



Cultists & Cubicles

Adam Boman

In loving memory of Anders Boman



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Adam Boman



**Ideas, text & art**

Adam Boman

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cultistsandcubicles.com

It was supposed to be a normal day at work

TL;DR: Evil has infiltrated the office. Only you and your team can stop it. But first, please fill out the form labeled “Character Sheet” with your profile information.

Sprint planning has just finished and you are in the zone, hunched over your keyboard in your cubicle and oblivious to the outside world. You are grinding away at your first task when Zonia asks “Do you know where the intern is? I haven’t seen them since standup this morning.”

You hadn’t noticed the absence of the Intern’s constant chatter. Strange. They rarely leave this part of the office for more than a few minutes. By the way, were those blood-red stains in the corner really there before? They look fresh. Something is seriously wrong.

Maybe you should have seen the signs earlier? In retrospect, there has been a creeping feeling of something being off—not just the everyday alienation caused by working for a large, soulless corporation, but the presence of something truly evil.

Did it start when the new management consultants arrived at the Corporation? Or with the announcement of the Q3 goal to increase market share by 100% by any means necessary? Is it connected to the monotone chanting you occasionally hear in the corridors after long days of grueling work?

It seems that you and your cross-functional, ragtag team of tech workers will need all your wits to survive with your health, dignity and sanity intact. Your employment is also at risk. Will you succeed in rooting out the nefarious influence that is permeating the workplace?

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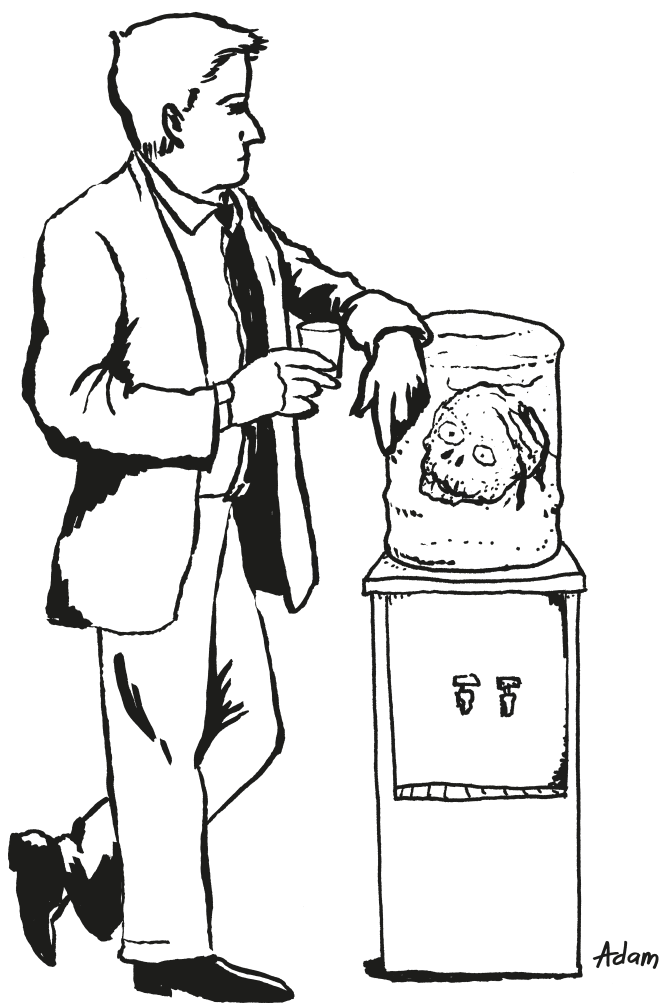
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Core Rules

Character Creation

To complete your profile, enter your information in the required fields of the Character Sheet; Divulge as much personal data as possible.

First, decide whether or not to use a Persona as a basis for your profile. The Persona provides a general description of your career and personality and it will shape some of the other characteristics. Without a Persona, you have more flexibility, but character creation may take longer and require more work. This could be a good time to estimate the Return on Investment.

This documentation supplies tables of suggested values for many of the fields in the Character Sheet. The Game Manager decides if you have permission to select freely from these tables or if you must let the dice decide for you. The Game Manager always has final say and may overrule any choices you make. If values appear contradictory, either change them to be more consistent or accept that your character is complex and well-rounded.

Below is a quick guide to the Character Sheet. More details follow in later sections.

Name Pick an appropriate name or use the table below:

D20	Name
1	Ali
2	Brad
3	Cassilda
4	Dee
5	Frank
6	Gary
7	Hippolyta
8	Isabella
9	Jay
10	Kilgore
11	Lilith
12	Mo
13	Pat
14	Rhiannon
15	Sam
16	Ursula
17	Violet
18	Xavier
19	Yasmin
20	Zach

Pronoun What pronouns do you prefer to be used when referring to you? E.g. “she/her”, “he/him”, “they/them”.

Employer You are employed by the Corporation, see the section “Your Employer”

Corporate Alignment

How loyal are you to the Corporation?

Alignment	Description
Loyal	You've gulped down the corporate Kool-Aid and asked for more.
Neutral	You just go to your job and keep your head down.
Disloyal	You bite the hand that feeds you by secretly or overtly opposing the Corporation.

Team

The name of the team that you belong to.

Persona (Optional)

If you base your profile on a Persona, note which one here. See the section "Personas".

Job Title

Select a suitable job title from the section "Careers and Job Titles". Keep in mind that a well balanced team consists of a diverse mix of roles.

Education

What is your education/background? Roll a D8 or consult with the GM.

D8	Highest level of education
1	School of Hard Knocks
2	High school
3	College of Hard Knocks
4	Previous work in an unrelated field
5	Coding Bootcamp or similar
6	Bachelor's degree or equivalent
7	Master's degree or equivalent
8	PhD in Computer Science or similar field

**Attributes, Hit Points
and Sanity**

First determine the primary attributes Strength, Agility, Intelligence and Resilience, then Hit Points and Sanity; see the section “Attributes”. For Story Points, see the section “Experience and Story Points”.

Team Connections

What are your feelings towards of your fellow team members? Use the table below if needed.

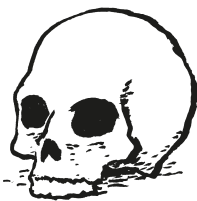
D8	Relation
1	Idolization
2	Respect
3	Envy
4-5	Indifference
6	Fear
7	Mild dislike
8	Contempt

Description

Describe your personality and physical appearance. See the sections “Clothing Styles” and “Background and Personality Traits”.

Skills and Abilities

Some personas, job titles or backgrounds come with special competencies. Note them here.



Your Employer

The Corporation where you are employed is an immense, faceless conglomerate with activities in several business sectors. It has numerous subsidiaries and local offices across the globe. Its inner workings are shrouded in mystery, but most employees have at least some insight into the undertakings of their own department. You work in software development, but it is unclear how relevant the resulting software is to the overarching goals of the Corporation.

In the upper echelons of the organization, the competition is fierce and only those with strong allies have a chance of advancing. Various cabals promote their own agendas using intrigue, arcane rituals and sometimes open violence. A byzantine bureaucracy keeps the rank-and-file in check.

Attributes

Just like everyone else, you can be described by the four attributes listed below.

Strength

The physical power of your body. Describes your capability for tasks such as lifting desks, holding down a crazed co-worker or wielding a blunt instrument.

Agility

Your mobility and flexibility. Used for athletic feats such as playing ping pong, balancing on a moving office chair or dodging an attack.

Intelligence

The raw computational capacity of your brain. Used for observation, solving theoretical problems, spotting bugs in code and aiming wisely when throwing something heavy in a fight.

Resilience

Your ability to cope with physical and mental hardship. Relevant for staying awake during boring meetings or enduring stress and torture.

For each of the attributes, roll 3D6 and determine the attribute value in table below.

3D6	Attribute Value
≤4	-3
5-6	-2
7-8	-1
9-12	±0
13-14	+1
15-16	+2
≥17	+3

Hit Points

Hit Points (HP) is a measure of how much physical harm you can withstand without fainting or dying. Start with Resilience+D8 Hit Points, but not lower than 1. You can never have more Hit Points than this.

You are rendered unconscious when you reach 0 Hit Points, and below that, you are dead. Rest, food and healing will help you recover Hit Points.

Alternative rule: Start with resilience +5 Hit Points.

Sanity

*They just use your
mind and they never
give you credit.
It's enough to drive
you crazy if you let it.*

Dolly Parton

Sanity is a measure of your level of mental health. Traumatic experiences and psionic attacks may lower your Sanity. Start with a Sanity level of Intelligence +D8, but not lower than 1.

At half the original Sanity, you will start to exhibit some signs of intermittent neurotic behavior.

When your Sanity is equal to 0, you are affected by a temporary psychotic episode (the GM decides the symptoms, lasts D6 minutes).

A Sanity level below 0 means that you have permanently lost your mind and will require mental healthcare for the rest of your life. You can no longer take part in the game. Maybe single-payer healthcare isn't such a bad idea, after all?

Alternative rule: Start with intelligence +5 Sanity.



Personas

Personas are an optional way of creating a character quickly. They give the broad strokes for personality, career and background, and may restrict some of the other characteristics. For instance, a Brogrammer always has the job title “Developer” and is unlikely to dress like a Goth. Use common sense and consult with the Game Manager when questions arise. Some Personas give additional skills as a complement to the skills for job titles.

D10	Persona
1	The Eager Rookie
2	The Flashy Front-End Developer
3	The Back-End Introvert
4	The Brogrammer
5	The Nitpicky Tester
6	The User Advocate
7	The Sophisticated Designer
8	The Team Builder
9	The Cold-Blooded Contractor
10	The Jaded Veteran

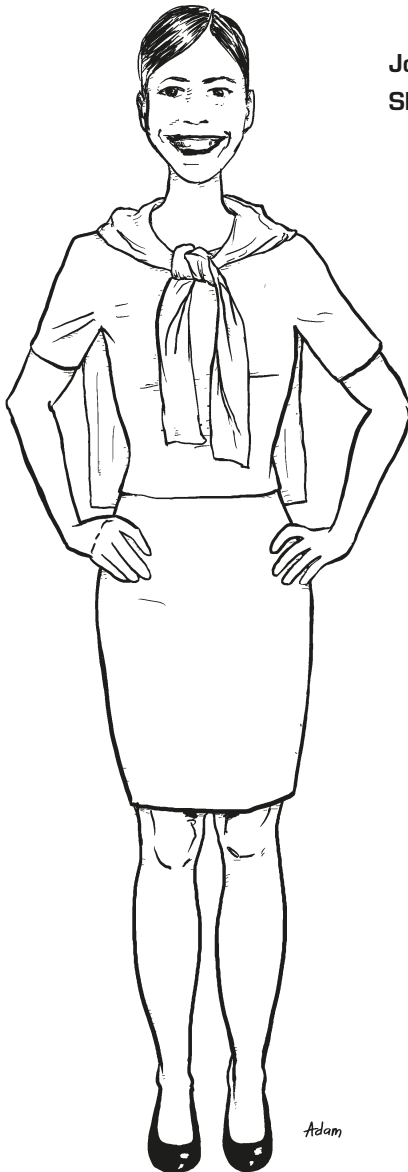
The Eager Rookie

*They say "jump",
I say "how high?"*

You were recently hired to an entry-level position in the Corporation. Your naïveté and earnest wish to prove yourself make you blind to any negative sides of your employer. Only time will tell if you have a great career ahead of you or if you will end up broken and disillusioned.

Job Title: Any

Skills: None yet.



The Flashy Front-End Developer

Imagine still using Grunt to bundle the SASS and jQuery for your XHTML.

Coding the perfect User Interface is your calling, and as a consequence you spend an unreasonable amount of energy on superficialities. You live in constant fear of missing the Next Big Thing and you refuse to get your hands dirty by touching last year's JavaScript framework. On the other hand, you are pragmatic in your coding and a good communicator.

Job Title: Developer

Skills: You can actually make sense of CSS.



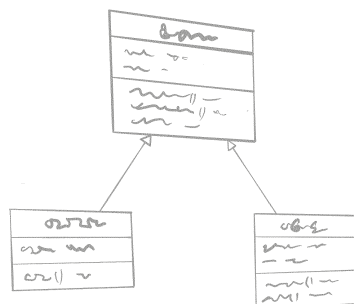
The Back-End Introvert

*Clean code speaks
louder than words.*

You build the heart of the system: the business logic and data handling on the server-side. If everyone just left you alone with your headphones and your code, you would create amazing data models to revolutionize the whole product. You are contemplative and find inner harmony in architecture and object oriented modeling.

Job Title: Developer

Skills: Once every day, you can “get in the zone” and achieve total focus when solving a task, giving you a +4 modifier.



The Brogrammer

Weird flex, but OK.

At work you crush code like a rock star developer, but you spend more of your free time at the gym than in front of a computer screen. Protein shakes and energy drinks keep you alive. You consider yourself a chill guy with a great sense of humor, but others think you're a bit of a sexist, homophobic douche.

Job Title: Developer

Skills: You have a more developed physique than most office workers. Increase your Strength by 1.



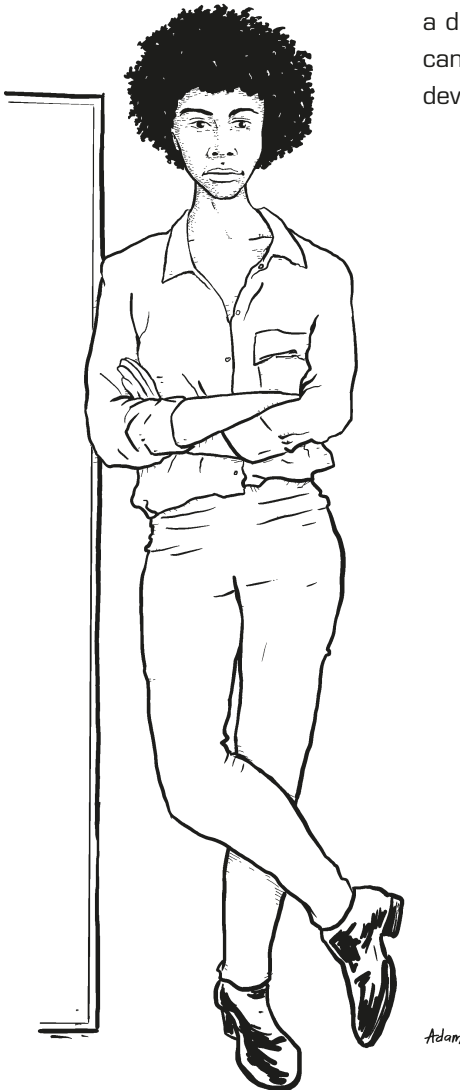
The Nitpicky Tester

*I found an edge case
where the whole
system crashes.*

When the developers are too careless or lazy to write bug-free code, you save the day. You are very conscientious and structured, some would say obsessive. You always strive for perfection, but you secretly enjoy finding faults in other people's work.

Job Title: Tester

Skills: You can improve anything that a developer does. Once every day, you can add a +2 bonus to any task that a developer takes on.



The User Advocate

*We can't ignore what
the user research says!*

You defend the end users' rights to have a great product by putting your heart and soul into drawing amazing wireframe designs. You have high ideals but you are fighting a losing battle against the business side of the Corporation that always prioritizes quick profits. You are not bitter yet, but you're getting there.

Job Title: UX professional

Skills: You have the power of empathy. Test Intelligence to glean insight into the emotions of other characters. Can only be used for benign purposes.



The Sophisticated Designer

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog

You deliver exquisite works of art that the developers mangle in their vain attempts at making a decent user interface. You are occasionally perceived as condescending by your less aesthetically aware co-workers.

Job Title: UX professional

Skills: You can design an inspiring sigil that can be used once per session to heal D4 Sanity.



The Team Builder

*There is no "I" in
"Teamwork makes the
dream work!"*

You invest most of your energy in the success of the team, sometimes at the expense of your own well-being. No one considers the opinions and feelings of their co-workers like you do, but your contribution is often forgotten when the loudest "rock star" or "ninja" gets the credit.

Job Title: Any, but most likely
Agile Coach

Skills: You can boost the morale of your team giving everyone a +1 modifier on their next test. Can only be used once per session.



The Cold-Blooded Contractor

My only loyalty is to the almighty dollar.



You are a coder of fortune, a sword for hire willing to work for whichever company is ready to pay the highest fee. Blindly obedient as long as your bills are paid, you have no qualms about working with gambling, weapon systems or spyware. No one knows how long you will remain at your current assignment—you could be gone from one day to the next.

Job Title: Any, except Intern

Skills: You are immune to office politics and receive a +2 bonus on all related tests.

The Jaded Veteran

*I've seen things you
people wouldn't believe...*

You are a true veteran and have been in the industry far longer than any of your co-workers. You have out-lived a myriad incompetent managers, worked on more failed projects and completed more meaningless tasks than most people would imagine possible. In the process, you have lost any hope of improving your work situation or the world in general for that matter.

Job Title: Any, except Intern

Skills: Your cynicism makes you less susceptible to traumatic experiences, add a +1 bonus on rolls for psychological trauma.



Careers and Job Titles

As an employee at the Corporation, there are several careers available to you. If you base your character on a Persona, you may be limited to which Job Title is suitable, otherwise choose wisely or roll a D6.

D6	Job Title
1	Intern
2	UX professional
3-4	Developer
5	Tester
6	Agile Coach

Intern

You are the newest addition to the team and you hope to learn the ropes, but the other team members mostly send you on errands instead of teaching you anything. At least it's good for your resumé. You get little (if any) pay, and you have even less job security than the rest of the team.

Skills: None, but by retaining some of your first idealism, you receive +1 Sanity.

UX Professional

You are an expert at User Experience—creating great interaction for the end user. You conduct user research and/or design graphical user interfaces to make the products lovable and increase conversion rates. You are one of the most creative members of the team.

Skills: All UX professionals get a +2 bonus on tests when trying to convince or manipulate others.

Developer

You write the actual code for the product. Maybe you specialize in a specific programming language, or maybe you want to dip your toe in all of them.

Skills: All developers get a +2 bonus on tests when writing code.

Tester

You work with Quality Assurance (QA), either through manual testing or by writing automated tests. Your life goal is finding bugs before the code is deployed.

Skills: Testers get a +2 bonus on tests when trying to locate mistakes.

Agile Coach

You are responsible for the well-being of the team in order to maximize its efficiency and productivity. You know the Agile Manifesto by heart and keep the Burn Down Chart up to date.

Skills: You can perform the healing rite of Retrospective, regaining D4 HP for all who participate.

Clothing Style

What type of clothing do you usually wear to work?
Write your own description or use the tables below
for inspiration.

D8	Clothing style
1	Formal business attire—Business suit or pant suit, power tie, dress shoes, pumps.
2	Business Casual—Neat but not overly formal; khakis, skirt, blouse or shirt in a subdued color or pattern.
3	Preppy—Cashmere cardigan over a white blouse, polo shirt or button-down shirt, pencil skirt or chinos, LV bag.
4	Hipster—Flannel shirt, knit beanie or trucker hat with ironic print, short slim pants and no socks.
5	Norm Core—Comfortable, “normal” clothes in neutral colors. Blue wash jeans, plain t-shirt.
6	Street Wear—Expensive sneakers, track pants, hoodie, baseball cap.
7	Developer Chic—Swag from dev conferences, nerd humor t-shirt and corporate hoodie, cargo pants, old sneakers.
8	Subculture of your choice, or use the table below.

D8	Subculture
1	Goth
2	Old-school hip hop
3	Cosplayer
4	Psychobilly
5	Emo
6	Metalhead
7	Cyberpunk
8	Cowboy/Cowgirl



Background and Personality Traits

Most people have some quirk or dark secret that makes them unique. Roll a D20 on the table below (developers add 1), then flesh out the details. Feel free to keep the result secret from the other player and only share it with the GM.

D20	Background or personality trait
1	Average Joe/Jane—Your utter lack of distinguishing features makes you unique. You blend in and go unnoticed in most situations.
2	Martial artist—You are a practitioner of martial arts which gives you a +1 modifier in unarmed combat.
3	Fitness fanatic—You focus most of your attention on workout schedules and protein intake. Add 1 to your Strength.
4	Mr/Ms Fixit—You are handy with tools and can mend most broken things (+2 bonus on repairs).
5	Demagogue—You can be a very convincing agitator and get a +2 bonus when trying to persuade a NPC and on reaction rolls for humans.
6	Forgotten languages—You have knowledge in an ancient programming language (like Smalltalk or Fortran) which may or may not come in handy.
7	Phony degree—You have faked your qualifications. The consequences if this is ever revealed may be severe.
8	HaxxOr—You used to be a black hat hacker. +2 bonus when trying to break into a computer system.
9	Imposter syndrome—You constantly fear that someone will expose you as the talentless fraud that you think you are (while in fact, you are no worse than anybody else at this company).
10	Criminal past—Back in the day, you committed some criminal offenses. You may or may not have been convicted of these but you worry that your misdeeds will come back and haunt you.
11	Control freak—You need full control of everything around you. If given power, you will micromanage your subordinates to death.
12	Body odor—You smell awful unless you wash hourly. Or is that just your imagination?

13	Heretic—You adhere to a dissenting belief in religious, political or technical matters. It's up to you to decide if you wish to be open with this break with orthodoxy.
14	Diva—You believe you are God's gift to the team. You are a star and expect everyone around you to do your bidding.
15	Sycophant—You suck up to anyone in authority and blindly support and flatter whoever is currently in charge.
16	Rationalist—You think all your choices are based on logic and rationality, meaning that you refuse to take fluffy things like emotions into consideration. You will hold a grudge against anyone who finds holes in your reasoning.
17	Overachiever—You are ambitious in the extreme and will stop at nothing to advance in the corporate hierarchy.
18	Evangelist—You are a dedicated follower of a specific technology, ideal or method and you never miss a chance to promote it.
19	Hidden knowledge—Your interest in role-playing games/heavy metal/new age/philosophy has given you some insight into the occult.
20	Disillusioned idealist—You used to have high ideals but the real world has turned you into a cynic.
21	Cowboy programmer—You go your own way and do what you think is best without ever asking your teammates' opinion. You refuse to conform to norms or team agreements.

Game Play

The game mechanics of Cultists & Cubicles are ~~stolen-~~ based on the best practices put forth in the seminal paper *Mörk Borg* by Nilsson et al. (2019)*.

The Game Manager is invited to break the rules whenever they see fit, for example to avoid inconsistencies and contradictions, or to achieve a better playing experience.

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Tests and Attributes

Every Player Character has four attributes, *Agility*, *Intelligence*, *Strength* and *Resilience* (see section Attributes, above). Each is represented by a value between -3 and +3. When a Player Character attempts to complete a task where success is not obvious, follow the following process:

1. The Game Manager decides on the Difficulty Rating (DR) of the task at hand.
2. Decide which attribute is relevant.
3. Roll a D20 and modify the result by the value of the attribute.
4. Compare this sum with the Difficulty Rating, if the sum is greater than or equal to the DR, the task succeeds.

```
if (D20 + attribute >= DR) {  
    Success  
} else {  
    Failure  
}
```

Difficulty Rating

Examples of what level of difficulty corresponds to what Difficulty Rating (DR) can be found in the table below.

DR	Difficulty
6	Trivial
8	Easy
10	Pretty easy
12	Normal
14	Difficult
16	Really hard
18	Absurdly difficult

Example: Jerry wants to pry open a locked door with a crowbar that he has found. The door is a bit flimsy and The Game Manager judges its Difficulty Rating to be 8. Jerry rolls a 9 and has Strength -2 resulting in 7. Close but no cigar! After this embarrassing failure, Jerry will have to hand over the crowbar to a stronger character or give up on getting through the door.



Experience and Story Points

Given enough time and the right mindset, anyone can improve their skills and attributes. All it takes is experience. The experience you accumulate is represented by Story Points which are awarded for solving work-related tasks or overcoming challenges.

Gaining Experience

Grinding away at work results in D4 Story Points for each completed task. A task takes D6 days to complete.

When winning a fight (by incapacitating your opponents or causing them to flee) you gain Story Points equal to the Hit Points of the NPCs that were defeated.

Story Points are divided equally among all the Player Characters that were involved in doing the work.

Improving Skills and Attributes

Between gaming sessions, you may use the acquired Story Points to improve your attributes and skills. It is also possible to spend Story Points to recover Hit Points and Sanity up to the original value (cost 1 Story Point per recovered HP or Sanity).

Increasing an attribute one step costs 10 Story Points, except if the resulting modifier is +2 or +3, in which case the cost is 20 and 30 Story Points respectively. Experience can never result in an attribute that is higher than +3. Improving skills work in a similar fashion.

New value	Cost per step
≤ +1	10 SP
+2	20 SP
+3	30 SP

Unused Story Points are saved.

Equipment

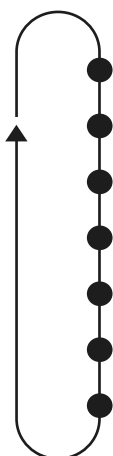
Your employer values your contribution to the company and will allow you to upgrade your tools or acquire new gear. Between gaming sessions you may spend Story Points to acquire equipment from the tables below. No returns. Not guaranteed to help you in your job. Conditions apply.

Equipment	Cost
Whiteboard marker	1 SP
Branded mouse mat	2 SP
Branded water bottle	2 SP
Team or project stickers	2 SP
Team-branded apparel (t-shirt or hoodie)	5 SP
Branded backpack	6 SP
Ergonomic mouse	6 SP
Ergonomic keyboard	7 SP
Computer upgrade (+1 bonus)	10 SP
Pinball machine (for the team)	15 SP
Branded sports equipment	Cost
Frisbee (damage D2-1)	3 SP
Lacrosse stick	5 SP
Hockey stick	5 SP
Baseball bat	5 SP
Golf club	8 SP

Fighting and Encounters

The Player Characters are at their place of employment to write elegant code, create value for the employer or to move post-its on whiteboards. Fighting is not part of anyone's job description, but under extreme circumstances one may be required to defend oneself against murderous, mindless drones or atrocities from beyond our reality. This section describes the rules for encounters and fighting.

When the players encounter creatures or Non-Player Characters in what may develop into a fight, the sequence of events is as follows:



1. Reaction
2. Initiative
3. Fight
4. Incapacitated?
5. Dead?
6. Morale
7. More fighting (go to 2)

Reaction

The first step is to determine how the Non-Player Characters will react. The Game Manager decides whether the encountered NPCs are hostile or not, if this is obvious from the circumstances. Otherwise roll 2D6 on the reaction table below and apply any modifiers. If the reaction is *Attack*, the encounter turns violent, in the other cases role-play and social skills determine if a fight can be avoided.

2D6	Reaction
≤3	Attack
4-6	Aggressive
7-8	Neutral
9-10	Almost helpful
≥11	Friendly

Initiative

Start each round of a fight by rolling for initiative. Roll a D6 on the table below to see who gets to deal the first blow.

D6	Initiative
1-3	Adversaries
4-6	Player Characters



Fighting

With the possible exception of the occasional practitioner of martial arts, office workers are not skilled at any form of combat. The wise thing to do is to avoid fighting if you want to stay alive.

If the Player Characters have the initiative and decide to attack, the player rolls D20+Strength against a Difficulty Rating of 12 for hand-to-hand combat, or D20+Intelligence against DR 12 for ranged weapons.

On the other hand, if the adversaries have the initiative, the player rolls for defense, D20+Agility against DR 12.

Action	Roll
Hand-to-hand combat	DR 12 Strength
Ranged weapons	DR 12 Intelligence
Defense	DR 12 Agility

When a Player Character succeeds at an attack, the opponent is dealt damage and conversely, Player Characters are dealt damage if they fail at defending against an attack. The number of Hit Points that are lost is determined by a roll of the damage dice specified for the used weapon (D2 for unarmed combat).

If the attack roll is a critical hit (natural 20) the damage is doubled. If a defense roll is a natural 20, the Player Character gains an extra attack.

If the Player Character fumbles (rolls a natural 1) during an attack, the weapon is dropped or broken. A natural 1 during a defense roll results in double damage.

Injury and Death

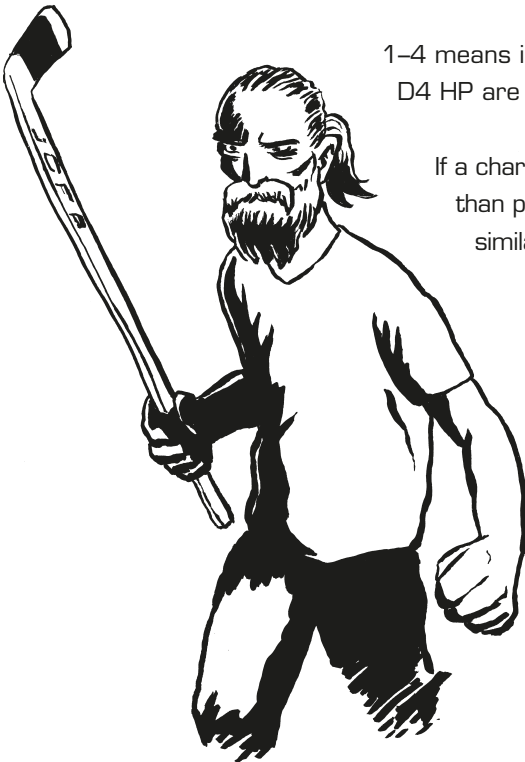
If the Hit Points of a character or creature lands at exactly 0, they are incapacitated. When anyone's HP reaches a negative value they die. Just hope that they stay dead...

When HP = 0, roll for Serious Injury on the table below.

D6	Serious Injury
1	Unconscious for D4 rounds
2	Broken or severed arm
3	Broken or severed leg
4	Lost eye
5	Bleeding to death in D2 hours, unless bandaged
6	Dead

1–4 means incapacitated for D4 rounds, after which D4 HP are regained.

If a character is affected by a psionic attack rather than physical violence, Sanity is decreased in a similar way.



Morale

Too many setbacks can demoralize most adversaries. Roll for morale if one of the following occurs:

- Their boss is eliminated
- 50% or more of the group is incapacitated
- Only 1/3 of HP remains (for single enemy)

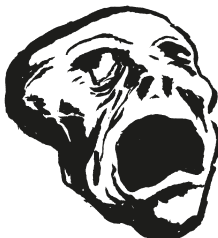
Roll 2D6; if the resulting value exceeds the Morale of the adversary, they either flee or surrender:

D6	Effect
1-3	Flee
4-6	Surrender

Certain opponents don't have a value for Morale as they are either too mindless or too powerful to ever give up.

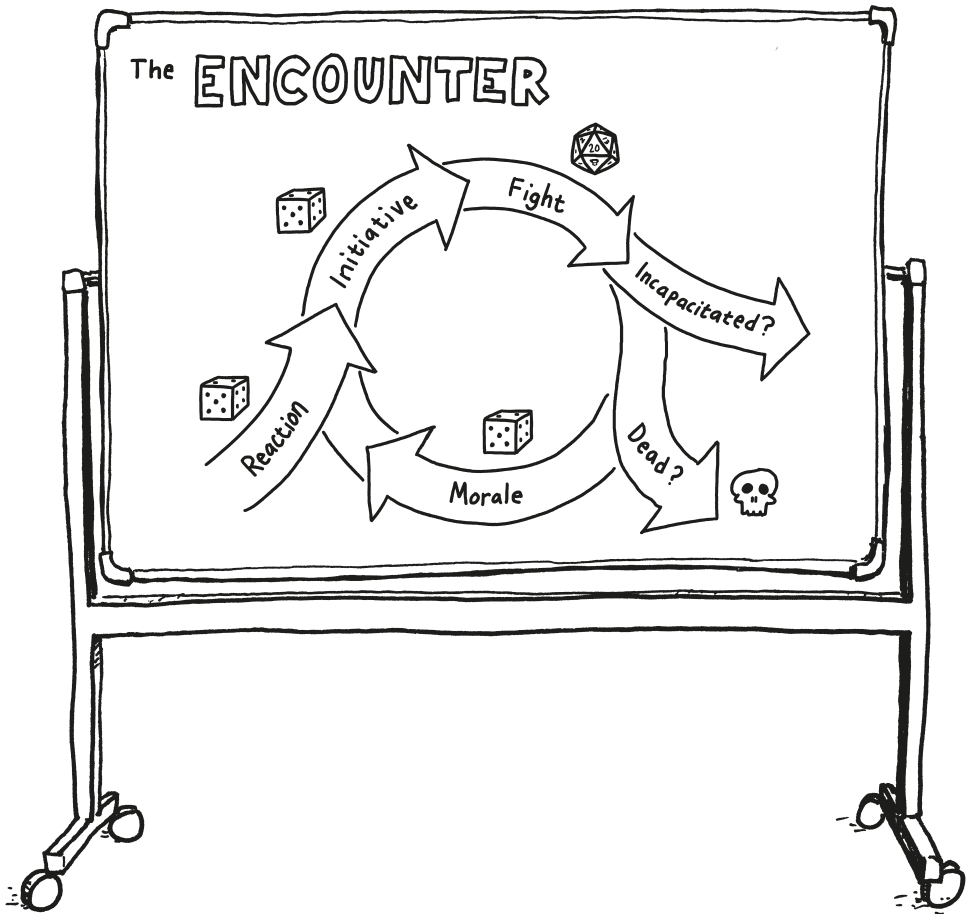
Trauma and Insanity

After a fight, each player that has been hurt or has successfully hurt an opponent must successfully test Resilience against a Difficulty Rating of 12 or lose 1 point Sanity as a result of the traumatic experience.



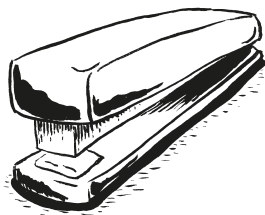
Recovering

A one hour rest will help the Player Characters recover D4 HP and a whole night's sleep will heal D6 HP, but who has time for such luxuries? Certain snacks and drinks that the Player Characters find will have a restorative effect, the number of HP that is restored will be specified. Eating or drinking more than one item in an hour will not have any additional effect.



Improvised Weapons

Of course no one is armed at work, but if need be, anyone can wield an abandoned hockey stick or throw a weighty object at an attacking creature. In an office, there are lots of improvised weapons available if the going gets tough.

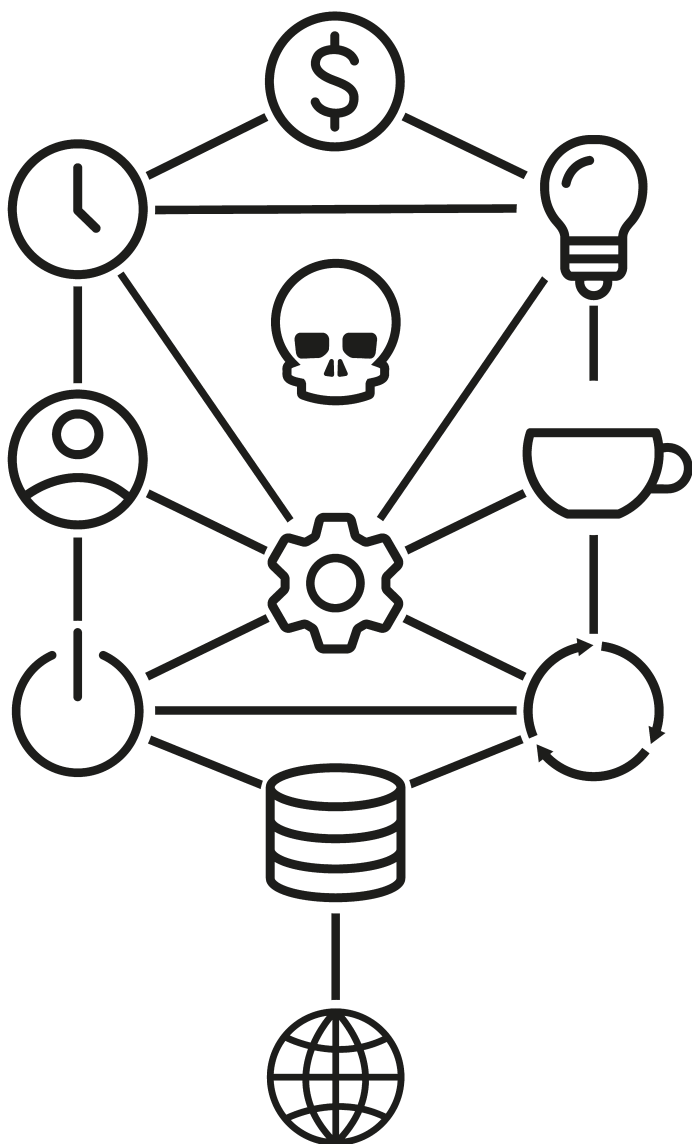


Melee weapons	Damage
Unarmed	D2
Mouse nunchucks	D4
Ergonomic keyboard (blue switches)	D4
Scissors	D4
Multi-tool	D4
Kitchen knife	D4
Lacrosse stick	D4
Wrench	D4
Baseball bat	D6
Sharpened hockey stick	D6
Golf club	D6

Ranged weapons	Damage
Red stapler	D2
Hole puncher	D4
Paper weight	D4

Now move fast and break things!



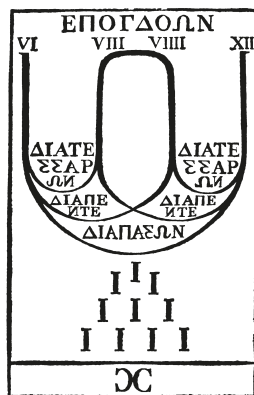


Game Manager's Guide

The following document, and the text contained herein, is confidential and may only be read by individuals with relevant clearance e.g. a Game Manager. Dissemination of this information, without prior permission from the appropriate authority, is strictly forbidden. Infractions against the aforementioned regulations will result in penalties of unimaginable severity. If you obtained this text in error, delete it immediately and try to erase it from your memory, then pray to a deity of your choice that this transgression will go unnoticed.

– Legal

Beyond the Veil



The consensus view on the Nature of Reality is that our existence is a mindless tedium, occasionally interrupted by random humiliations. According to this belief, the Universe is dominated by two opposing forces: Order and Chaos. Order causes the relentless monotony and Chaos brings the unpredictability that prevents us from ever letting our guard down. What these forces have in common however, is that they are both governed by the laws of physics. While there may appear to be no logic or structure behind the events that unfold, there are limits to what can happen. Cause always precedes effect, even if details of the actual outcome are impossible to predict. Being careless when handling documents may result in a paper cut and asking uncomfortable questions at work may get you fired, but the result will never be that you are transformed into a pink elephant. This predictability may be a cause for comfort, but at the same time these laws of nature also keep us shackled. The world around us is entirely beyond our control—we are slaves to an unforgiving and ultimately meaningless Universe.

This bleak characterization of Reality may be superficially correct, but on a more fundamental level it is fatally flawed—it does not reach beyond the Veil of Deception that covers our eyes and conceals the True Nature of Reality. There are deeper truths about the world, truths that are not evident to someone relying merely on their physical senses. Order, Chaos and the laws of nature are part of an illusion that keeps us caged. This Illusion can be manipulated by someone with enough power and the right knowledge. On the other side of this veil, unseen forces exert their influence and direct the world behind the scenes. They are best left undisturbed, but not all who gain insight into the True Nature of Reality are wise enough to act with caution.



While the great majority of the uninitiated spend their lives in comfortable ignorance, the disturbances that do penetrate from Beyond the Veil are sometimes too obvious to disregard. Moreover, certain individuals have more acute sensibilities regarding events outside the mundane. Usually the effect of such exposure is madness or denial, but once in a while lucid insight may be the result.

At certain locations, the membrane of the Illusion is particularly thin which can cause uncanny consequences. Corruptions may afflict humans and animals, leading to strange behavior or the spawning of abominations that terrorize their surroundings. Sporadically, the Veil is wholly breached and beings from beyond are able manifest in this reality. They may become a limited inconvenience or an existential threat to all of humanity, depending their magnitude. The uninformed may call these beings angels, daemons or Elder Gods, but any such description falls short of the Truth. This type of incidents will be the motor in many scenarios in Cultists & Cubicles.

It is your task as Game Manager to guide the players through this world of hidden knowledge. Try to ration out hints of the false nature of experienced Reality and the Truth that lies behind at a slow pace. The whole extent of this knowledge should not be revealed until late in the game, if ever. Remember to keep the mysteries intact to heighten the players' experience.

Metaphysics and Magick

Delving into the more obscure aspects of the cosmos may eventually reveal the Ultimate Truth about the Universe. It may also lead to the unexpected insight that Magick is not an imaginary, supernatural phenomenon, rather an integral part of the physical world.

The Ultimate Truth

There is a metaphysical explanation of the Nature of Reality discussed above: the Mathematical Universe Hypothesis is correct. The physical universe we inhabit is literally a mathematical structure. All physical aspects of the Universe are actually numerical properties of this structure, ruled by logic, arithmetic, geometry etc. The reason why mathematics is such an efficient tool for explaining the world is that Reality is math made flesh. Humans and other sentient beings are subunits of this structure with sufficiently complex information-processing capabilities to achieve consciousness and self-awareness.

Uncountable other mathematical structures exist in the Multiverse that is made up of all mathematics. Most of them are too hostile for life to arise, but some are hospitable enough to support sapient lifeforms.

*Any sufficiently advanced
mathematics is
indistinguishable
from Magick.
Unknown initiate*

In a mathematical Universe, any transformation that is theoretically feasible is also possible to apply on Reality. Magick is simply a different word for operations on the mathematical structure of Reality. An adept with determination and the right knowledge of what symbols to apply, can bend the fabric of Reality to their will. Given enough energy, it is also possible to penetrate the barrier between universes and summon otherworldly beings to our Reality.

Throughout the ages, mystics and madmen have glimpsed the edges of the Ultimate Truth and attempted to make sense of it. This has resulted in theories that are more or less inaccurate descriptions of Reality, giving birth to most religions, esoteric teachings and occult practices. Without the full understanding of the mathematics involved, these theories are tragically incomplete and for the practitioner they are often more dangerous than beneficial. Summonings and invocations are possible perform but exceptionally risky.





The Pragmatic Magick-User

It should be pointed out that some Player Characters already have the ability to use Magick even without the knowledge of how this is accomplished: A competent Agile Coach can perform the ritual of Retrospective which causes the local level of entropy to decrease, resulting in harmony and the healing of all participants.

*Lorem ipsum dolor sit
amet, consectetur
adipiscing elite.*

Arcane spell

Hitherto unknown seekers have developed an application programming interface (API) to facilitate the interaction with the mathematical structure of the Universe. It works as a bridge between the symbolic language of code to the mathematics that form a substrate beneath Reality. Although the API is undocumented and the communications protocol is thoroughly unintuitive, it is possible to work out how to implement simpler spells and eventually more advanced Magick. This programmatic approach to working Magick requires skill in programming which is usually found among developers, but team members with other job descriptions may also have that competency.

Since bugs in a spell or ritual may be devastating, involving a tester is highly recommended when doing Magick. A tester may add their Intelligence modifier to rolls by the primary Magick User.

Experimental research into the Magick API may result in the discovery of usable spells. A dedicated researcher may test Intelligence against a Difficulty Rating of 15 each workday that is spent exploring the API. If Elder Scripts or other arcane fragments of documentation are found, they may be used once for a +2 bonus on the roll. A successful roll grants knowledge of one new spell, roll on the table below. If a Player Character rolls a natural 1 during Magick discovery or during the casting of a spell, they fumble and must consult the Magick Failures table further below.

D10	Spell
1	Hello World—Write an arbitrary text of up to 128 glowing letters in the air. The message will remain for D6 minutes.
2	Detect bugs—Highlight up to D6 bugs in a computer program.
3	Glow-in-the-dark—Make an item or body part phosphoresce for D6 minutes.
4	Nausea—The target of the spell will vomit uncontrollably for D6 rounds.
5	Locate—The Magick User finds a specified object if it exists in the current room.
6	Levitate—Allow a person or object to move vertically without support for D4 minutes.
7	Improve weapon—A weapon gets a +1 modifier during one fight.
8	Teleport—Instantaneously move a person or an object to a different location. DR depends on size and distance.
9	Heal—One character recovers D4 HP or Sanity.
10	Magick shield—Reduce the damage caused by Magick or psionic attacks by D4.

D8	Magick Failure
1	Horrific hallucinations—Lose D4 Sanity.
2	Explosion—Lose D2 HP.
3	Partial aphasia—Lose the ability to speak any language except ancient Sumerian for D20 minutes.
4	One body part is horribly disfigured for D6 hours.
5	One body part is permanently disfigured.
6	Permanently change eye color: (D4): 1-2 Left, 3 Right, 4 Both.
7	Permanently gain D4 extra fingers.
8	Allergic to a color: (D6): 1 Red, 2 Green, 3 Blue, 4 Beige, 5 Black, 6 Hotpink.

The Corporation

The Corporation is given a superficial introduction in the Core Rules, but the Game Manager may decide to describe the Corporation in greater detail. One option is to involve the players in a “session zero” where background and other facts are worked out in collaboration, similar to how the Player Characters are created. On the other hand, a lack of specifics can enhance the mystique in the gameplay.

Below is some more information about the Corporation that should not be shared with the players.





Adam

*In a hierarchy, every
employee tends to
rise to his level of
incompetence.*

The Peter Principle

Employees

Some employees are devout loyalists who know the Corporation's mission statement by heart and live by it as if it were a holy commandment. They may have ambitions to rise in the corporate hierarchy, or perhaps they truly believe in the lofty goals communicated by the corporate leadership.

Meanwhile, other employees are secretly opposed to the Corporation and do their best to frustrate its progress, be it through malicious compliance, outright sabotage or by refusing to do more more than what is explicitly required. Open dissent is dealt with harshly but discretely and troublemakers are rarely seen again after an incident. Management actively promotes a culture of fear in the workplace and the overwhelming majority of the employees try to do their job and keep their heads down.

The Player Characters may start out belonging to any of the above mentioned alignments, but as more and more is revealed about the Corporation, they are likely to grow increasingly skeptical.

The CEO

The Corporation is an unaccountable private tyranny, and the Chief Executive Officer is its absolute ruler. Many legends surround the mysterious CEO of the Corporation, but very few employees have ever seen him in the flesh. He is magnificent and his power is vast—just the mention of his name can cause shudders in all but the most committed. Around him, a coterie of followers enthusiastically obey his every request in order to earn his favor; he is the center of much intrigue. It should be assumed that the CEO has deep knowledge of the occult—how else could he reach the top of the corporate hierarchy in a cut-throat business?

Secret Organizations

*Never attribute to
stupidity that which
can be explained by
dark magick*
Anonymous acolyte

The Corporation is riddled with secret societies struggling for influence. They follow different traditions and have varying degrees of proficiency in the occult, but all are more or less nefarious. Some of the secret organizations are infiltrated by one or more of the others. Only the CEO is above the plots and machinations.

A possible plot element when playing Cultists & Cubicles is to have a secret society take interest in one or more of the Player Characters, either as a potential initiate or as an enemy. Some of these secret organizations are described below.

Mammonites

The Mammonites worship the Golden Calf. They strive to maximize personal economic gain through the use of ceremonial Magick. Elaborate rituals and initiations obscure the fact that they have no real insight into the Ultimate Truth. While ignorant of the other secret societies, they still pose a potential threat to others since they oppose all competing centers of influence and will go to great lengths to defend their power. Members of the Mammonites seldom reach the highest ranks of the Corporation, but they are numerous and committed.

Disciples of lok-Sotot

The Disciples of lok-Sotot blindly follow what they perceive to be the will of the eldritch power lok-Sotot. They are prone to human sacrifice and self mutilation, since their divine master thirsts for blood and suffering. It is unclear whether there is any truth to their beliefs, but some of the more senior Disciples are capable mages and hold C-level positions in the Corporation.

Sacred Brotherhood of the Dark Temple

The Sacred Brotherhood of the Dark Temple revere raw power and engage in blood rites to attain greater knowledge. They worship the Secret Chief Officers who supposedly are the true, hidden rulers of the Corporation. The Sacred Brotherhood have long attempted to establish the title of Chief Demonology Officer within the Corporation and intend to use that post to steer the business decisions of the company. Their belief system is based on a syncretic blend of —among other things—Kabbala, Brahminic wisdom, ancient Egyptian lore and Gnostic apocrypha.

Rotary

This order has long upheld a front as a harmless club for charity, networking and mutual aid, but they are in fact advanced explorers of esoteric theory. They trace their history back to the Greco-Roman mystery cults and the worship of the Egyptian sun god Ra. The cogwheel emblem of the organization was originally based on an ancient symbol for the sun, but is now camouflaged in order to obfuscate its origin.

Justified Architects of Mummu

Little is known of this organization, its membership and goals. It is believed to spring from Pythagorean mysticism and mathematics, colored by Erisian thought. Some sources claim that the Justified Architects of Mummu are descended from Dionysus-worshippers in ancient Greece.



Random Corporate Occurrences

Unexpected events may disrupt the usual boredom of the office worker. The following table may be used in order to establish the right atmosphere or as a hook for whole scenarios.

D12	Occurrence
1	The Chief Operations Officer is missing. A power vacuum ensues.
2	Hostile takeover! A competing corporation is attempting to take over the subsidiary where the Player Characters are employed.
3	In order to improve Net Promoter Scores among employees, mandatory surveys will be sent out at regular intervals. Absent or incorrect answers will be punished.
4	Intra-departmental conflict: Two departments try to eliminate each other and there may be collateral damage.
5	One of the in-house secret societies is running a campaign to recruit new members.
6	New OKRs. A new set of goals makes all recent work wasted. All Player Characters lose D6 Story Points.
7	Lay-offs. 2D6 employees at the Player Characters' department are fired; possibly contacts, allies and enemies of the PCs.
8	Promotion. One of the Player Characters is promoted. Gain D6 Story Points, a new title and a lot more work.
9	Unionization. Members of the workforce are trying to organize a union.
10	An office party is coming up. Expect bad music, free alcohol and awkward situations.
11	A summons from HR. One of the Player Characters have been summoned to HR for unknown reasons.
12	Zombie infestation. D20 unliving members of the Accounting Department are stumbling around in the office, occasionally attacking other employees.

Encounters and Hazards

D20	Encounter
1-7	Nothing.
8	Random Stranger: A tester from another team who appears to be lost.
9	An indoor food truck. Eat and recover D4 HP. Stay too long and lose D4 HP caused by carbon monoxide poisoning.
10	A vending machine containing D6 soda cans (\$1 each, only accepts coins; Heals 1 HP).
11	A deadly trap disguised as a vending machine. Test Agility against 12 or be crushed under it, losing D4 HP.
12	Whiteboards covered with occult symbols. It's not a clue, merely a coincidence.
13	A room with a constant rain of blood. No one seems to notice.
14	A rambling maniac.
15	An irritated rat. Reaction -1.
16	Intelligent mold.
17	Animated leftovers from a forgotten refrigerator.
18	D4 rodents of unusual size.
19	A gargantuan cockroach.
20	A Soul Sucker.



Random Stranger

Random Strangers roam the safer corridors and can be of help to the Player Characters if the encounter goes well. Let role-play or a reaction roll determine if this is the case. If treated badly, a Random Stranger will attack, flee or mislead the Player Characters with false information.

Examples of Random Strangers

- A tester from another team who appears to be lost.
- A cleaner minding their own business.
- A shy developer politely trying to avoid the Player Characters.
- Two developers in a heated argument over the pros and cons of functional programming (Reaction +1).
- A curious UX Professional. (D6): 1–3 they begin an ethnographic study of the Player Characters and follow the team around from now on.

Stat	Value
Hit Points	4
Reaction	+2
Morale	5
Unarmed	D2

Rambling Maniac

Too much stress or a traumatic experience has broken this previously brilliant developer. Dressed in tattered developer garb, they wander the corridors preaching to anyone who will listen. If you pay attention, important knowledge may be gleaned from the ramblings.

D10	Subject of ramblings
1	The merits of functional programming
2	The merits of object oriented programming
3	Why tabs are superior to spaces
4	Why spaces are superior to tabs
5	The merits of open source software
6	The merits of static typing
7	Why micro services are better than monoliths
8	We are all living in a simulation
9	There is a secret cabal running the Corporation
10	The company leadership are all reptile people

Stat	Value
Hit Points	3
Reaction	+2
Morale	7
Unarmed	D2

Rat (Ordinary Size)

Although more common on subterranean levels, rats can be encountered anywhere in an office building. If a Player Character is bitten, test Resilience against a Difficulty Rating of 10 or get a nasty infection. Scared of fire.

Stat	Value
Hit Points	1
Reaction	+1
Morale	5
Bite	D2 - 1

Intelligent Mold

Comes in three variations: green, white and black. Intelligent mold is difficult to distinguish from ordinary mold, but has a rich inner life. Peaceful unless provoked, it can release a cloud of mycotoxins in self defense. Nearly impossible to kill using physical violence but trivial to outrun.

Stat	Value
Hit Points	40
Reaction	+4
Morale	7
Mycotoxins	D6

Rodents of Unusual Size

Exposure to Dark Magick has caused these rats to grow in size. They are ill-tempered and will not hesitate to attack a lost wanderer.

Stat	Value
Hit Points	4
Reaction	-1
Morale	6
Bite	D4



Gargantuan Cockroach

Cockroaches are notoriously hard to kill, but killing a roach that is bigger than a boardroom table is exceptionally hard. And quite dangerous. Prefers dark, damp areas.

Stat	Value
Hit Points	32
Reaction	0
Morale	7
Mandibles and legs	D6



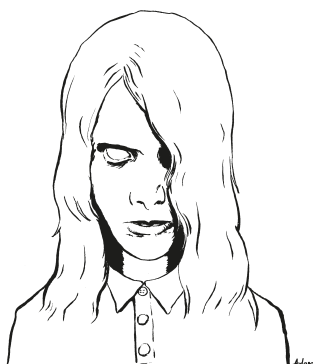
Animated Leftovers from a Forgotten Refrigerator

Noodles, meatballs and various snacks have been left in a refrigerator long enough for spontaneous generation of life to take place. This creature, entirely made of foodstuffs, is traumatized by being abandoned by its former owners and is out for revenge.

Stat	Value
Hit Points	7
Reaction	-2
Morale	5
Slime attack	D4

Office zombie

Powerful Magick or excessive boredom has halted all higher brain functions of this employee, causing them to enter a state of unliving. They are not necessarily aggressive but someone in authority can command them into using violence against innocent bystanders.



Stat	Value
Hit Points	5
Reaction	0
Morale	-
Unarmed	D2

Soul Sucker

The Soul Sucker was once an unusually frustrating mid-level manager. Now, emanations from beyond have morphed their physical appearance to better correspond to the shape of their twisted soul. As an added bonus, they have gained psychic powers. The Soul Sucker enjoys torturing their victims without mercy with micromanagement, endless paperwork and psionic attacks. They believe all other employees to be their subordinates.

Stat Value	
Hit Points	10
Reaction	-3
Morale	8
Psionic attack	D6





Scenario: Sub-Basement of Horrors

This is an introductory scenario that will familiarize the players with the world of Cultists & Cubicles as well as present some elements that may become relevant in later scenarios. For the Game Manager's eyes only.

Introduction

In Sub-Basement of Horrors, the Player Characters are ordered to search for the missing Team Alpha. The scenario consists of two parts: Investigation in the third floor office and exploration in the sub-basement.

The Player Characters can search for clues to the disappearance of their co-workers on the third floor. When enough information is gathered, it will be possible to explore the sub-basement where the lost team is assumed to be. Meanwhile, the mood changes to an office crawl where unspeakable horrors must be confronted.

The Non-Player Characters appearing in the scenario are presented in the section Dramatis Personæ. A handout can be found at the end of the scenario.

Background

Team Alpha used to be celebrated for their high productivity and unrivaled track record of meeting deadlines, but lately their performance has declined to a more mediocre level. Their charismatic project manager Dolores McGuffin has been yearning for the times when the team was more successful and she has been exploring ways to revive their reputation. A chance discovery by one of the team members has given Dolores an idea for how to boost productivity to unheard of levels, but the price will be high.

Setting the Scene

Earlier in the week, the CEO (in his infinite wisdom) declared the company to be in crisis. Earnings and productivity are down and all employees are expected to work "hardcore" at finishing all active projects. Any team not in phase with their expected progress

must work extra hours. The risk of layoffs is implied but never stated explicitly.

Some employees suspect that the goal is to pump up the earnings in time for the next quarterly report and that the “crisis” will be over after that, but it is unwise to question the decrees from above—if you want to keep your jobs. So you toil away the whole week and when you finally close the last ticket on Friday evening you are all alone on the third floor.

It's Friday evening at 7.50 and you are about to pack up and go home after a grueling workweek when one of you notice the latest email:

From: **William Lumbago**

Subject: **URGENT! IMMEDIATE ATTENTION REQUIRED!!**

Team Alpha's current whereabouts are unknown and they have not filed progress reports during the current or the previous reporting period. Since their regular working area is adjacent to yours, you have been delegated to immediately locate Team Alpha and compel them to comply with the progress reporting schedule. Failure to succeed in this task will have severe repercussions for all members of your team. I expect this issue to be resolved promptly.

Regards

William Lumbago, Manager of Systems Development and Maintenance

A reading receipt has already been sent by the e-mail system, so there is no point in pretending to not to have seen the message.

The past week has been so busy that you haven't noticed the absence of Team Alpha who usually sit near you in the third floor office landscape. Where can they be?

Investigation

Locating Team Alpha will require some research in the office building and on the corporate network.

Keycards are used to unlock the main doors on each floor. After 6 p.m. the Player Characters only have access to the floor where their office is which limits where the team can conduct their investigation.

The third floor office consists of four main areas:

- The office landscape
- The break room
- The office of William Lumbago
- An area of cubicles
- There are also a few other rooms of lesser importance.

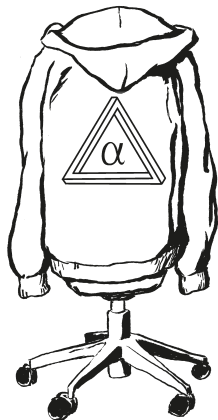
Office Landscape

To save in on expenses, most of the third floor is not used by The Corporation but leased out to other firms, causing the third floor office to be the smallest one in the building.

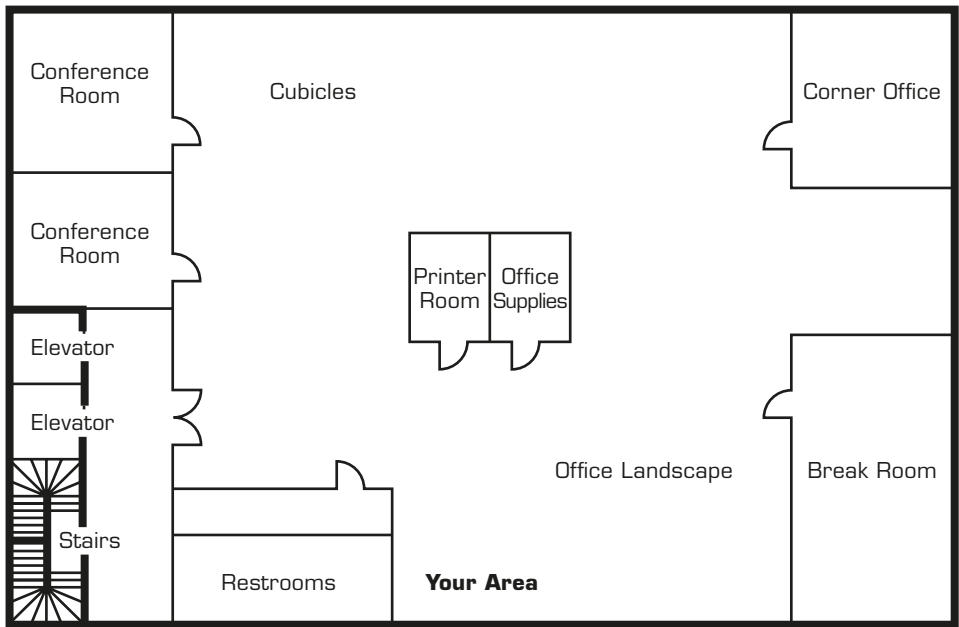
The company-wide policy against frivolous decorations in the workplace makes the office landscapes unusually drab. Screens and input devices litter the desks but there are few traces of the personalities of those who work there. Whiteboards cover most of the walls, and they in turn are covered in bright sticky notes.

Clues

The following clues can be uncovered if the Player Characters succeed at testing Intelligence. Unless otherwise specified, the DR for finding a clue is 10.



- A hoodie with the Project Trinity logo. The medium-sized hoodie hangs off the backrest of an office chair (+1 bonus in fights against the enemies of Team Alpha).
- A note about a missing keycard. On one of Team Alpha's whiteboards, there is a sticky note with the text "Help find Natalya's keycard".
- A page from a printed document. The first page of the document Liber MCCCXXXVII was forgotten in the printer. (Handout)
- Notes mentioning "Project Trinity". On a desk there is a notepad with the text "Project Trinity" scrawled.
- A sticky note saying "-2 access".



Break Room

There is a break room in a corner of the office. Unclean refrigerators, loud microwave ovens, uncomfortable chairs and high tables make up the furnishings. There is a vaguely putrid scent in the air and one wall is decorated with a motivational poster with the text: "You can maximize short-term shareholder value!"

Clues

- A keycard on a lanyard. As a prank, someone has hidden Natalya's keycard inside a cookie jar. (DR 12)
- A kitchen knife (damage D4)
- Dirty dishes
- Stale snacks (heals 1 HP)



The Manager's Office

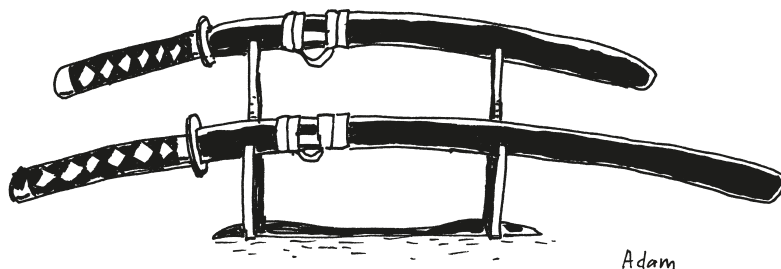
The office of William Lumbago is locked. The door can be opened discreetly by picking the lock (test Intelligence against DR 14) alternatively by bashing open the glass door using brute force (test Strength against DR 12).

The office is furnished in a style that is far more exclusive than the rest of the office. A large, hardwood desk takes up the center of the room and photos of Lumbago playing golf and shaking hands with various bigwigs are displayed on the walls.

On a sideboard is a stand with a Daisho—a set of two matching samurai swords. These are decorative weapons and have dull edges, but their points are surprisingly sharp.

Clues

- Katana (damage D6)
- Wakizashi (damage D4)
- A golf bag contains a driver and a 3 iron of an exclusive brand (damage D6).
- A note about Team Alpha and their missing productivity reports.
- A keycard in a desk drawer. It is a new card for Natalya.
- A hardcover edition of *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu.



Cubicles

The northern part of the office is the so called Cubicle Farm. This is where the “normal” office workers, who are not involved in system development, spend their days. Row after row of identical cubicles containing computers, keyboards and screens. It accomplishes the impressive feat of being even more dreary than the open office landscape.

Clues

There is nothing of interest here. Nothing whatsoever.

Intranet

It is also possible to find clues on the corporate intranet. Some of this information is accessible to any employee who can find their way on the mazelike document management systems (test Intelligence against a DR of 10). Other data is hidden in the dark recesses of the server farms, requiring hacking skills or more persistent searching, i.e. a higher DR.

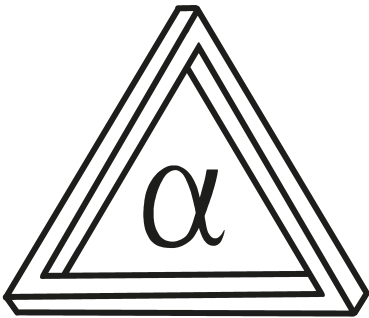
More details about the Non-Player Character can be found on the intranet, see section “Dramatis Personæ”.

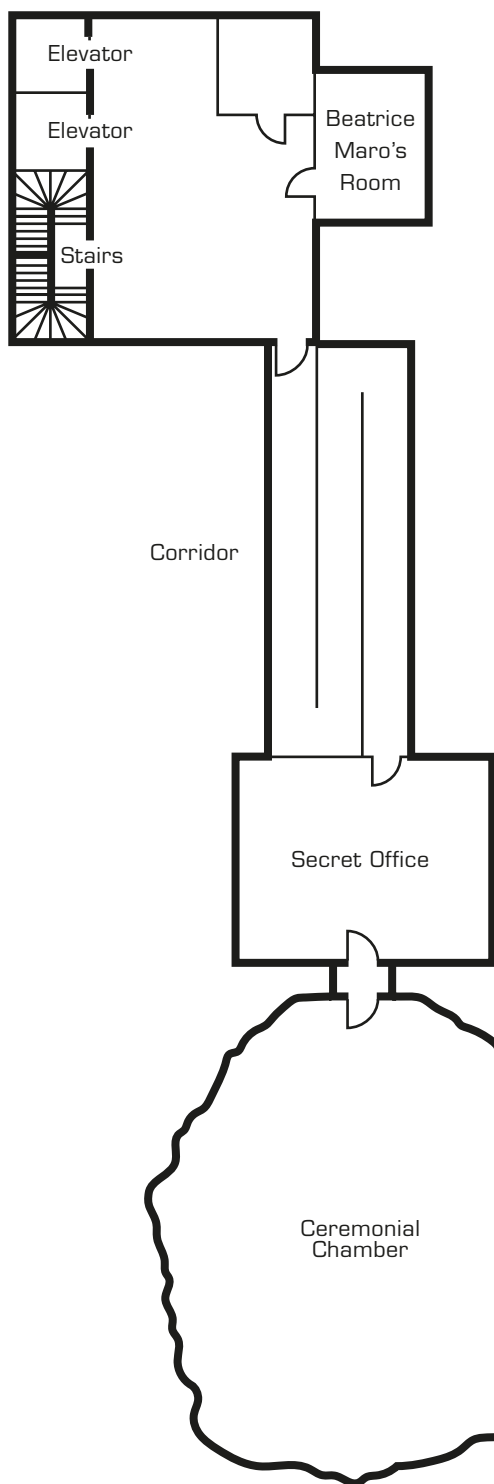
Clues

- A request to gain access to the sub-basement on level -2
- Notes from a meeting on the need to increase productivity (DR 12)
- Logo design for Project Trinity

Random Events and Encounters on the Third Floor

D12	Encounter
1-8	Nothing
9	A 4 x 4 m zone that is completely silent.
10	A copy machine is randomly outputting images of severed body parts.
11	Horrible noises are emanating from one of the bathrooms. It is caused by problematic plumbing.
12	A mysterious human-shaped character is mumbling to themselves in a cubicle. On closer inspection it is revealed to be an over-worked accountant who has to finish a TPS report and would prefer not to be disturbed. Can become testy if not left alone.





Sub-Basement

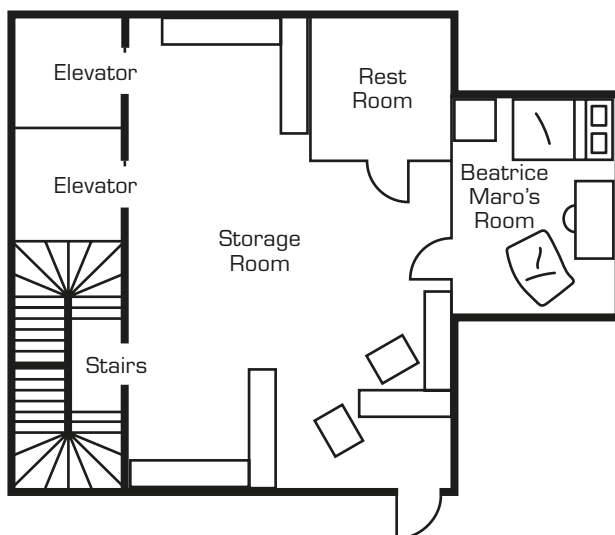
The rest of the scenario takes place in the sub-basement on level -2. If the Player Characters have found either of the keycards on the third floor, they can use the elevator. Another way to reach the sub-basement is to use the emergency stairs and force open the locked door on level -2 (Strength, DR 14).

As part of Project Trinity, Team Alpha has been exploring how to manipulate the laws of nature. Unbeknownst to them, their earlier experiments have caused a strong reality distortion field in the sub-basement and given rise to aberrations.

The Storage Room

The elevator and stairs lead to what appears to be an abandoned storage room with dust collecting in the corners. The only source of light is the flickering emergency exit sign above the door to the stairwell, evoking a sinister feeling of foreboding.

Across the room, a door marked "Restroom" stands ajar; next to it is a closed door. The rest of the room is covered with storage shelves and a few boxes. On one box, some joker has written "Time travel stuff" with a marker.



The closed door leads to a small room that contains a bed, a bean bag, a chair and a small desk. A woman is sitting on the bean bag reading a crime novel. The woman is revealed to be Beatrice Maro who works in the Marketing Department. She has made a temporary home for herself in this room while she is looking for a new apartment. She is slightly embarrassed at being found out. Unless the Player Characters are outright hostile, she will tell them what she knows. If they are persuasive enough, they can convince her to join the search for Team Alpha, since she is understimulated from being isolated.

**What Beatrice Maro
Knows**

During the weeks that she has been living in the subterranean room, Beatrice Maro has been left alone and she is not aware of anyone coming to the sub-basement. However, during the last few days she has noticed some changes: Boxes have been moved, especially on the side of the storage room to the left of her living quarters, and it feels like there's less dust.

Clues

On one of the shelves there is a box labeled "Team Alpha". It contains various garbage including one sticky note with the text

Side project: Study "Liber MCCCXXXVII"

**Entrance to the
Next Room**

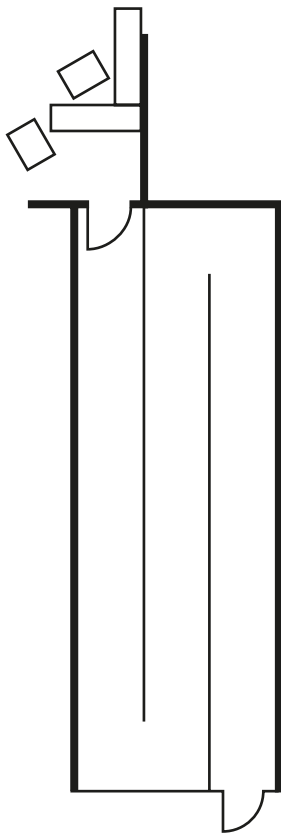
Behind one of the shelves is a partially obscured security door with a code lock.

The door can't be forced using tools available in the office building but it can be unlocked with a four digit code: "1337". This number can be derived from the Roman numerals in the title of "Liber MCCCXXXVII".

An alternative method for opening the lock is to examine the buttons on the number pad (Intelligence, DR 12) to see that the buttons 1, 3 and 7 are more worn by use than the others. By limiting the number of keys, the number of possible combinations is decreased dramatically.

A brute force attack using all the digits 0-9 is possible but time consuming: starting at 0000, it would take approximately 1,5 hours to arrive at the correct code, if allowing 4 seconds per attempt. Test Resilience against a Difficulty Rating of 8 after every 1000 attempts to resist the temptation to give up.

Breaking the number pad using physical force is difficult (Strength, DR 15), as is short circuiting the cables in a way that unlocks the door (Intelligence, DR 14).



The Labyrinthine Corridor

A dimly lit corridor extends 20 meters ahead. In the sepulchral gloom at the far end, there is a sharp turn to the left. From this position, the corridor leads back almost to the starting point. Here, the passageway veers abruptly to the right, leading back in the original direction. The final 20 meters distance appears to end in a closed door. There are no other doors in the corridor and the walls are slightly moist. There is a hint of mildew in the air.

A successful roll for Intelligence against DR 12 will reveal a series of four squares cut out of the carpeting on the floor in the last stretch. Each one of these squares cover a simple booby trap intended to alert the members of Team Alpha of intruders. Each Player Character must test Intelligence to avoid stepping into a noisy trap (Difficulty Rating 10 if a light source is used or if the Player Characters are exceedingly careful, otherwise DR 14). If the test fails, lose D4 -1 HP and spend one minute getting unstuck. The door at the end of the corridor is not locked.

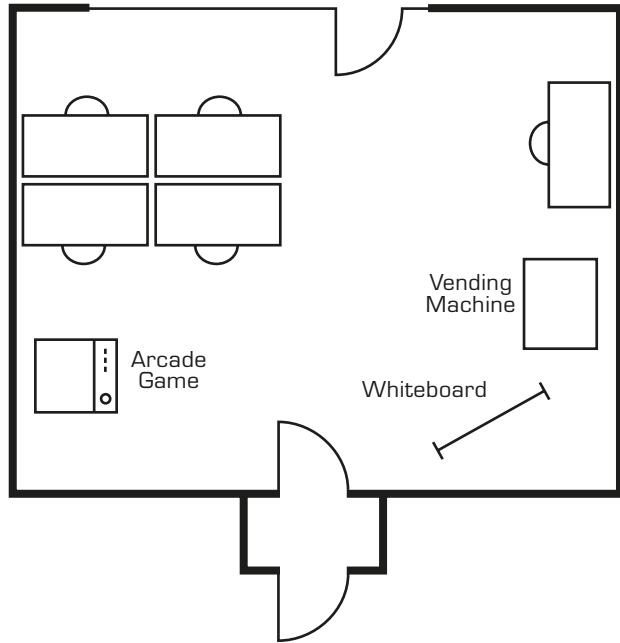
A Mischief of Rats

The noise of a triggered trap will attract D10 rats that are likely to attack. The rats appear from behind a loose ventilation grate.

If a Player Character is bitten, test Resilience against a Difficulty Rating of 10 or get a nasty infection. The rats are scared of fire.

Stat	Value
Hit Points	1
Reaction	+1
Morale	5
Bite	D2 - 1

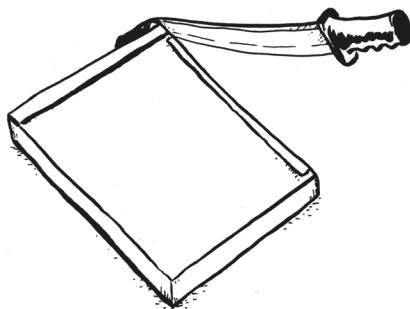
The Secret Office



The door opens up to a surprisingly cozy and well-lit area, especially considering that it is located in the sub-basement. The room is outfitted as an office space for five people with desks, whiteboards and comfortable office chairs. There is also a sofa, and an arcade game (Ms. Pac-Man). Much energy has gone into making this clandestine room into a great place to work. There are no people in the room; all computers are turned off and most of the whiteboards are wiped clean. It appears as if whoever used this office has abandoned it, at least for the time being. Despite all its agreeableness, this area may cause a slight feeling of unease. There is a sense of something unnatural creeping behind the pleasant façade.

Improvised Weapons

The room contains a few items that are possible improvised weapons. A red stapler can be used as a projectile (damage D2) and the blade of a paper cutter can be torn off (Strength, DR 6) and used in close combat (damage D6).



Attack of the Doppelgängers

Before the Player Characters have time to inspect the secret office, a door opens and five figures rush in. They appear to be the five members of Team Alpha. Dolores leads them in a sudden, unprovoked assault. They are relentless in their attack and will not stop until they are all defeated.

The attackers are actually not Team Alpha but contraterrene doppelgängers created by the reality bending effects of Project Trinity. Similar to antiparticle counterparts of ordinary matter, they are almost exact mirror images of the original team members. However, an attentive observer (Intelligence, DR 15) will note that all of them are left-handed which is statistically unexpected. These doppelgängers are imperfect in that their resemblance is only physical. Mentally they are very dissimilar to the originals in that they lack all emotions other than aggression, something that causes them to instantly attack anyone entering in the office.

When a doppelgänger's HP reaches 0, it will dissipate into a thin wisp of smoke.

Doppelgängers

Stat	Value
Hit Points	1
Reaction	-9
Morale	-
Unarmed	D2

After the Attack

After the contraterrene doppelgängers are overcome, the Player Characters may search the Secret Office or enter the door from which the attackers came.

Clues in the Secret Office

- If the Player Characters have not found the first page of the document Liber MCCCCXXXVII yet, a printout can be found on a desk.
- A careful search in the room will yield a collection of notes on performing a ritual to manipulate the laws of nature.
- In the middle of the room is a whiteboard with a single index card under the headline "ongoing":

As a project manager

I want to be able to finish projects on time,
within budget and without bugs,

so that the team can be hyperproductive

Exit

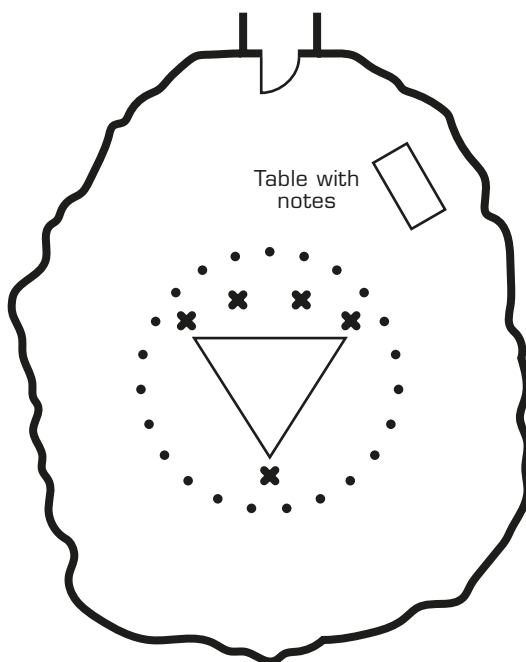
The door through which the doppelgängers entered leads to a small anteroom. The exit at the other end of this cramped space connects to the next room.

The Ceremonial Chamber

On entering this room, you sense a crackling energy in the air. The ceiling is nearly obscured in the twilight of the cavernous, mostly unfurnished space. In the middle of the floor, 23 battery-powered LED candles are placed in a perfect circle. They are the main source of light. Inside the circle a large triangle is drawn with whiteboard markers on the linoleum.

Between the circle and the triangle, five hooded figures are sitting; one at each vertex of the triangle and two next to its base. They sit in contorted positions, weakly chanting with hoarse voices as if performing some arcane ceremony. They are all facing the center of the triangle and appear to be in a trancelike state, unresponsive to external stimuli.

In the center of the triangle, spectral lights are flickering and a vaguely humanoid shape can be discerned in the seething chaos. Mandibles, baleful eyes and an enormous hook are occasionally visible in the luminous turmoil.



The Failed Ritual

The chanting figures in the circle are, in fact, the missing Team Alpha. The ritual they are performing is the culmination of the skunkworks project dubbed "Project Trinity". The ritual is intended to manipulate the fabric of the universe into fusing the irreconcilable triad of Cost, Time and Quality, thereby creating a method for consistently finishing development projects within budget and on time without compromising quality.

Team Alpha reverse engineered the ritual from the document Liber MCCCXXXVII that they stumbled upon in a hidden archive on the corporate intranet. But because of an off-by-one error in the implementation, the procedure results in an infinite loop; Instead of bending reality and revolutionizing project management, each iteration of the rite weakens the barrier that protects the universe, something that will have catastrophic consequences.

An opportunistic entity from beyond has noticed the emerging vulnerability in the barrier and is trying to exploit it in order to gain access to our reality. The only thing keeping this Intruder from fully breaching the perimeter is the triangular protective sigil on the floor, in combination with the chanted incantation. If the chanting stops, or if any of the lines of the triangle are broken, the Intruder will be let loose and cause unforeseeable devastation.

The situation is seemingly stable at the moment, but the condition is not sustainable since the chant has already been performed for nearly 24 hours, and the participants are reaching their limits. The Player Characters must now decide on how to resolve the crisis.

Handling the Crisis

1. The easiest solution is to just leave and pretend to have failed in the search for Team Alpha. This will result in a reprimand from William Lumbago and the eventual breakdown of the ritual. When the ritual is terminated, the Intruder breaks through and immediately consumes Team Alpha. It is then able to gather strength and subsequently wreak havoc in its unrestricted manifestation.
2. Disrupting the ritual by damaging the protective triangle or ending the incantation will set loose the Intruder at its current, restricted level of power. This will inevitably lead to a violent confrontation.
3. It is possible to learn the incantation in order to help with upholding the chant (Intelligence, DR 11). This would in no way close the breach, but the Intruder would be kept at bay as long as at least four people are chanting.
4. It is also feasible to debug the ritual by correcting the error and stabilizing the barrier. The words of the chant are in ancient Aramaic and fixing the chant requires a successful test of Intelligence against a DR of 17. Failure immediately releases the Intruder in its restricted form.
5. One option is to gather more intelligence about the Intruder and the ritual. The few notes that are available in the room give scant knowledge of the technical details of the ritual, so the best source of information is Team Alpha. If done carefully, it is possible to remove one of them from the chant without interrupting the ritual. After a short rest, and hopefully something to drink, any member of Team Alpha will eagerly share as much information as possible to prepare the Player Characters for when the Intruder eventually breaks free.

The Intruder

The Intruder is a denizen of another realm where brute force and ruthlessness are the only means for survival—so it's only slightly worse than the Corporation. It attempts to enter this universe, intent on feeding on the nourishing bodies and souls of humans. If the Intruder can gain access, it will immediately manifest in a restricted form. Hints of the shape of this incarnation is visible in the center of the triangle. If undisturbed, the Intruder will then gather strength by siphoning off energy through the breach. When it is strong enough and has achieved its unrestricted form, it will mount an attack on a cataclysmic scale.

If the Intruder is released, all Player Characters in the vicinity must succeed at testing Resilience against DR 14 or lose D6 Sanity from the shock of seeing the Intruder in the flesh.

While it is possible to cause the Intruder harm with physical attacks, the only really effective method is by using a blade that has been charged by drawing blood from an innocent person. Such a blade causes triple damage. If the Player Characters have done their research, this knowledge may be crucial; Otherwise an accidental cut may reveal this weakness. Just remember that the blood must come from someone who is truly innocent.

Restricted Manifestation

The restricted manifestation of the Intruder is a nightmarish abomination. Its skin is shimmering with an oily secretion. The general body plan is humanlike, but taller and much more robust than any human. In place of the left hand is an enormous, sharp hook. The face is horrifying: staring eyes and a mouth with huge mandibles.



Stat	Value
Hit Points	18
Reaction	0
Morale	-
Hook	D8
Bite	D8
Hand	D6

**Unrestricted
Manifestation**

The full-scale incarnation of the Intruder does not have stats. It is of cyclopean size and will go on rampage in the city. It cannot be stopped by ordinary weapons, but tactical nuclear bombs may cause enough damage to stop it. If the Intruder has achieved its unrestricted form, the situation is out of the Player Characters' hands and the game ends or turns into a different genre.

Resolutions

Provided that the Player Characters survive handling the crisis and the confrontation with the Intruder, they are given a chance to recover and take stock of the situation.

The surviving members of Team Alpha are exhausted and have slumped down on the floor. LED candles are scattered across the room and the air is full of acrid smoke. In the middle of the triangular sigil, there is still an area of weakly flickering light that stings the eyes.

Dolores and her team need water and some time to catch their breath. After that, they can talk about the reasons for their disappearance and the background of Project Trinity.

There is still a vulnerability in the barrier between worlds. This will be exploited by other extradimensional threat actors, unless the breach is patched. There is no immediate threat, so there is time for recovery and discussions among the survivors.

Patching the Breach

Together, the two teams can now engineer a ritual that will seal the breach. In addition to a designer drawing the binding circle required for the ritual, a sacrifice must be made to complete it. The needed sacrifice is all memory of the latest 24 hours.

Performing the ritual requires successfully testing Intelligence against DR 13. If it fails, the participants will notice this and they may try again unless it was a fumble. Remember that a tester may add their Intelligence modifier to the roll.

Aftermath

The Player Characters find their way out of the sub-basement without complications and can spend a restful weekend at home. Dolores McGuffin files Team Alpha's belated progress reports thereby solving the Player Characters' original task to William Lumbago's satisfaction.

On Monday, the team meets up again at the office with a sense of dread that is only slightly worse than on any other workday. Anyone who did not participate in the ritual—and who consequently retain memories of the incident—is recommended to keep quiet about their experiences or risk being deemed crazy.

Any potential sores, scars, missing limbs or lost co-workers will remain unexplained.

Team Alpha will secretly start research on how manipulate reality in order to merge the impossible triad of Cost, Time and Quality.

Dramatis Personæ

The main Non-Player Characters in this scenario are presented below. If a Player Character tries to find out information about an NPC using the corporate intranet, test Intelligence against a DR of 10. On success, the first paragraph on each NPC summarizes the revealed information.

William Lumbago



[Intranet information] William Lumbago is the Player Characters' manager. He claims the title Manager of Systems Development and Maintenance, but that is highly questionable. He resides in the corner office when he deigns to be in the building.

William Lumbago is the undisputed ruler of the third floor. He has reached this apex of middle management not because of his leadership qualities, but by being ruthless, having an unreasonably high self-esteem and an almost fanatical devotion to the CEO. He describes himself as a mix between Steve Jobs and a feudal lord: a thought leader in the field of management.

Beatrice Maro



[Intranet information] Beatrice Maro is a junior market research analyst who has worked at the Corporation for six months. She has not distinguished herself in any way.

Temporarily lives in a storage room on level -2. Beatrice can be convinced to follow the Player Characters on their quest (Intelligence, DR 12) but she is a pacifist and will go to great lengths to avoid violence.
Affiliations: The Marketing Department

Stat	Value
Hit Points	4
Reaction	+2
Morale	4
Unarmed	D2

Dolores McGuffin



[Intranet information] McGuffin was headhunted from a competing firm three years ago to head the newly formed Team Alpha. She received high praise from her superiors based on the high productivity the team achieved under her leadership. She was fast-tracked to promotion, but later progress reports indicate that the productivity has been dwindling and there is a note of a warning regarding this being issued approximately 6 months ago.

The ambitious leader for the previously famed Team Alpha is great at motivating her team and convincing them to give their all. She will stop at nothing to reach her goals. Affiliations: Team Alpha

Stat	Value
Hit Points	5
Reaction	0
Morale	8
Unarmed	D2

Dolores' team

Alice (she/her)

Developer—has no social life outside of work



Stats	Value
Hit Points	4
Reaction	0
Morale	3
Unarmed	D2

Bob (he/him)

Developer—a merry prankster



Stats	Value
Hit Points	4
Reaction	0
Morale	3
Unarmed	D2

Arash (he/him)

Tester—the ultimate follower



Stats	Value
Hit Points	4
Reaction	0
Morale	3
Unarmed	D2

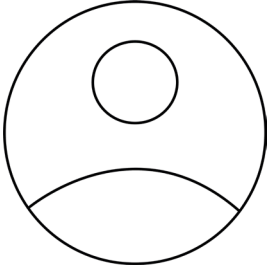
Natalya (she/her)

Designer—easily enthused



Stats	Value
Hit Points	4
Reaction	0
Morale	3
Unarmed	D2

N.P. Alnaasik—The Anchorite



[Intranet information, DR 13] After post-doc work in data science, Alnaasik was hired by the R&D department of the Corporation in the late 1980s. There is no record of any promotions but HR has noted worries about possible mental health issues. The only other entries are about two academic papers written by Alnaasik and arguments why those should not make him eligible for a raise. There are no records of salary being payed after 1997, but on the other hand his employment does not seem to have been terminated either.

Alnaasik was withdrawn and kept to himself. He focused all his energy on his research and seldom left his office. He was jokingly called “the hermit” before finally being completely forgotten by co-workers and the HR department. The paper Liber MCCCCXXVII was the crowning achievement of his research into Mathematical Ontology. Affiliations: Truth

Liber MCCCXXXVII

N.P. Almaasik

02/03/1987

To live like an anchorite, without the superstitious ignorance which leads him to such a course of life, this is wisdom indeed, and power is the reward.

– Eliphas Lévi

Philosophy is written in that great book which ever lies before our eyes – I mean the universe – but we cannot understand it if we do not first learn the language and grasp the symbols, in which it is written. This book is written in the mathematical language, and the symbols are triangles, circles and other geometrical figures, without whose help it is impossible to comprehend a single word of it; without which one wanders in vain through a dark labyrinth.

– Galileo Galilei

Abstract

This paper presents a method for examining hidden aspects of the ontological reality as a emanation of mathematics, furthermore it studies the effects structured symbol-manipulation may have on mathematical structures. Gödel's incompleteness theorems, in conjunction with the halting problem, is utilized to probe the mutability of experienced reality.

1 Introduction

In a time of ignorance and darkness, the Truthseeker must turn his back to the world of lies and diversions in order to reach insights of any profound significance. The following text is an account of the knowledge I have acquired through arduous exertion and deep contemplation in ascetic solitude. The faint of heart or weak of intellect will recoil when confronted with the conclusions that I have come upon, but the truthfulness of these same conclusions is not diminished.

Cultists & Cubicles

Character Sheet

Player

Name

Pronoun

Age

Employer

Corporate Alignment

Team

Persona (optional)

Job Title

Education

Strength

Agility

Intelligence

Resilience

Hit Points

Total

Current Value

Sanity

Total

Current Value

Story Points

Team Connections

Description: Appearance and Personality

Skills and Abilities

Weapons

Equipment

Further Reading

The following excellent works have inspired the world of Cultists & Cubicles:

- *The Laundry Files* series by Charles Stross
- *Death is Only the Beginning* and other works by Gunilla Jonsson and Michael Petersén
- *My Work Is Not Yet Done* by Thomas Ligotti
- *Welcome to Night Vale* by Joseph Fink and Jeffrey Cranor
- *Foucault's Pendulum* by Umberto Eco
- *The Illuminatus! Trilogy* by Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson
- *Swedish Cults* by Anders Fager
- *Feminist Fight Club: A Survival Manual for a Sexist Workplace* by Jessica Bennett
- *Mörk Borg* by Pelle Nilsson and Johan Nohr
- *Our Mathematical Universe* by Max Tegmark

Thank You

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Glossary

Agile methodologies—Using buzzwords like “scrum”, “lean” and “kanban” to cover up the fact that you are still adhering to antiquated hierarchies and processes.

API—Application Programming Interface—the interface that enables an external program to interact with an otherwise protected system resource.

Dx—Conforming to Dice Notation; A randomly generated integer in the range 1–x, possibly using a x-sided die. For instance, “D8” means a random number between 1 and 8 for which an octahedral die may be used.

GM—Game Manager. The person with the ultimate responsibility for the planning and execution of the scenario.

HP—See Hit Points.

LoC—Lines of Code, sometimes mistakenly used as a measure of productivity.

Natural 20—When the die actually says “20”, before modifiers.

NPC—A Non-Player Character, any character controlled by the Game Manager instead of by a player.

SP—Story Points, a completely abstract measure of work done.

UX—User Experience—an end-user’s experience of interacting a product or services.

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