

tHE bIG pICTURE

(tHiS Is tHE LiFe yOu
HAvE)

C O N T E N T S

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Please feel free to write to us regarding anything to do with Progress and SLA Industries, all correspondence will be answered (send SSAE or dream on metal trash).

Please stop asking for subscription rates. There aren't any. Don't subscribe to anything.

Adios 'borrowed' artwork! Hello text only issues from now on! If you are an artist, or know one, please help! We desperately need pics. Grip Inc. are a damn fine band who deserve your support. Music to SLA to.

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Chocolate Frog Enterprises
7 Jubilee Close
Byfield
Northants
NN11 6UZ UK.

Unless specifically credited to an author, all material in The Big Picture is written by Max Bantleman.

B a c k C o v e r

Progress is evolution.

A universal idea from a single source.
driven by the consciousness and will of one
man.

Progress sweeps along regardless of us.
In spite of us.

We can not stand outside of Progress.
We can not stand in it's way either.
Why try?

2 0 0 1 – P D F C o n v e r s i o n

The sixth issue of tHE bIG pICTURE was something of a landmark. No more 'borrowed' artwork from Nightfall products, except for the cover, which I figured was fair game. A much tighter layout, more content and a great variety of subject matter.

A company called Jageeda were rumoured to be involved with getting SLA back on the tracks. It turned out to be a long, slow, agonising delay in the development of SLA, as ultimately Jageeda (as was) did not have either the backing or the will to do anything other than fuck people about.

SLA Industries was on the ropes, Nightfall in a state of apparent flux, and I was shifting more stuff than ever. Strange times really.

Max Bantleman, 2001.

INTRODUCTION

Hi there! How you doing? Good to see you, get comfy and dig in.

The Big Picture costs three pounds direct from us (inc. p&p), all five back issues available at the same cool price. Neat.

Please pay by Postal Order, or cheque if the order is more than a tenner, make all stuff payable to Max Bantleman. Ta muchly.

Something I want to bitch about, and as it's my ball I will if I want to (*grow up idiot*), is the growing trend to move SLA towards what I would call 'tabloid' horror, rather than a deeper, more mature and disturbing horror that I will call Mabel, er no, that's not right....

(I think the boy has finally lost it....)

The media, namely the tabloids, as well as the entertainment's industry, thrive on a 'quick fix', immediate coverage of an instant, throw away cultural product, designed to get in fast and then leave no lasting marks on us (the victims). Constant change and a striving to bring us new delicacies characterise the modern press and film industry.

(I just know all this is leading somewhere, I hope....)

The efforts of the entertainment industry, of which so called 'news' papers are but a small part, to shock and scare us are getting more and more desperate, as we become more and more brutalised through their efforts to reach us. We are no longer horrified or repulsed by things that would turn our grandparents hair white over night. We tolerate images and narrative that would have been thought unthinkable gross maybe a decade ago.

The less imaginative writers in the horror genre, both in games and fiction, fall foul of the same old bollox when trying to get our attention, and to achieve their aim of 'frightening' us.

The most recent 'fad' seems to be the exploitation of incidents involving children, which any human being would, of course, find sickening.

This is the last straw in a pathetic struggle to get the 'oh-my-god' reaction from a jaded and tired public.

I abhor the use of this tool in games. Not because I am a prude, or 'immature', or a fanatical right wing censorship addict, but

because it is pointless and serves only to make the task of living a decent life all the more difficult. If you need to be told of horrific incidents and events involving children in order to get you 'horrified', it's time to stop playing, reading and viewing, and to get your shit together. Nobody needs to be *told* to be shocked. It is a cheap, one off shot, that once fired can never be retrieved or healed.

There are many aspects to 'horror', and I feel that SLA Industries does not need to grovel around the sewer with the rest of the filth in order to convey a sense of horrific despair.

The reason I am spouting all this rubbish, is to get the message across that you do not have to include the (by now seemingly obligatory) section mentioning atrocities involving children to get my attention when writing scenarios, or designing Soft Companies. Be more imaginative or don't bother to write at all.

In the same way that the use of guns desensitises us to violence in the real (and game) world, over use of any 'mechanic' blunts the edge, it becomes boring and stale; leaving us with no desire to investigate or uncover deeper, darker truths that may lurk hidden behind this limp, desperate facade.

We simply can't be bothered to be scared.

So, cut the crap and get to the *real* horror. Arbitrary violence, crumbling social values, paranoia, oppression and mayhem wrapped in a world of nightmare, darkness and eternal struggle. Deception, deceit, betrayal, brutal realism, the death of romance in a society desperately in need of hope yet devoid of all aspiration. SLA Industries created, owns and controls it **all**, you work for them or you are nothing, less than nothing. But even if you do work for them, you are doomed to a life of struggle and superficiality, where you will risk your life every day and be rewarded with only more danger, insanity, pain, deceit and lies .

On a pragmatic note, SLA Industries would not tolerate the loss of it's future, i.e. it's children. Not to any great degree.

You want horror, go play with a Necanthrope. Let the hell of Downtown swallow you up. Mess with Cloak. Grow up and play with the big boys, try to find the truth behind Progress. I dare you.

Well, that's quite enough of that.

(Thank goodness. Even I was beginning to feel uncomfortable.)

Some minor changes in layout, and a fond farewell to the facing page, which I wanted to keep at all costs, but nobody listens to me....
(Next we work on the printing and page size....)

Jageeda: obviously every effort should be made to support their purchase of the SLA Industries licenses. Hopefully they will be our friends, and will look upon us with a degree more kindness / pity than did their predecessors.
(Why should they....)

Apparently, we have been pissing a lot of people off at Nightfall / Wizards, mainly for the borrowing of artwork, but also for producing stuff such as the Wraith Raider Sourcebook. In our defence (*as if we needed one*) we have sent them copies of anything we've produced, and written to them, and contacted them via the net, and phoned them, asking what they thought of what we were doing. Unfortunately they did not want to talk to us. Slagging us off behind our backs seemed a safer course.

Hey-Ho.

We have always stressed our non-involvement with Nightfall / Wizards and we have made every effort to promote SLA Industries, running demos and designing scenarios for struggling GM's, quite apart from the production of **The Big Picture** at a time when the future of the game was, to say the least, uncertain. We have always felt we were playing a supporting role. And we certainly do not make money from our efforts.

I could see how the nicking of artwork would tick 'em off. But we had no alternative. Anyway, from now on, in a sort of effort to piss people off slightly less, we will not be using any Nightfall / Wizards / Jageeda artwork. Makes **The Big Picture** look a bit bleak, but there you go. Never mind eh?

Still, enough of such tosh. I'm sure you don't care as long as we produce it. (?)

The Internet eh? E-mail address you say? Towering technophobe that I pretend to be, it all seems rather childish and unnecessary at the moment, basically CB radio with a keyboard, a chat line with greater anonymity, what's the bleedin' point?

(*This man is a true Philistine, it's a wonder he can use a phone, thankful for small mercies I suppose....*)

Got your copy of the Wraith Raider sourcebook yet? Five pounds, a true bargain. Available

direct from us, or from your local games shop (probably).

The Big Picture seems to have fallen in to a kind of regular format, with certain features appearing every issue. Is this good? should we adopt a more general, free form approach?
(*Just when we get it settled, you want to change it?*)

We are shipping more copies of **The Big Picture** than ever before, but the feedback is drying up. Work that one out.. And what about SLA, Nightfall, Jageeda and the future? Anybody know what the fugue is going on?
(*Anybody care....?*)

Front Line Assembly. SLA Music.

We will publish letters if we get enough of them. We will, in fact, publish almost anything (if we get it).

Is this the beginning of the end? Is there any need for **The Big Picture**? Oh, woah is me, all is despair. Much wailing and rending of cloth, angst; we need more angst.

(*Oh no we bloody well don't!*)

So. There you have it. On we go with another issue. Hope you like it....

(*Hope you like it.... and tell us*)

Remember, it's not (just) about guns. Guns kill but so does the truth. If you don't want to know, don't ask. If you can't face the truth, don't lift the shroud.

(tHiS Is tHE LiFe yOu HAvE)

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES

This scenario has been designed with the more experienced Op's in mind. There is a degree of serious investigation, with much slipperiness involved. But there is also an apocalyptic ending, which will finish off any 'weak' Operatives. Read it through. See what you think. If you decide to go the whole nine yards with it, be aware of the consequences. Make

sure you are prepared for the carnage (don't you just love it already?).

From one side of Mort to the other, from the heights of Uptown to the lowest, darkest depths of Downtown. Citizens get restless. Bored. SLA Industries constantly strives to find new ways to keep the masses entertained, subdued. Crazes and fads come and go. Entertainment changes form, bringing ever new delights to the citizens' front rooms via the TV.

SLA Industries owns and controls it all.

The pathetic incursions of Channel Resistance are a small itch, a mere irritation, nothing to really worry about. All in all SLA Industries has it under control. They know what needs doing and they deliver the goods. It is generally recognised by the citizens of Mort that SLA TV offers them everything they could ever want.

Born from the ashes of the Soft Company; Ringmaster, comes the latest in entertainment, the Marquee de Sade; the Circus of Pain. Bringing back the showmanship, excitement and pageantry of the circus; tents, sawdust and all.

The Soft Company Ringmaster used to stage various 'entertainment's' for discrete and discerning clients, all live acts involving feats of pain endurance and physical skill. During many of the larger performances, members of the audience would be dragged in to the act and frequently maimed or killed. This of course was part of the huge appeal of the Ringmaster experience, the edge that kept them going in the cut throat world of pirate entertainment.

SLA Industries finally shut them down after a fire at one of their shows that destroyed two blocks in Upper Downtown. They had gone too far, and people were starting to complain, namely Shiver Captains. Ringmaster came to a brutal and quick end in 901 SD., after an operation known as White Dot. Thirty Ringmaster employees and performers were killed as they 'resisted arrest'. The company was finished.

The head of Ringmaster escaped and decided to go 'straight'. He applied for (and got) permits and grants from the Dept. of Recreation and Entertainment, and in a deal with the Dept. of Employment, he gained sponsorship. All he had to do was take in and train a quota of citizens,

either giving them long or short term employment. With the high fatality rate of his performers, he realised this would not be a problem. So Marquee de Sade was born, and the Circus of Pain, headed by Ringmaster Zed hit the road.

Their numbers swelled, eventually reaching sixty performers and two hundred support staff. Transported in thirteen huge 'wagons', painted and decked out in flags and banners. This was a labour intensive operation, relying on manpower rather than technology. Many acts harked back to 'old world' rumour and legend, with performers recreating feats of manual dexterity, endurance and skill. The showmanship and 'extras' (such as the Clowns of Fate) made the show a success, with citizens more than willing to pay the 10u per ticket.

The Marquee de Sade is a success. It makes money, keeps citizens happy, enjoys support from two SLA Depts.. and has a long and prosperous future ahead of it.

Something is obviously horribly wrong.

The BPN that will hook the Op's in to the scenario is put out by the Dept. Subversion. These boys and girls play for keeps, they are furiously loyal and efficient, being afraid of no one and trusting no one. The Dept. of Subversion are the only SLA Dept. shown grudging respect from Cloak, who never the less loath and distrust them as much as anyone. The Head of Subversion, Mr. Callus Wetton, has issued the BPN under his direct sponsorship, and it is he that will conduct interviews. Use the Human NPC stats, Karma 143; with the following modifications: SLA Info 10, Literacy 9, Interview 10, Diplomacy 10, Communiqué 12, Business Admin. 9, Psychology 10, Intimidation 8. Mr. Wetton exudes power and control, he is confident, relaxed and utterly ruthless. If he thinks the Op's are the ones for the job, he will offer more money, blackmail, or just plain threaten in order to get them 'on board'.

SCL : 7 (Discretionary)

Contact Department Of : Subversion

Training Package Recommended : Any

Colour Code : White

Summary : Complete an undercover investigation of target company. Prolonged

undercover operation. Squad only. Contact Mr. C. Wetton on D/H 3321-462-004.

Consolidated Bonus Scheme : 30c per day (plus Dept. variable bonus)

Payment : Per Operative

Mr. Wetton will explain that the Dept. variable Bonus is payable upon a 'satisfactory' outcome to the BPN. The bonus is 400c and an extra 0.5 SCL increase.

Mr. Wetton will make the Op's sign the relevant contracts and disclaimers, they must go for a physical and a Psyche evaluation. These are non-negotiable elements of the BPN. If non of the Op's is chipped, Mr. Wetton will try to encourage one of the squad to have a chip fitted, he will offer an 'incentive' of up to 1,000c.

All the Op's have to do on the BPN is to infiltrate the Marquee de Sade, either as performers or staff, and compile very in depth reports on all aspects of the Circus. An open ended BPN, the Dept. of Subversion will decide when to call it a day.

The Operatives will be given two days to plan their actions, setting up any cover they need and acquiring any equipment they want. After this two day period of 'grace', they will be considered as active, being under the employ of the Dept. Subversion. Try to stress the importance of this two day period; once on the BPN, the Op's will have few chances to leave the Circus without arousing suspicion.

If the Op's decide to go undercover as employees, they will find the Marquee de Sade currently advertising for the following staff:

Performers; Always needed, must have an interesting and dangerous act of up to eight minutes duration. Animal acts welcome, the more exotic the better. Ringmaster Zed is always willing to take keen amateurs and give them that show biz edge. Clowns desperately needed ('un-funny' clowns wont last a single performance).

Pay: 100u - 1000u per performance.

Drivers; Must be able to handle a vehicle as large as a tri-axle rig, skill use Drive Civilian (at least rank 5), Drive Military, any rank.

Pay: 400u per week.

Vendors; Always in short supply, people willing to sell food and drink at the shows, must have some 'feature' to their looks, the freakier the better (or just plain ugly).

Pay: 300u per week.

Labourers; Relatively few are needed as there are always hundreds of people willing to work for the Circus doing the mundane jobs. The fitter, and stupider the better. May be called upon to act as 'extras' in a particular performance.

Pay: 200u per week.

Musicians; Hired on a casual basis, they never the less end up with the show for months at a time. They provide backing music and interval tunes. No one takes them seriously, and angst ridden musos need not apply.

Pay: 100u per week.

Prominent performers in the show at the moment include:

Meko the Mighty. Meko is a small oriental gentleman who wrestles a caged Carrien. The Carrien is sedated during transport and 'woken' up for show time. Meko is a competent wrestler who has a high level of Martial Arts, he lets himself get wounded to make it look good. He used to perform in Downtown, killing the Carrien and then getting a 'fresh one' for each performance.

Meko will also wrestle members of the audience for a 'purse' of 200 unis.

Meko is a very quiet, polite little man, who will mysteriously disappear at the first sign of trouble (investigation).

Dead Eye. Dead Eye is a 'shootist', he performs trick shots with his CAF P50, shooting cards, cigarettes and coins from the heads, mouths, hands of volunteers, often while blindfolded or cycling or juggling, or balancing a razor sharp sword on his nose. He averages one miss a performance, often non fatal, with the Circus paying for the ambulance. Dead Eye is well liked by everyone. He is addicted to Slosh (four cans a day).

Slasher. Slasher is the stage name of Petrina Sweet, a young girl with an affinity for knives, swords and chainsaws. Much juggling, throwing and sawing of flying object (often

thrown by the audience). Her finale involves using the chainsaw to slice six pieces of fruit, held in the mouths of audience members who stand in a circle around her, while she is (of course) blindfolded.

Slink. A feral Ebon, Slink performs using a semi-tame Enokas. Slink can make people see things, usually images of breath taking beauty or horror. These images appear as pictures in the air, flat, yet three dimensional, virtual reality on a flat canvas. Disturbing. Slink uses natural Communication and Senses. The Enokas boosts both abilities, allowing Slink to achieve effects of up to rank 14.

Slink and Myre (his Enokas) are inseparable and Slink will fight violently to protect his pet and helper.

The Great Callisto. A true magician and illusionist of the grand style. Very, very accomplished. Tricks from cards to large scale illusions, like making people disappear and re-appear. Always uses people from the audience. Very reclusive and introvert, speaks to no one but Ringmaster Zed. Disliked by all staff except Meko.

Angel. Stage name for Shelly McCormac. Shelly is a stunningly beautiful woman with a voice that could melt cold steel. She sings and plays a curious guitar. Her voice has a hypnotic quality enjoyed by all who hear her, she plays during breaks in the main acts and always finishes the show. She is a stern, proud woman, cynical and world weary. She keeps her loneliness to herself. Shelly will always help if she can, she is generally loved by all at the Marquee de Sade. Slink is incurably smitten, though he dare say nothing.

Each show features twelve to fifteen acts, with those listed forming the core. Tastes change. Sometimes people want flames and engines, sometimes soothing music and shows of grace. We have left it up to you to fill out the rest of the show with whatever suits your taste and game world; acrobats, gymnasts, mind readers, animal acts, jugglers, comedians, bands, whatever....

The audience always plays a large part in any show, with a reward for the best act (as voted by the audience). The more bizarre and

dangerous the better, the winner of the 'talent contest' gets 500u.

Once the Op's have decided upon their course of action, which may well (we hope) include going undercover to work for the Circus, they will find their job relatively easy. All of the staff and performers appear to be completely legitimate and none have anything to hide. Ringmaster Zed is a friendly open person, who makes everyone who works for him feel like part of the family.

So. What's it all about.

Scenario Outline

Ringmaster Zed is working for Stygmartyr, more specifically for the 'dark' company within Stygmartyr known as 'Catharsis'. Catharsis are hand picked by Intruder, and report directly to him. All members of Catharsis are closely supported by Intruder, though no other SLA department knows of their existence (many suspect).

Ringmaster Zed is looking for something. The Circus of Pain roams freely over Mort, accessing areas Op's would normally find it difficult to get to. The Circus is also designed to attract what Ringmaster Zed wants to get hold of....

The Thresher have a problem. One of their Pilots has gone 'rogue', setting up as an independent. Unfortunately he has also taken some equipment with him. Along with his First Step (TH. 0004) Heavy PPA, SHEER 0023/B1 Assault Rifle and his Flay Auto 1701/C6 Auto Pistol, he has stolen one of The Threshers most prized possessions. An 'experimental' Glyph Card that Thresher captured on a raid on a Necanthrope base on Dante. The Thresher pilot is known as Jack 2, the Glyph card is known by the code name 'Horror'.

Jack 2 is known to have several psychoses and well developed phobias, as well as an ingrained attraction to the circus, either through his twisted mind or from some childhood experience. Jack 2 has gone to ground in Suburbia, posing as a Mechanic, he currently works in a small auto shop on the borders of Uptown. His Powersuit and weapons are

hidden in the basement of the shop (which he lives above).

Jack 2 just wants out. He is scarred and maimed by his experiences on Dante, the only thing that keeps him from going over the edge is his job and his knowledge that he cannot be found by 'the enemy' thanks to his possession of the Glyph Card (Delusion 7), which he carries with him at all times.

The Glyph Card (for Enhancement) is for the raising of an Ebb Demon (Rank 20), drawn directly from Ebb sources provided by 'sleepers' (normal citizens). The Flux needed is 60, it will be drawn from all Flux 'sources' within 50m, the drain is permanent and Flux lost through this drain can never be regenerated. The demon will take on the grotesque form of the Glyph Cards maker (a Necanthrope known only as H), boosted as per the ability. The user of the Glyph Card will die after the duration of the 'summoning' (1 hour), but the Demon will try to 'possess' another host, and if successful will roam from host to host until it has killed all there is to kill or until it runs out of hosts. The Demon may try to possess any potential host within 50m, possession takes place on a successful 'attack' roll of skill 8, the user may resist using their CONC -5 as a skill. The one that rolls the highest success wins. If the victim rolls a natural 20, they are immune from possession.

Jack 2 is not an Ebon. The Glyph Card has been feeding on Flux from Jack, as well as occasionally drawing it from others near to the Thresher rogue. For game purposes, the Glyph card is a near sentient being, with an overwhelming desire to activate itself. Any Ebon looking at the card must make a Formulae roll (as a skill), success means they have activated the Glyph and nothing can stop the effects.

Running The Scenario

So. The Op's will be infiltrating the circus to find out if anything is actually going on. You may want to run it as a series of smaller encounters, both with employees and audience members, or you may want to jump straight in with the main plot line. Either way, you should make sure Jack 2 only attends the Circus after a few performances, and that the Op's have time to settle in. Pad out the main characters as

much as you like, they will be the main interaction with the Op's. The audiences will vary as the Circus moves over Mort, sometimes calm and aloof, sometimes down and dirty. Hecklers abound, things are thrown at performers on a regular basis. The Circus of Pain always attracts the media, as well as local law enforcement units.

We have provided four 'mini' encounters for you to include in the scenario; build up to the cornering of Jack 2. The Op's should only have a very small chance of finding out about Ringmaster Zed and his mission, they will (for the most part) simply fumble around in the dark. You must of course not let them know this, feed them as much bullshit as you want, always wrapped up in the guise of importance. Wait 'til you are good and ready before letting the real plot unfold.

Encounter One

DarkNight hit. At one of the performances a DarkNight Convert will try to kill one of the performers, with a break in link tied to Channel Resistance, the assassination is going to be 'live'.

Pick a target that the Op's have become particular fond of or attached to, or maybe one of the Op's themselves.

Use Civilian Convert (Karma pp 139) and boost Sneak to 5 and Hide to 6. Arm the Convert with weapons appropriate to the Op's; you must ensure he has a chance. We suggest a FEN 603, maybe even a grenade or two..

The Convert will get near the front of the audience then use his Pistol (FEN 603). After the hit, he will try to escape using the crowd for cover. If desperate he may take a hostage. The Op's must be careful not to blow their cover here, their intervention must seem natural, or lucky.

Encounter Two

Shiver shakedown. A unit of corrupt Shivers will visit the Circus after hours and try to extort 'protection' money from Ringmaster Zed and his employees. The performers may be gathered together, maybe at a party or a pep talk, when the Shivers arrive.

The Shiver squad is comprised of one sergeant and nine standard Shivers. They will demand a payment of 3,000 unis, or they say they will not

be able to 'protect' the Circus from the notorious gangs in the area.

The sergeant is a streetwise vet. who keeps his young recruits under control. The Shivers themselves will try to provoke a fight. If pushed the Shivers will not hesitate to open up with their Gauss Rifles. They have brought some 'contraband' to plant as evidence if needed.

Ringmaster Zed will simply refuse to pay. Some of the other performers will be for jumping the Shivers and giving them a

taste of their own medicine. Remind the Op's that unwanted attention could blow their cover, or at best put them in a very compromising situation.

Use Standard Troop stats (Karma pp 134) for Shivers and Dispersal Shiver stats for sergeant; bump Detect to 6 and Streetwise to 8.

Encounter Three

Gang Trouble. The local gang has taken exception to the Circus visiting their area without the usual protocols (bribes). They have decided to disrupt proceedings by standing outside the entrance to the big top and threatening people who want to go in; things like "go in and when you come out, we'll be waiting."

Ringmaster Zed will choose one of the Op's and one other performer to go out and talk to the gang, telling them he will not pay them off and that he is prepared to call in whatever help is necessary (Shivers, Op's).

The Op's should be made aware how this may blow their cover, maybe they can resolve things quietly....(yeah, right)

Encounter Four

Carrien attack. The Circus of Pain features Meko and his Carrien wrestling. At one of the stopping points, probably in upper Downtown, Carriens will break out of a storm drain and attack the Circus. Their main aim is to try and grab as much 'food' as they can, retreating quickly in to the cover of the sewers. If an opportunity presents itself, they will try to free the captive Carrien, otherwise they will simply attack and flee.

Obviously, if live 'food' is taken, (in the form of audience members) the Op's must be made to feel obliged to go after them. Ringmaster Zed

will encourage this, and will offer a reward for each one brought out alive. Meko will lead any foray in to the sewers.

Running It And Wrapping It Up

Ringmaster Zed will be on the look out for Jack 2, and when he appears at one of the shows, he will keep a close watch on him, trying to ascertain whether or not he has the Glyph Card with him. Patience is the key here, Ringmaster Zed will wait for Jack 2 to come back, maybe not making his move until the third or fourth visit.

The Op's may detect this attention, and the target, and may do some digging of their own. Whatever happens, when Ringmaster Zed moves, it will be quick and deadly.

If Jack 2 has a chance, he will try to ward off Ringmaster Zed by holding up the Glyph Card and chanting an incantation (he heard it from a Necanthrope of Dante), he will unwittingly activate the Glyph Card by staring at it (something he is loathed to otherwise do). The Ebb Demon will possess him one round after his failed CONC roll.

If Ringmaster Zed manages to close on Jack 2 and dispatch him (Martial Arts), he will take the Glyph Card and conceal it. If the Op's make themselves known and try to force Ringmaster Zed to reveal what is going on, he will give them some bullshit about Jack 2 being a terrorist, and tell the Op's that he has been asked by Cloak to watch out for him. As soon as he is able, Ringmaster Zed will contact Catharsis and very soon after this he will 'disappear'.

If the Op's overpower Ringmaster Zed, or somehow manage to get the Glyph Card from him, you must decide whether to let one of the Op's activate the Card, or whether you want ringmaster Zed to do it in his final struggle. Either way, you must unleash the Demon.

The Op's may even get to Jack 2 and the Glyph card before Ringmaster Zed. Jack will use the Glyph card to ward off the Op's, and bingo, we have the Demon again.

Ideally the final conflict should take place in the packed big top of the centre ring of the Circus. The media will soon attend and turn it in to a true circus.

We have supplied stats. for the Demon, bearing in mind it is conjured from the tortured spirit of a Necanthrope, and that it is faintly tied directly to the White;

STR; 26. DEX; 22. DIA; 13. CONC; 16. CHA; 4. COOL; 18. PHYS; 21. HITS; 47.

Movement: W; 2. R; 4. S; 7.

Rank 11 Ebb Razor Claws; PEN 6. DMG 18 (inc STR Bonus). AD 4.

Armoured skin; PV 18.

The Ebb Demon may only be killed by reducing it's Hits to zero and isolating the body from other 'hosts', of course, as soon as anyone gets within 50m of the body, we have a potential host. The demon may lie dormant in a body for up to one hour before it is dragged back to the white.

The Ebb Demon is a mindless killing machine, with the only instinct being to slay and survive. It will rampage indiscriminately through any area it finds itself in. The Demon will be strangely drawn towards Head Office (by Glyph Pillars), and clever Op's may detect this. If it actually reaches Head Office it will be met by Intruder, who will simply tear it to shreds with his bear hands (Fear rating 18).

All material relating to the sighting of the Ebb Demon will be censored and gathered by Cloak, reports will be suppressed and the incident put down to The Thresher using an 'experimental' Power Suit.

So. There you have it. We have left it in a open format, letting you dictate the pace and the direction of the scenario. The scenario offers the chance for great fun and 'frivolity' through the activities of the Circus, while at the same time allowing you to develop sinister undertones through the connection with Catharsis. We hope you play and enjoy it, and are not afraid to let the full horror of the scenario unfold. Let us know how you get on.

As an afterthought, we decided to include some guidelines for prominent NPC's, all taken from

Karma templates and tweaked in the relevant places:

Ringmaster Zed: Human NPC; Boost CHA 10. Streetwise 10, Martial Arts 8, Psychology 7. Add Persuasion 8.

Ringmaster Zed carries no weapons and wears no armour.

Jack 2: Thresher pilot; Detect 8. Mechanics Repair 9. Add Streetwise 5.

Meko: Use Frother NPC: Take out Blade 2H, add Wrestling 10. Take out Rifle and Auto Support, add Pistol 4, Tracking 8. Add Martial Arts 5.

Meko has a FEN 603 (std ammo).

Dead Eye: Use Props: Boost DEX 10. Detect 8, Pistol 10.

Dead Eye has a BLA 406 (HEAP) for emergency use only, and his CAF Pistols.

Slasher: Use Props: Boost DEX 10. Close combat skill Blade 1H 8. Add Blade 2H 9, Chainaxe 5. Boost Acrobatics 8.

Slink: Use Civilian Convert: Take out; Rifle, Auto Support, DarkNight Info. Add Ebb skills as listed. Boost Running to 8.

The Great Callisto: OK, you got us, you're gonna have to wing it here.... (Props?)

Angel: Use Mort Civilian: Boost DEX 10, CHA 10. Take out Club 2H. Boost Play Guitar 9. Add Singing 10.

You may have to put some more thought in to the NPC's, padding them out as the Op's have more interaction with them. Some of them will prove useful contacts in other games, and Op's may develop long term relationships with some or all of them.

The Circus Of Pain

Nestled in the middle of Downtown, between the devastation of a ruined power station and the sprawling rubble of an abandoned factory, sits the three Big Tops of the Circus. Huge domes of riotous colour, decked in multi coloured flags and banners; surrounded by the drab greyness of Downtown, the Marquee de Sade is a bizarre sight. The trailers and wagons

of performers and labourers spread out around the Circus like piglets from a bloated Sow. Crowds gather and buzz around the many side shows and stalls, oblivious of the rain and the smog, eager customers drawn to the Circus like moths to a flame, pockets stuffed with unis they can't wait to spend. Even the various gang members on whose turf the Circus sits, have called a truce for tonight; everyone is fascinated and strangely drawn to the Big Top. The air is filled with tense expectation. The hum and buzz of conversation dies with the lights, the darkness brings total silence as children hide behind chairs and all eyes are drawn to the huge curtain drawn tight around a cage in the middle of the ring. Smoke rolls out, covering the floor; strobe lights dance and blind, the band suddenly starts pumping out a relentless bass and drum beat to numb a Carriens skull. Red rain pours from the roof, drenching everyone in a syrupy liquid, causing screams of surprise and delight. The tempo of the music picks up, from the middle of the ring the curtain drops and there is an impossibly loud explosion, sending out shock waves that rock the audience.

From the centre of the explosion, rising from the fireball like some tortured Demon comes a lonely figure, his rainbow coloured coat streams out behind him as he strides in to the ring. On his face a manic grin, wide eyes stare with madness as with a bow he removes his mirrored top hat. Silence returns to the Big Top as he surveys his audience, the smoke dies and the rain fades. Ringmaster Zed raises his arms and a hundred dead bodies, mutilated and twisted, broken by some hideous torture fall from the roof of the tent, crashing to the floor, throwing up clouds of sawdust and smoke.

The Clowns of Fate burst in to the ring on motorcycles and on foot, tumbling and dancing to the insane rhythms now being pounded out by the band. Ringmaster Zed spreads his arms, cruciform, and slowly begins to rise in to the air, laughing madly as he climbs above the heads of the crowd.

The music is cut dead, the clowns fall prostrate on the floor, Ringmaster Zed holds everyone with his wild staring eyes and his impossibly wide grin, as he speaks his voice seems to carry to every corner of the Big Top, "welcome to the Circus of Pain!"

TRAINING AND SKILLS

When you first open the rules and decide to roll up a character, it may all seem a bit confusing. The physical layout of the rule book does not help much, and the key information is pretty well hidden. Then you discover you don't need any dice; skills based and points allocation.

The actual starting base for characteristics (stats.) is uniform. This means that a Wraith Raider, who has a higher Dexterity (by Racial definition) than a Human, has to spend more points to reflect this.

Stormers who are stronger (STR through bio-engineering) have to spend more points to reflect this.

We would like to offer a different starting base, based on the character descriptions, and some of our own bias. You get the idea. Change the racial starting base as you see fit.

At first you may be loathed to mess with the generation system, but as long as you are consistent, keeping the same system for all players, you can pretty well suit yourself. The main thrust of the rules is based on skills use and game background (atmosphere). You will be surprised how simple the actual rules system is.

New Stat. Ranges

Character	STR	DEX	DIA	CONC
Human	5-10	5-10	5-10	5-10
Frother	7-12	6-10	5-8	5-10
Ebon	5-9	5-10	6-10	7-13
Brain Waster	6-11	5-10	5-10	6-11
Wraith Raider	5-10	8-15	7-12	5-9
Shaktar	7-13	7-13	5-8	5-8
Stormer	8-15	6-13	5-8	5-8

Character	CHA	COOL	PHY	KNW
Human	5-10	5-10	5-10	5-10
Frother	5-10	6-10	7-11	5-9
Ebon	6-11	5-10	5-9	7-12
Brain Waster	5-8	6-11	6-11	5-11
Wraith Raider	5-10	5-10	7-13	6-10
Shaktar	5-9	7-12	7-13	5-8
Stormer	5-8	8-15	7-14	5-8

And now on to a slightly stickier area, the skills base. We have been dissatisfied with the starting skills listed for the various races for some time now. Most games we start by changing the skills listed, offering players access to a greater range of skills for their race, and allowing them to mould their own character. Well, we thought, might as well write it all down and see what other people think.

The logical progression of character development would seem to be; choose a race, note skills gained for your race. Then spend development points, on both stats. and skills, then finally choose a Training Package. Advantages and Disadvantages should be worked out during the choosing skills and upgrading stats. stage. Each race has access to a batch of skills from which they may choose, they may choose up to eight ranks of skills from the list. We suggest you allow no more than two, or maybe three ranks in any one skill. As a twist, allow characters to choose only one rank in each skill, giving them a broad base of skills from which to build during training and development.

We have used the skills list from the basic rules; the one found on the GM's screen is a bit weird (PHYS skills?) and we liked the original list (so there).

Skills Access By Race

Human

STR: Unarmed Combat, Blade 1H, Club 1H, Club 2H.
DEX: Sneaking, Hide, Drive; Motorcycle.
PHYS: Running, Climb, Swim, Throw.
CHAR: Seduction, Haggle, Persuasion.
DIA: Computer Use, Bribery, Lock Picking, Intimidation.
CONC: Drive; Civilian, Detect.
KNOW: Streetwise, Evaluate Opponent, Literacy, SLA Information, Rival Company.

Frother

Unarmed Combat, Blade 1H, Blade 2H, Pole-arm.
DEX: Martial Arts, Gymnastics, Pistol, Drive; Motorcycle.

PHYS: Wrestling, Running, Climb.

CHAR: Haggle.

DIA: Tactics, Bribery, Intimidation.

CONC: Weapons Maintenance, Detect.

KNOW: Streetwise, Evaluate Opponent, SLA Information, Rival Company.

Ebon

Unarmed Combat, Flexible Weapons.

DEX: Martial Arts, Sneaking.

PHYS: Acrobatics, Running, Swim.

CHAR: Leadership, Seduction, Interview, Diplomacy, Communiqué, Persuasion.

DIA: Tactics, Tracking, Bribery, Forensics, Pathology, Read Lips, Intimidation.

CONC: Drive; Civilian, Detect, Photography.

KNOW: Evaluate Opponent, Literacy, SLA Information, Rival Company, Psychology, Navigation, Space Navigation.

Brain Waster

STR: Unarmed Combat, Blade 1H, Club 2H.

DEX: Sleight, Sneaking, Hide, Pistol, Drive; Motorcycle.

PHYS: Running, Climb, Swim, Throw.

CHAR: Seduction, Haggle.

DIA: Tactics, Bribery, Torture, Intimidation.

CONC: Drive; Civilian, Detect.

KNOW: Streetwise, Evaluate Opponent, Literacy, SLA Information, Rival Company, Psychology.

Stormer

STR: Unarmed Combat, Blade 2H, Club 2H.

DEX: Martial Arts, Gymnastics, drive; Motorcycle.

PHYS: Wrestling, Acrobatics, Running, Climb, Swim, Throw.

CHAR: Leadership, Haggle.

DIA: Tactics, Intimidation.

CONC: Weapons Maintenance, Drive; Civilian, Drive; Military, Detect.

KNOW: Streetwise, Evaluate Opponent, SLA Information, Rival Company, Pilot; Military.

Shaktar

STR: Unarmed Combat, Blade 1H, Blade 2H.

DEX: Martial Arts, Gymnastics.

PHYS: Wrestling, Running, Climb, Swim.

CHAR: Leadership, Interview, Diplomacy, Persuasion.

DIA: Medical; Paramedic, Tactics, Tracking.
CONC: Weapons Maintenance, Drive; Civilian, Drive; Military, Detect.
KNOW: Survival, Evaluate Opponent, SLA Information, Psychology.

Wraith Raider

STR: Unarmed Combat.
DEX: Martial Arts, Gymnastics, Sleight, Sneaking, Hide, Rifle.
PHYS: Wrestling, Acrobatics, Running, Climb, Swim, Throw.
CHAR: Haggle.
DIA: Computer Use, Medical; Paramedic, Tactics, Tracking, Lock Picking, Electronic Locks, Forensics, Pathology, Intimidation.
CONC: Weapons Maintenance, Detect, Marksman.
KNOW: Computer Subterfuge, Electronics Repair, Mechanics Repair, Survival, Evaluate Opponent.

The Chagrin 714, Xeno 711 and the Vevaphon are specialised creations, designed to fulfil specific roles. Their basic skills as listed should be fine.

Training Packages

We have supplied details of four of the additional packages we use to develop characters. Along side these, we also use packages that go in to greater detail, giving more skills but inflicting disadvantages at the same time. For example the War World package creates an almost semi-sane War Veteran, who has enough psychoses and phobia to keep an analyst in full time employment. We have left these out, as they are very personal choices, most GM's like to give their players more freedom when developing characters, or are not prepared to start players with such powerful characters (*wise, very wise*). Mess with them as you will, change, chop, discard and start again if you want. GM's rule.

Shadow Hand

"Keep out of sight, keep things in yours. Be ready to choose targets carefully, be aware of where your 'friends' are."

"I never saw him go in. I never saw him come out. Only thing we knew for sure was he put

down the Pack leader with a leg shot. Never knew it was coming, would have been dead without it. Say what you like about 'em. Wraith Raiders, I love 'em! Bless the sarge who trained him!"

Climb (Phys)
Hide (Dex)
Rifle (Dex)
Auto Support (Phys)
Marksman (Conc)
Detect (Conc)

Snake (Counter Insurgency)

"Go deep undercover, make friends of your enemies, then terminate with clinical precision."

"I knew what I wanted from Meny from the minute I got there. I wanted to know how it really was. How to make it in the *real* world. I may not look much like an Op, but I know where my loyalties lie. The people who matter know where to find me."

Streetwise (Know)
Rival Company (Know)
Disguise (Char)
Persuasion (Char)
Psychology (Know)
Martial Arts (Dex)

Urban Jungle

"Survival on the streets in predominantly confrontational areas. Usually leads to Downtown assignments, or Sleeper status. Often taken in partnership with a Counter Insurgency Op. Often leads to increased frequency of Psyche. evaluations. Be warned."

"Man, BoBo fits in like he was born and bred down there. He wears his colours with pride. Nobody, but nobody messes with him. You gotta respect that."

Gymnastics
Unarmed Combat (Str)
Blade, 1H (Str)
Pistol (Dex)
Detect (Conc)
Streetwise (Know)

Interrogation

"A more specialised version of I&I, preferred by many Ebons. Also known among Op's as the 'gung-ho' package, as it's products tend to be squad leaders."

"Wanna get noticed? Wanna move along up the Op's ladder? Take Interrogation. Puts you on the spot more times than any other package. Think you can handle it? yeah, that's what I thought too, but look at me now."

Leadership (Char)
Interview (Char)
Persuasion (Char)
Intimidation (Dia)
Detect (Conc)
Forensics (Dia)

Introducing these new packages will give your players greater range and flexibility.

A seriously (deviant) alternative method of character generation can easily be developed using the points system as a base.

We suggest you only use this method with experienced players, or with players who have a very detailed idea of how they want to develop their character.

Scrap all racial and training skills bases, replace with a completely 'free base' system of choice, giving the player 360 points to spend where they will. You may give them a limit they can spend on stat. enhancement, say 100, or you may limit the rank at which they may start with any skill, say to rank 8.

Once you start mucking around with character generation, it soon becomes apparent that as long as a flavour of the race is kept, the actual generation becomes easy and obvious. It is surprising how 'unimportant' in games mechanic, and system support terms, the actual character generation procedure is in SLA Industries.

Take advantage of this. Experiment. be bold.

The next obvious step is to stipulate the amount of background the player has to develop. Awarding each starting character thirty ranks of disadvantage, to be spread as they see fit, yields fuller characters and gives more points for development.

It is up to each individual GM to decide how advanced he wants his characters to be when they start gaming. As your players progress in

experience, you will be more comfortable with them starting out with more powerful characters.

Before introducing any drastic changes in to your system, it is always worth talking it over with your players.

Also, don't be afraid to incorporate players suggestions in to the generations system. *(yes, they have ideas too....).*

NEVER MIND THE PIG

ENOKAS (Glyph Carriers)

Enokas were developed by Dark Lament, then abandoned after numerous disastrous field trials. The Project Master for the Enokas, Samia Tralon, released the last batch of nineteen breeding pairs in to Mort Central rather than committing them to the graves assigned them. Since their release in 900 SD they have slowly spread to all areas of the city. Sightings of Enokas are rare, so their exact number can only guessed at.

Enokas are otherwise known as Glyph Carriers, they were designed to be living 'Glyph Pillars', capable of storing and channeling a limited amount of Flux. Their skin, engineered by Karma, is capable of being 'etched' to form Glyph shapes, imprinted onto the Enokas' memory by Dark Lament technicians. An Enokas can 'recall' as many as nine Glyphs (one at a time), though most only have one or two left in their memory.

Enokas are small, reptilian humanoid creatures with four arms, they have long tails, no eyes or ears and three digits on each hand/foot. They have elongated necks and small heads, their mouths are filled with razor sharp teeth, and this is their only form of attack.

Stats.	Min.	Max.	Norm.
STR	1	4	2
DEX	8	13	10
DIA	1	3	2
CONC	1	2	1
Hits	9	17	12
Weight	4kg	14kg	9kg
Length	50cm	120cm	90cm

Weapon	PEN	DMG	AD
Bite	1	1	0
SKILLS	RANK		
Detect	10		
Hide	10		
Run	5		
Climb	8		
Swim	5		
Unarmed (Bite)	5		

Enokas will only attack and bite if desperate, they will try to wrap their arms round a target and bite their face.

Enokas And Glyph/Flux Use

Enokas are 'keyed' to one specific group of the twelve Ebon abilities. They either disrupt or enhance the ability they are keyed to. The range of their influence is their DEX x2 in meters. Enhancement means they channel Flux equal to their DEX in to the Ebb use, disruption means they drain an additional amount of Flux equal to their DEX and cause a minus modifier to the successful formulation of the ability equal to their DEX div. 2.

Usually Enokas use their Hide ability, together with the chameleon like quality of their skin to simply disappear from view, being generally shy and reclusive by nature. When they either disrupt or enhance Ebb use, their skin Glyphs glow purple. Enokas may use their Glyph ability a number of times per day equal to their STR x2, after this they are drained and need 24 hours to recharge their Flux Store.

Rumour has it that Enokas originate from The White, and that they draw their flux from it. Some say Enokas are the remains of Ebons who failed to emerge from The White. Some say the Enokas are a form of Necanthrope, simply waiting to be 're-born'.

BARANATH

Baranath were brought to Mort by War Veterans returning from Cross, where they are fast becoming extinct. Baranath begin life as eggs, laid by a dying adult. They are a hermaphrodite species, there are no mating or courtship rituals, and they remain solitary

animals their whole life. Once hatched Baranath look like large, cat sized rats, with a pair of crab like pincers beneath their jaw. The remain at this stage for two or three years, during this time they concern themselves solely with feeding and sleeping. They are omnivores with an insatiable appetite, they are able to sleep in the most inhospitable of surroundings, ignoring the loudest of noises.

Baranath transform during their 'hibernation'. After their feeding period ends, they go dormant for five or six weeks. During this period they form chitinous shells around their curled up bodies, they appear to be impervious to heat or cold, being seemingly dead.

Upon emerging from their cocoons, the Baranath bear little resemblance to the animal they were before. A re-born Baranath appears to have no head, and the pincers have become enormous, with a minuscule mouth at their centre. Their ears become enlarged, their eyes have become shrunken and lost in fur. Re-born Baranath live only to lay eggs. They need very little food and have become carnivores, devouring any living thing they can find or kill.

Stats.	Min.	Max.	Norm.
STR	6	12	9
DEX	6	10	8
DIA	0	1	0
CONC	0	1	0
Hits	12	23	16
Weight	20kg	100kg	60kg
Length	80cm	150cm	100cm

Weapon	PEN	DMG	AD
Pincers	2	4	1
SKILLS	RANK		
Detect	10		
Hide	8		
Dodge	6		
Swim	3		
Unarmed (Pincers)	8		

Once re-born, Baranath have the ability to regenerate. They regain one wound and two hit points every third round. If there eggs within a Baranath when it is killed, it may still regenerate, sacrificing the eggs to do so. Baranath may only regenerate as long as their abdominal sections and their brains are intact.

Baranath have incredibly sensitive hearing, both in the early life and even more so once they have been re-born. War Veterans used them as guard animals, always being alerted to incoming troops or missiles by the whine of the Baranath. Once re-born Baranath will react to violently loud noises by trying to bury themselves for concealment.

Baranath meat is poisonous to Humans and many other animals, though Carriens seem to be unaffected. The indigenous rats and scavengers of Mort have not yet adapted to the Baranath's meat, and for the most part will steer clear of these alien creatures.

BPN's may be run for the capture of an egg laying adult and numerous young Baranath may be found in the (illegal) possession of War Veterans.

WAR WORLDS

The concept of War Worlds may at first seem a difficult one to integrate in to your game world. The notion that a whole planet can be continually at war seems to be stretching the 'suspension of disbelief' to breaking point. What we need to do is look more closely at the circumstances that plunge a civilisation and it's planet in to this chaotic state.

War Worlds can be broadly classified in two categories;

1) Worlds that have refused the Three P's contract and have been 'thrown to the wolves', where the wolves are most strongly represented by DarkNight and the Thresher. Worlds such as these are known as Havoc Worlds. Examples include 'Cross', 'Hed' and 'Core'.

2) Worlds that have some strategic or psychological significance through their physical position in the universe. These worlds have been battlegrounds since before SLA Industries appeared, their wars began in the mostly forgotten period of the Conflict Wars. 'Dante' is a prime example.

All following details have been supplied by Ministry of War and have been cleared for release SCL 5.

"Hed is a mess. The two power blocks were close to annihilating each other at the close of the Conflict Wars, primitive nuclear obliteration seemed inevitable. Then SLA came along and cleared it all up. Both governments had to deal with SLA, both rejected the Three P's contract, suppose they thought they could cope with SLA. The war came the next year, seems they couldn't resist the temptation to just blow each other up. SLA came back, took one look and said 'no thanks'. DarkNight came along and said 'yes please'. The remnants of both peoples welcomed them with open arms. DarkNight moved in, brought their 'advisers' and their equipment and started to strip out any remaining resources. The people of Hed knew they had fucked up. Civil war broke out with DarkNight supporting any faction that suited them at the time.

Seems SLA got wise to the size of the DarkNight operation, started shipping in troops to take out DarkNight. All the while the peoples of Hed were trying to regain control of their own planet. Hundreds of civil wars escalated in to nation-wide conflict. DarkNight pulled all support and concentrated on wiping out the SLA forces. SLA Industries began to take Hed seriously, sending in ship loads of troops, along with sealing off the system. DarkNight were in a hole. Then things got downright complicated. The Thresher starts appearing on the scene, troops moving in to areas of high industrial production, not that there were that many of them left.

And there you have it. SLA Industries can't leave 'cos the bad guys are there. DarkNight can't leave 'cos SLA are there. The Thresher won't leave, for whatever reason. And the peoples of Hed are stuck in the middle, fighting everyone, including themselves. Yeah, Hed is a mess."

Sergeant 'Mule' Logan, off the record briefing to cadets, Meny 700 SD.

The remnants of governments try to reform armies and gain the support of the local population, while trying to negotiate with other factions and the off world companies. Cities and towns are reduced to rubble and waste, many are still highly radioactive, while others

are mined or so heavily shelled, that nothing can really live there.

The atmosphere is becoming more and more polluted, the temperature rises by a whole degree every four years, wildlife is all but extinct.

There are no 'front lines', no friendly territories, everyone is out to kill everyone else. SLA personnel are just as fair game as DarkNight, though DarkNight do enjoy a greater degree of support from the average citizen.

Hed has become a restricted area, with only serving personnel being allowed to gain access. BPN's that take Op's to Hed are always closely monitored by the Dept. War.

Core has deteriorated in to the same state as Hed, though the route was somewhat more tortuous. The peoples of Core had been united for many centuries and had remained largely unaffected by the Conflict wars, their system was isolated and no-one seemed interested in them. The Planetary Government of Core were not stupid enough to believe this could last; they made contingency plans to cover most eventualities. The standing army of Core was well equipped, well trained and highly motivated. They stood ready and waiting for the call to duty.

As SLA Industries brought an end to the Conflict Wars, they began bringing the Three P's contract to all worlds within their reach. Eventually they reached Core.

The Government received them, listened to them, were very polite, then told them to go away. Core simply did not believe it needed SLA Industries. The Government allowed SLA to set up an 'advisory' unit, consisting of some thirty staff and two hundred troops.

Mr. Slayer sat back and waited for the inevitable.

Within two years of Core rejecting the Three P's contract the first signs of DarkNight incursion appeared.

'Resistance' movements sprang up all over the planet, previously happy peoples suddenly became ferociously nationalistic. A year after the first faction appeared, there were nine 'civil' wars raging over Core. DarkNight supplied arms and advice, and in return took control of production facilities and extracted raw materials for export to other production worlds. After eight years of civil wars and turmoil, the remnants of the Planetary Government turned to SLA Industries.

A year later most of the planets surface was a war zone.

As SLA Industries moved in in force, mainly to crush DarkNight, Thresher reared their ugly head. It soon became apparent that they had been on Core for many years, they had established production facilities as well as lines of supply and movement. SLA Industries sanctioned 'War World' status for Core in 102 SD.

Where Core differs from Hed is in the nature of the peoples unity. After SLA, DarkNight and the Thresher began their war, the peoples of Core soon realised they had been set up. The Government regained control and the full support of all the peoples of Core. The standing army was re-instated and strengthened, SLA Industries was approached for the granting of the Three P's contract. Mr. Slayer refused. Core would become an example for other worlds.

Today Core is a shattered world, with vast tracts of waste land and lifeless oceans. The citizens of Core are wary veterans, being born in to a culture of total war, with SLA Industries, DarkNight and Thresher all being targeted as the enemy.

SLA Industries sees Core as a strategic location, using the chance to draw DarkNight resources in to a central point. DarkNight fight on in the hope that they can still turn the Government to their way of thinking. The Thresher plunder at will, looking for technology and resources they can add to their arsenal.

"Core is kind of strange because it is kind of organised. There are cities, towns and industrial complexes still intact, because all sides need them intact. Sure there is terrorism, and full scale war. In fact the 'front line' extends to all corners of the planet. But there are people here. Organised and well equipped. The people of Core are the most stubborn bunch of civilians it has ever been my fortune to meet."

Captain Dorrell, Shadow company, Core 700 SD.

"We will fight to the last man, woman and child. We will reclaim our planet for our people. DarkNight will be destroyed. With SLA Industries behind us, the future could be a

bright one. If only we could get SLA Industries behind us."

Ghurni Hahl, Minister for Information, Core Central Government, 701 SD.

"Core is dead. It committed suicide a long time ago. All we need to do is stop DarkNight feeding on the corpse."

Dread, Necanthrope Op, SCL 3, Core 700 SD.

Dante, and worlds like it, are a nightmare. Their population has been at war for hundreds of years, constantly teetering on the edge of complete self destruction. At the end of the Conflict wars, many of these planets took up self destruction in earnest. With nothing to distract them, they concentrated on full scale global war.

SLA Industries moved in to worlds where it thought DarkNight could prosper. They came as an invading force, offering no terms of peace, and expecting no co-operation. Both DarkNight and Thresher move in following SLA, using the warring worlds as cover for their theft of resources.

As it is in no one's interest to destroy the whole planet, a sort of balance is struck. Total, constant war rages over the planet, with all sides seeing only enemies around them. The longest periods of relative 'peace' are localised, with no truce lasting for more than two days. Usually the lulls in the fighting are to allow one side to regain position or bring up further resources.

SLA sees worlds such as Dante as places for training, experimentation and observation. It is obvious to all that such worlds exist only at the whim of Mr. Slayer. These are the sanctioned worlds which are most commonly referred to as War Worlds.

The average life expectancy on Havoc Worlds is 72 hours, on War Worlds such as Dante it is 28 hours. The main causes of immediate death (within the average time) are either dropping in to a full on war zone, or through 'terrorist' activity, such as bombing of holding areas, or a Thresher strike. They say if you're going to get in, you'll get it within the first week. After that, you'll wish you had.

"Dante? Yeah I served a term. One was enough. Go back? (*manic laughter*) You aint

got access to enough money to even get me back in the same system. Mr. Slayer? Well now, that's different. If he wants me back.... (*manic laughter*)"

'Loop' Higson, War Veteran turned Prop, 900 SD. Mort.

Serving On War Worlds

There has been some discussion as to what constitutes a 'term' or 'tour' on a War World. Suggestions have varied from ten years to a month. Our suggestions are; a Term is three hundred consecutive days, a Tour is twelve hundred consecutive days.

Those serving must gain five ranks in phobia and psychoses (ten ranks in all) for each Term served.

The standard form of service for a War World is via a contract with the Dept. War. The pay is pretty good, but of course you probably wont live long enough to spend it. The salary is payable upon completion of each Term, nothing is paid during the Term, and if the employee dies, the pay is totally withheld. There is a 'flat' wage structure, with the higher ranks making up their wages through bonuses. Basic Pay: 10,000c per Term.

So, what else can get the Op's on to a War World? Here are some BPN ideas;

Blue: Inappropriate.

White: A murderer has taken refuge on a War World, reasoning that SLA will not try to track him down here. The prey must have killed someone pretty damn important for a BPN to be set up on a War World.

Yellow: Either Thresher or DarkNight could have stolen something, taking it to a War World to use / test it. This is best if the Op's start out close to the thief and then get dragged along.

Green: Expeditionary. Either scouting type missions or exploration or confirmation of reports. May either be directly or indirectly tied to War World. Good example is a confirmation survey on the discovery of some resource or artefact. Often run in conjunction with other

departments, may involve contact with the military.

Red: inappropriate.

Grey: Follow a trail of one or more traitors to a War World, natural progression of a BPN starting on Mort. As Grey are the most tricky of the BPN's (apart from Platinum), you can easily justify off world assignments.

Black: Possibly tied in to a major assault on one of the War Worlds, maybe a final frontal push designed to terminate one of the Soft Companies present. Recruits can be drawn from the Black BPN pool, often assigned to single department or the military via Dept. War.

Silver: Most often assignment to a crew doing a piece on a War World as guards, though may include duties such as speaking or lecturing. Sought after assignments.

Platinum: You can set these up to suit your own players and campaign. Always obscure, always confusing, always involves uncovering of compromising secrets. Operatives should always leave Platinum BPN's with scars that never heal, and with a healthy sense of hopelessness and paranoia.

Although War Worlds are insanely dangerous, scary places, this should not stop you from introducing them in to your campaign. Once the Op's have been to Dante, they will look more kindly on such places as Downtown, a Carrien will never seem quite as frightening again.

FINDING A JOB: BPN'S

Something for the more experienced and maybe better equipped Op's; a Jade, as well as a bog standard Grey.

(A 'standard' Grey, geddit, it's a joke.... oh never mind.)

SCL : 7

Contact Department Of : Ebb

Training Package Recommended : Any

Colour Code : Jade

Summary : Investigate sightings of rogue feral Ebon in Downtown. Capture alive. Retrieve any and all Glyph Cards associated with rogue. Possible 'sleeper' assignment, requires undercover work. Squad only. No Ebon, no BPN. Contact Miree at dept. Ebb on 320-211 709402.

Coverage : Station Analysis

Consolidated Bonus Scheme : 50c per day

Payment : Per Operative

The Department of Ebb has recently received reports from Shivers that a feral Ebon has been sighted in Downtown, apparently dealing in Glyph Cards. The Ebon has not been connected to any of the major subversive factions (DarkNight, Black Order, Purge, etc.) and is, apparently, acting alone.

The Dept. of Ebb would like to speak to this individual, to find out where they got the Glyph Cards, and to ascertain exactly how much the feral knows about the cards (not to mention how he could have gone so long without detection).

The contact at the dept. of Ebb is one Miree Maze, an Ebon herself, Miree will only talk to squads with at least one Ebon among them.

The interview with Miree will be conducted away from the Dept. of Ebb buildings, at a spot of the squads' choosing. Suspicious, no?

Miree will claim the BPN requires additional security as they suspect someone within the Dept. has been leaking Glyph Cards on to the Black Market. She explains that the Op's should only deal with her directly, and that the Dept. will deny any knowledge of their involvement with the BPN, which they will claim is an internal matter.

The BPN will take the squad deep in to Downtown, to levels 28 and 29, well out of Monarch's range and where only the most daring of Shiver units will venture.

In sector 104 a market has been established, based in the burnt out remains of an old power terminal, this is where the feral, known only as Kel, can be found. Twice a week he visits the market, seeking buyers for his wares.

Miree gives the Op's a slim dossier of hand written notes, precious to the Dept. They must

be read while she is present and then handed back to her, no copies may be taken and the notes may not leave her sight. The notes detail the various sightings of Kel, with some descriptions of the Glyph Cards. No discernible pattern may be found and the information is pretty much useless, good background but nothing else.

The key to the BPN and the Dept. Ebb's driving force behind using the Op's is buried in the notes. There is an oblique, obscure, reference to "advancement Glyph Beta", which seems to be in Kel's possession.

Miree will make no direct reference to the advancement Glyph and, if directly questioned, will assume an air of genuine ignorance as to what 'advancement Glyphs actually are. She will stress the objective of the BPN to recover as many cards as possible, as well as to bring in Kel.

One course of action open to the Op's, perhaps their best chance, would be to set up in sector 104, observe Kel, then move in to 'buy' the Glyph cards. They will obviously have to have a good cover story, as Kel will not have any cards on him. Kel will only sell to Ebons, and will immediately become suspicious of any Ebon in the wrong company.

Gaining the trust of Kel will be the make or break point of the BPN.

Kel is a feral Ebon, that is an Ebon who is self taught, whose abilities have been mastered through punishing lessons of growth and torment. Kel, like all Ferals, lives day to day, learning more about themselves with every passing hour. He is a bundle of emotional turmoil, wrapped tight in a razor sharp intellect, trapped and frustrated at not being able to master the constant emotional outpourings of his soul.

Kel however, is a feral with an edge. He has had some training from a DarkNight Ebon, a tutor who has long since abandoned his charge, but not before Kel learned his most valuable lesson.

Kel has a Death Suit, and knows how to use it.

The DarkNight tutor was an infamous agent known as 'Coil', SLA Industries will pay bonuses for information leading to his capture. The Op's will not be told this via the BPN,

though they may find it out in the course of the adventure.

Coil now has nothing to do with Kel, and does not even know if he is still alive. Coil is unaware that Kel has access to the advancement Glyph. If he found out, he would come and get it.

Kel has the following characteristics and skills:

STATS	RANK
Strength	8
Dexterity	10
Diagnose	7
Concentration	9
Charisma	4
Cool	10
Flux	20
Hits	18
EBB SKILLS	RANK
Formulae	5
Blast	8
Enhancement	8
Healing	4
Protect	8
Reality Folding	6
SKILLS	RANK
Unarmed combat	8
Streetwise	8
Club, 1H / 2H	6
Detect	8
Pistol	5
Acrobatics	5
Climb / Swim	5

Kel has the following equipment which he carries with him at all times:

Deathsuit
GA47 (flash suppresser, stock)
4 clips 10mm ammo for GA 47 (Std)
Baseball bat

Kel has access to a 'lock up' which he rents from the Static gang. Static protect the lock up, along with their other rooms in the derelict factory that is their base, with the help of a Prop called Fingal.

Use 'Prop' from Karma (p139) with the following modifications; Dex 10, Cool 9, Close Combat Skill; Blade 2H 7, Pistol 8. Fingal has a Power Claymore and a GA50, he is a wary veteran, well established in the Prop world.

Along with Fingal, there will be 3-8 other gang members at the factory, use 'Mort Civilian'

from Karma (p137) but boost Unarmed to 4, Club 2H to 3 and Pistol to 5.

It is in the lock up that Kel keeps his Glyph Cards, hidden in a secret compartment in a kevlar case. Kel never takes anyone to the lock up, besides which Static will not permit anyone else to enter their turf.

The Op's may try to follow Kel to his source after offering to buy Glyph Cards, or they might try to get close enough to Kel so that he cuts them in to his operation, whatever they do, they will have to gain his trust and go deep undercover, proving themselves to Kel in some demonstrable way.

Kel has a steady supply of Glyph Cards, which he is being fed from a contact inside the Department of Ebb. Uncovering this connection will prove the most difficult task of all.

We have left the rest for you to fill out, remember Kel is a very wary, streetwise Ebon operating from the toughest place in Mort; Downtown. The Op's will have to use all of their collective skills and resources just to survive day to day in this forsaken place, let alone carry out their BPN.

Pour it on with the atmosphere and environmental nightmare of this subterranean world. Constant yellow mist swirls through the area, acidic pollutants dragged through every corner of the sector. The air smells and tastes bad, respirators are the order of the day. Rain seldom falls, and when it does it is grimy and oily, having passed through numerous sectors above. The citizens of the 104 are their own police, Shivers rarely come here (except the *really* tough ones) and Monarch are never seen. Everyone is a suspicious neurotic, looking for enemies in every shadow, every face. No one in these sectors has any love for SLA or those that work for them. Open opposition to SLA is frequently demonstrated, via posters, vids, vandalism and constant verbal abuse.

Make the Op's feel and live the low life of those around them.

The Dept. of Ebb contact is a DarkNight agent, who is filtering confiscated Glyph Cards back in to the system via Kel. You may want to make the DarkNight agent a high up official within the Dept., or you may decide it is a lowly clerk from some obscure sub-department.

As a twist, try making Miree the DarkNight agent, nasty but works a treat, especially if one of the Op's try's to strike up a relationship with her, maybe another Ebon. Betrayal is the spice of life, doubly so for Ebons. Can't you just picture the hours of angst ridden self analysis and morbid self pitying....

SCL : 8

Contact Department Of : Internal Affairs

Training Package Recommended :

Investigation / Any

Colour Code : Grey

Summary : Covert operation involving the uncovering of one or more subversive agents. Contact Dept. of Internal Affairs for further information, quoting reference IA/G 00234-23A.

Coverage : Station Analysis

Consolidated Bonus Scheme : 2000c.

Payment : Per Squad

Once the Op's have contacted the Dept. Internal Affairs, and have been briefed, they will be told of the complex inter-departmental nature of the BPN. Once they have this explained to them there is no going back, they are in too deep and must come out the other end if they want out.

The BPN concerns an investigation in to Shiver behaviour, it is being run with the knowledge and co-operation of Cloak Division, who must be kept up to speed on the investigation. They (Cloak) and only they will take any action to terminate any Shivers, this is made quite plain to the Op's.

Cloak have an obligation to keep the Dept. Investigation informed, a matter of protocol and owed favours at a very high level. The Op's may be asked to report to offices and members of Dept. Investigation at any time, to brief them and make sure they are not stepping on any toes.

Internal Affairs has chosen to inform the Dept. of Shiver Organisation, in a hope that any cleaning up can be kept 'in-house' and in a bid to build better relations between themselves and the DSO. The Op's must be fully aware of the delicate nature of their operation, and the potential political nightmare it's bad handling could cause.

Cloak are unaware of Internal's co-operation with Dept. Shiver Organisation, and if the Op's

let the cat out of the bag, they will have made enemies within Internal Affairs, never a good thing....

As if all this wasn't enough, it is rumoured Head Office has taken an interest....

The BPN itself involves the Op's going undercover on a fictitious Yellow and working the Suburban sector 388, where the suspect Shivers are currently based.

Fictitious Yellow

SCL : 9

Contact Department Of : Investigation

Training Package Recommended :

Investigation / Any

Colour Code : Yellow

Summary : Conduct a survey of sector; ascertain level of Black Market activity. Recovery of 'stolen' SLA equipment. Contact Shiver Virish at Dept. Investigation of 221-0936-2242, quote ref.; Ys388/BMR.

Coverage : Station Analysis

Consolidated Bonus Scheme : 50c per day. Bonus schemes operate for recovery of equipment.

Payment : Per Operative.

Internal suspects that as well as receiving the usual (acceptable) bribes, certain Shivers have become 'contract killers'. Carrying out assassinations as part of their so called duty.

The Op's are to keep an eye on Shiver activity and to investigate the allegations by setting up a fake hit on a selected target.

Internal Affairs will select a target due for termination by Cloak, so that the hit will be totally convincing and the Op's cover maintained. The Op's will be told it is a fake hit that will be stopped at the last minute (it's not, it wont).

Target; Mathew Guna, SCL 8, Operative with Spindle squad, lives in sector 388 in single room apartment. Warrant for termination regarding confirmed DarkNight sympathy.

The termination of Mathew will piss off the rest of Spindle, who will hold a grudge against the Op's, doing whatever they can to make the players lives a misery.

The truth behind the BPN is quite straight forward. The whole of the section house in sector 388 are in on the deal. Contracts are undertaken and handed out on a rota basis, targets are either shot during 'legitimate' activities, such as riot control, or they are taken in to custody and killed while trying to escape'.

Targets vary from Gang Leaders to Props, from civilians to SLA employees SCL 11 or 10, never higher). The Shivers will hit anyone for the right price. The large scale of the operation is not even suspected by Internal Affairs, who believe it may be at Shiver squad level.

The Shivers will be wary of any new Op's on their patch, and may well quiet things down for a while, but it is clear that the Op's cannot be everywhere at once, and soon after they have arrived, the hits will start up again.

Shiver Headquarters for the sector, as well as the Section Houses, will all find out about the Op's Yellow BPN, news travels fast, and the communication between all squads of the sector is excellent; something to make any sensible Op suspicious from the start.

The community at large will support their Shivers, as this is one of the most orderly areas in the whole of Mort. All Joe public knows is that the streets are relatively safe and that the Shivers show the citizens a great deal of respect. The high reputation of the Shivers should make the Op's even more suspicious from the start, as should the general fear shown by all 'street' types such as gangs and vigilantes. People on the street are loathed to speak about the Shivers, very few will commit themselves, either in praise or condemnation, though if pushed they will all vouch for the shivers diligence and dedication. It may be hinted that Shivers are on the take, but no more so than is 'normal'.

The 388 are known throughout the service for their pioneering use of DAC's. There will always be a highly visible presence on the streets, with the DAC's being allowed free roam while their handlers are with them. The 388 has a 'shadow' unit of twelve Domino Dogs, which it uses in emergencies, or in incidents involving 'beasts'. The Domino's are each controlled from Headquarters.

The hits are mostly carried out by on duty Shivers, each of whom receives a cut of the money, though sometimes it has been done by off duty Shivers, covered by their comrades on the shift.

The service offered by the shivers of 388 is surprisingly cheap, with an average hit costing around 10,000 Unis. In strange contrast, bribing the Shivers of the 388 is a costly business, with bribes being approximately 100% more expensive than listed (Mort p67). Most of the sections Shivers will not accept bribes from Operatives and will tend to turn a blind eye to any indiscretions Op's may commit; this may be one of the reasons it has proved so hard to nail the Shivers of the 388, who have at least some blackmail material on almost everyone who passes through their patch.

If the Shivers are having a problem with a particular Op, they may well frame the unfortunate souls, and then offer to 'forget' it if the Op agrees to leave their investigation.

This BPN gives you a chance to play up to all the Op's fears of conspiracy, without ever giving away the true scale of the problem. Bare in mind that the 388th has at least three thousand serving officers, 80% of whom are in on the gig. The Op's may uncover some of the lower levels, but the closing of ranks and the hindrance from above will prevent them from doing any real damage. They could dig deep, but they will pay a heavy price.

The rewards for completing this BPN should be great, both in financial and SCL terms, with a bonus and maybe a whole level increase. Timewise, it could last anything up to three months, depending on what the Op's turn over, and how far Internal Affairs want to go.

Possibilities include mass arrests or undercover 'hits' of some of the key figures in the 388th, forcing the disbanding of the conspiracy. If the full extent of the involvement becomes known, there may be mass transfers to Downtown postings.

A grand way to end the BPN is through the uncovering of the whole conspiracy, and the decision by those involved, to try to hold out against Internal Affairs. This will ultimately lead to the siege of the 388th headquarters, with

a final assault being made by both Operatives and agents from Cloak. There will be a high media presence (ensured by the conspirators) and many chances to make or break for an up and coming Operative.

The atmosphere should be one of cold silence and resentment from the Shivers, who will be polite but spectacularly unhelpful to the Op's. The street will soon detect this pattern and may decide to take advantage by having a pop at the Op's.

DarkNight involvement must be kept to a minimum to maximise the shock and horror of the conspiracy being solely about greed and corruption within the ranks of SLA.

It may turn out that the Op's see nothing wrong with the shivers activities, especially as they seem to suit the local community, in this case they may decide to cover for the Shivers, maybe even consult them in their BPN to 'minimise' the damage. Dangerous ground to walk, Internal Affairs to the left, Cloak to the right.

A spin off from the activities of the 388, is the high profile presence of many Soft Companies, who can afford to pay their way out of trouble. Soft Company goods and services are quite freely available, and the employees of these companies may be quite open about their involvement.

Shiver response times to Operatives calls for help is slow, they do not really care if the Op's make it or not. This can either be made plain to the Op's, via sergeants at the station houses, or it can become clear through some incidents.

If the basic idea appeals to you, but the scale revolts you, try it at a smaller level, with maybe one or two high ranking Shiver Officers being in sole control.

Any remnants from the 388 that the Op's meet at a later date, will be extremely hostile, as will all members from Spindle.

Internal Affairs may reward the Op's, which will increase the level of suspicion from other Op's. Once Cloak have you in their sites, they never let go, and the Op's may be made to feel they are being watched for a long time after the BPN is over.

EQUIPMENT

GSM 2 GYRO STABILISER MODULE

"Kind of weird at first, bit heavier than your standard Waldo. Like being hugged by a huge spider, took a lot of practice to keep everything where it was supposed to be. The 30-30 felt like nothing in my hands and I found I could leave it suspended on the arm, very strange. I had the other two arms fitted with gyro-sensors to fire my climbing gear. As the time passed I got comfortable and let the GSM 2 take the strain. Oh yeah, I got my shot, no worry. Criticism? Well the motors need a bit of silencing, but on the upside you lose all the recoil. Cool."

Marko Hunt, SCL 8 Operative with DarkGlasses, 901 SD, Mort.

Hot on the heels of their hugely successful Shield range, this vibrant new company has launched another potential blockbuster to rival the best efforts of their 'parent' company FEN. Defense Systems Inc. have recently marketed a superior quality Gyroscopic Stabiliser aimed at the sniper end of the market. The GSM 2 can also be fitted with a small Defense System Shield to protect the 'blind' side of the wearer.

Each system has to be fitted to the individual customer, which takes about two hours. The GSM 2 harness can be worn 'solo' or in conjunction with any armour type, though it will not of course be needed if the user intends to wear PP Armour.

The base GSM 2 unit is a useful and valuable addition to the Op's wardrobe. However, the real innovations have been made in modifications marketed as 'specialist' units.

Game System Stuff

The GSM 2 weighs in at 4.5kg and costs 580c. It negates 30% of the weapons weight and may be fitted with up to six ranks of recoil baffling (in addition to any on the weapon fitted to it). The GSM 2 may be fitted with two weapons, which may be fired simultaneously (recoil allowing). It may also have one weapon fitted in reserve, which may be brought in to use in a single round, or without an action if a successful DEX roll is made.

The small shield is incorporated in the weight, and when deployed measures 90cm in diameter (while closed it remains hidden in the harness). The shield takes an action to deploy or take down.

Shield: PV; 3 ID;10.

The GSM 2 can be 'locked' in place, being programmed to remember up to thirty pre-set positions. This can be useful for snipers, who once they have found the ideal position and set up their shot, may then be free to relax their posture, maybe even catch a few zeds. Particularly enterprising snipers have discovered that they can actually set the unit up to take the shot, by taking it off and using the links in either their scout or Silverback helmets. This effectively gives them two shots for the price of one.

Both FEN and CMC offer a site fitting service to the GSM 2, with links to all major brands of audio visual equipment.

Modifications

The GSM 2 can be used to mount accessories such as lights, scanners, vid. cams. or even climbing equipment. As it has a Gyro Stabiliser that controls the movements of the frame, and the chip may be pre-set with positions, the GSM 2 can also be adapted to 'cut in' when certain criteria occur. Climbing equipment, such as motor launched grappling hooks, or wire retrieval lines, may be mounted on the GSM 2, set to automatically deploy if the harness achieves certain angles or velocities. These climbing aids can be activated by muscle movement, or voice command, leaving the user's hands free for other things.

The modified GSM 2 may require the development of a separate skill, or the Climbing or Acrobatics skill may be used.

The fitting of lights, controlled by sensors in the helmet of the user, gives excellent illumination, and as the GSM 2 has a power pack, these lights can be very powerful indeed (stealth goes out the window here...)

KIL-TECH V4 'GUARDIAN'

"Getting in was the easy part. Getting out was a nightmare. The slimy buggers had Guardians placed in the floor, sprang up like mad puppets all over the friggin' place. I don't know how

they knew we was coming, but they knew. And them discs go through armour like it weren't there. Clean cut though, so I suppose it wasn't too bad. Weak spots? Dunno. We just kept away from 'em."

Jake Emerson, SCL 9 Operative with The Royals, 901 SD. Mort.

The Guardian is the third release from Kil-Tech and should prove to be their most popular yet. Kil-Tech are a wholly owned subsidiary of SLA Industries, being a member of the Multi-Job Lacerates group.

The V4 Guardian was designed in answer to a request from the Dept. of Shivers, who wanted a drone 'guard dog' that could be relied upon to bring down intruders but keep them alive.

The Guardian stands 1.5m high, being 1.3m in diameter. The domed, cylindrical design makes them look slightly comical.

The sensory equipment is situated in the top and consists of; motion trackers, IR/UV vid. sensors, audio sensors (keyed to vibration), temperature and pressure sensors as well as air filters with detection systems for toxins. Scanners can be fitted to read 'smart' passes, and there is a growing demand for 'aura' sensors, such as Ebb detectors.

Guardians are becoming very popular with Shiver HQ's, as well as finding homes with a lot of the top SLA execs.. Third Eye have started to fit them as standard to all of their Downtown Reportage vehicles, deploying them at the scene once the crew have disembarked.

Game System Stuff

The Guardian weighs 22kg, it has an internal power supply, which is good for 5000 hours..

The armour of the Guardian is; PV 8, ID 30. Movement; Walk 2, 'Burst' 4. Guardians never 'burst' for more than two rounds at a time.

The on board sensory systems give the Guardian a Detect Skill ranging from 5 to 15. The Weapons Skills are; Disc Thrower 5, Flail 5.

Around the centre of the Guardian are two revolving sections, each mounting one of the weapon systems. The upper band fires the Power Discs, the lower deploys the Flail.

Weapon	DMG	PEN	AD
Power Discs	2	6	2
Flail	3	5	2

The Power Disc carries a store of a hundred discs, each measuring 10cm in diameter. The eight firing ports of the Power Disc thrower may all fire simultaneously, or they may select targets individually.

The Flail consists of eight individual whips, each made up of six strands of carbon filament, driven by a motor at the flail's base which rotates the weapon. Each Flail has a length of up to 2m, varying according to the surroundings (walls and such) as detected by the sensors. Each Flail whips out and then retracts back in to the body of the Guardian. In extreme cases all eight Flails may be constantly deployed, creating a circular 'wall of pain' around the Guardian.

The room for expansion of the Guardian is obvious. Sensory systems may be extended, and the weapons systems may be upgraded; the most common modification being the addition of a 5mm SMG in place of the Flail.

But what does it all cost?

Guardians start at 600c and go as high as taste and finance allow. The whole point of the V4 was to design a solid core chassis and sensory array, to which anything could be added. Most Guardians remain as standard, though some have been seen sporting 12mm 'Blitzoids'.

NORTEC FLATBIKE

"Jet black with a yellow 'tiger stripe' camouflage, looked low and mean, like a sleek torpedo. Pulls away like a bullet from a gun. Moves like a blade through soft flesh, steers like a bead of sweat down a tanned back. Turns like a barge. Oh yeah, it's fast. Top speed in a straight line can give the SCAF boys a run for their money. I heard they're going to release a custom version with a firm point. Can't see it myself, negates the whole point of going that fast in the first place."

Almon Kerr, SCL 8 Operative with Yo'Yo, 901 SD. Mort.

Nortec have just finished field trials of their most adventurous design to date, the concept of the FlatBike. The basic design of the FlatBike

was inspired by the sidecar from the Nortec Combination Motorcycle (T.A.F.).

The FlatBike puts the rider in a laying, or 'prone' position, with the back wheel being between his legs and feet. This gives the FlatBike a very low profile and allows it to reach insane speeds.

The body of the FlatBike is made from a 'poly-ceramic', incredibly tough, light and fire resistant. The shaping of the cover (cowling) of the FlatBike has been designed to make it 'invisible' to motion trackers and the bike carries ECM jamming equipment in the 'nose', with a range of 20m.

For some reason the FlatBike is proving very popular with Ebons and Brain Wasters.

Game System Stuff

Type: Motorcycle / FlatBike

Max. Speed: 400km/hour; 64m/phase.

Movement: Wheeled.

Dimensions: 2.5m length, 1.5m wide, 1m height.

Weight: 0.5 tone.

Crew: 1 Driver.

Skill: Drive, Motorcycle.

Armament: None

Cost: 1,800c.

P.V. 15, I.D. 180.

Acceleration rate: 5.

Turning circle: 4.

The FlatBike is powered by a reactor with a user life of 30,000 hours. A link may be fitted to allow the rider to 'fly blind' using HUD and external sensory systems only. Links to the Silverback helmet cost an additional 100c to fit. At present the FlatBike has no firm points.

SOFT COMPANIES

HARD CORPS.

Corporate slogan: "Get the job done."

Hard Corps. are a major Soft Company that have only recently come to the attention of the public at large. They have been in existence for

over two years, and can be classed as a strictly 'underground' operation.

Hard Corps. do not advertise, they do not sponsor. You will never hear one of their employees mention them. Discretion and professionalism are hall marks of their trade.

Hard Corps. recently supplied two Props for Rat Rage, a Downtown gang who had their turf invaded by Gorezone and half their members killed or maimed. The high profile operation finally broke Hard Corps. in to the eye of the public. The two Props they supplied (Tornado and Fly Boy) took down two contract killers and four other Props before they were spiked by a squad of Op's.

In the Underworld, especially in Suburbia and the fringes of Downtown, Hard Corps. have an excellent reputation. They are known to be expensive, but to offer a first class service.

The agents of Hard Corps. are as elusive as those for DarkNight, you either know how to contact them or you don't. If you put the word out you need their services, chances are they will contact you (after they have done a credit and reputation check).

Third Eye are trying to put a piece together concerning Hard Corps., though they have failed to talk to anyone from the company itself. Rumours in the Prop world are rife as to who actually works for them, and who they are looking to recruit.

Game System Stuff

Hard Corps. have two hundred and seventy employees, all of whom work undercover. Most have jobs within SLA Subsidiaries, a few have positions of some importance within a Department.

Hard Corps. is unusual in the world of Soft Companies, in that it is dominated by one person.

Only eight people within the company know who the Head is, and they want to live.

Sandy Wirril is a Deputy Head of Department at the Department of Warrants. She is a wealthy, powerful woman, who runs Hard Corps. as a business. She has nothing against any one company, and will supply Props on a highest bidder basis to anyone who can afford them.

90% of Hard Corps. employees are contact middle men, known as 'switchers', they channel information within the company, making

contact with at least three other people before they can close any deal.

All potential customers are checked by Sandy herself, using the SLA information available to her. She will not supply Props to customers that are liable to damage her long term business plans.

Props supplied by Hard Corps. are high quality professionals. Use the Props stats. in Karma but boost stats. by 4 points and skills by 8 ranks (spread as you see fit).

Hard Corps. hire out at a daily rate, charging between 200u and 500u per day.

Currently top of the Hard Corps. list are; Red, Monkey Man, Cool Blue, Steam, Piglet, Kil-Whip and Sly.

P R O – C A R S

Company Slogan: "It's just a ride."

Pro-Cars are a growing 'cab' company that run hundreds of vehicles in Downtown, many under the guise of 'legitimate' trade vehicles or 'seconded' public service vehicles.

In the areas where they operate, they are recognised as a useful service, and well liked by your average citizen. Their fares range from 1 to 10 unis, and they frequently move through areas otherwise inaccessible to 'authorised' transport.

Pro-Cars drivers are knowledgeable, streetwise citizens, who mostly enjoy their work, and are proud of the reputation they are gathering.

Behind Pro-Cars lies a dark and dangerous secret.

G a m e S y s t e m S t u f f

Pro-Cars run vans, lorries, cars, bikes and 'runabouts' (essentially rickshaws). Often these vehicles are owned by other 'legitimate' companies, and the drivers use their vehicles to moonlight for Pro-Cars, either during or outside of their normal working hours.

Pro-Cars are linked via a network of street corner operators who radio in to drivers where their next fare is and where they will be going.

On the face of it, a fairly harmless business providing a much needed service.

Pro-Cars have sixty street corner contacts, three 'executives' and employ over two hundred drivers on a casual basis. The company is headed by Matt Wheely, Sreen Narrim and

Fitch Tarn. All three of these 'executives' are DarkNight Espionage Agents.

Pro-Cars is used by DarkNight to assess potential recruits, who can be sold the DarkNight philosophy during their ride, and to sell drugs, vids, discs and services unique to them. A Pro-Car can take you to a venue where services can be found to suit most tastes.

The DarkNight products and services will only be offered to clients after they have taken at least three rides, when one of the core of 'specialist' drivers (nine in all) will be used for the ride. These nine are all Civilian Converts, and all loyal to DarkNight.

The deeper, darker side to Pro-Cars is known only by the three exec.

Pro-Cars is used to take Op's to their deaths. Anyone selected as a suitable target by DarkNight; usually undercover Op's, off duty Shivers or prominent figures in the SLA community, may be carried in to an ambush.

DarkNight will either wipe out the vehicle, driver and passengers, or they will select the SLA personnel, staging a fake hijack for the hit. Drivers for Pro-Cars can earn up to 70% of the fare charged, which will range from 10 to 100 unis. The remainder goes to the company.

At present SLA has no idea that Pro-Cars is a DarkNight front, they have not connected the various deaths of Op's to the company, as there appears to be no uniting factor in the ambushes. If Pro-Cars is uncovered, SLA will move to shut them down in a 'storm' operation; secrecy and tact abandoned in a full on assault of company property and personnel.

Matt Wheely, Sreen Narrim and Fitch Tarn, the three execs. all run a legitimate bakery business in Downtown called Let Them Eat Cake, part of the Bread Fan bakery conglomerate, which is a wholly owned SLA subsidiary. It will be easy for the three executives to get wind of any major SLA operation against them, and they will probably vanish in to the maze of Downtown, maybe leaving clues to lure Op's after them.

S O R R O W I N C.

Sorrow Inc. are a new Soft Company providing products for the 'alien' market. Magazines, disks and vids aimed at Ebons and Brain Wasters dominate their product line, though they do provide some material for Shaktar and Wraith Raider consumption.

Sorrow Inc. have a particularly pessimistic outlook, giving their material a feel of doom and despondency.

Factual articles, discussions, revelations and gossip relating to the Ebon world of emotional turmoil, pain and anguish are the main content of Sorrow Inc. material. SLA Industries is presented in a fairly good light, though there are many hints that all is not what it seems with the Ebons' Lord and Master.

Shaktar are offered discs and vids on such things as how to 'mould' the Honour Code to fit in to the World of Progress, discussions of Shaktar beliefs as relevant to 'new world' discoveries.

Wraith Raiders can purchase lists of equipment and reviews of products aimed at them, as well as what have become known as 'hit lists'; complete details of all contracts currently out to tender in the Underworld, together with their value, contact and target study.

Sorrow Inc. can be found with representatives in most of the lower Downtown markets, with some of their more exclusive Ebon material filtering in to Suburbia and even Uptown, via more discrete agents.

Sorrow Inc. are being quite well received on the street, and most peoples attitude seems to be one of indifference; aliens are beyond their understanding, so companies that cater for them must be too. SLA Industries have just started to take notice of Sorrow Inc., with briefings going out to Shivers, and a few BPN's starting to appear.

Game System Stuff

Sorrow Inc. have seventy employees, all of them are involved in the writing, production and distribution of their products.

They are headed by a 'council' of six elected employees, who take charge of company strategy and planning for a four week period, after which they are either re-elected or replaced.

There are at least five feral Ebons among the employees, as well as two 'rogue' Ebons. Sorrow Inc. has two Wraith Raider contract agents who work for them on a casual basis.

Sorrow Inc. seem only too willing to engage SLA Industries employees at any opportunity; Shivers who get too close are either warned off or killed, even Op's have been attacked.

The company has a monthly turnover of between 30,000 and 100,000 unis, and ploughs most of it's income in to production costs.

Generate all company employees as Civilian Converts, with aliens having their characteristics and skills 'tweaked' accordingly. Throw in one or more Espionage Agents (as Ebons) and a couple of Props, and you should have a good breakdown of the company.

Sorrow Inc. are desperately trying to find the remnants of Integration Twenty, the Downtown Phoenix publication that could bring down SLA Industries.

If SLA find out about the search for Integration Twenty, they may over react; shutting the company down, or they may take a more subtle approach. If they let Sorrow Inc. survive, they may be able to follow the companies trail, leading them to the legendary remnants of the damning article. Such a move would be made by Stygmartyr or the inner circle of Cloak.

MEET N GREET

Frank Weiss caught up with Lava after his squad, Red Eye, had just completed a Yellow BPN deep in Downtown. All material licensed to Inter-Com, © 901 SD. Eye 4 Inter-Com (under license from Third Eye).

FW: "Thank you for giving us this interview, I will try to be brief as you obviously have other things to do."

L: "No shit. First off is a nice long shower. Two weeks in shit-central! Makes you wonder if this crap'll ever wash off."

FW: "What can you tell us about the BPN? If anything?"

L: "You know. Same old stuff. Set up recon. on a flea market, wait for the bad guys to show up, then shut 'em down."

FW: "Sounds easy. How come it took two weeks?"

L: "Well why don't you ask the tactical genius of our squad, I'm sure there were reasons, even if I don't know what the fuck they were."

FW: "Do I detect a note of disagreement?"

L: "Yeah, very perceptive. Something about the stuff we were supposed to recover. Anyway, we got it all. So, shit loads of brownie points

for us, and body bags for the bad guys. The perfect end to a perfect day."

FW: "Some of the footage from the Stirling showed you using a Ripper, any comment on that...."

L: "Purely back up, I had no choice. Them boys with the CAF shit just kept pouring rounds out in my direction, kind of cramps your style after a while."

FW: "Anything you can tell me about the sponsorship deal Red Eye have just nailed with Deth Jam?"

L: "Hey Frank. Deth Jam are a 'softie', no way me or my compadres would have anything to do with them, know what I mean?"

FW: "Ok. Any truth in the rumour that you recently got yourself thrown out of the Pit for trying to take out a lighting rig?"

L: "You really do get around don't you?"

FW: "It's kind of my job...."

L: "Yeah well, accidents happen, especially after three cans of Slosh, know what I mean? But things are cool now, the Clan sorted it out."

FW: "Anything you can tell me about the deal Pharm Corp just made with the clan McCulloch?"

L: "What's to tell? Just corporate shits dealing with each other. I don't even rate the McCullochs as a clan, they are ashamed of their heritage, bunch of pussy whipped drum heads."

FW: "So. What lays on the horizon for Red Eye? Any exclusives?"

L: (laughs) "Oh yeah! We need a quick break, maybe three days, then we plan to go out with a bang, maybe try off-world, maybe take up the offer of a certain Department to go contract, who knows."

FW: "So you will be splitting after the next BPN together...."

L: "Yeah, just too many differences between us you know? Too much conflict within, fucks us up every time, time to move on."

FW: "Can we talk specifics?"

L: (laughs) "Why not! Weaver and Rufus want to set up on their own, what is it with Ebons and Stormers? Me and Rq'th plan to reform Red Eye."

FW: "What about Casper?"

L: "Casper needs some time to get his head together. He will be back, when he is ready. Shit, we'd take him back anytime."

FW: "Thanks for your time."

L: "Sure, whatever."

Lava	
Name	William McLarn
Classification	Frother
Package	Kick Murder
Squad	Red Eye
Strength	10 (11)
Dexterity	9 (10)
Diagnose	6
Concentration	7
Charisma	6
Physique	9
Knowledge	7
Cool	9
Walk	1
Run	2
Sprint	(3)
Movement	(33) 37
Half Movement	(66) 74
No Movement	(99) 111

Lava has Shock Tendons, Sinewshock, Brace Tendons and Sinew Brace implants from Nuke Tendons.

SKILL	RANK
Detect	5
SLA Information	3
Rival Company	3
Streetwise	7
Unarmed combat	6
Blade, 2H	12
Hide	5
Sneaking	4
Martial Arts	10
Climb	6
Acrobatics	7
Blade, 1H	9
Rifle	5
Pistol	6
Running	6
Auto Support	5
Medical Paramedic	9
Tactics	8
Intimidation	7
Evaluate Opponent	8
Drive, Civilian	4

Lava wears PP10 Hard Armour, he carries a fixed Ripper (shoulder mount) and a GA50. His favoured weapon is his Power Claymore, after this he prefers his GASH Fists and his SLA Blade.

Lava carries a medi-kit at all times, equipped with 10 doses of Kickstart Solo. He has a forearm mounted syringe (Boopa) which is

loaded with Blaze UV to which Lava is addicted, he also carries a manual syringe loaded with Bass.

Lava is essentially a combat orientated Frother who likes to know the plan so he can chip in his bit. He likes Shaktar and thinks of himself as 'honourable'. Amazingly, Lava has no psychoses or phobias. His addiction to Blaze, is, he believes, under control.

OPERATIVE VIEWS

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"Nobody knows what is going on. One minute you're dealing with SLA Industries as a legitimate business, then, boom! You're declared a Soft Company. Business and politics, the same fucking thing if you ask me."

"More and more of the citizens are joining these 'racial purity' groups. It sucks. SLA Industries should be doing more to promote our alien cousins. Just like it says on Captain Contract; 'where would we be without 'em.'"

Marty Frien, Unemployed citizen, Downtown.

"We did our level best to shut those bastards down. They just melted away in to the blackness, citizens covering their tracks. What can you do when Joe public don't want to help you?"

Dotty, Stormer with 'Judas Escargot', Downtown.

"I love it all! The Pit, the Crib, Downtown, the Sectors, yeah! What a life, getting paid to do what I do best, yeah. Can't beat it. Being an Operative is all there is."

Jam, Frother with Termite-8, interviewed in the Pit.

FW: "You stand accused of use of unnecessary force. Got anything to say before Internal get here?"

K: "I don't care about Internal anymore. Fuck 'em all. We did the job, we got 'em all. No more Skin Trade in sector 318."

FW: "And the incendiary grenades...."

K: "Had to use 'em. Buggers hold up in a solid hole. Killing ground and everything. We were lucky N'Tkrq got the grenades in when he did."

FW: "I've been told N'Tkrq has died on his way to Sector General...."

K: "Good! I was hoping he would. The shame of the investigation would have been worse than death for him...."

FW: "You knew the grenades were a mistake?"

K: (laughs) "Yeah, well I had a good idea. Burning down large sections of Downtown is never going to be very popular, right?"

FW: "I can see the Internal wagon has arrived. Thank you for your time, and good luck!"

K: "If it weren't for bad luck, I'd have no luck at all...."

Krypton, the Operative interviewed, has recently been released by Internal, he is currently on Dante.

FW: "Excuse me miss, did you see what happened here?"

S: "yeah, I saw it! Those poor boys never stood a chance...."

FW: "You mean the squad of Operatives?"

S: "They were cut down like..., like... well I don't know what. It was all over so fast."

FW: "Did you see any of the terrorists?"

S: "Oh no! All I saw was a lot of shooting and those poor boys getting blown up in their nice car."

FW: "Thank you miss."

S: "Will I be on TV?"

FW: "Frank Weiss bringing you pictures as it happens. Another Black Order strike? How long can this go un-avenged?"

"All we saw was a muzzle flash and one of the Clowns went down. Heurian was up and running before I had a chance to stop her, Jelly pulled his Blitzter and I just knew it was down hill from there. Oh yeah, we got him. DarkNight conscript. Jelly took two rounds, CAF shit, Heurian snapped his neck like a twig. Me? I was too busy watching the show!"

Luke Lurrin, Operative with Hi-Lite,
interviewed at Circus of Pain, Downtown.

"I aint got no friends, and that's the way I like it. I been around long enough to know you don't need anyone but your self, and nothing is going to help you as much as you can help yourself. I been solo for a year now, mainly Yellows and Whites. My advice? If you don't need to know, don't."

Malcolm Reed, SCL 6 Operative, Mort.

"It's not about guns? Oh yeah? Would you go in to Downtown without a piece? Exactly. Now piss off and leave me alone."

Anonymous undercover Op, on assignment in the Volcano, Downtown.

*I'd forgotten how much issue 6 rocked!
It started the pattern for much weightier issues,
and the lack of pictures didn't really affect it in
any way.
Issue 6 shifted bucket loads of copies, it was
also a turning point in the decision to keep
supporting SLA regardless of what was
happening with Jageeda and Nightfall.
A lot of people commented on Sarah Harris and
her role with TBP.... but that was coming to an
end, and she managed to retain her anonymity
☺*

Max Bantleman, 2001.