

for EABA™ v2

1957

an alternate start point for Agency

 **BTRC**

greg porter

Table of Contents

Vignette	1.1
What it's about	1.3
Agents	2.1
Attributes	2.2
Skills	2.2
Traits	2.2
Secrets.....	2.3
Status	2.4
Black	2.5
Non-white	2.5
Female.....	2.5
Non-Christian.....	2.6
Homosexual	2.6
Communist	2.7
Final notes.....	2.8
The world of 1957	3.1
The Cold War.....	3.2
Racism.....	3.4
Drugs	3.10
Feminism.....	3.12
Guns	3.14
Dress codes.....	3.16
Censorship & Prudery.....	3.17
Settings & plots	4.1
Espionage	4.2
Technology	4.3
Travel.....	4.4
Cuba	4.7
West Berlin	4.7
Yugoslavia.....	4.10
USSR	4.11
North Korea.....	4.12
Middle East.....	4.13
China	4.14
Nuclear weapons	4.15
Alaska & Hawaii.....	4.16
Sputnik	4.16
Wars & rumors of wars	4.17
Adventuring	5.1
Agent groups	5.1
Yakuza	5.1
The Summit.....	5.3
Mercantile	5.3
Alternate campaign strategy	5.7
All about the Jacksons.....	5.8
And one more thing.....	5.18
Gear list.....	5.23
Agent record.....	5.24
EABA OSL	5.25

1957 1.0

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Published by: Blacksburg Tactical
 Research Center

Design: Greg Porter

Layout: Greg Porter

Page backdrop: Paschalis Zervas

Useful Scenery: Cathy DeMott

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Vignette

The Vegas Strip was getting bigger every year. The papers said 'too big, too fast', but they couldn't understand Scenery. Agents ran the Strip, and if they were halfway competent, the profits would roll in. Half a dozen new casinos in the past two years.

Half wouldn't make it. Scenery copies what it sees to work but can't always duplicate it. Ten million visitors a year. Elvis, Sinatra, topless stage shows and high-class restaurants.

I had just handed the keys of my TR3 to the valet when the concierge came out the main doors, accompanied by a welcome blast of air-conditioning. "Mr. Factor wishes to see you at your earliest convenience." Faktorowicz. That was quick. After that business in Los Angeles someone must have seen me headed northeast. Route 91 only goes one place worth visiting, and it would not take an Agent to figure out who they would call. I told the bellhop to get the luggage to my room, gave him my card and a dollar tip. He looked at me, looked at the card. I could see the curiosity warring with the potential of ruining another nice tip later. "Yeah, I know, I look a lot like him, but James Dean is gone and we'll never see his like again." It was good while it lasted, though. I stepped into the Stardust's icy embrace.

Faktorowicz, makeup mogul Max Factor's half-brother, persona non grata with the Brits for having swindled the royal family, now a 'respectable businessman'. He owed too many people too many favors to ever be in charge, but he was damn good at what he did. For Faktorowicz, I was sure 'my earliest convenience' meant 'goddamn now', and since he was part of why I was here, his attempt to catch me off-balance wasn't going to work.

Factor's outer sanctum had two bits of Scenery, one splendid, one gorilla. Both had desks and both had electric typewriters. I think the gorilla was the better typist, but that's not what he was there for any more than she was. He gave me a thorough and professional pat-down before buzzing me in to Factor's office. The door closed behind me with an electric snick and a surprising amount of mass.

"Jimmy."

"It's Harold, now."

"Harry, Jimmy, whatever. You made some people in Los Angeles very unhappy."

"Not unhappy enough. They still had enough unbroken fingers to call you."

"You're a regular Don Rickles. I owe LA a favor, but I owe you one too, which is why we're talking. But I don't owe you that much of a favor, so when we're done talking, you're going to leave here in a sack and you're going to wake up in the desert with a broken leg and a canteen. The favor is that it won't be two broken legs. I know you've got some heavy hitters on your side, but you don't mess with the families."

"Berman."

"Davie the Jew? Didn't I just say something about the families?"

"He's working for the Reds."

"Davie? Nice try. He's as American as they come."

"Maybe so, but that's not where he came from. Stalin's people got to his mother, and she got to him. He's been in the pocket of the Commies since he was a kid. Found out that crazy Uncle Joe even visited him once or twice back in the Ukraine."

"Agency?"

"Never heard of it happening, but God only knows what Stalin was capable of. Maybe even rolling one of us."

I pulled out a fat envelope and dropped it on Factor's desk. "Pictures, receipts, travel records. Vegas is close enough to the A-bomb tests that key personnel come down for hookers and Elvis. All kinds of pillow talk going on, and one of his key girls at the Flamingo is a Soviet Agent." I didn't need to capitalize the A for Factor to understand. He leafed through it. He knew what my group did. We didn't make things up. He didn't want to believe, but he eventually stuffed things back in the envelope.

"I'm gonna need this for later." I nodded. "That's why I brought it."

"The surgery?" I nodded again. Berman was going under for routine surgery tomorrow. He wasn't coming back up.

"I just need people to stay out of the way. It will look like an unforeseen complication."

"If you get caught, Berman's goons will make you wish I'd given you the broken leg. And you know his Commie girlfriend will be watching out for him while he's under."

"And if I don't get caught, it's just one of those things that happens. No scandal, no blame, no Family with blood on their hands." Factor looked at me for a very long several seconds.

"Get out of here. I'll make sure what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. Do it and be gone." He put the envelope in a side drawer, gave me a look that said "and don't come back" and hit the buzzer for the door. I left.

What it's about -----

1957 is an Agency supplement for starting a campaign in, obviously enough, 1957. This is not some sort of "you all go back in time" supplement or anything like that, it is just set in the unimaginably distant past of a few generations ago.

For almost all gamers, this is 'before their time', yet easily within living memory, your father's, mother's or grandparents. What was the world like then, that Agents were living in and shaping? And just how jarring will it be for players who might think that this is a 'modern' world?

Well for starters, there is no Internet. No mobile phones. Very, very few fax machines. No pagers. Long distance calls to anywhere except between major cities required a human operator to connect the call. Very few credit cards and the ones that do exist are only honored in a limited number of places. No personal computers. There are exactly three television stations you can watch, ABC, NBC and CBS. And to change the station on your television (which is probably black & white), you have to get up, walk over to it and turn a chu-chunk! big-ass dial on the front. Mankind has put exactly zero items into space, and the first episode of Star Trek and its progressive notion of black girls in miniskirts as bridge crew is almost a decade away.

Fifteen percent of homes in the United States do not have full plumbing systems. Twenty percent do not have a telephone. Fifteen percent do not have a television. Five percent still do not have electricity and virtually no one has central air conditioning, but window air conditioners are becoming popular with the well-heeled. The 'Coldspot' window unit sold by Sears in 1957 costs the equivalent of 2,000 Credits in 2018 money! And it is described as 'portable' since it only weighs 40 kilograms...

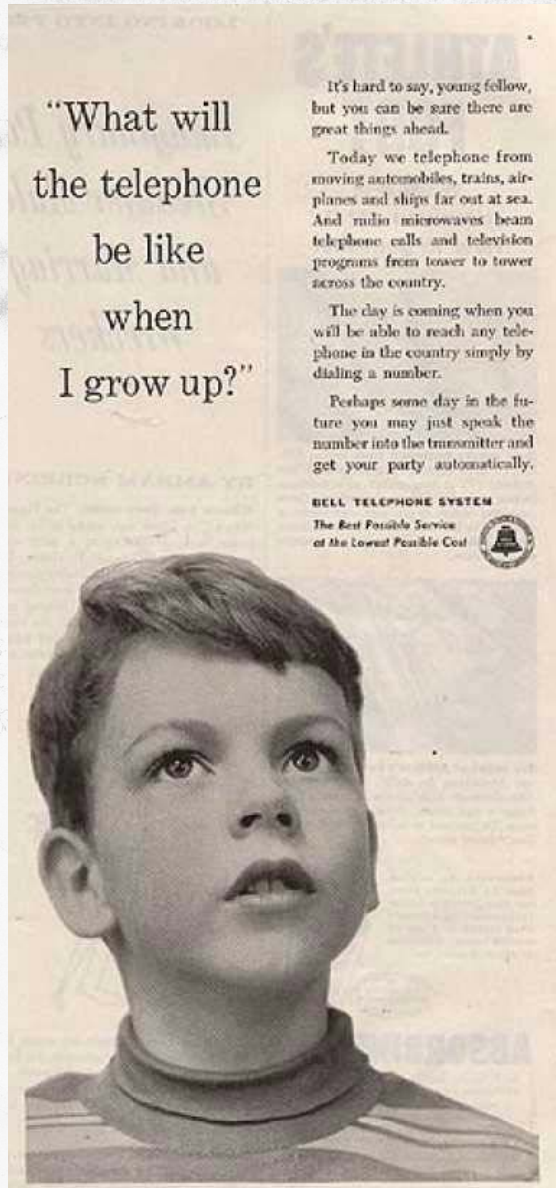
In other words, it is a setting where all the easy tricks and conveniences that modern players and Agents have at their disposal are simply non-existent. Agents have to rely on their talents and wits. If you do not know something, you have to physically go to a library and look it up. If you need to negotiate something, you go there and talk to people in person. If you want to request a document from someone, you have to wait for it to show up in the mail, because overnight or express delivery has not been invented yet. When you buy something anywhere but a store, you send a check or money order and wait six to eight weeks for it to arrive, and there are no tracking numbers to see where the package is at.

1957 is not just a setting, it is a year. It has 365 days, and when those days run out, the campaign is over. Yes, the gamemaster can continue things into 1958 and beyond, but the idea is that the Agents will be involved in something that is happening in 1957, and that whatever the big plot is, it will resolve in 1957, even if the final repercussions of that plot will take some time (even years) to fully resolve. For instance, the 'space race' begins in 1957 when dastardly Commies put Sputnik into orbit and the Vanguard rocket the US launches in response blows up on the launch pad.

1957 does not have to end the same way our history records it. Because this is **Agency** and we (you, anyway) are Scenery, what gets written in the history books is not necessarily what really happened.

In addition to all the fun and games, 1957 is also a history lesson. It will rub your nose in the past. Your Agents will be noticeably out of place and socially hindered if they try to act with the attitudes of 2018, even if they are among other Agents. Acting with and within the social moires of this other time, even if trying to change them, is part of the setting. And social attitudes are changing. This is the time of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, a time when President Eisenhower called for Congress to pass the Equal Rights Amendment, when the United States Supreme Court addresses homosexuality for the first time, when the 'Red Scare' that caused countless people to be blacklisted for 'un-American activities' was finally starting to fade.

In addition to the lengthy cultural notes in the next chapter, 1957 will also be peppered with period advertisements, in most cases taken from that exact year. This will as much as anything else, give you a 'feel' for the look and attitudes of the time, how the world (especially the United States) sees itself, and the starting point for what the players and their Agents are going to be doing.



In the future you will be able to reach any telephone just by dialing its number!