3. How Paranoia Works

In **PARANOIA** you play a Troubleshooter who undertakes *missions* for The Computer. A mission is a storyline; a sequence of episodes that you and the other PCs experience. You might complete a mission in a single game session a few hours long or in a series of sessions.

Possibly you might not complete it at all. The other PCs may kill you first.

You are – we now cut to the chase – a traitor. You are a mutant and a member of a Secret Society. If your fellow Troubleshooters (the other players) find out, they will have you arrested or more likely shoot you. If you die, you will have to pay for a replacement clone body and this new body may have unfortunate drawbacks. The best way to avoid this fate is to shoot the other bastards first.

It is unwise to just start firing randomly. The Computer requires you to first obtain *evidence* of a target's treason. Otherwise you yourself will be convicted of unjust accusations and probably terminated. If you present adequate evidence, The Computer will remand the convicted traitor to Internal Security or authorise you to terminate him. This authorisation may be retroactive.

Evidence can be documents, video records, incriminating materials or, most often, corroborating testimony from other Troubleshooters. Consider forming temporary alliances with other players to gain or create evidence against a common enemy.

Your goals as a Troubleshooter

The Computer assigns Troubleshooters several duties:
1. Serve The Computer.
2. Locate and eliminate traitors, including (but not limited to) Communists, Secret Society saboteurs and terrorists, unregistered mutants, data pirates, WMD manufacturers and IR Marketeers.
3. Investigate and eradicate corruption.
4. Remove dangers to the good order and smooth operation of Alpha Complex.

Aside from these duties, your Troubleshooter has some personal goals. Many are universal among citizens of Alpha Complex. Most citizens prioritize them as follows:
1. *Survive*!
2. Rise in Security Clearance.
3. Get rich.
4. Further your Secret Society's goals.
In addition to these standard goals, your Troubleshooter may have other goals not shared by all citizens:
5. *(Optional:)* Locate and protect fellow mutants who share your power.
6. *(Optional:)* Find Old Reckoning artifacts to collect or resell.
7. *(Optional:)* Escape from Alpha Complex to freedom Outdoors.
8. *(Optional:)* Overthrow The Computer (good luck!).

PARANOIA play styles

You can play **PARANOIA** in several different styles – as pure comedy, frenzied slapstick or tense and fearful dark satire. The GM's chosen play style affects some game rules, including the rigor The Computer requires for an accusation of treason. The GM will divulge the style he has chosen before play begins, if this suits his worthy purpose. This rulebook focuses on the **Classic** style of play. See the section starting on page 194 for discussions of **Straight** and **Zap** style play.

Classic: Made popular in previous editions of the game, this is rapid-fire slapstick. Troubleshooters seldom live long enough to advance far. Alpha Complex suffocates in bureaucracy, perpetually on the brink of collapse. 'Laurel and Hardy get jobs with the IRS on the original starship *Enterprise*.'

Straight (also called **Dark**): Fear, suspicion, striving for power and advancement, occasional hard-won successes in a scarily functional Alpha Complex. 'Yossarian from *Catch-22* gets a job in Orwell's Ministry of Truth.'

Zap (also called **Excessive** or **Frantic**): Pop-culture parodies, cartoon physics and frenzied firefights at the drop of a Bouncy Bubble Beverage can. Alpha Complex is generally irrelevant. 'Yosemite Sam gets a job in a factory that makes sledgehammers, nuclear warheads and glass unicorn figurines.'

5. Clones

In the old days citizens were decanted in families of six identical clones. Now you are just You, alone – the Prime.

If you die, your memories are transferred to a clone backup body. You have five clone backups. If your GM allows it, you can purchase new six-packs of backups.

In the old days of Alpha Complex, The Computer created citizens in families of six identical clones, all born from the tanks at the same time. When they died, their precious genetic heritage was lost to Alpha Complex. What a treasonous waste of resources! Today, thanks to advances in forced-growth cloning technology, The Computer's loyal servants in Technical Services can now produce new clone copies of any citizen at will and can copy and transfer a clone's memories with absolute accuracy.

Most citizens who meet an untimely demise must wait months for Tech Services to get around to downloading their recorded memories into a new replacement body. Because Troubleshooters have a twenty-seven-thousand-percent higher fatality rate than average, The Computer has thoughtfully ordered Tech Services to

prepare a number of ready backups of You.

A new backup clone will be dispatched soon after you have been killed in the line of duty. Usually, the new you will show up after around five minutes but heavy traffic or multiple terminations can delay delivery. GMs should see page 52 in the Gamemaster's section for a longer discussion of clone replacements; players should read page 52 only if they wish to experience first-hand the loss of a clone backup.

When you run out of backups, you may be able to purchase another six-pack of clones. The chances of this being an option vary depending on how overcrowded Alpha Complex is, what Clearance you are and whether or not you've got an enemy in the clone factory. Even if you are permitted to purchase more clones, note that genetic drift becomes a problem after the sixth clone. The seventh might have a minor speech impediment or be missing a finger. The eighth has the same problem and could also be nearsighted, partially deaf or colour-blind (a grave hazard in Alpha Complex). The ninth has both of these problems and might also have a

pronounced limp, twitch or hump. By the 10th or 11th clone, think Quasimodo.

At Clearance **BLUE** and higher you can spend 10,000 credits to get Tech Services to clean up and correct your clone template, so that your next six clones are as perfect as the original. The only means of template cleanup at lower cost or Clearance is an illicit deal made through a Secret Society. Generally the society requires you to do it a favour at some unspecified time in the future. Perhaps the society will never call in that favour, perhaps they will never need you...

Does your clone replacement always have the same mutant power as its predecessor? Not necessarily. If you want to keep the same power, tell the GM. Otherwise, he may give you a new power or ask you to roll again on the Mutant Power table in this section. Or he might just say you have got the same power for simplicity's sake. Similarly, your new clone may be provided with a fresh set of assigned equipment or you might be expected to loot your own corpse for supplies.

6. Mandatory Bonus Duty

Each Troubleshooter on the team has a special duty. You may be Team Leader, Loyalty Officer, Hygiene Officer, Communications Officer, Happiness Officer or Equipment Guy.

The Computer assigns fun and interesting duties to specific members of your Troubleshooter mission team as rewards for their continued service. These **Mandatory Bonus Duties** (MBDs) enhance the team's chances of success and provide many exciting and educational experiences. Your added responsibility will make you feel loved, wanted and secure… and not in the least bit paranoid.

For instance, your MBD might be *Communications and Recording Officer*. As such, in addition to your normal duties during a mission, you would operate a

valuable multicorder to record every action by your fellow Troubleshooters. You could get all your fellow Troubleshooters to smile and demonstrate their loyalty to The Computer right there on camera as they execute their mission. Wouldn't that be fun?

Mission briefing officers may assign you an MBD based on detailed analysis of your past achievements, your performance on HPD&MC Mandatory Bonus Duty Determination Test 88-9b, your core competencies or your place in alphabetical order.

The Duties

Team Leader: Offers guidance and sound advice to other team members; acts as tactical situation commander in combat.

Loyalty Officer: Discourages treasonous thoughts; looks for early warning signs of Commie sympathy.

Hygiene Officer: Monitors the personal hygiene level of other team members, preventing poor morale, substandard performance and halitosis. CPU performance tracking statistics show [CLASSIFIED] percent of Troubleshooter missions fail due to poor hygiene.

Communications and Recording Officer: Chronicles the mission using advanced video technology, extremely sensitive microphones and gripping colour commentary. Good lighting and innovative camera angles produce excellent training material and possibly even footage for popular evening vidshows like *Bake That Commie!*

Happiness Officer: Ensures everyone has fun on the mission; knows jokes, sings, leads citizen-instruction games; authorises and administers biochemical supplements needed to guarantee a fun time is had by all.

Bots/Weapons/Vehicles/Sundry Equipment Repair and Maintenance Officer (Equipment Guy): Controls bots and vehicles assigned to the team; monitors each Troubleshooter's equipment maintenance level. The Equipment Guy is responsible for assigned mission equipment that gets lost, stolen or damaged.

Badges describing the duties of each MBD are on page 151. Ask the Gamemaster to photocopy these badges and hand them out to the players.

'Meet the team. Then, shoot the team.'

7. Missions and How to Survive Them

There is a standard template for Troubleshooter missions, a trail blazed by the thousands of brave, doomed Troubleshooter teams who went before you, a trail marked by blood and lit by laser fire… ahem. Anyway, it goes like this:

1. Mission Alert!
Your Friend, The Computer alerts you and the rest of your team via your Personal Digital Companion (PDC), by a convenient terminal or by sending a bunch of heavily armed goons to pick you up. Prompt response to the mission alert will be commended. Hesitation or a lack of enthusiasm will be punished.

2. Secret Conference
The traitorous among you secretly conspire with mutants, Commies and traitors, and receive instruction from their Secret Societies. The loyal among you go to the bathroom – alone, of course and are not at all conspiring with other Secret Societies.

3. Briefing
The team assembles in the briefing room, where your briefing officer informs the team of the task and gives you whatever information is available at your Security Clearance.

4. Equipment Outfitting
After briefing, the team moves onto Production, Logistics and Commissary, where you will be issued with your mission equipment. You may be obliged to purchase some of this equipment from alternate sources, such as C-Bay or the **INFRARED** market.

5. R&D
After PLC, it's time to make the traditional stop at R&D, where you will be issued with some new experimental equipment for field testing. This equipment is usually a one-of-a-kind prototype, so you will be responsible for its care and subject to severe penalties if the equipment is lost, damaged or fails to function as expected.

Alternatively, you may be sent to one of the other Service Groups to perform some service for them. Perhaps CPU needs you to survey Bouncy Bubble

'OK, Snafued, Hurt, Maimed, Down, Killed, Vapourised. Not pictured: Toasty.'

the ability of the recently deceased to care about.

Recovering from damage

You decide how long a character takes to heal damage. Here is some guidance:

Snafued characters recover from the Snafu at the end of the next round.

Injuries can sometimes be healed at the end of the current combat. Docbots and medikits provide plastiflesh and repair nanobots that can zip up a flesh wound, no problem. Broken bones are harder, requiring days of bed rest in a medibed as nanobots painstakingly build up layers of bone cells. Either way, the team's Happiness Officer should ensure that the injured team-mate can happily participate in the rest of the mission by giving him enough painkillers to light up an elephant.

Maimed limbs can be regenerated in a week or replaced by high-tech mechanical prosthetics in a shorter time. No, nothing ever goes wrong with a prosthetic limb, like for instance evil Secret Society programming that makes the limb lash out wildly at the society's enemies. How could you even think that?

Downed characters revive in a minute or less if aided or in 10 minutes without aid.

Recently **killed** and still attractive characters of Clearance *BLUE* or above can sometimes be revived with diligent attention from Tech Services. No one bothers below Clearance *BLUE* or after about 10 minutes, or without sufficient body material to make revival an exciting prospect. Revival of the dead is a less

costly and more trouble-free alternative to activating a new clone.

If a **vaporised** character's player wants to recover, laugh brightly and chide him for being a smartass.

Damaging objects

Troubleshooters routinely need or at least they try, to destroy bots, equipment, doors, walls, delicate Old Reckoning china and other physical objects. Let these objects perish according to the needs of the mission, with attention to dramatic effect rather than to strict results dictated by materials engineering. If you like, you can instead carry out experiments around the house. Try your own home slugthrower on common household objects like vacuum cleaners and TVs. That's what we game designers do.

target with, say, a random loyalty test or a hidden bug, then it is Mr. I've Got More Treason Points over there.

Similarly, you can roll 1d20 against a character's Treason score to determine if he's able to access sensitive information or get favours from official sources. If you roll equal to or under the character's Treason Point total, then deny his request or stick extra consequences on him. (*'Certainly, citizen, you may have access to the operations manual for your vehicle. However, as a, heh, random security measure, the manual will self-destruct in one hour if not returned to this office. Keep the manual with you at all times.'*)

Traitor!
A Troubleshooter who has accumulated **20 or more** Treason Points is declared a traitor. Optionally, The Computer announces this with sirens, flashing lights and '*please report for termination*' balloons falling from the ceiling. You can also take the subtle approach, such as a note passed to the Loyalty Officer informing him of his team-mate's new status.

Terminating a traitor is a meritorious act. It is permissible to terminate a citizen who is not a declared traitor, as long as you then immediately provide proof that he was a traitor (i.e. can pin enough stuff on him to bring his Treason Point

total to 20 or higher). If this proof is not provided *immediately*, then the murder is charged with Unwarranted Termination (10 Treason points). It's generally safer to accuse the target of treason first and get permission to terminate.

Note that a failed accusation brings a penalty of +5 Treason Points but being accused of treason also inflicts two Treason Points on the suspect. After all, if you are being accused of treachery, then *something* must be going on. Repeated accusations of treachery without added proof will be dismissed – you can't shout '*Fred-R's a Commie*' ten times and then shoot him.

Commendation Points

The opposite of Treason Points, Commendation Point are given for really heroic and meritorious actions. Each Commendation Point given removes one Treason Point. If you have got no Treason Points, then you start accumulating Commendation Points instead. However, Internal Security treats this as being extremely suspicious behaviour – anyone that loyal is sure to be hiding something.

Executing a Traitor	2 points
Turning a Traitor over to IntSec	1 point
Unmasking a Traitor	1 point
Completing a mission	1 point
Commendation from a Superior	1 point
Successfully completing and reporting a Service Service	1 point
Being Extremely Happy	1 point
Heroic Act (Documented By Multicorder or other camera)	1 point
Truly Impressive Bootlicking	1 point

Debriefing
At the end of a mission, the team is debriefed, which inevitably leads to more accusations, recriminations, arguments, corpses being dug up and skeletons being dragged out of closets. During debriefing, Treason Points work slightly differently – all of the evidence against the Troubleshooter is added up and a suitable punishment is assigned, from mild censure to brainscrubbing to termination, all the way up to complete erasure of the Troubleshooter's clone line.
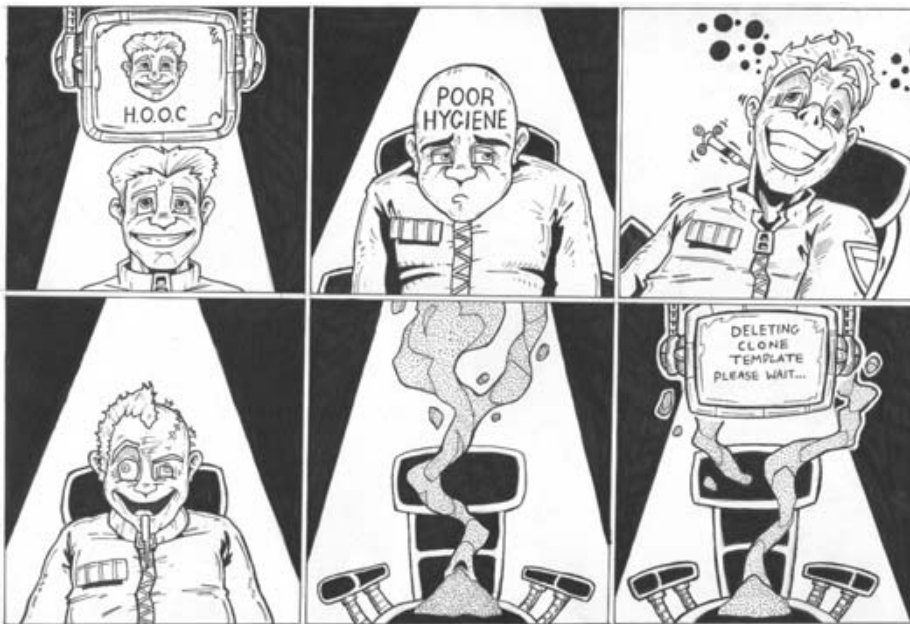
'The just desserts of treason.'

cluster of sensors and communications equipment corresponding to a human head in size and basic function. Two thick manipulator arms with four degrees of freedom extend from the cylinder, functioning like human arms.

Jackobot brains have true intelligence and therefore develop humanlike personalities. In addition, they have large amounts of RAM and many ports for mem cartridges. Thus any jackobot has potentially any skill or specialty, given the proper cartridge. Because of the memory limitations of individual models, only a certain number of skill programs can be resident in memory at any one time. However, a jackobot can reprogram itself within one Combat Round simply by unplugging one cartridge and inserting another.

Scrubot

Ah, the scrubot. The iconic bot. A little box of toxic chemicals, overheating brain chips, psychosis and scrubbing brushes, rattling through the pipes and air vents of Alpha Complex like over-sugared and citrus-smelling rats in the walls… who doesn't love the scrubot?

The answer is 'anyone who has ever met a scrubot'. The best scrubbers are merely surly, uncooperative and capricious. The worst go for your throat if you catch their camera, squealing that the inside of your jugular vein is absolutely *filthy* and must be cleaned *immediately*.

Scrubots are equipped with a range of high-pressure sprays, caustic chemicals, toxic air fresheners and high-speed vibrating brushers and scrubbers. Sometimes, they even bother to clean things with these attachments. Tech Services clones tell strange tales of scrubot colonies deep in the bowels of Alpha Complex, where the weird little bots have built nests of scavenged trash and formed their own bizarre culture…or cult.

Warbot

Take, say, a small mountain. Pour steel over it. Wait until it sets. Then stick it full of nuclear reactors, railguns, laser cannons, particle beams, nuclear missiles, plasma generators and even more exotic and unlikely guns. Now, put a very small and very stressed bot brain on top of the

whole apocalyptic enchilada and stand very very very very well back.

Vehicles

Citizens of **BLUE** Clearance or higher may legitimately own a vehicle as personal equipment and **ULTRAVIOLET** Clearance permits a citizen to commandeer any vehicle at will. The Computer temporarily assigns vehicles to Troubleshooters according to availability and the needs of each mission.

Automatic (bot) vehicles

Because almost all vehicles in Alpha Complex have bot brains, any character can normally command these vehicles to operate in their self-directed mode. Sounds neat, doesn't it? Not so fast.

Have you ever ridden in a car that talks? 'A door is ajar. A door is ajar. Please fasten your seatbelt. Thank you.' Urgh. It is bad enough to have an idiot voice nagging you over trivia; imagine how much worse things would be if the voice had intelligence and even control over the vehicle.

Welcome to Alpha Complex. Few citizens receive training in any Vehicle Operation specialties, so passengers must rely on the bot. This can lead to problems:

Flybot: Please fasten your seat belt.
Troubleshooter: Shut up!
Flybot: Hey, look, you're supposed to wear your seat belt.
Troubleshooter: Shut up, I said!
Flybot: Well, okay, buddy, I mean, it's your life.
Troubleshooter: Okay, we turn left here. *[Turns wheel. Flybot fails to respond.]*
Flybot: Are you sure you want to go left here?
Troubleshooter: Yes! Yes, dammit! Do what I tell you!
Flybot: Well, okay. If you insist. *[Flybot turns. Time passes.]*
Flybot: Shouldn't we climb a bit or something?
Troubleshooter: Huh? Why? *[Through the viewscreen looms a huge mountain, shrouded in mist. Troubleshooter yelps.]* Why didn't you tell me we were headed into a mountain? *[Wrenches at wheel.]*
Flybot: You said 'left turn;' so I turned left. I suggested maybe we should do

something else, but nooo. You were pretty rude about it, too. *[Turns desperately; a wingspar snaps; wing begins to shudder; G-forces wrack the cabin.]*
Troubleshooter:
Sorrysorrysorryohplease pleeease…

Manual drive

Any character with the Vehicle Ops and Maintenance specialty in the Hardware skill can drive a vehicle manually.

Inadequately trained operators always manage to get themselves into some kind of trouble – often fatal trouble. Even if they survive their mistakes, they face steep fines for damaging valuable equipment. This encourages Troubleshooters to be careful with their assigned vehicles. Unfortunately, being careful is not always enough.

Each vehicle has a Security Clearance. In normal circumstances, only citizens of the appropriate Clearance are assigned vehicles. A citizen of equal or higher Clearance can access the vehicle's online help system and learn how to operate it.

However, The Computer considers Troubleshooter missions of the utmost importance to Alpha Complex and unstintingly assigns resources to Troubleshooter missions. Frequently Troubleshooters are assigned vehicles of much higher Clearance – **BLUE**, **INDIGO** or **VIOLET**. These vehicles are extremely powerful and often heavily armed. Unfortunately, the Troubleshooters do not have the requisite Security Clearance to access the user manual and The Computer is not about to permit such a drastic breach of regulations. Trying to operate a vehicle with no knowledge of its abilities can be frustrating:

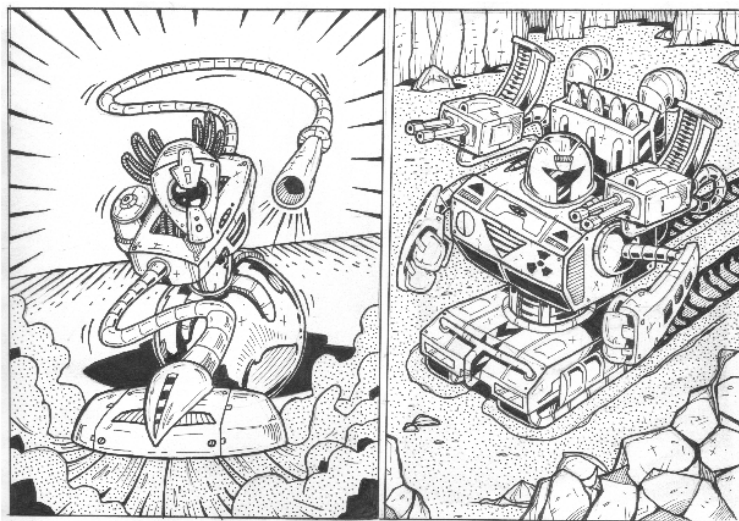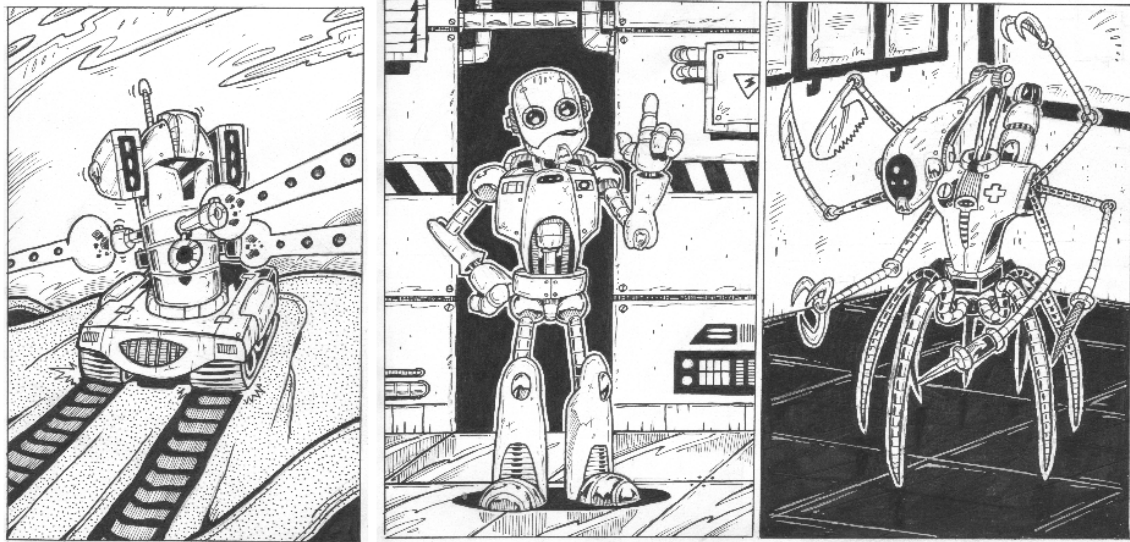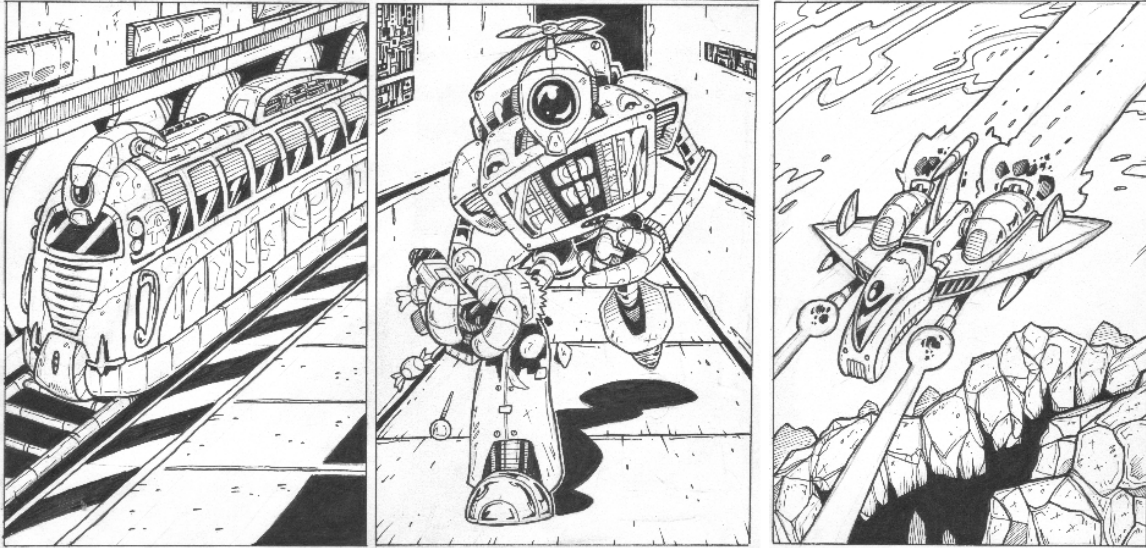**Troubleshooter:** Okay, I ease the flybot into gear.
Gamemaster: With a dramatic *whump*, the steam cannon launches you out the tubes at Mach 3. Bill-R is sucked out his window by the slipstream.
Troubleshooter: I hit the 'close windows' switch.
Gamemaster: Which switch is that?
Troubleshooter: Ah – the one by my armrest?

'Bots are your plastic pals. Or, in the case of warbots, your titanium steel and depleted uranium pals.'