FIELD WORK

"You might have a few questions as to what it is you'll be doing for us as IT Technicians, and it's my job to answer those questions. On paper, you'll be making field trips to fix computers for people who are too dim to fix their own computers. But in addition to IT support, here's what else you'll be doing: everything.

Most of you will be aware that, over the last year or so, extra-real entities began to surface in the populace - snake people, the undead, demons, murdergnomes, and so on. Some of these creatures pose a problem to our clients; some of them are our clients.

As an employee of the Prometheus Organisation, I'm sure I don't need to remind you that we're paying you several dollars above the hourly minimum wage, and we expect to see results. So when a client has a problem, we have a problem, and when we have a problem, you have a problem. It's up to you to make sure that our clients don't have problems by using any means necessary.

I'm glad I've made myself clear. Now, if you'll proceed through to the next room, you'll be able to sign up for our company softball team!"

MISSION BRIEFING

> *"Okay, let's see what's on this morning: I've got a lady in Stony Point who's complaining of a literal ghost in her machine; some dude out in the sticks past the Northern overpass who says that his dead wife is going through his browser history; and a call from a fireworks warehouse with absolutely no supernatural overtones whatsoever. But, you know, I wouldn't risk it. Now, who wants what? Anyone?"*

This is a roleplaying game for 3-4 players that deals with fixing computers, inept monsters from beyond the veil of sanity, and situations rapidly escalating to the point of crisis. You're going to love it!

There's no fixed gamesmaster role - instead, every player will take turns playing a scene as their character, and the role of gamesmaster (or "GM" for short) will be shared by everyone else at the table.

When you're playing your character, the player to your right is the Mundane GM. They're in charge of everything that's normal about the world. The player to your left is the Supernatural GM, and they're in charge of everything creepy and strange that's going down with the supernatural. If you have four players, the person sitting opposite you is the Company GM, and they're in charge of The Prometheus Organisation as a whole. (If you've only got three players, the Mundane GM will take on the role of the Company GM.)

THE EXTRA-REAL AND YOU

> *"Personally, I think that this alien invasion was a good thing. I mean, they put in free Wifi EVERYWHERE. Even underground! Even in my bedroom! And they're abducting, what, ten to twelve people a month? I can stand twelve people a month in exchange for Wifi. I don't know what you're complaining about."*

The first thing you'll have to deal with is precisely what kind of supernatural incursion you've had in the area surrounding your branch of Prometheus.

Maybe the dead have risen and they're furious because their stashes of AoL internet connection CD roms no longer function; maybe a race of white-furred crab people from the darkness beyond the stars are offering free energy in exchange for the chance to live amongst humans, and there are some teething problems with that; maybe there are massive hives of psychic wasps downtown, and you're getting calls from concerned residents that their broadband connection is getting interference from the constant waves of psionic energy.

Whatever you decide, keep it broad, and leave room to explore it during the game.

WORKING FOR THE PROMETHEUS ORGANISATION

As a group, answer the following questions:

Where is your branch located? (Downtown, Suburbia, Rural, University, Business District, etc. - each provide their own unique set of challenges.)

What is your branch of The Prometheus Organisation like? (Regional managers differ in their approaches, ranging from strict military-esque briefings to smooth, slick Tech Megagiant-style presentation, to we're-all-one-big-family chats with motivational posters and infuriatingly twee props.)

NEW EMPLOYEE REGISTRATION

Please fill out the following:

NAME: *You can use a fake name, if you'd like. We're not picky.*

DESCRIPTION: *What makes you you? We're mainly asking so, in the event that a malevolent clone of you ends up on the loose, we have a way to tell which is the "real" one so we can shoot it.* Please list descriptions of any of the following you deem noteworthy: race, age, gender, notable features, personality traits, appearance, previous occupation, etc.

KEY RELATIONSHIP: *We all have friends outside of work; who's your primary connection outside of the office? We're mainly asking so we know who to call up and apologise to in the event that we shoot the "real" you and not the clone.* Also, relationship upkeep can be stressful, and impact your performance in the field, so we like to stay abreast of your situation.

THE REASON YOU WORK ALONE: *We won't hold it against you, we're just interested to know.* Why is it that you applied to do your field work alone? What don't you quite trust about, or like about, your fellow employees?

BOND: Which technician have you make the closest bond with during your training? Note down who they are and how they helped you.

You've been issued with the standard equipment for all IT technicians: a a uniform, a van, spare parts, some basic tools and a laptop. In the event that you need additional equipment to solve a problem, we recommend that you source materials on-site or develop an alternative strategy to rectify the situation.

WORKDAY STRUCTURE

> *"It's just a nine-to-five like any other job. Sure, the demons make it difficult, and there was this one time there the van got infested with hellwolves and we had to rinse it out with holy water after Steve lost his leg, but tell me - where else are we gonna get a steady job in this economy?"*

The games proceeds as follows:

- AM shift (work)
- Lunch back at base
- PM shift (work)
- Debrief

Each player gets one scene each in the AM and PM shifts. During the Lunch and Debrief sections, the team indulges in some R&R, which gives them a chance to interact and gain bonds with other players. Bonds can be used to call in favours from other technicians while tackling a problem.

ROLLING THE DICE

When you get stuff done and solve problems by applying your skills to the situation, you'll roll two six-sided dice - one black and one white. The white dice is the Mundane dice; the black dice is the Supernatural dice.

Dice that show 4 or more indicate a success. When you solve mundane problems with mundane means, you need the Mundane dice to succeed; when you tackle the supernatural head-on, you need the Supernatural dice to succeed. The GM will de-escalate the situation (more on that later) by one step.

When you roll a 6 on a dice, that's a critical. This is mainly used for critical successes - when you succeed on a 6, the GM deescalates the situation by 2 steps rather than 1. Sometimes, criticals can cause problems to spiral out of control, though - more on that later.

The dice with the highest number on it (or the Supernatural dice, if there's a tie) is the dominant dice. Generally, dominance is only used if you fail.

When you roll 3 or less on the relevant dice, you've failed - and you've only made things worse. The GM will either escalate the situation by one step, or introduce a new situation to complicate matters - the dominant dice will dictate whether to escalate or introduce a Mundane situation or a Supernatural one.

If you're not happy with the dice result, you can spend a Bond to re-roll one of the dice as you call up another technician and ask for advice.

Whenever you roll the dice, you advance the time counter of the scene by 1.

SITUATIONS, AND HOW TO MAKE THEM NOT BE "SITUATIONS" ANY MORE

> *"The employee handbook calls them Situations, and it capitalises it, too. Never problems; never difficulties; never monumental cock-ups that are gonna see your best friend reeling away from the van after a goddamn hellwolf bit his leg clean off. Just "Situations." Although, to be fair, after that thing with the hellwolves you can kind of see why they'd want to santise it in the official documentation."*

Every problem in *Field Work* is represented by a Situation. Situations could range from "My CD draw won't shut properly" to "Ever since I installed that new app on my smartphone, I've noticed a definite increase in the number of tentacles around here" to "Would you look at that, the building is on fire," and so on.

Situations have three states:

Out of Hand: The situation has escalated out of control, and unless it's tackled soon, it's only going to get worse. If a situation is out of hand and the relevant GM feels that it would interfere with your attempts to solve a problem, they can declare that your action fails. Still, at least it can't get any worse - it's not possible to escalate past this point. Silver linings, eh?

Causing Problems: The situation is clear, if not at crisis point yet, and it's causing problems to someone - generally you or the client, or maybe someone you or the client care about. Situations enter play at this level. If a situation is at this level and the player ignores it when they make a roll, the relevant GM can choose to escalate it to Out of Hand if they feel it's appropriate.

Under Control: The situation is no longer a problem, thanks to your incredible skill. (Read: blind luck, frantic scrabbling, smashing it with a hammer, etc.) The more situations you bring Under Control, the happier the client will be.

When the GM escalates a situation, they move up this list; when they de-escalate, they move down.

EXAMPLE:

Yasmin is attempting to fix a client's broadband router after they've reported that it's started giving off smoke during high-usage times of the day. She says she's going to take apart the router and take a look to see if she can see what wiring needs to be replaced. This is a mundane task. She grabs the dice and rolls them, getting a Mundane 3 and a Supernatural 5.

She failed, because she rolled 3 or less on the relevant dice, and seeing as Supernatural was the dominant dice, the Supernatural GM can introduce or escalate a Supernatural Situation.

The Supernatural GM decides that the router is in fact part of a larger network of compromised wireless devices that have been subverted by the Great Enemy Satan, and that the smoke is in fact rising from a tiny portal to hell. The GM says that, as Yasmin levers off the side of the router, an unearthly screaming echoes out of the tiny box and the windows rattle and shake as the lights in the apartment dim.

The Situation "Wireless Portal to Hell" enters play at the Causing Problems level.

SETTING UP A SCENE

Remember earlier when we said that each player gets one scene per work shift? Here's how to make that happen.

The Mundane GM creates a problem that they think will interest the character in question; if they can't think of anything, they should ask the Supernatural GM for advice, and then the Company GM, in that order. (*Field Work* is a fast game, so we want to limit the brainstorming segment as much as possible and establish things through play, rather than doing it up-front.)

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

> *"So I walk in the door and, wouldn't you know it, eyestalks everywhere; poking out of the fans, worming their way into the monitor, clogging up the fans, tapping keys when the client wasn't watching. That's your problem right there, I said. Eyestalks. Typical."*

The mundane GM describes the scene and sets the Time dice to 1.

When you first investigate a technological problem, roll the dice. The Mundane GM will tell you what the problem is, and on a success, how you can have a crack at solving it.

In addition, whichever die has dominance, the appropriate GM introduces a Situation of that type that is Causing Difficulties. If the dominant dice shows 6, choose: the Situation is Out Of Hand, or introduce two Situations that are Causing Problems.

After that, play progresses as follows:
- The player proposes a solution to one of the Situations active in the scene. The Mundane GM decides if it can possibly work; if there's something else the officer needs to do first; and if there's any other important consequences to that course of action.
- They roll dice, and the GMs either escalate, deescalate or bring in a new Situation and advance the Time dice by 1, or by more than 1 if it's a particularly lengthy course of action.
- Once the player says so or the Time dice reaches 6, the scene is over.

BRINGING IN NEW SITUATIONS

> *"You know what's worse than a zombie? A zombie on fire. I only went over to install a new OS, and I had to fight my way out of there with nothing but an external hard-drive. They should give us guns. Or, you know, some kind of prior warning."*

When you're asked to bring in new situations, try to work with what's been established before than bringing in new stuff all the time. What's been highlighted in the scene so far? How did the

Mundane GM describe the scene when they set it up - are there any big flags that you can exploit?

Remember, if you can't come up with a suitable Situation, you can always fall back on the technician's Key Relationship as established during character creation. Have their spouse call them up and demand to know about their secret gambling debts, or for their brother to need collection from the airport, or for their best friend to turn up at the scene and attempt to steal items of value from the unsuspecting client.

RUNNING OUT OF TIME

Look, you're on the clock here, and you have to get back to base to fill out your report (and get some of the donuts off the breakroom table before the other employees steal them all) - you can't spend all day with a client and hope that things get better. We're after results.

If the Time dice reaches 6, you're out of time. Describe how your character extricates themselves from the situation as best they can and head back to the office.

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

Once a scene is over, the Company GM will decide how well you did. Did you solve the Situations cleanly and efficiently, without collateral damage or injuring bystanders? Did you leave the client happy and intact? Did you tackle challenges with style and aplomb?

If a technician leaves a situation Causing Problems or Out of Hand, ask them why they felt it was a good idea to do that. Really give them a grilling.

On the other hand, if they did well, reward them! It's not enough to just return things to the status quo; they have to go above and beyond for the client and make things better than they were back before the problem was called in. If they've really excelled, offer them a promotion.

BEING THE MUNDANE GM

Think of every awful job you've had, then turn it up to 11. What's the worst customer you had to deal with? Who's that one person in your office who can't grasp how computers work? What's the one massively difficult and largely unnecessary thing you have to do *every day* at work that no-one's fixed because they don't have the time, inclination or authority to do it?

You are the avatar of all that; of minutiae, of useless requests, of clueless people, of backstabbing grasps for office power, of Orders From On High, of broken materials and shoddy tools, of not enough budget and not enough time, of everything you hate about having to drag yourself into work every morning. Wield that hate like a weapon.

BEING THE SUPERNATURAL GM

You're in charge of the weirdness, so don't be afraid to go nuts with it - let the mundane GM handle all the boring stuff, and let rip! Have fun toying with the technician as you unleash supernatural horrors (or just otherworldly strangeness) on them, because all you're *ever* going to be is a problem - the player is never rewarded for deescalating your Situations, just not punished for leaving them unchecked.

You've not describing broken DVD drives, massive flights of stairs or their husband calling trying to understand how the washing machine works; you're insidious psychic control, ravenous beasts, sudden and unexplained explosions, swarms of hideous creatures and capricious fey-monsters.

DOWNTIME, MAKING BONDS, AND SPENDING THEM

During downtime - lunch and debrief - you'll have a chance to hang out with the other technicians and chat about your day. During each downtime session, pick a character that you feel you make a connection with, and describe the connection - maybe you eat lunch together, go to the gym, commiserate each other on a couple of bad jobs, and so on. Roleplay out the scene, if you'd like. You now have a bond with this character.

At the end of downtime, mark down which other character you have a bond with.

During work scenes, you can expend your bond if you roll the dice and you're not happy with the result. Call up one of the other technicians for advice on what you should do, and then have them re-roll one (not both!) of your dice. Once you've expended your bond, it's gone - you'll have to hang out with them some more if you want to call in another favour.

Establishing bonds with characters during debrief (or spending time together after work) won't benefit you for a one-shot game, but if you play again with the same characters and set-up, you can use the bonds you established during your AM shift if you wish.

ENDING THE GAME

Once you've handled the debrief - and chewed out any players who performed badly, and commended any players that performed well - the game is over. You can play again with these same characters in the same situation, or you can generate a new group of hapless, put-upon IT technicians facing a different supernatural incursion in a different part of town, and see what happens.

ALTERNATE SETTINGS AND RULES

Teamwork: You could probably use these rules to have pairs of player characters head out to tackle especially large or difficult jobs; everything would still function, but each player would get less screen time. If you've got a group of five or six people who want to play, you could assign each player a partner who they accompany on jobs.

No Prometheus: Want to play a local IT support firm without the backing of a major corporation? Want to fix computers with your dad? Scrap this whole Prometheus idea and bring in a mom-and-pop situation.

Cleaners: Don't want to fix computers at all? Worried about coming up with enough IT problems to keep the other players interested? Scrap the IT thing and play semi-professional fixers and cleaners for an organised crime syndicate. Or for the CIA. Sure, on the surface that dead body you have to cut up and hide seems radically different from being asked to dispose of a client's confidential data, but they're basically the same job.

With this, the supernatural's here, but it's not a source of comedy - it's a source of horror. Vampires lurk in the shadows - one of them is probably your boss, come to think of it - ghosts haunt the streets, demons crawl from wicked pentagrams, and you're trapped in the middle of it trying to hack up an informant's corpse before the cops show up. (The cops, of course, who are all glamoured golems under the control of a deviant wizard.) Reckon you can outrun a guard dog? Cool. What about a werewolf?

A Friendly Computer: Hello, Troubleshooter! Do you love Alpha Complex, and hate commie mutant traitors, as much as you respect copyright law? Then we're sure you'll love solving problems for your benevolent AI Overlord with your trusty laser pistol and jaunty jumpsuit, and you won't mind being used for reactor shielding at all!

SOME BONUS IDEAS FOR YOUR SETTING:

A COLLEGE TOWN: Don't worry, they're all basically the same. A College Town will be populated by students and recent college grads as well as quirky local professionals and eccentric academics. There will be regular folks too, but don't worry, they don't need technical support.

Many problems these folks have are related to device misuse. Students try to keep their snakes warm using the heat shed by their computers, lazy writers put coffee cups in their CD trays, mathematicians try to run sophisticated geometric analysis on their netbooks instead of the purpose-built supercomputer at the number theory lab, beer pong casualties… that sort of thing.

WALL STREET: A grey-faced sea of bankers and investors. That means that everyone is a drone who can only be told apart from the other drones by the subtle differences between their expensive Italian shoes and the way they tie their tie. Some of them are also slightly older than the others, but basically here your customers are people with no faces. Try not to let it get to you.

These people typically have two kinds of problems: professional security problems related to their money handling activities, and personal security problems related to keeping secrets from the other people in their lives. You see, the business of handling money, at the highest levels, is really the business of handling secrets, and these kinds of people just kind of get into the habit. You'll need to smarten yourself up a little, and bring the kind of attitude that suggests that you're capable of discretion.

THE SUBURBS: Your suburban customers will commonly be two classes of people: comfortable retirees and professional families.

Most suburbanite problems are caused by using a hammer to do a screwdriver's job. How do I send email with Photoshop? Can I play a movie in my word processor? That kind of thing. You're not going to need extra parts, probably, but gird your loins for a lot of patient explaining.

DOWNTOWN: Every city is a little different, but every city has a part where large and small businesses push up against tiny apartments with soaring rent. There is a great diversity of customers here, and along with that comes a diversity of problems.

If you don't want to choose a more narrow theme, choose a real city downtown as your setting, and pick a couple of quirks to make it feel specific.