ARTHUR FISHBURN

(historian)

You grew up in an extremely remote and backward part of the world -- an island named Ingland. Like the rest of Europe, your country was hit heavily by Nepenthe, and nearly everyone died. Among the only survivors were back-to-nature types living in places like Findhorn to the north, and Glastonbury to the west. It took several centuries, but eventually the island was repopulated, though it still has only a fraction of its original population. You are the descendent of one of the survivors. You come from the town of Glastonbury.

From your early childhood, you have always been fascinated by the past. There is so much around you that is obviously ancient, and nobody knows what it is! Which came first, the big True Church abbey in your town, or the old engine-stone [concrete] building where the mayor lives? The Church came after the engines, so probably the cathedral is later, but you aren't sure. What do those almost-worn-to-nothing inscriptions mean (and WHY did the Church have to outlaw all writing and reading, so that today you have to guess at the letters)? More than anything else, though, you were fascinated by the time when humanity reached its highest glory -- the time right before Nepenthe came, when humans numbered in the billions, conquered the remotest parts of the world, and could bend the very power of nature. You're convinced that it must have been like being in heaven, to be alive then. To travel around the globe in days, instead of months! To have a box that could heat food up, or cool it down, with just the press of a button!

The Church discourages people from studying the past, because they're so afraid of Nepenthe. Therefore, you had to conduct your research in secret. You delved into many old ruins, studying artifacts and guessing what they were for. You also tried to engage people in innocent conversation about legends of what it was like in "the old days." Unfortunately, the stories you got tended to contradict each other a great deal.

When you became a teenager, you were aided by a new-found ability: that of instant recall. You could glance at anything, and remember it photographically at any time in the future. Gradually you built up a mental catalog of things from the past, and began assigning names to them from the fragments of stories people told you. You were even able to figure out a few words of this thing called "writing."

Unfortunately, if you have one major weakness, it's that you have trouble keeping a secret. You get so excited about things that you blurt them out without thinking of the consequences. The Church caught you. They were going to punish you for delving into the past, but when they found out about your recall, they sent you to Delhi instead for psychic training. You marveled at the new buildings and marvels of this new country. Even the writing was different!

Your trainers spent a lot of time trying to convince you of how evil it was to want to study the past, and you pretended to acquiesce. The Church's telepaths continually gave you black marks, though, because they could read your heretical thoughts like a book.

They tested you for all sorts of other psychic abilities besides recall, but you came up negative. Then, one day, a man came through the training hall. He stopped in front of you, and asked you to concentrate on where he was standing, and follow him

wherever he went. Then, all of a sudden, his whole body changed. It looked the same on the outside, but on the inside, he was somebody else. You tried to feel around for where his mind had gone, and then suddenly, you found it. The next minute, you were standing next to him someplace else. But where it had been winter in the hall, it was summer here.

You could travel back in time! You were so excited that you lost all control of yourself, and blurted out that now you could go back and study the ancients directly!

Sanjay, your new teacher, was disapproving. First, he said, going back that far would take much more psychic energy than what you could muster. And second, it was wrong to want to know too much about the ancients anyway.

You tried to backpedal, but it was too late. After looking at the records the Church kept on you, Sanjay decided that you were too undisciplined to be allowed back in the past, and he refused to give you training. It was infuriating, but there was nothing you could do.

You thought about experimenting with time travel yourself, but you were pretty sure the telepaths would catch you, and you don't want to get in even worse trouble.

You've heard that there's an underground group that opposes the Church, and wants to bring back Engines. They call themselves the Engineers. You think they've got the right idea, but they've never contacted you and asked you to join them. Probably they all have psychic shielding, and they know you don't. Still, you wouldn't mind furthering their aims.

The Church put you in a monastery "to fast, to pray, and to meditate." Actually, it was to indoctrinate you and keep you under observation, and out of trouble. No one talks much, and for the last few years, you've been incredibly lonely. Still, despite your isolation, you continued to study the past.

Then, one day, Sanjay showed up again and took you back to Delhi. There, you were taken to a top-secret meeting, with important Church officials. With them was a priest from a country even farther and more sparsely populated than yours -- distant America.

While digging the foundation for a new church, builders found a capsule of some type beneath the ground. They opened it, and there was a rush of air -- apparently it had been airtight. Inside were some pictures, some objects, and some papers.

When the priest arrived, he noticed that some of the papers were already starting to crumble from exposure to the air. Fortunately, he had the Recall ability, just like you. He memorized the first page of the folded paper, though of course he did not understand the meaning of the letters; when he tried to pick up the rest of it, it crumbled to dust.

Uncertain of what to do, he traveled to the nearest long-range telepath to find out the wishes of the Church fathers. The message came back that he was to travel to Delhi, and recopy the page for them.

Apparently the Church officials had reason to believe that the paper might have some information about Nepenthe. Normally, they would have destroyed such information. However, they seem particularly interested in Nepenthe at the present -- you aren't sure why. They knew that you had studied Writing, and for some reason the words from this far-distant land seem to be the same as those used in your own island. They wanted you to try to translate it.

With your memory of other words you had seen, you set to work. Somebody managed to locate a map of the ancient world, and you spotted one of the words on the page -- the city Minneapolis. You also found another place name -- a place called Radisson South Hotel. Perhaps some kind of laboratory? You've also figured out their calender, and you found the date April 2, 1994. That was enough for Sanjay to get a fix on the space-time coordinates. There is one other number, , next to another word you don't know [ask GM to copy it for you].

There's one other thing. If you've figured out the letters that spell Nepenthe correctly, then the word shows up all over the document.

Anyway, now Sanjay wants to go back to the pre-Nepenthe age, and he wants you to go with him. He told you that it was because they needed your knowledge of the past age, but you suspect that they really just need your psychic energy to go back so far. Well, you aren't complaining -- this is something you've wanted to do all your life!

Of course, you're supposed to keep it a big secret that you're not from this time. Sure, sure. You're good at keeping secrets, right?

PLAYER NOTE>>> Although this character has his serious side, he can be played for laughs as well. He takes his job as tour-guide very seriously, and will carefully explain the significance of everything he sees to the other time-travelers. Of course, almost everything he says will be completely wrong. He also asks questions which should suggest to everyone in the present that there is something seriously strange about him.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Time travel. See blue sheet.

Language Sense. See blue sheet.

Recall. If you look at any picture or writing, you may recall it and draw it <u>exactly.</u> At present, you have memorized the strange paper that was found in the time capsule, and could reproduce it with paper and a writing implement. However, you cannot understand what you write!

GOALS

Find out everything about the past. Your curiosity knows no bounds. How does that switch make the light come on? Have you ever met Shakespeare? Did people really walk on the sun in this time period? Is that a television, or a mercedes?

Have someone translate your paper. You've got the whole thing memorized. Given 10 minutes and writing equipment, you could copy the whole thing out [talk to a GM]. Anybody from this time period should be able to read it. You aren't sure what Sanjay will say about that, though.

Stop being lonely. You have barely spoken to any women since they put you in the monastery, five years ago. You wish you could have some companionship.

SPECIAL ENVELOPE -- OPEN WHEN GM TELLS YOU TO

This world seems to be everything you thought it might be. Wonderful engines! Lots of wonderful people! So much going on! Plus, there's one other thing.

You're in love. In love, in love, in love! You've finally seen the woman of your dreams.

You've made up your mind. After finding your ideal woman, you have no intention of going back home so you can be locked away in a monastery again.

Unfortunately, this presents you with a definite problem. You can't just sneak away from the rest of the group and hide -- if you get too far away, you'll pop back into your own time. But Sanjay is hardly going to approve of your staying here in the past.

There's also an ethical problem. If you succeed, the person whose body you're occupying will wind up stuck in the future. Well, all's fair in love and war. Perhaps he'll like the future as much as you're enjoying the past.

NEW GOALS

Stay in the past. Convince two other time-travelers to stay in the past with you. It only need be for a few days, and then the pull will be loose enough that you'll be able to stay on your own.

Get to know your love. Talk to her, and persuade her that you're the man of her dreams. How do they do that here?

SANJAY GUPTA

(Leader)

The High Priesthood put you in charge of this expedition into the past, because you have more experience with time travel than anyone else alive. Since you didn't have enough power to go back all that temporal distance on your own, you had to round up some other folks to lend you energy. You're worried about bringing others along, though. No one but you truly understands the dangers of time travel. That's why you persuaded the High Priesthood to restrict it in the first place.

You grew up in Delhi itself, the heart of the priesthood. If there's one thing to keep a kid on the straight and narrow while growing up, it's having two parents who are both exceptionally powerful telepaths, and priests as well. You tried rebelling a little when you were a teenager -- questioning the church teachings, little things like that -- but they were always three steps ahead of you, and eventually you gave up. The church had always done good things for your family, and you realized as your own power developed that you would eventually need to find your own niche in that venerable institution.

One of your best friends while you were growing up was Ashra Gulati. The two of you had a great deal in common. Both of her parents were telepaths and priests too, so you could commiserate about the difficulty of getting away with anything.

When you first realized your gift and its power, back in your teens, you were elated. It was a new spiritual gift: there had only been three earlier time-jumpers, and they had only been able to go back fifteen years or so, so that by the time they were ready to do anything important, they were already too old to jump without running into their own life-spans. Your gift was much stronger, and you were confident that you could use it to improve the world.

You trained for several years with the best trainers the Church had to offer. Only a year after you entered, you were pleased to discover that Ashra, too, had manifested a time-travel gift. Now you had even more in common!

Finally, you were ready for your first major mission. You would improve the past, for all time! The church had picked out the perfect place for you to visit. Everyone was a little afraid of what might happen if a paradox was generated, and you had no intention of accidentally killing your grandparents, so the site was far, far from your own homeland and twenty years before you were born. It was a large village on an island next to New China. In 1053, a tsunami flattened the whole place. You figured that you could go a few weeks before, convince everybody to pack up and leave, and save a couple hundred lives.

It worked, too. It wasn't even particularly difficult. You had an immense feeling of satisfaction as you watched those boats sailing out of the harbor. Then you broke your concentration and jumped back to your own body.

As soon as you did so, you realized that something felt terribly wrong. The world just didn't feel real to you -- it felt like some horrible nightmare that you needed to wake up from, or like you were constantly stepping on your own grave. That feeling has never left you, all the time since you've come back. It stays with you when you jump. It's with you now. It's one of the main reasons you've persuaded the High Council to outlaw changing the past -- so that no one else ever has to live through the Hell you live through every day.

Walking the streets of Delhi, there was nothing you could put your finger on. Everything looked the same. You checked with the record memorizers, and sure enough, everyone in the village had been saved due to the timely warning of a mysterious priest. Puzzled, you went home.

When you got there, your grandmother greeted you. You idly asked about your parents. You were dumbfounded when your grandmother told you they had been dead for eighteen years.

Research uncovered the whole chain of events. The priest of the village you had saved, twenty years after your visit, contracted a rare disease on a trip to Delhi. The only people he infected were your parents. Your mother died in childbirth, and it was only by a medical miracle that you were saved.

After mourning your parents, you spent a good deal of time thinking about this situation and discussing it with members of the High Council more deeply versed in philosophy than yourself. The conclusion you finally reached was this.

Nothing else in all of Delhi had been altered by your trip, except for your own existence. Therefore, time itself must have been blindly searching for you to try to destroy you. Perhaps Time has a certain inherent protective system. When it is damaged, or changed, it tries to protect itself, just as a human body protects itself when invaded by a disease. Now, it is possible to change time once -- you proved that. But there are some diseases that you can't get twice. Time protects itself from further tampering by wiping out the source of the original. It almost got you; you feel sure that, if you change anything else in the past, it will get you. It's not a risk you want to take, and you don't want to let anyone else take it either.

Meanwhile, you discovered other spiritual gifts besides time travel. You can mentally blank people, causing them to forget everything they know and leaving them with no memory of who they are. You've used it a few times on criminals sentenced to blanking by the High Council. It's a tricky process, though -- it takes a minute or so, and the target needs to be held perfectly still during the whole time.

More useful was the ability of Psychic Detection. With it you can sense psychic powers in others. It's spotty with most powers, but very strong when it comes to Time Travel. You periodically go through the training schools looking for anyone with the talent. Your goal is to find them before they accidentally use it themselves, to prevent them from changing anything like you did. If you suspect someone has the gift, you stand in front of them and tell them to follow you wherever you go. Then you jump to the body of a half-witted sheep farmer thirty-five years ago. If you were right, then they quickly follow you into the body of the farmer's son. You're pretty sure that any experiences the farmers miss won't significantly change the future.

After you regained your courage, you experimented a bit more with Ashra, and also with Alexander, your brightest student. You discovered that, as long as you didn't interfere with any life or death situations and stuck to the recent past, the disastrous strike-back phenomenon you experienced doesn't seem likely to occur. There are various mysteries that the judges and record-keepers want solved, and as long as you confine yourself and your pupils to observation, you think you'll be all right.

The most interesting thing that happened during this period was that you found yourself falling in love with Ashra. Unfortunately, the feeling wasn't reciprocated,

and she turned down your proposal of marriage flat. Well, you kept your dignity -- far be it from you to go begging. These days your relationship is strictly professional, though you still dream of her from time to time. You wish you knew what went wrong, but who can understand the mind of a woman?

Then, one night, disaster struck. Five High Priests died in their beds. The next day, the remainder of the High Council received a message. The Engineers had rediscovered the secret of Nepenthe. Remove the ban on Engines and Engineers, or Nepenthe would be unleashed again, and humanity would be destroyed.

Like any good member of the Church, you are horrified by the thought of Nepenthe returning. But it is equally unthinkable to give in to the demands of terrorists. How could they have rediscovered Nepenthe? No one knows how powerful they actually are, their size, and how much knowledge they have managed to preserve, so anything is possible.

One thing you do know is that any Engineers must have Psychic Shielding. A hundred years ago, when the first really powerful telepath was born, hundreds of Engineers were detected and killed. The identities of those with shielding was read from the minds of those without it. But, like cockroaches, a few probably survived. They're probably more careful now. The problem is, if you're trained enough in using a shield, you can pass every test that a telepath can give you, leaving her convinced that you are one of the faithful, and the shield won't even show up.

The High Council decided that they needed more information. In particular, was the killer in the night really Nepenthe, or some other assassin? If it was Nepenthe, and it was actually unleashed, how could it be stopped? To know these answers, they would need to finally uncover, after years of studiously suppressing it, knowledge of Nepenthe itself. They asked you to form an expedition, go a thousand years back in the past, and learn all you could about the dreaded scourge.

You have grave doubts about this mission. For relatively recent events, it apparently takes fairly major alterations to seriously change the shape of time. This far back, might it not be proportionately easier to wipe oneself out? You are somewhat reassured by the thought that all the people you see will probably be dead in twenty years anyway.

Another area of concern is your colleagues. You will need the concentration of at least three powerful time travelers to travel this far into the past, and you think it prudent to take one or two extras in case of an emergency. After all, this trip will be your one chance -- you won't get another opportunity if you blow it. But you can't really vouch for the faithfulness of this many people. One might even be an Engineer, bent on who knows what dastardly plan. You will need to watch them all very closely indeed to keep them out of trouble. Ashra you know well. Alexander comes from the north; he seems ambitious to move upward in the church ranks. He has the gift of sensing lies. Lani is a new recruit, with the additional ability of Empathy; she is powerful, but undisciplined and untrained.

Another problem was the question of exactly where and when to go. Fortunately, this one was solved for you. At a a top-secret meeting with important Church officials, you met a priest from distant America. While digging the foundation for a new church, builders found a capsule of some type beneath the ground. They opened it, and there was a rush of air -- apparently it had been airtight. Inside were some pictures, some objects, and some papers.

When the priest arrived, he noticed that some of the papers were already starting to crumble from exposure to the air. Fortunately, he had the Recall ability, and could memorize anything at a glance. He memorized the first page of the folded paper, though of course he did not understand the meaning of the letters; when he tried to pick up the rest of the pages, they crumbled to dust.

Uncertain of what to do, he traveled to the nearest long range telepath to find out the Church's wishes. The message came back that he was to travel to Delhi and recopy the page for them.

Though writing is a lost art, you can at least recognize the word Nepenthe, and it appears all over this document. You went to get Arthur Fishburn to try and decipher enough of the rest to get a fix on where and when to go.

Fishburn was an unsuccessful time-travel candidate. Though his power is strong, he seems to be obsessed with the past to an unhealthy degree. You didn't feel you could trust him to avoid making changes, so you had him put in a monastery so he could be kept under observation. He understands this archaic writing as much as anyone, though, and he was successful in giving you a place-name and a date.

Now, reservations or not, you are heading back into the past. If the Engineers truly have Nepenthe and are willing to use it, then the fate of the human race could rest in your hands!

GOALS

Stop anyone from altering the true course of history. This far back in time, any changes could be catastrophic to your time. If anything prevented Nepenthe from being developed, the True Church might never be founded! You will need to keep a tight watch on everyone.

Find out what Nepenthe is. If it is unleashed in your own time, how can you stop it?

Find any heretics. Someone in the group might well be an Engineer, or some other form of heretic. Fishburn at least bears close watching.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Time travel. See blue sheet.

Language Sense. See blue sheet.

Mental Blanking. By concentrating on someone who is being held perfectly still, you may cause them to forget everything they know, or some portion thereof.

Psychic Detection. If you are concentrating on someone, you can tell whether they are using any spiritual gifts, and get some idea of what gifts they may have, unless they are shielded.

Members of your team have the following abilities:

Ashra Gulati: Recall

Alexander Brozne: Truth Sense

Lani Vishra: Empathy

Arthur Fishburn: Recall

Lani Vishra
(do-gooder)

Sanjay Gupta, the leader of this mission, must have told all of you a thousand times in the last few weeks that you were in the past to learn, not to interfere. He's been telling you that interference of any kind would be catastrophic. But what does he know? He obviously believes anything that the Church tells him. The prejudice against changing anything in the past was probably just brought about by cowardice on the part of the High Priesthood, afraid to meddle with anything that they didn't understand. Well, you may not understand everything about time, but you understand the difference between right and wrong. It's right to save people's lives if you can. And now, through some quirk of fate or the gods, you have been put where you can save more lives than any single individual has ever done. You can be the greatest hero the world has ever seen. You can stop Nepenthe.

Of course, you don't think the Church is wrong about everything -- just about time travel. You grew up in a remote goat farm in the Himalayas. You always found inspiration in the cold mountain air and the wild scenery. Your saintly mother taught you all about right and wrong, and how a person should always struggle to do what is right against any odds. She also taught you how all life is sacred, from the humblest plant to the smallest butterfly to the most wicked person. You never knew who you might be reincarnated as during the next turn of the wheel, or if that lizard had been your best friend once, so you should try to preserve and protect every living thing.

Every year a traveling priest would visit your farm, and talk to you for a while. He often asked some questions about what you had been taught, but he was always pleased with your answers -- mother was always a faithful member of the church.

When you were thirteen, he asked you a whole new set of questions. They were all about your mind -- whether you could move things without touching them, whether you knew the thoughts of others before they spoke -- that sort of thing. You'd heard of these special gifts from the gods, and you were ready. Yes, you had been blessed with some of the senses he spoke of. Sometimes when you looked at your mother a certain way you could see a fuzzy glow around her, with a color that let you know how she was feeling. You could often sense her emotions without her needing to say a thing. You had never been able to pick up actual thoughts, but emotions were easy enough.

Next thing you knew, you were in Delhi, being tested and trained to help perfect your new powers. They tested you for lots of powers, but were never able to find any besides empathy, which was pretty common. Then, one day, a man came through the training hall. He stopped in front of you, and asked you to concentrate on where he was standing, and follow him wherever he went. Then, all of a sudden, his whole body changed. It looked the same on the outside, but on the inside, he was somebody else. You tried to feel around for where his mind had gone, and then suddenly, you found it. The next minute, you were standing next to him someplace else. But where it had been winter in the hall, it was summer here.

That was how you began to learn about the gift of time travel. You soon learned that your teacher's name was Sanjay. He taught you how to use the gift to go back to the bodies of people to study the past.

The second trip you went farther back, and stayed longer. You were there to study a small town that had been wiped out by a volcano -- there was information that had been lost, and Sanjay wanted to recover it. While looking around, though, a thought occurred to you. Why couldn't you just warn everybody in the village that they should leave? Sanjay became incensed. He yelled that you could never, ever change something from the past. It was too dangerous. He never told you why it was dangerous -- he just said it was. Well, how did he know?

You've only been training for a few months, and you've "gone back" four times now. It's always just been to observe -- without written records, lots of information gets lost that the church would like to preserve orally. But ever since that second trip, it's galled you. You trippers could do so much good!

Now is your big chance. It's so obvious, you're surprised no one else has seen it. If ancient records are to be believed, Nepenthe wiped out millions of people -- it seems hard to believe there were that many people once, but that's what they say. If you can stop it now, in its infancy, your karma will become so pure from the lives you have saved, you will probably reach Nirvana almost instantly. You're not sure how you'll do it, but there must be a way. Perhaps these people from the past just don't realize what devastation their invention will cause, and if you explain it to them, they'll be willing to stop. Or perhaps you'll need to be more subtle.

Sanjay is sure to try to oppose you, once he finds out what you're doing. You respect him greatly, but he's really a coward who puts his own life ahead of the lives of others. You won't let him stop you. The others might be more sympathetic -- you aren't sure.

Of course, if you succeed, the True Church will probably never be born. Perhaps you will never be born either. But the gods will surely understand all of that, and if the Church is correct, your soul has an existence independent of your body anyway. Besides, as your mother always taught you, doing the right thing is more important than your family, yourself, or even the Church.

GOALS

Change the course of history. Prevent Nepenthe from being invented, and save millions of lives.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Time travel. See blue sheet.

Language Sense. See blue sheet.

Empathy. You may ask anyone about their emotional state. They must answer truthfully, unless they have Psychic Shielding. You may do this five times before you become exhausted.

ASHRA GULATI

(Engineer)

You're definitely looking forward to your trip into the past, but not for the same reason your glorious leader Sanjay Gupta is. You intend to use this opportunity to overthrow him and everything he stands for.

You were brought up in Delhi, just like he was. In fact, the two of you were best friends when you were young. At first, you felt sorry for him because he was an orphan -- his father died just before he was born, his mother at childbirth. Your parents and his grandparents were exceptionally powerful telepaths, high up in the Church priesthood, so you could commiserate with each other about how difficult it was to get away with anything. A good observer at an early age, though, you noticed that his grandparents always seemed to punish him a lot more for "thought-crimes" than your parents did. When you questioned Church teachings, your parents just nodded, repeated the standard lessons, and told you to come to them if you had any other questions.

When you were fourteen, in a fit of rebelliousness you sneaked out of the house one night to live it up with some lower class friends. In the morning you refused to tell your parents where you had been, trying to keep your mind as tightly closed as possible. You could feel your mother trying to read your thoughts, but to your surprise, she couldn't get in.

She told you then that you seemed to have the spiritual gift of Psychic Shielding -- the power to prevent someone else from using their psychic abilities on you. She also told you that the Church disliked this particular power, even though it was a common one. During psychic training, they would condition someone who had it to avoid using it, usually through the use of mental shocks. She also said that someone who had it fully developed could shield themselves so thoroughly that the shield itself was undetectable, and anyone trying to read minds on the individual would think they were being successful when actually they had failed. Then she went away.

For a long time you were afraid that your parents would turn you in for the conditioning your mother spoke of, but they never did. However, you noticed that both of them began probing your mind more and more often, and you became better and better at fending them off.

Finally, when they were sure they could trust both your loyalty and your discretion, they told you the truth. Both your parents were Engineers, members of a secret organization within the highest echelons of the Church that was dedicated to the heretical doctrine that machines were not evil, and should be brought back to serve humanity once again.

The origins of the Engineers, they told you, stretched all the way back to the days of Nepenthe itself. At that time, a few people in the industrialized world -- back-to-nature types, artists, etc. -- had realized what Nepenthe was doing to their society, and had tried to fight back. The only way to stop Nepenthe seemed to be to cut off its power supply, and that is what they did. They cut wires and blew up power plants, and became known as the Energy Terrorists. They weren't against all Engines, or at least most of them weren't, but they felt that desperate times called for desperate measures.

Unfortunately, the campaign of terrorism didn't work, and Nepenthe continued to spread. Some of them then realized that the best way to fight the belief in technology might be to counter it with a different belief -- some kind of religion. In India and China, there were already strong preachers crusading against Nepenthe and the Engines that brought it, and the terrorists joined these organizations and used their resources to help them spread.

When the Wars of Cleansing began, however, the terrorist leaders realized that the Church of Free Minds which they had helped set up had gone too far. By the time the wars began, Nepenthe had already killed about as many as it was going to, but in the newly-devastated world, people would cling to any superstition and strike out against anything that would give them a scapegoat for the disaster. The Church gave them a belief, and it gave them a scapegoat -- machines, books, and anyone who used either of them.

Many of the terrorists were appalled at the lengths to which their movement had gone. In desperation, they tried to save as many Engines as they could. Already adept at secret organizations, they set up the Engineers within the heart of the Church itself, to preserve machines and the knowledge of the ancients. This original society lasted almost eight hundred years.

Its downfall was the spreading of psychic powers throughout the church's hierarchy. In the tenth century, a telepath was born powerful enough to strip information from every non-shielded Engineer alive. The non-shielded ones were then forced to betray the shielded ones. The slaughter was immense. Many killed themselves so that their minds would not be read.

The Engineers today are a much smaller organization than they were then, since they only recruit members with Psychic Shielding. Both of your parents are members.

As you worked on shielding yourself, you discovered that you also had the ability of Perfect Recall, which allowed you to glance at any picture and remember every detail later. Since psychic powers were the quickest ticket to power in the Church, you dutifully turned yourself in for psychic training, confident that you could keep your other ability a secret. Besides, as your parents had told you, the Church did many good things in the world, despite its terrible wrongness about Engines and Engineers.

One day you were daydreaming about the Great Betrayal, when so many Engineers were killed. Suddenly, you found yourself standing in the temple square while smoke filled the air and the temple guards moved from house to house with swords in their hands. You looked down at yourself, and saw that you were occupying the body of your great-great grandfather. Terrified, you broke your concentration and returned to the present.

You had heard of the time-travel psychic ability before. There had been three earlier time-jumpers, but they had only been able to go back fifteen years or so, so that by the time they were ready to do anything important, they were already too old to jump without running into their own life-spans. But it was rumored that Sanjay himself was in training for the exact same ability. He was delighted when he found that the two of you had something else in common. You, on the other hand, were less pleased with the reunion. His grandparents' discipline had produced exactly the kind of grandson they wanted -- stiff, unforgiving, and orthodox.

You discussed with your parents the possibility of going back and trying to change the results of the Great Betrayal, but decided against it. For one thing, there probably wasn't much that could be done to save the larger organization once the psychics came along. For another, Sanjay told you after his initial experiments in time travel (and you had no reason to disbelieve him: that any major alteration in the time stream would, as a side effect, wipe out the person who made the change. You weren't quite that dedicated to the cause.

A better use of your talents, you felt convinced, was to somehow go back in time all the way to the time of the ancients themselves. If you could only look over a few technical blueprints and schematics of the way things worked, it would be an immeasurable boost to the Engineer cause. So much had been lost over the centuries, that Engineers thought themselves brilliant if they could put together a windmill. The old knowledge would never be regained at the rate you were going -- working in secrecy, it was being lost faster than it could ever be gained.

The problem with going back to pre-Nepenthe times was that you lacked the psychic power to do it alone, and no other Engineers could travel through time. Sanjay and the other Church officials would never do it on their own, of course -- they were too afraid of Engines and books.

Then your younger sister manifested her psychic power. It was unique, hitherto unknown, and extremely powerful. She could deliver psychic jolts that could kill.

The council of Engineers immediately drew up a list of High Priests that they wished to get rid of. That was fine, but you had a modification to their plan to suggest. If they thought that their members were being killed by a psychic killer, they'd be looking for a psychic killer. Why not spark their curiosity in a more useful direction?

A week later, five High Priests died in their beds. The next day, the remainder of the High Council received a message. The Engineers had rediscovered the secret of Nepenthe. Remove the ban on Engines and Engineers, or Nepenthe would be unleashed again, and humanity would be destroyed.

You gambled that the Council knew nothing more about Nepenthe than you did, and the bluff paid off. According to your spies, the Council bought the lie hook, line, and sinker. At their next meeting, as you had hoped, they voted to have Sanjay lead an expedition into the past, to find out more about Nepenthe and try to discover how to stop it. As you had expected, you were chosen to be part of the expedition.

GOALS

Find as much information as you can about Engines and Nepenthe. Talking to people and asking questions would help. Even better would be to find some kind of technical manual that gives diagrams of basic Engines, since you can memorize books as fast as you flip through the pages.

Find a way to destroy the True Church. You don't know whether Nepenthe can be targeted or not. Otherwise, any efficient means of killing would be helpful. You truly want revenge.

Avoid changing the past. You have no reason to doubt Sanjay when he says that major changes in the past tend to eradicate the changer's existence. Occasionally you like to think of yourself as one of the brave Engineers who committed suicide to keep their secrets during the Great Betrayal, but you aren't really sure you could actually destroy yourself. Besides, they are remembered as heroes by their descendants, whereas, if you changed the past, you wouldn't be remembered at all. You aren't particularly religious, and utter oblivion scares you.

Keep Sanjay at arm's length. He has made it clear in the past that he wouldn't mind making you his wife. You have made it equally clear that you aren't interested. It's not just that he's a stuck-up orthodox prig. You actually like him a little, or at least you used to, but you'd hate to be married to a man whom you had to constantly betray.

Keep an eye on Arthur Fishburn. Engineer spies have reported that he is extremely resistant to Church teachings, and is fascinated with Engines. He would be a perfect Engineer recruit, except that he lacks Psychic Shielding and seems to have difficulty keeping a secret. Perhaps he could help you in some way without being given any important secrets. At least you're quite sure there aren't any true telepaths on this trip, so you won't have to worry about him having his mind read till you get back. Alexander, though, does reportedly have some form of truth detection ability, that works when he is touching a person. You are shielded, but Arthur wouldn't be.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Time travel. See blue sheet.

Language Sense. See blue sheet.

Shielding. Psychic powers don’t work on you unless you want them to.

Recall. If you look at any picture or writing, you may recall it and draw it <u>exactly.</u> However, you cannot understand what you write!

Alexander Brozne

(patriot)

From your earliest years, you have been surrounded by the ruined glories of the past. You grew up in the ruins of the great city that had once been known as Moscow, and wandered in awe through the shattered towers and trash-choked streets that had once been the capitol of a mighty empire. Now, only a few hundred thousand remain from what was once a city of millions.

Your grandmother used to tell you stories about the days hundreds of years ago, before the disaster of Nepenthe, when Moscow ruled the world. As she told it, the territory once stretched all the way to the Eastern and Western seas, and even into outer space. Then, along came Nepenthe, and everything crashed to nothingness. She believes that Nepenthe was originally a weapon of war invented by your old nemesis, the Untied Stays. Often, the Untied Stays would invent something, and then lose control of it, with disastrous results, and doubtless it was the same with Nepenthe: they had intended to use it to wipe out your ancestors, but ended up wiping out everything. Of course, not all Mericans were evil, but you know for a fact that their government was deceitful, selfish, and aggressive, unlike the wise men who governed your own country.

Much as you loved your country, though, you were ambitious, and you knew that you had to get out of the backwater of Moscow. The church was the way to see the world, and you joined it, aided by your manifestation of the gift of truth sense. This is a mild form of telepathy -- if you are in physical contact with someone, you can tell whether or not they are lying. Most other psychics will be aware when you are doing this, and it doesn't work on anyone with Shielding.

One day, a man came through the training hall. He stopped in front of you, and asked you to concentrate on where he was standing, and follow him wherever he went. Then, all of a sudden, his whole body changed. It looked the same on the outside, but on the inside, he was somebody else. You tried to feel around for where his mind had gone, and then suddenly, you found it. The next minute, you were standing next to him someplace else. But where it had been winter in the hall, it was summer here.

That was how you began to learn about the gift of time travel. You soon learned that your teacher's name was Sanjay. He taught you how to use the gift to go back to the bodies of people to study the past.

You have been one of Sanjay's brightest pupils for a while now, along with his apparent girlfriend, Ashra. However, you have secretly resented his leadership (fortunately, he isn't a telepath). The man prevents everyone else from changing the past; however, rumor has it that he has been known to do so himself. It seems obvious that he is "training" you to make sure you don't use your powers, in order to maintain his own monopoly and eliminate competition. If you were in charge of time travel, that is what you would do.

When you learned about this mission, all sorts of possibilities came to mind. First of all, it will give you an opportunity to outshine the stuffy Sanjay. It is quite possible that one of the others on this trip may be planning to sabotage it in some way. With your younger mind, you should be able to apprehend any Engineers or

other heretics before Sanjay gets wind of them, thus putting yourself closer to a promotion and making him look bad.

Being close to the invention of Nepenthe, and finally finding what it is, is terrifying and exciting. You have no wish to alter the past this far back; doing so might wipe you out of existence, and you know that you are too important to do that. However, it has also occurred to you that it might be possible to allow Nepenthe to be constructed, but find some way to innoculate your homeland so that it is protected from the scourge. Perhaps when you return, you might find yourself the Czar of a new Russian Empire! Even the risk of oblivion might be worth such a reward.

GOALS

Hunt down heretics. The best way ahead in the church is to demonstrate your loyalty by exposing the disloyalty of others. Best of all would be if you could find a flaw in Sanjay -- then you might head the department!

Protect the Russian Empire. You have no idea how to do so, here in the heart of enemy territory. It is said that the ancients had devices that let them communicate over vast distances, but you have no idea how to use one.

Help Lani. Lani is a new student of Sanjay's. Providing you can assure yourself that she is not a traitor, you find her rather fetching. Perhaps you could get to know her better.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Time travel. See blue sheet.

Language Sense. See blue sheet.

Truth Sense. If you are in physical contact with someone while they are speaking (need not be skin to skin), you can tell whether or not they are lying. This doesn't work against anyone with Shielding, and most psychics will be aware that you are doing it.