

# PARANOIA™

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### THE COMPUTER

Looking after your best interests

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## Security Clearance *ULTRAVIOLET* WARNING:

Knowledge or possession of this information by any citizen  
of Security Clearance *VIOLET* or lower is treason punishable by a  
long spell of Armed Forces latrine scrubot maintenance duty.

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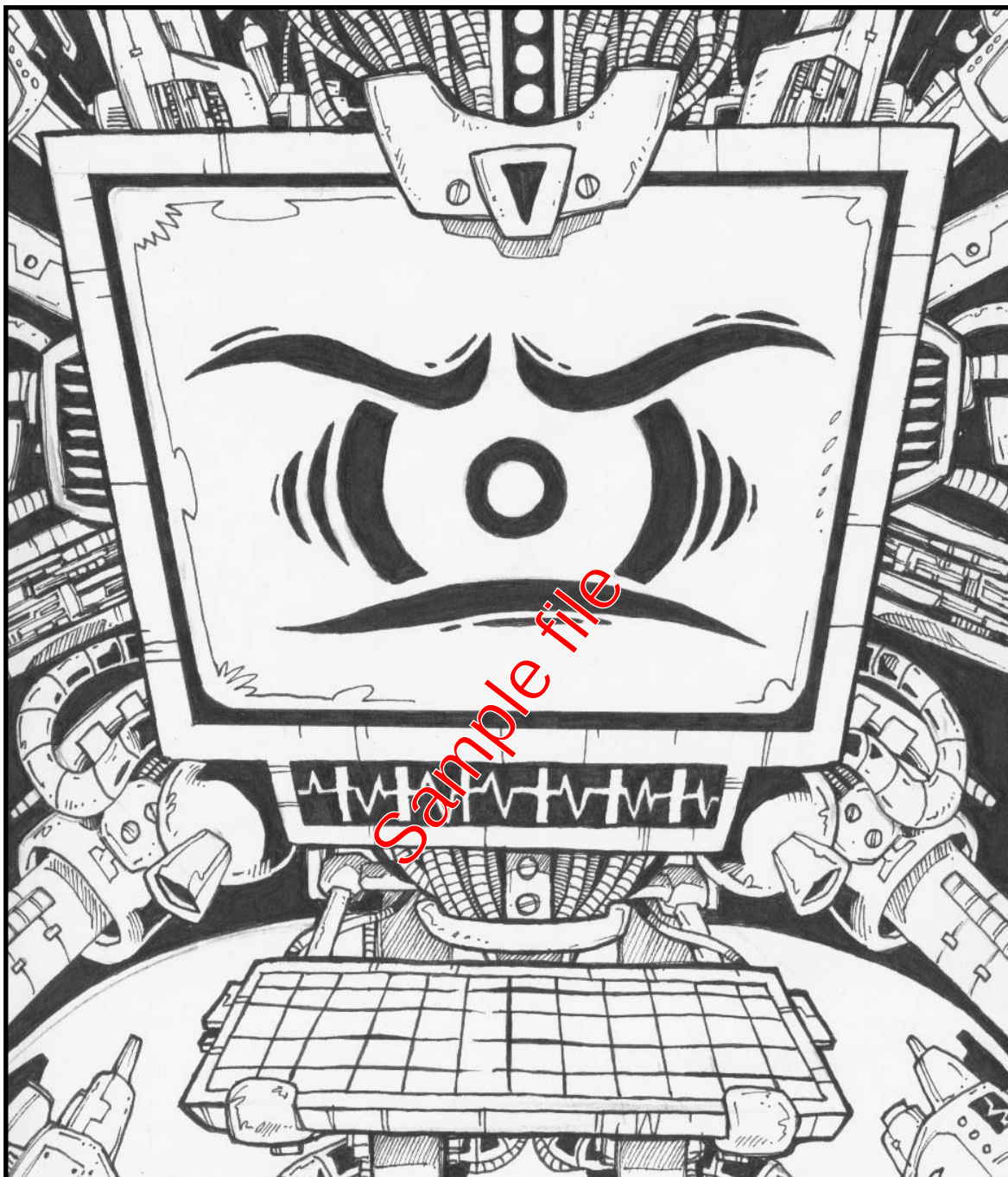
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# TROUBLESHOOTERS



**STAY ALERT!**

**TRUST NO-ONE!**

**KEEP YOUR LASER HANDY!**

WELCOME, CITIZEN, TO ALPHA COMPLEX. WELCOME  
TO YEAR 214 OF THE COMPUTER.

## 1. Introduction

### Now Commencing **PARANOIA...**

### **SECURITY CLEARANCE INFRARED— CLEARED FOR ALL CITIZENS**

May I be of assistance?

Sure. Why don't you tell me how this roleplaying game works?

I'm sorry, citizen. That information is not available at this time.

Huh? Most games are really eager to teach you the rules.

Not **PARANOIA**. In **PARANOIA** you don't know the rules. You don't know who your enemies are. You don't know how your equipment works. You're never sure why you're doing anything. One thing you do know: Everyone is out to get you.

Ignorance and fear; fear and ignorance. These are your watchwords.

Uhh... The back cover says something about a computer.

In **PARANOIA** you play a Troubleshooter in service to The Computer. Trust The Computer! The Computer is your friend! You are The Computer's trusted agent and protector of Alpha Complex, The Computer's underground city of the far future.

Why am I a Troubleshooter?

You turned in a friend for treason. The Computer had him executed for betraying Alpha Complex. The Computer rewarded you for your loyalty.

Now you root out all traitors and apprehend or execute them. You uncover corruption among The Computer's servants and turn them into Internal Security. You find trouble and you shoot it.

What's a 'traitor'?

A traitor is a malevolent human citizen who has betrayed his friend The Computer and seeks to destroy The Computer, Alpha Complex, humanity and life as we know it. You must unmask and destroy all traitors. Watch out! Traitors are everywhere!

Mutants are traitors. These genetic freaks have uncontrollable abilities they selfishly use for their own advancement, rather than to serve Alpha Complex. You must subdue or eliminate them.

Members of secret societies are traitors. In organizations unsanctioned by The Computer they conspire irresponsibly to undermine the good order of Alpha Complex. You must destroy them.

By the way... you are a mutant and a member of a secret society. You are a traitor.

Wait, I'm a traitor?

That is correct. Your fellow Troubleshooters would be eager to unmask you as a traitor and execute you. You work with many Troubleshooters. They all carry powerful weapons.

Let me get this straight. My job is to hunt and kill traitors. I work with other people

who have the same orders. They all want to kill me?

Not quite. They all want to kill traitors. They don't know you're a Commie mutant traitor. Yet.

If they find out?

They'll apprehend or kill you, as any right-thinking citizen would. Of course, if you convict them of treason first, The Computer will have them executed and you may survive. Note, though, false accusations of treason are themselves treason.

So I want to prove they're traitors before they can prove I'm a traitor. If I don't, I die?

Precisely. Dead traitors cannot testify to their own innocence or to your guilt. It is convenient to be the last Troubleshooter on your team left alive.

The good news is, Troubleshooters routinely get shot, stabbed, incinerated, mangled, poisoned, blown to bits and occasionally stapled, so you have many opportunities to ensure your teammates meet their just end.

Stay alert! Trust no one! Keep your laser handy!

...Are you sure this will be fun?

Certainly, citizen! Fun is mandatory. The Computer says so and The Computer is your friend. Do you doubt The Computer? Doubting The Computer is treason.

Uh! No, certainly not. If The Computer says fun is mandatory, then this certainly will be fun. Only a Commie mutant traitor could believe otherwise.



# TROUBLESHOOTERS



**'This will be fun. Failure to have fun will result in termination.'**

**Excellent! You're getting the idea. As a sign of its trust, The Computer promotes you to Security Clearance RED. Welcome to PARANOIA.**

## Attention, player!

Obtain paper and a pencil. Obtain one 20-sided polyhedral die, available in hobby stores. Obtain three to six other players, one of whom will be the Gamemaster (GM) who runs the game.

Whether or not you are familiar with the concept of roleplaying games, read the non-example of play later in this introduction. If you are already familiar with other roleplaying games, also read the boxed text titled 'What You Must Forget.'

Now you may begin to play **PARANOIA**. True, you know nothing about the game yet. This is acceptable and even desirable for **PARANOIA**.

If you insist, you may read all of the Player section, which begins on page

4 and ends on page 40. It teaches a bit about the **PARANOIA** setting, how to create your Troubleshooter character and nothing at all of any importance about the rules of the game. The Player section is classified Security Clearance **RED**. You are now a Troubleshooter with Clearance **RED**, so you may read this section without fear of execution.

The rest of this book – the Gamemaster section, Sourcebook and Mission – is classified Clearance **ULTRAVIOLET**. This is above your Clearance, so you are not permitted to read it. Only the Gamemaster, the person who runs the game, may read it. If you read any Gamemaster material, or display any knowledge of its contents during play, you are a traitor and subject to summary execution.

Of course, you paid for this nice book and would like to get your money's worth, so naturally you will read it anyway. Do not tell your Gamemaster you did. Pretend you haven't read it. If he asks, look him straight in the eye, cross your heart, spit over your shoulder and promise you have never, ever read the book and you

have no intention of doing so. Of course he will believe you.

By the way – and this is for real – do not read the mission! No, really, don't. A mission is a story that the Gamemaster will inflict on – run for – your characters. If you know all the plot details and surprises in advance, you'll have less fun when you play.

## Attention, Gamemaster!

Oh fortunate one, most trusted of The Computer's servants, you are Clearance **ULTRAVIOLET** and therefore may read this entire book. Read the Player section first so you know what your players know, then read the rest. You do not have to memorise anything; **PARANOIA** is a game of freewheeling improvisation and you can revise, upgrade, ditch or bluff about any rule as you go along. Players cannot argue with you—they are not allowed to show that they know the rules.

The Player section includes rules for creating Troubleshooter characters. The first few times you play, we suggest you give your players pregenerated (ready-made) characters.

The first time you run **PARANOIA**, use the mission provided in this book. This is an unusual game and by using the mission, you'll see how to do things. Later you'll devise your own missions to delight and torment your players.

## Attention, longtime players and Gamemasters!

**Citizen:** Friend Computer!

**The Computer:** At your service!

**Citizen:** Please tell what happened when you Crashed in the Crash Course Manual and how you came back and what happened to Alpha Base.

**The Computer:** Your request is senseless. The Computer has never Crashed. There is no such place as Alpha Base. Any statement to the contrary is a rumour. Rumours are treason.

**Citizen:** But what about the Secret Society Wars and MegaWhoops and Reboot Camp?

# INTRODUCTION

**The Computer:** The **PARANOIA** products that refer to these fictitious events have never existed. They are now un-products. You have experienced bizarre hallucinations.

Be reassured! Due to highly advanced engineering and multiple redundant systems, your friend The Computer cannot Crash. It is impossible. The Computer cannot *fatal exception error*.

[Feedback squeal, followed by a long pause.]

**Citizen:** Um... Friend Computer?

Computer: [Happy xylophone tune.] Welcome to **PARANOIA**. Please press Control-Alt-Delete to log on.

The first edition (1984), second edition (1987) and [redacted due to legal action by a certain megacorporation] edition of **PARANOIA** were, of course, perfect. The Computer says so. This Anniversary Edition is even more perfect. Entirely new character creation and rules systems make the game more like what it really is, while classic rule systems are brought back to tweak your nostalgia glands. To improve efficiency and fun, characters from previous editions are completely incompatible with the new rules. Other (non-fun) games would offer a character

conversion system. For this new edition no conversion is required, because older characters could not possibly have survived this long.

## Non-example of play

Nearly every published roleplaying game (RPG) starts with an explanation of how an RPG works. We Famous Game Designers used to skip reading these, until we realised they tell a lot about the designers' philosophy. Many RPGs describe roleplaying as 'It's "let's pretend," but with rules.' Others call it a deeply emotional collaboration in storytelling. Some offer scholarly and arcane discussions of Gamist, Narrativist and Simulationist RPG philosophy. Some indie games even compare roleplaying to laying down tracks in a hot jazz band.

We like all these descriptions. **PARANOIA** is somewhat like all of them, in a non-jazz-band sort of way, but it's also different. **PARANOIA** is also something of a psychological exercise.

Because of this we will not tell you how to play, unless you are cleared for it. We won't even show you an example of play

for this game. Instead, here is an example from some other game:

**PARANOIA** is set in a high-tech future underground city of lasers, robots, cloned citizens and an insane Computer. This game has no character classes – no warriors, wizards, priests or rogues – no magic and aside from the occasional giant radioactive mutant cockroach, no monsters.

Yet, that said, a good way to dramatise the unique nature of **PARANOIA** is to imagine another RPG's familiar dungeon crawl filtered through the paranoid mindset.

## If Popular Fantasy RPG™ worked like **PARANOIA**

**Gamemaster:** You're in a long dungeon hallway with a dirt floor, stone walls and an arching stone ceiling. There are burning torches in wall sconces every 10 feet. You see one door.

**Warrior player:** What colour is the stone?

**GM:** Sort of orange.

**Rogue player:** Aah! I'm only Clearance **RED**! Get me out of here!

**Priest player:** I'm casting Mass RAISE



'I cast magic missile at the darkness.'



## TROUBLESHOOTERS

Security Clearance to make us all **ORANGE**. [Passes note to the GM: 'I'm also casting Subvert to Communism on the warrior.']

**Wizard player:** I'm using the Gem of Memory to document the priest's spellcasting. I, uh, may want to study his technique later.

**Priest:** Of course, of course. [Looks significantly at the rogue, whom he subverted earlier. The rogue nods and passes a note to the GM. The GM rolls a 20-sided die (1d20).]

**GM:** All right. You're all **ORANGE** for the moment and can pass safely down the hallway. Your orders, you recall, were to investigate the door. [Passes note to warrior: 'You feel a strange, treasonous impulse to overthrow the existing social order and restore power to the people.']

**Warrior** [Gulps]: Come, Comra – fellow heroes, let us break down the door!

**Wizard:** Wait! Did you almost call us 'Comrades'? That's a Commie word!

**Priest:** Of course he didn't. I heard nothing of the sort.

**Rogue:** Nor I. Are you levelling false accusations against our leader? That's treason.

**Wizard:** Don't anybody move! I'm not only levelling accusations, I'm levelling my Wand of Fireballs against all three of these traitors. By the way, I'm recording all of this with the Gem of Memory.

**GM:** When you reach for it, you notice the Gem is missing.

**Rogue:** Uh-oh! You've lost a valuable magical item. That'll mean a heavy fine at the guildhall.

**Wizard:** I'm firing a fireball at all of them!

**GM** [Rolls a 20-sided die]: I'm sorry, it appears your experimental Wand of Fireballs has backfired. In a trice you are immolated in a ball of flame. Fortunately the fire is orange, so at least your charred body hasn't breached its proper Security Clearance. Scratch one wizard. Your next simulacrum has been dispatched from the guildhall and should arrive shortly.

**Wizard:** You bastards are gonna pay.

**GM:** No comments from the currently dead, please. Suddenly the door opens. A huge hobgoblin in leather armour stands there with his broadsword drawn. On his chest you see the mark of a silver hand.

## What you must forget

If you have prior experience with other roleplaying games, this is regrettable but can be overlooked. However, it is mandatory to abandon the following notions, which interfere drastically with the **PARANOIA** experience:

**1. Solidarity among characters or players.** Other (non-fun) RPGs exhort you to do your part in the adventuring party, split the loot equally, avoid internal strife and generally play good little scouts. In **PARANOIA** this trusting behaviour will get you killed six times in six minutes. Trust no one, especially your fellow players.

**2. The quest for weapons and loot.** Other games reward your efforts with treasure, cool new powers and ever more damaging attacks. Most powerful weapons in **PARANOIA** are experimental. You will learn quickly not to trust experimental weaponry. You have a mutant power but it too is hard to control and prone to backfires. The Computer rewards successful missions with credits, which you can spend on a variety of useful or gratuitous possessions – but only if you're cleared to own them.

**3. Shaping a complex personality.** In other games you can craft a highly individual character of emotional depth, which grows and changes over time in fascinating ways. In **PARANOIA** it is unwise to grow attached to your Troubleshooter, whose lifespan is typically measured in days, if not hours. The Computer prizes conformity; interesting or outlandish behaviour is not actually illegal but always suspicious. Instead of plumbing depths of character, experience the game's atmosphere. You'll probably enjoy the game more if you treat your Troubleshooter as a stand-in for your own hopes, schemes and fears.

**4. Comprehensive attributes, skills and combat options.** Many other RPGs have elaborate character creation, movement and combat systems. These games offer a well-designed character a broad range of control in almost any situation. In **PARANOIA** you have no control. The Gamemaster decides all details of movement, combat and the environment. Your character survives entirely at the pleasure of the GM, who shields you from other players so long as you do entertaining things. Entertain or die.

The GM tells you what you see. You say what you want to do. The GM tells you what happens. You don't try to optimise your tactical advantage; instead, you want the best dramatic advantage. The most entertaining character wins; put on a good show and Fate will smile on you. You'll enjoy watching the boring characters die like – well, like Troubleshooters. Won't that be fun? Of course it will. Fun is mandatory.

**Rogue:** I attack him with –

**Warrior:** Wait! I wave my fingers at him from under my chin.

**Priest and rogue:** What?

**GM:** The hobgoblin nods at your recognition signal and lowers his sword. He waves you all inside. Who's going in first?

**Warrior, priest and rogue** [Pointing at each other]: Him!

...And so on. To repeat, none of the traditional fantasy elements in this example resemble anything in Alpha

Complex, the underground city of **PARANOIA**. At this point you know nothing much about Alpha Complex or your place in it.

Keep it that way. You may live longer.