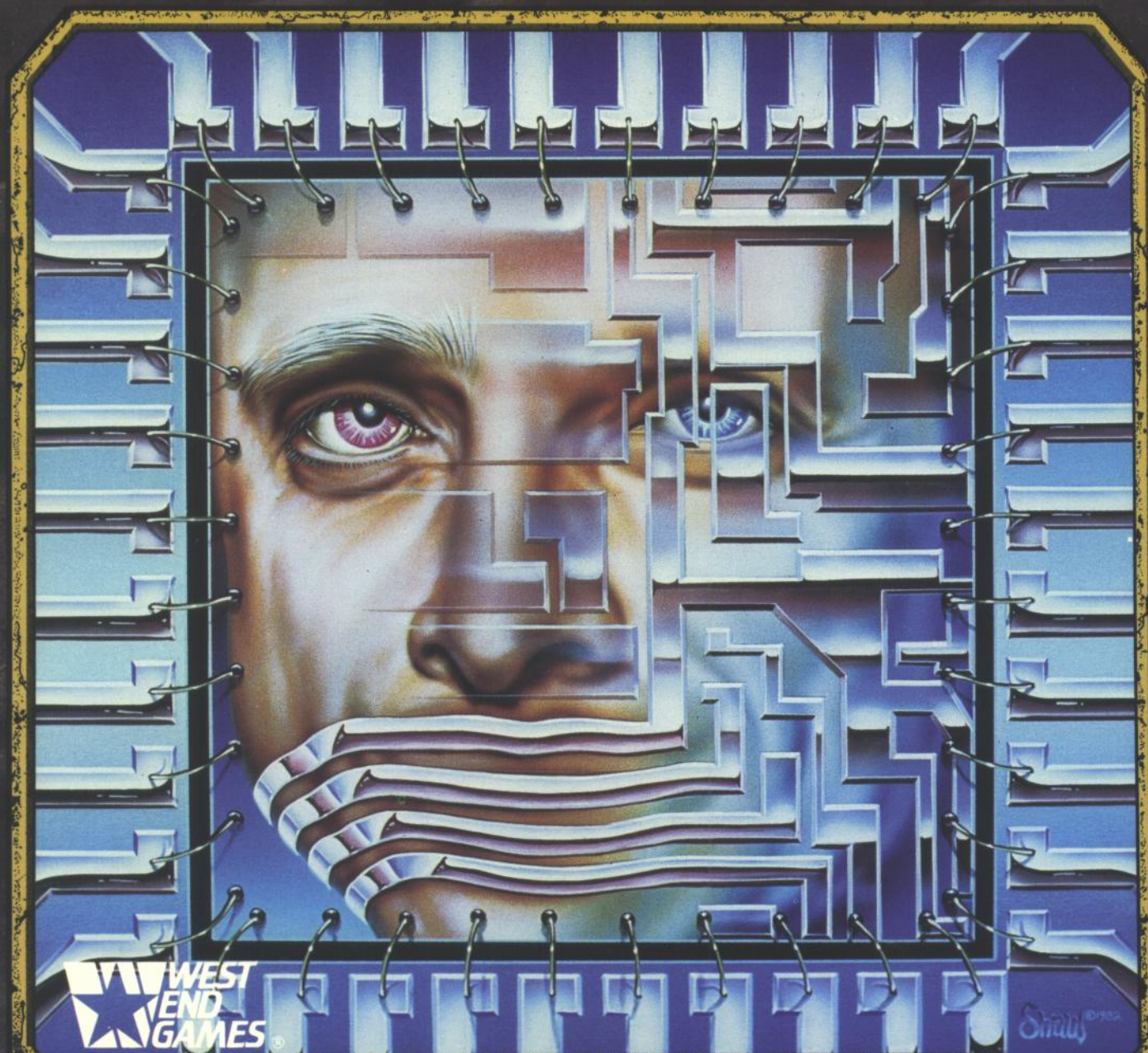


An Adventure for *TORG: ROLEPLAYING THE POSSIBILITY WARS*™

™

TORG

WHEN AXIOMS COLLIDE



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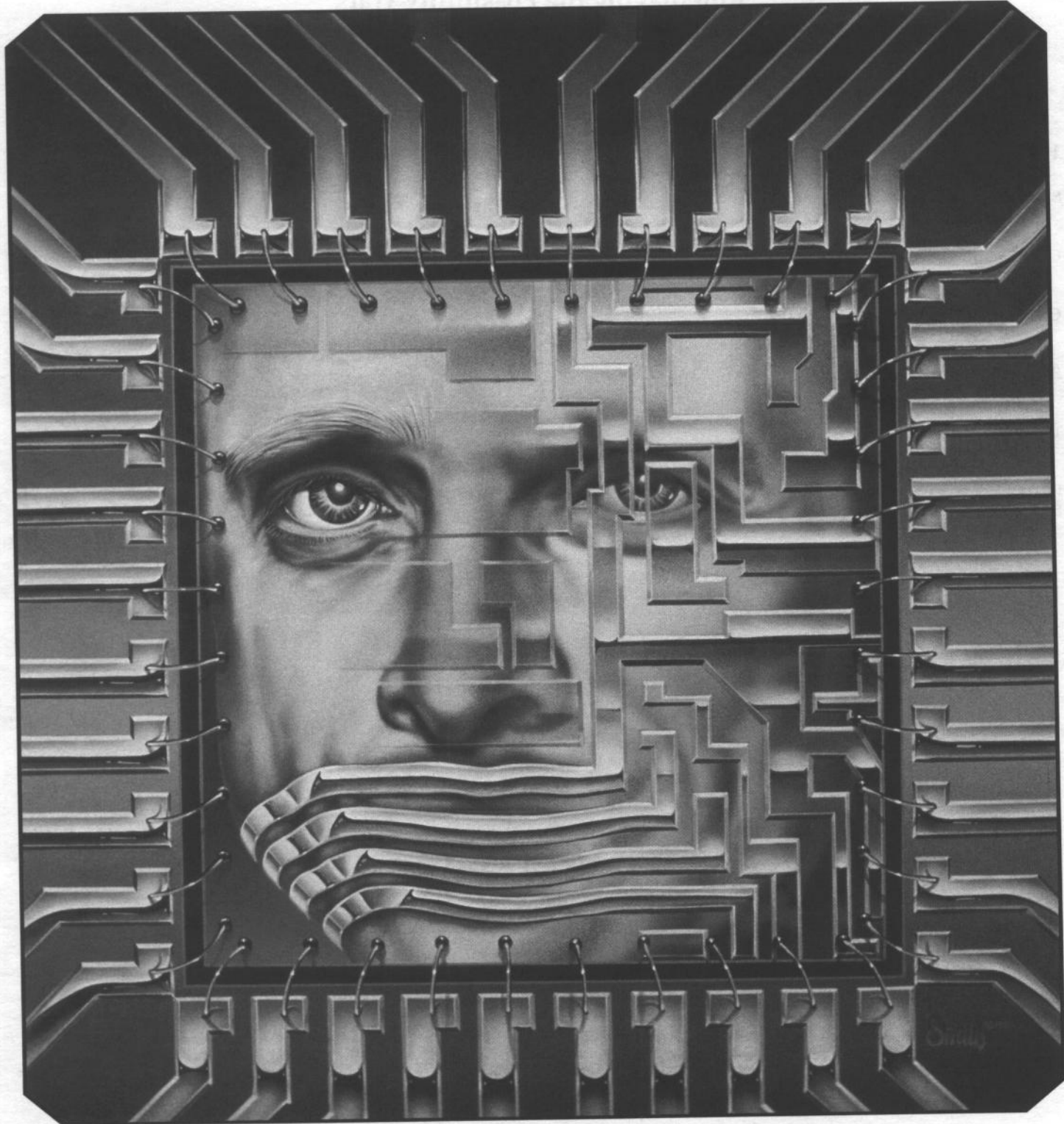
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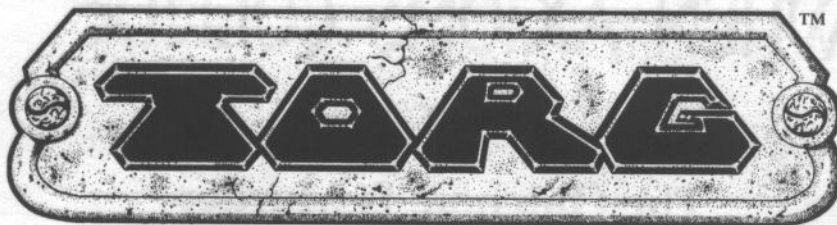
The Outcome is Murder

WHEN AXIOMS COLLIDE

By Shane Lacy Hensley

The Outcome Is Murder





Roleplaying the Possibility Wars™

When Axioms Collide

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Prologue



omewhere near Borneo, the Near Now ...

Geoffrey signalled to the battalion commander that his regiment was in position. A single bead of sweat broke from his forehead and raced down his aquiline nose, plunging silently into the dark, blood-soaked ground below.

The other regimental commanders signalled their readiness and relayed the message to their anxious men. How many of the Queen's soldiers would die tonight? Best not to think about it, Geoffrey decided.

The battalion commander raised his Colt revolver, its polished barrel glinting in the moonlight. Geoffrey saw the hammer pull back, as if in slow motion, he saw the commander's eyes squint in anticipation, and finally, with a devastating crack in the still night

air, the pistol fired. The attack had begun!

Shells blessed by the company chaplain flew through the darkness, the artillery thundered across the field. Hundreds of First Planting gospog were falling in droves! Even the terrifying things known as "the Others" were beginning to wither beneath the barrage.

The startled Caretakers were just beginning to return fire when Geoffrey heard the shrill whistle which signalled his regiment to charge. He turned to face his veterans, raised his polished sabre, and gave the command!

Hundreds of the Queen's finest surged across the soggy ground, stomping, hacking, and shooting anything not wearing the red finery of the Victorian army. Geoffrey, as usual, was fast in the lead. He quickly emp-

tied his pistol into one of the "Others," and as it fell, realized he had made a terrible mistake. Directly behind it were the ominous forms of the Caretakers, their loaded blunderbusses levelled at the silver badges which decorated his chest and shone so brightly in the moonlight ...

When the sun finally rose on the bloody field, the few survivors of the "Fightin' 5th" found the blasted body of Major Geoffrey Winthrop sprawled across the mangled forms of two Caretakers, surprise and alarm frozen into their hideous features.

Meanwhile ...

Talamous struggled to put on his robes. Oh, what had happened now? He had heard the distant cries of the Caretakers, but he had been lost in his latest conquest. The girl had been so young, so ... unspoiled. How strange



to find one of her ilk walking the streets.

He paused for a moment and admired the beauty of her face, unstained to the necromancer despite the crimson liquid which still spilled from her eyes.

Tightening his robe, the creature known as Talamous Scratch rose and moved across the basement laboratory. Deep within his mind he heard the distant telepathic groaning of the Caretakers. They had been trying to warn him of an attack upon the fields! Oh, Gods! If the fields were damaged, Thratchen would surely rip out his wrinkled throat!

Scratch collected his favorite revolver and a worn grimoire before heading for the stairs. Just before leaving his hidden laboratory, he turned and blew a kiss to the still form of the girl below.

He looked out his dirty window, drumming his bony finger upon the pane. Scores of Victorian buffoons, clad in their bright red uniforms and brandishing all manner of weapons, covered the fields entrusted to him by the Gaunt Man's lieutenant, Thratchen. It was a total loss.

There was only one option: escape. But where to? he pondered. Casually walking toward his antique globe and giving it a spin, the necromancer stabbed a scrawny finger at the swirling sphere.

The Victorian police were thorough in their investigation the following day. They found the hidden wall safe (empty, of course). They found the secret passage into the cellar (deserted save for the body of a young woman). They even found the 17 and a half corpses buried underneath its earthen floor.

The only thing of importance they missed was a single scratch. A scratch made as if by a long fingernail on an antique globe, ending ominously on the European nation now called CyberFrance.

Near Langres, France. One Month Later

Bishop Paulo nervously signalled the Inquisitors to remain in place while he advanced to the bonfire. He could just make out the forms of several creatures cowering in the shadow of a ruined wall, seemingly more afraid of him than he was of their master.

"M-Malraux has ordered you into our service, caretaker," he stammered.

From out of shadows deeper than those made by ordinary night came a powerful, red-scaled hand. Jet-black nails glimmered in the firelight and Paulo failed to hide the raw terror in his expression.

"You ... order me?" the thing grumbled slowly.

"No. I am h-here on orders of the Cybropope."

"And what does he request of me?"

"You will lead the other gospog into ..."

"You dare lump me in with these shambling creatures!" it bellowed.

Paulo wanted to shrink down inside himself, but to do so would only give the demon more power. He gathered his courage.

"Yes. That is what you are, a gospog of the Fourth Planting, are you not?" he managed.

"So I am, brother," it tested. "So I am."

"Then Malraux would have you perform a service for us."

"And what shall I get in return?"

"More corpses for your field."

"You promise me one task for another? This is no bargain!"

Paulo summoned his courage once again. "No. It is an order ... Nefastario."

There was an awkward moment of silence, and then the thing in the shadows leaned forward slightly, revealing its reptilian, hate-filled eyes. But the demon Nefastario only chuckled when he saw the sweat break like floodwaters from the bishop's brow. "My children and I are yours to command, Bishop. What would you have us do?"

Paulo sighed with relief. He had won.

For now.



Introduction



When *Axioms Collide* is an adventure for *Torg: Role-playing the Possibility Wars*. You must have the basic set to play this adventure. The *Cyberpapacy* and *Orrorsh* sourcebooks and *The GodNet* supplement are also required for maximum enjoyment of this product.

Adventures for *Torg* take place on Earth in the Near Now. Earth has been invaded by several powerful beings from other realities. The High Lords, the leaders of the invaders, have the power to conquer other cosms and impose their reality upon their victims.

One of these beings is Thratchen, the High Lord regent of Orrorsh, a realm of monstrous horror. Of the many weapons employed by Thratchen to terrorize his subjects, the gspog are among the most terrible. Gspog are undead creatures which rise from specially prepared fields filled with the corpses of those who have opposed the High Lords. The weakness of the gspog fields is that they must be protected by servants whose power does not approach that of their master.

This is the story of one such servant ...

Adventure Background

When an Orrorshan gspog field was destroyed, the Nightmare assigned to protect it, an evil sorcerer/scientist named Talamous Scratch, fled the realm and the vengeful wrath of Thratchen.

Choosing CyberFrance by pure chance, Scratch arrived near the town of New Culmont and resumed his old habits of debauchery and murder. Several young women have already met their deaths at his gnarled hands. He has made a practice of choosing his victims (with the aid of an ethereal coachman) from the lower levels of society. But while crimes against such

people might not attract the attention of most Victorians, the people of New Culmont search desperately for the villain. Eventually, they turn to the Storm Knights for aid.

Meanwhile, Scratch has delved into the GodNet and hatched a monstrous plan: the creation of a living computer

virus designed to slay thousands of Net users. Only by braving a horrifying section of the Net can the Knights stop the slaughter.

Unfortunately for the villagers, New Culmont is plagued by more than just the mad Scratch. Cyberpapal gspog have twice descended upon it to claim



new corpses for their unholy harvest, and now threaten to return in force.

Adventure Synopsis

When *Axioms Collide* begins when the Knights are asked by Le Resistance to help ambush a MindBody convoy near Paris. Shortly thereafter, one of their allies receives a note informing him that his daughter has been branded a witch and is about to be burned at the stake. Quickly securing a hover-car, the heroes race from Paris to the man's home town of New Culmont.

A stop at the Last Supper Cafe brings news of a mass-murderer known only as the "Night Slasher," as well as an example of the power of Scratch's virus.

The team finally makes it to new Culmont just as the "witch" undergoes and fails an Ordeal by Fire. As the Knights move to the rescue, a horde of gospog falls upon the village.

Act One ends as a Cyberpapal cleric asks the Knights to aid the village against the threat of the serial killer.

Act Two begins with the Knights on the trail of the murderer, a treacherous path that leads them to a massive Cyberpapal gospog field. The village of New Culmont is full of intrigue, cyberleggers, and one physician with more than the ills of the body on his mind. Drawn to the investigation of a cyberlegger who swore he saw a ghost

in the GodNet, the Knights meet with his band and learn that his body was dumped in a gospog field. The Knights must raid the field to retrieve a MemChip with the VX address of their true foe on it.

In Act Three, the Knights must fight a two-front war against Scratch, both in his manor house and his VX construct. The Net contains clues to the true deaths of the sorcerer's servants, but deadly perils as well. The manor is home to a spectral killer, a weretiger, and a creation more horrific than both.

Failure to stop Scratch will result in the deaths of thousands — and perhaps serve as the prelude for an invasion of the Cyberpapacy by the horrors of Orrorsh.

Playing Without a Decker

Deckers are special characters who possess the *cyberdeck operations* skill. This skill allows the character to manipulate the GodNet, the virtual reality created by Jean Malraux's Darkness Device.

Having a character with this skill is extremely important to this adventure. If no Storm Knight possesses the skill, the Knights can encounter someone in the Resistance who will offer to train one of them. Failing that, the Knights may have to hire a cyberlegger in New Culmont to give them some help (of course, it will probably cost an arm and a leg ... perhaps literally).

The Power of Fear

Keep in mind that, although Scratch and his horrors are operating in the Cyberpapacy, they are still connected to Orrorshan reality. This means they can make use of the Power of Fear. As soon as the Knights begin seeing signs of Scratch's grisly work, they will have to begin making *Perseverance* checks.

In a way, this will be a benefit to them, as it will help them to tell which atrocities have been perpetrated by Scratch and which by some other force.

Selective Invisibility

Selective invisibility is a new three-point power available to Orrorshan horrors. Although the creature using this ability is invisible for all practical purposes, it can be spotted by those who know to look for it. A *find* or *Perception* total of 23 will allow a character to spot the horror.

The truly disturbing aspect of this ability is that the horror can become visible to certain persons while remaining unseen by all others. The creature can speak with, attack, or simply intimidate a person while she is standing in a crowded room, and no one else will see a thing. This allows horrors to put the power to use as a means of driving victims insane.

Use of *selective invisibility* adds +10 to the creature's *dodge* value.



Act One

A Friend in Need

The Major Beat

The Storm Knights begin the adventure by helping the Resistance ambush a MindBody (MB) convoy. After the attack, one of the leaders of the group receives a disturbing message that his daughter has been found guilty of witchcraft and is about to be executed by the local priest.

Asking the party for assistance, the man rushes off to save his daughter, arriving with the Storm Knights just in time to see town attacked by Cyberpapal gospog.

SCENE ONE: A Better Mousetrap

The Situation

Standard. Patrice Cochereau, the *de facto* leader of the local branch of the Resistance, meets the Storm Knights in a run-down cafe. His message to them had stated that he had an offer. As he approaches, he glances about with his one non-cyber eye to ensure he has not been followed.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

A man who matches the description of Cochereau approaches your table warily. His nod tells you that he has recognized you as well.

"It is good to see you, *mon ami*," he says to one of your number. "I am pleased to see you received my message.

"I have, as I said, an offer for you: I have in my power the ability to get papers printed for your group. Letters of transit signed by Cyberpope Malraux himself, which will allow you to pass into many otherwise forbidden areas of France. In return, I ask your help in a small ... operation."

If the Knights express any interest in the offer, Cochereau will lead them outside and explain the rest. He wishes them to aid Resistance members in the hijacking of a MindBody (MB) convoy carrying cyberware.

If the Knights are not interested at first, Cochereau will offer to sweeten the deal. They can have some of the goods taken from MB, as well as 8000 francs.

The Route

Once the party has decided to help, Cochereau will tell them what he knows. He has a contact among the MindBody truck drivers who managed to get the following note to the Resistance:

To the free fighters of Paris:

I am a truck driver for MindBody Technologies. Last month we delivered a truckload of tech to GodWare Hospitals in Rouen and Amiens. We were not told our route beforehand, but I am sure we traveled for a time on the Boulevard Mortier. Three days after you receive my message, I trust you may find us there again. Our usual escort consists of an Aaron Hover APC and two David Mk. IIs.

I also know that the rear entrance of our truck is booby-trapped with plastic explosive, but I cannot tell you how to disarm it. Best of luck ... and please ... try not to shoot the driver.

The Action

The party is given a map of the Boulevard Mortier and asked to help plan the ambush. Whatever tactics the party chooses will most likely be accepted by Cochereau and his men unless they involve unnecessary risk to their life and limb.

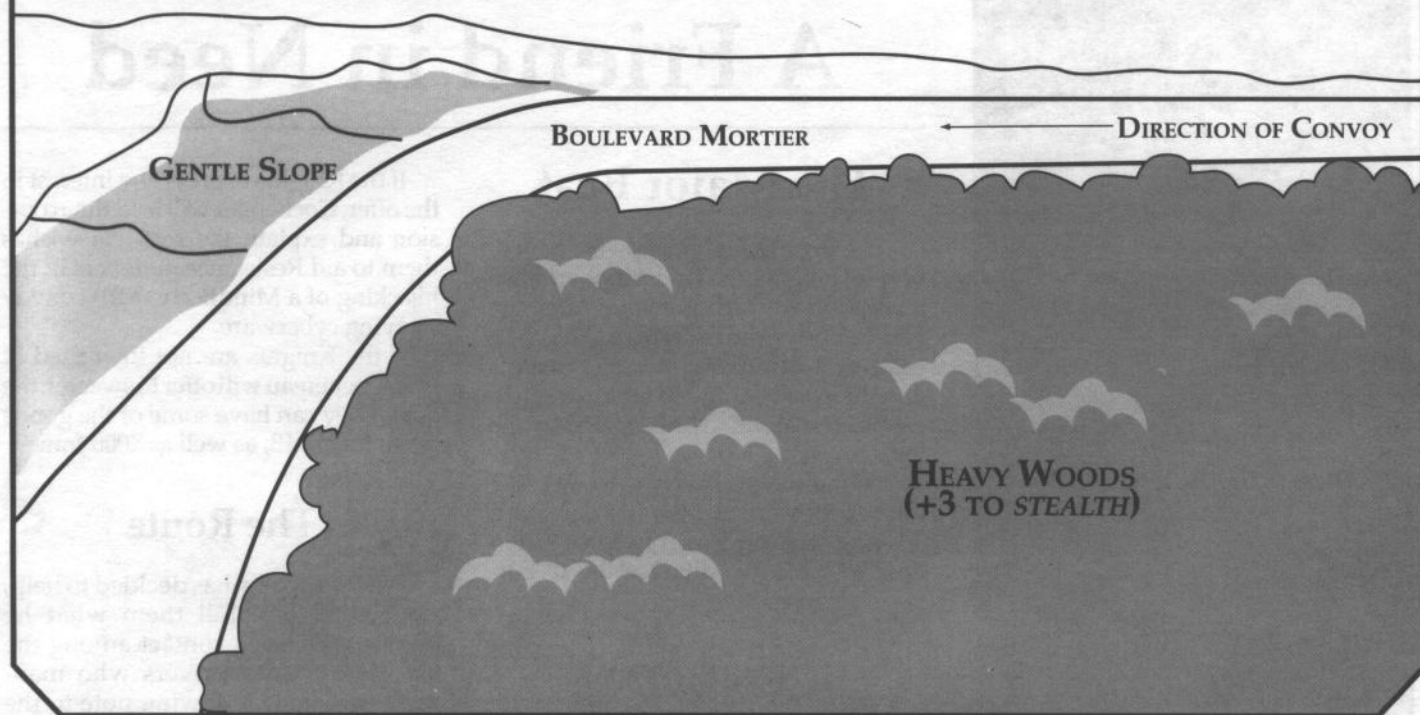
Assets available to them are: Cochereau himself, his lieutenant,





When Axioms Collide: Map 1

Boulevard Mortier



Descadieu, 18 resistance members, 15 fragmentation grenades, 12 flash grenades, one MAS grenade launcher, and one GWI Devastator with 6 shots remaining.

Cochereau will allow the party to distribute these weapons as they see fit.

Frag Grenades (15), damage value 21, range 1-6/15/40

Flash Grenades (12), damage value 20, range 1-6/15/40

MAS Grenade Launcher, damage value 21, ammo 6 with 4 extras, range 3-25/150/600

GWI Devastator, damage 35, ammo 6, range 3-200/500/1k

Patrice Cochereau**DEXTERITY 11**

Dodge 12, energy weapons 12 (15), fire combat 15 (18), maneuver 14, melee weapons 12, missile weapons 12, running 12, stealth 17, unarmed combat 12

STRENGTH 10**TOUGHNESS 10****PERCEPTION 12**

Evidence analysis 14, find 14, first aid 13, land vehicles 13, language (English) 14, scholar (small-squad tac-

tics) 16, trick 13

MIND 11

Survival 13, test 15, willpower 15

CHARISMA 11

Charm 12, persuasion 15, taunt 14

SPIRIT 10

Faith (Catholicism) 16, intimidation 15, reality (Cyberpapacy) 15

Possibilities: 5

Equipment: Tec-9 Scorpion machine pistol with CSI Smartgun, damage value 16, ammo 12, range 3-15/25/50; reflex armor, value TOU+6/16, one dose of Totalamine (see page 108 of *The Cyberpapacy* sourcebook) Cyberware: Neuracal, j-jack, CSI EyeKill Mk. IV (+3 to fire combat), DATAS Snooper, TSE LeMotion, FFONightView; cybervalue: 15

Description: Cochereau went along with the new "Cyberpope" for the first few months of the invasion, but has since become aware of his true nature and the violence that is part and parcel of his regime. He has lost family and friends to the Church Police and will show them little mercy.

Though dedicated to protecting his friends, he is even more loyal to the Resistance. Should a Knight's capture

seem imminent, he won't hesitate to toss them a grenade (minus the pin) to protect the secrets of his organization.

His daughter, Jeanette, has recently returned from Aysle.

Christophe Descadieu

Reality: Cyberpapacy

DEXTERITY 12

Acrobatics 15, dodge 16, energy weapons 14, fire combat 17, lock picking 13, maneuver 16, melee weapons 14, stealth 18, unarmed combat (savate) 15

STRENGTH 9

Climbing 13

TOUGHNESS 8**PERCEPTION 11**

Find 12, first aid 12, trick 15

MIND 10

Survival 12, test 11, willpower 11

CHARISMA 7**SPIRIT 12**

Faith (Catholicism) 14, intimidation 14

Equipment: Uzi (silenced), damage value 17, ammo 11, range 3-15/40/100; knife, damage value STR+3/12

Description: Christophe Descadieu is Cochereau's right hand man. He



speaks very little and is known for suddenly appearing when least expected.

Resistance Members (15)

Reality: Cyberpapacy

DEXTERITY 9

Dodge 10, fire combat 11, stealth 10, unarmed combat 11

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 10

Cyberdeck operation 11, find 11, trick 11

MIND 10

Test 11

CHARISMA 9

Charm 10, persuasion 10, taunt 10

SPIRIT 9

Intimidation 11

Equipment: GWI GodMeeter, damage value 20, ammo 30, range 3-12/30/50; plexiflex, armor value TOU+4/13. Cyberware: BelleView Low-light, MB Charger 1 (DEX+1 for three minutes); cyber value: 4

Description: These are ragtag members of the Paris Commune currently assigned to Patrice Cochereau. Most have found him a capable leader and have an attitude of *loyal* to him and their cause. All have lost something to High Lord Jean Malraux I, and are extremely bitter about it.

Seeking Additional Firepower

The party may use any tactic they deem appropriate in taking out the convoy, be it by stealth and guile or a direct assault. The gamemaster is encouraged to let them find any extraneous materials they require such as logs, burnt-out cars, a get-away truck, etc, as long as they have a reasonable explanation for how they obtained them.

Explosives and other heavy weaponry should be extremely hard to come by. Paris and its environs are a war zone and most people who have such items plan on using them. *A streetwise total of 15 and a trip downtown will let the Knights find a black market outlet specializing in weaponry (prices for such things will be higher than those listed in the Cyberpapacy sourcebook, as they are being purchased "on the street").*

This sort of encounter will have to be improvised by the gamemaster, depend-

ing upon exactly who the Knights attempt to contact (the Warewolves, cyberleggers, the Paris Liberte Militia, etc.)

The Best Laid Plans ...

Unbeknownst to the Resistance, the convoy from Avignon is delivering more than just cyberware. Gearing up for a major Parisian assault, Jean Malraux has ordered several Close Assault Teams into the area. For security reasons, one such team has linked up with the usual convoy escorts.

Convoy Drivers (4)

Reality: Cyberpapacy

DEXTERITY 8

Dodge 9, fire combat 9, maneuver 9, unarmed combat 9

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 9

Find 10, land vehicles 12

MIND 8

Test 9

CHARISMA 8

Persuasion 9

SPIRIT 9

Faith (Cyberpapacy) 10

Equipment: Herod IV, damage value 19, ammo 50, range 3-25/100/150; truck, Tech 26, speed 400/160/100/13, passenger 2, TOU 24, weight value 20, length 5, maneuver-3, concealment, driver DN+3, passenger DN+5, armor add, driver TOU+4/21, passenger TOU+6/22

Description: This style of truck-trailer combination is the standard cargo transport vehicle of most corporations. It has a cybercomputer installed which gives the user +3 to all *land vehicle* totals when jacked in. These particular trucks are wired with explosives (see "Getting the Goods" below).

Church Police-Streetbeaters (10)

Reality: Cyberpapacy

DEXTERITY 11

Dodge 12, energy weapons 13, fire combat 12 (15), melee weapons 12, unarmed combat 12

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 9

Find 10, first aid 10, tracking 10

MIND 9

Test 10, willpower 10

CHARISMA 8

Persuasion 9, taunt 9

SPIRIT 9

Faith 10, focus 10 (12 with crucifix), intimidation 11

Additional Skills: two at +1 adds

Possibility Potential: some (65)

Equipment: Armor of God, value TOU+8/17; MAS Fury, damage value 21, ammo 20, range 3-20/150/300; Cyberware: Neuracal, Epiphaneur, BelleSee Telesight, CSI Eyekill Mk. IV, cyberham receiver, homer, throat mike, MB Charger 1 (DEX+1 for three minutes), MB Blocker; cyber value: 18

Church Police-Close Assault Team (15)

DEXTERITY 11

Dodge 14, energy weapons 15 (18), fire combat 14 (17), heavy weapons 12, melee weapons 14, missile weapons 12, unarmed combat 13

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 9

Find 10, first aid 10, tracking 10

MIND 9

Test 10, willpower 10

CHARISMA 8

Persuasion 9, taunt 9

SPIRIT 9

Faith 10, focus 10 (12 with crucifix), intimidation 11

Additional Skills: two at +1 adds

Possibility Potential: some (45)

Equipment: GWI Destroyer Armor, value TOU+10/19; GWI Hellfire, damage value 22, ammo 12, range 3-50/150/400; Cyberware: Neuracal, Epiphaneur, BelleSee Telesight, CSI Eyekill Mk. IV, cyberHam receiver, homer, throat mike, MB Charger 1 (DEX+1 for three minutes), MB Blocker; cyber value: 18; Aaron Hover APC (2), Tech 24, speed 400/110/68/13, passenger 14, TOU 35, weight value 23, length 6, maneuver-3, concealment, driver DN+9, armor add, driver TOU+20/35, others can be injured if tank is killed.

Description: Each of the two APCs is driven by a standard Church Policemen with a *land vehicles* skill of 12 (+3 for cybercomputers). The GWI Devastator plasma cannon is manned by a second policeman with a heavy weapons skill of 14. GWI Devastator, damage value 35, ammo 25, 3-200/500/1k



Rushing the Battle

If the Storm Knights wish to avoid the battle and simply go for the trucks—or if the gamemaster is uncomfortable attempting to run so large a firefight—the battle can be run abstractly for the gamemaster characters only.

In the first few rounds, the Resistance members will successfully complete whatever task they have been assigned. If the trucks are stopped but the APCs are in good condition, one member of the Resistance will perish each round. Once the APCs have been driven off, brought to a halt, or destroyed, the Resistance will continue to lose a member each round while the Church Police will lose one man every other round. The Storm Knights should be able to take up the slack.

In any event, Descadieu and Cochereau will survive. The latter is essential to the plot of the adventure and Descadieu's skills could make him a valuable aid to the Knights.

Getting the Goods

Anyone attempting to open the rear doors or cut through the sides of the trucks will activate the explosives rigged throughout the trailer's roof and walls. Fourteen rounds after activation, the explosives will detonate, doing damage value 30 in a blast radius of 0-5/15/20.

A *find* or *Perception* total of 8 will allow the Knights to spot a small box affixed to the outside of the trailer, toward the rear. It contains a keypad for entry of the code that disarms the explosives.

The Knights do not have the code, nor do the Resistance members. The Church Police and drivers have been deemed expendable, and so did not need to know the code. This means the Knights must attempt to disarm the bomb—a Dramatic Skill Resolution requiring *science* (demolitions), *science* (electronics), or some similar skill. It may not be performed unskilled.

Keep in mind that, if the trailer has been breached, the clock is ticking. The Knights will have 14 rounds to disarm the bomb before it goes off in their faces.

Step A involves removing the key-

pad face to get at the heart of the detonator, requiring a *science* total of 11.

In Step B, the Knight must separate the wires that hide the key cord. This must be done delicately—failure of this step will start the timer (if it isn't already active). This requires a *science* total of 12.

In Step C, the Knight must cut the detonator wire. Finding and severing this wire requires a *science* total of 13. Again, failure to perform this step starts the timer moving.

For more details on Dramatic Skill Resolution, see page 63 of the *Torg Rulebook*.

Inside, the Knights will find crates of MB Chargers (DEX+1 per two points of cyber rating), MB Adrenal Boosters (DEX+3, STR+3 for three minutes), MB EndoBoosters (TOU+3 for 15 minutes), and MB Blockers (ignore K results, three less shock, kills pain). For more details on this equipment, see *The Cyberpapacy* sourcebook.

If the Knights' deal with Cochereau involved their getting some equipment from the haul, they may take some of the above from the crates. If that was not part of the deal and they take some equipment, Descadieu will grow angry and refuse to have anything more to do with "common thieves."

Returning to Paris

After the bloodshed, the Knights will be invited by the survivors to accompany them to a Paris safehouse for rest and recuperation. The party should be allowed to rest for a day or two before the event "Message of Misery" takes place.

When the Knights have had a chance to pursue whatever activities they wish to, cut to "Message of Misery."

Flags

Personal Stake and *Romance* cards can come into play as the Knights interact with members of the Resistance. Once the Knights depart with Cochereau for New Culmont, the subplot will have to be largely set aside unless a Knight can persuade her new friend to accompany her.

Message of Misery

When the gamemaster feels the party has spent enough time in their Parisian retreat, it is time to hit Cochereau with the bad news. One night, just after dinner, the following message is brought to Patrice by a young street urchin:

Patrice,

For the love of God, hurry home! The murders have continued, and there are now those who blame your daughter. Father Dumois accuses her of witchcraft, and her trial is set for tomorrow night.

—J.

After reading the message, Patrice will scowl and ask the Storm Knights to accompany him into another room. Showing them the message, he will ask them for their help once again. He has little to offer them in return, save for the gratitude of a fellow fighter for freedom.

Cut To ...

If the Knights agree to help, Cochereau will want to leave immediately. As soon as the group packs their belongings, they pile into his Peugeot hover car and travel through an underground tunnel to the outskirts of Paris. Cochereau knows how to bypass most of the Church Police checkpoints, and so can get the party to the vicinity of New Culmont undetected.

Once the Knights are underway, cut to Scene Two, "The Last Supper."

SCENE TWO: The Last Supper

The Situation

Standard. With fuel in the hover car low, Cochereau suggests the party stop briefly at a small waystation offering food and fuel. Here the Knights hear the first rumors of the nature of New Culmont's trouble and get a taste of more than just soup and bread.





Read aloud or paraphrase:

You see before you a small highway eatery similar to ones located throughout Europe. The handpainted sign on the door reads "The Last Supper (Before Chaumont)." It is, you imagine, a joke barely tolerated by the local authorities.

The Action

Due to the decrease in automobile traffic, the Last Supper has fallen on hard times. The exterior is as dirty as the interior, and the glass front which once sported a magnificent hilltop view is now obscured by thin plywood.

Outside are three vehicles. Two are compact Renaults in serious deterioration. The third is a blue pick-up truck, packed full of personal belongings. An *evidence analysis* or *Perception* total of 9 reveals that the belongings are scattered haphazardly in the back of the truck, and were probably loaded in a hurry.

Inside are six tables, a bar with 12 stools, a television and a doorway leading to the staircase and the second-floor apartments of the owners.

As fate would have it, Charles Montebanc, the father of Talamous Scratch's latest victim, happens to be in the cafe. Wracked with grief, he sits alone at a table, cursing and sobbing quietly. A *Perception* total of 8 allows the Knights to overhear the word "Culmont" several times from his lips.

If no Knight hears this, the owner of the diner will recognize Cochereau and ask him if things are any better in New Culmont. At that, Montebanc will lift his head and say,

"You travel to New Culmont? Foolish, foolish people. Culmont is plagued by demons! It is being punished for its transgressions against God!"

If the Knights pursue his comments, he will say through his tears:

"First it was only the addicts and the sinners. But why my poor, little Agnes? She was no sinner! She was a simple, beautiful girl whose only fault was to stay out too late. I warned her, but 'No, no Papa!' she said. Her friends hadn't left yet, so neither would she.

"And then they found her. Her

tender throat crushed ... her innocent body maimed. Now I have nothing. Nothing."

Montebanc buries his fists deep into his tear-soaked eyes. After a few moments and some kind words, the party can convince him to elaborate.

The additions he refers to is that of the HolyVids and common street narcotics. All of the previous murder victims had been those unfortunate souls who had been chased from the refugee camps and driven into an area known as the Barrens. (Montebanc makes no mention of the fact that the victims of the Barrens murders were killed in a different manner than those in New Culmont, as he is unaware of this.)

The "sinners" were two local girls known to have been involved in drugs and possibly prostitution. Each victim had been assaulted, murdered, and had their cyberware stripped from their bodies, not necessarily in that order.

Soon after Montebanc's tale, the event "Things That Go Bump in the Night," takes place. When the party returns downstairs, Charles has fled the cafe.

Things That Go Bump in the Night

After Charles has imparted his information, the lights in the cafe suddenly dim and a scream is heard, followed by a dull thud from the floor above. The wife of the cafe owner drops a cup of coffee and shouts "Monique," then dashes up the stairs with her husband.

If the Knights do not follow, they will hear her screaming for help a few moments later. When the Knights reach the top floor apartment, read aloud or paraphrase:

The scene before you is stark and frightening. A young woman lies on the floor, unconscious, an overturned chair next to her. On a table nearby is a standard GodNet terminal, a loose and flaming wire dangling from its socket. As her mother cradles the woman in her arms, you can see the black scorch marks surrounding her j-jack.

A *Cyberdeck ops* or *Mind* total of 10 will reveal the marks to be the tell-tale signs

of a surge program.

Monique is still alive. A *medicine* total of 9 will reveal that there has been no serious physical damage, but there is most likely mental damage. A *first aid* total of 11 will revive her, but a *psychology* total of 12 will be required to heal her wounds.

Once revived, Moira will be stunned for a few moments. When she begins to speak, her eyes will remain riveted on the family terminal.

Read or paraphrase the following:

"... confession ... I was only in confession. There was this ... feeling ... like something ... evil ... was in the GodNet. Father Selboius told me to wait and he went into the next cell. I looked out into the church, there were 30 or 40 other people. And there was this thing. I couldn't see it plainly but it was ... ripping the people limb from limb!"

The teenager's eyes become wide as saucers and her delicate lips tremble; she continues.

"Selboius tried to stop it ... he loaded in an attack program, but it was just too strong! It tore his head from his body! His 'burn had to be total. I tried to jack out but it followed me, running a surge down my line. I was almost out when it caught me! It touched me and it felt wrong, like it was from someplace else. It was horrible! I have never felt such raw evil. Or power."

The attack happened so fast that Moira can remember only that the thing was man-shaped with huge muscles and scaly, jet-black skin. She guesses that at least 20 people were fatally attacked in the cathedral construct.

Her terminal can be fixed in a few minutes on a *cybertechn* total of 10. If a decker goes inside the Troyes Cathedral (see the map on page 37 of *The GodNet*) he will find that several Babel Monitors are investigating the individual cells. Anyone caught sneaking about is assumed to be involved in the massacre, and the Monitors will pursue quickly and with little restraint.

Babel Monitor (4)

DEXTERITY 8

Dodge 10, energy weapons 10, fire combat 10, melee weapons 10, stealth 9



STRENGTH 8**TOUGHNESS 9****PERCEPTION 12**

Cyberdeck ops 16, evidence analysis 13, find 13, language 13, tracking 13, trick 13

MIND 10

Science 11, test of will 11, willpower 13

CHARISMA 8

Persuasion 11, taunt 10

SPIRIT 9

Faith 14, focus 14, intimidation 12

Additional Skills: two at +1 adds

Net Values: net attack (energy) 17, net attack (fire) 17, net attack (melee) 17, net defense 17, net find 17, net stealth 13, net manipulation 19, net track 20

Possibility Potential: some (20)

Equipment: Penitence IV terminal (+3/+0/7/15); NeuraCal; j-jack

Programs: any

Cyber Value: 3

There will be four Monitors investigating the cathedral over the next several hours. The Knight will have to remain near the priests to overhear their conversations and uncover clues (i.e., the data vaults have no relevant information.)

Alternatively, have the decker make a *net stealth* total (*stealth* + *cyberdeck operation* adds + the deck's *stealth* rating) against a difficulty number of 10. She learns the following information, based upon success level achieved:

Minimal or less: The Babel Monitors detect the character and begin pursuit before anything important can be discovered.

Average: One of the Monitors transmits that 23 Christians are believed dead, though they must await physical confirmation.

Good: The decker intercepts a data transmission from Babel Central. The dispatch states that the "creature" has not been sighted in any other region of the Net.

Superior: The Knight overhears one Monitor speaking to the other. He says that the creature seems to have self-terminated, suggesting that perhaps it was only a test version of something more powerful yet to come.

Spectacular: The Knight overhears the above, plus the fact that Monitors traced



the creature back to the Langres exchange (the local exchange for New Culmont) before it self-terminated.

Variables

If the Storm Knights do not go into the GodNet to find out what happened at the Troyes Cathedral construct, they have missed out on a valuable, but not essential, clue. Allow them to go on to the next scene, but if they should wish to return within the next four days, give them another chance at the above information, possibly secured in a Data Vault cell instead of overheard from the investigators.

Flags

An *Idea* card allows the character to get one additional success level if she goes into the GodNet. *Alertness* performs likewise.

On a *Personal Stake* card, a Knight knew Agnes Montebanc and grieves for her death. She will be determined to uncover her murderer.

On a *Romance* card, a male Storm Knight will be attracted to Monique. He will consider the events in the GodNet to be of more immediate importance than those in New Culmont.

Cut To ...

Leaving the Last Supper Cafe, the tired heroes speed on towards New Culmont in Scene Three, "Ordeal by Fire."

SCENE THREE: Ordeal by Fire

The Situation

Dramatic. The Storm Knights arrive in New Culmont just as Jeanette LeClerc is about to undergo an Ordeal by Fire.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

From a high point miles away, you can see a bright fire burning in the distant village of New Culmont.



Cochereau floors the accelerator, leaving you little time to see the shadows of the firelight bouncing off the cobblestone streets and stucco houses of Patrice's home.

As you approach the town, you see a priest standing on the hood of an rusting automobile. The man is wearing loose, white robes and seems to be speaking to a large crowd. A golden crucifix, engraved with circuitry, dangles from his neck. A few meters to his left is a pole surrounded by stacked wood. A fire burns in a nearby barrel.

Two to three hundred villagers are standing about the town square, some carrying lit torches. A few seem supportive of the priest but most look very confused and concerned. Near the priest stands a young woman hand-cuffed to a single Church Policeman. A second policeman stands near him.

If the Knights wish to attack at this point, Cochereau will urge them to wait. He still retains some hope that

the crowd will come to their senses. The Knights can, however, scout out positions from which to launch a possible assault.

As the Knights approach, they will overhear Father Dumois' voice over the noise of the heckling crowd. A *find* or *Perception* total of 10 spots a David hover car and a squad of Church Police stationed twenty meters north of the crowd.

Read or paraphrase the following:

"Listen, brothers! The girl you see standing before you has been accused of cavorting with Satan! Of taking his evil seed and spreading terror, wickedness, and death throughout our peaceful village. I submit to you, that the witch known as Jeanette Cochereau, is none other than the Night Slasher."

A loud gasp escapes from the crowd.

"Are we going to allow this to continue?"

The crowd responds, "No!"

"Are we going to allow the beast to claim another Christian life?"

The crowd responds again, though louder this time, "No!"

Cochereau reaches under his jacket and releases the safety on his weapon.

"Are we going to allow the Anti-Christ to suck this poor child's soul into the oblivion of Hell?"

Again, "No!"

At this point, the priest signals to a policeman, who moves everyone away from the center of the area, pushing them back into a wide circle. Into the center, near the fire and the ominous looking pole, go the priest and the girl. He brings out a pair of metal tongs from beneath his robes and speaks again:

"Before we judge this girl, brethren, we must allow the power of God to show us her guilt."

The priest plunges the tongs into the fire and procures a glowing piece of iron. Dragging the girl back to the automobile, he shouts, "We shall test her guilt with the Ordeal by Fire. Hold out your hands, miserable wretch!"





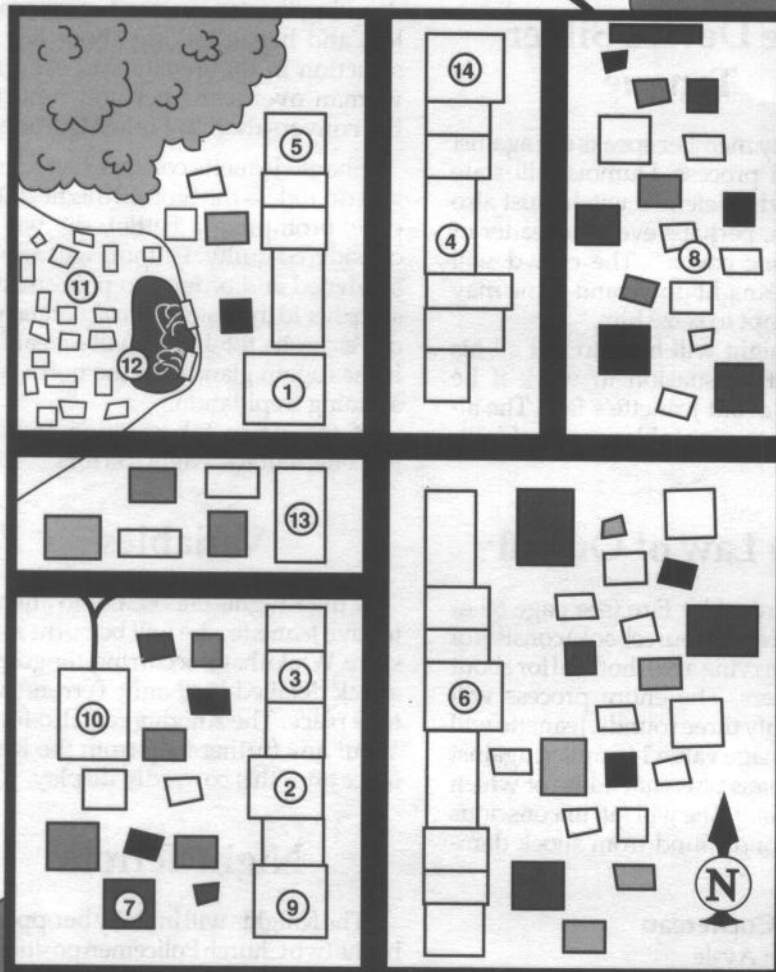
When Axioms Collide: Map 2

New Culmont and Environs

TO LANGRES

CHATEAU DE CRAG

NEW CULMONT



Key

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Town square | 8. Mondue's shack |
| 2. Demons' Bane Inn | 9. Challier's apartment |
| 3. Cyber repair | 10. Tech ghouls |
| 4. Le Patriot Café | 11. The Barrens |
| 5. Cochereau home | 12. Waste pool |
| 6. Mayor Gaston | 13. Abandoned building |
| 7. Toulace's home | 14. Dumois' church |

NEW CULMONT

1 KM

MANOR SCRATCH

TO OLD
CULMONT-
CHALINDREY



An *evidence analysis* or *Perception* total of 12 allows the Knights to notice Dumois glance nervously to the north, where the squad of Church Police stands.

Father Arnaud Dumois

DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 12, fire combat 11, melee weapons 11

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 12

Cyberdeck operations 15, find 13, scholar (Avignon Doctrine) 13, trick 14

MIND 10

Science (computers) 13, test 14, willpower 15

CHARISMA 13

Charm 17, persuasion 20, taunt 16

SPIRIT 12 (10 without blessing vow)

Faith (Cyberpapacy) 17, focus 16 (18 with crucifix) intimidation 16, reality (Cyberpapacy) 21

Possibilities: 19

Equipment: HallowMesh, armor value TOU+5/13; God Meeter, damage value 20, ammo 30, range 3-12/30/50; power dagger, damage value STR+5/13. Cyberware: NeuraCal, EpiphaNeur, BelleView 20-20, CSI LEDs, CyberHam receiver, TSR LeMotion, throat mike, homer, DATAS Boomer, MB Charger, ChipHolder 3 with 1 DatChip (contains the names of the people of New Culmont and details on their recent activities), find +2 and persuasion +2. Cyber Rating: 21

Description: Relatively handsome, with blonde hair and deep blue eyes, the cyberpriest of New Culmont was 27 when the invasion occurred. He had been a chaplain in the French army before it was disbanded. Quickly joining the zealous forces of the Cyberpope, Dumois became a fanatic who is willing to do just about anything to curry favor with his superiors. He enjoys a close relationship with Archbishop Paulo, a connection that has made him privy to many of the Cyberpapacy's most closely-guarded secrets.

Church Police (Streetbeaters) (14)

See statistics above.

Cochereau, convinced his daughter is innocent and therefore will pass through the ordeal unharmed, will again implore the Knights not to act. But if they choose to do so, they will discover that the frightened villagers are hostile

to the girl and will aid the Church Police in a fight.

Should the party attack, cut immediately to "Night Terrors," below.

Should the Knights challenge Dumois verbally at some point, cut to "The Devil's Silver Tongue."

Should the Knights heed Cochereau's appeal to stay their hands, go to "The Law of Ordeal."

The Devil's Silver Tongue

If a party member speaks out against the ordeal process, Dumois will state that any who defend a witch must also be a witch, perhaps even the leader of the "Satanic coven." The crowd will shout the Knight down and some may even attempt to seize him.

The Knight will have to put all his powers of persuasion to work if he wishes to avoid Jeanette's fate. The alternative is coming to blows with a frightened mob.

The Law of Ordeal

The Ordeal by Fire (see page 69 of *The Cyberpapacy* sourcebook) consists of Jeanette carrying a red-hot coal for about three meters. The entire process will take roughly three rounds. Jeanette will suffer damage value 14 applied against her *Toughness* plus *faith* adds (of which she has none). She will fall unconscious in the second round from shock damage.

Jeanette Cochereau

Reality: Aysle

DEXTERITY 8

Dodge 9, maneuver 9, stealth 9

STRENGTH 7

TOUGHNESS 7

PERCEPTION 10

Divination magic 12, find 11, first aid 11

MIND 8

Artist (painter) 9, willpower 9

CHARISMA 8

Charm 9, persuasion 9

SPIRIT 7

Intimidation 9

Arcane Knowledges: *water* 3

Description: Jeanette is Patrice's pride and joy. When the invasion began

she was touring in England and became trapped. As tales of Malraux's evil began to spread, Jeanette decided to develop her natural talent for divination, to better enable her to predict when atrocities would occur. She spent a brief time in Aysle learning a form of water scrying.

She arrived back in New Culmont only days ago and has been waiting to hear from her father. One night, while drinking in a tavern, she became careless and began talking about her instruction in the mystic arts. Another woman overheard her and reported the conversation to Father Dumois.

Should Jeanette collapse (which she will do unless the Storm Knights intercede, prompting a battle), she will be considered guilty. Dumois will appear saddened and order two policemen to strap her to the pole. An *evidence analysis* or *Perception* total of 10 will reveal that he has again glanced to the north with seeming trepidation.

If the party takes action to save Jeanette, cut to "Night Terrors."

Variables

If the Knights choose not to attempt to save Jeanette, she will be burnt at the stake. While that is occurring, the *gospog* attack detailed in "Night Terrors" will take place. The Knights can also forget about any further help from the Resistance after this cowardly display.

Night Terrors

The Knights will initially be opposed by the two Church Policemen positioned near the stake. As soon as the Knights attack, Dumois will try to slip away in the confusion. It will take the crowd two rounds before they comprehend just what's going on — about 30 die-hards will go after the Knights, the rest will do nothing or flee.

Two rounds after the Knights act, a horde of *gospog* will sweep down upon the city from the north. They have been dispatched by Nefestario in accordance with the orders he received from Bishop Paulo of Langres.

The Church Police will immediately open fire on the scores of First Planting *gospog*. If the Knights glance in that



direction, they will see the police being overwhelmed, and a small group of Second Planting gospog moving toward the stake and Jeanette.

As the gospog move in, the people of New Culmont will flee to their homes and bolt their doors behind them.

If Jeanette has been handcuffed to the pole, the Knights will have to free her to get her away from the gospog. If Dumois has succeeded in escaping the scene, he will have dropped his keys on the ground near the stake. A *find* or *Perception* total of 12 will allow the Knights to find them. Otherwise, a *lockpicking* or *Dexterity* total of 8 will be required to free her. Keep in mind that the Knights will have to be fending off the attacks of the Second Planting gospog while doing this. (The First Plantings will have their hands full with the Church Policemen.)

Gospog of the First Planting

(5 per Storm Knight)

DEXTERITY 8

Energy weapons 9, fire combat 9, melee weapons 9, missile weapons 9, unarmed combat 9

STRENGTH 8

Climbing 9

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 7

Find 10, tracking 8

MIND 7

Willpower 10

CHARISMA 7

SPIRIT 7

Possibility Potential: none

Natural Tools: armor, TOU+2/10

Equipment: Herod IV, damage value 19, ammo 50, range 3-25/100/150

Gospog of the Second Planting (6)

DEXTERITY 8

Dodge 15, running 12, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 19

TOUGHNESS 18 (23)

PERCEPTION 6

Find 10, tracking 13, trick (12)

MIND 6

Survival 12, test (12), willpower 13

CHARISMA 5

Taunt (8)

SPIRIT 5

Intimidation 14

Possibility Potential: none

Natural Tools: teeth, damage value STR+4/23; claws, damage value STR+3/23; rock-tough hide, armor value



TOU+5/23; immune to K-results

Standard New Culmont Villager (300)

Reality: Cyberpapacy

DEXTERITY 8

Fire combat 9, melee combat 9

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 9

Find 10, scholar (agriculture) 11

MIND 9

CHARISMA 8

SPIRIT 9

Faith (Cyberpapacy) 11

Additional Skills: one at +1 adds

Possibility Potential: some (65)

Equipment: About 100 of the villagers are armed with pitchforks, damage value STR+3/11. Another 20 are carrying .9mm pistols, damage value 15, ammo 8, range 3-10/25/40. Cyberware: NeuraCal, j-jack. Cyber rating: 2.

Description: A majority of the villagers believe Jean Malraux to be their true savior. Those who have some inkling of the Cyberpapacy's true nature know better than to speak their thoughts aloud.



The Fate of Patrice Cochereau

Midway through the battle, describe the following sequence to the players:

Out of the corner of your eye you see Patrice finish off two of the slower creatures with a single burst. But just behind him stands an enormous Second Planting gospog, its razor sharp claws reaching for him.

Allow the Knights to take an action. Cochereau is roughly three meters away from where the nearest Knight is battling. If the Knights succeed in somehow getting Cochereau away from the gospog, he will survive to continue fighting.

If the Knights attack the gospog and do damage, but do not kill or KO it, it will almost absent-mindedly claw Cochereau. If he is KO'd or worse, he will be disabled for the rest of the adventure.

If the Knights do not do any damage to the gospog with their attack, it will go after Cochereau. Read aloud or paraphrase:

In a heartbeat, you see the talons of the beast rip through Patrice's sternum and erupt on the other side in a bright explosion of red gore.

There can be little doubt that Patrice Cochereau is dead.

Ending the Battle

Once Jeanette has either been captured and carried off or whisked to safety, the gospog will break off the attack. They will take the bodies of any Church Policemen they have killed away with them and flee to the north, with the remaining CPs pursuing them in a hovercraft.

The Knights may attempt to pursue if they wish. *Tracking* totals of 12 will allow them to follow the gospog for the first three rounds, but as the terrain becomes rocky, *tracking* difficulty goes up by +3 per round. If the Knights do come upon the creatures, they will fight a rear-guard action to allow the one carrying Jeanette to escape.

If the Knights defeat the gospog, they may rescue Jeanette and bring her back to New Culmont.

What's Going On Here?

Cyberpapal gospog attacking Church Police and a cyberpriest? How can that be?

Remember that Cyberpapal gospog are not used in the same manner as those of other realms. They are publicly branded "agents of Satan" by Malraux and cited as an example of why France and the world require the Cyberpope's protection.

This gospog attack was planned by Father Dumois and Bishop Paulo for two reasons: the first, because the people of New Culmont needed reminding of why they should obey the words of Malraux without question; and secondly, because Jeanette Cochereau had been branded a witch, and Paulo wished her captured for experimentation in the GodNet.

Fearing a public backlash if she were to simply be arrested and carried off (following mount-

ing hysteria about the Night Slasher murders), Paulo hit upon the idea of using the gospog to capture her. Nefestario, caretaker of the gospog field, was ordered to send his troops into the town and "save" the girl from the stake, thus proving her a consort of demons in the eyes of the townspeople. In return, he was promised better bodies for his field than he has been able to obtain from among the refugees living on the Barrens. Even the Church Police were not informed of the plan, so the attack would appear completely genuine.

But Dumois has not survived so long by being a fool. He recorded the details of the entire plot — so that Paulo could not blame him if it failed — and secreted them in the New Culmont Church Construct. See Act Two, Scene One for details on that construct.

Under no circumstances will the gospog lead the Knights back to their field. They will turn and make a stand long before they reach that area.

Once back in the village, a *Perception* total of 8 will allow the Knights to overhear two residents talking about the battle's victims. They will comment that these corpses look nothing like the Night Slasher's victims, so these demons could not have been responsible for those deaths. Perhaps it is the devil that haunts the Barrens, now decided to strike at the village now, who has brought such terror to New Culmont.

Picking Up the Pieces

Once the team has driven off the gospog and are tending to their wounds (or have returned from pursuing the creatures), the villagers will slowly trickle back into the street. From the shadows come two men the Storm Knights have never seen before. They

whisper a quick thanks to the heroes and begin to tend to Jeanette's (and/or Patrice's) wounds. If neither of the Cochereaus has survived the battle, the Resistance members will not make an appearance. The two men will take their wounded comrade(s) away before Dumois returns and ask that the Knights not follow, as it might lead the Church authorities to their hideout.

Soon, more citizens will return to the street. Those loyal to the Cyberpapacy will tend to believe that the Knights have prevented the gospog from "rescuing" a bonafide witch, while others think that the party saved her from some diabolical Cyberpapal conspiracy. Either way, most of the town will have a friendly attitude toward the heroes.

Eventually, the David hover car will return and any surviving Church Policemen will begin to clean up the mess with the help of some of the villagers. Once this task is completed, the weary policemen will return to their post at the church.



Dumois' Return

Whether or not the Knights saved Jeanette, Dumois is furious about their presence. Either they prevented his plan from succeeding or snatched glory from the Cyberchurch by defending New Culmont from the gospog, or both. Dumois knows that Jeanette is not the "Night Slasher," and so has decided to use the presence of the Knights to his advantage and earn some points with the villagers by appearing to care about them.

When the party has finished binding their wounds, Dumois will appear before them. He has a few cuts and scrapes (all self-inflicted, of course). He will thank the Knights for their aid against the "demons" and ask them to listen to an offer he has to make.

If the Knights agree to listen, read aloud or paraphrase the following. If the Knights refuse to listen, see below. If the Knights attack Dumois, cut to "Variables."

"I am Father Arnaud Dumois, the humble administrator of this grief-

torn village."

The priest looks at you thoughtfully for a moment, then continues. "You have fought the witch's minions, and this is excellent. The trial proved that the girl is a witch; there is no doubt about that. But I am not so sure that she is the killer known as the 'Night Slasher.'"

Dumois nods his head, as if he has just decided upon something. "If you will but agree to help us discover the true identity of this murderer, I could grant you an Indulgence absolving you of all your past sins, and perhaps even a monetary reward as well."

The villagers have crowded about and now look pleadingly in your direction.

The Knights may well be reluctant to work with Dumois or the people who were so eager to burn Jeanette Cochereau. But they should keep in mind that if the forces of the Cyberpapacy succeed in apprehending the killer, it will merely serve to reinforce Malraux's image as a savior. In addition,

as the death of Agnes Montebanc showed, innocents are dying in this village. (Finally, the clergy's pursuit of the killer may well lead to the deaths of other wrongly accused people like Jeanette.)

If the Knights wish to search for the killer, but do not want to work for Dumois and refuse his offer—or refuse to listen, period—the villagers' attitude toward them will become *hostile*. The adventure can continue, but the party has made their task more difficult—they will not have to avoid the Church Police and those loyal to the Cyberpope while pursuing their investigation.

If the party agrees to Dumois' deal, he will have their Indulgences available in the morning. (See page 23 of *The Cyberpapacy* sourcebook for details on Indulgences.) They are now free to walk about the streets of the Cyberpapacy with relative ease. Dumois and the few Church Policemen stationed in New Culmont will have a *neutral* attitude towards the characters.





Perceptive characters may ask Dumois why he seemed to anticipate the gospog attack. If this occurs, the crafty priest will act as if he doesn't know what they're talking about and swear that the gospog are vile creatures of the Anti-Christ.

The priest suggests that the heroes rest tonight and meet with him in the morning.

Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep ...

The party may stay at the Demon's Bane Inn or with the Cochereaus. It is entirely up to them. See Act Two for details on both of these locations.

Flags

If an *Alertness* card is played, the character will automatically notice Dumois glancing nervously to the

north moments before the gospog attack.

Variables

If Jeanette is successfully captured and carried off by the gospog, she will vanish into the GodNet, never to be seen again. The Resistance will have lost a potentially useful operative.

It is entirely possible that hot-headed Storm Knights will slay Father Dumois as soon as he returns. This can seriously hamper the adventure as the Church Police from Langres will constantly scan the area until they have eliminated the threat (Bishop Paulo cannot afford Storm Knights roaming loose in his domain).

If an attack occurs, Dumois will try to convince the party that while they may slay him, another will soon take his place, and his replacement may not be so willing to negotiate for the common good.

If the Knights relent, cut to "Dumois' Return."

Awards

If Jeanette was rescued and the characters have decided to stay and help stop the Night Slasher, give each player three Possibilities. Award two Possibilities each if one, but not both, of the above conditions are met.

Cut To ...

When the party finally manages to get settled and get to sleep, Act One ends. Act Two begins as the sun rises over the turbulent French landscape and the shattered village of New Culmont.



Act Two

Scratching the Surface

The Major Beat

Most of this act will involve the Storm Knights traveling from location to location investigating leads and trying to figure out exactly who or what is the "Night Slasher."

When interacting with the citizens, they will find that these are simple people who have been thrust into a war and a climate they still don't really understand, and are justifiably afraid of. Most of them believe strongly in the power of God, and have not yet differentiated between true Catholicism and the religion of Jean Malraux. So far, however, the CyberChurch has been the only sign of order in a world gone mad.

Any Knight who tries to persuade a gamemaster character otherwise must do so against an attitude of *hostile*. Also, remember that the Law of Suspicion will automatically increase someone's *willpower* or *Mind* by +3 against such attempts.

This act should play like a mystery "whodunnit," testing the Knight's investigative and deductive abilities rather than their *fire combat* skills. Everything and everyone in New Culmont should seem suspicious. The doctor makes a likely candidate for the "Night Slasher" as do the cyberleggers known as "Tech Ghouls."

The gamemaster should let the players figure out through trial, error, and wild schemes that the Night Slasher is actually none of these. In short, the first two scenes should play as if they were one big *Suspicion* subplot.

SCENE ONE:

Guess Who's Coming to Breakfast?

The Situation

If the Knights accepted Dumois' deal in Act One, he invites them to an early breakfast at the church.

If the Knights did not accept the deal and wish to begin their own investigation, they may do so. If they wish to visit the local police station (a potentially risky maneuver, without Church backing), cut to "The Bodies in the Basement." If they wish to explore the New Culmont and Langres constructs of the GodNet, cut to "Using the Net."

If the Knights simply want to wander New Culmont, cut to Scene Two, "Door to Door."

The Action

If the Storm Knights are meeting with Dumois, they must go to the New Culmont church. The Culmont church is a very simple affair for the forces of the Cyberpapacy, owing mostly to the location of the nearby cathedral at Langres. Dumois and four acolytes administer and organize the religious and social activities of the town, and five policemen are stationed in the adjoining barracks.

The back of the church is the living area and consists of six private bedrooms, a kitchen, dining room, and a lounge. Standard confessionals, an altar, wooden pews, and typical church adornments fill the lobby, while sev-



eral classrooms lead off from the main area.

Acolytes (4)

Reality: Cyberpapacy

DEXTERITY 8

Dodge 10, fire combat 11, maneuver 9, melee weapons 10

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 11

Cyberdeck operation 14, find 12, scholar (Avignon Doctrine) 11, trick 12

MIND 10

Science (computers) 12, cybertech 13, science 12, test 11, willpower 13

CHARISMA 8

Charm 11, persuasion 11, taunt 11

SPIRIT 12 (10 without blessing vow)

Faith (Cyberpapacy) 15, focus 14 (16 with crucifix), intimidation 14

Additional Skills: two at +1 adds

Possibility Potential: some (70)

Equipment: HallowMesh, armor value TOU+5/14; GodMeeter, damage 20, ammo 30, range 3-12/30/50; power dagger, damage value STR+5/13 Cyberware: NeuraCal, Epiphaneur, BelleView 20-20, CSI LEDs, CyberHam Receiver, TSE LeMotion, Throat Mike, Homer, DATAS Boomer, MB Charger, ChipHolder 3 (DatChip with local incomes, observations and personal notes, cyberdeck operations +1, cybertech +2). Cyber rating: 21

Description: Four young men are in training under Dumois for eventual use in the administrative clergy. Most of their day is spent inside the GodNet, listening to confession, watching for intruders, or traveling about virtual France in pursuit of their studies.

Continental Breakfast

The Knights arrive to find Father Dumois and Captain Drouet Loison of the New Culmont Church Police waiting for them. Dining with a cyberpriest and a Church Policeman should be a tense and uncomfortable situation for the Knights.

Both Dumois and Loison will do their best to avoid a confrontation, but the latter is not above slipping in an occasional comment about the righteousness of Malraux's cause and his dislike for vigilantes. He resents the Knights'

presence, but will follow the orders of his "civilian" superior.

Loison also resents Dumois, for the priest interfered with his recent investigation of the massacre at the Barrens. Loison won't openly refute the cyberpriest, but will look disgruntled and disapproving of Dumois' working with "heretics."

Loison will distribute Prop 1, "Loison's Report," to the Knights, at the request of Dumois. It details the three New Culmont murder victims, but makes no mention of the deaths on the Barrens by Charles Montebanc. If asked about these deaths, Dumois will quickly answer that the events there have nothing to do with the "Night Slasher" case and were most likely the work of Jeanette Cochereau's evil minions. Loison will give him a dubious look, but will grudgingly agree that the two cases are "apparently unrelated."

If asked about the gospog attack, both men will swear that the creatures are creations of the Evil One, who opposes the will of the Cyberpope. Dumois knows the truth, but Loison actually believes that the gospog are demonic threats. (See "Variables" for more information.)

If asked about the mysterious creature attacking the faithful in the GodNet, both men will profess ignorance on the subject.

If the Knights wish to view the bodies, Loison will invite them to accompany him to the morgue in the Church Police station.

Captain Drouet Loison

DEXTERITY 12

Dodge 16, energy weapons 16, fire combat 15 (18), melee weapons 15, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS

PERCEPTION 10

Cyberdeck operations 13, evidence analysis 16, find 15, first aid 11, land vehicles 12, language (English) 13, tracking 11, trick 17

MIND 10

Streetwise 15, test 13, willpower 14

CHARISMA 9

Persuasion 16, taunt 14

SPIRIT 10

Faith (Cyberpapacy) 13, intimidation 17, reality (Cyberpapacy) 18

Possibilities: 25

Equipment: Armor of God, armor value TOU+8/17; MAS Fury (damage value 21, ammo 20, range 3-20/150/300; Cyberware: Neuracal, Epiphaneur, BelleSee Telesight, CSI Eyekill Mk. IV, CyberHam Receiver, Homer, Throat Mike, MB Charger 1 (DEX+1 for three minutes), MB Blocker. Cyber rating: 18

Description: Drouet Loison is a dedicated police officer. Unfortunately, his devotion to discipline has made him a devout follower of Jean Malraux. Drouet will not be thrilled that Dumois is putting a group of Storm Knights before him and his force, and he isn't afraid to say so. Fortunately for the Knights, he's a by-the-book kind of soldier and won't disobey his orders. See "Variables" below for more information on Drouet Loison and his relationship with Father Dumois.

The Bodies in the Basement

The Church Police are stationed in a building adjoining the church. Individual police are usually rotated with replacements from Langres about once every two weeks. The Cyberpapacy doesn't want its officials becoming too attached to the people near their posts.

Their barracks consists of six beds with wall lockers, a common washroom, a table, and chairs. Police weapons (GodMeeters) are kept secured in their wall locker (lock picking difficulty of 14 to pick) when off-duty.

One vehicle is kept in the garage, a David MK. II hover car. It has an electronic lock which requires a lock picking or science (electronics) total of 18

Should the need arise, the Church Police can call upon Langres for reinforcements, who will arrive in about fifteen minutes.

If the Knights are visiting the station with Loison or with a pass from him, they will have little trouble gaining access to the morgue. If they are not working with the Cyberpapal authorities in this matter, the Knights will have to persuade or trick the policeman on duty to allow them admittance to the morgue. Use the standard Church Policeman stats given in Act One.





The Morgue

Each Church Police facility has a small morgue where bodies are kept until a forensics expert can examine them. Since New Culmont is so small, Loison must rely on experts from Langres. After each of the "Night Slasher" murders, a forensics specialist from Langres came to New Culmont and performed autopsies on the corpses.

His official report is logged with the Church Police in Langres and Loison may access it via the GodNet at any time. It varies from the report given to the Knights by Loison only in its use of technical jargon.

As the Knights enter the morgue, read aloud or paraphrase:

The New Culmont morgue is cold, with a chill that seems to reach right into your soul. Three of the drawers bear the hastily scrawled names of young women whose lives were taken by force.

Some of you have been in places of death before. But something here doesn't feel quite right ... almost as if the souls of those murdered are watching your every move.

All three corpses are still in the morgue, as the deaths have been so recent and Loison believes there still may be clues to be found on them. When the Knights first view the grisly remains, have them generate *Perseverance* totals against a difficulty number of 18 (their current *Perseverance* is 7 — they began with an 8, but lost a point upon seeing the horrific sight).

If the Knights still wish to examine the bodies, a *Perception* or *evidence analysis* total of 13 allows them to spot a clue the police overlooked. Hidden by the dried blood and mutilated flesh is a series of light scratches on her neck and shoulders. A *medicine* total of 9 will reveal these to have most likely been made by claws or fingernails.

Using the GodNet

Based on their experiences in the Demon's Bane Inn, or purely to gather more information on the situation in New Culmont, the Knights may wish at some point to explore the GodNet. A wealth of information is available therein on the true story behind Jeanette Cochereau's arrest and the massacre at the Barrens.

The main terminal at the Demon's Bane Inn or a private home (perhaps Cochereau's) are the best places for the Knights to jack into the Net from. The important thing is that they not jack-in from where they are staying. Despite his show of cooperation, Dumois has no wish for the Knights to probe the Net and will have their datapath monitored. If they jack in from their temporary home, Dumois will order Loison to have them arrested.

If the Knights are being aided by a gamemaster net-runner, he can inform them that it is quite likely their terminal





When Axioms Collide: Prop 1

Loison's Report

Victim #1: Denise Morehead. Female Caucasian. Age: 28.

Morehead was found in the dumpster behind the Demon's Bane Inn by one of the owners, Renee Derovoir, on February 3 at 8:30 a.m. The body had obviously been molested. Long scars suggesting the use of claws or fingernails were present on parts of her body, and the arms suffered serious bruises as if she had been held by a man or woman of some considerable strength. Morehead suffered numerous contusions and lacerations, but strangulation was the cause of death.

Several puncture marks were found on legs and upper arms, suggesting a long history of narcotics abuse. Large quantities of morphine and "stardust" were found in her bloodstream.

Most disturbing was that the girl was known to have possessed several cyber systems and all had been skillfully removed. The incisions were clean and suggestive of some skill.

No one seems to have seen Morehead on the night in question.

Victim #2: Beatrice Laguer. Female Caucasian. Age: 23.

Laguer was found in the area known as "the Barrens" on the morning of the 7th. The body was found floating in the waste pool by Father Dumois. Her corpse was in the same condition as that of the Morehead girl and she also bore the signs of drug abuse. Again, all cyberware had been removed.

Victim #3: Agnes Montebanc. Female Caucasian. Age: 26

Montebanc does not fit the standard victim profile for the "Night Slasher's" crimes. No narcotics were found in her bloodstream and witnesses claim that she had been in the Demon's Bane Inn until 2:30 a.m. on the night of her death. Her father called at that time and she spoke to him for some time, apparently becoming quite upset during the conversation. The victim then told friends that she was going to walk home. That was the last time she was seen alive.

She had a significant amount of cyberware, including arm and leg systems. Again, it had been skillfully cut from her corpse.

Her body was found in a ditch south of the town on the morning of February 9th.

will be watched. If they jack in from their rooms, a *net find* total of 10 will reveal that the datapath leading from their terminal to the datachurch construct is being monitored. They would be wise to jack in from somewhere else.

If the Knights persist in investigating the Net, they will have ten minutes before Loison and five Church Policemen arrive at their rooms to make the arrest.

The Church Construct

Since New Culmont is so small, the clergy shares this construct with the Church Police. Neither group is officially allowed into the other's data vaults, though Dumois has slipped into Loison's files on numerous occasions.

There are two important files within the New Culmont Construct. The first is Prop 2, "E-Mail," and is a written transcript of Bishop Paulo's and Dumois' plan to stage the gospog attack and kidnap Jeanette Cochereau, as well as mention of the strange creature sighted

in the Net. If the Knights show this transcript to Loison, see "Variables" below.

The other file is Loison's report on the massacres at the Barrens. Prop #3, "Massacre at the Barrens: Loison's Official Report" details the scene and lets the Knights know that they have a potential ally against the scheming cyberpriest.

Cell 1: This cell resembles the exterior lobby of the real Culmont church. Behind an information desk is an angelic-looking woman who will direct authorized users down the appropriate path (confessional, Sunday Mass, and chat services). The VX woman has attributes of 8 and the *willpower* skill at 10. If the Knights can convince her that they are among the faithful and merely seek confession, she will pass them on.

Constantly walking about the room is a Watchman Sentinel.

Watchman

DEXTERITY 8
STRENGTH 8
TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 9

MIND 7

CHARISMA 8

SPIRIT 8

Net Values: net attack (melee) 8, net defense 8, net find 9, net stealth 8, net manipulation 9, net track 9

Possibility Potential: none

Response/Processor/Storage: 0/4/6

Programs: Attack 2 (2), Defense 2 (2), Scan 2 (2)

Description: The watchman appears as a human carrying a lantern in one hand and a sword in the other.

Cell 2: This is the area where the community meets each Sunday to attend Mass and listen to the sermons of Father Dumois. Many rows of pews lead to a grand altar and podium over which a crucifix hangs. Another Watchman (see above) stands to the "rear" of the room.

Cell 3, 4, 5: Anyone wanting to give confession may enter this region and page the attendant acolyte. An acolyte listening to confession must make a *Per-*



ception total of 8 to notice an external alarm.

Cell 6: This cell resembles a large dining area within the church. The faithful may congregate here and chat with friends from anywhere within the GodNet.

A Sentry scans for illegal users in this area.

Sentry

DEXTERITY 9
STRENGTH 9
TOUGHNESS 9
PERCEPTION 10
MIND 8
CHARISMA 9
SPIRIT 9

Net Values: net attack (melee) 9, net defense 9, net find 10, net stealth 9, net manipulation 10, net track 10

Possibility Potential: none

Response/Processor/Storage: 0/5/7

Programs: Attack 3 (3), Defense 3 (3),

Scan 1 (1)

Description: The sentry appears as a guard armed with a sword and wearing armor.

Cell 7: This cell resembles an empty room with a Watchdog tethered to a rung embedded in the wall.

Watchdog

DEXTERITY 10
STRENGTH 8
TOUGHNESS 9
PERCEPTION 8
MIND 6
CHARISMA 6
SPIRIT 8

Net Values: net attack 10, net defense 10, net find 16, net stealth 14, net manipulation 15, net track 16

Possibility Potential: none

Response/Processor/Storage: 0/5/1

Programs: Attack 2 (2), Defense 1 (1),

Scan 2 (2)

Description: Watchdogs appear as large, luminescent dogs with a nasty disposition.

Cell 8: This appears exactly as the one before it and also has a Watchdog. In addition, it contains an alarm which will go off if a skill roll in this cell is failed by three or more points.

Cell 9: This slave cell is used by the cyberpriests to monitor, correct, adjust, or otherwise manipulate the security cameras and alarms surrounding the



church. Three of the remotes are wired to cameras which constantly scan the grounds. The fourth remote is patched into the central alarm system, triggered whenever a security door is forced open or an incorrect entry code is given.

Cell 10: Cell 10 is exactly like number 8, above and also contains a Watchdog.

Cell 11: This is the core of the construct. It appears as a large shrine. The alarm will sound if an attempt to manipulate the core is failed by a roll of one

or more. The core is guarded by a Protector sentinel.

At one of the workstations is an acolyte acting as a jackpriest. The rest are used for data entry and reprogramming by the rest of the clergy.

Acolyte

Reality: Cyberpapacy

See stats above.

Possibilities: 2

Programs: Attack 3 (3), Defense 3 (3), Scan 2 (2)





Protector

DEXTERITY 10
STRENGTH 11
TOUGHNESS 12
PERCEPTION 13
MIND 11
CHARISMA 12
SPIRIT 13

Possibility Potential: none

Net Values: net attack (melee) 10, net defense 10, net find 13, net stealth 10, net manipulation 13, net track 13

Response/Processor/Storage: 0/7/

10

Programs: Attack 3 (3), Scramble 1 (1), Defense 3 (3), Scan 2 (2)

Description: Protectors appear as armored crusaders carrying a glowing sword and a shield marked with a red cross.

Cell 12: These workstations are found in the rooms of each of the priests. The remote devices control such mundane things as when they want their lights to come on and off, wake-up alarms, and temperature of their bathing water.

Cell 13: Leaving the core, the virtual reality of the GodNet makes it appear as if one is walking down a country lane towards a Papal library. Along the road is a Defender.

Defender

DEXTERITY 11
STRENGTH 12
TOUGHNESS 13
PERCEPTION 14
MIND 12
CHARISMA 13
SPIRIT 14

Possibility Potential: none

Net Values: net attack (melee) 11, net defense 11, net find 14, net stealth 11, net manipulation 14, net track 14

Response/Processor/Storage: 0/9/12

Programs: Onslaught 4 (3), Scramble 2 (2), Armor 4 (3), Scan 1 (1), Trace (1), DeckWipe 1 (2)

Description: The Defender appears to be a Protector mounted on a white stallion. He wields a lance.

Cell 14: The data vault of the construct looks like a library several miles distant from the church itself. There are two entrances to the "library": one is labeled "Clergy" and the other reads "Church Police." Between the two doors is a Watchdog Sentinel. It is identical to the one found in cell 7.

Beyond the door marked "Clergy" are cubicles filled with ancient-looking vellum scrolls. These are the various files which deal with everything from mundane record-keeping to Dumois' personal records. This is the file the Knights are after. Give the decker the prop marked "E-Mail" if this file is ever accessed.

Dumois knows that despite their close friendship, Paulo could turn on him at any time. That is why he has secretly kept transcripts of all their activities together.

Of course Malraux and those privileged enough to know the secret of the gospog couldn't care less if Dumois used them against his own parish. But if individuals such as Loison or other





When Axioms Collide: Prop 2

E-Mail

2/15, 0900
From: PAULO
To: DUMOIS

Father Dumois,

With regard to your recent communique regarding Jeanette Cochereau and her studies of witchcraft in Aysle, the monks of St. Wandrille have expressed an interest in such individuals. I believe that they intend to implant their consciousnesses on to SpiritChips and send them into that damnable region of the GodNet known as the Deep.

Would her disappearance create any undue disturbance amongst your parishioners?

— Paulo

2/15, 1045
From: DUMOIS
To: PAULO

Your Grace,

The Cochereau girl's disappearance may cause us some difficulty. Her father, Patrice Cochereau, has many friends in the Resistance. We could undoubtedly abduct her before he and his rebel heretics were aroused but it would only make them more determined; perhaps even to the point of joining with the troublemakers at Langres. Perchance there is a way that the girl can be taken without arousing her father's ire?

Pardon my changing the subject, Your Grace, but I may have a problem more serious than the young witch. New Culmont has become home to a madman the villagers have dubbed, the "Night Slasher." The Church Police have been unsuccessful in their efforts to apprehend the felon, and the townsfolk are beginning to get restless. In addition, there are reports of a murderous creature in the Net.

2/15, 1645
From: PAULO
To: DUMOIS

Father Dumois,

The divine light of Jean Malraux I has shone upon my weary mind and inspired me, brother. Perhaps there is a way to eliminate all of our problems in one night.

Blame the murders you spoke of on the Cochereau girl; call it witchcraft or whatever seems most appropriate to you. Then set her trial for the very next day so that the heretical forces sympathetic to the Cochereaus won't have time to plan a rescue.

I will arrange for the Caretaker to send his minions into your village at the height of the trial. They will have instructions to carry the girl off and leave her where my senior men can retrieve her.

You can tell your parishioners that the gosgop were her demonic consorts come to rescue her. By the time her father hears of it, she will have been long gone and he will have no one to blame but the Devil himself.

As usual in such cases, it is best if you do not inform the local Church Police barracks of the impending attack, so their defense of the village will appear convincing to the residents.

"honest" Church officials were to discover this sort of activity, Malraux would be forced to claim that those involved were in league with the Anti-Christ. Dumois figures that he can keep Paulo, at least, from using this information against him by threatening to reveal the proof of his own involvement.

Beyond the door labeled "Church Police" is the same series of vellum scrolls

and stone cubicles found in the other half of the virtual library. Church Police records concern themselves mainly with minor offenses, new laws, and DNA codes and personnel files of all registered citizens (not refugees or the homeless.) In a sending cubicle destined for Langres, a decker with a *net find* of 14 discovers Prop 3, "Massacre at the Barrens: Loison's Official Report."

The Langres Cathedral

The most useful information is found in the Culmont construct although some interesting clues can also be found in the Langres data vaults. If a decker wants to try this construct, have him make a *cyberdeck operations* total against a difficulty number of 12. Compare this with the following to figure out what the



Knight has learned:

Minimal to Good: Approximately one hour after each of the three "Night Slasher" murders, Church Police received anonymous tips about where to find the bodies.

Superior: The decker discovers that Bishop Paulo has dispatched an undercover Inquisitor to New Culmont to keep tabs on Father Dumois.

Spectacular: Bishop Paulo is directly responsible for the gosgog attack on the night of the Knights' arrival. If Jeanette was captured, the decker will also learn that she has been sent to St. Wandrille and "disposed of."

If you wish to extend the GodNet run, you can have the players raid Langres, using the map on page 37 of *The GodNet* supplement. However, it is not necessary for this adventure that you do so.

Variables

Under the best circumstances, the Storm Knights will cooperate with Dumois and Loison until Scratch has been defeated. If they should attempt to tangle with the authorities before this occurs, their investigation will be seriously hampered. Bishop Paulo at Langres will not hesitate to send a strike force into New Culmont if he is aware there is a band of Storm Knights present in his district.

If the "E-Mail" prop is ever given to Loison, Dumois is in big trouble. Loison will quickly alert the Inquisition via the GodNet and grin widely when they show up to cart the ranting cyberpriest away. Loison still won't wish to cooperate with Storm Knights, but he will look the other way while they conduct their investigation.

Flags

A *Nemesis* card will pit the character against the cunning Church Police captain. Remember that the Knights' Indulgences only forgive them for past sins, it doesn't absolve them of future crimes. Should Loison capture the heroes breaking the law, he'll shoot first and argue with Dumois later. The character who played the card is, undoubtedly, the "ringleader" of this notorious gang of

outlaws.

An *Idea* card will allow the Knights to guess that Dumois would probably have their GodNet terminal monitored, and they might be better off jacking in from somewhere else.

Perseverance Awards

Give the Knights two *Perseverance* points for their renewed determination to catch the "Night Slasher," having seen his gruesome handiwork. Give the Knights additional three points if they noticed the scratches on the bodies.

Cut To ...

When the Knights are ready to begin exploring New Culmont, cut to Scene Two, "Door to Door."

SCENE TWO: Door to Door

The Situation

Standard. The Storm Knights explore New Culmont, seeking clues to the identity of the mysterious "Night Slasher."

Read aloud or paraphrase:

New Culmont is a town born from the ashes of the Possibility Wars. The houses are constructed from the ruins of the old town of Culmont-Chalindrey to the south. That area was so torn apart by cygoyles and other terrors that the residents fled here and resettled around the Demon's Bane Inn. The first settlers managed to strip the old ruins and reconstruct suitable housing around the new site. Those that weren't quick enough grabbed whatever remained and formed the ramshackle shanty towns which surround New Culmont.

The Action

The Knights may visit any of the locations detailed below. Remember to take into account the attitudes of the villagers when being questioned by the Knights, which vary depending on

whether the Knights are working with Dumois or not.

The gamemaster characters mentioned below represent only a small part of the population of New Culmont, and the gamemaster is encouraged to flesh out the rest of the village with additional characters.

Unless otherwise stated, use the statistics given for New Culmont villagers in Act One.

The Demon's Bane Inn

The tavern/inn run by Samuel Derovoir is the core upon which New Culmont was built. Upon the spotted walls are bizarre pentagrams, old candles which never quite seem to burn out, and strange runes carved in the stucco walls. The inn and restaurant portion open at 10 a.m., drinks are served from 4 p.m. until 2 a.m.

Sam and Renee are God-fearing country folk who like nothing better than to hear and spread gossip throughout the town. Samuel dislikes using the GodNet and prides himself on being able to disseminate information faster than the Church. He has no particular love for the Cyberpapacy but is smart enough not to mention it.

Renee is not as friendly as her husband and much more dedicated to the new religion of Jean Malraux I. If someone goes out of their way to insult the Church, Renee will immediately become hostile toward them. She is not above speaking to Father Dumois via the GodNet if the characters should give her reason enough.

Renee is particularly afraid of witches and demons and it was she who reported Jeanette Cochereau to the authorities.

Tales from the Demon's Bane Inn

Whenever the characters spend any amount of time in the tavern, they will inevitably be drawn into conversation with the villagers of New Culmont. The following characters are frequent patrons of the inn and should help the gamemaster leak information to the players. On the topic of the massacre at the Barrens, most everyone will say that it was the work of the demons which



attacked the night before, all servants of the enemies of the faithful.

Other characters also frequent the Demon's Bane in the evening. Roll the die for each of the characters listed below. On a 1-15 or below, that character has chosen to visit the Demon's Bane that night:

Two acolytes from the Church sharing a meal of soup and bread. They are ignored by the other patrons;

Two off-duty Church Policemen,

Scratch's Victims

The young women who were murdered were known to several people in the village. Use the following as a guide when the Knights question the citizens of Culmont about Denise Morehead, Beatrice Laguer, and Agnes Montebanc.

Denise Morehead: Denise was known by everyone. Prior to the invasion, she had been a dropout and was suspected of having a drug addiction. Since the invasion, Denise reportedly dealt in such narcotics as dazzleomine, headbanger, and totalamine. No one is sure where she lived and few were surprised when they learned of her fate.

Beatrice Laguer: Beatrice frequented the Demon's Bane and was known to most of the patrons there. The 23-year-old girl was said to have come from a broken home and left the inn with a different man every night, presumably the source of her income. Her home has since been vacant and can be found just off the main street. There is nothing of any real significance here except some clothing and a Herod IV pistol hidden under the mattress.

Agnes Montebanc: Agnes was the first victim to come from a respectable family; the party may have met her father in Scene Three of Act One. The Phantom Coachman mistook Agnes for a runaway when she was walking home from the inn one night.

drinking German beer and being avoided by everyone;

Anton Delaroy, speaking to another man about the newest advances in cyberware. If the Knights evidence any interest in his conversation, he will suggest they visit his cyber-repair shop if they ever require any assistance. He also mentions the name of Professor Simon LeAngelac, who he describes as a cyberware "enthusiast," in a dark tone. Under his breath, he also mentions a group of cyberleggers know to be friends of Pierre Gerard, who runs Café de Pa-

triot.

The following characters will always be present in the Demon's Bane from about 7 p.m. until midnight. By day, most of them can be found in the cheap apartments which line main street:

Guiles Tulace is a slightly overweight, balding man who grows grapes, which he once sold to the larger vineyards. It was a slow living with little reward, but times had so hurt his crops that he could no longer produce his own wines.

Three months ago, Guiles' son was





When Axioms Collide: Prop 3

Massacre at the Barrens: Loison's Official Report

2/3, 1825

Criminal Investigation: Missing Persons

Location: New Culmont ("The Barrens")

One of the forsaken wretches that lives in the swampy area called the Barrens assaulted one of my officers on the morning of the 4th. The man's clothing was bloody and he was screaming of demons and witches murdering his companions. Following the pathetic fellow, the officer discovered that a number of the homeless were missing and a great amount of blood had congealed in the muddy ground.

I was alerted to the situation and ordered an immediate investigation. Our search was terminated within minutes by Father Dumois, who instructed that the incident was a matter for the bishopric to handle.

2/7, 0915

Criminal Investigation: Missing Persons/ Possible Mass Homicide

Location: New Culmont ("The Barrens")

Once again something has struck the crazed addicts who inhabit the "Barrens." Large pools of blood were visible and many footprints were evident. The prints and blood samples were about to be analyzed when Father Dumois once again instructed us unit to halt our investigation. Father Dumois stated that: "Our Savior, Cyberpope Malraux, has more important things for his Church Police to do than look for a bunch of psychotic vagabonds."

I have reported this interference to my superiors at Langres and ended the investigation under protest.

bitten by a snake while helping pick the grapes. Panic-stricken, he brought the boy to his friend, Professor LeAngelac, who treats the poor of New Culmont. Thirty minutes later, he was told that his son had died. But while preparing the body for the funeral, Guiles noticed that his son's BelleSee TeleSight eyes were missing. He truly hates LeAngelac and frequently calls him "Dr. Frankenstein," believing he let his son die so that he could have his cyber-eyes.

Francis Mondue: A shady character dressed in a black sweater, blue jeans, and a slouch hat, Mondue is a burglar of the first caliber. After the initial destruction of technology, he found himself without a job, money, and shortly thereafter, a wife.

He quickly turned to a life of crime and found he had a true knack for it. Francis mostly discusses losing his job and how he manages to live off his savings, quickly turning the conversation into a series of questions concerning the character's personal fortune and where it can be found.

If the Knights ask about the murders, Mondue will suggest that they talk to Pierre Gerard at the Café de Patriot. He is known to be a friend of the local cyberleggers, who are Mondue's chief

suspects.

Note: Francis has seen Talamous Scratch's Phantom Coachman (see Act Three). While casing the Demon's Bane late one night, he fell into a half sleep and heard an eerie "clip-clop" on the cobblestone street. When he looked up, there was a pale hansom cab with four ghostly horses standing in front of the inn. He was sure that he saw Denise Morehead enter the carriage, but then it began to fade away, taking the girl with it. She was found behind the Demon's Bane the next day.

Mondue was frightened by the sight and will share it with anyone who buys him a drink (he's desperately trying to find someone who won't think he's crazy).

Francis Mondue

DEXTERITY 13

Dodge 14, fire combat 14, melee weapons 16, stealth 15

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 10

Find 13, trick 15

CHARISMA 9

SPIRIT 8

Reality (Cyberpapacy) 10

Possibilities: 3

Equipment: cane sword, damage value STR+5/14; Herod IV, damage value 19, ammo 50. range 3-25/100/150; Cyberware: NeuraCal, j-jack. Cyber Rating: 5

Josephine Challier: A very attractive woman in her mid-twenties, Josephine dislikes living in Cyber-France, but is smart enough not to say so. She misses being able to travel to Paris without having to pass through Paris Liberté Militia checkpoints. She misses the lights and the parties of pre-invasion France, and is looking to hook up with someone who can get her to Berlin. Ideally, she would like to meet a handsome, wealthy Stormer who would be sufficiently attracted to her that he would be willing to take her with him. Once in Germany, she would find a way to ditch him. Her behavior has gained her an unsavory reputation in New Culmont.

Twenty-four hours after the party's arrival, she will become Scratch's next victim (unless he has been stopped by then). See "The Phantom Coachman," below.



The Abandoned Building

The empty building in the center of town was at one time a cyberware factory secretly controlled by a Kanawa subsidiary. It was damaged in a recent purge by Cyberpapal forces and abandoned. The Knights will find some equipment still extant which could be used to build or repair cyberware (+3 to *cybertech* checks).

Café de Patriot

This unusual-looking cafe is decorated in the motif of wartime France. It boasts souvenirs of both World Wars and an autographed photo of General Charles De Gaulle hangs over the cash register. The food is of average quality and consists of soups, breads, wines and some pork. A typical meal would cost about six American dollars.

It is run by Pierre Gerard, a sickly-

looking man in his late twenties whose features are constantly obscured by cigarette smoke. Pierre is a devoted member of the Resistance, and the man who sent the note to Cochereau. He loves being a spy and frequently plays the role to the hilt, using obscure and needless code phrases such as "The wind in Vienna smells of sausage in the early morn." He'll then wink and act as if the unfortunate player is supposed to understand him. This makes him feel very important.

Pierre is on good terms with a local group of cyberleggers. If the Knights remain on good terms with the Resistance, he will tell them where they can find "Tech Ghoul," a group he feels has been unfairly suspected of the "Night Slasher" murders.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

Gerard rolls a cigarette with nicotine-stained fingers as he speaks to you.

"Tech Ghoul's work out of an old garage on the south end of town. You

would call them 'cyberleggers.' They steal and sell what they can for profit, but they have been very good for Le Resistance. I have dealt with them many times. (Cough, cough.)

"Their leader was a young man named Renaldo. It was he who held them together, but something very strange happened to them a few nights ago, and he vanished. It was about then that the murders started."

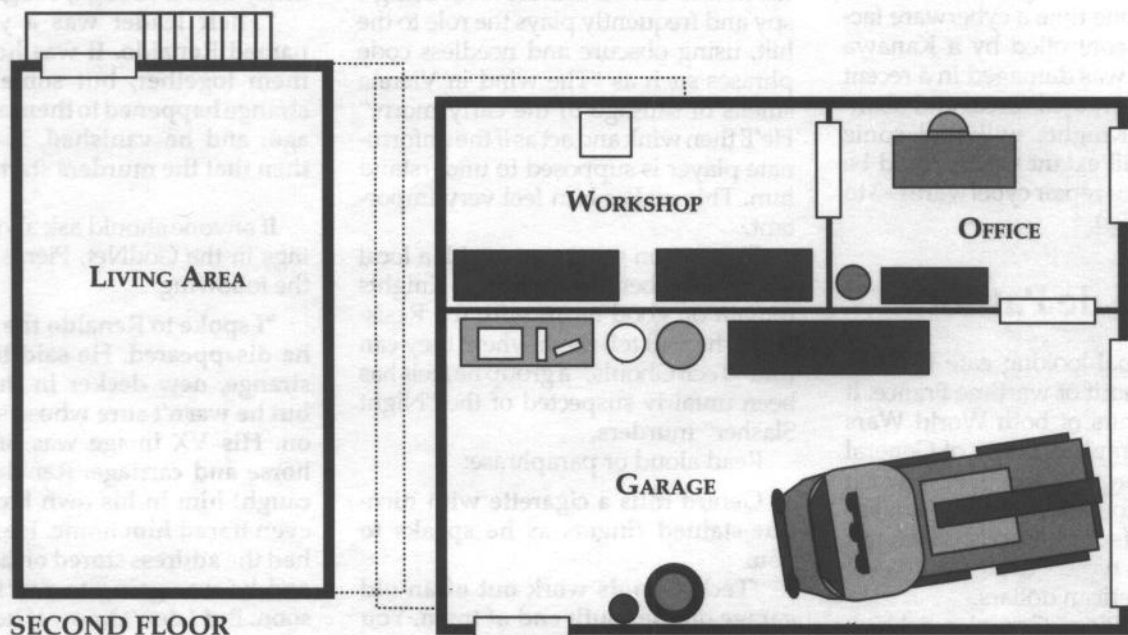
If anyone should ask about happenings in the GodNet, Pierre will reveal the following:

"I spoke to Renaldo the day before he disappeared. He said there was a strange, new decker in the GodNet, but he wasn't sure whose side he was on. His VX image was of a ghostly horse and carriage. Renaldo actually caught him in his own terminal, and even traced him home. He told me he had the address stored on a MemChip and he was going to pay him a visit soon. But I don't know if he ever did."





When Axioms Collide: Map 3 The Tech Ghouls Hideout



Renoir's Auto Service (Tech Ghouls Hideout)

Renaldo and his gang run a failing garage on the west side of town as a cover for their cyberlegging operations. With VX traffic taking the place of vehicle traffic in many instances, their business has been slow enough to allow them time for their latest cybertech experiments.

There are three cyberleggers in addition to the missing Renaldo. Slash, Renaldo's fiancée, accentuates her rough beauty with studded leather, chains, and harsh make-up. "El Cid" takes his name from the Spanish hero and travels the GodNet in this virtual identity. He often wears a power sword and homemade chain mail. The last member of the gang is the young Martinique. She usually wears a pink ballerina's outfit covered with a cracked leather jacket. Beneath her child-like exterior lurks the heart of an experienced street thief.

The work area of the garage has room for two vehicles, and the grounds are surrounded by a surprisingly strong

(TOU-13) chain-link fence, 2.5 meters high, topped with razor wire. A climbing total of 8 is required to scale it, and an acrobatics total of 13 is needed to avoid the wire on top. The wire does damage value 12 to those who fail that roll.

The fence's gate is padlocked (lock picking total of 12 to get around).

The yard is full of broken-down vehicles, good for nothing but parts. Two gasoline pumps rest in front of the garage. The door to the garage is locked (lock picking difficulty of 10). The door has a Toughness of 9. It and the front windows (lock picking difficulty of 10) are the only entrances to the building.

Tech Ghouls will be out looking for their leader when the Knights arrive. If the Knights investigate the garage, the cyberleggers will return while they are so engaged.

Raiding Renaldo's Terminal

Renaldo had two terminals, the main one in the office and a smaller one in his living quarters. If a decker tries to run the main terminal, a cyberdeck operations total of 8 reveals the following informa-

tion, depending on success level achieved:

Minimal to Average: A hidden file reveals that Renaldo doesn't report all of his repair work to the authorities. It also says that he saw the VX image of a new decker in the Net, a ghostly horse and carriage which was raiding the garage terminal. Renaldo traced it but the intruder's VX address is stored on his MemChip.

Good: A private journal kept by Slash reveals that she is deeply in love with Renaldo.

Superior: The decker finds a comprehensive catalog of the gang's cyberware. None of it matches that stolen from the "Night Slasher's" victims. It seems the Tech Ghouls deal mainly with small visual and olfactory systems.

Spectacular: A record of recent sales reveals the names of several Resistance members in Paris Liberté. The file is dangerously unprotected.

The Knights will discover that the smaller terminal has been smashed if they visit Renaldo's quarters.





Return of the Ghouls

If the Knights have broken into the garage, they will have a lot of explaining to do when the Tech Ghouls return (which they will do just as the Knights are about to advance upstairs to the living area). Have the Knights generate *find* or *Perception* checks — on a 10, they will hear voices from outside growing nearer.

If they fail the check, have them generate another the next round, with a difficulty of 8. This time, they hear a key turning in the garage door's lock.

If the Knights should hide in Renaldo's room in the living area, cut to the description under "Slash's Story," below, and have them make a *Perseverance* check.

If the Knights attack the cyberleggers, the Tech Ghouls will fight until subdued. Their attitude toward the Knights at that point will be *enemy* and they will have to be interrogated to get any information from them.

If the Knights do not attack and instead hide, have the Tech Ghouls generate *find* or *Perception* totals against the highest *stealth* value of the Knights. If they succeed, the Knights are discovered.

If the Knights are discovered and do not attack, El Cid will insist that they are Church Police spies and they should be killed. He will have an attitude of *enemy* toward the Knights. Martinique will be *hostile* toward them, and Slash will be *neutral* toward them. She recognizes them as Storm Knights who might be of help in finding Renaldo.

If the Knights are not discovered, a *find* or *Perception* total of 9 will allow them to overhear Slash say that she is certain Renaldo is in "the field," but has no idea how to get him out.

Slash

DEXTERITY 12

Acrobatics 13, dodge 14, fire combat 17, lock picking 14, maneuver 15, melee weapons 14, missile weapons 16, stealth 14, unarmed combat 15

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 11

Cyberdeck operation 14, find 14, first aid 16, land vehicles 13, language (English) 13, trick 15

MIND 9

Cybertech 13, psychology 10, streetwise 12, test 12

CHARISMA 8

Charm 14, persuasion 15, taunt 12

SPIRIT 9

Intimidation 11, reality (Cyberpapacy) 16

Possibilities: 11

Equipment: GWI GodMeeter, damage value 20, ammo 30, range 3-12/30/50; Plexiflex, armor value TOU+4/14; stilettos (4), damage value STR+4/14
Cyberware: NeuraCal, Epiphaneur, BelleView Low-Light, TSE LeMotion, MB Adrenal Booster. Cyber value: 13

Description: Slash always wears black, studded leather outfits, and severe facial makeup. The image of the typical punk rocker suits her and is accentuated by a sharp stiletto she continually twirls about her nimble fingers. She was and still is deeply in love with Renaldo Renoir.

El Cid

DEXTERITY 12

Dodge 17, fire combat 15, maneuver 15, melee weapons 18, stealth 14, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 12

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 11

Cyberdeck operation 14, evidence analysis 14, find 14, land vehicles 15, language (English) 12, tracking 13, trick 14

MIND 9

Test 14, streetwise 12

CHARISMA 10

Charm 14, persuasion 12

SPIRIT 9

Intimidation 15, reality. (Cyberpapacy) 15

Possibilities: 9

Equipment: GWI GodMeeter, damage value 20, ammo 30, range 3-12/30/50; homemade breastplate, armor value TOU+4/14, dagger, damage value STR+3/15, power broadsword, damage value STR+8/18. Cyberware: NeuraCal, Epiphaneur, FFO Rove Eye, TSE LeMotion, MB Adrenal Booster. Cyber value: 13

Description: "El Cid" was formerly Antonio Gonzales, a Spanish immigrant with little going for him. When he hooked up with the Tech Ghouls, his mechanical aptitude and his cavalier attitude had found their niche. His hair is kept neatly trimmed and he is

often too eager to jump into combat, powersword swinging about his head in the style of his namesake. He is attracted to Slash, and so is not heartbroken over Renaldo's disappearance. He will attempt to *charm* any female Storm Knights he encounters in a futile effort to make Slash jealous.

Martinique

DEXTERITY 9

Acrobatics 13, dodge 14, fire combat 15, lock picking 14, maneuver 20, stealth 14, unarmed combat 15

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 11

Cyberdeck operation 13, find 12, land vehicles 13, language (English) 12, trick 13

MIND 9

Cybertech 14, streetwise 16, test 13

CHARISMA 10

Charm 14, persuasion 13

SPIRIT 9

Faith (Protestantism) 10, intimidation 15, reality (Cyberpapacy) 13

Possibilities: 2

Equipment: Herod IV, damage value 19, ammo 50, range 3-25/100/150. Cyberware: NeuraCal, Epiphaneur, Compté's Stabiliza (+3 to defensive skills — already added into stats). Cyber value: 10

Description: Martinique lives her entire life for a twisted sort of ballet mixed with heavy metal rock music. She always wears a skintight black outfit underneath a pink ballerina's dress. Her makeup accentuates her pale face, rosy cheeks, and the pink bow in her hair. Appearances can be deceiving however. Martinique has perfected a combat style that literally dazzles her opponent, dancing around him until she is in a perfect position to pull her concealed pistol and end the show with a bang.

Slash's Story

If the Knights manage to convince the Tech Ghouls that they are not agents of the Cyberpapacy, they may be able to get some information from the gang. Slash will confirm that Renaldo had traced a decker resembling a ghostly coachman on a phantom carriage. He was shaken and fearful after the experience and seemed certain the coachman



had something to do with the "Night Slasher" murders.

Later that same night, Renaldo was working late in his room when the others heard a terrible scream. Slash will offer to show the Knights the scene, if they are interested.

If the Knights go with Slash into Renaldo's room, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The combination bedroom/office looks like a charnel house. Walls, floors, furniture are covered with dried blood. Empty racks line the walls, whatever they had once held gone.

Subtract one from the Knights' *Perseverance* and have them make a check.

Slash will tell the Knights that the racks held cyberware, which was evidently stolen at the same time Renaldo disappeared. His kidnapper would have had to enter by the window, but there was no sign of a break-in.

Allow the Knights to investigate the room as much as they would like. A *medicine* total of 9 reveals the dried blood to be human, roughly a week old (the length of time Renaldo has been missing). An *evidence analysis* total of 8 on the lock reveals that it is indeed rusted shut and has apparently not been disturbed.

The cable leading from Renaldo's private terminal is lying on the floor, and the terminal itself has been smashed.

An *evidence analysis* total of 13 allows the Knights to spot a word scrawled near the bottom of the wall in blood. It reads simply "gold." A *find* or *Perception* total of 9 reveals a small spool of gold wire which rolled under the bed. None of the Tech Ghouls know what it is or what it's doing there, but they will allow the Knights to take it, providing they pay for it.

"El Cid" will tell the Knights that the group believes Renaldo is dead, probably lying in the nearest gospog field (a place the Tech Ghouls know well, from scouting missions to steal cyberware off corpses).

If the Knights ask about the field, read aloud or paraphrase:

"There's a place up north. It's an old ruin surrounded by a thick forest. The Church Police sometimes dump bodies up there, complete with cyberware and even weapons. Only the bodies don't just lay there and rot like God



intended. After a while they get up and walk around. They're those things Malraux calls the 'walking dead.'

"We used to go to the edges and grab any fresh stiff, but there were just too many of the walking kind to stay too long or go too deep.

"If Renaldo is in the field, he'll be up at the top, near the ruins. He had a lot of cyberware, and that's where they dump the really good stuff. If his MemChip has any data on the murders, that's where you'll find it."

If the Knights decide to investigate the gospog field right away, have them encounter the event below, and then cut to Scene Three, "Harvest of the Dead."

Anton's Cyber-Repair

Anton Delaroy is an older man in his mid-sixties who enjoys a good problem to solve. Before the invasion he used to fix small engines. Now transformed to the reality of the Cyberpapacy, the tinkerer has found an electronic heaven. No problem is too big or too small for Anton.

Should a character find himself in

need of a repair man but in trouble with the CyberChurch, Anton will not turn them away. Under these circumstances, he will have the character sneak into the back of his building late at night and try to complete the repairs in a few hours. Remember that he is not a surgeon, only a cyber-technician.

For sale in his shop are an assortment of dumb-terminals, common replacement parts, power cells for cyberware, and a few loose tools which, purchased together, grant a +1 bonus to the *cybertech* skill. He also has all MemChips, Act-Chips, and DatChips listed on page 104 of *The Cyberpapacy* sourcebook.

Finally, a few legal programs are for sale. These include MicroMind's Manipulate 3 (10,000 Francs), and CyberWorks Store 1 (\$3,000 Francs) and Copy 2 (3,000 Francs) programs. Anton has no black market items.

If the Knights ask him about Renaldo, he will have heard of his disappearance, but have no details. He will recall that Renaldo purchased a spool of gold wire from him the day of his disappearance, but would not explain what he wanted it for. He seemed very anxious.

Delaroy will also mention that Pro-



fessor LeAngelac has never purchased cybertech through him or from the Tech Ghoul, to the best of his knowledge. But he has an enormous amount of equipment and Anton believes this proves he is the "Night Slasher."

Event

At some point during the Knights' first full evening in New Culmont, have them generate *Perception* totals. On an 8, they hear an eerie "clip-clop" coming from somewhere outside. If they investigate, they will see a ghostly white handsome cab and four phantom horses, driven by a spectral coachman. As soon as they see this, it fades from sight and is gone. Have the Knights generate a *Perseverance* total.

The next morning, Josephine Challier's body will be found between New Culmont and the Barrens. She is the fourth victim of the "Night Slasher."

If the Knights have not yet learned about Tech Ghoul at this point, Pierre Gerard will tell them that Renaldo Renoir recently saw something similar in the GodNet and they might want to speak with the cyberleggers.

Professor Simon LeAngelac

One of New Culmont's more mysterious characters, LeAngelac is one of the few inhabitants with a large number of cybersystems. Seemingly inserted at random about his tall body are half-contrived, jury-rigged systems of one sort or another. Dumois and the police at Langres haven't arrested LeAngelac so far because he performs a valuable service to the community and doesn't seem to be dealing with the black market.

LeAngelac is a biologist and former college professor who was fired for his unorthodox views on "survival of the fittest" among human beings. He believes that the poor and the uneducated exist only to serve an elite and has become an ardent Cyberpapist as a means of joining the "upper class" in France.

Since the arrest of New Culmont's resident physician on charges of heresy, LeAngelac has taken over the treatment of refugees, the poor and even some of

the middle-class. (The wealthy go to outside physicians.) He often removes the cyber systems from any patient that expires under his care.

This has led to some nasty speculation that the doctor allows his patients to die just so that he can have their cyberware. Whether or not this is true, he is not the "Night Slasher" — simply an interesting "red herring" for the Knights. He will not hesitate to share his views with them and if they do not put him out of business, he may return to trouble them in the future.

LeAngelac can tell the Knights that fear has been rampant among the refugees on the Barrens since the recent massacre. They claim that demons similar to the one who attacked New Culmont were responsible.

Professor Simon LeAngelac

DEXTERITY 9

Dodge 11, fire combat 11, melee weapons 14, stealth 11, unarmed combat 11

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 9 (14)

PERCEPTION 11

Cybertech 14, evidence analysis 15, find 14, first aid 16, language (English) 13, trick 12

MIND 12

Medicine 18, psychology 16, science (biology) 16, science (computers) 16, test 14, willpower 14

CHARISMA 10

Charm 11, persuasion 14, taunt 11

SPIRIT 13

Intimidation 16, reality 17

Possibilities: 5

Equipment: Herod IV, damage value 19, ammo 50, range 3-25/10/150; power dagger, damage value STR+5/14; Cyberware: Neuracal, Epiphaneur, BelleView Low-light, FFO Rove Eye, TSE Tasty Store, Marlenes Cool-Breeze with Headbanger and Totalamine, PLP Hypertouch, TSE LeMotion, Mediserve, BiV Arms (STR+5), Interdermal Plating; cyber value: 31

Description: LeAngelac is a physically grotesque man with cyber systems jutting out all over his body and the occasional loose wire sparking under his skin. His interest in cyberware has become a dangerous obsession.

He will greet the Knights with all courtesy and share information on the Barrens with them. He is oblivious to his

appearance and will be puzzled should the Knights have a horrified reaction to the sight of him.

He will not attack the Knights unless they threaten him. He will matter-of-factly state his views on the world and concede that "cyberware is wasted on those who do not have the will to use it."

The Barrens

When and if the party investigates this area of New Culmont, they will find few people willing or able to speak to them. Most are the unfortunate refuse of HolyVid and narcotic addictions while others are former patients of mental hospitals, thrown into the streets under Malraux's uncaring regime. Some are even ex-political opponents driven insane by the methods of the Inquisition. Eleven to fifteen of the unfortunate wretches can be seen amidst the weedy swamplands at any one time, huddling in cardboard boxes or chatting idly with wilted flowers.

There is little to see in the Barrens. Several storm drains and natural streams lead into a murky pond that smells of sewage. No plant life over half a meter tall grows in the swampy soil. Many people use the Barrens as a dumping ground, and cardboard boxes and old refrigerators dot the landscape. The homeless who live here use them as shelter.

Around noon every day, Dumois and an acolyte visit the Barrens and throw dry rations and water bottles to the forsaken inhabitants. He enjoys watching them scramble and fight for the meagre aid packages, but will feign great compassion if anyone is watching.

On a *find* or *Perception* total of 12, a Knight will find a blood-covered wine bottle. It belonged to one of the victims of the massacre and could be used as a contagion for certain Ayslish spells that allow users to gaze into the past (thus viewing the gospog attack).

Find or *Perception* totals of 10 reveal several sets of footprints. Most are the shoe prints of the wandering vagabonds that populate the Barrens, but some are the telltale tracks of the gospog that twice descended on this place.

An *evidence analysis* total of 11 reveals an unusual set of prints around a rusted, blood-spattered refrigerator. They ap-





pear to be the marks of cloven hooves made by some sort of two-legged animal. A scholar (realm lore) or Mind total of 9 will remind the Knights that Fourth-Planting Cyberpapal gospog resemble goat-footed, horned devil. (These are the prints of Nefestario, who led the attack on the Barrens.)

After the party has had a little time to investigate, Jean-Marc Landon, the former mayor of old Culmont, will scramble out of an old refrigerator. Gaston was "re-educated" by the Inquisition when he resisted turning over his office to Father Dumois. When he sees the Knights, he will grab one of them from behind and begin to rave about witches and demons. He is dressed in tattered rags and has dark circles under his eyes. Gaston's teeth are beginning to rot and his breath smells of rancid meat.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

The horrific vision that might have once been an upstanding citizen screams, "They came out of nowhere! We weren't doing anything! We weren't doing anything! There were

hundreds of them! Their skin was rotten and decaying, and some of them didn't even have any eyes!

"There were others though, oh yes! Witches. They poked at us to see who was plump enough to eat. They took Emma, they said they were going to cook her alive!

"But they weren't the leaders. Oh, no. There was another. A demon with red skin and black horns. And, hooves where he should have had feet! In his eyes were numbers, and letters! I think I even saw my name on those horrible black orbs! It was the Devil himself!"

He sinks to the ground and begins to sob. "Malraux was right after all! I'm sorry I ever doubted you, Père Dumois! The Devil has come to France! The Devil has come to France!"

The man suddenly turns around and runs away, crawling into an old refrigerator.

Jean-Marc will huddle in his refrigerator like a frightened child after his speech. He has gone from hysterics to

virtual catatonia, and can tell the Knights no more.

The Refugee Camp

The invasion and subsequent war in France have combined to displace a significant portion of the French people. In crossroads, junctions, and waypoints all across the nation, the dispossessed have settled. Most live in rickety shacks made of aluminum siding, plywood, roadsigns, or whatever else they could salvage.

Malraux's regime has provided relief funds for dispossessed families but they are slow in coming. The Red Cross typically delivers ration packages about once every two weeks, and one such camp has established itself around New Culmont. Dumois has kept them blissfully unaware of the area known as the Barrens.

The people that live in the camps are a mixture of lower and middle-class families and street thugs cast out from



places like Langres and Dijon by the Church Police. The rumors of the "Night Slasher" have circulated about the camp, and popular opinion is that the killer is none other than Father Dumois himself.

So far, Nefastario has centered his raids on the Barrens. Soon however, he will be forced to take advantage of the densely packed, defenseless refugee camps.

As the Knights head back to New Culmont from either the Barrens or the refugee camp, cut to "Troll Booth."

Troll Booth

As the party moves past a series of ramshackle tin shelters, have the Knights generate *Perception* totals. On a 14, they hear sounds of movement from both ahead and behind them. Then several figures emerge from the shadows. Two members of the "Troll" gang (Ogre and Goblin) block the Knights' path and three others position themselves behind the party so that they can't escape.

The Knights have wandered on to the turf of a gang whose members take their names from medieval fantasy. Goblin, Ogre, Hobgoblin, Orc and Ghoul terrorize the refugee camp, stealing food and liquor from the unfortunates. Their weapon of choice is the slasher, backed up by a dose of HeadBanger from their Cool Breeze atomizers.

Goblin demands a toll of 3,000 francs (about \$450) from the Knights if they wish to proceed. If the party won't pay, they'll have to fight their way through the punks. Gunfire will attract the Church Police, but slowly (it will take the authorities about 20 rounds to get a patrol out to the camp).

Just before the combat, the Trolls will inhale their HeadBanger, increasing their *Strength* and *Toughness* by three points for two hours and reducing all other attributes by the same. Parenthetical values represent their attributes as enhanced or reduced by the drug. Adjust skill values accordingly.

Goblin

DEXTERITY 12

Dodge 15, fire combat 14, maneuver 14, melee weapons 16, stealth 15, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 9 (12)

TOUGHNESS 8 (11)

PERCEPTION 11 (8)

Find 13, language (English) 12, tracking 13, trick 15

MIND 11 (8)

Streetwise 14, test 14

CHARISMA 10 (7)

Charm 11, persuasion 11, taunt 11

SPIRIT 10 (6)

Intimidation 17, reality (Cyberpapacy) 17

Possibilities: one per Storm Knight

Equipment: Herod IV, damage value 19, ammo 50, range 3-25/100/150; street version of Plexiflex, armor value TOU+4/12. Cyberware: NeuraCal, j-jack, BelleView Low-Light, slashers (both hands), damage value STR+4, Marlenes Cool Breeze with HeadBanger; cyber value: 13

Description: Goblin is a scrawny thug who uses his gang to prey on the weak. He attempted to carve out territory in Paris Liberte, but was driven out by the Sun Kings and Queens.

Ogre

DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 13, fire combat 13, melee weapons 14, stealth 11, unarmed combat 13

STRENGTH 13 (16)

Lifting 16

TOUGHNESS 12 (15)

PERCEPTION 9 (6)

Find 10, trick 10

MIND 9 (6)

Streetwise 11, test 10

CHARISMA 9 (6)

Taunt 11

SPIRIT 9 (6)

Intimidate 16, reality (Cyberpapacy) 14

Possibilities: 2

Equipment: Herod IV, damage value 19, ammo 50, range 3-25/100/150; street version of Plexiflex, armor value TOU+4/16; Cyberware: NeuraCal, j-jack, Kreelar Tendons, slashers (both hands), damage value STR+4/17, Marlenes Cool Breeze with HeadBanger; cyber value: 13

Description: Ogre is purely the pawn of Goblin and has been his friend for many years. He loves combat and will seek out the strongest looking opponent. He won't abandon Goblin for any reason.

Hobgoblin, Orc, and Ghoul

DEXTERITY 11

Dodge 14, fire combat 12, melee weapons, stealth 13, unarmed combat 14

STRENGTH 9 (12)

TOUGHNESS 8 (11)

PERCEPTION 9 (6)

Find 10, trick 10

MIND 9 (6)

Streetwise 10, test 10

CHARISMA 9 (6)

Taunt 10

SPIRIT 9 (6)

Intimidate 10

Possibilities: none

Equipment: Herod IV, damage value 19, ammo 50, range 3-25/100/150; street version of Plexiflex, armor value TOU+4/12; Cyberware: NeuraCal, j-jack, BelleView Low-Light, slashers (both hands), damage value STR+4; Marlenes Cool Breeze with HeadBanger; cyber value: 13

Description: These dregs of humanity joined Goblin after he and Ogre wiped out their old gang. They are decent fighters but not incredibly loyal, breaking and running if their two leaders should fall.

Flags

If a *Romance* card is played, either Francis Mondue will fall for a female Knight or Josephine Challier will fall for a male Knight. If the latter, the Knight will burn for vengeance when Challier is killed.

If a *Connection* card is played, one of the Knights knows Anton Delaroy and can seek him out. He will tell them about LeAngelac and the Tech Ghouls.

If a *Suspicion* or *Nemesis* card is played, Dumois will decide that the Knights' investigation is only a cover for an attempt to sabotage his work in New Culmont. If he is still in power at the end of the adventure, he will order the Knights arrested, regardless of the outcome of their efforts.

Alertness cards can be used to point out any clue that may have been missed. A character who failed to find the footprints or the bloody bottle at the Barrens, for instance, would notice them if this card was played.



Variables

If the heroes get in major trouble with the forces of the Cyberpope, Dumois will repeat his offer once again. If trouble is unavoidable, the priest will be forced to call in a large, well-armed strike team from Langres to deal with the uncooperative Stormers. Dumois is reluctant to spark such an open conflict, but will if forced. The gamemaster should try to prevent this circumstance by whatever method works best with her particular group.

If the Knights do not visit the Tech Ghouls, have the cyberleggers seek them out. Frustrated in their search for Renaldo's body, and having heard Storm Knights were in the area, they will seek the heroes' aid. They can offer six power daggers and four Avro PR II.Vs as payment. They will then be able to give the Knights the information about Renaldo's MemChip.

Perseverance Awards

Award the Knights *Perseverance* points based on which of the following events they have experienced:

- Learning of the Phantom Coachman's presence in the GodNet, +1;
- Spotting the Phantom Coachman, +3;
- Visiting the scene of Renaldo's murder, +2;
- Finding the word written in blood, +1;
- Finding the spool of gold wire, +1.

Cut To ...

The Storm Knights' investigation of New Culmont should lead them toward the gospog field and Renaldo's MemChip, their first concrete lead to the "Night Slasher's" identity. Without Scratch's VX address, they could search for years in the GodNet before finding him.

If the Knights do not know about Renaldo's MemChip, they still may want to go to the gospog field to avenge the Barrens massacre.

When the Knights are ready to go to the field, cut to Scene Three, "Harvest of the Dead."

SCENE THREE: Harvest of the Dead

The Situation

Dramatic. The Knights travel to the Cyberpapal gospog field located north of New Culmont. If they visit the area during the day, they will see the ruins of an ancient keep, the Chateau de la Crag, sitting high atop a rocky cliff in the distance. Surrounding it is a dense forest, full of thick brush and tangled vines.

Have the Knights generate *find* or *Perception* totals. An 8 reveals the occasional gospog wandering the edge of the wood, peering out of its boundless prison.

The Knights can, if they wish to, attack now. But they will have a far better chance of achieving success if they wait until dark. Any foray made in daylight by the Knights will plunge them into combat with hundreds of gospog, something they'll discover if they try it. Once their noses are bloodied, they'll think better of the idea.

If the Knights wish to avoid crossing the gospog field, they may approach the area from the north and climb the mountain to reach the ruins. If they do so, cut to "Scaling the Crag," below.

There are a number of caverns and dense glades in which the Knights can hide until darkness, if they wish. By night, a spark of light can be seen flickering among the ruins of the Chateau de la Crag.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

It has just begun to snow on this crisp, cold evening. A brisk wind bites at your face, and clouds obscure the waning moon which hovers above your head. From the woods before you comes an occasional moan or an even more frightening howl; telltale signs of the creatures you fought the night of your arrival.

Far in the distance, you can just make out the ruins of the castle which must serve as the abode of whoever watches over this harvest of the dead. Some source of light, probably a small fire, burns in the center of the ruins, and casts flickering shadows off the crumbling gray walls.



The light snowfall rapidly turns into a full-fledged storm. The cover from the trees and the blowing snow limits visibility to roughly 25 meters. Infrared vision will penetrate up to 100 meters. All *missile weapon* or *fire combat* attacks from medium or long range suffer a -3 penalty.

The Action

Finding the corpse of Renaldo (and/or the leader of the gospog) requires that the Knights make it past the hundreds of First Planting gospog which lie mouldering in shallow graves about the field. Then they must do battle with the Third and Fourth Planting gospog that live in the ruins of the Chateau de la Crag.

Near the ruins, the Knights can find the corpse of the cyberlegger, with his valuable MemChip still embedded in his ChipHolder.

Who's That I See Walkin' In These Woods?

Crossing the field to reach the ruins requires the use of the *tracking* skill and possibly the *stealth* skill. Going by way of the roadway which cuts straight across the field (see below) will take six rounds.

A *find* or *Perception* total of 9 will reveal a crude road running through the middle of the gospog field. This is used by Dumois when he visits Nefestario and is the safest way to cross the field. Traveling through the field itself, working one's way around the depressions filled with gospog, requires *stealth* and increases the risk of being spotted.

Flying to the crags takes only three rounds, as opposed to six on foot. However, the difficulty of *flight* in the inclement weather is a 17. Failing the roll means the character is forced down by wind, snow and ice. The character does not take any damage from this, however it is the equivalent of a *setback*. Whatever the Knight was using to achieve flight (gizmo, wings, etc.) ices up — unless there is a source of heat readily available to melt the ice, the character cannot achieve flight for the rest of the scene

(the exceptions to this are flight as the result of magic, miracles, psionics or a *flight* power that does not rely on an external aid to operate).

Following the road from the air requires a *tracking* total of 15. Failure means the character flies off course. A successful *tracking* total must be made to pick up the trail again. A flying Knight need not follow the roadway to reach the chateau — only if he wishes to keep the "on-foot" members of his party in sight.

Following the roadway on foot requires *tracking* totals of 12. Have the Knight with the highest skill value generate the total for the group. Failing the total means the group wanders of the path and into the field proper.

If the group becomes lost, all members must generate *stealth* totals as they move amid the gospog. The base difficulty is 6 (the gospog *find* skill of 10 modified for darkness and weather conditions). Roll a die to find out how many active gospog are in the immediate area (1-20) and add the appropriate Many-On-One modifier to the difficulty number of the *stealth* total.

Finding the path again when lost requires a *tracking* total of 12. The character generating this total will have to either make no movement for that round or generate a *stealth* total as well as part of a multi-action.

If a character fails a *stealth* total, he has been detected by the gospog. If this occurs, cut to "Marathon," below.

Once the base of the cliff is reached, the First and Second Planting gospog will not follow. Nefestario has forbidden them from entering this section of the field.

Gospog of the First Planting (4 per Storm Knight)

DEXTERITY 8

Energy weapons 9, fire combat 9, melee weapons 9, missile weapons 9, unarmed combat 9

STRENGTH 8

Climbing 9

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 7

Find 10, tracking 8

MIND 7

Willpower 10

CHARISMA 7

SPIRIT 7

Possibility Potential: none

Natural Tools: natural armor, value

TOU+2 /10;

Equipment: Herod IV, damage value 19, ammo 50, range 3-25/100/150

Gospog of the Second Planting (2 per Storm Knight)

DEXTERITY 8

Dodge 15, running 12, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 19

TOUGHNESS 18 (23)

PERCEPTION 6

Find 10 tracking 13 trick (12)

MIND 6

Survival 12, test (12), willpower 13

CHARISMA 5

Taunt (8)

SPIRIT 5

Intimidation 14

Possibility Potential: none

Natural Tools: teeth, damage value STR+4/23; claws, damage value STR+3/22; rock-tough hide, armor value TOU+5/23), immune to K-results.

Marathon!

Run this event only if one of the Knights fails a *stealth* check when wandering off the path in the gospog field. Have the Knights generate *Perception* totals. On a 10, they hear the sound of footfalls in the snow.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

The wind blows ice crystals into your eyes. Despite this, you can just make out a humanoid figure shambling from a break in the trees. Its dead eyes turn toward you.

This gospog is rapidly followed by others. The first few make a frontal attack on the Knights, then more appear to the sides and behind the party. If the Knights attempt to flee (even just to get better position), have them generate *Dexterity* totals. Failure to achieve a 10 means they have stumbled into a shallow grave in which a First Planting lies. The gospog will attempt to grab the Knights' ankle and will have to be fought off.

This should be an extremely frightening scene — with visibility limited by the weather, the gospog loom out of the darkness. Moving forward, claws outstretched, this scene should leave the Knights feeling like they've walked into





When Axioms Collide: Map 4 Chateau de Crag

RUINED WALLS

SPIT

PIT

TREE

RUBBLE

ROCKS

NEFESTARIO

RUBBLE

a horror movie.

The Knights can fight the gospog off or they can try to make it to the ruins. No matter what course of action they choose, they are in for a battle.

If the Knights defeat the initial wave of gospog and make it back to the road, the whole thing can start again if they wander from the path and fail a *stealth* check.

Chateau de la Crag

As the party advances towards the center of the field, they can make out a few details of the ruined fortress above.

A pathway leads up to the mountain to the structure. If the Knights wish to approach from the north by climbing the cliff face, cut to "Scaling the Crag."

When they are within 100 meters of the castle, a *stealth* total of 12 will be needed to avoid detection by Nefestario. (Gunfire in the field will not necessarily tip him off to the presence of Storm Knights — cyberleggers have been known to make raids on the field by night).

If a Knight fails the check, Nefestario will take up a position on the ruined tower where he is practically invisible (*find* total of 20 to detect his presence).

From here he will watch the intruders, but not alert his Third Planting "witches" just yet.

If Nefestario is unaware of the party's presence, he sits on the rocks to the right of the fire, partially obscured by the deep shadows of the ruined walls and the blowing snow (*find* total of 15 to spot). Of course, low-light or infra-red vision will ruin this advantage.

Within 75 meters, the heroes can make out 13 figures dancing around a large bonfire. Tied on a metal spit above the flames is a slowly roasting humanoid. Torturous moans carry slowly through the night and seem to ride on the brisk



winter wind. Due to the flames and smoke, *evidence analysis* totals of 18 are required to make out just what is being cooked up.

When the Knights reach the ruins, cut to "The Devil Made Me Do It."

Scaling the Crag

A clever party may want to scale the ruins from the north. This has two advantages; they won't have to cross the gospog field and they will be downwind of Nefastario and the witches, subtracting -3 from the difficulty of the Knights' *stealth* check.

The mountain can be climbed without any special gear, and requires three *climbing* totals of 15 to complete. If one of these totals is missed, the character falls. A *Dexterity* total of 14 will allow her to snag a nearby branch or root and stop the fall.

Falls can occur at 20, 40, and 60 meters, depending upon which of the three totals is missed. Use the falling rules on pages 52-53 of the *Torg Rulebook* if this occurs.

The Devil Made Me Do It

When the Knights reach the summit, they can generate *find* or *Perception* totals. A 9 reveals a shallow pit filled with corpses near the ruined walls. The spit and the dancing witches (who continually poke and prod their victim) stands between the Knights and the pit, unless they have scaled the mountain from the north.

If that is the case, they can sneak over the ruined wall and attempt to carry off Renaldo's body. But the proximity of the fire and the gospog means *stealth* totals of 23 will be needed to reach the pit. For information on finding the proper corpse, cut to "The Pit" below.

If the Knights mount an attack, Nefastario will attempt to slip away to take up a position on top of the south tower if he was not there already. The cunning gospog will hide for a few rounds while he evaluates the party's capabilities, possibly casting a *mage dark* spell to remain hidden if this won't attract even more attention.

In combat, a favorite trick of Nefastario's is to cast *mage dark* on himself and one of his enemies, disguise himself as the victim and then come running out yelling "Shoot it!" Anyone who fires into the darkness suffers a -5 penalty to their attempt, due to the darkness, but if he hits, he may save the gospog the trouble of eliminating an opponent.

The Third Planting gospog will use their spells to the best of their ability. They will fight to defend the area, unless Nefastario should be killed, at which point they will *break*.

Should Nefastario be *heavily wounded*, or his Third Plantings slain, he will offer the Knights a deal. Let him live, and he will share some information. If they agree, he will tell them that Dumois was behind the attack on New Culmont. He will also tell them that one of the bodies in the pit was not brought by Dumois or gospog, but by a spectral figure and a man-like animal. The phantom muttered something about a MemChip as he dumped the corpse with the others. Nefastario saw no profit in challenging the two, but did trail them, and so can give the Knights the physical address of Scratch's home (one kilometer southwest of New Culmont).

If the Knights let him go, he will vanish into the darkness. He may return seeking revenge in a future adventure.

Nefastario (Fourth-Planting Gospog)

DEXTERITY 13

Acrobatics 15, dodge 15, melee 15, running 15, stealth 15, unarmed 18

STRENGTH 12

Lifting 15

TOUGHNESS 18 (24)

PERCEPTION 11

Alteration magic 15, divination magic 15, find 16, language 16, tracking 16, trick 16

MIND 11

Apportation magic 15, test 15, will-power 20

CHARISMA 15

Charm 20, persuasion 19, taunt 18

SPIRIT 15

Faith (Cyberpapacy) 20, focus 18, intimidation 18

Possibility Potential: none

Spell Notes: Nefastario has the following spells: *disguise self*, *haste*, *earth*

shield, *flyhaste*, *jump*, *lightning*, *mage dark*, *mage light*, *pathfinder*, *stealth walk* and *weakness*. See Pixaud's *Practical Grimoire* for details.

He may use all Cyberpapacy miracles except *excommunication*.

Natural Tools: horns, damage value STR+4/16; hooves, damage value STR+3/15

Equipment: cyberware: NeuraCal, epiphaneur; cyber value 7

Skill Notes: Nefestario's heightened *Toughness* is due to enchantments placed upon his skin

Third Planting Gospog (13)

DEXTERITY 9

Dodge 11, maneuver 12, prestidigitiation 12, stealth 13

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 11

PERCEPTION 17

Alteration magic 20, divination magic 20, find 18, first aid 18, language 18, scholar (magic) 18, trick 18

MIND 17

Apportation magic 20, conjuration magic 19, survival 18, test 19, will-power 20

CHARISMA 9

Taunt 11

SPIRIT 11

Faith (Cyberpapacy) 13, focus 12, intimidation 14

Possibility Potential: none

Skill Notes: Third planting gospog know *living forces*, *inanimate objects*, *folk*, *entity*, *earthly*, *enchanted*, *avian*, *air*, *earth*, and *fire* arcane knowledges at +4 adds. They have the spells *altered fireball*, *bullet*, *detect magic*, *disguise self*, *earth shield*, *fly*, *haste*, *jump*, *lightning*, *pathfinder*, *stealth walk*, and *weakness*.

They also know the *alter disease*, *bless*, *crisis of faith*, *curse*, *vex*, *ward danger*, and *ward enemy* miracles.

Equipment: enchanted staff, damage value STR+3/12; in the staff is a focused spell which allows the gospog to use its *apportation magic* as the attack value, and which has a damage value of 18.

If the Knights go to save the figure on the spit, they will discover that it is actually a roasting First-Planting gospog that tries to bite anyone who tries to save it. This pathetic creature has a *Strength* of 5. Life's tough at the bottom of the gospog food chain.





The Pit

In the pit near the ruined wall are six rotting corpses, all of them with large amounts of cyberware. Five of these are Church Policemen, and have the appropriate cyber systems, should anyone care to remove them. They have been stripped of all other equipment.

The sixth body is that of Renaldo Renoir and has the following systems: NeuraCal, epiphaneur, BelleView Low-Light, CSI EyeKill Mk. IV, FFO Rove Eye, TSE LeMotion, MB Adrenal Booster, MB EndoBoost, MB MindBoost, MB Blocker, slashers, ShocKnucks, intradermal plating +6, and of course a ChipHolder with a MemChip and a cyberdeck operations +3 skill chip. His body has been torn apart by what appear to be (on an *evidence analysis* total of 9) to be sharp claws. Subtract one from the Knights' *Perseverance* and have them generate a total.

The "pit" is actually a grave. Nefastario was soon to harvest an An-

gel of Death, a gospog of the fifth planting.

The ChipHolder is located just below Renaldo's right ear. The Knights need only remove the chip from the holder.

The MemChip has a fair amount of information, including: the VX address of a construct called the Manor Scratch and data that reveals that the physical manifestation of the manor is located just south of New Culmont, and is cloaked with a spell that allows only those who know exactly where it is to see it. The physical address can be discovered by delving into the VX manor. The house is also protected by alarms that can be deactivated through the VX construct in the GodNet.

Renaldo actually made it as far as this construct, but did not learn the physical address. He did discover three things of major importance: the owner of the house is responsible for the "Night Slasher" murders; he has two servants, a spectre and a weretiger—the former is vulnerable to gold, the latter is at his

most powerful and most vulnerable when in animal form; and the instigator of all this evil plans to unleash something horrible into the GodNet that will kill thousands. Renaldo was detected before he could discover just what that something was.

He was unwittingly traced back to the garage by Scratch, who sent the Phantom Coachman and Mr. Grosh (see Act Three) to destroy him. Scratch was unaware of the existence of the MemChip with his address on it.

Flags

If a *Mistaken Identity* is played, the Knight will think that the creature on the spit is someone from town, preferably someone they've grown attached to. She should try to cut her way to the fire to rescue it, heedless of the danger to herself. A *True Identity*, *Alertness*, or *Idea* card reveals the gospog for what it is.

Nemesis cards can mean big trouble



for the character. If the Knights don't totally destroy the pit and the bodies within it, the Angel of Death will rise in three nights. Then the thing will track the card-player, for some reason holding him personally responsible for the attack on the field. See page 86 of *The Cyberpapacy* sourcebook for a complete description of how the Angel of Death operates.

Angel of Death (Fifth-Planting Gospog)

DEXTERITY 13

Dodge 15, flight 18, melee weapons 20, unarmed combat 20

STRENGTH 14

TOUGHNESS 30

PERCEPTION 14

Find 19, *materialization* 20, tracking 25, trick 16

MIND 13

Test 16

CHARISMA 12

Persuasion 16

SPIRIT 20

Faith (Cyberpapacy) 25, focus 21, intimidation 25

Possibility Potential: none

Skill Notes: May use all miracles of the Cyberpapacy except *excommunication*.

Natural Tools: wings, speed value 15

Equipment: death scythe, a two-handed weapon which has a damage value equal to the *faith* of the user; usable only by those of the Christian, Judaic or Islamic faiths; neon-blue TempTroles, known as DeathTroles. Cyberware: NeuraCal, BellSee Tele-sight, CSI LEDs, FFO NightView, True Spirit Toner, TSE Sifter, slashers, damage value STR+8/damage value 22; cyber value 15 (though Angels of Death never suffer cyberpsychosis).



Perseverance Awards

Award the Knights one Perseverance point for viewing Renaldo's body. Award them five for obtaining the information contained on the MemChip.

Awards

Award the Knights two Possibilities each for successfully completing this act (obtaining the MemChip). If, in addition to this, the Knights destroyed the gospog field and learned that Dumois was behind the attack on New Culmont, award them an additional Possibility each.

Cut To ...

With the MemChip in hand, the Knights now have enough information to mount an assault on Scratch's VX mansion. When they are ready to do so, cut to Act Three, "An Itch You Just Can't Scratch."



Act Three

An Itch You Just Can't Scratch

The Major Beat

In this act, the Storm Knights face their most formidable opponent yet, the Orrorshan sorcerer-scientist, Talamous Scratch. After successfully penetrating his terminal through the GodNet, a decker can shut down the manor's automated defenses without alerting its owner.

Meanwhile, striking in the flesh, the team must deal with Scratch's minions — the Phantom Coachman, were-tiger Mr. Grosh and others — and finally gain entrance to the attic laboratory, where they fight the mad scientist and his newest horror. Meanwhile, they must also try to stop the activation of the "Black Plague," a horrible virus threatening to destroy thousands of GodNet users throughout France.

SCENE ONE: Ghosts in the Machine

The Situation

Standard. The party must infiltrate the manor's virtual environment in order to shut down the automated defenses which run throughout the grounds of the estate. If they have not yet obtained the physical address of Scratch's home, they may also do so here. In addition, information on True Deaths and the "Black Plague" is available within the Net.

If the Knights do have the physical address of Scratch's home, they may wish to proceed there while their decker explores the Net construct. If so, cut

back and forth between the Net run and the exploration of the house (Scenes 2-4). This not only keeps tension high, but allows all the players to do something, rather than having the majority wait for the decker to emerge from the Net.

The virtual experience (VX) of Scratch's terminal is an extremely difficult run, not so much for the inherent difficulty of the seals and manipulations, but because of the very nature of Talamous' design. While the guardians which reside in the system are not horrors and have no access to the Power of Fear, their images are reminiscent of Orrorshan creatures.

The Action

The VX in Talamous' terminal resembles his physical home only in its feel. Once the party passes through the Langres exchange into this region, read aloud or paraphrase:

The datapath you walk suddenly changes, and you find yourself traveling down a cold and gloomy street. Before you stands a crumbling manor house, the likes of which you have never seen outside of Orrorsh.

A *net stealth* total of 11 is required to approach Cell 1 of Scratch's construct undetected. Should the Knights fail, let them think that horrible consequences will ensue. In fact, Scratch has had a lot of glitches in his homemade environment and will not be too alarmed when he sees an intruder alert. The Knights can get away with an initial failure — any others will alert Scratch to their presence in the construct.

Cell 1: The first cell appears to be a yard enclosed by an iron fence. There



are no Guardians or alarms here and the creaky old "gate" can be easily opened. A plaque hanging askew reads "The Manor Scratch."

Cell 2: Opening a battered gray door, the decker enters a musty foyer. Red velvet furniture, which looks as if it might once have been expensive, now looks only battered and worn. A proper English butler stands beside one of the chairs, carrying a silver tea tray.

He is the Guardian of this cell, and will attack (and activate all other Guardians) should he detect unauthorized intruders.

Butler

DEXTERITY 8
STRENGTH 8
TOUGHNESS 8
PERCEPTION 9
MIND 7
CHARISMA 8
SPIRIT 8

Net Values: net attack (melee) 8, net defense 8, net find 9, net stealth 8, net manipulation 9, net track 9

Response/Processor/Storage: 0/4/6
Programs: Attack 2 (2), Defense 2 (2), Scan 2 (2)

Description: The butler may roam freely. He has been instructed to admit no one beyond the foyer. He will not give out the physical address of the Manor Scratch.

Cell 3: A gloomy hallway stretches into the darkness. A peculiar Guardian resides in this cell. It looks like a long, tattered rug with snake patterns weaved throughout — but it will rise and attempt to crush any intruders it detects.

On the wall is a portrait of Talamous himself. An *evidence analysis* or *Perception* total of 10 reveals that he has extremely long fingernails. (This relates to the clue found in the morgue in Act Two, Scene One.)

Python Rug

DEXTERITY 8
STRENGTH 8
TOUGHNESS 8
PERCEPTION 9
MIND 7
CHARISMA 8
SPIRIT 8

Net Values: net attack (melee) 8, net defense 8, net find 9, net stealth 8, net manipulation 9, net track 9

Response/Processor/Storage: 0/4/6

Programs: Attack 2 (2), Defense 2 (2), Scan 2 (2), Grapple 3 (4)

Description: The rug is static and restricted to this cell.

Cell 4: A bend in the hallway leads to Talamous' first study (cell 5). A secret panel slides out allowing access to the security devices. A *net find* total of 16 is needed to find the security remotes, and a *net manipulation* total of 16 will disable all external alarms. If the Knights should fail at this last, Scratch's minions will be expecting them in the real world. There is no Sentinel here.

Cell 5: This area appears to be a study complete with desk and writing utensils. A journal lies open on the desk and rows of books line a shelf overhead. The Guardian here is a poltergeist — if it detects an intruder, it will begin battering him with books, pens, compasses, globes and other pieces of furniture.

The journal and books are all blank. This area has been abandoned by Scratch and is now only used as a trap for the unwary.

Poltergeist

DEXTERITY 11
STRENGTH 8
TOUGHNESS 10
PERCEPTION 10
MIND 7
CHARISMA 8
SPIRIT 8

Net Values: net attack (melee) 11, net defense 11, net find 10, net stealth 11, net manipulation 10, net track 10

Response/Processor/Storage: 1/4/6
Programs: Attack 3 (3), Defense 2 (2), Scan 2 (2), Lock 1 (2)

Description: The poltergeist resembles a ghostly skeleton clad in rags. It may not leave the study.

Cell 6: The core of the construct looks something like a Nile Empire "weird science" lab. Vandergraff generators buzz eerily and many test tube concoctions boil and spew forth smoke throughout the room. Giant levers, dials, and pulleys are used to manipulate the other cells. The Sentinel in here is a creature seemingly created from parts of other GodNet entities. It has obvious cyber-enhancements in place of limbs.

The Monster

DEXTERITY 8
STRENGTH 15
TOUGHNESS 13
PERCEPTION 8
MIND 5
CHARISMA 5
SPIRIT 5

Net Values: net attack (melee) 8, net defense 8, net find 8, net stealth 8, net manipulation 8, net track 8

Response/Processor/Storage: 0/6/8

Programs: Onslaught 4 (3), Defense 2 (2), Scan 2 (2), Trace 2 (2), Surge 1 (2)

Description: The monster may roam freely about "Scratch Manor."

Cell 7: This data vault is in the form of a cemetery. A successful scan reveals a grim-looking crypt across the graveyard. There is one sentinel here which resembles a multitude of decaying hands. It will reach from the ground and attempt to hold an intruder in place until "the monster" arrives from the core.

"Buried" beneath one of the graves is data on Mr. Grosh's True Death and can be accessed using a *net manipulation* total of 11. Grosh, a were-tiger, can only be killed when in animal form.

Also buried there is information on the "Black Plague" virus. The virus is currently contained on a chip in Scratch's deck. Scratch must activate it through his terminal (at which point it will appear in this cell of the construct). The virus will then move outside of the construct and replicate itself before sending Surges through the GodNet and killing thousands of GodNet users.

Until the activation process has begun, the virus cannot be encountered in the Net. For further information and statistics for this creation, see Scene Four, "Tears On My Pillow, Plague in the Net."

Creeping Hands

DEXTERITY 14
STRENGTH 12
TOUGHNESS 6
PERCEPTION 10
MIND 4
CHARISMA 8
SPIRIT 8

Net Values: net attack (melee) 15, net defense 15, net find 10, net stealth 12, net manipulation 11, net track 11

Response/Processor/Storage: 1/6/6





Programs: Defense 3 (3), Scan 2 (2), Grapple 3 (4)

Description: Creeping hands are confined to the cemetery construct.

Cell 8: Once the decker slips past the crypt doors, he sees an odd sight. Sitting on a stone tomb, its lid half open, is a journal, a quill pen, and a bottle of red ink; Talamous' new study. A skull with a candle atop it provides a meager light source.

If the chamber's Guardian detects the decker, it will rise from the tomb and attack. It resembles an Orrorshan wight, a white, bloated corpse with tattered clothing, scraggly white hair, and bloody eyes.

Once the wight has been defeated, the journal can be examined. Unfortunately for the Knights, it has been partially erased. Scratch tried to keep his notes here, but found that he still preferred the old-fashioned method. (See Scene Three.) What remains reads:

"Will have to find a better way ... kill. Read ... something called ... virus

which could be used with ... effect, killing thousands of these foolish Cyberpapists.

"Will liken ... black plague. ... Hellion Court ... pleased."

The actual translation is:

"Will have to find a better way to kill. Read about something called a 'virus' which could be used with devastating effect, killing thousands of these foolish Cyberpapists. Will liken to the black plague. The Hellion Court will be pleased."

Also included in the remains of the journal is Scratch's address in the physical world, one kilometer southwest of New Culmont.

Wight

DEXTERITY 11
STRENGTH 12
TOUGHNESS 10
PERCEPTION 10
MIND 9
CHARISMA 5

SPIRIT 7

Net Values: net attack (melee) 13, net defense 13, net find 14, net stealth 5, net manipulation 13, net track 12

Response/Processor/Storage: 2/10/13

Programs: Attack 3 (3), Defense 3 (3), Scan 2 (2), Scramble 2 (2), MindWipe 2 (3), DeckWipe 1 (2), Trace 2 (2)

Description: The wight must remain in the crypt.

Perseverance Awards

Award the Knights two Perseverance points for learning Grosh's True Death and three for learning Scratch's physical address.

Cut To ...

Should the Knights beard the horror in his lair, cut to Scene Two, "Into the Manor Scratch."



SCENE TWO: Into the Manor Scratch

The Situation

Standard. The Knights arrive at the Manor Scratch. If they obtained the physical address, it is visible to their eyes. If they are just searching at random, they will need a *true sight* total of 14 or *Superior* success with a *detect magic* rite.

If the decker was successful in Scene One, all external alarms have been disabled and the horrors within are not expecting them. If they were unsuccessful, they must be careful when entering the property and the odds are good Scratch and his minions are waiting for them.

Unlike Scene One, *Perseverance* checks will be made here. Remember that the difficulty number for such checks is 18.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

A heavy iron fence surrounds the dreary grounds. Near the gate stands

an old gatehouse, long unused judging from the condition of it. Beyond that is a murky pond, dark and stagnant.

Further on, up a long drive sits the manor house and some sort of garage. The dull yellow windows of the mansion might be eyes looking down upon you. The roof appears badly mauled by decades of wind and rain and most of the shingles lie rotting on the lawn. Great gray columns, paint peeling in long decaying strips, rise from a large porch and struggle to support the overhanging roof.

Far away, you can hear the distant sound of thunder. It begins to rain.

Gateway to Hell

Although the house appears dilapidated and frightening, this is all intentional. The house is an occult creation maintained by Scratch. If he should be killed, the house will vanish as if it never existed.

The surrounding area is filled with abandoned homes, destitute squatters, and heavy woodlands. No one will hear the noises that the night will bring.

Detect Magic and the Occult

Orrorshan magic is quite different from Ayslish magic. The result of this is that using *detect magic* rites to spot occult spells is quite risky.

Failing in such an attempt sends vibrations through the ether which can be picked up a sorcerer with an *occult* total of 20. Make a roll for Scratch should the Knights fail such a check.

There are three ways that non-flying Knights can gain entrance: scaling the fence, scaling trees to the south and dropping down behind the fence, or breaking in via the gate.

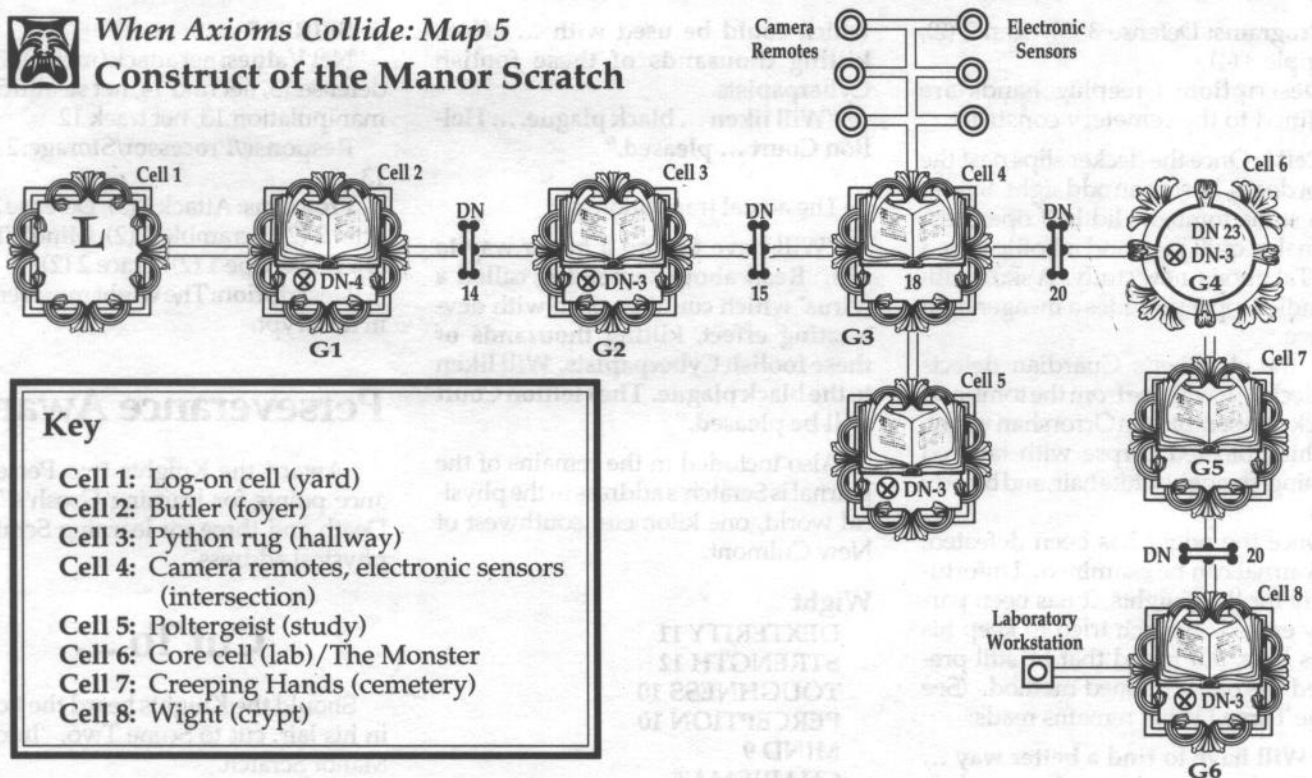
Climb Up, Drop In, Get Out

If the Knights have not successfully disabled the alarms, an electronic sensor is attached to the fence. It will imme-



When Axioms Collide: Map 5

Construct of the Manor Scratch



diately warn the occupants of the house if the fence is touched. A *find* or *Perception* total of 10 will reveal the sensor and a *science (electronics)* total of 11 will disable it (a *Mind* total of 15 can also accomplish the feat).

A *Good* success with a *detect magic* rite will reveal that the first person to touch either the fence or the gate will be attacked by a *boiling blood* spell (see page 84 of the *Errorsh* sourcebook). The spells around both structures are good for only one attack apiece. Characters flying over the fence or gate will not be affected by these spells.

The gate is two meters high and padlocked (*lock picking* total of 13). The lock is similarly protected by a *boiling blood*

spell.

Scaling the gate or the fence require *climbing* totals of 10. (Both are roughly three meters high, made of iron rails and topped with spikes.) Unlocking the gate requires a *lock picking* total of 8.

To the south of the manor is particularly heavy woodland. A number of trees have limbs which hang over the fence — a *climbing* total of 10 will allow the character to shimmy up and an *acrobatics* total of 8 allows the Knights to make the leap to the other side of the fence. But once he's in mid-air, the spiked fence will move underneath to "catch" him. A second *acrobatics* total of 12 will be required to keep from landing on the fence (damage value 18 from the spikes

otherwise).

Once the Knights make it past the fence, they will face a new danger: Mr. Grosh's DemonHounds patrol the grounds. Generate *find* totals for the hounds immediately after the Knights are in — if they beat the *stealth* values of any of the Knights, they will head toward the smell/sounds to attack, arriving in the next round.

Have the Knights generate *Perseverance* totals when they first see the grotesque hounds.

DemonHounds (12)

Reality: Errorsh

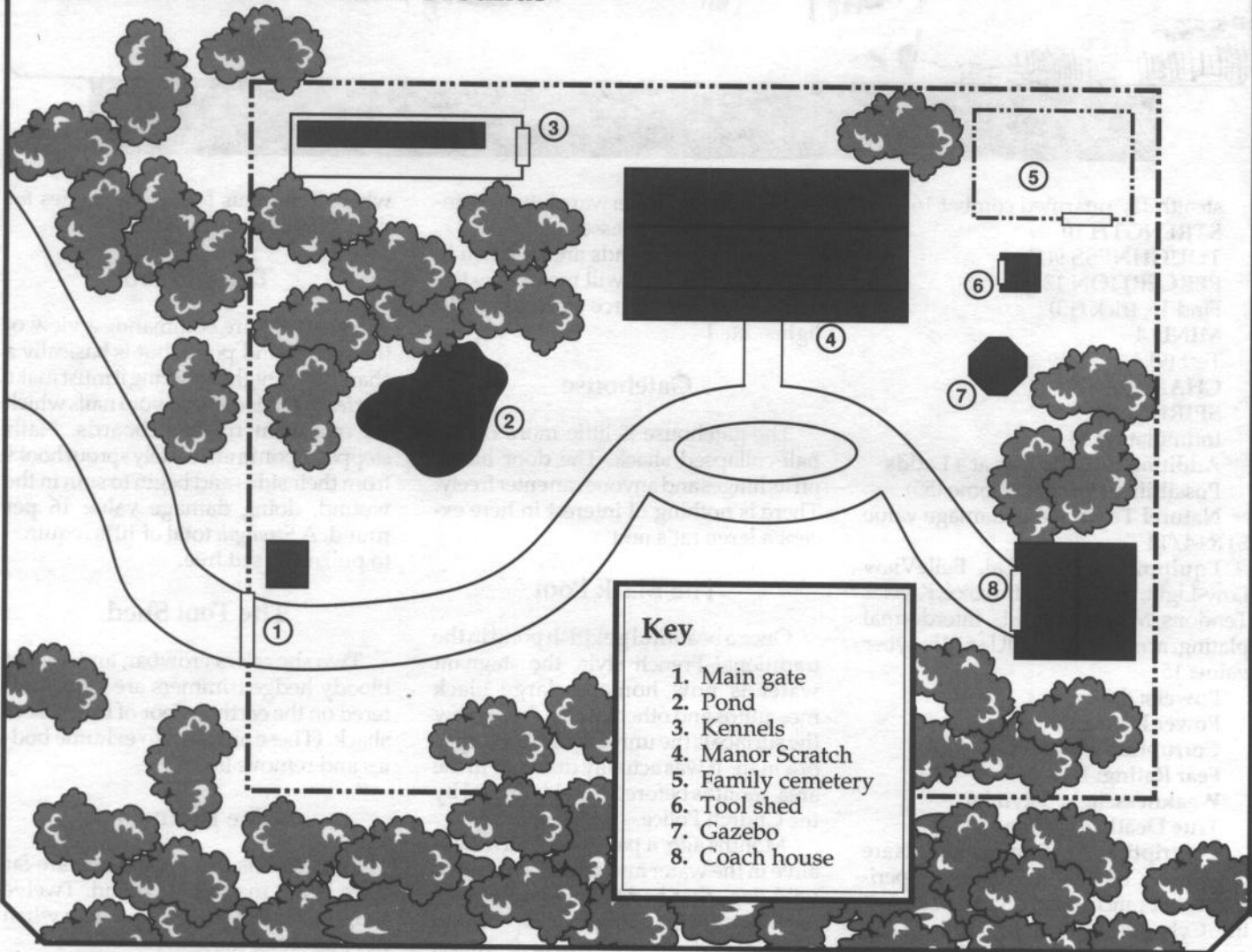
DEXTERITY 12

Dodge 14, maneuver 14, running 15,



When Axioms Collide: Map 6

The Manor Scratch Grounds



Key

1. Main gate
2. Pond
3. Kennels
4. Manor Scratch
5. Family cemetery
6. Tool shed
7. Gazebo
8. Coach house





stealth 13, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 9(15)

PERCEPTION 12

Find 16, trick (13)

MIND 4

Test (9)

CHARISMA 4

SPIRIT 8

Intimidation 14

Additional Skills: one at +1 adds

Possibility Potential: some (55)

Natural Tools: teeth, damage value

STR+4/14

Equipment: NeuraCal, BelleView Low-Light, DATASynthivoice, Kreelar Tendons, MB EndoBoost, interdermal plating, armor value TOU+6/15; cyber value: 15

Powers: darkness

Power Rating: 1

Corruption Value: 12

Fear Rating: 1

Weakness: light (stymie)

True Death: drowning

Description: The DemonHounds are the results of Talamous' first experiments in France, Orrorshan versions of the Cyberpapacy's hellhounds. They appear as large, decaying canines with a

hodgepodge of cyberware jutting painfully from their carcasses.

The DemonHounds are *up* when in total darkness, and will move to extinguish any light source (torches, flashlights, etc.)

Gatehouse

The gatehouse is little more than a half-collapsed shack. The door hangs off its hinges and anyone can enter freely. There is nothing of interest in here except a large rat's nest.

The Black Pool

Once a beautiful goldfish pond in the traditional French style, the stagnant water is now home to large black mosquitos and other insects. Just below the surface is the unrecognizable corpse of a man. It was actually dumped in the area months before Scratch's arrival by the Church Police.

Months ago, a paralyzing virus was alive in the water and affected a pack of wild dogs that had taken up residence here. Most of the animals collapsed into the pool and quickly drowned. This is

where Talamous found the bodies for the DemonHounds.

The Gazebo

This structure commands a view of the woods and pond, but is basically a shambles. Knights entering it must make *Dexterity* totals of 11 to avoid nails which jut out from the floorboards. Nails stepped upon immediately sprout hooks from their sides and begin to spin in the wound, doing damage value 16 per round. A *Strength* total of 10 is required to pull one's self free.

The Tool Shed

Two shovels, a crowbar, and a set of bloody hedge trimmers are lying scattered on the earthen floor of this rickety shack. (These are used to exhume bodies and remove limbs.)

The Kennels

The animals that reside here are far from being man's best friend. Twelve DemonHounds are penned here when not patrolling the ground.



Anyone investigating will find gnawed bones and a few dead rabbits lying about the floor.

The building is concealed from the north by heavy vines clinging to the iron gate.

The Coach House

As the Knights pass the coach house, an eerie light shines from within. Though it looks as timeworn as the other buildings, the coach house is home to Scratch's spectral henchman and his ghostly hansom cab.

The building has only one entrance, a large garage-door which hangs slightly ajar. There are two windows but the dust and grime inside are so thick that nothing can be seen beyond them.

When anyone enters this building, read or paraphrase the following:

The door to what looks like a garage seems to have broken from its track and hangs slightly ajar. You notice pale light seeping in through the dusty windows. Sitting quietly in the middle of the garage is a worn hansom cab. It seems to be made of leather which has cracked into large rivulets, grotesque patterns which look like wounds on the aging hides.

The wheels are broken in several places, and a large gash mars the right side as if the carriage had been in a catastrophic accident. Even the supports which would attach to the horses' harness have snapped. A battered top hat lies on the seat.

If a Knight examines the inside of the carriage, read the following:

All over the floor boards is some sort of dried, brownish substance. A few flies stir around when you near it, and a terrible smell, like rotting flesh emanates from the vehicle.

The hat, like the floorboards, seems to have been sunk in some sort of mire. It too smells of decay.

A *find* or *Perception* total of 10 will reveal an eerie glow around the hat. If one of the Knights should touch it, have him generate a *willpower* or *Mind* total against the Phantom Coachman's *Spirit*. Failure means that he has become possessed and will instantly assume the appearance of the Phantom Coachman,

an invisible spirit wearing a top hat and suit. (This new appearance is an illusion and will disappear if the character is rendered unconscious.) The cab will then transform before his very eyes, becoming opaque yet fully restored. Ghostly horses will slowly materialize and the harness will attach itself as if guided by human hands.

Possessed, the Knight will now have the *Mind*, *Perception*, *Spirit* and *Charisma* of the Coachman (see the rules for possession on page 95 of the *Orrorsh* sourcebook). The possessed Knight will not have access to the Coachman's powers. He will feel compelled to attack his comrades — if he is rendered unconscious, the possession will end and the true Coachman will attack. If he is bound by a golden wire, or rendered unconscious with a golden weapon, the possession will likewise end but the Coachman will not reappear. (In this particular case, the

Coachman's ability to possess others is bound to his weakness, a means by which Scratch ensured his servant's loyalty.)

If no Knight touches the hat, or the attempt at possession fails, the true Coachman will attack the party before they can leave the coach house.

Have the Knights generate a *Perseverance* total at the initial appearance of the Phantom Coachman.

The Phantom Coachman

Reality: Orrorsh

DEXTERITY 15

Dodge 16, maneuver 19, melee weapons 17, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 18

TOUGHNESS 16

PERCEPTION 11

Find 23, land vehicles 13, tracking 13, trick (18)

MIND 12

The Phantom Coachman

The Phantom Coachman is an unusual horror, in that Talamous didn't create him, he salvaged him. One stormy night in the city of London on Gaea, terrible apparitions of the Gaunt Man's creation rode the dark winds. The homes of many City residents were torn to pieces by the angry spirits, and hundreds of refugees clogged the roads, scurrying for the safety of their churches.

One man, Darius Barkley, had just secured a large quantity of gold from a Victorian expedition into the Congo which he had sponsored and had deposited it in a bank in London. Fearing for the safety of his gold, he jumped into a cab and ordered the driver to make for the bank. The vehicle's progress was soon halted by the frightened mob in the streets. When the driver balked at driving over innocents, Barkley beat him with his cane and took the reins for himself. He continued to race down the City avenues, trampling almost a hundred people in the process.

Midway to London, Barkley was attacked by the Gaunt Man's apparitions and his cab was driven into a deep ditch. Barkley and his horses were maimed horribly, and while he lay suffering in the bitterly cold rain, the spectres of those he had run down passed and cursed him for his greed.

Now all that remains in the physical realm of Darius Barkley is his top hat and the battered cab which eventually crushed the life from his body. The "Phantom Coachman," as he was dubbed, became a legend in London, a warning against excessive greed.

Scratch found out that there was some truth to the rumor, and eventually came across the cab and hat in an auction of the Barkley estate. With the permission of the Gaunt Man, Scratch used the occult to trap Barkley's spirit in the tattered hat and make him a servant. At Scratch's bidding, the spirit can free itself and do his bloody work. It is the Coachman who obtains victims for Scratch.





Test (20)

CHARISMA 13

Charm 16, persuasion 18

SPIRIT 13

Intimidation 20, reality (Orrorsh) 14

Possibilities: none

Equipment: whip, damage value STR+3/21

Powers: *elemental alteration (mist), selective invisibility, blur form, silence, resistance to normal weapons, dark vision, hypnosis*

Power Rating: 13

Corruption Value: 13

Fear Rating: 1

Weakness: gold objects (severe)

True Death: To be bound by gold wire — the Coachman has no power to resist the touch of gold, and his *Strength* will avail him naught

Skill Notes: attacks made against the Coachman when he is invisible suffer a -5 penalty

Family Graveyard

Scratch's house was "built" on the site of a mansion burned to the ground

by the Church Police for harboring heretics. The families that lived there buried their dead in the small plot behind the house. It is surrounded by the same sort of gate which circles the grounds though it is always left open. The tombstones bear such names as Duvallier and La Fleur. Several have been dug up recently for parts — an *evidence analysis* total of 9 reveals a scattering of what appear to be bat heads and wings near one of the open graves.

Enter Freely, And Of Your Own Will

Once the grounds are explored, the Knights can head for the house. The manor house is a disaster area, as dark and dangerous as the mind of the man who created it. The floorboards are constantly falling through and rats scurry about the debris littered floor.

If the Knights are low on *Perseverance* or simply having too easy of a time of it in the house, feel free to introduce a

wandering horror from the *Orrorsh* sourcebook or *Creatures of Orrorsh*, just to keep the Knights on their toes.

Anytime a *setback* occurs, a Knight has stepped through the decaying floor. If this occurs while not in a direct conflict, it will simply be an annoyance and will do no damage (but the character must spend a round freeing his leg).

During combat, let the unlucky victim go in all the way up to his waist, suffering a fatigue result. *Climbing* or *Strength* totals of 11 are necessary to get out of the hole. Remind the Knight that his legs are now dangling over who-knows-what ...

Have the Knights generate *stealth* totals against a difficulty number of 15 when in the ballroom, sitting room, dining room and kitchen. If they fail, cut to "Oh My Grosh!"

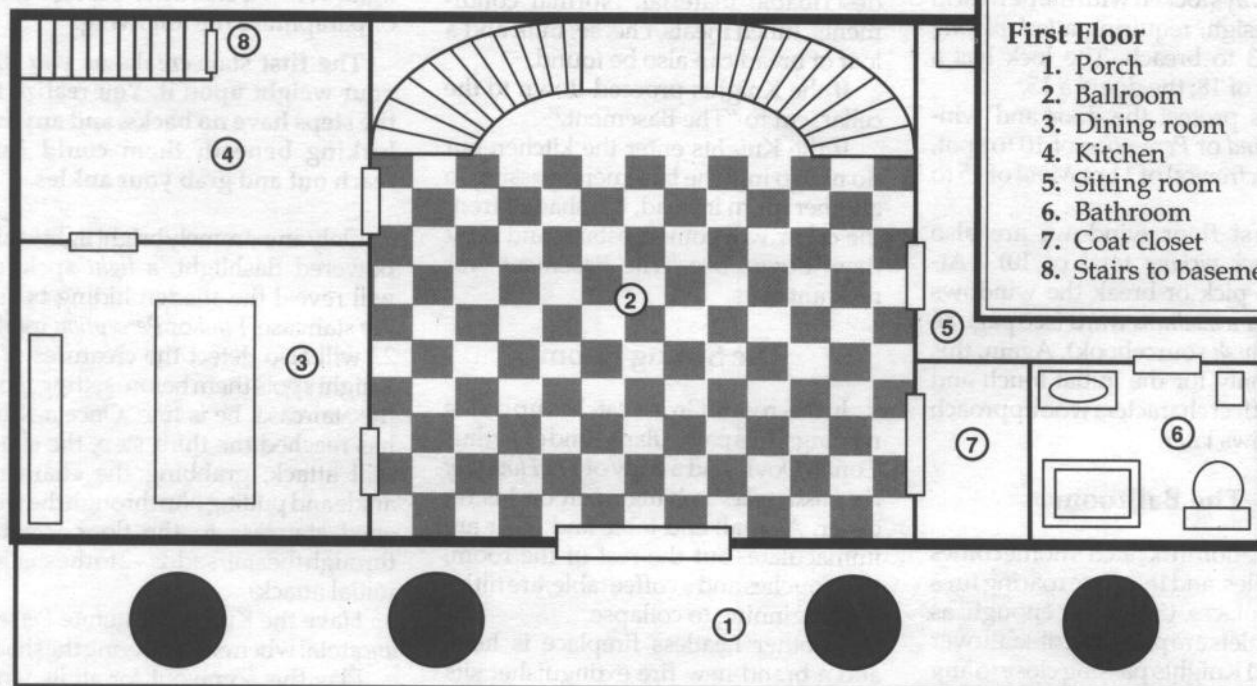
If they successfully explore the entire first floor — or are about to head upstairs — have them generate *find* or *Perception* totals. On a 7, they hear someone coming down the stairs. Cut to "Oh My Grosh!"





When Axioms Collide: Map 7

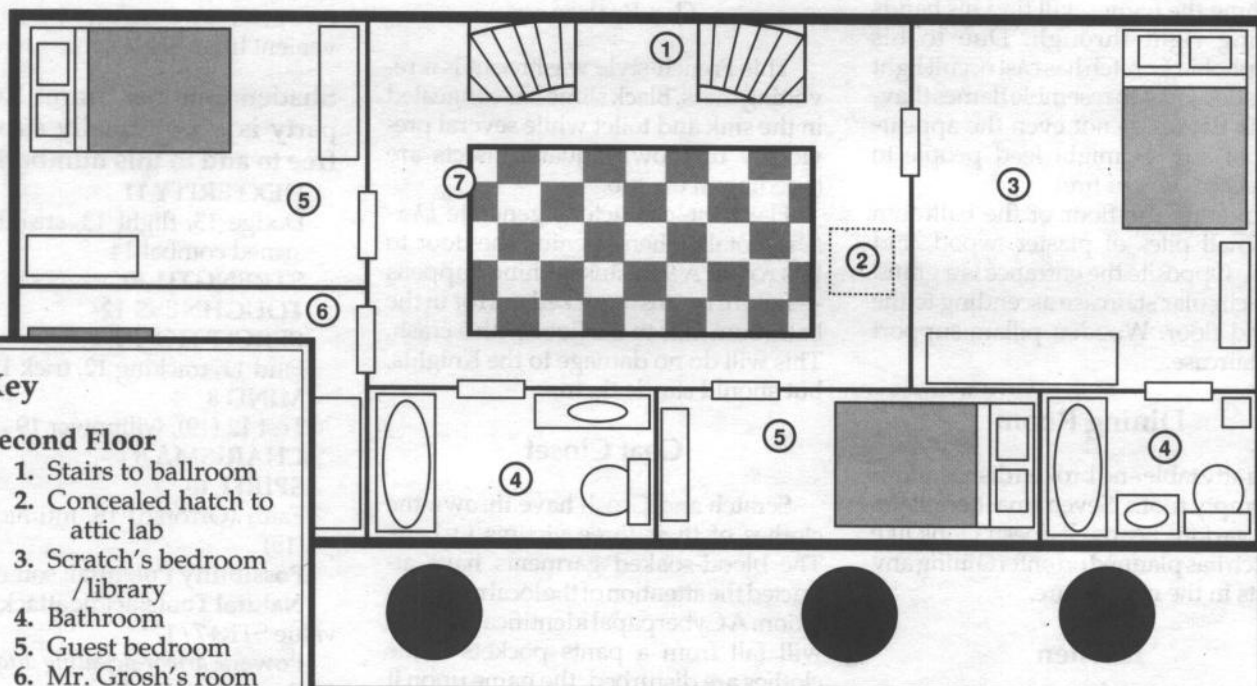
The Manor Scratch: First and Second Floors



Key

First Floor

1. Porch
2. Ballroom
3. Dining room
4. Kitchen
5. Sitting room
6. Bathroom
7. Coat closet
8. Stairs to basement



Key

Second Floor

1. Stairs to ballroom
2. Concealed hatch to attic lab
3. Scratch's bedroom /library
4. Bathroom
5. Guest bedroom
6. Mr. Grosh's room
7. Overlook to ballroom (5 meter fall)



The Front Porch

The porch now suffers from the same weakened floors as the interior. Paint is peeling from the columns and plaster has fallen from the overhang. The front door is always locked with the newest in French design, requiring a *lock picking* total of 13 to breach. The lock has a *Toughness* of 18; the doors a 15.

Sensors protect the door and windows — *find* or *Perception* of 10 to spot, *science* (electronics) of 11 or *Mind* of 15 to disable.

The first floor windows are also locked (*lock picking* total of 10). Attempts to pick or break the windows will trigger a *madness* ward (see page 86 of the *Orrorsh* sourcebook). Again, this is active only for the initial touch and does not affect characters who approach the windows later.

The Ballroom

Illumination in Scratch's home comes from candles, and there are roaring fires in the fireplaces. (Strangely enough, as electric outlets are plainly visible all over the house.) Knights passing close to any of these fires or candles will notice that the flames gives off no heat. A Knight touching the flames will find his hands passing right through. Due to his pyrophobia, Scratch has cast occult light spells designed to resemble flames (having no flames — not even the appearance of any — might lead people to suspect his fear of fire).

Covering the floor of the ballroom are small piles of plaster, wood, and trash. Opposite the entrance is a grand semi-circular staircase ascending to the second floor. Wooden pillars support the staircase.

Dining Room

A ratty table and broken dishes adorn this empty room. Seven smashed chairs lie in various heaps. It doesn't look like Scratch has planned on entertaining any guests in the near future.

Kitchen

One of the few clean rooms. Mr. Grosh has put up a small table where he and his master sometimes eat together.

On the table when the Knights arrive is a plate of cut meat and cheese, half-eaten. A rat will jump from the table onto the floor as the party approaches.

The appliances are all new and the refrigerator contains several jars of indescribable material. Normal condiments, lunch meats, cheese, milk and a loaf of bread can also be found.

If the Knights proceed down to the cellar, cut to "The Basement."

If the Knights enter the kitchen but do not go into the basement, passing to another room instead, the shaden from the cellar will come upstairs and hunt them down. See "The Basement" for relevant stats.

The Sitting Room

In this room, Grosh catches up on his reading. He is particularly fond of Arthur Conan Doyle and a copy of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is lying open on his recliner. A small end table and chair are immaculate, but the rest of the room, two couches and a coffee table, are filthy and beginning to collapse.

Another heatless fireplace is here, and a brand new fire extinguisher sits beside it.

The Bathroom

This French-style washroom is a revolting mess. Black slime has congealed in the sink and toilet while several previously unknown aquatic insects are breeding in the tub.

Have the character's generate *Dexterity* totals when opening the door to this room. A 9 means nothing happens — failure means a cracked mirror in the bathroom falls to the floor with a crash. This will do no damage to the Knights, but should startle them.

Coat Closet

Scratch and Grosh have thrown the clothes of their three victims in here. The blood-soaked garments have attracted the attention of the local rat population. A Cyberpapal identification card will fall from a pants pockets if the clothes are disturbed, the name upon it that of Agnes Montebanc.

Subtract a *Perseverance* point and have the Knights make a check.

The Basement

Creaky stairs lead to what appears to be a wine cellar. The walls are of a cold, slimy stone. A single candle burning at the bottom the stairs provides the only light. When a character descends, read or paraphrase the following:

The first stair creaks as you place your weight upon it. You realize that the steps have no backs, and anything lurking beneath them could easily reach out and grab your ankles.

Only an extremely bright light (a high-powered flashlight, a *light* spell, etc.) will reveal the shaden hiding beneath the staircase. *Find* or *Perception* totals of 23 will also detect the creatures. If the Knight spots them before setting foot on the staircase, he is fine. Once a Knight has reached the third step, the shaden will attack, grabbing the character's ankle and pulling him through the weakened staircase to the floor (crashing through the stairs adds +2 to the shaden's initial attack).

Have the Knights generate *Perseverance* total when encountering the shaden.

Play this scene out for all its worth. Drag out the trip down the first few stairs; extinguish the "candle" two steps down; have a rat scurry by at an inconvenient time. Have some fun with it.

Shaden (one per Storm Knight; if party is exceptionally strong, feel free to add to this number)

DEXTERITY 11

Dodge 13, flight 13, stealth 18, unarmed combat 14

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 12

PERCEPTION 9

Find 11, tracking 12, trick 11 (16)

MIND 8

Test 12 (19), willpower 19

CHARISMA 8

SPIRIT 10

Faith (Orrorsh) 18, intimidation 11 (15)

Possibility Potential: some (55)

Natural Tools: acidic attack, damage value STR+7/17

Powers: armor-defeating attack

Power Rating: 2

Corruption Value: 18

Fear Rating: 1

Weakness: None



True Death: killed with a steel or iron blade

Description: Shaden resemble floating patches of darkness. They can compress and shape themselves, conforming to the shapes of the shadows in which they hide. In shadows or darkness, they receive a +5 to their *stealth*.

The only things of any great interest in the basement are a fuse box against the wall and Scratch's concealed room (see below). Accessing it is a simple action.

The Wine Racks

Relatively valuable wines line the dusty old racks. Should someone bother to collect the bottles, they are worth about \$200,000. The shelves are arranged so as to obscure the view of Scratch's concealed room, the area in which he toys with his victims.

An *evidence analysis* or *Perception* total of 10 reveals a crack in the wall behind the racks. Closer examination reveals this to be a doorway into a hidden room.

Concealed Room

The cold, stone floor of this room is spotted with patches of dried blood. A bloody rope rests in the middle of the floor and various instruments of torture fill the room. Tools of the cyberlegger's trade also litter the chamber, all covered with blood.

Subtract a *Perseverance* point and have the Knights generate a *Perseverance* total.

Oh My Grosh!

The Knights will encounter Mr. Grosh either on the first floor or on the staircase to the second. If they have failed *stealth* checks, he will know someone is about and already be in his were-tiger form. If they have simply overheard him coming downstairs to get his book, he will be in human form. His first action upon confronting them will be to transform.

Should the Knights see him transform, have them generate a *Perseverance* total.

(If the Knights go into hiding to ambush Grosh, have them generate one last *stealth* total against his *find*. If they fail, he transforms instantly.)



Mr. Grosh (Third-Planting Gospog — Human Form)

DEXTERITY 11

Dodge 13, fire combat 13, maneuver 12, melee weapons 15, running 16, stealth 15, unarmed combat 13

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 12

PERCEPTION 9

Find 15, first aid 12, language 12, tracking 13, trick 15

MIND 9

Test 15, willpower 12

CHARISMA 8

SPIRIT 9

Faith (Orrorsh) 16, intimidation 14

Possibility Potential: none

Equipment: Standard Cross heavy revolver, damage value 16, ammo 6, range 3-5/15/25

Description: Since Scratch was once the caretaker of a gospog field in Gaea, he was able to reward himself with a useful product of the harvest. Grosh is a gospog of the third planting, a were-tiger. Normally a quiet man who likes to serve his master, Grosh will become the beast when danger threatens.



Grosh does not entirely approve of his master's embracing high technology, but knows better than to voice his objections. His own distaste for such technology is the reason he carries a Victorian pistol rather than a Cyberpapaal one.

Were-Tiger Form

DEXTERITY 13

Dodge 15, maneuver 20, running 16, stealth 15, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 14

TOUGHNESS 12

PERCEPTION 9

Tracking 13

MIND 6

Test (18), willpower 15

CHARISMA 5

Taunt (12)

SPIRIT 9

Faith (Orrorsh) 16, intimidation 14

Possibility Potential: none

Natural Tools: claws, damage value

STR+3/17; teeth, damage value STR+10/24

Powers: *shape change, attack form resistance (magical physical damage), resistance to normal weapons, dark vision*

Power Rating: 6

Corruption Value: 22

Fear Rating: 1

Weakness: None

True Death: Can only be killed when in animal form.

Flags

If a *Nemesis* card is played, Mr. Grosh will attempt to escape if the battle is going against him. He will return to Orrorsh to report on Scratch's presumed failure and return to plague the Knights in a future adventure.

The same applies if Grosh is defeated in a way other than his true death.

Variables

It is possible that, at some point after entering the house, the Knights might decide to leave and call for reinforcements from the Church Police, the Resistance, etc.

If the Storm Knight group has been getting pounded in the adventure, allow them to pick up a few gamemaster characters to set off some of the traps

and take some of the initial hits from horrors. Otherwise, kill the unwanted helpers as quickly and as gruesomely as possible, as a warning to characters about trusting Ords to do a Knight's job.

Perseverance Awards

Award the Knights one *Perseverance* apiece for defeating Grosh, the DemonHounds and the Shaden. They also receive one point for finding the victim's bloody clothing, finding the concealed room, and discovering the true nature of the fires in Scratch's home.

Cut To ...

When the party ascends to the second floor of Manor Scratch, cut to Scene Three, "Shadow Boxing."

SCENE THREE: Shadow Boxing

The Situation

Standard. Before the final confrontation in Scratch's attic, the Storm Knights may explore the second floor. In doing so, they can find clues to the True Deaths of the Scratch and his newest creation. Use the following scene to detail the rooms on this floor.

The Action

Climbing the grand staircase leads to the sleeping quarters of Scratch (which also houses his library) and his servant Grosh. As the party ascends the stairs, read or paraphrase the following:

Out the bay window, you can see the rolling fields of the French countryside stretching out for miles. The lightning that you heard earlier is closer now and you wonder if all "haunted houses" are surrounded by a perpetual storm at night. At least, it may have covered any noise you've made so far.

In fact, it has not. The noise of the

Storm Knights' battles has alerted Scratch, and he has just decided to rush the creation of his newest horror to deal with whomever has broken into his house.

Attic Hatchway

Concealed from view, this pull-down staircase requires a *find* or *Perception* total of 11 to spot in the poor light. This applies only if the character is specifically searching for the hatch. Otherwise, it is a *find* or *Perception* total of 18 to locate it.

Master Bedroom/Library

Scratch's bedroom is the only room in the house which reflects his expensive tastes. The bed is covered in expensive Gaeen Ch'in velvet. A nightstand and chest-of-drawers of a rich mahogany, obtained from Gaea's India, rest in a corner. The wardrobe is made from the same rich wood and contains some 14 outfits, all made of expensive French material. Hanging prominently on one wall is a bright red fire extinguisher.

On the nightstand is a Victorian book on the occult called *Making Man*, which details the creation of golems and gives a +2 to any occult ritual involving them.

At the foot of the bed is an old footlocker filled with odds and ends. A *find* or *Perception* total of 11 detects a false bottom. Beneath this is \$27,000 dollars in gold coins.

A bookcase rests against the far wall. One volume, Scratch's journal, is marked with a tattered map of New Culmont. The map has several sites circled. An *evidence analysis* or *Perception* total of 9 or more reveals that these match the locations of the last known sightings of the three murder victims.

The last entry in the journal is several days old. Anyone who reads it should be given Prop 4, "Scratch's Journal." Remember that this represents only the pertinent information and takes about ten minutes of game time to pick through.

Scratch's occult notes are currently in use in the attic laboratory, but a *find* or *Perception* total of 7 reveals that several books are missing from the shelves.

A terminal equivalent to a Wrath II is also present in this room, hooked into



the GodNet. The "Black Plague" chip is not in this room.

The Bathrooms

Mr. Grosh's washroom is immaculate, with soap, towels and other toiletries neatly laid out with the precision and cleanliness of a surgeon.

Scratch's bathroom is the opposite. Thick rings line the bath-tub and *evidence analysis* or *Perception* totals of 10 detect rolls of dead skin collected near the drain. The toilet and sink are indescribable.

Mr. Grosh's Bedroom

Like his washroom, Mr. Grosh's sleeping quarters are spotless. It is extremely spartan, the one exception being a bookcase filled with the works of Arthur Conan Doyle. Grosh has been trying to get Scratch to create a "Hound of the Baskervilles" to set loose on the local populace but Talamous has so far only given him a patronizing look and

promised him a visit to Aysle.

Guest Rooms

Broken beds and nightstands are the only items in these rooms. They are not completely unoccupied however. Since these are the only rooms on the second floor without "candles" burning within, the shadows used by Scratch to protect his house dwell here.

As soon as the Knights enter a guest room (or even open its door), cut to "Me and My Shadows."

Me and My Shadows

The shadows will strike from the darkness when the Knights enter a guest bedroom. Scratch obtained them from the mysterious Nightmare known as Mr. Punch, with whom he traded a horror of his own creation several years ago.

The shadows will pursue the Knights once they have been released.

Have the Knights generate a *Perseverance* total when attacked by the shadows.

Shadows (one per Storm Knight)

Reality: Orrorsh

DEXTERITY 11

Acrobatics 13, dodge 13, melee weapons 14, stealth 13, unarmed combat 12

STRENGTH 11

Climbing 12

TOUGHNESS 14

PERCEPTION 10

Find 11, tracking 13, trick 12

MIND 9

Test 10, willpower 11

CHARISMA 5

SPIRIT 5

Faith (Orrorsh) 19, intimidation 11

Possibility Potential: none

Equipment: shadow rapier, damage value STR+5/16

Powers: blur form, darkness, dark vision, attack form resistance (firearms/explosives), silence

Power Rating: 5



Corruption Value: 27

Fear Rating: 1

Weakness: intense light (stymie)

True Death: Trapped in bright light for a full minute

Flags

Should the Knights miss the gold coins or the journal, an *Idea* or *Alertness* card should point them in the right direction.

Perseverance Awards

Award the Knights one *Perseverance* point for defeating the shadows, and three for finding Scratch's journal.

Cut To ...

When the Knights find Scratch's attic laboratory, cut to Scene Four, "Tears On My Pillow, Plague in the Net."

SCENE FOUR: Tears On My Pillow, Plague in the Net

The Situation

Dramatic. The Storm Knights hurl themselves into the attic laboratory of the Manor Scratch. There they must stop the activation of the "Black Plague" while trying to stave off the attacks of Scratch's newly-created horror, the Chiropterase.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

Topping the stairs, an explosion of light and sound fills the attic above you. When your senses return, you hear the laughter of an insane soul.

The attic looks like a cross between a cyberlegger's lab and a weird scientist's nightmare. A well-dressed but scrawny old man shuffles across the floor and begins punching something in on a cyberdeck.

To your right are several hideous forms, zombies or gspog by the look of them. They hang from hooks and chains embedded in the walls and reach

out toward you as you crawl from the hole.

A sliding panel in the roof above you stands open, and the rain collects in puddles all over the floor.

The room is dominated by an operating table, to which is strapped a massive creature resembling a humanoid bat. Cyberenhancements protrude grotesquely from its skin.

As you watch, it begins to move, tearing its straps apart as if they were paper. Suddenly you realize that the explosion which greeted you was the lightning that gave life to this horror.

The old man lifts his eyes to the heavens and screams, "It lives! I have won! Won! Ha ha ha ha ha!"

The Action

Stopping the "Black Plague" is the crucial element in this scene. While some Knights enter the GodNet, the others must battle Scratch and the creature he sparked to life only moments ago.

The lightning bolt that aided in that effort succeeded in cutting all power to the lab. (Note that cyberdecks are powered by their interface with the GodNet, and do not require external power sources.) The attic is now lit only the occasional flash of lightning — those without enhanced vision suffer a penalty of -5 to all *fire combat*, *missile weapons* and *energy weapons* attacks. A *find* or *Perception* total of 10 will reveal the presence of an auxiliary generator, currently turned off.

The power failure has also released the zombie from their power chains — they will attack the Knights, Scratch, the Chiropterase, and just generally make nuisances of themselves.

The rain has made the floor slippery. Anyone attempting a *maneuver* suffers a -3 penalty due to the conditions. A total less than 8 means the character slips, suffering a *knockdown* result.

Zombies (13)

Reality: Orrorsh

DEXTERITY 7

Stealth 10, unarmed combat 9

STRENGTH 12

TOUGHNESS 14

PERCEPTION 1

Trick (10)

MIND 1

CHARISMA 3

SPIRIT 7

Faith (Orrorsh) 11, intimidation (18)

Possibility Potential: none

Power Rating: 1

Corruption Value: 13

Fear Rating: 1/2

Weakness: None

True Death: Shot through the head (*vital blow* which causes at least a *heavy wound*)

Work Tables and Chemical Racks

Each table features electrical generators, boiling concoctions, and mazes of tubing conducting some noxious liquid into large beakers. All of the Bunsen burners are currently off. As the battle ensues, this equipment will inevitably be wrecked, scattering its debris on the floor. This creates random hazards appropriate for a setback or two (see "Flags," below).

In addition, there is a large amount of sound equipment lining the wall, which Scratch uses to keep the Chiropterase in line. With the power out, the Knights will have to restore it. See "Chiropterase Rising."

The Cyberdeck

A terminal equivalent to a Wrath II sits on a metal table here. The virus created by Scratch is an independent entity, a merging of cyber-science and the occult. The specific instructions for the "Black Plague" are to pass through the Langres exchange and find an isolated area to reproduce itself. This was to happen at 8:00 am the following day. After it had produced 13 versions of itself, it was programmed to scatter through the Net and attack the people of CyberFrance during Sunday Mass.

When Scratch became aware of intruders in his home, he decided to go ahead and launch the virus early. He begins the activation process when the Knights emerge into the attic. Smashing the terminal or the chip cannot stop the virus from "awakening."

The activation process, once begun, requires four steps, A-D. This is a use of Dramatic Skill Resolution for the virus, in which it need not generate any totals. It is present in the Net, but dormant





When Axioms Collide: Prop 4

Scratch's Journal

January 25th, London, Victoria

...an interesting legend. A nobleman named Darius Barkley supposedly trampled several people to death while trying to get to a bank in London. It seems the City was being attacked by the Gaunt Man's creatures and Barkley wanted to make sure his gold was safe. The cab in which he was riding must have crashed, killing him. I came across the cab in an auction of his estate and think I have found a use for him. I will put his soul into the tattered hat he was wearing at the time of his death and use him as a sort of "coachman." This would be a fantastic way to minimize the risk of picking up my conquests.

December 18, New London, Orrorsh, Earth

I write this as I prepare to travel to Jean Malraux's realm. The field was destroyed last night by the Lancers or some other such regiment of red-bellied buffoons.

January 5th, New Culmont, CyberFrance

I have transferred all my currency to gold coins. This presents a certain danger to the coachman, so I've hidden them safely away. My equipment has arrived at my new home, the Manor Scratch.

This realm is fantastic! That fool Malraux has no idea the capabilities of his technology. I will have to experiment with these mechanical limbs and attempt to integrate them into my creations.

One of my undead assistants upset an experiment today and started a small fire. Needless to say, it was most upsetting — fortunately, it was extinguished before any damage was done to me. I vivisected the clumsy fool, of course.

January 15, New Culmont, CyberFrance

Heketon has granted me a soul! This is further evidence that Thratchen is only pretending to rule Orrorsh. Perhaps I can regain the favor of the Gaunt Man and the Hellion Court if I can create sufficient havoc in France.

January 16, New Culmont, CyberFrance

...I will call my first experiments "DemonHounds." The pieces stolen from a local gang and my young visitors have proven invaluable ... though I believe I may have made the optical units too sensitive to light.

January 23, New Culmont, CyberFrance

Malraux's creation, the GodNet, is fantastic! I have

bought a "terminal" and installed it in the manor. With the use of "skill-chips," my knowledge of the GodNet has become equivalent to years of research! I must create my own environment ... one more in line with my tastes.

January 28, New Culmont, CyberFrance

Horrors are seriously outgunned in this realm. While I will continue to blend the benefits of "cyberware" with my horrors, I think I have found a better way to cause misery, death, and fear throughout the entire realm! The Gaunt Man will be pleased!

February 2, New Culmont, CyberFrance

Oh, the girls here are so tender and so sweet. I have sent the Coachman out many times now and he has delivered excellently. Most of my lady friends have come from Langres, but I must try to meet some from New Culmont soon, perhaps this very night. I could stay here for many decades. But alas, I must return when the Gaunt Man awakens from whatever dark sleep is holding him.

February 13, New Culmont, CyberFrance

I have stumbled upon a band of criminals who cut cyberware from corpses and resell it on the black market. It should be a simple matter for the Coachman to take their wares, and the fools won't be able to report it to anyone!

February 13, New Culmont, CyberFrance, Supplemental

The virus is nearly finished, but the artificial environment I've created is constantly crashing. The other Sentinels seem to lock up whenever it becomes self-aware. I even had an intruder recently — the file regarding the Phantom Coachman and his true death may have been copied. I must send the Coachman and Grosh to kill the fool before he succeeds in binding my spectre.

Still, this will not rob me of my triumph. When I load the virus into the Net and complete the activation process, the "Black Plague" will leave my construct and replicate itself 13 times. Then it will spread throughout the Net, sending Surges up the lines of thousands of users. All will be chaos and blood, and I will have justified the Gaunt Man's faith in me!



until the fourth step has been completed. During the stages, the monitor screen will flash, "Stage 1 Complete," "Stage 2 Complete," etc.

During the time the virus is dormant, all gates and Guardians will function normally within the construct.

A science (computers) or cyberdeck operations total of 9 will reveal that such a sequence has been entered. The program will have reached the "Black Plague" in the second round, but it needs a few minutes (about 18 rounds) to scan the GodNet for monitors before it leaves. It will then take five rounds to leave the construct and enter the Net, replicating immediately upon exiting.

To destroy the virus, a decker, with or without companions, must go into Scratch's virtual environment and defeat it in combat before it passes through the Langres exchange. This should be exceptionally dangerous since the Chiropterase, the zombies, and Scratch himself will be attacking the Knights who remain in the physical world, as well as the dormant bodies of those in the Net.

Use the construct map found in Scene One for reference. The virus will be located in Cell 7 until it finishes scanning for monitors. Due to a glitch in Scratch's programing, no other Sentinels or Guardians in the construct can operate once the virus awakens.

Try to keep the action fast as Scratch tries to destroy the bodies of those in the Net and the rest of the team tries to stop him.

The Black Plague

DEXTERITY 12
STRENGTH 19
TOUGHNESS 18
PERCEPTION 8
MIND 7
CHARISMA 4
SPIRIT 6

Reality 17

Possibilities: 8

Net Values: net attack (melee) 17, net defense 17, net find 9, net stealth 15, net manipulation 14, net track 12

Response/Processor/Storage: 2/6/12

Programs: Onslaught 3 (2), Scan 2 (2), Surge 1 (2), Deck Wipe 1 (2), Trace 4 (4), Reproduce 1 (4)

Description: The plague appears as an unusually large, rotting humanoid.

Powerful gray muscles can be seen beneath the tattered rags it wears. It can reproduce itself 13 times. The reproductions will not have this ability and the original virus may only perform the action once.

Home Wreckers

The floor around the operating table has been smashed by the lightning bolt. Only a few crossbeams make the hole traversable. These are slick and hard to walk across (an *acrobatics* or *Dexterity* total of 10 is needed to keep from falling through to the second floor). Any attacks made while standing on one of the crossbeams is at -3.

Anyone who gets the bright idea of jumping up on the operating slab should generate an *evidence analysis* or *Perception* total. On a 10, he notices the weakening beam beneath it. (If the Chiropterase's *darkness* is in effect, no roll is made, unless the Knight has the ability to see in such conditions.)

A setback result while a Knight is on the slab will cause the beam beneath it to collapse, sending both operating table and passenger crashing to the floor below.

Chiropterase Rising

Have the Knights make a *Perseverance* check when they first see this creature. The Chiropterase is an Orrorshan horror outfitted with cyberware. It is a gigantic, vaguely humanoid, bat and possesses an extremely large mouth filled with rows of metal teeth jutting painfully in all directions. Titanium pins run bloodily from elbow to shoulder and enhance its physical strength much in the way cyber-arms do.

The eyes of the beast are a dull red and seem to fulfill no function (it is technically blind). They are actually FFO CamEyes. An interesting effect is that whatever is being filmed can be seen reflected dimly in the Chiropterase's pupil.

The hands are immensely oversized and bear cyber-slashers. Thick, leathery wings sag between its body and its long arms, and the creature is capable of flight (though not in the cramped quarters of the attic.)

Before each action, the thing will briefly let out a piercing screech. This is actually "bat radar," the reflecting sound waves provide it with a picture of everything in a forty-five degree arc to the front. Should these sound waves be stifled (by, say, a *death of sound* miracle), the creature will be effectively "blinded."

The Chiropterase was created with the Cyberpapacy specifically in mind and has the powers of *darkness*, *dark vision* (through its "radar"), and *attack form resistance* (*spiritual*) and *attack form resistance* (*firearms/explosives*). Its tactic will be to create darkness (which will fill the entire attic) and leap to the solid part of the floor, attacking from relative safety there.

If it should be *broken* and forced to flee, it will seek a hiding place somewhere in the surrounding countryside and venture out only at night to feed.

Its weakness is intense sound. Screaming will keep the creature at bay, but real volume (roughly 150 decibels) will have to be produced to cause its true death. Subjecting it to this sort of intense pain for one minute will cause the creature to explode in a black and bloody mess. The creature will be "blind" during those rounds in which the sound is being played. He is *unskilled* in the first round, *fatigued* in the second round, *stymied* and *fatigued* in the third round and *setback* in the remaining rounds. While "blinded," the creature suffers a -5 penalty to all attacks.

The damage value of 150 decibels is equivalent to a 21 on the Torg Value Chart. Decibels can be read as a +10 on the chart. 150 has a value of 11, so +10 makes it a 21.

For reference purposes, raucous music is at roughly 80 decibels; thunder is 90 decibels; a plane taking off is 100 decibels.

In every round in which the killing sound is being played, Knights, along with all other characters present, will suffer damage. Knights can actively resist the effects of the sound by generating successful *Toughness* totals.

Scratch will take damage for one round, and then put special earplugs in his ears to protect himself. Earplugs provide TOU+15 protection; a motorcycle helmet would provide TOU+4 protection; a knight's helm would provide TOU+2 protection; earmuffs would pro-





vide TOU+1 protection.

If the Knights wish to use Scratch's sound equipment, they will have to restore the power. This means either turning on the auxiliary generator (*science* (electronics) or *Mind* total of 8) or going down to the basement and replacing the fuse. Doing the latter is a simple action, but will require seven rounds (three to get to the basement, one to replace the fuse, three to get back up). Characters with the ability to teleport can, of course, reduce the amount of time needed.

Chiropterase

DEXTERITY 12

Dodge 16, flight 14, maneuver 15, stealth 13, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 20

TOUGHNESS 24

PERCEPTION 10

Find 15, tracking 15, trick (11)

MIND 4

Test (18)

CHARISMA 3

Taunt (15)

SPIRIT 6

Faith (Orrorsh) 12, intimidation 13, reality (Orrorsh) 18

Possibilities: 2 per Storm Knight
Natural Tools: teeth, damage value STR+4/24; wings, speed value 8

Equipment: slashers (both hand), damage value STR+4/24, FFO Cam-Eyes, DATAS Hi-Freq; cyber value 6

Powers: darkness, dark vision, attack form resistance (firearms/explosives), attack form resistance (spiritual)

Power Rating: 4

Corruption Value: 18

Fear Rating: 1

Suggested Weakness: intense sound (stymie weakness)

Suggested True Death: Trapped in high volume area for a full minute

The Talons of Scratch

The old English used to call the Devil "Old Scratch." Talamous took the name after he was corrupted many decades ago back on Gaea. Never one to socialize with Victorian society, the sorcerer-scientist has had many close calls at the hands of the Sacellum. His saving grace was his high aptitude for the occult and a metabolism which allowed him to

work for long stretches without rest.

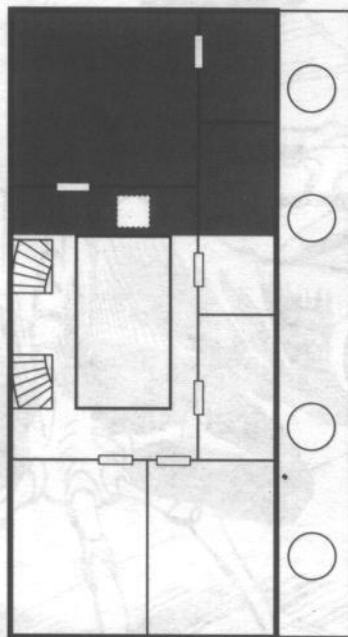
Finally, however, the churchmen trapped and burnt him. His soul went to a Waiting Village where, gaining the attention of the Gaunt Man, Talamous was offered a position as a Nightmare. He eagerly accepted and followed the Gaunt Man over to Earth for the initial invasion. When the High Lord disappeared and the replacement Thratchen came to power, Scratch was relegated to supervising a gospog field. He never stopped creating horrors, however and Heketon continued to send him corrupted souls, seemingly under the auspices of Thratchen. Only recently, when Scratch received the souls for the DemonHounds, did he realize that the techno-demon must be unaware of Heketon's actions.

Talamous possesses a dull silver occult amulet with a full moon carved upon it. One side of the moon appears to be bright while the opposite is stark black. Somewhere in the middle the two sides blur together. A character who wears it will be harder to hit (DEX+5 for defense)

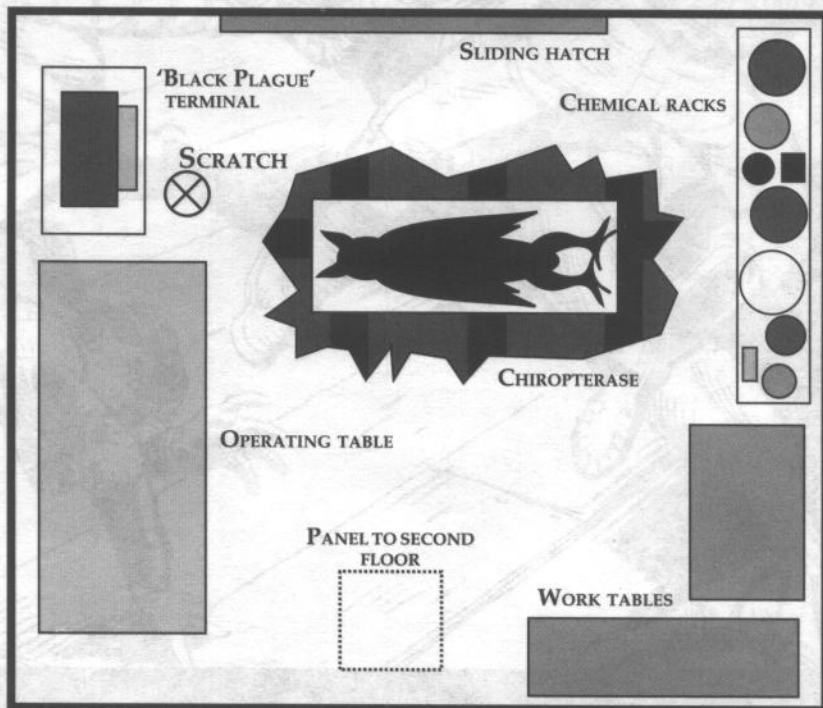


When Axioms Collide: Map 8

Scratch's Attic Laboratory



TINTED AREA SHOWS PLACEMENT OF LAB RELATIVE TO THE SECOND FLOOR



If Talamous is losing and sees a chance to escape, he will. One of the reasons he's still alive today is because of his discretion. He realizes he will probably be able to return in another form if slain, but is none too anxious to find out.

Talamous Scratch

DEXTERITY 15

Beast riding, 16, dodge 18, fire combat 19, maneuver 17, prestidigitation 20, stealth 19, unarmed combat 10,

STRENGTH 22

TOUGHNESS 22

PERCEPTION 19

Cyberdeck operation 25, evidence analysis 24, find 22, language (French) 21, research 25 cyberdeck operation 15

MIND 17

Cybertech 20, medicine 21, science (biology) 21, science (chemistry) 21, science (computers) 19, test 24, will-power 22, occult 28

CHARISMA 16

Charm (17), persuasion 17, taunt 19

SPIRIT 14

Faith (Orrorsh) 17, intimidation 21, reality (Orrorsh) 22

Possibilities: 5 per Storm Knight

Spells: *boiling blood, death haunt, fear, madness, the mark of the hunted, slow death*

Equipment: GWI GodMeeter, damage 20, ammo 30, range 3-12/30/50; Cyberware: ChipHolder with 3 chips, *cybertech* +2, and the others are DatChips which Talamous has been using in place of his journal; occult library; amulet (DEX+5 in defense)

Powers: *magical resistance, ward breach*

Power Rating: 4

Corruption Value: 21

Fear Rating: 2

Perseverance DN: 18

Weakness: fire (severe)

True Death: Burnt to death

If Scratch should be killed, the house will vanish as if it never was. All that will remain will be the Knights, Scratch's corpse, his journals and the footlocker full of gold (if it has been found), alone on a barren field.

Aftermath

The primary condition for victory is the destruction of the "Black Plague." If



this is accomplished, Scratch will try and escape to plan again.

If Talamous and his creations are destroyed, the Knights will find it easier to piece together the remaining parts of the puzzle. Anyone with a ChipHolder can read the DatChips in Talamous' head (if they survived the fight) and the gamemaster can reveal the details of the last two acts. An hour of reading the journal will also reveal the tales and true deaths of the Phantom Coachman and the other creations.

If the virus was allowed to get into the GodNet, the Knights will hear about the deaths of close to a thousand Net users the following day. Jean Malraux will broadcast through the HolyVids later that the forces of the Cyberpapacy have dealt with the virus, which was undoubtedly planted there by demonic entities.

This will represent a severe blow to Malraux. Although some will find their faith increased, many more will become fearful of using the Net and question the



Cyberpope's ability to protect them from such evils. This will weaken the realm in its struggles with Nippon and Tharkold (and eventually Orrorsh). Scratch, who believes the Gaunt Man will return from his "tour of conquests" soon, planned to present the disorder in Malraux's realm to him as a gift.

If the virus was stopped, the Knights might wish to leave Scratch's journals where the Church Police can find them. This will certainly result in open hostilities between the Cyberpapacy and Orrorsh and an intensification of the battles between Malraux and the forces of Tharkold (who, the Cyberpope is certain, were behind this clumsy attempt by Thratchen to weaken him).

If Talamous was not put to his true death, the party will most certainly hear from him again ... someday.

Hopefully, however, all went well and the characters can retire to the Demon's Bane Inn for a little rest and recuperation, maybe even to tell a tale of glory or two. When and if the town hears of their bravery, they will try to reward them in any way they can.

Flags

Nemesis cards need little explanation. If Scratch or his soul survives, he will blame the characters for his defeat. This subplot is worth two Possibilities per act whenever the necromancer or his minions return.

Setbacks can add a lot of drama and danger to this act. Perhaps a noxious

chemical brew explodes near the Knight, causing damage if she inhales it (damage 12 plus bonus with no armor). Also, some of the floor sections are loose as in the lower floors, providing ample opportunity for a character to slip and fall through as in the section "Home Wreckers."

Villain setbacks could send Scratch, the Chiropterase or one of the zombies plunging through the floor to the second level. If this happens to the Chiropterase and it survives, it will crash up through another part of the ceiling two rounds later, possibly spilling characters into the holes as it does so.

Another setback for the villains is to have the chemicals somehow catch fire. Talamous has a weakness and a fear of flames and could be *maneuvered* or otherwise *tricked* into falling into them. If this happens, let him stumble around burning for a few more rounds while the party pumps more lead into him. Finally, a climactic fall through the floor (as above) will finish off the necromancer. (But that's just one scenario ...)

Variables

If the party slays the terminal thinking they have dealt with the problem, tell them they see the message, "Activation Process Proceeding" flash on the screen just before it dies. If a character has a cyberdeck nearby (or can reach either one of Scratch's), he could try to patch directly into the Net to stop whatever is happening before it gets too far.

If the party does not have a decker — or if the decker is dead and they have no time to contact a gamemaster character — feel free to fudge. A character with *science (computers)* or *scholar (computers)* might be able to work a programming miracle and countermand the virus' programming or a character might just take a wild guess at the right buttons (*Mind* with a very high difficulty number). It is recommended that you not exercise this option if the possibility of a Net run exists, as it robs the scene of some of its drama.

Adventure Awards

Anyone who survived this adventure receives seven Possibilities, plus one more if Nefastario was driven off. Finally, each hero gets four more if the "Black Plague" has been stopped.

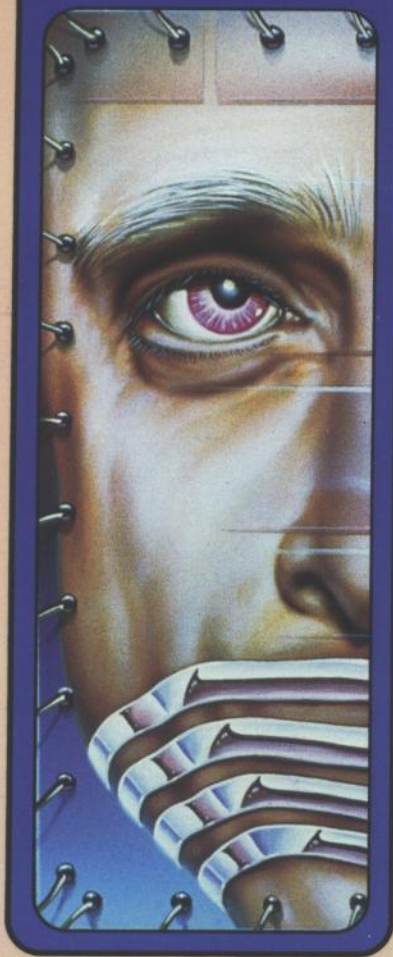
Epilogue

If the Knights collected incriminating evidence against Father Dumois, they can turn it over to Captain Loison. When he finds out that Malraux is behind the gospog attacks, he will lose his faith in the Cyberpapacy. After attempting the assassination of Dumois, Loison will join the Resistance.



WHEN AXIOMS COLLIDE

By Shane Lacy Hensley



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