

NEWS FACES



1992

AN ADVENTURE RESOURCE FOR

OVER-THE-EDGETM

BY JONATHAN TWEET

NEW FACES

An OVER THE EDGE™ Adventure Resource
by Jonathan Tweet

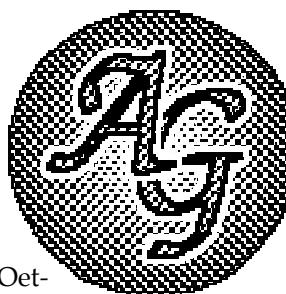
DIGITAL EDITION VERSION 1.0

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INTRODUCTION

New Faces is a collection of material designed for easy incorporation into your *Over the Edge*™ series.

The title piece is a rather straightforward adventure originally developed as a demo adventure for a local convention. As such, it is relatively simple and unconnected to the various plots on Al Amarja. It is suitable for beginner PCs who aren't ready for the big leagues, or for experienced PCs who need a break and change of pace.

The second piece is a new "force to be reckoned with." Remember Portia, from Sad Mary's? This is the story of her people. Believe it or not, the Agaras originally were a part of my *Ars Magica*™ saga, but the PCs never investigated them, so years later I moved them from 13th century Wales to 20th century Al Amarja (with a few alterations, naturally).

The Agaras are a suitable mystery for newcomers to crack because it is relatively small and low-powered. This piece is not a story in itself. How you turn the background information into a story for your players is up to you.

Finally, the third piece is simply a set of GMC operatives that can be used in a great variety of ways, depending on your needs and tastes. I developed them as PCs for an online demo game, and they were so interesting I decided to put them to use after the demo was over.

I like this collection because it shows the breadth of which OTE™ is capable: weird science, surreal espionage, even "fantasy." I also like them because, in various ways, they deal with the exploration and transformation of the self. Use them the best way you know how, and enjoy.

NEW FACES

In which the PCs search for a missing young woman and face psychotic shape-changers.

WHAT'S HAPPENED

A few weeks ago, a young woman named Konstanz Nachbar received plastic surgery through a new technique invented by Dr. Nusbaum. The technique breaks down the surface tension of living cells and allows one to alter their shape at will. The process is lengthy, involving drugs, mental training, and a large device whose active ingredients are a secret known only to Dr. Nusbaum. Once the new face is shaped, it is set permanently.

After her surgery, Konstanz was contacted by some folks who have also had the surgery, but who have taken their powers to a

new height through the processes of one Dr. Alfonso Rodriguez, a former colleague of Nusbaum's. With his system, one can maintain conscious control of one's form, even altering it drastically. He has started a small, secret following of people who can transform their bodies at will.

Unfortunately, the mind is inextricably linked to the body, and such gross transformations often have an unfortunate influence on the mind. Dr. Rodriguez has unwittingly produced a small cadre of psychotic shape-changers, himself foremost among them.

Poor Konstanz is in over her head, and she doesn't know what to do, but she's happy, because she has a supply of communion, her drug of choice.

GETTING THE PCs INVOLVED

Depending on the details of your series, there are several ways to involve the PCs.

- Konstanz's parents, Annette and Waldo, are wealthy people, and they want their daughter back. They may place an ad in "Opportunities on the Edge," offering a reward for Konstanz's return, or they may have some more direct connection with the PCs.

- The Nachbars are friends of one or more PCs, who are not yet on the island. The Nachbars contact the PCs, and this story serves as the reason why the PCs come to Al Amarja in the first place.

- The PCs have met Konstanz and befriended her. When she turns up missing, they look for her on their own initiative. Konstanz may be the key to a deeper mystery.

- Konstanz knows something that the PCs want to learn, but she has disappeared before they could contact her.

- The PCs are in deep trouble with the Peace Force, and Dr. Nusbaum promises to get the charges dropped if they find and capture a fellow named Alfonso Rodriguez. The best clue to finding him is tracking down what happened to his last "victim," Konstanz Nachbar.

FINDING KONSTANZ

The following clues may lead the PCs to Konstanz. If the PCs are being hired by Annette Nachbar to find Konstanz, then Annette supplies this information. Otherwise, the PCs may have to dig it up themselves.

Sad Mary's

Konstanz loved the fights and went there often. The bartender here may tell the PCs about her unusual beer order. She always ordered her beer jumped and on the rocks, and then salted it. If the PCs later see the transformed Konstanz ordering such a drink, they may realize it is Konstanz and follow or attempt to restrain her.

Sigma Epsilon Xi

A former sorority sister, Konstanz would often hang around the sorority house and was friends with several of the seniors. If questioned, the Sigma Ep girls may say that Konstanz came by showing off her new face a little while back, but that they haven't seen her since. One of them, Juice Petrelli, may tell the PCs that she received a letter from Konstanz just two days ago imploring her to use Dr. Nusbaum's method. The letter also said that Konstanz would be in touch soon after Juice had undergone the process.

If the PCs have the time and a way with words, they may be able to convince Dr. Nusbaum to spring for a free "transformation" for Juice, and then use Juice as bait, waiting for Konstanz to contact her.

Nuben Zimnalla

Konstanz's Algerian boyfriend, a message carrier and Sommerite. He, too, received a letter from Konstanz telling him that she would be in contact with him once he had the face-changing process. The letter says, "Things are getting a little strange where I'm at, but it's very exciting. By the way, if you could be any animal you wanted, which would it be?"

As with Juice (above), Nuben could serve as bait once he has undergone the transformation process.

Dr. Nusbaum

Dr. Nusbaum only takes time from his busy schedule to talk to the PCs if they let him know that they are after Konstanz. He himself is after information regarding Dr. Rodriguez, and he meets with the PCs only if they seem to have something to offer. Seeking information himself, Dr. Nusbaum is not willing to give out much in return. He asks what the PCs know and insists that they report to him once they have found anything important. He knows that several of his clients have come up missing. If the PCs him offer good information, he tells them that he thinks the clients have been abducted and perhaps killed by a former colleague, one Dr. Alfonso Rodriguez. Dr. Nusbaum expelled him from the clinic for unspecified misconduct, and Rodriguez may be getting

his revenge by killing those who use the self-transformation system he helped invent. He explains that Dr. Rodriguez was disturbed and should probably be captured but definitely not killed. (Dr. Nusbaum wants to use Rodriguez' genius, not snuff it out.)

Without promising anything, Nusbaum makes it plain that capturing Dr. Rodriguez would be materially appreciated by the powers that be.

FINDING KONSTANZ

The simplest way for the PCs to seek Konstanz is to stake out Sad Mary's during fights and to notice someone ordering jumped beer on the rocks, and then salting it. Konstanz should be able to escape pursuit, leaving the PCs to face Antoni (below), if it makes sense in play.

If the PCs manage to restrain Konstanz, Antoni will attack, possibly allowing Konstanz the opportunity to escape.

If the PCs do capture Konstanz and defeat Antoni, the adventure may be over (depending on the PCs' goals). If Antoni escapes, however, he may phone Dr. Rodriguez and get a strike team of Proteans on the scene to off the PCs and retrieve Konstanz.

Play Konstanz as wary and slippery when the PCs find her. If she is taking the bait (Juice or Nuben), she will scout the scene first in an altered and unrecognizable form before approaching the "bait" in her "normal" guise.

A Taste of What They're Up Against

Antoni, a member of the Proteus Club, is infatuated with Konstanz. When she goes about in the Edge, he follows her, partly for her protection, and partly out of jealousy. Konstanz does not know about Antoni's attentions.

When the PCs try to follow or capture Konstanz, Antoni sees what is going on and strikes. He attacks them in the form of a (clothed) gargoyle, with horns, huge claws, fangs — the works. This attack may let Konstanz give the PCs the slip. When killed, Antoni turns into a skeleton smothered in a puddle of stinking, sticky goo.



A fight is likely to bring some authorities to investigate, such as the Aries Gang, the Peace Force, or some other group active in the area. Unless the PCs really want to answer some sticky questions, they may want to bug out before the authorities arrive (leading to a chase scene, if you wish). Faced with the putrefied corpse of Antoni, the authorities may either back off rather than tick off the PCs (who apparently have the power to melt people) or take the PCs in for serious questioning to get to the bottom of this strange occurrence. Even if the PCs can show that there is no evidence to hold anything against them, the authorities that round them up will put them on a surveillance list or other such list of noteworthy troublemakers.

Antoni

Jealous Gargoyle

In gargoyle form, Antoni is a hideous monster bristling with sharp points and

edges. In his pockets he carries some important clues for the PCs: receipts from The Last Supper, The Archives, and Lou's Booze — all establishments found on the Plaza of Justice. He also has a little over \$50 in cash, but no identification.

Italian man, age 28, 173 cm, 69 kg, short, black hair, small moustache, casual clothes (when following Konstanz), striking good looks.

Languages: Italian, Al Amarjan patois

Attack: 3 dice, X3 damage with horns, spikes, ridges, and claws

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 30 (gristly flesh)

Traits

Shape-Changing — Allows him to change his appearance at will. When preparing for a fight, he takes his gargoyle form (see below).

Gargoyle Form — Gives him strength, speed, and considerable personal weaponry: 3 dice and X3 damage.

Fashion, 4 dice — Antoni anticipates trends with incredible facility, putting him usually one step ahead of current fashion. He is quite impressive in human form because he can even mold his facial features to accent whatever style he wishes. (striking good looks)

Obsessed — He obsesses over Konstanz, imagining that only she is worthy of his attention and devotion. That she has so far ignored his advances indicates, to him, a minor inability to know what's best for her, but she will certainly come around soon enough.

FINDING THE HIDE-OUT

The easiest way to find the hide-out is to snag the receipts in Antoni's pockets and then stake out the Plaza of Justice. Here the PCs may see the new Konstanz ducking into Neat Fit (assuming, of course, that they know what she looks like). Their interest should be piqued when she does not return from the store. The store is owned by Jesus Rodriguez, cousin of Dr. Alfonso Rodriguez, and it serves as a front for the Proteus Club.

The Proteus Club lives in the basement of the abandoned building next to Neat Fit, which is connected to the Neat Fit's base-

ment by a hidden passage. When Konstanz returns, she may have news for Dr. Rodriguez. If the PCs followed her discreetly, she will not know that the PCs are on to her, but Dr. Rodriguez will worry about Antoni's failure to return. If the PCs made it obvious they were after Konstanz, she alerts Dr. Rodriguez, who starts packing his notes and tells the other Proteans not to leave the basement until they are certain whether or not their secrecy has been compromised.

The PCs may try diplomacy, such as passing word to Dr. Rodriguez that they will not reveal his location to the Peace Force if he releases Konstanz. They may try a siege, staking out the area until Dr. Rodriguez relaxes his vigilance and lets Konstanz out. They may alert the Peace Force and have them do the dirty work. In determining the actions of the Proteans, remember that they are not as rational as they once were.

The quickest solution is to raid the place. The PCs can find Konstanz, force her out, and battle the transformed Proteans in the process. Ooze, blood, ichor, smelly liquids, the works!

PROTEANS' HIDE-OUT

In the basement of Neat Fit is a dolly about a meter and a half long on which are stacked boxes and crates. The dolly is against a wall, concealing a door that opens onto a tunnel that extends three meters to the Proteans' Hide-Out. Both the door in Neat Fit's basement wall and the door at the end of the tunnel are locked, but not well-sealed.

The Proteans' hide-out is dark, dirty, and cluttered. The small, high windows that look out onto the street level are all boarded up, and the door at the top of the stairs (which opens onto an abandoned building) is also boarded up. (Note that a Protean would have a much easier time squeezing through one of these windows than would a PC.) In this ugly place, the Proteans practice their shape-shifting skills, pursue individual hobbies, and make plans for what they shall do with their powers once they have a few more members.

The most important room is the laboratory, where Dr. Rodriguez has his drugs, notes, and equipment. If threatened but

given enough time, Dr. Rodriguez packs these valuable items and escapes. If not given enough time, he sets fire to his lab. If the PCs capture his notes and equipment, they may find interested parties willing to pay up to \$5,000 for it. Or, such parties may just attempt to steal it from the PCs. If you wish, Dr. Rodriguez may be working on a new fringe science technique or substance, something of your own creation that you would like to inflict on the PCs.

The other rooms you can detail as you please, though they might hardly come into play. PCs may find books, tapes, scribbled notes, magazines, toys, tools, and other interesting items in the sleeping quarters of the various Proteans. If you wish, somewhere in here you can plant a clue that leads the PCs to another mystery on the island.

GMCs

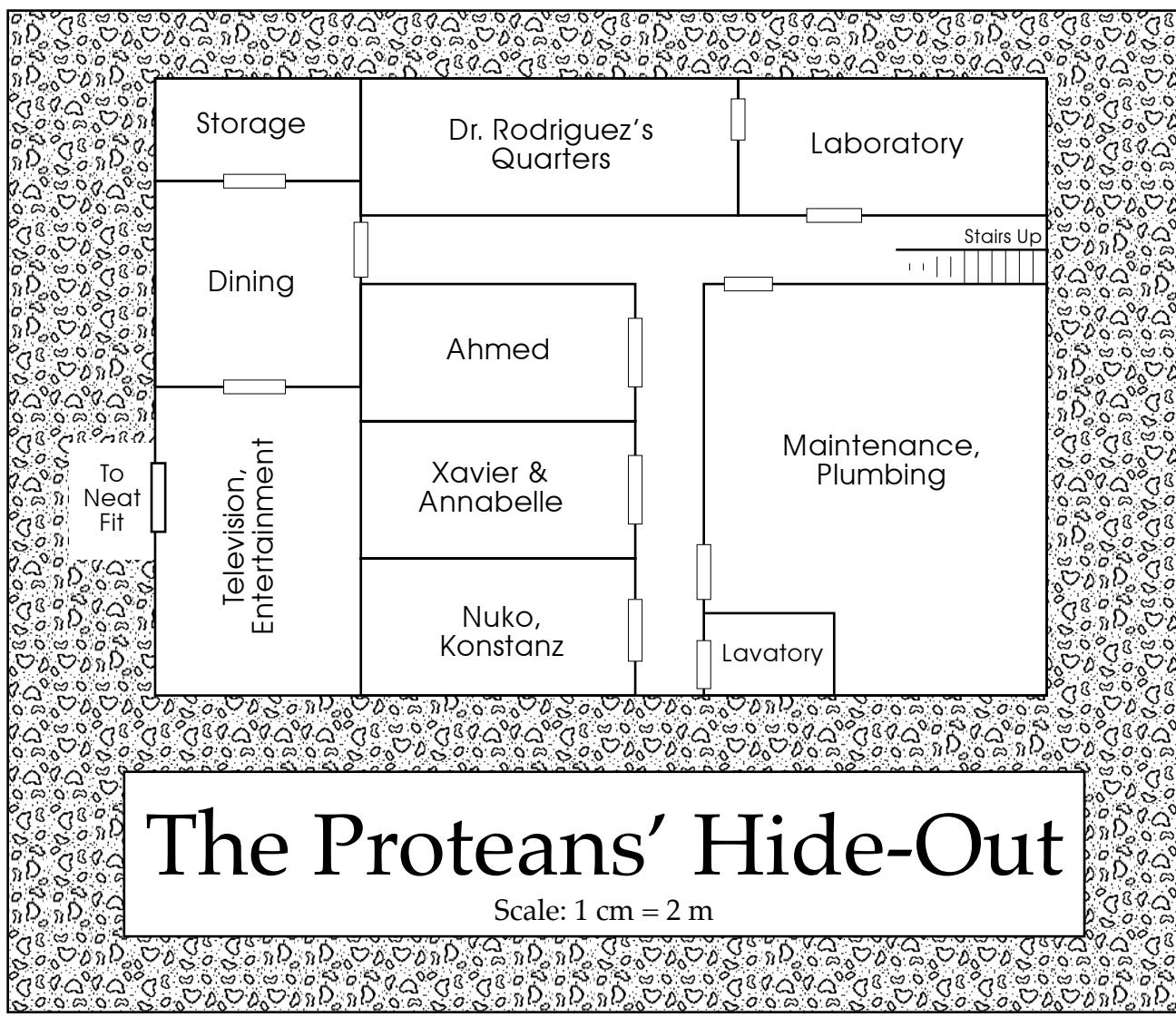
Dr. Alfonso Rodriguez

Protean Oppenheimer

Never the best-balanced man, Dr. Alfonso Rodriguez is used to mental dysfunction and is quite capable of maintaining his research and his leadership of the Proteans despite the gradual psychotogenic effects of shape-shifting.

Spanish man, age 54, 171 cm, 60 kg, thin, with a close-cropped black beard; wears tan suits that do not fit him perfectly (slight changes in his physical proportions being a nearly unavoidable result of frequent shape-changing).

Languages: Spanish, English, French, German, and some Chinese.



Combat Form: When in a fight, Rodriguez pulls his nose, chin, and ears into his body to prevent their being damaged, and forms his hands into sharps ridges for throwing a very mean punch.

Attack: 2 dice, X2 with bony hand ridges

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 15 (mutable flexibility)

Traits

Fringe Medicine, 3 dice — Dr. Rodriguez has epileptic seizures (petit mal, mostly, and rare at that) during which strange ideas "come together." He recovers from these seizures with new and innovative ideas that he puts to use. He has wondered whether these seizures might be something other than epilepsy; perhaps they are the result of extraterrestrial intelligence beaming ideas into his head. He denies the possibility of this hypothesis, however, regarding it as simply too disturbing to entertain any further. (strange hypotheses)

Brilliant, 4 dice — Dr. Rodriguez' mind works differently from the cause-effect, verb-object syntax imposed by Indo-European language. He therefore finds it difficult to express himself verbally (and he can never get his commas in the right place). On the other hand, his unusual thought processes allow him to achieve leaps of logic and understanding unattainable by normal people. (strange verbal syntax)

Manipulator, 3 dice — Years of wheedling grant money from those too dense to understand his work and contemptuous of his inability to speak clearly has taught Dr. Rodriguez to be a shrewd and ruthless manipulator of others. It is his personal charisma and conniving that have kept the Protean Club together. (black book with phone numbers of vulnerable young women)

Nuko

Muscular Protean

Nuko has always admired body-builders, and now she has the kind of body that would have taken her years of work, heavy steroid use, and rare genes to achieve. To create the bulk of muscle she wants, she has to make herself short, about 147 cm. She wears a

generous bikini, other clothing proving to be restrictive for her constant size changes.

African woman, age 25, 147 cm, 67 kg, very dark-skinned, incredibly muscular person of nearly indeterminate gender.

Languages: French, Swahili, English

Attack: 4 dice, X2 with barbells

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 35 (dense muscle)

Traits

Shape-Changing — She is not extremely talented at this task, and resorts to exercise in order to slowly build her shape to the way she wants it. 1 die.

Ahmed Abnsala

Grotesque Protean

The unpredictable nervous messages sent to his brain by an altered body were too much for Ahmed to process. His brain has overloaded. When calm, he is merely hideous. When excited, he becomes unimaginably grotesque.

He has a high hit points rating because his shifting form flows over wounds and seals them shut, making it hard to damage him by traditional means. To one's horror, however, a grappler may find that Ahmed's spontaneous appendages pull away from the body with alarming ease. (Grappling and wrenching does X3 damage to Ahmed.)

In combat, Ahmed may melt at any time, his overloaded brain no longer able to coordinate or control changes in shape. At that point, he turns into a jumbled pile of reeking flesh and bones, though he may survive and flail about for tortured seconds before finally giving up the ghost. Use this conclusion dramatically, such as when a PC lands an especially good blow on him.

Arab man, age 52, height and mass vary. A twisted caricature of the human form, becoming a writhing mass of random appendages once he gets excited. In battle, a variety of new orifices let out a wild cacophony of squirts, moans, and burbles.

Languages: Arabic, Hebrew, English

Attacks: 4 dice, X2 with spontaneous ridges, spines, and spikes

Defense: 3 dice. It is hard to connect effectively with an ever-shifting form.

Hit Points: 50

Extreme Shape-Shifting — He can take shapes that no other Proteans are even willing to try. 5 dice.

Controlled Shape-Shifting — He has almost no conscious ability to control his shape. Worst 1 of 2.

Xavier & Annabelle

"Four-Armed" Protean

These two shape-changers have found a very erotic and effective (if somewhat deranged) shape that they enjoy. Annabelle rides on Xavier's shoulders, and the two of them meld, forming one gigantic being with two pairs of arms. Xavier's face grins and drools out from Annabelle's belly. They have even learned to connect their nerves so as to coordinate their actions as if they were truly one being.

If either of the two is incapacitated or killed, the other will try to break free from the meld, though this takes one round.

French man and woman, 250 cm, 120 kg.

Languages: Xavier speaks French and some English, Annabelle speaks French and Spanish.

Attack: Xavier gets 3 dice, X3 for his machete. Annabelle gets 2 dice, X3 for her makeshift spear.

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: Xavier has 21, Annabelle has 14.

Traits

Shape-Changing — They are both adept at altering their physical shapes. 2 dice each.

Strong (Xavier) — 3 dice

Cunning (Annabelle) — 3 dice

Konstanz Nachbar

Neophyte Protean

German woman, age 21, strikingly beautiful.

Attack: 2 dice, X2 with impromptu weapon

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 15

EPILOGUE

Dr. Rodriguez tries to escape the basement if threatened. Even if the PCs retrieve Konstanz without forcing Dr. Rodriguez to flee, he abandons the hide-out once it has been discovered. If Dr. Rodriguez remains at large, he may seek vengeance against the PCs.

Konstanz apparently repents of her irresponsible actions, but the long-term effects of her shape-changing may eventually drive her to psychosis.

If Dr. Nusbaum has learned of the PCs' actions, he contacts them to see what they've learned.

THE AGARAS

A new, minor force to be reckoned with.

THE AGARAS

"Long have I suffered at the sight of your iniquities, and now you would turn me into an abominable idol. No longer will the land or the light of day suffer in the face of your many evils. Behold, you will take the shape

of the beasts you are, and you will live in filth in warrens beneath the earth until you have learned to walk in my ways."

—God, cursing the Agaras in the 13th century A.D.

Type: Secret Race

Rep: None

Brief: Humans in rat-like form that are trying to regain human form through virtuous living.

Cursed for their vile deeds, these beings were once human but have now assumed the shape of rat-like creatures. Through the centuries they have purified themselves, gradually rising in holiness and returning, generation by generation, to their human shape. The most advanced and holy of the Agaras can pass for human.

In the 13th century, a clan of corrupt Muslims known as the Agaras lived on Al Amarja. Disaster struck one night when the Hand of God (so the story goes) struck them, turning them into gigantic rats. Their spiritual leader, Maroum Bismallah, remained in human form, and on him was placed the burden to oversee his “people” until they had redeemed themselves. He gathered the rat-things together and took them underground into expansive caverns.

The Agaras have a tray that fills miraculously with food, chalices that fill miraculously with water and milk, and a lamp that provides an unending source of oil. Some Agaras occasionally venture to the surface to gather rarities and delicacies for their people.

Under Maroum’s strict tutelage, the Agaras have become more holy over the years, and each Agara’s offspring are more human-like in proportion to the parent’s holiness and purity. Thus, an individual Agara does not become more human, but the members of successive generations can be more human-like.

GMCs

The Agaras fall into three rough categories depending on how human-like one is.

Rat-People

They can pass for human, though their ears are large, round, and smooth; they have tail nubs and more than normal body hair (which they shave). They tend to be extremely patient and kind. Most stay in the warrens to teach and help the half-rats, though some also go to the surface occasionally. Those who qualify to visit the surface keep their kindred informed as to the languages and cultures there, in preparation for

the Agaras’ eventual return to civilization. Their stats are like those of normal humans, and they are of North African extraction.

Languages: Arabic (archaic dialect), poor English (from contact with the surface world)

Half-Rats

These are any creatures partway between the rat-things (below) and the rat-people. They have human shapes, but are small and hairy with short tails and pointed faces. They tend to be cruel, but try to fight their genetic evil. They have sharp teeth which they can use in brawls.

Languages: Arabic (archaic dialect), poor English (learned from the Rat-People)

Attack: 3 or 2 dice with short spear, X3 damage, X2 with fangs

Defense: 3 or 2 dice

Hit Points: 18 (bestial brawn)

Traits

Fast & Agile, 3 dice (lithe)

Perceptive, 3 dice — In addition to good overall senses, they receive a bonus die in low light. (large eyes & ears)

Rat-Things

Dog-sized, greasy rats with human-like hands and short tails. They are extraordinarily vicious. The half-rats and rat-people care for them because they are actually human and must be helped out of their state of abasement, though these represent the Agaras that have progressed little, if at all, over seven centuries.

Language: None, though they can understand simple commands in Arabic

Attack: 4 dice with teeth & claws, X2 damage.

Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 15 (bestial ferocity)

Traits

Shredding Opponents, 4 dice — With sharp teeth, long claws, high speed, and bestial fury, a Rat-Thing is a vicious opponent. (claws & fangs)

Perceptive, 4 dice — They have keen senses of smell and hearing, and their vision works well in low light (bonus die). (large ears & eyes)

Fast & Agile, 4 dice — They can scurry with surprising speed, squeeze through small openings, climb well, dodge attacks, and so forth. (rat-like form)

Weak, 1 die — If a human manages to get into a contest of straight brawn, the rat-thing is at a disadvantage. (scrawny limbs)

Howard Berner

A Rat-Person Scout

Berner lives in the Edge, learning about civilization and bringing what he knows back to the Agara community. He also watches for any people who might discover the Agaras and seeks to suppress such information. He leads a secretive life, holding down a job as a telemarketer, which allows him to practice his skills at manipulation without having to worry about his physical appearance.

Agara Rat-Man, Age 41, 157 cm, 56 kg, swarthy, thin, carefully groomed.

Attack: 2 or 3 dice with impromptu weapons

Defense: 2 or 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (well-trained muscle)

Traits

Good Manipulator, 3 dice — Berner is familiar with the ways of people and needs to be something of a manipulator to keep his identity secret. (ingratiating smile)

Athletic, 3 dice — Berner keeps himself in fine physical shape. (good muscle tone)

Extremely Patient, 4 dice — Berner can tolerate inconveniences that annoy or fluster most people. (calm demeanor)

Maroum Bismallah

Leader of the Agaras

Maroum is a stern but wearied leader of his people. He bears his task of leading the Agaras back to humanity diligently, but seven centuries of careful guardianship have left him tired and worn. Some Agaras believe

that Maroum will not live to see the Agaras return to the surface — that, like Moses, he will see but not enter the "Promised Land." He never goes to the surface.

North African man, age approximately 800 years (looks like a worn-out 60), 162 cm, 64 kg.

Languages: Arabic (archaic dialect)

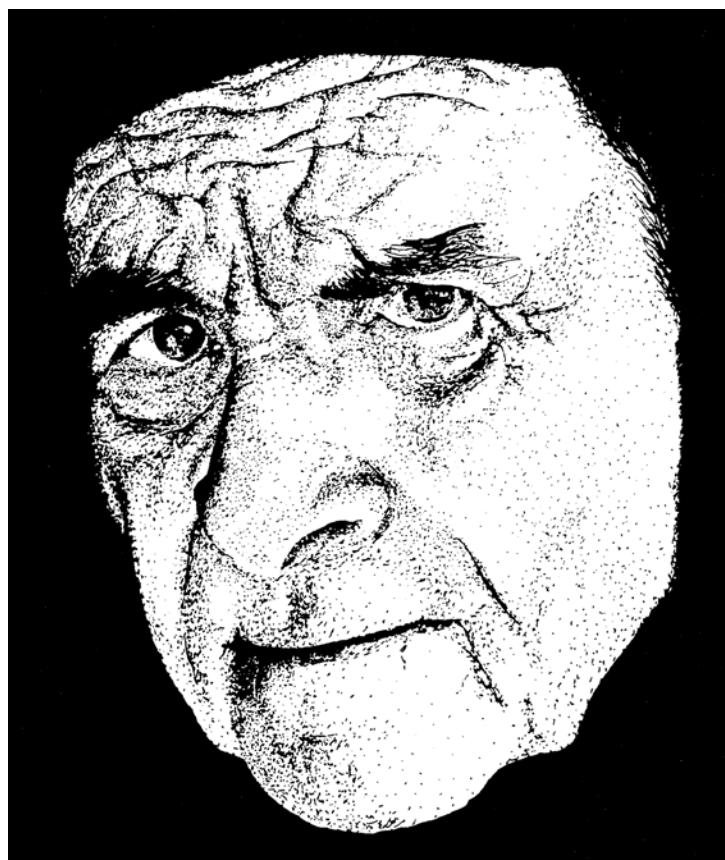
Attack: 2 dice plus penalty die

Defense: 2 dice plus penalty die

Traits

Strength of Purpose, 5 dice — Very little, if anything, can turn him from his intertwined goals of returning the Agaras to humanity and living a virtuous life. If anything would prevent this goal, he gets an extra die in rolls to prevent that catastrophe. (E.g., he could get 3 dice plus a penalty die when fighting someone who intends to corrupt the Agaras.) (glow of inner strength in his eyes)

Wise, 4 dice — Centuries of meditation and study of the Koran have given him keen



Maroum Bismallah

insight and broad wisdom. (peaceful expression)

Frail, penalty die — Age and worry have sapped much of his vitality, leaving him weak and slow. (aged)

Portia

See her description under "Sad Mary's Bar & Girl" in the rulebook.

Story Ideas

In search of ruins from the 13th century (whether for fame, gold, knowledge, or whatever), the PCs get trapped in the cavern-

ous warrens of the Agaras. After some hostile encounters with rat-things or half-rats, the PCs meet the friendly rat-people leaders. Internal strife has developed almost to the point of bloodshed, and the leaders fear that if the disagreement turns into physical conflict, the Agara population will lose much of the ground that it has gained in recovering its lost humanity. They tell their troubles to the PCs in hopes that these newcomers will take it upon themselves to attack and kill the instigators of the strife, but they would never suggest such an abominable act themselves. Perhaps the PCs could mediate a peaceful resolution.

ROENTGEN OPERATIVES

Roentgen is a megacorporation, seen by the public only through its apparently unconnected subsidiaries. Every day in the US, people hear Roentgen jingles, eat Roentgen food, and wear Roentgen clothes, without ever hearing about the megacorporation that owns the corporations that are feeding and clothing them. In an ideal world, hard work and fair business practices would allow one to build such a massive corporation, but the truth is that Roentgen relies on industrial agents of every sort to maintain the dynasty they have created.

This section details six of Roentgen's more unusual operatives, the ones that may be dispatched to intriguing but mysterious locales such as Al Amarja. While many of the missions that these operatives undertake are financial in nature, the owners of Roentgen are also involved in the more devious manipulations that go on behind the scenes. The owners may be members of a conspiracy, or

may be a small conspiracy in their own right (or, more likely, they have different goals and engage in intrigue among themselves to use the vast resources of Roentgen toward different ends). In your series, you may find various uses for the Roentgen Operatives.

- ☛ The operatives are sent by Roentgen to investigate a mystery that also involves the PCs. The PCs find themselves with potential allies or rivals in their work.
- ☛ The operatives, unknown to themselves, are on a mission that is really for the benefit of one of the conspiracies detailed in *Over the Edge*™.
- ☛ The operatives recruit or manipulate the PCs to do some of Roentgen's work for them.
- ☛ One or more operatives has been captured and is held on Al Amarja. The other operatives enlist the PCs' help in retrieving their captured colleague.

- The operatives become renegades, setting up operations on Al Amarja as highly paid private investigators.
- Roentgen (or another power controlling the operatives secretly) wants a closer look at the PCs and has the operatives capture the PCs.
- Roentgen (or a secret power) uses the operatives to eliminate the pesky PCs.
- Hand out the operatives as PCs for a new group of players, especially for a one-shot adventure that is not part of the whole series.

“Debhed”

A Vicious Killer

His nickname comes from the acronym DBHD, meaning “dead before he drops,” a term often used to describe the people that “Debhed” fights. While valuable to the other operatives, he is something of a turn-off personally. He has very simple tastes, running to the coarse and vulgar, and his personal style in conversation leaves much to be desired.

Gear includes: folding fighting knife, stout fighting cudgel (60 cm long), three throwing knives, false ID (two sets), notepaper, pen & pencil, calling card, ATM card, \$1,000 cash.

White US male, 184 cm, 73 kg, lean and tough-looking. Wears whatever clothes are appropriate for his cover, though he usually looks a little disheveled, unkempt, or uncouth.

Languages: English

Attack: 4 dice, X3 damage with knife or cudgel

Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 28 (relentless resilience)

Traits

Scorpion Atavism (up-side) — Unknown to his friends, and unknown to himself, Debhed was a scorpion in his last life. Some of the lethality of scorpionhood has spilled over into this incarnation, and he does extra damage (+1 to damage multiplier) with every successful strike in melee combat (not with missiles). Note that, with the massive extinction of nonhuman life forms, and the

human population explosion, lots of animal souls are forced to transmigrate to human bodies before they are quite ready. (Like a scorpion’s exoskeleton, his skin fluoresces under ultraviolet light.)

Undercover Ops, 3 dice — Adopting a cover, using secret communication signals, forging documents, etc. (has two sets of falsified ID at all times)

Fighting, 4 dice — A master of several fighting styles, mostly unarmed or armed with knives. (Lean and tough)

Scorpion Atavism (downside) — Since this is his first life as a human, he has not mastered some of the finer points of human society, such as table manners and an appreciation for art. (Looks uncouth)

“Eagle”

Open-Eyed Agent

Eagle serves as a scout and sometimes as a back-up diplomat with Teeth. Sometimes he wonders whether work as an operative is really his calling, but he is loath to look deeply into his own motives.

With his talent for insight, he has a pretty good idea of who his colleagues are, though he does not have them completely figured out (especially that weirdo Debhed.)

His gear includes: a folding fighting knife, false ID (two sets), notepaper, pen & pencil, calling card, camera with various lenses, ATM card, \$1,000 cash (for emergencies), books on philosophy.

Hispanic (US) man, age 23, 170 cm, 67 kg, unkempt hair. Wears whatever is necessary for his cover.

Languages: US English, Mexican Spanish

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (trained grit)

Traits

“Keen” Eyes (up-side), 4 dice — Frankly, his vision is 20/20. It’s his mind that sets him apart. Due to some genetic or congenital fortune (or curse), he was born without a fair dose of the natural human fear of the truth. He sees things as they are. It literally is “seeing” things that he does differently, not just “understanding” them. Without the sub-



"Debhed"

conscious fear-motivated filters to screen out unwanted stimulus, his brain's visual center dutifully records and presents to him those things to which most people unconsciously blind themselves. This unusual trait got Eagle dropped out of first grade as a mischief-maker, dropped out of private school as a malcontent, dropped out of a youth shelter as incorrigible, and finally dropped into a mental institution at the age of 8. Here the staff smilingly ignored his insights as the ramblings of a psychotic, and he was able to recuperate. One secret to regaining social acceptance, he learned, was to keep most insights to himself. Another was to stop looking into a mirror. By not looking at (and "into") himself, he was able to learn some of the reality-denying conventions of society, construct a socially-acceptable persona, and get out of the institution. Eagle remembers some of his more striking childhood insights as unfathomable dreams, and others he has forgotten entirely. Carefully, slowly, he has developed some measure of the truth-aversion that underlies human consciousness. He retains, however, a phenomenal ability to read facial expressions, posture, body language, and so on. (has disturbing dreams in which childhood insights try to fight their way back to consciousness)

Industrial Espionage, 3 dice — Adopting a cover, using secret communication signals, forging documents, fighting, breaking & entering, etc. This is his job, and it is second nature to him. (has two sets of falsified ID at all times)

Philosophy, 4 dice — In an effort to incorporate some of his more profound and hazy childhood insights into an adult, functional consciousness, Eagle has cultivated an interest in philosophy, especially philosophies based on perception (such as Zen and the teachings of Castaneda's Don Juan) over those based on reason and language (such as Plato and Wittgenstein). (always has a paperback of philosophical bent at hand)

"Keen" Eyes (down-side) — Since Eagle refuses to look in a mirror, personal grooming is difficult for him and means little to him. Unless he can get help grooming, he is usually a mess. He also occasionally refers to himself by his name (alias), instead of as "I." (E.g. "Roberto wants to check out the roof," instead of "I want to check out the roof.")

(messy)

"Shades"

Stealthy Spy

Shades serves as the sneak in the team. Not only is she good at moving about unnoticed, but even in social situations she is likely to be ignored, making her a valuable eavesdropper and spy.

Her gear includes: dark sunglasses, folding fighting knife, false ID (two sets), notepaper, pen & pencil, calling card, camera with various lenses, ATM card, \$1,000 cash (for emergencies), \$1,000 personal funds (for gambling).

White (US) woman, age 27, 164 cm, 56 kg; medium-length brown hair; round, plain face; usually wearing nondescript clothing, often with sunglasses.

Languages: US English, French, learning Japanese

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (tough)

Traits

Blending, 5 dice — Walking home from junior high one day, Shades found a book in the street. It promised to teach a technique to allow one to pass into parallel worlds. The first section taught how to "loosen" oneself from this world, and the second section taught how to "world-travel" once one was sufficiently "loosened." She did the loosening exercises, and had started the world-traveling exercises when she had a frightening, psychotomimetic experience in which the world around her seemed insubstantial and in constant flux. When she "came back" to reality, the world was slightly different in many details: minor historical facts, the names of some acquaintances, the party to which her local Congressional Representative belonged, etc. More personally, she used to be right-handed, and is now left-handed. (Furthermore, her whole body seems reversed, with her heart now on the right side of her chest.) In addition, the book was gone. Still, the loosening exercises she did (and still performs privately, to keep in practice) make

her hard to notice. Her stealth is phenomenal. (For some reason, however, cats do notice her, and take a marked dislike to her.) (hard to pick out in a crowd)

Industrial Espionage, 3 dice — Adopting a cover, using secret communication signals, forging documents, fighting, breaking & entering, etc. This is her job, and it is second nature to her. (has two sets of falsified ID at all times)

Gambling, 4 dice — Playing poker, investing in oil mines, calculating odds for football pools, buying undervalued junk bonds, whatever. She certainly has lost her fair share of money at these ventures over the years, but she has the courage and control to sense a good bet when she comes across one. (always has cash ready to put down on one wager or another)

Compelled to Involve Herself — Shades walks a fine line between being fully in this world and slipping uncontrollably out of it. Her loosening practices keep her detached, but she cultivates connections to the world to keep her here: stormy relations with lovers, gambling, savoring fine foods, taking pictures of herself near major landmarks, etc. She is sometimes almost obsessive over "getting involved." When deprived of contact with the outside world, such as when she once spent three days in a Mexican jail, she can feel herself slipping away. And the book from which she learned loosening warned that uncontrolled passage from world to world puts one at the mercy of karmic debts, a fate that Shades desires greatly to avoid. (frequently gambles, has friends take pictures of her in new places, gets to know strangers)

"Surfer"

"Adaptable" Agent

Surfer excels at "getting the hang of" a new area, a valuable trait when one wishes to pass as a native. Other team members get frustrated at having to follow the lead of someone as wishy-washy as Surfer, but they have learned that his guidance can be very valuable.

His gear includes: a folding fighting knife, false ID (two sets), notepaper, pen & pencil,

calling card, camera with various lenses, ATM card, \$1,000 cash (for emergencies).

US man (mostly European, with African and Native American stock), age 31, 175 cm, 70 kg, dark brown hair, light brown or "well-tanned" skin, relaxed and comfortable demeanor.

Languages: US English, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic; picks up languages quickly when immersed in them, but then forgets them easily.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (guts)

Traits

"Surfing," 4 dice — An uncanny ability to adapt to new social environments, being in the right place at the right time, and lucking into things. It is as if he absorbs customs, dialects, and behavior through "osmosis." (always at ease, always "fits in," passes as a "Martian")

Undercover Ops, 3 dice — Adopting a cover, using secret communication signals, forging documents, etc. He is not as versatile at espionage as some of his colleagues, but his "surfing" ability makes up for what he lacks in skill. (has two sets of falsified ID at all times)

Fighting, 3 dice — Roentgen has trained him to defend himself while unarmed or with casual weapons. (in good shape)

Fickle — Sometimes Surfer "fits in" too well and gets caught up in his environment, even forgetting his objectives in the process. The other operatives know this weakness and keep a close eye on him. (wears buttons from different [and often contradictory] political causes on different days, depending on the political inclinations he has last been exposed to)

"Tec-Doc"

Avant Garde Electronics & Mechanics Expert

In addition to serving as an electronics and mechanics expert for circumventing alarms, tapping phone lines, and other typical activities, Tec-Doc has an ever-changing

array of experimental devices that he can use for the benefit of the team.

His gear includes: a folding fighting knife, false ID (two sets), notepaper, pen & pencil, calling card, camera with various lenses, ATM card, \$1,000 cash (for emergencies), innumerable tools, and three specialty items:

ELECTRONIC TRANSLATOR: A box the size of a cigarette pack that can detect electronic signals and translate them into recognizable data. With some fiddling, Tec-Doc can use it to "overhear" telephone conversations, read computer operations, eavesdrop on digital audio and visuals, and detect electronic activity of any kind. The translator has an earplug for audio, but for text and visuals he needs to connect the translator to some kind of replay device, such as a television.

SOUND MANIPULATOR: The size and shape of a toilet paper tube. It can detect, amplify, record, manipulate, and deaden sounds.

JAMMER: A thick, copper-colored chain bracelet. Emits energy waves that can interfere with all manner of electronics. The more subtle the device, the better the jammer can mess it up. On occasion, Tec-Doc can connect the translator to the jammer and project data to a device, but his success rate at doing so is low.

White US man, age 34, 179 cm, 64 kg, scrawny, "distant" demeanor, wears clothes appropriate to his cover.

Languages: US English, reads German and Japanese

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (stubborn)

Traits

The Technician's Touch, 2 dice ("technical trait") — Since childhood, Tec-Doc has had an uncanny familiarity with things mechanical and technical. With his tools (and often with makeshift equipment), he can jimmy and jury-rig just about any machinery. In fact, traditional mechanics and electronics bore him, so he spends a lot of time fiddling with avant garde devices of his own eccentric design. While these devices are undependable, he can usually jimmy them into working when he needs to. Devices he currently

has with him are described above. (small tools of all kinds stashed in pockets)

Undercover Ops, 3 dice — Adopting a cover, using secret communication signals, forging documents, etc. (has two sets of falsified ID at all times)

Fighting, 3 dice — Karate, aikido, knife-fighting, and sidearms. (meditates daily — a habit picked up from martial arts training)

Mechanical Attitude, penalty die — Habitu-
ated to the dependable, reproducible results
of electronics and mechanics, Tec-Doc finds
the vagaries of human social interaction
bewildering. (says "please" and "I'm sorry"
and expects them to work as intended every
time)

"Teeth"

The Diplomat

When the Roentgen team needs to talk, Teeth goes into action. In addition, she proves invaluable in keeping the disparate members of the team working well together.

Her gear includes: a folding fighting knife, false ID (two sets), notepaper, pen & pencil, calling card, camera with various lenses, ATM card, \$1,000 cash (for emergencies).

Taiwanese woman, age 27, 159 cm, 54 kg, short hair (with a long-haired wig for quick identity change), "bouncy" or "professional" demeanor, as the situation demands. Usually good-looking enough to make a favorable impression, not so beautiful as to be intimidating.

Languages: Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, French

Traits

Winning Smile, 4 dice — Actually, it's not just her smile, it's the whole gestalt she presents with facial expression, posture, tone of voice, diction, etc. Manipulating, conning, and deceiving is a way of life for her. (asks gentle questions)

Industrial Espionage, 3 dice — Adopting a cover, using secret communication signals, forging documents, fighting, breaking & entering, etc. This is her job and her second

nature. (has two sets of falsified ID at all times)

The High Life, 4 dice — Partly to improve her ability to adopt certain covers, and partly for personal enjoyment, she has developed a taste for, and thorough knowledge of, high living: fine wines, high art, theater, aristocratic fashion, etc. (dresses sharply)

Spoiled — Since she has usually gotten her way ever since she could smile, Teeth has not developed a normal tolerance for frustration. Machines that fail to operate as they should, for example, frustrate her because they are immune to her charms. Those few people who can resist her can really tick her off. (face turns red when frustrated)



"Teeth"