reading this material closely and memorizing every detail is a good start. More importantly, listen to your fellow soldiers. What you're holding is the official story of our organization. But the boys in the field know a HELL of a lot more than the stuffed shirts back at base—and I mean that literally. The most important thing you can do is to keep an open mind. You're about to enter a strange and bloody world. Every day hundreds of civilians are slaughtered by creatures that shouldn't exist. Dimensional portals, demonic infestations, viral possession—it's all out there, and we're the only ones who can stop it. The risks are high, the pay's lousy, and the world can never know we exist. But it's a job that needs to be done. And every day you survive you'll have saved hundreds of lives.

Now get a move on, soldier. There's a war on.

Major Daniel D. Ellis
Special Division, USTARU

TOP SECRET

Recruit Briefing Manual

Directive 654I-A

United States Subterrestrial Activity Response Unit

AKA The Initiative

I.0 INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! You have been chosen to serve in the United States Subterrestrial Activity Response Unit (USTARU). The USTARU is the world's first line of defense against all forms of supernatural attack. This document provides you with valuable information concerning the history, structure, and procedures of our organization. You should familiarize yourself with the contents of this manual and then destroy it. Under no circumstances can this document be allowed to fall into civilian hands. The primary mission of USTARU is to protect the civilian population—both of the United States and the entire world—from the subterrestrial menace. Public knowledge of the full extent of this threat will cause panic and chaos. It is your duty to suppress the spread of such knowledge, and to do everything in your power to calm the fears of any civilian that witnesses unnatural events. You will find that most civilians have a remarkable ability to rationalize and suppress the memories of subterrestrial encounters.

Could they have picked a more fruity name than "USTARU." I think not. I got an idea—let's call ourselves "Starvies" or the elite "Star Corps." Brother!

Many recruits have questions about the subterrestrials. Where did they come from? How did they escape detection for so long? What do they want? You should set these questions aside. Your job is not to understand these creatures—it is to stop them whenever they pose a threat. Some of these creatures are able to coexist peacefully with humanity. Those you will never see. You will be facing hostile subterrestrials (HSTs)—bloodthirsty demons intent on murder and destruction. Follow the directions of your squad leader, and always remember that you are humanity's last hope against these creatures. We have tried to reason with the HSTs in the past with disastrous results. Your job is simple. Stop the monsters. Protect the innocent. Repeat as necessary.

The information provided in this briefing manual is all that you need to know about the Initiative. You may hear base rumors about previous incarnations of this organization, or about other government programs dealing with subterrestrial or paranormal subjects. We trust that you will have the good sense to dismiss such stories. The odds of surviving this job are long enough. No need to lose focus over false, irrelevant, and possibly treasonous babble.





Welcome to the team! Time to join the good fight!

And Oswald was the only guy who shot JFK. Honest.

2.0 HISTORY OF THE USTARU

Many recruits assume that USTARU has been in existence for many years. Sometimes this assumption is based on urban legends—tales of fanciful government projects with names like “Star Gate” and “MKULTRA,” or stories about special units brought in to fight sorcerers in the Congo. Other recruits assume that the limited impact of subterrestrials on the history of the United States is the direct result of government activity—that some form of the USTARU has been around since the nation was formed.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Remarkable as it may seem, the U.S. government only became aware of the danger posed by subterrrestrial forces over the last quarter of the twentieth century. USTARU has devoted significant resources to studying this phenomenon. The general conclusion is that subterrrestrial activities have increased sharply over the last thirty years. This may be the result of a shift in the subterrrestrial population into the United States, or it may reflect the collapse of some internal force that has held the subterrestrials in check. Whatever the reason, civilian casualties began to mount as a result of unchecked subterrrestrial activities. By 1986, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Army Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, and the Department of Treasury had all established offices researching unexplained and possibly paranormal events. In 1992, enough information had been gathered by these independent organizations to confirm the scope of the subterrrestrial threat. USTARU’s immediate predecessor, codenamed The Initiative, was established as a covert operation under the auspices of the Congressional Subcommittee for Subterrrestrial Affairs, combining the resources of the four pre-existing offices. Soldiers were drawn from the elite forces of the U.S. Army, selected for their skills, strength of character, and unswerving patriotism. Top scientists, parapsychologists, and cryptozoologists were also recruited for the organization.

If you believe that, I’ve got some land in Sunnydale to sell you. Old Joe was always bragging about fighting Nazi demons back in WWII—mentioned something about a Demon Research Initiative. And he said his unit had been around long before that.

And what about Roswell? Since when has 1947 been in the “last quarter of the twentieth century”?

2.1 THE INITIATIVE

The primary purpose of the Initiative was to protect the public from the danger presented by HSTs. But in these early stages of the organization, the committee had to determine the best way to carry out that mandate. The Assistant Director of the Initiative (see file 6541-A004A/Walsh, Maggie) believed that pure military force was an inefficient method of countering the HST threat. Instead, Walsh proposed a program to turn the subterrestrials from a danger into an asset. Under her direction, the Initiative established three centers for subterrrestrial research, along with a special detention center in Nevada. Base One was located in Salem, Massachusetts. Base Two was in New Orleans, Louisiana. Base Three was the largest of the three, and was established in Sunnydale, California, a town that appeared to be a nexus of subterrrestrial activities. The Initiative quickly obtained a captive population of HSTs and began to study these creatures. This research formed the basis of the current USTARU HST Database, and Initiative scientists began to develop technology to counter the supernatural threat.

Assistant Director Walsh was personally involved in two series of projects. The 300 series was a study of xenomorphic behavior modification—using cutting-edge technology to contain and control subterrestrials, with the long-term goal of transforming these creatures into useful members of society. The 310 series involved xenomorphic human enhancement—the development of soldiers that were equal to or superior to the subterrestrials they had to fight. Initial work involved ILTEP, a battery of chemical treatments incorporating elements of subterrrestrial DNA. When ILTEP produced limited results, Walsh started work on what would be her greatest and final project: Project 314, the Initiative Subterrrestrial Integrated Cyborg. With ISTIC, Walsh sought to combine her knowledge of subterrrestrial physiology with state-of-the-art cybernetic technology to create the perfect soldier.

In case you missed it, that’s G-speak for “let’s secretly inject our own troops with demon juice, and when that doesn’t work, cut ‘em up and splice them together with Sub-T parts.” Great plan, Professor.

Project 314 was Assistant Director Walsh’s crowning achievement, but the results were tragic. The ISTIC prototype had a critical design flaw. It escaped from custody, killed AD Walsh and Dr. Wallace Angleman, and seized control of the Initiative complex. When the prototype released the HSTs contained at the facility, the resulting conflict resulted in a forty percent casualty rate; if not for the skill and dedication displayed by the soldiers and scientists, the losses would have been much higher.

WELCOME TO
THE INITIATIVE





The lesson was clear. Walsh's goal—harnessing the power of the subterrestrials—was too dangerous. The Congressional committee in charge of the Initiative chose to terminate the operation. The research facilities were filled in with concrete. Staff members were discharged or assigned new duties. The Initiative was officially shut down.

Typo here—"skill and dedication", etc. should read "the Slayer."

2.2 THE USTARU

The death of Assistant Director Walsh and the loss of the Sunnydale compound proved that the HSTs could not be controlled—that attempts to harness their power, however well-intentioned, could only end in disaster. But erasing the Initiative from the record books did not eliminate the threat, and it did nothing to protect the hundreds of civilians that were being slaughtered by HSTs every day. After the ISTIC debacle, Congress wanted nothing to do with the paranormal. But many of the people involved in the Initiative recognized the need for a well-organized team that would protect the people from the forces of darkness. After due consideration, the United States Subterrestrial Activity Response Unit was formed as a subdivision of the U.S. armed forces. USTARU operates under special jurisdiction. Officially, most of the other branches of government are unaware of our existence, and the executive branch will deny any association should we become a liability. In the international community, some nations are glad to accept our help. Others don't know we exist, and it is your job to keep it that way. We are the world's exorcists; when the forces of Hell are involved, you don't have time to stop and argue politics.

Notice how they're nice and vague about who actually runs the show now. Ever wonder about that?

USTARU's mission is simple—protect the innocent from all supernatural threats. Our overriding goal is to stop these horrors, not to study them. We are tasked with no research beyond what is required to understand our enemies and effectively defeat them. USTARU is ready to respond to threats across the globe. Our soldiers are equipped with the latest in modern weaponry and cutting-edge technology—tools to identify, track, and neutralize any sort of HST menace. Subterrestrials are typically uncomfortable with modern technology, and this gives us a tremendous advantage. Be confident in your abilities! You have everything you need to save the world. From here, it's up to you. Good luck.

Guns and gadgets are all good, but there are times when all the Bond gear in the world can't beat having a competent witch at your back.

3.0 ORGANIZATION

Due to the need for rapid response and government deniability, USTARU features a highly flexible structure. After your initial indoctrination, you will be assigned to a squad of no more than ten individuals. A USTARU squad does not have a designated base of operations. You will spend most of your time moving from one crisis to another, and you will resupply at whatever outpost or safehouse is convenient to your current location.

Gotta wonder how many squads are out there. Twenty? Two? Two hundred? Inquiring minds want to know.

The chain of command is simple. All new recruits hold the rank of agent. Each squad includes one special agent, who leads the unit in the field and can designate seconds as necessary. You will be also be assigned a commanding officer, who will serve as your liaison with central command. All requests for information and support should be directed to this officer. If an operation is beyond the capabilities of your squad, your CO will call in additional support as necessary to deal with the threat. Due to our limited resources and the degree to which our squads are spread across the globe, however, you should never expect quick reinforcement. When you're out in the field, the members of your squad are the only people you can rely on, and you should follow the orders of the team leader without question. Your lives—not to mention those of hundreds of civilians—could depend on your ingenuity and your ability to work together as a team.

Frag the lieutenant!

Each squad will be assigned an alphanumeric code that serves as an official designation for the team. Most squads develop an additional code name to be used when interacting with other agents of USTARU. When you arrive at your unit, the Special Agent will inform you of the name of the squad.

As you might have guessed, nobody uses official designations. We call ourselves the Initiative—the whole squad was at the Sunnydale FUBAR. It's kind of a tribute to the guys who didn't come home.





3.1 SQUAD STRUCTURE AND SPECIALIST ROLES

Most USTARU recruits have been drawn from the ranks of the U.S. military. Over the past two years, we have learned the value of recruiting talented individuals with civilian backgrounds—especially those who have had firsthand experience with subterrrestrial forces. The ideal recruit is athletic, disciplined, altruistic, optimistic, and capable of facing the forces of Hell without losing composure or sanity. Members of the Special Forces possess impressive skills and a familiarity with military discipline. But some of our most exceptional recruits have been members of the Peace Corps, missionaries, and teachers who have survived HST attacks and embraced the cause. Whatever your background, the fact that you have been chosen reflects the confidence that central command has in your abilities and potential.

Let's face it—the ideal recruit is dumb enough to take the job and tough enough to survive it.

As noted in section 3.0, a USTARU squad needs to be as self-sufficient as possible. You will be expected to fill a clear and useful role within the squad. The standard specialist roles include the following:

Assault troops are trained to handle both close and long-range combat situations. Assault agents take the front lines in confrontations with HSTs. As certain species of subterrrestrial are highly resistant to ballistic weaponry, it is vital for assault agents to be familiar with the use of close combat weaponry.

Command functions are carried out by the special agent assigned to the squad. A special agent must be the most versatile member of the squad. This officer needs to be able to inspire the team and to fill any role during a crisis.

Field Engineers are also known as “breachers”—these agents specialize in demolitions and technical support. The primary role of the breacher is to facilitate forced entry into enemy fortifications. Explosives and heavy weaponry can also be extremely valuable tools for dealing with exceptionally large or powerful HSTs. The technical skills of a field engineer can be useful in other situations, especially if the squad is assigned unusual or delicate equipment.

Intelligence assets or “intels” are tasked with acquiring and managing the information required to successfully accomplish the goals of the mission. An intel agent must be well-versed in subterrrestrial affairs. The agent is responsible for identifying threats, prioritizing targets, and providing detailed information about the capabilities and weaknesses of HSTs encountered over the course of

a mission. If multiple squads are involved in an operation, it is the responsibility of the intel to coordinate communication between the squads. In a single-squad operation, the intel maintains contact between squad members. The agent also manages communications with the regimental commander.

Scientific Support or “SciSpec” agents are trained in medicine, computer use, and general science. In many squads, the SciSpec agent doubles as the intelligence officer. The scientific support agent provides medical assistance in the field, manages electronic intelligence acquisition, and can perform field analysis of subterrrestrial phenomena. While these agents were very common in our predecessor, USTARU makes little use of SciSpec officers. Once again, the mandate of our organization is to stop monsters, not to study them.

Scouts are specialists in stealth, reconnaissance, and human interaction. An intelligence agent manages tactical information; a scout must acquire data in the field, and must be equally capable of performing this mission in an urban environment or in the field.

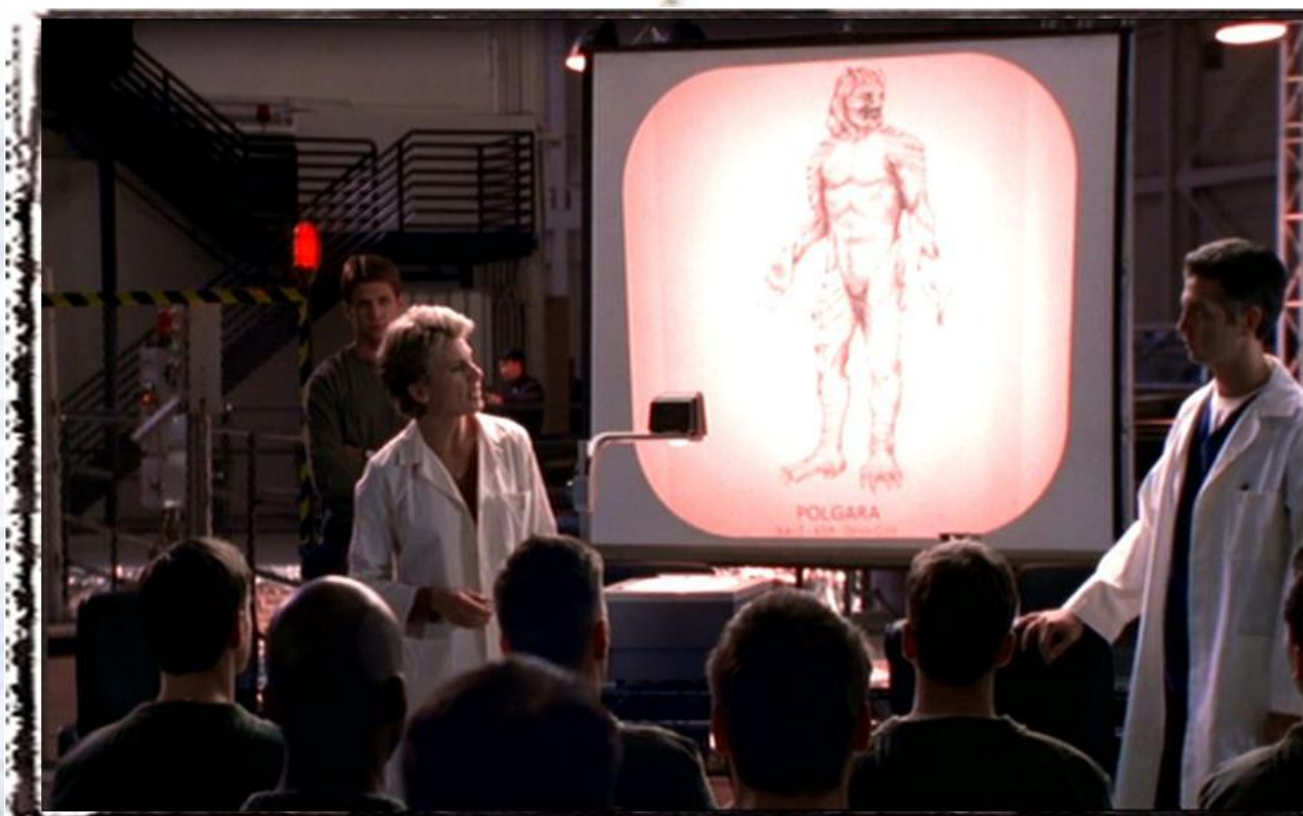
Snipers specialize in stealth and long-range tactical support. A sniper can perform reconnaissance in the absence of a scout, but the primary function of the sniper is to provide ranged support for agents engaged in close combat.

In addition to these standard specialists, USTARU occasionally employs subterrrestrial or supernatural auxiliaries. Subterrrestrial units are typically remnants from the former organization, who are conditioned by the Walsh Xenomorphic Behavior Modification System. Other supernatural agents include freelance psychics, shamans, and mystics. While the administration prefers to avoid the use of these unnatural assets, certain situations call for the unique talents of these individuals. Be advised that these auxiliaries are often unstable and unreliable.

Note to self: “Unreliable” = “May go crazy and try to destroy the world.”

Given the current structure of USTARU, you rarely have access to a fully stocked arsenal. Command and Control ensures that you have the essential equipment for your current assignment. Special requests must be routed through your commanding officer, and it may not be possible to obtain specialized equipment within the timeframe of an urgent mission. In the field, you have to learn to rely on your skills and learn to stretch the resources you are given.





4.0 MISSION PROFILES

The previous sections have outlined our basic mandate and the nature of the subterranean threat. This section provides a brief overview of the types of missions that your squad may be called upon to perform. You will receive a more detailed briefing when you receive a specific assignment.

4.1 COLOR CODES

Color-coded missions—also known as “zap and trap” assignments—are largely a holdover from the Walsh era, when agents generally sought to capture HSTs for study and experimentation. In the present organization, situations arise where it is vital to capture a subterranean alive. For example, the creature may secrete a substance that can be used as a vaccine, or it may be necessary to study a demon in order to effectively counter the actions of its comrades. These missions include the following:

CODE GREEN: Investigate a possible HST sighting. If an HST is encountered, it should be captured and returned to the nearest properly equipped outpost for study.

CODE YELLOW: Locate, capture, and incarcerate a confirmed HST.

CODE RED: Locate, capture, and incarcerate an HST that has escaped from custody.

4.2 NUMERICAL CODES

Numerically coded missions are combat assignments. The lower the number, the greater the risk. Code One is the highest threat level. Code Three is a low threat level. Code Four is used to indicate an unidentified threat. As a general rule these missions are straightforward—locate the HSTs and use whatever means are necessary to eliminate the threat while minimizing civilian casualties and exposure. However, numerical codes may be assigned a secondary designation that modifies the mission objectives. These include the following:

ANGEL: Provide support to another squad or allied unit.

FIREWALL: Contain the target within a defined area.

SALVATION: Rescue operation. Your team must recover prisoners, hostages, or civilians who have been trapped within the impact radius.

SCRUB: The HST has irrevocably contaminated an area. All creatures (and possibly structures) within the impact radius must be destroyed.

SHADOW: Scout the area and report your findings to your commanding officer. Respond with lethal force if engaged by HSTs.

WILDFIRE: The threat will spread quickly if it is not immediately contained. This could be a HST species that breeds at an astonishing rate or a spreading interdimensional vortex.





4.3 BLACK MISSIONS

Black missions are covert assignments involving clandestine contact with subterrestrials. Your commanding officer will inform you if you are authorized to respond to attack with lethal force. These include:

BLACK BLADE: Engage in an act of sabotage against subterrestrial forces.

BLACK BOOK: Identify and evaluate subterrestrial activities within a specified region.

BLACK EYE: Observe the activities of a specified subterrestrial or group of subterrestrials.

BLACK HAND: Appropriate an object currently in the possession of subterrestrial forces.

BLACK WORD: Establish contact with designated subterrestrial or group of subterrestrials.

Black missions cover a wide range of activities. A Black Eye assignment could involve tracking a single HST back to its nest or infiltrating a demon cult or wolf gang. Codes are bug-hunts and firefights—Black missions require careful thought and precise execution.

We're going to stop here – the next chapter of the briefing manual is about radio identification protocols, and it gets even duller from there. But hopefully this has given you some idea of what you're in for. Now get out there and be all you can be!

Spike: Come on! Vampires! Grrr! Nasty! Let's annihilate them. For justice . . . and for . . . the safety of puppies and Christmas, right? Let's FIGHT that evil! Let's KILL something! (Fade to black) Oh, come ON!

—4.11 Doomed



WELCOME TO
THE INITIATIVE





2 You're In The Army Now

Xander: Am I the only one with a big floating question mark over his head about this Initiative thing?

—4.13 The 'T' in Team

Suit up, soldier!

This chapter provides all the information you need for creating a member of a USTARU strike team or putting the finishing touches on a former commando. It includes new Qualities, Drawbacks, and Archetypes (in case you want to get to the action quick). It also includes a combat maneuver, and discusses how a commando girl can use existing skills to accomplish a variety of military tasks.

Lest it go without saying (did we mention that we get paid by the word?) all of the new material provided in this section is optional—especially if you're part of a Sunnydale series. This material is intended only for commando characters. Your Director may allow your Cast Member to get Skill Specialties or Cross-Disciplines, but don't count on it. She has the final say on what can and can't be used—if she doesn't want to let your Cast Member get into chips, guns, and explosives, you'll have to find another outlet for your *Alien vs. Predator* fantasies.

BASIC TRAINING

Spike: Attitude. See how far that'll take you in boot camp. Say, I hope you get one of those toughs-as-nails drill sergeants who's only hard on the men because he's trying to keep them alive when the bullets start flying. I love that stuff.

—4.20 The Yoko Factor



TEN-HUT! It's my job to turn your sissified Cast Member into a full-fledged commando. And believe me, I've never seen such a sorry pack of cannon fodder! Why are you bothering to fight vampires? You should just check into the local blood bank and get things over quick!



First, let's take a look at a commando series, which we'll call Strike Force HST. In Strike Force HST, you and your pals need to put together a USTARU squad. Your Director may add a few supporting characters to the squad, but in general you'll have to rely on one another—so take a moment to talk amongst yourselves. You want to have a fairly broad set of skills at your characters' disposal. Between the Cast, you should make sure you have at least one of each of the following:

- * A specialist in ranged combat.
- * A specialist in close combat.
- * A skilled doctor to patch up all your boo-boos.
- * A sneaky character—'cause ninjas are cool.
- * Someone with good technical skills.
- * An Occult specialist or scientist with a Cross-Discipline (Subterrestrial Research)—someone needs to be able to identify the critters you run into!

You can spread these skills around the squad. A sniper is sneaky and good with guns, and if your character doesn't have some kind of combat skill, well, why are you reading this book? It's called MILITARY Monster Squad, hello! As the commando life is filled with the action, you'll probably want to play a Hero; your Director may even hand out Experienced Heroes, depending on the level of challenges she has in mind. Still, if you really want to play a White Hat—a wet-behind-the-ears recruit with no right being out in the field—hey, it's your military funeral.

So, by now you and your chums should have come up with a basic division of duties and a cool code name for your squad (or you can just call yourselves "The Initiative," if you want to capture that old-fashioned feel). The next step is actually creating the Cast. Unlike most Cast Members, commandos are actually encouraged to take two package Qualities. These include one each of the following:

* **Background:** How did your character come to be part of USTARU? Was she recruited from Special Forces, or was she pulled out of a quiet civilian life and dropped into the crazy world of HST hunting? You can select either the Initiative Commando or Orphan Quality to indicate your character's basic history. With the Director's permission, you can instead select Robot, Vampire, Werewolf, or Demon/Half-Demon (see *Monster Smackdown* or the *Angel Corebook*) as your character's background Quality. If you have *The Slayer's Handbook*, you can take Ex-Cop, Nosy Reporter, or Occult Investigator as a background—your character's relentless search for truth or justice eventually landed her in the squad.



* **Specialty:** Whatever your character's background, once she's part of USTARU, her crusty drill sergeant will quickly help her to find her niche and make her hate it. To represent this, you may choose one of the following: Coat, Grunt, Lab Rat, or Ninja Girl. Or you can choose not to take a specialty—but then it's only one package Quality for you, missy!

* **Squad Leader:** One (and only one) Cast Member needs to take the Squad Leader Quality as her specialty. While she's no Slayer, she is the official team leader, which means that it's her ass on the line when it comes time to deal with the brass and explain how the team managed to blow up two Taco Huts and still failed to catch your quarry. When push comes to shove, a court martial can be more dangerous than a rampaging Fyarl demon...

* **Slayers:** Given the events of Season Seven, it is slightly more feasible to have a Slayer as a member of a USTARU squad. Perhaps she was already part of the armed forces when she received the gift. However, your Director has final say as to whether she wants to allow any Slayers in her Strike Force HST series. In addition, because of her impressive natural abilities, a character who takes the Slayer Quality cannot take a military specialty (Coat, Grunt, Lab Rat, Ninja Girl). Combining the Slayer Quality with your background package Quality (Initiative Commando or Orphan) is already obscene enough (your Direction may decide not to allow Attribute and skill bonuses from those Qualities to stack; your character would only benefit from the higher bonus given).

Unless specifically mentioned (i.e., Lab Rat), Attribute bonuses cannot increase an Attribute beyond a value of six. Bonuses from different Qualities stack—you get the benefit of a +1 Strength from being an Initiative Commando and another +1 Strength from being a Grunt—but the maximum value is still six.

If you're playing an ex-Initiative agent in a Sunnydale series, you'll have to check with the Director to see if she'll allow you to take more than one package Quality.

Now let's make with the military fun!



QUALITIES AND DRAWBACKS

For the most part, the Qualities and Drawbacks presented here are for any commando-oriented game. A number of them can also be used in non-Initiative games. A few are mystic- or psychic-oriented. They are presented primarily to explain the capacities of some of the odder folks in **Chapter Five: Hell on Earth**. Check with your Director; you never know, she might allow you to use one or two in your character, with a suitable and conspiratorial explanation, of course.



BULLSEYE

1-POINT QUALITY

Forrest: If you were Hostile 17, living off the crap we feed 'em, what would you rather eat than that?

Riley: You wanna use the girl I got a crush on as bait?

Forrest: I can tag a hostile at 50 yards.

—4.7 *The Initiative*

A strange thing about the military—they like their guns. The Bullseye Quality is for folks that REALLY like their guns. Don't thank us: If you need such a big gun, you've got some serious issues, and it's the least we can do for you.

You know those movies where the guy spends like fifteen minutes aiming and arguing with his boss—"I have the shot, sir!"—before actually doing anything? Well, if you want your character to be that guy, Bullseye is the Quality for you. Bullseye basically allows your character to use the Aiming maneuver on two consecutive Turns. The first Turn she does nothing but aim—make a Perception and Gun Fu roll and note the Success Levels. The second Turn, repeat this roll, again noting the Success Levels. If desired, the character may make a normal Gunshot maneuver at the end of the second Turn. The combined Success Levels of the two sniping rolls are added to the shot. Spiffy, huh?

But wait, there's more! The sniper can keep up the aiming; just continue to make a roll every Turn until she actually takes the shot, noting the results of each roll. The trick is that she only gets to add the Successes of the last two rolls, regardless of how long she takes—targets keep moving around, focus wanes, twitchy trigger fingers get twitchy, etc. Bullseye has other restrictions. It can only be performed with a two handed weapon (a rifle or a smaller weapon with a stock). In addition, using Bullseye requires concentration and stability. If attacked or otherwise seriously distracted while in the middle of an Aiming maneuver, previous Aiming Success Levels are lost.

Bullseye usually applies to rifles, but with your Director's permission, it could be used with ranged, non-firearm weapons (in which case Gun Fu should be replaced with Getting Medieval when Aiming).

The Big Example: While Riley is negotiating, Forrest is preparing to take out an HST that is holding a hostage. On the first Turn of Aiming, Forrest scores four Success Levels. On the second Turn, he rolls again and scores two Success Levels. At the end of the second Turn, he can choose to take the shot, adding a total of six to his roll. Otherwise, he can choose to wait. On Turn three, he scores five Success Levels, but he also loses the bonus from Turn one, so his total bonus is now seven (2+5). Under normal circumstances, he could take the shot at the end of the third Turn. Unfortunately, before that time, a HST picks up Riley and throws him into Forrest. The physical impact distracts Forrest, and if he wants to try sniping again he'll have to start from square one.

CHIPPED

2-POINT QUALITY OR DRAWBACK

Spike: What's with 'im?

Adam: I activated his chip.

Spike: Oh. So it's chips all around, is it? Someone must have bought the party-pak.

—4.21 *Primeval*

The surgically implanted BeMo (behavior modification) chip is one of the trademarks of the original Initiative. The abilities and limitations of implanted chips are described in more detail in **Chapter Three: Tools of the Trade** (see p. [?]), but here's a brief look at what chips can do for your character.

As a rule, USTARU has stopped experimenting with behavior modification. However, your Cast Member may be a holdover from the old Initiative, or she may have been victimized by another organization that has adopted Walsh's techniques. Or maybe she doesn't even realize she has a chip. This last option only really works with slave chips; otherwise, the blinding pain is a bit of a



Canon Alert

The implants detailed here and in **Chapter Three: Tools of the Trade** are hinted at in the *BtVS* TV show, but none are named or explained in detail. As usual, we've taken the opening provided by the show and blown it wide enough to fly a dropship through. Most of the chip material here is of our own design. Remember, friends don't let friends get chipped!

giveaway. If her chip was implanted by an enemy agency, finding a way to get it removed may be an important long-term goal for your character. However, just because she finds a good doc doesn't mean it's freebie points for all—if your character gets a chip removed, she needs to pay off the cost with experience points or shift the points to a new Drawback (say, some nice Mental Problems).

There are three main categories of chips: BeMo (Behavior Modification), Slave, and TEA (Temporarily Enhanced Activity). Despite what the commercials say, your character can only have one chip—you can't take twelve TEA chips and adrenalize yourself into an unstoppable green giant.

BeMo chips prevent a character from performing a specific type of action. If she attempts the prohibited action, she suffers blinding agony. This is represented by five points of damage (no defense). In addition, the character is stunned by the pain, rendering her completely helpless on the Turn following the action. Each Turn thereafter, she can make a Willpower (doubled) roll; if successful, she recovers and may resume normal activities. A BeMo chip is a two-point Drawback.

Don't try to get cute and bring in a BeMo chip that covers an action your character would never perform. For example, when you take the Vampire Quality, you and your Director need to agree on what keeps your character from killing her pals. This may be a chip, but you don't get an extra two points, that's just fulfilling the requirements of the Vampire Quality. Likewise, if your Cast Member has no magical or psychic powers, why exactly would she be given a spellbuster chip? Ultimately, your Director has final approval on any chip selection.

Slave chips are an extreme form of BeMo. When activated, the chip places you under the control of a designated master (this is the chip that Adam used to control Riley in 4.21 Primeval). Some slave chips rely on verbal direction; others cause the victim to perform preprogrammed actions. This is a two-point Drawback.



On the surface, a slave chip may seem like a better deal than a BeMo chip—it won't come into effect as often. The trick is that your character doesn't know when it may activate, who may be using it, or what they may force her to do—and she may not even remember her actions while being controlled by the chip. Those with slave chips are tools waiting to be used. You'll have to decide if your Cast Member is aware of the chip. In all likelihood, if she is known to have a slave chip, she should also take the Under Suspicion Drawback (see p. [?])—it's hard to trust the Manchurian Candidate.

So far we've only looked at bad chips. But the coats have developed a few useful chips as well. In the wake of Professor Walsh's disastrous enhancement experiments, SciSpecs have been working on more controlled methods of physical and mental enhancement. As Riley found out in 5.4 Out of My Mind, constant adrenal stimulation can be dangerous or even lethal. But Temporarily Enhanced Activity chips—known as TEA chips—provide impressive power for a limited time, while avoiding dangerous long-term effects. Your Director can provide you with a variety of chips to enhance physical, mental, or skill abilities (see p. [?]). She may also make other chips available, at her discretion. Having a TEA chip is a two-point Quality, but it comes with an additional cost. The thing about boost chips is that your character never knows exactly what she's getting. To begin with, it's experimental technology. On top of that, how far can those scientists be trusted? Are you CERTAIN that they didn't sneak some sort of BeMo programming onto the boost chip? You'll probably find out at the worst possible time . . .

COAT

3-POINT QUALITY

Buffy: Thank you guys so much. You're like my . . . fairy godmother and Santa Claus and Q all wrapped up into one . . . Q from Bond, not Star Trek.

—5.4 Out of my Mind



Under Maggie Walsh, the Initiative focused on studying subterrestrials—seeking ways to harness the military potential of the HSTs. In addition to the commandos, the Initiative employed a host of scientists and psychologists. To the grunts, these scientists were an interchangeable mass of lab coats, or just “coats” for short. USTARU does not devote much of its resources to research, but maintains a small corps of coats—properly “scientific support assets”, or “SciSpecs”—to provide the commandos with technical and medical support. That's your character. She may have been part of the original Initiative, or a science whiz the commandos snatched out of school. Whatever her background, she receives a +1 to Intelligence and two bonus levels to divide among the following skills: Doctor, Mr. Fix-It, or Science (stacking is allowed). Your character may not be Gun Girl like all the commandos, but don't let them push her around—she's probably the only one in the squad who passed multivariable calculus. Scratch that—she's probably the only one who can SPELL multivariable calculus.

CROSS DISCIPLINE

I-POINT QUALITY

Walsh: This is your objective. Sub-T: 67119. Demon class: Polgara species. Though visual confirmation has not yet been made, we're confident of the target's approximate position as it leaves behind a distinct protein marker. Dr. Angleman will brief you on its defenses.

—4.13 The 'T' in Team

The eighteen skills of the *BtVS Corebook* cover almost any action. But occasionally there are problems. For example, Occultism is normally used to identify demons. As Buffy would be the first to tell you, the scientists of the Initiative know little about the Occult world. But specialists like Dr. Angleman know a great deal about the biology, natural weapons, and behavior of HSTs. So how does an Initiative scientist identify her demons?

The answer is that she has a Cross-Discipline. This is a specialty that allows the Cast Member to use a skill to perform an action not usually associated with that skill. A Cross-Discipline skill usually has slightly different effects than the normal skill. For example, a Subterrrestrial Specialist can acquire hard physical data about a demon using her Science skill, but she won't get the historical details or legends that she would learn through use of Occultism. A few examples are given below, but your Director can add others as she sees fit. Like Wild Card skills, Cross-Disciplines need to make sense as opposed to being an excuse to load every action onto a single super-amped skill—and sorry, you're not going to get away with “I want to use Getting Medieval to shoot guns because of, um, my primal gun instincts.”



Paranormal Physics: Your character is convinced that all paranormal phenomena—psychic powers, “magic”, and so on—have a unified source, a form of physics that science is only beginning to understanding. She may not know diddly squat about the history of magic, but she is beginning to learn to channel and control supernatural forces. As a result, the character may use her Science skill instead of her Occultism skill for purposes of casting spells (and for the rare folks who have Sorcery and Paranormal Physics, they can add their Sorcery levels to their Willpower and Science spellcasting rolls).

Subterrestrial Research: While your character is not exactly a Watcher, she knows a lot about Sub-Ts. She’s read all the reports and done a lot of really icky hands-on research. Ever performed an autopsy on a Chaos Demon? Trust us when we say YUCK. This really disgusting pastime allows the character to use the Science skill instead of Occultism when trying to gather information on demons, vampires, or other subterrestrials.

GRUNT

3-POINT QUALITY

Xander: Can you cut me some slack, gimme a blind eye?

Soldier: And why should I?

Xander: Well, if you do, I won’t tell Colonel Newsome that your boots ain’t regulation, your post wasn’t covered and you hold your gun like a sissy girl.

—2.14 Innocence

The Initiative is a military operation. The lab coats and the sneaky guys have important jobs, but more often than not things end with a fight—and that’s where the Grunt comes in. Your character is a frontline soldier, trained to handle multiple types of tactical situations. Tagging a Hostile with a taser rifle, taking on a hellhound with her bare hands—it’s just another day on the job.

As a Grunt, your character gets a +1 bonus to her Strength and two bonus levels to divide among the following skills: Gun Fu, Getting Medieval, and Kung Fu. It’s okay to stack the levels on a single skill, but be careful about overspecialization. She’s likely to come up against a wide variety of beasties, and all that Gun Fu may leave her ammo-less when dealing with a pack of vampires.





LAB RAT

3-POINT QUALITY

Adam: After you met Maggie, she was the one who shaped your basic operating system. She taught you how to think, how to feel. She fed you chemicals to make you stronger—your mind and body. She said that you and I were her favorite children. Her art.

—4.14 Goodbye Iowa

Maggie Walsh had some very interesting ideas about medical ethics. When she was running the Initiative, she authorized a variety of experiments that attempted to merge human and subterrestrial DNA—mostly with disastrous results. Your character is the product of one of her experiments. The experiments may have occurred without her knowledge, or she may have actually been created from whole cloth—Adam junior, if you will. In any case, the condition is irreversible, but stable enough that the brass have kept her in the service.

As a Lab Rat, your character receives a +2 bonus to a single Attribute; this can exceed the normal human maximum. She may take one of the following without spending extra points: Acute Senses, Fast Reaction Time, or Natural Toughness. However, it's not all fun and games; she has an Attractiveness of -1 and suffers from Recurring Nightmares or another one-point Mental Problems. You can increase these Drawbacks in order to gain additional points (make the character even less attractive, for example), but you can't spend points to gain a positive Attractiveness Quality. It's up to you to

decide whether your character's Attractiveness penalty is based on a disturbing physical appearance or whether something just doesn't feel right about her. Finally, your character can have up to ten levels of Hard to Kill (but they have to be paid for separately).

In addition to these penalties, as a Lab Rat there is always the chance that your character has some lurking secret she has yet to discover. What was the true purpose of the experiments performed on her? Is there some secret waiting to be revealed? As a result, most Lab Rats are either Under Suspicion (see p. [?]) or Chipped (see p. [?]) or both; the higher ups will certainly be keeping an eye on them.

MYSTERIOUS CONNECTIONS

1-POINT QUALITY

Willow: Call the Initiative. If they know what's wrong with him, they have to help.

Buffy: Yeah, but call them how? First of all, they don't exist any more, and secondly, they never CLAIMED to exist in the first place.

—5.4 Out of My Mind

The Buffyverse is filled with conspiracies and secret societies—from the Watcher's Council and the Knights of Byzantium to shady government agencies that recruit invisible girls. With this Quality, your character made a connection with one of them. This is sort of like the Contacts Quality, with an important difference—she doesn't know who she's dealing with. The mysterious

allies contact her when THEY feel like it. They may provide her with information and assistance, or they may ask her to perform favors for them—and these requests may put her in awkward situations. It may be possible to negotiate with a Mysterious Connection—but if your character pushes things too far, the secretive ally may turn into a powerful Adversary. You can take this Quality more than once; each time represents a connection to a different conspiracy. Your Director will determine the identity of each Mysterious Connection and decide when to bring those “allies” into play. Again, your character doesn’t have a way to contact a Mysterious Connection; it’s up to the Director to decide when and if an ally will put in an appearance.

Work with your Director to decide how your character made the connection. If she’s a long time conspiracy freak, she may have made contact as a result of research; otherwise they may have sought her out. Is this a recent alliance, or has the character been dealing with these strangers for a long time? Did they pay her way through college or help her score big on the SATs? How does she feel about the Mysterious Connection—does she think they have the best interests of the world at heart? If not, her ties to the organization may be a closely guarded Secret—or the brass may already have concerns about her and have placed her Under Suspicion (see p. [?]).

It is possible that the true nature of the Mysterious Connection will be revealed over time. Depending on the nature of the organization and how your character handles things, it might become a Contact . . . or an Adversary. Secrets can be dangerous!

NINJA GIRL

3-POINT QUALITY

Walsh: They do have keen eyesight, however. You might want to be suited up for this.

Buffy: Oh. You mean the camo and stuff? I thought about it but, I mean, it’s gonna look all “Private Benjamin.”

—4.13 The ‘I’ in Team

Your character is all about the sneakiness. She got her start stealing cookies behind grandma’s back. Since then, she’s had to sneak her way past monsters with ears the size of, well, really big ears. Of course, it helps to have a back-up talent; she may have learned to hear granny coming, or she may have gotten really good at lying with a straight face. As a Ninja Girl, your character gets a +1 bonus to Dexterity and two bonus levels to divide among the following skills: Crime, Notice, and Influence. It’s okay to stack the levels on a single skill, but versatility may save your life some day.



ORPHAN

4-POINT QUALITY

Buffy: Good thing he has you.

Sam: More like miraculous. I went down to Central America with the Peace Corps. One night, my entire infirmary got slaughtered by . . . I didn’t know what they were. I got saved, quit the Corps, joined the squad. My first firefight, I met Riley.

—6.15 As You Were

Orphan is a background Quality option to Initiative Commando. An Orphan is someone who has been recruited into USTARU from a civilian background. The name comes from the fact that most Orphans join the squad after surviving an HST attack, and may have some old scores to settle or ghosts to lay to rest. But your character could also be a scientist or doctor drawn into service because of her useful skills. The main thing is that Orphans usually aren’t as buff as Initiative Commandos; as an Orphan, your character hasn’t had all the special ops training of the standard commando. Of course, there are exceptions to every rule—despite her Peace Corps background, Mrs. Finn can kick butt with the best of them.

As an Orphan, your character gains +1 to any two mental Attributes. She also receives a bonus level to two of the following skills: Doctor, Influence, Knowledge, Mr. Fix-It, or Science. Finally, she gets three levels of Good Luck. Your character may not be as hard to take out as the average commando, but she has a knack for getting out of the way. Like an Initiative Commando, she has a total (three-point) Obligation to the organization, whether it’s USTARU or the Initiative.





SQUAD LEADER

4-POINT QUALITY

Forrest: Riley here was about to explain why he's leaving us so very quickly.

Riley: I don't explain. Because I don't have to. I'm the one in charge.

—4.15 *This Year's Girl*

The military likes its chain of command, and that means someone has to be in charge. That's the Squad Leader's job. As team leader, she must possess honor, integrity, and the ability to inspire her comrades—not to mention the courage to face the brass after her team has screwed up again.

Of all the members of a squad, it is vital for the Squad Leader to be versatile and capable of stepping in to help in many different situations. At the same time, a good team leader needs to know the strengths of her allies, and recognizes when to send in a specialist. A Squad Leader receives +1 to any one mental Attribute and +1 to any one physical Attribute. She also receives two bonus levels to divide between the following skills: Gun Fu, Influence, and Wild Card (with an appropriately militaristic focus). You can stack these if you wish, but you might want to spread them out. That way, if your character can't Influence someone to follow her orders, she can just shoot 'em.

TELEPATHY

5-POINT QUALITY

Willow (telepathically): Xander, Anya, stop!

Xander: Great googly-moogly, Willow, would you quit doing that?

Willow (telepathically): I told you I was going to get the lay of the land.

Xander: But not the lay of my brain.

Anya: It's kind of intrusive. You could knock first or something.

—6.1 *Bargaining - Part One*

Your character can speak into the minds of anyone she knows well, as long as she can see them or knows where they are. While doing this, she also hears any thoughts directed at her in response. She cannot read minds using the power in this way though—the only thoughts she hears are the ones your character's friends want her to hear. Basically, she is a living cell phone. A telepath can "connect" simultaneously with a number of people equal to her Willpower.

If the psychic touches someone or looks into her eyes, she can listen into what the person is thinking. In this case, the victim resists the telepath's Willpower (doubled) roll with one of her own. Mostly people don't think about anything terribly important, but those preparing to do something dramatic or heinous generally think about

it. Even if someone is lying, they generally think about the correct answer to a question before they respond with a lie. Asking people questions while reading their minds is a great way to get information.

Using eye contact for telepathy only works if the target is less than five feet away. Each successful roll your character makes allows her to listen to someone's thoughts for a minute or two. Successive attempts to read someone's mind before resting at least three hours suffer a cumulative -2 penalty (whether a similar or different penalty is applied to the readee as you batter away at her defenses is a matter for your Director). So, for the second attempt, the Willpower roll suffers a -2 penalty; on the fifth attempt, an -8 penalty is incurred.

UNDER SUSPICION

I-POINT DRAWBACK

Colonel: Being new around here, Finn, I had a look at your record and Professor Walsh's notes. Until recently, you were an exemplary soldier headed straight for the top. Then you meet this girl, this . . . slayer, and suddenly you begin to exhibit signs of disloyalty.

—4.19 *New Moon Rising*

This is a variation of the Minority Drawback; it affects the way your character is treated by other members of USTARU. Something has called her loyalty into question, and the brass and other commandos feel that she cannot be relied upon. This may be due to biology—if she's a Lab Rat or a chipped HST, people may feel that sooner or later she's going to turn on her squad. Perhaps your character acted against orders. Maybe she's got Mental Problems—strangely, some people have a hard time trusting a psycho with a gun.

Being Under Suspicion has a variety of effects. The members of your character's squad may be able to overlook a questionable past, but other USTARU agents consider her to be a security risk. People automatically assume the worst about her, and are quick to blame her for things that go wrong. She may also have trouble obtaining equipment or information. With time (and experience points), your character may be able to clear her name, but until she does she's going to be the black sheep of the unit.



more skill details

The skills in the *BtVS Corebook* are very broad in scope. Almost any action can be performed by using one of the basic seventeen skills, and if nothing makes sense, there's always the Wild Card skill. But some may not be entirely happy with this open framework. A character could be an expert in a specific element of a skill but not others—like the *Corebook's* example of the criminal lawyer who knows all about the underworld but can't pick a lock. Other times, technical tasks can be easily attributed to one of the base skills, but a Director might decide they should only be performed by specially trained professionals. For example, defusing a bomb is a Mr. Fix-It task—but not every mechanic ought to be playing with fire! For those who don't mind some movement away from a broad skill system, and the added complexity that brings, we offer an optional Quality called Skill Specialty. Some may find these particularly relevant in a commando campaign, where squad members often have special areas of expertise.

Some versions of this Quality can be used in conjunction with certain Wild Card skills discussed later (see p. [?]), compounding their benefit. Absent possession of the more specific Wild Card skill, this Quality effectively lowers the normal penalty associated with such use by two. For instance, those without Wild Card (Demolitions) can disarm a bomb using Mr. Fix-It at a hefty penalty (-5). Giving that person a Skill Specialty (Demolitions) but not the matching Wild Card skill decreases that penalty (to -3).

SKILL SPECIALTY

I-POINT QUALITY

A Skill Specialty has two effects. First, it allows your character to perform a specific type of action, which may or may not be available to most characters (at your Director's discretion). Second, your character receives a +2 bonus to rolls involving that specialty.

Skill Specialties exist for all the Wild Card skills discussed later (see p. [?]): Artillery, Demolitions (if your Director is generous, that might also provide a +2 on Getting Medieval grenade tossing rolls), Disguise, Electronic Surveillance, Piloting, Sensors, Surveillance, Tactics, or Wilderness Survival. They can even be devised for Wild Card skills presented in other *BtVS* or *Angel* RPG books. A couple more examples are provided here. Feel free to add new specialties as desired. If you have an idea, speak up! Your Director might buy it.



cont. more skill details

Conspiracy Freak: A Watcher may be able to tell you all about the mating habits of Ghora demons, but can she explain the Rosicrucian connection between JFK and Elvis? Well, YOU can. You get a bonus when using the Knowledge skill to dig up information on obscure government plots, alien abductions, and much more. The truth is out there!

Pistol Packin': Your character either spent her childhood watching Westerns, or she has a thing for those John Woo movies with the guys jumping around firing pistols in slow motion. In any case, she gets a +2 to Gun Fu rolls when using handguns. If you've got *The Slayer's Handbook*, she also gets a +2 on Fast Draw maneuvers. Go get 'em, Marshall Buffy.

Sniper: Your character has a thing for big guns, and frankly, it gives us the wiggins. She gets a +2 to Gun Fu rolls when using rifles or other two-handed guns. Might want to check out the Bullseye Quality (see p. [?]). Some day, Oliver Stone may make a movie based on her life.

Tracker: You're good at following trails in the wild, and you get to say things like "He passed this way six hours ago, and he was losing a lot of blood." This is mostly useful in wilderness situations, but hey, see what the Director will let you get away with. You get a +2 to Wild Card (Wilderness Survival) tasks involving spotting, identifying, or following tracks, noticing signs of a struggle, and that sort of thing.

SKILLS

Xander (with toolbox): We gotta fix up those fighting skills pronto.

Willow: Actually, we have bigger worries than her fighting skills today.

Tara: Way bigger.

Xander: I guess. Depends on how highly you prize punning.

—6.1 Bargaining - Part One

There are a few activities that commandos deal with more frequently than Slayers—things like disarming bombs and using advanced spy gear. This section discusses the skills that are used for a few of these tasks. In one case, they use the standard 17 skills, but there are also a few new Wild Card skills that the Director can add into the game if she chooses to.

The addition of these new Wild Card skills reflects the more specialized nature of tasks performed by the armed forces. Some may find them too restrictive and desire a broader and more cinematic rule. Your Director could always just dispense with these Wild Card skills and use the default skills without the penalty. Alternatively, she could define two boarder military Wild Card skills. Wild Card (Military Operations) would cover Demolitions, Surveillance, and Wilderness Survival; Wild Card (Military Communications) would cover Artillery, Electronic Surveillance, and Tactics.

WILD CARD (ARTILLERY)

Your agent has learned how to use direct artillery fire, air strikes, and other extremely heavy weapons. Not something that gets used often, but still being Queen of Firepower has its advantages. Assuming your character has access, clearance, and authority, she knows how to get a large machine to position its ordnance (business-end first) on some spot or object. The number of Success Levels dictates just how spot-on goes the boom.

Absent the Wild Card (Artillery) skill, such a strike involves Computer, Mr. Fix-It or the Brains Score -4.

WILD CARD (DEMOLITIONS)

Demolitions has two primary uses: Blowing things up and preventing other people from blowing things up.

Setting up an explosive charge so as to cause maximum structural damage requires an Intelligence and Wild Card (Demolitions) roll. Three Success Levels are required to ensure the maximum effect; if your character only gets one or two Success Levels, the damage is reduced (by one-tenth or one-half respectively). If she fails the roll, she's messed up the trigger and the bomb won't even go off—nice going, butthead. The most common triggers are time-based or radio detonated, but if your character wants to be clever and has the necessary materials, she could set up a pressure-sensitive plate or a tripwire. This requires a second roll though.

Disarming a bomb has two steps. First, make a Perception and Wild Card (Demolitions) roll to examine the bomb. If that fails, your character has no idea how to disarm it. Extremely complex bombs (the nuclear warhead with 53 wires) may require multiple Success Levels. Once your character has successfully examined the bomb, she can attempt to disarm it. This requires an Intelligence and Wild Card (Demolitions) roll; any extra Success Levels from the examination result are added to this roll. Your Director sets the number of Success Levels needed to disarm a bomb depending on its complexity, position, the tools available, or just the needs of the storyline (how hard does she want to make the disarm



attempt; how crucial is the explosion, or lack thereof, to the storyline). Failure to accumulate the necessary Success Levels could mean nothing happens (and you can try again) or it could mean . . . well, best not to talk about that.

Example the Elder: Buster has found a bomb in the funhouse in the abandoned amusement park. It is moderately complicated; the Director declares that two Success Levels are needed just to understand it. Buster makes a Perception and Wild Card (Demolitions) roll: three Success Levels! This allows him to move on to disarming, and he gets a +1 to all rolls (because of the extra Success Level from the examination).

Example the Younger: Now Buster is ready to disarm the bomb. The Director decides that it's fairly tricky and requires three Success Levels. Buster makes an Intelligence and Wild Card (Demolitions) roll—and only gets two Success Levels. The Director pauses for a moment to build the suspense and then tells Buster . . . nothing happens. Buster wipes the sweat off his brow and tries again.

If the Director is dealing with a group of highly trained commandos and wants to keep the tension up, she can declare that any disarm roll which results in a one is an automatic failure—even if the character's Intelligence and Wild Card (Demolitions) total is nine or better without a roll. What's the fun of messing with a bomb if there isn't a chance of it going off? And hey, you've got some Good Luck, right? Wrong? Uh-oh . . .

As a general rule, messing with explosives is best left to professionals—i.e., people with this skill. However, the Director may decide to let untrained people set up bombs under special circumstances—like if it's the only way to stop a giant demonic mayor-snake. In that case, Mr. Fix-It or Science may be used with a –5 penalty. Even so, if your character fails a placement roll for the explosive, she rolls again. Further failure means the bomb explodes during set-up. That's very bad.

WILD CARD (DISGUISE)

Code missions (p. [?]) are focused on combat—but Black operations have a heavy emphasis on stealth and espionage. In these situations, a talent for disguise can be extremely valuable. Creating a disguise requires an Intelligence and Wild Card (Disguise) roll. Observers use Perception and Notice or their Brains Score to penetrate a disguise. If your character has access to special



equipment (you know, the whole *Mission Impossible* thing), she receives a bonus of up to +6 to her roll. Conversely, if she is trying to impersonate a specific individual and lacks the necessary accessories, your Director could impose a penalty of up to -8. It's hard to disguise yourself as a guard without a guard's uniform.

Once your character is all disguised up—and note that one person can do the disguise thing for others, so the expert in the squad can get the more clueless ones all fixed up—she's good to go . . . until she actually has to talk to someone. Convincing a suspicious observer that your character is someone else requires an Intelligence and Influence roll, against the observer's Perception and Notice roll (or Brains Score). If the observer isn't really interested—it's not like she knows all the guards personally—the Director may not bother with this roll. On the other hand, if the observer is a close personal friend of the person impersonated, she may get a bonus to her roll. Them's the breaks.

Absent Wild Card (Disguise), Art, Crime or the Brains Score may be used with a -4 penalty.

WILD CARD (ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE)

Electronic surveillance is part of the whole covert ops scene. Whether your character is planting bugs inside a crypt or using TEMPEST gear to spy on a nearby hacker, electronic surveillance is the name of the game.

Placing a bug requires an Intelligence and Wild Card (Electronic Surveillance) roll. The Success Levels determine how hard it is to locate the bug and how effective it is at transmitting data (hint: don't put a bug in someone's boom box). If the character gets at least three Success Levels, it's placed in an ideal location. If she only gets two Successes, any rolls associated with the bug suffer a -2 penalty. With only one Success Level, this penalty is increased to -4. If a complete failure, either no information can be gathered at all or its location is so obvious that Stevie Wonder could find it.

Using any sort of surveillance equipment requires an Intelligence and Wild Card (Electronic Surveillance) roll. In some cases—like a microphone bug—this is a simple success-or-failure roll. With more complex systems, the number of Success Levels may affect the quality of information received.

Those trained to perform surveillance can also block it. Locating bugs is a Perception and Wild Card (Electronic Surveillance) roll. This result is resisted by the bugger's placement roll or Score. Depending on the complexity of the bug, it may be that anyone can try to find it; trickier high-tech bugs might only be located by someone with training and equipment.

With the proper equipment, a character can make an Intelligence and Wild Card (Electronic Surveillance) roll to attempt to track, isolate, jam, tap into, or otherwise interfere with surveillance devices. The Success Levels needed are up to the Director, based on the complexity of the equipment to be affected and the skill of the enemy operator (if any). If the character succeeds in tapping into a bug or redirecting the signal—setting up a looped image on a security camera, for example—the person monitoring the device makes a Perception and Wild Card (Electronic Surveillance) roll, resisted by the bug interferer's result.

Anyone can use surveillance equipment, provided that they receive instructions from a skilled individual. Absent the Wild Card (Electronic Surveillance) skill, Crime or Brains -4 may be used for placing a bug, Notice or Brains -4 for locating bugs, and Computers, Mr. Fix-It, or Brains -4 for interfering or noticing interference. Counter-surveillance is more difficult though; some Directors may decide that locating, interfering, and noticing interference can only be performed by characters that possess the Wild Card (Electronic Surveillance) skill.

For those in a more equipment heavy game, Wild Card (Electronic Surveillance) can also be used with all sorts of fancy, boring army equipment—things like radar systems, sonar, communication networks, electronic warfare equipment, and that sort of stuff. It even works with nifty hand-held sensors, like the bioscanner (see p. [?]). Absent Wild Card (Electronic Surveillance), Computers, Mr. Fix-It, or Brains is used for this sort of equipment, all at a -4 penalty.

WILD CARD (PILOTING)

Feel a need for speed? Your character can use Dexterity and Wild Card (Piloting) to operate relatively small planes, helicopters, and boats. The larger the vessel, the more remote the control system; in that case, a pilot uses Intelligence and Wild Card (Piloting). In an Initiative series, this skill may not come up often—most



squads operate on the ground, and pilots are provided by the brass when needed. Still, you never know when your gang might need to hijack a helicopter. Plus, it gives your character an excuse to wear that cool bomber jacket.

Absent Wild Card (Piloting), Driving may be used with a -4 penalty. More detail oriented Directors may wish to separate out a Wild Card (Piloting) skill for aircraft and one for watercraft (and even one for spacecraft if the story goes in that direction).

WILD CARD (SURVEILLANCE)

A gumshoe with the Wild Card (Surveillance) skill is an expert at spying on people. When following a specific person or group, she makes a Dexterity (or Intelligence) and Wild Card (Surveillance) roll, resisted by the target's Perception and Notice, to avoid being seen by her targets (this bonus does not affect any other observers). She also makes a Perception and Wild Card (Surveillance) roll when eavesdropping on a conversation or studying an individual. Finally, she can make a Perception and Wild Card (Surveillance) roll to spot someone who is trying to follow or spy on her.

Absent the Wild Card (Surveillance) skill, a character may use Acrobatics, Crime, or Combat at -4 when tailing someone, or Notice or Brains -4 when eavesdropping or spotting a spy.

WILD CARD (TACTICS)

Wild Card (Tactics) allows budding generals out there to evaluate situations and plans in order to maximize the team's efficiency. If the Cast has the blueprints of a building, a successful Intelligence and Wild Card (Tactics) roll can locate weaknesses or security holes. If studying a fighting force, an Intelligence and Wild Card (Tactics) roll may help to second-guess their next actions. After the squad concocts a plan, a tactical review might reveal that it's the dumbest idea ever (which, as Buffy has proven many times, may not stop it from working). The precise level of hintiness is up to your Director, based on the number of Success Levels rolled and the degree to which she feels like helping you dogfaces out.

In addition to strategic evaluation, the Success Levels in an Intelligence and Wild Card (Tactics) roll may be added to any Influence roll used to inspire your character's comrades, or to any Knowledge roll used to obtain information on military hardware or procedures. This could prove crucial in unearthing that one rule exception that will keep your character from being court-martialed.

Absent Wild Card (Tactics), Knowledge or the Brains Score may be used with a -4 penalty.

WILD CARD

(WILDERNESS SURVIVAL)

Wild Card (Wilderness Survival) is the whole Grizzly Adams thing—the ability to find shelter, anticipate the effects of wind and weather, and forage for food. In addition, knowledge of the wilds can help with other tasks. If your character makes an Intelligence and Wild Card (Wilderness Survival) roll, she may add the Success Levels to any rolls related to tracking (using Notice), moving stealthily in an outdoor environments (using Acrobatics or Crime), or overcoming natural obstacles (like climbing a tree) (using Acrobatics or an Attribute roll).

Absent Wild Card (Wilderness Survival), Knowledge or Notice may be used with a -4 penalty.

FRONT AND CENTER:

NEW ARCHETYPES

Riley: I said shut up! Or maybe you'd like to go back to the lab with me. I'm sure the coats would love to classify a—whatever you are.

—4.14 *Goodbye Iowa*

So, your Director is putting together a commando series. But Strike Force HST has a very different cast of characters than Buffy. No Slayer for you! This section provides you with several individuals that could fit into a commando team. You can grab one straight off the shelf, or you can linker with 'em to get a better fit.

The archetypes all include the Drawback Adversary (HSTs or Enemy Agency) (3). This feature should be tailored to each game. It can remain fairly generic and represent the character's reputation among her supernatural HST enemies. It's always cooler when the bad guys have heard of your character. Alternatively, it can be focused on one of the groups in Chapter Five: Hell on Earth. That makes it more personal but also more organized (and thus more insidious).

The backgrounds for these characters all assume your Series takes place during or after Season Five squad. Most can be adapted to a Season Four Series; just ignore all references to USTARU and the fall of the Initiative. Now get your squad together—there's a war going on!



Captain

ARCHETYPE

CHARACTER TYPE HERO

Life Points 57

Drama Points 10

Attributes (20)

Strength 4 (1 level from Initiative Commando Quality)
Dexterity 5 (1 level from Initiative Commando Quality)
Constitution 4 (1 level from Squad Leader Quality)
Intelligence 5 (1 level from Squad Leader Quality)
Perception 3
Willpower 3

Qualities (20)

Attractiveness +3 (3)
Fast Reaction Time (From Initiative Commando Quality)
Good Luck +2 (2)
Hard to Kill 5 (2, 3 levels from Initiative Commando Quality)
Initiative Commando (4)
Nerves of Steel (3)
Situational Awareness (2)
Squad Leader (4)

Drawbacks (8)

Adversary (HSTs or Enemy Agency) (3)
Emotional Problems (Fear of Commitment) (1)
Honorable (Serious) (2)
Obligation (Total) (From Initiative Commando Quality)
Recurring Nightmares (1)
Secret (Previous Failure) (1)

Skills (20 + 8 from Drawbacks)

Acrobatics 1	Knowledge 1
Art 0	Kung Fu 4
Computers 1	Languages 1
Crime 3	Mr. Fix-It 0
Doctor 2	Notice 0
Driving 1	Occultism 1
Getting Medieval 4	Science 0
Gun Fu 1 (1 levels from Squad Leader Quality)	Sports 0
Influence 3	Wild Card 3 (Tactics)

Maneuvers

Bonus Base Damage Notes

Dodge	9	—	Defense action
Kick	8	10	Bash
Punch	9	8	Bash
Cobra	9	12	Bash; as Baton
Combat Knife	9	12	Slash/stab; as Big Knife
Taser Pistol	10	5	Bash; knockout
Big Pistol	10	15	Bullet
Assault Rifle	10	16	Bullet; can fire bursts

BACKGROUND ON THE CAPTAIN

The fall of Sunnydale still haunts my dreams. Every night I relive that final battle, watching as the demons released by the prototype tear apart my friends and devour their corpses. But the worst part is knowing that I helped those creatures. I was supposed to be on duty at security post two when the attack occurred. Instead I was off in the supply closet with Katya—Dr. Terina. When we came out, all hell had broken loose—literally. I remember every second of the struggle. When the dust settled I was still alive. But Katya was gone, and most of my other friends—Chen, Smith, Wilson—were dead or worse. Perhaps I couldn't have made a difference. Still, I can't help but feel that if I'd stayed at my post, there might have been SOMETHING I could have done to save more lives. Now I'll never know.

The brass never found out about my dereliction of duty. All they saw was my otherwise exemplary service record, my history in the field and with the Rangers. When they offered me a position as squad leader in this new operation, I jumped at the chance. This may be my only chance at redemption—to atone for my failure in the Battle of 314. I will do everything in my power to protect the innocent from the creatures that haunt the night. And from this point on, I will never allow my heart and my emotions to keep me from performing my duties. Katya died because I allowed my feelings to distract me from my job—I can't let that happen again.

My current squad—they're good at what they do, but only a few of them have any idea how ugly this war can be. We've had some tough assignments, but nothing to compare to that final battle at Sunnydale. I've got a few veterans, but too many are rookies, raw recruits, or civilians who have no idea what horrors lie ahead. I've got to protect the civilians, but I also need to look after my own—I'm not about to watch another soldier die needlessly. If I can hold this team together, I know that we can make a real difference in the world. Perhaps then I'll be able to sleep in peace.

Quote: "Beta team, quickly! Alpha needs back-up immediately. No one's getting vamped on my watch!"

ROLEPLAYING THE CAPTAIN

You've seen horrors that most people can't begin to imagine, and you blame yourself for the worst of these tragedies. Now you are trying to redeem these imagined sins by saving innocents in the service of USTARU. Your squad is like a family to you, and you are extremely protective of your comrades. But at the same time, you are afraid to let anyone get too close. You are worried that emotional attachments could cloud your judgment and put more deaths on your guilty conscience. As a result, you try to mask your emotions behind military discipline and efficiency—although you try to throw in a joke now and then to keep up morale.

Scout

ARCHETYPE

CHARACTER TYPE

HERO

Life Points 46

Drama Points 10

Attributes (20)

Strength 3 (1 level from Initiative Commando Quality)
Dexterity 5 (1 level from Initiative Commando Quality, 1 level from Ninja Girl Quality)
Constitution 3
Intelligence 4
Perception 4
Willpower 4

Qualities (20)

Acute Senses (Vision) (2)
Acute Senses (Hearing) (2)
Attractiveness +3 (3)
Contacts (Old CIA friends) (2)
Hard to Kill 4 (1; 3 levels from Initiative Commando Quality)
Initiative Commando (4)
Mysterious Connections (1)
Ninja Girl (3)
Photographic Memory (2)
Situational Awareness (From Initiative Commando Quality)

Drawbacks (8)

Adversary (HSTs or Enemy Agency) (3)
Emotional Problems (Fear of Commitment) (1)
Mental Problems (Mild Cowardice) (1)
Obligation (Total) (From Initiative Commando Quality)
Secret (Demon Blood) (1)
Showoff (2)

Skills (20 + 8 from Drawbacks)

Acrobatics 0	Knowledge 0
Art 0	Kung Fu 4
Computers 2	Languages 1
Crime 6 (1 level from Ninja Girl Quality)	Mr. Fix-It 1
Doctor 0	Notice 4
Driving 1	Occultism 0
Getting Medieval 1	Science 0
Gun Fu 5	Sports 0
Influence 5 (1 level from Ninja Girl Quality)	Wild Card 0

Maneuvers

	Bonus	Base Damage	Notes
Dodge	9	—	Defense action
Kick	8	8	Bash
Punch	9	10	Bash
Cobra	6	9	Bash; as Baton
Combat Knife	6	9	Slash/stab; as Big Knife
Taser Pistol	10	5	Bash; knockout
Big Pistol	10	15	Bullet

BACKGROUND ON THE SCOUT

I always wanted to be a secret agent. I thought it was in my blood. I've always been slick as a slug and a few hundred times as sneaky, and I have a talent for overhearing secret conversations. My friends used to say I was part weasel—as it turned out, they were more right than they knew.

So, I was home on break during my senior year of college, and my dad introduced me to an “old friend of the family”—a woman named Elga Brach, who kept her skin completely covered because of some odd condition. She asked me all sorts of questions about my goals, so I laid it out for her—why not? Later, when I got back to school, there's a CIA recruiter waiting to talk to me. I joined before ten words were out of his mouth.

I'd been with the Company for a few years when I got offered a new job—a position with USTARU. The whole thing sounded pretty fruitcakish to me, and I was going to turn it down, but then I got this call from Elga Brach. She's all friendly, as if we'd just talked the day before. She told me how she pulled a few strings to get me the CIA position, and how it would mean a lot to her if I took the USTARU posting. She also said that it would be a good thing for my family . . . I couldn't quite tell how to read it that. Was it a threat or a fact?

So I thought about it and signed up with the monster hunters. Imagine my surprise when I found out that it wasn't a looney bin after all, that there really were demons out there. NOW imagine my surprise when my dad told me that we had demon blood running in our family—that old (and I mean OLD) Elga was my great-great-grandmother, or something like that. Needless to say, I did a little freaking out. It sounds like there's a chance I might suddenly go all Sub-T—and frankly, I wanted to be James Bond, not the Creature from the Black Lagoon. And I can't help but wonder if Elga Brach has some sort of plans for me. It sounds like she's part of some big demony group, and what's that all about? If it comes to a conflict between my squad and my family, who do I choose?

Quote: “Step out of the way and let the master show you how it's done.”

ROLEPLAYING THE SCOUT

Your job with the squad is to gather information. In the wilds you're Mr. Recon; in the cities, you're Joe Spy, quick with the words and quicker with the lockpick. You love your job, and you like being a hero—which makes the whole “demon blood” thing a little hard to deal with. You have no idea what would happen if people found out, and you also don't know what Elga Brach is up to. You hope she's a GOOD demon, but you're pretty skeptical about that. You're doing your best to ignore the whole issue, mostly by hamming up your work and your importance to the team. Beneath your showy exterior, you're frightened and lonely—but you're also afraid to let anyone get too close, in case they discover your secret.

Bomb Boy

ARCHETYPE

CHARACTER TYPE

HERO

Life Points 49 Drama Points 10

Attributes (20)

Strength 3 (1 level from Initiative Commando Quality)
Dexterity 5 (1 level from Initiative Commando Quality)
Constitution 3
Intelligence 5 (1 level part of Coat Quality)
Perception 4
Willpower 3

Qualities (20)

Coat (3)
Fast Reaction Time (From Initiative Commando Quality)
Good Luck 3 (3)
Hard to Kill 5 (2, 3 levels from Initiative Commando Quality)
Initiative Commando (4)
Natural Toughness (2)
Nerves of Steel (3)
Resistance (Pain) 3 (3)

Drawbacks (7)

Adversary (HSTs or Enemy Agency) (3)
Attractiveness -1 (1)
Impaired Senses (Hearing—uses hearing aid) (1)
Obligation (Total) (From Initiative Commando Quality)
Showoff (2)

Skills (20 + 7 from Drawbacks)

Acrobatics 0	Languages 0
Art 0	Mr. Fix-It 6 (2 levels part of Coat Quality)
Computers 3	Notice 0
Crime 1	Occultism 0
Doctor 0	Science 1
Driving 2	Sports 0
Getting Medieval 4	Wild Card 5 (Demolitions)
Gun Fu 4	Wild Card 3 (Artillery)
Influence 0	
Knowledge 0	
Kung Fu 0	

Maneuvers

Dodge
Cobra
Combat Knife
Grenade
Taser Pistol
Big Ass Pistol
Assault Rifle

Bonus Base Damage Notes

9	—	Defense action
9	9	Bash; as Baton
9	9	Slash/stab; as Big Knife
9	Varies	By grenade; range 8 yards
9	5	Bash; knockout
9	18	Bullet
9	16	Bullet; can fire bursts

BACKGROUND ON THE BOMB BOY

Let me tell you something. I've seen a lot of weird things since I was assigned to this outfit. Vampires, gargoyles, devil dinosaurs, freaky little spider demons, and that's not the half of it. A lot of the time, bullets just don't cut it when you're dealing with the freak patrol. Take your vampire—you can unload an M-16 into him, but you give him a minute or two and he'll be back on his feet and coming for your throat. But you know what? Stuff a grenade down his throat and you end up with a room full of vampire jerky. You can keep your crosses and garlic—me, I'll stick with the C-4.

I bring two things to this outfit. I'm good at putting things together, and I'm good at taking them apart—and frankly, I prefer the taking apart. Used to just focus on blowing apart bridges, blasting through reinforced doors or walls, or disarming bombs. And I'm always ready to help with a little forced entry or bomb disposal when the need arises, though you don't see a lot of mad demon bombers around. But these days my job is more about cleaning up the messes the rest of you can't handle with your popguns. I admit, my methods don't always fit with the whole "black ops" covert operation thing; explosives have this way of drawing attention. Still, when you want to get the job done, you've got to be prepared to make a little noise.

I suppose you're looking at my scars. Yeah, I've had a few accidents in my time—keeps things interesting. When you're playing with the big guns, it stands to reason that you're going to get burned eventually. This here I picked up in a little incident involving a Ghora demon and a lot of white phosphorous. If you think it looks bad, you ought to see the Ghora . . . though it's a little too late for that.

Anyhow, I got work to do. I've got this idea for a silver fragmentation device that I think would be real sweet to have in the trunk the next time we go up against a wolf gang. So you go back to your target practice and your textbooks. Just give me a holler when you're ready for things to get hot.

Quote: "I love the smell of napalm in the morning. Actually, I pretty much like it all day."

ROLEPLAYING THE BOMB BOY

You're loud and proud of it. The way you look at it, you're the single most destructive member of the squad. Let the coats do their studying and the spies their skulking. When they're finally ready to get serious about killing off the beastie, you're the guy who gets called in. In general, you're a regular guy—you know how to use your rifle and you're happy to keep all the equipment in working order. But you're always looking for an opportunity to make some noise and show your teammates what real power is.

Hybrid

ARCHETYPE

CHARACTER TYPE

HERO

Life Points 78 Drama Points 10

Attributes (20)

Strength 6 (1 level from Initiative Commando Quality)
Dexterity 8 (1 level from Initiative Commando Quality, 2 levels from Lab Rat Quality)
Constitution 5
Intelligence 2
Perception 2
Willpower 1

Qualities (20)

Fast Reaction Time (From Lab Rat Quality)
Lab Rat (3)
Hard to Kill 8 (5, 3 levels from Initiative Commando Quality)
Initiative Commando (4)
Natural Toughness (2)
Nerves of Steel (3)
Resistance (Pain) 3 (3)
Situational Awareness (From Initiative Commando Quality)

Drawbacks (10)

Adversary (HSTs or Enemy Agency) (3)
Attractiveness -2 (1, 1 level from Lab Rat Quality)
Chipped (Slave Chip) (2)
Emotional Dependency (1)
Showoff (2)
Obligation (Total) (From Initiative Commando Quality)
Recurring Nightmares (From Lab Rat Quality)
Under Suspicion (1)

Skills (20 + 10 from Drawbacks)

Acrobatics 5	Knowledge 0
Art 0	Kung Fu 5
Computers 0	Languages 0
Crime 0	Mr. Fix-It 3
Doctor 2	Notice 1
Driving 2	Occultism 1
Getting Medieval 5	Science 0
Gun Fu 5	Sports 0
Influence 0	Wild Card 0

Maneuvers

	Bonus	Base Damage	Notes
Dodge	13	—	Defense action
Kick	12	14	Bash
Punch	13	12	Bash
Cobra	13	18	Bash; as Baton
Combat Knife	13	18	Slash/stab; as Big Knife
Taser Pistol	15	5	Bash; knockout
Big Ass Pistol	15	18	Bullet
Assault Rifle	13	16	Bullet; can fire bursts

BACKGROUND ON THE HYBRID

What's that? Mean ol' Maggie Walsh pumped you full of icky drugs and gave you the world's worst hangover? Awww. You're breaking my heart, kid, and that ain't as easy as it used to be. So you were on the pill for a few months. Take a look at me. Sure, I signed up to be all I could be, but I kind of thought I'd get to keep all my body parts in the process.

So what happened? Well, I used to be plain ol' G.I. Joe. Yes sir, no sir, right away sir. I get recruited for the Initiative, and I'm assigned to Base Two. It's a freaky gig, no arguments there. But Base Two had its own secret project, just like the whole 314 thing in Sunnydale. I get mauled up pretty badly in a patrol, and I guess the docs decided not to let an opportunity go to waste. I'm out for a week or so, with nightmares like you wouldn't believe, and when I finally wake up I find out where those nightmares were coming from. So here I am—scales over half my body, some serious funkiness with my left hand, and the prospects for my sex life—well, I'm not even going to go there. The docs said that they had to do a little creative surgery to keep me alive, but I'm not buying that for a minute. I'm about to lay into them when suddenly—poof—everything goes blank. Next thing I know some government suit is explaining how the whole operation has been shut down. Seems like I've got a handy little BeMo chip in my head. I don't know if they shut me off for those few months I'm missing or if they had me doing dirty work for them—and I'm not sure I want to know.

Anyhow, the government guys explains that he can let me off with a medical discharge—but let's face it, where's a guy who look like me going to go? Then he explains about this new USTARU. Fighting is something I'm good at, especially now, so I figured I'd slay the course. It's not all bad; I can move faster than you can blink, and I'm damn strong. Basically, I'm the Six Million Dollar Demon. But I still have the nightmares—and I worry about what this demon flesh is doing to my soul. But enough blubbering—let's get to work!

Quote: "Talk to the surgically attached demon hand, pal."

ROLEPLAYING THE HYBRID

You're a poor man's Adam—a regular guy who got chopped up and sewn together with a bunch of demon parts thrown into the mix. The coats at Base Two were working on their own version of 314, only without the cybernetics; you're a rough draft of a bio-demonoid soldier. You like to talk tough and show off your superhuman reflexes, but underneath this bravado you are terrified. You have terrible nightmares, which you believe to be the residual thoughts of your demon parts. What if the demon somehow takes you over? Even if it doesn't, what kind of normal life could you have? And what about that chip in your head? You play it as cool as you can, but underneath it you're afraid and desperate for the approval and respect of your peers. The government doesn't trust you—the support of your teammates may be the only thing that is keeping your human side in charge.



3 Tools of the Trade

Buffy: This is incredible. But not that I thought it was some fly-by-night operation. Unless it is! I mean, can you guys fly? At night. With those jet-pack things, do you have those?

Riley (playfully): I can't really talk about it.

—4.13 The 'I' in Team

Boys need toys—half the fun of the Initiative is getting to play with all the cool gear.

This chapter provides you Directors a wide array of weapons and gadgets for requisitioning by characters. Some of this equipment exists in the armory of the Initiative and USTARU; some of it is produced and used by enemy organizations. There's some pretty scary stuff here, so don't forget that you're the quartermaster. You get to decide what gets doled out for a particular mission. Much of this gear is experimental and rare, and the far-flung nature of USTARU means that a squad may not always have access to the best equipment for a particular mission. It might be nice to have a sun cannon for the assault on the Sanguine office, but if the team needs to attack NOW and the nearest cannon is halfway across the country, the commandos are just going to have to make do with what they have on hand. Further, if you decide that you just don't like a particular weapon, pull it out! Think sun cannons are stupid? Then they never existed. The Cast will just have to deal with it.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first focuses on the armory, providing details on weapons and armor. The gadgets section runs down a variety of useful equipment—scanners, bugs, and other nifty toys. Lots of vehicle information is covered next. Finally, bizarro tech gives up the goods on unusual weapons, tools, and surgical procedures. The bizarro stuff is definitely of the extreme experimental nature and may not even exist at the start of a Series—eyes-only is the word!

canon alert

We seen some of this equipment—taser rifles, bioscanners, homing darts, BeMo chips—on the *BtVS* show. Most of it is made up though. We think of what we'd want if we were a squad of professional military monster hunters. If you don't like it, scrap it or just give it nasty side effects (that will show those push-the-tech-envelope types).





THE ARMORY

Walsh: The armory. You'll have to be cleared for use on each of these weapons. The more advanced arsenal can be complicated, but I'm certain, in time, you'll pick that up.

(Buffy picks up a piece of equipment.) Don't pick that up.

Buffy: What is it?

Walsh: About twenty thousand dollars.

—4.13 The 'I' in Team

A USTARU squad has to face the forces of Hell on a daily basis, with no Slayer to do the dirty work. In place of any sort of sacred birthright or ancient mystical power, a commando relies on modern weaponry. This section provides details on the arms and armor that a commando might carry in the field.

While this section includes some very powerful weaponry, the same restrictions from the Corebook apply. Heavy weaponry packs a wallop, but if a mission requires stealth or subtlety, explosions are a bad idea. In addition, supernatural creations are often resistant to conventional weapons. A Fyarl demon can only be hurt by silver weapons; a soldier can have the biggest rifle in the world, but without silver bullets it's just dead weight. Many of these weapons (like the big ass sniper rifle or the taser cannon) require military training. This might not be a problem in a commando series, but if Scoobies somehow get their hands on this gear, you may want to require Military Rank, Initiative Commando, or a strange Halloween costume as a prerequisite to using the big guns.

As with all things in the *BtVS RPG*, our focus is on fun and TV-style action. Some of the weapons listed below may be inspired by existing military technology, but we're not sweating every precise detail. If it makes you happy and you know the facts, you're welcome to specify that the big sniper rifle is an Armalite AR-50 while the regular sniper rifle is an MSG-90 using 7.62 millimeter ammo and a roller-locked delayed blowback breech. Meanwhile, we'll be over here playing the game.



CLIP VALUE

Commando characters carry a lot of weapons. Keeping track of the number of bullets in their pistols, the charges in their tasers, and the bullets in their assault rifles . . . well, it's about as much fun as cleaning the grease trap at the Doublemeat Palace. In some cases—like when the squad is fighting a pack of werewolves and only has three silver bullets to go around, or when using things like rocket launchers—tracking ammunition is a necessary part of the dramatic action. But most of the time, tracking all the numbers is just a pain. So we're offering an alternate and oh-so-optional system for dealing with ammo: Clip Value.

Clip Value causes weapons to occasionally run out of ammo without all the mess and bother of actually tracking the number of shots that have been fired. Clip Value is a number, usually between one and three. When a character fires a weapon, if the number on the d10 part of the Gun Fu roll is equal to or less than the Clip Value, she can't use that weapon again until she spends some time fixing the problem. You should assign a reload time of one to three Turns, depending on the weapons, the nature of the problem, and what best fits the scene (i.e., you're tired of the Cast using their assault rifles all the time). Clip Value does not have to reflect running out of ammo; obviously, if a character spends a Turn reloading and then immediately has another bad roll, she's probably not out of bullets again. Perhaps the gun has jammed. Perhaps the safety got switched on. The cosmetic details are up to you; you could even decide to let the player off the hook, if she's been having bad roll after bad roll. The main question is—how would it play out on TV?

The new weapons in this chapter have Clip Values. Use the following table to assign Clip Values to weapons from other books. The Clip Value is based on the maximum load of the weapon.

clip value table

number of shots in full clip	clip value
>10	1
6-10	2
4-5	3
3	4

For weapons with one or two shots—say, rocket launchers—we're assuming you can keep track of the ammo. If a weapon is used with burst fire, add one to its Clip Value. A 30-shot assault rifle normally has a Clip Value 1; but if the character is firing bursts, the Clip Value is increased to two. If a weapon has an extremely high capacity—like the taser cannon—you may want to ignore ammunition completely, unless the shooter is using special bullets.





Again, you decide when to use Clip Values or whether to use them at all. The basic question is whether there's a plotline reason to make players keep track of ammunition. If the need to conserve ammo is an important part of the story, make 'em sweat it out. But for a more cinematic "we've got all the bullets we need" sort of thing, use Clip Value. Feel free to switch halfway through an episode, too "Uh-oh, ammo's running low—you're all down to one clip apiece." It's all about the drama, baby.

Example Time: Graham is running around with his trusty assault rifle. He sees an HST and takes a quick shot at it. The rifle has a Clip Value 1. Graham rolls a 2—close, but no troubles yet. The next Turn he decides to go for a burst. He rolls a two again, and because burst fire increases the Clip Value by one, this time he's out of luck. You declare that the gun has jammed and Graham needs to spend two Turns clearing it before he can fire again. His shots from this Turn are still good—although with a roll of two, he probably wasn't winning any marksmanship badges.

"But wait!" you say, "What about creatures that just use the Combat Score and never roll? Do they never run out of ammo?" Well, aren't you a pain in the butt. You've got two options for you: either go ahead and roll a die for enemy shooters, purely to see if they have gun problems, or arbitrarily make them run out of ammo when it suits the needs of the story. You're the Director—have some fun with it!

ELECTRIC AVENUE

Walsh: It's a low-level threat. Minimal aggression.

Meager defenses . . . They barely show up on the scanner and occasionally turn out to be raccoons. (Hands Buffy a taser rifle.)

Buffy: 'Wow. You're not crazy about raccoons, huh?'

—4.13 The 'T' in Team

Taser weapons were the primary tool of the Initiative, as the lab coats wanted HSTs to be taken alive for study. USTARU is all about killing beasties, but tasers can be extremely useful for dealing with unknown HSTs—many demons that are resistant to bullets can still be incapacitated by a powerful jolt of electricity.

We're going to cover four different types of taser here. All four use the same basic game mechanic. A target hit by any sort of taser suffers a base five points of Bash



damage. In addition, the victim must make a Constitution (doubled) roll (or use the Muscle Score) at a penalty of five plus the Success Levels of the attack. On a failure, she's knocked out. Even if the target manages to stay conscious, the shock gives her a -2 penalty to all actions (including resisting another shock) for the next four Turns. Multiple shots (or multi-Turn dosings by the taser cannon) have cumulative penalties.

Tasers and robots are usually an interesting mix. With some robots, the massive jolt of electricity causes the robot to short-circuit. In this case, the base penalty on the Constitution roll should be increased by five (to 10 plus the Success Levels of the attack roll). On the other hand, your well-made robot (or cyborg bio-demonoid) simply absorbs the energy, suffering no ill effects whatsoever. As always, you get to decide the effects on a case-by-case basis!

With the exception of the hand taser, all of these electrical weapons use a Dexterity and Gun Fu roll to determine the Success Levels of an attack.

Hand Taser: This is that little thing that looks like an electric razor. You have to press it against the target—use Dexterity and Getting Medieval instead of Gun Fu. A hand taser holds 20 shots (Clip Value 1).

Taser Cannon: Ever seen *Ghostbusters*? The taser cannon is basically a taser rifle attached to a hefty backpack-sized generator. It's got two things going for it. The first is that it never runs out of juice—at least, not unless you decide that it would be dramatically exciting for it to do so. Second, once a shooter has hit a target with a taser cannon, she can maintain the beam. This allows her to keep the same attack roll for subsequent attacks, so she doesn't have to make a new Gun Fu roll (although she can choose to do so if she wants to try for a better result). The shooter can maintain the electrical connection until the target moves far enough so that some other object or obstacle comes between shooter and victim. The taser cannon is an extremely bulky weapon, and about as far from unobtrusive as you can get. Despite its imposing size and appearance, it uses pistol ranges—without a conductor, pure electricity just doesn't go that far.

Taser Pistol: USTARU has continued the development of taser technology since the Initiative first developed the blaster rifle. The taser pistol is a smaller, more concealable weapon. It packs the same punch and has the same range as a taser rifle, but it runs out of juice more quickly—it has five charges (Clip Value 3).

Taser Rifle: This is the standard rifle seen in all those spiffy Initiative episodes. One thing that wasn't mentioned in the *BtVS Corebook* is the fact that a taser rifle uses pistol ranges. Bolts of electricity just

How Electric: Riley is engaged in hand-to-hand combat with a Suvolte demon, because . . . well, it seemed like a good idea at the time. Sam shows up with her trusty taser cannon. She fires at the Suvolte and scores three Success Levels, inflicting eight points of Bash damage and requiring a success check with Muscle Score -8. But the Suvolte is a tough bugger and it's still on its feet. It ignores Sam and continues to fight Riley. Now, Sam can either roll again, hoping to score more than three Success Levels, or she can stick with the ones she already has, automatically inflicting another eight points of damage and requiring the demon to make another roll—this time at a -10 penalty due to the effects of the previous blast. On the third Turn, the Suvolte circles around, placing Riley between itself and Sam. Now, Sam has to cut the beam, although she can always take another shot.

don't go as far as bullets, and you may remember Forrest bragging that he could "tag a hostile at 50 yards"—hardly an impressive feat if the weapon had a range of 300 yards. A taser rifle holds 30 charges (Clip Value 1).

MORE BANG

Cordelia: So, does looking at guns really make girls wanna have sex? That's scary.

Xander: Yeah, I guess.

Cordelia: Well, does looking at guns make you wanna have sex?

Xander: I'm seventeen. Looking at linoleum makes me wanna have sex.

—2.14 Innocence

Guns may be next to useless against vampires, but they work just fine against many breeds of demon, and they also give Cast Members a chance to get all Dirty Harry. Most of your varmint huntin' needs are covered by the Corebook; commandos are generally fine with big pistols and assault rifles. But according to the NRA you can never have too many guns, so here's a few more for your arsenal.

Big Assault Rifle: If command is handing out these babies, it's going to be an ugly mission. This supersized assault rifle includes an over-the-barrel grenade launcher with a six-grenade clip (Clip Value 2); see p. [?] for details on grenade launchers. The rifle has a 30-shot clip and can fire bursts; if you're using the optional reloading rules, it has a Clip Value 1 for single shots (2 for automatic fire). Base damage is 20 points (Bullet type).





Big Ass Sniper Rifle: Really a light anti-tank weapon, this miniature cannon fires 20mm shells, is approximately six feet in length, and weighs 58 pounds. Between recoil and size, it's impossible to use one of these from a standing position—the character must be braced and using a bipod. The weapon holds three shots at a time (Clip Value 4). Normal rounds inflict 45 points of Bullet damage, and it can be loaded with explosive shells that should be treated as grenades (see p. [?]). The fancy sights provide a +3 to Gun Fu rolls in addition to any bonuses for aiming or sniping. The range of the weapon is truly ridiculous—short range is up to 70 yards, medium range up to 400 yards, and long range is an insane 1,800 yards—assuming a clear line of sight to the target. It can be broken down for concealment, but between the gun and accessories, it fills two backpacks. These are rare weapons that are overkill for most assignments; if you hand one to the squad, they should be big time worried about what going up against.

Big Sniper Rifle: This .50 caliber rifle comes standard with a fancy electronic nightvision sight and has a huge barrel that may make you feel better if you've got something to compensate for. The sight adds a +3 to Gun Fu rolls, in addition to any bonus from aiming or sniping. Unfortunately, it's too big and awkward to use while in motion; it must be braced to be effective. On the plus side, it has a tremendous range—short range is under 50 yards, medium range up to 300 yards, and long range is a whopping 1200 yards. Many big sniper rifles are single shot weapons, but the higher end military weapons

have a clip of five bullets (Clip Value 3). It takes 10 Turns to assemble or break down a big sniper rifle. It can be carried around assembled, but given the set up and bracing time needed to use it, mostly that just shouts "Look at me! I've got a really big gun!"

Dart Pistol: This handgun uses compressed air to fire poisoned darts. In principle, it is similar to a tranquilizer rifle, but it's smaller and more concealable. The downside is reduced range. The damage is based on the type of dart that is used (see p. [?]). Because it uses compressed air instead of gunpowder, the dart pistol is virtually silent—this can be quite useful on a covert operation. On the other hand, it is a single-shot weapon that must be reloaded after each use.

Laser Sights: A laser sight goes under the barrel of the gun and sticks a red dot on the target. A laser sight provides a +1 bonus to any Gun Fu roll with the associated weapon. In smoke or fog, the beam is visible. This creates an extremely cool visual effect, but it's also a great way to reveal the shooter's position to the enemy.

Needler: A needler is a tranquilizer rifle designed for military use. The primary difference is that the needler has a clip that can hold six darts (Clip Value 2). The damage inflicted by a needler varies based on the type of dart used (see p. [?]). Like the dart pistol, it uses compressed air to fire its darts and is a very quiet weapon. On the minus side, its maximum range is only 100 yards.



Silencers: One of the problems with guns is that they are noisy. Still, as we've all seen in spy movies, that's why they invented silencers. Problem: each firearm requires a specially tailored silencer. Solution: with an entire military-industrial complex to call on, a commando can get such tailoring done. Using a silencer imposes a -1 penalty on the Gun Fu roll, but anyone around needs to make a Perception and Notice roll to hear the sound of the shot. This should be modified for distance (anyone standing right next to a shooter with a silencer is going to have be deaf not to notice) and circumstances (those engaged in other activities are more likely to miss the telltale "sspfffft").

Sniper Rifle: A compromise between big sniper rifle and the hunting rifle, the sniper rifle provides impressive range and solid firepower, without being quite as bulky as its bigger cousins. If set up and properly braced, a shooter using the sight gains a +3 bonus to her Gun Fu roll (in addition to any other bonuses). Unlike its larger cousins, the sniper rifle can be used without being braced, but all benefits are lost. Without bracing and sights, a -3 penalty is applied to all Gun Fu rolls due to the awkward size of the weapon. Base damage is 20 points (Bullet type). A sniper rifle has a short range of up to 30 yards, a medium range up to 120 yards, and a long range of 500 yards. Most military sniper rifles hold 10 shots (Clip Value 1) but single-shot models exist as well.

Stakethrower: Developed by the Thrones (see p. [?]), this garish weapon is an effective vampire-stopper, although it is considerably more obvious than a pistol loaded with wooden bullets. A stakethrower is approximately the size of a shotgun. It has a rotating barrel assembly that holds six big stakes (see p. [?]; Clip Value 2). Effectively, it's a high-tech crossbow that shoots small spears. A stakethrower inflicts 24 points of Slash/stab damage. Due to the size of the projectile it inflicts full damage to vampires (no Bullet damage here). When shot through the heart, it dusts beautifully.



LOADS TO LOCK

Buffy: Riley, I . . .

Riley: Aim high, plenty of lead.

Buffy: I'm not exactly gun girl.

Riley: You wanna live, learn fast.

—6.15 *As You Were*

Having the right firearm for a mission is good. Having the right ammo for the right firearm is even better. Here's how.

Darts: Dart pistols, injectors, micro-injectors, needlers, and tranquilizer rifles all use the same type of ammunition—darts that inject a chemical into the target's bloodstream. The nice thing about such weapons is that the ammo can be adjusted to fit the needs of the current battle. Common payloads include:

Tranquilizer: This powerful sedative has a poison Strength 6 and takes effect every three Turns. Every Success Level reduces the target's Strength by one. If Strength reaches zero, the victim falls unconscious for one hour.

Toxic Venom: A poison with Strength 5, this takes effect every Turn and reduces Constitution. When Constitution reaches zero, the victim dies. This is an extremely deadly toxin; a lesser venom might only take effect once every minute.

Paralysis: This poison has Strength 5 and takes effect every Turn. It reduces Dexterity; if the target's Dexterity falls to zero, she is paralyzed for 10 minutes, although she remains aware of her surroundings. While weaker than the tranquilizer, it is considerably faster.

Hallucinogen: This Strength 5 poison affects Perception. If Perception drops to zero, the victim begins to hallucinate; the exact nature of her visions is left to your tender mercies. A typical hallucinogen takes effect once every three Turns, but stronger and weaker doses are available.

Homing: Sometimes it's more important to track an HST than to poison it. This nasty little barbed dart is designed to embed itself within a target's flesh. It only inflicts a base two points of Slash/stab damage, but it is a bear to remove. Getting it out requires a Dexterity and Doctor roll with two or more Success Levels, and the victim takes four points of Slash/stab damage per attempt. The approximate location of the dart can be tracked with a bioscanner (see p. [?]), to a maximum range of two miles.

Sanctifier: Holy water has a devastating effect on vampires, especially if it is applied internally. This thinking led to the development of the sanctifier dart, which injects its victim with a dose of holy water. While



this has little effect on most creatures, it burns through the body of a vampire, inflicting 40 points of damage. Some demon species are also vulnerable to holy water, and suffer the same effect. USTARU has recently begun using sanctifier darts, but the weapon was originally developed by the European organization known as the Thrones (see p. [?]).

Willbreaker: This drug is often used by Sanguine agents (see p. [?]) who possess hypnotic powers and wish to soften the minds of intended prey. It is a Strength 4 poison that acts every five Turns. Each Success Level reduces the target's Willpower by one. Willpower cannot be reduced below one by this drug, and any effects wear off after an hour has passed.

The problem with drugs is that their effects are unpredictable across species. A chemical that works fine on humans may have no effect on a demon, or vice versa. If a squad is being sent to deal with a known species of HST, the brass tries to outfit the team with effective weapons; but if an unexpected enemy makes an appearance, the drugs may be useless against them. Also, certain creatures—notably vampires—recover from being drugged far more quickly than humans do. Ultimately, it's up to you to decide how effective certain drugs are against the forces of evil.

demons and holy water

Okay, we've never actually seen any other demons that are affected by holy water, but they use it all the time in those exorcist movies, so we're assuming that some other demons out there have trouble with the holy. We've added a few in **Chapter Five: Hell on Earth** just to make water fights more fun.

Holy Bullets: The Thrones are constantly developing new weapons for use against the forces of darkness. Holy bullets are forged from a mixture of lead and consecrated silver, and each bullet contains a tiny reservoir of holy water. Any vampire struck by a holy bullet takes an additional six points of damage. This damage comes from the holy water and what amounts to blessed shrapnel; it is not Bullet damage and is only added if the bullet penetrates any armor the target is wearing. Holy bullets are considered to be silver for purposes of damaging werewolves or affecting creatures only injured by silver weapons. If you decide that other demon species are harmed by holy water or silver, holy bullets would affect them as well. USTARU does not produce or use holy bullets, but a squad might be able to acquire some of this unusual ammunition during an encounter with the Thrones.

Wooden Bullets: During World War II, a number of countries used wooden bullets for training purposes. In the modern age, these bullets have a new use. In combination with the Through the Heart maneuver, wooden bullets allow a shooter to dust a vamp. Of course, wooden bullets have a number of drawbacks, which is why they aren't used all the time. A wooden bullet may splinter and shatter in the barrel of a gun. To represent this increased chance of jamming, add one to the Clip Value of a weapon loaded with wooden bullets (a burst from an assault rifle with wooden bullets would have a Clip Value 3). In addition, wooden bullets don't have the stopping power of lead. Damage from a wooden bullet is decreased by four points before armor is applied. A vamp hit by a wooden bullet still gets to reduce the damage by a factor of five, unless a heart shot dusts him.

PINJAWEAR

Riley: Here. No offense, but this is black ops, and you look like a pylon.

Buffy: Ninja wear?

Riley: Battle gear. Lightweight Kevlar. State of the art.
—6.15 As You Were

The first rule of combat is "it sucks to be dead." The best way to handle this is to avoid combat altogether, but when that's just not an option wearing armor is a good alternative. Armored commandos may look like weenies, but as an ancient Chinese proverb says, "Better to be armored weenie than bloody corpse."

Initiative Flak Jacket: This bulletproof vest is standard issue commando gear for Walsh's Boys. It comes in a wide variety of attractive designer colors, all of which are olive green. When combined with camouflage-y clothing and worn in an appropriately green outdoor environment, it provides the wearer with a +1 to all stealth-related Acrobatics or Crime rolls. Slightly lighter than full SWAT gear, it has Armor Value 10.

USTARU Covert Armor: When on a Black mission, the stylish warrior can't always wear a bulletproof vest. USTARU covert armor is the cutting edge of undercover protection; while incredibly resistant to any sort of penetration, covert armor appears just like normal cloth. That wool sweater could save your life! Covert armor only has Armor Value 3 against Bash damage, but that increases by three against all other damage types.

USTARU Battle Gear: Cool, black, and the latest in commando protection, this is the stuff Riley and Sam were sporting in 6.15 As You Were. It has Armor Value 14, and when worn in combination with dark clothing, provides a +1 to stealth related Acrobatics or Crime rolls—unless the operative happens to be sneaking around a brightly lit white room.



USTARU Apocalypse Armor: When the brass outfits the team with apocalypse armor, there's real cause to worry. This is all-out science-fiction style battle armor—armored plates, helmets with shaded lenses and built-in air supply—the whole nine yards. With Armor Value 18, it is extremely conspicuous (hint—just say you're an extra in the next *Star Wars* trilogy) and it's very bulky, reducing the wearer's Dexterity by one.

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Kendra: In case de curse does not succeed, dis is my lucky stake. I have killed many vampires wit it. I call it Mr. Pointy.

Buffy: You named your stake?

Kendra (embarrassed): Yes.

Buffy: Remind me to get you a stuffed animal.

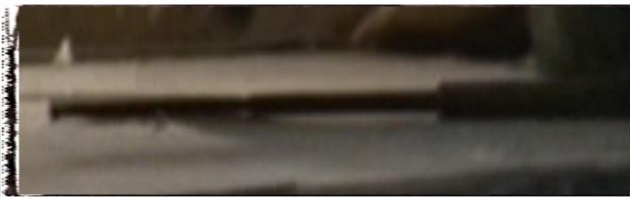
—2.21 *Becoming - Part One*

Face it, oftimes guns just don't cut it. USTARU and the Initiative aren't big on the old-fashioned medieval stuff—a commando with a battle-axe just doesn't fit the image the government tries to project. Still, times they are a'changin' so an assortment of hard-charging goodies, from wacky spy gear to plain old metal sticks, is handy to have around.

Big Stake: Sponsored by the same people that designed the stakethrower (see p. [?]), the big stake is to Mr. Pointy as a Ginsu knife is to a desert fork. This 18-inch stake is carved from the hardest woods and reinforced with a lead core. The tip is sheathed in Teflon. The big stake inflicts a base 3 x Strength points of Slash/stab damage. It can also be used two-handed, which increases the damage to 3 x (Strength + 1) points of damage; such use is awkward though, a -2 penalty to Getting Medieval rolls is imposed.

Blessed Weapon: What's better than a cross or a jar of holy water? A big sword that happens to be holy in its own right. Items possessing this quality are extremely rare—the weapons of saints, or blades that have been fused with the remains of a saint (as Buffy herself said, "Religion: freaky"). Some of these objects would be the greatest treasures of a religious order; others might have been buried or hidden by demons who sought to keep them out of mortal hands. A blessed weapon increases the wielder's Strength by two for purposes of determining damage against vampires. This bonus may be applied against other types of demons at your discretion, and it might also allow the wielder to ignore demonic invulnerability (you may recall that the demon Acatlha could only be slain by a blessed blade). Even if a squad came by a holy relic of a weapon, there is an excellent chance that the Thrones would eventually show up and demand that the weapon be turned over to them.





Cobra: This extendable metal baton telescopes out from about nine inches to approximately 26 inches with the flick of the wrist. Riley used one to fight Angel in 4.20 The Yoko Factor—those who remember how that went can decide on their own whether tackling vampires with a club is really a good idea. Still, it looks cool, and makes a neat “shkk” sound when wrist-flicked. Bash damage for a cobra is 3 x Strength points.

Holy Oil: The Thrones are the experts in holy R&D, and they have incorporated holy water into a fine oil that can be spread over a weapon. When applied to a hand weapon that inflicts Slash/stab damage, holy oil adds two to the user’s effective Strength for purposes of determining damage against vampires (or other demons harmed by holy water). This extra damage is only added in after the weapon penetrates any armor. In addition, a vampire can be dusted by a weapon coated with holy oil. The oil eventually rubs off of the weapon—on an attack die roll of one or two, the holy oil ceases to be effective. USTARU and the Initiative do not produce holy oil, but a squad may acquire some through dealings with the Thrones.

Holy Example, Batman: Father Bob is using a sword coated with holy oil. With a Strength 4, the sword normally inflicts 4 x Strength or 16 points of damage. If he strikes a non-armored vampire, the base damage increases to 4 x (Strength + 2) or 24 points. Then the doubling is applied for the Slash/stab weapon. On the other hand, if the vamp has at least 16 points of armor (that’s one tough vamp), the oil does not come into contact with the vampire and the extra holy damage does not come into play.

Injector: This fancy syringe is usually disguised as a pen or similar object. With a successful Dexterity and Getting Medieval roll (or Combat Score) against a target, a wielder can inject her with a chemical or other payload. Basically, it holds a single charge of dart ammunition (see p. [?]). It takes one Turn to reload an injector.

Micro-Injector: For those getting serious about the spy girl stuff, these puppies are a must. This tiny injector is disguised as a small object, like a ring or a bracelet. When used in combat it works just like an injector. If the target does not realize the threat, a Dexterity and Crime roll (or Combat Score) is opposed by the victim’s Perception and Notice roll (or Brains Score). Success for

the attacker pricks the opponent without her even noticing what happened—although the poker may have to come up with an excuse for touching the victim in the first place. The micro-injector has two drawbacks: the smaller dosage reduces the Strength of any loaded poison by one, and it takes one minute to fit a new venom cartridge into the device because of all the little fiddly bits. The tiny size of the weapon prevents any sanctifier or homing payload (see p. [?]).

Silver Garrote: Functional and decorative, this length of silver-alloy wire is coiled up into a small object—typically a wristwatch. A garrote is used with the Choke maneuver, but on a successful Choke, (Strength + 1) points of Slash/stab damage is inflicted, in addition to the usual problems related to suffocation. The silver content of the wire makes it especially effective against werewolves or Fyarl demon (assuming somebody is stupid enough to try to choke a Fyarl demon . . .).

TABI: Sometimes the old ways are the best ways. But it’s just darn hard for the US military to wrap its brain trust around outfitting soldiers with swords. Millions of tax dollars were spent to develop the ultimate weapon for engaging HSTs in hand-to-hand combat. This led to the development of the TABI—the Tactical Assault Bladed Implement, or to quote the first commando issued a TABI, “a sword.” The TABI has a 26-inch blade, sharpened on one edge. It is formed of an experimental silver-steel alloy, blacked out to facilitate covert operations. It is astonishingly strong and sharp, and available at the special military discount of \$198,000. Looking beyond the mockery, the TABI is a highly effective weapon. It inflicts a base 5 x Strength points of Slash/stab damage, and the blade has enough precious metal in it to be effective against creatures that are vulnerable to silver. The long handle is designed to facilitate a two-handed grip; this increases the wielder’s Strength by one for purposes of determining damage. Due to the expense and lingering concerns about appearances, the TABI is not yet standard issue, but may be assigned to commandos that specialize in melee combat.

THINGS THAT GO BOOM IN THE NIGHT

Buffy: I haven’t processed everything yet. My brain isn’t really functioning on the higher levels. It’s pretty much: fire bad, tree pretty.

—3.22 Graduation Day - Part Two

Sometimes all the guns and pointy things in the world won’t do the trick. Perhaps there’s only seconds to destroy a Suvolte nest before the eggs hatch. Or perhaps a commanding officer thought that ascension thing sound



like a good idea and she just turned into a giant demon snake. When things are as bad as they can possibly get, it's time to pull out the explosives.

Grenades, bombs, and rockets are big on the bang. But remember, there's no such thing as a silencer for a grenade; start chucking the explosives around and any attempt at stealth goes right out the window. Also, in urban operations USTARU is committed to a policy of minimal property damage. If the only way to save a village is to destroy it, the character better have a good explanation for his CO.

So go on—get down with your bad bomber self!

Air Strikes: An air strike is available only in the most dire circumstances, and anyone who has to call it in has probably failed in his mission—nice going, chump. When we talk air strikes here, we are also including long-range artillery, tank guns, smart bombs, drone armaments, and anything that delivers doom at a distance. Coordinating an air strike requires an Intelligence and Wild Card (Artillery) roll. Three Success Levels gets the strike on target. With only two successes, the boom is roughly 20 yards off. One success brings it in 50 yards off. Failure means the hit isn't even close; the strike could come down on a nearby village or on the spotter's own position. An air strike inflicts 300 points of Fire damage within a 20-yard radius of ground zero, 75 points of fire damage out to 50 yards, and 25 points of Fire damage to everything within 100 yards of the blast point. Again, under most circumstances an air strike is simply not be an option—USTARU just doesn't have a lot of ground support aircraft and major artillery pieces waiting around for a call, and any sort of air strike drops a massive amount of unwanted attention on the organization.

Bomb: There are two main uses for explosives—hurting folks and blowing up structures. Either way, the Wild Card (Demolitions) skill is needed to set the bomb up properly (see p. [?]). The radius of a bomb depends on the amount of explosives on hand. A decent-sized bomb inflicts 80 points of Fire damage within a two-yard radius of the bomb, 40 points of Fire damage to everyone within four yards, and 20 points out to a range of 10 yards. The more explosives packed in, the wider the radius.

Grenade: All grenades share a few common characteristics. The big trick is hitting the right spot, which is not as easy as it sounds. Grenades use the Throw Weapon maneuver (or the Combat Score). With three or more Success Levels, the grenade goes exactly where thrown. With one or two Successes, the throw is off-line (apply minimum damage). On a failed roll, the grenade doesn't end up anywhere close to where it was aimed—that could be very bad for innocent bystanders in

the area. The range of a grenade is two yards plus two yards for each Strength level of the tosser. For those who throw like a girl—a non-Slayer girl . . . well, Xander—and don't like having things blow up in their face, a grenade launcher is a good investment. Now, on with the pretty explosives:

Basic: This is the boring old grenade you've seen in every army movie since the beginning of time. Pull the pin, boom—tres *Saving Private Ryan*. The grenade inflicts a base 30 points of damage to everything within a yard of ground zero, 20 points with three yards and eight points within five yards. All damage is Fire type.

Daylight: A daylight grenade, also known as a "sun bomb," is a sphere of hard translucent plastic developed by the same folks who brought us the sun gun (see p. [?]). When activated, a sun bomb illuminates a 15-yard area with the equivalent of full daylight. The light lasts for two Turns. Any vampires caught in the area takes 20 points per Turn if they cannot shield themselves from the light; otherwise damage is reduced to only two points. Two or more grenades can illuminate a wider area, but there's no "stacking the sun" for additional damage. While these devices rarely kill vampires, they're great for softening up a room.

Flashban: This device produces a brilliant flash of light and a tremendous burst of sound, blinding and stunning anyone caught nearby. Anyone within 10 yards of the point of impact and facing the grenade must make a Dexterity (doubled) roll; Fast Reaction Time and Situational Awareness each add two to the roll. The victim is blinded for five Turns minus the number of Success Levels on the Dexterity roll. In addition, those within five yards of ground zero must make a Constitution (doubled) roll. Acute Hearing subtracts two from this roll, while Impaired Hearing adds two. This victim is stunned and unable to take any action for two Turns minus the number of Success Levels obtained from the Constitution roll. Eye or ear protection may add to the respective rolls or negate the need to roll completely, at your discretion.





Holy Vapor: The “holy hand grenade” is another tool commonly used by the Thrones (see p. [?]). Similar in nature to a smoke grenade, it emits a cloud of mist impregnated with holy water. The cloud spreads out to fill an area 10 yards in diameter. Vampires caught in the cloud suffer two points of damage each Turn, and suffer a –2 penalty on all rolls or Scores due to the intense pain. The mist has little effect on vision. Under normal conditions it disperses within a minute—a strong wind may blow it away more quickly.

Phosphorous: This unpleasant bugger does the same damage as a basic grenade, but also scatters fragments of white phosphorous. Anyone caught within a yard of ground zero gets hit with fragments; these continue to burn for 30 rounds, inflicting three points of Fire damage each Turn. In addition, the grenade creates a cloud of thick smoke that fills a 10-yard area. Phosphorous fragments burn through armor. Consider the AV to be additional Life Points—damage only reaches the character once the “life points” of the armor have been exhausted. If the character can completely remove the armor before the phosphorous burns through, she is safe. Water does not put out phosphorous fragments. An Intelligence and Doctor roll with at least two Success Levels can remove a fragment, provided the doctor has a sharp implement to work with. Each roll inflicts three points of Slash/stab damage on the victim—it’s hard to be delicate when you’re dealing with white-hot metal shards.

Smoke: It’s a smoke grenade—what do you think it does? Once tossed, dark smoke spills out, filling an area 10 yards in diameter. The cloud lasts for approximately two minutes, although wind disperses it much more quickly. The cloud lasts much longer in an enclosed space.

Grenade Launcher: A grenade launcher is a small rifle that shoots self-propelled grenades instead of bullets. Grenade launchers use an entirely different style of grenade from the thrown kind—don’t try pulling the pin and dropping it in the launcher. Purely for the sake of simplicity, we’re going to use the same stats for rifle grenades as for hand grenades, so any of the previously described grenades can be used in a launcher. Firing a grenade launcher requires a Dexterity and Gun Fu roll; hitting the target dead on requires three Success Levels, just like throwing a grenade. The grenade itself strikes with considerable force, inflicting 20 points of Bash damage before it explodes. A grenade launcher uses pistol ranges, with one catch: the grenade has to travel at least five yards before it arms, otherwise it won’t explode. Most grenade launchers can hold six shots (Clip Value 2), but those on a budget may get stuck with a one-shot model.

Rocket Launcher: This is a light rocket launcher—intended for taking out armored vehicles or, well, armored HSTs. It’s rare for a rocket launcher to be assigned to a squad, but hey, sometimes it’s the only way

to get the job done. Anyone with Gun Fu 3 or greater and either the Initiative Commando or the Wild Card (Artillery) skill can use a rocket launcher (or, if the storyline demands it, a quick explanation by her “military guy” friend). Those without the Wild Card (Artillery) skill suffer a –2 penalty on rolls to hit the target (it’s a bit easier so the normal –4 heavy weaponry penalty is halved). A rocket launcher of this size has a maximum range of approximately 150 yards. A standard shell inflicts 100 points of Fire damage at the point of impact, 35 points within a two-yard radius, and 10 points within five yards. It takes five Turns to reload a rocket launcher; this drops to four for those with the Wild Card (Artillery) skill.

UNUSUAL WEAPONS

Jonathan: Kind of clunky-looking.

Warren: What?!

Andrew: I pictured something cooler. More ILM, less Ed Wood.

Warren: You wanna see cool? I’ll show you cool.

—6.11 Gone

Guns, bombs, and pointy things are all covered in basic commando training. But every now and then a squad may end up with less traditional weapons—objects which are only “weapons” in the vaguest sense of the word.

Garlic Sprayer: Pepper spray for the undead, this small can delivers a concentrated dose of aerosol mist laced with holy water and essence of garlic. It has a range of one yard, and requires a successful Dexterity and Getting

Medieval roll; because of the wide path of the spray, a +2 bonus is applied to the roll. A vampire hit by the spray takes two points of damage from the holy water and suffers –2 to all actions for the following five Turns due to pain and irritation. Additional shots inflict damage and increase the duration of the pain, but the negative effect of the spray is not cumulative. If the sprayer can somehow squirt directly into a vampire’s open mouth, the damage is increased to 20 points, plus it gives her *really* bad garlic breath. A garlic sprayer holds four doses (Clip Value 3).

Holy Water Cannon: This is the ultimate super soaker—a high-pressure water gun attached to a backpack storage unit. When filled, it is extremely bulky and reduces the wearer’s Dexterity by one. It’s great fun at parties, but it is usually filled with holy water and used as an anti-vampire weapon. The cannon has a short range of up to two yards, medium range up to six yards, and long range of 12 yards. It uses a Dexterity and Gun Fu roll; if successful, the target is drenched with holy water. A vampire suffers 10 points of damage immediately, and takes an additional three points of damage each Turn until she can dry herself off or remove wet clothing. Additional blasts inflict the base 10 points of damage, but do not increase the per-Turn damage. The beauty of the holy water cannon is that—unlike a flamethrower—there’s no worries about accidentally frying civilians. A holy water cannon holds enough water for 25 shots (Clip Value 1). If using the cannon in the field, there’s little chance of reloading. As a result, you should cut the shooter a break on the Clip Value—if she runs into trouble after one or two shots, it’s probably just a jammed mechanism.



Sun Cannon: During the initial phase of the Initiative, the lab coats spent a great deal of time studying the vampiric vulnerability to sunlight. Despite initial hopes, it turned out not be as simply as rigging up some ultraviolet lights. The vulnerability is a mystical reaction to the pure light of the sun. Still, after two years of research, the superscientists at the USTARU think tank were able to produce a synthetic source of sunlight. The sun cannon is a floodlight that produces the equivalent of natural sunlight. It is not man-portable; a sun cannon could be mounted on a vehicle, but that's about it. A sun cannon can illuminate a 10-yard radius at a distance of 100 yards, and any vampire trapped within the circle of light suffers as if trapped in the sun. Tracking a moving target requires a Dexterity and Gun Fu roll (opposed by a defense action). A sun cannon has an attached generator to provide power, but it is an extremely unstable device and typically burns out after an hour of use. Sun cannon technology is still highly experimental, and these weapons (along with daylight grenades and sun guns) should be seen rarely, if at all.

Sun Gun: A portable sun cannon, this is basically an oversized flashlight connected to a backpack-sized power source. It can illuminate a five-yard radius at a range of 20 yards, providing the equivalent of full sunlight, but the charge only lasts for five minutes. Keeping the gun trained on a moving target requires a Dexterity and Gun Fu roll (opposed by a defense action).

GADGETS

Buffy: Is this really the time for Donkey Kong?

Riley (using strange device): What? Oh. It, ah, takes trace readings of the creature's pheromones.

Buffy: And?

Riley: And it's either mating season for this thing or it's moving all over town.

—4.11 *Doomed*

Both the Initiative and USTARU are weighted more towards the zapping than the spy stuff, but cool gadgets are still . . . cool. From bioscanners to nightvision goggles, here's a passel of gizmos for the next Black mission.

Bioscanner: This handy device was developed for the Initiative and is still used by USTARU. It can be seen in almost any Episode where commandos go monster hunting. As Buffy pointed out, a bioscanner looks something like a Gameboy—all the Trek geeks out there can finally live out their tricorder fantasies.

Any type of roll with a bioscanner requires at least minimal training (included with the Initiative Commando and Orphan Qualities). Given time, a technically oriented character can figure the scanner out by making an Intelligence and Mr. Fix-It or Computers roll, but she suffers a -4 to all rolls until she gets some Wild Card (Electronic Surveillance) skill training. In addition, the HST database and personal files are password protected.





A bioscanner has a number of functions:

Chemicals: Many subterrestrials have unique pheromones or other protein signatures. A bioscanner can identify and track this residue. This requires a Perception and Wild Card (Electronic Surveillance) roll on the part of the user. The number of successes determines how easy the trail is to follow; failure means that the trail is too weak to be tracked. If the target creature has been extremely active or if there are many creatures in the area, the proteins may be too prevalent to be tracked effectively. Vampires do not have distinctive protein signatures.

Data: A bioscanner contains the latest version of the USTARU HST Database. Anyone can look up common HSTs. A character with the Cross-Discipline (HST Research) Quality can use the database to try to identify less common subterrestrials. The user must make a successful Intelligence and Computer roll to access the proper area of the database, after which she can make an Intelligence and Science roll to acquire information on the HST.

Tracking: It can track the location of any homing dart (see p. [?]) within two miles, providing direction and distance to the target.

Thermal: It can perform a thermal scan within a thirty by ninety foot cone, collating the data and providing information on the body temperature and basic nature of all living creatures in this area. If a creature is not in the database, information on its mass, basic shape,

and body temperature are provided. This scan can penetrate most materials, although at your discretion it could be blocked by lead shielding or mystical barriers. Thermal scans are an easy way to spot a vampire in a crowd of people. If you want to make things a little more challenging—especially if a character is scanning a crowded area—require a Perception and Wild Card (Electronic Surveillance) roll to pick up the important details (i.e., vampire) in a timely manner.

Zelda: Finally, the bioscanner can perform any sort of common PDA function—on the latest models, you actually can play *Donkey Kong*.

You might want to ask for an Intelligence and Science roll to analyze any data recorded by the bioscanner. Success could provide additional clues relevant to the mission. Failure could leave the team unable to make head or tail out of the readings (and thus be unable to gain otherwise available information, such as the body temperature of nearby creatures).

Bugs and SIGINT Devices: We could write a whole section of different kinds of bugs, but you know what? We're not going to. This is another one of those things that should be wholly dependant on your storyline. Bugs are easily concealable cameras or microphones that can be stuck to things. Depending on the mission requirements and what's available at the local equipment depot, bugs could be designed to read heat signatures, trigger alarms or explosives, or other nifty tricks. While we're on the subject of bugs, we'll also throw in the idea





of SIGINT (a fancy way of saying “Signals Intelligence”) equipment. These are devices designed to intercept signals from any sort of emitter—bugs, radios, telephones, surveillance cameras, and so on. Basically, bugs that can bug someone else’s bugs, in addition to doing things like tapping into phone lines or intercepting radio signals. Another nifty gadget is TEMPEST technology, which allows an operator to pick up signals from a nearby computer and see what’s on the monitor. In other words, an agent can be sitting in the cafeteria and spying on Willow as she hacks into a federal database in the library. Handy, huh? So if an Episode involves bugging, you can pretty much make up whatever type of bug catches your imagination. The real challenge is usually going to be getting in to place the bug (see p. [?]).

Bug Busters: Spy movies are full of gear for spotting bugs and blocking transmissions. Again, we’re not going to get into technical details here, but sure, there’s lots of ways to do this. Basically, it’s up to you to decide whether the squad has the proper equipment for the job. Locating a bug is a tricky task that may require specialized skills (see p. [?]). Using a device to block transmissions doesn’t require any sort of training—but it’s the kind of thing that attracts attention. The trained bug boy knows just how long to block a signal before it will be noticed; the amateur certainly set off alarms.

Again, pretty straightforward stuff here—a superstrong grappling line attached to a harness, allowing an operative to quickly rappel down the side of a dam to leap into a demon’s lair. What’s not to like? A climbing line grants a +4 bonus to any roll associated with climbing, assuming there’s time to secure the line. And if the character screws up, she is still attached to the line, which hopefully prevents a messy death. Still, she probably loses a Turn or two as she plays the role of the Amazing Human Pinata.

Comcam: As seen in 4.13 The “I” in Team, this spiffy headset unit handles all communications needs. In addition to providing an audio link to the command center, it has a small camera that can relay video images and a biomonitor, allowing the communications officer to keep an eye on the wearer’s heart rate and other vital signs.

Comlink Components: The comcam is extremely obvious to observers. On an assault mission, this is just fine. For the sneaky or *saue* gal-about-town stuff, the little headset with the camera raises suspicions. Each function of a comcam can be performed by a concealable component. Audio communications are handled by a flesh-colored earpiece; if this is spotted, it may be mistaken for a hearing aid. A video feed can be hidden in a pair of glasses, a watch, or similar item. Wristwatches also make excellent biomonitors; alternately, a biomonitor patch can be taped over the heart. All of these components require the use of an





auxiliary transmitter, which is about the size of a cigarette lighter. Spotting a comlink earpiece requires three Success Levels on a Perception and Notice roll; spotting a camera requires four successes.

Electronic Lockpick: About the size of a PDA, this little device allows a character to manipulate electronic or magnetic locks, ATMs, and the like. This grants a +2 bonus to any roll dealing with electronic systems.

Laser Mike: This handy device picks up a conversation in a room by bouncing a laser off of one of the windows. Setting up a laser mike requires an Intelligence and Wild Card (Electronic Surveillance) roll; if the bugger gets fewer than three Success Levels, she suffers the same penalties as if she were setting up a bug (see p. [?]). A laser mike lets a character listen in on a conversation from far away, and she doesn't have to actually sneak in and place the bug. But the mike does have one limitation. You know how vampires don't have reflections? As it turns out, their voices don't create vibrations in glass either. Those wacky supernatural creatures. So listening into a room and hearing a one-sided conversation could mean a vamp-human discussion . . . or the gent could just be talking on the phone.

canon alert

That thing about vampires' voices not creating vibrations on glass? We're totally making it up. So ignore it if you want. But it would be kinda creepy, wouldn't it?

Riley: You shouldn't have done that to the door.

Buffy: I do not have time to play by the rules tonight.

Riley: I have a master key. It opens every shop on Main Street.

Buffy: Oh. Well . . . next time, absolutely.

—4.12 *A New Man*

Master Keys: The thing about government conspiracies is that they often have mundane but extremely useful stuff they just shouldn't have. Given a little lead time, the Initiative, USTARU, and groups like Monarch can generally acquire master keys to buildings in any American city. Not so useful when the crew is in a hurry or fighting in the jungles of Peru, but when Ace is the place and Crime skills are lacking, it helps to have a key.

Mirror: That's right—a plain old mirror. Nothing exciting here. Still, a small mirror is a nice, low-tech way to quickly scope a scene for vampires. A pocket-watch with a mirrored lid or a makeup kit can be used with a Perception and Crime roll to surreptitiously check the people around for reflections (Perception and Notice is

used if the viewer isn't trying to hide her actions). While you're at it, rig a bug buster or a silver garrote in the body of the watch—never waste an opportunity for a good gadget!

Mirror Monocular: This palm-sized scope has a magnification factor of five. Due to a pair of mirrors in the housing, the user is actually seeing a reflected image—look for the people who disappear and there's the vamps. The monocular can also be mounted on a rifle or pistol and used as a scope.

Mobile Communications Center: When out in the middle of nowhere, keeping track of the information picked up by comcams, bugs, or SIGINT gear is a bear. The MCC is an extremely fancy laptop computer with a backpack full of extra components, including a second monitor to help track multiple video feeds at once. Getting it all set up requires an Intelligence and Wild Card (Electronic Surveillance) roll; using it is an Intelligence and Computers roll. An MCC can also be used to relay a message to USTARU command through a satellite uplink. Once it's set up, the MCC is no longer mobile; assembling or disassembling the MCC takes five minutes.

Nightvision Goggles: You've seen 'em in everything from army ads on TV to *Silence of the Lambs*, 'cause they're just so darn useful. Initiative and USTARU nightvision gear uses image enhancement technology as opposed to thermal imaging, which is important when going up against non-warm things like vampires. Effectively, the goggles see up to 200 yards away in perfect darkness. Still, a -1 penalty is imposed on any Perception rolls due to that funky green image.

Passive Millimeter Wave Imager: The PMWI is the closest you'll get to those X-Ray specs offered in the back of comics in the old days (y'know, pre-1990). The standard PMWI used by USTARU is the size of an electric razor. It picks up EM waves emitted by living creatures and uses resistance to build a picture of the objects carried by the target. This model has a range of 10 yards, and can even be used through walls (although lead or



similar materials block the signal). The PMWI can be set to deliver its data to the user's bioscanner or to a mobile communications center. Interpreting the data correctly requires a Perception and Science or Computers roll. Many agencies are working on developing even smaller PMWI units; a smaller unit would have a correspondingly shorter range. Note that undead creatures do not emit the radiation that the PMWI uses to generate an image—so no peaking through a zombie's pockets!

Probe Ring: When you're on a Black mission, you may not be able to pull out a bioscanner and check out your current pals. The probe ring packs a powerful scanner into a rather large piece of jewelry or item of similar nature (like that mirrored pocket-watch). In conjunction with a mini-transmitter (see p. [?]), it scans a character's immediate surroundings and relays the information to a mobile communications center for analysis. The range is far more limited than the bioscanner—only 10 feet for thermal imaging or protein sampling—but it's a good way to find out whether the guy nearby is actually a robot.

THE MOTOR POOL

Buffy: Nice wheels.

Riley: Came with the car.

—6.15 *As You Were*

Vehicles do not play a major role in the Buffyverse. It's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, not *Knight Rider*. In a commando Series though, the squad could be traveling across the world. Despite what the movies would have you believe, you can't get from New York to Africa by drawing a red line on a map. Here's a small selection of vehicles to play with—if you need more, just make them up. Sure, it LOOKS like an F-22, but it's got the same statistics as a helicopter. Trust us, your players won't know the difference. And if they do, you can always crash the plane.

Black Helicopter: Trademark of the true government conspiracy, the black helicopter is the standard vehicle for airborne insertion into a potentially hostile area. While similar to the Black Hawk helicopter used by the US military, this bird has a few high-tech enhancements. The black helicopter has the latest in stealth technology, which helps it avoid radar and other detection systems. In addition, it has sound dampeners that allow it to fly almost completely silently—which can be useful for those violating restricted airspace or sneaking up on a nest of demons. The helicopter has a crew of two and can carry eleven passengers. It has a maximum speed of 200 MPH, can reach heights of up to 19,000 feet—you'll be surprised how often you'll need to know that—and can travel for about four hours straight, longer if auxiliary fuel tanks are used. A black helicopter has 14 points of

vehicles rules

We're not going to get into terrible complicated rules for vehicles. A full set is provided in the *Angel RPG Corebook*. For the *Angel RPG* challenged, we'll give the down-and-dirty basics.

If you run a car chase, make contested Driving rolls—if one of the vehicles is obviously faster than the other, give the driver a bonus. It's not rocket science . . . unless actual rockets are involved. For the most part, we're just going to tell you how hard it is to damage a vehicle and what kind of weapons it's got—so if the squad brings that helicopter into the fight, you know just how much firepower you need to destroy it and strand the Cast in hostile territory. Ha!

Vehicles do have one special statistic. Damage Capacity is how much damage a vehicle can take before it stops working (stopping dead or exploding in a cool fireball, depending what best suits the scene). It's just like a character's Life Points, but with a few creepy exceptions vehicles aren't alive, so "Life Points" seems like a stupid name. Vehicles take the same amount of damage from all damage types; unlike living creatures, piercing a helicopter isn't much different from whacking it with a crowbar. In combat, vehicles don't get to dodge—any Success causes a hit.

Armor Value and a Damage Capacity of 100. It has two 7.62 mm machine guns—base damage 20 points (Bullet type), capable of burst fire, a range of 50 (short), 240 (medium), and 1200 (long) yards, and virtually limitless ammo—it runs out when you decide you've seen enough shooting out of the Cast. Cast Members can also shoot from the open side of the helicopter, but anyone in a position to fire out of the helicopter (including using the machine guns, which fire out of the sides of the vehicle) can be attacked directly.

HMMWV (Hum-Vee): The "Hummer" has become the default vehicle of the U.S. Army; it is used for reconnaissance, troop transport, and command functions. Riley shows up in a spiffy black Hummer in 6.15 *As You Were*, so it's a good bet that USTARU uses them as well (strange thing: he arrives in a Hummer but leaves in a helicopter. What happened to the Hummer? Can we have it?). A Hummer requires one driver and can hold seven passengers, or six passengers and a gunner if the vehicle is armed. Possible weapons include a machine gun like the one on the black helicopter, a sun cannon, a holy water cannon, or a taser cannon. A Hummer has a Damage Capacity of 110. Military Hummers have Armor Value 20; the civilian model only has an AV 4.



Professional Driver, Closed Course: Riley is driving through Sunnydale in his spiffy black Hummer when he sees a demon henchman in the middle of the road. Thinking fast, he guns the engine and heads for the demon. He makes Dexterity and Driving roll and gets three Successes—you decide that he was going about 40 MPH. The result is seven (40 MPH divided by 10 and three Success Levels) time seven (Hummer Size Value) or 49 points of Bash damage. Splat goes the demon. The Hummer takes half damage, as the demon was a light target: 24 points. Subtract the 20 points of Armor, and only 4 points get through to the Hummer; barely a scratch on the paint. Riley takes off, looking for more demons to squash.

Speedboat: Miami Vice, anyone? For water insertions, USTARU typically uses a blacked-out “Go-Fast” boat capable of reaching speeds of up to 50 knots. The speedboat can carry eight people in addition to the captain, and can mount one weapon—usually a machine gun (use the helicopter gun stats) or sun cannon. A speedboat has an Armor Value 4 and a Damage Capacity 80.

The art of collision

So. You’re in your Hummer, a vampire is standing in front of you, and your basic thought is “Hello, roadkill!” What happens when you hit someone?

To successfully hit a pedestrian with a vehicle, the driver needs to make a Dexterity and Driving roll; the target can dodge as usual. A successfully hit inflicts Bash damage equal to one-tenth of the vehicle’s current speed plus Success Levels, multiplied by the size value of the vehicle (see the following table). The vehicle also takes this damage, but if the target is lighter than the colliding vehicle (as in a truck hitting a compact car or virtually anything hitting a person), the vehicle only takes half damage. If you are using the *Monster Smackdown* rules, vampires only take half damage from large blunt trauma, like collisions.

Type of Vehicle	Size Value
Motorcycle	4
Small Car	5
Car	6
SUV/Hummer	7
Bus, Tractor-Trailer	9





BIZARRO TECH

Walsh: Doctor Angleman! Head of our science team. He's a leader in the field of xenomorphic behavior modification.

Buffy: Behavior modification?

Walsh: We've made significant advances in reconditioning the sub-terrestrials. Bringing them to a point where they no longer pose a threat.

Buffy: So I've seen . . . on the Discovery Channel. With gorillas and sharks. They—they made them all nice. You haven't seen it?

—4.13 The 'I' in Team

Now, let's get down to the good stuff. Behavior modification, cybernetics, strange drugs—all that stuff that USTARU isn't involved with anymore. At least, that's the official story . . .

As with all the other weird stuff in this book, it's entirely up to you whether you use any of this gear. Perhaps only the bad guys use chips and drugs. Perhaps USTARU is still engaging in secret experiments. Or perhaps all of this stuff really has been swept under the rug and forgotten. Needless to say, this weirdness can also be pulled into a regular Sunnydale campaign. Who knows what secrets are hidden in the remains of Initiative Base Three, waiting to be recovered?

NEURAL CHIPS

Anya: Wow. That chip in your head means you can't even point a gun. How humiliating.

Xander: Doesn't work anyway. It's a fake.

Anya: Can't even point a decorative gun?

Xander: Give it up for American chipmanship.

—4.20 The Yoko Factor

Thanks to the trials and tribulations of Spike, *BtVS* viewers are familiar with the behavior modification (BeMo) chips developed by the Initiative. While USTARU claims to have abandoned this field of research, there are a number of ways that surgically implanted chips can show up in a commando series:

* Lots of lab rats are left over from the days of the Initiative, both human and subterranean. Though USTARU does not condone chip research, it has taken custody of the "Neutralized Subterranean Assets" chipped by the Initiative and the Cast may be assigned to work with some of these creatures. In addition, a number of commandos and civilians were unwittingly used in chip experiments, to test both behavior modification and the performance-enhancing boost chips.

* As any true conspiracy freak knows, government experimentation into behavior modification did not

begin—or end—with the Initiative. While Maggie Walsh adapted MKULTRA mind control techniques for use on subterrestrials, the organization known as Monarch (see p. [?]) has continued to experiment on human subjects. Monarch agents may be equipped with TEA chips (see p. [?]), and you never know who might have a Monarch slave chip.

* The Soviet Union was studying mind control techniques long before the United States established MKULTRA. Most of this research was conducted by a top-secret directorate known as Volshebnyaya Fleta (see p. [?]). Who knows how many chipped sleeper agents—both human and otherwise—are scattered around the world, waiting to be activated?

* In all likelihood, scientists who worked for the Initiative (and survived the 314 debacle) would be recruited into Monarch or Vulcan (see p. [?]). Some could end up working as independent mad scientists, or they might be recruited by other agencies. One example is Dr. Katya Terina (p. [?]), who now works for Sanguine.

Most of the time, a neural chip is implanted directly in a subject's brainstem. This chip is designed to cause crippling brain damage if removed. Still, a highly skilled surgeon with expert knowledge about the particular style of chip can remove it without lasting damage. We know that the Initiative can remove its chips; after all, Spike did finally get his chip out. But if a Cast Member has been chipped by Sanguine, Monarch, or Fleta, she needs to find an expert from the organization in question to deal with her problem. Even if someone has an Initiative chip, feel free to claim that it's a nonstandard design if you need the chip to stay in for purposes of the story. That way you don't have to explain why the brass just never bothered to remove the potentially dangerous chip.

With all that said, it should be noted that these limitations only apply to chips embedded in the brainstem itself. If the chip is embedded in another part of the body, it can be removed without permanent harm, as Riley demonstrated at the end of Season Four.

One chip can have multiple functions—a TEA chip can include slave programming—but a normal individual can only have one chip "installed." Multiple TEA chips would cause catastrophic damage to the recipient's nervous system. This section looks at each type of chip in turn.

BeMo Chip: These chips prevent the victim from performing a specific type of action. If the victim attempts the prohibited action, she suffers blinding agony. This is represented by five points of damage (no defense); in addition, the victim is stunned by the pain. She is completely helpless on the Turn following the action. Each Turn thereafter, she may attempt a Willpower (doubled) roll; success allows for the



resumption of normal activities (though a headache still remains to remind her of her no-no). BeMo chips come in a couple varieties.

Peacemaker: The victim is prevented from harming a designated type of creature. She can't even take any sort of threatening actions (like pointing a gun) without triggering the chip.

Spellbuster: A chip of this sort would cover both direct spellcasting and the use of any sort of magical artifact. In an extreme case, the victim might be unable to touch magical books, speak Latin, or perform any other actions that could be associated with magic. A similar chip could be designed to block the use of psychic abilities. You should be careful about slapping a spellbuster on a Cast Member witch, since it basically destroys her character. Still, it is a good temporary measure to increase drama and force a bit more flexibility in the gang's thinking. Otherwise, you could have Ethan Rayne or some other mystical baddie shows up, hoping to trick the Cast into disrupting his chip.

Situational: A situational BeMo chip is triggered by a specific type of stimulus. Typically this is a code phrase, but it could also be some sort of visual stimulus, a piece of music, or even a smell. This allows a commander to keep the victim in line, activating the chip whenever it is necessary. It's sort of like one of those electric dog collars. If the Cast is fighting a demon with a situational chip—the result of Initiative or Fleta experiments—determining the trigger for the chip could be the key to an easy victory.

Neural Shutdown: NS chips are used by groups like Monarch and Fleta to prevent critical information from falling into enemy hands. When a Neural Shutoff chip is activated, it shuts down the victim's higher brain functions, throwing the chipee into a coma. Neural shutdown is an extremely traumatic experience. If the chip is deactivated, the victim can make a Willpower (doubled) roll to return to consciousness; if she fails the roll, she remains in the coma indefinitely. The effects of a neural shutdown chip typically block any attempts at telepathic information retrieval; there is no brain activity to scan. If the Cast has a clever approach or if the plot hinges on acquiring a specific piece of information allow an attempt, but the telepath should take a minimum -5 to any associated rolls.

Slave Chips: Sometimes it's not enough to prevent a specific type of action. Sometimes the chipper wants the victim to *perform* an action. In that case, a slave chip is a must-have item. There are two basic types of slave chips:

Manual Control: This chip places the victim under the direct control of a designated authority figure. Commands are usually given verbally, but the victim can respond to other forms of communication, like telepathy. Some chip slaves have tiny radio receivers surgically implanted nearby or incorporated into the chip itself.

Automatic Action: This chip causes its user to perform preprogrammed activities. A program can be activated by some sort of outside stimulus—hearing a code phrase or a song, for example—or via a built-in radio receiver.



A slave chip can contain multiple automatic programs. Common programs include “Kill (whoever)” and “Kill yourself,” which is used to dispose of the unwitting assassin once she has served her purpose.

Depending on the model and purpose of the chip, the victim may or may not be able to recall any of the actions she performed while under its influence. In particular, automatic action chips usually place the victim in a trancelike state.

It is possible to resist the effects of a slave chip, but it requires tremendous strength of will. A character can make a Willpower (doubled) roll to try to break the chip’s hold. If she scores four Successes, she regains control of her actions for one Turn; each additional Success Level gives her an additional Turn of free will. This attempt can only be made once every minute. In addition, if the victim is not aware of her actions, she can only make this roll if some outside force compels her to do so—like her best friend begging her not to kill herself.

There are many ways to use slave chips in a series. Cast Members with slave chips are walking time bombs. Members of the Supporting Cast may turn from ally to enemy at the touch of a button. And what would a Cast Member do if her best friend turns into a deadly assassin and there’s no way to safely remove the chip? In the case of a chipped Cast Member, it could be that the chip is only activated by a specific stimulus that the character can try to avoid, or perhaps the signal can be magically disrupted. But in the long run, the Cast must track down and defeat the villain who is controlling the chip—and even then, there is always the chance that someone else will find a way to activate it.

If a Cast Member has taken the Chipped (Slave Chip) Drawback, take your time activating the chip. A slave chip is not supposed to be activated as often as a BeMo chip. Its effect are going to be nasty so it should be used sparingly. Also remember that the victim may not be able to remember her actions while under the influence of the chip. Perhaps the gang is investigating a series of murders, and it’s halfway into the Season before the character discovers that she’s the killer!



Adam: Actually, the chip is here. Tied directly into your central nervous system through the thoracic nerve. This is phase one of your preparation. It lay dormant until the time came. I simply activated it, brother.

Riley: Stop calling me that. I’m not your brother. You’re a botched science experiment. And I’m a human being who’s gonna do everything in his power to—

Adam: Sit. (Riley sits without hesitation.)

—4.21 Primeval

TEA Chip: Commonly known as a “boost chip”, a Temporarily Enhanced Activity chip allows a character to perform at superhuman levels for a brief period of time. Developed as an alternative to long-term enhancement programs—which had an unfortunate tendency to kill human subjects—TEA chips are extremely useful for tight situations, but can only be used once per day. Here are three sample TEA chips; feel free to develop others with similar capabilities.

Adrenal Boost: This provides the user with a brief rush of strength and energy. For 10 Turns, the user gains a +2 bonus to Strength and Dexterity (which can exceed normal human limitations). The increase in Strength adds eight Life Points to the character’s total, but these points are lost when the effects of the chip wear off.

Cortical Boost: This chip enhances the efficiency of neural transmitters, allowing the user to process information and sensations more efficiently. It provides a +2 bonus to all mental Attributes (which can exceed normal human limitations). This effect lasts for 10 minutes.

Skill Boost: A skill chip combines the effects of a cortical and adrenal boost, providing a concentrated burst of coordination and focus that enhances the user’s ability to perform a specific type of action. Each chip is tied to a specific skill—Acrobatics, Crime, Getting Medieval, Gun Fu, Kung Fu, or Sports. Once it has been implanted, the focus of a chip cannot be changed. When activated, a skill chip provides the user with four additional levels of the skill in question; this effect lasts for 10 Turns. This bonus is added to any existing levels that the user already possesses.

If you want, you can allow a character to use a TEA chip more than once per day, but this should carry a considerable price; each use beyond the first causes a character to lose one point from all physical Attributes for 24 hours. You can DO it, if you don’t mind risking your health. And if you decide that a Cast Member is getting too much mileage from their chip, you can always have it turn out that the chip has a secret double purpose—throw in a surprise BeMo or slave program!



CYBERNETICS

Buffy: Broke your arm.

Adam: Got another. (A six-barreled minigun springs out of his forearm.) I've been upgrading.

—4.21 Primeval

The government has long been interested in the military potential of cybernetics. The Initiative devoted some of its resources to developing cybernetic and robotic systems, as part of its quest to create human soldiers that could match HSTs on the field of battle. The best-known result of this research was the bio-demonoid Adam, who possessed cybernetic weapons systems and the ability to directly link his brain into computer systems.

Cybernetics are definitely in the realm of superscience. Most cyborgs encountered in the field will be remnants from the Initiative or the creations of Vulcan (see p. [?]). If the government could produce soldiers with built-in miniguns on a regular basis, well, Special Forces would be a lot more interesting.

The Slayer's Handbook includes a variety of cybernetic systems designed for a dark-future Slayer series. Some of these—aural enhancement, memory storage, mindjack, optical replacements and rippers—can be pulled directly from that book and used in a commando Series. New rules are presented for cybernetic prosthetics and implanted armor, reflecting the differences between the modern style and the designs of the future. If you've got *The Slayer's Handbook* (and if you don't, we'd like to know the reason why), you can take your pick.

Most of the cybernetic systems that have been developed by Vulcan are bulky and obvious when in use. This isn't the Six Million Dollar Man, where you might not realize the bad guy is a cyborg. Some of these systems can be retracted or concealed, though. A retracted system provides no benefits, but it allows the cyborg to move about undetected. When a Vulcan cyborg activates her extra systems, they seem to fold out of her body. It's hard to follow how this works and it often seems completely impossible. Where did Adam's minigun come from? Where do the bullets come from? The fact of the matter is that it is impossible—like most Vulcan "technology," these systems are actually a blending of science and magic. Extending or retracting a cybernetic system takes one Turn, but during this time, the character can activate or deactivate as many cybernetic systems as she wishes.

We hate to belabor the point, but it's up to you whether you want to allow Cast Members to obtain any of these enhancements. The primary source for cybernetics is Vulcan and that's not a group most characters should

want to get involved with—who knows what strings will come with the enhancement? On the other hand, if you like the idea of commandos with built in grenade launchers, cyber away!

Armor Plating: In the future, we may be able to weave Kevlar fibers beneath the skin—forming protection people can't even see. These days, the process is a little clunkier; basically, big metal plates are riveted to a torso. That tends to attract attention. Armor plating comes in two models. If it only covers part of the body, the wearer gains Armor Value 6. If it covers the entire body, Armor Value is 12, but Dexterity is reduced by one. This is cumulative with the bonus from any cybernetic limbs (see below), but not with any other form of protection—if you wear additional armor, use the higher value of the two.

Cybernetic Prosthesis: Vulcan prosthetics are designed for strength as opposed to speed. These limbs are bulky metal contraptions—look to Adam for your example. Characters performing an action with a cybernetic limb increase their effective Strength by four. Of course, to use this enhanced Strength for running or jumping, both legs have to be replaced (it's hard to run when one of your legs is faster than the other). No additional Life Points are gained with a cybernetic limb, but each limb increases the character's Armor Value by two. So, for the real hard cases out there, four cybernetic limbs and full armor plating provides AV 12. As a general rule, robots cannot get cybernetic prosthetics—unless you like the idea of a robot with one arm that's much bigger and tougher than the other one, in which case go ahead and knock yourself out.

Implanted Weapon: Remember young Adam and his amazing mini-gun? That's the idea here. The character has a weapon attached to one of her limbs, retractable at will. This can be a melee weapon or a firearm. An implanted firearm miraculously produces its own ammunition, although the Clip Value rule can be used if you want it to have a chance of jamming.





DEMON DRUGS

Riley: What's wrong with me? I'm more powerful than I've ever been, Buffy. Most people would kill to feel this way.

Buffy: Yeah, and this feeling is GOING to kill you. Riley, your body was not built for this kind of strength.

—5.4 Out of My Mind

Whatever her faults, Maggie Walsh was a brilliant scientist. During the 310 series of experiments, she made a number of amazing discoveries involving the interaction of human and subterrestrial DNA. The drugs described below are fruits of her labor—chemicals made using Sub-T DNA and other unconventional materials. In the present day, these drugs can be gotten from a variety of sources. Vulcan (see p. [?]) has been continuing Walsh's work, while Fleta (see p. [?]) developed its own demon drugs during the Cold War.

While useful in the short term, extended application of any of these drugs can be extremely dangerous. The infusion of subterrestrial DNA severely destabilizes human physiology. This can cause any of the following side effects:

- * Mental Problems, typically Cruelty or Delusions.
- * Paranoia or Reckless behavior
- * The spontaneous manifestation of demonic physical traits, resulting in a reduced Attractiveness.
- * A dramatic drop in whatever statistic is raised. A character who enjoys a +3 bonus to Strength for a week might then start to lose Strength at a rate of one point an hour, falling into a coma or dying unless she receives medical treatment from a specialist in HST research.

It's up to you to define and apply the downside of enhancement drugs. Consider how much disruption they are causing your plotline or how much your plotline could be enhanced by the characters spiraling downward. A nifty story could be based around a character becoming addicted to an enhancement drug with nasty side effects. Of course, we mean "nifty" in a "whole lotta pain to the characters and their friends" way. It wouldn't be *Buffy* without that, right?

Boost: This is a substance that has the effect of an Adrenal Boost TEA chip, only it is applied externally. It increases all physical Attributes by two for 10 Turns. The user also ignores all penalties from injury, all the way down to -10 Life Points. Of course, once the drug wears off, the user has to deal with her current Life Point situation, making any Survival roll necessary. If a character takes more than one dose of boost in a single day, she loses one point from all of her physical Attributes for 24 hours. Still, her statistics are always restored to normal levels while she is under the effects of the drug. Yes, a character could keep taking shots of

Boost and operating at a superhuman level, only to drop dead in her tracks when the effects wore off.

Cellular Regeneration Serum: One problem with a commando Series that features a lot of guns is, well, the chance of getting shot. When the Cast runs up against a Sanguine undead squad, the odds are good that a few heroes will get banged up pretty good. CRS is a miracle treatment that dramatically accelerates healing. Each dose of CRS lasts for three hours—during that time, the user recovers one Life Point per Constitution level each hour. This is one of the few demon drugs that USTARU provides to its troops. While the side effects can be dangerous, the need to keep soldiers alive generally outweighs other concerns. Commandos will not be told about the true nature of CRS; instead it will simply be described as "an experimental substance that accelerates the natural healing process."

Initiative Long Term Enhancement Program: ILTEP was the program Maggie Walsh developed to enhance the physical abilities of her top agents in the Initiative. ILTEP does not have the dramatic effects of Boost; it takes weeks for the drugs to build up to full effect. Once it is active, ILTEP provides the user with a +1 bonus to Strength and Dexterity, and one bonus level of Hard to Kill. There are few short-term side effects, but if the user goes off the drugs she becomes violent, paranoid, and feverish. Without medical treatment, the withdrawer eventually collapses into a coma. Walsh's soldiers were on ILTEP for a period of a few months—it's possible that over a longer period the drugs would have had more serious side effects, possibly slowly transforming the users into human-demon hybrids. Wouldn't that be a hoot?

Mindseye: A number of demon species possess psychic abilities, notably the scabby telepath demons and the psychic visions and the gray "aliens" associated with Majestic-12. Mindseye uses the DNA of these demons to temporarily induce psychic abilities in a human subject. The character gains the Psychic Visions and Telepathy Qualities for one hour (see *The Magic Box* for details on Telepathy). If the user already possesses psychic abilities—including Empathy, Psychic Visions, Psychometry, Telekinesis, Telepathy, or Sorcery used to represent psychic powers—she gains a +3 to all rolls involving these powers for one hour. The drawback is that the character also suffers from Severe Delusions while under the influence of the drug. It is extremely difficult to separate true visions and thoughts from the hallucinatory images. An experienced psychic can make a Perception (doubled) roll to determine the veracity of a particular image. A normal person just has to guess. So PERHAPS she knows what you're thinking . . . or perhaps she only thinks that you're thinking the things she thinks you're thinking. We think.



WEIRD SCIENCE

Jonathan: Shrink rays, trained gorillas, workable prototype jetpacks . . . and chicks, chicks, chicks. I know that's the action I signed on for.

—6.4 Flooded

Chips and drugs are fine, but what about the cool Q gear? This section details a few wacky gadgets that could be useful when dealing with the demon-y. These are all highly experimental; just because a squad gets an EPG for one mission doesn't mean that they can get one in the next. How many times have you seen James Bond reuse the same gadget in two different movies? It's a style thing.

Ectoplasmic Disruption Net: The modern equivalent of the summoner's circle, the Ectoplasmic Disruption Net is designed to contain poltergeists or other insubstantial supernatural manifestations. The EDN is a backpack-sized generator attached to a 20-yard coil of silver-alloy cable. When the cable is laid out in a circle and the generator is activated, a translucent spherical field appears, following the path of the cable. This energy field has no effect on living creatures, but ghosts and other insubstantial spirits cannot pass through the field or use poltergeist powers to affect objects on the other side of the field. The EDN does not stop vampires or other spirits that have taken possession of a physical form; crossing the field is a painful experience for these creatures, but causes no permanent damage. Depending on the circumstances, an EDN can be used to contain spirits or as a temporary defense against a spiritual onslaught. Activating the generator requires both a Willpower and Occultism roll; the generator holds a one-hour charge.

Ectoplasmic Pulse Generator: This rifle-shaped tool operates on the same principles as the Ectoplasmic Disruption Net—it delivers a burst of ectoplasmic energy that affects a spirit's ability to manifest in the physical realm. Activating an EPG requires a single Success Level in a Willpower and Occultism roll. Striking a target requires a Gunshot maneuver; every Success Level stuns the spirit for one minute. If used against a vampire or other spirit that has possessed a physical form (like a sleeper demon), the EPG inflicts five points of damage per Success Level. This damage bypasses all defenses, but cannot lead to dusting. An EPG has a maximum range of 10 yards. The weapon is extremely delicate—it has a Clip Value 3, and if it is jammed it takes twenty minutes and a successful Dexterity and Mr. Fix-It roll to get it working again.

Jetpack: What do you know—the Initiative really is a fly-by-night organization. The military has been working on personal jetpacks for years, and the squad may be assigned a working prototype. A personal jetpack is a large device that weighs 200 pounds; the user must wear protective clothing and a portable oxygen supply. The jetpack allows the user to fly at a speed of 80 miles per hour, rising to a maximum height of 8000 feet. It can run for 90 minutes before burning through its fuel supply. The jetpack can be used to hover, and the user has one hand free for actions like firing a weapon. Any tricky action—hovering, firing while flying, or cool aerial acrobatics—requires a Dexterity and Driving roll. A failed roll can result in a painful introduction to the ground—25 points of Bash damage and a 50% chance that the jetpack stops working. The jetpack does contain an emergency parachute, so the rest of the Cast probably won't have to scrape their friend off the pavement—although you never know when someone might have forgotten to stuff the parachute . . .

Vampire Mask: It's difficult for a human to infiltrate a group of vampires. The undead have keen senses, and things like high body temperature and pesky beating hearts really blow your cover. This high-tech body-stocking projects a low-level energy field that shields the wearer in a number of ways. It masks her heartbeat, keeps her apparent body temperature at room level, conceals the smell of warm blood and body odor—something vampires are quite sensitive to—and through a truly bizarre application of quantum mechanics, prevents her from showing up in mirrors. However, it doesn't come with a "game face"—the masquerading vampire may find herself in a spot of trouble if she's invited to partake in a meal. There's also the whole eating, going to the bathroom, and washing thing. Those can't be done in the mask. Finally, any damage caused to the wearer and thus the mask disrupts its effect.

power level?

For those with *The Magic Box* supplement, these weird science devices can be created. They have Power Levels as follows:

Ectoplasmic Disruption Net: 4 (base 3 plus 1 for duration)

Ectoplasmic Pulse Generator: 3 (all base)

Jetpack: 4 (base 4 minus 1 for size plus 1 for duration; alternatively, this item could be treated as pure tech)

Vampire Mask: 6 (base 4 plus 2 for duration)





4

Sunnydale Ops

Buffy: This is not your business. It's mine. You, the Initiative, the boys in the Pentagon, you're all in way over your heads. Messing with primeval forces you have absolutely no comprehension of.

McNamara: And you do?

Buffy: I'm the Slayer. You're playing on my turf.
—4.21 Primeval

An Initiative or USTARU Series is perfect for running a string of globally-based commando adventures.

The next two chapters give you Directors the goods for doing just that. But perhaps you LIKE life in Sunnydale. It's a nice enough place, if you don't mind the Hellmouth. This material is for those stay-at-home types, providing all the information needed to work the Initiative into your Sunnydale Series. Although the Initiative, as constituted in Season Four, doesn't survive that season's finale, we're going to talk about it in the present tense. It's alive and well in your game, right (otherwise you'd be perusing some other chapter).

canon alert

Let's face it, the show just doesn't give use that many facts on the Initiative. We don't even know long it was operating in Sunnydale, and that only begins to show our vast ignorance. We're going to do our best to fill in these gaps for you, but we're speculating. Don't worry—we'll let you know when we're making stuff up.





MAGGIE'S BOYS: THE INITIATIVE

Mr. Ward: It was an experiment. The Initiative represented the government's interest in not only . . . controlling the otherworldly menace but in harnessing its power for our own military purposes.

—4.21 Primeval

In Season Four Buffy went to college. Halfway through the season she discovered a top-secret government operation had set up shop in Sunnydale—and that her Psychology professor and her new teaching assistant boyfriend were right in the thick of it. The Initiative was created to study demons and to protect the innocent from the subterrrestrial threat, but it had a darker side. The government was interested in using the demons as weapons of war, and chief scientist Maggie Walsh had an agenda even beyond that. As studying demons and the Hellmouth go hand in hand, it's not much of a surprise that the Initiative set up a base in Sunnydale.

From the very beginning, the Initiative had problems. The scientists and their soldier boys were playing with powers they didn't understand. Maggie Walsh's attempt to create a new race by fusing humans and demons ultimately resulted her death, and her "son" Adam staged a war between demons and humans that destroyed the Sunnydale operation. The oversight committee

managing the program recalled all military personnel from Sunnydale and the Initiative was closed down.

On the show, the Walsh's Initiative was only around during Season Four. If you're running a Season Four series, you can use it just as it appeared on the show. But perhaps you're running a different Season. Maybe you just don't want history to repeat itself. Let's start out by looking at alternate ways to use the Initiative. Then we'll move on to discuss material that is equally applicable to all the different presentation possibilities.

THE UNKNOWN SOLDIERS

Willow: Anyway, Professor Walsh is supposed to be great. She's, like, world-renowned.

Buffy: How do you get to be renowned? I mean, like, do you have to be "nowned" first?

—4.1 The Freshman

Willow's familiarity with Professor Walsh's work—along with a few other comments in 4.1 The Freshman—suggest that Walsh might have been on staff at UC-Sunnydale for some time. And if Walsh was there, it's a reasonable assumption that the Initiative was there with her. It's not hard to imagine—the Initiative is a major operation and the government would probably need more than one summer's vacation to set it up. The way government contracts go, they'd probably need three months (and \$15 million) just to set up the toilets below Lowell House . . .





If you want to stay true to the show, the Initiative must have taken a pretty low profile in the previous seasons. We never saw a commando and the organization evaded the attention of Mayor Wilkens—who seems to have been pretty observant, given how quickly he caught up with Mr. Trick.

One possibility would be to present the Initiative as a beachhead operation. The underground base is under construction; the armory is there, but the containment and research areas are still being built. The network of demon detectors is in the process of being established and tested, so the commandos are unaware of most of the supernatural activities in Sunnydale. A skeleton crew has been established—a few scientists and support staff, and a dozen commandos. The mission is to lay the foundation for the larger organization: the operatives need to establish their cover identities, learn the lay of the land, test equipment, and engage in practice maneuvers. If you go this route, the Slayer and her friends may meet up with Initiative commandos on training missions. The commandos lack the resources and the support network they will have in the future, and they are not trying to capture HSTs (having nowhere to put their prisoners). But they may still try to help protect innocents from monsters—although maintaining anonymity is of paramount importance. If you want to have an active member of the Initiative as a member of your Scooby gang, this is a good approach to take. The Initiative is still a small organization with limited staff, so the commando would have an easier time balancing a Scooby life with his military duties.

A second approach is to use the Initiative just as it appeared in Season Four—and just get the party started a little earlier. They might simply not know about Mayor Wilkens and his nefarious activities. Needless to say, if Wilkens found out about the operation, he would want to find a way to shut it down. After all, even giant snakes are vulnerable to explosives and the Initiative has lots of those. Perhaps Wilkens would try to trick the Slayer into fighting the Initiative, or vice versa—hoping to get his enemies to destroy one another. Otherwise, feel free to use all of the ideas presented in the following sections a few Seasons ahead of time.



THE COLLEGE COMMANDOS

Voice over Intercom: The demons have escaped. Please run for your lives.

Adam: This could be trouble.

Riley: We better make a fort.

Adam: I'll get some pillows.

—4.22 *Restless*

If you're already running a Season Four Series, you're good to go; just use the Initiative as presented on the show. Of course, you may not want history to repeat itself. If you've got Professor Walsh in the game your players are going to expect Adam to pop up sooner or later, and you perhaps you want a surprise or two. What can you do with the Initiative without bring everyone's favorite biomechanical demonoid into play? Here are a few clever plots for Season Four.

1, Adam: Adam was designed to be the perfect soldier—and, perhaps, the blueprint for a new race, but let's set that aside for now. What if Adam did not possess the design flaw that caused him to kill his "mother" and destroy the Initiative? What if Adam actually worked perfectly, and was sent out alongside Initiative teams in their battles against HSTs? Even if Adam was truly fighting on the side of good, would the Cast ever be able to trust him—and if not, would it be their lack of trust that turned him against humanity? How would the commandos feel about working with this patchwork monster? If Adam was proven in the field, Professor Walsh would start producing more biodemonoids. Perhaps it would be the next model ("Cain", maybe?) that would go bad, and Adam would have to sacrifice himself in battle with this next generation demonoid—trés Terminator 2!

Be All That You Can Be . . . And Then Some: Maggie Walsh oversaw a number of projects before she began working on Adam. The 310-series research projects focused on xenomorphic human enhancement: creating superhuman soldiers through the application of subterrestrial DNA. This research came to an end with Project 314, the experiment that produced Adam. But what about that earlier research? Project 312 involved ILTEP—the Initiative Long Term Enhancement Program (see p. [?]). This was Maggie's program of feeding her boys a variety of chemicals laced with demon DNA. As we saw on the show, it didn't get very far. When Maggie died, the soldiers began to suffer dangerous side effects. Worse, as far as we saw, the benefits gained from the treatment were not overwhelming. During training exercises, Buffy managed to defeat an entire squad of commandos without breaking a sweat.





But let's say Maggie didn't die. She's still around, and she puts off Project 314 to focus on 312. At first the results are very promising—after a few months of treatments, the soldiers show significantly increased strength and reflexes. But they are also developing mental problems—paranoia, delusions, and cruelty. In fact, they are becoming human-demon hybrids . . . effectively, homegrown vampires. Unchecked, the demonized commandos seize control of the Initiative base; demon Riley could even become a Big Bad, as he and the demon soldiers seek to consolidate their power while hiding their condition from the higher-ups beyond Sunnydale. Perhaps he decides to dose the Sunnydale reservoir with Maggie's chemicals, creating a city of demons! Will the Cast notice the strange behavior of any friendly commandos before things get this far? If not, can they rescue Professor Walsh from the demon commandos and find a way to reverse the treatment? Or will the heroes have to try to kill these unfortunate soldiers, who were simply trying to serve their country? Statistics for an ILTEP-infected demon commando are provided for those going this route (see p. [?]).

You may be saying "OK, ILTEP is Project 312, Adam is 314—what's 313?" Well, Maggie Walsh may have treated lots of commandos with chemicals, but it was made very clear that she had special plans involving Riley Finn. So, what was Project 313? Perhaps we'll find out the next time Riley shows up . . .

canon Alert

Needless to say, the Season Four plots detailed here involve a massive amount of conjecture on our part. All we know for certain from the show is that Walsh was drugging her soldiers, and that Adam was Project 314. It seems logical that there are other, lower-numbered projects—but holding strictly to canon, we have no idea what they were.



GRADUATE SCHOOL

*Commando: Team Epsilon requesting immediate back-up!
'We're in the alley behind the school building! Where the
hell is—Fall back! Fall back! It's coming—'*

—4.20 *The Yoko Factor*

So, you've set your Series post-Four, but you prefer Maggie Walsh and her college boys to the more recent commandos we've seen on the show—the organization we're calling USTARU? No problem. Perhaps Maggie took a little more time to work on behavior modification chips—or her lesson plans for Psych 105—and just never got around to creating Adam. Or perhaps she's a little less of a loony-tune than she appeared to be in Season Four. Whatever the explanation, there's no reason that Walsh and the Initiative couldn't stick around in Sunnydale for a few more seasons.

Of course, if you're going to keep the Initiative around, there are a few questions you need to answer. To begin with, what *are* the scientists doing with their chipped demons? By episode 4.13 *The 'I'* in Team, Walsh was able to get chipped demons to do her bidding. And even if they aren't using slave chips, Sunnydale could quickly end up with a large population of harmless Spike-style vampires. As Willow said, what's the plan? Get them jobs at Walmart? Here are a few possible solutions:

* If your series *began* in a different Season, you could always say that the Initiative actually got started later—and that the scientists are only just beginning to perfect chip technology.

* In theory, the goal of the Initiative was to tap the military potential of the subterrestrials. So, maybe that's a go. Walsh could be sending regular shipments of chipped HSTs off to the Pentagon. This keeps things moving normally in Sunnydale, but may have larger implications. A Watcher might hear stories about demons being used in brutal covert military actions, under the aegis of Monarch (see p. [?]). Will the Slayer try to do something about this? If not, Ethan Rayne's warning to Giles might come to pass—the demons themselves might get organized to battle this threat from the mortal world.

* An increasing population of "harmless" demons could actually make life challenging for a Slayer and her pals. If it's morally wrong to kill a chipped vampire, well, you can bet that every vamp you run into will pretend to have a chip. How will the cast spot the phonies?

The next question is how the Initiative interacts with whatever Big Bad you've got planned. In the show, Season Four revolved around the Initiative. The Bad—Adam—was closely tied to the commandos from his first





appearance on. But what if there was a completely independent Big Bad in town? What would happen if the Initiative was bumbling its way around the supernatural world and crossed paths with Glory? If one of her most trusted toadies was captured, Glory might smash her way into Initiative HQ, leaving a smoking ruin in her path. What forces would the government bring to bear in retaliation? Could the Cast keep this conflict from devastating Sunnydale?

Alternately, Warren and the Trio might find out about the Initiative. Using sorcery and nerd know-how, the Trio could trick the Initiative into doing their dirty work for them. A little computer hacking, faked radio transmissions, spells to make the Slayer look like a demon—all sorts of fun could be had. Perhaps Maggie Walsh has set aside her bio-demonoid studies to work on robotics, and her secret lab is set up to mass produce ASTARTE robot commandos (see p. [?]). What happens if Warren and his cronies seize control of the lab and activate this robot army?

The challenge is to keep the Initiative from taking over for the Slayer and making her actions irrelevant. If the commandos have the vampires under control, who needs a Slayer? But the Initiative has many problems: a reliance on military procedure, a general lack of understanding of the supernatural world, and an arrogant belief that they can handle anything, among others. They may end up opposing the Slayer, fighting alongside her, or just getting in her way; but the important thing is that Sunnydale is still the Slayer's world, and it's a place most commandos will never truly understand.

USING THE INITIATIVE

Walsh: Report for TLs for assignment and weapons requisitions. Reminder: this is a zap-n-trap, people. Capture, not a kill. Any questions? (sighing at the raised hand) Buffy?

—4.13 *The 'T' in Team*

Now we turn to stuff that's applicable to all Seasons: the role of the Initiative as ally or enemy, the tactics used by Initiative commandos, the statistics for the members of the Initiative that we've seen on the show, and finally, a guided tour of Lowell House—everyone's favorite fraternity/top secret underground military base. Buckle up, it's going to be a rough ride.

AUTOBOTS OR DECEPTICONS?

Giles: Buffy, I don't want to ask you to betray any confidences, and I certainly don't want to interfere . . .

Buffy: Uh-oh, you have "but-face." You look like you're gonna say "but."

Giles: But, this . . . Initiative. I'm a little concerned.

Ethan's not exactly a reliable source but . . . I'm not sure that he's wrong about them.

—4.12 *A New Man*

On the show, the Initiative starts out at odds with the cast—a mysterious force that the Slayer and her pals are curious and concerned about. When Riley and Buffy hook up midseason, the Initiative temporarily becomes an ally, but that doesn't last for very long. Within a few episodes, the government and the Slayer are again at cross-purposes. Regardless of what Season you're using them in, you need to decide what sort of role you want the Initiative to play in your series. Are your Slayerettes going to work hand in hand with the government—Deputy Junior Agent Scooby—or will the Initiative be an obstacle and another threat that the Cast has to overcome? Let's look at each option in more detail.

KEEPING THE STREETS SAFE FOR DEMONS

Ethan: I know we're not particularly fond of each other, Rupert. But we are a couple of old mystics. This new outfit, it's blundering into new places it doesn't belong.

It's throwing the worlds out of balance. And that's way beyond chaos, mate. We're headed quite literally for one hell of a fight.

—4.12 *A New Man*

One of the main problems with the Initiative is that when it comes down to it, most of the soldiers and scientists don't actually believe in magic. Asked to explain how demons can exist, Forrest tells Riley "They're just animals, man, plain and simple." As a result of this Scully attitude, the Initiative has no real understanding of the complexities of the mystical world. When Buffy wants to know why a Polgara demon is rampaging through Sunnydale, the other commandos are nonplussed; the idea that HSTs have rational motivations is alien to them. All demons are evil. The idea of them organizing and planning is unfathomable.

This fundamental cluelessness is one of the first ways to bring the Initiative into conflict with the Cast. The Scoobies probably have a pretty good handle on the scene in Sunnydale. Got any friendly werewolves, ex-demons, or vampires with souls around? To the Initiative, these





are all HST threats that should be taken into custody. There is no room for a friendly subterrrestrial in Walsh's world; if a demon isn't under direct neural control, it is an enemy (and a potential source of body parts for Project 314). If Buffy hadn't been involved with Riley, she too might have been seen as a threat. Indeed, Forrest Gates referred to her as a "supernatural freak" and distrusted her from the very beginning. If your Slayer doesn't have a top field agent backing her up, the Initiative could end up trying to capture and study her, believing her to be a demon that has assumed human form. After all, Maggie Walsh is trying to create superhuman soldiers; when it comes down to it, she wants to find a way to transform her boys into Slayers. If she has to sacrifice one girl to do it—well, we've seen how she gets when her work is at stake.

Even if the Cast doesn't come into direct conflict with the Initiative, the soldier boys can still pose a problem for the Slayerettes. Carefully laid Scooby plans may be spoiled when an Initiative commando team bursts onto the scene or blows up a crypt that may have contained valuable clues. And even if the ast doesn't have demonic allies that can be put at risk, a demon with ties to the current Big Bad could be captured—either spoiling the Scooby's attempt to track the lesser villain to the Bad, or angering the Big Bad and causing greater reprisals. As noted earlier, what would Glory do if a few of her sniveling toadies were taken into custody by unfashionably dressed human soldiers?

THE SCOOPY CORPS

Buffy: I'm in. The Initiative. Professor Walsh gave me the grand tour and we're talking Grand as in Canyon! You'd never believe the size of it.

Willow: That's really... again I say "neat." So, what do you mean exactly? You've joined them?

Buffy: No. Not exactly. It just means that when I patrol I'll have a heavily armed team backing me up. Plus, boyfriend going to work with me—big extra perk.

—4.13 The 'I' in Team

On the show, Buffy was "in" with the Initiative for all of one episode. This is hardly surprising—if she had that heavily armed team at her back, what need would she have for, say, Xander? If there are packs of commandos around to help with any mission, White Hat characters are going to get the short end of the action. There is also the question of why a top-secret government organization would be willing to work with civilians. Buffy had the whole superhuman ability thing, plus she was dating the top field agent. But why would Professor Walsh be willing to stick her neck out for a runaway goth girl or a football jock? Not to mention any subterrrestrial Cast Members you might have in your group...

If you want your group to have a friendly relationship with the Initiative without actually enlisting, take the Riley approach. Introduce the Cast to a commando or scientist in her civilian identity. Once the truth comes





out, this connection can allow the two organizations to share resources and avoid stepping on each others' toes. Walsh probably won't change her plans because of a librarian's theory about a moldy prophecy, but the group's Initiative contact can at least keep the Scoobies posted on what the Initiative is up to. Perhaps he can even come up with some sort of argument to convince his superiors to follow the advice of the Slayer and her friends. An interesting variation on this is to have a player take on the role of this Initiative connection—playing a *current* Initiative agent instead of a former one. Like Riley, this Cast Member may find that he is torn between his commitment to the Initiative and his emotional relationship with the members of the Scooby gang.

If you do establish a friendly but distant connection, the Initiative can serve as back-up for really big fight scenes or as a source of scientific information. In a sense, the Initiative can be like Willy's Place—something that is always there, but that rarely comes up unless the Cast seeks it out. There is always the chance that the Cast comes into conflict with the Initiative, for any of the reasons mentioned in the previous section or because of the machinations of a Big Bad (say . . . Adam?)—but until then the organization can be a valuable ally.

Initiative Tactics

Riley: We start with the basic mobilization pattern. Three teams. Sweep and search, just like practice. Thorough but fast. C-team, take the campus perimeter. Make sure it can't leave. Stake it if you gotta, but only as a last resort. B-team, you're going down. Tunnels, sewers, cemeteries. Gates and Miller are with me. We take the heart of campus and work our way out. All units . . . maintain radio contact early and often. Who's got questions? Move!

—4.7 The Initiative

We've only had a few glimpses of the Initiative in action. Still, we can detail a few things about the Initiative's standard operating procedures:

* There are demon detectors set up at key positions throughout Sunnydale. Certain demons do not show up on the scanners; others are easily tracked. The Initiative prefers to act decisively—a target is identified, tracked, incapacitated and returned to the base as quickly as possible, minimizing the chance of civilian exposure. Occasionally a single commando is sent to verify one of the readings on a scanner, if the results are inconclusive or the threat level is minimal.

* Commandos usually operate in squads of three to five men. Graham and Forrest are Riley's standard teammates, but we see five-man squads in other episodes.

* The weapon of choice is the taser rifle. Commandos also carry pistols and cobras on standard missions. Heavier weapons—grenades and assault rifles—are kept in the armory, but may be brought out for special missions. On a zap-n-trap assignment, one commando is equipped with a tranquilizer rifle loaded with homing darts. And despite Professor Walsh's chiding Buffy about fighting with pointed sticks, there are multiple examples that show that the Initiative knows the value of a good stake when dealing with vampires.

* Commandos do their best to avoid contact with civilians. They use bioscanners and homing darts to isolate a target and strike with speed and precision, relying on the cover of darkness and masks or camo paint to conceal their identities. If commandos must operate in daylight, they dress in civilian clothing.

* In 4.7 The Initiative, we learn about a quarantine protocol when a vampire is caught feeding on a civilian. Apparently the Initiative believes that the victim of a vampire attack can be infected even if she isn't actually killed. It's unclear what the commandos do with quarantined civilians; it is unlikely that they would reveal the location of the main base to a potentially harmless human. A more likely hypothesis is that the Initiative maintains a "clinic" on the college campus. The soldiers come up with a story about a dangerous infection and get the victim sedated and examined. Straightforward hypnosis might be enough to suppress the traumatic memories of the attack and the commandos.

* Commandos are trained to use group tactics. If one opponent appears to be especially dangerous—a Slayer amidst a group of Slayerettes, for example—the soldiers concentrate their fire on that target. They cover each others backs and generally react to threats with speed and precision. With that said, many commandos are fresh out of Special Forces training. They know what to do, but they may lose their discipline if taken by surprise. This is conjecture—we haven't actually attended Initiative Boot Camp—but it's a fairly logical assumption. These are highly trained soldiers, and they should approach combat with a little more discipline than the average group of high school kids.

For the most part, these tactics can be used regardless of Season. If you are going with an earlier, smaller version of the Initiative, the demon detection grid may not be set up and they probably are more interested in killing their targets. Tasers aren't much use when you don't have a cell for your prisoner. You'll have to decide whether comcams are standard issue in your series, or whether the commandos are using standard walkie-talkies. Both have been seen in the show.





KEY PERSONNEL

Colonel: Recovery of the hostile known as Adam is our first and most important job. To this end I've asked our tactical consultant here to address us today. Mr. Levinson.

Jonathan: Thank you, colonel.

Graham (aside to Riley): It's about time we brought out the big guns.

—4.17 Superstar

Here's a handy Who's Who of the all the folks you need to run your very own secret government subterrestrial research franchise. This includes all of the Initiative agents that have been named on the show, with the notable exception of Special Agent Riley Finn. The complete lowdown on Agent Finn—and the lovely Ms. Finn—is presented later (see p. [?]).

MAGGIE WALSH

Buffy: You know, for someone who teaches human behavior, you might try showing some.

Walsh: It's not my job to coddle my students.

Buffy: You're right. A human being in pain has nothing to do with your job.

—4.7 The Initiative

A brilliant scientist equally skilled in psychology and physiology, Maggie Walsh is one of the driving forces behind the Initiative. When the government decides to shut down the project, it refers to it as "Maggie Walsh's vision." Walsh is a strict disciplinarian who usually comes across as cold and unfeeling. But beneath this crusty exterior, she honestly seems to want the best for her boys—especially her surrogate sons, Riley Finn and Adam. She does whatever she believes is best for them—even if that means killing Riley's girlfriend or secretly drugging her "children" with powerful chemicals. When

it comes down to it, you can probably find Maggie's picture in the dictionary under "mad"—but she is still doing what she felt was best, both for the men under her command and for the nation as a whole.

When she isn't sewing together bio-demonoids, Maggie maintains a cover identity as a psychology professor at UC-Sunnydale. While her lessons are brilliant, she is as strict with her students as she is with her soldiers. If you skipped a class or missed an assignment, you needn't bother showing up at the next class.

In the show, Professor Walsh is killed by Adam when he first wakes up, and later is transformed into a mindless robозombie. If you're going to have the Initiative in your game, you may want to keep her around; the college commandos just wouldn't be the same without mommy there to boss them around.

We know very little about Maggie Walsh's past before the Initiative. If you incorporate the conspiracies in **Chapter Five: Hell on Earth**, Walsh may have been involved with Majestic-12 and Vulcan. In fact, if you want to run with our crazy ideas, Maggie may still be involved with Vulcan (see p. [?]).

COLONEL MCNAMARA

McNamara: They're animals, lieutenant. We pack them in until we're out of room and then we pack them in some more.

Lieutenant: They're going to start tearing each other apart, sir.

McNamara: I have no problem with that scenario.

—4.20 The Yoko Factor

After Adam killed Maggie Walsh, Washington sent Colonel McNamara to hold down the fort while the brass decided how to proceed. McNamara is an arrogant military man and his primary concern is maintaining order and discipline. He despises the Slayer and her "band of freaks." He considers them anarchists "... too

Name: Professor Maggie Walsh

Motivation: Watch out for her boys, and, well, replace humanity with a superior race

Critter Type: Human

Attributes: Str 2, Dex 2, Con 2, Int 6, Per 4, Will 5

Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 10, Brains 17

Life Points: 26

Drama Points: 3

Special Abilities: Coat

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	10	—	Defense action
Kick	9	7	Bash
Punch	10	5	Bash
Pistol	10	13	Bullet



Name: Colonel McNamara
Motivation: Sort out the mess Walsh left behind
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 3, Dex 4, Con 3, Int 2, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 12, Combat 14, Brains 12
Life Points: 37
Drama Points: 2
Special Abilities: Hard to Kill I



Maneuvers			
Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	14	—	Defense action
Kick	13	11	Bash
Punch	14	9	Bash
Pistol	14	15	Bullet
Taser Rifle	14	8	Bash; knockout
Assault Rifle	14	19	Bullet; burst hits with 3 shots (damage 16)

backwards for the real world.” He has no understanding of the supernatural, and this proves to be his undoing. He fails to heed Buffy’s warning, and dies in battle when Adam unleashed the prisoners from the Initiative containment cells.

The McNamara Quick Sheet can be used for any “by the book” military brass. If kept around for any length of time, he could remain hidebound and narrow-minded, but prove to be a fearsome adversary. Or he could turn out to be “strong but fair” and realize the worth of the Cast Members. In that situation, his loss in battle could add some drama to the proceedings.

standpoint, as he knows nothing about the occult. While a highly talented scientist, Angleman lacks Walsh’s vision (or madness). He tries to maintain order after Maggie’s murder, but he himself is killed when Adam reveals himself to Riley and Buffy.

Dr. Angleman can be used for any top level government or private research type. He’s not evil but he’s strictly an obey-orders type and won’t rock the boat. Now, if you take away his toys or keep him from his *raison d’être* (experimenting with all things chip), he might get a bit more pro-active.

DR. ANGLEMAN

Angleman: Adam, Maggie would want you to stand down.

Adam: Yes. But I seem to have a design flaw.

—4.14 Goodbye Iowa

Dr. Angleman is one of Maggie Walsh’s top researchers. He is an expert in the field of xenomorphic behavior modification (translation: he’s Chip Boy). Between helping Professor Walsh with Adam and sticking chips in people’s heads, he clearly knows his way around a scalpel. He is also familiar with a wide variety of HST species—at least, from a scientific physiological

FORREST GATES

Forrest: Somebody’s been staying here.

Graham: What do think, a homeless guy?

Forrest: Could be. Or a squatter of the demon variety.

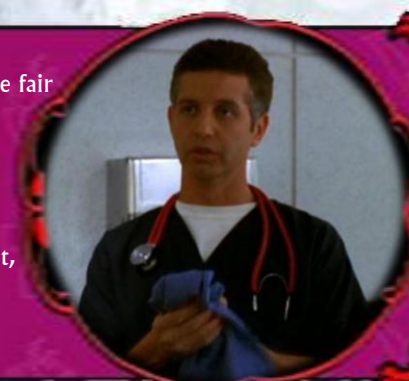
Graham: But not the Polgara.

Forrest: Who cares!? I see a demon, it dies.

—4.14 Goodbye Iowa

Forrest Gates and Riley Finn went through Special Forces together and were recruited into the Initiative at the same time. Forrest is one of the top commandos in Sunnydale, but throughout his career he’s been a step

Name: Dr. Angleman
Motivation: Build the perfect soldier, win the Army science fair
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 2, Dex 2, Con 2, Int 5, Per 4, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 9, Brains 14
Life Points: 26
Drama Points: 1
Special Abilities: +3 to Brains for Doctor and Science, Coat,



Maneuvers			
Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	9	—	Defense action
Punch	9	5	Bash

Name: Forrest Gates

Motivation: Fight the HSTs, keep the Initiative “family” together

Critter Type: Human (for now)

Attributes: Str 5, Dex 5, Con 4, Int 3, Per 3, Will 3

Ability Scores: Muscle 15, Combat 17, Brains 13

Life Points: 55

Drama Points: 3

Special Abilities: Fast Reaction Time, Grunt, Hard to Kill 3, Initiative Commando, Obligation (Initiative) 3, Situational Awareness

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	17	—	Defense action
Kick	16	17	Bash
Punch	17	15	Bash
Cobra	17	20	Bash
Pistol	17	17	Bullet
Taser Rifle	17	10	Bash; knockout
Assault Rifle	17	21	Bullet; burst hits with 5 shots (damage 16)



behind Riley. Despite the slight competition between them, Forrest has always been Riley’s closest friend and his second in the field.

Forrest is extremely loyal to the Initiative, but slightly hotheaded and hostile to the supernatural. He considers the HSTs no more than animals. Initially he doesn’t believe that the Slayer exists. When Buffy’s true nature is revealed, he refers to her as a “supernatural freak” and claims that she is using Riley to infiltrate the Initiative. Riley’s relationship with the Slayer drives a wedge between the two friends. Ultimately Forrest is killed by the bio-demonoid Adam. He makes a brief reappearance when Adam reanimates him as a lesser bio-demonoid, but Riley blows him up real good (Evil Forrest’s stats can be found in *Monster Smackdown*, p. 81).

GRAHAM MILLER (SEASON FOUR)

Riley: There’s definitely something off about her.

Graham: Maybe she’s Canadian.

—4.7 *The Initiative*

During Season Four, Graham is the third member of Riley Finn’s squad. Where Forrest is always ready with a smart remark or some trash talk, Graham is strong and silent. He is a follower, not a leader—always prepared to back up his friends, but rarely the first to speak. He seems to have a decent sense of people, and sticks up for Buffy when Forrest questions her motives.

After he survives Adam’s human-demon war and the destruction of the Initiative, Graham choses to stay with the government and continues to work in the same organization as Riley. As we have reconstituted the

Name: Graham Miller

Motivation: Stop the HST threat, be strong and silent

Critter Type: Human

Attributes: Str 6, Dex 4, Con 4, Int 2, Per 3, Will 3

Ability Scores: Muscle 18, Combat 16, Brains 13

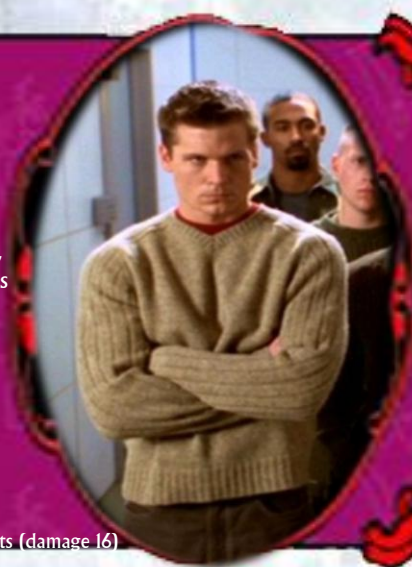
Life Points: 59

Drama Points: 3

Special Abilities: Fast Reaction Time, Grunt, Hard to Kill 3, Initiative Commando, Obligation (Initiative) 3, Natural Toughness

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	16	—	Defense action
Kick	15	18	Bash
Punch	16	16	Bash
Cobra	16	22	Bash
Pistol	16	16	Bullet
Taser Rifle	16	9	Bash; knockout
Assault Rifle	16	20	Bullet; burst hits with 4 shots (damage 16)





Name: Agent Toughguy
Motivation: Fight the HSTs, pick up babes at fraternity mixers
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 4, Dex 4, Con 4, Int 3, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 14, Combat 15, Brains 12
Life Points: 53
Drama Points: 1-3
Special Abilities: Fast Reaction Time, Grunt, Hard to Kill 3, Initiative Commando, Obligation (Initiative) 3

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	15	—	Defense action
Kick	14	13	Bash
Punch	15	12	Bash
Cobra	15	16	Bash
Pistol	15	16	Bullet
Taser Rifle	15	9	Bash; knockout

Buffyverse, Graham is assigned to USTARU. His post-Season Four career path and stats are entirely up to you (see p. [?] for a Season Five suggestion).

INITIATIVE COMMANDO

Riley: In the military you learn to follow orders. Not ask questions.

—4.13 *The 'I' in Team*

These are the rank and file members of the Season Four Sunnydale strike force. Recruited from the Special Forces and other branches of the military, they are well-trained soldiers and work efficiently as a team. The average commando is cocky, proud of his abilities, and considers himself to be more than a match for the bogeymen he faces. But he has little hands-on experience with the unnatural and is limited by his reliance on the chain of command. The commando counts on the scientists and officers to do his thinking for him, and this could be a handicap when dealing with the horrors of the Hellmouth.

As far as we know, all of the commandoes are male. This need not be the case in your campaign.

INITIATIVE SCIENTIST

Buffy: 'Why exactly can't we damage this polka thing's arms? I, uh, not that I want to, it's just in my experience when fighting for your life body parts get damaged and—better its bits than mine. Or . . . ours.

Angleman: We wish to study the physiology of every subterrrestrial's natural defenses. It's part of the research we do here.

—4.13 *The 'I' in Team*

The Initiative employs a large number of scientists—researchers and surgeons who examine captured HSTs and do the chip thing. We assume that some of these lab coats maintain cover identities at UC-Sunnydale, while others live in what we are calling “Base Three (Sunnydale)” and only rarely emerge onto the surface. No doubt, many these scientists have been recruited from government agencies. Few have any sort of formal military training, but there might be an odd one here or there that knows which way to point the pistol.

Name: Dr. Vampfodder
Motivation: Get chippy with the demons
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 2, Dex 2, Con 2, Int 4, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 9, Brains 12
Life Points: 16
Drama Points: 0-2
Special Abilities: +3 to Brains for Science or Medicine skills

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	9	—	Defense action
Kick	8	6	Bash
Punch	9	5	Bash

Name: Agent Monsterboy
Motivation: Convert or replace humanity, SIR!
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 7, Dex 6, Con 5, Int 3, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 20, Combat 17, Brains 12
Life Points: 67
Drama Points: 1
Special Abilities: Attractiveness -3, Armor Value 5 (20 vs. Fire), Claws, Fast Reaction Time, Grunt, Hard to Kill 3, Mental Problems (Severe Cruelty), Mental Problems (Mild Delusions), Paranoid, Resistant to Fire and Bullet damage

Maneuvers			
Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	17	—	Defense action
Claws	17	19	Slash/Stab
Pistol	17	17	Bullet
Taser Rifle	17	10	Bash; knockout

ILTEP-ALTERED COMMANDO

Graham: Oh, come on. You know Walsh pumped all those chemicals and crap into us. You got more than anyone. She messed us up bad.

Riley (scornful): And now the government's knocking themselves out to kiss it and make it better.

—5.4 Out of My Mind

While we know that the Initiative was “doctoring” its commandos, it’s not clear what effect those chemicals had. In our Buffyverse, the ILTEP-altered commando goes along with the Be All You Can Be—And Then Some plotline (see p. [?]). In that storyline, Maggie Walsh’s chemical treatments start to slowly transform the Initiative commandos into human-demon hybrids. The statistics below are for a fully-transformed commando. The modified statistics and mental problems are the first changes. The more dramatic physical changes—claws, armor, reduced appearance—are the last things to show up.

A fully transformed hybrid commando only takes half damage from bullets and other piercing weapons, and heals at the same rate as a Slayer. The altered commando also possesses an additional 20 points of Armor that only applies to Fire damage. A hybrid is not affect by sunlight, but is vulnerable to holy water and crosses (probably the result of a little vampire in the genetic makeup).

If you want to convert an existing character (like Riley, Graham, or Forrest) into an ILTEP hybrid, make the following changes: Strength +3, Dexterity +2, Constitution +1, Mental Problems (Severe Cruelty), Mental Problems (Mild Delusions), Paranoid, and the special abilities noted below. These can boost Attributes above human levels.

Equipment for demon commandos depends on how capable you want them to be. If you’re going to have Demon Riley as a Big Bad, give the commandos full access to the Initiative’s high-tech arsenal. The wacky element of the plot is fighting demons who are down with modern technology. On the other hand, if the demon commandos are just a subplot, they may lose their ability to use modern technology once they pop out claws. In this case, the challenge is really trying to find a way to cure these innocent soldiers.





INITIATIVE BASE THREE

McNamara: Every inch of this installation is under constant twenty-four hour surveillance!

Willow: Including the secret lab?

McNamara: Including everything! . . . What secret lab?

—4.21 *Primeval*

Sunnydale has its fair share of secret underground lairs (see the *Welcome to Sunnydale* sourcebook for proof), not to mention more sewer tunnels than Los Angeles. But no tour of the underground would be complete without a visit to what we have labeled Initiative Base Three, a fully-loaded state-of-the-art military research center hidden beneath the ground. Whether you need a place to store your Hummer or a want to peruse the well-stocked armory, Initiative Base Three has it all! Let's take a look at the excellent facilities available to Season Four's Initiative commando.

LOWELL HOUSE

Xander (reading): Lowell House. 1962.

Julie: Yes?

Xander: Um, just, you know, impressing you with my knowledge of local history. Or my knowledge of reading.

Julie: You didn't even have to sound anything out.

—4.18 *Where the Wild Things Are*

Most of the Sunnydale commandos bunk in the Lowell fraternity house, maintaining cover identities as graduate students and college jocks. At a glance, Lowell is your standard frat—the commandos take great pains to maintain the cover, throwing wild drunken parties (oh,

the difficult life of a government agent). But a few things keep Lowell from becoming the social center of campus. Before it was a fraternity and a government front, the building housed the Lowell Home for Children, a shelter for runaways and juvenile delinquents. The woman who ran the Home forced the children to repress their "impure" urges and this created a sexual poltergeist that lurks in the walls of the house. Powerful sexual experiences—like Buffy and Riley making with the round the clock acts of nakedness—trigger dramatic and dangerous poltergeist activity.

An elevator to the Initiative base is hidden behind a mirror on the first floor of the frat house. The mirror slides open in response to a retinal scan—or, if you're the Slayer you can just smash it and take the bad luck. The elevator itself has a voice lock. If an intruder fails to pass the voice scan, she is trapped in the elevator and exposed to deadly gas. The Initiative didn't take kindly to unauthorized guests. The base can also be reached through a concealed staircase, which used a retinal lock. Here's a tip—if your voice has been stolen by the Gentlemen, take the stairs.





BENEATH LOWELL HOUSE

Buffy: My God. You said it was big. You told me, but you never said it was HUUUGE!

Riley: I don't like to brag.

—4.13 *The 'T' in Team*

Want a party? Go to Lowell House. Want to stop HSTs? Head down below.

When you emerge from the Lowell elevator, you'll find yourself in a vast staging area. Scientists compare notes while commandos escort captive demons back to the holding cells. In one corner, a bank of monitors display images gathered from static scanners and the comcams of agents in the field. Across the way, the armory is visible, racks of guns sealed behind an electrified fence. The center of the chamber is a sunken area filled with surgical equipment and restraints. This is the Pit, where the researchers engage in most of their work with the captive HSTs.

The staging area is the single largest chamber in the Initiative; in addition to the work conducted in the Pit, the commandos gather by the video monitors for mission briefings. But the staging area is only the tip of the Initiative iceberg. Some of the other important locations that were shown on TV follow.

Armory: Located just off of the staging area, the armory is just like the local Radio Shack, only a zillion times more dangerous. The walls are lined with pistols, assault rifles, taser rifles, grenades, and other implements

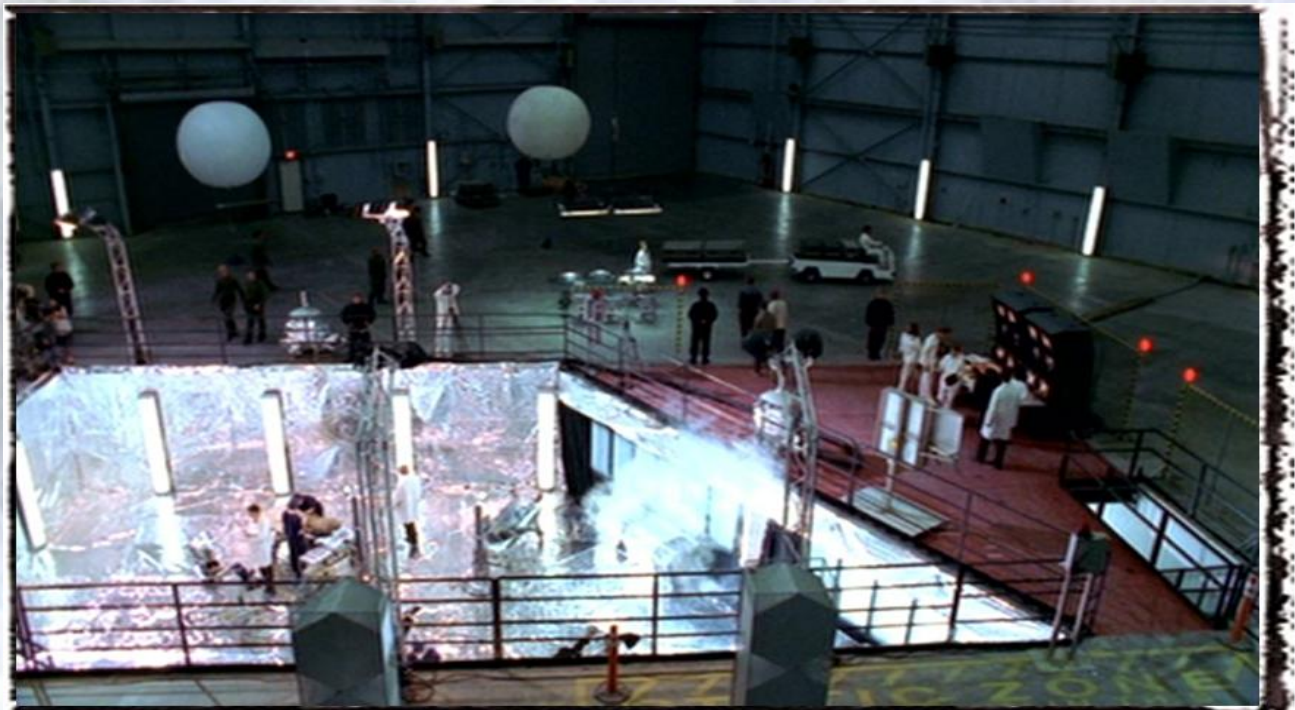
of destruction. The armory is protected by an electrified chain-link fence. Anyone with proper security clearance can shut down the fence and open the gate, but sentries are on duty twenty-four hours a day. If you want to get the big guns, you'd better have proper authorization!

Barracks: The commandos may bunk in Lowell House, but the underground base contains living quarters for the staffers who don't maintain cover identities. While most of these barracks hold multiple occupants, rank has its privileges—when Buffy and crew break into the base in 4.19 *New Moon Rising*, they surprise Colonel McNamara in his private quarters.

Brig: In addition to the HST containment area, the base includes a few cells designed to hold human prisoners—like traitorous special agents who try to free werewolves. The cells in the brig have a few basic amenities that the HSTs don't get—like, well, bunks.

Command Center: While basic briefings and mission oversight can be handled at the monitors in the main staging area, a dedicated command center is located deeper in the base. This includes a satellite uplink providing video communication with Washington and the other Initiative centers, as well as multiple computer stations and monitoring posts to track both internal security and the demon scanners placed around Sunnydale.

HST Containment Area: A large section of the base is dedicated to subterranean holding cells. For the most part these are barren white chambers. Sliding panels of thick reinforced Plexiglas allow scientists to observe





demonic prisoners from a position of safety. At least, safe until Adam arranges for all the panels to open, releasing all the prisoners at once . . .

Restricted Laboratories: Almost all of the research into behavior modification is performed in the Pit. However, the 310-series projects were top secret, concealed from the commandos and most of the scientists. A heavy steel door off of the main staging area leads to a smaller set of labs, each marked with the number of the associated project. The doors to these laboratories are reinforced steel and a special keycard is required for access. Maggie Walsh and Doctor Angleman have access to all of the restricted labs. Beyond the two top scientists, it's up to you to decide who can get into these labs—or who even knows that they exist. Commandos aren't trained to ask questions. Needless to say, the only restricted lab we saw on the show was 314. Still, if you make use of our ILTEP idea, it's logical to assume that Project 312 would have its own lab.

Secret Lab: Maggie Walsh has her own plans for the Initiative—most notably, creating a new race of human-demon hybrids. To this end, she has created a secret facility hidden behind the 314 lab. A fully outfitted surgical center designed for all your demon-human-cyborg splicing needs, this lab has a private generator, computer terminals linked to the Initiative mainframe, and a hidden back entrance leading out into a network of caves. If you're planning on holding a really gross surprise party for Dr. Frankenstein, this would be the place to do it.

Locations that we never saw but can safely assume exist would be an infirmary, a mess hall, and storerooms for all the assorted military crap the base requires—50,000 pairs of surgical gloves, 3,002 lab coats, 6,424 tubes of camouflage face paint, and all that other good stuff.

There is also the issue of entrances. In the show, we saw three entrances to the underground base: the elevator in Lowell House, a hidden door out in the woods (seen in 4.19 *New Moon Rising*), and the door in the caves that leads to the Secret Lab. It's reasonable to assume that there are a few more. Presumably Professor Walsh and Doctor Angleman don't have to go through a frat house to get down to the base, and it would be kind of hard to fit a Hummer through Lowell. So there is probably an entrance in some sort of hidden or staff-friendly location on campus, and a larger freight entrance—say, hidden in the bottom of the campus parking garage.

AFTER THE FALL

Mr. Ward: It is therefore our recommendation that this project be terminated and all records concerning it expunged. Our soldiers'll be debriefed. Standard confidentiality clause. We will monitor the civilians. And the usual measures prepared should they try to go public. I don't think they will. The Initiative itself will be filled in with concrete. Burn it down, gentlemen. Burn it down . . . and salt the earth.

—4.21 *Primeval*





Mr. Ward's instructions are pretty clear: the Sunnydale base is to be completely destroyed, with no traces left behind. But you know how efficient government operations are. It was really no surprise that these orders are never carried out in full. Besides, the brass didn't even *know* about Maggie's hidden areas—and who's to say those were the only secret locations within the Initiative? If you want, you can have all kinds of goodies hidden down below. This can be a useful subplot—perhaps a group of Monarch (see p. [?]) agents show up to reclaim a cache of supplies hidden in the old Initiative base. Or what if the Nerd Trio discovered that the base hadn't been filled in and set up shop beneath UCSD? How much fun could three supervillains have with a honest-to-goodness superscience headquarters? Season Seven revealed that there are still demons in the darkness. Are these simply prisoners who remained in the shadows for years after the base was shut down? ILTEP-altered commandos? Or is USTARU still using the base? It does seem awfully convenient that there just happened to be a squad of soldiers in the base at the precise time that Buffy decided to go exploring . . .

THE POST-WALSH ERA: USTARU

Ellis: It's not the Initiative, Finn. We don't do experiments. None of us give a damn what makes monsters tick. We just stop 'em.

—5.10 *Into the Woods*

After the fall of the Initiative, an unknown branch of the government (in theory, the Army—but don't trust everything you read) established a new program to protect the public from the subterrestrial threat. We've decided to call this more aggressive organization the United States Subterrestrial Activities Response Unit: USTARU (makes it easier on us that way). Agents of this organization have appeared in Sunnydale a few times—twice in response to direct requests from Riley and Buffy, and once in pursuit of a dangerous Suvolte breeder demon. USTARU is not interested in studying the subterrestrials; it just wants to stop them as quickly and efficiently as possible.

What does this mean for your Sunnydale series? Well, USTARU agents can appear as Guest Stars at almost any time. Following the example of 6.15 *As You Were*, the agents may bring troubles with them—the Scoobies could be pulled in to help with the mission that has brought the squad to Sunnydale. Alternately, if the Cast is facing seemingly hopeless odds, a squad of USTARU agents could show up to provide surprise back-up and a little





heavy firepower. If one of the Cast Members is a former Initiative Commando, the agents may lean on her to come back and join the fold—quit slumming around in Sunnydale and come to where the action is!

If you don't want to run an entire series based around USTARU but like the idea of giving the Cast a break from Sunnydale and an excuse to play with big guns, a commando squad could show up seeking help with an emergency situation somewhere far from California. This is most appropriate if the Cast has a history with USTARU or the Initiative, but if the Cast members are powerful enough, that bit of backstory could be dispensed with. It's not too hard imagining Riley coming to Buffy and Willow for a little physical and magical support. It's more of a stretch for him to show up asking for Xander ("We need to get these windows boarded up, stat!"). Weaker White Hats might be able to tag along with their more powerful companions, or you could have the White Hat players temporarily assume control of commando characters for the duration of the mission. It might be refreshing for the nerd to get to play Rambo for a session or two.

If you are interested in running an entire series based around the commando lifestyle, stop wasting your time here and get to **Chapter Six: Strike Force HST!**

USTARU PERSONNEL

This section includes statistics for all the characters we know to be currently working with the organization that the Initiative has become, including the redoubtable Agent Finn and his charming wife.

We've also included stats for generic USTARU commandos and scientists. If you need quick Guest Stars but don't want to use any familiar faces, Major Ellis' statistics can be used for any commanding officer, Graham Miller is an above average field agent, while Riley and Sam are truly exceptional field agents. If you need a scientist, use the Initiative Scientist statistics found on p. [?]. You can also use the character templates from **Chapter Two: You're in the Army Now** if you want to bring more unique agents into an episode.



SPECIAL AGENT RILEY FINN

Riley: Just ditch the chips and watch my back.

Willow: Done.

Xander: You know what he's like? He's like a cat. You know, a big jungle cat. How come I'm not like that? It's just so cool.

—5.7 *Fool for Love*

When we first met Riley Finn he was a psychology grad student at UC-Sunnydale, working as a teaching assistant for Professor Maggie Walsh. As it turned out, this was just a cover for his more important activities. Beneath his bland Clark Kent exterior, mild-mannered Riley was actually Special Agent Finn, the top field agent of the Sunnydale Initiative base. Finn led the zap'n'trap teams that located and captured hostile subterrestrials for the Initiative scientists to study. Little did Riley know that he himself was being used as a lab rat. Maggie Walsh was dosing her soldiers with chemicals as part of her attempt to produce super-soldiers. Still, Riley was a special project of hers. In many ways Walsh was a mother to Riley; Adam said that Professor Walsh taught Riley "how to think, how to feel." She even implanted behavior modification circuitry in Riley—a slave chip that allowed Adam to seize control of Agent Finn in 4.21 Primeval.

Riley met Buffy in his role as TA, little realizing that this seemingly scatterbrained student was also engaged in a war against the demons. Wacky hijinx and romance ensued. Eventually secret identities were revealed and true love bloomed. Riley briefly recruited Buffy into the Initiative, which set off a catastrophic series of events. Professor Walsh tried to have Buffy killed, just before she herself was slain by her own creation, the bio-demonoid Adam. Ultimately, Adam brought about the destruction of the Sunnydale base and the Initiative itself. Discharged and free of obligation, Riley settled in with his Slayer girlfriend.

But civilian life did not sit well with Riley. First he had a nearly fatal relapse related to Professor Walsh's chemical treatment. Next, the growing emotional distance between Riley and Buffy drove the former commando to dangerous extremes. This came to a head when Spike led Buffy to a blood den, where Riley was giving his blood to a female vampire. Around the same time, Major Ellis arrived and offered Riley a place in a new organization. Riley confronted Buffy and explained the problems that had driven him to the blood den; when they couldn't come to an understanding, he helicoptered off into the night.

Riley next returned to Sunnydale on a mission for his new organization—tracking a Suvolte breeder to the Hellmouth. The black ops life agreed with him; he





seemed to have recovered the optimistic cheer that was his character's strength in Season Four. This may have been due to the influence of his new wife, Sam Finn. The encounter was a surprise of Buffy, who was going through something of a second-death crisis. But things ended on a positive note. The Suvolte and its spawn were destroyed, and Riley and Sam took off on another exciting mission.

Riley is an energetic and optimistic person—a cheerful Midwestern boy. In Season Five he suffered from an emotional slump and a period of disillusionment with the government, but he's gotten his groove back now. In the past, he was a little too trusting where the government was concerned; he may or may not be keeping a closer eye on the leaders of his new agency than he did on the Initiative brass. Of course, there is one more issue with Riley Finn. Adam said that both he and Riley were Professor Walsh's "art," and that she had plans for the two of them. In 5.4 Out of My Mind, Graham stated that Riley had received more chemical treatments than the other commandos. Did Maggie's plans die with Adam—or are there still more secrets waiting to be revealed?

RILEY SEASONAL ADJUSTMENTS: Riley's full character sheet updates his stats for Season Six. We've also including new seasonal adjustments for Seasons Four and Five, based off of the Season Six sheet. The power is in your hands!

Riley is a well-rounded special agent with good tactical skills and command ability – even if he occasionally forgets to do things like tell the Slayer that he's trying to track the Suvolte instead of kill it. Needless to say, in Season Six his Love Drawback should apply to his wife Sam, although he still has strong feelings for Buffy.

In Season Five, all of Riley's skill values should be dropped by one. In addition, he picks up the Reckless Drawback, due to his frustration with his life and his relationship with Buffy. During the brief period when he is suffering from the severe aftereffects of Professor Walsh's drug treatments, he receives a +2 to Strength and Constitution (increasing his Life Point total to 77), but also gains the Paranoid Drawback. His Love is for Buffy; you could certainly make a case for calling it Tragic, but we'll leave that to your call.

In Season Four, Riley is all hopped up on Walsh's drugs, which were designed to increase his physical abilities. On the other hand, he's gotten tougher over the last few seasons. So the net result is that he has the same Attributes in Season Four as in Season Five and Six. In addition to the skill penalties listed for Season Five, his Gun Fu and Kung Fu should be dropped one additional level in Season Four. Also, his Occultism should be reduced to zero—the Initiative studied HSTs from a scientific perspective and had very little knowledge of the occult world. Riley was not Paranoid or Reckless in Season Four.





CHARACTER NAME	Riley Finn
CHARACTER TYPE	Experienced Hero
DESCRIPTION	

ATTRIBUTES

STRENGTH	<u>5</u>	INTELLIGENCE	<u>3</u>
DEXTERITY	<u>6</u>	PERCEPTION	<u>4</u>
CONSTITUTION	<u>4</u>	WILLPOWER	<u>4</u>

SKILLS

ACROBATICS	7	KNOWLEDGE	3
ART	0	KUNG FU	7
COMPUTERS	2	LANGUAGES	6
CRIME	6	MR. FIX-IT	3
DOCTOR	2	NOTICE	5
DRIVING	4	OCCULTISM	3
GETTING MEDIEVAL	5	SCIENCE	2
GUN FU	9	SPORTS	2
INFLUENCE	4	WILD CARD (Tactics)	4

QUALITIES

Attractiveness 2	Hard to Kill 5
Fast Reaction time	Initiative Comando
Contacts(Army/Slayer) 5/3	Nerves of Steel
Squad Leader	Situational Awareness

DRAWBACKS

Adversary (Various)	Obligation (Total)
Honorable (Minimal)	Love

USEFUL INFORMATION

INITIATIVE (DIO + DEX)

PERCEPTION (DIO + PER + NOTICE) _____

COMBAT MANEUVERS

MANEUVER	BONUS	BASE DAMAGE	NOTES
Dodge	13	-	Defence action
Kick	12	12	Bash
Jump Kick	10	18	Bash, Require acrobatic roll
Punch	13	10	Bash
Cobra	11	15	Bash
Combat Knife	11	15	Slash/Stab, as Big Knife
Taser Pistol	11	15	Bash, Knockout
Big Pistol	15	15	Bullet
Assault Rifle	15	16	Bullet; burst hit with 4 shots (damage 16)

NOTES

SUCCESS LEVELS TABLE

ROLL TOTAL	SUCCESS LEVELS	DESCRIPTION
9-10	1	ADEQUATE
11-12	2	DECENT
13-14	3	GOOD
15-16	4	VERY GOOD
17-20	5	EXCELLENT
21-23	6	EXTRAORDINARY
24-26	7	MIND-BOGGLING
27-29	8	OUTRAGEOUS
30-32	9	SUPERHEROIC
33-35	10	GOD-LIKE
+3	+1	



SAM FINN

Buffy: So, you guys do this often, you know, the whole . . . husband-and-wife tag-team demon fighting thing?

Riley: Yeah, it's what brought us together. I almost feel sorry for the Suvolte.

—6.15 *As You Were*

Sam has always had an altruistic nature. After college, she signed up with the Peace Corps. She was working at an infirmary in Central America when her group was attacked by horrible monsters. Only Sam survived. Hiding and calling on talents she didn't know that she possessed, she managed to hold out until a military squad showed up and took down the demons. A weaker person might have fled home and never looked back; instead, Sam quit the Peace Corps and signed up with the military monster squad. She had a natural flair for violence, and she was soon out in the field again; in her first firefight she met up with Riley. The two started talking about tactics, missions, and past relationships, and love blossomed. Life moves quickly in wartime, and after five months Riley and Sam were married in a commandeered military helicopter. Ever since then the Finns have been racing from one hot spot to another, fighting to make the world a safer place!

Sam is confident and cheerful. She tries to be sensitive to other people's feelings; she felt terrible when she accidentally offended Willow with a comment about magic. After a year of constant firefights and battles

with the forces of darkness, few things can scare her; but on some levels she is still a rookie. She was intimidated by the thought of actually working with the Slayer and during the Sunnydale mission she was concerned that she'd slow Buffy down. In general, Sam is calm and quietly competent person who gets things done quickly and efficiently.

SAM SEASONAL ADJUSTMENTS: Sam first appears in Season Six, but according to her talk with Buffy, she's been with the Initiative for about a year at that point. Obviously, she's a quick study—after only a year, she's ready to go toe to toe with a Suvolte demon. We know very little about her background prior to her work with the Peace Corps, but it's not unreasonable to imagine that she had been studying martial arts, either for exercise or self-defense. In any case, if you want to use a Season Five rookie Sam—prior to her marriage to Riley—drop Acrobatics and Getting Medieval scores by three, Gun Fu and Occultism by two, and all other skill values by one. The one exception is Doctor; she was working at a Peace Corps infirmary, so she probably knew what she was doing on that front. She met Riley in her first firefight; it's up to you to decide if her Love drawback comes into play.



Buffy

the vampire slayer™

roleplaying game

LIFE POINTS

DRAMA POINTS

EXPERIENCE POINTS



CHARACTER NAME Sam Finn

CHARACTER TYPE Experienced Hero

DESCRIPTION _____

ATTRIBUTES

STRENGTH	<u>4</u>	INTELLIGENCE	<u>4</u>
DEXTERITY	<u>6</u>	PERCEPTION	<u>3</u>
CONSTITUTION	<u>4</u>	WILLPOWER	<u>4</u>

SKILLS

ACROBATICS	<u>7</u>	KNOWLEDGE	<u>4</u>
ART	<u>0</u>	KUNG FU	<u>6</u>
COMPUTERS	<u>1</u>	LANGUAGES	<u>3</u>
CRIME	<u>3</u>	MR. FIX-IT	<u>1</u>
DOCTOR	<u>4</u>	NOTICE	<u>5</u>
DRIVING	<u>2</u>	OCCULTISM	<u>2</u>
GETTING MEDIEVAL	<u>6</u>	SCIENCE	<u>0</u>
GUN FU	<u>6</u>	SPORTS	<u>2</u>
INFLUENCE	<u>3</u>	WILD CARD	<u> </u>

USEFUL INFORMATION

INITIATIVE (DIO + DEX) _____

PERCEPTION (DIO + PER + NOTICE) _____

NOTES

SUCCESS LEVELS TABLE

ROLL TOTAL	SUCCESS LEVELS	DESCRIPTION
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24-26	7	MIND-BOGGLING
27-29	8	OUTRAGEOUS
30-32	9	SUPERHEROIC
33-35	10	GOD-LIKE
+3	+1	

QUALITIES

Attractiveness 3	Hard to Kill 5
Fast Reaction Time	Initiative Commando
Good Luck 3	Orphan
Ninja Girl	Situational Awareness

DRAWBACKS

Adversary (Various) 4	Obligation (Total)
Love	

COMBAT MANEUVERS

MANEUVER	BASE BONUS	DAMAGE	NOTES
Dodge	13	-	Defence Action
Kick	11	10	Bash
Jump Kick	9	15	Bash; Require Acrobatics roll
Punch	12	8	Bash
Cobra	12	12	Bash
Combat Kife	12	12	Slash/Stab, as Big Knife
Taser Pistol	12	15	Bash, Knockout
Big Pistol	12	15	Bullet
Assault Rifle	12	16	Bullet, burst hits with 4 shots (Damage 16)



MAJOR ELLIS

Riley: What do you need me for?

Ellis: I think you can handle yourself. And I always need bodies. I'm not gonna lie to you. It's the real deal. High risk, low pay, and seriously messy.

—5.10 *Into the Woods*

Major Ellis is the highest-ranking member of Riley's new agency that we know of. He's a grim, tough-as-nails officer who brooks no nonsense. He's an example of a mid-level commanding officer, acting as a liaison between the field agents and the deskbound brass who actually run the show. When necessary—as seen in 5.7 *Listening to Fear*—Ellis gets his hands dirty working in the field. As a general rule, though, Ellis is an administrator and coordinator. He recruits new agents, briefs commandos on their assignments, and relays orders from the top. Someone need a “win one for the Gipper” pep talk? Ellis is the guy to give it . . . in a suitably grim way.

If you are running a USTARU series, you may want to use Ellis as the CO for the players' squad. In addition to giving assignments or relaying intel from on high, Major Ellis would coordinate actions involving multiple squads. His Brains score reflects his perception and his tactical and motivation skills; like most of his soldiers, he has no scientific background.

GRAHAM MILLER (SEASON FIVE)

Graham: Come on, man. You know it's true. There's nothing for you here.

Riley: There's her.

Graham: Okay, right, there's her. And? You used to have a mission, and now you're what? The mission's boyfriend? Mission's true love? You belong with us.

—5.4 *Out of My Mind*

When the Initiative was shut down, Riley took the discharge. Graham apparently stuck around and joined the new program. He showed up in Sunnydale a number of times, both to help Riley and to convince his friend to return to doing what he did best. In 5.4 *Out of My Mind*, he appeared to be in charge of the squad sent to help Riley; this may mean that Graham has been promoted to squad leader.

USTARU COMMANDO

Riley: I'm a civilian.

Ellis: You're a soldier.

Riley: I quit the government a long way back.

Ellis: We're not government. We're Army.

—5.10 *Into the Woods*

We have established USTARU as the successor to the original Initiative. Its soldiers don't pretend to be college boys; instead, they fight an unceasing covert war against the forces of darkness. As a result they are slightly tougher and more heavily armed than the Season Four



Name: Major Ellis
Motivation: Keep his boys on their toes, obliterate HSTs across the world
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 3, Dex 4, Con 4, Int 4, Per 4, Will 4
Ability Scores: Muscle 12, Combat 16, Brains 15
Life Points: 47
Drama Points: 3
Special Abilities: Hard to Kill 3, Nerves of Steel, Situational Awareness

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	16	—	Defense action
Kick	15	12	Bash
Punch	16	10	Bash
Cobra	16	13	Bash
Combat Knife	16	13	Slash/stab; as Big Knife
Taser Pistol	16	9	Bash; knockout
Big Pistol	16	19	Bullet
Assault Rifle	16	20	Bullet; burst hits with 4 shots (damage 16)



Name: Graham Miller
Name: USTARU Commando
Motivation: Stop the subterrestrial threat, SIR!
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 4, Dex 4, Con 5, Int 3, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 14, Combat 16, Brains 12
Life Points: 55
Drama Points: 1-3
Special Abilities: Armor Value 14, Fast Reaction Time, Grunt, Hard to Kill 3, Nerves of Steel, Obligation (USTARU) 3

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	16	—	Defense action
Kick	15	14	Bash
Punch	16	12	Bash
Cobra	16	16	Bash
Taser Pistol	16	9	Bash; knockout
Big Pistol	16	19	Bullet
Assault Rifle	16	20	Bullet; burst hits with 4 shots (damage 16)



Name: USTARU Commando
Motivation: Stop the subterrestrial threat, SIR!
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 4, Dex 4, Con 5, Int 3, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 14, Combat 16, Brains 12
Life Points: 55
Drama Points: 1-3
Special Abilities: Armor Value 14, Fast Reaction Time, Grunt, Hard to Kill 3, Nerves of Steel, Obligation (USTARU) 3

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	16	—	Defense action
Kick	15	14	Bash
Punch	16	12	Bash
Cobra	16	16	Bash
Taser Pistol	16	9	Bash; knockout
Big Pistol	16	19	Bullet





commandos. Most USTARU commandos are no-nonsense people who are completely focused on their job—not the ideal choice if you’re looking for laughs.

When on a raid, a commando wears USTARU battle gear, which provides AV 14 protection. Assault rifles are standard issue, but a few members of a squad carry taser weapons in case a particular species of HST cannot be stopped with bullets.

USTARU SPY

Buffy: So . . . the black-ops life, it's workin' out for ya?

Riley: Don't suck.

Buffy: They got dental?

Riley (smiles): Yeah, we're covered.

—6.15 As You Were

Under Maggie Walsh, the Initiative simply trapped HSTs so the lab coats could perform experiments. The organization had little interest in global subterrestrial activities, and commandos and scientists were all that was really required to get the job done. As we've interpreted it, USTARU has a broader mandate. The new organization is dedicated to countering subterrestrial threats across the world—and these threats come in many shapes and sizes. USTARU spies may be assigned to gather intelligence about HST activities in an area or to infiltrate an enemy operation. Spies need to disguise their true nature; an undercover spy will be lightly armed and will not wear the usual USTARU battle gear.

Name: USTARU Spy

Motivation: Sneak around, drink martinis, and oh yeah, stop the subterrestrials

Critter Type: Human

Attributes: Str 3, Dex 4, Con 3, Int 3, Per 3, Will 3

Ability Scores: Muscle 12, Combat 14, Brains 14

Life Points: 43

Drama Points: 1-3

Special Abilities: +3 to Combat for Crime, +3 to Brains for Notice and Influence, Hard to Kill 3, Ninja Girl

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	14	—	Defense action
Kick	11	11	Bash
Punch	14	9	Bash
Cobra	14	12	Bash
Combat Knife	14	12	Slash/stab; as Big Knife
Taser Pistol	14	8	Bash; knockout
Pistol	14	15	Bullet





5 Hell on Earth

Riley: How do YOU explain the things we deal with, Forrest?

Forrest: They're just animals, man, plain and simple.

Granted they're a little rarer than the ones you grew up with on that little farm in Smallville...

—4.11 *Doomed*

In *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the heroes are tied to Sunnydale.

They are the guardians of the Hellmouth and they wait for trouble to come to them. USTARU squads, on the other hand, seek out danger, traveling across the world in search of threats to humanity. This chapter presents a number of organizations and villains that are ideally suited for this level of global conflict. These groups are either designed with specific geographical regions in mind—like the Seal of Solomon—or have sufficient power and influence to appear anywhere in the world. Of course, nothing's stopping you Directors from bringing one of these organizations into your Sunnydale series. The Sanguine Corporation may try to tap into the power of the Hellmouth, or Eve and Vulcan may want to recover a secret project Professor Walsh was working on at Initiative Base Three. Or perhaps it's time for Marcie the invisible girl to make a comeback, as part of a Monarch strike force...



canon alert

The material in this chapter has little or no basis in existing *BtVS* material. It's all conjecture, based on "real-world" conspiracy theories. Everyone knows the government is hiding evidence of alien contact—so what's the story on aliens in the Buffyverse? Was Roswell the site of a UFO crash, or something else entirely? In any case, we're making this stuff up—don't hold your breath waiting for the Thrones to turn up in the Buffyverse movie (don't hold your breath waiting for the movie, either—we know no more about that than you do).

As none of this material is canon, feel free to adjust it as you see fit. Just because we suggest that Monarch is the agency that runs the school for invisible children doesn't make it so. Perhaps Marcie really was picked up by the FBI. Or perhaps the agents actually worked for the Sanguine Corporation. Did Professor Walsh really work for Majestic-12 before establishing the Initiative? The truth is out there, but the final decisions are in your hands.





This chapter is divided into several sections. The Shadow Government section discusses conspiracies that are hidden within the government of the United States. It's a significant challenge for any USTARU Cast Member when the enemy turns out to be her own government. The Big Dogs material provides information on a number of powerful conspiracies scattered across the world (see p. [?]). Some of these groups may be allies; others are deadly enemies. Wildfires looks at major threats that USTARU agents may have to deal with—emergencies that have the potential to threaten entire nations (see p. [?]). The Weeds section covers smaller threats—problems that pop up on a regular basis (see p. [?]). Weeds are the equivalent of vampire nests in Sunnydale—they don't threaten the entire world, but they do kill innocent people.

THE SHADOW GOVERNMENT

Willow: It does have that icky government feel to it.

Dawn: Did you know that one time the CIA tried to kill Fidel Castro with poisonous aspirin?

—5.4 Out of My Mind

It's clear that the United States government has been aware of the existence of the supernatural for some time. The Initiative was one government-funded program dealing with subterrestrials; I.II Out of Sight, Out of Mind shows there may be others. Ultimately, it's up to you to decide the full extent of the government's power. Perhaps the Initiative was the first program decided to deal with the supernatural—or perhaps that's just what the highest-ups wanted people to think. With that in mind, let's take a look at the group that tops the list of most USTARU conspiracy buffs: Majestic-12.

MAJESTIC-12

Willow: So, so we'll just figure this out ourselves. We're experienced.

Anya: Yes, 'cause it seems like we're always dealing with creatures from outer space. Except that we don't ever do that.

—5.9 Listening to Fear

As anyone who's ever seen *The X-Files* or *Taken* knows, the government of the United States has devoted vast resources to concealing secret contact with aliens from outer space. In the infamous Area 51, military personnel are reverse-engineering flying saucer technology and studying corpses recovered from saucer crashes. Elected officials are making deals with hideous humanoid reptiles, bartering human lives for technology and power. And all of this is managed by Majestic-12, the ultra-top-secret committee set up in the wake of the Roswell UFO crash of 1947. Hidden in the shadows of the government, the agents of MJ-12 conceal all evidence of alien activity from the public.

Needless to say, these secret agents haven't done a very good job. All of this is common knowledge to any UFO nut. TV series and movies have explored the government's alien agenda, and you can order a copy of the MJ-12 documents on the Internet. But what if Majestic-12 has intentionally allowed the story to get out? What if the alien conspiracy is just a cover story designed to conceal a darker and far stranger truth? What if the Roswell "crash" was a staged event designed to take advantage of UFO fever? For the fact of the matter is that Majestic-12 doesn't deal with *otherworlds*; it deals with *underworlds*.





The true origins of Majestic-12 are shrouded in mystery. USTARU conspiracy buffs say that the government first learned about the subterrestrials in the late 19th century, after a conflict with a tribe of demons on the Western frontier. According to the stories, the United States Unnatural Protection Agency was created to coordinate military action against the forces of Hell and to keep the public from learning of this demonic threat. But over the decades, the directors of USUPA began to wonder what the country could gain from trade or friendly relations with the demon dimensions. During World War II, conflict with the German Vril Society further convinced the government that the nation needed to explore the potential of the supernatural. USUPA was completely restructured, and a new organization—Majestic-12—was placed in charge of subterrestrial relations. The Roswell incident, the ballyhooed “alien autopsy,” and other such events were created to throw any snooping reporters onto the wrong trail. Sure, people think the government is hiding flying saucers. As a result, if they see an agent talking to a reptilian humanoid they’ll assume it’s an alien. From the perspective of any government official trying to maintain his god-fearing church-going credentials (and aren’t they all), it’s a lot easier to deal with stories about little green men than concerns about government ties to Hell.

Majestic-12 is an oversight committee—a ruling cabal that manages a number of organizations dealing with different aspects of subterrestrial relations. A common theory is that the Initiative was managed by Majestic-12; many conspiracy nuts believe that Maggie Walsh was one of the members of MJ-12’s central committee. According to these stories, USTARU has broken free of MJ’s leash, and Majestic isn’t happy about it—USTARU’s actions are hurting the government’s relations with its demonic allies. Of course, some believe the exact opposite, claiming that MJ-12 sabotaged Project 314 in order to get the Initiative shut down and replaced by a new agency under Majestic control. In which case, the Cast Members might be unwitting pawns in a larger game . . .

Cast members are unlikely to run up against Majestic-12 itself; it’s a managing committee and doesn’t conduct field operations. However, they may come into conflict with one of its subordinate organizations. Monarch is its enforcement arm (see p. [?]). Vulcan handles research (see p. [?]). Project SNOWBIRD and Project BLUE BOOK both work to maintain the UFO hoax, creating fake “alien” encounters and spreading UFO stories throughout the media and pop culture. Project PLATO handles diplomatic relations with subterrestrials. There are many others—and in the fluid realm of conspiracies, new players are always coming on line while old ones morph into new entities. Feel free to add a higher profile fringe group or a deeper layer to what’s known already anytime it makes the storyline work better.

GREY

The greys are the aliens made famous in the media—the little guys with grey skin, big heads, and big black eyes. With apologies to Agent Mulder, the greys aren’t aliens; they’re telepathic demons. The greys have a tremendous interest in the acquisition of information, hence the unpleasant probing. They have also been using Earth as a place to perform dangerous or messy mystical experiments, which explains all the cattle mutilations. As it turns out, cows are the perfect sacrifices for grey magical rituals, and they just don’t have any in Greyville; whoda thunk it? In exchange for abduction rights and cow-hunting permits, Majestic-12 and Vulcan (see p. [?]) get technology (well, mystical technology) and information from the greys.

As a rule, greys are cowardly creatures who fear physical pain. A grey usually attempts to use its telepathic powers and advanced weaponry to avoid conflict; it is more likely to flee as soon as the opportunity presents itself instead of pressing for a kill. The greys are engaged in a vicious war with the reptoids (something to do with cattle rustling). MJ-12 tries to contain conflicts on Earth, but the Cast may still end up in the middle of a demonic shoot-out.

Name: Grey

Motivation: Experiment on humans and cattle, pretend to be an alien

Critter Type: Demon

Attributes: Str 1, Dex 4, Con 3, Int 4, Per 4, Will 7

Ability Scores: Muscle 8, Combat 12, Brains 15

Life Points: 26

Drama Points: 0-3

Special Abilities: Telepathy

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	10	—	Defense action
Psychotron	15	—	Illusions
Mental Disruptor	15	14	Bash, knockout



Name: Reptoid

Motivation: Make deals with the government, infiltrate human society, eat people

Critter Type: Demon

Attributes: Str 4/7, Dex 4, Con 4/6, Int 3, Per 2, Will 3

Ability Scores: Muscle 14/20, Combat 17, Brains 12

Life Points: 70

Drama Points: 5

Special Abilities: Acute Smell (in reptoid form), Demon (Reptoid), Increased Life Points, Natural Armor 2 (in reptoid form), Toxin

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	17	—	Defense action
Punch	17	13/19	Bash
Claw/Bite	17	19	Slash/stab, only in reptoid form
Venom Spit	17	8	Fire, victim blinded
Forceblade	17	17/26 or 21/32	Slash/stab or Bash
Hellbore pistol	17	40	Fire, halve opposing Armor Value

Greys typically travel about in small flying disks propelled by magical forces—the archetypical UFOs from all those '50s sci-fi flicks. Grey weapons are discussed on p. [?].

REPTOID

Another breed of demon commonly mistaken for aliens, the reptoids are another long-time ally of Majestic-12. Remember the TV mini-series “V”? That’s the general idea here—reptilian humanoids disguised as human beings. Unlike the greys, the reptoids aren’t interested in research or anal probes. All they want is wealth, comfort, and a steady supply of people-burgers. The reptoids have been hidden among humanity for centuries, and many of our wealthiest families are actually reptoid dynasties. Some stories claim that the entire English aristocracy is a reptoid front (giving an entirely new meaning to “blueblood”). Majestic-12 helps to conceal reptoid activities and brokers trade agreements between the US and the reptoids. In exchange for technology, the reptoids have been allowed to set up underground people processing plants (mmm, Soylent Green) across the United States. Who knows? Maybe the government will sell the old Sunnydale Initiative Facility to the reptoids for use as the latest franchise in the booming fast food people-burger business.

Contrary to what B-movies would have you think, reptoids do not wear latex masks. Instead, the demons have the mystical ability to assume human form. Like a werewolf, a reptoid can only assume a specific human form—it’s a whole self-image thing. A reptoid is strong and tough in human form, but gains increased Attributes in its true shape (its Life Points stay the same but are

enhanced in both forms). While in reptile form, a reptoid also gains Acute Senses (Smell/Taste), Natural Armor 2, and Claws. While in either human or reptile form, a reptoid has the ability to spit acidic venom into the eyes of a foe. This attack has a range of three yards and requires a successful Brain Shot maneuver (or the Combat Score – 4; no damage bonuses). If the attack is successful, the victim takes a base three points of damage (treat as Fire type for healing purposes). Also, the spitee is blinded and in agony for two Turns per Success Level of the attack; apply a –4 penalty to all her actions. A reptoid can only make a venom attack once every four hours.

If prepared for battle, a reptoid wears shield armor and carries a forceblade and hellbore pistol (see p. [?]). When possible, a reptoid prefers to engage enemies in hand-to-hand combat—it’s a whole “spill the hot blood of the enemy” thing. Unresolved tadpole issues, we’re guessing. Of course, the real trick about fighting reptoids is that many of them hold influential positions. The reptoid may actually be a flesh-eating monster, but if it’s also a senator or a fantastically successful teen pop star, the Cast Members are going to have a lot of security issues to deal with . . .





MONARCH

Teacher: Okay, class, let's get started. Everybody turn to page fifty-four of your texts.

*Marcie (reading title "Assassination and Infiltration"):
Cool!*

—1.11 Out of Mind, Out of Sight

Every bad thing you've ever heard about the secret government? That pretty much sums up Monarch. At the most basic level, Monarch works to cover up all Majestic activities. But it's also the networks arm of Majestic-12, and every dark secret or supernatural weapon that MJ-12 uncovers eventually finds its way into the hands of Monarch.

Aside from a highly trained corps of spies, saboteurs, and assassins armed with the latest in hell-tech weaponry (see p. [?]), Monarch makes use of invisible (and homicidal) children, chipped demons, and far worse things. Stories say that Monarch can actually implant a demon inside someone's head, set to trigger in response to a specific signal; at a moment's notice a Cast Member or anyone she knows could be transformed into a supernatural killing machine.

Monarch is the dark reflection of USTARU. Where the commandos fight to protect innocents from the forces of Hell, Monarch is only interested in pursuing the secret agenda of their hidden masters. If USTARU is working to destroy a demonic plague, Monarch tries to obtain a sample to turn into a weapon. If USTARU wants to imprison a rogue psychic, Monarch wants to recruit her. Monarch agents may be sent to assassinate people who know too much about the secret government or who prove to be a threat to the plans of Majestic—like, say, an experienced Watcher or Slayer, or a young graduate student who's learned a little too much about opening dimensional portals. USTARU protects the innocent; Monarch views innocents as tools to be used. Of course, the twist is that many Monarch agents are both human and representatives of the U.S. government. It's one thing to blast demons, but how about turning assault rifles on other human beings? USTARU agents are supposed to be the good guys—make sure you press this ethical dilemma. If the Cast is willing to kill Monarch agents in cold blood, how are they any better than this enemy?

Monarch employs a wide variety of agents, human and otherwise. Vulcan (see p. [?]) acquired many of the behavior modification specialists who used to work for the Initiative, so in addition to Monarch's sleeper demon agents, the agency also has access to demons and vampires outfitted with BeMo chips (see p. [?]). And then there are demons that have joined Monarch of their own free will; hey, it's a chance to indulge one's

bloodlust with the full support of the government. Basically, if it's in *Monster Smackdown*, it could be working for Monarch! Monarch also makes extensive use of psychic agents, drawing on the decades of research the government has invested in programs like Project Stargate. The government has had less luck with sorcerers and witches. The people in charge dislike the unpredictable nature of magic. As a result, Monarch tends to kill mystics (errr, "terminate with extreme prejudice") encountered in the field.

Monarch can call in its own commando squads—armed with powerful hell-tech weaponry—in emergencies. Still, it prefers to use guile and deception. Men in Black pose as FBI agents or representatives of other branches of the government, all of which have the authority to command local law enforcement. On killing missions, invisible assassins or sleeper demons can be harder to stop than a team of soldiers. In addition to hell-tech weaponry, Monarch agents have access to all of the equipment described in **Chapter Three: Tools of the Trade**. Monarch pioneered the use of the TEA chip (see p. [?]), and agents may make use of demon drugs or other strange devices passed down from Vulcan.

The following sections shine some light on a number of Monarch's human agents. As noted above, any sort of demon could show up working for Monarch—go with whatever best fits the needs of the Episode.

INVISIBLE ASSASSIN

Manetti: In time she'll learn to be a useful member of society again.

Marcie: Where are we going?

Doyle: Very useful.

—1.11 Out of Mind, Out of Sight

There are a lot more invisible people out there than you'd think—pretty much what makes them invisible in the first place. This psychic phenomenon seems to affect people with low self-images—people who are ignored by their peers. Eventually, after being ignored for long enough, they simply fade away. This occurs most frequently among teenagers—which suits the purposes of Monarch just fine. Ever since Majestic-12 discovered this wave of invisibility, Monarch has sought out these invisible youths. These teenagers are typically emotionally traumatized by years of neglect, and filled with anger and resentment towards the rest of the world. Monarch makes them feel important and gives them a chance at revenge against the world that ignored them. Monarch maintains a school for invisible assassins; students receive intense physical training, weapons and infiltration instruction, and a healthy dose of brainwashing to keep them loyal to Monarch.

Invisible characters can't be hit unless the attacker takes a turn to concentrate and succeeds in a Perception and Notice roll (this is how Buffy beat Marcie). Directors should modify that roll to account for the circumstances (sand on the floor, mud on the ground, misty day, etc.) and can cancel it entirely when smoke, steam, or sprinklers reveal enough of an invisible person's movement to allow her to be hit. Even with a successful Perception roll, all melee attacks against an invisible person suffer a -4 to hit. Ranged attacks are basically impossible against her.

An invisible assassin can extend her invisibility to her clothing and to small objects (knives, popguns, etc), although it takes a few hours for this to occur. Larger items remain visible—an invisible sniper can't hide her rifle, but on the other hand she's still harder to spot than a normal sniper.

The statistics below can be used for someone like Marcie Ross, the girl last seen (well, heard) in 1.11 Out of Mind, Out of Sight. Five years of intense training have turned her into a hardened killing machine. Monarch psy-ops have played on her sociopathic nature, amplifying her resentment and anger. She sees her superiors in Monarch as the only people who have ever cared about her, and killing gives her a sense of satisfaction and power. While Monarch has kept her on a busy schedule, she still intends to get back to Sunnydale some day, to take a little vengeance on her old High School classmates



MEN IN BLACK

Doyle: It would be best for you to forget this whole incident.

Buffy: Do you know that you guys are very creepy?

Doyle: Thank you for your help.

Manetti: Oh, and, uh... have a nice day.

—1.11 Out of Mind, Out of Sight

We're talking X-Files here, not Will Smith. Monarch Men in Black are cover-up specialists—agents sent in to run interference for demonic activities or to recruit potential agents. Men in Black do not have any sort of supernatural powers; their strength comes from their authority as an agent of the government. Thanks to Majestic-12 plants, Men in Black have cover identities with many other branches of the government, and can present themselves as agents of the FBI, the Secret Service, the IRS, or whatever suits the needs of the moment. This allows Men in Black to demand assistance from any local law enforcement agency—which can be a real problem

canon alert

Like everything else in this chapter, we're making stuff up here. This *could* be what happened to Marcie, but there's only one guy (and a small team of writers) who knows for sure.

Name: Invisible Hitperson
Motivation: Kill on behalf of her government masters, get revenge on everyone who ignored her
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 3, Dex 5, Con 3, Int 2, Per 3, Will 2
Ability Scores: Muscle 12, Combat 16, Brains 11
Life Points: 34
Drama Points: 3
Special Abilities: +2 to Combat for Crime rolls, Invisible

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	16	—	Defense action
Kick	15	12	Bash
Punch	16	10	Bash
Big Knife	16	13	Slash/stab
Popgun	16	13	Bullet; fitted with silencer
Microinjector	16	Varies	Damage by drug (see p. [?])
Sniper Rifle	13/19	23/25	With silencer; unbraced/braced.



Name: Classified
Motivation: Cover things up, act smug and mysterious
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 3, Dex 4, Con 2, Int 4, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 12, Combat 15, Brains 13
Life Points: 36
Drama Points: 1-3
Special Abilities: +3 to Brains for Influence rolls, Hard to Kill 2

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	15	—	Defense action
Grapple	17	—	Resisted by Dodge
Kick	14	11	Bash
Punch	15	10	Bash
Pistol	15	16	Bullet

for USTARU commandos. Human Monarch agents are nasty opponents for the Cast, but at least they know they are ratfinks. It's far worse when the Cast is up against the local sheriff and can't be sure if she's one of the bad guys or just trying to do her job as ordered by the federal authorities.

The stats given here are for a basic cover-up agent. Special agents could have TEA chips, nanodemons, or other bizarre enhancements. Men in Black are rarely assigned hell-tech weaponry—hard for an “FBI agent” to justify a wacky alien ray gun to the local cops.

MONARCH COMMANDO

Monarch prefers subtlety over brute force—but when force is the only answer, in come the commandos. Monarch commandos aren't as tough or talented as their USTARU counterparts, but they have access to hell-tech equipment. Ranking commandos may also be equipped with TEA chips or other special gear. These commandos are ruthless killers, as bad as any demon . . . of course,

that doesn't necessarily make it all right to kill them, does it?

A Monarch commando is typically equipped with combat armor (Armor Value 12), a hellbore rifle, and a forceblade (see p. [?]). If a commando is working undercover, he will be armed with a hellbore pistol, a forceblade, and reptoid shield armor (see p. [?]).

MONARCH PSYCHIC

Psychics come in many flavors. Remote viewers are usually kept locked away in secluded vaults, where they can use their powers to spy far from the distractions of daily life. More aggressive psychics include powerful telekinetics or little girls who can set things on fire. Monarch likes psychics—their powers are predictable, and if caught at an early age, they can usually be brainwashed into serving the “right” cause.

The psychic presented here is a “Telepathic Intelligence Asset”. She can maintain a mental link between up to five people, allowing a Monarch squad to communicate in

Name: Nick Furious
Motivation: Make the world safe for government-backed HSTs
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 4, Dex 4, Con 3, Int 2, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 14, Combat 16, Brains 12
Life Points: 44
Drama Points: 0-2
Special Abilities: Fast Reaction Time, Hard to Kill 2, Nerves of Steel

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	16	—	Defense action
Kick	15	14	Bash
Punch	16	12	Bash
Forceblade	16	16 or 20	Slash/stab or Bash
Hellbore Pistol	16	39	Fire, halve opponent's armor
Hellbore Rifle	16	39	Fire, halve opponent's armor



Name: Ms. Mindbender

Motivation: Obey her government masters, pry into other's secrets

Critter Type: Human

Attributes: Str 2, Dex 2, Con 2, Int 3, Per 3, Will 5

Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 9, Brains 14

Life Points: 26

Drama Points: 1-3

Special Abilities: Psychic Visions, Psychometry, the Sight, Telepathy

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	9	—	Defense action
Punch	9	5	Bash
Mental Disruptor	14	13	Bash, no defense, knockout
Psychotron	14	—	Illusions

complete silence. She can pick up mental impressions from objects that she touches. She can also attempt to read the surface thoughts of any victim she touches; to resist, the target must make a Willpower (doubled) roll and tie or exceed the psychic's Brains score. Finally, her psychic Sight allows her to see magical auras or to recognize the true nature of creatures she examines (demon, human, robot, etc). Typically she goes unarmed, but she may be equipped with a psychotron or mental disruptor for special assignments (see p. [?]).

Like the invisible assassin, the psychic has been brainwashed from an early age and considers Monarch's agenda to be her own. Years of reading thoughts have caused her to become cold and cynical—she believes that everyone lies and cheats, and she may as well enjoy her power. While she is blindly loyal to Monarch, her employers may have equipped her with a neural shutoff chip (see p. [?]). A number of psychic agents have turned against Monarch in the past, and they prefer to take no chances.

SLEEPER AGENT

Majestic-12 has been working on behavior modification techniques for many years. Maggie Walsh pioneered the use of BeMo chips to control subterrestrials, but both Vulcan and Fleta had been developing techniques to control human minds since the first days of the Cold War. The most disturbing form of "Monarch programming" does not involve technology of any sort. The first stage of the treatment involves severe psychic trauma, designed to splinter the victim's identity—artificially creating multiple personalities. Then the programmers perform mystical rituals that bind demons to each of the alternate personalities. Each personality is conditioned to become active in response to certain stimuli. The result? Possession on command. When the alternate personality is triggered, the demon takes over the body; when it has completed its mission, it slips back into the unconscious.

As a general rule, a sleeper agent has no recollection of events that occurred while one of her demons is in control of her body. However, the demons have access to all of her memories. So an alternate personality may be set up for the express purpose of spying on the sleeper agent; once a day, the demon may take over to send a message to her Monarch masters, keeping them posted of recent activities.

Different demons are used for different purposes, and these creatures have different powers and abilities when they are in control of the body. These include:

- * Alpha demons are observers; these are the spirits that watch the actions of the host and report back to the controller. An alpha demon does not have any special abilities.

- * Beta demons are succubi and incubi; they are seductive spirits that can be used in covert operations or to gain blackmail footage of prominent individuals. While under the influence of a beta demon, an agent gains +2 Attractiveness (on top of any existing levels) and +2 Influence. If her Influence level is still below five, it is raised to five. However, beta demons hate combat; reduce Getting Medieval, Gun Fu, and Kung Fu by one while a beta is in control.

- * Delta demons are vicious killers. While under the influence of a delta, the victim gains +4 to all physical statistics and a +2 to all combat skills (with a minimum value of four); depending on the spirit, she may actually manifest claws and fangs.

- * Omega demons are suicide spirits. The sole purpose of an omega spirit is to kill its host body. It usually attempts to be subtle—leaving evidence indicating that the victim took her life of her own free will—but in dire circumstances it simply tries to jump out of a window or throw the victim in front of a car. An omega demon does not provide its host with any special abilities.

All sleeper agents are vulnerable to holy water and crosses, just like vampires; however, they do not suffer



Name: Delta Demon
Motivation: Live normal life until unexpectedly transformed into demon assassin
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 6, Dex 6, Con 6, Int 2, Per 4, Will 4
Ability Scores: Muscle 18, Combat 18, Brains 10
Life Points: 58
Drama Points: 1-3
Special Abilities: Claws (optional), Vulnerable to holy water and crosses

Maneuvers			
Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	18	—	Defense action
Grapple	20	—	Resisted by Dodge
Punch	18	17	Bash
Claws	18	17	Slash/stab
Big Knife	18	23	Slash/stab

any ill effects from sunlight. Religious items have no effect on a sleeper unless one of her demon personalities is actively in control of her body.

Curing a sleeper agent requires long-term program of intense deprogramming and exorcism. If the sleeper has an omega spirit, it constantly attempts to kill the host to prevent deprogramming. For every week of therapy, the victim can make a Willpower (doubled) roll; if she is successful, one of her alternate personalities is destroyed. It's up to you to decide how many demons she's carrying around in her head.

Sleeper agents present USTARU characters with two major challenges. The first is that you never know who might be carrying a demon; maybe your commanding officer is secretly reporting to Monarch! The second problem is that the host of the demons is a complete innocent. Can you find a way to stop the sleeper agent without killing her—and while you're at it, keep her from killing herself?

VULCAN

Riley: We're drawing up a plan for world domination. The key element? Coffee makers that think.

—4.22 *Restless*

Get on the web and check out “secret government” and you'll run into a variety of sinister paranormal projects. MKULTRA. ARTICHOKE. Stargate. According to the stories, the government has been studying mind control, psychic powers, and alien technology for decades. But according to the serious conspiracy nuts, all of these projects are just shadows of the true occult research agency: Vulcan. These rumors claim that Vulcan is the arm of Majestic-12 that integrates magical acquisitions

with human science, seeking to reverse engineer demonic “technology” into a form that scientists can quantify and understand. Vulcan provides Monarch and other government agencies with new forms of technology—advanced weapons and vehicles that most believe to be based on alien technology, but that are in fact magical in nature.

Vulcan is a support agency; the Vulcan lab coats supply the other arms of Majestic-12 with nifty gadgets and weapons. If your cast ends up breaking into a Vulcan base, use the statistics for the Initiative scientists (p. [?]) for Vulcan personnel. In point of fact, many of the scientists who survived the destruction of the Initiative were absorbed into Vulcan. According to the stories, the Initiative was Maggie Walsh's private alternative to Vulcan; Walsh didn't want to share power with the directors of the research division. If this is true, the story may have an ironic ending. Conspiracy nuts like to point out that when Initiative Base Three was scuttled, Maggie Walsh's cyber-zombie corpse was never found. Tied to this is the fact that Vulcan has a new star researcher known only as “Eve.” If the stories are true, Maggie Walsh may have ended up working for Vulcan after all . .

EVE

Maggie Walsh was a brilliant woman in a highly dangerous position. Perhaps she didn't expect her “son” Adam to betray her. But who's to say that she didn't have some other back-up plan in place in preparation for her untimely demise? Perhaps she made an electronic back-up of her personality and memories. Or perhaps her secret lab contained devices designed to reanimate her—devices that Adam had overridden, but which came online again once Buffy destroyed him. Whatever the truth of the matter, Vulcan has its very own bio-demonoid



scientist: Eve. Perhaps she is the reincarnation of Maggie Walsh; this would certainly give Riley Finn something to think about. Or perhaps she is a new model based on Walsh's designs. Or maybe they made her out of one of Adam's ribs. Adam: The Next Generation!

Whatever her origins, Eve is designed to be the Big Bad of a season dealing with Majestic. Eve is a tremendous asset to Vulcan; in addition to her natural genius, she has an intuitive grasp of hell-tech (it sort of comes with being part-demon, part-toaster). But the leaders of Majestic don't want a repeat of the 314 disaster. As a result, Vulcan scientists have implanted a kill switch in Eve—if she steps out of line, the touch of a button can cause her uranium power source to shut down. But you know how it is—when have scientists ever been able to control the monster? Eve has upgraded her systems and now draws on a mystical energy source—the same source of power used by hellbore weapons. Now she's biding her time and making plans. Eve is a little more subtle than Adams; she intends to seize control of Majestic-12 from within, and to manipulate Monarch into doing her dirty work for her. When she's ready, she'll emerge with her bio-demonoid army—but she intends to start a global war between humans before she unleashes her new race.

Eve is the T-1000 to Adam's Schwarzenegger. While not as physically imposing as her predecessor, she has access to hell-tech devices and is even harder to destroy. Eve has implanted reptoid shield armor, a built-in forceblade and hellbore cannon, and all sorts of other goodies. Due to her advanced nanodemon repair systems she recovers her Constitution value in Life Points every minute, and she can only be permanently destroyed if her connection to her mystical power source is severed. Implanted sensors allow her to analyze any sort of spell or use of mystical energy within her field of view. She's

also got nightvision, the ability to intercept radio transmissions, and other handy tricks. Her Ectoplasmic Disruptor plays havoc with ongoing spells—if her Combat Score exceeds the casting roll of the caster, the spell is broken. Basically, she's a Swiss Army Knife from hell—if you come up with any other fun gadget ideas, stick 'em on her!

HELL-TECH

Lots of geeks like to spout the phrase "sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic"—but folks rarely point out the other side of the coin, which is that advanced magic looks a lot like technology. There are a number of demon dimensions that have merged superscience and the art of enchanting, producing weapons and tools that appear to be technological in nature but defy all known laws of physics. Vulcan's primary mission is to study hell-tech obtained from subterrestrial allies and find ways to integrate it into modern society. For the most part this just means that groups like Monarch get to have cool ray guns. But who knows? That whole clipper chip system for monitoring computer activity could be a little demon waiting to go in your system. It would explain a lot of those annoying crashes . . .

This section provides details on a handful of devices that may be found in the possession of Monarch agents or "alien" races like the greys or reptoids. This is only the tip of the iceberg—expand away!

All hell-tech is unreliable. On a roll of one, it fails to operate properly (you can decide on any other nasty repercussions). Repairing hell-tech is a tricky business—make an Intelligence and Mr. Fix-It or Occultism roll (using whichever of the two skills has the *low* value).

Name: Eve

Motivation: Cause global war, replace humanity

Critter Type: Demon/Cyborg/Undead Hybrid

Attributes: Str 8, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 8, Per 7, Will 7

Ability Scores: Muscle 22, Combat 25, Brains 20

Life Points: 250

Drama Points: 5

Special Abilities: Armor Value 18 (30 vs bullets), Enhanced Senses, Implanted Weapons, Increased Life Points, Nanodemons, Resistance (Magical Effects) 10

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	25	—	Defense action
Punch	25	23	Bash
Forceblade	25	31 or 39	Slash/stab or Bash
Hellbore Cannon	25	52	Fire, halve AV, burst hits with 7 shots (damage 45)
EP Disruptor	25	—	Disrupts ongoing spells

Forceblade: This versatile tool is the preferred melee weapon of the reptoids. It is a short metal tube, designed to be gripped in one hand. With the touch of a button and a whispered invocation, it produces a solid blade of pure force. The weapon has two length settings—the shorter setting inflicts a base damage of Strength x 3 Slash/stab, the longer Strength x 4 Bash. When the blade is deactivated the handle fits easily into a pocket. Also, the weapon is made of mystical ceramics and does not show up on metal detectors. Using a forceblade requires a Dexterity and Getting Medieval roll, or the Combat Score.

Hellbore Pistol: The standard reptoid sidearm (also commonly used by Monarch agents), a hellbore pistol looks like a sci-fi ray gun but actually shoots bolts of mystical energy. A hellbore pistol inflicts 35 points of base fire damage, and any mundane armor protects with only half of its Armor Value. Magical defenses—spells or Reptoid shield armor—protect at full value. Typically, armored demon skin is not considered to be a “magical defense”, but you get to make the final call on this.

Hellbore weaponry draws its power from abyssal furnaces and never runs out of shots. Handy, huh? All hellbore weaponry uses Dexterity and Gun Fu or the Combat Score to determine the success or failure of an attack.

Hellbore Rifle: A bigger version of the hellbore pistol, this puppy has the same benefits but inflicts 35 points of base damage (Fire type) and uses rifle attack ranges. A hellbore rifle is capable of automatic fire, but it has Clip Value 1 when used for burst fire. Hellbore rifles are made for the reptoid military and are rarely seen on Earth; Monarch may pull them out for big engagements.

Hellbore Cannon: A Gatling gun from hell—literally! Strength 5 or better is necessary to wield a hellbore cannon, and Dexterity is reduced by one while doing so (this limitation does not apply to cybernetically implanted weapons). A hellbore cannon inflicts 45 points of base damage (Fire type), is capable of automatic fire with no Clip Value, and has a range of 50/250/750 yards. Otherwise, it has the same capacities as the hellbore pistol.

Mental Disruptor: This odd-looking handgun is the standard weapon of the greys. It draws on the telepathic abilities of the wielder and creates a burst of mental static that can disorient or incapacitate the target. In order to use a mental disruptor, the wielder must have Psychic Visions, Telepathy, Telekinesis, or another psychic ability. To attack, use Willpower and Wild Card (Psychic Focus) or the Brains Score. This is resisted by a Willpower (doubled) roll or the Brains Score. If it hits, the weapon inflicts 10 points of base damage that ignores all armor. In addition, the victim must make a Willpower (doubled)

roll at a penalty of three plus the Success Levels of the attack; on a failure, she is knocked out. Even if she remains conscious she suffers a –2 penalty to all actions for the next four Turns. A mental disruptor has a maximum range of 50 yards, with no range penalty. The attack cannot be detected by any normal senses, but anyone in the area with psychic powers can feel the burst of mental energy.

Mind Shield: This light metallic belt is studded with glowing crystal spheres. The wearer is shielded from psychic attacks. She receives a +5 to any rolls to resist direct psychic manipulation (telepathy, hypnosis, or the attack of a mental disruptor). Any psychic damage is reduced by five points.

Nanodemons: Hey! Here’s a great idea—inject your body full of microscopic demons! On the plus side, you get an astoundingly accelerated healing rate—one Life Point per Constitution level per minute and recovery from drugs and tranquilizers at the same rate as a vampire. On the down side, there’s little demons running around your system. Mental Problems (Cruelty or Delusions) are the usual result as they restructure your brain, and who knows what physical changes they’ll make in the long run?

If you’ve got nanodemons, you can be killed, but unless you are dismembered you will eventually come back to life. This is a good trick for that annoying recurring villain—hey, he’s human, we shouldn’t have to cut his head off—now how’d he survive that? Eve (p. [?]) is an exception to the dismemberment rule; unless her connection to her power source is severed, she always reforms.

Psychic Transmitter: You know how the CIA is always supposed to be beaming messages into people’s heads? This is what they use to do it, although it’s actually Monarch that’s doing the beaming. A psychic transmitter is a crystal-studded cube about the size of a shoebox, with a large glowing sphere embedded on one side. A character with psychic powers can use the transmitter to establish a mental link with anyone she can see, anyone she is familiar with, or anyone that has been tagged with a mental beacon (a common element in Vulcan-made neural chips). The user can project telepathic messages into the mind of the victim; the victim can choose not to respond, but she’ll keep hearing the “voice” of the transmitter. This is a good way to convince someone that she is going insane, or to manipulate someone who is already insane. For those who possess the Telepathy Quality, thoughts can be read through this link, as if they were able to touch the target.

Psychotron: Another handgun used by the greys, this is identical to the mental disruptor except for the effects of the attack. The shooter uses Willpower and Gun Fu or



the Brains Score. Anyone struck by a psychotron must make a Willpower (doubled) roll at a penalty of five minus the Success Levels of the attack. If she fails, a mental link is formed between the shooter and the victim. The shooter can project images into her mind just like the level 1 Illusion power (see BtVS Corebook, p. 175). The effect lasts as long as the shooter continues to concentrate on her victim. The shooter may perform other actions while maintaining the illusion, but she suffers a -4 penalty on any rolls. A psychotron may be used on multiple opponents, but the same illusion must be projected into the minds of all victims.

Reptoid Shield Armor: This is a metallic harness that wraps across the chest and can be worn under normal clothing. When activated, it projects a glowing field of energy around the body. This provides an Armor Value 18 against Bullet damage, and an Armor Value 9 against all other forms of damage. Even if the harness is worn under clothing, the energy field projects a good inch out from the body and is obvious to any observers.

BIG DOGS

Trick: There's a reason these vengeance crusades are out of style. It's the modern vampire who sees the big picture.

—3.3 Faith, Hope, and Trick

There's a whole world beyond Sunnydale—a world filled with heroes, villains, and powerful conspiracies. As commando teams travel across the globe, they may run afoul of familiar gangs like the Order of Taraka, the Knights of Byzantium, or even the Watchers Council. This section presents a few entirely new organizations—global power groups that could be valuable allies or deadly enemies, depending on the circumstances. It's up to you to decide which of these groups are active in your incarnation of the Buffyverse, and which are only rumors.



FLETA

Sam: We think they're gonna be sold on the black market.

There are some foreign military powers that would love to have their own Suvolte. You could never train it, but drop it on an urban population . . .

Riley: And it cleanses the area.

—6.15 As You Were

If you accept the existence of Majestic-12, it's not hard to believe that other governments are engaged in occult and psychic research. A mystical arms race raged in the shadows of the Cold War, and Majestic-12 was always struggling to stay ahead of its Soviet counterpart, Volshebnaya Fleta. A top-secret branch of the science directorate, Fleta was initially focused on mind control, chemical conditioning, and psychic powers—rumors of Fleta's experiments were one of the driving forces behind the American MKULTRA program. Over time Fleta began to place a greater focus on demons. Unlike Maggie Walsh, the Fleta scientists had no interest in cybernetics or creating new species. They were interested in transforming existing demons into supernatural bioweapons, creatures that could be unleashed to pacify enemy territories.

For decades, the scientists of Fleta were actually significantly ahead of their U.S. counterparts. But the organization suffered a major blow in 1983, when its central research facility in Kovalensk was destroyed (see *Monster Smackdown*, p. 10). The break-up of the Soviet Union was the final nail in Fleta's coffin. Still, like the nuclear arsenal of the USSR, Fleta's work remained behind . . . as much of a threat as ever.

So, what has become of Fleta in the new regime? There are a few obvious possibilities. Fleta demon wranglers may have gone freelance, selling their sinister bioweapons on the black market. As Sam Finn notes, there are lots of countries that would pay a pretty penny for a pet Suvolte demon. Other Fleta units may have gone over to the Russian mob, using their mystical expertise to advance in the criminal underworld. There is also the chance that a Russian Riley exists out there—that a unit of Fleta commandos has chosen to devote their skills and knowledge to protecting their people from the dangers they have seen. These Fleta commandos could provide unexpected reinforcements for USTARU agents fighting in Eastern Europe; they might even help the Cast to fight against the less noble elements of Fleta.

Fleta personnel are virtually identical to their counterparts in USTARU. Use the USTARU commando (p. [?]) as a base for a Fleta soldier, the Initiative scientist (p. [?]) as a model for a Fleta researcher, and the USTARU spy (p. [?]) or Man in Black (p. [?]) for a Fleta espionage agent. However, Fleta agents do not





have access to the same level of resources as USTARU or Majestic-12. As freelancers, Fleta commandos can acquire basic military technology, but they can't get all the cool Bond gear. While most of the Fleta psychic agents were likely killed when the program was shut down, or have since been slain, a few probably escaped. These fugitives may have gone freelance, fled the country, or signed up with another unit.

Towards the end, Fleta focused its resources on demonic bioweapons; as a result, any creature from *Monster Smackdown* could turn up, chipped to serve Fleta masters. Rumors tell of hidden caches of hibernating demons scattered around the world, waiting to be activated; dealing with one of these demon doomsday squads could be a Code One task for a USTARU team. In addition, Fleta scientists pioneered many techniques for controlling humans. As with Monarch, there could be any number of Fleta sleeper agents scattered around the world, also waiting to be activated. Fleta never developed the "sleeper demon" technique. While the same general effect could be produced with chemicals and psychic conditioning, Fleta mole agents do not receive the increased skills or statistics possessed by a Monarch sleeper.

SANGUINE

Master: Vampires, come! Behold the technical wonder, which is about to alter the very fabric of our society. Some have argued that such an advancement goes against our nature. They claim that death is our art. I say to them . . . Well, I don't say anything to them because I kill them. Undeniably we are the world's superior race. Yet we have always been too parochial, too bound by the mindless routine of the predator. Hunt and kill, hunt and kill. Titillating? Yes. Practical? Hardly.

—3.9 *The Wish*

As a rule, vampires are creatures of tradition. Some belong to ancient orders like El Eliminati or the Brotherhood of Aurelius. Others form small packs, with few goals beyond hunt, bleed, repeat. Most vampires prefer the primal thrill of fighting with fists and teeth; it is the rare bloodsucker who can get behind guns and computers. But there are always exceptions. As Spike has shown, some vampires like Earth and aren't all that keen to bring back the Old Ones. Season Three brought Mr. Trick to Sunnydale; Trick was a vampire who was down with the 21st century and everything it had to offer. Trick was a solo operator and was killed by the Slayers after he fixed his star to Mayor Wilkins. But Trick was not the only vampire to appreciate the wonders of the modern world. Let's suppose that over the last thirty years a group of forward thinking vampires gathered

together to establish a cabal for the new millennium—an organization known as the Sanguine Corporation.

Despite its name, Sanguine is not actually an existing corporation; you won't find it on the stock exchange. That sort of thing tends to act as a big bullseye for groups like USTARU and the Thrones. Instead, Sanguine is an alliance of influential vampire tycoons, each with her own corporate holdings. Any successful company—from Microsoft to Eden Studios—could secretly be part of Sanguine. The directors of Sanguine have used their pooled resources to establish outposts across the world—blood banks, all-you-can-eat moron bars, and other vampire conveniences. Sanguine is an extremely selective organization; members consider most demons (and vampires) to be hopelessly short-sighted and mired in ancient traditions. Only the most forward-thinking undead are allowed to join the organization. That said, Sanguine also maintains an active recruiting program and "acquires" humans who have skills or resources that could be useful to the corporation. The directors have used this hostile takeover technique to seize control of a variety of powerful companies. They have also converted talented scientists for their R&D efforts and created "undeath squads" from mercenaries and highly trained human commandos.

Sanguine has no interest in destroying the world or raising ancient demons. On the contrary, Sanguine may act to prevent other demons from interfering with their plans. The directors of Sanguine only care about two things: blood and money. A lack of apocalyptic fervor, however, does not make them all cuddly. They have been responsible for countless atrocities across the world. Sanguine subsidiaries maintain Asian sweatshops that double as blood vaults. After humans are worked to death, they are bled dry to serve their corporate masters. Some believe that numerous ethnic cleansing campaigns have been instigated by Sanguine, which purchased the lives (and blood) of the persecuted minorities.

Sanguine vampires are rarely involved in occult schemes—but there is more than enough horror in the mundane world. The trouble is that Sanguine vampires are well hidden and well entrenched. Even if you discover that the president of ReallyBigCorp is one of the Sanguine directors, it's not so easy to just walk into the corporate headquarters and gun him down. And even if you do, will this solve the problem? Or will his human subordinates continue to carry out his policies, not realizing the true activities that the company is involved in? And how long until Sanguine reabsorbs the company, converting the new president to the undead? Destroying Sanguine is a serious challenge; it may be that the best the commandos can do is to shut down its most horrific operations.



RICHARD LO

Richard Lo is the chief of Sanguine's board of directors. A cutthroat businessman, he had already built his own software empire when he was turned in a random vamp attack. His sire was just trying to build a little gang of his own—but Lo's competitive nature and keen business sense survived his demonic transition and he had no intention of lurking in the alleys with a group of smelly thugs. Slipping away, Richard returned to his old life. He soon saw the potential in immortality and decided that it was time to make a few long-term investments. Thus, Sanguine was born. One of Richard's personal contributions to Sanguine has been to romanticize the image of the vampire in modern media. He is the secret godfather of the modern goth movement; his subsidiaries have promoted novels and roleplaying games about tragic vampire antiheroes, TV shows involving vampires with souls, and much more. He's particularly proud of that whole "Lonely Ones" thing . . . it's astonishing what the kids these days will believe.

Richard is a handsome Asian-American man in his early thirties. Before he devoted himself to business, he was a brilliant software engineer and he views all challenges as an exercise in logic. He has an indomitable will and is a masterful negotiator, preferring to resolve all conflicts with calm diplomacy. When debate proves insufficient Richard turns to his powers of hypnosis, which are remarkably well developed for such a young vampire. He despises combat; if he can't talk his way out of a conflict or get a commando squad to fight on his behalf, he uses his hypnotic powers to turn his enemies against one another, and then flees in the confusion. He wears a well-tailored Sanguine power suit (see p. [?]) and does not carry any sort of weaponry.

DR. KATYA TERINA

Katya Terina was a scientist at Initiative Base Three in Sunnydale; she assisted Dr. Angleman and Professor Walsh in the Xenomorphic Behavior Modification program. When Adam released the subterranean prisoners, Katya was bled and turned by one of the escaped vampires. Her sire was killed in the battle—for some reason her bite marks escaped notice and Katya rose in an unmarked military grave. She found herself face-to-face with a Sanguine recruiter. Word of the Sunnydale disaster had leaked out throughout the demonic community, and Sanguine is always interested in new technical talent.

Now Katya works for one of Sanguine's front companies, providing the vampire corporation with the fruits of her Initiative research. It's up to you to decide exactly what her full talents are. Perhaps she's a cybernetics specialist—the commandos have to deal with vampires with built-in assault rifles. Perhaps she's just a chip technician—giving the vampires a chance to chip humans for a change. Whatever her skills, Katya is devoted to her research. With physical immortality on her side, she intends to make the discoveries that will shape the new millennium.

Katya has no formal combat training; if she can't talk her way out of a fight she attempts to flee. In a commando campaign, you can make things more interesting by saying that Katya was a close friend (or even a lover) of any Cast Member who worked with the Initiative. Can he kill her now, after he let her die in the battle of 314? Oh, the angst!

Name: Richard Lo

Motivation: Crush the competition

Critter Type: Vampire

Attributes: Str 5, Dex 5, Con 4, Int 6, Per 4, Will 6

Ability Scores: Muscle 16, Combat 14, Brains 18

Life Points: 61

Drama Points: 8

Special Abilities: +2 Brains for Influence rolls, Attractiveness +2,

Hard to Kill 5, Hypnosis 3, Iron Mind (immune to telepathy or other mind affecting powers), Vampire

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Bite	16	19	Must Grapple first; no defense action
Dodge	14	—	Defense action
Grapple	16	—	Resisted by Dodge
Hypnosis	20	—	Target hesitates
Hypnosis	19	—	Creates illusion
Hypnosis	18	—	Controls target
Punch	14	13	Bash

Name: Dr. Katya Terina
Motivation: Scientific immortality (she's already got the other kind)
Critter Type: Vampire
Attributes: Str 5, Dex 4, Con 4, Int 6, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 16, Combat 12, Brains 16
Life Points: 55
Drama Points: 8
Special Abilities: +2 Brains for Science rolls, Attractiveness +1, Hard to Kill 3, Vampire

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Bite	14	17	Must Grapple first; no defense action
Dodge	12	—	Defense action
Grapple	14	—	Resisted by Dodge
Kick	11	14	Bash
Punch	12	12	Bash

SANGVINE COMMANDO

While Sanguine prefers to compete on the economic battlefield, it maintains a corps of highly skilled undead commandos for times when violence is the ideal solution. Drawn from the Special Forces and other elite units, these undeath squads are armed with the best equipment that money can buy, including Sanguine commando armor (p. [?]). They strike with military precision and vampiric speed, letting nothing distract them from their goal. Note that a vampire wearing commando armor has her face completely covered—as a result she cannot bite in combat. Of course, that's why she carries the assault rifle. Ironically, Sanguine commandos also use TABI blades (p. [?]); as it turns out, the military contractor assigned to make the blades is a Sanguine subsidiary.

SANGVINE EXECUTIVE

This is an example of a typical Sanguine vampire. She's not especially strong or fast—as vampires go, at least—but she is clever and fantastically wealthy. In her case, the pen is mightier than the sword, because she can buy a private army by signing a check. The executive prefers to avoid combat at all costs, letting her vampire or human bodyguards fight on her behalf. Why should she go hunting for blood when she's got five different vintages on tap in her office?

SANGVINE GEAR

Trick: Why do they always gotta be using swords? It's called an Uzi, ya chump! Could have saved your ass right about now.

—3.14 Bad Girls

Name: Sgt. Bloodsucker
Motivation: Blood and guts, especially blood
Critter Type: Vampire
Attributes: Str 7, Dex 6, Con 5, Int 2, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 20, Combat 17, Brains 11
Life Points: 70
Drama Points: 1-3
Special Abilities: Fast Reaction Time, Hard to Kill 4, Vampire

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	17	—	Defense action
Grapple	19	—	Resisted by Dodge
Kick	16	20	Bash
Punch	17	19	Bash
TABI	17	40	Slash/stab
Big Pistol	17	20	Bullet
Assault Rifle	17	21	Bullet, burst hits with 5 shots (damage 16)



Name: Ms. Weasel
Motivation: Suck the lifeblood from smaller companies and smaller company executives
Critter Type: Vampire
Attributes: Str 5, Dex 4, Con 4, Int 3, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 16, Combat II, Brains 13
Life Points: 52
Drama Points: 2-4
Special Abilities: +2 to Brains for Influence rolls, Vampire

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Bite	13	18	Must Grapple first; no defense action
Dodge	11	—	Defense action
Grapple	13	—	Resisted by Dodge
Kick	10	13	Bash
Punch	11	12	Bash

If money is power, Sanguine is a force to be reckoned with. Between the vast wealth of multiple megacorporations and a long-time policy of “recruiting” top scientific talents, Sanguine agents have access to almost anything money can buy. A Sanguine executive’s manor is packed with state-of-the-art security equipment, and her guards are equipped with combat armor and assault rifles. Due to the work of people like Katya Terina, Sanguine may even have access to the bizarre tech items discussed in **Chapter Three: Tools of the Trade**; it’s up to you to decide how far they’ve gotten with this and what they would do with neural chips. While we’re talking about equipment, here’s a few extra goodies cooked up for the vampire who appreciates modern technology.

Gas Grenade: Hey! Vampires don’t need to breathe! Sooo, gas grenades make highly effective weapons against living opponents. A gas grenade works just like a normal grenade (see p. [?]), but spreads a cloud of poisonous vapor five yards from the point of impact. Those caught in the cloud (who aren’t undead or wearing a gas mask) make a Constitution (doubled) check to hold their breath; a cumulative –1 penalty is applied for each Turn the breath is maintained. Once the check is failed, the gas takes effect. A gas grenade can hold any of the venoms described under Dart Ammunition (p. [?]), or you can produce your own nefarious toxins.

Holy Venom: You know that whole “cyanide capsule in the tooth” thing? Same idea, but for vampires. Just the thing for the Big Bad who has everything. If one of your toadies gets captured, just trigger this hidden reservoir of holy water and POW! 60 points of holy damage. If Terina comes up with a Neural Shutdown chip that works on vampires, this old-fashioned device will probably be set aside. Why kill a perfectly good commando if you can just put her into a coma?

Sanguine Commando Armor: The battle dress of a Sanguine commando includes a tough black bodysuit, goggles to protect the eyes, and ballistic armor that covers the upper torso and rises up in a high collar around the wearer’s neck. The suit provides complete protection from sunlight, and the goggles protect the wearer from flashbangs or other blinding weapons. The material of the suit has Armor Value 3, but the small breastplate and collar are designed to protect the vampire’s greatest weaknesses; the wearer gains Armor Value 20 against any attack that targets the heart or neck. The water-repellent material also provides protection from holy water (at least, if the water is applied externally). In addition, the all-black outfit grants +1 bonus to any stealth-related roll, as long as the wearer is in a shadowy environment. Finally, the outfit has a built-in thermal web. When activated, the vampire appears to have a normal human body temperature for purposes of infrared and temperature scans.

Sanguine Power Suit: No, this isn’t mechanized armor—it’s the latest in undead business attire. Aside from being extremely stylish and available in the latest power colors (possibly granting a +1 to Influence checks in big business meetings), a power suit has a microwave Kevlar pad over the heart. This grants the wearer with Armor Value 8 against attacks aimed at the heart. The latest model—available only to directors and other extremely wealthy individuals—has an extra twist. Using a quantum flux generator, Dr. Terina has managed to create an artificial reflection—a holographic shadow superimposed over the wearer. This shadow shows up in mirrors, which can be quite useful when you have to go conduct business in a mirrored office. This quantum field also maintains a steady human body temperature around the wearer, allowing her to fool bioscanners—although an observant scanner (at least five Success Levels on the scan roll) will notice that the temperature reading isn’t perfectly matched up to the wearer’s physical location.





THE SEAL OF SOLOMON

Giles: Tell me about this spell you performed.

Willow: Oh, okay, first of all? So scary. Like, the Blair Witch would have had to watch like this (covers her eyes). And, and, and this giant snake came out my mouth and there was all this energy crackling, and this pack of demons interrupted, but I totally kept it together. And then, the next thing you know? (triumphant) Buffy.

Giles: You're a very stupid girl.

—6.4 Flooded

Many ancient secrets are buried beneath the sands of the Middle East. Powerful spirits yearn to be released from millennia of imprisonment. Relics and artifacts of many religions are hidden beside the records of ancient rituals—crumbling scrolls describing spells best forgotten. And these long-forgotten dangers are buried beneath a vicious conflict that rages to the present day. In this region torn apart by prejudice and terrorism, the Seal of Solomon is an unlikely alliance—a coalition of Jewish cabbalists and Muslim mystics who fight to protect the Middle East from supernatural threats. Despite their cultural and religious differences, the sorcerers of the Seal recognize that the battle between human and demon supersedes any mortal disputes. To a man, they believe that humanity must stand together in the final struggle between light and darkness. While the Seal of Solomon is primarily concerned with inhuman forces—demons and djinn who have broken free from ancient bonds—they also act to prevent acts of mystical terrorism, apprehending rogue sorcerers who would bring magic to bear on either side of the conflict.

The Seal of Solomon is fundamentally quite similar to USTARU. Both organizations fight to protect the innocent from demons and dark magic. However, their

methods are completely different. The Seal has no interest in science and little access to military hardware. The Seal of Solomon lacks any semblance of government backing; on the contrary, many local governments would consider the strange alliance to be a subversive threat. The Seal also generally restricts its actions to the Middle East. However, if a USTARU squad is on a mission in the Gulf region, there is always the chance that a Seal team will show up to provide assistance. Of course, in grand television tradition, the two groups that should be allies could be turned against one another by a misunderstanding or lack of communication . . .

The sorcerers of the Seal use a powerful binding ritual to force demons and djinn into their service. This ritual is a well-kept secret that requires sacred relics to perform, so the Cast shouldn't plan on building a demon army any time soon. Almost any demon could be found in the service of the Seal, but the ritual does not work on vampires or other hybrids (ILTEP-altered commandos, Monarch sleeper demons, and so on). Of course, it is always possible that a bound spirit will find a way to break free of the effects of the spell—in which case we're talking big trouble in Sealsville.

GHUL

A lesser djinn bound into service, the ghul is an evil spirit that haunts deserts and tombs, preying on the weak and unwary. It is not especially powerful, but its ability to dematerialize into a cloud of dark mist makes it an effective scout and spy. A ghul must obey any direct order from its Seal controller, but it always looks for ways to twist the letter of the command. If it is allowed to speak, it always seeks to spread discord and strife among those around it.

A ghul is a gaunt, skeletal figure formed from smoke and shadow. It can alter its height, varying between four

Name: Ghul

Motivation: Escape from captivity, spread chaos and havoc

Critter Type: Demon

Attributes: Str 6, Dex 4, Con 4, Int 2, Per 4, Will 4

Ability Scores: Muscle 18, Combat 14, Brains 12

Life Points: 50

Drama Points: 2-4

Special Abilities: Claws, Demon (Ghul), Disembody, Immortal, Invulnerability (Minor) (half damage from non-magic attacks), Regeneration (four Life Points per minute)

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	14	—	Defense action
Grapple	16	—	Resisted by Dodge
Claw	14	16	Slash/stab
Punch	14	16	Bash



Name: Golem
Motivation: Serve and protect
Critter Type: Magical Construct
Attributes: Str 12, Dex 3, Con 10, Int 1, Per 1, Will 5
Ability Scores: Muscle 30, Combat 20, Brains 8
Life Points: 120
Drama Points: 0
Special Abilities: Armor Value 25, Increased Life Points, Invulnerability (Partial: unaffected by poison, disease, or mind-controlling magics), Resistance (Pain) 10

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Break Neck	30	57	Must grapple first
Grapple	22	—	Resisted by Dodge
Punch	20	29	Bash

and nine feet in size. In its disembodied state it can fly at a rate of 60 mph. It is somewhat insubstantial at all times—it takes half damage from all normal attacks regardless of damage type. It takes full damage from spells or blessed weapons (regardless of the religion involved). It regenerates four Life Points per minute and can only be permanently destroyed by spells or blessed weapons.

GOLEM

You remember when the school bully used to take your lunch money, and you wished that you had a really big strong guy who would take care of you and beat up anyone who got in your way? Well, what you needed was your very own golem. A large, rough-hewn humanoid figure formed from clay and animated through cabbalistic rituals, a golem possesses immense strength, but is slow-moving and lacks the potential for creative thought. A golem can be set to patrol an area or to protect a specific individual or group of people. More

complex tasks require real-time direction from its creator or a designated controller. Unlike the ghul or other bound demons, the golem is not being forced to act against its wishes. It will not turn against its masters—on the other hand, it will never take any action unless specifically ordered to do so.

A golem does not need to eat, drink, sleep, or breathe. It cannot be affected by poison or disease, or mind-controlled in any way. A golem does not heal; if it is damaged, it must be repaired through magical means.

SEAL SORCERER

If you cross paths with a Seal operation, you may never see a human face; most of the field agents employed by the Seal of Solomon are bound spirits. But when a mission requires that human touch—or when a demon cannot be trusted, even one bound by magic—the Seal dispatches a member of the inner council. Ibrahim is an example of a Seal counselor—a powerful sorcerer who may accompany enslaved spirits or act on his own.

Name: Ibrahim Dhakir
Motivation: Protect the innocent from infernal forces, keep magic out of the hands of the foolish
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 2, Dex 3, Con 2, Int 4, Per 3, Will 6
Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 16, Brains 14
Life Points: 41
Drama Points: 4
Special Abilities: +2 to Brains for Occultism rolls, Hard to Kill 5, Resistance (Demonic Powers) 4, The Sight, Sorcery 6

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	16	—	Defense action
Punch	16	8	Bash
Magic	22	Varies	By spell
Telekinesis	18	*	Slash/stab or Bash * 2 times Success Levels



Ibrahim has noble motives, but he can be annoyingly arrogant. He is extremely critical of any Cast member who uses magic, playing the whole “you tamper with forces you cannot begin to understand” riff. If you want to use the Seal in a Sunnydale campaign, Ibrahim could show up to investigate the building menace of the Djinn, possibly blaming the Cast for letting things get as bad as they have. Ibrahim could provide useful information on the history of the Djinn or help to spoil its current plot. Or perhaps Ibrahim has gone rogue, and now seeks to free the Djinn in exchange for mystical power . . .

THE FLIP SIDE

While the Seal of Solomon is intended to be an ally for USTARU, it could make a Grade A villain with a few modifications.

Reap What You Sow: Solomon was a master of demons—but his descendants may not have his power. Perhaps a few demons escape from the binding spells and take possession of their former “masters.” Seizing control of the Seal, these evil spirits plot to release a host of demons buried beneath the desert sands. Can the Cast find a way to stop this threat while sparing the lives of the possessed sorcerers?

City of Brass: The Seal is an alliance of sorcerers. But they do not seek to protect the modern world; instead they intend to replace it. The sorcerers of the Seal despise modern technology and weapons of war. They are paving the way for a great ritual that will revive the golden age of Solomon—dissolving all evidence of the modern world into smoke and shadows, returning to a time when magic was the greatest force in the world. When the Cast encounters members of the Seal, will they realize what the sorcerers are up to? If not—if the world is shifted—can the Cast Members find a way to reverse the spell and return the world to the way it was before? Should they?

Sanctuary: The Cast has been working with a freelance mystic—a Guest Star who has provided valuable assistance in multiple Episodes. At the start of an Episode, the terrified mystic appears before the Cast. She is being pursued by a Seal team, who seek to capture her and execute her for her role in an act of magical terrorism—something she did in her youth and now regrets. Will the Cast protect the fugitive, even if it means fighting the Seal? Or will they turn her over to face the harsh justice that awaits her?

THE THRONES

Master: We are defined by the things we fear. This symbol (moves near cross), these two planks of wood, it confounds me. Suffuses me with mortal dread.

—1.10 Nightmares

If you’ve got an Occult Library and too much time on your hands, you can turn up some interesting stories. According to one legend, when the Knights of Malta were at the height of their power, the Pope chose a handful of their warriors, selecting champions for their strength and piety. These knights were to form a new order and receive special training “that they might directly combat the forces of Hell, when it should stretch its hand over the Earth.” After leaving the Knights of Malta, these holy warriors disappeared from the pages of history. Most historians assume that the Order of the Thrones never actually existed—that it is a myth or a papal dream that was never fully realized. Nothing could be further from the truth. For centuries, the Thrones have been engaged in a brutal crusade against the forces of darkness. Unlike the Knights of Byzantium, the Thrones have updated their methods. Throne weaponry combines ancient tradition and modern technology. Over the years, the Thrones have developed stakethrowers, mirror monoculares, holy water cannons, wooden bullets, holy oil, silver garrotes, holy vapor grenades, and sanctifier darts. Holy bullets are only the latest addition to the Throne arsenal. The Thrones also have access to a few blessed weapons, which can be extremely useful when you have to, say, destroy the demon Acatlha.

The Thrones are a secret and independent order. Their resources originated with Church funds, but that was centuries ago. The hierarchy of the modern Vatican has no knowledge of their activities. The goals of the organization are quite similar to those of USTARU, and the Cast may find themselves fighting alongside the Thrones. In general the Thrones are noble people willing to lay down their lives in the service of the light. However, like the Knights of Byzantium, the Thrones are fanatics—and this can cause problems. The Thrones intend to exterminate every demon that has found its way to Earth, and they abhor the use of all forms of magic. A Throne commando sees no difference between a werewolf and a vampire (aside from the fact that you use silver ammo on one and wooden bullets on the other), and psychic powers are generally lumped together with witchcraft. If the Cast includes chipped HSTs, primals, psychics, or any sort of sorcerer, it’s going to be difficult to have an entirely comfortable encounter with the Thrones. The best you can hope for is suspicion; worst case, they turn out to be more dangerous than your original quarry.



The exact role of the Thrones in your Series is your call. If you wish, they can be a valuable and powerful ally. The Thrones could turn up to help defeat a powerful Big Bad or supply the Cast with unusual and useful weapons (like holy bullets and holy oil) as the result of a smaller encounter. On the other hand, the Thrones could come to the conclusion that USTARU is a tainted organization that must be destroyed. Certainly the Thrones would consider Maggie Walsh's research to be an abomination. If they think that USTARU is continuing this work, they would strike without mercy. And what if it turns out that they are right—that the USTARU brass are secretly continuing 314? Or, if you want to take things in a completely different direction, the Thrones could actually be demons themselves. Many demons are entirely unaffected by holy symbols and the like; perhaps the Thrones are trying to eliminate all other demons and witches as the first step to claiming the Earth as their own.

A Throne strike team generally includes one exorcist and three or four commandos, highly skilled at stealth and combat. All Throne operations are planned out with military precision, and the team's weapons is chosen to take advantage of the supernatural weaknesses of their prey.

THRONE COMMANDO

You might wonder where the Thrones get their recruits. Classifieds don't work that well: "Position: Professional demon hunter. Must be pious. Military experience a plus." Like USTARU, the Thrones occasionally recruit people who have survived demon attacks. However, for the most part the Thrones are a hereditary order. A few villages—mostly in Europe—are secretly Throne training camps where children are taught

to fight the forces of darkness as soon as they can walk. As a result, Thrones are highly resistant to demonic influences and can face the worst horrors of Hell without flinching. They are familiar with the occult world, but they have a lopsided view of it. A Throne's training in Occultism is designed to teach her to fight demons, not to help her understand them.

In a full assault, a Throne commando wears combat armor (Armor Value 12). On a covert mission, she wears a bulletproof vest (Armor Value 10, five vs. Slash/stab attacks). Depending on the nature of the enemy, a Throne may be equipped with holy bullets, sanctifier darts, holy vapor grenades, or holy oil.

THRONE EXORCIST

Willow: Buffy, you were right. The time for touchy-feely communication is passed. I've done some homework and found the only solution is the final solution.

Xander: Nuke the school? I like that.

Willow: Not quite. Exorcism.

Cordelia: Are you crazy? I saw that movie! Even the priest died.

—2.19 I Only Have Eyes For You

Silver bullets and holy water sprayers are good for your everyday demon shoot, but when it comes down to witch fu and the serious demon mojo it's time to call in the exorcist. Contrary to most movies—where the priest typically just pisses the big bad off—Throne exorcists are extremely good at what they do, which is to banish evil spirits and contain dark magicks (using the Throne dictionary, that translates to "all magic"). The typical exorcist is extremely grim and serious, always looking for signs of evil and corruption in everyone she meets. And

Name: Throne Commando
Motivation: Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 4, Dex 4, Con 4, Int 2, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 14, Combat 16, Brains 10
Life Points: 54
Drama Points: 1-3
Special Abilities: +3 to Brains for Occultism rolls, Fast Reaction Time, Hard to Kill 4, Nerves of Steel, Resistance (Demonic Powers) 4

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	16	—	Defense action
Punch	16	12	Bash
Big Stake	16	16	Slash/stab
Big Pistol	16	19	Bullet
Needler	16	Varies	Damage by ammunition (p. [?])
Assault Rifle	16	20	Bullet, burst hits with 4 shots (16 damage)



Name: Throne Exorcist
Motivation: Banish the forces of Hell! Overcome the servants of evil!
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 2, Dex 3, Con 2, Int 4, Per 3, Will 6
Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 11, Brains 14
Life Points: 26
Drama Points: 2-4
Special Abilities: +3 to Brains for Occultism rolls, Nerves of Steel, Resistance (Demonic Powers) 5, Sorcery 4

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	11	—	Defense action
Punch	11	6	Bash
Pistol	11	14	Bullet
Magic	21	Varies	By spell; dispel/exorcism only
Telekinesis	16	2 times Success Levels	Slash/stab or Bash

whatever you do DON'T get her started on religion, unless you have a few hours to kill. A Throne squad generally contains one exorcist. She may not be in command of the squad, but her spiritual authority is such that most of the commandos defer to her judgment—even over that of the appointed commander.

When on an assault mission, an exorcist wears the same armor as her accompanying commandos. She is lightly armed, due to her lack of combat training. A Throne exorcist has high levels of Sorcery and Occultism, but she can only produce effects that harm demons or evil spirits, or that counter the spells of other sorcerers. If you can't somehow justify a ritual as "exorcism," there's no deal.

THE VRIL SOCIETY

Willow: Giles, I did what I had to do. I did what nobody else could do.

Giles: Oh, there are others in this world who can do what you did. You just don't want to meet them.

—6.4 Flooded

You don't have to be a conspiracy nut to know that the Nazis were interested in the occult—all the proof is right there in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. But if you *are* a conspiracy nut, you might be familiar with the Vril Society, a cult that is said to have counted Adolf Hitler among its members. Members of the society believe in a subterranean realm ruled by a secret master race, the Vril-Ya. Long ago, these beings learned to control the Vril Force, a form of energy that links all things. Depending on your point of view, the Vril-Ya are either the ultimate sorcerers or creepy cave-dwelling Jedi Knights. To make an extremely long story somewhat short, the members of the Vril Society believe that the Vril-Ya will one day come to the surface and conquer humanity. Those who have mastered the Vril Force will

rule alongside the Vril-Ya. The members of the society seek to attain the mental and physical discipline required to master the Vril Force. This doesn't sound so bad . . . if you imagine it involving meditation and yoga and stuff. Unfortunately, it's not nearly that pretty. Vril researchers are always looking for shortcuts to perfection and performed horrible experiments on human subjects during World War II. There's also the little problems of motives. Sooner or later the Vril-Ya will rise to rule the world—and the way the members of the society see things, why not get the party started early? Many occultists believe that Hitler's astounding charisma was a manifestation of Vril-based powers. They also claim that Vril agents were active during World War II; if the society had completed its work, the resulting mystical war machine might have been unstoppable.

As it was, the Nazi juggernaut was defeated—and the Vril Society was shattered along with the German army. Both the United States and Soviet Union were intrigued by the occult powers that had been used in the war, and most captured Vril adepts were recruited by Fleta (p. [?]) or Majestic-12 (p. [?]). Others went into hiding, aided by supporters across the world. Many aristocrats and industrialists had joined the Society, intending to maintain their power in the coming age; many students of the Vril took refuge among these powerful families.

It took decades for the survivors of the Vril Society to reestablish a network of communication and to plan for the future. Now the society is back on its feet and ready to return to work. Vril supporters are scattered around the globe, and include captains of industry, powerful politicians, and neo-Nazi groups. You think you're better than the average Joe? You want to unlock your secret mystic potential? You'd rather be a ruler than one of the ruled? Then you might be qualified to join the Vril Society—provided your racial background checks out, of course.



Vril manipulation is not exactly the same as magic—it crosses the line between sorcery, psychic power, and science. When a Vril adept turns her enemy into a rat, she does it by restructuring molecules as opposed to invoking Hecate. To keep things simple, we're going to use the same system for both Magic and Vril manipulation. However, Vril users don't invoke spirits, and they use weird Vril focusing devices instead of stinky herbs and voodoo dolls. A Vril adept has one advantage over a traditional witch; she can reuse the same spell multiple times without taking the usual -1 penalty. However, there may be effects that the adept just can't produce. For example, she might be able to mimic Thespia's Demon Detection without calling on Thespia, by reaching out with her mind and sensing demonic emanations. But something like Revoke Invitation or a spell to return a vampire's soul—well, that gets into weird metaphysical stuff that the Vril doesn't cover.

Vampires and other undead creatures cannot manipulate Vril energy. As a result, Vril adepts consider the undead to be especially inferior creatures.

Below are statistics for a typical Vril adept and Zaeya, a potential Big Bad for a season focusing on the Vril Society. The society also makes use of common mercenaries; use the statistics for the Initiative Commando (p. [?]) for these soldiers.

VRIL ADEPT

Cordelia: What are they, some kind of cult or something?

Buffy: Yeah, a psycho cult.

—2.5 Reptile Boy

The human mind is not designed to channel Vril energy, and an adept must slowly restructure her neural pathways to increase her power. Under normal circumstances, this process could take centuries—which is why the society is constantly searching for ways to artificially accelerate this mystical evolution.

The typical Vril adept is arrogant and considers herself to be superior to all those around her. She is, after all, a herald of the coming master race. She may be an old war criminal or a young scion of a wealthy family. Her power comes from her ability to manipulate Vril energy—her weakness is her tendency to underestimate her opponents. She is prone to gloating, revealing her plans to her apparently helpless foes, and all the other classic master villain shticks. Adepts who have gone through experimental treatments may have other mental problems. Cruelty comes standard on the Vril adept, but many are available with a delusions or paranoia package option.

The statistics below are for an experienced adept. A new recruit might only have a single level of Sorcery, while a master would have additional levels of Sorcery and Willpower.

VRIL BLAST

QUICK CAST: Yes

POWER LEVEL: 2

REQUIREMENTS: A Vril channeling rod—a slender metal wand inscribed with mystical insignia.

EFFECT: Instead of packing heat, a Vril adept usually relies on this power—an unpleasant effect that psychically disrupts the victim's molecules. A rippling distortion in the air strikes the target, inflicting two times Willpower points of damage per Success Level. The Vril-Ya can use a more powerful version of this effect to vaporize entire cities with the wave of a staff—luckily Zaeya didn't bring along her Nuking Staff.

ASPECT ANALYSIS: Recitation (+1), can be Quick Cast (+1), noticeable scope (one target) (+1), way-rare ingredients (wand) (-3), severe effect (+2).

Name: Vril Adept
Motivation: Master the Vril Force, conquer humanity, gloat
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 2, Dex 3, Con 3, Int 4, Per 3, Will 4
Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 10, Brains 12
Life Points: 30
Drama Points: 3-5
Special Abilities: +3 to Brains for Occultism rolls, Sorcery 3

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	10	—	Defense action
Telekinesis	13	2 times Success Levels	Slash/stab or Bash
Vril Blast	18	40	Single target
Vril Manipulation	18	Varies	By spell

ZAeya, Mistress of the VrIL

You think Evil Willow is bad news? Meet Zaeya. Back around 1920, the occultists who would become the founding members of the VrIL Society made contact with the subterranean realm of A-VrIL. While there was no question that the VrIL-Ya could easily conquer this surface world, the long-lived horrors were in no hurry to act. Instead, they sent a young observer from the College of Sages to study the surface world and to decide if conquest would be worth the effort.

Zaeya has been observing the Earth for over eighty years. While she expects members of the VrIL Society to obey her every command, she does not particularly care about the Society. During World War II, she watched as the Society was destroyed and then watched as it regrouped. As far as Zaeya is concerned, the VrIL adepts are trained monkeys—it's cute the way their behavior almost seems capable, but it's not like you can really expect great things from them. Zaeya is the harbinger of the VrIL-Ya conquest, and with a thought she could set the end of human civilization in motion. But she isn't in any real hurry. She's virtually immortal, and Earth is like an enormous tank of sea monkeys—she's intrigued by humanity and curious to see what they'll do next. There are many human concepts that are completely alien to the VrIL-Ya. Crime is unknown among her people, and war only occurs when the VrIL-Ya conquer another race. Zaeya likes to watch human wars, almost as much as she likes to watch soap operas (like Spike, she's a big fan of *Passions*). For their part, the VrIL adepts are terrified of Zaeya. Their powers are nothing next to those of the VrIL-Ya, and if the conquest occurred tomorrow the members of the VrIL Society would be enslaved along with everyone else. As a result, the adepts do everything they can to keep Zaeya interested in continuing her observation.

As a Big Bad, Zaeya is a slightly erratic villain. She likes to set up conflicts between organizations like USTARU and Monarch, both to watch the show and to study human potential. Her other schemes appear to be totally random—she may cast a plague upon a city, give the citizens blue skin, or recreate the events of a recent episode of *Passions*, just to see how people will react. Sometimes her actions are strange, and sometimes they are deadly. But she's not just comic relief—if she ever tires of her little games, one telepathic message is all that's required to start the VrIL-Ya invasion. Can the Cast find a way to keep her interested in Earth—or to defeat her without calling down the end of the world?

Zaeya is a tall, athletic woman with deep black eyes, reddish skin, and long black hair. She is very beautiful, but there is something about her that makes normal humans uneasy—a subliminal sense of the power that she wields. She's no Slayer, but she is surprisingly strong and fast; while not superhuman, all VrIL-Ya are in peak physical condition. Her other physical abilities—her high Life Points and remarkable rate of regeneration—reflect her innate ability to manipulate VrIL energy. She heals her Constitution value in Life Points every Turn, and recovers from the effects of drugs within moments. Regeneration is an unconscious act that continues even after she is technically dead; destroying Zaeya for good requires the use of magic or superscience, disrupting her spiritual energy as well as destroying her body.

While her physical abilities are impressive, it's the VrIL Force that makes Zaeya a threat. In addition to her remarkably high Sorcery level, she does not suffer the cumulative -2 penalty human mages are saddled with after casting spells. Zaeya can toss energy around all day if she feels like it; luckily, she rarely does. If a Cast Member wants to stay alive around Zaeya, the trick is to maintain the VrIL-Ya's interest. If Zaeya becomes

Name: Zaeya

Motivation: Observe humanity, decide when to unleash the Apocalypse

Critter Type: VrIL-Ya

Attributes: Str 6, Dex 6, Con 6, Int 8, Per 6, Will 10

Ability Scores: Muscle 18, Combat 18, Brains 22

Life Points: 120

Drama Points: 8

Special Abilities: Attractiveness +5, Increased Life Points, Iron Mind (immune to telepathy or other mind affecting powers), Regeneration (6 Life Points per Turn), Resistance (Magical Effects) 8, Sorcery 10

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	18	—	Defense action
Punch	18	17	Bash
Telekinesis	26	2 times Success Levels	Slash/stab or Bash
VrIL Blast	32	180	Single target spell
VrIL Manipulation	32	Varies	By spell



interested in the Cast, she may start to think of them as a soap opera. She'll introduce plot twists, but as long as they maintain her interest she won't cancel the show.

OH, THE HORRID WAYS

The Vril Society can serve a number of roles within a Series:

Straightforward Enemy: In hidden labs around the world, Vril researchers are performing horrific experiments on human subjects. Vril insurgents are encouraging racial tensions. Adepts are searching for powerful magical relics and weapons in preparation for the conquest to come. The Cast must raid the labs, expose the plots, and reach the Holy Grail before the bad guys. Get out your Indy hat!

Subtle Foe: Many Vril agents were recruited by Fleta and Majestic-12 after World War II. Where have these adepts ended up, and what sort of power do they have now? Monarch, Fleta, Vulcan, or even USTARU itself—any of these groups could be under the influence of the Vril Society. What if the Cast's commanding officer is a Vril insurgent? What if USTARU itself is a tool of the society, being used to destroy any supernatural opposition to the coming of the Vril-Ya?

Angsty Background Stuff: Even if you don't want to get into the whole "hidden conspiracy manipulating USTARU" thing, there are other ways to use the Society. An occult researcher or freelancer who has been working with the Cast could turn out to be a former member of the Society. She truly regrets her actions as a member of the Society, but can she ever truly redeem herself for the horrors she inflicted upon innocent souls? What if active Vril adepts seek to kill her before she can reveal any information about the Society to outsiders? It should also be noted that Maggie Walsh's program of xenomorphic human enhancement had some similarities to the goals of the Vril Society. Was the Initiative a Vril tool, and if so, was Walsh involved or was she an unwitting dupe?



WEEDS

Ellis: We have a Code One in Belize. A demon tribe is taking apart missionaries in the rain forest down there.

—5.10 *Into the Woods*

The Big Dogs and the branches of the Shadow Government are powerful organizations that the Cast cannot destroy with a single blow. With a concentrated effort, the Cast could cripple one of the Big Dogs; over the course of a Season, they might find a way to bring down Sanguine or expose the agents of the Vril Society. On the other end of the spectrum are the missions that the USTARU grunts refer to as Weeds—isolated problems, but things that turn up over and over again. As soon as you wipe out one vampire nest, another one appears. The best you can do is to keep at it.

Here are some examples of Weed-level threats—simple ideas that could be used as the backdrop for a USTARU episode.

ALL THE DAMN VAMPIRES

Vampire Willow: You don't have to be afraid just to please me. If you're all good boys and girls, we'll make you young and strong forever and ever. We'll have fun. If you're not . . . (she bites and kills a woman). Questions? Comments?

—3.16 *Doppelgangland*

The name of the show is *Buffy the VAMPIRE Slayer*, so even in a commando series vampires should play a significant role. Vampires are the foot soldiers of the underworld, in part due to their numbers and ability to reproduce—stake one, we'll make more. USTARU and the Initiative always take the opportunity to wipe out random gangs of bloodsuckers. In addition, Monarch or most of the Big Dogs may use vampires as cannon fodder. The adepts of the Vril Society despise vampires, but they are happy to use them as tools. The Sanguine Corporation is an alliance of deadly, high-tech vampires, but they have no problem using their moronic kindred as scapegoats and sacrificial diversions. Vampires may work with Monarch or Fleta, either as full agents or under the influence of behavioral modification. Whichever way you slice it, there're a lot of vamps out there—so you'll get some good mileage out of that holy water cannon.





CULTS AND ROGUE MYSTICS

*Buffy: Let me guess—Gwendolyn Post. Not a Watcher.
Giles: Yes, she was. She was, uh, kicked out by the council
a couple of years ago for misuses of dark power. They
swear there was a memo.*

—3.7 Revelations

Vampires aren't the only ones trying to bring back the Old Ones. Some humans believe that they will gain power by bringing the mighty demons back to this world. Others make deals with demons in exchange for power—cults like the Followers of Machida or individuals like Mayor Wilkins. Some people use magic as a weapon of terror or revenge; others draw on forces they cannot control and end up doing that whole Dark Side thing. Any of these examples could draw the attention of USTARU. The cast might be sent to stop a summoning ritual, to take down a witch who has lost control of her powers, or to stop a mayor who's turned into a giant snake.

The statistics for the Vrill Adept (p. [?]) can be used for a mid-level mystic; the Seal Sorcerer (p. [?]) is a more powerful opponent. Another interesting target would be Rack's operation in Sunnydale (see *The Magic Box*, p. 24).



DEMON PESTS

Xander: Okay, so we track down the demon, find the nest, Mr. and Mrs. Finn here make with the killin', and everyone goes home happy. But seriously, married man. If forced to choose between a photographer and place settings...

—6.15 As You Were

Many subterrestrials are prone to nesting behavior. Vampires are one of the most common nesting demons; while some vamps are lone wolves, most build up a pack. Other nesting demons include Suvolte, Ghora, Hellhounds, and Bezoar. You might also find a group of Lei-Ach, Vahrall, or Miquot Clan warriors holed up in an abandoned building plotting some kind of demony plot thing. Stats for these critters can be found in *Monster Smackdown*, another fine product from the good people at Eden Studios. Taking out a pack of demons is a fairly straightforward mission; the only question is whether you're going on a bug-hunt in the middle of nowhere—in which case tracking and containing the creatures may be the biggest challenges—or whether you're fighting in a city, in which case you have to worry about civilians getting in the way.

WOLF GANGS

Willow: Oz is a werewolf.

Buffy: It's a long story.

Oz: I got bit.

Buffy: Apparently not that long.

—3.3 Faith, Hope & Trick

Life is cheap on the big city streets—and a gang can use any edge it can get. Is it any surprise that lycanthropy might actually become a fad? It's easy to spread, and with a little mental discipline, you can really raise some hell when the moon is full. Wolf gangs are a growing trend; one member of the gang gets the infection from a member of his family, and then spreads in to the other members of his crew. Sometimes wolf gangs use their supernatural powers to cripple their opposition. Other times, two wolf gangs fight for the same turf, giving a new meaning to "marking your territory." Can the Cast find a way to contain or control these teenage werewolves? Can they track the infection back to "wolf zero"?

Some wolf gangs have no control while in wolf form. These gangs roam together as a pack, but are unpredictable and a threat to all around them. Other wolf gangs are able to control their actions while in wolf form (as the six-point Werewolf Quality). These gangsters use their powers as a tool to dominate their territory.

Name: Wolf Gangster
Motivation: Party, protect your turf
Critter Type: Werewolf
Attributes: Str 3/7, Dex 3/5, Con 3/5, Int 2, Per 3, Will 2
Ability Scores: Muscle 12/20, Combat 13/15, Brains 10
Life Points: 37/61
Drama Points: 0-3
Special Abilities: Acute Senses (Smell/Taste), Hard to Kill 1, Werewolf

Name	Maneuvers		Notes
	Score	Damage	
Dodge	13/15	—	Defense action
Punch	13	9	Bash (only in human form)
Pistol	13	15	Bullet (only in human form)
Knife	13	9	Slash/stab (only in human form)
Claw/Bite	15	18	Slash/stab (only in wolf form)



WILDFIRES

Willow: Proserpexa, let the cleansing fires from the depths burn away the suffering souls and bring sweet death.

—6.22 Grave

Weeds are trouble. But the real problems are known as Wildfires—supernatural disturbances that will result in a massive death toll unless they are quickly contained. USTARU exists to counter Wildfires, responding to these deadly situations and finding some way to stop the world from coming to an end (again).

This section includes a few sample Wildfires. In addition to the four described here, a cult or rogue mystics may count as a Wildfire instead of a Weed, depending on the threat presented by the target. Andrew summoning flying monkeys is a Weed; Dark Willow calling on Proserpexa is a Wildfire.

ABYSSAL VIRUS

Giles: Cordelia may be Homerically insensitive, but she may also be right. Death and disease are, are things, possibly the ONLY things that, that Buffy cannot fight.

—2.18 Killed By Death

There are a number of different kinds of demonic possession. On the one hand, you've got your head-twisting, pea-soup-spitting action, which strikes at random but only affects one person at a time. Then you've got your vampire, who kills so that demons can take up residence in the corpses of her victims. But what about a form of possession that affects the living—just like your soup-spitter—but spreads even more quickly than vampirism? What if possession could be spread by touch—like some terrible hell-virus?

When an abyssal virus breaks out in a small village, the Cast Members are the USTARU squad closest to the scene. They are ordered to find a way to contain the infection before it spreads. An important question is where the outbreak occurs. If it is in a remote African village, it will be easier to contain than if it is in a California suburb, where the possessed have access to cars, phones, and all the other conveniences of modern technology (not to mention guns . . .). Can the Cast find a way to stop the victims from spreading the infection further without killing them? And if it comes to violence, can the Cast tell friend from foe—panicked villager from possessed victim? What if a beloved Supporting Cast Member gets infected—or if the village is the hometown of a Cast Member? What if Monarch shows up? The Cast may be able to use their help, but Monarch will certainly be looking for a sample of the “virus” to use as a spiritual bioweapon. For that matter, the possession plague may have been *created* as a weapon by Fleta or Vulcan . . .

Those infected by the virus do not gain any sort of enhanced statistics or supernatural powers. The virus is effectively one big demon, so every infectee is in constant telepathic communication with every other victim. The virus can only draw on the most general memories of its host bodies (i.e., it can remember the names of close companions, but not details of specific conversations) and it cannot use any of their skills. Victims of the virus have a value of two for Acrobatics, Notice, and all combat skills. The virus is spread through contact—if a viral victim makes a successful Grapple attack, on the following Turn she can attempt to infect her target. The intended victim must succeed at a Constitution (doubled) roll against the disease Strength 6 (doubled) to resist infection. If a Cast Member is infected, you'll probably want to take control over her and place the player in





control of a Supporting Cast Member—although you could let her skulk around trying to fool her friends, if the two of you like that sort of thing. The virus cannot infect demons or vampires.

Since the “virus” is supernatural in nature, it cannot be easily detected through technological means. If you want to make things easier for the Cast, you could let a lab coat put together a bioscanner filter to detect the microscopic demons by making a few skill rolls. A Science, Mr. Fix-It, and potentially Occultism roll must be conducted in order; each roll takes 20 minutes and suffers a –4 penalty due to the unusual nature of the disease. The coat would also need a sample of the disease (a contaminated body is good but very dangerous). As for containing or destroying the virus, a victim cannot cross an Ectoplasmic Disruptor Net (p. [?]). The virus is also highly susceptible to holy water; if a victim gets holy water on her skin, she flinches and cries out in pain. If she drinks holy water or has it injected into her, the virus is purged from her system. If the squad happens to have a holy water cannon or a crate full of sanctifier darts with them, this might not be so bad. Otherwise, the Cast must identify this weakness and find a way to get hold of a lot of holy water—and find a way to administer it to the victims without being infected themselves. If Fleta or Monarch agents are on the scene, they may know the cure and may even have a supply of holy water on hand. But both groups are more interested in studying the effects of the virus than in helping its victims; the Cast would have to obtain the information (and the holy water) by stealth or by force.

BREEDER DEMONS

Riley: We’ve been tear-assing through every jungle from Paraguay up, taking out nests. As soon as we put one Suvolte down, a dozen take its place. They’re breeders, Buffy. One turns into ten, ten becomes a hundred. This gets out of hand and there’s a war with humans?

Humans are gonna lose.

Buffy: So they’re like really mean tribbles. Sorry, I’ve been dealing with these, these geeks, it’s, it’s a whole thing.

—6.15 *As You Were*

If you’re looking for a straight-up firefight, you can always throw a mess of breeders at the squad. Creatures like Suvolte demons (as covered in the inimitable *Monster Smackdown*) reproduce at an astonishing rate. If the Cast can’t track these Sub-T’s down quickly and eliminate every last one, they can produce a legion of demons within hours. No subtlety here—the Cast just needs to hope they have enough firepower and make sure that no evil escapes their net.

DOPPELGANGERS

Anya: What’ll we do if this doesn’t work?

Xanders (in unison): Kill us both, Spock!

Buffy: They’re . . . kinda the same now.

Giles: Yes, he’s clearly a bad influence on himself.

—5.3 *The Replacement*

Seen *The Thing*? Same idea, larger scale. A doppelganger is a shapeshifting demon that devours other living creatures and then spits out a new doppelganger, which takes the form of the latest victim. A doppelganger picks up all the memories of its victim, but skills and physical attributes are replaced by those of the doppelganger. A doppelganger commando may remember passwords, but he’s not a Rambo badass.

At its heart, this is the same problem as the Abyssal Virus. The difference is that here you can go ahead and shoot the bad guys with a clear conscience—but it’s much more difficult to tell who the bad guys are. Doppelgangers are not vulnerable to holy water, and while in an assumed form a bioscanner won’t be able to tell the difference—at least, not without special modifications. There are a few differences, however. A doppelganger heals more quickly than a human. A bioscanner could be modified to detect this difference, but this would require a test subject and a few skill rolls—Doctor and Science to isolate the biological difference, and Mr. Fix-It to modify the bioscanner, with each check requiring 20 minutes and suffering –4 penalty. And, of course, the bioscanner only detects doppelgangers that are actively regenerating.

Any of the plot ideas suggested for the Abyssal Virus could also occur here. Monarch or Fleta could show up—though can you be sure that the Monarch Man in Black isn’t actually a doppelganger already? A Supporting Cast Member could be devoured and replaced, if you don’t mind losing someone. The doppelgangers spread more slowly than the virus, but there’s no cure. When you find out that a friend has been replaced, she’s gone for good.

A doppelganger has a few special abilities. It regenerates at a fast rate and quickly recovers from the effects of drugs and poisons. It can shift shape; this takes a single Turn. It can assume the form of any creature that has been in its personal food chain. If doppelganger A is disguised as a lawyer and eats a cop, it splits off doppelganger B and both A and B can assume the form of either the cop or the lawyer. A doppelganger can also do funky T-1000 stuff, like turning its hands into knives and oozing under doors. While it is in this sort of protean state it can be detected by an unmodified bioscanner (or say a person witnessing the event). Finally, doppelgangers take normal damage from all forms of attack; Bullet and Slash/stab damage is treated the same as Bash.

Name: Doppelganger
Motivation: Consume, replace, repeat
Critter Type: Demon
Attributes: Str 6, Dex 4, Con 6, Int 3, Per 3, Will 4
Ability Scores: Muscle 18, Combat 16, Brains 12
Life Points: 58
Drama Points: 2
Special Abilities: Duplication, Invulnerability (Minor), Regeneration (6 Life Points per minute), Shapeshifting

Maneuvers			
Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	16	—	Defense action
Grapple	18	—	Resisted by dodge
Natural weaponry	16	16	Slash/stab
Punch	16	16	Bash



A WRINKLE IN SPACE

Giles: The energy . . . would flow into that spot, the walls between the dimensions break down. It stops, the energy's used up, the walls come back up. Glory uses that time to get back into her own dimension, not caring that all manner of hell will be unleashed on earth in the meantime.

—5.22 *The Gift*

So there's a physics professor or a graduate student who finds a book of magic and starts to mess around with dimensional portals. Or a Hellgoddess trying to get home. Or a demon with a grudge who opens a portal just for the heck of it. Whatever the cause, there's a rip between worlds, and it's getting bigger by the hour. If something isn't done, it will eventually swallow the whole planet. On top of that, who knows what might come out

of the portal as it continues to spread? The Cast is on the scene—but how do you stop a dimensional rift from spreading?

There's no single right answer to this problem; it depends on the nature of the portal. The first challenge will be finding out what caused the dimensional rift to appear in the first place. Depending on the cause, the squad might have to locate and defeat the demon or sorcerer that is maintaining the portal, or go through the portal and destroy a relic on the other side—without getting trapped in a hell-dimension in the process. They might have to try to contain the hordes of demons swarming out of the portal while the lab coats back at base try to come up with a solution. Or they may find out that the only way to close the portal is to sacrifice a teenager—will they do it, or will they put the safety of the world on the line to try and save one innocent life?





6

Strike Force

HST

*Riley: I know all I need to know. 'We're doing good here.
Protecting the public. Removing the subterrestrial threat.
It's work worth doing.*

—4.13 *The 'T' In Team*

In the present day, the research-oriented Initiative has been replaced by a more militaristic operation,

Which, as you've probably noticed, we're calling the United States Subterrestrial Activity Response Unit (USTARU). USTARU is a small, highly mobile organization. As seen in 6.15 *As You Were*, its commando teams are in constant motion, moving from one supernatural hotspot to another. Using the latest modern weaponry and cutting-edge technology, these bold soldiers battle the forces of darkness across the entire world. The Slayer guards the Hellmouth and does stop the end of the world on a regular basis, so hey, good for her. But Sunnydale has no monopoly on demonic activity. Every day innocent people are placed in mortal danger by the forces of Hell. Demons prowl the jungles of Africa and Central America, preying on innocent tribes and missionaries. Supernatural gangs lurk in the shadows of urban sprawl. And from towering skyscrapers and hidden fortresses, demonic masterminds pull the strings of powerful conspiracies. Stopping the apocalypse is a very important job, but someone needs to get out into the field and fight the rank-and-file battles. That's where USTARU comes in. That's where your campaign can take you—Strike Force HST.

A commando series is very different from a regular Sunnydale series focusing on the Slayer and her pals. As agents of USTARU, your players travel across the world; each episode is probably set in a new location. Instead of the perils of high school, college, or the Doublemeat Palace, commandos are dealing with firefights, espionage, and supernatural conspiracies. This chapter looks to help you wrap your brain around the supernatural war in the shadows of the Buffyverse.





LOVE & ROCKETS: SETTING THE TONE

Buffy: This is the Initiative, Xander. Military guys and scientists do not make out with each other.

Xander: 'Well maybe that's wrong with the world. Ever think about that?

—4.14 *Goodbye Iowa*

In a commando series, highly trained soldiers investigate supernatural disturbances across the world and fight the powers of darkness with the latest in military hardware and technology. Even so, this is *Buffy*, not some heavily armed episode of *The X-Files*. The Buffyverse has a few basic elements: humor, horror, action, and romance. (As the man behind the show has said, the title *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* covers humor, horror, and action in one package.) *Angel* also has these same four elements. So Strike Force HST, our theoretical commando Series, needs to work in all of these as well. Let's look at each one in turn.

Action certainly isn't a problem. In a commando series, action may take center stage, and that's OK; if you're in a supernatural strike force, you'd expect to do a lot of striking. You just need to make sure that you don't forget about the other three elements—unless, of course, that's what you and your players want. Another challenge is keeping the action fresh and exciting. That's discussed later in this chapter (see p. [?]).

Horror also seems fairly straightforward. Hello, demons? Vampires? The problem is that vampires aren't necessarily that scary when you're wearing combat armor and carrying an assault rifle loaded with holy bullets. As Director, your challenge is to find ways to give your players the wiggins even if their characters have Nerves of Steel. So what if the Cast Members are armed to the teeth and loaded with combat skills. That won't help them much when they run into the victims of the Abyssal Virus (p. [?])—innocent people who can spread a demonic infection with a touch? Will the Cast Members open fire on these civilians, who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time? And what about the village that has been destroyed by the Suvolte? The Cast may be able to handle the demons—but that won't bring their victims back from the dead.

Another way to bring horror into the game is through use of the conspiracies. The human agents of Monarch can be just as horrifying as any demon, simply *because* they are human and are still committing atrocities. In the wrong hands, the power of the government can be just as sinister as any dark sorcery. They have the protection of law and enormous resources. Worse, they keep coming.

Take a few government agents down and not only are you in a world of trouble with the Feds, but there're always more severely suited gents to take their place. Likewise, the commandos may not find a lone vampire to be especially horrifying—but if she's a Sanguine executive whose chain of nursing homes are set up to slowly drain residents of their blood . . . Bleah.

Humor takes a little more effort. Once you make with the guns and the camo, it's easy to get all grim and serious. But just because you're in the army doesn't mean you have to be all "Yes SIR!" Back in the Initiative, Forrest was always a smartass, and Sam and Riley were banter-ific when they showed up in Sunnydale:

Forrest: Oh, wait a sec. Am I bursting somebody's bubble here? Maybe this is a bad time to tell you about the Easter Bunny?

—4.11 *Doomed*

Sam: Let me guess. Captain Can-Do over here (pointing at Riley) forgot to mention that this was a homing operation.

—6.15 *As You Were*

The point is that agents speak their minds and the Cast should be having fun. The Special Agent may be nominally in charge, but she's got another think coming if she expects everyone to snap to attention whenever she opens her mouth. The exception to this is the commanding officers and the bigger brass; Major Ellis isn't one for joking around. When he's on the scene you can expect things to be serious.

In addition to the occasional wisecrack and Buffyism, make sure to highlight the humor of any situation. Let's take our Sanguine executive. Sure, the idea of turning a bunch of innocent old folks into a blood farm is pretty horrific. But at the same time, the evil vampire nursing home is a fairly goofy concept. And let's play up that executive—put a "Hang in there!" kitten poster on the wall of her office, and give her a Red Cross coffee cup (filled with blood, of course). For that matter, a Sanguine executive lounge might have a water cooler filled with blood, with a pair of executives standing around talking about the best place to play night golf. For Majestic-I2, throw in a paranoid FBI agent who occasionally crosses paths with the Cast. He's been hunting MJ-I2 for years and is absolutely *convinced* that they're working with aliens; meanwhile, his cynical partner doesn't believe in aliens *or* vampires.

Romance can be difficult to work into a commando series due to the emphasis on action and the Cast's constant mobility. Still, love (tragic or otherwise) could bloom between members of the cast; failing that, you have the extra members of the squad that are under your control. You also have Guest Stars and villains. A quick





and intense romantic interlude adds poignancy to any Episode (assuming you can get over the trust issues). Perhaps one of our heroines falls for that dashing Fleta agent who keeps showing up—but is he truly trying to protect his people from evil, or is he secretly selling mystical bioweapons and engaging in acts of magical terrorism? The role of the Supporting Cast will be examined in greater detail later (see p. [?]).

In general, the goal is to keep the tone light and the story evolving. The Cast may have to deal with horrible things, but you don't want to settle into a doom'n'gloom funk—after exposing the bad, make with the action, throw in a wise-cracking bad guy, and you're back on track.

ROLE CALL:

CASTING THE SHOW

Forrest: 'We have a problem, we deal with that problem.

You know, the most important part of the equation now is that we keep said problem within the family.

Riley: 'Family? Is that what we are?'

—4.15 *This Year's Girl*

One problem with running a series during Season Four is that the Initiative is seriously big. If necessary, Riley could call on dozens of commandos; he also had to deal with Professor Walsh or Colonel McNamara breathing down his neck the instant he screwed up. That may not be your caliber of campaign. Some groups may find it more fun to play independent heroes than cogs in the machine.

A USTARU Series falls in between the true independence of the Slayer and her pals and the strict hierarchy of the Initiative. Instead of operating out of a few big underground bunkers, USTARU is organized into independent squads. This allows the organization to respond as quickly as possible to threats around the world. A squad can contain as few as two people (as shown by Riley and Sam). To give some direction, let's say the maximum sized squad is ten (more than that and roleplaying sessions become very difficult). Your players form their own squad (you can fill in the rest of the team if necessary). They have to deal with officers at the beginning of an Episode, and they have to account for major screw-ups after the fact. Still, for the most part the Cast Members are on their own—free to be the full focus of the show.

Chapter Two: You're in the Army Now has already discussed character creation and the need for versatility in a commando squad. But there are a few things you need to consider as the Director. Since a USTARU series involves constant travel, you don't get the usual Supporting Cast you'd find in Sunnydale. It's harder to build relationships with the antagonistic principal, the hunky teaching assistant, or for that matter the creepy evil mayor when one adventure is in Nepal and the next is in Cairo. However, you do have a few tools at your disposal. Consider the following:

The Brass: Someone has to give the squad orders and to relay the decisions of the secretive commanders of the USTARU. Someone needs to show up at the end to congratulate the heroes when they triumph and chew them out if they screw up. What would *Charlie's Angels* be without Charlie (well, *Angels*, but that's the point)? Every squad needs a commanding officer—a liaison with central command. This CO has an important impact on the mood of the Series. Is she grim and serious, always criticizing the cast for their failures? Is she a bright-eyed optimist with no field experience? Can the Cast Members trust her, or is she slightly shady? If you don't want to think about any of this, you can just use Major Ellis, the CO we've seen on the show (see p. [?]).

Supporting Staff: A squad can have up to ten members. Odds are that you won't have ten players—if you do, hats off to you. Otherwise, here's your chance to bring in a few Guest Stars to add some color and versatility to the group. Support staff should not take the focus off of the main Cast Members, and should generally have fewer skills or a tighter focus, but you can use them to fill gaps in the party. We've got a few examples to get you started (like you needed it, eh?).

AGENT JESSE ELLIS

The daughter of Major Ellis, Jesse Ellis is the consummate rookie. She's fresh out of training camp and hasn't actually seen a real HST yet (but she's read all the books and seen all the movies and she's totally prepared, honest). She's excited and eager to jump into the field—but she doesn't have Nerves of Steel or a particularly high Willpower, so she may panic when evilness rears its extremely ugly head. With Jesse in the squad, your players get two problems for the price of one. First, if they try to keep her out of harm's way she'll get frustrated and complain to her father. The Special Agent in charge of the squad is going to have to deal with a little dressing down from the Major. On the other hand, if something serious happens to Jesse, the team leader is going to have some SERIOUS explaining to do. Have fun!



AGENT YURI MALENKO

USTARU adventures can take the Cast across the world. This means that they are in constant need of transportation. While a plane may be important to get the Episode started, the Cast probably won't be flying around during the Episode itself—this makes spending character points on piloting something of a waste. The simpler answer is to provide the squad with a chauffeur—someone who handles transportation and adds a touch of crotchety color to the trip. Yuri constantly complains about how *he's* the one who actually makes everything possible, and yet receives no credit whatsoever, just because he isn't out there with the guns. If the party doesn't have a specialist in Mr. Fix-It or artillery, Yuri could be drafted to fill those roles—but again, he should generally stay out of sight, hanging around the helicopter and waiting for the Cast to complete the mission.

DR. SAMIRAH HASANI

So, none of your players wanted to play a scientist? No problem. Dr. Hasani is a proficient field medic and a dedicated specialist in subterrestrial research. She is a devout pacifist with no combat skills whatsoever, and like Yuri she will want to stay off of the front lines. If you need to identify a demon, translate a Sumerian scroll, or just get yourself stitched up, however, go and talk to the doctor. If she slips up and exclaims "Damn it, I'm a doctor, not a . . ." who are we to object?

SIR NIGEL ST. CLAIRE

While there are a few exceptions (like the Intel Agent, p. [?]), for the most part the USTARU brass distrust the supernatural. Very few practicing witches or shamans have been recruited into the Unit. But there are times when you've just got to have the mojo working for you, and to that end USTARU employs a number of mystical freelancers. If none of the Cast Members are capable sorcerers, the unit may be saddled with Nigel St. Claire. Nigel's family had always served with the Watchers Council, but due to an incident that he does not care to elaborate upon, Nigel was expelled from the Watchers Academy. He is a snotty sorcerer who is too fond of using dark magic, and in the long run he may become more of a threat to the squad than the demons they face. In the short term though, he is a capable mystic and well-versed in the occult world, both of which could prove to be useful in the field.

GUEST OF THE WEEK

In addition to permanent Supporting Cast Members, you may want to introduce "weekly guest stars"—specialists who are assigned to the squad for a single mission. This allows you to provide the squad with back-up in an area that is need for a particular adventure (science, sorcery, raw firepower) while also adding a colorful personality to the mix. Following the proud red-shirt tradition, it gives you a character who can die dramatically without crippling your Cast. If you want to be wacky, use celebrity actors for these roles—"With a special appearance by Angelina J. as Agent Teresa Gonnadiemessy!" Of course, popular Guest Stars can always return. Remember Silas McWeasel, who's help during the Sanguine operation was largely a hit or miss proposition? Well, now he's back as a vampire commando! This time it's personal!

canon alert

We just made all of these folks up. Maybe Major Ellis has a daughter—maybe he doesn't. Come on, you give it a try. What if Forrest had a younger brother who joined USTARU, secretly looking to get revenge on Riley for letting his brother die? See? It's easy!

BACKGROUND CHARACTERS

Depending on the nature of the Cast, you may be able to come up with interesting Supporting Cast Members tied to the backgrounds of the Cast Members. Is there a robot commando in the group? Perhaps it has a rivalry with a later model robot, who shows up occasionally. Or maybe someone who used to date the Slayer. The Special Agent's background might include a romantic tie to Dr. Katya Terina (see p. [?]), who has become a vampire and is now working for Sanguine. These sorts of relationships provide excellent material for Plots. Can the special agent find a way to save Katya's soul? Will the robot discover that his rival is working for Monarch?

VILLAINS

When you aren't spending all of your time in one town, how do you build a Big Bad for the season? **Chapter Five: Hell on Earth** provides a selection of global conspiracies—ranging from rival government agencies to vampiric megacorporations. You may want to use more than one of these organizations over the course of a Season, but you should pick one to serve as the primary villain. Because of the scope and power of these conspiracies, their influence can stretch across the entire world (or even into other worlds). The Cast may find





that what appears to be a straightforward bughunt for a rampaging demon actually involves an escaped Vulcan experiment or a Sanguine assassin. Once you've settled on a group to be the Big Bad, develop a few special agents for that organization—operatives who can play Boris and Natasha to the Cast's Rocky and Bullwinkle. Some of the Big Dogs already have stats for special agents, like Marcie the Invisible Assassin. Otherwise, just take the statistics provided for the generic agents and bump 'em up a little. The Cast may deal with Men in Black all the time, but it's that darned Monarch psychic that really gets on their nerves.

Villains, support staff, background characters, and the brass can serve many functions, adding humor, drama, and romance to a commando series. Who are the villains that the cast will face time and again? Do they trust their commander, and if so, what do they do when she's suddenly replaced by a shadier officer? What do they do when they discover that their trusty pilot has a chip in his head and has been spying for Monarch for the last seven Episodes? As the players assemble the Cast, think about what you want to do with the Season and proceed accordingly.

IN THE LINE OF FIRE

Buffy (taking three wild shots): These things? (Clubs a demon with her gun.) Never useful.

—6.15 *As You Were*

Combat is certainly a central part of a commando series—what's the point in having all that high tech weaponry if you don't get to use it? But as with any *BtVS* game, the challenge is to keep it from getting repetitive and tedious. Draw a picture with your words. Did the Sanguine commando miss the hero? Describe the blast hole behind the Cast Member, or the dirt spraying around her feet. As always, think of expression and the effects of actions. "The Sanguine executive doesn't even seem to notice that you staked her—she's more concerned with the hole in her suit. She glares at you and starts to say 'You're going to pay for this' before she explodes in a cloud of ash. Too bad—it was a nice suit."

The Clip Value system (p. [?]) is designed to keep combat moving quickly, so players don't have to keep track of every bullet they fire. It also gives you some flexibility about forcing players to switch weapons. If a Cast Member makes a bad roll, it's up to you to decide whether she just needs to take a Turn to reload (which she'll probably do) or if it's a tough jam that will take three rounds to clear (in which case she'd be better off switching to a secondary weapon). And don't forget about the Disarm maneuver! If you're tired of that sniper

using the assault rifle all the time, well, see what she does when the Suvolte rips the gun out of her grasp!

Since combat will be a big part of most Episodes, also look for ways to squeeze humor into it. Wise-cracking villains are certainly a good start, but always keep an eye out for other options. If the fight is taking place in a warehouse, what's being stored? When that grenade goes slightly off-target and blows up the crate of fish, both heroes and villains can end up slipping on fish, getting covered in fish guts (attracting the attention of stray cats for the rest of the Episode), or having to resort to using fish as improvised weapons. The gun jamming or dud grenade can also be amusing, especially when it's happening to someone else—like when the Sanguine squad leader has the drop on our heroine, makes a dramatic speech ("Now it ends, Agent Finn") and pulls the hammer on an empty chamber. D'oh!

OVERKILL AND UNDERKILL

When the squad has access to heavy weapons, things can get very ugly. As we mentioned earlier, if a Cast Member is wearing apocalypse armor and carrying an assault rifle filled with wooden bullets, a lone vampire just isn't that scary (at least until the rifle jams . . .). Grenades, TABs, and other heavy weapons let the Cast dish out a lot of damage. That's how it should be—they are an elite military unit, after all. But it's up to you to make things feel like a challenge. In part this involves the choice of villains for the Episode. In addition, you decide what equipment the squad receives for an assignment. If they start in the field, and are called to deal with a Wildfire, there may not be time to get them proper equipment. They may have run out of holy water, only have one clip each of assault rifle ammo (i.e., when you miss your Clip Value, that's it), and two grenades. This sort of situation requires the Cast to be far more cautious than if they are loaded up with sun cannons, daylight grenades, heavy armor, big assault rifles, and other goodies.

Another decision involves what degree you want the Cast to have to think about combat. If everything is well balanced, they can just charge in and shoot it out. On the other hand, if they are vastly outnumbered or outgunned, the Cast may have to put some tactics to use—setting up ambushes, sabotaging enemy weapons, separating opponents, and so on. It's really a question of what your players enjoy. Do they want to think about setting up kill zones? Or do you they just want to break down doors and get all Captain Blowed 'Em Up?



MISSION CONTROL: DIRECTING FOR COMMANDOS

Sam: You ready for Nepal, agent?

Riley: Fire-fights, bug hunts, big body counts . . . yeah, I could use a break.

—6.15 *As You Were*

So you're finally sitting down to plan out your first Season of Strike Force HST. The structure of a Season is the same as that of *Buffy*. The Season Premiere needs to introduce the Cast Members to one another and set the stage for events to come. Typically, the Cast is a newly formed USTARU squad, so it's mainly a matter of establishing character backgrounds and the chain of command. You need to put together the Supporting Cast, select your Big Bad, and come up with the major Plots for the Season. The trick is that the Cast won't be staying in one place, so everything needs to be able to move with them. The Big Bads provided in this book—Eve (p. [?]), Richard Lo (p. [?]), and Zaela (p. [?])—are all attached to major conspiracies that have the power and resources to appear anywhere in the world. Plots need to be tied to people, not locations. But while the shape of a Season is the same for both commandos and Slayerettes, the structure of an Episode is slightly different. Let's take a look.

MISSION BRIEFING: THE SETUP

As with any *Buffy RPG* Episode, a commando story needs a Setup stage, where the basic situation is laid out for the players. But since we're in the Army now, it's not just a setup—it's a mission briefing. This is where you get to set that military tone and remind the Cast that they've got a job to do, darn it.

When you're putting together an Episode, the first thing you need to do is to classify the mission. Check out the list of Mission Profiles (p. [?]) and figured out which best fits the story you have in mind. A few examples:

Code One Wildfire: The Abyssal Virus described on p. [?] is a good example. The commanding officer might also declare it a Firewall or Scrub mission, depending on whether she wanted the viral victims to be destroyed or contained. If the Cast is ordered to destroy the infected village, will they blindly follow orders? Or will they instead try to find a cure?

Code Two Salvation: A group of Miquot Clan demons are holding some Red Cross workers hostage. The demons have not offered any terms and they are killing one worker every hour. The demons are looking for a worthy foe to challenge their warrior skills, and are killing the hostages to provoke an attack from the best warriors humanity has to offer. Can the squad rescue the

hostages—with or without defeating the Miquot Clan?

Code Four Shadow: The squad is sent into an urban area to gather information on subterrestrial activity. This could be groundwork for a two-part Episode, if the squad uncovers evidence of a Sanguine operation or some other large-scale activity. Alternately, the squad could receive new orders once they have more information. If they locate a vampire nest, it becomes a simple Code Two—destroy the nest. If they instead find doppelgangers (see p. [?]) it might be upgraded to a Code Two Wildfire, with the potential for a Scrub order.

Black Eye: A group of Sanguine executives are going to be meeting at an international trade conference. The Cast Members are provided with vampire masks (p. [?]) and sent to the convention, posing as independent vampire moguls. The primary mission is to identify the Sanguine agents and learn about the current plans of the Corporation. But when a Sanguine recruiter offers one of the Cast Members a position in the company, will she take the chance to infiltrate Sanguine? This could be a critical turning point for a Season, as the Cast finally gets some insight into the plans of the enemy.

Black Hand: Having identified a Sanguine base, the squad is sent in to retrieve a relic hidden in the vaults of the corporate skyscraper. Can they get in, bypass security, replace the relic with a duplicate, and get out without being caught by the roving teams of vampire commandos?

The next question is where the Episode begins. USTARU doesn't have enormous bases like the Initiative did; instead, it has a network scattered safehouses and supply depots. The Cast may be camped out at a safehouse, they may be at the scene of their last mission, or you may even start the briefing en route. When the lights go up the squad is on a black helicopter, and we don't know what they were doing five hours earlier. Once you've set the initial stage, the commanding officer will explain the mission, either in person or via satellite link. The folks in the squad may joke around with one another, but the CO is deadly serious and demands respect from her underlings. She lays out the situation, informing the Cast of their objective and expected threats. The squad can ask questions, but as Buffy found with Maggie Walsh, the folks in charge don't like a lot of questions—in USTARU, a lot of information is on a Need To Know basis.

Once you've explained the job, the next step is to hand out equipment. Most commandos have basic gear available in all situations—a cobra, a knife, a stake, a bioscanner, and a sidearm of some sort. But as for heavy weapons and nifty gadgets, that's your call. If the squad is at a safehouse, think of this as the part of the Bond movie where they go through Q Division and get to see all the exploding umbrellas.





standard operating procedures

The equipment in **Chapter Three: Tools of the Trade** is pretty darn impressive. It's also pretty darn numerous . . . and a bit on the exotic side. For those looking to get up and running with the basics, here's some standard outfitting suggestions.

Standard

*BDU Outfit/Cap/Boots (camo, urban camo, black ops as mission profile) * Load Bearing Harness (WEB Gear)
 *Flak Jacket *Military and Cover IDs *Taser Rifle *Pistol w/ Holster (4 extra magazines)
 *Combat Utility Knife (Big Knife) *Tactical Communications Gear (w/ head set) *Flashlight
 *Compass *Bioscanner

Tracking/Hunting Operation Additions

*Map *GPS Device *Night-Vision Gear *Camouflage Kit *Snare Kit *Appropriate Hunting Weapon
 *Rope (50 ft., w/ hook)

Demolitions Operation Additions

*Demo Kit (including little clippers that cut wires so well, be they red or blue) *Explosives Detector
 *Explosives (usually C4) *Detonators *Duct Tape (always useful)

Communication Operation Additions

*SATCOM Device *GPS Device *Lap Top *Taping and Tracer Kit *Electronics Toolkit



SETUP, PART II

In a standard episode of the *Buffy RPG*, the Setup puts everything in motion. By the time the credits run, you know what you're dealing with. In *Strike Force HST*, by the time the briefing is done the Cast knows what they're *supposed* to be dealing with—but they still have to get to the scene of the crime. Perhaps Major Ellis had the facts wrong. Perhaps they were being sent into a trap, accidentally or on purpose. In any case, the squad will reach their destination and get the skinny on the real lay of the land—and that's when the action really begins.

TURNING POINTS

Once the squad is on the scene, you can start introducing the surprise twists and plot elements. All of the standard Turning Points—He's Dead Jim, We're in Deep Doodoo Now, Out of Left Field, and The Moment of Truth—are relevant in a commando series. And if you're at a loss for what to do next, throw in a fight—it's what commandos do best. Here's a few specific ideas based on the missions we described earlier:

Abyssal Virus: The squad identifies a Fleta or Monarch team on the scene—are these agents there to help, or did they release the virus in the first place? And what will the Cast do when a supporting squadmate gets infected?

Miquot Clan: One of the hostages is a close friend of one of the Cast Members. After a few initial skirmishes, the Miquot First Warrior challenges the Cast to select a champion to face him in unarmed combat; if they refuse, the friend will be killed.

Sanguine Conference: Doctor Terina (p. [?]) is attending the conference—and she will recognize any Cast Members who worked for the Initiative. This could blow the Cast's cover (unless they do some clever talking), but it also reveals the source of Sanguine's unusual technology—which could be extremely valuable information. In addition, members of other conspiracies could show up. Maybe Monarch is also trying to obtain information about Sanguine. Or perhaps the Thrones burst in just as the Cast Members are winning the trust of the vampires—which side will they take in the battle?

Black Hand: As it turns out, Monarch has sent a group of invisible agents in to steal the same relic the Cast is after. Can they deal with this unexpected threat and still achieve their goal?

THE CLIMAX

Like any Episode, it all has to come to an end eventually. In a Coded mission, this probably means a big firefight—a final showdown with the subterrestrials, with clever tactics and big weapons coming into play. In a Black mission, the final confrontation will not necessarily be physical. It could be psychological, as the Cast engages in tense negotiations with the leader of the opposing forces. Or it could be a matter of overcoming a final challenge—the Cast suspending the scout from a wire while she grabs the idol, with only seconds to go before the security system reactivates. Of course, in a Black mission you can always have a fake climax; the Cast gets the idol and gets out of the building, and they're about to pop the champagne—when suddenly the Monarch hit squad shows up, demanding that they turn over the idol or die. "There is nothing you can obtain that I cannot steal . . ."

Okay, that's a wrap! You're all set! Gas up the Hummer and load it up with stakethrowers and sun guns—it's time to take this show on the road!





7 *Monarch's New Clothes*

Willow: It must be the clothes. It's a fluke.

Xander: It's a clothes fluke, that's what it is. And there'll be no more fluking.

Willow: Not ever.

—3.5 Homecoming

Monarch's New Clothes is an Episode designed to introduce your Cast to a few of the varied organizations presented in this book.

As usual with adventures, it is strictly Director territory. All others—this is eyes-only clearance stuff!

Continuing the Seasonal arc of the Djinn introduced in the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer Corebook* and expanded in its supplements, this Episode ups the stakes as the otherworldly being seeks to expand its influence beyond the immediate vicinity of the Cast. Depending on how they resolve the situation, they may come into contact with potential allies and clues that could lead to final defeat for the Djinn.

Following on the heels of The Once and Future HST Episode in *Monster Smackdown*, which presented a mid-Season plot twist permitting our Big Bad some freedom from his extra-dimensional prison, this Episode sees him taking advantage of his new mobility. Though insubstantial, the Djinn is able to roam far and wide, assuming any shape it pleases to personally deliver its brand of terror (and continue to feed its power). Additionally, this Episode assumes that the buildup of Davot's army, and its subsequent destruction at the hands of wish-twisting Djinn, did not go unnoticed by the surviving supernatural population of the city.

If the *Monster Smackdown* Episode is not run prior to this one, some minor changes are necessary to justify the monster exodus that brings the Cast's locale to the attention of the various government groups involved. See the sidebar Which came First, the Djinn or the Hellgod? (see p. [?]) for some suggestions.

Finally, this Episode is strictly mid- to late-Season—it relies on the Cast having established a reputation for saving folks from monsters. New Supporting Cast Members who have been rescued off-screen are introduced to mitigate this problem for a Director who wishes to set this Episode early Season.





stats stat!

The Adversaries in this adventure are designed with mid- to late-first season heroes in mind. Only slight adjustments will be needed for a second season gang. For those who've survived to their third season or more, the bad guys aren't going to seem all that bad. Here's some rule of thumb adjustments for the nasty's Combat Score.

Start with a base Combat Score equal to your best fighter's Dodge bonus. For average difficulty combatants (the Monarch Commandos), add five. For wimps (the demon-suits), add two. For tough muthas (the golem), add eight. The really harsh dudes (Ibrahim, if the gang winds up fighting him after he has time to "magic" up) call for adjustments in the area of 15 (depending on how many Drama Points you want your Cast to blow through). Now, this will probably leave your White Hats in the dust (literally!) even if they are experienced. One suggestion is to create a set of bad guys based on your Hero-types' stats, and another based on the best of your White Hats. An alternative is to include one monster per two or three White Hats and one for each Hero.

Another major combat factor is gunfire. Guns (like those carried by commando types) do major damage. If your monsters are going to be facing folks with heavy weaponry (anything over a Pistol), Combat Scores of 18 or more are going to be necessary. Dodging bullets (even when possible) incurs a -4 penalty so that numbers drops significantly. At that point, only really high Armor Value or reduced damage (no doubling for bullets, for example) is going to keep the monster alive for more than a Turn.

As a final adjustment, consider giving the monsters an Armor Value of 10 or more. That keeps the damage down to a dull roar.

In the end, keep an eye on how challenging the encounters prove to be, factoring out any particularly good or bad streaks of dice rolling. If it turns out you've under- or over-estimated, racket it up or down as needed.

an army of none

You may be surprised that a book pushing the benefits of government service in the Buffyverse sets a default adventure point of view geared towards civvies. This allows those following the Djinn Series from previous books to continue with minimal changes. For those looking to show that membership has its privileges, use this situation as boot camp for a new group of USTARU recruits. We've included information in each section on ways to smooth things over for a more military-oriented Cast.

Plot Synopsis

As with all conspiracies, loyalties are fluid, the plots interweave, and things are rarely as they seem. Pay close attention, this is the only place where it's all summed up.

At the end of The Once and Future HST Episode, the Djinn is one giant step closer to escaping its imprisonment. It has decided to expand its influence out of the Cast's immediate area. What better way to do this than to subvert governmental forces?

Not all of the demons and vampires called to Davot's army got caught up in the climactic wishing and subsequent firestorm. A couple came late to the party and got a ringside seat as their sibling demons got their heads handed to them. Surmising that things were getting far too inhospitable in this town, they decided to beat feet (clawed or otherwise)—but not before drowning their troubles in several glasses of blood and yak bile at the local demon dive. As a result, their tale makes the rounds and more than a few creatures decide to take it seriously.

What follows is a mini-exodus of supernatural creatures from the immediate vicinity of the town. Enough activity, in fact, that it shows up on the radars of a couple of clandestine government agencies. A USTARU team is activated to contain or eliminate the riled-up HSTs. A Monarch team is also dispatched, with an entirely different agenda . . .

The two organizations manage to avoid running into one another at first, but a Monarch wetworks squad is decimated while making contact with a group of Fyarl demons. The one operative not mortally wounded makes a wish in desperation. Bang! The Djinn seizes upon this opportunity to deal with a few pressing issues.

First, it keenly desires corporeal form. The locks that bind its true form hold fast, so while it can access nearly the full range of its mental capacities now, the true splendor of its physical prowess remains under wraps. To be so tantalizingly close to experiencing sensation again is the embodiment of frustration! While confident its release is inevitable now, the Djinn takes steps to



accelerate its parole. It's newfound awareness has not been limited to plaguing the Cast Members. It recently discovered (or remembered) a means for implanting beings into the bodies of more powerful creatures. A few drawbacks hold back immediate implementation: it has no idea which species are the best hosts, it is unaware of how much the implanted essence may be "infected" by the tendencies of the host body, and there are precious few creatures that can match the power of the Djinn, let alone surpass it. Before the Djinn risks itself in the process, it arranges for a series of mystical experiments seeking to overcome these difficulties.

Second, as a bonus to this experimentation, the Djinn plans to insinuate itself into the halls of power by providing Monarch with a means to use the dead bodies of demons as literal suits of organic armor, which they can shrug on and off with ease. Hoping to ensnare the dark hearts of both Monarch and, eventually, MJ12, the Djinn plans to remake them as demons and soulless humans under its influence via the manipulation of a few key figures. As the tests are refined, more and more of these government agents will be branded with its mark, and stand ready for eventual harvesting.

Is there a doc in the house?

That's, let's see, one ... two ... three organizations intro-ed at one time! That may seem like overkill for some of you. It's not like we have a quota of Bat-villains we have to squeeze in, after all. Ibrahim could easily be replaced by a solo wizard-type without the organizational ties. For those of you running a post Season Five game, may we suggest a return appearance by Doc? Last seen plummeting to his (presumed) death at the end of that season, Doc would make a good foil for the Djinn. With the Djinn masquerading as his beloved Glorificus, reduced to ghost-status and in need of a physical body, Doc is easily manipulated into helping Monarch with their demon research. Doc believes that he is using the government group to procure guinea pigs to perfect the installment process before risking it on his god. And once the truth is revealed to him, he might not be above helping the Cast out with their little wishmaster problem.

Doc could even be used pre-Season Five, but you'd have to make sure he miraculously escapes at the end of the day. We're sure you can think of something suitable should you go that route.

Finally, it suborns a potential enemy in implementing the wish. Ibrahim, an agent of an old adversary, the Solomons, has come on the scene investigating rumors of the Djinn's awakening. The Djinn uses the soldier's wish to turn Ibrahim rogue. Ibrahim himself supplies Monarch with the necromantic technology that makes the demon suits possible, while using their resources to devise a plan to make his new master flesh once more.

Once Ibrahim has infiltrated his agents into the local Monarch squad, and they in turn have convinced someone higher up that the demon recruitment goals can be achieved with less effort, risk and most importantly cost, a pilot program is initiated. The eventual goal is to implant trained commandos into the bodies of dead human-looking demons, and then retrieve them safely at the end of the day. An initial test phase is set up using unsuspecting subjects from the area.

A mobile Vulcan laboratory is brought in to allow the scientists to monitor the implantations, and learn the techniques involved for later refinement and wide-scale use, if they are deemed successful. After their transformation and subsequent physical tests, the new "demons" are released into the "wild," and guided back to the "natural habitat" of their neighborhoods and schools to allow the researchers to determine the psychological effects of the changes. Observers monitor their reactions to familiar people and places, carefully judging if the human is in control, or if the demon instincts of the body overwhelm her. Implanted chips should allow the handlers to maintain control of the subjects, and to force them into violent actions (to test that control). The potential for loss of life and damage to property is great if the Cast does not intercede when some of their friends, classmates (or possibly even themselves) become involved.

Once the tests are deemed complete, any "surviving" hybrids are recalled back to a retrieval point via the control chips. With Monarch commandos deployed to secure the location, any pursuing Cast Members are rewarded with their first government team encounter. While the Cast is prevented from following the retrieval team back to the lab this time, the resulting conflict introduces them to the other players in town—a team of USTARU commandos makes an appearance in response to the commotion (just to further confuse things for our gang).

The tests expand. Though the infection problem remains, Ibrahim has learned enough to attempt the implantation of other beings. Under one program, living human bodies are to be used as hosts for "demon friendlies"—demons who have joined Monarch on their own and require something a little less conspicuous to wander around in than their own skins. The improved



process succeeds (meaning it avoids the immediate destruction of both subjects), and these demon-troops are deployed elsewhere for field tests with squads of demon-suited commandos.

A parallel program is also attempted, merging the essence of dead demons into the bodies of living human subjects. This procedure aims to imbue the host body with the strengths and powers of the demon, and is of keen interest to the higher-ups. Can this be refined enough to be used as the ultimate form of battlefield triage? Could slain creatures be implanted on the spot to get wounded commandos up and fighting again? Better yet, success could mean that the leaderships of both Monarch and MJ12 need never step down. Should they get too old to serve, appropriately long-lived demons would be found, killed, and essencized. The powerbrokers then take two demon-sized "aspirin," and start a new life in the morning.

As it turns out, the demon-pill gambit turns out to be less successful than the demon-suit trials. Field tests of the converted wounded show that the lust for blood and destruction is too great to be controlled, at least initially, by most subjects. Worse, when these tendencies erupt, so does the demon form from within, making it a less than ideal process for covert work. Still, the leaders of Monarch have been seduced by the concept of eternal life without damnation. Instead of being abandoned, the demon-pill trials are evaluated as needing more work. Surviving subjects are released into the wild, tagged and chipped for later follow-up studies.

While the Cast begins to put the pieces together and possibly learns whom they can trust, they find out the hard way those they definitely cannot. The Men in Black target individual Cast Members, throwing a wrench into work, school, and even social lives with their omnipresent meddling. Given the Cast's success in staying alive in the face of dangers past, no overt violence is enacted against them. Instead Monarch takes the battle to the psychological and spiritual realms as they attempt to drain the Cast's resources, freedoms, and wills. On top of all this, the Cast is blindsided when they learn all the victims of the experiments bear the Mark of the Djinn.

The key to preventing disaster lies in discovering the Djinn's manipulation of Ibrahim. The Cast must track down the ex-Solomon in the heart of the local Monarch operation, and either kill him or convince him he's been duped by the Djinn. If they succeed, the spread of the Djinn's influence is limited, and the Cast learns of a foe of the Djinn, the Ifreet.

which came first, the djinn or the hellgod?

If you don't intend to use the ever-lovin' Djinn in this Episode, this is the section for you! With a few minor changes, you can re-tool the story for another Big Bad, even while sticking to the concept of an insubstantial entity manipulating events. Here we present a few ideas to do just that, for use as-is or as inspiration for your own mods.

Since the current state of the Djinn (minus the whole twisted wish-fulfillment thingy) is pretty much a dead ringer for the First, we have a natural substitute right there. The wishy-ness of plot gets pushed out, and is replaced by the subtle (and not-so-subtle—this is the First, after all) coaching by our ghostly fiend through a variety of guises. If still set in Sunnydale, the exodus from Davot's failed army can be replaced by the chaos after Buffy's death at the end of Season Five, or the turmoil leading up to the First's attempted ascendance in Season Seven (or nearly any of the season finales, really—such cataclysmic events seemed to occur on an annual basis in that fair city).

The First could appear as Ibrahim's dead lover, convincing him to pursue the demon research needed to bring his beloved back to life. Then again, since we don't need the Solomons to reveal information about the Ifreet in this case, we are open to other possibilities, such as the Is there a Doc in the House? sidebar. The First plays Doc like a virtuoso, using the demon-suits as a distraction while it is actually more interested in a new "side" project (in place of the demon-pill triage) involving partially-souled vampires—possibly sired by one of our favorite vampires with a soul (if the timing is right). And if some wide-scale corruptions of government officials occur at the same time . . . hey, what's a primal force of evil to do?

Or drop the masquerade twist and really have the ghost of Glory be the instigator, looking for payback and a new purchase in this reality. Under her present circumstances, installation in a demon/human hybrid body is a fair choice. Heck, despite how "common" they are, Glory wouldn't say no to a Slayer body either. This would require modifying the final scene. With no disguised villain to reveal, Doc stays loyal to his Glory until the bitter end.

More details and stats for Doc, Glory, and the First can be found in *Monster Smackdown*, along with a whole host of beasties you could sprinkle into this story, to taste.





There were days Simon really loved his job. Lording the superiority of man over the powerful but unworthy demons that crawled upon the Earth never got old. Those they could work with learned their place; the others he never tired of killing. Unhappily, today wasn't one of those "love your job" days.

McKellar was the first of his team to fall. The three Fyarl demons they had been tracking led them into a tree-line ambush. Fyarls weren't supposed to be smart, and the deployment to this town had been a cakewalk so far. Result: they got sloppy. The creature's paralytic snot hit Simon just after the splatter of McKellar's blood.

Jonas barely had time to shoot before the demons tore him to pieces. Danica was quick though. She rolled out of the way and brought her weapon to bear, taking out two of the creatures in quick succession. She would have saved the day if the third hadn't taken the hint and picked up Jonas' discarded hellbore rifle. Instead of firing, he broke it in two, destroying himself and wounding Danica in the resulting fireball.

Simon was burned as well, though he didn't realize it until the mucus began to lose its potency. "Damn it! We should be killing these things on sight, not capturing them, not recruiting them!" Crawling over to the dying Danica, and surveying the remnants of his shattered team, Simon couldn't help uttering, "I wish command could see that these demons are more useful dead than alive. God knows, we need back-up. I wish we had back-up!" A few miles away, his wish was heard.

* * *

"There is no reprieve for you this time, beast!" exclaimed Ibrahim, and he made the final passes in his incantation. "I may not be able to destroy you myself, but the power of my order will prevail, and in seconds the Solomons shall know what I have discovered; a Djinn walks freely in this place."

"I offer you power, fame, whatever you desire . . . how can you resist?" the wavering form of the Djinn spoke again in the voice of Ibrahim's dead wife. "We could be together again . . ."

"Enough, creature! You know you cannot trick me. I know you, and will not express a wish!"

The Djinn, now appearing as the dead woman in form as well as voice, cocked her head to one side, and smiled, saying, "You don't need to. Wish Granted!"

* * *

Ibrahim found himself in the forest, near a decimated commando team. He reached out with his mystical senses, trying to determine what the Djinn was planning, but was unable to sense anything. His confusion lasted but a moment as his memories were altered—suddenly he recalled his duty to his new master, the Djinn. He now remembered his life had been so much richer since he betrayed the Solomons and used their knowledge for his needs, not theirs. He had but to finish freeing his master, and all of his desires would be fulfilled. And he had an idea—a glorious, brilliant, inspired idea—but it needed testing . . .

Simon looked on in shock as the Arabic man in the flowing robes suddenly appeared before him. This new arrival swooped in, grabbed Danica and examined the unconscious soldier for pulse and breath. The man then turned and walked up to him, saying, "Do not worry. I am here . . . to help. Your friend will be . . . transformed, and will know life again. You, my companion, will bring news of this wondrous feat to your superiors." He gestured at one of the dead demons and intoned a phrase in a foreign tongue. Turning back to Simon, he concluded, "This won't hurt . . . much."





Act One: Introduction

Wesley: And Faith?

Buffy: She's missing too.

Willow: Which means nothing. Two unconnected events.

—3.17 Enemies

RUNDOWN

Disappearances are the first signs of trouble. Tales of mysterious government agents turn up as the investigation begins, but an attack by several demons postpones any follow-up. Once confronted, the demons turn out to be missing townsfolk, transformed and not entirely in control. Worse still, they aren't the only ones who show for the party.

ACTION

Now You See Them, Now You Don't: Unexplained absences at work or school are nothing new. The Cast has probably run into this a few times since starting this little hobby involving monsters and mischief. There's a disturbing trend in the latest batch, however. And it leads back to the Cast and their friends.

While not everyone can be rescued from the forces of darkness, no doubt the Cast has accumulated a sizable list of "savees." Most survivors tend to rationalize away the worst of their unsettling experiences, but a few are forever changed. Such a person might look for patterns indicating other occurrences. She might talk to anyone she can about her theories and how her encounter relates to the current murder/robbery/locust infestation. Unless some direct tie exists, the talk is generally regarded as just that . . . and ignored. Certain organizations, however, can't take the risk that too many like-minded individuals piece together enough to see a "Big Picture"—one that could grasp the public psyche and make their own work with the occult that much harder to conceal.

It's best to lead the Cast into this adventure by cluing them into the recent disappearance of at least two folks from their list of prior success stories. The details and how they go missing are left to you, based on the Cast's prior encounters with the folks. A couple examples have been provided to work into your storyline (by expanding their back stories into full fledged non-Djinn Episodes, or introducing them during teaser scenes in an unrelated Episode or two) or to use as models for creating your own.

Sally Kilmont, a waitress at the local Sunny Pizza Kitchen fast food joint, is a devout vegetarian (perhaps it has something to do with where she works). When a

batch of demonic pepperoni found its way into the store, she dodged that bullet but had a front row seat for the strange antics of the customers and staff who ingested the cursed links. When her possessed co-workers tried to turn her into this week's special topping, she was glad to have the Cast on hand to put things right. The magically induced vomiting necessary to restore the attackers made her even gladder she wasn't on cleanup duty that week.

Learning about the supernatural underpinnings of the world gave her something besides food to obsess about. She even managed to combine the two interests—she began to study the medicinal and mystical properties of herbs, spices, and other plants. She took to suggesting specific combinations of unusual toppings for the weekly specials, not all of which could be considered edible by anything with less than three stomachs. She wasn't shy about informing the patrons about the occult benefits of her culinary creations, and the need of such protections against what the cruel world, or underworld, had to offer.

After the pepperoni incident, the Cast dined much less often at the local SPK, but had no problem accepting the double large with all the toppings that Sally hand-delivered to them as a Thursday afternoon thank-you. Hey, free food is free food, after all, and what are the odds of infernal indigestion striking the same fast food place twice? So when Sally doesn't show for this week's drop off, not only do they have a mystery on their hands, they're out a pizza!

A call to the restaurant confirms Sally didn't show for her shift. In fact, she cut out early from work yesterday, leaving with dark-suited government inspectors whose surprise health check consisted of little more than talking to Sally. The SPK won't give out Sally's home address, but it's easy to find in the phone book. No luck at her home number, though. And Sally's absence brings to mind other missing persons.

Garth Shea was on his way to becoming the late night snack for a certain vampire girl gang some months back when the Cast intervened. While not the brightest bulb on the tree, he was observant enough to see the bloodsuckers for what they were, despite the lame stories his parents, the police, and even the Cast tried to feed him about drug-using low-lives. When the Cast didn't acknowledge "the truth" when he blurted it out in front of others, Garth began to do his own research. Unfortunately, this consisted mostly of swallowing all of the conjecture and mistakes to be found about vampires in modern fantasy. Not satisfied with just reading it, Garth started using his natural artistic abilities to project those images, both real and imagined, onto canvas. He



didn't restrict himself to traditional images, either. Searching for accuracy, he began photographing the cemetery after dark, using a low-light lens from the roof of a nearby building. The last time the Cast saw him, he was happily snapping away during one of their patrols several nights ago.

The passion he put into his drawings got him attention from the local paper, which featured him in an article last week that included definitive statements about his belief in the supernatural. That did little to bolster his popularity around town. When the young man stopped going to classes a few days ago, the conventional wisdom held that he either couldn't take it and ran away (or worse), or that he was fed up with his bad press and was just fishing for a new round of attention from the town. No one got particularly worked up, though, especially since his parents didn't call the police or raise a fuss. In light of Sally's disappearance, maybe where there's smoke, there's fire after all.

Enter the Men in Black? Sally, Garth, or those of your own devising are not the only people to go missing. Once the disappearance card is played, a quick investigation (contacts, internet searches, the daily paper, or just looking up those who know the victims) reveals a myriad of missing. While only apparent recently, almost a dozen individuals the Cast has saved in the past have vanished in the last month alone. Any Cast Member keeping tabs on the missing persons score, either from the cops or just the news, realizes that the majority of these folks haven't been reported as gone. It's as if they haven't been missed. In every case, dark-suited government agents were seen talking to the victims, or their relatives and friends.

The Cast also learns that humans aren't the only ones caught up in this mess. Scuttlebutt in the demon haunts is that some new plague has hit town: the two-legged variety. And it wears a dark suit and carries a badge. It seems to be gunning for anything big, powerful, and non-human and it doesn't care who gets in the way. Demons were already leaving the town in droves due to the unhealthy climate recently (the Davot affair). But now, with some of those very same evacuees being killed as they abandoned the area, the demon community is feeling trapped.

Let Slip the Demons of War: In-depth investigation on the missing leads to trouble. As the Cast approaches the first victim's dwelling, the sight of a demon smashing cars and attacking anyone present quickly distracts them. Initially, it's a demon destruction solo (two, if at the Shea residence—Garth's father is missing, too), but once the Cast joins in, nearby Monarch observers recall others to do battle. The additional demons (two for each Hero Cast Member, plus one more for each two White Hats) arrive four Turns after first demonic blood is drawn.

military options

If the Cast are USTARU agents, they may be in town to protect civilians against the monster exodus, saving Sally and earning free pizza as mentioned. They may want to speak to Garth as a potential new recruit only to discover that he and others are missing. Once introduced to the mystery, the action follows pretty much as written, though instead of a conflict with another USTARU unit at the end of the Act, reverse the situation and use a Slayer and her Scoobs as Supporting Cast. Major Jeffries and her group could be recast as Men in Black, on site to keep the rumors generated by the experiment to a minimum. They can appear as helpful government wildlife agents to keep tabs on the USTARU unit until the perfect time to betray them is revealed.

A more interesting option, though, might be to have your USTARU Cast already aware of Monarch, working undercover within that organization. Either their covers have been blown, or the project is a little more advanced than we assume here and Monarch is using "loyal" troops as part of the test, and the Cast ends up getting demonized and forced to fight a Supporting Cast group of heroes until released from the demon body upon defeat.

The demons are, of course, the missing townsfolk under Monarch remote control. During the first two Turns of combat, the demons are silent attackers. After the fighting begins in earnest, the control chips are turned off and the townsfolk are able to shout out their identities and otherwise jabber their heads off, even as they throw the next right-cross. While nominally in control, the instincts of their demon bodies are overwhelming and even if they talk the Cast into a truce, they attack again immediately. They must be either knocked out . . . or killed.

The Monarch monitors don't let the situation get too out of hand. Dressed as civilians, they can be spotted only if specifically looked for, and only then with a Perception and Notice roll with a -10 penalty (allows the observer to notice the out-of-place Monarch headset on one of them). After half of the demons have been dropped, the team re-activates the implanted chips. The remaining demons attempt to pick up their fallen comrades (unless prevented) and scatter in all directions at lightning speed. Potential pursuit is covered in Act Two, though the Cast may be too busy trying to hold on to the captures they've already made.



demonizing your cast

Given that the selection criteria for the Monarch project involves a brush with the supernatural, and a subsequent, and likely unhealthy, interest in the subject, most Cast Members fit the bill perfectly. Getting a Slayer captured and demonized is probably not in the cards, but one or more of the Slayerettes would be fair game. Natch, this keeps them out of the action during the build-up portion of this Act, so weigh your player's feelings on the matter before proceeding. Even worse, they could end up marked by the Djinn at the end of this Episode, though that may prove a necessary first step in its eventual defeat. But that's another story . . .

If you think one or more of the players is game, throw in an introductory scene with the Men in Black interviewing them to sweeten the deal. Depending on how you use cut scenes in your Series, you may want to run this interactively for the rest of the Cast (remembering to compensate those kidnapped for the inevitable outcome with Drama Points) and perhaps toss out a few more clues before the curtain falls and the MiBs render them unconscious via violence, drugs, little spray guns with blue goo, etc. The shanghaied Cast Members next appear in their demon-suits, under outside control like the others. Unfortunately, they are likely to stay that way for a good chunk of the Episode, until they are "killed," the Cast can research a cure, or Ibrahim is freed from his delusion. The controlling influence of the slave chips can be thrown off for a Turn (see p. [?]), though overriding the demonic impulses for violence are just as taxing (and handled similarly).

Unless you have a Cast Member who doesn't mind being turned into a part-monster for good, she should be saved during the fight, either by her peers, or by USTARU. Since we are past the mid-point of the Season, if you have a Cast Member getting restless with her abilities and looking for a power-up, this would be the perfect opportunity to add a were-demon to the mix. She could override the recall signal and stick around to help her friends, or end up getting vamped for the next stage of Monarch's test.

Any Cast or USTARU captured here, or in later Acts, could be subject to the same experiments. The demonizing ones are reversible; should you use the First big bad option, the vampirizing ones are not. We wouldn't want to interfere with that whole Shanshu thing, after all.

May We Cut In?: The combat draws the attention of the *other* secret government force in town, and they quickly converge on the area. The four-person USTARU team can step in at any time if the Cast isn't faring so well. Otherwise they arrive in time to help subdue one creature while the rest make a run for it. Major Rowan Jeffries dispatches Ryan to track the escaping demons, while she identifies herself and the others as agents of the Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service, here to deal with the exotic animals that escaped from the illegal collection of an eccentric millionaire. They attempt to confiscate any unconscious demons, as well as any freed humans (so that they receive the proper treatment, of course).

The badges look real enough and their story is plausible—if the Cast didn't already know a demon when one rears its ugly head. Coupled with the fact that numerous disappearances have been linked to government types, the Cast probably does not give the USTARU folks the benefit of the doubt. A confrontation between heroes is just the break that Monarch needs to retrieve its subjects, so Jeffries endeavors to defuse the situation if hostilities seem to be ready to erupt. Sticking to her cover story, she directs her squad to fight only defensively against these civilians, and will leave the unconscious humans (setting a higher priority on taking any "animal corpses") rather than let the situation escalate further.

If there are ex-Initiative agents among the Cast, the USTARU team has been briefed about them. Jeffries could turn to these ex-agents to smooth things over between the two groups. She might be persuaded by the presence of such an agent to reveal the covert status of her mission in an attempt to get the former soldier to intercede on her behalf. Even so, she does not allow a free exchange of ideas and info between the two groups. She has standing orders, after all, and it takes a stronger display of raw utility (and valorous discretion) to get her to bend those enough to share her intel.

Use the USTARU Commando Quick Sheet for the team (see p. [?]). Major Jeffries gains +4 to Brains and four Drama Points, Agent Ryan gets two Drama Points, and Agents Parker and Felter each get one Drama Point (same goes for others you add to the mix, such as the Supporting Staff mentioned in Chapter Six).

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the listed disappearances (and lack of free food) don't add up to a dire need to get with the investigating, personalize the dilemma by adding to the MIA list one or two incidental characters from the Cast's previous adventures (survivors either from the earlier published encounters with the Djinn, or an interim Episode of your own making). Another option is to put one or more of the Cast directly in harm's way. See the *Demonizing Your Cast* sidebar for more details.

Don't worry about convincing the Cast to go to the demon attack site—just stage the rampage somewhere along the Cast's investigatory path. The attacks can be encountered near any area familiar to one of the abductees (such as Sally's restaurant, or the apartment complex near the cemetery that Garth uses as a vantage point), as long as the location has a connection to the human within the demon-suit that can be easily determined by the Cast. If they don't conduct an investigation (shame on them), use broadcast bulletins of the attacks to get their attention. If the Cast are doing too well, make good use of the demon Drama Points to insure they remain quite the bother until the various twists in the Act arise, and one or two can escape to be followed.

If any Cast Member gets in serious trouble, you may wish to be lenient and have the unstable demon merging fail, causing the demon shell to crumble around the unconscious victim, like a vampire dusting that leaves a chewy human center behind. The Monarch control chip falls to the ground near the head. The "rider" wakes in 15 minutes on her own, but cannot be roused earlier. Her memories of activities while demonized are very incomplete—even her encounter with the government agents that led to this is but a dim recollection. For more on her long-term condition, check out Act Three (see p. [?]).

If USTARU is prevented from acquiring one of the demons needed for study in Act Three, the easiest solution is that they grabbed one off camera at another attack site before charging in to the Cast's rescue. Similarly, one of the beasts should be recognized for who it is under all those scales, and be allowed to escape back to the clutches of the Vulcan scientists, to show up again as a were-demon at the end of Act Two. The ideal choice for this is Sally, or some other Cast Member "friendly." If the opportunity doesn't present itself, make one with the addition of a couple more Hell Hound demons, or by advancing the appearance of Monarch strike team waiting for those tagging after their test subjects (see *Following the White Rabbit(s)* in Act Two).



Name: Fyarl-Suit
Motivation: HEEELPPP!, Sneeze, Kill on Command
Critter Type: Demon-Suited Human
Attributes: Str 7, Dex 2, Con 6, Int 2, Per 2, Will 2
Ability Scores: Muscle 20, Combat 14, Brains 9
Life Points: 80
Drama Points: 2
Special Abilities: Attractiveness -4, BeMo Chip, Embedded Human, Increased Life Points, Partial Invulnerability (non-silver damage regenerates 6 Life Points per Turn), Paralyzing Mucus

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	14	—	Defense action
Grapple	16	—	Resisted by Dodge
Head Butt	12	23	Damage from horns
Mucus	14	—	-4 to victim's Dex; resisted by six Success Levels on a Strength (doubled) roll; pistol range
Punch	14	17	Bash

dead demon suits

While the ritual used to install humans into their demon-suit bodies is meant to be a plot device, that doesn't mean you can't have a little fun and use it to throw a bunch of unrelated critters at your Cast all at once! Simply take any beastie that strikes your fancy from *Monster Smackdown* and convert at will. The quick and dirty rules for using the creatures in other books (including *Angel* or any other cinematic Unisystem roleplaying game) are as follows:

Use the physical Attributes of the creature, but reduce the Dexterity by one if it is humanoid (two arms, two legs, standing upright, etc.), and by two if it strays too far from that form (four leggers, insects, and so on). This reduces the Combat Score by a like amount (so remember to refigure the combat maneuvers).

Use the mental Attributes of the human, with the exception of Perception, which can be higher (to the maximum the human brain can normally process—six) or lower depending on the sensory abilities of the creature.

All of the creature's powers, at your discretion, are available via the "muscle memory" of the corpse.

Once the demon-suit takes enough damage to die, the rider has to make a Constitution (doubled) roll or die with it. Use the rider's Constitution (two for the supernumeraries without names here), and if she achieves a single Success Level, she remains trapped, unconscious, in the demon's form for 15 minutes minus the Constitution of the demon-suit. After that, or if two or more Success Levels are rolled, the suit dissolves away around her, leaving her naked and unconscious (oh my!).

Tailor your suits to your particular Cast so they aren't overwhelmed. Obviously the creatures must be corporeal and capable of leaving behind dead bodies (vampires need not apply). Regardless of the type, the installation process leaves an obvious scar on the demon form—the Mark of the Djinn!



Name: Hellhound-Suit
Motivation: HEEELPPPI, Drool, Kill on Command
Critter Type: Demon-Suited Human
Attributes: Str 4, Dex 4, Con 4, Int 2, Per 6, Will 2
Ability Scores: Muscle 14, Combat 14, Brains 10
Life Points: 50
Drama Points: 2
Special Abilities: Attractiveness -6, BeMo Chip, Embedded Human, Increased Life Points, +5 to Brains for Wild Card (Tracking)

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Bite	14	11	Slash/stab
Claw	14	11	Slash/stab
Dodge	14	—	Defense action
Pounce	14	11	Slash/stab; Hellhound's Slam-Tackle

Name: Suvolte-Suit
Motivation: HEEELPPPI, Breed, Kill on Command
Critter Type: Demon-Suited Human
Attributes: Str 7, Dex 4, Con 6, Int 2, Per 2, Will 2
Ability Scores: Muscle 20, Combat 14, Brains 8
Life Points: 80
Drama Points: 2
Special Abilities: Armor Value 5, BeMo Chip, Embedded Human, Increased Life Points, Leap (+5 to roll and damage for first attack)

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Bite	14	24	Slash/stab
Dodge	14	—	Defense action
Grapple	16	—	Resisted by Dodge
Claw	14	17	Slash/stab

Act Two: Conflict

Spike: Oh, it's fun. I can't do it, do it for me. Now let yourself go.

Giles: I refuse to become a monster because I look like a monster. I have a soul. I have a conscience. I am a human being.

—4.12 *A New Man*

RUNDOWN

Hard on the heels of Act One, the Cast may chase down the escaping “demons” and make an important contact in the process. The investigation continues and additional evidence of government involvement pops up, revealing high tech and sorcery as part of the mix.

Meanwhile Vulcan scientists puzzle over the inconclusive data from the experiment. Extricating the retrieved subjects from their demon-suits, a subset of them are chipped and given over to Ibrahim for implantation of a demon-essence. The next phase of the test finds the Cast face-to-face with an old friend, changed forever.

ACTION

Following the White Rabbit(s): After the deadly demo-demon attack, the Cast may try to intercept the things as they rush to their rendezvous point near the old Crampton's Meat processing plant at the edge of town. In doing so they must contend with the Monarch commandos (see p. [?]) positioned along the route, ready to delay, disable, or even damage anyone attempting to



track their experiments to the pickup location. Armed with hell-tech, these agents aren't afraid of making a scene, knowing that their cover-up operatives will take care of any witnesses.

At least one USTARU agent, Lt. Mark Ryan, is also on the trail. Slightly ahead of the Cast, the Cast sees him targeted by a volley of hellfire from three dark-suited agents. Ryan is able to avoid the blasts and return fire, revealing the unearthly nature of his opponents as they shrug off the damage using glowing force shields. One Monarch agent takes out the car Ryan is hiding behind in an ear-shattering explosion. Unless the Cast Members successfully sneak up under the cover of Ryan's combat, they quickly become the primary targets. Once the Cast enters the fray two additional enemy operatives attack from their hidden positions on neighborhood porches. These two attack with surprise (no defense rolls) unless spotted by a Perception and Notice roll with a -4 penalty.

The Monarch operatives need to delay the Cast for a minimum of 10 Turns to ensure that the subject pickups are successfully completed. After that time, the agents change their tactics and try to get away, knowing their task was successful. Any Monarch personnel unable to retreat tries to self-destruct by overloading her pistol. After one Turn, the pistol explodes, immolating the agent and causing 40 points of base damage (Fire type) to anyone within 10 feet of the blast. Those up to 20 feet away can make a Dexterity (doubled) check with a -2 penalty or take 20 points damage. Monarch agents unable to trigger their pistols suffer an incinerating blast by the retreating agents.

Fortunately, the bad guys don't target Ryan for the same treatment. He should survive the encounter, despite being wounded and rendered unconscious by the car-trashing blast. He is in need of medical attention and if the Cast renders it (or gets him to a hospital), Major Jeffries is more inclined to trust them in their next encounter. Ryan wakes up by morning, but is not released from the hospital until his teammates arrive late in the day. If the Cast speaks with him, he initially sticks to the cover story about exotic animals, ad-libbing a run in with a radical animal rescue group as explanation for the ambush.

If the Cast convinces him that they are, in fact, aware of the HST threat and have actively fought it (a Willpower and Influence roll), he acknowledges the truth of the ambush. He thanks them for their help, but insists that the government has things well in hand. With two Success Levels on the Influence roll, Ryan goes so far as to reveal that his team is specially trained for these kinds of situations and were deployed here specifically to deal with this threat. With four or more Success Levels, he is persuaded that the Cast can help and informs them that

he will speak to his superiors on their behalf. You may wish to give a bonus of +2 to +4 to the roll if the Cast relates some of their previous encounters with hostile subterrestrials or otherwise roleplays the situation particularly well.

Galaxy Defenders: Once all the fisticuffs and fireworks are over, the Cast may wish to gather info on those who were lost. Again, the specifics of these investigations depend on who the Supporting Cast Members are and how they have factored into the Cast's prior adventures. As before, we've sketched out what's to be found on Sally and Garth.

Checking up on Sally, the Cast interviews her roommate Vikki Barnes. Vikki hasn't seen Sally since the night before. At that time, Sally left their apartment with a tall man in a dark suit and sunglasses. Vikki assumed it was a date, though she didn't know the guy. That wasn't unusual—Sally hadn't had a steady boyfriend since they'd been rooming together and didn't always bother introducing the "man of the week." She saw them get into a big SUV-type vehicle and take off.

Persuading Vikki to allow a look around the apartment is easy; she doesn't seem all that concerned about Sally's absence. Besides the obvious scattering of books on the supernatural, the place reeks of herbs and other plants. A successful Perception and Notice check with a -2 penalty uncovers the presence of an artificially cloying, sickly-sweet smell. A bit of searching pinpoints a small discolored patch on the wallpaper where the odor is particularly strong.

Anyone taking a closer look risks getting a snoot-full of the vapor, as does everyone present if someone disturbs the spot (by say, scratching at the residue). Unless a Constitution (doubled) roll is successful, any snooter gets a little light-headed and her jaw goes slack. While not bumping-into-walls impaired, an afflicted Cast Member finds herself susceptible to suggestion for the next (6 - Constitution) hours (if she has a Constitution 6 or greater, the dizzy feeling is the worst that happens). For the duration of the impairment, any persuasion attempts gain an automatic extra Success Level, even if the attempt otherwise fails. After the impairment, the suggestion remains convincing. At your discretion (depending on the suggestion), the drugee can make a Willpower (doubled) roll to shake off the effects for a single Turn.

Other than the strange smell, the only other notable item is something that isn't there. On Sally's crowded reading desk, a conspicuous space is not piled high with books. Pens are available but no paper can be found. This may lead to speculation that Vikki can confirm: Sally jotted down notes and recipes in one of those blank brown leather books found at a craft store. She called it



her "Spook Diary." No amount of searching uncovers the Spook Diary, and if asked directly about it, Vikki remembers that Sally was carrying it when she left.

Garth Shea lives with his folks in the attic above their garage, and his story is similar to those of the other victims living with loved ones. Mrs. Shea looks like the typical suburban mom in her mid-forties, and at first seems confused by anyone inquiring after her son's disappearance, as she's sure he's "just off with friends." Still, she welcomes any "friends" of Garth's, offering tea or lemonade and a big plate of cookies (assorted). Her husband isn't present. "He's away at work, I suppose," she says. It takes pointed questioning for her to reveal that she hasn't seen either Garth or his father for almost a week, though if asked she doesn't conceal it or seem to be the least upset by it. She just doesn't seem to think it important.

She says Garth had some friends over to look at his paintings a few days back. They came to the main house looking for Garth, and Mr. Shea took them over to the garage apartment. She hadn't met these friends before, but they were nice, clean-cut gentlemen in dark suits and sunglasses. They were very polite and must have really liked Garth's work, as she saw her husband and Garth helping them load up the paintings and other materials into a black van and drive away. Mr. Shea has no doubt they were from the National Endowment for the Arts and are planning to set up a showing of her son's work. She's sure she'll see him again when the show is ready. The Cast can easily notice the flat affect with which she relates the details of her son's disappearance, almost as if she was under hypnosis.

The same sweet smell found in Sally's apartment can be detected (though it is less concentrated; a -4 penalty is applied to the roll), and traced back to one of the aroma plugs Mrs. Shea has scattered throughout electrical outlets of the house. This particular plug is unlabeled, though it has a serial number. It is filled with a blue liquid, while the others contain a yellow substance called "Spring Rain Fresh." Mrs. Shea doesn't recall placing a different scent in that plug, but believes she must have gotten it by mistake when she replaced all of them last month. The odd-smelling plug has more liquid scent remaining than the others, indicating it has been placed more recently. No Constitution check is necessary unless the Cast is exposed for more than an hour, at which time the effects begin to manifest as detailed previously.

As you might expect, Mrs. Shea has no problems with the Cast examining the garage apartment. While the sweet scent is not present here, careful observers note (with another Perception and Notice-4 roll) a bluish stain on the hardwood floor near the door. Doing a scratch and sniff check revives the scent enough for identification (without posing a danger to the sniffer, this time).

All of Garth's drawings and reference materials (besides the cemetery photos, he collected horror mags) are missing. The only things remaining are a few sketchbooks filled with crude figure drawings and black and white photos of some pale girls in black attire (members of the local goth community and big fans of Garth's "realistic" portrayal of the world). No camera or film is present; Mrs. Shea informs the Cast that Garth used her 35mm camera, which she keeps in the main house. If the camera is checked, a roll with several exposures is still loaded. Once developed, the shots turn out to be recent activity in the cemetery, including one or more of the Cast Members taking out a vampire. Several pictures show what appears to be a military squad (not our friends from the Interior Department) killing a large demon and carrying it off on a stretcher. A man of middle-eastern descent dressed in robes is directing the operation. Garth got a good close-up on the man's face, including the Mark of the Djinn on his forehead. If the Cast tries to ID him through their contacts in the local magic scene, check Act Three for details.

Won't Let You Remember: If a sample of the smelly substance is obtained (either by confiscating the plug or by slicing and dicing the wallpaper) and studied, an Intelligence and Science roll is required. Note that more than two Success Levels are impossible without some kind of lab equipment (high school chemistry or better). The information revealed depends on the roll; higher Success Levels results include all the information from lower levels.

One Success Level: The stains on the wall and floor were the result of a small stream of the liquid, as from a spray bottle, that missed its target (or came from a wide nozzle so that not all of the spray made contact). The splatter indicates the victims were most likely sprayed at a distance of two-five feet, so the attacker didn't need to make direct contact.

Two Success Levels: This reveals some physical properties of the material. It dries extremely quickly (the wallpaper sample has to be moistened to test at all), and when dry, appears to become inert within a day. So without repeated application, as with the scent plug, the material neutralizes itself in short order.

Three Success Levels: This result shows that the material has been artificially manufactured.

Four Success Levels: The liquid is a synthesized mixture of naturally occurring enzymes and proteins. A subsequent Intelligence and Occultism roll with a -2 penalty suggests the organic model for the mixture has protein markers similar to a number of mind-affecting demonic species.

Five Success Levels: The scientist clearly identifies a number of proteins and protein markers. A subsequent Intelligence and Occultism roll reveals it to be the spinal



fluid of the Migdeloon Beast, a small demonic animal that preys on much larger creatures after being attacked by them, using the narcotic and hallucinogenic properties that its bodily fluids have on contact. Immediate effects include disorientation and memory loss. Long-term exposure is thought to cement these reactions permanently and generally saps the will of those unfortunate souls. This has made the Migdeloon long the favorite of sorcerers and mad scientists alike—the secretions of these creatures has been rumored to be a component in zombie-making potions used throughout the Caribbean that leave their victims alive but subjugated to another's will.

Meanwhile, on Patrol: Life doesn't stand still while the questioning and the research goes on—the run-of-the-mill human/demon run-ins must be attended to. The Cast finds that the flurry of supernatural activity accompanying the monster exodus tapers off, but not a night goes by without some kind of incident. During one of these encounters, the person making the rounds finds one of the missing, restored to her original form. Or is she?

Not so much. As the result of another phase of the Monarch operation, this friend (Sally, unless you have other plans) has been turned into a were-demon and chipped. The gang can easily follow the chippee as she moves towards a couple in an alleyway behind the movie theatre. If they don't intervene, she throws the man against a wall in a display of remarkable strength, knocking him out, and begins attacking the woman. When the Cast approaches, she stops, begging them to help her to overcome these urges. She pauses and tries to allay the warning bells going off in their heads by talking as their friend, asking for their help against the government labcoats who did this to her. A Perception and Influence roll correctly identifies her tone as a ruse, designed to draw them so she can attack. A Perception and Notice roll clearly reveals a tight grip on her unconscious victim and a readiness to use that victim as either a shield or a projectile. The newly minted were-demon cannot help herself; the passion for violence is too strong. She attacks on the Turn after speaking to the Cast, regardless of their response, and grows into a seven-foot tall demon as she throws the first blow.

If the Cast can refrain from killing her for two Turns of combat, a preset factor is met in the implanted chip. It activates and becomes a standard BeMo chip, programmed to allow no harm against humans. The resulting pain takes the twinkle out of our new demon's eyes, and her capture or cancellation becomes child's play at this point. If spared for interrogation, the stress of the situation and the pain from the chip causes her to pass out for several hours (12 – Constitution), reverting to human form as she goes out. Just so the Cast doesn't get the idea they just purchased a lemon, though, she blurts

out (just as the pain becomes too much) that if they kill her, they'll never get that creep, Ibrahim, that did this to her.

military options

Instead of the attack on Ryan tipping off the Cast to the ambush in waiting, a lone demon that has momentarily broken through the chip conditioning is the target. Trying to subdue the behemoth that is ignoring Vulcan's preprogrammed recall procedure, the Monarch agents-in-wait give away their positions. Assuming the Cast intervenes, the demonic victim with the faulty control circuit can help them fight, though the demon's nature pushes it to kill, rather than keep 'em alive for interrogation.

If the Cast are all demonized, and have not been "rescued" by a Supporting Cast Slayer or another USTARU cell, allow them an easier time when trying to override the recall signals. They'll have to help themselves to a little bit of freedom and tackle the problem from the outside.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the Monarch ambush goes a little too well, additional USTARU agents can appear to help the gang survive the encounter. Once it becomes apparent that they have no chance of subduing all of the pursuers, the Monarch operatives settle for the delay already caused and retreat. Any additional USTARU agents used should become wounded in the exchange and limp off with their dead or incapacitated squad mates in tow. They are unable to reach the unconscious Ryan and he is left to the Cast to care for.

Similarly, if the ambush is too easy, Monarch calls in reinforcements from the pickup area. Since they have the portable control devices, they come a-runnin' with one or two demons (your choice) as backup.

If the Cast doesn't take the bait to follow the demons and there is no ambush, they stumble on a wounded Ryan trying to stay alive as two Monarch agents pursue him. He is grateful for any help he can get and requires hospitalization as above.

Finally, if the Episode is getting on the wrong track, one or two of the Monarch boys can be captured for interrogation, either by the Cast or off-screen by the USTARU team. The commandos won't let much slip before they self-destruct, but enough of Monarch's plans can be spilled (such as what the were-demon reveals in Act Three) to keep things rolling towards the coming smackdown.





Name: The New Sally Kilmont
Motivation: Feed, Exist, Stay Free
Critter Type: Were-Demon
Attributes: Str 5, Dex 4, Con 4, Int 3, Per 3, Will 4
Ability Scores: Muscle 16, Combat 14, Brains 10
Life Points: 76
Drama Points: 5
Special Abilities: Were-Demon (subtract 2 from all Attributes in normal form; transformation takes one Turn)

Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	14	—	Defense action
Grapple	16	—	Resisted by Dodge
Kick	13	15	Bash
Punch	14	13	Bash

Act Three: Climax

Buffy: Know where we're going?

Riley: Got an idea. The tag's on-line. We'll find it.

—6.15 *As You Were*

RUNDOWN

The Cast trades either blows or info with their government counterparts. Pooling information allows them to discover the extent of the danger posed by these tests and the involvement of the Djinn. At the same time, those dastardly agents of the grand government conspiracy do their best to make life difficult for our heroes, just as they learn the true extent of the forces against them.

ACTION

Too Many Cooks?: If they have not befriended Ryan, the Cast might be thinking the friendly neighborhood forest rangers they met in Act One are part of the evil government conspiracy they seem to have stumbled on. After all, how's a body to keep the sides straight without a scorecard? Even without Ryan's help, they eventually track down the USTARU group based on their descriptions and a little leg work (plus a successful Perception and Crime roll if they don't think to check the hotels, or a Willpower and Influence roll if they do—grant a +2 bonus if using Contacts).

Of course, unless the Cast has Ryan's introduction, we're likely to see a good team-on-good team dust up in the best tradition of the DC and Marvel crossovers. If things are going badly for her, Major Jeffries surrenders and negotiates for the lives of her squad and the civilians in their care. If the reverse is true, Jeffries uses Tasers only and the Cast can prove themselves during the

subsequent interrogation by demonstrating a little knowledge of the strange markings on the MRI scans the squad has made of the victims. Only then does Jeffries reluctantly reveal her true identity and mission.

The USTARU squad has set up shop in a suite of rooms at the back of the *Peaceful Slumber* motel just north of town. One room is used for storage, a second is a command center, and the third is for medical purposes (both treating wounded and the whole CSI forensic thing). The other two suites in their block of rooms are being kept clear of any military hardware so they can be used to interview civilians, if needed, or to rest in, should they ever get the chance.

Any demons or wounded civilians taken by the squad in Act One were brought back to the makeshift laboratory here and thoroughly examined. While the pretext of escaped wild animals is maintained as much as possible, the USTARU teams makes it clear that they are here to help, not keep anyone prisoner. They just need to insure that anyone involved hasn't been exposed to anything contagious before they are let go.

Visual exams reveal the Mark of the Djinn on the demons easily enough, but a more thorough check up of a de-suited human is needed to determine that she also carries the mark. A survivor of the suit has the symbol imbedded as a fatty cyst below the surface of the skin where Ibrahim touched her during the suit-up ritual. While it shows up on sophisticated medical tests (ultrasounds, MRIs, etc.), normal x-rays sometimes miss it (requiring an Intelligence and Doctor roll), and a physical exam is worse (that Doctor roll suffers a -4).

Worse than that, though, are the side-effects indicated in the blood work-up of those who are de-suited. The



USTARTU team has only the roughest lab equipment and gain one Success Level during analysis. If the Cast can grant access to a better lab, the result depends on an Intelligence and Doctor roll (an Intelligence and Knowledge roll with a -4 penalty can be substituted):

One Success Level: The subject's hormone levels are out of balance, particularly those related to aggression, self-control, and helping to maintain self-image and sense of worth. These imbalances level out over the hour after release from the demon-suit, but under their influence, the subject is prone to paranoid reactions that tend towards violence.

Three Success Levels: Aggressive behavior might be just the tip of the paranoia iceberg. The same ratio of chemicals is thought by some to be triggered by episodes of schizophrenia under the right circumstances. The blood imbalance is probably an indication of an even more serious imbalance in brain chemistry.

Five Success Levels: Permanent damage is likely to result, even though the imbalance returns to normal over time. Repeated exposure to this stimuli causes physical changes to brain structures, turning these problems into a self-sustaining cycle. Donning the demon-suits will no longer be necessary to cause paranoid episodes. Simple stress will be sufficient. While resistance will vary from person to person, repeated exposure to the demon-suiling process will eventually cause the subject to go looney-toons.

That's from the medical perspective. The magical prognosis is even more wigful. Anyone with the Sight or casting a magical reveal spell can roll Perception and Notice to see that the spiritual energy of the subject has been diminished. Instead of a bright glow, the soul is only dimly visible (and visibly leaking out through the mark, if the Perception roll garners three Success Levels). Though the energy seems to replenish itself over time, it takes a week or more for the full glow to return.

Stirring the Broth: Tracing the unlabeled scent plug's serial number from Act Two takes a little doing. Checks with local stores turn up empty, though similar serial number formats are used by the "Pure Air" brand. Checking with brand manufacturer requires a Willpower and Influence roll (to figure out what to ask and how to ask it). Success confirms that this serial number was in use about 10 years ago, for a wildflower fragrance called "Majestic Clear." It proved unpopular and was discontinued after a year on the market.

Another Willpower and Influence roll with a -4 penalty reveals that the company sold off the excess inventory of Majestic Clear to Aronson Pharmaceutical Labs. Research on Aronson shows that it is a small, high tech bio-concern with no apparent ties to the government beyond the occasional no-bid contract. Any current or former

government agent, however, can recall (with an Intelligence (doubled) roll) that some of the scientific equipment used in Initiative/USTARU labs was acquired by Aronson, after the appropriate laundering to hide governmental involvement with the equipment.

Following the Aronson lead uncovers a couple of small and ultimately dead-end offices and one warehouse property in the local area. Letting your fingers do the walking provides an address for the warehouse near the rail yard—that's a potential location for more sleuthing (see p. [?]).

Pass the Chips: Any Former Initiative or current USTARU Agent recognizes the control chips left behind by demon-suit dustings. Pre-programmed with a few simple commands, these chips override motor functions and transmit recorded data. They can be activated by remote signals that specify which command sequences to execute and in what order. Cast Members of the non-military persuasion can determine that the chip has a receiver with an Intelligence and Science roll, but at least three Success Levels are necessary to discern the frequency used.

Clever individuals may wish to track the controlling signal. An Intelligence and Mr. Fix-It roll with a -4 penalty, or an Intelligence and Science roll with a -6 penalty allow a character to jury-rig a directional tracer, but the trace must be triangulated from a couple of locations about town. Since the controlling laboratory is mobile, moved often, and designed to blend in among local civilian signals, all readings must be taken in short order of each other to pinpoint its location.

If two or more chips are recovered and used simultaneously, both the location of the pickup van (where the "handlers" have portable control units) and the Vulcan lab (see p. [?]) can be accurately pinpointed. A successful Perception and Science or Mr. Fix-It roll must be conducted at roughly the same time with each chip, and each chip must be studied at a different location (i.e., different operators must make the roll at roughly the same time). Of course, that leaves two locations to be checked, but two pieces of straw are better than a haystack.

Bringing to a Boil: After the performance of the Cast so far, the Men in Black have noticed them, tracked down them down, and are working their administrative mojo. Given the Cast's resilience against things that go bump in the night, their orders are agitate, observe, but not detain. At least not until the Cast reacts to the warnings given.

The countermeasures begin when one of the Cast tries to pay for something with a credit/debit card, or tries to withdrawing money from an ATM (ideally, pick a Cast member with the Resources Quality). The transaction



doesn't work. Turns out that "someone" reported the card as stolen and had it cancelled. Further checking finds similar problems for other Cast Members with money, including stops put on their credit due to "suspicious activity." Money withdrawals must be done in person; purchases are limited to cash for the time being. Attempts to trace the source of these problems lead nowhere. The bank doesn't have a record of the report, just the flags on its system. While inconvenient, the problem can be straightened out with a few weeks of phone tag, visits to the local branch, extensive paperwork, and affidavits signed and sworn to.

The pressure isn't limited to financial. Proud owners of tricked-out rides, whether they be cruisin' machines, choppers, or still attached to training wheels, discover their licenses and registrations have expired (regardless of what it says on the stickers). The police stop the vehicle because it has been reported stolen. Fortunately the MiBs haven't created any paper trail to back this up, so the stolen vehicle report turns out to be "just a glitch." This takes time however. In the meantime, a ticket and a fine are issued and the car impounded if the Cast doesn't make good with a Willpower and Influence roll.

Be creative and throw additional roadblocks tailored to the Cast. Maybe Family Services starts making visits after anonymous reports of abuse to a Dependent, or an out of state relative files custody papers for the orphaned Cast Member but never follows up. The idea is to keep the Cast off-balance and to make it difficult for them to pursue leads that Monarch doesn't want them to. Oh, and it nicely ratchets up the paranoia level—the Cast Members should be looking over their shoulders, convinced they are being watched. They aren't, at least not by Monarch. At this stage, Monarch is leaving the direct harassment to the local authorities, after supplying false intel on individual Cast Members. The local law might not take an interest in kids wandering through the cemeteries at night, but if one of those kids is suspended from school under suspicion of selling drugs . . . routine patrols might be hard to keep for a few nights if detectives are following, hoping to catch them in the act.

None of these obstacles are insurmountable. A few Dexterity and Crime rolls sneak a Cast Member away from the watchful eye of the cops. Liberal (and successful) uses of Willpower and Influence, as well as Intelligence and Knowledge ("I know my rights!") should see them through the worst. Once the current Episode is over, things go back more or less to normal, though feel free to throw in additional hardships and misunderstandings in future Episodes. This underscores that, though they may have won the day here, the government conspiracy lives on to plot another day.

The Challenger . . . Iron Chef Arabia! The Cast has a lot of clues at this point, but nothing to connect it all to the mastermind the Djinn has created to run it. That is, unless they are able to interrogate Sally, their former friend-turned were-demon. Of course, she's frightened after being subdued, and not talking without some assurances of continued existence. A little forceful persuasion simply triggers her demonic rage and form, and while she can't act against humans due to the BeMo chip, doing things the hard way proves counter-productive. Some promises, real or not, are needed to loosen the old friend/new fiend's tongue. A little nourishment wouldn't hurt, either, as the transformation process seems to require a great deal of energy, and she's famished.

This second implantation process was actually less traumatic than the suiting, so Sally remembers a great deal, and her new demonically-enhanced senses picked up more than the Vulcan personnel expected. She describes the four semi-trailers that were hooked together to form the lab, and that they were located in the dry reservoir on the western edge of the city. She also knows that the lab is broken up and relocated every morning, so it'll be somewhere else by now. She heard the names Monarch and Vulcan, and thinks she knows the number of guards and scientists present, as well as the name of an outsider, a sorcerer who seems to be in charge of the experiments—Ibrahim. If shown the picture Garth took, she confirms it's the same person.

Besides the logistics, she's overheard a number of juicy tidbits. For one, this Ibrahim is worried that some one called Solomon is going to come after him sooner or later. So he's planning to move to a different town after the next batch of soldiers are given demon-suits in the next few days. She also heard him complain about running low on necessary supplies after the last group of commandos was transformed and sent off for field-testing at some hot spot in Africa. While she didn't overhear the entire list, he stressed the need for the items to be fresh, and she recognized one or two items that could only be found locally at a magic shop. Not even she ever cooked with *real* eye of newt.

In addition she saw that Ibrahim had at his command a magic robot of some sort. This huge brute protected the area around the lab so that no one could approach or leave except in a designated vehicle. She had been carried out in a van with four other of the newly implanted. One of them tried to make a break for it, but the robot (they thought it was a stone statue until that point) reached out and crushed him.

An Intelligence and Knowledge roll recalls the story of Solomon and the binding of demons. More in-depth searches using Intelligence and Occultism turns up the following information:



One Success Level: The Seal of Solomon is an organization dedicated to safeguarding the public from the spirits and demons that once roamed the land freely. They are composed of mystics of both the Jewish and Muslim faiths who use the secrets of magic and enslaved demons to protect the innocent. They generally don't operate outside of the Middle East.

Three Success Levels: The Seal is ruled by a council made up of powerful sorcerers who command the ancient relics needed to enslave demons. They are served by golems, magical constructs created via cabalistic means. These councilors are sometimes dispatched outside the Middle East to investigate matters of interest to the group, and are often accompanied by their magical servants for protection.

Six Success Levels: One of the current councilors is named Ibrahim Dhakir, a specialist in the ways of demons known as the djinn. He has the Sight and can see the spirits he fights even before they take corporeal form.

in the know

If you're curious why we didn't devise a similar research result table for Monarch, Vulcan, etc., it's because you must decide how much or how little to reveal about them at this point. If you plan them to become recurring villains, you may first want to let the heroes discover some of the common conspiracy myths about such organizations. Sprinkle in some other truthful nuggets as you create your own Episodes featuring these black-hearted government types. If they are only around for a one-shot guest appearance, feel free to reveal as much as you think would drive the Cast to a delightful state of paranoia for an Episode or two.

Canvassing local purveyors of magical supplies achieves immediate results. They all recognize Ibrahim as a guy who came in recently asking questions about supernatural activity in the area "which as you know has been pretty high, if not very profitable, let me tell ya . . ." He sketched out a symbol (the Mark of the Djinn, which he did not have on his forehead at the time) and asked if it had been seen around town. Then he bought a variety of materials. If a couple places are investigated, a list of supplies can be assembled. An Intelligence and Occultism roll indicates that the components could be used for a locator spell and a long-range telepathy spell.

One store, *Harry's Anytime Halloween*, provides a little more than the others. Harry can recall that Ibrahim returned a few days later, and must have found what he was looking for, since Harry saw that mark on his forehead then. This time he ordered a bunch of items, including ingredients for a variety of necromantic spells.

He must have been at hard at it all that time and was tired or something, Harry speculates, since he seemed to have a whole different demeanor.

If the Cast presses him on this difference, Harry merely adds that Ibrahim wasn't nearly as scary to deal with the second time around. A Perception and Influence roll indicates that Harry is holding something back. Alternatively, a Perception and Occultism roll allows magically-aware characters to have heard of his substitution policies, and realize the proper line of questioning.

With sufficient prodding (of the Willpower and Influence type, or a big enough purchase) Harry admits that he occasionally substitutes items "of equal or greater value" in an order. Always giving the customer their money's worth, he stresses, if not strictly the best value for what they asked for. In this case Harry tried to substitute an expensive crystal vial for the consecrated glass one Ibrahim asked for on his first visit. The guy could tell at a glance that it wasn't blessed, and insisted in no uncertain terms that he be sold the correct type, which he flawlessly picked out from amongst a display of containers.

On his return visit, Ibrahim requested a large quantity of eye of newt and several other ingredients, but the shop hadn't received an expected shipment. Harry was ready for another verbal tongue-lashing when offered weaker, non-magical, varieties, but Ibrahim didn't seem to give it much thought. Maybe he was satisfied with the large discount Harry gave him. Harry assures the Cast that the shipment has since come in, so rest assured all purchases are straight up from now on. And at full price.

Since then, Harry has filled a few more orders for Ibrahim by proxy. The guy calls up a list of materials, and some suit drops by to pick it up and pay for it. If presented with the list of ingredients Sally recalled, Harry informs the crew that he has just put together a similar order, due for pickup today. Harry suggests a larger purchase before parting with this additional info.

Should the Cast follow up, a lone Man in Black arrives a few hours later. His basic statistics (see p. [?]) should be supplemented by a maneuver for the Mind Control Spray Gun he has in his breast pocket. Looking like a tire pressure gauge, it hits with a Combat Score - 2, has a reservoir of two doses, and otherwise causes the suggestion effects mentioned in Act Two instantaneously (see p. [?]). It's also worthless at ranges over five feet. If allowed to pick up the materials unmolested, the MiB heads back to the Aronson Labs warehouse (see p. [?]). Attempts to trail him suffer a -2 penalty, as he uses his government ninja-training.



military options

While you should feel free to inflict any of the aforementioned administrative roadblocks on a Cast of USTARU grunts, we'd be remiss in our duties as members of the Evil Director's Guild if we didn't point out a few nasty additions. Since USTARU recruits, even civilians, are nominally under a military command structure, one of the best ways to annoy them is by disrupting the chain of command. The Men in Black could arrange for contradictory orders through regular (non-USTARU) military channels, such as an immediate directive to pull out of town to some disaster area or another. Or worse, pit them against another USTARU group in town (or vice versa).

Of course, this should be sprung after some of the smaller, not-so-subtle actions listed earlier are tried. That way, even though it is an obvious ruse, the Cast still has to disobey one set of orders and suffer the possible repercussions. USTARU officials are pretty good at recognizing these types of mix-ups coming from regular military channels, so the gang shouldn't have to worry in the long run. But then the Cast won't know that upfront.

Additionally, the very things that make fighting evil in USTARU so much nicer than as a band of local townies can be stripped away. Membership hath few benefits if the group's resources, communications, and even backup forces are unavailable. Taking that a step further, one or more of the Cast could be picked up by the local police on suspicion of desertion from duty, or petty theft from the local base. That wouldn't take long to disprove, but could leave the group shorthanded for a time.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Once the Cast makes nice with Jeffries' USTARU squad, equipment can be used to move the plot along. If they stumble on the idea to trace the chip signals, but are short a complete set, compatible components from the makeshift USTARU lab (i.e., Room 135 at the hotel) can be used instead. Similarly, you could use the government team to reveal clues the Cast has overlooked—such as the mind control scent packs—though any in-depth mystical knowledge or research should remain the province of the Cast. The USTARU team can use their contacts to uncover info on Ibrahim, or Aronson Labs, but they should be limited to asking leading questions rather than simply laying out the entire plot for the Cast.

If no old friend-turned were-demon is available to spark the hunt for info on our ex-Solomon opponent, a little creative license can be used to fill in the gaps. Introduce another victim of the Monarch trials in a demon-suit, captured by the USTARU group off camera. Jubal Goldstein is a Solomon who was sent to town when Ibrahim failed to maintain contact. Asking too many questions of the wrong people, he got recruited for the project. Recognizing that Ibrahim was under a mystical influence during the preparations for the ritual, he engaged his former compatriot in conversation. While unable to convince him of the deception he was caught in, Jubal did manage to drag out of him as much of the plan as you need to relay to the Cast to move the Episode forward. Lucky, that. Unfortunately, Ibrahim had the Vulcan scientists implant a neural shutdown chip in Jubal, and though he is somehow able to fight it long enough to provide the needed nudge forward, he is unable to help in the final act.





Act Four: Resolution

McNamara: You think you and your friends can just keep waltzing into a government installation, brandishing weapons like . . . like . . .

Willow: It's a gourd.

Giles: It's a magic gourd.

—4.21 Primeval

RUNDOWN

Raiding the warehouse, the Cast discovers a group of MiBs and the last clues they need to find the Vulcan laboratory conducting the experiments. From what they've discovered, the scientists are being manipulated by one man, who in turn has been manipulated by the Djinn. They have to decide how far they will go to prevent the Djinn's plans from taking hold in what is already a massive government conspiracy.

Indeed, they may already be too late—another group of recruits from Monarch has arrived to undergo the process, and specialized agents with mystical training are on their way to learn the suiting-up ritual from Ibrahim in order to test it in other areas. Once that happens, the Djinn is truly out of the bottle, and his mark will appear on hundreds across the land.

ACTION

Stocking Up: The Aronson Labs warehouse looks like any other, though set back from the other buildings in area. Still, most warehouses don't have pressure sensors on the roof, pass-card and pass-code security on the doors, and close circuit cameras panning over the entire area around the building. Approaching it undetected isn't easy, though underground access from the sewers, which hook up to a pump room that houses the ventilation system, is an option if you don't mind working your way through several steel grates. At irregular intervals, regular shmoees working for Aronson arrive to pick something up for shipment. The only other visitors arrive by van—the same unmarked van the experimental subjects were shuttled around in. The van has a remote which opens an exterior door, and it drives inside. Unlike the regular employees, these visitors stay for hours at a time.

Other than two civilian employees regularly on site, five Men in Black are sequestered in the suite of rooms at the back of the building (employ more if the Cast and USTARU are attacking in concert, or two fewer if the van is on one of its daily supply runs to the Vulcan lab). Use the standard Men in Black statistics (see p. [?]), but give them access to Mind Control Spray Guns (see p. [?]).

If possible they attempt to spray and turn one of the attackers against their friends. They have no other advanced weaponry, however. Stealth is their greatest weapon (that and really stunning black suits, of course).

Unless caught off guard—one is constantly watching the monitors to prevent that (any Crime attempt suffers a –6 penalty)—one Man in Black attempts to destroy documents in the back room once hostility is confirmed. The others engage the intruders. Only once the destruction is completed (10 Turns) does the non-engaged agent call for backup. All the personnel in the warehouse are expendable (and they know it), but the paper/computer trail must not be compromised. If the destruction is interrupted, some files may be recovered through an Intelligence and Computers roll with a penalty equal to the number of Turns that the Man in Black worked on deleting. Kindly Directors who don't wish to punish the Cast in later Episodes through repeated government interference should rule that whatever Monarch files being kept on the Cast are destroyed or captured here, and not sent on to the main Monarch databases. Unkindly Directors . . .

If the Cast prevails (if they don't, they'll end up at the mobile lab for a different reason), they have access to whatever coded records still exist. As one might expect, it's a particularly difficult code to crack (–12 to any attempts, whether using Computer, Knowledge, or Crime). An MiB with a face full of mind control juice might oblige with the key (he can also give them the pass phrase to the mobile lab if the Cast thinks to ask for such a thing). Once decrypted, the file reveals a laundry list of the dirty tricks these guys have been playing on the Cast (be a sport and throw one in that they haven't encountered yet—just to show them how much worse it could have gotten). It also displays the supply requisitions and transit records to and from the Vulcan lab. It looks like at least three squads of the Monarch commandos and a few VIPs have been in to have the suit treatment so far; the commandos have been left that way and redeployed elsewhere. Another squad is scheduled for arrival in the morning, as is a team of specialists to study Ibrahim's methods . . . for replication at other Monarch facilities! Also, while the schedule of relocations of the lab is available, its current position is not.

That information can be found in the van's complete satellite guidance system. It looks like the mobile lab sites are programmed into the navigation system remotely after each move. Recorded data shows the reservoir location Sally mentioned, as well as the current position—an abandoned state truck weighing station just off of the highway south of the town.



Other than the Monarch mischief, the warehouse contains ordinary medical equipment. Some of it is expensive (if any larcenous Cast Members are interested), but nothing that couldn't be found in a hospital or university lab. Searching through the supply of drugs does turn something up, though. A successful Perception and Notice roll uncovers two dozen refills for the spray guns, as well as a handful of the Mind Control scent packs filled with the same material.

Into the Breech: This scene takes place in an open parking lot surrounded by woods on three sides. An abandoned weigh station stands between the lot and the highway on the fourth side. A golem (see p. [?]) stands immobile behind the station building, observing the lot for any movement. Its mystical senses cause it to move to intercept and attack anyone approaching or leaving the four, linked, oversized semi-trailers parked in the center of the lot, unless they are inside the MiB van. And when we say anyone, we mean whether moving invisible, underground, disguised, via parachute, or from some mythical "blind spot" your players throw at you. On the other hand, due to the exact command it was given, it does not attack individuals who approach or leave within the van, even if they participate later in combat of some type. If the Cast satisfies those conditions, it only attacks them if ordered to by Ibrahim, or if Ibrahim is killed. In the latter case, it will attack any and all who try to prevent it from retrieving Ibrahim's body, and streaking away through the woods (quicker than you can say "Clatoo, verata, nicto").

Those Cast Members extra-nimble on their feet may wish to provide a distraction for the others by leading the golem on a wild Slayerette chase. This works, to a point. Once the golem locks on to a valid target, it pursues it relentlessly, but all but the most average of runners should be able to out pace it. Eventually it will return to its guard duty once the target has gotten farther away from it than it is from the lab (a maximum of five Turns unless the "distraction" is deliberately pacing herself to stay in range). The problem is it keeps the lock on that target even after it abandons the chase. If that individual approaches the protected area again, the golem senses her immediately, and takes action to ambush her as she arrives.

The trailers are parked side-by-side, linked via sealed airlocks located in the middle of each vehicle's side. The entrance is a set of double doors in the trailer on the far side from the highway, facing the woods. Two Monarch commandos (see p. [?]), with hellbore rifles and reptoid shields (see p. [?]) stand guard at the entrance. They aren't much better than the golem when it comes to distinguishing friend from foe. They'll raise the alarm and watch as the golem attacks any intruders. But if the Cast approaches in the van and wears the expected

uniform (dark suits and shades) when they exit it, the guards allow them to approach. Unless the Cast thought to ask the MiBs they disabled at the warehouse, though, they won't know the pass phase. If they don't know it, one guard presses the alarm button (which goes off at the end of that Turn), while the other brings his rifle to bear.

The main entrance is sealed and locked. An Intelligence and Computers – 10 roll, a Strength (not doubled) – 20 roll, or one of the commandos thumbs is needed to bypass the lock.

Once inside, the Cast must deal with the individuals in each of the four rooms listed in sequential order. In general, once the alarm sounds, the scientists (use the Initiative Scientist, see p. [?]) retreat into the furthest trailer, while the demons rush forward for the kill. There are five scientists in all, plus Ibrahim (see p. [?]), a vampire lieutenant (see *BtVS Corebook*, p. 171), two commandos with forceblades (see p. [?]), and three Fyarl-suited commandos (see p. [?])! Plus the caged hellhounds, of course (see p. [?]) but increase Dexterity and Combat Score by two).

The interior airlocks can be closed and locked from either side from a keypad. If so, they can be opened in the same manner as the outside door (demon or vamp thumbs do not work). Triggering the alarm also starts the fail-safe destruction device countdown. Two separate scientists must enter codes in the last trailer to deactivate it. The explosion incinerates all evidence of the trailers and their occupants (and potentially starts a forest fire, if the Cast aren't around to call it in). An annoying computerized voice counts down the time to self-destruct in minute intervals, changing to seconds as the last minute is reached (the exact timing is left to your dramatic judgment, of course).

Room One: This trailer holds most of the supplies and equipment for the lab, as well as the mess and sleeping quarters (i.e., bunks) for the personnel. There are currently two scientists taking naps, and one of the human commandos is eating.

Room Two: One of the surgical bays, the room contain the autopsied body of a Rwasundi demon that Ibrahim conjured for study, as well as a dozen other demon bodies of various types stacked on shelves up to the ceiling. Three cages hold hellhounds awaiting their eventual execution and use in the next batch of suiting. Ibrahim is here if the alarm has not sounded, otherwise he retreats to Room Four, and calls his golem to rip open the back of lab so he can escape. One other scientist is in the room, as is the second human commando.

Room Three: The second surgical bay, this one is set up for human subjects. Any Cast Members or USTARU agents captured earlier in the Episode, and not already accounted for, can be found here, strapped to their



stretchers and drugged. And what would a raid be without innocent victims to save? A couple of non-combatants (including children) are strapped to stretchers as well. Apparently the higher ups were interested in finding out if young minds would make better shock troops. Your tax dollars at work! The two Fyarl-commandos keep an eye on things here. Unless the alarm has sounding, they are preoccupied with keeping Ibrahim's vampire companion from using one of the kids as a snack. They may be demon-suited soldiers, but they're still human (kind of), after all!

Room Four: Containing the laboratory equipment, the computers, and the files generated so far, this room is the command center for the facility. Within are the last two scientists, and the remaining Fyarl-commando. Once the alarm goes off, the scientists begin destroying records. If an escape route is provided, they run—note that this violates the golem's guard space command . . . with very messy results.

The Moral Choice: While the Cast has little choice of action against the commandos and demons, the question remains: what to do with Ibrahim? He must be stopped, but how permanently? Killing him may be the most straightforward solution, and the simplest (save for that nasty golem attack which is sure to follow). But the Cast has come across evidence that he is not exactly what he seems, and may be a victim of the Djinn himself.

If the Cast suspects he has been controlled by the Djinn, they may attempt to reason with him. Unfortunately any persuasion attempt is doomed to failure, due to the "wish" changes to his mind. The best that they can hope for are slight hesitations in carrying out his actions when confronted by words alone. If they add some visual aids to the mix, however, that's a different story.

Ideally the Cast has realized that the Djinn, in addition to "brainwashing" Ibrahim, has also suppressed his natural Sight powers, preventing him from seeing the signs of the Djinn's influence on or about himself. Almost as if the mark on his forehead clouds the "third eye" that reveals the mystical to him. In this case, that's what exactly has happened.

Magically-inclined Cast Members might try to cast a spell which would uncover his Sight, or otherwise render the Djinn's influence visible to him. Spells from *The Magic Box* such as *Tirer La Couture*, *Lifting the Veil*, or even Cadria's *End Demonic Blindness* would all serve that purpose. For those without access to that worthy tome, we present *Uncover the Third Eye* nearby.

UNCOVER THE THIRD EYE

QUICK CAST: Yes

POWER LEVEL: 4

REQUIREMENTS: A several-minute chant to the blind goddess Cadria.

EFFECT: This spell allows one individual to view the world as if she had *The Sight* for one Turn per Success Level, allowing her to see magic and traces of supernatural power.

ASPECT ANALYSIS: Ritual (several minutes) (+0), may be Quick Cast (+1), noticeable scope (one being) (+1), short duration (-1), major effect (+3).

military options

For those with a strict military bent, a less "squishy" option to using a spell is necessary to save the day. Like, say, cutting the mark off of Ibrahim's forehead (or simply changing its appearance with a little knifework, if you don't want to go that far). This temporarily breaks the enchantment clouding his senses just as well as magic would. Well, until the blood starts dripping into his eyes, that is.

Of course, given the standard operating procedure for our favorite military monster hunters, it's likely to be a matter of skipping the small talk and shooting first. Unfortunately no amount of pain or duress is going to snap Ibrahim out of the delusion he is under. Serious wounding can get him to reveal what he knows of the Djinn, however, and his plans to make it corporeal. The only way to stop him strictly with violence is to go all the way—he'll always try to carry out the Djinn's design otherwise.

For our USTARU team, the lure of the information in the files, both at the warehouse and in the lab, may prove dangerous. While they must avoid being blown up with the lab, this information is likely to lead them further into the web of conspiracies at the heart of this sourcebook. Just the opportunity you were looking for to throw out information that will prepare them for future Episodes.





If Ibrahim gets his magical Sight back, he can see the Djinn's manipulation all about him, as well as its mark on those touched by the demon-suit project. His mind is still clouded by the Djinn's twisting, but he's smart enough to realize things are not how they should be. When that mind-bending appears as a giant, and visible, taloned hand hovering over his head, distorting his vision, even his reprogrammed mind can't ignore it.

While that isn't enough to turn him back to the man he was, it does cause him to pause, and be receptive to an unmodified Willpower and Influence persuasion attempt. In fact, speaking of his ties to the Solomons grants the Cast a +2 bonus to the roll. Once persuaded, he turns his efforts toward extracting the Cast and any victims from their present difficulties by siccing his golem on surviving Monarch agents. He can't turn off the self-destruct, however, so it is still prudent to run away as soon as is convenient.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If Ibrahim does not survive, Jubal can cover most of what he relates to the cast. Jubal can be introduced in one of the Fyarl-suits in the lab if he has not already appeared in the Episode. He, too, suffers from the Mark of the Djinn, and cannot return to his sect until he proves himself with a cure.

There are lots of powerful beasts in this Act, so be sure to use the USTARU team to good effect. If the Cast hasn't made an alliance with them, that group should make the same connections independently so they are on hand to render assistance. Or if the two groups together are having difficulty, tone down the opposition by making the Fyarl-suits captured townsfolk who can override their control chips for a critical moment or two to lend a hand.

Similarly, unless the Cast has been clued into the destructive potential of the golem, an assault on the lab may prove too much for them. If their survival is in question, alter its capabilities to give them a fighting (or sneaking) chance. Drop its mystical senses down to line-of-sight detection, allowing them to slip in from the woods, or allow Cast Members who run away a chance to fight another day when the golem stops pursuit at the tree line.





AFTERMATH

Fortunately for those with the Mark of the Djinn in this Episode, the Djinn used its newfound semi-freedom and another's wish to place those sigils. Thus, it cannot immediately call up those souls to feed upon. They are bound to it still, though loosely. While they cannot hide from the Djinn without powerful magics, neither can it spy on them without being visible itself, whether using magic or not. Should it ever finally escape bondage, these poor souls become fair game, and all it has to do is perform a simple ritual to claim them. Sounds like incentive enough for any Cast Members so afflicted to keep that from happening, eh? If and when it is finally reimprisoned, the marks fade completely. Until such time, though, even surgery can not remove them permanently. The mark always grows back within a number of days.

Jeffries' USTARU squad remains in town for a few weeks to wrap up its mission of protecting the populace until the monster sightings die down again. Then it's off to another glorious and thankless adventure. In the meantime, the Cast may be able to call on them for immediate support and backup, and have made important long-term contacts that could prove helpful the next time the Cast is over their heads in hot water.

If Ibrahim died and was carried off by the golem, he might yet return in a future Episode. Perhaps dying freed him from the Djinn's influence, and he bears no ill will towards the Cast. He could show up in the final battle against the Djinn to help the Cast make an end of it. On the other hand, he might carry a grudge and show up again next Season to show them he knows what they did last summer.

A surviving Ibrahim is conflicted. He knows he is not the way he was and cannot (in fact does not want to) return to the Solomons as he is now. That group could not risk accepting him. As a servant of the Djinn, he feels loyalty to his master, but he also knows that is a falsehood implanted by the creature itself. He, too, is afflicted with the Mark of the Djinn through no fault of his own. His conclusion is that he must search for a way to cleanse himself of the mark, and attempt to rediscover his true self along the way.

Before he goes, Ibrahim removes any demon-suits still being worn among the Cast and their friends. In your fiendish discretion, he may be unable to fully complete the process now that he is at odds with the Djinn, leaving the subject apparently cured but prone to fits of demonification during times of stress, the full moon, etc. Finding a cure could lead to a whole new arc through several Episodes, or else it might just be something to keep under control until the Djinn is no more.

He does offer one bit of advice to the Cast. His mind is now clouded, and many of the things he once knew seem to be gone, but he does remember snippets here and there. In all of his studies regarding the Djinn and their kind, he remembers never finding a sure way to truly destroy it. All the tales talk of imprisonment, banishment, or containment. As if the evil that composes such a creature could never be dissipated. He is sure, however, that a Djinn imprisonment can be made escape proof. How, he cannot recall. Indeed, he's not sure he ever knew the specifics. But the glimpses of memory he has left tell him to seek out the Ifreet. Those magical creatures are ages-old enemies of the Djinn. Their long-standing feud has stretching into different times and different dimensions. The Ifreet are no angels—they are just as nasty when it comes to relations with mortals and the whole mortal plane, but Ibrahim thinks there must be a way to use that animosity against the Djinn. In any event, that's something he will be working on as he seeks a cure for the mark. He promises to let the cast know if he succeeds at it.

Does the Djinn appear to taunt the Cast? Well, if they'd miss it, then yes, certainly. Otherwise, regardless of whether Ibrahim is dead, or turned against it, the Djinn is already thinking ahead to its next plan. It's got its claws into several groups of soldiers throughout the world, ready to be harvested when it is ready. It successfully tested the new limits on its cage, and found that it could twist the wishes it grants to put weak claims on those other than the wisher. The cage has gotten just a little bit gilded, and life has just got a whole lot more interesting. Time to take full advantage of that.

The absence of that gloating voice might be enough to keep the Cast on edge. Did they stop its plan in time? What did they miss? And what will it throw at them next?





Appendix

AN INITIATIVE GLOSSARY

Half the fun of being in the military is getting to use lots of bizarre acronyms and goofy sounding phrases, like "Roger that, Alpha-Yankee-Foxtrot." Aside from helping you understand this book, these terms can also help to make your commandos sound a little more commando-y. "Alpha Team, your collateral mission is to establish the bona fides of the Sub-T collaborator" sounds cooler than "Joe, while you're out there find out if we can trust that demon stool pigeon."

Some of these terms have been used on *Buffy*. Most we made up on our own or flat out stole from the military. Don't be looking for canon here folks.

BeMo: Behavior Modication, typically administered through a surgically implanted chip.

Black Mission: An assignment emphasizing stealth over force.

Bona Fides: The use of verbal or visual signals to establish the authenticity of an unknown agent.

Breacher: A field engineer specializing in demolitions and forced entry.

Catalytic Attack: An attack designed to bring about a war between major powers, staged for the benefit of a hidden third power.

Coat: A scientist; also *Lab Coat*.

Coded Mission: An assignment emphasizing force over stealth. The numerical value of the code indicates the level of the threat. Code One represents the highest level of danger. Code Three is the lowest level of danger. Code Four indicates an unknown threat level.

Collateral Mission: A secondary objective that may fall outside the usual duties of a squad, but which the squad has the skills to accomplish.



Covering Force: A detachment of troops providing security for a larger force through observation, reconnaissance, attack, or defense, or any combination of these methods.

HST: Hostile Subterrestrial.

ILTEP: Initiative Long Term Enhancement Program. The treatments Maggie Walsh was giving to Initiative Commandos in an attempt to give them superhuman physical abilities.

Impact Radius: An area contaminated by subterrestrial activities.

Intel: An intelligence agent, responsible for acquiring and managing the information required to accomplish the mission objectives.





ISTIC: Initiative Subterrestrial Integrated Cyborg. Another name for Adam, the prototype of Project 314.

Kill Zone: An area in which a military commander plans to draw the enemy to allow maximum concentration of allied fire. Also *Killing Zone*.

NS Chip: A Neural Shutdown chip, a surgically implanted chip that can temporarily halt all brain activity.

Phonetic Alphabet: A standardized list of words used to identify letters. The following are the authorized words, listed in order, for each letter in the alphabet: ALPHA, BRAVO, CHARLIE, DELTA, ECHO, FOXTROT, GOLF, HOTEL, INDIA, JULIET, KILO, LIMA, MIKE, NOVEMBER, OSCAR, PAPA, QUEBEC, ROMEO, SIERRA, TANGO, UNIFORM, VICTOR, WHISKEY, X-RAY, YANKEE, and ZULU. Also known as *Alphabet Code*.

SciSpec: Scientific Support agent.

Scrub: A Scrub order or Scrub mission involves cleansing an area that has been contaminated by exposure to subterrestrial forces. This generally involves the elimination of all living creatures within the impact zone.

Slave Chip: A specialized type of surgically implanted BeMo chip that allows an outside force to seize control of the victim.

Sub-T: Abbreviation of subterrestrial.

Subterrestrial: Properly, an inhabitant of another dimension; what an occultist would refer to as a demon. In practice this is used to refer to any sort of supernatural creature, including primals or natural spirits. Especially common subterrestrials are often assigned a secondary identifying designation that can be used around civilians without revealing the true nature of the squad's activities; see *Victor* and *Whiskey*.

TABI: Tactical Assault Bladed Implement. A melee weapon designed for use by USTARU commandos. Civilians use the more prosaic term sword.

TEA Chip: Temporarily Enhanced Action chip. A neural chip that provides a temporary boost to physical or mental activities.

USTARU: The United States Subterrestrial Activity Response Unit. A military unit dedicated to fighting HSTs across the world.

Victor: USTARU shorthand for "vampire"; generally used around civilians, as in "Riley, Sam says that she's found Victor in the warehouse."

Whiskey: USTARU shorthand for "werewolf." Typically used for any sort of primal shapeshifter.

Wildfire: A subterrestrial threat that will cause massive loss of life if it is not immediately contained.





ORGANIZATION STATISTICS

The *Angel Roleplaying Game*—another fine product by the good people of Eden Studios—includes a detailed system for comparing the capabilities of organizations. In case you happen to own a copy of this excellent book, here are statistics for the groups presented in *Military Monster Squad*. Needless to say, the Why, What, and When for each group is covered earlier in the book.

THE INITIATIVE

The Supernatural Clout rating of the Initiative (and USTARU) reflects its basic knowledge of HSTs and access to chipped subterrestrials, as opposed to true mystic power.

Total Value: 46 points.

Clout: Financial (Big bucks) (4), Governmental (Agency) (4), Supernatural (Arcane) (1). Total Cost: 9 points.

Quarters: Huge (5), Worldwide (10), Physical Security (Best money can buy) (5). Total Cost: 12 points (reduced by eight from Financial and Governmental Clout).

Gear: Computers (Cutting Edge) (4), Laboratory (Full-Scale) (5), Medical Facilities (Full-Scale) (5), Workshop (Cutting Edge) (4), Special Training (2), Training Facilities (3), Vehicles (Military/Exotic Vehicles) (5), Weapons (Full Metal Jacket) (5). Total Cost: 25 points (reduced by eight from Financial and Governmental Clout levels).

USTARU

USTARU is not a research operation. The gear ratings for its labs and workshops reflect its few dedicated research centers, but these resources are not available at every USTARU base.

Total Value: 44 points.

Clout: Financial (In the money) (3), Governmental (Agency) (4), Supernatural (Arcane) (1). Total Cost: 8 points.

Quarters: Huge (5), Worldwide (10), Physical Security (Military-level) (4), Supernatural Security (Believers) (1). Total Cost: 13 points (reduced by seven from Financial and Governmental Clout).

Gear: Computers (Top-notch) (3), Laboratory (Top-notch) (3), Medical Facilities (Full-scale) (5), Workshop (Cutting edge) (4), Special Training (2), Training Facilities (3), Vehicles (Military/Exotic Vehicles) (5), Weapons (Full Metal Jacket) (5). Total Cost: 23 points (reduced by seven from Financial and Governmental Clout levels).





FLETA

Fleta was once a government agency, but it is now a freelance organization. This description applies to what agents can acquire on a regular basis. Still, there are always exceptions and loopholes. If the story calls for it, a Fleta agent may be able to acquire gear that far exceeds these limitations, by raiding an old supply cache or uncovering a forgotten project. Its "quarters" are primarily old safehouses; at one time they would have possessed a greater level of security, but these systems are no longer maintained. If a Fleta base was fully restaffed and reactivated, the security would jump up a few levels and the gear ratings would jump up considerably. In its heyday, Fleta was easily a match for the Initiative.

Total Value: 16 points.

Clout: Criminal (Big player) (3), Financial (In the money) (2), Governmental (Connected) (1), Supernatural (Arcane) (1). Total Cost: 7 points.

Quarters: Medium (1), Worldwide (3), Physical Security (Standard) (1), Supernatural Security (Believers) (1). Total Cost: 3 points (reduced by three from Financial and Governmental Clout).

Gear: Computers (Basic) (1), Laboratory (Basic) (1), Medical Facilities (Advanced) (2), Workshop (Advanced) (2), Occult Archives (1), Weapons (Full Metal Jacket) (5). Total Cost: 6 points (reduced by six from Criminal, Financial, and Governmental Clout levels).

MONARCH

It doesn't get much worse than Monarch. As the most powerful arm of Majestic-12, Monarch agents are above the law and have access to vast amounts of cash and resources. Due to its extensive experience in wetworks, Monarch also has major contacts in the criminal underworld. All in all, it's a good group to avoid. Note that Monarch has limited research capabilities; these functions are handled by other arms of MJ-12, like Vulcan. Monarch goes more for exotic vehicles than military—think silent black helicopters.

Total Value: 44 points.

Clout: Criminal (Major connections) (3), Financial (Powerhouse) (5), Governmental (Shadow Government) (5), Supernatural (Exotics) (3). Total Cost: 16 points.

Quarters: Huge (5), Worldwide (10), Physical Security (Best money can buy) (5), Supernatural Security (Protected) (2). Total Cost: 12 points (reduced by ten from Financial and Governmental Clout).

Gear: Computers (Cutting edge) (4), Medical Facilities (Full-scale) (5), Workshop (Top-notch) (3), Special Training (2), Training Facilities (3), Vehicles (Vehicle Fleet) (2), Vehicles (Military/Exotic Vehicles) (5), Weapons (Full Metal Jacket) (5). Total Cost: 16 points (reduced by thirteen from Criminal, Financial, and Governmental Clout levels).

SANGVINE

While Sanguine is an alliance of vampires, its members have intentionally turned away from the supernatural world; as a result, its greatest power comes from its financial clout. As it includes multiple major corporations, it has access to vast research and production facilities.

Total Value: 48 points.

Clout: Criminal (Major connections) (3), Financial (Powerhouse) (5), Governmental (Major contributor) (3), Supernatural (Arcane) (1). Total Cost: 12 points.

Quarters: Huge (5), Worldwide (10), Physical Security (Excellent) (3), Supernatural Security (Protected) (2). Total Cost: 12 points (reduced by eight from Financial and Governmental Clout).

Gear: Computers (Cutting edge) (4), Laboratory (Full-scale) (5), Medical Facilities (Full-scale) (5), Workshop (Full-scale) (5), Occult Archives (1), Training Facilities (3), Vehicles (Vehicle Fleet) (2), Vehicles (Air Fleet) (5), Weapons (Military) (5). Total Cost: 24 points (reduced by eleven from Criminal, Financial, and Governmental Clout levels).

THE SEAL OF SOLOMON

For a major player, the Seal of Solomon doesn't have much clout. It is a dedicated alliance of sorcerers, but it is a small organization and it does not have any sort of government support.

Total Value: 20 points.

Clout: Criminal (Street cred) (1), Financial (Holding its own) (2), Supernatural (Potent beings) (4). Total Cost: 7 points.

Quarters: Medium (1), Multiple Locations (1), Physical Security (Standard) (1), Supernatural Security (Invulnerable) (4). Total Cost: 5 points (reduced by two from Financial Clout).

Gear: Medical Facilities (Advanced) (2), Occult Archives (5), Special Training (2), Training Facilities (2). Total Cost: 8 points (reduced by three from Criminal and Financial Clout levels).





THE THRONES

The Thrones have access to considerable wealth and they have a few allies in the government—especially the Vatican hierarchy—but they are a secretive and independent organization with little temporal influence. Throne labs and workshops specialize in producing the exotic weaponry the Thrones use in their crusade.

Total Value: 51 points.

Clout: Criminal (Street cred) (1), Financial (Powerhouse) (5), Governmental (Influential) (2), Supernatural (Exotics) (3). Total Cost: 11 points.

Quarters: Huge (5), Worldwide (10), Physical Security (Good) (2), Supernatural Security (Warded) (3). Total Cost: 13 points (reduced by seven from Financial and Governmental Clout).

Gear: Computers (Top-notch) (3), Laboratory (Advanced) (2), Medical Facilities (Full-scale) (5), Workshop (Cutting edge) (4), Occult Archives (4), Special Training (2), Training Facilities (3), Vehicles (Vehicle Fleet) (2), Vehicles (Air Fleet) (5), Weapons (Military) (5). Total Cost: 27 points (reduced by eight from Criminal, Financial, and Governmental Clout levels).

THE VRIL SOCIETY

The Vril Society includes members from all walks of life, including powerful politicians, wealthy businessmen, and established criminals. Its clout and gear comes from the combined resources of these individual members.

Total Value: 35 points.

Clout: Criminal (Major connections) (3), Financial (Powerhouse) (5), Governmental (Major contributor) (3), Supernatural (Exotics) (3). Total Cost: 14 points.

Quarters: Large (3), Worldwide (6), Physical Security (Excellent) (3), Supernatural Security (Warded) (3). Total Cost: 7 points (reduced by eight from Financial and Governmental Clout).

Gear: Computers (Top-notch) (3), Laboratory (Top-notch) (3), Workshop (Full-scale) (5), Occult Archives (4), Vehicles (Vehicle Fleet) (2), Vehicles (Air Fleet) (5), Weapons (Paramilitary) (3). Total Cost: 14 points (reduced by eleven from Criminal, Financial, and Governmental Clout levels).

VULCAN

Vulcan is a research arm of Majestic-12; military operations are handled by groups like Monarch.

Total Value: 37 points.

Clout: Financial (Big bucks) (4), Governmental (Agency) (4), Supernatural (Arcane) (1). Total Cost: 9 points.

Quarters: Large (3), Worldwide (6), Physical Security (Best Money Can Buy) (5), Supernatural Security (Protected) (2). Total Cost: 8 points (reduced by eight from Financial and Governmental Clout).

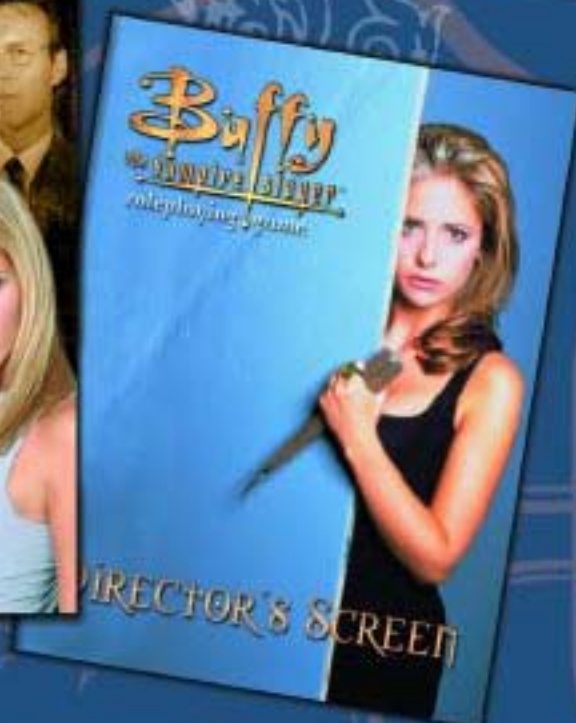
Gear: Computers (Futuristic) (5), Laboratory (Full-scale) (5), Medical Facilities (Full-scale) (5), Workshop (Full-scale) (5), Occult Archives (1), Vehicles (Vehicle Fleet) (2), Vehicles (Air Fleet) (5). Total Cost: 20 points (reduced by eight from Financial and Governmental Clout levels).



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*Willow: Okay, that's a little blacker than I like my arts.
Anya: Oh, don't be such a wimp.*

-3.16 Doppelg ngland

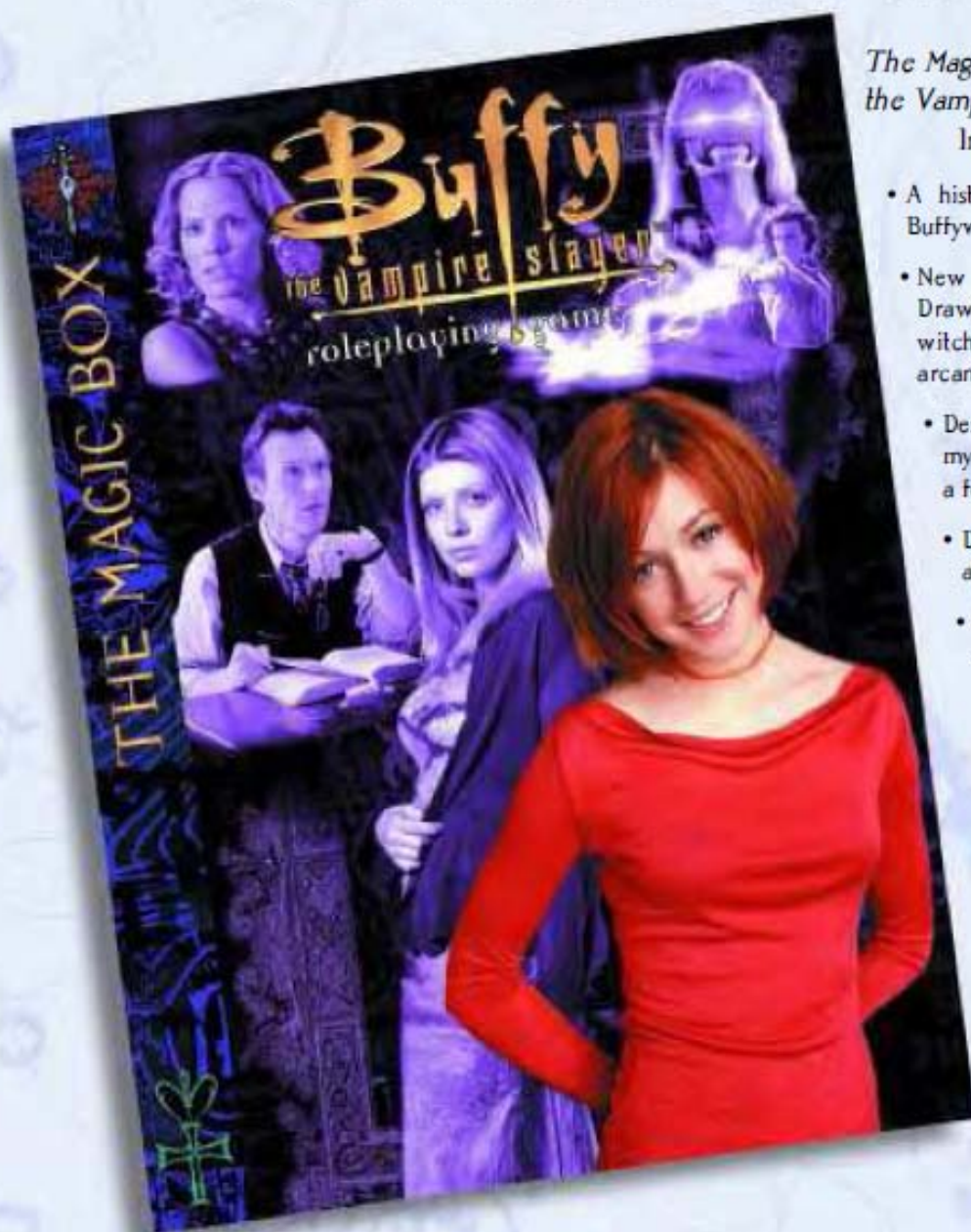
Okay, so you're not the one and only Slayer . . . whatever.

With ancient and powerful magicks on your side, you don't need to be able to bench press a car to fight evil with the best of them. Whether you're a witch, a warlock, a dabbler in the dark arts, a psychic or even a superscientist, you have powers granted to few mortals.

'Course, there's a potential downside . . . but bad stuff never happens to the good guys. Right?

Here you'll find all the info you need to master your powers and learn how to introduce the monsters to a world of magical hurt.

Oh, and there's also some talk of the dark side . . . just in case . . .



The Magic Box is a supplement for the Buffy the Vampire Slayer roleplaying game.

In it, you will find:

- A history of magic and the supernatural in the Buffyverse
- New character creation ideas, Qualities and Drawbacks, and more character Archetypes for witches, warlocks, psychics and other users of arcane arts
- Descriptions and stats for rituals and items of mystical power from the BVVS TV show as well as a few never seen before
- Details on psychic powers and other paranormal abilities
- A complete Episode featuring a monster that only powerful magic can vanquish

Written by John Sneed

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