

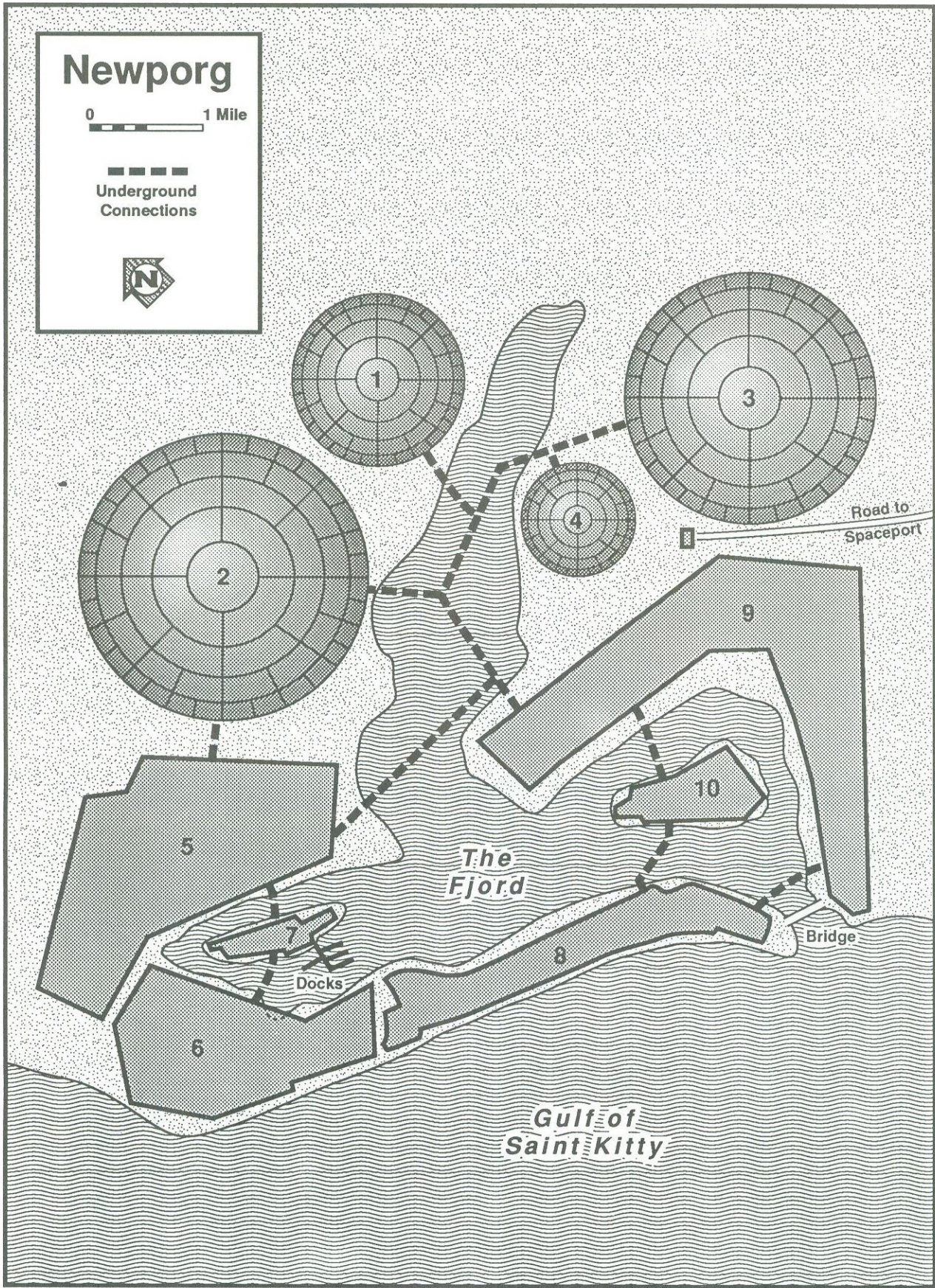
Official Game Adventure

Buck Rogers in the 25th Century

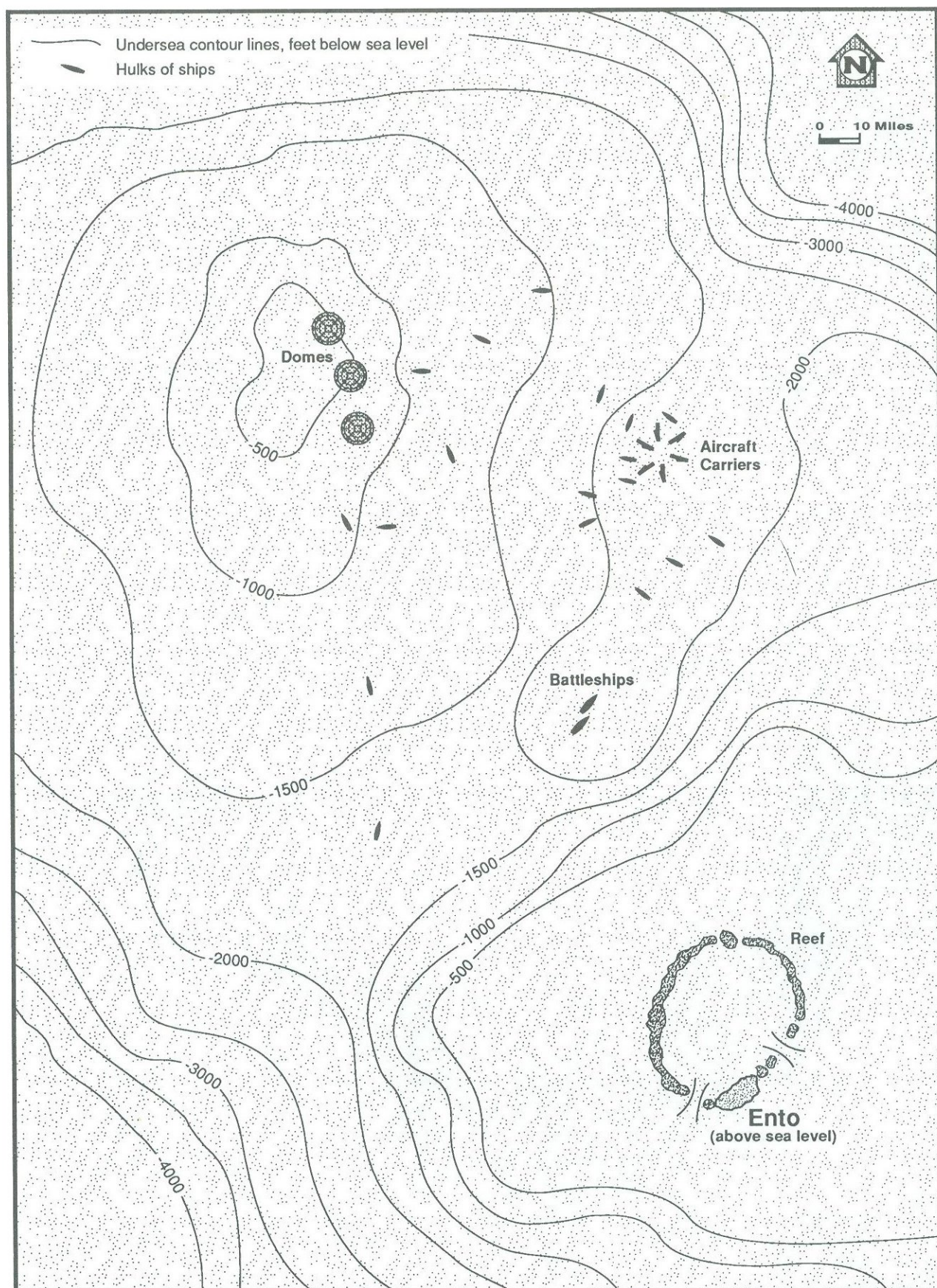
by Doug Niles



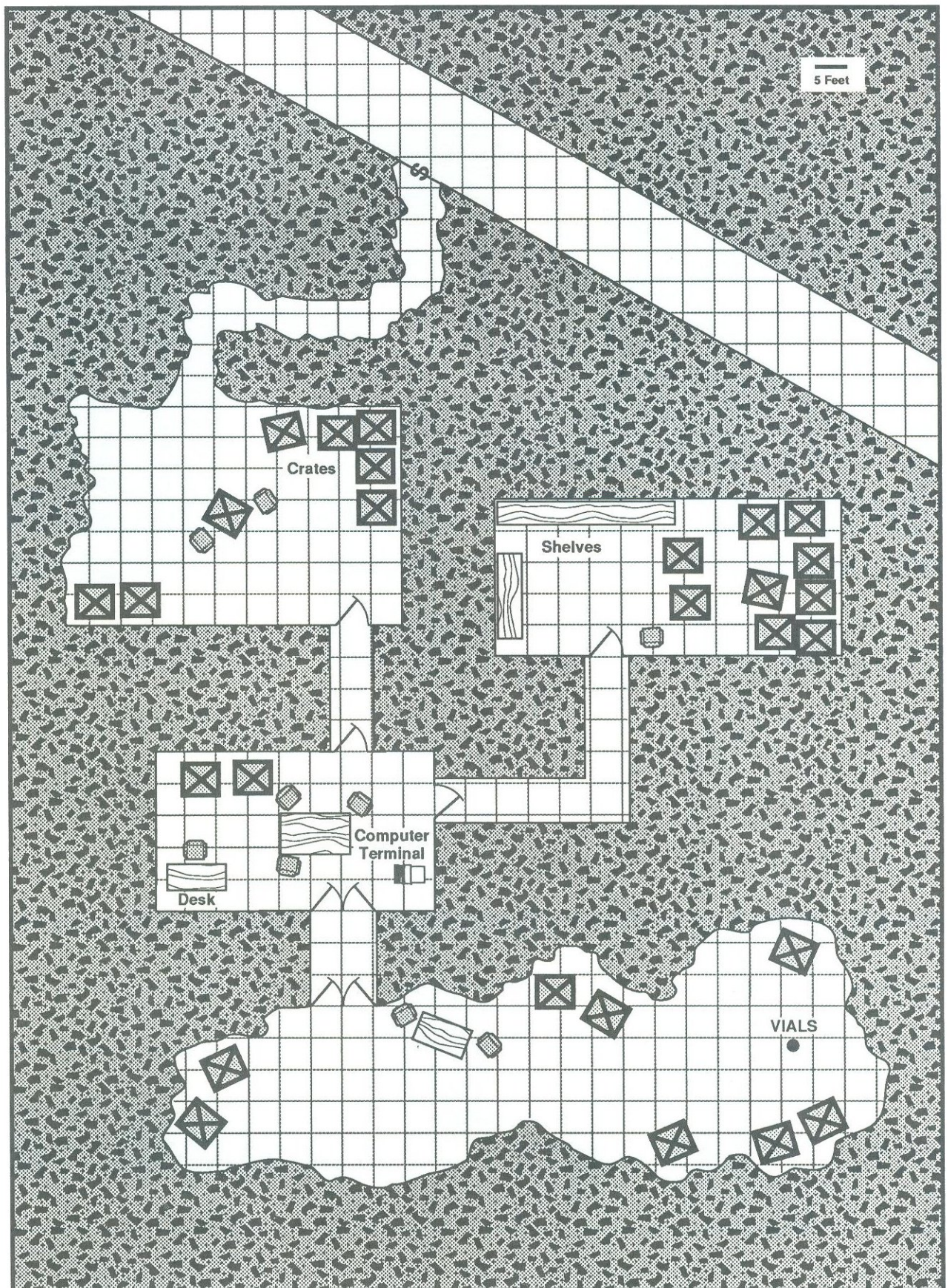
The Newporg Arcology



Pacificus



Gang Hideout



DOCTOR ANTILLES' LABORATORY



TO SUBMARINE DOCK

TO FACTORY



0 5 Feet

Security Doors
Vats

AIRLOCK

POOL

MAIN LAB

DINING ROOM

KITCHEN

LIVING ROOM

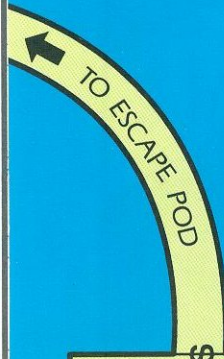
OFFICE

CONFERENCE ROOM

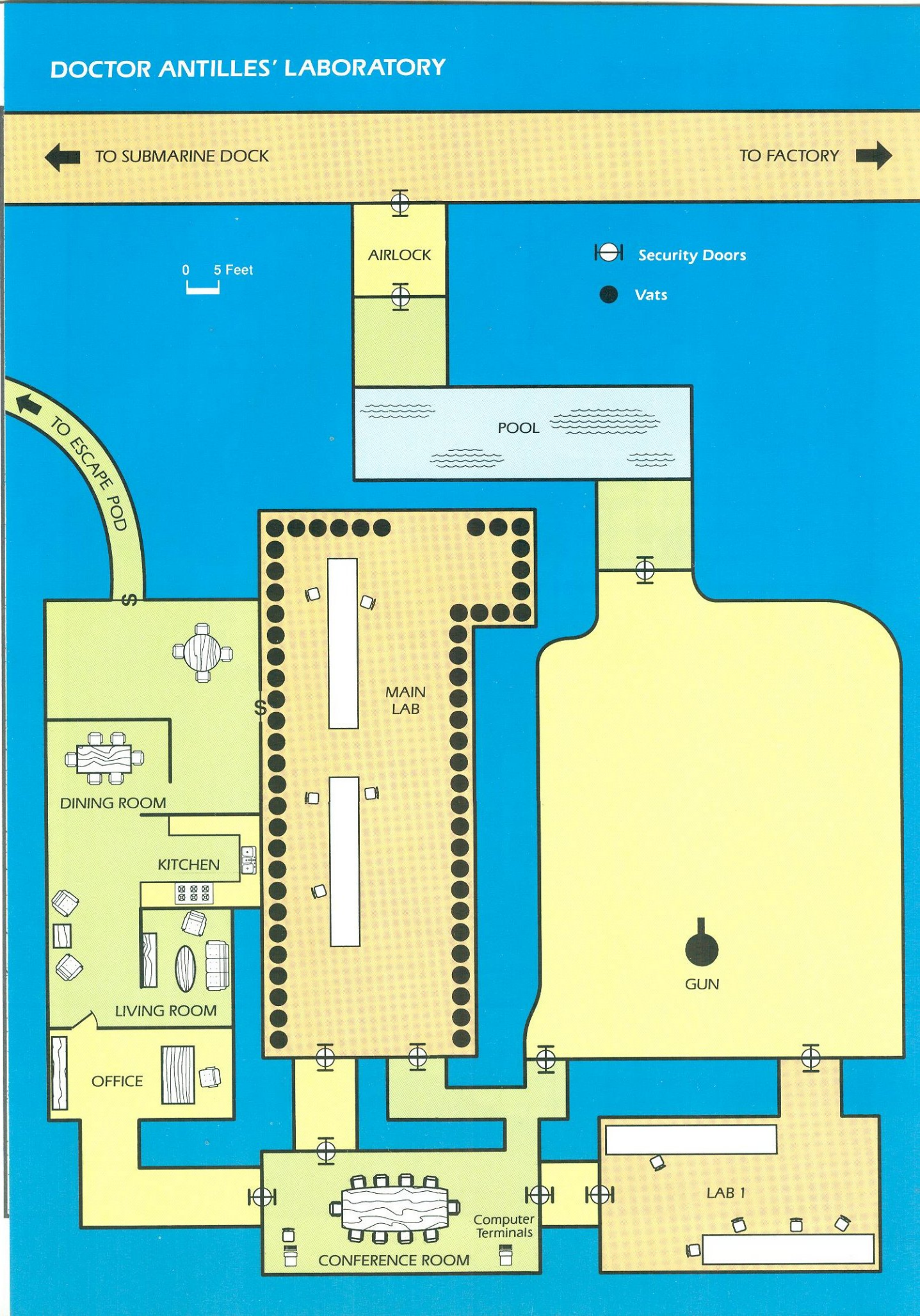
Computer
Terminals

GUN

LAB 1



TO ESCAPE POD



Buck Rogers in the 25th Century

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Credits

Adventure design: Douglas Niles
Editing: Timothy B. Brown
Cover painting: Jerry Bingham
Interior art: Continuity Studios, Burbank, Calif.
Maps: John Knecht
Typography: Gaye O'Keefe
Graphic design: Paul Hanchette

TSR, Inc.
 POB 756
 Lake Geneva WI 53147
 U.S.A.



TSR Ltd.
 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton
 Cambridge CB1 3LB
 United Kingdom

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INTRODUCTION

In this series of adventures, a band of brave player characters is given the opportunity to join, and then prove themselves within, a select fraternity known as NEO, the New Earth Organization. NEO needs qualified, skilled members like the player characters, and will readily accept them. The missions in this book are not strictly for characters in NEO, but each supports that organization's struggle against RAM.

Buck Rogers will be on hand during the adventure, perhaps surreptitiously observing the PCs or performing a little behind-the-scenes manipulation. His participation might even be more dramatic—he could appear in the nick of time with a fast spaceship or a rocket rifle and a case of grenades.

The adventure is designed for characters who are fairly new to the game, but have had the experience of running through one or two short adventures previously. They should be from 1st to 3rd level. The module in the XXVc™ game box, *Ghost in the Machine*, is a good prequel to this one.

Who Should Read This Module

This module is designed for the referee's use. *If you intend to play in the adventure, you shouldn't be reading this!* There is a mystery in the adventure that we, of necessity, tell the referee all about. If a player gains this information early, a lot of the tension and drama will be destroyed for everyone.

The Players

This adventure works best if at least one character of each of the six main careers (rocketjock, engineer, warrior, scout, rogue, medic) is present. Though a first level of ability is all that is needed, no character will suffer by having achieved level two or three.

If the characters are of higher levels, or are an exceptionally numerous or well-armed bunch, the referee may want to consider increasing the levels of some of the adventure's adversaries, or upgunning their levels of equipment and weaponry. Tailor the adventure to the characters, balancing their abilities as closely as you can.

Starting Out

The planet Earth is the dregs of the solar system in the 25th Century—threatened by external destruction, rotting from within, mostly untamed and unsafe. But of course, this festering hole is home to millions of people, and to mankind as a whole, so we've learned to make the most of it.

This adventure begins and climaxes on the planet Earth, so players will get a good look at the evolution of their planet through the 25th Century.

If your players are new to the game, starting them out on Earth isn't much of a problem. If you have used a previous adventure, invent some ploy to strand them there (on the west coast of the old USA to be specific). Perhaps their ship breaks down, or gets hijacked, and they're stranded. Or maybe they've hooked up with the New Earth Organization (NEO) and have been assigned to duty in the Newporg Arcology.

Newporg is where the fun begins (see Chapter 1). This huge arcology, on the site of the 20th Century's California community of Newport Beach, is a NEO strongpoint. The presence of RAM here, as in most of the southern California arcologies, has been decreased by active resistance over the years. Now these arcologies, though still ruled by an SA (Solar Alliance) appointed viceroy, are some of the most free cities on Earth.

Of course, they are surrounded by some of the most wretched sprawls imaginable. Indeed, this coexistence creates the counterpoint to the first part of the adventure.

As the story develops, the PCs will have exciting opportunities to travel, to explore Earth and its environs. The lucky ones may even get back alive.

Alternate Beginnings

If your players are not on Earth when you want to start this adventure, you can begin with them on Mars or Luna, or in space in the vicinity of Mars, Luna, or Earth.

In the event that a previous adventure has left your group of PCs stranded in the Asteroid Belt, the moons of Saturn, or the sun-scorched wastes of Mercury, you can devise a means of your own to get them to one of the three starting points mentioned above (Earth being preferable). This can become a short adventure in itself. Otherwise you can use this as the first excuse to introduce Buck Rogers into the adventure. As explained below, a referee should consider Buck as a tool for keeping (or, in this case, getting) the PCs on track.

USING THESE ADVENTURES

This module contains several adventures, sometimes referred to as missions, each of which is designed to be played in one or two sessions of gaming. The general idea is to provide a look at several different settings on and around the worlds of the 25th Century. To this end, you'll find adventures focusing on the North American west coast, the Pacific Ocean, and of course, the fringes of outer space.

The Role of Buck Rogers in the Adventure

As explained on the NPC Profile Card that came with the XXVc™ role-playing game, Buck Rogers is a character of heroic stature in both the 20th and the 25th Centuries. As NEO's top troubleshooter, he is well known throughout the solar system—both to the friends, and to the enemies, of freedom.

Obviously, Buck has a soft spot for Earth, and takes particular interest in the NEO activities there. He will be inclined to help the PCs in their endeavors, even though he's busy with problems of his own. He doesn't have the time to accompany the PCs on their missions, or to coax them through every rough spot with advice (nor would this make for entertaining role-playing). He might show up with a fast ship just when it looks like the PCs are cornered and doomed, but he certainly wouldn't lead the characters to count on that eventuality.

Indeed, many of Buck's appearances can be clandestine. He has good reason to travel in disguise, and if he can convince the player characters that he's just an old mercenary who heard an interesting bit of news, so much the better.

Presentation of the Environment

It can be important to set the mood of these separate missions through your presentation of the material provided. Letting the players know just what kind of environments their characters are in will be very important to the flavor of the adventure.

While in Newporg, the PCs will have at their fingertips all the wonders of the 25th Century. Their sleeping quarters will include many basic comforts,

including comfortable chairs and beds, that we are familiar with today. But as citizens of the future they will also have direct access to information and information processing through their computer terminals, including news, entertainment, computer functions, direct visual, oral, or data communications, maps, and so forth. Their basic creature comforts, such as laundry, cleaning, etc., will be taken care of by robots. Within the arcology, transportation is largely cheap and readily available, from taxis and buses to slidewalks and escalators. The PCs will enjoy inexpensive meals at nice restaurants, have all sorts of shopping opportunities nearby, and generally live a life of luxury. Insert some of these ideas into your dialogue to them to emphasize their rich environment.

Of course, when they move from the comfortable arcology out into the sprawls of Los Angelorg, their surroundings will be markedly different. The rubble is difficult to cross, and it's everywhere, dirty and jagged, often unidentifiable. It is overrun with rats, ratwursts, and other filthy creatures scrambling for the refuse of the ruined streets. The inhabitants are dirty and pathetic; children wear rags and grow up in ignorance. Families huddle in crude homes built out of the ruins, without much in the way of creature comforts, food, or hope. Make sure you let the players know just how bad things are for these people.

Finally, the undersea environment of Dr. Antilles's laboratory and the orbiting New Frontier Bazaar toward the end of the adventure are examples of the 25th Century's technology at work. Both environments are sealed against the outside, made sterile, and pumped full of artificial atmosphere. The electrical lighting and most other features are voice-activated by the occupants of a particular room or corridor. Of course, they are dependent upon their power supplies for their operation, and would shut down completely if the power were turned off.

Presenting the different environments through which the PCs must journey with imagination and conviction will help make the game come alive for the players. Use these suggestions in your presentation and you will probably enjoy the game sessions more yourself.

CHAPTER 1: A PLACE TO CALL HOME

The skies above the Pacific glow at sunset as they have always glowed, with an iridescent hue of red, pink, purple, or perhaps a fiery orange. The haze is still there, but on a clear evening the now-barren hulk of Santa Catalina Island diffuses the sunset into a kaleidoscope of divergent beams. Some of these rays inevitably fall upon the silver mass of Newporg, one of the most advanced and liberated arcologies on the west coast of North America.

Newporg—a West Coast Arcology

This cluster of domed farmlands, smooth, quiet factories—with much of their heaviest machinery located far underground—and tall, elegant residential dorms, occupies a small peninsula and the land behind it, forming a towering presence of steel and glass around the sheltered waters of a narrow inlet. The heights of the arcology's buildings and domes is so impressive that the small bay has been dubbed the "fiord." Its smooth waters lie between towering, clifflike buildings that soar the better part of a mile into the air.

Appearance and Surroundings

The arcology, when viewed from without, appears to be a sterile, nearly lifeless place. Few plants are visible growing around the peripheries of the metal building foundations. No means of egress or exit can be seen—of course, they exist, but their locations are not advertised.

Large expanses of building surface are nothing but sheets of glass. During the day these filtered panes—each about the size of a 20th-Century parking lot—reflect the intense energy of the sun like giant mirrors. At night, they glow like pearls with a soft, translucent light. Even then, they retain enough opacity to prevent any details from being visible outside.

The arcology appears to consist of nine separate structures (see Map 1). These include four Agricultural Domes, two Industrial Plants, and three Residential Towers. In fact, multiple connections link all of the buildings underground, but there is nothing to suggest this from the arcology's outer appearance.

Newporg is most accessible by sea or by air. It has docks and loading facilities for each of its nine build-

ings, though large vessels (those in excess of 150 feet long) must dock at the island wharf in the fiord.

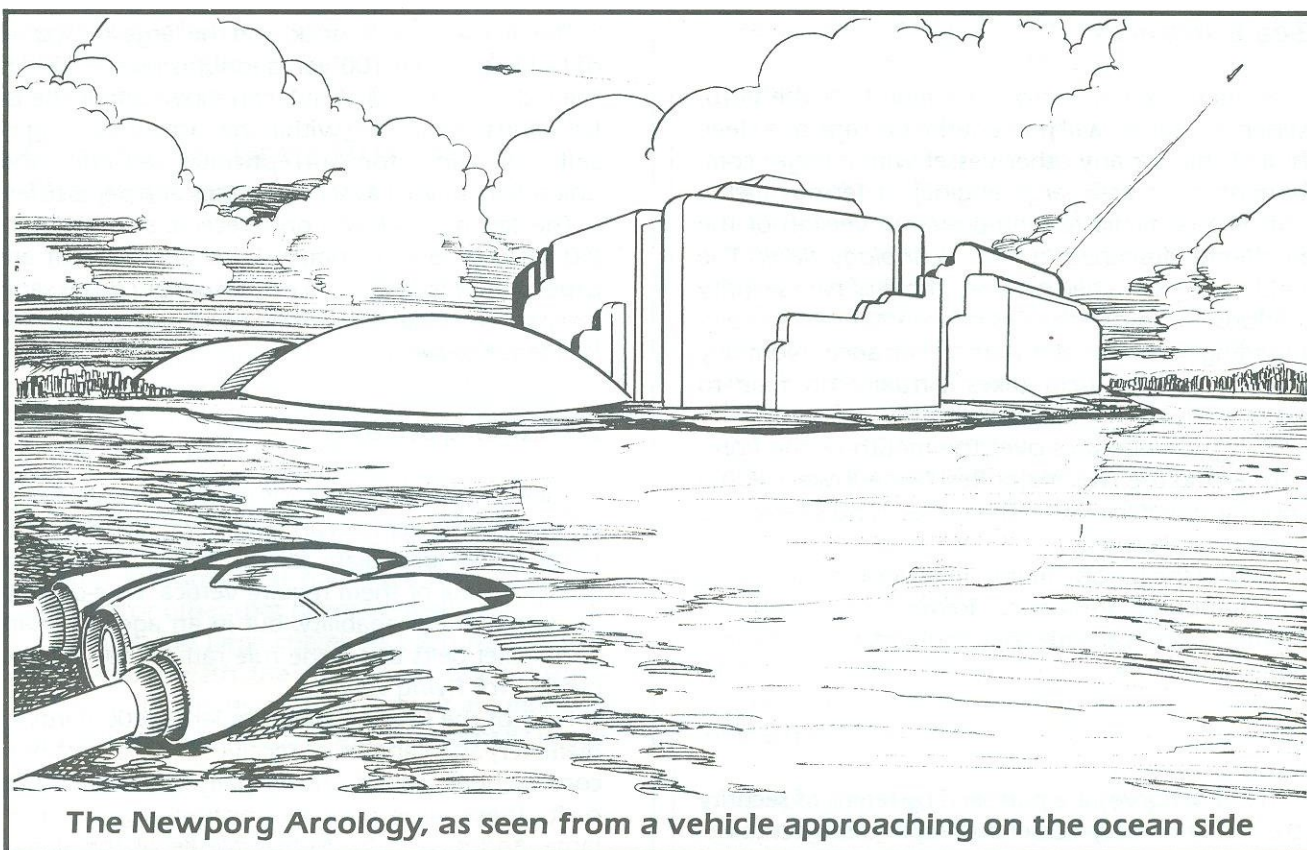
Newporg abuts to two different types of terrain on its eastern (inland) side, ruins and foothills. To the north and northeast lies the tangled urban sprawl of the greater Los Angelorg area. Though dotted with a few other arcologies, this region is primarily a wasteland ruled by a seething, chaotic tangle of gangs, petty dictators, and bullies. Some of the sprawl is controlled by humans; other parts are ruled by bands of gennies, by jackrabbits and scrub grass, or have no masters at all.

The ruins of the city have been cleared for one full mile away from the arcology, leaving a wasteland that is barren of cover and constantly watched by the alert security monitors protecting Newporg. Beyond this cleared zone begins the sprawl itself, characterized immediately by a tangle of skeletal buildings and burned out hulks. More details on the sprawl are presented in Chapter 2.

To the east of Newporg rise dusty and, for the most part, uninhabited foothills of the coastal mountains. Lack of water, coupled with the ferocious Santa Ana winds—gales that have doubled in force during the last five hundred years due to the parching of the American deserts—have driven all but the most hardy humans and gennies from these hills.

There is a small community of desert runners—an expatriate gathering of these Martian natives—that lives in a limestone canyon high in the foothills. These near-savage aliens maintain a small trade with Newporg, bartering with wild products of the high desert such as rare mushrooms or snake venom in exchange for some of the moist, nutritious food from the Agdomes.

The only other location of note is the small, often deserted Class C spaceport located on the summit of a nearby foothill. Called "Duke's Hill" for some unknown reason, the area has been blasted flat, barring a broad expanse about two miles across. There is a small shed with a minimal assortment of tools, a large shuttle hangar, and a terminal that can shelter perhaps twenty-five passengers at a time. A winding road snakes its way down the hill and then leads straight into the arcology, with intersections branching northward into the sprawls. To the south, branches of these tracks merge with the Pacific Coast Trail, or PCT. This is a winding track, often rutted or eroding away, that reputedly runs for thousands of miles along the west coast of North America.



The Newporg Arcology, as seen from a vehicle approaching on the ocean side

Getting in and out of Newporg

Entrance to Newporg can be gained from the land, sea, or air. All of the approaches are monitored twenty-four hours a day. In general, an entrance will not be opened unless someone outside can show an ID badge that scans into the arcology's computer.

Ground Entrances

The Agdomes, Industrial Plants, and Residence Towers all have several concealed doors connecting them to the outside world. Each of the Agdomes has four entrances to the outside, located at the north, south, east, and west points of the compass. These are steel panels that look like any other steel panels on the outside of the dome, which is a pattern of large plates of glass interspersed by these panels.

An ID card must be pressed, at waist height, to the pane of glass to the right of the doorway. The computer will scan the card through the glass. If admittance is allowed, the panel will slide open. However, scanners also check the vicinity around the person seeking admittance. If others are present

within a 25' radius, the door will not open unless all of them have ID cards. Other than this, the identification system is identical to the voice prints, retinal scanners, and palm scanners in *The Technology Book*.

The door opens up with a sudden "whoosh." It remains open for up to a minute before closing slowly. If it bumps into something, it stops closing—though an alarm immediately alerts the arcology security staff, several of whom are already present.

If an unauthorized intruder penetrates that 25' radius while the door is open, an alarm sounds and a bright light flashes. After two seconds, the door slams down hard enough to inflict 2d6 points of damage on anyone caught beneath it. Also, the security guards manning the door can press an override button that instantly slams the door shut.

Each of the Industrial Plants (except the one on the island) is equipped with a similar array of doors, though these apertures are wider and higher. The locations of the doors are indicated on the map.

The Residence Towers, too, have a few passages leading to the outside (except, again, for the one on the island). Like the Agdomes, these are small-sized apertures. Their security procedures are identical with those in the other buildings.

Sea Entrances

A magnetic field across the mouth of the fiord, when activated, will prevent the passage of a steel-hulled ship, or any other vessel with a major component (such as a large engine) of ferrous metal. This is a particularly high-powered version of the fieldfence described in *The Technology Book*. The field can be switched on from either of two security stations, located in the Residence Towers with commanding views of the harbor entrance. Normally inactivated, the field takes virtually no time to power up when it is switched on.

A high bridge arcs over the mouth of the fiord, connecting the two major Residence Towers. A full thousand feet in the air, the bridge is no obstacle to even the tallest ship.

Within the harbor, many small docks abut against the Agdomes, Residence Towers, and Industrial Plants. Small craft are commonly moored at these docks. The large wharves on the island are used for the unloading of the larger vessels that bring timber, coal, oil, steel, and other products that the arcology imports in bulk.

These wharves are patrolled by teams of security guards, and every vessel putting in is subject to detailed scrutiny. A physical search is only performed in cases of truly suspicious behavior—forged manifests, past record of smuggling, etc.

Also, the harbor itself is patrolled full time by hovercruisers of the arcology security teams. All vessels with the home port of Newporg are equipped with small radio transceivers that inform the radar-equipped cruisers of the craft's status. Strange craft will quickly be confronted by one or two of the fast, heavily armed cruisers.

Facilities also exist for submarine docking at two locations within the arcology. The magnetic field at the gate is sufficient to hold undersea craft as well as surface boats out of the arcology, and sensors at the mouth of the bay—and for a half-mile arc on the ocean floor beyond—alert the org's security staff to the approach of any submerged vessel.

Both of the submarine docks can be accessed by a craft while it remains submerged. Each is located under one of the two islands in the bay. While subs can reach the docks without surfacing, and will generally be unseen by anyone at surface level, the shallow water in the bay forces them to move very close to the surface. Thus, any observer in an aircraft or other raised platform (including the tops of the Residence Towers or the two largest Agdomes) will see the sub slipping in or out of the arcology if it is light out or if they have night vision equipment.

The first submarine dock, and the largest (capable of holding a boat 100 yards long) is located under the industrial island. A sub can move under the island and then surface within the factory building itself, allowing for surreptitious loading and unloading, as well as secret arrivals and departures.

The second dock can only receive smaller boats (50 yards or less in length). These smaller craft are usually used for pleasure or passenger cruises, and thus arrive underneath the island supporting the Residence Towers.

Aerial Entrances

There are ten different locations in the arcology where a flying vehicle can land and provide its passengers with immediate access into the buildings of Newporg. All of them require vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) capability, but in an age of jetcars and rocket belts this is the rule rather than the exception for flying vehicles.

Four of the landing pads are large (100 yards in diameter) and capable of receiving the largest helicopters, huge jetcars, and virtually any other VTOL craft. These large pads are located atop the two large Agdomes (right in the middle of the dome, which has been flattened for this purpose) and on the two large Industrial Plants.

Space shuttles and other interplanetary craft are not welcomed here even on the large pads, however, because the weight and the excessive heat of their thrusters causes serious damage to the landing zone. A space shuttle could take off from here in an emergency, but the org's security cameras would be sure to get the registration number. The rocketjock responsible will find a hefty bill awaiting him if he should ever be so unwise as to return to Newporg. Spaceflights almost exclusively launch from the spaceport.

The other six structures—two Agdomes, three Residence Towers, and the small Industrial Plant on the island—contain smaller pads. Each is capable of receiving a small helicopter, or virtually any jetcar. Persons flying individually via rocket belt will also be able to use these smaller landing zones.

Each landing zone, whether large or small, is constantly observed by security cameras, and is staffed by at least two security guards. The large zones are staffed with four guards, and two gunners in a heavy weapons emplacement. These four batteries contain two rocket launchers and two plasma throwers at each of the four locations. Unidentified approaching air vehicles will be warned off by

flares fired when the craft is two miles away. If the vehicle approaches to within a mile the gunners have standing orders to shoot it down.

Communications Within The Arcology

Security checkpoints are rare for those within the arcology. A few labs in the Industrial Plants require ID cards or retina scans for admission. Apartments in the Residence Towers can be individually keyed for fingerprints, and the doors will only admit those who have been entered into the lock's program.

But with these exceptions, the citizens of the arcology are free to move about their community, even to leave. Newporg maintains an open society, where the average citizen is not afraid to accost the viceroy in public and harangue him about some problem or other that needs immediate attention.

Tunnels and large chambers even run back and forth underneath the fiord, kept dry by special, whisper-quiet pumps. These tunnels are monitored by camera, but require no special pass or ID in order to use them.

The Newporg Power Structure

The Newporg Arcology is nominally under the command of the Los Angelorg Regent, Boris Sifon. In reality, of course, the arcology is fairly self-controlled.

The Solar Alliance Regency

The Regent, Boris Sifon, is an Earth native who has long worked for the SA. Most of the details of his career are presented in Chapter 2. Suffice it to say here that Boris has stepped inside the arcology only about five times in the ten years or so since he was appointed regent.

He is always graciously welcomed for these visits, of course, his entire retinue provided with one of the luxury floors in the Residence Tower. The citizens resent the SA's control, however, and Boris senses this.

Newporg contributes a great deal to the regency. It produces more food than it consumes, the excess of which is distributed in the nearby sprawls. The trade carried on by the small, busy port provides imports of objects that are available nowhere else in the regency area. Also, the skilled scientists, engi-

neers, and craftspersons of the arcology are available to the regency when needed for special projects.

Thus, the regent pretty much ignores Newporg, and will continue to do so as long as it doesn't become a known hotbed of resistance. This suits the citizens just fine, and they will make certain to comply with reasonable requests from the regent in order to maintain this status quo.

For example, Boris required blueprints and electrical components for a boom he was attempting to install in the bay. Newporg engineers drew up the blueprints, while the arcology's electrical specialists prepared some specially programmed computer chips. Boris accepted this work as his due, but then conscripted laborers from the sprawls to perform the brute work of construction.

The Arcology Governing Committee

Newporg is ruled by a group of citizens, all of whom have been lifelong residents of the arcology. Cletus Gorki, the chairman, is the de facto ruler of Newporg, in the sense that a slightly corrupt, long-term mayor might have become the "ruler" of an historical city in the old USA.

Cletus is supported, and occasionally challenged, by three powerful committeepersons, each of whom directs an important part of the arcology's operations. These are Lars Rolfon, director of security; Max Dodder, director of engineering; and Steffa Sorti, director of personnel and communications. Each of these NPCs is summarized in a capsule on pages 13 and 14.

The committee members are elected for life, though they can be impeached for truly horrendous offenses against the arcology. In fact, during the past century several have committed treason against the arcology, though this was before Newporg installed the requirement that committee members be native-born residents of the arcology.

In general, the committee tries to insure that the arcology's status quo remains intact. They seek to expand trade when advantageous terms present themselves. They will increase the arcology's defenses and security during times of danger, and will rigorously pursue—through the security forces—any evidence of treason or corruption.

The committee is responsible for seeing that all children are nurtured and educated, and that all adults have meaningful occupations. Citizens of the arcology have a great deal of freedom in choosing

their areas of educational specialty, and also in the level of work they desire. As in any essentially capitalist system, hard work will generally be rewarded by good pay. The more specialized and developed one's skills, the greater are that worker's chances for advancement.

While a distinct hierarchy of authority exists, it is common and acceptable for the lowest peon of a citizen to speak out loudly against injustices he sees in the system. Freedom of speech is tolerated and encouraged.

Freedom of action is, however, more restrained. Crimes such as theft, physical assault, manslaughter, extortion, and corruption are generally punishable by lifetime banishment from the arcology—a fate that is, indeed, worse than death to a Newporg native. The most serious crimes (murder and rape, most commonly) are punished by the execution of the offender.

Security

The security system of the Newporg arcology is a high-tech operation, but is not above lowbrow threats and two-fisted solutions to its problems. This philosophy in part reflects the outlook of Lars Rolfon, current director of security. (See NPC description, pages 13–14). But it also has its roots in history.

When the arcology was first established, midway through the 23rd Century, it had to fend off constant attacks from the huge gangs—armies, really—of near-savage humans swarming from the LA sprawl. During these attacks Newporg established a reputation as an impregnable fortress, but not until hundreds of citizens—and many thousands of barbarians—had paid for that reputation with their lives.

Since those days, Newporg has been safe from external attack, except for its brief stint as a strong-point when the RAM mercenaries were driven from southern California many years ago. Its present-day security concerns are more oriented toward prevention of infiltration by small parties of saboteurs or assassins.

Indeed, while the security force is generally effective, about ten years ago a trio of RAM Terrines blasted their way through a rooftop entry point and embarked on an orgy of destruction in one of the Industrial Plants. Some fifty citizens and two dozen security agents died before the last of the savage killing creatures was brought down.

Security Personnel

The arcology's security agents always operate in groups of two or more—never alone. A pair of these agents are positioned at each of the entrances described above.

Note that, just because these guards have the same game stats, you still don't have to role-play them as the same character. If your PCs get into conversation with one of these NPCs, remember to give him some personality. An identifying characteristic—thumbnail chewing, a limp, an accent, an excitable temperament, or whatever—can be very helpful in bringing your NPCs individuality and life.

Also, consider boosting the stats of a guard if the situation calls for it—the security guards around the reactor plant, for example, have on the average a higher Tech score than those who work elsewhere.

Newporg Security Guard (1st level Terran warrior): hp 7; AC 6; THACO 20; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10, Tech 10.

Weapons: Each guard wears a laser pistol in a holster at his hip. Laser: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800. One of each pair is equipped with a sonic stunner as well. Sonic stunner: Dmg save vs. paralyzation, ROF 1, Max Range 40. If the guards are at a permanent guardpost, they will also have a pair of grenades and a rocket rifle within easy reach. Grenades: Dmg 4d10 or save, ROF 1, Max Range thrown. Rocket rifle: Dmg 2d8, ROF 1, Max Range 2000.

The guards are generally friendly, sociable men and women who are not expecting trouble. They are well-trained observers, however, and are quick to respond with force when necessary.

In addition, other pairs of agents make routine patrols around the arcology. There are 1d4 of these teams in each building at any one time.

Each building also has, on permanent station there, a security strike team. This team is composed of six guards, four of whom have the stats listed above. All four of these carry two grenades each and laser rifles. The other two members of the team are higher-ranking agents: a sergeant and a captain. Each captain is responsible for security within one of the ten buildings, and answers to the director.

Newporg Security Sergeant (3rd level Terran warrior): hp 20; AC 4; THACO 18; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 9, Tech 11.

Weapons: Each sergeant carries a sonic stunner, a rocket rifle, and a mono knife. Sonic stunner: Dmg save vs. paralyzation, ROF 1, Max Range 40. Rocket rifle: Dmg 2d8, ROF 1, Max Range 2000. Mono knife: Dmg 1d6.

Security sergeants are hardbitten veterans. They tend to be profane and direct when they attend to problems. Some of them are bullies, but most have a tendency toward fairness. They universally loathe criminals and enemies of the arcology.

Newporg Captain of Security (6th level Terran warrior): hp 37; AC 2; THACO 15; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 13, Tech 13.

Weapons: Captains routinely carry sonic stunners and laser pistols as their only weapons. Sonic stunner: Dmg save vs. paralyzation, ROF 1, Max Range 40. Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800.

Captains of security are autocratic commanders who tend to be concerned with security at the expense of civil liberties, politeness, and other niceties. Official and brusque in manners, they are nonetheless intelligent and capable officers who have achieved their status by proving themselves superior to scores of other men and women.

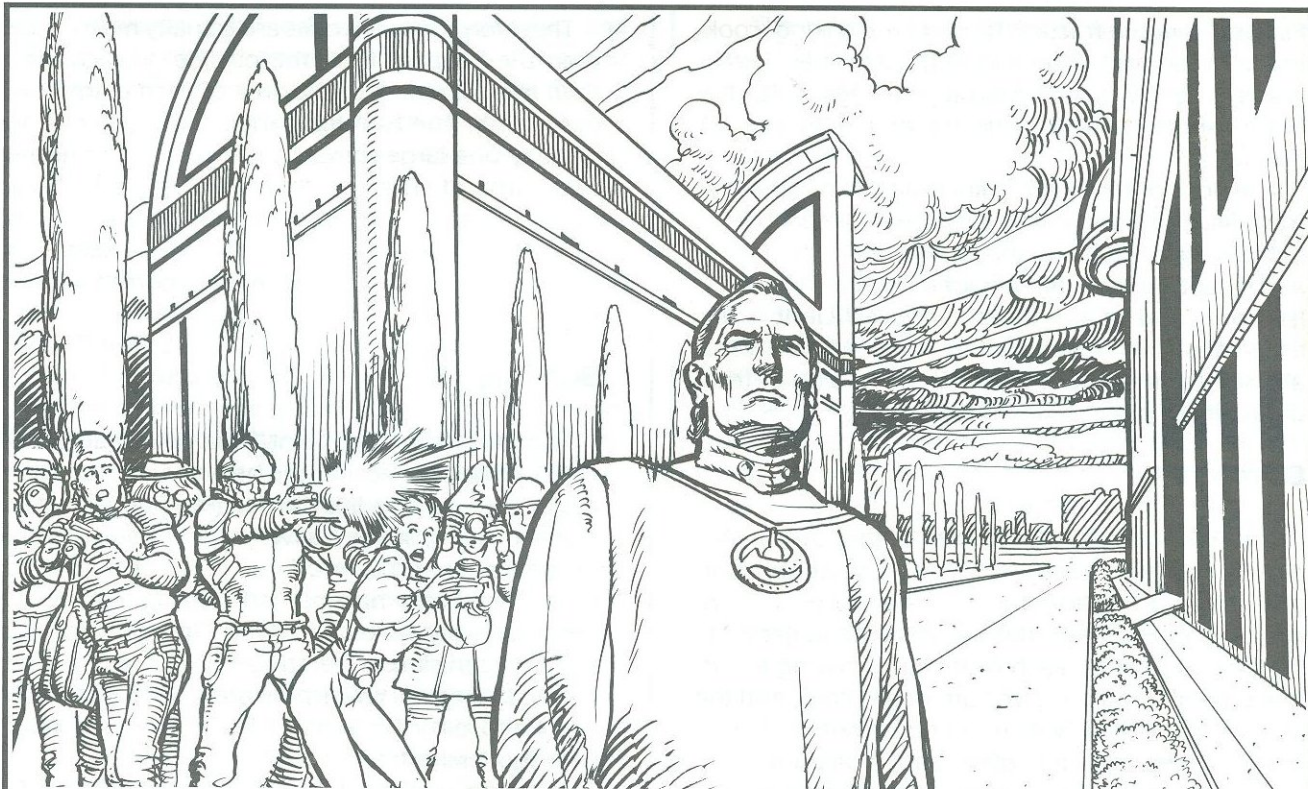
The Buildings of the Arcology

For purposes of explanation, Newporg can be easily divided into its three general purpose areas: the Agdomes, Industrial Plants, and Residence Towers.

Agdomes

These great structures are the source of the arcology's food and fresh water—the true font of life for the citizens of Newporg. Indeed, the domes are so efficient that surpluses are regularly harvested and donated to the Regent for dispersal in the sprawls.

The surface of each dome is a gridwork of steel supporting vast panes of thick glass. The glass is



Even in a civilized and secure place such as Newporg, crime cannot be prevented

computer monitored to adjust its level of ultraviolet filtering. Often it admits the full force of the sun, bringing crops from the moist, nutrient-enriched earth with uncanny speed. But then the panes darken, as fruit or grain ripens, and even then the glass varies the quality of sunlight it allows to fall on different crops, say oranges to apples, bringing each to its fastest, most delicious culmination.

The growing areas are stacked in several layers within each dome. Vegetables such as potatoes and carrots are grown on the lower level, where the light is easily kept dim. Tropical melons are raised on the top level, where the light is more readily kept more intense.

The atmosphere in each dome is moist and warm. The ground is well watered, thanks to the desalinization efforts in Dome #1. Large banks of machinery maintain the temperature and humidity at the proper levels for maximum agricultural output.

The domes, however, are not identical. Each is devoted to a particular use.

Dome #1

This is the desalinization chamber, where salt water is distilled into pure water for all the purposes of the arcology. Most of the water goes directly for irrigation in the other domes or for use in the Industrial Plants, though a fraction is used for drinking, cooking, bathing and other individual activities. Excess water is sent with the food to the Regent, for the water shortage is a critical problem in the LA sprawl.

The floor of the dome is lined with long, shallow trays filled with seawater. Overhead of each tray is a thin network of coils and pipes, used to condense and recapture the water vapor rising from the trays. Its roof and glass panels are efficient solar collectors—the desalinization chambers are virtually self-sufficient, drawing little or no power from the main arcology power plants.

Dome #2

This is the grain dome, the largest of the Ag-domes. Through steady irrigation, intense sunlight, and utilizing hybrid strains of wheat, oats, corn, rye, and other cereals, this dome is used to generate six crops a year on each of its five growing levels. The type of grain is rotated after each crop, and the soil is regenerated with nutrients drawn from seawater. Except for the glass panels arching high overhead, someone standing in this dome on the top field level could almost fool himself into believ-

ing he stood in the middle of a field in the American Midwest near harvest time. A sophisticated series of mirrors keeps sunlight on the lower four field levels during the midday hours, when the light would normally be completely blocked by the fields above.

Dome #3

This small dome is used to grow the exotic crops that are desired by the arcology's residents. A small olive grove is maintained here, as well as a productive vineyard. Garlic, onions, chives and other spices grow here, giving the air a rich, pungent smell. Other plants, grown in small amounts, are used to create rare medicines for the arcology's hospital, and they are also meant for export.

Dome #4

This large dome is used to grow fruit on a single level of plants and orchards. Melons lie in the field, and small orchards of citrus, apples, and other fruit trees are scattered around the periphery. The air in this dome is the most humid of all of them, thick with the sweet smell of ripening fruit.

Industrial Plants

These long, low factories are actually much larger than they appear from the outside. In fact, more than three quarters of the area of each plant is underground. The two main industrial buildings are actually one large complex, thoroughly connected underground. The top of each of the two large structures is crowded with antennae, radar dishes, telescopes, and other equipment—except, of course, in the vicinities of the two rooftop landing pads.

Building #5

Known as the "big plant," this low, flat-roofed structure houses most of the heavy industrial activities of the arcology. It is divided into huge compartments by long, sterile hallways of stainless steel or white tile. Even the working zones, where automated machines hammer and stamp and clank, seem curiously devoid of people. The workers tend to be technicians operating robotic equipment, rather than actual wrench-twisters with greasy coveralls and dirty fingernails. The entire complex is kept spotlessly clean.

The most significant sites are the two nuclear fusion reactors (one is a backup) in the corner of the

building farthest from the rest of the arcology. These are safe, clean systems, but they generate tremendous amounts of heat. Most of this excess heat is piped off outside the arcology through great vents that exhaust in the wasteland a half mile beyond the three-mile cleared zone.

These four vents are metal tubes 10' in diameter, blocked at their exits and at two dozen points along their length with steel mesh screens and monitored with security alarms to prevent unauthorized entry. Every hour, two of the vents (the two connected to the active reactor) blast hot air for 20 minutes. This air inflicts 1d4 points of damage per combat round against unprotected human (or others from moderate climates) skin.

The reactors switch back and forth once a month; the one that is not operated undergoes inspection and any necessary repairs at that time. In more than 100 years of use, only twice have emergencies required the engineers to shift to the backup reactor.

This big plant also contains the machine shops, foundry, and carbon-fuel refinery.

The machine shops are capable of stamping, lathing, magnetically and molecularly hardening, or otherwise manipulating any type of metal known to man. They are used for manufacturing of many of the arcology's needs in appliances, vehicles, and so forth. Because of the small market for products, the emphasis is on individual craftsmanship and versatility rather than mass production. A team of technicians and robots might assemble 10 jetcars in ten weeks, then retool and make 500 food processors. The equipment is quite versatile for the engineers familiar with it.

The foundry is the area most like an old fashioned factory—even in the 25th Century there is still no genteel way of melting metal ores and smelting them together into steel or other advanced alloys. The foundry is also used to manufacture and mold plastics. It runs on nuclear heat and the vats of superheated metal are sealed in huge ovens. Even so, the area (which is far underground) is uncomfortably warm. The air is filled with a sweet, metallic odor that quickly grows unpleasant.

Next to the foundry is the refinery area. The refinery is also adjacent to the bay, and is connected by heavy pipeline to the industrial island. Once a primary source of the arcology's fuel needs, the refinery was made a non-necessity by the fusion reactors installed a century ago. Though the citizens of the arcology have little use for carbon-based fuels, it is much in demand in the sprawls, where ancient gasoline-powered vehicles are not uncommon. With the ready supply of energy, and a

cheap source of carbon-based resources such as kelp and plankton, the refinery has now become the arcology's main source of export revenue. The Solar Alliance Regency purchases a great deal of the fuel, with the rest going to the highest bidder among the loosely organized bands in the sprawls. There is an arcology-wide ban on transport of petrochemicals by water, since spills virtually wiped out the entire coastline in centuries past.

Building #6

Known as the "sparkhouse," this sleek, modern building contains the more high tech operations of the arcology's industrial activity—the electronics laboratories, computer design and manufacture, robotics, and also the medical facilities and higher-education classrooms and learning centers.

The sparkhouse is a cluster of much smaller areas than the big plant. The corridors are short and crooked, with wood-paneled walls and carpets. Each lab is a self-contained area, but seems to connect to a dozen other locations when one simply goes through a door or across a hall.

Indeed, the atmosphere inside the sparkhouse might best be described as collegiate. Professors and technicians cheerfully throw ideas back and forth, liberally sprinkled with insults.

The robotics department designs and manufactures all of the robot-type machines used in the arcology. Of course, none of these are the two-legged, two-armed human imitation variety. Most are designed to be installed in one place, though some are ambulatory (with tracks or wheels). It is a matter of pride to these engineers that no two robots in the arcology are exactly alike.

The computer department does many things in addition to making and programming computers. It maintains the communications system between the arcology and the rest of the world. It imports and exports computer technology. And, through constant upgrades, it has an impact on every aspect of life in the arcology—from climate control to nutrition to entertainment programming.

The hospital zone is underground, at the end of the sparkhouse adjacent to the residence tower. It contains virtually every piece of advanced equipment known to man, and has a capacity of 200 beds in an emergency. Its typical patient population is around a dozen.

Above the hospital are the classrooms. This is where the arcology's children are educated beginning in their thirteenth year. (Classes for younger children are held in the Residence Towers.) The pro-

gram of education here runs for five years for all children, with up to five more for those who elect to train in the more advanced careers in science or medicine.

Building #7

The small industrial plant located on the island is a nexus for many of the arcology's systems. Known as the "island plant," it serves as the transformer plant for the electrical power generated in the reactor, and as a terminus for raw materials imported by ship into the arcology. It is connected by a wide underground tunnel to the big plant, where most of these raw materials are sent for use.

The island also contains the little-used detention cells, for those rare occasions when the arcology has prisoners it does not wish to simply deport. There are a dozen cells for one or two prisoners, and two cells capable of holding 50 for an extended period, or 100 under terribly crowded conditions.

Residence Towers

These towers are much more than sleeping quarters for the residents of the arcology. The Residence Towers are the focuses of social activity, dining, entertainment, and shopping for the citizens of Newporg.

The towers are very tall, each of the two largest reaching over 200 floors into the sky while the smaller Residence Tower on the island is some 80 stories high.

The most luxurious apartments are those on the top five floors of each tower. These are reserved for the leaders of the arcology and its most influential scientists, educators, entertainers, and military heroes.

The floors from about number 20 on up to these luxury penthouses all contain similar quality apartments, with the size based on the number of members in the family, or the number of single residents.

The bottom 20 floors of each tower are collections, in no particular order, of restaurants, theaters, cabarets and bars, boutiques of all kinds, small shops of crafts, stores selling imports from around the world and the solar system, arcades, and small carnivals.

Building #8

Called Seatower, this long Residence Tower reaches some 210 stories into the air. The bridge connecting it to the Baytower (see below) is at the

100 story level. At levels 50, 100, 150, and 200, the Seatower has entire floors devoted to parks, with greenhouse-supported vegetation, playgrounds, swimming pools, and sports fields.

The bottom level of the Seatower is a beach arcade. On some days, when an offshore wind has been exceptionally strong, the beach is clean enough for swimming, and this area and the adjacent strip of sandy shore become the focus of life in the arcology.

In levels 2-20 of the seatower can be found every variety of entertainment deemed to be acceptable to the average family. These floors are centered around long pedestrian malls, fringed with stores and entertainment establishments. The central mall is open, in places, all the way up the to 20th floor. The nightclubs of floors 4 and 5 tend to offer live musical entertainment and other stage shows. A strip along the 14th story is famed for a fine assortment of seafood restaurants.

Stories 21-210 contain living apartments. Each floor contains a gridwork of "streets," which are usually used by pedestrians but occasionally see the traffic of small electrical cars used by disabled citizens. Other traffic—a cart used by a mover, for example—is allowed only on a permit basis.

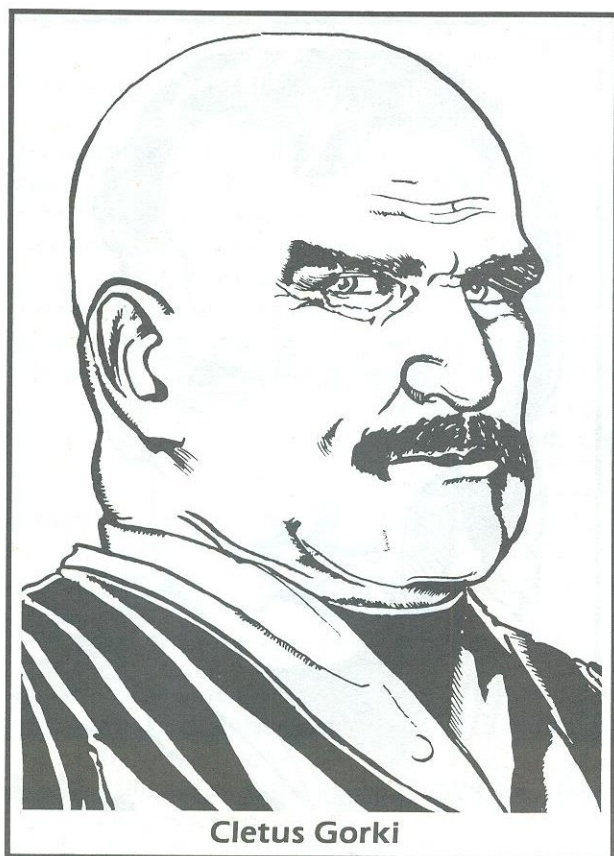
At each street corner is a bank of four elevators, which allow access to all floors of the tower. The individual security of each apartment is assured by computer monitoring, security team patrols in the streets, and a variety of user-selected locks.

Building #9

The Baytower is much like the Seatower in design and function, although at 225 stories it is slightly taller than its neighbor. However, it has the same types of parks in the same locations and uses the same floors for its shopping and entertainment district.

Specifically, however, the second floor of the Baytower is known as Theater Row. There are usually two to three dozen live performances offered on Theater Row on a given night, making it the high culture section of the arcology. Immediately above, on floors 3-5, can be found the most expensive specialty restaurants in the arcology. Many of these feature imported foods, or ancient recipes tied to specific cultures such as Mexican, Thai, Cantonese, Japanese, Italian, and otherworld cuisine.

Buried in the earth at the north end of the Baytower is a public arena, capable of holding all of the arcology's 100,000 people. It is used for contests,



Cletus Gorki

major entertainment events, sporting activities, and the many festivals sponsored by the arcology.

Building #10

This Residence Tower is unique not just in its small size nor in its island location. The Tower Isle is reserved for adults; households with minors (16 years of age or younger) must reside in the Baytower or Seatower. In addition, the entertainment on the lower 20 floors of this 85-story tower is tailored much more to the adult taste. This is where the casinos can be found, and the more raucous dance halls and saloons. While minors are not barred from the island, they are not allowed in most of the establishments on the entertainment levels.

Certain parts of these levels, in fact, occasionally become dangerous even for the arcology's security teams. The 13th floor, for example, has a reputation as a haven for thieves and cutthroats. However, most of the arcology's citizens are vehemently law-abiding in nature, and are very intolerant of such unruly behavior. Whenever an area or an establishment gets a reputation for being just *too* rowdy, the arcology security people move in and shut things down for a while.

Government NPCs

While the information included on each NPC below is not to be considered common knowledge, these are public figures in Newporg and, consequently, much of their background is on the public record. Details on a committee member's education, travels and work experience are not difficult to find for one who is willing to do some research.

A little more digging will reveal that very little is known of some of the aspects of these NPCs' lives—Steffa Sorti's "wild years," for example, or the courses of study followed by Lars Rolfon or Cletus Gorki on Mars.

These NPCs are presented with role-playing tips. You are encouraged to bring these characters to life for your PCs—use these tips and embellish them any way you like. Since the crux of the story line involves the discovery that one of these VIPs is in fact a traitor, the more you can make the PCs know and even like these NPCs, the more effective the story will be.

Cletus Gorki, Chairman of the Governing Committee (12th level Terran engineer): hp 40; AC 3; THACO 14; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 13, Tech 13.

The Gorki clan is well known as one of Newporg's original founding families. The family patriarch, at the time of the arcology's establishment, was one Cyril Gorki. An entrepreneur and scientist, Cyril not only designed many of Newporg's structures and mechanical features, he provided a great deal of the capital that made the arcology possible.

Since that time, Cyril Gorki's descendants have played important roles in the governing and managing of the arcology, generally in the areas of finance and architecture/design engineering. Always politically liberal, the Gorkis have loudly and frequently challenged RAM directorates. This has made them a popular family with members of the arcology. Never in seven generations, however, had a Gorki held the ultimate post in Newporg.

Cletus Gorki has taken that final step.

Undeniably aided by his family's prominence, Cletus has nonetheless earned his place through hard work and superior administrative and engineering skills. His excellent education has been gained not only in Newporg, but through extensive traveling—mostly around Earth, but he has also spent some time studying on Mars. He is still regarded as one of the brightest and most innovative

engineers in the arcology, though his political duties allow him but limited time to spend on engineering, which was his first passion.

During his travels, Cletus has seen firsthand the exploitative tactics of RAM, and his heart still burns with anger against these many injustices. Though RAM paid for much of his Martian education, in an attempt to sway the young member of this influential family, the schooling backfired. Gorki came away from Mars more convinced than ever that the machinations of the powerful conglomerate must be held in check before all of Earth is reduced to a rubble-strewn refuse heap.

His first priority is the welfare of Newporg, for he takes the responsibilities of his office very seriously indeed. He is recognized all across Earth as a wise and effective leader, and his advice is as much sought after as anyone's on this fractious planet.

Cletus is one of the most dominating leaders to have presided over the arcology during its two-century lifetime. In most cases, this has had a positive effect on the quality of life in Newporg. Tolerance of criminal behavior has all but ceased, and those who cheat or seek to subvert the arcology are dealt with harshly. Cletus has sent assassins as far away as the moons of Saturn in order to see justice (some would call it vengeance) done.

Cletus is one of the secret masterminds of NEO. He can communicate quickly with the major agents of the organization, including Buck Rogers.

Role-playing Tips: Cletus is a genial, grandfatherly character in conversation. He always flatters attractive women. Despite his outward friendliness, however, Cletus is very clever and strong-willed. He will brook no insolence from those in audience with him, and his tongue can be quite barbed, should the occasion require such behavior.

Lars Rolfon, Director of Security (11th level Terran warrior): hp 56; AC 0; THAC0 10; Str 16, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 10, Tech 13.

It is difficult to imagine more extreme opposites in background, mannerisms, and personality, than Cletus Gorki and Lars Rolfon. Nevertheless, Lars has become the second most influential citizen in the arcology of Newporg.

Lars comes from a family of relative newcomers to the arcology—his grandparents on his father's side returned to Earth from Mars some 60 years ago. The major influence on young Lars's life seems to have been a three-year program of study on Mars, paid for by his grandfather. He returned from that



Lars Rolfon

education determined to make a name for himself in Newporg.

And in this he has succeeded, beyond even his wildest dreams. Though his parents did not live to witness this success, Lars often invokes their memory as he sits at the nerve center of Newporg's social and political power structure.

Lars Rolfon is the primary enforcer of Cletus Gorki's directives, as well as a fail-safe controller of all of the arcology's security arrangements. He was recruited to Newporg's enforcement teams after the savage RAM Terrine attack twenty years ago. A mere youth then, Lars destroyed one of the Terrines—but not before the killing machine had slain both of his parents.

That's the public story. In actuality, Lars is a traitor of unspeakably monstrous proportions. A RAM agent since he was brainwashed as a young child, Lars arranged the death of his parents, and his subsequent destruction of the Terrine was an elaborate ruse—his ticket into the arcology's security apparatus.

Now he pursues his cover job vigorously, totally within character. With the decreased presence of RAM in the southern California area, he had gone into deep freeze, remaining out of touch with his

contacts for many years. But recently he was called back to duty by RAM, and his treacherous duties will be the basis for the rest of the PCs' adventure.

Role-playing Tips: Lars is a nervous, tense person by nature. He is constantly pacing or chewing his nails. He has a habit of asking questions that others often find harsh and accusatory, though he does not necessarily have this intent.

Lars is impatient with the chairman's gentle, almost patronizing approach, though he controls this resentment for political reasons. Every once in a while, however, his temper will get the better of him, and he will snap angrily at visitors, other committee members, or—rarely—at Gorki himself.

Max Dodder, Director of Engineering (15th level Terran engineer): hp 33; AC 6; THACO 12; Str 12, Dex 9 Con 14, Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 8, Tech 18.

Max, nicknamed "The Professor," is a genial old man who knows the ins and outs of the arcology better than anyone. Although given to an occasional dalliance with the bottle, he saves his binges for off-duty days and nights.



Steffa Sorti

He is a hard-working fellow who has earned his post through a combination of dedication to duty, his talents as an engineer, and his genuinely likable nature. Where Lars and Cletus have traveled across the Earth, and even visited Mars, Max takes pride in his focused, contented existence that has never taken him far from Newporg.

The son of two laborers, Max developed an early fascination for tools, repairs, and building things. Diligent in his studies and helpful to his professors, he was provided with a good, thorough education in all aspects of the arcology.

When only twenty-two years of age, he developed a water-recycling apparatus for the Agdomes that increased the efficiency of the hydroponics gardens by nearly 10%. From that moment on, he was regarded as something of a *wunderkind*. As a troubleshooter, he worked in all areas of Newporg, including computers, manufacturing, agriculture, life support/comfort maintenance, and transportation.

Now he presides over each of these departments as the arcology's chief technical director. Though he is hardly afraid to roll up his sleeves and pitch in to help find a solution to some problem, in his present position Max spends most of his time in meetings. Every now and then he admits to himself that he misses the days of hands-on work. Administration does not really suit his temperament.

But he has learned to become a good leader, and in fact is a beloved one. Virtually virtually all of the workers in Newporg's engineering staff will swear by him. He, in turn, is fiercely loyal to his subordinates, and will stick up for them in any kind of disagreement with security or personnel.

Role-playing Tips: Max smokes smelly cigars, and is friendly to anyone who will put up with the smoke. He has little time for those who complain.

Steffa Sorti, Director of Personnel and Communications (10th level Terran rogue): hp 30; AC 8; THACO 16; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 8, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 17, Tech 13.

Steffa is an overly officious administrator who nonetheless has a deeply sensitive streak. She is very attractive, though she can be coldly aloof. When she advocates a point, however, she makes a formidable spokesperson. She is often the champion of the "little guy," and this is a large part of what makes her popular with the people she supervises.

She has long since retired from a wild, active lifestyle during which she gained her experience as a

rogue. She still knows the sprawls around Newporg as well as anyone, and she has many contacts on the space stations orbiting Earth.

Steffa was born in the arcology and lived there until she was sixteen. She did well in her studies. However, a brief but passionate affair with a young immigrant caused her parents to forbid her from seeing the young man.

Impulsively, she ran away from home, stowing away on a Mars-bound freighter. She spent the next fifteen years moving about the solar system in the twilight fringe between law, government, corporate control, and the military. Serving each of these institutions at one time or another, she developed great skills in the arts of infiltration, theft, smuggling, and revolution.

At various times, according to employment records, she worked for RAM on Mars and undertook missions for the giant conglomerate to the moons of Jupiter and the Asteroid Belt. She also worked for a small mining concern in the Belt and a giant terraforming corporation on Venus, and has often been employed as an agent and courier for small-scale (and not necessarily wholly ethical) companies.

Always she performed her work capably, but her intolerance for injustice often led to a falling-out with her superiors. More than once, she so antagonized her employers that she was brought up on charges of insubordination, though she always slipped away before unpleasant sanctions could be used against her.

As she grew older, Steffa began to think about security and stability, and she realized that Newporg was where she wanted to live out her life. She returned there, determined to leave her past behind.

For the most part, she was readily reaccepted into Newporg society. Her work in the communication division was exemplary, and she displayed a hitherto unnoticed knack for administration and motivation. Now nearing fifty, she has reached the pinnacle of her field.

Role-playing Tips: Steffa tends to keep her lips pursed tightly together, as she thinks this makes her look determined. She is very prim and proper in manner, and she seems to be easily offended, though this is mostly an act.

FORTUITOUS INTERVENTION

Since the population of the arcology is around 100,000 people, the mere presence of the PCs is not going to attract the notice of the arcology's leaders. Yet this is a useful and important prerequisite for the rest of the adventure. Therefore, this initial encounter is presented as a way to give your players some excitement, and at the same time allow their characters to attract the notice of the arcology's elite.

Starting Them Out

The primary requirement is to get your characters into the arcology. The easiest way, especially if your characters have not fully detailed all of their backgrounds, is to say that one character is from Newporg. With that character's vouching, all of them will be admitted to the arcology, even if they admit that all they want to do is see the place.

Alternately, you as the referee can create an NPC (or better yet, use an existing NPC friend of the PCs) who hails from Newporg.

Failing either of these approaches, you can send the characters to the arcology with some trading items to deliver, or with instructions to pick up something that has been manufactured there for delivery to the PCs' home base, wherever in the solar system that may be.

Once they're in, it's simply a matter of subtly encouraging them to look around. Within the bounds of the arcology's security considerations, they will be allowed to tour Newporg pretty much at will—especially if accompanied by a native.

Cruisin' the Org

As referee, it is your responsibility to make Newporg, the massive, pulsing center that it is, come to life for your players. You'll have to give detailed, compelling description, and introduce the NPCs as living, interesting individuals.

Descriptions of the buildings are provided earlier in this section. You may wish to read some of these passages aloud to the players to aid them in picturing the interior of, for example, an industrial plant. Also, you should embellish and personalize these descriptions, particularly if Newporg will become a recurring setting in your campaign.

Newporg NPCs

To this end, some NPCs are briefly described below. Drop these in wherever they might seem to be useful. You may wish to make a note in the module, or in a separate notebook if you keep one for your game, indicating which NPC has been posted at what location. If you note that Clint Fielding is the chief technician in plant 1, then you will put him in the same location if the PCs, at some future time, should return to that plant.

Note that these NPCs are not provided with full game statistics. You can randomly assign attributes if you need to, but their main purpose in the adventure is to provide role-playing interaction with the player characters.

Clint Fielding, an engineer, is a crusty old character prone to colorful expletives and rude noises. However, he knows the operation of his equipment (be it vehicle, machine, or an entire building environment; you choose) inside and out. Clint shies away from pretty women, and—surprisingly, to those who know him casually—he delights in small pets and children.

Dara Sutter, a surgeon, is a keenly professional medic of indeterminate, but very high, level. She is nearing middle age, and would be very attractive if she bothered at all about her appearance. She is fussy about health to the exclusion of all other interests—like fun. However, she is a passionate believer in freedom and a fervent member of NEO. Her cold exterior might be an attempt to cover up these avid values.

Max Reconn, a restaurateur, is the proprietor of The Maxi, a posh restaurant/night club in a ritzy section of a residence tower. (Which tower depends on the adventure; see below.) Condescending in the extreme, with a sneer that can shrivel a clumsy waiter or underdressed patron at 50 yards, Max has somehow come to represent the pinnacle of social status in Newporg. He is unmarried, but is never encountered without a beautiful woman on his arm.

Orville Nodd, a maintenance worker, can be encountered in any part of the arcology, doing (or, more likely, attempting to do) virtually any mundane task. He wears an ill-fitting pair of coveralls, and is always willing to offer an opinion on any topic discussed in his earshot. Usually Orville's opinion is not only offensive, but expressed at great length and in meticulous detail.

The Right Place at the Right Time

While the PCs are ambling through a bustling shopping/entertainment mall in Newporg, they will stumble upon the perpetrators of a horrible plot: nothing less than the assassination of Chairman Gorki himself! Regardless of whether or not the PCs try to stop this crime (of course, we *hope* they intervene!), they will become swept up in the action.

The encounter presented here occurs on one of the public strips of mall, on a lower level (2-20) of one of the Residence Towers. If the PCs are given ample freedom, perhaps with friendly suggestions from one or two helpful NPCs, it shouldn't be too long before they find themselves at an appropriate location, which you can describe to them.

A few citizens amble along the sidewalks here but there is no crowd. Potted trees line the edge of the walkway, where the next three lower floors in the tower can be seen. The identical opening in the ceiling allows 10 or 12 levels to be seen above, as well.

Three floors down is ground level, however, and there the center of the tower is an open plaza. A crowd has gathered in one section of this plaza, outside The Maxi, a restaurant with a tastefully subdued exterior of dark wood.

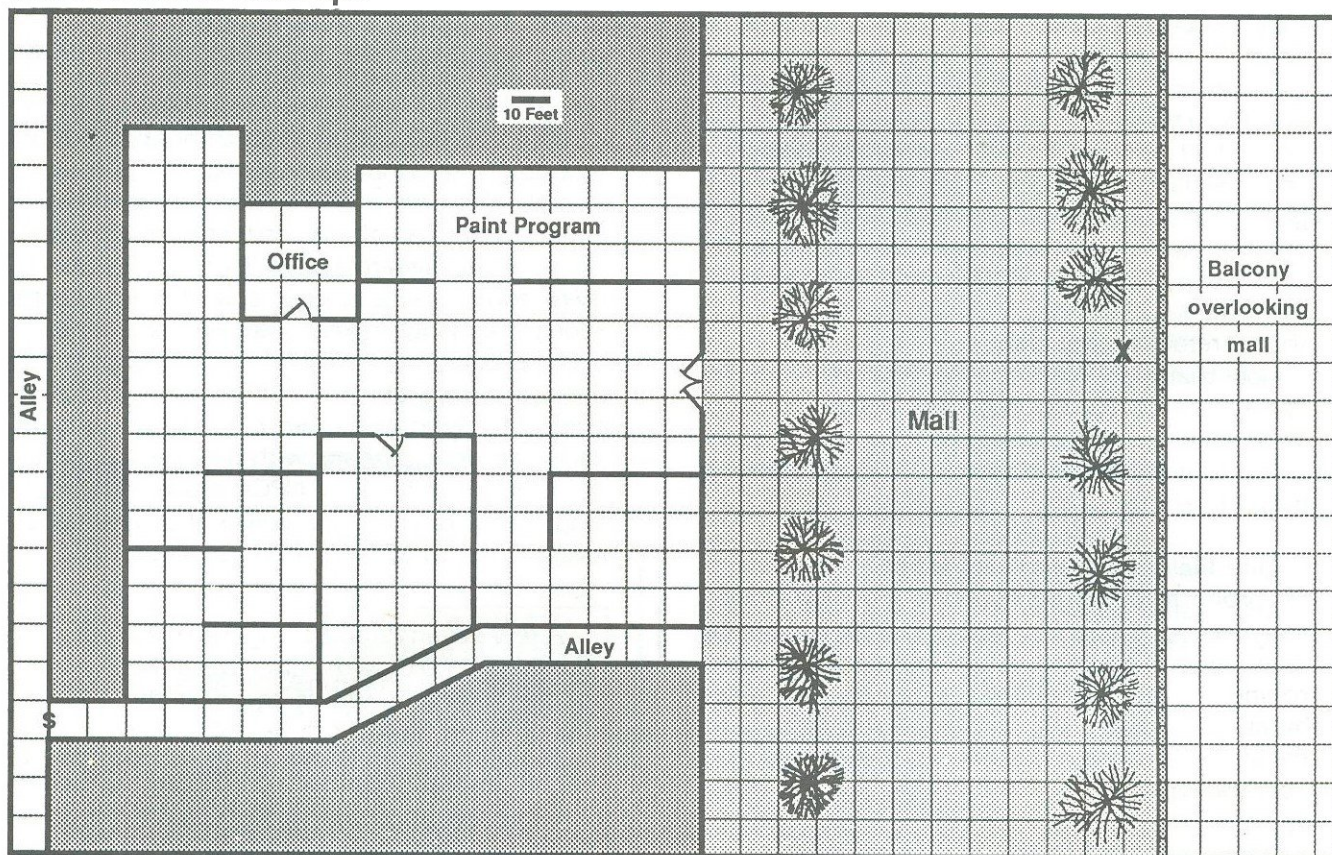
On this floor, opposite the atrium opening to the upper and lower floors, a row of boutiques sell fashions, fine art, and handcrafted pottery. The shops are open, but have few customers.

A security guard strolls past the shops, while several young women windowshop. A gang of youths passes, calling something that the women ignore. A pair of photographers lug a heavy camera to the edge of the sidewalk, overlooking the crowd in the plaza below.

If the players ask about the crowd, any passerby knows that Chairman Gorki, leader of Newporg, is entertaining a group of important personages inside. The exclusive dinner represents a break from a grueling series of meetings—these VIPs have gathered to discuss recent epidemics of disease which have swept through parts of the sprawls, leaving many dead in their wakes. The guests attending the conference include Buck Rogers, among others. The crowd has gathered to see these celebrities as they emerge.

Use Map 2 to help picture the location of this

Assassination Attempt



encounter. Before the action gets too hot (but after they've figured out that something is going on) describe it in as much detail as possible to the players.

Allow the players to roll Notice Skill Checks for their characters. Those passing the checks see a security guard checking a niche between two shops. Mysteriously, he does not emerge.

Any player can roll a check for any Tech-related skill, or use his Tech score by default, to study the camera or the photographers—but only if the player asks to do so. A successful check indicates that the device is a little too long and heavy to be any piece of photographic equipment known to the character.

The Scene

The *alley* between the art gallery and the jewelry shop is a mere 8' wide. It is dark, but relatively clean of debris. At the end is a door protected by an electronic security alarm. A character must make Skill Checks for Bypass Security and then Open Lock in order to enter. The door opens into the mazelike maintenance corridors of the towers.

The *sidewalk* is a pleasant, tree-lined pedestrian mall, although occasionally one of the arcology's silent electric cars whispers past. The edge of the

walk overlooking the floors below is bordered by a waist-high wall of brick. Vines and other trailing greenery cluster along this wall, and hang down from each level to lower stories.

The *Paint Program* is a 25th-Century version of an art gallery. Its rooms are empty except for the occasional bench, but on the walls are flat video screens. Each projects an image in three dimensions of slowly changing geometric patterns.

The gallery is also the hideout of a nefarious RAM infiltrator, Gordann Fezz. His cover is the operator of the gallery, but he actually works to undermine the arcology's government.

Gordann Fezz, art collector, social butterfly, and treacherous RAM mole (7th level Terran rogue): hp 22; AC 8; THAC0 17; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 9, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 15, Tech 8.

Weapons: Fezz has a dagger hidden in his knee-length fashion boots. He also keeps a laser pistol hidden in a special clip-mount below his desk, in easy reach of someone sitting at the desk. Dagger: Dmg 1d4. Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800.

On his own initiative, Gordann has created a plot to disrupt Newporg. He has arranged the assassination of the patriarchal chairman, Cletus Gorki. Such an act will gain him great notoriety in RAM espionage circles, perhaps even transfer to Mars!

Gordann has had contact with a traitor, known simply as "Blue," high in the arcology's power structure. This traitor (whom Fezz cannot identify) has informed him of the current evening's outing to The Maxi. His team of assassins, long prepared, has carefully arranged the attack.

Gordann smuggled them into his art gallery through a network of passages that lead from the back of his showroom into the maintenance ducts and work passages in the arcology's shell. The secret entrance was not really necessary, but Fezz was going to extra lengths to avoid detection.

The two assassins, disguised as photographers, are backed up by a pair in the alley, and a pair in the art gallery masquerading as customers. Gordann himself will not get involved in the action. Indeed, he will be one of the first witnesses to call security, too late of course for any help to arrive.

The two security guards closest to the attackers are also agents working for Gordann. An authentic security agent has just wandered past, when he noticed the pair of suspicious characters entering the alley. His throat was slit with a mono knife as he went to investigate.

The assassins are highly trained and well armed. All are Terran thugs.

#1 Photographer: hp 12; AC 7; THACO 17.

Weapon: Rocket rifle: Dmg 2d8, ROF 1, Max Range 2000.

#2 Photographer: hp 13; AC 6; THACO 18.

Weapon: Laser rifle: Dmg 1d12, ROF 1, Max Range 3000.

#3 In Store: hp 9; AC 6; THACO 17.

Weapon: Sonic stunner: Dmg save vs. paralysis, ROF 1, Max Range 40.

#4 In Store: hp 8; AC 8; THACO 18.

Weapon: Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800.

#5 In Alley: hp 6; AC 7; THACO 18.

Weapon: Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800.

#6 In Alley: hp 6; AC 7; THACO 18.

Weapon: Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800.

Player Character Actions

If the PCs question the "photographers," the other assassins will move up behind them and quietly try to herd them back to the alley. If the characters resist this suggestion, a gunfight breaks out as explained below.

If the PCs surrender docilely, they will be herded back to the alley and held at gunpoint until the encounter is over. They'll be released eventually with a strong suggestion that they retire from the adventuring life.

At any sign of attack by the PCs, or even an attempt to reach for a weapon, the assassins will also start shooting. Once a melee breaks out, however, the assassins give up all intentions of assassinating the chairmen. Leaving their heavy equipment behind, they will retreat through the art gallery—much to Fezz's chagrin. They leave through a concealed door in the back of the gallery. If they reach this door, they lock the portal behind them. If the PCs can't get through the door in less than three rounds, the assassins escape. Otherwise, the firefight can continue in a series of short corridors behind the door.

The two fake security guards will also look for escape once the shooting starts. All the assassins will fight to the death if cornered, unless overcome by a stunner or other disabling attack.

If any of the assassins is captured, he can probably be made to talk. He can identify Gordann as the one who hired them, and he knows that Gordann gets his information from a highly placed traitor in the arcology.

Official Reaction

Security teams will swarm around the Paint Program within 10 rounds of the first outbreak of violence. If a gunfight is still in progress, they will not stop to identify good guys and bad guys—they will demand that everyone drop their weapons; those failing to do so will be fired upon.

Once everything gets sorted out, however (and assuming our PCs haven't done something *really* stupid, like getting into a firefight with Newporg's security teams), there will be enough witnesses to clarify what happened. Choose a couple of NPCs from the list above to serve as witnesses, or make some of your own.

If the PCs took positive action to stop the assassins, word of this will soon reach the Chairman. Within 24 hours after the aborted attempt, the PCs

will be invited to a private audience in the chairman's chambers.

The chairman's offices are near the top of the sparkhouse. Two guard checkpoints and a field-fence block access to his outer office. That room is occupied by two secretaries and four armed guards, and a heavy steel vault protects the chambers themselves.

Within, Cletus's office is revealed to be appropriate to his lofty station. Long wide windows provide a view of the Pacific Ocean. A variety of furniture arrangements can be found in the large room: a cozy pair of chairs beside a fireplace, a long conference table, an outside balcony overlooking the sea, and so forth. The walls are decorated with tasteful works of art, and the flooring and furnishing is all first class.

Present will be Cletus Gorki, of course, but also his three directors, and the imposing figure of Buck Rogers, in his full NEO regalia. If the PCs have not made his acquaintance, this is a good time to introduce him into the campaign.

If any of the assassins were taken alive, security will have found out about Gordann by the time of the interview; if not, Fezz will still be under suspicion if the secret door to his gallery was revealed. If, by some fluke, Gordann Fezz does not become implicated by the engagement, he will begin plotting revenge against the PCs. The nature of that revenge is left up to the referee's imagination.

After expressing his gratitude, Cletus will ask the PCs to relate their version of the assassination attempt. He will listen carefully. If anything has been learned about Gordann, he informs the PCs of this information—despite Lars Rolfon's urgent attempts to silence him. The director of security, of all the four boardmembers present, is the most brusque and hostile with the PCs.

The meeting closes with Gorki conferring honorary arcology citizenship on any PCs who are not already citizens. They will be heartily encouraged to seek him out in the future, "if there's something—anything at all—that I can do."

CHAPTER 2: INTO THE SPRAWLS

Their first mission will see the characters perform a little detective work and then, perhaps, save a few lives—including their own and those of untold thousands of innocent victims. Virtually all of the adventure takes place outside of Newporg, though still in the Los Angelorg area. One purpose of the scenario is to familiarize the players with the arcology's surroundings. The main settings encountered in the scenario are the Regency (the offices of Boris Sifon, Solar Alliance Regent for the Los Angelorg area), a sprawl community called Montebellorg, and the rambunctious but sinister gambling district known as Pasareno.

The adventure starts with a stolen shipment of crucial medical serum intended for Newporg. The characters can travel to several different areas of Los Angelorg to gather clues, and should eventually trace the stolen serum to Pasareno. There, however, the story becomes shrouded with sinister complications and the possibility of unforeseen treachery.

The grateful leadership of the arcology will approach the PCs, asking them to get involved in this particular situation. The risks to the PCs will be great, and the distances they must travel very long and difficult, the arcology leaders know. To remedy this situation, they will grant the use of a spiffy, well-armored vehicle—the HiSTAV (High-Speed Tracked Amphibious Vehicle), as well as access to Newporg's considerable resources for supplies and equipment.

If your players seem (or you anticipate that they will be) reluctant to respond to this motivation, use some other inducements. Perhaps one of the PCs has a friend, relative, or loved one on the space shuttle that brings the serum to Earth. Or, if you have already developed an NPC that the PCs have befriended, that NPC can be kidnapped during the attack (see below for details), so the mission becomes personal to the PCs. In fact, even if your PCs don't need the extra motivation, you will only add to the intensity of the adventure if you take advantage of this chance to imperil an NPC.

Getting Started

This adventure starts with an urgent message for the PCs from Chairman Gorki. It is most convenient if they are in Newporg already, but the message can reach them anywhere on Earth or elsewhere in the solar system. The exact arrangements are left up to the

referee—waking the characters up out of a sound sleep is always a good way to get things going.

As soon as one of the PCs gets to a videophone—one of the flat, wall-mounted devices that serve as telephones and video monitors—they will see the Chairman, looking exceptionally harried. His dress, of course, depends on whether you start this during the day or the night; the substance of his message remains unchanged.

"We need your help! It is a mission of the utmost urgency! Please, come to my chambers as quickly as possible—there's no time to lose!"

Cletus Gorki's state of mind is obviously worried, but he will provide no additional details over the videophone. If the PCs refuse, he hints that it is a matter of life and death—*imminent* death—for many innocent people, and the PCs are his only hope.

The outer office to Gorki's chambers is empty, except for a single guard who opens the inner door for the PCs. In the chambers themselves, the characters find both Gorki and Lars Rolfon, director of security, but no one else.

Cletus immediately begins to speak, pacing as he does so.

"Perhaps you've heard of these outbreaks of disease in the sprawls—perhaps not. In any event, the problem is real, and growing. Our most advanced medical teams have gone into the sprawls and examined the virus. It seems to be a descendant of the same kind of thing that spread the Black Plague across the world in the medieval era, but enhanced and specialized by far more modern genetic techniques!

"Fortunately, we have some means of countering the threat. A vaccine is available, but in very small amounts. It must be shipped in from Mars, at incredible expense, but we were determined to do this. First, for the health of Newporg itself, but also, so that our medics can go into the sprawls and help combat the spread of the disease there."

Cletus draws a heavy sigh.

"We arranged to purchase the serum a few days ago—virtually the entire existing supply—and it was shipped immediately. Indeed, yesterday it arrived at Duke's Hill—you know, the

spaceport a few miles from here. A shuttle brought a dozen containers of an antidote that could insure the survival of every citizen of Newporg." Gorki shudders.

"But the shuttle was destroyed by rocket attack as it was being unloaded! The attackers got away without being identified, and we know they have that serum! It is imperative that we get it back—I can't tell you more than that right now. I implore you—we need help from the likes of yourselves!

"We know that somewhere in that vast Los Angelorg sprawl you will find the containers. For the sake of all of us in Newporg, please hurry!"

Lars Rolfon rises to his feet as Gorki finishes. The director of security looks at the chairman once, hesitating, but Gorki gestures him to speak. Reluctantly, Rolfon turns toward you.

"We are going to provide you with transportation into the sprawl—a new vehicle designed by our engineers. It is experimental, but we think you will find it satisfactory.

"We call it HiSTAV—High-speed Tracked Amphibious Vehicle."

At this point a huge video screen on the wall pops to life, displaying the HiSTAV in a variety of elements. Show the players the HiSTAV's diagrams (page 25) and describe to them what they see

The video shows the machine, supported by its four wide-set tracks, rolling over an assortment of jagged rocks, piles of ruins, and even a wall that looks taller than a man. Then the HiSTAV charges into a river, taking off like a speedboat. Suddenly it disappears.

The camera changes to an underwater view, showing that the tracks have flattened into wide horizontal fins. HiSTAV moves very quickly underwater, and the wide fins give it exceptional maneuverability. As the machine passes, a stream of bubbles is visible shooting out behind it, apparently as part of its propulsion.

If the characters refuse to leave without further explanation, the two bureaucrats finally tell the whole story.

Rolfon's security operation has uncovered proof that a virus has been introduced into the arcology's life support system. The virus resembles the ancient

bubonic plague, but microanalysis indicates that it has been changed by genetic engineers, tailored by human hands to be a more selective and precise killer. Exact figures are not available, but evidence indicates that the plague will break out, claiming thousands of victims, within a matter of days unless the stolen antidote can be found and delivered. There simply isn't time to research and produce a replacement antidote before the virulent strain will strike.

The origin of the virus in the arcology is unknown, though Rolfon has scientists working on the problem day and night. Gorki, the three directors, and perhaps two or three trusted staff members apiece, plus a team of security department engineers and scientists, are the only ones who know of the plague. Only Gorki and the three directors knew how and when the serum was being delivered.

Gorki and Rolfon can suggest several different approaches. The PCs can check out the landing pad in the hills, where the theft occurred. Or they could pay a visit to the Regent of Los Angelorg, under the auspices of Chairman Gorki, to see if any rumors of the mysterious containers might have reached him. Lastly, the board members explain that they have an agent in the sprawls who has often provided them with valuable information. This agent is a scavenger named Skidd, an outcast even from the gangs in the sprawls. Nevertheless, he has been reliable in the past, and Newporg pays him well, so he might be worth finding.

The arcology will also provide equipment asked for by the PCs, within reasonable requirements. Reasonable requirements could conceivably include explosives or high tech communications equipment, up to the extent of stuff that can be loaded onto the HiSTAV.

The expedition will be outfitted as soon as the PCs are ready. The HiSTAV is loaded with provisions for a week.

A Tale of Treachery

There is an important fact unknown to the PCs as they begin the mission, a fact none of the NPCs present for this conference are aware of either—all except one, that is. However, the referee must be made aware of it, so that he may handle its revelation with the proper care.

To wit, there is a traitor among those now gathered in the conference room, one who is a devoted RAM agent, sworn to restore that organization to

its place of power in Los Angelorg. One of the first tasks in this resurgence is the removal of Newporg as a center of resistance and leadership in the org area.

The traitor's task is nothing less than the mysterious obliteration of Newporg, in such a manner that the mass murder of 100,000 people will "look like an accident."

The task has been aided by an off-planet switch of the real serum for a fake. The fake is far worse than a mere useless antidote, however—it is a virulently toxic entity in its own right.

The toxin was manufactured on the RAM outpost island fortress of En-We-To (further described in Chapter 3). It was then shipped to the great docking station in orbit around the Earth—the New Frontier Bazaar (described in Chapter 4). There it was switched for the real serum, and sent to Earth.

The hijacking of the serum/virus by a gang from the sprawls was an unplanned and highly annoying interruption in this grand design. Thus, the traitor is every bit as anxious—in fact, perhaps more so—that the precious containers be recovered.

The Phony Serum

The toxin that is now in each of the 12 containers has the following deadly effects and characteristics.

Spreading

It is in liquid form now, but evaporates instantly on contact with air. The vapors are toxic, rising from the containers as soon as they are opened. The container will continue to exude vapors as long as it remains open, until all the serum evaporates (about 12 hours later). If the container is recapped, however, the toxicity remains in the air for another 10 minutes. After this time, anyone entering the area will not be freshly exposed to the virus.

The virus will be strong enough to poison a large room (100' x 100' x 10') as soon as the container is opened. For every 10 minutes it remains open, enough toxin develops to infect a similar area.

Onset and Symptoms

It is quite possible that characters (NPCs will be best for game purposes) will open a container, allow a lethal dose of virus into the air, close it again, and go about their business not knowing they have but scant hours to live.

Characters exposed to air carrying the virus during its toxic period will experience symptoms

1d6 + 1 hours later. Afflicted individuals have difficulty breathing, and their skin becomes covered with red blotches. After 20-30 minutes of suffering, the character almost always dies. However, PCs and important NPCs should be allowed to make a saving throw vs. poison (with a -2 penalty). Success means that they have battled off the disease and will recover in 1-6 days.

HiSTAV

High-speed Tracked Amphibious Vehicle

By Newporg Design Engineering

PERFORMANCE DATA

Maximum Speed

Smooth Terrain	120 mph
Water (surface)	60 mph
Water (submerged)	40 mph

Passenger/Cargo Capacity

15 passengers, or 8 passengers with sleeping berths for 4 at a time. Cargo hold 4 ton capacity.

Armament

One rocket launcher, rooftop turret mount: Dmg 5d10, ROF 1/2, Max Range 1000.

One flamethrower, forward firing mount.

The HiSTAV also has firing ports for two weapons from each side, one each from front and rear. Characters using ports are treated as sheltered by 75% cover.

Vehicle Description

The atomic-powered HiSTAV is capable of negotiating virtually any type of terrain. Its wide tracks and squat profile allow it to climb steep mountainsides and negotiate mud flats or deep ditches.

The HiSTAV can be sealed up tightly, supporting its passengers indefinitely with its built-in life support system. It has cooking facilities, and room for four persons to sleep while four others are seated in the cabin.

The armored shell of the HiSTAV is heavy enough to cancel the first 30 hp of damage inflicted by any weapon. Damage of greater than 30 hp punctures the armor.

The driver and passengers have good visibility in all directions, thanks to the plexiglass bubbles on all sides and the top and bottom of the vehicle. Ex-

tremely bright headlights (one mile range) and several movable searchlights of similar brightness aid night observation.

The HiSTAV is equipped with a high-speed computer, which includes a Terran Navigation Program allowing the vehicle's location to be pinpointed exactly anywhere on Earth.

The tracks are a remarkable blend of plastic, rubber, and silicone. On land, they grab tightly to virtually any surface, and are equipped with retractable, sharp lugs that give the tracks great performance even on steep, icy slopes. The nuclear-powered turbine engine is almost silent, even when operating at high speed. It provides drive power to all four tracks. Each of these tracks is equipped with an independent suspension and swivel mount, allowing the four tracks to be aligned in four different directions if necessary. This is how the HiSTAV can easily drive through a boulder field, for example.

The vehicle can be driven into the water and it will float with no difficulty. In 5 rounds it can be converted to amphibious mode without requiring the operator to leave the vehicle. This procedure converts the tracks to fins and activates the suction drive. When stretched into the knife-edged fins, the tracks give the HiSTAV its nimble handling in water. When in amphibious mode, the vehicle is propelled by a suction fan that pulls water in the front of vehicle and jets it out the rear under high pressure.

Flamethrower. The flamethrower that fires out the front of the HiSTAV was installed originally as a means of dealing with snow and ice obstacles. However, it makes for a formidable firepower attack as well.

The device carries enough fuel for 25 blasts of flame. Each extends through a fan-shaped area (45 degrees wide) straight ahead of the HiSTAV for a distance of 200 feet. Any living creature caught in this area of effect suffers 3d6 hp of damage. Those who make saving throws versus heat suffer only 1d6 of damage.

The Shuttle Pad

This normally desolate hilltop looks even worse than normal, now that the passenger building was burned to the ground during the rocket attack. The massive pile of wreckage that was the shuttle has been scraped off to the side of the pad, and now sits near the edge of the hillside. The hangar doors are open and an old junker of a shuttle is visible, together with an old man who is bent over a disassembled rocket engine.

The old man is Selmer Hanson, the extent of the permanent maintenance staff here at the shuttle port. Selmer is currently working on the final engine in the junker shuttle—he hopes to have it space-bound in four or five more months.

Selmer saw the rocket attack on the shuttle and will be pleased to tell the story again.

"They just started off-loadin', they did. Got a ground truck up here from the arcology—security team drivin'. Hauled out these big tube-like things—silver cylinders, sort of.

"Suddenly them rockets started flyin'. They was launched from a coupla jetcars what went whizzin' past—blew that shuttle nigh up to Luna, they did. Smoke got pretty thick then, but I saw at least one groundcar come chasin' up the road. Sounded like they was several of 'em.

"Anyway, the car I saw was full of these young punks—you know, one of the gangs from up in the sprawls. They had lasers and when they started shootin', I headed down the back side of the hill!"

Selmer points out several neat black holes in the front of the hangar, clear marks of laser rifle shots.

If pressed for additional details, Selmer will suddenly remember that some of the gang members had these red tattoos—they looked sort of like skulls and crossbones—on their wrists. If pressed further, Selmer remarks that he has already given this information to the director of security himself, Lars Rolfon.

Selmer will keep talking as long as he has an audience—after all, it gets a little lonely up here at the pad. If the PCs treat him politely, give him a tip, buy him a drink or something equivalent, the old mechanic will remember the favor in future encounters. Though talkative and apparently a bit absent-minded, Selmer is a keen observer of spaceships and their passengers, and he might turn out to be a useful ally for the PCs in some future mission.

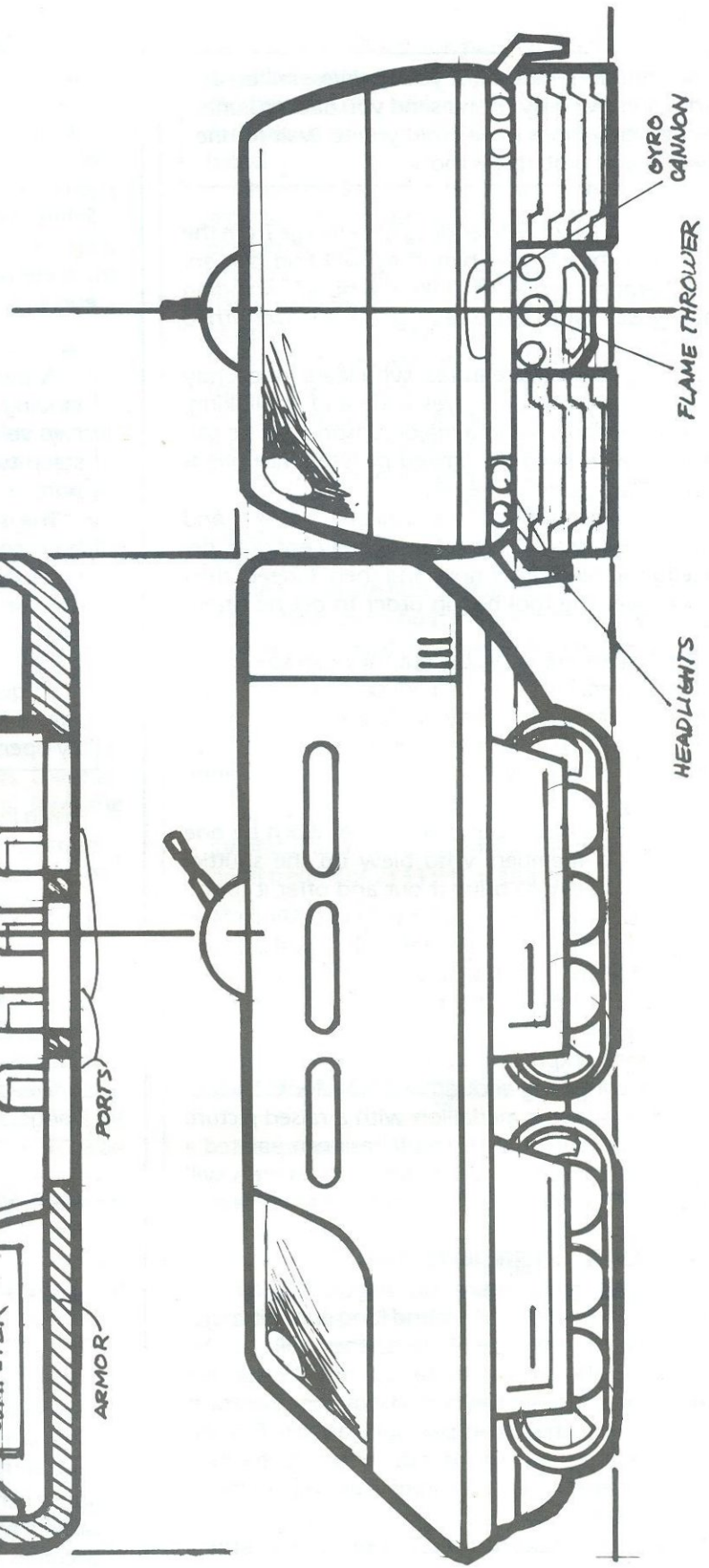
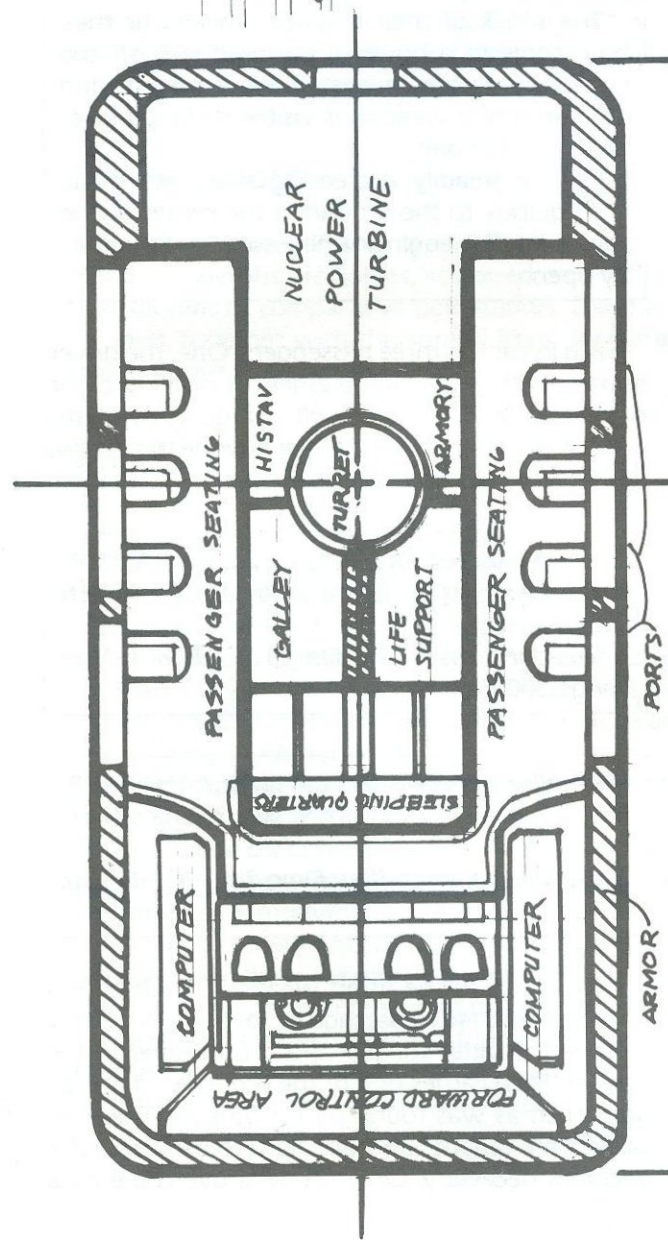
The Tinkers

At some point the discussion is interrupted.

A loud crash suddenly sounds from inside the hangar building. Selmer clasps his hands to his forehead and rushes into the building, cursing

H I S T A V HIGH SPEED TRACKED AMPHIBIOUS VEHICLE

BY NEWPORT
DESIGN
ENGINEERING



and shouting, "You oafs, you brainless imbeciles! I don't know why I don't send you back to Lunal! How many times have I told you to wait for me before you grab those tools!"

If the PCs leave, Selmer does not emerge from the hangar. If they follow him, they will find him angrily berating a pair of Tinkers who are standing among the sprawled wreckage of an overturned toolbox.

These 3-foot tall creatures, who stare innocently up at Selmer with their eyes wide and unblinking, are his assistants—and a major reason why he can keep up with even the limited maintenance needs of this dilapidated spaceport.

Selmer has dubbed the Tinkers "Clink" and "Clank." He treats them affectionately enough, despite losing his temper now and then. Indeed, they tipped over the tool box in order to get his attention.

The Tinkers are very shy, but they can speak and listen; indeed, they are well educated and have extensive vocabularies. They are fascinated by small, pretty objects. They live in a small, cozy den underneath the hangar in what was once a lower maintenance bay.

The Tinkers have found an amulet worn by one of the gang members who blew up the shuttle. They are too shy to bring it out and offer it to the PCs, but they will try to give it to Selmer while he is yelling at them. The old mechanic will be too wrapped up in his outburst to notice the object, but it is visible to the PCs if they advance to see what the fuss is about.

If anyone expressed curiosity about it, Selmer stops shouting long enough to have a look. The object is a small brass medallion with a raised picture of a skull on one side. The skull has been painted a bright red. The other side is blank. The Tinkers will hand it over to the PCs if one of them asks for it.

A Return Engagement

If the PCs have stayed around long enough to get the medallion from the Tinkers, they will still be there when this encounter starts. If not, they will be a short way down the road from the spaceport when they see the jetcars swooping in. The PCs can reach the port in five rounds—too late to help Selmer and the Tinkers, but in time enough to battle the attackers.

Encounter Background: The original attackers

of the spaceport have realized that they made a critical mistake in leaving an eyewitness, namely Selmer, alive. Hoping they are not too late to shut him up, these schemers (the PCs will learn more about them in the next mission) have sent a pair of jetcars back to the spaceport. Their job is to question Selmer as to who he has informed about the attackers, and then to silence him—permanently.

Determine where the PCs are at the start of the encounter, and then read the following description.

A pair of jetcars suddenly rocket across the landing pad, a couple of hundred feet above. The two vehicles split apart, each banking through a steep turn, then angle back toward the spaceport.

The shriek of their engines whistles as they both come to a hover, a hundred feet off the ground. Each has at least two passengers, and the barrel of a weapon is visible sticking out of the cockpit of one.

With a steadily decreasing roar, the jetcars drop quickly to the ground in the center of the spaceport. The engines whine softly as the doors fly open.

Each jetcar has three passengers. One, the driver, remains within the vehicle while the other two hop out. The four attackers will charge toward the hangar, shooting at anything or anyone that shows any sign of resistance.

Gang Members #1 & #2: hp 13; AC 7; THAC0 17; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 7, Wis 9, Cha 9, Tech 10.

Weapons: Laser rifles: Dmg 1d12, ROF 1, Max Range 3000.

Gang Members #3 & #4: hp 11; AC 7; THAC0 18; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 7, Cha 8, Tech 11.

Weapons: Rocket rifles: Dmg 2d8, ROF 1, Max Range 2000.

In addition to the listed weapons, each carries two grenades (4d10 damage or save). They will try to save the latter for the attack on Selmer in the hangar. Each carries one of the red-painted medallions such as was found by the Tinkers. These attackers are fanatics and will fight to the death if it becomes necessary. Only if one is overcome by a

disabling attack such as a sonic stunner's will capture be possible.

Everf then, the prisoner will never voluntarily reveal anything about himself or his organization. In fact, each carries a cyanide pellet underneath a fingernail, and will use it as soon as an opportunity presents itself.

If any PCs attempt to use a skill, such as Intimidate or Hypnosis, to encourage the prisoners to talk, the check is considered to be Difficult.

Into the Sprawl

The characters should eventually decide to head for the sprawls, since that's where this adventure needs to be resolved. The Los Angelorg map shows several cleared routes into the heart of the sprawl. The HiSTAV can also, of course, take a water route and put to shore anywhere in the Los Angelorg area.

Los Angelorg

The southern California area has given rise to many prosperous arcologies, scattered among the vast sprawls of comparative devastation. These arcologies, together with the sprawl itself, form the region known as Los Angelorg.

The org is a very, very loose political entity. About the only thing holding it together is the Regency of Boris Sifon, and this is togetherness in the nominal sense only.

The org is one of the few places on Earth where the tentacles of the RAM octopus have not just been thwarted, but literally lopped off. Boris is careful to keep his distance from the corporation, desperately maintaining the fiction that the Solar Alliance is in truth an independent organization. Because of his lack of influence in the area, however, Boris is tolerated as a non-RAM entity.

As for corporate offices, trading centers, or RAM-controlled arcologies, however, there are none in the org. Those that once existed have been overrun by gangs and now have degenerated into part of the sprawls themselves.

The main components of the org are the arcologies, of which there are more than a dozen, and the sprawls, which make up most of the other area.

The org area differs in several fundamental ways from the southern California of five centuries earlier. Most of the inland sources of water have dried up or been diverted, so the area receives only 10% of its water from these sources. Each of the arcolo-

gies has a desalinization plant and an unlimited supply of seawater (piped in, for the inland arcologies), so they do not suffer from the shortage. In the sprawls, however, water is more precious than blood.

Also, the Saint Annie winds that have always scorched the region still blast from the inland deserts periodically, but sometimes with a furnace force of 200 mph or more, hot enough to blister exposed flesh. These occur during June-Sept, in 1d10 annual blasts of 1d4 + 1 days duration each. The force of these winds has scoured the hilltops and mountaintops of the org area, and cleared the entire eastern and northern faces of these heights. Some sturdy, low shelters located in protected ravines and gorges on the south and westward slopes survive the periods of Saint Annie winds. These haunts are popular with the few Desert Runners who live in the org area.

The winds are little threat to the arcologies, all of which have been built in locations and with design features to resist the Saint Annie winds. In the sprawls, however, the periods of wind bring life to a complete standstill as the entire population seeks shelter from the deadly blasts. A death toll of one hundred or more is not uncommon after a Saint Annie lasting several days.

One thing that has not changed is the susceptibility of this area to major earthquakes. Of course, the great tremor of 2144 left a lasting impression on the area, but several times a century, the region is threatened with another major quake. The occurrence of another at any point is left to the referee's discretion, but he should note that it has been more than 75 years since the last one.

The Arcologies

Newporg is a good example of the arcologies in the Los Angelorg area, but that is not to say that any one arcology could be mistaken for any other one. Each is unique in architecture, internal politics, economic activity, and of course, location.

The arcologies do share some philosophies—most notably, that the mastership and destiny of Earth should best be left to residents of the Earth. Period. It is this commonly held belief—which is not necessarily consistent with other arcologies in other parts of the world, and flies in the face of some off-world policies—which has led the Los Angelorg area in its successful efforts to eradicate RAM influence from the area.

Each arcology maintains some contact with the

leading powers in the nearby sprawls, though this contact is rarely harmonious. They all have various areas of specialty; Newporg offers its precision designed electronic equipment and robotics; Santa Monicorg is the source of a kelp-based food product distributed throughout the solar system; Bel Arc is a leading producer of advanced computer technology, and so on.

Each arcology maintains its own security force, environment, and economy. Each sends a representative to the Regent's Council, but these mostly serve as gossips, both speakers and listeners, offering their information as news back home, keeping millions of citizens of the org abreast of major developments in the area.

Only rarely do the arcologies find any need for external military power. If this should arise, the arcologies would be more likely to recruit mercenary warriors from the sprawls than to enlist their own citizenry in military formations.

The Sprawls

Though the arcologies of Los Angelorg are the focal points of culture, economics, and power—indeed, of civilization itself—they contain only about 20% of the org's total population. The rest live in considerably less luxury than their arcology-bound neighbors, among the vast ruins called, simply, the Sprawls.

The skyline of the sprawl describes its nature: a barren gridwork of girders, some of them twisted by forces of unimaginable violence, others standing straight and tall, unbent by time. These grids, the skeletal structures of the buildings that once loomed tall, sometimes contain remnants of floors and walls. No glass can be found in the empty windows, however, and intact walls are the exception rather than the rule. The Saint Annie winds, of course, do not spare these high, exposed grids. Unprotected characters up here when the wind is strong can suffer 1d4 hp of damage per turn and must cling to the structures for their lives.

Lower down, the sprawls are equally ruined, but more reconstruction has occurred. One can find shanties, shacks, burrows, mounds of rubble, old stone building foundations, and the rare, intact structure from the ancient days—usually a stone-work or reinforced concrete structure built to withstand the earthquakes that have always threatened the area.

These densely packed residences are called warrens. Thousands of people might live in what had

once been a small block of houses. Now the rubble will be piled upon rubble, so that three, four, or even more layers of living space will have been created. Tunnels connect one cellar to the next, and allow passage up and down between these levels.

After a teeming warren like this, the sprawl might contain miles of empty ruins, abandoned except for the ravenous packs of coyodorgs and ratwursts that prowl through the wasteland in search of prey.

The key locator of life, of course, is water. Areas with seasonal streams nearby such as Pasareno or Montebellorg thus become centers of warrens with populations approaching 100,000. Even with the vast quantities of food donated by the arcologies and the Solar Alliance, these masses live perpetually on the brink of starvation. Internecine wars of exceptionally brutality are frequent, and serve the gruesomely vital function of holding the population in check.

Each section of a warren is controlled by a confederation of citizenry that can be called nothing other than a gang. These thugs exact a living from the inhabitants of their neighborhood, in exchange for the dubious service of protecting their turf from the depredations of other neighboring gangs.

In some places, the gangs actually do represent a majority of the local citizenry. These warrens generally prove themselves resistant to oppression. Other districts, where the populations resent or even resist their dominating gang, prove far more vulnerable to invasion and plunder.

These gangs will have patrols at all overland approaches leading into their warren. They will also maintain observation of any flat surface suitable for rocket or jetcar touchdown, though fortunately such level areas are rare in the sloped-roof, winding alleyway, and tangled skyline of the sprawl.

A typical gang patrol will include a dozen members.

Impoverished Gang Members: hp 4; AC 8; THACO 20; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 7, Wis 6, Cha 8, Tech 9.

Weapons: Daggers or clubs, inflicting 1d4 damage each.

Prosperous Gang Members: hp 6; AC 8; THACO 19; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 6, Cha 9, Tech 10.

Weapons: Laser pistols: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800.

Typical Gang Leader: hp 11; AC 7; THACO 17; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 12, Tech 11.

Weapons: Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800. Rocket pistol: Dmg 1d10, ROF 2, Max Range 400. Grenades (4): Dmg 4d10 or save, ROF 1, Range thrown.

Alternately, one of the gang members might have a laser rifle or rocket rifle, while 1d4 could be armed with laser pistols, sonic stunners, heat guns, or bolt guns. In general, they will all be armed with a melee weapon, probably a dagger or a club.

Gangs will not automatically attack a group of characters that approaches their turf. They will accost the strangers and ask their business. Often, a small bribe will help smooth the wheels of transit.

The gangs will keep an eye on strangers—especially well-armed strangers—within their warrens, however. Even the less effective bands will maintain a network of nondescript informers, so this surveillance is usually accomplished without the strangers noticing anything awry.

The Roads

Travel over these rubble-strewn pathways is tricky even for a vehicle such as the HiSTAV. A normal groundcar would find many passages that would be completely blocked.

The normal city streets and lanes that once crossed the whole area are only distant memories, virtually indistinguishable from the rest of the ruins except where the tall metal frameworks of long-decayed buildings give definition to their surrounding thoroughfares. Many of these streets now have been taken over as living quarters, with the tin sheds, wooden shacks, and sometimes reinforced bunkers that pass for housing in the greater Los Angelorg sprawl. These buildings are often so close together that a vehicle larger than a cycle cannot pass between them. Of course, HiSTAV could go over them, crushing a few in the process, but this would be deemed an act of exceptionally bad public relations by the short-tempered, well-armed residents of the sprawls.

The main streets of the city—the arterials—are sometimes passable for stretches of 1,000-6,000 feet (1d6 x 1,000) before being closed off by piles of rubble or even gang-constructed barricades.

The old freeway system is a better way to travel

over the ground, though most of its bridges have collapsed. Still, there is less rubble on the freeway, with smooth stretches of road lasting for 2d6 miles between areas of obstruction. These freeways are shown on the map.

Fortunately for the PCs, virtually every type of obstruction mentioned here can be negotiated by the HiSTAV, including barricades established by gangs. These are primarily designed to obstruct groundcar and pedestrian traffic, and to provide cover for its builders if they should find themselves under attack by a neighboring gang.

Rivers

An ideal way to travel in a vehicle like the HiSTAV is to enter the city along one of the river lines that cross the org leading from the mountains to the sea. The southern California area receives even less rain now than it did five hundred years ago, so most of the riverbeds are dry valleys or, at most, mud-bottomed trenches. Sudden mountain rains occasionally send torrents down these valleys, however, and this has discouraged the residents of the sprawls from extending their teeming shack-towns into the floodplains.

Rubble blocks some of these streambeds, most notably where bridges have collapsed, but these great chunks of concrete and steel are no major obstacle to the HiSTAV.

In places, the rivers have gathered or been diverted into large, shallow pools. These fetid swamps breed mosquitoes and disease. They tend to range in maximum depth from about 4 to 10 feet. Like the rubble, they provide no obstacle for the amphibious HiSTAV.

In general, those rivers shown on the map are muddy, occasionally flowing with water during March, April, and May. They are dry beds virtually all the rest of the year.

Barrens

Key features of the sprawls are the wide clearings that suddenly appear in the midst of heaping devastation. These open areas are generally paved, or surfaced with hard-packed, lifeless earth. Nevertheless they provide the only spaces where the dwellers of the sprawls can emerge from the tight confines of their warrens to stretch and, for their young, to exercise and play.

These barrens are the remains of parking lots, vacant yards, or simply ruins where even the structure

of the original buildings has collapsed, leaving a fieldlike expanse. Barrens are also the only place in the sprawls where a jetcar or a rotary-wing aircraft can land. Generally, a barren is too small for a shuttle to land without blasting much of the surrounding sprawl. The map is of too large a scale to show the barrens accurately. Suffice to say that within any single square mile of sprawl, there will be 3d6 barren areas like these.

Other Life In the Sprawls

Humankind unquestionably dominates the Los Angelorg area in the 25th Century, just as it has for six hundred years. But other types of creatures can survive here, as well. Of the host of insects, birds, and rodents that dwell in the sprawls, most of these do not vary tremendously from their predecessors of centuries before.

The referee is encouraged to consider some modifications that might have occurred in the interim, however. Coyodorgs and ratwursts are two examples. While it is not essential, it can be interesting to have the PCs encounter one or both of these types—preferably, while they are outside of the HISTAV. They are described in the new creatures section at the end of this chapter.

Encounters in the Sprawls

The PCs should begin the mission with two potential destinations—the Regency offices of Boris Sifon and the slum hideout of the informant, Skidd. One, or both of these encounters should put them on the road to Pasareno, a wild center of lawless misbehavior in the north central part of the org.

As the PCs move through the sprawls, they may encounter bandits, turf-conscious gang patrols, or perhaps a ratwurst or pack of coyodorgs. The referee should use one of these short adventures to liven things up if it seems like the players are ready for a little action.

Boris Sifon, Regent of the Solar Alliance (8th level Terran rogue): hp 24; AC 4; THAC0 17; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 9, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 14, Tech 10.

Weapons: Boris Sifon is generally not armed, but has Terrine bodyguards who are.

Although ostensibly the master of the entire Los Angelorg area, Sifon wears a very loose-fitting

crown, figuratively speaking. With the expulsion of RAM from the area, and with the well-known connections between the Solar Alliance and RAM, it is difficult for Boris to maintain his office while still renouncing the agency that is, at root, the source of his power.

Boris has long sought to be accepted into the ranks of the NEO, but so far this acceptance has not been forthcoming. The primary NEO leaders in the org area are the chairpersons of the most progressive arcologies—Newporg's Cletus Gorki, of course, being one. These leaders do not fully trust Boris, and thus, while politely dealing with him, they have not taken him into their confidence. This is undoubtedly the wisest decision for them, because Boris's loyalty could probably be purchased by a higher bidder, if one so financially well endowed should happen along.

But Boris Sifon is nothing if not a skilled politician. He is a glib speaker, and controls enough resources on his own merits, that he can usually persuade, bribe, or—as a last resort—browbeat others into acceptance of his point of view.

For one thing, he maintains a large treasury and has off-planet sources of funds that put his worth into the billions of credits. He is not averse to spending some of this in order to keep things running smoothly in Los Angelorg. He has hired and maintains a small army of enforcers, numbering some 1,000 committed, well-armed and well-paid warriors. Most of these warriors are drawn from one of the several gangs that have claimed the sprawl areas around Sifon's headquarters. The rivalries between these gangs have been temporarily quelled by the profitability of working together. The Regent is careful not to mix his troops together very much, however. They are loosely incorporated into ten companies, each primarily composed of the members from a single gang.

Boris also maintains a trio of very effective personal bodyguards, in the form of RAM Terrines. These three giant humanoids remain with Boris at all times, though they are kept out of sight as much as possible. In his office, for example, the Terrines observe the Regent through one-way windows, ready to intervene at a second's notice. When Boris travels outside of his HQ, the Terrines follow in an armored jetcar, never more than a hundred feet or so from their master.

The Regency

During the great earthquake of 2144, a great *tsunami* carried a number of deep-draught ocean ves-

sels well inland. One of these was the ancient liner, the *Queen Mary*, formerly docked on the ocean at Long Beach. Before this great vessel finally came to rest, the raging floodwaters had surged up the valley of the Los Angeles River, into and through the former city of East Los Angeles. This is where the *Queen Mary* finally settled into the mud, never again to move.

Despite the great ship's list of about 5 degrees to port, it certainly offers a grandeur of setting that could not be duplicated elsewhere in the sprawls. Thus, it was only natural that Boris's predecessors as regents should select and maintain it as their official residence and office complex.

Holes have been bored into the hull at ground level, and now two great entrances lead to the ship's fore and aft sections. These are guarded by a detachment of two dozen Terrines each, and are closeable at a moment's notice.

However, diplomats and protocol clerks also staff these entrances, stamping the approval passes for all those who have legitimate business in the Regency. Passes are color-coded and allow access only to certain areas; the higher decks are restricted.

A nearby field has been blasted clear, forming a large Class B spaceport—one of the largest ports in the Los Angelorg area. The deck of the liner has been equipped with a pair of hefty rocket batteries, capable of shooting down a suspicious craft as far as about 10 miles away (these are complex, highly sophisticated surface-to-air missiles—there are no specific rules for them, but they are very effective).

The ship itself is now home and office to a Regency staff of several thousand. Equipped with its own fusion generator (in a small compartment of the former engine spaces), the Regency is supplied from space with food and many luxuries unknown to the rest of the org.

Boris maintains his own office in what was formerly the vessel's grand ballroom. The chamber has lost none of its grandeur in the intervening centuries, and Boris likes the opulence—he thinks it lends authority to his office.

An Interview With Boris

If the PCs reach the beached liner, they can apply for a meeting with the Regent. Their request will only be considered if they represent it as the wish of Cletus Gorki; however, once they do so, they will be quickly admitted to the upper decks. An escort of a protocol clerk and two Terrines will accompany them on the long elevator ride to the upper deck.

The Regent himself will usher them into his

gymnasium-sized office, and bid them be seated before his vast desk. Boris is nervous and tries to cover it with hyperactivity, pacing and gesturing.

The amount of information the PCs will learn from Boris depends upon how much they already know.

*If they have the medallion from the Tinkers, Boris will positively identify the Crimson Crown gang—formally, the League of the Crimson Crown—rulers of the streets of Pasareno, a gambling district about 10 miles north of the Regency.

*If asked about the Bloodskull assassin symbol, Boris knows that it is the military arm of the Crimson Crown gang.

*Otherwise and in any event, Boris knows several rumors:

In the northern sprawls, word persists of some virulent poison that is decimating whole warrens—but nobody seems to know where, exactly.

The Bloodskull mercenaries have reputedly been hoarding heavy weapons—a fact that makes the Regent very nervous. These weapons include those types that were used to blow up the shuttle.

A red bandana or hat could represent any number of gangs; one of these that comes readily to his mind is the Crimson Crown.

A Visit to Skidd

This unprepossessing character seems like a little weasel when one first meets him. He lives in a wild warren called Montebellorg. A mazelike tangle of alleys leads through wreckage-filled yards where old machinery has been left to rot and rust. Many of these huge iron shells have become, with their inner works removed, shelter for the pathetic inhabitants of the warren.

A clearing about a hundred yards in diameter lies at the center of the metal web. Here is a small well, watched over by Skidd. He lives in a small shack beside the well, in the center of the open area. He allows the residents of the warren to take the water as they need it, but he challenges any stranger who seeks to use some of the precious liquid.

Montebellorg

Montebellorg is a small warren amid a chaotic tangle of other equally small sprawl communities. However, Montebellorg shows no outward signs of

brute gang rule, and this is primarily a tribute to the negotiating skills, patience, wisdom, and fighting prowess of Skidd Carson.

This warren is watched and, when necessary, protected by a loosely formed militia that includes all of the warren's able bodied adults. No badges, caps, or tattoos distinguish these members. Nevertheless, they are all over, and a troublemaker or intruder can find himself, in the blink of an eye, surrounded by several dozen of Montebellorg's protectors.

The community, like other warrens in the org, has suffered outbreaks of the new plague. These have not spread with a great deal of rapidity, thanks in great parts to the improved hygiene of the citizens of Montebellorg, at least when compared to the norm for life in the sprawls.

Montebellorg Militia Member (2nd level Terran warrior): hp 7; AC 8; THACO 19; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 9, Tech 8.

Weapons: These militia members will carry old-fashioned knives and swords, as well as the occasional antique firearm. About one in six will carry a laser pistol, needle gun, or sonic stunner, while about one in twenty has a rocket rifle and a half-dozen grenades.

If an emergency should arise within the precincts of the warren, militia members will arrive on the scene at the rate of 1d6 per round.

Skidd Carson, Informant and Fearless Leader

Skidd is a rat-faced, pot-bellied little man with a sparse black beard and even sparser hair, which he keeps long and greasy. He is rude in conversation and blunt in manner.

On the other hand, he is very loyal to Cletus Gorki personally, less so to the arcology he represents. Skidd is also the person who has single-handedly brought his warren out of the stone age. He has created one of the most democratically run, economically stable, communities among the ruins of Los Angelorg.

Skidd Carson, scavenger, informer, courageous community leader (12th level Terran rogue): hp 40; AC 3; THACO 15; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 15, Tech 13.

Weapons: Skidd is armed with a wide assortment of weaponry, including a laser rifle, a half-dozen grenades, laser, and even a plasma thrower in his shed. Laser rifle: Dmg 1d12, ROF 1, Max Range 3000. Grenades: Dmg 4d10 or save, ROF 1, Max Range thrown. Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800. Plasma thrower: Dmg 4d10, ROF 1/2, Max Range 400.

Skidd is also a source of information. Gorki keeps his warren supplied with vital medical supplies and food, and he in return keeps the leadership of the arcology posted on news in the warren. Skidd does not know the identity of the attackers who stole the serum. However, he has, through his underground contacts, been able to acquire a small sample of the stuff, which one of his medics has taken to the section of his warren where the disease has erupted.

If the PCs can tell Skidd that they're on their way to Pasareno, he has some useful aid for them. He has three of the red caps that distinguish the Bloodskull guards, and can distribute these to the PCs, giving them at least a chance of passing as that gang.

Also, he knows that the medallions (such as the Tinkers found) are used by the gang members as electronic keys, opening up most of the group's secret passages and hideouts. Skidd doesn't have any extra medallions, however.

Outbreak

During the course of the PCs' meeting with Skidd, an urchin suddenly sprints out of one of the warren tunnels, dashing to Skidd's side, shouting for his attention. "Mr. Skidd! Mr. Skidd! Come quick—they're all getting sick!"

Suddenly the child cries and clutches his stomach, doubling over in pain. An examination of his skin shows red blotches all over his chest and back. A medic can ease his suffering somewhat, but will not be able to cure the malady.

Skidd quickly heads for the part of his warren where the sickness had first appeared. If the PCs follow, they pass through a tangle of pipes and junked wreckage, then cross a shattered wasteland of tall stone walls with vacant holes where doors and windows had once been. These are three- and four-story buildings, but now they have no interior floors, walls, or roofs.

It takes about a half hour of scrambling through these ruins before they reach a block where some

houses still have roofs and doors. Within one of these buildings is the makeshift hospital. Here the PCs will be urged to remain outside; they can enter if they want (and fortunately, the contagious period of the bug has passed).

But the virus has already decimated a block of Montebellorg. Those who had been sick before, plus the entire medical team that brought the antidote down here, have perished. Many other victims, their bodies covered with the horrible red blotches, are even now going through the last stages of suffering.

The scene is far worse than it was a day ago. Witnesses explain that the team of medics arrived, and had been administering the antidote (that came from the stolen shuttle shipment) for about two hours. Suddenly, a convulsion of sickness seemed to seize the room, and within another hour most of those present were incapacitated or dead.

Pasareno—Wildest of the Worst

On the outside, Pasareno looks no different from any other rubble-strewn warren elsewhere in the sprawl. Some of the heights of the Saint Gabby peaks tower close behind the ruins, adding a serene touch to the chaos. And there is the great, dish-shaped coliseum, where legends tell of the great gladiators and their epic contests, gala events where the throngs gathered by the hundreds of thousands to witness the archaic game called *rose bowling*.

Now, Pasareno conceals beneath its shabby cap the center of decadence and corruption in all of Los Angelorg. The lowest levels of Pasareno make up a seamy network of gambling pits, brothels, night-clubs, opium dens, and worse. Some of these places are huge, others tiny. All of them are dark, smoke-filled, and loud.

At night, an array of neon gleams above the skyline of tangled ruins that is unique in Los Angelorg. The biggest places, such as Caesar's Castle, have individually designed signs, while the smaller places use an excess of lighting to make up for the lack of a personalized logo. The whole effect is a chaotic assortment of colors and shapes that always seem to be in motion.

Also unlike the rest of the org, Pasareno comes alive at night. Except for the frequent bands of red-capped guards, the warren might be taken for a deserted ruin during the day. After the sun sets,

however, things start to move. Music of every kind from primitive to the most avant garde swirls through Pasareno's streets and alleys.

Long tunnels, once steampipes and still dripping with moisture, connect these places. Flickering oil lanterns provide dim illumination along these passages, but add a smoky haze of their own to the already unclear air.

The Bloodskull gang is the undisputed master of Pasareno. They challenge anyone who enters their turf, though they readily let those pass who come seeking entertainment. Their patrols, usually operating in pairs, can be frequently encountered among the lower levels of the warren.

Standards of Pasareno

Virtually any type of dress, race, and behavior is allowed in Pasareno, with these exceptions:

- *Violence against the Bloodskulls is punishable by banishment or death, depending on how fast the offender is.

- *Destructive violence within a business establishment results in the offenders being thrown out. Continuation of such violence, in the streets, alleys, and barrens of the org, is generally encouraged by passersby. Customarily, a small amount of betting will develop around any altercation; such bettors are inclined to cheer on their champions and jeer and insult the opponents.

Entering Pasareno

The boundaries of Pasareno are well defined. The gang and its workers have cleared a thousand-yard-wide strip of land around the three sides of the warren that abut against the rest of the sprawls. These strips are carefully watched, and have guardposts in the center, halfway between Pasareno and the surrounding sprawls.

The eastern edge of Pasareno merges gradually into the foothills of the Saint Gabby mountains, and has not been so carefully cleared. In places, stretches of dry cedar forest or the tangle of ancient ruins spill right into the warren.

As long as the PCs think to say that they're here for entertainment and leisure, they will not be detained as they enter the warren. Although the HiSTAV might attract some notice, and perhaps an envious remark or two from one of the Bloodskull guards, even it will not raise many eyebrows.



The residents of the sprawls might not give the HiSTAV a warm reception

Boarding houses are not uncommon here in Pa-sareno. If they wish, they PCs will have little trouble finding one with secure parking for their vehicle.

Some of the most popular establishments in Pa-sareno include:

The Red Monkey

This is as sleazy a dive as a character can find this side of the Asteroid Belt. Located in one of the deepest cellars of the sprawl, the Red Monkey is a smoke-filled, damp, overheated saloon filled with drunks, bullies, and junkies, as well as some real riff-raff.

The saying goes that anything can be bought or sold at the Red Monkey, and that saying is pretty close to the truth. Though the place is huge, the Red Monkey consists of dozens of interconnected rooms, many of them quite small and private, while others are typical barrooms, full of two-fisted drunks.

Some of the smaller rooms follow different motifs, such as Oriental, Polynesian, Old Mexican, and so forth. The most exclusive can be rented by the hour with full private service. These rooms are guaranteed free of eavesdropping devices, and thus are privy to some of the most significant undercover

wheelings and dealings in the org.

Much of the trade at the Red Monkey is in services. The place is known, to those who know about such matters, as a hangout for mercenaries, bounty hunters, assassins, and other violent scum. A little bit of asking around, together with a few coins slipped to a waiter or bartender, will usually get a customer hooked up with an appropriately qualified supplier.

The Red Monkey serves food and a variety of mind-numbing substances beginning with alcohol and running on up through the range to the hardest narcotics.

Not surprisingly, the Red Monkey gets a lot of attention from the Bloodskull gang. Bands of these thugs, 4-10 strong, commonly roam through the various rooms and niches of the saloon, but even they do not barge in on the private conversations of the most important customers.

Bert's

This is a quiet nightclub very near the looming Rose Bowling Coliseum. Unusual for the sprawls, a small clump of hardy pines grows in a loose screen around this ramshackle building. Before the build-

ing stands a barren about 400' across—a smooth field of dirt where children play at sports. Higher ruins tower around the other three sides, their bare girders forming a stark framework above the long, low-ceilinged building.

The building itself is also unusual in that it is a lone-standing structure, not a pile of rubble thoroughly interconnected with a massive heap of similar debris. Tin panels, rusty and torn, make up the walls. The door leans at an angle, allowing the music from within to drift throughout the sprawl.

Bert Alfen himself is likely to greet a customer at the door. Once a famous musician, heralded for his electronic trumpet, Bert now seeks out young, talented singers and performers, giving them the spotlight in his club.

Bert's is one of the few decent places in Pasareno. Drinks are reasonably priced, and the food is excellent, though expensive. Rowdy guests are calmed or ejected by Bert himself, or one of his security aides. The latter are not from the Bloodskulls—another unique feature of Bert's place.

However, the most popular feature of Bert's has always been the entertainment. There is no cover charge, but the place is not crowded since the typical Pasareno customer is looking for something a little livelier.

Caesar's Castle

This is a gambling den of great repute, with every imaginable type of wagering activity available. The club fills the cellar of a huge ancient building that had once been a rambling hotel. Now, the structure is a tangle of steel girders above the ground.

A garish assortment of lights have been strung from these girders, lighting up the sky with a glow that is visible from all across Pasareno.

Crimson Crown gang members watch each of the four entrances, former service entrances—wide concrete stairways leading down into barren maintenance halls. The halls are brightly illuminated, and the entrances to gambling dens are 100' in from the doors into the building itself.

There are five huge gambling rooms down here, all of which have food and drink service, and even a larger room which is used as a sports arena. Combat sports are popular, including, occasionally, matches where the opponents are armed with knives or clubs. Grudge matches are particularly popular, and many a would-be gladiator dies in the ring—though the promoters don't go (quite) so far as to bill a match as a "fight to the death."

Needless to say, these contests are among the most

popular topics of betting. Rumors persist that the fights are rigged, and most of them are—flagrantly so. But their popularity remains undiminished.

Other games offered include all sorts of card games, both electric and the old fashioned pasteboards. Also, roulette and backgammon have retained their popularity. Computerized slot machines and other electronic probability calculators are quite popular as well.

The Dive

This establishment is nestled inside one of the worst ruined buildings in the warren. The original building was an office structure with an attached parking garage and heliport. Now the top 50 floors of the building have fallen away into a heap and the parking garage's bottom 10 floors have collapsed.

Since then the office building has been reinforced to make it safer, and most of the offices have been turned into hotel rooms. The parking garage is now a gambling hall and nightclub run by Jimmy "the Icepick" Picchietti. Though officially named the Hotel Imperial and the Imperial Lounge, the buildings are more readily known as The Dive.

The hotel is the finest in all of Monetebellorg. The common rooms are available in singles, doubles, or suites of several rooms, all modestly priced. The executive levels have pools, saunas, exercise areas, holographic entertainment, and room service. They also have conference rooms, ballrooms, and a large auditorium. For the right price, virtually any excess can be provided for the guests.

The hotel lobby is at ground level and has access right to the street. The Imperial Lounge, on the other hand, is a bit trickier to get into. It is built into the upper portions of the collapsed parking garage, so there are no stairs or elevators to the ground. The management has erected in their place what amounts to a ski lift from the street to the lobby of the lounge—10 stories up. There are four cars, each more or less a cage that can carry up to 15 passengers at one time. Employees on the ground collect the cover charge and pack patrons in or remove them from the cars all night long—the lounge never closes.

Inside there are three levels of entertainment. Oddly, the bottom level is generally taken over by the more upright members of the community. They partake of wines and other exotic imports, listen to soft, quiet music, and engage in polite conversations and diversions. There is a strict dress code here, and those not exhibiting the proper appear-

ance are asked by the guards on duty to either leave or go on upstairs.

The second entertainment level is geared toward teenagers. The Icepick books several large concerts of popular music here each year, sometimes getting acts from as far away as Japan or even Venus. Order is maintained by a few dozen gennie bouncers who have no problem tossing kids out when they create too much trouble.

Finally, the upper level is where the shadier deals in Montebellorg take place. The music and lighting are kept to a minimum, and there is an unwritten guarantee from the management that no violence will be allowed here—more gennies and a few scanners designed especially to detect weapons help to enforce that guarantee. There are several sets of back stairs connecting all of the levels that allow for surreptitious entry and exit. Several private parties or gambling events can be found on the upper level on any given night.

Jimmy Picchiatti can always be found somewhere on the premises. He is always escorted by four gennie bodyguards. The security system for the hotel is especially tight, with camera surveillance and gennie guards everywhere. The Icepick likes to make certain that his guests feel secure. He knows that if he can't do that, then his clients will take their business to the more plush, but more expensive, hotels of the arcologies.

Lou's Grill

"Ain't got the time to come to us? Hey! We'll come to you!" is the motto of Lou's Grill, an enormous motor-driven cafe that patrols the main cleared streets of the Montebellorg warren. It is the size of six 20th-Century buses and moves slowly around the warren, acting as a restaurant, meeting place, and mode of transportation all at once.

Actually, Lou's Grill is a rather unimportant landmark. It is presented here because of its possibly intriguing role in any firefights that might take place in the warren.

Investigations

The PCs can ask around at any of these places, or any of a hundred more that the referee can invent. Responses will follow a fairly regular pattern, and depend upon the PCs' approach. If they nonchalantly gossip about health, disease, starvation, or similar pestilence in the presence of a friendly waiter or bartender, the server will volunteer information about a portion of Pasareno that has report-

edly been struck by some kind of scourge. It is the area just north of the Rose Bowling Coliseum.

If they pointedly ask about stolen medicine or disease, they will receive no information. Instead, however, the server they ply for information will soon be observed summoning a Bloodskull guard and whispering to the thug, with a gesture or two in the PCs' direction.

The adventure should next lead the PCs to one of the gang's hideouts—the place where the stolen serum has been taken. This can occur whether the PCs stay put, try to get away, try to follow the Bloodskull thug, or head out for a look at the afflicted area they may have heard about.

If the PCs follow the thug . . .

He will lead them right to the tunnel into his headquarters. (The fellow is so concerned about people asking questions that he neglects the most basic precautions against being followed.)

If the PCs stay put . . .

A strike team of Bloodskulls comes after them—see below. The team enters the bar one member at a time, assembling quietly. When all six of them are present, they'll attack. However, any PCs facing the team or the entrance, or who have announced that they are looking around, should be allowed to make Wisdom checks to see if they suspect something.

If the PCs try to get away . . .

They will be challenged by the strike team as soon as they reach the street.

If they go for a look at the afflicted area . . .

They will be ambushed on the road past the coliseum, by the same strike team of Bloodskulls as above.

Strike Team

The strike team is a savage bunch of gangsters that enjoy doing the dirty work for their organization. They fight quickly and will attack without warning.

Strike Team Members #1, #2, and #3: hp 8; AC 6; THAC0 18; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 4, Cha 9, Tech 8.

Weapons: These thugs are armed with cutlasses (Dmg 1d6) or swords (Dmg 1d8).

Strike Team Members #4, #5, and #6: hp 10; AC 7; THACO 17; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 9, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 11, Tech 9.

Weapons: Laser pistols: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800.

Strike Team Leader: hp 18; AC 5; THACO 15; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 12, Tech 12.

Weapons: Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800. Rocket rifle: Dmg 2d8, ROF 1, Max Range 2000. Grenades (4): Dmg 4d10 or save, ROF 1, Range thrown.

The strike team is trying to scare off the PCs, but it has nothing against killing one or two of them as a means of doing so. However, if four of the strike team members are incapacitated during the fight, the others will attempt to flee. If they flee and are followed, or if they are captured and forced to talk (which they will do more willingly than their previously encountered comrades) the PCs will learn where the hideout is.

Hideout and Cache

The Bloodskulls maintain many dens and headquarters around Pasareno, and some of these are secret. However, none is considered so secure as the one below the great bowling field of the coliseum.

This is where the serum has been taken for safe-keeping. It is also the location of the main arsenal of the gang, and the place where they keep those unfortunate captives who, for some reason or another, are deemed worth leaving alive, and having too much value to the gang for them to be let go.

The entrance is through a wide passageway at the base of the stadium's outside wall. The approach to the entrance is observed at all times. A flat expanse, about 500' wide with only a few heaps of rubble to act as cover, must be crossed by anyone trying to reach the entrance. On a dark night, however, it is possible to reach the entrance unobserved if a party advances with care.

The observers are two Bloodskulls, one of whom is armed with a rocket pistol, the other with a sonic stunner. They are lying in a niche in the stadium wall, thirty feet above the entrance. They have a buzzer alarm hooked up to the hideout, but they do not know that the alarm is out of order—nothing

happens below when they push the button. (Okay, so it's the PCs' lucky night. . . .)

The Ruins

The great dish of the stadium is recognizable for its former purpose, but no longer is usable as such. Great sections of the stands have caved in, though this is not apparent from the outside. The field itself is pitted and crossed by deep gullies.

Much of the tomblike area below ground level remains accessible, however. The grounds are populated with several ratwursts, however, and anyone poking through this network of corridors, rooms, pipes, and ancient machinery will be attacked within 1d4 x 10 rounds.

Getting In

The hideout entrance can be reached shortly after one passes through the gaping doorways to the outside. A mere 50' down the tunnel, a secret panel is concealed in the wall. It will open if one of the Bloodskull medallions is held up before it; otherwise, a character can smash it down with a successful Strength Feat.

That, of course, will alert the hideout—not a good thing for the PCs to do at this point.

The hideout itself is displayed on Map 4.

The doors within the hideout also open when presented with a medallion. When they are closed, all of the doors fit flush into their mounts, preventing sound and even air from passing back and forth between rooms.

The hideout contains a total of twenty gang members, located in four different chambers. Because of the soundproofed nature of the hideout, combat in one room will not necessarily be audible elsewhere. However, several things might alert the hideout, and get all the gang members together to resist:

*Breaking down a door alerts them all, and before the PCs even get inside!

*If any PCs use a grenade, the explosion will be heard in each adjacent room, raising an alarm.

*If they enter the arsenal, an alarm sounds throughout the hideout.

*If any Bloodskull gets away from a battle, he will naturally summon the aid of his fellows in the neighboring chambers.

Wardroom

This is the gang room where the Bloodskulls gather to exchange stories, smoke, sharpen their daggers, and just generally act tough. The air is thick and smoky, the lighting dark, and usually there is some kind of loud, electronically generated music blasting. There are seven Bloodskulls in here when the PCs enter (unless they've triggered the alarm, of course).

Gang Members (7): hp 7; AC 8; THACO 19; Str 10, Dex 9, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 11, Tech 9.

Weapons: Daggers or clubs, Dmg 1d4. Three have ranged weapons: Needle gun: Dmg 1d4, ROF 3; Max Range 300. Sonic stunner: Dmg save vs. paralyzation, ROF 1, Max Range 40. Heat gun: Dmg 2d6, ROF 1; Max Range 60.

If four of the Bloodskulls in the room are incapacitated, the other three will head for the door to the headquarters room.

Headquarters

There are only three Bloodskulls in here, but all of them are armed with lasers. One of them, Ranklin Torque, is the local leader, and far more formidable than the average Bloodskull.

Ranklin Torque, bully, infatuated with his own warped sense of humor (9th level Terran rogue): hp 30; AC 4; THACO 16; Str 15, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 17, Tech 11.

Weapons: Rank is armed with a laser pistol at his hip, and he has a rocket rifle within easy reach. Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800. Rocket rifle: Dmg 2d8, ROF 1, Max Range 2000.

This room contains detailed maps of Pasareno, notes on the various establishments in the warren, and a small computer containing a directory of information on a wide variety of young hoodlums (potential new gang members).

The Arsenal

This room is posted with bright red signs identifying it as the arsenal and announcing that it cannot be entered without Rank's permission. The door will open if presented with a medallion, but a loud

alarm honks throughout the hideout. There are no guards in the arsenal.

The room contains a vast store of supplies, most of which is inferior to the PCs' in quality. There is also a great deal of ammunition, and several hundred grenades.

The Consortium

This large chamber is capable of holding a hundred or more people, and is used by the gang for large meetings. When the PCs enter the hideout, there are 10 Bloodskulls in the consortium, examining the stolen vials of medicine and debating what to do with them. All of these NPCs have received a fatal exposure to the virus, though the containers have been recapped. In exactly one turn from the time the PCs reach the outer door to the hideout, these NPCs will begin to suffer symptoms of the new plague. In another 10 minutes, they will all be dead.

Adventure Epilogue

It should be obvious to the PCs that there is something wrong with the serum that was stolen, since everywhere it was taken a horrendous outbreak of fatal illness suddenly erupted. If the PCs do not make this assumption (and assuming they bring the stuff back to Newporg without poisoning themselves), the true nature of the serum will be detected by the medics back at the arcology.

It becomes clear that only the fortuitous intervention of the Bloodskulls, in stealing the serum when they did, saved the arcology from a horrible outbreak. It also becomes common knowledge that the arcology has very vengeful, insidious, and powerful enemies.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Desert/Sprawls
FREQUENCY:	Common
ORGANIZATION:	Pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day and night
DIET:	Carrion, meat, garbage
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (2-3)

NO. APPEARING:	4d6
ARMOR CLASS:	8
MOVEMENT:	600 to 900
HIT DICE:	1-12 hp
THACO:	18
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1 per 3 dorgs
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Encirclement
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	None

Genotype: The coyodorg is a naturally evolved creature that traces its roots to virtually everything canine that ever lived in southern California. Primary among its ancestors is the coyote, but this is a common thread that runs through a very diverse species of creature. There are three basic types found within a pack, all linked by the commonality of their coyote blood.

The Fangs are the descendants of dobermans, German shepherds, wolfhounds, malamutes, St. Bernards, and all the biggest of the domesticated dogs. These creatures are as big as wolves, and a lot meaner.

The Sprinters hail from greyhounds, setters, spaniels, standard poodles—the entire spectrum of fast, medium-sized dogs. Sprinters are adept at tracking, and can generally run in the neighborhood of 45 mph.

Moles, descended from chihuahuas, dachshunds, and other tiny dogs, are usually the smartest and invariably the loudest members of a pack of coyodorgs. Their small size enables them to enter places that the rest of the pack cannot reach.

Physical/Cultural:

Physical Size: Varies according to type (see above), from 1' to 6' long and from 10 to 200+ lbs.

External Covering: Hair/fur of varying length, according to type.

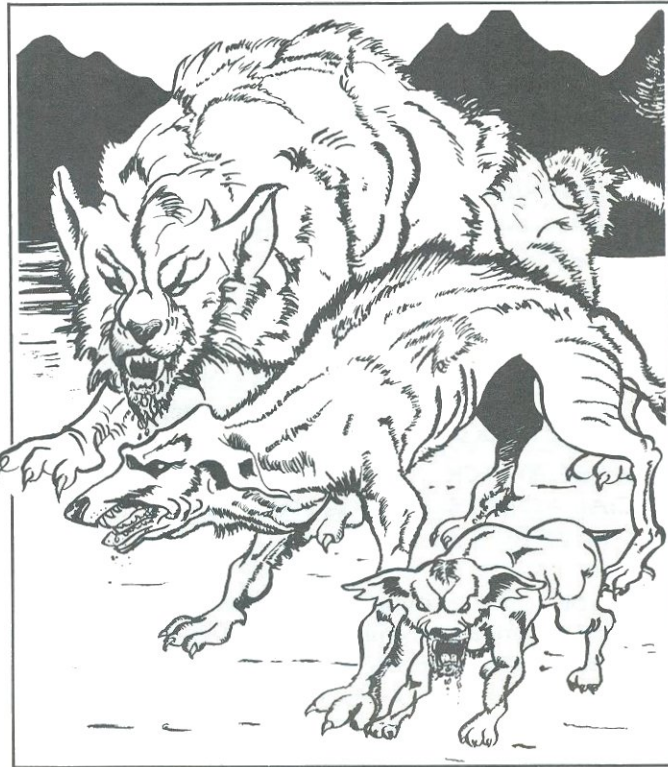
Eyes: Canine normal.

Ears: Canine normal.

Mouth: Canine normal.

Nose: Canine normal.

Cultural: Coyodorgs have developed the pack instincts of the canine to a highly advanced degree, such that various dorgs within a pack will perform specialized roles based on their size, strength, and speed. The function of each general type of coyodorg is described in the "Genotype" section above.



Combat: When coyodorgs attack in a pack, only one-third of them will actually go on the offensive at one time; the others will hang back, blocking the victim's escape routes and standing ready to step in if any animals in the front line are injured or killed.

This tactic of encirclement prevents a victim from simply running away (and in fact, most human-based characters would find it impossible to outrun a pack of dorgs anyway). If a victim attempts to get free of the pack, sacrificing any attempt at defending himself, the number of coyodorgs that join the attack increases to one-half of the full complement, and all of the animals receive a +2 bonus to their attack rolls.

Habitat/Terrain: Coyodorgs make their lairs in caves, ruined buildings, and other places of seclusion and safety that can be easily protected. All types of dorgs can co-exist in a pack. It is not uncommon for a pack to be made up exclusively of Fangs, but a group of Sprinters or Moles (or a mixed group of the two types) will never be found without at least a few Fangs serving as "muscle" and bodyguards for the others.

Ecology: All coyodorgs are scavengers. They prefer meat (and especially fresh meat), but will eat anything in order to survive. Because they have adapted to the barrenness of their environment, they don't need to eat very often, and thus they can inhabit areas of utter desolation where other types of animals would find it difficult to stay alive.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Sprawls
FREQUENCY:	Common
ORGANIZATION:	Family
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Carrion, meat, garbage
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal
NO. APPEARING:	1d6 + 2
ARMOR CLASS:	6
MOVEMENT:	360
HIT DICE:	4
THACO:	16
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d10/1d4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Tail lash, stench
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	None

Genotype: Like the coyodorg, the ratwurst traces its ancestry to a common varmint of an earlier century—the rat, in this case. However, whether through crossbreeding with larger animals or the genetic experiments of some unknown madman, the ratwurst bears precious little resemblance to its progenitor.

Physical/Cultural:

Physical Size: 5 to 7 feet long from snout to tail, 100 to 175 lbs.

External Covering: Fine hair of various colors, often matted with grease and garbage.

Eyes: Large and dark, no pupils.

Ears: Small and more humanlike, though still covered with hair, set closer to the head.

Mouth: Beneath a long snout, with extremely sharp teeth.

Nose: Extended from face, black.

Cultural: Despite their relatively high intelligence and great size, ratwursts have not advanced beyond the culture or the ecological niche of their rat ancestors. They operate independently for the most part, scavenging for food, attacking only those creatures they are certain they can defeat.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Though ratwursts have a great combat advantage because of their sharp teeth, they are cowardly by nature and thus easily frightened away by a show of force. If a group of would-be victims of greater size or number than the ratwursts takes offensive action, there is a 50% chance each round for each ratwurst that the creature will turn and run. Whenever half of the group runs away, the others will immediately also scurry for cover unless they are cornered.



Combat: The ratwurst's hairless tail is a supple weapon which it uses as a lash, inflicting 1d4 points of damage. If the damage roll for the tail attack is a 4, the target also falls down. Until the victim regains his feet (a process requiring 1 full round), all subsequent attacks against him are made with a +4 bonus to the attack roll.

The ratwurst has long, sharp teeth that are its primary weapon (1d10 damage). When a ratwurst hits with a bite attack, the victim must save vs. suffocation or be helpless for 1 round thereafter because of the ratwurst's stench.

The creature can attack two targets at once (making different initiative rolls for each attack), but cannot bite and use its tail against the same victim in a single round.

Habitat/Terrain: The ratwurst is in many ways a creature of its environment. Though the specific experiments which brought its like into being have not been documented, it is obvious that the creature is designed for ruined urban environments, though it is extremely adaptable to other locations, as well.

Ecology: The ratwurst is ravenous at all times, and has no problems with making humans an occasional part of its diet. When a ratwurst is discovered around a warren, the controlling gang spares no effort to find and kill the creature—but often not before several children or infirm adults have been snatched.

CHAPTER 3: BALI LOW

This part of the adventure begins with the arrival in Newporg of a visitor from the Delph community of Bali Low. The Delph, a gennie extensively modified for aquatic life, comes to Newporg with a tale of horror and a plea for help.

Naturally, the PCs will be among those invited to listen to the Delph's plea, which will be made to several dozen of the arcology's leaders in the chairman's office. The audience is invited to take their seats, but the Delph is nowhere to be seen. However, Chairman Gorki steps to the front.

Referee's Note: When you read in the voice of the Delph, try to whistle through the "s" sound. Also, this crossbreed of human and dolphin speaks in short phrases, with audible breaths between them.

"Esteemed citizens of Newporg, I have invited you to this unusual gathering in order that you may hear a tale of grave concern. Its teller is Hooseel Krike, who has traveled through great danger to bring us this news."

Gorki raises his hand and a concealed panel in the office wall slips silently open. A tall figure, dressed in a glossy black robe, enters and bows deeply. Another man, in the blue uniform of a NEO commander, was apparently talking to the Delph. The officer steps quickly backward, out of sight, but not before you catch a look at his two sidearms: a heavy rocket pistol on one hip, and an antiquated steel bullet-firing pistol on the other.

The Delph, Hooseel Krike, towers a good eight feet above the floor. His forehead bulges, typical for his race, and his skin is a slick, fascinating patchwork of gray swirls around bright patches of blue. His unseen ears, inside the skull, accentuate the smooth, fishlike shape of his head. His face, despite his short nose and protruding forehead, is very humanlike.

"I come from a place called Bali Low, in the great Pacific expanse. We are a peaceful folk. We provide our harvests to the great RAM ships that carry the food to Mars and beyond.

"But something evil has arisen from the sea. Now it kills our people. It withers our crops." Some of the "cultured" citizens of Newporg begin to stir, wondering why their valuable time is being wasted with this tale of woe.

"Our troubles have grown serious enough, so

serious that the great hero, Buck Rogers, has brought me to you. Please, you *must* hear my tale!" the Delph pleads with the audience quickly slipping from his grasp.

"And now we have learned that the same poison was recently used in an attempt to destroy Newporg as well." With that the crowd grows quickly silent as the seminar takes on a more serious tone.

You don't need to give the rest of his speech word for word. Instead, summarize these high points with as much detail as you and your players desire.

*The poison seems to originate from a nearby island—an island that has, since the origins of the Delph race, been reputed to be a place of blight and woe. It is called En-We-To.

*Bali Low is more advanced than the typical Delph raft-city. It is a series of undersea bubbles built long ago by RAM engineers for their early work on Delph development. Scattered around the city is the wreckage of another RAM project, a place known as Pacificus. Now the domes of Bali Low hold teeming populations of Delphs, but one of them has recently suffered a horrible and insidious attack that left all of its inhabitants dead.

*RAM has introduced a new gennie into the waters of Earth. An aquatic version of the Terrine, the Delphs refer to these fast, fishlike killing machines as sharcs.

*A shipment of the toxic substance was taken from the island of En-We-To to the New Frontier Bazaar, a tremendous trading station in space, orbiting the Earth. There it was transferred to a shuttle and brought to Newporg—the toxin from which the PCs saved the arcology.

Finally, Hooseel concludes his speech with a plea for aid—some skilled heroes who can come to Bali Low and help them face the menace of the Sharcs, and the even more sinister threat from the island of En-We-To. Who else but the player characters could perform such a task?

Journey to Bali Low

The HiSTAV will again be provided for the PCs' use, assuming they consent to perform the mission. The Delph domes lie some 5,000 miles west by southwest of Newporg. The nuclear plant of the HiSTAV has no difficulty with that kind of range—indeed, its power plant is virtually inexhaustible.

If the vehicle travels on the surface of the water, it can go faster, but the ride is a lot more uncomfortable. HiSTAV can make no headway on the surface in rough water.

Bali Low is very near the island of En-We-To. The island is a coral atoll atop a sheer undersea mountain. Bali Low has been built atop a nearby mountain, with a surface still some 500-800' beneath the surface of the Pacific.

Hooseel also knows a great deal about Pacificus. He will relate this information to the PCs in as much detail as they desire. In any event, the referee should become familiar with this location—think of it as sort of an undersea version of a sprawl.

The Delphs' knowledge of Pacificus is summed up in the entry on pages 43 and 44.

Encounters Beneath the Waves

The journey to Bali Low might be enlivened, particularly in its later stages, by an encounter with one or more of the odd and potentially dangerous creatures that have survived the destruction of Dr. Antilles's laboratory (this event is explained later).

The jonah, the albatoy, and the skrool can all show up during this journey. The shark is best not revealed until the adventure proceeds a little farther.

If the PCs stay buttoned up inside their HiSTAV, they will be safe from the skrool. The jonah is not likely to attack, either, unless provoked by PC actions. The albatoy has learned to fear humans, though it is quite capable of making a surprise diving attack against a surfaced watercraft.

Referee's Note: A map of the Pacific Ocean floor, if you have one, can provide some interesting detail for this journey. En-We-To is the island of Eniwetok, westernmost of the Marshall Islands. Bali Low is atop the summit of a nearby mountain. The peak towers above the abyssal plain of the ocean, though it is still hundreds of feet below the surface.

However, if you don't have a map, or want to get on with the adventure, there's nothing wrong with

saying, "You cruise under the ocean for nine days. The HiSTAV works fine, and you easily reach your destination."

Bali Low

Bali Low is comprised of three great clear domes, each at different levels on the rocky mountaintop below the sea. When the sun is shining, enough light filters through the clear ocean water to allow Bali Low to be seen by submerged viewers from several thousand feet away. It is, however, cleverly camouflaged so as to be invisible from observers above the surface of the water.

The northernmost of the domes is the highest, with the base of the dome about 500' below sea level. The dome to the south of this one is on an adjacent mountaintop, and is about 100' lower than the first. The third, irregularly shaped dome is built into the slope of the mountainside, with its floor averaging about 800' below sea level. The domes each rise about 200' high in their centers.

Entry to each dome is gained through an airlock mechanism below the floor of the dome. This device is large enough to handle a vehicle three times as big as the HiSTAV. The domes are connected to each other by pneumatic tubes with four-passenger cars that shoot back and forth at very high speed. Of course, the Delphs often prefer to swim between domes.

Indeed, each of the domes is about half filled with water. The air in the upper portion of the dome is breathable by humans, if a trifle thick and humid. In the center of each dome is an air pump. These devices circulate and purify the air, maintaining a level of oxygen sufficient for humans and other air-breathing creatures. Actually, a few humans live among the Delphs, finding the peaceful and philosophical existence of these marine creatures preferable to human chaos and conflict, and they find the air tolerable on a long-term basis.

Each dome is built atop a fusion reactor that provides the limited power needed by the residents. The air purification system, the illumination, and the pumps in the airlock mechanisms are the major consumers of electric power here. The Delph use no electrical devices for entertainment, food preparation (they like raw kelp and fish) or hygiene.

The domes of the Delphs are not unlike the Ag-domes of Newporg, in that plants are grown here to feed the community's inhabitants. The domes are not bright, but a constant blue light permeates their every room, illuminating Bali Low with a dim glow

that the Delphs find soothing.

Each dome normally shelters some 10,000 Delphs, mostly females and young. Much of the space in the domes is devoted to recreational pools and rooms where the children develop the skills needed to survive and prosper in the ocean depths.

Socially, the domes are organized by clan, with each housing three influential families and family leaders. In the central dome, for example, these are the Krike, the Sheer, and the Anteluvian clans. The matriarchs (or patriarch in the case of the Sheer) of the clans gather to make any decisions of import to the dome as a whole. In this way, each of the domes operates as a self-sufficient unit; Bali Low is much more like three separate towns than one extended city.

The New Plague

Bali Low is three separate, peaceful, prosperous towns, or, at least, this is the way it used to be. Now, Bali Low contains two very frightened communities of Delphs and one wasteland.

The northern dome is now a lifeless tomb, the resting place for the Delphs who died there. They died in the midst of eating, or playing, or sleeping, slain suddenly by a mysterious and invisible killer. The bodies show signs of short-lived agony, but all apparently died within a few minutes of their first discomfort. Visitors who entered the city during the hour or so of the disaster also died, within minutes of emerging from the airlock or transport car.

Some evidence has been gathered from this scene of disaster.

*The epidemic started in the center of the dome and spread outward toward its edges.

*Delphs who were in the air-filled parts of the dome first noticed a shortness of breath, then a horrible choking sensation. Within 1d4 + 1 minutes of the onset, the Delphs were helpless and immobile. Asphyxiation occurred slowly, then, killing the creatures after another 2d6 minutes.

*Delphs who were in the underwater areas of the dome were affected more slowly, but with a similar pattern. Those who remained immersed suffered the onset of the plague 10 minutes later, on the average, than those who were breathing the air. For Delphs in the water, it took 2d6 minutes to be reduced to immobility, and another 2d10 minutes before death.

*Every Delph who was in the dome about one hour before the first sign of trouble, and all those who entered the dome before or during the outbreak, suffered the effects of the plague. All who experienced the onset of symptoms subsequently died—there have been no reports of survivors. Some Delphs left the dome between exposure and effect; though they inevitably died, they did not seem to affect any others who were not inside the affected dome.

*The humans who lived in the affected dome also died, apparently with the same progression of symptoms as the Delphs experienced.

As the PCs learned in their previous mission, the new plague is actually a new strain of RAM-developed virus. It is nearing perfection in their eyes, attaining of its design parameters. These include a universal lethality to humans and gennies alike and a short period of effectiveness, so that areas thus cleared do not remain tainted for long.

The lab on En-We-To is the source of the virus, which was first tested in Bali Low by introducing it into the air purification system. Evidence of tampering will be obvious if the PCs think of looking there, which they might, because of the obvious spread of the plague from the middle of the dome to its edges.

Pacificus

The Deadly Dream of Doctor Antilles

The tale of Pacificus is a legend known to all of the Delphs in Bali Low, for it is a story that goes to the roots of the Delph race. Hooseel speaks of Pacificus in much the same way a fervent American patriot speaks of Bunker Hill, Valley Forge, or the Constitution.

Pacificus began as a small project by an elite team of RAM genetic engineers, led by Doctor Ramon Antilles. They selected a series of unpopulated atolls known formerly as the Marshall Islands as their laboratory. An exclusion zone with a radius of 1,000 miles was established around the island, and geosynchronous satellites were placed as sentinels above the islands.

Dr. Antilles and his team made their headquarters on the island of Kwaj-Line, one of the largest of the Marshalls. Here his engineers erected huge aquarium laboratories, with an old style fission reactor for power.

The experiments began with a marine bird, the albatross. Dr. Antilles resolved to create, from the bird's size and endurance, a gennie capable of carrying information and small packages across the breadth of the world. Though such a gennie would be of obviously limited use in a system with instant electronic communications to virtually everywhere, this was no deterrent to the good doctor. Indeed, it was a perverse quirk of his character that he sought to create—through the use of sophisticated technology—creatures that would take the place of technological devices in the lives of the inhabitants of Earth.

The modified albatrosses, christened "albatosys," were a failure. Though they still populate the islands in great numbers, they were temperamentally unsuited for the purposes of Dr. Antilles. In the end, he decreed open season on the creatures throughout his island domain, and they were ruthlessly hunted for sport and, eventually, bounty.

Doctor Antilles next project involved the genetic manipulation of humpbacked whales. He sought a way, through this attempt, to replace the vehicles to which humans were still bound when they desired to travel over or through the water for any distance.

The whale experiments resulted in the "jonah," a more successful Gennie than the albatoy. However, the doctor's desire for secrecy insured that all the jonahs he created stayed among his islands—he was not yet ready to reveal his creations to an unappreciative world.

Neither of his initial experiments had endowed the Gennie with much in the way of intelligence, but now Dr. Antilles was ready to move to the next stage of development. He chose as his prototypes two creatures of the sea, the shark and the dolphin, for what he desired to be his crowning achievement. At the same time, he ordered his legions of workers to begin construction of Pacificus—Dr. Antilles's intended legacy for the coming ages.

A great number of old steel-hulled ships had been sunk in nearby waters, and many of these were raised by the placement of a bladder inside the torn hull, and then the inflation of that bladder to a slight positive buoyancy. The refloated vessels were then towed to the waters above their intended locations, and re-sunk. Soon a vast tangle of steel hulls, empty cabins, and sloping decks began to spread around Kwaj-Line, extending throughout the island group.

Other vessels were brought from farther waters—the ancient battleships *Prince of Wales* and *Yamato*, for example, were floated in and sunk

for use as government buildings. Four wrecked Japanese aircraft carriers, and the American carrier *Yorktown*, were raised from the waters around Midway Island and brought to Pacificus to be sunk in shallow water. Their flat decks proved exceptionally suitable, when less than a hundred feet under the surface, as sites for kelp beds and experimental stations.

Meanwhile, Doctor Antilles had successfully created a gennie from the dolphin—the forerunner of the Delph race. He began releasing these creatures into Pacificus, and they prospered. The shark gennie he dubbed a failure, though before he could destroy his prototypes an accident released a number of them into the sea.

But Pacificus was never to become the undersea utopia its creator desired. Antilles was an old man when the fission reactor—one of the few left in a culture fast turning to fusion power—suffered a catastrophic meltdown. The entire island of Kwaj-Line, and all its population, including the doctor, perished in this disaster. Finally, billions of gallons of seawater pouring into the nuclear fire caused its extinction, but not until much of Pacificus had been ravaged by radiation gone wild.

Now the hulks of the ships still remain, and so too do the jonahs, albatosys, and Delphs. Recently, the appearance of the shark has caused suspicions that more gennie experiments are being performed in the islands. There is still, after all, a major RAM outpost on the island of En-We-To, the only one of the Marshalls that still has any human inhabitants (air-breathing ones, that is).

Others dismiss the shark as a mutated version of the escaped prototypes, heavily modified by the radioactive wasteland that still surrounds the former island (now undersea slag crater) of Kwaj-Line.

Pacificus in the 25th Century

Much of Pacificus lies buried beneath the accumulated debris of the centuries. The outlines of the great ships are still visible; so too are the high coral towers that were once intended to mark the great undersea land's borders.

Bali Low itself is a part of the greater undersea realm of Pacificus. Hooseel will guide the PCs to his home, where the HISTAV can easily enter one of the domes through the airlock.

Hooseel will accompany the PCs on a tour of the realm of Pacificus, if they should desire it. Also, he can supply them with specialized underwater equipment (explained below) that will help them function underwater.



Passengers in the HISTAV get a close-up view of a jonah

In the course of traveling around, the PCs will have the opportunity to observe the genetic mutations that are all more or less common around here. They are described in the new creatures section at the end of this chapter.

Adventuring in the Undersea Environment

Much of this scenario can take place underwater. However, in the 25th Century, with gillmasks and sturdy pressure suits available, this is not as difficult as it sounds.

Movement

A character's base movement rate when swimming is one-half of his base rate for overland movement, as explained in the XXVc™ game rules. However, several factors can modify this rate or prevent a character from being able to move in water altogether. Swimming against a current will reduce a character's speed (referee's discretion, based on the strength of the current). In addition, a player

character without Swimming skill must make a Swimming Skill Check using only his Dexterity score in order to stay afloat (if on the surface) or start moving in the right direction (if underwater). Additional Skill Checks for characters, both skilled and unskilled at swimming, might be called for at the referee's discretion.

Equipment (gillmask, spacesuit, etc.) is available to allow a character to remain immersed for long periods. Without some kind of respirator, a character can automatically hold his breath underwater for a number of rounds equal to one-third of his Constitution score. Beyond that time, he must save vs. suffocation each round. Each time he fails a save, he suffers the effects of suffocation (2d10 hp) exactly as if he was exposed to a vacuum.

Combat

Several changes in combat procedures occur underwater. These changes are implemented when both combatants are beneath the surface of the water; the standard XXVc™ game rules on combat apply in situations where characters are swimming on the surface or wading.

*Blows with blunt objects, such as fists, clubs, etc., inflict no damage underwater. Attacks with all other melee weapons inflict half damage.

*Laser weapons of all types are inoperative underwater.

*Sonic stunners have their maximum range doubled underwater (to 80 feet). In addition, underwater characters saving against a stunner attack suffer a -2 penalty to their saving throws.

*Characters not adapted for life in the water suffer the "alien environment" (+6) penalty to their initiative rolls.

Equipment

The following types of equipment are commonly employed underwater.

Gillmask: Described in *The Technology Book*, p. 11.

Aquadrive: This is a sort of underwater rocket belt, though it is even smaller and easier to use than a rocket belt. It is worn on a character's back, and can propel him at a movement rate of 900 feet per round through the water.

Fins: The simple pair of fins for a swimmer's feet have not become outmoded by the passage of time. Characters with fins can increase their base swimming movement rate to 1 1/2 times normal. Fins take 2 rounds to put on and 1 round to remove; a character's ground movement rate is reduced to 1/2 normal if he tries to run with fins while out of water.

Spearguns: An incredibly effective weapon underwater, a speargun fires a javelin-sized projectile at a high velocity through the water. A speargun will inflict 1d6 points of damage when it hits its target, has a rate of fire of 1, and a maximum range of 300. Spearguns are readily available at Newporg and other coastal arcologies, and can be found among the guards of the Ento Island laboratory or obtained from the Delphs.

Net: The net is a handy device to have underwater. When thrown at a target from hand-to-hand range (6 feet or less), a net can entangle a victim and render him helpless (no attacks, no Dexterity bonus to AC, automatic loss of initiative). It takes 1d3

rounds for a victim to disentangle himself, during which time he can take no other action.

Motion Sensor: This is a small device used to detect motion in the user's vicinity underwater. It uses a form of wave-motion detection to locate the source of rapid, abrupt movements, including the activity of swimming animals or characters and the action of propellers. The sensor can detect with great accuracy out to 150 feet, but can give a general indication of movement from as far away as 300 feet. Of course, if a previously spotted object stops moving, the sensor shows nothing. Many marine creatures already have considerable talent in detecting underwater movement (and for them, a sensor is unnecessary); this device gives humans and other nonmarine life a similar ability.

Animals

Many of the aquatic animals in the Pacific can be adapted for transportation purposes. For instance, if the PCs can capture a jonah (see page 57), they can use it to approach the Ento Island area relatively unnoticed. Other standard animals, such as dolphins or whales, can also be used for transportation of individuals or cargo. The Delphs often use animals for such purposes, and have the ability to communicate their good intentions to the animals in question. (A Delph can get a dolphin, whale, or other large marine creature to do his bidding by making a successful Befriend Animal or Animal Training Skill Check, or by succeeding at a Skill Check using only his Charisma.) It isn't a master-servant relationship as much as a cooperative effort among fellow creatures of the seas.

Vehicles

If the HiSTAV comes under fire while waterborne, or if the PCs damage some enemy vehicle, there is a chance it will sink. If the vehicle's hull points are reduced to half of its original amount, it cannot stay submerged without filling with water and sinking. If its hull points are all eliminated, the vehicle sinks like a stone if it is floating on the surface.

Other standard water vehicles might also be employed to approach the Ento Island area. Speedboats, hovercraft, and other sporting vessels are fairly unusual this far out in the ocean, so they would most likely bring unwelcome attention. However, other ships such as hydrofreighters and tankers pass near the island fairly frequently. If the PCs take the time to examine documented shipping

Ento Island

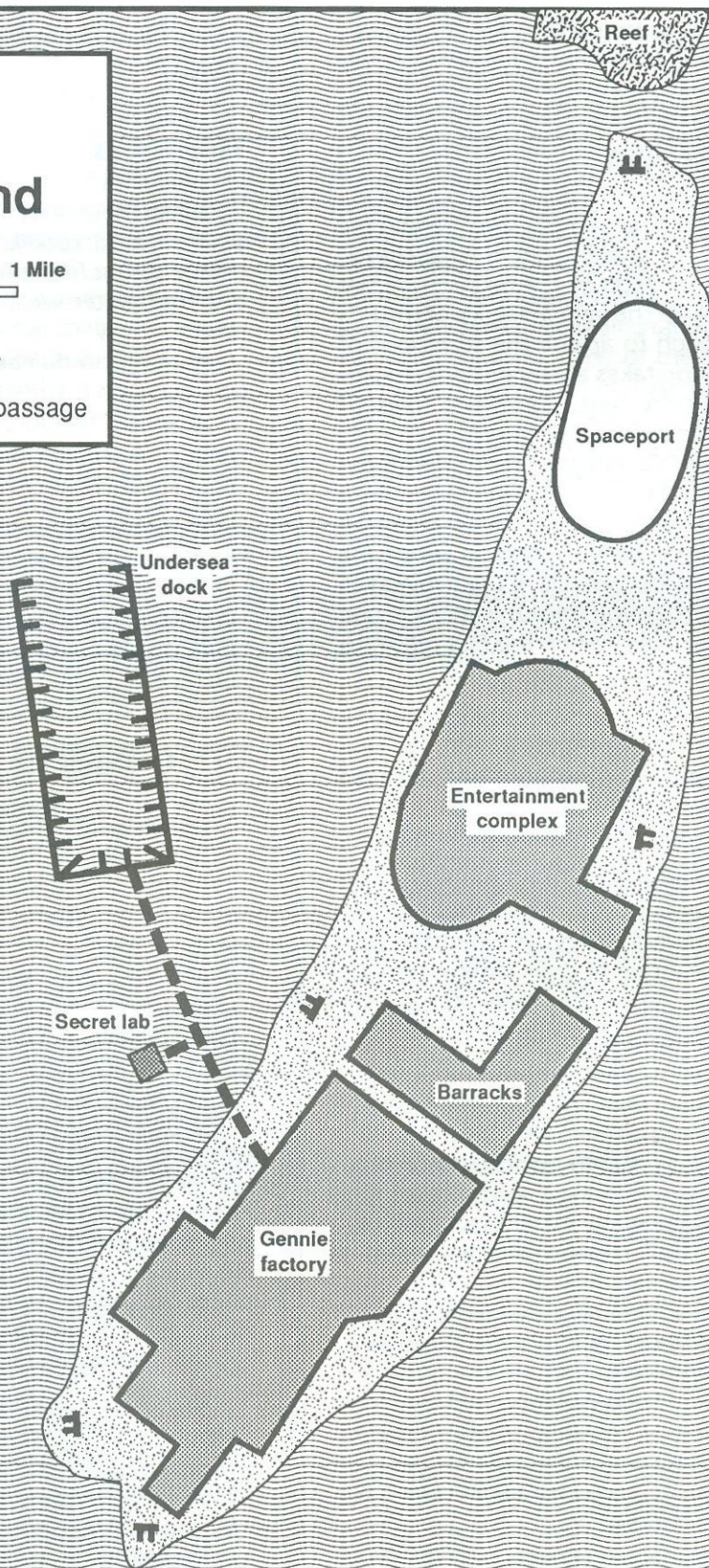
0

1 Mile

Rocket battery

Underground passage

Lagoon



routes, they might be able to sneak very close to Ento without drawing attention at all. From there, they could approach the laboratory using simple diving equipment.

Investigations

If the PCs try to put together the story behind the plague in Bali Low, they will find that it matches in every particular the effects of the fake serum that was sent to Newporg. The very presence of the PCs in Bali Low is enough to arouse the suspicions of RAM. The corporation takes a very protective view of its unique operations here, and is not about to brook any interference.

Consequently, the PCs and any Delphs with them will be attacked at the earliest opportunity by a strike team of RAM sharks. The creatures will try to attack the PCs in the waters of Pacificus, when the characters are not in their vehicle. If this proves too difficult to arrange, they will stage the attack in one of the domes of Bali Low, when the PCs return to their quarters there.

Sharks (6): hp 12; AC 4; THACO 16.

Weapons: Spearguns: Dmg 1d6, ROF 1, Max Range 300.

If the PCs don't figure it out, the Delphs will certainly be able to inform them that the attackers must have come from En-We-To. They will offer transportation to the atoll via one of their jonahs; the PCs may, of course, elect to take the HiSTAV, but the vehicle is not so anonymous as the great whale.

En-We-To

The tiny atoll of En-We-To consists of a ring-shaped coral reef about 25 miles in diameter. This ring is broken in two places, as shown on the map, but otherwise provides a barrier to all surface and underwater traffic.

The interior of the atoll is a once-beautiful lagoon that has been transformed by the RAM operations which have been En-We-To's lot for the past two hundred years. The atoll survived the meltdown of Kwaj-Line with the least damage of any of the islands in the group. Now it is used by the descendants of Dr. Antilles as a base for their continuing efforts at genetic mutation.

Most of the activity occurring here is centered on the large island of Ento, at the southeast edge of the

coral ring. Three other small islets have land area that remains dry at high tide; at many places along the circumference of the atoll the jagged coral reef is exposed at low tide.

The Islets

Each of these islets is a flat expanse of sand, thinly covering hard, rocklike coral. A few palm trees and bushes sprout from this surface in clumps. Each has one freshwater well, and a small garrison of Terrines.

This garrison numbers 1d6 + 10 of these combat gennies. Each is armed with a laser, heat gun, or laser rifle. In addition, the garrison has a rocket launcher and a fixed battery of missiles with a range of about 10 miles.

Terrines: hp 18; AC 4; THACO 17.

Weapons: Laser pistol (50%): Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800. Heat gun (30%): Dmg 2d6, ROF 1, Max Range 60. Laser rifle (20%): Dmg 1d12, ROF 1, Max Range 3000.

Ento Island

This speck on the ocean is RAM's strongest point within a radius of thousands of miles in any direction. From here, RAM overlords oversee the operation of a vast, undersea realm. Here, too, do they practice genetic manipulation and biological weapons research of a most deadly nature.

The island's main features are its spaceport, barracks and residential area, laboratory building, and defensive batteries. It is connected via underground tunnels to the undersea docking pen in the lagoon.

The beaches surrounding it are not watched diligently, but there is a 60% chance that the HiSTAV will be noticed if the PCs drive it onto the island. There is only a 10% chance that the PCs themselves will be noticed, if they emerge from the water under their own power. If they are detected, they will be confronted by one of the teams of Terrine guards patrolling the island. Each team consists of 2d4 guards, armed half with heat guns and half with sonic stunners.

Terrines: hp 10; AC 5; THACO 19.

Weapons: Heat gun (50%): Dmg 2d6, ROF 1, Max Range 60. Sonic stunner (50%): Dmg save vs. paralyzation, ROF 1, Max Range 40.

Ento's Defenses: Each of the spots marked on the map contains an anti-rocketship missile battery with a 10-mile range, similar to the missiles on the islets. Each of these batteries is garrisoned by a dozen Terrines, armed the same as those on the islets.

Spaceport: This is a Class B pad, fully controlled by RAM and limited to RAM traffic. The port has several large hangers and an extensive supply of parts. Characters will find 0-5 (D6 - 1) rockets and shuttles there at any given time.

Entertainment Plaza: This is a large complex of buildings between the residential complex and the spaceport. Here can be found hotels, restaurants, and an assortment of saloons and showhouses that cater to the spacehounds and tramp sailors who make planetfall on Ento.

The plaza is a noted meeting place for smugglers, but only those who operate more or less under RAM sanction. The place is rife with informers, and enemies of the conglomerate will likely soon find themselves betrayed.

Residential Complex: This is another huge building, with a wide variety of accommodations available. The apartments on the outside walls of the complex, facing either the ocean or the lagoon, are luxurious penthouses with porches, pools and splendid sea views. These apartments are larger than average, with many rambling on for ten or twelve rooms, each more lavishly furnished than the last. Naturally, these residences are reserved for RAM's most influential personnel from across the Pacific. Some of them are even reserved, unused for years, for the pleasure of high ranking executives on Mars who like an occasional escape to Earth.

The interior apartments are nothing like these splendid homes, however. Getting progressively smaller, darker, and dingier as one moves toward the center of the complex, the living quarters soon become small, steel-enclosed boxes, little more than cells for the brute workers in the factory and along the wharves.

The Factory

This is a huge, dark structure, the largest building on the island. Its height ranges from ten stories on either side to twenty stories in the towering center. The outside of the factory building is a featureless expanse of glazed coral, burned nearly black by the forces that scoured it into bricks and plaster. No windows break the outside of the structure, and no doors are visible. The workers, in fact, reach the factory from the residence complex by an underground tram.

Within, the factory is divided into a series of huge laboratories, each as big as a good-sized gymnasium. These labs are connected by long, featureless corridors of steel or glazed coral. The labs themselves are nightmarish places containing great vats, refrigeration tanks, incubators, and a whole host of blinking, sparking, and steaming pieces of equipment. Smokes of many different colors (and a variety of odors, all of them offensive) swirl through the air, often obscuring even the other side of the room. An overhead network of pipes, tubes, and cables creates a criss-crossing tangle above each lab, extending through many of the corridors as well. Sprayers are constantly releasing mist into the air, making the place oppressively humid. The bubbling of the larger vats also insures that the temperature always remains exceptionally warm.

Security is lax in the factory, primarily because its location insures that it has no real threats—at least, none that RAM knows of. Of course, it is known to be unpopular with the Delphs, but that is taken into consideration by the simple expedient of not allowing Delphs inside.

Most of the workers in the labs are variants of the Worker gennie—strong, but very, very dumb. They will take little note of unusual activity. Each lab is staffed by 1d6 + 1 scientists, however, and these will typically be very fussy about who is allowed to inspect their creations.

The vats themselves hold a grotesque array of experimental life forms. Most of them have little chance of survival, and are more a testament to the fiendish imaginations of their creators than anything else. Some of these types include a breed of giant, creeping starfish, hugely deformed killer whales and octopi, miniaturized skrool, individual fish no bigger than minnows that retain all of the voracious savagery of their larger kin, and so on.

Some of the "vats" are no more than tiny dishes, for the factory manufactures a variety of bacteria and virus products. The labs where this work is done are located in the very center of the factory, in a level underneath the ground.

Here ends the trail of disease, toxin, and death that the PCs have followed this far. These labs do have security guards stationed outside the doors, a pair for each of the 20 labs involved in bacteriological work.

Security Guards: hp 10; AC 6; THAC0 18.

Weapons: Laser pistol: Dmg 1 d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800.

The Undersea Wharf

This huge docking area dwarfs the island's spaceport. Indeed, this is where most of the shipping to and from the atoll occurs. In order to avoid the prying eyes of NEO and the independent arcologies, RAM uses submarines for the transport of its genetically manipulated products around the world.

These submarines bear little resemblance to the pioneer craft of five centuries ago. In external design, a submarine resembles a rocket ship more than the traditional conning-tower-topped craft. Steering fins arrayed around the stern, and a smaller pair near the bow, make these undersea boats exceptionally maneuverable. A system of suction pumps pull water through the hull and expel it out the rear; at top speed, the more high-powered of these subs can approach 100 mph, even though fully submerged.

Of the two entrances into the atoll, only the deep passage (at 4 o'clock on the ring) allows submarines to enter while underwater. The wide passage will also accommodate subs, but only when surfaced.

The whole wharf is underwater, but the bay itself is a trench some 100' deeper than the average lagoon depth of 40'. Two submarines, each a full 1000' long, can be accommodated here at one time.

To enter the wharf, a sub advances into the trench. A magnetic drive then pulls the sub into one of the huge docking bays to either side of the trench. There, the sub "surfaces"—though it is in fact under sea level, the huge underground wharf is pressurized such that the water level inside the wharf is about 100' below outside sea level. The pressure is monitored and adjusted for tides, so that it remains constant inside the wharf.

The wharf is well lit at all times, and there is a 50% chance that 1-2 submarines will be here, off-loading raw materials from elsewhere on Earth, or embarking with cargoes of Gennies and other mutated life forms for seeding on some unsuspecting shore.

The wharf region is connected to the factory on Ento by a long, wide tunnel. It is along this tunnel that the true nerve center of En-We-To lies.

The Laboratory of the Young Doctor Antilles

The operations on the atoll are directed by a descendant of Dr. Ramon Antilles—his great-great-granddaughter Sirine Antilles. The mad doctor's machinations, while bizarre and corrupt in their

own right, pale to mild eccentricities when compared to Sirine's plans. Only by removing her from her position here can the PCs stop the export of lethal viruses with which she is attempting to infect the places on Earth that show the most resistance to RAM influence.

Referee's Note: While it is certainly possible that Sirine meets an untimely end in this battle—indeed, the PCs will probably strive mightily to achieve this result—the referee may wish to do everything he can to help her escape. As a potent and eccentric villain, she can be an interesting adversary to keep alive. Her operations will be totally disrupted in any event, as long as the PCs successfully chase her away. If she can escape, she can become a major NPC in the campaign that you can use in future scenarios.

Doctor Sirine Antilles (15th level Martian scientist): hp 37; AC 3; THACO 12; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 9, Cha 14, Tech 17.

Doctor Antilles is a tall, brown-haired Martian with dark, dark eyes—eyes that blaze with the strength of her convictions. Anyone who gets one look at those eyes cannot doubt that she believes in her convictions fanatically.

She is one of the leading genetic manipulators in the solar system, but her complete lack of morality has made her an outcast even from her colleagues on Mars. Like her great-grandfather, she has found the sanctum on Earth to perform her vile experiments.

Sirine is the glue that holds the thousands of workers, guards, and scientists together on En-We-To. She pays the researchers and guards from her considerable budget, much of which is family fortune, but some, too, comes from RAM, which still sponsors some of her activities. The force of her personality, and the fear and docility she has bred into her mutated work force (about 90% of the island's population), insure that she retains complete control. They also insure that, if she is removed from En-We-To, the operation will quickly fall apart.

The Laboratory

Access to the lab is gained directly off the main tunnel that connects the submarine dock with the factory. This tunnel is heavily used at 8-hour intervals—when the work shifts change—and also when cargo is being transported from the factory to the subs, or vice versa. There are many unlabeled

hatches leading to the sides of this tunnel. Most of these lead to storage rooms; about 10% lead to guard stations, manned by security teams.

The tunnel is airtight, but not pressurized. It begins at 100' below sea level and gradually climbs until its floor is at sea level under the factory. The lab, located halfway along this length, is about 50' below sea level.

The hatch leading to the doctor's lab is about halfway between the dock and the island. It is not labeled, but it is guarded by a looming Terrine.

Terrine Guard: hp 25; AC 3; THACO 14.

Weapon: Heat gun: Dmg 2d6, ROF 1, Max Range 60.

Security Doors

Each door is actually an airtight hatch, capable of withstanding tons of water pressure, should a rupture allow the ocean to somehow pour into the outer tunnel. They are not locked, but each is protected by a security device which, if not deactivated, will alert Sirine.

Airlock

This chamber can be operated by whoever is using it. Once activated, it takes 3 rounds to equalize the pressure between the tunnel and the lab, which is open to the sea and thus pressurized to equal that at 50' below sea level.

The Pool

The corridor beyond the airlock seems to end in a square pool. There are two ways to proceed.

First, the pool connects, as shown in the map, with a continuation of the corridor. The water here is open to the sea, but a heavy metal screen prevents anything larger than a minnow from swimming back and forth. The ceiling over the central part of the pool is flush with the surface of the water, however, so this stretch must be passed fully underwater.

There is a hungry school of skrool in here that attacks anything remotely foodlike in the water.

Skrool: hp 120; AC 8; No. of Attacks 4d10 divided among 4 victims; Dmg 1d4; THACO 16.

Second, a character who makes an Impossible No-

tice Skill Check will see a concealed panel in the wall. It can be easily popped open to reveal a computer keyboard and screen.

If any character has Programming skill, he can attempt an Average Skill Check. If successful, a panel slips open to reveal a secret corridor, at the same time covering the pool. Characters can walk to the next hatch with no difficulty.

If these procedures take more than 5 rounds, however, the skrool in the pool emerge and crawl toward the PCs, attacking in their less effective air-breathing mode.

Skrool out of water: hp 120; AC 8; No. of Attacks 4d4 divided among 4 victims; Dmg 1d4; THACO 19.

Welcome Blast

The next hatch leads into a large room, empty except for a hydrant-shaped object at the far end. A red light blinks on top of it and, as the door opens, it swivels around to lower a black tube at those who enter.

The gun waits one round for someone to produce a security pass. If none is forthcoming, the black tube starts spitting laser fire. It will keep shooting until it is disabled or it senses no living beings in the room with it.

Robot Gun: hp 60; AC 8; THACO 18; Dmg 1d12, ROF 2, Max Range within room.

Special: The robot gun is disabled if it sustains 60 hit points of damage. Alternately, a character who states that he is shooting for the red light must hit AC 2. Any successful hit on the red light (the gun's fire control center) disables the gun.

Lab #1

This room is used for indoctrinating new research assistants. It has a variety of dishes and basins, each of which is filled with some failed attempt at genetic engineering. Most are varieties of plants, mollusks, and insects, but some of the most pathetic include mutated birds, fish, and even mammals.

Conference Room

This long, antiseptic chamber contains tables, chairs, and computer equipment. If no alarm has yet

been sounded, it probably will be now: There are 2d6 scientists lounging around here, sipping coffee and eating kelpcakes.

Scientists: hp 10; AC 10; no attacks.

Main Lab

This huge chamber is where the heart of the work at En-We-To occurs. Thirty deep vats line each side, containing a distasteful array of works in progress. The exact nature of these projects is left to the referee's imagination.

Some of the vats—those with the largest contents—are linked directly to the sea, while all of them are carefully regulated with agitation, nutrients, electrical stimulation, and other procedures fully equipped and installed. Other containers—six in all—are exceptionally small, and these are the ones containing the bacteriological viruses. They are marked with the universal skull and crossbones warning.

There will be 1d10 + 20 technicians and scientists in here. Like those in the conference room, they are not combatants.

There are a number of ways that the work performed here—and thus the entire plot of Dr. Antilles—can be sabotaged. A simple bashing and crashing will do it—if a character spends about 1 round per vat. The power can be interrupted, or the pressure released to fill the room with water, or the equipment can be burned. A combination of these techniques is guaranteed to be successful and will take only a few rounds.

There is a 50% chance that Sirine will be found here, if no alarm has yet sounded. Otherwise, she will be in her private apartments. If surprised here, she will immediately, though surreptitiously, attempt to sneak out through the secret escape door shown on the map.

Business Office

This luxuriously appointed room contains the massive desk and files of Dr. Antilles. The whole sordid story of her great-grandfather's dream, and her own further distortion of that legacy, can be found by one who wants to spend many hours investigating records. She maintains her records on paper and on microfilm, as well as in computer storage.

Of particular note is a file on Newporg. It contains the shipping manifest for the toxin that was to poison Newporg. The shipment was sent to the

New Frontier Bazaar, a huge marketplace in a space station orbiting the Earth.

An attached note records the doctor's observations:

At the Bazaar, the director will pick up the toxin with which to annihilate the arcology. I believe the traitor enjoys the irony—that, in this treachery, death will be taken to Newporg in the guise of life.

Still, I must wonder, how one with such power and prestige can turn against the very people that awarded such stations. It is a question that will no doubt linger on, long after Newporg has withered and died.

Further perusal will not reveal the name or the sex of the traitor, but only confirm that he or she is a director of Newporg—that is, Cletus Gorki, Lars Rolton, Steffa Sorti, or Max Dodder.

The manifest indicates that the shuttle to the Bazaar docked at berth C12.

Private Apartments

This living space is outfitted in a combination of gaudy Victorian and futuristic next century plastic and chrome. Invading characters will be confronted by the two genetically designed bodyguards that protect Sirine. Each is a tall, bald, strapping figure of a man. She calls them Adonis and Bruno, though there is little personality to differentiate them. They are designed specifically for combat and other physical activities.

Adonis: hp 22; AC 3; THACO 13.

Weapon: Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800.

Bruno: hp 28; AC 2; THACO 14.

Weapon: Heat gun: Dmg 2d6, ROF 1, Max Range 60.

Sirine will also join in the battle, armed with a laser pistol, as long as it looks like her side is winning. If, however, things start to go badly she will order her two bodyguards to continue attacking. She will then try to slip through one of the secret doors into the escape pod. This is a submersible space shuttle that can be activated within 1 round of her entering it. By the next round, there will be a flurry of bubbles and she'll be gone.

The Other Interests of Dr. Antilles

Dr. Antilles may very well escape from this encounter with the PCs. Her best operation ruined, she will not soon forget those who brought her down, and she will quickly reorganize at another location with revenge on her mind.

Sirine has a villa and estate outside of Madrid, where she vacations frequently under an assumed name. She has a yacht, named *Sea of Tranquility*, that operates out of Jakarta, and she has diverted a significant amount of RAM's money into a small firm known as Giant Shipping, which is based in Vancouver. Even after being defeated at Ento Island, Dr. Antilles will still have sizable assets in material and money and more than 200 people in her employ. Her agents will eventually track the PCs down—a challenge for a future adventure.

Aftermath

If Dr. Antilles flees the island, all work at the lab will come to a halt. If the PCs take steps to destroy the factory and its ability to produce more genetic abominations, they may easily do so. If instead they leave things as they found them, the factory will be up and running again in a year or two, complete with a RAM budget and a new, highly motivated director.

Actually, much of the Ento Island facility can be restructured into an important research laboratory. RAM has kindly financed an extensive operation that the Delphs would like to get their hands on. The facilities are state-of-the-art, and though they have been used for evil purposes up until now, they could easily be retooled for beneficial work.

The PCs will ultimately have to decide on the spot what to do with the captured facility. There will still be many Terrines in the area, but without their leader they will most likely attempt to escape to the vastness of the ocean. Any Delphs on the scene will wish to take over the complex for their own purposes, but the PCs, acting on behalf of Newporg, may wish to negotiate a deal between the arcology and the Delphs: Newporg provides technology, certain resources, and a security force, and the Delphs provide the labor with which to operate the place. If the PCs suggest this kind of deal, the Delphs will not hesitate to accept it, at least in principle, and the PCs will be doing themselves a great service by getting in the ground floor of such a venture. After all, an underwater base of operations would be an in-

credible asset to future adventures on Earth or elsewhere in the inner solar system.

Both the Delphs and the other humans will agree, however, that most of the gennies in the vats should be set free to live their own lives, however wretched, in the sea. Many will survive and flourish in the richness of the surrounding ocean.

If the PCs manage to disrupt the activities of the lab even temporarily, word will quickly reach Newporg via the Delphs. None other than Buck Rogers himself will quickly rocket to the atoll, bringing with him the heartfelt gratitude of the citizens of the arcology and the world.

If the PCs have learned of the traitor, and they inform Buck of their discoveries, he will be able to learn that, on the date of the shipment to the New Frontier Bazaar, Rolfon, Sorti, and Dodder were all on a trade mission to that station. Of the directors, only Cletus Gorki remained on Earth.

Also, in case the PCs do not think of this themselves, Buck will point out that the delivery manifest indicates what dock the serum came to. Surely a dock foreman or other worker on the station will be able to remember who came in to pick up that crucial shipment.

A little trip into space, anyone?

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Earth, Pacific Ocean
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Military companies
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Varies
DIET:	Meat
INTELLIGENCE:	Low-average (8-11)
NO. APPEARING:	2d20
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT:	240, 600 Swim
HIT DICE:	2
THACO:	18
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d12
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	None
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	None

Genotype: The sharc is a modified Terrine—clearly a blend of that armored war creature with the Delph. None of the latter's sense of pastoral contentment has survived, however; the sharc is all killing machine, with the same cruel cunning as the pure Terrine.

Physical/Cultural:

Physical Size: 7 feet long, 300 lbs.

External Covering: Its skin resembles that of a Delph—it is smooth, rubbery, and lined with blubber. Patches of callus armor over vital areas resemble the innate armor of a Terrine.

Eyes: Small, with several closeable membranes.

Ears: Small holes well back in the skull.

Mouth: The sharc's mouth is a narrow slit with several rows of sharp fangs. The chin is recessed and the upper jaw protrudes. Several rows of gills mark the sharc's neck just above the shoulders.

Nose: Its nose has a pair of short slits which can be closed, fully watertight at any depth.

Cultural: Sharcs are deep-sea killing machines, and nothing more. They have no culture as such, existing only to dominate and destroy. Within a group of sharcs, there is an acknowledged leader (the most vicious) and one or more subordinates in any group of 6 or more, simulating the hierarchy of a military unit: When the leaders attack, the others follow suit without regard for their personal safety.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Offsetting their ruthless nature and the killing power of their jaws is the fact that sharcs are very ill adapted for existing outside of an undersea environment. They move very slowly on land, such that even the slowest player character can easily outdistance them. In addition, a sharc must ingest large quantities of salt water (10 gallons plus, per sharc) for



every 12-hour period when the creature is not immersed in brine.

Combat: Sharcs are relentlessly fierce in any combat situation. They will not retreat, but they may regroup for the purpose of carrying through an attack on an obviously weakened individual. In an underwater environment, where they can attack from all around a target, as many as four sharcs can assault the same victim in the same round. Above ground, where sharcs are much less mobile, only two can attack the same victim at once. They can use weapons, but are not afraid of taking on anything armed "only" with their powerful bite attack.

Habitat/Terrain: The sharc is the product of experiments conducted under RAM auspices in the Pacific Ocean. En-We-To is one of the centers of this testing. However, things have gotten slightly out of hand. The sharcs have taken over area around the lab and are using their inbred talents to attack and exterminate their natural enemy, the Delphs. Bali Low has provided the perfect starting point for this campaign, since it—unlike most Delph communities—is fixed in place.

Ecology: Since it was not designed to be a part of an ecosystem but rather to exist "outside of nature," the sharc serves no purpose in the community of marine life, except as a force to be reckoned with—and, more often than not, avoided.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Earth, Pacific Ocean
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary or mated pair
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Fish
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (4–6)

NO. APPEARING:	1–2
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	120, 600 Air
HIT DICE:	2
THACO:	18
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	None
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	None

Genotype: The albatoy traces most of its genes to the great albatrosses that once wheeled over the oceans of the world. However, some mammalian elements have been introduced in order to increase the creature's brain size (thus slightly improving its intelligence) and enhance its carrying capacity.

The albatoy has been endowed with enough intelligence to understand basic commands, such as the names of places. As an indication of marsupial ancestry in some dim corner of its chaotic, genetically altered origin, the albatoy has a pouch on its abdomen, much like a female kangaroo's—though the pouch is found in both male and female albatoy. This pouch was intended for the carrying of documents or other objects when the albatoy performed courier duties—the task for which it was designed. The pouch can hold an object or a group of objects no larger than 18 inches by 12 inches by 6 inches and weighing no more than 10 pounds. If the pouch is loaded with anything larger or heavier, the albatoy will not fly and will spend all its energy trying to remove the obstacle with its beak.

However, the issue of how much it can carry is basically an academic one. As Dr. Antilles discovered after he created the bird, it turned out to be woefully inept at such purposeful tasks. He could not eliminate the creature's natural tendency to aimlessly follow the wind, or the current, or the fish. Within hours of leaving its roost, an albatoy would forget its intended destination. Instead it would be off, soaring on a serene inspection that would carry it across the oceans of the world.

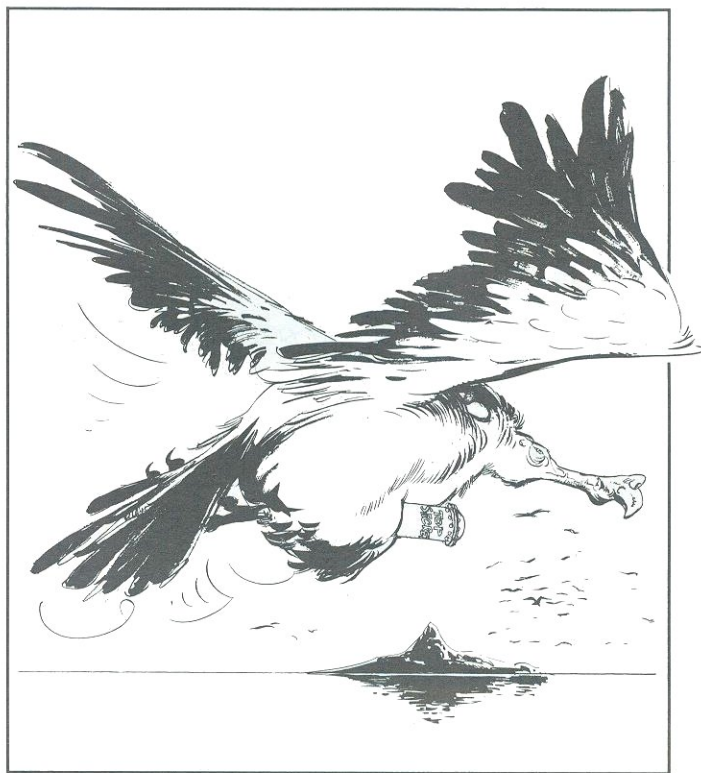
Physical/Cultural:

Physical Size: Wingspan 10 feet, weight 100 lbs.

External Covering: Feathers.

Eyes: White with pupils of deep green or blue, set on either side of the head.

Ears: Recessed into head.



Mouth: Beak.

Nose: On top of beak.

Cultural: Although it is intelligent enough to have a semblance of a social system, the albatoy's consciousness is devoid of such considerations. The birds do not mingle with other creatures, even others of their own kind, and have no lasting concerns other than the basic desire for self-preservation.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Nothing of note, aside from the characteristics described elsewhere.

Combat: The albatoy is not aggressive, and will only use its natural attack (piercing with its beak) in self-defense. When confronted by a threat or a potential threat, it takes to the air and, because of its incredible endurance, is usually able to outdistance its pursuer.

Habitat/Terrain: These great birds can soar for many days without touching land or water. When they do descend, they can land, eat, and sleep on the ocean or on any small piece of land that presents itself through the vast watery expanse of the albatoy's domain.

Ecology: Albatoy eat fish, alive or dead. If dead, they don't care too much how long it's been that way. Consequently, the flesh of the albatoy is not considered good eating by any other creature.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Earth, Pacific Ocean
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	School
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Constant
DIET:	Fish or other meat
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal

NO. APPEARING:	5d20 + 100
ARMOR CLASS:	8
MOVEMENT:	90, 600 Swim
HIT DICE:	1 hp per member
THACO:	16
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1d10 per victim
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Swarm
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	None

Genotype: The skrool combines the size, speed and ferocity of the barracuda with the innate community attack of the piranha. Originally developed as guardians of Pacificus against external seaborne threats, the skrool are now a major force in the open seas around the islands. Because of their vast numbers, they can emerge victorious in combat even against a group of sharks.

Physical/Cultural:

Physical Size: 3 to 4 feet long, weighing about 20 lbs. A school is a rough sphere 50 to 100 feet in diameter, depending on the number of individuals making it up.

External Covering: Scales.

Eyes: Black and bulging, on either side of the head.

Ears: None.

Mouth: Wide and capable of snapping shut with force, lined with razor-sharp teeth.

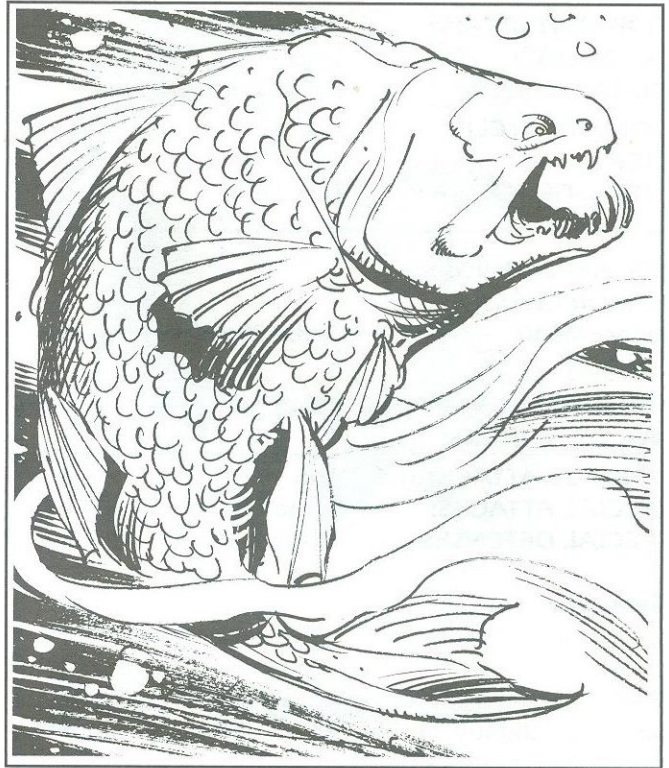
Nose: None, though there are gills on either side of the body.

Cultural: Skrool operate in large schools which surround and attack victims for food.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Skrool are terrible sea predators when acting as a group (which they always do), but they are restricted to animal intelligence, so that they will attack mindlessly even against opposition of overwhelming power.

Combat: In the water they will seek to swarm around an enemy, attacking from all directions. A school of skrool can attack up to 4 individuals with its full number of attacks apiece; if more targets than this are present, roll 4d10 to determine the number of total attacks made, and divide these as evenly as possible among the targets.

Every hit point of damage inflicted on a school of skrool kills or incapacitates one individual fish. Skrool



will persist in their attacks even in the face of horrendous losses.

In addition, skrool have a limited ability to move overland. Their THACO becomes 19 on land, however, and only 1d4 skrool can attack an individual victim.

Habitat/Terrain: Skrool prefer the depths of the ocean (at least 100 feet below the surface), but will move closer to the surface in search of prey. They have no lair as such, but may congregate near an underwater outcropping when not actively hunting.

Ecology: In the ecosystem of the ocean, skrool are both predator and prey. Schools are occasionally decimated by other attackers that swim through the community at high speed, ingesting and devouring as many individuals as they can without slowing down and subjecting themselves to a return attack.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Earth, Pacific Ocean
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Family
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Constant
DIET:	Kelp and plankton
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-6)

NO. APPEARING:	1d12
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT:	540 Swim
HIT DICE:	16
THACO:	16
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2d12
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	None
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	None

Genotype: The Jonah is a genetic adaptation of the humpback whale. It is quite similar in appearance to its progenitor, except that the hump is significantly more pronounced. It has a powerful tailfin, and a pair of smaller fins nearer the creature's head for guidance.

The jonah has two flaps of skin midway through the hump in its back that are normally sealed to lock out water. They can be opened to reveal "hatches" about six feet in diameter. Each of these leads into a separate area within the whale's hump. Each of the two compartments is about 12' long, 8' wide, and 5' high. There is room for eight passengers to sit comfortably, or for an equivalent volume of cargo to be carried.

Within one of these compartments is a soft patch of tissue. By picking up vibrations of voice, the whale can "hear" with this tissue. Also, since the membrane senses pressure, it serves as a way for a passenger to control the beast—similar to the role of a bit in a horse's mouth.

Physical/Cultural:

Physical Size: 100 feet long, weighing 50 to 60 tons.

External Covering: Thick skin with a heavy layer of blubber underneath.

Eyes: Large, with closeable membranes.

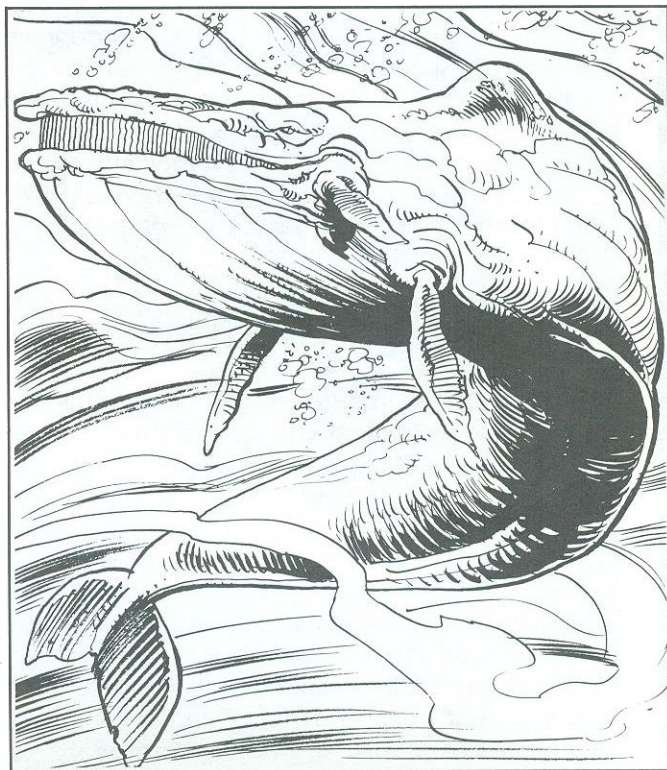
Ears: Holes set back in skull, similar to those of a Delph.

Mouth: A wide maw, lined with baleen. It has a hard, sharp edge around the outside, developed so that the creature would have some capacity for combat.

Nose: None, though it has a blowspout just as its whale prototype.

Cultural: The jonah is a beast of burden that is willing to accept simple commands and carry them out. Otherwise, it is a social creature that lives a peaceful life.

While not truly sentient, jonahs can learn to associate places with sounds; thus, for example, a trained jonah knows that the sound "En-We-To" means that its pas-



senger wants it to go to that atoll. Jonahs are also able to respond to commands such as "attack" and "flee," and new commands can be easily taught and learned.

Jonahs show great perseverance in the following of a command, and will remember a command almost indefinitely if thwarted in an attempt to carry it out. They respond to affection with loyalty. If abused, a jonah will possibly challenge its abuser, but despite their great size they are easily cowed by the infliction of pain.

Advantages/Disadvantages: None, aside from those noted elsewhere.

Combat: The hard ridge of bone around a jonah's mouth is capable of inflicting 2d12 hit points of damage on a character or creature caught within that maw. However, because of its huge and unwieldy size, the jonah cannot attack as effectively as one might expect; hence, its low THACO.

Habitat/Terrain: The jonah is exclusively a marine creature and cannot survive or move out of water. However, because of its whale ancestry, it must surface at least once every hour to take in a supply of fresh air.

Ecology: The jonah is noncarnivorous and nonbelligerent, but is usually not attacked by the predators of the sea because of its great size and its ability to cause heavy damage to an attacker when it must defend itself.

CHAPTER 4: THE NEW FRONTIER BAZAAR

The adventure reaches its climax, appropriately enough, in space. Here in the New Frontier Bazaar the PCs should be able to expose and capture Newporg's powerful traitor, and thus bring the adventure to a conclusion. However, if their efforts aren't quite so successful, they could find themselves fleeing for their lives to the far corners of the solar system . . . or worse.

Picking Up the Trail

The information discovered in Sirine Antilles's office should point out to the PCs that there *is* a traitor in the upper echelons of Newporg's power structure. However they react to this information, the referee should subtly encourage them to see that their only chance to put all the pieces of this mystery together will be to go to the orbiting flea market known as the New Frontier Bazaar—that's where all the clues are pointing.

Their most direct clue is the manifest, which clearly has the date and the docking bay number for the delivery of virus. If they don't notice this vital fragment of information themselves, it will be discovered by NEO investigators among the wreckage of the site. These investigators will, through Buck Rogers, encourage the PCs to track down the final pieces of the mystery, putting an end to this explosive situation. If the truth be known, the PCs are closer to their final goal than they realize, and the climactic confrontation is just a quick space flight away.

Into Space

Exceptionally motivated characters will probably be ready to blast into space right from En-We-To, and, if they have their own ship, they will probably want to take it. Otherwise, Buck offers the PCs a lift to the New Frontier Bazaar. Although he's got some urgent business on Mars and thus won't be able to hang around for the finale, he'll be glad to help with transportation.

Whether or not they leave from En-We-To, Newporg, or elsewhere on Earth, the trip to the Bazaar takes about eight hours. They approach the huge station—one of the first of the big colonies—from Sunside, and thus get a good look as they match orbits with it.

The station quickly grows from a pinpoint of light into a huge wheel that seems to fill the black, star-speckled sky. The rim of the station is brilliantly illuminated, in letters so huge they are readable with the unaided eye from 10 miles away:

"Welcome to the New Frontier Bazaar."

More details become apparent as you close the distance still further, feeling the steady drag of gentle deceleration tug at your feet. Great mirrors surrounding the spokes of the wheel gleam, directing their pure energy into the station's power collectors on the interior rim of the wheel. The white lights of the docking bay shine like a beacon from the open doors of this huge cargo zone, at the hub of the wheel. Several small ships are lined up, with a new one entering every few minutes. Through the spokes you can see the blazing drives of ships leaving from the other side of the docking bay. A long line of ships—cruisers, fighters, yachts, and transports in varying degrees of disrepair—is tethered to the hub.

The New Frontier Bazaar is famed throughout the system, and it is reasonable to expect that even inexperienced characters have heard of it. The referee can, therefore, describe it to the PCs as background knowledge. Of course, the more space travel a character has done, the more likely he will be familiar with—perhaps even have visited—the Bazaar.

The Bazaar is a place unique in the solar system. It is primarily a marketplace where characters of all races congregate to barter the wares of a half dozen worlds. Buying and selling, wheeling and dealing—there is a frantic pace of economic activity all around the entire rim of the Bazaar.

Originally started as a colony, the Bazaar has taken over all of the structure's interior space, including those sections that had formerly been agricultural and recreational/park zones, to create a dazzling array of commercial hustle and bustle.

The spaceships tethered to the docking bay are the first visible evidence of the vast market within. Each of the ships is clearly labeled with a price and a vendor. The former is subject to barter with the latter, who can usually be found and haggled with in the nearly weightless lounges around the docking bay.

The New Frontier Bazaar

This huge station whirls slowly about its axis, creating an artificial sense of gravity on the inner surface of its great wheel. Many deep space facilities take advantage of this spin gravity to satisfy the basic need for gravity—humans cannot generally live in zero gravity for great lengths of time without considerable discomfort, decalcification of their bones, deterioration of their muscles, etc. Spin gravity gives a station the best of both worlds, since the sense of gravity within the station is generated by centrifugal force, and thus is considerably stronger close to the rim of the wheel—it is virtually nonexistent in the area around the hub.

Interestingly, spin gravity effect is not a flawless substitute for true gravity. No matter how large the station, the centrifugal force a standing person interprets as gravity will be greater at his feet than at his head. This is known as the Coriolis effect, and if steps are taken it is not disabling. Those not used to this in 25th-Century space stations find themselves subject to a sort of motion sickness and light-headedness—in the 25th Century there are common medicines available to deal with these ailments. There are endless ramifications of spin gravity environments. Suffice it to say that people who live and work in them learn to cope with them relatively easily.

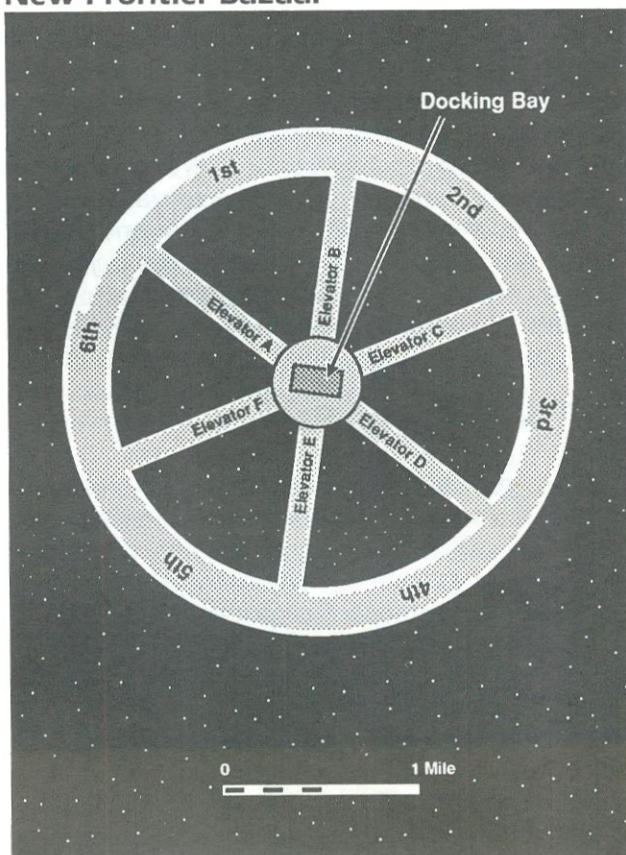
Law and Order in the Bazaar

The above terms are used very loosely, since legal niceties have never been the hallmark of this marketplace in space. Nevertheless, there is a hierarchy of power here that lurks in the background.

A loose confederation of merchants (a term that includes smugglers, at least as it relates to the Bazaar) establishes general policies, docking fees, and maintenance projects on the huge station. Totalling more than a thousand members, the confederation's working body is a committee of eight or nine merchants elected by their colleagues to serve for several years. This governing committee meets every few months, though it only rarely enacts new policies.

The committee takes a great interest, however, in ensuring that the status quo of the Bazaar is maintained. Troublesome businesses are occasionally evicted from the premises by the committee. These are usually places that have not paid sufficient bribes to justify their cost in security services, or are locations that have attracted the negative interest of powerful enemies, such as RAM.

New Frontier Bazaar



Certain policies are stationwide, and are enforced by the security teams that patrol all of the zones, markets, elevators, and the hub. The typical patrol is led by a sergeant, with 1d6 + 1 troops at his command.

Bazaar Security Sergeant (3rd level Terran warrior): hp 18; AC 4; THAC0 16; Str 16, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 12, Wis, 13, Cha 10, Tech 10.

Weapons: Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800. Sonic stunner: Dmg save vs. paralysis, ROF 1, Max Range 40.

Bazaar Security Guards (1st level Terran warriors): hp 5; AC 7; THAC0 20; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 7, Tech 10.

Weapons: Each trooper carries a laser pistol, and there is a 25% chance that one member of a patrol will have two grenades. Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800. Grenades: Dmg 4d10 or save, ROF 1, Max Range thrown.

These guards arrest thieves, incarcerate troublemakers, and investigate crimes. They are eminently bribeable, however, and unless a major crime has

been committed, they can usually be persuaded to look the other way.

Note, however, that vagrancy in the station is not permitted—the worst crime, after all, is not having enough money to offer a bribe. Anyone on the rim of the station must have a place to stay, or show proof of imminent departure or recent arrival. Those who cannot do so are sentenced to join the work crews of the station, generally for 2d4 months of sometimes dull and sometimes dangerous work.

1. The Docking Bay

The central hub of the station is open to space on both sides, so there is no atmosphere. The bay is divided into six different ports, lettered A-F. Each of these ports has accommodations for twenty vessels of cruiser size or smaller. Larger vessels must transfer cargo to the station via smaller shuttles.

The bay is brightly lit, and generally contains 50-100% of its capacity of vessels. In fact, an overflow station has been placed into orbit nearby. A regular shuttle service runs between the two; the overflow station primarily contains passenger docking facilities and hotel and restaurant accommodations.

The bay, even without an atmosphere, is filled with activity. Tractor-sized jet-lifts haul trains of cargo around; mechanics wearing spacesuits and rocketpacks dart around their giant charges; well-armed security teams patrol back and forth.

Each port is overseen by a single foreman, who supervises dockings and departures. The foreman wears a spacesuit, but generally works in a pressurized office with a huge, curving window that allows him to see what's going on in his bay.

The foreman has a staff of three or four customs officers, who mainly serve as gofers and rubber-stampers. One of these will be on hand personally to open the station airlock to an incoming ship.

Each docking bay is equipped with a main airlock and two peripheral airlocks for connecting to the arriving ship. Small vessels use only the main airlock. Larger ships anchor their own main airlock to the dock, and may also attach a peripheral airlock (or two).

These airlocks have no security locks on the space side of the door—anyone can pull up and open them. This is so that ships arriving under emergency circumstances can hook up to life support quickly, with no formality.

However, before the inner airlock door is released, providing travelers access to the space station, docking fees must be credited and cargo

manifests filed (electronically, of course). There is no cargo search, which is one of the things that makes the Bazaar so attractive to smugglers.

Robit freight-haulers are installed in each main airlock. These can be used, for an additional fee, for loading or unloading of cargo. Additional stevedore help, either robotic or gennie, is available through a quick call to the port foreman.

Station security patrols (see above) move through the docking bay areas constantly. There is a 25% chance that a patrol will be in a given port at any one time. If not, a summoned patrol will arrive in 3d6 minutes.

The hub of the station is a fully pressurized area, well stocked with cheap restaurants and bars, and little shops where one can acquire traveling necessities, send and receive messages, etc. Overnight accommodations can be found out on the rim, since most guests prefer sleeping with some gravity to hold them to the bed.

Investigations in the Docking Bay

If the PCs check with the foreman of port C (based on the manifest from En-We-To) they will learn that the current foreman is not the one on duty at the time the shipment from the island arrived. The foreman cheerfully (for a small bribe) furnishes his colleague's name—Wally Luber—together with the information that he lives in the Sohig district, and often spends his off-duty time at a place called "Bunny's Bar," down in Zone C.

Wally, the foreman says, would certainly be able to identify the purchaser of the goods from En-We-To. He also says "Geez, Wally's gettin' to be quite the celebrity—they other guys was real anxious to find him too!"

If questioned, the foreman explains that a team of police or something came through here an hour or two earlier. They wore uniforms that the foreman didn't recognize, though he guesses they "might be from Earth or something." These uniformed visitors also wanted to know who was supervising bay C12 when the toxin was delivered, and the foreman told them just what he told the PCs.

2. The Spokes

The spokes are six massive tubes that connect, through huge elevators, the docking bay to the station rim. The spokes, like the bays, are labeled A-F. Each spoke contains over a dozen elevators, each with 10 personnel movers capable of holding 25 human-sized passengers. The other two are huge

cargovators, with at least one on each spoke having a floor space of some 2500 square feet.

The elevator landings are generally fairly busy places, with $1d20+10$ individuals—merchants, buyers, security agents, mercenaries, smugglers, even families—generally scattered about.

The trip from the bay to the rim takes 15 minutes; characters must wait an average of $1d6$ minutes for an elevator. The wait can be important in cases of hot pursuit, for example.

No fee or security check is involved in using the elevators. They are pressurized, though cautious travelers wear spacesuits all the way down to the rim—about once a year, once of the ancient elevators suffers a catastrophic decompression.

A Word About the Competition

Naturally, RAM is paying close attention to the tremendous disruption that has crippled their genetics operations. The corporation is also keenly aware of the potential for compromised security arising from the En-We-To situation. They have dispatched a team of agents to investigate and tie up the loose ends of this unfortunate predicament. They have already visited the foreman, and they

have back-ups keeping an eye out for interference from non-RAM scum. Right now, they are one step ahead of the PCs.

The elevator landing in bay C is being guarded by four massive Terrines. They are standing all around the elevator's entrance, smoking and grunting in their harsh language, like off-duty soldiers. They are waiting for the PCs.

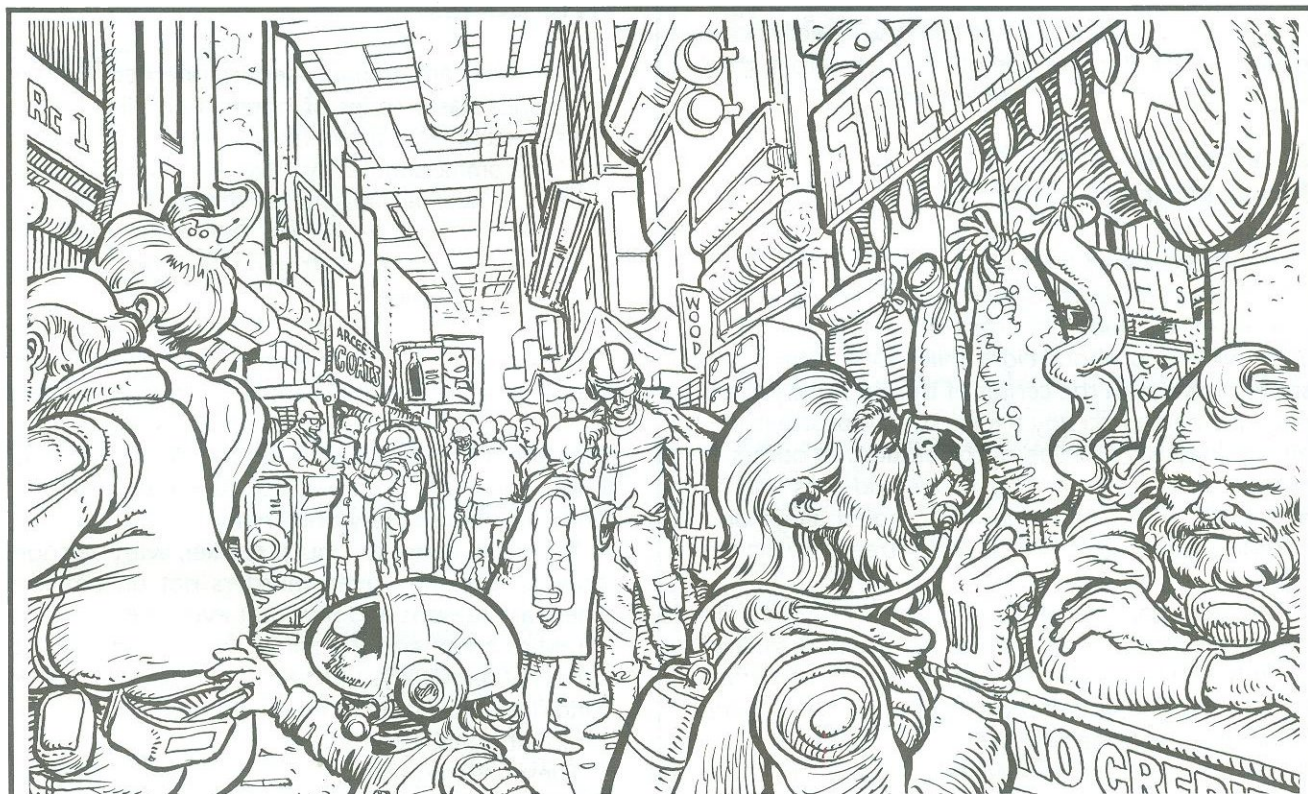
Fortunately, subtlety is not the Terrines' strong suit. Thus, it requires only an Easy Notice Skill Check for a PC to detect the Terrines at a good distance. (And, of course, if one character notices them, he will immediately tell all of his companions.)

If the PCs take no notice of the Terrines, the RAM enforcers will follow them onto an elevator. Otherwise, the confrontation will take place at the elevator landing—as the rest of the crowd quickly rushes for cover.

Terrines (4): hp 16; AC 4; THAC0 17.

Weapons: Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800.

These pin-eyed, flat-skulled, fang-toothed



A small slice of the activity in the bustling New Frontier Bazaar

monstrosities step forward. Their slitted noses flex open and shut in tension. Slowly, with painfully obvious nonchalance, they all turn to face the PCs.

The mission of these Terrines is simple: find the PCs and kill them. They have gotten good descriptive information from the security records at En-We-To—good enough that the Terrines won't miss the PCs, though they might also attack any other hapless group of adventurers who resemble them.

This is one of four RAM teams currently on the station. Each is here with orders to find and destroy the player characters. Only one team is in the hub area, however; the other three are down below, in Zones B, C, and D.

If the PCs choose to use a different elevator to the rim, they will avoid this attack, providing that they notice the Terrines before being discovered themselves. However, the elevators to Zones B and D are each under surveillance by a single agent, who can make radio contact with additional bands of Terrines on the rim. One of these bands will be contacted, and will meet the PCs at the base of the elevator if they used shaft B or D.

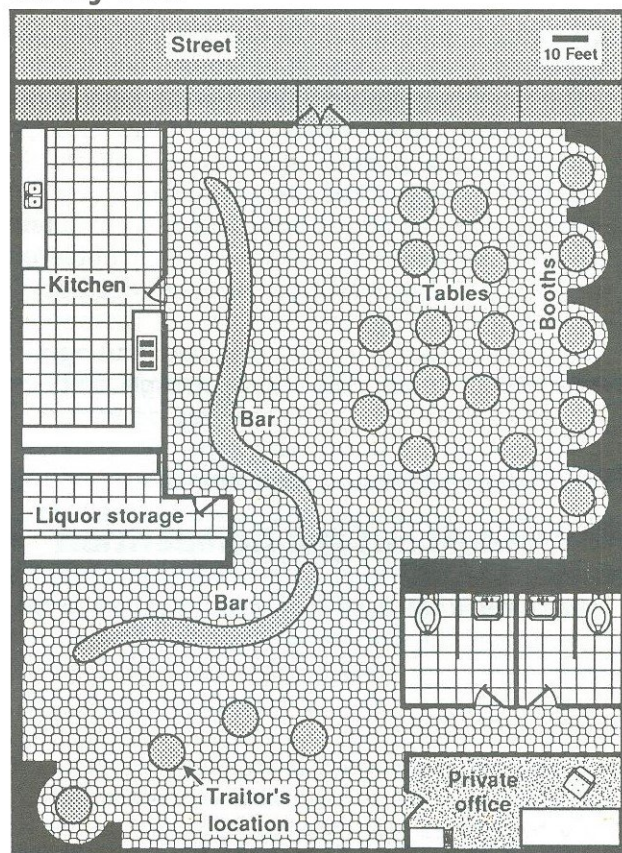
Shafts A, E, and F are not being watched, however, so if the PCs use one of these elevators, they will be able to descend unobserved.

3. The Rim and The New Frontier Bazaar

The Bazaar itself is a vast market that circles the entire rim of the space station. The outer rim of the station—the “floor,” in effect—is a strip not quite 200' wide and about eight miles long. One main street runs down the center of this. In some places, large properties occupy a long stretch of streetside, all the way to the edge of the station. In others, a tangled assortment of tiny shops and inns will be accessible only by the equally tangled alleys and corridors that twist from the main street toward the wall of the station less than 100' away.

The rim is divided into twelve distinct districts. Six of these districts lie directly under the spokes, and are referred to as Zone A, Zone B, etc. The other areas are considerably larger, occupying the sections of rim between the zones. These are referred to as the First Market, Second Market, and so on; there are six markets.

Bunny's Bar



The Zones

The zones are primarily service-oriented. Each of the zones has a series of hotels, boarding rooms, bars, restaurants, theaters, and clubs. The zones have accommodations for several thousand people apiece, as well as literally hundreds of restaurants and drinking establishments. The theaters cater to tastes ranging from electronic screenings to classic drama to burlesque.

Zone A is reserved for those with expensive tastes, and has high standards of behavior and dress—and prices to match. Glamorous dining lounges are the norm, with the most exclusive offering window-side seating—dine with a view of Earth, Luna, or distant space! Zone A is well policed, and crime here is very uncommon.

The other zones are much seedier, with barroom brawls, robberies, even murders not uncommon. There are saloons and bars that even the police are afraid to enter, and the zones include tangled networks of back alleys, ductwork, small and cramped lodgings, and pools of moisture that collect in the rampant humidity of these cheap zones.

These are the alleys and dingy rooms where most of the smuggling transactions are made, where illicit exchanges occur, and even lives are bought and

sold. A veritable cornucopia of intoxicants is peddled here, many of them powerfully addictive, some reputedly even designed to place the user under the absolute control the supplier.

Zone A

This zone is distinguished by its well-lighted thoroughfares, with many small jetcabs bustling about. Ferns and flowering shrubs are planted at most intersections. Building fronts are generally gleaming steel or mirrored glass, with small, understated signs announcing the names of restaurants and hotels.

Zone B

This zone is designed along the style of a pre-20th Century European town, with fake wooden exteriors on buildings, "gaslights" (electronically operated), and a multitude of sidewalk cafes. Musical acts are common at street corners, and jugglers, magicians, and other entertainers commonly perform for passersby.

Much of the zone is well lighted and fairly safe, but the darker alleys off the main thoroughfares are the scene of many muggings, illicit transactions, and other underworld activity.

Zone C

This zone is the favorite of many spacefarers, for it is famed for the variety and quality of foodstuffs available here. Restaurants of virtually every ethnic population remaining on Earth, as well as more exotic offerings from throughout the solar system, are common. Though the atmosphere is much plainer than that of Zone A, the prices are considerably lower as well.

Zone C is also home to a number of rowdy bars, taverns, and nightclubs. These are not generally concerned with providing entertainment or ambience so much as ensuring that their customers have lots of cheap liquor available at all times.

Zone D

This is the seediest of the Bazaar's zones, with dark streets, smoky bars, and cheap flophouses the norm. It is the zone where the poorest of space travelers seek lodging, and also the place where one goes if he wishes to leave no tracks, since the sheer number of shabby hotels and boarding houses here makes it difficult to locate someone.

The streets and alleys are narrow and dark. Often, those who cannot afford even the minimal accommodations of the zone will try to sleep here. This is a risky business, however, since these vagrants are routinely collected by station security personnel and sentenced to labor with the Bazaar's maintenance crews.

Zone E

This zone is entirely devoted to entertainment establishments, most of them of the low-class and sensational variety—the 25th-Century equivalents of carnival side shows and cheap cabarets. Zone E prides itself on featuring entertainments that cater to even the most outlandish tastes.

Zone F

This is the low-budget version of Zone A. The restaurants, clubs, and accommodations are nice, but not as nice—nor as expensive—as those in the neighboring Zone A. Still, a traveler can find comfortable lodging and good food here. Some of these establishments also feature "spaceside" seating, with vast plastiglass windows allowing patrons a view of the infinite cosmos.

The Markets

The markets occupy the strips between the zones. Each of these strips is more than a mile long, and contains a chaotic collection of shops, stores, stalls, and peddlers. They are always crowded.

At one time, perhaps, there was a plan to the bazaar. There is a concentration of robotics vendors in the First Market, for example, and mineral stockpiles and mining rights are traditionally exchanged in the Fourth Market. Also, the most exclusive vendors of the current Martian fashions in clothing and jewelry, as well as the most influential banking houses of the solar system, tend to have their places of business on either side of Zone A.

Some other lingering specialties remain. The Second Market contains virtually all of the genetic mutations markets on the station, and is heavily controlled by RAM—though the corporation goes to great lengths to keep its involvement in the background. The Third Market contains the brokerage houses for many of the foodstuff and commodities exchanges, at least those involving interplanetary trade. Food cargoes, as a rule, do not actually pass through the Bazaar, but the arrangements of trade are often made here.

These areas of specialty are the exceptions. Most of the markets are chaotic tangles of peddlers and shops, with no apparent rhyme nor reason. Virtually any service, from domestic help to a company of mercenaries, can be purchased somewhere in the markets—usually, in several places.

Goods for sale include the most advanced electronics and robotics equipment, fusion reactors, and gennies. There are also hand-made goods from the backward parts of Earth, medicinal and expedition supplies, bulk goods of any kind, spaceships and other vehicles, a vast assortment of weaponry, fuel, and communications devices. All of these things are common in the Bazaar; anything else you can think of is probably found here, but the degree of difficulty involved finding a specific item is left to the referee's discretion.

Bunny's Bar

This seedy dive is the hangout of Wally Luber, key witness to the whole affair. The PCs might be able to find him here; however, they are not the only ones who want to talk to him.

So does the traitor. He is Lars Rolfon, Newporg's Director of Security. He has brought a team of his agents with him, with the tale that Luber is the one who tried to smuggle the toxin into the arcology. Since Luber is the only witness who knows that Rolfon picked up the shipment from En-We-To, Lars figures his trail will be covered with this simple murder.

A pair of glowing pink rabbit ears proudly frame the doorway into Bunny's Bar. The place is tiny, dimly lit, and irregularly shaped. An electronic din shrieks and whines from powerful speakers. A haze of smoke fills the air.

Wally is not here yet, but Lars and his team of agents are in the back room. They are keeping an eye on the door, and will see the PCs if they enter, though it requires an Impossible Notice Skill Check for a PC to see the traitor in the shadows near the back of the bar.

Lars Rolfon (11th level Terran warrior): hp 56; AC 0; THACO 10; Str 16, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 10, Tech 13.

Weapon: Laser pistol: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800.

Security Agents (8): hp 7; AC 6; THACO 20.

Weapons: Laser pistols: Dmg 1d8, ROF 3/2, Max Range 800.

Lars will quickly figure out what is going on if the PCs show up. Talking fast, he convinces his men that the PCs are in league with Luber against Newporg. Lars leads his men in an attack, though an Average Notice Skill Check will alert one of the PCs that something funny is going on. The shootout lasts as long as Lars is alive—the security agents will not continue the battle if their leader goes down.

If reduced to 20 hit points or less, Lars will try to make a getaway. If he can reach the docking bay before the PCs, he will commandeer a spaceship and flee toward the sanctuary of the RAM offices on Mars. In any event, he is finished as a director of Newporg. If he lives, however, it will not be long before he begins to work some kind of plot to get even with the PCs.

Epilogue

With the identification of the traitor and, with luck, his capture or demise, this adventure is brought to a close. However, the grateful leadership of Newporg will always remember the contributions of the PCs.

There may also be some tangible awards for the PCs. Assuming that they are willing to play the part of heroes, the directors will offer the HiSTAV as a permanent gift. Also, if their performance was courageous and unfaltering, even in times of darkest danger, Buck Rogers himself offers any PC who wants it a commission as an officer in NEO.

With that, an entire solar system of adventure awaits. . . .

Buck Rogers in the 25th Century

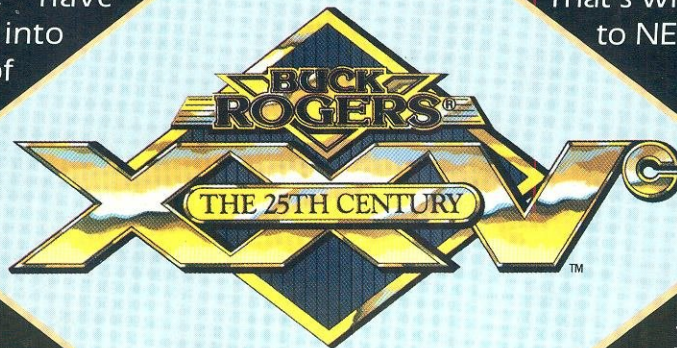
Welcome Home!

"You are cleared for de-orbital burn through avenue CJ-21, landing confirmed for 09:41:30, Newporg Pad ZY-1. And from Newporg and the other Los Angelorg Arcologies, welcome!"

Six centuries of disasters, both natural and man-made, have molded Los Angelorg into what it is. The worst of the rubble is impassable, unlivable, overrun with ratwursts, coyodorgs, and other vermin. Here and there in the sprawls are human communities, scraping out a living from the twisted wreckage of a once mighty city. Only in the arcologies, forcibly isolated from the sprawls, can citizens really enjoy the luxuries that the 25th century has to offer.

Of course, the people of the arcologies are the foreordained emissaries of Los Angelorg to the Solar System. From their mile-high sky-

scrapers they have proclaimed their independence from RAM influence, casting it aside with flagrant, possibly premature audacity. The leaders of the Newporg Arcology know that their boldness has cut RAM to the quick, and they are quite certain that they have a traitor in their midst. That's where the newest recruits to NEO come in.



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