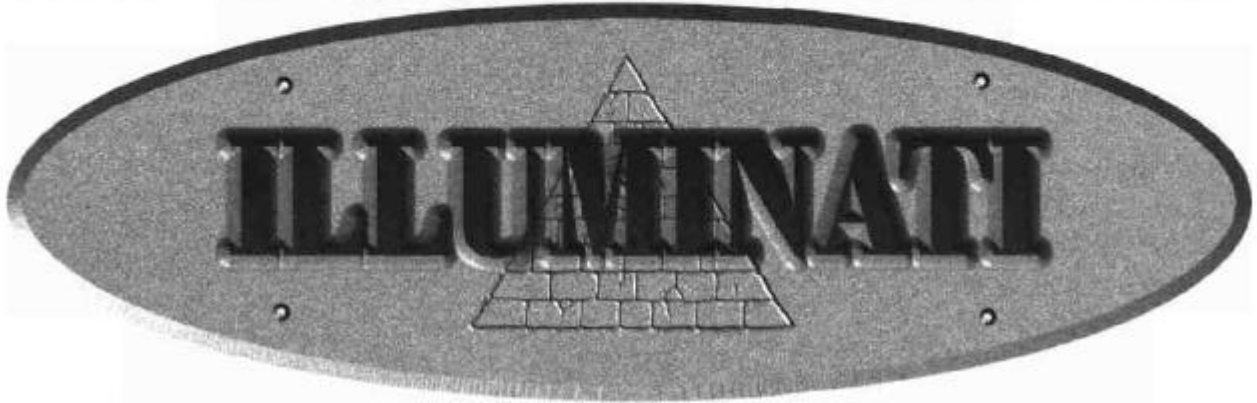


G U R P S



The World Is Stranger Than You Think

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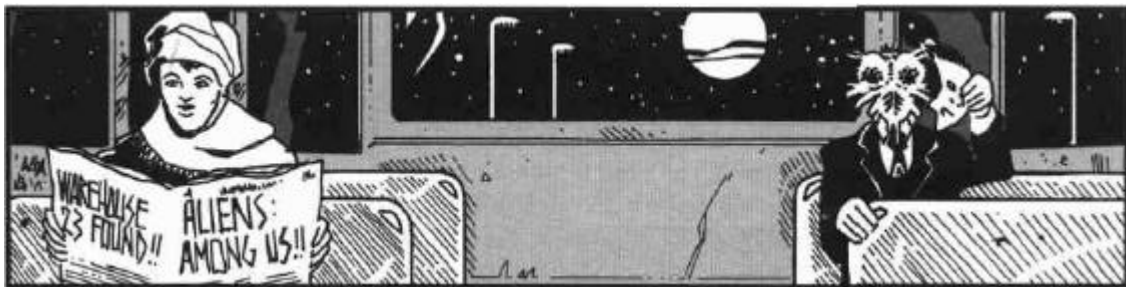
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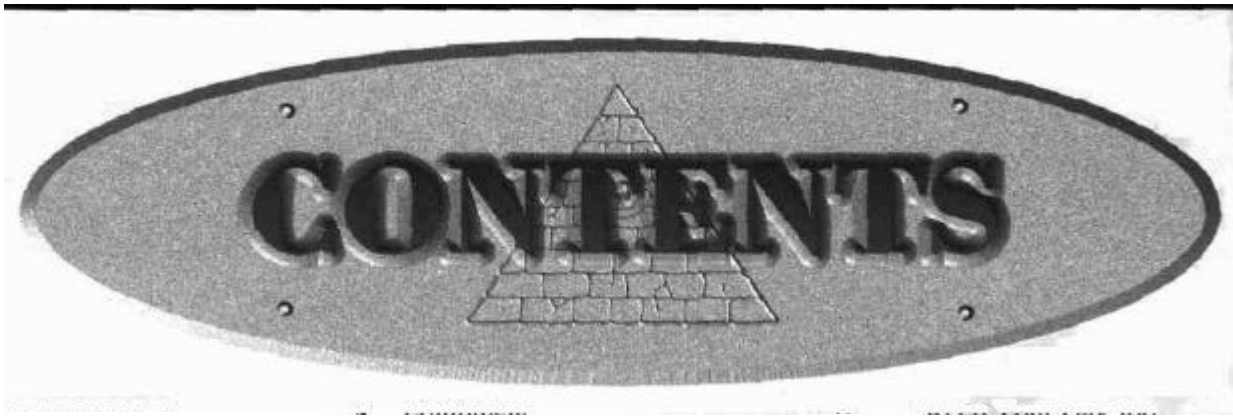
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STEVE JACKSON GAMES



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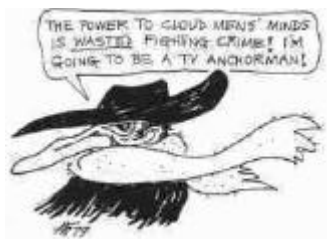
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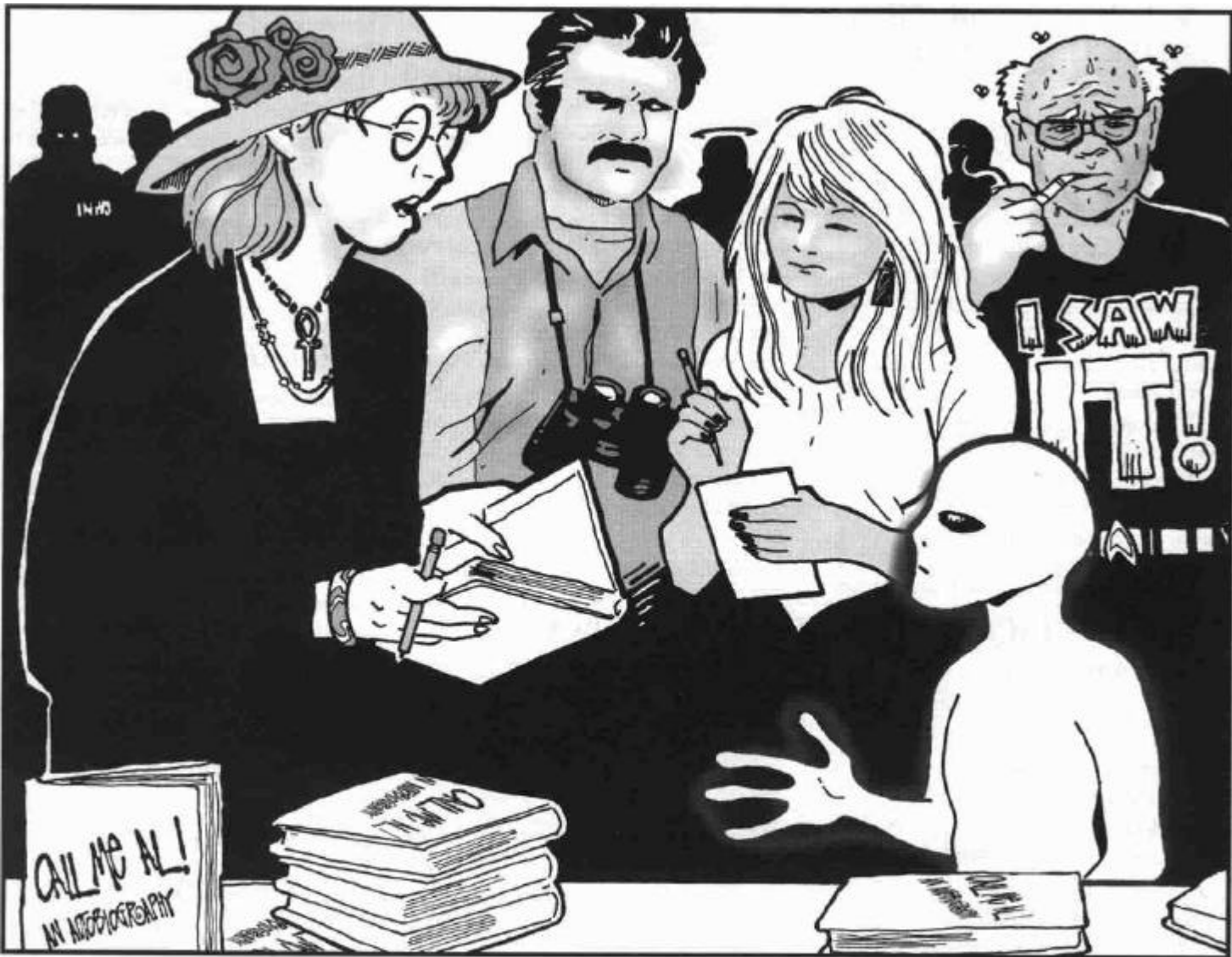
And Just WHAT Is FNORD? ..



INTRODUCTION

Welcome To The World As It Is...

"For not all true things are the truth . . . [and] not all true things are to be said to all men."



4 INTRODUCTION



- Bishop Clement of Alexandria

The world of the Illuminati seems very much like the "real" one in which we live. You can read about it every day . . . in the tabloids.

The world of the Illuminati is shaped, not by social pressures, market forces, technological development, and the tide of history, but by the actions and conflicts of a few shadowy groups operating behind the scenes. These groups - collectively known as the Illuminati, or just the Conspiracy - are orchestrating world developments to suit their own inscrutable ends. The Illuminati have connections with other groups, some secret and some overt, and those groups have connections with others. The interconnections cover the world, like an infinite spider's web. And at the heart of that web, shielded behind uncountable layers of "blinds" and "fronts" and "shells," lie the Illuminati.

The Illuminati rarely, if ever, take direct action. Instead, they simply tug on one strand of the web here, another strand there, subtly influencing the actions of other groups. Those groups, in turn, influence others, eventually bringing the result that the Illuminati wanted. The core conspirators remain safe in the middle of their web, hanging behind everything that occurs in the world like a dark and deadly spider. Only the greatest of worldwide catastrophes could force the Illuminati to step from the safety of their anonymity and act directly. Wars, even world wars, wouldn't be enough to do it; after all, wars are orchestrated by the Illuminati for their own purposes . . .

The existence of a group that is "stage-managing" the world may be frightening, but sometimes it's not hard to accept. It could be argued that we accept it already, in a way, but simply aren't aware of our acceptance. How often do we find ourselves saying things like, "They should do something about world hunger," or "They're letting too many Third World countries default on their debts," or "They're letting inflation get out of control?" Well, They are the Illuminati, the invisible rulers of the world . . .

Sounds a lot like the real world, doesn't it? Many people believe it *is* the real world. There's a whole "school," as it were, of historical analysis - the "conspiratorial" view of history - that believes the Conspiracy and the Illuminati are behind absolutely everything that happens in the world. There's no such thing as an "accident of history"; *everything* is orchestrated and manipulated. Both coincidence and synchronicity are phantasms, comfortable fictions that we maintain to avoid having to come face to face with the awful truth.

Disturbing, yes? But also somehow compelling. That's why an Illuminated world makes for such a fascinating campaign.

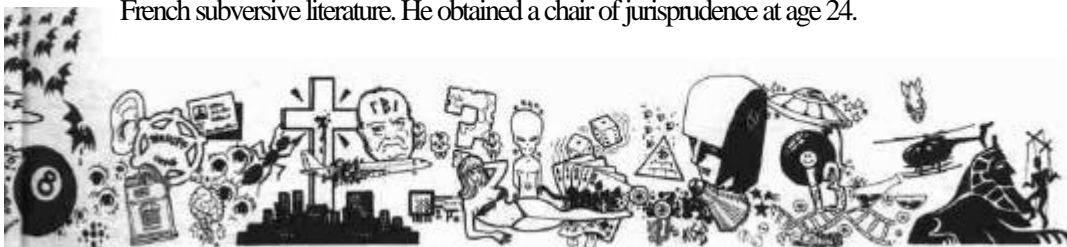
And So It Came to Pass ...

Beneath the broad tide of human history there flow the stealthy undercurrents of the secret societies, which frequently determine in the depths the changes that take place upon the surface.

- Arthur Edward Waite, *The Real History of the Rosicrucians*

Where did the Illuminati come from? Some would say this question is meaningless. The Illuminati have *always* existed, in one form or another. In Biblical times, the Illuminati - under a different name, of course - were working behind the scenes to temper the tribes of Israel during their generations of slavery in Egypt, and then orchestrated their freedom. It has even been hinted that Cain himself was the very first "Illuminatus." The more widely-accepted view, however, places the creation of the Illuminati in a much more recent historical context.

Adam Weishaupt, the founder of the historical group that bore the name "Bavarian Illuminati," was born in 1748 in Ingolstadt on the Bavarian Danube. Raised by Jesuits until he was 15, he went on to the local university to study jurisprudence, political science, history and philosophy. He devoted his spare time to reading French subversive literature. He obtained a chair of jurisprudence at age 24.



About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the **GURPS** system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid). Our online magazine includes new rules and articles for **GURPS**. It also covers the hobby's top games - *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Shadowrun*, and many more - and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *INWO*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. And *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online, to see (and comment on) new books before they're released.

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Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for an online catalog, errata, updates, and hundreds of pages of information. We also have conferences on CompuServe and AOL. **GURPS** has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. Much of the online discussion of **GURPS** happens on this e-mail list. To join, send mail to majordomo@io.com with "subscribe GURPSnet-L" in the body, or point your World Wide Web browser to <http://gurpsnet.sjgames.com/>.

The **GURPS Illuminati** web page is at www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/illuminati.

PAGEREFERENCES

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set**, Third Edition. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the **GURPS Basic Set** - e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the **GURPS Basic Set**, Third Edition.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

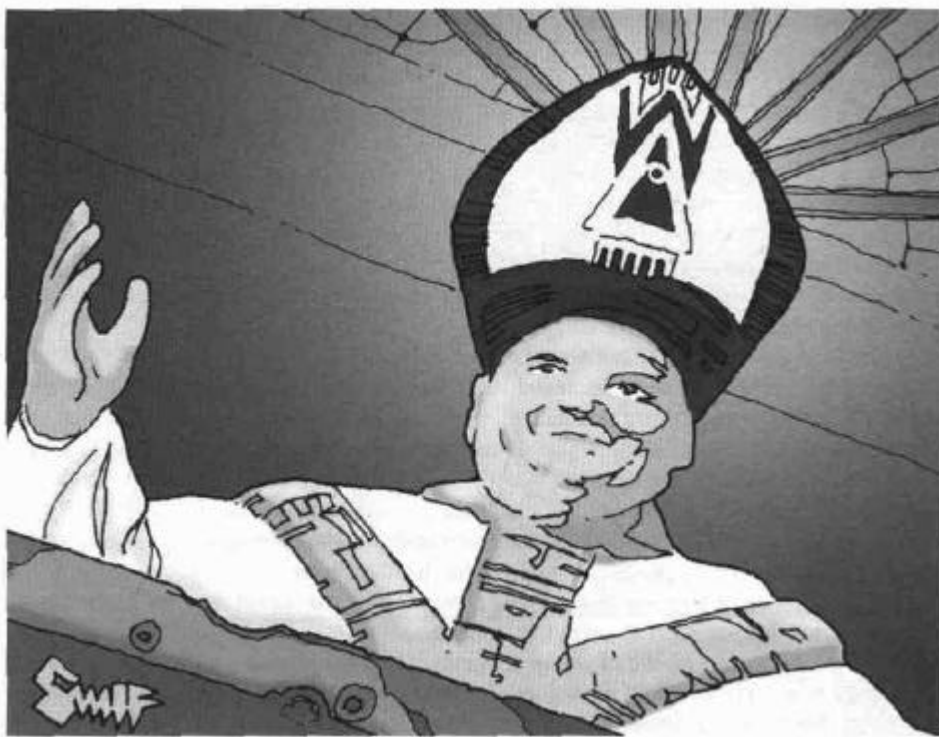
Nigel D. Findley was one of adventure gaming's most prolific and most respected freelance designers and novelists. He began roleplaying in 1976, and got his first gaming article published in *Dragon* magazine in 1983. He went on to write for nearly every major game system out there, including *D&D*, *AD&D*, *Vampire*, *Mage*, *Earthdawn*, *GURPS* and more. His work on the *Shadowrun* line, both as a game designer and a novelist, defined that game world as no other writer's work did.

Nigel Findley died Feb. 19, 1995 of a heart attack in his home in Vancouver, B.C. He was only 35. We, along with his many other friends in the game industry, mourn his passing and dedicate this book to his memory. If you play and enjoy *GURPS Illuminati*, that is the greatest tribute Nigel could ask for.

DISCLAIMER

This book deals with a fictional world in which everyday organizations - organizations that exist in what we laughably call the "real world" - are players and pawns in interlocking conspiracies with the eventual goal of world domination. Of necessity, then, this book refers to real groups, and describes baroque and surrealistic interconnections between these groups.

Conspiratorial view of history aside, rest assured that we are *not* impugning the reputations of any of these groups. This is, after all, a work of fiction. It's just a game. Isn't it?



The following year, in 1773, in response to pressure from France, Spain and Portugal, Pope Clement XIV issued an order that "forever annulled and extinguished the Jesuit order." Weishaupt personally benefited from this, in that he was appointed to the chair of Canon Law at Ingolstadt University, which previously had always been filled by Jesuits. Three years later, in 1776, Weishaupt founded a secret society originally called The Perfectibilists, but soon renamed the Illuminati - the "Enlightened." (The official date of the founding of the Illuminati was May 1. A number of conspiracy theorists gleefully point out the correlation with the later Soviet celebration of May Day.)

Why did Weishaupt found the Illuminati? Nobody knows, but there are lots of conflicting theories. The most interesting - from a conspiracy point of view - is that he was planning vengeance against the Pope who suppressed his beloved Jesuit order, and, in fact, against the entire Catholic Church. (The suppression order was reversed by Pope Pius VII in August, 1814, but by then the Illuminati had other concerns.)

Whatever his personal reasons, Weishaupt described the official purpose of his society as "to perfect and ennoble mankind." The philosophy he offered was a reversal of the traditional philosophy taught by the Church and the educational system. In Weishaupt's own words, the core belief of the Illuminati was that "Man is not bad except as he is made so by arbitrary morality. He is bad because religion, the state, and bad examples pervert him. When at last reason becomes the religion of men, then will the problem be solved." This position - that man should solve problems through the use of his own mind and reason, rather than relying on the laws of God - didn't go over too well with many of Weishaupt's contemporaries. Within the intellectual climate of the university, however, it gained considerable support. In fact, all but two of the university's professors became members of the group in the first couple of years of its existence.

In addition to his emphasis on free choice and the use of reason, Weishaupt drew the ire of organized religion because of his Manichaeic view of good and evil. Again to quote Weishaupt himself, "Behold our secret. Remember that the end justifies the means, and that the wise ought to take all the means to do good which the wicked take to do evil."

6 INTRODUCTION



These were the aims and precepts that Weishaupt discussed in public. His real aims were quite different, but were known only to his twelve "disciples" or *Aeropagites*, the core of the Illuminati. Weishaupt envisioned nothing less than the establishment of his own world dictatorship. The annihilation of existing authorities - religious, political, social, moral and national - Weishaupt defended on the grounds that all had been founded and maintained through the use of violence, and the abuse and degradation of humanity. Their destruction, therefore, became a holy necessity.

Outsiders couldn't apply for membership in the Illuminati. Recruits couldn't knock at the door for admission because, symbolically speaking, the door was invisible. Weishaupt and the members of the inner circle selected candidates, trained them and put them up for election without the candidates' knowledge! Some candidates were unwittingly tested for years before being inducted into the society. In general, candidates were accepted for membership only when they were "ripe" for blind obedience and for sacrificing their lives for a false ideal (Weishaupt's fiction of the "ennoblement of mankind"). Candidates were initiated into the order through secret ceremonies, and were "christened" with nicknames by which they were known to other members. (Weishaupt was known as Spartacus, while his disciple, Baron von Knigge, was Philo. Other nicknames included Socrates, Augustus, Alcibiades, Tiberius and Democedes.)

The Illuminati made extensive use of signs, grips and passwords, in much the same way as Freemasonry. (For a further discussion of Freemasonry, see p. 67.) The ceremonies of initiation included severe and blood-chilling oaths of secrecy, enjoining the members to keep inviolably secret all details of the inner workings of the group.

Initially, Weishaupt found most of his recruits in Ingolstadt University. Within a couple of years, however, he began to recruit members from Munich. In 1777, he joined the Lodge Theodore of Good Counsel, a Masonic lodge in Munich. Some historians say his goal was to receive protection and support from the Order, since he was having trouble attracting new members for the Illuminati. Others, however, claim that his goal was much more sinister: the co-opting and subversion of the Masonic order, until it became a front for an expanded Illuminati society.

Some years later, Weishaupt extended his recruiting "drive" to Protestant North Germany. One of his most notable recruits was one Baron von Knigge, who proved to be Weishaupt's superior in organization, agitation and recruitment. Von Knigge was responsible for recruiting members from the very highest circles of society - nobles, princes, even members of the upper clergy.

As the society's membership grew, so did its influence. Weishaupt began to dream of expanding the society into a world-girdling Order, similar to the Jesuits, with himself as General. This didn't sit well with von Knigge, however, and led to a falling out between the two influential Illuminati. In 1784, von Knigge resigned from the society, in one of many scandals that eventually rocked the Illuminati's structure. Other senior members seceded for various reasons - most, presumably, having to do with disagreements over Weishaupt's megalomaniac plans - and various books and pamphlets appeared that attacked the society as being subversive and a danger to the Crown. Denunciations by the Church followed - even though many senior clergy had joined the society - and the State issued a blanket warning against secret societies.

Things went from bad to worse for Weishaupt. The government scented the spirit of revolution in the air, and feared that secret societies were the breeding ground of subversion and treason. Eventually the Bavarian authorities outlawed all secret societies. The Church, too, began to view the Illuminati - and other such societies - as potential threats.

The beginning of the end for the Illuminati came in March of 1785. A priest named Cosandey - an admitted member of the Illuminati - was ordered by his bishop to tell everything he knew about the group. Despite the oaths of secrecy that had been part of his initiation, Cosandey "spilled his guts." He talked about the immorality and licentiousness of Weishaupt and his *Aeropagites*, and described the lesser members as

RULING THE WORLD¹⁴

How did Weishaupt and the Illuminati - never a very large group - intend to destroy institutions that had survived for centuries? Their plan was quite simple, and anticipates the philosophies of several conspiratorial organizations that followed them.

The core of their plan was the belief that human institutions can survive only as long as they submit to rules and duties. If the Illuminati could somehow convince nations to abandon their rules and duties, then the discipline that gave them cohesion would evaporate, leaving only impotent mobs. In such a world, any militant organization - in other words, the Illuminati - could easily impose itself as dictator, since humanity abhors anarchy as much as nature abhors a vacuum.

Weishaupt didn't live to see his theory put to the test, and most historians claim that the Illuminati collapsed long before their plans were set in motion. But other historians claim just the opposite, and point to current world events as indications of just how effective Weishaupt's plan really was ...



ORDERS OF INITIATION

Like many secret societies, Weishaupt's Illuminati included a number of "orders" or "degrees" of initiation. On first initiation, a member was considered an *Insinuat* or novice. After lengthy preparation, a candidate was admitted to the class of *Minervals* or "youths of wisdom."

At these lower levels, members were supposed to concentrate on morals, history and "the knowledge of mankind." To attain this knowledge, they were told to "observe and study" - in other words, to spy on - each other.

Higher levels of initiation borrowed symbology from freemasonry. Senior degrees included *Illuminatus minor*, *Illuminatus major*, and *Illuminatus dirigens*. The highest order - reserved for Weishaupt's twelve disciples - was the *Aeropagites*.



ILLUMINATI PROPAGANDA

Key statements from confiscated Illuminati papers included ideas such as:

- "the people are grown-up children, who should be released from the tutelage of kings and princes";
- "nationality is a fetter";
- patriotism is "a hindrance to the solidarity of mankind";
- universal enlightenment renders rulers and nations superfluous.



OTHER HISTORICAL ILLUMINATI

Adam Weishaupt wasn't the first, of course. History is full of plots and conspiracies, secret organizations and arcane brotherhoods.

The Society of Assassins (see p. 65) is often considered an early precursor of Weishaupt's group, and there are subtle similarities between the two organizations. .,

The "mystery cults" of the Roman era had initiations, ranks, secret rituals and other trappings associated with today's secret societies. Some modern groups may, in all seriousness, be following hermetic traditions over 2,000 years old.

And in the last years of the Roman Empire, the heretic Christian philosopher Montanus formed a group whose stated goal was to reform the young Christian Church. He called his disciples the Illuminati...

"deceivers, evil-doers, enthusiasts and dupes," all sworn to blind obedience. Further, he claimed that Freemasonry had been penetrated and suborned by the Illuminati. Freemasonry was a cloak for conspiracy. All Illuminati were freemasons, Cosandey claimed, but all freemasons were not Illuminati. As a result of this confession, Pope Pius VII issued a bull condemning all secret societies.

The Illuminati resisted, and redoubled their efforts to maintain their secrecy. But the authorities raided the houses of suspected members and confiscated papers and propaganda. So unacceptable did the powers that be find some of this propaganda, that in 1787 a new decree made recruiting new members for the Illuminati a crime punishable by beheading; accepting membership in the society was punishable by exile and expropriation of all possessions. Despite these draconian measures, the Illuminati survived in the shadows.

The year 1799 ushered in a period of tolerance. Even though secret societies were still officially banned, all exiles (except Weishaupt himself) were allowed to return to Bavaria, and several ex-Illuminati came to hold senior positions in the government. Nevertheless, the society seemed to fade away. Weishaupt died in 1830. In 1896, the Order of the Illuminati was revived in Dresden, but it never regained any importance whatsoever on the world stage ...

The Illuminati Abroad

Or so traditional history teaches. Proponents of the conspiratorial view of history see things differently. Historians such as A. Ralph Epperson hold that the Order of the Illuminati simply changed its name and its form to avoid the inquisition and persecution its members expected. Some say that the Illuminati moved to other countries, most notably France - where the society fomented and stage-managed the French revolution - and to the United States. The Illuminati are said to have formed their first American chapter in Virginia in 1786, followed by 14 other chapters throughout the fledgling U.S. The Illuminati purportedly organized the Callo-Italian Society. With the onset of the American Revolution, members of the Illuminati order in America began to call themselves the Jacobins.

Many influential Americans of the time were aware of the existence of the Illuminati. George Washington, himself a Mason, expressed knowledge of the Illuminati, but claimed no sympathy for its philosophies. Thomas Jefferson, too, was knowledgeable about the precepts of the Illuminati, and some of his writings seem to imply that he was more accepting of Weishaupt's philosophies than was Washington. (Jefferson once wrote, "Weishaupt seems to be an enthusiastic philanthropist. Weishaupt believes that to promote the perfection of the human character was the object of Jesus Christ. His [Weishaupt's] precepts are the love of God and love of our neighbor.")

And, of course, there's the eye in the pyramid - one of the chief symbols of the Illuminati. If Weishaupt and his disciples weren't deeply involved in the American Revolution, *what is their symbol doing on the back of the dollar bill?*

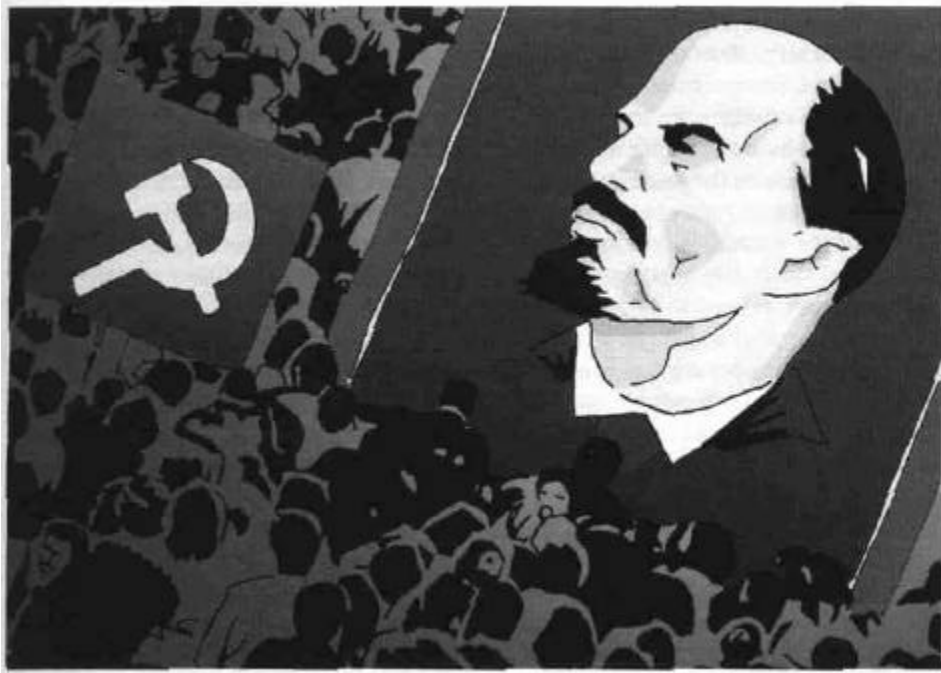
The Illuminati Today

In the conspiratorial view of history, the Illuminati exist today - perhaps not under the same name, of course, but with the same eventual goal. And what is that goal? Nothing less than world domination and absolute power. Most conspiracy theorists hold that the Illuminati are still striving toward that goal; some believe they've already achieved it! Conspiracy historians claim that many major turning points for the world were caused by the Illuminati.

How can a group, of necessity small and keeping its very existence secret, have such a great effect on the flow of history? The answer is, of course, indirectly. The Illuminati are past masters at infiltrating other organizations - secret or publicly-

8 INTRODUCTION





command - as when the Illuminati literally hold the purse strings for the subordinate group - to subtle influence - where one or more senior members of the secondary group are actually also members of the Illuminati.

Control can also be indirect. After all, there aren't that many Illuminati, and they would be stretched pretty thin - in regards to both time and resources - if they had to control every significant organization themselves. Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on your point of view, that's not the way it works. Conspiracy theorists believe that the Illuminati directly control only a few other groups - the Freemasons and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union have frequently been placed in this category. These directly-controlled organizations then control *other* organizations, in much the same way. They control other organizations, and *they* control other organizations, and so on and so on . . . Very quickly, the world becomes a network of interlinked influence, with the Illuminati sitting at the core, managing everything.

The situation gets even more baroque when subsidiary organizations don't know that they're being influenced, but believe that *they* are the "prime mover" in a conspiracy. For example, the Soviet Communist Party may have once controlled - as some conspiracy theorists have claimed - the British Trades Union Congress, the American Teamsters, various arms control groups, and an assortment of Third World governments. In many "readings" of conspiracy theory, the Party was totally unaware that it is as much a pawn in the "great game" as the British TUC. (One wonders what group will replace the late and unlamented Communist Party as "chief Illuminati dupe.")

The Campaign

Ibis is the world in which an Illuminated campaign takes place. A dark world, shot through with mystery and paranoia. A world where everything is interlinked in a surreal way. A world where the tabloid newspapers at the supermarket checkout stands are the only sources of *truth* . . . or *some* of the truth, at least.

It's a world where the vast majority of the populace is blissfully unaware of how things actually work. Where the voters in a democracy really believe that their votes mean something. Where citizens believe that their government is really looking out for their best interests.



CONTROLLED ORGANIZATIONS

So, what organizations can fall under the sway of the Illuminati, either directly or via intermediaries? Here's a list, in no particular order, of organizations that various theorists claim to be part of the Grand Conspiracy:

The Freemasons; the Communist Party (Soviet, U.S. and others); the U.S. Air Force; the Central Intelligence Agency; the N.M. Rothschild Company; the Federal Reserve system; the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare; the International Monetary Fund; the Rhodes Scholarship Foundation; the London School of Economics; the National Council of Churches; and the Beatles!

This is only the beginning. In the conspiratorial view, your school, your employer, your college fraternity, and the IRS - and the publisher of this book! - are all part of the net of interlocking conspiracies.

CONSPIRACIES

EVERYWHERE!

And, if every organization is under the indirect control of the Illuminati, then every occurrence in the world today is the result of a conspiracy with a very specific goal. Again, here's a cursory list of terrifying possibilities, just to get you started:

The fluoridation of the United States' drinking water was arranged to subject Americans to mind-altering substances.

The emergence of Adolf Hitler as leader of pre-war Germany was a conspiracy involving the Thule Society and I.G. Farben, to develop new markets for that company's chemical processes.

Inflation is a conspiracy involving the Federal Reserve, with the goal of debauching America's currency and weakening the social and economic fabric of the country.

The theory of evolution is a conspiracy of the Socialists, the Masons, and various scientists to weaken organized religion.

World War II resulted from a conspiracy of astounding scope, with the twin goals of positioning the United Nations as a fledgling "world government," and of allowing Russia to expand its imperialism into the countries of Eastern Europe.

America's current education system results from a plot of educators and government members to indoctrinate young minds with the "religion" of Humanism.

A conspiracy involving the U.S. Air Force and various giants in the news media is suppressing the fact that alien spacecraft have visited the Earth.

The establishment of an independent police force in the "county" that is Disney World in Florida is the first step in a plan that will culminate in the extraterritoriality of corporations.

The death of Elvis Presley was a cunning hoax, orchestrated by the FBI - an organization of which Elvis was *and is* an important member.

FOREVERY CONSPIRACY THERE IS ANEQUAL AND OPPOSITE CONSPIRACY

A significant feature of conspiracy theory is the flat contradiction between some of the most popular ideas. They can't all be true ... can they?

For instance, there's clearly a Communist, secular humanist, atheist plot to undermine America's moral fiber. But there's also clearly a Moral Majority, organized-religion, Fascist plot to straitjacket America into 19th-century middle-class morality.

There's obviously a left-wing, socialist, authoritarian plot to cripple Big Business with regulation and taxes. But there's also obviously a Big Business, military/industrial complex, authoritarian plot to take over the government.

Anyone can see the conspiracy of incumbent bureaucrats and legislators to keep office. But anyone can also see the anarchist conspiracy to cast out all office-holders, good and bad alike, and create chaos.

The collapse of the Soviet empire shows that monolithic super-states can't survive. Or does it show that something bigger and more powerful than the USSR wanted to eliminate it?

And anybody can see that a lot of people are having a lot of fun spreading lies and rumors about conspiracies. Could that be a conspiracy in itself?

THE PARANOID'S DELIGHT

A very extreme brand of conspiracy paranoia is the idea that *everybody* in a certain category ... all the morticians, all the gays, all the Sunday-school teachers ... is part of some plot. This is right on the edge of madness, even among those who agree that there *are* real conspiracies.

Still, the idea that there might be a secret brotherhood of, say, heavy-metal fans, can be weirdly compelling. They all wear torn black T-shirts and earrings, don't they? What if it *means* something? What if they have secret meetings, secret rituals, secret plans. Maybe it's ridiculous, maybe it's impossible, but you can't *prove* it's not true. And if it *were* true, it would be protected by its very unlikeliness. What sane investigator would follow up on a lead to the worldwide conspiracy of *redheads*?

What about optometrists, for instance? They get you alone in this little room, in the dark ... they put you in a special chair and fit this gadget over your head, and then they start flashing things on the wall that you can't quite read ... Maybe it would be better not to think about this after all.

A few people, of course, see at least some of the truth, a glimpse behind the curtain of normalcy. Most of them are labeled as paranoid, and suppressed - usually not harshly, but effectively nonetheless. Only rarely do the conspirators themselves have to arrange this repression; most of the time, society does it for them. After all, if one listens to the ravings of a paranoid, one might have to rethink some cherished assumptions about the way the world works ... and we can't have that, can we?

In some cases, these whistle-blowers *are* paranoid. The shock of seeing behind the veil of the normal can easily unhinge someone's sanity. Of course, paranoia can be difficult to judge. Try distinguishing between someone who believes that the phone companies are poised to take over the world's banking industry, and someone who *knows* it ...

Sometimes a person can learn enough to become a direct threat to some level of the conspiracy. Such people often simply disappear, or fall victim to random or scarcely-motivated violence - John Lennon comes to mind - or to accidents. But occasionally they are co-opted into an organization somewhere else in the power structure. In some cases, a dedicated researcher into the actions of the Illuminati becomes one of the Secret Masters himself.

There are also those who've somehow managed to learn at least some of the truth, and yet stay one step ahead of the members of the Conspiracy. Perhaps they simply haven't made their existence sufficiently inconvenient. . . yet. Or maybe they're under somebody's protection for some reason - possibly for future use as pawns against a rival organization. These people live perhaps the loneliest life of all, knowing that a single misstep will bring the weight of the world down upon them.

Roleplaying the Illuminati -

The Illuminated world can be a fabulous place for roleplaying. A successful Illuminati campaign has some unique requirements, though. First and foremost, the GM must maintain an ongoing sense of mystery and paranoia. Strange things are happening behind the facade of the normal. Nothing is as it appears. Coincidence is a risky term: *everything* may have some purpose, as part of *someone's* hidden agenda. Similarly, nothing is trivial: the degree to which the PCs judge any event as meaningless is a measure of their ignorance about the way the world really works.



Second, the GM should ensure that enlightenment is a gradual and step-wise process. Each time the PCs manage to part one curtain, there should be another curtain beyond it. Striving for "the truth" should be like peeling an onion with an infinite number of layers. Strip away one layer of lies, and all that's revealed is another layer of (bigger) lies. The impossibility of exposing the Illuminati themselves is almost axiomatic in this world. The characters and their players might be totally convinced that they've finally exposed the "prime movers," the group behind all the interlocking conspiracies . . . but who (or what) is behind that group? Are the Illuminati truly their own masters, or is there an "*Uber-Illuminati*" group pulling their strings? And an "*Uber-Uber-Illuminati*" group pulling *theirs!* Who's to say?

Third, the GM must make sure that the PCs cannot rely on help from *anyone* else in the campaign world. No matter how hard they try to publicize "the truth," no matter how persuasive they may be, they won't break through that great public indifference. Why? First, because the information they're trying to spread just won't get out to the people. The news media are controlled by the Illuminati, who obviously would like to see "the truth" squelched. Second, people won't believe the PCs because what they've got to say is so, well, unbelievable. After all, the supermarket tabloids have been spreading the truth for years, and who really believes them? And worse, the truth isn't just unbelievable, it's disruptive to a comfortable life. Who wants to accept that "*they*" are managing every aspect of our life? It's much easier to go on believing what we've always believed, and ignoring - or actively suppressing - anything that makes us examine things we just don't want to examine.



That doesn't mean they won't ever convince *anyone* of their story. Occasionally, they may encounter people who believe them - or *seem* to. These people may be certifiable paranoids, willing to accept anything (even the truth) that fits in with their delusional structure; or they may be fellow seekers after the truth; or they may be agents of the conspiracy. Can the PCs distinguish between these three situations? And is there any real difference? Kind of leads back to paranoia, doesn't it?

Finally, an interesting point to ponder: conspiracy theory is similar to fractals, or to white noise. No matter how much you expand the scale, everything looks (or sounds) very much the same. It doesn't really matter *where* you are in the power structure of interlocking conspiracies. There are always secrets behind the facade of reality; there are always an infinite number of layers left to the onion. How much does a conspirator who thinks he's at the top of the pyramid differ from an ordinary "civilian" who's unaware that there even *is* a pyramid?

Fjord.



I THINK WE'RE

"Charles Fort suggested that many weird occurrences were caused by aliens watching us . . . perhaps even manipulating everything we do. Perhaps we're an experiment — that would explain why many things about the 20th century just don't make sense.

Now if we're all the helpless pawns of godlike aliens, the campaign gets a bit limited. But perhaps the aliens aren't all-powerful. Maybe we're out of control, and the alien agents are trying, without too much success, to get us back onto their planned program. In that case, there are real victories to be won. If mankind is just smart and stubborn enough, the aliens will give up and leave.

Or maybe the alien masters didn't create us or help us develop . . . they're just taking advantage. Maybe we're just fun to watch. Maybe we're a resource to be harvested (as in Keith Laumer's *A Plague of Demons*) or even to be eaten. But again, resistance might succeed, and carry the day for mankind!

BE PARANOID ABOUT SATELLITES

They're up there, hanging around in space, with nothing to hold them up. It's against nature. There's something evil behind it all, mark my words. Even if they *weren't* built by Charles Fort's aliens.

They're watching us. Spy satellites have cameras now that can read a license plate from 200 miles up; it says so in the *Midnight Sun*. (Too bad license plates aren't on the roofs of the cars, isn't it?)

They're keeping tabs on our positions - at least they are if we have cellular phones (see p. 73). Who knows? They may be able to keep track of VCRs, too. And probably digital watches.

Don't even *think* about the orbital mind control lasers (but see p. 122, and put some tinfoil in your hat).

Worst of all, they're going to mess up the constellations and the astrological portents. If you're a Sagittarius with Telstar in your Gemini and Skylab ascendant, *nobody* can cast your horoscope right.

SEVEN MORE THINGS TO BE PARANOID ABOUT

Conspiracies of pure malice! Who says that a conspiracy has to have a meaningful goal at all? Perhaps they just want to torment someone. Whoever invented high heels obviously hated women, but *somebody* works hard to keep them popular.

Hotels! The big hotel chains all have huge databases now, on all their customers, "to serve you better." They know a *lot* about you. If you were with a redhead last year in Chicago, the clerk this year in Tucson will *not* call your brunette companion "Mrs. Smith." Wonder who else can see those databases?

The ozone layer! Is it really being destroyed, or is it all propaganda? Either way, who would benefit? Cosmetics manufacturers, selling PF500 sunscreen. Builders, who will get even richer if everyone has to live inside all the time. Or maybe the eco-freaks are trying to drive everyone inside so they'll leave Mother Nature alone.

Robot sea monsters! For years we've been reading about the riches of the ocean floor, and the gold dissolved in every gallon of sea water. Why isn't it being mined? Well, somebody else *got there first*.

Automation! Is it really intended to make everyone's life easier? In that case, why is a VCR *impossible to program*? No, it's all part of a fiendish plot to make *people unnecessary*.

Endangered species! Is extinction just a terrible accident, or is there a reason to it? Why is the rain forest *really* being wiped out? Perhaps extinction of a whole species is the greatest possible *blood sacrifice* for the *demonic masters* that rule the Conspiracy.

Automobile dashboards! Did you ever wonder why they quit labeling the controls in English, and started using those little pictures that nobody can figure out? To make it *simpler*? Hardly. But when everyone on Earth has died from *alien diseases*, those dashboards will be just right for the *fiends from Altair*, who will land in their UFOs and *loot our cities*...



Connections

The GM of an Illuminated world should decide just how organized the Conspiracy is at its highest levels. This also influences how he will treat connections and synchronicity, and determines how much of a chance the PCs will have to make *any* headway against the Secret Masters of Everything.

Secret Clockwork

In one view of the Illuminati, there's a single master group that controls everything. *Everything* is connected to everything else. Or, to put it a different way, "All things are true . . . even false things." Even though it may be difficult to imagine a connection between Freemasonry and Bigfoot, there *is* a connection. The corollary of this is that - by definition - the Illuminati are behind *everything*. You might be an agent of the Illuminati; you just don't know it (*maybe*).

When people say "Everything in an Illuminated world is connected," they usually mean that the connections are *causal* - that is, that one thing *causes* another. This isn't necessarily so. "Everybody knows" that the world population of rabbits and the height of women's hemlines are connected; when the rabbit population peaks, miniskirts come back into fashion. But nobody would claim that rising hemlines *cause* increased rabbit fertility, or vice versa. There is a connection, but it's *acausal* . . . as far as we know.

Perhaps these acausally-connected items are both caused by something else - by the sunspot cycle, for example. Or perhaps it's just synchronicity: rabbits and skirts are linked, and just because we don't know why doesn't mean it isn't true.

And in a world where almost everything is connected, the fact that two things are unconnected is in itself a significant connection. What do they have in common that makes them unconnected . . . ?

This sort of campaign will appeal to players who like a really spooky, *different* world, and don't care whether they "win" as long as they get to do some serious role-playing. Of course, it will also appeal to those with a hopeless martyr complex . . .

In a world like this, the PCs are like cockroaches trying to stop a tank. They can't understand it; they can't even *see* it all. From the outside they can do nothing, and will probably never be noticed until they're squashed by accident. If they can get inside they might become minor nuisances - but as soon as they're noticed, they're in real trouble.

General Weirdness

But perhaps - and this is the way that we prefer to look at it - there is no single all-powerful Conspiracy. Sure, secrets and conspiracies exist. Many of them. But they are constantly competing, and none of them knows what's really going on. They know



more than *you*, and some of them think they know it all, but there's more going on than *anybody* can understand. And some of it is very strange indeed.

Thus, GMs might decide that many weird things are true without having any (obvious) connection with the particular Conspiracy he's dealing with at the moment. The tabloids on sale at supermarket check-out stands are telling the absolute *truth*, not lies concocted by the Illuminati. Bigfoot *does* exist, a World War II bomber *was* found on the moon, Elvis *was* a Martian, and so on. These truths themselves may be clues to secret plots. Or they may just be the way things are!

In such a world, maybe people want to believe in the Illuminati - that a grand Conspiracy is behind everything - because it makes more sense than admitting the truth. At least a world-girdling Conspiracy makes *some* kind of sense . . .

Or perhaps the Illuminati are the only people who really understand. They *know* the way the world is, and they face it undismayed; that's what separates them from the rest of us.

And maybe, for some reason, the Illuminati are trying to convince the masses that the world *isn't* that way at all - that Bigfoot is a myth and that Elvis is dead. Why go to all that trouble? If you knew that, *you'd* be Illuminated.

This is a much less one-sided campaign, because the PCs *can* make a difference. Maybe they can't topple the Secret Masters by themselves, but if they can find out what's going on, they can pick a side and - maybe - do some good. And if they *can't* find out what's going on, they can take some comfort in the fact that the Illuminati probably don't know either!

This is also the background to pick if you want a humorous campaign (see sidebar, p. 48). Even a *serious* campaign will have its lighter moments when agents of a dozen different conspiracies start tripping over each other.

About This Book

GURPS Illuminati is different from many other *GURPS* worldbooks in that it is, to a great extent, not rules-driven. There are sections that refer to or extend existing *GURPS* rules, but these sections are the exception and not the rule. Most of this book is background and philosophy. There are two major reasons for this.

The Illuminated world differs from other campaigns largely *in* philosophy; the actual mechanics of the game will depend almost exclusively on the genre which has been "Illuminated." And if the "truth" about the Illuminati appeared in this book, then the players would probably know as much as the GM . . . and that's just *not* the way an Illuminated world works. Instead of categorical truth, this book provides suggestions - ideas that GMs can use as is, modify, or totally ignore as they see fit. Examples of Illuminati groups. Illustrations of how the Conspiracy can turn innocents into pawns. Suggestions for Illuminated adventuring.

Maybe everything in this book is true; perhaps the *Priore de Sion* still exists and is behind both the Knights Templar and the Freemasons. Or maybe everything is different. Only the individual GM knows for sure . . . and that's just the way it should be.



THIS CHANGE ORDER RESCINDS THE PREVIOUS CHANGE ORDER, WHICH WAS CLARIFICATION OF POLICY BUT NOT ANY SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE. WE STILL DON'T WANT ANY CHANGES, BUT THE POLICY IS SO BAD WE DON'T WANT IT CLARIFIED EITHER. IS THAT CLEAR?



VICTORY IN AN ILLUMINATED CAMPAIGN

Players used to oilier roleplaying environments and genres will probably have a view of "victory" that is totally impractical in an Illuminated campaign, if the Illuminati are really monstrous spiders in a web of intrigue, you can't defeat them. You can only soldier on, struggling to reveal one more layer of the conspiracy, while staying one small step ahead of those who would destroy (or co-opt) you. In some campaigns, the highest "level of victory" is survival!

Of course - especially if the GM sees the Illuminati as a set of squabbling power groups, rather than a monolithic bloc - it could be possible to defeat *some* of the Secret Masters. And that could make a satisfying ending to the campaign. But if the Illuminati are vanquished, another group is sure to slip into their position. ("The Illuminati are dead; long live the Illuminati.") It's possible that the PCs themselves will become the "new" Illuminati, and may find themselves acting in the same way as the "original" conspirators.

AN ILLUMINATED GLOSSARY

Illuminati: (1) Any of various groups claiming special, usually religious, enlightenment. (2) Any secret or conspiratorial organization. Also called Alumbrados, Secret Masters, Enlightened Ones, The Conspiracy, etc.

Circular definition: See *reflexive statement*.

Dupe: See *Pawn*.

Fnoird:

Hermetic: Secret.

Illuminated: (1) Enlightened. (2) Of or having to do with a conspiracy of the Illuminati.

Men In Black: The sinister agents who supposedly visit UFO spotters, etc., and warn them not to talk. Believed to be agents of the Conspiracy. May be perfectly normal people seen through a veil of fear, or monstrous androids, or both.

MIBs: Men In Black.

Murphy's Law: "Everything that can go wrong, will."

Pawn: Someone who is manipulated into doing the will of the Illuminati, but has no idea he's doing so.

Reflexive statement: See *self-referential*.

Self-referential: See *circular definition*.

Synchronicity: A (so-called) meaningful coincidence.

Tool: Someone who is in the pay of the Conspiracy. A tool knows that he's participating in secretive activities, though he usually has no idea what they mean.

UFOlogist: Someone who studies UFOs - or, more precisely, reports of UFO sightings. Some believe that they've been for saucer rides. Who knows? It could be true.

INTRODUCTION 13

50 Awful Things About The Illuminati

by Steve Jackson

On these pages is a complete basic primer about the Illuminati. Everything here is true, even the false things.



- 1 There are many Illuminated groups, with different kinds of secret knowledge. Anything you might say about them (including this) will be false for some of the Illuminati, but true for others, which only adds to the confusion and mystery.
- 2 The Illuminati infiltrate and take over organizations of all kinds, from churches to the post office to the corner grocery store, and turn them to their own ends.
- 3 And, just as a black joke, some of their subject organizations advertise themselves as Secret Societies!
- 4 They have agents and "sleepers" planted everywhere. Many of these people have no idea who they are really reporting to. Others are active members of the conspiracy, working their way ever deeper into the fabric of society.
- 5 They control the schools in order to make sure that young people learn to enjoy strange tuneless music and weird outlandish games, and that they dress oddly. But they change the styles every few years, so that everyone will feel equally alienated as soon as he graduates.
They also try to recruit the best and the brightest young people as agents, to insure the next generation of the Conspiracy.
- 6 They constantly feud among themselves and war with other groups and organizations. Each group of Illuminati is constantly striving to increase its power base and undermine the competition.
- 7
- 8 Their first means of dealing with opposition is to buy it off. To any group as rich as the Illuminati, a few million dollars are nothing.
Next they try threats. Danger to possessions, status or loved ones has dissuaded many a would-be foe of Illuminati schemes.
- 9
- 10 And, of course, murder is an ancient political weapon. The Illuminati have been responsible for some of the most shocking assassinations of modern
- 11 They also replace people with doubles. For many years they recruited look-alikes who would serve their ends. Now they are perfecting cloning technology that will let them replace anybody.

Those who can't be dealt with any other way are discredited or driven mad.



13 The Illuminati conspiracy is hundreds, if not thousands, of years old. Many of the most famous names of history have been Illuminated, or Illuminati agents. Indeed, all of history is nothing more than an outside view of the schemes and struggles of the Illuminati.

14 And, of course, the Illuminati are constantly rewriting history to serve their own goals. For instance, modern schoolchildren are taught that there is no historical evidence of Jesus Christ, and they learn nothing about the Russo-German War or the state of Arcadia.

15 They control the news media, so you hear what they want you to about today's news. Any event that doesn't fit in with their program will be quickly nussed up.

16 In particular, they control television. They don't permit intelligent shows to survive; they encourage mind candy that will keep people from thinking. The only reason good shows are permitted to appear at all is to convince intelligent people that nobody else likes such material, and that there must be something wrong with them.

17 The Illuminati manipulate the stock market and control currencies on an international level. Your paycheck is worth just what the Illuminati want it to be.

18 Likewise, the entire "energy crisis" is an Illuminati invention. There's no shortage of energy, of a dozen different kinds, but plentiful free energy might threaten the Illuminated power base!

19 The Illuminati are doing their best to hold back the space program, for the same reason. If mankind were spread throughout the solar system, they'd be much harder to control. [Not all the Illuminati agree on this. Some lust after the mineral wealth of space, and some want (literally) new worlds to conquer.]

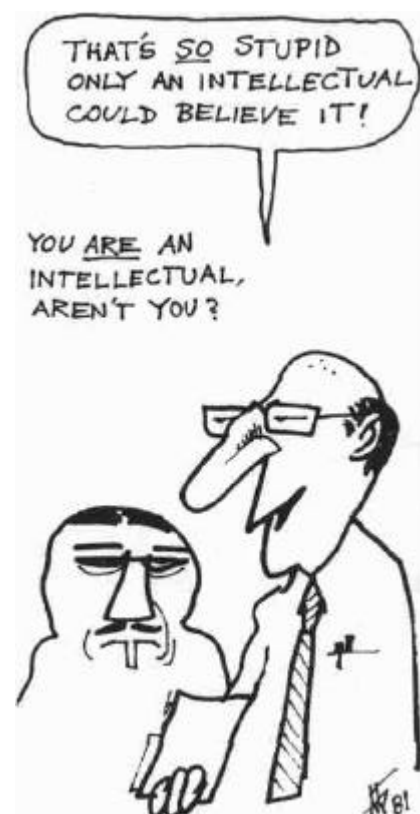
20 And some of them are in touch with aliens from outer space. Some of them are aliens. Why would "advanced beings" want to meddle with the affairs of Earthlings? Good question.

21 Worse, some of them have actual magical powers and are in league with forces from . . . elsewhere. Great huge beings that are madness to look upon, or tiny, malicious things that glare and gibber from dark corners. They have pins and dolls; they know old names.

22 Other Illuminati have embraced technology. Their files of information are much more useful when backed by the power of the computer. They are also conditioning everyone to believe that computers are so complicated and dangerous that only the Experts should play with them. Next time you get an electric bill for \$666,666.66, you know who's behind it.

23 And some of these technophiles have gone a step farther, creating actual machine intelligences. These sentient computers are now, themselves, a force among the ruling Illuminati!

24 The Illuminati don't like war; it's expensive and wasteful. War only happens when two groups of Illuminati are very evenly matched and neither is willing to negotiate. But then they whip a few nations into a patriotic fervor and go at it.







25 They send secret messages through the newspapers and airwaves - in the classified ads, and even buried in news reports. They have other, even stranger forms of secret communications ... all around you, all the time.

26 They keep everyone — yes, everyone - under constant surveillance. Every time you fill out another questionnaire, you're weaving another strand of the net that binds the world.

27 They are working to make the law as confusing as possible, so everything will be illegal or potentially illegal - then they have a hold on everybody and everyone will fear the laws.

28 They encourage resistance to authority among young people and political dissidents, to distract government attention from the real enemy within.

29 But when they reach a satisfactory level of control, they turn their efforts toward *extinguishing independence and encouraging mindless obedience* to whatever orders come from the Illuminati or their servants.

30 They commit random atrocities - poisoning food at grocery stores, murdering old blind ladies, sniping on the freeway - just to make people vaguely confused, frightened and paranoid.

31 They suppress inventions which might change the status quo. The 100-mile-a-gallon carburetor, the perfect contraceptive, and the cornucopia plant are all lying in Illuminati vaults, waiting for the day when it will suit the Secret Masters to release them. What happened to the inventors? Bought off, intimidated, or just vanished.

32 On the other hand, they also maintain secret laboratories where they develop new weapons and devices of all kind.

33 Their arcane investigations cause all sorts of mysteries. Ever wonder about the Loch Ness Monster? The "cattle mutilations?" The Oregon Crud?

34 And they require hundreds of human victims every year for their experiments. Ever wonder why there are so many Missing Persons reports, and why so few of those people are found?

35 They are constantly experimenting with new types of mind control. They put drugs in drinking water, flash subliminal messages during movies and TV shows, and play instructions that you can't quite hear over supermarket loudspeakers.

They experiment with microwaves and ultra-low-frequency devices, too.

36 And every wire in your house is a potential pathway for Illuminati messages, attacks or controlling rays. Did you ever stop to think just how many wires lead to your house? And do you have any idea where they really come from?



37 Naturally, they discourage investigation of the strange and unusual, because it might lead to them. But they encourage people to joke about the Illuminati.

38 They also publish supermarket tabloids, just to make sure that everybody thinks "Hitler's Brain Is Alive!" and "Bigfoot Seen In Hawaii" are just jokes.

3 And they encourage the craziest pseudo-science "researchers" they can find, because this tends to discredit legitimate investigators into the unusual.

9 A popular belief is that the Illuminati want power for its own sake. This is true of some of them. But other Illuminated groups exist to support an ideology, to achieve a particular goal, or simply to oppose some other group of Illuminati!

41 One of their chief preoccupations is life extension by any means possible. Nobody who has held ultimate power for 50 years is eager to let it go. Anything you can think of . . . yoga, cryonics, body-exchange, magic, cloning, goat (or other) glands, transfusions, computerized personality duplication . . . has been tried by the Illuminati at one time or another. And some of them work!

42 Furthermore, powerful Illuminati from past centuries lie waiting to be revived when science allows it. Mummies, pickled corpses, frozen bodies, conscious brains in jars ... you would recognize the names if we could mention them.

43 You're not cleared for this one.

44 They use disease as a weapon to discipline their own populations or destroy competing ones. Black Death in Europe, smallpox among the American Indians . . . The swine flu, a few years ago, was thwarted by opposing forces, or you probably wouldn't be reading this.

45 They have a variety of unhuman and inhuman servants. The dreaded Men in Black are perhaps their best-known agents. No one knows whether the MIBs are androids, golems, or something even worse. Perhaps they were once human . . .

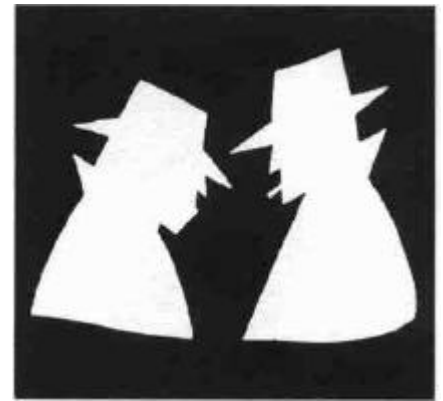
46 And they really are breeding a Master Race. The Nazis had no idea how they were being used, or why. And they'd be horrified at the Illuminati's idea of perfection!

47 The Illuminati know weird sexual techniques undreamed of in the Kama Sutra. They also know why those techniques are used.

48 The next time you spend too much money to buy something you didn't want or need, and it breaks in a week, you can be sure you've just contributed to an Illuminati fund-raising project.

49 They start chain letters. They also plant rumors that the Red Cross can buy an iron lung if you send them a million cigarette packages, and that dying children in England want ten million business cards. No one knows why they do this.

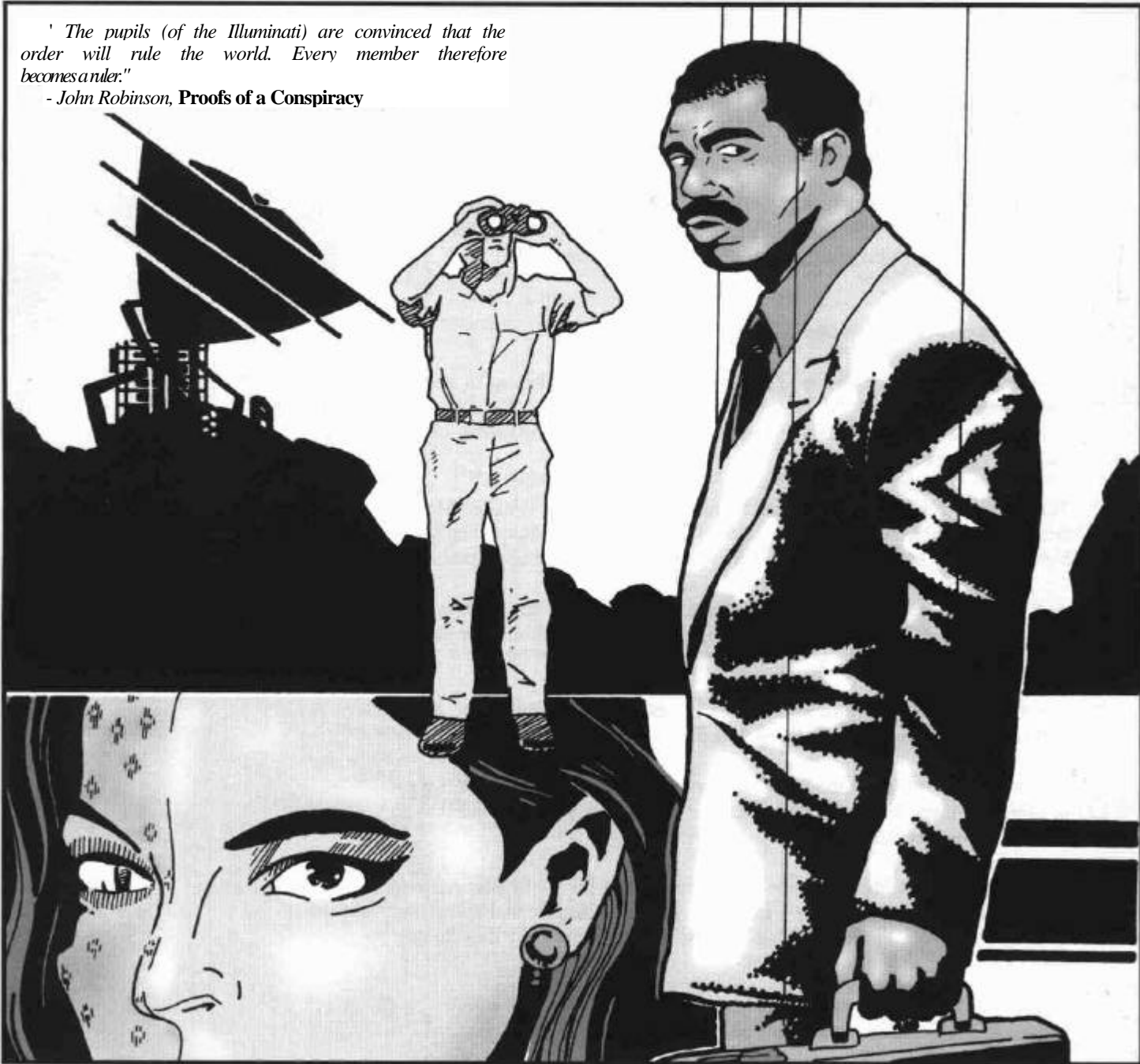
50 _Fnord.



1 CHARACTERS

' The pupils (of the Illuminati) are convinced that the order will rule the world. Every member therefore becomes a ruler.'

- John Robinson, **Proofs of a Conspiracy**



The world of the Illuminati isn't that much different from the "real" world; hence it should come as little surprise that most people in an Illuminated campaign are quite familiar. "Most," of course, is the key word here. An Illuminated world is a world taken to extremes. Thus, many characters in such a world are extremes themselves.

Here are some typical character types that would fit well into an Illuminated campaign. For each type, there are also some suggestions on how such a person might become involved in the grand

Character Types

Anarchists

Anarchists share at least some of the goals of the historical Illuminati: they want to see the removal of all forms of government. But anarchists don't want to see *anything* take the place of government; the Illuminati want to take on that role themselves.

An anarchist believes that the only good government is *no* government. They range from bomb-throwing loonies to calm and competent experts trying to disassemble the system from within. Anarchists can be found on street corners, loudly advocating civil insurrection, or on television talk shows lobbying for the abolition of the government. A particularly interesting offshoot, the Rational Anarchist, believes that people should be free to enact whatever laws they want to make them feel safe, but that individuals can and should decide to break any laws they disagree with and then be fully accountable for their actions. (A Rational Anarchist's favorite quote might be, "A person who follows all laws blindly is as foolish as one who breaks them at every opportunity.")

Anarchists can be excellent tools for the Illuminati: use the anarchists to tear down the structure of society, then get rid of them. Hatred clouds judgment, and many anarchists hate *hard*. This makes them easier to dupe and "program." On the other hand, an anarchist who's *discovered* he's been played as a dupe will turn strongly against whoever did it.

The more urbane and sophisticated anarchist might have advantages like Charisma, and perhaps Voice. Anarchists frequently hang around together, so Ally or Ally Group might be appropriate. (Remember, however, that anarchist groups by nature aren't going to be overly organized . . .) Appropriate disadvantages - particularly for the more rabid anarchist - are Odious Personal Habits, Poverty, Reputation (bad) and Status (worse). As with virtually any character type in an Illuminated campaign, Delusions, Fanaticism and Paranoia are always appropriate.

Appropriate skills include Economics (to better understand how to bring down the system), Politics (ditto) and Bard (Public Speaking; good for street-corner rabble-rousing). For the more violent types, combat skills are good, as is Demolition.

Conspiracy Theorists

A conspiracy theorist is devoted to tracking down the weird and wonderful interconnections between group, ideas and historical events. Want to find out how the Boy Scouts and the gun lobby are connected? Ask a conspiracy theorist. At first glance, conspiracy theorists and conspiracy historians (see p. 21) appear similar. The major difference is in their techniques. Historians are more academic in their approach, depending on library research. Conspiracy theorists find tabloids much more enlightening.

Conspiracy theorists vary in their dedication. Some are dilettantes, while others are obsessed with the topic. And some "con-

spiracy: how the Illuminati might use the character, how he might get himself enmeshed in dark dealings, and how he might eventually come to *fight* the Illuminati.

Remember, too, that *any* campaign can be an Illuminated campaign, which means that *any* character type suitable to the genre can get involved with the conspiracy.

Note that many of these character types are not jobs - a person of this type would have to do something else to earn money. These types are not listed in the *Job Table* (see p. 33).



spiracy theorists" don't believe a word of what they write, but do it because they know there's a market. They can become quite well-known - either among other conspiracy theorists only, or among the public at large through popular writing - and quite rich.

By definition, conspiracy theorists investigate the conspiracy - or at least pretend to. Even a cynic who's in it for the money might stumble across evidence of something real. The Illuminati almost certainly have a whole stable of conspiracy theorists under their control: rabid ones useful for destroying the credibility of conspiracy research, and more believable ones to spread disinformation.

Useful advantages include Charisma (a boon on the talk-show circuit) and Reputation (ditto). An Unusual Background can explain an interest in things mysterious. Delusions and Fanaticism are excellent disadvantages; Gullibility, too, can be fun (a Gullible conspiracy theorist would always be tracking down those few conspiracies that *don't* exist). How about Alcoholism or Addiction, no doubt brought on by the trauma of seeing the world as it really is? Paranoia is virtually a requirement for someone who even partially believes his own work! He could easily have stepped on a few sensitive toes, and thus have Enemies coming out of the woodwork (these can be groups in the Conspiracy, or groups irate over having been *accused* of being part of the Conspiracy).

Practical skills include Conspiracy Theory (virtually a must!), Research and Writing. Economics, Detect Lies, Fast-Talk, Literature and Politics can also be useful.

See also *Historians (Conspiratorial)*.



Conspirator "Wannabes"

There are real conspirators, and then there are the "wannabes": people who wish they were true members of the conspiracy, or who pretend they are, or who *believe* that they are. Conspirator wannabes are generally one step down from fringe cultists (see p. 21). Fringe cultists are actually members of some group; conspirator wannabes frequently aren't.

A wannabe might wish or pretend to be part of the Conspiracy for many reasons: for personal power, to impress people, to bolster sagging self-esteem, or because he believes such imaginary allies will dissuade *real* members of the Conspiracy from making him vanish. He might *believe* he's part of the Conspiracy merely because he's paranoid, or because he's recognized he's a pawn in the "great game."

Wannabes might research the Illuminati because they want to join them, and might try to fight those groups that are rivals of the organization of which they believe they're members. Their delusions and pathetic desires to belong make these people incredibly easy to use as dupes or tools. Feel free to load a wannabe down with Delusions, Gullibility and Obsession. Fanaticism isn't appropriate; the wannabe doesn't know enough to be fanatical. Paranoia? Probably in spades.

The occasional conspirator wannabe might even have a Secret Patron. This person/group will probably be a member of the Conspiracy that used him as an unwitting pawn, and is watching over him in case he can be so used again. So maybe the wannabe *is* part of the Conspiracy after all...

See also *Conspirators, Fringe Cultists, Paranoids, Pawns, and Tools*.



Conspirator

These are *real* members of the Conspiracy, and sometimes they even know it! They're not the movers and the shakers, however, at least not on a global level. They're members of a group that's *somewhere* in the power structure of the Conspiracy.

Conspirators will almost never know *where* in the structure their organization exists, or even that there *is* a structure as such. They know that some kind of conspiracy does exist, but usually are totally convinced that they or their organization are controlling it.

Confusing? Try two examples. First is a senior exec in an oil company who's been secretly feeding money to the anti-nuclear movement, to make sure that fission power never becomes a significant competitor to his industry. Second is a KGB case officer behind a far-right think tank in Washington, that continuously comes out with statements that make Genghis Khan look like a bleeding-heart liberal, with the hidden agenda of discrediting the philosophy of capitalism.

Conspirators might be relatively solitary - in the first case, the exec might be acting without his CEO's knowledge or permission - or surrounded by like-minded colleagues, as in the second example. In very few cases will a conspirator realize that he's being manipulated in the same way that he's manipulating people further down the "chain." (Who suggested the anti-nuclear idea to the exec? And what are the ultimate goals of the Director of the KGB?) When he finally recognizes the truth, the realization can be even more traumatic than for someone on the street. After all, for years he thought he was the puppet master; now he has to accept that he's wearing strings as well...

Conspirators aren't Illuminati - they're simply not high enough up the power structure for that. Generally, they'll serve the greater conspiracy as "middle managers," although they won't know that's their role. The shocking discovery that he's *not* the master of his own destiny will often be enough to send a conspirator off on the hunt for his hidden masters. (Did he make that discovery on his own, or was he led to it by person or persons unknown? Interesting question...)

Conspirators might have at least some control over Men in Black (MIBs), pawns, and tools. Depending on the circumstances, these may be considered Allies. Conspirators will probably have Ally Groups, and quite possibly Patrons (Secret or otherwise). Military Rank might also make a good advantage, as would any other advantage or skill that would make the character more persuasive, a better leader, or a better liar. Also, he should purchase whatever skills seem appropriate for his career or position. Fast-Talk would probably come in handy.

Disadvantages? The Delusion that there *isn't* a greater Conspiracy would be fun to play...

See also *MIBs, Pawns and Tools*.

Deprogrammer

Although they don't get as much press as they did a decade ago, there are still people who make their living "deprogramming," or "un-brainwashing," people who've been conditioned by cults and other groups. Deprogrammers are often hired by the families or friends of people "sucked in" by fringe groups. Using techniques that are often hideously illegal, they kidnap the cult's "victim" and submit him to conditioning that is sometimes much more disruptive and coercive than anything the cult did in the first place.

Deprogrammers range from compassionate professionals providing a real and vital service, to callous thugs who care for nothing but a quick buck. The best ones will act only when there's conclusive evidence that the cult's teachings are actively harmful, and then they'll work carefully to reverse any adverse conditioning the "victim" has suffered. The worst ones are in it just for the money, and sometimes will just brainwash the victim into acting normally - a very different thing from *reversing* whatever conditioning the victim suffered!

Deprogrammers have been described as "emotional bounty hunters." Certain groups in the Conspiracy use brainwashing to control the attitudes and behaviors of their members. Through rescuing such people, deprogrammers can deduce the existence of the Conspiracy. Players could create characters that are at either end of the "compassion spectrum" - caring professionals who investigate the Conspiracy because they consider it amoral and evil, or brutal hard-cases who are mad as hell because they've been used as tools - or anywhere in between.

Useful advantages include Empathy (for the "compassionate" group only), Intuition and Strong Will. Good disadvantages might include Bully (for the hard-cases only), Code of Honor or perhaps Sense of Duty. Deprogrammers could easily suffer from Fanaticism - the unshakable belief that any cult is *bad*. A success-



ful deprogrammer could have earned the enmity of virtually any fringe group. Deprogrammers could have Patrons (even Secret ones) who pass contracts their way.

Useful skills include Hypnotism, Psychology, and perhaps Interrogation. For a deprogrammer who gets involved in actually "extracting" the subject, consider Climbing, Disguise, Lockpicking, Stealth, and some of the less lethal combat skills.

See also *Fringe Cultists*.

Fringe Cultist

Pick a cult, any cult.

The Random House College Dictionary defines "cult" as "a group or sect bound together by devotion to or veneration of the same thing, person, ideal, etc." and as "a religion that is considered or held to be false or unorthodox, or its members." Both definitions fit many groups within the Conspiracy.

Obviously, the nature of a particular "cult" or group will have great bearing on the characteristics of its members. A fellow of a pseudo-Masonic lodge - where membership is limited to senior business executives and all rituals are performed in perfect Attic Greek - will be very different from a member of a New Age religious "retreat" that actively recruits outside downtown soup kitchens.

Cultists are great sources of manpower - low-level "drones," foot soldiers, and even cannon fodder - for the Illuminati. Although they can't be trusted with any valuable information, their sheer numbers and their frequently high levels of devotion make them useful. Many cultists joined because they thought the group in question had the answers to Life, the Universe, and Everything. How easy would it be for devotion to turn to anger if they found out that they'd been played for patsies?

Advantages, disadvantages and skills will depend on the group involved. Many members believe fully in the precepts of their group; this could easily progress to Delusion, Obsession or Fanaticism. Members might be able to call on the rest of the cult as an Ally Group, and the charismatic leader of a group might be a Patron. Joining such a group in the first place might show Gullibility, or might be the result of an Unusual Background.

Government Investigator

Governments generally have multiple layers of "oversight" built into them, in the form of Senate subcommittees, review boards, internal affairs departments, etc. Once in a while, someone in such an oversight role might realize that not all is as it seems. The obvious first conclusion would be that corruption and/or incompetence is involved. On closer examination, however, neither explanation would completely hold water, and the investigator would uncover at least some part of the Conspiracy. His reaction would depend largely on his position within the government, and exactly how much of the overall Conspiracy he had discovered. He might stage a public "witch hunt" in an attempt to uncover it (which is one conspiratorial justification for the actions of Senator Joe McCarthy), he might try to release the information to the press, or he might continue behind the scenes to expose more of the interlocking machinations. An investigator who's discovered too much might uncover something that his superiors just don't want to accept - and might have to keep his findings to himself until he finds people who'll believe him.

A skilled and dedicated investigator might become a dangerous foe of the Illuminati. But if properly programmed and handled, he can be an excellent tool for use by the Illuminati. A little manufactured evidence of malfeasance or corruption, and the investigator can be sent buying after an enemy of the conspiracy.

Though their goals differ, a government investigator and a PR flack (see p. 25) might quickly become colleagues, even allies. The investigator might also come into contact with military officers, and be opposed directly or indirectly by MIBs, pawns, and tools.

Useful advantages would include Military Rank or perhaps Status (depending on the investigator's position in the government) and possibly Patron (his superior or a mentor somewhere else in the government). Charisma, Intuition, Reputation, Status and Strong Will would also be appropriate, as would Luck. Interesting disadvantages might be Duties, Enemies (the group(s) he's exposed), and perhaps Truthfulness.

Useful skills would depend on his actual duties, but Accounting, Administration, Computer Operation, Detect Lies, Leadership and Politics would all be good choices. If his duties involve presenting in-depth reports to superiors, then Writing would also be highly appropriate.

See also *Military Officers, Pawns, PR Flacks and Tools*.



Historians, Conspiracy

At first glance, a conspiracy historian may seem identical to a conspiracy theorist, but this isn't the case at all. They may be studying the same large subject - conspiracies in the world around us - but they approach the topic from quite different directions.

Conspiracy historians come at the topic from an academic background. Many have university-trained research skills, and a good grasp of the flow of history. Conspiracy theorists frequently don't concern themselves with things that happened before 1917 or 1963 (to mention two key dates). Conspiracy historians, in contrast, are generally more interested in the *true* (i.e., Conspiracy-mediated) causes of World War I or the French Revolution than in whether the government is suppressing evidence that Bigfoot exists. In general, conspiracy historians look down on conspiracy theorists, and occasionally vice versa.

Conspiracy historians can vary widely in their dedication to the topic. Some write monographs presenting the Conspiratorial view as an interesting alternative to the Accidental view of history, but have little or no emotional investment in the idea; they approach it as an intriguing intellectual exercise. Others truly believe that the Conspiracy and the Illuminati are behind *every* turning point in history, from the Fall of Rome to the Korean War.

Like conspiracy theorists, historians can be used by the Illuminati to spread disinformation - knowingly or unwittingly - and to investigate and inconvenience rival groups.





A wider historical view of the world sometimes prevents conspiracy historians from falling into the trap of Fanaticism. Obsession is always appropriate, as are Delusions. Gullibility can be interesting to roleplay, but it certainly limits advancement in the academic world. Many historians will have considerable Status in the intellectual world. They might well have high positive Reputation among other conspiracy buffs, but very strong *negative* Reputation among more "mainstream" historians. University professors with tenure can earn reasonable money. Such is professional jealousy that conspiracy historians will rarely have Allies or Ally Groups to call on. Unusual characters might have a Patron (normal or Secret).

Conspiracy Theory, History and Research are musts, possibly reinforced by Anthropology, Archaeology, Linguistics, and other academic pursuits. Administration and Politics are good for departmental infighting, while Writing is an excellent way of supplementing a professor's salary.

See also *Conspiracy Theorists* and *Traditional Historians*.

Historians, Traditional

Traditional historians generally look on conspiracy historians as sadly - even criminally - deluded . . . and vice versa. To quote historian James Warburg, traditional historians believe that "History is written more by accident than design, often by the wholly irrational acts of madmen." The Conspiratorial View, they believe, springs from humanity's desire to have things make sense, to read a cosmic underlying pattern in events that follow no such pattern. Conspiracy theory, they believe, is on a par with "systematology": if one combines unrelated variables in enough cunning ways, one can find (totally acausal) correlations between diverse elements like the population of woolly-bear caterpillars and women's hemlines, and between the measurements of the Great Pyramid of Cheops and the Dow Jones index. Like skeptics, traditional historians will frequently go to great lengths to debunk the "myths" of conspiracy theory . . . and sometimes make a good living at it.

Many traditional historians have an intellectual "code of honor," however, which can eventually force them to change their views. If they examine enough claimed cases of conspiratorial activity, they might see that there *is* something there - and reverse their position. (Or they might just bury the disturbing facts and try

never to think of them again.) Thus a traditional historian might become the close colleague of the conspiracy historian he was disparaging in the press just weeks ago . . . Traditional historians will rarely give a conspiracy *theorist* the time of day.

Traditional historians will have the same advantages, disadvantages and skills as conspiracy historians, and are often used in much the same way by the Illuminati. They might even have the Conspiracy Theory skill - one must know something about a subject before one can debunk it, after all . . . In general, traditional historians will have higher Reputation in the intellectual community, but lower Reputation among the "common masses" (mainly because their writing will never make the *Midnight Sun*).

See also *Conspiracy Theorists*, *Conspiracy Historians*, and *Skeptics*.

Journalist (Respectable or Tabloid)

Journalists make a living by digging up and reporting "the news." Just what constitutes "news" depends on many factors, including (but not limited to) the slant of the publication the journalist works for, his personal preference (particularly in the case of freelancers), and what the target audience wants to learn about. Obviously, two journalists working for the *New York Times* and the *Midnight Sun* will pursue different stories, or will ring very different changes on the same set of events. For example, the *Times* reporter might turn a lead about a Sasquatch sighting into a column on what hoaxes tell us about human psychology; the tabloid writer might bang out a feature story on "My Night of Love with Bigfoot."

Many tabloid journalists make up conspiracies where none exist, because that's the general slant of the publications they work for. Most people think that all tabloid journalists make up *all* references to conspiracies, but that just isn't true. Occasionally, tabloid writers dig up evidence of a *real* conspiracy, perhaps the actions of the Illuminati themselves. These stories look so much like the *exaggerations* and *outright lies* written by their colleagues, however, that few people pay much attention. (As an interesting aside, this makes tabloid journalists relatively safe when they're investigating the Conspiracy. Nobody of any importance will believe anything he writes, but causing him to vanish might attract unwanted attention.) Tabloid journalists usually suffer from a twist on the Reputation disadvantage: because of their track record, nobody gives their work much credence, no matter what it is.

"Respectable" journalists, in contrast, generally begin with the view that global conspiracies don't exist. If research proves that the Conspiracy *does* exist, however, there's not much the journalist can do to bring his knowledge to light. Respectable publications won't print "flaky" conspiracy pieces because it just doesn't fit their image (the Illuminati don't have to lift a finger to squelch this kind of thing; the editors do it automatically).

Journalists can bring some very useful skills to the table. Area Knowledge, Detect Lies, Fast-Talk, Photography, Psychology and Streetwise are all very useful. Research and Writing are absolutely necessary, and Carousing can be a good addition. Alertness, Charisma, Intuition and Luck are advantages that will really help out a journalist, while Alcoholism, Impulsiveness and Stubbornness can be appropriate disadvantages. Status and Reputation can vary wildly, depending on a number of circumstances. Journalists can get quite rich, but that's by far the exception and not the rule.

The discussion above concentrates on print journalism, but can easily be adapted to TV (*60 Minutes* vs. *A Current Affair*), newsreel, futuristic 3-D, or any other kind of news media.



Law Enforcement Officer

Most law enforcement officials are so overworked that they don't have time to look at the bigger view. Occasionally, of course, they stumble across hints that something's happening behind the veil of "normalcy."

While police definitely have the skills for tracking the Conspiracy, most have major restrictions on their freedom of action. Police forces and private security organizations frown on their officers performing "freelance" investigations, particularly when there's no real (that is, conventional) evidence that a crime has been committed. Certainly, private investigators and their ilk have a lot more freedom of action, but there's a trade-off: they don't have access to the considerable resources of a police department.

A visit from the cops - or worse - will convince many conspiracy-hunters to cease and desist. . . and the Illuminati know it. The police may think they're actually rousting a drug ring, or searching for stolen goods, but the people the cops are visiting know they've actually received a warning from the Illuminati.

Depending on the type of officer chosen, Alertness, Danger Sense, Intuition, Strong Will and Toughness are appropriate advantages. Law Enforcement Powers will be almost mandatory, except for ex-cops and unlicensed Pis. Virtually any disadvantage will do, although Reputation ("a real hardcase"), Intolerance (of "civilians," perhaps) and Impulsiveness, maybe coupled with Sense of Duty or even Code of Honor, come immediately to mind. Police departments generally look out for their own, and cops stick together, so cops could easily have Allies or an Ally Group to draw upon. A PI might have a Patron. Vital skills include Criminology, Guns and Streetwise. Acting, Area Knowledge, Disguise, Law, and Shadowing can also be highly useful.

Lawyer

Some people believe that lawyers, as a group, are already involved in some grand conspiracy of their own. This might or might not be connected with the Illuminati. Certainly, lawyers seem to share with doctors, pharmacists and medieval alchemists a love for language that's purposely unintelligible to outsiders. ("Mafiosi make you an offer you can't refuse; lawyers make you an offer you can't understand.")

Lawyers are vital to the conspiracy, at various levels. Anything involving business takeovers - a favorite game of the Illuminati - obviously needs legal involvement. Lawyers are also expert at concealing illegalities, burying evidence under avalanches of paper.

Most lawyers in the service of the Illuminati are probably unaware of who their clients really are. They don't know, for example, exactly why their client wants to set up a trust fund in the name of his dog, or why they've been instructed to hold onto a sealed envelope

until a man with one eye and a strange facial tattoo comes to pick it up. Some legal eagles have little curiosity into their clients' affairs, just doing whatever they're told (and paid for). Others might eventually wonder just what they've got themselves involved in. At this point, they might begin to investigate, and eventually uncover at least part of the conspiracy.

Lawyers can also be valuable to *foes* of the Illuminati - if only as custodians of letters to be sent to the press if the client dies under mysterious circumstances.

Suitable advantages include Common Sense, Intuition, Reputation and Status. Successful lawyers are extremely well-paid, so Wealth (any level) is appropriate. Greed would be a good disadvantage for an amoral opportunist, while Sense of Duty would fit a crusading lawyer. Overconfidence and Odious Personal Habits ("talks the way he writes") would be amusing to roleplay. Good skills include Bard (Public Speaking), Detect Lies, Fast-Talk (almost a must), Law (of course), Psychology, Research and Savoir-Faire, and perhaps Computer Operation.

Men In Black (MIBs)

Men In Black, or MIBs, are the archetypal servitors of the Conspiracy. They are often pictured as quasi-governmental heavies, wearing dark clothes, hats with brims that shadow the face, and mirrorshades. (Some believe that the MIBs aren't even human.) MIBs have the job of warning people off when they're getting too close to something they shouldn't learn about. They operate through intimidation, threats and warnings, and sometimes by stealing or confiscating records, computers, notes, books, and pieces of evidence. Various disappearances and deaths have been attributed to MIBs. Since their manner generally implies both official power, legal or quasi-legal, and almost limitless intelligence-gathering and other resources, most people don't argue with MIBs. Of course, "MIBness" is in the eye of the beholder. Someone might think of himself as a normal member of an agency like the CIA or the Secret Service, following normal orders. To the people he interacts with, however, he's an MIB! Virtually anyone in any position of authority could thus become an unwitting MIB.

There are also those who've realized that they're MIBs. They've kept their eyes and ears open, and have concluded that the orders under which they're acting make absolutely no sense - or, more precisely, those orders make sense only when they're put into the perspective of the Conspiracy. . . . These "enlightened MIBs" might continue following those nonsensical orders, either because they can't find a viable alternative, or because they agree with the overall goal. (Don't forget the "fractal" nature of the Conspiracy, however. An "enlightened MIB" might think he understands the goals of his group; he might even be right. But it's likely that his group is being manipulated by organizations further up the hierarchy and closer to the Illuminati themselves.)



Then there are those rare individuals, the "MIBs-for-hire." They may actually be part of an organization like the Secret Service, or have any other career (or none at all). They are "hired guns," receiving their orders and payment through so many intermediaries they can never track down who's running things. Every now and then, they'll be hired to go "lean on" a journalist, or steal a writer's notes, or send an archaeologist packing, or whatever. "MIBs-for-hire" rarely if ever know the rationale behind their orders, and most don't care. Many of these guys are thugs who simply enjoy throwing their weight around . . . and getting paid for the privilege!

Of course, "unwitting MIBs" and MIBs-for-hire have plenty of opportunities to figure out at least some of what the Conspiracy is trying to do. At this point, they can become dangerous enemies to the Conspiracy. "Enlightened MIBs" can "break faith" with the Conspiracy as well, or can continue to work for it - or what little part of it they comprehend . . .

Empathy is inappropriate for an MIB. Other advantages and skills will depend on what organization - if any - the MIB works for. Interrogation and Intelligence Analysis are useful, as is Stealth. Basically, any advantage or skill that makes the character appear more competent and daunting would be a good choice. Combat skills are handy. Certain MIBs might have a reasonable grasp of Conspiracy Theory; others might have a Patron (Secret or otherwise). Appropriate disadvantages include Bad Temper and Bully, perhaps coupled with Intolerance or maybe Fanaticism. No Sense of Humor and Secret are also excellent.

Chapter 6 discusses more variations on the MIB theme.

Military Officer

The military/industrial complex - or, in near-future campaigns, the *military/industrial/entertainment* complex - is frequently accused of being a major player in the Conspiracy, and a source of many MIBs. Like so many similar accusations, this one is much too vague to be taken seriously. *Which part* of the military is *where* in the Conspiracy? Certainly, it seems likely that most portions of the military have been involved in the Conspiracy at one time - whether they *realized* their participation is another question. Some parts seem to be involved almost continuously (although possibly as tools and pawns of different players in the "grand game").

In other words, a military officer could play virtually any part in the grand Conspiracy: pawn, tool, conspirator, conspirator wannabe, MIB . . . *anything*. Maybe he's a member of an unofficial group - call it "Eye Corps" - working to protect the military from emasculation by civilian government. Or maybe he's a supply sergeant who's seen just one too many shipments of ammo go astray. Or maybe he's an officer frustrated by the fact that *again* the battalion air defense weapon the Pentagon picked just isn't going to cut the mustard . . .

Definitely, there are "normal" conspiracies and flurries of backstabbing of Machiavellian proportion in the military complex. (For example, some historians still claim the sole *deòiciã* of the land-based "leg" of the American nuclear triad is to keep the Army "in the missile business.")



Military officers need Military Rank, first and foremost. After that, their advantages and skills will depend largely on their actual duties. Combat officers should consider Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense and possibly Luck as advantages, and Strategy or Tactics among their skills. Supply sergeants might benefit from Freight Handling. Almost all members of the military undergo basic training, so they should have at least rudimentary Guns skills. Specific postings will suggest appropriate skills (Seamanship for a sailor, Gunner for a tanker, Stealth for a commando, etc.) Interesting disadvantages include Code of Honor and Sense of Duty, Impulsiveness, even Obsession, Fanaticism and Delusions. For an interesting diversion, try Combat

Paralysis for a company clerk or some other non-combat position.

Military officers can have Allies and sometimes Ally Groups. Some may have Patrons, but this will probably be rare.

Paranoid

In the world of the Illuminati, paranoia is often the price of survival.

A paranoid believes that someone is out to get him. In an Illuminated campaign, he might well be right. In this particular context, a paranoid is someone who's glimpsed enough of the Conspiracy to believe that it's everywhere . . . and that he's a target.

This kind of paranoid can have two very distinct origins. A clinical paranoid's suspicions can lead him to discover the truth of the Conspiracy, which then drives him deeper into paranoia. Or a sane person's brush with the Conspiracy can push him over the line.

Paranoids should, first of all, be Paranoid. Consider coupling this with Delusions, Fanaticism, Gullibility and Obsession for a



well-rounded loony. Just because he's paranoid doesn't mean he's not right, so consider tossing in Conspiracy Theory.

Paranoids will *not* have Allies or Ally Groups - they don't trust them! A Patron or Secret Patron might be around to manipulate them, but only through reverse psychology ("I don't think you should look into that"; "Well, I'm looking into it!").

Pawn

A pawn, or dupe, is someone who serves the Illuminati without ever realizing he's involved in anything unusual - or, at least, with no idea what the unusual thing is. A pawn thinks that everything he does is his own idea. But he was manipulated into it, whether it's a one-time event or his life's work.

By definition, a pawn can be just about anybody. He's caught up in matters too big for him, moved by forces that he can't comprehend or even detect. A paranoid would say that anyone who isn't a Master is, by definition, a pawn. Many pawns are people of influence (or they wouldn't be worth the trouble) and integrity (if they were corrupt, it would be easier just to buy their services). The preacher who sets aside his Bible and gives a sermon against a political candidate, or the teacher who spends a week of class talking about fluoridation, may be an Illuminati dupe!

Pawns may be manipulated in many ways. Directly, by brainwashing or mind control. Overly, by an advertisement or TV show aimed right at them. Subtly, by seemingly-meaningless events that make them respond in the way the Illuminati want.

Pawns are not the same thing as "innocent bystanders." A bystander is the person who gets an empty envelope addressed to him in the mailbox, and two days later suffers a burglary where the only thing taken is that empty envelope. Or he finds that somebody has shaved the symbol of the All-Seeing Pyramid into his pit bull's back. Something is going on, yes, but the bystander isn't involved unless he chooses to be. A pawn, on the other hand, is doing something. He just doesn't know what!

Sometimes a pawn realizes that he's being manipulated by members of the Conspiracy. He might be "promoted" to be a tool, an MIB or even a conspirator. Or he might sink into paranoia.

A pawn can have any combination of advantages, disadvantages and skills that make sense for his background. Most pawns usually start off with Delusions about how the world works, however (perhaps the delusion that there *isn't* a Conspiracy), and few begin with Conspiracy Theory. Outside these guidelines, anything goes.

Professional Skeptic

the professional skeptic is often a scientist or a professional stage magician, dedicated to debunking the pseudo-science that so often appears in the pages of tabloid newspapers. Professional skeptics struggle to educate people in the *truths* of science, explaining how astrology makes no sense (the gravitational effect of the obstetrician is much greater than that of any planet that is "ascendant" at the time of birth), refuting claims based on shoddy science or math, and generally exposing fakes and frauds. (A classic example of the professional skeptic is the famous stage prestidigitator, The Great Randi . . . who is currently being sued for defamation by spoon-bending "psychic" Uri Geller.) Debunkers will sometimes use straightforward logic and rigorous mathematical analysis to disprove the claims of pseudo-scientists; unfortunately, this approach is often over the heads of non-scientists. Professional performers like The Great Randi garner much more popular attention by replicating the "super-normal" abilities of psychics and others, and then showing how the tricks are done.

Some professional skeptics suspect that there's a "pseudo-scientific conspiracy," trying to destroy people's trust in the true sciences and replace it with blind faith in channeling, crystals, homeopathics, past-lives regression, palmistry, etc. *ad nauseam*. It's a small step from suspecting such a conspiracy to seeking evidence of it. . . and some have found it! Others have stumbled across the Conspiracy when investigating why supposedly "respectable" organizations have been promulgating pseudo-scientific views.

The skeptic is generally a professional scientist by training and background, although he may have broadened his field somewhat (Carl Sagan is an example). His advantages, disadvantages and skills will suit a background of academic study and achievement. Eidetic Memory, Intuition and Mathematical Ability are suitable advantages, while "core" skills will center around academic pursuits like Astronomy, Chemistry and Physics, no doubt coupled with Research.

The "Randi-style" skeptic, in contrast, comes from a background of performance. Any advantage and skill that would enhance his ability to perform stage magic would be appropriate; Alertness, Double-Jointed, Acting, Bard (Public Speaking), Detect Lies, Escape, Holdout, Performance, Pickpocket, and Sleight of Hand would all be highly useful. Depending on the character, Hypnotism might fit, as might Occultism (approached from a standpoint of "know your enemy," of course).

Initially, neither type of skeptic would be likely to have Conspiracy Theory; Delusions and similar Disadvantages would probably be rare. Fanaticism, however, might well be appropriate, manifested as a refusal to listen to *anything* that doesn't fit with the "standard" scientific view of the world.



PR flack

This person works for some kind of Public Relations department or agency, either in government or in the private sector. His job, in most cases, is to tell the public palatable lies like, "Everything's okay." But what happens when he realizes that maybe everything's *not* okay?

Most PR flacks aren't high up in the hierarchy, but information from many diverse sources crosses their desk to be turned into press releases. It's this volume of information that gives the flack such a great opportunity to notice holes in the overall picture.

Within the government, PR flacks might come into direct conflict with government investigators. The investigator's job is to blow the lid off things; the flack's job is to keep that lid bolted



down tight. Once a flack is convinced that something untoward is going on, however, he has the skills and the contacts to disseminate the story . . . sometimes.

Those PR flacks who actually give press conferences, as opposed to those who put words into the mouths of others, should consider Appearance, Charisma and Voice as advantages. Neither Compulsive Lying nor Honesty is an appropriate disadvantage; PR experts usually have to walk that fine line between truth and falsehood. Fast-Talk, Bard (or perhaps Acting or Performance), and Writing are all good skills. Languages might also prove useful. Some PR flacks might have Patrons. Status and Reputation will probably be low to non-existent, except within the PR field. Some PR experts get rich, but not many.

See also *Government Investigators*.

Psychiatrist

Psychiatrists frequently hear claims of world-girdling conspiracies from their patients. Most of these claims will probably be chimeras, and their proponents deluded or paranoid. (Ah, but what *made* them that way? Exposure to a truth too shocking to deal with, perhaps?)

Occasionally, though, a patient will seem totally sane - except for the delusional structure, of course - and can even back up his claims with some evidence. From time to time, circumstances might force a psychiatrist to accept that his patient is actually sane. Then he himself might join in the quest for more information about the Conspiracy. This might involve freeing the patient from an institution to which he's been committed.

But psychiatrists can be *part* of the Conspiracy - either as willing participants or as unwitting dupes. What better way to silence an inconvenient investigator than by committing him to a psych ward? Psychiatrists could even destroy the investigator's confidence in his own sanity, brainwashing him into believing that his "knowledge" of the Conspiracy was actually a delusional structure, and that he is now "cured" and "sane."

Empathy and Intuition would both be good advantages for a psychiatrist. The core skills would be Physician and Psychology, perhaps coupled with Diagnosis and First Aid (depending on his training and background). Detect Lies and Hypnotism would also prove useful. A psychiatrist working for the Conspiracy would also probably have some level of Conspiracy Theory.



Researcher, Fringe

In this context, fringe researchers are those people who make a career of collecting information on strange and inexplicable occurrences. They typically end up writing books with titles like *Unsolved Mysteries* or *The Unknown World*. Some few fringe researchers might suspect or believe that there is a Conspiracy, but the Conspiracy isn't the most important part of their work. Most are simply fascinated by what they see as unconnected "silly season" occurrences, like blue moons, UFO reports, Bigfoot sightings, and the like.

It's a long leap from collecting "unsolved mysteries" to determining that many of them are part of a Conspiracy. Few fringe researchers will ever *make* that leap. Those that do, however, will generally have skills that can be of use in tracking the Illuminati.

Fringe researchers who've managed to publish best-selling books can earn relatively high Reputation, particularly among "New Age" and fringe thinkers. Conversely, their Reputation will probably be fairly low among "conservative" academics and intellectuals. Widely-published authors can become quite wealthy. Fringe researchers are unlikely to have Allies, Ally Groups or Patrons (although all are possible). Disadvantages can run the gamut, from Fanaticism to Obsession and Delusions. The most obviously useful skills are Research and Writing.

See also *Conspiracy Theorists* and *Obsessed Researchers*.

Researcher., Obsessed

The obsessed researcher may start as a fringe researcher or an ordinary academic. He usually becomes obsessed when he witnesses or learns something highly unusual; then he dedicates his efforts to learning whatever he can about that subject. There are researchers who are obsessed with UFOs, with Bigfoot sightings, with the Loch Ness monster, or with other aspects of the Conspiracy. Few care about the diverse "silly season" material that so fascinates the fringe researcher, concentrating only on their area of personal interest.

Different characters become obsessed in different ways, and for different reasons. One person might have seen something he believed to be a UFO, only to be fed completely unconvincing "explanations" by the authorities. Another might have had a friend who disappeared under mysterious conditions. Obsessed researchers might not initially realize that what they're tracking is actually an artifact of the Conspiracy, and some may never accept this truth.

Advantages and skills will vary widely, although Research and Writing would both be very useful. Obsessed researchers might enjoy high Status or Reputation, but only within very limited "segments" - e.g., among UFOlogists. Obsession is virtually a must, possibly coupled with Fanaticism and/or Intolerance. Like fringe



researchers, obsessed researchers would only rarely have Allies, Ally Groups or Patrons.

See also *Fringe Researchers*.

Tool

A "tool" is one step up from a pawn (see p. 25) in that a tool knows that something covert is going on. Often he's paid, or rewarded in some other way. However, the odds are he won't know that it's the Conspiracy that's paying him, and won't know the purpose of the job he's doing. He may have been given a logical and wholly untrue explanation. The only difference between an unwitting tool and a dupe is that the dupe thinks it's his own idea. An unwitting tool thinks he's following a reasonable order or suggestion. The distinction is important only in that, if the tool knows where his orders came from, he's a link in the chain to the Secret Masters. A pawn knows *nothing*.

But a tool may also know perfectly well that he's involved in something strange or illegal. Maybe he's a petty criminal, in it for the money. Maybe he's a fanatic, in it for a cause. Maybe he just trusts the person who asked him to run that odd little errand! Children make great tools for teachers, youth leaders, even parents...

*Frequently the tasks that a tool is asked to perform seem totally meaningless (e.g., leave the light on in his office when he goes home, or park his car on the other side of the street from his house for the next week). It's because they are so meaningless, and apparently harmless, that the tool will usually go ahead with them. The degree to which the tool judges them as meaningless, however, simply reflects how little he knows about how the world really works. (A classic example of a tool hired for a seemingly meaningless purpose can be found in *The Red-Headed League* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.)*

Tools often don't know who they're really working for. Or, if they do, they don't realize that their employer is a tool himself. A useful tool may be shared by several different conspiracies, all at once or in succession.

Tools can have virtually any advantages, disadvantages or skills. They rarely earn their living from their covert work, so they must have other jobs. Gullibility is a good disadvantage for a tool, while a Secret Patron is a good advantage.

See also *MIBs* and *Pawns*.

Writer

Writers often find themselves researching strange subjects (conspiracy theory, for example). If they turn up evidence of the Conspiracy, they're likely to be curious and follow up. Their background in research and interviewing will certainly help them. Many writers will include what they've learned in their future work. Sometimes this upsets the Secret Masters; more often, it amuses them.

Writers are sometimes recruited into the Conspiracy. Many works of fiction have so melodramaticized the concept of the Conspiracy, that it has become almost a cliché to most people, too campy or ludicrous to consider seriously. This is probably the most efficient way in which the Conspiracy has concealed its nature.

Writers might have advantages like Common Sense, Intuition and Luck. Writers can enjoy great Status, Prestige and even Wealth; the vast majority, however, never get that far. Disadvantages can include Alcoholism (which appears all too often to be an occupational hazard for writers) and perhaps Shyness (since many writers are most comfortable at their word processor), plus - all too often - poverty. The key skills are Writing and Research; other skills will depend exclusively on the individual character.



Some of the existing *GURPS* advantages, disadvantages, and skills have different twists in an Illuminated campaign. Also pre-

sented are some new advantages, disadvantages, and skills appropriate to the genre.

Advantages

Allies

see pp. B23-24

In as paranoid a world as an Illuminated campaign, Allies should be rarer, and more valuable when they do exist. (After all, by definition a character can trust his ally.) Costs for an Ally are 5 points more than stated in the *Basic Set* (e.g., 10 points for an Ally built on 76-100 points, 15 points for one built on 101-150 points, etc.).

GMs might allow players to purchase an Ally for their standard point cost (i.e., without the 5-point addition), but there's a catch: the Ally might be unreliable! When the Ally is created, the GM secretly rolls against the character's IQ (or his Detect Lies, whichever is higher). If the roll is successful, the Ally is loyal to the character; otherwise, the Ally is actually an agent of the Conspiracy (or part of the Conspiracy opposed to the character's own organization). The character can detect this false loyalty only

by carefully watching the actions of the Ally. Players who like to gamble, and who *really need* those additional 5 points, might take this option. (Alternatively, the GM doesn't have to tell them . . .)

Magical Aptitude

see p. B21

Many people claim that some core members of the Conspiracy have magical powers (even in campaigns where magic isn't considered "possible"). In most non-fantasy campaigns, these people are going to be the *only* ones with magical abilities. Even within these groups, only the most senior members will have significant powers (see sidebar, p. 45).

At the GM's discretion, players can select Magical Aptitude, but they *must* then couple it with Unusual Background (to explain how they got it), and either Enemy or Unknown Enemies.



Patron

seep. B24

PCs may have Patrons of all sorts, as well as *secret patrons* (see p. 29). The question will arise: what are the Illuminati themselves worth as patrons?

A truly Illuminated group would be more powerful than most national governments (30 points), could supply fantastic equipment worth more than the standard starting wealth (+10 points), and may very well have special abilities (+5 or +10 points, at the GM's discretion). But the GM doesn't have to allow a beginning character to have the Secret Masters of the Whole World as patrons. It's far likelier that any patron will be a subordinate conspiracy of some kind, with correspondingly less power and point cost.

Unusual Background

seep. B25

By definition, conscious membership in the Conspiracy is an Unusual Background worth 10 points. *Unwitting* membership (i.e., as a pawn) *isn't* an Unusual Background. Membership in the Conspiracy is valuable to a character because it gives him access to basic and valuable facts - that the Conspiracy exists, and that the group he's a member of is a "player." It also allows him to purchase his group as an Ally Group.

New Advantages

Ally Group

Variabl

e

Ally Groups are composed of NPCs, controlled by the GM. An anarchist who is part of an anarchic group may take that association as an Ally Group; similarly, a cultist may take his cult. Police officers and certain army units stick together and look out for their own to a degree sufficient to qualify them as Ally Groups. Strength and frequency of appearance govern an Ally Group's point value.

The player chooses the Ally Group on Character creation. The GM should feel free to fill in the details, including the circumstances under which the Ally Group may be available. The GM may also require the Unusual Background advantage to explain the ties between the character and the Ally Group.

Injury to Ally Group

If individual allies are lost in the adventure through no fault of the PC, they will be replaced with equivalent allies the next time the PC and group are in an appropriate place. However, if the PC expends his allies' lives carelessly, they will not be replaced - *word gets around!*

A PC should get no character points for a session in which he betrays, attacks, or endangers his Ally Group. If the betrayal is prolonged or severe the ties between the PC and his Ally Group are broken; the Ally Group and points are lost.

If a PC and his Ally Group part ways amicably, the PC should not be penalized. The point cost of the Ally Group may buy another Ally Group met during roleplaying, or individual members of the group may continue as ordinary allies (see p. B24). At the GM's discretion, remaining points may be traded in for money (see p. B83), reflecting parting gifts.

Note that, in an Illuminated campaign, it's a foregone conclusion that some members of an Ally Group will be ringers, double agents, traitors, or even aliens! There should be no way for a PC to get a wholly trustworthy Ally Group.

There are many other possibilities for Unusual Background in an Illuminated campaign. A character might be a descendent of the J Merovingian dynasty, or be the child of someone genetically modified by aliens, Nazi scientists, CIA experimenters . . . (This allows! the character to purchase unusual skills and advantages - with the GM's permission, of course.)

The point cost of an Unusual Background should depend on the advantages it bestows upon the individual. Simply being abducted! by a UFO as a child conveys no real benefits. Possibly quite thej opposite: the person might suffer from Obsessions, Delusions,! Phobias, Paranoia, etc. as a result. Thus, it wouldn't cost the char-1 acter any points. In contrast, being abducted, and then being subjected to experiments that leave him psionically active *would* cost | points.

Depending on the nature of the campaign, any past event that | *confirms* that the Conspiracy exists, or that UFOs are real, or that | Bigfoot really does love blondes, or whatever, might be of some small value. This is particularly true if most characters in the campaign have yet to learn that the Conspiracy actually exists. (The GM could also give each PC one such small bit of background, at no cost, just to set the stage.)

A small group (2 to 5 people) costs 10 points. Examples include an infantry squad or a small gang.

A medium-sized group (6 to 20 people) costs 20 points. Examples include other reporters on a paper or members of an ecoterrorist movement.

A large group (20 to 1,000 people) or a medium-sized group with some formidable individuals costs 30 points. Examples include a police precinct or a government department.

Point Level

The individuals in an ally group normally are 75-point characters. They may be increased to 100-point Allies by raising the *base* cost of the group by 10 points. Allies of more than 100 points must be bought individually.

Frequency of Appearance

If the Ally Group appears almost all the time (roll of 15 or less): triple the listed value.

If the Ally Group appears quite often (roll of 12 or less): double the listed value.

If the Ally Group appears fairly often (roll of 9 or less): use the listed value.

If the Allied Group appears quite rarely (roll of 6 or less): halve the listed value (round up).

Illuminated

60points

You have undergone a mystical experience which has made you one of the Illuminati, in the original sense - you are enlightened. You *know what's going on*, and you know it *intuitively*.

Depending on the campaign, you do not necessarily have to be a member of an Illuminated organization to be Illuminated. The organizations are a means to make one an Illuminatus - but they don't have to be the only means. Some individuals might become Illuminated through close contact with other Illuminati, even without joining the Conspiracy. Others might gain Illumination through



the traditional Hindu/Buddhist path of asceticism and meditation, or less traditional paths (by joining the Church of the SubGenius, perhaps. . .). Still others might simply be walking down the street one day, and be struck with Illumination for no reason whatsoever. A few very special individuals might be *bom* Illuminated. Such a one might be regarded as a messiah by any other Illuminati who were aware of his existence.

As an Illuminated character, you gain the advantages of Luck (30-point level) and Intuition. In addition, you gain the ability to mystically discern another Illuminati on sight, with no possibility of error. On a successful IQ roll, you can even tell if the Illuminati are *behind* a certain event or situation. This perception has nothing to do with logical deduction; you just read the morning paper and *know* that "Dow Drops 50 Points" is part of an Illuminati plot, while "Four Killed in Belfast Riot" is just another random tragedy. (Obviously, this distinction doesn't work in campaigns where the Illuminati are behind *everything*.) If you want to know *which* Illuminati are behind an event, however, or *why* they're doing it, you're on your own. In some campaigns, this advantage will allow you to perceive and communicate with spiritual beings. You cannot necessarily control these entities, but they will know you and treat you with a certain respect - +3 on reaction rolls from such beings.

The drawback to Illumination, of course, is that other Illuminati and spiritual beings are able to perceive *your* Illuminated nature, and there's nothing you can do about it except stay out of sight.

GM's note: This advantage is only suitable for campaigns with a mystical or fantastic bent, and is not appropriate to more mundane conspiracy campaigns. Even if it is possible for some characters in the game world to have this advantage, the GM, as always, may forbid it to Ms PCs.

Psionics

see pp. B165-176

As with Magical Aptitude, there are many who claim that some members of the Conspiracy have psionic powers (even in campaigns where psionics aren't thought to exist). In many campaigns,

Disadvantages

Delusions

seep. B32

In the world of the Illuminati, many beliefs that we would consider *Delusions are actually true*.

*Perhaps the most dangerous Delusion of all is that the world isn't riddled with interlocking conspiracies. Someone with this Delusion will use all their mental resources to come up with "logical," non-conspiratorial explanations for any strange occurrence, no matter how convincing the evidence of Conspiracy is. (This could be either a *minor* or *major* delusion, depending on how dogmatic the character is.)*

It's an axiom of an Illuminated world that everything is connected. This doesn't mean that people can't be seriously and dangerously Deluded about *how* they fit together. (For example, a character's belief that the banks are tapping his phone is a Delusion when the group actually tapping the line is the Motion Picture Academy. So is the belief that the Soviets are behind UFOs, when UFOs are actually a mental "artifact" of something that the Society of Assassins is slipping into the water.)

the Illuminati are going to be the *only* ones with psionic abilities; and, even then, only the most senior will have significant powers.

At the GM's discretion, PCs can have psi powers, but they *must* couple them with Unusual Background (to explain how they got the ability), and an Enemy, either known or unknown.

Secret Patron

Variable

This is similar to the standard Patron Advantage (see p. B24-25), but the character doesn't know the identity of the individual or organization that has taken him under his/her/its wing. This means there's no way to directly call upon the Patron for help. If the character broadcasts his predicament in such a way that the GM judges the Patron gets the message, the Patron might (or might not) take action.

Cynics might not fully accept that they've got a Secret Patron. The only evidence might, at first, be minor incidents or "lucky breaks." All the while, however, the Secret Patron is watching over the individual, protecting him to some degree while also possibly testing him and grooming him for greater things. He might gain information, equipment, even direct aid . . . but *only* when it suits the Secret Patron, and almost certainly in an untraceable way.

In many cases, the Secret Patron is a corporation or other large/powerful organization. Such groups don't give gifts; they make investments. Thus, the Patron will expect to get some return. This can be in the form of a Duty, where the character is manipulated, bribed or otherwise coerced into carrying out a task for the Patron. It could just as easily manifest itself more subtly: the person is used as an unwitting pawn by the organization. In many cases, organizations within the Conspiracy that "adopt" people do so for no immediately apparent reason. *Not all Secret Patrons have your best interests at heart.*

A Secret Patron costs 5 points less (base cost) than a normal Patron. The character should tell the GM how many points he wants to pay, then the GM will secretly design the Patron to fit those constraints. The GM can also optionally add Duty and/or Enemies as disadvantages; he'd tell the player that he had a certain number of extra points to spend, but wouldn't explain where those points came from.

Fanaticism

seep. B33

An Illuminated campaign provides lots more possibilities for Fanatic beliefs. Belief in the existence or «nonexistence of the Conspiracy could easily be fanatical. So could loyalty or hatred for any particular Conspiracy group. Creative players and GMs should have little difficulty creating other fanatical beliefs and attitudes.

Gullibility

seep. B33

Gullibility can be a killer in an Illuminated world. Depending on just how frequently the Conspiracy manifests itself openly, the GM might consider giving a bonus of 2 or more points to anyone taking this disadvantage.

Paranoia

seep. B35

In an Illuminated world, becoming paranoid is often the price of survival. Even though the odds are that *everybody* isn't out to get you, a lot of them are. So the paranoid outlook is very worthwhile. GMs should be careful to make sure that players who took the Paranoia disadvantage play their characters as being paranoid about *everything*. For any gaming session in which a character is only "selectively paranoid," the player receives no points.

CHARACTERS 29



New Disadvantages

Amnesia

-10/-25points

You've lost your memory - you can't remember any of your past life, including your name. There are two levels to this disadvantage: Partial and Total.

If you have Partial Amnesia, you can see your character sheet, but the GM may reserve up to 30 points for use as he sees fit for disadvantages. Other than these secret disadvantages, you know that you can do certain things and use certain skills, but have no idea where you learned how to do them. You are likely to have enemies - and possibly friends - that you can't remember. If you turn yourself in to the police, they can check your fingerprints, but it's a gamble. You might turn out to be a wanted criminal. And even if you're an honest citizen, finding out your name won't restore your memory! Partial Amnesia is a -10 point disadvantage.

Total Amnesia (-25 points) is much more serious. Your physical skills are unaffected, but the GM makes all rolls for you (because you have no idea what you can do until you try it!). Likewise, the GM makes all of your Mental skill rolls, but at a -2 penalty. You have no idea what advantages, disadvantages and skills you have - if a player chooses to play a character with this disadvantage, the only things he can choose when designing it are those things that can be seen in a mirror. Everything else is assigned by the GM (and the GM holds onto the original character sheet until his memory is restored)!

If you are playing a character with Total Amnesia, the GM knows what your quirks and mental disadvantages are ... *and you don't*. So, from time to time, he will overrule your statements about what you are doing. For instance, you won't know you have the Berserk disadvantage until you go berserk.

This disadvantage can only be bought off if there is some rationale for the character recovering his memory. Meeting an old friend, reliving some fateful event, or the ever-popular blow-to-the-head are all reasonable. In most cases, the cure will be related to the cause of the memory loss.

Particularly twisted GMs might enjoy considering people with Total Amnesia to have been brainwashed. One of the character's hidden disadvantages will probably be an Enemy with sufficient resources to have brainwashed him in the first place.

No Sense of Humor

-10points

You never get any jokes, and think that everyone is earnestly serious at all times. Likewise, you never joke, and you are earnestly serious at all times. Others react at -2 to you in any situation where this disadvantage becomes evident.



Obsession

-5 or -10 points

Obsession is similar to Compulsive Behavior (p. B32), but it involves strange thoughts as opposed to actual activity. Someone who is Obsessed with an idea will think about it almost continuously, picking at it and worrying over it mentally. An Obsessed character can pull his mind back to important issues, but only with a successful Will roll. This roll is only required in normal, day-to-day situations, during conversations, etc. If the chips are down, and the character is in danger, no roll is required ("obsessed" doesn't mean "suicidal").

Most obsessed characters also have a strong tendency to talk about the object of their obsession, whether other people want to hear or not. This might come from a desire to warn others, or merely out of a desire to share their thoughts. The point value of this Disadvantage depends on how often the Obsession slips into his conversation, and how much this affects people around him. (In this sense, Obsession is similar to Delusions, p. B32).

Minor. -5 points. The character very rarely mentions it, but must make a Will roll to "snap back" to important issues (see above). No effect on others.

Major. -10 points. The Obsession slips into most conversations (successful Will roll to avoid this). Others who notice the Obsession react at -2.

Note that it doesn't really matter *what* the Obsession is. People who notice it will react to the sheer fact that the character *is* Obsessed - and thus presumably unstable - and not to its subject.

Secret

Variable

A Secret is some aspect of your life (or your past) that you must keep hidden. If made public, the information could harm your reputation, ruin your career, wreck your friendships, and possibly even threaten your life! The point value of a Secret depends on the consequences if the Secret is revealed. The worse the results, the higher the value, as follows:

Serious Embarrassment. If this information gets around, you can forget about ever getting a promotion, getting elected, or marrying well. Alternatively, your Secret could be one that will simply attract unwelcome public attention if it is known. -5 points.



Utter Rejection. If your Secret is discovered, your whole life will be changed. Perhaps you would lose your job and be rejected by friends and loved ones. Perhaps you will merely be harassed by admirers, cultists, long-lost relatives, or the press. *-10 points.*

Imprisonment or Exile. If the authorities uncover your Secret, you'll have to flee, or be imprisoned for a long time (GM's discretion). *-20 points.*

Possible Death. Your Secret is so terrible that you might be executed by the authorities, lynched by a mob, or assassinated by the Illuminati themselves if it were ever revealed - you would be a hunted man. *-30 points.*

If a Secret is made public, there will be an immediate negative effect, as described above, ranging from embarrassment to possible death. There is a lasting effect - you suddenly acquire new, permanent disadvantages whose point value equals twice that of the Secret itself! The points from these new disadvantages go first to buy off the Secret, and may then (at the GM's option only) be used to buy off other disadvantages or (rarely) to buy new advantages. Any unused points are lost, and the character's point value is reduced.

The new disadvantages acquired must be appropriate to the Secret and should be determined (with the GM's supervision) when the character is created. Most Secrets turn into Enemies, Secret Enemies, Bad Reputations, etc. They might also reduce your Status or Wealth - going from Filthy Rich to merely Very Wealthy is effectively a -10 point disadvantage. Some Secrets could even turn into mental or physical disadvantages, though this would be rare.

Similarly, if the GM allows you to buy off old disadvantages with the new points, these two must be appropriate to the Secret. The most common disadvantages that could be bought off are Duties and Dependents.

In general, a Secret appears in a particular game session if the GM rolls a 6 or less on three dice before the adventure begins. However, as for all other disadvantages of this type, the GM need not feel constrained by the occurrence roll - if he thinks the Secret should come into play, it does!

When a Secret appears, it is not necessarily made public. The character must somehow prevent the Secret from being revealed. This may

Skills

Alchemy

seep. B59

In an illuminated world, the supposedly moribund tradition of alchemy might actually contain some *great truths*. You can choose to be one of the few who know this, but it will probably (GM's discretion) require an Unusual Background to explain how you came to this startling realization.

New Skills

Conspiracy Theory (Mental/Very Hard) Defaults to History-4 or Occultism-4

This is the study of the interlocking network of conspiracies that has been created by the Illuminati. A conspiracy theorist can

require him to cave in to blackmail or extortion, to steal the incriminating documents, or even to silence the person who knows the Secret. Regardless of the solution, however, it's only temporary - the Secret will appear again and again until it is finally bought off. Secrets may be bought off either automatically through exposure (see above) or with earned character points over the course of play.

Unknown Enemies

Variable

This is a more frightening form of the Enemy disadvantage (see p. B39). It's very easy to make enemies in the Illuminated world, and much more difficult to *know* when you've earned someone's enmity . . . and where! Players can still take the standard Enemies disadvantage, for the standard number of points, and make up the Enemy group themselves. Alternatively, they can choose to have an *unknown* Enemy.

Players who want to take this route should tell the GM what point value they would like the Enemy group to be. They gain this point value *plus* an additional 5 points, to reflect the danger of not knowing who's out to get them. The GM should then work out a group that matches the point value selected. (Players who chose Unknown Enemies should consider taking Paranoia as well. Odds are they're going to be acting paranoid anyway, so they may as well get the benefit for it..)

Weirdness Magnet

-15 points

Strange and bizarre things happen to you with alarming frequency. You are the one for whom aliens will stop and chat. Magic items with disturbing properties will find their way to you. The only talking dog on 20th-century Earth will come to you with his problems. Dimensional gates sealed for centuries will crack open just so that you can be bathed in the energies released . . . or perhaps the denizens on the other side will invite you to tea.

Nothing lethal will happen to you, at least not immediately, and occasionally some weirdness will be beneficial. But most of the time it will be terribly, terribly inconvenient. People who understand what a weirdness magnet is (and that you are one) will react to you at -2. The exceptions will be parapsychologists, fringe cultists, unhinged conspiratorial theorists and thrill-seekers, who will follow you around!

Occultism

seep. B61

In an Illuminated campaign, a great deal of occultist esoterica may be true, and Occultism can substitute for Conspiracy Theory in some cases.

Research

seep. B62

This can be used to investigate conspiracies. Since the material is often hidden and hard to understand, you won't be as successful as someone with the specific new skill Conspiracy Theory (see below). In general, roll against the lower of both Research and Conspiracy Theory skill to research esoterica about the Conspiracy.

answer questions about the conspiratorial view of history - i.e., the various groups thought to be behind the assassination of President Kennedy, or the French Revolution. It does *not* automatically give the character knowledge about how the Conspiracy works *today*, however. Conspiracy theorists can sometimes determine whether a



certain strange occurrence is truly a coincidence or a result of the Conspiracy. There may be a penalty of -1 to -5 depending on circumstances (GM's option). Only a critical success will give insight about what Conspiracy group caused the occurrence, or why.

Remember that even without Conspiracy Theory skill, one may sometimes detect the workings of a conspiracy. Depending on the particular situation, the skills of Criminology, Forensics, Occultism or any of the sciences might be as good as Conspiracy Theory to let you realize that *something is wrong here*.

Intimidation (Mental/Average) Defaults to ST-5 or Acting-3

Intimidation is a social "influence" skill, used for persuasion. The essence of intimidation is to convince the subject that you are able and willing, and perhaps eager, to hurt him.

Intimidation may be substituted for a Reaction roll in any situation, though it is at a -3 penalty when used in a request for aid. A successful Intimidation roll gives a Good (though not friendly) reaction. A failed roll gives a Bad reaction. Most people will remember an intimidation attempt, whether successful or not, for a long time; it can permanently affect an NPC's attitude.

When Intimidation is used against a PC (or, at the GM's option, against a NPC), this can also be rolled as a contest of Intimidation vs. Will. See *Influence Rolls*, sidebar, p. B93.

Modifiers: Up to +2 for displays of strength or bloodthirstiness, or +3 for superhuman strength or inhuman bloodthirstiness. Appropriate reputation modifiers certainly count! +1 for each 6" of height that you have over the subject, -1 if you are shorter (-2 if more than 6" shorter). +2 for Hideous appearance.



The GM may give a further +1 bonus for witty or frightening dialogue, but should apply a penalty if the attempt is clumsy or inappropriate.

Fearlessness counts *against* intimidation attempts. The GM may apply any level of penalty if the PCs are attempting to intimidate somebody who, in his opinion, just can't be intimidated. This includes anyone with the Unfazeable advantage (see pp. S14-15).

Magical and Psionic Modifiers: Spells and psi talents can be used to frighten people. If any such ability is used to supplement an attempt to intimidate, allow +2 for a successful attempt - +4 for a critical success. A failure has no effect unless the GM wants to penalize a critical failure in some creative way.

Intimidating a Group: This skill may be used against several people at once. For every five targets you attempt to intimidate with a single roll, apply a -1 penalty to your skill - up to a maximum of -5 (25 people). A single person cannot intimidate a group of larger than 25 people. A group of characters may attempt to intimidate a group of larger than 25-3 characters could intimidate up to 75 (3x25) people! Use the bonuses of the *best* intimidator in the group, and the penalties of the toughest target in the enemy group.

Running a Bluff: If the PC can make both a Fast-Talk and an Intimidation roll, and role-plays it well, he can appear intimidating even when he can't back it up. This is the only way to intimidate some people (martial arts masters, world leaders, bellicose drunks). Success on both rolls gives a Very Good reaction. Success on one and failure on the other gives a Poor reaction. Failure on both gives a Very Bad reaction.

Note that Interrogation skill can default to Intimidation-3. It will not help you tell a good answer from a bad one, but it can get people to talk.

Equipment

As described in the sidebar on p. 46, the Conspiracy monitors useful developments in technology, and then prevents them from ever seeing the light of day. Thus, the core groups of the Conspiracy will frequently have access to equipment that is one or more Tech Levels higher than the campaign as a whole. For example, in a *GURPS Old West* campaign, the most sophisticated sidearm might be a single-action Colt Peacemaker revolver. Agents of the Illuminati, however, might have access to rudimentary automatic pistols. In a contemporary campaign, Senior Men In Black might carry Gauss needlers!

A few ultra-tech devices can add a lot of flavor to the Illuminated campaign. Remember that the advanced technology is kept *very* secret. It is used only when the risk of detection is non-existent, or those who *do* detect it won't live to talk. It will almost never be issued to subordinates, particularly when there's a significant chance that it might fall into the hands of others. (PCs *shouldn't* be able to acquire "killer" equipment simply by overpowering a couple of dozing MIBs...)

For a wealth of super-gadgets, see *GURPS Ultra-Tech*. But GMs should resist the temptation to drop dozens of wonderful gadgets into the campaign. One per adventure, and possibly one or two "signature" gadgets (like those extra-powerful hand weapons for the MIBs) will be plenty.

NOT ONLY WILL IT
FIND AN HONEST MAN,
BUT YOU CAN LOWER
THE GAIN TO FIND A
POLITICIAN THAT WILL
STAY BOUGHT!



McGuffins

In fact, the super-gadget itself can be the hook for an adventure. The "McGuffin" was Alfred Hitchcock's term for the item or gimmick around which a story is built. Ultra-tech gadgets make perfect McGuffins for an Illuminated campaign. The heroes get a hint of *one* miraculous device - possibly the brain-child of a mad scien-

tist or secret Conspiracy project. They follow the clues, and the adventure begins.

Good McGuffin possibilities described in this book are the Mind Control Laser (p. 122) and the drugs described in the sidebar on p. 117. These are especially good because in themselves they are potent - but not irresistible - weapons for the Illuminati and their minions.

Wealth and Status

Average starting wealth for an Illuminated campaign is \$15,000 for the modern day. For a campaign set in another period, use whatever figure is appropriate for that period.

Remember, though, that the Illuminati themselves have all the money they could possibly need for *anything*. PCs who are working for the Secret Masters will find that all their equipment needs are supplied - but only if they took an Illuminated or similar group as a very expensive Patron. PCs *opposing* an Illuminated group will have to out-think them, because they'll never out-spend them.

Jobs

Conspiracy-hunters have to eat, too. The GM should require players to define their characters' jobs and backgrounds, even if they seem to have nothing to do with the thrust of the adventures . . . and then find ways to work these details into the campaign. *Anybody* could wind up working for the Illuminati *without even knowing it*, and a conspiracy-hunter could seek the Secret Masters for months and then find them in *his* own office.

Status

This is a campaign in which PCs of every social level can coexist, brought together by the awful secret they share. The GM need not restrict beginning PCs in their choice of status levels. In fact, it can be very handy to have some party members who can attend Washington receptions . . . and others who can walk down New York alleys and come out safely.



The Job Table given here includes only those occupations which are most typical of Conspiracy hunters and Conspiracy dupes and tools. Other jobs can be taken from the daily papers (for a modern-day game) or from whatever source is being used as background for another period.

Job Table

Jobs (Required Skills), Monthly Income

Poor Jobs

Anarchist* (Streetwise 11+, Politics 6+ or Economics 10+), \$350

Average Jobs

Conspiracy Theorist* (Conspiracy Theory 11+, Research 12+), \$1,100

Deprogrammer* (Psychology 9+), \$1,000

Historian*, Conspiracy (Bard 12+ or Writing 12+, Conspiracy Theory 12+, History 11+, Research 12+), \$100 x Writing or Bard skill

Historian, Traditional (Bard 12+ or Writing 12+, History 12+, Research 12+), \$100 x History skill

Journalist* (Research 11+, Writing 12+), \$100 x Writing skill

Researcher, Fringe or Obsessed* (Research 10+, Writing 10+), \$100 x Writing skill

Writer* (Research 10+, Writing 12+), \$100 x Writing skill

Comfortable Jobs

Government Investigator* (Politics 12+), \$3,000

Law Enforcement Officer (Criminology 11+, Pistol 12+, Legal Enforcement Powers), \$2,050

Lawyer (Law 12+, Status 1+), \$15,000

Military Officer (Guns 12+, Leadership 10+, Military Rank 3+), \$1000 + \$1000 per level of Rank

Professional Skeptic* (Bard 12+, Research 11+, any Academic skill 11+ or Sleight of Hand 13+), \$250 x Bard skill

PR Flack (Bard 12+ or Fast-Talk 12+ or Writing 12+), \$250 x highest PR

Psychiatrist (Physician 13+, Psychology 13+), \$11,000

* indicates a freelance job (see pp. A193-194)

Success Roll Critical Failure

Worst PR -li, arrested/3i, 3d

Worst PR -li/-3i, "interviewed" by Illuminati, 2d

PR -li/-3i, arrested for kidnapping

Worst PR -li/-3i, "interviewed" by Illuminati, 2d

Worst PR -li/-3i, LJ

Worst PR -li/-3i, -2 Reputation, 1d

Worst PR -1 i/-3i, -2 Reputation, 1d

Writing -2i/-3i, -1 Reputation

PR -li, LJ/-3i, LJ, arrested

Worst PR -1 i, 2d/-1 i, suspended for 1d months, 4d

Worst PR -li/-2i, LJ, disbarred

Worst PR -2i/-2i, court-martialed, 4d

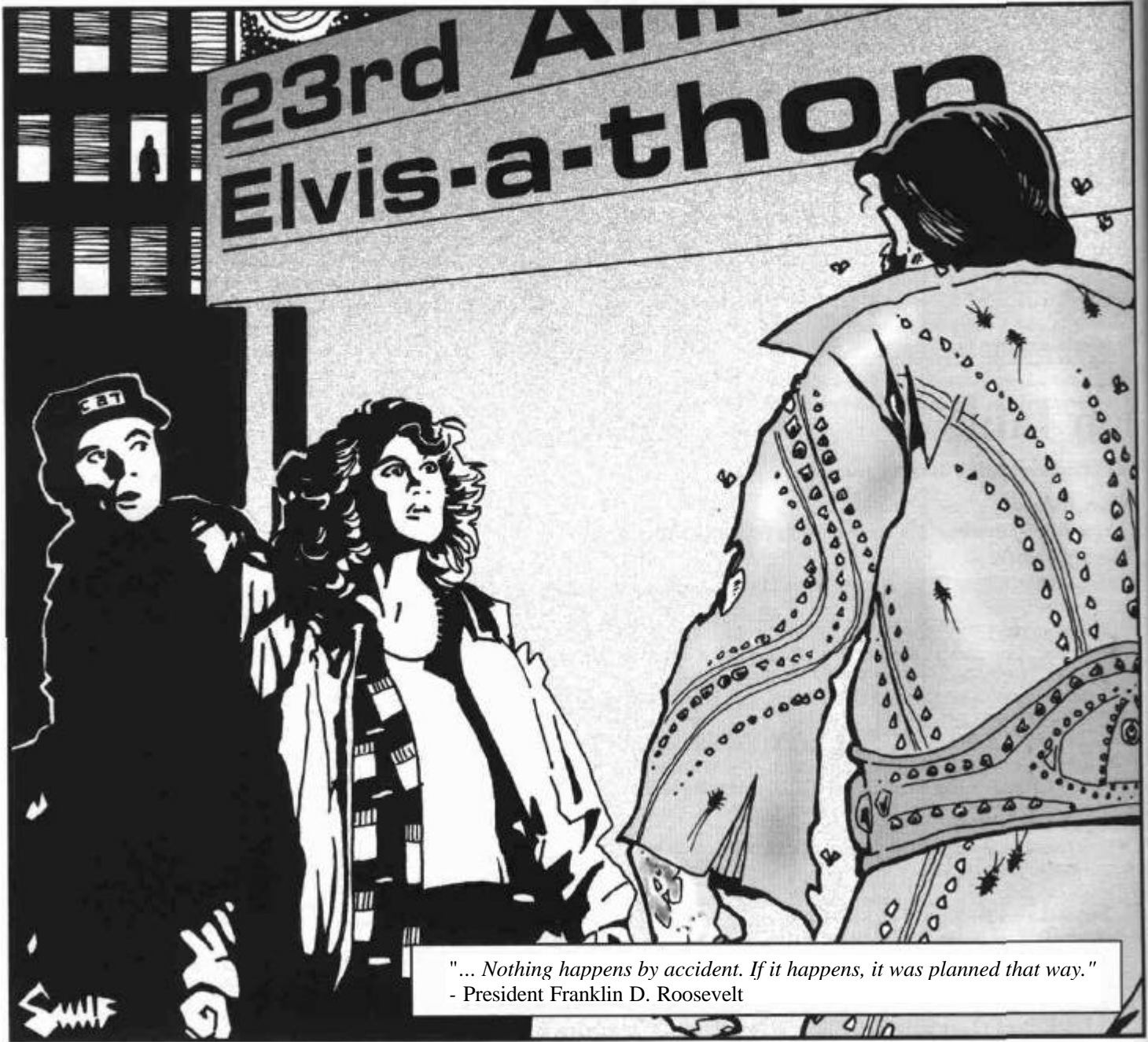
Worst PR -1 i/-3i, -2 Reputation

PR -2i, LJ/-4i, LJ, -2 Reputation

Worst PR -1 i/-2i, lose license



2 THE ILLUMINATED CAMPAIGN



THE ILLUMINATED
CAMPAIGN





The key issue to developing an Illuminated campaign is that *every* campaign is Illuminated ... the players just might not know it yet. The GM has to know it, however. This means that an Illuminati theme can be introduced into *any* existing campaign, played with for a while, then pushed into the background again. The players may *think* that the Conspiracy has been defeated, but it can reappear later in a totally new guise.

Perhaps the hardest part of running an Illuminated campaign is developing the power structure - the groups that are involved, the Illuminated group(s) at the core, and the way these different factors interconnect. There are basically two ways to go about this: working out what's behind the scenes before play begins, or "winging it" as play progresses. The best choice depends on the GM's personal style.

The "pre-generated" power structure takes much more work, but has the advantage of being internally consistent. As the PCs penetrate the layers of deception, it's unlikely that they'll be able to surprise the GM too much by heading off on a different track. (So they didn't follow up on the Earth First! connection; instead they tried to infiltrate the National Rifle Association. That's okay: the GM figured out at the start how both of these groups are controlled by the Chicago Transit Authority ... the rock group, of course, not the Illinois government.)

The improvised method is much less time-intensive, and can be free-wheeling and lots of fun. The GM can react instantly to changes in players' moods and attitudes, penalizing them for errors or rewarding good play by altering the direction of the campaign. Many GMs also find that their "creative juices" flow much better during play, and that they can come up with admirably twisted concepts that would never have occurred to them while slogging through research. On the down-side, the "free-hand" approach can be quite stressful for GMs unaccustomed to thinking on their feet, or whose players are highly unpredictable. It can also lead to a campaign with no coherence or internal consistency (not that consistency is necessary here, but some players expect it).



THERE ARE NO BAD GUYS

One of the axioms of good characterization in fiction is that nobody will ever consider himself to be a "villain." Well-drawn characters always have very good (to them) reasons for everything they do. If a "villain" punches his girlfriend, it's because she was always nagging him when he had more important things to think about. If he shoots his lieutenant on the street corner, it's to make a point. No matter how "bad" or "evil" his acts may look to others, the character himself is in his own mind justified in taking those actions.

Certainly, in comic books and pulp fiction - and movies based on them - there are people and organizations that do evil for no readily-discernible reasons, apparently just for the fun of it. OMs are, of course, free to create one or more Illuminati groups of this nature - organizations that spread terror and suffering "just because."

The campaign will be much more engaging, however, and have a much greater sense of internal consistency - and even reality - if groups are *motivated* in their actions. This doesn't mean that they can't spread terror and suffering; it just means they're doing it for a good reason. They might realize some eventual gain from it, or they might consider it a necessary - albeit painful - step along the way to a new world order, or whatever.

The motivation doesn't have to be obvious or even highly logical. But if it's there, when the PCs finally uncover it the players will be much more willing to suspend disbelief... which is the key to any successful campaign.

SYMPATHY FOR THE CONSPIRACY

In 1966, Dr. Carroll Quigley, a professor of history at Georgetown University's Foreign Service School, published a 1,300-page book entitled *Tragedy and Hope*. This book, Quigley claimed, was the result of 20 years' research into the Conspiracy. Quigley's study wasn't the first of its kind; there had been many other inquiries into the Conspiracy and the Illuminati. What set *Tragedy and Hope* apart was that Quigley was not trying to expose the Conspiracy in order to destroy it. In fact, Quigley describes his sympathy for the Conspiracy thus:

"I have no aversion to it or most of its aims, and have, for much of my life, been close to it and many of its instruments. I

have objected, both in the past and recently, to a few of its policies ... but in general my chief difference of opinion is that it wishes to remain unknown, and I

believe its role in history is significant enough to be known."

THE ILLUMINATED CAMPAIGN

Developing a Power Structure

ILLUSTRIOUS ILLUMINATI

According to conspiracy literature, most of those suspected of membership in Illuminated groups are rich, powerful in their own right, and basically very illustrious personages. The question is often raised: why would people of wealth and fortune join such an enterprise?

In fact, the answer is quite possibly the reverse of the question: people who are involved with the Conspiracy become illustrious *because* of their membership in the Illuminati. The Illuminati can change the world's business climate, influence national governments, or manipulate the press. With this kind of power, it's easy to get rich.

When it comes to figuring out what's going on behind the scenes, the possibilities are limited only by the GM's imagination. There are no hard-and-fast rules, and few guidelines. Feel free to play fast and loose with history - the Illuminati could easily have re-written it to suit their own ends. Ignore logic. Logic can prove *anything* if one starts with the right assumptions, and the Illuminati have different assumptions from the rest of us.

Is there one central Illuminati group, or several? Are they vying with each other for power, or cooperating? Or are they "agreeing to disagree," and splitting the world among them like a pie? Are the Illuminati even human? If not, were they human *once*? The possibilities are endless.

The following sections provide some guidelines and hints in setting up a power structure for a campaign. These are *not* rules, so alter them or ignore them as seems best for your own needs.

The Center of the Web

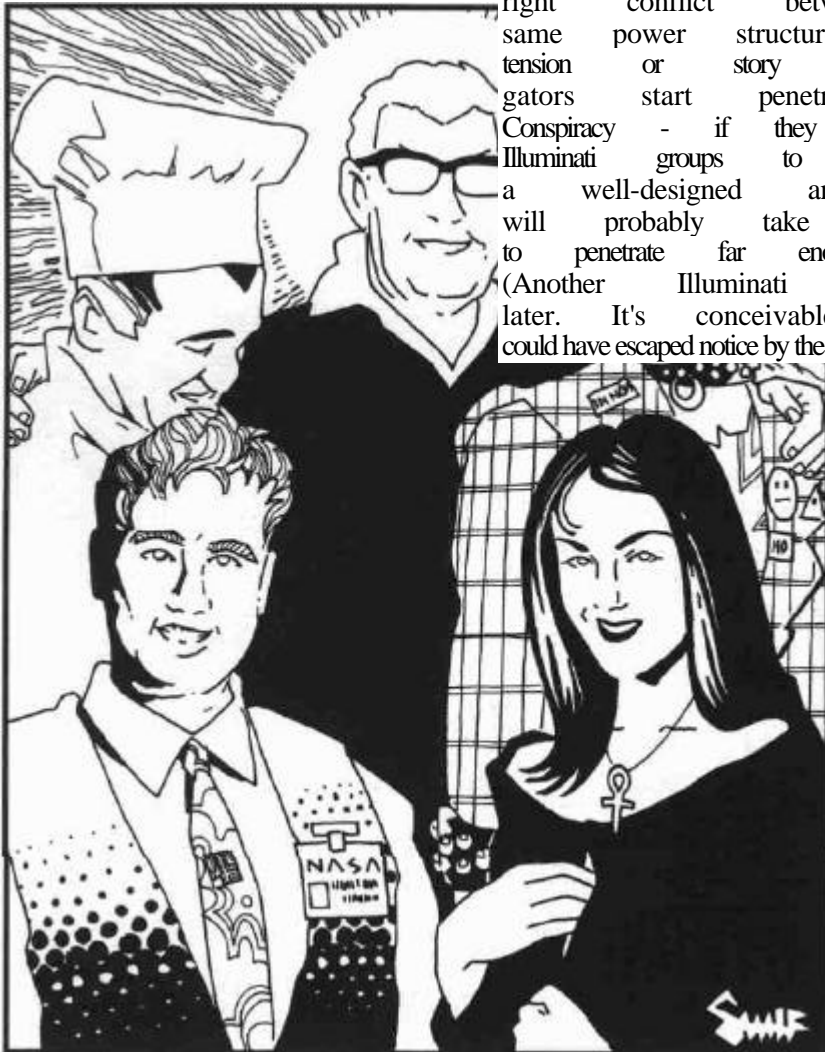
Conceptually, the easiest place to start building a Conspiracy is in the center. The first question: is there only one Illuminati group, or several? This decision won't have much effect on the groups near the periphery of the power structure, or on the PCs when they first start investigating the Conspiracy. There can still be rivalry and out-right conflict between different groups within the same power structure, so there's no loss of dramatic tension or story possibilities. Only when the investigators start penetrating the inner circles of the Conspiracy - if they ever do - might the lack of other Illuminati groups to strive against cause a problem. In a well-designed and well-run campaign, however, it will probably take the Illuminati-hunters a long time to penetrate far enough for this to make a difference. (Another Illuminati group could always "pop up" later. It's conceivable - just - that the "new" group could have escaped notice by the originals.)

Once the GM has decided how many Illuminati groups there are in the campaign, the next step is to flesh out each one in more detail. See Chapter 3 for examples of different Illuminati groups.

The Illuminati's Purpose

The most important thing to decide for each Illuminati group is its purpose, its ultimate goal. This will have significant effects on virtually everything that follows. Does the group want to rule the world? Why? Or does it want to destroy some existing facet of society, such as organized religion? Again, why? The goal will influence the types of subgroups that the Illuminati group will control, and thus will affect the "feel" of the entire campaign.

Many conspiracy theorists believe that power is the central goal of the Conspiracy. (To quote ex-Congressman John Schmitz, "When a person has all the money he needs, his goal becomes power.") But power for what purpose?



THE ILLUMINATED
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Does the group want power to attain wealth? (But then what does it need the wealth for?) So it can reshape the world in its own image? (But what *is* that image?) Or does the group simply want power for its own sake?

The central goal for a group might be to destroy another group. One organization could have been so locked in conflict with another for so many generations that it has forgotten its original purpose - if it ever had one. All its efforts, and all of its members' thoughts, are tied up solely with the destruction of the foe. (Of course, if the first group manages to destroy its enemy, it has won but also lost. What will the group do now? Perhaps find *another* enemy, and continue the war . . .)

Illuminati groups might also be dedicated to the destruction of other, non-Illuminated organizations. Perhaps their ultimate goal involves the destruction of a country's government or a system of government. Or maybe the group wants to destroy organized religion, or the news media. (But why?)

In some extreme cases, the Illuminati might want to destroy existing social institutions and then replace them with *nothing*. They might believe that the destiny of Mankind can only be served by removing *all* constraints on free and individual action (or some such philosophy).

One interesting situation is when the Illuminati don't quite know *why* they're following the agenda that they are. The group's members can only assume that there *was* once a reason, but that reason has been lost over time. Now the group continues doing what it has always done simply out of tradition - because "that's the way we've always done things." (This isn't as ludicrous as it sounds. Ask employees of a bureaucratic corporation the rationale behind the company's Standard Operating Procedures, and the result will often be a shrug and the statement, "That's the way it's always been.") Maybe the Illuminati group *did* forget their ultimate purpose along the way. Or maybe there's an *Uber-Illuminati* group at work here . . .

The goals of an Illuminati organization can be as logical or *il*logical as the GM desires. In the "real world," one could find a few people who'd support just about *any* ludicrous initiative (eliminating the letter V from the alphabet, for example).

Also, most people believe the goals of a Conspiracy must be bad. Not necessarily so. GMs can assign highly benign or beneficial motives to Illuminati groups. A group might be dedicated to the "ennoblement of mankind," as Weishaupt claimed for the Bavarian Illuminati. Many people outside the Conspiracy might feel sympathy with its intentions (see the sidebar on p. 35). Perhaps there's an "anti-Conspiracy" devoted to combating a malign Conspiracy.

But even if one agrees with the goals of a particular Illuminated group, one can disagree with its methods. Fanatics might discount the suffering and death of millions - in a war, for example, or a major famine - as necessary to bring about the greater good. A group with even the most benevolent intentions might take a position of "the end justifies the means."

A final point: Even if the original goal of an Illuminati group was a noble one, this may have changed with time. As an Illuminati group gains power and influence, temptation might grow too great for its members, leading them to forego their originally worthy purpose in favor of personal gain.

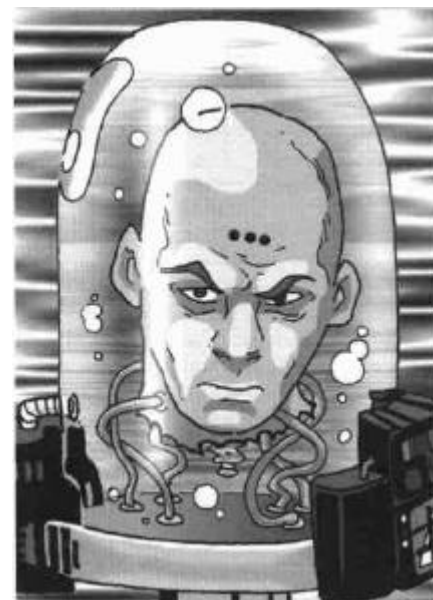
Size

The next question is, how big is the Illuminated group? Each group will have an optimum size, based on its purpose. Too small a group won't achieve its goals; too large a group will be noticed. Security is an issue, too. It's an axiom of intelligence work that the risk of exposure is proportional to the square of the group's size: double the size and *quadruple* the chance of exposure. Another problem arises if the group is even slightly democratic in its internal structure: the larger the group, the more likely it is that internal factions, and the difficulty of getting a large number of people to agree on anything important, will prevent the organization from reacting fast enough to changing conditions.

ILLUMINATIWARLORDS

Once individual Illuminati have gained the personal wealth and power they've always sought, will they be satisfied? Possibly not. There's always the desire for *more* wealth and power - which might, perhaps, be gained only by taking it from Illuminated "colleagues." Alternatively, Illuminati might decide to eliminate potential rivals.

These motives could easily turn Illuminati against each other, each individual trying to carve out his own empire, and grab everything he can for himself. This kind of chaos will propagate down the power structure, as subordinate groups ally themselves with one or another "warlord." At the lowest levels, groups that used to be allies will be fighting it out in the streets . . . without even knowing why.



THE GOLD STANDARD

Many conspiracy theorists believe that President Roosevelt's 1933 decision to require all Americans to turn in their gold bullion and gold coins was orchestrated by the Conspiracy. At the end of April, 1933, when it became illegal for private Americans to own gold, the metal was trading at \$20.67 an ounce. Immediately thereafter, the government raised the price of gold to \$35.00 in order to devalue the U.S. dollar. Many people - including, it is said, key members of the Conspiracy - had kept their gold in foreign banks, thereby avoiding the law, and now sold their gold to the government at an instant 75% profit!



POWERSTRUCTURES

Just what is a "power structure?" The term is used widely throughout this and other chapters, but just what does it mean?

It's obvious that a group of 12 or so Illuminati can't do much to influence national policy, social trends, the level of trust between nations, or the speed and direction of technological development... at least, without attracting entirely too much attention to themselves. Therefore, if an Illuminated group wants to control the world, it must do so through intermediaries. These intermediaries are, generally, other organizations.

Let's take a fictional example (all of this is fiction, remember?). Suppose that the Bavarian Illuminati want to take over Loving Arms, a national charity organization. They make a few donations, change a few records, pull a few of their existing strings. Within a few years, three Bavarians are on the national board of directors. The other directors have random problems with their lives, or great opportunities elsewhere. Their replacements are also Illuminated. Now the national Loving Arms organization is completely controlled, from the top down, by Bavaria itself.

As a charitable trust, Loving Arms has great assets of its own. By promising to shift its money to the Fourth National Bank - and, later, threatening to move it again - the charity group gains great influence over the bank. In time, that bank is effectively controlled by Loving Arms. By the same tactics, Loving Arms comes to dominate the brokerage firm that handles its investments. Its large donations also win it influence at a large research hospital, which couldn't continue to operate without the charity group's help.

The Fourth National Bank holds the note for an influential news magazine, *Newsleak*. When the magazine hits a cash-flow crisis, the bank is surprisingly supportive... but they demand a seat on the board of directors, and certain stock options. The magazine gives in. Soon the new director makes some suggestions about editorial staff.

So, if the Bavarians want (for instance) to make people nervous about AIDS, a couple of telephone calls will send a *Newsleak* senior writer out to interview a very cooperative and concerned hospital director. No problem. And that's one tiny arm of the power structure.

Now multiply this by hundreds of years, dozens of subordinate groups, billions of dollars. As long as the Illuminati can keep track of who knows who and who believes what, their power structure will continue to work for them... and to grow.

The number of members in Illuminated groups from literature varies widely. Most have a hierarchical structure, with levels or degrees of initiation, as with Weishaupt's Bavarian Illuminati. Novices will know next to nothing - perhaps not even the true name of the organization. As they progress through higher orders of initiation, they find out more and more about the group, and gain greater responsibilities. They might also have to "unlearn" the diverting falsehoods they were taught at earlier levels. Only the "central council" of grand masters - generally around 12 individuals - knows the true goals of the organization. (In some groups, there's some suspicion that even the council members don't know the truth, but are manipulated by a yet higher degree of initiation.)

Twelve council members seems to be an ideal number: large enough to bring a sufficient diversity of talents and backgrounds to bear, while small enough not to be unwieldy. While 12 people might not seem enough to cause the world-shaking effects attributed to the Conspiracy, most of the actual work is done by the lower orders of initiation, and by subgroups: other organizations controlled directly or indirectly by the "Inner Circle," "Round Table" or "Star Chamber" of 12.



Members

Who sits on the "Central Council"?

Membership might be hereditary (such as in the Rothschilds' power structure in the 19th and early 20th centuries). There are both advantages and disadvantages to this system. The major advantage is that future members of the "council" can be groomed from birth. They can be indoctrinated with the correct world view, and taught all the skills they need. They can be protected from outside influences, and there will be little doubt as to their loyalty. Also, it's relatively easy to conserve wealth within a single family through inheritance.

The major disadvantage to a hereditary system is that a bloodline always suffers the vagaries of chance. Every now and again, the "genetic dice" will roll a critical failure, resulting in someone who is temperamentally, physically or mentally unfit to join the council. This is particularly true if the bloodline is inbred. While inbreeding can definitely conserve desirable characteristics, it also increases the incidence of undesirable conditions. (The comparatively high frequency of hemophilia and feeble-mindedness within the interbred royal lines of Europe illustrates this.) An Illuminati group could minimize these disadvantages by consciously culling out those heirs who don't fit the bill, and by occasionally going outside the family to add desirable characteristics.

Other groups will view hereditary membership and power as an abomination. After all, power should fall only to those who deserve it. A group with this attitude would induct only those people who have proven that they're worthy. Perhaps the group simply observes, waiting for a worthy candidate to appear - whether within one of its subordinate organizations or totally outside the power structure. Alternatively, the group might actively test candidates - secretly, of course - to determine their mettle. (This was the method favored by Weishaupt when he created the Bavarian Illuminati in 1773.)

The major advantage of selection is that only those who are "worthy" to wield power will receive it. There's no risk that the "rightful heir" will turn out to be a congenital idiot. The prime risk is that the group may choose unwisely: they may offer membership to someone who refuses it because he disagrees with the organization's goals. While this situation arises frequently in literature ("*Join us, Mr. Bond . . .*"), it should be rare in "reality." The Illuminati will offer initiation only to one who has proven himself suited for membership, and to be incapable of changing his mind at a later date.

Groups that select their members based on worth will spend a significant proportion of their time searching for, testing and grooming candidates. They will probably "recruit" from those sub-organizations close to the center of the web, but there's no reason why they couldn't pick a suitable candidate "off the street" - once he'd been sufficiently tested, of course. (See p. 86.)

The qualities that characterize a "worthy" candidate will depend on the group's ultimate purpose and activities. A member of the "Network" - an organization of the world's best computer hackers - would obviously require different skills from a member of the "Gnomes of Zurich," or a council member of the politically-oriented "Round Table." On the other hand, members of *any* Illuminati group would have some things in common, including dedication to the "cause" - whatever that might be - and a very healthy dose of ambition.

There will definitely be no incompetents among the Illuminati themselves. Well-meaning incompetents might become pawns or tools of the Conspiracy; they might even be led to believe that they've reached the center of power. But, in reality, they will always be at the periphery of the web, puppets dancing on strings pulled by the true Illuminati.

In most groups, there will be no fanatics among the upper echelons; fanaticism gets in the way of clear and reasoned thinking, which members of the Illuminati must have in spades. This does *not* mean that there will be any uncertainty or weakness of motivation within the core group. The Illuminati will be pragmatic and totally ruthless about attaining their key goals.

Resources

Some Illuminated groups will have incomprehensibly extensive resources. Such a group can purchase *anything* that is for sale . . . and many things that aren't normally considered to be on the market. The sources of this money will vary. Organizations that have infiltrated the

CONTROLLING SUBORDINATE GROUPS

The Illuminati have many methods for controlling the groups within their power structure. A key member of the subordinate group - the CEO of a corporation, for example, or a trusted adviser — might actually be a member of the ruling council.

An Illuminated group that controls the flow of information to or within a subordinate group has great influence over its actions, even if no one within it knows the Illuminati exist. By providing the right information, the secret masters can set things up so that the leaders of the subordinate group will, of their own volition, act in exactly the way the Illuminati want. (For example, if the Network wants to destroy the influence of someone in the military complex, it can plant evidence that he's a foreign "mole." Then the intelligence community will deal with the matter without ever knowing they're doing the will of the Network.)

Another convenient form of control is through influence over a subordinate group's funding. The recent "gag law" concerning abortion in the U.S. shows how the government can exert control over independent medical institutions: any clinic receiving federal funding that counsels patients to seek an abortion, or that even discusses abortion as an option, will find its federal funding cut off.

Then there are the old-fashioned methods of compromising a key member of a subordinate group: physical threats, extortion, blackmail, even - in extreme cases — brainwashing. It's obvious that any Illuminated group worthy of the name has many ways of influencing the actions of other organizations.



THE ILLUMINATED CAMPAIGN

TAKING OVER A GOVERNMENT

Conceptually, taking over a government is no different from gaining control of a smaller group. The only differences lie in the cost, both in resources and in time.

The process by which a determined organization can seize control of a government was encapsulated in a 1957 book by Jan Kozak, a member of the Secretariat of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The first step involves having the organization's own people infiltrate the government. These infiltrators don't have to have total power, but they must be in a position to bring in at least some legislation.

The second step is to create a real or alleged grievance with the government. This involves either an action the government took, or a required action it failed to take. The third step is to field a mob in reaction to the manufactured grievance, demanding that the government solve the problem by legislation. The fourth step is for the conspirators in the government to bring in such legislation - *oppressive* legislation - that fails to solve the problem.

The last three steps are repeated, again and again. The mob demands more and more legislation, which the government enacts, until the government has become totalitarian . . . which was the initial goal of the conspirators.

A similar method was used by Adolf Hitler, according to conspiracy theorist A. Ralph Epperson. Hitler "sent his own party loyalists into the streets . . . to create the terror that he blamed on the government . . . The German people, told by Hitler that the government in power couldn't end the terror even though they passed oppressive legislation in an effort to stop it, listened to the one man who was offering relief: Adolf Hitler. He was in a position to stop the terror. He was ! the one causing it! And therefore he could end it! And he promised that he would end it when he was given the power of government! The people believed Hitler and voted him into office. And once in office, he called in his party • loyalists and the terror ended, just like he] promised. Hitler appeared to be a hero: - he did what he said he would."

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global data networks have total - albeit covert - control of the world's banking community, since what is international banking but the exchange of information? By changing the details of the smallest percentage of daily monetary transactions, they can collect virtually unlimited sums of money.

Even without complete access to the world's computer network, Illuminated groups can still make staggering amounts of money. As any inside trader knows, there are fortunes to be made on the stock market if one knows exactly which way even one stock is going to go. The Illuminati know, or can guess, how their actions are going to affect hundreds of stocks. They can then buy or sell those stocks, through so many blind links and shell companies that nobody can trace their actions. Normal large corporations are able to do this; how much easier it becomes for a group that can steer government and social policy.

Illuminati groups might also own companies, conglomerates and international megacorporations. Again, profits can be maximized when the controlling group can influence government policy.

For each Illuminati group in the campaign, the GM should decide where it gets its money, and roughly what its cash flow would be. (Many Illuminati groups could buy Luxembourg out of petty cash.) Sources of funding are important, since one way of examining a power structure is to analyze how money flows through it. The source of the Illuminati's money supply is also important to those who would disrupt it!



There are many important resources other than money, of course. Intelligence is always a key factor; it's vital to know what the other players in the game are doing. In a technological world, there are many sources of information that the Illuminati can access: government census data, income tax records, credit records, bank data, etc. Illuminated groups that control the news media can easily learn the "real truth," while making sure that what gets out to the people says exactly what they want it to say. Again, the GM should decide what sources of information are available to each Illuminati group in the campaign. (Other sources of information are discussed in later chapters.)

Technology is another significant resource. Many conspiracy theorists believe that the Illuminati have suppressed or "managed" the dissemination of technological developments, while keeping the fruits of important breakthroughs for themselves. In some campaigns, or in the case of some Illuminati, this effect may be relatively minor; the only major result is that the group's "soldiers" have access to military weaponry that the Pentagon frowns at seeing in private hands. In other cases, however, Illuminati groups might have equipment appropriate to a Tech Level one, two (or more) steps higher than the rest of the campaign world. The GM should decide this at the start, since it will significantly change how the group goes about its business.



But the Illuminati don't *have* to be that powerful. The GM can create interesting groups by asking "How could an Illuminati organization become secretly influential *without* huge wealth?" The likeliest reason for a group to keep a low profile would be fear of rival Illuminati. Different groups might specialize in different areas of power, keeping an uneasy and unwilling balance.

Relationships Between Illuminati Groups

If there are more than one Illuminati groups in a campaign world, it's important to know the nature of the relationships between them. Firstly, do the groups know of each other's existence, or does each "central committee" think it's the only organization striving for world domination? It's possible, although unlikely, that each of several conspiracies could believe that it's the only such organization in the world. It would be likelier for each group to know of the existence of the others, even though it may not know that much about them.

Perhaps the most interesting situation is where the level of awareness isn't equal. The Network might know about the Knights Templar, while the converse isn't true. Or the Network might know about the Templars but not about the Cathars, while the Templars know about the Network and the Cathars, while the Cathars know only about the Templars. GMs can make this situation as baroque as they like; the more complex the better. (Then add the next level of complication: are the Templars really ignorant of the existence of the Network, or is that a ruse to lull the super-hackers into a false sense of security?)

If Illuminated groups *are* aware of each other, what is their relationship? Is there an uneasy truce? Is there constant, out-and-out warfare? Or are the groups *pretending* to hold to a truce, while covertly doing what they can to smash each other's power structure and simultaneously denying that they're doing so? It's remotely conceivable that all the Illuminati groups in a campaign world are *cooperating* with each other, until a major goal is achieved. This might occur if it appears that something like a war between the superpowers will rain the chances of *any* group getting what it wants. (Perhaps the Knights Templar and the Knights of Malta cooperated on fragmenting the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, while the Network and the Holy Realm of Loge are still pushing the United States closer to isolationism.) Once the purpose of the cooperation has been achieved - in this example, once the Cold War is totally ended - the rival groups can get back to smashing each other's power structures to pieces.

Perhaps the most dramatically interesting situation would be where there are alliances between diverse Illuminati groups, and those alliances shift with little or no notice. In this scenario, each group is willing to do whatever it takes to reach its goal, even cooperate with - and then probably back-stab - an erstwhile adversary. This is just a macrocosm of the confusing state in which most subgroups - members of an Illuminated organization's power structure - exist all of the time.

Once the GM has decided the general situation - e.g., mutual ignorance, temporary cooperation, shifting allegiances, or out-and-out conflict - the other details, such as who's currently at whose throat, can be determined later. It could even vary depending on the actions of the PCs.

Building the Power Structure

The next step is to decide what organizations each Illuminated group would infiltrate, suborn or otherwise control to make up its power structure. This will depend largely on the Illuminated group's purpose and nature, as will the methods it uses to control them. Some groups within the power structure might match the characteristics of the central Illuminated council - for example, the Network might infiltrate IBM and Apple - but many will supplement the original group, providing skills beyond the



INDIVIDUAL AGENTS

Much of the discussion in this chapter has centered around subgroups controlled, directly or indirectly, by the Illuminati. In certain situations, however, a single individual agent can help the Conspiracy toward its goal faster than a whole power structure of subgroups.

An example of such an individual was Bismarck, the "Iron Chancellor" of Prussia. Prussia was on the brink of war with France - a war which the King of Prussia wished to avoid, but which Bismarck desired. The king sent a conciliatory telegram to the French, but Bismarck altered the wording. He stuck out the king's conciliatory words, so that the telegram sounded belligerent. The result was just what the Iron Chancellor intended: a French declaration of war, followed by a German victory.



THE CYBERGATE CAPER

As many readers will know, in 1990 the U.S. Secret Service raided Steve Jackson Games' offices and confiscated various computers and other equipment. On the computers were files that would eventually become the *GURPS Cyberpunk* book. According to Secret Service statements, the raid was part of a campaign against phone-company-sabotaging hackers, and the *Cyberpunk* project was described by a Secret Service agent as a "textbook for computer crime." The apparent illegality and unconstitutionality of this raid makes the incident seem sinister enough...

But try this as an alternate reading, an example of how conspiracy theory can work. The target of the raid *wasn't* the *Cyberpunk* project; it was *this* book - *GURPS Illuminati* - which hadn't been assigned or begun yet! Was the Conspiracy early? Or were they just making a point that *nobody's* safe, and "if we did it once, we can do it again?"

Note that the status of the Secret Service agents involved in the raid can be interpreted in different ways... and the more you know about the story, the *less* sinister those agents seem! From the point of view of the Steve Jackson Games employees who met them, they were classic MIBs (Men in Black). They were gruff, threatening, confident authority figures who wouldn't explain what they were doing.

From the agents' point of view? Well, it depends on whether they knew the purpose of their visit. Most likely, they were just following orders, and thus could be considered ordinary Tools.

From the point of view of those who sent them? As it turned out later, the Secret Service had been brought into the matter by the telephone company, which had suffered from harmless but annoying intrusions by computer hackers. The telephone company first turned to the FBI, telling them that there was a hacker conspiracy threatening the Emergency 911 system. The FBI didn't play along, however, forcing the telephone company to go elsewhere.

Then they went to the Secret Service, which has concurrent jurisdiction over hacker hunts with the FBI... an ongoing rivalry. The Secret Service accepted the telco's story. When they raided Steve Jackson Games, they may have honestly thought that they were destroying a dangerous conspiracy of sociopathic geniuses. If so, the agents - indeed, the whole Secret Service and the prosecutor who sent them - were simply dupes, doing someone else's dirty work on the basis of false information.

range of the council members. Again, take the Network as an example. Penetration of the world's computer network provides the Illuminati with control over the flow of information, but sometimes manipulating data isn't enough, and direct action is required. Therefore, the Network might subvert groups with political influence - the National Rifle Association, perhaps - and those with direct physical power, such as a member of the intelligence community like MI5.

Many of the organizations controlled by Illuminati groups are well-known players on the world stage. The GM thus doesn't have to create them from scratch the way he did the central Illuminati group(s). There are still several important questions he must answer about each organization within the power structure, however.

Goals of Subordinate Groups

Each group within a power structure will have its own goals. These might be overt; the NRA, for example, has an overt purpose of protecting the rights of gun owners.



Subordinate groups might also have covert purposes, however, and be different from their overt purposes. (As an example, the NRA's covert goal might be to destroy the rights of gun owners, by making such ludicrous demands that the government overreacts and drastically tightens gun control laws.) Members of the subordinate group might be aware of their covert purpose, but it's much more likely that most believe the "party line" and are unaware of any hidden agenda.

The covert goal of a subordinate group will usually be aligned, to some degree at least, with the central purpose of the controlling Illuminati group. This need not always be the case, however. The Illuminati might find it beneficial to co-opt a group whose goals are at cross-purposes with their own. This could well confuse others as to the central group's true intentions.

Relationships Between Subordinate Groups

Subordinate groups will range widely in what they know. Some will know or suspect that they're part of the great Conspiracy; others will be totally unaware of the fact. Certain groups might start their own "sub-conspiracies," and think that they're the "prime movers" as they suborn and control other organizations. The situation can get thoroughly baroque as the Illuminati build their power structures.

Subordinate groups could cooperate with other organizations, could be totally ignorant of their existence, or could be involved in complex rivalries. Groups within the same power structure could come into direct conflict, using every available means to subvert or destroy their "rivals." While this might signal that the central Illuminati's control has slipped, more often the conflict will further the ends of the controlling organization. It can even be a smoke screen to confuse other Illuminati as to exactly who is working for whom and why.

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Groups might sometimes be dropped from a power structure, or cut out by another subordinate group. . . or that's how it may appear. Such a disaffected group might actually be bait, to draw out another Illuminated group - or a member of *its* power structure, at least - and make it show itself. When this "enemy" group makes its move, it might expose itself to attack. Alternatively, the "orphaned" group might still secretly remain part of the original power structure, and become a "mole" within the structure of the group that co-opted it.

Subgroups in Rival Power Structures

Another key question is how a subordinate group relates to organizations in other power structures. The first issue is, of course, whether the two subgroups *know* they're in rival power structures - or if they know they're part of power structures at all.

There are great possibilities for intrigue and confusion here. Rival subgroups might be in out-and-out conflict, busily trying to infiltrate, suborn or destroy each other. They might totally ignore each other. . . or at least *pretend* to ignore each other. Or they could cooperate, either for some kind of "one-shot" operation or on an on-going basis.

Relationship with the World at Large

No matter what place they hold in a power structure, subordinate groups also have a place in the "real" world - that is, the world outside the Conspiracy. There are five basic positions, each with many sub-options.

Existence widely known, with significant influence. This includes powerful organizations such as the FBI, the CIA, national governments, the Roman Catholic Church, and major financial institutions like the World Bank. Because of their influence, these organizations are of great use to the Illuminati. The down-side is that many people *believe* — at least to some degree - that these groups are part of a global Conspiracy, and thus distrust their actions and intentions.

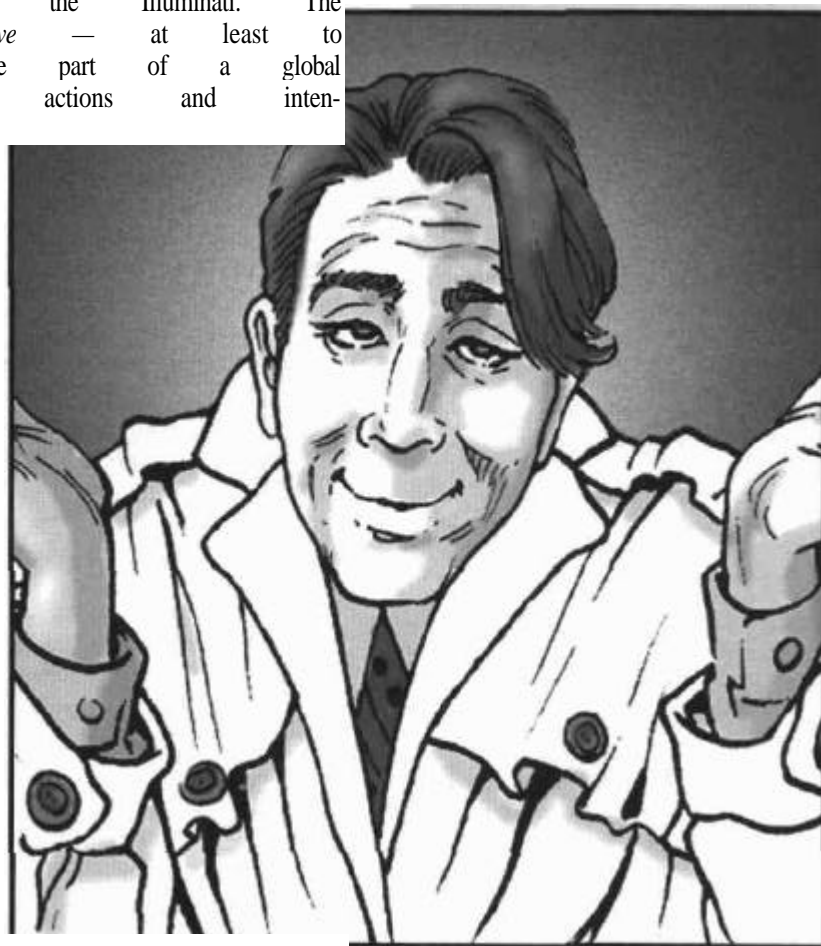
Existence widely known, but influence minimal. These are groups like most churches, the Boy Scouts and the United Parcel Service. They have little overt political influence on the world at large, although their covert influence could be quite significant. And some such groups *do* have goals and procedures which are not widely discussed outside the group (for instance, every church has its own rituals). Still, only true conspiracy theorists (and paranoids) believe that these groups are involved in the Conspiracy, which gives them more freedom of action.

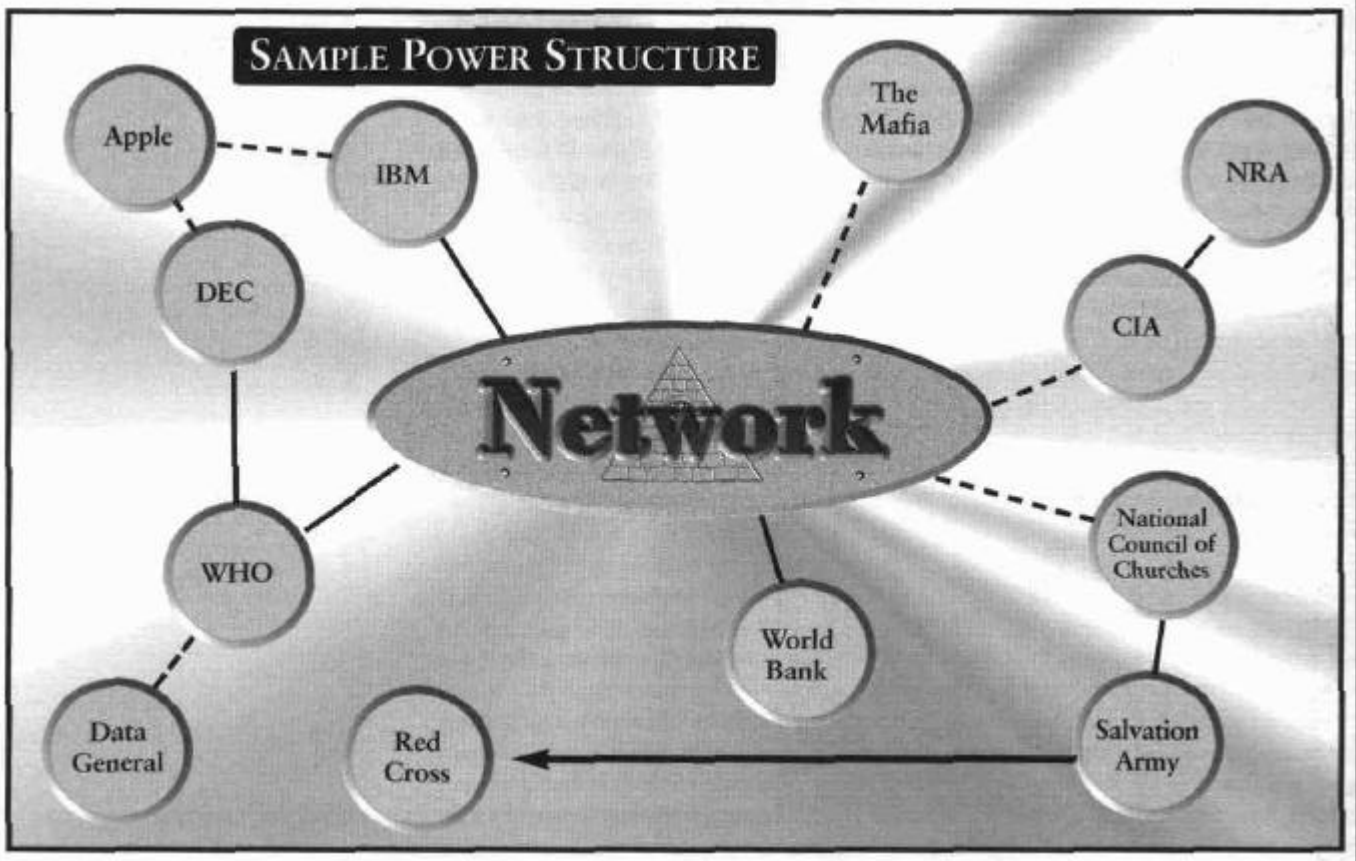
Existence announced as a secret society. Groups like the Freemasons and Greek-letter fraternities announce their identities as secret societies. This sets the minds of many people at ease as to their significance. The reasoning is, "If they were really conspiratorial secret societies, they wouldn't announce that they're secret societies." This reasoning actually holds little water. Such groups can have great significance. Many "movers and shakers" have been - or still are - members of such groups, giving the organizations some power over them. Further, groups like college fraternities can potentially indoctrinate their members with desired beliefs *before* they come into the public ken.

JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE PARANOID

Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean that people *aren't* out to get you!

In 1949, James Forrestal, the first Secretary of Defense of the United States, was diagnosed as paranoid and confined to an upper floor of the Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, DC. The reason? He believed that he was being followed by Israeli secret agents. So strong was the Secretary's belief in this surveillance, and so deep his depression over his confinement, that he committed suicide by jumping from a window. After his death, it turned out that Israeli agents *had* been following Forrestal, trying to learn whether the U.S. was making secret arrangements with Arab nations.





WHEN THE DOCTORS AREN'T OUT TO HELP YOU ...

Once you've been diagnosed as mentally ill - particularly when the diagnosis is paranoia, or some other delusional psychosis - it can be frighteningly difficult to get out of the system. There are recurring "urban myths" about totally sane people being dumped in psych wards — possibly as part of a college prank - and being unable to convince the staff that they're sane. ("Yes, of course, you're not sick, of course you're a freshman at the local college. Now just take your medication and everything will be fine . . .")

This is a very real risk for anyone investigating the Conspiracy. Psychiatrists and psychologists have little choice but to consider you pathologically deranged if you keep claiming things that everyone "knows" are counter-factual. . . even if what you're claiming happens to be the truth. The truth or fallacy of a statement has very little to do with its plausibility, and it's on plausibility alone that mental health care professionals often base their judgments. (For a sterling example of this, take a look at the psychiatrist in *The Terminator* and *Terminator II*.) Investigators are advised to stay out of the clutch of the psych wards . . .

Existence kept secret, but can be discovered. These are secret societies that have taken at least some pains to conceal their existence. Examples are the Hellfire Club in Britain, and Skull & Bones in the U.S. Some conspiracy theorists point to direct connections between some of these groups - particularly Skull & Bones - and the Bavarian Illuminati of Adam Weishaupt. These organizations command the same kind of allegiance as the well-known secret societies, if not more. It's likely that they're even better able to indoctrinate their members.

Existence kept inviolably secret. Such groups are known only to their members, and perhaps to others deeply involved in the Conspiracy. Some might have belonged, at one time, to either of the preceding two classifications. Over time, however, they slipped from public knowledge, and most people believe that they ceased to exist. Weishaupt's Bavarian Illuminati itself might fit into this category. (The group is thought to have dissolved in the 19th century, but is this actually true?) There is no way of knowing how many of these organizations exist, who their members are, and what their goals are. This category provides the greatest opportunity for GMs to let their imagination run free.

Mapping the Conspiracy

Once the major participants in the Conspiracy have been determined, the final step is to sketch out their interrelationship, possibly in the form of an "influence map." The GM is free to use whatever system best suits him, of course, but the following is a suggestion. Use solid lines to illustrate direct control, dotted lines to signify indirect influence, and single- or double-headed arrows to show conflicts. The figure above shows a (very simple) Conspiracy structure.



"Winging It"

The initial step is to decide which group the PCs are going to come into contact with first. The options are limitless - the FBI, some secret government think-tank, or the local PTA. Almost by axiom, the first group the PCs encounter will be close to the periphery of the Conspiracy.

Ideally, the GM should work out the relationship between the first group and the world at large, as discussed above. There's no need to worry too much about the group's goal. Organizations on the periphery frequently don't *have* goals; they just dance like puppets controlled by a group further up the hierarchy, without realizing that their "collective will" isn't their own.

From this point, the GM can figure out the connections with other groups as it becomes necessary. Only when the PCs have at least partially explored the structure of the first group need the GM worry about the next step. In fact, the GM can frequently let the players guide him in this. Creative players will often investigate potential links that might never have occurred to the GM. When the time is right to move on to the next group in the chain, he can allow whichever path of investigation most interests him to bear fruit. The advantage of this is that the structure of the Conspiracy will always make some sense to the players - if not to the PCs - and will follow lines that they're interested in exploring. Although they won't - and shouldn't - know it, they are *creating* the Conspiracy as they go along.

Alternatively, the GM can devise links to whatever other organization strikes his fancy. GMs shouldn't be afraid to be illogical. There's always time to fill out the background of the link, and the logic behind it, as the game develops. (For example, a GM might decide that the National Rifle Association - to use a familiar example - is controlled indirectly by the Boy Scouts of America. At first blush this makes little sense. But as the campaign develops, the GM realizes that the leaders of the NRA might all be ex-Scouts. Thus, their troop leaders could have quietly indoctrinated them with the beliefs that today make them such strong advocates of the right to bear arms.)

As the PCs explore the interconnected organizations that make up the Conspiracy, the GM will probably get a sense of what lies at the center of the web.



THE CONSPIRACY OF MAGIC

There is little doubt that early Conspiratorial groups such as Weishaupt's Bavarian Illuminati were involved in magic. After all, Baron von Knigge. Weishaupt's most important recruit from Protestant North Germany, was known to be skilled in magic and alchemy.

The disappearance of magic and study of magic from the world was interesting phenomenon. Over the centuries much research had been performed into the "laws" and principles of magic. Yet all of that has apparently been lost. This is actually quite surprising. Consider how the pseudo-sciences "evolved" into the true sciences we know and accept today: alchemy evolved into chemistry, astrology evolved into astronomy. The reason is obvious. Even though the alchemists and the astrologers were on the wrong track — or so we believe — many of their observations and experiments led us along the path of scientific development. With the Renaissance, the key truths were drawn from alchemy and astrology, while the rest fell into disrepute (with certain notable exceptions).

Yet nothing was saved from centuries of research into conjuration, enchantment, necromancy and the other black arts. Why?

Some would say the reason is that magic is a "bankrupt" tradition - there *are* no truths to cull from it. Others claim that the "truths" of magic are so causal, so unamenable to logical analysis, that when Renaissance scholars tried to force magic into the Procrustean bed of the scientific method, there seemed to be no fit at all.

Conspiracy theorists have a different interpretation. The magical tradition was never lost; it simply went underground. Since the days of Weishaupt, certain Illuminati groups have been heavily involved in magic, and still are today. It was these groups that made sure the magical arts were discredited and virtually forgotten. Since the Illuminati would be the only magically active individuals on Earth, they would have a great advantage over "mundanes." Similar arguments have been made about psionic abilities.

THE CONSPIRACY OF TECHNOLOGY

Take a look back through the pages of old science fiction stories from the 1940s and 1950s. What wonders did the writers predict for the 1990s? Now look around you. Where are those wonders?

Some of the predictions were totally off the wall. But it's interesting that so many writers massively *overestimated* how long it would take to see certain developments (for example, Robert Heinlein pegged the first manned landing on the moon as sometime around the year 2000). Why the inconsistency? Why a flight to the moon 31 years early, and no personal helicopters or jet packs?

Some conspiracy theorists point out that the "wonders" we haven't seen yet are those that would increase personal freedoms. The Apollo program was a technological *tour de force*, but it had little direct impact on the life-style of the man on the street. Personal helicopters, however, *would* have made a major difference. On another tack, there are recurring urban myths of technological advancements that have been suppressed (the 100-mpg carburetor, for example).

The obvious conclusion to draw - in an Illuminated world, at least - is that the Conspiracy is suppressing those technological advances that they consider detrimental to their ends, while pushing technologies that they consider beneficial. Since only the Illuminati themselves know those ends, it's impossible to predict beforehand what technologies will be held back and which helped along.

When the Conspiracy suppresses a technology, is it buried or lost forever? Not at all. It's almost certain that the Conspiracy keeps "forbidden" technology for itself - and probably refines and extends it in hidden labs. Thus, it's quite possible that the Illuminati will have access to many of those "wonders" from early science fiction.

Many breakthroughs - including technologies that the Illuminati would like to suppress - occur in small labs and research establishments around the world. To be sure of catching everything before it "escapes," the Conspiracy must keep a close watch on as many such establishments as possible. The Conspiracy's resources are huge but not infinite, so there's always the possibility that a breakthrough will occur where they're not watching - somebody's basement workshop, for example. The Conspiracy will frequently have to move quickly and decisively to suppress such discoveries.

Perhaps there are entire warehouses *somewhere*, full of technological and other developments sequestered by the Illuminati for their own ends.



The conceptual "shape" of the periphery will at least partially define the center. The PCs might never reach that center, of course; but the GM will come to understand more of the underlying purpose of the Conspiracy. (Perhaps the Illuminati themselves are guiding the GM in this step-wise understanding. Fnord.)

The major advantage of "winging it" is that the GM avoids the task of building an entire conspiracy before play begins. The amount of work will be much the same, but it will be spread out over many playing sessions. The GM can also recruit the help of the players themselves in figuring out the structure (although the players won't know they're being used in this manner . . . which is philosophically very much in keeping with an Illuminated campaign.)

The only significant disadvantage is that the world might not be quite so coherent as it would if the GM had developed the Conspiracy structure at the outset. But an Illuminated world *isn't* coherent. Everything is connected, but nothing makes sense ...

Getting the Characters Involved

The methods a GM can use to get the characters involved will depend largely on the nature of the campaign. The most important consideration here is whether the players even know they're playing in an Illuminated campaign - that is, if they know that the GM is using this book. The players might believe they're playing in virtually *any* kind of "normal" campaign - espionage, "cops and robbers," horror, etc. GMs might decide to "illuminate" an existing campaign that's been going on for some time. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss techniques and situations that can be used to involve PCs in an Illuminated campaign.

Most introductions to the Illuminati depend on the "pyramid of evidence." The GM leads them into things slowly, dropping very minor hints that there are mysteries behind the facade of the normal. The PCs can find clues that at first seem to have nothing to do with the current adventure. Only when they follow up on these clues do they start to learn the true nature of the world around them, and the existence of the

THE ILLUMINATED CAMPAIGN



Conspiracy. One clue leads to another, and each new adventure builds upon the previous one. Characters can start off as innocents, totally unaware of the Illuminati's existence, then find that they've become pawns of the Conspiracy. As they peel away one level of "truth" after another, they can penetrate deeper into the structure, until they become conspirators themselves.

Campaign Crossovers

"Keep Your Day Job..."

The Conspiracy is something that happens "behind the scenes" of a campaign world. But what's happening "on stage," as it were? What are the PCs doing before they discover the Conspiracy, or while they're not actively investigating the Illuminati? In a "pure" Illuminated campaign, the PCs might be complete innocents, with no concerns larger than making a living and enjoying happy lives. They can follow any careers that suit their fancy, but the details of those careers are unimportant except as they affect the characters' skills, environment and resources. In a pure Illuminated campaign, the first game session begins with the PCs stumbling over the first clue that leads them into the Conspiracy.

This can be limiting, in that the PCs have nothing to do but hunt the Conspiracy (definitely a job that can take a lifetime - however long or short that might be - but players might occasionally want a break from paranoia). Also, the campaign can have more depth if the PCs have to juggle their research into the Illuminati with more mundane elements of their lives. A solution is to illuminate some other kind of campaign.

Any campaign - modern-day, future or historical - can provide the basis for an Illuminated campaign. Following are some possibilities.

Espionage

Most of the time, the PCs are involved in the normal paranoia of espionage, counter-espionage and intelligence analysis. Their foes are the factions and individuals they're familiar with: other intelligence agencies, the KGB, terrorist groups, foreign governments and all the rest. The PCs will frequently be dealing with "small-c" conspiracies. Once in a while, however, they find disturbing evidence that something bigger is going on. Perhaps they find indications that traditional enemies - the CIA and the KGB, for example, or at least sub-factions thereof - are *cooperating* on some kind of hidden agenda. This is the first clue that some groups in the world are playing a "bigger game" of which the PCs aren't aware, that there is a "big-C" Conspiracy acting behind the scenes.

Espionage operatives will typically have many skills that are tailor-made for investigating, infiltrating and combating the Conspiracy. On the other hand, they must juggle responsibilities and face dangers that others never have to worry about. Obviously, when they're working on uncovering the Illuminati, they aren't following the day-to-day orders of their superiors. (They might argue that investigating the Conspiracy is much more important than their regular duties. The odds are good, however, that this lead to the PCs being confined to padded cells or suffering "nine-millimeter migraines.")

Another complication is that the agents must watch out for countermoves by their traditional adversaries, as well as by the tools of the Conspiracy (assuming that they're not the same thing).

If the PCs make the Illuminati uncomfortable, it would be easy to use either their own agency or a traditional adversary to get them out of the way. Evidence could be manufactured that they've turned, bringing down upon them the wrath of their own agency. Alternatively - or even simultaneously - the Conspiracy could leak information to their enemies as to their whereabouts and actions, making it very easy to eliminate them.

TIMETRAVEL

In a Time Travel campaign, many more fascinating possibilities open up. Investigators must struggle with more than just "where are the Illuminati?" They also have to worry about "when are the Illuminati?"

The key players in the Conspiracy might be from the future. What to them is "historical" knowledge would give them a vast advantage in the world of today, as they know exactly what key events will happen, where and when. They might also be able to bring highly advanced technology from the future. This, rather than the suppression of technological advance, might explain why the Illuminati have access to equipment one or more tech levels ahead of the rest of the campaign. It could also explain the rumors of magicians among the Illuminati, since - to quote Arthur C. Clarke - "sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

If two or more rival Illuminati groups have time travel technology, the possibility for chaos is frightening. They could travel back in time and attack each other in the past.

In a time travel Illuminati campaign, the PCs will have to be even more alert. They may find themselves targeted for assassination by the "future-Illuminati" while they and the "present-Illuminati" are mutually ignorant of each other's existence. Alternatively, the PCs could be co-opted by agents from the future - possibly even themselves, some decades older! - and groomed to take key positions in the Conspiracy.

And what if the PCs are among the researchers who develop the first truly functional time machine? Obviously, all contemporary Illuminati groups will want that machine for their own. Simultaneously, Illuminati groups from the future might be trying to *destroy* the technology. And were the PCs actually helped along the way to the discovery by agents from the future?



HUMOROUS ILLUMINATI

So far, all discussions of an Illuminated campaign have been serious. But why couldn't the Illuminati be played for laughs?

The Illuminati themselves might be intelligent and competent, but who's to say the same is true for organizations further down the power structure? Maybe a group of incompetents was recruited by accident. Or maybe the Illuminati see some value in having a bunch of raving loonies on "staff." (As cannon fodder? To confuse infiltrators? To discredit the whole idea of a world-girdling Conspiracy? Or perhaps for some more mysterious reason...)

A campaign doesn't have to be slapstick - "The Illuminati Meet the Keystone Kops" - to be humorous. Individual events in the campaign don't have to be particularly funny when taken alone; people can still get killed in unpleasant ways, governments can be undermined, and the social order can be threatened. The humor can arise from the way these events tie in to the rest of the "real world." *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* is a good example. The conspiracy known as THRUSH was serious. Nasty things happened, people died in awful ways, the democratic way of life was threatened.

But the whole thing was funny, mainly because the rest of the world was blissfully unaware of what was going on. The intrepid heroes, Solo and Kuryakin, would weekly burst into the lives of some poor innocent, in order to rattle off his balcony, blow a hole in his kitchen floor, or dunk his radio in a bucket of water - all to save the world, of course. The humor came from the mismatch between what was really going on and what the "mundanes" *thought* was going on.

And who's to say the Illuminati are sane, and that their plans make sense? (They have to make sense *to the Illuminati*, of course, but not necessarily to anyone else.) Perhaps Illumination drives you insane.) There's humor in a world-spanning organization with almost unlimited resources, working day and night, earnestly pursuing a goal that's totally ludicrous.

Humor depends largely on the GM. Depending on the mood he creates, the threat of global domination can be grimly serious, or as comical as a Roger Moore-vintage James Bond movie. It depends largely on how the GM describes characters and situations. For example, a wild-eyed man wearing a skullcap made of crumpled aluminum foil could be insanely menacing, pathetic, or downright silly - all depending on the GM's description.

Cops

Police officers can easily be drawn into an investigation of the Conspiracy. The PCs stumble upon evidence that one or more "meaningless" crimes are connected by some strange thread. Their superiors on the force disagree, and tell them to stop the investigation. (Why? Perhaps the police commissioner is a member or tool of the Conspiracy . . .) The cops must either disobey direct orders, or continue the investigation on their own time, and without access to the resources of the force. They can get drawn deeper into the web as key witnesses are conveniently killed in "random street violence."

The Conspiracy could easily turn the PCs' own colleagues against them if they're getting too close to sensitive matters. It would be easy to contrive evidence that the cops are on the take, or perhaps acting as midnight vigilantes, and pass it to the police force's Internal Affairs department.

While on the job, police officers must continuously expose themselves to very real danger. They have no way of knowing if the next speeder they stop is a Conspiracy hit-man with a sawed-off shotgun on the seat beside him, or whether the two Asian drunks brawling in an alley are actually ninja assassins waiting for the cops to come and break up the fight . . . A single brush with the Conspiracy could lead them to see the Illuminati's hand in *everything* that happens around them - seriously degrading their effectiveness and damaging their credibility.



Horror

Characters in a horror campaign are already accustomed to looking for the hideous truths behind the veil of the normal. In general, however, they expect their foes to be ghosts, vampires and other creatures of the night, with an occasional serial killer or psychopath thrown in for good measure. In an Illuminated campaign, their traditional foes might well be supplemented by very human enemies.



Are the Illuminati monstrous creatures, or deathless fiends such as vampires? Or are they humans who've struck some kind of unholy deal with the forces of darkness? Vampires or other immortal creatures would make excellent Illuminati. Because they never die, they can take as much time as necessary to see their plans come to fruition. With centuries - or even millennia - of experience, they can be hideously daunting foes.

If the Illuminati are human, what is their connection with the monstrous denizens of the night? Perhaps magically adept Conspirators summoned or created the foul monsters, and now use them as servitors to help bring about their ultimate goals.

There may be two very different Illuminati groups, one human and the other monstrous, locked in a struggle that has lasted for centuries. Investigators might initially feel that the human Illuminati are their allies - "The enemy of my enemy is my friend" - but this might be delusion. The human Illuminati might be fighting the inhuman conspirators not out of altruism, but because the monsters are getting in the way of their plan to rule the world.

Note that inhuman Illuminati would have powers beyond the capabilities of humans. They might well have human supporters (for example, the insane cultists and worshippers of the Elder Gods that H.P. Lovecraft so enjoyed writing about).

Other Times and Places

Much of the material in this book discusses the Illuminati in the modern world - the "real" world of the early 1990s. There's no reason to limit the actions of the Conspiracy to *any* particular period of history. Many conspiracy theorists believe that conspiratorial groups functioned in the distant past, and there's no cause to believe that they'll *cease* to exist in the far future. The only things that change are the scope, the playing field and the "pawns" in the grand game.

Historical Illuminati Campaigns

An Illuminated campaign can be placed in *any* historical period. There were many secret groups and societies, following strange creeds and philosophies, during the golden age of Greece (Pythagoras led one of these). These could easily have been the Illuminati of their day. The Roman Empire was shot through with conspiracy and infighting, and there are historians who suggest that the fall of the empire was helped along by secret factions in its midst.

In the 15th century, Prince Henry the Navigator dispatched many ships to explore the African coast. One purpose of this exploration was to find a route around Africa and negotiate an alliance against Islam with "Prester John," who was said to be the powerful king of Ethiopia. When Portuguese vessels had rounded the Cape of Good Hope and sailed the east coast of Africa, they found that no Prester John existed (or so history tells). These voyages, even though they failed in their ultimate goal, opened the Age of Discovery for Europe. Perhaps the Illuminati devised and spread the tales of Prester John, with the sole intention of so stimulating exploration.

There are many European Illuminati-style groups dating back to the year 1100 and earlier, including the Knights Templar, who some believe still exist as part of the great Conspiracy. These groups were highly influential at their zenith. They would be perfect Illuminati in a campaign set centuries ago.

During the latter half of the 18th century - including the period of the French Revolution - many secret societies existed in western Europe: the Freemasons, the Knights Templar, the *Compagnonnage* - and of course Weishaupt's Bavarian Illuminati themselves - to name but several. Were any of these groups actually true Illuminati? Nobody knows. Certainly, however, a campaign set in this period - a *GURPS Scarlet Pimpernel* campaign, for instance - can easily be Illuminated. In fact, there are hints that conspiratorial groups - including the Knights Templar - might have been responsible for triggering the French Revolution. When Louis XVI was beheaded, an unidentified man is said to have jumped onto the guillotine platform and yelled, "Jacques de Molay, thou art avenged." Jacques de Molay was the

As described in *GURPS Horror*, the Cabal is a loosely-knit secret society of mages, psychics and magically-affected humans such as vampires and lycanthropes. On the surface, the Cabal appears to be a relatively innocuous mutual-aid society that uses the trappings of secrecy to maintain the safety and anonymity of its members. The Cabal - or so its members claim - offers sanctuary and understanding to people who have been touched by the supernatural.

That's the official "party line;" however, there are hints that there's more to the Cabal than this. Members appear to have infiltrated many powerful political and economic institutions, from unknown motives.

The Cabal has three immediate goals: protecting its members, furthering the understanding of supernatural powers, and monopolizing the powers of magic and psionics for its own purposes. (To this end, the group secretly funds institutions and individuals devoted to *debunking* psychic powers and the occult.) These goals are known to the majority of Cabal members.

But what about goals that are known only to the Grand Masters of the Inner Circle? As a globe-spanning organization, possessing strange powers, the members of the Cabal - or the Grand Masters, at least - certainly sound like Illuminati . . . The *true* goals of the Cabal are entirely up to the GM.



DAVIDHAWKINS, TABLOID 'REPORTER'

ST10;DX11;IQ 13;HT11.

Advantages: Intuition, Luck, Patron, (the *Midnight Sun*) Wealth (Comfortable).

Disadvantages: Bad Temper, Combat Paralysis, Delusion (Minor; "My work's no different from 'legitimate' journalism"), Status (tabloid hack, -3 reaction from legitimate journalists).

Quirks: Always carries a palm-sized tape recorder; Feels obliged to defend his profession against those who denigrate it.

Skills: Carousing-13; Computer Operation/TL7-12; Fast-Talk-16; Fencing-10; Photography/TL7-10; Research-14; Streetwise-10; Writing-17.

David "Hawk" Hawkins is head writer for a tabloid newspaper, the *Midnight Sun* (see sidebar, p. 83). He's well-paid for what he does, which is to sit in the *Sun's* office and churn out "reportage" about sensationalistic tabloid-style subjects under a number of bylines. He rarely goes out in the field, and then only to seek out local color to enliven some of his more outrageous pieces. Many of his best stories - like "Rosanne Arnold is the Antichrist!" - were actually assigned to him by his editor (and Patron), Barrett Hamley, who also suggested most of the "facts" of the case. Other stories are devised by the writing staff in their daily brainstorming sessions.

Hawk has a chip on his shoulder when it comes to legitimate journalists. He believes himself to be a "real" journalist, and is highly irritated by people who tell him he isn't. Regardless of the doubtful subject matter, Hawk *is* a very good writer. His two hobbies are photography and fencing; he's not overly good at either one. (Note that Hawk's Combat Paralysis isn't triggered in a bout with bated blades, but *would* be triggered if he faced an opponent across blades with real points and edges.)

Hawk doesn't know that the *Midnight Sun* and editor Hamley have anything to do with the Conspiracy, and would deride anyone who suggested it.

Grand Master of the Knights Templar, burned at the stake when his order was (supposedly) destroyed by Philip IV of France in 1314. (Further details on the Knights Templar can be found on p. 69.)

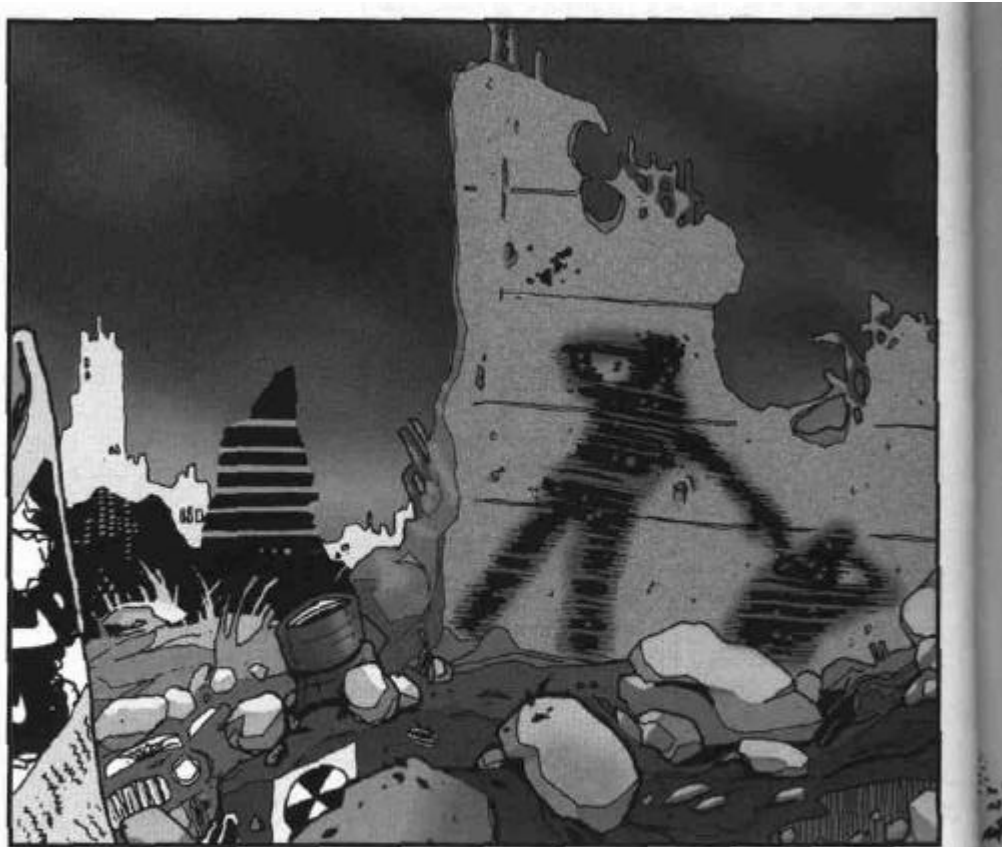
Even a *GURPS Old West* campaign could easily be Illuminated. The "railroad barons" and "cattle barons" of the late 19th century were powerful and ruthless, influencing government policy and cutting down anyone who got in their way. These individuals could themselves be among the Illuminati, or could be pawns in an even larger game.

"Historical" campaigns can also be set earlier in this century; a campaign focusing on "hard-boiled" detectives would be a perfect example. Although certain Illuminati groups such as the Network wouldn't exist even 30 years ago, most of the other members of the modern Conspiracy would be around during this period. (GMs interested in a "hard-boiled" Illuminati campaign shouldn't miss the movie *Chinatown*.)

The Future

There is no reason to expect the "end of the Illuminati" any time soon. Some Illuminated groups might vanish while others take their place, or the "old standards" might change their nature to stay with the times.

"Dark future" and cyberpunk campaigns are ripe for Illumination. In fact, interlocking multiple conspiracies are already major elements in most dystopian fiction. Computer-oriented groups like the Network are perfectly positioned to gain power in a cyberpunk world. Inexplicable events in cyberspace (like "ghosts in the Net") could easily be manifestations of Illuminati activity. As Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology advances, the possibility arises that the computers themselves will join the Conspiracy, dominating their human "masters." (In some modern-day Illuminati campaigns, that might already have taken place . . .) AI opponents would be incredibly difficult to defeat, since they would think and react at computer speed.



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Adventure Seeds

An Illuminated campaign is possibly the most individualistic of roleplaying worlds. It will vary widely from GM to GM, and even from day to day within the same game, as alignments and power structures shift and realign.

Following are campaign starters that GMs can fit into virtually any Conspiratorial world. Most of these are suitable for a pure Illuminated campaign; some, however, are cross-genre, and are marked as such.

The sidebars on pp. 50-54 describe characters that GMs can drop into the campaign where appropriate. Details should be changed to keep the players from recognizing them . . . or the names and descriptions should stay the same, while abilities and motivations change.

Terribilis Est (Illuminati/Horror)

In a European cave, a researcher discovers an ancient crypt dating back to the Dark Ages. Inscribed above the door is the Latin inscription, "*Terribilis Est Locus Iste*" ("This place is terrible").

Although the site is unknown to scholars, there's evidence that people have passed this way recently - within the last several months, at least. The researcher presses on.

Within the crypt he finds a black altar, atop which lies a human sacrifice - an adult man, slain by a black dagger of unusual design which is still lodged in his chest. Although unusually well preserved - perhaps due to the cool, dry air in the crypt - the body has obviously been dead for some months. The researcher looks closer, trying to identify the body . . . and recognizes an important political figure, perhaps the President of the United States.

But the researcher saw the President on TV two nights ago, giving his State of the Union address. Or *was* it the President?

An ancient Illuminati group known to dabble in magic - perhaps the Knights Templar, the *Prieure de Slon*, or Weishaupt's Bavarian Illuminati - kidnapped the President, and killed him in an arcane ritual that allowed one of their number to take on *his* appearance and personality. Or maybe it wasn't a *human* that took his place, but a soul-eating demon summoned by the rite. In any case, what evil could an Illuminati group wreak with one of their own members in the position of perhaps the most powerful leader in the world? (An even more disturbing question - if the "President" is actually a demon - would be, "Is the demon under the conspirators' control, or following its *own* hidden agenda?")

GMs should note that kidnapping the President of the U.S. long enough to whisk him away to a hidden tomb and off him with a dagger is much easier said than done. The fact that they succeeded implies the Illuminati have already penetrated the U.S. government - and specifically the Secret Service - to a frightening degree. If the campaign's Illuminati are simply not that powerful, perhaps the corpse is that of a double. If a crude wax doll can affect a person, how much more powerful would be a ritual performed on a living, breathing double? Either way, there's evil magic afoot.

Spitting Image

It all starts off innocently enough. A friend comes up to you, and remarks that he saw you walking by yesterday, but you didn't stop to talk. The mysterious thing is, you weren't anywhere near the place where this is supposed to have happened.

Matters quickly escalate. Other friends and colleagues say much the same thing, remarking that they've seen you in locations, and doing things, that don't match your memories. It soon extends to people you haven't met; they're reacting negatively to you, apparently for no reason. But when you pursue the matter, they say that you *have* met them, and were very rude to them. You go in to work one morning, and a colleague remarks that you came in late last night to "clear up some paperwork."



SARAH
BARSTOW.

ST9;DX 12;IQ 12;HT 10.

Advantages: Acute Vision, Alertness, Appearance (Attractive, +1), Night Vision, Peripheral Vision, Reputation (Highly skilled photographer; +2 to other professional photographers).

Disadvantages: Impulsiveness, Obsession (Photographing *everything*), Odious Personal Habit (will not stop photographing everything), Overconfidence.

Quirks: Always carries a camera.

Skills: Disguise-9; Motorcycle-14; Photography/TL7-21; Stealth-18; Streetwise-16.

Sarah is an attractive woman in her late 20s, and already has a reputation - among other photographers, at least - as a rising star. She freelances for a number of publications, including the *Midnight Sun* tabloid, and frequently helps them mock up the "photographic evidence" for their sensationalistic stories.

She always has a camera, or several cameras, with her, and snaps shots of anything that catches her eye. She seems almost unaware that she's doing this; it's almost a nervous tic. And she *never* discards a negative. The long hours she spends in the darkroom, and the fact that she almost always has a camera in front of her face, have come at the cost of her interpersonal skills. She's brusque to a fault, and considers small-talk to be the ultimate waste of time.

She has occasionally taken pictures of items and events that seem to hint at the existence of a Conspiracy. Although she's developed these photographs and noticed that they contain peculiar elements, she doesn't seem to have realized what they mean. (Or, if she has, she hasn't told anyone.)

Any conspiracy theorist, fringe researcher or similar character who went through Sarah's files - a daunting job, since it numbers many thousand negatives - would find enough circumstantial evidence of Conspiratorial activity to keep him busy for a long time. (Of course, the chances that she'd let anyone look through her precious pictures are



TONY K WAN, FRINGERESARCHER

ST8;DX9;IQ 11;HT 13,

Advantages: Charisma (+1), Wealth (Very Wealthy).

Disadvantages: Delusion (Minor; "The Illuminati are watching us all"), Dependent (Elderly mother), Duty (To mother), Gullibility, Impulsiveness, Obsession (constantly talks about the Conspiracy), Reputation (Gullible and deceived; -3 reaction from other Conspiracy researchers), Weak Will.
Quirks: Compulsive collector of "Illuminaria."

Skills: Archaeology-9; Computer Operation/XL?-13; Heraldry (Symbols of secret societies)-14; History-14; Occultism-9; Research-13; Writing-10.

Tony Kwan is the 30-year-old son of a rich Hong Kong businessman who left his considerable wealth to his invalid wife. Today, Tony has use of his mother's fortune, but is responsible for supporting her. Tony is also very wealthy in his own right, and will probably never have to work.

Tony is obsessed with the idea that a grand Conspiracy is all around us, and that the mysterious Illuminati are the real power behind the scenes. He is totally convinced that *everything* that happens does so at the instigation of these mysterious "hidden masters." Unlike many people, this concept doesn't disturb him, however: it fascinates and excites him. (Perhaps in his heart of hearts, Tony Kwan would like to *join* these hidden masters; however, he doesn't admit this to anyone, not even himself.)

He uses his wealth to track down any hint of Conspiratorial activity, anywhere in the world. If the event involves any concrete evidence or weird items - a signet ring with the symbol of the all-seeing pyramid, for example - he tries to buy whatever he can to add to his "Conspiratorial Museum" that he has set up in his home.

The problem is that Tony is unshakably gullible, making him a perfect target for confidence men. In fact, he has probably set a number of charlatans up for life by buying their "genuine UFO fragments" (rusted engine parts from a trashed Edsel) and "pages from the suppressed Second Gospel of Mark." Despite the forgeries, fakes and totally irrelevant items, Tony's collection *does* contain some interesting pieces that do have some connection - albeit indirectly - with the Conspiracy.

Tony's encyclopedic knowledge of things Conspiratorial is similar to his museum. Among little bits of trivia, lies and irrelevancies are some real gems of wisdom. Unfortunately, Tony can't tell the wheat from the chaff.

Tony would love to collaborate with anyone who shares his fascination with the Conspiracy. Unfortunately, most other researchers and theorists discount him totally.

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The final straw is when you get to work late one morning ... and a colleague says something about, "You changed clothes fast." It seems that your "doppelganger" got into work *early*, but pulled the quick fade before you arrived.

Just what's going on? Are you suffering from hallucinations? Are your friends and colleagues all involved in a conspiracy to systematically delude you? Or is the doppelganger real?

If the double *is* real, there can be a number of explanations. Perhaps a conspiratorial group is trying to destroy your credibility for some reason, to discredit you and even have you declared mentally incompetent. If you're working in a "sensitive" position - in the military, the intelligence community, or a company that's a likely target for industrial espionage - the double may be a spy. (*But isn't that a lot of work to go to for a little information?*)

Or maybe the doppelganger is a clone of you, or a surgically-modified double who is just "testing the water," as it were, preparing to eliminate you and totally take over your life . . .

Scavenger Hunt

The PCs, who are agents for a conspiratorial group, are assigned the mission of "acquiring" a certain item that has fallen into the hands of a scientist in a nearby city. From what little their masters will say, it seems to be an ultra-tech weapon or gadget of some kind. Its existence makes it obvious that *someone* has highly advanced technology. If the agents can acquire the dingus, their masters might be able to figure out who (or what) created it, and what their allegiance might be in the Great Game (if any).

There are countless possibilities here, which can be broken down into two major categories:



The Item is Real

Everything is as it appears: the item is important to the masters for the reasons they claim. Of course, other groups will be after it for the same reason. And its original owners - whether aliens or super-scientists - would probably like to have it back as well...

Or possibly the researcher possessing the item is working for another group of *niuminati*. It could be bait to lure rivals into the open. Alternatively, the researcher's masters might not care a whit about "normal" rivals. Who they're actually after are the original creators of the device, and this is all a ploy designed to draw *them* out into the open.

The Item is Fake

... But who faked it? If a rival group, then the goal is probably to lure the PCs' organization into showing itself. Enemy agents are likely to be watching very closely, ready to eliminate - or capture and interrogate, or even brainwash - the characters when they make their move.

Or maybe the agents' own group set the whole thing up, with the goal of luring rival groups into exposing *themselves*. And the agents? Well, they're just expendable pawns, sent out into a potential killing zone unsupported, to convince the opposition that this whole thing isn't the set-up that it actually is.

Ghost in the Machine (Illuminati/GURPS Cyberpunk)

It's a borderline cyberpunk world, with technology advanced perhaps ten years from the present day. The Net is only just developing, and neural interfaces are not yet commercially available.

One PC is a computer programmer/analyst - possibly a security specialist - for a major corporation, and finds unmistakable evidence that someone has hacked into the company's system from outside. Following the traces left by the penetration, he determines that the hacker is apparently someone called Robert McKinnon - or at least someone using his icon and some of his access codes. But McKinnon's records say that he died of cancer three years before, after a protracted illness. His icon is still running the Net, however, causing untold havoc; even stranger, whoever is running that icon seems to be using almost impossibly fast hardware.

Attempts to nail this super-hacker are blocked by a wide range of other "assets" within the Net, indicating that McKinnon - or whoever it is - is actually involved in some incredibly large Conspiracy. Just who is this super-hacker? Just someone who stole the dead McKinnon's icon and codes? Or is it a ghostcomp - McKinnon's personality transferred into the Net? If the latter, just who are the conspirators apparently working with him?

Mail Call

An agent of conspiratorial group A is using a rental car as a "mail drop." He's concealed a package - actually an envelope, addressed to a downtown business - under the driver's seat, to be picked up by another courier. The clerk at the desk of the car rental outfit is a tool in this scheme. He's been told to give that particular car only to someone who uses the correct recognition code. It's a hideously busy day at the front desk, however; under pressure, he makes a mistake, and gives *the car* to someone else - in fact, a PC.

Group A has agents watching the car to make sure that all is okay. They see the wrong person getting in the car; something is seriously wrong. Group B, a rival organization, is also watching the car. They don't know about the parcel under the seat, or

LAMONT GRAY, "CONSULTANT"

ST 12; DX 13; IQ 13; HT 12.

Advantages: Alertness, Ally Group ("Rent-a-mob"), Appearance (Attractive, +1), Charisma (+3), Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, Reputation (Good organizer; +2 to professional agitators), Strong Will, Voice.

Disadvantages: Intolerance (of Pacifists), Overconfidence, Reputation (Rabble-rouser; -4 reaction from targets of protests).

Quirks: Likes baroque chamber music, hates hard rock and rap; Always has a knife concealed somewhere on his person.

Skills: Brawling-14; Climbing-12; Demolition-14; Escape-11; Fast-Draw (Pistol)-13; Fast-Talk-14; Guns (Pistol)-17; Knife-13; Knife Throwing-14; Leadership-19; Politics-11; Public Speaking-18; Sex Appeal-15; Stealth-17.

Lament Gray is a large, handsome man in his early 30s. He would describe himself as a "Public Relations Consultant" or "Expediter." People who've faced him as an opponent would call him saboteur, rabble-rouser, *agent provocateur*, ring-leader, and many things unsuitable for print.

Regular viewers of local evening newscasts often notice that whenever a major protest march, sit-in, or similar event occurs, many of the same faces keep turning up. Some might guess that these people are professional demonstrators or agitators.

Sometimes that's the truth. Gray has a group of 20 allies - he refers to them as his "Rent-a-Mob" - that he hires out to organizations who are planning demonstrations. Like Gray himself, the members of Rent-a-Mob are good leaders and excellent public speakers (read "rabble-rousers"), and can guarantee to turn an otherwise placid march into something that will make the top of the evening newscast.

Gray takes it one step further, accepting contracts for sabotage (usually arson, although he's very good with a block of *plastique*), intimidation and even out-and-out "wet work." He is totally amoral, and unconcerned about the philosophy, politics or dogma espoused by the people who hire him. All he cares about is whether their money's good. Although many people would label Gray a fanatical anarchist, he is actually fanatical about *nothing*. He approaches everything pragmatically, asking only how it would personally benefit Mm.

Gray knows that he's been hired in the past - and will continue to be hired - by groups involved in some kind of large Conspiracy. In fact, he knows that some people would consider him a "Man in Black," and finds the idea highly amusing. As it is, he couldn't care less about the Conspiracy's goals, or the real reason he's being hired. Just as long as the contracts keep rolling in, he'll be happy.



JEAN-JACQUES MARTEL, CONSPIRATOR

ST9;DX13;IQ14;HT9.

Advantages: Ally Group (the *Prieure*), Eidetic Memory (Photographic), Status (Level 2), Wealth (Filthy Rich), Voice.

Disadvantages: Age (72), Duty (to the *Prieure*), Vow (to the Order: secrecy, and protect the Merovingian heir).

Quirks: Chain-smoker; Wears a signet ring with the symbol of the Merovingian kings; Speaks quietly, almost in a whisper.

Skills: Administration-13; Diplomacy -16; Economics-16; Heraldry (Symbols of secret societies)-15; History-17; Language (English)-13 ; Language (French)-17 ; Leadership-16; Occultism-13; Savoir-Faire-16; Theology -13.

Jean-Jacques Martel is a small, slender man, with bright, piercing eyes and an unmistakably Gallic nose. Despite his age, his thin hair is black with no trace of gray.

Martel proudly traces his lineage to Dagobert II, last of the great Merovingian kings. When he was 16, a messenger came to him, revealing his heritage, and inviting him to join the *Prieure de Sion*. Martel joined with a will. Over the decades, he has served the Order well in many capacities. He is currently one of the three Seneschals of the Order, under the direct authority of the Grand Master.

While serving the Order, Martel has been very successful in business, and has served with great distinction in the French diplomatic corps. His face is well-known in the corridors of power, although Ms membership in the Order is a well-kept secret.

Martel's duties over the last few years have been to help create a climate of public opinion that will support the Order when it finally brings forth the true Merovingian heir to the throne of France. This has involved leaking information hinting at the existence of the Merovingian line, and even of the *Prieure* itself. Martel is easily rich enough to hire muscle to protect Mm, and Ms home outside Paris is a fortress.

A further duty that has fallen to Martel is to test investigators who seem to be getting too close to the Order. Although only members of the Merovingian bloodline can be initiated members, the Order has a number of "lay members" who serve it as agents. Should investigators (such as the PCs) prove potential candidates, Martel may offer them membership as lay members. (Of course, lay brothers must prove themselves before learning the secrets of the Order, and frequently become expendable tools.) Otherwise, Martel will frequently warn them off personally. Should they ignore him, however, he will take whatever actions are required to protect the Order and its plans.

even that the operation is a mail drop. All they know is that group A is doing *something*, and they want to break it up on principle. They start to move in on the PC in the car.

Group A doesn't know what's going on. *Somebody's* got the car - and their parcel - and now agents they recognize as members of group A are approaching. Is the guy in the car with group B? Or are the group A agents after the parcel? Group A has no choice but to protect their parcel. They mix it up with the group A operatives. To the group A agents, everything suddenly makes sense. The guy in the car *must* be a group A agent; otherwise why would group A be trying to stop them from getting to the car? It's suddenly very important for them to get the guy in the car and ask him some hard questions.

The PC, of course, is in the middle of all this, blissfully ignorant. He might see strange things going on around him - people shooting each other, car crashes, etc. - but he probably won't realize that it has anything to do with him. Then he adjusts the position of the driver's seat and finds the parcel. It has an address on the front. Will he decide to drop it in the mail, or deliver it himself? ("Coincidentally," the address is very close to his destination.)

Group A will be in a quandary. The guy in the car seems to plan on making the drop. Is he really a colleague of theirs after all? Or is he a group A plant? If the former, he's fouled up badly because he's leading group A agents right to the next drop. The agents of group B, for their part, still have no reason to believe that the PC in the car is anything but a group A agent.

How will it all turn out? Who knows . . . particularly if both sides see the PC in the car *open* the package and start to thumb through the contents.

Telephone Tag (Illuminati/Espionage)

A PC is an analyst working for an influential intelligence agency like the CIA or Consular Operations. By accident, he sees evidence that *someone* within Ms agency - maybe within his own department - has been sending message traffic on an unusual channel . . . a "clean" line used by a KGB station in Europe. Why would a colleague be sending messages to the KGB? The only logical conclusion is that there's a mole in his agency.

If he tries to report what he's found, his superiors dismiss it as a mistake; even if he provides evidence, they still seem not to want to know. Should he attempt to investigate further, he's met with opposition, starting off as roadblocks and red herrings in his way, but escalating quickly to attempts on his life. If there *is* a high-ranking mole in the agency, that's what he should expect. But the attempts on his life are coming from *throughout* the agency.

Eventually he gains evidence that the secure message traffic isn't just one-way. His agency is also *receiving* traffic on their own secure lines, apparently from one or more KGB officers. Just what is going on?

The truth of the matter is that the PC's agency and the KGB are collaborating. But what is their mutual goal? To return the world to the Cold War, when both groups had much more status and were afforded more resources than today? Or is it something even more baroque and twisted?

Lost Legacy

The group knows a fellow who is very interested in genealogy. He has traced his own bloodline, and has proven to his own satisfaction that he derives from the Merovingian dynasty. Before he can officially and legally claim the Merovingian coat of arms, however, he must find one more piece of documentary evidence. Fortunately for him, his research has turned up someone who might be able to provide what he needs: an old man whose own family tree is undeniably connected to the Merovingian line. He travels to visit this individual, who lives in another city . . . and never comes

THE ILLUMINATED CAMPAIGN





back. If the PCs check with the old man, he claims that their friend had indeed made an appointment to meet with him, but never showed up.

Several weeks later, the missing person shows up . . . wandering the streets aimlessly, totally unaware of who he is or where he lives. He suffers from total amnesia; as far as he's concerned, his life began about two days before he was found. With the help of his friends, and some concerned doctors, he can recover some of his memory, but the period leading up to and including his disappearance is gone from his memory record forever. He's physically in fine health, and seems not to have suffered any hardships. The only strange thing is that he bears a new tattoo on his upper left chest: an eye in a pyramid . . .

What happened? As a (potential) descendent of the Merovingian bloodline, the individual would be of great interest to the *Prieure de Sion*. Did this order kidnap Mm and test him to determine his worthiness for membership? If so, they might have found him lacking, and erased his memory of the testing - and their very existence - to protect themselves. In this case, the tattoo might be like a "Rejected" stamp, warning other Commanderies of the order not to waste time with him in the future.

Or maybe he was kidnapped by a group *opposed* to the *Prieure*, who just wanted to interrogate him and perhaps mess up Sion's plans. In this situation, the tattoo could be a "Hands off" warning to the *Prieure*: "Recruit him at your own risk."

Or maybe the friend is still missing. The "amnesiac" is a double, faking memory loss while he learns . . . what?

And maybe there was no kidnapping involved at all; maybe his time away from home was completely voluntary. Maybe he was *accepted* by the *Prieure* or another group, and initiated into the mysteries (which would explain the tattoo, perhaps). Now he might be on a mission for the organization, with his instructions embedded in his subconscious. The amnesia could well be some kind of protection - for both him and the organization - to be reversed when he's completed his task so he can enjoy the full benefits of the membership he's been granted.

His friends will almost certainly try to find out just what happened him. The first lead will probably be the old man . . . who might or might not be protected from prying investigators. Regardless of what the true situation is, there will almost certainly be agents of the Conspiracy watching the amnesiac, if only to see that his memory has truly been wiped.

SYSTEMATIC DELUSION

You, as GM, can make an Illuminated campaign as paranoid and bleak as you like. A world-girdling conspiracy can do just about *anything*, right up to continually and systematically deluding an individual or small group of individuals (e.g., the PCs). After all, for the Illuminati resources just aren't a problem; they've got the whole world to draw on.

Try this one on for size. Tell one of the players:

"You've been on vacation for the last couple of weeks. You wake up your first morning home, and get ready for work. You're employed at a computer shop at the corner of Main and Broadway, and your boss gets really cranky when you're late. You take the bus as usual, and get off at your regular stop. You open the familiar front door and step inside . . .

"And you find yourself not in a computer store, but in a dusty Italian bistro. Check the address: yes, you've got it right, but you're certainly not in the right place. You ask the guy behind the counter about the computer store. No computer store here, he tells you.

"All right, so it's just vaguely conceivable that the computer store moved while you were on vacation. But the guy behind the counter tells you this place has been a bistro for the last three years, and he's worked here since the day it opened.

"Practical joke, right? You head outside and start asking random commuters on the street. None of them remembers the computer store; all remember the bistro.

"Except for one fellow. He looks puzzled as he listens to your question. Sure, he tells you, he remembers the computer store; he bought a modem from there just last week. He's in a hurry, so he gives you his business card, telling you to call him later in the day. You wait as long as you can. At 11 A.M. you call the number on the business card . . . and get a recording saying the number you've called isn't in service . . ."

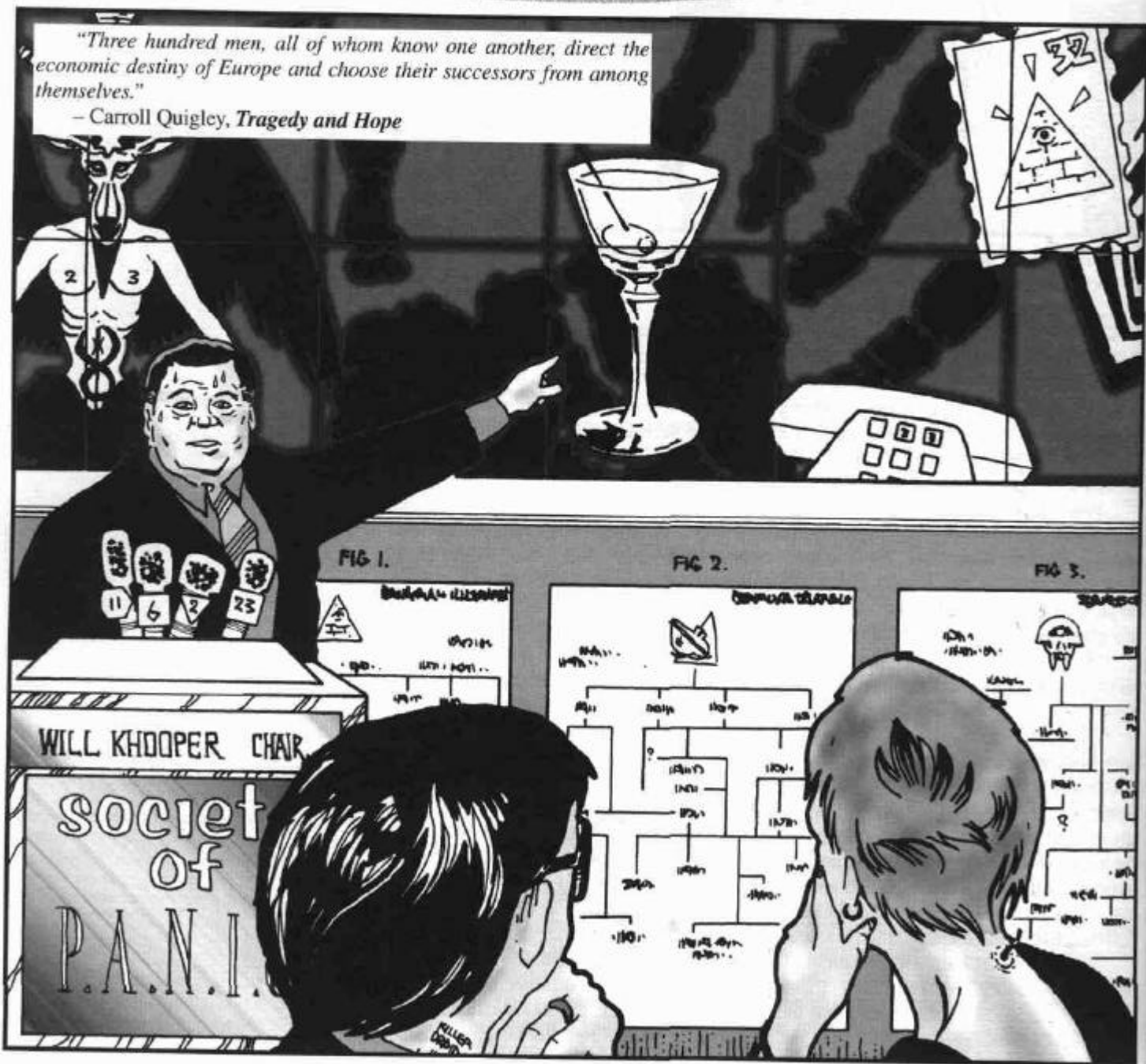
Impossible? Not for the Illuminati. Sure, it means that just about *everybody* is in on the conspiracy . . . But so what? That's the way the Illuminated world works.



3 ILLUMINATED GROUPS

"Three hundred men, all of whom know one another, direct the economic destiny of Europe and choose their successors from among themselves."

- Carroll Quigley, *Tragedy and Hope*





THE MEROVINGIAN DYNASTY

The bloodline of the Merovingi; was derived from the Sicambrians, also known as the Franks, a tribe of Germanic origin. Between the 5th and 7th centuries, the Merovingians ruled large areas of what is now Germany and France. The dynasty takes its name from a Frankish king named Merovee, who was crowned in 448 and ruled until his death a decade later.

Merovee's grandson, Clovis I, was perhaps the most famous of Merovingian monarchs. Reigning between 481 and 511, Clovis is remembered in Europe as the first of the Frankish kings to convert to the then-expanding doctrine of Roman Catholicism. In fact, he signed a pact with Rome, and was touted by the Church as the "New Constantine," Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Clovis was responsible for extending Frankish rule to include most of what would later become France.

On the death of Clovis, his realm was divided between his four sons. Over the years, these Merovingian kings faded in influence until they became virtual puppets of the "Mayors of the Palace" who served them as chancellors. The Merovingian monarchs who ruled over the next decades are known to history as "*les rois faineant*," "the enfeebled kings."

The last of the significant Merovingian monarchs, who took the throne of the kingdom of Austrasia, was Dagobert II. Exiled as a youth in a *coup d'etat* by his Mayor of the Palace, he returned to retake his kingdom in 674. Under his rule, the Merovingian dynasty began to increase once more in importance. Dagobert made many enemies, however, not least of which was the Catholic Church. In 679, Dagobert was assassinated as part of a plot that saw his Mayor of the Palace, one Pepin the Fat, collaborating with the Church to eliminate a mutual obstacle. In return for his participation, the Church anointed and crowned Pepin as true king of Austrasia.

The Church's action, of course, was a breach of the alliance they had formed with Dagobert's ancestor, Clovis. Although Dagobert's removal was definitely expedient, it seems that the Church eventually felt some guilt over their duplicity. In what some believe to be an attempt to expiate this guilt, the Church canonized Dagobert in 872, as *Saint Dagobert*.

Continued on next page...

This chapter describes a number of Illuminati groups and other organizations that GMs can use in their campaigns. Obviously, this list is neither inclusive nor exclusive. There are many historical Illuminati-style groups not mentioned. GMs can make up their own Illuminated groups as well - the more eccentric the better. Similarly, *any* organization that exists in the "real world" can be part of the Conspiracy. The following examples are just to get the GM started, illustrating the kind of information he should know about each group.

Nothing in this chapter should be taken as "the truth" - either in the real world or within an Illuminati campaign. GMs can change anything and everything to better suit their campaigns. The group descriptions below are intentionally somewhat vague; if everything were in print the players would know as much about the Illuminati as the GM!

The following descriptions discuss tendencies, possibilities and options, often in terms of "conventional wisdom," rumor, scuttlebutt, etc. It's up to individual GMs to decide how much of this hearsay and supposition is actually true ... if *any* of it is. Some liberties have been taken with historical fact; where there are multiple interpretations of history, the most interesting one - from a gaming perspective - is given.

The Illuminati

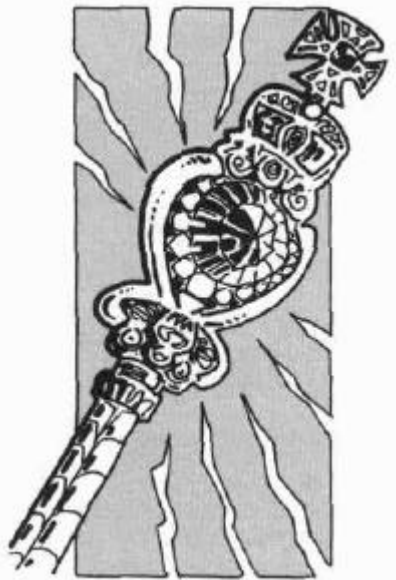
The "Round Table" Conspiracy

This is one of the "classic" visions of the Illuminati from the conspiratorial view of history. The "Round Table" is a small group of influential individuals, scattered throughout the world, in government and business. Their goal is to concentrate all world power into a single government with themselves at the head. They strive to destroy organized religion, all governments, and all existing human institutions, intending to set up a new world order in the wreckage. Conspiracy theorists frequently cite the Round Table as the true driving force behind the so-called "Communist conspiracy."

The path to world dominance is not a direct one. In many countries, the Round Table has used the "incitement" technique, described in the sidebar on p. 40, to bring in oppressive governments. Elsewhere, however, strong traditions of personal freedom makes this direct route impossible. In such countries, the Round Table must first discredit or destroy institutions that are bulwarks of individualism and freedom, such as organized religions and social institutions.

The Round Table frequently creates organizations similar to those it wishes to destroy. These are extreme versions of the real institutions - so extreme that they incur the wrath of society.





THE MEROVINGIAN DYNASTY (CONTINUED)

After Dagobert's death, there still existed some kings who could claim Merovingian descent. These individuals belonged to "cadet," or offshoot, branches of the line, however; the main line, descended from Merovee and Clovis, ended with the death of Dagobert. The remaining Merovingian kings were soon deposed or killed, or their lines died out. By the year 754, the Merovingian Dynasty, as such, had come to an end.

Although no Merovingians still ruled anywhere in Europe, many members of cadet branches of the bloodline still lived, and presumably live to the present day. If the *Prieure de Sion* still exists, it would seem to be these individuals that the order is protecting, and their bloodline that it is conserving.

It's interesting to note that the Merovingian monarchs were, according to tradition, occult adepts, initiates in the arcane arts and practitioners of the magical sciences. In fact, they were frequently referred to as "sorcerer-kings" or "thaumaturge-kings." Is this meant to imply that, in an Illuminated world, the Merovingian heirs have a propensity toward magical ability? Only individual GMs can say for sure.

The authors of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* - Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln - argue that the Merovingian dynasty represent the lineal descendants of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene. If this is true, then they - and not the Popes and other religious authorities - might be considered the true leaders of the Christian community.

Some conspiracy theorists cite the recent collapse of communism in Eastern Europe as evidence that the Round Table has suffered a major setback, that some enemy - or perhaps the unstoppable force of history - has undermined the work of decades. Other theorists, however, claim that the Soviet "empire" was just an intermediate step, and that its apparent breakup merely clears the stage for the next act - perhaps the eventual forging of the European Economic Community into a single republic...

Only 12 individuals sit on the central council of the Round Table. Traditionally, all have been English-speakers, although this may change. On principle, the group never grooms candidates for membership; individuals must prove their own worthiness to sit at the Table. Once an individual has come to their attention - perhaps by his rapid rise in business, or his growing influence in politics - the members of the group will secretly test the candidate to determine his suitability. The group tracks several acceptable candidates at all times, so that one can be inducted into the group when a member dies or steps down.

The Round Table is virtually unique in that members can "retire" from membership. "Alumni" of the Round Table are frequently stupendously rich, and grow even richer by investing based on their knowledge of the Table's actions. The current Round Table considers its retired members a significant resource of knowledge and wisdom. Retired members usually take their own lives when they recognize that their faculties are failing. Table members will sometimes be called upon to put to rest individuals who haven't seen to the matter themselves. (In an Illuminated world, Robert Maxwell, the English media baron who drowned when he fell from his yacht, might have been a member of the organization.)

It is thought that several American presidents sat at the Round Table, during or shortly after their term of office. Various business tycoons from the 1930s and earlier have also been suspected as members.

In its present form, the Round Table has existed for more than 200 years, and is thought to have been responsible for the French Revolution (although not the American Revolution), the American Civil War, and both World Wars. Some conspiracy theorists believe the Round Table arose out of another secret society of quite a different nature that had existed from the early decades of this millennium to the middle of the 18th century. The identity of this precursor group is the subject of wild speculation.

Much of the Round Table's influence comes from political and financial power. While the Table is thought to be indirectly guiding technological development down a path that best suits them, few conspiracy theorists believe that they are stockpiling advanced technology for their own use.

The Cathars

During the 12th and early 13th centuries, the Languedoc region of southern France was home to a number of religious sects collectively called "the Cathars" or "the Albigensians." The Cathars rejected the concept of "faith" as preached by the Roman Catholic Church, depending instead on a very personal experience of the deity, called "gnosis." Further, they repudiated the entire structure of the Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy, believing that it inserted unnecessary intermediaries between worshippers and God.

Even more interesting, the Cathars were dualists, in that they believed the entire universe was a struggle between influences of good and evil. This is not unlike accepted Catholic dogma, but the Cathars took it one step further. In Cathar philosophy, there are *two* deities of approximately equal capability, one good and one evil - quite different from the Christian conception of an all-powerful good God and an inferior evil Devil. Cathars held that the good deity is an incorporeal god of love, which they viewed as incompatible with power. Power, which of course is what was involved in



the creation of the world, was an attribute of the evil deity. Thus in Cathar thought, the deity who created the world "in the beginning" was the evil *Rex Mundi*, "King of the World." Humans were the tools the two deities used to carry out their struggle, the "swords" with which gods fought. (There is an obvious parallel here with the concept of the Conspiracy.)

Obviously, this philosophy was severe heresy in the eyes of the Roman Catholic church. In 1209, Pope Innocent III declared the "Albigensian Crusade" to destroy the influence of the Cathars. An army of 30,000 troops from all over northern Europe descended on the Languedoc region, razing towns to the ground and putting everyone to the sword. In 1244 the last Cathar stronghold, the mountain citadel of Montsegur, capitulated and the "Albigensian heresy" came to an end.



That's the way that traditional history tells it. In an Illuminated world, however, the Cathars *were* 't totally destroyed. When the Crusade began, many Cathars left the area or (quite literally) went underground, hiding in the caves that riddle the mountains of the region. Some Cathar leaders were in the citadel of Montsegur when it was invested, but history tells of many people sneaking out through the surrounding army, and even of a daring midnight escape the night before the stronghold finally fell. Like so many other societies before and since, the Cathars used the historical "fact" of their "destruction" to drop out of sight and continue their work in secret.

Since 1244, the Cathars have become considerably more powerful and coordinated. Operating behind the scenes in France, and eventually elsewhere in the world, they strove toward their eventual goal: the freedom of the human soul. In Cathar philosophy, anything that "imprisons the spirit" of mankind, and prevents him from experiencing gnosis, is an artifice of *Rex Mundi*, and thus something to be opposed

BASING THE CAMPAIGN ON THE CARD GAME

Both the *Illuminati* card game, and the new collectible card *gains, Illuminati: New World Order*, can help GMs set up their campaigns, largely by helping them answer many of the questions described in the section *Developing a Power Structure* on p. 36. The card games include several Illuminated groups - including the Network, used as an example earlier - and a whole raft of subgroups to be used in power structures. Each Illuminati group is described in terms of its purpose (its special victory conditions), its power and its wealth. Sub-organizations are described in terms of power, wealth, capability for controlling other groups (the number of outgoing arrows on the card), and special powers. This information can easily be transferred to an Illuminati roleplaying campaign.

For example, one of the Illuminati groups in the card games is the Discordian Society, described as "Worshippers of Ens, the Roman Goddess of Strife and Chaos." They delight in confusion, and generally just want to foul up the system. The Discordians' special victory condition involves gaining control of Weird groups, though the exact details differ in the two games. A GM might decide that this means the group is dedicated to weakening the oppressive strictures of modern society - governments, Political Correctness movements, and *anything* that represents the status quo - and maximizing the potential for personal freedom . . . no matter what the cost. The Discordians' special power is that they're immune to attacks from Straight or Government groups. This might mean that the Discordians have no "normal" structure — or none that a non-Discordian could understand - and that authoritarian weapons like law and public opinion simply don't impress influential Discordians. An example of a subgroup is Cycle Gangs. This group is Violent and Weird, isn't very powerful and has no outgoing arrow. In *INWO*, it gives its owner a bonus in attacks to destroy, and is even more effective when aiding Disasters. This would imply that the Cycle Gangs are great "soldiers" or street thugs in an Illuminated power structure, with a particular flair for taking advantage of chaotic situations and making them worse. The Gangs don't have the ability to infiltrate or control other groups (i.e., no outgoing arrow), but they're very useful when the time for subtle maneuvering comes to an end and direct action is necessary.

Continued on next page...



BASING THE CAMPAIGN" ON THE CARD GAME (CONTINUED)

GMs might even go so far as to lay out a power structure for each of the various Illuminati groups they want in their campaign, following the card game rules, then document the result. This can be a quick way of getting a handle on the overall "shape" of the Conspiracy. The GM must still figure out, in roleplaying terms, how the different groups control each other. (He will have his work cut out for him deciding how the Congressional Wives control the South American Nazis ...)

ALPHANS

An Alphan is vaguely human in appearance, but not even remotely mammalian in physiology. A typical individual is around 5'6" tall, very slender and light-boned, weighing no more than about 120 pounds. Alphans have soft skin that feels very delicate and vulnerable; in fact, it is considerably more resilient than human skin. The skin is a pale blue-white in color, and feels slightly cold; normal body temperature for an Alphan is 94°F.

An Alphan has no body hair. Its head is roughly humanoid, although its cranium is slightly enlarged. Eyes are over-large in human terms, with blue irises and black, slit-shaped pupils. It has a small nose, with a single nostril, and no external ear structures. Its mouth is small, with bony ridges in place of teeth. The creature has slender hands and feet, with four fingers and one opposable thumb. The "little finger" and the big toe are both partially opposable, although this is not immediately apparent.

An Alphan can masquerade as a human with a little make-up, concealing clothing, and a dose of luck. A human, given no reason to be suspicious, would roll IQ-1 to realize that a well-disguised Alphan wasn't human. Of course, someone who doesn't know Alphans exist would just suspect a prank - or assume that he was dealing with the victim of a birth defect.

Physiologically, the differences between human and Alphans are much greater. Anyone trying to perform First Aid or similar minimal medical treatment on an Alphan notices something seriously amiss on an IQ+4 roll ("Hey, his heart's in his stomach!"). A doctor performing any more extensive procedure - such as a physical exam - will automatically notice that an Alphan is not human, regardless of disguise. For the purposes of hit location, Alphans are humanoid enough for the standard rules to apply.

Continued on next page...

and eventually destroyed. Thus, the Cathars wish to eliminate most organized religions, certain repressive systems of government, and any other institution that replaces freedom and individual responsibility with dogma and "faith." Some conspiracy theorists believe that the Cathars are behind groups such as the Tax-the-Churches League that attack the basis of organized religion directly. The Cathars might also control the more extreme televangelists because - in many people's eyes - they discredit the whole concept of charismatic religion. During the late 19th century, a magical "renaissance" of a sort occurred in Paris, as many occult-oriented groups, sects and secret societies appeared on the scene. Possibly the Cathars were involved in this burgeoning of the arcane arts. Even today, the Cathars may number many magical adepts among their members.

The leaders of the Cathar organization are known as *Parfaits* ("perfected ones"). The *Parfaits* - of which there are thought to be several dozen scattered around the world - are the only ones who know the true purpose of the organization. Surrounding the *Parfaits* are an unknown number of followers, most of whom know little or nothing about the organization's true significance. The Cathars are thought to be a relatively small group, although their influence extends to many subgroups.

The Cathars have no central headquarters that has ever been discovered. "Chapters" of the organization appear to exist world-wide, although their location and membership are kept inviolably secret. Each chapter house is led by one or more *Parfaits*.

The *Parfaits* seem to enjoy comprehensive and virtually instant communication with their colleagues around the world. It is as yet unclear whether this is the result of magic, or simply well-implemented technology.

The Priore de Sion

The *Priore de Sion* ("Priory of Sion" or "Priory of Zion") is a secret religious order, originally founded sometime before 1099 under the name of the *Ordre de Sion* ("Order of Sion"). The order takes its name from the high hill, Mount Zion (or *Sion*), just south of the city of Jerusalem. The order is thought to have existed for several years before Jerusalem was taken back from the Saracens by Godfroi de Bouillon in 1099. In fact, some historians believe that Peter the Hermit - the charismatic preacher who was one of the prime instigators of the Crusades - was a member of what later would be called the *Priore de Sion*.

There is historical evidence that the *Priore de Sion* had significant power and influence very soon after its creation. Baudoin I - the brother of Godfroi de Bouillon - became the first European king of Jerusalem in the year 1100 because of the actions of the *Priore de Sion*.

Over the next few centuries, the *Priore de Sion* - which was also known in Latin as *Sionis Prioratus* - became exceptionally rich and influential. Some historians believe that the group was instrumental in the creation of another religious order beloved of conspiracy theorists, the Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon - the Knights Templar. So closely bound were the two orders that until the year 1188 they are thought to have shared the same Grand Master.

The *Priore de Sion* grew in power within Europe as well as in the Holy Land, and figures in a number of fascinating incidents of conspiracy and machination over the centuries. This continued until 1619 when the order seemed to vanish from the pageant of history. It was not disbanded or destroyed as many traditional historians believe, however; it simply went underground, and continued its work covertly to the present day.

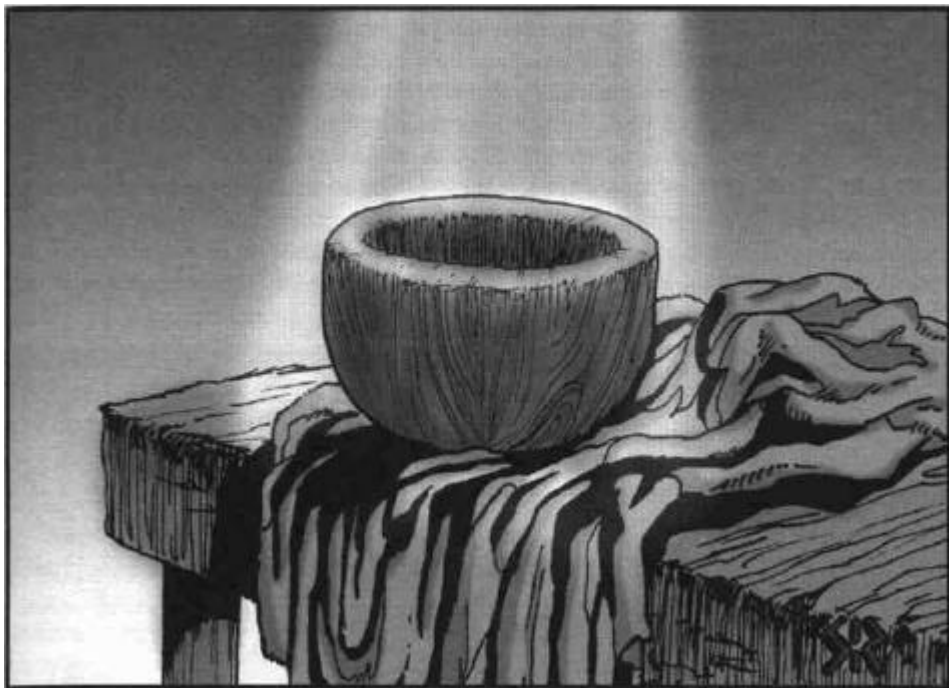
The *Priore de Sion* still works toward the same goal for which it strove at its creation: the restoration of the Merovingian dynasty and bloodline to the throne of France, and to the thrones of other European nations as well. (See the sidebar on p. 57 for further information on the Merovingians.) The Order is thought to have been



behind an attempt to exterminate the Valois dynasty of France during the 16th century, in order to claim the French throne for the Merovingians.

History has since lost track of the Merovingian bloodline . . . but the *Prieure de Sion* hasn't. The Order keeps a close eye on many people who are rightful "heirs" to the Merovingian heritage. Some heirs are members of the *Prieure de Sion* itself; most are not. In fact, most Merovingian heirs are totally unaware of their heritage and their significance. Such heirs can be found on every continent, living in most cases lives that appear totally normal. The only abnormal feature is that the *Prieure de Sion* is, in all cases, watching over them, protecting them from misfortune and helping them out from behind the scenes.

Some conspiracy theorists suspect that the *Prieure de Sion* is also conserving beneficial traits within the Merovingian line. This involves subtly influencing "heirs" to interbreed, then protecting offspring who show the desired traits and culling out those who don't.



The *Prieure de Sion* is led by a Grand Master, also called the *Nautonnier* (Navigator), below whom there are four grades of full initiation. Directly below the Grand Master are three Seneschals, beneath whom are nine Constables. Together, these 13 individuals make up the membership of the central council, the "Arch Kyria." There are then 27 Commanders, and 81 *Chevaliers*, to complete the roll of fully-initiated brothers. The *Prieure* also has hundreds or perhaps thousands of "Free Brothers," called *Prieux*, throughout the world. They are not fully "initiated into the mysteries," and might not be fully aware of the order's true goal and plans.

The latter-day *Prieure* is thought to have attracted some notable personages into its membership. Some historians number among its Grand Masters luminaries such as Isaac Newton, Victor Hugo, Claude Debussy, Leonardo da Vinci and Robert Boyle.

The Order's headquarters is thought to be near the village of Rennes-le-Chateau in southern France. The entire world is divided into 27 Commanderies, each of which oversees 27 Provinces. It is not known who has authority over the Commanderies or Provinces.

The Order maintains strong indirect control over the Knights Templar, and weaker influence over various factions within Freemasonry. It also holds sway over dozens of other subgroups.

ALPHANS (CONTINUED)

Alphans have no overt genitalia. In fact, nobody knows whether there is any sexual differentiation at all. No immature Alphans have ever been reported, and the written Alphan language contains no symbols for offspring. Alphans are very long-lived, with lifespans well over five centuries.

Alphans are not physically strong, but are quite dexterous, and are highly intelligent. They communicate among themselves by a form of telepathy that seems to be unlimited in range — unless individual Alphans voluntarily limit the range — and apparently instantaneous. Alphan telepathy cannot extend to other races. Fortunately, the creatures seem to be incredible linguists and masters at learning new languages. All Alphans on Earth can speak the dominant language wherever they may be, plus 1d additional languages. There are rumors that Alphans possess other psionic abilities, but this is up to individual GMs.

Alphans are pure vegetarians, and find carnivorous eating habits quite disgusting. They have a rumen, like a cow, and frequently regurgitate partially-digested food to chew and then swallow again.

The creatures are technically very advanced. Their home civilization — wherever it may be — is definitely TL10. The "outpost" on Earth is limited to TL9, however . . . with a few exceptions.

All members of the Earth outpost have three pieces of hardware implanted in their bodies — two in their brains and one in their chest cavity. The first is a physical lock on all memories of life before they arrived on this planet, and on certain other "restricted" information about the race's origin. The second is a suicide device that allows the creature to kill itself instantly and painlessly. The final device is a powerful incendiary charge that detonates 5 seconds after the Alphan is dead. It will immolate the entire body, totally destroying it within 5d seconds. (Since the incendiary charge is within the chest cavity, it's impossible to extinguish this fire before the body is consumed.) Anyone within one yard of the body suffers 2d of burn damage. All devices are protected by anti-tamper circuits. If an unconscious Alphan undergoes surgery, the suicide device immediately triggers, followed in 5 seconds by the incendiary charge. (Obviously, Alphan medics have techniques for safe surgery, but the details are kept secret even from "rank and file" Alphans.) Alphans seem to have no personal fear of death, and won't hesitate to suicide if circumstances warrant.



THE LITTLE ALIEN WAS A TRUE MASTER. WHEN I ASKED HIM: WHAT IS THE SOUND OF ONE HAND CLAPPING, HE GAVE ME THIS CASSETTE.

WHICH DOESN'T FIT MY MACHINE.



ALPHANCHARACTERS

Alphans have ST -2 (-15 points), DX +1 (10 points) and HT -1 (-10 points). They start out 3" shorter than indicated by their strength, and 30 pounds lighter than indicated by their height. They have Acute Vision +3 (6 points), Night Vision (10 points) and Peripheral Vision (15 points). These advantages are balanced by No Sense of Smell/Taste (-5 points). They also have Damage Resistance 2 (6 points) and Language Talent +5 (10 points). All Alphans are Pacifists (-15 points); personally, they can fight only in self-defense, but they are free to manipulate *others* into fighting and killing for them. Alphans automatically gain the Extended Lifespan advantage at level 4 (20 points). (Thus, they reach maturity at 72, the onset of aging is at 200, progressive aging rolls begin at every four years, accelerate at 280 and 360.)

Alphans on Earth *must* take Disguise (at least IQ+1; 4 points), and at least one Language (at least IQ+2; 1/2 point each, because of Language Talent; note that all human languages are *Hard* to an Alphan). Many Alphans have skills like Biochemistry, Genetics and Physiology, while others concentrate on Chemistry and Physics - all at TL9.

Racial Personality, Quirks and Habits: Alphans frequently "ruminate" (regurgitate their food to chew it again), which is definitely an Odious Personal Habit (-15 points) as far as humans are concerned. They find meat-eating inherently disgusting, and react at -1 to a human who is eating something that's obviously meat (-5 points). They are uncomfortable, although not actually impaired, in any light brighter than twilight (-1), and are startled by loud noises (-1).

It costs 14 points to be an Alphan.

Membership in the *Prieure de Sion* is by invitation and initiation. Candidates are examined for years, and secretly tested before being invited to join. As with many Illuminati groups, refusing the Order's invitation to join is a fatal mistake. Membership is of lifelong duration. Some theorists believe all members of the Order are Merovingian heirs, but not all Merovingian heirs are part of the Order. Others say that having a Merovingian heritage isn't a requirement for membership.

Historically, the *Prieure de Sion* has strong connections with various occult traditions. Therefore, it's likely that some members of the Order are magically adept.

The Alphans

The Alphans are a group of humanoid aliens who have lived on Earth for some decades, or perhaps even for centuries. Nobody knows where the Alphans came from; the name they have taken seems to imply their home system might be Alpha Centauri, but there are theorists who believe the name is symbolic, and drawn from the Greek letter "Alpha" the first. (See the sidebar on p. 62 for more details on individual Alphans and on Alphan characters.)

Many UFOlogists and conspiracy theorists believe that Alphan scout ships and supply vessels are behind most UFO sightings. More extreme individuals claim that the Alphans are the "Gods" postulated by Erik von Daniken, and the spacefarers for whom the Nazca lines were intended, even the creatures who "uplifted" *Homo sapiens* from his precursor species via direct genetic engineering. The Alphans themselves have absolutely nothing to say on the subject (possibly because of the memory locks installed in their heads). However long the Alphans have been present on Earth, they have been active for only the last 50 years.



There are thought to be perhaps 100 Alphans on Earth, spread around the globe in small groups of three or four. Although they possess stockpiles of high-technology equipment and weapons, there is no Alphan space vessel on Earth or in orbit. The only conclusion is that the Alphans are dependent on their fellows elsewhere in the Universe for resupply, reinforcements and — presumably — eventual evacuation.

Using various forms of mind control and influence - and occasionally direct intimidation or bribery - the Alphans have formed a very influential power structure that spans the globe. They prefer co-opting organizations with significant investment in technology, particularly biotechnology and genetic engineering. They do, however, directly control certain groups whose only value could be as shock troops. The Alphans are natural masters at the game of Conspiracy - particularly at "turning" hostile agents and using them as assets. Alphans seem to have no aversion to trusting



triple and even quadruple agents, at least in some cases - something most humans would never consider. Perhaps their putative psionic abilities allow them to read the minds, and judge the intentions, of potential assets.

The Alphan's goal on Earth at first appears to be an admirable one: to assist *Homo sapiens* in its evolution toward perfection. Unfortunately, what Alphans consider as "perfection" may well be very different from how most humans would view it. The Alphans seem to be behind the introduction of various mutagenic substances into the environment, and may well be working on certain engineered retroviruses as ways of causing genetic change in mankind. (Some doomsayers claim that HIV, the AIDS virus, was an Alphan experiment gone wrong.)

Nobody knows exactly what the Alphans want to turn *H. sapiens* into; even the members of the Alphan Earth outpost seem ignorant of the eventual goal, simply following a procedure set by their superiors on the Alphan homeworld. Thus, while the Alphans on Earth are certainly an Illuminati group as far as this planet is concerned, when the scope is expanded they can be seen as mere tools.

There is no known Alphan "headquarters." Individuals are scattered in small groups around the world, and seem to move frequently according to the dictates of their plans. Presumably, their schemes require some labs somewhere, but none are known. Perhaps the aliens or their servants have co-opted some human research facilities. Nobody can guess what time scale the Alphans have projected for completion of their great task. Since they seem close to immortal, it could be a long process indeed.

The "Time Meddlers"

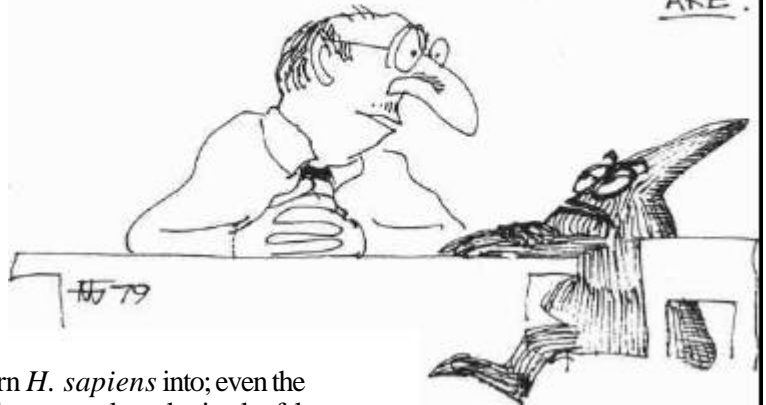
Although undeniably human, this group is even more mysterious than the Alphans. The "Time Meddlers" - to use a term popularized by certain conspiracy theorists - are a group of time travelers from Earth's far future. Nobody knows the Meddlers' home epoch; different members of the group have claimed different "home whens," but they could be lying, or different Meddlers could come from different times. In any case, the Meddlers have access to equipment of at least TL10, and possibly even more advanced technology.

There are thought to be 50 or so Meddlers in the present, although this number may change frequently. Since the Meddlers are physically indistinguishable from contemporary humans, and have studied this epoch well enough not to be caught out in normal interaction, it's difficult to pin down their number.

The ultimate goal of the Time Meddlers is unknown. Their actions sometimes seem whimsical and arbitrary. Although they've built up an extensive power structure, and have influence over a large number of groups - largely by dint of their knowledge of future developments - the Meddlers seem to shift allegiances in their power structure on an almost daily basis. Two groups, both under the influence of the Meddlers, may at one time be cooperating, and later be directly competing. The Meddlers sometimes seem to work in parallel with other Illuminati groups, who should logically be their rivals, and then turn against them with no warning.

The only reasonable conclusion is that the Meddlers are somehow trying to guide the flow of current events toward a future that they see as desirable - perhaps a future that includes their own existence. Judging by their actions, it's impossible to predict what form that desired future will take. Sometimes the group seems to be working towards a totalitarian and repressive world, by bolstering harsh governments in the

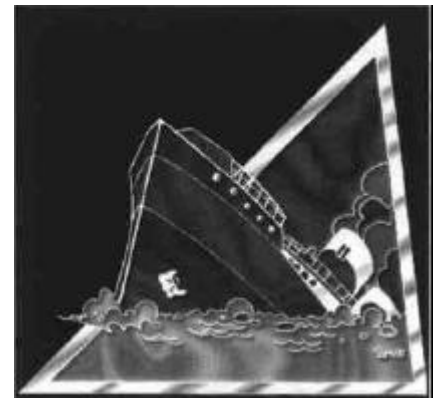
WE CHANGED THE TITLE OF YOUR BOOK TO:
"I WAS A FLYING SAUCER PILOT FOR THE CIA"
BECAUSE NOBODY KNOWS WHO THE ILLUMINATI
ARE.



THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE

This is the nickname for a group of Illuminati whose goal is world domination, through the control of as many facets of society - and of life in general - as possible. Causing the disappearance of ships and planes off the coast of Florida is only a sideline. Perhaps the vessels that disappear have wandered too close to the Triangle's secret base, or maybe they represent something of value to the group - resources, people with important knowledge, etc. Or maybe the disappearances themselves are the significant thing, because they imply that there's more happening in the world than most people understand (in other words, they foster doubt and paranoia).

The Triangle must have access to advanced technology, from some source (see sidebar, *The Conspiracy of Technology*, p. 46). They have members throughout the world, and control many diverse groups. (Are the UFOlogists and others investigating the "disappearances" under the control of the Triangle? Or are they controlled by another Illuminati group opposing the Triangle? Nobody knows.)





present; at other times, however, they throw their support behind institutions that bolster the freedom of the human soul.

Although they obviously have access to the future, this isn't easy, and isn't used often. Their form of time travel seems to involve a gate or portal that can only be opened at certain times, only for very limited periods, and even then at great cost in energy and significant risk of detection. The location of this gate is, of course, unknown, although some theorists believe it to be in Tibet (which might explain the Meddlers' apparent support for continued Chinese rule of this land). There are no known permanent "settlements" of Meddlers. They move freely and often around the world. Their high technology provides them with instant and inviolable communication among themselves.

The Time Meddlers have no access to magic or psionic abilities, although their advanced technology makes this lack irrelevant. They seem less willing to kill on whim than some other groups, preferring instead to brain-wash (or "brainlock") people who get too close. When lethal force is the only option, however, they kill efficiently and without compunction.

THE DISCORDIAN SOCIETY

The Discordians worship Eris, the Roman Goddess of Strife and Chaos, and their goal is confusion. Law and conformity are evil, the Discordians believe, since they stifle and imprison the soul of mankind. Only through chaos can humanity truly be free. (Most Discordians agree with English occultist Aleister Crowley that "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.")

The Discordians operate by co-opting many groups, each of which is opposed to one facet of society - Earth First! vs. Big Business, the NRA vs. gun control, etc. The trick is to control so many of these groups that the overall power structure can combat *everything*. The "bible" of Discordianism is *Principia Discordia* ("The Principles of Discord"), written by "Malaclypse the Younger." Their symbol is the Sacred Chao (below).



The Network

The Network is an association of expert computer programmers and "super-hackers" the world over. They've totally penetrated the world's computer network, and bent it to their will. They have direct control over all computerized transfer of data, and over every process that is mediated by the world's interlocking computer networks. (This involves telecommunications of all kinds, including the electronic data transfers on which international banking depends . . .) The only computer systems that are (presumably) safe from the Network are those machines that are totally isolated - and in fact *shielded* - from any form of electronic communication. Even a home computer without a modem isn't necessarily safe from the Network if a telephone is within 50 feet of the machine. The technology exists to use a phone to "read," from the computer's radio emissions, the data displayed on the monitor. It's possible that the Network has learned how to remotely *control* apparently isolated systems in a similar way.

The Network is almost certainly the newest of the true Illuminati groups, since it couldn't have existed before the 1960s, and could only have attained its present potential over the last half-decade. Nobody knows who belongs to the Network, or even how many members the organization has. There is no headquarters in any physical sense; its members are scattered around the world, but communicate and even meet "virtually" (i.e., through the computer network) whenever they wish.

It's almost certain that the members of the Network have access to computer equipment, software and techniques greatly in advance of what's available to others. They may well be on the verge of creating - or might already possess - the kind of direct neural interfaces described in the novels of William Gibson and in *GURPS Cyberpunk*. Certainly, they have access to computer equipment that is *at least* TL8.

Nobody knows what the ultimate goal of the Network is. Their current purpose seems to be to promote and expedite the creation of a true global computer network -



very much like "the Net" of cyberpunk fiction - and eventually the incorporation of virtual reality to create "cyberspace." After this, who knows? The possibilities are virtually unlimited . . . and somewhat frightening. After all, most historical Illuminati groups have tried to dominate the world as it exists. The Network is busy creating a *new* world, one that they'll rule the instant it comes into existence ...

Society of Assassins

In Persia in the year 1090, Hasan ibn al-Sabah founded a secret order known as the Assassins, or Hashashin ("hashish-eaters"). This organization was an offshoot of the Ismaili sect, which in turn was a branch of the Shiite faction of Islam. Hasan became the first Grand Master, or Sheik-al-Jebal ("The Old Man of the Mountain") of the order, which combined Ismailite religious practices with the secret murder of all enemies of the sect. The membership of the sect was divided into *Dais* ("Initiated"), *Refiks* ("Students") and *Fedavis* ("Devoted Ones"). It was the *Fedavis* who actually committed the murders ordered by the Grand Master and his three deputy masters. When Hasan died in 1124, he was succeeded by other Grand Masters who shared his dream of being a major force in the Muslim world. There is some interesting evidence that the Assassins paid tribute to another conspiratorial group, the Knights Templar, and may actually have been in the Templars' employ.

For 150 years, the Assassins held all of Asia Minor in terror. Then in 1255 the Mongol rulers of Persia declared all-out war on the order. History claims that the majority of the organization was destroyed in 1255, and that the Syrian branch was finally obliterated in 1272. As is so often the case, however, the Order of Assassins was only forced further underground, and continues to exist to the present day.

Although most of their operations are centered around India, Iran and Syria, the arm of the Assassins is long. They are thought to be responsible for a number of major assassinations in this century, and there are some conspiracy theorists who claim the Assassins were actually responsible for killing Archduke Ferdinand in 1914.

The purposes of the Assassins seem to have changed with the years. They still claim that their central precept is the eventual world dominance of Islam, which they will assist to come about by killing key opponents. Their actions, however, indicate they care more for hiring out their services than they do about the pre-eminence of Islam. In fact, the Assassins are thought to be the premier hired killers in the world.

They have definitely kept up with the times. While some killings are still committed with the dagger traditionally associated with the Assassins, they will also use state-of-the-art poisons, demolition charges, sniper rifles . . . whatever it takes to get the job done. While the Grand Master no longer uses hashish to control his subordinates, the modern Assassins freely use "combat drugs" to help them in their missions. still hold to one major tradition, they will commit suicide to always in being preferred.

Some theorists postulate a continuing connection between the Assassins and the Knights Templar.



THE ILLUMINATED TEMPLARS

In an Illuminated world the Order of the Knights Templar continues to exist. It has become a totally secret society, with its members scattered throughout the world. There are several hundred Templars worldwide, congregated into small groups or *Commanderies*. They are thought to have some influence over at least some portion of Freemasonry, and, even though they think themselves independent, are actually being manipulated themselves by the *Prieure*. The goal of the Knights Templar is apparently the establishment of a predominately Christian kingdom based in Jerusalem, although this seems particularly unlikely at the moment.

During the 13th and early 14th centuries, the Templars were said to dabble in magic, particularly necromancy. If they have maintained this tradition, senior members of the order may be adepts of considerable ability.

THE BAVARIAN ILLUMINATI

As described on p. 8, Weishaupt's organization is thought to have ceased to exist a century or more ago. But is this actually the case? Probably not.

The group is now wholly international in membership and operation, but its goal is unchanged: the removal of all existing social structures, and the acquisition of total power. The Bavarian Illuminati may use Freemasonry as a cover, and continue their practice of secretly testing candidates for membership.

Although there are groups with older roots, the Bavarians think of themselves as the "original" Illuminated Ones. They will cooperate with other groups, but also do their best to infiltrate and suborn *everyone* they deal with.

THE GNOMES OF ZURICH"

Some conspiracy theorists believe that the world's banks have been completely taken over by the Illuminati. Others fear that the banks themselves - or their principals, at least - *are* the Illuminati.

"The Gnomes of Zurich" is a nickname for the people who own and run the Swiss banks, originally coined by former British deputy prime minister George Brown. The Gnomes are reputed to be the money-masters of the world. Not many people today seem to believe that the Swiss bankers are actually up to anything sinister, but Conventional Wisdom has often been wrong ...

Definitely, the Swiss banks have many of the trappings associated with conspiratorial actions. The identities of depositors are kept totally secret, and can only be released if Interpol or some equivalent body can prove - to the bankers' satisfaction - that something criminal is going on. (And "criminal" in this context means "against *Swiss* law.") Often the bankers don't know - or claim not to know - the true identities of the people depositing and withdrawing funds. Clients simply have to provide a "signature" in the form of a sequence of numbers and letters, which is verified by handwriting analysis. Names are used only at the discretion of the client.

Today, the "Gnomes" aren't limited to Zurich, although this remains their headquarters. They can be found in all of the major banking centers of the world, controlling huge financial empires and reaping unimaginable profits. Although the Gnomes directly own a good percentage of the world's financial markets, their influence extends even further because they control the purse-strings.

The Gnomes are like business people anywhere: they want to develop their market and maximize profits. Unlike other executives, the Gnomes see the entire world as their market. Anything that will - in the long run - help business is good; anything that interferes with it is bad. Thus, small wars are good from time to time, since they spur technological development and stimulate the arms market. True global nuclear war *isn't* good for business, so the Gnomes will make sure it never occurs. (Paranoia about global nuclear war is another matter, of course.)

Other Organizations

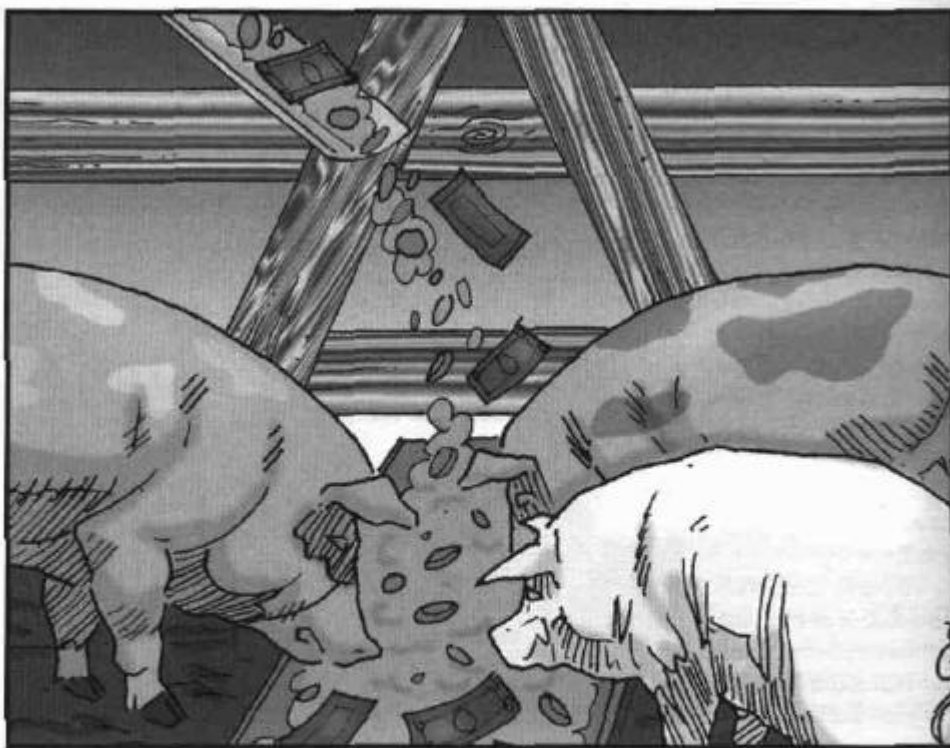
Following are examples of organizations that the Illuminati might incorporate into their power structures. Some of these organizations are overt, and definitely exist in the real world; others are secret societies, and some are either fictional or are thought to no longer exist. The sections below provide a brief discussion of each type of organization and how it can be fitted into an Illuminated campaign. No specific details have been provided; individual GMs should decide for themselves how groups fit into the power structures of their campaign. It's important to stress again that GMs should feel free to add groups to this list, or change details as they see fit.

Banks

Banks - particularly large multinational organizations - are prime targets for infiltration and control, simply because they're excellent sources of funding. Through such simple tricks as collecting all the "truncation errors" that arise from compound interest calculations into one account, an Illuminati group could realize huge gains.

There are other, perhaps even better, reasons for an Illuminati group to infiltrate a major bank, however. In the modern world, banking has very little to do with money as such. A bank with assets in the billions of dollars probably has only a few million dollars in cash at any time; when one bank transfers funds to another, it doesn't send armored cars full of banknotes. No, modern banking is the transfer of *information*, not cash or other valuta. Most banking transactions are just exchanges of electronic data, through a network that rivals military channels in security. An Illuminati group that controls a bank thus has access to a virtually impregnable communication channel, which is often worth more than any sum of money.

Further, banks have great influence - and often direct control - over other organizations, through control of their funding. A powerful bank could - openly or covertly - manipulate any number of organizations depending on it for loans, lines of credit, etc. Banks might use this kind of control in the competitive battle against other banks:



unaware that they're under the influence of the Illuminati, they might engineer their own mini-conspiracies to drive rivals out of business, or spread into their protected "turf."

The Illuminati must be very careful when suborning banks, particularly in Western industrialized societies where government regulations on banks are very strict. Other countries have much less stringent restrictions, however. The Illuminati could set up banks like the corrupt Bank of Credit & Commerce International (BCCI) which made headlines in 1991. Outfits like BCCI could control other banks - including more respectable ones in the U.S. and elsewhere. They could conceal ownership of businesses in many countries, broker political influence worldwide, and control the flow of illegal funds like drag money.

Some theorists postulate an Illuminati group composed entirely of bankers, especially the Swiss, controlling world finance: the "Gnomes of Zurich." See sidebar, p. 66.

Environmental Protesters and Ecoterrorists

The environmental or ecological movement has come to the forefront of public consciousness over the past two decades, and has garnered incredible influence. Major corporations that once shrugged off public opinion now fear the appearance of environmental protesters at their gates, and often kowtow to the movement whenever possible in an effort to placate foes who threaten their profits more than any competitor.

Most environmental groups are sincere in their concerns. Some few organizations or key figures use the movement for self-aggrandizement, however. They keep their protests going whether or not they're still warranted, since without them they'll sink back into obscurity. Such groups are prime targets for the Illuminati.

Planetary ecology isn't (yet) an experimental science. Environmental activists are thus forced to depend on the results of limited studies, the results of which depend on the initial conditions chosen by the investigators. This provides conspiratorial groups with a way of controlling the environmental movement, or organizations within it. By widely disseminating faked studies, they can direct the wrath of environmentalists against companies or even industries they wish to destroy. (Some conspiracy theorists believe that this has happened with the anti-nuclear movement - that major oil companies have secretly funded many of the studies that tag nuclear power as hazardous. Why? To remove a major threat to their dominance of the energy industry.)

Another possibility is that the extremes of the environmental movement - the ecoterrorists - are being funded directly by the industries that the environmentalists are opposing. The goal of this Machiavellian scheme is to discredit the entire movement. (See *Using Public Opinion*, sidebar, p. 70.)

Freemasons

A widespread and widely-respected fraternal organization, Freemasonry is frequently mentioned as a participant in the grand Conspiracy. The true origin of Freemasonry is lost in time. Masons themselves claim that their tradition dates back to ancient Egypt. Whether or not this is true, Masonic lodges were common in mainland Europe around the year 1500, and started proliferating in England and Scotland around 1600. Pope Clement VIII issued a papal bull in 1738 condemning and excommunicating all Freemasons, which implies that the Catholic Church at that time saw Masonry as a threat. Apart from this, however, there's no concrete evidence that Freemasonry has ever engaged in any overt Conspiratorial actions.

There's some interesting *indirect* evidence linking Freemasonry to the Conspiracy and the Illuminati, however. Many Freemasons look to the Templars as their direct antecedents. Certain Masonic rites are said to have been drawn from the



THE SOCIETY OF LIGHT

This is said to be a loose affiliation of individuals dedicated to stopping the acquisitive plans of the more "traditional" Illuminati groups. As far as anyone knows, the Society has no goal other than to prevent other Illuminati from reaching theirs.

Nobody knows much about the Society: the identities - or even the number - of its members, its organization, the location of its headquarters, etc. Some conspiracy theorists believe that the Society arose when opponents of the Illuminati realized they had to organize themselves if they wanted to defeat the Conspiracy. (It's ironic to note that the Society has been forced to adopt the same trappings of secrecy and security as their foes, simply to survive.)

Some people claim that the group's claims of opposing the other Illuminati are just a pose - that the Society wants world domination as much as anyone else. Perhaps the organization started off as dedicated opponents of the Illuminati and was perverted by the conspiratorial role it was forced to take on. Or maybe world domination was the goal all along. Nobody knows.

In an Illuminated campaign, the PCs should never come into direct contact with the Society of Light. Occasionally they may encounter someone who claims to be a Society agent . . . but is he telling the truth?





The best-known organized crime group in the U.S. is the Mafia, or the Cosa Nostra. The word "Mafia" is actually an Italian acronym for the phrase "Death to the French" Cry the Italians."

The Mafia originated as groups of fighting men recruited by Sicilian landowners in the early 19th century, in reaction to the Napoleonic invasions of southern Italy and Sicily. Quickly, however, the organization forgot its patriotic goals. Groups of Mafiosi became powerful enough to operate against their employers, and exacted tribute of various kinds from them. Using terrorism against the peasant electorate, the Mafia attained political office in several Sicilian communities. They then acquired influence among the members of the police force and obtained legal access to weapons. Late in the 19th century, the Italian government tried to suppress the Mafia, causing many of its leaders to emigrate to the United States. In Sicily, the Mafia was finally suppressed by the fascist Italian government during the 1920s.

In the United States, however, the Mafia continued to gain power. Prohibition provided an excellent market opportunity, through which the Mafia acquired wealth and power. (See sidebar, p. 69.) The organization developed a virtual monopoly on illegal gambling, and significantly penetrated the *legal* gambling market as well.

The Mafia today comprises a number of semi-autonomous "crime families," the heads of which sit on various councils. Membership is by initiation, and leadership is generally at least partially hereditary (unless there's a coup, of course).

The organization has connections with many legitimate enterprises, from which it realizes great profits.

Templars, specifically the Strict Observance rite, which is claimed to have come directly from Templars who survived the scourge of 1307 to 1312 and perpetuated their order in Scotland. (Interestingly enough, the Strict Observance rite includes oaths to unswervingly follow some "unknown superiors.") Further, in the late 1640s, some influential Rosicrucians are thought to have become Masons. Members of the *Prieure de Sion* are also said to have joined the Masons. This indicates that at least three influential conspiratorial groups have had the opportunity to gain direct or indirect control over Freemasonry.

As a fraternal secret society whose oaths include the tender of aid to brothers in time of need, Freemasonry has a structure that could prove of great use to the Illuminati. Recognition symbols, passwords and secret grips are already in place. Further, Freemasonry has many grades of initiation that include compartmentalization of information. Members of one grade expect to know more of the organization's secrets than lower grades, and less than higher grades. It's possible, therefore, that certain grades of initiation are reserved partially or exclusively for members of the Conspiracy. Thus it's possible that both the Templars and the *Prieure* control different "subsets" of Masonry.

Intelligence Agencies

Intelligence organizations around the world are prime candidates for takeover by Illuminati groups. Agencies like the CIA, KGB, MI5, CSIS and others have many of the skills and resources that the Illuminati need, and which can prove very useful in infiltrating, suborning or destroying rival organizations.

Security is of vital importance to intelligence agencies, and this very fact makes them relatively easy pickings for a well-organized Illuminati group. Most agencies are greatly compartmentalized to minimize damage if the group is penetrated or if an asset is compromised. Thus, one department often doesn't know what another is doing. A high-ranking officer who is loyal to a conspiratorial group has considerable freedom of action. Field agents are usually kept in the dark about the overall purpose of their mis-



sions. Further, they must often receive their orders indirectly. This makes it relatively simple for a conspiratorial group to alter those orders, co-opting a field agent as a pawn. Entire intelligence agencies are sometimes involved in games much larger than their officially-sanctioned operations. Usually this involves rivalries between agencies that are supposedly on the same "side." But sometimes agencies try to alter the policies of the national governments to which they are supposedly subordinate, and attempt to control or to actually overthrow those governments. Any actions like these can be used directly by the Illuminati.

Knights Templar

The Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon was, according to some historians, set up in the year 1114, although its official constitution wasn't negotiated until 1117, and the order's existence wasn't made public until 1118. There are hints that the Templars were initially created as an armed entourage to support the *Prieure de Sion*. The two orders were closely associated for the first decade of their existence, and shared the same Grand Master until 1188. In this year, Jerusalem fell to the Muslims, partially because of the incompetence of one Gerard de Ridefort, a Knight Templar. The *Prieure* responded by "disowning" its protegee order, and making them totally independent through an official ceremony that took place in Gisors in France. Some historians believe that this whole thing was intended solely for public consumption; despite the apparent schism, the two groups remained closely associated, with the Templars under the influence of the *Prieure*. Alternatively, the Templars themselves might have believed they were independent, while actually senior members of the order - perhaps the Grand Master - were associated with the *Prieure*.

The Knights Templar grew in influence and wealth over the years, until by the end of the 13th century they were powerful enough to ignore, with apparent impunity, the edicts of various European monarchs. This came to an end in the year 1306, however, when Philip IV of France decided he'd had his fill of the Templars. (Much of his animosity toward the order probably came from the fact that he owed them a considerable sum of money.) In any case, Philip maneuvered the pope, Clement V, into issuing an order to arrest all Templars in France. This order was carried out in 1307. Many Templars were tried and executed as heretics, and the order was officially dissolved in 1312.

Some historians believe that the order actually continued to exist after its official dissolution. There were many Templars outside France - in Scotland, for example - who were never arrested, and it's thought that many within France actually "went underground," perhaps with the cooperation of the *Prieure*, to escape the papal order. Freemasons claim that some of their rites are a direct continuation of Templar tradition, so in that sense the order might still be said to exist.

Major Corporations

Businesses have historically been major players in their own small-c conspiracies, in search of profits rather than power. Modern antitrust law in the U.S. has made this less common . . . or perhaps has just driven it deeper underground. Other countries might not have such restrictive laws, or might have a social and legal environment that *encourages* such collusion.

As corporations grow larger, their ability to influence society increases. Many companies are in a position to affect public attitudes and beliefs; as control of the news media consolidates into the hands of half a dozen major corporations, they will soon share *near-control* of what society knows. Almost by definition, a corporation will take what steps it can to maximize its own profit picture. Such steps involve creating markets - or *perceptions* of markets - where none existed before (e.g., antiperspirants and "personal cleansers"), and suppressing, discrediting or otherwise

PROHIBITION AND THE MAFIA

Some conspiracy theorists, including A. Ralph Epperson, believe that the Eighteenth Amendment of 1920 (Prohibition) had, as its sole purpose, the creation of a powerful crime syndicate in America. The reasoning goes as follows.

As should be obvious to anyone with the slightest grasp of human psychology, Prohibition wouldn't prevent most people from drinking liquor. It would only make their actions illegal, and force them to turn to illegal sources for their liquor. In other words, it created a huge and profitable "market niche" for those willing to risk the penalties for smuggling and selling illegal liquor.

Government attempts to crack down on bootleggers simply made the market more profitable and attractive. Each time the government clamped down, the supply decreased, raising the price that successful bootleggers could charge. As the profit potential increased, more criminal groups were drawn into the market, and competition increased between them, which often led to gang wars. The carnage of these wars led the government to increase the pressure still more, further raising the price of illegal liquor. The result, according to Epperson and others, was the creation of a powerful crime syndicate that continued to exist even after Prohibition ended in 1933.

It could be argued that some time before 1920, one or more Illuminati groups saw the desirability of creating a powerful crime syndicate - something that they could use for their own ends. Using their influence over the U.S. government, it was the Illuminati who brought about the Eighteenth Amendment. Probably from the outset the Illuminati were exercising limited control over the criminal elements that would eventually coalesce into the syndicate. • And when it emerged in its final form, it was already totally under the direction of the Illuminati. .



USING PUBLIC OPINION

Public reaction can be one of the strongest weapons a conspiratorial group can use against its opponents. This is particularly true when the two rival groups are both known to the public. The trick is to make an enemy look *much* worse than it actually is - so dangerous, in fact, that people will stand in line to destroy them in the cause of "public safety." \ Let's take a timely - and non-' Conspiratorial - example to illustrate the point. The forest industry and the environmental movement have been butting heads for years. The forest companies want to log old-growth forests; environmental groups want the same areas protected as national parks. Both groups have persuasive arguments. The forest industry puts billions of dollars into the economy, and creates many thousands of jobs; overly restricting logging operations might force companies out of business, and lead to many lost jobs. Old-growth forests, on the other hand, have taken centuries to grow; once they're gone they're *gone*, and won't be replaced in any two lifetimes.

For the sake of this example, assume that one forest company - WoodCo - is willing to go to any length to destroy the environmental movement as a significant force, freeing the industry to operate how it would like. Secretly, WoodCo hires a group of *agents provocateurs*, and funds them to create a particularly rabid environmental activist group - the FFF, "Free Forests Forever." The FFF blows up a sawmill. Three security guards are killed in the explosion. Suddenly the press, and the public, are taking more notice. This is war.

The next stages follow quickly. Several loggers - employees of WoodCo, as it turns out - are killed on the job by snipers. Logging trucks are blown off the road by LAWs. A lumber reseller, located in a suburban region, is fire-bombed. Again, the FFF claims credit.

Time for the *coup de grace*: evidence - manufactured, of course - is found indicating that FFF isn't operating on its own, that other environmental groups opposing the logging industry knew what was planned, and gave their tacit acceptance!

The public outcry is tremendous. Law enforcement and government agencies can sit still no longer. The entire environmental movement is destroyed as a credible force.

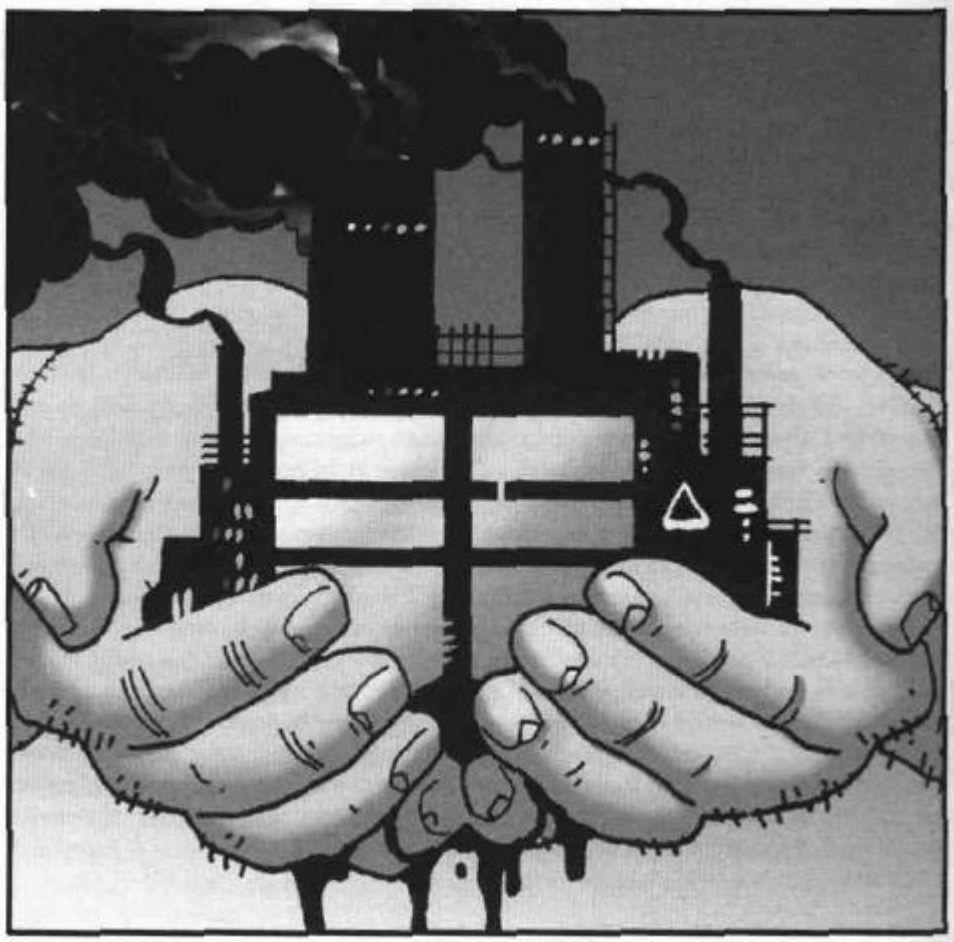
And the forest industry - with WoodCo in the vanguard - is free to continue without harassment.

A blatantly fictional example, of course, but the technique can be - and probably *has* been - applied in a wide range of areas.

decreasing the influence of any organization, product or person who threatens their continued survival.

For public corporations, there's some degree of oversight - in the form of shareholders and the legal requirements of public reporting - which can make it difficult for a corporation to act freely . . . and for the Illuminati to co-opt it. The degree of oversight is much less for privately-held corporations, whose shares are not traded on stock exchanges. Illuminated groups can exert influence on corporations through powerful individuals on the board, through the banks that provide them funding, and through many other channels. Examples of how the corporations, in turn, can control other organizations can be found on the business pages of any newspaper.

Note that conspiracies may exist *within* corporations, or - on a larger scale - *between* them.



Organized Crime

The realm of organized crime would seem to comprise a major Conspiracy in and of itself. Organizations such as the Mafia, the drug cartels, the Yakuza and the Triads have over the years demonstrated their ability to suborn corporations, cultural groups, even law enforcement agencies and governments! Their leverage comes from a balance of the carrot and the stick: the offer of wealth and the threat of violence. (A favorite phrase of the Colombian cartels is "*Plata e plomo*," "silver or lead" - i.e., a coin or a bullet.) These organizations are masters at creating shell companies, and protecting their real operations with multiple layers of deception.

Organized crime groups are not themselves immune to infiltration and control, of course. Many such groups are autocratic in their command structure. with most power



concentrated in one individual. All an Illuminati group has to do is suborn, recruit or control that individual, and the entire organization is under their control. Control can be much more subtle, of course, particularly in "markets" where multiple criminal groups are in direct competition.

Organized Religion

Historically, organized religions have willingly used their considerable influence to attain purely secular goals. They've started wars, and stopped them; created kings and deposed them; promoted individuals as saints or prophets, and then withdrawn their "endorsement." Unscrupulous religious leaders can command believers everywhere, with the weight of divine pronouncements. Certain religious organizations still have more control over the attitudes of their followers than any other group - including secular governments, the news media, and even Madison Avenue!

Contemporary religious figures can call thousands or millions to their banners, and then wield them as lobby groups of incredible power. This kind of influence can be seen in the actions of the Moral Majority less than a decade ago. With modern communication techniques, a charismatic leader can change, if not the world, then a good part of it. In an Illuminated world, televangelical organizations would be incredibly powerful tools. More traditional religions would be even more useful if some way could be found to co-opt them.

Phone Companies

Phone companies - or, more generally stated, telecommunication providers - will soon become among the most influential organizations in the world. As the banks have already found out, financial transactions - and, in fact, most "big business" - actually boil down to the exchange of data. The telephone companies have been exchanging data for decades (although it's only recently that they've realized it). They have the infrastructure, the hardware and the software in place to meet many of the world's data communication needs.

What this means is that the telecom companies will have access to tremendous amounts of valuable data. An Illuminati group that can penetrate their systems can view and even alter this information for their own purposes. The telecom companies in turn have incredible influence - overt and covert - on the organizations that depend on them.

The Unions

Since the beginning of this century, trade union organizations around the world have gained influence. Although this has recently decreased in the United States - due to government action and other causes - it has continued, largely unchecked, in countries like Canada. Trade unions can bend large companies to their will, and - in extreme situations - totally paralyze or even topple a country's government. Influence over government policy doesn't have to be so direct, of course. Unions represent huge voting blocs, particularly in those countries where they can legally require all their members to vote as dictated by the union bosses. Trade unions have allied themselves closely with political parties, promising their votes to help the parties get elected, on the assumption that the new government will bring in policies and laws that benefit the unions.

In an Illuminated world, some or all of the larger trade unions will be under the direct control of various conspiratorial groups. This control can be established by co-opting, bribing or otherwise influencing the union leadership, or infiltrating agents into that leadership structure. In turn, unions can control smaller groups - "special action teams," for example, like the ones that sometimes sabotage company facilities when labor negotiations aren't progressing along desired lines.

MOVING THE MOUNTAIN

Occasionally it becomes necessary for a conspiratorial group to cause a large and influential organization to change its public policy in a particular direction. Such organizations, particularly when power is to a large degree associated with a lone individual, have a very significant inertia. This is particularly true for those many organizations - including governments, churches and other similar groups - that have a great investment in being "right." (Groups like this could be considered to have a "macro" version of the Reputation disadvantage . . .)

Take, as a fanciful example, a conspiratorial group that would like to influence the Catholic Church into becoming more liberal in its policies and philosophies. Obviously, liberal groups or individuals petitioning the Church are going to see little result; the Church is too invested in being "right" to allow it to appear that it will bow to pressure in this way. Is there any way to get around this problem . . . *without*, of course, co-opting the person in the position of power - in this case, the Pope - as an agent of the conspiratorial group?

Psychology offers a possible solution. First, the conspiratorial group must coopt a member of the target organization - in this case, perhaps a Bishop - who is influential enough to be widely accepted by "civilians" as a spokesperson for official policy. (It doesn't matter whether this individual has any *real* authority or power in the group, just so long as the general public will believe that when he speaks he's publicizing official policy.) This person must now take a public position diametrically opposed to the direction in which the conspiratorial group wants the organization to move. In the example, the coopted Bishop must make public statements that are conservative and reactionary to a fault, much "further to the right" than official Church philosophy. Ideally, these statements will be tied closely enough to "official dogma" - or, in the case of other types of organizations, official policy - to be believable, but extreme enough to prompt strongly negative public reaction.

In many cases, the organization will respond by openly distancing itself from the unpopular statements of the coopted spokesperson - in the above example, the Church would announce policies to make it appear more liberal - which is just what the conspiratorial group wanted in the first place.



4 WHY DOES MR. BEAMISH
HAVE TINFOIL IN HIS HAT?

Pawns of the Illuminati



**WHY DOES
MR. BEAMISH...**



We've all had contact with the Conspiracy; we just haven't realized it. Everybody has experienced strange, meaningless, sometimes even sinister events - the kind of thing that nags at your mind at the time, but which you quickly force yourself to forget. That's one of the major differences between the "real" world and most campaign worlds. Everything has some significance in a roleplaying game, or the GM wouldn't have bothered describing it.

In an Illuminated campaign, senseless things happen all the time . . . but they're not really senseless. They're actually the byproducts of Conspiratorial actions, plots and counterplots. While the agents of the Conspiracy are very real, they're also relatively rare. Much more common are pawns of the Illuminati.

Gradual Illumination

Most of the material in this chapter assumes that the GM is either Illuminating an existing campaign, or is blending an Illuminati campaign with another genre (whether the players know it or not). Events that occur at this level of Illumination aren't usually enough to hang an adventure on. They're just weird, seemingly inconsequential events that happen while something else is going on. Some GMs might run "exclusively" Illuminated campaigns in which all of the PCs' actions are centered around investigating the Conspiracy. In this case, it's a good idea to go directly to the following chapter, where enough solid clues appear on which to base a full investigation.

The "meaningless events" stage of a campaign can be great fun, since it gives GMs free rein to create off-the-wall events. But unless there's something else happening - something significant - it can be exceedingly frustrating for the players. Things are happening around them over which they have no control, very much like in real life . . . which is what many people use roleplaying games to take a break from! They're unequipped to deal with the situation, and they don't even know what the real situation is. GMs should be careful in how long they continue this phase before moving to the next stage.

Here are a few examples of "meaningless events" to jump-start GMs' imaginations. Remember that these events are actually *not* meaningless at all; they are all part of the schemes cooked up by various conspiratorial groups to help them reach their goals. The problem is that only those groups *understand* what significance the events actually have. The PCs are either innocent bystanders or ignorant pawns . . . so far.

And even the *GM* doesn't need to understand the significance of a "weirdo event" when it occurs. He can just toss it into play, and worry *later* about what it really means. The players may never figure out what's going on, but GMs should let them *think* they had a chance to solve the mystery . . . they just didn't pick up on the clues. Too bad. In a well-run campaign, the players should be able to solve most but not all of the minor mysteries that drew them into the Conspiracy.

All of the following examples have some plausible Conspiracy-related reason behind them. These are left as an exercise for the reader . . .

Meaningless Tasks

Most PCs will have some kind of job - whether mundane office work, or something "adventurous" like a police officer or soldier of fortune. In the former case, the job usually happens in the down-time between adventures, although it sometimes intrudes on playing time; in the latter, the job is often the motivation for adventures. Either way, lots of weird events can happen on the job.

In a mundane job, most tasks make at least some sense: reorganize the filing system, write a report on departmental productivity, or something similar. Occasionally, however, tasks seem to make no sense whatsoever: for example, replace all the department's rubber stamps with new ones . . . which are *exactly* the same as the ones currently in use. Or everybody must take a psychological screening test for some



THEY KNOW WHERE YOU ARE

In the near future, many people in the "real" world will be carrying a device that allows a central tracking system to locate them, within seconds, virtually anywhere in the world. Should it strike their fancy, the people who manage this tracking system - or whoever controls them - can quickly determine where a certain person is, within a kilometer. No matter how Big-Brotherish and science-fictional this may sound, the technology exists, and many people are *already* carrying such location devices . . . although most of them probably don't realize it.

What insidious technology is this, no doubt promulgated by evil megacorporations? Actually, it's the latest generation of pager.

Standard pagers are very limited in range; if a user leaves his home city without forwarding his paging service, he won't get any messages. The upcoming generation of technology has been designed to avoid this problem. In the new system, the page is sent via a system of near-Earth-orbit satellites, one of which will always be in a position where it can make the downlink to the user's pager.

And how does the system decide which satellite is in the best position for the downlink? Well, the pager incorporates this little locator, see . . . The same technology will appear in cellular phones over the next few years.

The consequence of this is that, in late TL7 and more advanced campaigns, travelers had better leave their pagers and phones at home if they don't want the Illuminati to know just where they are.

Automated Transaction Machines (banking machines) also create an electronic trail, as do the automatic verification devices used by most stores for credit card purchases. The system records every transaction made with a bank or credit card - or even with a personal check, for places where "tele-check" verification systems are in use. This also makes it easy for the Illuminati to track your movements.



HAVE TINFOIL
IN HIS HAT?



M.A.P.

M.A.P., or Manufacturing Automation Protocol, was a communication standard for the automation of assembly lines and manufacturing plants that was developed by General Motors Corporation in the 1980s. Before M.A.P., factory floors were characterized by "islands of automation." Certain machines were computer controlled; various instruments communicated their readings direction to computers; some processes were performed by robots. But many of these pieces of computerized equipment were unable to communicate with each other, and pass information "up the line" to a central monitoring and control computer system. The reason was that just about every manufacturer of computerized equipment used a proprietary protocol, incompatible with equipment marketed by other companies. (Obviously, the goal of this was to minimize direct competition.)

M.A.P. was developed to overcome this problem. Once companies began marketing equipment that was "M.A.P-compatible," a factory manager could buy equipment from multiple sources and be confident that they could all intercommunicate (in theory, at least). Unfortunately for GM and perhaps for the manufacturing industry in general as of this writing M.A.P. hasn't really caught on.

In an Illuminated world, M.A.P. was actually a plot hatched by the Network to allow them to take direct control of manufacturing facilities. While islands of automation existed, a Network agent couldn't "hack" into a factory's computer and control all the equipment on the shop floor. If properly implemented, M.A.P. would allow this kind of penetration.

And why was this important to the Network? Imagine the possibilities when a Network agent can fire up an assembly line in the middle of the night and totally control it remotely. Normally the assembly line constructs automobiles. But what does it build in the middle of the night when everyone's gone home ...?

unspecified reason. Maybe a PC and a ñ-worker are asked to exchange offices for two days, then swap back again, with no explanation given other than, "The boss said do it." Or an employee must swap around all the phone extensions in the office so everybody gets a new number. A homicide detective might be assigned to assist with a shoplifting case, while a squad of infantry is assigned to guard the latrine for a night. A professional telemarketer might be assigned to selling a product that nobody in his right mind would ever buy.

The strange task might come from a customer instead. A client might deposit \$5,000 in cash to her account . . . then three hours later return to the same teller to withdraw \$5,000 in cash from the same account. A good example comes from Roger Zelazny's *The Guns of Avalon*: a freelance gunsmith is asked to make up a batch of 9mm rounds, but with jeweler's rouge instead of gunpowder. Clearly *something* funny is going on!

Independents or freelancers might receive unusual contracts - such as a professional "minder" hired to bodyguard a celebrity's pet dog for a day. And anyone might be asked by a friend or acquaintance to grant an unusual favor of some kind. Alternatively, a PC could be hired for some kind of man-in-the-street research, or marketing focus group, or something similar - something like being asked to watch taped TV commercials in a darkened room for three hours, while wearing a tinfoil skullcap.



Mysterious Events

An adventurer comes home and senses that things are very subtly different in *his* living room. (On a roll of IQ-1 he realizes that some or all items in the room have been moved, then returned *almost* to their original positions.) Similarly, he goes to unlock his car and finds the door already unlocked, even though he *knows* he locked it when he left. (On a roll of IQ-2 he realizes his car isn't quite where he remembers parking it, either.)



Or maybe his car is just where it should be. Everything's normal: the expected junk's on the floor, all the old familiar dings and scratches are still there. But the transmission's now a five-speed when it used to be a four-speed. Or maybe 5th and Reverse have been switched (an unpleasant surprise on a highway trip). Or maybe the car's now an automatic ...

Someone's house is broken into, but the only things missing are the E key from his computer, a pair of broken sunglasses, and his last jar of Dijon mustard. Maybe nothing's missing at all, and he now has a better stereo, more money in the cookie jar, and real silverware to replace his garage-sale cutlery. Or now his doors are all hung the other way, with the hinges on the wrong side. Or his carpets have all been replaced with purple shag! (Of course, none of his neighbors noticed anything amiss.)

A PC wakes to his alarm at the usual time. All the clocks in his home agree, and confirm that he's on schedule. But when he arrives at work he finds he's half an hour late.

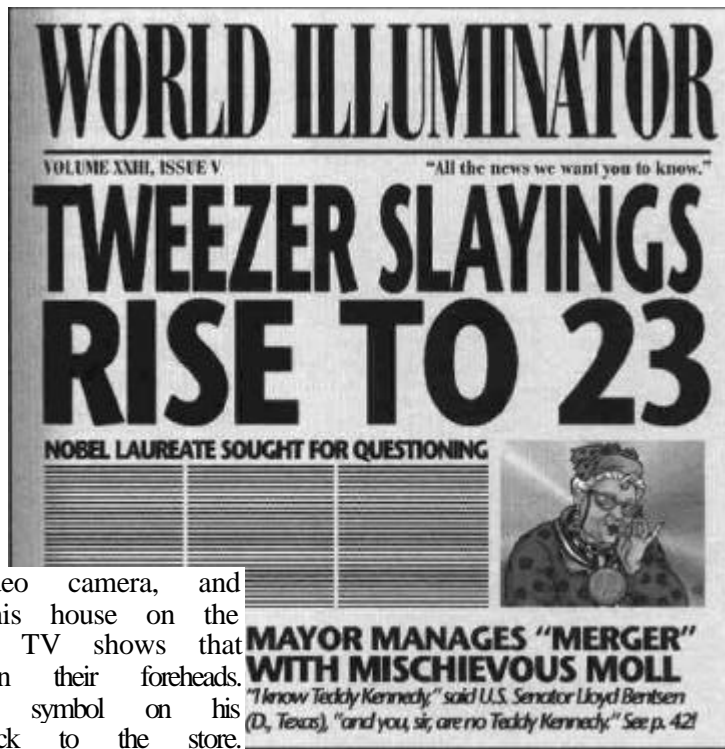
Someone's just bought himself a new video camera, and has tried it out by taping the people passing his house on the sidewalk. When he plays back the video, the TV shows that everyone has some kind of strange symbol on their foreheads. When he videotapes himself, he finds a similar symbol on his own forehead. Puzzled, he takes the camera back to the store. As he describes the problem, the salesman looks a little pale, but claims quite calmly that a recall has just been announced on that model of camera. If he just hands over the "faulty" camera, he'll receive a more expensive model, plus \$100 for his trouble. If he doesn't go along with this deal, someone breaks into his home, steals the camera and replaces it with one that's *almost* identical. Either way, the new one doesn't show the strange symbols.

"Call 1-800-NET-WORK"

Over several days, someone finds that she's consistently getting wrong numbers when she calls from her home or office phone. Even when she carefully checks the number she's dialing, or uses a speed-dial that she knows is programmed correctly, she still gets the wrong numbers. The "Last Number" display on her office phone confirms that she dialed the correct number. There's nothing wrong with the phone, and the phone company service department can find nothing wrong with the switching system, or so they say. After a couple of days or weeks, the problem clears up on its own. How about other kinds of phone "glitches?" Every time someone picks up the phone to dial out - whether it's his phone, someone else's, or even a pay phone on the corner - there's a second's pause before he hears the dial tone. Or maybe there's no dial tone, and he's patched in on a conference call with another call in progress. (What was it those people were discussing before they suddenly shut up? It *sounded* like something about the Worshipful Masters and the Day of Reckoning . . .) When other people try the phone, it works just fine.

Whenever someone tries to place a long distance phone call, the operator cuts in to say the lines are down. And the operator always addresses the caller by name. That's a nice, courteous touch if you're calling from your home phone, or using your calling card. But what if you're feeding coins into a pay phone in a foreign country?

Perhaps someone's phone bill includes calls that he didn't make, or calls charged to his calling card when he doesn't *have* a calling card. When he traces the numbers, these calls were all placed to the CIA, the White House, and the Pentagon. And now various Government-issue unmarked cars are cruising back and forth outside his house...



THE CONSPIRACY OF THE TABLOIDS

The Illuminati often use supermarket tabloids to discredit responsible research into the Conspiracy. Some conspiracy theorists believe that many of the articles in such tabloids are actually true, fed to the papers by agents of the Illuminati - if the publishers themselves aren't agents. Many researchers have been chagrined to find a sensationalized version of their recent theory published in a tabloid - usually on the same page as an Elvis sighting - timed to appear at checkout stands just before the real research is published.

Obviously, this is an incredibly effective way of discrediting real research. Most people automatically disbelieve anything that appears in a tabloid, and will immediately discount anything - regardless of its source - that echoes something that they've seen in such a paper. Those people who *do* believe what they read in tabloids generally only help to discredit Conspiracy research.



HAVE TINFOIL
IN HIS HAT?

Strange People

Somebody new moves into a character's building - an innocuous-looking little man who always wears a hat lined with tinfoil to protect him from the beams of "orbital mind-control lasers" being used by the CIA, or the KGB, or Madison Avenue, or anybody else.

Strange characters can appear anywhere - on the job, in the next seat on the plane, or simply passing on the street. Maybe these weirdos believe in the Conspiracy, and try to convince everyone they meet that the Secret Masters are behind everything. Or they're vociferous in their belief that there's no Conspiracy. While it's tempting to make these people totally ludicrous, GMs might prefer to give them some disturbing, perhaps even grotesque, twist. Even a "weird" NPC who seems largely buffoonish should still have some characteristic that makes him vaguely unsettling. Someone might approach a character on the street, calling him by the wrong name, and treating attempts to set him straight as a practical joke ("You've always been such a kiddie, Bob!"). When it becomes obvious that he's *not* kidding, the stranger is both embarrassed and amazed: the PC is almost a perfect double for the stranger's friend or colleague.

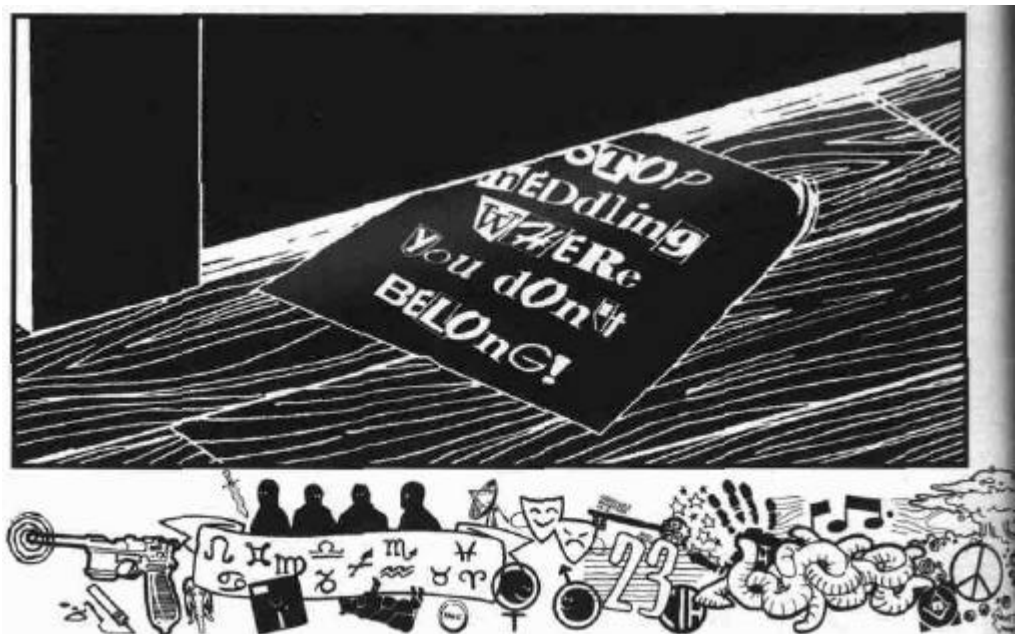
Alternatively, a stranger could offer a PC some kind of recognition signal - a password, handshake, or other such sign - and be totally chagrined when the PC doesn't return it. Depending on the situation, the stranger might try to explain it away - "Sorry, I thought I recognized you from the lodge meeting last Wednesday" - or might deny that there was any significance whatsoever to his actions ("It *wasn't* a secret sign, it was a twitch; it happens when I'm tired").

Warnings

What if someone receives inexplicable warnings or threats that seem to have no relation to anything he's doing? For example, he finds a message on his answering machine that says, "We know where you live," in an unfamiliar voice. Maybe it's just a practical joke, or a wrong number, but maybe not.

Warnings might be symbolic rather than spoken or written: a raw cut of beef is spiked to someone's front door with a carving knife (could the interpretation be, "You're dead meat?"). What if there's a cryptic - and possibly magical - symbol inscribed in a character's lawn, or traced on the kitchen floor using flour and water? Maybe he can find out what the symbol is - a voodoo *veve*, perhaps - or it could remain a mystery.

Someone comes home to find his regular squash partner dead, crucified against his living room wall. When the cops respond to his anguished phone calls, the body's gone and there's no evidence - no bloodstains, no nail-holes in the wall. While the cops are still there, the "dead" man - totally unharmed - arrives to ask, "Are we still on for squash tomorrow, Sam?"



RUMORMONGER

An idea to begin a campaign: An "interesting piece of illicit software" has appeared on various computer networks throughout the United States. It's called "Rumormonger," and its sole purpose is to disseminate rumors, innuendo, scandal and other "black" information. On an irregular basis, "Rumormonger" flashes a message onto a user's screen, asking him if he's heard a certain rumor. If he answers no, the software dumps a text file to his computer for his perusal. Apparently, "Rumormonger" has found its way onto the computer systems of a number of major corporations.

In reality, Rumormonger is something of an urban myth. In an Illuminated campaign, it could be a computer virus that's slowly spreading through the international networks.

Who created it? Probably the Illuminati themselves. It's a great way of disseminating information. Curiosity will make sure that people keep answering "no," and reading the virus's offerings. Even if they don't really believe what Rumormonger has to offer, it might be enough to get people thinking along desired lines.

What if Rumormonger started spreading horrible lies about a character? Obviously, he'd have reason to find out who started the rumor . . . and how to stamp it out before it spreads any further.

Accidents

A good way to start an Illuminated campaign is to have the characters fall victim to - or barely avoid - freak "accidents." These can be potentially lethal, like a near-miss by a speeding car, or merely inconvenient, like a workman spilling paint on someone's suit.

Potentially lethal accidents might be attempts by the Illuminati to eliminate someone who they think knows too much - or who might soon. Inconvenient accidents, like the paint on the suit, can be useful ways of manipulating someone - making him skip a party, or making him five minutes late getting home.

Accidents could also affect others, and still be effective. Maybe it's Mr. Beamish - the guy wearing the foil skullcap - who just dodges the falling piano. Was the piano a real attempt on Mr. Beamish? Or was it a way of getting the characters to talk to him?



Reasons and Explanations

After a few mysterious events, the PCs will probably want to find out what's going on. They might never receive answers to their questions; alternatively, explanations or *attempts* at explanations might be easily forthcoming.

Sometimes reasons and explanations, if examined closely, can end up posing more questions than they answer. Take, for example, the case where a person wakes to his alarm as normal, but arrives at work to find himself half an hour late. Somebody might offer the explanation that obviously the PC's electricity was cut off for half an hour. The victim might accept this at first. . . but then realize that some of Ms clocks are battery-powered or even mechanical - something that hadn't occurred to him at first! Suddenly the occurrence takes on even more significance.

Attempted explanations can come from any source: from an innocent actually trying to resolve to his own satisfaction what happened, or from an agent of the Conspiracy. In the second case, the "explanation" will be carefully chosen to maneuver the victim in the desired direction

"Gizmos"

Many people in what we laughingly call the real world believe (or fear) that the Illuminati possess weird gadgets that allow them to modify behavior from afar - "mind control lasers." for example. Most "rational" people dismiss these tales as lunacy. But then, rational people once dismissed the idea of flight. . .

GMs may decide that certain Illuminati groups in their campaign do, in fact, have access to high-tech or "weird science" gizmos. Depending on the individual campaign, these can be relatively logical, or as weird as the GM cares to make mem. Following are some ideas; GMs can ring whatever changes on them they like, or create their own gizmos from scratch. One example is described in more detail in the sidebar on p. 122.



WHERE ARE THEY HIDING?

It stands to reason that the Secret Masters - if they really exist — might have a hidden base, a luxurious sanctuary from which they pull the world's strings. Of course, it won't be easy to find . . . otherwise, what's the point? But there might be clues. Or an investigator might reach the Secret Headquarters by stowing away, or even be taken there as a prisoner.

A private island. The classic solution; real-world dictators and millionaires really do have their own island getaways. A powerful Illuminati group might be able to erase their base from the world's maps . . . not just a private island, but a secret one! Maybe that explains the Bermuda Triangle. All those planes and boats got too close to something they weren't supposed to see!

An underground fortress. Again, sometimes this is real. So take everything you've ever read about Cheyenne Mountain, Hitler's secret bunker and the catacombs of Rome, multiply it by 100, add humming high-speed elevators with hidden entrances, and let the Secret I Masters call it home. It might be under a remote mountain in a natural park, or below the Empire State Building.

In space. It's already technically possible to have an out-of-this-world hideout, if you just have enough money. This will only get easier over the next few decades. To Illuminati concerned with personal survival, an orbital base would be especially attractive: no gravity to weaken aging hearts, no local authorities of any kind, no danger from the plagues sweeping the overcrowded Earth.

Hidden in plain sight, in a small town in Kansas, a retirement community for the very rich, a European castle or a whole small principality.



HAVE TINFOIL IN HIS HAT?



So WHY ARE THEY So SECRETIVE?

Why *do* the Illuminati keep themselves hidden?

The obvious answer is that their goals, or the means which they use, are so disgusting that if we knew what they were doing we'd rise up and destroy them. Maybe it's true. It implies that we *could* fight them, if we just knew what they were up to.

Or perhaps their schemes can only come to fruition if we're ignorant. If we knew that magic was real, we'd become wizards ourselves. If we knew what was in the water, we'd all drink orange juice. In that case, we might or might not be able to fight them, but we could frustrate their plans if we understood them.

Of course, it's also possible that their plans will work no matter what we do ... but it's just *more convenient* for them to remain secret.

Maybe they just like their privacy. It could be that some of the Secret Masters have perfectly reasonable goals, and are going after them in perfectly legal ways . . . and don't want publicity. If *you* had found Bigfoot frozen in a glacier, and were trying to bring him back to life with the help of a famous blonde singer, would *you* tell the press?

And perhaps they're just hiding from *each other*. .i.

Semi-Rational

It's long been known that certain frequencies of sound have profound psychological effects on humans and animals. For example, under certain conditions, a sustained tone of 14 Hz (14 cycles per second) can induce a sense of unreasoning disquiet, or even fear, in humans. Perhaps the Illuminati have created "tonal generators" that emanate subsonic or supersonic frequencies, creating a variety of effects on anyone nearby.

The presence or absence of ions (charged particles) in the atmosphere is also known to have a decidedly unsettling effect on humans. Negative ions seem beneficial; that's why the air "smells" so good after a thunderstorm. When the atmosphere has a high concentration of positive ions, people feel on edge and tempers become frayed. Someone might have created an electronic device that ionizes the air, electromagnetically concentrates positive ions, and pumps them into the air conditioning system of a building. This would be an excellent way of making sure that an already-tense meeting - such as when management meets with the union in an attempt to stave off a strike - degenerates into vituperation and even violence.

Lunatic Fringe

There's an awful lot of hardware in orbit around the earth - satellites that nobody seems willing to claim. Couldn't the Illuminati have lofted their *own* satellites into space? Perhaps with mind control devices?

Everyone knows that subliminal messages have an effect on the way people think (and obviously the recent studies that claim they *don't* were faked by the Illuminati!). Well, members of the Conspiracy are inserting subliminal mind-control messages into *everything*, from heavy metal to elevator music to the "fasten-seat-belt" buzzers in our cars. And what about those public address announcements at airports that nobody can understand? What are they *really* saying?

And then there's fluoride in our drinking water, weird waxes on our fruit, sulfites in our wine, and MSG in our chow mein. What long-term effects might *they* have on the way we think?

Et cetera, et cetera, finord et cetera.

Testing, Testing

Most of the time, the weird events associated with the Conspiracy are ploys used by the Illuminati and other conspiratorial groups to turn innocent "civilians" into pawns, to further the groups' ends. Occasionally, however, such events will be tests. Weishaupt's Bavarian Illuminati were notorious for testing prospective candidates without their knowledge. A modern group might test reactions to challenges, obstacles, even physical danger. Individuals who show the requisite "strength of character" - perhaps illustrated by not going insane - will be tested further. More extensive forms of testing are discussed in the next chapter.

Other Opponents of the Illuminati

Maybe the PCs aren't the first people to discover the existence of the Conspiracy and to combat it. There could be a group of other intrepid "anti-Illuminati" already operating.

This could be a way of getting the party involved in fighting the Illuminati. Perhaps the "anti-Illuminati" burst into the characters' house to blow up *their* kitchen, or rappel off *their* balcony, or throw *their* radios in the toilet. Obviously, they won't tell the "innocent bystanders" - the PCs - what they're doing; instead they'll offer some more or less believable excuse ("Municipal Vermin Control. Sorry about the holes in your floor.") before making their escape. This technique is particularly well-suited to a humorous Illuminati campaign.





"They [the Illuminati] engineered the spread of crazy conspiracy theories, because even though many of the theories are true, they still sound crazy ..."
-J.R. "Bob" Dobbs, The Book of the SubGenius

JUST THE
FACTS, MA'AM

On the Trail of the Illuminati



SECRET COMMUNICATION

Secret societies have the same communication problems as military organizations: they must pass information to, their operatives without enemy interception or subversion. Further, the communication channel must be fast enough - the definition of "fast" depending on the context, of course — and cannot be so complex that the operative receiving the message is likely to make a mistake decoding it. Finally, the channel must be "robust," in that errors in transmission can't invalidate the whole message.

The methods chosen to get around these problems will vary depending on the resources available to the group, and on the importance of the message. The Network, for example, will use secure electronic channels, and even the simplest message will be encrypted. They could possibly "borrow" time and bandwidth on commercial communications satellites, inserting their own messages into legitimate traffic disguised as static or interference. Highly sophisticated groups might have their own satellites! Perhaps one or two of the "failed" satellites in orbit are actually fully functional, and now in the hands of the Conspiracy.

At first glance, it appears unlikely that the Illuminati would use conventional channels like mail, phone, fax, even simple electronic mail. After all, any enemy secret society worth its salt would keep tabs on all of these channels. This isn't necessarily so, however. Monitoring every phone and every mail address that an Illuminati group could use to contact its agents is virtually impossible. It becomes even more difficult when indirect routes are included (i.e., a letter is sent to a post office box rented by a friend of the agent, who hands the letter to its recipient). Thus it seems *likely* that Illuminati groups will use "mundane" channels for routine communication. (This doesn't mean that the communications themselves won't be encrypted, of course.)

The previous chapter describes the most common kind of "relationship" that individuals have with the Conspiracy: the Illuminati manipulate their behavior from behind the scenes, and the characters don't know what's going on. While this can be a lot of fun, both players and GM will eventually tire of it and want to move on to the next step. The PCs try to learn more about the Conspiracy and its component parts, and are on the trail of the Illuminati. But how can they get on the trail of the Illuminati? There are three ways: through their own skill and persistence, through the cooperation of the Illuminati they'll be following (perhaps as the first move in recruiting the investigators), or through the actions of a hostile Illuminati group.

The PCs Alone

Sometimes investigators may be smart enough - or lucky enough - to gather enough clues to piece together what's happening around them. For example, they discover that three people have recently died under mysterious circumstances. By investigating what the three have in common, they're able to figure out what the victims knew or discovered that led to their deaths.

Law enforcement professionals will have a good chance of stumbling over clues pointing to the Conspiracy. They'll also have skills well-suited to following what leads they do find. There are many opportunities for cops to catch hints of conspiratorial activities: auto accidents that *weren't* accidents; robbery-muggings where nothing was stolen; witnesses disappearing or changing their stories; etc. Creative players will no doubt find many ways to investigate such occurrences.



Looking to the Past

Secret societies cover their tracks. But sometimes it's still easier to gain a sense of where an organization has been than it is to learn where it is now or where it's going.

Many Illuminati organizations have been in existence for centuries. Some started out as groups that admitted their existence openly (although they didn't often advertise their true goals). Two examples are the Knights Templar and the *Prieure de Sion* (see pp. 69, 60). Both groups operated openly for some time, before apparently ceasing to exist. Through library and historical research, investigators can find out how



such organizations operated. With diligence, they can also unearth clues pointing to the society's *continued* veiled existence. This can give them a starting point from which to trace the secret society today.

For example, let's say the PCs are interested in the *Prieure de Sion*. Through historical research, they learn that the *Prieure* repeatedly strove to return the Merovingian bloodline to the throne of France. Knowing this, they can track down any descendants of the Merovingian line alive today, and be fairly confident that where there are Merovingians, there'll be the *Prieure*.

Most Illuminati groups will have gone to some lengths to wipe out such historical trails, but probably won't have caught them all. Something apparently irrelevant like the inscription on a forgotten tomb might give investigators the clue they need. Even if the Illuminati have wiped out all historical trails leading to them, researchers still might learn something valuable by studying exactly *where* gaps occur in the historical record.

GMs should show restraint when it comes to this kind of clue. Few players enjoy roleplaying scholarly research, preferring to be out in the world *doing* something. Used sparingly, however, this technique can add real atmosphere and a sense of depth to an Illuminated campaign.

Coincidences and Accidents

Even in an Illuminated world, coincidences and accidents can occur. Even if there *are* no accidents, and *everything* happens because the Illuminati will it, things can occur that look like accidents. These events are great inciting incidents for an adventure, and can take many forms. Perhaps the investigators witness an assassination disguised as an accident: the victim is hit by a speeding car. He mutters something before expiring. Perhaps the victim's cryptic last words are a valuable clue. Or perhaps the PCs never figure out what the victim's expiring words mean, but over the next several days they discover that people are following them around - actually agents of the Conspiracy, waiting for a chance to discover what the victim said. Maybe someone receives a cryptic phone call intended for someone who's part of the Conspiracy, as the result of a wrong number. The caller passes on a message to *bis* "contact" before he realizes that the person on the other end of the line is a "civilian." Again, the misdirected message might be enough to spark an investigation; if not, then the agents of the Conspiracy following them around - or maybe trying to kill them - could be the tip-off. Or perhaps an investigator finds something strange in his mail - a report to the Secret Grand Masters. Several groups might come after him: the group that sent the letter, the group that was supposed to receive it, and one or more rivals of the first two groups who've been trying to intercept communications for some time. Or maybe somebody intended for the investigator to get the letter in the first place...
- . . v,

Another time-honored coincidence is the mistaken identity. Agent A is supposed to meet agent \hat{A} on a particular street corner at noon. Since neither agent has met the other, agent \hat{A} will wear a black suit, red tie and white carnation. Agent A will make the approach, and confirm agent B's identity with some system of recognition codes. Now, just by luck, one of the PCs is also on that very corner at noon, coincidentally wearing black suit, red tie and white carnation. Agent A mistakenly approaches *him*, while agent \hat{A} looks on in horror. Of course, the recognition codes *should* save the day. But what if agent A is under pressure? Perhaps he's being followed by members of a rival group, or is mortally wounded, and doesn't have time to go through the entire recognition sequence. He passes his message, package or whatever to the wrong person.

Perhaps the Illuminati have hypnotically implanted a message in someone's subconscious. This message is "released" by a key, which could be visual, aural or a combination of the two. What if someone or something accidentally issues the key? A musician improvising along with the radio might repeat the sequence of tones; some-

CIPHERS AND COOES

Any text-based communication can be shielded from prying eyes by the use of ciphers or codes.

A cipher systematically replaces each character in the message with another character. When the message arrives, the receiver reverses the process to get the message "in clear." The simplest cipher replaces each letter with the next letter in the alphabet — A becomes B, B becomes C, etc. - so *Illuminati* becomes *Jmmvnjobuj*. Ciphers can be incredibly complex, but it's theoretically possible to decrypt any encrypted message.

A code, in contrast, assigns specific meanings to character strings. For example, the string FNORD might mean "Assassinate the President tonight." Unfortunately for anyone trying to crack a code, the meanings assigned to strings are totally arbitrary, and FNORD could just as easily mean "Buy rice futures." Obviously, both the sender and receiver must have a code book (or have all the codes memorized), or the system is useless.

Thus codes are harder to crack than ciphers. There's no way to determine the meaning of a coded message in isolation; a group might intercept the message FNORD, but have no way of interpreting it.

Codes can look completely innocuous, which means they can be used publicly without much risk. Need to send a message to an agent? Include the appropriate code phrase in a classified ad in the daily paper. Or spray-paint it on a public building. Slip it into a radio news report. As long as the agent knows where to look for the message, it'll get through. By the way, Elvis has the red fish. Your suspenders are melting.



JUST THE FACTS, MA'AM



WHEELSWITHIN WHEELS, GROUPSWITHINGROUPS

A very useful technique is for the Illuminati to create a "group within a group." It can be similar to the "parent" organization, or totally different, depending on its purpose. The "daughter" group will usually be some kind of secret society. For example, a national telephone company - a major player in the grand Conspiracy — sets up a daughter group, a secret society based along Masonic lines. Membership is by invitation and initiation; most people initially invited for initiation are employees of the company, although there are some "outsiders." The society officers will initially be conspirators from the parent group, but eventually the seats will be held by officers promoted from the membership. None of the "rank and file" members is part of the Conspiracy, or knows anything about it. The daughter group can be totally innocuous, perhaps raising money which is anonymously donated to worthy causes. Eventually, as the officer positions are taken by non-Conspiracy members, the initiates of the daughter group will all be totally ignorant of the greater Conspiracy. The parent group will still have significant influence over the actions of the daughter group, however.

What benefits can the parent group realize from this? Firstly, the smaller group is as an excellent "smoke screen." If investigators are sniffing around the parent corporation, clues can be dropped leading them to the daughter group. After further research, the investigators will almost certainly decide the daughter group is totally innocuous . . . and probably lose interest in the parent group as well. The mysterious clues they picked up were evidence of the innocent secret society and nothing else.

Alternatively, members of the daughter group might be manipulated into directly serving the goals of the parent group. When investigators come snooping, the parent group "blows" the daughter group, exposing it and - perhaps - sacrificing it to the authorities to divert suspicion from itself.

Particularly ruthless Conspirators might cover up an operation by arranging for the members of the daughter group to "tragically" die in an accident related to that operation. For example, a member of the parent group blows up the courthouse. When the police investigate, some or all members of the daughter group are killed in an explosion, *apparently* caused when bombs they were making for future terrorist attacks accidentally detonated.

Finally, a daughter group might prove a good way to get infiltrators out of circulation. Would-be infiltrators are invited to join the daughter group, and they can keep themselves busy — and out of the way - serving on each other!

one stumbling over a passage of James Joyce might repeat the required string of syllables; random graffiti scrawled on a building wall might include the significant symbol or sequence of letters. Suddenly the unwitting courier falls into a hypnotic trance and starts babbling about taking over the world . . . while the investigators are in earshot.

Or maybe the subject was programmed with a behavior, and not information. Suddenly a passer-by pulls out a gun and starts blazing away at a "Re-elect the President" poster!

Perhaps the investigators witness a motor accident (or *is* it an accident?). As the first on the scene, they rescue the dying driver - who is an agent of the Conspiracy. The agent passes a package or message on to the investigators, begging them to deliver it for him. Alternatively, the agent is already dead, and they find something suspicious in the wreckage of the car.

In any of these situations, the investigators have some clues on which to act. They're now actively involved in Conspiratorial activity.

Invitation From the Illuminati

Sometimes the clues that lead to the Conspiracy are orchestrated by the Illuminati themselves. In other words, a group might drop hints to the investigators about its own existence or true nature. There are several reasons a group might do this; most of these are ultimately detrimental to the investigators.

Destruction

Perhaps the investigators have already been sniffing around the periphery of the Conspiracy. They haven't found anything dangerous yet, but they might. Therefore, someone decides to eliminate the risk . . . by eliminating the investigators. One of the reasons the Illuminati are so dangerous is that they see the investigation coming long before the characters even know they're involved in intrigue.



It doesn't take much to lead intrepid investigators to dangle their doom. Just a sufficiently juicy lead before their eyes and they'll follow it anywhere - usually without taking precautions. The Illuminati can simply entice meddlers into an alley and do away with them, or lead them into an area where *someone else* will do the job - into the turf of a bloodthirsty gang, for example. In the latter case, the Illuminati might expedite things by telling the gang that their rivals - disguised as civilians - are planning a raid.

Of course, killing off the PCs makes for a short game. Instead, the Illuminati might destroy investigators' credibility and effectiveness - by humiliating them, for example. Or the Conspirators might trick the investigators into "erving wolf too



many times - as with the case of the crucified squash partner (see p. 76). A nasty trick is to have someone "admit" to the investigators that he's involved in the Conspiracy, and then recant when they take him to the authorities - claiming that the characters bullied him into it, or just didn't understand what he was telling them.

Bloodlines

Maybe the Illuminati want the characters removed because of who they *are*, not what they're doing. A certain group might want to stamp out a particular bloodline, and someone in the group is of that ancestry - or at least the Conspirators *think* he is.

Maybe the group's hatred for the bloodline is ancestral. Or maybe another group - rivals of the first - want to *conserve* the bloodline for their own purposes. The first group could thus be just trying to eliminate something their enemies want. (For example, enemies of the *Prieure de Sion* might be busily killing any Merovingian heirs they can find.)

The target of such a plot might be totally unaware of his heritage, or might know about it but apply no significance to it ("Sure, I'm descended from Dagobert II. So what?"). The group behind the plot might also have known about his heritage from birth, but only recently have decided the time is right to do something about it. For example, maybe the target was 30th in line for the throne of the Holy Roman Empire (when the *Prieure* gets around to re-establishing it, of course). But the hostiles have been working down the list for the last few decades, and now it's the PC's turn ...

A Matter of Time

Someone could be targeted by visitors from the future who want to prevent him - or perhaps his descendants - from doing something. This "something" could be directly detrimental to the visitors, or could be the founding of a group that will eventually oppose them. This is the premise behind *The Terminator* and *Terminator II*.

What if the would-be assassins miss, and leave evidence identifying who was behind it - an organization that exists in the target's time as well as in the future? He now seeks vengeance ... and unwittingly commits the act that earned him the enmity of the future killers. The circle is closed. (GMs interested in time-jumping Illuminati should check out *GURPS Time Travel*.)

Manipulation

Members of the Conspiracy are masters at manipulating innocent pawns into doing their bidding. To better control a subject, the Conspirators may first draw him out of his normal life, into a situation where his actions are easier to control. One of the best ways of drawing out an conspiracy investigator is to tempt him with evidence of covert activity. This can range from a telephone conversation with a "disaffected conspirator," to a meeting of a bogus secret society set up for the express purpose of exploiting the PCs.

Direct Manipulation

The Illuminati might manipulate investigators directly, by feeding them information - which might even be true - leading them in the appropriate direction. For example, the supposedly-disaffected conspirator who phones them is actually a dedicated member of one conspiratorial group, who provides them with some clues leading them to investigate a rival.

Manufactured evidence might turn the investigators into unwitting "lightning rods." When a rival group tries to eliminate



THE MIDNIGHT SUN

The *Midnight Sun* is a (fictional) tabloid newspaper based in Bellingham, Washington, and can be found on sale at the checkout counters of the finest supermarkets across the nation.

Although the *Sun's* masthead lists more than two dozen "traveling correspondents," inspection of the company's financial statements shows that there are only ten staff members (*including* the production staff), and that no money has been spent on travel for anyone but the president during the ten-year existence of the newspaper. The obvious conclusion is that these "traveling correspondents" don't exist.

I; Continued on next page ...



THE MIDNIGHT SUN (CONTINUED)

And, in fact, that's the truth. The "editorial staff actually consists of four writers who, each week, churn out totally fictional "news stories," to be printed under pseudonymous bylines and supported by fraudulent pictures. The fact that they're lying to the public doesn't bother the writers in the slightest; they look on the whole thing as a joke, and figure that anyone who takes their stories seriously shouldn't be allowed out in public anyway. Recent headlines include such winners as "Intelligent Rats Take Over Bakery," "Alien Dogs Threaten ASPCA," "Venus Flytrap Maims Housewife," "How to Tell if Your Parrot is Possessed," "Elvis Shot JFK!" and (a sellout issue) "Stigmata Appear on Statue of Liberty."

The editor, publisher and owner of the *Midnight Sun* is Barrett Hamley, a newcomer to the publishing game just ten years ago when he founded the *Sun*. Since then, the tabloid has carved out a very decent market share. Although he never draws attention to it, Hamley has an interesting background for a publisher. During the 1960s and early 1970s, he served with various military intelligence agencies, and then moved to the civilian sphere to work for the CIA. His responsibilities with these organizations is a closely-kept secret, but there are recurring rumors that he was an expert in psychological warfare, agitprop and disinformation.

Whatever his background, Hamley's employees are highly impressed with their editor. He really seems to have his finger on the pulse of America, and suggests many of the wildest stories that the *Sun* publishes.

The truth of the matter, unknown to any employees of the *Sun* and only suspected by Conspiracy-watchers, is that Barrett Hamley is an agent of the Illuminati. His best ideas are based on actual facts related to the Conspiracy, but he always embellishes them so that they seem totally unbelievable. This technique of trivializing the truth is one of the most powerful methods by which the Conspiracy discredits the work of real investigators.



them, the first group sees from where the blow came, learning more about their enemies in the process. PCs could be exploited as couriers, as lures, as red herrings for other investigators, or even - under special circumstances — as assassins.

False Recruitment

Another useful technique is to *recruit* investigators. A conspiratorial group might approach them in its true guise, depending on their sympathy toward the group's cause - or a silenced shot from a shadowed doorway - to prevent them from revealing the group's existence afterward.

It's more likely, however, that the group will approach investigators in a different guise. For example, a member of the Round Table might claim to be a representative of the FBI - or the CIA, or the University of Colorado, or the Twelfth Congressional District of California, or the local Civil Engineering Department (Traffic Division), or any other organization - with full documentation. After the investigators are recruited, they're given some assignment. (The "FBI" might request permission for some officers to use an individual's apartment one evening for a drug stake-out. The "Civil Engineers" might offer a reasonable hourly wage for sitting on a particular street corner during rush hour and counting potential pedestrian accidents.)

This kind of recruitment could be a "one-shot" deal - the FBI "surveillance agents" actually assassinate somebody with a rifle-shot from the dupe's window. Alternatively, it could be the first step in drawing the researchers deeper into the Conspiracy.

In this latter case, the recruiter might eventually admit that the seemingly minor tasks assigned were significant in some way, and connected with the Conspiracy. By this time, the recruits might sympathize with the group's (stated) goals, or might be so far in that they just can't get out. They're now conscious participants in the Conspiracy... but they still don't know for sure who co-opted them.

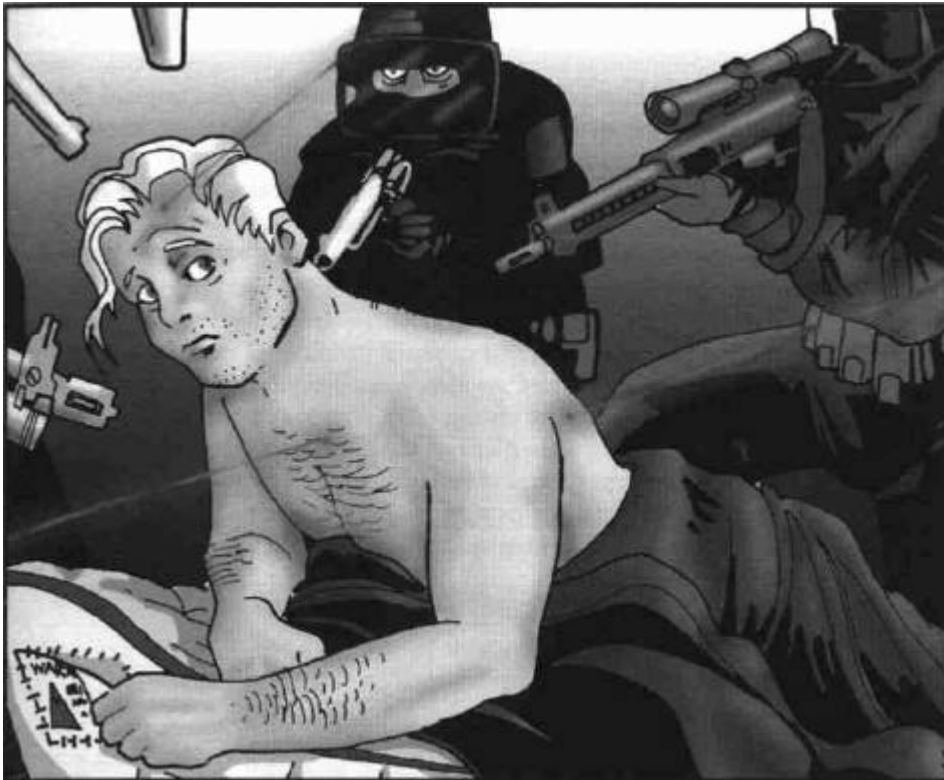
False recruitment is obviously an excellent technique to use on someone with the Gullibility disadvantage. It can be even more effective on Fanatics, however; the recruiter simply has to choose a group with avowed aims that match the fanatic's beliefs.



The Set-Up

A conspiratorial group might instead use pawns to draw a rival group into the open, by making it appear that the new recruits are important members. Then, when the rivals try to eliminate these valuable "assets," the recruiting group can take advantage of the situation - perhaps by capturing and interrogating one of the assassins.

This might occur in stages. First, the recruiting group sets up its pawns so they appear to be minor agents. Then they mount an attack on their own pawns so that it looks like a third group is trying to eliminate the agents. The recruiting group protects its pawns so that the (staged) attack fails. In the eyes of the rivals, the pawns suddenly appear much more important - why would the first group go to such lengths to protect minor players? Obviously, the agents are more significant than originally thought ... The pawns are now much more attractive bait.



Protecting the PCs

Sometimes an Illuminati group will act to *protect* someone. He might or might not be aware of this protection, or of the reason for it. Maybe his life just seems too easy; nothing bad ever happens to him. When he makes an enemy, that rival suddenly backs down from the confrontation, or just disappears. Mentors conveniently appear on the scene to teach him the skills he needs, right when he needs them. A lover suddenly breaks off the relationship for no good reason, or just vanishes, while a "replacement" wanders into his path.

Eventually, he might start to question his good fortune. When he investigates why he was offered a job at a prestigious company that has no openings for any other applicant, he might find that someone applied pressure on the company's president to create a position specifically for him. Who is looking out for him? Could it be the Illuminati? (Note that the *belief* that the Illuminati are protecting him and grooming him for greatness would be an excellent Delusion.)

Certain Illuminati groups such as the *Priore de Sion* (see p. 60) wish to protect a certain bloodline. There are three major reasons for this protection: eugenic - to conserve important genes, like those for psychic ability; symbolic - to protect an unbrou-



HUMOR-THE PERFECT WEAPON

As the old saying goes, the best method of lying is telling the truth but in such a way that nobody believes it. The Illuminati are experts at this. Many humorous treatments of the Conspiracy have appeared in print, on radio, and on the Screen. A classic example in print is *The Book of the SubGenius*, by I.R. 'Bob' Dobbs - a gonzo, speed-rap view of the global Conspiracy that includes quotes like "Give up the not-giving-into of temptation," and, "The U.S. government is a sham, something propped up for you to blame." "Everybody knows" that things like this are out-and-out parodies, ridiculing anyone who believes in that kind of thing.

What only a very few people know is that many of these works are telling the truth - literally and explicitly - but doing so in a way that invites laughter. It may be deliberate, or it may be the only *safe* way the writers can find to tell you the things you *need* to know, that you *must* know if you are to survive the next decades with your mind intact!

But people who read such a book and later encounter real evidence of the Illuminati are likely to discount it: "Sounds like something 'Bob' would say." And the Illuminati laugh.

Investigators into the Conspiracy are advised not to discount *anything*, no matter how ludicrous it may seem.

JUST THE
FACTS, MA'AM



FALSE EVIDENCE

The Illuminati are masters at contriving false evidence - to lead investigators astray, or to put them onto the trail of a rival organization. Creative GMs can certainly concoct many cunning ways of doing this, but here's a particularly twisted suggestion.

The first step is for the Illuminati group to write a pamphlet or a report of some kind, containing the leads they want the investigators to follow, under the name of some patsy. The Illuminati then insert the report into libraries where the investigators will find it.

Then they kill the patsy, in some obviously "Conspiratorial" way - by dropping a piano on him, or by blowing up his car. (Alternatively, the Illuminati can search through the paper for a story about someone dying in a manner that *couldn't* be arranged - by choking on his false teeth, for example. They attach the name of this unfortunate to the pamphlet, and fix the dates so it seems he wrote it two days before he died.) Then they sit back and wait.

How do things look from the investigators' point of view? They find the pamphlet in the library, but are probably suspicious about its authenticity. They research the "author" . . . and find that he died in a very suspicious manner just after completing the pamphlet. The obvious conclusion is that he was eliminated by the Conspiracy for revealing what he knew. Suddenly the pamphlet takes on much more significance: a man was killed for writing it.

The Illuminati can then really clinch things by orchestrating an attempt to snatch the pamphlet from the investigators' possession . . . an attempt that's intended to fail, of course. By now the investigators will probably consider the pamphlet to be gospel truth, even if it's written in Pig-Latin.

ken line of descent (from ancient kings, if not from Christ, in the case of the Merovingian dynasty; see p. 57); and historical - the subject or his descendants will eventually become important. In the first two cases, the subject himself isn't that important; it's his genes or his bloodline. If it turns out he doesn't carry the important gene after all, he's unimportant; once he has heirs, and the continuance of the line is assured, he's ignored.

Maybe the subject is a significant pawn who's doing - on his own, with minimal manipulation - something that's important to the Illuminati. This can be just about anything: researching new technology, writing a book that will one day be important, even hosting a game show. If he stops doing it, for whatever reason, the Illuminati lose out. The person might be the subject of some experiment; if he's killed before it's run its course, the results will never be known. Or maybe an Illuminatus is protecting him just on a personal whim (what use is power if you can't be capricious?).

The Test

Many conspiratorial groups will follow in the tradition of the original Bavarian Illuminati by testing prospective members . . . without letting them know they're being tested, or even that the testing group exists.

One basic test can involve a group dropping subtle hints as to its own existence in front of investigators, to see how they respond. This would test the researchers' intelligence and perceptiveness (whether or not they even *noticed* the hints), and their common sense and investigative prowess (how they go about their investigation). By dropping obstacles in their way, the Illuminati can test their determination and motivation.

Many Illuminati will also want to test potential candidates' philosophy and world view. As they find out more about the Conspiracy, are they horrified? Or do they share the testing group's overall goals? The testing process is also a chance to subtly mold the candidates' attitudes - letting them discover the good works performed by the testing group, or showing them the evil acts of rival groups.

This kind of testing can last days, months . . . even most of a lifetime. Conversely, it could end at any time, as the Illuminati decide that the candidate has failed.



How do the Illuminati handle failed candidates? They may just "disown" them: all leads dry up, and that's the end of the story. If the candidate knows too much, however, they may decide to eliminate him. For PC candidates, this makes for a short game - unless the elimination attempt fails, of course. But what if the candidate was an NPC, a friend of the investigators? For weeks he's been talking cryptically about the "pseudo-Masonic lodge" he's thinking of joining, while strange events have been occurring around him. Then, the day before he's scheduled for initiation, he's murdered by a ninja, or struck by a falling safe, or killed when his microwave oven blows up. This is an excellent way of getting the investigators on the track of the Conspiracy.

And what if the candidate passes all the tests? He might be invited for initiation into the testing group - or, more likely, into a sub-group, which he *thinks* is the real organization (see sidebar, *Wheels Within Wheels, Groups Within Groups*, p. 82).

Membership in the sub-group can be a test-within-a-test: only if the candidate distinguishes himself in the "farm team" is he elevated to membership in the real group.

Friends and Relations

Most of the ideas above assume that the PCs are the key individuals - the candidates for testing, the Merovingian heirs, etc. This is the obvious choice because it puts them at the center of the action, but it's not the only way to handle things.

For example, the key individual could be an NPC: a friend, colleague, relative ... even a Dependent. The PCs still witness the strange events, and wind up investigating them. The advantage here is that the key individual can get killed without ending the game.

Hostile Actions

Evidence of the Illuminati could also come from a group planting hints - subtle or direct - to draw attention to its rivals.

The subtle approach might include planting "weird" items, notes or symbols that will require investigators to do some research before they can even understand the clues' significance. An advantage of this technique is that investigators are much more likely to believe conclusions that they really have to sweat to reach; a *disadvantage* is that they might miss the leads they were supposed to follow.

A more direct approach is to orchestrate one of the "accidents" discussed in *The PCs Alone* on p. 80. The most blatant approach could very well work best. For example, an agent group could approach the Conspiracy-hunters, claiming to be a disaffected member of a rival organization, and carrying enough manufactured evidence to convince them. He could then tell them about the rival group, claiming that he wants help in bringing down the group that has been misusing Mm all these years. Then he can simply vanish - the more mysteriously and completely the better, since the researchers will certainly interpret his disappearance as an act of the Conspiracy.

Motives

Several motives can lead a conspiratorial group to send investigators after a rival. The first is the hope that the PCs might actually expose the rival group to the public eye, and thus deal it a serious blow.

This outcome isn't particularly likely, however. It's more likely that the Illuminati intend to force the rival group into taking direct action against the investigators ... hopefully exposing itself in the process, or at least diverting important resources from elsewhere.



THEY'RE NOT REAL!

Another genuinely paranoid concept is the idea that many people - many, *many* people - are not "real." Perhaps they're clones, or androids, or robots. Where are they coming from, and why? Is the replacement *a* plot in itself, or is it just a tool to some even more sinister end?

And what's happening to **the** real people? It can't be good ...

How can the impostors be detected? They may show strange powers, or may lack ordinary human abilities ... or both. Watch everyone who passes by for the tell-tale signs ...

In a campaign where imposters are common, the PCs will spend a lot of their time looking for danger signs or "alien tests." Of course, tests can backfire, especially if the campaign has elements of humor. Suppose that the duplicates infallibly dissolve when hit with a bucket of water. Great test. Now go out and apply it to the Mayor.

The "perfect impostor" theme has appeared in a number of classic science fiction novels and movies, including *The Stepford Wives* (husbands replace their wives with robots) and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (aliens duplicate and replace their victims). It was also the basis of the successful television program *The Invaders* (again, aliens duplicate and replace their victims). However, the "body snatchers" replaced people *en masse*, while the TV *Invaders* were limited in the number of aliens they could bring to Earth ... so they targeted those in positions of power.

This idea is also a classic feature of "real" schizophrenia. If you go around claiming to be surrounded by inhuman impostors, you're likely to be fitted with a white jacket with very long sleeves. Some mass murderers have laughed, as they were dragged away, that their victims "weren't real anyway!" What should the PCs make of such an encounter?



Sending investigators after the rival can also be a warning. Repeated operations of this kind might unsettle the rival, force them to back off from a project, or goad them into making a mistake.

Clear-Headed

Perhaps the investigators have had their memories erased, or been programmed with some behavior (see p. 119). The enemies of the programmers might well try to interfere - restore the victims' memory, or trigger the behavior at the wrong time. A PC who realizes his brain has been tampered with will have good incentive to find the tamperers. Alternatively, the programmed or amnesiac subject might be an NPC. Restoring *his* memory or triggering his behavior could well get other investigators - the PCs - to investigate what happened. In both cases, the programming group now has new enemies.

Of course, even the Illuminati aren't always right. Perhaps they *believe* someone has been brainwashed, but they're wrong. The result is that they'll straggle to shake the "victim's" belief in his own memories - definitely a paranoia-inducing situation!



I KNOW I'M PARANOID, BUT AM I PARANOID ENOUGH?

A really obsessed character . . . or someone who was really surrounded by ? powerful secret enemies . . . might...

Sweep his house for bugs, repeatedly.

Buy elaborate burglar alarms and keep watchdogs . . . and even install illegal booby-traps to catch or kill intruders.

Constantly worry about subliminal messages in advertising, TV shows, elevator music . . .

Worry even more about any flashing light or unusual sound, which might be an attempt to induce depression or even an epileptic fit.

Look for secret messages everywhere. Hold the classified section up to the mirror. Decode the Bible. Look for clues in fossils.

Join dozens of so-called "secret" organizations.

Collect every written mention of the Illuminati, even those that aren't serious. (Copies of this book are available at your local gaming store.)

Be very careful about what he ate and drank.



Going to the Authorities

However the investigators discover the existence of the Conspiracy, their first inclination might be to "blow the whole thing out of the water" by publicizing what they've learned. Alternatively, they might decide to pass what they know to the "appropriate authorities" - the police, the FBI, the appropriate anti-monopoly watchdog agency, etc. - and let them handle it. Neither option is likely to work the way they want it to, of course.

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Getting the Word Out

In the "real world" of the early 1990s, the vast majority of the news media are owned by a small number of conglomerates, each with its own axe to grind. Generally, the news media will publish or report nothing that brings their owners into disrepute, or that goes against strict content guidelines. (For example, the NBC network is owned by General Electric, a subsidiary of which builds nuclear reactors. Some people claim this is why NBC never broadcasts sympathetic treatments of anti-nuclear protests.)



In the near future, mergers and takeovers will exaggerate this situation even further. Industry watchers predict that by the turn of the century 98% of information sources in the world will be controlled by six or seven major multinationals, each with its own sociopolitical agenda. Most of these companies will be either players in the Conspiracy, or controlled by conspiratorial groups. Thus, the news media either won't report Conspiracy-based "rumormongering," or will do so in such a way that it discredits the entire concept. (For example, a report on conspiracy theory that's played for laughs will go a long way toward discrediting all talk of the Conspiracy.)

Even if investigators find a news outlet that *isn't* controlled by the Conspiracy (and how will they ever know that?), they still won't get a sympathetic hearing. Publications, news agencies and broadcasters depend on their reputation to draw readers/viewers and advertisers, and they must uphold this reputation. Thus, the editor of the *New York Times* or the *Toronto Globe & Mail* probably won't pick up a far-fetched story on Conspiracy theory, unless it's supported by unshakable evidence - *more* evidence than he'd require for a story that wasn't so inherently unbelievable. And there lies the rub: concrete evidence is incredibly rare in the average Illuminated campaign. Hints, leads, logical constructs and inspired guesswork are the order of the day, since the Conspiracy will go to great lengths to destroy any tangible evidence of its own existence.

Certainly, there *are* publications that would be gladly publish photographs of the alien spacecraft hidden in Hangar 13, or proof that the CEO of Nestle is actually the Grand Master of the *Prieure de Sion*. But these will be either "fringe" special interest publications - a monthly newsletter for UFOlogists - or the supermarket tabloids, both of which have negative credibility. That is, people reading a story are *less* likely to believe its content than they were before reading it!

Do-It-YaurselNews

Advancing technology is drastically reducing the cost of entry into the "news industry." In 1992, for under \$1,000 an individual or special-interest group can purchase a computer and modem, and set up a private bulletin board system (BBS). Subscribers to the BBS can call in from their own computers and read information posted on the system, and upload news and comments of their own. As the traditional news media fall under the sway of huge corporate interests, "private" news services like BBSs will probably proliferate. Conspiracy-hunters can set up their own BBS, or perhaps co-opt someone else's, and post their discoveries and suppositions.

That doesn't mean it will be read, of course. BBSs are maintained and monitored by system operators, or sysops, who can modify or delete anything that gets posted on the system. If the sysop is a member of the Conspiracy, unwanted messages might be deleted instantly. Furthermore, the sysop might be able to trace the investigators electronically, and send agents to eliminate them. Alternatively, the file could get posted, but in a drastically edited form, or on a section of the board dedicated to humor.

Even if the Conspiracy-hunters manage to get their story posted, they're not out of the woods yet. Hackers can break into the BBS and erase the file, or even crash the whole system.

Perhaps the BBS is safe from electronic mayhem. There's always the direct method: the enemy can simply physically destroy the computer on which the BBS is running . . . and perhaps the building it's in, depending on how militant they're feeling. (The sudden disappearance of a familiar BBS, and the seemingly unrelated news report of a suburban home blowing up, are excellent clues to start an investigation into the Conspiracy.) The Conspiracy could also eliminate a BBS through quasi-legal means - see sidebar, p. 42.

In a contemporary campaign, investigators might decide to use commercial BBSs, like CompuServe or Prodigy, or quasi-public systems like Usenet. These systems have many subscribers - a huge audience for the investigators' claims. They also have much better electronic security than do private BBSs. Of course, the very size and importance of these systems makes it much more likely that the Illuminati have penetrated them ...

GIVING (DIS)CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

One of the unwritten rules of the Conspiracy is, "Never try to refute the accusations, but always destroy the accuser." Players should learn this quickly in an Illuminated campaign. If they've attracted the attention of a heavy hitter like the Knights Templar, then they're definitely onto something. If they've got the Templars, the Alphans, the Assassins *and* the Network out for their blood, then they're really on a roll. (Of course, surviving long enough to enjoy this kind of "success" is another matter entirely ...)

"Destroying the accuser" will **take** different forms depending on the conspiratorial group or groups involved. Some organizations won't pay serious attention to investigators until they're actually ready to publish their results in a prestigious journal, and then will have the manuscript rejected at the last minute. Other groups might be more proactive, "stealing the investigators' thunder," as it were, by publishing a completely over-the-top version of their research - a couple of weeks before the real thing is ready - in a rag like the *Midnight Sun*, totally discrediting anything the investigators subsequently publish.

The next step up is to discredit not only the research, but the researchers themselves. Investigators might find that embarrassing incidents from their pasts are being publicized in the worst possible light; individuals with *no* embarrassing history find they're the victims of vicious lies and smear campaigns.

And there are even more direct ways of destroying the effectiveness of an accuser or investigator. Blackmail, intimidation and actual violence - aimed either at the character himself or someone important to him (perhaps a Dependent) - are all ways of forcing a researcher to back off.

The most direct class of **response** involves kidnapping prying characters, destroying their memories or otherwise altering their thoughts, or incapacitating or even eliminating them, possibly through orchestrated "accidents."

It has been said that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. This is certainly true when it comes to the Conspiracy.





THE CONSPIRACY OF COINCIDENCE

What if the Illuminati never really existed . . . until enough people joked about them? But a few people read about secret conspiracies, said "That sounds like a good idea. I could do that," and started their own. That would make the Illuminati a genuine self-fulfilling prophecy.

Or perhaps the only real "Illuminati conspiracy" out there is the conspiracy of writers to convince everyone that the Illuminati exist. This doesn't even have to be a deliberate conspiracy. If enough people start writing about the Illuminati, the effect may be the same as if they had deliberately gotten together to convince everyone that the Conspiracy was real. (And even if *most* of the Illuminated writers are just going along with the joke, who's to say that there may not be a few at the core who are *deliberately* provoking and guiding the popular preoccupation with conspiracies?)

Maybe one of these ideas is true. Maybe they're both true. How would a leader of the "new Illuminati" feel about the writers who articulated his worldview and gave meaning to his life? Would he assume that they are part of a conspiracy of their own, perhaps *the* Conspiracy? Or would he try to co-opt them into his own organization? Would he leave them alone, to act as a smoke-screen for his own operations? Or would he move against them lest they give potential competitors too many ideas?

Okay, assume that the investigators *have* managed to post their information - unchanged by hostile sysops and other meddlers. Now there's the problem of credibility. People might read their entries . . . but will they *believe* them?

The Last Resort

There are other ways of getting the news out, of course. Many are desperate, and few will work . . . but if the investigators are really serious, *anything*^ worth trying. They can call in to open-line radio shows. Write letters to the newspapers - first the big ones, then when they refuse to publish them, to the smaller ones. Take out classified ads, or buy advertising space. Photocopy pamphlets and hand them out, or distribute them on parked cars. Address local groups, or anyone who will listen. Buy billboard space, or put up signs on people's front lawns. Scream the truth on the street-corner. Spray-paint messages on public buildings!

Slowly, the investigators may find others who understand, who believe what they're saying. They band together, cooperating in spreading the word. They have to be careful - enemies are everywhere. It's not safe to act openly, but if they're cautious they can find allies, and gather influence. Security is important: passwords, signs of recognition. Eventually they can dupe the sheeplike public that ignored their message when it was offered as a gift. They can create pawns in places high and low, learn secrets and save them against the great day to come . . . Fnord. (See the sidebar, *The Society of Light*, p. 67.)



Calling the Cops

Law-abiding citizens might want to pass on everything they've learned to the police, and let them handle it. *Less* law-abiding individuals might still want to call in the authorities, simply because they figure they've got more clout. Both rationales make sense, but "calling in the cavalry" is much easier said than done.

What if the Illuminati have already penetrated the authorities? Complaining about the Illuminati *to* the Illuminati will do no good, and is hazardous to the health. A single Illuminati agent could derail an investigation just by making fun of the "conspiratorial clatran."



The Conspiracy Reacts

Of course, the Conspiracy might take preemptive action, up to and including trying to kill the nosy investigators. There are serious risks involved with eliminating anyone, however. What if they've told someone else what they know, or arranged for letters to be sent to the police if they die unexpectedly? The very disappearance of some investigators might be the event that motivates *another* group of Conspiracy-hunters. Instead of eliminating the investigators themselves, the Illuminati might consider it safer to eliminate any physical evidence they've collected.

Or the Conspiracy might prefer to discredit the investigators themselves. A technologically-skilled group such as the Network could easily modify police computer records to show that the investigators were recently discharged from mental institutions, or have multiple arrests for "confidence" games. The police will immediately discount anything the investigators told them . . . perhaps even going so far as to arrest them.

Finally, the Conspiracy could react to the PCs' attempt to bring in the authorities by . . . doing nothing! Perhaps the PCs' story is so ludicrous-sounding, and lacking in concrete evidence, that the Illuminati figure the authorities wouldn't believe it anyway.

Enter the MIBs

The Illuminati might prefer to intimidate investigators into dropping the matter. Confiscating evidence, terrorizing witnesses, planting disinformation, even kidnapping investigators' friends and dependents . . . it's all in a day's work for the Men In Black.

Some MIBs, like the one in the sidebar on p. 95, are members of the Conspiracy, and know they're serving the will of the Illuminati. Others - those described in *Characters* on p. 23 - often don't know why they've been ordered to lean on the investigators, and aren't even aware their victims see them as MIBs. This is a good way to introduce a new PC into a group. The new character could be a member of a law enforcement or intelligent agency, sent to warn off some investigators. He is an "enlightened" MIB, or on the verge of becoming one: some of his recent missions have been a bit strange, and he's afraid that something weird is going on in his agency. His meeting with the other PCs simply confirms this. Instead of the "criminal conspirators" Ms superiors told him about, he finds they're honest civilians, working on something that they consider of great importance. If the other characters are persuasive enough, the MIB might quit his job and join them, or aid them from behind the scenes while rooting out the corruption in his own agency.

Warnings from Other Sources

Colleagues, co-workers or acquaintances, even friends, could offer investigators "advice" that's "for their own good" - in other words, ostensibly friendly warnings to butt out. This can be an excellent indication of how far the Illuminati's influence extends: even the investigators' friends and colleagues are part of the Conspiracy ("Someone you trust is one of us!")

Of course, friendly warnings might be just that - expressions of concern from people who genuinely care. The people issuing those warnings could also be pawns, manipulated in various ways to pass on messages.

Warnings can also come from authorities who aren't involved in the Conspiracy. For example, Conspiracy-hunters have been following the Venezuelan Consul, whom they believe - rightly or wrongly - to be an Illuminati. The odds are *somebody's* going to notice: the Consul's own security forces, the police, or the FBI (who are responsible for the Consul's safety while he's on U.S. territory). Any of these groups

THE PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF ZION

The *Protocols* are perhaps the most blatant and grotesque example of disinformation and propaganda ever to exist. The *Protocols* are a document - in the form of a policy statement, or perhaps a kind of "inter-office memo" - describing a step-by-step procedure whereby the "international Jewish conspiracy" would take over the world. The *Protocols* described a grand Conspiratorial plan, steps of which involved destroying certain regimes, infiltrating Freemasonry and similar organizations, and seizing control of all political, economic and social institutions in the Western world. Further, the *Protocols'* authors described how they "stage-managed" whole peoples and races "according to a political plan which no one has so much as guessed at in the course of many centuries."

The *Protocols* first appeared in their present form around 1903 in Russia, presented to Czar Nicolas II by one Sergei Nilus as "evidence" of a world-girdling Jewish conspiracy. According to Nilus, the *Protocols* had been composed at an International Judaic Congress that took place in Basel in 1897. As has since been proven, the *Protocols* did *not* come from this source.

Presumably, Nilus' intention was to stir up anti-Semitic hatred in the czar. If this was his goal, it backfired; Nicolas ordered that all copies of the *Protocols* be destroyed, and banished Nilus from the court in disgrace. Unfortunately, the *Protocols* survived. The document was published in 1903 and again in 1905. In 1919, it was widely circulated by Alfred Rosenberg, who would become the chief racial theoretician and propagandist for Hitler's National Socialist Party. Hitler himself put great stock in the *Protocols*, according to *Mein Kampf*. The *Protocols* were presented as authentic by the *Morning Post* in England, and *The Times* gave them credence in 1921 (although it eventually admitted its error).

Today, most historians consider them purest forgery. Some, however, believe that Nilus actually modified an existing document so that the "international Jewish conspiracy" would be implicated. This original document - if it ever existed - could conceivably have been the game-plan of a *true* world-girdling Conspiracy, but one that wasn't Judaic in nature . . .



HANGAR 13

Many UFOlogists claim that the U.S. Air Force found the wreckage of a "flying saucer" that crashed - or perhaps was shot down - in the 1960s. The wreckage, and the preserved corpses of the space vessel's crew, are said to be kept under 24-hour guard at the mysterious "Hangar 13" on a major air base. In an Illuminated world, the ship in Hangar 13 could well have been a TL10+ Alphan scout or supply vessel.

It seems unlikely that the Alphans would leave something so potentially damaging in the hands of an enemy for extended analysis. The fact that Hangar 13 hasn't been vaporized by some TL10 weapon implies one of several things.

First, the Air Force might not *be* an enemy. The Alphans could have co-opted senior officers and had them seal the hangar to protect it from UFOlogists and other prying eyes. (The Air Force is very good at this kind of thing.) The Alphans could then use their co-opted assets to hinder or cancel the analysis of the wreckage, or so mislead the investigators that they'd never find anything of value. Alternatively, they could let the Air Force go ahead with its research, but make sure the technology was used only in ways that suited their goals.

Or the material in Hangar 13 could be an out-and-out fake, created by the Alphans or some other group with access to advanced technology. While the U.S. military is trying to penetrate the "secrets" of the saucer, and preparing from an invasion from space, the Conspiracy is progressing undisturbed around them.

Finally, and perhaps most likely, there's nothing whatsoever in Hangar 13, and never was. The Air Force has been denying for years that they've ever found a crashed space ship, and they're telling the truth. The whole thing was orchestrated by some conspiratorial group - maybe the Alphans, maybe somebody else - for their own ends.



would have real reasons to warn off or otherwise neutralize people who might well be planning to assassinate the Consul. How are the PCs going to interpret such a warning? The Illuminati are protecting their own ...

Reverse Psychology

How will many PCs respond to a warning to stay off a particular investigation? By redoubling their efforts, of course.

The Illuminati might well take this into consideration in their plans. Let's say that investigators are on the track of the South American Nazis. The boys at Moon Computers, bitter rivals of the Nazis, realize this and send MIBs to warn the Conspiracy-hunters to drop their investigation *right now*. If the PCs respond in predictable omery fashion, they'll intensify their efforts to get a line on the Nazis.

Heroes and Villains

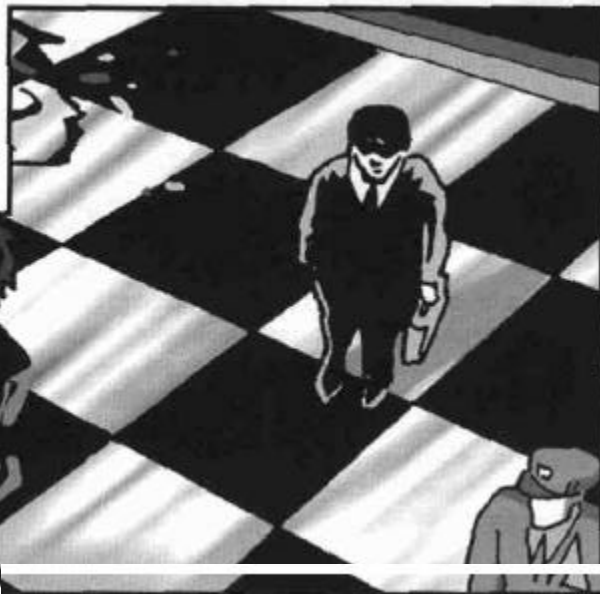
When investigators look into the Conspiracy, they could well find unexpected enemies and allies coming out of the woodwork. These offer the GM many options in assisting the PCs, or in dropping obstacles in their way.

Unexpected Foes

Investigators into the Conspiracy attract many enemies. People are out to warn or scare them off, or to feed them disinformation ... or even to kill them. It's tempting to assume that these are all agents of the Conspiracy. Some definitely will be; some *might* be. But others probably *aren't*.

For instance, if investigators make an overt move against the Venezuelan Consul, his bodyguards will defend him. If the person in question is more "sensitive" than a Consul, his bodyguards might act even *before* the Conspiracy-hunters make an overt move ... which of course will be taken as proof that the target *is* one of the Illuminati.

Another example: researchers have concluded that a local high-tech company is connected with the Network. They start digging for proof. When the company notices the investigation, what's going to be the obvious conclusion? *Industrial espionage*, or an attempt by a ruthless competitor to harm the company. The company will probably bring the police in as fast as possible, or take more direct action - *especially* if they're *hiding* something.



Surprising Allies

As enemies (or supposed enemies) can appear seemingly from nowhere when a group of PCs start their investigation, so can allies ... or *supposed* allies.

"Flakes"

When it becomes known that the investigators are interested in the Conspiracy, the first people they're likely to attract will be the "flakes" and the "fringies." These are fellow-travelers who've been convinced for years that the Conspiracy is behind *every-*





In the Service of the Illuminati i



Power is the end. What other delight is there but to enjoy the sheer sense of control?"
- Richard J. Whalen, *The Founding Father*



Conspiratorial groups constantly need new blood. Current members die - in the line of duty, by accident, or of old age - or become ineffective, or perhaps "graduate" to other organizations higher up the power structure. Even those Illuminati groups whose members have become immortal - if such exist in the campaign - might remain on the lookout for new talent.



The nature of recruitment depends on the nature of the secret society. An "overt" society like the Masons, an apparently non-Conspiratorial group like IBM, and a truly secret society like the Knights Templar would all handle matters very differently.

But in any campaign, there may come a time when the investigators, now wise in the way of the Conspiracy, are invited *to join* ...

"The Illuminati Want You" - Joining a Secret Society

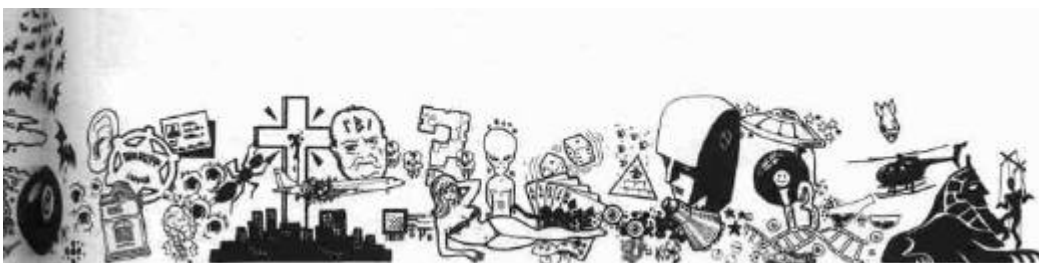
"Known" Secret Societies

These are groups such as the Freemasons and Greek-letter fraternities: organizations that openly described themselves as "secret societies," that actively recruit - and even advertise, in the case of fraternities - for new members, and that can be found in the phone book. They don't keep their existence secret, but they *do* conceal their ritual, their recognition codes, and - occasionally - their true goals and purposes.

Some of the more rabid conspiracy theorists believe groups like this are major players in the grand Conspiracy. Organizations like the Sigma Chi fraternity, for example, might conceal the Illuminati, who trust to the group's apparent openness to deflect suspicion. These groups can be quite open in recruitment. In fact, some of the more prestigious "secret" societies might just sit back and wait for qualified candidates to approach *them*.

But if the group is secretly controlled by the Conspiracy, only the senior members will know how the organization fits into the power structure. ("Senior" in this context might equate to those who hold the key offices in the group, but it might not. The president and other executive members might be totally unaware of the group's true nature, while the *eminence grise* manipulating them from behind the scenes is an "elder statesman" - greatly respected by all, but holding no official position.) Only after an initiate has proven himself worthy will he learn the "core secret" that he's joined a conspiratorial group.

Only rarely will every active member know that the organization has a secret purpose. In this case, it's likely that the organization is some kind of sham anyway - perhaps a cover group that can be sacrificed to the authorities or to public opinion if the *true* conspirators need to deflect attention from themselves.



A TYPICAL MAN IN BLACK

A "real" MIB can be one tough hombre. In general, he'll be just that bit tougher than those he's come to "warn off" - *enough* tougher that he could reduce one or even two to cat food, but could be defeated by coordinated and determined action by a group. (So great is the reputation of the MIBs that few intelligent people would ever fight one, of course.) The following statistics describe a typical MIB for a "real world" campaign (i.e., TL7, where the PCs don't have access to magic, superpowers or heavy weapons).

ST16;DX16;IQ11;HT13.

Advantages: Ally Group (other MIBs; Small Group, appears on 12 or less); Combat Reflexes; Danger Sense; High Pain Threshold; Patron (a conspiratorial group; Powerful Organization); Strong Will; Toughness.

Disadvantages: Duty (to conspiratorial group); Reputation (government official - +2 to law-abiding citizens; he's an MIB! - -2 to conspiracy theorists, UFOlogists, etc.).

Skills: Area Knowledge (whatever's appropriate)-14; Brawling-14; Detect Lies-14; Escape-14; Guns (varies)-19; Intimidation-17; Karate-15; Stealth-14.

An MIB will usually wear body armor concealed beneath his raincoat, and carry weapons just slightly in advance of what everyone else has.

MIBs have totally unshakable morale. They fight as a cohesive unit - if fighting becomes necessary - and never leave a comrade behind.

Note that MIBs aren't limited to contemporary campaigns. An MIB in a Victorian "London-by-gaslight" campaign might carry a small silenced automatic pistol; an MIB in a space campaign would probably pack something at least one Tech Level higher than the prevailing technology.



SUPERHUMANORINHUMAN MIBs

In a cyberpunk, Space or other high-tech campaign, there might be the MIB's "big brother," the "Cyborg-in-Black." All metalled up, with implanted armor, enhanced strengths and senses, and possibly built-in weapons, the CIB is the ultimate bionic "expediter" for the Illuminati. (Bionic reconstruction is covered in detail in *GURPS Cyberpunk*.)

And some conspiracy buffs believe that the Men In Black aren't human at all. They're artificial creations — androids or golems — maybe not even of Earthly origin. Maybe this is paranoid fantasy . . . and maybe it's true. After all, could ordinary human agents, no matter how secretive and ruthless, ever have acquired the legendary aura that surrounds the MIBs?

So maybe they're real. The Illuminati have lots of human agents, but they have a few *others* as well. This would come as a terrible surprise to the investigator who is used to dealing with mere human henchman of the Conspiracy.

Stats for one sort of inhuman IO are given below, but the GM could — and should — add other special abilities, and perhaps some interesting vulnerabilities.

ST15, DX 13, IQ9, HT16.

Advantages: Acute Hearing, Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold.

Disadvantages: No Sense of Humor, Reputation (government official — +2 to law-abiding citizens; he's an MIB! — -2 to conspiracy theorists, UFOlogists, etc.).

Skills: Intimidation-17, Guns-17, Tracking-15.

An inhuman MIB is emotionless and not especially bright, but follows orders to the letter. It (you can't really call something like this a "he") will have no concern for its personal safety, or for the well-being of the humans it encounters. It just does what it's told. Such MIBs are "programmed" to avoid notice when possible as they move among ordinary people, but they use their implacable strength to terrorize their targets . . . and anyone else who gets in their way.

The GM can play these inhuman Men In Black as a rare resource, used only in time of serious need . . . or as an unending, ing android army which the Secret Masters can unleash at a whim.

Hidden Secret Societies

Groups like the Knights Templar and the *Prieure de Sion* keep their very existence secret from all but the initiated. In all but the rarest of cases, candidates will be selected by the organization itself, and stringently tested before membership is offered.

Sometimes, however, an individual might learn of such a group and present himself for membership. Obviously, they would have to be very careful about such a volunteer, although it's possible they "saw him coming" early in his research and *allowed* him to get closer. In fact, some groups might even use this situation as their major test: if someone unearths the group and volunteers, he has the drive and competence to make him a worthy initiate.

This may vary, depending on the exact goals and background of the group. An organization interested in pure power will probably value talent wherever it can be found. An organization with other goals may limit its recruitment, at least for core members. For instance, a resurgent Nazi group would probably have no leaders who were not "pure-blooded Aryans."

And remember: if the Illuminati invite you to join, they won't take "no" for an answer.

Details of Initiation

Different secret societies — whether hidden or overt — will have unique rituals and ceremonies of initiation. If PCs ever reach the point where they're invited to join, the GM can devise whatever ritual initiation suits his fancy.

Most overt secret societies will have very somber and serious rituals, often with the same dignity as a high-church Mass (whether or not there are any religious overtones). Initiation may involve ritual questions and responses, usually symbolic in nature, and frequently in a classical language like Greek or Latin. Even new organizations may employ rituals that seem to resonate with history, to convince candidates that they're embarking on something serious. Most initiations have at their core an oath of loyalty and secrecy.



It might seem logical that secret societies closer to the central Illuminati will have more and more mysterious rituals and blood-freezing oaths - particularly those with a religious or historical nature (again, like the *Prieure de Siori*). The opposite might also be true, however: the most important groups have few rituals, and the Illuminati themselves have none. After all, one of the major purposes of a ritual is to reinforce the significance of the oath of loyalty, and the responsibilities of membership. By the time people have reached the true inner circles, there may be little need for such reminders. The Illuminati themselves will almost certainly be "true believers" in the Goal - whatever it may be - and don't need oaths and the enforced dignity of archaic ritual. Those groups with an august historical tradition may keep some ritual anyway, but groups like the Network would probably consider such things to be a total waste of time.

Who's In Charge?

Whatever the group, the new member should wonder just who's at the wheel. New initiates may think they know who the leader is and what he wants . . . but are they right? Very possibly not.

The PCs could well penetrate one level of deception, only to reach another. For example, 95% of the members of the Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) sorority believe the sole purpose of the society is to have a good time. But that's not all there is to good old AKA: behind the scenes, it's strongly active in campus politics, manipulating student elections. Some 4% of the sorority's membership know this deep dark secret. They're the politicians.

But that's only 99%; what about the other 1%? *They* know that the election-manipulating is nothing more than a front. AKA is actually a recruiting organization for the Republicans (or the Democrats or the Greens or whatever), indoctrinating future business leaders with the desired political philosophy.

And is *that* the final truth, or is there yet another layer of deception? Certainly, AKA is involved in political indoctrination. But is there another form of indoctrination going on as well, a plot known only to maybe one in a thousand members? What about those "foreign exchange programs," where gifted students go away for several months and return with only the vaguest descriptions of what they've been doing? Is it just coincidence that many "exchange students" seem to show unusual interest in fencing, martial arts and other such pursuits when they return?

Missions

Regardless of how the PCs have managed to join the Conspiracy, their over. New members are inducted into conspiratorial groups for a reason, and now must fulfill their purpose. The group's leaders will start assigning the PCs missions.

The agents will often not know the real goals of their mission. They might be told nothing - just "do it" - or given a fallacious briefing. Keeping the agents in the dark is a good general policy for various reasons. If there's a chance that the agents will be captured, compromised or turned by enemy conspirators, there's less risk if they're ignorant; what the agents don't know they can't tell. (For this same reason, the agents might never know the real identity of the person - or persons - who assigned the mission in the first place.) Also, the agents never know if their mission is real, or a test of their competence or loyalty. (Groups might spread rumors that such testing missions are common - whether or not they actually are - as a security measure. Prospective traitors are much less likely to defect if they think the hidden masters are watching them all the time.)

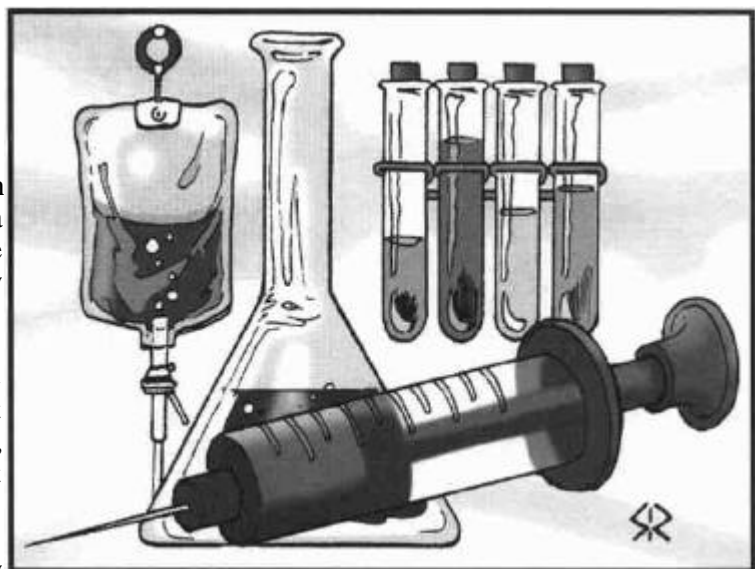
BLOODSAMPLES

Some secret societies require, as part of their initiation, that the candidate sign a contract in blood, provide a sample of his blood in a chalice, or something similar. In most cases, this act will be symbolic, representing that the candidate is swearing on his life - represented by the blood - to follow the precepts of the society. Sometimes, however, the blood might have a very real purpose.

There are said to be certain traditions of magic whereby the power of a spell can be greatly enhanced if the caster has a sample of the victim's blood. It's conceivable that magic-using groups take blood samples to give them a way of wreaking vengeance on anyone who forswears himself.

Certain Illuminati groups also have access to highly advanced technology - possibly including techniques of cloning. Perhaps when these Illuminati take blood from their new initiates, they have some dark plan in mind involving cloned doubles.

work isn't



MEMBERSHIP IN A CONSPIRATORIAL GROUP

Life isn't necessarily easy for the members of a conspiratorial organization. They must constantly guard against infiltration, and against subversion of their own agents by enemies. Fear of treachery will always be in the forefront of the masters' minds.

Many organizations will be highly paranoid and even repressive when it comes to their own members. They might watch their own agents closely, monitoring phone lines, intercepting mail, possibly even searching their homes. Even if this doesn't sit well with the masters on a moral or ethical basis, it's a practical precaution in a world where nobody can trust *anybody*.

In such an organization, the masters may even welcome evidence of minor transgressions by their agents. First - this gives them an extra hold, an extra lever on their members. Second - and much more important - intelligence officers get nervous when they find someone who's totally "clean." After all, everybody makes mistakes, and almost everybody has vices - even very minor ones. Someone who has *no* vices might well be an infiltrator, trying to avoid official attention ...

This means that those who are engaged in something dubious should always manufacture evidence that points to a lesser infraction, rather than trying to establish complete innocence. Considering human nature, it's much more effective.



Chains of Command

Some organizations, like police or the military, have very definite structures. Orders are issued directly, and lower-ranking individuals must obey the orders of their superiors. This set-up is tailor-made for conspiratorial action. A high-ranking infiltrator can give direct orders to agents lower in the pecking order, possibly through innocent intermediary ranks. If anyone questions those orders, there's always an explanation - "training exercise," "national security," etc.

Other groups have no rigid chain of command, such as social groups - or, more correctly, groups that *appear* to be exclusively social. In this case, Illuminati wanting to pass instructions to agents within the group must make themselves known to those agents, and prove that they have the authority to issue such orders.

Sometimes, however, the people in authority won't want to reveal themselves. Mission orders, reports and other routine communications can be passed back and forth using espionage-type techniques: coded message drops, anonymous phone calls, and so on. There must also be authentication codes to confirm that orders are real, and not an enemy ploy.

A situation where he doesn't know exactly who's issuing his orders is nerve-racking for an agent. He doesn't know who in the organization are his superiors, and might not even know who his colleagues are. It's always possible that some of his fellow members are actually enemy infiltrators. Disturbing or not, this is a fact of life for many agents of the Conspiracy, since it improves security for their hidden masters. -

Mission Types

The following sections discuss some representative mission types that agents of the Conspiracy might be assigned. Note that agents frequently won't be told the significance of their missions. Sometimes they can make intelligent guesses, but much of the time their orders will seem totally nonsensical. (Is it just that they don't know enough about the "big picture," or *is* the mission nonsensical? With the Illuminati, one never knows for sure ...)

Many of these missions seem so simple as to be boring. In the world of the Illuminati, however, *nothing* is ever as simple as it seems. There's always the chance that the blind beggar on the corner is actually a ninja assassin working for the Opposition, and enemies can appear at any moment.

WISDOM CORRUPTS BECAUSE
YOU COME TO UNDERSTAND
HOW CORRUPTION CAN SERVE
YOUR INTERESTS.

OF COURSE, YOU ALSO
UNDERSTAND WHAT
YOUR INTERESTS ARE
SO ITS SELF-LIMITING.
KIND OF.



Information Gathering

Conspiratorial groups depend on up-to-date intelligence about the actions of their rivals, the effectiveness of recent operations, changes in their environment (whatever that means to the particular group) that they can capitalize on, and so on. They live and die by information, and dedicate a great deal of time and resources to gathering it.

Intelligence missions are also a great testing ground for new agents. Usually the only consequence of failure is that the organization won't get the data it needs. Obviously, then, agents who are new to the Conspiracy will find themselves dedicating much of their time to information-gathering activities. There are many types of information gathering. The following list is definitely *not* exhaustive; GMs should have no difficulty coming up with countless other missions.

Surveillance. The agents are dispatched to "stake out" a particular location: a business, a hotel room, a nightclub, even an area in a park. They might be told exactly what they're looking for - a meeting between two known rivals, for example - or be instructed to simply record and report *all* activity. This can be a training mission, with virtually everything staged, to determine whether the rookie agents are going to report *everything* that goes down, or edit their reports to just what they think is important.

Tail. The agents must shadow an individual target, recording all his movements, with particular attention paid to anyone he meets. Maybe they're told that their subject will be making a drop or a pickup, and they have to spot it. Their subject may be a known member of a rival organization, an apparently innocent "civilian," even a member of the agents' own group.

Courier. The agents must pick up or deliver a message. This can involve a "blind drop," where the agents have to leave a package at a specific location, or pick something up. Or it can involve an actual meeting with another courier, either open or covert. The two couriers must confirm each other's identity, and possibly transfer the package so that any "shadows" following either of them won't spot it.

Interception. Intercept a rival group's communications. This may involve picking up a package from a rival's "blind drop" - and maybe replacing the real message with a fake - or impersonating the contact to whom a rival courier should deliver a message. Alternatively, the agents may be told to prevent a courier from making his delivery . . . maybe without fuss or bloodshed, maybe in any way they can. Although not strictly information-gathering, the agents might be assigned to redirect the communication of a rival group - mail, perhaps or some form of telecommunication - so that the message arrives at the wrong destination (at the door of a rabid conspiracy theorist, for example . . .).

Research. This can lead the agents anywhere in the world - from the local city records office, to haunted ruins on the other side of the world. Anywhere along the way they might run into active opposition, either from the subject of their research or from a third party which wants to keep them in the dark.

Infiltration

Infiltrating an enemy group is one of the most difficult and dangerous missions that an agent can receive. The most obvious danger is that the target group discovers the agent's true allegiance - or already knew it - and decides to eliminate him. Less common, but still very real, is the risk that the entire infiltration mission is a set-up, and that the agent's masters will "leak" his true identity and mission to the target group, for whatever reason - perhaps to draw attention away from *another* infiltrator.

Most organizations involved in the Conspiracy contain only a few true conspirators, with the rest of the membership totally ignorant of any hidden activity. It's relatively easy for an agent to work his way into the outer layers of such an organization - to be hired as an employee, or to become a rank-and-file member - but it's not much use. It's much harder for an agent to enter the "conspiratorial inner circle."

By using his background knowledge - without revealing where it came from, of course - the agent can attract the attention of the true conspirators, demonstrating



UNWILLINGTOOLS\

Not everyone who works for the Illuminati does so willingly. The Secret Masters have many reliable servants who work, not for money or power, but because they feel they have no option.

Such unwilling tools might be doing things that even hardened criminals wouldn't do for mere money . . . experimenting on children, for instance. Or they might be formerly-honest citizens, corrupted by desperation into becoming secret servants of the Conspiracy.

For instance, a respected judge might become an Illuminati tool due to blackmail. Perhaps his past holds an indiscretion he thought long buried. Or perhaps he's protecting someone else, like his wife or a child. Whatever the story, the outcome is the same: he was given a choice between a ruined life or doing an occasional "favor." Now he's trapped in the tentacles of the Conspiracy.

The Illuminati - or whatever front group is doing their bidding - might be the only source of a medical treatment that keeps a tool (or his loved one) alive. It might have the power to destroy something - a school, a museum, maybe just a patch of woods - that the tool holds dear. Or it might be the only possible source of support for an institution the tool loves . . . which works out the same way in the end.

At any rate, the tool's loyalty is bought, not by money, but by fear or desperation. Such an unwilling tool may actually be *harder* for the investigators to "turn" than the low-level conspirator bought with mere money. Unless the PCs can offer the same help, protection or forbearance that the Illuminati did, they have nothing to offer at all. The tool has made his decision, and he's likely to stick by it.

But if the investigators *can* change his mind — whether by showing him the stakes are high, or by convincing him the Illuminati have lied to him - the ex-tool will certainly carry a burning hatred for his former masters and all their works.

On the other hand - and when you play the conspiracy game, mere's always one more hand - the conspirators might set someone up to dupe investigators, with a convincing *story* of having been forced to work for the Illuminati against his will.



SYMBOLS AND SIGNS OF THE ILLUMINATI

Traditionally, many symbols are associated with the Illuminati and Illuminated activity. These include, but are not limited to, the eye in the pyramid (which, interestingly enough, appears on American paper currency), the Egyptian "eye of Horus," various modified Christian-style crosses, the *fleur-de-lis*, the symbol for infinity (???), and the amphibaena (the symbol of a snake grasping its tail in its mouth). Individual organizations - particularly secret societies - often have their own symbols, such as the square-and-compasses emblem of Freemasonry.

Secret societies are often distinguished by recognition codes that include physical signs and gestures, handshakes ("grips"), passwords and ritual exchanges. For codes to be usable when "outsiders" are present, a group must walk a fine line. The codes must be complex enough to be distinctive and to ensure that nobody can stumble upon them accidentally. They must also be "natural" enough in appearance that they can be used without attracting undue attention, or be recognized as "secret stuff."

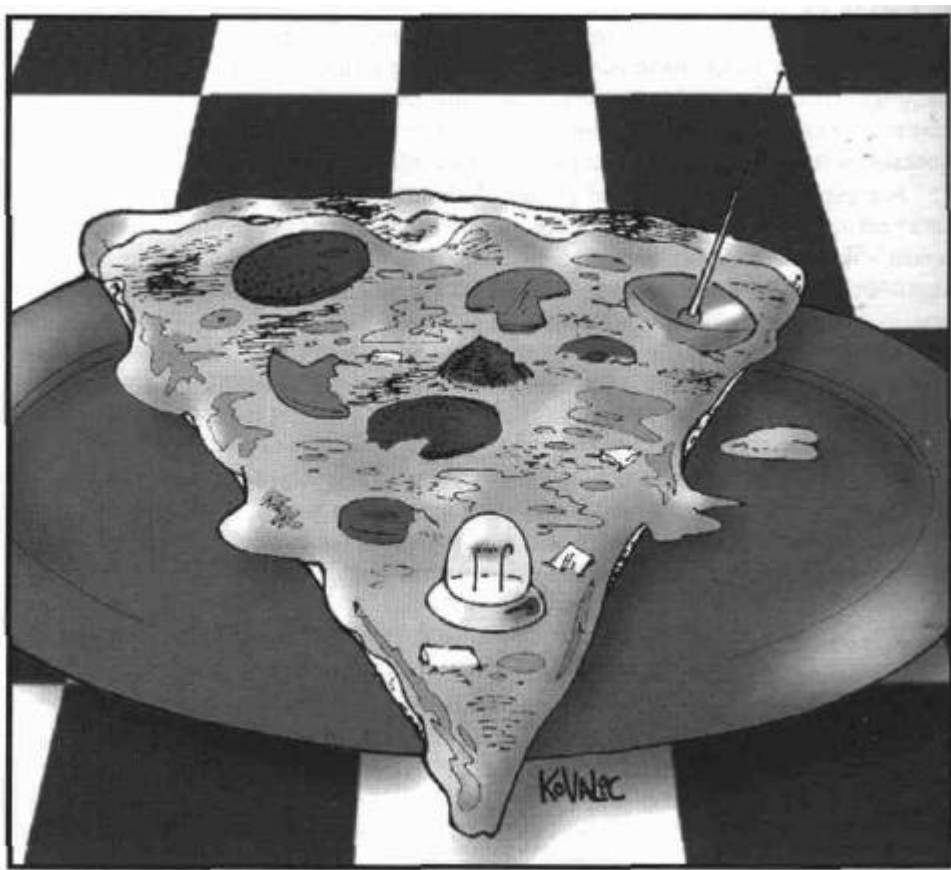
Thanks perhaps to the Greek-letter fraternity system, many people believe that ritual handshakes are widely-used recognition symbols. In fact, unless the two participants are already almost certain of each other's identities, "grips" are *not* good recognition symbols. After all, there's always the possibility that a society member will "slip the grip" to someone who *isn't* a member. If the grip is very complex or feels totally unnatural, the non-member will notice immediately that something strange is going on. On the other hand, there are only so many "grips" that won't immediately give things away, and there are lots of secret societies out there. Statistically, it's almost certain that a particular "distinctive secret grip" will actually be shared by a handful of Greek-letter groups, a couple of rugby clubs, perhaps the Masons . . . and maybe the Society of Assassins.

Continued on next page...

himself to be a perfect candidate for recruitment. But he must strike a balance between appearing to be a good candidate and coming across as a threat. . . Instead of trying to pose as an innocent, an agent might admit that he's part of the Conspiracy. How would a group react if they learn that an agent has run from a rival organization and is now on his own? Some would kill him on principle - an easy task when he's no longer protected by his masters - but others might decide to use him. An ex-agent would have valuable knowledge about his old masters. To make this work, the agent's masters must react just as they would if the agent really had quit. This would include changing all the codes and procedures the agent knew, and possibly making a (very real) attempt to track him down and eliminate him. Further, everyone else in the agent's old organization would have to fully believe that he's defected.

And what if a group recognizes that a candidate for membership is an infiltrator? They could kill him outright, or actually recruit him . . . and then use him as a conduit to send disinformation back to *his* masters! A particularly Machiavellian group might recruit the agent, and leak information back to his true masters that his loyalties have turned . . . then sit back and wait for the agent's own masters to eliminate him.

Even if the agent successfully infiltrates his target, his real masters aren't likely ever trust him fully again. There's always the chance that an infiltrator will be "turned," or simply have a change of heart and become loyal to his new masters. (Confucius - or was it Kurt Vonnegut? - said, "Be careful what you pretend to be, because you become what you pretend.")



Counterespionage

Counterespionage agents have the unenviable job of watching their own colleagues for signs of betrayal. Unfortunately, there will always be something that *looks* suspicious. (Perhaps because a loyal colleague gets the feeling that he's being watched!) Once found, infiltrators can be eliminated, turned (perhaps brainwashed or mind-controlled), or used as conduits for disinformation.





Counterespionage agents can never be sure exactly who an apparent infiltrator is working for. Is he a member of a rival group? Or is he an asset put in place by a group higher up the "friendly" power structure (perhaps by the Illuminati themselves)?

Programming an Asset

This is a preliminary step for the next kind of mission, running agents. PCs might be assigned to convince innocent dupes to hand out handbills written in Croatian on the streets of Manhattan, or spray paint "Thoughts Yes! Slogans No!" on the walls of City Hall.

One of the best techniques is "false flag" recruiting. The agent impersonates a member of another group - one that the subject respects or believes in. Thus, the agent might impersonate an FBI agent - with corroborative evidence, of course - and ask a civilian to "assist the Bureau on a sensitive matter." Similarly, the agent might co-opt an asset from a rival group by presenting himself as a senior member of that same group. Instead of depending on authority, an agent might play on an assumed similarity of goals. For example, he might co-opt a fanatical environmentalist by claiming to be part of the (non-existent) New Ecology Army.

Control—Running Agents

Once an asset has been recruited, someone must manage the communication channels, give the asset his orders, and receive his reports. This is the job of a "case officer" or "control." Agents may be responsible for only those assets that they themselves recruited, or they may be assigned assets recruited by others. In the latter case, the case officer may know his asset only by code name, and might not recognize him even if they were to pass on the street.

Subversion and Takeover

How do the Illuminati take control of the organizations that make up their power structure? Through subversion and takeover.

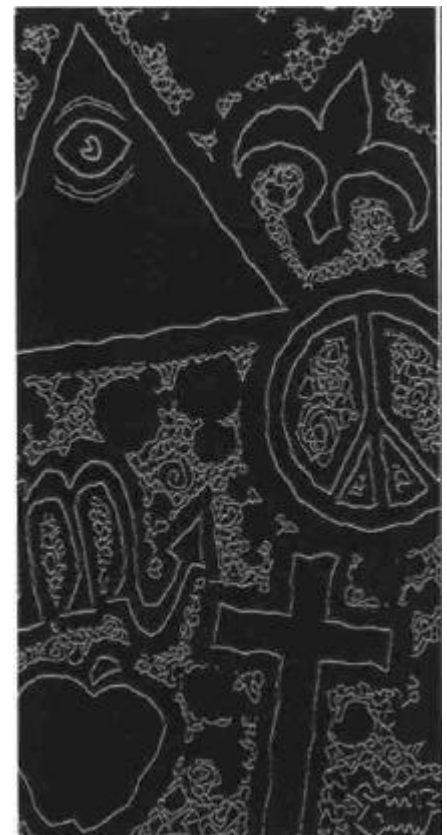
Some organizations are easy to subvert - just get enough agents on the board of the Podunk PTA, and the job's done. Others are much harder - governments, for example. From a gaming perspective, the most interesting situations arise when the PCs are ordered to subvert organizations that are small enough for a small group to be

SYMBOLS AND SIGNS OF THE ILLUMINATI (CONTINUED)

Recognition gestures and spoken code exchanges have similar problems. The more natural they are, the more likely that a non-member will "issue" them accidentally. The less accessible they are, the more likely they are to attract attention.

Many secret societies have ritual, to which only members are allowed access. Before someone is allowed even *close* to the *sanctum sanctorum* or chapter room where such a ritual takes place, he will be thoroughly examined and tested by other society members. When the ritual actually begins, then, it can include as many complex or even downright bizarre grips, gestures and ritual exchanges as desired, since there will be no "outsiders" around to see them.

Of all Illuminati groups, it is believed that only the Network makes no use of any such ritual symbols or codes. For one thing, members of the Network never meet physically, only virtually. For another, the Network appears to believe that anyone capable of tapping into their stupendously secure communication channels deserves to be privy to their plans, and is, in fact, a kind of *ex officio* member!



RITUALS AND TRAPPINGS

Obviously, recognition symbols serve an important purpose for secret societies - they identify who is and who isn't a member. But what about rituals? There are various possibilities.

First, even if they have no other significance, rituals can build a sense of camaraderie and belonging, and thus can unify a group. All members of a secret society have something in common with each other - the ritual - that's denied to "outsiders." This is an important way of building group unity.

Rituals are also great for making people feel that they're involved in something *important*, something significant. Sonorous phrases, dead languages, and ancient symbols can make a newly-created group *feel* much older - and thus much more respectable - that it actually is. Many people also confuse complexity with content, so an unnecessarily baroque ritual can make even the most trivial event *seem* important.

A ritual can be a lot of fun. Everybody likes play-acting once in a while, so dressing up in ritual trappings and exchanging meaningless phrases - "Are the wittols furbished?" "Aye, Puissant Vizier, furbished right and meetly" - can be an enjoyable way of passing an evening.

Under some circumstances, rituals can mean the difference between life and death. What biologist would enter a viral research lab without first performing the "ritual" of putting on his protective suit? Many seemingly-meaningless ritual "trappings" might serve similar purposes. Is the ritual cloak, worn by members of the Cabal when performing certain magical ceremonies, just a meaningless prop? Or is it integral to the success of the ceremony . . . and to the participants surviving the experience?

The distinction between important and meaningless can often blur. And who knows what purpose a ritual that now appears meaningless originally served? The *real* significance of a Shriner's fez might have been forgotten over the years, or might be known only to the Most Puissant Illuminated Masters. Forgotten or not, the fez *has* significance. Perhaps the ritual of "furbishing the wittols" actually has some forgotten occult purpose - to ward the meeting room against astral interference, for example.

For a hysterically irreverent look at secret ritual, see Terry Pratchett's Disc world novel, *Guards! Guards!*

able to make a difference, but tightly-knit (or weird) enough to make it challenging. How about subverting a survivalist commune in the Rockies, or a chapter of the Hell's Angels? Or an ecoterrorist army? Or a Washington, D.C., law firm?

In some cases, the agents can join the group and try to establish control from within. This would work with the biker gang and the survivalists. But what if the target is a law firm, and the only experience any of the PCs has with the law is (unsuccessfully) fighting a speeding ticket, and watching *Perry Mason* re-runs? It's obviously necessary to co-opt or dupe existing members.

And just why do the PCs' secret masters want them to subvert the target group? Frord.

Disinformation

This is the task of spreading false intelligence to conceal a conspiratorial group's existence and the nature of its operations. In the public sphere, this can involve standard public relations work: disseminating press releases, reports, that build public perception of the organization as harmless and beneficial. If the group is an overt part of the task is to careful descriptions applied to the group by the popular press. A good PR operative can take the worst situation and

re-frame it so it appears positive (for example, "Teenage Runaway Shacks Up With Miners" becomes "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves"). In the Illuminated world, public disinformation also includes disseminating the truth - or part of it, at least - but worded in such a way that it won't be believed. The supermarket tabloids, and humorous books or movies about the Conspiracy, are perfect channels for this. (See sidebars, pp. 75, 83-84.)

Disinformation also includes channeling false data to opponents. If the group knows its rivals' communication channels - such as how and where couriers drop and pick up messages, for example - agents can actively insert false information into enemy message traffic.

Instead of spreading lies, agents might be assigned to eliminate *true* information. They may be told to eliminate evidence in the hands of Conspiracy-hunters, to alter (or perhaps insert) historical records, to destroy the notes of a dogged conspirator, to "liberate" a piece of ultra-tech equipment that's fallen into the hands of a researcher . . . On many of these missions, the agents must deal with "mundane" (i.e., non-conspiratorial) threats: the police, security guards, prying neighbors, etc. Sometimes, however, a rival group is involved - either to acquire the evidence for themselves, or to make sure it remains in place for the authorities to find. Perhaps the "evidence" that must be destroyed was manufactured and planted by a rival group in the first place . . .

Sabotage

Sabotage can range in scope from "infecting" a researcher's personal computer with a virus, to blowing up a laboratory, to bringing down a whole organization con-



trolled by a rival group. Sabotage is risky: it can attract too much attention. Thus most cases of sabotage are disguised as accidents: the virus got onto the computer through the user's sloppiness, the lab blew up because of a gas leak, etc.

Agents involved in a sabotage mission must deal with threats both mundane and conspiratorial. Rival agents might be guarding their target - particularly if it's very valuable - along with "civilian" security operatives. Also, the saboteurs must complete their mission without leaving any evidence that will lead the mundane authorities to them.

When a whole organization must be destroyed, the job is much harder. Sometimes the best method is to take it over first. Other times outside pressure will be better, probably working through another group or groups as unwitting tools.

Assassination

Viable targets include a conspiracy researcher who's getting too close to the truth, an agent of a rival conspiratorial group, or a "civilian" who just happened to get in the way. The target himself might have little significance; the assassination might be a message - "We can get to you any time!" - or a red herring.

To avoid attention, the best assassinations are disguised as accidents - unless attention is the real goal, of course. In an Illuminated world, it's important not to make the accident seem too unusual (e.g., the old falling piano); there are many conspiracy investigators out there who'll seize on it as a major clue.

Adventure Design

Just about any espionage-type adventure can be used in an Illuminated campaign. By the time the PCs have become agents of the Conspiracy, the GM should know how the different conspiratorial groups fit into the overall power structures. Just looking over the web of interconnections should be enough to suggest many mission types, targets and opponents.

When designing adventures, the GM must keep in mind the nature of an Illuminated campaign. Paranoia and intrigue are key features, and the PCs should never be completely sure they know what's really going on. They should always have the nagging suspicion that they don't have all the facts, and that - no matter how deep they are in the Conspiracy - there's one or more hidden agendas they're yet unaware of. Here are some representative examples.

The PCs don't know who their masters are; they receive mission orders through indirect channels. How can they be totally sure that any order they receive was *actually* issued by their bosses? It might well be a false message inserted into the channel by enemies.

The PCs are ordered to infiltrate a rival group, and are sent on the mission without adequate training or back-up. Are they actually meant to succeed? Or are they decoys, thrown to the wolves to draw attention away from the *real* infiltration team?

It's an assassination mission this time, to track down and zero an erstwhile colleague who's decided to go freelance. The PCs make their approach, and then found they've been "blown." Who leaked the damaging information? Was it an accident, or was the whole hit job a scheme to set the "deserter" up as an infiltrator into a rival group?

And then finally the PCs start finding hints that their masters might not be who they claim to be. Is this some kind of disinformation program run by a rival? Or were the PCs recruited under a "false flag" in the first place?

Not every mission should be some kind of set-up, but it should happen frequently enough to keep the PCs guessing. They should *never* be exactly sure of anyone's true loyalty or true goals. Paranoia-inducing? Of course. But paranoia is the stock-in-trade of the Conspiracy.

PUBLIC SYMBOLS

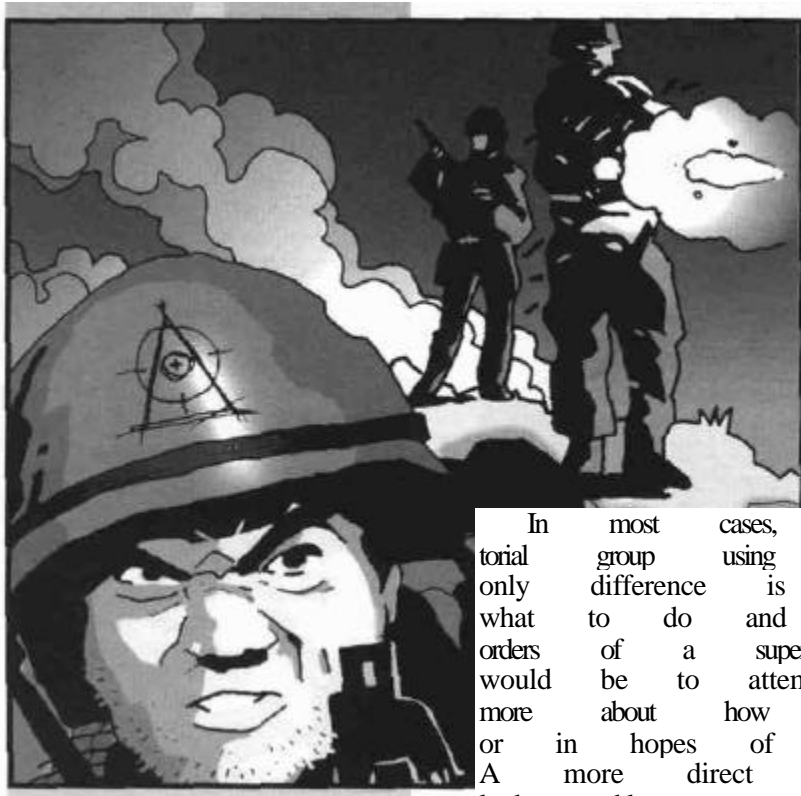
Many groups have signs and symbols that can be used in public, for a number of purposes. The most common purpose is for recognition and identification, basically saying, "I'm a member." Such signs can be tactile (a secret grip), verbal, or visual. For example, earlier in this century, "carnies" - people working for the traveling carnivals - would stop trying to hustle anyone who told them, "I'm with it" (a simple recognition code meaning, "I'm one of you"). The early Roman Christians used the fish-symbol - two curved lines - as an identification. It could be quietly drawn in the dust and as quietly erased.

Visible signs range from gestures (like the finger-against-the-nose salute in the movie *The Sting*) to badges and lapel pins. (Recognition symbols aren't limited to conspiratorial groups; supposedly mundane groups like the police use them too.) Signs like this can be designed to identify members of a group to each other - with or without revealing that membership to the world at large - or to identify a member to non-members (a detective's shield, for example). In the former case, groups may change the recognition symbol on a regular basis (daily, weekly, etc.) to maximize security. Somebody isn't a member unless they're wearing the "Pin of the Day."

Public symbols can be used for many other purposes: calling for help (the Masonic "Grand Hailing Sign of Distress"), pointing out an enemy, "waving off" an operation, etc. Many symbols will be designed to appear more or less natural, so they won't draw attention. In the case of gestures, hand-signals, etc., GMs might allow an observer to make an IQ-4 or Gesture-4 roll to notice that *some* sign was made. Unless he has some background information, the observer won't know what the sign *means*, of course.



Working Against the Illuminati — Or Are You?



Once the PCs have discovered the Conspiracy, they might want to *combat* it rather than join it. (Of course, maybe their true purpose in joining it is to destroy it from within . . .) This is *not* a simple proposition. From a gaming perspective, if a small group - i.e., the PCs - could bring the Conspiracy to the ground, somebody would have already done so. People have been investigating and opposing the Illuminati for decades, if not centuries. Obviously, the PCs would be best served by picking a small target to start with - a single conspiratorial group, preferably one near the periphery of the existing power structure.

... And How?

In most cases, the PCs will combat a conspiratorial group using the methods discussed above. The only difference is that they themselves will decide what to do and how it, instead of following the orders of a superior. For example, an obvious move would be to attempt to infiltrate the target to learn more about how the whole Conspiracy fits together, or in hopes of subverting and destroying the group. A more direct approach would be to assassinate leaders, blow up its headquarters, or take other violent action. Alternatively, the PCs could try to penetrate the group's communication channels and intercept or tap into their messages.

A group of innovative players running highly-skilled and well-connected characters might rack up a short string of "victories" against the Conspiracy. They might be able to infiltrate a minor conspiratorial group, eliminate a few low-tier agents or figureheads, even unearth clues that will lead them to groups higher up the power structure. But each success makes them more worthy of notice by the real "heavy hitters." Attempts to co-opt, mislead, discredit or eliminate them will become steadily more efficient, well-planned and ruthless. The PCs will be able to trust *nobody*; erstwhile friends and colleagues will be co-opted by the Conspiracy (if they weren't already part of it). One-time employers, allies and patrons will be fed false information and set on their trail.

GMs and players must both understand the threat the Conspiracy represents to its foes. Unallied investigators will find everyone's hand turned against them, or so it will seem. They can trust no information source; the Conspiracy could be manipulating the news to feed them false data. They must operate using cash exclusively - since checks and credit cards (plus credsticks and the like in future campaigns) leave a trail the Illuminati can follow. And their cash may quickly dry up. After all, a conspiratorial group with ties to the world's data net - such as the Network - can easily freeze or close down their bank accounts, or track their location whenever they use a bank ATM machine. Many conspiratorial groups can also co-opt the aid of civilian authorities; by inserting false information into police files, the Illuminati could arrange for the Conspiracy-hunters to become the prey, hunted as armed-and-dangerous terrorists.

The players should quickly realize that their only chance for survival lies with finding powerful friends . . .

HELPWANTED!

Some types of people would be especially valuable as Illuminati tools or hirelings. Characters of these types would be especially likely to be approached by agents of the Secret Masters. (And if you're fighting the Illuminati, you should be especially careful of anyone in these positions.)

Intelligence operatives. Obviously, the Secret Masters want to infiltrate any intelligence organization that they don't control outright.

Communications workers. It can be very, very useful to have eyes and hands within the post office, the phone company, the courier services ...

Media workers. Not just the anchorman on News At Ten, but the cameraman, the secretary, the guy in the mailroom . . . The media - print, TV, radio, cable, and the emerging computer nets - are all vital to Real Control, and the Illuminati won't miss a chance to suborn anyone with *any* media connection.

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Patronage

In many cases, powerful friends will track *them* down, rather than vice versa. Dedicated enemies of the Conspiracy - or of one part of it, at least - are excellent prospective agents for *another* part of the Conspiracy. If Conspiracy-hunters are out to bring down the Knights Templar, they might be approached by the Alphans, who are their sworn enemies. The offer will now look particularly attractive. Their would-be patrons can provide them with support, intelligence, resources, even allies . . . and *protection*.

A would-be patron might not approach directly, of course. The PCs might find that "coincidental" events have favored them, either helping them in a mission or saving them from doom. Or they might find that an anonymous benefactor is slipping them valuable information. It may take them some time to realize that they're actually being aided by a conspiratorial group. By the time they *do* realize it, they might be completely dependent on the aid. Or the secret Patrons might have sufficient hold over the investigators *to force* them to join.

False Colors

The possibility for false flag recruitment exists here, of course. Suppose the PCs are opposing a conspiratorial group - for example, the U.S. Postal Service. They're approached by representatives of another group - Midnight Express - which claims to be a rival of group A.

Should they believe this claim? The recruiters may well be members of the Postal Service - neutralizing a threat by absorbing it. In other words, the characters are striving against Them, and are offered help by an "Anti-Them." But Them and Anti-Them are the same group . . .

Non-Conspiratorial Patrons

But what if the PCs are dedicated to bringing down the *entire* Conspiracy structure, not just a particular faction within it? They might still be approached by powerful patrons. For example, the British agency MIS approaches them to help fight the Conspiracy, which they see as a threat to the U.K. Or perhaps the Treasury Department tries to co-opt them to combat the huge secret "sub-economy" represented by the Conspiracy. At first glance this seems great; the investigators have found a patron with some real clout, dedicated to wiping out the goal - Conspiracy.

Ah, but how do they know their new patron isn't a part of the Conspiracy itself? Any group large and powerful enough to provide significant help would be important enough to be a prime part of some Illuminati group's power structure. It's almost certain that the patron is a conspiratorial group in and of itself. Once again, the PCs are servants of the Illuminati.



HELPWANTED! (CONTINUED)

Law enforcement. A crooked cop, at any level, is one of the most valuable servants the Illuminati can have. An even better servant is the good, honest cop who is willing to follow an unusual order from someone he trusts. This also goes for private detectives, corporate security, FBI, Secret Service, and anyone else who carries a gun or wears a badge.

"Invisible" people. They're everywhere: the meter-reader, the Good Humor man, the trash collectors. Nobody looks at them twice, and they can go anywhere. This makes them great disguises for an agent. . . but a *real* trash collector, complete with truck, can drive down any street, walk into any building, walk out with anything he wants and *never be noticed*. Taxi and bus drivers are great, too. And a pizza delivery man is worth his weight in gold.

Researchers and scientists. Even if they don't come up with the Great Discovery themselves, they're in a position to know when someone else does . . . or to warn their masters if someone comes too close to dangerous information.

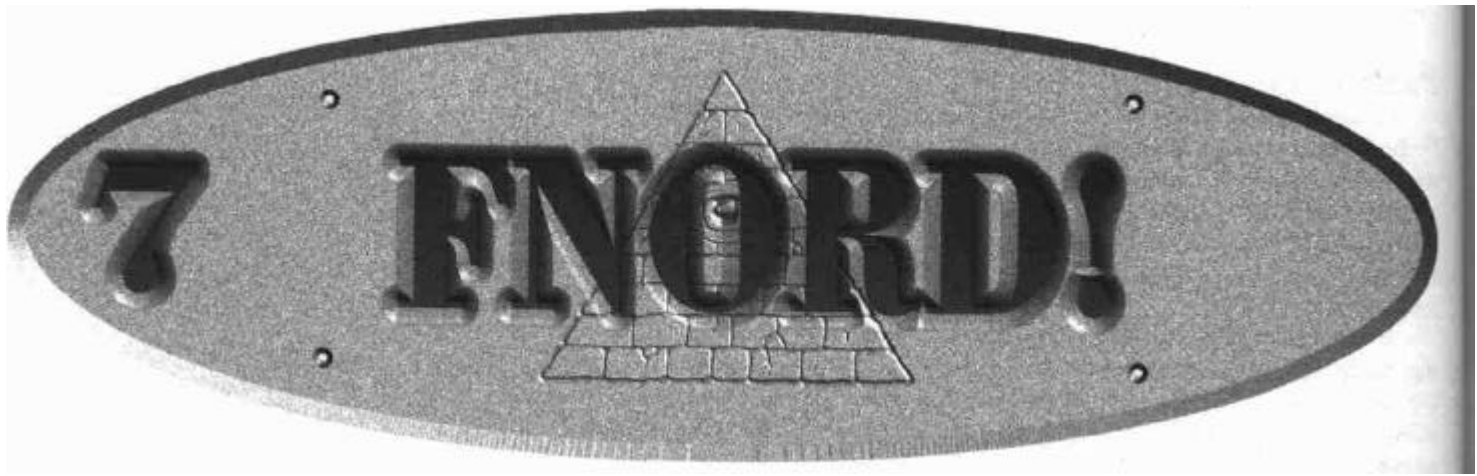
Members of fraternal and social groups. Not necessarily the leader, but someone in the inner circle . . . someone who knows everyone, is liked by everyone, and can keep an eye on what's going on . . . and report.

Doctors, nurses, paramedics. They're often called when something unusual happens, and people trust them. And a trustworthy doctor is a good person to have when you need someone declared legally insane. Or dead.

Lawyers and politicians. They've already got the power; might as well recruit them. If they're not already corrupt, something can be arranged. And even the best of them are very used to dealing with secrets.

Dead rock stars. We're sorry. We've been instructed not to discuss this any further.





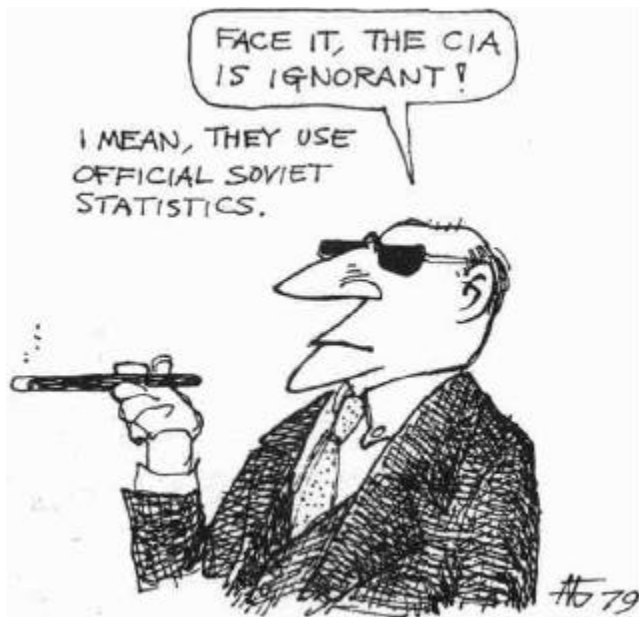
Beneath the broad tide of human history there flow the stealthy under-currents of the secret societies, which frequently determine in the depths the changes that take place upon the surface."
- Arthur Edward Waite, *The Real History of the Rosicrucians*



Secret Societies in the Real World

The campaign world described in this book is obviously an extreme creation. The world view is paranoid - *too* paranoid, perhaps, for some GMs and players.

Whether or not this background is used as is, however, there are elements in here that can fit any campaign. After all, the Illuminated world isn't that much different from the real world ...



Secret Societies in Real Life

Of course, secret societies *do* exist in the real world. They may not be conspiratorial masterminds, but they have a significant effect on the world. Take, for example, the Greek-letter fraternities and sororities on campuses all over North America. They may not be part of a Conspiracy of world domination, but in certain limited fields they can be a force to be reckoned with. Primarily, they act as an "Old Boys' Network." Most fraternal groups consider membership to be of life-long duration; decades after they graduated from the college where they joined, people are quite likely to say "I *am* in a fraternity" instead of using the past tense.

This means that such a group can provide a ready-made network of contacts. If a fraternity or sorority member who is hiring is faced with two people with equal qualifications, he or she will often pick the one who was a fellow member of the Greek system.

Freemasonry, too, is a (presumably) non-conspiratorial secret society that has a great effect on the world. As part of their initiation, Masons swear to aid their brothers to the best of their abilities; this often translates to material aid such as unsecured loans, job offers, etc. Much the same can be said of other such groups, like the Elks and the Rotarians.

There are many such groups, and in a realistic campaign they could be a significant force behind the scenes. Their members would have access to a network of contacts in many walks of life.

Conspiratorial Groups in the Past

Whether or not they still exist today, they certainly did in the past. Adam Weishaupt's Illuminati was real, as were the Knights Templar and *Prieure de Sion*. There's some evidence that the Templars and the *Prieure* still exist today, albeit in greatly changed form, but most traditional historians would classify both organizations as extinct.



"SPECIAL PROJECTS"

This is a small and very secret research lab run by the Bacchus Company, a major developer of leading-edge supercomputers based in California. It was the pet project of Sam Johansen, Bacchus' president and Chairman of the Board, and knowledge of its existence was limited to the boardroom. Johansen expected great things from Special Projects. But even he was surprised - and a little horrified - when he saw what his researchers had come up with.

In essence, Special Projects' scientists had designed an entirely new type of microprocessor chip based on radical theories developed in-house. The new chip, based on technology as far advanced over standard MOSFET devices as modern microchips are over individual transistors, turns in performance figures several orders of magnitude faster than any existing microprocessor, while costing much less. The new chip could be the heart of machines with more processing horsepower than a Cray supercomputer, the size of a laptop, and costing under \$3,000. In one fell swoop, Special Projects has rendered every computer currently on the market, or even on the drawing board, obsolete.

Johansen quickly realized that this kind of innovation was much too big for his company to handle alone. He also recognized that, if this technology burst onto the market prematurely, it would cut the heart out of Bacchus' business - since all of its current revenue came from selling multi-million dollar supercomputers - and the entire computer industry. And he estimated that the company would have perhaps one chance in 20 of successfully monopolizing the new technology. A bad gamble.

Cautiously, Sam Johansen brought the CEOs of a couple of his direct competitors into the picture. In essence, they formed a small conspiratorial group that would carefully manage the release of the new technology to the marketplace. Suitably managed, all the companies involved could make a killing over the next five years, while simultaneously restructuring for the shakeup that would occur when the full scope of the new developments hit the industry.

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"SPECIAL PROJECTS" (CONTINUED)

This represented quite a risk to all the "executives that Johansen brought into the fold. If someone else "broke" the technology to their own profit-skimming and restructuring phase, their companies would collapse. Furthermore, they personally would be in serious legal and financial trouble. Obviously, it would be in everyone's best interest to make sure that the technology remained tightly controlled.

Johansen was aided by the fact that Special Projects had always been highly compartmentalized. Only two senior managers had seen the overall picture of the lab's results and realized their significance. Johansen brought in one of these managers as a member of his conspiratorial group; the other was horrified by the proposal, so Johansen had him quietly killed. The Special Projects facility was shut down, and the researchers were scattered around the country.

Currently, knowledge of the new technology is limited to Johansen and his colleagues, a group that has taken to calling itself "The Circle." The Circle is carefully monitoring all of the researchers who once worked on the project. If anyone seems close to replicating the breakthrough, he suffers an unfortunate (and fatal) accident, as does anyone who gets too close to the truth about the Circle. All members are becoming filthy rich, and they have absolutely no scruples whatsoever when it comes to protecting their secret.

PCs might stumble upon this conspiracy in various ways: as ex-Special Projects researchers, as journalists investigating Bacchus' sudden pre-eminence in the market, as cops investigating a "fatal accident," etc.



Incompetent Conspirators

And that brings up a major difference between an Illuminated world and the "real" world. The Conspiracy in an Illuminated campaign has access to incredible resources and is world-wide in scope. Furthermore, the Illuminati are more or less omniscient: they're always watching, and nothing can remain hidden from them for long.

There lies the difference. If "big-C" Conspiratorial groups *do* exist in the real world, they don't have access to the resources and intelligence that the fictional Illuminati can draw on. The very size and scope that makes the fictional Conspiracy so powerful is what makes it very improbable - if not totally impossible - in the real world.

"Small-c" Conspiracies

Certainly conspiracies do exist in the real world - and thus in any realistic campaign. Corruption, racketeering and anti-monopoly cases in the news illustrate this clearly. There may be even deeper-running conspiracies as well: the anti-nuclear protest movement *could* be partially funded by the major oil companies; the more radical ecoterrorists *could* be funded by big business to discredit the environmental movement. The world of military and civilian intelligence agencies is filled with conspiracies of one kind or another; in one sense, the entire espionage-counterespionage around there's no concrete evidence that links all these into a greater global Conspiracy.

Still, small-c conspiracies can be used to great effect in any roleplaying campaign. And they don't have to be evil or selfish. A conspiracy to do good can be just as interesting! See *GURPS Robin Hood* for a whole book of examples.



The Illuminati in a Non-Illuminated Game

We have defined an Illuminated campaign as one where the hunt for the Conspiracy, or participation in it, is the central facet of play. Just about everything that the PCs do, and everything that happens to them, somehow relates to the Conspiracy. Just because the Conspiracy doesn't take center stage in play, however, doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. Any campaign can be an Illuminated campaign; the characters just don't know it.



Before dropping hints that a Conspiracy exists in his campaign, a GM should decide just how widespread the conspiracy is, and whether or not an Illuminated group is behind it.

The Illuminati Exist

In this option, there is a hidden order or secret society of some kind, operating behind the scenes. Its plans could be fairly small-scale — perhaps the members are manipulating the New York Stock Exchange to build their own fortunes. Although this is a far cry from world domination, they will have their fingers in many pies - regulatory agencies, shell companies, brokerage



houses, stock rating services, etc. - and might be ruthless in dealing with would-be meddlers. But a real conspiracy could have a larger scale. Perhaps the *Prieure de Sion* still exists, and continues to conserve the Merovingian bloodline for that time when the "one true king" can regain the throne of France. While it might have subverted the police department, and have sympathizers within the French government, its tendrils definitely won't extend as far as those of the fictional Illuminati groups described earlier in this book. But it would still be a force to be reckoned with.

In a non-Illuminated campaign, the GM might drop occasional hints that some kind of Conspiracy does exist. The PCs occasionally hear vague rumors, or stumble across puzzling clues, that hint at something strange going on behind the facade of the world as they know it. The PCs may *never* obtain categorical proof that there is a Conspiracy, but the possibility is always there.

This can add a lot of depth to a campaign. A common weakness in many role-playing campaigns is that very little seems to happen that doesn't directly concern or involve the PCs. News reports about events in the campaign world are usually provided as adventure hooks, or clues leading the characters to take certain action. This isn't the way things work in the real world, of course. Hints that things are happening outside the scope of adventuring - say, that officials fear that the NYSE is shot through with stock fraud - will make the campaign world seem more dynamic, and much more real. In this kind of world, most of the same events will occur as would without the Illuminati... but for different reasons!

Contact with the Illuminati

Alternatively, the GM may set things up so that the PCs come into contact - or conflict - with the "Illuminati." Keeping in mind that this is a non-Illuminated campaign, there are three interesting possibilities. -=

Small Scale

In this case the "Illuminati" are very serious and very dedicated, but operating only on a relatively small scale. Stock manipulators would fall into this category, as might a coterie of corporation head collaborating to manage the introduction of a new

THE CHURCH OF NEW BEGINNINGS

This "church" is actually about as religiously devout as a sideshow booth at a carnival. It was established by one Zachariah Hartford, a partially-trained seminarian, self-styled "neo-psychiatrist," failed author, convicted con man, and general snake-oil salesman. Zachariah wrote and published a book entitled *The Gospel for the Coming Dark Age*, an almost-impenetrable mess cobbled together from the sacred writings of half a dozen faiths, combined with new-age mysticism, a good dose of Apocalyptic scare-mongering, and leavened with a measure of self-help psychology. The phenomenal market success of the *Gospel* surprised even Zachariah ...

Never one to pass up an opportunity, Zachariah immediately opened the "Church of New Beginnings," based on the *Gospel*. Troubled people flocked to the Church, considering it to be "the answer," and gladly signed over half their worldly possessions to the Church's good ministers.

Today, the Church is an international concern with an annual cash flow in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Zachariah Hartford is still the leader of the church - the Worshipful Master - but he hardly makes any appearances lately, and when he does he looks somewhat under the weather. The day-to-day affairs of the Church are handled by a business manager that Zachariah hired soon after he'd founded the whole edifice, one Mary-Beth Fortunato. Some believe that Fortunato is the real power in the Church these days, and that she keeps Zachariah as the figurehead, possibly drugged or even brainwashed ...

Which wouldn't be out of keeping with some other tales that have come out of the Church. Some ex-members have told tales of brainwashing and mind control within the organization; most erstwhile members will say nothing whatsoever, apparently in fear for their lives.

Under the guidance of Mary-Beth Fortunato, the Church has gained tax-exempt status, just like a real church. It's reputed to have leverage at all levels of government.

For most people, the Church of New Beginnings is nothing more than a curiosity, a topic of cocktail party conversation. But for those whose loved ones have joined the Church, or for people who have otherwise fallen under its sway, it is a nightmare.

PCs can encounter the Church when a friend or relation joins, or when a contact suffers a "fatal accident" while investigating the organization.



COUNCIL FOR A FREE AMERICA

There is circumstantial evidence that the Council first came into being as a revolutionary cabal in 1773, and played a major role in the Revolutionary War. By 1860, the Council had become a secret association of high-ranking military officers around the continent. Membership was thought to number almost 50.

When the Civil War began in 1861, members of the Council were on the general staffs of both the Union and the Confederacy. They realized that a prolonged conflict would do irreparable harm to the country, and so determined to conclude hostilities as quickly as possible. Members in the Confederate officer corps falsified intelligence analyses and misstated reports of enemy troop concentration, all of which contributed to the South's relatively rapid defeat. ("Rapid," of course, is a relative term; the war lasted until 1865. According to Council documents, however, the group projected that the war would have dragged on until at least 1869, and the cost in lives and resources would have been at least double the actual figure.)

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technology that will reshape their industry. These people might be quite ruthless, with access to significant resources - compared to the PCs - and represent serious opponents. But the PCs could still defeat them. See the sidebar "Special Projects" on p. 107.

"Weirdos"

Here, the "Illuminati" are actually a group of fanatics, zealots, or people with extreme beliefs that most of the population would describe as "weird." For example, a society dedicated to stamping out roleplaying games as inherently "evil" would fall into this category, as would an association of historians who want to force school boards to give equal time to the conspiratorial view of history. Fraudulent religions also belong here. In this case, unless the PCs are directly and personally involved - if they're game designers, for example, or if a character's sister has been "brainwashed" by the false church - they can ignore these groups as simply unworthy of attention.

Note that, if they *do* decide to "do something about" a group like this, they might find themselves in for quite a scrap. A false church or similar organization might mount a "smear" campaign to totally discredit its opponents, or even resort to physical violence. But still, the PCs could well be able to defeat groups such as this . . . whatever "defeat" means in context. See the *Church of New Beginnings* sidebar, p. 109.

Historical Holdovers

Perhaps the "Illuminati" were once very powerful, but the group has *almost* died out or been rendered irrelevant by history. Such a group can still be formidable. Although aging and perhaps even senile, the members may still have great influence in government, business, finance, and elsewhere. Knowledge that time is running out might motivate them to be more ruthless, and to take more risks, than earlier generations would have considered wise.

The *Prieure de Sion* might still exist, even in a non-Illuminated campaign, and still be dedicated to returning the Merovingian dynasty to the throne of France. But

the group is but a fading shadow of what it once was, a group of old men clinging to the image of a "holy quest" that has no real significance in the modern world. The current members represent the final generation of the organization; they can find no qualified candidates to replace those who have died.

This could be the most interesting - and emotionally evocative - possibility of all. The PCs might discover hints that a Conspiracy is operating behind the scenes, and set forth, loaded for bear, to hunt down and eliminate the plotters. When they reach the center of the web, they find not a lethal society of capable conspirators, but a group of old men whose devotion to a meaningless cause is more pitiable than anything else. They may well decide that the best way to handle a group like this is to render them powerless, by eliminating their links with other organizations, and then leave them to quietly die out. See the *Council for a Free America* sidebar, p. 110.



The Illuminati are Dead!

Illuminated groups may well have been influential in the past, but have vanished - or ceased to be influential - in the present. Conspiracies of various kinds may still exist, but there's no central group behind them all, or even behind very many of them. No such group has the sort of "power structure" that would make it a truly Illuminated cabal.

This is almost certainly the case with "conspiracies" in the real world. Take, for example, the "Conspiracy of the News Media." Certainly, the vast majority of information sources in the world will soon be under the control of a handful of multinational corporations, each of which will no doubt slant the news they report to further the parent company's interests. While many people would describe this as a "conspiracy," there's probably no central group that meets and makes decisions. In other words, there's no central "Round Table" or "Star Chamber" at the heart of the news-information complex.

Other Genres

A world-girdling plot that can be labeled "*The Conspiracy*" will, in all likelihood, exist only in an Illuminated campaign — in other words, one where the PCs focus on combating or assisting the conspiratorial groups that run the world. "Small-c" conspiracies can be used in any kind of campaign. Here are some ideas to get GMs' imaginations churning.

Horror

Horror conspiracies can include supernatural creatures trying to dominate mankind - or perhaps trying to *save* the world from a conspiracy of human sorcerers.

Conspiracy of Silence. A group of human sorcerers has struck an unholy alliance with the "forces of darkness." In return for inhuman powers and advantages, the group will provide the fiends with a steady stream of human sacrifices. (This group may be the Cabal from *GURPS Horror*.) The authorities and the news media are suppressing the horrible truth. The overt reason is that telling the truth will cause panic worse than anything that the "creatures from the Beyond" could ever do. The *real* reason is that the authorities refuse to admit that they're powerless.

Cops and Robbers

The papers contain enough conspiracies to keep campaigns going for a long time: drug cartels, weapon dealers, youth gangs, racketeering, organized crime, corruption in the police force and in government, etc. Any of these apparently disparate elements could be connected.

New Kids on the Block. The drug cartels are trying to diversify into gambling - traditionally Mafia turf - and are bribing senior police officials to help them out. Maybe there's a crime family - or a single crime lord - behind many recent events, and the youth gangs and other small criminal organizations are controlled by a puppet-master.

COUNCIL FOR A FREE AMERICA (CONTINUED)

When World War I began, the Council had grown to almost 100 very influential members including, it is thought, several members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Council believed that the war was a purely European conflict, and that America's security would be best served by letting the European powers whittle each other away. Despite the Council's very real influence, the American Expeditionary Force was sent to Europe to join the war.

The world situation had changed by 1940. This time, the Council saw the war as a perfect opportunity to extend American influence around the world. They were opposed by strong isolationist tendencies, however. The country needed something to shock it out of its apathy.

This came in 1941 with the attack on Pearl Harbor. There is indirect evidence that the Council orchestrated the delay in Japan's declaration of war to make the "Day of Infamy" even more horrific, and certain conspiracy theorists go so far as to claim the whole attack was somehow incited by the group.

Some historians suspect that the Council brought about the death of Roosevelt, and replaced him with Truman, who they believed would be more tractable. This proved not to be the case, however. When Germany fell in 1945, the Council wanted Patton's army to continue east to take Moscow. Truman vetoed this plan.

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COUNCIL FOR A FREE AMERICA (CONTINUED)

Viet Nam was effectively the last straw for the Council. They saw U.S. strategy as hamstringing the military effort, turning the conflict into an unwinnable war. They apparently tried to instigate a military *coup d'etat*. The entire plan collapsed, proving once and for all that the Council for a Free America was finished as a major force on the world scene.

The Council still exists today. It's down to an even dozen members; the group has been unable to find suitable recruits to fill the vacated chairs. Its members are all retired generals, living in the Washington area, who meet monthly under the most secret of conditions. Although they feel their faculties failing, and the chill wind of mortality blowing through their souls, still they try to cling to the fiction that they still discuss grandiose plans of taking over the government and exploiting the "death of communism" by pre-eminent world power. They have some influence with certain officers at the Pentagon, certainly hire "expeditors" to eliminate and others who get too close.

The youngest current Council member is 78; the oldest is in his mid-90s. Within 20 years, the Council will be just a memory. In the meantime, it can still be a danger to anyone who asks the wrong questions.

PCs can encounter the Council when researching any of the strange, conspiracy-related events in recent American military history. Characters who are military officers might also see evidence of minor conspiratorial activity within the Armed Forces.

Espionage

The field is wide open: espionage is about as close to an Illuminated campaign as it's possible to get in the real world. There are always wheels within wheels, and every "truth" is likely to turn out to be yet another layer of deception. Double agents riddle intelligence networks, and agencies will use any pawn to gain an advantage. Alternatively, small conspiratorial groups may be playing the major intelligence agencies off against each other for their own purposes.

The Good Old Days. Agents discover that some component of the Western intelligence community is collaborating with a faction of the former KGB to orchestrate "incidents" between east and west. The goal is to prevent the attrition on both sides arising from the end of the Cold War, and returning levels of tension - and thus levels of funding - to 1950s levels.

Space

Conspiracies can be mercantile, with multistellar corporations, instead of multinationals, vying for dominance. Aliens could well be involved - is the newly-discovered starfaring race *really* as friendly as it seems? Are aliens collaborating with the Federation's enemies? It's difficult enough to figure out the motives of a small group of humans; what about an entire race of aliens? This kind of conspiracy could involve technology and individual powers totally beyond the ken of humanity.

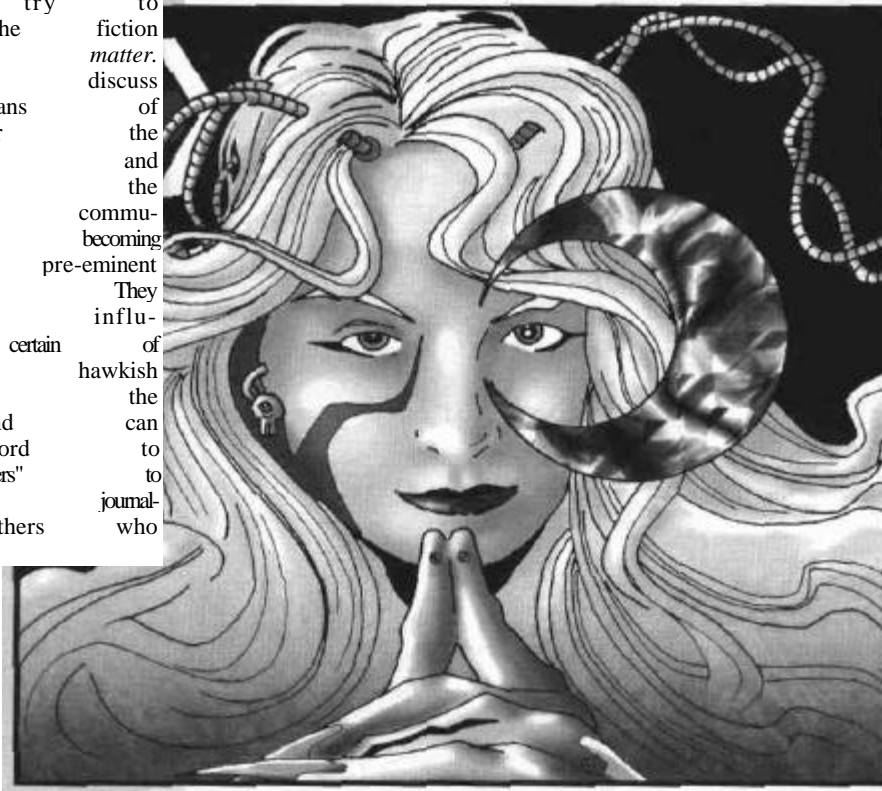
Phoenix Reborn. A multistellar corporation in the Phoenix Sector is providing aid to the Phoenix Domain in its struggle against the Federation, with the understanding

that, in return, the Domain will open the entire sector into a free trade zone once the Federation is defeated.

Fantasy

Two archetypical plot lines in fantasy are the conspiracy to kill the king and take over the kingdom, and the conspiracy to remove the usurper and reinstate the rightful heir. Other possibilities include conspiracies of merchants (to control trade and maximize profits), of nobles (to strengthen their position), or of wizards (for any number of arcane reasons). Magic will frequently be involved, on one side or both.

Coronation. The Priests of the Mother Goddess are concerned that "heresies" and rival sects will soon sweep worship of the Goddess from the land... leaving them without the wealth and influence they've come to cherish. What they need is a powerful secular supporter. The priests decide to throw their support behind a would-be usurper and regicide. When he takes the throne, the priests will bless and anoint him, making him a "rightful" king despite his common birth. In return, the new king will make worship of the Mother Goddess the only official religion of the land.





Cyberpunk

Like espionage, just about every adventure in a cyberpunk campaign will involve a conspiracy, often revolving around new technology or new drugs. The conventional villains are the megacorporations . . . but who's pulling *their* strings? A group of netrunners? Or maybe a conspiracy of AIs? Often the conspirators already have power (e.g., the megacorps) and are scheming to keep it.

False Front. Recently, ecoterrorists have targeted the facilities of a particular zaibatsu, destroying assets and killing employees. The corp is petitioning the government to allow them to use their private security force to track down and eliminate the terrorists. The government is wavering. Actually, the "ecoterrorists" were hired by the corp. When the government grants them permission, they'll use their security force to eliminate *all* opponents of the corp's operations, under cover of tracking the terrorists.

Urban Renewal. The latest - and nastiest - designer drug has been dropping members of the understrata like flies. Cheap and highly addictive, it's also incredibly brutal to the human physiology. After an average of ten "hits," the user's dead . . . with an orgasmic grin on his face. The cops can't track down the source; the established drug dealers want it stopped, because it's killing their customers. As it turns out, the drug was developed and is being distributed by a major - and exceptionally respectable - zaibatsu, Eiji Inc. The city government is in on the scam, because the drug's doing more to clean out the "fringe" regions of squatters than any police sweep. When the "fringes" are depopulated, the city will move in with urban renewal projects, most of the contracts for which will be given to Eiji Inc.

Time Travel

The entire Timepiece/Stopwatch campaign world described in *GURPS Time Travel* is about as Conspiratorial as it gets: rival groups of time-travelers from alternate time lines, manipulating the past to ensure that their own world will come into existence. Other possibilities have been mentioned earlier.

Closed Centuries. There are various eras that can't be viewed or visited by the time-travel technologies available to the PCs. These "Forbidden Years" shift - not randomly, but based on the actions of the PCs and their colleagues. Slowly it becomes

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH

This is not the public name of any organization. It's an informal, but very real, society of religious leaders who are dedicated to the establishment of a state religion - fundamentalist Protestantism - in the United States. Some would go farther, dreaming of a theocratic world government.

The organization is some 40 years old, having been established shortly after the end of World War II. It's very well funded, largely due to the efforts of televangelists who ask for - and get - healthy donations from the "faithful."

The leaders of Fundamental Truth belong to different denominations, and if they succeed in their aims, they'll no doubt quarrel among themselves over details of doctrine . . . but for now, they're agreed on both goals and methods.

On the one hand, they constantly lobby for more church privileges under the banner of "freedom of religion." In their view, any church-run enterprise should be entirely free of taxation - and of government control of any kind. They want to exempt churches from zoning laws, wage and rent controls, licensing requirements . . . They can make earnest theological and Constitution[^] arguments that the state should have no control over *any* church doings, even those designed specifically to make a profit.

In particular, they want the freedom to organize church-controlled schools, which will teach only the curriculum that the church leaders select. They also encourage their followers in "civil disobedience" to any law that "goes against their religions." In time, Fundamental Truth hopes to establish the idea that church authority is greater than government authority - in all ways, at all times.

Continued on next page...



FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH (CONTINUED)

On the other hand, the leaders of Fundamental Truth define "church" very carefully indeed. Essentially, their idea of "free- dom of religion" is "freedom to choose one fundamentalist Protestant sect." They see Catholics and Mormons as sinister schismatics, and believe (rightly or wrongly) that those churches have their own secret organizations and schemes for power. As for other religions, Fundamental Truth simply thinks they're fatally misguided, if not actually tools of Satan. And they don't recognize any "right to be wrong" in matters that important...

As the leading edge of their campaign against other religions, the leaders of Fundamental Truth are orchestrating a continuing media battle against "Satanism." They've duped many respectable religious leaders - as well as law enforcement officers - into near-hysteria over "cult crimes" which they attribute to some monstrous Satanist conspiracy. They've successfully tarred both pagan gatherings and Moslem groups with the "satanist" brush. In fact, they've essentially gotten pagan religions outlawed in some areas! Of course, once the police and courts are accustomed to deciding that a religion isn't "real," it'll be easier to squeeze out the Hindus, the Jews, the Episcopalians . . .

Fundamental Truth campaigns loudly against "secular humanists," and often supports ultra-conservative political candidates, especially those who profess fundamentalist beliefs of their own. The core group of Fundamental Truth is all-male and likely to remain so; they do not even support female candidates for office, sincerely believing that the Bible ordains male mastery.

As a whole, the group is scrupulously legal in all its dealings - *except* when they feel that they are deliberately disobeying some "immoral" government regulation. The leadership of Fundamental Truth has never even condoned vandalism against its opponents, let alone blackmail or physical coercion. They prefer "education" and economic leverage. Any physical offenses that may take place are the work of over-enthusiastic underlings, and the leaders will pray that their erring sheep learn better.

Some mainstream Protestant leaders are aware of Fundamental Truth, but dismiss its leaders as intolerant crackpots. They don't realize the depth of support the group can muster, and they'd be surprised to see some of the "respectable" leaders who attend Truth meetings.



apparent that the "Forbidden Years" are actually *protected* - by someone or something, labelled the "Forbidder" - to prevent the PCs from making certain changes, presumably because those changes would drastically change the home-time of the Forbidder. There are some disturbing factors involved. Firstly, protecting a span of time is not just a practical impossibility for the PCs' technology; it is categorically forbidden by the theories on which the PCs base their understanding of the world. Secondly, based on mathematical analysis of the protected eras and the theory that changes there would alter the Forbidder's home-when, it would appear that the Forbidder exists *some fifteen million years* uptime ...

Supers

There are several "crossover" options here. Perhaps the Illuminati have superpowers - particularly mental or transportation-related — which explains why they're Secret Masters. Or the Illuminati are striving to breed metahuman powers or create them artificially. Or maybe they've already succeeded, and are busily cranking out super-MIBs to do their bidding. Or maybe the Illuminati are trying to capture or recruit supers, to use them as servants or as breeding stock.

Cleaning Up the Streets. A lobby group is applying pressure to the government to stringently restrict supers and other "mutants," to protect normal citizens from the threat of such "non-humans." But the money is coming from a major crime syndicate, which wants to eliminate the supers as a crime-fighting force. Or it's backed by a rival group of super-powered villains; when you make superpowers illegal, only criminals will have superpowers ...

Public Enemies. A metahuman villain has been running amok, destroying hundreds of millions of dollars worth of property. Nobody's been killed - *yet* - but the news media predict that's only a matter of time. Predictably, popular opinion is turning against all supers; after all, they're not really human, and couldn't their minds eventually snap, turning *them* into mad destroyers too? In fact, the "mad destroyer" is in the pay of a faction in the government. This faction wants to create popular support for oppressive laws to control the supers, who they see as a very real threat to their power.



Psionics

The discussions concerning *Supers* apply here as well. A conspiracy of psionic Illuminati - particularly in a world where psi powers are considered myths - would be incredibly dangerous.

Autoduel

In essence, the *Autoduel* world is cyberpunk with fast cars, so any of the conspiracies described above would fit in.

It Doesn't Matter Whether You Win or Lose . . . Until You Lose. Some of the big-purse events in certain arenas seem to be fixed. Drivers who just shouldn't be winning, or strangers who've just appeared out of nowhere, are pulling in the big prizes, while old favorites are being taken out by weird "accidents" and equipment problems. One particular driver, the favorite for an upcoming duel, was scragged by a cycle gang on his way home for Christmas, and his clones were found to be non-viable. Obviously somebody's fixing the autoduel "game." Figuring out "why" is easy: huge sums of money. But that still leaves the "who" and "how."

Cliffhangers

Conspiracies are essential to the pulp genre. The conspiracy is usually a criminal organization headed by a single individual. This "Napoleon of crime" may or may not have access to highly advanced technology. In this genre, the villains have a penchant for eliminating opposition using elaborate death-traps, rather than the more simple silenced rifle from a rooftop.

Swashbucklers

In any historical campaign, the players have the opportunity to run into genuine historical conspiracies, especially Weishaupt's Bavarian Illuminati and the Society of Assassins.

Scarlet Pimpernel

Many conspiracy theorists believe the French Revolution was fomented by conspiratorial groups - perhaps the Knights Templar or the *Prieure*. The players may encounter these groups, or run afoul of them. Or they may chase Illuminated shadows without ever meeting the real thing. (If the Illuminati instigated the Revolution to eliminate the French nobility, how would they react to a bunch of swashbuckling Britons running around rescuing them?)

Camelot

The key conspiracy was between Mordred and Morgan, to oust Arthur from his throne. Lancelot was their pawn, used to destroy Arthur's self-confidence.

Riverworld

Every "secret master" who ever lived - Jacques de Molay, Adam Weishaupt, and all the rest - has been resurrected along the banks of the River. Would the founders of Illuminated groups agree with the changes later generations have rung on their creations? Or would they organize new cabals to oppose the "perverted" philosophies?

Would groups that were enemies on Earth join forces to combat the Ethicals (with the eventual goal of taking over the Riverworld, of course)? Or would they ally themselves *with* the Ethicals to gain power over their terrestrial rivals?

THE JOKERS

TRI (which simply stands for Three Random Initials) is an organization dedicated to harassing conservative and churchly personalities . . . not just politicians, but other public figures as well. They specialize in "practical jokes" of the most vicious, ingenious and persistent kind . . . phone calls, faked letters and even photographs, and contrived situations that humiliate or terrify the victim. The most brutal thing about TRI is that it's simply a hobby for its leaders.

The group started in college in the late 1960s, with four members who cooperated to play pranks on unpopular faculty. The pranks got more sophisticated and more serious . . . and more malicious. When a series of "joke" phone calls led to a dean's divorce and resignation, they realized that they were powerful. And they liked it. Over the next year, they drove three conservative student leaders off campus and got a vocal professor denied tenure. When they graduated, they turned their attention to local political figures and, later, to entertainment personalities.

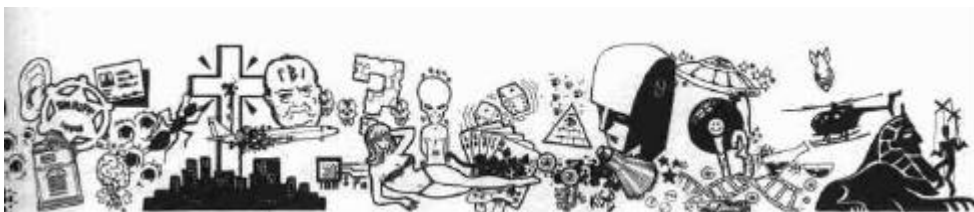
Money has never been a problem for TRI; its members come from wealthy families, and all have safe corporate jobs. The "pranksters" hire or bribe talent to help them carry off their projects. TRI now numbers a core group of six, a couple of dozen trusted "outer circle" members, and over a hundred occasional employees, with talents ranging from voice impersonation to photo retouching.

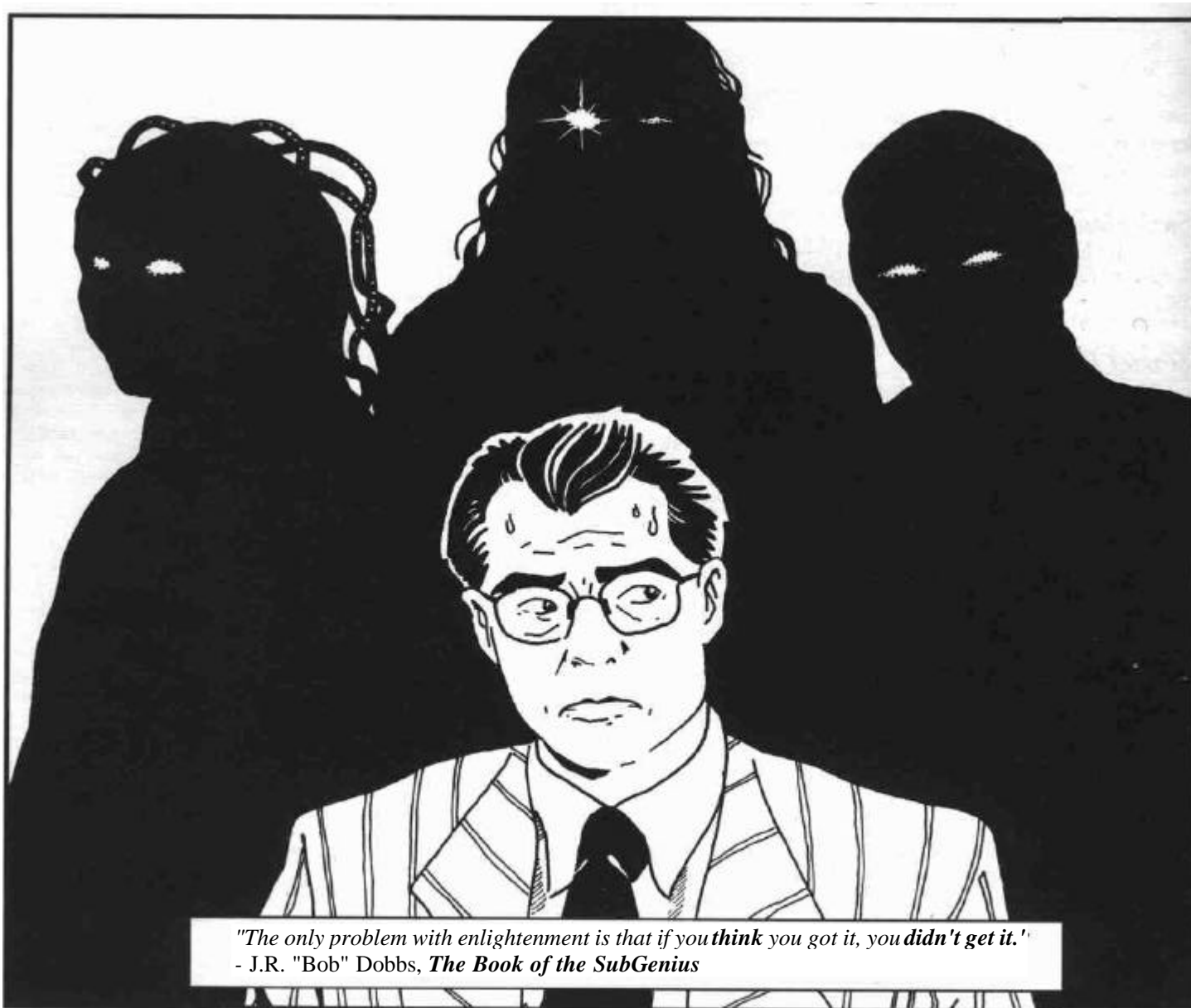
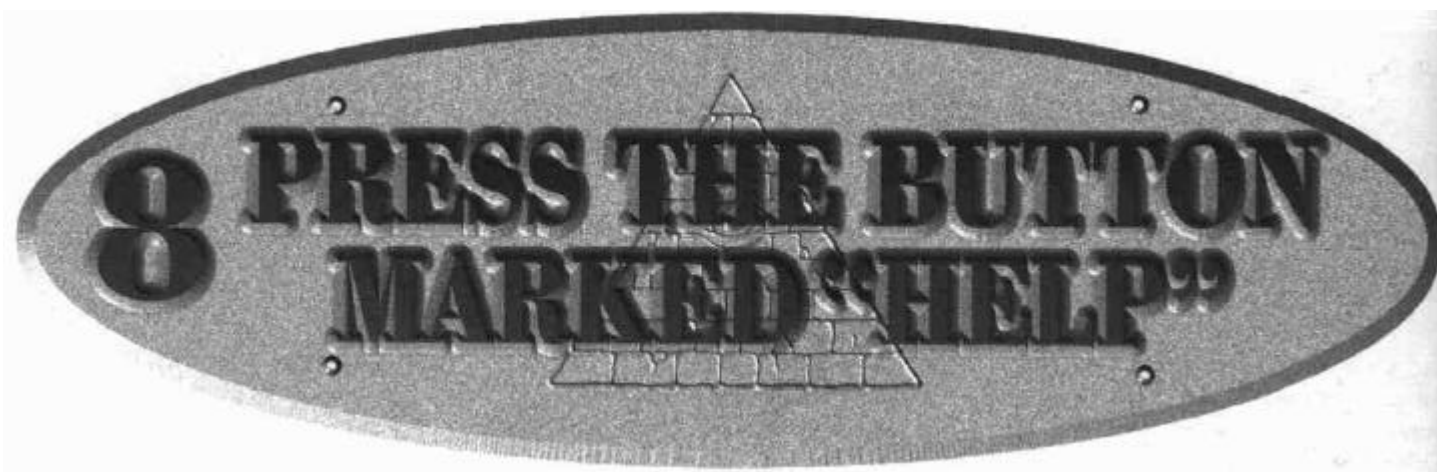
TRI takes on six to eight "projects" per year. The inner circle meets for dinner once a month and discusses new targets. Though they share a generally leftist agenda, and prefer right-wing victims, *any public figure is fair game.*

In the last 25 years, the group has been responsible for three suicides, nearly 20 wrecked careers, and an incalculable amount of grief, confusion and anger. And its existence as an organization has never even been suspected. The TRI crew is clever about picking its targets, and skilled at impersonating the random craziness that any public figure must deal with.

Their weak link is their army of hirelings and tools. If one of them was asked to harass a public figure he admired, he might blow the whistle instead. But the core group protects their identities well. They've never actually had anybody killed, but would do it in an instant to protect themselves.

TRI would also fit into a campaign of interlocking conspiracies. One of the core members would belong to a "higher" organization, and would manipulate the pranksters to destroy enemies of the Illuminati.





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Advice For The GM

Counter-Moves

What if the investigators do too well? The GM needs to keep a step ahead of the players . . . without being *too* arbitrary. Here are some useful techniques for the Illuminati to use against determined foes.

Mind Alteration

Brainwashing and other forms of mind control are major tools of the Illuminati. There are four major categories of mind alteration, each with many variations.



Insanity

The Illuminati often try to drive their foes insane. They might use brainwashing, hypnosis, chemicals, physical intervention (surgery or implants of some kind), psionics or magic. Insanity can take the form of most mental disadvantages, from Delusion or Paranoia, to Weak Will.

For those mental disadvantages that should be roleplayed at all times, or that are immediately apparent - such as Absent-Mindedness, Paranoia, Delusion or Obsession - the GM should simply take the victim player aside and explain the situation to him. For other disadvantages such as Combat Paralysis or Berserk, the victim and hence the player won't know about them until the requisite circumstances arise.

This kind of mental tampering can apply to either NPCs or PCs. Depending on the personalities of the players, however, GMs should think twice before inflicting a "manufactured" disadvantage on a PC. Some players resent this sort of thing; others will look upon it as a roleplaying challenge . . . as long as they know there's some way to get back to normal again. Inflicting mental modification on an NPC - a close friend or a colleague - can be almost as effective, in a story sense. What if an even-tempered friend suddenly starts flying into homicidal rages? Something's obviously going on . . .

AMNESIA

Currently, there are no drugs that will specifically erase memories without causing other, more widespread effects (such as cell death, palsy, etc.). This need not be true in worlds with higher Tech Levels, of course. The Illuminati might have access to advanced technology, and could possess such drugs. Two powerful memory-altering drugs, both TL8, are described below. Both must be injected (either intravenously or subcutaneously) to take effect, and neither is addictive. Neither is currently illegal, simply because the authorities don't know these drugs exist (though *using* them on someone would probably constitute assault).. One dose is 50 milligrams. These drugs can only be acquired from certain conspiratorial groups, and they'll be *very* unlikely to sell them.

LETHE

Lethe induces total amnesia. The subject loses all memories of *everything* that happened before the dose was administered. The base duration for this memory loss is 4 weeks. At the end of this period, the subject makes a roll against HT-5 each week to shake off the effects. On a successful roll, the subject's "lost" memories come flooding back. On a critical failure, the memory loss has become permanent; the character is considered to have acquired the Total Amnesia disadvantage, and can only buy it off with character points.

OBLIO

Oblivio is chemically very different from Lethe, and induces temporary retrograde amnesia. For each dose - to a maximum of four doses - the drug temporarily wipes out 3d weeks of the subject's memory record, starting at the moment the drug was administered and counting backwards. Thus, if the subject is given three doses, he forgets everything that happened in the 9d weeks before the drug was administered. The drug also renders the subject instantly unconscious for 10d minutes.

The drug has a base duration of 1d+6 days. After that period, the subject rolls every day against HT-1. If he succeeds, his memory comes back immediately, although in most cases he will never recall the period one hour before the drug was administered. If he rolls a critical success, however, he *does* remember that one-hour "window." If the subject ever rolls a critical failure, the temporary amnesia becomes permanent.

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CHEMICALLY-INDUCED AMNESIA (CONTINUED)

The maximum number of doses that can be administered at one time - safely - is four. A fifth dose requires the subject to make a HT-4 roll or become comatose for 20-HT hours, and suffer 3d damage plus 1d of additional damage for each dose after the fifth.

Agents will sometimes want to maintain this kind of temporary amnesia beyond the base duration. This requires multiple administrations of Oblivio. Each time the subject receives the drug, the GM must secretly roll the base duration for that particular administration (i.e., 1d+6). The number of doses he received in that batch is considered to be still in effect for that time. If he receives more doses before that time is up, to bring the total number of "active doses" up to 5, the subject will suffer the effects of an "overdose" as described above.

For example: An agent gives Smith three doses of Oblivio. The GM rolls the duration (1d+6), for a result of 12 days. The agent wants to maintain Smith's amnesia; obviously, he doesn't know how long the first three doses will last. After 8 days, the agent is getting very nervous: he figures Smith could snap out of it at any time. He sneaks into Smith's place and gives him another three doses. Unfortunately for Smith, the first three doses were still in effect, and the new administration raises the number of "active doses" to six. Smith must roll HT-4 or pass out for 20-HT hours and suffer 4d of damage (3d base plus 1d for the 6th dose).

Altered Memories

Someone is conversing with a friend or colleague, and realizes that they have quite different recollections of a particular event. If they were the only participants or witnesses and there's no concrete evidence (photographs, for example), the question arises: who's right and who misremembered things? A *player* will automatically assume that the NPC is mistaken, since he - the player - remembers how things actually occurred.

But what happens if he starts checking with other NPCs and they *all* disagree with his memories? They could all be mistaken, be lying for some reason, or could have had their memories altered. What if he finds concrete evidence against his view? Again, that's not absolute proof: any evidence could be faked, given the desire and enough resources.

The GM could be playing two very different games here. First, the PC's memory could be correct, and some conspiratorial group is playing with his mind. Second - and much more interestingly - he could be *wrong*.

This is a particularly twisted ploy to spring on a player. Remember, in a roleplaying game the player's memory equates to the *PC's* memory; it's the GM who decides on what *reality* is, and that reality might not match either the player's or the character's memory. Particularly in an Illuminated campaign, the GM could decide that something that happened to a PC *didn't* actually happen: that it was a figment of the character's imagination, an implanted memory, even a dream! Certainly, the player is going to be vehement about roleplaying his character's belief that everyone else must

be lying or deluded.

The GM might go one step further, and set things up beforehand with the other players so they'll go along with the "altered" version of reality. If the difference between the "new reality" and the actual events remembered by the player is relatively minor, this might convince him that his memory actually *is* faulty! If the difference is major, however, or if the player has notes or other evidence to support his memory, he might decide that everyone else is conspiring against him . . . just what his character would think. As with the amnesia situation, GMs should be very careful about who they play this kind of trick on. Many players will take it in stride and enjoy the twist; some might react badly.

See *GURPS The Prisoner* for a book-length discussion of flexible reality, mind alteration and similar paranoid games.



Implanted Memories

If the Illuminati can eliminate memories, why can't they create them? The Time Meddlers or the Alphans might have the technology to implant memories so real that the subject can't tell them from the real thing. Psi powers could give the same result.

This is a perfect technique for keeping the Conspiracy secret. Someone stumbles upon an Illuminati operation - a UFO landing, for example - and is captured and interrogated. After several days, he's released - complete with a shiny new memory that he actually spent the last week hiking in the mountains. Or the Illuminati might want a subject to "remember" something that didn't happen - that he saw a UFO that actually didn't exist - and spread the word based on his personal "experience."

Implanted memories may be perfect and permanent, or they might begin to "fray around the edges" after some time. Maybe the subject's dreams are representations of reality - if he can only figure out the symbolism - or perhaps hypnosis or drugs can strip away the false memory.



Programmed Behaviors

The next logical step is to implant not just memories, but whole sets of behaviors. Programmed actions can be on-going - for example, the subject becomes a homicidal maniac who attacks anyone wearing a red tie, whenever he happens to see them. Or they can be triggered. The subject is totally normal until some special event occurs - a code word, a musical phrase, a visual symbol - and only *then* does he attack people wearing red ties.

Although the PCs themselves might become subjects of implanted behaviors, it's generally easier for a GM to use NPCs. Maybe the investigators are the targets of the implanted behavior - "Next time you hear the Coffee-Mate jingle, you will seek out and kill *these people*?" Or - more amusingly - maybe they accidentally trigger a programmed behavior in someone else ("Hey, Joe, put down that axe. I only hummed the Flintstones theme ...").



ATTITUDECHIPS

The Illuminati may well have access to other insidious ways of altering the behavior, memories and thoughts of their enemies, agents and pawns.

GURPS Cyberpunk describes many pieces of technology that can mess with a subject's mentation. Attitude chips and behavior chips can be inserted into a subject's chip slot - possibly against his will. Although a chip is as easy to slot out as it is to slot in, a chip programmed by the Illuminati might include some kind of compulsion preventing the subject from removing it . . . or letting anyone *else* remove it without a fight. Psych implants are permanently-installed versions of the same kind of circuitry, but surgically implanted in the subject's skull.

Attitude and behavior chips, and psych implants are TL8. In a contemporary campaign, only certain Illuminati will have access to such technology, and maybe not even them. Obviously, in a TL7 or lower campaign, attitude and behavior chips aren't a good option if the Illuminati want to keep the installation secret (particularly from the subject) since they require a chip slot - a small open socket - installed in the skull. Psych implants are a much better choice, since they are completely internal to the brain case.

Healing time is about two weeks for either kind of installation, which is *not* negligible . . . and this assumes access to TL8 medical technology! The Illuminati *could* conceivably have this kind of stuff installed in an unwitting subject — a PC, for example - but they'd have to arrange an extensive cover story. (Perhaps the subject is in a car accident, requiring extensive neurosurgery . . .) The possibility of detection is also a problem, but could be an *excellent* way to get a PC investigating the Conspiracy. What would happen if the PC gets a routine head X-ray - after falling off a ladder, say - and it shows some kind of gizmo installed in his brain . . .?

Of course, the Illuminati might not have to bother with such subtle techniques. *GURPS Magic*, *GURPS Grimoire* and *GURPS Psionics* contain many mind-controlling spells and powers. Illuminated groups with access to these abilities have many more options open to them.

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THE CONSPIRACY IS AFAKE!

There *is no* Conspiracy. The whole thing is the creation of one man, an obsessed practical joker with a skill for forgery. Several years ago, he started fanning the ardor of conspiracy historians and theorists by "leaking" forged documents that seem to hint at causal linkages between totally unrelated events in the world. Further, he created from scratch "historical" evidence indicating that certain ancient secret societies - specifically the Knights Templar and the *Prieur de Sion* - survived into the 20th century and thus probably to the present day. Such "proof" included lists of the Grand Masters of both organizations up to the middle of this century, naming sufficiently high-profile individuals that everyone would take notice.

This unknown forger seems to have gone even further. It seems that he's founded certain organizations, including printing houses and even a Masonic lodge. Although the members of these groups don't know it, the sole purpose for their existence is to continue his great fallacy. This fact is concealed from investigators through the collusion of the police and other official agencies in the cities where the sham organizations exist. Even stranger, some investigators who were getting close to *proving* that this whole thing was an invention have disappeared mysteriously.

Wait a minute . . . maybe there was a Conspiracy after all...

Complexity

For a successful Illuminated campaign, the GM must walk a fine line. The Conspiracy must not be so impenetrable, so full of dead ends and false trails, that the players can't find a way to proceed. But he must not give away so much that tracking the Conspiracy isn't a challenge.

There's no simple answer; it depends on the personalities of the GM and players. Some players will enjoy picking away at the fringes of the Conspiracy for a long time, finding that every lead is actually a red herring or a meaningless coincidence, until they get that one *big break* that lets them shatter the first layer of deception. Others will get impatient and frustrated if they don't see continuous progress, if each gaming session doesn't bring them one step closer to the mysterious Illuminati. (Then, of course, there are the "power gamers" who don't feel satisfied unless each gaming session includes a firefight. An Illuminated campaign probably isn't the most appropriate genre for players like this . . .)

GMs must "fine-tune" the campaign to match the style of play of their players. Fortunately, this is easier in an Illuminati campaign than it is in many other genres. The structure of the Conspiracy is known only to the GM, allowing him to alter it as necessary as the campaign progresses.

Mood

Mood is vital to the success of an Illuminati campaign. Whether the PCs are participants in the Conspiracy, or still trying to discover the truth about what's going on, the "feel" of the campaign should be paranoid. Nothing is exactly what it seems, and nobody but the Illuminati themselves - if they actually exist - knows the true significance of the strange and sinister events that keep occurring. Characters in an Illuminati campaign should be even more paranoid than in an espionage campaign.

This doesn't mean the game has to be bleak and depressing, however. While it's true that every knock on the door could announce an enemy, it could also mean that the courier is delivering *another* stuffed frog to go with the 50 already piled in the hallway. The sense of paranoia can spring not from the fear of imminent death, but from the unshakable certainty that something else weird is about to happen.





The situation doesn't change much even after the PCs have become active participants in the Conspiracy. They may know a little more about what's going on, but they're still in the dark about a lot of important things. Weird things still occur, but now there's the possibility that their Secret Masters will order them to make weird things happen to someone else.

Maintaining the Mood

How can the GM encourage this sort of feeling? Here are several suggestions.

There is No Safe Place or Time

Whenever the PCs are starting to feel safe and secure, it time for a weird or sinister event to occur. Perhaps they think that they're safe at home when they're not actively tracking the spoor of the Conspiracy. Show them they're wrong. Have the radio suddenly start playing programs from 1939 (and no, it's *not* a retrospective special), or have every mirror in the house shatter into tiny pentagons.

Mysterious Trivia

Weird, meaningless events happen in real life; why not in a roleplaying game? Occasionally describe the kind of senseless event that gets discussed in the coffee room at work. It doesn't have to happen to the Conspiracy-hunters, or even to someone they know directly; they just have to hear about it. And of course, it doesn't have to *mean* anything, or have anything whatsoever to do with the section of the Conspiracy the characters are hunting.

"UNLOCKING" IMPLANTED INFORMATION

So the Hluminati have locked important information in the subconscious of an unwitting dupe. How does one *unlock* that information?

Mental unlocking is tricky, requiring much skill. Only those with either Interrogation or Psychology can even try it (no default skill use allowed).

The procedure is a Contest of Skills •between the interrogator's Skill (either Psychology or Interrogation) and the subject's IQ (modified by Strong or Weak Will). This is even if the subject *wants* the interrogator to succeed. "Truth serum" type drugs, like pentothal of sodium, will decrease the subject's effective IQ by -2. Each attempt takes one hour.

If the interrogator makes his roll and the subject fails, the implanted information is released normally (whatever "normally" is for the specific case). If the interrogator rolls a critical success and the subject fails, the implanted information is released normally *and* the subject gains full conscious access to it, even if this wasn't part of the original programming. If both rolls fail or both succeed, the attempt is a failure.

If, however, the interrogator fails the Skill roll and the subject succeeds, any secondary programming that might be in place is triggered. The result could range from the subject permanently forgetting the implanted information, to his going insane, or even to a bomb implanted in his head detonating.

Finally, if the interrogator rolls a critical failure and the subject rolls a success, the information in the subject's head is totally lost and unrecoverable. *Plus*, the subject suffers some kind of mental imbalance, equivalent to any mental disadvantage that the GM sees fit to apply. This condition lasts for 2d weeks.



THE MIND CONTROL

LASER

Strictly speaking, this device is a *maser*, not a *laser*, since it employs microwaves instead of visible light. The projector is about the size of a beer can, but it must be attached by a slender cable to a battery pack about the size and shape of a briefcase. When in use, the projector heats to a temperature of about 100° C (212° F), requiring that it be mounted on a tripod or something similar.

The projector produces a conical beam of microwaves with an effective range of 300 feet. The beam is not tightly collimated. At 150 feet the beam has a diameter of 20 feet; at maximum range it has a diameter of 40 feet. It is totally invisible, and can penetrate up to six inches of stone or brick; less dense materials, such as wood, drywall, plaster, etc. offer no resistance to the microwave beam. Any ferrous metal of more than a quarter-inch thickness totally blocks the beam, however.

Any human caught within the beam must make a Will roll each minute or be highly suggestible to any authoritative statement for however long the individual is within the beam plus an additional 1d minutes. During this time, any authoritative statement is treated as a *posthypnotic suggestion* (see *Hypnosis* on p. B56). The beam's intensity - and hence its effectiveness - diminishes with range. A subject's Will roll has the following penalties, depending on range:

0-50 feet	0
51-100 feet	+1
101-200 feet	+2
201-300 feet	+3

In addition, if the subject is wearing a special protective helmet composed of a titanium-beryllium alloy, he receives an additional -10 bonus. (Jury-rigged protection like a skullcap made of aluminum foil can give a +1 bonus if the GM is feeling generous. A skullcap of beaten gold is even better - +4 - because it's more conductive.)

The briefcase-sized battery pack contains enough power for 5 minutes of continuous use.

The mind control laser is TL8 (sort of). It is not considered illegal, since nobody who writes the laws believes such a thing exists.

No One Is As He Seems

Many players seem to need some ultimately trustworthy NPC - contact, patron, ally, friend, etc. - on whom their character can depend . . . someone they *know* isn't out to get them. Such people *should not exist* in an Illuminati campaign . . . although the players will almost certainly continue trying to cast NPCs in this role.

If a player has this tendency, the GM should take advantage. Over the course of several sessions or adventures, develop interesting, believable, sympathetic NPCs. Let the investigators come to trust and depend on them. Then kill them off in nasty ways, or have them betray the Conspiracy-hunters at the worst possible moment. They could be brainwashed dupes, psionic assassins, Secret Masters, or even Martians.

No One Tells The Truth

Once the investigators have joined the conspiracy, they'll frequently be tempted to put all their trust in their superior, the Master of their lodge, the officer who assigns them missions, or someone similar. NPCs like that are an "emotional crutch"; when the world is particularly nasty, the characters will look to them for reassurance. In the Illuminated campaign, GMs should, from time to time, snatch away this kind of support. Maybe a trusted "case officer" disappears; the next day the Hidden Masters announce that the officer defected, fled when it was discovered he was a mole, or was executed for treason. (Is this really the truth? Is the officer being set up to become a double agent? Or is something stranger going on?)

Untrustworthy Comrades

The GM might collaborate with one player to set up his character as an infiltrator from another group, or a monitor for the hidden masters, or even an agent from a group further up the power structure. This "ringer" shouldn't be working directly against the party. Even though this matches the philosophy of an Illuminated campaign, it's too destructive to player morale and cohesiveness. Instead, the ringer's goals should be almost the same as everyone else's . . . but not quite. There should be just enough difference to make things interesting, but not so much that discovery will automatically lead to bloodshed. Perhaps *all* members of the adventuring group are "fellow-travelers" from different organizations, working together because their motives temporarily mesh.



If a player leaves the campaign, it's natural to keep his character around as an NPC. The players will assume that *this* is someone they can trust. Wrong! (Should the player return, it will be time to let the *real* character escape and unmask his evil clone. Or maybe not.)

Lost in the Fog

GMs will often find they've underestimated the complexity of their campaign world (or perhaps overestimated the resourcefulness of their players). When they designed the campaign, GMs might have thought their players would have little difficulty following the clues. But they're just drifting from one dead end or red herring to another, getting absolutely nowhere, and becoming discouraged and impatient. What's a GM to do?

Fortunately, an Illuminated campaign provides legitimate ways of helping the players out. When the characters are out of clues and the players out of patience, a new lead can come from just about anywhere: an anonymous phone call, a misdirected letter, a message burned in the front lawn with a laser beam, even a map mysteriously tattooed on the back of a close friend. Maybe a disgruntled ex-conspirator approaches the investigators to tell them all he knows. (But is he for real, or an *agent provocateur*! And is his "murder," immediately after the meeting, the real thing, or a carefully staged fake to make sure his information is taken seriously?) In essence, GMs can find Conspiracy-based ways to give just about *any* hints the players need.

Sometimes the sheer size of the Conspiracy is the problem: the players feel overwhelmed. The solution here is to "feed" them small, attainable goals. Maybe it's impossible to bring down the entire world-girdling Conspiracy, but at least they can root out the Illuminati among the local PTA. Players should come to recognize each of these small victories for what it is: one more blow against the grand Conspiracy.

If All Else Fails...

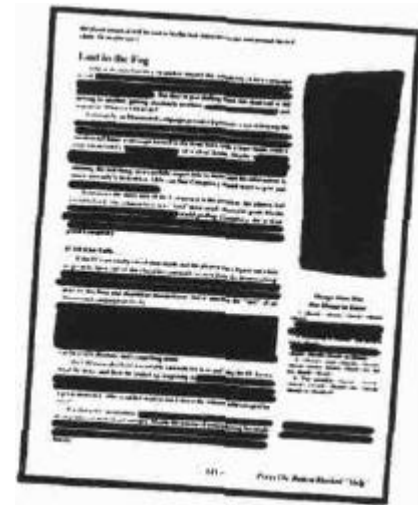
If the PCs are totally out of their depth, and the players can't figure out where to go next, have one of the characters *partially recover from his brainwashing!* Suddenly he remembers some vital information - or even some skills - that were wiped from his brain. In any other genre, this trick would come across as absolute *deus ex machina* and shameless manipulation, but it matches the "feel" of an Illuminated campaign perfectly.

GMs should use this technique sparingly, or players may begin to depend on it. ("Don't sweat it. When we really get stuck, one of us will 'remember' something important") Once in a campaign is plenty.

It's important to fully motivate the "awakening." It shouldn't come just out of the blue; amnesia usually doesn't work that way. It might happen after a blow to the head, failed Fright Check, drugging, or something similar. Handled well, this can be a very dramatic and compelling scene.

The GM must also have a workable rationale for how and why the PC knows what he does, and how he ended up forgetting it. There's no need to explain everything immediately; the victim could well have blank spots, particularly surrounding the actual brainwashing, that return slowly if at all. And this technique is a great motivator: who *wouldn't* want to track down the villains who ravaged his mind?

If a character "remembers" new skills, the GM should consider balancing out their point cost with disadvantages. Maybe the trauma of remembering has made the victim Fanatic, Obsessed or Paranoid. Or maybe the group that brainwashed him in the first place will be back for a second attempt, as an Enemy or Secret Enemy.



THINGS MAN WAS NOT MEANT TO KNOW

1. <fnord> <fnord> <fnord> <fnord> <fnord>.
2. The end of the world will be on <fnord>, <fnord> <fnord>, 20<fnord>.
3. Everything is <fnord>. The secret is not to <fnord>.
4. The real <fnord> of life is that <fnord> <fnord> <fnord> to <fnord>.
5. <fnord> wart <fnord> <fnord> <fnord> money <fnord> <fnord> sex, but not <fnord> <fnord>.
6. The monthly <fnord> <fnord> <fnord> <fnord> <fnord> the <fnord> <fnord> to <fnord>!!!

AND JUST WHAT IS FNORD?

Sorry, you're not cleared for that.



PRESS THE BUTTON
MARKED "HELP"

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There are literally thousands of books and other sources bearing in some way on the subject of conspiracies and conspiracy theory. Here are a few which would be most useful and accessible to the Illuminated GM.

Non-Fiction Conspiracy Theory

Architects of Fear, by George Johnson. A study of various people who propagate conspiracy theories in the U.S.

Behold a Pale Horse, by William Cooper. Another classic example of how conspiracy theorists think.

The Capitalist Conspiracy, by G. Edward Griffin. American Media, Thousand Oaks, 1971.

The Illuminoids, by Neal Wilgus. A treatment of conspiracy theorists, from the outside looking in.

The Power Game, by Hedrick Smith.

The Red Web, by Blair Coan. Western Islands, Boston, 1925.

Tragedy and Hope, by Carrol Quigley. The Macmillan Company, London, 1966.

Trilateralism — The Trilateral Commission and Elite Planning for World Management, edited by Holly Sklar. In hardcore Republican eyes, this has always been a conspiracy.

The Unseen Hand: An Introduction to the Conspiratorial View of History, by A. Ralph Epperson. Publius Press, Tucson, 1985. Links the "Red Threat" with income tax and the Beatles.

The Warmongers, by Howard S. Katz. Books in Focus, Inc., New York, 1979.

The West in Crisis, by James P. Warburg. Doubleday, New York, 1959.

World Revolution, by Nesta Webster. Constable and Co. Ltd., London, 1921. Well worth the trouble to obtain . . . and then to wade through. Highly bigoted, and will be offensive to some, but epitomizes the conspiratorial mentality.

Secret Societies

The Dictionary of Secret and Other Societies, by Arthur Preuss. Includes modern organizations such as Odd Fellows, Rotarians, Job's Daughters, Demolay, etc. — all great organizations for Illuminated groups to incorporate into their power structures.

An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, by Albert Mackey. The Masonic History Company, Chicago, 1925. And *The Teachings of Freemasonry*, by "Essex Master" Cecil Palmer, London, 1928. Both somewhat heavy going, but provide a great sense of the depth of ritual and tradition that would accompany any historical secret society.

Handbook of Secret Organizations, by William Joseph Whalen.

A History of Secret Societies, by "Arkon Daraul." Discusses many Illuminated, pseudo-Illuminated, and totally unconnected groups.

The History of the Knights Templars, by C.G. Addison. London, 1842. Interesting background on one of the most fascinating organizations in history.

The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail, by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh & Henry Lincoln. Jonathan Cape Ltd., London, 1982. Published in the U.S. by Dell (1983) as *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*. A fascinating book linking the *Prieure de Sion*, the Rosicrucians and the Knights Templar in a conspiracy dating from the life of Christ to the present day. Somewhat doubtful scholarship, but nonetheless compelling. This is a must-read for GMs interested in using historical Illuminati groups.

The Holy Place, by Henry Lincoln.

Mythology of Secret Societies, by John Morris Roberts.

The Occult Conspiracy: Secret Societies — Their influence and power in world history, by Michael Howard. A fine example of conspiracy theorizing.

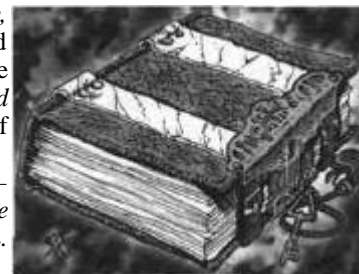
Principia Discordia, by Malaclypse the Younger. The "handbook" of Discordianism.

The Real History of the Rosicrucians, by Arthur Edward Waite. Steinerbooks, New York, 1977. Whether or not it's "real," this history does provide plenty of useful, "gameable" background.

Secret Societies, by Norman MacKenzie.

The Temple and the Lodge, by Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh (two of the authors of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*). A history of Freemasonry.

Warlords of Crime — Chinese Secret Societies, The New Mafia, by Gerald L. Posner.



General Weirdness

Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science, by Martin Gardner. Discussion and debunking of various pseudo-sciences. In an Illuminated world, of course, some of these would be real, while others would be tools of Conspiracy schemers.

High Weirdness by Mail, by Ivan Stang. Mail-order resource with addresses for hundreds of crackpot scientists, strange cults and religions, hate groups and other True Believers.

Lo! and *The Book of the Damned*, by Charles Fort. Discussions of unexplained phenomena, from disappearances of famous people



to rains of frogs. Fort's speculations (including the famous "I think we're property") weren't always serious, but nobody could ever tell when he was joking and when he was in dead earnest.

Loompanics Unlimited. Specialty publishers specializing in those books that are, for whatever reason, "untouchable" by mainstream publishers. Catalog \$3 from Loompanics, PO Box 1197, Port Townsend, WA 98368.

Fiction

The Book of the SubGenius, by various worthies of the Church of the SubGenius, writing as J.R. "Bob" Dobbs. A perverted, disturbing and hilarious speed-rap bashing conspiracy theories, the New Age, quick-fix religion, and anything else that gets in the way or isn't bolted down. Possibly contains more truth than any of the non-fiction books listed above (but then maybe not).

The Chancellor Manuscript, *The Icarus Agenda*, *The Matarese Circle*, *The Osterman Weekend*, *The Parsifal Mosaic*, and virtually anything else written by Robert Ludlum. Exercises in rampant paranoia. Trust nobody, always watch over your shoulder, and eat the books after reading them.

The Crying of Lot 49, by Thomas Pynchon.

Flow My Tears, *The Policeman Said*, by Philip K. Dick. A media figure wakes one morning to find that no one knows who he is. Prime paranoia.

Foucault's Pendulum, by Umberto Eco. Illumination at its deepest, most claustrophobic, and most intense. Worth reading for its treatment of the Templars, if nothing else.

The Godfather, by Mario Puzo. A look inside the Mafia, a very real conspiratorial organization.

The Great and Secret Show, by Clive Barker. Illuminati meets horror.

The Historical Illuminatus Chronicles, by Robert Anton Wilson. A series of "prequels" to the *Illuminatus!* trilogy.

The Illuminatus! Trilogy, by Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson. The best-known fictional treatment of matters Illuminated.

In the Country of the Blind, by Michael Flynn. A novel about conspiratorial groups.

Mindkiller, by Spider Robinson. No Illuminati here, but a near-future conspiracy with a monopoly on mind control.

The Manchurian Candidate, by Richard Condon. The first, and arguably the best, mind control novel. Also a good movie with Frank Sinatra.

The Odessa File, by Frederick Forsyth. A reporter infiltrates a secret society of ex-Nazis.

The Puppet Masters, by Robert A. Heinlein. Alien mind-controlling parasites are taking over the world, and only an elite intelligence force stands in the way.

The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag, by Robert A. Heinlein. Mind control, ancient horrors, and the creator of the universe, all in one short story.

Valis, *The Divine Invasion*, and *Radio Free Albemuth*, by Philip K. Dick. The trilogy invokes conspiracy theories and extraterrestrial intervention.

Film and TV

The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai (Across the Eighth Dimension). A cult classic featuring an alien conspiracy.

Capricorn One. A faked space mission gets out of hand.

The China Syndrome. Dark goings-on at a nuclear power plant.

The Cassandra Crossing. The authorities try to eliminate the danger of a major plague when a fugitive is infected by a virulent infectious agent.

The Formula. Industrial paranoia about a new fuel that the oil industry wants to suppress.

The Godfather (I, II and III). Criminal conspiracy at a high level.

JFK. Oliver Stone's polemic against the Warren Commission report, and a treatment of perhaps the most widely-known conspiracy theory.

North by Northwest. An innocent is mistaken for an espionage agent.

The Prisoner. Who is Number One? Which side runs the Village? Or is the question meaningless? Prime paranoia.

Silkwood. More unpleasantness in the nuclear industry.

The Terminator and *Terminator II: Judgment Day*. An assassin machine from the future goes hunting in 1980s Los Angeles (twice). Watch the psychiatrist who labels anything he can't accept as "delusional."

They Live! Paranoia, a world-girdling conspiracy, and aliens. What more could anyone ask for?

Total Recall. The epitome of mess-with-your-mind paranoia.

Magazines

boING-boING. "Brain Candy for Happy Mutants!" Interviews and articles on high-tech, weirdness, high-tech weirdness, and conspiracies, among many other things. 4 issues for \$14 from PO Box 18432, Boulder, CO 80308.

Factsheet Five. This long-running fanzine attempts to review every book, zine or other publication of interest to the fringe and the cutting edge, no matter how outrageous or esoteric. Available only by subscription: \$20/year (6 issues) from Factsheet Five, PO Box 8615, Prairie Village, KS 66208.

Mondo 2000. Sometimes cyberpunk, sometimes cyberprep: high-tech, post-tech, style and attitude. If the real techno-Illuminati aren't writing this, they're reading it.

Grocery-store tabloids, one and all, are excellent sources of campaign ideas. All fiction, of course. Of course.

Games

The Call of Cthulhu, by the Chaosium. Based on the writings of H.P. Lovecraft, this game creates webs of conspiracy for the PCs to unravel — usually with some foul, inhuman mystery at the heart.

Illuminati, the original card game, by Steve Jackson Games. You control an Illuminated group, taking over other organizations in a quest for world power. Ultimate backstabbing.

Illuminati: New World Order, by Steve Jackson Games. A collectible version of the classic original, with several new features and over 400 different cards! The *Assassins* expansion set added 125 new cards, including the Society of Assassins. Future supplements are planned - the conspiracy is still going strong . . .

Illuminati Play-By-Mail Game, from Flying Buffalo Incorporated. Based on the card game, but with many more groups and more players per game.

Paranoia, by West End Games. Trust the Computer. The Computer is Your Friend. Fear the Secret Societies and the Commie Mutant Traitors. A great example of a "silly" pseudo-Illuminated campaign.

GURPS The Prisoner, by Steve Jackson Games. Authorized game version of the British TV show. You are Number 6. Or are you?



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