



CHAPTER 4

From his office on the second level of VRDET HQ, Malaclypse the Seeker, mad scientist at large and all-around Mysterious Person™, was practicing the ancient art of “pretending to work.” This was not to say that he wasn’t being even remotely *productive*, simply that he wasn’t working at it. In front of his desk, several viewscreens floated unsupported. In the center, a collage of screens showed various terrain maps, each screen displaying a different country. To the right, a fair-sized display was running the latest episode of Babylon 5. Mal was alternating between paying attention to the screens and making notes in a thick book entitled *SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE; 5th Standard Edition*.

One unused viewscreen flared, the screen displaying multicolored fractal spirals, from which a shadowy figure regarded Malaclypse’s back.

“Seeker, report,” it boomed. Mal didn’t flinch, twitch, or even turn around.

“Oh, hello,” Mal said evenly, “what can I do for you today?”

“You can give me a report. The Five are getting anxious, and you know what happens when they get anxious. There are some concerns that the Project may be in jeopardy, and your... reluctance to submit critical information on a regular basis has not consoled them.”

Mal sighed. “Look, stupid in the first place, the information needed for the Project isn’t available to the last damn decimal place. Second, if I go looking for the info, high-ranking Jihaddi or not, somebody will get suspicious. Finally, the Project has been moving along for nearly ten thousand years, it sure as hell can wait six weeks for my reports.

“Tell the Five that I’ll have a report, along with as much information on known military capabilities as I can locate without arousing suspicion, within the next week, barring accident. Will that keep the Five from panicking and doing something stupid like, say, destabilizing global economy or weather patterns?”

“I believe it will, Seeker. I suggest that you get that information to them. Otherwise, I might have to show up in person.” The flames died down, and the Watcher vanished. Mal turned around, made sure that the brazier was burning low, then pushed a key on his desk.

“Yeah, like that’s a threat.”



FELLOW TRAVELLERS



There are a few groups that live in the shadows and on the edges of Mundane civilization. These people are not active participants in the war, preferring to sit on the sidelines and wait for a clear victor to emerge. Their goals are not the same as the Jihad's, but sometimes they intersect favorably...

THE ILLUMINATI

"The Jihad is a distraction from the real work. No, that's perhaps somewhat uncharitable. The Slayer is important. The Praxeum is important, the duck is important, as are the research divisions of your Jihad. The soldiers, the guns and the bombs and the rest of it are illusions; sound and fury intended to distract the Enemy. We know that people are dying, and we regret it. But it must happen, and it must continue to happen. It is cliché to say that humanity's future depends on it, but sadly life often likes to emulate clichés."

The original World's Oldest Conspiracy, this group has gone by many names over the centuries, but the one that's stuck in the modern day is the Illuminati. They aren't *too* unlike the cabal imagined by mundane conspiracy theorists, but their motivations and methods of control are very different. The Illuminati don't have the level of direct control that most conspiracists think, only extending their reach into a few select areas of everyday life, like the Freemasons, the European Union and the Science Fiction Writers of America. Most of the Illuminati's influence is felt indirectly, and it has guided the physical, mental and spiritual development of mundane civilization.

The Illuminati has existed in one form or another since the fall of Atlantis, some 25,000 years ago. The

conspiracy's archives are sketchy about the nature of Atlantis and the founding of the Illuminati, the consensus among Illuminati historians is that the original conspirators came together to preserve as much of the Atlantean's advanced technomagical knowledge as possible. Over the years, the Illuminati has refined and added to their store of knowledge, combining the Atlantean fragments with discoveries made in the intervening years.

This vast store of knowledge gathered on the fringes of reality has been honed into a plan for the human race. This plan, called the Project by those Illuminati in the know, has been operating for a thousand years with only minor hiccups. The ultimate end goal of the Project is only known to the highest levels of the Illuminati leadership, the five Illuminatus Prima; all other Illuminati are aware of the Project, its means and its importance, but not to the final objective.

As the Project progressed, the Illuminati have picked up connections into the mundane world; indirect guidance was tricky at best and dangerous at worst, and the Project's intricacies require a steadier hand on the controls. Most of these connections are not dissimilar from the Jihad's liaisons; having the right person in the right office to rubberstamp the right form at the most opportune time. Only in the rare occasions where a group is absolutely essential to the Project will the Illuminati instigate a takeover and exercise direct control.

(It is an exercise for the student to figure out why the Illuminati controls the SFWA.)

Illuminati agents, when not engaged in Project-related work, also act as protectors of the fringe landscape that exists underneath and at the far reaches of mundane civilization. Extraterrestrial and ultraterrestrial incur-

sions, mythical creatures, Fae, mad scientists and other similar wildlife that don't fit into the rather staid mundane world fall under the eyes of the Prima, and they direct their minions to protect the mundanes from the fringe and vice-versa.

Between the Project and policing the weirdness underground, the Illuminati don't have the time to act as the all-powerful conspiracy that most people expect. However, they do enjoy giving the *appearance* of the all-powerful conspiracy. At its heart, this shadowplay is part stress-relief therapy for busy Illuminati and part defensive technique. The conspiracy is actually quite small - no more than 2,000 members are alive in the modern world - and by looking like they control the entire world, the Illuminati can prevent shadow wars from breaking out that might threaten the Project or even the Illuminati's existence. It also occasionally comes in handy when recruiting new members, though the inevitable discovery of the truth is a bit of a letdown.

RELATIONS WITH THE JIHAD

To understand the Illuminati's stance on the Jihad, we first need to look back to the group's founding and the fall of Atlantis. According to the fragmented histories the Illuminati still possess, a being not unlike B'harne was present at the final destruction of the island. The Atlantean documents call this creature "the Enemy," a tradition the modern Illuminati have continued.

When the modern Illuminati discovered the occult nature of Barney the Dinosaur, they immediately made the connection to the Enemy. Combined with the sudden appearance of Lyran mages in large numbers, the Prima came to the conclusion that their charges were under attack by the same (or a similar) force as that which destroyed Atlantis at its height. The Il-



luminati in general have accelerated the Project's timetable, in an attempt to get the mundane population ready before the Enemy can destroy them again.

This is where the Jihad comes in. The Prima don't know who or what sent the prophetic dreams to the High Prophet and his comrades, but the fact that they *were* sent suggests that other, more powerful forces are at work countering the incursions made by B'harne.

The Jihad as a group is considered both a potential threat and a valuable asset; the concentration of human superscience and parahuman force represents a potential existential

threat to the Illuminati, and at the same time their relaxed organization suggests a potential willingness to come to terms with the conspiracy. In other circumstances, the Illuminati could not tolerate a threat to themselves and the Project on the Jihad's scale; the last time any esoteric group grew so powerful was the Ahnerebe, during World War Two. The Nazi sorcerers were eliminated to the last man, and the Prima wouldn't hesitate to do the same to the Jihad.

With the threat of Barney and his allies still hanging fire, however, the Illuminati has decided to use the Jihad as a tool instead of trying to eliminate them outright. Placing a handful of their senior field operatives into ranking positions in the Jihad (see *Malaclypse the Seeker*, p. 109) the Illuminati have ensured that the Jihad will not discover them or - in the event that they *do* - attack them. If the Jihad succeeds before the Project is complete, then the survivors will be welcomed into the Illuminati fold.

The average Jihaddi - indeed, none of the command staff save the actual moles themselves - know anything

about the Illuminati or its goals beyond what they might read in the nut literature. This is as the Illuminati would have it; to reveal themselves might set off a panic in the Jihad, much like the Jihad's existence might set off panic in the mundane world. It's a strange dance of shadows, but if the Project completes as planned it will have been worth all the difficulty.

*For several thousand years now, they've worked behind the scenes,
They laugh when we buy Dockers — we've all got designer genes!
They know if you'll get the girl or pass the SAT,
It's kinda like The Truman Show combined with D&D.*

—TOM SMITH, "THE ILLUMINATI POLKA"

ALIENS

The Hidden War has the potential for incredible ramifications away from the Earth. After all, should Barney win the war, it is likely that he would turn his attention towards other worlds to conquer.

As the war expands and contracts, the struggle has drawn the interest of several different types of extraterrestrial. Some of them are content to simply watch, while a few have been drawn into the conflict.

X'HIRJQ

"Every action, thought, and deed by every X'hirjq for the past 400,000 of your years has served this one purpose without error. It is religion, as humans understand it, the base of our culture and reason for our survival. It is what defines us, give us purpose, and demands our actions."

The X'hirjq are a mysterious race of nomadic aliens who have been wandering the galaxy for the better part of half a million years. They are best remembered for their invasion of Earth in the fall of 1996, when they engaged the Jihad at the behest of their temporary ally, Barney.

X'hirjq are between seven and nine feet tall, heavily muscled reptilian beings with the prerequisite sharp teeth, claws, and lizard's tail. As a race, they possess strong psychic and magical powers, and have a sizable amount of TL11 and TL12 devices with which they can defeat almost

any foe. X'hirjq value honor above all other things, and desire nothing more than a good, clean fight (or a challenging hunt).

The X'hirjq invasion of 1996, while initially inspired by Barney, was in fact an attempt to *test* the inhabitants of Earth for worthiness; the X'hirjq Empress wanted to know if humans were worthy of living in what is, apparently, a "sacred" solar system. Very little is known and less understood about X'hirjq motivations, although it seems that humanity passed the Empress' test, as the invasion was cut short and every X'hirjq vanished again into outer darkness within a month of the invasion's start. Nothing has been heard of the X'hirjq since that time, not even rumor.

SALUSIANS

The Milky Way galaxy is home to a surprisingly large number of sentient races. The most technologically advanced species are linked together in a loose alliance known commonly as "galactic civilization." Of the races in this



alliance, the one regional power that has any interest in Earth and the goings-on there is the Kingdom of Salusia.

The Salusians rule a modest empire of a dozen worlds and twice as many frontier outposts some 1,500 light years away from Earth. The Kingdom of Salusia itself has been in intermittent contact with Earth since the early 1970s, when an anthropology field study turned into an impromptu rescue of the *Apollo 13* mission. Since then, the Kingdom has maintained covert diplomatic contacts with several human nations, mostly through Illuminati intermediaries.

Physically, the Salusians are upright bipeds averaging around six feet tall, with digitgrade legs and vaguely canine facial features. The average Salusian is covered in short black or dark brown fur, and has a long mane of black, white or red hair running down their head and neck.

Salusians have most of what we would consider the normal human emotional traits, along with a somewhat quirky sense of humor and a deep love of irony. Most Salusian who come into contact with humans end up liking them, and vice-versa. Emotional bonds between members of the two races can

form very quickly, and be (at times) extremely intense. Realizing the potential trouble this can cause, the Salusian government does their best to ensure that only the most level-headed members of their species are sent to Earth.

Technology in the Kingdom is a mature TL10 in most things, edging into TL11 in the field of biotechnology; while not as naturally adept at biotech as the Lyrans, Salusian geneticists can do some impressive things. The most common application used around humans is cosmetic - turning native Salusians into near-perfect lookalikes of humans. While the modified Salusians may *look* human, they're unable to interbreed with humans without the help of major genetic surgery. (This practice has been proscribed by the Salusian government, but some rules were made to be broken: a small number of Salusian expatriates, including a few human-Salusian hybrids, settled in the Pacific northwest in the mid 1980s with the Illuminati's blessing.)

Why so few aliens?

At first glance, there would seem to be barely any alien beings in the Jihad Universe. As a rule, there are plenty of aliens running around the Jihad Universe — it's just that barely any of them come to Earth. While this might put a crimp in the plans of some players, the aliens have a number of good reasons for avoiding Earth and the rest of the solar system.

The important thing to understand about galactic culture is that the galaxy is a very, very big place. Even the races and empires most involved in galactic politics - like the Salusians - can only extend their influence so far. Most of the species in our general area of the Milky Way are far too busy with their own affairs to bother with a backwater planet that hasn't cured the common cold or developed FTL travel. Despite the potential apocalyptic outcome of the Hidden War, barely anybody offworld knows about it; the few races who *do* know have conspired to keep it as quiet as possible, for fear of sparking genocidal attacks on Earth to contain the threat.

The Greys and Salusians are the only races who have any permanent installations in the solar system (mostly diplomatic and scientific stations) and even those are very lightly staffed. As a general thing, both Grey and Salusian operatives in the Sol system do their best to keep their people as uninvolved in the War as they possibly can, and go about their business with a wary eye cast on the participants.

Other races (ones not involved in the Salusian quarantine, freebooters, culture pirates, etc.) who feel like wandering around our solar system stand a good chance of running into the *Explain Star*. The crew of that noble ship, with nothing better to do and a great deal of time to do it in, tend to enjoy stopping and boarding every unauthorized ship (read: anything that moves and isn't an asteroid) that crosses their path. After the sixth or seventh boarding action by a bunch of pirates flying a rocket-powered rubber duck, even the most stubborn of alien races gets the point and stays the hell away from Earth.

RELATIONS WITH THE JIHAD

In regards to the Hidden War, the Salusians consider themselves neutral within certain limits. The Kingdom recognizes the threat posed both by B'harne and Lyran expansionism, but without a formal alliance of the regional powers they can't act openly. The necessary alliance is highly unlikely to ever actually happen. (see box, *Why so few aliens?*)

As a compromise measure, the Salusians have instituted a quarantine zone around our solar system. If the war should expand beyond the quarantine, the Salusians will aid the Jihad with all the resources at their disposal, but not a moment before. In theory, the Kingdom would be willing to offer "lend-lease" equipment to the Jihad (in the form of weapons, spacecraft parts and other sundry high-tech items) but



so far Salusian diplomats have been unable to find a good way to approach the Jihad without setting off an adverse reaction.

To this date, the Jihad as a group is unaware of the Salusian presence on Earth, and unless the Kingdom makes an overture is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

GREYS

“You... interest us. Normally we would not bother with contact. There is something here we must continue to study.”

You’ve undoubtedly seen the pictures. Thanks to mundane pop-culture, they’re the most recognizable “alien” form on Earth today. However, most of the rest of what pop-culture has to say about the Greys is amazingly inaccurate.

The real Greys are not on Earth in any large numbers, nor do they abduct random rednecks from isolated trailer parks to conduct experiments on. Most Greys on Earth are starship crew or research physicists, and “buzzing” the locals is considered bad form.

Grey civilization is very old — it predates the existence of almost every other known galactic civilization. For all their abilities, the Greys have never been expansionist in any way. They seem content to cultivate their homeworld and the other planets in their home solar system, without putting much thought to colonizing other star systems. The Greys have achieved a mature TL12, and have been so for at least 10,000 years. The Greys are highly respected by the other galactics, especially for their near-impossible defeat

of a X’hirjq invasion force 2,000 years ago.

The Greys have been on Earth since 1947 (one thing UFO pop-culture has gotten right), when a research ship was dispatched to investigate readings of an unusual wormhole developing in the Sol system. On a low-altitude pass over the supposed wormhole, the ship was damaged by a Lyran defense system, and crashed several hundred miles away in the New Mexico desert (again, something reported accurately by the mundanes, but little believed).

The surviving Greys were rescued by the United States government, and

since that time, the Greys and Terran powers (mostly Illuminati agents using the US as a cover) have had a limited scientific exchange program going. In exchange for allowing a small contingent

of Grey scientists access, the Greys will slip a few small advances into human technology — nothing fancy, mostly computer-related, or microelectronics.

RELATIONS WITH THE JIHAD

The Greys, as a rule, are a deeply isolationist people. Only their curiosity about the Lyran dimensional gate has kept a Grey presence on Earth. Like the Salusians, the Greys are aware of the Jihad’s existence, but unlike the Salusians, the Greys are firmly neutral. However, they are interested in the possible connections between the Lyrans and the wormhole. As a rule, unless one side or another starts shooting at the Grey delegation on Earth, they will not help or hinder anybody in the Hidden War.

OTHER SHADOWY TYPES

While intruders from the stars hover above the landscape, watching both Mundanes and Jihaddi with avid interest, others move in between the “normal” world and the shadows. These people all have a vested interest in the activities out on the bleeding edge of human existence. Some of them are fairly harmless, some are possible sources of help or hindrance in the Hidden War.

ANCIENT ILLUMINATED SEERS OF BAVARIA

“We are the shapers of human destiny. Those who would attempt to usurp our power will find us quite formidable opponents.”

While the true Illuminati works deep in the shadows of human society towards the completion of the Project, the AISB work in the mundane realms to further their own personal power.

As all good conspiracy theorists will tell you, the Ancient Illuminated Seers of Bavaria were founded in 1776 by one Adam Weishaupt, defrocked Jesuit and professor of law at Ingolstadt University. Weishaupt had conceived a plan to unite Europe under the leadership of a rationalist cabal, with himself naturally at the head. To this end, he formed the original AISB with a number of German freethinkers, and ran a mostly public organization until 1785, when the Bavarian government found out about Weishaupt’s ultimate goals and shut down the public fronts of the Illuminati.

Of course, you can’t keep a good

RUMORS...

If you go to the right part of rural Kentucky at the right time of year, you’ll meet a woman who will tell you exactly why the world’s so fucked up. But if you listen to her, you’ll never go home again.



Solos

Solos are people who, for one reason or another, have cause to fight Barney or the Lyrans, but have no connection to any group. Some solos are expatriate Jihaddi, former members who left for varied reasons (disagreement with authorities, personal vows, psychotic temperaments, etc.) but have not given up the fight. They wander around the world, striking at their enemies whenever they can, expecting to die at every moment.

In fact, most solos *do* die — the average life expectancy of a solo who has taken up arms without the support of others is less than a year. Only the wisest, strongest and most dangerous solos become veterans, and there are no *old* solos. The solo lifestyle — which involves taking on entire armies of otherworldly beings single-handed — tends to quickly take its toll on the mind, body, and available resources. Due to this, solos as a rule are not the most psychologically stable of people.

Solos tend to have some amount of personal wealth, that they would use as a bankroll for weapons, equipment, headquarters, weapons, clothes, weapons, food and weapons. However, some solos will liquidate all of their possessions in favor of simply dropping out of sight and living in the underclasses of the world, where they keep alive by performing less-than-upright jobs for less-than-upright people. Solos of this type tend to have a *very* loose moral framework.

If a solo has had enough of fighting alone, or is approaching the end of their supply base, then they may approach the Jihad and ask for admittance. The Jihad has taken in solos in the past — many distinguished Jihaddi, including the Original Seven, started their careers as solo warriors — and as long as the solo agrees to follow the Jihad's chain of command, they will be accepted and respected by other Jihaddi.

conspiracy down, and the Illuminati went underground, slowly but surely infiltrating as many political movements as possible through the late 18th Century. It wasn't until the mid-1800s that the AISB had achieved any real sort of power in Europe and the Americas, however. By the beginning of the 20th Century, the AISB had managed to take control of a large portion of the political and economic structure of the Occidental world, and had made serious inroads into controlling several East Asian and African nations.

Interestingly enough, the AISB has often eschewed the use or even investigation of paranormal or "fringe science" phenomenon. Consequently, the AISB is only marginally more advanced than

the Mundane governments it rules, currently standing at a mature TL8. This is partly because of the AISB's hyper-rationalist dogma originally set down by Weishaupt, which dismisses everything that can't be explained "scientifically." But a good part of this blind spot is due to agents of the true Illuminati, who have managed to keep the power-hungry AISB under control this way since the French Revolution.

RELATIONS WITH THE JIHAD

The AISB considers the Jihad to be a bunch of upstarts, a group of power-mongers like themselves, who are trying to build an impressive hoax in order to seize control of the mundanes the AISB considers to be *their* rightful ser-

vants. The Jihad's activities in co-opting certain members of the American Congress have not made the AISB any less paranoid.

As such, the AISB are distinctly hostile to anything they can pin down as Jihaddi in nature, although they will not make any direct assaults (usually because the Jihad can easily outgun even the best-equipped AISB soldier). The Jihad, in turn, is dimly aware of the AISB's existence, and attempts to avoid their close scrutiny much like they would for any other mundane organization.

The AISB, affected by their particular form of mundane blindness, doesn't believe in the evil of B'harne or the Lyran forces. This has played quite nicely into the hands of the Enemy, especially those wurm-minions who work mainly in the mundane world, as it's in their (supposedly) mutual best interest to foil the Jihad at every turn.

PLANETARY

No matter how well the Jihad (or the Illuminati, or the AISB, etc.) try to keep things totally undercover, things will be discovered.

Living on the fringes of mundane society, an underground network of the most unlikely individuals has sprung up, dealing with the scattered information and discarded technology the various conspiracies running across the world have left behind them.

This network (called "Planetary" by the younger members, after a recent comic book series dealing with "mystery archaeologists") is made up of a loose coalition of conspiracy theorists, arms dealers, information brokers, hackers, crackers, and UFO enthusiasts. The theorists are interested in using the data gathered by Planetary to expose and destroy The Conspiracy. (That is, whichever The Conspiracy they're con-



vinced is to blame for the world, any resemblance to the actual Secret Masters being mostly purely coincidental.) The arms dealers and info brokers use Planetary on a far more pragmatic and amoral basis, looking for new weapons and secrets worth selling on the open market. The members of the hack community who have joined the Planetary network have done so more out of a love of the thrill of going places they shouldn't, doing things that they aren't supposed to. The UFO watchers, of course, use Planetary to figure out "what's really going on."

The group has no set meeting place, or even a set organization. Members typically have recognition signals (usually consisting of a gesture or key code phrase), and usually know at least one place where members can meet personally and haggle for artifacts. Meeting places are often businesses owned by Planetary members, or highly public areas, train stations or public parks, where the risk of getting killed out of hand are less. For more shady deals, members use the network to locate only the best, quietest back alleys from which to swap money for hardware.

The main information network is set up — like most things in the Age of Information — using the Internet extensively. Members have at least one secure, encrypted e-mail account through which data swaps can be arranged. Rumors of alt.marketplace.planetary are wholly unsubstantiated, and are most likely a hoax put on by a member hacker. Really.

RELATIONS WITH THE JIHAD

Both sides are very well aware of Planetary, although the network is itself mostly ignorant of the Hidden War. While the network as a group has large sections of the puzzle available, no one member has managed to fit together the whole puzzle, and Planetary is far

too fragmented to ever be able to comprehend the Hidden War as a group.

The Jihad often exploits both this fragmentation and the wealth of knowledge Planetary represents. An observant Jihaddi with contacts in the Planetary network can use them to chivvy almost anything from a handy member. The best use of the network involves finding a place to lie low for a night, to get a floorplan for a high-security government facility, or arranging a meeting with weapons dealers to score a few quick guns.

The Enemy, on the other hand, is more interested in the transfer of information and *disinformation*. Wyrms Minions with previously established contacts in Planetary do their best to spread tweaked propaganda around the network. A group of crackers working for Liaison Winston has managed to subtly convert a Planetary-connected cell of UFO cultists to the enemy cause, creating a group of near-Sponge Minions by altering the data they collected to suggest that B'harne was one of their Space Brothers. Planetary's wide variety of individuals makes it a good recruiting ground for the Jihad as well. Almost anything can come out of the group, and sometimes does.

THE OFFICE OF SPECIAL PLANS

Despite the raging mundanity of most of the American government (a state of affairs carefully tended by the Bavarians) sometimes the most bizarre projects can be started up under their very noses.

The Office of Special Plans (OSP) was originally founded during the Harding administration, as a way to maintain the United States' regional power in the face of a potential united world under the League of Nations. As with

many things in the Harding government, the OSP was quickly corrupted and subverted by a cabal of high-ranking military officers and industrialists. For the first years of its life, the OSP was used primarily to fund pro-American governments and regimes in the western hemisphere.

In the 1930s, the OSP found itself funding more and more bizarre projects, as good old American know-how combined with its backer's money and the knowledge of expatriate European scientists to produce very weird results. Very little of what OSP produced was useful; it was mainly a great deal of fodder for insane asylums, and some things fit only for disposal in fire. They were learning, though.

1937 brought a new focus to the group, with the rise of the Ahnerebe, Nazi Germany's agency for occult research. Fearing that the Ahnerebe could succeed where the OSP had to date failed, President Roosevelt ordered that the OSP begin development of a project to nullify the (theoretical) magical power that the Nazis were bringing to the table. The new program, Project KILLJOY, succeeded in creating a subject immune to direct magical attacks, only to find that when completely isolated from mana energy, the test subject went violently insane. OSP mad scientists couldn't come up with a solution to the problem before the war ended, the project was cancelled in 1945 as Hitler and his cabal of magicians had been rendered powerless anyway. They were left with vast areas of understanding of genetics, the key to unlocking some very weird abilities and scores of additional patients clogging various mental hospitals around the country.

As the Cold War began to settle over the group, the OSP turned towards the creation of an oracle. Supposedly in order to aid US strategic planning, the OSP had decided a long time before



that a being blessed with the gift of prophecy would be an invaluable asset. Especially if you wanted to make yourself filthy rich. To make a long story short, the next 25 years saw an alarming increase in asylum inmates, to say nothing of the *really bad* experiments.

Finally though, the OSP produced a useful result in 1973. Or a somewhat useful result, anyway. The subject screamed out several predictions of the future, followed by an anguished cry of *“Oh God! The wizards have landed!”* over and over before committing suicide. The predictions proved true, and the OSP science teams began to take serious notice of this after the next three test subjects did the exact same thing. When they reduced the fifth subject to a brain in a jar, they were able to get a little more data before it managed to self-destruct: a date of 2004.

Instead of creating a method to see their enemies actions ahead of time and make themselves incredibly rich, the OSP's ruling cabal had apparently uncovered the end of the world. As the prophecies all had “wizards” or the like in common, they decided to revive Project KILLJOY as a possible counter-measure.

RELATIONS WITH THE JIHAD

The OSP is, to date, mostly ignorant of the Jihad or its movements. One of their KILLJOY success stories joined up with TRES Corps in 1997, but as the operative wasn't instructed to send back regular reports the OSP doesn't know this. As far as the Office is concerned, they're the only people who know that something big and bad is approaching, and that their ability to stop it isn't all that great. Right now, the OSP is focusing on developing a stable oracle, in an attempt to get more data about the impending danger.

INTERNATIONAL ORDER OF MAD SCIENTISTS

“For us, the laws of physics are mere guidelines, there to confine the unimaginative. Hey! Don't touch that button—”

Existing out on the fringes of mainstream mundane science, the International Order of Mad Scientists works to advance the cause of human understanding of the universe, preferably by disassembling portions of it in the most creative way possible.

According to legend, the Order was founded in 1898 by Nikola Tesla, considered the God-King of modern mad science, and an immortal Leonardo Da Vinci, for reasons that remain shrouded in mystery. Regardless of the truth of this story, the Order has certifiably existed for the whole of the 20th Century, attracting scientists and engineers whose theories have been dismissed by mundane authorities as mere crankery.

The Order has mechanisms in place (mostly funded by patent royalties from successful members) to help keep experiments running, but the most important function the Order performs is the annual Mad Science Convention. The convention provides a place for fringe science aficionados from around the world to exchange notes, learn the latest developments and otherwise relax from the rigors of a world that doesn't like them much. Every year at the convention, the assembled members of the Order decide which of them gets to win the coveted Victor Von Frankenstein Award.

RELATIONS WITH THE JIHAD

The Order doesn't have any real understanding of the Hidden War or the nature of the Jihad or Barney. Several

members of the Order have run across the Lyrans in the pursuit of scientific truth, but none of them ever made the connection to the Hidden War.

For the most part, this suits both the Order and the Jihad just fine. The Order doesn't feel obligated to engage in mere politics (internal politics are much more fun) and the Jihad doesn't have to worry about an independent group of loose cannons barrelling into the conflict. A not so surprisingly large number of the Jihad's research and development groups also have membership in the Order, and the annual convention is considered a good place to relax away from the pressure of saving the world on a daily basis.