

Henchmen

When he got to the table, Tony was staring down despondently at the lukewarm plate of glop in front of him.

"Chow mein?" Cliff didn't really want to know.

"Irish stew, I think," Tony turned over a glistening chunk of mysterious origin staring at it with pure animosity.

"I really miss working for DeChamp."

"That French guy? What do they call him, 'the Epicurean Assassin'?"

"Yeah, it was fine food every day. Osso bucco, filet mignon with wild mushrooms"

"Why did you leave then?"

"He kept eating henchmen."

"No shit!"

"No, really. If he didn't get an enemy agent for a couple of weeks he would start looking at the staff, poking them to see who looked the tenderest. We had to go out and capture someone or he would get hungry. Before I left, last one we got was some old lady, we said she was Greyham Nemo in a clever disguise."

"He believed that?"

"No, not really... He ate her anyway."

They sat in despondency for a few moments. The silence was broken by a droning announcement from the PA system. The message reminded all henchmen of the dress code, that ties were to be worn under overalls at all time.

"You'd think he'd have something better to do, he is the area Overlord after all."

"Who would let him loose on something important?"

"They gave him the overlord job didn't they? Hadn't they heard what happened when he was in the KGB – his own men shot him!"

"Yeah but the Council of Doom are all as bad as he is. Herlihan O'Shamrock is just as nasty and twice as stupid, ditto for Hammerhead. The Smiler is smarter but just too weak to keep

Bolstavich in line, even if the little dwarf is his subordinate. With Big Joel Banana as head of Henchman Resources, do you think they are going to pull him into line. He has them convinced that his Finland project is going to make them big bucks, even though the Fins have yet to cough up a nickel."

"And the Henchman's Union is fucking useless."

"God, don't get me started on Meinhoff. He thinks that because he shares a name with a big terrorist that gives him some credibility and a license to do squat all."

Misery was palable. Other henchmen shuffled into the cafeteria,

"God, sometimes I regret going into the terror and crime business at all. You get twenty years of this shit if you're lucky. More likely you get shot by some secret agent and end up dead or hooked up to some machine."

"Oh, did you hear about Dave? He got shot by Asha Strange, paralysed, but his insurance plan came through and they turned him into a cyborg. He has no brain left to speak of but has these great big fucking robot arms. His wife even got them to put an edge trimmer attachment, for the lawns."

"Shame about the brain damage."

"Yeah, but I think he's happier. I even envy him in a way. God, being a henchman here is shit work."

"Ain't that the truth - but think about the agents. Some of them went to underground university, got degrees in crime and everything. Some even have evil doctorates."

"I heard most of them are thinking of defecting, even to MI5 if they have to. Those that are left, that Bolstavich hasn't had killed because they are too good at their jobs. Did you hear he's making Dog Hatchet Jack do a safe job in Nevada? She's a goddam pirate, the best in the business, and he's taken her off The Remora and told her she has to do second storey work, and blow safes even though she's never done that before in her life. We're an international crime organisation, you have to learn to spread your wings..."

They were interrupted by another static punctuated announcement. Something about Team Dreadnought sending the money back to the bank because the robbery hadn't been properly authorised by the Overlord's office...

"What does he do all day? Sit with the microphone in his hand?"

"I heard he gets off on it. Sitting up there, jacking off and giving orders."

Another announcement violated the air, demanding that Team Dreadnought do what they are told, "I'm the Overlord, you – will – do – as – I – say!" Both men cracked up.

"He doesn't need to jack off, he's got his assistants to service him. All those Finnish chicks who do all the real work in his office."

"It was that fucking Fufu who got Doctor Checkmate removed. He was the best base commander we ever had and she rats him out to the Council of Terror, something about a fucking masseuse chair she reckoned he bought for Professor Number."

"A fucking chair? Do you know why they call her the Silk Whisper?"

"I thought it was some kind of assassin codename, even though I've never seen her do a lick of work. Mitch reckons she chucks a tantrum any time someone asks her to pick a lock or ice a cop."

"That's because she can't do any of that shit. She only got the job because she was fucking Bolstavich, even though we aren't supposed to know that they live together in goddamn Love Canal. Jesus, how stupid would you have to be? They call her the Silk Whisper because she loves two things – expensive clothes and gossip."

"What is it with all these Finns? I know Bolstavich digs Finnish chicks but I heard all new agents have to speak Finnish."

"Yeah it was in the ad and everything. How do you think we got a loser like Bokki Kling? He can talk the lingo, and even better, he's incompetent – no threat to the overlord."

Another message. Team Dreadnaught had been executed and all agents were reminded that proper authorisation must be sought for all activities.

"What does Yul Sausage actually do, now he's the new commander? He is supposed to run the base, he just does what Yuri tells him to do."

"Yeah well, that's his payoff for selling out Checkmate. He gets to sit at Bolstavich's table while Doctor Checkmate is stuck in an Antartica prison."

"I heard it was more like under Yuri's table."

Both men allowed a cheap snigger.

"So, how's your nephew doing?"

"Rick, he's fine. Went to work for that Zookeeper bunch. His mother ain't too happy about him going into the same line of work as me, but what are you going to do?"

"How's that working out for him?"

"Great. Good health plan, three fucking weeks annual leave, uniform laundry subsidy and they don't mind you taking guns home on the weekend." He took a swig of coffee, possibly a specimen from the germ warfare division. "There is that whole 'danger of being eaten' thing again though..."

"God, what is it with evil organisations today?"

Another message from the Overlord. Some pigeons had been seen sitting in his parking space and he was dispatching a wetwork squad to teach them a lesson.

"Do you know if they're recruiting?"

I. What is ZODIAC?

International foundation, think tank, sinister secret society, espionage cabal, pyramid marketing scheme, socialist conspiracy, concerned citizen's alliance. All these and yet none, the ZODIAC organisation is one of the enigmas of the 1970s.

So how much is known for sure? ZODIAC is a pro-environment espionage agency, funded by unknown sources which battles a variety of enemies, real and imagined (let me tell you, the imaginary ones are the most dangerous). It can only be made sense of in contrast to the Astrolabus Group, a loose-knit affiliation of corrupt interests bent on world domination and exploitation of the last few gasps of Mother Earth. One is the mirror of the other, but there is much conjecture as to where the plane of glass that separates them actually lies.

ZODIAC's origins are said to lie in the mists of prehistory, with twelve primordial giants in the earth. These giants embodied the power of the stars, the joining of heaven and earth in cosmic unity. These giants are the founders of ZODIAC and it is the invocation of their heritage which unites the organisation in its fight against despoilers and vandals.

Which is a nice legend, if you want to believe that ZODIAC are the good guys. Perhaps it is just so much pseudo mystical mumbo jumbo? Well, maybe ZODIAC isn't as pure and virtuous as the do-gooders like to believe, but what is your alternative? Is the Global Typhoon Crime Syndicate really going to give a damn about the spotted throat warbling frog? Are the House of Cards and their corporate stooges going to hesitate about poisoning thousands in developing nations with chemical waste?

Someone has to do something. The time for protests and whining is over. We gave peace a chance. Now we bring out the big guns. The future may be a boot grinding into someone's face, we just have to make sure the boot is on our foot.

The Para-Institute of Geomancology

In days of yore, geomancers across the world described the world in language of superstition and magick. Whether they talked about ley lines, dragon lines, song lines, the one thing they agreed upon was that the earth was alive with a kind of mystical power which was mapped across its surface in a network of lines and junctions.

The founding of the Para-Institute of Geomancology in Hawaii in 1941 was an attempt to unify these traditions under the umbrella of science. What had provided elusive was a way of measuring and studying this power. What was its nature? A kind of electricity, a broadcasted wave, a type of particle, electromagnetic energy?

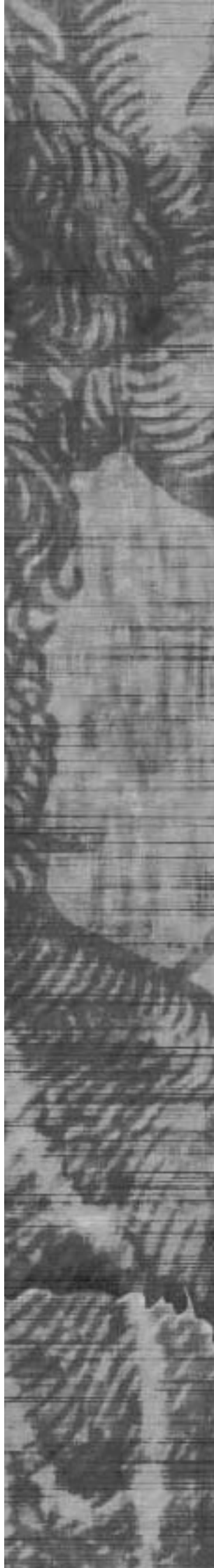
Scientists and geomancers were brought from around the globe, ostensibly seeking the next progression from atomic energy. While some residents were of dubious history (some even known war criminals), the promise of a bright future of earth-powered technology far outweighed petty moral concerns about the past, ancient history. Secret diplomatic documents disclose a protest from China concerning the Institute sheltering a group of Japanese scientist involved in the kidnapping and torture of geomancers in Manchuria, but these concerns were assuaged by the appointment of a Chinese representative to lead the team, Dr Feng.

The disappearance of the Para-Institute in 1954 led many to suspect that they had discovered the truth, or had at the very least revealed secrets that man was not meant to know about. Five buildings, two hundred staff and a good size quantity of landscaping simply vanished, leaving behind a bowl shaped scoop, encrusted with black glass.

The Pentagon believed this to be the work of the Russians or mass defection by treacherous egg heads, engineered by the red Chinese and Dr Feng. A suspicious fire in document storage destroyed much of the material produced by the Institute, including plans for the "Charybdis Ray" a weapon which disintegrates human flesh but leaves cities untouched. This began a massive scramble from government agencies worldwide seeking the missing scientists and their discoveries. No trace was found.

The Rapture Incident

The espionage community was soon to have its hands full with a bigger problem. In 1961 dozens of key personnel vanished from their posts under mysterious circumstances. For instance, Greyham Nemo, British Intelligence's top assassin, vanished from a locked room with no conceivable means of egress, a black sobranie still burning in his ashtray. Rumours abounded that the Charybdis Ray had been completed. The spy world was in chaos, leading to desperate coups and power struggles by those left to fill the void.



In truth, these agents had all heard the same call, a cry of distress from a wounded planet. Their lives of secrecy, living in the margins, had made them sensitive to the energy of the planetary network, later dubbed *eidos energy*. Using their skills of deception and elusion (augmented by mystical *eidos energy*), these agents extricated themselves from their lives and made their way toward seats of earth power.

Twelve of these agents, those who were to become the first ZODIAC elite, were drawn to the city of ancients, beneath the Arctic circle. Others were similarly touched but died along the way. These twelve re-awakened ancient machines which sewed their essence into the geomantic networks, connecting them directly to the source of *eidos energy*. From this point on they were something other than human.

This was to be the final act of these antediluvian machines. Several agencies had tracked the agents to the nameless city and sought to terminate the rebels with the collective resources of their governments and armies. There were only twelve survivors of this epic battle and they seldom speak of what occurred. Today those who make the long and perilous journey to the nameless city find that it bears the scars of this conflict, its ancient beauty and machinery in ruins.

The twelve elite, who adopted astrological codenames, called themselves the ZODIAC group. They began a campaign of covert action, aimed at protecting the world from those who would exploit it, striking terror into the hearts

of governments and corporations alike. It soon became clear that these enemies were far from helpless and had mystical and uncanny resources of their own.

Eventually they met up with other cells of agents, those who had been drawn to other sites of earth power. Slowly but surely the ZODIAC group became the ZODIAC organisation, its agents infiltrating and using various agencies extending their network of contacts internationally.

The Return of the Tiki-Men

In 1966 the ZODIAC organisation was approached by a mysterious cabal calling themselves the Tiki-Men. Always concealed by faux Polynesian masks, members of this group seemed to know all the secrets of ZODIAC yet insisted on remaining enigmatic and anonymous themselves. The Tiki-Men offered the secrets of *Eidos energy*, occult powers and fringe science.

It is not known whether the Tiki-Men were the survivors of the Para-Institute and, if so, what they had been doing in the interim. They insisted that ZODIAC respect their secrets but pledged complete loyalty to the organisation and its objectives.

Each ZODIAC base was assigned a Tiki-Man, who came with a laboratory filled with gadgets, technologies and magickal talismans. The Tiki-Men all dress similarly, in an out of style manner akin to beatniks. Their sense of fashion and interior design has always been curiously anchored in that earlier age. They display a fondness for lounge music and the décor of their laboratories could double for cocktail bars. Their value to ZODIAC far outweighs concerns over their curious eccentricities and affectations.

While distinguished by different masks and body shapes, they all speak in the same way. Agents have been able to pick up a conversation with apparently a totally different Tikiman, with little indication that they are talking with a another person. They are never seen without their masks, no one knows their true nature.

Of the most important secrets the Tiki-Men had to offer, the mastery of geomancology had to be foremost. Drawing on a fusion of Eastern, Western and Indigenous understandings of earth magick, along with technologies to harness *Eidos energy*, the Tiki-Men offered ways in which ZODIAC secret bases could best exploit mystical flows of energy and draw on this as an alternative power source.



Eidos Power and G.A.I.A.

The Tiki-Men provided the key to harnessing Eidos energy, soul power, a clean and replenishable source of energy. Superior to conventional power forms it has allowed the development of advanced technologies, compact gadgets and inventions which push the envelope between science and mysticism.

The most profound of these inventions has been the Global Artificial Intelligence Autosystem, or G.A.I.A., an Eidos powered network of computers which keeps the ZODIAC organisation connected across the world. The masked Ur helmets which the Tiki-Men wear allow them to interface directly with the eidos rivers and streams. Many ZODIAC agents refer to the system as "Mother Nature" or "Mother" for short.

G.A.I.A. seems to exploit the naturally existing network of geomantic power which links, ultimately, to the metaphorical power of the twelve giants and the astrological signs. As agents progress through the ranks of ZODIAC they become more intimately connected with these powers, the Eidolons of the Zodiac, like a Voudoun priest and their spirits of the Loa. The twelve elite agents sit at the intersection of global conduits, a phenomenon which had unexpected results.

When Horatio Shiner (the first Agent Virgo) was killed in Singapore in 1968, everyone feared for the worst. In the espionage business death is constant companion, but somehow the ZODIAC elite seemed unassailable. Suddenly the twelve were only eleven and the odds seemed that little more stacked against the group. Just when all seemed grim, Shiner's assistant, Leonard Matterson announced that the impossible had just become feasible.

Not only did Matterson reveal that he was now Agent Virgo, but he had inherited Shiner's memories, persona and identity – living on as a part of himself. When Shiner was shot, he felt the flood of eidos pour into him, like a primeval sea. In this way the ZODIAC elite never truly die, they become part of the astrological Eidolon which their replacement inherits. This can become quite confusing, not the least for the elite agent themselves.

No one can know for sure how many people have been assimilated into each of the Zodiac Eidolons in the past. It is possible that even before G.A.I.A., countless generations of shamans and sacred warriors have been a part of each eidolon, perhaps this is the true nature of the "giants in the earth".

Whatever the situation, the Zodiac elite can draw on tremendous reserves of supernatural power. All ZODIAC agents draw on this power to some extent and it is from the best agents that the next elite will, hopefully, be drawn. As a result, all elite are supposed to be accompanied by a senior agent at all time, in theory at least.

Astrolabus Appears

The occult rituals which established the G.A.I.A. network and ZODIAC proper, had an unfortunate side effect. Due to the occult law of equivalences, the expenditure of this kind of power created a void which must be filled. In the face of ZODIAC becoming a force for good, another organisation formed as its shadow, the Astrolabus Group.

It began as a set of informal meetings, chance occurrences, in which various of ZODIAC's enemies learned of each other's existence. Soon, the core of a secret society was formed, to plot and scheme about their mutual foe. Sharing resources and information meant that foes which had once been formidable separately were almost unstoppable united. Fortunately Astrolabus seldom operates as a united front and it still lacks the greatest of ZODIAC's assets, the G.A.I.A. network.

Today – Somewhere in the Mid 1970s

ZODIAC and Astrolabus have reached something of a stalemate.

Of great concern are rumours that Astrolabus is attempting to build an Eidos network of its own. Using monstrous giant creatures called "Magdalenes"; that they are secretly building energy siphons, to suck the power straight out of the earth. Astrolabus scientists have claimed to have cloned the Magdalenes from the mummified remains of one of the original twelve giants in the earth, which seems unlikely but a terrible prospect nevertheless. The next battle may well herald the beginning of the ends. It starts as a small thing, and then builds momentum...



II. 1970s Zeitgeist: The Mood of Casefile: ZODIAC

Casefile: ZODIAC draws its inspiration from weird espionage TV shows and movies of the late 1960s and 1970s. The jaunty campiness of the Connery Bond giving way to the cynical sleaziness of the Moore vehicles. The themes and mood of the game are drawn from the source material and from the spirit of the times.

The 1970s are not often kindly remembered, particularly by the media which paints a picture of seedy disco, the energy crisis and crass clothes. Nostalgics lament the death of the spirit of '69, the Age of Aquarius came and went, everyone got a 9 to 5 job. The cold war deepened and we faced the daily threat of mutual assured destruction. Meanwhile the divorce rate went up and latch key kids ran wild. In the suburbs the swingers and wife swappers preached 'make porn not love'.

In truth it was a time (like any other) balanced between cynicism and optimism. Watergate was a crisis of faith for America and the West which had pinned much of its ambitions on the leadership of that imperial power. Suddenly you couldn't tell the good guys from the bad guys. While this generated considerable angst, it was certainly a good thing a time to grow up. Watergate, the My Lai massacre, revelations of the CIA's activities in the developing world, all had a deeply unsettling effect on the presumption that John Wayne was going to ride into town and sort everything out. Meanwhile progress gave way to decadence and consumption, spiralling out of control.

But this was only the Newsweek view of the world. Elsewhere the people were getting the power. Black consciousness, second wave feminism, gay liberation – the crumbling monoliths of the 1970s allowed voices to emerge, long suppressed by the tyranny of progress and history. Many of the voices spoke not in the peaceful tones of 60s counterculture but in the angry voice of revolution.

Music reflected these changes. Soul and funk emerged on the groundswell of black consciousness, punk voiced the anger of disenfranchised youth, glam flirted with sexual identity.

Of course revolution was all too easily commodified and turned against itself. Women fought for the right to work and soon found

themselves compelled to work in order to make ends meet. The rock stars who scrambled to be the first bisexual on the front of the papers ended up scuttling back into the closet with similar alacrity. Sexual liberation turned out to be sexism in another guise.

But somewhere in the stroke and counterstroke of revolution there is the potential for change. Environmentalism reached critical mass in the 70s, moving from suspicious fringe group to mainstream consciousness. Key to the success of the green movement was the concept of "the environment" – that toxic waste didn't just hurt some species of finch that only bird fanciers cared about, that lasting harm could effect humans as well.

Casefile ZODIAC seeks to explore some of the contradictions of environmentalism, from activism to self interest to misanthropy. Far from the clean-cut heroes of *Captain Planet*, it is hoped that the ecological espionage of the ZODIAC organisation raises doubts about an easy solution, keeping us from settling the easy good guy/bad guy distinction between ZODIAC and Astrolabus.

The 1970s were also the time when terrorism came to the fore. It was the tool not only of leftist radicals such as the Red Army and the Baader-Meinhoff group but also of government agencies such as the CIA. The rules of engagement were redrawn along the way and the divisions between military and civil targets (such as they ever were) became eroded.

Ultimately though, this game is meant to fun. Cynicism, optimism, paranoia, nihilism and brutality, all in the name of weird genre adventures. An uneasy mix but mother's milk to spies, no matter how uncanny their world is.

This is the World of Black Light™, Groovy-Funk™ attitude.

III. The Deployment of ZODIAC

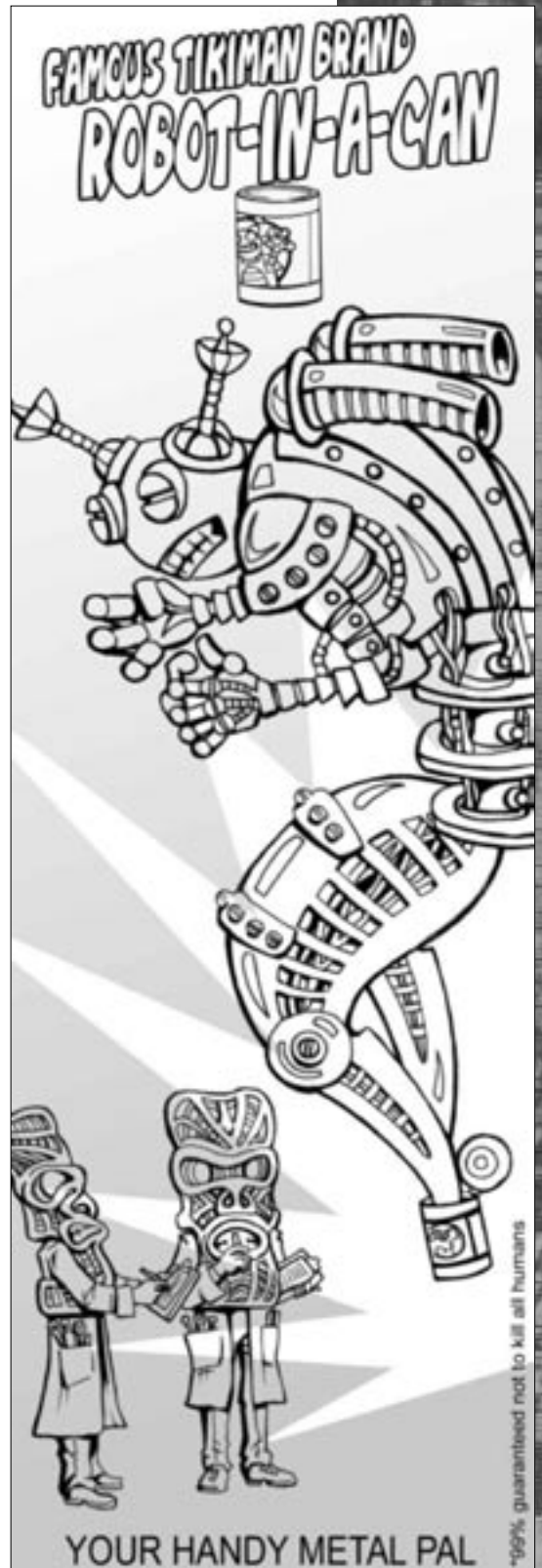
There are said to be somewhere between thirty and forty ZODIAC bases around the world, few agents know more than a handful of them. This section briefly describes the primary headquarters of each division as well as the political issues which divides the organisation.

1. Political Divisions In ZODIAC

ZODIAC seems to be a decentralised organisation, with each secret base operating as a cell. The Tiki-Men and the G.A.I.A. computer coordinate operations between divisions and cells but take an apparently passive role in the politics and direction of the organisation. Missions may be suggested by Mother Nature, but are always at the discretion of each base Control.

The connection of the Elite into the Eidos network certainly seems to shape the nature of ZODIAC overall, making it more human but also subject to the weaknesses, foibles and eccentricities of its key agents. While individual agents are free to hold their own political opinions (so long as they do not interfere with missions), there are some broad ideological trends which emerge from the different divisions.

Because agents are intensively trained within divisional facilities, they cannot help but be effected by the surrounding politics (one way or another). All new agents are trained under three divisions (one primarily) which often leads to a curious mixture of influences. Below are four of the key items of dissent in ZODIAC and a rough estimation of which divisions subscribe to which standpoint. Note that each issue is divided into two camps with the rest of the divisions remaining neutral. Aries division seeks to maintain neutrality on ALL issues.



A) The Environment – Faith in human evolution vs misanthropy

An objective view of the state of the environment, the harm caused by human consumption and overpopulation, the unlikelihood of real change – all lead down the path of despair. It is very difficult to maintain faith in the potential of humanity in the light of the evidence. Sooner or later it may come down to a choice between humanity and the rest of the planet...

This is the most serious division within ZODIAC, one which is likely to see the corruption and eventual collapse of the organisation. One day you may wake up and find the group of madmen holding the world hostage is your own organisation.

Pro Humanity - Scorpio
 Gemini
 Sagittarius
 Capricorn

Earth First - Pisces
 Aquarius
 Leo
 Virgo

B) Involvement in local issues and politics

There are a great many injustices in the world, people crying out for help. The question of priorities becomes greatly vexed, particularly when individual agents have personal stakes in the outcomes. ZODIAC is divided between those who want to see it remain above local politics and those who seek engagement, primarily, at the grassroots level. For example the plight of the Black Panthers has divided those who embrace immediate assistance from those who see ZODIAC's role as a neutral arbiter which would be compromised from being embroiled in the situation.

Global arbiters - Capricorn
 Pisces
 Aquarius
 Gemini

Local advocates - Cancer
 Scorpio
 Leo
 Virgo

C) Political ideologies

While ZODIAC's mission is to change the world, there are different political opinions as to how this will be achieved. The largest split is between the libertarians/anarchists (pro individual freedom) and the Marxists (pro community solidarity).

Marxists - Cancer
 Libra
 Taurus
 Leo

Libertarian/Anarchist- Scorpio
 Virgo
 Sagittarius
 Pisces

D) Modus Operandii

ZODIAC's methods are equally under challenge. The traditionalists see covert action as the only possible avenue for change, having no faith that governments can change or that people will take charge of their lives. A new spirit of revolution opposes this attitude as elitist (and probably crypto-fascist) and would prefer to seek ZODIAC involved in mass political movements, one day stepping out of the shadows and operating in an honest and legitimate manner. The traditionalists see this as dangerously naïve and ultimately self-destructive.

Covert action - Libra
 Pisces
 Cancer
 Sagittarius

Popular revolution - Scorpio
 Aquarius
 Taurus
 Gemini



2. ZODIAC Headquarters

Each of the twelve divisions of ZODIAC maintains a headquarters, a base from which its training regime is organised and in which its resources are concentrated, to be distributed to smaller bases in need. Each headquarters is also the home of one of the ZODIAC elite, two Superspies (one the heir apparent to the Elite, the other acting as base Control), at least 4 ZODIAC agents, one Tikiman and various guards, administrators and scientists.

Taurus (Combat and Martial Arts)

Deep in the heart of the Chinese wilderness is a forgotten mountain range, shrouded by mists and surrounded by impenetrable gorges and chasms. The Temple of the Ox, a hidden monastery is said to have once been the refuge of the Immortal sword saint Xia Yu. It is a magnificent structure, covered with carvings and looming statues, spared the ravages of dynasties and revolutions by its secrecy.

From this temple martial disciplines are taught. Experts are gathered from around the world versed in martial arts ancient and modern, masters of every conceivable weapon. The training conducted here is rigorous in an ascetic environment. In the dead of night the statues are said to whisper secrets of lost stances and techniques, but only to those submerged in deepest meditation.

Virgo (Intelligence)

The city of Lincolnia is one of the worst kept secrets in the espionage world. Underneath Washington DC, beneath its sewers and subway tunnels lies the real seat of government power – a bunker city of secrets and shadows. Concealed within Lincolnia are many enigmas, included the Virgo HQ, a secret base within a secret city.

Justice Department Division V (Codename Lady Liberty) is in fact a front for ZODIACs most paranoid of divisions. It is here that agents learn the trade of espionage, until duplicity and terror are ways of life. Operatives must learn to move in and out of Lincolnia at will, to become as one with the hive of covert activity. From there operatives are sent to infiltrate agencies on both sides of the cold war, sometimes losing track of who they are working for but always remaining focussed on the mission. Virgo Division see themselves as the pragmatists, protecting others from their own ideals.

Capricorn (Survival)

Capricorn's Siberian HQ is little more than a base camp from which long wilderness treks are launched. Apparently a disorganised nomad collective, the Capricorn trainers act with surprising unanimity given the fierce individualists they seem to be. Perhaps they are united by their mutual dislike of people, of civilisation. In the harshest weather the camp makes its way to Goat Summit, an outpost of a lost civilisation.

Capricorn trainers use ancient paths to take their charges to a variety of hostile environments, including the inner city wastelands, where they learn to fend for themselves. Trainees emerge well versed in the arts of survival, if they emerge at all. At the end of their training, each agent is taken to the Nameless City in the ice. No one speaks of what transpires there but the experience seems to make death seem like an idle threat.



Aries (Organisation and Finance)

Istanbul luxuriates in its reputation as a city of intrigue. The Society of the Ram is said to be an ancient cult, devoted to the advancement of its members. It operates at all levels of society, has fingers in all the pies: corporations, organised crime, espionage agencies, religions and conspiracies. Thanks to the conversion of its head, the Society belongs to ZODIAC.

The Society also runs the Ramshead Bank, a wealthy institution whose primary purpose is to be the training ground for new agents. Much like the Capricorn agents are released in the wilderness and forced to survive, Aries trainees are left to sink or swim in the bureaucratic mire of the Bank, a Kafkaesque nightmare of corruption and secrecy. Only those who can command the blackmarket of favours and information can earn a position close to the Board. Once you possess the secrets of the Board, you can truly claim to have completed your training. Of the nature of these secrets, there are many rumours..

The Ramshead Bank has its origins in a human sized puzzle box labyrinth invented for the entertainment of a forgotten caliph. It was said that captives were placed in this maze and forced to fend for themselves and endure trials and torments. Over the years a perverse culture emerged out of the survivors. Apparently the ruins of this maze are still located deep in the bowels of the Bank.

Leo (Infiltration)

In sight of the Berlin wall lies the Linus Instituts, twin organisations with a common heritage. On the West the Institut is a staff training and placement corporation. It was originally a foundation for managing servants, gentlemen's gentlemen and ladies' maids. Today it is branching into new areas throughout the globe. On the East the Institut is a communist government bureaucratic wing engaged in the indoctrination and instruction of functionaries and administrators throughout the eastern bloc.

Built upon the groundwork of a medieval league of assassins, the Lion Couchant, Leo division's specialty is infiltration and disguise. Recruits are first trained as servants and functionaries, taught to be invisible. They are then assigned to a target in order to learn everything about that person, eventually to replace them while the target is spirited away to a remote location and kept drugged. A large division of psychiatrists, hypnotists and exorcists are available to assist in deprogramming agents once they return from these missions.

Sagittarius (Intrigue)

The magnificent Chiron Club in Venice is just a part of a network of clubs, resorts, chalets, spas, castles and fashion houses. These are owned by Sagittarius Division and are connected by a complex set of codes and recognitions, said to be invented by Machiavelli himself. Sagittarius division wages Byzantine wargames throughout the diplomatic arena, the nobility and the party circuit of the fashionable set.

Each candidate is assigned twelve "labours", objectives which must be met within a year of their initiation. These range from the apparently facile to seemingly impossible, but few are quite what they seem. Only once all are completed can the candidate see the big picture and understand what they have achieved.

Aquarius (Science and Ecology)

Deep in the Pacific Ocean, off the coast of Australia lies The Habitat, an artificial ecology of domed Edens, engineered to protect species of plants and animals from the depredations of humanity. This is the domain of pure science, only the most brilliant, rational and toxin free of agents are permitted entry. There are rumours of some kind of genetic purity test as well, but Aquarius agents dismiss this kind of coarse eugenics as 'scientifically backward'.

Needless to say, human beings did not evolve in this kind of environment, which, along with exacting work demands takes a heavy toll on the psyche. It has been suggested that these are the most socially dysfunctional of all ZODIAC divisions, even the gruff misanthropists of Capricorn keep a large buffer of space between each other to prevent feathers from being ruffled. The scientists of The Habitat claim that the intellect can put people above such petty differences, but this does not account for the high incidence of experimental sabotage, vandalism and cruel practical jokes in this base.

Libra (Academic and Gadgets)

Much older than the secret city of Lincolnia is the sprawling labyrinth of Old London. Rather than being buried underground, Old London is spread through the modern city like a fungal growth – in lost alleys, forgotten backrooms and buildings erased from all maps. One simply needs to have the right passwords, to know the right shortcuts to find themselves in this eccentric maze of Dickensian character. It even has its own underground tram system, the bequest of a Victorian criminal mastermind.

In very few places on the earth is there such a concentration of eccentrics, boffins and outright

madmen. This is a melting pot of alchemists, inventors and mad scientists all sharing a community of outcasts. It is a place of many bazaars, where anything is available at a price. Many of the residents of London know of its twisted twin, many clubs for professionals have secret chambers within Old London known to the most senior and well connected.

Just like Lincolnia, ZODIAC has its own refuge within Old London, under the shadow of the Old Old Bailey, the law courts of the lost, which administers justice those living or passing through the hidden city. The base is fronted by a set of barristers' chambers (with entry from old and new London) and a club, "The Exchequer Jovian Club". Passing a series of odd secret passages, one finds the quirky laboratories & musty libraries of Libra division.

Gemini (High Tech Engineering)

Everyone has heard of Gacgac Heavy Industries, the Japanese corporation which manufactures many of the giant robots used in construction projects as well as owning a burgeoning consumer product and vehicle division. It is among the companies who are turning around the Japanese reputation from the producers of cheap disposable goods to the inventors of creative high tech innovations. Gacgac HI is also notorious for its eccentric "environmentally responsible" policies which keeps its profits well below its competitors.

What the public do not know is that this corporation is a front for the ZODIAC Gemini division. As well as bringing in profits and resources for ZODIAC, this division is responsible for the remarkable vehicles and robots utilised by the agency. Trainees are indoctrinated to the company as standard employees and are then subject to the ordinary schedules and demands of Japanese corporate life – needless to say an incredibly high pressure environment in which only the best succeed. This division has the highest failure rate, worse even than those facing the physically punishing rigours of Taurus or Capricorn.

Pisces (Psychic Powers)

At the head of an unnamed Nepalese river sits "The Squatting Buddha", a natural rock formation which bears a strange resemblance to its name. Climbing the waterfall into the caverns is the first of many arduous tasks for initiates seeking to reach the River Temple, an ancient ruin which has been adapted for ZODIAC purposes. Deep within its caverns, pools, crystal formations and ancient stone carvings lie the riddles which awaken psychic potential and spiritual powers.

Only a few agents ever reach the Eyrie of Maidens, the lofty chambers of the head of Pisces division. Most have to be content to stumble around in the dark, bearing the taunts and cryptic advice of instructors until they find entry to the hallucinatory dreamscape of their inner self. Few people are pleased with what they find there, but the lucky ones emerge basically sane with enhanced mental powers.

Cancer (Magick)

Deep in the lost rainforests of South America, even the country is unknown, lies the Temple of the Claw, named after the vicious marsh crabs which make the ruins their home. It was founded at the time of the conquistadors as a haven for heretics and sorcerers fleeing the inquisition, meant to be a repository of the occult wisdom of all Europe. Eventually it's resources attracted necromancers from the East, crazed Taoists, disgruntled shamans and evil eyed wise women – a cornucopia of magicians and charlatans.



The Temple was built on the site of an ancient city and has been extended many times over the years. Today ZODIAC controls the temple and has been busily building air conditioned vaults to fill with computerised records, to replace the crumbling manuscripts and scrolls. Initiates are assigned to sorcerers as researchers, working as their hermetic slaves for a year and hoping to cobble together an understanding of occult theory along the way.

Scorpio

Once Scorpio division was based in the Carapace Facility a high tech astrophysics laboratory located on the plains of Africa. From there ZODIAC coordinated its space program, launching satellites and expeditions to the moon and nearby planets. A terrible accident in 1971 destroyed the base and most of the staff along with it.

Those who survived were irreversibly changed by whatever they experienced. A core group of nine scientists seemed completely mad, taken over by an all embracing sense of bliss and claims of cosmic awareness. No ZODIAC facility was able to hold them and they soon departed for a long pilgrimage, first to Egypt, then to the Arctic Nameless City and thereon to all the major ancient monuments of the world, claiming that they were following the star Antares, from which they draw their cover name, "The Antares Travelling Funk Festival".

Along the way they gathered disciples from ZODIAC agents of similar mindsets (often the victims of the harsh training regimes imposed by other divisions). Today the Scorpio "base" is a travelling show – moving from festival to funk event and soaking up the cosmic vibrations. Other divisions scoff at this hedonistic approach, but somehow initiates emerge with unparalleled understanding of Cosmology and fringe science involving other dimensions, multiple worlds and cosmic wisdom. Their knowledge of geomancology seems to rival that of the Tiki-Men, who have remained typically silent regarding the changes to Scorpio division.



3. The Zodiac Elite

Taurus – Tsing Djen

This slight, intense woman was known as “The Terror of Deng-Hua” during the height of the cultural revolution. When the Rapture Incident occurred, she put aside a lifetime of devotion to Mao and Marx, hearing a higher calling. A gifted Chinese Opera performer and martial artist in her youth (her master passed her off as a boy) Jian had used the skills of her decadent upbringing for the people’s revolution and soon learned that even the workers had to yield to more important issues.

During her time as a state agent, Jian had been sent to destroy the Temple of the Ox, a seat of imperial martial arts, decadence and counter-revolutionary ferment. To her shame she had never been able to locate the elusive monastery. Once she transformed into one of the ZODIAC elite, she found her way through the mountain trails as though she had walked them all her life. The monks gave a silent welcome and she immediately commenced the rigorous completion to her training. Today she is a warrior of perfection, Taoists whisper that she has become as the Immortals of ancient days.

Jian is serious to a fault, brooks no frivolous behaviour and expects of her subordinates nothing short of the perfection which she herself has achieved. Those who have seen her kick heads can recall it only in the most poetic of language – “She moved like the shimmering mist over the evening lake, her dainty foot displacing a spray of teeth like the dance of the phoenix greeting the moon”.

Virgo – William S Bowman

The original Agent Virgo, Horatio Shiner, was a WWII veteran and CIA operative involved in some of the blackest of black ops in the Central American arena. Changing sides for the good of the planet he was instrumental in waking some of the other agents up to the evil that governments (east and west) were truly capable of.

When he died in 1968, seeking redemption for his sins, his close friend and sidekick Leonard Matterson assumed the mantle of Agent Virgo. This was the first time a ZODIAC elite had died and the first time the Eidolon Nexus passed to another. Matterson now found that not only was his power augmented but he also found that Shiner was with him always, an ever present ghost among the flows of Eidos. Soon other voices emerged from the stream, faint distant shades of heroes long dead.

Matterson was a fierce proponent of ZODIAC’s involvement in local issues, himself a member of the Black Panther movement. Railing against ZODIAC’s laxness on black issues, he even threatened to quit the organisation several times. In 1973 these threats became futile as a sniper’s bullet took his life. Most blame the White Supremacists he had constantly harried but others, whispered that this could only be the work of his fellow elite agents, that his personal crusade had become a liability to the group.

The new Agent Virgo, William S Bowman hails from the CIA like the original. He is, as yet, untested. He remains firmly ensconced in his position with his former masters, claiming that this allows him to keep his finger on the pulse of world events. Critics suggest that his loyalties may still be divided.



Capricorn – Ygnora

The scary shaman known only as Ygnora is one of the most enigmatic of the ZODIAC elite. She spends little time in the company of other people, let alone agents of her organisation. Swilling fermented reindeer milk and chewing on unmentionable dried meats, she is not the best agent to invite to social gatherings, having no tolerance for chatter or foolishness.

In the wilderness she becomes a shadow across the landscape, a confidante of all the plants and animals. Notoriously absent for large periods of time she makes frequent journeys to the Nameless City of the ancients, there is no one in the organisation with more knowledge of the place than Ygnora.

Seeming like something cross between a forest witch and the mean old neighbourhood lady, it comes as a surprise to many that under the rancid furs Ygnora possesses the beauty of a harsh icefield. A junior agent, Mike “Lefty” Van Gerson once suggested that she scrubbed up quite well. Fortunately Libra division have managed to create quite a lifelike prosthetic for him.

Aries – Sybella Rasheen

Lost in her networks of intrigue, gossip and stratagems, Mdm Rasheen seems remote and distracted to others, particularly those seeking straightforward answers. The heady scents and aromas of her chamber invoke daydreams, images of long lost summer afternoons or forgotten cities of brass and emeralds. Don’t let any of this distract you from the unblinking stare, the amber eyes of the Mistress of Aries.

Even when she was a KGB agent, Mdm Rasheen was primarily an operative for the Society of the Ram. She passed the Ramshead Bank ordeal in record time, taking from the labyrinth many secrets of its original design. Today her agents give a fanatical devotion to her, even above their ZODIAC loyalties.

Aries division’s international network of contacts and information continues to grow at a dramatic pace. Seer Martha Ztcen of Cancer Division recorded a nightmare in which the Aries information network achieved sentience of its own and became a demonic entity, hell bent on taking control of the world. Mere symbolism, of course.

Leo – Seamus Borodin

Leo Division has been struck with a quandary. It is now known that when an elite agent dies, their spiritual nexus is passed on to their successor, or at least to someone fortunate enough to be nearby when they die. But what happens when an agent goes completely irrevocably insane?

The man currently called Seamus Borodin was the best agent Leo had available, a master of disguise and identity theft, so good that no one knows who he was originally or where he came from – even the man himself. One day the weight of borrowed faces, accents, phone numbers, lost sweethearts, secret fantasies, forgotten ambitions all became too much and Borodin cracked.

Today he has been confined to a high security facility and screams about the pipes. What kind of pipes (organ, bag, plumbing?) is impossible to discern. He has escaped several times and always finds his way back, no one knows what he does in the missing days. His heir apparent, a superspy named Catalina Orff, has tried to make do during his incapacity. But fears are growing that someday, someone is going to have to do something about the Borodin problem.



Sagittarius – Rotwang Pope

Chic International fashion magazine is the renowned and notorious mouthpiece of style impresario Rotwang Pope. Arrogant, mercurial, impulsive, but acknowledged to be brilliant, Pope claims sole credit for bringing fashion out of the dark ages of the 1950s. The collective breath of the world press is held before each extravagant stunt or event, each more outrageous than the last.

But fashion is a mere hobby for this modern Renaissance man. He is the grand mastermind behind the most devious schemes of Sagittarius division. Only the Sagittarius inner circle know that they are following the commands not of the blustery Pope, but his little Italian Greyhound Momu.

When the original Agent Sagittarius, Ivan Birezzi died in a freakish automobile accident, the only living being close enough to absorb his Eidolon Nexus was little Momu who absorbed not only power but the intoxicating taste of consciousness. This is a trick that other animals achieve through similarly unlikely events. Momu has gathered as many as possible under the ZODIAC umbrella to act as Beast Agents, an experiment in broadening the organisation's agency and (non)human resources.

Aquarius – Dr Eliza Meinast

Invariably known in The Habitat as "The Menace", Dr Meinast is the tyrannical head of Underwater Operations. Fancying herself as a modern Captain Nemo (she even has a bust of him in her quarters) she tolerates no mistakes or flippancy from her underlings and believes that she is single-handedly keeping the ZODIAC mission alive.

Oblivious to the insanity and ferment of mutiny around her, she goes about her work with a cheerful disposition, deflating the egos of the inferior scientists around her with her brilliant insight. Dr Meinast sees The Habitat as a model society, one which the rest of the world will have no option but adopt once the poisons and pollution get too much and they all come begging to her for help. She does not understand that her regime of imposed asceticism (save for herself and her circle of favourites), coupled with cabin fever, have long ago driven The Habitat residents insane.

There have been a few outbreaks of dissent, demands for decadent 'landside luxuries' or the corrupting taste of the polluted air outside. These have been punished with 'involuntary stoicisms' and have led to increasing levels of surveillance, all necessary for the good of The Habitat. Only trainees finishing their secondment are allowed to leave domed city and they do so with relish, dreading the day they might have to return to face The Menace of The Habitat.



Libra – Dr Eliot Magnus

Somewhere in the early 70s Dr Magnus slipped from being a handsome older gent to a sleazy perverted-avuncular barfly. No one is sure the exact point at which it happened, but the day he abandoned his trademark three piece suit for the safari suit is one which still brings shudders to the agents of Libra division.

Once a gifted (albeit fringe) scientist, Dr Magnus has been producing little of late. He blames the Tiki-Men and their faddish gadgetry for the declining fortunes of his division. These days he is less often in his laboratory and more often seen trawling the seedy dives of Old London. His flirtatious attitude once charming has long since sunk into repulsive innuendo, his brilliant mind pickled by cocktails and chemicals of his own invention. Truly a sad sight to behold.

Gemini – Dr Takahasi Miyauchi

Not only a brilliant scientist, Dr Miyauchi is also a gifted business entrepreneur who has taken Miyauchi Heavy Industries from the producer of cheap tin robots to the international success that it is today. Few can imagine a 1970s without Nixon, the Rolling Stones, and the presence of MHI giant robots building the breathtaking skyscrapers of the modern age (and only occasionally running rampant out of control).

Little is said of Miyauchi's missing twin brother, Gendu. Only a few of the best informed ZODIAC agents know that Gendu Miyauchi is actually the Venomous Eye, the head of the Global Typhoon Crime Syndicate. In stark opposition to his brother Takahasi is a gentle, peaceable man of humble means and quiet introspection.

Nevertheless he must be firm to control such a large enterprise. He is beloved by his employees who work themselves to death not out of fear but respect. His personal strike force, the costumed Science Ninja Squad Mishima, are devoted to the man and will sacrifice their lives for him, piloting their experimental vehicles against the Syndicate's sinister inventions.

Pisces – Brother Krishna

When Agent Pisces, Brother Stream Buffalo died of a mysterious illness, it was his first disciple Ike Michaels (then called Brother Pussywillow) who inherited the Eidolon Nexus. Renaming himself in honour of the occasion, he set about bringing in some changes in the management of the River Temple. No longer concerned with worldly things, he deferred all responsibilities to his Control and cloistered himself away in the eyrie with only the most promising disciples, coincidentally all young women.

Today Brother Krishna sees few initiates, always fragile young women who have problems that require his enlightened mastery and secret techniques to unlock. When he does appear on ZODIAC business (as an astral projection) it is to express caution and forbearance. Being above worldly things certainly gives one a rare perspective on events, just as surely as it gets on everyone else's tits.

Dynamic superagent, singing legend and Hindu cowgirl Chamunda Earp has her sights set on the top job in Aquarius once their current master transcends into the heavens. As he never leaves the safety of his retreat, this may be some way off.



Cancer – Carmelita Evabar Ortiz

The original Agent Cancer, the wise Mulkhra Singh worked as an archivist and translator for Interpol and used her time in the musty vaults to accrue a unique hoard of occult secrets from around the world. After the Rapture Incident she was hardly missed by her former employers and transferred operations to a secret community she had learned of, the Temple of the Claw.

When a bungled CIA operation led to Singh's accidental death, her replacement was not forgiving of the agency or of Division Virgo which was supposed to be in control of the situation. To this day there have been tension and skirmishes between the two divisions, particularly in the Central American theatre of operations.

A former nun and war medic, Carmelita Ortiz is tough enough to stand up to any bullies. Her forceful personality has united the divergent interests of the Temple community against their many foes. Snidely referred to as the "Mother Teresa of Necromancy", she nevertheless cares enough about her fractious colleagues to try and insulate them from a harsh and intolerant world.

Scorpio – Dr Moog Swing

Look at a photo of Dr Rene Ogobo in 1968 and one of the man calling himself Dr Moog Swing today and you would be forgiven for not realising that they are in fact the same man. When the Carapace Facility was destroyed in 1971 it was feared that Dr Ogobo was dead along with most of the staff. When he resurfaced months later, it was as the colourful dreadlocked, spaced out ringmaster of the Antares Travelling Funk Festival.

In the missing months he seemed to have unlocked many secrets of the universe as well as unhinged his mind. His brilliant grasp of astrophysics had transformed into a keen insight into weird cosmic sciences.

His demeanour can shift between impassive sphinx to impish Bacchus in a moment. The maps of the earth, the pathways of consciousness, the waves of cosmic energies all shift and entwine in his brain. The stories told by his Funk Orchestra are parables, riddles and tell perplexing legends of today, of the secret battle for the vitality of the Earth.

Beneath the gaudy clothes and convoluted mythologies he is one of the strongest leaders in the ZODIAC organisation and perhaps the final hope for preventing the schism which is dividing its members. He is an unwilling messiah, admonishing would-be disciples to find their own answers but nevertheless his sheer magnetism has attracted many, especially those wary of the final solution which is taking root somewhere in the dark places of the ZODIAC collective psyche.



IV. Esoteric Agents

As you have no doubt seen, *Casefile: ZODIAC* has a minimal system designed to speed play rather than occupy you with anal considerations such as the ammunition capacity of guns or lists of spells and incantations. Neither do we have a set of advantage and disadvantage points to balance, so that your super martial artist ends up being a claustrophobic bearded lady with a skin condition and a lisp who thinks they are a boxing kangaroo. You should want to play such a character anyway, without counting on racking up silly point bonuses!

There will be times that players will want to create agents with weird powers which are not covered by the rules. To this we suggest you use a basic balancing exercise:

- For every power there has to be a balancing drawback or taboo.
- If the power is useful all the time, the taboo should restrict the character all the time.
- If the power would just replace or enhance an existing speciality (eg claws should enhance martial arts) this should be dealt with in the normal character generation system – just spend more points in that area. Some combat-oriented powers could be considered an Edge (see p.32)
- A power may only be used a certain number of times per session or might inflict a tally against an element to activate – this should reduce the severity of the taboo.
- Be lenient for creative and weird powers. Be strict on boring super powers.

Do this by negotiation with the player. Think about your traditional vampire and how the powers and taboos kind of balance each other out. But then again, who would possibly want to play something as tedious as a vampire?

Esoteric Agents Example: Beast Agents

When Momu took control of Division Sagittarius, he decided the time had come to expand ZODIAC's repertoire of species. Gathering together sentient animals along with a special variety of psychics, Momu bound together teams of human and beast who were able to work together for the good of the planet.

In game terms the agent is the animal, it is the creature in the duo with all the expertise. Their companions are ordinary humans, except for their psychic links. They act as the mouthpiece and hands of their companion and, when necessary, they can swap bodies – in control of their companion like a Vodoun Loa rides a Cheval.

The downside to this is first that there will always be one weak and vulnerable member of the partnership – the body that is hosting the human soul. In addition each agent suffers from an individualised taboo based on their animal nature, usually a fear (fire, predators, water, open spaces).

When engaged in fights in animal form the agents either fight at a lower scale (see the Vehicles rules, page xx) to humans (tiny ones such as ferrets or cats), their enemy gains an edge (medium ones such as dogs) or the beast gains an edge (big ones such as tigers). Use the normal agent stats whether in human or animal form, even if it seems counterintuitive that a gerbil could have an Earth of 3 – these are cosmically powered gerbils, man. Likewise, their human companion has normal human statistics, whatever body they are in, lacking the relevant instincts to take advantage of a wolf's strength.

Obviously each kind of animal has other pros and cons. Some are fierce fighters, some can slip through small spaces, some are so commonplace that they can move unnoticed through a human house.

Slowly ZODIAC is realising what valuable resources these Beast Agents are. There is even talk of developing all-animal groups of specialists.



V. Astrologabus

Below are profiles of the current members of Astrolabus and of the conspiracy organisation itself. Because Astrolabus membership is by consent of other council members, it is possible for the membership to change at any time. Any suitably large failure may find a group expelled from the organisation and hunted down by their former allies.

It should be remembered that beyond Astrolabus, the world is full of threats, weird and mundane. Not every outbreak of monstrous giant genitalia or toupee eating ticks are the result of sinister Astrolabus machinations. Sometimes these things just happen.

On top of this, the Cold War is still in full swing. Even the agencies which are not under Astrolabus control are not keen on ZODIAC's agenda and the power that it holds such as the unsavoury Agents of D.I.R.T..

a) Astrolabus

"The world held hostage to a league of madmen!"

Known Details:

Every force of good has its nemesis. As ZODIAC has vowed to protect planet Earth, Astrolabus seeks to conquer the dying world at all costs. It is not much of a long term plan, but when your ruling council is dominated by megalomaniacs, crazies, ego fiends and belligerents you cannot hope for too much forward thinking.

The organisation is run by a ruling council of thirteen, one member drawn from each of the thirteen groups under the Astrolabus alliance. At meetings each member is robed and wears a mask representing a different planet – each of the known heavenly bodies in this solar system, the sun, Earth's moon, as well as Nemesis (Earth's twin on the far side of the sun) and Planet X (beyond Pluto).

Secrets:

The creation of ZODIAC was inaugurated with an occult ritual that tapped the power of the cosmos. The law of equivalences meant that, in an opposite reaction, Astrolabus was created, the dark twin of ZODIAC.

There are at least three ways to use Astrolabus in your game depending on how secretive you wish them to be. The game could begin with them as the core villain, leaving the assortment of groups to provide colourful foes for different stories. Alternatively the agents could begin with just one of the groups as their enemy, slowly learning of the conspiracy behind it all. Finally the agents could begin as 'normal' intelligence agents for a government, thrown over their heads into the ZODIAC/Astrolabus war.

Spheres of Influence:

Their agents are everywhere. The influence of Astrolabus is limited only by the composition of their ruling council. Sometimes there are territorial clashes between different factions and the council must supervise these strictly, although a little competition is always productive.

Schemes:

- Destroy ZODIAC.
- Conquer the world.
- Corrupt the governments and institutions of power.
- Steal secrets and extend the network of contacts.
- Supervise friendly rivalry between factions.

Plot Hooks:

These plots are large and certainly couldn't be resolved in one session. They could form background to a campaign or at least provide reoccurring themes.

A. There can only be thirteen groups within Astrolabus at any time. If a new group wants to join, they have to prove themselves by demolishing an existing group. One of these contenders arrives (use your imagination) and threatens the status quo. While ZODIAC would love to see Astrolabus tear itself apart, it must take some role to stop innocent people being hurt in the crossfire.

B. The agents uncover a plot of breathtaking magnitude. Astrolabus' size is limited by the number of celestial bodies in the solar system. By building an artificial world, they hope to increase their numbers and tip the scales in their war with ZODIAC. Using the power of the dreadful Magdalenes, they plan to create a gravity well in the asteroid belt, drawing the fragments back into the planet they were once

said to have formed. Apart from the potentially apocalyptic nature of this exercise, no one has reckoned on the ghost of the dead planet which does not want its rest disturbed.

C. Redemption. Something has been going wrong within ZODIAC for a long time and the players' agents have been involved in several conflicts of ideology with their commanders and other ZODIAC groups. They learn of a plan within ZODIAC (perhaps a splinter faction, perhaps not) which will sacrifice a large number of people "for the greater good of all". Stricken with paranoia, having no where else to turn, the agents find allies in the most unlikely of places, within the ranks of Astrolabus. Because of the ritual which binds the two groups together, as ZODIAC becomes corrupted, so to is there hope for Astrolabus...



b) Global Typhoon Crime Syndicate

"And the forecast is... CRIME!"

Known Details:

Newspapers, television news breaks, trend setting magazines, frequently bear the image of the sinister masked men of the Global Typhoon Crime Syndicate. Something of a cult phenomenon they are despised by law enforcement, feared by upright society and adulated by those in the punk movement who mimic their style. They strike without warning and you can be sure that each plan for criminal enrichment will be more devious, more fiendish and more overly convoluted than the last (although all too frequently they boil down to "let the giant robot run rampage through the city").

Operating via a cell structure, the organisation has proven impossible to break by the combined operations of intelligence and police services around the world in cooperation with the Mafia and other bastions of 'decent' organised crime. Members of the Syndicate are simply too terrified of their masters to ever betray them – death is preferable.

Secrets:

Few people know the true identity of The Venomous Eye – the criminal mastermind who manipulates the tentacles of the Syndicate. He is in truth Gendu Miyauchi, the missing twin brother of Takahashi Miyauchi, billionaire entrepreneur, chairman of Miyauchi Heavy Industries (you know, the giant robot people) and secretly Agent Gemini of ZODIAC. As Takahashi is benevolent, his twin is greedy, malicious and sadistic. Not content to share ownership of the corporation they built together, he set a deathtrap for his twin, one which he was ironically caught in himself and, inevitably, hideously disfigured.

Now this man with a grudge uses technology stolen from his brother alongside his own twisted designs in plans to strike terror into the heart of decent society and extort fortunes which usually have to be invested in the next generation of fiendish contraption and doomsday device. He has a fondness for weather devices and is nostalgic for the days when the threat of too much rain could hold a city to ransom. Always needing to top the last device, he is currently working on a satellite which causes earthquakes, thunder strikes and typhoons all at the same time. The ecological damage caused by these devices is especially injurious to ZODIAC as they disrupt the network of Eidos energy.

Spheres of Influence:

The Syndicate expands its reach by taking over small crime organisations and crime-friendly cults and secret societies. Rather than doing this by coercion, they simply outline the benefits of being part of a large franchise operation which is usually sufficient incentive.

The Syndicate often has a lot of money to spend and will use this to purchase technology from corporations or just individual scientists. Those secrets they cannot obtain by corruption, they steal via industrial espionage. New advances in giant robot technology and weather control are particularly appealing.



Schemes:

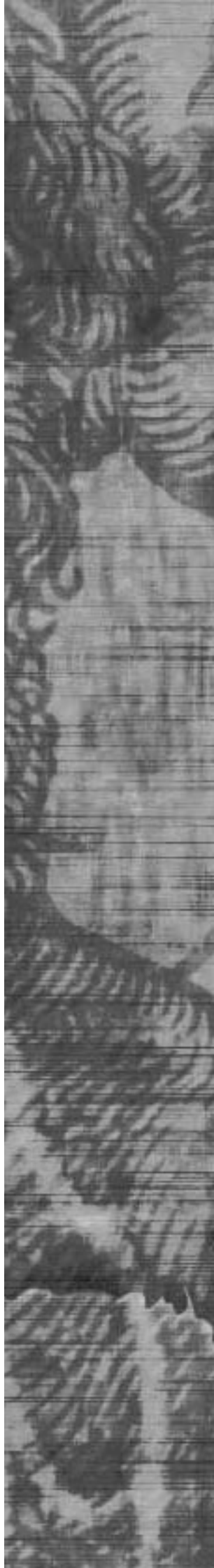
- Ransom
- Robbery
- Rampage!

Plot Hooks:

A. A series of robot bank robberies have been orchestrated by the Syndicate over a certain city. Unbeknownst to them, the severe vibrations caused by these demolitions have weakened the fault line. The latest robbery culminates in a massive earthquake and the release of Mongothra, nine headed demon swine of the underworld. ZODIAC agents have to split their attention between saving the populace, protecting their geomantic distillers and recovering a valuable item from the Syndicate hoods. The latter task is made a little easier (in a manner of speaking) by the fact that Mongothra is also after the elusive macguffin. Depending on the city chosen, the Ancients may also get involved – “eat the people, not the buildings you hellpig!”

B. The Syndicate gets more than it bargained for when it attempts to extort money from a holiday resort with threats of gloomy weather. In reality this remote island is a front for an independent criminal mastermind and theatre enthusiast, Dr Noh. In order to recover a macguffin or secure the release of hostages or some other excuse, ZODIAC will have to infiltrate Dr Noh's Fortress of Ponderous Doom and rescue the Syndicate prisoners.

C. The Syndicate kidnaps Dr Phlecus, a fringe entomologist who claims to have unlocked the secrets of controlling insects, dubbed “Dr Flea Circus” by his unkind colleagues. He is in fact a fraud, his trained insects are actually tiny robots – but he is a genius roboticist (go figure). ZODIAC agents must rescue Dr Phlecus from some remote locale and escort him out of enemy territory.



C) The Intraterrestrials

"It is 5AM, do you know where your organs are?"

Known Details:

Long before the Confederation ships arrived (see *The U Foes*, p x) people have seen lights in the sky, encountered mysterious strangers and woken to find their internal organs re arranged. These sinister beings come not from outer space, but inner space – the 4th dimension. Responsible for many legends of demons, underworld creatures or the fay, these creatures are unpredictable, insane by human standards, but fortunately infrequent visitors to our plane.

Occasionally a human and an IT end up occupying the same three dimensional space along the four dimensional continuum. This juncture is not kind to either being, causing strange illness and insanity to both. The ITs see the human as some kind of alien parasite and often draw them into their space in order to operate on their 'twin'. If lucky, the human returns as a raving lunatic.

Sometimes this junction is not detected by the ITs, the result is an insane hybrid creature which appears human but possesses weird powers. A group of criminally insane (even by their standards) IT rebels have discovered a process to make fusions and escape the reach of their authorities into our plane space. Called the Nameless Ones (their names were removed as part of their punishment) this league of megalomaniac psychopaths plan to build an army on Earth to invade their home continuum. Sometimes they identify themselves as the ITRE or Intra Terrestrial Rogue Element. As part of this they seek to unlock the geomantic secrets of the earth and possess the power of Eidos energy.

Secrets:

The ITRE have finally completed preparations to bring through their leader, the notorious Dr Siwill who is currently incarcerated in a five dimensional prison. Once the stars are right, the mad genius who perfected the fusion process will enter Earthspace. His host is to be a Soviet physicist who, coincidentally, has the same name.

One possible origin of the Tiki-Men is that the Para Institute was subject to a mass fusion of ITs, generally more benevolent than Dr Siwill's group. We prefer to leave the Tiki-Men mysterious but this is one option among many to explain their arrival. The ITRE have learned some of the ZODIAC history and sometimes pretend to come from the lost Para-Institute.

Spheres of Influence:

The ITRE rely on building organisations around their human hosts, preferring to fuse with those who are already well connected and resourced when possible. They have considerable influence in the mad world of fringe science and the fringe worlds of the insane asylums. Their influence is concentrated in the Eastern Bloc where fringe mathematics is a better established science, although they are also responsible for the Roswell incident. By the way, the U Foes and the ITRE cannot stand each other.

The ITRE have learned to control some human cults, from devil worshippers, playdoh pagans, Yog Sothoth cultists to the Church of Jesus, Spaceman. Often these cults will have an IT undercover pretending to be an ordinary member while all the time coordinating the miracles and flashy spectacles that keep the rank and file impressed.



Schemes:

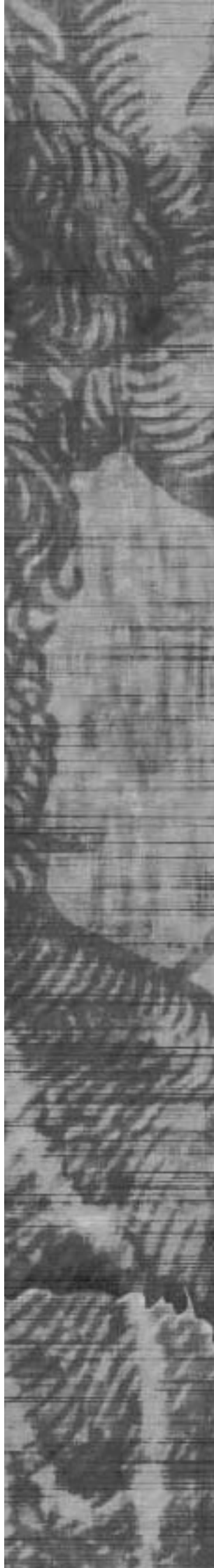
- Create dimensional rifts and release madness on Earth, just for the chaos of it all
- Abduction and experimentation
- Releasing madness from the heads of the insane into three dimensional reality
- Stealing weapons and secret plans in order to build their army
- Free Dr Siwill

Plot Hooks:

A. A Soviet scientist is on the brink of perfecting four dimensional travel, a way of saving the world from the energy crisis by making teleportation accessible to all. She wishes to defect to the West and has shaken off her keepers. ZODIAC is among the many groups who want to get their mitts on her. This leads to an international espionage adventure in the conventional mode, except for the presence of the nightmares which escape from her head while she sleeps. The Doctor is phobic about something strange like chickens, children or clowns – perhaps all three!. Given her sheltered upbringing she is also quite xenophobic which adds to the confusion as the last thing the agents need are more weird foreigners lurking around.

B. The ITRE have begun an international campaign of art theft. Just what they want with these treasures is uncertain, but the leave behind time/space rifts in the frames where the paintings were once. These rifts swallowed a few people before the authorities figured out that something terrible was amiss ("Why, is that the new Francis Bacon? Argghhh!). ZODIAC must enter these strange art worlds, rescue the hapless curators and tourists, recover the artwork and seal the rifts.

C. A heavy metal band, The Spacelords, have released an album which opens dimensional rifts when played backwards. In a *Spinal Tap* inspired adventure the agents must infiltrate the band as managers, roadies, groupies, new drummers or whatever in order to flush out the IT involvement.



4) Brown Paper Bag

"They came from the government!"

Known Details:

Not every threat to ZODIAC relies on strange technology or ancient magicks in order to pursue its agenda of control and powermongery. A secret alliance of intelligence agents, primarily in the United States, have become aware of ZODIAC's existence and are not happy with their agenda. Operating out of the CIA and its puppets, today they even have agents in the KGB and other ordinarily fierce enemies.

Named after the conventional vehicle of bribery, this organisation has its hooks into every corrupt scam and underhand dealing available to it – assassination, revolution, drug running, sale of illegal weapons, extortion, torture – you name it. It could be suggested that if ZODIAC did not exist as a threat unifying them, they would have had to invent it.

In the same way that ZODIAC agents justify their conspiracy in protection of the greater good, Brown Paper Bag also believe that they are protecting their cherished ideals – although the exact nature of these ideals changes from agent to agent. Some are fighting communism, others fascism or environmentalism or even pop music. Beneath the neat suit and well barbered hair the average Brown Paper Bag agent is a seething mass of unfocussed rage and flag waving frenzy. The end always justifies the means.

Each agent is called Mr Smith, distinguished only by their file number. They are zealots and the have expense accounts.

Secrets:

Brown Paper Bag's stronghold in the hidden city of Lincolnia just happens to share office space and secretarial support with ZODIAC's Justice Department Division V. Both are oblivious to the other. Occasionally memos get mixed up and information gets into the wrong hands but, so far both organisations are convinced that this is the work of a 'deep throat' agent in their rivals organisation rather than a simple piece of misfiling

Spheres of Influence:

Brown Paper Bag covertly controls many government departments around the world with agents in the most unlikely places. From dog catchers to presidential advisors from postal workers to ambassadorial masseuses – their eyes, ears and fingers are everywhere. They are very useful to their Astrolabus allies, securing everything from diplomatic immunity to planning permissions for secret missile silos.

Heavily involved in corruption, Brown Paper Bag also have agents in organised crime and train many terrorists in their secret bunkers & farms. At times they pretend to be ZODIAC in order to infiltrate leftist organisations or to implicate their enemies for unconscionable deeds.



Schemes:

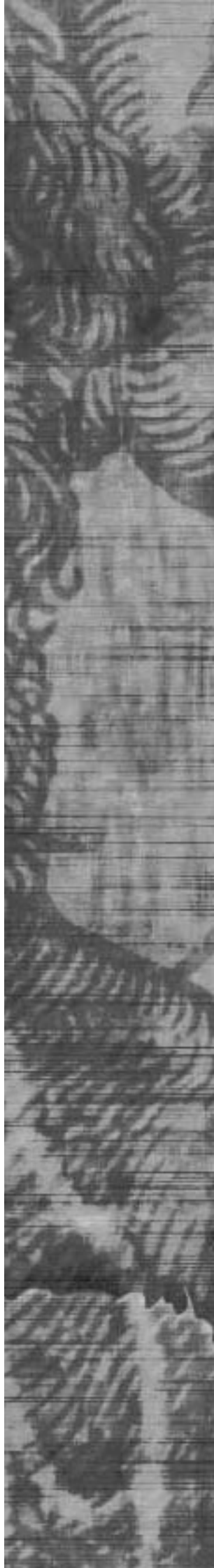
- Extending the net of corruption
- Giving favours in exchange for future Faustian compacts
- Enticing the defection of enemy agents
- Sale of contraband – weapons and drugs
- Spread of misinformation
- Assassination of pro-environment leaders
- Infiltration of pro-environment groups

Plot Hooks:

A. Brown Paper Bag have been instrumental in the construction of The Darkline, an underground railway system that bridges the United States and promises unfettered movement and supply for the organisation. The government is funding the construction (based out of Lincolnia) and is largely ignorant of the agenda of its architects – they just think it is an early escape route for the President. What no one except the insane architect yet knows is that the rail system is built on interdimensional routes which in many places breach the walls of hell. It is only when the President goes missing during the launch of the service that questions begin to be asked.

B. Governments around the Western world unite in a War on Terror, to flush out dangerous terrorists and revolutionaries in our midst. Lobbying for extended policing powers (in addition to their existing illegal operations) Brown Paper Bag and their supporters seek to round up the subversives and put them into protective detainment. To assist in this they have a new gadget – a kind of meter which measures the residue of Eidos energy (supposedly 'weapon class radiation') to seize ZODIAC agents, resources and bases. The only way to break the momentum is to get the media into the detainment camps and reveal what is actually going on and force the politicians to back down.

C. Brown Paper Bag use ELF wave technology to control politicians who cannot be bribed or converted to the cause. Recently some type of interference has arisen, turning the politicians into babbling maniacs during public engagements. As yet no one has noticed but it is only a matter of time, perhaps, until someone does. Brown Paper Bag send their paramilitary forces to besiege and destroy the source of the interference which turns out to be the anti-control funk baseline of the Antares Travelling Funk Festival.



e) The Menoastikan Leagues

"They sold BenWay products – FOR THE DEVIL"

Known Details:

Until 1966, the occult community was a disorganised rabble, each group pursuing their own agenda in a haphazard manner, many seeing the black arts as a hobby rather than a true vocation. On June 6 1966 the daemon Menoastika made his presence known through mass visitation. Declaring himself the heir to Baphomet he unveiled a ranking system by which occult groups could measure success and by which he would distribute dark secrets and powers.

No one is entirely sure how the league ranking system works and an inordinate amount of time is spent debating possible scoring strategies. However it is achieved, every six months, six days, six hours and six seconds Menoastika appears simultaneously in every properly sanctified shrine and announces the ranking of every occult group in the league. Groups do not discuss what rewards they actually receive, if indeed the daemon actually delivers on his promise.

Points seem to be scored primarily by backstabbing, infighting and factionalising and to a lesser degree for occult science and research. As a result the Leagues are a constantly shifting mess of allegiances and betrayals. Successful groups stay at the top of the leagues for only a short time before they split into factions and then return to the bottom again. Because of this we have included a handy name generator for League cults (see Appendix A) so the Ref can quickly figure out new names on the fly.

Secrets:

Many of the League cults are involved in pyramid selling schemes particularly the pernicious BenWay products. The daemon encourages this and it creates income flows for some of the more impoverished groups. Some heretics have whispered that the Leagues are organised not from the netherworld but by a clever marketing entrepreneur in Fort Worth who is raking the millions off the top.

Spheres of Influence:

The cults which compose the Leagues cut across a cross section of society from the street level Inner Garden of Mystic Panhandlers through to the decadently wealthy Zhinkster-Koloban Group. From the shabbiest hotel room through to the swankiest apartment, the hygienic stench of BenWay Three in One Cleanser is always apparent.

Schemes:

- Theft of occult knowledge, from enemies or from libraries and private collections
- Cursing enemies, usually other League groups but sometimes ZODIAC agents
- Use of the ZODIAC/Astrolabus conflict to gain advantage over other cults
- Spread of the pernicious BenWay products

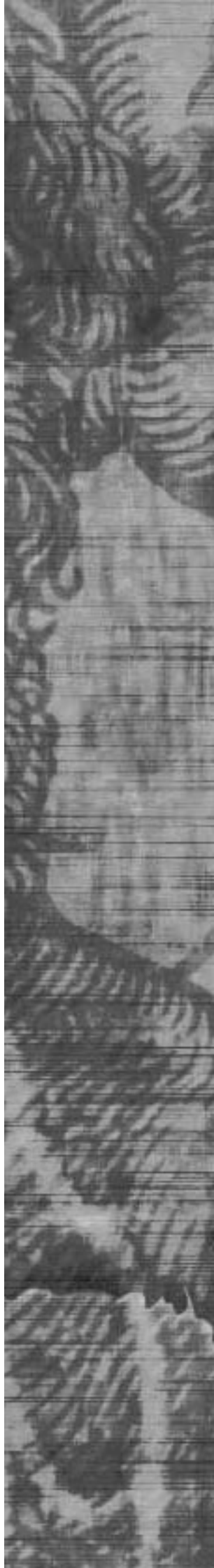


Plot Hooks:

A. Two local cults are using ZODIAC bases as pawns in an escalating series of pranks which will eventually turn lethal. It begins with them sending anonymous information about each other to ZODIAC, continues through elaborate practical jokes humiliating both rivals and the players' agents and will culminate in lethal summonings of giant monsters to crush their foes.

B. The daughter of an important environmental scientist has been kidnapped by a group of terrorists calling themselves The Invisible Hand. A member of the Leagues comes to the agents offering help, supposedly with no strings attached. With their help they can find the secret base of economic rationalists and mount a rescue operation, but at what point will they be betrayed? It might be most disturbing if they are never betrayed, and they are left to wait and wonder...

C. A diviner in the Leagues figures that the signs from the Daemon are such that crushing a ZODIAC group will earn big points in the next round. Perhaps this has something to do with the players shutting down that BenWay plant which was dumping all that toxic waste? Whatever the reason, four rival teams of eccentric occult delinquents set out to prove themselves by taunting, confusing and ultimately besieging the ZODIAC agents.



f) Memorium Vampires

"The Count sucks, but it is not your blood he wants"

Known Details:

Most human cultures have legends of vampires, deathless beings who prey on the vitality of the living. Their existence is much speculated but yet to be proven. Those who do find proof, like Dr Jonah Kalperin, disappear without a trace.

Dr Kalperin was a nerve specialist operating out of Prague in the 1920s. He discovered a series of patients with the same problem, large portions of their memory had been wiped clean. Suspicious that each of them had contact with the same man (Kalperin's mentor Dr Matthew Widdershins) he began to investigate further.

He discovered that Widdershins was an ancient being who fed on the souls of his patients, not by drinking their blood but by listening to their woes. The traumatic events which fed their problems vanished, but this was small recompense for their diminishing memory and atrophying personality. Slowly but surely they were turning into mere shells as their doctor grew plump on their suffering.

The confrontation turned murderous and only Kalperin walked away from the burning building. He devoted his life to tracking down creatures like Widdershins and found them scattered across Europe. Some lurked in bogs and drank blood like monsters of yore but most had more sophisticated methods of draining the vitality out of their prey. Some were ailing patients whose afflictions drained the life of those who cared for them, some pretended to be close friends with a victim, all the time sapping their life force. Even the most monstrous shared the same diet, the memories of their victims. Kalperin coined the term 'Memorium Vampire' but found other references to Dream Gourmands, Fleischermensch or, enigmatically, the Peppermint Men.

The creatures were disorganised, most knew nothing that others like them existed. That was until they got Kalperin in 1931, then his research became theirs along with all his other memories. This became the impetus to get organised, to protect themselves from their unruly food supply. A loose hierarchy was formed, those who were (or had once been) nobility at the top. They grew slowly in influence until Astrolabus made them an offer they could not refuse.

Secrets:

Memorium Vampires need to eat memories as they have none of their own, no self or personality. Their bodies are inhabited by hybrid creatures, amalgams of the memories and personality traits stolen from countless victims. Needless to say they are very strange creatures indeed and many a bog monster has been born of attempting to digest too many irreconcilable thoughts and memories.

While the shell of Kalperin died in an asylum in 1939, his memories live on in Countess Feesby, the creature who drained him. In this way the memorium vampires gained knowledge of their own existence but also possible sowed the seed of their own eventual destruction as "Kalperin" clings to his personality, driven by hate.



Spheres of Influence:

There is a lot of old world money in the noble estates of the Memorium Vampires. Many have been successful in making the jump to corporate entrepreneur while others sit on decaying but valuable real estate. Some still rule as warlords in remote countries, barely touched by the twentieth century. Others have become thoroughly modern, moving through the world of fashionable jetsetters engaging in the perverse culture of Mind Toys, who seek out new experiences in order to sell them to the jaded palate of their patrons.

Schemes:

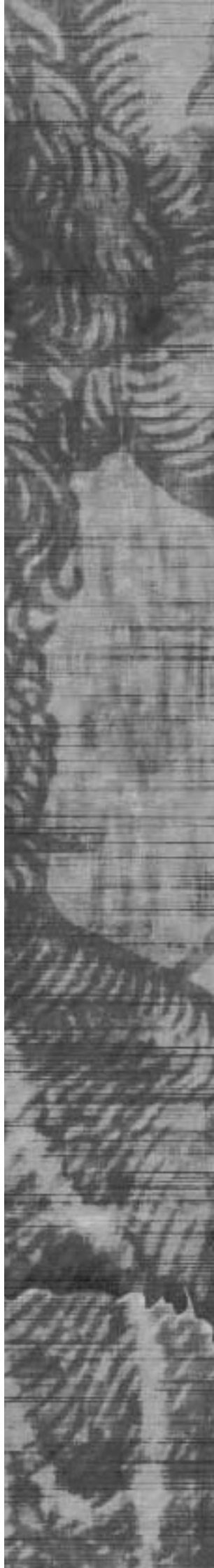
- Memory theft. The Memorium Vampires make ideal interrogators.
- Some have mastered Memorium regurgitation by which they can implant memories in a victim. This has been instrumental in creating Manchurian candidates.
- Corruption
- Prop up friendly governments, either monarchy or totalitarian.

Plot Hooks:

A. The agents get drawn into a war between the Memorium Vampires and psychotic vampire hunters. The hunters have discovered a secret weakness, that photographs actually drain memories (and strength) from the vampires. When developed with a special film, the memories replay as still images or movies.

B. The Memorium Vampires drain the knowledge from an important scientist. It is up to the team to recruit or otherwise bring the vampire back alive in order to get the information from them, by hook or by crook.

C. A small town is found filled with blanks, soulless people drained by an insane memorium vampire. The authorities posit some kind of imbecile virus and it is up to the agents to get the culprit – strangely enough occupying the body of a cat but has the experience of thousands of years including the tactical insight of a Roman general.



g) The House of Cards

"This most exclusive of exclusive men's clubs"

Known Details:

On the Ark, the days were long and dull waiting for the floodwaters to subside. The sons of Noah passed the time by debating the ownership of the new, pristine world. Ultimately they chose to play games of cards to determine who would own what.. The game ended in bloodshed as the two oldest brothers, both aggressive players fell upon each other with knives. When their bodies were condemned to the flood waters the other two brothers, careful and canny players, divided the world between them.

Or so the legend goes, anachronisms aside. This is but one of many origin myths told by the cabal of financiers, investors and white collar criminals who call themselves The House of Cards. Their operations are shrouded in mystery, their identities kept secret behind card-derived code names (there can be only 54 members including two 'jokers'). There is however nothing terribly uncanny about the House of Cards, they are a boy's club writ large playing with the world's economy for gain and amusement.

Once other secret societies caught wind of the House there began a series of internecine wars which left the rival conspiracies at the mercy of the House. The House's trump card was a society of assassins, nearly as old as their own, called The Plumbers. The House provides everything for the Plumbers – resources, change of identity, corruption of law enforcement bodies. In exchange the Plumbers neatly arrange for the liquidation of the enemies of the House.

Secrets:

The Plumbers recruit the most vicious, cruel and inventive of killers into their ranks. They will pull convicted murderers out of prison (faking their execution or death), frame dupes for their crimes and arrange for new faces, new identities. After the success of Project Lederhosen, which saw a large part of the Nazi command transfer to the Plumbers' tactical division, they have also kept an eye on dictators in trouble, to recruit them before they meet unpleasant ends.

Some of these assassins will also work in the field, thus explaining the Queens woman who in 1957 claimed that Hitler was fixing her fridge – he was in fact laying down surveillance equipment for part of a larger operation. Recently they have also begun conscripting stranger agents in order to fight ZODIAC.

Spheres of Influence:

Corporations around the globe owe fealty to the House of Cards, even if they don't know it. A complex network of finance, money laundering, loans and international aid keep the House of Cards rolling in money and favours. If they weren't such tightwads, they could flex their financial muscles and easily become the top dog in Astrolabus. As things stand they are hell bent on hoarding their gains and are less influential than one would at first assume.



While The Plumbers began as an internal black ops agency they have become quite successful and influential as contract killers in their own right, continuing to fill the organisation's coffers. The time may come when the Plumbers challenge the trumps for leadership of the organisation.

Schemes:

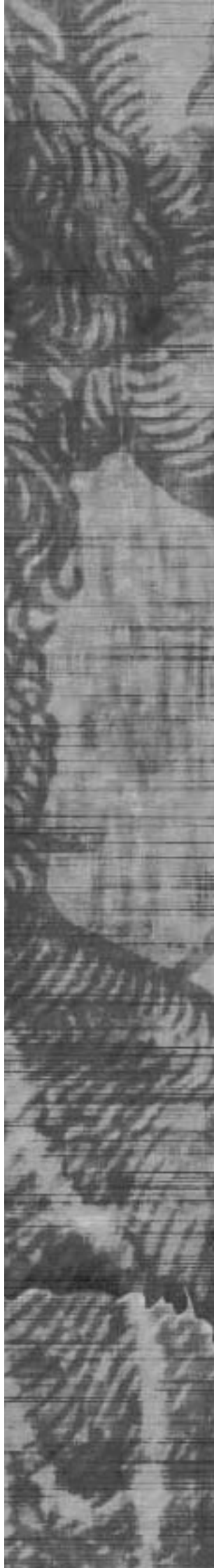
- Control governments through corporate pressure.
- Crack down on unions, environmentalists and other undesirables.
- Assassinate enemies
- Control terrorist organisations, use terror to justify wider policing powers to government and private security powers for corporations.

Plot Hooks:

A. House controlled sweatshops are springing up in a developing nation which just so happens to have a ZODIAC base in it. How do the agents bring this to the attention of the industrialised world? Does the West really care? They might do if they knew that the sweatshops were a convenient front for factories producing experimental nerve gases.

B. Over the last few years the city was in terror of the Miss Lonely Hearts killer. Convicted as a serial killer, Mike Patsy is currently in prison waiting execution, a Plumber frameup. The real killer is a kind of hybrid ghost, formed by the residual rage of the large collection of preserved hearts in a hospital's rare pathological anatomy department. When ready to kill it seizes control of discarded body bags and presses them into human shape, then goes to kill, adding the stolen hearts to the hospital's collection. The Plumbers plan to use "Miss Lonely Hearts" against a peace activist and it is up to ZODIAC to provide protection.

C. Welcome to Manhunt Island. The Plumbers have converted a remote island as a training facility and they hone their skills (and train new recruits) on the best possible fodder – captured agents from ZODIAC and intelligence agents around the world. An investigation of missing agents turns into a good old fashioned battle for survival with minimal resources and a pack of deranged Nazis on your back.



h) The Radical Authorities

"They want to know what you do when the lights go out"

Known Details:

A television broadcast. The young professor is trying to look cool but the tweed jacket is not helping. His fashionable sideburns convince the kids that he is on their side while his obligatory pipe reassures everyone of his dignity and qualifications. He is talking about socio economic bubbles, cognitive homogenisation and leitmotif "think-good" syndromes. No one is listening to the words. Everyone is watching the professor. They believe what he says.

Society is an experiment. It was running out of control until 1970 when the Radical Authorities decided to take charge. A cabal of intellectuals, sociologists and think tank gurus they want to find out what makes society work, even if they have to destroy it along the way. They manipulate social trends, engineer events, manufacture controversies; with one objective – find out what makes the masses obey control.

With a repertoire of propaganda and mind control techniques learned from experimental psychology and other even fringier sciences, the Radical Authorities see themselves as the last hope of civilisation. In reality they the spoilt, arrogant and disdainful product of the "me generation". They do not seek power for its own sake but in order to save people from themselves.

Secrets:

Few people remember the Groovy Friends. They were a cold war experiment who turned on their makers. In 1949, using purloined Nazi technology, the United States government bred genetically perfect soldiers and called them The Youth of the Future. Atomic powered, they possessed heightened physical strength, enhanced longevity and powers of the mind.

They were a shining example of boy-scout like forthrightness in the early 60s they eventually fell under the spell of Abby Hoffman and dropped out. Calling themselves The Groovy Friends, they were the super pranksters of the love generation. Until they grew up.

Today the Groovy Friends are the Radical Authorities. They have sought to eradicate all traces of their past. They have decided that they only way to destroy control is from within and have set about infiltrating the academy and gaining control of the propaganda tools of the intelligentsia.

Spheres of Influence:

The Radical Authorities have a great deal of influence in intellectual circles and through their universities which still had some (perhaps misplaced) credibility back in the 1970s. The RAs are also prominent members of think tanks and government policy agencies.

As part of the agenda of total media experimentation, the RAs have selectively seized power in advertising agencies and television networks – key agencies of social control and manipulation. They share this power uneasily with the Ancients (who control high culture) and the Funkbusters (whose area of expertise is the Mainstream). The RAs exercise power subtly and often cryptically.



Schemes:

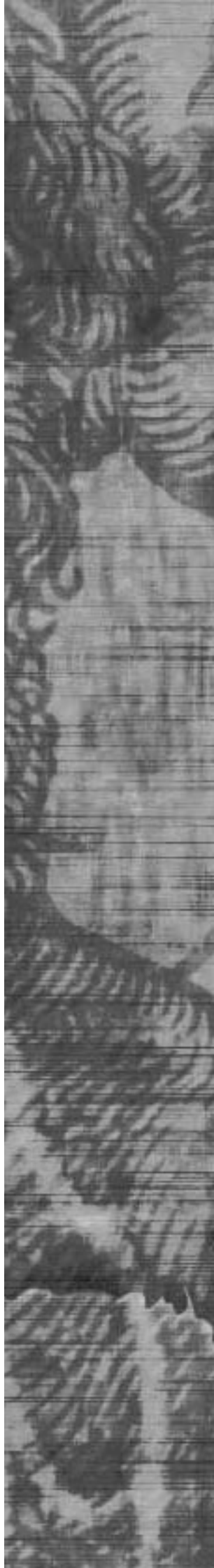
- Human experimentation, particularly on communities and social groups.
- Control of the masses through brainwashing and memetic terrorism.
- Abduction of individuals to conduct experiments on them, playing mental games and using fringe drugs.
- Building model communities to observe behaviour
- Social engineering, including manufacturing disasters in order to observe consequences

Plot Hooks:

A. The Radical Authorities are up to their social engineering tricks again. Using their contacts in government and the police they are slowly turning up the heat on the Black Panthers and other radical organisations. They are attempting not just to create resistance to authority but also create riots in order to test rumours that aetheric entities arrive and feed on riot energy. If they can make a deal with these creatures they might be able to use them in the future. The agents are called in to investigate the discontent in the city and see who is stirring up trouble.

B. *The Institution* is a Radical Authority experimental facility. Built to resemble a small, isolated town it has been created in order to observe and manipulate lines of authority. It is also a prison for the enemies of the RAs and of Astrolabus. The agents have been captured and placed in this surreal setting, interrogated by various strange techniques. Perhaps they can discover the truth that this is but one of many Institutions springing up around the world – and even escape with that knowledge.

C. A group have appeared on the scene calling themselves The New Zodiac. They seem to have the same goals as ZODIAC but something is not right. They are in fact a controlled experiment of the Radical Authorities seeking to model the inner workings of their enemy and also see how the real group reacts to the arrival of an ally/rival. Each of the New Zodiac agents has been programmed with post-hypnotic suggestions to obey the RAs' commands.



1) The Ancients

"Ancient as ruins, THEY watch"

Known Details:

There are shadows in the alcoves, eyes peering from the mantle, voices whispering in the tabernacles. In the nooks and crannies of churches, stately homes, palaces and museums live the ancients, strange beings of angelic aspect.

From the simplest house good folk to the most majestic seraphim, these creatures have acted as advisors to king, popes and politicians. Behind the scenes they exercise considerable control and, rarely, have come out to perform miracles. The Ancients have begun to organise centrally, no one is sure what their agenda is but they seem keen to cut down the ZODIAC upstarts.

Secrets:

Once dubbed "The Angeli Mathematica", the Ancients are the souls of buildings. The first Ancients were born when humanity first contrived shelters. They gained physical shape when the occupants first adorned their abodes with images of human forms.

The classical era was a time of great expansion for the ancients. Greek statutory gave them physical perfection which enabled them to present themselves as gods. Their influence peaked with the creation of the Christian church. The early Islamic church knew of the ancient's baleful influence and forbade the representation of human form in their art. The crusades are but one example of the Ancients manipulating human events for their own benefit.

The decline in ornamental statutory was engineered by the Ancients who dreaded the competition their numbers swelled. The creation of modern sculpture has led to the birth of some very odd Ancients, however.

Most of the Ancients seem to be essentially human but have supernatural powers and a knack for returning from the dead. They are feasibly immortal, but all are vulnerable to the destruction of their dominus, the building which houses their soul. Ruins still house the wraiths of ancients, rambling half creatures whose only hope is the restoration or merciful destruction of their shell.

Spheres of Influence:

Pretending to represent the heavenly hosts, the Ancients still exercise considerably power through the religions of the world, particularly the Catholic church. Any religion which allows the creation of statues and builds magnificent edifices has some Ancient influence in the nooks and shadows.

In the secular age, the Ancients have extended this control through the manipulation of high culture – the arts, literature and museums. As a result they can draw on the resources of weird millionaires, depraved aristocrats and art critics.



Schemes:

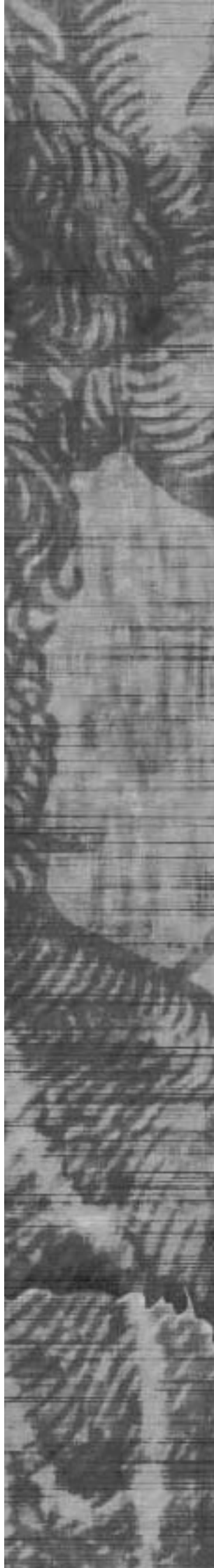
- Control humans by selectively manifesting as supernatural beings
- Corruption of church and state
- 'Miracles' for hire
- Forgery and other art crimes
- Modern dance

Plot Hooks:

A. A splinter group of rebel ancients has appeared calling itself *The Nouveau Atlanteans*. The irony is that these rebels are the remnants of the original Ancient society, under the authority of the Patriarch of Atlantis. The Ancients of Europe rebelled against their elders and sunk the entire continent, the buildings along with it. Two years ago a ZODIAC sponsored deep sea dive recovered some statutory and ruins from the lost continent. This awoke the Wraith of Metatron from his slumber. He has set about building (literally) an army of allies with the aim of taking down the demons of Babylon and recovering his master (The Lord of Calculations) who yet lies asleep beneath the waves.

B. Quite smitten with the idea of fascism or totalitarianism of any kind, the Ancients gave support to the Nazis, to Stalin and Mussolini. Part of their payment was the massive monumental building projects which dictators are so fond of, including heroic statuary. It was hoped to build a better Ancient, an Ubermensch of their kind. Instead they got a whole array of Ancient supremacists which could not be controlled. Using forbidden rituals they bound the Uber Ancients into their Domina. It is inevitable that a) some will escape with or without outside help and b) many parties will become interested in the ritual which was used to imprison the rogue Ancients as it might be used as a weapon against the rest of their kind.

C. Deep in the red light district of every major town is a club, a pleasure palace known for its exotic and compelling dancers. Always elusive, only those who know the exact directions can ever find it. Built of strange dimensions, the club leads to a secret district that exists within all cities where the rich and powerful can go to experience a taste of paradise. The dancers are Ancients, their domina making up the heart of this complex. For some reason, sexual contact with Ancients is extremely addictive to humans. When a key scientist or politician goes missing it is up to the agents to Knock on Heaven's Door and get him out.



J) The Funkbusters

"Rock is dead and they are the ones who killed it"

Known Details:

Great rock stars don't die they just grow up. After some of the greatest rock stars of the 70s faced near fatal accidents, often due to drug use, they returned as better, more wholesome people. Some of the unlikeliest of former counter-culture figures have joined forces with Astrolabus. Out with the sex, drugs and rebellion, in with slacks, golf and conformity. They are the public voice of the enemy, assuring everyone that nothing is wrong with the world. Feel good about yourself, be productive, raise a family. It is easy to whine and gripe, the real challenge is to make a difference for God, Country and your Corporate Sponsors.

Secrets:

When guitarist Leroy Nash died, he unwittingly opened the gates to the world of the dead. Choking on his own vomit, he collapsed over his guitar which just so happened to be painted with a Vodoun veve symbol which he thought looked cool. The blood from his sliced face completed the ritual to contact the ghosts of his ancestors, in this case a puritan preacher by the name of Samuel Whitchurch. Finding a vacant body he decided to take up residence. Horrified by the life lived by his great great grandson and the world he lived in, Whitchurch set about converting Nash's legion of fans to a path of righteousness.

Using the heathen ritual he had chanced upon, the new Nash sought to gather similar souls around him. If you have ever had a parent or grandparent express disgust at your music, ordering you to turn it down – think about *their* grandparents, or even their grandparent's grandparents. What we have here is a conspiracy of ghosts set to turn cutting edge radical youth culture into easy listening golden oldies.

The Funkbusters seek out self-destructive musicians and other heroes to youth, lying in wait for the inevitable. Some targets need a little push.

Spheres of Influence:

The Funkbusters have sought absolute control of the Mainstream, meaning the core institutions, values and media of society. It is natural that youths will try to rebel by creating alternatives but eventually the Mainstream re-assimilates all. The Funkbusters help this process by seeking to eliminate and replace key counter culture figures, disguising the inversion of values as simply 'growing up'. They are broadly allied with the Radical Authorities in their methods, although their ideologies are quite different.

As a result the Funkbusters control publishers, newspapers, record companies, movie studios and other creators of fodder for the masses. While there are plenty of artists all too willing to sell their souls to control, the Funkbusters really relish the opportunity to corrupt a forthright and honest creative spirit.



Schemes:

- Assassinate rebellious figures and replace them with more sensible ghosts.
- Control the media.
- Assimilate the creative and turn it into the bland.
- Corrupt creative individuals with money.
- Create moral panics.
- Eliminate genuine and uncontrollable pleasures. Constrain sexuality. Ban drugs. Prevent harsh language. Replace parks with theme parks and rock festivals with Shriners rallies.

Plot Hooks:

A. A counter culture hero (could even be one of the player's agents) has been plagued by bad luck and nightmares of being hunted by easy listening musicians (Roger Whittaker, Glenn Campbell, The Captain and Tenniel). They are the latest target of the funkbusters and are going to be defunked if the agents don't do something to protect them. Sick of contriving accidents, the crotchety revenants have decided that overt assassination is the only option.

B. One of the agents' favourite musicians (chose a historical one or make one up) has emerged from a convalescence after a drug induced 'nervous breakdown'. Revealing a brand new look they launch a television show as well as a new wholesome theme park derived from that show. The theme park is positioned at the site of major ley line intersections and is the location of one of the dreadful mutant Magdalenes which is slowly leeching vitality from the area.

C. The kids are gripped by a new craze, a special kind of goo which can be stretched and mauled but always returns to its original shape. It's not silly putty, it's sensible putty for children who don't want to get over-excited. It is also of occult funk-sucking properties which renders the little beasts pliable and disposed to suggestion. The agents need to find the factory that makes this stuff and close it down now.

k) The Stylelords

"The kids worship the way they move on the dance floor"

Known Details:

Every year the kids get stranger. Coming out of the nightclubs and discotheques is a new craze – fads, fashion and music based on pagan gods of yore. From the Europop sensation of Thor's Children to the Heavy Metal fans of Hephaestus' Forge and the Glam stylings of Queen Oberon's Velvet Creche. Each week we here wild stories about some new club which has redecorated and announced that some obscure Babylon deity is now "the in thing"

There is a dark side to this craze. Youth gangs modelled on these fads have sprung up in the inner city. As yet we have no reliable information on their expansionist turf wars, one informant said "Would you tell anyone if you were beaten up by a guy in blond plaits humming the latest Abba tune?"

Secrets:

It is not much of a secret, really, but the Style Lords *are* actually the gods they claim to be. They have long been forgotten shadows, starved of worship. Using a badly translated and 'water' damaged Lesser Clavicle of Solomon, Swedish teenager Aag Muffleson attempted to contact the demon Furfur to get him to put in a good word for a Led Zeppelin tour of his home town. Instead he inadvertently released Thor from a long purgatory.

Returning to limbo with the incarnation ritual, Thor gathered the odd assortment of deities who had not faded from the universe completely and agreed that they should re-claim what was once theirs. By taking control of music and fashion trends, they have gathered followers who worship in the only way they know how – they dance.

Their taste for power rekindled, it was not too long before Thor and his inner circle began treading on toes. As yet still dull imitations of their former glory, they decided to throw their lot in with Astrolabus until the time came when they too would have to bend their knees in worship.

Not all the Style Lords have thrown their lot in with Astrolabus. There are many quite benevolent Style Lords such as the proto goth Mictlantecutli or the punk Morrigan but their powers are quite limited without access to the manifestation rituals controlled by the big powers.

Spheres of Influence:

Once they were gods, commanding the obedience of thousands, millions even. Today their spheres of power are diminished but still pursued with commitment and zeal. Each of the Style Lords retains some power over the phenomena for which they are renowned (Thor thunder, Ares war) and also those who are innately connected with it (Thor electricity workers, Ares mercenaries).

In addition, each of the Style Lords has gathered a coterie of worshippers in the discotheques and nightclubs. These faithful often seek out vocations and experiences which bring them into contact with the elements of their deity, enhancing the effectiveness of their devotion.



As the culture machine begins to pick up on the Style Lords' trends (with some gentle shoving by their Astrolabus allies) they have extended their influence to music, fashion, even film. These projects earn them money as well as means of converting new worshippers.

Schemes:

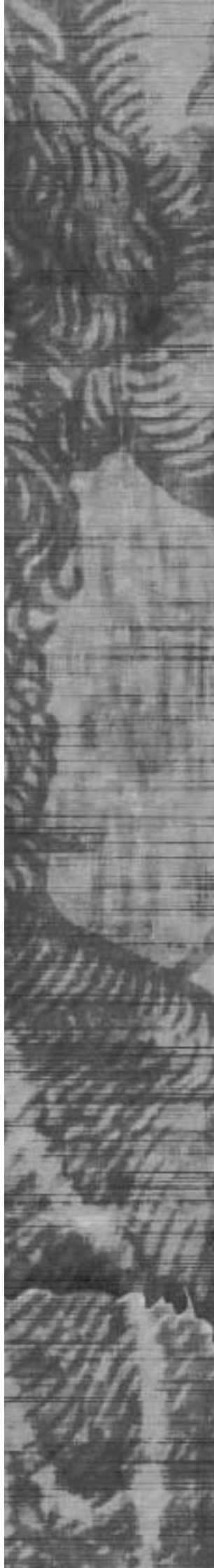
- Gather worshippers and minions
- Reawaken monsters of legend
- Provoke rebellion against authority
- The Style Lords are a new faction in Astrolabus. As yet they see little beyond their own vain concerns and have not yet realised their potential. Many of the other factions are trying to woo them over and involve the fallen deities in their own schemes.

Plot Hooks:

A. It has been a long hot summer. As if racial tensions were not bad enough, now the city is split on neo-deity religious lines as well. The agents get involved in defusing the situation and figure out who is stirring up the Stylelords. If they fight each other, that is one thing, but a lot of innocent kids who stand to get hurt along the way.

B. Something has to be done about the craze for musical car horns. They seem to contain some kind of mind virus in the tune, spreading the Stylelords' influence to the suburbs. When middle aged housewives are flocking out to buy the Monkey King's "Kung Fu You" single, chaos cannot be far behind.

C. Eurovision Song Contest. The horror. The horrrroooooorrrrr.....



1) The Swingers

"A social disease isn't the only thing you'll bring home from this party"

Known Details:

"My husband went away on a business trip and he hasn't been the same since." "Since my wife joined that Slarperware club, I don't know what she and her girlfriends do during the week but it sure ain't housework!" "The Venerable Beaver Rotarians were not like this in my day!"

Out in the suburbs, something is brewing, spreading and lurking. Seeking other forms of fulfilment they are leaving their nice houses in twos, threes, larger groups getting together in order to do - something. Beware the innocent invitation to come over for a pot roast, it may be the last one you ever accept.

Secrets:

No one is sure of the origin of the swinger parasite and, being creatures of pure hunger, they are not answering any questions. They may be demonic, a science experiment gone wrong, an alien infestation, a strange drug or the creation of mass hysteria. They seem to breed through exchange of body fluids or at least, <ahem>, "close orifice contact" and seem to thrive under ultraviolet light or in chlorinated water, having a taste for chemicals.

The Swingers hunger for the physical experience of the human body. Many are obsessed with sex which is a very obvious way of getting close to new potential hosts. Others revel in other activities - sweating, excretion, sleep even. Many have found really creative ways to tailor their obsession to methods of infection.

The swingers have been organised in an anarchic way, drawing on the memories and personalities of their human hosts to plan the next stage of the breeding process. It was only a matter of time until they infested members of Astrolabus and then saw this organisation as a venue for further expansion. They are wary allies, the other groups want to understand the Swingers' mysterious powers and physical enhancements but are as yet unwilling to even shake hands with these weird party fiends.

Spheres of Influence:

The Swingers are everywhere that people engage in lustful pursuits and exchange of body fluids. They especially savour either the dark nooks and crannies of fringe sexualities and bizarre fetishes or the furtive actions of repressed normal folk - in both situations people tend to be more secretive to begin with and usually less likely to tell others of their experiences, giving more time for the parasite to control the host. More open and communitarian subcultures such as the gay saunas and the S&M scene tend to be too talkative, too likely to see a doctor or shaman about that strange rash.

The Swingers have attempted to control the sex industry but have found their success stymied by existing organised groups of raincoat occultists and sex vigilantes wary of the creatures of the night. They have had some success in areas of very extreme pornography but have had more success in the more prosaic arenas of sexuality - wife swapping parties in the suburbs, lusty pizza delivery services (dial-a-pizza is a new craze), pool boys, travelling salesmen, cheerleaders and Slarperware™ parties.



Seedy doctors who treat social diseases on the sly have been prime targets for Swinger control, particularly those who exchange their services for, um, services. By pretending to treat the infestation, they can facilitate the conquest of their patients.

Schemes:

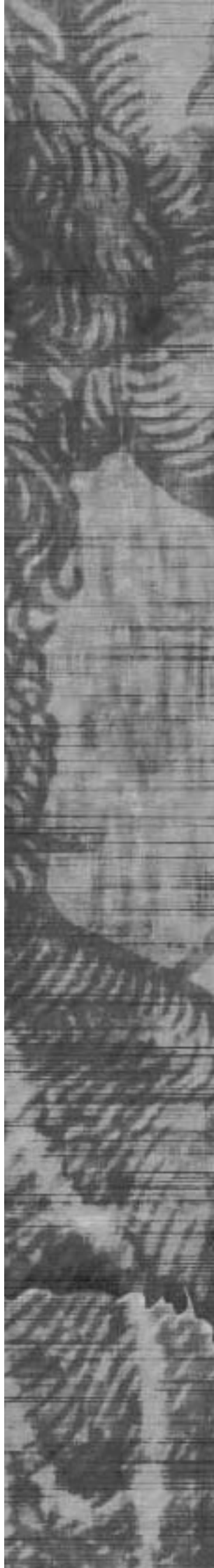
- Breed!

Plot Hooks:

A. A lab of Swinger converted scientists (work hard, party harder!) have been working on a new blacklight weapon. Something like a bomb or grenade, it floods an area with ultraviolet light making things glow in an eerie way, but also allowing the Swingers to spread without physical contact. The only downside is that it also makes them glow visibly – as pulsating, writhing, throbbing masses seeking to leap onto victims. After a few tests the scientists are sending an agent carrying plans and prototypes on a cross continental train to their mass production centre. Now that ZODIAC has taken out the lab, someone has to waylay the egghead without getting infected.

B. Contestants at the Mr Cosmos muscle competition are turning up inside-out. Is something in their steroid dose reacting badly to Swinger infestation or is something stranger happening? Don't ask me, I don't know!

C. The agents receive a tip off that Mrs Gunty's Cookie Factory is putting something other than their renowned wholesome ingredients in the dough mix. Given carefully manufactured 'proof', the agents walk into a trap. In cooperation with Brown Paper Bag, both federal law enforcement and national media have been tipped off over a 'terrorist attack' on one of America's most beloved institutions.



m) The Zoo Keepers

"These aren't your cute and cuddly critters, they are man eaters!"

Known Details:

Someone once asked why the most environmentally rapacious corporations used endangered animals as their mascots. While the PR men sell snake oil about technological advancements and unbridled productivity, the company's despoilment of natural habitats mean that "Davey the Dolphin" and "Mr Joy Fun Panda" have nowhere left to live.

The Zoo Keepers are a consortium of companies with two things in common – hideous environmental records and cute endangered animal mascots. They also have thrown their lot in with Astrolabus providing the cabal with not only financial resources but specialist agents and assassins of remarkable skills.

Secrets:

The Zoo Keepers group of companies are owned by animals who have mastered the rituals by which they can take off their skins and adopt human forms. This skill is said to have originated with the foxes who taught it to the other animals in exchange for "skin fealty". This means the teacher gets to keep the skin of the student until the student proves themselves trustworthy. Many never manage to satisfy their patron and remain enslaved.

An animal cannot revert to its natural form without its skin (usually it takes the form of a fur coat or leather jacket) and someone who possesses the skin can control the animal by subjecting it to a variety of torments which sympathetically afflict the skin's owner.

The ritual aspect of incorporation is the true source of this power. In order for an animal to learn the skin ritual, they must be worshipped in some way by humans. In the past temple offerings sufficed, but today the Zoo Keepers have figured that the fetishisation of corporate mascots allows them to tap a deeper, subconscious vein of human imagination. The fact that these corporations gain wealth and power by devastating their fellow beasts is a twist of irony enjoyed by the Zoo Keepers. Humans have benefited from environmental destruction for too long, now they want their share before it is all gone!

Spheres of Influence:

The Zoo Keepers are wise investors, particularly the foxes. They see humans as dupes and pride themselves on their ability to sell any kind of junk to the gullible fools. They enjoy extending favours to humans only to ruin them and then call in their ultimate trump. Written in fine print at the bottom of the contract the failed entrepreneur must condemn themselves or their families to the restaurants of the Zoo Keepers.

They also maintain a network of agents in environmental organisations, especially the more extreme ones. They know how to prey on human sentimentalism and will often engineer environmental disasters just to tug at the heartstrings. They then channel the outrage to suit their corporate schemes, to destabilise rivals or increase fear of eco terrorists among the prevaricating stockholders.



Having links with ancient clans and cults, the Zoo Keepers train both human and animal assassins and spies. Some indentured agents even have their skins 'loaned' back to them so that they can use their beast forms to infiltrate targets or deploy ferocious natural attacks. Sometimes they swap skins, but this is never a comfortable fit.

Schemes:

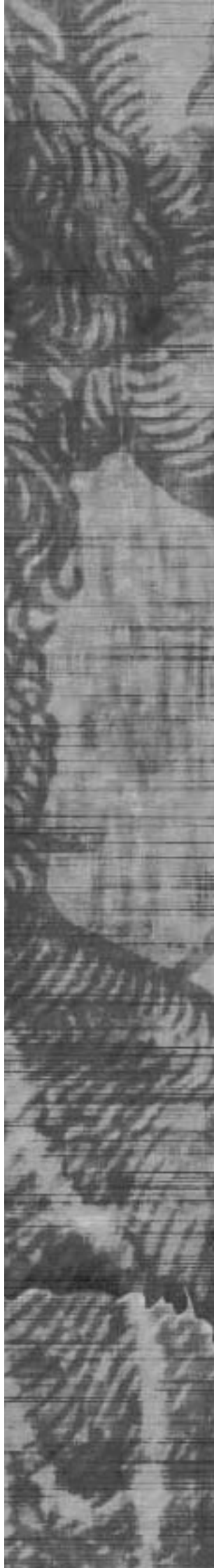
- Act as agent provocateur to discredit the environment movement.
- Acquire and sell secrets.
- Build armies of sympathetic animals, maintaining loyalty through skin fealty.
- Assassinate to further their own ends or as a money making service to others.

Plot Hooks:

A. Club Cetacean is a luxury resort where tourists can go and have their photos taken with tame dolphins and whales. These animals are also the management of the club, shedding their skins as wet suits. The tourists are brainwashed into sending regular contributions to 'environmental protection organisations' (all Club Cetacean fronts) and returning to the resort to spend their money. Those who run out of funds, end up on the dinner table. Several wealthy businessmen and Hollywood celebrities have bankrupted themselves with their compulsion to give generously and vanished, attracting the attention of ZODIAC among others.

B. Zoo Keeper scientists are working on a devolution drug, managing to keep it secret even from their Astrolabus allies. Having turned one of the agents' home towns into The Village of the Apes, the secret labs need to be flushed out before they set their sights on a bigger target such as *The Big Aple*.

C. At a big fashion show in Paris, the new look is fur. A group of situationist fashion terrorists have managed to steal a variety of Zoo Keeper furs and are proudly displaying them on the catwalk – cut into new shapes, even combining different furs together. The Zoo Keepers affected are in a very sorry shape but dare not tell their superiors. They have kidnapped a group of children whom they have no qualms about torturing to death unless ZODIAC gets their furs back.



n) The U Foes

"They are the Earth's absentee landlords and now they want to claim vacant possession"

Known Details:

Millennia ago, the primordial peoples of Earth learnt the secrets of spacefaring, fusing geomancy and astrology into a mystic science, recalled in the legends of Egypt, the Mayans and others. They departed for the stars leaving on Earth only those who craved a life of simplicity. These intrepid explorers reached the corners of the galaxy and founded a great civilisation.

Eventually their technology reached the point that the only place left to explore was human consciousness itself. Breaking out of the evolutionary plateau these spacefarers undertook the next great journey into inner space, leaving bodily existence behind.

Not everyone reached this cosmic nirvana. Left behind were those too petty, self interested or just plain dull to ever aspire to the heights of their fellows. These people were a small minority, but cobbled together they formed a new civilisation of sorts "The Confederation". It was a society plagued by the weaknesses of its rulers. In the absence of cosmic engineers they had to make do with broken down relics of the past and whatever flawed designs they were capable of inventing.

Resentful and unwilling to let their standard of living diminish, the Confederation worked on building a slave race to take the place of the hard work done by their departed compatriots' psychic powers. These synthetic creations, called the "Shammies" by their masters, were treated very poorly and, inevitably, rose up in arms and toppled the Confederation, seeking to destroy all organic life.

The remnants of the Confederation formed a shabby fleet of spacecraft and fled the persecution of their former slaves. Their objective was to get as far away from the United Worlds as possible, seeking out to reclaim their legendary homeland. In the meantime their long distant cousins have formed their own civilisations and have no intention of relinquishing the planet.

The first saucer scouts of the Confederation have reached Earth and announced themselves privately to the leaders of the primitive nations as the new masters of the planet. These envoys were and remain imprisoned for their arrogance, their technologies plundered by Earth governments.

Slowly learning from this experience, the next wave of scouts have just arrived. Now, wary of betrayal, they avoid governments. When they do present themselves to earthlings, it is as the wretched victims of genocidal evil rather than as the masters of the planet (as galling as this is to their inflated pride). Once the main fleet arrives they intend to take the planet by force, until then they will work with whatever partners they can find to undermine the stability of the Earth and leave it vulnerable for conquest. Calling themselves the U-Foes, after the Earthlings description of their silver craft, they are hell bent on evicting the squatters from their property.

Secrets:

The Confederation are not alone. They have been tracked back to the Earth by the Shammies, still fuelled with genocidal rage. Like their former oppressors, the Shammies have few ships here (although more are on the way) and work in secret against the U Foes and their miserable human relatives.



Spheres of Influence:

The Confederation have a technological edge over the Earthlings but it is not a technology that they understand well. Without other resources, they hock as much of this off as possible to raise funds for their other activities, to bribe their way into seats of power. The military in particular love any space weapons they can get their hands on. Unfortunately for the U Foes' allies, this technology is a mixed blessing and often malfunctions in dangerous ways.

The U Foes are sloppy technicians, impatient and are obsessed by fads. They mimic many of the consumer trends of the 1970s especially the toys. Nevertheless they do have vastly superior resources to draw on than the earthlings.

It is important to note that the U Foes have absolutely no innate sense of style, fashion or aesthetics. They claim these to be antievolutionary traits which were genetically engineered out of their race, but perhaps they never had it in the first place. This means that they follow Earth trends and styles in order to move unnoticed among the popular, a tactic which infrequently works well. They are the ultimate bourgeois consumers, spending lavishly on kitsch and poorly produced clothes and furnishings because of what they see the neighbours as having, not through any aesthetic choice.

As UFO sightings increase in frequency, obsessive watching groups and cults have grown around the phenomenon. The U Foes have begun to exploit this, infiltrating groups and staging elaborate 'visitations' in shiny silver space suits with weird alien masks. Partially they do this for fun but also they see the potential to use these groups, particularly as many of them are mystically inclined and otherwise possible recruits for ZODIAC.

Schemes:

- Selling technology in exchange for allegiances and access to Earth resources.
- Infiltrate military cults and right wing groups.
- Experiment in the use of terror, particularly on backward yokels.
- Capture and experiment on earthlings in order to see how much they differ from their Confederation cousins.

Plot Hooks:

A. The U Foes have found that the close knit nature of human communities is a barrier to successful infiltration, particularly as they are just learning the vile Earth customs and behaviours. One of their social engineers has created a fiendish scheme – the concept of model communities. They have gone to work building these psychogeographical hell holes and attracting earthlings to them with offers of jobs in company factories and offices. Once there they are enslaved and replaced by U Foe duplicates who are identical to the original but without any vestige of fashion sense they may once have had. When a VIP's daughter moves to Happy Meadows and starts to decorate in burnt orange, lime green and macramé, her relatives are understandably concerned.

B. The Shammies are working on a way to disguise themselves, to appear human. Unfortunately skin is proving to be difficult for them, the best they can produce is a leathery artificial substance looking much like naugahyde. This has thwarted attempts at infiltration and gaining the trust of the Earthlings until they chanced upon the perfect hiding place – Miami. Since taking over the retirement villas and fashionable condos, they have extended their reach to other places where people tan unwisely around the globe. They are using these places as staging posts and, through their control of the plastic surgery industry, have begun to steal real skins from humans. A shammie with human skin is discovered trying to break into a ZODIAC base and it is up to the team to find out what is going on.

C. The U Foes and their perennial rivals, Division Scorpio, both get evidence pointing to a lost space temple of the ancients deep in the rainforest of a South/Central American country. Not only do they have to contend with bribing the local dictatorship, tropical diseases and jungle survival but both teams are out to sabotage each other – until they are forced to unite against the snake goddess and her progeny who is awoken when the temple is opened. Will bitter rivals learn something from this experience? Probably not.

VI. Inspiration & Further Reference

TV

Danger Man
Department S
Earth Girl Arjuna
Edge of Darkness
Gatchaman
Get Smart
Giant Robo
Jason King
L/R
Mission Impossible (the early ones)
Project UFO
Sapphire & Steel
The Avengers
The Champions
The Lone Gunmen
The Man from UNCLE
The Prisoner
The Tick
Thunderbirds
Upright Citizens Brigade

Film

Blaxploitation Films, especially Cleopatra Jones, Foxy Brown, Truck Turner, Superfly, Disco Godfather
Bond Films (especially the seedy/sleazy Roger Moores)
Bruce Lee Films
Buckaroo Banzai
Cronenberg films
Fassbinder Films
John Waters Films
Kill Bill and other Tarantino Films
Mystery Men
Our Man Flint/In Like Flint
Shaw Brothers Films
Spy Kids
The Final Countdown
Velvet Goldmine
Zoolander

Books, Comics & Manga

Fleming's Bond Books
Jasper Fforde's books
No. 5 by Taiyo Matsumoto
The Invisibles (But not The Filth)
1970s Metal Hurlant (Heavy Metal)
What it is ... What it Was (by Martinez, Martinez and Chavez, 1998, a history of Blaxploitation cinema)
Noam Chomsky's books for a serious look at the politics of espionage, especially the recent *Hegemony or Survival?* (2003)

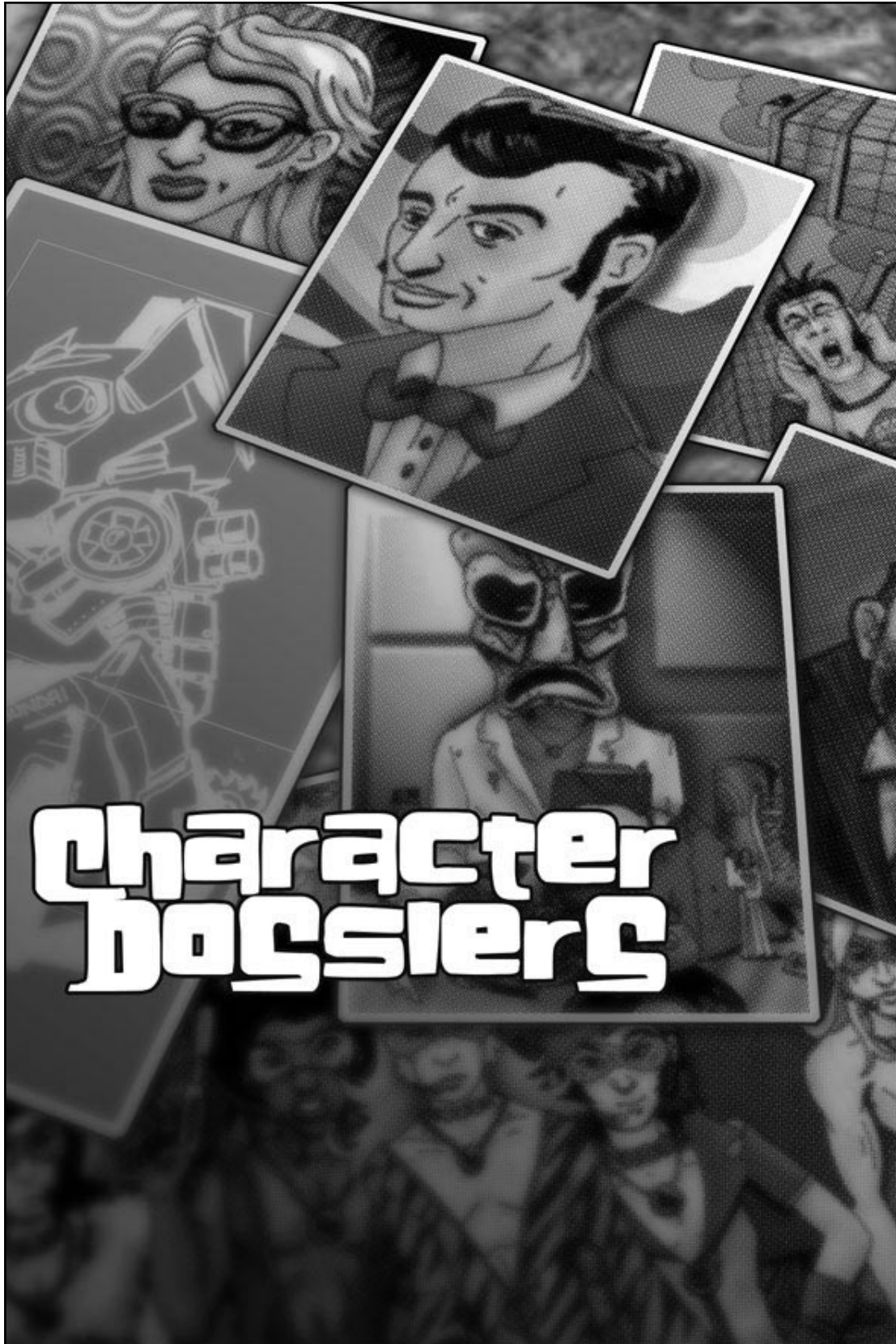
Music

Barry Adamson
Glam Rock
Kraftwerk
Lounge samplers, International Sophistication
Funkadelic/Parliament
The Mood Mosaic Series
Prog Rock
Soul (especially collections such as the Harmless/Pulp Fusion sets and the Blaxploitation series)
Film & TV Show soundtracks – wakka wakka
Lovage
Senor Coconut
Incredibly Strange Music (great for the Tikilab)


RPGs

Unknown Armies
Over the Edge
Feng Shui
Delta Green
GURPS Illuminati
Pandemonium
Sorcerer
Chalk Outlines Waiting to Happen





VII . Character Dossiers



So, whether you have a team of elegant secret agents, redeemed foot fetishist serial killers like The Footmen, dandy gentleman mod assassins like the Precious Boys (and their bitter rivals the Dolly Lads), an artistic collective like The Industrial Unit or eidos powered revenants like Yesterday's Stars, you should be able to find a place within ZODIAC.

The examples in this section should give you a starting point. First there are four beginning agents, suitable for use by players. Then comes a peek at the Kittyboys, a group of well resourced ZODIAC agents likely to engage in rivalry with any other team. The four Super Spies may be used as specialists or controllers for new agents as well as elite agent Dr Moog Swing. Finally, three enemies, the irritating bully Yuri Bolstavitch, the Super Spy level Bee Master and the terrifying Eleanor Goodwife, whose skills match the ZODIAC elite.

Dossier Overview

ZODIAC Agents

Asha Strange - Kungfu Model & Illegitimate Royal
"Cupcake" Chinoki Endo - Scientific Prodigy, Pop Singer and Car Fanatic
Udo "the Love Muscle" Gronkheimer - Bouncer, Pornstar, Agent
Herb Johnson - Ad Man, Thriller Writer and Occult Suck Monkey
Twiggy & Harlon - A Weasel and his Man
The Kittyboys - Glamorous Models, Secret Agents & Popstars

Super Spies

Rainer Wolfgang Bangstroller - Disgruntled Art House Filmmaker & Drive-In Impressario
Onke Signussen - Danish Hippie Mystic and Lawyer
Greyham Nemo - Suave Secret Agent
P - Olde School Controller
Dr Apiary Cheval - Marine Biologist and Former Feral Girl

ZODIAC Elite

Dr Moog Swing

NEMESIS

Yuri Bolstavich - Clueless KGB Bully and Astrolabus Puppet
Mycroft Pennington "The Bee Master" - Demented Eccentric Vicar and Astrolabus Criminal Mastermind
Eleanor Goodwife - Former CIA Agent, Astrolabus Puppet Mistress