



FLASHBACKS REDUX

PARANOIA™

Sample file

**Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET
WARNING:**

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INTRODUCTION

As we hurtle past **PARANOIA**'s 25th anniversary into an era uneasily sandwiched between the promised techno-utopia of **2010** and the Mayan apocalypse of 2012, the game seems more prescient than ever. As I write, the headlines are full of leaked secrets, conspiracy theories, shadowy secret societies vying against increasingly autocratic regimes, invasive security procedures, economies that wobble like Potemkin villages, corporate malfeasance and alarmingly weird technology. There's a running section on the official **PARANOIA** blog (<http://paranoiarpg.blogspot.com>) called '**PARANOIA in the Real World**', but these days it's almost redundant. We have met the Commie Mutant Traitor, and it is us.

I am, of course, overwhelmingly happy about this. Wait, I mean patriotic. Or austere. Whatever the approved groupthink of today is, I am most sincerely and wholeheartedly *it*.

Anyway, welcome to **Flashbacks Redux**, a marginally updated and reshuffled collection of wonderful **PARANOIA** missions, both classic and recent, covering the full 25-year history of the One True Fun Game. Herein is the work of many - brilliant writers, Famous Game Designers and at least one tired hack - all united by their love of the game. If, at any point, the missions here happen to reflect or (alarmingly) predict the sorry state of the world, we offer sincere apologies.

Come for the hilarity, stay for the trenchant social commentary. At least, that's the idea, when we're not making cheap jokes about airport security.

WHATS IN FLASHBACKS REDUX

Mandatory Mission Pack: The **Mandatory Mission Pack** is freeze-dried Alpha Complex, designed to be sprinkled lightly or baked thoroughly into your own missions. It's fragments of a million potential missions for the harried Gamemaster. More than any of the other projects I worked on for **PARANOIA**, the MMP came closest to capturing the Alpha Complex zeitgeist.

Clones in Space: Remember all the pretentious stuff about zeitgeists and real-world paranoia and how this game was Deeply Meaningful? Forget all that. Erick Wujcik's **Clones in Space** involves jolly aliens and rocket ships. It does, however,

also involve explosive decompression and the ever-popular Explosive Decompression Table, and for this it is absolved of all wrongdoing.

Orcbusters: Characters from A Parallel Universe Unlike A Certain Non-fun Roleplaying Game invade Alpha Complex! Orcs! Wizards! Lizards! Gizzards! Transdimensional Collapsatrons! Proof that there was something in the water back then! This one's by Ken Rolston, long-standing **PARANOIA** line editor during the early days.

My First Treason: If we were interested solely in cashing in on popular fads, we'd be frantically scraping the barnacles of West End Games' ill-fated **PARANOIA/Vampire** crossover, **Creatures of the Nightcycle**, and gluing glitter onto the bloodsuckers so we could call it **Twilightcycle** or something. Credit us with the approved minimum level of dignity, please. **My First Treason** started out as an experiment in screening players over before the game even started, and only turned into a **Harry Potter** parody when the Famous Game Designer's brain exploded.

Yellow Clearance Black Box Blues: When two or three old-school **PARANOIA** players gather together, they inevitably come to speak in hushed tones of the brilliance of John M. Ford's epic. Quite possibly the funniest mission ever written. Certainly one of the top two.

Code 7s: Short ways to kill your Troubleshooters.

Me and My Shadow Mark 4: The other candidate for funniest mission ever, and probably the most popular. Written by Steve Gilbert and Peter Corless, **Me and my Shadow Mark 4** is the iconic **PARANOIA** scenario: screw-jobs, overkill, absurdity, and the classic simplicity of 'something falls off.'

Pre PARANOIA: Jeff's Groves' training exercise for newly recruited Troubleshooters.

Vapours Don't Shoot Back: The first ever full-length **PARANOIA** mission, written by Curtis H. Smith & Geoff Valley. This was one of the key inspirations for the **High Programmers** rulebook, which followed promptly a mere twenty-four years later.

In case the 25th anniversary edition is your first exposure to the **PARANOIA** infection, you'll note some differences in approach and content in these classic missions, many of which were based on the first and second editions of the game.

Ken Rolston, the original **PARANOIA** line editor, often used props and staging to brilliant comic effect. Ken exhorted the GM to (for instance) simulate a faulty public address speaker by talking with a styrofoam cup in his mouth. Fans still talk about this. The current line de-emphasizes props somewhat, partly because we're not as good at it as Ken, but mainly in an effort to expand the range of experiences players associate with the game. It's arguably harder to sustain a tone of fearful anxiety when speaking with a cup wedged in your mouth.

This revised text doesn't update certain details of setting in these older works, even though the new **PARANOIA** edition alters them. For instance:

- The economy wasn't nearly as important in these older missions as it is now. Don't expect to see anyone in a serious cash-flow bind. However, supplies were scarce.
- Earlier editions let PCs have troublesome powers like Precognition. Roll with it.
- The 'service service' idea, which assigns Troubleshooters secondary duties from firms in all the service groups, generalizes from older editions' unfailing 'trip to R&D to field-test valuable experimental equipment'. All the full-length missions here send the Troubleshooters to R&D. If you're new to the game, you'll soon understand why old-time players can't talk about R&D without giggling and shivering.
- The early writers sent the Troubleshooters Outdoors, over and over. In those days, most low-clearance Alpha Complex citizens weren't even aware of the existence of a world beyond the underground city, and mere knowledge of it was treason.
- For that matter, mere knowledge of secret societies or mutations was itself treasonous. So was lots of other stuff.
- PURGE was a comedic society like all the others. The current edition recasts PURGE as ruthless, genuinely scary terrorists.
- This revision couldn't quite/didn't bother to winkle out every single reference to 'clone families'. In previous editions of **PARANOIA** each player character had six identical clones, all decanted at the same time and raised together as individuals. When one clone was on a Troubleshooting mission, the others in his family were working desk jobs or something, waiting to jump to duty as soon as their brother got offed. When all six clones died, you created a new family of six identical clones.

In the current edition, each PC is created as one individual, the 'Prime', with backup clone bodies floating unconscious in a Tech Services clone tank somewhere. When the current PC dies, his memories are transferred to the new body, and he returns to action. (What's that? This idea makes no sense? Well, if you're so smart, why don't you take that up with The Computer? No doubt it welcomes diligent correction.)



PARANOIA™

Mandatory Mission Pack

Special duties for special troubleshooters

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THE COMPUTER

Looking after your best interests

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MANDATORY MISSION PACK

1. Introduction

Hello and welcome to the Mandatory Mission Pack. This friendly mission pack contains extra bonus resources for your PARANOIA games. It is designed to be used in an ad hoc manner – if your Troubleshooters open the wrong door, run off down the wrong corridor or just get hold of the wrong end of the stick entirely and your simple ‘hunt and kill the Commies in the food vat factory’ mission turns into ‘become convinced that the High Programmer is a traitor and engage in a complex Complex-spanning

epic conspiracy to take him down’. This Mandatory Mission Pack gives you specific locations, characters and weirdnesses without a general context. Think of it as a tinkertoy set for PARANOIA – just put these locations and characters into your own plots.

There is, of course, a school of thought that Troubleshooters who open the wrong door or run off down the wrong corridor should just

be shot.

This is an entirely valid school of thought.

In which case, think of this book as a selection of scenic locations in which to terminate the Troubleshooters.

2. Briefings

Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns -- the ones we don't know we don't know.

- Donald Rumsfeld

Unusual briefing rooms are between 1 and 10; unusual briefing officers between 11 and 20. Either roll for the particular brand of weirdness being inflicted on the players or pick from either or both lists.

officer must be up there. You can hear the susurrus of a fan in the distance and there is a disconcerting smell of ash in this chimney-shaped room. Your subconscious also picks up on the facts that there are flash-heating elements built into the walls and that the chairs are made of a highly heat-resistant synthetic material that can withstand temperatures of up to 2,000 degrees.

If the Troubleshooters annoy the briefing officer, he can twist a dial. This causes the heating elements in the wall to glow a dull red and raises the temperature in the shaft slightly. Turning it more increases the temperature more and more, until all of the Troubleshooters' troubles – not to mention their skin – just dries up and floats away on the breeze.

briefing officer is perched uncertainly on top of a large bean-bag, looking very uncomfortable as he grapples with his briefing notes. As you enter, mood music starts playing in the background.

Ah, you've got to love it when Mystics get to design briefing rooms. One of the bean bags has an Internal Security spy hiding inside it, eavesdropping on the briefing. When a Troubleshooter sits down on the bag, it feels oddly lumpy and makes the occasional groaning or wheezing noise. If discovered, the IntSec officer cuts his way out of the bag, stands up, brushes himself off and stalks out the door with as much dignity as he can muster.

1. Briefing Room 807 – Getting the Shaft

Sector YAP, Level 12, Corridor 90

On entering the briefing room, you look up. And up. And up. You're at the bottom of a deep, deep circular shaft. A blindingly bright spotlight shines down on you from far above, illuminating a harsh circle at the centre of the shaft's floor. Chairs line the edge of the circle of light. Somewhere, far above you, you can make out the outline of a balcony – the briefing

2. Briefing Room 430- Gamma – Mystic Comfort

Sector DEL, Level 9, Corridor 4

This briefing room is all pastels and comfy couches. There is still a RED stripe running around the wall but it's done in something fuzzy and soft to the touch. There is a Computer monitor with what appears to be a tartan monitor-cosy in one corner. Your

3. Cory-G-FOX Memorial Briefing Room

Sector FOX, Level 22, Corridor 2

This briefing room is decorated with murals and memorabilia dedicated to the life of Cory-G-FOX, a famous Troubleshooter and Hero of the Complex who battled Commie Mutant Traitors and saved Alpha Complex from some terrible threat (details on the terrible threat not available at your security clearance). On your left, a

BRIEFINGS

mural depicts Cory-G dramatically hurling the rest of his team into a steaming food vat after he discovered they were all traitors. To your right are relics of Cory-G's career, such as his shiny laser pistol, his trusty cone rifle, his golden Hygiene Officer MBD badge, his framed certificate of merit, his ME Card and his remains in a nice little urn. A huge statue of Cory-G straddles the briefing podium; your briefing officer peers at you from between the ankles of the great man.

All of Cory-G's stuff is still functional.

- ☞ The laser pistol has a GREEN barrel with one shot left.
- ☞ The cone rifle has six High Explosive shells in a bandolier.
- ☞ The MBD badge is just that, if anyone wants to pretend to be a Hygiene Officer.
- ☞ The certificate of merit would sell for 1,000 credits to a collector.
- ☞ The ME card lets a Troubleshooter pretend to be Cory-G. On the bright side, you get GREEN clearance, access to an account with thousands of credits and the adulation of those who think you are Cory-G. On the downside, you are registered as deceased and The Computer does not like zombies.

4. Briefing Room 128 – The Countdown

Sector PNS, Level 8, Corridor 4

When you enter this briefing room, an electronic voice says calmly 'Seven minutes and fifteen seconds remaining. Attention. Seven minutes and ten seconds remaining.' The walls, floor and ceiling of this room are made up of large liquid-crystal displays, each of which displays 07:00 in large black flashing letters. The chairs, briefing podium and other furniture are all made of transparent plastic, so you can see the displays perfectly from any point in the room.

Your briefing officer starts his briefing, interrupted occasionally by the electronic voice calling out the current

time. It's getting closer and closer to zero...

What happens when the countdown reaches zero? Here are some options:

- ☞ Absolutely nothing.
- ☞ The next Troubleshooter team shows up at the door of the briefing room. It is a busy sector; the countdown just tells the briefing officer how much time he has left in his scheduled booking.
- ☞ Everyone in the room is disintegrated.

5. Briefing Room 84 – Contradiction

Sector JKL, Level 45, Corridor 9

This briefing room looks like a pretty standard briefing room – uncomfortable chairs, odd stains on the carpets, cameras watching your every move and a briefing officer standing behind an armoured podium – except for the absolutely gigantic television screen that takes up the entire back wall. It is like being at a movie theatre.

The briefing officer clears his throat and starts, immediately, the screen behind him flickers into life and the text of the briefing crawls slowly up the screen. 'This briefing is classified clearance RED' says the officer and the screen behind him displays the same text.

Unfortunately for the Troubleshooters, the briefing speech read by the officer and the briefing text displayed on the screen diverge. Two entirely different and contradictory sets of instructions are issued to the Troubleshooters...

6. Briefing Room 192 – A Glass of Water

Sector RTD, Level 33N, Corridor Gamma

This briefing room is unremarkable apart from the glasses of water sitting on the table in front of you. All of the glasses are sitting on plastic coasters

and there is a nearly-invisible X scratched into one coaster. The air is quite dry in here; anyone want a drink?

So, what is the deal with the marked coaster? There are several possibilities:

- ☞ It means nothing. It is just a damaged coaster.
- ☞ That glass of water was poisoned by an assassin aiming for the Troubleshooter who is sitting in the chair in front of the glass.
- ☞ That glass of water was randomly spiked by the Mystics. Anyone drinking it goes on a weird hallucinogenic trip. Or has his brain dribble out of his nose, who can tell.
- ☞ The glass of water is the only one that has not been spiked by the Mystics.
- ☞ The coaster is a signal to the Briefing Officer. It has been placed in front of the Troubleshooter who is a member of the same secret society as the Briefing Officer, so he knows to pass on a secret message. It has all been arranged by the caterer, who is also a member of that secret society. Man, there sure are a lot of that secret society running around.

7. Briefing Room 454 – Funhouse

Sector FUD, Level 39, Corridor Beta-9

When you enter the briefing room, you see... yourself. The walls are all mirrored. Some are perfectly flat, others are weird funhouse mirrors that show distorted images of your team. There are several square pillars in the room, which are also mirrored. You cannot see your actual briefing officer but warped images of him appear on several panels.

A few moments later, you become aware of an annoying buzzing noise emanating from somewhere in the ceiling, or maybe somewhere in the back of your skull.

This briefing room is a psychological experiment. The Troubleshooters are being subjected to a brain-warping electrical field and