333

One question the GM may wonder about is- what exactly do the players do in this game?

This is not a game with a definite long-term goal, or the quick rush of gaining levels or finding loot. The only real goal for the characters is simple- find a way to survive with some vestige of normality remaining. The GM can introduce mundane problems and events whenever the players become too involved in the **UNNATURAL**. If a character reaches the point where his entire life is devoted to trying to understand the **UNNATURAL**, he will certainly be considered insane by the rest of the world; even if he has no derangements.

Another important aspect is that the world itself is in flux- incontrovertible evidence of the **UNNATURAL** is easy to come by, so people exposed to it will not necessarily be dismissed as cranks. How the world and its people cope with the infrequent but significant interference of the **UNNATURAL** can be a central part of the game. Does the government try to protect its people? Do insurers pay out for damage caused by the **UNNATURAL**? Are those who encounter it given support or shunned by their peers? Perhaps the most important part is that the **UNNATURAL** should be used sparingly. Too much, and the players will feel that nothing they do really makes much difference to what's going on.

A second question that may occur to the GM is- what are these 'patterns' that I'm supposed to come up with?

It's not as tricky as it sounds.

1) Come up with an ordinary, understandable devious plot that the **UNNATURAL** may pursue- say the Incursors putting small devices inside people's heads.

2) Mix in a little weirdness so the plot doesn't quite make sense, or contradicts itself in some way. With the previous example, you could have the devices appear in the heads of people who didn't witness the funny lights in the sky, or in such a way that they are

easily removed.

3) As soon as the players get a handle on what's going on, give them 1 opportunity to exploit this fact, then change the ground under them by altering some of the details.

4) When you run out of ideas, stop action from that form of the **UNNATURAL** and start afresh with another.

Another important tool for the GM is the slow reveal- never give the players a whole slice of bread when you can give them a crumb. Don't have a player character open a door to see his daughter's doppelgänger strangling her. Instead, have him call out to her and there be two responses- one from the front room and one from upstairs. The first room he goes to is empty. Eventually, when you've got as much out of this plot thread as possible, let it drop. The player won't know whether she's been replaced or not. You don't even need to decide if she has or not until you bring the question up again later.

But the most important tool for creating these 'patterns' is to rely on your players' ingenuity. If they come up with a plausible idea, put yours on the back-burner and use theirs until the next change. They'll feel clever for working out 'your' plan and you can spin the plot out for a little longer.

With such a comprehensive toolbox of ways to destroy characters, the temptation is to simply deploy them without finesse. The players should feel that their characters are placed in danger only for good reasons- because they dropped the ball in trying to work out what was going on, or because something is at stake the character cares about enough to risk herself for.