

# Wild talents

August 15, 2007

## **An Introduction**

This is the first issue of Wildtalents. Within these pages we hope to bring you character ideas, scenario hooks, rules updates and errata and letters and thoughts from those of you kind enough to write to us.

We hope to give you advance notice of the next products that will appear from Crucible Design and also as a source of information regarding gaming as a whole. In this latter case, we'll have to rely on being informed of events in gaming so don't hesitate and send us some info!

## **ERRATA for The 23rd Letter 1st Edition**

We did make some mistakes with the first book but as it was a bit of a rush to get it ready for the convention I'm sure you'll understand. Some of the mistakes just weren't there until someone noticed them. A hint: never believe a spelling checker.

The first is not horrendous. Just a casual misspelling of brain so that it reads brian tissue instead. Boy did I feel foolish.

The second mistake was bad though. I forgot to put the damage track on the front of the character sheet. This has now been rectified and the character sheet is available from us. You should get it when you buy your copy of the game but if not just let us know and we'll get one sent off to you as quick as possible. We're not infallible.

**info@crucibledesign.com**

**News, Previews, Explanations, Sales**

### **The 23rd Letter 2nd Edition**

The game is available at Q-CON and also through direct mail order from our good selves. You'll find a contact address on this issue where you can find information on ordering copies or just finding out more about the whole rigmarole of starting up such an undertaking.

People have asked us why The 23rd letter has significance. Some people even say that 'W' isn't very special. We'd like to point out that psi (  $\Psi$  ) is the twenty-third letter of the greek alphabet (according to the books I have at home) and is also a 'hot' number in the world of discordia - apparently.

### **Sourcebooks for the 23rd Letter**

Crucible Design have yet to produce any supplements for the 23rd Letter. They are coming, but a bit more slowly than we expected. Until they appear here are some suggestions for useful sourcebooks and adventure ideas.

There are a number of modern adventure RPGs, several of which have excellent published adventures which can be played as 23rd Letter adventures. The most useful, especially for Project campaigns, are those for Chameleon Eclectic's Millennium's End and the late, great GDW's Merc 2000. These adventures do not feature psychic powers but any GM with half a brain can introduce the paranormal into these scenarios.

Surprisingly, adventure supplements for contemporary conspiracy and horror games are less useful. There are adventures for games such as Chaosium's Nephilium and Call of Cthulhu and NME's Conspiracy X amongst others which vary from excellent to adequate, but these tend to be too closely tied into their own supernatural or UFO mythos to be useful for 23rd Letter players.

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Errata, News, Previews, Downloads, Links

There are several very useful reference works for RPGs which we find especially useful. Some of the sourcebooks for Millennium's End are highly recommended, especially The GM's Companion, The Terror/Counterterror Sourcebook and UltraModern Firearms. The first two books feature excellent floorplans of modern buildings and vehicles of all kinds and maps of larger installations. Another superb book is Talorian's Compendium of Modern Firearms, a reference to weapons from pistols through rifles to rocket launchers. An appendix gives information on how to convert the real weapon stats to those of various RPG systems.

Finally, for details of those various world-wide locations where the PCs may want to go blow up things, check out the various travel guides published by companies such as Lonely Planet, Frommer's and Fodor's. These fat paperbacks are available covering everywhere you can imagine, from Albania to Zambia. In them you find city maps, transport details, prices of food and other essentials and much useful local colour. They tend to be expensive bought new, but out of date and second-hand copies can often be found cheaply.

#### **New Wild Talents for The 23rd Letter**

As mentioned in the game, the only talents which are catalogued are those that have been recognised by the WhiteChapel Project. There are other, rarer talents which are either special gifts on their own or specialised versions of the catalogued talent. Some, like that possessed by Gremlin of the Nevada Project are a talent specialisation while others, like BlackOut of the Nevada Project, are quite unique.

#### **A wild talent for The 23rd Letter**

As mentioned in the game, the only talents which are catalogued are those which have been tested and recognised by the Whitechapel Project. There are other, rarer talents which are either special gifts of their own or specialised versions of

the catalogued talent. Some, like that possessed by Gremlin of the Nevada Project are of the latter - a talent specialisation while others, like that of Blackout again of the Nevada Project are quite unique.

Below we illustrate another wild talent of the latter kind. A rare ability possessed by only a handful of psychics.

#### **WILD TALENT: Astral Form**

"Kitty relaxed, feeling her weight sink into the sofa, the leaden feelings in her arms and legs beginning to subside as the cushions shifted under her. Eyes closed, she began to regulate her breathing taking deeper and deeper breaths until finally she exhaled her deepest, expelling almost all of the air from her lungs.

As the air began to force its way back into her body she felt the rush of light particles bouncing off her eyes and she was free, a spirit floating upon the air looking down at her body, so serene in repose now, so weighed down by the gravity of materials.

Unfettered she swam skyward, wheeling her way among the clouds almost dizzy from the adrenalin of her departure. A moment later she was half a continent away speeding towards a hidden military base. The next moment she had penetrated its walls, weaving her way through corridors and locked doors like the invisible wisp she was. The insignia of an owl caught her eye and she paused, drawn in like a moth to a candle to a door. She poked her head through the door, confident in her astral form that she would be safe.

Beyond the door a man stood dressed in a starched dress uniform. He straightened his collar and then glanced in her direction. She was surprised to see him react, his pupils narrowed as he looked through her. More surprising still was that she could not move. She was rooted to the spot

where the man now approached, a warm smile on his face. He spoke quietly "Here little moth...come to the flame". She could feel psychic tendrils barbed with poison search her mind and begin to unravel the link back to her body. Could this man hurt her though she was safe and sound a thousand miles away? She could feel his mind touch hers and she recoiled. With a single thought she snapped back to her body and woke with a shout.

Three days later Kitty was picked up by a Project Hunter Unit. I lost my link with her about twenty hours after that. They'd pumped her full of drugs and had got in a Scanner to get what they could from her. Our situation was compromised and we had to bug out. Sometimes I think I can feel her out there and I wonder if she's free, or maybe she's working with them now. Or just maybe that's a ghost out there, not some psychic projection."

- Carl Wanamaker, Network Telepath.

**SUPPORT:**                      Catriona "Kitty" O'Neill    Age: 19  
**Affiliation:**                Network / Unknown  
**Allies:** unknown            **Enemies:** unknown

<b>Stats</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Psychic Ability</b>
END:3	Warfare:Nov	Astral Form: 8
REF: 4	Espionage:Com	Travel: Prof
INT: 5	Survival:Com	Sight: Com
STR: 3	Social:Prof	
FAT:0	Knowledge:Prof	
STS: 4	Technical:Nov	

**Personality:** Kitty was always popular with the others in her cell. She had a sense of humour and an optimistic outlook on life that helped the others through their hardships. She enjoyed using her talent for both work and play.

**Background:** Kitty came from a lower class family in an area where the social problems often caused the breakup of families and relationships. Her family stayed together sparing her from the brunt of the hardships and she quickly learned that teamwork was important for any unit to survive together. She joined the Network when she was identified as an Esper by a Project Sniffer Unit and has been instrumental in their work by acting as the eyes and ears of her cell as they move against the Projects. She was arrested in June of 1996 and she is reported as MIA. Speculation abounds as to whether she is dead or has been turned over to the side of the Projects. Investigation is prohibited by the Network as it may provide the Projects with leads to the Network organization and compromise the integrity of the system.

**Astral Form - a new talent**

This is the ability to separate the psychic consciousness from the body and permit it to travel unseen to other places. Tests have shown that it is more than an advanced form of Remote Sensing or Object Reading and the Astral form is known to possess a rudimentary Kirlian Aura which can be perceived by psychometrists. While separated the astral form may travel at great speed and observe other locations. The physical body is dormant as if in a deep sleep or a trance state but physical sensations on the sleeping body can be felt by the astral form.

**Travel:** a subskill of Astral form which permits the traveller to use instinct rather than reason to travel the world. This permits the traveller to move a thousand miles in the blink of an eye and still know where he is in relation to his target. This ability also permits the traveller to return to his body in an instant if threatened or if the body is in danger.

**Sight:** at times there can be interference in the 'astral sense' especially when close to other psychics. This can manifest as

'ectoplasmic streamers' from a telepath to bright auras surrounding those using biofeedback. Sight permits the traveller to ignore the random effects of these distortions and see what is happening in the real world.

**Combat:** in the rare event that an astral traveller would meet another, there are skills in manipulating the astral world of ectoplasm and bright auras in order to cause stress to an enemy. Combat would be resolved using this score and damage inflicted would be added directly to the Stress total of the target.

**Force:** possibly the most draining of the astral travellers arsenal is the ability to affect the material world while still in the astral plane. With a successful roll of Astral Form plus Force ratings the traveller can cause objects to move in the real world. Each use causes Stress. One point causes a light breeze, two a light fingered touch, three a light slap, four a blow hard enough to send ornaments flying and doors slamming and five a mighty strike that can do all of the above plus create a gust of wind that can shatter glass. If used to strike a living being then three stress are gained and a level one would is caused.

**Game Notes:** Rolls should be made where necessary. The power rating of the psychic should be an indication of how far the traveller can go from his body and for how long. Each level is a multiple of minutes and miles, i.e. a power level of six would permit the traveller to go 100 000 miles for one minute or 100 miles for 1000 minutes. Use of this ability causes 1 automatic stress. Each power level that is used adds one to the total. If the talent is used at power level 4 then four points of stress are added for the use of the ability. Going into a controlled trance before departing the physical body will reduce this stress gain by half but requires that the character have the requisite knowledge/survival skills.



## Another Wild Talent

### **WILD TALENT :- Project Image.**

"Cop work, it just gets crazier! Yesterday I booked a bum in for a psych evaluation. It was the wierdest thing. These bums were hassling some old man for cash, he started talking back to them, they started to get ugly. So's I picked up the pace and started to cross the street toward them - they turned, towards me and started running, yelling the man had a gun - I didn't see one.

I got one, cuffed him, and asked the oldster if he wanted to press charges. He walked up to the bum and started poking him in the chest with his finger, sounding of about what he'd like to do to him. The thing was - the hobo was crapping himself - really crapping himself. He started yelling, asking me to help him, gibbering about the gun - "The F\*\*\*ing GUN man!!!!" - heh. The old man let him off then, gave the guy a strange smile and toddled off. Still, the bum had to be on something, and was spaced out, so I took him in for a drug and psych eval. George got back to me at lunch time, guy was clean, just booze in the veins - still was freaked out. Won't be hassling old folks for awhile I reckon. We are living in strange times Louie."

- Police Officer Lorenzo D. Wilder, NYPD, 17 Dec 1999.

### **Project Image - a new talent**

This is a Telepathy based talent, and has four variants. The first and most basic variant is Basic Vision. The character can make one or two people in close proximity to each other see things that are not there, e.g. a car, a person, or a gun in a characters hand - or in someone elses hand. In addition, a character can warp a persons visual perceptions making near things seem out of reach etc.

The second variant is Kinetic Image. With this the projected image appears solid, be it gun, car or the mailbox that some criminal has posted a letter his boss told him to send.

The third variant is Mirror. Here a character can extract an image from someones mind and project that image. A guard can be shown the I.D. she was expecting to see or a character can appear to be someone the person knows.

The fourth variant is Facade. A character can develop and maintain an illusion about his form that can be seen from all angles and will fool even a cursory and tactile examination.

#### Game Notes

A single variant can be bought at a cost of one quality point while if a character wishes to specialise on Project Image then he needs to pay the standard cost of two points. Each of the variants has some game notes followed by the skill and difficulties necessary for someone with telepathy and psychokinesis talents to mimic.

Each variant requires a rating in Project Image and a skill level in the variant (generated as a normal psychic ability in T23L). Basic Vision and Kinetic Image require Difficult rolls against their total while Mirror and Facade require Formidable rolls. If trying to mimic the ability using Telepathy, all difficulties are raised by one level. Basic Vision can be mimicked with Telepathy/Implant. Kinetic Image requires Telepathy/Implant and Psychokinesis/Telekinesis. Mirror requires Telepathy/Implant and Telepathy/Extract. Facade requires Telepathy/Implant and Psychometry/Awareness.

## **Nevada Project Weapons**

Nevada Project squads are issued with standard US Army firearms, but the Project's armoury includes a selection of less common weapons which are available to PCs who can use their Negotiation or Management skill or otherwise justify their need for them. They will probably deal with Master Sergeant Lester Sontag, a sour tempered soldier with a noticeable paunch. He will not release any weapons without a complete set of correctly-filled in paperwork. However he is a skilled gunsmith and if befriended (hint: talk about firearms in technical detail) will enthusiastically help the PCs with any weapon related problems. He has a small but well-equipped workshop and several assistants.

**SUPPORT:** Master Sergeant Lester Sontag Age:36  
Stats Base 4 Skill Base: Gunsmith: P (+4)  
Firearms: C (+2)

**Equipment:** Fatigues (with a copy of Guns and Ammo in the pocket), tools, filing cabinets

The armoury is a squat bunker set away from the rest of the Project headquarters buildings. Its shelves contain cases of M16 and MP5 variants and M9s (this is the US military designation for the Beretta M92). There are smaller numbers of M249 Squad Automatic Weapons and M24 sniper rifles. The Project holds about thirty AK47s. As an experiment the Project purchased twenty Spectre submachine guns in the late 1990s. These Italian weapons are liked by some for their large magazine capacity but the MP5 (and the closely related MP2000) remain the most popular because of the lighter weight and greater familiarity. Some less common weapons such as shotguns are kept in small quantities. Of course ammunition and sighting devices are kept for all of these weapons. There are some 'sterilised' weapons, these have had all identification markings which could be used to track their or-

igin back to the Project or even the US removed. The table gives the ERIS system statistics for weapons the PCs may find in the Nevada armoury.

<b>Weapon</b>	<b>Calibre</b>	<b>Mag</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>C / M / E</b>
<b>Pistols</b>				
M100	9mm P	12	1	20 / 60 / 100
<b>Offensive Handgun Weapon System</b>				
Colt M1911 MEU (SOC)	.45	7	1	20 / 60 / 100
S&W Mark 22	9mm P	8	1	10 / 50 / 60
Smith and Wesson Mark 22 'Hush Puppy'	9mm P	15	1	10 / 30 / 75
Beretta M9	9mm P	15	1	10 / 30 / 75
<b>SMGs</b>				
H&K MP2000	9mm P	30	1 / 3	40 / 90 / 200
SITES M4 Spectre	9mm P	50	1 / 3	40 / 90 / 150
H&K MP5	9mm P	30	1 / 5	30 / 80 / 175
H&K MP5K	9mm P	2x20	1 / 5	25 / 70 / 130
<b>Assault Rifles</b>				
M16A2	5.56 NATO	30	1 / 5	30 / 175 / 350
M16A2 Carbine	5.56 NATO	30	1 / 5	30 / 130 / 300
AK 47	7.62 Soviet	30	1 / 5	25 / 125 / 200
<b>Sniper Rifles</b>				
Remington M24	7.62 mm	6	1	100 / 500 / 1000
Barrett Model 52	.50 BMG	10	1	100 / 450 / 1000
<b>Shotguns</b>				
Ithaca M37	10 Gauge	8	1 / 2	10 / 25 / 40
Pancor Jackhammer	12 Gauge	10	1 / 5	15 / 30 / 45
<b>Machineguns</b>				
FN M249 SAW	5.56 NATO	30/Belt 6		30 / 150 / 500

Some of these weapons may be unfamiliar to players. The M100 and M1911 MEU (SOC) are very accurate pistols made or modified for special operations. The M100 is silenced and fitted with a laser spot projector as standard. The Hush Puppy is waterproofed and completely silent. The MP2000 is a highly modified silenced MP5. Standard MP5 magazines do not fit it.

**Save the Children:  
A 23rd Letter Adventure by Colin Johnston**

The PCs are members of the WhiteChapel Project, although they could belong to another Project or be a Network cell. They are called to a briefing room by their immediate superior, who asks them to watch a short video. It is an exert from a promotional video produced by an international children's welfare charity and deals with the plight of refugee children in warzones. Part of the film was made in a Bosnian refugee camp, and a short sequence shows some children performing in a talent show. An English-speaking brother and sister do a very good conjuring act. If the PCs don't realise themselves, their boss will tell them that some of the tricks are impossible without psychic talents. Between them, the children (Anya, aged about 13, and Bruno, about 9) appear to have significant precognition, telepathic and telekinetic powers. The PCs are to go to Bosnia, investigate the children and bring them back to the UK ("After all, they'll be better off here"). How the PCs get custody of the children is left open.

Enquiries will reveal that the video was shot six months before and the refugee camp was near Mostar. WhiteChapel will supply transport to Bosnia and a guide/interpreter. If the PCs ask, they will also be given false papers identifying them as reporters, charity workers or whatever. The journey will be uneventful unless the GM wants it to otherwise. The refugee camp is a depressing place, with several hundred people living in tents and shacks. Everyone will remember the two children, who were well-known for their tricks, but the PCs will hear a variety of rumours about where they are.

Eventually the PCs will meet the kids' mother, Rosa Gajic, a pale, broken-looking woman. Weeping, she will tell the PCs her story. Three months ago, a couple of Americans arrived at the camp and asked to see the children perform. They ap-

peared very impressed and offered to take them to Hollywood, the Americans claimed to work in the movie industry and could get parts for the children. In addition, they would pay \$10 000 for the privilege. Rosa said no, but her husband Vultan did the deal without her knowledge, handed the kids over and fled with the money. If the PCs try to pursue him, they'll find that he is dead, having drunk and gambled away the money before being hit by a car in Sarajevo (a genuine accident, but the PCs don't know that). However Rosa has received one letter from her children, posted shortly after the kids left, the envelope carries a Los Angeles postmark. Briefly it says that all is well, and was not obviously dictated. There is a photo too, of the kids in an American city street. By studying the background features, the PCs may realise that the photo was taken in New York. Rosa will not let the PCs leave without obtaining a promise that they will find Anya and Bruno and bring them back to her.

If the PCs try to work with the local authorities they will find them very unhelpful. The officials were not interested in the case and some had been bribed to look the other way. The very most they will discover by normal and paranormal means are as follows:

The two men used the names Matthew Bruce and Jason Trask. They gave their professions as businessmen. Bruce was in charge, Trask was apparently his body guard.

They travelled on a US registered Gulfstream business jet. It belongs to an American leasing corporation.

They left with two children meeting the missing kids' description but the boy and girl had US passports naming them as Bruno and Anya Hanusiak. The children seemed happy and excited.

The PCs will wonder what they should do. Hopefully they will suspect the involvement of an American Project or Power. Their superior will order them to New York, but they may stop in London to plan the trip. Relations between WhiteChapel and the US Projects are especially bad and the PCs will be warned not to approach American officials. Library research will provide the facts that Bruce is a rising star on Wall Street and has recently shown remarkable ability in predicting stock market changes. He was already rich, now he has an estimated fortune of \$30 million. He has no known relationship with the Western or Nevada Projects or with criminals.

In New York, the PCs will no doubt study Bruce. If they watch him or study him with esper abilities, they will discover the following:

Bruce is a smart, greedy and ruthless yuppie.

Trask is a former US Marine and is head of security for Bruce's company. He acts as driver and bodyguard for Bruce.

At irregular times they drive to a small country house off Highway 495 on Long Island. It is owned by a couple called Robert and Alice Hanusiak. Hanusiak is another former Marine and works for Trask.

The Hanusiaks have recently adopted two children who attend school in the town of Riverhead.

This is what has happened. Bruce was shown the video in the hope he would be moved to donate money. Instead he noticed the kids and realised that they had psychic powers. He believed he could use them. So he more or less bought them and took them home. By bribery he obtained passports and adoption papers for the kids. The Hanusiaks are a genuinely

sincere couple who want children but cannot have their own, they greatly enjoy having the kids living with them. The children have settled well and but miss their parents. They have written several letters home which have not been posted. Their first letter was posted from LA to reassure Mrs Gajic.

Apart from their abilities and upbringing in Bosnia, the children are just that, children. Bruno loves soccer and Sci-Fi movies and TV shows and hates the braces the Hanusiaks make him wear on his teeth. He is obsessed with aliens and UFOs. His sister loves the horseback riding lessons which Alice Hanusiak takes her to. She is asthmatic and is never without her inhaler. Anya is the best precog, and Bruce works mostly with her. She can predict share values with about 75% accuracy, so Bruce still uses his own acumen in conjunction with her advice. Bruce has a foul temper and once lost control with her after one of her incorrect predictions caused him to lose a large amount of money, Trask prevented him from slapping her. Bruno has telekinetic and probability manipulation skill, and Bruce is experimenting to see if Bruno can manipulate sports results and public lotteries. He plans to bet on the results. Neither child fully understands what they are asked to do, but do it willingly. Bruce isn't good with children and they don't like him, surprisingly Trask is more popular with them. The Hanusiaks allow Bruce access to the children whenever he wants, although if they knew just how vicious he can be, they might have second thoughts. Bruce rewards the children with expensive presents.

If the PCs think that they can extract the kids, there are several potential problems, not all of which will be obvious to them. The Hanusiak's house, a two storey wooden building set in two acres of woodland and meadows, is fitted with a high tech intruder alarm system which will alert the Hanusiaks. They keep two Rottweilers (Sly and Arnie) as guard dogs and a couple of guns (a Colt M1911 pistol and a



Stakeout shotgun) are stored in their bedroom. Both Hanusiaks will fight any intruders, especially if they are after the kids. If they call the police, it will be 15 minutes before the first patrol car arrives. Alice Hanusiak stays at home while her husband commutes to New York city, he works various shifts. She drives the children to the school bus stop in the morning and collects them in the afternoon. She is alone with the children fairly often but is relatively trusting of callers who arrive in broad daylight. She allows the kids to roam where ever they like on their land. On weekend evenings she takes the kids shopping to mall, where they wander unattended.

Should the PCs attempt anything while Bruce and Trask are there, things may get really nasty. Trask is tough, competent, wears a shoulder holstered Glock 17 and carries nightvision goggles and an MP5K in his briefcase.

The kids have their own rooms. These have bolts on the inside of the doors and are completely typical in decoration and content for boys and girls of their ages. Anya reads teen romance novels by torchlight under her bed covers so is often awake very late. Before going to sleep, her brother sets up boobytraps (tripwires and the like) around his bedroom, these are to give him a chance should the Grays try to abduct him in his sleep. The suburban school attended by the kids has a dozen security guards and is located in a neighbourhood watch zone. The PCs could pose as social workers or immigration service agents to take the kids away, but they and their false IDs will need to be very convincing (and will their British accents be suspicious?). The kids will not necessarily leave willingly with the PCs, but telling them that they are being taken to see their mother may help (can the PCs prove this?). If the kids saw the PCs harm the Hanusiaks (or anyone else for that matter) it will be very difficult to reassure them. How they bring the children to London will be inter-

esting too, if they blatantly kidnapped Anya and Bruno, the authorities at airports and border crossings will be watching for a pair of children meeting their description.

If this seems too easy, here are optional complications the G.M. could introduce:

The WhiteChapel Project is very under-funded. The PCs are given a cash advance of £10,000 to carry out the operation. Everything they need, transport, equipment, forged documents etc. must come out of this budget. Under no circumstance will they be given any more.

To defend himself from aliens, Bruno keeps a water pistol filled with ink by his bed. The water pistol is moulded in black and styled like a real auto pistol, so if the PCs break into his room and waken him, things could get interesting (and possibly tragic).

Anya's precognition has warned her of the PCs' existence, so Robert Hanusiak and Jason Trask have set a trap for the PCs. On the journey to London, the children demand to be taken home. They noisily cause a major incident in a public place, attracting the attention of bystanders and police. Maybe one of the kids runs away in the confusion.

Trask may plan to sell out his boss and his buddy. He is going to kidnap the kids and sell them to a criminal organisation which will use them to enable gambling scams, or perhaps one of the Powers. By coincidence, his plan is to take the children about the same time as the PCs intend to. Trask's abduction would almost certainly involve bloodshed to cover his traces and the PCs may be blamed.

Coming soon from Crucible Design:

**The Project Sourcebook**

With details on the goings on in China, Russia, Holland, Germany and our old favourites Britain and the US. Includes more equipment for budding Project members as well as a description of how well the Projects interact. See our web page for details.

The Western Project has just discovered the children's existence and has taken or is just about to take them for itself. A team of agents, including espers, posing as child welfare workers and law enforcement officials will take the kids (probably from the school), claiming that the Hanusiaks had immoral designs on the children. If this happens, maybe the PCs could offer to help the Hanusiaks. Remember if the Western Project captures the PCs, the very best they can hope for is an extremely unpleasant interrogation, confiscation of their equipment and deportation back to the UK.

Once the kids are successfully delivered to WhiteChapel, the PCs may wonder if they've done the right thing. Anya and Bruno have a loving and distraught mother in Bosnia and caring foster parents in the US and now they are separated from both. Is this right? What should the PCs do? They should have promised Rosa Gajic that they would return her children to her, so will they keep this promise? Anyway, what is the WhiteChapel Project planning for Anya and Bruno? Unless the PCs do something, once they hand the kids over to their Project they will never hear from them again. What happens after this is up to the players.

### **Threeway Split**

#### **A23rd Letter adventure by Eamon Watters**

##### **The Situation.**

The Network is loose. Any organization that accepts outcast from all walks of life has to be. Some cells are run with military efficiency, others would shock university student with their laxness.

Lennie's Wanderers were one such cell. The aforementioned Lennie wasn't so sloppy to actually be called 'Lennie', his real name was Freddie Parkshed. A renegade from the sixties, he was into free love, militant pacifism, drugs, and, of course, rock and roll. Freddie's power, appropriately, was Mind Bliss - the ability to activate the emotion centres of the brain at will.

Moving from squats, to communes, to protest camps, the Wanderers gathered an eclectic menagerie of espers. As long as the esper wasn't psychopathic, Freddie took them in. In February 2006 Freddie made a fatal mistake, he welcomed Ian Stirling into the fold.

Ian was an angry young man, like a lot of the Wanderers. He was also a sociopath. At a protest against the repairing of the M1 Motorway by the 'Back to the Fields' eco-group one of Freddie's Cell saw a Policeman beating himself with a baton, the prostrate figure of Ian on the ground. He was obviously gifted, and defending himself from the 'filth' as best he could. The esper used implant to cause the policeman to sleep, and brought Ian back to Freddie. Ian initially fitted in quite well into the group. Freddie was lax enough to give him his own way most of the time, and trained him to better use his psychic ability - sympathetic nervous system synergy, better known as 'Body Control'.

After a move to Aberdeen Ian found it harder to make 'liaisons' with the opposite sex for a period of a few days. Unfortunately he decided to use his power to relive his tensions with a certain member of the Cell. He was immediately confronted by Freddie, but he lashed out, and taking control of him, made him kill his accuser. The rest of the Cell were aroused by the commotion, but he used Freddie to hold them at bay while he and Freddie escaped.

The cell now has a murder on its hands, apparently committed by its leader, who is now controlled by a nutter, who will use him as he pleases. Already the local press is abuzz with reports of robberies carried out without resistance, and police falling over themselves rather than catching the crooks. This may have brought official notice down on the area, the projects and powers may be closing in fast.

Ian has limitations. He can only control one person at a time, and only make them do what a conscious human could. He cannot stop their heart or freeze their brain, though he could make them stab themselves or others. There is also a lag, of at least a second, up to 9 seconds in the most resistant people, between him commanding someone to do something, than the act being carried out. If the object of this act has moved out of the senses of the controlled, then they will do nothing. His main tactic is to stay concealed nearby whilst his 'puppet' attacks his enemies. If he relinquishes control of someone for a few seconds he can attack people by contracting their chest muscles, stopping them breathing.

By the time this attack is over he can take over his victim again and escape. He also has no problem with putting civilians in danger if it affords him an advantage.

With the report of the first robbery the Whitechapel Project will be alerted. On the event of the second robbery or other odd event they will dispatch a team to investigate at once. Not far behind them, by about a day, will be the minor Power known as the Human-Machine Interactions Institute. The reason for this delay being the better access Projects generally have to official channels.

The Project Team will consist of 4 people:

Frankie Hillingdon    END REF INT STR PSI STS

Age: 31                    3    6    5    4    0    0

Qualities: Perceptive, Lower Class, Rival,

Firearms, Unarmed - Prof

Blade/Blunt, Intrusion, Stealth, Perception, Survival, Driving - Comp

Surveillance, Climbing, Repair, Psychology - Nov.

Equipment: BMC Leviathan 4x4, Snazzy Suit, Shades, Raincoat, Glock 17, MP-5, WA2000 in Car Boot, CellPhone.

Martina Francis      END REF INT STR PSI STS  
Age: 37                3    4    6    3    0    0  
Qualities: Perceptive, Enemy.  
Perception, Stealth - Prof  
Intrusion, Drive, Socializing, Ciphers, Unarmed, Negotiation  
- Comp  
Medicine, Computers, Psychology, Firearms - Nov.  
Equipment: Carrington Sports 21C, Smart Suit, Briefcase  
with Portable PC, Umbrella, M15 ID, CellPhone, Burglar's  
tools, Colt Detective.

Gunther Welt         END REF INT STR PSI STS  
Age: 53                2    3    5    4    8    0  
Qualities: Psychic, Unattractive, Overweight.  
Awareness - Vet  
Intuition, Medicine, Surveillance - Prof  
French, Object Reading, Telelocation, Management, Psychol-  
ogy, Communications - Comp  
Drive, Firearms, French Literature of the 18th Century - Nov.  
Equipment: Restrained Suit, Briefcase w/Scrambler Radio  
and a book by Voltaire, Med Kit, Silly Putty (Kneads whilst  
using esper powers), Thick Glasses, Browning H-P.

Iain Pardoe          END REF INT STR PSI STS  
Age: 26                5    5    3    5    6    0  
Qualities: Psychic, Deaf, Delusions.  
Reception, Extract - Prof  
Implant, Drive, Repair, Firearms, Intrusion, Engineering -  
Comp  
Computers, Unarmed, Skiing, Painting - Nov.  
Equipment: Casual Smart Clothes, PDA/CellPhone, Hip  
Flask of Brandy, Humidor of Cuban Cigars, mini toolkit,  
Walther PPK, Silk Scarf, Sword Stick, MI5 ID, Binoculars in  
Sports Car, Spy Gadgets.

Hillingdon and Welt will provide backup for Francis and Pardoe as they investigate the strange goings on in Aberdeen. Due to the anachronistic gear of Freddie Parkshed they'll get quite a lot of information off the street, including the current location of the Network Cell. If the Network Espers are being sloppy then the Project Team will follow them hoping that they'll lead them to Ian, and in the ensuing confrontation they can bag them all.

At the end of the second day the team from HMII will arrive. They will be more like enforcers and thugs rather than dedicated researchers into the unknown. If it comes down to a straight gunfight then the players are going to lose. HMII has come loaded for bear and they can have another team (read: hit-squad) in the area in 30 minutes.

This adventure can be played from a number of aspects. It is assumed the players will be members of a Network cell. If they are a member of a Project (presumably WhiteChapel unless the adventure is relocated) then the statistics above could be used for the Network members. As Network members they won't have access to any cool gear, anything but the most basic of weapons and certainly no MI5 ID cards!!!

## **FAQ**

The first edition of The 23rd Letter was not without mistakes. The infamous “brian tissue” haunts us to this day. We present some of the most frequently asked questions in an attempt to clarify rules.

### **“What is Brian Tissue?”**

Sorry! We meant “Brians Brain Tissue”. Thanks Brian!

### **“The damage from FAEs seems underestimated.”**

We never had them in the first place. Just for effect I’d put them in with nuclear warheads. Look, if you’re near an FAE going off - no game mechanic is going to save you - you are dead!!! (For those not in the know, FAE means Fuel-Air-Explosive.)

### **“Where is the damage record on the character sheet?”**

Well it was missing because we left it out. This shouldn’t have caused too much hassle we hope. We include a new updated character sheet with WildTalents in hardcopy and the fixed character sheet is also available from our website in Adobe Acrobat format. The reader for this format is freely available from <http://www.adobe.com/>

### **“When is the game set? There are references to the future but nothing clear.”**

This is deliberate (You knew we’d say that...). The game is set in the opening years of the next century or the flagging years of this one. The future looks bleak, even more bleak than one might assume.

### **“I thought Terata were meant to be tough. I beat five in my game.”**

Well on one hand a Terata may have phenomenal precognition but be physically unable to do anything about the future. This one would therefore seem quite weak. Encountering the



Terata should not be a bughunt. A monster with precognitive powers would soon win friends willing to protect him in the return for the use of his talent. I'd also mention that if you have met five Terata then you may not be playing the game the way it was intended - you aren't doing anything wrong though, your game is what you make of it.

**“The Weapons list looks small. Where can we get more guns?”**

Look at the second edition, theres more. Look earlier in this issue, more still!!! We've added more but others should be easy to adapt. Remember though, the bigger and better guns you use, the more of a threat you are and the bigger and better is the weaponry the enemy is using.

**“Why is the skill list so short? I find it hard to flesh out a character I can believe in.”**

If this is true then the problem probably isn't with the game. The rules are just a brief guideline, feel free to add new skills to the list, but remember the 23rd Letter skills are very wide, if you want minor skills like Drive Motorcycle then take them as specialisations.

**“If a character is learning a psychic talent (i.e. Telepathy), should subskills be learned in order (i.e. Reception, then Extract..)”**

Not really. The game works best if players choose their individual talents. This fits the genre better as well. Firestarter could only use Pyrokinesis. Her father could only use Regent.

**“Character Generation is difficult as you have to jump so many pages due to the tables.”**

It is spread across seven pages. That isn't too bad is it? You only need to visit each table once as well.

**“Why isn’t there an equipment list?”**

Well, the game is set in the very near future so it is best just to assume the same prices as today and we couldn’t possibly fit every cool gadget into one book. As for buying guns, you either have them supplied by your employer or you pay through the nose buying them illegally.

**“Can you give clear evidence on whether to play a psychic or normal character?”**

Well there is a choice. Normal characters don’t have to worry about stress and they won’t have Projects and Powers knocking on their door. At the same time, Normals don’t get cool psychic powers. I’d say ask your GM.

**“Shouldn’t shotgun damage decrease with range, but hit probability increase with range up to medium range?”**

Hit probability doesn’t change much. Shotguns now have a rate of 1/2 which means they can use the Autofire rules to a limited degree. This should simulate increased hit probability. Damage also decreases with range as Critical results cannot be given out if fire at Extreme range.

**“Why can’t you kill with one punch in 23rd Letter?”**

You can. If you study martial arts and are pretty strong and if you can hit someone on the head then you’ve maybe done six points of damage which is fatal. Even less than this can take someone out of action due to the effects of Fatigue/ Shock on people with low endurance scores.

**“When is the Project Sourcebook coming out?”**

It has been delayed. Hopefully out real soon.

**“How do I get Wild Talents?”**

In the game you get them by begging your GM. You can get this newsletter for the cost of postage or via download. Up to you.

### **“Why can't I play a Powers Agent?”**

Well because in every story there has to be a bad guy and we picked the corporate types. We didn't really foresee the players would want to play scumbags. There might be some fun in it and if demand is high enough then we'll write the Powers Sourcebook.

### **“Why can't I play a Terata?”**

You can't. Sorry. Och...if you want to play one then its really up to your GM but they aren't really the focus of the story even though I have a gem of a scenario idea which involves them....

### **Please keep in touch!**

We can communicate via email or snail mail and some of us can always be found on some USENET newsgroups. I'm sure you can track us down!

Email: [info@crucibledesign.com](mailto:info@crucibledesign.com)

Web: <http://www.crucibledesign.com/>

### **What Else Are We Working On?**

Lots of different things! Qabal is still under development and I'm sure we can get you thinking when we drop codenames like Frontier, Airtight, Hegemony and 2K.

We are trying to concentrate on getting a sourcebook or two out and supporting our first games as well as extending the product line with another game or two.

The web pages listed above are the best source of information and are often updated with more info. We also include PDF character sheets and issues of Wild Talents for download.

### **On the Net?**

We have our first fan page! You'll be able to find it on a link off our main pages soon! It has some nifty rules for the 23rd Letter devised by Chris Lupton. He also has an adventure and sample characters made up!

## Catalogue of Products

**The 23rd Letter, 2nd Edition**                      **£9.99**                      **CD.120**

Be part of a psychic conspiracy that threatens to shake the world apart. Play a government agent, a rogue psychic or a human caught up in a secret war. Fight monsters and free yourself from mental domination. The Psilent War has begun. Whose side are you on?

**The Project Sourcebook**                      **TBA**                      **CD.111**

A supplement for the 23rd Letter. More details about the role that your government plays in the secret war. Do they know? Do they care? Will you help them hide a great secret? Will you kill to reveal that secret? What side can you afford to take? Also includes errata and updates plus a lot moe psychic abilities and equipment!

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An all-consuming and terrible desire for the Original Sin. Two thousand years of magic is waiting out there, ripe for the picking and only you and a handful of others know the Keys that can open the tombs of dead kings. There are others out there, things that gnash and chew. A game about magic and how easy it is to forget what your friends really are.

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Games are available from most good UK stockists as well as direct from us and from conventions that we attend. You may have to pay a little extra for postage. See our web pages for pricing details.

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