

ENGINE[®]
System

TABLOID!TM
GAME

NOVEMBER 1995

ALIENS ATTACK LOCH NESS!

*No story too strange
for our underpaid reporters!*





An
AMAZING ENGINE®
Universe Book

TABLOID!TM

GAME

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The AMAZING ENGINE® Role-Playing System

Note: If you are already familiar with the basic rules for this game system, feel free to turn directly to the Universe Book portion of this product. Any rules modifications specific to this setting are included there.

The AMAZING ENGINE® role-playing system is more than just a single role-playing game, be it fantasy world or science fiction universe. Instead, the AMAZING ENGINE system provides the basics for creating a wide variety of role-playing settings—anything from consulting detectives investigating fairy realms to deadly aliens stalking hi-tech space marines—and as much as can be imagined in between.

System Guide and Universe Books

To do this, the AMAZING ENGINE system consists of two parts. The first part comprises the basic rules for creating player characters and having those characters use skills, fight, and move: the System Guide, which you are reading right now. These rules are found in all AMAZING ENGINE products. This section also details how players and Gamemasters (GMs) can change settings while transferring benefits player characters have gained from previous play.

The second part of the system comprises the Universe Book. Each Universe Book is a complete role-playing game. It is not necessary to buy every Universe Book to play in the AMAZING ENGINE system. Gamemasters can run campaigns in just a single universe, choose only science fiction or only fantasy, or play in both according to their personal whims.

The AMAZING ENGINE system is more than a mere collection of universes. In this system, the advances a player character (PC) gains in one universe can be used to help PCs in other universes. Starting in a new setting does not call for starting over from the beginning; this means players and GMs can experiment with the wide range of universes.

The Player Core and the Player Character

The heart of the AMAZING ENGINE system is the combination of the *player core* and the *player character*. The player core is the framework around which PCs are built. The same player core is used from universe to universe.

The PC is the actual collection of numbers, skills, and other abilities used to role-play in a given universe. A player will have a different character in each universe, but these characters may all be generated from the same core.

When creating player cores, the players must make certain decisions about the kind of characters they want. They can choose different emphases for the four different pools (see next page) that define a character: Physique, Intellect, Spirit, and Influence. These choices, made while creating the player core, reflect in all PCs created from that core. Each pool offers a pair of choices. Does a player want characters that are generally strong and influential, or ones who are intellectually superior and athletic? Physical characters can be either

muscular or quick; spiritual characters can possess great psychic potential or strong wills.

Of course, the same ability is not always the best in every universe. A muscular but psychically weak character who does quite well in the BUGHUNTERS® game may be at quite a disadvantage in the MAGITECH™ game, where wizards needing strong psyches to manipulate magic are a common sight. Therefore, the same player character is not used in every universe. Instead, the player core allows each character to be tailored to the needs of each universe—within the limits of the player's original choices. Players who emphasized Physique will still have characters who are either faster or stronger than most others. Those who chose Intellect will have smarter characters, either in learned skills or intuitive understanding. The player core forms the archetype around which a single player's characters are all set.

The Ability Pools

The player core consists of four different ability pools: Physique, Intellect, Spirit, and Influence. Each pool has two attributes that define the player character. When creating the player core, only the ability pools are used. When creating a PC, or playing that PC in a single universe, only the attributes are used. Once the first character is generated, ability pools never affect the actions of a PC and attributes never affect ability pools. The ability pools' corresponding attributes are:

Fitness and Reflexes. These attributes of Physique measure all things physical about the character.

Learning and Intuition. These attributes of Intellect define the character's mental power for learning useful skills.

Psyche and Willpower. These attributes of Spirit are the sources of the PC's mystical potential and strength of will.

Charm and Position. These attributes of Influence generate the values affecting the character's social interactions.

The Attributes

As noted, the eight attributes are more precise breakdowns of the corresponding ability pools, and they define a specific character in a specific universe. Beginning characters' attributes have values from 3 to 50, with 25 being the approximate average score. (Characters generated from the core later in a campaign may have higher scores.)

Fitness. A measure of bodily strength, Fitness reflects the characters' muscles and their ability to use them effectively. Fitness affects the amount of damage characters can cause in hand-to-hand combat, and the amount of body damage they can take.

Reflexes. This attribute measures characters' reaction speed and hand-eye coordination. It is used for scoring a hit in combat, and (along with Willpower) determines the amount of stamina damage characters can take.

Learning. This measures characters' knowledge in areas requiring long training or study. In some universes, it may represent a degree or period of schooling. Learning affects the number and kind of, and chance of success at, skills characters can have.





Intuition. This encompasses the characters' ability to remember random trivia, innate wit, street smarts, comprehension, and worldliness. Intuition is applied to skills picked up through observation and practice, without long periods of study. Like Learning, Intuition affects the number and kind of, and chance of success at, skills characters can have.

Psyche. The universe is filled with more things than can be measured or imagined by physical science—or at least an AMAZING ENGINE universe may be. Psyche represents the characters' potential to perceive and manipulate the spiritual and metaphysical world. In a given universe, this may determine the characters' magical ability, psychic powers, or plain old luck.

Willpower. As a measure of mental fortitude, this ability indicates how well the characters can endure pain (along with Reflexes, in the form of stamina points), block mental attacks, or resist psychic possession.

Charm. In role-playing games (RPGs), characters must interact. This attribute rates the characters' personalities and the way others are disposed toward them. Charm is used to influence reactions of NPCs and can affect the success of some magical and psychic skills.

Position. This attribute provides a rough rank for characters on the ladder of social advancement, whatever form the rungs take in a particular universe. Depending on the setting, Position may translate into military rank, fame (or infamy), wealth, title, class, or even occupation. Position is used to deal with officials, finance large purchases, and secure special resources, and also at special social functions.

Generating the Player Core and Player Character

The process of creating the player core is woven into the steps of creating the first player character. As you create this character, you will have to make a number of choices for the core that will affect the character. In later steps, numbers rolled for the PC's attributes will affect the final results of the player core. Thus, the procedure for creating your first PC (and player core) is slightly different from that used when creating subsequent PCs from the same core.

The first task in creating a character is to decide what kind of character you like. You can do this even before knowing what kind of universe your GM is going to use. Do you prefer strong characters, able and ready to fight; charmers who can talk their way out of any situation; intellectuals good at solving problems; or magically-charged wonderworkers? Think about your ideal character.

The next step is to translate your ideal into game form by ranking the four ability pools of the core from best to worst. Using a sheet of paper (or the Player Core Sheet on page 18), write the numeral 1 (best) next to the pool for which you want the best chance for high scores. Then rank the remaining pools (2, 3, and 4), remembering that the one ranked lowest will usually have the lowest scores. Later die rolls do not guarantee anything.

In the third step, begin creating your first actual PC by choosing four of the eight attributes and rolling four 10-sided dice (4d10) for each

one. Add the four results, and note the total in the space next to the attribute name. (Do this in pencil, since the attributes may be modified in a later step.) The attributes chosen need not correspond to the ranking of attribute pools done previously. You can choose one, both, or no attributes of any given pool in this step.

Now, generate scores for the four remaining attributes by rolling 3d10 and adding the results. Note the totals in their appropriate places.

Once the basic numbers have been generated, modify the attributes based on the rankings you gave the ability pools (1–4). The rankings determine the number of points available to divide between the two attributes of that pool (15, 10, 5, or 0). You can divide these points however you wish, but no attribute can have more than 50 total points.

Rank 1: 15 points

Rank 2: 10 points

Rank 3: 5 points

Rank 4: 0 points

The modified numbers are your PC's attribute scores.

With the PC attributes determined, you can now finish creating the player core by figuring your ability pools' dice ratings. Do this by adding the two attribute scores of each pool and dividing the total by 10. Fractions are rounded up to the next whole number. Write these numbers next to "Dice." Although this total has no effect on a PC during play, it is needed for creating other characters in other universes.

Creating Characters from the Player Core

Once you have created a player core, you are ready to create new characters for other AMAZING ENGINE settings. These characters are made using the player core, and follow different steps from those you used for your first (or "prime") character.

You build PCs from the core by assigning dice to the different attributes. Each ability pool has a dice rating (this was the last step you performed in creating your prime character). These dice are divided in whole numbers between each pool's attribute pair. In addition to these dice, all new PCs have 7 "free" dice the players can assign as they see fit. However, unless stated otherwise by the universe-specific rules, no attribute can have more than 5 dice assigned to it. Once all dice have been assigned, the appropriate numbers are rolled and totalled, just as before.

After the dice are assigned, rolled, and totalled, the next step is the same as for your prime character from this core. Using the same rankings you assigned to your ability pools, use the points each rank gives (15, 10, 5, and 0) to modify your PC's attributes. As before, no PC can have an attribute rating higher than 50.

Once the attributes have been modified, the character creation process stops. Do not recalculate the dice ratings for the player core. The dice ratings can only be altered by spending experience points earned by the PCs created from that core.





Multiple characters can be created from the same player core. However, you should have only one character from the same core per universe. Multiple characters per core in the same universe would give you an unfair advantage over players with only a single PC per core. You can create multiple cores, however, each with its own prime character; use the rules for "Generating the Player Core and Player Character."

A detailed, complete example of creating a player core and a prime character is given on pages 14–15.

Life and Death

A crucial part of any role-playing game is the risk of injury and death to the PCs. Every time a PC tries something dangerous or gets in a fight, she can suffer damage. This damage is measured in points, subtracted from a character's total. In the AMAZING ENGINE system, there are two types of damage: *stamina* and *body*.

Stamina damage is caused by the host of bruises, grazes, cuts, burns, jolts, and effort spent avoiding serious harm. A character who loses all her stamina points does not die—she falls unconscious. Unconsciousness comes from the combined effects of blood loss, concussion, shock, pain, and just plain exhaustion. If an attack causes 10 points of stamina damage and your character has only 4 remaining, the excess points are ignored. Your character falls unconscious. Attacks on unconscious characters automatically cause body damage.

Body damage represents wounds and injuries that seriously threaten the health of your PC. These include bullet holes, stab wounds, broken bones, serious burns, bites, and other unpleasanties. When your character loses all her body points, she's dead.

Just how many stamina and body points your PC has varies from universe to universe. In some, such as that of the BUGHUNTERS game, combat is one of the main activities. Here, your PC will need lots of stamina and body points. In others, like *For Faerie, Queen, and Country*, combat is a last resort when all others have failed. Characters in such a universe have lower stamina and body point totals to discourage players' desire to solve every problem with guns.

In all universes, however, stamina and body points are calculated from the same attribute scores. Fitness is used to figure body points. Characters with high Fitness scores will always have more body points than those with poor Fitness scores, no matter what the universe. Willpower and Reflexes combined are the base for stamina points, so that those with high scores in these attributes will have more stamina points than those with low ones.

Injuries and wounds do heal, allowing your PC to regain lost stamina and body points. Because the two types of damage reflect different causes, each heals at a different rate. Stamina is regained in two stages: 1 point in the first 10–60 minutes (1d6×10), then 1d10 points per eight hours of light activity (2d10 per eight hours of bed rest or sound sleep). Body points heal at the rate of 1 per week. Rest, nursing, and hospitalization can increase the rate of healing; to what extent depends on the universe. After all, the hospitals of a pseudo-Victorian London are nothing like the sickbay facilities of a 23rd-century starship!

Beyond the Player Core: Fine Tuning

In any AMAZING ENGINE universe, your PC is more than the sum of her attribute scores. There are many other choices to make; however, these depend on the universe in which your character is playing. While all the choices are defined for your character in the Universe Book section of this product, the range of options is explained here in general terms.

Base Adjustment

Every universe of the AMAZING ENGINE system is different, so a suitable starting character for one may not be right for another. Therefore, a given universe may apply a *base adjustment* to certain of your PC's ability pools. This adjustment increases every affected attribute by the same amount (for example, a base adjustment of +30 to the Physique pool means you add 30 to the base Fitness score and 30 to the base Reflexes score). The adjustment must be made *after* calculating your PC's base attribute scores.

Species

Up to now, nothing has been said of just what your PC is, and from the examples it's easy to assume everyone's human. However, this need not be the case. In some universes, you may have the opportunity to create characters that are members of some other species. Your character could be an intelligent being evolved from dinosaurs, belong to an alien race from another star, be a combination of human and machine, or (comparatively simply) have fairy blood. The universes of the AMAZING ENGINE system have all of science fiction and fantasy to draw upon, so the possibilities are nearly endless!

Gender

There is nothing in the player core that determines your PC's gender. In most universes, you can choose it freely. However, in some cases there may be special restrictions or different choices, particularly when playing an alien (nonhuman) PC. The Universe Book describes any such rules additions.

Handedness

For convenience, your character uses the same hand as you do in real life. Of course, if you're playing a four-armed g'rax, special rules may apply.

Appearance

Again, unless your PC is an alien, you can describe your character's looks however they please you. He could be tall and willowy, or she could be short and blunt. It is recommended that you create a character





description that matches the attribute scores. For example, if your character has a miserable Fitness score, it doesn't pay to imagine him as strong and muscular.

Professions and Skills

At some point in her imaginary life, your PC probably went to school, learned a trade, or at least got an education on the street. In the AMAZING ENGINE system, what your PC knows is defined by her profession. No matter the universe, every character has a profession, varied though they are. In a Victorian fantasy setting your PC might be a consulting detective, consul of the Foreign Office, Oxford don, navy ensign, or medium. A completely different set of professions exist in a world of high space opera; space freighter captain, alien spy, smuggler, and psychic are only a few possibilities.

Likewise, the exact benefits of a profession can vary from universe to universe. The Victorian consulting detective might know material analysis, chemistry, fisticuffs, craniometry (measurement of people's skulls), heraldry, and fencing; his counterpart in a world of modern magic could well possess flying carpet driving, spell analysis, handguns, karate, and empathy.

When you create a PC for a campaign, your character must be given a profession from those offered in that particular universe. The Universe Book lists these. Choosing a profession does not determine what your PC is currently; it only tells what she was, and therefore what she knows at the start of the campaign. From this basis, you can make of your PC what you want.

Skill Groups

Note: Reference this Universe Book's skill listing as you read this section.

Every profession includes a listing of skill groups falling within that profession's purview. These skill groups form the basis of what a character can learn, given her profession. The skills categorized under each grouping are all related to that area of study or use, although the skills themselves may be quite different. For example, a scholarly character may have "Humanities" as a skill group. Checking the information in that Universe Book, you find the listing for Humanities. Under it are several different scholarly areas and skills that all have to do with the humanities (like Linguistics and Theology), though they are not always related to each other.

Certainly not every profession has the same skill groups. The scholar's studies in humanities would be ill-suited to the needs of a soldier in the 23rd century. Her skill groups would include things like Sidearms and Comm-gear. The skills of the Sidearms group are vastly different from those of the Humanities group.

In addition to organizing skills, the skill groups also show the skills' order and relevant attributes, both important to using skills in play.

Skill Order: In each list, skills are arranged in ever-smaller steps of specialization. Before a skill can be learned, your PC must know all preceding steps. For example, look at the following list.

Sidearms (R)

- Coherent Beam (R)
 - Laser rifle (R)
 - Particle beam (R)
- Projectile (R)
 - Modern (R)
 - Antique (R)
 - Blunderbuss* (R)
 - Rifled musket* (R)
- Assisted (R)
- Energized (R)
- Flechette (R)

General Medicine (L)

- Xeno-biology (L)
- Arcturean medicine (L)

Each level of specialization is indicated by indentation, just as in an outline. Once your PC has learned a skill (Sidearms or General Medicine, in the above listings), she has a basic familiarity with everything grouped below it, allowing her to attempt any of those specialties. However, your PC's chance of success decreases when attempting things of greater specialization than her training level. The degree of penalty depends on what the PC knows and what she's trying to do. She cannot know the Rifled musket enhancement unless she knows Antique weapons, which she cannot have until she has taken the Projectile specialization. (She need not know Coherent beam weapons before she can know Projectile; these two are at the same level, and thus are unrelated.) The precise penalty varies from universe to universe. A typical penalty is -10 to the PC's chance of success per each level of difference. (In the above example, a PC familiar with projectile weapons trying to use a rifled musket does so at a -20 penalty: -10 for not knowing the Antique specialization, and -10 for not having the Rifled musket enhancement.)

Enhancements: Some specialized skills do not require your PC to gain new areas of learning or technique, but only call for the refinement of existing knowledge. Your PC doesn't "learn" anything new; she only improves what she can already do. These specialties are called *enhancements*, and are noted by an asterisk (*) on the skill groups.

For example, under Antique Weapons, *Blunderbuss* and *Rifled musket* are enhancements. The basics of loading and firing each are essentially the same, and the same goes for any other antique weapon (the larger skill category). The differences are that a character skilled in *Blunderbuss* is more familiar with the particular quirks of that weapon. The same does not apply when comparing Antique Weapons to Modern Weapons, or General Medicine to its specialty Xeno-biology. In these





cases, the skills involve new learning, new techniques, and new facts that must be mastered in addition to the basic understanding of Sidearms or Medicine.

Knowing an enhancement gives a PC a bonus (typically +10) when using that particular skill—but only that skill. A PC who knows the Blunderbuss enhancement and uses that weapon gains a +10 bonus to her skill roll. She does not gain that bonus when using a rifled musket, however, even though both weapons require the Antique Weapons specialty.

The bonus for an enhancement does not accumulate across levels the way that penalties for lack of a specialty do. For instance, a character with the Blunderbuss enhancement gains only one bonus when rolling against the Sidearms skill, despite the fact that there are two levels between the skills.

Starting Skills: After you have chosen a profession for your character and noted down the skill groups, you can select skills for your PC. The number of skills your PC can have depends on her Learning and Intuition scores.

First, you must choose those skills dictated by your PC's profession: the things that allow her to operate effectively in whatever career she has chosen. You can choose any skills from the skill groups named by that profession. Your PC can have 1 skill for every 10 points of Learning (or fraction thereof, rounded up). Specialized and sub-specialized skills can only be chosen if the preceding skills are also learned.

After you have chosen those profession-based skills, you can pick other skills from any skill group regardless of the PC's profession. These skills represent your PC's general knowledge, interests, curiosity, and hobbies. Select one skill (from any skill group) for every 15 points of Intuition your PC has (ignore fractions in this case). Additional skills gained may be within the PC's profession or completely outside it. As before, your PC cannot learn specializations or sub-specializations unless all previous skills are known.

As you select skills, note the names and relevant attributes (noted in parentheses after each skill) on your character sheet.

Skill Checks

Although your PC may know how to apply a skill, this is still a long way from using the skill correctly and successfully. As a real person, you might "know" a foreign language, but could still make an error when talking to a native speaker. Furthermore, not everyone is equally adept; not every first-year French student speaks first-year French equally well. The same is true, of course, for your PCs.

Every time your PC attempts to use a skill, you must make a skill check to see if the effort succeeds. This entails rolling percentile dice, applying any bonuses or penalties as required, and comparing the result to one of your PC's attribute scores. The relevant attribute score is noted in parentheses after the listing in the skill group: Fitness, Reflexes, Learning, Intuition, Psyche, Willpower, Charm, and Position.

If the (modified) die result is less than the PC's attribute score, the attempt succeeds. If the (modified) die result is greater than the score,

the attempt fails. A skill check always fails on a roll of 95–00, but there is no corresponding chance for automatic success.

Easy and Difficult Tasks: Skills are applied to tasks of varying difficulty. For your PC with mechanical skill, fixing a stubborn lawnmower is just not the same as rebuilding the engine on a sub-orbital jet. The former is a task of basic simplicity, the latter a highly demanding and complicated job. Clearly, your PC's chance of success in each endeavor should not be the same.

A skill check is not required every time your PC does something skill-related. For example, driving to the supermarket does not require a skill check. A character trained as a spaceship pilot need not make a skill check every time he travels through space. It is assumed that every skill provides a level of basic understanding. Thus, skill checks can be ignored for simple and familiar tasks.

When the result is uncertain, a skill check must be made. Characters with Firearms skill can handle a gun without a skill check, but they may not hit the target—a skill check is required to find out. If the check succeeds, your PC performs the action successfully. If the check fails, the action fails, with appropriate consequences.

Your PC can also attempt actions of even greater risk and skill, so much that a normal skill check is still too easy. She may want to shoot an item from a person's hand, or calculate an obscure scientific formula. Based on the situation, the GM can reduce the chance of success to reflect the difficulty of the action. Guidelines for the modifiers are given as appropriate in the Universe Books.

At other times, your PC may attempt something more specialized than she is trained for. In this case, even the simplest task requires a skill check (with the penalty for not knowing the specialty applied), since any specialized knowledge is assumed to be beyond your PC's basic understanding. Tasks that would require a normal skill check become extremely difficult for those without the proper background, while things difficult for a specialist become nearly impossible.

Unskilled Characters: No matter how well-rounded and prepared your PC is, there are always times when she is faced with a problem for which she is simply not trained. Faced with such a situation, your PC may have little choice but to try her best.

Whether your PC can even hope to succeed depends on the skill normally required to perform the task. If this is a Learned skill (one that uses the Learning attribute for skill checks), the task is impossible. Computer programming, biochemistry, and surgery are all examples of Learned skills. Without the proper training, your PC simply has no clue about what needs to be done. For example, she cannot repair a malfunctioning high-energy gas laser. The only thing she's likely to do, without the proper training, is increase the damage.

Actions based on nonLearning skills can be attempted by even those lacking the proper training. In this case, the PC has a default chance equal to half the appropriate attribute score. Even the most basic actions require a skill check (there is no automatic success), and the attribute score is halved for the attempt. The other penalties, for specialization and difficulty, still apply.





Margin Ratings

In most cases, the actual outcome of a skill check doesn't change, regardless of how well or poorly the PC did, so you can simply translate the skill check into story details. Roll well below the success number, and your PC did the task extremely well. Roll high—close to failing—and it was a struggle, but she succeeded. Roll drastically greater than the success number, and your PC botched things royally.

For example, your PC, Anya, and her companion, George, are trying to jump across a pit, with a villain in hot pursuit. You roll a 17 (needing a 54 or less), while George's player barely rolls below the necessary number (69 out of 71). Right behind your PCs, the villain attempts the leap. His roll is a 93, well over the 51 needed. In this case, the GM might say, "Anya, you clear the pit easily, then bend down and help George, who nearly failed and is clinging to the edge by his fingertips. The thug chasing you slips just as he starts the leap. There's a horrid scream as he falls out of sight." Both player characters succeeded and there was nothing gained by doing better, while the thug failed and would have fallen in any case. If Anya had not been there, George would have simply hoisted himself over the edge to safety.

At other times, you need to know not only if your PC succeeded or failed, but to what degree. These are known as critical successes or critical failures. Skills that require them are defined in the *Universe Books*. In *For Faerie, Queen, and Country*, Louis the forger is altering a will. A successful skill check results in a will that fools most people, but Louis needs a critical success to dupe the court's handwriting expert. In the *BUGHUNTERS* game, Harmon, the demolitions man, is faced with a complicated time bomb. Success obviously defuses the device, but there is the risk he pulls the wrong wire. This would be a critical failure, causing the bomb to detonate immediately.

Critical successes and failures are defined by *margin ratings*. Success margin ratings are noted as S#: S2, S5, etc. Failure margin ratings are noted as F#: F8, F7, etc.

In such instances, the success or failure margin is found by reading the 1s digit of the skill check roll. For a critical success, the skill check must be successful *and* the 1s digit must be equal to or less than the success margin. For a critical failure, the check must be failed *and* the 1s digit must be equal to or greater than the failure margin.

For example, Louis has a 45 on his attempt to forge a signature. The skill notes a success margin of 1 (S1) for a perfect forgery. Louis's player rolls the skill check, and the result is 40. Louis succeeds! Not only that, but it's a critical success, since 0 is less than 1 (the success margin rating). If Louis's player had rolled a 29, the forgery would have been successful but imperfect. On a roll greater than 45, the forgery would have failed completely.

Note that, statistically, margin ratings give characters with higher attribute scores a greater chance of amazing successes and a lower chance of horrible failures at any particular task than characters with lower attribute scores. In effect, success and failure margins serve as fractions of a character's skill, so as that skill increases, the margins become automatically more beneficial. Applying them to the 1s digit

of a skill check simply makes it very quick and easy to identify them during play.

Movement

Character movement is divided into three speeds: walking, running, and sprinting. Each is defined by a speed in meters/turn and a duration of minutes or turns.

Measurements

To ease the transition from one universe to another, this game system uses a consistent set of measures for figuring game time, movement, and weight.

In this game system, all distances, volumes, and weights are given metrically. Although unfamiliar to some, the metric system is best suited to meet the needs of universes ranging from high fantasy to hard s-f. Distances are given in meters and kilometers, weights in grams and kilograms, etc.

Game time—the imaginary time spent by PCs to do anything, as opposed to the real time you spend describing your PC's actions, rolling dice, thinking, etc. while playing—is organized into turns, minutes, hours, and days. A turn is roughly equal to 10 seconds of action and is used for combat and other time-important actions. Minutes, hours, and the rest are self-explanatory. A given universe may have weeks, months, and years equivalent to those of our Earth or may use a quite different system (especially in s-f settings).

Speed

Walking is the slowest and most common movement. A person walking can cover up to 15 meters per turn. (In general, people unconsciously adjust their strides to those of their companions to walk at a uniform rate.) Characters can walk for an indefinite amount of time, although the hourly movement rate of 5,000 meters should be used if PCs travel for longer than 30 minutes at a time.

Running is a brisk jog or long, loping stride, good for covering considerable distances at a quick pace. It is not as flat-out fast as your PC can run, since your PC is trying to conserve some strength for the long haul. Most PCs run a distance equal to their Fitness in meters per turn. A character with a Fitness of 32 could run 32 meters in a single turn. Notably unfit characters (those with Fitness scores of 14 or less) run and walk at the same speed: 15 meters per turn. A character can run for a time in minutes equal to his or her Fitness rating.

Sprinting is a burst of speed, in which your PC tries to cover a short distance as quickly as she or he can. Each turn your PC can sprint a distance in meters equal to twice his or her Fitness score (a PC with a Fitness score of 32 can sprint 64 meters in 10 seconds). Sprinting can be maintained for turns equaling one-tenth the PC's Fitness score (Fit ÷ 10), rounded down. Amazingly unfit characters (those with Fitness scores of 7 or less) cannot sprint or run, although they still walk at normal speed.





Carrying Capacity

Another important modifier for your PC's speed in any situation is the weight she is carrying. The movement rates given assume the PC is not loaded down with excess goods that would slow her pace.

Your PC can carry goods equal to her Fitness score in kilograms without penalty. A PC with a Fitness of 21 can carry 21 kilos (about 46 lbs.) of gear and supplies without significant difficulty. When carrying up to twice this weight, the PC's running and sprinting speeds are halved. At three times the base weight, the PC cannot sprint or run and may only walk meters equal to her Fitness score before having to rest.

If a player tries to tax her PC's Fitness by spending experience points (so she can lift a greater-than-normal weight), the benefit lasts until the PC fails a Willpower check. Like an Olympic weightlifter, the PC puts her legs and back into a heroic effort to lift the great weight. Every muscle in her body strains until her Willpower finally gives out. When the PC fails this check, she suffers 1 point of stamina damage. Players can use experience points to tax their PCs' Willpower to improve their chances of passing this check, too.

Pushing the Limits

It is possible for PCs to run and sprint faster or farther than their normal allowances by taxing their Fitness scores and making attribute checks.

Any PC can sprint faster than is normally allowed in a given turn by taxing his ability. The player must spend experience points to increase the Fitness score. However, a PC can never increase his speed by more than 50% in this way (he cannot add more than half his Fitness score). This increase is only effective for a single turn. The player must continue to spend experience points to maintain the PC's pace on subsequent turns.

Any PC can also try to exceed his duration. At the start of each turn (when sprinting) or minute (when running) during which the PC wants to run longer than his normal duration, the player makes a Willpower check with percentile dice. If the result is lower than the PC's Willpower score, he keeps going for that turn or minute; otherwise, he must stop since he's exhausted. PCs who fail the check suffer 1-2 points of stamina damage. Note that players can spend experience points to increase their PC's Willpower for this check.

For more information on taxing attributes, see "Taxing Attributes" in the "Experience" section of these rules.

Resting

Flat-out sprinting and long-distance running make for exhausting business, and your PC must rest at the end of any dash. PCs must spend time resting in minutes equal to the minutes spent running or turns spent sprinting. Sprinting three turns requires resting three minutes. Characters resting cannot run or sprint but can walk up to 10 meters per turn.

Vehicles and Special Movement

Since the AMAZING ENGINE universes can encompass anything from lizard-drawn chariots to anti-grav sky-sleds, rules for vehicle movement are part of the Universe Books. In addition, a Universe Book may present unique movement rules to reflect any special conditions of that universe. Heavy gravity, magical terrains, other dimensions, and weightlessness are all possible complications unique to specific universes.

Combat

Sooner or later, fighting becomes part of every role-playing game. The AMAZING ENGINE system is no exception, although the emphasis on fighting (and just how dangerous it is) will suit the story needs of the universe. For example, combat in *For Faerie, Queen, and Country* is an infrequent thing, and dangerous when it occurs. A character can be killed with a single shot. At the other extreme, battles are frequent and heroic (and often magical in nature) in *The Galactos Barrier*, a swash-buckling universe of high space opera. The BUGHUNTERS game, where characters are the elite of the interstellar armed forces, is almost entirely combat-centered.

Because of the differences among universes, the things described herein are basic procedures that do not change from setting to setting, such as the differences between ranged combat and melee, and how to make an attack roll. Every Universe Book contains additional combat rules. At a minimum, these include weapons available in that universe; a maser rifle just won't be found in a world of armored knights and dragons. It could appear in a world of cybernetic knights and chrome steel dragontanks, however.

Some universes, such as that of the BUGHUNTERS game, place a greater emphasis on combat than others. Accordingly, the combat rules for these universes incorporate detailed rules for things like special combat maneuvers, penetration, knock-back, and recoil. Other universes may keep the combat rules to the barest minimum in favor of other role-playing aspects.

The Combat Sequence

Because combat can be a confusing event with six or seven characters to a side, each trying to do something different, the AMAZING ENGINE system (like most RPGs) organizes combat into a series of steps, each complete sequence taking one turn, each turn being roughly 10 seconds of time (allowing the GM flexibility in resolving combat actions). Each turn repeats the sequence of events until one side is defeated or manages to escape.

- I. Determine advantage (1st turn only)
- II. Players declare PC actions; GM decides NPC actions
- III. Determine initiative
- IV. Resolve actions





I. Determine Advantage: This is the “jump” one character or group might have on another when the encounter begins. It is used in situations such as two groups (friend and foe) stumbling onto each other unexpectedly, a group being betrayed by someone the members trusted, or the party walking into an ambush. The character or party who has the advantage automatically gets the first action and may have a bonus on chances to hit the targets.

Advantage is checked at the beginning of any encounter, before any actions are taken. After the first combat turn, advantage is normally no longer checked, since both sides are perfectly aware of what the other is up to—at least in general terms. In some instances, however, additional advantage checks may be called for: a new attacker appearing from an unexpected direction, or an event unanticipated by one or both sides.

The basic method for determining advantage is for both sides to roll percentile dice and compare the result to the highest Psyche score in each party. If the check passes, the group is forewarned, however slightly. If the check fails, the group is unprepared and the other side gains the advantage. If both sides succeed, no one is caught unprepared. If both sides fail, everyone is caught flat-footed. If either side rolls a 95–00, that group is *surprised*—caught completely off guard—and is particularly vulnerable. The “Advantage Outcomes” table appears on page 16. The properties, equipment, and situations of different universes can modify a PC’s check. Some possibilities include thermal sensors to spot what is normally unseen, or psionic powers to detect thoughts. Any such modifiers will be noted in the Universe Book.

The side with the advantage automatically goes first on the opening turn of combat. Its members gain a +5 modifier on any attack or action opposed by the other group. The side without advantage goes second, and suffers a –5 modifier on any like action.

If one party is surprised, they essentially do nothing for an entire turn during which their opponents have the freedom to move, attack, talk, run away, or whatever (with the +5 modifier) without a reaction from the surprised group. In the next turn, the surprised group is considered unprepared while their attackers have the advantage (they act first and gain the +5 modifier, while their opponents act second and suffer a –5 modifier).

II. Declare Actions: Except for situations of advantage and surprise, you must declare what action your PC will take *before* knowing in what order both sides will act (the same applies to the GM). Tell your GM what action your character will take in the coming turn. Try to be as specific as possible, given that you don’t know the intentions of the other side. For example, if your PC attacks, state her target in advance. The GM has many things to track, so the more you can help, the quicker and more exciting the game will be.

In general, it is best to keep actions short, ideally things that can be completed within 10 seconds. Not only does this help prevent confusion, it also means your PC is ready to react to new situations in the next turn. You should also be ready to say quickly what your PC will do, since the GM can penalize your PC for your hesitation. Combat requires snap judgments and you should be ready to play the part

accordingly. Reasonable questions are allowed, but delaying the game while you try to make a decision is apt to result in your PC losing her action that turn.

III. Determine Initiative: If neither side has an advantage or surprise in combat, you need to know in what order everything happens. This is done by determining initiative at the beginning of every combat turn, unless one side has advantage over the other (because of die rolls or GM’s ruling). A single initiative is normally determined for the entire group, although universes with detailed combat rules may require each individual to roll initiative.

Check initiative by rolling 1d10 and modifying the result. The modifier equals 10% (for simplicity, the 10s digit) of the best Reflexes score on each side. A character with a Reflexes score of 37 adds 3 to the die roll. Only those PCs present and active in the combat are considered in this initiative roll. The side with the higher modified die roll acts first.

In addition to PCs, any thing or event beyond the control of either group has its own unmodified initiative roll. If the enemy lobbs a grenade at your PC’s feet, at the start of the next turn the GM secretly rolls 1d10 for the grenade’s initiative (to see when it explodes). Your PC may have a chance to throw it back, or dive for cover—or she may not.

Prepared actions, like holding a gun on someone and demanding surrender, are special initiative situations. Normally, the prepared PC (or NPC) automatically goes first (“Move and I shoot, you ugly bug.”). However, your PC can try to beat out the opponent if you roll a successful Reflexes check (the GM may apply modifiers to your chance of success). If you succeed, your PC can take an action before her challenger reacts. Fail, and she just wasn’t quick enough.

IV. Resolve Actions: Most often, this involves playing out some kind of combat. So, you’ll need to know how to decide the following.

Hitting Your Target. Whenever your PC attacks (or is attacked), actually hitting what she aimed at is no guarantee. Virtually all attacks require a die roll to determine a hit or a miss. Only the inescapable are exempt from this rule.

In melee and ranged combat, your PC’s base chance to hit equals her Reflexes score. However, this chance is modified according to the target area and the mitigating circumstances. If the roll is equal to or less than your PC’s modified Reflexes score, the attack hits the target and damage is determined. If the roll exceeds the score, the attack misses.

Target Areas. Anytime your PC (or anything else) makes an attack, you must specify one of three target areas: general, nonvital, or vital. Different chances to hit apply to each area, and successful hits result in different damage effects.

General targets are anywhere on the opponent’s body; your PC is just trying to land a fist or make a shot without concern for pinpoint accuracy. General targeting allows your PC to use her full Reflexes score before other modifications and does not alter the damage done by the attack.





Nonvital targets are those areas of the opponent that if hit will stun, wound, or injure but are unlikely to result in a kill. Trying to knock someone out or wing him in the arm calls for a nonvital target. Your PC's Reflexes score is halved when making a nonvital attack, and the chance of body damage is reduced by 2.

Vital targets are just the opposite: vulnerable areas that could lead to sudden death if hit. On humans, for example, these include the area around the heart and the head. Attacks on vital areas are particularly difficult, and so the chance of hitting is only 10% of your PC's normal Reflexes score (rounded up). The chance for body damage, however, is increased by 3 on a vital attack.

The "Target Modifiers" table appears on page 16.

Ranged Combat. Ranged combat (attacking with a weapon that shoots, flies, or is thrown) has special rules. While many of these depend on the universe (and its technology), certain features are common to all.

In each Universe Book, missile weapons (if any) are listed with their ranges and damage. Ranges are divided into *short*, *medium*, and *long* categories (some universes may also have *extreme*), measured in meters. When shooting at targets beyond short range, your PC suffers a penalty on her chance to hit. The exact penalty depends on the universe, since weapon effectiveness changes with each technology.

Furthermore, every character has a sighting range, normally 50 yards. Characters can see beyond this distance, of course, but when firing at targets beyond the sighting range, only general targeting can be used.

Combat Modifiers

Few battles are straight-up matches where heroes and villains duke it out toe-to-toe. Most are moving affairs with unique situations: things to get in the way, things to hide behind, and armor to wear. These situations are handled by combat modifiers, which are given in the Universe Books. The following factors often modify combat:

Movement. Movement affects ranged combat, making targets harder to hit, but has no effect on hand-to-hand (melee) combat.

Armor. Depending on the universe, characters may have some kind of armor, be it the leather and metal of fantasy or the spun-fiber body armor of s-f. Most armor reduces the amount of damage caused by a hit. However, a few types—particularly things such as magnetic force fields or slippery suits—may make the PC physically harder to hit. These types of armor modify the attacker's chance to hit.

Cover. The most common kind of protection is something to hide behind—preferably something solid, so your PC can't be hurt. Cover is divided into *soft* and *hard* types. Soft cover is anything your PC can shoot through that still conceals the target: tall grass, bushes, curtains, leaves, even smoke are all types of soft cover. Soft cover reduces the attacker's chance to hit. Hard cover is anything solid that conceals the target: tree trunks, sandbags, rocks, and walls, for example. Hard cover

has modifiers like soft cover and may limit the target areas that can be chosen. What can't be seen, can't be shot.

Damage

Every weapon in a given universe, be it accelerated magnetic field rifle firing depleted uranium flechettes, enchanted saber, or fist, is rated for damage.

Damage is given as two numerals: a die range for the points of damage caused, and a *lethality rating*. For example, in *For Faerie, Queen, and Country*, the service revolver's damage is 2d6/5. It causes 2–12 points of damage per hit and has a lethality rating of 5. Whenever a hit is scored, the dice are rolled and that amount is subtracted from the target's stamina or body points.

Lethality Ratings: It is possible to seriously injure someone with anything, but it is a lot easier with some weapons than others. A hit from a club hurts, but most often only raises ugly bruises, while a shotgun blast tends to have far more fatal effects. The differences between weapons are reflected, in part, by their lethality ratings: the chance that any hit causes body damage instead of the usual stamina damage.

Each time you roll for a hit, you must note not only whether your PC hit or missed, but (if she did hit) what the 1s digit on the attack roll was. If this number is equal to or less than the lethality rating of the weapon (modified by the target area chosen), the damage caused by this hit is subtracted from the target's body points. Otherwise, all damage comes from the target's stamina points. Lethality ratings can never be less than 1 or greater than 10 (0 on the die).

Experience

Part of every RPG is improving your character: increasing attribute scores and adding skills. This is done by earning experience points (xps) to be used by the character. Experience points are a simple way to measure all the intangible things your PC gains from surviving dangerous adventures, risking heroic perils, and "living" an everyday life through your role-playing. After all, it stands to reason that when your PC talks her way past a spaceport customs inspector, survives a dangerous shootout, or uses her skills, she improves: Her hand-eye coordination might get a little better, her confidence might grow. Experience points are a way to measure these slow improvements.

The Goals of the Game

Experience points are not the be-all and end-all of role-playing. If you hope to be a good player (or already are one), then your reasons for playing should go deeper than merely earning more experience points and making your PC more powerful.

A role-playing game is a *game*, first and foremost, and games are meant to be fun.

This should be obvious, but too often it is easy to lose sight of this fact in the pursuit of more experience points for your PC. Good players





don't focus on the powers and items their PCs possess, whom they have defeated, or what they might control. Naturally, they strive for these things, but they also act out their character's personality, get involved in the stories, and work with the GM and other players. For these players, it is perfectly possible to have an exciting, enjoyable game session without ever once earning a single experience point for their characters.

Place the following goals above the mere "earning" of experience points. If you do, rewards for you and your character will come automatically.

Have a good time playing.

Act the part of your character.

Don't let your good time ruin everyone else's fun.

Awarding and Earning Experience

It is not the place of this rules section to list everything a PC can do to earn experience points. In fact, because the AMAZING ENGINE game system has so many different universes, a single list is impossible. Your PC can't earn experience for fixing a computer when you're playing in a fantasy setting of faeries and boggarts.

Each universe has its own list of experience point awards, designed to suit the needs of that universe. In a setting where high-tech space marines battle hideous aliens, combat is important. Players can expect characters to be rewarded for showing tactical skill, surviving battles, and defeating enemies. At the other extreme, another universe casts the PCs as ambassadors and detectives in a fairy-filled England. Shooting an attendant of Queen Maeve's court or blowing up a fairy ring with a keg of gunpowder is not the goal of that universe. Instead, players are rewarded for talking their way through sticky situations, preventing wars, and solving problems. The experience awards for the former setting will not work for the latter. Nonetheless, all share some general features.

Successful adventures. In any universe, a successful adventure warrants some experience points. "Success" depends on the universe and the adventure. Sometimes, it's enough to survive; in other cases, a specific foe must be defeated or a problem solved.

Using skills. People learn by doing. In the AMAZING ENGINE system, this is noted by rewarding characters with xps for using their skills in ways relevant to the adventure. "Relevant" means your PC can't just spend the day shooting at bottles to increase his Combat skill; bottles don't shoot back, after all (if the skill were Target Shooting, it'd be a different story). Using the skill has to involve some real chance of failure or risk for the character.

Role-playing. This is the object of the AMAZING ENGINE system, so good role-playing is rewarded with xps. This is a highly subjective GM call. It depends on the personality you have established for your character, the GM, and the situation at the moment. Good role-playing also means keeping what you as a player know separate from what your character knows. As a player, you know that sticking your hand into a fire is a Bad Idea, but your PC, Oog the caveman, discoverer of fire, hasn't learned that lesson—yet.

Experience and Multiple Universes

In most RPGs, you play only a single character at a time, and so only have to track the xps earned by that character. In this system, however, situations are often different. The most common possibility is that you will play in one universe, where your PC earns some xps, and then change to a different universe. What happens to all the xps your PC has earned to date? Few players want to give up all their advantages and start over. In this system, you don't have to.

Whenever your PC earns experience in an AMAZING ENGINE universe, you must immediately assign the xps to either your current player character (the one who earned the xps) or to the player core from which that character was created. Points assigned to the core are forever beyond the reach of your current player character. These points can only benefit characters created from this core in future sessions. Points assigned to your PC are available for immediate use, but cannot be given later to another PC in a different universe.

Within these two areas—player core and player character—you have four options for assigning experience points. With points assigned to the player character, you can tax the character's attributes, spending xps during play to temporarily increase attribute scores, or you can use these xps to make permanent improvements to your existing character. With the points you give to the player core, you can buy extra dice for that core, thereby improving future characters created from it, or transfer xps to a new character in the same (or different) universe.

Taxing Attributes

The most immediate use of experience points is spending them during the course of play to temporarily increase an attribute score. This is called *taxing* your PC—forcing her to think a little more or strain a little harder. Taxing can increase her chance of success with a skill: pour on that extra burst of speed in a chase, or make a heroic effort to lift a great weight, for example.

When you want to tax your character, you must tell the GM *before rolling any dice*. Once the dice are rolled, your chance has passed, so be ready to decide quickly. At the same time, you should tell the GM how many xps you want to spend in the effort.

There are three limitations on how many xps you can use to modify the character's attribute score.

1. Your PC must have unused xps to spend on the attempt. (This applies to all uses of xps. There is no such thing as "negative experience.")
2. Experience points are spent in increments of 5: 5, 10, 15, etc.
3. Experience points spent in a taxing attempt cannot exceed 50% of the original attribute score. This means that the modified score cannot exceed 150% of the original. Numbers are rounded down, to the nearest multiple of 5. See "Pushing the Limits" under "Movement" and "Example: Taxing an Attribute," under "Tables, Charts, and Examples."

Experience points spent to improve an attribute check are subtracted from the PC's xp total, regardless of the check's success or failure.





Improving Your Character

A more permanent method of improving your PC is buying points to add to your character's attribute scores. Unlike modifying an attribute score (taxing), these purchases are permanent. They are also more costly. The cost of these improvements varies from universe to universe. In one, it may cost 3 xps to raise an attribute 1 point; in another, the same change might cost 10 xps.

There are two limitations on buying increased attribute scores.

1. No attribute score can be increased beyond 90.
2. Permanent improvements cannot be bought during the course of an adventure. They can only be purchased after your PC has had time to reflect on her accomplishments.

Increases bought in this way are permanent for your character. Erase the old attribute score and write down the new one, then subtract the xps spent from the character's total.

Players can also buy new skills for their characters, improving their PCs by increasing the range of their knowledge and ability. The xp costs for buying skills can vary widely from skill to skill and universe to universe. Costs and procedures are described in each Universe Book, as needed.

Improving the Player Core

For long-term planning, you can look beyond your immediate character and instead assign points to your player core. With these points, you can buy additional dice for your ability pools. The purchase of additional dice has no effect on current characters; it only helps those created from the improved core in future universes and game sessions.

Each die of improvement to an ability pool costs 100 xps. Since improvements to the player core have no effect on your current PC, this kind of purchase can be made at any time.

Although theoretically the number of dice you can buy for a single ability pool is limited to 10 (allowing you to assign 5 to both attributes, the maximum allowable), a specific AMAZING ENGINE universe may set different ability pool or attribute limits on characters in that universe. It is best to check with the GM before over-investing in an ability pool for your character.

Without special Universe Book modifications, it is possible (eventually) to purchase dice for each ability pool sufficient to negate the use of the 7 "free" dice. However, this requires many, many game sessions' worth of xps, which must be assigned to the player core and not the PC who earned the xps. In general, we suggest that player cores reaching this limit (and the PCs created from them) be retired permanently, and that players create new cores and new prime characters. This eventuality is not covered within these rules. GMs are free to design their own rules to deal with this situation, when and if it occurs within their campaigns.

Transfer to New Characters

One unique feature of this game system is the opportunity to role-play in a variety of universes. In other RPGs, this means giving up any experience your character has earned. In essence, all the time you spent playing comes to naught when you start in a new world.

That is not the case in the AMAZING ENGINE system.

Each time you create a new character from an existing core, you can transfer xps from the core to the new character, with the following limitations:

1. The new character must come from the same core as the previous character (the one that earned the experience).
2. The two characters cannot be active in the same universe. A new PC from an existing core can appear in the same universe as a previous PC from the same core *only if the previous character is dead or permanently retired*.

Thus, in the MAGITECH™ game universe, your new PC could profit from the adventures of that marine sergeant from that old BUGHUNTERS game. Treat the transfer like a withdrawal from a bank account. The points you assign to the new PC cannot be "redeposited" later on, but new xps can be earned by the new PC and assigned to the player core (or to the new player character, as you choose). See "Example: Assigning Experience Points," later in this section.

Experience and Character Death

Unpleasant as the thought is, your PCs can (and will) die. When this happens, any experience assigned to that player character is lost, assuming you haven't used it all trying to keep the PC alive. Experience points assigned to the player core are *not* lost. These can be used by future characters created from the same core.

Tables, Charts, and Examples

The remainder of the rules section contains a complete example of character generation; reference tables and charts for the player core, movement rates, and carrying capacity; and text examples of various game-play situations showing application of taxing, skill checks, and more. You can use this section in several ways: read it in its entirety now, before continuing with the rest of the book; read only the parts that interest you, saving the rest for when you really need them; or ignore it, and turn to it later when you've become hopelessly lost. Seriously, though, if you need clarification on any of the points covered in the previous pages, the answers are probably in this section.





Example: Character Generation

Wolfgang is ready to create his first character for an AMAZING ENGINE game, and so he spends a little time thinking about what he wants. Having just read an interesting story about thieves, Wolfgang decides he would like a confidence man, a smooth-talking, quick-fingered individual with a modest chance for magical skill.

Based on his ideal con man, Wolfgang must decide how to rank the four ability pools. Since he wants his PC to be a very smooth talker, somewhat light-fingered, with a smattering of mystical ability, he rates the pools like this:

Physique: 2 (+10 points)
 Intellect: 4 (+0 points)
 Spirit: 3 (+5 points)
 Influence: 1 (+15 points)

Remember, the pool rated 1 has the best chance for high scores; the pool rated 4 has the lowest chance.

Wolfgang now selects four attributes as his primary concerns. Since he really wants to have a personable character, he chooses Charm. To ensure his light-fingered abilities, his second choice is Reflexes. After pondering, Wolfgang realizes his character could end up short in street smarts, so he chooses Intuition, even though it is in his lowest-ranked ability pool (Intellect). For his fourth choice, he decides to take a chance and selects Position, so he can have a sophisticated con artist. He then rolls 4d10 for each attribute, with the following results:

Reflexes: 31
 Intuition: 28
 Charm: 17
 Position: 23

Wolfgang now fills out the remaining attribute scores by rolling 3d10 for each and noting the numbers. When he is finished, his sheet looks like this:

Physique	Intellect	Spirit	Influence
Rank: 2	Rank: 4	Rank: 3	Rank: 1
Dice:	Dice:	Dice:	Dice:
Fitness: 16	Learning: 23	Psyche: 21	Charm: 17
Reflexes: 31	Intuition: 28	Willpower: 7	Position: 23

Now, it's time to add the die modifiers according to the ability pools' ranking. Wolfgang starts with his first-ranked pool, Influence. He had bad luck rolling for Charm (and he really wants a personable character), so he adds all 15 points to Charm. In Physique, Fitness is a little low, so he splits the 10 available points between Fitness and Reflexes, 5 each. Under Spirit, the character's Willpower is dangerously low, so Wolfgang feels he has no choice but to add all 5 points to that score even though he would like a better Psyche. He rolled well for his Intellect attributes, which is fortunate since he cannot modify either score (it's the fourth-ranked pool, which gains no modifiers).

Physique	Intellect	Spirit	Influence
Rank: 2	Rank: 4	Rank: 3	Rank: 1
Dice:	Dice:	Dice:	Dice:
Fitness: 21	Learning: 23	Psyche: 21	Charm: 32
Reflexes: 36	Intuition: 28	Willpower: 12	Position: 23

Looking over his character's final attributes, Wolfgang decides the PC is nimble-fingered (high Reflexes) and smooth (good Charm), with a good sense for danger (from his good Intuition). His character is not the strongest or healthiest (only average Fitness), and he needs to work on his psychic abilities (only average Psyche). Finally, with a Willpower of 12, Wolfgang decides his con man is something of a craven fellow, who more often than not "runs away to live to fight another day."





Having created his PC's statistics, Wolfgang now finishes creating the player core by assigning the dice ratings to each ability pool.

Physique	Intellect	Spirit	Influence
Rank: 2	Rank: 4	Rank: 3	Rank: 1
Dice: 6	Dice: 6	Dice: 4	Dice: 6
Fitness: 21	Learning: 23	Psyche: 21	Charm: 32
Reflexes: 36	Intuition: 28	Willpower: 12	Position: 23
$(21+36)/10=5.7$	$(23+28)/10=5.1$	$(21+12)/10=3.3$	$(32+23)/10=5.5$

After running a fantasy campaign for some time, Wolfgang's GM decides to switch to a science-fiction universe. Since there is no magic in this s-f setting (and since he's getting tired of playing thieves and scoundrels), Wolf once more chooses a role he might like to play. Knowing from his player core that his PCs will tend to be strong in Physique and Influence, Wolf decides to try for a hard-bitten smuggler captain. Checking his player core's xp total, he sees that there are 150 points he can work with. Since his Spirit pool tends to be weak (just because of bad dice rolls), he decides to purchase 1 additional die for that pool. He crosses off 100 xps (the cost of 1 improvement die) from the player core's total, and adds 1 die to the dice rating for his core's Spirit pool. Then, he divides his pool dice according to the dice ratings, and then assigns his 7 "free" dice to Fitness (2), Willpower (3, because it was very low), and Position (2).

Physique	Intellect	Spirit	Influence
Rank: 2	Rank: 4	Rank: 3	Rank: 1
Dice: 6	Dice: 6	Dice: 5	Dice: 6
Fitness: 5 dice	Learning: 3 dice	Psyche: 3 dice	Charm: 4 dice
Reflexes: 3 dice	Intuition: 3 dice	Willpower: 5 dice	Position: 4 dice

After all the dice are assigned, this PC's Fitness and Willpower attributes have the maximum number of dice allowed (5). Wolf rolls and notes the totals for each attribute score, with the following results:

Fitness: 26	Learning: 18	Psyche: 23	Charm: 24
Reflexes: 13	Intuition: 29	Willpower: 17	Position: 25

Once again, he rolled incredibly well for Intuition and not so hot for Willpower. Looking at his new character, he starts with the first-ranked ability pool, Influence. For this universe, he wants an important character and so puts all 15 points toward Position. In the second-ranked Physique pool, he puts 4 points to Fitness and 6 to Reflexes, while for the third-ranked Spirit, he gives all 5 points to Willpower.

Fitness: 30	Learning: 18	Psyche: 23	Charm: 24
Reflexes: 19	Intuition: 29	Willpower: 22	Position: 40

Wolf decides to transfer the remaining 50 xps from the player core to this new character, making those points immediately available during play (for taxing attributes, just in case). Wolf might also choose to use some of those xps to purchase some new skills for this PC, after his first adventure is completed. He notes the 50 xps on the new character's sheet, and subtracts them from the player core's total.

With these adjustments, Wolfgang's new character is ready for play.





Movement Rates

Movement Type	Distance per:		Duration	Fitness Check
	Turn	Minute		
Walk	15 m.	90 m.	Indefinite	None
Run	Fitness	Fitness \times 6	Minutes = Fitness	Yes
Sprint	Fitness \times 2	Fitness \times 12*	Turns = Fitness/10	Yes

* If character has sufficient duration.

Carrying Capacity

Kilos Equal to:	Effect on Movement:
Fitness score	No effect
Fitness score \times 2	Sprinting and running halved
Fitness score \times 3	No sprinting or running allowed, must rest after walking meters = Fitness score

Target Modifiers

Target Area	Chance to Hit	Damage Effect
General	Reflexes	None
Non-vital	50% Reflexes	-2 to type
Vital	10% Reflexes	+3 to type

Advantage Outcomes

Condition		NPC		
		Successful Psyche Check	Failed Psyche Check	95-00
P L A Y E R	Successful Psyche Check	No advantage	Player has advantage	Player has surprise
	Failed Psyche Check	NPC has advantage	No advantage	No advantage
	95-00	NPC has surprise	No advantage	No advantage





Example: Skill Checks

Karen's character, Leonardo "Big Shark" Accardo, needs to make a hasty getaway from the law. Flying Carpet skill, which Leo has, is Reflex-based. Karen knows Leo's Reflexes score is 36.

Wasting no time, Leo jumps onto his Mach flying carpet, recites a quick incantation, and zips into traffic on Michigan Avenue.

No skill check required. *Starting and flying the carpet is a common enough action, one Leo does every day, hence no skill check is needed.*

As he weaves through the late rush hour traffic, Leo looks back. Chicago's finest are in hot pursuit. Leo's in trouble! He can't outrun a police special carpet, especially not in this traffic. His only hope is to lose them with some quick turns. A gap in the traffic appears just ahead, so the Big Shark commands his carpet to pour it on. He darts across the lanes and whips onto a side street faster than is safe.

Skill check required. *Karen is having her character take a chance, the equivalent of skidding around a corner during a high-speed car chase. She rolls percentile dice and gets a 21, which is less than Leo's Reflexes score. The move succeeds, and Leo doesn't crash his carpet.*

White-knuckled, Leo careens around the corner, narrowly missing an oncoming bus golem and the plate glass window of Bessom's Department Store. Unfortunately, the cops make the turn too, and are now gaining on him. Still speeding, Leo banks his carpet again, this time aiming for an alley. Just as he begins the turn, a giant steps from a service entrance, blocking the opening! It's too late to change course, so the only thing Leo can do is try to shoot between the fellow's legs.

Modified skill check required. *Taking the turn too fast already required a skill check, so the GM assigns a -10 penalty for the added trick of trying to steer between the giant's legs. This reduces Leo's Reflexes score to 26 for this skill check. Karen rolls 57 on percentile dice. The check fails; Leo doesn't make it.*

Oh no! Startled, the giant instinctively moves to protect himself, closing the gap Leo was aiming for. Too late to stop, the carpet hits the brute right at his knees and crumples like a limp rag. As Leo is flung from the crash, he hears the howls of the police as they, too, bank into the pileup.

Example: Skill Check with Penalty for Nonspecialization

Leo has a tip on a shipment of smuggled magical artifacts stored in a warehouse near the trainyards, just the evidence he needs to spring his client. All he has to do is break in and get a few pictures. That night at the back door, Leo figures he ought to check for burglar alarms before forcing his way in. Leo knows the basics of glyphs (Glyph Analysis skill), but is no expert in burglar alarms (Protection Glyph specialization). Checking the door for alarms is pretty basic for a specialist, but for Leo a skill check against his Learning score (which is only a 23,

with an additional -5 for nonspecialization) is required. The check is rolled, and the result is a 12: Success! Sure enough, the door is enchanted.

Now, Leo tries to deactivate the alarm. This requires a skill check for a specialist, and so is very difficult for Leo. The check is made with a -15 applied to the attribute score (-5 for nonspecialization, -10 for the action) for a total chance of success of 8 or less. Amazingly, Karen rolls a 04! Leo manages to temporarily dispel the alarm.

Example: Attempting an Unknown Skill

Once inside the warehouse, Leo begins searching through the crates. Suddenly, just as he finds a suspicious one labeled "Excalibur," a foot-step scrapes behind him. Leo spins, pulling his gun as he does, to find himself facing a centaur thug. A quick hoof kick sends Leo sprawling, his gun clattering across the floor. A second blow just misses, shattering the crate next to his head and spilling the contents—the sword—half out of the box. In desperation, Leo grabs the sword and pulls it from the box. "Ain't the same as bullets, but you'll have to do." As he clumsily swings the sword up over his head, it begins to glow.

Karen never thought her character would need a sword, so Leo doesn't have Fencing skill. However, since Fencing is a nonLearning-based skill (one that uses Reflexes), Leo can attempt swordfighting—but at an 18, half his normal Reflexes score.

Example: Taxing an Attribute

In a campaign of *For Faerie, Queen, and Country*, Karen's character, Colonel Sir Jameson Pickering, K.C.M.G., ret., suddenly senses a wave of magical power while attending an important diplomatic ball. Frantically looking about, he sees the villainous sorceress, Countess Angevin, standing in the shadows on the portico. Their eyes meet and before Sir Jameson can warn anyone, a magical paralysis creeps over his limbs as the countess imposes her seductive will. The situation is dire, so Karen decides it's time to tax Sir Jameson's Willpower to break the spell. The normal attribute check to resist possession is equal to the Willpower score halved. Sir Jameson's Willpower is 46, halved to 23 for the check. Karen looks at the available xps assigned to Sir Jameson, and decides to spend the maximum (50% of the original attribute score, or 20 points) to bring the relevant attribute score back to 43 for this check only. The dice roll is a 32; with strain, Sir Jameson breaks the countess's gaze and makes his way into the drawing room for a cigar.





Example: Assigning Experience Points

Michele's character, Plt. Sgt. Adrian 2 Selinko, United Terra Reconnaissance and Peacekeeping Force, has just returned to the "booze barge" (as UTRPFers refer to their HQ on Earth's L-5 station) from a bug-hunting mission on a mining outpost at Barnard's Star. The GM awards experience for that mission, and Sgt. Selinko receives 75 xps for repulsing a swarm of chitinous predators. Michele must assign the xps immediately, so she adds 50 points to Adrian's xp total (the player character) and the remaining 25 to the Player Core xp line on her character sheet.

The 50 points assigned directly to Adrian can be used for taxing attributes during the course of an adventure or for purchasing increased attribute scores after the adventure is completed. The 25 points assigned to the player core will never affect Adrian directly but will benefit future characters created from the same core.

Example: Damage and Lethality Rating

WO1 Selinko watches in horror as the xenoforms outmaneuver her squad, three of the creatures lunging in for the kill.

The GM rolls three attacks, one for each stalker, and decides that all attacks will be at general target areas, as this is easiest. The stalkers have Reflexes of 62. The die rolls are 83, 17, and 23, so two of the creatures hit and one misses. Each attack causes 3d6 points of damage and has a lethality rating of 4. The first hit (17) causes 6 points of stamina damage, subtracted from the trooper's total of 25. The second attack does 8 points of body damage (not the standard stamina damage, because the 1s digit—a 3—was less than the lethality rating of 4), but the trooper only has 7 body points. The extra damage is ignored.

One of the soldiers reels back, cut, but not seriously, by a xenoform's slashing claws. The other trooper isn't so lucky, as a stalker strikes him dead in front of platoon leader Selinko.

"Eat this," she snarls while unloading her flechette clip into the creature's gaping maw.

AMAZING ENGINE® Role-Playing System Player Core Sheet

Physique	Intellect	Spirit	Influence
Rank:	Rank:	Rank:	Rank:
Dice:	Dice:	Dice:	Dice:
Fitness:	Learning:	Psyche:	Charm:
Reflexes:	Intuition:	Willpower:	Position:

Player Core xps:





Everything You Read Is True!

Welcome to the the world of yellow journalism and three-inch headlines—the tabloid world! It's a neat world, just like ours, except—

EVERYTHING YOU READ IS TRUE!

Really! Honest! Bigfoot lives—and he's fathered a Seattle housewife's baby. (The kid is a hairy little cuss, but he's got his mom's eyes—unfortunately, he's inherited his dad's hair.)

JFK isn't really dead—though nobody is sure if he is in hiding, in a coma, or hanging out with the aliens (or was he really an alien himself?).

And the aliens—not all those UFO reports are weather balloons, fog banks, or drunken binges. THEY just want you to believe that everyone who sees one is touched. And who are THEY? Why the government, of course. The Air Force spends a lot of time making sure nobody ever finds out the truth, because if they did—well, just imagine the consequences.

And the King, did we forget about the King? How could we? He's everywhere—grocery stores, shopping malls, parking lots, and secret spas. The Man is not dead—just hiding out from the rest of the world. Nonsense, you say? What about Howard Hughes?

It's an amazing (AMAZING ENGINE system, that is) universe. Anything is possible!

Of course, it's not all happiness, awe, and light. There is danger out there, too. The Bigfeet (Big-footies?) don't take kindly to strangers. Not all those aliens want to help humanity—some of them are more interested in experimenting on us instead. Nazi clones are waiting to emerge from secret laboratories. Unknown cattle mutilators stalk the Midwest. Maybe JFK really was killed—and it's his clone that's in hiding! The forces of evil are secretly replacing world leaders—and then there are the conspiracies.

It's a universe full of plotters and schemers. The Illuminati want to dominate the world, and Madison Avenue secretly manipulates our minds. (You really don't need a Chia Pet, do you?) Aliens are infiltrating





the workplace. (Have you ever *actually* looked at your fellow workers? Scary, isn't it?) Vile cults are subverting the world (like the US Postal Service).

Wait a minute, you say, if—

EVERYTHING YOU READ IS TRUE!

—how come nobody believes it?

A-ha! That is the question isn't it? How can people not notice the UFOs, aliens, Atlanteans, Bigfeet, Nessies, and yetis? They get written up in papers, featured on TV shows, and even have movies made about them, and still nobody believes they are real! *Wake up world!* How can anybody ignore this?

Because the only press that takes these wonders seriously are the tabloids—those sensationalist, oh-my-god-look-out-there's-aliens-everywhere!, dish-up-more-dirt newsprint rags found at every supermarket checkout in the United States—and probably the world. Everybody knows that tabloids are the scions of journalistic standards. Nobody would ever write anything in a tabloid that wasn't true, would they?

Of course, not only tabloids believe in these things. There's all sorts of true believers out there. They print up newsletters with names like *Planetary Awareness*, *New Revelations of the Holistic Light Church*, and *The Ugly Truth You Don't Want to Hear*. To "normal" folks this is the fringe of modern society—rantzines, Xerox culture, revelation cults, new ageism, way-far left, ultra-right, and just plain psychos. To the "normals," these are *not sources to be trusted!*

How did this terrible state come to pass? How is it that the only truly enlightened ones are branded and outcast by the rest of society? That, too, is another mystery. Some folks think there are forces out there trying to keep the world in the dark. THEY don't want people believing the truth, so THEY make sure nobody does. How? By using governments to cover things up, by manipulating the "legitimate" media into making fun of the truth, by branding those who know the truth as madmen and psychos—the ultimate of all conspiracies.

Of course, it might not be a conspiracy. It could just be that the truth is too much for most folks to comprehend. To protect their own brains, they simply ignore the truth or rationalize it away. Those UFOs?

Nothing but weather balloons and atmospheric disturbances. Bigfoot? Some guy with fake feet running around in the woods for a laugh. That photo of Nessie? A hoax done with a cheap camera and a toy submarine. Global conspiracies? An honest case of paranoia, nothing more.

So What's a Player to Do?

The truth must be told! That's what this game is all about. As a player, you will take on the part of a valiant reporter for a renowned tabloid, determined to get the story! So what if your character couldn't get a job with any *real* paper—the tabloids pay. Of course, your character will be covering stories that others deem cheap, sleazy, crackpot, and outright lies—but maybe someday the world will come to realize the truth.

Your character is only part of a team of reporters who all work for the same paper. As a team, you'll track down leads, investigate rumors, get interviews, take photos, and, most important of all, file the story. It's easy, right?

Of course not, or this wouldn't be any fun. First off, your characters don't get normal stories like covering a presidential campaign or a civil war in the Balkans. The closest they are likely to get to normal is a movie star's wedding. No, most of the time your characters get to sniff out things like UFO sightings, sea monster attacks, and secret cults. Take a look at a supermarket tabloid (the most lurid one you can find)—that's the kind of stories your character will be covering.

Second, the **TABLOID!**™ universe is just like our universe except for one thing—all the weirdness is real! Co-workers might really be space aliens. The CIA might really want to silence anyone poking too far into JFK's assassination. People—like your character—do get abducted by UFOs. Those yeti do come out of the mountains and kill people. There, that adds an element of risk, doesn't it?

Finally, there's one other thing that ensures your character's efforts won't be boring—

This is a silly game.

Enough said.





Good Reporters Need a Good Editor

This is a role-playing game, so not everybody gets to be a reporter. Somebody has to actually run the game, and in **TABLOID!** that person is called the Editor—what other games call the referee or game master (GM). The Editor is the person who creates adventures, assigns reporters to their tasks, and runs all the myriad weirdness the characters meet on the way.

Not everybody can be an Editor. It takes a certain something—at the very least, a well-developed sense of humor. If you don't happen to have one of those handy, fear not! This book features all sorts of tips and hints for how to keep your games rolling (on the floor laughing, that is!).

The (sometimes dubious) honor of taking on the position of Editor usually goes to the person who bought these rules and read them. (*Like you, maybe!*) Sometimes the Editor is somebody else, especially if you can con a friend into running the game so you can play. It's perfectly fair to alternate Editors, letting one person run one adventure and another run the next. This is not a big, serious campaign world with vast amounts of secret detail, like some role-playing games. This is supposed to be silly.

However you do it, have fun.

How to Use this Book

It's pretty straightforward. You read it. If you plan to be a player and not the Editor, you don't even need to do that, since the things you need to know can be explained when you sit down to play. If you are going to be the Editor, you need to read the rules sections at least. The other sections, the articles and adventures, can be read as you need them.

The rest of this book is divided into chapters, adventures, and articles. The first four chapters pick up where the AMAZING ENGINE Role-Playing System left off. After reading them, you'll be ready to create unique **TABLOID!** characters. These and the four chapters that follow can be read by players and Editors. The remaining chapters are best left to those

planning on being Editors. (Of course, you could claim that you *plan* to be an Editor and read all that stuff if you wanted. It would be wrong, but how are we to know?)

Only the Editor should read the adventures. After all, what fun is there in playing an adventure in which you already know what's going to happen? Kind of wreaks havoc with all those arguments about free will versus predestination, doesn't it? If you're a player, you just keep your snoopy nose out of those adventures!

The articles are the "background" of the **TABLOID!** world. This is all set in the real world, so there's no need to tell you about New York, Abilene, or Pago-Pago. You want to know about the goofy stuff, so that's what's there. Some of it is true, and most of it is a lie. Use the articles as inspiration for your own adventures—they are there to give you ideas.

At the back of the book are a number of pages you can photocopy—but like our legal department says, "For personal use only!" These include a character generation worksheet, a **TABLOID!** character sheet, and some other things. Remember—personal use only! You don't want to make our legal department mad.

Finally, there's a map of the **TABLOID!** world bound into the back of the book. This map notes some of the most famous strange sites and sightings, along with some editorial comments that couldn't be suppressed. Never forget: this is a silly game.

A Note About the **TABLOID!** Game

The **TABLOID!** universe is not a serious universe and was never intended to be one. Any attempt to play this game in a serious manner is an exercise in complete futility. Those who do actually play this in a serious manner, and especially those who argue over rules, are suffering from severe repression of something in their life—probably fun.

Some people may find parts of the **TABLOID!** rules, descriptions, and commentary impertinent or even offensive. Hopefully the designer has managed to spare no one, including himself.





Chainsaw Heals Injured Auras

By KAREN S. BOOMGARDEN

BANGOR, Maine—Jackson Pflug, of Bangor, ME, fells trees for a living. But in his off hours, Jackson becomes the Chainsaw Surgeon!

Since he was a child in Possum Creek, West Virginia, Pflug has been able to see auras, the electrical fields surrounding living things. His great-grandmother trained him to see illnesses in people's auras, which appear as black or dark spots in an otherwise colored field. She showed him the traditional method for "curing" these illnesses: "combing" the aura with his hands as if removing tangles from someone's hair.

As he matured, Pflug found that some people's auras were more resistant to such treatment than others. He became disillusioned when, at 32, he was unable to help a neighbor of his by his own traditional means. The neighbor then turned to a psychiatrist and was eventually medicated so heavily she no longer recognized Jackson. He left Possum Creek, vowing to do no more auric healing for the rest of his life.

After he established himself as a logger in Maine, Pflug noticed that cer-

tain trees' auras responded favorably to the sounds of roaring chainsaws. Their colors, normally bright and clear, were clouded and dark. The sound of a full-throttle chainsaw, though, worked like an enzymatic cleanser on the darkness. One rev of the engine, and the dinginess drained from the aura, leaving only the bright, true colors of a healthy tree.

This made Pflug consider reentering the field of auric healing, but working on people again—people whose auras were tough, like his old neighbor back in West Virginia. He honed his skills on the trees with which he spent his days and slowly began his medical practice on the weekends.

"It's the noise what does it," beams Pflug, holding his trusty implement of healing. "The Kirlian frequency of the aura and the sonic vibration of the chainsaw set up a one-to-one resonance, and the blockage in the aura gets shook out. Sometimes all I have to do is turn the dang thing on, and them black spots just hightail it away from that aura like football players from a science class."

Pflug has had only one failure since his conversion to chainsaw surgeon. "One of my neighbors said there was a

sick, nekkid kid in her back yard, some little guy maybe four feet tall, kinda gray and wrinkly-lookin'. Soon's I seen him, I knowed he weren't from around here; that feller's aura was the strangest thing I ever did see! Looked like a pattern, mebbe a checkerboard, only the squares was all differ'nt. I took a deep breath and tried my best anyhow, but the resonance just wasn't there. Stead of scarin' the spots out, that whole aura started waverin' like the northern lights. Then, it got real bright, like one a' them novas, and that little guy was gone!

"I dunno if I killed him or sent him back where he come from, but I ain't seen nothin' like it since," he says, crossing himself, obviously uncomfortable with talking about this harrowing experience.

What of his vow to cease the etheric meddling made so many years ago?

"I figger if God'd meant me to quit healin', he wouldn'ta let me find out about the chainsaw. My fingers couldn't handle the tough cases, but this machine . . . well, it's a miracle."

And this is one second chance that this amazingly gifted healer plans not to let slip through his fingers.





—So You Wanna Be a Reporter?—

So it's finally come to this. With the last change in your pocket, you picked up the World Tattler-Tribune at the checkout stand. You're so desperate, you're even checking its want ads, when you see—

*Are you ready for the big world of
POPULAR JOURNALISM?*

Apply to:

*Suite 3872, Knotell Motel
(666) 555-1212*

This is it! The job you've been waiting for. Nervously you dial the number to get an interview. . . .

Be a Tabloid Reporter

Enjoy Exciting Future in Journalism

In the AMAZING ENGINE system, the first step in finishing your character is to choose your profession. To make it simple, there is only one profession you can choose for your character in the **TABLOID!** universe. Your character can earn big bucks, travel to exotic locations, and become famous as—a reporter! Wasn't that simple?

"I don't wanna play a reporter," somebody's sure to whine. "I wanna be a gun-toting squid of a private investigator." Hey, this is a game of serious investigative reporting, fella! If you just want to go shoot things, go play another game or have your character buy a gun. Or, you could just keep whining until the Editor agrees to break the rules and let you be a PI. That'll take extra work but, hey, go ahead. It's not like we're going to hunt you down!

The senior editor of the World Tattler-Tribune grumbles that he's wasting his time as he looks up from his work to notice you. Sitting in that first job interview, you begin to wonder if this was really such a good idea. Still, you really need the work. "So, you wanna be a reporter, eh?"

Pulling out a stogie, the hardened main editor bites the end off the cigar and jabs it in your direction. "What makes you think you've got the stuff?"

Base Adjustment Makes You a Man (or Woman)

Hey, you know that not everyone is cut out for the daring and high-stress life of a tabloid reporter, but your character's got the stuff. How do you know? By the base adjustment, that's how. All player characters in the **TABLOID!** universe add +30 to their attribute scores. No feeble, sun-light starved journalism students here, by god! Tabloids hire the best. Only real gung ho, story-getting, photo-retouching, deadline-making writers get a job on this paper.

The editor hardly notices your proud claims of high-school achievements. "So, you got a little talent. That and a dime still won't get you coffee, kid. I only hire skilled, trained reporters. Where'd you go to school?"

Trying not to be nervous, you point to the life history on your résumé.

Reporter's Past Revealed!

Since every character in the **TABLOID!** game is a reporter, you need a different means of determining your character's skill pools and individual skills. You do this by creating your character's background before applying for this new and exciting career. By making choices (a few) and rolling dice (a lot), you get a history of what your character did before entering the field of yellow journalism.

The process is simple—you create your character's past by using the Résumé Steps on page 26. Starting with Step 1: Youth, you pick a skill from the School of Hard Knocks. Then you make a decision for your character and roll 1d20 and find the result on the chosen step's table. The result may raise or lower attributes, grant skills, or send you to another step. If your character goes to another step, follow the instructions for that step.

You keep choosing skills and rolling on the step tables until all of your character's skill slots are filled. Even if choosing a skill fills your character's last slot, you must still roll on the step's table. If the result





grants your character another skill, add this one too—it's a bonus from us! The number of skill slots your character has is the same as explained in the System Guide portion of the rulebook. Unlike other AMAZING ENGINE universes, there are no restrictions on choosing Learning-based skills. If your character has a Learning of 63 and an Intuition of 59, you can choose up to 11 skills ($63 \div 10 = 7$ when rounded up + $59 \div 15 = 4$ when rounded up).

It may work out that the tables call for your character to have an event that has already occurred once (either to another player's character or yours). In the spirit of mayhem, your Editor can either let you roll again or let the die roll stand. After all, it is possible to land in a Mexican jail more than once! If your character gains a skill already known, too bad.

Big Bucks in Your Savings Account

In addition to skills, the résumé process also generates how much cash your character has, measured in a *Savings Account*. Your character starts with 1d4 points in the Savings Account. Events that happen during résumé building can then raise or lower your character's total. Keep careful track of these changes as you go.

Crazed Cult Stalks Reporter

Your character's past is not just about skills learned and money earned. Characters can wind up with as many as four special complications, just to make their lives more fun. (Heh.)

Contact. Somehow or other, your character managed to make a favorable impression on somebody. It was probably an error in judgment on their part. If your character gets a Contact, you should note down who and what the contact is. For example, a contact in college might be a friendly old professor of archeology or that permanent graduate student who taught chemistry lab. Contacts can provide information, answer questions, and give advice. They make good sources for quotes, too. They won't go out and do the dirty work needed for a good story, though.

Dependent. Characters with dependents have somebody to take care of—children or a spouse mostly. Dependents don't have any direct impact on your character's abilities, but can lead to amusing role-playing situations, like explaining how your character missed the birthday party due to alien abductors.

Hunted. This complication is a bad one. Somebody wants your character either in jail or permanently out of the way. The event will give some idea of who's after your character and why, but you and the Editor will have to fill in the gaps.

Record. It is also possible for your character to get arrested. Maybe he or she was innocent, maybe not. It does mean your character has a police record—not that your new employer, the paper, cares. Still, there may be times when having (or not having) a record might be important.

Amnesia Victim Fills In Gaps

The résumé process does more than give your character skills and money—it also gives events that happened before becoming a reporter. These are sketchy and often ludicrous, but who said you were playing a serious game here?

Part of the fun here is to fill in all the gaps, make explanations for how all the strange things that happen to your character can be justified.

Miracle Worksheet Makes Life Easy

For a mere cost of a photocopy, you too can have your very own personal Character Worksheet and Character Record! *No money down!* All you have to do is flip to pages 135–136 and photocopy the high-quality, no-expense-spared forms we've provided there!

Located at the back of this rule book are two sheets you can photocopy for personal use. The first is a **TABLOID!** character worksheet. This worksheet will guide you through all the steps needed to create your **TABLOID!** character, from the very first steps explained in the System Guide section through the process of building your character's résumé.





The second sheet is a character sheet. After you've completed the steps on the worksheet, you can copy the final information to a character sheet. This sheet has spaces for all the information you're likely to need in a **TABLOID!** campaign.

The Résumé Steps

Here it is! You're ready create your first character. Just follow the instructions for each step as you go.

Step 1: Youth

This is it—high school graduation. Now, after months of avoiding the question, it's time for your character to decide what to do for a life. First, choose one skill from The School of Hard Knocks on page 41 and then choose your character's answer to the question:

"No more high school. What am I gonna do?"

"I wanna make money—lots of money! I'm going to college." Go to Step 2: College.

"I wanna be an idealistic reporter—like G*****o R****a." Go to Step 3: Journalism School.

"I wanna car." Go to Step 4: Work.

"I wanna go to the beach." Go to Step 5: The Beach.

Don't forget to roll 1d4 for the initial funds in your character's Savings Account.

Step 2: College

So, the choice is made—it's off to the halls of higher learning. Gee, we sure hope your character remembered to study hard in high school! Pick a school from the skill pool list (pages 40–41) and roll against your character's Learning attribute. If you roll your character's Learning or less, the character's in. If you rolled higher, that school said no. You only get two tries, so choose carefully!

If you are admitted, choose one skill from those listed for the school's skill pool. If your character blows both chances, go to Step 4: Work.

If your character is admitted, you must check to see if your character develops an academic quirk due to the pressure of those long hours devoted to studying (or not studying, as the case may be). Roll 1d10 and add all the years your character has gone to college (including this one). If the result is 10 or greater, roll for a quirk on the table below.

- | | |
|----|----------------------|
| 1 | Absent-minded |
| 2 | Alcoholic |
| 3 | Bad grooming |
| 4 | Bad fashion sense |
| 5 | Blunt personality |
| 6 | Caffeine addict |
| 7 | Candy addict |
| 8 | Chain smoker |
| 9 | Cigar smoker |
| 10 | Fastidious |
| 11 | Fidgety |
| 12 | List maker |
| 13 | Monochromatic vision |
| 14 | Moocher |
| 15 | Paranoid |
| 16 | Ritualist |
| 17 | String fetish |
| 18 | Perpetually tardy |
| 19 | Tinfoil user |
| 20 | Hear voices |

Next roll 1d20 and check Table 1: College (on page 30) to find out what happens to your character during the school year. In addition to the colorful event described (which you might want to note on your character worksheet), additional skills and adjustments to your bank account may be gained.

Step 3: Journalism School

No worthless business major from Harvard for *your* character, no siree! Journalism's the ticket to a high-paying job, so look out, world. Your character is automatically enrolled in the Columbia School of Journalism and on the way to a great career. Nobody ever gets rejected from journalism school.





Pick one skill from the Columbia School of Journalism skill pool on page 40. Next, roll 1d10, adding the number of years the character has been in school. If the roll is 10 or greater, your character has acquired one of those wonderful traits that so endear journalists to the rest of the world. Roll 1d12 to find out just what it is.

- 1 Chain smoker
- 2 Irritating whiner
- 3 Insufferably rude
- 4 Foul-mouthed
- 5 Fast food junkie
- 6 One set of clothes
- 7 Bad story for everything
- 8 Argumentative
- 9 Caffeine addict
- 10 Slovenly
- 11 Egocentric
- 12 Insensitive

While your character is learning to be a *real* journalist, he or she works as an intern at a local paper. This means you get to add 2 to your character's Savings Account and then roll 1d20 and check on Table 2: Journalism School (on page 31) to see how your character's year went.

Step 4: Work

Why waste time with higher education? Your character knows everything there is to know anyway. Get a job and earn money—that's what life is all about! So, what kind of job does your character get? Whenever your character comes to Step 4, you need to determine your character's job. If your character already has a job from the list below, you can automatically keep it or roll randomly for a different one.

Roll 1d20 and check the table below to find your character's current career path. Each job lists the school your character can choose a skill from and the addition to his or her Savings Account. Each year your character works, you may add the listed amount to your character's Savings Account.

Note: *It's truly amazing, at times, the things that people will actually do to survive. All of the jobs described below (save one) are real and were held by people the designer knows, so please don't make fun of them. This could happen to you!*

- 1 **McJob:** School of Hard Knocks, +1 Savings Account
- 2 **Chicken Defroster, Night Shift:** School of Hard Knocks, +1 Savings Account
- 3 **Game Designer:** Conservatory of Secrets Humanity Was Not Meant to Know, -1 Savings Account
- 4 **Furniture Sander:** Krasnoyorsk Technical School Exchange Program, +2 Savings Account
- 5 **Postal Worker:** Louie di Chang's Dojo and Shooting Range, +2 Savings Account
- 6 **Department Store Baby Photographer:** Forbert School of Celebrity Nude Photography, +2 Savings Account
- 7 **Just Do What We Tell You and Don't Ask Questions:** CIA University of the Air, +3 Savings Account
- 8 **Holistic Dental Technician's Assistant:** Sister Sarah's 24-Hour Psychic Hotline and Mind Home Study Institute, +3 Savings Account
- 9 **Mega-Mall Theater Floorsweeper:** G*****d Tour Guide Training Program, +1 Savings Account
- 10 **Superbookstore Clerk:** World Revisionist Library, +1 Savings Account
- 11 **Highway Surveyor:** Lawson's Absolute Center of the Universe School, +2 Savings Account
- 12 **Convention Organizer:** Kult College, -2 Savings Account
- 13 **IRS Slave:** Academy of Data Entry Specialists, +4 Savings Account
- 14 **Dormitory Janitor:** *No skills this year*, +1 Savings Account
- 15 **Fishmarket Gopher:** San Diego Cryptozoological Society, +1 Savings Account
- 16 **Nuclear Weapons Technician:** Krasnoyorsk Technical School Exchange Program, +2 Savings Account





- 17 **Door-to-Door Pan Salesman:** Institute of the Secret Truth, +1 Savings Account
- 18 **Junior High Language Arts Teacher:** Staggering Merwin's School of Debunking, +1 Savings Account
- 19 **Costumed Theme Park Character:** G*****d Tour Guide Training Program, +1 Savings Account
- 20 **Observatory Gift Shop Clerk:** Blue Book Tech, +1 Savings Account

While working you can also have your character attend night school. Night school costs 1 point from the character's Savings Account for each year attended. Any school on the skill list can be chosen for night school.

Select one skill from those allowed by your job and one skill from those allowed through night school (if your character attended it). Then roll 1d20 and check on Table 3: Work (on page 32) to see what becomes of your character next.

Step 5: The Beach

Enough with this working stuff already—it's time for fun. After all, there's always parents and friends to sponge from, right? There's always time to get a job later. You're young and durable, and there's nothing stopping you from wasting away in some tropical paradise.

Your character spends an entire year just slacking. Your character doesn't study in school or get on-the-job training, but does meet some interesting and scary people. There's a lot to be learned from them—more than most people might think—the sort of stuff that might come in handy later for a tabloid reporter.

Each year your character spends slacking, choose one skill from either Louie di Chang's Dojo and Shooting Range or the School of Hard Knocks. Next, subtract 1 from your character's Savings Account (if it's at 0, then there's nothing to lose!). Finally, roll 1d20 and consult Table 4: The Beach (on page 33) to find out what happened to your character in that year.





Suppressed Manuscript Reveals **Shakespeare** **Was a Woman!**

By JEFF GRUBB

LONDON—In news that rocked the literary world this week, a respected expert in Shakespearean Studies announced that the immortal Bard was not the author of such famed plays as *Romeo and Juliet*, *the Merchant of Venice*, and *Two Women of Verona*. Instead, the true author was Will's Italian mistress, who was in turn a member of a secret society known as "The Chapterhouse."

Professor Janet Vegas of Shade Chapel College, near Oxford, made the announcement through a literary newsletter of Shakespeare aficionados. "There have long been suspicions that Shakespeare did not write the works attributed to him, and much of the controversy has centered on such other literary talents as Bacon. However, the presentation of strong female characters such as Portia, Desdemona, and Juliet, amongst others, always has hinted at a strong female influence in the work. While that in itself is not proof of the true identity of the Bard, it provided the first clues as to her identity."

Vegas conducted most of her research through what is called the "Supplemental Volumes" of Shakespeare's plays—the few surviving rough drafts, contemporary commentary, and marginal notes for the production. Most are believed to have been in Shakespeare's own hand, but there are entries in a decidedly graceful, probably feminine hand as well.

"These 'graceful entries'," states Vegas, "are as influential on the final plays as we know them today as are Shakespeare's own comments. This leads to the conclusion that William Shakespeare may have worked at least in co-operation with, or being edited by, a female hand."

The breakthrough occurred with Vegas' discovery in Rome of a number of Shakespearean manuscripts done in this "graceful hand," which predated the earliest known samples of William Shakespeare's own work. Among the manuscripts were a number of letters from a Franchesca Bacaros to William Shakespeare, including one taking the reputed Bard to task for changes made to *Romeo and Juliet*.

"In Bacaros' original draft, Juliet recovers after Romeo's death, but does not kill herself," says Vegas. "Instead she shames the rival families to make peace, and marries Romeo's youngest brother—a minor character who disappears in the final version—and in that marriage establishes herself as the ruling matriarch. The letter, written but apparently never sent, excoriates Shakespeare for changing the ending of her play."

In addition to the letter, the Roman find included a new unknown manuscript done in a confirmed Shakespearean style but by the "graceful hand" of Bacaros. This manuscript, called *The Chapterhouse*, deals with a secret society of women who live throughout Europe, married to individuals of power and manipulating them in this fashion. A note on the last page says, "Do not send—Veritas."

"'Veritas' is Latin for Truth," explains Vegas. "Was Bacaros creating a fantasy of a women-dominated society, or revealing a true secret society operating in the shadow? If there was such a society, what became of it?"





Playing Dice with the Universe

such a society, what became of it?"

Table 1: College

- 1 Oops—your character accidentally earned a degree. No more easy college life—unless you decide to change majors. A reporter is what you really want to be! Go to Step 3: Journalism School.
- 2 Family member killed. Your character needed at home. Automatically get job in family business. Gain several Dependents and go to Step 4: Work.
- 3 Your character got married! No fair blaming the champagne. Gain a Dependent and go get a job. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 4 "It was an accident, honest!" doesn't wash. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 5 "I did it, and I'm glad I did!" makes for a bad defense. Character is sent to the big house. Automatically gains Self-defense, Smuggle, Survival Instinct, and a criminal Contact. Released for good behavior after one year. -10 on Position. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 6 Character fingered for outrageous prank. Get thrown out of school but gain +5 Position for the notoriety. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 7 Hacker friend fixes those troublesome grades. It's time to leave school and get a job before they find out. Double initial Savings Account affect of character's first job. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 8 Tragic affair leaves character haunted by memory of lover. Lose 5 Willpower from depression, add 10 points to Psyche. Remain in Step 3: College.
- 9 Late-night research leads character to secrets better undiscovered, prompting him or her to quit school before they find out. Choose one skill from the Institute of the Secret Truth in addition to normal skills allowed. Character is Hunted by conspirators. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 10 Character's outspoken comments incur cult persecution, forcing character to quit school. Immediately gain Detect Fraud, but be Hunted by cult. This sounds like good copy. Go to Step 3: Journalism School.
- 11 Affair with Professor/Dean/Dean's spouse/Dean's child. Gain one Contact. Remain in Step 2: College.
- 12 Police discover roommate's business on the side. Character mistakenly Hunted by authorities. Hide out on Step 5: The Beach.
- 13 Caught cheating—character thrown out of school. Permanent black mark in records, causing a -5 on Position. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 14 Insulted professor who is now making life hell. Remain in Step 2: College, but don't have any fun.
- 15 Blew academic probation—change one college skill to Boozing and get thrown out. There's only one thing to do—go to Step 3: Journalism School.
- 16 College prank gone bad scars character for life. Lose 5 points of Psyche or Willpower. Remain in Step 2: College.
- 17 Psycho date wants to be yours—forever. He or she will follow the character until the end of time. Lose 5 points of Charm from emotional scars. Remain in Step 2: College.
- 18 Persuasive cultists get character to join. Choose one skill from Kult College and go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 19 Student loans catch up with character. Lose all of Savings Account. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 20 Lacrosse injury disables character. -10 to Fitness or Reflexes, but double Savings Account from settlement with school. Go to Step 5: The Beach.





Table 2: Journalism School

- 1 Tired of being a gopher, your character quits without a job prospect. Subtract 1 from Savings Account. Choose 1 skill from the School of Hard Knocks. Go to Step 2: College in hopes of a better career.
- 2 Hawaii's not the remains of Atlantis? Character loses job as fact checker but gains Research skill. Go to Step 2: College.
- 3 That story on poodle-barbecuing cultists was good, but there's no witness protection program for reporters. Character gains 1 skill from Kult College, adds 1 to Savings Account, and is Hunted by cult. Stay in Step 3: Journalism School.
- 4 The sexual harassment charge filed against the editor doesn't stick, so character is fired in revenge. Character gains Law skill, but is blackballed by "real" papers. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 5 Character's scoop on a FBI operation gives the Mob enough dope to finger the informer and blow him or her away. Stricken by guilt, the character quits. Lose 5 points of Psyche. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 6 The mayor isn't amused by that report that he or she is a cross-dressing night-club singer. Get assigned the dog pound beat—*forever*. Choose a skill from the School of Hard Knocks. Stay in Step 3: Journalism School.
- 7 Character discovers publisher is part of a global media conspiracy. Of course, nobody believes it because the conspiracy controls *almost* everything. Character gains Media Manipulation skill and, oddly enough, becomes Hunted. Hide out at Step 5: The Beach.
- 8 Editor notices the death-row interview came three days after the execution. Character notices pink slip immediately. Since the character must clearly have supernatural powers, choose 1 skill from Sister Sara's 24-Hour Psychic Hotline and Mind Home Study Institute. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 9 Playing the D&D® game at work doesn't cut it as "reviewing." Character learns RPG Mind Control skill but takes a pay cut. Lose 1 point of Savings Account and roll again on this table.
- 10 That confidential memo calling the publisher a "#\@!*&?%" gets posted on the Internet. Character gains Computer skill and looks for new job. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 11 New management takes over paper. Character is part of the "old guard" and so gets fired. Character's self-esteem hits bottom. Lose 5 points of Willpower. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 12 Character points out the editor's secretary is also his or her live-in lover. The publisher is not amused. Character gets promoted. Add 2 to Savings Account and roll on this table again.
- 13 Character prints interview with Xalдар, an honest-to-god Venusian, then discovers it's a hoax. Lose job but gains Hoaxes skill as lesson. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 14 While interviewing the head of the Revealed Church of Thoop-Tor, character sees the light, quits job, and joins cult. Choose one skill from Kult College. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 15 Character drinks too much at the office Christmas party and wakes up in Mexico with a spouse and a hangover. Learn Fast Talk and gain a Dependent. Go to Step 2: College to get ahead.
- 16 Killing the neighbor sure livened up a slow news day. With good behavior, character gets out after five years. Choose up to 5 skills from the CIA University of the Air and the School of Hard Knocks. -2 to Savings Account. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 17 The stress of deadlines leads to nervous breakdown. Choose one free skill from the Institute of Secret Truth and lose 5 points of Psyche. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 18 Character's love writes tell-all book and goes off to fame and fortune, leaving character brokenhearted. Lose 5 points of Charm, gain 5 points of Psyche. Learn Celebrity Trivia from watching former lover's televised interviews. It's time to improve your writing skills. Go to Step 2: College.
- 19 Hollywood options character's work, so it's off to LA. Too bad they hate the treatment. +4 to Savings Account and gain Celebrity Trivia. Stay in Step 3: Journalism School.
- 20 Gallery owner goes ga-ga over character's photos. Take a leave of absence to become an *artiste*—and starve. Choose Photography or Photo Retouching skill and subtract 1 from Savings Account. Art school might help. Go to Step 2: College.



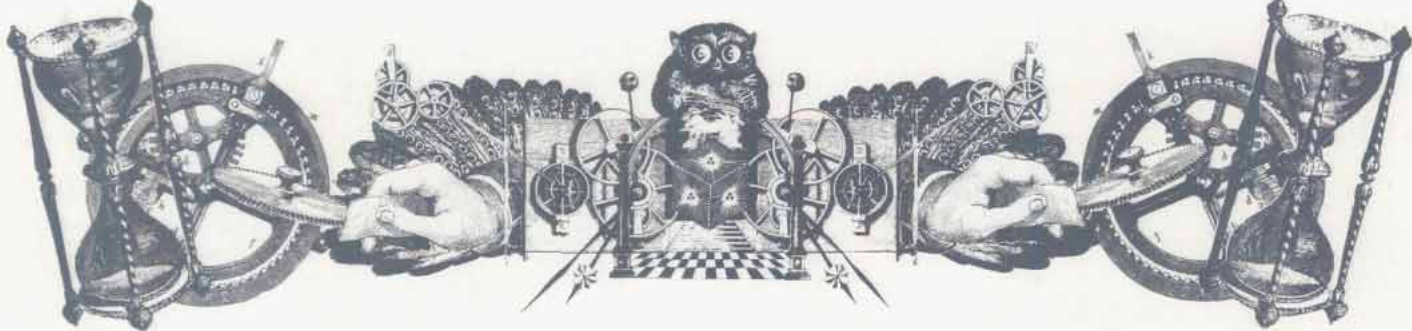


Table 3: Work

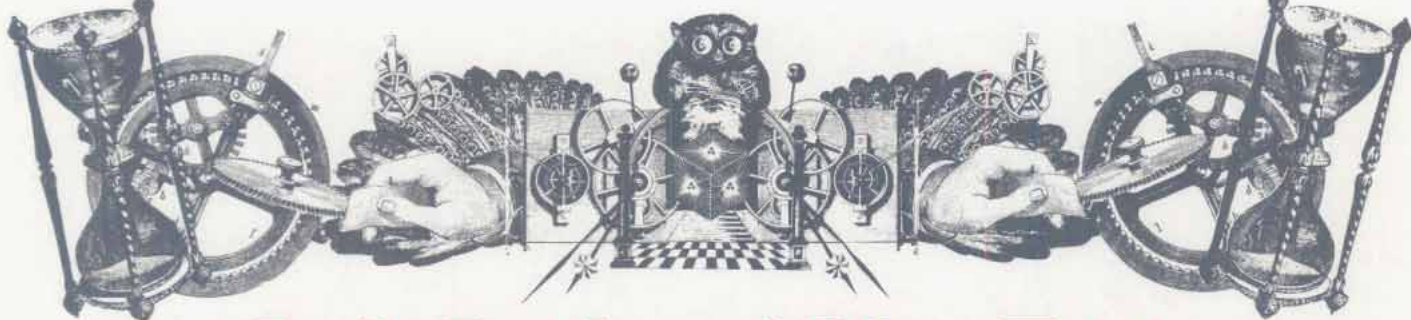
- 1 Sleeping at work! Character gets fired. No bonus this Christmas. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 2 Union goes on strike, but you cross the picket line. Get beaten up for being a scab. +1 to Savings Account, but no night school next year while recuperating. It's time for a safer line of work. Go to Step 3: Journalism School.
- 3 That late-night fun with the photocopier gets posted on the company bulletin board to everyone's glee but the character's. Lose 5 points of Position. Remain in Step 4: Work.
- 4 Life's great! Life's—the specialist says your character has a month, maybe two left to live. What's there to do but quit and discover the world? Too bad that six months later it turns out the quack was reading the x-ray upside down. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 5 The one-armed man did it—really! The cops aren't buying it. Your character barely gets away in time and is now Hunted by the law for a crime someone else committed. Lose 2 from the character's Savings Account but immediately gain Disguise and Survival Instinct. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 6 Co-worker loses that big order and artfully shifts blame to your character. The boss is not pleased. Lose 1 point from Savings Account. Remain in Step 4: Work.
- 7 Oh my god! Don't mix those—! The resulting explosion scars your character for life. Lose 10 points of Charm, but add 4 to the character's Savings Account when the responsible company pays generously for silence. Take the money and go to Step 2: College.
- 8 Get hit on the head! Amnesia! Lose one skill (your choice), choose a new name and start a new life. Go back to Step 1: Youth and start over.
- 9 OK, the boss has bad taste in clothes, but pointing it out wasn't a real bright idea—especially in front of the district manager. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 10 Co-worker comes in and plays disgruntled postal worker. The business is closed permanently after the tragedy. The scary part is that the loon's ranting made sense. Your character gains 1 skill from the Institute of Secret Truth or Louie Di Chang's Shooting Range and Dojo, just in case. Go to Step 3: Journalism School so you can expose the TRUTH!
- 11 Your one-night stand was married? To the boss? Photos? Uh-oh. Lose 2 from Savings Account. Remain in Step 4: Work.
- 12 The in-laws were surprised to learn about the marriage. Your character was surprised to learn about the baby. Gain a Dependent and remain in Step 4: Work.
- 13 Quickie marriage, quickie divorce—it seemed like such a perfect deal until the letter from the lawyer arrived. The ex wants alimony. Halve the character's Savings Account, rounding fractions down. Remain in Step 4: Work.
- 14 Hot tip from main office earns character a fortune. Unfortunately, the SEC notices. Character serves 1 year in minimum security (no skills gained) and still gets to add 6 to Savings Account. Study in your cell and go to Step 2: College.
- 15 Parents sell the house, sell the car, and join a cult. Your character has to move out. Lose 1 from Savings Account but gain 1 skill from Kult College. Remain in Step 4: Work.
- 16 "Okay, it went a little over budget. They can't fire me, I'm too important." True, but they can take it out of your character's salary. Lose 1 point from Savings Account as a reminder. Remain in Step 4: Work.
- 17 Front office sends character to Fiji branch and then forgets about it. It's just like being at the beach. Go to Step 5: The Beach but don't lose any from the Savings Account while there.
- 18 Good job, blaming the other guy! The boss buys it and your character gets promoted. Add 1 to Savings Account. Remain in Step 4: Work.
- 19 Boss has a stroke, and your character is chosen to fill the gap. Add 1 to Savings Account. Go to Step 2: College for more training.
- 20 Marrying the owner's daughter wasn't such a bad idea after all. You're now a VP with a Dependent. Add 4 to your Savings Account. Remain in Step 4: Work.



Table 4: The Beach

- 1 Your character gets a great tan. Gain Look Good skill. It's time to improve your love life. Go to Step 2: College.
- 2 Your character meets a really scary person who babbles a lot about secret plots and other things. Choose one skill from the Institute of the Secret Truth. Remain on Step 5: The Beach.
- 3 Tinfoil Ray spends a lot of time explaining those alien mind control satellites. Choose one skill from Blue Book Tech. Remain on Step 5: The Beach.
- 4 Your character gets thrown into a Mexican prison, and it takes a year for the family to make bail. Lose 5 points of Psyche and all of the Savings Account. Gain Self-defense and Observation. Dad wants his money back. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 5 Spend the summer riding the waves. Your character doesn't learn a thing. Maybe it's time to go to school. Go to Step 2: College.
- 6 A cyberhead friend introduces you to the world of computers. Choose one skill from the Academy of Data-Entry Specialists and add 2 to your Savings Account by readjusting the state welfare system in your character's favor. Now you have the money to go to Step 3: Journalism School.
- 7 A serious illness and no health insurance leaves your character with a hacking cough, -10 on Fitness, and a Savings Account of 0. The thin and pasty look is perfect for being a reporter. Go to Step 3: Journalism School.
- 8 Your character meets another really scary person. Choose one skill from the Conservatory of Secrets Humanity Was Not Meant to Know. Remain on Step 5: The Beach.
- 9 Darn but this cult makes sense! Spend a year in the wilderness with them and gain one skill from Kult College. Remain on Step 5: The Beach.
- 10 Who would've thought those bald-headed chanters would get so mad over a few missing collection boxes? Character is now Hunted by a fringe cult. Hide out by getting a job. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 11 A guy named Loomis shows your character how to make really good fake IDs. Your character runs a small black market business until the heat starts to rise. Add 1 to Savings Account and choose one skill from the CIA University of the Air. Remain on Step 5: The Beach.
- 12 You spend the summer working out. Add 5 to Fitness. Remain on Step 5: The Beach.
- 13 A motorcycle/skate/surf/girl gang insists your character hangs with them. Choose one skill from Louie di Chang's Dojo and Shooting Range or the CIA University of the Air. P.S. Your character has a Record. Remain on Step 5: The Beach.
- 14 A fire destroys your character's possessions and cardboard box. Savings Account goes to 0. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 15 That lottery ticket your character found in the street wins big! Headlines read, "Homeless bum now rolling in dough." It's a sign to give up the slacker life. Add 4 to Savings Account and go immediately to Step 2: College.
- 16 Some punks beat the character up and take everything—which isn't much. Character loses 5 from Reflexes and everything in the Savings Account. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 17 Your character's girlfriend/boyfriend is tired of living with a bum and walks. Character is stricken to core. Either lose 5 points of Psyche or give up the slacker life and go to Step 4: Work.
- 18 Your character travels the country with 5,000 other neo-hippies for the ultimate Deadhead experience. Gain one skill from Sister Sara's 24-Hour Psychic Hotline and Mind Home Study Institute. In the end, you decide to write about the experience. Go to Step 3: Journalism School.
- 19 Your character falls in with a bunch of eco-warrior/merry pranksters. Lose everything in the Savings Account when that logging company sues for everything your character's got, but choose one skill from the San Diego Cryptozoological Society. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 20 Hey, it works for others, so why not you? Your character founds a religion, thereby angering rival cultists. The religion bombs, but the character is now Hunted. Gain one point to Savings Account and a skill from Kult College. You need more skills to get the message out, so go to Step 3: Journalism School.





Cash, Death, and Other Trivia

"Well," the old editor draws, "you might just do. Tell you what—yer hired. Congratulations and welcome aboard. Call me Eddie." Tossing your résumé back on the desk, the editor-in-chief smiles and thrusts his hand out to you. You've done it! You've got the job. "Now let's talk salary."

Secret Lottery Numbers are Your Path to Riches

Just like folks in the real world, your character in the **TABLOID!** universe has to have money. There are all sorts of mundane things your character needs to manage in life: paper, batteries, coffee filters, parking meter change, magnets, underwear, and (hopefully) soap. Unfortunately for the percentage of the population that are not accountants, balancing the checkbook is not fun.

Therefore, the **TABLOID!** universe ignores all this. Your character does not have to keep track of every

dollar and cent earned. First off, the paper will cover most of your character's reasonable expenses. Need a plane ticket to Papua for that UFO story? Just convince the Editor to foot the bill. Car get squashed by a dinosaur? File a claim with the company insurance, and you might even get it paid. Sure, the boss will be angry, but the money won't come out of your character's pocket.

For those things that have to be bought, characters have Resource ratings. The rating pools everything together—mostly the character's salary and savings. To find your character's Resource rating, roll 1d4 and add the Savings Account number you got from creating your character. That's your character's Resource rating.

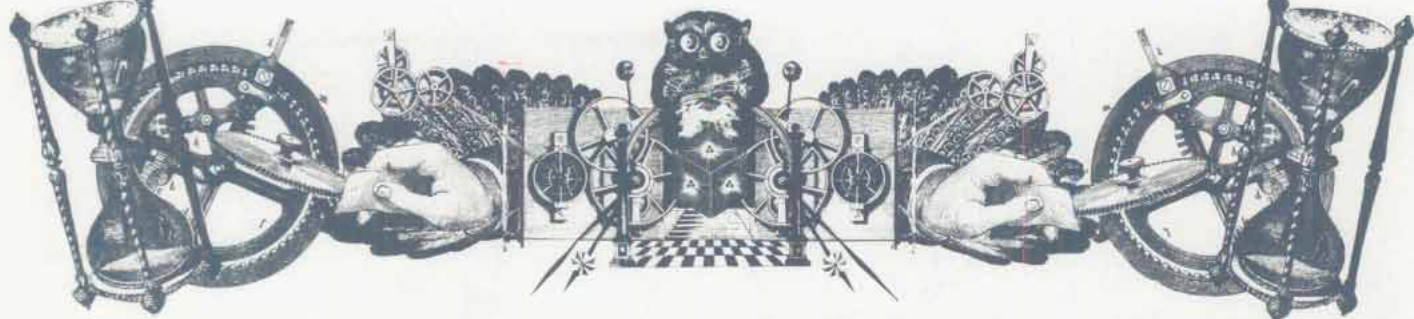
Resource Rating	Living Conditions
0	Are you kidding?
1-2	Fleabag hotel and handouts
3-4	Parent's basement
5-6	Apartment with roommates
6-9	Private apartment
10-12	Rented house
13-16	Condo
17+	Own house

The Resource rating means you don't have to keep track of every dime your character earns. This is not a game for accountants. Most things you need to buy (food, clothes, housing and the like) are covered by your Resource rating. Other things that might come up you just pay for out of your pocket. Don't worry. Your Editor has the rules on this. All you need to remember is that high Resource ratings are better than low ones.

Your character's Resource rating isn't fixed either. It can go up or down. Buy a lot of expensive things, and it goes down. File a good story that gets a bonus, and it goes up. Your character might even become rich as a **TABLOID!** reporter—but don't count on it.

"I just hope you're tough enough," Eddie the editor adds ominously. "Being a reporter for this rag's no piece of cake."





Woman Survives Plunge From Sears Tower

That's life in a tabloid world. All sorts of amazing things can happen to people, and they just don't die. Of course, tabloids also print lots of stories about people and animals who die in really unusual and bizarre ways. To survive in the **TABLOID!** universe, your character has to be tough.

Like all **AMAZING ENGINE** characters, your reporter has Stamina and Body points. Stamina points are equal to 1/4 of combined Reflexes and Willpower, rounded down. Body points are equal to 1/10 Fitness, rounded down. A character with a Fitness of 59, Reflexes of 61, and Willpower of 65 has 31 Stamina points ($[61 + 65 = 126] \div 4 = 31.5$) and 5 Body points ($59 \div 10 = 5.9$).

Looking at your character's Body points, you might think, "This poor sucker's doomed." 5, 6, or 7 points doesn't seem like much. You're right—it isn't, so it is a good thing that guns, knives, and most "normal" weapons have a lethality rating of 0. These things don't do Body damage. Almost all the normal ways your character can get hurt do nothing but Stamina point damage. A reporter can take a lot of punishment, go get some sleep, and come back in fine fighting style.

However, nobody is immortal—well, except maybe for ancient mummified pharaohs, certain presumed-dead rock stars, and Hitler. Your character *can* die. The most common way is when your character reaches 0 Stamina points and, of course, falls down unconscious. If the bad guys—the mob of outraged E***s worshippers, for example—keep beating the character, any further damage caused comes right off of Body points. Reach 0 Body points, and your character is dead, kaput, out of the adventure. Smart characters make peace, surrender, or run away before they pass out.

There are ways for your character to die quickly, to lose all Body points while still having lots of Stamina. Most of these are weird, unusual, and outright fantastic—alien death rays, failed brain transplants, falls

from incredible heights, Bigfoot attacks, even drownings in puddles. Your character should be cautious when nosing around the strange and unusual. These things can have nasty lethality ratings.

A good guideline for reporters to remember is that death makes good copy. That means that in the **TABLOID!** universe, really lethal things are the spectacular, headline-grabbing ways to go. Things like **REPORTER DROWNS IN VAT OF BANANA PUDDING** or **VAMPIRE STAKES REPORTER**. Now that's going out in style!

Just like the people in the papers, your reporter can die. It's not easy, but it can be done.

Surgeon Invents Male/Female Afro/Asian/Anglo/Aboriginal Weight Loss Program

By now you may have noticed a few things unanswered about your character—little questions, like whether the PC's male or female? Other people get hung up on whether their character is supposed to be right or left handed. Well, guess what? We don't care! You get to complete the picture of your character just the way you want—sex, height, hair color, weight, nationality, and any bad habits we haven't already saddled your character with.

A piece of good advice is that no matter how exotic you want to make your character, he or she still has to fit into a more-or-less normal society. Reporters who are so strange that they are news stories themselves aren't going to work well in the **TABLOID!** universe.

Secondly, although your characters can be any nationality, it's assumed they speak the language the paper's printed in. Sure, you can have a male, Albanian ex-war correspondent and photo-journalist, but if he's working in the USA, it's assumed he speaks and writes in English. Of course, Albanian players may want to assume the exact opposite. The same holds true for French-, German-, Japanese-, or Spanish-based campaigns, too, amongst others.

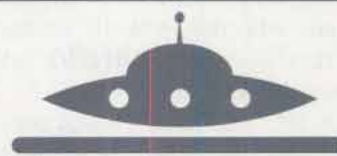




CROP TALK



**WE DEMAND RERUNS
OF "BEN CASEY"!**

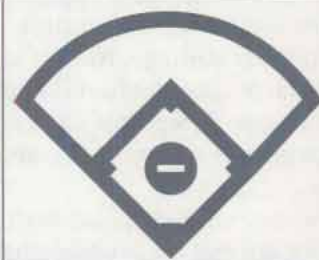


**WATCH FOR
LOW-FLYING CRAFT**



**YOUR TIME
IS UP, PUNY
HUMAN!**

**IF YOU BUILD IT,
WE WILL
COME**



GIVE US YOUR WHEAT!



**WE WILL DROP THE
BIG ONE! -OR-
GIVE US THE BIGGEST
OAK TREE YOU HAVE!**

(varies by location)





Renowned Scientist Claims Atlanteans Made Crop Circles!

By KAREN S. BOOMGARDEN

Never mind those quacks who claim they're the ones flattening fields of corn (what we call wheat) in England. The real culprits are time-traveling Atlanteans, exercising their love of patterns and practical jokes!

Professor Aloysius X. Axelrod of the Centre for Responsible Occult Problem Solving (CROPS) ran his hypothesis up the metaphorical flagpole at the recent oddity investigators' trade show in Felsingham. Based on ancient writings ostensibly from an Atlantean library, Al's claim points to time-travelers who are just getting their kicks out of making pretty patterns in farmers' fields and then watching the hubbub they've caused.

"This entry in a journal shows diagrams of flight patterns that would result in some of these shapes found in Wiltshire. We know that Atlanteans had a highly-evolved technological

base, much higher than our own; but a technologically superior society doesn't preclude the existence of practical jokers!" The prof then displayed a diagram of a "crystal mechanism," the very gizmo the prof purports to be the instrument of destruction responsible for the designs in fields across Wiltshire.

"One of my esteemed colleagues has put forth the 'plasma vortex' hypothesis, wherein a column of extremely fast-spinning air forces the corn down and effectively acts like a laser, but without the heat, resulting in the clean edges on the shapes," explained Prof. Axelrod. "My research, conducted concurrently and separately, led me to a similar conclusion; but mine involved crystal power, not forced air." He chuckled, "As if someone's heating system could be responsible for this!"

Further proof, the prof insists, is found in the pages of another purported

Atlantean text. "See these symbols? We don't know what they mean—perhaps they're mathematical or alchemical—but the shapes are strikingly similar to some of the more complicated crop 'circles,' the ones that combine circles with other geometric forms and lines."

Why is Wiltshire a favorite spot for these merry pranksters? "I think it's the proximity to Stonehenge, personally. I mean, for all we know they helped build that, too; maybe they just like the area for its natural beauty. But honestly, I do think that Stonehenge has something to do with their attraction."

And how was Professor Axelrod's hypothesis received by the attendees? "There wasn't a great deal of interest, but that doesn't daunt me in the least," he admitted. "It's the time traveling part they're having trouble with. Once I can explain that, I think I'm home free."





How the %*\$& Do You Know That?

Well, you got the job! In fact Eddie the editor wastes no time at pointing you to a desk. "That one's yours," he barks. "Now get going and get me some stories!"

Get A Degree Without Going to College

Skills are the heart of every AMAZING ENGINE game, and **TABLOID!** is no exception. You never know when your character may have to fix the office coffee maker or analyze those burn marks in the cornfield. Without the right skills, your character is going to be up the creek without a kayak, much less a paddle.

The System Guide of this book explained how skills are organized and used, and there is really not much to add to the rules for skills. This section lists the skills your character can have and explains each as much as is necessary for play. Some skills may have additional rules covering their use. When needed, these are explained in the skill description.

Enhancements.

Many of the skills in the **TABLOID!** list are enhancements of some broader field of knowledge. In this game, enhancements give a +10 to the character's ability score when the enhancement applies. The trick is knowing when it applies.

Maybe you've noticed that the same skill is listed as an enhancement under more than one heading—JFK Assassination Conspiracies, for example. In each case, the bonus only applies when the enhancement relates to the broader skill.

For example, your character is well-read on the *Trilateralist Commission* skill. Later on, you add the *JFK Assassination Conspiracies* enhancement. The +10 bonus only applies to how the Trilateralist Commission may have been involved in JFK's death. Another player might have a character choose *THE CONSPIRACY* and *JFK Assassination Conspiracies*. That character's bonus only applies to questions about how *THE CONSPIRACY* did JFK in. Your character's enhance-

ment couldn't help your friend's, and your friend's couldn't help yours. Each character has the same data, but they don't agree on who was responsible.

In a few cases, an enhancement is listed elsewhere as its own skill. If you choose it this way, your character doesn't get the +10 bonus, but isn't limited to just one explanation. Choose the skill *JFK Assassination Conspiracies* and your character has studied them all, not just how the Trilateralist Commission or *THE CONSPIRACY* was involved.

Hubby Drives Wife Mad When He Won't Shut Up

Skills break down into two big categories—those that let your character do something and those that let him or her just know things. The first have rules about what your character can do and how to do it. For convenience, these are called useful skills.

The latter are called knowledge skills and are pretty useless in real life. Knowledge skills let your character know lots of facts about something, but don't actually allow a character to build, fix, shoot, or operate something. If your character has *Alien Abduction*, a knowledge skill, he or she may know everything there is to know about UFO kidnappings—dates, places, names, and circumstances—but what good that knowledge does is a role-playing issue. Of course, for a tabloid reporter, knowing such facts can mean all the difference in filing a great story.

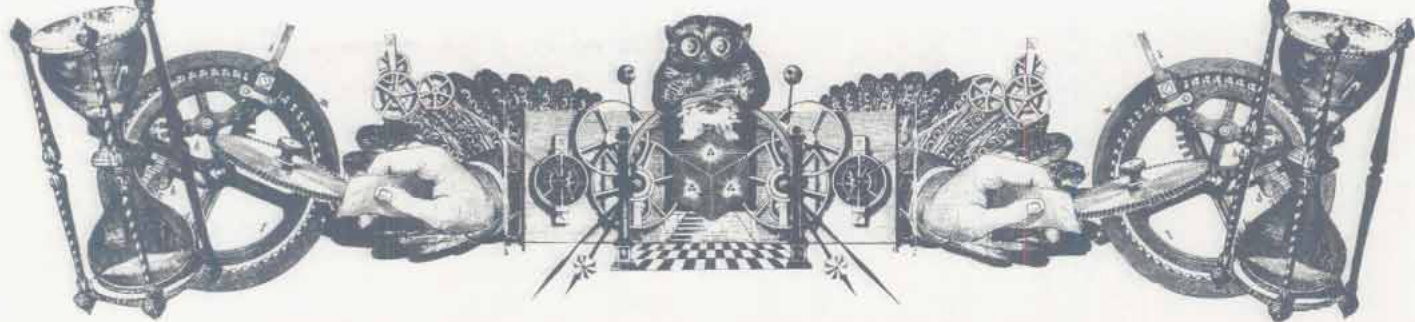
Tot Plays Mozart at Birth!

The skill list doesn't cover everything your character knows, only the things especially useful in the **TABLOID!** universe. Of course, your character knows a lot of other things. All characters can:

- Drive a car.
- Swim.
- Write an article.
- Type.

We don't want to make things *too* difficult for your character!





Hitler's Brain-Powered Death Machine

By JEFF GRUBB

BRAZIL—Frightened loggers working deep in the Brazilian rain forest awoke to a terrifying discovery last month as their camp was leveled by a juggernaut of death, the most bizarre chapter in the Fuehrer's continued plans of world domination.

"It was bloody horrible!" said an Australian engineer on the scene, "It was like something out of WWII—a huge tank mounted with big guns and a flame-thrower. It barreled into the camp like lightning, everything blazing at once! The flame-thrower destroyed our supplies, and the guns drove the workers off. A few of my mates were caught in their bunks when the tank rolled over their tents—poor sods."

The camp was destroyed in minutes and the mystery tank, moving with surprising speed and agility, disappeared as quickly as it came. The loggers suspected some form of ecological or national terrorist group, but the attack remained a mystery until recently.

A headless body in a German officer's uniform was recently fished out of the nearby Rio das Mortes river, and

papers on that body tell a horrific tale of insane science and the long-term plans of Adolf Hitler, still alive after all these years.

The papers, now under investigation by a joint committee of American, British, and Israeli intelligence agencies, indicate that Hitler's body failed him in 1974, following a bitter internal power struggle among the surviving Nazis with rival Martin Bormann which left the head Nazi's former lackey dead. Using Nazi super-science developed since the last years of the war, Der Fuehrer's brain was removed and transplanted into a mechanical device. This early device was little more than a complicated life support system which occupied half a room, and while allowing Der Fuehrer to communicate with his minions, denied him true mobility.

That has changed with the development of a mobile robot-tank body which turns the former German leader into a living Panzer tank. The framework of this body was built on the old German super-tank known as the Oliphant, which was developed during

the war but never put into production. Hitler's robot brain was implanted in the heavy tank, turning him into a living weapon. It is believed that the loggers were working too close to a secret Nazi training facility, and Der Fuehrer-panzer was dispatched to destroy them.

"The unification of man and machine is in keeping with Hitler's own personal views and ambitions," says Prof. Andrew Volks of the German University of Buenos Aires, "Hitler always considered himself to be the ultimate leader of his troops, and his poor performance in the First World War (when he rose only to the lowly rank of Corporal) always haunted him. He sees himself as a shining knight at the head of an Aryan army. With such a weapon grafted to his brain, he has the opportunity to be that armored knight. I shudder to think of the horrifying consequences."

A joint alliance of intelligence teams is currently attempting to determine the whereabouts and abilities of the robotic Hitler-tank and dispatch a team of agents to destroy this threat to democracy.



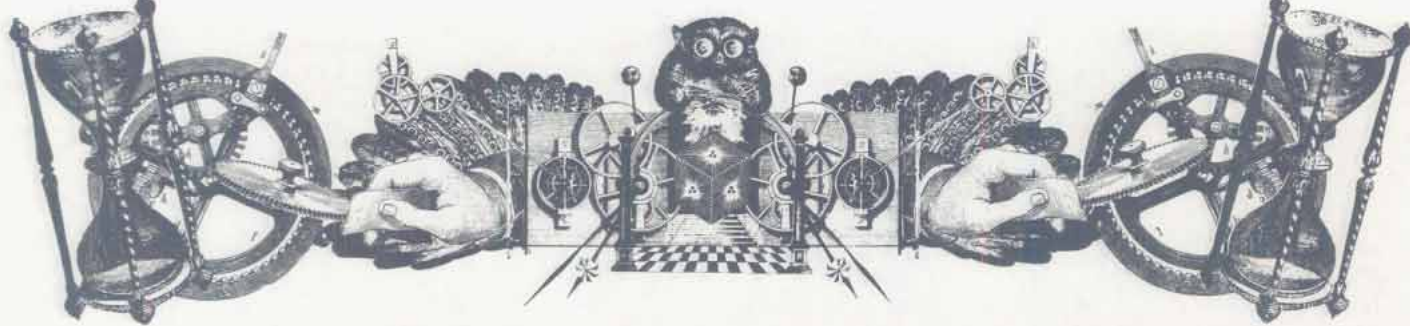


Table 5: Skill Pools

Academy of Data-Entry Specialists

Computer (Lea)
Hacking*
Networking*
Fix Electrical Things (Int)
Phone Phreaking (Lea)

Blue Book Tech

Aliens (Lea)
Alien Abduction*
Ancient Astronauts*
Astronomy (Lea)
Cattle Mutilations (Lea)
Men in Black*
Crop Circles (Lea)
Face on Mars (Int)
UFO Groups (Lea)

CIA University of the Air

Army Mind Control (Wil)
Bribery (Psy)
Disguise (Cha)
Impersonate (Cha)
Electronic Eavesdropping (Lea)
Foreign Language (Lea)
Lock Picking (Ref)
Observation (Psy)
Lip Reading (Lea)
Photography (Int)
Smuggle (Int)

Columbia School of Journalism

Current Events (Lea)
Journalism (Int)
Badgering (Pos)
Law (Lea)
Libel (Lea)
Deal with Attorneys (Pos)
Research (Lea)
Source (Cha)
Shorthand (Ref)
Smug Liberalism (Pos)
Secular Humanism*

Conservatory of Secrets Humanity Was Not Meant to Know

Hauntings (Int)
Vampires*
Mass Murderers (Lea)
Predictions (Psy)
Nostrodamus*
Spiritualism (Psy)
Possession/Exorcism (Wil)
Stigmata*
Spontaneous Human Combustion (Lea)
Vanishings (Lea)
Alien Abduction*
Supernatural Disappearances*
Voodoo (Psy)
Curses (Wil)
Mummies*
Zombies*

Forbert School of Celebrity Nude Photography

Celebrity Trivia (Lea)
Photography (Int)
Video Camera (Int)
Paparazzi*
Darkroom (Lea)
Photo Retouching*

G*****d Tour Guide Training Program

E***s P*****y: Living, Dead,
Returned (Lea)
Dead Rock Stars*
Dead Movie Stars*
Other Dead People*

Institute of the Secret Truth

Army Mind Control (Wil)
THE CONSPIRACY (Int)
Army Mind Control*
Bermuda Triangle*
Freemasons*
JFK Assassination Conspiracies*
Media Manipulation (Psy)
Discordians (Int)
Freemasons (Lea)
Illuminati (Lea)
Freemasons*
JFK Assassination Conspiracies*
Media Manipulation (Psy)
Trilateralist Commission*
JFK Assassination Conspiracies (Lea)
Media Manipulation (Psy)
Moongate (Lea)
Media Manipulation (Psy)
Trilateralist Commission (Lea)
Freemasons*
JFK Assassination Conspiracies*
Media Manipulation (Psy)
Smug Liberalism (Pos)
Media Manipulation (Psy)
Secular Humanism*
RPG Mind Control (Wil)





Krasnoyorsk Technical School Exchange Program

Mechanics (Int)
Auto Repair (Int)
Fix Coffee Machine*
Gadget (Int)
Use Fax Machine*
Way with Machines (Psy)
Weird Science (Lea)
Alchemy (Psy)
Clones*
Medical Miracles*
Perpetual Motion*
UFO Tech*

Kult College

Neo-Paganism (Int)
New-Age Messiahs*
Old-Fashioned Messiahs (Lea)
S***nic Lore (Int)
Voodoo (Psy)
UFO Groups (Lea)

Lawson's Absolute Center of the Universe School

Flat Earth (Int)
Hollow Earth (Int)
Inner Earth (Int)
Power Sites (Psy)
Russia (Int)
Tunguska*
The Rest of Siberia*

Louie di Chang's Dojo and Shooting Range

First Aid (Int)
Pistol (Ref)
Rifle (Ref)
Self-Defense (Fit)
Tri-Ambidextrous (Ref)

San Diego Cryptozoological Society

Dinosaurs (Lea)
Nessie*
Missing Link (Lea)
Abominable Snowman*
Bigfoot*
Frozen Cavemen*
Mothmen (Lea)
Nessie (Lea)
Other Lake/Sea Monsters*

School of Hard Knocks

Boozing (Fit)
Driving (Ref)
Bush Pilot (Lea)
Dumpster Diving (Int)
Fast Talk (Cha)
Poker Face (Wil)
Hide (Int)
Sneak (Ref)
Look Good (Cha)
Trivia (Lea)

Sister Sara's 24-Hour Psychic Hotline and Mind Home Study Institute

Acupuncture (Lea)
Ethereic Surgery (Psy)
Astrology (Int)
Channeling (Psy)
Find Native Guide (Psy)
Crystals (Int)
Handwriting Analysis (Int)
Hypnotism (Wil)
Firewalking (Wil)
Psychic Awareness (Psy)
Hunch (Psy)
Dumb Luck (Psy)
Survival Instinct (Wil)
ESP (Psy)

Staggering Merwin's School of Debunking

Detect Fraud (Lea)
Hoaxes (Lea)
Sleight of Hand (Ref)

World Revisionist Library

Atlantis (Lea)
Ancient Astronauts*
Mu*
Lemuria*
Creationism (Int)
Hitler (Lea)
Nazis*
JFK (Int)
JFK Assassination Conspiracies
(Lea)
Lost Tribes (Int)





Complete Skill Descriptions All in One Place!

All the skills listed in the schools on Table 5: Skill Pools are described in this section. Some skill descriptions present new rules, while others are simple explanations of what the skill is. Of course, some of these skills are not exactly obvious—like what the heck is THE CONSPIRACY anyway? Is it really a good idea to know?

Enhancements for skills are explained within the skill's main description, especially for all the conspiracy related items. The same enhancement may be described several times, again, especially for the conspiracy related items. After all, people can talk about the same thing and still not be talking about the same thing.

Acupuncture (Lea). In case you chose this skill and didn't know what it was, acupuncture is the ancient Asian art of sticking needles into people to kill the pain, a perfectly logical approach to the problem. It might also stop smoking, reduce appetite, and cure allergies—or it might not. Your character probably knows a lot more about acupuncture than you do. If fact, your character can even do it to others by making a successful skill check. If the check succeeds, the needles can be used to restore 1d6 points of Stamina damage, induce restful sleep, or help another character overcome mental attacks (like pain) by adding 10 points to the patient's resistance. Of course, there is the possibility that your character will get it wrong. This causes no damage but is not much fun to think about.

Alchemy (Psy). Alchemy is the ancient art that predated chemistry. Nobody then or now really knew what it was all about, but everybody who learns it tries to change lead into gold. Your character can't do that, but can take a shot at brewing strange potions—poisons, antidotes, and really nifty mixed drinks. If the check is successful, your character gets the desired effect. Otherwise, the result tends to be about the opposite. Mixed drinks taste hideous, poisons are

harmless, and antidotes do more harm than good. Of course, your Editor is going to roll that ability check for you. Your character doesn't know success from failure until it's too late.

Aliens (Lea). Aliens—they're everywhere! We're not talking cab drivers with strange accents here, either. We're talking real aliens, the UFO type. Lots of folks meet them every day. Really, they do.

Your character's taken up the study of aliens and can spout all sorts of facts about them (on a successful ability check), facts like:

- The government's been hiding a UFO crash at Roswell, Arizona.
- Project Blue Book was actually a scheme by the government to locate and monitor UFO contacts.
- Most aliens tend to be short and bald, with great big eyes and silvery skin. Of course, the last is probably just their space suits.

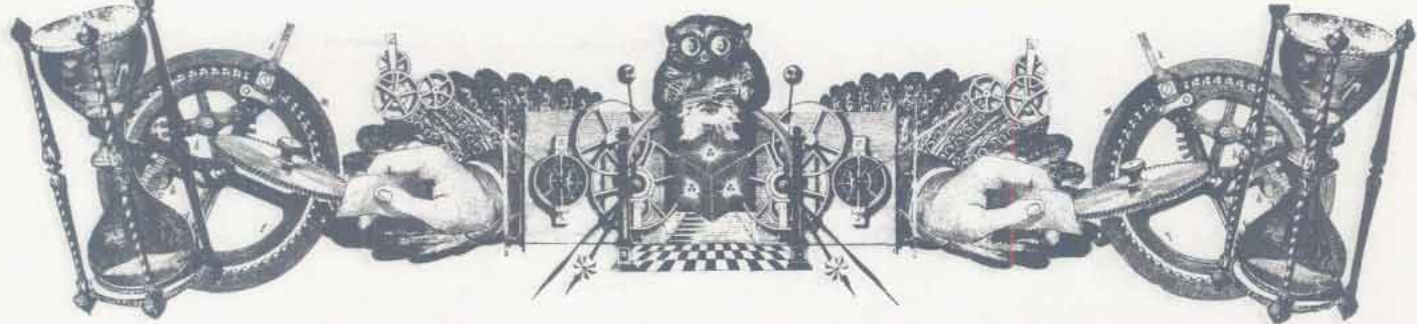
With this skill, your character can compare eyewitness reports and data to known UFO sightings, possibly weeding out obvious hoaxes. Your character can also make interesting conversation at parties.

ALIEN ABDUCTION*. This enhancement clues your character in on the bizarre, world-wide pattern of humans kidnapped by UFOs. Of course, the aliens are so efficient that most people have the abduction wiped from their mind. Memories come back in dreams and through hypnosis. Most have memories of alien examinations and even operations where something was implanted into their brains. All are, of course, far from reliable witnesses, and their testimony is covered up or ignored by others.

ANCIENT ASTRONAUTS*. Your character has delved into historical records to find all the instances of aliens visiting ancient cultures. This includes things like the Mayan carvings of ancient spaceships, that the Nazca lines are actually landing fields, and that the pyramids were energy transmitters built by alien visitors. Your character has read every book Von Daniken wrote.

Army Mind Control (Wil). For those that didn't know, the Army conducted secret mind control tests in the '50s and '60s. Most of these involved drugs like LSD





and brain-washing techniques. The military denies all of it, but inside sources say the program was abandoned because it didn't work very well anyway.

One advantage of all this knowledge is that your character gains a +10 bonus to resist mental attacks like hypnotism because he or she knows what they're up to.

Astrology (Int). Your character can cast horoscopes and has a legitimate reason to ask "What's your sign?" The horoscopes are, of course, perfectly accurate.

Astronomy (Lea). Your character remembered what was taught in science class and can still identify constellations and know when somebody is spouting bunk about outer space. Still, it requires an ability check to see if your character's memory is right.

Atlantis (Lea). Bless an obsessive mind, but your character's gone and read everything there is about Atlantis. He or she knows about Thera (the "historical" Atlantis), the "real" Atlantis out in the Atlantic (why do you think they named it that?), how the Flood was caused by the sinking of Atlantis, and several other Atlanti. He or she knows about Atlantean super-science and wants to know more about the degenerate practices that led to their downfall.

ANCIENT ASTRONAUTS*. Your character's version of ancient astronauts all involve Atlantis, which conveniently sank without a trace. That notwithstanding, the Atlanteans were really a race of beautiful aliens who settled Egypt, Africa, Polynesia, and/or the Americas (take your pick). The men might have been really ugly and cruel, but the women were beautiful at any rate.

Mu*. What's Atlantis without its sister sunken continent Mu? It supposedly sank in the Pacific when the great caverns beneath it collapsed. Your character can argue endlessly with other sunken-worlders about which came first, Atlantis or Mu, and who had telepathic powers, Mu-ites or Lemurians.

LEMURIA*. Of course, it stands to reason that since the oceans are so big, there's plenty of room for another sunken continent—this one's called Lemuria. There is not much known about this place, except that it was responsible for lemurs being all over the globe. Your character knows about Lemuria, the telepathic pow-

ers of its people, and the fact that they're still around today—mentally communicating with ordinary folks!

Auto Repair (Int). Your character can fix cars with tools and a successful skill check. If the reporter career doesn't pan out, the character could always get a job in a garage.

Badgering (Pos). The real secret to good reporting is to get people to say what they don't want to. Badgering eyewitnesses until they screw up and blurt out a juicy quote is a good way to do this. Your character has to make an ability check to try to intimidate, cow, and otherwise browbeat eyewitnesses, suspects, and "unnamed sources" into talking.

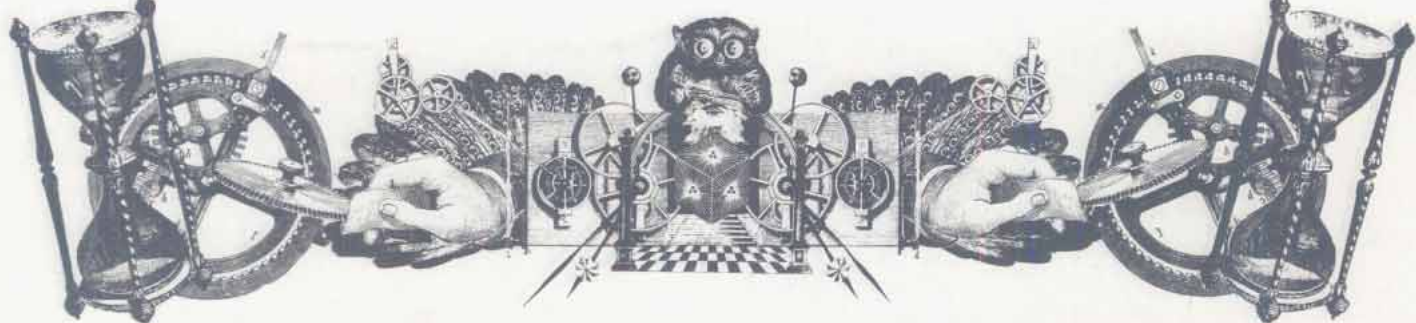
To see if Badgering succeeds, first try to do it without rolling any dice. If you can fluster the Editor with a constant barrage of questions and comments, then you've "badgered" the witness. The Editor has to give you a quote or tip at that point. (Editors—be fair and admit when you've been had!) If you have to roll dice, roll against your character's Position. If the other guy has a greater Position, the chance of success is halved—the target's not likely to be buffaloed by your character. If your character's got some good dirt to use as a threat, don't use Badgering at all. At that stage you're into the fine line of blackmail. Role play the encounter.

If the check succeeds, your target blurts out something that will at least make a good quote if not provide some real info for the story. Otherwise, he or she realizes what your character is up to and shuts up like a clam.

Boozing (Fit). Yes, the designer of this game knows this is not a socially acceptable talent, but this is supposed to be a silly game, so relax. This is just what it sounds like. After years of practice, your character has learned to drink like a fish. In any situation where the Editor would rule a normal character drunk, you can make a check against Fitness to see if your character can avoid any adverse affects. Boozing is good for loosening up hostile sources and drinking your enemies under the table.

Bribery (Psy). Yes, the designer knows that this, too, is one of those morally thin kinds of skills. It's only a game, so quit bothering him about it.





When your character passes a Psyche skill check, this skill allows an accurate estimate as to whether an NPC is bribable and, if so, what a proper bribe would be. It is *not* an automatic, roll-the-dice-to-see-if-I-bribe-the-guy skill. The player still has to role-play that part.

There are some important things to remember about bribery. First off, not everybody is bribable. In fact, most folks like to think of themselves as upstanding citizens. Second, not all bribes involve money. It could be the promise of a good review, their picture in the paper, or something else. Use your imagination. Third, blackmail is not bribery. Finally, the skill only allows an estimate—the player still has to figure out just what's too much or too little.

So how is the Editor supposed to know if an NPC can be bribed? And how much will it take? Suppose the player characters want to get the real dope on what the Air Force is hiding about those UFO sightings. They pigeonhole an Air Force lieutenant who flies in and out of the local base and offer some dough for the real story.

You're the Editor—put yourself in the place of this lieutenant. You've got a wife and kid and payments on a house and car you can't afford for which some extra cash would really help out, but you're also on the jet jock fast track to a rising career in the service, and if anybody higher up ever finds out, they'll drop you without a parachute, even though you know they're all raking in big bucks from defense contractors, and you really hate their guts for this—so what's it all worth to you? As much as the player characters are offering?

That's how you do it.

Bush Pilot (Lea). Your character can fly a plane—not a big plane or a jet, but a little, single-engine puddle-jumper. Most of the time, this is easy, but you have to make a Learning check when your character tries extreme things like landing on the interstate or in some farmer's pasture. Checks also need be made when other things get extreme with your character—like when the UFOs want to play chicken.

Cattle Mutilations (Lea). There are things humanity was not meant to know, and the truth about cattle

mutilations is one of them. Naturally, your character has tried to learn everything about them. Basic facts are easy, so no skill check is required. Recalling precise trivia about any specific incidence of cattle mutilation requires a Learning check.

This skill does have some usefulness beyond the trivial, too. Your character knows enough to expertly study any mutilation site with the skills of a badly-trained forensic pathologist. He or she can distinguish animal attacks, natural decay, and badly-done hoaxes from the honest-to-God, real thing—organic samples taken by alien visitors from outer space.

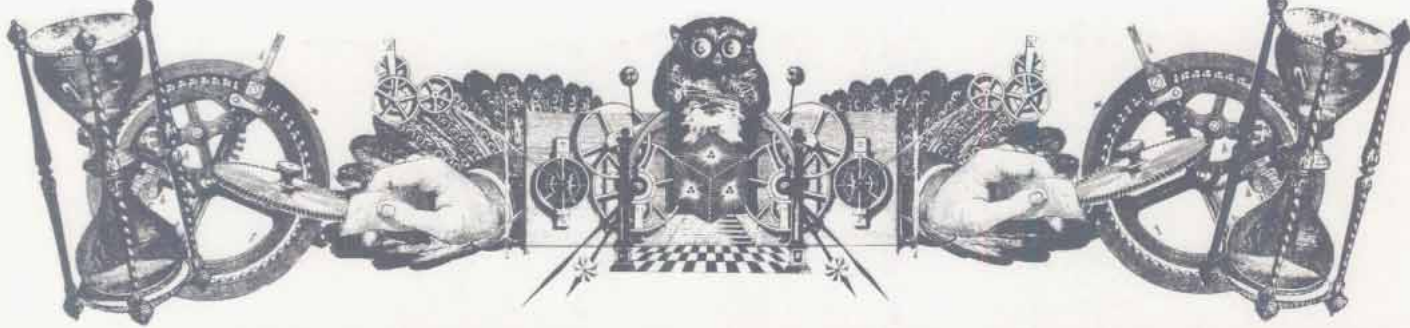
MEN IN BLACK*. For those really in the know, who's doing those cattle mutilations is no mystery—it's the Men in Black. Of course, nobody's sure just who or what the Men in Black are. Are the Men in Black aliens from space, studying us? Are they secret operatives of the FBI hiding all evidence of contact—or CIA agents doing the same thing? There's lots of choices, and rest assured that your character knows them all. When it comes to Men in Black, your character's a pro.

Celebrity Trivia (Lea). This skill should be obvious from its name. Your character knows loads of useless information about the stars of stage, screen, and real life. Where was E***s when he died? Who is Michelle P— dating these days? Are her breasts real or fake? It's all hopelessly useless information, but fortunately tabloid readers are hooked on the stuff. Celebrity trivia provides filler and maybe even story hooks for good articles.

Channeling (Psy). Channeling is a fancy modern-day term for good, old-fashioned spiritualism. The channelers send themselves into a trance and, bingo, pretty soon they're taken over by a spirit who speaks through them. (In the old days, channelers were called mediums, and the spirits were the dearly departed. Today, channelers are psychic advisors and the spirits are more likely to be Hutuum-Ra, Atlantean warlord, or Tesh, an enlightened being from the planet Za of Betelguese.) Through their spirit guides, channelers dispense all sorts of good advice and collect donations. (It's not clear what a spirit does with all this earthly money.)







Channeling skill has several uses. First off, your character just knows a lot of the lore and history of channeling. Your character knows famous channelers, famous spirit guides, and famous incidents of channeling. Second, the skill gives your character a chance to expose the dark side of the whole profession—frauds! Nobody would ever fake contact with a spirit guide, but if they did, your character can detect such frauds with a successful skill check. Of course, first your character has to be suspicious and get a chance to poke around a little.

Finally, your character can attempt to channel his or her very own spirit guide! The chance of success is 25% of your normal skill ability. If you succeed, it's useful for getting advice, hints, tips, and whatever else the Editor is willing to give away. Be warned, though, that spirit guides can be notoriously uncooperative.

Editors take note! *Spirit guides are unique personalities and always stick to the same channeler. The first time a character contacts a spirit guide, take a little time to create an appropriate personality. Remember that, while channeling, player characters are not in control! They've let themselves be possessed, and so it's not their place to say that the summoned spirit of the warrior-queen Leshata won't try to hunt down and barbecue the family dog!*

Channeling is exhausting. Merely trying (whether the roll succeeds or fails) costs 1d10 Stamina points. Successful contact costs another 1d4 Stamina points per minute. If the channeler passes out, contact is broken.

Computer (Lea). Your character knows something about computers. Basic computer skills are automatically successful—turning them on, typing, and using everyday programs. Your character can use basic on-line services and can tell a modem from a hard drive. More complicated procedures, like finding hidden files, recovering lost data, and writing simple programs, require a skill check against Learning. Even more complicated stuff, like Internet surfing, tele-crashing, and system hacking also requires a skill check, but at one quarter of your character's normal chance of success.

HACKING*. This skill lets your character hack—try to infiltrate other people's computer systems—with a normal chance of success on the skill check. This is very useful to technologically advanced reporters. Imagine cracking into the Air Force's secret Blue Book files or those hidden records of what NASA has really been doing! Of course, there's more mundane things, too—fixing a soft bank account or messing up a competitor's stories. Gee, it would just be a shame if that rival tabloid “accidentally” telecommed to their printer a reprint of the complete *Congressional Record* instead of the latest love affair of M*****! J*****'n's chimp.

This is not as easy as it seems. Some places, like the Pentagon, don't want your character nosing around. There may be special modifiers that make it harder to crack into such computers. Worse yet, there may be ways for them to track down hackers and kill them. Anytime a character tries hacking into a system, the Editor should make the check. If the die roll is 91–00, not only does the attempt fail, but the character goofed up and left evidence of the try. Since the loophole is supposedly fixed, all future tries suffer a –5 per goof penalty. With really important systems (say for example, the NSA), they also know where your character was calling from. This could be a bad thing.

NETWORKING*. This computer sub-skill outfits your character with all the knowledge needed to prowl through the wire-world. All it takes is a successful skill check to remember the phone number of that weird BBS, figure out how to send that e-mail under an assumed name, track down the Internet address of that strange professor, or type those little symbols to make those funny on-line smileys like Ronald Reagan's—7:|.

CONSPIRACY, THE (Int). Everybody loves a conspiracy, but nobody more so than THE CONSPIRACY. What's THE CONSPIRACY? Never heard of it? That just goes to show how effective they are.

THE CONSPIRACY is a global plot of the world's secret elite to hide from all the rest of us the ways that they manipulate everything to their own ends. They control governments, banks, media, armies, space programs, and scientific research, all to shape history





to their own ends. Nobody who is not part of THE CONSPIRACY knows exactly what the aims of THE CONSPIRACY are. Some say it's power and wealth, others believe the leaders of THE CONSPIRACY are keeping humanity from reaching its potential of full enlightenment. It may be that the leaders are actually aliens from another world, cultivating humans as a slave population. It may be the leaders just don't want to share the truth about the secrets they know.

One of the neat things about THE CONSPIRACY is that it's impossible to disprove that they exist. They control *everything*, therefore any proof about them is quickly laughed down by their lackeys in the press. Their manipulation of public opinion ensures that the only people who know the truth are branded as crackpots, lunatics, or—gasp—tabloid reporters.

THE CONSPIRACY skill lets your character in on the secret plot against the rest of the world. By knowing, your character becomes a potential enemy of THE CONSPIRACY, so it's wise not to say too much. On a successful skill check, your character can spot the hidden hand of THE CONSPIRACY's agents in all sorts of world events and strange phenomena. This is certainly useful for coming up with a story hook, although writing it could get your character killed!

ARMY MIND CONTROL*. Your character knows that all those Army brain-washing experiments in the 1950s were really the work of THE CONSPIRACY perfecting its scientific methods to control the world's population. Also, those secret satellite launches are really part of their plan for an orbital mind control system, and tin foil just might be a good protection from thoughts beamed into one's brain.

Because of all this accurate knowledge, your character gains a +10 to resist all attempts at mental control by others. Of course, anybody who tries this on your character is probably part of THE CONSPIRACY. **BERMUDA TRIANGLE***. Sometimes even THE CONSPIRACY can't cover everything up, and the Bermuda Triangle is one of those things. There are just too many disappearing ships and planes for their media drones to explain away. Sure, they can say it's natural phenomena, but your character knows it's really their secret undersea base.

When it comes to the Bermuda Triangle, your character can recall just about any fact on a successful skill check—and then tie it in to the workings of THE CONSPIRACY.

FREEMASONS*. The group is one of the semi-secret branches of THE CONSPIRACY. In fact, THE CONSPIRACY is the super-secret elite of the Freemasons. The Freemasons, with their strange powers, have been around for centuries and are THE CONSPIRACY's outer shell. Sure, they claim to be a fraternal organization, but your character knows the truth. On a skill check, your character can drag up almost any interesting bit of Freemasonry lore from the depths of memory.

JFK ASSASSINATION CONSPIRACIES*. Oswald was a stooge for THE CONSPIRACY, and he wasn't the real gunman anyway. THE CONSPIRACY wanted JFK out of the way. Why? Because he was a threat. He was about to propose legislation that would threaten their world-wide activities. What activities were those? Your character is still working on that part. Your character knows all the theories about the assassination and how they relate to THE CONSPIRACY. A skill check is needed to remember truly obscure information.

Creationism (Int). Creationism says that if evolution can be a scientific theory, then the biblical story of creation can be, too. Your character has studied the issue and can recognize facts and issues relating to creationism on a successful skill check. He or she can explain the fallacy of the fossil record, reveal the errors in the physics of carbon 14 dating, and calculate the scripturally accurate age of the universe. Whether your character believes or disbelieves it is up to you.

Crop Circles (Lea). Aliens land in farm fields all the time. They do, really. Those wheat fields are so big and flat, they make perfect landing sites for passing UFOs! Not only that, but after they land, the aliens get out and flatten the wheat into large patterns known as crop circles.

Your character knows all about the lore and evidence of crop circles, those areas of crushed grain found in fields. More importantly, your character can





The Monster LIVES!

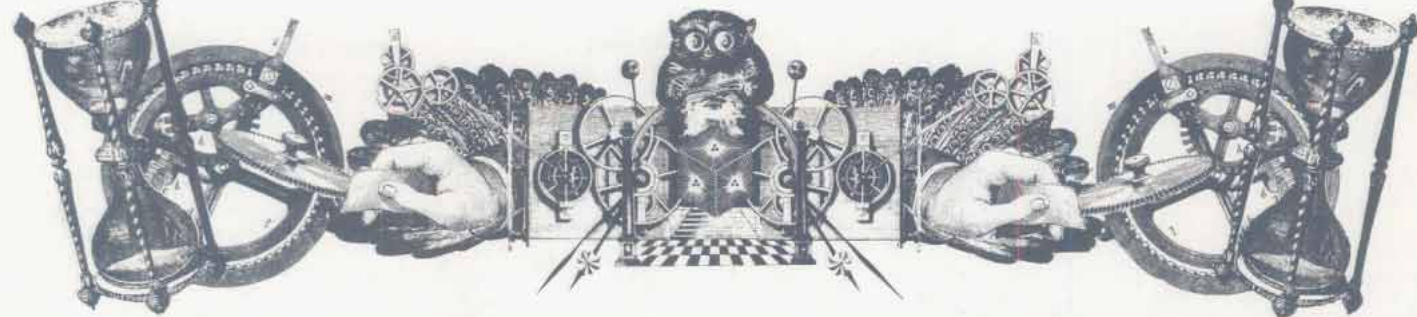
**Frankenstein's Creation
Discovered at North
Pole; Escapes Vowing
Vengeance Against
Hapless Humanity**

By ROGER E. MOORE

OSLO—A Russian icebreaker last month discovered evidence that Frankenstein's Monster, long thought the creation of English novelist Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, actually exists and is at large in the world today—a multiple murderer determined to destroy humankind!

The icebreaker found the remains of a Norwegian ship, locked in the polar ice since 1921, with the bodies of five crewmen aboard. Investigation of the





ship's log revealed that most of the crew had fled the vessel after thawing out a "enormous man" they had dug out of the ice. The description of the man closely matches that of the monster, as related by Mary Shelley in her novel, *Frankenstein*. The Norwegian ship's crew apparently recognized this as well, though they first thought they had found one of the ice-dwelling giants spoken of in old Norse mythology.

The eight-foot-tall, frozen man was described as "hideous beyond nightmares," its limbs once obviously stitched together but healed over. It lay next to the remains of a dog sled and some unidentified supplies. The "man" was pronounced dead by the ship's doctor, but appears to have been revived by two sailors who used the ship's electrical generators to bring the beast to life. Why they did so is not known, though it may have been as a prank or from curiosity. The dead crewmen found aboard the vessel had been killed by blows from a blunt object. No trace of the monster or eight missing crewmen were found. The Norwegian vessel, crushed by the ice, was lost when the ice around it broke apart shortly after the arrival of the icebreaker.

Speaking under condition of anonymity, a Russian seaman from the icebreaker talked with a vacationing reporter in St. Petersburg and revealed the whole story. The reporter, who was investigating UFO reports from Russia and Ukraine, said the sailor was greatly shaken by his experience. "We knew about Frankenstein from the movies," said the sailor, mistakenly calling the creature by the name of its creator—a

common error. "We had no idea it was real. The log said that the monster cried that it would destroy all men everywhere. It could have escaped south across the ice until it reached the northern coast of Russia or Scandinavia. Where it went from there, no one knows. I pray that it fell through the ice and drowned."

The Russian government has said nothing about the find, and no other details from the Norwegian logbook have been revealed. The Norwegian government says it has no information about a ship lost in Arctic waters since 1921, though it states that many ships have been lost there over the years because of the dangers of the ice, including floating icebergs.

How Mary Shelley originally came by the information on the monster's existence is not clear. The original novel, first published in 1818, is written as if from the papers of Robert Walton, an Arctic explorer in the eighteenth century. According to the book, Walton met Dr. Victor Frankenstein, who was rescued while pursuing the monster toward the North Pole. Dr. Frankenstein died of exposure, while the monster escaped.

H. Lloyd Arbuthnot, editor of the newsletter *Tales of the Godless Heathens Monthly*, has collected some unusual legends circulating among inhabitants of Siberia before World War II. Those who live in this frozen land say that an ugly "giant" passed through some villages, killing livestock for food as it went on south. Details on this event were lost during Stalin's reign, and their connection to the escape of the monster can only be supposed.

We contacted a professor of English literature from Weehauken Technical Academy, New Jersey, who asked to remain anonymous. "If this is truly Shelley's monster," he said, "then a terrible force has been unleashed on the world. We know of Frankenstein's monster only from Boris Karloff movies, but the original monster was a literate genius and spoke many languages fluently. Its face was so horrible that men would flee from it in terror, and it was tremendously powerful. It could do anything that it set out to do. And I'm afraid that the one thing it certainly meant to do, according to Mary Shelley, was to destroy humanity for giving it life and then trying to destroy it. You can't help but pity the thing, even though you know that it must now be completely evil.

"Worse, this case opens up the possibility that some of the other 'monster tales' we've all known are actually true. Vampires, werewolves, and worse might actually exist, heaven forbid. I wouldn't like to meet up with the real Count Dracula! And if the means to create Frankenstein's monster were real, then alchemy must be real as well, only poorly explored. Maybe science took a turn at some point and missed exploring a whole world of strange laws—a world of magic, dare I say."

The professor laughed nervously then and said, "You know, this sounds terrible to say, but I certainly hope there are no living relatives of Doctor Frankenstein around today. If this monster is indeed alive, the public will be certain to have any Frankensteins burned at the stake—assuming, of course, that the monster does not catch those relatives first. I wish them luck."





examine suspicious cereal stompings and pronounce the cause. The usual suspects are natural phenomena (like tornadoes and dust devils), animals, hoaxes, and, of course, UFOs. Furthermore, the character can tell just ordinary landing marks from more elaborate symbolic messages that the aliens leave behind, like "We want your wheat." All it requires to do these things is a successful skill check.

Crystals (Int). Your character knows that crystals are the harmonic power of the universe. Your character knows all the secrets of crystal power that are currently in vogue—without even making a skill check! Furthermore, your character can use crystals in many ways by passing a skill check, including sharpening razor blades, restoring harmonic balance, re-energizing people (regaining 1 Stamina point once per day), and transmitting crystal "energy" through the ether. Too bad nobody has found a way to make it power your radio.

Current Events (Lea). Your character, perhaps wanting to someday be a *real* reporter, keeps close tabs on world events. Anytime there is a need to remember just why the Tamils in Sri Lanka are at war with the government (or any other detail of world news), your character needs only make a successful Learning check to come up with the answer.

Curses (Wil). *No, this is not the art of swearing creatively—that's left to you, the player.* This skill is the dark and evil knowledge of hexes, the evil eye, and calling down bad luck on others. With a successful skill check, your character can spot those whose lives are clouded by a curse, identify a real curse from a harmless prank, and resist the attempts of others to curse your character.

If your skill check is equal to or less than half your character's Willpower, you know what must be done to break a given curse. Your character can even try to fashion a curse to affect another. Such curses can only be annoying, little things—itches, sneezes, hiccups, forgetfulness, and bad luck (–5 to all die rolls). Creating a curse is hard—the chance of success is only 1/10th of the character's Willpower check. If the check fails, the character cannot try to curse the same target again.

Darkroom (Lea). Your character is trained in photographic techniques for developing film and making prints. Anytime the character works in the darkroom, a skill check must be made to see that things develop properly.

PHOTO RETOUCHING*. With this enhancement, your character can not only develop pictures, but also doctor photos to create interesting juxtapositions and useful graphics for stories. Whenever your character tries doctoring a photo, a skill check must be made. If successful, the job's good enough for the paper, though it's not likely to fool anyone. If the roll is 10 or less, the doctoring job is convincing enough to fool all but skeptics and experts.

Characters eager to doctor photos of celebrities for the sake of a good story are advised to know Libel and Deal with Attorneys.

Deal with Attorneys (Pos). If your character is a good tabloid reporter, sooner or later it will pay to know this skill. Good tabloid reporters usually manage to offend someone and that someone usually responds with lawsuits. Characters who know Deal with Attorneys gain two benefits. First, in any dealings with lawyers, the character can spot a bluff, see through legal double talk, decipher a contract, or handle any of the tricks lawyers use. Each attempt requires a skill check. A successful check means the character has the wit or knowledge to match the lawyer.

The second thing the skill does is give the character a +10 bonus when resolving all things legal, such as contract disputes, libel suits, and contempt of court citations. Your character knows the way around the legal system well enough to have an advantage over the normal guy.

Detect Fraud (Lea). It's a sad fact, but not everyone who tries to get a story in the pages of the tabloids is on the up-and-up. Sure, Mrs. Waterlily-Faucet may claim she was possessed by the spirit of Ivan the Terrible when she stormed the Bronx school board's meeting while shouting "Death to the boyars!"—but how do you know she's not just a loon? In this modern world, it's gotten hard to tell the true channelers, UFO contactees, Bigfoot spotters, psychics, and secret cultists from the fakes.





That's where Detect Fraud comes in. With this skill, your character can spot those dissemblers and expose them for what they are: phonies trying to cash in on hard-working, fringe types. To use the skill, your character has to observe the suspect in action, doing their thing, or (in the case of UFO contactees) questioning them in detail. For each incident observed or hour spent questioning, your character gains a +1 on the chance of success. After observing as much as your character cares to, the Editor secretly makes a skill check (adding any modifier).

If the check succeeds, the Editor announces whether the act is genuine or fake. If the die roll fails, the answer is hazy. More investigation and facts are needed. If the die roll is 91-00, the character gets the wrong answer, something the player won't know. Real alien abductees are branded as fakes, and fakes are believed. A good reporter is careful—remember what happened to G*****o R****a when he opened that vault!

Dinosaurs (Lea). *Dinosaurs are good, dinosaurs are cool, dinosaurs make good copy.* Your character knows as much about dinosaurs as the average graduate student who studies the field of big dead lizards. This knowledge extends only to dinosaurs—your character's not interested in the measly fossil trilobites that came before or the craven little mammals that came afterward. It's dinosaurs or nothing!

Of course, this being the **TABLOID!** game, your character's knowledge also extends to dinosaurs in the modern world. They still exist—it's only a matter of time before somebody finds the proof. There's too many reports of things like Moloko-M'kembe in the Congo or the strange sea creature in the waters off British Columbia.

On a successful skill check, your character can recall dinosaur facts (for padding stories), identify dinosaur types on sight, separate real dinosaur tracks from elephant trails and moose prints, and recognize the mating call of the iguanadon if your character ever hears one.

Nessie*. Nessie is not just a big lake monster swimming in Loch Ness, Scotland. Nessie is a plesiosaur. All the Nessie facts prove it, and your character

knows them all. It's a simple skill check to recall details about any Nessie sighting, but nothing shakes the faith that the dear lake monster's nothing but a sea-going dinosaur.

Discordians (Int). Who are these guys? Your character knows. The Discordians are the anarchists of the reality-fringe world, committed to the belief of free everything. They don't just stop at anarchy though. Discordians want to make people question their assumptions, double-check reality as it were. It's only by doubting what everyone else accepts as real that a person can a person really know the truth—because there's a lot more out there than some folks want you to know. The problem is, the Discordians don't know and don't really care what the "truth" is—they're too busy tearing down what you "know" to bother with that. Fortunately, they're great guests at parties.

With the Discordian skill, you know what the Discordians know. You can talk like a Discordian, walk like a Discordian, and say "Hail, Eris!" like you really mean it. Furthermore, Discordian skill gives you a +10 on all attempts to impress conspiracy buffs, UFO abductees, and the rest of fringe society. After all, they know that you know that what they know is the truth.

Disguise (Cha). Your character is a master of disguise (in training). Using basic theatrical materials (wigs, whiskers, spirit gum, putty, and makeup) along with suitable clothes, your character can conceal features, make those known look like strangers, and pass as a general type of person—telephone lineman, truck driver, Army captain, and the like. You've got to make a skill check to see if the job is convincing (or your Editor might make the check secretly). If it succeeds, your character's disguise will pass, provided nobody gets too suspicious.

Of course, not everybody's born to be an actor. . . .
Driving (Ref). All **TABLOID!** characters know how to drive, but yours knows how to *drive*. Your character can attempt stunt-driving maneuvers like bootleg turns, jumps, two-wheel driving, wheelies on motorcycles, sideswipes, and all the other things that make roaring down the highway behind a ton or two of steel and plastic really fun.





A skill check is made every time your character tries a maneuver. Pass the check, and he or she made the car, pickup, van, or truck do amazing things. Blow it and, well, things could get bad. How bad? That depends on several things—what was your character trying to do, what kind of mood is your Editor in, and will the result be funny? In most cases, the Editor should allow a second skill check to see if your character can keep the car under control.

Finally, your character gets to make a skill check to retain control any time an situation comes up that would be beyond just normal driving—like when your car is buzzed by UFOs.

For example, Marko Grouch is screaming down a one-way street in his beat-up Dodge Charger, trying to catch the aliens who just fled their secret base beneath Grant's Tomb (more on that later) when a semi, horn blaring, rounds the curve and heads straight toward him. Thinking fast, he shouts, "I'm bootlegging this baby and flooring it before that truck makes me into road pizza!"

Your Editor smirks and says, "Make a Driving check." Marko's Reflexes are 67, but you roll a 83—not good enough by a long shot!

Now your Editor is smiling evilly. "Too bad! You've put the car into a spin headed straight for the truck. Try to regain control." Ever obedient, you roll again, this time getting a 23!

"Great!" your Editor shouts. "You're still headed for the truck. Roll again to see if you can swerve just in time."

Palms sweaty, you clutch the dice and. . .

Dumb Luck (Psy). What can we say? Your character is just lucky—plain-out, stupid lucky. Things that shouldn't happen to the character do, and things that should happen don't. It's a gift, a talent that your character has little control over.

Once per game day, your character can call upon dumb luck. All you do is tell the Editor you want to use the skill. The Editor, *not you*, makes the check. If it succeeds, something improbable and fortunate happens to get you out of whatever mess you're in.

All of this depends on the Editor thinking up something to happen. You can make suggestions, but it's

the Editor's choice in the end. If the situation's too illogical, the Editor has the right to say, "Dumb luck won't help your character here." If so, then you haven't used the Dumb Luck skill for that day.

...suddenly you remember Marko's Dumb Luck skill. "Forget driving, I'll use my Dumb Luck!" you shout.

"We're all gonna die!" wail the other players whose characters are piled into the back of Marko's Charger.

Your Editor says nothing, but raises an eyebrow as she rolls the dice. For a moment she doesn't say anything, trying her best to be poker faced. She's milking the moment for all it's worth. (Actually your character's Dumb Luck worked, and now the Editor is desperately trying to decide what happens.)

"All of a sudden, the semi blows a tire that sends the truck into a swerve!" she blurts out at last. "There's a grinding scrape as your Charger slides down the length of the truck. Sparks fly everywhere, and you all get bounced around, but nobody's hurt! The car's going to need some body work though."

And that's how Dumb Luck works.

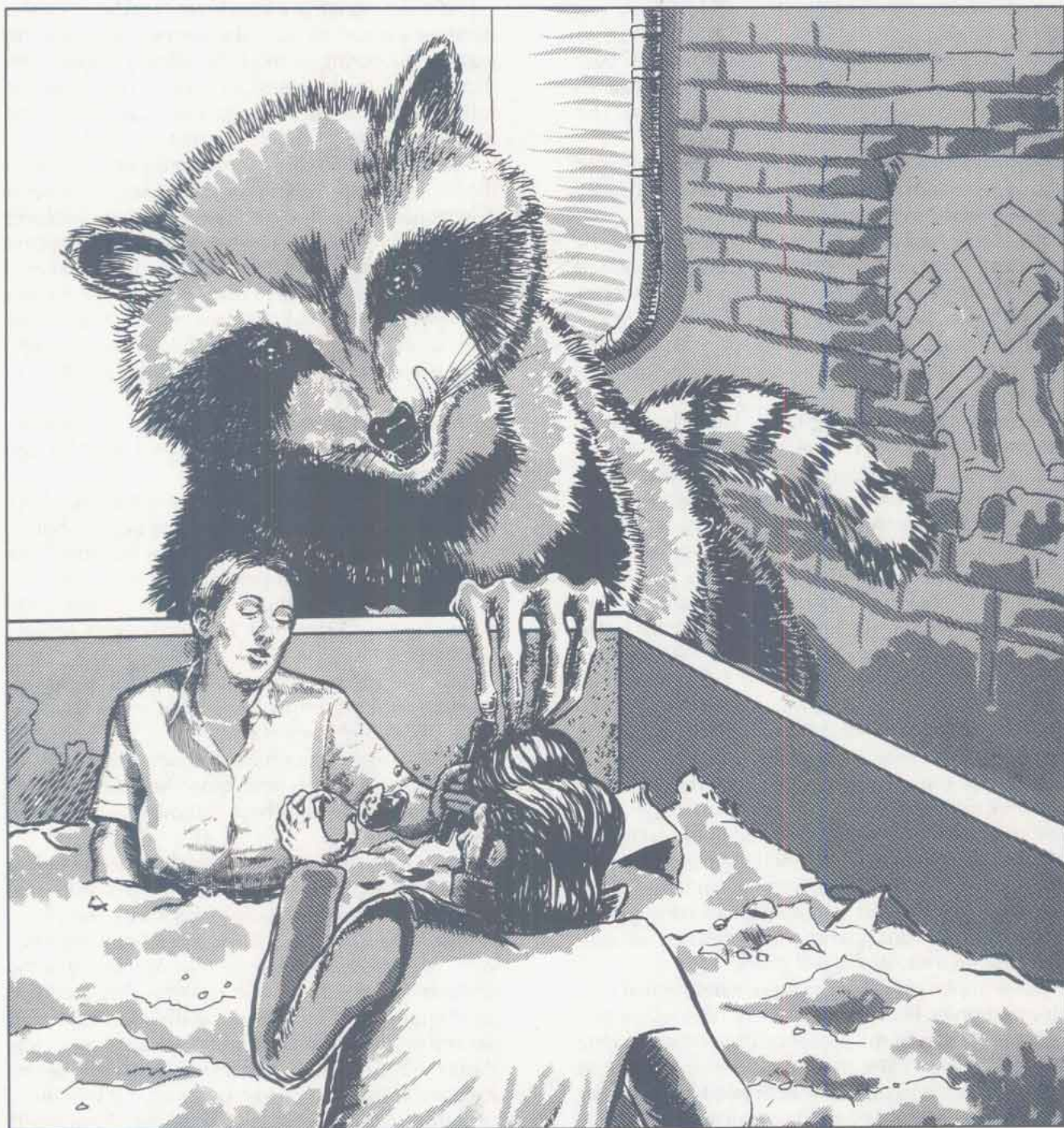
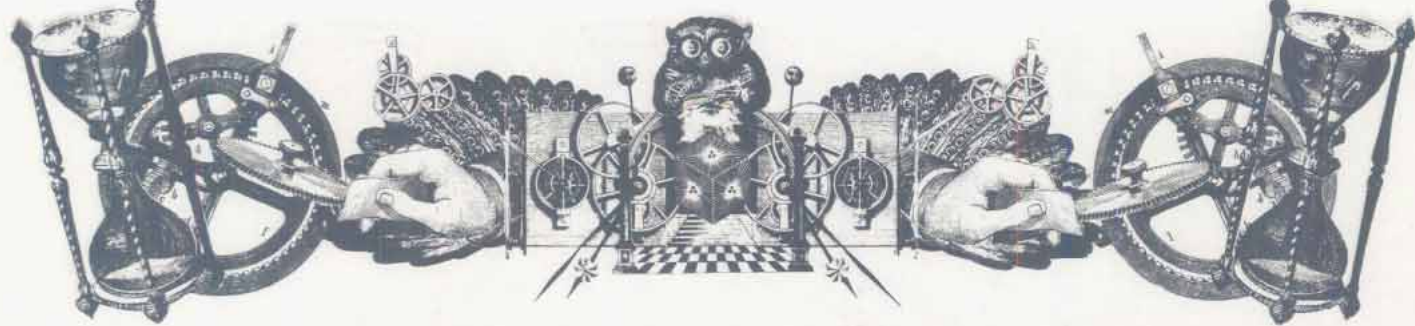
Dumpster Diving (Int). This is a vitally important skill for every modern reporter—the ability to sift through other people's trash in search of vital clues, leads, information, and leftover pizza.

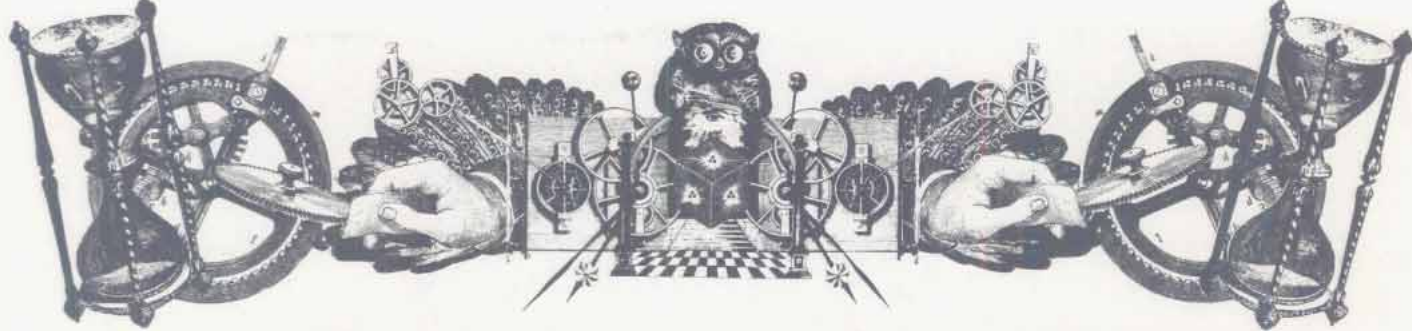
When confronted by suspect trash, make a skill check to see if your character can find that important clue—a discarded phone bill, a hastily shredded memo, or even strands of Bigfoot fur in an old comb.

Dumpster Diving also provides your character with the means to live from day-to-day should the tabloid job market ever go completely sour.

E*s P*****: Living, Dead, Returned (Lea).** Your character has devoted a lifetime, perhaps several lifetimes (there are past lives, after all), to the study of the King. Your character knows all sorts of information and trivia about the King when he was alive, how he died, and most importantly, where and when he's been seen since. This lets your character instantly evaluate the validity of any reported sightings. On a successful skill check, your character can discern hoaxes from potentially true sightings of the King. Of course, even a potentially true sighting might still be







wrong, since even a well-intentioned informant can make a mistake.

DEAD ROCK STARS*. This enhancement extends your character's knowledge to other famous deceased musicians with the same effects as above. The enhancement also applies to the King.

DEAD MOVIE STARS*. This enhancement extends your character's knowledge to other famous deceased actors with the same effects as above.

OTHER DEAD PEOPLE*. This enhancement extends your character's knowledge to other famous deceased people with the same effects as above. However, because all famous dead people are not equal, scientists, explorers, and "serious" musicians do not qualify for the enhancement. In such cases, use only the character's base score.

Electronic Eavesdropping (Lea). Your character is familiar with all those nifty electronic gadgets seen in spy movies and on TV shows. Your character can rig a body wire, tap a phone, plant a bug, and use long-range mikes to record conversations. To use the skill, your character first needs the right equipment. (Editors should remember that most of this gear is not found in the standard Radio Shack store and some of it is downright illegal.) Second, the character has to get the hardware into the right place. Only then should a skill check be made. (The Editor should do this secretly if there is no way for the character to immediately test the job.) If the check is successful, the attempt succeeds. Otherwise, something has gone wrong, like the radio bug picking up The Nashville Network instead of the conversations at Hangar 18.

ESP (Psy). Your character is studied in the "science" of extra-sensory perception, including how it is supposed to work, the different forms it can take, how to administer a Rhine test, and how to talk convincingly about it. This means your character can sort out subtle frauds on a successful skill check.

More importantly, your character has limited psychic awareness because he or she is obviously a true believer. When in the presence of another psychic (somebody with ESP), the characters can attempt to communicate telepathically. Both need to make successful skill checks for any communication to occur.

Determining what a character "reads" from the other person can be done the boring way or the fun way. By the boring method, the Editor compares the dice rolls to the chances of success. The lower the rolls, the clearer the message. (Messages should be limited to images and feelings, not true words.)

The *fun* method requires trustworthy players. Here, the two psychics are on different ends of a game of Telephone—that parlor game where a secret message is whispered from person to person. One psychic whispers the message to the Editor, the Editor passes it to another player, and that player passes it to another until everyone has had a chance to hear it. The other psychic should be the last one to hear the message. What is clear and what is misunderstood is left up to chance.

This method won't work if players deliberately change the message. That's not the goal here! Be nice and play well with others, okay?

Etheric Surgery (Psy). This skill is also known as psychic healing, and your character can't do it—but he or she does know a lot about it. This includes New Age crystal wielders, Filipino psychic surgeons, non-denominational faith healers, aura balancers, and guys who adjust the inner harmonies with orgone machines. (It does not include herbalists, witches, vodun priestesses, acupuncturists, chiropractors, macrobioticians, or massage therapists, despite the outlandishness of some claims.)

Etheric surgery does have one advantage beyond knowledge. Characters who know this skill and Medicine gain a +5 on any check that might involve their bedside manner.

Face on Mars (Int). As anybody who's been reading the tabloids knows, there is a giant outcropping on the surface of Mars that looks suspiciously like a face. (It also looks suspiciously like a giant outcropping.) Well, your character has been reading more than the tabloids—things like NASA reports—and studying photographs and interviews with scientists who worked on the Mars missions. He or she knows lots about the Face on Mars. What's unclear is whether it's a natural feature or a construct. And if it was built, who did it? And whose face is it? An alien? God?



Jesus? Leo G. Carroll? It is clear that humanity must return to space to find out.

Fast Talk (Cha). Your character has worked hard to develop the glib tongue and the convincing lie. This gives your character the ability to buffalo people with highly improbable stories and requests. To use the skill, you—the player—first have to spin a tale for the Editor. No fair just saying, “I’m going to use my Fast Talk.” You’ve actually got to come up with something to say! What the skill does is allow your character a check to see if the story is believed, even if it does sound ridiculous on the surface!

For example, tabloid reporter Marko Grouch is in Argentina, hot on the trail of a Hitler clone (there’s lots of them, you know!), and needs to get past the guard at the gate of the walled hacienda where the clone may be hiding. This guard’s not going to let just anybody in, so now is a good time for Fast Talk! Noticing a satellite dish in the yard, Marko grabs a toolbox (props help, after all) and saunters up to the gate. In his best German accent, he tells the guard he’s a representative of the satellite dish manufacturer here to do a complimentary service check on the hardware. It would not be good for the master to miss an episode of his favorite crime show. The idea of a repairman coming up to the gate is ludicrous, but Fast Talk allows the Marko a chance to see if he can convince the guard to open the gate.

Editor’s Note: Don’t let the players get away with sitting there like lumps. Make them act! Make them use phony accents and generally behave like fools. It’ll be fun for everyone.

Find Native Guide (Psy). This all-important psychic power lets your character learn the reporters’ location—no matter where they are! Whenever your characters get lost, you can make a skill check. If successful, your character is informed of where they are and how to get to where they want to be, most often by a willing stranger. In places where no willing strangers are to be found, birds, rabbits, field mice, and even psychic counselors will appear to gently urge the character along.

Firewalking (Wil). Here’s a handy skill for the next time your character has to impress that lost Amazon

tribe by walking over a bed of hot coals. Firewalking allows your character to try walking through fires or standing too close to the BBQ grill without being harmed. If a successful skill check is made, your character is unharmed. One check must be made for every 10 feet or 15 seconds of exposure, whichever is less. If the check is failed, well, then things get painful.

First Aid (Int). With this skill and simple bandages, your character can treat wounds, bruises, snakebites, and the like. A wounded character can be treated once per day for general injuries—regardless of how many times the character was struck or shot. Every instance of poisoning can be treated, but the treatment must be applied immediately.

When the treatment is made, make a skill check. If successful, the character regains 1 Body point or 2d4 points of Stamina. In the case of poisonings, the strength of the toxin is halved. A failed check indicates the wounds are such that only rest and proper medical attention can help.

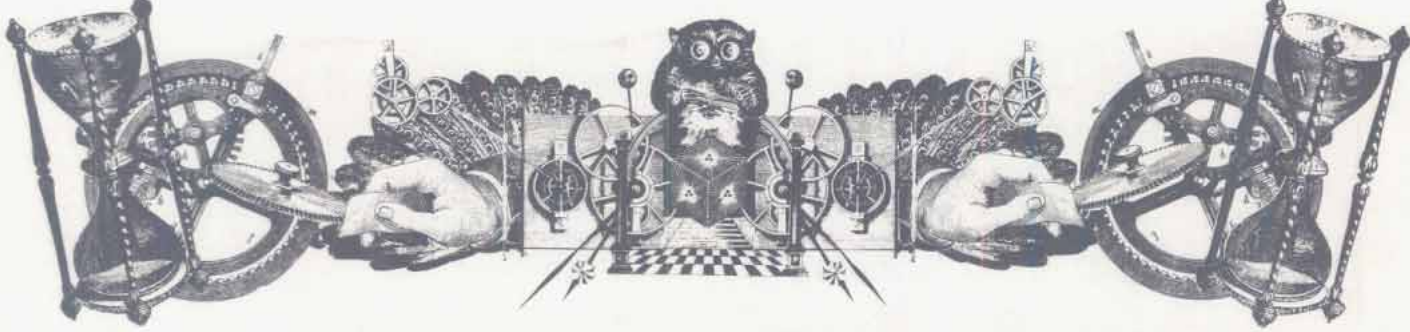
Fix Electrical Things (Int). Your character can fix electrical things—from simple things to complicated things. To use the skill, the character has to have an electrician’s kit. Common electrical appliances (steam irons, toasters, light switches, and so on) are repairable with a normal skill check. Items of moderate complexity (stereos, walkie-talkies, telephones, car ignitions, and the like) require an S5 margin. Highly sophisticated devices (computers, electric razors, and nuclear power plant control panels, among others) require an S2 margin. All repair attempts have an F9 margin, which, if rolled, renders the thing completely unfixable.

Flat Earth (Int). The earth is flat. No, really. It if wasn’t, we’d all fall off, right? Isn’t that enough proof that the earth is really flat?

Your character knows about the flat earth and how governments, the scientific community, and especially all the space programs of the world have conspired to convince billions of willing dupes that the world is round.

Why? Well, gee . . . There must be some sinister secret hidden on the underside of the earth that they





have discovered and are hiding from the rest of us! It's probably because all those politicians, scientists, and astronauts are really aliens who come from the underside of the earth.

Your character knows all the theories like this one—and more! All this knowledge isn't particularly useful in real life, but it does allow your character to fit in certain circles.

Foreign Language (Lea). Your character can speak and read a foreign language. In cases of technical jargon ("Oui, monsieur, zee UFO had a— how do you say?—*système de propulsion spatiale contragravitationnelle*.") or obscure slang, your character must make a skill check.

Freemasons (Lea). According to some folks, Freemasons are the granddaddy of all secret societies (at least of the secret ones we know about) and have ruled kings and emperors for centuries. According to others, they are only a front for an even more powerful and dangerous secret society who rule the unenlightened members of the Freemasons (in addition to the kings and emperors). According to a third source, the Freemasons are a harmless, non-secret society (that just happens to have powerful members who can rule kings and emperors).

Your character knows all the Freemason lore—the secret signs, handshakes, catch phrases, and reputed world-wide activities. Knowing all this is one thing, remembering it is another. Anytime your character tries to use some Freemason lore, a skill check is needed to remember it right.

This skill allows your character to pass as a Freemason, should the need arise. In fact, the character just might be a Freemason. That would explain the knowledge, now, wouldn't it?

Gadget (Int). Given a big roll of duct tape, some copper wire, some tin cans, a spring or two, and a Swiss Army knife, your character can jury rig up all sorts of useful devices—everything from hand catapults to signal rockets. Of course, time and a skill check are required to do the job. The gadget built can't be larger than a bread box, can't be an electrical device (like a radio), and is only good for one or two uses before it goes PHFFFFT! Finally, the gadget built can't

exceed known science—sorry, no anti-grav belts allowed here.

Handwriting Analysis (Int). This skill is good for analyzing character and detecting forgeries. With a single paragraph of handwriting, your character can try to determine the personality of the writer using "scientific" principles. A successful skill check reveals the sex, mental age, handedness, emotional state, and origin (human? alien? possessed?) of the writer. The Editor should make the check secretly so that success or failure is not a sure thing.

On a success margin of 4 or less, those with this skill can detect all but the most perfect forgeries—provided they have sample of the true writer's handwriting for comparison. After all, if your character has never seen the signature before, it's pretty hard to say it was forged.

Hauntings (Int). Just because it's a modern world, don't go thinking that ghosts and the like don't exist any more. They're smart and tricky! They've adapted to the technological world. Today's ghosts make phone calls to their relatives, mess with the heating, create their own room-freshener scents, hitchhike rides, and send e-mail. There are still a lot of them who are hide-bound traditionalists and won't give up the old practices of walking through walls, fading from sight, and generally being a nuisance.

Your character is up on ghost lore. Since there are so many reported sightings, a skill check is needed to recall the particulars of any single one. The abundance of sightings does allow your character to classify new ones by type—visitations, poltergeists, apportations, teleportations, and so on.

Furthermore, your character knows the names of (and how to contact) the leading spook researchers in the world. This is always handy for getting a good quote.

VAMPIRES*. There's been a big resurgence in the blood-suckers lately—and we're not talking game-players or Hollywood actors here. After lying low for a century or more, vampires are back in the news. Your character has kept up on the latest reports and the old lore. On a skill check, the when and where of any vampire sighting can be recalled. Furthermore, he or she





knows that not all vampires are the same. There're differences between a Hungarian blood-sucker and a Chinese hopping vampire, differences that mean a person has to fight them differently. Your character knows the right things to do to destroy or protect his or her person from vampires from around the world. Of course, the character's never had to use this knowledge—yet. There are a lot of conflicting stories, too, so your character has to make a skill check when putting some of the old lore into practice—just in case the tales were wrong.

Hide (Int). When the angry yeti are marching down the mountain pass, there are times when your character may not want to be seen. For this you need Hide. This skill allows your character to conceal his or her person in the local surroundings—behind a bush, under the bed, poised in the field like a scarecrow—and thus escape all but the most determined observation by others. The character remains hidden until he or she moves.

Of course, the Editor should secretly make this check, since the character has no idea how well he or she is hidden.

Hitler (Lea). *Yes, the designer is quite aware that Hitler was a monster, but let's face it, monsters are what this game is about.*

Your character knows reams about Hitler, his career, and his crimes. More importantly to the **TABLOID!** universe, your character is well-versed in the post-war Hitler lore, including his possible escape to Argentina, Brazil, America, Russia, or just about anywhere else. Your character is also up on all the Hitler cloning, Hitler brain-in-a-jar, and Hitler popsicle theories. None of this is particularly useful, but it does make for interesting dinner conversation.

NAZIS*. This enhancement expands your character's knowledge to other infamous Nazis who may or may not have escaped the long arm of justice—cheerful people like Dr. Mengele, Martin Boorman, and Adolph Eichmann.

Hoaxes (Lea). Nobody in the **TABLOID!** universe today ever lies about anything, but there have been a lot of hoaxes and frauds in the past. Your character has the historical background needed to recall such

events as the Cardiff Giant and other infamous frauds of history. This is useful in comparing modern reports and sightings to old ones, preventing your character from being taken in by an old trick like the Piltdown Man.

Hollow Earth (Int). Sure the earth is round—and it's hollow, too! There are entrances at the North and South Poles—or only at one of the poles. The crust is really thick, too, which is why no oil wells have drilled through the inside—at least not the oil wells they tell people about. There are rumors that some deep drilling projects and long mine shafts have broken through to the interior. In every case, the government has moved really fast to keep the news secret.

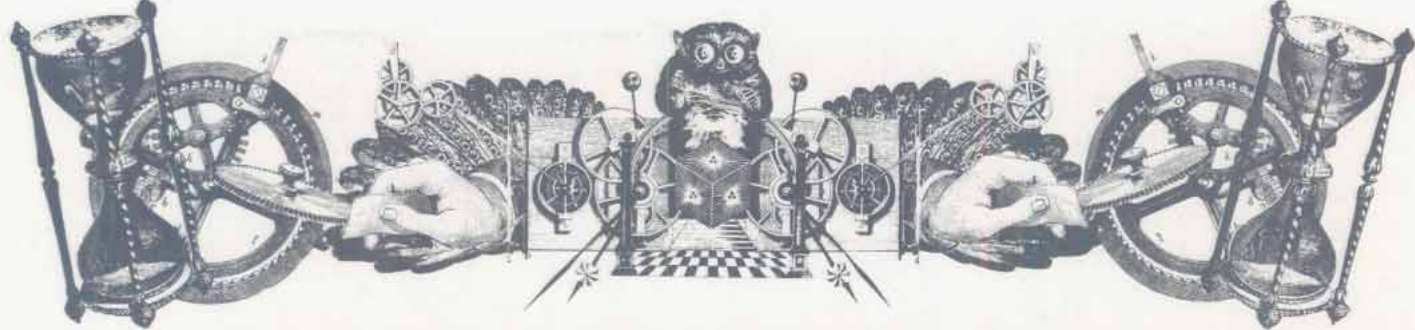
So what are they covering up? Well, nobody is quite sure. It might be the secret UFO base in the center of the earth. Is this a UFO base built by outer space aliens? Maybe, but it might also be the UFO base of the highly advanced civilization that lives inside our earth. It's a civilization of super-Aryans who some day will come out and fix everything that's wrong—whether the rest of the world wants to be fixed or not. Supposedly Hitler sent agents to the South Pole to find the secret power these aliens have. Did he find it? Well, he didn't win the war.

Hunch (Psy). This is a handy skill for the psychically endowed. Once per day, your character can try to attune to the surrounding vibrations to get a hunch (read: "clue") about the situation. Is that eyewitness lying or holding something back? Does this field give you a strange feeling like it might be a landing site for a UFO?

A Note to the Editor: *This is your die roll to make, not the players'. It's important for them not to know if the roll succeeded or failed. That way, they can never be sure if they just missed a clue or if there was nothing special to be learned.*

Hypnotism (Wil). Your character has studied hypnotism, probably to impress people at parties. Most importantly, your character knows the techniques of hypnotism and can try to use it on others. There are lots of limitations on this! First, it only works on a willing subject—though your character can try to hypnotize people who are unaware of what he or she





is doing. ("I can tell these things—you really are very sleepy!") Hypnotism requires trust, so it's not going to work on an hostile or suspicious subject.

Even with the right subject, hypnotizing isn't automatic. If the character's Hypnotism is greater than the target's Willpower, a normal skill check is made. If the subject has more Willpower than your character has skill, the chance of success is halved. Finally, if the subject is unaware what your character's trying to do, the attempt only works on a success margin of 3 or less. So, if your character, with a skill of 69, is trying to hypnotize an unsuspecting guard who has a Willpower of 83, the actual chance of success is an S3 on a roll of 35 or less. That's not too likely.

The other big restriction applies to what you can make a hypnotized person do. For the most part, you can get a victim to act out of character, even behave foolishly or stupidly. They don't gain any new skills, and they can't do things that are physically impossible for them. On the other hand, hypnotism does release the mind from the bonds of what it thinks are possible. This is how you get ordinary people to stiffen their muscles till they're hard as boards or persuade them to ignore a limited amount of pain. It also allows them to remember skills once-learned and now forgotten, like that high-school Spanish.

Editor's Note: *You are going to have to judge the use of this skill very carefully. It's hard to use, but then you don't want the players abusing this one too much. Encourage them to use Hypnotism in fun ways—like helping a victim recall details of the brainwashing during the Army mind control experiments. Don't let them use Hypnotism to turn people into mindless slaves or psychotic killers!*

Illuminati (Lea). Some folks claim this is the granddaddy of all conspiracies, the secret power group that rules the world. Others claim it's all a smokescreen put up by the secret power groups, which might be the Freemasons, THE CONSPIRACY, or some other secret group that's managed to stay secret.

With this skill, your character knows the Illuminati is the real power group and all those others are frauds or johnny-come-latelys in the world domination business. He or she knows about the secret manipulations

of the world stock markets by the gnomes of Zurich—the Illuminati who secretly control the world's money supply (except what enlightened folks pry from their clutches). Your character knows about the Bavarian Illuminati, the most powerful of the lot, and has read everything there is to find about the Illuminati. Are they well-intentioned manipulators of humanity or sinister puppet masters working the mouths of all the world's leaders? Why do people who know too much about them keep disappearing? Be careful, the walls just might have ears.

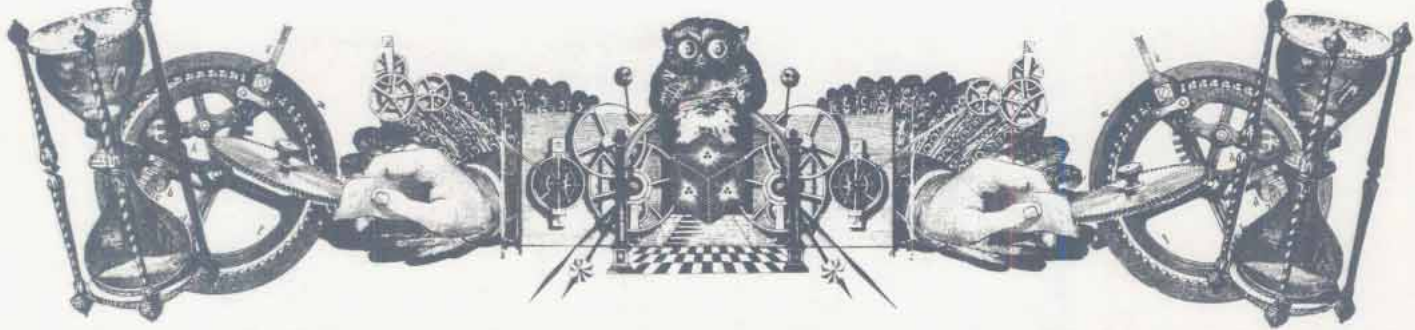
FREEMASONS*. According to Illuminati buffs, the Masons are just a cover for this group's secret plans. Sure, Troy Acres down the street is a Mason, and he seems like a nice enough guy. Sure, reporters sometimes get into Mason lodges and find there is nothing to report. That's the beauty of it all—only the innermost circles of the Masons know all the true secrets! On the surface, it's supposed to look like a big friendly club. Only a select few are ever taught the mysteries of the inner circle and the Illuminati.

So why doesn't somebody spill the secret? Some have, but they never lived too long.

JFK ASSASSINATION CONSPIRACIES*. Forget the CIA, the Soviets, or even the Mafia; it's obvious—the Illuminati did in JFK. He was a threat to their power. All the evidence—Oswald's time in Moscow, the grassy knoll, the mysterious second gunman, even the Zapruder film—proves it if a person knows what to look at. The Warren Commissioners were either Illuminati stooges or taken in by Illuminati counter-propaganda, and the FBI are just a tool of the Illuminati. There's still a few people willing to say the truth, but the Illuminati's media henchmen have managed to paint them as kooks.

TRILATERALIST COMMISSION*. This collection of wealthy industrialists, bankers, and politicians are supposed to be working in the interests of capitalism. The truth is that they are the pawns of the gnomes of Zurich. Their job is simple—make sure nobody but the ranks of the Illuminati ever gets ahead. Use money and power to squash any challenge to the group's plans. Who cares if it hurts the common person? The Illuminati are above the herd anyway.





Impersonate (Cha). Your character has a knack for voices and mannerisms that gives an edge when impersonating others. On a successful skill check, your character has matched the general voice and body language of a person he or she has been able to watch and hear for at least an hour.

An impersonation is not a disguise, though. Your character still looks like the same. With the right clothes—say a hat to cover the face—your character can pass at a distance or with a quick nod and “Hello” to the guard. Impersonate is also good over the phone.

You can combine Impersonate and Disguise to make a more complete illusion. Suppose your character needs to convince a staff sergeant that he or she really is Lieutenant Bream (the sergeant’s commanding officer). In this case, you would need to make both a Disguise and Impersonate check to fool the sergeant. Otherwise, your character might sound like Lt. Bream or look like Lt. Bream, but not both—something sure to make the sergeant suspicious.

Inner Earth (Int). The earth’s not flat—but there are all sorts of interesting stuff to be found down there. Why hasn’t anyone found it? That’s simple—some have, but nobody believes them. The dwellers of the hollow earth are just too good at covering their tracks. Your character is familiar with the Shaverian theories of a hollow earth filled with creatures and civilizations hidden from humanity. He or she knows about the caves, mine shafts, and other holes that are supposed to lead to this other realm and of a few of the creatures that live down there—like the sort-of-invisible deros who prey on humanity using mind control. This knowledge might be useful—or it might not. It all depends on whether the characters are going spelunking sometime soon.

JFK (Int). This skill is simple. Your character has raised Kennedy-watching to college-level heights and knows every bit of life, lore, and trivia about the ex-president imaginable. This knowledge even extends to other Kennedys, living and dead. Your character knows the facts of JFK’s assassination, but has not delved into the arcane conspiracies surrounding it. For that your character needs . . .

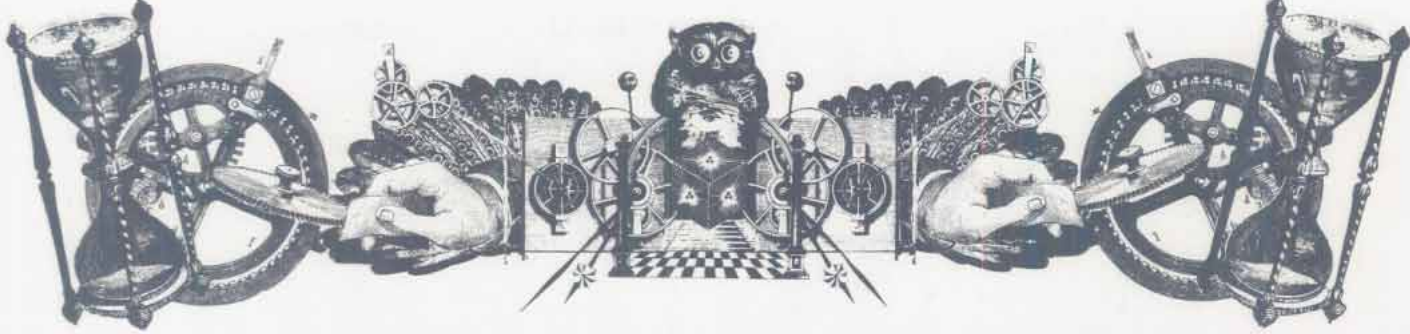
JFK Assassination Conspiracies (Lea). This is the one by which all other conspiracies are measured—this is the pinnacle of plots in the conspiracy world. Your character has absorbed it all—Oswald alone, Oswald and partners, and Oswald the dupe. Who was behind it—the CIA? The Army? The Mafia? Lyndon Johnson? The Russians? Did JFK fake the whole thing so he could live happily in Switzerland? Or did he really get shot, but still lives as a vegetable in a secret asylum? Places like the Dallas Book Depository and the grassy knoll make your character’s blood sing. Your character has heard it all before and can recall it on a successful skill check.

Journalism (Int). Oh, yeah. This is supposed to be a game about journalism, so it ought to have Journalism skill. Your character knows the boring things they teach in journalism school—whether it is ethical to print the victim’s name (it is if sales go up), how to compose a story (quickly), how to double-check sources (use the phone), if it’s right to accept free tickets to the ball game (depends on who’s playing), and what is the responsibility of the journalist to the public (to print everything). Journalism school was also where aspiring reporters practiced their world-weary sneers and snappy comebacks.

Consequently, your character has a great sneer and might have a snappy comeback, plus, just in case it’s needed, some journalistic talent. Anytime there is a question about the quality of a story your character files—like is it clear and punchy, yet still get the facts across?—make a Journalism check. Any time a question of reporter ethics arises, your character can remember the right answer on a Journalism roll. Finally, any time your character is hobnobbing with *real* reporters (who don’t write for tabloids), make a skill check to see if he or she blends in. *Real* reporters are notoriously cruel toward their tabloid cousins.

Law (Lea). “The law is a —” Well, never mind. Let’s just say your character knows the basic workings of the legal system, particularly the ins and outs of the courtroom. With this skill, your character knows the standard course any case will take as it goes to trial, plus the rules of evidence the police are supposed to follow, along with basic police procedure.





Any time the character is confronted by the local authorities about any actions taken, you can make a skill check to see if your character remembers some obscure precedent that justifies the deeds. Any time the local authorities cross the line into murky legal waters, you can make a skill check to try to intimidate them into backing off.

For example, Marko Grouch has sneaked past the police barrier and snapped photographs of havoc wrought by the rampaging Bigfoot. Just as he snaps the last shot, the camera is taken from his grasp by a well-armed SWAT member. "We'll just confiscate this film," the officer snarls.

You remember Marko's Law skill. "That's personal property not used in the commission of a crime, and prior censorship, too. My paper will have your badge, buddy!" It sounds good, but is it true? You will have to make a check against Marko's Law skill to find out.

Editor's Note: *Don't let the players use Law skill to get themselves out of all their troubles, and especially don't let them use the skill without figuring out just what they're going to say first!*

Libel (Lea). Knowing the law is not enough. As a reporter, your character has got to know just what can and can't be said in print. Saying the wrong thing about somebody important is a great way to wind up in a libel suit.

This skill has two uses. First, anytime your character thinks a report might be libelous, a successful skill check tells just how great the risk is. Writing that the mayor hangs out in crack houses is not risky—unless it is based on unconfirmed reports of informers. A Libel check would indicate high risk in this case. Secondly, the skill improves the paper's resistance to libel threats. Suppose Lady X threatens to sue the tabloid for libel because of something your character wrote. A successful skill check in this case indicates that your character kept enough notes and corroborating material for the paper's lawyers to blow the threat off.

This is important. A successful libel suit against your character could ruin his or her career—permanently—and then the character would wind up in the Home for Washed-Up Reporters, a place nobody wants to be.

Lip Reading (Lea). Your character can read lips of anyone speaking a language your character knows. A skill check must be made to understand anything. Lip Reading has a success margin of 2 for perfect comprehension. If the check is successful but above this, your character only understands some of what's said—a percentage equal to the skill check.

For example, Marko Grouch succeeds with a 43. This means he is able to lip read about half of what is said—more than enough to have an idea of what is said, but still not enough to avoid misunderstanding.

Lock Picking (Ref). Your character can pick locks, open car doors, and work combination safes. Picking locks or jimmying open cars requires a set of tools. To work a combination safe, all that's needed is a good ear. Plus a successful skill check, of course. This skill does nothing to deactivate alarms, however. Fix Electrical Things is necessary for that.

Lock picking has a success margin of 2. If this margin is made, the job takes mere moments. Otherwise, the character is going to be at it for 1d6 minutes (not that this really matters in a fast and loose setting like the **TABLOID!** game).

Look Good (Cha). For those important occasions when your character's got to look just perfect, this is the skill to use. Look Good gives him or her the edge in dressing, posing, and otherwise making an impression based entirely on superficial and shallow things like beauty. Better yet, your character doesn't even have to talk! (Some might even consider talking a detriment.) Furthermore, Look Good allows your character to look good even when covered with slime or anything else that would reduce an ordinary fashion model to tears.

Say, for example, your character has just slogged through 500 miles of jungle, fighting off headhunters, skinny-dipping in piranha-infested waters, and slogging through gumbo-thick swamps. Gasping, mud-covered, and tattered, she stumbles to the gates of the local warlord's palace—hardly ready to make a good impression. Now's a good time to use her skills! Ducking behind a tree, she uses Look Good (you make a successful skill check) and manages to make six months of wilderness hell look like a Paris fashion



statement. (For fun, read the whole thing above, substituting *he* for *she*!)

Lost Tribes (Int). *Yep, they're out there and of course nobody's ever heard of them—THEY'RE LOST!* Still your character is a fount of information concerning legends, unconfirmed reports, probable locations, and suspected lifestyles of lost tribes around the world. It takes a skill check to remember most of it.

Given your character's profession, this is not nearly as worthless a skill as it sounds.

Mass Murderers (Lea). Your character has taken a morbid interest in death, especially the really notorious serial killers. (He or she probably dresses all in black, too.) Your character knows names, dates, victims, places, and trials and might have corresponded with a few mass murderers still in prison. A veritable walking concordance of lore about these sick and twisted lives, your character can dredge up any fact on a successful skill check. Most people make a point not to bring up the subject around your character, especially at parties.

One useful bit from all this is that your character understands the psychological profile of these criminals. This gives the player a +10 on all checks that might involve dealing with a mass murderer, hopefully only in an interview.

Mechanics (Int). *Fix things! Build things! Take things apart! Rebuild things! Do things to things! Gotta have a screwdriver—where's my pliers?*

Your character is a primitive gearhead—one of those people who, as a kid, took apart alarm clocks and actually got them back together (without too many parts left over). Electronics may baffle your character (unless he or she has Fix Electrical Things), but rebuilding a sewing machine is a piece of cake. Your character can use Mechanics skill when faced with repairing, disarming, or improving any mechanical (not electrical) device.

FIX COFFEE MACHINE*. It is a well-known fact that coffee machines (of all types) are the most important and devious machines on Earth. If the coffee machine doesn't work, nobody does. Your character has studied especially to fix these infernal devices. Not only that, he or she can brew a mean cup of java.

USE FAX MACHINE*. It is a not-so-well-known fact that the people who design fax machines are actually part of a conspiracy (take your pick) to disable global communications. Not only did they invent a machine that allows everyone to send junk mail directly to your character's office, but they also tried to make sure that nobody but THEM would know how to work the things. Your character has outsmarted them, though, by studying fax machines especially hard. He or she can use this skill on any fax machine, no matter how obscure or alien it might be. This makes the character one of the most important people in the office—right after the whiz who can fix the coffee machine.

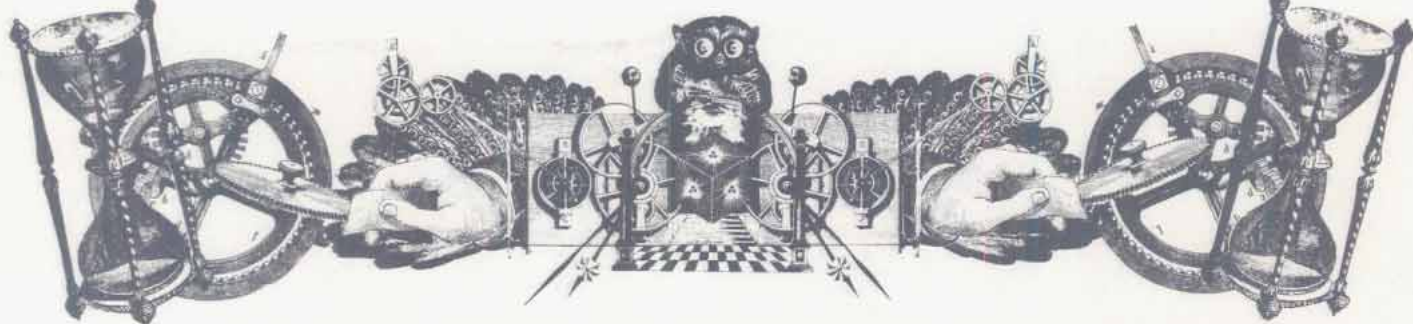
Media Manipulation (Psy). *Buy this! Believe me! That idea is wrong! Scientific studies prove the Earth is not hollow! THE CONSPIRACY is only a made-up thing in a silly role-playing game!*

Everything in print, on radio, on TV, and plastered on billboards is an effort to manipulate the minds of the population. Some of it, like advertising, is pretty obvious, but other forms of media manipulation are subtle and controlled by secret forces. Your character knows that and is aware of their methods. On a successful skill check, he or she can detect the subtler forms of manipulation and thus be immune to them. (Close companions can be protected from such powerful forces in the same way.)

Additionally, your character can try to use the media to manipulate others into realizing the truth of the articles published in the tabloids. This requires making a success margin of 1 or less, but if it works, it usually prompts outraged reaction like a Senate investigation or a scientific inquiry. It also throws the media manipulators into a frenzy as they try to discredit your character's work.

Missing Link (Lea). *Russian Scientist Reveals Bonzo was really Missing Link!* Okay, this skill relies on the theory that there is a horrible gap in the fossil record that covers the point when humanity evolved from apes—and that when it's found everyone will slap their foreheads and go "Of course! Look at that—it explains everything!" This skill gives your character a good background in human prehistory, especially in





the area of hominid fossils. Dr. Leakey, the Olduvai gorge, the Rift valley, Lucy, Handy-man, and hunter-gatherers are names and terms your character can toss around with arrogant superiority. Complicated questions require a skill check to give an accurate (but lay person's) answer. Likewise, skill checks are needed to understand what scientists are talking about.

This isn't the whole story about missing links, though. They're alive! They're somewhere out there, and we're not talking about your neighbors. They're in hiding. In addition to the fossil record, your character knows about missing link sightings and (if your character knows Lost Tribes, too) whole colonies of the little devils.

ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN*. Grandpa of the missing link clan, he's supposed to live in the Himalayas. Several expeditions have gone to find him, but all they've come back with are stories, grainy photographs, and questionable footprints. Your character knows them all.

BIGFOOT*. Feeling deprived, America needed its own missing link, so it found one in the forests of the Northwest. Of course, there is also the theory that Bigfoot's really a space alien. Again, your character has seen it all.

FROZEN CAVEPEOPLE*. This one's a new entrant in the missing link race—cryogenic Cro-Magnons! Ever since people started *scientifically* exploring places like Alaska and Siberia, they've been finding frozen things—mammoths, bison, and cavepeople. Of course, nobody ever talks about the cavepeople, because the scientists don't want the world knowing what they've really found. Not only have they got perfectly preserved bodies—they've revived these Neanderthals! The newly awakened cavepeople are kept in secret labs where they can be studied. Not only that—some of them are smarter than modern humanity! Scientists have proof that humanity evolved from space aliens and they're keeping it from all the world!!! Your character knows this—and can cite the proofs with a successful skill check.

Moongate (Lea). Most of the world doesn't know it, but *we never went to the moon!* It was all a hoax, a

trick staged by NASA! The moon landings were staged out in the desert in Arizona. They didn't even hire a good film crew which is why the special effects looked so cheap—nothing like *Star Wars* or a good science fiction movie. Not only that, we never sent a lander to Mars or satellites out to photograph the other planets. All those pictures are fakes. The only real ones are the Mars flybys that show the Face on Mars. After the scientists saw those, they got scared. Maybe that's why they started faking all those space missions.

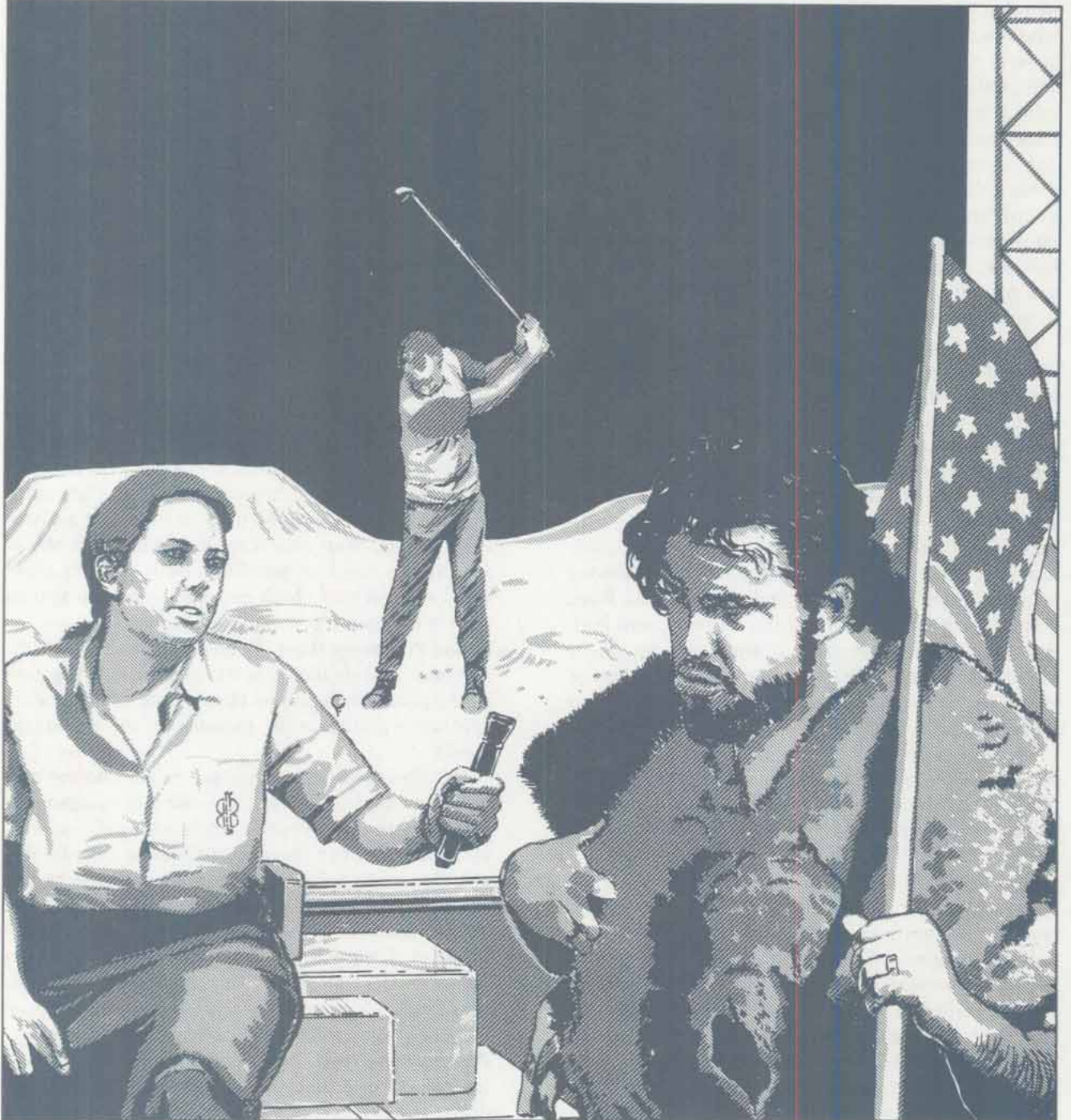
Or maybe it's because the entire space program is a cover-up for the real truth—that our government has secretly developed flying saucers and is in contact with several alien races. *No, that's not it!* It's that the aliens don't want us getting into space and secretly have threatened to destroy the world if we do! *No, no, no!* It's that our government leaders and space scientists are aliens, and they don't want anyone else finding out.

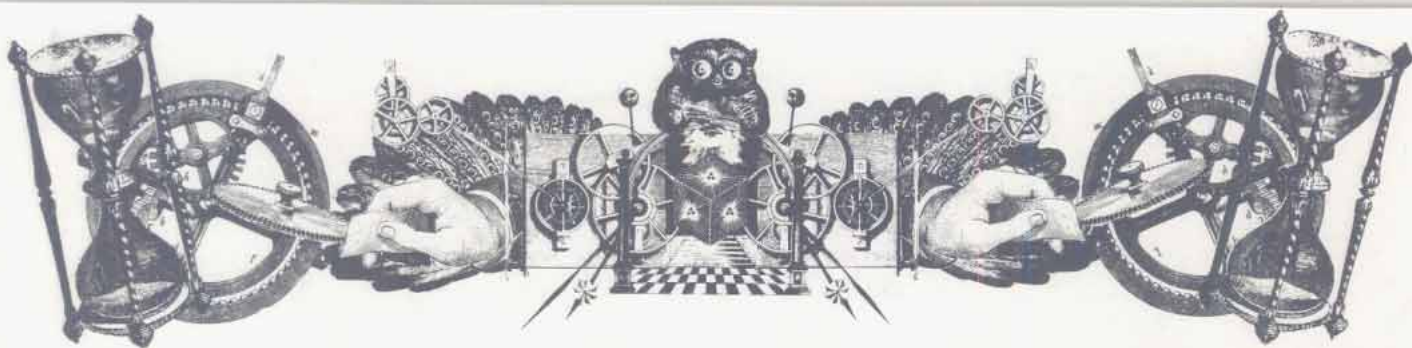
Take your pick. Your character knows them all.

Mothmen (Lea). There are things living out in the woods that we just don't know about. Flying people are one of those things. Reports come in from around the globe of Mothmen (West Virginia), bird people (Brazil, Vietnam), flying men (Kazakhstan, Washington), flying women (Spain, Argentina), bat men (Texas), and bird people (Brazil). Your character, with a keen interest in cryptozoology (the "science" of animals that ain't supposed to be or ain't supposed to be where they are), has gathered and filed these reports, perhaps looking for a possible connection (besides mass hysteria). With a skill check, you can categorize any reported sighting by type and can remember important details about past sightings.

Neo-paganism (Int). There's a new age upon the world, and your character is an up-to-date person. There's been a rebirth in ancient beliefs as the world rediscovers the past. Your character has kept up to date on the range of ideas, including those of druids, wiccans, vodun, iron men, and others. On a skill check, your character can recall and recognize the various beliefs and practices of these groups. Knowing does not necessarily mean belief, however.







NEW-AGE MESSIAHS*. Along with the revival of ancient religions comes a whole slew of new religions. Most of these run along the lines of "Believe me, for I have been enlightened in the revealed truth by the Vrix." Who is the Vrix? Why, the enlightened galactic consciousness of the planet Yizz that circles that big star right over there, just to the left of Sirius. Naturally, these enlightened beings have taken a great interest in uplifting humanity. Why they chose housewives, construction workers, little old ladies, ex-hippies, lawyers, and other truly credible types as prophets just goes to show that even enlightened beings need to get out more.

Apparently your character has been tracking and cataloging these groups because, on a skill check, the details of most of them can be recalled—the founders, basic tenets, and bases of operations, at least.

Nessie (Lea). *I'm big, and I live in Loch Ness. Guess who? And no fair peeking.* The Loch Ness monster is by far the most famous of all lake monsters or, indeed, any undiscovered monsters at all. Over the centuries, there have been legends, sightings, photographs, and even motion pictures of the infamous Nessie. Scientists, amateur and professional, have tried diving expeditions, sonar sweeps, and lake watches in futile attempts to scientifically document the creature's existence. Is Nessie just imagination or is she (since everybody assumes it's a she) just too clever for the human world?

Well, maybe your character doesn't know the answer, but he or she has all the facts about the Loch Ness Monster down solid (with a successful skill check). Who knows? In the **TABLOID!** world, such info just might be useful.

OTHER LAKE/SEA MONSTERS*. Nessie's not the only lake/sea monster out there. There's the Flathead lake monster, Champy in Lake Champlain, Ogopogo in Lake Okanagan (B.C., Canada), Irish lake monsters, Moloko-M'kembe in the Congo (though the dinosaur hunters claim this one as their own), the Morgawr off Cornwall, Chessie (in Chesapeake Bay, of course), the Cadborosaurus (B.C. again), and more. Your character has expanded the knowledge skill beyond Nessie to include these others.

Observation (Psy). *Hubby finds wife with another man—in freezer!* This is an actually useful skill! With it, your character has a chance to notice facts and details others might miss—like the green glowing stains of alien blood almost out of sight under the sofa. To use the skill, you have state your character is using it and there has to be something to find. You don't make the roll, your Editor does.

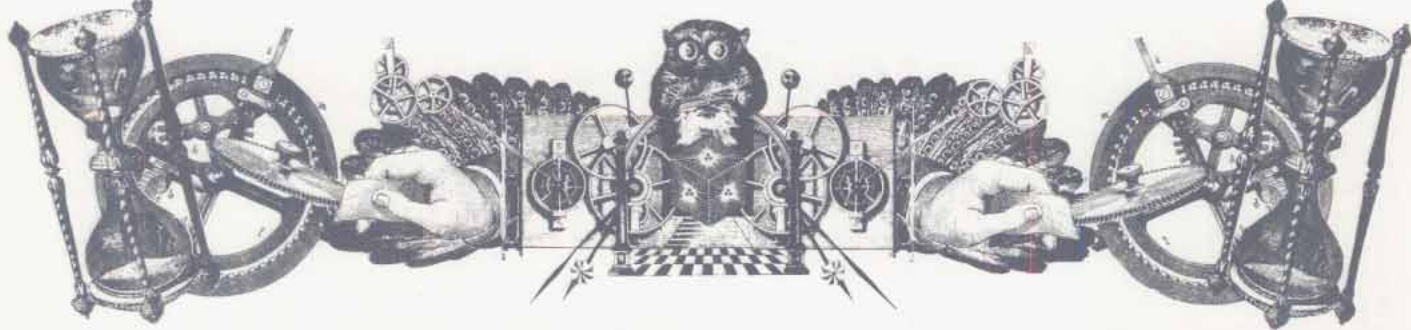
Editorial Comment: *If you're not careful, players may wind up abusing their Observation skill. Always make the roll secretly and don't let them know if it has failed or if there was just nothing there. Only allow one check per given situation, using the highest score, unless you really need them to find that clue. Of course, if the darn clue's so important, why did you make it so hard to find?*

Old-Fashioned Messiahs (Lea). In addition to the standard faiths of the world, the neo-paganist beliefs, and the new-age messiahs, there are a lot of small sects, faiths, and cults around the globe. They range from the mundane to the truly strange, but all have their points. Your character has made a hobby of learning as much as possible about many of these small sects. A skill check permits remembering facts seen in the course of these studies.

Phone Phreaking (Lea). *Telephones are a wonderful invention and should be free to all! The evil oligopoly of the phone companies conspire to make unconscionable profits at the expense of the rest of the world.*

This skill gives your character insight into the dark world of telephone phreaking—using or misusing the phone system to personal ends. On a skill check, your character can place long-distance calls for free or bill them to a favorite enemy. Phone-nets can be scrambled on a success margin of 1. There is a risk to all this, however, since Phone Phreaking has a failure rating of 9. Blow the roll, and the phone company cops have been alerted to your character's funny business. Still, it is the duty of your character to subvert this evil system! Either that, or he or she's just cheap.

Photography (Int). *Exclusive photos of President's love tryst!* An article without photos isn't just half-done, it's useless. Besides the fact that nobody is



going to believe your character's story about computer-hacking chimps in the Congo without picture proof, it's not going to sell either, since half the buyers of this rag only look at the pictures!

Photography skill lets your character take photos that are well-framed and hopefully in focus. Since your character doesn't get to know the outcome until the film is developed, the Editor should secretly roll for each picture taken and note the result on a piece of paper for later reference. Imagine how the players will feel when they realize that their photographic proof was obscured by a lens cap!

Another Editor's Note: *Sometimes players will try to work the odds of the die roll by snapping off several shots all in a row, figuring that no matter how lousy their skill is, the odds of die rolling will give them one success. Make only one check for a series of shots unless there's a change in things—different focus, f-stop (it's a technical term), or positioning.*

PAPARAZZI*. This enhancement gives your character the knack of getting just the right celebrity shot—the one where they look stupid, are waving their hands in front of their face, or just before they take a swing at somebody. This enhancement only works on famous people in candid settings and, even then, only when you say your character is using it.

Pistol (Ref). Your character has had some practice shooting things and can fire a pistol using his or her full Reflexes score.

Poker Face (Wil). Sometimes it's not enough to lie. Sometimes your character has to lie brazenly in the face of all truth and reality. How else can a reporter get a good story? This skill helps your character do just that. Whenever your character has to pass off a completely unbelievable tale, you can make a check on this skill. If successful, your character doesn't smirk or crack up—which doesn't make the lie any more believable. However, Poker Face has a success margin of 3, and if you roll this, the Editor must check to see if the listener believes your story, no matter how preposterous. *Revel in it—this is one of the few times you can force the Editor to make a die roll!*

Possession/Exorcism (Wil). *"Rhode Island is mine." claims man controlled by spirit of ancient king!* In a

tabloid universe, you never know quite what's going to happen, so it's perfectly possible for an accountant to suddenly be imbued with the artistic spirit of Michelangelo or a truck driver to wake up with the memories of Attila the Hun.

Given all these possibilities, a person's got to be prepared. This skill has three important uses. First, it allows your character to deduce from clues that a person has been possessed. Clues are usually things like glassy eyes, ranting, refighting the battle of Waterloo, or suddenly speaking fluent Sumerian.

Second, it allows your character to try to correct the situation through the proper procedures (exorcism to some, psychotherapy to others). This requires a full day of preparation and work with the afflicted person, followed by a skill check. (Furthermore, exorcism is exhausting, causing the character to lose 4d6 Stamina points.) A successful check restores the victim to some semblance of normalcy.

Finally, it gives your character a +10 on all checks to resist possession by aliens or other things.

Power Sites (Psy). *Scientists discover room filled with used razor blades in Great Pyramid!* Some places in the world are more powerful than others—and we're not talking New York versus Los Angeles here. This is mystical power—the type that sharpens razor blades, broadcasts power around the earth, balances the harmonic resonances, and might be the secret to immortality. There's lots of strange places around the world with these powers—the Nazca lines, the Pyramids, and Stonehenge, for example. Your character knows the lore of these places and can recall obscure details on a skill check. Furthermore, on a successful skill check, your character can sense power areas by the mystical current flowing through them.

Predictions (Psy). *Read our predictions for 1995! You will play a game!* Predictions are a time-honored part of every tabloid—both in reporting on old ones and making new ones. With this skill, your character has studied famous predictions—biblical, astrological, oriental, alchemical, mystical, and whatnot. On a skill check, he or she can find current events that can justify the prediction and make the whole thing seem convincing. *What? An earthquake in California,*





rioting in Palm Beach, and a swarm of earthworms in Mukwanago? Why it's just as predicted—the end is here!

Second, your character can fashion predictions for every occasion. This doesn't require a skill check, just the willingness to say "This will happen." These predictions are as accurate as any printed in the tabloids, so of course they are always right when uttered.

A Note for Cruel Editors: If you really want to have fun with your players, secretly make a skill check for every prediction made. If a success margin of 1 is rolled, secretly note that the prediction is real. Then use it later to build an adventure for the player characters. Have fun—make them sorry.

NOSTRODAMUS*. This old Frenchman was the king of the seers, leaving behind a body of prophetic drivel that can be interpreted just about any way anybody wants. Sensing a never-ending source of copy, your character has waded through the reams of the stuff and has mastered the art of selectively reading it all to suit the times. This means that on a skill check, your character can cite a prediction from old Nostrodamus for everything—no, make that *everything!* Earthquakes, births, deaths, even Snappy-Crunchy breakfast cereal can all be foreseen in the works of Nostrodamus.

Psychic Awareness (Psy) Your character's in tune with the psychic forces of the universe—honest! *Would this game lie to you?* Well, maybe your character is not quite perfectly in touch but, doggone it, those forces are out there!

Anytime your character is in the presence of psychic activity (more than just somebody thinking real hard), he or she has a chance to detect it. The Editor should make this roll secretly—although crafty Editors can make players real paranoid by asking "What's your Psychic Awareness score?" If the roll succeeds, the character feels the presence of *strange and mystical forces*. If a success margin of 3 is made, the character also knows what the powers are. Telepathic messages get intercepted, mind readers pinpointed, and the spirit guides of channelers get misdirected. (This last one can be very amusing if the character suddenly becomes host to the spirit of Louis XVI.)

Research (Lea). *Secret map of Atlantis found by librarian in 1903 atlas!* Your character knows how to find information—in libraries, bulletin boards, museums, and newspaper morgues. This is useful for getting information about those ancient UFO sightings, forgotten psychics, lost civilizations, primitive legends, and the like. Research requires an hour to a day for most things, depending on the resources available and the obscurity of the question. *Your Editor will make all this up.* A successful skill check means your character got the right dirt.

Rifle (Ref). Your character knows how to handle a rifle and shoot things with it. (Characters without this skill can shoot things, too, but not as well.)

RPG Mind Control (Wil). THIS IS NOT A GAME! THIS IS A SECRET ATTEMPT TO CONTROL YOUR MIND! BWAH-HA-HA-HA! *Oops—we weren't supposed to tell you that.*

This skill indoctrinates your character into the mysterious world of role-playing games. Not only does the character know the title, theme, and release date of every RPG in existence, he or she can also use the techniques of role-playing to dominate weak minds. To use the skill, your character has to propose a hypothetical role-playing situation involving the target in an imaginary role. Hopefully, the point of this hypothetical situation is to get the target to agree with your character's point of view. When your character does this, the Editor secretly makes a skill check. If it succeeds, the person gives an answer that matches your character's secret ends and inadvertently falls into the trap!

For example, Marko Grouch is being chased by a gun-toting thug just for snapping some pictures of some celebrity. He's not going to outrun the goon, so he skids to a stop and shouts, "Wait a minute! Violence is no solution to anything. Suppose you were Dag Hammerskjöld on a UN peace-keeping mission—and suppose I'm the anti-UN protesters who don't want you to interfere in my homeland. Now really, is violence going to defuse this situation? What are you going to do, Dag?"

At this point, one of three things is going to happen: A) The thug says "Huh?" and points his gun at Marko (the skill check fails); B) He pauses to ponder



thoughtfully before finally putting away his gun and saying, "Yer right—as Mr. Hammerskjöld, late General Secretary of da' UN, me only proper response is ta eschew acts o' violence as a morally improper response to da situation" (the skill check succeeds); or C) the Editor breaks into hysterical laughter (and maybe you get away with it).

At any rate, RPG mind-control is not very effective and so only affects others for short periods of time. In this above example, it would give Marko just enough time to run like hell.

Russia (Int). *Top scientists in Russia prove everything!* Hooray for Russia—it's every tabloid reporter's friend! It's got everything your character is ever going to need to launch a spectacular yellow journalism career. Among its many features are:

It's real big. Not even counting all those places that were once Russia, Russia is real big. So big, in fact, that virtually anything can be found there, from frozen mammoths to mummified Lenins.

It's got scientists. Better still, they work for universities nobody in the rest of the world has ever heard of—and they'll say anything to get their names in the press.

They used to be bad guys. Although reformist, anti-Communist Russians are nearly as good (for a reporter) as dyed-in-the-wool, banner-waving Reds, a good reporter can still get mileage out of the Cold War. There's lots of "Russia is reforming" and "Russia's headed down the tubes" for those flamers who write the tabloid opinion columns.

They have lots of secrets. And now they're selling and telling them all. All sorts of goofy new information is revealed every day. Better still, the secrets reveal the Russians were incredibly paranoid about everything including monsters, psychic powers, and their neighbors.

They have a space program. This means they've also been in contact with aliens. Enough said.

They have low production values. Every photographed UFO sighting, psychic demonstration, or giant monster slain is suitably grainy for use. After all, if a picture looks too good everyone will assume it's a fake.

With Russia as a skill, your character automatically knows general facts about the place—current leaders, geography, and general history. On a skill check, the more loony bits can be remembered—predictions, scientific breakthroughs, and other stuff. Alternatively, some suitable Russian scientist can be dredged up to be contacted for a quote or to confirm just about anything. However, your character does *not* speak Russian.

TUNGUSKA*. Nothing, even in Russian history, is of more interests to the tabloids than the explosion in Tunguska (June 30, 1908)—the one that leveled trees for miles around. Nobody has ever figured out what it was, though not for lack of trying. Was it a meteorite or a comet? Did a teeny black hole pass through the earth? Or did somebody's interstellar ship have a disastrous malfunction? That's one of the things your character is trying to find out.

THE REST OF SIBERIA*. Tunguska is the most intriguing thing about Siberia, but it's not the only one. There's hairy missing links in its mountains, sea monsters off its coasts, mammoths roaming its woods, lake monsters in its big lakes, UFOs in its skies, and, lest anyone forget, undisclosed cities of scientists working on secret programs for the government. On a successful skill check, your character hasn't forgotten these either.

S*nic Lore (Int).** This is a bad one, but your character knows about it. Of course, he or she will never irresponsibly share this knowledge or do things that will upset your mom or anyone else's.

Self-Defense (Fit). *Don't let those bullies push you around! Bulk up with the Muscle-Master and show them who's boss!*

Your character is pretty good in a fight, enough so to be able to brawl using his or her full Fitness score. (Those weenies who never learned Self-Defense can only put up a pathetic struggle, using half their Fitness score.)

Shorthand (Ref). *An rewarding career awaits you in the exciting field of court reporter! Okay, so your character washed out as a stenographer, but at least you can take good notes. This skill lets you fudge the fact that—as a player—you keep really lousy notes.*





Whenever you forget a piece of information that the Editor gave you, you can call upon your character's Shorthand skill. If you make the check, lo and behold but the answer was scribbled in the character's notes!

There are a few caveats on this skill, though. First, you have to declare your character is taking notes. Second, you have to take notes to prove that your character was taking notes. Third, you have to have those notes for later checking. Basically this skill is a safety device—try your best, and you can fall back on it when you screw up.

Sleight of Hand (Ref). *Presto-change-o, nothing up the sleeve! Just watch the cards, sonny, and tell me which one's the queen.* Your character, quite the amateur magician, is pretty good with sleight of hand. This includes card tricks, making balls appear, and pulling coins from children's ears. Beyond just entertaining, Sleight of Hand lets your character palm things—keys, cards, a rival's notes, and so on. A successful skill check avoids detection if any onlookers are distracted or otherwise occupied. A success margin of 4 or less is the work of a master magician—although making a key vanish into thin air is going to arouse suspicion! A failure margin of 8 indicates that, not only did the try fail, but your character was clumsy enough to give away the whole trick! In some situations, this might not be considered a good thing.

Smuggle (Int). Sleight of Hand is good for small things, but there's times when your character needs to sneak something larger than a key through customs or past the MPs. Smuggle is the skill for this job. It gives your character a knowledge of what folks like customs guards look for and how to conceal those things.

To use Smuggle, your character has to spend time preparing—at least 15 minutes. A friendly Editor might give you a bonus if you spend a lot of time at the task. When the time comes to sneak the thing by, make a skill check. Succeed, and the guard doesn't notice. Fail, and it's bad news for your character.

The Smuggle skill works on objects of virtually any size, provided you've got the means to hide them. Sure, your character can try to make off with the UFO wreckage the Air Force is hiding at Roswell, but only

in a big truck! (P.S. Sooner or later somebody will notice it is gone.)

Smug Liberalism (Pos). *The game designer would like to point out that lots of people know things that are completely useless—like the ability to glue buttons into a mosaic of Fido. Therefore, he feels it fair to include a complete useless skill in this list.*

Your character can say anything so it sounds both far more pretentious than it has any right to be and vehemently politically correct. Besides being vastly amusing, smug liberalism has no other practical purpose but to annoy people. If your character really needs to annoy someone, use Smug Liberalism to get under that person's skin. Say something smugly liberal and then use the skill check to see if it hit the right "hot buttons."

SECULAR HUMANISM*. Your character has learned the ultimate height of Smug Liberalism—the "Rationalism is everything" stage. He or she can spout things about how science is the superior way to understand all events and behaviors. This gives your character a +10 when dealing with scientists and those educated at certain liberal colleges. Honest, hard-working folk tend to find this whole view annoying, however, so your character has a -5 (don't use this enhancement at all) when dealing with farmers and those from small towns. Adherents of non-scientific beliefs are even more appalled and have a -10 on their reaction rolls.

Sneak (Ref). *Teenage ninja stalks space alien ambassador!* Whether light like butterfly or heavy as an ox, your character gets around lightly and quickly—or at least tries to. Any time your character tries to move unnoticed, the Editor secretly makes a skill check. Your character doesn't find out if the sneaking succeeds or fails until he or she gets away or is caught.

Source (Cha). *What's a reporter without good sources? Nothing—that clown's useless, hopeless, completely without a clue! Aren't you glad you chose this skill? Live it up—lord it over those bums who wouldn't know a good source if it came up and bit them! You're a real reporter, not some hack. . . .*

Source is one those journalistic type skills the reporters for real papers consider important. It allows



your character to come up with a name or a position for just about any field or topic—somebody who *might* be a good source of information. This doesn't mean the source is friendly or even knows your character. More than likely, your character remembered the name from something else read at some other time. All the skill does is give your character a name and an idea of where to contact that person.

Spiritualism (Psy). Although channelers, crystal-techs, and etheric healers have co-opted most of the psychic market, spiritualism is still around. Your character knows a lot about the subject and, as usual, can remember most of it on a skill check. Since the new age types have taken over most of the business, Spiritualism is mostly useful for historical background.

Spiritualism does have one sort-of-practical use. Your character can attempt *readings* on others. A reading can be about the future or advice for a personal problem, ranging from love life to hexes. The reading can use cards, tea leaves, or whatever. They aren't particularly accurate, so go ahead and say anything you want in the reading. A smart reader keeps things really vague and general, so that it will *look* like something actually came true (and also so the bunco squad can't shut them down).

Editor's Note: *Of course, this is the TABLOID! game, so you can't let your players off that easy. Every time a character does a reading, secretly make a skill check. If a success margin of 1 is rolled, make a note of what was said because, like it or not, the reader was more in touch with the psychic powers than they ever thought!*

Of course, predictions are like the monkey's paw. They never work out the way the characters want.

STIGMATA*. This curious psychic mystery has fallen out of favor in recent years, which is why its now known pretty much only to students of Spiritualism. Stigmata are strange signs and marks on the body (or sometimes on statues if you really want to be generous). Birthmarks that look like E***s, rashes that match crop circles, and bleeding statues all fall under this category. Your character knows the famous and recent incidents and the "scientific" explanations used to dismiss these events.

Spontaneous Human Combustion (Lea). *I'll bet your mother told you not to play with matches, but did she ever tell you not to spontaneously combust? Well, darn, if it's not one thing, it's another!*

Believe it or not, people sometimes just burst into flames. Nobody knows why they do it, but a lot of people have guesses. Maybe it's sinister psychic forces at work. Maybe it's a freak of physical science we haven't figured out. Maybe it's just the risk of drinking gin and smoking cigarettes. Whatever it is, there's been some reported instances of people just going up in smoke.

Your character's read up on the history of SHC (as those in the know like to call it), including famous cases and theories. A skill check is required to recall specific details of any case. Since nobody really knows what causes SHC, your character can't trigger it or control it. (Sorry about that, pyros.) Your character can identify cases of SHC by their telltale features.

Survival Instinct (Wil). *Man dodges death when he drops umbrella!* This skill is a blessing to both the accident-prone and the risk-takers of the world. With it, your character develops a certain toughness in the face of death. When faced with situations of life or death, your character can instantly deduce what's the right thing to do in order to keep breathing—unless the skill check is blown.

On the other hand, if the skill check is made, your character, when faced by a life-threatening situation, knows the correct course of action. Take the following situation, for example. While flying over the Yukon, the bush pilot of your plane suddenly has a heart attack and slumps over the controls, plunging the plane into a dive! This is probably a life-threatening situation, seeing as how the ground is headed straight toward the nose of the plane. It's a good time to use Survival Instinct, you figure. The check is good, so the Editor says, "There's no time to pull it out of a dive! Your character can only get to the back of the plane and prepare for a crash." To wit, this is what you do.

WHAM! The plane hits the ground, but your Survival Instinct has prepared you for this! You bounce along, get battered and bruised, but live. Scrambling





out of the wreckage, you tumble into a snow bank. It's cold. It doesn't take brains to figure out you will freeze, but what to do? Time for Survival Instinct again. After another successful check, your character is building a decent snow cave, using parts of the plane wreckage. Later, when in need of food, Survival Instinct might tell the character what's safe to eat, and what's not.

Survival Instinct also works in urban settings. Your character can estimate which dark streets are likely to have muggers, how to placate a vicious pit bull, and where're the best places to ask for handouts.

Tri-Ambidextrous (Ref). *Learn the secrets of the Orient! Master the deadly arts of Gitchie-Wichie-Fu and become a secret master of this ancient martial art. All for a dollar!*

Your character has studied martial arts and can make up to three attacks in hand-to-hand combat (all at the normal chance of success) and do normal damage (see the **TABLOID!** Weapons Table on page 94).

Beyond fighting, Tri-Ambidextrous also lets characters try up to three actions at once. They could, for example, be taking notes while driving a car while talking on the car phone—all at once. They could also be writing, driving, and trying to catch the hand grenade some enraged cultists hurled at them! Obviously, doing more than one thing at a time requires a skill check. Blow it, and the consequences could be very unpleasant.

Trilateralist Commission (Lea). *You think your money belongs to you, don't you? Shows what you know. They are out there, taking your money and using it. They only want you to think it's yours.*

One of the more obscure conspiracies out there, the Trilateralist Commission, made up of bankers, industrialists, and statesmen (all who deny any sinister plotting), is out to control world trade for its own profit. Nothing is too sinister or involved for its members—stock market crashes, money laundering, assassinations, even wars, so long as it all makes them richer and more powerful.

Your character has been studying up on the doings of this shadowy bunch and knows lots of unproved facts about them. If they knew this, they wouldn't like

this. They might even get concerned. And when they're concerned, they take action.

FREEMASONS*. The Freemasons are one of the oldest secret societies around, so everybody knows a lot about them. What most people don't know are their ties to the Trilateralist Commission. Is it just coincidence that the members of one are members of the other? What's the link between these two secret groups? Your character's been doing some checking, and it may be more sinister than anyone ever thought. **JFK ASSASSINATION CONSPIRACIES***. Why was JFK killed? Was it because his plans to pull out of Vietnam threatened the interests of a few powerful weapons makers? Did he have a secret plan to reform the banking system and make it open to the people. Was he about to crack the link between organized crime and the Trilateralist Commission? Your character has been working on gathering all the right clues. Someday the truth will be heard!

Trivia (Lea). *Let's see . . . during what minor South American border war was a sailor killed by cheese fired from a cannon? Which Beatle wrote the most Top Ten hits?*

The answers to these and other completely useless questions just might be on the tip of your character's tongue—if you can manage to make a successful skill check. Your character has spent a lifetime memorizing useless facts. Of course, now now that your character has a job as a tabloid reporter, these useless facts suddenly become useful! Isn't it amazing how fate works these things out?

UFO Groups (Lea). *Aliens are going to destroy the world! I know because they told me so—but don't worry because they're sending a spaceship first to take those of us who know to safety. Sell everything! Go stand on a mountain! The UFOs will only come and rescue people who are ready!*

Sure. First they want to blow up the earth, and then they want to save people on it. This kind of logic is what makes alien beings superior to the rest of us. It doesn't make sense because we're not enlightened enough to understand it—but, hey! There's people out there who do understand, so what do they do? They found UFO groups to clue the rest of us in!





There are UFO groups all over the world and about the only thing they agree on is that there are aliens out there. The problem is, every group seems to get contacted by a different bunch of aliens. One group believes in Enterians, another in Antarians. A little old lady in California has been in contact with unnamed enlightened beings from the planet Verg, while a little old lady in Idaho has been getting visits from Le-Roc, an enlightened being from an unnamed planet. Not only that, all these aliens are smarter than us, nicer than us. . . .

Well, not all of them. There's other groups that are clued into the real truth. These folks know (don't ask how) that the aliens are already here, secretly trying to take over the Earth. This usually starts with the USA (because it has earned it!), although there's more than a few working with the Nazis in the Amazon jungles. *Aliens are dangerous! Don't trust them!*

Finally, there are groups that sit on the fence. Maybe there are aliens, and maybe not. Maybe they are good, and maybe not. These groups are boring.

Your character has been cataloging these UFO contactees as fast as possible. After all, most of these groups surface once and then disappear into obscurity. On a skill check, your character can remember details about a given group, categorize it (aliens—friend, foe, or scientific inquiry?), and can also classify the type of alien (and UFO) the group is keen on.

Vanishings (Lea). People disappear all the time, but how many go like Judge Crater? Walk around a corner and—poof! Sure, some people claim he just skipped out on his responsibilities, but what if *they* got him?

This skill gives your character all the facts that can be remembered (through a skill check) about famous disappearances. What really happened to Amelia Earhart? She didn't just sink at sea. What about those missing flights over the Bermuda Triangle—was it really bad weather every time? And don't forget the crew of the *Marie Celeste*—surely they weren't all washed overboard at once!

ALIEN ABDUCTION*. A whole subcategory of disappearances includes those folks who get taken away by UFOs. Most of the time these abductees (as they like

to call themselves) show up a couple days later, dazed and with wild stories of aliens capturing them and examining them aboard the UFO. Sometimes these memories don't come out until weeks or years later, under hypnosis.

Now skeptics might say these are elaborate excuses for that three-day bender or cheap attempts at fame and publicity. The fact that there have been hoaxes doesn't help the matter. Still, some of these stories just might be real!

SUPERNATURAL DISAPPEARANCES*. Sometimes you just can't blame an alien for an unexplained disappearance. If not them, what's a body to do? *The supernatural!* Sure, there are all kinds of strange powers out there humanity does not understand. Why, when Fred vanished off the face of the Earth, maybe it was the deros that got him! Or maybe he was taken by a ghost into another dimension! If he was sailing off-shore, the sirens might have lured him away—after all nobody ever found his sailboat!

Unfortunately, over the years, as belief in science grows, there have been fewer and fewer reports of supernatural vanishings. These days, people vanish scientifically. Still, a person never knows when there are might be a resurgence in zombie kidnappings or ghostly shanghais.

Video Camera (Int). *Hey kids, let's make a movie!* Your character can handle a video camera, including the typical local news rig used to make the nightly broadcast seem more important by airing lots of pointless live reports from low-paid TV journalists (as they like to be known). All your character needs is the gear.

Editor's Note: Normally, you secretly make the skill check anytime this skill is used, since the camera operator has no way of knowing what's really on the tape. However, some video rigs now let the camera operator check the work on a small screen while filming. If you gave such a nice setup to a bunch of louts like your player characters, then they can roll their own Video Camera check—and it's all your fault.

Voodoo (Psy). You say voodoo, I say vodun. You say zombie, I say zombi. Voodoo, vodun. Zombie, zombi. Body parts are fallin' off!





This skill gives your character an understanding of the mysterious world of voodoo (as portrayed by the movie-makers of Hollywood, of course!) or vodun (as it's sometimes known by those people that actually practice this Caribbean religion). He or she can spot voodoo warnings a mile away, deduce if somebody's been cursed, identify zombies (before they actually attack someone) and address a loa (a voodoo god) in the proper form.

Your character can also try to work simple voodoo curses or lift them. This is hardly a scientific or certain process and is affected by too many variables to ever make it anything more than a really iffy thing. When your character wants to lay or lift a voodoo curse, you must make a skill check and achieve an S2 result. On a failure margin of 7, your character has instead inflicted bad luck on him- or herself, causing a +5 on all die rolls until another proper practitioner can undo your character's work. This can, of course, be the basis for a whole other adventure (probably in someplace exotic like New Orleans or Haiti) all by itself!

MUMMIES*. Mummies are dead, and they walk around, so they are kind of like zombies, right? So, it makes sense that your character's knowledge of voodoo leads to an interest in mummies. (Say, "Yes!" or *your character doesn't get to use this skill!*). Your character knows about mummies, how they are made, what kind of curses they haul around, and how to best avoid getting in trouble with one.

ZOMBIES*. Your character is a big zombie fan and not just of those that eat folks in splatter movies. You can spot zombies in a crowd and know the things a person is supposed to do to get rid of one.

Way with Machines (Psy). Remember how Grandma could always kick the old Oldsmobile when it wouldn't start and, sure enough, it would turn right over? Or that geeky little cousin who could heal TVs by touching them? That's what this skill is all about—that mysterious knack for making machines work even when they don't want to.

To use this power, your character first has to have a faulty machine. (Too bad everything works perfectly in the modern world!) Once one is found, make a

skill check. At the same time, the character's got to do something to the machine—kick it, bang on it, turn a random knob, or shake it a lot—anything that seems appropriate will do. If the skill check succeeds, the machine suddenly works! On a failure margin of 8, your character really broke it.

When combined with Fix Coffee Machine and Use Fax Machine, this skill will convince others your character is a techno-god.

Weird Science (Lea). Hey, there's all sorts of scientific miracles out there that *they don't want you to know about!* The Power Companies squish the perpetual motion patents, the Oil Companies buy up all the superfuel patents, the Auto Companies squelch the motorless cars, the Air Force doesn't want anyone else having anti-grav engines, and the Phone Companies are awfully nervous about those telepathic amplifiers.

Try as they might, it's impossible to keep all these advances a secret from the general populace forever. Eventually the truth will be revealed. *The people will not be denied!* Science can't be bottled up! Progress moves ever forward!

Your character habitually searches through the fringe of scientific journals and non-scientific rantzines for the ideas being blasted as "crackpot." He or she knows how the reactionary scientific community locks out anything that doesn't match its ideas of "reality." The character can talk knowledgeably about anti-grav motors and broadcast energy towers, and not only that, he or she's seen enough plans and patents to tell yet another hare-brained scheme from pure scientific genius. Now, if only the *fools* would listen!

CLONES*. Cloning, the modern frontier—*hah!* Hitler's scientists figured this one out years ago! There's proto-Hitlers floating in incubation tanks all around the world. The Soviets learned the secret of it when they overran Germany! The US cloned JFK before he died, and they know how to do it because of what was learned from the wreckage at Roswell. *Or is it because the aliens have been replacing world leaders with their own clones?*

Why won't the fools listen?!



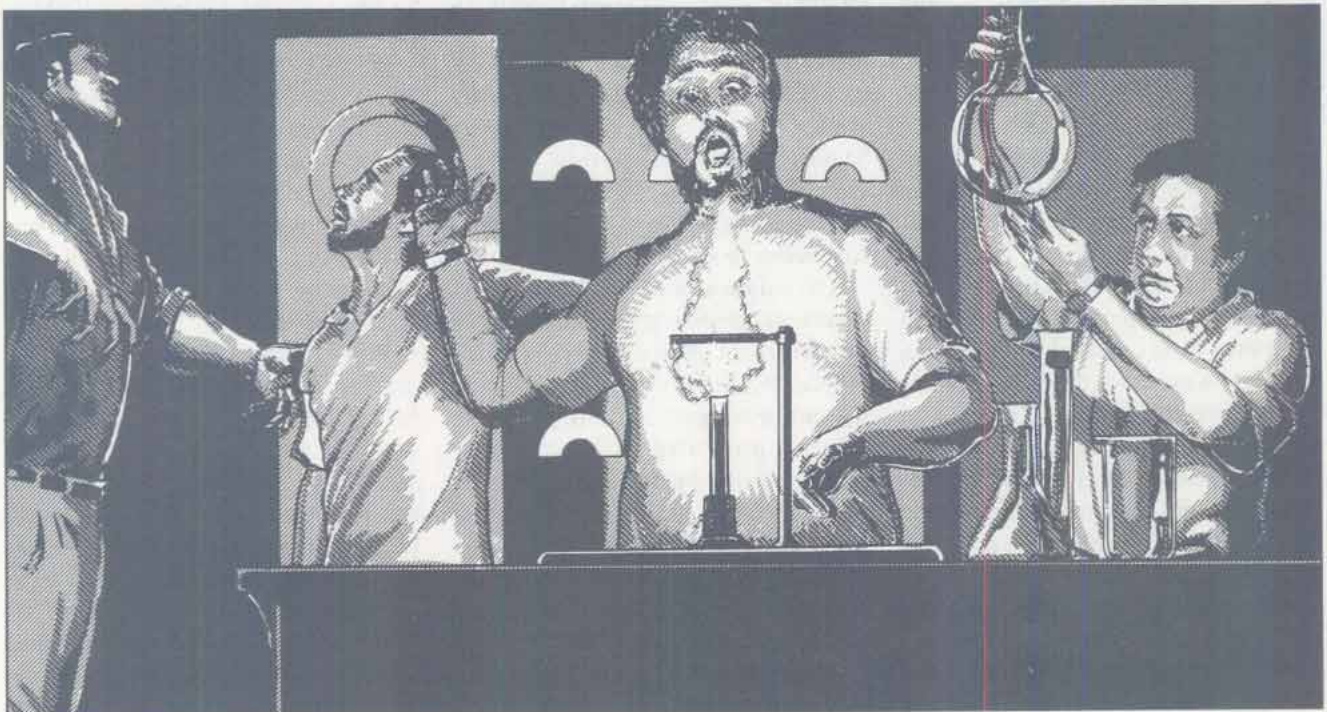
MEDICAL MIRACLES*. The government, because it is immoral, has been withholding radical new treatments and drugs for all the world's diseases for years—*because the pharmaceutical companies don't want to heal the world*. Think about it—wouldn't it be great if a simple cheap drug came out and cured everything from cancer to the common cold? *No, it wouldn't—not if you're a drug company exec!* "We don't want people getting healthy. Healthy people don't buy drugs!"

Your character has been tracking this mockery of the Hippocratic oath for some time and knows how the AMA has mocked orgone generators and macrobiotic diets, how the FDA has buried promising drugs and treatments under years of testing, and how the pharmaceutical companies are systematically funding the destruction of the rain forests so that no cheap, natural alternatives will be found!

Fools! They are using their "medicine" to hold you in bondage to their amoral system. You are all being used like sheep!

PERPETUAL MOTION*. Energy makes the world go round—just the way the oil companies like it. Pump oil. Dig coal. Build nuclear plants. It all makes the Power Mis-Utilities rich! Who cares if there's a way to make more energy than you spend? There's oil and coal to last our lifetime, and when that's gone, there'll always be nuclear power! Who needs to worry about the future? Mock the inventors of perpetual motion machines. Teach the children that science says it can't work. Your character knows, however, that it can work.

UFO TECH*. There are some things the government doesn't want people to know—like the fact that those UFOs everybody sees are really secret Air Force test programs. The military has had UFO technology for years. Of course they know how to do it—they learned from the Roswell crash. Most of the UFOs that have been seen since are homemade! The military just doesn't want to share their technology with anybody else. In fact, they're so paranoid they won't even use them in real wars.





Hitler's **Terror Children!**

By ROGER E. MOORE

BRAZIL—The twisted descendants of top Nazi officials who fled to South America after World War II are reported to have established a cannibalistic slave empire deep within the Amazon rain forest in Brazil, according to unnamed top US State Department officials. It was revealed in a secret interview with these sources, conducted inside a Dempster Dumpster near the White House, that the Nazi slave empire also received funding in the 1980s from overzealous American officials who thought the neo-Nazis would use the funding to fight an alleged Communist insurgency in the jungle. Instead, the dwarflike goose-steppers have used the money to finance dance lessons, pay for dental bills, and buy foreign-made land mines which the stunted cannibals use for "artistic purposes."

This shocking information came directly to Washington, DC, from the

heart of the rain-forest hell itself. In December, 1993 (summertime in the southern hemisphere), an emaciated old man staggered out of the rain forest and into the camp of Mortimer Weems and Bertha Grobnik, two volunteers working for the Worldwide Amazonian Macro-Biotic Organization, a group attempting to preserve the jungle and use its products in high-cost, nutrition-free health foods.

The old man, once fed a macrobiotic dinner and given rest, spilled out a tale of horror that chilled the blood of his helpful WAMBO samaritans. He and his entire village, he said, had been taken captive five years earlier by mangy, pink-eyed, sharp-toothed dwarfs who dressed in black leather but had completely white skin and hair. The dwarfs spoke a peculiar language that the old man repeated to Weems and Grobnik, who identified it as a mixture of Portuguese, German, English, and Esperanto. They were heavily

**Cannibal Nazi Vampire
Dwarfs Turn Amazon
Into Green Hell;
Line Dancing, NAFTA
Encouraged By
Fourth Reich**

armed with machetes and machine pistols, which they used to execute all of the villagers' goats while crying loudly, "Traitor!", "Communist!", and "Unbeliever!"

The villagers were then herded for miles, deep into the unexplored reaches of the jungle, where they were led into a cave. There the villagers discovered a vast, mazelike, underground city, inhabited by hundreds of the wretched, albino monsters and many unfortunate slaves from other jungle tribes. Huge red flags marked with a unique emblem (which the old man identified as a swastika) were hung everywhere, and twice a day, the pale, ragged dwarfs paid homage to two old photographs of their "Fuehrers."

When taken to a local hospital, the old man was shown a history book, and he quickly pointed to the pictures of Adolf Hitler and the notorious Dr. Josef Mengele as the ones in the photos. Hitler was revered by the dwarfs for his "foresight," said the old man, and Mengele for using cloning techniques to actually bring the dwarfs into being. Before his death in Argentina some years ago, Dr. Mengele would visit the dwarfs and exhort them to





"stay pure, keep the Fourth Reich intact, and brush their sharpened teeth regularly."

In the claustrophobic caverns under the Amazon rain forest, the old man and his fellow slaves were forced to perform housekeeping chores under threat of being eaten alive. Aside from being made to polish the dwarfs' extensive skull collections, donate blood, and mend the tattered black clothing the dwarfs loved to wear, they were subjected to day-long brainwashing lectures and even country-and-western line dancing. The old man had managed to escape only by hiding in a garbage can filled with the dwarfs' worn-out line-dancing boots. He wept as he told of his ordeal, and could not bear to hear "Achy, Breaky Heart" played in his presence.

Their vile captors, meanwhile, spent their leisure time learning line dancing to improve their communal bonding (learning how to "stay in step," as they put it), making alcoholic beverages from jungle fruits, and filling out forms requesting more foreign aid from the United States to continue their battle against "Communists and traitors" within their territories. The Nazi dwarfs were reportedly quite frustrated that their source of funding had dried up recently, leaving them with enormous dental bills resulting from having their teeth filed into points by local dentists.

The dwarfs lately had studied American and Mexican newspapers and had decided to apply for admission into NAFTA, believing that they could export duty-free alcoholic beverages to pay for their other expenses. Failing

that, they were planning to offer their services as instructors in dance classes and middle-management seminars and other areas in which they are skilled.

Of course, Weems and Grobnik quickly reported their discovery to the American embassy in Brazil, but the report was apparently thrown away without even being shredded once it reached Washington, DC. The Washington sources of this story found the report by accident and felt immediately obligated to make it public, though for a small fee to cover their nutritional costs at a liquor store two blocks away. "We hope that the President will realize the dangers of supporting these bums," said one source. "Anyone who would enforce line dancing is low enough to do anything—even vote Republican."





The TABLOID! Reporter's Beat

Get to Work!

Congratulations, your characters are now tabloid reporters, all set and ready to go! All they need is a desk and a job. So what do they do?

They do what every reporter does—go out and report the news. Since they're tabloid reporters, they don't report just any news. It's got to have a special angle which is, in a word, *sensational!!!* Let those dime-a-dozen journalists cover boring foreign civil wars, presidential debates, leading economic indicators, and the latest policy crises. The only way your characters would care is if they could get a good headline out of it. Below are some examples of good and bad headlines—from a tabloid point of view.

Example #1

Bad: President Meets with Japanese Prime Minister

Good: *President Marries Japanese Prime Minister*

Very Good: *President Caught in Bed with Japanese Leader*

Excellent: *Prez Exposes Japanese PM as Alien!*

Example #2

Bad: HUD Reports Record Number of Homeless

Good: *Homeless Yuppies Demand Condos*

Very Good: *Homeless Campers Stalk Yosemite*

Excellent: *Homeless Nomads Terrorize Midwest, Led by Reincarnated Attila the Hun*

Example #3

Bad: Bad Weather Delays Shuttle Launch

Good: *NASA Fears Terrorist Attack*

Very Good: *Aliens Threaten to Destroy Shuttle!*

Excellent: *The King to NASA: "Stay Out of Space!"*

So, the first step to becoming a good tabloid reporter is to develop an instinct for a good story. Take a look at your character's skills—these are clues to a hot lead. Aliens, conspiracies, ghosts, UFOs, strange monsters, and more are what to put in print.

The Rules of the News

To get the most out of the **TABLOID!** game, your character really needs to do more than just bumble around hoping for something exciting to happen. By god, your character's a reporter—so act like one!

Of course, it helps to have an idea of what to do and how to do it. Hence, here are the unofficial **TABLOID!** *Rules to Better Reporting*, *The Journalist's Little Book of Ethics*, and *Forbert's Principles of Good Photography*. Learn them and use them, trooper, or your character will be working for the *Walworth Shopper Weekly* in no time at all!

Rules to Better Reporting

Rule # 1: *A good reporter finds the news—don't just wait for it to happen!*

To get a story, a reporter needs a place to start—a lead. Since this is a game, you could just sit back and not worry. After all, your Editor has to give you a lead to start the adventure—but what if the Editor can't think of one?

Hey, why not have some fun? Keep an eye on the *real* news of the world and see if you can beat your Editor to a good story idea. When you come up with one, have your character pitch it to the paper's editor. "Hey boss, I think there might be something in these crop circles in Kansas. How about I check it out?"

Another way to find the news is to keep track of sources. A source is anyone who can give information. It doesn't have to be a hot tip or a leak. Lots of sources are people looking to get into the news—crackpot scientists with their latest ideas (remember cold fusion?), Hollywood types with awful movies to plug (just watch the talk shows), businessmen with products to sell (the Amazing Miracle Cleaner!), and just plain lonely kooks (like your cousin Elmo). In exchange for a little free publicity, these types are usually more than happy to steer your character onto a good story.

Don't worry about *verifying* the sources—that's something for real papers and real reporters, not your character!



Rule #2: Get Good Quotes. Every story needs people making statements—it makes the story all that much more real. That means your character should take notes. Tape phone calls without permission, use a Dictaphone at all times. Who cares if it's not ethical—this is a game, not the real world!

Get quotes that make the famous sound stupid. (*"I mean, I think, you know, that my music is really, you know, even better than the King, like, you know."*)

Get quotes from scientists that prove they're pencil-necked geeks. (*"It is, of course completely possible for men to understand the chimpanzee's speech. All I have to do is change a single gene."*)

Get quotes that make ordinary stiffs—like the kind who buy tabloids—sound like smart and reliable witnesses. (*"Then I looked up and saw it hovering right over the trees. It shined a big, black spotlight all over the road."*)

Get quotes that make kooks sound even kookier. (*"We will bury you!"—Nikita Khrushchev*)

Rule #3: Who? What? When? Where? Why? Give them enough facts to make it seem real, but not enough to bore them.

Rule #4: Make it local or make it bloody. If that UFO sighting doesn't have Americans (or whatever nationality) involved, don't bother—unless the body count is above ten.

Rule #5: The Severed Arm Shot. This goes with rule #4. If your character doesn't get photos, don't bother, even if the body count is above ten. The more sensational and graphic, the better, too. Don't worry too much about focus and composition—darkrooms are made to fix that.

Rule #6: Write what sells. Your character's not doing this for charity, you know. If nobody wants to read it, then what good is it?

Rule #7: Don't let the facts get in the way. When the real story is boring, *embellish!* Just remember, there're always these things called *libel suits*.

The Journalist's Little Book of Ethics

I swear that, in the pursuit of my trade:

I will only report the truth—as I understand it. Truth is a slippery thing.

I will not knowingly slander or defame another—unless I can get away with it.

I will never reveal my sources—that way nobody knows if I made it all up.

I will report all quotes accurately—unless I couldn't get an interview.

I will never inject personal bias into a report—I'll just pretend it's someone else's.

I will present both sides of every issue—at least in one sentence.

I will present both sides of every issue—even if one is completely loony.

I will attribute all names and photos accurately—even for the ones I make up.

Forbert's Principles of Good Photography

Don't forget the film. More good shots are ruined because somebody forgot to load the camera. Load the camera!

Take off the lens cap. This is the second-leading cause of failed photos. Load the camera, and take off the lens cap, idiot!

Don't get too close. A good photographer keeps a distance from the subject. This lets you run if the other side starts swinging, and it ensures that potentially embarrassing details (like those wires) aren't clearly seen.

Blood? Good.

Gross? Good.

Can we use a standard file photo instead? It never hurts to save film.

Does the photo capture the public mood? This one applies to movie stars, musicians, and professional wrestlers. Starlets high on the popularity lists (and who have good chests) should be photographed flat-





teringly—lots of cleavage and smiling is good. Popular males should be bare-chested in a small swimsuit if possible. (Publicists usually have extras of these.)

Bad boy (and especially bad girl) stars should be captured looking their worst—swinging their fists, swearing at the camera, drunk, sweaty, half-awake, and with facial expressions that say, “Look, I really *am* an obnoxious idiot who deserves every bad thing ever said about me!”

The darkroom is a god. Photo retouching is a modern miracle. Trust us.

REPRINTED WITH WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM *CELEBRITY NUDE PHOTOGRAPHY, THE FORBERT WAY*, WORTHING AND PLATZ, ANAHEIM, 1991

Tools of the Trade

To help your character in actually reporting, there are a few useful items that no reporter should be without. Because we know your character will be an ace, all of these are provided free as soon as he or she takes that first assignment.

Press Pass. Even though he or she works for a tabloid, your character gets a press pass just like a real reporter. It looks good in a hat brim or worn around the neck like a badge. If it were a pass for an impressive paper, like a major city daily, your character might be able to use it to get backstage at a concert or receive free tickets to the ball game. However, your character’s press pass is not for a major paper, network, or news magazine. It may impress the yokels, but for everybody else, it’s more bluff than clout.

Dictaphone. Welcome to the electronic age! Your character has a cheap pocket Dictaphone. If you say he or she is using it often enough, then you can bluff your Editor anytime you forget an important fact. Smile, lie, and say, “I remember that! It’s on my Dictaphone.”

Telephone Answering Machine. Make up your own vapid greeting—it should sound impressive to potential leads, sources, and future employers. Being smart, your character also has one of those machines that let the owner call to find out what messages have come in, change the out-going message, and even eaves-

drop on anyone in the house. Too bad all this takes Use Fax Machine to understand.

Camera. If your character has Photography skill, he or she has the cheapest SLR camera possible—no autofocus, no auto-wind, and no film. If your character does not have Photography skill, he or she can get a disposable camera from the local drugstore.

Wood-Cased, Solid-State, Graphite Input Device and Portable, Multi-Partitioned, Cellulose Data Storage Unit. A pencil and notepad.

Plane Tickets and Hotel Rooms. If your character gets sent on assignment by the Editor, or if your character convinces the Editor there’s a story in it, the plane tickets are on the house. Of course, your character travels on the cheapest airlines at the cheapest times and stays at the cheapest motels. This means your character travels the Red Eye, eating “complimentary” peanuts in quarters an ant would call cramped to finally get a room at a place that was featured in a horror movie.

Extras

In addition to the above devices and services, there are other tools your character might want to buy. (For more about the Savings Account and to use it, see page 84–87.) Because your character has to spring for these, you may not start the game with them.

Portable Computer with Fax/Modem. Portable computers are very handy for the modern reporter. With one, a reporter can organize notes, write the story, and send it in—either by fax or bulletin board—all from a motel room where the boss never needs to know what your character was really doing. A computer will cost around \$2,000, and they have been known to break, lose files, and have their batteries drain at the most inconvenient times. Thieves and co-workers walk off with them all the time, too.

Car. This is only really necessary if most stories are local—the type of thing for which your Editor will say, “Take your car down there and check it out.” For reporters in places like New York and LA, this is not uncommon. On the other hand, does your character really want to deal with rush hour traffic?





Rosicrucians Contacted Aliens!

Ancient Link Established by Scientist's Hoax!

By KAREN S. BOOMGARDEN

One of the nation's foremost authorities on UFO contact has been revealed as a fraud because he cribbed his latest book from an old tract on Rosicrucians!

Whitney Scribner, famous author and screenwriter, admitted to the fraud in a news conference at his home in Marin County. "I'm under tremendous pressure from my current publisher to bring out X number of books in a five-year period," a downcast Scribner stated. "I know it was wrong, but it sure made this book a breeze to write!" Apparently, the bogus book writer took an 18th-century publication on Christian Rosenkreuz and the Rosy Cross Society, changed a few names and occurrences, and handed the manuscript to his agent for delivery to the publisher, along with a letter describing the content as "a manifesto from the Outer Worlds."

All would have been rosy, had the editor assigned to the project not been a descendant of Mr. Rosenkreuz. He recognized the work for what it was, almost as soon as he had read the first

page, and blew the whistle on Scribner. "Granted, this work was in the public domain long ago and technically therefore is not stolen," sniffed Dane Holzheim, Assistant Editor in the UFO/Folklore section of the unnamed publishing house. "However, this is my ancestor he's defaming with this flagrant theft! I can't stand for that. I'm filing a suit in small claims court for defamation of ancestor's character."

However, all is not lost. The current head of the Rosicrucians, Scribe DZ242, is pleased with the publication and wants to purchase all rights to it. He plans to bring out the book under the house imprint, Pink Cross Press. "Mr. Scribner has done a great service by showing the public that Rosicrucianism can relate to many experiences of life. The fact that the content is still credible after the changes he made is proof of the firm foundation the order was built on." Attorneys for both Mr. Scribner and the order are planning to meet sometime in the next three months to iron out details of the contract.

Plans are also under way to update the advertisements run by the order in

many mainstream publications. The new copy will include mention of Mr. Scribner's book, under its upcoming title, *Gray Men and Rosy Crosses: A Social History*.

Scribe DZ242 had no comment about the possible link between Rosicrucian knowledge and alien sources. Many historians have theorized such a connection, based on the tenets of the sect and the symbolism of the Rosy Cross, which some believe to represent Betelgeuse.

Literary critic Samuel Johnson, also a noted ancient-astronaut scholar, had this to say: "It has long been felt that intelligent interstellar beings may have provided the basis for the Rosicrucian belief system. It is my personal feeling that Mr. Scribner serendipitously stumbled onto the connection that has been there all along, and that the publication of this text will be a great step toward mainstream acceptance of both extraterrestrial intelligence and the Rosicrucians, as well as their obvious links. Both deserve our respect and attention; we have a lot to learn, and they have a lot to teach us."





Reporting Done Right

Filing the Story

As an extra bonus in the **TABLOID!** universe, you don't just get to play an adventure to get the story—you get to write it up too!

Oh, boy.

Hauling out the ancient typewriter or the nearly-as-old dedicated word processor systems that you have to buy disks from Bali for, you begin wrestling with the issue at hand. You've got all the facts, and those you don't have, you can make up just fine. You've got all of this screaming in your head to get out. That blank paper or screen is begging to be filled, but for some reason, you just can't find it within yourself to punch that first key. You've contracted that most horrific of diseases discussed only in frightened whispers by those who make their living by the written word. You've got a bad case of writer's block!

Don't worry! There's help. You don't have to go through the laborious process of creating every sentence and paragraph, not when you can use the never-to-be-patented AMAZING ENGINE system of story creation. It's as simple as picking one from Column A and another from Column B. Okay, there's at least one more column, but you still don't have to think! Not much, at least.

At the end of any adventure or any time you think your character has a good story, you can "phone it in." When you do this, all you need do is photocopy page 134 for use with the **TABLOID!** Story Writer! Complete stories in just a few steps. They used to laugh when you sat down at the typewriter, but now impress your fellow players and Editor! No thought required—and best of all, it's absolutely free! (Well, it comes with this game, but at least it didn't cost you anything extra. What a bargain!)

Heck, if you want, you don't even have to have your character go do the research legwork. You can make it all up if you like. Of course, eventually your character's editor is going to catch on to the fact that nothing you've written over the past few weeks bears even a passing resemblance to reality, and your character will end up on the next plane to the Antarctic with only one instruction: Get a real story or else!

The **TABLOID!** Story Writer

How to Use: Start at Step 1 and follow the instructions through to the end. When all else fails, make it up.

Step 1: The Headline

Build the headline for your story by filling in the blanks. Choose entries from the appropriate lists (just to get you warmed up) or use your own.

Who?	Does what?	To Whom?
Alien	Kidnaps	Aliens
The President	Sees	The President
Man	Kills	New Jersey
Wife	Cheats on	Hubby
UFO	Spots	Crop Circle
Nazi Scientist	Invents	Miracle Drug
Chimpanzee	Talks to	God
Reporter	Stalks	Nessie
Scientist	Clones	Hitler
Bigfoot	Visits	The King
Preacher	Evicts	S***n
JFK	Dines with	Russkies
Hunter	Captures	Bigfoot
Housewife	Hears	Angels
E***s	Serenades	The Queen

Get the idea?

Step 2: The Body Copy

A headline only goes so far. Your character needs to have a real story to go with it. Recognizing that story filing is a time-consuming process, we here have ransacked our brains to devise the simplest, least trying means of *writing that story!* It's as simple as a sing-along. Just turn to page 134 at the back of this book. There you'll find the **TABLOID!** Maybe-to-be-Patented Instant Copy Generator.

Permission is granted to photocopy this. (Remember, personal use only, or you'll make our legal department mad!)





Whenever you're ready to file a story, take a few moments to fill in the blanks of the framework. Every blank is well-defined for you—person, place, action—you remember all those parts of speech from grammar school, don't you? When you're done, read it out loud for your Editor (and the rest of the table) to evaluate. With any luck at all, you'll get more than a few laughs.

Step 3: Photo Captions

Of course, a story has to have photos. (*Remember the Severed Arm Shot?*) And all of your photos must have dazzling, snappy captions. Your character can't assume people will know those fuzzy blobs on the newsprint show the secret meeting between Nessie and her alien masters on the shores of Loch Ness. Come on, *This is America!* We're all lucky that we can barely read! Still, everyone will read a caption—because that way they don't have to read the rest of the article.

Knowing that 99% of American society will assume the caption is the entire story, your character has to make that caption exciting. Here's some rules of thumb you might find useful.

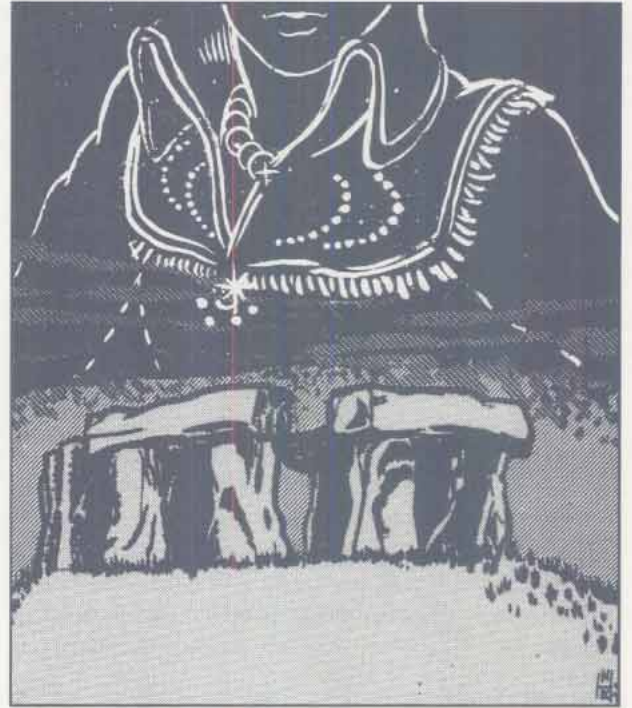
Ask, don't answer. For the above-mentioned photograph, the caption might read, "Is monster plotting world conquest?" The question caption is particularly useful for Hollywood gossip. "Who's that man with movieland's reigning soap queen?" works because most readers can't identify the little geeky guy next to her—assuming your character followed the principle to make the famous look stupid.

Imply there's more to the story. Actually the 99% of Americans are right on this—look at the picture and read the caption, and you do know the whole story. So *lie!* Make them think there's more to the story than meets the eye. For that Loch Ness photo write, "Nessie saves the world again!" The readers will pore through the article looking to find out how and why. When they can't find it, they'll just *imagine* they read it anyway!





Stone- henge Mystery Creator



FOUND!





By KAREN S. BOOMGARDEN

LONDON, England—Brandy Grant, noted Stonehenge scholar and student of ancient archaeology, claims to know who *really* built Stonehenge, the mysterious, circular monument of rough-hewn stone that has stood on Salisbury Plain here in England for thousands of years.

Claiming to have related the alignment of the stone circle to the Great Pyramid in Egypt and the Nazca Lines in Peru, Ms. Grant points to “irrefutable evidence” of the incredible knowledge of the creator. “It was someone who not only knew the future, but also knew the scientific relationships of the earth, moon, and sun. He knew the diameters, circumferences, and relative distances of all three celestial bodies. He also knew the alignments of the continents, because otherwise the (figures) wouldn’t be precise, which they are.”

Basing her calculations on the premise that a Biblical “day” is a thousand years, Ms. Grant performed complicated mathematical calculations showing that, at its completion, Stonehenge allowed anyone who knew the secret to predict the future. “The alignments point to dates as early as 3999 B.C., which is the birth of Seth, Adam and Eve’s third son, and as far ahead as A.D. 2730. You can see that this span of time (matches) the accepted Biblical (measurement) of a 7,000-year cycle. Each cycle begins and ends with events of immeasurable importance. Of course, we can’t tell what important events are supposed to happen that far ahead, but they must be historical turning points for the human race. Otherwise, they wouldn’t be accounted for in the monument’s calendar.”

One important point to note: In order for the calculations to work as Ms. Grant claims, one of the lines created by the stones’ alignment needs to be read as if it actually split the Sarsen Circle and the Aubrey Circle in half. How did she come by this key information? It certainly wasn’t by luck. “One night as I was poring over my calculations, a strangely bright light appeared in the hallway outside my study. As I raised my head to see what was happening, a glowing, winged figure entered my room. It was obviously an angel; it couldn’t have been anything else. I heard a celestial voice in my head, telling me that one of the lines needed to be moved. It was the only one capable of creating the proper alignment, without which none of the information contained within the monument’s architecture could be released.”

Another example of the information the angel referred to is the fact that the angle formed by lines pointing due north and toward the summer solstice sunrise, when both lines cross the center of the Sarsen Circle, is the same angle as the slope of the Great Pyramid at Giza. Since the pyramid was built before Stonehenge, the knowledge of this angle and its starry significance must have been known to the architect of both monuments—the same person, according to Ms. Grant.

The four Station Stones form a rectangle encasing the Bluestone Circle. When a line is drawn 118 degrees from North, beginning at the upper left Station Stone and splitting the rectangle in half on that angle, if you were to draw that line across the globe of Earth, it would cross right over the Great Pyra-

mid. According to Ms. Grant, “This could only happen at this precise latitude, so the creator had to know the continental relationships.”

Further tinkering with figures comparing the angles of passages within the Great Pyramid with angles formed at Stonehenge lead the author to point out additional matches between the geometry of the two structures. The angle of the Ascending Passage inside the pyramid is the same angle that points to the death of Christ on the stone calendar at Stonehenge, says Ms. Grant. Another point on that angle indicates the birth of Christ. At the time both these monuments were built, neither event had happened. The builder knew the future!

Other events include the last Jubilee (a special feast day that is figured in factors of seven by a fairly weird set of rules) of the Jewish people in Israel, before the Babylonian Captivity; the date of the Great Flood of Noah; the dates of completion of both Stonehenge and the Pyramid; the date of the first Punic War, between Rome and Carthage; and the beginning of the Protestant Reformation (begun by Martin Luther, father of the Lutheran Church) in Europe. Who was this architect who knew the geometry of the solar system and could so accurately predict the future?

“It was Elv . . .” The phone connection went dead, and a horrible buzzing sound came from the receiver. Rumors spread quickly of an assassination plot on the part of several Las Vegas casino owners, who are themselves rumored to be members of the Knights Templar. We will continue to report on related events as we get information.





What It's All About: Getting Paid!

Just Desserts

So, where's the payoff? Your character's not doing this for charity! Sure, there is the glory, the fame, and the public good but, face it, your character got into this line of work for the cash. When he or she lands an interview with Ambergris from Planet Glpht, it's not because the world needs to hear the alien's message of peace and harmony—it's to *get paid!* So, at the end of every adventure, your character has something to look forward to: a paycheck.

Every time the characters get their paychecks, they're added to their Savings Accounts. Soon your character's bank account will be bulging. *Journalism is the path to riches!* If only it were that simple.

Saving for the Future and What It Does For You

Your character's Savings Account is more than just a retirement plan. It serves as a measure of lifestyle, available cash, and experience points all in one. Just as fast as you earn points for your character's Savings Account, you are going to be spending them on everything from plane tickets to new skills. Just like the real world, hanging onto cash is harder than earning it.

In addition to the general measure of your character's living standards—as noted in the character creation section—the Savings Account also determines your character's monthly pocket money. This is the cash your character has for things other than rent, mortgage, utility bills, auto insurance, groceries, dry cleaning, video rentals, and the like. Those are the *planned* expenses, the costs that, if anyone really had the foresight, would all be figured into a household budget. That is the boring stuff, and this isn't a game about accounting adventures.

The only things worth tracking are special purchases: a camera, plane tickets to Thwickhampton, a special set of clothing, car rentals in the field, hotel rooms, hospitalization, and all those other *unplanned*

expenses. This is when you need to keep track of your character's spending, since spending too much is going to quickly take a bite out of his or her Savings Account.

Your character's pocket money is equal to the Savings Account \times \$50. This is the amount of money your character can spend in a single month without lowering the Savings Account total. Say your character has a Savings Account of 9, which means pocket money of \$450. The character's got to fly from Chicago to New York. No problem. Standby flights are cheap—say \$150—so as long as he or she eats and sleeps cheap, your character's not going to blow the budget.

Your character's Savings Account drops when spending exceeds any remaining pocket money. At that point, to cover the costs, your character has to withdraw another batch of pocket money from the Savings Account. Every point you reduce the Savings Account by gives another amount equal to what your character got at the start of the month. Spend too much, and you will bankrupt your character in a single month!

Say Marko Grouch has to go to New York to attend a UFO convention. No problem, right? It costs \$150, leaving Marko with \$300. When he gets there, he discovers the paper isn't paying for his room—\$150 a night with another \$50 for food! (*It was that little *&\$&^ down in accounting—he's had it in for Marko ever since he called his UFO sighting a hoax! When will Marko ever learn? Don't make the money weasels angry!*) The convention is three days long, so the total hotel bill is going to be \$600! It's time to get to the bank and withdraw another \$450 dollars by spending one point from the Savings Account to cover the cost. Add that to the \$300 left, and Marko can pay the bill and have \$150 to spare. Next month, his Savings Account is reduced to 8.

Suppose, at the convention Marko picks up a hot lead. *The enlightened ones are coming! In Utah! Real soon!* If he gets the scoop, the editor is going to love him. The only problem is tickets to Bryce Canyon from New York are running \$1,000 on such short notice. Oh well, anything for the sake of the story.



Marko takes the \$150 from his wallet and then lowers his Savings Account by 2, taking out \$900 ($\450×2). When he gets to Bryce Canyon, he's got \$50 left.

Buying Stuff

Hey, where's the long lists of equipment every role-playing game worth its salt is supposed to have? I want to load my character up like a *steroid-popping pack mule* and I can't do that without proper *equipment lists*! What kind of *weasel* game is this if it doesn't have detailed prices and weights of everything I want to buy? *I spent my money on this?*

Welcome to the real world. In the **TABLOID!** game, there are no equipment lists because—you don't need them. This is the real world—if you want know how much something costs, go downtown. Go to the mall! Get a Sears catalog—do they still make those? Use the prices you know. Call a travel agent. Ask your friends. (Don't ask your parents. They'll start wondering why you want a VW van, 500 pounds of coffee, a directional mike, six cameras, and a stun gun. They probably won't believe you if you tell them it's to go hunt Bigfoot.)

See, life really can be simple sometimes.

Economics 101

Now here's the funny thing. Any cash your character has left at the end of a month—*vanishes!* It just isn't possible to put pocket change back into the Savings Account. This is a little-known law of economics—and *you heard it here first!* The stuff just seems to find ways to get spent, so if your character has a lot of cash left, don't let it burn a hole in the character's pocket. Spend it.

But Wait, That's Not All!

Your character's Savings Account does more than just generate money. It doubles as experience points! It buys skills, improves abilities, and alters die rolls—all with a single stroke! Can your savings account do that for you?

At any time, your character can trade in Savings Account points for xps. One point of savings equals ten xps. For 1 point of savings, you can buy a 10-point adjustment to a die roll or 2 ability points to improve your character. For 5 points, you can buy a new skill for your character. For 10 points of savings, you can improve your player core by one die.

Experience points are like pocket money. When you cash them out of the Savings Account, anything you don't use is lost. Whether you buy one ability point or two, it doesn't matter—all 10 xp are used. You can't take 5 experience points and the rest in cash either—it's an all-or-nothing deal.

Chapter Eleven

Hey, your character's got it made, right? You even start the game with some experience, so why not spend it all on more skills and better scores?

Bankruptcy—that's why.

If your character ever hits 0 in the Savings Account, this is a bad thing. It is a bad thing called bankruptcy. At that point, your character has no money. All worldly possessions are taken away—cars, cameras, houses, real estate holdings, trusts, Swiss bank accounts—the works! Every time your character needs money, he or she can get the same amount as at the beginning of the month in exchange for a -1 to the Savings Account. Get to -10, and the local sheriff locks your character up for passing bad checks. This is not a good thing. For all intents and purposes, your character is out of the game, and you might as well create a new one.

To get out of bankruptcy, your character has to have a positive Savings Account—and 0 is not a positive number. Points earned for the Savings Account (given out by your kindly, generous Editor) are immediately snatched up by creditors to pay back debts (they reduce the size of your character's negative bank account)—but at a two-for-one rate. Every two points earned reduces your character's debt by one. Nobody said getting out of hock was easy.





Experienced Hands

If you've been playing in other AMAZING ENGINE system universes, you know that you could create a new **TABLOID!** character and shift experience points earned in other universes to that character. If you do, be sure to do it in units of ten, because every ten experience points equal one point of Savings Account.

Transfer enough experience, and it's obvious that your character is the black sheep of some wealthy family who doesn't want the folks to know that one of *their kind* has taken up such a slimy job. Your character was probably disowned right after saying, "I wanna be a tabloid reporter when I grow up!" Great-aunt Eurydice fainted when she heard that, and your own father had to cancel that order of business cards for his law firm with your name added as a junior partner.

You should be *ashamed* of yourself. Look what you've done to the family name! Just think of the money it'll take to repair it!

The Editorial Review

Look, if you're a player, you're not supposed to read this part—but who are we kidding? You bought this book (if you didn't, put it down!), so you can read the whole dang thing! When you're done, you'll be able to give the Editor all sorts of grief about being too cheap—but never too generous, eh?

A big job for the Editor, besides trying to control all this mayhem, is to evaluate the job the reporters are doing and then hand out the bonuses and raises. Normally this comes at the end of an adventure (after the reporters have filed their stories), but for long adventures, the Editor may want to call upon the *6 Month Review*. Basically this is an excuse to give out experience (in the form of the Savings Account) before the adventure ends.

There are three kinds of rewards the Editor can give out: bonuses, expense accounts, and paychecks. Each of these wonderful things is described in excruciating detail below.

The Bonus

Bonuses get added into next month's pocket money. (Accounting always takes their time paying up, just like in the real world.)

For example, the boss actually comes up and says, "Nice work, Wilkins, getting that photo of Bigfoot checking into the B***y F**d Clinic for detox. I'm putting you in for 100 bucks. Oh, and don't worry, the scars hardly show." The bonus just gets added to pocket money the character starts the next month with.

Bonuses should only be given for little successes—after all, a bonus can't be changed into experience points. It's only money—a *tool of the evil Trilateralist Conspiracy!*

The Expense Account

This reward is a way to let the characters keep their Savings Accounts intact—without making them bigger. That's handy for the character who's got just a disgusting lump of points sitting in his or her Savings Account. Give Bozo one more, and the clown plans go buy Rockefeller Center. Unless, for some strange reason, you think that having this happen would actually be funny, you should not allow this to occur. So, what can you do? Award the character an expense account instead.

Actually, you should use expense accounts as a reward for good journalism. For example, the boss might say, "Boy, you folks really busted your chops on that last one, and that new car shouldn't have come out of your pocket. Next time you go out, you're on the expense account. Just don't abuse it."

Wahoo! Money flowing from their fingertips, right? Just remember, there's no expense accounts without receipts. Then, think of the fun you can have when the editor looks at their claims. "You bought *what*? On my credit card? Your next expense account will be when hell freezes over—and *thaws!*"

There is one other time when giving out an expense account is handy. That's when you've created an adventure that you know is going to cost them big





bucks. It's hardly going to be fun to end in the middle of the adventure for lack of cash—unless, of course, they've just gone broke in the heart of the Himalayas on the very day the expedition's Sherpa guides are expecting their pay and the Red Chinese border guards want the money promised to look the other way while the group ducked over the border to avoid a loan shark they stiffed in Katmandu who is closing in on their tail.

In other words, give them an expense account or make their woes completely over the top. This is funny—complete grief, complete pressure, and completely impossible circumstances.

The Paycheck

The paycheck is the most common reward you will give the characters. Paychecks are points the characters can add to their Savings Accounts. (*Paychecks in the real world are small, lonely little things that the government covets.*) Paychecks are usually given at the end of adventures, but for particularly long adventures, you can issue paychecks before the story is completely filed. These are called *advances* and work just like paychecks (but the designer thought it would be fun to give them a different name).

You could just tell the players, "Okay, paychecks are passed out. You each get to add 4 points to your Savings Accounts." *But what's the fun in that?* Instead, why not use the official **TABLOID!** Capitalist Tool and Behavior Modification Slip, found on page 133. Just copy it and fill it out with appropriate information—character name, paper name, publisher's name, and points added to the Savings Account. Then, like a real boss, you can lord over the players as you hand them their meager rewards and watch their faces light up with child-like glee.

*If the legal department knew the designer was creating the **TABLOID!** Capitalist Tool and Behavior Modification Slip (of course, they do—they've got spies everywhere), they would probably want him to include a whole bunch of warnings and cautions. Since there is a remote chance they might actually read this, the designer made up a few just in case.*

WARNING!

The **TABLOID!** Capitalist Tool and Behavior Modification Slip may be photocopied for personal use only. Making lots of copies and selling them to people is a legal *bad thing*.

The designer, the legal department, and just about anyone else on Earth points out that copying the **TABLOID!** Capitalist Tool and Behavior Modification Slip, filling it out, and then trying to pass it off at the bank as your paycheck is a legal *dumb bad thing*.

Starting up your own tabloid, giving it a name, and then using the **TABLOID!** Capitalist Tool and Behavior Modification Slip to pay your employees is a legal *weird dumb thing*.

You have been warned!

Of course, you can't go giving out random amounts for the player's Savings Accounts. A precise scientific method is required. *Science is everything!* Too bad we couldn't get that grant from the National Science Foundation to do the research needed. Instead, giving out Savings Accounts points just has to rely on the illogical and completely fallible system of *Editorial judgment!* It's shocking, we know, but it's time to face the brutal facts—there's no avoiding these slipshod, unscientific techniques.

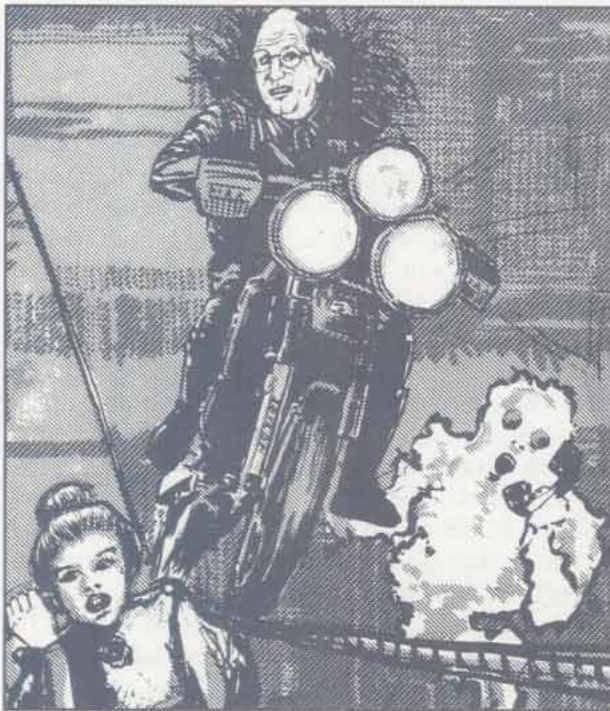
How much is too much? (You're kidding, right? This is *such* a serious game.) Too much is easy—if your characters can buy Rockefeller Center back from the Japanese (or whoever owns it now), then they might have just a tad too much in their Savings Accounts. If buying a hamburger at a McRestaurant involves major financial planning, then you are being a cheap Editor. On the average, characters should earn 2–5 points for their Savings Accounts on most adventures.

This amount needs to be balanced against how much characters have in their Savings Accounts. The exact amount should depend on how much the characters already have, the goals of the players, and whether they had to spend points from their Savings Accounts to complete the adventure. Properly done, it should take the players a couple of adventures to earn enough points to buy a new skill.





Ghost Riders Plague Information Superhighway!



**Spirits Take a
Grave View of
Cable Placement;
“Dead Ends” on
the Information
Superhighway Are
Lively After All**

By ROGER E. MOORE

NEW YORK—“The line is dead” has taken on new meaning with a report

from a service division of a major American telephone company. The report, stamped “Classified” and with

the corporate name stripped off, reveals that the spirits of the dead have been discovered traveling telephone lines





into major computer systems, sometimes gaining restricted access into government and corporate files. The report was delivered to the offices of the *World Tattler-Tribune* in an unmarked envelope, and its contents were swiftly published.

According to the report, some of the fiber-optic cable lines creating the backbone of the much-vaunted "information superhighway" being built by government and industry have been laid over old graveyards, beside mausoleums and vaults, and through Indian burial mounds. Such cable placement is usually illegal, but phone-company crews have been hard pressed to get proper authorization to route cables through built-up areas, and running cables through cemeteries proved easy, especially when done at night when no one was looking. ("No one in the cemeteries complained," the report observes.)

Engineers have since noticed that these lines are subject to more electronic noise than usual, and such interference was often (to quote the anonymous corporate report) "of a definite and identifiable character resembling a regular telephone-line connection—despite the fact that no telephone link-up exists along the noise-troubled sections of cable." The noise discovered by the engineers has been traced along lines leading from the burial sites into mainframe computers at Washington, DC, and New York City, among other places.

Phone calls from the dead have long been a topic in American folklore, but this represents the first definite evidence of psychic postmortal activity tapping into high-tech systems. "We

cannot conclude that this [the noise] is truly a result of spiritual phenomena," states the report, "but the evidence is startling and unsettling."

Among specific problems cited in the report are the following:

- Repeated line overloads occur at two phone switching stations outside Peoria, Illinois, following the placement of cable through a previously unknown burial mound used by Native Americans about 1,200 years ago. Overloads are sometimes accompanied at the switching stations by a thick haze that has no origin and does not trigger smoke detectors, as well as (according to two ex-employees who quit late last year) the faint sounds of chanting and angry cries. Neither the smoke nor the chanting has an identifiable origin. Both ex-employees, who asked not to be identified, said the overloads were getting worse.
- Fires in local phone-company headquarters and computer networks in Missouri, Kansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina, resulting from unexplained circuit overloads. Preliminary work has indicated that power surges were pumped into these buildings from sections of cable laid through cemeteries containing large populations of Civil War veterans, some located at battlefield sites that are now state or national parks.
- A caller using an archaic dialect and calling himself "Poor Richard" who has run up a \$320,000 bill dialing 900-number phone-sex services in

New York and New Jersey. The line was traced and found to originate from a section of fiber-optic cable laid through the cemetery in Philadelphia where Benjamin Franklin is buried.

- Alleged instances of strange noises heard in the phone lines of Hollywood celebrities, government officials, and foreign dignitaries, with all such noises being traced to the burial site of J. Edgar Hoover. The site was recently crisscrossed by five underground cables.

"These problems represent only the tip of the iceberg," the report states. "The bottom line is this: What right do the dead have to create their own on-ramps and bypass the tolls on the information superhighway when live users must obey the road signs and pay for the privilege? Clearly, we must find some way to make these illegal undead immigrants crossing the information superhighway respect our right of way, or else turn these spirits into roadkill."

The report briefly considers the idea of moving cable links so that they do not cross cemeteries and other burial sites, but points out that it would cost millions of dollars and take years to reroute the cables through less trouble-prone areas. "What's done is done," says the report. "If the dead had a problem with this, they should have spoken up before now." It concludes: "Dead ends on the highway should be closed off. If the dead want to use our network, they can take jobs as police officers and security guards for sensitive databases. Otherwise, we'll go out and dig the [expletive deleted] up."





The Final Byline

Dying Is Easy. . .

Sooner or later your character is going to get into a fight. How does the designer know this? Is it because he is *psychic*? Is it because he has secret knowledge *denied* to the rest of you *hapless mortals*? Does he *know more than you*?

Or is he just betting your character will do something immensely stupid at least once during the course of the game?

No, that would be too obvious. It's more likely the designer knows these things because he was contacted by higher intelligences from Saskatoon, who taught him certain secret arts that he is now willing to share with those who will recognize him as the enlightened genius of role-playing game design.

Really. Trust us.

New Combat Steps

There are none. Life is complicated enough.

"Guns Don't Hurt People. . ."

While there's no changes to the rules given in the System Core, there are a few things that were never said there—like how much damage that gun will do. (*Those fiends! They dodged the issue!*) Well, have no fear, because the immensely complicated table on page 94 lists all the common weapons your character is likely to use or have used upon him- or herself, along with damages and any special notes the designer could think of just to make your life more difficult.

Evil Psychic Causes Man to Die

Guns, knives, and alien death rays aren't the only things characters need to worry about. In the **TABLOID!** universe, there is also the threat of strange psychic attacks. Humans, aliens, and Chihuahuas can all kill with the power of their mind.

Because this is a very serious game, any listing of psychic powers would invariably be incorrect. Top scientists are working day and night to find you incontrovertible proof of such powers. In this game, *factual inaccuracies cannot be tolerated!* Therefore the only proper thing to do is to leave the selection and nature of all psychic powers as yet undefined. Editors are free to introduce their own psychic powers into the game, based on their personal experiences and what they have learned from comic books. (*Editors imbued with psychic power are asked to please not make the heads of their players explode.*)

Psychic powers fights are treated like normal combats except that the Psyche score is used to determine the chance to hit. Furthermore, all targets of psychic attacks are allowed to check against their Willpower to resist the effects of the attack.

Player characters should not have psychic powers. *If they did, then the designer would feel obligated to create some more rules.* NPCs should only rarely have them. Suggested powers for the Editor to play with include ESP, psychokinesis (moving things with the mind), apportionation (making things—like rocks—appear from nowhere), pyrokinesis (starting fires with the mind), and always knowing the exact time in Greenland.

Secret Lottery Numbers Make Anything Possible

Only because the System Guide said we would does the designer present any combat modifiers for anything. Here they are:

Situation	Modifier
Hiding behind something	-20
Standing with chin out saying, "Come on, hit me. I dare you."	+20
Running and shooting	-20
Running in panic and shooting	-50
Blinded by flashbulb	-30
Target bigger than character	+10





The Death Makes Good Copy Rule (or the Fifteen Minutes of Fame Thing)

Some astute readers will have noticed that there are no lethality ratings for any of the weapons listed on the big table (page 94). That's because anybody who dies can get into the paper. What's more important, though, is how many column inches the obit gets. This is where the fabulously handy Death-to-Copy Ratio Table comes into play.

The more column inches your character's death would get, the higher the lethality rating of any attack. The Death-to-Copy Ratio Table gives suggested lethality ratings based on where a character's death notice just might appear. Since all this posits a non-Euclidian universe where values are not absolute and geometries are strange, an explanation of each is given here.

Table 7: Death-to-Copy Ratio Table

Attention Garnered	Lethality
"Normal" Death	0
Obit Column	1
Back Page Article	2
Distributed by Wire Service	3
Filler Bit	4
Third Page News	5
Front Page Report	6
National TV News	7
One for the Record Books	8

"Normal" Death: This category includes all the completely ordinary and entirely boring ways to go—old age, heart attack, and every disease that wouldn't even pass muster for a cheap movie of the week. Basically, in the **TABLOID!** universe, no player character is ever shuffling off this mortal coil in such a boring fashion.

Obit Column: To get to this level, the character has to die by some less common, but still ordinary way. Slipping on the ice, hunting accidents, car crashes, and the like are all ways to earn this lethality rating.

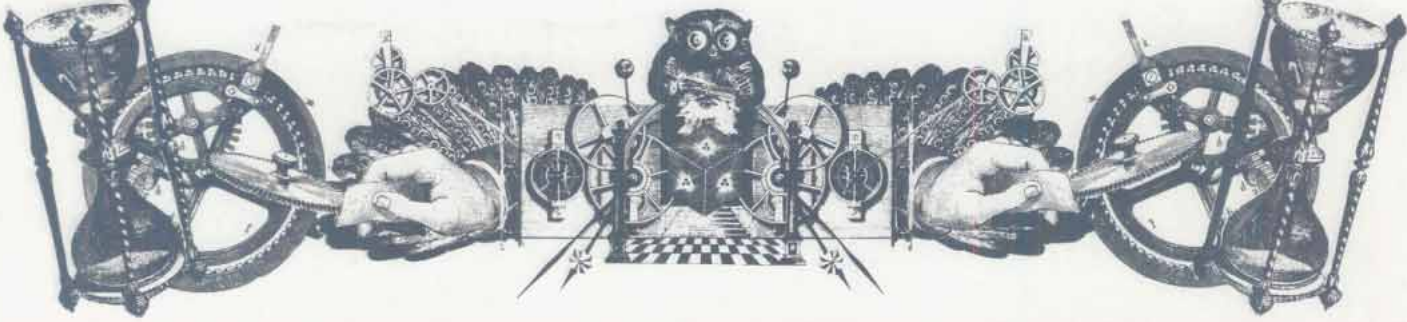
Back Page Article: Now the character has to start dying a little more creatively. Most of the time this involves getting shot by muggers, hit by trains, going down in a plane crash, or drowning when the ice breaks. The notice gets written up as a bit of local news, not on the obit page, along with the arrest report, quote from the shocked engineer, or warning from the park ranger to stay off thin ice.

Distributed by Wire Service: This type of death is not much different from those described above, just enough more dramatic that somebody sends it out on the wire services. The character's death might appear as a back page article in some other newspaper, or it might get ignored completely. Stranded mountain climbers, folks mauled by bears in national parks, plunges from skyscrapers (with photos), and anything involving the words "Bermuda Triangle" fit in this category.

Filler Bit: These are the tiny little notices that appear at the ends of other articles to fill those left-over spaces. Almost always, they're picked from wire services and kept in files for later use. A filler bit doesn't have many column inches, but reports of the character's demise can pop up around the world for months to come. Now the character is starting to go out in style—usually suffering some short, pithy, and outlandish death. This category can include those eaten by crocodiles, sucked down flooded street drains, or victims of a *voodoo* curse. (Italics theirs, not ours.)

Third Page News: Some ways of dying are actually newsworthy—the amount of worth depending on the amount of news that day. Getting blown up by terrorists in a foreign country, gunned down by a postal worker in an office rampage, or crushed in a 57 car pile-up on I-97 when the UFO buzzes rush-hour traffic are all worthy of page-three articles. Sure, the article's really about the other guy, but if the characters are lucky, they might spell their names correctly when they write, "Among the dead were . . ."





Front Page News: To get on the front page, the character either has to have been important, have been dealing with somebody important, or die with style. Nobody wants to read about some poor schmuck who gets shot in a robbery—at least not the first thing they see. Now, getting torn apart by Bigfoot, being killed in a mob-style execution, drowning while trying to save somebody else, or being immolated by aliens who misunderstand those overtures of peace—that's the kind of death worthy of the front page.

National TV News: This one is like front page news, except they got footage, too. Of course, the news meant here isn't necessarily network. In fact, the syndicated yellow journalism shows with names like *Inside Affair* or *Current Edition* are better markets. They'll pay the character's relatives and coworkers for interviews! Characters shot by alien death rays in front of witnesses, along with anyone killed by a teenage mistress, are good candidates for this one.

One for the Record Books: This is the ultimate going out in style—any death worthy of a special entry in any number of record books. Take a look at the examples below. Can you guess which one is fake?

1. In 1880, a man disappeared from an open field in clear sight of a judge.
2. In 1983, a California man was suffocated by his waterbed.
3. In 1984, a elephant trainer was crushed when his elephant knocked over a power line, was electrocuted, and fell on him.
4. In India, over two dozen people died from eating soup made from a poisonous lizard.
5. In 1814, nine Londoners died in a flood of beer.
6. In 1919, 21 Bostonians died in the Great Molasses Flood.
7. In 1897, several people were killed in a landslide triggered by their too-hearty clog dancing.
8. Several people died in an 1851 accident when a train hit an ocean schooner.
9. In the 1800s, two Brazilian sailors were killed in action by cheese.
10. In 1972, two soccer players were shot by fans to prevent a goal.

7. The others are true—really!

Miracle Drug Saves Man From Brink of Death!

Having a whole group of battered and bloodied player characters wandering around and unintentionally scaring the wits out of innocent people might be amusing for a while, but sooner or later you are going to want them to heal faster than the rate allowed by the rules, or their wounds are going to become a burden.

Well, dang it, check them into a *clinic*! Not just any clinic, mind you, but one of the latest, up-to-date, cutting-edge-of-technology clinics! Something like Dr. Gustaf Gurtu-Shahas's Universal Health and Wellness Institute. (*We put you in a healthy mind.*)

This is the **TABLOID!** world, not one of those dark and dreary places where everyone wears the mark of doom stenciled on their foreheads. With just a touch of creativity, characters almost never have to die. Unless, it'd be hilarious, of course. Then you should feel free to stick it to them—just this once.

If you want them healed, don't just sit there wringing your hands. Put them through the latest "in" fringe—vitamin therapies, experimental drug treatments, allergen tests, orgone reactors, inhalants, aromatherapy, herbal mojo bags, all-lemon-rind diets, and cortex manipulation groups! *Take their money* and then pronounce them *cured*!

Aren't the wonders of modern science great?

Well, They're Dead—Now What?

Sometimes, despite all the best efforts of modern science and soft-hearted Editors, player characters get dead. Great, now you've got some player who's going to spend the rest of the evening whining while everyone else has fun.

WRONG! WRONG! WRONG!

Death is only the . . . well, death is only a small rest stop somewhere on the interstate in Wisconsin. There's lots of things a "dead" character can do.





First off, don't make the poor guy sit out the rest of the night—this is the **TABLOID!** universe, for crying out loud! There's nothing that says the character's spirit can't hang around for a while. Sure, the spirit's got no body, and nobody can hear it, but that doesn't mean it can't do stuff. If the Editor wants, the departed can even be a ghost or a poltergeist.

For player characters, being a ghost or a poltergeist is a temporary condition. (If it isn't, the Editor's going to wind up eventually with an entire playing group of spirits. It's tough to get stories filed on time without fingers.) The condition lasts until the player gets a chance to create a new character—or gets the old one restored via some unknown means. Hey, it's a tabloid world!

Temporary spirits are limited in what they can do. They can't directly talk to the other players, and everything they do is a psychic power. That means they have to manipulate things to get their message across and that means making Psyche checks to accomplish *anything*. Suppose a living character is overlooking an obvious clue—like the death ray machine that killed his or her buddy. The departed player character wants to send a message along the lines of “Hey, idiot, this is a death ray machine!” Too bad a spirit can't talk—but it can try to flip on the power switch so the death ray fires up and burns a hole in the wall. All it takes is one teensy little Psyche check to telekinetically move that lever. Just roll the dice and—*oops, guess it would have been better to make sure nobody was standing in the way!*

Who says death has to be boring?

E***s P*****y Sighted at Mega-Mall

But I don't wanna be dead! Hey, tough.

Sometimes, though, it just hurts too much to lose someone we love—like that character a player's been slaving over since the beginning of time. Must we point it out again? This is the **TABLOID!** universe! Come on—what do JFK, Hitler, the King, and Ronald Reagan all have in common? *They were all dead*

once. If they can miraculously come back, so can a player character—if the Editor wants it.

Of course, nobody ever goes through a near-death experience unchanged. (After all, Hitler might only be a brain in a jar.) If you, the all-powerful and mighty Editor, decide to let a character return from the dead, take the player aside, explain your decision, and then make some changes. Maybe the character has amnesia (retains all skills but gets a new name and no knowledge of the other PCs). Maybe he or she just loses some skills. Maybe there was a little mix-up in the reincarnation department, and the character's a different sex now! Work out something the player can have fun with, but don't let the character be unchanged.

So how was the character miraculously returned? Aliens, clones, mad scientists, Atlantean super-science, or just good clean living—you name it. That's the point—getting returned should be an adventure in itself. We're handing you great set-up material here. Don't blow it.





The TABLOID! Weapons Table

Weapon	Damage				
Alien death ray	10d12	Hay baler	10d6	Sandbag	1d8
Assault Rifle*	2d12	Household appliance	3d4	Sap	1d4
Attack dog	1d6	Knife, dull	1d3	Scalpel	1d3
Ax	1d6+1	Knife, sharp	1d4	Shotgun	1d12
Baseball bat	1d6	Laser	2d10	Sixteen-ton weight	10d10
Blowgun	1d2**	Lawn dart**	1d8	Slap	1
Bowling ball	1d8	Lawn mower,		Snake,	
Brick, thrown	1d4	mulching	4d12	constrictor	1d3/minute
Brick wall,		Lead pipe	1d4+1	Snake, poisonous	1**
collapsed on	5d10	Light socket,		Spear	1d6+1
Brick wall,		screwdriver in	2d10	Squirt gun	Wet
collision with	1d4/10 MPH	Line drive foul ball	1d6 [§]	Star,	
Cane	1d2	Mad doctor's		deadly ninja	
Cannonball, shot	2d100	operation	0 ^{§§}	throwing	1d6
Cannonball,		Molten lead poured		Star,	
dropped	3d10	from above just like		exploding	
Car, run over by	1d10/10 MPH	the way Charles		neutron	1d6 × 10 ³⁰
Chainsaw	3d6	Laughton did in		Straw	0
Chinese water		<i>The Hunchback of</i>		Straw, in tornado	1d12
torture	1d2/hour	<i>Notre Dame</i> on the		Sword	1d8
Club	1d4	people storming		Thermonuclear	
Compactor, car	1d1000	the cathedral so		device	1d6 × 10 ⁵
Compactor, trash	1d100	there was nothing		Three Stooges routine	1d2
Crash, car	2d6/10 MPH	left but a pool of		Vacuum cleaner,	
Crash, jet	2d100	molten stuff and a		industrial	1d3
Crash, small plane	4d10	pair of boots stick-		Wall, run into	1d2
Drowning	1d10/minute	ing straight up	2d100	Wet towel, thrown	0
Electroshock		Paintball gun	1 [†]	Wet towel, snapped	1
therapy	1d4 [†]	Paper cut	1	Wrecking ball	5d12
Experimental weapon	? ^{††}	Paper cut			
Fall, from bridge	3d10	with lemon juice	1 [†]		
Fall, from roof	1d10	Piranha	1d3 each		
Fall, from		Pistol	1d8		
skyscraper	1d10/floor	Pitchfork	1d4+1		
Fire, house	5d10	Processed meat			
Fire, match	1d3	by-products	1d2		
Fire, torch	2d6	Radio in tub,			
Fist	1d2	portable	0		
Floor waxer	2d10 [‡]	Radio in tub,			
Foot	1d2	wall socket	2d10		
Frying pan	1d4	Rifle	1d10		
Grenade	2d12	Rock, small	1d3		
Hatpin	1	Rocket exhaust,			
		caught in	2d1000		

* Like the kind postal workers use.

** Sans poison.

† But you have a much nicer character.

†† Make it up. It's an experiment.

‡ And you *look* good, too.

§ The old kind, banned in most states.

§ Runner steals home, gets called back.

§§ Brain transferred, create a new character.

¶ Ow, ow, ow!





Mad Millionaire Wants to Build Dinosaur Park in Congo

By JEFF GRUBB

AUSTIN—Texas millionaire Joshua T. Stammel announced this week his intention to build and stock an African Theme Park filled with real dinosaurs captured in the depths of the nearby Republic of Zaire (formerly the Belgian Congo).

"If all goes well," said a spokesperson for Stammel, "we should see tourists flocking to the ultimate theme park on the African Coast before Christmas."

The plan for the park consists of two gigantic stockades surrounding a portion of the Zaire Coast. The inner stockade will be the resort itself, consisting of a luxury hotel, beach, and chain of five restaurants. The wall of the inner stockade will be dotted with observation platforms allowing wealthy tourists to sip champagne while dino watching. The dinosaurs would live between the inner and outer

walls of the stockade, and be viewed from the inner resort as well as from special elevated camps in the park itself. The walls of the stockades will be made of specially reinforced concrete to prevent the dinosaurs from escaping.

The opening of the park hinges on the capture of suitable dinosaurs to display. Stammel is reported to have launched a number of major recovery efforts to bring dinosaurs back, but their successes have been so far kept secret.

"The Congo region is the confirmed home of the Moloko-M'kembe, which is the native name for the brontosaurus," said the spokesman. "Other reports indicate that this amazing creature is not alone and that there are other sauropods, ceratopians, and carnivores to be found in the region."

Stammel has been earlier quoted as saying that such a park would serve an

environmental function as well. "With the destruction of the jungle habitat," he is reported to state, "it would be a tragedy of the first order to discover that we had accidentally killed off the last of a breed of creatures who have lived millions of years."

Stammel's "recovery crews" are armed with heavy tranquilizer rounds in addition to live ammunition, and the millionaire has had army surplus helicopters shipped to Brazzaville to aid in recovery operations. Security is reported to be tight, centering on a number of warehouses used by Stammel as a command post.

Stammel is the founder and CEO of Stammel Staplers, one of the leading makers of office tools worldwide, and the announcement came from a prepared statement through his Austin offices. An attempted live satellite hook-up failed, and Stammel was unavailable for further comment.





Anything for a Laugh

Comedy is Hard

I'm not doing this! I only run real role-playing games, things full of drama and beauty—none of this stupid stuff.

Oh, you're not funny . . . it's all right. We understand. We promise we won't tell anyone. Look, you can even fool people by carrying this game around. People will think you're funny, and you don't even have to do anything. But maybe we can help. . . .

Russians Scientists Discover Humor!

Running a **TABLOID!** game is a lot different from running *normal* role-playing games. In normal games, the players are all trying to be heroic or villainous, accomplish mighty deeds, gain power, wealth, and impressive titles.

*In the **TABLOID!** game, players try to be stupid!*

This is not a game where the mighty, brave, or even cynically manipulative profit. In this universe, success goes to those who are willing to risk their characters on the stupidest, most lame-brained, and ill-thought-out plans possible. It's kind of like real life in that way.

So how do you run a game where failure just might be a positive? Well, a few rules of comedy like the ones below don't hurt.

*Some of these rules of comedy were stolen from game designer Mike Pondsmith, his game **TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE**, and his company, R. Talsorian Games. This is in keeping with rule #3, which was stolen from Mr. Pondsmith (with his permission, it must be added).*

1. Get Physical (stolen)
2. Maintain a Manic Pace (stolen)
3. Steal Shamelessly (stolen)
4. Use Running Jokes (stolen)
5. Dare to be Stupid (stolen)

To justify his existence, the designer adds a few of his own:

6. The innocent must suffer.
7. More is better.
8. Plot?

Rule #1: Get Physical. This rule works two ways. Comedy is action—it's called slapstick. Use it. Stupid things happen to characters. Ladders totter endlessly before they fall. Doors slam in peoples' faces—literally. Bad guys trip over marbles.

Do yourself a favor. Go watch some cartoons (Road Runner and Coyote are the best) and some Three Stooges. Study how they act stupid. Look at all the physical gags they use. Use them. Invent your own.

The second part of this rule is you, at the table. *Don't just sit there!* Get off your behind! Act out parts. Pretend you're the airplane spinning into a dive. Stand on your chair. *Get physical.*

Rule #2: Maintain a Manic Pace. This is otherwise known as *timing, timing, timing!* Once you got them happy, don't stop! Don't let up. Don't pull a gag and then come to a dead stop. Just when they think it's all over, hit your players from a different direction.

There they are, faced by a family of hostile Sasquatches (just saying that is funny). That's bad—but not funny. What if they ran into the Sasquatches because they were running away from the enraged Hitler clones? *Don't give them a break!* If players have time to think, then they won't get themselves into stupid messes. They might even make plans.

You can tell when it's been a good adventure because you're sweaty, hoarse, and twitchy. Being an Editor is no job for the weak!

Rule #3: Steal Shamelessly. This one is obvious. If that joke was funny for someone else, it will be twice as funny for you right?

Well, maybe. To make it really funny, steal shamelessly and then twist it to make it your own. Don't just directly copy the best jokes you've heard and seen, since everybody else has probably heard and seen them, too. Instead, take those jokes and give them a whole new spin of your own. That way while the players are looking one way—waiting for the punch line—you whop them on the head from the other direction!



You can even steal from your players. Listen to what they say. When Louis moans and says, "Oh man, I sure hope the Men in Black aren't waiting for us!" Well, doggone—guess what's going to happen. Confirm their worst fears every once in a while. It'll make them happy paranoids.

Besides, there's another good reason to steal shamelessly. It's easier than trying to make everything up.

Rule #4: Use Running Jokes. This is a big one. A good gag deserves repeating—not every one, mind you, but every adventure should have at least one or two set-ups that always seem to reoccur. At it's simplest, it's like the guy who leaps back from the road just before the car hits him. The next time he steps out, he's looking really carefully, and—ZOOM—the car comes from the other direction. The third time, cars come from both directions. It's only on the fourth try that he gets across, dodging cars all the way—and then he gets hit by the bicyclist.

An important part of a running gag is that it can't always be the same. The first and second time, yes—that lets them know it's a running gag—but after that, vary things. Again, you want to catch the players looking the other way.

Rule #5: Dare to be Stupid. Your players aren't going to be stupid if you aren't. What are you worried about—do you think this is a *balanced* game?

Okay, enough of the stolen rules. Now for some sort-of originals. (Remember rule 3, after all.)

Rule #6: The Innocent Must Suffer. How many comedies have you seen where the hero gets mistaken for the crook? Where the nice guy gets blamed for nasty things someone else did? *Lots!* That's because they are all following the rule that the innocent must suffer!

When a character is being chased for committing a crime—that's not comedy, that's drama. Where's the humor in trying to prove your innocence if you're already guilty? No—it gets funny when some schmuck not only has to prove his or her innocence, but avoid capture at the same time. Think of the potential for mix-ups, narrow escapes, and completely ludicrous chases.

Of course, this doesn't just apply to criminals. It's undeserved stuff happening to any character. That's funny. If they deserve it, it's a comeuppance.

Rule #7: More is Better. This goes hand-in-hand with manic pacing. Certainly the surest way to get some laughs is to just throw a ton of jokes at them. *Some* of them are bound to be funny. (If they aren't, you've got a serious problem.) The same applies to situations the characters find themselves in. There's no such thing as too much.

One way of adding more to any situation is to just throw in complications. The characters are trying to interview Mrs. Anya Toolip, Conservator of the Secret Library of Alexandria (Rediscovered), at her Indiana home. She's constantly being interrupted by her aides who need confirmation that Glath-Ral really did compose the 35 Tablets (found in Yankton, SD) during the last Ice Age. Meanwhile, her nosy neighbor is constantly interrupting, and Meow, her pet Persian, has turned into the psycho-kitty from hell. Worst of all, Mrs. Toolip keeps channeling in the spirit of Yama-Damba the Destructor. Naturally, old Yama-Damba wants to destruct something—and this is a *good* day for the characters.

There's no such thing as too much.

Rule #8: Plot? Plots and storylines are nice. They give you a reason for creating an adventure and give the characters some motivation to do things—just don't let them get in the way of the fun. Games like this one never go in straight lines, and trying to make your adventure do that is likely to ruin all the fun.

Improvise. Be ready to spontaneously combust your adventure right in front of the players. Just throw out that encounter that's not working, laugh, and get the characters toward the goal by whatever means.

Suppose the characters are supposed to be tracking a serial killer for that once-in-a-lifetime interview, but things aren't going right. The players are getting serious, and the whole game is looking more like a horror campaign than inspired silliness. It's time for a change. As they are driving down the highway, the Mothman leaps out from the side of the road. Photo ops! A story! Off they go on the chase, and before you know it, the lot is crashing through the woods





trying to get the scoop. Of course, you'd like them to get back to the adventure with the serial killer, so it would just be a shame if the killer happened to be hanging out on the same patch of turf—and maybe the sicko really, really wants to be interviewed. (Too bad that Mothman won't wait—but that's getting into the realm of more is better.)

Look, the real secret is this: Comedy is simple. Just free your mind and make an idiot of yourself. It's surprising how many folks react in kind.

Some Other Extremely Useful Advice

Most of other role-playing games have lots of advice, rules, charts, and statistics that are all supposed to help the Editor. The designer would like to offer you the best piece of advice he can in place of all that:

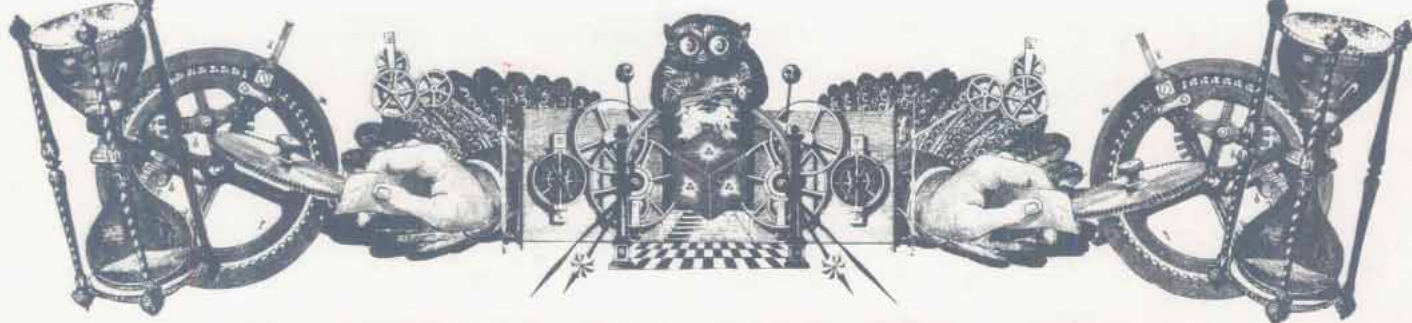
MAKE IT ALL UP.

This book isn't going to give you detailed monster listings, pages of NPC statistics, street-by-street city descriptions, or even complicated rules. If you need a thug, make him up either on the spot or, if you're not comfortable with doing that, try making some preparations in advance. It doesn't matter what the Fitness range for Bigfoot is—he's as strong as you need him to be. How does that mad scientist's death ray work? However you want it to.

Because this is a silly game, you've got a freedom referees don't get in other games. You don't have to be consistent. You don't even have to make much sense. By their very nature, silly universes are *illogical*! That's part of their fun. If the first yeti the PCs meet is a hairy brute in the Himalayas and the second lives on Park Avenue and gets his shirts from Bond Street, well—gee! That's just the way things are! If one NPC uses telepathy by concentrating for minutes on a target and the other has it happen instantly, all well and good.

Just don't worry. Have fun and go get 'em, tiger!





Moon Flag for Sale

Minnesota Farmer Hosts World's Oddest Auction

By JEFF GRUBB

ST. PAUL—Next week, the gavel rings down on what may be the oddest auction in American history, as memorabilia which supposedly was left on the lunar surface will be sold to the highest bidder.

The material, which includes the tires of the lunar rover, the plaque supposedly left behind by Neil Armstrong in 1969, a bucket of golf balls and the original American flag planted there by astronauts 25 years ago, will be auctioned off by the reputable St. Paul house of Zither & Fitch. Despite the reputation of the auction house for its honesty and veracity of its claims, many experts have openly questioned the legitimacy of the material to be auctioned. How, demand the cynics, can material abandoned on the moon be recovered and sold on earth?

"The truth of the matter is it could not," says Milo Breedlove, the representative of the auction house in charge of this particular lot. "Not if the US truly went to the moon. However, we have seen sufficient evidence to con-

vince us that the reported American moon landing was a hoax perpetrated by the government, and these items prove that hoax."

Theories have persisted for years as to the veracity of the American Moon Landings, and many experts have suggested that the landings were faked in an effort to bolster United States morale in the face of growing discontent over the War in Vietnam.

According to Breedlove, following the filming of the fake moon landings, most of the sets and material were scrapped. Some items, such as the flag, commemorative plaque, and even such material as a bucket of golf balls and a golf club used by the astronauts were salvaged and sent to a storage facility in northern Minnesota belonging to the Smithsonian. There they were in storage for a decade.

After ten years, the moon material was tossed out, "The way I understand it," says Breedlove, "is that the facility was cramped for space and the administrator, who was aware of the 'Moongate' situation, saw no point in saving

material that could prove to be embarrassing. He ordered it destroyed."

The order to destroy the Moongate material apparently changed, while it was being carried out, to merely disposing of it. The vital evidence of a hoax perpetrated by the US Government was put into a garbage truck and carted to a local land fill.

At this point, fate intervened. Breedlove explains, "One of the workers noticed the flag among the debris and rescued it and the other items before they were buried. He stored the material with a relative while investigating the idea that American Moon Landings were faked. He accumulated sufficient proof to show that this was so before he himself disappeared under mysterious circumstances."

"The Moongate material was still stored in this relative's barn," continues Breedlove, "and continued to be so for fifteen years. Finally, this relative died, and the heirs, in looking through the deceased effects, discovered both the lunar material and sufficient proof as to its veracity."

The presence of such items will change both the political and scientific landscape once they are fully presented, and Breedlove has already fielded offers from various governments, individuals, and corporation. Breedlove has little fear of government interference in the auction, however. As he says, "To attempt to stop the auction and perform a cover-up at this stage would be a wholesale admission of guilt. I fully expect government agents to be among the bidders, and to be willing to spend a great deal to recover the property they threw out decades ago."





The Wedding of the Year

(Favorite Star Here) to Wed Geramizo Crime Boss Heir



Eddie Geramizo fends off a fearless photographer.

By MARKO GROUCH

NEW YORK, New York—In a surprise announcement today, TV soap star (Insert your favorite actress's name here—whoever you think would be appropriate, but who we're prohibited from so blatantly parodying for legal reasons far too obtuse to go into here. Who says real life isn't silly, too?) announced wedding plans to marry Johnny "Slickback" Geramizo, reputed mob assassin and heir apparent to the powerful Geramizo crime family's coveted throne.

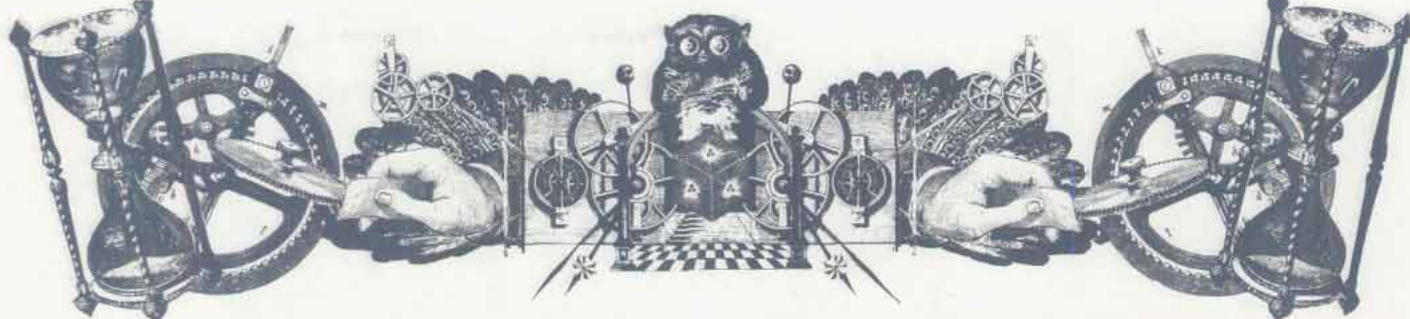
"Johnny and I have the purest sort of love," said the 34-year old actress, who has played the innocent waif Monica Brockefeller on the hit soap opera *The Hot and the Twitchy* for over 16 consecutive years.

As faithful readers know, (the Actress) is anything but innocent off the set. Reports of wild flings and liaisons with everyone from B**t R*****s to B*g B**d have only been topped by her recent all-out, hair-pulling cat-fight with rising starlet (another actress) at the trendy Spago's.

Still (the Actress)'s announcement is a pure surprise to Hollywood watchers and everybody's scrambling to learn more about the man of mystery, Johnny Geramizo. Sources afraid to be mentioned say he's pegged to step into the shoes of Eddie "Can Opener" Geramizo, reputed boss of all East Coast mob operations.

Eddie came into power by means reported to be both brutal and efficient. Although some others are reputed to covet his position, few have managed to match his unadulterated ambition.

(story continues on page 3)



I want that story!" roars your editor. "I want pictures—lots of them. I want to see the wedding gown, the ring, the groom—everything. And if I don't get them, I'm going to be very unhappy. Everybody scrambles for this one, understand?" Waving the competition's paper, your editor turns and looks meaningfully at you. "I don't want to see it in this rag! Is that clear?"

Hi There!

Welcome to "The Wedding of the Year," the first of two funtabulous, fully authorized and mostly realized **TABLOID!** adventures designed specifically to get your **TABLOID!** campaign off to a running start. Read it over carefully and figure out which bits you like. Use the ones you find funny and ditch the ones you don't. It's your game. No one's feelings will be hurt—[sniff]—really.

Back to the Matter at Hand

At this point, the editor singles out the player characters. They are to be the strike team to get the scoop of the century—this month. The editor demands exclusive pictures of (the Actress)'s wedding to Johnny Geramizo.

Waste no time in laying out the precise goals of this assignment to the players. Their characters must get photographs of the couple's secret and private wedding. These photos should include the bride in her gown, the couple kissing, hugging, or otherwise being intimate, and at least one that makes Johnny Geramizo look like a grotesque idiot. Along with that, the editor would like a copy of the guest list or at least an accurate report of who was there, details on how much the shindig cost, who the caterer was, what was served, and any other dirt the characters can dig up.

Taking Off

The editor slaps some plane tickets on the desk. (If you have used ticket folders from a real plane flight, use these as props.) "My source says they're holed up

at the Playa Riente estate in Palm Beach. Requisition a camera from stores, grab your bags and get going. Your flight leaves in an hour. Monica's already made your reservations at the Holiday Inn on the other end."

In that hour, the characters have just enough time to pack their bags and get to the airport. At the terminal, while waiting for the plane, each character has enough free time to make one phone call. Things they might want to do include:

- Arrange for a car in Palm Beach.
- Use a source to get more info on the Geramizo family.
- Get a list of caterers in Palm Beach.
- Get facts about the Playa Riente estate (no maps are available, though).
- Charter a boat, plane, or helicopter in Palm Beach.

The camera the characters requisitioned (they did requisition a camera, didn't they?) is a standard one—no huge telephoto lenses or other neat gear. Any requests for something better are met with the photo department's firm *no*. "I'm not letting one of my good cameras out to a bunch of reckless bozos like you" is the way the head of layout explains it.

The Players

The Geramizo Family. The Geramizos aren't just an East Coast mob family. They are *the* East Coast mob family. Eddie Geramizo is the *capo di capo* of all the families in the northeast. He and all the Geramizos are used to getting what they want and getting it with respect.

While most of the family was against the wedding, Eddie couldn't say no to his favorite son. Now they're dealing with the fact that this is a very public event and they are very private people. The Geramizos want absolutely no press present, and they figure they have the means to make it so.

Eddie "Can Opener" Geramizo got to where he is the old-fashioned way—by assassinating the competition and forcing everyone else to make peace with him. Eddie is a stoop-shouldered, little man with pale skin and prominent liver marks. He's only about 62,





but looks a lot older. His nickname comes from his preferred method of dealing with trouble—leaving it in the back of a van that's sent through the car crusher so "da cops is gonna need a can opener wot to find all of him."

Arturo "Art" Geramizo is Eddie's oldest son, about 41 years old. Art is well-educated, clever, and loyal to the family. He's also bland. Eddie skipped over him for leadership of the family. Art does not like this. Although he knows this whole wedding is a mistake, he supports it completely. He's hoping something embarrassing will happen to knock his brother Johnny from favor. He may be useful to the reporters.

Johnny "Slickback" Geramizo, so named for his greased-down hair, is the handsome and charming one of the clan. Too bad he's not as bright as his brother. Still, he talked Dad into naming him heir, and as favored son, he intends to milk it for all it's worth. Hence this wedding, which he thinks will make him "legit."

(The Actress). Love? Hah! (The Actress) is starting to slip, and she figures a scandalous marriage is just the thing to lift her career. Her publicist, Dick Loscum, agreed, so she courted Johnny and got him to agree to marriage. She has every intention of dumping him in about a week.

(The Actress) has a toy poodle, Binky, that constantly yips and yaps. It is her pride and joy.

Dick Loscum. This fellow could be the players' best friend. He wants publicity, he craves publicity. The problem is he also wants money and control. He's figuring that making a deal out of keeping the press out will actually heighten the excitement over the whole affair. He might relent if convinced it's good for his career.

Armand Fishwater, Caterer to the Stars, previously Hernando Taylor. Armand is the hot and rising star of the Palm Beach culinary world. His trademark is his quirky blend of Cubano-Irish cooking. Armand makes much of his "exotic" Cuban-Irish roots, although his Cuban father abandoned his mother in Scranton, PA, when he was born. His accent is a mangled mix of Spanish and Gaelic, since he never really learned to speak either.

Armand is on the fast track and wants to go faster. So far, that means getting jobs like this one and being discreet. Armand will become talkative if he thinks it's better for his career (not likely) or if he's threatened with exposure of his "dear Irish mum."

Da Boys. The ever-present and loyal bodyguards of the Geramizo family, Da Boys all wear ill-fitting and tasteless suits with suspicious bulges under their arms. All of them have pistols and will shoot first and ask questions maybe.

Ref: 79 Sta: 28 Body: 7
Pistols: 1d10/0

Gators. These charmers have a nasty habit of showing up at all the wrong times. They come out of the canal and wander throughout the lawns. Since the wedding's inside, this is no problem for the guests. It's not necessary to use the gators, but it can be fun to throw them in if things get too dull.

Ref: 45 Sta: 40 Body: 18
Teeth: 2d20/2

Tail: 1d4/0, knocks victim down if Reflexes check is failed.

Capt. Sturgeon. This is the only charter boat/plane available to the group. Capt. Sturgeon is actually a hydrofoil racer/barnstormer from Port Huron. This is his first time on a real ocean. He seems like a real nice, mild-mannered guy—until he gets behind the wheel. At that point, the characters can discover that Capt. Sturgeon probably has a secret death wish, because he'll do anything with gusto without bothering to consider little things like danger or safety. No suggestion is too lunatic. Fly through the front doors of the estate? He's willing to give it a try. All sailing/flying activity is accompanied by rants about why did Louella ever leave and how he should have been in 'Nam.

His craft, the *Shrimpy*, is hideously fast and notably devoid of safety features.

The Competition. A wedding like this attracts flies like reporters, so the characters should stumble across all sorts of fellow travelers. The Editor can include famous faces and names among those spotted, but the serious threats are those reporters from other tabloids, all well-known to the player characters.



These tabloid reporters are after the exact same things as the player characters and are just as desperate in their pursuit. Feel free to use all sorts of dirty tricks on the player characters if things get slow—mysterious flat tires, canceled reservations, phony tips, and even siccing Da Boys on the competition are all fair play in the tabloid wars.

The Wedding Schedule

To coordinate the activities of the player characters and NPCs, use the following wedding schedule. It'll help you keep track of everything that's going on. Plus, it'll help put pressure on the players. Characters do the most amazing things when they can hear the clock ticking.

Wedding -2 (the day the characters arrive): The caterer and decorator are busily arranging furnishings in the ballroom. Guests arrive throughout the day. Most go to expensive hotels in the area, but a few stay with Palm Beach friends. The bride-to-be slips out and tries to go on an incognito shopping spree at the really expensive Galleria mall. That evening, the bride-to-be and her friends go out for a fling with old lovers and wind up dancing till dawn at the Poison Apple.

Wedding -1: More guests arrive throughout the day. The florist, contracted by Fishwater, brings in flowers while the caterer starts bringing in food. Catering assistants come and go all day. The Geramizo family priest arrives and goes straight to the estate. That night, the Geramizo associates take Johnny out on the town, settling in at the Palmtop Club for a night of serious drinking. Meanwhile, the catering staff works all night in both kitchens.

Wedding Day: The serving staff arrives at 5:00 AM to help prepare the final touches. Guests begin to arrive at 9:00, and the servers begin circulating with drinks. The bride dresses upstairs for the wedding at 9:30 AM, assisted by her hairdresser, make-up artist, and maid. At 10:30, the official photographer does the publicity shots. At the same time, guests assemble in the ballroom for the ceremony.

At 11:00 AM sharp, the wedding is held. It lasts about 15 minutes. When it is finished, food is served in the dining room, and the guests circulate through the house. The reception lasts until 3:00 PM, when the new bride and groom slip away by taking a speedboat moored at the docks in the canal.

The Investigation

When the characters arrive, they are likely to be at a loss for what to do. Their immediate goals should be to find out the wedding date (2 days from now), who the caterer is (Armand), and where the wedding is being held (Playa Riente). Phone calls and fast talking should get most of this. The phone book lists 30 caterers, including Armand. Directly asking "Are you hosting so-and-so's wedding?" is certain to fail, but a clever trick—"There's been a terrible mistake! Miss (the Actress)'s cake must be egg- and gluten-free!"—can get Armand's staff to respond.

Contacts are necessary to learn about the bachelor bash at the Palmtop Cafe. Such a contact might be a small-time Geramizo wiseguy, a local reporter, a chauffeur, or even the publicist Dick Loscum.

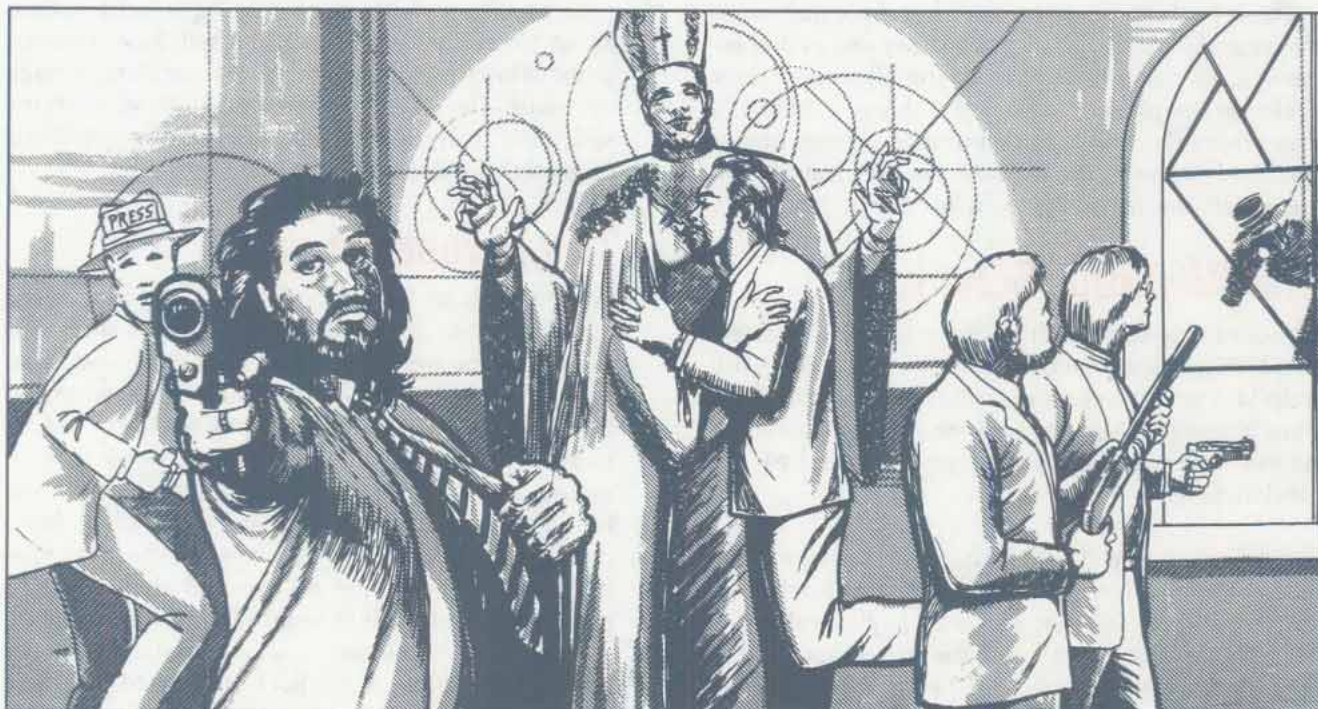
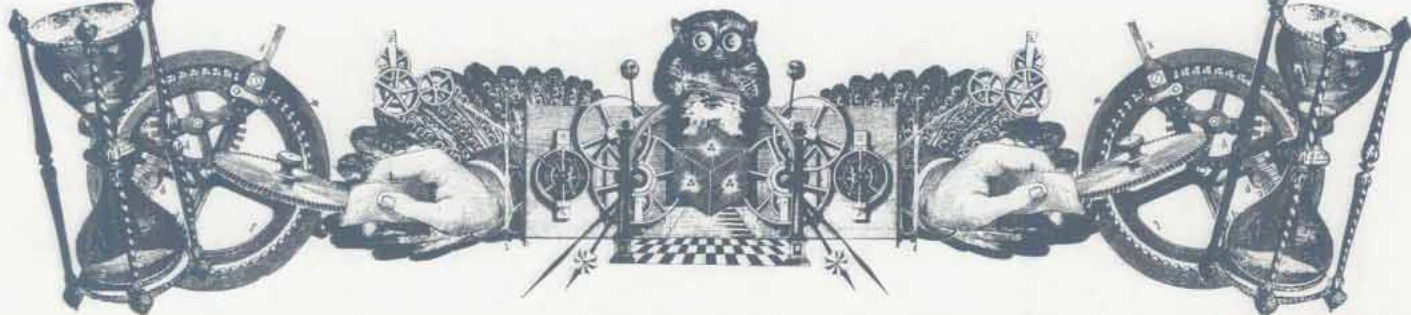
During these two days, guests begin to arrive for the wedding. Characters can spot most by staking out the airport and swanky hotels. Create a list of ten to twenty Hollywood types (your choice) as the entertainment side of the guest list. Characters at the airport will also spot reporters from competition tabloids. Any dirty tricks to send the competition on wild goose chases or otherwise mess them up are encouraged.

The other side of the guest list is Geramizo family associates. They do not want publicity. They will find ways to express their displeasure with nosy reporters. Have fun.

Getting the Photos

The editor has demanded several specific photos from the player characters. The problem for them is, of course, how to get them. It's up to their ingenuity to create the opportunities they need. For the most





part, as Editor, all you have to do is sit back and enjoy the fun that's sure to come.

Now, there is no way to predict just what your group will decide, but some methods are more obvious than others—at least some of those we can cover here. From this, you should have some idea of how to handle other creative solutions.

The Bridal Gown and the Kiss

The key to getting the photos their editor demands is for the player characters to crash the wedding.

Sneaking In. This is a most unsubtle method and not likely to succeed. The Geramizos expect crashers, and so they've tightened security. The entire estate is walled, and the entrance is closed by an automatic gate. Lots of reporters naturally cluster outside it, hoping for a good snapshot of someone coming in or out. Freelancers with big telephoto rigs keep constant watch on the estate, but little or nothing occurs on this side of the house.

At least two of Da Boys are at the gate at all times. The only folks who get past them are "family", people with invitations, and chauffeurs (hint, hint). More of Da Boys patrol the grounds (again, at all times—if anyone gets past them, it's their jobs, at least!), ready to eject anyone trying to climb the walls. A couple of bulky goons in Bermuda shorts, Hawaiian shirts, and straw hats (guns tucked behind their backs) guard the beach. Everybody has orders to politely throw people out—after checking IDs and destroying any cameras and film. At night, the compound is well lit and patrolled by Da Boys with guard dogs.

Disguise. This is the best bet for getting inside. A large number of tradespeople pass in and out of the estate for two days before the happy day. The characters can try to slip in as caterer's assistants, waiters, chauffeurs, florist's aides, or whatever. Characters had better scout out the caterer first and learn what uniform the caterers are going to wear if they want to be convincing. That precaution and a little Disguise skill should get them through the gates.



Helicopter Flyby. This won't do much good, since the wedding is inside. Still, characters may want an overview of the grounds. Unfortunately, around the airport the word is that "anybody flying over da estate's gonna wish fer a FAA investigation by da time we're done." The only pilot oblivious to this is Captain Sturgeon. With him as a pilot, getting a steady photograph is nearly impossible.

Naval Landing. The guys on the beach are ready for this. Word has been spread around the docks that "fishing too close to shore on da wedding day would be a bad idea." Of course, Captain Sturgeon hasn't heard this. He'll take the characters in his own kamikaze style. If the group zooms up the canal, there's always the gators, too.

Forged Invitation. To forge an invitation, the characters need an invitation. If they have an invitation, why forge one?

The Embarrassing Photo

By far, the best opportunity to get a picture of Johnny looking stupid is at the Palmtop Club. He and his friends are having the traditional last good time before the wedding. Of course, Johnny and his friends are "camera shy." They do things like break cameras, expose film, and hurt photographers. Characters will have to come up with some clever trick to keep their film and noses intact.

The Guest List, the Menu, and the Cost

These are the other important details demanded by the editor. Dumpster diving at the caterer's is the best solution. Rummaging through the garbage yields an estimate on the number of guests (100) and an exact list of the refreshments. There is a complication—one of the Da Boys hangs out at the caterers at all times.

One character can attempt an Intuition check to estimate the food bill from this. Flowers, champagne, chauffeuring, and other costs should be added into this, of course.

Any character who stakes out the driveway entrance of the estate can get photos of celebrity guests arriving. This is hardly exclusive, but it does give names to go with the numbers and makes good copy.

The Rewards of Success

If the characters get all the pictures and information that they were instructed to gather, their editor is extremely pleased. Film should be overnighted to the paper as fast as possible, while facts should be faxed back to the office. Someone else will write up the story to make the next edition.

Naturally, the less the characters get, the less pleased their editor is. The table below lists the descending order of experience points the group can earn for their efforts.

"We got it all! Yowza!":	4
"OK, we'll make up some facts, but the photos are good.":	3
"Well, most of the photos are in focus.":	2
"We did get some nice pictures of the estate.":	1
"Look, you tell him we got scooped.":	0

The other possible consequence of all this reporting is attracting the attention, not necessarily kindly or welcome, of the Geramizos. The family is not so annoyed that the reporters need fear an immediate lesson, but the Geramizos have noted them. Player characters should be careful in any future dealings with the family. The Editor is encouraged to milk this for all its worth. Lots of assignments can run the player characters afoul of the mob, after all.

If the characters happen to run into the Geramizos again, even by accident, like on their way home from the office, the Geramizos might decide to send a couple of Da Boys over to show the characters the error of their ways. And if, when they go to talk to or apologize to Eddie, the reporters should accidentally stumble across his new wife in the arms of another man, well, there's the beginnings of a story that would no doubt make their editor proud.





Aliens Prefer College Grads!

By KAREN S. BOOMGARDEN

In a recent survey sponsored by the Association for Higher Educational Standards, statistics show that the more advanced a degree you have, the more likely you are to see a flying saucer at least once in your lifetime—or at least to admit to having seen one.

The Association was dismayed by these findings. "It certainly wasn't one of our focuses," said Sally Fishbein, Vice-President of Public Relations. "We weren't trying to find out about any thing like that, not at all. It's just a fluke of the questions, the way they were written."

It seems that one of the essay questions asked the subjects for a description of their most unusual experience, particularly one that was difficult for

others to accept. Typical of the answers is this excerpt from an actual respondent.

"I was in grad school. Some of my buddies and I were sitting on a hillside overlooking San Francisco Bay, having a few beers. It was after dark, and the sky was beautifully clear. There was a full moon, and no clouds. All of a sudden, I saw a flat, disk-shaped object hovering over the bay. It just appeared, like it popped in from some other dimension or something. A hatch opened in the bottom, and a tube came out and reached down into the bay and started siphoning up water. I could see the water moving up into the ship. I glanced at my buddies, and they were all looking too, so I knew it wasn't just me.

"After a minute or so, the tube retracted into the ship and the hatch closed. There wasn't any noise or anything, from the tube or the ship or anything else. Just the normal sounds of San Francisco at night—traffic, people's voices, that kind of thing. It was about then that I noticed other ships just like this one, all doing the same thing, all sucking water out of the Bay! There were four or five of them, and not a sound from any of them.

"The whole thing couldn't have lasted more than a couple of minutes. They left as fast as they'd appeared, and none of us ever mentioned what we'd seen to anyone. Heck, we never even talked about it among ourselves!"

This kind of sighting apparently is common near large bodies of water. Similar reports came from the Great Lakes region, especially on the Canadian side of Lake Superior near Thunder Bay, and from the vicinity of the Gulf of Mexico.

The Association for Higher Educational Standards disavows these reports as being "just written to entertain the scorers." However, persons associated with various UFO-watching groups have expressed acceptance of the respondents' experiences. "We have long believed that the pilots of these crafts can reveal or conceal their presence at their discretion. It makes sense that they'd choose to show themselves to more highly-educated persons; folks are less likely to think they're just looking for attention," said Joseph Golden, of the United Federation of Outer-space Studies (UFOS). "We want to get the word out to these sightees, that we're here and ready to listen and help them in any way we can."



Russians Battled Evil Atomic Space Aliens 30 Years Ago!

American Space A-Bomb Tests Created Van Allen Horrors; Cosmonauts, Rockets Attacked By Ruthless Radiation Monsters, Soviets Retaliate With Doomsday Device

By ROGER E. MOORE

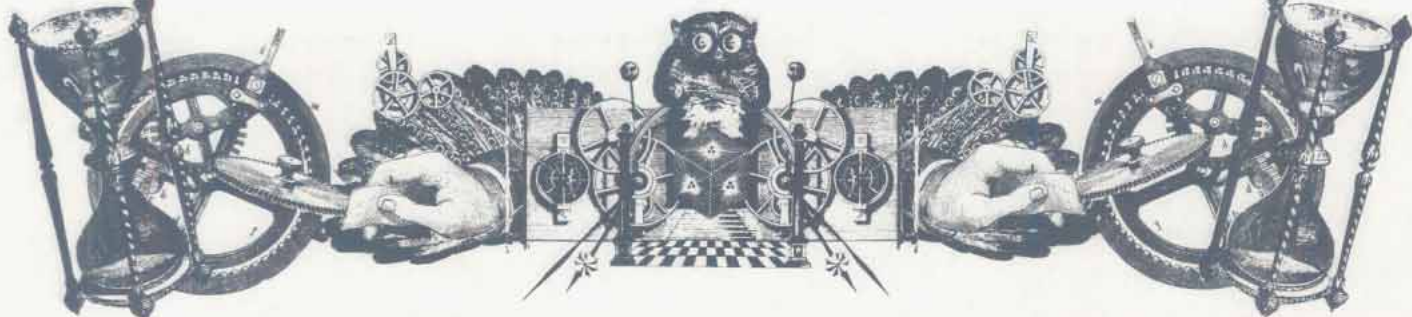
NEW YORK—Internationally renown space scientist Reuben E. Morgenstern, currently an assistant to the director of astronomical publications and advertising at Woodstock Community College in McHenry, Illinois, revealed in an electrifying interview with this reporter that 30 years ago the Soviet Union fought a terrifying, losing war against evil alien entities which were created and possibly destroyed by American hydrogen bomb tests in space.

Morgenstern, 23, learned of this secret war during a school visit to Moscow last week. When he and 22

other graduate students in astrophysics were allowed to tour the library of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Morgenstern became separated from his friends in the titanic maze of book stacks. "I was so lost, I couldn't find my *tochis* with both hands," Morgenstern told this reporter. "I came to a dead end in the radio-astronomy archives and had just leaned against a wall to clear my head when the wall shifted. Just like that, I was in a secret room. My heart nearly gave out on me!"

Morgenstern explored the tiny room, incredibly dusty with age, which contained only a table, chair, and some





papers. "I looked at the papers, and my heart nearly gave out a second time. The papers were handwritten notes by Korolev—Sergei Korolev, THE Soviet rocket scientist!"

Out of purely scientific interest, Morgenstern carefully tucked the papers under his sweater, then quickly left the room and closed the door behind himself. Minutes later he rejoined his tour group, then went back to his room, claiming indigestion ("Lying, I wasn't. My insides were churning like I had eaten five pepperoni pizzas!"). There he read the yellowed papers in Russian script—and learned the awful truth.

The notes appear to be a draft of a retrospective diary by Korolev, the Soviet's "Von Braun" and architect of their entire space program, written in late 1965, just before his untimely and unexplained death. Translated by Morgenstern, the aged sheets tell a tale of horror and death at the dawn of the Space Age.

America had conducted high-altitude atomic tests in the summer and fall of 1958, sending A-bombs aloft on rockets from Johnston Island in the Pacific and from a Navy ship in the South Atlantic. In the latter experiment, called Project Argus, three atomic bombs were exploded at 300 miles altitude to determine their effects on the Inner Van Allen radiation belt. The results of the tests were classified because of their military applications. But the tests boosted the amount of radiation trapped in the belt and apparently created or awakened one or more monstrous entities within it.

"Korolev had no idea of what was about to happen," Morgenstern said.

"He was planning to put the first man in space in 1960, a year ahead of the Americans, but he wanted to send the man aloft secretly in order to avoid media exposure in case something went wrong."

The choice tragically turned out to be a wise one. On May 15, 1960, a rocket roared skyward from the Baikonur Cosmodrome, carrying a Vostok spacecraft with one cosmonaut aboard. Officially the shot was dubbed "Sputnik 4," a prototype for a manned spacecraft. But Khrushchev was pushing the space program hard for results, and Korolev had reluctantly agreed to a risky manned flight. The mission started out well for the nameless cosmonaut—then disaster struck.

"The cosmonaut couldn't report directly to ground control for fear the conversation would be overheard by the West," explained Morgenstern grimly. "The Soviets were pretending a robot was aboard the Vostok. But suddenly the telemetry changed—the cosmonaut, who had no voice radio, tried to signal Moscow in Morse code!"

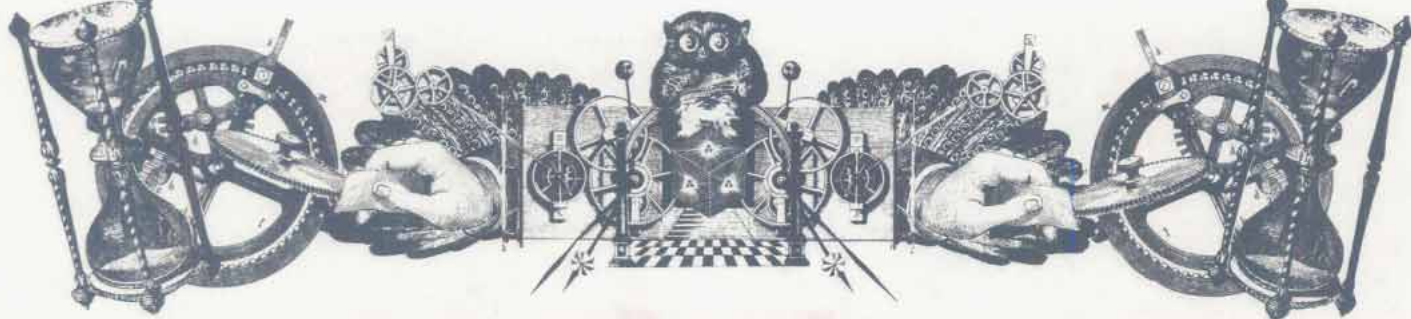
Italian radio operators reported receiving the message "I AM SICK" and then the words "LIGHT" and "HOT" over and over, then "THEY ARE COMING IN...HELP ME." Then—nothing. Ground control ordered the ship's retrorockets to fire and land the ship, but they misfired instead. "Sputnik 4" went into a higher orbit, eventually falling and burning up in the atmosphere. What became of the cosmonaut, no one knows, but Morgenstern believes he was one of a group of "lost cosmonauts" whose faces were airbrushed out of official group photos of the Soviet space pioneers.

"After that, nothing went right for the Russians. Korolev says another manned ship blew up shortly after launch in July 1960, killing the cosmonaut. After the second accident, Korolev ordered that only dogs were to be sent up in the Vostoks, still called 'Sputniks' by the government. The next ship, Sputnik 5, took two dogs up and back safely.

"But Khrushchev was furious and ordered more manned missions. One was prepared for launch in October, but it blew up on the pad, killing hundreds of scientists and technicians, as well as the cosmonaut. The government covered it up like the rest of the failures, eventually saying it was an unmanned Mars probe that blew up by accident.

"But that wasn't the worst of it," continued Morgenstern. "Some of the technicians who survived the October disaster reported their equipment had malfunctioned all at once, as if someone else was controlling it. The telemetry from the rocket, taken moments before it exploded, proved that it was receiving short-wave signals from another place. It took the Russians two weeks using, what were at the time, cutting-edge radio telescopes to find the source: it was in the Inner Van Allen belt, in the radiation zone created by the American H-bomb test blasts! Something monstrous out there had come to life and was attacking the Soviets!"

From then on, it was war. Sputnik 6 went up with two dogs in December 1960 to scout the area just below the Van Allen belt, to see if it was safe for manned ships. The ship escaped attack but burned up on reentry. Khrushchev



and Korolev, meanwhile, prepared a double mission up to the lower edge of the Van Allen belt. The first carried two men and much radiation and camera equipment. The second ship, originally an unmanned Venus probe, was reconverted to carry a deadly gift for the radiation creatures attacking the Soviets: an H-bomb. Korolev and his physicists reasoned that even if the alien monsters thrived on hard radiation, a burst from a megaton-level hydrogen bomb might disrupt or vaporize them.

"It was a gamble," said Morgenstern, "but the Soviets lost. The first ship was attacked by some sort of radiation field from the belt, and ground control could only sit and listen to the cosmonauts' coded cries for help before their heartbeats faded away. Still, the dying cosmonauts located the exact position of the radiation creatures in the belt. The second ship went up a week later and managed to launch its H-bomb on target, but the missile didn't explode—it flew off into space. The Soviets later claimed these were only experimental Venus probes, but Korolev's papers prove otherwise."

After this, Korolev was almost moved to shut down the Soviet space program entirely. Khrushchev wouldn't hear of it, however, and two more spacecraft carrying dogs and robots were prepared, to be followed by another manned mission—a quick one-orbit shot. The dog crews came back after only one orbit each, the animals alive and well.

"Then Korolev got this brilliant idea," said Morgenstern excitedly. "It was pure genius. He suddenly realized that the dog-carrying Sputniks had

never been harmed, probably because the Van Allen creatures didn't see them as a threat. Only the spacecraft carrying humans were attacked, either in space or on the ground. Korolev ordered that the next manned Vostok transmit the tape-recorded signals of a dog's heartbeat, instead of the cosmonaut's! The ruse worked, and the next cosmonaut—Yuri Gagarin—came back safely!"

Two Americans also went into space in 1961, but their flights were each barely 15 minutes long. Neither was harmed by the Van Allen monsters, probably because of the speed of their flights and because their Mercury spacecraft did not use the same radio frequencies as did the Russians. Another Russian, Nikolayev, went aloft in August and spent a day in orbit—his ship also transmitting the heartbeat of a dog instead of a human, and he returned unharmed.

Despite pleas from concerned scientists, Khrushchev ordered that the Americans were not to receive any help from the Soviets. "They sent a chimpanzee into space and got it back," he is reported to have sneered. "Let them figure it out." Meanwhile, the Soviets prepared another mission to atomize the monsters, this time with a super-huge H-bomb of over 100 megatons in power. A 57-megaton forerunner of such a device, the largest nuclear weapon ever detonated, was tested in October 1961 in the Novaya Zemlya region of the old USSR; the shock waves were felt across the world.

But the demonic entities lurking in radioactive space, whatever their origin, were not long for this universe. Given birth in American atomic tests,

their doom was sealed when the unknowing Americans began a new series of high-altitude tests in 1962: Project Dominic. A half-dozen Thor missiles were launched from Johnston Island, each carrying an H-bomb into space to test the effects of detonation.

"One 1.5 megaton burst, set off well over 250 miles up, became notorious for destroying four unmanned satellites, including the world-famous Telstar 1, the first communications satellite. That blast also seems to have wiped out the savage space creatures that had attacked the Soviet spacecraft—at least in Korolev's opinion in 1965, with his space program then free of calamities and roaring ahead of the Americans.

"Unfortunately," says Morgenstern, "I think he was wrong. Since 1965, the Russian space program has been plagued with problems—deaths, disasters, and near disasters. I am half afraid now that, instead of killing the Van Allen aliens, the Dominic tests may have knocked them out for a bit, but boosted their powers in the long run. The Russians have lost several space stations, they've had tremendous trouble with their supposedly 'reliable' spacecraft, and then, of course, came Chernobyl and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

"I wouldn't want to bet that whatever's out there in the Van Allen belt had nothing to do with all that. We've had troubles, but nothing like what the Russkies have had. Maybe we've been spared because American atomic weapons 'fed' the creatures out there the radiation they need, but God help us if they decide they don't like us, either."





Faux Pas

What's Buried In Grant's Tomb?

By SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LESTER WINDOOTH III

In a startling announcement exclusive to the World Tattler-Tribune, Canadian historian Anton Sacka-Weeje has proven that US Vice-President and Civil War general Ulysses S. Grant was really a space alien!

"The evidence is all there," explains Anton, professor at the Great Slave Lake Academy of Arts and Sciences. "There are links to this 'war hero' and all sorts of strange events like the Wendigo up here and the Men in Black

of the American Southwest. Your government's got documents proving it all, but they've locked those all away. Think about it. Why do you suppose they started asking 'Who's buried in Grant's Tomb?'"

Ulysses S. Grant was a top general for the Confederate army during the Civil War (or War Between the States for our southern readers). After the war, General Grant went on to become Vice-President of the United States.

With information from Civil War Secret Service files, Professor Sacka-

weeje proves Grant was not of this world. "No human could ever drink the quantities of whisky he did and live. Why, President Lincoln had to keep him supplied with barrels of the stuff. What did he do with it? Well, no one ever saw him bathing."

Professor Sacka-Weeje explains why it has taken so long for the news to be revealed by pointing to the powers of alien beings. "They don't want us to know just how Grant won the war. In fact, there are still secrets they are trying to suppress."

Editorial meeting! In my office, everybody—now!" bellows your editor as he strides through the reporter's bullpen. He doesn't wait to see if anyone follows, but barges right through and plants himself at his desk.

As the reporters squeeze into the cramped office—there's no place to stand let alone sit—they see a short, skinny, bald, bespectacled, and bow-tied man

standing alongside the editor's desk. He acts nervous to be the center of attention, though his pinched, little face still radiates that "I'm-better-than-all-you-weasels" sense of smug superiority that only comes with excessive pride in one's undergrad education.

"Two things, staff," your editor starts without any hesitation. "First, I want you to meet Lester Windooth III. He's our new head of Research and Fact Checking.



Unlike you bums, Lester's done something with his life. He was a History professor—"

"With an English composition minor, sir," the newcomer has the temerity to add.

"Like I was saying, he's educated, and he's here to oversee our fact checking. There's been complaints that we ain't always getting our history right, and I want that to stop!" With this, the editor slams his fist on the desk and glares particularly at the player characters, even if they haven't done anything wrong.

"Second thing—the public wants real news. They're getting tired of these Hollywood Heights, who's-sleeping-with-who stories you've been filing! Sales are slipping. I want ground-breaking material here, stuff that's gonna make people sit up and take notice." Your editor picks up a sheaf of papers from his desk and thrusts them into your hands.

"This is a good one I'm thinking of running. Lester's already checked it. What do you think?"

At this point, give the players the Grant's Tomb article and let them read it through. After they've gone through it, ask (as the editor) for opinions. Make each player give you an answer—in character. You want them on the hot seat, and you want them to feel it.

There are several possible outcomes to this question, depending on what the players say.

If they point out errors. There are several errors (intentional on our part) about U.S. Grant. Little things like he was a *Union* general, not a Confederate general and he was *President*, not Vice-President. These are little things that the new fact-checker Lester missed.

When the characters tactlessly point these out to the editor, he grows stony-faced and turns on the new man. After some embarrassed squirming, Windooth admits he may have made a little error, but it was "in keeping with modern educational standards."

With that answer, the editor only snarls and turns on the player characters. "Well, we can't go printing this story till we've checked the facts. Alright, I want you to go find this Professor Sacka-whatja and check out just what the real story is. Get your tickets from accounting and have a nice trip." With that, the editor (you) dismisses them all, Lester included.

As they elbow their way out of the office, Lester hisses, "So, your little scene's made you look good at my expense. Well, I'll make you sorry you ever heard of Dr. Windooth." With that he slinks away.

If they say it's a great piece. The editor (you) gets beet-faced and indignant. "You morons!" he roars. "Grant fought for the Union and was president of the US—*twice!* This thing's probably riddled with errors. Lord knows what else is wrong, so get your heinies out there and get the real story from the Professor Sacka-what. *Now!*"

As the characters tumble out of the editor's office, the old man turns on his new fact checker. "As for you . . ."

Sometime later, a much chastised Lester Windooth III slinks from the editor's office. As he passes a player character's desk, he venomously hisses, "You did that on purpose, setting me up in front of the boss. It was an honest mistake, and you used it to make me look like a fool. I'll get you for this."

Yes, it's true. No matter what the players do, they get assigned to double-check the story and they make Lester look bad. Congratulate them if you want, because now they have a playmate in the game of office politics. Lester hates them for life. Lester Windooth doesn't play a direct role in the rest of this adventure, but he is a continuing character you can use to add more role-playing (and mayhem) to those between-adventure interludes.

Finding Professor Sacka-Weejie

Assuming the reporters take their editor's obvious suggestion to interview the professor, they must first locate the man. A careful reading of the article gives them their only clue—the Great Slave Lake Academy of Arts and Sciences. Since the professor is Canadian, the characters might even deduce that Great Slave Lake is in Canada!

Researching Great Slave Lake and the Academy of Arts and Sciences. Before getting too far into this adventure, you (the Editor) might want to know a little





about the Great Slave Lake. It's just a hunch, really. Characters can use their various skills to dredge up more info on the lake. What they get depends on what skill they use.

Trivia: For those with Trivia skill, Great Slave Lake is the second largest lake inside Canada. (The Great Lakes don't count, since they are in the U.S. and Canada.)

Research. Great Slave Lake is located in the Northwest Territories. Yellowknife, the capital, is on its shores. Yellowknife has an airport and a single highway in. There are other small towns around the lake.

There is an entry for the Great Slave Lake Academy of Arts and Sciences in *Gromp's Guide to Government Grants*. A professor A. Sacka-Weejie received \$10,000 from the US Department of Defense, Psi-Lab division. No phone number is given, and the address listed is a post office box in Yellowknife.

If some smart player tries to duck the rest of this adventure by having his or her character phone the professor—well, it doesn't work. There's no listing of him in the Yellowknife phone directories or through operator assistance. The only way to track him down in time is to head north.

Getting to Yellowknife is not too difficult—most major cities in the US have connections to Calgary, and from Calgary there are regular flights to Yellowknife. Of course, you could make things difficult for the characters if you wanted to.

All the flights north might be filled, canceled for snow, canceled for underbooking, or delayed indefinitely because of bomb threats from F.I.S.H. (Free Inuit Salmon Harvesters*). The two choices left are to wait in Calgary for another flight or to drive to Yellowknife on the Mackenzie Highway. As Editor, discourage the first choice—warn the players their characters could sit in Calgary for days, and that prudence and caution are not the stuff of bold **TABLOID!** reporters. The second choice isn't so hot either—renting a car to get to Yellowknife is exorbitantly expensive, and the drive is going to take days. (The whole point is that you should stall them in Calgary until you have some ideas for side adventures to throw at them during the trip. Hey, have fun!)

First Night In Yellowknife

The designer would like to point out to all game players in Yellowknife that he has never been in Yellowknife. Everything he knows about Yellowknife comes from one small encyclopedia entry, a brief look at a map, and some vague memories from Mountie movies. All errors about Yellowknife in this adventure are therefore accidentally intentional. He sometimes wakes in the middle of the night and wonders, "Is Yellowknife a nice place? Should I move there?"

If the united game players of Yellowknife want to fly the designer to Yellowknife and show him what errors he has committed, that's their business.

However the characters manage it, they arrive in Yellowknife late in the day. They could leave Calgary at 10:00 PM—it doesn't matter, because their flight still won't arrive until 5:00 PM. (Where did all those missing hours go? Maybe that's the subject of another adventure. UFO abductions do lead to mysterious blackouts, after all.)

When the characters get to Yellowknife, it is winter. It doesn't matter if they began this adventure in Los Angeles at the height of summer—it is winter here. In fact, if the characters come back to Yellowknife in a future adventure, it will still be winter—unless the characters return in winter, in which case it is an "unusually warm day." Winter in Yellowknife means lots of snow, ice, and bitter cold.

There is no time to do any investigating and they really need hotel rooms. There's only one problem—hotel rooms in the city are at a premium. It seems the characters have arrived on the same day as a major political convention of the Indigenous People's Party. The town is overrun with politicking and partying Indians. These folks aren't fools—they've booked every decent room in town. The *only* thing that's available is the Snowblind Chalet out on the edge of the city—way out on the edge. The forest starts across the street, right next to the dog teams' kennels.

Fortunately, the Snowblind Chalet is a decent place. The rate is about \$40 (Canadian) a night, and there are enough rooms for the characters to sleep

* F.I.S.H. and their terrorist plots had better be the subject of another adventure!



double. The front is part office, part living room. The log walls are covered with the dusty heads of dead things that loom overhead. Since only a single lamp on the front desk is lit, there are lots of suggestive shadows.

The owner is Ed McTaggart, a round, sweaty fellow (even in the dead of winter) with a smooth, shiny face. It's late, and he's just settling in to watch the local hockey playoff on TV when the characters show up. Still he's thankful for the business, so he wildly fluctuates between sour grumpiness and fawning servitude. Play Ed slightly over the top, a little dotty, like he just might be a wee bit unhinged in the head.

Editor's note on talking Canadian

If you are a Canadian, skip this simplistic section. Please! For those who aren't aware of it, Canadians speak English—sort of. They say “eh” a lot, like at the end of every sentence, eh. Sometimes it sounds like a question, even when it's not, eh? Canadians can naturally figure out real questions from not real ones, eh. Sometimes when they get real excited, eh, they stick “ehs” in the middle of things, eh. These “ehs” don't sound like questions though, eh?

All these guidelines don't apply if the Canadian is from Quebec, eh. Then he or she speaks *Français* (though not according to the French).

End of Interlude.

The character's rooms are on the second floor, the motel only having two floors. The windows of all rooms look out on the woods across the road. (*The woods right next to the kennels.*) There's a little diner next to the hotel. It's too late for the characters to do anything useful this day—all businesses are closed.

Nothing interesting happens until late at night when everyone is asleep. Then, the characters are awakened by the howling of the sled dogs. Let them listen to this for a minute and then say, “The howling changes to that kind of screaming the dogs did when James Arness—the alien—tore them up in *The Thing*.” Don't say this if your players have never seen *The Thing* or if you haven't seen *The Thing*, either.

By this point, some character is probably going to peek through the curtains to see what's happening. Tell them that across the road they barely see a tall, man-like figure flailing about. There might be dogs around it, if that's what those dark specks are.

Downstairs, Ed's heard the noise, too, and is terrified. Before any character gets downstairs, he has already dropped a huge wooden bar across the door and is standing in the center of the room nervously fingering his loaded shotgun. If asked, he says, “It's a bear, eh? You ain't never heard before, eh.” No matter what anyone says, Ed insists the thing outside is only a bear. If anybody moves to open the door, Ed gets real scared and tries to hold them back with the shotgun. He wouldn't really shoot anyone, but he's nervous and might squeeze the trigger a little too hard.

The thing outside is a wendigo, come to check out the player characters. This leads to several questions. *What is a wendigo?* The “normal” world says it's a legendary spirit of the North American Indians that lives out in the north woods. It supposed to do terrible things, drive men mad, and generally scare little children to sleep.

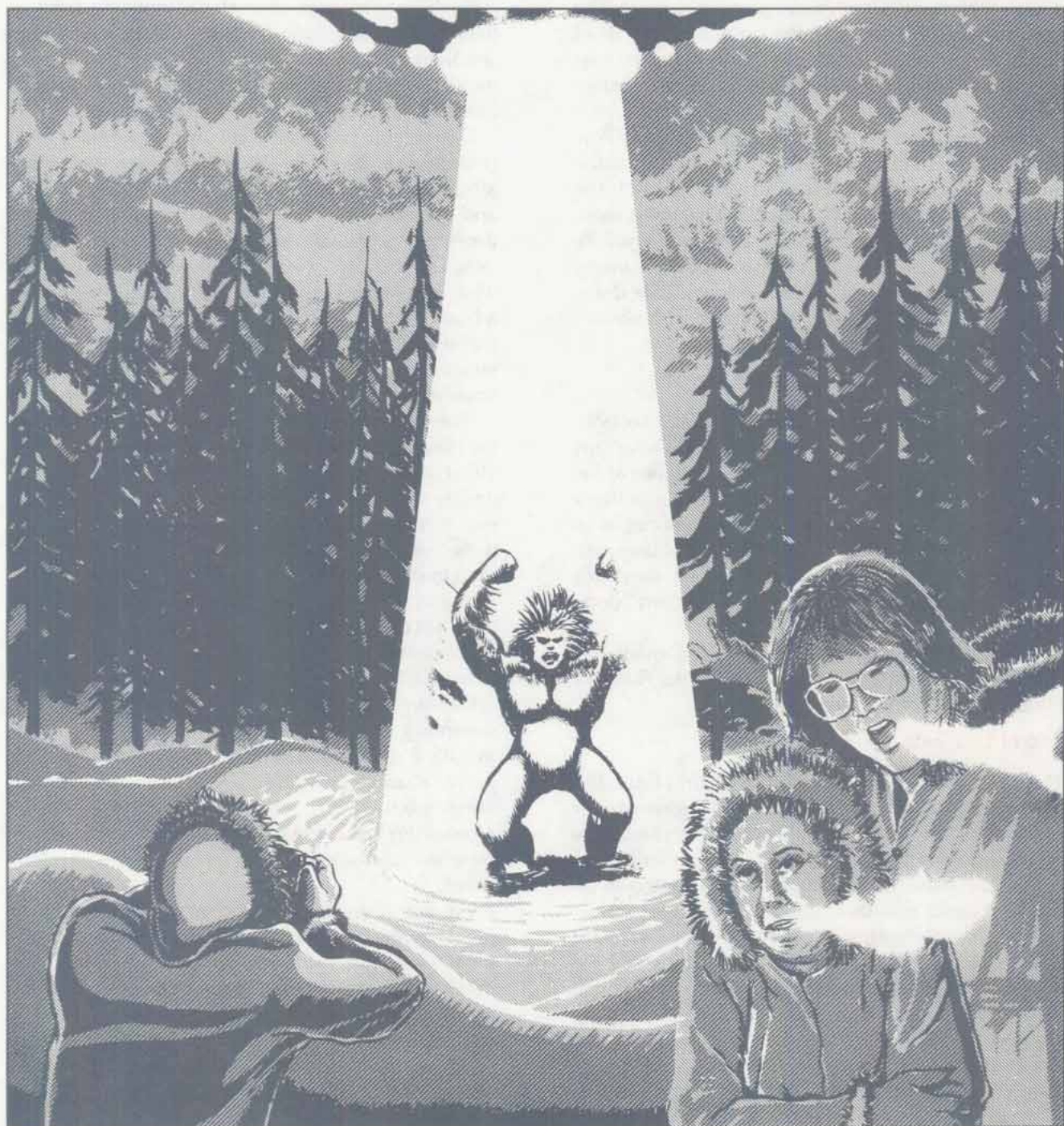
That is not what this wendigo is. Remember, this is the **TABLOID!** universe. This wendigo is a real thing. In this adventure, it's an alien being who conceals its presence by staying in the deep woods. In another adventure, the wendigo might be something else, depending on the conspiracy involved.

What's it doing here? It has come to look over the player characters and see if they are a threat to the aliens' plans.

How did it know the player characters were here? How do you know one of your co-workers isn't an alien?

What will it do? It was trying to get as close to the player characters' rooms as possible when the dogs started howling. Dogs and aliens don't get along—that's a documented fact. If the characters don't do anything else, the wendigo will finish with the dogs, cross the street, and levitate itself (because it can) to peer into their windows. At this point, the player characters will see a big-eyed, dark-green-skinned alien staring at them.







This plan changes if the characters act. The reporters can get outside many ways. If they open a window and drop to the ground, require a Reflexes check. Those who fail suffer 1d10 points of Stamina damage. Those who pass land in a nice deep snow-drift. They might be able to get past Ed and open the door (although not without at least one random shot being fired).

Whether the characters notice the wendigo/alien before it reaches their window or after it peers in, it notices them if they do anything fairly obvious like shouting at it, screaming, or charging across the road. As soon as one picture is snapped or anybody tries to get close to it, the thing vanishes. (Don't tell me your reporters *forgot* their cameras! Remember that and as their editor give them endless grief when it's time to file the story.)

Of course, being an alien it doesn't just *vanish*—it disappears in style. A sickly green light lances out of the sky—just like in those science-fiction shows. The snow swirls up in golden flakes and there's a *big* gust of wind that's freezing cold. Anyone within 50' of the wendigo/alien takes 2d6 points of Stamina damage from the chill. Frost coats their cheeks, icicles hang from their eyebrows, and their skin is a trendy, pale blue-white—kind of like a northwoods nosferatu. Those that pass out better be brought inside, or they'll start suffering Body damage. Don't make it much, just a point or two from exposure, but use the threat to scare the player.

Those that aren't frozen to the bone can go check things out—if they dare. Naturally, as soon as they move forward, the moon goes behind a cloud and everything goes pitch black. Dogs whimper and snarl in the darkness. The woods are unnaturally quiet, except for the weird sounds in the distance, which are perfectly natural to any native of Yellowknife, but what's the likelihood any player character hails from here? Use all this—the darkness, noises, smell of warm blood and ozone, and sudden silences—to make the players twitch in their seats. This is the height of fun.

Whether the characters investigate at night or by daylight, they find the same things—torn and muti-

lated dogs surrounding a set of tracks—*not made by a human!* Big surprise, that. In the morning, Ed calls the local Mountie, and they both agree it must have been a bear. By then, the tracks do look sort of like bear tracks—such is the cold light of reason.

Following the tracks into the woods at night is a stupid idea, so by all means encourage the player characters to do this. The trail goes a mile through thickets, deep snow, and lots of other inconveniences and finally ends in the center of a clearing. The end of the trail is not hard to miss because the tracks lead to a perfect circle of scorched earth (all the snow is melted here too). Anybody with Astronomy type skills who looks to the sky can make a skill check. *Surgeon General's Warning: Skill not usable in daytime.* If it's successful, they see an extra star in Orion's belt that just might be suspicious! (It isn't—it's just the daily Washington to Moscow trans-polar flight, but they don't need to know that!)

On-the-ball reporters will remember to interview Ed, the Mountie, anyone standing nearby, and each other. They will also take photos of dead dogs, tracks, Ed, the Mountie, anyone standing nearby, and each other. They will find a file picture of a bear print to compare to the *monster's* photograph. They will go to the Yellowknife library and read up on local sightings and legends. (Actually, they might just call the librarian and get the scoop.)

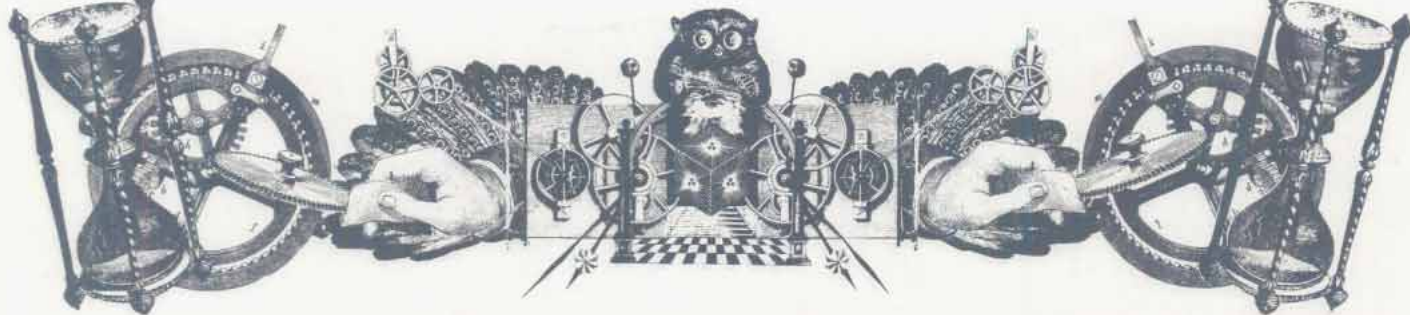
This is what on-the-ball reporters would do. Your player characters will probably forget all this and go chasing after something else. Be sure to remember any lapses so that, should the whole episode get mentioned in front of their editor, he can appropriately ream them out in front of the entire staff.

No amount of further poking around, waiting, or watching is going to get the players any more information. Get on with things, will you?

Finding Professor Sacka-Weeje, Part II

Well, the characters are in Yellowknife, but they still don't know where the prof is. All they've got is a post





office box—but they are intrepid reporters! That should be enough. All they have to do is go to the post office and bribe some mail clerk into looking the address up. Simple.

Gee, it would be a shame if it was that easy. Let's introduce some problems. Take your pick.

Problem #1. The Canadian Postal Service is on strike—again. The characters arrive at the post office—any post office—and are greeted by picket lines. The management is barricaded inside the building, trying futilely to sort mail. Anybody openly crossing the picket line is assumed to be a scab and gets beat up.

There's an open window in the back that the characters could climb through, but it's on the second floor. Fortunately, the guy next door just went in from shoveling snow off his roof and left a ladder leaning against the house. When he comes back out and sees the ladder against the post office leading to an open second floor window, he will do one of two things, both of which may directly affect the characters:

- 1) Call the police.
- 2) Go collect his mail which hasn't been delivered for 6 days.

Problem #2. Ultra-Patriot is working the desk today. On listening to the player characters, the desk clerk instantly deduces they are *not from Canada* and therefore must be up to no good. (*They probably didn't say "eh" enough.*) The only persuasion that will be effective on this guy is to convince him that the player characters are really Canadian agents posing as foreign provocateurs in order to trap the professor in some hideous scheme that threatens a vital national interest—like hockey. He resists anything else, loudly singing "O, Canada" if he must.

Problem #3. The entire staff is Quebecois. Through a small administrative oversight, every postman in the building is from Quebec. They all speak French only and won't even deign to deal with English-speaking customers. Have fun.

The address of Professor Sacka-Weeje's log cabin puts its location at 30 miles outside the town of Snowdrift, which is on the eastern end of the Great Slave Lake.

Getting to Snowdrift

Now it's time for a running gag. Things have just been too peaceful up to now! Let's have some mayhem!

Remember what happened if the characters tried to hire a boat or helicopter to cover the wedding of Johnny Geraimizo? (You *did* play that adventure, didn't you?) Of course you do. There was only one guy who would take the job. Well guess what—he's back! He's rested! And he's as *loony* as ever! Players can get to Snowdrift by bush plane, ice boat, snowmobile, or dog sled, but there's only one man who will take them:

CAPTAIN STURGEON!

Yes, indeed, the good captain's moved his base of operations. It seems Florida just didn't suit him. The deep woods is the place for him, so here he is in Yellowknife.

As before, Captain Sturgeon seems like the most harmless man in the world when he's not behind the wheel. Everything he says is frighteningly boring and monotone and he shows all the emotions of a fish. The minute he gets behind the controls, though, he's a changed man. Speed is his friend, and there's no risk too stupid or too great that he won't try it.

Although the characters may remember the captain, he won't remember them. The player characters are just customers. Of course, any injuries he suffered in his first adventure are still with him. If he cracked up the helicopter big time on the estate lawn, give him a neck brace or a leg in a cast.

Continuing the Running Gag. Of course, you shouldn't drop Captain Sturgeon after this adventure—he's now a running gag. At the same time, you can't have it be the same every time. There has to be variation, otherwise the characters will just say, "Oh look, we got Captain Sturgeon—again." Work him into the story in different ways. The next time, he could drive the competition. They might see an ad on TV for his new charter service. They could meet his brother or a friend of a friend of Captain Sturgeon. Drag it out. Make them suffer. Keep them guessing.



Of course, just going to Snowdrift, even with Captain Sturgeon, isn't much of a problem. All the player characters have to do is keep their mouths shut and not make stupid suggestions. So, to prevent that from happening, there have to be some complications.

As the characters get close to Snowdrift (on the shores of the Great Slave Lake), a UFO comes shooting down from the north. It is a big, silvery cigar-shaped object that jinks and swerves through the air like no normal flying craft. Suddenly, sickly green beams lance out from its hull, just missing Captain Sturgeon's craft! Where the beams strike ground, dirt and snow explode into the air. Where they hit water, the ice shatters into a thousand pieces.

At even the slightest word from the player characters, Captain Sturgeon goes into maniacal evasive maneuvers. Every character not actually strapped down must make a Reflexes check. Those that fail are hurled from the craft (bounced off the snowmobile, tossed through the airplane door, and so forth). for 3d6/1 points of damage. If incited, the good captain will swing around to pick them up on the fly. This requires that the rescuer and the rescuee both pass Reflexes checks to succeed.

After several minutes of panicked fun, the captain manages to lose the UFO. From there, the trip to Snowdrift is uneventful.

Once in Snowdrift, the characters have no trouble finding their way to Sacka-Weejie's cabin. He's a well-known, local kook so somebody will cheerfully give directions or maybe even take the characters there.

At the Professor's

The Great Slave Lake Academy of Arts and Sciences is actually a little log cabin in the deep, snow-bound woods. As the characters get close, they see that the place looks like it's been ransacked. Fantastic junk, some of it snow-covered, some of it not, is scattered among the trees all around the building. The cabin itself looks like a scavenger's dream. It's covered with nailed-down bits of everything: flattened tin cans, old boards, hides, plastic sheeting, truck fenders, old

windows, screen doors, and traffic signs. A satellite dish perches precariously on the roof. The place seems deserted except for the hum of a generator.

A wooden sign nailed over the door reads "GREAT SLAVE LAKE ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIE—" The rest is missing. A yellowed note taped on the door reads "True seekers round back."

At the back of the cabin, in a small clearing, is a battered picnic table, cleared of snow. A well-worn path leads from it to the house, while other tracks stomp all around the clearing and branch off into the woods in various directions. If the character compare these tracks to the wendigo's, the prints are the same! *Oh, my God!* The professor's been taken by the wendigo! No, no, no—wait. *The professor is a wendigo!* Or is it . . .

At any rate, let the characters stew with terrorized thoughts for a couple of minutes. All of a sudden there's a terrible hissing and gurgling noise from the house. Something *horrifying* is happening inside!

Just then the back door opens and out comes Professor Sacka-Weejie holding a cup of coffee. Don't tell the players that. Instead tell them:

The back door opens and out comes a stunted humanoid clutching a smoking something in its three-fingered hand. It seems to be wearing some kind of silver suit like—well, you know. The suit covers its face too, except for its huge, saucer-like eyes.

Then sit back and watch them panic.

Actually the description is pretty accurate. The professor is very short (4'8") and completely bald. He's got hugely thick glasses that magnify his eyes. He's wearing a silver snowmobile suit (with hood) and a face mask for warmth (there's a little hole for his mouth so he can drink).

Oh yeah, the hand—seems some time ago his buddy Elmo got a little careless with a chainsaw. The professor's other hand is perfectly normal. Honest. It's just in his pocket. The "smoking" thing he's holding is actually a steaming cup of espresso (hence the horrible gurgling noises inside).

Any resemblance between the professor and various descriptions of purported space aliens is just an amazing coincidence, isn't it?





Assuming the player characters don't do something amusing like gun the professor down where he stands, the little guy speaks. He says, "Eeeep!" He says "Eeeep" while he bolts back into the cabin and bars the door behind him. He does this before the characters get to act. This is terribly unfair and breaks the AMAZING ENGINE rules, but the designer says it's okay. (*Besides, if he didn't hide inside, there would be no point in writing the next paragraph.*)

Once inside, the professor is not opening the door for nothing and nobody. If the player characters try to talk to him, he shouts back that he's not going to be fooled by THEM. He keeps talking about THEM and how THEY have come to get him because THEY know he knows what THEY already know. What the players are supposed to know already is that THEY are part of the evil conspiracy run by THEM and that THEY have come to get the professor and either make him one of THEM or get rid of him so that THEY can continue in their secret plans to have the world run by THEM.

It takes some pretty persuasive arguments to get the professor to open the door. The most effective is to convince the prof that the characters really are reporters and will print the *truth* to the world. It might not hurt if they leave out the part about how the *truth* will inevitably show up with lurid photos on supermarket shelves right next to the stories about the President's meeting with the Loch Ness Monster and the King's marriage to a McRestaurant drive-through waitress.

Eventually, they will either get the professor to open the door, or they will freeze. If they get the door open, you get to continue with the next part of this adventure. If they all freeze, you can quit playing and go watch TV. This is *America*, God bless it, a *democracy*! You have a choice, not like those in godless *communist* countries! You should be on your knees, thanking the founding fathers that you have the choice to watch TV or not! It's right there in the Constitution, right after the part about buying unlimited quantities of assault weapons, enough to arm every post office in the free world—

(*Oops, sorry.*)

The Professor's Story

Basically the professor's story doesn't make much sense. Convinced he's finally found a bunch of true believers, he just lets it all out in a huge, sprawling rant. Babble excitedly, talk a lot about THEM and THE CONSPIRACY and clones and how World War I was all part of THEIR plot and how you (the professor, that is) have been enlightened and how it all started in 1864 and the assassination of Lincoln wasn't really Lincoln and how Booth could see the clones and how US money has secret messages coded in it and it's not as pretty as Canadian money anyway and would you (the player characters, that is) like some coffee? and stand on the chair and really make the reporters wonder if they haven't tapped into some current of pure insanity.

What the professor is trying to say is that there is an evil conspiracy of ancient proportions that has been working for centuries to control humanity for its own evil ends. According to him, some time in the 1800's THEY perfected the secrets of cloning and behavioral conditioning. This allowed THEM to clone world leaders and then condition those clones into absolute loyalty to THEIR conspiracy. THEIR clones aren't perfect, though, so people who know what to look for can spot THEIR clones.

How does the professor know all this? He's been enlightened by friends—and they're coming by for coffee!

Coffee Klatch

About this point, the player characters hear the same burbling and hissing noise they've heard every time the sickly green beams have appeared. The noise is coming from just outside. Take this opportunity to induce mass panic in the player characters. Describe the charged scent of ozone, the clomp of footsteps outside, and the beatifically calm face of the professor as he says, "They're here," and gets up to open the door.

Outside are two tall visitors. They are wearing silvery suits. They are bald. They have large, saucerlike



eyes. They have three-fingered hands. They are not the professor's cousins.

They see the player characters; the player characters see them. Have the aliens do a double-take and slowly raise their three-fingered hands which are clutching silvery tubes pointed straight at the player characters.

Pause at this point and allow the players *insufficient* time to plan their actions. You don't want to allow them enough time to plan properly—this is called pacing. If they had time to plan properly, they might do something intelligent. *You do not want this.*

Let mayhem ensue. The aliens mistakenly assume the characters are THEM. The aliens are enemies of THEM. The aliens are nice guys, even if they are holding little silver tubes that emit purple rays that paralyze anybody who fails to make a Fitness check.

After things finally calm down—either all the characters are paralyzed or the professor and characters have managed to convince the aliens that the characters are not THEM, then everybody can sit down and talk. The aliens really like coffee, although their habit of mixing it with antifreeze is a little disconcerting.

The aliens confirm the professor's story. They feel bad because they are the ones who taught THEM the secrets of cloning a long time ago. The aliens didn't realize THEY would use these secrets to evil ends. Ever since, they (not THEY) have been trying to secretly make amends. Of course, the aliens don't want to go public. That would create a panic, and THEY would be able to blame the aliens for things THEY did. Furthermore, THEY are always hunting for the secret alien base, and if anyone printed anything about the aliens, THEY might be able to find it. Finally, there's always the problem that THEY are a secret conspiracy. Anybody who reveals something about THEM becomes a target. This could make a reporter's life exciting—but short.

Ultimately the aliens, who the professor affectionately calls Sid and Nancy, want to have the player characters as allies. Of course, they won't allow any photographs of themselves to be taken, but in the future, they might grant confidential interviews. That's about all the group is going to get out of this situation,

although there's no limit to the number of stories they can spin from what they've already unearthed.

The Aliens

Ref: 45 Sta: 30 Body: 4
Alien Paralysis Beam: damage 0, check versus Fitness or be paralyzed 1d8 hours.

Back Home

Oh yeah, that business about Grant being a space alien. According to Sacka-Weeje, Sid, and Nancy, that was a forgery written by THEM. It's true, Grant really was an alien, planted by the good guys to try to undo some of the damage caused by THEIR clones, but that's not something they (the aliens, that is) wanted everyone to know. THEY wrote the article to expose the aliens and increase the fear of alien contact. THEY are evil and cunning. In fact, Lester Windooth III might be one of THEM. The player characters should be cautious around him.

Back at the office, the editor wants a story. A wendigo story would make him happy, along with something about Professor Sacka-Weeje. The characters are encouraged to be creative at this point. Remember, the aliens don't want their involvement known!

The experience points for surviving all this can be broken down as follows:

Filing an exciting story about the prof:	1
Filing story about wendigo:	1
Photo of wendigo:	2
Photo of wendigo tracks:	1
Story about Canadian Postal Service being part of secret world conspiracy:	1
Story about Grant being part of secret world conspiracy (thus alerting world!):	2!

Whatever the result, Lester Windooth III *is* one of THEM, although admittedly not the most competent one of THEM. He and THEY will be around to cause trouble for the characters for some time.





Shocking Secret Revealed!

Docs Turn

Backs on

Human

Torches!

**Dozens of People Up In Smoke
and No One Seems to Care!**

By ANNE BROWN

Humans around the world are spontaneously cremating in their homes and even cars—and the medical community refuses to acknowledge their deaths as medical phenomena!

American Medical Association spokeswoman Doris Washburn was quoted in a recent press conference. "There is no way to scientifically explain these deaths. The human body is made mostly of water. To cremate

bodies in the manner described would require a temperature of 3,000 degrees or more. In all the cases we've examined, the investigations were poorly handled, documentation was sloppy, or foul play was suspected. Until we have



sound empirical evidence and a reasonable theory, we refuse to acknowledge spontaneous human combustion as a medical condition."

The press conference was triggered by the near-hysteria induced in residents of Idaho following a string of bizarre events:

- Estelle Robins, a 72-year-old grandmother, was discovered lying dead on the floor of the sacristy of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church on November 16, 1993. Her body and clothes were reduced to ashes with the exception of her left foot and shoe, and her Timex wristwatch. Robins was cleaning the church at the time of the incident. Nothing else in the Boise church was harmed.
- Dwight Landers, a 60-year-old elementary school principal, walked out of his kitchen at 7:30 p.m. on December 15, 1993, to take out the trash. When he did not return after 10 minutes, his wife, Sadie, a semi-invalid, stepped out into the winter night to look for him. She discovered his corpse, blackened and unrecognizable, outside their garage in a Boise suburb. The snow was melted in a four-foot perimeter around the body. The bag of trash lay nearby. The plastic bag had melted entirely, but the contents were not scorched in any way.
- Fred Hawkey, an unemployed resident of Falling Rock, cashed his unemployment check, purchased groceries, and was waiting in his car at a stoplight when he burst into

flames on February 2, 1994. Witnesses in neighboring cars reported seeing a bright blue flash, then the victim was engulfed in fire. He was pronounced dead at the scene. The convertible top of his car was barely scorched. A carton of ice cream in his grocery bag was melted, but other items showed no signs of exposure to heat.

Local police, coroners, and arson investigators have failed to solve these cases. Relatives can offer no plausible explanations for the demise of their loved ones. Matches, lighters, and flammable fluids were not found near the bodies in any of the cases.

Spontaneous human combustion (SHC) has been a documented phenomenon for hundreds of years. Authors Charles Dickens, Herman Melville, and Mark Twain each wrote of the demise of a character through SHC. A transcript of the proceedings from a Paris court in 1725 describes the reversal of a murder conviction. The victim's husband, convicted of murdering his wife and then burning the body to hide evidence, narrowly escaped execution. A physician present at the scene was able to convince the jury that no human device could account for the near-total consumption of the body while leaving the surroundings virtually untouched. The man was released from prison but spent the rest of his life in a depressed state.

American scientist and researcher Wayne Baxter is an authority on spontaneous human combustion. He has traveled the world documenting cases of SHC, and sums up the findings of two decades' worth of research as fol-

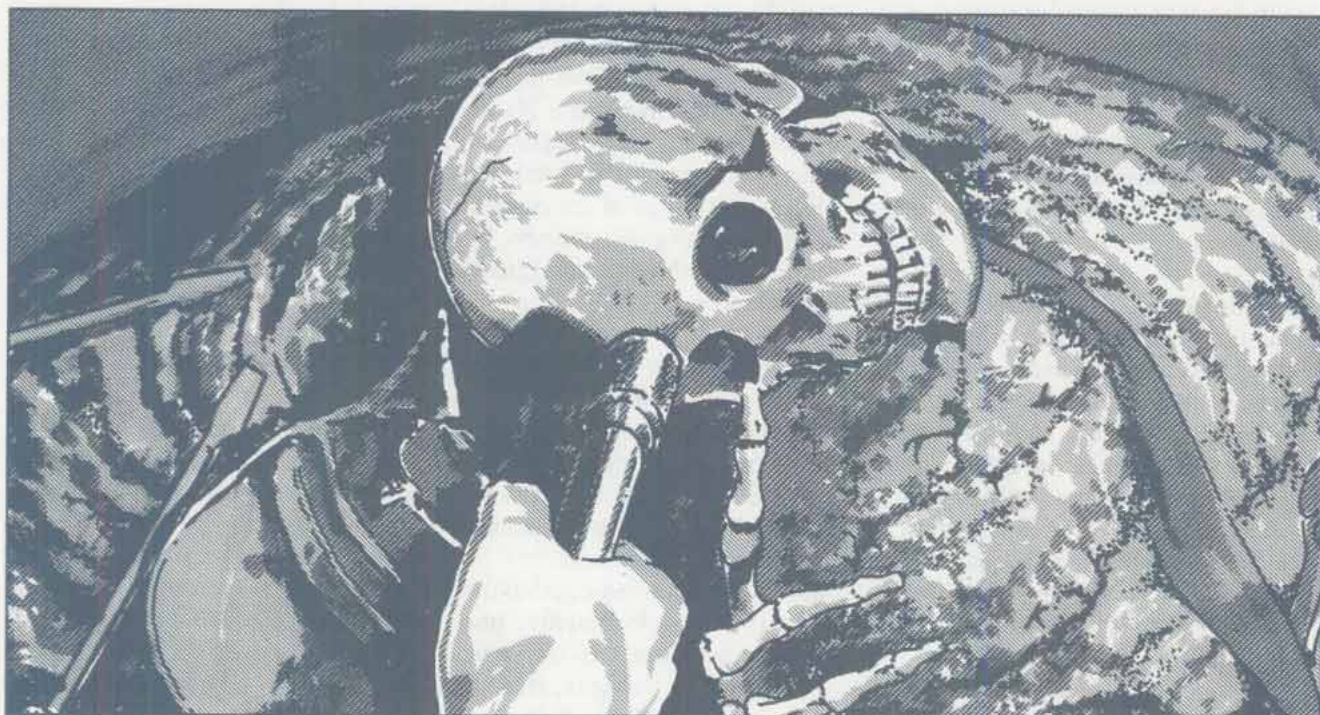
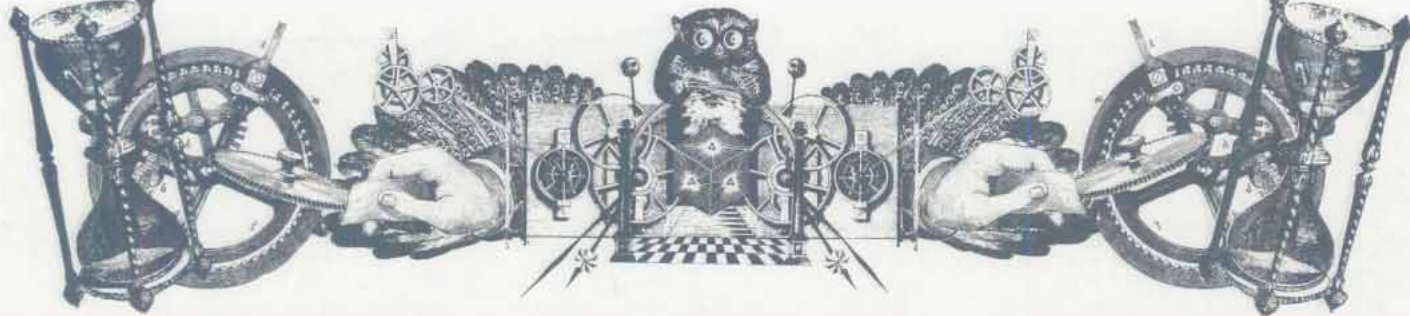
lows: "In all cases, bodies are consumed far beyond what one would normally expect in a case of death by fire. Sometimes, remains are reduced to fewer than 10 pounds of ash and cinders. The surroundings are typically untouched. No common thread has ever been discovered to link victims. They range from old to young, wealthy to poor, atheist to devout, educated to ignorant."

Baxter states that traditional theories for the cause of SHC include divine retribution, ignition of an intoxicated person, lasers, ignition of intestinal gases, static electricity, and ball lightning amongst others. "Most of the traditional theories are full of holes. For example, the elements sodium and phosphorus explode into flame when exposed to oxygen, and these elements are found in the human body. But there's no evidence to suggest that those elements can combust in such minute quantity in the presence of moist, living tissue."

Baxter favors the ball lightning theory, but even that theory has weaknesses. "When a man is found combusted outdoors on a cold, winter night under a clear sky, the evidence for ball lightning is barely plausible. Ball lightning could account for some occurrences under the correct weather conditions, but it certainly can't explain all cases."

"We can't rule out intervention by aliens. As bizarre as it sounds, it is the only option that could explain all the cases. I refused to consider this theory early in my research, but the longer I study this phenomenon, the more I'm convinced that aliens must play a part in it somewhere."





"We know that laser beams can be so fine-tuned as to strike tumors the size of a grain of sand. They can obliterate kidney stones without damaging surrounding tissue or requiring an incision. Why couldn't alien technology blast an individual seated in a recliner in his living room? A focused beam could be fired from miles up in the sky. Any one of us could be the next victim at any moment."

But what would cause aliens to randomly blast citizens of earth? Baxter shrugs. "We could think of a hundred reasons—testing weapons of warfare, ceremonial sacrifice, even practical jokes. Only the aliens could answer that question."

The scientist at one time considered a government conspiracy, but dismissed that theory early in his research.

"Documented cases from more than one hundred years ago could not be attributed to government testing of laser beams. We simply didn't have the technology back then. And if the government were testing lasers within the last 40 years or so, I think we'd see more evidence. I think we'd have cases of farm animals, wild animals, isolated buildings, empty vehicles, and other inanimate objects burning inexplicably.

"I repeatedly ask myself why only humans are involved. Other creatures on the earth are every bit as organic, but none of them are combusting!"

"I also believe that if any government on the planet were testing laser beams, we'd see some kind of evidence in weather patterns, airport radar, or the discovery of such testing through spies."

Baxter displayed his research files and pointed out some of the more intriguing cases.

- On the rainy evening of July 13, 1974, neighbors of Mrs. Vera Burton of Amarillo, Texas reported seeing a human torch stumbling out of the Burton bungalow. Those who rushed to aid the victim, including neighbor Dale Donovan, stated that despite a driving rain, the flames did not die down until Mrs. Burton was smothered with a blanket. The Widow Burton was pronounced dead at the scene. Her arms and feet were completely burned off.

Inside the home, the stove's oven and burners had not been lit, no heating device was discovered, and the electric blanket was unplugged



from the outlet. The only package of matches discovered was in a small tin box in a kitchen drawer. The only candles in the house still bore their cellophane wrappers. Mrs. Burton was known to be a teetotaler and no liquor was found in the home.

- In June, 1982, nine residents of Mexico City succumbed to SHC over the course of three evenings. All the cases occurred after midnight. When the three-night reign of terror was over, three women and six men were dead.

June 21:

- A known prostitute ignited in the empty lobby of a cheap hotel. She was found in the morning by a maid. The streetwalker's body was reduced to ash; her red sequined blouse was merely smoke damaged.
- A doctor returning from a house call was found in the morning on his front yard by the family dog. His body was reduced to cinders, except for his left hand, wearing a wedding ring and still clutching his medical bag.
- A honeymooning couple in a luxury hotel reported hearing a cry from the next room in the small hours of the morning. Investigation revealed a business man in the next room lying on the hotel bed, still smoldering. His pajamas and bedding were only slightly scorched, even though the body was burned beyond recognition.

June 22:

- A nun arose early in the morning thinking she had heard the bell at the outer gate. As she crossed the courtyard in the darkness, her nightgown suddenly blazed around her. She saved herself by leaping into the courtyard fountain.
- A drunk in a seedy cantina spent several hours insulting local patrons. When the bartender threatened to close up, the drunk grew so angry that he burst into flames. Witnesses simply stood by watching, and within five minutes, the man was reduced to a pile of ash that filled a single metal bucket.

- A highway patrolman reported investigating an abandoned vehicle on a two-lane highway. The driver's seat was buried in a layer of black ash. On the floor lay the legs and feet of an adult male. The legs had been burned away from the knees up. The bottom ten inches of blue jean legs still ringed the ankles; the feet still wore their leather cowboy boots.

June 23:

- The parents of eight children in one of the poorest districts of Mexico City reported the death of a nine-year-old daughter. The girl shared a bed with three sisters. The victim was discovered in the morning, charred and blackened. The other girls were not harmed in the slightest way. The bedding under the victim's body was slightly scorched.

- An elderly man was admitted to a hospital emergency room complaining of chest pains and tingling extremities, symptoms generally indicative of an acute heart attack. He was examined and soon stabilized. An attending nurse reports that as she approached the man to take a pulse, he cried out suddenly and a blue flame leapt up from the center of his chest. The flame blazed with such intensity that the nurse was forced back and cried for help. When the nurse and two orderlies approached less than two minutes later, the man was dead, a hole burned completely through his chest so that the bedsprings beneath him could be seen.

- A wealthy man awoke before dawn to the smell of smoke. As he arose from his bed, his nightclothes fell from his body in ashes. The bedding too, was in ashes, burned and blackened. As he arose, the bed collapsed. The man had not so much as a blister from his experience.

Baxter points to all these events as having no clear link, cause, or common circumstances. "If spontaneous human combustion is truly not a medical condition, what answers are left to us? As preposterous as alien target practice may sound, it is the only logical link. I speculate that we'll find evidence to support my theory within the next ten years."

Reports of SHC can be forwarded to Wayne Baxter at the University of the Midwest in Indianapolis, Indiana. He welcomes photographic evidence and eyewitness reports.





Startling Research Reveals

Aliens Built Ark!

**Holy Ark of the
Covenant
Designed by
Visitors from
Beyond the Sun;
New Theory Links
Ark to Coso
Geode, Nazca
Lines and Great
Pyramids**

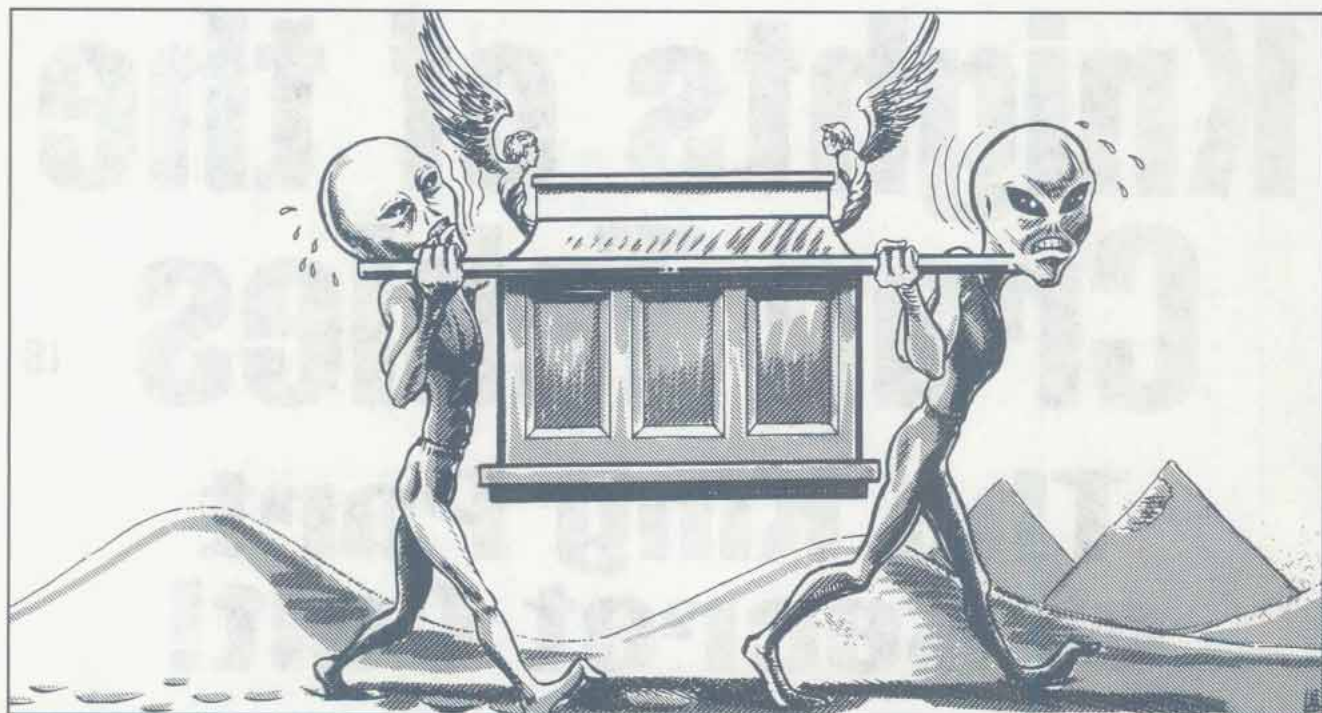
By KAREN S. BOOMGARDEN

Archaeological digs on three continents have unearthed astonishing new evidence that the Ark of the Covenant, that most holy artifact of the Old Testament Israelites, was designed by aliens.

For years, it's been claimed that the Ark was a kind of battery, given the description in the Bible and subsequent experimentation with building a duplicate. However, with the discovery of the Coso geode in California, a new hypothesis has sprung to life.

Far from an ordinary crystal-bearing rock, this geode contained an amazing item. X-rays reveal the shape to be strikingly similar to a spark plug. A cross-section clearly shows an outer covering of an unidentified material surrounding a ceramic core, at the center of which is a copper rod.

The x-rays further reveal a coil or spring at one end of the rod and some



kind of gap at the other "like that on a car's spark plug," explained one of the archaeologists who found the incredible artifact.

Carbon dating has set the age of this item at half a million years.

Meanwhile, a simultaneous discovery in Peru shook the archaeological community. A new pattern has been found on the Nazca Plain, previously invisible to the naked eye. Electromagnetic photography techniques perfected by NASA have disclosed a new shape on the rocky flats, apparently a box flanked by winged figures, the proportions of which are uncannily similar to those of the Ark of the Covenant.

Incredibly, the discovery of a new archaeological layer in ancient Jerusalem also contains parts of this globe-spanning jigsaw puzzle.

Potsherds from this layer clearly show antennae-headed beings, apparently wearing helmets, carrying what appears to be the Ark itself. Forming the border at the lip of the pot is a pattern of gizmos matching the X-rays of the Coso geode!

Calculations are currently being made to find whether any part of this pattern conforms to the angle of the Great Pyramid at Giza. At the present time, it would seem that a triangle drawn from Nazca to the dig in California to Jerusalem is equal to precisely one-half of one side of the Great Pyramid, using measurements accounting for the curvature of the Earth.

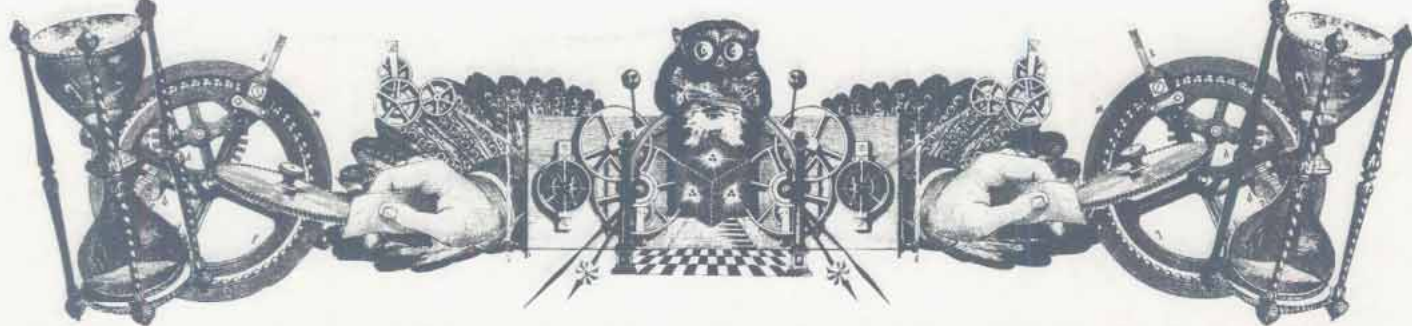
Professor Hank Twintowers, of the State University of Tulsa in Oklahoma City, is using the currently available data to construct a working scale model

of the Ark of the Covenant. One of the most useful pieces of information is a series of still photos from the famous film about Nazis stealing the Ark and planning to use it to end World War II, *Reuters and the Lost Spark*.

"Those effects guys really got it down," gushed Prof. Twintowers as he filed down the end of a length of thin, copper tubing. "The documentation in the ancient Babylonian scrolls I've photocopied confirms the appearance of the energy bolts that should shoot out of this puppy when I get it plugged in."

"Besides that, though, there's the question as to what all this means. I'm currently planning an expedition to bring the Ark to the Great Pyramids in an effort to contact whatever it is out there that set this puzzle up."





Knights of the Crap Tables

The King Part of Secret Cult!

By KAREN S. BOOMGARDEN

New and startling evidence about E***s's private life has just surfaced, linking him with the believed extinct Order of the Knights Templar, founded during the Crusades.

Renowned Genealogist Kimberly Grant-Whitman claims to have uncovered records showing the King's relationship to Jacques de Molay, the last of the known Templars, executed by the King of England in the 14th century. Her research has also led to speculation about present Las Vegas casino owners, particularly those who just opened the extravagant Excalibur casino-resort hotel.

"Like their predecessors, these modern Templars are amassing huge sums of money, not paying taxes on it, and putting up a front of public service," complained Ms. Grant-Whitman.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, more evidence about Stonehenge threatens to link the creator of that monument with the Knights Templar and with E***s. Sir Ethelbert Rhys-Jones, who has taken over the studies of Brandy Grant (the aforementioned Ms. Grant-Whitman's mother), claims to have proof that, because Dr. Grant was so close to revealing the creator of Stonehenge to be E***s, the remaining Knights Templar ordered her assassination. That information, they believe, would lead to the disintegration of the military-industrial complex and the national health program, and from there nothing in our society would be safe from outside takeovers.

An anonymous note sent to Sir Ethelbert reads in part: "If the Creator E. were to be revealed, our Overseers from A.C. would be most displeased

and would revoke our gambling license. This cannot be permitted. That is why the meddler was removed from our midst."

While some are quick to infer that E stands for E***s, Sir Ethelbert has reason to believe otherwise. "Numerologically speaking, it's far more likely that E stands for Ethelred the Unready. That wily Saxon carefully cultivated the image of the doddering fool so that people wouldn't know he was one of the greatest minds of his time. That, and no one would believe that aliens would ever land in Wales. It's far too foggy."

And what of the mysterious "A.C."? Sir Ethelbert has a theory for that, too. "Atlantic City. I know lots of blokes wish it stood for Alpha Centauri, but that's ridiculous. What would aliens know about gambling, I ask you!"



France: UFO Landing Field?

By KAREN S. BOOMGARDEN

PARIS—Chretien Troyes, a UFOlogist from Marseilles, claims to have found evidence that ancient astronauts visited France and left markers so others of their kind could find it as well.

Three ancient sites containing petroglyphs (rock drawings), apparently depicting space aliens, form a triangle encompassing the whole of France. Furthermore, along the legs of this triangle lie most of the functional uranium mines in the country. This information would be of great importance to aliens whose ships ran on nuclear power.

Perhaps most significantly, the northern leg of the triangle, when extended around the globe of Earth, points directly to the Nazca Plains and the mysterious figures that have long

puzzled humankind. "It's clear to me that the ancient visitors were leaving messages for others who would follow them. Nothing says we were ever meant to find this out!"

Troyes also points out that the triangle formed by these sites has the same proportions as the Great Pyramid of Giza. "That's no coincidence," he says. "The significance is staggering."

Another mystery regarding the petroglyphs may be close to being solved. "These lines have been the center of many years of study and discussion, and the answer was right here all along," said Troyes. "Any physicist would have recognized them immediately! They're sine waves, triangle waves, and square waves. And some of the other 'mysterious' figures are equally obviously electromagnetic symbols and diagrams."

A similar discovery concerns the locations of twelve ancient temples in Greece. Lines connecting these sites form a Maltese cross, a design unknown to the ancient Greeks.

When asked what the chances were that the formation was a fluke, Troyes replied, "Several hundred million to one, at least. If you asked a computer to randomly locate 12 points on a screen, and tracked the patterns created from that, it would take the computer 95 million years to come up with a Maltese cross."

Troyes contends that alien spacefarers told the ancient Greeks where to build, perhaps through the Oracle at Delphi or one of the other temples. "It's entirely possible that this is just a big joke, that the aliens just wanted to see how long it would take for anyone on this planet to notice."





The Triangle of Terror

Aliens, Atlanteans Battle for Captives off Bermuda Coast!

By ROGER E. MOORE

MIAMI—Wilson Fogg, a 51-year-old nightclub owner and sport fisherman, was presumed lost when his yacht, the 90-foot *Ava Maria*, disappeared with Fogg and six of his employees on a weekend fishing trip near Miami last spring. The Coast Guard had officially ended the search for the *Ava Maria*, which had been missing for three days, when an unidentified pleasure boat found Fogg adrift in a rubber raft about six miles from Miami. The dazed and sunburned Fogg had little to say to the authorities, noting only that he had fallen over-

board and lost sight of his yacht. When questioned, Fogg admitted that he could not recall the events leading up to the loss of the *Ava Maria*.

Recently, however, Fogg has revealed a chilling tale of extraterrestrial piracy. While undergoing hypnotic therapy for the psychological shock arising from his ordeal at sea, Fogg recalled enjoying the clear air and sunshine of the Caribbean when he and his guests sighted "a long, cigar-shaped object" that Fogg and his party first took to be some kind of large fish or submarine. According to Fogg, the object left a trail of "steaming

whirlpools" on the surface of the sea even though it was traveling at a "substantial" depth.

While Fogg and his passengers observed the submerged object, they were taken by surprise when a saucer-shaped object swooped from the clouds and unleashed a "barrage of iridescent beams" at the submerged object and at the *Ava Maria*. When a beam struck the yacht, the engines failed, compasses spun like tops, and the radio and the rest of the *Ava Maria*'s electronic equipment went dead. Fogg was unable to observe what affect, if any, the beams had on the submerged object.



Before Fogg and his guests could get the equipment working again, a "plume of foaming water" enveloped the *Ava Maria*, and the yacht was lifted skyward while a "large hatch" opened in the belly of the saucer. Before the yacht was taken into the saucer, a blinding green light erupted from below (probably from the submerged object), and the *Ava Maria* plunged back into the sea. As the yacht sank beneath the waves, Fogg reports that he saw his guests wafting upward into the saucer.

The disappearance of the *Ava Maria* took place within the infamous Bermuda Triangle, a treacherous area of the Atlantic ocean bounded by lines connecting Bermuda, Florida, and Puerto Rico. Some 200 ships and planes have mysteriously disappeared here, usually in good weather.

The details of the *Ava Maria*'s disappearance mirror the important details of other incidents within the triangle: clear, calm weather, unexplained disturbances in the sea, and the erratic behavior of compasses and other equipment. An unnamed spokesman for the Coast Guard, upon hearing Fogg's story has said: "This is the first time in 200 years . . . that a . . . triangle survivor has told such a tale."

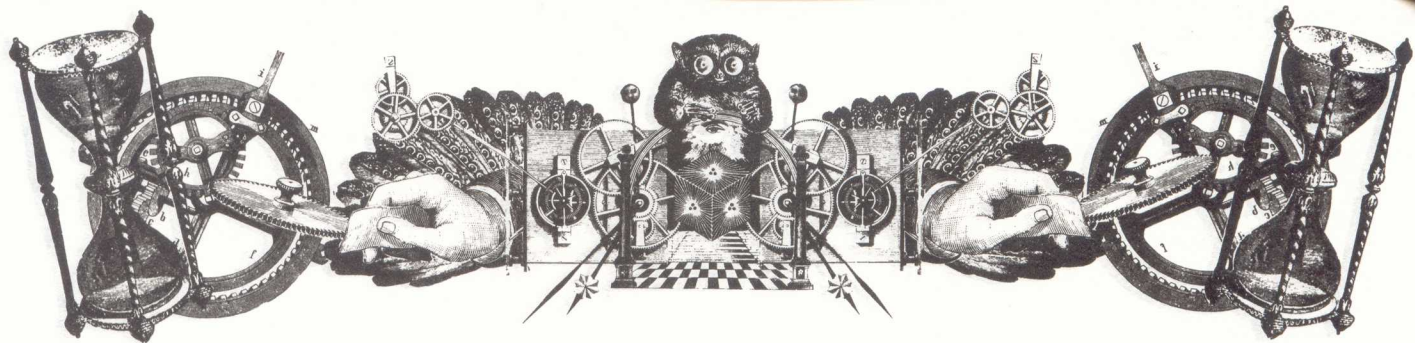
In fact, there are approximately 12 areas on the globe that produce magnetic and meteorological anomalies similar to those found within the Bermuda Triangle. The most notable of these areas—termed "vile vortices" by the scientific community—is the Devil's Sea, south of Japan. One is located over land, in the northwestern Sahara desert. The triangle is unique

among these areas because of its proximity to the presumed site of the lost continent of Atlantis (which might help explain the loss of the submarines USS Scorpion in May, 1968, and USS Thresher in April, 1963). The waters of the Bermuda Triangle also encompass part of the equally ominous Sargasso Sea.

Other notable victims of the Bermuda Triangle include famed seafarer Joshua Slocum (the first man to sail alone around the world), jockey Al Snider, and five US Navy Avenger torpedo planes which disappeared in 1945, along with the aircraft sent to rescue them.

Mr. Fogg remains in seclusion in his Miami home. He is recovering from his harrowing experience and grieving the loss of his friends.





Giant Piranha "Not a Problem" Says Governor

Boaters and fishermen protest handling of "nature gone mad" in Wisconsin lakes & rivers; giant beavers here, too

By ROGER E. MOORE

MADISON—Wisconsin's governor has pooh-poohed recent public concerns over the alleged appearance of unusual creatures in state recreation areas, including ferocious piranha so large and dangerous that sportsmen carry high-powered hunting rifles to bag them.

"It's just another case of Loch Ness-itis," the governor declared on his way to an important business appointment at a local Madison country club. "If people want to believe in something badly enough, they'll believe in it, whether it's there or not. It's just a lot of nonsense."

Despite these assurances, public fears are on the rise that something is rotten in the state of Wisconsin. This reporter questioned a group of sportsmen at a State Street bar last night and came up with the following responses.

"I'll tell you what I believe in," said Lester Nesmith, 32, a hunter from Lake Geneva. He went to his pickup and returned with a wooden oar. The shaft was covered with bite marks and gouges. "They came for me last weekend out on Gamma Lake, right below the power plant spillway. I almost didn't make it to shore before they tore a hole in my boat and sank it. And it was aluminum."



Local fisherman R.A. Denning holds up trophy-sized, carnivorous fish killed with his trusty hunting rifle "Betsy." He claims to have bagged many others and says "They make fine eating!"

Several other sportsmen voiced agreement. "That Gamma Lake's never been the same since the nuke plant went up," one complained, referring to the cooling pond for Wisconsin's well-known nuclear power station near Horicon, on the border of the Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area.

"Damn college kids've been throwin' pet piranhas in there for years for fun, and the run-off from the plant's gone and given 'em three eyes and more teeth than a shark at an orthodontist's. I lost my dog there three weeks ago. He went down to get a drink from the lake, and that was that. I ain't goin' back."



Some claimed to have found benefits in the situation at Gamma Lake, however. "You go up to Gamma Lake sometime with a chunk of meat, and you'll have the best time ever," stated Jon Schend, 29, of Middleton. "A friend and I stopped at a Pick 'N' Save, got a frozen chicken, thawed it out, then threw it in the lake. Man! The water just explodes when those babes go for dinner. We've been out with a twenty-two a few times, but you can't kill 'em with those little bullets. You just make 'em mad."

According to reports, at least seven state lakes, all serving as cooling ponds for power plants, are infested with giant piranha. The lakes are kept unnaturally warm throughout the year, matching the conditions found in the carnivorous fishes' home river, the

tropical Amazon. Gamma Lake is said to have the worst problem, which fishermen blame on an accidental spillage of radioactive water from the plant in 1987.

Other reports of unusual wildlife in the state in recent years include mountain lions in the north, werewolves in Walworth County, the Beast of Bray Road, and (most recently) giant beavers said to travel most of the state's largest rivers. A giant beaver was reported as far south as Moline, Illinois, but the reports in Wisconsin are more frequent. Some are rumored to be building huge dams in the northern reaches of the state and in Minnesota as well.

"I think they're coming down from the north, from Canada," said UW-Madison student Jeff Slavicek, 23, of Sauk City. "I got a call yesterday from

my uncle in Thunder Bay who saw several giant beavers swimming across Lake Superior for the American side."

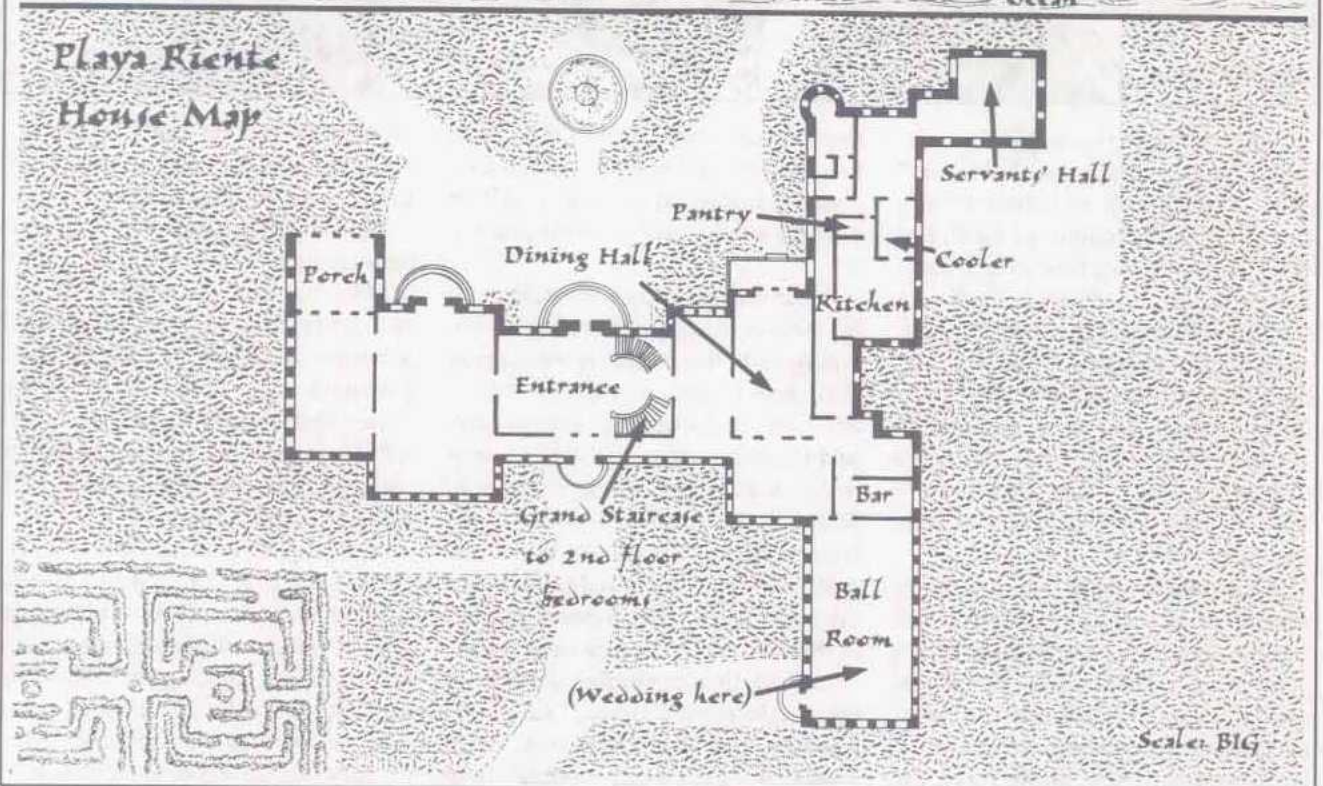
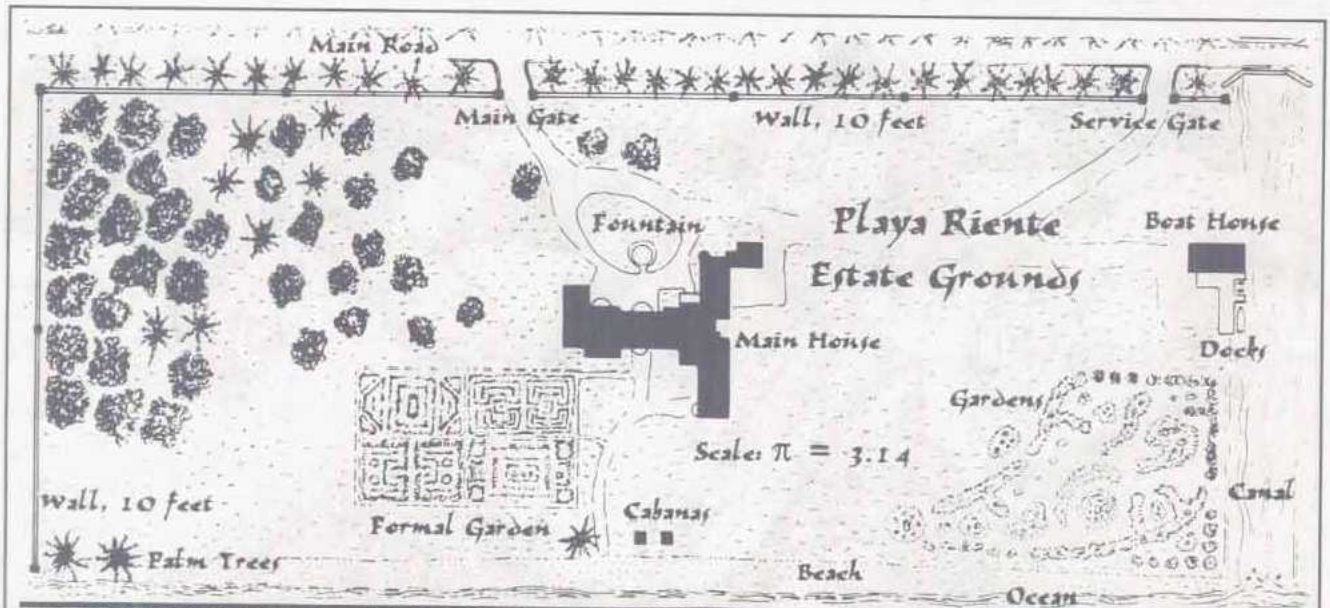
This isn't the first time that giant beavers have appeared on the scene. "During the Ice Ages, there were giant beavers the size of black bears," said Michele Weinlein, a UW-Madison graduate student in paleontology. "They disappeared when the glaciers left. I was thinking that maybe they're appearing naturally, sort of like the heralds of the next Ice Age."

Fellow grad student Dale "Slade" Grubb snorted at that. "There's nothing natural about them," he said. "Some gene researcher in Ontario's probably having a ball making them up right now. It would be the kind of thing you'd expect from a Canadian. After all, they put beavers on their nickels."





A Map of Playa Riente



The **TABLOID!** Capitalist Tool Slip

Tabloid Name _____

Address _____

Code #	Department	File #	Adventure	SS #	Check #

Pay This Amount:

Savings Account Points

To the Order of:

Character Name: _____

Address: _____

Editor's Signature

First Bank of Worthless Credit

Note: The TABLOID! Capitalist Tool and Behavior Modification Slip is not even close to legal tender. You have been warned!





The *TABLOID!* Instant Copy Generator

The *TABLOID!* Maybe-to-be-Patented Instant Copy Generator

In a(n) _____ this week, _____ revealed that _____.

Sources close to _____ confirmed the story, saying,

"_____."

However, _____ denied the report. Their spokesman, _____, speaking from _____ suggested that _____ was _____ and should _____ immediately. In response to the news, _____ from around the world flocked to _____.

When asked for greater details, _____ (could/could not) show _____ of the _____.

"I was _____. In all my _____, I've _____.

Then all of a sudden, _____."

_____ is a _____ from _____. After several years of _____, _____ has finally decided to _____ this _____.

Faithful readers will remember a similar _____ reported in these pages _____.

At the time, _____ dismissed _____ as a _____.

When our reporters pointed out the similarities between _____ and _____, these _____ vainly attempted to respond by saying

"_____."

Once again, _____ goes that extra step to bring you the truth! Keep reading for more details!

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The TABLOID! Character Sheet

Physique Rank: Dice:	Intellect Rank: Dice:	Spirit Rank: Dice:	Influence Rank: Dice:
Fitness:	Learning:	Psyche:	Charm:
Reflexes:	Intuition:	Willpower:	Position:

Character Name:

Body:

Player Name:

Stamina:

Skills

Equipment

Academic Quirks and Fallout

Savings Account:

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The TABLOID! Journalist's Creeds

TABLOID! Rules to Better Reporting

Rule # 1: *A good reporter finds the news—don't just wait for it to happen!*

Rule #2: *Get Good Quotes. Make the famous sound stupid. Prove scientists are pencil-necked geeks. Make ordinary folks seem smart. Make kooks sound kookier.*

Rule #3: *Who? What? When? Where? Why? Whatever.*

Rule #4: *Make it local or make it bloody. Either American or 10 dead.*

Rule #5: *The Severed Arm Shot. No photo, no story.*

Rule #6: *Write what sells. Your character's not doing this for charity, you know.*

Rule #7: *Don't let the facts get in the way. When the real story is boring, EMBELLISH!*

The Journalist's Little Book of Ethics

I swear that, in the pursuit of my trade:

I will only report the truth—as I understand it.

I will not knowingly slander or defame another—unless I can get away with it.

I will never reveal my sources—that way nobody knows if I made it all up.

I will report all quotes accurately—unless I couldn't get an interview.

I will never inject personal bias into a report—I'll just pretend it's someone else's.

I will present both sides of every issue—at least in one sentence.

I will present both sides of every issue—even if one is completely loony.

I will attribute all names and photos accurately—even for the ones I make up.





Appendix: The **TABLOID!** Tables

Table 1: College

- 1 Oops—your character accidentally earned a degree. No more easy college life—unless you decide to change majors. A reporter is what you really want to be! Go to Step 3: Journalism School.
- 2 Family member killed. Your character needed at home. Automatically get job in family business. Gain several Dependents and go to Step 4: Work.
- 3 Your character got married! No fair blaming the champagne. Gain a Dependent and go get a job. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 4 "It was an accident, honest!" doesn't wash. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 5 "I did it, and I'm glad I did!" makes for a bad defense. Character is sent to the big house. Automatically gains Self-defense, Smuggle, Survival Instinct, and a criminal Contact. Released for good behavior after one year. -10 on Position. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 6 Character fingered for outrageous prank. Get thrown out of school but gain +5 Position for the notoriety. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 7 Hacker friend fixes those troublesome grades. It's time to leave school and get a job before they find out. Double initial Savings Account affect of character's first job. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 8 Tragic affair leaves character haunted by memory of lover. Lose 5 Willpower from depression, add 10 points to Psyche. Remain in Step 3: College.
- 9 Late-night research leads character to secrets better undiscovered, prompting him or her to quit school before *they* find out. Choose one skill from the Institute of the Secret Truth in addition to normal skills allowed. Character is Hunted by conspirators. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 10 Character's outspoken comments incur cult persecution, forcing character to quit school. Immediately gain Detect Fraud, but be Hunted by cult. This sounds like good copy. Go to Step 3: Journalism School.
- 11 Affair with Professor/Dean/Dean's spouse/Dean's child. Gain one Contact. Remain in Step 2: College.
- 12 Police discover roommate's business on the side. Character mistakenly Hunted by authorities. Hide out on Step 5: The Beach.
- 13 Caught cheating—character thrown out of school. Permanent black mark in records, causing a -5 on Position. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 14 Insulted professor who is now making life hell. Remain in Step 2: College, but don't have any fun.
- 15 Blew academic probation—change one college skill to Boozing and get thrown out. There's only one thing to do—go to Step 3: Journalism School.
- 16 College prank gone bad scars character for life. Lose 5 points of Psyche or Willpower. Remain in Step 2: College.
- 17 Psycho date wants to be yours—forever. He or she will follow the character until the end of time. Lose 5 points of Charm from emotional scars. Remain in Step 2: College.
- 18 Persuasive cultists get character to join. Choose one skill from Kult College and go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 19 Student loans catch up with character. Lose all of Savings Account. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 20 Lacrosse injury disables character. -10 to Fitness or Reflexes, but double Savings Account from settlement with school. Go to Step 5: The Beach.



Table 2: Journalism School

- 1 Tired of being a gopher, your character quits without a job prospect. Subtract 1 from Savings Account. Choose 1 skill from the School of Hard Knocks. Go to Step 2: College in hopes of a better career.
- 2 Hawaii's not the remains of Atlantis? Character loses job as fact checker but gains Research skill. Go to Step 2: College.
- 3 That story on poodle-barbecuing cultists was good, but there's no witness protection program for reporters. Character gains 1 skill from Kult College, adds 1 to Savings Account, and is Hunted by cult. Stay in Step 3: Journalism School.
- 4 The sexual harassment charge filed against the editor doesn't stick, so character is fired in revenge. Character gains Law skill, but is blackballed by "real" papers. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 5 Character's scoop on a FBI operation gives the Mob enough dope to finger the informer and blow him or her away. Stricken by guilt, the character quits. Lose 5 points of Psyche. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 6 The mayor isn't amused by that report that he or she is a cross-dressing night-club singer. Get assigned the dog pound beat—forever. Choose a skill from the School of Hard Knocks. Stay in Step 3: Journalism School.
- 7 Character discovers publisher is part of a global media conspiracy. Of course, nobody believes it because the conspiracy controls *almost* everything. Character gains Media Manipulation skill and, oddly enough, becomes Hunted. Hide out at Step 5: The Beach.
- 8 Editor notices the death-row interview came three days after the execution. Character notices pink slip immediately. Since the character must clearly have supernatural powers, choose 1 skill from Sister Sara's 24-Hour Psychic Hotline and Mind Home Study Institute. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 9 Playing the D&D® game at work doesn't cut it as "reviewing." Character learns RPG Mind Control skill but takes a pay cut. Lose 1 point of Savings Account and roll again on this table.
- 10 That confidential memo calling the publisher a "#\@!*&?%" gets posted on the Internet. Character gains Computer skill and looks for new job. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 11 New management takes over paper. Character is part of the "old guard" and so gets fired. Character's self-esteem hits bottom. Lose 5 points of Willpower. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 12 Character points out the editor's secretary is also his or her live-in lover. The publisher is not amused. Character gets promoted. Add 2 to Savings Account and roll on this table again.
- 13 Character prints interview with Xalдар, an honest-to-god Venusian, then discovers it's a hoax. Lose job but gains Hoaxes skill as lesson. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 14 While interviewing the head of the Revealed Church of Thoop-Tor, character sees the light, quits job, and joins cult. Choose one skill from Kult College. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 15 Character drinks too much at the office Christmas party and wakes up in Mexico with a spouse and a hangover. Learn Fast Talk and gain a Dependent. Go to Step 2: College to get ahead.
- 16 Killing the neighbor sure livened up a slow news day. With good behavior, character gets out after five years. Choose up to 5 skills from the CIA University of the Air and the School of Hard Knocks. -2 to Savings Account. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 17 The stress of deadlines leads to nervous breakdown. Choose one free skill from the Institute of Secret Truth and lose 5 points of Psyche. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 18 Character's love writes tell-all book and goes off to fame and fortune, leaving character brokenhearted. Lose 5 points of Charm, gain 5 points of Psyche. Learn Celebrity Trivia from watching former lover's televised interviews. It's time to improve your writing skills. Go to Step 2: College.
- 19 Hollywood options character's work, so it's off to LA. Too bad they hate the treatment. +4 to Savings Account and gain Celebrity Trivia. Stay in Step 3: Journalism School.
- 20 Gallery owner goes ga-ga over character's photos. Take a leave of absence to become an *artiste*—and starve. Choose Photography or Photo Retouching skill and subtract 1 from Savings Account. Art school might help. Go to Step 2: College.





Table 3: Work

- 1 Sleeping at work! Character gets fired. No bonus this Christmas. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 2 Union goes on strike, but you cross the picket line. Get beaten up for being a scab. +1 to Savings Account, but no night school next year while recuperating. It's time for a safer line of work. Go to Step 3: Journalism School.
- 3 That late-night fun with the photocopier gets posted on the company bulletin board to everyone's glee but the character's. Lose 5 points of Position. Remain in Step 4: Work.
- 4 Life's great! Life's—the specialist says your character has a month, maybe two left to live. What's there to do but quit and discover the world? Too bad that six months later it turns out the quack was reading the x-ray upside down. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 5 The one-armed man did it—really! The cops aren't buying it. Your character barely gets away in time and is now Hunted by the law for a crime someone else committed. Lose 2 from the character's Savings Account but immediately gain Disguise and Survival Instinct. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 6 Co-worker loses that big order and artfully shifts blame to your character. The boss is not pleased. Lose 1 point from Savings Account. Remain in Step 4: Work.
- 7 Oh my god! Don't mix those—! The resulting explosion scars your character for life. Lose 10 points of Charm, but add 4 to the character's Savings Account when the responsible company pays generously for silence. Take the money and go to Step 2: College.
- 8 Get hit on the head! Amnesia! Lose one skill (your choice), choose a new name and start a new life. Go back to Step 1: Youth and start over.
- 9 OK, the boss has bad taste in clothes, but pointing it out wasn't a real bright idea—especially in front of the district manager. Go to Step 5: The Beach.
- 10 Co-worker comes in and plays disgruntled postal worker. The business is closed permanently after the tragedy. The scary part is that the loon's ranting made sense. Your character gains 1 skill from the Institute of Secret Truth or Louie Di Chang's Shooting Range and Dojo, just in case. Go to Step 3: Journalism School so you can expose the TRUTH!
- 11 Your one-night stand was married? To the boss? Photos? Uh-oh. Lose 2 from Savings Account. Remain in Step 4: Work.
- 12 The in-laws were surprised to learn about the marriage. Your character was surprised to learn about the baby. Gain a Dependent and remain in Step 4: Work.
- 13 Quickie marriage, quickie divorce—it seemed like such a perfect deal until the letter from the lawyer arrived. The ex wants alimony. Halve the character's Savings Account, rounding fractions down. Remain in Step 4: Work.
- 14 Hot tip from main office earns character a fortune. Unfortunately, the SEC notices. Character serves 1 year in minimum security (no skills gained) and still gets to add 6 to Savings Account. Study in your cell and go to Step 2: College.
- 15 Parents sell the house, sell the car, and join a cult. Your character has to move out. Lose 1 from Savings Account but gain 1 skill from Kult College. Remain in Step 4: Work.
- 16 "Okay, it went a little over budget. They can't fire me, I'm too important." True, but they *can* take it out of your character's salary. Lose 1 point from Savings Account as a reminder. Remain in Step 4: Work.
- 17 Front office sends character to Fiji branch and then forgets about it. It's just like being at the beach. Go to Step 5: The Beach but don't lose any from the Savings Account while there.
- 18 Good job, blaming the other guy! The boss buys it and your character gets promoted. Add 1 to Savings Account. Remain in Step 4: Work.
- 19 Boss has a stroke, and your character is chosen to fill the gap. Add 1 to Savings Account. Go to Step 2: College for more training.
- 20 Marrying the owner's daughter wasn't such a bad idea after all. You're now a VP with a Dependent. Add 4 to your Savings Account. Remain in Step 4: Work.



Table 4: The Beach

- 1 Your character gets a great tan. Gain Look Good skill. It's time to improve your love life. Go to Step 2: College.
- 2 Your character meets a really scary person who babbles a lot about secret plots and other things. Choose one skill from the Institute of the Secret Truth. Remain on Step 5: The Beach.
- 3 Tinfoil Ray spends a lot of time explaining those alien mind control satellites. Choose one skill from Blue Book Tech. Remain on Step 5: The Beach.
- 4 Your character gets thrown into a Mexican prison, and it takes a year for the family to make bail. Lose 5 points of Psyche and all of the Savings Account. Gain Self-defense and Observation. Dad wants his money back. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 5 Spend the summer riding the waves. Your character doesn't learn a thing. Maybe it's time to go to school. Go to Step 2: College.
- 6 A cyberhead friend introduces you to the world of computers. Choose one skill from the Academy of Data-Entry Specialists and add 2 to your Savings Account by readjusting the state welfare system in your character's favor. Now you have the money to go to Step 3: Journalism School.
- 7 A serious illness and no health insurance leaves your character with a hacking cough, -10 on Fitness, and a Savings Account of 0. The thin and pasty look is perfect for being a reporter. Go to Step 3: Journalism School.
- 8 Your character meets another really scary person. Choose one skill from the Conservatory of Secrets Humanity Was Not Meant to Know. Remain on Step 5: The Beach.
- 9 Darn but this cult makes sense! Spend a year in the wilderness with them and gain one skill from Kult College. Remain on Step 5: The Beach.
- 10 Who would've thought those bald-headed chanters would get so mad over a few missing collection boxes? Character is now Hunted by a fringe cult. Hide out by getting a job. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 11 A guy named Loomis shows your character how to make really good fake IDs. Your character runs a small black market business until the heat starts to rise. Add 1 to Savings Account and choose one skill from the CIA University of the Air. Remain on Step 5: The Beach.
- 12 You spend the summer working out. Add 5 to Fitness. Remain on Step 5: The Beach.
- 13 A motorcycle/skate/surf/girl gang insists your character hangs with them. Choose one skill from Louie di Chang's Dojo and Shooting Range or the CIA University of the Air. P.S. Your character has a Record. Remain on Step 5: The Beach.
- 14 A fire destroys your character's possessions and cardboard box. Savings Account goes to 0. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 15 That lottery ticket your character found in the street wins big! Headlines read, "Homeless bum now rolling in dough." It's a sign to give up the slacker life. Add 4 to Savings Account and go immediately to Step 2: College.
- 16 Some punks beat the character up and take everything—which isn't much. Character loses 5 from Reflexes and everything in the Savings Account. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 17 Your character's girlfriend/boyfriend is tired of living with a bum and walks. Character is stricken to core. Either lose 5 points of Psyche or give up the slacker life and go to Step 4: Work.
- 18 Your character travels the country with 5,000 other neo-hippies for the ultimate Deadhead experience. Gain one skill from Sister Sara's 24-Hour Psychic Hotline and Mind Home Study Institute. In the end, you decide to write about the experience. Go to Step 3: Journalism School.
- 19 Your character falls in with a bunch of eco-warrior/merry pranksters. Lose everything in the Savings Account when that logging company sues for everything your character's got, but choose one skill from the San Diego Cryptozoological Society. Go to Step 4: Work.
- 20 Hey, it works for others, so why not you? Your character founds a religion, thereby angering rival cultists. The religion bombs, but the character is now Hunted. Gain one point to Savings Account and a skill from Kult College. You need more skills to get the message out, so go to Step 3: Journalism School.





Table 5: Skill Pools

Academy of Data-Entry Specialists

Computer (Lea)
Hacking*
Networking*
Fix Electrical Things (Int)
Phone Phreaking (Lea)

Blue Book Tech

Aliens (Lea)
Alien Abduction*
Ancient Astronauts*
Astronomy (Lea)
Cattle Mutilations (Lea)
Men in Black*
Crop Circles (Lea)
Face on Mars (Int)
UFO Groups (Lea)

CIA University of the Air

Army Mind Control (Wil)
Bribery (Psy)
Disguise (Cha)
Impersonate (Cha)
Electronic Eavesdropping (Lea)
Foreign Language (Lea)
Lock Picking (Ref)
Observation (Psy)
Lip Reading (Lea)
Photography (Int)
Smuggle (Int)

Columbia School of Journalism

Current Events (Lea)
Journalism (Int)
Badgering (Pos)
Law (Lea)
Libel (Lea)
Deal with Attorneys (Pos)
Research (Lea)
Source (Cha)
Shorthand (Ref)
Smug Liberalism (Pos)
Secular Humanism*

Conservatory of Secrets Humanity Was Not Meant to Know

Hauntings (Int)
Vampires*
Mass Murderers (Lea)
Predictions (Psy)
Nostrodamus*
Spiritualism (Psy)
Possession/Exorcism (Wil)
Stigmata*
Spontaneous Human Combustion (Lea)
Vanishings (Lea)
Alien Abduction*
Supernatural Disappearances*
Voodoo (Psy)
Curses (Wil)
Mummies*
Zombies*

Forbert School of Celebrity Nude Photography

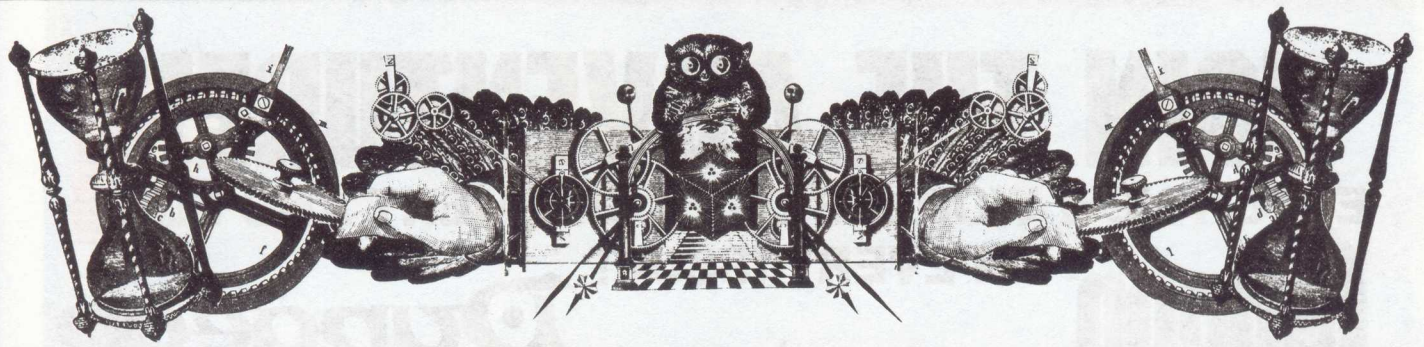
Celebrity Trivia (Lea)
Photography (Int)
Video Camera (Int)
Paparazzi*
Darkroom (Lea)
Photo Retouching*

G*****d Tour Guide Training Program

E***s P*****y: Living, Dead, Returned (Lea)
Dead Rock Stars*
Dead Movie Stars*
Other Dead People*

Institute of the Secret Truth

Army Mind Control (Wil)
THE CONSPIRACY (Int)
Army Mind Control*
Bermuda Triangle*
Freemasons*
JFK Assassination Conspiracies*
Media Manipulation (Psy)
Discordians (Int)
Freemasons (Lea)
Illuminati (Lea)
Freemasons*
JFK Assassination Conspiracies*
Media Manipulation (Psy)
Trilateralist Commission*
JFK Assassination Conspiracies (Lea)
Media Manipulation (Psy)
Moongate (Lea)
Media Manipulation (Psy)
Trilateralist Commission (Lea)
Freemasons*
JFK Assassination Conspiracies*
Media Manipulation (Psy)
Smug Liberalism (Pos)
Media Manipulation (Psy)
Secular Humanism*
RPG Mind Control (Wil)



Krasnoyorsk Technical School Exchange Program

Mechanics (Int)
Auto Repair (Int)
Fix Coffee Machine*
Gadget (Int)
Use Fax Machine*
Way with Machines (Psy)
Weird Science (Lea)
Alchemy (Psy)
Clones*
Medical Miracles*
Perpetual Motion*
UFO Tech*

Kult College

Neo-Paganism (Int)
New-Age Messiahs*
Old-Fashioned Messiahs (Lea)
S***nic Lore (Int)
Voodoo (Psy)
UFO Groups (Lea)

Lawson's Absolute Center of the Universe School

Flat Earth (Int)
Hollow Earth (Int)
Inner Earth (Int)
Power Sites (Psy)
Russia (Int)
Tunguska*
The Rest of Siberia*

Louie di Chang's Dojo and Shooting Range

First Aid (Int)
Pistol (Ref)
Rifle (Ref)
Self-Defense (Fit)
Tri-Ambidextrous (Ref)

San Diego Cryptozoological Society

Dinosaurs (Lea)
Nessie*
Missing Link (Lea)
Abominable Snowman*
Bigfoot*
Frozen Cavemen*
Mothmen (Lea)
Nessie (Lea)
Other Lake/Sea Monsters*

School of Hard Knocks

Boozing (Fit)
Driving (Ref)
Bush Pilot (Lea)
Dumpster Diving (Int)
Fast Talk (Cha)
Poker Face (Wil)
Hide (Int)
Sneak (Ref)
Look Good (Cha)
Trivia (Lea)

Sister Sara's 24-Hour Psychic Hotline and Mind Home Study Institute

Acupuncture (Lea)
Ethereic Surgery (Psy)
Astrology (Int)
Channeling (Psy)
Find Native Guide (Psy)
Crystals (Int)
Handwriting Analysis (Int)
Hypnotism (Wil)
Firewalking (Wil)
Psychic Awareness (Psy)
Hunch (Psy)
Dumb Luck (Psy)
Survival Instinct (Wil)
ESP (Psy)

Staggering Merwin's School of Debunking

Detect Fraud (Lea)
Hoaxes (Lea)
Sleight of Hand (Ref)

World Revisionist Library

Atlantis (Lea)
Ancient Astronauts*
Mu*
Lemuria*
Creationism (Int)
Hitler (Lea)
Nazis*
JFK (Int)
JFK Assassination Conspiracies
(Lea)
Lost Tribes (Int)



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Lost trapper frozen
in ice and thawed

Fish rain
(good eatin', too)

There's got to be
something up here

Collectible tarot
card manufacturers

Flathead Lake monster

Lake Champlain
(Champy)

Mu?

Sasquatch
land

Tinfoil
rain

Cattle
mutilations



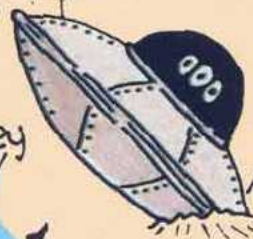
Washing
(Home)

Secret mind
control base,
Lake Geneva



Lion
sightings

Monkey
Rain!



Hangen 18, Ozark
Roswell, AZ Spooklight

Los Alamos
(Here be mutants)

Urban
Vampires

Mothmen

UFO
abductions

The Bermuda
Triangle
(Patented)



Titanic

California
(always good
for a story)

Cape Canaveral
(suspiciously close
to Triangle)

Golf ball
Rain
(Fore!)

Men in
Black

Mu?

Ghost ships!

Atlantis



Alien spaceships
disguised as pyramids

Land of the
non-Irish
Little people

Dracula!

Jungle
Ghosts

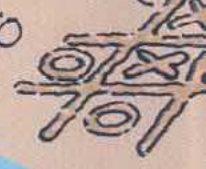
Drive-by
Sightings



...by UFO sightings

Land (Am...)

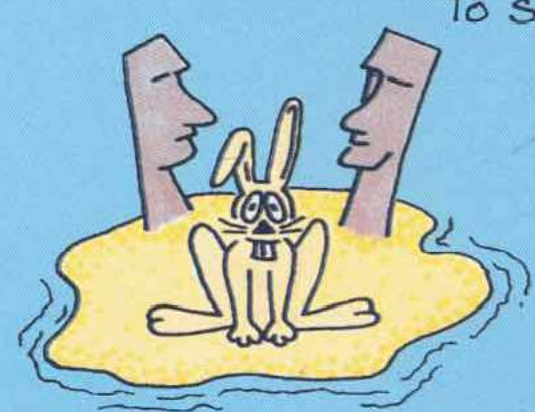
Nazca Lines - UFO landing field or message to space?



Machu Picchu (built by gods)

Hittite (old)

Mu?



Mu?

Easter Island (Alien site array)

Crop C...



Monsters in Patagonia

Mu?





Hollow Earth
(North entrance)

Lemmings

Leprechaun
island

Fossil rain!

Giant snakes

The Original
Loch Nessie

ington
of the Cloned

Stonehenge
(Ancient theme park?)

Gnomes
of
Zurich

Giant chicken
(we kid you not)

Eurotherm
& Miracle

Atlantis?
(north unit)

Survivors of
the Titanic

¿Que?

The Shroud
of Turin

Frog
Rain

Knights
of Malta

Marie Celeste

Atlantis?

Ostrich
Footed
Tribe

Hitchhiking
Midget Cannibal
Alligator Men

The
Bleeding House
of Doom!

Atlantis?

Ghosts

We got
dinos, too!

of Lost Tribes!
(Women, too!)

of Los
amazon women

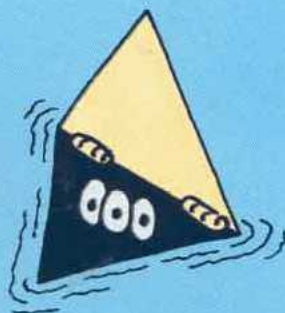


Hitler
(cloned)

Hitler
(d)



Atlantis?



Atlantis?



(Di

The
Coff

Circles!

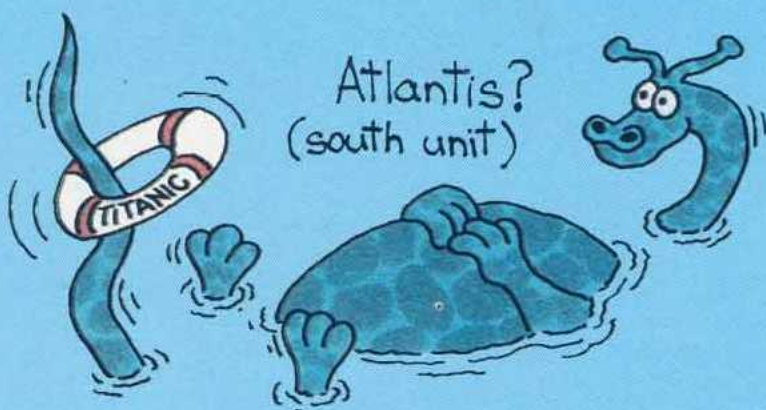
Atlantis?
gonia



Underwater UFO Base
(Amphibian aliens?)



Atlantis?
(south unit)



Atlantis?

Hollow
(Servan



FK (sanitarium)

et!
(.)
Park
Cures
bactyls in
Parthenon!

Chernobyl! ✓
Glow in the dark!! ✓

Frozen
Missing Links! ✓

• ← Hitler
(in jar)

Stalin
(in jar) •



Moscow
(Home of the Cloned, Pt. II)

Frog
Rain



Ark found -
No Leaks

• Dead Sea
Scrolls, \$19.95

Russian
wildmen
(oops, make
That
Azerbaijani)



Fineball
flames
farmer's
field

Mount
Everest
yetiland

The
Pyramids
(Razors sharpened,
batteries charged,
food preserved)

Statue
weeps Olive
Oil!

Bug rain

SHC
on
Suttee

Giant
Lizard

one Lost Tribes

Horn of Africa

Strings of Africa

Lemuria?

walking →
Statue





the Congo
Dinosaurs and
Pygmies)

Bleeding
Tree of Doom!

Top
Triangles

Pirates
(Aargh, matey!)

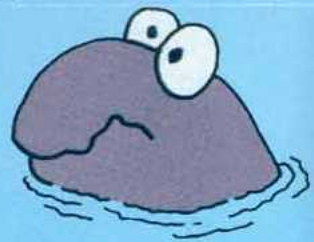


Lemuria?

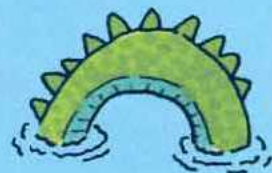
ghost hitchhiker
(Don't stop to
pick him up!)

The Bleeding
Tree of Doom

Lemuria?
(No, lemurs!)



Lemur



Earth
(Entrance)



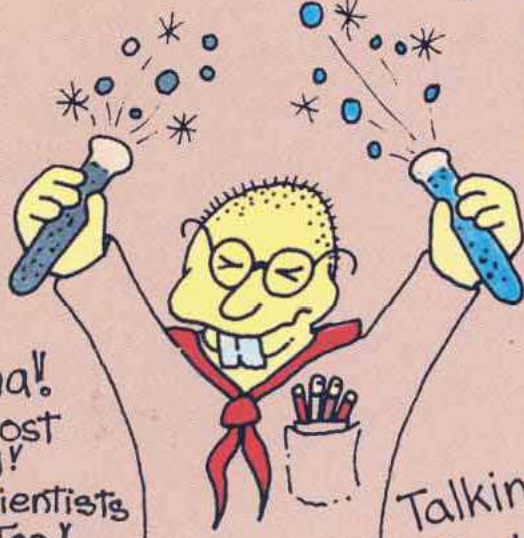
Here
be
monsters

ssia!
Big!
Got
ientists!

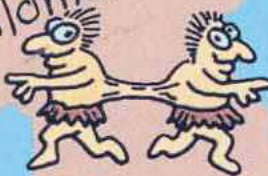
guska
plat)



China!
It's Almost
as Big!
It's got Scientists
Too!



Chinese
wildmen

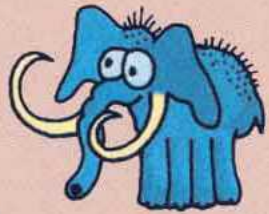


Even
More
Lost
Tribes
(of Siamese twins)

Lemuria?

Nexus of the
Multiverse

Popsicle
Mammoths!



Poltergeist
central

No
Fact-Checking
Required

Mongolian
wildmen



Well Hole
To Nasty
Place

Etheric Surgeons
Society, World HQ

Ghost
Soldiers

The
Devil's
Sea

MU?

WWII
Still Fought
Here

Talking
Rocks

Hong
Kong
(Till Given
Back)

God
"Yehobah"
appears,
is videotaped
(watch for it
in stones!)

Bird-Woman
sighted

Rain of Roses
(quick, call Pasadena!)

My God
neo's
Too!!



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