

PARANOIA™

Flashbacks II

Great missions for first- and second-edition *PARANOIA*, updated for a new generation of prospective traitors!

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THE COMPUTER

Still hanging in there after 20+ years...

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The original publisher of *PARANOIA*, West End Games, presented these missions in 1986-89 as part of the first and second editions' legendary support line. These fine works, together with those reprinted in *PARANOIA Flashbacks*, still stand as some of (if not *most* of) the funniest writing ever published in the roleplaying field.

This edition lightly updates these missions for the new Mongoose *PARANOIA* rules.

Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET WARNING:

Knowledge or possession of this information by any citizen
of Security Clearance VIOLET or lower is treason. What kind of treason?
Hey, you might as well write your will, buddy—that kind of treason.

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THE COMPUTER

The prince of darkness

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Wizards? Lizardmen? A dungeon? In *PARANOIA*?

Sure. Not only can your players get blown up, back-stabbed, betrayed, hosed, incinerated, crushed and repeatedly executed, but in this mission they can also get turned into a collie, devoured by a dragon, munched by a tiger, chopped in half by a gargoyle, soul-sucked by a spectre, drowned, then ripped apart by killer penguins.

And Gamemaster, you get to play wizards and use any magic you want, and your players can't complain, 'cause there ain't no rules, and you get to play a lying, whining, toadying lizardman they'd love to strangle, but they can't, 'cause they need him, and you've got a whole dungeon full of personality-disordered monsters to pester them with, not to mention the standard Alpha Complex wackos and Our Friend The Computer, and there are lots of opportunities to make loud squawls in your players' ears and...

Ahem. Perhaps a more formal and mature-sounding pitch is in order.

Long ago, in a galaxy far, far away, my idea of a good time was finding six cloud giants jammed into a 10 x 10 room. I wasn't particularly interested in how those giants came to be jammed into the room. I just wanted to whack on the giants, or taunt them, or get them into joining my party so we could go look around for another 10 x 10 room jammed with 15 red dragons or something.

Those were the Good Old Days.

PARANOIA is a reincarnation of the Good Old Days.

PARANOIA has lots of action and mayhem, lots of bizarre and implausible oddities, lots of unconventional problems requiring unconventional solutions, ample opportunities for improvisation and humor, and a freewheeling and irresponsible attitude toward rules. We Famous Game Designers trace the game's humble beginnings back to stupid, cheerful dungeon crawls where we gathered loot and vorpal swords as we tumbled into pit traps, swapped riddles with sphinxes and hewed the heads from many an orc. It is with a deep nostalgia and heart-felt pride that we return to plunder the rich resources of our primitive origins and transform them into a dream **PARANOIA** mission.

Evil wizards. Loathsome servitors. Torchlit subterranean corridors. Fireballs. Wandering Monster Tables. And Our Heroes, caught between The Computer and the Forces of the Unknown.

Say, has anybody seen my Horn of Valhalla?



Introduction

Treasonous Commie Mutants from Dimension X

A lowly RED-Clearance flunky discovers an experimental device that allows interdimensional travel. The device is assembled and turned on. It works. Part of the DND Sector Computer Subsystem disappears. In its place appear three wizened but proficient wizards and their craven but sniveling lizardman apprentice. The wizards are disgruntled by their peremptory summons from Dimension X. They want to go home. Now.

Correctly surmising the experimental device is the agency of their transport, the sorcerers determine to find folk who know how it works, hoping to enlist their aid in returning to Dimension X. The RED-Clearance flunky correctly surmises he is in a Lot of Hot Water and makes himself scarce.

The sudden disappearance of part of the DND Sector Computer Subsystem causes quite a stir. The PCs investigate.

Meanwhile, the wizards and apprentice question the citizens of Alpha Complex. 'Pardon me. Do you know the way to the nearest interdimensional portal or 15th level magic-user?' The citizens are less than cooperative.

The survivors rally to The Computer to rid the complex of these dangerous mutants.

After several unsuccessful attempts to destroy the wizards, The Computer begins to realize the potential value of sorcerous technology. The Computer then issues instructions to capture the wizards and their marvelous device, the Transdimensional Collapsatron, intact.

Guess who gets assigned this interesting job?

No big deal. If a pair of scruffy hobbits can deliver a ring to the Crack of Doom in defiance of the most awesome heavies in Middle-earth, then this should be a snap.

Karly-I-AKN-6

Deep in the labyrinthine tunnels beneath ICE Sector R&D, in caverns measureless to man, lies the pleasure dome of Karly-I-AKN-6. Karly-I vanished after completing his life's work—a marvelous maximedia arcade for his patron, a nameless and unimaginably powerful High Programmer. The pleasure dome has been deserted since Karly-I's untimely disappearance.

One fine day an insignificant RED flunky was dispatched to retrieve a file from the pleasure dome. While looking for

the file, the flunky spotted a box marked 'Transdimensional Collapsatron: Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET. Real important and Dangerous Artifact. Don't Mess With It.' The flunky, a Computer Phreak secret society member, couldn't resist.

Hastily scrawling 'Experimental File Folder: Ref. 44P.Ass.LOP' to match the designation on the courier clearance voucher, the flunky snatched up the Transdimensional Collapsatron. He didn't notice another box, 'Transdimensional Collapsatron Mark 2' hidden elsewhere in the lab.

He bore his box straightaway to a safe room (where The Computer's monitors had been disabled some days before to hide a Phreak meeting) below DND Sector Computer Subsystems. There he tried to figure out how to operate the TC.

The Transdimensional Collapsatron

When the flunky opened the box, he found something that resembled a computer monitor, only with six screens, one on each side of the cubic object, and a thick, incomprehensible, hand-scrawled operations manual.

A small metal stand supported the multi-screened cube, setting it several inches off



the floor. A spikey array of thick wires folded at dozens of elbows into a compact mass at the foot of the object. A short, armored power cable was connected to the base of the stand. The plug at the end of the cable was missing, the wire and armor sheared through like a laser through Vattjelly.

Not to be deterred, the RED flunky requisitioned a techbot from Tech Services—ostensibly to service a faulty door buzzer—and gave the manual to the techbot with orders to assemble and test the device.

The flunky, not altogether a fool, decided to take a long walk while the techbot messed with the mysterious device. Lucky flunky.

The techbot struggled dutifully with the unfamiliar device and the obscure manual. After spending several hours trying to set the antennae-like wires exactly as displayed in the diagrams, the techbot decided it had done the best it could. It repaired the truncated power cable, dragged the device over near a power outlet and plugged it in.

Zooooop!

What's really going on here?

When supplied with power, the Transdimensional Collapsatron (TC) creates a spherical field around itself (in pseudo-technical jargon, an extra-spatiotemporal interface), opening a gateway between dimensions. Anything inside the sphere (with the exception of the Collapsatron itself) is dumped into another space-time continuum, and an equal amount of matter from the other continuum is dumped into this one. The process is quite safe, unless the portal opens in someplace like vacuum. But it has one small design flaw.

Across the surface of the interface a brief surge of matter reduction results in temperature and gravitational fluxes similar to those generally found only at the core of a neutron star.

Imagine the techbot's surprise.

On the bright side, the temperature and gravitational fluxes immediately sheared the TC's plug, turning off the machine before intense gravity had a chance to suck most of Alpha Complex into a small, incredibly dense wedge of neutronium. However, the field didn't deactivate until after it had performed its interdimensional switcheroo...

The matter of primary interest sent to the other continuum was a substantial volume of the computer subsystem of DND Sector.

The matter of primary interest sent to this continuum is in the nature of three very

interesting gentlemen and one sorta interesting gentlething.

Wizards. And their lizardman flunky. And their (dare we whisper it in an ostensibly science-fictional universe) magical staves.

Yup. It was bound to happen sooner or later. Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the dungeon...

Meanwhile, back at the ranch ...

Cut to the computer subsystem monitoring board in the facility directly above the safe room. Suddenly the computer monitors all go blank, and the peripherals stop clattering, whirring, chugging and bleeping. A large spherical hole appears in the center of the room, where once stood a couple of tons of computer memory banks. Computer techs stare in disbelief. The never-silent room is now silent.

Is The Computer dead?

Nope, but a sizable chunk of it is down for the count. DND Sector Subsystem has been breached. Other subsystems jump in to try to keep things from coming apart at the seams. The PCs are called in to Save The Day.

Three mopeed wizards

Think about the poor wizards stranded in a strange universe, wandering around with a mysterious device they suspect has summoned them to this inhospitable place, hoping to find someone to explain how the device works and send them back. They do not speak the language of this world, nor do they understand the peculiar nature of magical science here. When they try to solicit help from the inhabitants, they receive either blank stares or concentrated weapons fire. From every wall a calm, soothing, incredibly sinister voice issues, commanding death and destruction on a scale unheard of except in the most unbelievable fantasy trash the wizards like to read on long boat rides.

Just what kind of horrible world have they been sucked into?

The innocents abroad

The wizards, **Skibex**, **Phemud** and **Chodor**, are motivated by one primary objective—to go home. To go home, they need to learn how to use the TC device. They experiment on their own with the device, but its principles are so obscure they quickly recognize their need for

an expert's aid. They blow up a lot of Alpha Complex while looking for one.

Of course, these are intelligent, questioning scientists, naturally curious about their environment, not immune to the thrill of adventure and conflict and always with a keen eye out for potential sources of sorcerous power and knowledge. So, of course, while looking for a way home they do a bit of innocent experimentation on the citizens and objects of Alpha Complex—just to see how they work.

Here are some guidelines governing the wizards' actions in Alpha Complex. (References to magical powers and their use are explained on page 5.)

1. Initially, when their spellcasting powers are not dangerously low, they use Telepathy, Deep Probe and Tongues (see below for information on powers) to communicate with cooperative natives.

2. They soon find out there is no such thing as a cooperative native in Alpha Complex. After a brief introduction to the lethal firepower carried by *uncooperative* natives, they use Protection and Teleport powers to evade. After they pop out of trouble, they take the first opportunity to recharge their magical staves (about which, more later).

3. If the natives are not too intimidating, they use a little magical muscle to test the natives' mettle and abilities. (And, well, just for fun, too.)

4. If the wizards are engaged in important, purposeful activities, like interrogating an uncooperative native, they use magical powers to ensure privacy and non-interference.

5. When dramatic technological devices like flashlights, lasers, plasma guns, bots or butane lighters are displayed, or when natives use mutant powers, the wizards are as curious as is consistent with their personal safety. (Assume a medieval mindset—what would fascinate a Dark Ages scholar?)

6. Whenever someone appears to have considerable 'magical' powers (technological or mutant powers may be interpreted as magical), or whenever a citizen informant suggests an expert who might understand the TC device, the wizards tenaciously interrogate the resource person and convince him to help them, alternating threats and promises of powerful magical secrets as inducements to enthusiastic cooperation.

Randy the Wonder Lizard

Pathological liar, coward, squealer, toad-eater extraordinaire, **Randy** is one of the sleaziest and most charming NPCs we've ever stuck in

a mission. Randy will provide you with some Real Fine roleplaying opportunities.

Your players will hate him, of course.

KEEP RANDY ALIVE AT ALL COSTS! If the PCs want to kill him, have The Computer intervene on Randy's behalf. If they kill him anyway, have R&D techs scrape up his remains and clone another one complete, through RNA transfer, with all of Randy's memories. Then have The Computer promote Randy to INDIGO Clearance and assigned to the PCs' task force.

Magic in PARANOIA: Eye of newt, spleen of lizard and exposure to heavy radiation

If you were looking for some neat new roleplaying magic system from us Famous Game Designers, guess again. Our particular geniuses are dedicated to perverting existing bad ideas wherever possible rather than working real hard to come up with all-new bad ideas. *Orcbusters*, you'll be glad to know, is no exception.

So. In *Orcbusters*, the wizards' 'magical' powers work just like **PARANOIA** mutations.

You see? In one fell swoop—a magic system that's consistent, easy to understand and involves no work on our part whatsoever.

Is that genius or what?

How it works

Each wizard has a Power attribute, just like Alpha Complex citizens, except wizards have heftier ratings. In addition, wizards have a special magical reservoir that stores Power—their magical staves. Each staff stores 100 Power points the wizards can draw upon to cast spells. (A hundred points sounds like a lot, but if these guys have to contend with tankbots, they'll wish they had heaps more.) The wizards always use their staves' power before tapping their personal power.

The really neat part is how the wizards recharge their magical staves. A relatively boring way is to feed the staves from their own personal Power attribute; they regenerate power at twice the rate of Alpha Complex citizens (2 points per hour of sleep).

However, as you know if you've ever played *Popular Fantasy Roleplaying Game*™, what with wandering monsters and random gods popping in at all hours of the night to kill you, it can be difficult to get a decent eight hours' sleep. Skibex, Chodor and Phemud have a nifty

way to overcome this: They drain Power points from innocent bystanders.

And here in Alpha Complex, until someone shows himself capable of Shaping the Force, he is assumed to be cattle, and thereby an appropriate subject for power draining.

A wizard can drain a citizen's entire Power attribute into his staff by touching the aforementioned individual with the aforementioned object and concentrating briefly. The citizen promptly passes out for a few rounds, and experiences a terrible dream of emptiness and powerlessness ('I'M FALLING FOREVER INTO EMPTINESS AND POWERLESSNESS! AAAIIIEEEE!'). When he comes to, he immediately makes an Insanity roll.

The wizards' staff-recharging activity leaves a trail of terrified, schized-out clones in their wake.

Note: If someone shows some talent for Shaping the Force (i.e., uses a mutant power), he automatically gets a little respect from the wizards. A very little. For example, Randy, the lizardman apprentice and *stop-and-fetch-it*, has some talent with *Shaping the Force*. Therefore he gets the signal honor of being allowed to lug the wizards' gear. As an added bonus he gets to walk point and check doors for boobytraps. Lucky Randy.

Magical powers

Here is a list of the magical abilities/mutant powers each wizard has. The Power expenditure necessary for the use of the power is listed in parentheses after the title. (The Power expenditure may *not* be the same as described in the **PARANOIA** rulebook; this is the *special* cost for out-of-town wizards from other universes.)

The first group is a list of mutant powers already described in the main rulebook. Review the text for details on these powers; the notes here are simply for quick reference.

The second group is a list of mutant powers peculiar to the universe of Skibex, Phemud and Chodor. These are *special* mutant powers. Can you add these mutant powers to your own **PARANOIA** campaign? Well—every Gamemaster is right, of course, but powers like these make for a slippery slope. After you let in these powers, orcs are just around the corner, and there goes the neighborhood ...

Concentration, duration, range and all that stuff

In accordance with proper fantasy usage, wizards have to concentrate when they use a power—the more difficult and powerful the spell, the more critical the concentration. Poor concentration, haste or distraction during spellcasting may result in spell failure.

Use the following guidelines to govern concentration and spell failure. Make all Power checks by rolling 1d20 against personal power; staff power doesn't count.

- ☉ **No distractions, plenty of time:** extremely easy (add a nice positive modifier to the Power check).
- ☉ **Minor distractions and/or some time pressure** (60 seconds or more): fairly easy (unmodified check).
- ☉ **Distracted and/or hurried** (30-60 seconds): slight negative modifier.
- ☉ **Physically jostled or harmed and/or panicked** (10-30 seconds): make the check pretty hard.
- ☉ **Wounded and/or no preparation** (one round): don't let this succeed unless it suits your storyline.

When a spell fails, the Power points are expended, but the mutant power/spell doesn't work. (What 'doesn't work' means is up to you; see 'Staging spells' below for suggestions.)

Unless otherwise specified, the effects of mutant powers/spells last for 1-5 minutes, according to fluctuations in the Force—and the GM's dramatic needs.

Range and area/volume of effect vary according to spell. If not specified, assume that range is line of sight with rapid decrease in power and reliability over distance as moderated by a perverse GM. Area/volume is 5m radius unless otherwise specified.

Magical components

There ain't none. Well, that's not absolutely true; for long, involved spells, such as demon-raising, it may be necessary to draw a pentagram in crushed diamond or something, but, in general, wizards use spider legs, powdered dragon's milk, rabbits' feet and all the other junk to impress the rubes. In this mission they are too busy trying to stay alive to have much time for special effects.



Staging spells

Some tips for effective presentation of mutant powers/spells:

☛ Make your descriptions of spell effects colorful and imaginative.

In most fantasy roleplaying magic rules the visual (and aural and tactile and olfactory) aspects are neglected. For example, a fireball—‘A dazzling glow like burning magnesium forms at the tip of the staff, blindingly intense. Half an instant later the glow expands like a flower and the wave-front of heat blasts your face—your jumpsuit bursts into flame, malfunction alarms sound on various pieces of equipment and there is a dull thud behind you as an HE round explodes in the chamber of Jerry-R-DNN’s cone rifle.’

☛ Play the spellcasting concentration element to the hilt.

Initially the wizards have plenty of time to concentrate, making gestures and mumbling hocus-pocus. When the PCs start rushing them, the wizards squint, tongue protruding a little bit, stammering and jittering about, fumbling with their staves and correcting their postures with panicky twitches.

☛ When a wizard fails a Power check

and klutzes a spell, either nothing happens (clean, simple, elegant—and boring) or something happens, just not what was intended. The spell can be more-or-less correct (like a slightly smaller fireball, or Tongues spell with a speech impediment), or completely off-the-beam (instead of a fireball, a hail of jellyfish). One way to inspire inadvertent variation in spell effect is to make an Arbitrary Justice roll each time a spell is klutzed. A high roll means a catastrophic and undesirable result. A really low roll means a fortunate variation; sometimes an artist simply outdoes himself.

Wizard mutant powers

Regeneration (5-10 Power points): The wizards seem to recover miraculously from injuries between encounters.

Charm (1 point per minute): This makes citizens docile and cooperative when the staves need recharging, or when the wizards want information.

Telepathy (1 point per minute plus 1 point per new subject): Basic scanning of citizens and other potential informants.

Mental Block (1 point per minute): If a wizard senses a mental power being used on him, he instantly puts up the Block. He also becomes curious about the citizen who used the power.

Telekinesis (1 point per minute for 100 grams; more to move heavier weights): Used to steal things, disarm hostile natives and create general confusion.

Electroshock (1d20/2 points): The equivalent of a stungun; useful for taking captives to be questioned later at leisure.

Teleport (1d20 and Power check, minimum): Standard getaway drill.

Telepathy (1 point per minute of projection): Cheap, reliable one-way communication.

Deep Probe (3 points per minute of probe): Expensive, slow, but reliable method of extracting information from an unwilling informant.

Wizard special powers

Empathic Healing (1d20/2 points): Transfers pain effects of any disease or injury from one victim to another for five minutes. Both victims must be within 5m radius. Does not alter physical condition of either victim, but transfers stun and incapacitation penalties from one individual to another.

Wizards (1 point per minute): This is to keep one another in fighting condition even though wounded; it buys time to withdraw and use Regeneration to properly heal an injury.

Tongues (1d20): Permits wizards to speak and comprehend a foreign language. Also permits reading foreign language through eyes of native speaker.

Animate Dead (1d20): Essentially a lesser golem spell, this causes a corpse to magically animate and follow the user’s directions for the duration of the spell. The corpse is immune to all combat results less severe than Maimed.

Protection Shield (1d20): Bread-and-butter spell. Provides complete protection from effects of material, energy or magical attacks from outside 2m radius of spell. No effect on melee attacks. Melee attack is defined as any attack where attacker and victim are in direct and constant contact with the instrument of attacking—that is, if the attacker is whacking or poking the defender with something he is holding in his hand. (By this definition, a grenade is a melee weapon—if the attacker is willing to hold onto it while he strikes the victim.)

The Shield may fail depending on the intensity of an attack (GM judgement). For example, an unlucky wizard’s Protection Shield may buckle under one laser’s fire, but the chances rise if a plasma generator is aimed at it.

Fireball (1d20): Effects identical to those of a hand flamer.

Darkness (1d20): Bread-and-butter spell—all-purpose defense confuse-the-enemy operation. 5m radius. Wizards can see; no one else can. Infrared or other special darkness vision gear is completely ineffective.

Transform Other (1d20): The wizard can change his victim into any living creature of approximately the same size (plus or minus 100% mass). Expensive, but extremely impressive. For the duration of the spell, victim actually becomes the creature in body and mind. The new creature isn’t under the wizard’s control, but is justifiably terrified of him. Victim must make an Insanity roll after resuming original shape.

Other special powers

In addition to the mutant powers listed above, the wizards have any magical abilities you want them to have. G’wan. Have some fun.

If you want to play fair and limit yourself to the mutant powers we thought up... well, every GM is right. We suppose in other RPGs that would be considered admirable restraint.

But it’s not **PARANOIA**.

Don’t get fussy about game mechanics. So what if a given spell never appears to work the same way twice? The PCs are *supposed* to be baffled and intimidated by the mysterious forces they observe. And who cares if the players start whining about logic and physics and laws and rules and stuff? This is *magic*—not the hard-science-fictional technology (snort!) of the basic **PARANOIA** game.

Abracadabra.

