

tHE bIG pICTURE

(bLAcK tHe sKy)

C O N T E N T S

Eat More Toast – Sam's introduction.

Financiers – Who are they, what can they do for a squad?

Madness Never Sleeps – A SLA / CoC 'crossover', with option to 'straight' SLA.

DarkFinders – Background and secrets uncovered, two perspectives.

Never Mind The Pig – Blood Vines and Pazools.

Equipment – New Science Friction stuff from Dark Lament.

Finding A Job – A Red and a White BPN.

Soft Companies – White Flame and Starburst.

Ebb Crystals – Ebb enhancing drugs, pay the price and take your choice.

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None of the Nightfall team are involved with the production or writing of **tHE bIG pICTURE**, which is produced solely by a few fans in their spare time, on a non-profit making basis.

SLA Industries is a great game, and we intend to do what we can to keep it's profile up, and keep people interested in developing the WoP.

So....

tHE bIG pICTURE is produced on a non profit making basis, with the cover price being for production costs only. Anything bought from us direct, should have cheques made payable to **M. Bantleman**, not Chocolate Frog.

It goes without saying (or should) that everything within **tHE bIG pICTURE**, especially where it may be of a controversial nature, is specifically

the opinion of someone else wholly unconnected with anyone here. If it's good, we did it, if it's a bit dodgy, we don't know what you're talking about.

Anyone with anything they think would look good in **tHE bIG pICTURE** should send it to us at the address below, or better still e-mail it to us at one of our two addresses (less typing).

We cannot pay for anything we use, and all copyrights remain with the respective authors.

Right.....

I'm off....

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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

SLA Industries is looking for loyalty.

Mr. Slayer is looking for individuality.

Progress looks on uncaring.

Citizens of the WoP will stand by
and watch you die.

You are your own best hope for survival.

You are SLA's best hope for growth.

2 0 0 1 – P D F C o n v e r s i o n

*The eleventh issue of **tHE bIG pICTURE** featured stolen artwork from the MRB on the cover. it had written contributions from Sam Pay, Chris Cotgrove and Pally Sandher. Many thanks to them for their fine stuff ☺*

I was happy with the layout for TBP, Sam was happily putting stuff in HTML and putting it on his site, so all things considered, it was going strong. Some stock was released by WoTC, making SLA easier to get hold of, and I believe Nightfall were taking shape again....

Max Bantleman, 2001.

black the sky

Well, it's still going. Eeeeeleven. Luverly. No, it's not Max spewing forth words of incoherence, but Sam Pay, he of the oft-mentioned web-site, Big Picture HTML-izer and now writer of this rubbish for this lovely mag.

Hello.

There's not a great deal that I can say about SLA that hasn't already been said. As far as anyone knows, things are still sitting in a WotC vault, waiting for life to spring forth, and maybe we should be glad for that. After all, at least we know that WotC *CAN* do something with SLA if they want to. And what with Nightfallers still working there and (apparently) still interested in the game and its future, we can hope.

Can't we?

(It's going well so far, this "writing" lark.)

SLA conventions may or may not materialise. SLAcon '97 was a.... well it did sort of.... it happened, at any rate, and MORTcon '98 will be going on probably as you read this. (Spooky) Unfortunately, both are/were/will be private gatherings, as we want to "Test the water", to see how things might work on a larger scale. SLAcon '98, pencilled in for September, will be a much more open affair, and who knows, may be coming to a continent near you.

Some good news. Jared Earle, kind and thoughtful soul that he is, has had a word with WotC stock peoples, and managed to possibly get new copies of the existing books printed, probably get the stockpile of already-printed books shipped. This means (for me at least) no more lending books to curious players and friends. Who knows, I may even be able to get a "Mint" copy of SLA... (Definition of "Mint copy of SLA"? All the pages in one plastic bag. :-)

What about a suggestion. We all know (me more than any) that GMs and players have different ideas about the way that the World of Progress operates. But recently, I've noticed more and more that GMs and other GMs have still worse conflicts, especially in a game like SLA where so much is background and style. How do *YOU* play it? Max put in his ideas about the Truth last issue. Do you buy that? Does it clash?

How about all those "Disappeared" characters, like Albrecht Durer, Senti and Angel? Who is Halloween Jack in your World of Progress?

It'd be interesting to send in a little letter to Max (or, shock horror, yours truly), and briefly outline ideas, appearances, maybe even comparisons with films, books, anything. At worse, you could be ridiculed and mocked by our lightening wits and made a mockery of in public. At best, you could see your name in print.

(That's not really the way to encourage, is it?)

Other projects on the horizon? Well, there's The BPN Directory (which me and Glenn Berry seem to have *Both* suggested independently), which would collect most of the best TBP BPNs, along with some completely new ones from SLAcon, MORTcon and other sources. This would be the ultimate GMs resource, as we all know how few actual BPNs SLA itself contained.

There may also (if I can get away with it) be a published version of my very own campaign/story arc, ESP, available through the same outlets as TBP. (something we can produce without actually writing anything new...)

(It's been a fairly cheerful column, this.)

Maybe I can do a quick plug for my website: (<http://www.stsm.demon.co.uk>)

The Pythagorean Lair, which now contains all sorts of Big Picture articles, the ENTIRE Shaktar sourcebook (Wraith book coming soon as well), along with my own ramblings in the Lair and lots of new Ebb powers in Lamentations. Cool, huh? Surf, my little friends, surf. (I'd mention Aphasia, but it's down.... Whitt?)

Anyway, I've written as much as my tired fingers to cope with, so just read, enjoy, and remember all those back-issues that you haven't bought yet, available for only (only? yes, only!) 3.00 from all good Max Bantlemans.

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FINANCIERS

Blue Print News Files (BPN's) form the core of the Operatives activities, providing both money and attention for the SLA Operative. So how do you get them?
One of three ways:

- 1) Go to a BPN Hall and get one.
- 2) Get offered one by a specific SLA Department.
- 3) From a 'Financier'.

GoIng To A BPN Hall

Going to the BPN Hall, the 'Crib', should feature heavily early in an Operatives career, and they should be forced to go back once they have become established, just to ground them a bit.

The Crib is an infuriating place, designed to serve thousands of Operatives at once, it features heavily in the 'SLA beurocracy' top 100. Form filling and queuing take up 90% of the Operatives time, with the clerks generally being rushed, stressed out and keen to farm out any old BPN just to get rid of the squad and move the next one along.

In previous TBP's we have featured more than one BPN that begins in the Crib, so we will not dwell on it here.

Suffice to say that most Operatives and squads seek to avoid BPN Halls as soon as is practically possible.

SLA Departments Offering BPN's

The various SLA Depts. all have employment and publicity sections, each with the power to offer BPN's direct to squads.

Unfortunately, such offerings are very, very rare, and only squads with high media profiles and appropriate SCL's ever get a Dept. chasing them.

If a BPN comes direct from a Dept., sponsorship often follows, and many SLA Depts. use the initial couple of BPN offerings as a 'courtship', seeing how the squad and the Dept. feel about each other, and how they work together.

Once your Op's are established, and their squads featuring regularly on prime time shows, you may want to approach them with one of the SLA Depts., Ministry of War perhaps.

Financiers

Financiers can save the Op's a lot of time and frustration in getting BPN's, often forming lasting relationships with both squads and individual Operatives.

So how come so little is written/known about them?

Well they seem to be viewed as akin to 'theatrical' agents, that is a sort of necessary evil. This puts them in a bad light and forces an atmosphere of distrust, even dislike, between Op's and Financiers.

Obviously Financiers need to make their money somehow, and as they do not undertake BPN's themselves, this usually comes in the form of a cut from the BPN's Consolidated Bonus Scheme, or from a payment direct from the issuing Dept., usually for quick uptake of the BPN, or for fulfilling some other specific condition the Financier may or may not tell the Op's about.

Either way, the Financier and the Op's have a symbiotic relationship.

There are three main 'types' of Financier, and which one your squad chooses to do business with will be largely down to their own sense of style and Business sense.

Department Financiers

Dept. Financiers work for one or maybe two specific SLA Dept.'s, they are paid a basic salary and their bonus (which forms the bulk of their salary) is dependent upon them allocating a certain amount of BPN's.

The successful completion of a BPN is not so much of a concern for a Dept. financier, as they get paid for throughput and volume, they are not generally held responsible for the success or failure of a BPN, hence they are not too fussy about matching a BPN with the best squad to achieve it's success.

"Look, you want the job or not? I got another five squads to see before lunch, so shit or get off the pot."

Nigel Ligson, Dept. Environment SCL 7
Financier, Mort 902 SD.

"Sure I think you can do it! I've gone through your record, you boys are just the team needed to get the job done. I know it's a Jade, and I'm aware you haven't actually got an Ebon in the squad, but hey, I can help you there, see there's this solo Operative I know, goes by the name of Wire, a Waster actually, nice girl...."

Malcolm Brown, Dept. Racial Employment
Financier, SCL 8, Mort 902 SD.

Dept. Financiers like to do business from their offices and rarely meet Op's anywhere else. They are competent, professional businessmen with a drive to succeed in gathering as much money as they can for an early retirement.

They do not generally form close relationships with squads or Op's, though they often form loose friendships with those they like.

Ultimately their attitude is shaped by the fact that they know there are hundreds of squads looking for work, they see it as a 'sellers market', where the Op's are the 'buyers'.

Department Financier.

Typical BPN Frequency: Blue 30%, White 10%, Yellow 30%, Green 10%, Grey 05%, Jade 05%, Silver 10%

STATS.	RANK
STR	7
DEX	7
DIA	8
CONC	8
COOL	8
HITS	14

SKILLS	RANK
Detect	5
Rival Company	6
SLA Information	8
Literacy	5
Streetwise	4
Unarmed Combat	5

Interview	7
Communiqué	6
Computer Use	5
Business Administration	7
Drive Civilian	4
Psychology	4
Pistol	5

Their Rival Company knowledge will usually be specific to someone the Dept. they work for has a lot of trouble with, and may spread to two or three specialist areas. They will always carry a pistol and are regarded as Op's for all intents and purposes by SLA.

The Dept. Financier is in a strong position and they know it, they will take little cheek from Op's. They can be thought of as powerful friends or enemies, and depending upon their position within the Dept. they work for, as between Rank 2-6 contacts.

Independent Financiers

The Independent Financier works for a multitude of SLA Depts., each of which he is registered with, as he is at the Crib in most sectors of Uptown and Suburbia.

Independents get paid on results. They are much more choosy about matching squads to BPN's and will usually try to assemble a wide range of talents among the squads in their 'portfolio'. They will try to target BPN colour types to squads with matching success rates in those areas.

Independents rarely work from a SLA Dept., though they may rent space from one of them where they have a central office.

Mostly the Independent works from BPN halls and known Op's meeting places such as bars, clubs and the Pit.

They like to strike up close relationships with at least one member of each squad they use, being proud of their status as friend and contact to the squad.

It is often the Independents that become the squads greatest ally in their fight to progress in SCL's and sponsorship. Most Independent Financiers have contacts in the sponsorship world and will be only too pleased to act as 'agent's in these matters.

"Hi there. My name's Frank, here's my card. I've been following your last couple of BPN's, and if you don't mind me saying, bad choice of work, low success rate. I think I can be of some help.... interested?"

Frank Warren, Independent financier approaching squad in Crib of Suburbia 414, 902 SD.

"I've got a BPN here that should fit like a glove. I know I said that about the last one, but hey, we all make the occasional mistake right? And I'm telling you, I don't make a cent if unless you complete this one, so why would I give it to you if I didn't think it was right for you? Trust me, you'll slide through it."

Edward Hutchins, trying to get back in a squads 'good books', over-heard in Red Shoes Cafe, Mort 902 SD.

The Independents are also the ones with the closest ties to Third Eye, having most direct access to new desks and editors, they often make extra money for both themselves and their squads by selling footage and striking deals for interviews with Third Eye.

All Independents are classed as SLA employees, with a nominal SCL of 10, though they often have higher clearance within specific Dept.'s they have close dealings with.

Generally the Independents are the ones who skirt round some of the SLA procedures, often cutting corners on paperwork (though never on contracts). They can be seen as a little bit fast and loose, they are always quick to cover both their backs and their tracks.

Independent Financier

Typical BPN Frequency: Blue 20%, White 05%, Yellow 30%, Green 05%, Grey 05%, Jade 05%, Silver 30%

STATS.	RANK
STR	8
DEX	7
DIA	7
CONC	7

COOL	9
HITS	15
SKILLS	RANK
Detect	7
Rival Company	3
SLA Information	6
Literacy	4
Streetwise	8
Unarmed Combat	7
Interview	5
Communiqué	4
Computer Use	8
Business Administration	6
Drive Civilian	4
Psychology	7
Pistol	4

Independent's will always be well equipped and dressed appropriately for their surroundings. They will most likely have their own vehicle and use this as a status symbol to gain more credibility with both squads and SLA Dept.'s.

Independents can often be found in the company of a body guard, usually a solo Op seconded for a duration, or a high ranking Prop.

Freelance Financiers

Freelancers walk a fine line between SLA and the outside world. They must register with Dept.'s to issue BPN's on their behalf, though this is the only 'official' affiliation they are classed as having with SLA Industries.

A Freelance Financier will generally specialise in placing high value BPN's with squads he has a close connection with, and because of this need for a close connection to the squad, most Freelancers will only work with between fifteen and twenty squads at a time.

A specialty of Freelancers is second time around BPN's, that is ones that have been issued and failed by other squads, thus pushing up the bonus for success.

Because they are not strictly SLA 'employees', Freelancers are not shown the same co-operation or courtesy that goes to other Financiers, most Dept.'s can be said to be passively hostile to them.

In return, Freelancers do not show any due respect to SLA and frequently 'bend' the rules as far as contracts and paperwork goes.

"Put your phone down, I'll call you back, can't be too careful eh?"

Dirk Gently, Freelancer working from Downtown sector 618, Mort 902 SD.

"I'll meet you in the market of 440, usual place. I can't talk right now. You'll love this one, tell J'Qrk'n he's going to get a chance to repay the RedHeads. You can thank me later."

Liam 'Fritz' Fischer, Freelancer for DarkEye arranging follow up Yellow in sector 440, Mort 902 SD.

Freelancers work exclusively from murky back street offices and bars, sometimes conducting business in a Downtown market or a Suburban Mall's car park.

They are shady characters, always on the move, relying on their cell phone answering service and their huge web of street contacts for communication.

It is not unknown for a Freelance financier to be closely associated with a number of Gangs and Props.

Freelance Financiers

Typical BPN Frequency: Blue 10%, White 30%, Yellow 30%, Green 10%, Grey 05%, Jade 10%, Silver 05%

STATS.	RANK
STR	6
DEX	8
DIA	9
CONC	8
COOL	10
HITS	14

SKILLS	RANK
Detect	8
Rival Company	4
SLA Information	6
Literacy	4
Streetwise	10
Unarmed Combat	8
Persuade	6
Hide	7

Sneak	7
Computer Use	8
Computer Subterfuge	8
Business Administration	5
Blade 1-H	6
Evaluate Opponent	6
Pistol	8

Freelancers often look more like Op's or Props than businessmen. Their lifestyle demands a knowledge of combat as well as finance.

A Freelance Financier rarely stays in the same place for more than a day at a time, they are like ghosts in the night, never being found if they don't want to. All Freelancers carry a number of concealed weapons and regularly travel in to districts that would cause concern to the most experienced squads.

A good Freelancer is closely connected to all street types, including Gangs, Props, Monarchs, Shivers, Cults and sometimes even Soft Companies.

Financiers In Games

How you place Financiers and the amount of contact they have with the Op's will obviously depend upon how you run your WoP.

They can be a very useful resource for the Op's, or they can be an occasional contact used when all else fails.

The Background of an Op may well include a Major/Minor friend/enemy, and this is where the Financier can be neatly fitted in, giving the Op either a leg up or an oppressive hand in the WoP.

Financiers can often have hidden agenda's, either driven by their contacts within SLA or maybe by their contacts with a Soft Company or a Gang. The Op's can be used to complete BPN's that work towards a single aim known only to the Financier.

It also gives you a chance as GM to avoid the "so, you queue in the Crib for four hours" introduction to a BPN.

The World of Progress is driven by greed and finance and some of the Op's major contacts or enemies should reflect this. Give

them a chance to inter-act with businessmen not just monsters. Not that businessmen cannot be monsters, just that if they are, they will have to be shrewd to survive in the cut throat world of Mort's financial circuit.

You may want to extend the roll of Financier to one of 'financial advisor', offering a stocks and shares service or maybe even a loan facility (now you can afford that FEN 400 you've always wanted.)

MADNESS NEVER SLEEPS

"Crawling chaos reaches out from the Black Stump, seeping in to the fabric of the World of Progress like a cancer, infecting all it touches with hopelessness and despair. A dark cloud of insanity shadows the hearts of the Operatives. Whisperings of terrible secrets and tortured twisted visions invade their lives. Fighting for control of their fear, they know they must stay awake to stop the Dreams. The time for reason is over. Madness never sleeps."

This is a SLA Industries scenario with a twist. If you read it through and you don't like the twist, there are a couple of suggestions at the end to help you mold the scenario to better suit a 'straight' World Of Progress.

If you do like the twist, and the idea of introducing certain elements of CoC in to your WoP; beware. Many of the Mythos beings and their minions are far more powerful than any SLA enemies, and of course there's the uncanny ability of ignoring bullet wounds.

It is important to retain a SLA 'feel' to the scenario, don't let on that it's got CoC connections, keep the Operatives guessing. There is enough to speculate about; agents of Bitterness, rogue Nec's, 'demons' from the White, experimental Stormers, whatever it takes to keep them from putting the pieces together until the last minute.

Scene One : White BPN - Cry Havoc

The Operatives will be offered a BPN by either a Financier contact, or by a friend within SLA Industries. Word is that this BPN could really help an up and coming squad make a name for themselves, maybe even get noticed by both Third Eye and Head Office.

Colour Code: White

SCL Requirement: 9

Training Package: At least one I&I, Ebon involvement preferred.

Contact: Mr. Kerrin Arboc, at Department of Environment, Mort 890D/KA045-E45.

BPN Summary: Squad of Operatives needed to investigate murder of undercover Operative. Media attention. Soft Company involvement, extermination warrants available.

Coverage: Third Eye.

Consolidated Bonus Scheme: 300c.

Payment: Per operative.

SCL Increase: 0.8

Kerrin Arboc will arrange to see the squad at his offices at the dept. He is a professional Dept. Financier, who conducts himself properly at all times, he is a stickler for procedure and forms. Basically a likeable beaurocrat, he will try to guide the Op's as much as he can, and will genuinely try to answer any questions they have. The information that Kerrin has is as follows, how much of it you give to the Op's should depend upon their role playing and skills use.

The murdered Operative is a Michael Dorff, known on the street as 'Fly'. Dorff was killed in the apartment he was using as part of his cover for a grey BPN. The Operatives will not be allowed to access any details from the Grey, and should not try. the apartment has been sealed off, the body removed. A full post mortem report is available, the apartment awaits the Op's inspection.

Prime suspects in the murder of Dorff are members of a Soft Company called Havoc that Dorff was close to helping shut down. A video slug is available for the Operatives, and may be collected from the Shiver guards

at the scene, it is still in the video camera which has not been touched since the removal of the body. The Shivers (and ultimately the Dept.) were alerted by a neighbour, who heard sounds of a fight from Dorff's apartment, and then two gunshots.

Post Mortem Report

Dorff was killed by a canine bit to the throat, which caused massive trauma damage and bleeding. The body was apparently savaged and half eaten by the dogs after Dorff was dead.

There is a full medical report of the examination, but the findings are essentially as above.

It would be easy to find numerous such reports on victims of DAC's, and Domino Dogs also fit the MO.

The Crime Scene

Dorff's apartment was in the Sector 686 in Suburbia, it is on the third floor of the Danon Apartment block, over looking the Riddley Mall. At the front of the Mall is a store called Myne, an aging ground floor shop with basement, selling bric a brac, small furnishings and decorations. Myne is the suspected 'front' for the Soft Company Havoc, Dorff's apartment has a perfect surveillance view of the store.

The Operatives will be let in to the taped off and locked by a Shiver Corporal, who informs them that nothing has been touched since the removal of the body.

The Shiver Corporal, Sam White, says that the apartment has only had three guards on shift outside it since the killing, and all three have reported hearing faint, almost indiscernible scraping sounds coming from within the apartment, since they have had orders not to enter, they have not investigated.

The small two room apartment looks like a scene from a deranged nightmare. The floor has been scrubbed clean, with no carpets and rugs covering the bare boards. The walls are barren and grey with no decoration or hangings. The wall opposite the one window has been 'sculpted' using old scraps of rubbish and papier mache, it has thousands

of small 'pyramids' stuck all over it, making it look like it is covered with teeth.

All of the walls and the ceiling are covered with a wandering script, unreadable and erratic, it appears to be scrawled in blood. Thousands upon thousands of lines of script criss cross the whole apartment. Analysis shows the blood to be human, of mixed types, and at least three days old.

Any Ebons can make a Formulae roll as a skill, with a modifier of minus five. Success means they detect a few Glyph patterns among the scrawl, each to do with the Reality Fold ability, though whether to help someone come in, or keep them out, they cannot tell.

Next to the window, pointing at the 'toothed' wall, is a video camera.

There is nothing else of consequence in the apartment, maybe some personal affects, groceries, a couple of magazines and such.

The vid-slug in the camera has not been touched since the removal of the body.

It shows a back view of a naked man, identifiable as Dorff from a large tattoo across his back and shoulders. He appears to be holding a book close to his face, slowly rocking backwards and forwards and occasionally dropping his head as if to sleep. There is no sound, though the audio equipment on the camera is in perfect working order.

After about three hours of this, the room darkens, and the camera's small on board light cuts in. From out of the wall comes a dark, inky black shape, looking like a Domino Dog, it has glowing red eyes and smooth black skin. It seems to literally drag itself through the wall, as if in agony. Dorff drops the book and spreads his arms in a cruciform shape. The dog seems to sniff the air, slowly looking from side to side, taking in all the room, before it crouches then leaps at Dorff. Dorff fly's back out of shot, the dog shaking at his neck as he falls.

The 'dog' is a Hound of Tindalos, a precursor and hunter for the Great Old One soon to come.

Dorff found the book he believed to be the key to unlocking the secret of the Soft Company Havoc.

Dorff's reports are filled with references to Havoc being like a cult, he often speculates

on the companies aims, referring on many occasions to their 'fascination with Ebb use'. The book is missing, stolen by Havoc immediately after Dorrf's death. It was they who called the Shivers, they have been watching his apartment for some time, hoping he would use the book and confirm their suspicions about it.

Scene Two : Be Quick Or Be Dead

The Operatives should spend at least the rest of the day following up whatever leads they can muster, or whatever red herrings you choose to throw at them. As they gather for a 'team meeting' or meet anywhere as a group, as long as it's last thing at night, they will encounter a group from Havoc (you may need to feed them a red herring to get them to be suitably placed for this).

A 'gang' of street people, all tatty, smelly, disheveled and shambling, approaches the Operatives, feet shuffling and hands fidgeting, they obviously intend to accost the Op's. Whether the Op's perceive this to be for food, money or for an attack is left to their wits and skills.

Once within three meters the gaggle will charge the Op's down. They have a specific purpose and will attack in formation to carry it out.

The strength of the gang and their level of arms and armour is left to you, threat level according to the Op's level of experience.

The assembled gaggle of cultists intend to discharge a 'bag bomb' in the midst of the Op's designed to stun them. Then their leader, a Havoc agent, will move in and shoot one of them with a large dose of Honesty. The aim is to find out what the Op's know.

At least half of the cultists are 'dead'. They are beings whose sanity has been drained away, their blood thin and their muscles wasted. They are driven by spells of binding, being little more than 'zombies'. Use 'Mort Civilian' stats. (Karma 136) with STR 10 and COOL 15.

The 'bag bomb' is the equivalent to four DA 71 Blast Grenades. If Op's are wearing Powered Armour, get the Havoc agent to

'Hotline' 'em. The aim is to single out an Op and question him about the BPN and what they know of Dorrf and the book.

While the Op chosen is being questioned, the others will all be robbed by the remaining gaggle, a few kicks and punches may be delivered but nothing serious.

Operatives that notice (Detect) that some of the gaggle appear to be dead have to make a Fear roll, rating 10.

Scene Three: Sweet Dreams Are Made Of This

The next four days should be spent by the Op's investigating the murder and the Soft Company Havoc.

How you lead them in to this is up to you.

We have given some detail about Dorrf and about Havoc, how much the Op's discover is left to their skills and to your generosity. The key purpose of these four days is to give the Op's three very sleepless nights.

Dorrf

Dorrf graduated Meny as a Kick Murder Op, joining the first of his three squads; Rise after an 'audition'. Rise consisted of; Dorrf, Kn'r Qwr - Shaktar Kick Murder, Raindance - Ebon I&I, Hurren - Wraith Raider Scout. The other three members of Rise were wiped out in a Black BPN in CS3, after this Dorrf is recorded as failing his next three psyche evaluations. He gained an exemption certificate and joined Soulfly.

During his time with Soulfly Dorrf climbed to SCL 6. Soulfly are listed as 'disbanded' after an IA investigation, the other three remaining members of the squad are all solo Op's, living and working on Mort. Each will testify to Dorrf's gradual slide in to insanity, telling of his growing obsession with 'old things like paper books'.

After Soulfly Dorrf spent a mere three weeks with a squad called Fat Alice, who kicked him out after he failed a psyche evaluation. All of Fat Alice are reported to have died in a fire in a Downtown gauss Train station three weeks ago.

H a v o c

Company Motto: "Cry Havoc, and let loose the dogs of Justice."

Havoc want to bring about the downfall of SLA. They believe they can achieve this by opening the way for the return of the 'old ones'. Most members of Havoc have Delusion of at least rank 7, some rank 10, the truly believe that the old ones will destroy the 'unbelievers' and spare them.

Havoc spend most of their time searching for artifacts to help them with their task, they 'earn' the money they need by indulging in all of the usual Soft Co. activities, including ambushing and robbing SLA Op's. Havoc sponsor at least six props, and employ roughly four hundred people, most of whom are simply in it for the chance to have a go at SLA and the money. The core members of Havoc number thirty and each is a 'cultist' in the truest sense of the word, being totally dedicated to their belief in the old ones, and acting as if their own lives mean nothing.

Havoc have not been connected with any other Soft Company or cult, and word on the street is that Havoc are one drop short of a shower, most people with Streetwise avoid them realising the trouble they bring.

SLA treats Havoc with contempt, not realising the true danger they represent, there are no BPN's specifically targeted at shutting Havoc down, and most Op's think of them as just another softie that will eventually die a natural death.

There are elements within Cloak's Catharsis division that know what Havoc really represent. Catharsis are keeping an eye on Havoc and intend to use their knowledge to both shut them down, and bring terror to White Earth, giving Bitterness something to worry about in the process. Catharsis report directly to Intruder, they are not acknowledged by Head Office and rumour has it they don't actually exist.

T h e D r e a m s

Once the Op's have been in Dorr's room and found the vid-slug, they will be visited by visions and dreams.

The dreams will keep them from gaining restful sleep, which may affect their recovery from both injury and flux use. Each of the Op's will have the same dream, with an ending to suit their own personal psychoses/phobia/fear.

First Night; The night of the visit to Dorr's apartment will bring the first dream. The Operative will find himself awake in their room, but vaguely aware they are somehow still asleep, being in a sort of 'waking dream' state. They will feel a great darkness all about them, which they will not be able to turn their head to examine. There is a presence in the room with them, a threatening menace that will cause them great pain and misery. After what seems like hours of tortured anticipation, the Op will feel themselves and their bed being shot towards the ceiling at terrible speed, knowing that their death will occur when they hit it. As they rise, their flesh is torn from their bodies with the force of the wind, leaving every nerve bare to experience the agony of the freezing wind.

As they strike the ceiling, they are greeted by rushing visions of their worst fear or phobia, accompanied by relevant smells and physical sensations.

The dream repeats itself over and over again until the Op wakes from their tormented sleep.

Second Night; The sleeping Op is sleeping face down in their bed, they are panic stricken that they are going to suffocate. They find themselves unable to move, and try as they might, they cannot strain their heads from the choking pillow. As they feel the last burning breath leave their body, they sense the onset of absolute oblivion. The blackness rushes in and once again they are confronted with their own worst fears/phobias as in the first dream.

Third Night; The Op's find themselves on a black, oily beach, with a churning polluted sea raging in front of them. behind them are blackened ash heaps, twisting with the wind. They can hear the sound of gull's cries on the wind, mingled with the screams of tortured victims. As they stand, unable to move, they are approached by a huge black dog with burning red eyes. The dog brings

their death, chewing out their throat, but somehow they remain alive to feel it eating their internal organs. The dream repeats itself until they awake.

The dreams will have the effect of physically draining the Op's and adding to their fears and phobias. After dream one, they need to make PHYS rolls with a -3 modifier, success means they are at a temporary -1 to their PHYS, failure means they get -3, PHYS is recovered after a good nights sleep. After dream two they must make the same roll, plus a Fear roll rating 10, success means they get a temporary +1 rank to any one of their fears/phobias/psychoses, failure means they get a temporary +2 ranks, the ranks disappear after two good nights sleep. After dream three the Op's need to make both the above rolls again with -2/-4 +2/+3 results for success/failure.

If any Op's psychoses/phobia/fear reaches rank 10 as a result of the dreams, they gain a permanent +2 to the affected affliction and gain another psychoses at rank 2, their choice based on their character's reaction to the dreams.

The Op's will obviously be affected by the dreams and you should encourage them to analyse them and relate them to what's happening in their lives.

The four days spent investigating can either go as quickly or as slowly as you like, with in depth or sweeping role playing.

Scene Four : Red House Over Yonder

After the third night of dreams, the Op's will be contacted by Kn'r Qwr who alerts them to an imminent Red BPN which may be of interest to them. Kn'r gives them a location in upper Downtown, and tells them to be there in two hours time. The location is the Red House, a known house of 'ill repute' which caters for the well to do.

Beneath the Red House is a small basement complex dug out from almost solid rock. Within these four rooms Havoc have a 'temple' from which they intend to summon a great old one. The Red BPN Kn'r Qwr tells the Op's about is in fact going to be caused by the Shaktar, who plans to enter the

building and kill any soft company employees, or opposition he finds there. Kn'r knows about the basement and will work towards it, hoping to trap the cultists down there, killing them and destroying the basement in a 'suicide' attack.

The Op's should be close to the Red house as Kn'r begins his attack. The Shaktar is half crazy, having been exposed to the Hounds of Tindalos during the Black BPN is CS3 that drove Dorrf insane.

The Op's should be drawn to follow the Shaktar as he makes for the basement.

There will be three Props guarding the Red House, and the clients will try to get away as soon as the shooting starts, many of them are either Soft Company employees or Op's, with a few off duty Shivers thrown in for good measure.

Kn'r will see them all as enemies.

The Op's may want to moderate their attacks, maybe recognising the odd Prop, Serial or Soft Company employee as targets, while having to avoid conflict with any other SLA employee. The boys and girls that work in the Red House will also vigorously defend themselves.

The 'Madame' of the red House is a fanatical Havoc supporter, as are half of her staff. They will seek to kill anyone seen as enemies, with no regard for their personal safety. The main job of the Havoc cultists is to delay the Op's long enough for the summoning to take place.

How you play the Red House scene is up to you, but the activities in the basement will ensure that there is nothing left of the Red House after the Op's have left, so feel free to let mayhem rule.

Scene Five : Look Out Below

There should be an eerie calm after the rampage through the Red House, with Kn'r stalking off to the basement in total silence.

In the basement the Necanthrope Myne is summoning a great old one, which once arrives he intends to 'fold' to a beacon within range of White Earth. Myne is close to insanity and incredibly powerful.

In the outer chambers of the basement, Myne has positioned his 'zombie' helpers, each of whom will attack any living thing that enters. Use the same stats. For the zombies as the 'gaggle' that accosted the Op's earlier, remember their job is to delay the Op's any way they can, they are fearless and brutally simplistic.

Once the Op's follow Kn'r down the stairs to the underground chambers, after they have encountered their first batch of zombies, they will find Kn'r frozen in a corner, apparently with fear. Kn'r is about to be overpowered by zombies, and is showing no signs of defending himself.

The Op's begin to 'hear' the whispered chants of Myne, along with a strange, elusive high pitched piping noise. Each Op will have to roll against their highest fear/phobia/psychoses as if it were a skill. Success means they are momentarily transfixed, for a number of phases equal to their DIA. Failure means they must make a fear roll with a rating of 13. If they fail the fear roll, they must face the consequences as dictated by the roll.

The arrival of the Great Old One is preceded by the appearance of his 'minions'. These minions sweep through the basement looking for minds to eat. They will ignore the zombies as they are dead and offer no feelings.

The Great Old One will materialise, exploding the ground around it to fit it's huge, festering bulk. Myne will remain calm, waiting for the whole of the Great Old One to materialise before he folds.

As the last of the chunks of earth, rock and building settle from the explosive arrival of the beast, Myne will charge forward, folding as he goes. Both Myne and the Old One will disappear in a huge discharge of flux, blinding anyone who looks towards it for 50 - PHYS rounds.

Any Ebb users that witness either the arrival or departure of the Great Old One gain a rank in Formulae straight away.

As Myne disappears the Shivers begin to arrive on the scene, together with the Fire Department and at least four other squads of Op's. If any of the minions remain, they will

continue to attack every living thing they can before they are dispelled.

All survivors of the Red House Incident will be questioned by both Cloak and department of Psychology, and immediately given a Psyche Evaluation. Those that 'fail' are sent of a one month 'sabbatical' to New Paris, where they will be expected to keep out of trouble. Asking too many questions, or letting on that you know too much will get you 'reconditioned' by Cloak, as will any mention of the Necanthrope Myne.

Game System Stuff (CoC)

Great Old One - Shyghath Nohee Kauth

"And he will appear, terrible and silent, his awesome countenance held upon a glistening stalk. look not upon him, for his thousand writhing tentacles move with a slithering rhythm that belongs to the mindless dance no man can follow. His silence will tear at your sanity while his minions tear at your flesh, he will cleanse the unworthy and clear the way for his followers."

If summoned he will appear 1-100 hours after the ceremony is completed. On arrival he will immediately attack his summoner, using his Power as the active characteristic and his opponents power as the passive. If Kauth wins, he will devour his prey and go in to a frenzy of destruction lasting 1-10 minutes, if they win, he will teach them 3 spells by touching their mind, the summoner loses 1D6 sanity for each spell learned in this way.

Each round Kauth may employ 1D20+6 tentacles to whip out and strike foes. If a target is within 15m Kauth may decide to 'suck him up'. To do this he uses his Power as the active characteristic, and the targets (DEX+STR) Div2 as the passive. if Kauth wins, his victim is 'eaten' in one round, if he fails, they may escape his immediate range.

Kauth's body is coated in frozen slime and debris from space which counts as 16 point armour, his 'stalk' is covered with only 6 points armour.

Seeing Kauth will cost the victim 1D100 Sanity, if Sanity roll is successful only 1D10 is lost.

Characteristics

Strength 140. Constitution 230. Size 90. Intelligence 18. Power 25. Dexterity 30. Hit Points 120. Move 5 (stalk) 20 (rolling).

Weapon	Tentacle	Suck/Bite	Crush
Attk%	70%	70%	90%
Damage	7D6	Eaten	13D6

Dark Spawn Of Kauth (Kauth's Minions)

"They look like huge starfish with strange pulsing balloons on their back. Underneath, in the centre is their mouth. The body is covered with lumpy puss bubbles that fester and burst at regular intervals. They are constantly regurgitating putrid material from their innards. Each 'point' of the starfish has a hooked claw. From beneath two tentacles trail, one either side of the mouth."

The spawn's body is covered with thick, leather like scales and frozen slime, worth 4 points of armour.

Skills: Spot Hidden 40%. Camouflage 40%. Listen 40%.

Seeing a Dark Spawn will cost the victim 1D8 Sanity loss and 1D3 if Sanity roll is successful.

Characteristics

Strength 5D6. Constitution 5D6. Size 3D10. Intelligence 2D6. Power 25. Dexterity 3D6. Hit Points Variable. Move 5 (shambling) 20 (flying).

Weapon	Tentacle	Bite	Claw
Attk%	70%	25%	40%
Damage	7D6	2D8	2D6

Game System Stuff (SLA)

Kauth (Fear Rating 16)

STR 12. DEX 15. DIA 6. CONC 6. COOL 20. HITS 30.

Moves: 3 (Stalk) 4 (Rolling).

Armour: Body PV 30, ID 300. Stalk PV 15, ID 80.

Attack Ranks: Tentacle 12. Suck/Bite 15. Crush 10.

Weapon	Tentacle	Suck/Bite	Crush
Pen	20	Eaten	10

Damage	40	Eaten	30
A/D	7	Eaten	10

Kauth forces Ebons to Formulate at -15 to use any abilities within 15m of his presence.

Dark Spawn (Fear Rating 13)

STR 30. DEX 20. DIA 8. CONC 20. COOL 30. HITS 60.

Moves: 2 (Shambling) 8 (Flying).

Armour: Body PV 20, ID 100.

Attack Ranks: Tentacle 10. Bite 10. Claw 10.

Weapon	Tentacle	Bite	Claw
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Pen	15	18	20
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Damage	18	10	10
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A/D	4	3	4
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Dark Spawn force Ebons to Formulate at -8 to use any abilities within 30m of their presence.

Now obviously these beasts are very powerful in SLA game terms, and may well seem effectively indestructible, and that's the way it should be.

CoC Alternatives

A CoC crossover may not be to everybody's taste (?), so a few alternative ideas are offered.

Monitors

The Hounds may be replaced with DN tampered with Doom Dogs, complete with 'folding' abilities.

You may want to replace Myne with a Monitor, who is trying to drag through a being from White Earth to Mort. The being should be the equivalent to a very powerful Necanthrope who is completely insane.

Havoc would then become a DN backed cult, dedicated to the summoning of beings from White Earth, though they may be less fanatical and slightly more 'materialistic', maybe having some ally's among other DN backed Soft Companies.

Root Dogs

The hounds become creations of the Root Dogs, powerful mutated beasts dragged from the face of White Earth and sent to

Mort by the Root Dogs who seek a way to invade Slayers WoP.

Myne can either be a Necanthrope who seeks to learn more about the Root Dogs, or maybe a descendant of Mandrake's who seeks to summon the Root Dogs to question them about Mandrake's whereabouts and fate.

Slayer

The Hounds may be a form of Doom Dog under development, being 'summoned' by their handlers (Dorrf becomes a Dark Finder).

Myne is a Necanthrope loyal to Slayer who is sacrificing himself in order to trade places with a being from the White. Slayer is trying to continue the development of the WoP by dragging through beings from a dark time before the Conflict Wars.

CoC Tie-ins

There are obviously lots of ways you can tie in the Mythos world of Call of Cthulhu to your WoP. If you want the whole Mythos, cults, Great Old One's and all, then some conversion work is in order, though this will be largely cosmetic as the deities of CoC will be mostly immune to the assaults of the WoP.

Cthuloid beasts can get in to the WoP in a number of ways;

The Black Stump.

The White.

The 'experiments' of Senti or maybe even Karma.

The 'worship' from a cult.

The ravings of Bitterness and White Earth.

Each offers different avenues of exploration, and tends to imply differing powers for the Mythos creatures, those brought forth by cults for example, would not be as powerful as those that broke through from the Black Stump.

You must keep one thing constant though. Mythos beasts must be chaotic, unpredictable, almost unkillable and they must provoke insanity, or at least panic and hysteria.

The very stuff of the World of Progress.

DARK FINDERS

Written By: Sam Pay (The First Bit)
And Max (The Second Bit)

DARK FINDERS : A WORK IN PROGRESS

"The position of Dark Finder is both less and more than an honour. Our positions within SLA Industries is a variable, each fulfilling his or her own uses in Slayer's Big Picture. Many of us exist only due to the gift that we have been given, the eternal regeneration of body and soul that makes us more than the average Homo Sapiens. We are Homo Superior, advanced beyond our original peaks of ability and fine-tuned by a thousand tests, both in and out of the field of battle. Truly, we are perfect."

Dark Finder Anderio Michelmas, on the role of Dark Finders in the World of Progress, Mort 902 SD.

"What? Are you shitting me? Advancement? Improvement? How can you improve on perfection, baby? I am at the pinnacle of my abilities, and you want to belittle my achievements by turning me into a fucking SLA Industries Zombie? No way, man. No way."

Human Operative Andrew Michaels, his reaction to the offer of entry into the Dark Finder project, 786 SD.

The Dark Finders exist in a limbo between Operatives and Corporates.

Grey, emotionless killing machines, they stalk the world of progress, looking for the disloyals, the malcontents, the troublemakers, and weed them out. Like dark avengers of Slayer's Big Picture, they are unstoppable, eternally vigilant and provided with an immortal patience. But they were not always such....

The Dark Finder Project

Cadavar clearly saw the shit coming long before Senti and her Deathwake Device were brought into the Stormer project. His

success with implants was obvious, he was living testament to them. So, he began to design an army for the dark times that he saw ahead.

One of the undocumented facets of Cadavar is his paranoia concerning Ebons and their potential. In hindsight, he clearly predicted the creation of Necanthropes, and the enhanced Operatives he tried to design were pumped so full of biogenetics that their sensitivity to all forms of Ebb was seriously diminished. The side-effect of this was, unfortunately, madness, and Cadavar quickly diverted his attention back to Stormers when Slayer took close interest in the project, a few months before Senti's success.

While the Stormer project, under Senti's watchful eye, gathered pace, various parties who had supported Cadavar began to be "filtered out" of Karma. Those who weren't relegated to administrative positions deep within the department fled under the protective wings of Internal Affairs and its various sub-companies, some of them taking more than just their administrative abilities with them. One of those who wormed their way into Cloak Division was Neil Mitchel.

"Neil? Yeah, smooth operator or what? Cadavar had realised long ago, around about Stormer V.100, that sentience was going to be a big sticking point in his operations. So he began working on a mass-production version of the alterations he had made to his own body.

I mean, you only had to look at the guy to realise that even if he couldn't make people, he could damn well improve on them. And Neil? He just sat back, made copies of all the research and tests done, and when Cad did a bunk, he just handed it all over to Cloak. Made for fucking life, he was. And didn't he let you know...."

Un-broadcast interview with Terry Nicholes, former associate of Neil Mitchel, 12 SD.

Mitchels set steps in motion to forever change the face of street policing. He saw the potential in the Dark Finder project (a veiled reference to Cadavar's original Anti-Ebon uses for them) as a Street Police, far

and above the existing Shivers. He believed that they were underpowered and understaffed to deal with the more serious threats that emerged from SLA's total domination of the chaos of Mort. Presenting what was essentially the blueprint for marshal law to the executives of Internal Affairs, he was unaware of the conflict that would exist between the soon-to-be-introduced Operatives and his Dark Finders, and was promptly swatted down for not researching carefully enough.

Discouraged, Mitchels threw himself into the technical details of the project, determined to prove that IA could not afford to let what he saw as an unyielding army go to waste.

Armour-Plated skin. Further muscular enhancements through intravenous stimulants pumped into the bloodstream. Reflexes based on stolen Stormer designs.

Eventually the Dark Finder became a grey mass of reinforced tissue, and IA stepped in, removing him forcefully from the company and leaving him a broken wreck. The project was brought under control, the enhancements toned down to reasonable and physically feasible levels.

The proposed mental improvements (which Cadavar had failed to implement successfully) were scrapped completely, insanity problems continuing.

The improved Dark Finders, almost identical to those seen on the streets today were shown again to the IA board.

"Yes, we were concerned. A Dark Finder army quite clearly clashed with Slayers existing ideas for a standing Operative force, and we weren't about to fight Slayer on his own ground. So, we thanked Mitchels, we thanked the re-designers, we thanked the test subjects, and we took it and changed it and made it more.... well, more Cloak really. We weren't looking for an army. We wanted dark violent corporate machines. And if we want it...."

Un-broadcast interview with ***** *****, 16 SD

Game Use

Background

The Dark Finders are, by majority, grey and faceless masses. Several thousand are on Mort at any one time, although as a race in general, they are the greatest traveled, shipped off to whatever world on which SLA Industries requires their unique abilities. Their grey body-armour and huge physique accounts for part of their reputation, but there are numerous other factors, such as their grating voices, caused by steel plates implanted in the throat, their brilliant white teeth, resistant to many forms of acid and corrosion, and their deep black-red blood, filled with small supercharged bio-mechs, which repair and rebuild their oft-damaged bodies.

Dark Finders are, clearly, not Operatives, neither should they be used in the place of Operatives. Rather, they are enforcers of SLA Industries' will, whatever form that may take. This leads to encounters with them both in the field of battle, as the eyes and ears of Departments, even corporate positions, and should be respected, feared and obeyed.

Insight

Once, you were merely mortal, a soft fleshy human being with limited prospects and even more limited life-span. Fighting alongside Stormers and against Manchines, it's clear to you that Humanity is no longer the great power in the universe it once was, forced to resort to weight of numbers. And it shames you.

But you've been offered a chance to become better than you ever thought possible. Enhancements above and beyond all previous reckoning, stimulants and adrenaline pumped straight to the muscles that need it most, reinforced skin equal to the challenges you will be set. And what challenges.

As you emerge from your deep sleep, weeks of operations and skin-grafts forgotten, you can feel the sinew tighten and bunch, experience the feeling of not wearing, but

being armour. You are faster. Stronger. Better than before, and now with purpose. You have been gifted by Slayer, and you intend to repay that gift. Soft companies, Suppressor powers, even Digger himself will now bow before you. You are.... Unstoppable.

Dark Finder Stat. Ranges:

Str: 10 - 14

Dex: 9 - 12

Conc: 5 - 10

Dia: 5 - 10

Cool: 8 - 15

Hits: 20 - 27

Skills and Ad+D depend on the background of their original Human psyches, although Psychology + Psychoses do a run-down on all Dark Finder candidates, eliminating the likelihood of psychopathic Finders, deeply disturbed Finders, etc.

GM's Notes

I, personally, have never wanted to see Dark Finders as merely souped up Operatives, and believe that they have more potential than that. As I see them, Dark Finders spend years as Operatives, Security and other "Field Work". Physically, this is where they are at their most ferocious, ready to test their enhancements and prove their ability. As they advance in age and maturity, they become used to their bodies performing at astounding speeds and temper their ferocity with experience and control. They are promoted to positions of importance and placed in situations of greater delicacy than is convenient for Operatives, and work their way up, generally as trusted lieutenants or liaisons between departments.

So.

That's Sam's take on Dark Finders, and as pointed out, it's work in progress (pun intended?) doubtless to be expanded in the near future.

Sam's DF ideas are different to my own, and I thought it would be nice to put them back to back, giving an alternate take on DF's from two perspectives.

See what you think....

Give us your ideas, and we'll throw the field open to even more exploration.

After all, Dark Finders are a major part of Slayer's security forces on Mort, their presence can be overwhelming, their enigmatic workings need exploring....

I use two sorts of Dark Finders, DF's and 'Seekers'.

Dark Finders

Dark Finders are Operatives who have been selected by SLA for further training and development.

These Operatives are taken out of the loop for a year, during which time they are given the physical enhancements and training they will need as Dark Finders.

Each Operative is given Sock Tendons, Brace Tendons, Sinewshock and Sinewbrace to level 3.

As well as the physical enhancement, they are put through the DF 'training package'.

Each of the following skills is gained at Rank 2, if the Operative already has the skill, they gain an extra 4 Ranks.

STR: Blade 1-H.

DEX: Martial Arts, Sneaking, Hide, Pistol.

PHYS: Running, Throw.

CHA: Leadership, Seduction, Interview, Persuasion.

DIA: Tactics, Tracking, Torture, Forensics, Intimidation.

CONC: Detect.

KNOW: Streetwise, Evaluate Opponent, SLA Information, Rival Company, 1 Language of Operatives choice.

Each Operative also gains +2 to their COOL.

The intense training also includes subliminal conditioning, making the DF a loyal SLA employee to the point of fanaticism. Subliminal implanting is being pioneered by Cloak, who can afford to ignore some of the more unpleasant side affects, being answerable to no one.

This training does have a price.

Any Operative with any Phobias or Psychoses gains 3 ranks in each. In addition to this, each Operative will gain +3 Ranks in Sociopathy and Paranoia.

Seekers

Seekers are those chosen from an early age to become Dark Finders. They are trained, conditioned and genetically altered to perform their role as Slayers ultimate police force.

Seekers are removed from their families, they know only SLA as their 'family' and the term 'friend' ceases to mean anything to a Seeker. The only family they have are their fellow Seekers, and anyone higher than SCL 4.

Seekers emerge in to the WoP as fully trained Dark Finders, whose key role is 'in the field'.

Seeker Stats.

STR: 13, DEX: 13, DIA: 10, CONC: 10, CHA: 10, COOL 15, PHYS: 13, KNOW: 10.

Seeker Skills

STR: Blade 1-H; 8, Blade 2-H; 8, Flexible Weapons; 6.

DEX: Martial Arts; 8, Gymnastics; 8, Sleight; 6, Sneaking; 6, Hide; 6, Pistol; 8, Rifle; 8, Drive Motorcycle; 5.

PHYS: Running; 6, Climb; 5, Swim; 5, Auto/Support; 8, Throw; 6.

CHA: Secuction; 5, Disguise; 5, Interview; 6, Persuasion; 10.

DIA: Computer Use; 5, Paramedic; 5, Tactics; 6, Tracking; 5, Torture; 6, Forensics; 5, Intimidation; 8.

CONC: Weapons Maintenance; 6, Drive-Civilian; 5, Drive-Military; 5, Detect; 10, Marksman; 8.

KNOW: Electronics Repair; 5, Mechanics Repair; 5, Demolitions Disposal; 5, Evaluate Opponent; 6, Psychology; 5, SLA Information; 8, Rival Company; 10.

Each Seeker has 15 Ranks of Psychoses, spread as the GM sees fit, though all have Paranoia to some degree.

Secret Of The Seekers

The Seekers hide a secret, a secret that forms a part of their very being.

In the very early days of Dark Lament's experiments with Death Suits, they discarded much material and work that was proving unsuitable to their Ebb needs.

Not all of this discarded work was to go to waste. Cloak is ever vigilant, and their eyes were opened to many possibilities by Dark Lament.

One of the earliest Death Suits was more of a 'chassis' than a suit. It had nothing of the innate Ebb ability of the later designs, being merely a 'living', biogenetic exo-skeleton that enabled the Ebon to stand toe to toe with other armoured opponents.

These prototype suits were named 'Exons'. Eventually Exons were discarded, and the now famous Death Suit was developed using more Ebb friendly materials.

Cloak picked up the Exon project, without the knowledge of Dark Lament, and turned the Exons to their own use.

Exon suits were tailored by Cloak's own biogenetic division, the Ebb resilience was enhanced and the 'living' nature of the Exon material was toned down, taking some of the 'spirit' out of the Exons in place of greater flexibility and toughness.

The Exon suits are more than armour. More than an Ebb shield. They are a living partner to the seeker, worn and thought of in the same way that an Ebon wears a Death Suit. A Seeker will never relinquish his Exon suit, and will never reveal its existence to any but an SCL4+ Cloak Operative.

Exon Suits

Exon suits are worn like a second skin. They are put on each morning and removed before the user sleeps. Those that sleep with their Exon suits on, automatically get one rank added to an existing phobia/psychoses, depending upon their dreams.

Exon suits form a symbiotic relationship with their wearer, drawing upon the users energy and body fluids for their own use.

Exon users become addicted to their suits. They are unable to part with them. If a user is parted from their suit for more than a day, they get a permanent -4 to their CONC, DIA and DEX.

Exon Armoured Suit

P.V.	Head	Torso	Arms	Legs
13	--	60	45	50

Exon suits 'regenerate' 1 ID every phase, and 1 P.V. every three rounds.

The Exon suit is very Ebb resistant, making it difficult to target the user. Ebons trying to use Ebb against the wearer of an Exon suit, must make a 'formulate' roll with a -8 modifier. The Exon suit takes only quarter damage from any Ebb based attacks and regenerates as normal.

Exon suits are 'tuned' to their individual wearers, and none but their intended user may wear them. Any one else putting them on takes 2 points constricting damage per round.

Necanthropes can 'smell' Exon suits, other Ebb users can 'taste' them the same way they can detect a Nec's flux.

NEVER MIND THE PIG

BLOODTHORN

Written By :
Chris Cotgrove

Not only animals and insects have been affected by the toxic pollutants that SLA pumps into Mort's biosphere - even plants have been altered in and around the Cannibal Sectors. One such plant is known as "Bloodthorn". It is speculated that it was once a genus of creeping vine, which over the years has mutated into a vampiric plant capable of movement, and some say thought.

The black, thorned tendrils of this plant tend to wrap around metal poles, rusted fences and other debris as a form of camouflage, lying in wait until suitable prey comes close. Upon contact with a victim, the plant's tendrils wrap tightly around them, inserting razor-sharp hollow thorns into the victim's body, proceeding to drain their blood (or blood-equivalent), until sated. The larger the plant, the more dangerous it will be, as it will take more blood to sate it than a smaller specimen. The majority of the plant remains concealed from view, including its ambulatory root system, and a red-veined digestive sac resembling (and emulating the function of) a stomach.

So far the largest specimen discovered was infesting an entire small ruined building in Cannibal Sector Three. The method by which it reproduces is unknown; it can be found in several different areas of the Cannibal Sectors, and even Lower Downtown. Dept of Expedition xenobotanists have formed several theories as to its distribution, including pollen carried by the swarms of vampiric flies that hover over the Sectors (even though Bloodthorn has no flowers, it is believed that the flies feed from the plant's "veins", while it somehow propagates itself); airborne spores; that Carrien spread the plant, or that it is in fact a DarkNight bio-weapon undergoing field tests. It has even been suggested that the plant is not indigenous to Mort, or is even an alien life form recently arrived on the planet.

The plant will remain in one location, feeding at its leisure until prey is depleted past the point the plant can survive, or prey learns to avoid that area. At this time, the plant will uproot itself, and move into another "feeding zone". A Bloodthorn's feeding zone can be identified by the drained corpses and partially desiccated skeletons of rats and other unfortunate animals that litter the area.

The Bloodthorn is very durable; if the smallest portion of it survives, then the plant can flourish. If the digestive sac is destroyed, then the plant is killed instantly and permanently; however, it is usually the portion of the plant buried deepest of all.

Stats.	Min.	Max.	Nor.
STR	6	10	8
DEX	6	8	7
DIA	0	2	1
CONC	0	1	0
HITS	12	19	16

Walk 1. Run. 2.

Weapon	PEN	DMG	AD
*Tendril	3	2	1
#Drain	3	Special	

SKILLS RANK

Detect	8
Unarmed (Tendril)	6

*Success means a chance for a grapple, with +3 per round of holding on to victim, using opposed STR rolls with Bloodthorn to break free.

#The 'drain' of the Bloodthorn causes damage in hits equal to half the Bloodthorn's STR. The plant 'feeds' until it drains HP = to its HITS.

Resists fire attacks: -2 damage from fire-based attacks, including Red Thermal. This is due to a tough outer layer, that strengthens as the plant grows. Bloodthorn can sense victims that come within 1.5m.

P A Z O O L

The Pazool (pronounced pah-Z-hool) originates from the Resource World of Kriakaz, in Sector 340 of the Stone Rim Colonies. Originally the Pazool was smuggled on to Mort by DarkNight, who frequently raided Kriakaz before the SLA initiative of 800 SD. Pazools are exclusively found in Lower Downtown and the Cannibal Sectors. They cannot live away from water, and they seem immune to the toxic nature of all water found below Downtown level 1.

Pazool look very much like an Alligators body, only with the back two legs missing, they move and propel themselves as much with their tail as they do with their incredibly powerful front legs. It is a short step from snake to Pazool.

The tail of the Pazool is long, sinuous, spiny and tipped with a viscous barb. The mouth and jaws have 'progressing' teeth, that renew and force the old or broken teeth out every few months. The Pazool also shed their skin every year as well as being able to 'shed' their tail, growing another in a matter of weeks.

Stats.	Min.	Max.	Nor.
STR	8	14	10
DEX	7	12	9
DIA	0	1	1
CONC	0	1	0
HITS	15	26	20

Walk 1. Run. 2. Sprint 8.

Weapon	PEN	DMG	AD
Teeth	5	3	1
Tail	3	3	0

SKILLS RANK

Detect	10
Unarmed (Teeth)	8
Unarmed (Tail)	12
Swim	10

Pazool are very fussy eaters, and it is this trait that is their most mysterious feature. They will only eat freshly killed meat, and will not even be fooled by old meat soaked in fresh blood. A Pazool must eat it's own body weight each day in fresh meat other wise they begin to starve, losing two hits per day for each day they fail to match their body weight in food.

They are very territorial animals, with the males of the breeding pairs marking out their boundaries with a foul smelling spray. This scent can be very distinctive, it never seems to wash from skin or clothes and it attracts Carrien.

Carrien are the Pazool's greatest enemy and their most abundant food source. The Carrien have learned to trap and hunt the Pazool, which in turn has got the taste for Carrien meat, which it prefers above other animals.

Pazool 'sing' to each other, with haunting melodies of deep throated whines and

whistles made form their shifting air within their diaphragm. The deeper notes of the Pazool song can be heard for many kilometers, brining an eerie response form other Pazool in the area. Both Carrien and Cannibals are somehow drawn to the sound of Pazool song, as are other unmated Pazool.

EQUIPMENT

Written By :
Pally Sandher

This issue we hand over the Equipment section to Pally Sandher, who first posted this stuff to the SLA-l, and I believe, also has it on Sam Pay's web page.

At first we thought "better get editing", then we thought "bugger it. Just stick it in."

It is written in Pally's inimitable style, and offers us a glimpse in to the ever expanding world of Dark Lament marketing.

(Bodyform indeed. I'll 'Bodyform' you in a minute.)

Science Friction Releases

The 902nd anniversary of the birth of the World of Progress brings with it a wealth of new products from one of the companies that have been around for all of those 902. Dark Lament's Science Friction Department is proud to present the new range of accessories geared with the average and the not so average SLA Operative in mind. Over the next few pages we will be reviewing the new products from Science Friction and discussing what implications these products will have on the World of Progress.

Virtual Light

The Virtual Light range are the first of the new Science Friction models which incorporate Science Friction material as used in the DeathSuits worn by Ebons and Ebb Glyphs to make the equipment usable by Ebons and Non-Ebons alike. The Virtual Light range are all designed to look and feel like a pair of glasses or shades with the all important Glyphs being on the inside of the

frames so that you can be ready for anything and still look like Joe Average.

Virtual Light - IR

The IR model incorporate the Sense Perception rank 12 Ability in Glyph form to give Ebb generated infra-red vision. Each use lasts up to 15 minutes and can be activated 5 times every 24 hours and costs 500c each.

Virtual Light - UV

Basically the same as the IR model only incorporating the rank 13 Sense Perception ability to enable perception of the Ultra-Violet spectrum. Cost and limitations are the same as the IR model.

Virtual Light - Dark

Ebb enhanced night vision can now be yours in the form of the oddly titled Virtual Light - Dark. Using the rank 16 Ebb Illumination ability in Glyph Form, this model has all the limitations of the IR and UV models and the price tag along with them.

Virtual Light - Blocker

Need protection from Rival Company Necanthropes on your latest Black BPN? Got an obsessive Brain Waster ex-girlfriend who keeps using her Communication and Detect abilities to track your every move? Fear no longer for help is at hand in the form of Virtual Light - Blocker. With the aid of the rank 11 Sense Perception ability Glyphed to the frames of these stylish Science Friction glasses you can keep yourself hidden from detection by all forms of Ebb. The effects will last for no longer than twenty minutes, with a potential usage of 5 times every 24 hours, you should have more than enough time to complete that Black BPN and get back to collect your SCL increase. All for the bargain price of 750c.

Virtual Light - Monitor

Need to prove to the Dept. of Extermination that it was your 12.7mm HESH that killed the DarkNight Interceptor and not the building that fell on top of him after? Been

targeted as a subversive by Internal Affairs but can't or don't want a finance chip? Need to give a reconnaissance feed to the Dept. of Expedition by don't want to lug a RollerCam around the Cannibal Sectors? You need a Virtual Light - Monitor. The Virtual Light - Monitor model works like a finance chip only you don't need to have it inserted into your head and you don't have to sacrifice your use of the Ebb.

Employing the use of Rank 15 and 16 of Ebb Illumination as well as a Science Friction booster to transmit back to Station Analysis, the Monitor will report your movements and of those around you as a finance chip would.

Unfortunately these are not for sale and you must approach your department to be allocated one. A model that sends the feed to a specified monitor is under development. Watch this space for details as and when they arrive.

The Virtual Light series are all available in any colour of frame and with any colour or type of lenses including sight-correcting lenses for no extra charge. Please note that there is a waiting time of 1 day after ordering to allow construction of the model.

Moving Shadow

The Moving Shadow range of Science Friction equipment has been under development since 200 SD. The use of the Chameleon Illumination ability on non-Science Friction products left many strange and sometimes dangerous consequences upon the equipment it was used upon. Many attempts to refine this idea to a usable degree have been made over the years but were eventually given up on. Finally we are proud to present, after many set backs and redesigns, Moving Shadow ware.

Moving Shadow - One

Imaginatively titled One, the first of the Moving Shadow accessories allows the user to be rendered effectively invisible for a duration of 2 minutes (approximately). The unit itself looks like a set of wristbands and a neck brace about 2 centimeters wide that are connected by thin Science Friction Tendrils. Touching the Glyphs in each

wristband together activates the unit. The user then has 2 minutes of invisibility invoked by the repeated use of the Reality Fold rank 1 Glyphs that festoon the unit, after which time the unit will cease to function. The unit can only be activated once every 24 hours and will set you back 450c.

Moving Shadow - Two

The second of the Moving Shadow units is basically the same as the first except it has a longer duration, 5 minutes to be precise, and a higher credit value of 750C. The limitation of one use every 24 hours is still applicable.

Moving Shadow - Three

The last release of the Moving Shadow range uses the rank 10 Reality Fold ability in 5 second bursts to give an unprecedented ability to Non-Ebon Operatives. There is a limitation of one activation every 24 hours on this unfortunately but with power comes a price. No more waiting for the subversive to open the door, walk through next doors wall and start kicking some ass. Full wall-walk capability can be yours for only 1000c credits.

Only Dark Lament can supply this kind of power to the Operative.

Starlight

Starlight is the Science Friction equivalent of a flare. It uses rank 6 Illumination ability to create a globe of light that will follow the unit for 10 minutes. The unit is a ball shaped, Glyph inscribed, Science Friction device. It can be used twice in 24 hours and costs a minimal 150c.

Perfect Motion

Perfect Motion is the refinement and distillation of the Telekinesis discipline of Ebb. The glove of the Perfect Motion units can be worn over armour but the headband must be worn on the skin. The two parts of the unit are linked by a cord of Science Friction material and when the user 'thinks' the activation phrase, the glove will emit a blast of Telekinetic energy powerful enough to flip Powered Armour and fire Carriens at

least 10 meters backward. Please note that Head Office will not look kindly upon the destruction of SLA property using this device. The unit can be activated twice every 24 hours and costs 650c.

Bodyform Invisible - Regular

The Bodyform Invisible unit provides the user with extra protection from kinetic attacks whilst activated with the added bonus of being completely invisible in operation. The unit itself is a discreet belt type piece of apparatus which fits around the waist of the user. The user merely has to touch the activation Glyph in the centre of the belt to activate the Telekinesis Shield Glyphs which adorn the belt. This will engage the shield which has a protection value of 5 and an armour rating of 20. This will then last up to 15 minutes or until the armour is reduced to 0. It may only be activated once every 24 hours and has a value of 500c.

Bodyform Invisible - Super

The Super model of the Bodyform Invisible range is exactly the same as the Regular model including the limitations but has a protection value of 12 and double the armour rating, increasing it to 40. It will still last 15 minutes or until destroyed and will cost you a mere 1000c.

There you have the new Dark Lament releases. What impact will these items have on other companies and the average Operative? Watch this space for more info on the latest from Dark Lament.

Dark Lament is not a member of the Racial Equality program.

GM Note

Stormers can't use the Science Friction equipment. Dark Lament did this for fun. Nor can Op's after LAD treatment or with lots of Nuke Tendon implants (i.e. more than 2 including a finance chip). (Too much Biogenetic shit in their bodies for the device to differentiate from a Stormer or a Human / Wraith / Shaktar)

Thanks Pally.

It makes a change to focus the Equipment section, maybe this is a way to stylise it for the future? Sort of an excerpt from a catalogue? Any ideas? Should Soft Companies get a look in?

FINDING A JOB: BPN'S

A Red and a White.

The red requires some 'GM fixing' for location and timing. The first part will have to be 'staged' where and when you think your Players are most ready for it.

The White involves some deep digging and some high level SLA skullduggery, you may want to refine it to make it more accessible for your Op's.

"There is no 'justice', just us."

The Squad will be alerted via Station Analysis, who put out a 'general emergency alert'. They require an immediate response to an Operative in urgent need of assistance. SA will give details of Operative's name, and co-ordinates to a restaurant which is literally a minute away from the squads current position.

Refusing to respond may lead to recriminations if SA finds out how close the squad was to the location of the call.

And, of course, they will find out.

E m e r g e n c y R e s p o n s e
R e q u i r e d

SCL: Any

Contact: N/A. Confirmation of Operative status via Station Analysis.

Training Package Recc.: Any

Colour Code: Red

Summary: Off duty Operative in need of immediate assistance. Possible hostage situation. Urgent response required.

Coverage: Station Analysis.

Consolidated Bonus Scheme: 300c

Payment: Per Operative

SCL Increase: T.B.A. (0.3)

Operative needing assistance is Rupert Kline, an SCL 6 Human Operative, works as part of a three man squad called 'Dead Heat'. Current last known position; Blue Dragon, Oriental Restaurant.

Threat level; Code Yellow (Operative assumed to be in life threatening situation, with possible casualties already incurred.)

When the squad arrives at the Blue Dragon, they find a number of the patrons outside on the street, clambering to both get away and some to get a better look in through the windows.

Upon entering the dimly lit building, they are greeted by the site of a woman dressed in a waitress uniform holding a Blitzer to the head of a seated human, lying dead at the same table is another human, face down in his noodles, a huge bullet wound to the back of the head.

The woman stands behind Rupert and is talking quietly to him.

As the squad approaches, the woman notices them and tells them not to come any closer, or she will shoot.

Evaluate Opponent or Psychology rolls will tell the Op's that the woman is deadly serious. Tactics would tell them that they could not get to her before she did.

As the Op's begin either their maneuvering or their negotiations, the woman resumes her questioning of Rupert.

The woman asks Rupert why he murdered her husband.

The woman repeats her questions, obviously working herself up through her hatred of Rupert.

The woman makes some serious allegations of brutality and murder against Rupert. She accuses him of beating her husband to death, then planting evidence in the form of a CAF pistol on him for the Shivers to find. She says she realises that Rupert was under the influence of drugs at the time, probably an 'illegal' Soft Company product known as 'Bozerker', but that this does not excuse his actions.

The woman begins to cry. It is obvious she is going to make her move.

One of three things can happen here;
The squad can shoot the woman.
The woman can shoot herself.
Rupert will draw his concealed KK20 and shoot her.

If the Operatives shoot the woman, Rupert will thank them and offer to help them in their careers, if they forget what they have heard. He will then casually walk away as if nothing had happened, saying he will file his statement to Station Analysis as soon as he gets home.

If he himself has to shoot the woman, Rupert will warn the Operatives off from repeating anything they have heard here, using veiled threats (Intimidation, Psychology), then he will leave without further conversation.

If the woman shoots herself, Rupert will wait for the Shivers to arrive, giving them a full report. He will barely talk to the Operatives.

Rupert's report, which would be accessible to the Op's, is brief and accurate as far as events go after the Op's got there. It makes no mention of the woman's accusations or any conversations Rupert may have had with the Op's. Rupert puts forward the theory that the woman was under the influence of drugs. This hypothesis will be backed up by a (brief) coroners report, stating that large amounts of Alice™ were found in the woman's system.

What's Going On

Four weeks ago, Rupert and his two companions in Dead Heat were undertaking a Yellow BPN. They had a tip off that the 'fence' they were after would be at a certain market at a certain time. The fence was known to have a lot of underworld support, and at least four Props have been associated with him. Rupert and his chums thought they'd need some 'extra help'. Combat drugs were used as the squad moved in. The tip off was wrong, the fence wasn't there. But the woman's husband was.

In a combat frenzy, with no other targets, Dead Heat set about beating the innocent bystander to death.

Frederick Conin was found dead by Shivers, with a CAF pistol discharged in his hand. His wife, Maria, maintained his innocence and filed a complaint and a wrongful death report.

Frederick was a respected figure in his local community, being outspoken against Soft Companies and Gangs, he was a leading figure in the 'anti gun' lobby in his sector.

Something is obviously being covered up, both in the death of Maria, and possibly in the past of Rupert Kline.

Rupert is a fanatical racial purist, who spouts much about human supremacy, the evil of drugs and the undercover conspiracy to dominate the WoP being undertaken by all 'aliens'.

He is a member of the covert cult organisation the 'White Flame'.

Any amount of digging by the squad will reveal that the records of Maria's death, as well as those of her husband, have been neatly vetted and filed correctly.

The Shiver reports will rubber stamp Rupert's reports in both cases.

If the Operative's file reports at odds with Rupert's, or make accusations, repeating Maria's own suspicions, their reports will be altered by sympathisers within the White Flame and the Op's will hear no more about it.

If the Op's are persistent in their investigations, Rupert will take steps to remove them from the scene.

Rupert will 'rig', via sympathisers within the White Flame, the next BPN the Op's take. It will be turned in to an ambush by the introduction of a Red.

Listed is a suggested 'bogus' Red BPN.

SCL: 10/Any.

Contact: Dept. Sanitation.

Training Package Recc.: Any.

Colour Code: Red.

Summary: Squad needed to respond to clean up crew's report of Carrien breakthrough.

Crew has Third Eye news team with them, high profile operation involving interview.

Coverage: Third Eye.

Consolidated Bonus Scheme: 250c.

Payment: Per Op.

SCL Increase: 0.3.

The Op's squad will be directed to a disused warehouse, where there is a suspected Carrien opening.

The warehouse should be close to Downtown.

The warehouse is the home to DogMan, a War Criminal recently returned from Hed (use stats. Karma 133).

DogMan knows nothing of Rupert or of the White Flame, all he knows is that he's alone in the world, peacefully living out his delusions with occasional forays in to Cannibal Sector 3.

The Operatives will be seen as 'insurgents' and will (of course) have to be terminated.

DogMan, once he has acquired the Op's as targets, will not let them go. He will pursue them until they, or he, is dead.

Remember DogMan has Tactics and Evaluate Opponent 10.

Wrapping It Up

Now obviously the Op's will figure something is very much 'up'.

How you proceed from here is up to you.

Once Rupert is uncovered as the person behind the set up with DogMan, the Op's can either confront him openly, or take matters in to their own hands, with a private 'vendetta'.

Rupert and his association with the White Flame can be brought in to play. Would this ultra secretive organisation help Rupert or drop him like a hot rock?

If they get involved, it's a conspiracy theorists dream.... White Flame will be seen to be behind everything that hinders the Op's from here on in.

Of course, the Op's could simply dispatch DogMan, collect the cash and the SCL increase and think nothing of it.

Maybe Rupert will think twice about messing with a squad who can take out a War Criminal.

This White BPN is unashamedly inspired by the Anthrax album; 'Sound of White Noise', which is about as close to the sounds of 'Progress' as you can get.

"I was never even a fan

The only thing that makes me smile is your pain

If I ever had the chance

I'd kick out your chair just to watch you dance"

C. Benante, S. Ian, J. Bush. Anthrax 1993 - Black Dog, Mort 902 SD.

"Hey man, it's a business, get it? It's the music 'business'. Besides, a few deaths never did anybody's career any harm."

SCL: 9

Contact: Recreation & Entertainment.

Training Package Recc.: I&I, at least one Op must have one successful White to their name.

Colour Code: White.

Summary: Squad of Operatives needed to investigate possibly subversive 'back masking' in connection with Beat Mask Record's musical group, Black Dog.

Coverage: Internal Affairs, Third Eye.

Consolidated Bonus Scheme: 1300c

Payment: Per Squad.

SCL Increase: 0.5.

The BPN

The contact at the Dept. Rec. & Ent. is Ernest Morgan, he has personally issued the BPN, sponsored by his Dept. Head, Miles Copeland. Mr. Morgan's son, Elijah, committed suicide two days ago, and Ernest believes that the band Black Dog, and their music are responsible.

Miles Copeland, the Head of the sector house for Rec. & Ent. has sanctioned the BPN as there have been a number of other complaints, mainly from SLA employees, that Black Dog seem to be using some kind of subliminal messaging to get their fans to

commit acts of violence directed at themselves.

The squad are to investigate the band to see if there is indeed a hidden agenda, as well as look in to the recording studio they use, which also presses the CD's and video discs. Any evidence of 'back masking' (leaving hidden, subliminal messages in the recordings) is to be collated and reported to Mr. Morgan. The players are not to act on anything they find during the BPN.

Some Background On The Band

Black Dog are unusual in that two of the five band members are 'active' Operatives, both Frothers; the guitarist Jake 'shrapnel' Sazinski (SCL 7) and the drummer Sammy 'snake' McCulloch (SCL 8). The other band members are; Singer; Cherry 'choc' Presley (female, 19), Keyboards; Samantha 'fingers' Penn (female, 20), Bass; Louise 'tiny' Thomas (female, 20, 6'4").

Black Dog play a mixture of introvert, exploration music, drug influenced and very wandering, and extremely violent speed/thrash/funk. They have a strong following among Frothers, and their gigs are always sold out well in advance.

Black Dog earn their record company millions of credits a year and are known throughout the music world as a band of extreme talent and integrity, backed by completely ruthless management.

Two permanently assigned 'minders' for the band are a pair of SCL 8 Brain Wasters, Stone (male, 21) and Blaze (female 20). Both are under 'Orange' BPN status, contracted to BMR for two years, or until the band expires.

(BMR = Beat Mask Recordings, who were detailed in an earlier TBP issue.)

Jake Sazinski and Sammy McCulloch see Black dog as a nice little earner and a bit of a harmless distraction from their Operative role, neither takes the band too seriously, and both realise that Black Dog have a

limited life span. They both run the band on the 'burn out, not fade away' philosophy.

The other members of the band are along for the ride, using Black Dog to get their foot in the door of the cut throat music industry, none has any illusions as to the bands longevity, though they are all fiercely loyal to Jake and Sammy.

Up and coming gigs for Black Dog; Mr. Zed (Suburban club), Heroes (Uptown entertainment complex), Savage Streets (Downtown club).

Beat Mask Recordings (BMR)

Beat Mask recordings are a recently acquired addition to the SLA 'subsidiary' stable. BMR were one of the shrewdest 'soft companies' in the market, slowly legitimizing themselves with SLA, until their buy out late last autumn.

They have a turnover, registered with the Dept. Stocks, Shares and Bonds, of 64 million credits for the last quarter, returning a profit of 23 million credits.

They are expected to take over from TurnStyle Music Industries (TMI) as the highest grossing music company for the 903 financial year.

The BMR 'executive' responsible for managing Black Dog is Peter Grant, a very wise and world weary veteran, poached from TMI. Mr. Grant has a 'ten band policy', managing only ten bands at a time. Mr. Grant has an internal SCL of 4, and is treated as a respected 'Operative' for SLA Industries. Black Dog are Mr. Grant's favourite band from his stable at the moment, and he resents any implication they may be behind the recent violent behaviour shown by their fans. he is, however, a business man, and he knows that no publicity is bad publicity, so he will help the Op's in any way he can with their investigations, raising the profile of both the band and the Op's at every opportunity.

Peter Grant has a SLA assigned body guard, an SCL 4 Cloak agent known as 'Bonzo', a nickname given to him by Mr. Grant, and one which only his closes advisors dare call him. Bonzo never leaves Mr. Grant's side.

Mr. Grant will be open and helpful with the Op's, to a point. if he feels that the Op's are

digging where they may uncover trouble, he will pull the rug from under them, and prevent them from accessing any BMR personnel, premises or records.

The Recording Studio

The Recording Studio where Black Dog put down all of their music is called Thunder Head, and is run by it's owner, Belinda Rose, universally called 'Billy'.

Thunder Head employs eighty full time staff, and can have up to thirty part time on the premises at any one time. They have eighteen music studios and six film studios on site.

The Thunder Head complex is in Suburbia, taking up the whole of a fully detached building in a largely residential area.

Billy has a checkered past, being associated with three Soft Companies before forming the Thunder Head Corporation, a licensed subsidiary of TMI.

Nothing has ever been proven regarding Billy's involvement with softies, and implications or suggestions from the Op's that she may be involved with anything illegal, will be met with a civil suit for slander, which she will pursue through her corporate lawyers.

If the Op's treat Billy with respect, and are careful about what they say in her presence, she will be open and helpful, giving them access to her staff and studios.

For obvious reasons, she will not let them take any recordings of music or film out of the building, and they will not be allowed to carry any recording equipment within Thunder Head.

Thunder Head studios employs ten security guards (use Civilian Convert stats., Karma 139).

The head of security at Thunder Head is an Operative, under contract on the new 'Orange' category BPN, his name is Jason Ranson (use Human stats., Karma 143, increase Pistol to 8, Unarmed Combat to 9). Jason is Billy's lover, and he will be very protective in areas concerning his boss. Billy and Jason do not advertise their relationship,

and only a few at Thunder Head know of it for sure, though there are of course rumours.

When there are major 'stars' using the Thunder Head facilities, they are expected to bring their own security, and Jason has an excellent working relationship with all of the squads that do business there.

Thunder Head is run in a professional atmosphere of efficient camaraderie. All of the employees seem happy at their work, and most realise they are lucky to work for Billy, who pays well and looks after her own.

Running The BPN

It will become obvious that there are only a few places along the production line that the back masking can be taking place. The most obvious of these is during the mastering of the tracks at Thunder Head. The next favourite is at the pressing plant, within Thunder Head's production facilities.

We have laid out the method for the back masking, who is behind it, what it is trying to achieve, and how to shut it down. How the Op's uncover this, and the lines their investigations take, is left up to you.

'Back Mask This!'

Black Dog have been chosen by Dept. Communications to spearhead an experiment in 'sleeper triggering'.

The hidden messages in their music are placed at the Depts. request, and only affect specific individuals who have had corresponding sleeper triggers planted.

The experiment is being conducted using SLA employee's children, as they are easy to get at both for the initial trigger planting, and for monitoring of their behaviour.

The experiment is being closed down as it has been deemed a failure. The sleeper triggers are supposed to prompt the individuals to acts of extreme aggression and violence targeted at specific groups, differing from subject to subject and set at the trigger implant stage.

Unfortunately, all the triggering seems to do is drive the subject to suicidal self directed violence.

Jason Ranson is working a Platinum for the Dept. Communications, and runs an implant disc along with the master during production of the Black Dog material. The back masked messages are not on the original master disc, and are designed to imprint on only a selection of the final cuts of the albums, usually the first thousand and the last thousand of the run.

The test subjects chosen by the Dept. are then fed the impregnated disc.

The other two thousand or so discs are left to go in to free circulation. But for a purpose.

The DarkNight virus, 'AdVent' can also be used to trigger sleepers (DN plants) by sending out specific signals to receivers of the AdVent signal. The free circulation Black Dog discs are designed to trigger the DN sleepers in to action.

The Dept. Communication is monitoring all Shiver and Operative reports for signs of the DN sleepers being activated.

In the past two weeks eight DN sleepers have been activated and subsequently taken out by Operatives, the civilian death toll from the DN sleepers has reached forty.

The Dept. Communication deems the experiment a success as far as triggering the DN sleepers goes, far better to trigger them, exposing them to Operatives, than to let them go about their sabotage work.

A further complication comes from the fact that Jason Ranson is also working for the Soft Company Deth Jam.

Jason is stealing copies of various artists work and selling them to Deth Jam at an extortionate rate.

Some of the back masking originals have found their way to Deth Jam. The potential for Deth Jam to use the back masking technique on their own recordings is small, though if they were fully aware of the power of the back masking originals they possessed, the back lash for SLA would be huge.

Now obviously, how the Op's go about their investigations will determine the outcome of the BPN.

Jason is a weary veteran who will almost certainly go undetected unless the Op's are very resourceful or get a lucky break.

Possible lucky breaks could include the discovery of a Deth Jam employee making a pick up from Thunder Head, or the uncovering of a link with the Dept. Communications, either through hacking Thunder Heads system, or from a SLA sub department system.

D e t h J a m

Company slogans: "Tune in to Deth."

"The beat on the street is Deth."

Deth Jam are an entertainment soft company, that have various interests in many SLA Industries activities.

The bulk of product produced by Deth Jam is visual or audio discs, mainly music, but some 'features' such as interviews with serial killers and stolen 'cutting room floor' footage from Third Eye.

Deth Jam have been making stars of both Operatives and Gangers for some time now. They have a solid foothold in the music market, mainly through their outlawed broadcast station; Wire.

Wire broadcasts artists on the Deth Jam label, as well as main stream 'company' artists.

Most of what Deth Jam refer to as 'their own unique sound' has been labelled as "Deth Rack Muzak". All sounds are sampled from combat, mostly hand to hand, with some firefight sounds, these are placed over insanely heavy bass beats. The 'vocal' can consist of anything from spoken words to screaming Frother speak.

Once an Operative or a serial has been brought to the public's attention, you can be sure Deth jam will be offering them a 'deal' in the near future.

Their last major success was a release called "Ded Witness", a project involving the Prop Scat-Man and the notorious Serial Cognates; Uncle Sam's Slaughterhouse.

Many of the sounds on Ded Witness were sampled from actual killings made by Scat Man and the Uncle Sams, including some dying words spoken by two Operatives ambushed in Downtown.

Needless to say Ded Witness drew the wrong sort of attention from SLA Industries, who want to shut down Deth Jam real bad. Deth Jam have managed to draw a lot of support from the 'ordinary' citizen of Mort, this makes them a sensitive target for SLA Industries, who are waging a war of 'information' to win back the support of the masses before they move in to destroy Deth Jam.

SOFT COMPANIES

WHITE FLAME

Company motto: "Humans are alone. Humans are chosen. The Human race must be the only race."

Racial supremacy groups rise and fall with the changing of the fashion seasons. Each new group, cult or company has one major thing in common with it's predecessor's; it never lasts very long.

Whether it's the Human Alliance Against Alien Races, or the League of Racial Purity, or any of the other twenty or so groups that have come and gone in the last 900 years. One thing's for sure, they have all come and gone. None has had any lasting effect on the WoP, none has seriously challenged the status quo, none has posed any real threat to SLA.

All that may be about to change with the White Flame.

The perception of the 'public' is that the White Flame are a sort of cranks secret society, being something of a joke to most citizens. There are very few people who realise how powerful the White Flame is.

Game System Stuff

The White Flame are a very secretive organisation, headed by a Council. The Council members are elected every two months, and each is drawn from a different Lodge.

Lodges exist in every Sector of Mort, and there are even some off world, mainly in the Stone Rim Colonies.

The current head of the White Flame, and Grand Master of the Council is Dr. Samuel Mier.

As members of the Council are elected it is possible for some members to remain on the Council for some time, Dr. Mier has been Grand Master since the founding of the White Flame, and all seem keen to keep him there.

Samuel works for the Dept. of Racial Employment as a sub-dept. head in Uptown.

The White Flame has eight thousand members, spread across Mort, and a further thousand in the Stone Rim Colonies.

The key to their success and their continued growth can be put down to two things; their secrecy and their simple 'message' to their members.

The secrecy surrounding the white Flame is such that some people within SLA do not believe they actually exist. Many see them as a sort of 'folk myth' that has grown from the natural paranoia behind most of the citizens lives; putting a face to the 'men behind it all'.

The message the White Flame preaches is brutally simple; kill aliens. Humans should be the only beings in the WoP, all other aliens are an abomination that should be eradicated.

Aliens include Ebons, Wasters, all Stormers, Shaktars and Wraith's.

There are no degrees of tolerance, all aliens are equally hated, and all seen as fair game for extermination.

Those behind the scenes at the White Flame, including the Council members, regularly draw up hit lists for extermination and discrediting.

The main activities sponsored by the White Flame are assassinations and dirt digging, both of which they pay extremely well for.

Due to the well connected nature of the members, stories and information gathered can be quickly distributed through the network, as can hit lists and orders for the various Lodges.

Any bad news regarding 'alien' activities is quickly passed to the place where it can do the most damage, be this Third Eye or another SLA Dept.

Assassinations and executions are either carried out by hired muscle, in the form of Props or Gangs, or by one of the few permanent hit squads kept by the White Flame. Members of the hit squads live dual lives, usually as menial SLA employees during the day, working for one of the more heavily infiltrated Depts. such as Dept. Environment.

A 'typical' White Flame hit squad member is similar to a Standard Shiver (Karma pp 134). They are typically sociopaths with a brutal, sadistic streak, enjoying their work. hit squads tend to work in groups of five or six, preferring mob handed ambush tactics or break in's to targets homes.

Favourite targets for hit squads and discreditation are up and coming Op's.

STARBURST

Street talk: "StarBurst will show you things SLA don't even know about. Forget Beat, forget Slosh, forget Alice, this stuff is out there."

StarBurst began life as a small Soft Company operating from the upper levels of Downtown sector 56.

Their range of alternative sweets and drinks soon attracted a larger market, as it became clear that StarBurst were putting more than flavourings in their product.

StarBurst advertise through street artists and graffiti masters, their slogans and messages can be found on any Downtown wall, and some in Suburbia.

Various street gangs support StarBurst, and two Prop's currently represent them at markets and trade off's.

The serial killer SweetTooth is sponsored by them and the fact that she only targets SCL 10 Operatives seems to give her sponsorship extra market credibility.

It is common knowledge that StarBurst are addictive, that they are using underhand tactics in getting people to use their product, but no one seems to care. The trip from StarBurst seems to soothe even the harshest critics once they have tried it.

StarBurst are seen as an independent Softie, with no ties to either DN or SLA, their reputation as a full on, extremely violent organisation is strengthened every time they hit a squad, which happens once a week. SLA Industries wants StarBurst investigated, and eventually shut down.

Game System Stuff

StarBurst are headed by three ex-SLA employees; Daniel Marcus, Rachel Seer and J'Qwr Rr'n. Daniel and Rachel were both deputy department heads at the Dept. Psychology and Psychoses, where they met the chief chemist from a Soft Company called BlackOut. After examination of the chemist (known as 'Victor') Daniel and Rachel decided to split from SLA, carrying on the work of Victor in the 'private' sector. J'Qwr Rr'n is a StarBurst addict recruited by Rachel after her evaluation of the Shaktar who was involved in the three month surveillance and shut down operation of BlackOut.

J'Qwr has Chapter Seven (Shaktar 'purist' group) connections that neither Rachel or Daniel are aware of.

StarBurst has four hundred employees, most of whom are agents working the back street markets and bars of Downtown and Suburbia.

In sector 56 is the main production and holding warehouse, it's location is known only to the three heads of StarBurst, the twenty employees and five Props that work there are picked up and dropped off every day from an underground market in sector 59 (two levels below).

StarBurst produce candy sweets, drinks and ice lollies. Each is called a StarBurst and each contains varying strengths of the StarBurst narcotic. 'Fizzers' are the mildest, 'Winders' are the middle range and 'WipeOuts' are the strongest, each is

available in the three formats of sweet, drink and lollie.

J'Qwr Rr'n is addicted to StarBurst. His contacts in Chapter Seven think that StarBurst may be used to bring other Shaktars round to their way of thinking. They plan to use J'Qwr to steal vast quantities of the narcotic and are simply waiting to strike.

StarBurst - Narcotic

The user feels relaxed and confident, at peace with themselves. Described by one Feral Ebon user as follows; "It's a bit like Drum, sort of like Flip and way, way better than Beat."

The three 'levels' of StarBurst have varying effects and varying time lapses between taking and tripping.
Re-read the 'addiction' rules on page 248 before introducing StarBurst.

Fizzers

Game Effects: Delayed kick-in, six to twelve phases depending upon how quickly ingested. +1 to COOL, -2 to CONC for duration of 1 hour.
Addiction: -1 PHYS, per 3 doses.
Detox. Effects: -2 CONC permanent.
Addiction: Continuous.
Costs: 15u

Winders

Game Effects: Delayed kick-in, six to eight phases after ingestion. +2 COOL, -2 CONC, -2 DIA for duration of 1 hour.
Addiction: -1 PHYS, -1 CONC, per 2 doses.
Detox. Effects: -3 CONC permanent.
Addiction: Continuous.
Costs: 30u

Wipe Outs

Game Effects: Normal kick-in. +4 COOL, -2 CONC, -2 DIA for duration of 1 hour.
Addiction: -2 PHYS, -2 CONC, per 3 doses.
Detox. Effects: -2 CONC, -2 DIA, -1 PHYS permanent.
Addiction: Continuous.
Costs: 40u

Addiction will usually lead to a step up to the next level of narcotic. The user has to make a PHYS 'addiction' roll every 24 hours to resist the call of the next strongest StarBurst.

Ebons using StarBurst regain full FLUX in 3 hours (as per Drum) if they sleep immediately after the effects of StarBurst have worn off, which they will do if they fail a PHYS roll (as a skill), with a -3 modifier for each dose of StarBurst taken since they last slept.

EBB CRYSTALS

Ebb Crystals are only known to grow in two places in the whole of the World of Progress:

- 1) Around the central, or 'core' Pillar within a series of Guidance Pillars on a FoldShip.
- 2) Along side the Greater Ebb Artefacts known as Ebb Crystals.

FoldShips

In order for a Ebon Navigator to successfully 'fold space' around a FoldShip, they must have Ebb Manipulation Rank 20; Jump Port 18. This level of knowledge allows the Ebon a great understanding of how the universe works. Very few Ebons reach this level of competence in the skill before they succumb to the calls from the White and turn Necanthrope, consequently the vast majority of Navigators are Necanthropes.

Folding a ship through space and time requires a phenomenal amount of Flux. The focus for the fold is the central Pillar within the complex known as the Guidance Pillars, which form the heart or 'core' of any FoldShip.

Most Necanthropes will not speak of folding, and those that do, will only hint at the terrible pain it bestows upon the Navigator. What little is known, includes the fact that the Necanthrope actually has to

'deny' the White and that they need the 'focused' Pillars to stop them overloading with Flux.

Glyph pillars focus the Flux, channeling it through the physical world so that the Ebon can draw upon it to perform the fold. As the Flux rips through the Pillar, it physically changes it slightly, leaving a residual 'dust' on it's outer layer. After several folds, this dust crystallises, forming the substance that has become known as Ebb Crystals.

Ebb Crystals - Greater Ebb Artefacts

On the Ebon Homeworld of Static, there is a naturally occurring crystal known as Cehdrite. This remarkable crystalline substance grows deep beneath the planets surface, in places where the flow of the Flux through the planets core is focused. It is from Cehdrite that all of the early Flux Gems were formed, and from Cehdrite that all of the eight Greater Ebb Artefacts were carved.

These legendary artefacts were wrought by Intruder and the early Ebb users to act as primitive Glyph Pillars, to allow the focusing of Flux to train younger, more inexperienced Ebons without draining them completely.

As the artefacts were used, they began to store some of the Flux they channeled. Eventually, the artefacts were exposed to the 'call' of the White. Intruder instilled in the artefacts the 'souls' of eight Necanthropes (the first 'Union'), and through them created the 'Soul Store' ability (protect Rank 18).

The artefacts continually draw Flux in to the WoP, and when not used, they form the residual crystals known as Ebb Crystals, which are in essence, exactly the same as those grown on FoldShip core Pillars.

Game Use

Ebb Crystals have a narcotic effect upon Ebb users, bestowing upon them enhancements and greater understanding of the nature of the Ebb.

In this respect they are very dangerous, and SLA has declared them a 'Class 1' controlled substance. Those found in possession of Ebb Crystals are immediately fined, imprisoned, then thrown from the ranks of SLA Industries. Anyone outside the company found using Ebb Crystals is executed without trial.

When Ebb Crystals form, they naturally reflect the Flux unique to one aspect of the Ebb Ability. Their colour reflects their prime function:

Blue : Blue Thermal
White : Ebb Awareness
Green : Enhancement
Yellow : Illumination
Black : Reality Folding
Red : Red Thermal
Purple : Telekinesis

Typically Ebb Crystals are either taken orally or snorted by the user. Roughly 2gms constitutes a dose.

Game Effects

Ebb Crystals take effect four phases after they are taken. It is classed as a 'continuous' drug.

The Ebon may 'access' abilities two ranks higher than their skill level, using the relevant Flux.

Ebons 'regenerate' Flux at a rate of one point per minute for the duration of the 'fix'.

Ebons on Ebb Crystals get +4 to any Conc. rolls for formulation purposes.

Ebons using crystals have a temporary increase in their Formulae of +2 for the duration of the drug.

The Ebon can formulate as if they were wearing a Light Deathsuit.

Duration - 10 + 1-20 minutes.

Addiction: -2 CONC, -2 DIA, -2 PHYS per dose, +2 Ranks Psychoses.

Detox Effects: -4 CONC, -4 DIA.

Addiction: Continuous.

Cost: 100cr per dose.

Backfires

Once an Ebon is addicted to Ebb Crystals, they are prone to Flux 'backfires'. These act

in exactly the same way as the Ebb Senses : Sense Perception, Rank 20: Ebon Backlash ability.

The 'backfire' always turns the ability the Ebon is trying to use back on them, with the worst possible effects. Backfires occur when an Ebon addict fails to formulate when required.

If the ability they are using has no immediate, or obvious backfire effect, then the Ebon must take the Flux spent on the ability as physical damage to their torso in the form of 'Flux Burn.'

Ebb Crystals And Non-Ebb Users

The flow of the Ebb permeates all things in the WoP. Non-Ebb users, such as Humans, have an innate Flux store that they simply cannot access. Usually the non-Ebb user will go through their whole life blissfully unaware of the nature of the Ebb and the force of Flux.

Unless they ingest Ebb Crystals.

Once this has happened, the victim suffers a shock to their senses equivalent to the Senses Ebb ability.

The severity of the 'shock' depends upon the victim making a PHYS roll, with a relevant modifier depending upon how much Ebb Crystal has been ingested, minus 2 for each 'dose', up to a maximum of Shock Sense 7 (Rank 10).

The Shock Sense suffered if the victim fails is equivalent to the number of 'doses' ingested. So, a victim ingests one dose, a Rank 1 Shock Sense is suffered.

All CONC are taken to be 10 plus the number of doses.

Senses affected are rolled for randomly. Non-Ebb users cannot become addicted to Ebb Crystals.

So there you have it, middle of 1998 and issue 11 came and went.

Circulation was towards it's peak, and I shifted a bucket load of 10 / 11 / 12, but I didn't get any feedback from anyone who bought it. Which was weird. Pleas via adverts in the zine for contributions of articles or artwork also produced nothing. All a bit confusing: all these people were buying it, but no one was saying anything about it ☺

Max Bantleman, 2001.