



Briefing
for the
Contra Central
Mentality

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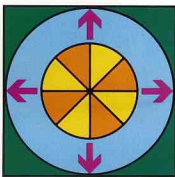
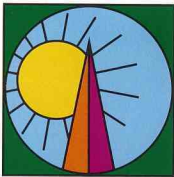
CLASSIFIED
INFORMATION

CLASSIFIED

This briefing has been updated and revised many times to ensure accuracy and completeness. In a crisis, our planet's survival depends on you. We cannot overstate the importance of the information contained herein.

Since Contra was terraformed and settled by emigres from Earth, we have had the benefit of living within a controlled environment. As you well know, our weather is always perfect and there is food for everyone—wholesome, delicious food. Anyone wishing to travel the surface of our planet simply takes a glide ramp, a robot-taxi, or a floater.

This controlled and balanced environment is maintained by three massive and powerful computers buried deep beneath Contra's surface. Without these computers, we would be forced to brave the elemental fury of Contra and provide for ourselves using primitive methods and skills.



Contra's three Filtering Computers maintain and monitor all surface-side systems.

RESP 21-86459-9723

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO CONTRA

Since these three Filtering Computers are biomechanical in construction, they must be monitored. It is the duty of the Central Mentality to monitor these Filtering Computers to ensure they function properly.

The Filtering Computers are located in an extremely high-security area called the Underground Complex. With one exception, monitoring of the Filtering Computers has always proceeded without trouble. Since training and costs prohibit frequent changing of the Central Mentality, you will be in the Complex for 500 years.

Your time in the Complex will be spent in a state of limited cryogenic suspension. You will be frozen to nearly absolute zero and then stored in a cryogenic capsule within the Complex. Your brain will remain in an Alpha state, receptive but quiet, requiring only minimal biological functions. You will be able to survive in this state for your tour of duty: 500 years.

WRNG 27-30651-1804

IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG

It won't. But if it does, the computers responsible for all of our surface-side systems will awaken you and inform you of the problem. We are confident you will be capable of solving any situations which may arise. The fate of the entire population of Contra will rest in your abilities to make logical decisions and choices.

Your body will be warmed to the point where marginal biological activity is resumed, supplying your mind with the necessary nutrients and oxygen to function at peak capacity. Unfortunately, we cannot revive you completely until the end of your tour of duty.

Due to the Gregory Franklin incident (refer to the letter from the Lottery Commission), we are forced to make clones of you. When you complete this briefing, the cloning procedure will begin. These clones will be installed in the Complex as a backup system, should anything go wrong with you.

UNCX 56-05319-9278

THE UNDERGROUND COMPLEX

The Underground Complex you will occupy is fully automated and maintained by six robots. In the unlikely event that the Filtering Computers malfunction, there are override controls for the weather systems, the transit systems and the hydroponics food resource center. There are also planet-side monitors for examining the current state of these systems.

The robots which maintain the Complex are under the control of the Filtering Computers. Malfunctioning equipment is quickly and easily detected by the computers themselves, and the necessary robots are dispatched to effect the replacements. If you are ever awakened (an extremely unlikely event), robots will provide your link to the outside world.

SRBT 63-34582-2351


THE SIX ROBOTS

The most recent facilities check indicates that your robotic crew is fully operational (with the exception noted below). The following profiles have been provided to inform you of special capabilities of individual robots, so that you can make the best use of each member of your crew, should corrective maneuvers become necessary.




Iris is a visual robot whose mobility is limited. Her ability to describe things approaches what a human being might see in most circumstances. Since the Frobozz Engineering Company was responsible for her design and construction, she has limited abilities for grasping, carrying, etc., and has only two grasping extensions. An historical note: she proved to be the butt of many design and implementation jokes on Contra's surface, one of which was "The eyes have it." Humor of this sort has, of course, since been outlawed on Contra.


Iris's limited mobility results from her complex optical capabilities. Due to these abilities, only a limited mapping of the Complex was included in her logic circuits. This design restriction allows Iris to wander about the areas only in which she serves a useful purpose.




Waldo is an industrious robot. Since his primary purpose is to manipulate objects, he has been provided with six grasping extensions. He travels by using a sonar-feedback mechanism and, when close to or touching an object, can detect quite a bit about its inherent characteristics based on this sonar. In addition, he has a highly developed sense of touch and can prove to be a delicate workman.




Sensa is a peculiar mixture of sensory apparatuses. She can detect vibrational activity, photon emission sources and ionic discharges. She is also rigged to automatically perform such sensory tasks as the analysis of diffraction indexes. Sensa has five extensions, two of which are used exclusively for sensory input. The other three extensions are grasping extensions.



Auda is all ears, capable of processing and interpreting auditory signals within the Complex. Her presence is required by the CLU (Consolidated Listeners Union), and though Auda may not be very helpful in the high-tech sense, in case of human intervention she is absolutely essential. Auda has but one grasping extension.



Poet is a peculiar robot whose function was somehow altered over time by the Filtering Computers. Poet was originally intended as a diagnostic robot. He has been equipped with a diagnostic sensor which is activated when he has been directed to TOUCH something. Unless Poet is actually doing his thing, he makes the best of what he perceives, translating his input into occasionally bewildering output. Despite the sometimes seeming lack of sense to his statements, they provide an accurate representation of reality. In addition to his "touching" extension, Poet has been provided with three grasping extensions.



Whiz is an interfacing device between you and the Central Library Core, a huge data bank available to your queries. Whiz can PLUG IN to any of the four CLC peripherals and find information for you. This information pertains to objects and the Complex in general. The CLC contains no information about any of the rooms your robots can visit. Although Whiz is extremely helpful, he does have his limitations. There was once a robot-joke about Whiz being a real airhead; if he could have understood it, he would have taken offense. Whiz has two grasping extensions.

Note: There is a seventh robot. Standing almost two meters tall and featuring 16 grasping extensions, verbal circuits and heavy-duty shielding against acid damage, this model is optimized for a multitude of applications. It should be mentioned that this robot was misused by Gregory Franklin, who abandoned it within the Complex after brutally mangling it beyond recognition or hope of repair.

THE CENTRAL LIBRARY CORE (CLC)

The Central Library Core (CLC) is composed of several distinct parts: Whiz, the Peripherals and the Library Core.

Whiz. Whiz's function with the CLC is to act as your querying device. By plugging him in, you can ask questions about objects and get advice on situations.

The Peripherals. There are four peripherals accessible to Whiz:

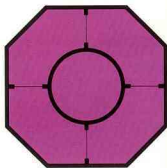
The Index Peripheral—Querying this peripheral performs the following operations: The object is passed along to the Central Language Core, at which point its name is matched against an index. If the name is not found, you will be informed that the object is not on file and no peripheral will contain any reference to it. If the object is found within the Language Core, it is passed to the Index Core. The Index Core then scans through the tagging device for references. If no references are found, you will be told that no data is available at any peripheral. If references are found, you will be told at which peripherals information can be retrieved.

The Technical Peripheral—This peripheral can provide technical data on some objects. If you absolutely need to know how something works, querying this peripheral can sometimes prove helpful. Technical information is not available on all objects.

The Advisory Peripheral—When you need advice and just can't understand what's going on with something, ask this peripheral. It is attuned to provide Hierarchical Information for Newly Terraformed Systems (H.I.N.T.S.).

The Historical Peripheral—This peripheral can provide you with historical references for certain objects found within the Complex, adding a greater understanding of what these things do and how they interact.

The Library Core. The CLC itself is also accessible from the Lower Access area, but all interactions and queries here are designed solely for human interaction. Whiz cannot perform queries from this area since there isn't a suitable peripheral for him.



THE SURFACE SYSTEMS

The surface of Contra is controlled by the three Filtering Computers. These systems, when in proper balance, maintain the weather, the transportation systems and the food production automatically. By polling surface-side peripherals, the Filtering Computers can make decisions on what adjustments are necessary for a balanced environment. If the Filtering Computers cannot mutually agree on a course of action, you will be awakened to make the necessary decisions.



The Weather System. Weather on the surface of Contra is controlled by Weather Towers. Each city has three towers which control atmospheric pressure within the surrounding area. By testing temperature, wind velocity and relative humidity, the three Filtering Computers can make adjustments in the Weather Towers to maintain a balanced, comfortable state. Since the weather on the surface is controlled, housing and clothing are more decorative than protective, and maintaining a balanced weather condition becomes a primary concern.

Since the planetary engineers were aware of this, they built the Weather Monitors and the Weather Controls into the Complex. You have been provided with manual override controls in case the Filtering Computers fall out of synchronization and cannot agree on a course of action. These controls are found in the Weather Control Area and consist of three dials, each of which controls a set of towers in all the cities of Contra. The first dial, for example, controls the pressure in all of the first towers in all of the cities.

The Weather Monitors provide you with the necessary feedback on the planet's surface so that you can make necessary adjustments.



Food Production. Food is produced hydroponically deep underground, separated from the Underground Complex by nearly half a planet. The Filtering Computers prepare and balance the amount of water, minerals and light for the Hydroponic Growing Area. This area is not accessible to you or the robots because of its distant location, but you do have manual control over it, should the need ever arise.

The Hydroponic Monitors provide you with a continual analysis of the Growing Area, while three levers in the Hydroponic Control Area allow you to manually override the three Filtering Computers' settings.



The Transportation System. Transportation on Contra's surface is totally automated and controlled by the Filtering Computers. There are three basic forms of transportation: floaters, taxis and glide ramps.

Floaters are small single- or double-occupant bubbles which travel through the air. They travel on lines of force, generated from the ground, maintained and controlled by the Filtering Computers. Collisions are normally unheard of, and not a single casualty has ever occurred due to traffic problems. The Transit Monitors tell you how many floaters are currently in use, while a manual override switch is located in the Transit Control Area. By turning off the switch, you can turn off the lines of force to the floaters.

The taxis are actually robots, semi-intelligent vehicles which are guided by the Filtering Computers. They have on-board power, so the manual override system, a switch in the Transit Control Area, instructs the taxis to stop picking up passengers rather than simply shutting them off. (When Franklin was in control, he managed to figure out a method of getting the Filtering Computers out of balance, causing the taxis to seek out pedestrians and run them down.)

The glide ramps are similar in function to conveyor belts, transporting the bulk of the population at a leisurely pace. The ramps are speed-controlled by the Filtering Computers and can be shut off by using the manual override switch located in the Transit Control area.

A Final Note. Your 500-year tour of duty will indubitably fly by trouble-free. Pleasant dreams.



A robot who hears but cannot see . . .

You are suspended—physically immobilized, frozen but alive—20 miles beneath the surface of an automated planet. Three computers, supposedly perfect and fail-safe, control the entire planet's weather, transportation and food production. You are linked to the computer system in case of an emergency—in case, for some unthinkable, unimaginable reason, the computers malfunction.

A robot who sees but cannot wander . . .

Should the impossible happen, should something go wrong, you must fix the computers as quickly as possible, since people will be dying—victims of a utopia turned nightmare—until you do.

A robot who feels but cannot hear . . .

You cannot move. You have six robots at your disposal to do your work for you—highly specialized, preprogrammed robots, all obedient, all helpful, all individualized. You will have to manipulate them in and around an Underground Complex where the computers are controlled. You will address and work them separately and jointly, and they will report back to you with their progress and perceptions.

Think logically. Act decisively. Your life—and that of the entire planet—depends on you.

The Table of Contents for the manual is on page 11. Take a look at it to determine what you should read before you start the story.