



INTRODUCTION

This quickplay scenario is an introduction to *The Troubleshooters* roleplaying game. We assume that you already know what a roleplaying game is, and are curious about *The Troubleshooters*.

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SETUP

This scenario supports up to six players plus a Director of Operations (the gamemaster). We think that 4 players is a good number, but it will be playable with as few as two players plus a Director (although not as fun).

- Ideally, the Director of Operations should be someone who is both familiar and comfortable with the rules.

- The players choose one character each. The descriptions of abilities and complications are listed on each character.
- Hand out two startup handouts to two different players with corresponding plot hooks.
- Start the adventure.

WHAT YOU NEED

To play this quickplay scenario, you need:

- At least one set of dice (two ten-sided dice, preferably numbered 0–9 and 00–90, and half a dozen or more six-sided dice), though more than one set, or even one set per player, is a good idea
- This scenario
- [The quickstart rules \(separate file\)](#) or the core rules
- Pre-generated characters (from the quickstart rules)
- Printed handouts
- Pen and paper
- A printer (to print the pre-generated characters and handouts)

GETTING STARTED

If you are using the quickstart rules, start by printing the six pre-generated characters from the quickstart rules. If you use the the core book, transfer the pre-generated characters (page 8-11) to the “emergency passport”, or have the players make their own characters.

You will also need to print the handouts for the scenario (page 16). Print these single-sided.

Get acquainted with the scenario and the rules.

The scenario is set in the Paris area, starting with a Christmas lunch at *Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville*. It is a detective story which assumes that the characters follow up the leads. If they are stuck, give them more leads so that they can progress.

GETTING THE PLAYERS STARTED

Have the players look at the pre-generated characters, and pick one each. Set the rest of the characters aside. You won't be needing them unless you choose to replay the scenario later.

From the characters chosen, pick two as the startup characters. Then pick one startup handout for each character that fits your idea of how to start the adventure.

A special word about startup characters: they are supposed to help you get the adventure going and drag the other characters along. There is a note about that on the handouts, but make sure that the players notice it.

If the startup characters do help you, award them an extra experience tick during the debriefing session at the end. If the other characters make the startup characters feel like the main characters of the night, award them an extra experience tick during the debriefing session.

TEACHING THE PLAYERS

You will need to teach the players how to play the game. There is a cheat sheet provided on page 41, which you should print and distribute to your players. It is a handy reference which explains the basics of the game.

The most important thing for the players to understand is the basic task check:

- Roll percentile dice, usually abbreviated **d%**, and compare the result against a skill value.
- Equal to or lower than the skill value is a success, higher than is a failure. Try to fail forward, though; don't let failure stop the action or bring the characters' progress to a halt, but rather let the failure drive the story.
- In opposed checks, on top of succeeding, your roll must be higher than the opponent's in order to win.
- If an action has a modifier, check the **Ones**. If the **Ones** are between 1 and a negative modifier, disregarding the minus sign (i.e. 1 or 2 for a modifier of **-2 pips**), the task check fails regardless of whether the roll is lower than the skill value. If the **Ones** are between 1 and a positive modifier (i.e. 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 for a **+5 pips modifier**), the check succeeds even if the roll is higher than the skill value.
- If the **Ones** and **Tens** are equal, **Karma** happens. If the task check fails, it's **Bad Karma** (something bad happens). If it succeeds, it's **Good Karma** (something good happens).

Sometimes you want the players to participate in a challenge. You will list a number of skills, and the present characters must distribute the task checks among themselves as evenly as possible. The more checks that succeed, the better the challenge goes.

You also need to explain how Damage (**NdX**) and Recovery/Soak rolls (**NdP**) work.

- Roll N number of six sided dice.
- Each 4, 5 or 6 is one point of Damage, Soak or Recovery.
- Damage rolls (**dX**) explode. This means that for each result of 6, roll an additional die. Repeat until there are no more sixes.
- Soak and Recovery rolls (**dP**) do not explode.

Finally, **Story Points** allow the players to influence the story, activate abilities, and change rolls. The players get **Story Points** for **Karma** (good or bad), entertaining the table, activating complications, or being captured by the villains.

Each character starts the adventure with **4 Story Points**, and can have as many as **12 Story Points**.

There are a lot more details, of course, which you can find in the Rules section (page 23) of this scenario.



HOW ROBO-SANTA STOLE CHRISTMAS

A Troubleshooters quickplay scenario

INTRODUCTION

This is a short adventure, intended to be used for Session Zero. It will take about 2-5 hours to play, and can be played right after character creation at Session Zero.

REQUIREMENTS

The adventure takes place in Paris in December 1964.

- It is assumed that the characters know one another well enough to at least have a gathering before Christmas.
- The location, Paris, can easily be changed to another location if you want. The time, just before Christmas, is harder to change, since the adventure depends on an animatronic Santa.

If you use this adventure as your Session Zero adventure, tell the players about these requirements.

THE STORY

Elinore Mauvin is a genius, and also a bit unstable and paranoid. She runs a small studio specialising in special effects and animatronics for tivolis, stores and the like. She was commissioned by Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville (BHV) to create an animatronic Santa.

The Robo-Santa was built from a reused bodyguard robot that she had created to protect her from the Octopus. She reprogrammed its positronic brain to play the act of Santa.

As we all know, being paranoid doesn't mean that they're not actually out to get you, and sadly, Elinore was right – the Octopus were out to get her.

The Octopus decided to use the opportunity to not just hurt Elinore Mauvin, but also test their positronic reprogramming beam. They gave the means to the robotic Santa by hiding a machine gun in his throne, and then aimed their PRB (for "Positronic Realignment Beam", of course) at Santa, in order to have it hunt down and kill Elinore Mauvin.

It didn't go as expected. The core programming to defend Dr Mauvin against the Octopus and protect itself and its master was too deep. Instead, it made it crazy. The reprogramming made it go berserk and attack at random, but it will still defend itself, neutralise

all threats, and kill anything that it can identify as an Octopus agent.

That's where the characters come into the story. As they investigate the case, they find the traces to Elinore Mauvin, hiding in the catacombs, and of course to the Octopus.

HO-HO-HO, NOW I HAVE A MACHINE GUN!

The characters have gathered at Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville, also known as "BHV", one of the classic department stores in Paris, for their annual Christmas season get-together. The department store is at Rue de Rivoli, IV Arrondissement, right in the centre of Paris.

The place is lavishly decorated for Christmas, and they even have an animatronic Santa in the entrance hall. Children can sit on his lap for photographs, and his arms can support the child. He is programmed to say things like "what would you want for Christmas?", "have you been naughty or nice?", "ho-ho-ho" and other things that the archetypal Santa would say.

Suddenly, the animatronic Santa puts a boy over his lap and gives him a spanking while yelling "you have been a naughty boy! Ho-ho-ho!" This sets off a minor pandemonium, as security and door guards try to rescue the boy from the robotic nightmare. When they do, the robot Santa rises from his seat, produces a machine gun, and then runs amok in the department store. He yells "Naughty or nice?!" and shoots random stuff while stomping through the department store like a jolly fat Terminator.

Luckily, he doesn't really kill anyone. In moments he enters the café in which the characters were until recently enjoying their light Christmas snack.

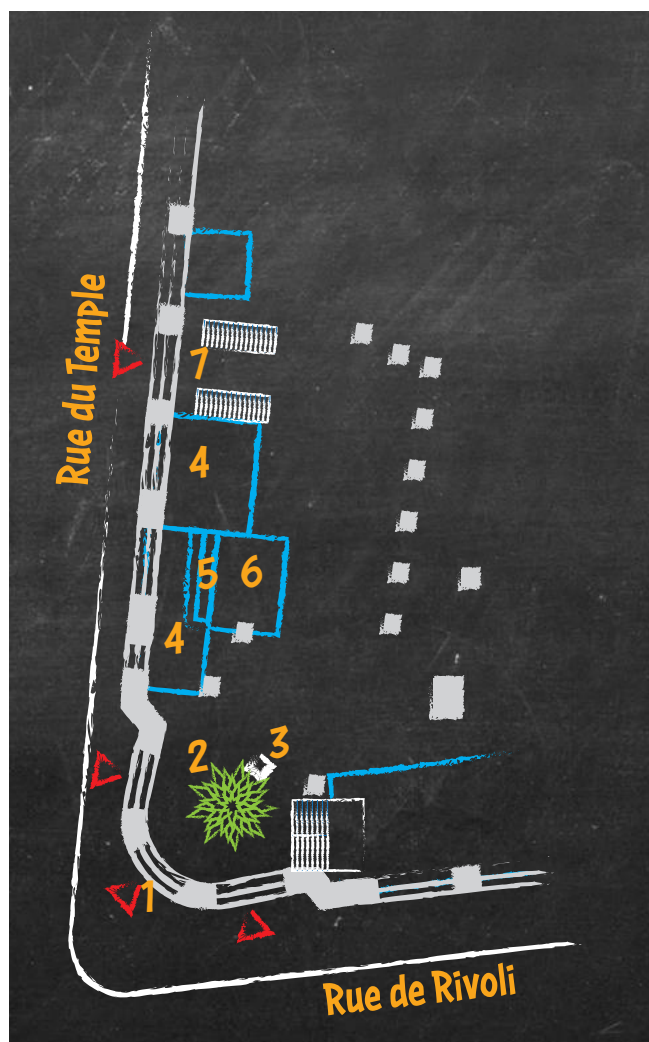
- 1 Entrance
- 2 Christmas tree
- 3 Santa's throne
- 4 Brasserie
- 5 Counter
- 6 Kitchen
- 7 Side entrance

FIGHT OR FLIGHT?

The characters have three options:

- Fight Robo-Santa to stop him. Brave, but really dangerous. Robo-Santa has a machine gun. Run this as a fight.
- Find some other means to stop him that doesn't involve a fight. Run this as a challenge.
- Get out of there and let the gendarmerie take care of Robo-Santa. Run this as a challenge.

Clever or experienced players may find other venues of action. If you are inexperienced as Director, try to steer the actions to one of those three. If you are experienced or just want to see what happens, roll with the punches and go for it!



Only three options?

Experienced roleplayers will not be limited to just these three options. If you are experienced yourself, you don't have to limit yourself either. Instead, just consider the three options as "recipes" and improvise and adapt accordingly.

If you are less experienced, try to gently coax the players into the three options, or interpret their actions as one of the options which you use accordingly.

FIGHT!

Fighting Robo-Santa in the restaurant is risky, especially if the characters don't have any weapons. But if the characters choose this option, do this:

- Present the map of the restaurant. Show the different zones of the restaurant, and where they are and where Robo-Santa is.
- Then roll for initiative. Robo-Santa has a set initiative of 5.
- In descending order, ask each player what they do. They can do a move, an action and a free action. Then make the task checks as required.
- At the start of the second round, Robo-Santa activates full combat mode. When that happens, he shoots back after each attack on him.
- Robo-Santa is a Lieutenant, and will take the **Wounded** condition instead of being **Out Cold** the first time. The second time his vitality runs out, he is **Out Cold**.
- The fight ends when Robo-Santa is **Out Cold**, when the characters are **Out Cold** or leave the scene, or if the characters do something creative (see Creative non-violence below) and stop Robo-Santa that way.
- A character can flee from Robo-Santa in a fight: on their turn, make a Sprint as their main action plus a move, and they're two zones away from Robo-Santa and can probably break line of sight.

FLIGHT!

Escaping is probably the smartest thing to do when hunted by an armed machine with a machine gun. Here is an example of a challenge to get out.

Challenge: escape from the restaurant

Each player picks one skill. If you have two players, each player picks two skills. Do not make task checks for superfluous skills.

- **Agility**, to duck under, over and through things.
- **Alertness**, to predict and evade Robo-Santa's search beam.

- **Endurance**, to keep doing the gymnastic exercises.
- **Sneak**, to remain unseen.
- **Subterfuge**, to fool Santa to look in the other direction.

Outcome

Great outcome: You manage to get out of the restaurant and rescue another restaurant guest from the mechanical terror. Pick another player character or invent a Director character to save.

Good outcome: You manage to get out of the restaurant unharmed.

Limited outcome: You manage to get out of the restaurant, but ... every person who failed their task checks must pick a mishap.

Bad outcome: You're still stuck in the restaurant.

Abysmal outcome: You're still stuck in the restaurant, and a mishap happens.

Mishaps

Each player directed by the outcome chooses a mishap. Players can choose the same mishap to happen to them.

- You are **Wounded**.
- You lose a gear kit that you had with you in the restaurant for the remainder of the adventure.
- Robo-Santa picks a fight with you, no matter if you want it or not.

FRIGHT?

Any character who hopes to stay undetected will have to make an opposed **Sneak task check** at -2 pips against Robo-Santa's Sensors skill. Add extra modifications to the character's task check if they come up with clever ways of hiding.

If the character wins, Robo-Santa does not detect the character, but you should still describe how the mechanical horror almost finds the character.

"The Terminator Santa stops next to the table. Its sensors sweep across the room. Then he fires a salvo in your direction and porcelain shards and wood chips rain down on you. There's a short moment of silence – and then he marches on towards the next target."

Let the player sweat a little before telling the result. If Robo-Santa wins, it knocks that character **Out Cold**, and then marches on. Add a mechanical "ho-ho-ho" or "you have been very naughty!" for good effect.

If Robo-Santa wins, it detects that character and fires a salvo in that direction.

“The mechanical horror sweeps its sensors across the room. A red beam from its eyes locks onto you, and then he fires a salvo right at you. You duck, and porcelain and wood chips rain down on you as your cover disintegrates. What do you do?”

From this moment on, the character is in a fight, or has to flee in panic.

CREATIVE NON-VIOLENCE

Creative players may attempt to trap and stop Robo-Santa without actually fighting it. Let the players describe how they plan to take down Robo-Santa, and make a challenge from the players' plan. Look at the skill list, and pick between three and five suitable skills.

Here's an example of such a challenge:

Challenge: stop Robo-Santa without violence

The plan is to trip Robo-Santa with a rope, then cover him with a tablecloth to blind him and then cut the battery.

- **Sneak**, to get in position without being seen
- **Subterfuge**, to lure him into the trap
- **Strength**, to trip Santa with the rope
- **Agility**, to cover him with a tablecloth
- **Electronics** or **Engineering**, to cut the battery

Outcome

Great outcome: Robo-Santa is disabled, and it happens to be photographed. The characters become heroes in the national press.

Good outcome: Robo-Santa is disabled. Well done!

Limited outcome: Robo-Santa is disarmed but not disabled, and will continue to go berserk but without a machine gun.

Bad outcome: Robo-Santa avoids the trap.

Abysmal outcome: Robo-Santa notices the trap and prepares a counter-move that surprises the characters.

AFTERMATH

If the characters stop Robo-Santa, they become heroes of the day, with their faces on the front page of newspapers and on television. If all characters are **Out Cold** or flee the scene, Robo-Santa stomps on until eventually the army arrives to take out the mechanical menace.

Any **Wounded** characters are taken to hospital and treated. You can just fast forward a couple of days and drop the **Wounded** condition. **Out Cold** characters are also examined at the hospital, but released shortly after.

The story of Robo-Santa will dominate the news for a week. No matter whether the characters flee or stop Robo-Santa, they will be sought after by journalists. This is a good time to introduce Pierre Martin, a journalist from *La République* – he will return in future adventures of *The Troubleshooters*.

THE ACTUAL START OF THE ADVENTURE

The horrible events at the BHV were only a prelude. The actual adventure starts here.

It is about a week after the incident at BHV. BHV is mostly open again for business, but parts are closed for forensic investigations and repairs.

Pick two characters as **plot hook** characters, and hand them their startup handouts. Have the characters gather for another – hopefully Santa-less – lunch somewhere and talk about their future plans.

If the characters still hesitate, have the journalist Pierre Martin show up again and invite them to explore the secret catacomb entrance or check up Robo-Santa.

INVESTIGATING ROBO-SANTA

If the characters opt to investigate Robo-Santa, it's in the Army's forensic laboratory, being disassembled and investigated by their top scientists.

By chance, there is a Christmas ball for officers at the army base coming, and it is possible to enter the base with an invitation to the ball. Examples include:

- **Knowing someone:** A **Contacts task check** can easily get a character plus one invited to the ball.
- **Being an officer:** Having the Military rank ability practically means that the character plus one is already invited.
- **Spending story points:** Being invited already is a minor addition, so for **2 Story Points**, a character plus one can be invited.

At the ball, there will be a five-course dinner, lots of wine and champagne, dancing, and of course officers (both military and police) and dignitaries from other European countries. The guest of honour is the President himself.

If the characters did something heroic, like fighting or stopping Robo-Santa, then the President will be

notified about the characters' presence. He will then hold a short speech about their ingenuity and valour and the gratitude of the city and the nation. He will then have them step forward so he can thank them personally, handshake and cheek kisses and all.

Infiltrating the secret lab will require some verbal legerdemain to get away from the ball, nimble fingers to steal the necessary access cards, and sneaking to avoid the base guards, but it is not impossible.

Challenge: getting into the secret army lab

Here is a sample challenge for getting into the secret lab. Use it as it is, or as a template for making your own challenge.

- **Charm**, to get away from the party without suspicion.
- **Sneak**, to not be noticed by guards.
- **Prestidigitation**, to get hold of access cards to get into the lab.
- **Security**, to get past the locks and security cameras.

Outcome

Great outcome: The characters can get in and get a look at Robo-Santa undisturbed before meeting some friendly top scientist to ask.

Good outcome: The characters find the lab, and some suspicious but not hostile top scientists working on the robotic horror.

Limited outcome: The characters find the lab, and some surprised top scientists will set off the alarm immediately if the characters don't do anything about it quickly. They will not tell the characters anything except name, rank and number. They can also demand to call their lawyers or remind the characters of what the Geneva convention says about prisoners of war, depending on what is most humorous at the moment.

Bad outcome: The characters do not get a chance to get to the lab. Time for plan B.

Abysmal outcome: The characters are caught by base guards at a very inappropriate moment. Put them in the base's jail, give them **9 Story Points**, and have them come up with a brilliant idea for getting out.

Asking the scientists

The top scientists are actually clueless. The robotic Santa seems to be controlled by a sparkling blue glass cylinder in the head. It has a large and powerful battery in its belly, but other than that, it is built using over-the-counter

parts, like power actuators from car steering, an ordinary steel pipe frame, CCTV cameras for eyes, and so on. But whoever built Robo-Santa was a genius! And they have no idea how the positronic brain works.

Challenge: investigating the Robo-wreck

- **Electronics**, to understand the wiring.
- **Engineering**, to understand the mechanics.
- **Science**, to understand the positronic brain.
- **Search**, to find the weird stuff in it.

Outcome

Great outcome: The strange glass cylinder is a self-organising mass of positron antimatter which is used as a "brain" in the most advanced experimental robots by the military. They're banned in Britain and Germany for environmental reasons. This positronic brain seems to be infected with a purple mold. The battery is a lithium-ion battery developed for the French-Japanese Kaguyahime atomic moon rocket.

Good outcome: The glass cylinder is a positronic brain, used to control the most advanced experimental robots by the military. It has some swirling purple stains in it. The battery is not an acid-lead battery, but a lithium-ion battery.

Limited outcome: The glass cylinder in the head has some swirling purple stains in it. The battery is not acid-lead, but something else.

Bad outcome: Other than what the scientists can explain, the characters have no clue.

Abysmal outcome: One character poking around shorts out something. The entire lab goes dark, except for the sparkling positronic brain.

Dundun-dun-dudun

After the character's investigation of the Robo-wreck, it suddenly sparks to "life" after the challenge. Read the first part of the rhyme in your best Santa imitation until the "sgrzt", which is a static sound, and then read bold part in your deepest most threatening voice that you can muster.

"Ho-ho-ho! Have you been naughty, or have you been nice?

That is the question perplexing the wise!

Will you get presents this season of ice?

Or will *sgrzt* **the Purple kill you like cats kill mice?**"

Then the purple stains spread in the positronic brain and the blue light fades. Robo-Santa will not speak anymore.

INVESTIGATING BHV

BHV is at least partially open during the daytime. Some parts are closed for repairs after Robo-Santa running amok. These are behind sheets or are boarded up, and hidden behind Christmas decorations.

Other parts of BHV are closed by the police for investigations. These are just closed off by police tape and Sûreté standing guard, while forensics experts are working inside.

Sneaking in at night is much easier. The place is locked up, as are the individual shops. There is a security system with alarms at the doors and windows, and there are night guards patrolling the place.

Challenge: defeating the security system

- **Alertness**, to not be surprised by the patrolling night guards.
- **Search**, to find a suitable way in.
- **Security**, to pick the locks without setting off the alarms.
- **Sneak**, to not be heard or seen.

Outcome

Great outcome: The characters get in unnoticed as the night guards sneak off for a night cap. They now have the place to themselves for some time.

Good outcome: The characters get in unnoticed, but will have to be careful to not be discovered by the night guards.

Limited outcome: The characters get in, but they trigger a silent alarm or the guards quickly find traces of the break-in. Either way, they call the police quickly.

Bad outcome: The characters are discovered by the guards, but manage to get away.

Abysmal outcome: The characters are caught red-handed by the guards. They are brought to the guard room to be held until the police arrive, who will arrest the characters for unlawful entry and lock them up. Give the characters 9 Story points each and let them figure out how to get out of this fix somehow!

was further expanded in 1953 when two more floors were added.

- The easiest way to get to BHV is by the Métro, at the stop Hôtel de Ville on line 1 and 11.
- The store slogan is “Style as a lifestyle” (“Style come style de vie”)

CLUES AT BHV

Once the characters are in, finding clues is not particularly hard. All the characters have to do is to look at the right place.

The paper trail (main office): There’s a (not paid) invoice in BHV’s office from Dr Elinore Mauvin for building one (1) animatronic Santa.

Santa’s throne: There’s a torn electrical chord that used to power Santa. It seems as if someone ripped it out of something, for instance an electric Santa, so hard that the plug tore off. The cable goes up the Christmas tree to the ceiling. It is hidden in the ceiling, but eventually leads to a socket at the wall. The socket is not on the main fuse box.

The throne has a compartment in the back of the throne, big enough for a light machine gun to be stored.

The path of destruction: Robo-Santa’s path of destruction seems to be quite random. There’s no discernable pattern, except that one particular store for men’s fashion is thoroughly trashed. In particular, a mannequin in a three-piece purple suit is shot to pieces, with the head completely demolished.

The hidden catacomb entrance: The entrance is well hidden behind a panel in a large pillar. It is not fenced off by either the repair crew or the police, but by ordinary store ropes, and guarded by a security guard while the department store is open. At night, the catacomb entrance is not guarded.

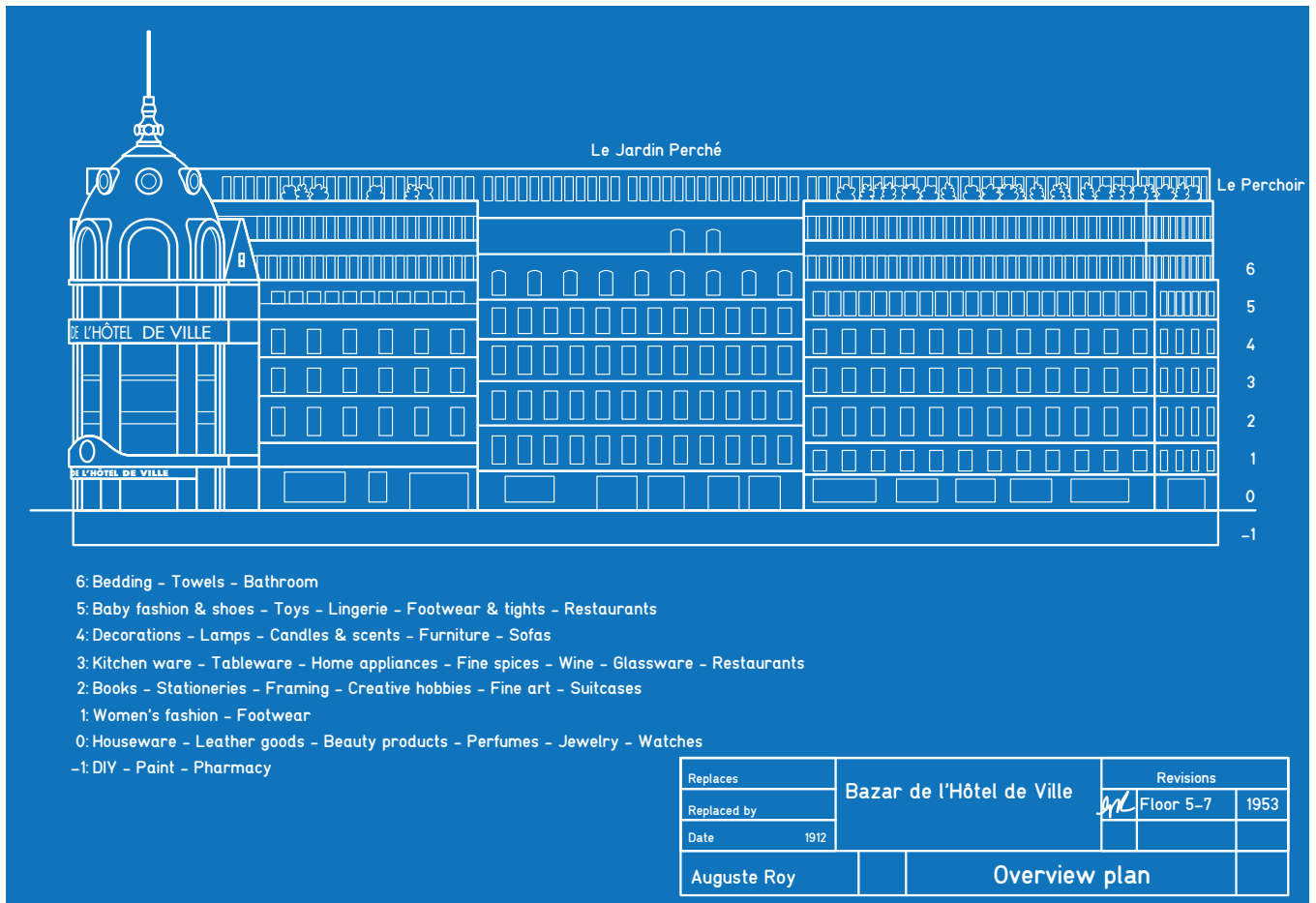
Behind the panel, there’s a 19th century iron ladder inside the pillar, leading down into the catacombs, but also up. Going down to the Paris catacombs is a fun adventure in and of itself, but the real secret is up. If you go up, you will find yourself in a hidden attic where Elinore Mauvin has set up her workshop to control Robo-Santa.

Dr Mauvin’s hidden workshop: In the workshop, there is the equipment to build and construct any kind of robot and several computer racks, but more importantly, there’s the equipment to build positronic brains. There is also a strange machine that looks like an electric chair connected to the computer, and a half finished feminine robot, also connected to the computer.

On a corkboard are sketches and plans of the feminine robot. There are also lots of photos of beautiful

ABOUT BAZAR DE L’HÔTEL DE VILLE

- BHV has a long history, going back to 1852 when Xavier Ruel opened his first boutique across the street from the city hall, and called it “le Bazar Parisien”.
- Architect Auguste Roy was commissioned to rebuild the building in 1913, including its famous rotunda. It



women tacked to the corkboard. Some are known movie stars, others are old black and white photos of a young woman (they show Elinore Mauvin as a young girl). They may be reference photos for the robot. Dr Mauvin is not there.

The workshop can also be reached through the attic, but then you have to get to the top floor of BHV, find the stairs to the attic, and then navigate the almost labyrinthine attic and several locked doors.

INVESTIGATING ELINORE MAUVIN'S PLACE

Elinore Mauvin used to live in a VW camper van near an unused water mill, in a small hamlet outside Paris.

Elinore Mauvin's place is a mess. It's not just a lab of a mad scientist genius stuck in a VW Camper van, but it also looks as if someone has ransacked the place, then left, and then someone else ransacked the place again. That's exactly what happened: first the Octopus trashed her van, and then the police learned that Mauvin created Robo-Santa and tore it apart again.

Among the trashed papers are a lot of demands from debt collectors, representing mostly hardware stores and producers of electronic components, but some of them represent medical bills from specialist doctors.

CLUES IN MAUVIN'S CAMPER

Like the clues at BHV, the characters will find the clues if they just look at the right place. Some acting in character and smooth talking may be needed as well.

The specialist doctors: They will not give any information about their patients to anyone, so it will take a lot of persuasion or a police badge to get that information: Dr Mauvin has an autoimmune disorder which will kill her within a year, probably a lot less if she doesn't get her very expensive medication. There are no bills for the drugs.

The stores: The bills are about hardware and electronic components: precise but strong actuators usually used in fighter jets, powerful batteries of the new lithium type, quite a lot of these new fancy integrated circuits or "chips" as they are known, and so on.

Forensics investigation: There are a few electronic bugs in the van for surveillance. They are passive bugs of Soviet manufacture that are only active when “illuminated” by a specific radio source tuned to 330 MHz. The listening post is in a blue Moskvitch across the river, manned by Grigori and Juri. Juri is a technical expert

from the KGB, and Grigori is a handler and diplomat at the Soviet embassy. Naturally, both of them have diplomatic immunity, which will be invoked if the police arrive.

The bank: If anyone checks Mauvin’s bank account (some **Subterfuge** needed), her account is overdrawn.

MESSAGES

As the characters investigate the matter, they will get two messages. The order is not important, nor the timing as long as it is before the showdown. The message from the Octopus should be delivered quite early in the investigations, while the message from Dr Mauvin is the transition to the final showdown.

A MESSAGE FROM THE OCTOPUS

Knowing that the characters are investigating Dr Mauvin, some underling in the Octopus decides to give them a warning. One night, a number of buffoons in purple leather jackets and balaclavas enter the home of one character (or many, if they live together). The leader leaves a message:

“If you know what’s good for you, you’ll keep your nose out of Dr Mauvin’s affairs. They’re our business, not yours. And to give you an idea what will happen if you ignore our advice, here’s a downpayment!”

Then the crooks beat the living daylight out of the character – not enough to give them a **Wounded** condition, but enough to be **Out Cold**, and the character will miss the next scene.

DR MAUVIN’S STORY

Another character gets a message from Dr Mauvin herself, via telephone or telegram, saying that she wants to meet them.

She tells them that she is dying and needs their help for a final project.

She has them get to her place to retrieve some important tools and components. Then she must get to the hidden laboratory in BHV.

Dr Mauvin is really sorry that they got hurt by her creation, but its brain was “hijacked” by an evil organisation called “the Octopus”, which wants to use her creations and pervert them to take over the world.

She once worked for The Octopus, lured in by their mastermind, the fiendish graf von Zadrith, a polite, intelligent and fiendish German gentleman (and quite

charming). She fled from them, but they have been after her ever since.

She created the framework for Robo-Santa as a bodyguard. When she learned that she was dying, she desperately needed money to finish her project. For that reason she sold Robo-Santa to BHV as a Christmas animatronic, hoping that she would have time and the Octopus would not find her. And if she didn’t succeed, it would not matter anyway.

Hidden in the spare tyre of the van, there’s a new positronic brain, more advanced than the one in Robo-Santa. She needs that.

Challenge: getting the female robot back

If somehow, the female robot was taken from the secret lab at BHV, Dr Mauvin needs it back as well. It may be in the hands of the police, at the university of Paris, or in the same military lab where Robo-Santa was taken.

- **Investigation**, to find who took the robot.
- **Red tape**, to find where it was taken.
- **Security**, to get past the security system of the place.
- **Subterfuge** or **Sneak**, to convincingly or unnoticed get away with an advanced robot.

Outcome

Great outcome: The characters not only find the robot, but also some equipment that will make it easier to finish Dr Mauvin’s project, whatever it is. (This means that they will get a +2 modifier on the task checks in the challenge to activate the positronic brain.)

Good outcome: The characters find the robot and get it back.

Limited outcome: The characters find the robot but lose one part of it, like an arm or a leg. (The characters will get a -2 modifier on the task checks in the challenge to activate the positronic brain.)

Bad outcome: The characters find the robot but are discovered. The police chase after them, and they have to get away from the police somehow! Time for a chase scene!

Abysmal outcome: The characters do not find the robot, or cannot get in to steal it back. Time for plan B. Or C, or whatever it is.

A FINAL SHOWDOWN

In her hidden laboratory at the BHV, Dr Mauvin spends some time inserting the positronic brain in the female robot. Then she needs the help of the characters to activate it. It involves lots of high-power stuff, and switching things on at the right time.

Challenge: activate the positronic brain

One of the task checks is done by Dr Mauvin. Roll dice, but the task check succeeds anyway.

- **Engineering**, to manufacture the contacts and connections for the positronic brain.
- **Science**, to understand how positronic brains interface with ordinary electronics.
- **Machinery**, to operate the advanced computers and connectors.
- **Alertness**, to make sure that nothing goes wrong.

Outcome

Great outcome: All goes well without a hitch. It takes some time, but eventually, the positronic brain is ready for activation, and the computers will store all data on the magnetic tapes.

Good outcome: It takes some time, but eventually the positronic brain is ready for activation.

Limited outcome: Eventually, everything is ready for activation of the positronic brain, but someone has to go down to the basement to throw the high-power switch. One character will be separated from the others, and fight two Octopus goons by themselves in zone 1.

Bad outcome: The character doing the **Machinery** (first choice) or **Engineering** (second choice if Dr Mauvin makes the **Machinery task check**) will get electrocuted as the final cable is attached, takes **2dX** damage and starts the first round of the fight **Stunned**.

Abysmal outcome: Will not happen thanks to Mauvin's expertise.

Before she can tell anyone what she intends to do next, she collapses. As the characters tend to her, the Octopus arrives, led by von Zadrith himself.

"Ah-hah, frau Mauvin. We meet again! Have you reconsidered our offer?"

"I will never work for you, Albrecht" she wheezes.

"We will pay you extremely well, mein liebe. We will make all those bills of yours – poof – disappear."

"You're gravely mistaken. Soon, I'll be dead, and you with me."

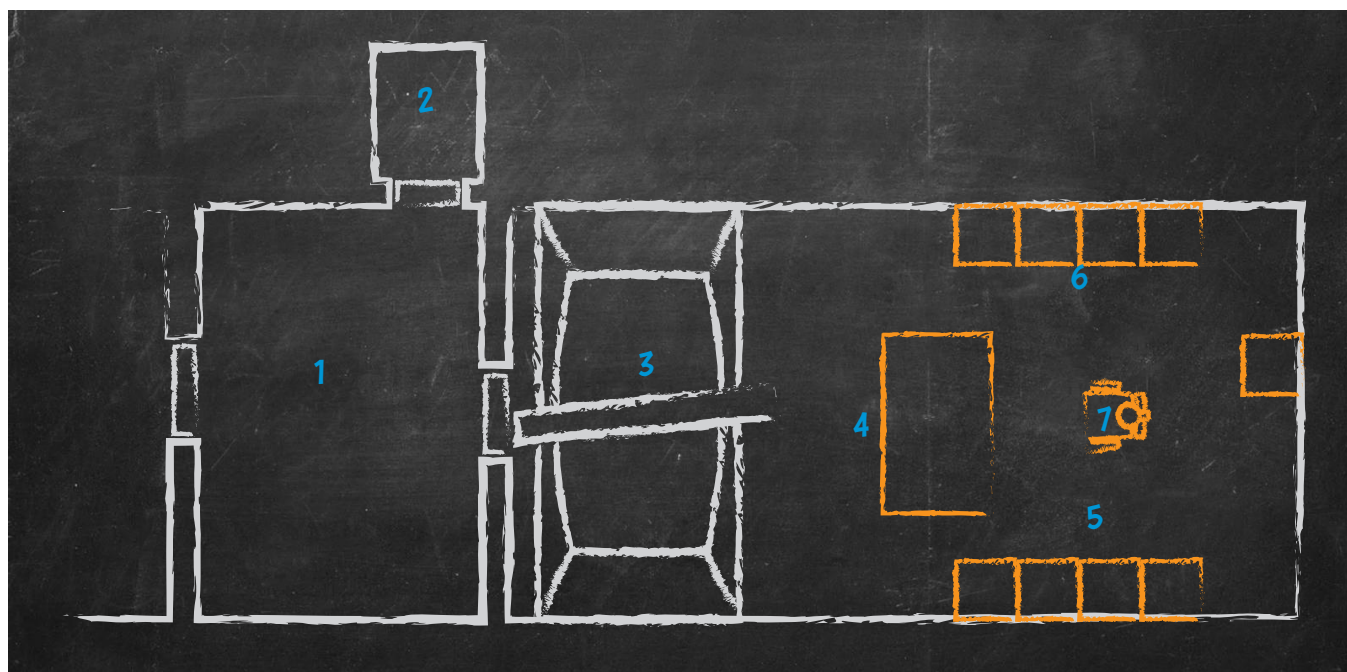
"I very much doubt it. You will live a long and happy life serving the Octopus. Your friends, however..."

With that, he signals for his goons to attack, and two goons rush over the plank over the missing floor (zone 3).

- **Round 1:** general fighting against Zadrith and two goons. Two more goons will rush across the plank (unless someone removes it). If the characters had a **Limited outcome**, that character pops out the hidden ladder in the attic, and two goons will focus on him. Dr Mauvin crawls to the "electric chair."
- **Round 2:** more fighting, against von Zadrith and four goons (unless some are **Out Cold**). Unless someone removes the plank over the missing floor, two more goons rush over. Dr Mauvin gets into the chair.
- **Round 3:** even more fighting, now with six goons and von Zadrith (minus casualties). No more goons come across, as Dr Mauvin activates the chair at the end of the round.

ZONES IN THE ATTIC

- 1 The attic. This is where the hidden ladder ends.
- 2 The hidden ladder.
- 3 The missing floor: There is a gaping hole in the floor. It is just about a metre deep, but it ends on a rather flimsy ceiling of half-rotten planks and Paris plaster. Anyone falling down will end up in the bedding department on the 6th floor. A lone plank leads to the main workshop from the door. Only one person can be in the zone at any one time. Removing the plank means that you have



to jump over the missing floor (requires a Sprint action and a successful **Agility task check**: failure means that you fall).

- 4** Work area. Contains all kinds of tools on and around the workbench.
- 5** Computers banks. Also includes a printing station.
- 6** Data banks. Tape stations with whizzing tapes.
- 7** The chair.

THE GRAND FINALE

When Dr Mauvin activates the chair, read aloud:

“Suddenly two electric high voltage arcs jump through the power lines into the cables, into Dr Mauvin’s arms. She erupts in a painful primal scream as the cable to the head cup bursts into

sparks as it is overloaded. Fuses blow, the computer hardware explodes, the skeletons of Octopus goons can be seen through their flesh, and even the female robot arcs its back. Make an **Agility task check** now, -2 pips if you hold anything of metal.”

Those who fail the task check take **6dX** of damage, and any protection doesn’t count.

The lightshow and fight doesn’t go unnoticed. After the lightshow, security and the store manager come rushing up the stairs to the hidden laboratory. Two purple flying saucers swoop down, and the Octopus goons evacuate using them.

“Such a pity. Auf wiedersehen!” von Zadrith sighs with regret as he enters the flying saucer.

EPILOGUE

Dr Mauvin is dead. The report says “suicide by electrocution”. Her equipment is destroyed, and even the female robot’s positronic brain has lost its spark. Any Octopus goons that are **Out Cold** are arrested and charged with assault, robbery and destruction of property.

The characters are eventually released from the police as well.

Pierre Martin tries to publish the story, but it is rejected – nobody will believe it. He invites the characters for dinner to tell them about it.

If you used the **Looking for a case** or Secret Service **plot hook**, the friend in the service thanks the

character and then files the report, which disappears into the archive somewhere.

End the adventure by reading the following:

“In the last panels of the adventure, we see the hidden laboratory of Dr Mauvin. It is raining through the broken windows. Everything is black with soot. A police tape flaps in the wind.

On a workbench, there is still the female robot, under a clear plastic sheet. Then the ‘eyes’ suddenly light up with a warm yellow glow.”

REWARDS

The players get a reward check each for the **Status** skill and, if they don't have it, also for the Famous ability.

FOR THE FUTURE

Pierre Martin will return in the adventure The U-boat Mystery. Of course, graf von Zadrith will also return in the future.

The female robot now houses the consciousness of Elinore Mauvin. Free of her dying flesh body and with

everyone thinking that she is dead, she can now return home and continue her work. The first thing she will do is make a new natural-looking skin covering her body. She takes the name "Elize Mauvin" and presents herself to the people in her village as the grandniece of Elinore Mauvin.

It is quite likely that the characters will meet Elize Mauvin in the future, but they may not realise that it is her. She will look like a mix of the young woman in the black and white photos and the movie stars in the reference pictures.

THREAT FILES

TAGS

Boss: The character can take the **Wounded** condition once instead of **Vitality** loss. The character may also take the **Mortal Peril** condition once instead of **Vitality** loss. The character is dead if **Vitality** runs out and they have the **Mortal Peril** condition; otherwise they're just **Out Cold**.

Brittle: The weapon breaks and is unusable after an attack or defence check with **Karma** (good or bad). If it was a successful attack check, apply damage first.

Counter-attack: Immediately after being attacked, the character makes one counter-attack against the person that attacked them, if that person is within range.

Diplomat Passport: The character can get out of jail free by waving their diplomat passport or calling the embassy.

Flips (X): The adversary can flip X task checks in a fight scene.

Frightening: If the characters face an adversary with this tag, they get the **Frightened** condition.

Leader (X): The character can instead of taking any main actions of their own order X allied Mooks to make one main action at the Leader's initiative, in addition to any action they would take on their own initiative. Other allies can also be ordered, as long as they are lower than the Leader. Underlings count as two Mooks, and Lieutenants count as four Mooks.

Lieutenant: The character can take the **Wounded** condition once instead of **Vitality** loss.

Loud: Using the weapon will be heard in the Vicinity.

Multiple Attacks (X): The character may perform X attacks as their main action. Unless an attack has the Multiple Strike tag, each attack can be used once. The number of times each attack can be used during a turn is in parentheses after the name.

Pack Hunter: The creature has +2 pips on its attacks per extra pack member attacking the same target.

Paralytic: Instead of **Wounded** or **Mortal Peril** conditions, take **Stunned** and **Paralysed** respectively.

Reload (X): If the **Ones** of an attack check is within the range X, the weapon is empty after the attack and needs to be reloaded. If you have **Bad Karma** and the **Ones** fall within range X, then the weapon is jammed and has to be fixed in a later scene.

Short Range: You can attack targets in your zone or one adjacent to it. You can attack targets one zone beyond an adjacent zone at -2 pips. Beyond that, the target is out of practical range.

Underling: If an attack against a Director character with the *Underling* tag has **Good Karma**, the *Underling* is immediately **Out Cold**.

Unwieldy: You automatically have the Condition **Overburdened** if you carry or use a weapon with this tag, unless you can use the weapon with support. With support, attacks at targets in a different zone from the previous attack is at -2 pips.

PIERRE MARTIN

Pierre Martin is a driven, young and quite liberal journalist. He is tall and thin, with a long quiff, black hair and sideburns, and usually wears worn jeans and a turtleneck. He lives with his girlfriend Françoise, who is even more bohemian than he is, in a small single room apartment. He has been on the trail of the Octopus for some time

Pierre Martin

Initiative: Alertness check **Vitality:** 4

Attacks:

Anything nearby: 55%, 3dX, Brittle

Defence: 35%

Languages: French, German

Skills: Basic 45%,

Journalist 85%, Specialist 65%, Alertness 65%,

Investigation 85%, Bohème 65%

GRAF VON ZADRITH, #2

The current leader of the Octopus is graf Albrecht Vogelgin Erwin von Zadrith. He is almost mythical in the Octopus. Few in the Order have ever met him. Still, he is one of the few in the Octopus who is actually known by name and not by number.

Graf Albrecht Vogelgin Erwin von Zadrith

Tags: Boss, Flips (4), Leader (8), Counter-attack, Multiple Attacks (3), Frightening

Initiative: task check **Vitality:** 8

Attacks:

Disneuro ray (1): 75%, 4dX, Paralytic, Reload (0)

Cane sword (2): 65%, 5dx, Counter-Attack

Defence: 45%

Skills: Basic 45%, Specialist 75%, Alertness 65%,

Strength 65%, Endurance 65%, World

Domination 75%, Barking Orders 85%,

Intimidate 65%, Ominous Pipe Organ 105%

ARMY TOP SCIENTIST

The French Army employs the best scientists of what's left after corporations and universities had their pick. They are a bit naïve though, and usually have to be chaperoned by an officer who has no grasp of science to do anything useful to the army.

Army Top Scientist

Tags: Underling

Initiative: 2 **Vitality:** 2

Attacks:

Lab equipment: 45%, 3dX, Brittle

Skills: Basic 35%, Specialist 65%, Science 95%,

Disagreeing with one another 75%,

OCTOPUS BRUTE

The generic Octopus brute is hired for loyalty and strength, not intelligence. Don't expect any conversation deeper than "resistance is futile", "silence!" or "keep moving!"

Octopus Brute

Tags: Underling, Pack Hunter

Initiative: 4 **Vitality:** 3

Attacks:

A fistful of hurt: 55%, 2dX

Disneuro projector: 55%, 4dX, Short Range (2),

Reload (9-0), Paralytic

Skills: Basic 35%, Specialist 55%, Agility 45%,

Strength 65%, Obey Orders 55%

DR ELINORE MAUVIN

Dr Mauvin is a frail woman – to be honest, she is dying – and a genius in robotics and positronic brains. She was once a lover to graf von Zadrith, but they fell out when she realised that she was just being used to build the positronic brains for the Octobots.

Dr Elinore Mauvin

Tags: Lieutenant, Flips (2)

Initiative: 8 **Vitality:** 2

Attacks:

Lab equipment: 45%, 3dX, Brittle

Skills: Basic 35%, Specialist 65%, Science 95%, Robotics 85%, Positronics 105%, Dying 75%

ROBO-SANTA

The mechanical horror designed by Dr Elinore Mauvin looks like a generic animatronic Santa puppet, stuffed with pillows and dressed in a red Santa costume. It smiles constantly, and says “ho-ho-ho”, “have you been naughty or nice?” and similar Santa-ish phrases with a tinny voice. When it goes berserk, the eyes shift to a menacingly glowing red glare as it tracks its targets.

Robo-Santa

Tags: Lieutenant, Flips (2), Multiple Attacks (2)

Initiative: 7 **Vitality:** 5

Attacks:

MAC 24/29 light machine gun: 55%, 7dX, Loud, Reload (0), Unwieldy

Skills: Basic 35%, Scan for Targets 65%, Jolly laughter 85%

GRIGORI

Grigori Alexandrovich Kublanov is a handler at the Soviet embassy, being something of a cross between a bureaucrat and a goon. His job is to gather information from and pay agents, make sure that the information reaches the right departments within the GRU, bully Soviet citizens, and hold the leash of Juri.

Grigori Alexandrovich Kublanov

Tags: Underling, Diplomat passport

Initiative: 4 **Vitality:** 3

Attacks:

A fistful of hurt: 55%, 2dX

9mm Makarov: 55%, 5dX, Loud, Short Range (3), Reload (9-0)

Skills: Basic 35%, Specialist 55%, Agility 45%, Strength 65%, Marxist Ideology 85%, Russian Accent 95%

JURI

Juri Zinovich Ishutin is the archetypal low-level Soviet scientist with a brilliant idea: both an engineer and theoretician, and trained by Lev Sergeyevich Theremin himself!

He is also pretty clueless about Communist ideology, except that he is convinced that the Soviet Union is at the forefront in science and therefore the ideology works. How he ended up in the KGB is anybody's guess.

Being KGB and handled by Grigori, he is both Grigori's underling and bitter rival.

Juri Zinovich Ishutin

Tags: Underling, Diplomat Passport

Initiative: 2 **Vitality:** 2

Attacks:

Bug receiver: 45%, 3dX, Brittle

Skills: Basic 35%, Specialist 65%, Science 95%, Communist ideology 15%,

STARTUP HANDOUTS

At The Start of the Adventure, after the introduction and the attack of the robotic Santa, pick one or two characters whose **Plot Hooks** match the startup handouts, and give them the appropriate handouts.

- If the plot hook characters drag the other characters into the adventure, they get a free experience tick.
- If the other players make the plot hook characters into the main characters of this adventure, they get a free experience tick.

Alternative rule: hand out all startup handouts, and let the players suggest how they would drag the other characters into the adventure. Then let the players vote on which one to use: that player is then the plot hook character of this session, and has to expand the intro scene.

Looking for a case or Secret Service

This is a startup handout. Use it to help the director kick off the adventure and drag your friends into the adventure.

A friend in the service would want you to investigate the Robo-Santa incident. There are a few things that disturbs your contact, things that the police are not capable of investigating and should not investigate in the name of national security. The robotic Santa did not just malfunction, but there is no radio in the wreckage. So it must have operated autonomously or been physically triggered somehow. If there is such a trigger, find it, deal with it, and let the SDECE know.

Arch-Enemy: The Octopus

This is a startup handout. Use it to help the director kick off the adventure and drag your friends into the adventure.

“Long live the Octopus” somehow echoes in your head. You know that they have been experimenting with humanoid robots and have been far more successful than most people believe. Although there are no evil octopus logos, you feel as if the mechanoid nightmare before Christmas has their fingerprints all over it. There should be some clues left at the scene that may give you further clues in your search.

Looking for the Past or Looking for an adventure

This is a startup handout. Use it to help the director kick off the adventure and drag your friends into the adventure.

On the news, there is a story of a hidden staircase down into the Paris catacombs at the BHV, discovered after the Robo-Santa incident. Although closed off by the police, the idea of hidden rooms is too much to resist. They must have been there since building the house. Why not explore it?