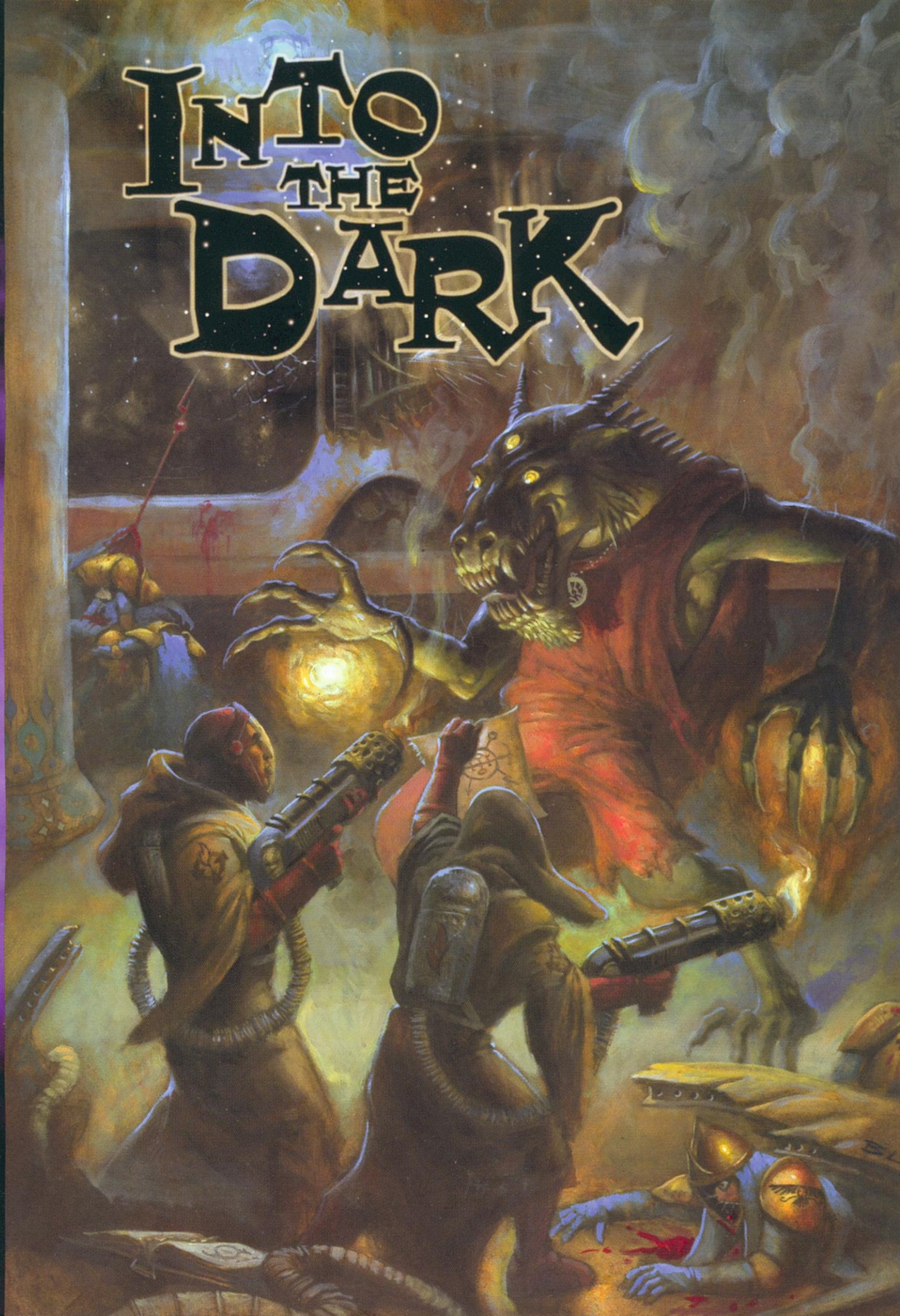


INTO THE DARK



FADING SUNS™

INTO THE DARK



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Pilgrims:

Woe to you who travel the Dark without a spark of Light in thy breast. The Absence of Stars shall devour you and a chill, unending hell shall be thy fate far from warmth and joy. Until the Holy Flame once more conflagrates through the universe in its fiery, final embrace, redeeming what was old and remaking anew.

And if you heed not this dire advice, then carry you a torch that you may at the least burn the maw that swallows thee.

Scanned by Ivan Krenyenko.

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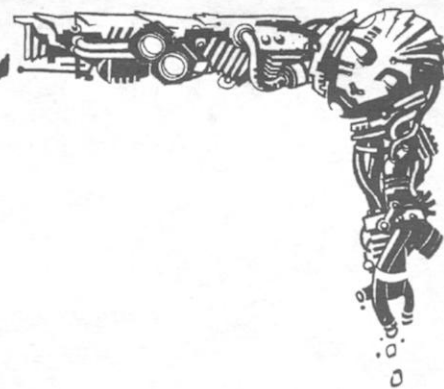


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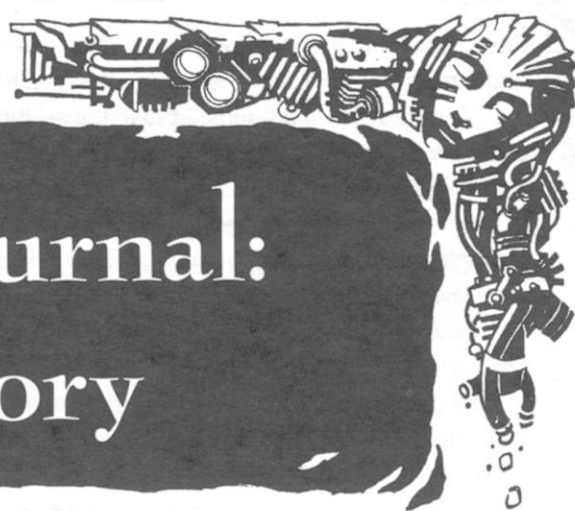
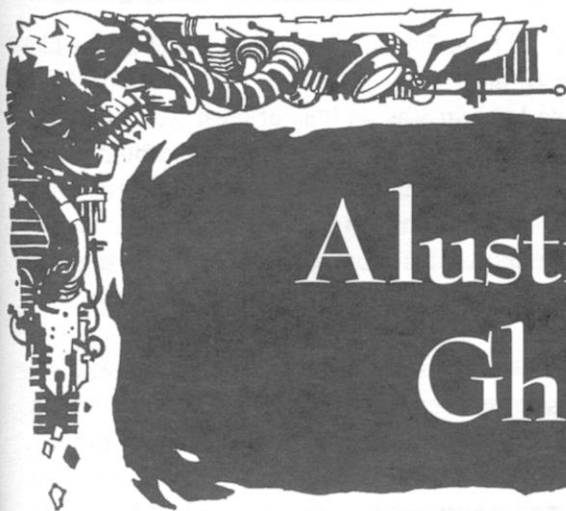
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Contents

Alustro's Journal: Ghost Story	4
Introduction: Casting Light	8
Thorn Manor	10
Dark Liner	40
Love's Labors	48
The Maltese Gargoyle	62
The Ancestor's Tomb	78
Short Dramas	104







Alustro's Journal: Ghost Story

"You, priest, surely you've heard worse tales," said the man with a scar descending down the length of his left cheek, its chalk-white, puckered trail reaching to his neck. His eyes bored into me, seeking both a challenge and an answer to his hopes.

I cleared my throat. "Oh, yes. Far worse."

Cardanzo, sitting to my left, smiled and sipped his beer, and Sanjuk, to my right, raised an eyebrow. The scarred man, one Lt. Harbald Drax of the Muster, leaned across the table, attentive.

"Do tell, friar," he said, his eyes still on me as he motioned behind him to his comrades, summoning them over. I took a sip of beer myself as I waited for the mercenaries to pull up chairs, each of them eyeing me suspiciously.

Once they had settled, I put my mug down and stared intently at the wood grain of the table, as if seeing some augury there.

"It was dark that night on Midian during the crop-gathering season. Peng-Lai, the Woman in the Moon, did not come out that night to play her lyre. Only torches lit the edge of the lake where the men gathered to administer justice...."

The room grew quiet as ears turned to listen attentively. Smoke from a dozen different weeds from half as many worlds floated over our heads, misting the wan light from the lanterns hung by each table. The room was full of silhouettes, with few features discernable from over an arm's length away.

"Their captive struggled against his bonds, but they were drawn tight about him and made of strong-threaded hemp. If he could only reach his wireblade, he would be free. But his weapon, along with the rest of his devil's gear, had been taken from him, distributed among the vigilantes who car-

ried him, kicking all the way, to the lake's edge.

"The old headman, leader of the village gang, turned from the dark waters and regarded the captive. He nodded to the men and they began wrapping more cord around the bound man, these ones tied with stones and rocks of varied sizes.

"The captive, frantically trying to dislodge the stones, cried out to his accusers: 'This is illegal! I demand you cease immediately and free me! How dare you even lay hands upon me! When my family discovers your crime, you shall all be killed, and your children sold into slavery!'

"The old man looked on, no emotion on his face. 'I reckon it's no worse than what you'd do to us if we didn't take justice into our own hands. You're an evil man, Baron Michaelo. The Pancreator will judge what's wrong and right here.'

"'You have no proof for your accusations!' the criminal cried.

"Don't need it. This ain't no Reeves' court. You killed them children with this here Republican sword,' he said as he held out the criminal's wireblade hilt, 'and carved horrible symbols and signs into their flesh before dumping them into the lake. I don't know who you tried to sell their souls to, but I tell you they are the Pancreator's children — they're in a better place now, not that hell you intended for them.'

"The criminal quit his struggling and an ugly grin stretched across his face. 'Do you know what I wrote into their skin, old fool? Compacts and deals, sealed with blood. Agreements which cannot be broken by your petty justice. Do what you will to me. I shall wreak my vengeance upon all of you one by one. Your own avarice shall be your undoing!'

"'Throw him in!' the old man yelled, and the vigilantes



lifted the criminal — writhing in their grasp — and flung him into the lake. The stones quickly dragged him into the dark depths. A few air bubbled broke the surface but their coming eventually slowed and finally stopped.

"The men dragged their tired bodies to the nearby village and each returned home, lighting a small candle to burn through the rest of the night.

"Over the coming weeks, the village returned to normal. What children still lived were allowed to play outdoors once more. With each day, they were allowed to roam farther and farther from their parents' sight, until they once more played like all children do, roaming far and wide over the nearby hills and dales.

"But it was not the children the villagers had need to fear for. All those men who had participated in the murder of Baron Michaelo came to calamity, one by one. First, there was the butcher. He had kept the baron's fine hunting dagger for his own, and used it to skin what deer others brought to him for preparation. One day, while skinning an ontagont with the knife, he slit his own throat with one well-determined swipe. Others soon found him, his blood mixed on the floor with the split innards of his butchered animals. They assumed it was suicide, anguish over his lost child.

"Next, however, died the tanner. He had kept for himself bottles of the powerful beverage the baron carried with him, a vintage from some far world none knew where. He used such bever to console his guilty soul on the many nights that had passed since he had helped to throw the baron into his watery grave. One night, he drank three whole bottles. His body was found by his wife, and the local apothecary discovered that one of the bottles held not wine but sweetened poison from the glands of a vicious Ungavoroxian beast.

"More vigilantes soon died, each helped along by some item pilfered from the dead baron: his synthsilk rope used to hang the wrangler, his travel rations to choke the baker, his velvet cape to smother the weaver. Soon, the only one left alive from that night was the headman who had personally condemned the baron.

"He fled the village, believing it to be cursed and haunted, and took to the hospitality of his family in the city.

Surely here, far from that damned lake, he could escape his fellows' grisly fate.

"Among his gear was an item of great worth, one he meant to sell once he reached the city, for it would make him rich for the rest of his days. After his cousins showed him his room, he curled up on the bed, exhausted after the long ride. He clutched his treasure in his hands, fearing that his own family would pilfer his bags seeking loot. Nothing would prevent his selling the thing on the morrow.

"He awoke as the sun crept through his window, casting its accusing light upon his eyes. He stretched and yawned and immediately doubled up in pain. He stared at his body

and the blood welling up over the bedsheets — his nightclothes torn to shreds, deep, precise cuts all over his skin. His body was laced with symbols and images arcane and unholy, not unlike those the baron had carved upon his young victims.

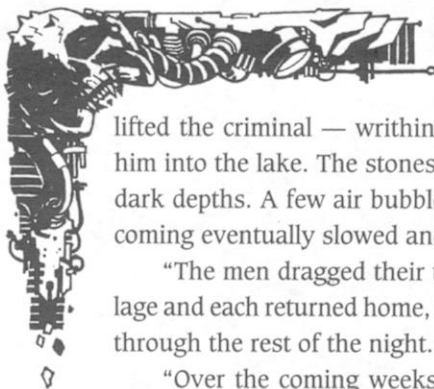
"The headman stared aghast at the unreadable text of his flesh and groaned as his sight fell upon his hand, which he now realized still clutched the treasure he had so passionately guarded before falling into sleep. He moaned in horror and released the hilt of the wireblade. It slipped from the bed and rolled across the

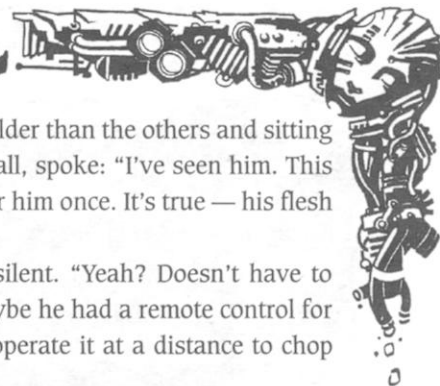
floor, coming to rest in the corner of the room.

"He leapt from the room and ran into the streets, screaming for a priest, for a healer, for anyone who could save his soul flame. A trail of blood followed him, for his wounds could not seal — so perfect had been their cutting, there was no edge where flesh could adhere to flesh. He died by the time he reached the next block, his blood having run completely from him.

"The Church authorities were summoned to investigate. Upon seeing the flesh glyphs, they scoured the headman's gear, searching for any signs of the man's killer. They found the wireblade on the floor, and recognized the crest carved into its pommel.

"Three days later, a young Eskatonic investigator called upon the Michaelo mansion and was greeted by a servant. Led into a vast library, he waited only a few minutes before the baron arrived, fresh from his lunch, its strong smell pervading his clothes. The noble apologized for his appearance,





claiming to have suffered a long illness that caused his flesh to become pasty white and his skin to heal wounds but slowly.

"The Eskatonic, nauseous from the smell, produced the wireblade and asked if it were his. The baron claimed it, and said he had lost it when his boat capsized in a lake to the south, well over two seasons ago. He had thought it long gone beyond his reach.

"The priest, too sick to interview the man much longer, forgot the urgency of his mission in his desire to once more breath fresh air. He bid the baron farewell, found his own way out, and mounted his horse in the courtyard.

"If there's one thing I cannot abide,' he said to his horse, 'it's the smell of dead fish.' He then rode back to the city and went about his daily prayers, thinking no more upon the matter."

I sat back and took a long sip of my beer, watching the faces of those who leaned near.

Scarface crinkled his brow in thought. "What happened then?"

I shrugged. "I don't know. I heard this tale when I was a young novitiate on Midian. Priests in my order swore that the baron still existed in his mansion and sometimes rode out at night on missions of retribution against any serf who dared to stand against the nobility."

One of the mercenaries spoke up. "I don't buy it. It's too much like a morality tale. Keeps the peasants in line." Others grunted assent.

A smallish mercenary, older than the others and sitting in a booth against the far wall, spoke: "I've seen him. This Baron Michaelo. I worked for him once. It's true — his flesh stank of the rotten sea."

The mercenaries grew silent. "Yeah? Doesn't have to mean he was a warlock. Maybe he had a remote control for the wireblade, so he could operate it at a distance to chop that guy up."

The old merc leaned forward: "What about the rest of his stuff? You think his knife and cloak were remote-control, too? There's things out there no guild scientist can name, boys, and it'll get us all in the end."

Scarface smiled and guffawed. "Ah, it's just a ghost story, Colonel. It don't mean nothing. Just a story to scare good folk is all. Might work on peasants, but not toughs like us. Right, guys?"

"Gehenne, no!" one merc yelled, and another added: "You gotta try harder than that to get us, priest!"

The mercs got up and went back to their tables, scattering again into small groups. Scarface looked at me. "Good try, friar. But next time add a haunted starship or something. You know, something that could actually happen!" He stood and stumbled to the bar, bellowing for a refill.

Cardanzo looked at me. "Was the story true?"

"I really don't know. But I do know one thing: I still can't stand the smell of dead fish."



Introduction: Casting Light

Things Sentients Were Not Meant to Know

This book is called **Into the Dark** for a reason — it thrusts player characters into situations beyond the ken of everyday knowing, into events seemingly supernatural and inimical to science, or even into the darkness that hides in human hearts, from small betrayals to murderous intents.

“The Dark” is the Church’s term for the threatening Unknown, a zone beyond the fields we know, populated with all manner of outlaw thoughts, exiled entities and anything that doesn’t properly fit into a priest’s conception of How Things Should Be.

It is given its most palpable form in the void between solar systems, the region past a jumpgate’s orbit, where the heat of a star is weakest. Although light still travels through this forsaken realm — for do we not still perceive the distant stars? — it is believed that their position and intensity is dimmed by travel through the murky ether, such that humans couldn’t plot the proper position of distant planets even if their science allowed it. Or so the Church has said, putting to rest any ordained attempt to resurrect the lost arts of astrogation.

But the Dark resides not only amidst the stellar voids; it also lurks in the souls of sentient beings, whispering to them, luring them to succumb to their worst, most immoral urges and antinomian desires. This demonspeak haunts the Faithful, taunting even those who never leave their homelands, let alone their homeworlds. One need not travel to distant, exotic locales to heed the lure of darkness.

Those who do travel, however, are more susceptible than those who do not. Who can fully prepare himself against the myriad tricks and powers the Dark brings to bear in places

where it has nurtured power, far from the consolations of the Church? Out There, a soul has only his own Faith to guide him.

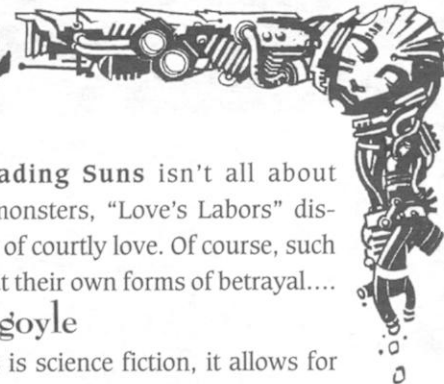
Either that or his wits and brawn. Not everything in the universe is a supernatural threat. Sometimes, technical know-how is required to defeat the sorties of the Dark when it manifests in the form of forgotten tech. A particularly recalcitrant League heresy states that there are no purely supernatural terrors, only unknown forms of biology and physics. Some guildsmembers fancy themselves heroes, pushing back the boundaries of the Dark by shining the light of reason and understanding upon it. Pure, arrogant Republicanism, of course. Most 51st century moderns know better....

How to Use This Book

Into the Dark is a collection of dramas set in various locales — forlorn wildernesses, doomed spaceships, seedy casinos and musty tombs. Each touches on supernatural subjects, even if it is only suggestive rather than substantial in some cases — all too real in others.

Some are presented as introductory dramas — ideal for introducing new players to **Fading Suns**, or beginning a new epic. Each is packed with a cast of non-player characters (NPCs) that can migrate into other adventures, aiding or hindering the player characters. Each also comes with a mini-character sheet for ease of use, and a portrait that can be shown to the players upon their meeting.

Holistic Design has received numerous requests for such a book as this, especially with dramas geared for those just starting their games. However, the dramas here can be adapted for any level of play — “Dark Liner,” for instance, has different suggestions for just how weird the events can become, depending on the needs of the gamemaster and players.



The dramas are summarized below; if one of them strikes your fancy, proceed into the heart of the book and read the full chapter. Once you're ready to run it, remember the golden rule: Have fun. If things are moving too slowly or becoming frustrating, feel free to change the script. It is impossible to write a drama that is perfect for every group's playing style. It's the gamemaster's duty to adapt this material however he sees fit to maximize a drama's impact.

Thorn Manor

This introductory adventure, set on the planet of Pandemonium (detailed in the **Complete Pandemonium** book that comes bundled with the Gamemasters Screen), is presented with pre-generated characters, each of whom has a list of secrets and lore particular to that character. Success in this drama may depend on the characters communicating their special knowledge to one another.

"Thorn Manor" was developed as an introductory drama, intended to be a playing group's first introduction to **Fading Suns**, or perhaps their first lengthy adventure after playing through the three adventures provided in **Complete Pandemonium**. However, it can be set in any forlorn wilderness on any world and integrated into any ongoing epic with minor modifications.

Dark Liner

This short, suspenseful drama was developed as an introductory game to be run in three-to-four hour sessions at gaming conventions. It provides a good first glimpse into the possibilities of **Fading Suns** adventures, featuring elements emblematic to the setting: Conflicts between factions, broken-down high technology, a mysterious starship, and creepy goings-on that may or may not be supernatural (depending on the gamemaster's proclivities).

This is a good place to start for gamemasters looking for a short game to test on players, to see if they want more **Fading Suns** roleplaying.

Love's Labors

Just to prove that **Fading Suns** isn't all about backstabbing politics and monsters, "Love's Labors" displays the passionate pursuit of courtly love. Of course, such social politics are not without their own forms of betrayal....

The Maltese Gargoyle

Although **Fading Suns** is science fiction, it allows for stories from a variety of sub-genres, including crime noir. This tale of theft and recovery highlights the lengths people will go to win the constant game of one-upmanship played among the major Known Worlds factions.

The Ancestor's Tomb

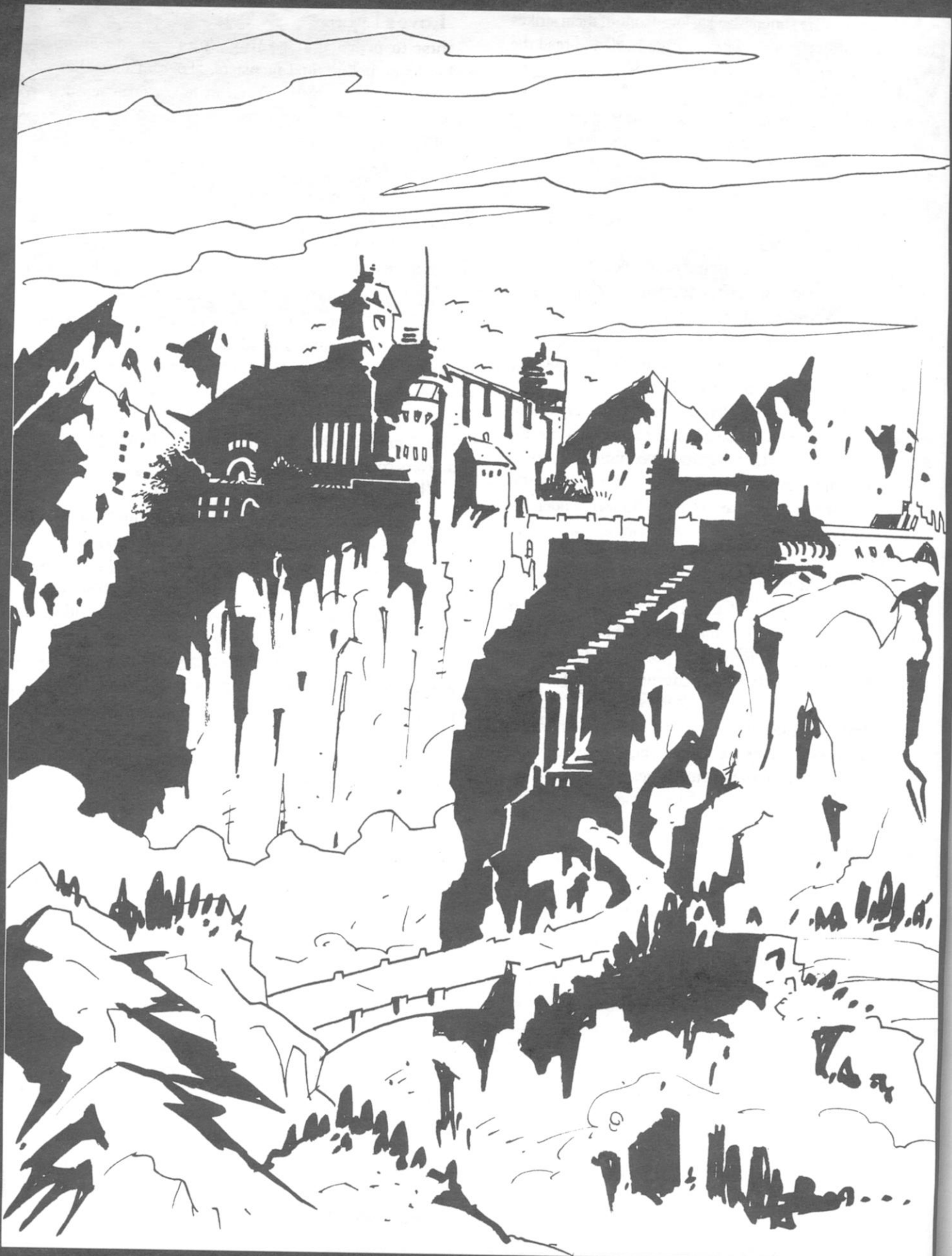
A deadly scavenger hunt through an ancient tomb with the reputation of a noble's bloodline at stake — and the fate of the characters' very souls. The past holds wonders of high technology but also terrors produced by humans toying with forces they barely understand. Eternal punishment is the cost of failure in such endeavors — eternal, that is, until the characters come along....

Short Dramas

A collection of short adventures and situations that provide primers for learning the rules or better understanding one's character and his motivations. These can be run as single-session events, excuses to break-up the tension of a longer-running epic, or as entry points into future conflicts with the NPCs encountered herein.

Although some are set on Pandemonium, they can certainly be moved to any world with similar, overcrowded urban conditions.







Thorn Manor

A Pandemonium Drama with Pre-Generated Characters By Bill Bridges

On the outskirts of the abandoned city of Kuzuldome sits an old noble manor, long host to the Gilgar family. The current head of the house, Duke Vanth Gilgar, now in his 97th year, still resides in the manor, even though all of his subjects — but for a handful of servants — have long fled to the safety of the Hub. No amount of cajoling by his family can uproot him from his ancestral home. Fearful that the old man should die alone in a cataclysmic event, Count Avals Gilgar has sent a priest to tend him and guildsmen to maintain the manor's technical needs.

Then came the earthquake. Detected by satellite, this seismic event wracked the whole peninsula and cut off all communication with Thorn Manor. Worried about the safety of his grandfather (and the priests and guildsmen he sent there), Count Avals now gathers a rescue party. Its mission is to get everyone out of Thorn Manor and return to the Hub, leaving the old manse to molder like the rest of the Gilgar legacy.

Rumors

Each character knows some rumors concerning Thorn Manor, explained on the character sheets. The gamemaster should read each of them, as they point to the truth of what's going on, but in the typical half-truth/half-bullshit way of rumors.

What's Really Going On?

As gleaned from the rumors given to each character, there are some interesting things at Thorn Manor. There are actually two "treasures," one the traditional kind (money

and goods buried in chests) and the other a scientific marvel: a terraforming node.

The now-legendary treasure of House Gilgar is indeed hidden on the grounds of Thorn Manor. In fact, it is buried in the ground surrounding the Shrine of Saint Hecla. The treasure includes a genetically-engineered soil sample designed — from back when Pandemonium was Grange, the Republic's bread-basket — to grow plants faster and larger than normal. One of the containers holding this soil burst a long time ago, but the stuff is quite durable and has lasted the ages, causing the renowned roses of Thorn Manor to grow to wondrous proportions.

Who knows about the treasure? The duke knows where it's buried, and it is his duty as the head of the house to keep it there and secret. However, his age-enfeebled mind refuses to recognize that keeping it there may destroy it, should another cataclysmic event hit the region. It's really time to hand the house heirlooms onto his successor, Count Avals.

Bremen Svors, the loyal chamberlain, also knows about the treasure and its location, but has up till now honored the duke's wishes in all things — which means staying quiet and keeping anyone from finding out about the treasure. However, with the right allies, he might be convinced to betray his master on this one issue, for the future good of the house. In other words, the player characters may get him to spill the beans as long as he is sure they will help ferry the treasure to Avals and keep it out of the captain and the doctor's hands.

Captain of the Guard Ardel Gramton and Doctor Uldas

know the treasure exists and that it is here somewhere. They both conspire to glean the secret from the duke. Unknown to them, Reeves Associate Lars Nalandras also discovered the truth of the treasure rumors, after following an age-old paper trail in the house's accounts back in the Hub. While incomplete, the records pointed him to Thorn Manor. He convinced Avals to send him here, and now spends his nights searching the basement for the buried treasure. He is unaware of the captain and the doctor's plots.

The servants have heard endless rumors about the treasure, but don't put much stock in them. ("If the duke is that rich, why does he live in this shit-hole of a manor?").

The Treasure of House Gilgar

The treasure is actually a pile of house relics, mostly knickknacks, objets d'art, paperwork (declaring the house's ownership of many Badlands fiefs on the planet — a well-known fact), and some very special items:

- A handful of Second Republic-era coins, valuable to collectors but not legal tender. A handful of these coins, unearthed by Mulakee during their digging, may provide a clue to the treasure's location. See *Mulakee*, below.

- Ag-Grow™ soil, the Second Republic wonder soil that now feeds the large roses of Hecla's Shrine. Two canisters (enough to fill one plot of farmland) are intact.

- A hermetically-sealed packet of "cornucopia," a genetically-engineered grain from the Second Republic that was never released into circulation but which is hardy and bountiful (it yields nearly twice as much per plot of land as regular grain, perhaps solving hunger problems on the Hub's farmland). The Gilgar family has held on to this sole-surviving specimen from the Grange days.

- A jumpkey to Rampart and Apschai from Pandemonium.

- The datafile needed to reactivate the Thorn Manor terraforming node.

- A Second Republic-era laser rifle of the finest workmanship. Quality +3.

These items are stuffed into four chest-sized packing crates. A fourth crate's seal has been broken, causing the leakage of Ag-Grow™ and the coins.

Terraforming Node

There is a terraforming node in the nearby mountains controlled by a complex underground bunker beneath the manor. However, it was shut down long ago, during the Second Republic. It might take quite a while to figure out how to reactivate it (unless the treasure is recovered), let alone what the effects of that activation might be. The bunker is now used as a wine cellar, and the terraforming controls are hidden behind dusty old, ceiling-high wine racks. The power has been shut down for a long time, but can be turned back on as long as the house's fusion generator is also active.

The Current Sorry State of Things at the Manor

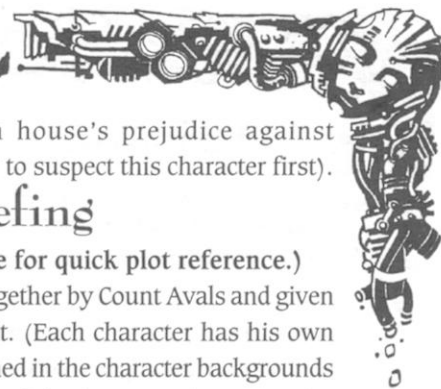
Despite rumors to the contrary, the duke is not a cyberfetishist — but the captain of the guard is. Injured in a combat years ago, Ardel Gramton replaced a gangrenous arm with a cyberlimb. Ever since, he has sought to replace even more body parts (see his traits). To this end, he has secretly pilfered valuable items from the manor (art objects, silk draperies, other luxuries), and sold them in the Hub for black market cybertech. In collaboration with Doctor Uldas, he maintains a crude cyberlab in the old Gardener's Shack. The doctor installs Ardel's cybertech, hoping to split the manor's treasure with Ardel once they find it.

Indeed, this is the real source of tension at the manor. Ardel and Uldas seek the treasure, trying to get the duke to reveal its location, while Bremen Svors tries to outmaneuver them. The chamberlain is afraid to openly call them out, in case Ardel attempts an open revolt with martial force (the guards are more loyal to Ardel than to the duke).

Svors tried to communicate his distress in code to Count Avals, but the idiot misunderstood and sent a priest and two guildsmembers (a Reeve and a Scraver), all of whom certainly can't be trusted with house secrets. Now, the Scraver is dead (killed in the earthquake) and the Reeve seems to be sniffing out the treasure — another person Svors must steer away from the addle-minded duke before he accidentally reveals the treasure's location. Desperate for aid, Svors may confide in any noble who arrives, even one who isn't of House Gilgar.

The recent cataclysm killed Boss Nawas Uwix, the Scraver sent to upkeep the tech, and caused the house's fusion generator to go down, allowing various conspirators to wander the grounds and halls in the dark, searching for leads on the treasure. The servants fear the house is haunted, after hearing these midnight meanderings. One of them used the last of the precious squawker fusion cells to tell this to Count Avals before radio silence descended on the manor. The duke, hearing these whisperings from the staff, is beginning to believe that the ghosts of his ancestors have awakened, to punish him for the house's decline.

To add to everyone's distress, monkeylike birds called Mulakee have invaded the grounds, forced out of the mountains by the recent earthquake. These vicious tricksters have stolen anything not clamped down: tools, the flutter's fusion cel, and some of the house's furnishings. Nobody in the manor can speak of them without spitting a curse. In actuality, while the Mulakee are curious and somewhat mischievous, they aren't even as intelligent as monkeys. All the mischief blamed on them is the work of Captain Ardel. They provide a convenient scapegoat for his sabotage, designed



to isolate the manor so Ardel can force the secret from the duke. Boss Uwix discovered this, so Ardel killed him, making it look like the Scraver electrocuted himself while trying to fix the generator.

Then, Dame Rudana arrived, the sole-survivor of an ill-fated expedition to the Badlands. An opportunist, she sucks up the duke's hospitality as the first noble visitor to the house in a long while. Svors has an instinctual mistrust of her, and thus does not confide his problems to the knight. Of course, Rudana's story is false, as anyone who questions her deeply enough about her expedition can eventually glean. If found out, however, Rudana will challenge her interrogator to a duel. (See *Dame Rudana*, below).

The rescue party enters this tense situation, where conflict is simmering but still underground. Their actions may ignite certain conspirators to action. Certainly, all the manor folk will be distrustful of the party at first, unsure whose side they're on...

Mulakee

If characters respond well to Mulakee curiosity, the animals will eventually bring one of them a shiny thing — an old Second Republic coin dug up from near the shrine. If the character follows them around, he will eventually see them dig up more (but only if they trust his presence — they won't dig in front of enemies). If he is particularly trustful, they may play with him by throwing coins, until he follows them to their source at the shrine.

Dame Rudana

Rudana is a maverick knight of House Decados, an outsider in its elaborate political intrigues. As such, she is resentful of the local authority. However, like all good Decados, she does have a strong rumor network among household retainers. She thus heard that a house-patroned assassin, disguised as a noble, was sent against House Gilgar (this is the Gilgar noble player character). Unsure of who this assassin is or the exact nature of his mission against the house, Rudana sniffed around and heard all the gossip about Thorn Manor. Deciding that the assassin would surely end up there, where so many Gilgar interests lay, she scooted out to the manor herself in the hopes of foiling the assassin's mission and getting herself in the good graces of the minor house, all while pissing off her own houses' superiors — a lesson to them to include her in their games or risk her further meddling.

Her intent is to carefully examine any newcomers to identify the assassin, and then do him in. If the assassin is disguised as a noble, she will do everything in her power to bring about a duel. Depending on the player characters' actions and words, Rudana may target any of them, but she will be especially curious about the House Gilgar noble and

the Hawkwood (her own house's prejudice against Hawkwoods may incline her to suspect this character first).

A Quick Briefing

(Use the Timeline page for quick plot reference.)

The group is gathered together by Count Avals and given the full story, as he knows it. (Each character has his own reason for being here, explained in the character backgrounds on each sheet.) Avals cannot join the party due to a crippling dueling wound he suffered years ago, leaving him wheelchair bound. The characters are given a hopper (meant to transport the duke, his retainers, the priest and guildsmembers), and sent to Thorn Manor.

The Crew: The player characters know the following about each other (they can get further acquainted on the journey out):

- The Charioteer is hired to fly the hopper.
- The mercenary is hired to provide security. There are rumors of bandits in the badlands, along with roaming beasts.
- The nobles are returning favors owed to Count Avals or House Gilgar. They are to convince the duke to return, noble-to-noble. (One noble carries Count Avals' seal — choose whomever roleplays this scene best.)
- The Inquisitor has forced her way into the party, investigating the heretical rumors at Thorn Manor. She does not have an Inquisitorial Seal, but does have the ear of Hub Avestites who do.
- The Engineer has been hired as a terraforming expert, in case he can predict coming cataclysms.
- The alien mystic has been hired by Countess Zeena zad Gilgar, Aval's wife, a superstitious woman who fully believes that the manor is on sacred ground. The mystic is to sry this out and provide spiritual advice as necessary.
- Rupert, a household retainer who used to work at Thorn Manor, is sent along with the crew to guide them there and to verify their credentials to Chamberlain Svors.

Manor Residents (give the players the handout copy at the end of this booklet): As far as Count Avals knows, the only people at the manor are:

- Duke Vanth Gilgar, current head of House Gilgar;
- Canon Oblay Dawan, Orthodox priest;
- Boss Nawas Uwix, a Scraver tech redeemer sent to maintain the house's technical needs;
- Associate Lars Nalandras, a Reeve sent by Avals to ensure that the duke's material affairs are in order (along with inheritance documents);
- Bremen Svors, the duke's long-serving chamberlain;
- Doctor Uldas, the duke's doctor and cook;
- Captain of the Guard Ardel Gramton;
- three guards (names unknown);
- five chamberboys/maids (names unknown).



The Journey

The party leaves in the morning and flies over a blasted and barren terrain, witnessing only a few caravans of natives eking their living in the Badlands. The trip will take a few hours. Rupert, the House Gilgar servant sent to guide them to the manor, gives some directions to the pilot and then can't wait to get on with his real joy in life: gossip. He starts babbling about the rumors he's heard of late, in the hopes that the crew will start talking and give him whole new rumors. Basically, he knows all the rumors listed on the player character sheets and can start a conversation about any of them. However, he does not know which are true and which are false. (He tends to believe them all...)

By about 5:00 pm in the evening, the distant domes of Kuzuldome are seen to the south as Thorn Manor first appears to the west.

The manor is situated on a tall rise, nestled near the western mountain peaks. Built in a Republican style — with maxicrete, rainstone and hardwoods — it is a two-floored mansion, surrounded by elaborate gardens, with a single lane for landcraft (leading to Kuzuldome) and a landing field for flitters. The now-barren farmlands surrounding the manor hill stretch north, east and south, reminders of the planet's troubles.

Rupert

Rupert is in his 60s and is no good for anything but guiding the characters to the manor, telling Svors who they are, and perhaps getting some roleplaying out of them on the journey there. He can't fight and he's too cowardly to accompany any player character on a nighttime investigation (if forced, he will moan and shiver the whole way).

Crashing the Party

As the hopper approaches over the gardens, a swarm of monkeylike birds shoots past the cockpit window. Seconds later, the characters hear hooting and thumping on the roof. From the windows, characters can see the creatures clamoring all over the hull, trying to open maintenance hatches, pulling on the wing flaps, or twisting the anti-gravity steering vane.

The pilot can try to shake them off the hopper by performing some trick maneuvers. Roll Dexterity + Drive Spacecraft. One success knocks a few of them off, while more successes knocks off successively more Mulakee. Five or more gets them all. Failure means that none of them are dislodged, and they hoot and howl mockingly at the pilot.

The very turn after this roll is made (or immediately if the pilot does not attempt it, even at the gamemaster's suggestion), the engine explodes. (A critical on the above roll will convince the pilot that it couldn't have been Mulakee at fault, since he dislodged them all.) A crash-landing is inevitable. The only question is how well the pilot can bring it

down: roll Dexterity + Drive Spacecraft. Three or more successes means a bumpy landing in the flitter field, but no damage to the ship or passengers. One or two successes means everyone is shaken around and the hull is badly scraped (but not punctured) as it lands in the hedge maze. Failure means all the passengers suffer three dice of damage (armor and shields apply), the engine is unexaminable for the true cause of its malfunction, and the ship can't fly again without hull repair (which requires some serious metalworking, or jury-rigging plates from the manor's dysfunctional flitter; both the work of a few days at least). A fumble means the hull tears apart and passengers are flung outward, taking six dice of damage.

If anyone spends time examining the engine — roll Tech + Tech Redemption (Mech) — they will discover that it was expertly shot with a high-caliber bullet (13mm), the kind used in sniper rifles. (Unless they failed the crash-landing roll, destroying the engine further and removing all evidence of the bullet.) Obviously, Mulakee couldn't have done this. Captain Ardel did, hoping to kill or incapacitate the newcomers and blame it on the Mulakee.

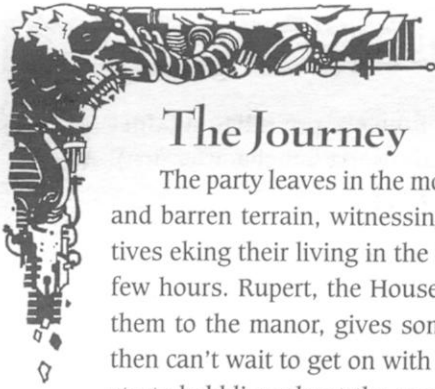
The manor guards rush to the hopper to first ascertain that the passengers aren't enemies, and then aid them any way they can (sending one of their number back to summon the doctor, if necessary). They will constantly curse "those damn Mulakee," and explain about the post-cataclysmic arrival of the pests.

They insist on escorting the entire party into the manor, claiming that more dangerous beasts than Mulakee have been sighted in the area recently. If any character evinces worry about the safety of the hopper, a single guard will stay inside it. As they reach the manor, Captain Ardel meets them. He doesn't seem concerned about the crash, only about the newcomers and their credentials. Once Rupert speaks for them, or one of the nobles displays Aval's seal, Ardel has his guards escort them to the chamberlain. (He then sabotages the hopper's radio, tearing it out and leaving fake Mulakee clawprints everywhere in the interior cabin.)

As the party enters the manor, it is obvious that the power is out, a side-effect of the recent earthquake. Servants carry lanterns and candles about the darkened corridors (many rooms don't have windows), staring curiously at the new arrivals.

The guards take the party to the second floor, into the library, where Svors is removing a wallhanging. (He is uncovering some minuscule spy holes hidden in a floral pattern on the wallpaper.) He is surprised to see them but seems overjoyed. He yells for the servants to prepare a meal for (4 + number of player characters). The guards depart to continue their patrol of the grounds.

Svors asks the crew to make themselves comfortable in the library, discourages them from wandering, and rushes



off to inform the duke. He stops at the door and tells them that the servants will inform them of the meal, where they will meet the duke. No attempts to rush things will get him to change the schedule.

Anyone searching the library will find mainly boring books on agriculture (some in Urthtech, from the Second Republic), local folktales, House Gilgar genealogies and fief records. A Wits + Search roll will uncover an old bestiary from the non-interstellar era, describing real and mythical creatures, including the Mulakee. It explains that they swarmed the region once before, a few hundred years ago, following an earthquake in the mountains. However, folktales attribute them as an arm of vengeance for wrongs done to the Pancreator's true believers.

First Impressions

Before the characters can leave the room or split up, they are visited by some of the manor residents, in the following order:

- Dame Rudana Ivanoff Decados comes to greet the crew. This is someone not on their list of manor residents. She claims to be an adventurer whose expedition to Old Folani was wiped out by an earthquake. She made her way on foot through the mountains and found this manor, where she has graciously received the hospitality of the duke. A success on a Wits + Physick roll indicates that she is in better health than such a harrowing journey should have left her.

She has a prickly personality, and is inclined to bait fellow nobles to test their mettle, questioning everything they say and thus impugning their honor. Once the priest arrives, she departs. "Until dinner, gentlemen?"

- Canon Oblay Dawan comes seeking news of the Hub. He bemoans the duke's senile state, and lets it be known that he fears for the man's soul, for "he hides a secret which weighs heavily upon him. If only I could get him to confess it."

To any interested, Oblay will speak of the peaceful shrine in the gardens and recommend that everyone visit to pray and taste its sweet water. If asked about the Mulakee or other dangerous beasts, he downplays such talk. "The Mulakee are mischievous but not dangerous. They're more curious than deadly. As for other creatures, I haven't seen any."

If asked about rumors concerning ghosts, he looks quizzically at them and asks where they heard about that. He then confesses that the servants are superstitious and speak of ghosts wandering the halls at night. Even the duke mutters about them. But he himself has seen no sign of such hauntings; he is not a theurgist.

- Associate Lars Nalandras enters and apologizes for interrupting. At that, Oblay departs, to let "worldly men discuss worldly matters." Lars Nalandras tries to get the char-

acters to open up and talk about themselves (he suspects they are treasure seekers like himself). If asked, he will sadly claim that the duke's finances are poor; rumors of any treasure are the talk of fools.

Dinner is Served

Servants arrive to herald the meal and usher everyone to the dining room. Waiting there is Doctor Uldas, who is also the chef of the manor, overseeing the kitchen staff and preparing the menu. He greets the guests and brags about his legendary meals. He tries to size them up, but doesn't go too far in his questioning, knowing it would be suspicious. If asked about the duke, he sadly sighs and simply says: "His health has been better. I must administer medicine every night." Before this chat can continue, the chamberlain enters, helping the old duke to walk to his chair at the head of the table. Even in his old age and near-senility, the man strikes a regal pose without trying. Nonetheless, the losses his house has suffered show in his forlorn eyes.

As the duke is seated, Uldas bows slightly and leaves for the kitchen, not to be seen again during dinner.

The duke does not notice the characters at first, even if they speak directly to him. After a while, he speaks with them, as if they are regular guests, but he doesn't ask for introductions and seems confused if asked for them.

If anyone mentions his leaving the manor, or the duke's grandson Count Avals, the duke gets violently angry, and simply says: "Out of the question. I have duties." After too much of this, he excuses himself and is guided out by the chamberlain, who first bids the guests to stay the night before beating a hasty retreat and ordering the servants to prepare guest rooms.

If at any time during this the characters persist too harshly in goading the duke to leave, Dame Rudana will grandstand about their rudeness, pressing them into challenging her to a duel. If this happens, she will summon Svors, who reluctantly agrees to preside over a duel that evening, one hour after dinner on the flutter field (8:00 pm).

Until that time, the characters are on their own.

Night Moves

Duel: If the duel has been declared, Svors and Uldas, along with one guard, will meet Rudana and whatever characters show up on the flutter field, now lit with garden torches.

Uldas is impatient and seems to want to get it over with so he can get elsewhere. (Is asked where, he stutteringly replied: "Oh... er, I must prepare the duke's medicinal concoction.")

Particularly noteworthy instances of honorable behavior by a noble character draw Svors's notice. If that character appears to be losing the duel, Svors calls a halt to the duel on a technicality, citing some ancient and obscure Gilgar rule that was somehow broken, necessitating a postpone-



ment of the affair until a week later. (Make up something based on one of the duelists' behavior or utterances.) Any complaints should be fielded to the duke upon the morrow. Svors later attempts to recruit the honorable character into his cause against Captain Ardel, Doctor Uldas and the lone Reeve.

Conspirators: None of the conspirators are still tonight. After the characters are thought to have gone to bed (or are licking their wounds/drinking to victory after the duel), Doctor Uldas sneaks out to join Ardel at the Gardener's Shed to plot what they're going to do now. The three guards roam the grounds and will stop any character who wanders, asking him to return to the manor, for fear of "dangerous beasts."

Lars slips into the wine cellar with a shovel and begins to dig. After a while of uninterrupted digging, he uncovers a large underground cable wrapped in an unbreakable plastic sheath marked "Node 523." He has no idea what this could be (it's a clue that the terraforming node bunker is in the wine cellar). If traced to its origin point, it clearly points to a hidden room behind the wine racks on one wall. A little bit of elbow grease to remove the racks and a crowbar to open the sealed door reveals the terraforming node control bunker (see above).

Oblay, suffering nightmares, slips outside to the shrine to pray, expertly navigating the hedge maze in the dark of night. (Anyone trying to stealthily follow him must make Perception + Observe or Tracking rolls to avoid getting lost.) If anyone joins him at the shrine, he will demonstrate how the Mulakee can be friendly, throwing pebbles playfully at them. They will throw back Republican coins, which surprises Oblay as much as any character. He will not know what to make of it.

Dame Rudana wanders the manor, hoping to attract another night wanderer in a discussion over cognac. If foiled in this, she will go to bed.

Svors sneaks along the secret passages, spying on whomever he can, with emphasis on the nobles, whom he hopes to confide in (unless he already confided in one of the duelists; see above).

The servants cower in their quarters, convinced that ghosts roam the halls.

Wresting the Secret

At midnight, Captain Ardel, impatient with the process and fearful that the arrival of the rescue party spells the ruin of his plans, gathers his guards and Doctor Uldas and visits the duke in his bedroom. Uldas administers a truth serum and Ardel commands the duke to reveal the treasure's location. The poor old man has no choice but to say: "Saint Hecla's Shrine." Triumphant, Ardel takes his gang and leaves, forcing Uldas to follow even though the man's single spark of conscience bids him to stay and tend the duke, who is

having a bad reaction to the serum. Nonetheless, he tosses a vial onto the bed as he is rushed from the room.

If the duke does not get some form of medical attention soon, he will die. He cannot move from the bed, only shiver and sweat. Any person who makes a Remedy roll can identify the vial as a remedy for the duke's reaction. When administered, it cures the duke and puts him to gentle sleep until the morning.

Svors watches this scene from the secret passages, and rushes to get the aid of the player characters, first to save the duke and then to stop Ardel.

The Dig

Ardel's gang goes straight to the shrine and begins digging around it for the treasure. Almost immediately, one of them finds a Second Republic coin and they realize they've hit pay dirt (literally).

Canon Oblay is at the shrine praying. He is rudely thrust aside by Ardel, who threatens his life if he interferes. Oblay's attempts to convince Ardel not to perform this sacrilege upon the shrine fall on deaf ears. He then waits until everyone is distracted (by the coin), and slips away to fetch help from the player characters.

Ardel notices that he is gone in a few moments and sends a guard to kill him. Just as Oblay finds one of the characters, the guard takes aim at the meddling priest. Whether he successfully kills Oblay or not depends on the player character's actions at that point.

If no one arrives to stop the dig, the treasure is unearthed. The crates (made of high-tech plastics) are unsealed and their contents marveled at by the thieves. Before they can drool too much, Ardel commands them to reseal the crates and transport them to the flutter. Each guard carries a crate, while Uldas takes the half-empty fourth crate.

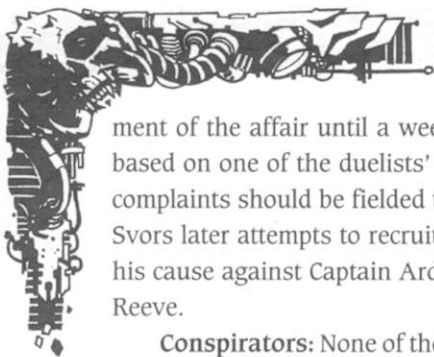
Ardel splits off from them and goes to the Gardener's Shed to fetch the hidden flutter fusion cel. He then meets his gang at the flutter, installs the cel, and off they go, far richer than before. With their black market connections, it is little problem to fence the goods and gain passage off-world before the player characters can find them.

There are numerous chances for the player characters to stop them. If Oblay doesn't alert the characters, the ghost of Saint Hecla will.

Ghost of the Past

If anyone attempts to dig up the treasure or the terraforming node, characters inside the manor witness an apparition: a sad woman smeared in blood and dirt. This is likely to scare the bejesus out of anyone. (Roll Calm + Stoic Mind or Focus to not get the willies; failure means a turn of inaction, as the character freezes in fear.)

If the treasure is being dug up, she will sadly roam toward the shrine, moaning: "The thorn hides the rose..." (yes,



this is an intentional reversal of the well-known phrase, referring to the fact that Thorn Manor hides the secret of House Gilgar). Hopefully, brave characters will follow her to the dig.

If the terraforming node is being disturbed (by Lars' digging), the ghost walks down to the basement and into the walls of the wine cellar (where the terraforming node bunker is hidden), moaning "Oh, my world bleeds...". Now is the best chance for characters to notice the terraforming controls. Activating the terraforming node will put her poor ghost to rest.

Resolution

The player characters are of course triumphant in stopping Ardel's theft, right? If so, the duke is finally convinced to hand the treasure over to Count Avals. The flutter fusion cel can restore the flutter and its radio, and can be flown back by six people, who can then bring back another hopper (or an engine for the broken hopper).

The characters are rewarded by House Gilgar not with money but with promise of favors — they can be introduced to anyone of note on the planet, or are provided with a comfortable passage contract in a stateroom for journey elsewhere.

The discovery of the terraforming node is a great boon for the house and is the rebirth of Thorn Manor. Engineers

rush to the place, erecting a portable terraforming device to protect the manor (this is an expensive and rare item!) and go to work studying the terraforming node. In the coming years, its reactivation greatly calms the cataclysms in the equatorial region. The Engineer character comes to the notice of important people in the guild, and future assignments assure quick promotion.

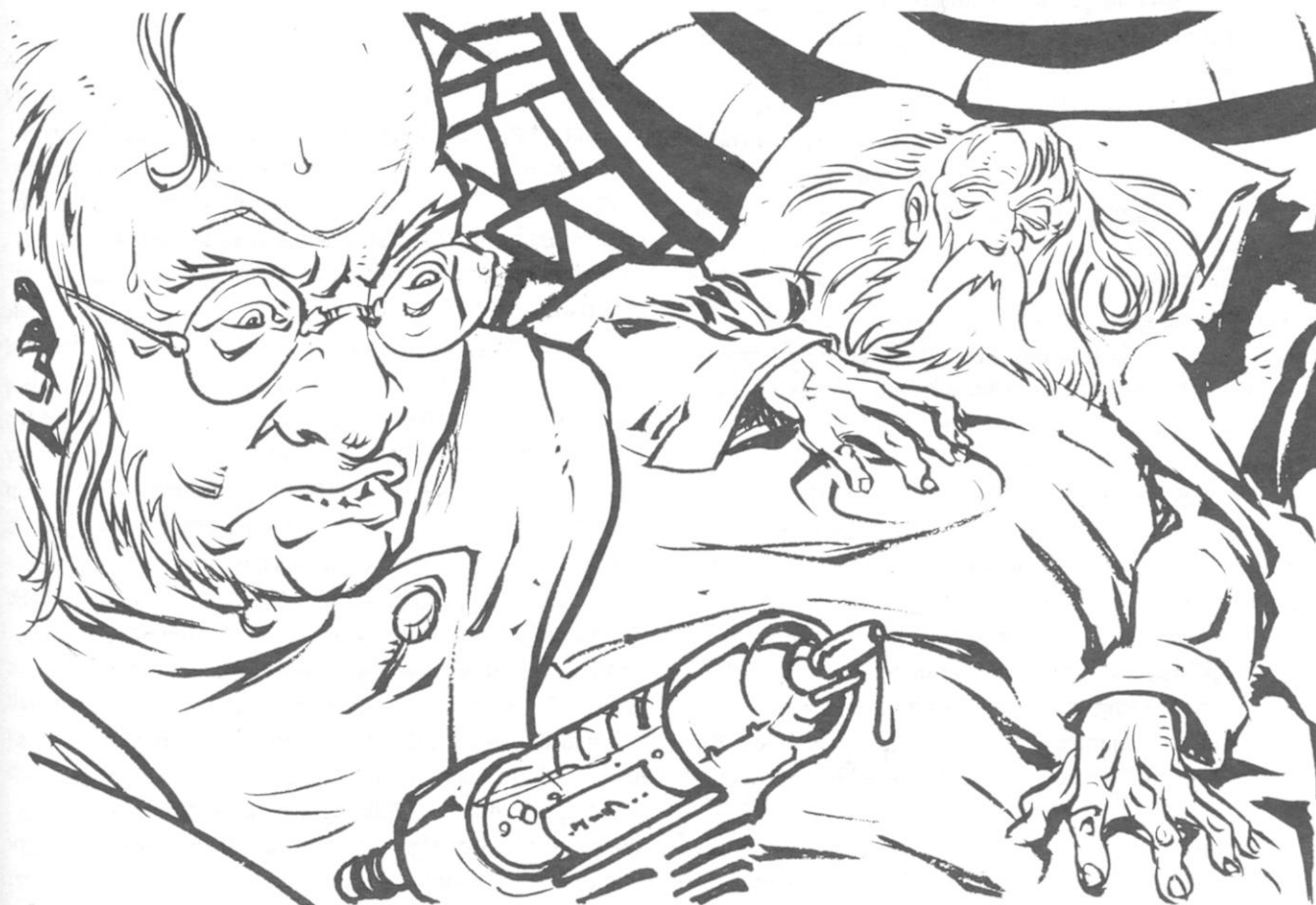
Of course, this could all end badly. The duke could die (from the botched truth serum), Ardel could escape and the terraforming node could remain undiscovered (if Lars is interrupted before too much digging and the ghost is ignored). This is truly the end for Thorn Manor, as its staff eventually leaves on foot, hoping to gain the hospitality of Badlands nomads for a long journey to the Hub. After a week of no news, Avals sends another team to investigate and rescue the stranded characters.

Let's all hope for the former ending...

Places

Hedge Maze Gardens: With the gardener gone, the grounds are poorly maintained and grow wild, with weeds in abundance. The once-perfectly formed hedge maze is now a mess of wild and tangled shrubs — more of a labyrinth now than any one could intentionally design.

Saint Hecla's Shrine: In the center of the gardens is



the old shrine to the martyred Saint Hecla. It is a small, wooden pagoda and well (holes for incense sticks surround the rim). The water is fresh and cool, fed perhaps by some deep underground stream (or else renewed by the holy presence still felt here).

The pagoda sits amid a garden of wildflowers and huge rosebushes. Beneath these flowers (about one meter deep), is the treasure of House Gilgar. To fully dig it up, the shrine grounds must torn up — a sacrilegious act in Canon Oblay's eyes.

The duke often comes here when troubled to circle the pagoda, muttering and stamping the earth, trampling the flowers and leaving an odd path around the shrine. Clever characters may realize that this is a clue to the treasure's location.

Gardener's Shed: This also served as a greenhouse, but its panes have been blackened and the place is now used as Captain Ardel's personal quarters. Doctor Uldas often comes for tea or chess, staying long hours into the night.

Actually, the greenhouse hides a ramshackle cybertech lab. Crude surgical tools, volt and mech tools, and various metal and plastic cyber parts (gears, wires, oil, etc.) are scattered about.

Manor (First Floor): The first floor consists of an entry foyer, greeting room, grand ballroom, a large dining room, kitchen and servants quarters.

Manor (Second Floor): A library (taking up the full length of a wing), guest rooms, lounge, master bedroom (with a double-doored foyer blocking entrance).

Basement: Wine cellar (terraforming control center hidden behind wine racks), food stores, generator room (broken fusion generator, needs unavailable parts).

Secret passages: Canny searches may find the secret hallways that run throughout the house to all rooms but the wine cellar. There are three such networks, none of which connects to one another, and each are tight — only one person at a time can fit through them. Each room has hidden spy holes, but some have been inadvertently covered by servants (a new painting here, a new paint job there). The duke hasn't used the passages in ages, so he does not know that all the spy holes don't work. The chamberlain, who has been forced to use the passages of late, has discovered this. Characters may notice him moving things around throughout the house, and maybe even witness him carving small holes in the wall paint of some rooms.

Garage/stables: Between the landcraft lane and the flitter field is a building that holds beasts and beastcraft on one side, and mechanical vehicles on the other. Tools for minor repairs (mainly for skimmers and flitters) are available.

Currently, the duke's horse is stabled. It hasn't been ridden much lately, but one of the chamberboys sees to him

and occasionally takes him out.

The duke's flitter is parked, its fusion cel missing (believed stolen by Mulakee; it can be found hidden in the cyberlab of the Gardener's Shed).

Non-Player Characters

Traits for four characters are given (those most likely to get into a combat or dice-rolling situation with the characters). Other prominent NPCs are described afterwards.

Duke Vanth Gilgar

The head of his beleaguered house, Vanth's senility and the recent events have unhinged his mind. The weight of responsibility for the house secrets has broken his will, and he barely remembers where he is at any given time. Nonetheless, when he does make a decision, his years of noble elan shine through.

Appearance: A well-groomed elderly man in noble finery.

Chamberlain Bregon Svors

His parents were Gilgar householders, as where his many-times great-grandparents. Svors can never betray that lineage. His whole sense of identity revolves around his duty to the duke, even to the point of risking the future prosperity of the house (hence his unwillingness to reveal the treasure to Count Avals).

Appearance: A middle-aged black man of strong physique and well-formed features. His uniform is a gentleman's jacket and sash covered with house medals.

Doctor Uldas

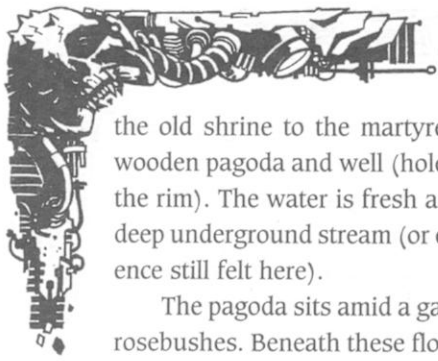
Like Ardel, his long service to House Gilgar has seen little reward. He has expensive habits and fancy drugs to pay for. No addiction really, but he certainly finds it hard to control urges for the "finer" experiences drugs can bring. Ardel has convinced him that a better life awaits elsewhere in the Known Worlds.

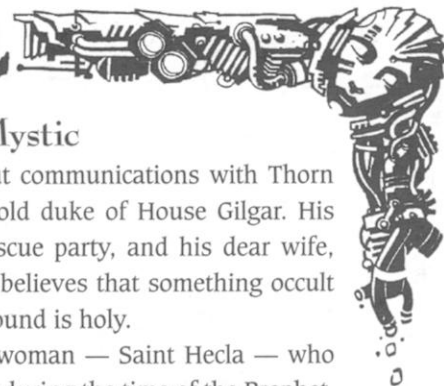
Appearance: A thin man of medium height, Uldas appears younger than he actually is (longevity serums). His hair is thinning, however, and the lines are beginning to show in his hands, which sometimes twitch uncontrollably.

Canon Oblay (Orthodoxy)

Oblay came to Pandemonium early in his career to administer to the poor. While the work was often heartbreaking and healthwrecking, it strengthened his soul. Although he rose in prestige and now serves more upperclass needs, he still cares for all souls regardless of class or material property. Unlike some priests, he doesn't know much about occult matters, being more concerned with everyday miracles like a barking puppy or a praying child.

Appearance: A middle-aged man in plain robes, he has allowed his beard to grow of late, and he resembles Church stereotypes of a wild friar.





Associate Lars Nalandras (Reeves)

Lars is a greedy man who was lucky enough to find a niche in the one faction open to freemen where that is a strong virtue. He is diligent in his work and rose in rank through a willingness to perform the boring bureaucratic nightmares that other shy from. His library work routinely uncovers all sorts of lost information that allows him to reap benefit through blackmail, and has now lead him to the treasure of House Gilgar.

Appearance: A very well-dressed, impeccably groomed man in his late 20s.

Mulakee

Description: (See illustration handout.) Resembling some bizarre crossbreed between gibbons and storks, Mulakee have short, leaf-green colored fur and large eyes (like a bird, these are on the sides of their head, so they look at things with head cocked sideways). Their arms are somewhat like those of a bat, but with feathers spreading out below between their hands and armpits. They don't have thumbs, but their double-jointed digits allow for a large range or manipulation and good digging abilities in loose dirt.

Body: Strength 2, Dexterity 8, Endurance 2

Mind: Wits 3, Perception 6, Tech 0

Natural skills: Charm 2, Dodge 8, Fight 2, Observe 6, Sneak 6

Weapons: Beaks (1d DMG)

Armor: None

Vitality: -4/-2/-1/0/0

Rumors

These are the rumors known to the player characters:

Rumors: Compassionate Inquisitor

Awful rumors are running rampant around the Hub about heresy going on in a House Gilgar manor in the Badlands. A recent earthquake cut communications with the place, and now a noble is gathering a rescue party. The reclusive old duke of the manor hasn't been seen in public in years. Some say that he can no longer hide his sin of technosophy. He has enhanced himself from head to toe with cybertech, and now looks more machine than man. He probably has a lab under the mansion filled with all sorts of other gadgets.

You've also heard the rumors from superstitious peasants who say that Thorn Manor is haunted by the ghosts of the Gilgar family who died in previous terraforming disasters, bound to their ancestral locus until the planet's cataclysms are healed.

In the interests of squelching heresy, you've forced your way into the rescue party. Count Avals Gilgar was too surprised and abashed to say no to your request.

Rumors: Alien Mystic

A recent earthquake cut communications with Thorn Manor, home to a revered old duke of House Gilgar. His grandson is gathering a rescue party, and his dear wife, Countess Zeena zad Gilgar, believes that something occult takes place there, for the ground is holy.

Legends tell of a holy woman — Saint Hecla — who was martyred in the vicinity during the time of the Prophet. The nature of her martyrdom is somewhat unclear, lost to history, but some claim she died protecting farmers from the bullets of thieves, while others say she willingly sacrificed her life to appease a pagan deity that threatened the terraforming of the world — a deity some believe is a demon responsible for the current disasters.

The sacred heritage of the site led the early Gilgar nobility to build Thorn Manor there, close to the rose bushes that bloom with unnatural regularity near the supposed grave of this saintly martyr, now in the gardens of the manse.

In addition, Thorn Manor is said to be haunted by the ghosts of the Gilgar family who died in previous terraforming disasters, bound to their ancestral locus until the planet's cataclysms are healed.

Rumors: Techie

You've heard rumors about an old House Gilgar duke who is built head to toe with cybertech, and now looks more machine than man. His manor recently suffered a cataclysm, and his grandson has called for a terraforming expert to join a rescue party. If the duke were to die, his parts would be worth a fortune on the black market... He probably also has a lab under that mansion filled with all sorts of other gadgets.

Your training in terraforming might finally pay off. You hear all sorts of rumors about an important terraforming node that ties into the worldgrid, supposedly located beneath the manor.

Rumors: Diplomat

You are actually a knight of House Van Gelder, an assassin parading around as a knight of House Gilgar, claiming to be from a distant arm of the family only recently forced to the Hub from Defiance Gap. Your Decados masters have supplied you with all the paperwork and stories you need to sound credible.

Thorn Manor, ruled by an old duke of House Gilgar in the Badlands, recently suffered an earthquake and is incommunicado. The duke's grandson is building a rescue party, and has called for aid from any house member. Your masters have assigned you to spy on the mission, and to ascertain whether rumors of a vast treasure are true. Street talk says the old duke won't leave the manor because he knows the great treasures of House Gilgar are buried on the grounds. Other house members have investigated these ru-



mors, digging in various places, but nothing was found. But what else could explain the old man's stubbornness? (Unless he's senile...)

If that weren't enough, some say an important terraforming node that ties into the worldgrid is located beneath the manor (the real reason it was built at this location), and that the old man is either protecting it or fiddling with it to cause more disasters in an insane attempt at revenge against the Decados.

Rumors: Duelist

When first arriving on this hell-hole of a world seeking glory on the dueling circuit, you were befriended by Dame Johanna Gilgar, a noblewoman since killed in a cataclysmic accident. You owe honor to her memory, or else you couldn't very well call yourself a Hawkwood.

A crippled count of that house is calling for a rescue party to save his grandfather, an eccentric who insists on living in a Badlands manor. A recent earthquake has cut communications. Now is your chance to step forward and honor your fallen friend.

However, Thorn Manor is said to be haunted by the ghosts of the Gilgar family who died in previous terraforming disasters, bound to their ancestral locus until the planet's cataclysms are healed.

Rumors: Mercenary

You've been hired to guard a rescue party bound for the Badlands. Seems some old duke won't leave his manor, and a cataclysm hit it, cutting off communications. Street rumor says that all manner of strange animals have savaged the manor since the recent earthquake. The residents are under siege.

You've heard rumors about this Thorn Manor. Folks say House Gilgar has a bunch of valuable datafiles on Second Republic superfarm technology hidden there, keeping them safe from the Inquisition. That info might be worth something on the technology black market.

Rumors: Star Pilot

You've been hired to fly a rescue crew to a manor in the Badlands, one that was hit by an earthquake and hasn't been heard from since. All manner of strange animals have savaged the manor since the recent earthquake, and the residents are under siege.

The old noble won't leave because he knows the great treasures of House Gilgar are buried on the grounds of the manor. Other house members have investigated these rumors, digging in various places, but nothing was found. But what else could explain the old man's stubbornness? (Unless he's senile...)

Also, Some say an important terraforming node that ties into the worldgrid is located beneath the manor (the real reason it was built at this location), and that the old man is either protecting it or fiddling with it to cause more disasters in an insane attempt at revenge against the Decados.



Now secretly more machine than man due to cyberimplants, Ardel Gramton has long been bitter about the sorry state his masters have fallen to. House Gilgar has been kicked around a lot lately, not only by the cataclysms but by House Decados, the current rulers of the planet. Ardel has had enough, and wants out of his nowhere job in life, guarding an aging idiot duke. The legendary treasure of the house is his ticket off-world in style.

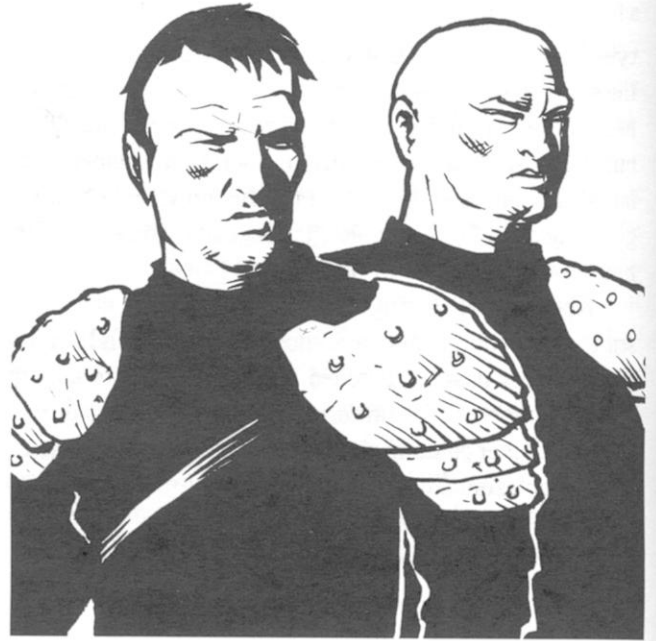
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Name: Captain Ardel Gramton	Race: Human		
Gender: Male	Alliance: House Gilgar		
Age: 32	Rank: Householder		
CHARACTERISTICS		NATURAL SKILLS	
BODY	MIND	Charm (3)	3
Strength (3) 7(12)	Wits (3) 5	Dodge (3)	5
Dexterity (3) 8(f)	Perception (3) 5	Fight (3)	7
Endurance (3) 6	Tech (3) 5	Impress (3)	6
		Melee (3)	7
SPIRIT		Observe (3)	5
Extrovert (3) 5 / 1 (1)	Introvert	Shoot (3)	6
Passion (1) 2 / 5 (3)	Calm	Sneak (3)	6
Faith (1) 1 / 7 (3)	Ego	Vigor (3)	5
COMMON ACTIONS		BLESSINGS/COURSES	
Action	Goal	+/- Trait Situation	
Bald-faced lying	12(14)		
Interrogation	II		
Detecting others' presence	15		
CYBERNETICS		COMBAT	
Devices	STR bonus: +1(3d)	Action	Init Goal DMG RNG
(All Hidden & Self-Powered),		Assault Rifle	6 14(17) 8 40/60
- Cyberlimb (right): +5 Str		Med Revolver	6 14(17) 6 30/40
- Lithic Wire: +3 Dex		Knife	7 15(18) 4(6)
- Proximity Alarm (alerts him when others are near): +5		Fist	7 15(18) 3(5)
Perception (no details)		Kick	6 15(18) 4
- Fox Box (emits pheromones to aid his lies): +2 Knavery		Grapple	5 15(18) 3(5)
- Cyberorgan reinforcement: +3d armor		Charge	4 15(18) 4+
VITALITY	[OOO] [OOO]		
Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2			
WYRD	[OOO] [OOO]		

INTO THE DARK

Appearance: Dark blue jumpsuits with studded leather padding and the house symbol emblazoned on the breasts.



Name: Guards		Race: Human		LEARNED SKILLS <i>LVL</i>	
Gender: Male		Alliance: House Gilgar		Etiquette 1	
Age: 19-22		Rank: Householder		Gambling 2	
				Inquiry 2	
				Knavery 2	
				Remedy 1	
				Search 4	
				Streetwise 4	
				Survival 2	
				Tech Redemption (Mech) 1	
				Tech Redemption (Voif) 1	

CHARACTERISTICS		NATURAL SKILLS	
BODY	MIND	Charm (3)	3
Strength (3)	5 Wits (3)	Dodge (3)	4
Dexterity (3)	6 Perception (3)	Fight (3)	5
Endurance (3)	5 Tech (3)	Impress (3)	4
SPIRIT		Melee (3)	5
Extrovert (3)	3 / 1 (1) Introvert	Observe (3)	5
Passion (1)	1 / 3 (3) Calm	Shoot (3)	5
Faith (1)	1 / 3 (3) Ego	Sneak (3)	4
		Vigor (3)	4

COMMON ACTIONS		BLESSINGS/COURSES	
Action	Goal	+/-	Trait Situation
Spying intruders	10		

ARMOR Stud leather 5d	
(/) Hits:	

COMBAT		STR bonus: _____	
Action	Init Goal DMG RNG		
Assault Rifle	5 11 8 40/60		
Knife	5 11 3		
Fist	5 11 2		
Kick	4 11 3		
Grapple	3 11 2		
Charge	2 11 3+		

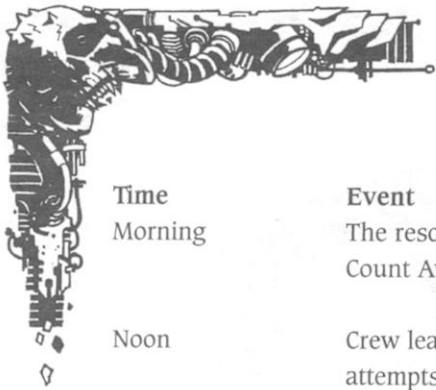
OCCULT		VICTORY CHART	
Psi /	Urge	Successes Pts	
Theurgy /	Hubris		
Powers/Rites	Goal		
		1-2	0
		3-5	+1
		6-8	+2
		9-11	+3
		12-14	+4
		15-17	+5
		18	+6
		Critical	success = x2

VITALITY		VITALITY	
Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2		Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2	
WYRD		WYRD	

Critical
success = x^2

Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2

[illegible]



Timeline

Time	Event
Morning	The rescue party is hastily gathered with little time to plan. It's been a week since the cataclysm and Count Avals has lost all patience. A quick briefing ensues.
Noon	Crew leave the Hub in a hopper with Rupert, a Gilgar servant who used to serve at Thorn Manor. He attempts to engage them in gossip and banter, hopefully getting them to share their rumors.
5:00 pm	Crew arrives at Thorn Manor. Mulakee hoot and buzz the hopper, landing on it and climbing across the windshield, attempting to open hatches and such. The engines suddenly explode and the pilot must make a crash-landing in the hedge maze, while the Mulakee fly away in all directions. (The engine was shot by Captain Ardel with a sniper rifle; only later examination of the engine reveals this.)
5:30 pm	Crew led to the library and told to wait until dinner. They are visited by the other manor guests.
6:00 pm	Sunset. Dinner is served. The duke arrives.
7:00 pm	Thorn Manor prepares for the night. The duke retires to bed.
8:00 pm	Rudana's duel (if she elicited one at dinner; otherwise, she attempts to engage any midnight wanderer in a discussion over cognac in the lounge).
10:00 - 12:00 pm	Conspirators make their moves: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Guards patrol the grounds.- Ardel and Uldas conspire in the Gardener's Shed.- Canon Oblay goes to the shrine to pray.- Svors wanders the secret passages, hoping to recruit a player character.- Lars sneaks into the basement to dig for treasure.- The shade of Saint Hecla wanders the basement of the manor, moaning.- Servants cower in their quarters, fearing ghosts.
Midnight	Ardel gathers his guards and visits the duke. Uldas uses truth serum to gain the secret. Svors runs through secret passages to gain the player characters' aid.
12:30 am	Ardel, guards and Uldas go to dig up the shrine. Oblay tries to stop their sacrilege. The ghost of Saint Hecla appears before any character not trying to stop the digging.
2:00 am	Guards and Uldas collect treasure and carry it to the house flitter. Ardel goes to Gardener's Shed to retrieve the flitter's stolen fusion cel.
2:30 am	Ardel, guards and Uldas make their escape.



Age:

Rank: Canon

LEARNED SKILLS *LVL*

BODY		MIND	
Strength (3)	5	Wits (3)	6
Dexterity (3)	7	Perception (3)	7
Endurance (3)	5	Tech (3)	4

SPIRIT			
<u>Extrovert</u> (3)	4	/ 1	(1) <u>Introvert</u>
Passion (1)	5	/ 5	(3) <u>Calm</u>
<u>Faith</u> (3)	5	/ 1	(1) <u>Ego</u>

Charm (3)	5
Dodge (3)	3
Fight (3)	3
Impress (3)	5
Melee (3)	3
Observe (3)	6
Shoot (3)	7
Sneak (3)	4
Vigor (3)	4

Arts (Music)	1
Empathy	1
Focus	6
Inquiry	5
Lore (Folk)	1
Lore (Theology)	1
Lore (Heresy)	1
Physick	3
Remedy	6
Search	1
Stoic Mind	2
Streetwise	2
Torture	1
Tracking	1

+/-	Trait	Situation
+2	Passion	Helping others
-2	Calm	Judgment questioned

Type	Pts

Psi _____	/ _____	Urge _____
Theurgy <u>3</u>	/ _____	Hubris _____
<i>Powers/Rites</i>	<i>LVL</i>	<i>Goal</i>
Cleansing _____	<u>1</u>	<u>11</u>
Hearth _____	<u>2</u>	<u>11</u>
Laying on Hands _____	<u>3</u>	<u>8</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Action	Init	Goal	DMG	RNG	Rate	Shots	SIZ
Knife	3	10	3		1		S
Assault Laser	4	12	8	20/30	2	20	XL
Fist	3	10	2				
Kick	2	10	3				
Grapple	1	10	2				
Charge	1	10	3+				

Successes Dice

1-2	0
3-5	+1
6-8	+2
9-11	+3
12-14	+4
15-17	+5
18	+6

Critical success = χ^2

Stigma Shackles (St. Maya stigmata)

VITALITY

Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2

ARMOR: Hvy cloth (2 d)
Flame-retardant +3d

WYRD

Experience:

Birthdate _____

Sex _____

Hair _____

Eyes _____

Complexion _____

Height _____

Weight _____

Image _____

[illegible]

Awful rumors are running rampant around the Hub about heresy going on in a House Gilgar manor in the Badlands. A recent earthquake cut communications with the place, and now a noble is gathering a rescue party. The reclusive old duke of the manor hasn't been seen in public in years. Some say that he can no longer hide his sin of technosophy. He has enhanced himself from head to toe with cybertech, and now looks more machine than man. He probably has a lab under the mansion filled with all sorts of other gadgets.

You've also heard the rumors from superstitious peasants who say that Thom Manor is haunted by the ghosts of the Gilgar family who died in previous terraforming disasters, bound to their ancestral locus until the planet's cataclysms are healed.

In the interests of squelching heresy, you've forced your way into the resour-
party. Count Avals Gilgar was too surprised and abashed to say no to your request.

<i>Carried</i>	<i>SIZ</i>
Fusion cels x 5	
Physicks' Kit	
MedPac (Elixir x 10)	
Fusion Torch (TL4)	

<i>Cash</i>	<i>Assets</i>
30 firebirds	

Action	Init	Goal	DMG	RNG	Rate	Shots	SIZ

DESCRIPTION

Birthdate _____

Sex _____

Hair _____

Eyes _____

Complexion _____

Height _____

Weight _____

Image _____

RUMORS

A recent earthquake cut communications with Thorn Manor, home to a revered old duke of House Gilgar. His grandson is gathering a rescue party, and his dear wife, Countess Zeena zad Gilgar, believes that something occult takes place there, for the ground is holy.

Legends tell of a holy woman — Saint Hecla — who was martyred in the vicinity during the time of the Prophet. The nature of her martyrdom is somewhat unclear, lost to history, but some claim she died protecting farmers from the bullets of thieves, while others say she willingly sacrificed her life to appease a pagan deity that threatened the terraforming of the world — a deity some believe is a demon responsible for the current disasters.

The sacred heritage of the site led the early Gilgar nobility to build Thorn Manor there, close to the rose bushes that bloom with unnatural regularity near the supposed grave of this saintly martyr, now in the gardens of the manse.

In addition, Thorn Manor is said to be haunted by the ghosts of the Gilgar family who died in previous terraforming disasters, bound to their ancestral locus until the planet's cataclysms are healed.

POSSESSIONS

Carried

SIZ

MedPac (Elixir x 5)

TRAITS

LVL

MONEY

Cash

Assets

22 firebirds

COMBAT

STR/

Action

Init Goal DMG RNG Rate Shots SIZ

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SIZ

Race: Human

Native Planet:

Alliance: Engineers

Rank: Apprentice



LVL

Academia	1
Focus	1
Inquiry	5
Knavery	1
Lore (Forbidden Tech)	2
Read Urthish	
Read Urthtech	
Tech Redemption (High Tech)	7
Tech Redemption (Volt)	5
Tech Redemption (Mech)	5
Science (Terraforming)	5
Social (Debate)	1
Streetwise	2
Think Machine	3

Type	Pts
------	-----

STR/

VICTORY CHART

Successes	Dice
1-2	0
3-5	+1
6-8	+2
9-11	+3
12-14	+4
15-17	+5
18	+6
Critical success =	x2

ARMOR: _____ (d)

Standard Shield: (5 / 10) hits:

Experience:

DESCRIPTION

Birthdate _____
 Sex _____
 Hair _____
 Eyes _____
 Complexion _____
 Height _____
 Weight _____
 Image _____

TRAITS

LVL

RUMORS

You've heard rumors about an old House Gilgar duke who is built head to toe with cybertech, and now looks more machine than man. His manor recently suffered a cataclysm, and his grandson has called for a terraforming expert to join a rescue party. If the duke were to die, his parts would be worth a fortune on the black market... He probably also has a lab under that mansion filled with all sorts of other gadgets.

You're training in terraforming might finally pay off. You hear all sorts of rumors about an important terraforming node that ties into the worldgrid, supposedly located beneath the manor.

POSSESSIONS

Carried

SIZ

Mech Tools _____

Volt Tools _____

Think Machine tools _____

Fusion cels x 2 _____

.40 caliber bullets x 30 _____

Owned

Location

MONEY

Cash

Assets

160 firebirds _____

COMBAT

STR/

Action

Init Goal DMG RNG Rate Shots SIZ

Name:
Player:
Gender:
Age:

Race: Human
Native Planet:
Alliance: House Gilgar
Rank: Knight

Concept: Noble Diplomat



CHARACTERISTICS

BODY		MIND	
Strength (3)	4	Wits (3)	8
Dexterity (3)	8	Perception (3)	8
Endurance (3)	5	Tech (3)	3
SPIRIT			
Extrovert (3)	6 / 1	(1) Introvert	
Passion (1)	1 / 5	(3) Calm	
Faith (1)	1 / 4	(3) Ego	

NATURAL SKILLS

Charm (3)	8
Dodge (3)	4
Fight (3)	3
Impress (3)	3
Melee (3)	5
Observe (3)	8
Shoot (3)	8
Sneak (3)	7
Vigor (3)	4

LEARNED SKILLS

	LVL
Arts (Rhetoric)	1
Drive Aircraft	1
Etiquette	2
Inquiry	5
Knavery	8
Lockpicking	2
Lore (People & Places seen)	1
Remedy	1
Social (Debate)	1
Speak Pandemonium Dialect	
Stoic Mind	3
Streetwise	3
Tech Redemption (Mech)	2
Think Machine	1

BLESSINGS/CURSES

+/-	Trait	Situation
+2	Knavery	Chameleon
-2	Extro	when out of guise

BENEFICES/AFFLICTIONS

Type	Pts
Ally	4

OCCULT

Psi	/	Urge
Theurgy	/	Hubris
Powers/Rites	LVL	Goal

COMBAT

Action	STR/						
	Init	Goal	DMG	RNG	Rate	Shots	SIZ
Knife	5	13	3		1		S
Katana	5	13	6		3		L
Garrote	4	12	3		3		XS
Derringer	8	15	3	5/10	2	4	XS
Sniper Rifle	8	16	8	50/70	2	5	XL
Fist	3	11	2				
Kick	2	11	3				
Grapple	1	11	2				
Charge	1	11	3+				

VICTORY CHART

Successes	Dice
1-2	0
3-5	+1
6-8	+2
9-11	+3
12-14	+4
15-17	+5
18	+6
Critical success = x2	

Stigma

VITALITY ☐

Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2

WYRD ☐

ARMOR: Synthsilk (4 d)

Dueling Shield: (5 / 10) hits:

Experience:

Birthdate _____

Sex _____

Hair _____

Eyes _____

Complexion _____

Height _____

Weight _____

Image _____

[illegible]

You are actually a knight of House Van Gelder, an assassin parading around as a knight of House Gilgar, claiming to be from a distant arm of the family only recently forced to the Hub from Defiance Gap. Your Decados masters have supplied you with all the paperwork and stories you need to sound credible.

Thorn Manor, ruled by an old duke of House Gilgar in the Badlands, recently suffered an earthquake and is incommunicado. The duke's grandson is building a rescue party, and has called for aid from any house member. Your masters have assigned you to spy on the mission, and to ascertain whether rumors of a vast treasure are true. Street talk says the old duke won't leave the manor because he knows the great treasures of House Gilgar are buried on the grounds. Other house members have investigated these rumors, digging in various places, but nothing was found. But what else could explain the old man's stubbornness? (Unless he's senile...)

If that weren't enough, some say an important terraforming node that ties into the worldgrid is located beneath the manor (the real reason it was built at this location), and that the old man is either protecting it or fiddling with it to cause more disasters in an insane attempt at revenge against the Decados.

Carried	SIZ
Fusion cels x 1	
.32 caliber bullets x 10	
13mm bullets x 30	
Fusion Torch (TL7)	
Thieves' Keys	

<i>Cash</i>	<i>Assets</i>
61 firebirds	

[illegible]

Rank: Baron



DESCRIPTION

Birthdate _____
 Sex _____
 Hair _____
 Eyes _____
 Complexion _____
 Height _____
 Weight _____
 Image _____

TRAITS

LVL

RUMORS

When first arriving on this hell-hole of a world seeking glory on the dueling circuit, you were befriended by Dame Johanna Gilgar, a noblewoman since killed in a cataclysmic accident. You owe honor to her memory, or else you couldn't very well call yourself a Hawkwood.

A crippled count of that house is calling for a rescue party to save his grandfather, an eccentric who insists on living in a Badlands manor. A recent earthquake has cut communications. Now is your chance to step forward and honor your fallen friend.

However, Thorn Manor is said to be haunted by the ghosts of the Gilgar family who died in previous terraforming disasters, bound to their ancestral locus until the planet's cataclysms are healed.

POSSESSIONS

Carried

SIZ

Fusion cels x 5

Physicks' Kit

Fusion Torch (TL5)

Owned

Location

MONEY

Cash

173 firebirds

Assets

COMBAT

STR/

Action

Init Goal DMG RNG Rate Shots SIZ

Concept: Mercenary



Name: _____ Race: Human
 Player: _____ Native Planet: _____
 Gender: _____ Alliance: Muster
 Age: _____ Rank: Sergeant

CHARACTERISTICS

BODY		MIND	
Strength (3)	8	Wits (3)	3
Dexterity (3)	8	Perception (3)	5
Endurance (3)	8	Tech (3)	6
SPIRIT			
Extrovert (3)	3	/ 1	(1) Introvert
Passion (3)	5	/ 1	(1) Calm
Faith (3)	5	/ 1	(1) Ego

NATURAL SKILLS

Charm (3)	3
Dodge (3)	8
Fight (3)	8
Impress (3)	7
Melee (3)	8
Observe (3)	6
Shoot (3)	8
Sneak (3)	5
Vigor (3)	7

LEARNED SKILLS

Beast Lore	LVL 1
Drive Landcraft	2
Knavery	1
Lore (People & Places seen)	1
Lore (Bannockburn)	1
Remedy	2
Search	1
Stoic Body	3
Streetwise	1
Survival	1
Tech Redemption (Mech)	2
Tracking	1

BLESSINGS/CURSES

+/-	Trait	Situation
+2	Passion	Bold
-2	Extro	Callous

BENEFICES/AFFLICTIONS

Type	Pts

OCCULT

Psi	_____ / _____	Urge
Theurgy	_____ / _____	Hubris
Powers/Rites	LVL	Goal

COMBAT

Action	Init	Goal	DMG	RNG	STR+1	STR/	Rate	Shots	SIZ
Dirk	8	16	5			2			M
Frap Stick	7	16	7/3			5			L
Blaster Shotgun	8	18	9	10/20	1	8			L
Blaster Pistol	8	16	7	10/20	1	10			S
Heavy Revolver	8	16	6	30/40	3	6			M
Fist	8	16	3						
Kick	7	16	4						
Grapple	6	16	3						
Charge	5	16	4+						

VICTORY CHART

Successes	Dice
1-2	0
3-5	+1
6-8	+2
9-11	+3
12-14	+4
15-17	+5
18	+6
Critical success = x2	

VITALITY

Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2

WYRD

ARMOR: Synthsilk (4 d)

Standard Shield: (5 / 10) hits:

Experience:

Birthdate _____

Sex _____

Hair _____

Eyes _____

Complexion _____

Height _____

Weight _____

Image _____

Blank lined paper for writing.

You've heard rumors about this Thorn Manor. Folks say House Gilgar has a bunch of valuable datafiles on Second Republic superfarm technology hidden there, keeping them safe from the Inquisition. That info might be worth something on the technology black market.

[illegible]

Owned	Location

<i>Cash</i>	<i>Assets</i>
7 firebirds	

[illegible]

Rank: Lieutenant



Birthdate _____
Sex _____
Hair _____
Eyes _____
Complexion _____
Height _____
Weight _____
Image _____

LVL

You've been hired to fly a rescue crew to a manor in the Badlands, one that was hit by an earthquake and hasn't been heard from since. All manner of strange animals have savaged the manor since the recent earthquake, and the residents are under siege.

The old noble won't leave because he knows the great treasures of House Gilgar are buried on the grounds of the manor. Other house members have investigated these rumors, digging in various places, but nothing was found. But what else could explain the old man's stubbornness? (Unless he's senile...)

Also, Some say an important terraforming node that ties into the worldgrid is located beneath the manor (the real reason it was built at this location), and that the old man is either protecting it or fiddling with it to cause more disasters in an insane attempt at revenge against the Decados.

Carried	SIZ
Fusion cels x 7	
Volt Tools	
Mech Tools	
Fusion Torch (TL5)	

Location

<i>Cash</i>	<i>Assets</i>
91 firebirds	

STR/

Action	Init	Goal	DMG	RNG	Rate	Shots	SIZ
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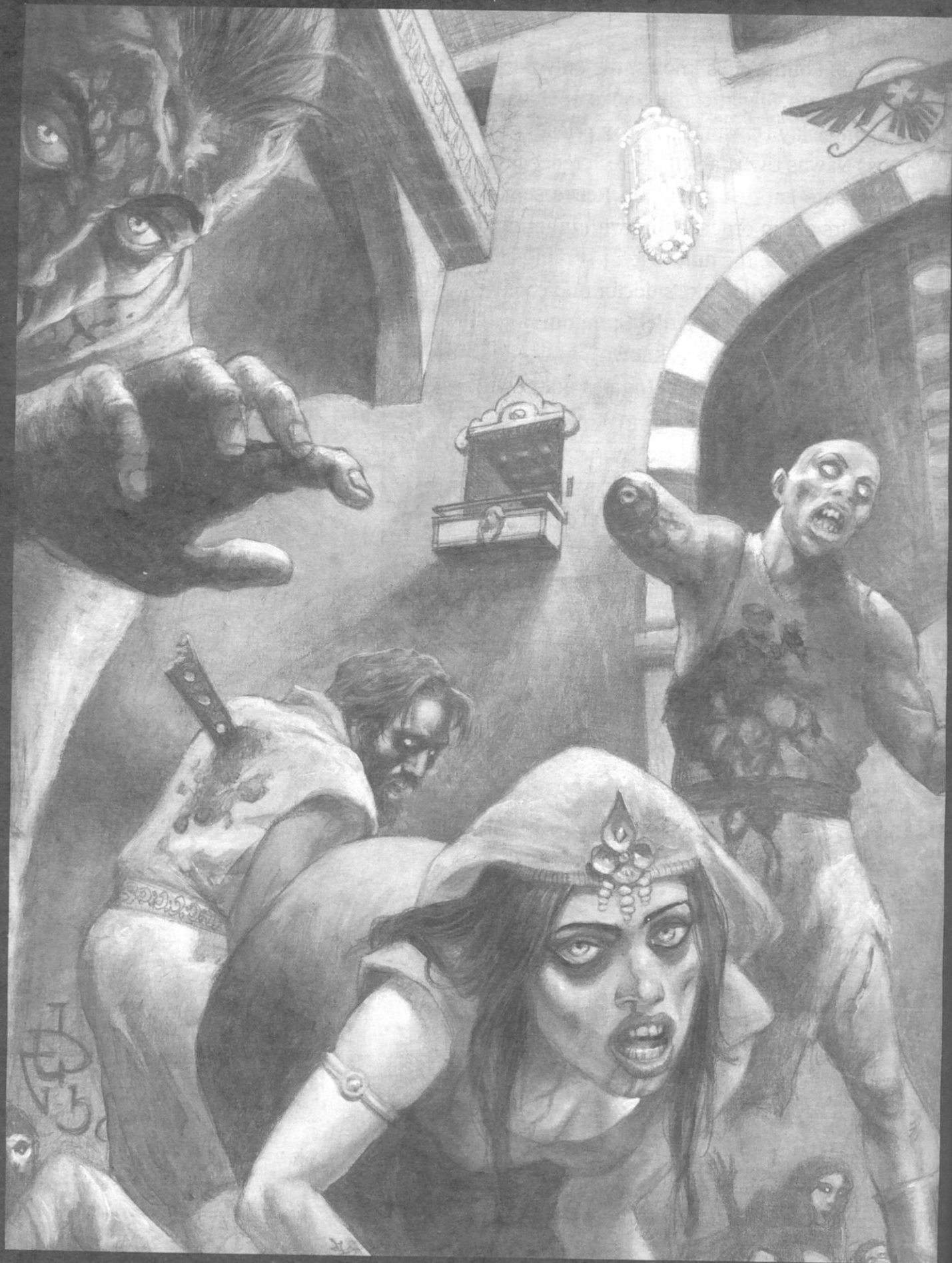
Manor Residents

As far as Count Avals knows, the only people at the manor are:

- Duke Vanth Gilgar, current head of House Gilgar;
- Canon Oblay Dawan, Orthodox priest;
- Boss Nawas Uwix, a Scraver tech redeemer sent to maintain the house's technical needs;
- Associate Lars Nalandras, a Reeve sent by Avals to ensure that the duke's material affairs are in order (along with inheritance documents);
- Bremen Svors, the duke's long-serving chamberlain;
- Doctor Uldas, the duke's doctor and cook;
- Captain of the Guard Ardel Gramton;
- three guards (names unknown);
- five chamberboys/maids (names unknown)



Mulakee



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Dark Liner

A Short, Introductory Drama By Bill Bridges

"Dark Liner" was developed as a short introduction to *Fading Suns* to be run at gaming conventions, in a three- to four-hour time slot. Players do not need to know anything about *Fading Suns*, and can be provided pregenerated characters (the ones from "Thorn Manor," earlier in this book, work fine). It is meant to be somewhat free-form, allowing the gamemaster to adjust the timing and pacing of the drama — and the nature of the threat — to best fit his group of players.

"Dark Liner" has been playtested numerous times at various conventions, each with different results. For instance, some games have focused less on the supernatural elements — with no appearance of demons — and more on the conflict with the Avestites and Kurgans, while others have played up the ghostly doings to the hilt. Gamemasters should just sit back and let the characters' own actions choose the course of play.

The setting is a luxury liner spaceship. Rather than reproduce extensive maps here, we recommend the gamemaster use the poster page deckplans provided in *Letters of Marque: Starship Deckplans*, available from Holistic Design. However, unless miniatures are used, the exact details of the ship don't really matter, since the demons can shift the layout of corridors to their own uses anyway.

The Dilemma

Hira is a vital point on the Kurgan pilgrimage. Despite Hazat attempts otherwise, Kurgan ships come and go from the system, bearing pilgrims on their holy journey. The Hazat fleet recently suffered a major setback after a sortie with

Kurgan cruisers. As a result, the Hazat fleet presence in the system was sparse until reinforcements could be commissioned and delivered. The Kurgans took this opportunity to send a huge pilgrimage ship through, a luxury liner called the *Kabir*.

On its way out of the system, however, the Hazat returned in force, initiating a grand space battle with the liner's frigate and cruiser escorts. Most ships on either side were reduced to hulks floating in the void. The liner lost most of its crew, along with its maneuver jets and thrust engines. It continued helplessly along its initial course, missing its target jumpgate and floating into the Dark Between the Stars.

Elements of both fleets did escape, however, but not without losing captives to either side. The Hazat, holding a Kurgan captain, interrogated him and discovered an interesting piece of information. It seems the *Kabir* carried with it a holy relic thought lost since the Diaspora, the apocryphal "Missives to the Intelligence," a series of letters written by Saint Horace, addressed to a mysterious angel with which he was reputed to have converse. While some consider this book to be false, a heretical text written not by Horace but an iconoclastic scribe rebelling against Palamedes, others (especially among the Eskatonic Order) believe it to be genuine. However, for the last millennia, issues of its veracity have been moot, for no complete copy of the book was known to exist. If the alleged copy on the *Kabir* is real, it could reveal lost enlightenment — or spark new schisms in the Church.

An incautious Hazat scribe leaked word of the relic by radio, and now nearly every faction with agents in system

wants the book. Ships have launched and now speed towards the derelict ship. But it has already traveled past the safe margin, for demons are said to thrive in the darkness beyond the jumpgates. Recovery of the lost book may cost adventurers their souls....

Raiders

Three ships caught up with the *Kabir* and docked: the *Starling* (an independent explorer), the *Blood Spider* (a military escort) and the *Cestus Malificus* (an Avestite raider). Each of their crews disembarked and began scouring the ship.

The game begins as the boarders of the *Starling* and *Blood Spider* meet one another in the bridge (deserted of all but dead bodies) and realize that, if they are going to accomplish their task, they should work together.

NOTE: If the luxury liner deckplans are used, then each cadre docked at one of the two docking bays (belowdecks port and starboard) and made their separate ways down from Deck C to the Crew Deck (one group was ahead of the other), and then up to the bridge.

Unknown to either crew, the Avestites have also latched onto the hull with grapple cables and cut their way in (their parked on the transparent hull over the auditorium, with a rope ladder hanging down from the hole they cut below their ship).

A Hasty Council

First off, let the players familiarize themselves with their characters and their comrades. Don't let this take overlong; thrust everyone right to the next stage as soon as feasible.

Emphasize that both crews' journeys to the bridge were somewhat harrowing: Strange creaking noises in the hull could be heard, sometimes accompanied by distant moans or even laughter. Everybody is on edge, and the appearance of strangers is sure to initiate conflict, verbal or otherwise.

Widen the divide between the crews by handing notes to members of one crew and not the other, or allowing one side to roll to know some fact or perceive some clue but not the other. The two crews may provide all the conflict needed, with no recourse to spooks or demons.

The first thing the team will probably do is examine the bridge. It has suffered damage from combat; bulkheads block the windows, which were blown out by blaster fire. Only those crewmembers who were strapped in are still in their seats — all dead, burnt by the blast. The controls refuse to respond (the engine room must first be repaired, a task all crewmembers know is too great for their abilities).

The computer is faulty. It displays the captain's final log (in Kurgan): "...and so we go now into your bosom, Great Star-Maker, and return to you that which Your servant lost long ago. Hail Horace!" On the display is a live-remote camera view (from the Library on Deck B, if you're using the

deckplans mentioned above) showing an ancient handwritten book in a now-shattered glass case (shards litter the floor). The shot is labeled on the screen as "Library," although a map showing how to get there isn't shown. Any attempt to manipulate the think machine will crash it, canceling the video image. It cannot be brought back.

Library

The team moves from the bridge to the library. Any manner of peril can assail them on the way. Choose from the *Encounters* below.

The first thing they realize is that dead bodies litter the hallways. Most of them are Kurgan pilgrims, passengers aboard the vessel, but some are Hazat marines (boarders during the conflict) and others Kurgan marines (who attempted to repel the boarders). While most people show obvious blaster or sword wounds, others seemingly died of asphyxiation — or extreme fear, judging from their horrorstruck expressions.

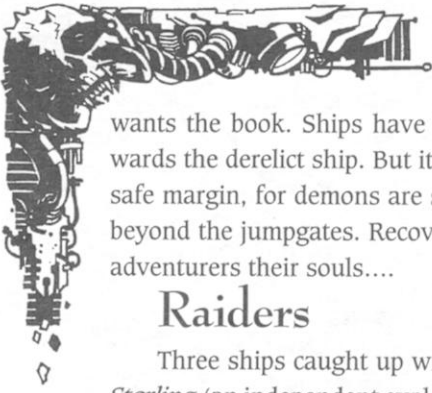
The book is missing three pages, seemingly torn at random. A quick read by any priest (or anyone with Theology Lore) reveals that these are very important passages, including the formulae for ancient theurgical rites against demons. The rest of the book may be a theological curiosity, but these pages are of immense practical worth. They must be found — indeed, they may provide the only defense for an escape.

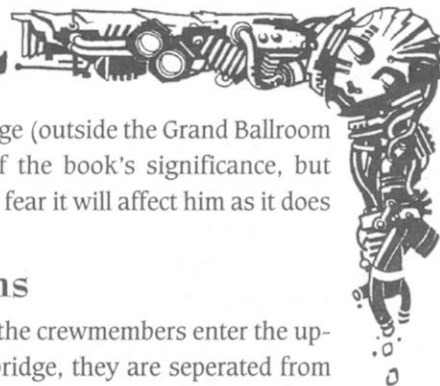
Page Hunt

The first clue to the pages' locations are dead people. Anyone with the book will be threatened by husks or demons (see *Encounters*, below), but these entities shy away from the dead folks immediately outside of the Library. Close examination reveals that one of them has a missing page stuffed in his mouth. It is this page which repels the Dark. Only the person holding it is protected.

However, there is a catch — the person whose mouth is stuffed was possessed by a demon; removing the page awakens the demon — which is why the Kurgan marines roaming the ship stuffed the page here: to prevent demons from manifesting. Removing the page not only reanimates the corpse, it also empowers it with unholy abilities, warping its visage in the process. While it cannot attack whomever holds one of the torn book pages, it can assault his friends.

The second page is in the captain's quarters (on Deck A on the deckplans). On the bed is the body of a Ghamizi occultist, who apparently died recently of self-poisoning (the substance is scattered on the nearby table — enough for one more death-dealing dose, which must be administered orally). His mouth is stuffed with the page, stained with the now-inert and harmless poison. However, removing it will not awaken a demon (the page was placed here to guard the holy man's soul in the Beyond).





The third page is in the possession of a living Bagatur soldier, creeping around the deck with a small complement of marines. They are attempting to reach one of the boarders' ships to escape — either the two below decks, or the Avestite ship.

(If times permits, there can be four or five pages — the forth in a Kankali actresses' mouth on the stage of the theater, and the fifth in the restaurant among a pile of dead people and rotting food.)

Encounters

As the team travels the corridors of the *Kabir*, they may encounter one or more threats, from Avestite Inquisitors and Kurgan marines, to the walking dead and worse...

Traits for some of these threats are provided on the following pages. Below are some additional encounters:

Demons: The farther the ship travels, the more powerful these entities become. Before, they had to possess a body (living or dead) to interact with the world. Now, they can physically manifest their true forms.

When doing so, the demons don't necessarily appear as monsters; they can draw from a person's mind images and behaviors of people he knows or fantasizes about ("Yes, it is I, Zebulon returned..."). Some of them are more clever than others, and will choose plausible illusions (pretending to be an Avestite, for example, but one that offers to work with the party, or a Hazat commander claiming to have just boarded).

The demons' main aim is to eat peoples' soul-flames. To do this, they must taint a person before death, by getting him to commit a sin (murder, defiling the book) or possess him and make him do it. To possess someone, they need only touch him and succeed in a contested Possession (Goal: 10) vs. the victim's Faith + Stoic Mind roll.

If all else fails and it appears that the characters may escape with all the pages of the book, the demons will band together and manifest a single, monstrous body — the Dark Slave — to physically attack any living being aboard the ship. The traits for this entity are provided in the following pages.

Erlik Khan's Lackey: An Antinomist is on board. He intended to take the pilgrimage so he could subtly defile it along the way. With the ship forsaken and lost in deep space, he has called in all his markers and summoned demon sultans to rescue him. Once the ship reaches a certain point, he will be transported away to safety on a Kurgan world (or so he was promised; he'll actually appear on an airless moon considered to be Kurgan territory, and choke out his final moments cursing his betrayers, who will then feast on his soul-flame). He plans to stay well out of danger until then,

remaining in a smoking lounge (outside the Grand Ballroom on Deck B). He is aware of the book's significance, but doesn't want to go near it for fear it will affect him as it does the demons.

Complications

Nowhere to Run: Once the crewmembers enter the upper decks after leaving the bridge, they are separated from their ships. If they later return to the docking ports, they will find them inaccessible: The elevators won't open onto them, for there is only vacuum there now — both ships are missing, as are bits of the hull around where they docked, as if something took a bite out of the luxury liner.

However, the Avestite's ship is still docked and intact. The only way off this hell ship is aboard the Avestite's Inquisitorial raider class vessel. Of course, the characters could take the raider for themselves; there are only two crewmembers aboard — a Charioteer hired to pilot the ship (who hates his job) and an Avestite left to guard it, complete with flamethrower.

This Can't Be Happening: As the characters wander the corridors in search of the book and its pages, things go wrong. Freak engineering snafus — elevators dropping in free-fall for a few floors before stopping, lights going on an off — keep them jumping at shadows. Inexplicable explosions may breach the hull and suck dead bodies (and maybe characters!) into space before emergency bulkheads close. Kurgan crewmembers thought dead rise up and shoot anything that moves before dying again in screaming agony. Repulsor pads malfunction, causing instant, crushing gravities.


Science or Sorcery?

There may not be a need to resort to demons or the walking dead at all. The crewmembers' own conflicts, and those provided by the all-too-human Kurgan marines and Avestites may be well enough to fuel the drama until some form of resolution comes about: Either the characters escape or die. In this case, weird noises and spectral visions may be written off as stress or oxygen deprivation, as the failing engines get the life support mixtures wrong.

Of course, demons are fun (for gamemasters, at least). If the players would best enjoy fencing the forces of darkness, then bring 'em on full force. The finale could be the uber-demon given in the traits that follow the drama.

Conclusion

Not everyone is guaranteed to make it out alive. In fact, few will. This drama is best run as a stand-alone game. If integrated into an ongoing epic, its dangers should be adjusted downwards.



Avestites

The Inquisition prowls the streets, but the Avestites don't know about the lost pages. They're only told about them. What they do know is that they're going to hand over the book to the Inquisition, and thus flameable. They are not going to and split their team upon both sides.

A black and white illustration of two figures in hooded robes. The figure on the left has a stern, almost angry expression, while the figure on the right has a more somber, weary look. Both are wearing robes with a ribbed collar.

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Name: Marines	Race: Human	LEARNED SKILLS <i>LVL</i>
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A few people may be simple servants and cooks — they fear the characters and will avoid revealing themselves, but stammer out everything they know (in Kurgan) if questioned — stories about some Antinomist summoning demons and possessing the crew as soon as the ship was disabled in battle.



Name: Marines	Race: Human	
Gender: Males & Females	Alliance: Kurg'a Caliphate	
Age: 18-25	Rank: Marines	

CHARACTERISTICS		NATURAL SKILLS
Body	Mind	Charm (3) 3
Strength (3)	5 Wits (3) 3	Dodge (3) 4
Dexterity (4)	6 Perception (3) 3	Fight (3) 6
Endurance (3)	5 Tech (3) 4	Impress (3) 3
Spirit		Melee (3) 6
Extrovert (3)	3 / 1 (1) Introvert	Observe (3) 3
Passion (3)	3 / 1 (1) Calm	Shoot (3) 6
Faith (3)	3 / 1 (1) Ego	Sneak (3) 3
		Vigor (3) 3

COMMON ACTIONS		BLESSINGS/COURSES
Action	Goal	+/- Trait Situation

OCCULT		COMBAT	STR bonus:
Psi /	Urge	Action	Init Goal DMG RNG
Theurgy /	Hubris	Med Autofeared	6 11 5 20/30
Powers/Rites	Goal	Broadsword	6 11 6
		Knife	6 11 3
		Fist	6 11 2
		Kick	5 11 3
		Grapple	4 11 2

VITALITY											
Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2											

WYRD											
Critical success = x2											

LEARNED SKILLS LVL	
Gambling	2
Search	2
Warfare (Gunners)	5

ARMOR Leather 4d	
(/) Hits:	

VICTORY CHART	
Successes Pts	
1-2	0
3-5	+1
6-8	+2
9-11	+3
12-14	+4
15-17	+5
18	+6
Critical success = x2	

The Dead

All decks are littered with dead bodies. Some of these may rise to walk as Husks....



Name: Husks	Race: Dead Humans
Gender: Males & Females	Alliance: The Dark
Ages: 12-65	Rank: None

CHARACTERISTICS		NATURAL SKILLS
BODY	MIND	Charm (3) 4
Strength (3) 6	Wits (3) 6	Dodge (3) 9
Dexterity (3) 6	Perception (3) 4	Fight (3) 6
Endurance (3) 7	Tech (3) 3	Impress (3) 4
SPIRIT		Melee (3) 7
Extrovert (3) 3 / 1 (1)	Introvert	Observe (3) 3
Passion (3) 3 / 1 (1)	Calm	Shoot (3) 5
Faith (1) 1 / 3 (3)	Ego	Sneak (3) 7
		Vigor (3) 5

COMMON ACTIONS		BLESSINGS/CURSES
Action	Goal	+/- Trait Situation
		+2 Per In darkness
		-2 Per In strong light

CHANGED TRAITS	COMBAT	SHOTS FIRED	VICTORY CHART
Meta 5	STR bonus: +1d	(/clip)	Successes Pts
Powers	Action Init Goal DMG RNG		1-2 0
Claws	Claws 6 12 4		3-5 +1
Digestive Puke	Puke 5 11 4 (for 2 turns, -1d/turn thereafter)		6-8 +2
			9-11 +3
			12-14 +4
			15-17 +5
			18 +6
			Critical success = x2

VITALITY	O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O
Wound penalties:	-10 -8 -6 -4 -2
WYRD	O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O

LEARNED SKILLS LVL

Knavery 5

Stoic Body 5

Name: Dark Slave	Race: N/A	LEARNED SKILLS	LVL
Gender: N/A	Alliance: Frik Khan	Empathy	7

[illegible]

A detailed black and white illustration of a dragon's head. The dragon has large, curved horns, glowing yellow eyes, and a wide, toothy grin showing sharp fangs and many small teeth. It is wearing a dark, textured collar or harness around its neck.

VITALITY [O O O O O O O O O O] [O O]
Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2
WYRD [O O O O O O O O O O] [O O O O O O O O O O]

18 +6
Critical success = x2

[illegible]



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Love's Labors

By James Maliszewski

Preface

"Love's Labors" is a short drama that touches on an integral part of the **Fading Suns** setting seems underused: courtly love. As a source of drama, few emotions can compare to love. When coupled with the ritualized rules of court, the gamemaster has the makings of an excellent story. Indeed, courtly love seems almost tailor-made as the basis for a **Fading Suns** drama. Players and gamemasters alike are encouraged to read page 38 of the Second Edition rulebook as a primer before participating in "Love's Labors." Although this drama expands upon the concepts presented there, it assumes an understanding of those basics. Both enjoyment and ease of play will be increased with a proper understanding of courtly love and its place in the noble culture of the Known Worlds.

Using "Love's Labors" with a Pre-Existing Epic

The likeliest use of this drama is with a pre-existing or ongoing **Fading Suns** epic. Assuming the gamemaster plans to incorporate "Love's Labors" into his ongoing game, involving an experienced cadre of player characters, he should try to fit it into the context of what has gone before. Here are some suggestions:

- The characters may already be in the service of House Hawkwood, in which case it's a simple matter to get them to Delphi and in the employ of Baron Christian Gregory Hawkwood.
- One of the characters may have an undetailed Benefice like Ally or Contact that could lead them to Delphi. Alternately, Baron Christian might be an Ally, as he's a Questing Knight with minor influence at court.
- If the characters have extensive Church contacts, they

might be approached by Baron Christian's confessor, Father Gelasius Nascimento. He's become worried that his liege has become obsessed with winning the love of the Lady Clarissa de Vicente — to the detriment of his noble duties. In a similar vein, characters with friends in the Questing Knights (or who *are* Questing Knights or Imperial Cohorts) might become aware of the Baron's lovesickness and seek to aid him.

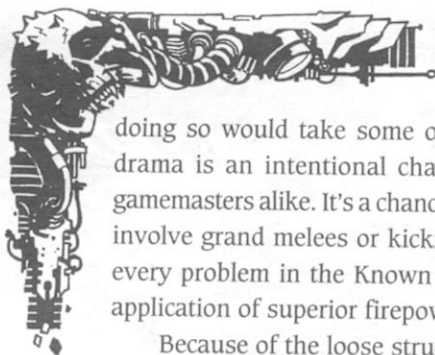
- For a real twist, the characters may have heard that the beautiful Lady Clarissa has at last agreed to accept suitors and they chose to take up this challenge for themselves. In this case, they'll be rivals rather than allies to Baron Christian. Although it changes their motivations for the drama, the bulk of its events can be used as written.

Beginning from Scratch

If the gamemaster is not incorporating "Love's Labors" into an ongoing epic, or is using new player characters, it's even easier to get things started. The characters can be friends or retainers of Baron Christian on Delphi. They'll see firsthand his degeneration and melancholy resulting from lovesickness. Helping him achieve his goal will thus be more than an academic matter to them, lending even greater urgency to this drama.

Control Issues

"Love's Labors" is a very freeform drama, allowing for multiple solutions to its central problem. While the three quests dictated by Sir Reginald de Vicente are quite explicit in their requirements, they admit several different approaches, depending on the skills and motivations of the cadre. In addition, part of the drama's "action" takes the form of social interaction with gamemaster characters. Despite social skills like Charm and Impress, not everything in "Love's Labors" is reducible to a series of die rolls. Besides,



doing so would take some of the fun out of the story. This drama is an intentional change of pace for players and gamemasters alike. It's a chance to show that heroism needn't involve grand melees or kicking down doors, and that not every problem in the Known Worlds can be solved by the application of superior firepower.

Because of the loose structure of the plot, tips are provided throughout to aid the gamemaster in handling certain tricky elements. In those cases where multiple solutions are possible, these tips include information on those most obvious alternate courses of action. These aren't the only solution, of course, and it's hoped that players will be creative in their attempts to resolve some of the issues involved in this drama. As you'll soon see, creativity will be rewarded greatly in "Love's Labors" — for the course of true love never did run smooth.

Outline

"Love's Labors" consists of the following parts:

Act One: Baron Christian — The player characters learn of Christian Hawkwood's lovesickness and his inability to rid himself of it. Both he and Father Gelasius plead with the characters to help rid him of the madness his love for the Lady Clarissa has brought about. They inform the cadre about Sir Reginald's wish to marry off his daughter and her unwillingness to accede to his wishes, as well as her strange change of heart. This conversation hatches the plot to use the cadre to win the Lady Clarissa's love — and end his suffering.

Act Two: The Hesychast — The characters are given the first task by Sir Reginald: reclaim an ancient medallion taken by a hesychast. According to the knight, this dirty old man stole a family heirloom from his home, after his father took pity upon him. Repeated attempts to locate the medallion have failed and now Sir Reginald has tasked his daughter's suitors with recovering it. Because the hesychast does not fear death, threats of physical violence have little effect on him. Instead, the characters must convince and cajole him, besting him in a battle of wits and theological insight. To complicate matters further, a mysterious Faceless Knight appears to harass the cadre, mocking their abilities and urging them to give up the quest for Clarissa's love.

Act Three: The Ice Wurm — The second task is more straightforward: the group must hunt and kill a large Ice Wurm from the far north. Unlike the first task, this problem can be solved through physical prowess. The Faceless Knight reappears to insult and bedevil the cadre as well.

Act Four: The Cave — The third and final task is putting an end to the haunting of a cave on Sir Reginald's lands. This foul and noxious place is the reputed lair of a long-dead Antinomist. Those who have entered it have never returned — or so the legends say. The cadre must therefore

face both the evil within and the Faceless Knight, whose presence reveals the true nature of their quest.

Resolution — The party must counsel Christian on the best way to proceed after they discover that the Lady Clarissa does not wish to be married after all. What they suggest and how the Baron responds will determine the course of future dramas, if any.

Act One: Baron Christian

In this act, the cadre comes to the continent of Frisia on Delphi (if they do not begin there) and meets the Baron Christian Hawkwood with the intention of curing him of his lovesickness. In the process, they realize that the only way to do so is to help him win the love of the woman he desires.

Note: Delphi is outlined in the sourcebook, *Hawkwood Fiefs: Imperial Survey 1*.

The Hawkwood Estate

Christian Gregory Hawkwood lives in an ancient estate outside Frisia's primary city. Surrounded by rugged terrain covered in ice and snow, it's a stark sight for newcomers unfamiliar with the region. The estate is somewhat dilapidated, but retains a proud air about it — a testament to its sturdy construction and classical features. Depending on the circumstances under which they begin this drama, the characters may or may not be expected by Baron Christian. If the former, he'll send a skimmer to meet them when they arrive on Delphi. If the latter, they'll have to make their own way across the ice and snow. The gamemaster can add animal encounters or environmental challenges along the journey if he wishes, but there's no necessity to do so. The baron is an avid hunter (or was before his melancholy set in) and keeps his grounds free of dangerous predators.

Once at the estate, the cadre is met by Ruggles, the baron's majordomo. A stiff and proper gentleman whose family has served the Hawkwoods for untold generations, Ruggles accepts the characters' introductions and ushers them into a waiting room. There, they are served Frisian ice wine and offered a variety of delicacies from elsewhere on the planet. Characters who achieve three or more successes on a Wits + Observe roll notice that the waiting room contains many ancient Urthish books on the subject of hunting and warfare. Clearly, the baron is an avid practitioner of these arts.

After a few minutes, a middle-aged man in the cassock of an Orthodox priest enters the room. He introduces himself as Father Gelasius Nascimento, the baron's confessor and adviser. He thanks the characters for coming to the aid of his liege and asks them what they know of the Lady Clarissa de Vicente. Characters who succeed in a Wits + Lore (Delphi or Court Gossip) roll will know something of the woman and her family. Adjust how much Father Gelasius

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tells the cadre based on how well any character succeeds.

The priest explains that Lady Clarissa is a woman of great beauty and a keen mind. Her family has lived on Delphi since the time of the Second Republic and they once possessed great wealth. Now they have fallen on hard times and her father, Sir Reginald, hopes to secure a marriage alliance with one of the great houses of the empire. Since the death of Clarissa's mother three years ago, he has tried to find a suitable husband for his daughter — but to no avail. Rumor has it that Clarissa opposes marriage, believing that no man is worthy of her. This has given her a reputation as a spoiled brat who possesses a pleasing form but lacks in manners. Despite that reputation, Baron Christian has long sought to marry Clarissa. He respected her enough, however, to abide by her supposed wishes and so never approached her with his feelings. Instead, he worshipped her from afar and waited for the day when he might woo her as a noble knight should.

That day finally arrived, as Sir Reginald announced that Clarissa had agreed to be courted. However, Clarissa only agreed on the condition that the ancient forms of courtly love be obeyed. From her reading of history, she knew that Tabitha al-Malik, for example, demanded proof of her lovers' ardor in the form of tasks, each one more difficult than the next. Clarissa agreed to marry any man who could overcome the challenges she selected. Sir Reginald has announced the nature of these tasks and many suitors from across Delphi — and a few beyond — seek to win her hand. To date, none have succeeded and Christian despairs of doing so himself. Because so many men he deems his betters have failed, he doubts his own abilities and sulks in his bedchamber, abandoning his work and duty to the emperor. At the same time, he worries that a more worthy applicant will indeed come along and win Clarissa's heart, thereby consigning him to loneliness without his lady love.

Father Gelasius considers this state of affairs intolerable and asks the characters to convince Christian to either try his hand at the tasks or abandon his melancholy. Thus far, he has had no success in doing this. He hopes the characters, as outsiders (if indeed they are — otherwise some other excuse will be necessary) might be able to sway him. If nothing else, a fresh perspective on the problem might rouse the lovesick nobleman from his self-indulgence.

Meeting with Christian

When they're ready, Father Gelasius takes them to the baron. He's lying on his ornate bed, dressed in a longshirt and cap, looking sullen and depressed. Characters who gain successes with a Perception + Empathy roll immediately recognize that Christian is indeed suffering from severe melancholy, one so profound it's probably affected his physical condition; he has indeed fallen on hard times. When introduced, the baron barely acknowledges the characters — even



if he already knows them. Instead, he weakly offers them a place to sit and returns to his besotted reverie.

If the characters don't think to do so themselves, Father Gelasius urges them to broach the subject of the Lady Clarissa with Christian. Upon hearing her name, the baron noticeably perks up, extolling the virtues of her physical and mental perfection. Another successful Perception + Empathy roll reveals that his love for the woman is probably superficial. Talking to him further makes it obvious that he's met her only briefly and that she is more an ideal than a reality to him. Pointing this out will only enrage Christian, a fact the cadre discovers if they're not careful.

Once the subject of the tasks comes up, Christian's demeanor once again becomes moody. He carries on at length about his unworthiness and inability to live up to the challenges. Convincing the baron otherwise is a sustained action that requires nine victory points to succeed. The gamemaster can award points on the basis of successful skill rolls (such as Debate or Oratory) or good roleplaying. Throughout their conversation, Christian will deny he is worthy of Clarissa's love while at the same time egging the character's on to change his mind. Roleplay this banter to the hilt, emphasizing the nobleman's feigned low self-image and belief in his own worthlessness.

Once nine victory points have been achieved (or by gamemaster decision), Christian will perk up once more and agree he has a chance to win Clarissa's hand. However, he begs the cadre to help him. He says he lacks the confidence needed to succeed. With their assistance, that might change. In return, he promises to return the favor however he can. The baron has influence at the Imperial Court and could assist the cadre in gaining positions or patrons. He is also a wealthy man and would be willing to pay for their services

Other Suitors

This drama assumes that other knights and noblemen are competing with Christian (and the cadre) for the hand of Clarissa. While the drama as written mentions only the mysterious Faceless Knight, the gamemaster should feel free to add encounters with other challengers as he desires. Unless the characters are especially powerful or experienced, the traits for Lady Rene Gooddale Hawkwood on page 263 of the **Fading Suns** Second Edition rulebook provide a good example of the skill levels of most of the suitors. Unlike Christian, these men are surer of themselves and will fight hard to defeat the cadre. They won't give their lives, of course (well, one or two might), for this is a friendly competition, after all. There's no expectation that it be fought to the death.

in this important matter. Assuming they accept his offer, the gamemaster should choose a suitable reward based on the needs of his epic.

The Plan

Christian describes each of the three tasks to the characters in as much detail as they wish. Refer to the following three acts for this information. What he recommends is that the cadre pose as other suitors, so as to draw suspicion away from him. He doesn't wish to undertake these tasks only to be disqualified because he has assistants. He will provide the characters with anything they need to undertake the tasks, including money. Frisia is somewhat primitive compared to the rest of Delphi, so there are limits to what they can acquire in this manner. Christian suggests they work together, using their combined skills to overcome each of the tasks. When completed, he will claim credit for the victory and report his success to Sir Reginald, as required by the rules Clarissa demanded of her father.

Act Two: The Hesychast

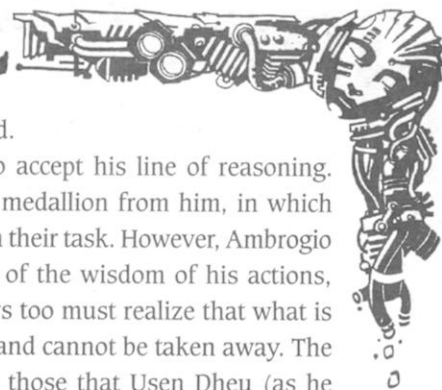
The first task is seemingly simple: Retrieve a family heirloom from a dirty old Hesychast who stole it from Sir Reginald's father. According to local legend, Sir Andres De Vicente served Darius Hawkwood during the early part of the Emperor Wars. In recognition for his service to the Hawkwood cause, the regent gave Sir Andres a golden medallion stamped with the Hawkwood sigil. Andres prized this possession and passed it on to his son after the elder De Vicente died in 4981.

In addition to being an upright man, Sir Reginald is also quite pious, giving his tithe to the Church and alms to the poor. When a holy man named Ambrogio appeared on the De Vicente lands two years ago, he welcomed him, giving him a place to stay and treating him like an honored guest. Although Sir Reginald thought the hesychast a strange man (he quoted odd passages from scripture, for example), he gave him the run of his home. He even allowed him access to family treasures, like his father's medallion.

Eventually, Ambrogio disappeared into the night and took several treasures with him — including the medallion. Sir Reginald offered a reward for the item's return, but no one could find the thieving old monk. In time, he even said he'd forgive the hesychast in exchange for the medallion's safe return. He didn't care about the other stolen items or about bringing the rogue to justice. Consequently, Clarissa has decided that finding Ambrogio and convincing him to return the medallion would make a fine first task for any would-be suitors.

Locating Ambrogio

The process of finding the hesychast is somewhat complicated one. The gamemaster can run this portion of the act



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however he sees fit. At its most basic, the characters can simply acquire six victory points in a sustained Wits + Inquiry roll. Complementary skills include Delphi Lore and Streetwise. Alternately, the gamemaster may require the cadre to travel about Frisia speaking with locals and gathering information. Whatever method he chooses, the following data points are essential to reaching a conclusion:

- No one in the local Church hierarchy knows this Ambrogio. Indeed, they doubt he is even a member of a recognized monastic order at all.
- Frisian peasants claim otherwise, pointing out that Ambrogio was a holy healer, who aided them with his theurgic rites.
- Other local nobles suffered thefts after giving shelter to this supposed hesychast.
- He was last near the Hot Springs of Vella on the southern edge of the continent; this was over a week ago.

Characters who possess Lore (Church), Lore (Heresy) or similar skills may recognize that Ambrogio's behavior suggests he isn't a hesychast at all, but a wandering member of the Children of Zuran, a faith persecuted by the Church. Details of the faith aren't important for this drama, other than to say that Zuranity is a syncretic religion devoted to freedom and democratic ideals. Some of its practitioners don't believe theft is a sin, based on their legend that the Prophet (whom they regard as one of their saints) gave them sanction to steal after they brought him to Saint Amalthea on Grail for healing. Gamemasters who are interested can consult **Lords & Priests** for further details if they wish to include them in "Love's Labors."

If the cadre journeys to the Hot Springs of Vella, they find signs of a recent encampment. A successful Perception + Tracking roll leads the characters to Ambrogio's current camp, several kilometers away. Once there, the old man welcomes the characters and offers them some of his meager food and drink. Despite the poor quality of his food and the harsh weather, he looks hale and hearty — a testament to his endurance and strength of will.

The Meaning of Love

If asked, Ambrogio does not deny that he is a Zuranist or that he took Sir Reginald's medallion. Indeed, he produces it — along with many other stolen items — for the cadre to see. However, he explains that he did this out of religious conviction and a wish to "improve" Sir Reginald in spite of himself." Ambrogio believes that excessive attachment to material things is a great evil, especially baubles like the medallion. He claims that the medallion is "payment" for his "services" to Sir Reginald, which is to say, aiding him on his spiritual path. If pressed, he quotes from the legend that the Prophet rewarded the Zuranists for aiding him in his own path by granting them the ability to steal without sin. Therefore, he is only following the words of the

Prophet in doing what he did.

The cadre is unlikely to accept his line of reasoning. They could simply take the medallion from him, in which case they'll have succeeded in their task. However, Ambrogio tries hard to convince them of the wisdom of his actions, intimating that the characters too must realize that what is truly valuable is immaterial and cannot be taken away. The things that matter most are those that Usen Dheu (as he calls the Pancreator) allows us to carry with us at all times, like honor, camaraderie and love.

The conversation eventually turns to the topic of love. If the characters do not first emphasize how much Sir Reginald values his medallion, Ambrogio will expand upon his comments above. He'll ask the characters why it is they seek the medallion. If he believes they do so for worthy reasons, he'll return it to them willingly. After all, his interest in it is not for its material value, but for what it represents: another soul aided on the path to spiritual enlightenment. At this point, the characters — including Christian — should explain the story of Clarissa's tasks and how the Baron wishes to win her love through achieving them.

These comments will attract Ambrogio's disdain. He tells the cadre the love is not something that can be won — least of all through great deeds. Love can only be freely given, without any expectation of reward, just as Usen Dheu loves his children. He says that he believes Clarissa could never love anyone who goes through with these tasks; no one could. The tasks are just a ruse, the means to get rid of those who would treat her as an object just like the medallion they seek. If the characters do not show an indication that they understand what he is saying, he will not give them the medallion. They can snatch it from him, of course, and he will put up no fight for it. However, he will laugh at them for being poor pitiful fools who don't have any idea what love truly is or how it may be gained.

If the characters agree with him or otherwise show that they see the wisdom in his statements, Ambrogio gives them the medallion freely. He wishes them well and offers a blessing upon them. Before they leave, he says, "May you give your love freely, for it is in the giving that we make ourselves fit to receive."

The characters are then free to move on to the second task.

The Faceless Knight

During the cadre's debates with Ambrogio, they encounter a large and powerful-looking man. Standing nearly two meters tall and dressed in ornately designed ceramsteel armor, he accosts the characters and mocks them. Through his unusual helmet — which is featureless and completely covers his face — he tells them they have no chance of winning Clarissa's love. He explains that such a lady as she is beyond their reach, whatever tasks they may achieve in her



The knight never attacks the characters except to defend himself. Even then, he will fight to wound and escape rather than kill. However, he is a skilled warrior and will do his utmost to prevent his being defeated. His primary purpose appears to be harassment rather than violence, although his motivations are unclear. Characters who attempt to read his emotional state through the use of Empathy, Xeno-Empathy or similar skills fail no matter how many victory points they achieve. Occult attempts to read his mind likewise fail (make the characters roll anyway, so they at least believe they have a chance). Afterwards, the knight leaves the scene as mysteriously as he came. As soon as he is out of eyesight of the characters, he runs or leaps with his preternatural speed and strength; see his traits at the end of the drama.

The second task is much simpler than the first — at least on the surface. The cadre must find and kill an Ice Wyrms, a huge serpentine creature native to the ice fields of Frisia. Wyrms can reach over 13 meters in length and have the ability to heat their scales, giving them the ability to tunnel through ice and snow. These creatures are fierce opponents and cunning hunters. The Lady Clarissa expects her would-be suitors to find and kill one of at least 10 meters in length. Christian explains that he has never killed an Ice Wyrms greater than 5 meters and that the largest Wyrms are found far from human settlements.

Finding an Ice Wurm of appropriate size seems impossible. Even with the help of Christian, who is an expert hunter, they cannot find a Wurm greater than 5 or 6 meters in length. However, any Wurms they do encounter will fight fiercely and to the death, using their claws and bite to defeat their attackers. If the cadre succeeds, they may chop off a creature's head as proof of their actions, although it's obvious any such specimens are not as large as the one Clarissa de-

Body: Strength 15, Dexterity 10, Endurance 13
Mind: Wits 1, Perception 5, Tech 0
Natural Skills: Dodge 4, Fight 6, Impress 8, Observe 5,
 Sneak 4, Vigor 8
Blessings: Huge (base move: 20 meters)
Weapons: Bite (8 DMG), Claws (6 DMG), Heated Scales
 (5 DMG)
Armor: 10d
Vitality: -10/-8/-6/-4/-2/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0

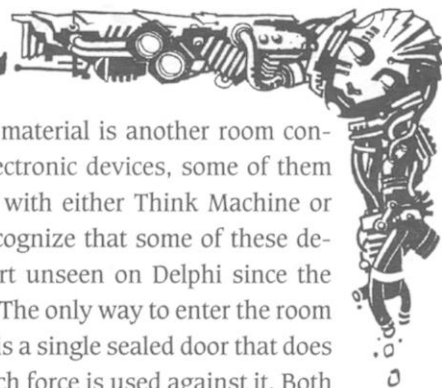
At some point during this task, the Faceless Knight again appears to mock the characters. Should he appear when they are fighting a random Ice Wurm, he will join the battle, helping them. He will aid them only if their lives appear to be in danger. Otherwise, he waits for them to succeed and grudgingly congratulates them on their prowess, but once more reminds them that Clarissa's heart is not theirs to win like a trophy, whatever great deeds they accomplish. He mocks them for their inability to find a great Wurm and then departs as mysteriously as he came.

The third and final task concerns the demon-haunted Cave of Swindoll, located in a mountain range near the De Vicente family lands. According to local legend, the cave was the lair of a Second Republic-era Antinomist who plotted against the Hawkwood family. Although Sir Antoine Hawkwood defeated the Antinomist, his lair was never found. Over the centuries, various places on the continent of Frisia have been identified as Swindoll's den. However, the cave near the De Vicente lands has been the prime candidate for decades — ever since Renaud Justinian and his party disappeared after entering it in 4898. Since then, numerous other knights have disappeared while attempting to explore the cave, giving rise to rumors that Swindoll's demonic servitors still haunt the place. For that reason, Clarissa demands that her suitors enter the cave and return with some token proving their exploits.

The cave is only a few meters above the ground, and doesn't require the use of Climbing skill to reach. There is evidence of strange runes carved on the outside of the cave entrance, although they are so faded as to be almost unintelligible. Characters who succeed at a Perception + Urthtech skill roll will recognize the "runes" as being Second Republic engineering symbols, but they'll be unable to attach any further meaning to them. In addition, it's apparent someone else has been to the cave recently. Footprints in the snow lead up to the edge of the mountains, suggesting someone has beaten them to the locale.

The cave is dark and possess an unusual metallic smell. After only a few meters, the walls of the cave become smooth





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like polished metal, reflecting any light sources the cadre brings with them. Characters who make a successful Perception + Observe roll will notice that there is a low-level hum in the background — so faint that one must concentrate to hear it at all. Characters with knowledge of Urthtech or Tech Redemption (High Tech) might, at the discretion of the gamemaster, realize that this “cave” is actually a bolthole from just before the Fall. Such places were commonplace in those dark days, as people attempted to preserve some small part of the Republic’s glory in preparation for better days.

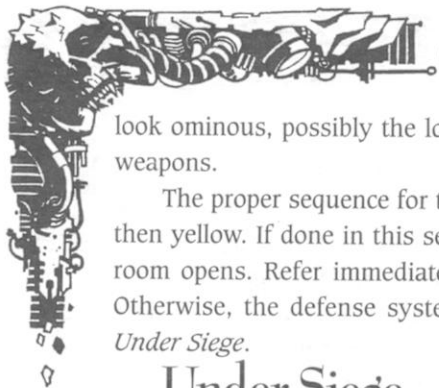
A corridor extends from the cave’s edge for approximately 10 meters before abruptly coming to a stop. Instead of there being anything more, there is a blank wall carved from the same stone that the cadre saw upon first entering the cave. The characters are likely to believe the wall is an illusion, but it is not. Instead, the real illusion — a holographic projection, actually — is halfway down the corridor in the eastern wall. Characters who achieve at least three victory points in a Wits + Observe skill roll will notice a slight flickering in that area, hinting at a passageway beyond. Characters with occult powers such as Sixth Sense may see through the projection with a simple success.

The hidden passageway leads to a functional elevator that takes anyone who enters up to the next level of the bolthole. The upper level is a large open room with a single large metallic table in its center. Visible beyond a wall made

of some sort of transparent material is another room containing a large variety of electronic devices, some of them still functioning. Characters with either Think Machine or Science (Think Machine) recognize that some of these devices are computers of a sort unseen on Delphi since the time of the Second Republic. The only way to enter the room beyond the transparent wall is a single sealed door that does not open, no matter how much force is used against it. Both the wall and the door have a defense value of 15 and can sustain 30 hits before being breached. In the event they are breached, refer to the next section: *Under Siege*. Characters familiar with Republican magnetic doors can open it with five successes on a sustained Tech + Lockpicking roll. Anything less results in the security system’s activation, as described below.

A small, metal pyramidlike device sits atop the metallic table. Each side is lit with a glowing light, one each in the colors of blue, red and yellow. Characters who have experience with Second Republic security devices can roll Tech + Lockpicking to realize this is a simple mechanism that requires touching each side of the pyramid in the proper sequence to open the door beyond. If two or more victory points are achieved, such a character also remembers that failure to use the proper sequence results in the activation of a defense system. A successful use of Wits + Observe reveals that there are four small hatches placed in the ceiling that





look ominous, possibly the location of the room's defense weapons.

The proper sequence for the pyramid is red, then blue, then yellow. If done in this sequence, the door to the next room opens. Refer immediately to *Golem Controls* below. Otherwise, the defense systems activate as described in *Under Siege*.

Under Siege

Upon the use of an improper color sequence, four blaster turrets pop out of the ceiling and begin to attack the characters. The turrets are the equivalent of blaster rifles in power, but don't need to reload. Each has a defense value of 6 and can take 10 points of damage before being rendered inoperable. Once destroyed, the attacks stop but the door beyond does not open. Unless breached or lockpicked as described above, the door does not open.

Blaster Turret

INIT	GOAL	DMG	RATE	SHOTS
6	11	9*	2**	Unlimited

* Damage leaks through energy shields on rolls of 1 and 2.

** Each turret can fire up to two times per turn at up to two different targets without suffering multiple action penalties.

Golem Controls

The room filled with think machines is a veritable treasure trove of Second Republic technology, worth thousands of firebirds to the Merchant League — maybe more. Unfortunately, much of it appears damaged and inoperable. What still functions is a golem control station at which sits a small cloaked figure. If the cadre succeeds in entering the room, the figure gets up from the controls and runs away to another door at the far end of the room. If the characters pursue, the Faceless Knight steps out from behind a wall and challenges them to a duel. His intention is to stall the characters long enough for his controller to escape via another exit. Consequently, he fights harder than in previous engagements, even to the point of harming the cadre. In addition, he does not flee at the end of the engagement. The knight does whatever he can to keep the characters at bay — including allowing himself to be destroyed. If this happens, the cadre will quickly realize (if they haven't already) that the knight is not a human being at all, but a golem. Destruction isn't the only way to defeat the Faceless Knight. However, the characters need to be creative if they're to stop this relentless machine from preventing their pursuit of its controller.

Unmasked

With the Faceless Knight destroyed or otherwise incapacitated, the cadre may follow the cloaked figure. The figure escaped via another door in the control room. This door leads to another elevator. If taken, it descends and deposits

the characters in a small room that looks out onto an ice field. The room's location is hidden by another holographic projection that they can pass through without harm. Once outside, tracking the cloaked figure takes little effort. Footprints in the snow — similar to those seen earlier — lead deeper into the ice field. A simple success with Perception + Tracking leads the cadre to the right location. The gamemaster may allow other skills to substitute for Tracking if he so desires, as the footprints are quite prominent.

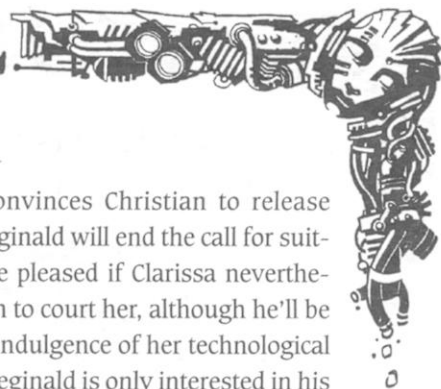
As the characters follow the figure, they hear a loud roar and a woman's voice crying out. Looking ahead, they see a huge Ice Wurm appear, menacing the cloaked figure — who is revealed to be the Lady Clarissa. Baron Christian (if he is still with the cadre) may incite his passion with a +2 bonus, as may anyone else enamored of Clarissa. Characters who simply wish to help Christian and the young woman may receive a +1 bonus if they so wish. The Ice Wurm is huge — well over 10 meters in length — and quite angry. If the characters do not act, Clarissa will die and their quest will be for nothing. If attacked, the Wurm quickly turns its attention to the cadre, allowing the young woman to escape.

Once the Wurm is defeated, the characters will have achieved the second task they were unable to win before. In addition, they'll have learned the true identity of the Faceless Knight and the cloaked figure. The Lady Clarissa, still frightened by the Wurm and mortified that her ruse has been uncovered, will thank the characters profusely. Though clearly unnerved, she shows a remarkable strength of will, which should impress them. She is clearly a woman of incredible will; for the first time, they understand what Christian sees in her. If they'll allow it, she directs them to a skimmer she has hidden in a nearby forest and will take them back to her family estate. Along the way, she explains her actions and why she has undertaken them.

Clarissa's Story

Clarissa reveals that she is deeply interested in the wonders of the Second Republic. In fact, she dreams of traveling to Leagueheim and joining the Engineers Guild. Of course, he father would never allow it, but her deceased mother had encouraged her interests, giving her holobooks and data crystals with information on Tech Redemption and Think Machines, among other topics. In the course of her studies, she came across tales of boltholes created by scientists before the Fall. They sounded so much like the stories of the Cave of Swindoll that she believed there might be a connection. So, bit by bit, she acquired enough knowledge to steel herself for a journey to the cave. Not only did she survive the cave, she mastered its complexities, adding more knowledge to her already-great storehouse of information. She even reprogrammed the golem to serve as her defender — the Faceless Knight.

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That's when she got the idea of allowing her father to arrange for suitors to court her. Taking the role of a dutiful daughter and learned lady, she appealed to the traditions of courtly love. Her father approved of her newfound respect for tradition and thus allowed her to set the tasks by which a knight could win her hand. She chose the tasks carefully, knowing that their difficulty would frighten off many would-be husbands. Likewise, she set the Faceless Knight against any who dared to undertake the tasks. The combination of the arduousness of the tasks and the knight's presence has kept most men away, allowing her to continue her studies and dream of being freed from the expectation of marriage — until now, that is.

Clarissa concedes that Baron Christian and the cadre have bested her at her own game. She never expected it to happen, but she is nevertheless an honorable woman. She will abide by the rules of courtly love and marry whomever wishes to claim her as his bride. If no one reveals her interest in forbidden things, she will go through with the marriage Christian has won. However, she also explains that she will never be happy in the role of a "good wife." She's too much of a free spirit to settle down to manage lands and raise a brood of children. She still wishes to become a guildsman and learn more of the wonders of the Republic. Clarissa then asks if there is any way this situation can be resolved to their mutual satisfaction.

It's clear that Clarissa is sincere both in her willingness to abide by the rules of courtly love and her desire to join the Merchant League as an Engineer. If they are so inclined, the characters could convince Christian to release Clarissa from her vow. The players should roleplay this; no die rolling can substitute for the give and take of debate. Perhaps they'll even use some of the wisdom they learned from Ambrogio. They could also reiterate that he'd never have succeeded in any of the tasks, let alone all of them, without their help. Thus, if they ask him to release Clarissa, he'll eventually — albeit reluctantly — acquiesce to their suggestion.

Clarissa will be elated. She'll thank the cadre and Christian profusely. If they agree to help her in her quest to join the guild, she'll be even more ecstatic. She will also tell the baron that, if he is willing, she will allow him to continue to court her as the rules of chivalry demand. In time — and with a lot of indulgence and mutual understanding — she may become better suited to the role her father had wished for her. Or not. Clarissa makes no promises. She only asks that she be treated as a person with her own hopes and dreams, which may well include marriage to Christian — eventually. For now, there's still so much to do and see and learn. If Christian or the cadre agrees to help her in this, she'll be even more receptive to the possibility of marriage, which, in a way, is a triumph for Christian Hawkwood.

Resolution

Assuming the cadre convinces Christian to release Clarissa from her vow, Sir Reginald will end the call for suitors for his daughter. He'll be pleased if Clarissa nevertheless agrees to allow the baron to court her, although he'll be less than enthused with his indulgence of her technological interests. Nevertheless, Sir Reginald is only interested in his daughter's happiness, so he'll warm to this in time as well. If the cadre didn't convince Christian (or didn't try to do so), preparations for a wedding will begin. The festivities will be lavish and well remembered on Delphi. The bride will be beautiful but unhappy; she'll play the role of a dutiful wife but will forever wonder what could have been had the cadre not bested her tasks.

Representatives of the emperor will seize the contents of the Cave of Swindoll if they are revealed. If not, they characters may either allow Clarissa to continue to use them for her research (assuming they have made an accommodation with her) or they may dispose of them as they wish. Christian allows the characters free rein in this matter, as long as he gets a cut of any profits. The gamemaster should determine the precise contents and value of the devices in the cave, depending on the scope and needs of his ongoing epic. At minimum, they're worth 10,000 firebirds to the League, the emperor or the Inquisition — possibly much more.

The Faceless Knight, if not totally destroyed, will serve anyone who masters the controls in the cave. Clarissa will not share this information with anyone, especially if she is forced to marry against her will. Therefore, she'll keep the knight in reserve as protection against any who might harm her or those she loves. If the characters leave her under good terms, she may even "lend" the knight to the cadre for certain missions whose goals she approves of.

Further Dramas

Depending on how the cadre leaves the Lady Clarissa at the end of "Love's Labors," several additional dramas are possible. If forced to marry Christian, Clarissa may one day run away from him to seek her own life among the League. This could lead to a hunt for her before she gets too far from her husband. Likewise, she may one day call upon the characters to convince Christian to give her the opportunity to fulfill herself outside the home.

If Christian releases Clarissa from her vow, she may ask the cadre to find technological items or knowledge for her. Alternately, she may become the object of blackmail, as a jealous noble or priest uses her secret obsession for his own gain. Finally, the eventual wedding could in itself be the occasion of an excellent drama, bringing the cadre back to Delphi to celebrate the union.

Baron Christian Gregory Hawkwood

Christian Hawkwood is one of two lynchpins around which the drama of "Love's Labors" hangs. His ideals and actions are what involve the characters in the first place, as well as push events to their eventual conclusion.

Quote: "There is no truer test of a gentleman's prowess than what he does in the name of love."

Description: A tall blond man with fine features and a pleasant manner, his visage nevertheless reveals a lack in the area of mental acuity. He's not stupid, just somewhat naive and idealistic, a fact that comes through in his uncritical acceptance of chivalric tales and House Hawkwood propaganda. Nevertheless, he has a ready smile and winning ways that make him enjoyable company even under the worst circumstances.

Entourage: Despite his status, Christian has only one retainer, Father Gelasius Nascimento, his Urth Orthodox confessor.



Name: Baron Christian Gregory Gender: Male Age: 20s			Race: Human Alliance: House Hawkwood Rank: Baron			LEARNED SKILLS LVL		
CHARACTERISTICS			NATURAL SKILLS			Etiquette		
Body	MIND		Charm (3)	6		Lore (Courtly Love)	5	5
Strength (3)	7 Wits (3)	4	Dodge (3)	5		Lore (Nobility)	6	6
Dexterity (3)	6 Perception (3)	4	Fight (3)	7		Read Urthish		3
Endurance (3)	7 Tech (3)	3	Impress (3)	5		Search		4
	SPIRIT		Melee (3)	9		Social (Leadership)		5
Extrovert (3)	6 / 1 (1) Introvert		Observe (3)	4		Survival		6
Passion (3)	7 / 2 (1) Calm		Shoot (3)	6		Tracking		3
Faith (1)	2 / 5 (3) Ego		Sneak (3)	5		Warfare (Military Tactics)		
COMMON ACTIONS			BLESSINGS/CURSES			ARMOR		
Action	Goal		+/- Trait Situation			6d Half-plate (plastic)		
Bemoan fate	12		+1 Charm Handsome					
(gain sympathy)			-2 Wits Impetuous trader					
OCCULT			COMBAT			VICTORY CHART		
Psi	Urge		STR bonus: +1d			Successes	Pts	
Theurgy	Hubris		Init Goal DMG RNG			1-2	0	
Powers/Rites	Goal		Blast Pistol 6 12 7 10/20			3-5	+1	
			Broadsword 9 15 7			6-8	+2	
			Parry 9 17 6+vp armor			9-11	+3	
			Slash 7 15 8			12-14	+4	
			Draw & Strike 7 15 7			15-17	+5	
			Disarm 7 14			18	+6	
			Off-hand (no penalties for left-hand wpn)			Critical success = x2		
			Fist 7 13 3					
			Kick 6 13 4					
			Grapple 5 13 3					
			Charge 4 13 4+					
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			Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2					
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LEARNED SKILLS LVL
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Race: Human
Alliance: Children of Z...

Name: Ambrogio
Gender: Male

A black and white woodcut-style illustration of a man with a beard and a pointed hood, wearing a dark robe with circular medallions. He is holding a book or tablet with a skull and crossbones. The background is a circular grid pattern.

A.

18 Critical success = x2 +6

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Name: Lady Clarissa De Vicente	Race: Human	LEARNED SKILLS	LVL
Gender: Female	Alliance: House Hawkwood		
		Academia	5

[illegible]

2



Name: Lady Clarissa De Vicente Race: Human				LEARNED SKILLS <i>LVL</i>			
Gender: Female				Academia 5			
Age: early 20s				Drive (Landcraft) 3			
				Etiquette 4			
				Inquiry 6			
				Lockpick 5			
				Read Latin			
				Read Urthish			
				Read Urthtech			
				Search 5			
				Social (Debate) 5			
				Science (Think Machine) 7			
				Tech Redemption (High Tech) 8			
				Think Machine 6			
				ARMOR			
				5/10 Energy Shield (3 cells)			

CHARACTERISTICS				NATURAL SKILLS			
BODY		MIND		Charm (3)		5	
Strength (3)		4		Dodge (3)		4	
Dexterity (3)		7		Fight (3)		3	
Endurance (3)		6		Impress (3)		6	
				Melee (3)		4	
				Observe (3)		7	
Extrovert (3)		6 / 2		Shoot (3)		3	
Passion (3)		6 / 2		Sneak (3)		4	
Faith (1)		3 / 5		Vigor (3)		6	
SPIRIT							
Introvert		(1)					
(1) Calm							
(3) Ego							

COMMON ACTIONS				BLESSINGS/CURSES			
Action		Goal		Trait		Situation	
Defending own rights		12		Charm		Beautiful	
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The Maltese Gargoyle

By Lee Hammock

This drama is one of misdirection, stolen goods and four-way fights. It can be completed in one game session of play, but may take more depending on how cautious the players are. "The Maltese Gargoyle" can take place on nearly any inhabited world, although it requires an urban environment. It is intended for moderately experienced characters; if more powerful characters are involved, the gamemaster should scale up the foes' traits. While no specific character types are required to complete the adventure, some combat- and stealth-oriented characters may prove useful.

The story of the Maltese Gargoyle begins one month before the adventure begins. An alchemical breakthrough occurred on the world of Pentateuch during an experiment conducted by several Eskatonic priests. They managed to create a liquid that quickly burns through any flesh infected by the cursed Symbiot symbiosis. They called it Blessed Oil. Although the ingredients for this alchemical brew are incredibly expensive due to their rarity (1000 firebirds per gallon), the liquid can provide a very effective weapon against the Symbiots — if the costs can be reduced.

The Blessed Oil is also a superfluid — it has no viscosity. It flows continuously until acted upon by an outside force. A whirlpool created in a superfluid liquid will continue indefinitely. This makes superfluids extremely useful for certain high tech uses. Unfortunately for the Eskatonics, a few scientists heard of the discovery and became very interested in the Blessed Oil for its superfluid properties, regardless of its intended purpose.

A cadre of Engineer Harbingers (a secret spy agency within the guild) managed to steal the sole test sample of

Blessed Oil and shipped it offworld. The oil was hidden in a hollowed-out, ceramsteel gargoyle statue built by the Scravers guild for smuggling drugs. The statue weighs about 20 kilograms and stands half a meter tall and half a meter wide at its base. It appears to be an Ur artifact, one meant to keep superstitious port inspectors from examining it too closely. Although the statue is an almost exact replica of the famed Gargoyle of Nowhere, it is not as resistant to damage as an actual Ur artifact and possesses none of the supernatural powers rumored of such relics.

The Harbingers sent the oil-bearing gargoyle to a group of researchers on the planet that the characters happen to be on at the moment. Fortunately, the Eskatonics managed to catch the Engineer agent bearing the key that opens the gargoyle. From him, they learned of the gargoyle and the ship that carried it.

Unfortunately for the Engineers, the gargoyle statue, instead of diverting attention, attracted it. Soon after the Charioteer captain unloaded the cargo, several Avestites from the Congregation of the Vigilant Flame swooped in and took the statue. These zealous priests were actually Scravers guildmembers in disguise, hoping to throw any investigation off track. They believed the ship bore drug cargo originally intended for their operations.

Now two parties seek the gargoyle: the local Engineers guild and a lone Eskatonic who has come to redeem himself by reclaiming the Oil. Only he has the key to the hidden compartment in the gargoyle. However, he has no idea where to start looking, and so he seeks the help of others...

Act One: Investigation The Job

Brother Joshua Melainis of the Eskatonic Order seeks to find the stolen Blessed Oil hidden in the gargoyle statue. For help, he comes to the player characters. The gamemaster can devise any number of reasons they are chosen:

- If any character is a member of the clergy, he may feel an obligation to help a fellow member of the cloth. Since the item is allegedly an Ur artifact, even the Orthodoxy might back Brother Melainis in his quest. Perhaps the character has been asked by his superiors to aid the Eskatonic priest in this matter. Likewise, any Li Halan nobles may be asked by the Church to intervene.

- Brother Joshua may approach members of the Brother Battle order, the Muster, or the Hazat, seeking their military prowess.

- Anyone with a vested interest in stopping the Symbiots — which includes especially the al-Malik, Imperial Eye and even House Hawkwood — may be approached, as long as their loyalties are clear, for Brother Joshua fears to reveal the oil to agents of the Symbiots.

Brother Joshua arranges a face-to-face meeting with the characters at the Hearty Pilgrim Inn, where he is lodging. The priest explains his quest for the missing gargoyle but does not mention its true contents, the Blessed Oil. The characters must earn his trust before he reveals that key piece of information. He describes a tale wherein Engineer agents stole the statue, suspecting it held accessible Ur tech, and smuggled it to this world on an independent freighter called the *Light-Skipper*, captained by a Charioteer. He urges them to recognize the holy nature of the statue, discovered on Pentateuch, he claims, by means of prophecy. It must be returned or disaster may befall the world.

The only lead he has is the name of the ship. He knows it must be at the starport somewhere.

If the characters are not motivated to perform a good deed or undertake the orders of their superiors, Brother Joshua offers the goodwill of the Eskatonic Order. He promises to aid the characters if they ever need academic help, such as researching the Eskatonic libraries. If they are unmotivated by anything but material means, he offers to pay them 30 firebirds apiece for their assistance. He can, however, be bargained up to 50.

Brother Joshua Melainis's traits are provided at the end of this drama.

After the Fire

The size and description of the starport depends on what

planet the characters are on. Regardless, the information below is the same.

The *Light-Skipper* can easily be found by asking anyone at the port. Indeed, the ship is somewhat infamous, for it was the site of a firefight yesterday. No one seems to know the real story, but each person will gladly tell the rumors they've heard, which can consist of the following plus any even more outrageous versions the gamemaster wants to devise on his own:

- There were Symbiots living in the ship, and so the Avestites had to burn it. It's quarantined now; nobody can get in.
- Psychic Sathraists were aboard, planning to spread their contagious doctrine to other pilots in the port. Thank the Pancreator the Church was on hand to stop them.
- The ship was attacked by psychic covenmembers. They left the crew wounded but alive, and stole some unknown but valuable item from its cargo stores.
- The ship was caught in a guild-feud. The Scravers were simply getting even at the Charioteers for some past slight.

Eventually, the characters realize that the only way to get the real story is to visit the *Light-Skipper's* docking bay.

When they arrive, they find a battered and damaged ship, with bullet holes all over the hull and more than a few bloodstains coloring the landing pad. Several cargo containers have been bashed open and their contents — mostly luxury clothes and exotic fruits — spill over the floor.

Several dockhands mill about nearby, trying to avoid work by hiding in the docking bay nobody is supposed to visit. The characters can get the story on what happened from them, but they'll first have to shell out a few crests or intimidate the dockhands (threatening to tell their supervisor they aren't working is especially effective).

The dockhands tell that yesterday, while the captain of the *Light-Skipper* was unloading his cargo, a group of fanatics in robes appeared and attacked with no warning. They carried shotguns and crossbows, and said they were the Congregation of the Vigilant Flame, a local group of Avestites who really like causing trouble for the Merchant League. In the ensuing battle, they managed to greatly damage the ship, the landing pad and the captain, who returned fire before suffering serious wounds. The attackers seemed interested more in the cargo than the ship or captain. They thoroughly searched all the cargo containers aboard, and left once they found some sort of statue.

If the characters ask about the captain's whereabouts, they say that his name is Richard Lensway, and he was taken to a nearby Sanctuary Aeon chapel with severe wounds.

If the characters are particularly generous — or intimidating — the dockhands will reveal that two other groups have come by before the characters. The first group showed

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up an hour after the fight and was lead by an Engineer look-
ing for a shipment. He searched the ship but didn't seem to
find it.

The second group showed up several hours after the
fight. They were local Scravers from Boss Lauren DeCaprio's
gang. They also searched the ship, claiming to be working
for a Reeve with whom the captain had insurance. The
Scravers poked around a bit and left after getting the story
from the dockhands. (Actually, the Scravers were making
sure that the dockhands believed the Avestites to be respon-
sible for the attack; see below.)

Any inquiries about Boss DeCaprio's gang reveals a few
tales of leg breaking and extortion, but assurances that the
group makes most of its money from drug-running. One of
the dockhands did some thug work for them a few years
back, and says that Boss DeCaprio runs her business out of
the Spinning Wheel, a casino in the lower class section of
the city. This information, however, is only volunteered at
the cost of few firebirds, and cannot be intimidated out of
him.

In order to search the ship, the characters must intimi-
date or bribe the dockhands to look the other way. Once the
characters investigate, they may make Wits or Perception +
Search rolls to find out anything:

Victory Pts Result

The area around the launch pad is heavily dam-
aged from gunfire, but there is no sign of any
flamegun damage. If the characters think to ask
the dockhands about this, they are told that
the Congregation of the Vigilant Flame are
known and feared for their flamegun tactics.
The cargo manifest can be found underneath
one of the cargo containers. In addition to cloth-
ing, exotic plants and a water filtration sys-
tem, one gargoyle statue is listed. There is a
notation that the gargoyle was to be picked up
by an Engineer named Phileas Nuet.

When the characters leave the starport, one of the
dockhands follows them, intending to report their activities
to the Scravers. If one of the characters specifically states
that he is looking to see if anyone is following, he can notice
the dockhand with a successful Perception + Observe roll. If
the dockhand thinks he has been seen, he flees to make his
report to the Scravers.

Tangents

The characters have several options for following up
these clues: They can go look for the Charioteer captain Ri-
chard Lensway, the Scravers at the Spinning Wheel, the
Engineer Phileas Nuet, or they can go back and report to
Joshua. The other option is to seek the Avestites; if
they choose this tangent, proceed to Act Two.



Captain Lensway

If the characters decide to visit the Charioteer pilot Richard Lensway at the Sanctuary Aeon church, they find him in critical but stable condition. He has several gunshot wounds and a few broken ribs. He is unable to speak unless the characters can quickly heal at least three of his lost vitality points (using Elixir or theurgy, perhaps).

If they can accomplish this, the grateful captain tells them that he was attacked by a group of Avestite thugs who were after a gargoyle statue he was shipping for the Engineers guild. He thinks the gargoyle is fake; he's seen real gargoyles, and this one was not as creepy as those relics typically are. With careful questioning, he reveals that the statue made a strange noise when moved, a sloshing sound, as if there were water inside it. He knows nothing about Phileas Nuet, the Engineer the statue was intended for.

The Spinning Wheel

The Spinning Wheel is easy enough to find; almost anyone with any street knowledge knows where it is. The Spinning Wheel is located in one of the lower class sections of the city, facing a large, open market. The Wheel is two stories tall; the first story consists of the casino, while the second story is occupied by offices. On any given day, the casino has from 20 to 50 patrons, most of whom play cards or slots at the two dozen slot machines along the walls of the casino. Eight dealers and eight bouncers staff the casino. The bouncers wear studded leather jackets and carry crossbows.

When the characters arrive, the place is fairly busy. Getting a meeting with Boss DeCaprio is not easy; she doesn't meet just any punk who walks in off the street. If the characters mention the gargoyle, they are ushered upstairs to her office. She will politely but insistently grill them about what they know about the gargoyle. She will be especially interested to hear about Brother Joshua. She does not have the gargoyle, but wants it, explaining that she believes it was used to smuggle Scraver property. If the characters find it, she is prepared to offer a good reward.

Of course, she's lying. The gargoyle is in the basement below the casino. However, she does not have the key to access the contents inside it, and so she needs any leads she can to find it. The characters are the most promising so far.

If the characters are rude or continually claim that she is lying, she has them forcibly ejected from the casino by her bouncers.

Characters may want to attempt a break-in. A cursory search, however, reveals just how tough that would be. Four of DeCaprio's enforcers are in the casino at all times and the building has a fairly advanced security system, complete with closed circuit cameras and locks (each of which requires two victory points on a Dexterity + Lockpicking roll to open).

Mr. Phileas Nuet, Engineer

Phileas Nuet is not a difficult man to find. With but an hour of leg-work or a successful Wits + Streetwise roll, anyone can find his shop in the wealthier section of town. Mr. Nuet runs a store specializing in old entertainment technologies, mainly magic lanterns and think machine games. His electronics business is not the most impressive, but his true business in his basement drug laboratory is notable.

Characters approaching Mr. Nuet during the day will find him in his store. At night, he is probably working or sleeping in the basement (in which case, he won't willingly receive guests). In his shop, Mr. Nuet will ignore the characters unless they seem interested in buying something. He then becomes talkative, but only a purchase of at least 20 firebirds will really loosen his tongue. Alternately, a skilled character may draw him out with a successful Extrovert + Charm roll. Any attempt to intimidate him only summons his guards.

A talkative Mr. Nuet will answer any inquiries about the gargoyle, freely admitting that he was supposed to pick it up from Captain Lensway and hold it for a group of fellow Engineers due to arrive within the week. He knows nothing else about the gargoyle. (He's lying — he knows about the Blessed Oil — but it will take at least three victory points on a Wits + Knavery roll for characters to realize it.) He is worried about what the Avestite fanatics will do with the item, and has been trying to decide what to do about it. He offers the characters 200 firebirds if they can retrieve it for him, payable only upon delivery. (He believes that the Avestites took it, and knows nothing about the Scravers' involvement.)

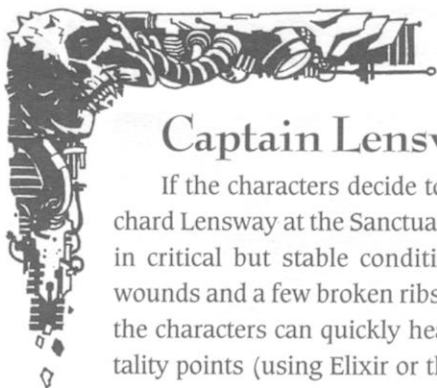
Regardless of whether or not they accept the offer, Mr. Nuet tries to surreptitiously place a transmitter on one of the characters. (Roll Dexterity + Sleight of Hand to see how successful he is at this task.) This bug allows Nuet to listen in on their conversations and track their location throughout the city. It can be discovered with a Perception + Search roll that scores at least as many successes as Mr. Nuet's roll to place the bug.

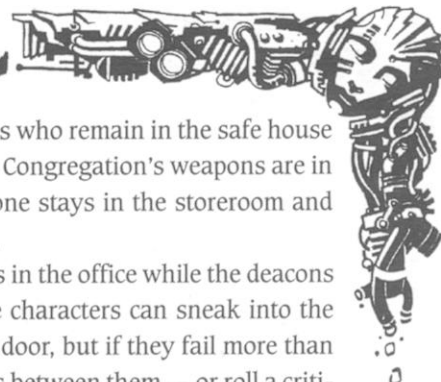
Brother Joshua

Brother Joshua listens eagerly to the characters report and becomes very concerned. He expected to deal only with the Engineers, not other clergy. He pleads with the characters to get the gargoyle from the Avestites before they destroy it, and is willing to pay them 10 more firebirds per person for the task.

He asks for one condition, however: They must retrieve the gargoyle without harming the priests. He does not agree with the Avestites' misguided methods, but he doesn't want them hurt.

He can find out where the Congregation of the Vigilant Flame gathers, but it will take him three hours of meeting





with other local clergy. The characters might be better off checking the word on the street themselves (two or more victory points on a Wits + Streetwise roll yields their location).

Act Two: Insurgency

Assuming they answer Brother Joshua's pleas, and have located the Congregation of the Vigilant Flame's compound, the characters can now attempt try to get the gargoyle. Unfortunately, the Avestites were not involved in the theft. The gargoyle was taken by Scravers disguised as Congregation members, hoping the ruse would throw off pursuit.

Because Brother Joshua does not want to see the Avestites harmed, he advises them to sneak into the building rather than fight their way in.

Breaking and Entering

The Congregation of the Vigilant Flame are a group of especially fanatic priests. There are eight of them, seven of whom are deacons and one of whom is a priest, Leonardo Bunartis. While they claim to be members of Temple Avesti, only about half of the group actually belong to that sect. The rest, including Leonardo Bunartis, are simply fanatics who agree with Temple Avesti but do not have patience for the procedures and politics of the Church.

They are not very experienced but make up for it with enthusiasm. The Congregation travels around the Known Worlds causing trouble for anyone they suspect of heresy, leaving a score of angry families and merchants in their wake. If they suddenly disappeared, the local Church authorities would not lose any sleep. They are currently seeking sinners on this planet as they attempt to raise the funds for another space journey (usually in the cargo hold of a tramp freighter), and have set up their chapel in an abandoned storefront.

If they had known about the gargoyle, they might well have tried to take it, fearing that such an artifact might fall into evil hands. However, they know nothing about it and thus won't understand why someone would want to break into their temple, which they will defend with every ounce of faith and muscle.

The building is divided into a front room, a rear storeroom, an office and a walk-in closet that opens to the storeroom. Bunartis has taken over the office as his room while the deacons sleep in the front room. They store their weapons and supplies in the rear storeroom. Both the front room and the storeroom have doors. The storeroom is barred with a lock (one victory point on a Dexterity + Lockpicking roll to unlock), but the front room is unlocked. There are windows looking into the front room, the office and the storeroom.

During the day, only four of the deacons are in the chapel. Bunartis and the other deacons will be out proselytizing from sunrise to sundown, but some will occasionally

return for meals. The deacons who remain in the safe house pray, study or make sure the Congregation's weapons are in prime condition. Normally, one stays in the storeroom and three stay in the front room.

At night, Bunartis sleeps in the office while the deacons sleep in the front room. The characters can sneak into the storeroom through the back door, but if they fail more than three Dexterity + Stealth rolls between them — or roll a critical failure — Bunartis awakens and quickly rouses the deacons. The Congregation of the Vigilant Flame has a shoot-first-and-ask-questions-later policy, with flamerguns ablaze.

The Avestites are difficult to talk to, especially if the characters are caught breaking into the chapel. They will, however, strongly deny possessing any gargoyle. If told that they attacked the *Light-Skipper*, they will deny it, claiming that several robes were stolen from their storeroom a few days ago.

Their main goal is to drive out the intruders. Afterward, they will attempt to follow them. Now that they know there is a dangerous gargoyle statue about — one a group of people are willing to break into a shrine to steal — they must find it themselves. To spot the following deacons, players must make Perception + Observe rolls contested against the deacons' Wits + Sneak.

Front Room: Eight cots and the personal effects of the Congregation members are scattered about. Anyone performing a careful search through the lockers and boxes finds a few daggers, clubs, a suit of studded leather armor, two tanks of ka-plant oil (for the flamerguns), and nine firebirds. Two flamerguns are always kept in this room in case of emergency.

Office: This room has been transformed into Leonardo Bunartis's personal quarters. The desk has been shoved against one wall and a cot placed against the outer wall. Anyone performing a careful search finds a broken flamergun, a studded leather armor suit, five shotgun shells, 34 firebirds and Leonardo Bunartis's journal. The journal is rather boring; it describes the Congregation's victories against heresy in the Known Worlds. There is no mention of the gargoyle.

Storeroom: During the day, there are two flamerguns and four suits of studded leather armor here, along with 10 tanks of ka-plant oil. At night, there are four shotguns, two flamerguns, eight suits of studded leather armor and 20 tanks of ka-plant oil. Foodstuffs, extra robes and cooking equipment are also in the room.

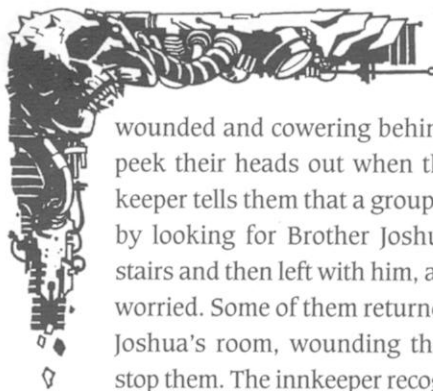
The Closet: The closet is empty.

The Lost Brother

Once the characters have learned all they can from the Congregation, they can return to meet Brother Joshua at the Hearty Pilgrim.

They arrive to find the front door broken in and the front room in disarray. The innkeeper and his wife are





wounded and cowering behind the bar, but they cautiously peek their heads out when the characters arrive. The innkeeper tells them that a group of rough-looking people came by looking for Brother Joshua. They spoke with him upstairs and then left with him, although Brother Joshua looked worried. Some of them returned later and ransacked Brother Joshua's room, wounding the innkeeper when he tried to stop them. The innkeeper recognized one of them as a Scraver who used to run a local extortion racket.

Upon investigation of Brother Joshua's room, the characters find the place in total disarray. Furniture is broken and items from Brother Joshua's travel trunk are thrown around. On the center of the bed is a note: "If you want your friend back, bring the key to the Spinning Wheel."

Any character searching the room can make a Perception + Search roll; success yields Brother Joshua's journal, which was kicked under the mattress. It provides details on the creation of the Blessed Oil (although not enough to actually reproduce the oil), the theft of the oil and the Engineer agent captured on Pentateuch. It reveals that the Blessed Oil is in the gargoyle and that a key is needed to open the statue. The key is hidden in a secret pocket in the book lining.

Act Three: Bad Odds

The Spinning Wheel has been closed down in expectation of the characters' visit. However, the characters may not be the only ones coming: If the deacons successfully followed them, they will also arrive in force. Meanwhile, Mr. Nuet decides that he has heard enough through his bug and also comes after the characters, escorted by his cybernetically enhanced guards.

Boss DeCaprio has positioned six of her thugs in the center of the room surrounding Brother Joshua (who is bound by ropes), while two more hide in the shadows at the rear of the room. Boss DeCaprio herself is upstairs with the gargoyle statue, watching the scene through a closed circuit television. Her plan is to allow the characters to enter the front door (the only unlocked door) and then have her minions trade Brother Joshua for the key. She doesn't plan on starting a fight, but is fully prepared to end one.

The characters can try to enter through the back door, but doing so requires two victory points on a Dexterity + Lockpicking roll. Any characters coming in from the back must make Dexterity + Stealth rolls contested against the Scravers' Perception + Observe rolls. If they succeed, they can get the jump on the Scravers. If the characters come in through any door other than the front, the Scravers will open fire as soon as they see them. It is not possible to approach Brother Joshua without being seen by the six Scravers surrounding him.

It is possible to enter a window on the second story.

This requires five victory points on a sustained Dexterity + Vigor roll to climb the wall, and a Strength + Vigor roll to force open a window without making noise. They could simply break the window, but doing so will alert Boss DeCaprio, who then heads downstairs, rounds up her gang, and sets an ambush at the base of the stairs.

Shortly after the characters arrive, the Congregation arrives looking for the gargoyle. They show up at the front door and march inside, yelling their demands that everyone freeze and surrender the gargoyle to them, lest they be burnt as sinners. If they are not heeded, they begin burning everyone and everything in sight.

About the same time that the Congregation arrives, Mr. Nuet and his enforcers show up at the back door. They easily pick the lock and enter, hoping to spread out across the room before they are seen, and then demand the gargoyle. If they are resisted in any way, they will open fire.

Once the inevitable fight begins, Scravers, Congregation fanatics and Nuet enforcers dive for cover, leaving poor Brother Joshua exposed. He can barely move in his bonds, and might be cut down by gunfire unless the characters intervene to rescue him. To escape the room requires either encountering Nuet's thugs at the back door, the Congregation at the front, or Boss DeCaprio upstairs (if they take the stairs). If it looks like her thugs are losing, DeCaprio flees through a window and takes to the streets, leaving the gargoyle behind in the hopes her pursuers will give up the chase in return for the statue — she knows it's valuable, but it's not worth her life.

The prime targets in the fight will be the most heavily armed, as everyone tries to take out the most dangerous opposition first. If the characters can slip away and hide, they may be able to wait out most of the slaughter. However, if they qualify as most heavily armed, they will have to survive the barrage of bullets first.

If at any point Nuet loses two of his enforcers, he will retreat (likewise, if Mr. Nuet is killed, his enforcers will retreat). The Congregation retreats if they lose more than half their number, or if Leonardo Bunartis succumbs. The Scravers have nowhere to retreat to, and so will stay until the bloody end — unless Boss DeCaprio is killed, in which case they'll either attempt to surrender or to flee out whichever door is closest.

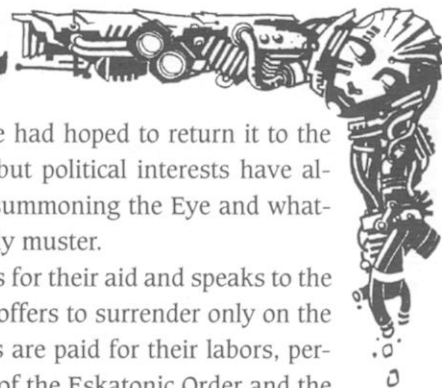
In the end, hopefully the characters and Brother Joshua will attain the gargoyle, but it's not guaranteed. If not, there may be later opportunities to raid whomever does get the statue.

Becoming Scarce

Once the characters have the gargoyle and the key, it would be best if they made themselves scarce. Brother Joshua (assuming he lived through the firefight) suggests that they try to get off-world as quickly as possible before anyone

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else tries to get the gargoyle. Following this course will likely take them to the starport.

Once they get to the starport, chartering a ship to get to Pentateuch takes about an hour. An explorer class vessel, captained by Charioteer Chief Joan Hershel, is available for the journey, after Brother Joshua assures her of a hefty pay-out upon arrival. However, there is a down payment required: 50 firebirds per passenger. The Scravers took all of Joshua's money; the characters must pay his passage. If they refuse, he pleads and begs. If no admonitions seem to work, he leaves their company to look for help elsewhere.

If the characters have their own ship and the necessary jumpkeys to get to Pentateuch, they can immediately set about making preparations for launch.

In either case, shortly before the characters are cleared to take-off, the launch pad is swarmed by 20 Imperial Fleet marines and five black-clad commandoes whose shoulder patches display the Imperial Eye emblem. Among them is a single, blue-robed priest with an Eskatonic Order pendant. They order the group to surrender the gargoyle and Brother Joshua, along with his key.

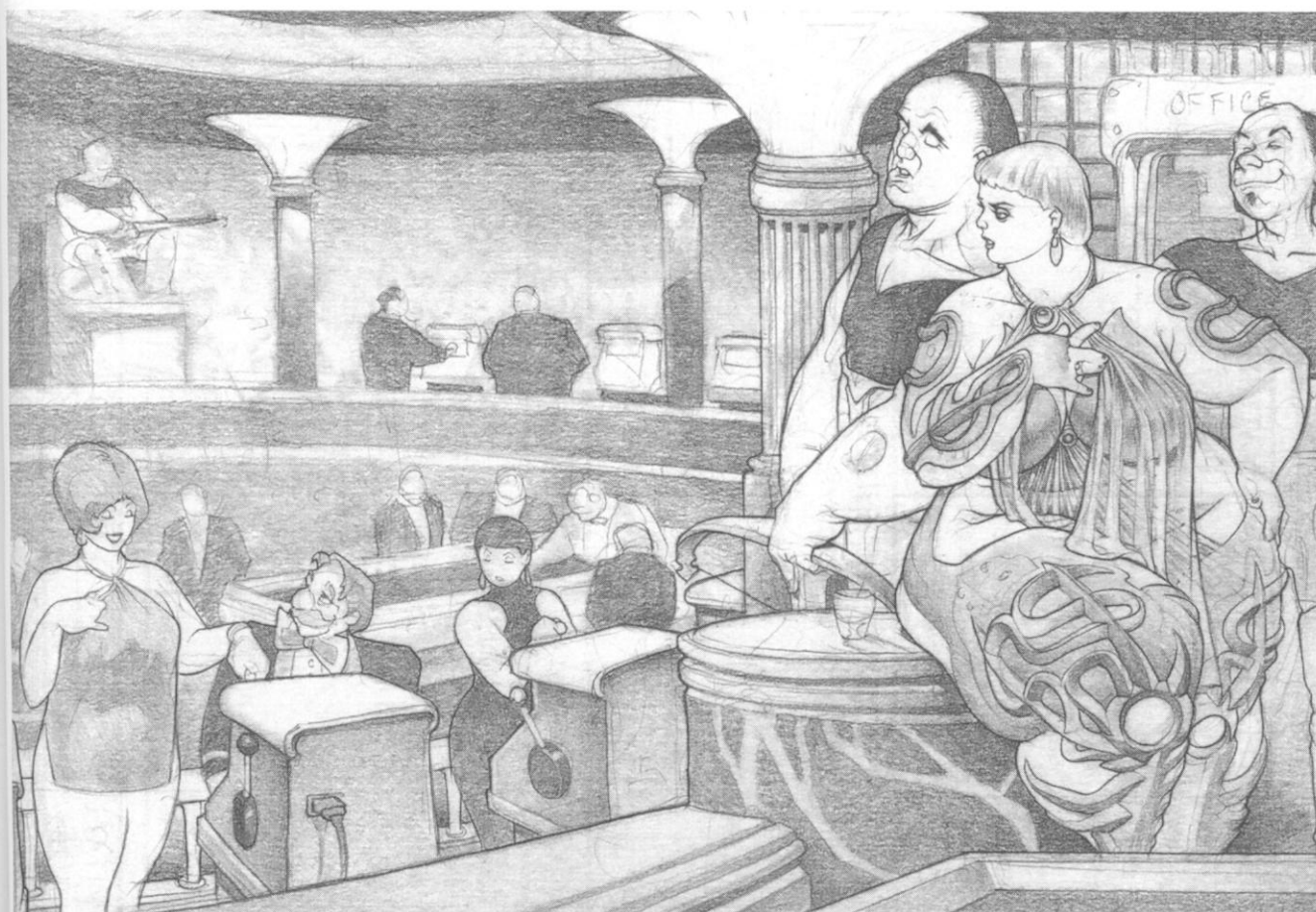
Brother Joshua sighs and advises the characters not to resist. This is seconded by Chief Joan Hershel, who adds that she cannot launch under such conditions. Brother Joshua recognizes his fellow sect member as Bishop Aerlius. It is pointless to resist such overwhelming forces, and the oil truly

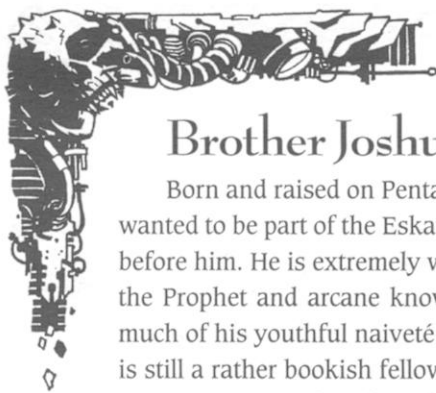
belongs to them anyway. He had hoped to return it to the alchemists within his sect, but political interests have already overtaken the affair, summoning the Eye and whatever forces they could quickly muster.

He thanks the characters for their aid and speaks to the bishop outside the ship. He offers to surrender only on the condition that the characters are paid for their labors, performed for the greater good of the Eskatonic Order and the universe. The bishop readily agrees, and so Brother Joshua, bearing the gargoyle, leaves the ship and the characters' lives.

The bishop is a man of his word and the characters are promptly paid with scrip cashable at any Reeves guild office in the amounts Brother Joshua had agreed to earlier. The bishop might contact them later, however, once he has heard the story of their detective work. Impressed, he might offer them similar contracts in the future, or recommend them to his friends among the rich and powerful who often need outside contractors with their skills.

A few months later, however, a package arrives for them. It includes a note from Brother Joshua thanking them for their help and two specially made hand grenades filled with Blessed Oil. These do no damage to non-Symbiots, but Symbiots suffer 20 dice of damage at ground zero, -1d per meter away, 10 meter-maximum radius.





Brother Joshua Melainis

Born and raised on Pentateuch, Brother Joshua always wanted to be part of the Eskatonic Order, just as his mother before him. He is extremely well-versed in the teachings of the Prophet and arcane knowledge. Although he has lost much of his youthful naiveté on travels to other worlds, he is still a rather bookish fellow.

He pursues the Blessed Oil on his own, without the permission of his superiors. Joshua's mother was one of the alchemists involved in the creation of the Blessed Oil, and this mission is as much to impress her as it is to return a holy item to the Church.

Quote: "As Saint Hombor said, 'Everything is rewarded in time, if not coin.'"

Description: A man in his late 20s, Brother Joshua's time spent studying is beginning to catch up to him, as evinced by his ever-increasing girth. He tends to wear comfortable, earth-tone clothing instead of robes and always seems to be cleaning his eternally smudged glasses.

Equipment: Walking staff, travel trunk with clothing, journal (hiding the gargoyle's key), 400 firebirds

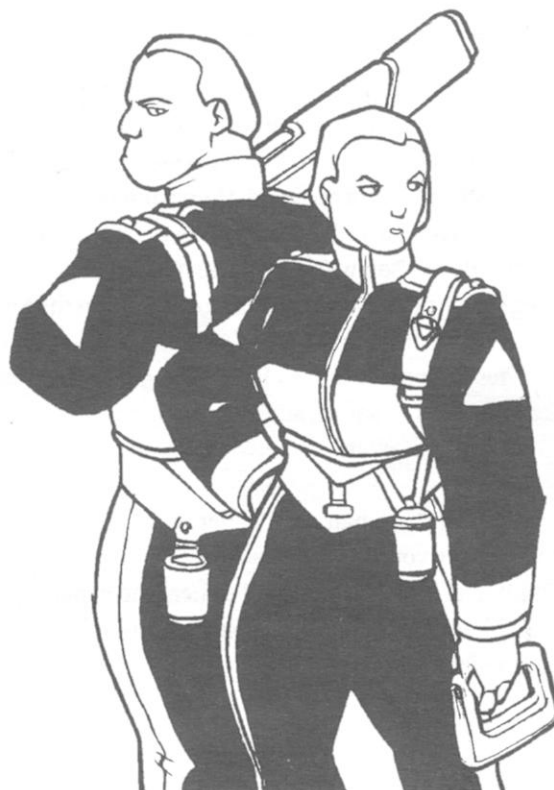


Name: Brother Joshua Melainis			Race: Human			LEARNED SKILLS <i>LVL</i>		
Gender: Males and females			Alliance: Eskatonic Order			Academia		
Age: mid-20s			Rank: Priest			Alchemy		
CHARACTERISTICS			NATURAL SKILLS			Bureaucracy		
BODY			MIND			Focus		
Strength (3)	4	Wits (3)	7	Charm (3)	5	Inquiry	4	4
Dexterity (3)	4	Perception (3)	6	Dodge (3)	3	Physick	2	2
Endurance (3)	4	Tech (3)	5	Fight (3)	3	Read Latin	3	3
SPIRIT						Remedy	3	3
Extrovert (1)	1 / 5 (3)	Introvers		Impress (3)	5	Speak Latin	3	3
Passion (1)	3 / 4 (3)	Calm		Melee (3)	3	Stoic Mind	3	3
Faith (3)	6 / 1 (1)	Ego		Observe (3)	6			
COMMON ACTIONS			BLESSINGS/CURSES			ARMOR		
Action	Goal		+/-	Trait	Situation			
Pleading	6		+2	Extro	Curious			
			-2	Calm	Nosy			
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Powers/Rites		Goal	3	7	2		Successes	Pts
Celestial Alignment		12	2	7	3		1-2	0
			1	7	2		3-5	+1
			1	7	3+		6-8	+2
							9-11	+3
							12-14	+4
							15-17	+5
							18	+6
							Critical	success = x2
VITALITY			WYRD					
Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2								

Name: Imperial Fleet Marines			Race: Human			LEARNED SKILLS <i>LVL</i>		
Gender: Males and females			Alliance: Imperial Navy			Drive (Landcraft)		

These are professional soldiers who will do whatever is necessary to complete their mission. They have no qualms about killing in the name of the Emperor. In this instance, they will remove Brother Joshua and the gargoyle by any means necessary.

Description: All the marines are fit humans clothed in black synthsilk uniforms. Both genders are represented, but most of them are male.

[illegible]

Boss Lauren DeCaprio

A native to this world, Lauren DeCaprio pulled herself up out of the muck by joining up with the Scravers at a very young age. From extortion to space salvage, she's held just about every job there is in the guild. Unfortunately, five years ago she was involved with a botched space salvage operation where a dean's son was killed; she has been blacklisted by the higher-ups ever since. She is stuck running the Spinning Wheel with no opportunity for promotion — unless she manages to impress the leaders of the guild. Hopefully, the gargoyle is her ticket up and out of the casino.

Quote: "I pay well for good work. I pay in kind for betrayal."

Description: A woman nearing her forties, DeCaprio has lost much of her youthful beauty. Years spent running the Spinning Wheel have been unkind to her. She is putting on weight and her hair is almost completely gray.

Money: 89 firebirds



Name: Boss Lauren DeCaprio Gender: Female Age: mid-30s			Race: Human Alliance: Scravers Rank: Boss			LEARNED SKILLS <i>LVL</i> Bureaucracy 5 Disguise 2 Drive (Landcraft) 4 Drive (Spacecraft) 6 Gambling 9 Inquiry 5 Lockpicking 8 Knavery 8 Remedy 3 Search 6 Social (Leadership) 5 Spacesuit 10 Streetwise Tech Redemption (High Tech) 5 Throwing 3		
CHARACTERISTICS Body Strength (3) 5 Dexterity (3) 7 Endurance (3) 6 MIND Wits (3) 7 Perception (3) 8 Tech (3) 6 SPIRIT Extrovert (3) 2 / 2 (1) Introvert Passion (1) 2 / 4 (3) Calm Faith (1) 1 / 5 (3) Ego			NATURAL SKILLS Charm (3) 7 Dodge (3) 6 Fight (3) 5 Impress (3) 5 Melee (3) 5 Observe (3) 7 Shoot (3) 8 Sneak (3) 7 Vigor (3) 5			COMMON ACTIONS Action Coaxing others 9		
BLESSINGS/CURSES +/- <i>Trait</i> +2 Situation +2 Per Suspicious +2 Wits Shrewd +2 Gambling with cards -2 Passion Callous -2 Calm Greedy -2 Calm Possessive			ARMOR 4d Synthslk			VICTORY CHART <i>Successes Pts</i> 1-2 0 3-5 +1 6-8 +2 9-11 +3 12-14 +4 15-17 +5 18 +6 Critical success = x2		
COMBAT <i>Action</i> Hvy autofeet Dirk Fist Kick Grapple Charge			SHOTS FIRED (8 / clip) (3 clips total) STR bonus: Init Goal DMG RNG 8 15 6 30/40 5 12 4 5 12 2 4 12 3 3 12 2 2 12 3+			VITALITY [0] Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2 WYRD [0]		


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LEARNED SKILLS *LVL*
Crotchbow

Name: DeCaprio Enforcers
Gender: Male
Race: Human

[illegible]



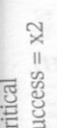
Leonardo Bu

Although he appears to b
Avesti, Leonardo Bunartis ne
Five years ago, he was a mem
He experienced such horrors
unhinged. He has ever since f
ing enough to stop the Darkn
the night side. Unfortunately

Description: A haunted-looking man in his mid-30s, Leonardo Bunartis appears much older. His hair is prematurely gray and his skin is covered with scars and blemishes. He tends to wear Temple Avesti robes when on the hunt, but otherwise wears an old and faded suit of military fatigues.

[illegible]

Name: Congregationalists	Race: Human	LEARNED SKILLS	LVL
Gender: Male	Alliance: Temples Adventi	Remedy	3



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Mr. Phileas Nuet

Mr. Nuet enjoys being an Engineer not for the sake of science, but because it allows him to live a posh lifestyle. The son of freemen, he watched his parents toil their lives away for a few measly firebirds while the guilds raked money in hand over fist. He broke his parents' hearts the day he joined the Engineers instead of taking up the family business, but he hasn't looked back. Now he considers himself something of a gentleman and is starting to play around with the idea of trying to gain a noble title.

Quote: "Do watch where you put that wrench. I don't want grease on my new rug."

Description: A small, scholarly man, Mr. Nuet looks more like someone's grandfather than an Engineer. However, his eyes reveal his true nature — they are obviously artificial and have a cold quality to them indicative of Mr. Nuet's personality. He normally wears imitations of last year's fashions.

Money: 53 firebirds



Name: Mr. Phileas Nuet Gender: Male Age: 50s Race: Human Alliance: Engineers Rank: Fellow			LEARNED SKILLS <i>LVL</i> Etiquette 4 Inquiry 5 Knavery 3 Lockpicking 3 Read Urthtech 5 Remedy 7 Science (Cybernetics) 8 Science (Chemistry) 5 Search 8 Tech Redemption (High Tech) 5 Tech Redemption (Voi) 7 Think Machine 7 Throwing 5 Sleight of Hand 7 Spy Eye 5 Streetwise 4	
CHARACTERISTICS Body Strength (3) 4 Dexterity (3) 7 Endurance (3) 4 MIND Wits (3) 8 Perception (3) 7 Tech (3) 8 SPIRIT Extrovert (1) 2 Passion (1) 1 Faith (1) 1 Introvers (3) 5 Calm (3) 5 Ego (3) 3			NATURAL SKILLS Charm (3) 6 Dodge (3) 4 Fight (3) 4 Impress (3) 5 Melee (3) 3 Observe (3) 4 Shoot (3) 8 Sneak (3) 5 Vigor (3) 3	
COMMON ACTIONS Action Goal Examining technology 16			BLESSINGS/CURSES +/- Trait Situation +2 Tech Innovative +2 Tech Redemption skills -2 Extro Haughty -2 Calm Greedy	
CYBERNETICS Devices - Engineer's Eye (TL6, Magnifier/Telescope, IR Vision, +1 sight Per, concealed, self-powered) - Spy Eye (TL6, Video, hidden, self-powered)			COMBAT STR bonus: Init Goal DMG RNG Blaster pistol 8 15 7 10/20 Fist 4 11 2 Kick 3 11 3 Grapple 2 11 2 Charge 1 11 3+	
VITALITY [0] Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2 WYRD [0]			SHOTS FIRED (10/dip) (3 fusion cells) VICTORY CHART Successes Pts 1-2 0 3-5 +1 6-8 +2 9-11 +3 12-14 +4 15-17 +5 18 +6 Critical success = x2	
ARMOR 4d Synthsilk Energy shield (5/10)				

Name: Mr. Nuet's Guards Gender: Male Race: Human Alliance: Nuet			LEARNED SKILLS <i>LVL</i> Knavery 3
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Mr. Nuet has learned in his years of shady dealings that it is better to let someone else take the hits. Four years ago, he hired a group of thugs and ran them through an exhaustive training program that resulted in the death of most of the applicants. Those who survived are now his personal guards. Their natural abilities have since been augmented with cybernetic enhancements and advanced weaponry.

Description: These three men look more like soldiers than thugs. They are all in excellent shape, with shaved heads exposing some of their cybernetic implants. They all wear black stiffsynth jumpsuits with a military style.

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The Ancestor's Tomb

By Brian Campbell

"The Ancestor's Tomb" is an introductory adventure that's not only suitable for new players, but also includes a few ideas to intrigue experienced **Fading Suns** gamers. The pre-generated characters from **Sinners & Saints** and the core rulebook work particularly well in this environment, but as long as the group contains at least one hero who's willing to work with House Li Halan, any entourage of heroes suffices.

With a little planning, it's possible to adjust this drama's level of difficulty to the strength of the characters. Much of the conflict in this story comes from two groups exploring and guarding the domain surrounding the ancestor's tomb. One of them is a mundane threat from one of the guilds; the other is a supernatural horror never encountered before. Gamemasters can take down the level of difficulty by scaling back the number of times these rivals cross the characters' path. Increasing the number of supernatural encounters, on the other hand, should challenge even an experienced entourage. As for the final confrontation, it's intentionally extreme. Neophytes may actually lose a character or two; even experts may find it a challenge to survive with the entourage intact.

The start of the story is far more modest. The drama begins with a very formal invitation to an audience with Gregorious Li Halan, an elderly respected scholar. After posing a few innocuous questions about the way characters dress for the occasion, what they know about each other, and what their reputations are within the entourage, lead the heroes into the lobby of an expensive hotel. A cringing servant starts off the first scene.

Act One: A Noble's Dilemma

Gregorious Li Halan has invited the entourage to his modest hotel room. Any hotel will do, as long as it is expensive and the staff is willing to tend to the needs of a wealthy eccentric. A servant meets the characters' entourage in the lobby downstairs, then dutifully leads them to a spacious yet functional room on the second floor. Since Gregorious is traveling far from home, he's brought relatively few luxuries. For him, three servants and four steamer trunks of reference works, academic treatises, and scholarly lore is "relatively few." As soon as the heroes enter his room, they see that their host has been busy. Papers are spread out over every available surface, save for the bed, which is covered with rumpled sheets — signs that he's been restlessly researching and fitfully sleeping in this room for weeks.

Gregorious is obviously and unabashedly a reverent man. A shrine to St. Horace, the patron saint of wisdom, sits prominently on his desk. He has also mounted several holy symbols — including the jumpgate cross of the Urth Orthodox Church — on the walls. This is fitting, of course. While the Li Halans were once infamous as libertines, scandalous heretics, and even practitioners of diabolical arts, the noble house is currently known for its reverence, orthodoxy, and faithful allegiance to the church.

While the servant finishes dressing his master behind a lacquered screen in the corner, his visitors have enough time to briefly scan the room. Anyone observant enough (Perception + Observe, along with Read Urthish) notices that most of these papers are concerned with history and gene-

alogy. A visitor with sufficient learning (three victory points with Perception + Academia) may scan a brief passage or turn of phrase that hints of his fascination with the ancient lineage of House Li Halan and its religious practices. Only the most perceptive occultists (five victory points on Perception + Folk Lore) can glean that his fascination has extended into the realm of the supernatural. Strange diagrams and archaic symbols hidden in the morass of papers are figures once used by heretical sects of House Li Halan.

Before anyone can snatch a paper — or fire off the kaol of a flamethrower at an apocryphal scrap of parchment — the tired old man saunters out from behind the screen. Although he is obviously tired, he immediately launches into a passionate colloquy. (Read or paraphrase the following text as you see fit.)

"I have found the most disturbing news!" the elderly scholar proclaims, waving his hands over the morass of papers. "Forgive the eccentricities of an old man. I have just acquired these papers from the estate of a deceased relation. Before I burn the most offensive of my findings, I must elicit from you assistance I cannot otherwise acquire. Pray attend.

"My friends, I have spent my life in atonement for venial transgressions and the sinful excesses of youth. In service to my house, I have been compiling a genealogical treatise on certain branches of the Li Halan family tree. What I have seen torments me. Although my family has been diligent in its observance of the Urth Orthodox religion, some of my more... nefarious... ancestors have done unspeakable things. Atrocities. Heresies! Antinomy!"

With a withered hand, he snatches a weathered scroll of vellum from the nearest desktop. (If any enterprising characters have started reading his private papers, have him snatch a paper one of them is currently holding.)

"Witness! This fragment refers to one of our more infamous ancestors. He is said to have made," he continues, reading aloud, "'several and diverse pacts with the forces of darkness in exchange for sorcerous power and unholy knowledge.' I have read of his unspeakable practices! His abhorrent cult! His subsequent living burial in an extensive and unhallowed necropolis! My friends, I have found the location of the tomb of none other than Gilles LeFanu Li Halan, one of history's most reviled diabolists! And I need your help."

(Gilles' name is pronounced ZSHEE-el.) Make whatever deal you can with the entourage to secure their help. Gregorious has contacts in the Church; he can offer minor favors from House Li Halan, and if all else fails, he can offer baser compensation — namely, cash. He's eager to entertain a deluge of questions, but he's an old man who can't maintain an animated conversation for long. If the charac-

ters' questioning becomes excessive, he'll insist that he should catch some well-deserved sleep. If characters begin pressing him for answers he doesn't want to give, he'll feign exhaustion. (*"Forgive me. I am somewhat fatigued. I can rest now knowing you can handle this."*) As long as they are polite and at least modestly offer their assistance, he'll continue telling them what he's uncovered.

Shadows of the Past

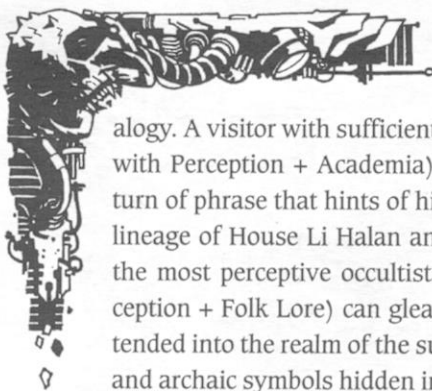
Almost seven centuries ago, Gilles LeFanu Li Halan was the benefactor of a minor colony on a distant and forgotten moon near the Malignatus system. The wealthy noble's patronage helped over a thousand industrious farmers and craftsmen settle a primitive colony far from the madness of the struggling Known Worlds. For them, life would be hard, but peaceful. The moon's surface was covered by league after league of rolling grasslands and vast verdant forests. For the colony, the future was bright.

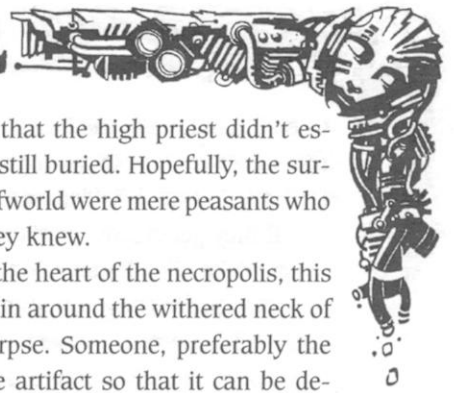
Yet after the colony was established, that future darkened. Gilles' altruism hid sinister motives. Along with the farmers and craftsmen, the noble brought fellow scholars and priests with him — devotees who shared his hidden religious convictions. The settlement served as an extensive foundation for a community where the nobleman's religion could hide in peace. Isolated from the watchful eyes of his fellow noblemen, and more importantly, from the Urth Orthodox Church, Gilles Li Halan's community harbored a small but devoted cult. Its practitioners understood the value of hard work, sacrifice, and the worship of demonic and diabolical forces.

Modern scholars of the Known Worlds would describe their practices as Antinomy. Just as the Church basks in the light of the Pancreator, cults of Antinomists fade into the shadows hidden from that bright light. Through sacrifice to powerful forces, they descend into darkness and villainy. The settlers thus became a vast herd ready for torture or slaughter at the nobleman's whim.

Spreading his ideas through the captive populace, his priests cautiously indoctrinated the strongest settlers and community leaders as initiates in his religion. When the strong began to openly exploit the weakest among them, the noble dropped his façade of altruism completely. Peasants suffered to satisfy appetites ranging from the subtle to the grotesque. The enthralled populace was then forced to labor erecting a massive temple to satisfy the nobleman's ego. Through its marble hallways, the names of demons and Qlippothic principles resonated as Gilles indoctrinated his heretical cultists.

It is hinted in ancient tracts that at the end of his life, that same temple became a mausoleum. The infamous Li Halan ancestor demanded that he be buried alive as his final sacrifice to his dark gods. He left behind three children to inherit his legacy, which has since come to be known as





the "LeFanu lineage." Most Orthodox Li Halan insist that the line died out centuries ago, before Cardano Li Halan brought the noble house back into the Pancreator's light. A few devoted scholars have attempted to prove otherwise.

In the generations that succeeded this progenitor, the LeFanu lineage and the priests of its heretical religion dominated, exploited, victimized, and ultimately sacrificed the populace of the colony. Its most reverent priests guarded over the mausoleum, and were rewarded with burial in chambers beneath it. The priesthood interred faithful slaves to the cult in shallow graves nearby, creating a slowly growing necropolis around the massive edifice.

Fears of the Present

At first, Gregorious Li Halan was shocked to discover that documents, records, and testimonies from the ancestor's colony had been carefully and secretly preserved. Writings hinted at the black arts of Antinomy that thrived free of outside influence and scorn. Documents confirm that the cult continued for generations in fearful reverence of this diabolic ancestor. Art and diagrams detail the mausoleum guarded in his memory. Though the exact location has never been found, heretical references are still being unearthed by dutiful scholars and archaeologists, suggesting that someone must have survived to tell the tale. Scholars still debate who this source may be.

The nobleman's research has finally unearthed the location of this forgotten colony, along with terrifying glimpses of Antinomist practices, details of the cult's genealogy, and timorous descriptions of the blasphemous mausoleum. If encouraged, Gregorious relates all these tales, elaborating on the tale of Gilles being buried alive as a final rite in the religion.

As the players may expect, he does not wish to disclose everything he knows. One fact is especially shameful. The timid scholar suspects, but dares not reveal, that the Antinomist may be his own direct ancestor. A fellow scholar has sent him papers suggesting that the last priest of this cult escaped from the desolate moon, leaving the colony world in ruins behind him. If the facts in the papers are true, this would make Gregorious Li Halan an inheritor of the LeFanu legacy.

Under the guise of scholarly research, Gregorious is eager to find someone who can gather information first-hand from the ruins of the forgotten moon, the colony, and the necropolis. Crude sketches hint at its secrets. The most alarming of these is a description of an Antinomist artifact used by the high priest of the cult to summon and command demonic forces. Beyond any interest in history, religion, or genealogy, Gregorious must be assured that the artifact has remained undisturbed. He is also losing sleep considering whether Gilles Li Halan is actually buried in the tomb at all. Although Gregorious won't say it, he secretly prays that the

colony died out completely, that the high priest didn't escape, and that the artifact is still buried. Hopefully, the survivors who finally escaped offworld were mere peasants who greatly exaggerated what they knew.

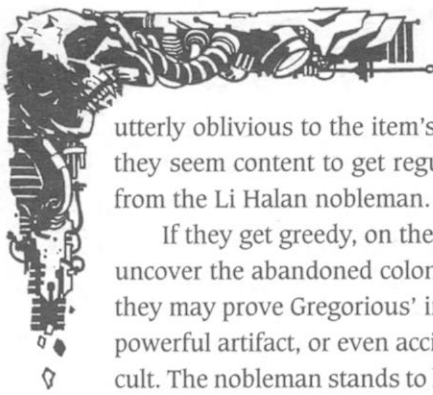
According to legend, at the heart of the necropolis, this artifact rests on a golden chain around the withered neck of Gilles LeFanu Li Halan's corpse. Someone, preferably the entourage, must retrieve the artifact so that it can be destroyed properly, along with any records of the ancestor's dark past. Their patron can provide a rough sketch of the area and transport to and from the site. He would, of course, go himself, but it is evident his health prevents it. From what he can tell, the colony has long since degenerated into ruins and wreckage. If any remnants of the cult remain, they are surely a threat to reverent theists everywhere.

When questioning Gregorious, characters have to work hard to get him to admit his possible connection to the ancestor. Such information would scandalize him. The most direct route to uncovering this secret depends on psychic and theurgic abilities. The Eskatonic rite *Rending the Veil of Unreason* reveals that their patron is as innocent of wrongdoing as he appears to be — his only noticeable sin is faint pride at his scholarly knowledge of religion. Reading his emotions or thoughts with psychic *Intuit*, *Subtle Sight*, or similar powers shows that he is acting out of fear, not only for what could be done with the artifact, but also for the truths that may be revealed.

The players may suspect he is not telling the complete truth. For instance, he rejects the idea of asking the Church to investigate for him officially, since he doesn't want any connection between himself and the ancestor revealed. If pressed, he increases his rewards to prevent the Urth Orthodox Church from getting involved. With three victory points on a Wits + Knavery roll, a disreputable character may realize how easily Gregorious could be blackmailed or threatened by the entourage to reveal what he knows.

Astute and cautious application of social skill yields further information. If a player focuses on questioning Gregorious' motives, three victory points on a skill roll like Introvert + Empathy, Extrovert + Inquiry, or Wits + Charm unveils an additional motivation. He's not the only one who suspects he's related to this infamous ancestor. He didn't find this truth wholly on his own. Furthermore, the scholar who sent him some of the papers now in his room had powerful friends skilled in the arts of blackmail and intimidation.

A rival of House Li Halan is blackmailing Gregorious. The Mandagora Syndicate, a crime family within the Scraver's guild, acquired the illegal and heretical books for him. The Mandagorans specialize in what they call "freelance archeology." A more appropriate epithet would be "tomb robbers." They know something valuable is in the tomb, but they are



utterly oblivious to the item's religious significance. So far, they seem content to get regular payments of hush money from the Li Halan nobleman.

If they get greedy, on the other hand, the Scravers may uncover the abandoned colony on their own. If unchecked, they may prove Gregorious' infamous ancestry, retrieve the powerful artifact, or even accidentally resurrect the heretical cult. The nobleman stands to lose a great deal if it's revealed that a lifetime of scholarly research ended with the resurrection a cult his own family began. Thus, he's eager to send an entourage to recover the truth — and the artifact — before any of this can happen.

Their patron can also supply the entourage with transport to and from the forgotten, desolate moon and an advance of a few hundred firebirds for purchasing supplies. He refuses to part with the papers he has concerning his family, as he fully and honestly intends to destroy them. Even if the entourage somehow manages to acquire them, they are so convoluted, archaic, and esoteric that only the most advanced scholar would benefit from their knowledge.

There's no time for such detailed research. That night, a Charioteer arrives to transport the entourage to the site. If the characters offer to take their own ship, Gregorious refuses. He has paid a pilot handsomely to drop off the entourage, return a day later, and then forget the destination, his passengers, and the whole transaction.

Act Two: Descent into Darkness

After a lengthy journey, the Charioteer lands his spacecraft on the desolate moon a few miles from the marble temple. From where he's landed the ship, he can see rubble from low stone buildings surrounding the periphery of a vast alien graveyard. None of the stone markers on the graves are remarkable. The few inscriptions on them cannot be read at a distance, and the pilot does not want to read them anyway.

Any Eskatonic worth his forbidden lore should immediately think of one possible danger: shallow graves and sinful dead could mean Husks. A clever player might jump straight to the Eskatonic rite *Divine Revelation* to discern the location of walking dead in the graveyard or tomb. Even one victory point reveals that there aren't any. Three victory points provide a less direct, but more truthful answer to the question. The dead are restless, but there are no Husks. If the players jump straight into zombie-hunting mode, feel free to let them get as paranoid as they want. There is actually a very different danger here. If the entourage goes in ready to hack at some corpses, they are completely and utterly unprepared for the real danger.

The ruins contain nothing but collapsed buildings, a

few remnants of crushed and moldering simple wooden furniture, and the bare bones of slaves who died in a final, glorious orgy of violence. Anyone who is foolish enough to use an ability like *Shadows Gone By* and succeeds well enough can receive a rush of impressions of enraged peasants turning on each other in a seemingly endless outbreaks of violence, rape, and destruction. This was the last event in the colony, a series of atrocities that overwhelm any attempt to gather subtler or more direct details.

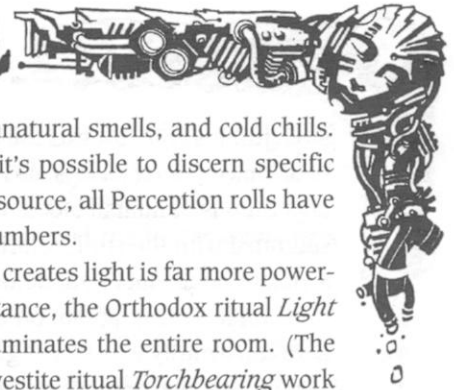
Searching the area around the village yields little information. Many of the buildings have simply collapsed because they are several centuries old. The colony is technologically primitive, although the irrigation methods and animal pens are well designed. No signs of books, education, or government remain. Some of the fields nearby were obviously used for farming, but have since grown wild. The land is flat for miles around, save for a nearby river for irrigation.

The buildings hold a few disturbing remains, but not much else. A dedicated search (Perception + Observe or Search) uncovers a few skeletons buried under rubble. Most of the peasants died violently. Two bodies lie intertwined with hands around each other's necks. The skeleton of a small child lies sprawled before the corpse of a hulking brute with a club. A bit of skillful searching (Wits + Search) reveals five bodies crushed under a fallen roof; it's evident that they threw their hands up in the air right before their demise. Scientific acumen (three successes on Wits + Geology) reveals evidence of an earthquake that toppled many of the buildings. Curiously enough, the mausoleum nearby shows no such signs of disturbance.

The buildings have been erected in a circle around the graveyard. Wandering towards the center of the necropolis reveals more direct facts about the colonists. Their grave markers are simple and unadorned, save for a few brief words describing the most sinful acts of each peasant. As the heroes come closer to the center of the graveyard, the lists of sins grows. Most of the people buried on the periphery have no last names; towards the center, names like Wright, Carpenter, Smith and the like are more common. The earth above these graves is carpeted with grass and show no signs whatsoever of movement, tracks, or disturbance. The corpses have long since turned to dust and bones.

A hill lies in the exact center of the graveyard, and the mausoleum on top of it is a magnificent sight. Marble was brought across entire continents to form the massive structure. The entrance is actually a huge archway free of writing or ornamentation. The only aesthetic features are the ornamentation along the top of the building, which features regular swirling patterns, jagged stone edges, and artfully crafted demonic gargoyles brooding over the remains of the settlement.





The superstitious Charioteer insists on landing at high noon. Because the sun is directly overhead, the interior of the building is shrouded in darkness — unusually so. Even an Engineer's Eye cannot penetrate the obtenebration that permeates the interior. Curiously, all electronic efforts — including infrared vision, heat sensors and even bursts of light — fail pitifully. Only fire or holy light can drive back the unnatural shadows. The entrance faces east, where the sun will rise the following morning.

The Mausoleum

Through a Qlippoth ritual, the interior of the building has been cloaked in shadows. Once a hero walks inside — for the first time in centuries — the shadows begin to lessen. Faint outlines reveal the location of massive statues. Half of them are in poses of triumphant dominance; the other half cower in suffering and submission. Walking around in the dark is possible by feeling the cold, smooth marble walls.

Fire is effective here. Flame consistently illuminates a 10-meter radius around its source in this room. Nothing is flammable, though. Fusion torches don't diffuse light as much as they should. No matter what its setting, a fusion torch emits a narrow cone of light about 10 meters long — enough to highlight a feature of the room, but not the entire interior. Heroes with psychic *Sensitivity* should feel more than the shapes around them; they'll also be hypersensitive

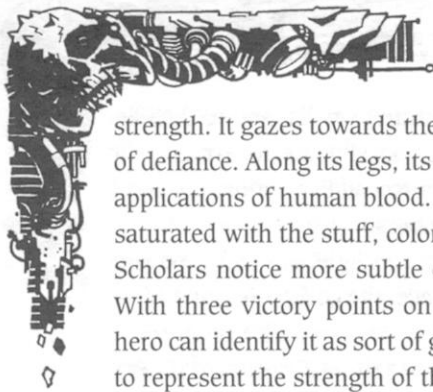
to sudden gusts of wind, unnatural smells, and cold chills. With a little concentration, it's possible to discern specific details. If no one has a light source, all Perception rolls have -6 modifiers to their goal numbers.

Any act of Theurgy that creates light is far more powerful than fire or tech. For instance, the Orthodox ritual *Light* brilliantly and suddenly illuminates the entire room. (The Amalthean rite *Hearth* or Avestite ritual *Torchbearing* work just as well.) In a heartbeat, the holy light reveals a vast bas relief mural along the upper edge of the room, showing peasants being flayed, beaten, abused, mounted, penetrated, and violated by a parade of monks in black robes and an entourage of demons. Standard stuff.

The statues erected at regular intervals are far more fascinating. The triumphant ones show signs of vestigial horns and tails. Submissive ones are all too human, but the signs of suffering and poses of submission are meticulously detailed. There are no dead bodies here, no matter how hard the heroes look for them. Searching the ground reveals a layer of dust; a closer examination (three victory points on Perception + Observe) shows the faint outline of tracks; skillful searching (Perception + Track) suggests a group has been here within the last year.

The most prominent statue dominates the room from the middle of the far wall. Holding up the roof above it with four muscular arms, a titan of a demon flexes in a display of





strength. It gazes towards the heavens with a resolute look of defiance. Along its legs, its hews are stained by countless applications of human blood. Its groin has been thoroughly saturated with the stuff, coloring it a crimson shade of red. Scholars notice more subtle details, ignoring the obvious. With three victory points on a Wits + Academics roll, the hero can identify it as sort of guardian; its strength is meant to represent the strength of the defenses of the building.

An elaborate dais sits under the demon statue's ponderous bulk. Scuff marks show where instruments of binding and torture and wooden sacrificial altars once lay. Now the dais is bare save for one massive, three-by-three meter marble tile that has been laid askew. Two metal hooks show where the chains or ropes to lift it were attached, and there is still a metal ring on the wall behind the demonic guardian. Moving the tile aside requires a combined Strength of 30 (or 20, if using the hooks as a pulley for rope or chain). The more the tile is moved, the more the charnel odor of putrefaction wafts from the marble staircase and corridor below.

Antechamber of the Ossuary

The stairway leads to a long stone corridor. The walls are textured with a pattern of carvings on the walls that resembles layer upon layer of human bones. Dust motes and humidity choke the air. After a few moments of travel, the stone walls give way to earth walls reinforced by layer upon layer of human bones. This is an ossuary, a decorative arrangement of skeletons and corpses. Puddles of water cover parts of the floor, nourishing plant vines that thrive on the decaying, skeletal frame. Left undisturbed, a festering ecosystem thrives.

As in the mausoleum upstairs, fire only drives back the stygian darkness for about ten meters from the source. Holy light brilliantly illuminates the entire area. Fusion torches will highlight a few disturbing details at a time. Without Theurgy, a stumbling character needs two victory points on a Perception + Observe roll to notice the many tiny, almost microscopic spores floating in the air. No rolls are necessary to detect a faint and spicy funk of decay and mold. A carpet of fungus lightly traces the moist bones, giving off an intoxicating rush to anyone breathing the spores deeply. A burst from a flamethrower would clear the air for a few rounds, but by then, another mist of spores would waft through the fetid air.

As a side effect, anyone underground gets a +2 to the goal number for any extended activity that lasts for a span or more. A hero covering her mouth with a cloth negates this effect, but doesn't completely eradicate the slight intoxication. The buzz from the fungal spores reduces any need for rest. Upon returning the surface, for an equivalent length of time, a hero feels drained and tired, conferring a -2 to the goal number for any physical or mental activity, no

matter how long it lasts. The effects are not blatantly obvious until a character leaves the corridors of the necropolis. Ukari foolish enough to eat the fungus experience more pronounced effects—their suddenly blurry vision is occasionally obscured by sudden bursts of false color and drifting, illusory shapes.

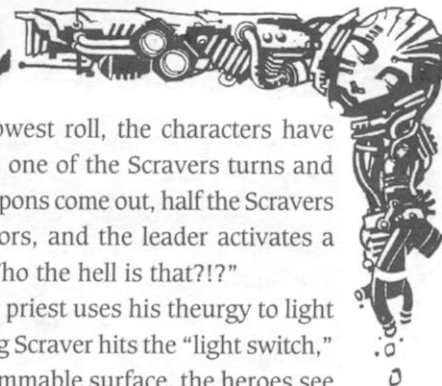
As the heroes trudge deeper underground, feeling the first rush of fungal intoxication, they come upon a round antechamber approximately 10 meters in diameter. The walls of this ossuary feature arms and legs, which reach out for about a meter from the periphery. Seven corridors branch out, each one featuring bones from a different portion of the body. Lying facedown in the muck are the bodies of two tomb robbers wearing blue jumpsuits. Two slug guns have been thrown to the ground; all their ammunition is gone. White knuckles wrap around the hilts of unsheathed knives. The bodies appear to be heavily wounded, and their faint breathing is strained as they wheeze.

The cloth of their jumpsuits does not appear to have decayed or worn. Anyone with two victory points on a Perception + Streetwise roll notices Scraver patches sewn on the sleeves. Three victory points identifies them as belonging to the Mandagora Syndicate, an outfit known for its attempts at freelance archaeology. As for the flesh, it is uncorrupted. It would only appear pale by holy light. There are no signs of decay, as would be evident in a Husk. No, it's worse. Much, much worse.

The heroes do not have to investigate at all, of course. If the bodies are not disturbed, the heroes can check their map to find the correct path to the next significant chamber, the underground temple. But if anyone touches them, attempts to heal them, turns them over, or even casually sets fire to them, the bodies jerk upright and scream. (You'll need to reference the Possessed Archaeologist traits at the end of the drama.)

If anyone is within a meter of one of the bodies, one of the Scravers grabs at his ankles (Dexterity + Fight) and screams. His skin is pale, clammy, and slightly cold, but the human appears to be alive. If the heroes don't immediately flee, the second Scraver starts to leap to his feet, screams "Run!" and body slams the closest character as he hurries for an exit. Once combat starts, it takes him two actions to stand up from prone during the first round of combat. After the finer points of dialectic have failed, the enraged explorers furiously stab at anyone within reach. The strain of exertion then gives all participants a heavily intoxicating and highly pleasurable rush from the fungal spores.

If the Scravers' bodies are hacked, burned and shot until they fall back into the puddles of water on the floor, a faint mist rises from their corpses. The charnel stench of putrefaction instantly fills the room. The bodies twitch in their death throes. For a moment, it is as though a vaporous cloud



in the faint outline of a human form hovers of the body. Then all movement stops, a breeze clears the room, the muscles of the bodies go limp, and all is still. The mist dissipates, wafting down a corridor lined with ribcages. Whether this vision is real or the effects of intoxication remains unclear.

If the players are extremely cautious — wearing breath masks, unpunctured space suits, or any other contained breathing apparatus — they witness the same events. This is no brief illusion. It is real. Apparitions haunt the mausoleum, spirits drawn to places of suffering and torment. Two of the more powerful spirits slew the two Scravens and possessed their freshly killed bodies. Now that they have found another group of intruders, they'll scheme to exploit their bodies the same way, visiting their vengeance upon the living.

The Necropolis

The antechamber leads to the corridors of an underground necropolis. Bones, animal and otherwise, line the walls. In some places, the entire intact body of an esteemed priest is propped against the wall, surrounded by an artistic display of flesh, bone, muscle, or gristle. Each corridor has a different motif. Those priests who most faithfully defended the tomb were spared the disrespect of mutilation. For cryptic reasons, all other bodies have been thoroughly mutilated and artistically arranged. The application of fire does little more than singe the corpses, adding the stench of burnt skin to the musky scent of alien fungus.

The corridor of ribcages leads to an underground temple, the next room featured on the sketch of a map. Two victory points on a Perception + Observe roll betrays the sounds of a small group hard at work nearby. The shuffle of footfalls and scraping of tools is barely discernable. Anyone with Darksense can make out outlines of human forms moving about the temple and hooking up some kind of tech to the walls. An ultraviolet projector sits at the center of the room, casting a very faint and almost imperceptible violet glow (three victory points on Perception + Observe to notice it without Darksense).

The grave robbers are wearing shadow goggles, weird ancient tech that allows them to see by ultraviolet light. Second Republic archaeologists once used them in exotic conditions underground. Above ground, they allow the workers to see by starlight. The tech is a trade secret exclusively used by tomb robbers in the Scravens Guild, allowing them to work under conditions of minimal lighting... and maximum stealth.

The temple is a large rectangular area filled with archaic funerary equipment: operating tables, cabinets of essential salts and fluids, embalming pumps, and a few metal storage containers. Three corridors lead out from the room. Everyone approaching needs a Dexterity + Sneak roll. For

each victory point on the lowest roll, the characters have one round to prepare before one of the Scravens turns and notices them. Otherwise, weapons come out, half the Scravens flee down one of the corridors, and the leader activates a fusion torch, calling out, "Who the hell is that?!?"

Regardless of whether a priest uses his theurgy to light the room, the highest-ranking Scraver hits the "light switch," or flame sears the closest flammable surface, the heroes see seven Scravens. Four of them stand in the middle of the room with blasters at their side. Bright lights do not blind them, since their shadow goggles rapidly adjust to shifting light conditions. Their archaeological tools have been dropped to the ground. Three of them are already fleeing. The heroes must decide whether to talk fast or attack immediately.

In case the heroes hesitate, anyone with guild connections realizes that Scravens have many strange specialties, and oddly enough, archaeology is one of them. From the Guilds' point of view, the master scavengers have every right to be here. If anyone wants to talk, the archaeologists are willing to negotiate a truce.

If there's any hesitation, the Scravens would rather talk than fight. For a start, it gives their comrades a chance to flee. It may also reveal whether the heroes know anything about the tomb or the Mandagora Syndicate's blackmail. Quick questions lead to easy, almost rehearsed answers. Knavery is not required for any of the following statements. At the end of any one of these responses, though, either the Scravens raise their blasters, use the turn to pump up their bonuses from aiming, or move behind partial cover.

Why are you here?

We have a contract. It's guild business. We're archaeologists. Please leave.

What were those bodies doing back there?

They were wounded, and they fled. You didn't kill them, did you?

What were those guys running from?

If you're smart, you'll run, too. This place isn't safe. You're in danger. Maybe from us, huh?

Why are your friends running?

Look at yourselves. You aren't supposed to be here. This is a legal operation. Please leave.

Are you going to let us through?

Are you trying to cut a deal? Make us an offer. We have the rights to this place now.

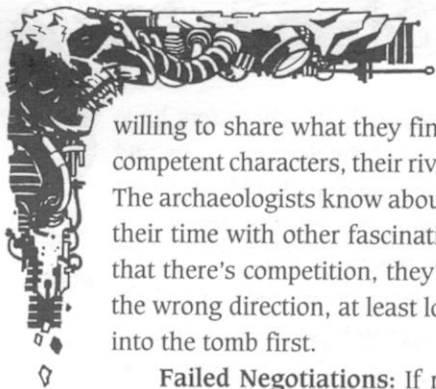
What is this place?

You wouldn't understand. We do. It's our job. Trust us.

Are you going to put those weapons away?

No! Drop yours! This is guild business!

Successful Negotiations: Social skills can delay the combat long enough to cut a deal. Three victory points on Extrovert + Knavery, Impress, Inquiry, or Leadership lowers their guns. If the heroes are diplomatic, the Scravens are



willing to share what they find. If the players have created competent characters, their rivals feel outnumbered anyway. The archaeologists know about the tomb, but they're taking their time with other fascinating finds along the way. Now that there's competition, they'll want to steer the heroes in the wrong direction, at least long enough for them to break into the tomb first.

Failed Negotiations: If negotiations break down, the Scravers slowly back out of the room with weapons drawn, heading down the same corridor as their friends. Their leader then says, *"Take what you can find. Whatever you're looking for, we'll find it first."* Within a few rounds, they'll fade into darkness. Each tomb robber carries an ultraviolet light source, allowing them to seemingly run in the dark. They have high Sneak scores, so following them is difficult.

Running Gun Battles: If anyone rushes them or fires off a shot, the Scravers open fire. If negotiations seriously break down, the Scravers open fire anyway. If hard-pressed, they'll attempt a fighting withdrawal. Unless one of them is killed outright, they'll try to give their companions enough time to get to their supply of explosives stashed in another room.

Tactical Retreat: If the heroes actually leave, the Scravers leave the mortuary temple after gathering up their gear and head for where they think the legendary tomb is located. The heroes have to work fast if they want to get there first. The tomb robbers have time to place several alarms and at least one explosive charge.

Blathering: If conversation stalls the heroes for at least a minute, the three Scravers that escaped have enough time to start wiring an explosive charge in one of the three chambers nearby, as detailed below. No matter what happens, one of the archaeologists does nothing but lay explosive charges for the rest of the adventure.

Killing Everyone: If the four Scravers are killed quickly, their blaster pistols sell for about 700 firebirds each. Characters can get five firebirds for each pair of high-quality boots and a pittance for their jumpsuits. Their archaeologist tools are esoteric and practically useless to the unskilled. Shadow goggles fetch a thousand credits apiece on the black market, but even an Engineer can't figure out how the hell they work without a proper laboratory, enough time, and the Scraver Guild's trade secrets.

Act Three: Tomb Raiders

Past the mortuary temple, the sketch of a map becomes even sketchier. A few corridors are shown, but not all of them. Three rooms are prominent: an armory, a library, and a museum. The heroes can pass through these rooms in any order, but keep in mind that the Scravers are at liberty as

well. At this point, there should be a decent amount of running around, along with a sense of urgency to get to the tomb before the archaeologists do.

Gradually increase the pace of the story as you progress. If things bog down, use the Scravers to force reactions from the characters. Fire a few snapshots from the darkness. Collapse a random tunnel to keep the entourage off-guard. Send the leader back to negotiate another deal. Give the two groups a chance to cooperate, or better yet, betray each other.

If that's not enough, there's also the apparitions mentioned earlier. They'll do what they can to set the two groups against each other. The rules for these spirits are included at the end of the adventure. Here's a short version: Any body that falls to the ground can be possessed by a spirit and exploited. Without holy light, the heroes cannot see enough details to notice the pale skin of a possessed body. In ordinary light, this requires five victory points on Perception + Observe roll or four successes on Perception + Folk Lore; in holy light, only three victory points are required. An Extrovert + Empathy roll can also suggest that a Scraver (or former companion) is acting strangely, or at least more suspiciously than normal.

If a character is killed right away, and one of your players is suitably devious, take him aside for a secret conference. Tell him his character's corpse been possessed by a ghost that's trying to kill the rest of the heroes. The character could return from the darkness with an elaborate story of how he survived his brush with death — and then plot against his former companions. Or, if the player is patient, he may pass you secret notes while his hero lurks in the dark, attempting to sabotage his former friends' plans.

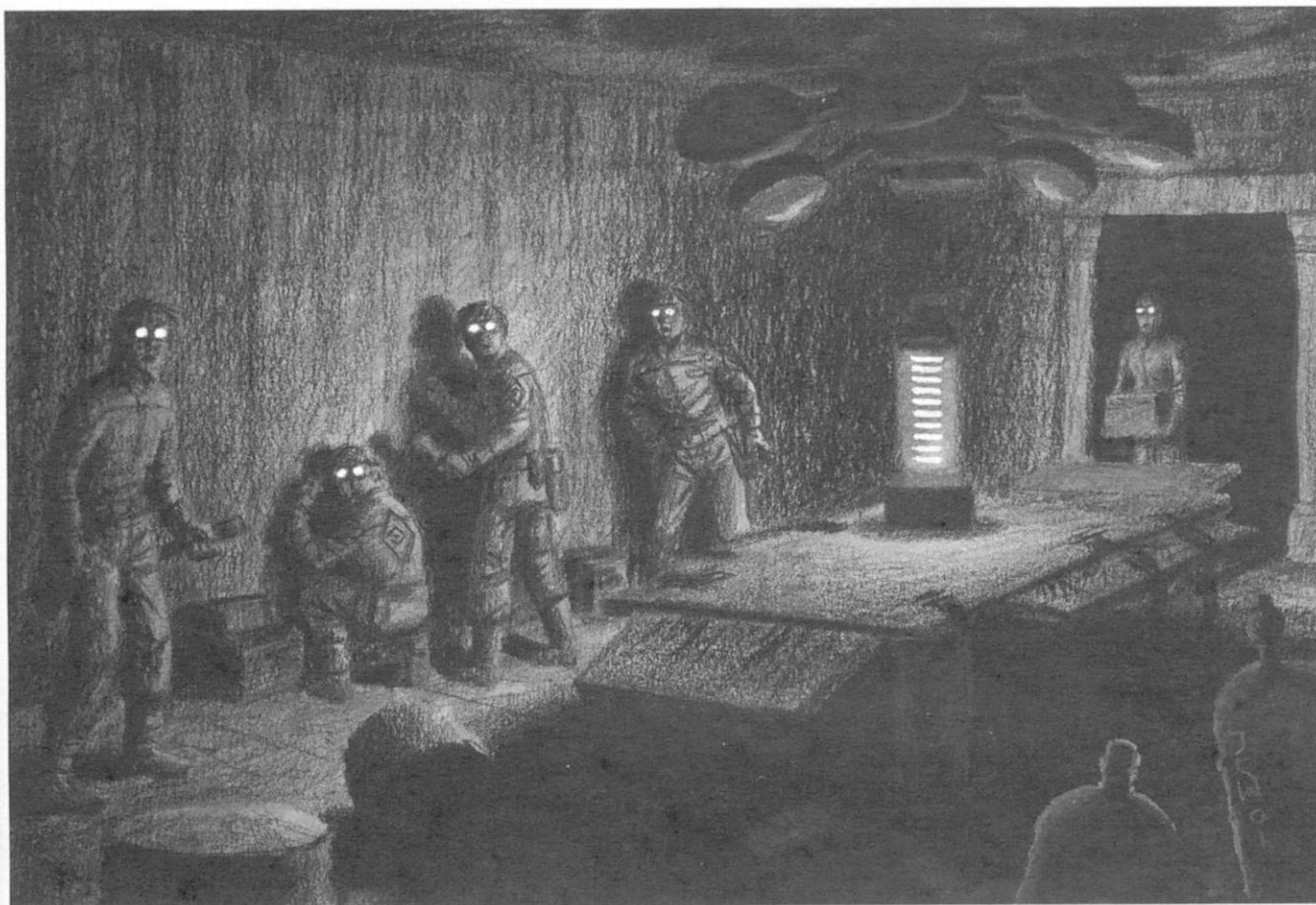
Misdirection in the Corridors

In the corridors beyond the mortuary temple, the ossuary motif comes to an end, replaced by a strange mix of rusting Republican technology and archaic cultist trappings. Corridors here are lined with earth or metal. Some have long strips of heated wires that flood hallways with a reddish glow as soon as someone approaches. Pushing someone into one of the heating elements inflicts 3d damage.

Fewer patches of fungus are present, but the spores down here have grown more powerful. At opportune moments, hit a random character with a Calm + Focus or Stoic Mind roll. If he fails, his vision begins to grow blurry, and the goal numbers of all his Perception-based rolls are reduced by 2. On a critical failure, he witnesses strange bursts of color or undefined drifting forms for a full span. Either way, as a side effect, acts of exertion still provide a hit of pleasure; so do sinful acts. This far underground, the concentration of fungal spores turns the act of killing into a moment of ecstasy.

A few corridors have vid cameras mounted high above the ground. The functioning ones activate and track the char-

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acters' progress at random moments. Broken ones blink red lights off and on, suddenly pan to watch objects that seemingly aren't there, or just emit the sound of screaming, grinding gears. All of them can act as "magic lanterns" as well, randomly casting holographic images of cultists, degenerate nobles, suffering peasants, and shadowy demons in the darkness. Consider this, then: the apparitions, when present, appear remarkably similar to holograms. Use this to misdirect players as you will.

The Armory

The closest chamber lies in the direction the cowardly Scravers fled. Antiquated suits of combat armor have been gathered here, demonstrating the various tech levels of defense. A case at the end of the chamber displays a family heirloom: a beautiful antique sword hilt (but no blade). The Scravers were unable to retrieve this artifact, so they've begun to lay explosive traps in the room instead. The characters won't suspect it, but the most paranoid Scraver has begun to lay wiring along the surrounding corridors, either as a trap for self-defense or an attempt to betray and kill his own comrades.

The armor in this room is custom-made to fit some of the more prominent noblemen of the LeFanu lineage, providing between 5d and 10d of protection. For anyone other human who climbs inside, each one is a bulky, uncomfort-

able apparatus that reduces all Physical goal numbers by 2, reduces base movement by half, and reduces all Vigor-based goal numbers by an additional 5. For the largest, bulkiest suits, stealth is impossible while the contraptions are clanking and rattling. If anyone's paranoid enough to take this option anyway, give a +5 difficulty modifier to any Perception roll to hear the poor fool walking.

If the characters go to the library first: The Scravers have finished rigging a trap to the weapons case. If captured and beaten, they'll swear (using Extrovert + Knavery, if necessary) that they only wanted to rig enough explosives to blow the case open. The trap appears as a grid of wires on the ground surrounding the area, rather like a low-tech archaeological dig. Various low-tech archaeology tools are scattered about, and there is evidence of digging. It takes three victory points on a Tech + Observe roll to notice that the grid conducts a faint current. Disrupting it by walking inside it triggers an explosion. Disarming the trap requires five victory points on a sustained Tech + Volt Redemption roll. Alternatively, a wise psychic could trigger the trap from a distance with *FarHand*.

Anyone monkeying with the case who doesn't notice the tomb raider's gear sees a sudden burst of light from a magnesium flare from behind it, followed by a massive explosion. Because of the sudden burst of light, anyone in the room can make a Dexterity + Dodge roll to dive behind a

suit of armor. Anyone standing next to the case needs six victory points on a Dexterity + Dodge roll. Everyone else needs three. The explosion does 10d damage, shorting out any energy shields present for a round or two. Psychics with *Darksense* may be blinded for a span by the sudden flash.

If the characters go to this room first: Opening the case requires a difficult (-10 goal modifier) Tech + Lockpicking roll to disarm a series of electronic locks. This takes up valuable time, giving the Scravers an opportunity to not only complete their trap in the library, but also to get a head start on breaking into the museum. The trade-off might be worth it, though: The weapon in the case is a flux sword; pressing a stud on the ornate hilt unsheaths an energy blade.

If the characters come here last: The Scravers are already working on breaking into the tomb. Each time the characters make a roll, have the Scravers make a roll to bypass the electronics around the entrance. It takes at least four successful rolls to break into the tomb, as detailed below. The heroes will have to race to keep up.

The Library

A labyrinth of wooden shelves stretches across this room. No books are present; only stacks and stacks of plastic chips, disks, spools and cubes used for storing data. The machines are built from low-tech remnants. Most think machines cannot read this data. The Engineers Guild (or Panlex Communes of Pandora) would pay a modest fee for these museum pieces, but reconstructing the information is difficult at best. An elaborate system of wires and electronics crawls over the bookcases like ivy. At the end of each bookshelf, there are devices in which the data storage media can be placed.

As soon as the characters enter the room, an electronic eye set a foot above the ground in the doorway turns on most of the lights and electronics in the room. Lights flicker, wires spark, and generators whirl. Various bits of tech grind as though they haven't been used in centuries. Following signs through the tiny labyrinth eventually leads the heroes to a circular study area in the center of the room.

The exact center of the room contains a black dais resembling a table, although no chairs are near it. Five microphones are equidistant along its periphery. Three data readers are present in the study area, but only one is still working. To read the display screens, the user must first brush away the layer of fungal spores that has adhered to the screen. The damp, drifting fungal spores have degraded all of these systems over time. Fixing the two broken machines requires a bit of technical skill (Tech + Volt Redemption), while accessing the working machine requires a bit of ingenuity (Tech + Think Machine). Either of these tasks requires at least an hour; the intoxicating effects of the fungus are incredibly soothing anyone who does this for at least a span,

bestowing a +4 to the goal number of either activity.

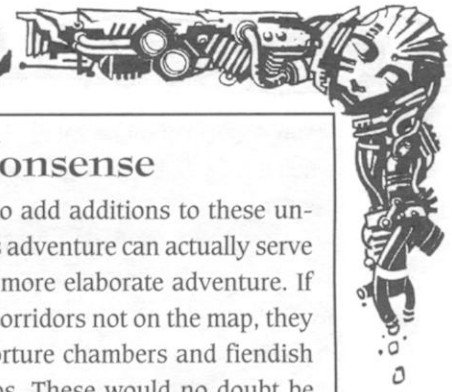
Although it is not immediately evident, each data reader is also wired to a crude holoprojector in the central dais. Turning on the tech readers fires up the projector, which causes a three-dimensional grayish blur to manifest in the center of the room. If the heroes are struggling to find specific data, a physical form resolves in the center of the dais. Tech + Think Machine or Academics can identify the set-up as a primitive First Republic version of a Hierarchy think machine (see pg. 220 of the rulebook).

Through a series of carefully phrased questions and answers posed to the artificial intelligence, a scholar can get the avatar standing on the central dais to display data, read passages of text, and show visual links to other related sources of information. Call for Extrovert + Inquiry, Debate, or Knavery rolls as the characters converse with the scholar. This version of a "library hierarchy" takes up an entire room, plus a series of generators and motherboards underground, in addition to three data terminals and a central holoprojector. The entire network was taken from the original starship that brought the colony. It soon became the exclusive property of the cult.

If the characters succeed at their Tech rolls: Perhaps after visiting the museum, they'll eventually summon the transparent form of a robed scholar in the center of the dais. In the guise of the scholar, it can answer any questions about the failed colony and even display a limited amount of information about it. All of this data is biased, however, casting the colony in a far better light than reality can offer. The most complete files in the library concern the Li Halan nobles who governed over the colony. If queried about this subject, the apparition first states facts in a very direct matter, then slowly appears more and more pleased as it details the crimes, perversions, and heresies committed by these prodigal Li Halans. This data is massively useful, especially to Gregarious.

If the characters fail their Tech rolls: One of the apparitions manifests on the dais in an attempt to misdirect and mislead the heroes. The holoprojector turns on at an opportune moment. The apparition then poses as the Hierarchy scholar. Again, a manifested spirit appears rather like a holographic image. The mischievous spirit deliberately gives the characters wrong information. For instance, he may ask if the heroes are allied with the fellows in blue jumpsuits, the ones that took the only data reader capable of reading certain files. The robed scholar can then offer to help the heroes access the proper files if they can return the non-existent "master think machine" to the library.

Clever players will suspect a ruse. Very careful examination of the primitive technology (three victory points on Tech + Think Machine) for 10 minutes reveals that the holoprojector isn't working properly. It only displays the



fuzzy background. The scholar is also curiously advanced for First Republic A.I., appearing to possess a distinct personality and the ability to intuit and anticipate possible inquiries. If a character suspects that the machine is giving false information, he may realize with sufficient insight (three victory points with Tech or Introvert + Empathy) that the interface is not what it seems. The apparition then passes through the smart-ass character and uses one of its Spiritus powers to assault him directly. (See below *Apparitions*, below, for a description of Spiritus powers.)

If the characters go to the armory first: The Scravers have jury-rigged an explosive trap on a doorway at the far side of the room. If the characters go directly from the library to the museum, passing through the electric eye on the far side of the room detonates an explosive placed at the base of one of the bookcases. One bookcase is knocked over toward the character standing in the doorway; unless he makes a Dexterity + Dodge roll, he takes 7d of damage. Anyone within about five meters must scramble for cover as bookcases topple, shards of plastic fly through the air, and the concussion from the blast demolishes part of the library. This more insidious trap requires three victory points on a Dexterity + Dodge roll to avoid 10d of damage.

If the characters come here last: The Scravers are already working on breaking into the tomb. Each time the characters make a roll, have the Scravers make a roll to bypass the electronics around the entrance. It takes at least four rolls to break into the tomb; the heroes will have to race to keep up.

The Museum

The heroes can flee from any of the three chambers, or the mortuary temple, directly to the museum. It's one of the most elaborate areas of the necropolis. The ceiling is high, the walls are stone, and the workmanship is exquisite. Several patches of masonry, however, are obviously unfinished. Along the right wall, a series of six statues of noblemen from the LeFanu lineage stand on cold stone bases. In front of each one is a low pedestal. The last pedestal displays a marble bust of a sneering fat man's head. Along the left-hand wall is a long, low shelf with a series of preserved, mummified heads. Each one has been meticulously preserved in a different facial expression depicting sin. A lustful head leers; a wrathful one grimaces in rage; a prideful head points its nose in the air. Each one is on a base of marble and weighs less than five pounds.

At the far end of the museum, directly opposite the entrance, is a grisly triptych. A central dais holds a marble statue resembling the four-armed "guardian beast" that holds up the ceiling of the mausoleum. Behind it is a ponderous, obvious metal door. Close examination (perhaps with Perception + Artisan) reveals the workmanship on the dais is

Stuff and Nonsense

If you like, feel free to add additions to these underground chambers. This adventure can actually serve as the start and end of a more elaborate adventure. If the heroes wander down corridors not on the map, they may encounter various torture chambers and fiendish *Tomb Raider* sorts of traps. These would no doubt be initiation chambers for the followers of the ancestor's cult. Exploring these sections of the complex is optional, and wise heroes may avoid them, but possibilities include leaping between platforms to avoid swarms of rats lurking below, dodging swinging blades, running from huge rolling marble balls, and all that sort of stuff. Family artifacts are scattered about, but most of them are of minimal value. Wandering "off the map" burns valuable time.

very different from the statue — they're two different pieces.

Bolted to the wall on either side of the guardian statue, identical crucified statues hang from metal shackles. They are covered in skin that has been flayed and stripped, revealing intricate and exquisite musculature. Closer examination reveals that the muscle tissue is quite real, but it's been carefully preserved, sewn, and stitched together with a masterful combination of taxidermy, mortuary sciences, and anatomical knowledge. The feet are held a few inches above the ground in shackles; the arms are spread wide with similar devices. Blood stains add finishing touches.

Gregorious Li Halan will pay handsomely for any names and descriptions the heroes can provide of the noblemen's statues. Each one is clearly labeled, detailing the six patriarchs of the LeFanu lineage. The series of six heads on the opposite wall are minor functionaries of the family. They are not placed at regular intervals, nor are they directly opposite the seven statues. The heads face different directions.

Closely examining the pedestals reveals a circular depression roughly the same size as the marble bases of the mounted heads. The intent of the high priest who designed this tribute is brutally obvious: the heads are the keys to unlocking the door. Each servant must be placed before its master. The only way to deduce the right combination is by returning to the library and consulting the hierarchy library. The "scholar" there is eager to divulge gruesome stories of how the servants sated the base desires of their masters.

The gamemaster can make these stories as minimal or elaborate as desired. The nobleman closest to the guardian beast can be identified as Zan Li Halan, the rather portly son of Gilles Li Halan who kept his subjects starving so that he could feast. His gluttonous servant not only perpetually demanded larger herds of livestock, but was also known to



slaughter and prepare the nobleman's own subjects as food when he couldn't butcher enough animals to sate his master's appetites.

Feel free to elaborate further tales of sin and exploitation. One noblemen might have a reputation as a notorious womanizer who used his reign to impregnate countless peasants; his servant would then be the lustful functionary who selected maidens for his pleasure. Another may be known as an effete patron of the arts who vastly expanded the necropolis; his functionary would be the proud artiste willing to kill the most reverent cultists to preserve them eternally in flesh and bone. If this exercise isn't to your taste, the hierarchy scholar can simply grant them the knowledge they need to unlock the tomb. Underneath the dais, a sloping passageway leads down into the ancestor's tomb. The metal door is another bit of misdirection — no matter how long characters hammer at it, it won't give, since it's mounted against a stone wall.

Crucifixion

Because the Scravers were so meticulous in looting obviously valuable treasures, they've overlooked blackmail material in the library they should have gathered instead. Placing the right statues on the right pedestals does not open the metal door, however. First, the machinery opens the shackles of the two crucified forms. The flayed bodies land resoundingly on the stone floor, kneel to lift the dais, and slowly slide it forward. Anyone who freaks out to slaughter "Husks" will be in for a surprise. Each shambling automaton has a metal body under its meticulously crafted artificial musculature. The stats for these two worker golems are included at the end of the adventure. If assaulted, they'll defend themselves.

If anyone attempts to mutilate or assault the crucified bodies (for whatever reason), the shackles open automatically, allowing the muscle-bound artifacts to respond more quickly. Smashing the nobleman's statues or attempting to steal the heads produces the same effect. Theurgists, psychics, techs, or physicks may study the flayed statues instead. Three victory points on an appropriate roll (Perception + Physick, Tech + Mech Redemption, Second Sight, and so forth) reveals the two lowly golems that have waited beneath the carefully crafted skin for centuries.

Cautious and ingenious techs may examine the golems first, figure them out, release them from their shackles, and reprogram them. This is possible, but requires an impressive array of technical skills. Give Engineers and techie players some leeway in figuring this out. Breaking into the tomb requires at least four successful rolls. One possible combination would be: figuring out the statues are golems (see the previous paragraph above), figuring out the release mechanism for the shackles (Perception + Volt Redemption; three victory points), reprogramming the A.I. of the golems

(Tech + Think Machine; three victory points), and properly commanding the golems (Tech + Extrovert ; three victory points). It is unlikely that any one Engineer would possess enough diverse skills to do this alone. The Scravers, however, have enough specialists to pull this off. If they have enough time, they'll skip the array of severed heads and focus on the high-tech solution to this problem.

Unfortunately, the statue of the guardian beast on the dais is not technological. For centuries, it has stood guard over its master's tomb. As part of an infernal pact, it awaits the moment when the Gilles Li Halan's sarcophagus is opened. As soon as this happens, its stone animates, its eyes burn with infernal fury, and the guardian beast attempts to slaughter anyone who dares violate the ancestor's tomb. Like so many investigations into the dark between the stars, this story is doomed to end in a bloodbath.

The Scravers

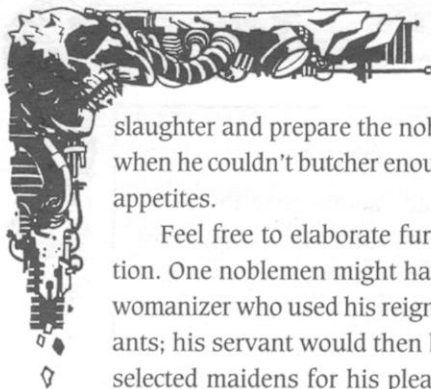
How this scene plays out also depends on the heroes' interaction with the Scravers. If the heroes abandon this little puzzle and return to loot previous rooms, the surviving Scravers get here first. If the heroes blatantly waste time — for instance, by chasing the Scravers down like rats, researching nonessential crap in the library, or taking elaborate precautions against potential Husks — the Scravers still get here first. The archaeologists then concentrate on releasing the golems, commanding them to move the dais. The golems follow them inside the tomb. The heroes later enter to find the golems kneeling in a corner, the dais moved aside, and intriguing statues and mummified heads staring at a violated room.

If the heroes spend copious amounts of time with both the armory case and the library, the Scravers eventually get to the room anyway. If they hit the library or armory last, the heroes must solve either problem there as quickly as they can while the Scravers make rolls to break into the tomb. After the guardian statue has departed, either group could eventually move the marble dais with a combined Strength of 20.

Anyway you decide to play this out, moving the slab of marble uncovers the passageway to the ancestor's tomb. As soon as anyone enters the tunnel, motion sensors activate machinery inside. The tomb is at the bottom of a 50-foot slope; at the bottom, four metal braziers are lit by remote mechanism. The faint outline of a sarcophagus is visible. A Qlippoth artifact awaits inside.

The Apparitions

The apparitions don't want the heroes, the Scravers, or anyone else to open the tomb. They know that the spirit of Gilles LeFanu Li Halan has been trapped inside the cave. After a lifetime of sacrifices, and the final sacrifice of his own life as part of a grisly living burial, Gilles' soul has



been trapped in the realm of flesh as a powerful apparition. The pact has its darker side, of course. One of the last reverent theurgists in the colony managed to figure out the correct rite to cast to imprison the Ancestor in its sarcophagus. A powerful application of the Urth Orthodox rite *Consecration of the Land* on the walls of the tomb and the marble slab keeps him trapped inside.

As long as the marble dais stays in place, the ancestor remains undisturbed. In order to destroy his spirit or retrieve the artifact, however, the dais must be moved. If the characters don't move fast enough, the Scravers move it for them. If the apparitions can set the two groups against each other, they'll scheme to destroy enough intruders to prevent the ancestor's release. If that doesn't work, they'll lurk in the walls of the museum, waiting for their next move. They can't communicate directly with the heroes unless they possess a recent victim (using the Spiritus power *Animate Victim*). That requires them to kill someone, directly or indirectly.

Act Four: The Ancestor's Tomb

If the characters get to the tomb first: At the end of the descending tunnel, a massive cavern has been carved out of the ground. A metal brazier rests in each corner of the room, illuminating the room with open flame. There's a stone sarcophagus covered with a heavy block of marble in the center of the room. Sliding this aside reveals the moldering burial garments of the ancestor. The body is gone.

Only one object is in the sarcophagus: a square pendant with a tiny candle in the center. This is the Qlippoth artifact mentioned in the ancient legend. As one would expect, the candle is not lit. If someone reaches for the pendant, the light from the braziers flickers. If the heroes decide to light the candle, the room begins to grow dark. Skip to the next scene of the story: *Pitch Black*.

If the heroes don't light the candle, or start to leave the room, they hear sounds of violence from the museum. Scravers scream in pain. The demon beast slaughters everything in sight, beginning with the archaeologists, and then roams the corridors of the necropolis. Skip to the last scene of the story: *Hell on Earth*.

If the Scravers get here first: The heroes discover that the tomb has already been violated. The room is a charnel scene of carnage. Blood has been sprayed across the walls, and all of the bodies, save one, have literally been torn limb from limb. The artifact is still here, but it's firmly held in a severed hand lying in the crypt. By this time, the guardian beast has left its dais. It roams the corridors of the necropolis, prowling for others who have desecrated its master's sanc-



The Low-Tech Option

With a bit of work, the gamemaster can modify this adventure to a very different style, one that doesn't threaten everyone's lives quite as much. If the apparitions seem too powerful or complex, it's easy to write them out of the adventure. With this option, there aren't really any supernatural encounters in the tomb, only confrontations that seem supernatural. The Scrauers in the "Antechamber of the Ossuary" don't have to be possessed; instead, they really are just wounded, and the visions of rising mists are the result of fungal intoxication. The apparitions don't have to be real; they might just be projections from cleverly concealed "magic lanterns." Just as the crucified bodies are Ogre golems, the stone guardian may be a very sophisticated Askari golem with similar statistics and very heavy armor. The spirit of Gilles Li Halan is nothing more than a recording, although the fear that forces the Scrauers to collapse tunnels with explosives is very real.

The trick is to fake the players out, terrifying them with the threat of demonic forces while simply shifting shadows, light, smoke and mirrors. At any moment, the forces of darkness may emerge, but the heroes' paranoia can make the adventure seem more dangerous than it is. The only real danger would then be the Scrauers—they're not as formidable as the apparitions, and not nearly as dangerous as the last scene.

tum. If the heroes respond by grabbing the pendant and lighting the candle, the room grows dark. Proceed to *Pitch Black*.

If, on the other hand, the heroes examine the bodies of wounded Scrauers, they find that the last tomb robber is dying, but not dead. (He's at one Vitality and making his Endurance + Vigor roll each hour to regain consciousness.) If the entourage is merciful and heals him, he can describe a tactic they can use to destroy the guardian beast. As the heroes no doubt know, he's been busy wiring explosives throughout the corridor. He was going to use his traps against the heroes, but if they'll spare his life, he can help them make a run for it and collapse the corridors on the guardian beast. That's the good news. Now here's the bad news. You'll still unleash *Hell on Earth*.

Pitch Black

The fire in one of the braziers can be used to light the candle in the center of the pendant. However, instead of yielding illumination, the pendant slowly darkens the room in which the tomb raiders are standing. Blowing out the flame cancels the effect. If the heroes let it burn, the graverobber holding it—and anyone standing within 10 feet of her at the

time the artifact is activated—is soon surrounded by absolute darkness. The fools find themselves standing before the image of the ancestor. There's a vid cam in the corner of the room; close examination (Perception + Volt Redemption) reveals that it's not really working.

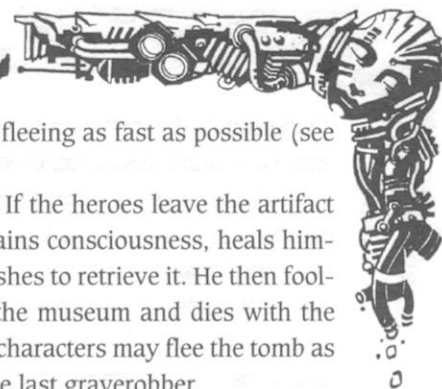
After avoiding insidious traps and perils, the entourage is confronted by ancient and insidious evil. Standing in the field of darkness, Gilles Li Halan explains why he has left the guardian beast to watch over his remains. He has served as the mentor for generations of Li Halan pursuing the dark secrets of Antinomy. With utter glee, he describes how the guardian beast will slay them all if they do not turn to him for help. He is too weak to control it now, but he is still the only one who knows how it can be appeased. Only he knows the rituals that can save them from its wrath. He's lying, of course, but with Knavery 8, he'll probably pull it off.

Villainy: A villainous character can learn the dark secrets the ancestor offers... and thus allegedly enter the "first circle" of the Qlippoth religion. Ask if any of the heroes want to take up the ancestor on his offer. If anyone says yes, respond by saying the following words: *Hand me your character sheet*. That character remains under your control for the next span. Gilles uses the Spiritus power *Liberation* to possess his willing victim in an attempt to leave his underground prison. The treacherous character says, "Wait here," then slowly walks into the museum, surrounded by absolute darkness (an application of the Spiritus power *Stygia*). Anyone who wants to follow him can; the area around him still darkens.

Any number of characters can make this deal with the devil, but to be honest, only the first one counts. Once past the museum, the cloud of darkness dissipates. The body possessed by Gilles LeFanu is gone. The rest of the traitors are left standing in the open. Hold on to the first traitor's character sheet; hand the rest back. Guess who the guardian beast attacks first? The statue assaults the closest player character. Whether the rest of the characters are just outside the museum or right inside the tomb, unleash *Hell on Earth* anyway.

The Dark Secret: Gilles Li Halan, after a lifetime of sacrifice and a living burial, has been trapped in the realm of flesh as an apparition. The game mechanics for these spirits are at the end of this chapter. And guess what? They can be killed. The villain flees at the first sign of an attack, but he'll run straight through the chamber with the guardian beast. He can't control it, but then again, it can't harm him either. . . not unless one of the characters voluntarily lets him use the Spiritus power *Liberation*.

Nothing is stopping the characters from assaulting the traitor, either. No matter where the dice fall, as soon as the guardian beast can see someone other than Gilles, it attacks. If he can reach the surface in the body of a willing host, he



is free to roam the world as he will. If the heroes chase him while he's manifested, he needs Endurance + Vigor rolls to outrun them, as described in the next section.

Heroism: A heroic entourage can take a very different path: they can extinguish the flame at any time. As soon as this happens, Gilles flees, passing through the sloping corridor to escape part of his underground prison. They can chase him, but they'll have to outrun other perils. If the heroes are truly merciful, they'll find the guardian beast's victims, discover that one of them is still alive, and heal him. He has his own plan for destroying the beast. If they are vengeful, they can escape with the artifact, but at a terrible price. For everyone involved, it's still *Hell on Earth*.

Act Six: Hell on Earth

Our story so far: Gilles LeFanu was once an immortal apparition sealed in a stone tomb. Before the colony completely degenerated, the last of the pious priests used the Theurgic rite *Consecration of the Land* to seal him in his sarcophagus. His descendents, knowing that his spirit would live on, were content to leave him trapped. Thus, he's immortal, but he can't leave. Compared to some Qlippoth pacts, it's a relatively good deal. It could be much, much worse.

Well, actually, it *is* worse. His more diabolical descendents, as part of their pacts with darkness, have created the statue of a demonic guardian to further ensure that the spirit stays trapped. To be more precise, they've actually bound a demon to the statue, one that can animate it as a destructive juggernaut of pain. For the demon, the pact is eminently practical, since it also traps the artifact inside. In the wrong hands, a Qlippoth cultist with sufficient power could issue it further commands. The descendents of the LeFanu lineage, trapped on a low-tech world and lacking the proper tools to destroy their predecessor, were content to leave both the artifact and the ancestor deep underground.

The guardian statue may be a slavering, stone-skinned demon from hell, but it's not stupid. As soon as anyone opens the Li Halan's sarcophagus, the demon animates the statue, following the specific commands of its pact. Its first objective is slaughtering anyone who has stolen the artifact. The massive statue can't enter the sloping tunnel to the tomb. It can't open the Consecrated sarcophagus, either, but it's fast, it's strong, and it's patient.

The guardian's second goal is destroying anyone in the necropolis who is not a cultist in the Antinomist religion. Thus, after it destroys everything it can see, it roams the corridors looking for other intruders to destroy. This gives survivors a chance to make a break for the surface world. The conclusion of this scene depends on the characters' ac-

tions. Most of them involve fleeing as fast as possible (see *Flee! Flee! Flee!*, below)

Abandon the Artifact: If the heroes leave the artifact behind, the last Scraver regains consciousness, heals himself with some Elixir, and rushes to retrieve it. He then foolishly tries to sneak through the museum and dies with the artifact with his hands. The characters may flee the tomb as the guardian beast seizes the last graverobber.

They better leave fast. The last Scraver is the bastard who was wiring explosives to trap the heroes. He's actually wired a whole corridor to collapse, but in his obsession for destruction, he insisted on being a little too thorough. It's just as possible that he's done this because of the Spiritus power *Arouse Passion*. The device he uses to trigger the bombs is keyed to cybertech the Scraver has buried in his flesh. When the access code is given, this collapses the remaining tunnels and buries the artifact forever. If the heroes leave quickly enough, they'll outrun the explosives the Scraver detonates as he dies.

Show Mercy: The guardian beast has left one Scraver for dead. As one would expect from a member of this guild, he's got a plan to get out of here. If the heroes can find him and heal his wounds, the mad bomber can tell them which corridors are set to collapse. With his help, they can flee and stop the guardian beast by dropping several tons of rock and soil on it. They'll have to outrun the explosion (Dexterity + Vigor), but they'll retrieve the artifact.

Flee: If the heroes abandon all reason and flee, each character rolls Endurance + Vigor when passing through the chamber closest to the surface — the temple. The guardian beast catches up with the slowest character in the entourage. The beast grabs the slowest hero and rends him limb from limb, giving his companions time to escape.

Exact Revenge: If the heroes take revenge against the Scraver by dropping his wounded body as a sacrifice for the guardian beast while they flee, the explosive charges still go off. The beast ignores the sacrifice (since it's not going anywhere), grabs the slowest character (as described above), and savages him as the tunnels collapse.

Stand and Fight: If the heroes try to stand and fight the beast, it's strong enough to seriously wound most of them. If it's actually losing the fight, it begins smashing the walls and collapsing the tunnels of the ossuary. The shockwaves begin detonating the explosive charges, setting up a chain reaction that collapses the tunnels.

Flee! Flee! Flee!

The heroes must pass through four areas to flee the mausoleum. If you don't want to use a precise mechanic for this, feel free to simply describe the event as dramatically as possible and use one Endurance + Vigor roll for the whole chase scene. You may want to call for it just as the heroes



flee through the antechamber of the ossuary. If you want a more elaborate mechanic, on the other hand, here it is. Call for these rolls as the heroes flee through each section of the necropolis.

The Museum: The chase scene begins in the museum, where the heroes see three corridors leading from the museum. The tunnels beyond are a tangled maze, but they eventually lead to the armory, the library, and the mortuary. The demon appears in one of the three tunnels. Making a sprint for one of the other two exits requires a contested Dexterity + Vigor roll. Keep a tally of everyone's successes (or victory dice, if you like). Who's in front, and who's in back becomes very important when lives are on the line. If the demon catches up with the slowest character, it stops long enough to smash with a knockout attack. This gives everyone else one extra roll while fleeing. If anyone voluntarily turns and fights, this gives other fleeing characters more time to escape. A failed Vigor roll means a wrong turn as the demon gains ground.

The Corridors: The corridor to the armory is the one that's wired with explosives, so the Scraver's plan won't work unless most of the characters run through that one. If the characters split up, the demon takes the path with the slowest character. It's still early in the chase, so the roll to escape is still a contested Dexterity + Vigor roll. If anyone takes the corridor leading through the museum, don't forget the possibility of the Scraver's insidious trap in the bookcases if the characters missed it the first time. Again, a failed roll means a wrong turn as the demon gains ground.

The Mortuary: By now, the fungus takes effect. The roll becomes Endurance + Vigor to keep running, but everyone gets a +2 to their goal rolls. If the characters are doing well, you might have some oblivious Scravens hanging out here with blasters drawn. If the apparitions have possessed any victims, you may also want one of them to grapple a hero that's running past them. As soon as the first character reaches this point, explosions echo through the metal corridors. As soon as the demon enters the mortuary, the corridor from the armory collapses behind him. He'll need to Dexterity + Dodge to avoid getting trapped inside it.

The Necropolis: Here's another Endurance + Vigor roll, this time with a +4 to the goal roll from fungal goodness. If the apparitions haven't made an appearance during the chase scene, they'll use the Spiritus power *Twitch* to animate severed arms and legs. If life is too easy, go for some opposed grapple rolls to catch a fleeing hero. If life is too hard, the corridors continue to collapse behind the demon. If it hasn't scored at least 20 successes, bury it now. If it does succeed, everyone keeps running.

The Mausoleum: As soon as the first character reaches the stairs to the mausoleum, the first light of dawn struggles to illumine its interior. The rites keeping the mausoleum

shadowed in darkness are dispelled as the underground necropolis continues to collapse. As long as the characters outrun the demon, or at least delay it, they make it to the light of day. This is the last Endurance + Vigor roll to escape. If the demon catches anyone, roll for its nasty knockout attack. Otherwise, everyone escapes.

Aftermath

As the first light of dawn casts long shadows across the graveyard, the Charioteer's ship lands just outside the ruins. The Scravens have chartered their own flight later in the day, but it's unlikely any of them will reach the surface. If even one Scraver someone survived, he has no desire to start another damn gunfight with the heroes — he'll surrender if anyone gives him grief. If the mad bomber is with the characters, he submits to any plan the heroes suggest. As an added bonus, the graveyard is entirely free of walking dead.

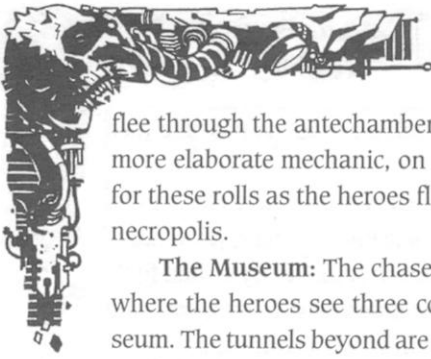
The heroes might escape from the desolate colony moon with a powerful weapon (the flux sword from the armory, ideal for slaying apparitions), redeem whatever they can scavenge from the Scraver tomb robbers (including blasters, also good for slaying apparitions), and more importantly, return with extensive details on the Li Halan's less reputable ancestors (some of whom still exist as apparitions). The entourage has to choose whether to destroy the artifact themselves or return it to the noble who sent them — trusting that he'll do it himself. Either way, a heroic entourage may gain Gregorious Li Halan as a valuable contact.

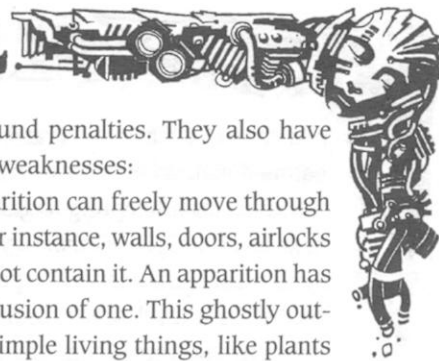
Of course, a villainous entourage may blackmail him and seize the Scravens' profitable sideline in financial exploitation. And, of course, if one character is treacherous enough to make a pact with evil, Gregory LiHalan's worst nightmare has come true. The spirit possesses the traitorous character for a year and a day, then dumps the quivering body on a distant world with a few extra psychic powers as compensation. Any promises of Qlippoth instruction were a lie, of course.

Until that time, the gamemaster can use the rules listed below to cannibalize the traitor's character sheet to detail the new incarnation of Gilles LeFanu Li Halan. The scholar wanted to discern whether the LeFanu lineage has survived the last few centuries. If your players take the villainous option, it has. The powerful new Antinomist is suitable for use as a recurring villain in the campaign. If your players roleplay like heroes, on the other hand, the spirit remains buried in its underground domain, sealed in the collapsed tunnels that once contained the Ancestor's Tomb.

Apparitions

Peasants and nobles alike have heard stories of the walking dead, shambling Husks that plague the desolate





badlands of rural worlds. Fewer have heard of souls who escape their rotting prisons of flesh to seek vengeance beyond the grave. Wandering spirits trapped in the realm of flesh haunt places of carnage, violence, diabolical Antinomy, and outright atrocity. These apparitions unleash their rage and pain on any who witness them.

Most legends hold that apparitions are the result of sinful lives cut short before their time. Other tales speak of lives left unfulfilled, of love unrequited, or torment preserved for all eternity. Because of their violent and tragic deaths, they are drawn to places of suffering and carnage. More sinister tales relate that foolish occultists have willingly made pacts with demons to defy death and return to the world as apparitions. No matter what the tales behind an apparition, they universally feature passionate lives and grisly deaths.

An Apparition typically either haunts the grave of its former body or, if there is no body, remains at the site of its untimely demise. The presence of the dead is comforting to them — especially the corpses of their mortal victims. The most powerful apparitions find some surcease to their suffering by possessing the bodies of their victims. By using Wyrds, they may enter a corpse and temporarily animate it. Brave nobles have only just begun to tell tales of slaying what they thought was a Husk, only to find the spirit within it rise from the body and attack.

Heroes confronted by an Apparition of death in its ghostly form cannot destroy it with physical weapons; swords, slug guns, and meaty fists are all useless. Strange, residual energy of the human soul propels it. However, Apparitions can be harmed by energy weapons of all kinds; blasters, screechers, and stunners are particularly effective. Energy shields form a suitable defense; physical armor does not.

Spirit Creation

Gamemasters can generate spirits by using the same rules as they would for living characters. All Apparitions must have at least Ego 5 and Passion 7; correspondingly, they have no Faith or Calm traits. All Apparitions possess some degree of Spiritus, a dark mirror of the psychic powers possessed by the living. Like psychic powers, this occult ability requires a Spiritus occult characteristic (ranging in levels from 1–10) and a path of powers that must be mastered sequentially. They may also learn to mimic any psychic power that does not require a physical form (*FarHand*, for instance, is possible; *Soma* is not), although they must have a Spiritus characteristic equal to or higher than the power's level, and they must learn powers in their path sequences. They also have their own special path, called Corpus.

A spirit's total Vitality is equal to the sum of its Passion + Ego + Endurance traits. Because they are free from the prison of flesh, they don't get the base five levels of Vitality,

nor do they suffer from wound penalties. They also have the following strengths and weaknesses:

Insubstantial: An Apparition can freely move through inanimate physical matter. For instance, walls, doors, airlocks and starship bulkheads cannot contain it. An apparition has no physical body, only the illusion of one. This ghostly outline can also pass through simple living things, like plants and animals. Passing through complex living things, like humans and aliens, is slightly more difficult, requiring a Dexterity + Fight roll. Some applications of Spiritus require the Apparition to pass through an unwilling target.

Manifestation and Mists: These spirits appear shadowy and indistinct, remarkably like faint holograms. The spirit can will itself to manifest as it did either at the most important moment of its life or the moment right before its death. It can also fade out to a faint mist. Seeing signs of its presence in this "mist form" requires someone actively looking for it, and knowing what to look for, to make a Perception + Observe roll.

Living Energy: Only energy-based weapons can harm an Apparition. Typical examples include screechers, stunners, flux swords, and blasters. The Apparition has no ability to soak this damage. It can, however, use Dexterity + Dodge to avoid it. Note that a spirit that soars out of a room can escape from most ranged attacks. Fire can harm an apparition, but the spirit can soak the damage using its Endurance as armor. *Vis Shock*, *Vis Bolt* and *Vis Storm* all work against spirits.

Energy shields repel apparitions (so does the psychic power *Vis Shield*). If a character with a dueling shield is attacked, subtract the maximum amount of protection afforded by the shield from the number of successes on the spirit's Dexterity + Fight roll. *Armor of the Pancreator* and psychic abilities like *Vis Shield* have the same effect. Physical armor, however, cannot soak damage inflicted with Spiritus abilities.

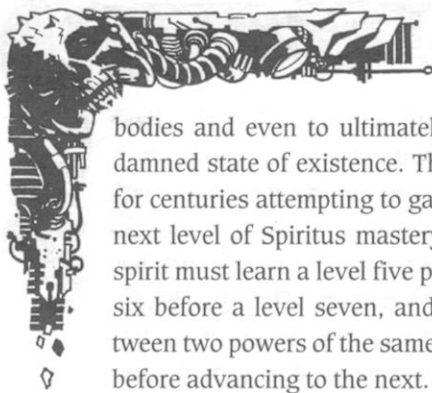
Condemned: Until the spirit learns the Level 10 Spiritus Corpus power *Liberation*, it is trapped in the same place for eternity or until it is destroyed. This "domain" is usually the location of its mortal death, a place of great tragedy, a place of great suffering, or an unholy place commanded by demonic and Qlippothic forces.

Exorcised: The spirit cannot enter a place or person that has been sanctified with the Theurgic rites *Consecration* or *Consecrate the Land*.

Corpus

Apparitions have levels of occult power, just as many characters do, through an occult power called Spiritus (available only to Apparitions or disembodied entities). Besides the ability to mimic psychic powers, Spiritus provides a special path called Corpus, allowing Apparitions to manipulate





bodies and even to ultimately free themselves from their damned state of existence. The spirit can suffer in torment for centuries attempting to gain enough power to attain the next level of Spiritus mastery. As with psychic paths, the spirit must learn a level five power before a level six, a level six before a level seven, and so on. If it has a choice between two powers of the same level, it can choose either one before advancing to the next. Unless stated otherwise, each of these powers costs at least one Wyrd to activate.

Wyrd Drain

(Level 1, Dexterity + Fight, touch, instant, OW)

When an Apparition successfully passes through a character with a Dexterity + Fight roll, it can steal one Wyrd. If the Apparition is at the maximum for its Wyrd pool, its victim still loses Wyrd. If a victim cannot lose Wyrd points from Wyrd Drain, it loses vitality levels instead. This power does not require Wyrd to activate.

Stygia

(Level 1, prolonged, 1W)

The spirit can summon a cloud of darkness up to 10 meters in diameter, with itself at the center. All Perception rolls to see through the cloud have a -6 difficulty modifier; *Darksense* reduces this to a -4 difficulty. The cloud lasts for one span or until the spirit dispels it.

Arouse Passion

(Level 2, Dexterity + Fight, touch, instant, OW)

When performing Wyrd Drain, the Apparition may attempt to leech off additional Wyrd by forcing its victim to obsessively pursue its own overwhelming passions. The spirit must succeed on another Dexterity + Fight roll; the victim can attempt to resist with Calm + Stoic Mind or Dexterity + Dodge. For every victory point (three successes) by which the spirit beats the roll, the victim loses an additional Wyrd. If a victim cannot lose Wyrd points from Wyrd Drain, it loses vitality levels instead. As a side effect, for the duration of one span, the victim has a -2 penalty to all goal numbers from the distraction of overwhelming passions.

Illusory Presence

(Level 2, Extrovert + Knavery, prolonged, 1W)

An apparition normally appears as it did at the most important moment of its life, usually right before the tragedy or horror that would later torment it for all time. With this power, the spirit can appear as anyone it has seen or known. This requires one Wyrd point and an Extrovert + Knavery roll; mark down its number of victory points. Seeing through the disguise requires a greater number of victory points on a Perception + Observe roll; this roll cannot be attempted more than once per span.

Twitch

(Level 3, Wits + Impress, prolonged, 1W)

The spirit can temporarily animate the limbs or heads of corpses. One body part can be animated per victory point on a Wits + Impress roll; the body must have been dead for at least a week. A hand can clutch or strangle, a leg can thrash and kick, or a head can snap and bite. If the body part has been severed, it can move half a meter a round. If anyone comes within a meter of the body part, it can attack with a Dexterity + Fight goal number of 6; it inflicts a base of 3d damage.

Possess Victim

(Level 4, see below)

The spirit can pass through a dead body as easily as any other inanimate matter. By using this power against the recently dead, such as those killed by the spirit, it can possess the body and use it as its own. The body must have died within the last week. Possessing the body costs one Wyrd point for each point of Endurance the victim had in life. This power cannot be used against a living victim.

The animated body appears similar to a Husk, but does not rot, decay, or degrade while it is possessed. A recently killed body appears pale and feels cold, but can still be forced to move as it did in life. While the corpse is possessed, any excess damage inflicted to the animated body is inflicted against the spirit instead. The spirit can cease animating the body at any time.

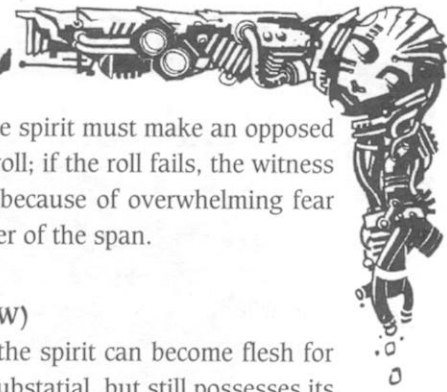
The victim's Body traits function like those of a Husk: Use the victim's Body characteristics, but subtract 2 from each one. During the possession, use the spirit's Mind characteristics, but subtract 2 from each one. The Possessed body uses the victim's Vitality; all other traits (including natural skills, learned skills, spirit traits, and occult abilities) are derived from the possessing spirit. The spirit cannot "access" psychic powers the body had in life; those are gone. It can, however, use its own psychic and Spiritus powers.

Incite Passion

(Level 5, Extrovert + Impress, sight, prolonged, 1W)

The spirit can force its victim to incite a passion and become obsessed with a specific activity. The gamemaster (or person playing the spirit) chooses one of its target's skills. The target must make an Incite Passion roll; the roll is Passion + the chosen skill. If the roll succeeds, the target is obsessed with pursuing a task related to that skill (as if he had scored a critical success on the roll). Even if the roll isn't a critical success, victory points add to any roll with that skill; the duration of this effect is one span.

Apparitions typically choose an obsession tied to a



victim's dark secrets, unresolved passions, or strongest aspirations. As a side effect, the spirit can roll Introvert + Observe to figure the strength of the Passion traits for all living things in its presence. Spirits with this power are invariably drawn to passionate, obsessed, and tormented people.

Soulfire

(Level 6, Dexterity + Fight, instant, 1W)

When the spirit passes through a victim with Dexterity + Fight, it can roll its Ego to inflict searing damage. Every victory point inflicts one level of vitality damage; this damage bypasses all forms of armor. (Energy shields still subtract successes from the attack roll, but they don't soak damage.)

Animate Flesh

(Level 7, touch, prolonged, 5W)

This power works like Possess Victim, but can only be used on a corpse that has been dead for at least a week; this costs five Wyrd. The body moves like a Husk, but it only has five Vitality points; it still does not suffer wound penalties. The duration is one span.

The spirit can cease possessing the body at any time. While the body is possessed, any excess damage is inflicted against the spirit instead. The body shambles like a Husk, but the Body traits are reduced to 3, not 2. The spirit can still use any of its other occult abilities while possessing the corpse, including psychic powers from other paths.

Terrifying Presence

(Level 8, Extrovert + Impress, prolonged, 1W)

The spirit can appear as death incarnate, or alternatively, as it did at the moment of its untimely demise. This requires one Wyrd and an Extrovert + Impress roll; mark down the number of successes it got on the roll. The effects last for

one span. Anyone seeing the spirit must make an opposed Calm or Faith + Stoic Mind roll; if the roll fails, the witness gains a -6 to all skill rolls because of overwhelming fear and nausea for the remainder of the span.

Revenant

(Level 9, prolonged, 1W)

By burning one Wyrd, the spirit can become flesh for one span. It is no longer insubstantial, but still possesses its normal weaknesses. The revealed body shrugs off physical attacks, but still takes damage from energy attacks. In this state, fire inflicts double damage. It gains an additional five Vitality levels for the duration of that span, and can suffer wound penalties for losing them as characters do.

Liberation

(Level 10, see below)

If the spirit can find a willing living victim, it may possess the victim's body and leave its place of confinement. Once it leaves, the spirit is free to roam creation as it wishes. Some particularly insidious spirits offer to instruct psychics or Antinomists in exchange for this freedom. The spirit is still repelled by people or places who have been Consecrated, but cannot be bound by them.


While the spirit possesses its liberator, it uses all the Body traits and natural skills of its host. The spirit uses its own Mind and Spirit traits, learned skills, and Occult powers. It immediately steals all of its victim's Wyrd. The body retains its vitality, but so does the spirit. The spirit can take an action to abandon the body at any time, but any excess damage inflicted on the body is inflicted on the spirit instead. Usually, the spirit does not abandon its host unless it is about to die.




INTO THE DARK

Mandagora Archaeologists (Scrapers)


Just a bunch of regular Joes and Janes doing their job of tomb robbing — hey, it's a living. They don't want trouble and will bluff or lie their way out of or into any situation which they believe will lead to their getting out of the tomb alive.





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Equipment: Blaster pistols, shadow goggles, shadow torch, archaeological tools, one dose of Elixir (5d) each



Name: Mandagora Archaeologists		Race: Human	
Gender: Males and females		Alliance: Scavengers	
Age: Varies		Rank: Varies	

CHARACTERISTICS				NATURAL SKILLS				LEARNED SKILLS				
BODY		MIND		Charm (3)		3		Inquiry		3		
Strength (3)		4 Wits (3)		Dodge (3)		7		Knavery		5		
Dexterity (3)		7 Perception (3)		Fight (3)		6		Read Urthish		5		
Endurance (3)		5 Tech (3)		Impress (3)		6		Remedy		5		
SPIRIT				Melee (3)		6		Science (Archaeology)				5
Extrovert (3)		4 / 2 (1) Introvert		Observe (3)		6		Search				3
Passion (3)		5 / 2 (1) Calm		Shoot (3)		7		Sleight of Hand				3
Faith (1)		1 / 4 (3) Ego		Sneak (3)		8		Social (Debate)*				5
				Vigor (3)		6		Speak Scriver Cant				6
								Speak Urthish				4
								Tech Redemption**				6
								Think Machine				4

* The leader has:
Social (Leadership)
** Each has one of the following: Craft, High Tech, Mech or Volt

COMMON ACTIONS				BLESSINGS/COURSES				ARMOR			
Action		Goal		+/-		Trait Situation					
Bluffing		10									
Lying		9									

OCCULT		COMBAT		SHOTS FIRED		VICTORY CHART	
Psi	/ Urge	Action	STR bonus: Init Goal DMG RNG	(10 /clip)		Successes Pts	
Theurgy	/ Hubris	Blastr Pistol	7 14 7 10/20			1-2 0	
Powers/Rites	Goal	Fist	6 13 3			3-5 +1	
		Kick	5 13 4			6-8 +2	
		Grapple	4 13 3			9-11 +3	
		Charge	3 13 3+			12-14 +4	
						15-17 +5	
						18 +6	
						Critical success = x2	

VITALITY	[0][0][0][0][0][0][0][0][0][0]
Wound penalties:	-10 -8 -6 -4 -2
WYRD	[0][0][0][0][0][0][0][0][0][0]

A black and white charcoal or pencil drawing of a man with a wide-eyed, screaming expression. He has dark, messy hair and is wearing a jacket with a diamond-shaped patch on the left shoulder. The background is dark and textured.

Equipment: Blaster pistols, shadow goggles, shadow torch, archaeological tools, one dose of Elixir (5d) each

Name: Le Fanu Cultists Gender: Males and females Age: N/A		Race: Apparition Alliance: The Dark Rank: N/A		LEARNED SKILLS LVL Academia 5 Empathy 3 Focus 4 Lore (Theology) 5 Read Latin Read Urthish Remedy 3 Speak Latin Speak Urthish Stoic Mind 8	
CHARACTERISTICS BODY Strength (3) 3 Dexterity (3) 6 Endurance (3) 5 MIND Wits (3) 6 Perception (3) 6 Tech (3) 6 SPIRIT Extrovert (3) 4 / 4 (1) Introvert Passion (3) 7 / — (0) Calm Faith (0) — / 5 (3) Ego		NATURAL SKILLS Charm (3) 3 Dodge (3) 7 Fight (3) 6 Impress (3) 6 Melee (3) 5 Observe (3) 5 Shoot (3) 3 Sneak (3) 7 Vigor (3) 5			
COMMON ACTIONS Action Goal		BLESSINGS/COURSES +/- Trait Situation			
OCCULT Spiritus 6 Powers/Rites Goal 8 Lifting Hand (as Psi) 8 Corpus Powers: Wyrd Drain 12 Arouse Passion 12 Twitch 12 Possess Victim — Incite Passion 10 Soulfire 12		COMBAT Action STR bonus: — Init Goal DMG RNG		SHOTS FIRED (/clip) Successes Pts 1-2 0 3-5 +1 6-8 +2 9-11 +3 12-14 +4 15-17 +5 18 +6 Critical success = x2	
VITALITY		ARMOR Immune to all physical attacks		VICTORY CHART	
Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2		VITALITY		SHOTS FIRED	
WYRD		COMBAT		VICTORY CHART	

INTO THE DARK

[illegible]

These disguised golems aren't interested in combat — unless they're attacked. They just do their job the way it was programmed into them centuries ago, although they are smart enough to adjust to changing conditions.

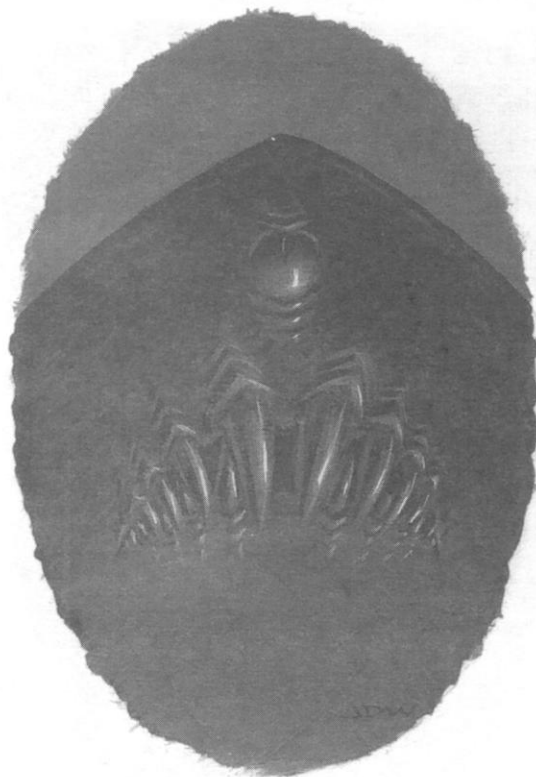
Note: TL 5 artificial intelligence.

[illegible]

Guardian Demon

This thing is nothing but trouble. It cannot be redeemed or convinced to give up its stony "flesh." It wants nothing but to wreak havoc and deliver souls to the Dark.

Note: The guardian favors knockout attacks (see pg. 185 of the rulebook) and martial holds. With its double attack, it can punch and grapple on the same round. Remember that this isn't a creature to fight; it's the sort of thing characters should flee. When it starts sprinting, it runs with a goal number of 13 for Dexterity + Vigor; if the heroes can last long enough, this lowers to an 8 for Endurance + Vigor.



Name: Guardian Demon		Race: N/A		LEARNED SKILLS <i>Lvl</i>	
Gender: N/A		Alliance: The Dark		Stoic Body 8	
Age: N/A		Rank: N/A		Stoic Mind 5	
CHARACTERISTICS		NATURAL SKILLS			
BODY		MIND			
Strength (—) 13		Wits (—) 3			
Dexterity (—) 10		Perception (—) 3			
Endurance (—) 5		Tech (—) 3			
SPIRIT					
Extrovert (—) 6 / 1		(—) Introvert 3			
Passion (—) 6 / 1		(—) Calm 3			
Faith (—) 0 / 10		(—) Ego 3			
COMMON ACTIONS		BLESSINGS/CURSES			
Action Goal		+/- Trait Situation			
ARMOR		10d skin			
OCCULT		COMBAT		SHOTS FIRED	
Psi / Urge		STR bonus: +3d		(/clip)	
Theurgy / Hubris		Init Goal DMG RNG			
Powers/Rites Goal		Fist 8 16 6			
		Kick 7 16 7			
		Grapple 6 16 6			
		Charge 5 16 6+			
		Martial Hold 7 16 6			
		* The demon can perform two combat actions per turn without suffering a multiple action penalty			
VITALITY		VICTORY CHART			
Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2		Successes Pts			
WYRD		1-2 0			
		3-5 +1			
		6-8 +2			
		9-11 +3			
		12-14 +4			
		15-17 +5			
		18 +6			
		Critical success = x2			

* The demon can perform two combat actions per turn without suffering a multiple action penalty

The vile bastard who created this tomb of the damned, Gilles Le Fanu is also the only Apparition powerful enough to escape it — with the willing aid of a player character (or perhaps Scriver NPC, if the gamemaster seeks a recurring villain and the players won't play along by being traitorous Antinomists).



CHARACTERISTICS			NATURAL SKILLS			LEARNED SKILLS		
Body	Mind		Charm (3)	8	Academia (Religion)	8		
Strength (3)	3	Wits (3)	7	Dodge (3)	6	Alchemy	5	
Dexterity (3)	8	Perception (3)	7	Fight (3)	6	Etiquette	5	
Endurance (3)	7	Tech (3)	4	Impress (3)	6	Knavery	7	
SPIRIT				Melee (3)	3	Read Latin		
Extrovert (3)	6	4 (1) Introvert		Observe (3)	6	Read Urthish		
Passion (3)	7	1 (0) Calm		Shoot (3)	3	Remedy	5	
Faith (0)	—	5 (3) Ego		Sneak (3)	6	Search	3	
				Vigor (3)	6	Social (Leadership)	7	
						Speak Latin		
						Speak Urthish		
COMMON ACTIONS			BLESSINGS/COURSES			ARMOR		
Action	Goal	+/-	Trait	Situation				
OCCULT			COMBAT			VICTORY CHART		
Spirit	10	STR bonus:			Successes			
Powers/Rites	Goal	Init	Goal	DMG	Pts			
Stygia	—	6	14	3	1-2 0			
Illusory Presence	13	5	14	4	3-5 +1			
Twitch	13	4	14	3	6-8 +2			
Possess Victim	—	3	14	3+	9-11 +3			
Incite Passion	13				12-14 +4			
Soulfire	14				15-17 +5			
Animate Flesh	—				18 +6			
Terrifying Presence	13				Critical			
Revenant	—				Success = x2			
Liberation	—							
VITALITY			VIT			VICTORY CHART		
Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2			Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2			Successes		
WYRD			WYRD			Successes		



Short Dramas

By Bill Bridges

Coven Crackdown

The characters are living in a flophouse on the East Lane, on the Slums side of the road. They have banded together in the hopes of getting off-world sooner, by pooling their money and taking collective jobs to earn a passage contract together. (This is the glue that binds them — they need one another to get out of this hell-hole.)

Currently jobless, they wake up late one day and exit the flophouse to find the street deserted. It's an eerie feeling, as if they're walking into a dream. The normally bustling and overcrowded lane, filled with make-shift merchant stalls, beggars and freelancers yelling about their resumes to any potential boss, is completely empty of people.

Down the street a few blocks to either side, police barricades have been erected, behind which a line of armed guards (about five per side) and Inquisitors (one on either side) stares nervously down the lane. Behind them are the teeming crowds, struggling to get a good view of the street.

Keen eyes will see people staring furtively from windows on either side of the lane. One person may take a risk and yell out to the characters: "Coven crackdown! Get indoors, you fools!" before disappearing behind closed shutters.

If the characters try to re-enter their flophouse, they find the doors shut and barred from within. Their nervous patron cries from behind the thick, wooden doors: "Sorry! Can't open them. I didn't realize... I'll drop a refund from the window above..." (This refund never comes.)

So what the hell is going on? It's a coven crackdown. Inquisition authorities uncovered psychic coven activity nearby and cracked down on the area last night. This only caused the psychics to go berserk, killing the Inquisitors with guns and occult powers. Now, the area is barricaded, with no way out for the psychics. Inquisitors guard the exits, backed by police, wary of any attempt to psychically manipulate them. (Any characters attempting to navigate the tight alleys will find barricades there also.)

Any psychic character may have heard of a coven crackdown before: roll Wits + Lore (People & Places seen) and give the character a +4 bonus due to his psychic powers. If he succeeds, he knows the gist of what's going on. If he gets three or more success, he knows that open use of his powers will make him a target. Failure means he has never heard the words "coven crackdown" before.

There are three NPC psychic coven members trapped in this lane with the characters, although they are hidden behind windows or doors, watching. The only chance they have of escaping is to cause enough of a ruckus in which to slip past the guards and lose themselves in the teeming crowds. The player characters are prime targets for such a disturbance...

The Coven Members

Three psychics are trapped in the area (some others escaped earlier). These guys hate one another, though, and refuse to work together to save their own hides. Two are

members of the Invisible Path (selfish, power-hungry ubermenshes), and vie with one another for control of the coven chapter; the other is a member of a completely different coven, the Favyana ("we-can-all-get-along" psychics), rivals of the Invisible Path. They won't work in concert, and may even attempt to foil one another's bid for escape. They are (see their character sheets for traits):

- Iskander Smith (Invisible Path, and a Scraver guildsmember)
- Oskar (Invisible Path, and a Brother Battle monk)
- Delia Sarnon (Favyana, and a Purgers guildsmember)

Shit Hits the Fan

The following events occur in this order, at a maddening pace (give the characters little time in which to choose their reactions):

A Vorox bursts from out of the Alien Slums and charges on all-fours at the characters, roaring in rage. He is under Iskander Smith's mental control (Puppetry, level 9 Psyche path). The poor alien does not want to attack the characters, but has no choice. The characters don't know this, though; they may assume it's a feral Vorox — rabid and wild.

Delia hates to see the Vorox used in this way. She will erect a Far Wall barrier around the beast (level 6 FarHand path; acts like an energy shield: activates with 3 points of damage or more, and will block up to 13 points of damage).

The Vorox will attempt to drive the characters down the street, to break through the barricade. If anyone gets within 15 meters of the barricade, they will be shot at by the cops.

Once the Vorox is nearly dead (either from player character delivered wounds or police slugs), Iskander will drop his control over it and attempt to control a player character instead. (Choose whomever you think would be the most fun to control.) The Vorox will be completely confused and beg the characters to help him. Anyone who aids the Vorox also gets the advantage of the FarWall.

If any of the characters clearly exhibits psychic powers, or aids the Vorox, a Brother Battle warrior monk (Oskar) will come bursting from a closed door in the street and rush to attack that character. He cries out to the Inquisitor at the barricade: "Aid me against these sinners! Every moment they are free is a moment for trickery!"

This will cause the Inquisitor to rush forward and attack the characters; the guards follow him into the fray.

Characters may take this moment to try and run past them, disappearing into the crush of onlookers. This will take three turns of dodging attacks. If successful, they can then make Wits + Sneak rolls to slip through the crowd and escape. Modifiers for this last roll depend on their actions: the crowd will try to get away from any known psychic, noble or extremely dangerous character — subtract -2 through -6 from the roll for these characters. However, any character

who exhibited compassion or attempts to calm the situation down, or looks like a poor underdog being picked on, will be aided by the crowd — add +2 to +6 to the roll.

Once the guards join the melee, the Brother Battle chases any sinners into the crowd, attempting to disappear himself as soon as he can. (He has a -4 to the Wits + Sneak roll.)

Delia Sarnon will make a break for it at this point. If the characters under her protection (the Vorox and any who aided her) are attacked, she will halt her escape to defend them for one turn with her FarHand powers — firing dropped guns, fencing with dropped swords, etc. It will be obvious to all that she is risking her life to do this.

The Inquisitor will single her out and attack. If the characters defend her, the crowd will surge forward — it's full of underdogs who hate the Inquisition. Their own fear of psychics turns to admiration for Delia and the characters, and their mob mentality turns on the Inquisitor. (Add +6 for any character attempting to escape through the crowd from this point on.)

This little vignette seems awfully combat-oriented, but there should be moments for social interaction also: characters can try to work the crowd into coming to their defense or convince the guards that they are innocent (superlative Extrovert + Charm or Oratory rolls will cause the guards to let that character through, regardless of the Inquisitor's demands otherwise).

In addition, the nobles can demand personal duels with anyone accusing them, whether it be the Inquisitor or the Brother Battle. If they are denied, the crowd will boo whom-ever denied them a chance at honor.

Finally, at the last moment, Iskander will drop whatever control he has on a character and run from the building he was hiding in (probably jumping from a balcony). As he runs, he stops to exert control on anyone trying to stop him (guards perhaps?), revealing his identity. (He then suffers a -6 to slip through the crowd).

Resolutions

If time permits, some positive points of resolution can be told:

- Characters who aided Delia will be furtively approached by other Favyana members and told that the group owes them a favor. A passage contract for all the characters is handed over. It's a cheap one, for miserable conditions in a cargo hold converted to carry passengers, but it's a ticket off-world.

- If the characters aided in subduing, capturing or killing Iskander (or exposing Oskar as a psychic), the Inquisition will thank them for their service and overlook the fact that any of them is a psychic — for now (as long as he doesn't bring further attention to himself).



Iskander Smith

A leader in the Invisible Path psychic coven, Iskander is a supremely powerful psychic, but one who is terribly haunted by his own psychically-active dark side (his Urge). Years of backstabbing others in his rise to power and prestige have only increased his seemingly in-born paranoia, but have also sharpened his cunning.

He arrived recently on Pandemonium with the goal of consolidating two Invisible Path chapters on the world. He found a worthy rival in Oskar, the Brother Battle monk who already led one of the chapters. Taking control was not as easy as he first thought, so he did something heinous: he leaked knowledge of the coven's safehouse to the Inquisition in the hopes they would burn Oskar alive. Instead, he has been trapped like Oskar in the coven crackdown.

Appearance: He is tall and thin with long dark, braided hair. He's a Scraver (his guild doesn't know his true allegiance) and dresses like one, wearing somewhat grimy clothes, as if he's been busy at a dig or redeeming tech.

[illegible]

Name: Oskar	Race: Human	LEARNED SKILLS 1/17
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0

7

Critical
success = x^2

[illegible]

INTO THE DARK

Name: Deliah	Race: Human
Gender: Female	Alliance: Purgers Guild
Age: 23	Rank: Associate

CHARACTERISTICS		NATURAL SKILLS	
BODY	MIND	Charm (3)	6
Strength (3)	4 Wits (3)	Dodge (3)	4
Dexterity (3)	6 Perception (3)	Fight (3)	4
Endurance (3)	4 Tech (3)	Impress (3)	3
SPIRIT		Melee (3)	4
Extrovert (3)	7 / 2 (1) Introvert	Observe (3)	7
Passion (3)	5 / 1 (1) Calm	Shoot (3)	6
Faith (3)	3 / 1 (1) Ego	Sneak (3)	6
		Vigor (3)	4

COMMON ACTIONS		BLESSINGS/CURSES	
Action	Goal	+/-	Trait Situation
Size up a person	10		

OCCULT		COMBAT		STR bonus:	
Psi 6 /	Urge	Action	Init	Goal	DMG RNG
Theurgy /	Hubris	Lt Autofeed	6	12	4 10/20
Powers/Rites	Goal	Knife	4	10	3
Lifting Hand	14	Fist	4	10	2
Throwing Hand	12	Kick	3	10	3
Crushing Hand	11	Grapple	2	10	3
Dueling Hand	11/13				
FarArms	14				
FarWall	11				

VITALITY		SHOTS FIRED		VICTORY CHART	
<div>Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2</div>		(6 /clip)		Successes Pts	
				1-2 0	
				3-5 +1	
				6-8 +2	
				9-11 +3	
				12-14 +4	
				15-17 +5	
				18 +6	
				Critical success = x2	

ARMOR Leather 4d	
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LEARNED SKILLS LVL	
Drive Landcraft	3
Empathy	3
Focus	7
Inquiry	4
Remedy	2
Stoic Mind	4
Streetwise	7
Tech Redemption (Mech)	4
Tech Redemption (Volf)	2

ARMOR Leather 4d		COMBAT		STR bonus:		DMG		RNG		SHOTS FIRED (6 /clip)		VICTORY CHART	
OCCULT	Action	Init	Goal	DMG	RNG							Successes	Pts
Psi 6 /	Urge	6	12	4	10/20							1-2	0
Theurgy /	Hubris	4	10	3								3-5	+1
Powers/Rites	Goal	4	10	2								6-8	+2
Lifting Hand	14	3	10	3								9-11	+3
Throwing Hand	12	2	10	3								12-14	+4
Crushing Hand	11											15-17	+5
Dueling Hand	11/13											18	+6
FarArms	14											Critical	success = x2
FarWall	11												
VITALITY		<div> <div> <div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div> </div> </div>											
Wound penalties:		-10 -8 -6 -4 -2											
WYRD		<div> <div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div><div>0</div> </div>											

A generic fanatic from the Avestite temple, with flame-retardant robes and smoking hot flamegun. Meb is just itching for proof of psychic heresy.

[illegible]

Hub guards, hired by House Decados to defend the city. They bear small Mantis symbols on their uniforms, but most of them are natives with no particular allegiance to the house.

[illegible]

Kadagadang

Once a mercenary with the Muster, a string of failures and bad circumstances left him without any guild allies on the planet (although he does retain his rank). He is now poverty-stricken in the Alien Slums. He's not a feral beast, but a rather intelligent soldier eager for a chance to prove himself in loyal service again. His lack of packmates has left him a bit on edge, which only aids Iskander's attempt to mentally control him.

Once free of Iskander's control, he wants nothing more than to leave the area and escape all the attention he's garnered — unless he can identify Iskander, whom he will berserk against (as long as he's healthy enough to do so — he's not stupid enough to kill himself for revenge).



Name: Kadagadang		Race: Vorox		LEARNED SKILLS		LVL
Gender: Male		Alliance: Muster		Drive Aircraft		3
Age: 28		Rank: Private		Gambling		2
				Inquiry		4
				Knavery		1
				Physick		2
				Remedy		5
				Search		5
				Stoic Body		5
				Streetwise		6
				Survival		6
				Warfare (Artillery)		3
				Warfare (Demolitions)		2
				Xeno-Empathy		3

CHARACTERISTICS		NATURAL SKILLS	
BODY	MIND	Charm (3)	4
Strength (4)	9	Dodge (3)	5
Dexterity (3)	6	Fight (3)	6
Endurance (4)	7	Impress (3)	4
SPIRIT		Melee (3)	6
Extrovert (3)	3 / 1	Observe (3)	3
Passion (3)	5 / 1	Shoot (3)	7
Faith (3)	3 / 1	Sneak (3)	3
		Vigor (3)	5

COMMON ACTIONS		BLESSINGS/COURSES	
Action	Goal	+/-	Trait Situation
Plead for aid	6	+2	Per When hungry
		-2	Calm When hungry
		+1	Per Sensitive smell
		-2	Extro Social situations
		Extra limbs (+4)	
		14 meters base run	

OCCULT		COMBAT		STR bonus: +2d	
Psi /	Urge	Action	Init Goal DMG RNG		
Theurgy /	Hubris	Bite	5 12 5		
Powers/Rites	Goal	Banga	3 12 5+2/3m		
		Drox (second limb action at -2 init)			
		Leaping Kick	4 11 8		
		Sure Fist	4 14 5		
		Tornado Kick	5 12 7		
		Martial Throw	4 12 5		
		Head Butt	4 13 6		
		Martial Kick	5 12 6		
		Martial Fist	6 12 5		

VITALITY		WOUND PENALTIES										VICTORY CHART			
Vitality		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Successes	Pts
Wound penalties:		-10	-8	-6	-4	-2								1-2	0
Wyrd		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3-5	+1
														6-8	+2
														9-11	+3
														12-14	+4
														15-17	+5
														18	+6
														Critical success = x2	

ARMOR Stud leather 5d

They Hunger

The characters (still on Pandemonium) have each heard of a new opportunity to make some money, but it's outside the walls of the Hub, in the Shantytowns. A native is gathering an expedition to retrieve valuable goods out in the Badlands. He's interviewing applicants at a tent in the morning, with the hopes of leaving that afternoon. The group of characters all travel together for this job interview.

As they arrive at the large tent (it's about the size of the swamp in M*A*S*H), they notice a gang of well-armed mercenaries being turned away, looking disgruntled but heading back to the Hub. A small man stands at the door and seems glad to see the group, except for any mercenaries or other combat-skilled characters. He introduces himself as Logan and ushers them in, carefully closing the flap behind him and tying it with a string.

He does a cursory interview, getting each character to describe themselves and their previous adventuresome experiences. He seems overjoyed to have such qualified folk applying. If asked why the mercs were turned away, he scowls and says: "We cannot afford them." He explains that the pay is a portion of whatever goods are brought back, which could be quite a sum — he promises high-tech parts and building materials (maxicrete mix), all of which are especially valuable in the Hub.

If they accept, he moves a rug aside and reveals a human-sized tunnel into the earth. Lighting a candle, he leads them into it, saying: "Good. Let's meet the others." The short passage opens into an old mine shaft, supported by wooden beams. (The passage is obviously new, dug to intersect the older shaft). Lanterns hang every few meters, providing a wan light to see by.

He enters a large room where a number of refugees are gathered, living in make-shift hovels separated only by hanging sheets and rugs. They all appear malnourished and look to the characters with hope in their eyes.

"These are my people," Logan says. "Until we can reclaim what it ours, there is little money with which to buy food."

He leads on to the next room, an even bigger cavern with no passages leading out. A metal shed can be seen on the far side. "Wait here," Logan says. "Our leader will be

out momentarily." He returns to the crowded room, where people have gathered at the entrance to the cavern, staring pleadingly at the characters. He fiddles with something unseen (blocked by the gathered crowd), and a net drops from the ceiling to cover the passage, blocking the exit from the cavern.

It is made of some super-fibrous Second Republic material, and has an armor rating of 5d and a Vitality of 20. It'll take a few turns to cut or blast through enough for a human to slip through it.

As soon as the net drops, a weird person sticks his head out of the shack for a moment — he looks half-human, half-lizard. He disappears again and before anyone can reach the shed, the roar of an engine is heard, and something large and metals bursts through the flimsy shed doors and out into the cavern, wheeling about to face the characters. It is a large, gasoline-powered golem (robot), armed with all manner of weaponry and programmed to kill the characters.

The animal-man appears with swords, crying out to the people behind the net "I get the brains, you get the brawn!"

What the hell is going on? Zagurzan (see his character sheet) is a cannibal who has taught his refugee followers to eat human flesh (hey, food really is scarce in the Shantytown). The characters are on the menu. They've got to fight the golem and this weird Changed (genetically-engineered) being while attempting to break the net.

Once (if) they break the net, the natives will flee, screaming into the endless mine shafts which stretches for kilometers beneath the Shantytown and into the Badlands (no entrance into the Hub, however).

If they beat their foes, the golem parts (assuming its not too beaten up) are worth a lot of money anywhere in the Hub, enough to get a stateroom to fit them all on the next frigate offworld.

Zagurzan

The bizarre result of genetic experiments in a hidden lab in the Badlands, Zagurzan is but one of the many monstrosities to escape from that lab and make its way to the Hub. His craving for human flesh is only one of the many unfortunate side-effects of his twisted maker's melding of his genes with a lizard.

He likes brains the best.

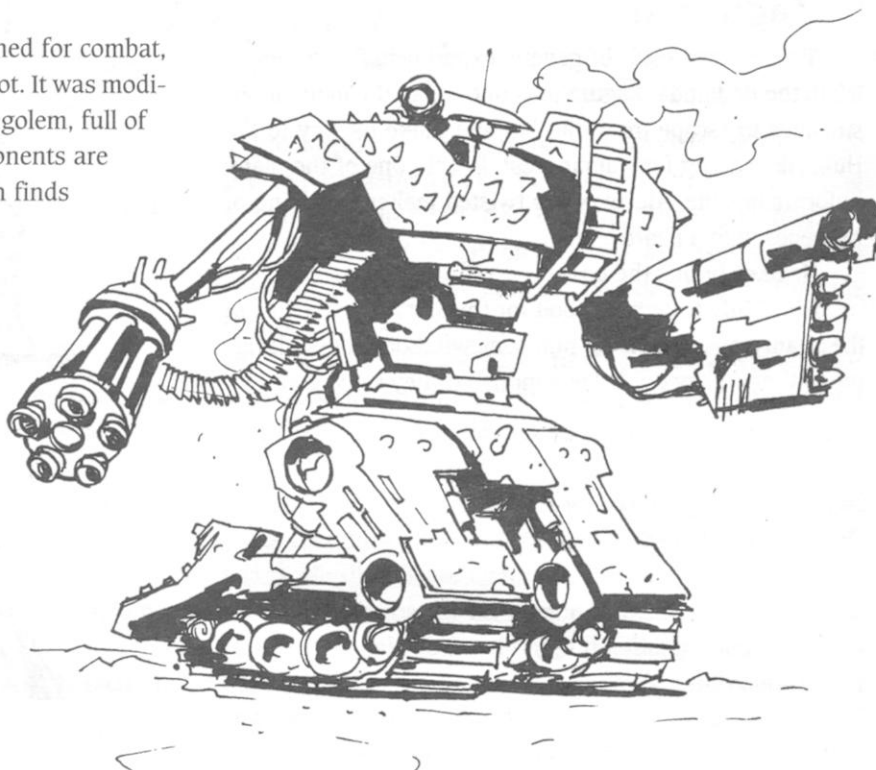
His ability to provide food for the starving wretches in the Shantytown has made him somewhat of a messiah figure to them. They don't see a monster; they see a god.

[illegible]

Golem

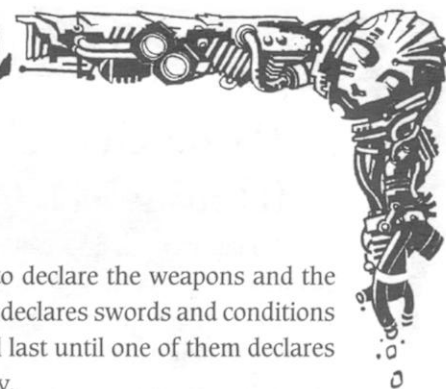
This old hulk was not originally designed for combat, but as an earth-mover and construction robot. It was modified by its previous owner to be a gladiator golem, full of weaponry and programmed to kill. Its opponents are supposed to be other golems, but Zagurzan finds it quite useful in mincing his meat.

Appearance: 4 meters tall, metal plates haphazardly wielded onto its chassis. A chaingun is on its right forearm, a rocket launcher on its left. Its legs aren't mobile, but its feet are like tank treads. If someone can break the treads (armor 3d, Vitality 7), its motion would be hindered or stopped.



Name: Gas-powered Golem Tech Level: 5		LEARNED SKILLS <i>LVL</i>	
CHARACTERISTICS		NATURAL SKILLS	
Body	Mind	Charm (-)	0
Strength (-)	10 Wits (-)	Dodge (-)	0
Dexterity (-)	5 Perception (-)	Fight (-)	0
Endurance (-)	15 Tech (-)	Impress (-)	0
		Melee (-)	6
		Observe (-)	2
		Shoot (-)	6
		Sneak (-)	0
		Vigor (-)	6
COMMON ACTIONS		BLESSINGS/CURSES	
Action	Goal	+/-	Trait Situation
CYBERTRAITS		COMBAT	
Powers	Goal	STR bonus: +2d	SHOTS FIRED (100 /clip)
Armor 10d		Init Goal DMG RNG	
Infrared vision		7 11 10	
Think Machine programs:		5 11 6	
Detect weakness	8	6 11 10	75/100
Acquire target	13		
Gas-power engine			
(30 actions allowed)			
Movement is one action per 10 meters traveled			
VITALITY		VICTORY CHART	
Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2		Successes	Pts
		1-2	0
		3-5	+1
		6-8	+2
		9-11	+3
		12-14	+4
		15-17	+5
		18	+6
		Critical	success = x2
WYRD		ARMOR Metal plates 10d	

The Duel



Wonder of wonders, nobles within the characters' group have been invited to a gathering hosted by a Torensen baron on the Noble Estates. The invitation strongly suggests that only nobles of means will be allowed through the doors. Since these nobles have few means, the other characters must pretend to be part of their entourage — hired traveling companions — proof of a sufficient dilettantish nature on the nobles' parts. Success in making contacts at this shindig could well lead to a ticket offworld. (If there are no nobles in the cadre, then a poor noble acquaintance will hire the cadre to play his entourage.)

Once they arrive that evening, they are admitted into a cozy manse in the Minor House Estates. Other nobles and their entourages mill about, sampling *hors d'oeuvres* served by servants bearing silver trays. Doors stand open to the garden behind the manse, where more guests socialize under warm lantern light.

Choose one of the noble player characters to single out for trouble. Baron Grunch Decados, an old rival of the noble characters' houses, makes it his job that evening to insult the character until he has sufficient grounds for a duel, which he demands take place on the lawn immediately. The Torensen host will officiate, and he knows all the rules of dueling.

The injured party gets to declare the weapons and the conditions. If it's Grunch, he declares swords and conditions of surrender — the fight will last until one of them declares a halt to it, conceding victory.

As the duelists prepare for their bout, the entourage of other characters are by no means left out — Grunch's entourage of priests, aliens and guildsmembers endlessly harass the player characters, perhaps even goading them into fisticuffs. All but one of them, that is — a nonchalant priestess slips away to steal valuable objects from the manse. Hopefully, one of the player characters will realize she's missing from the fun and go search for her, catching her in the act.

The duel is, of course, a commotion designed to cover this thief's activities, and many nobles guests will accuse Grunch of orchestrating the affair. He will leave in anger, denying the charges, but it is clear that he has lost a lot of face, regardless of how well the duel goes for him.

Two nobles approach the characters and warn them that Grunch is a lowly character, and may seek revenge on them. Since these nobles like the characters' moxie, they invite them to join them on a cruise to Byzantium Secundus, entourage and all — the perfect chance to finally get offworld.

A man well-used to getting his way, no matter what scam he has to pull or who he has to insult on the way. He is generous to those who aid him, however, realizing that it's not power alone which sways people, but money. Hence, his entourage are all fiercely loyal because he pays them quite well.

Name: Baron Grunch Decados		Race: Human		LEARNED SKILLS <i>LVL</i>	
Gender: Male		Alliance: House Decados		2 Bureacracy	
Age: 39		Rank: Baron		3 Etiquette	
				5 Gambling	
				2 Inquiry	
				7 Knavery	
				3 Lore (Pandemonium)	
				2 Read Urthish	
				3 Remedy	
				4 Ride	
				2 Social (Debate)	
				4 Stoic Mind	
				2 Streetwise	
				2 Survival	
				1 Think Machine	
				2 Torture	

CHARACTERISTICS		NATURAL SKILLS	
Body	MIND	Charm (3)	3
Strength (3)	6 Wits (3)	Dodge (3)	6
Dexterity (3)	7 Perception (3)	Fight (3)	5
Endurance (3)	5 Tech (3)	Impress (3)	5
		Melee (3)	7
SPIRIT		Observe (3)	5
Extrovert (3)	6 / 1 (1) Introvert	Shoot (3)	5
Passion (3)	4 / 1 (1) Calm	Sneak (3)	4
Faith (1)	1 / 3 (3) Ego	Vigor (3)	4

COMMON ACTIONS		BLESSINGS/COURSES	
Action	Goal	+/-	Trait Situation
Soliciting duels (insults) II		+2	Per When rivals about
		-2	Per When flattered

OCCULT		COMBAT		STR bonus: +1d		SHOTS FIRED		VICTORY CHART	
Psi /	Urge	Action	Init	Goal	DMG	RNG	(6 /clip)	Successes	Pts
Theurgy /	Hubris	Rapier	7	14	6			1-2	0
Powers/Rites	Goal	Parry	7	16				3-5	+1
		Thrust	9	14	6			6-8	+2
		Slash	5	14	7			9-11	+3
		Draw & Strike	5	14	6			12-14	+4
		Disarm	5	13				15-17	+5
		Lt Revolver	5	12	4	10/20		18	+6

VITALITY		WOUND PENALTIES		WYRD	
<div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> </div>		<div> <div>-10</div> <div>-8</div> <div>-6</div> <div>-4</div> <div>-2</div> </div>		<div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> <div>0</div> </div>	
Critical success = x2					

Canon Ulantia (Orthodox)

Although she sees the importance of her calling as a priestess, money is more important to her. To her credit, she does tithe heavily from her earnings and does attempt to remind her patron, Baron Grunge, that the Pancreator won't forgive everything. Nonetheless, she gets quite a thrill from her position as his personal sneak-thief; she's always the last person suspected.

Appearance: Small and mousy, but with a strong voice. She's rather unnoticeable when quiet, but noteworthy when she speaks.



Name: Ulanfia	Race: Human	LEARNED SKILLS LVL
Gender: Female	Alliance: Orthodoxy	Etiquette 3
Age: 26	Rank: Canon	Inquiry 5
		Knavery 5
		3
CHARACTERISTICS		NATURAL SKILLS
BODY	MIND	Lore (Theology)
Strength (3) 3	Wits (3) 5	Read Latin
Dexterity (3) 5	Perception (3) 6	Read Urthlish
Endurance (3) 3	Tech (3) 3	Remedy 3
SPIRIT		Search 6
Extrovert (3) 6 / 1 (1)	Introvert	Sleight of Hand 5
Passion (3) 4 / 1 (1)	Calm	Social (Debate) 3
Faith (3) 3 / 2 (1)	Ego	Stoic Mind 2
COMMON ACTIONS		ARMOR
Action Goal	+/- Trait Situation	(/) Hits:
Casing a place 12	+2 Extro Among sinful	
Pilfering goods 10	-2 Passion Before flock	
BLESSINGS/CURSES		VICTORY CHART
OCCULT	COMBAT STR bonus: _____	Successes Pts
Psi / Urge	Action Init Goal DMG RNG	1-2 0
Theurgy / Hubris		3-5 +1
Powers/Rites Goal		6-8 +2
		9-11 +3
		12-14 +4
		15-17 +5
		18 +6
		Critical success = x2
VITALITY [O O O O O O O O O O]		SHOTS FIRED (/clip)
Wyrd penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2		
WYRD [O O O O O] [O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O]		

Boswick Stones (Reeve)

The baron's financier and fence for stolen goods, Boswick loves to bait priests with insulting debates over sticky theological issues. He argues a hated old Church belief from the Second Republic called "dispassionate liberty," wherein the Pancreator is seen as a distant creator, giving the maximum amount of liberty to his creations to screw up however they see fit; only the most cunning can rise to transcendence. This almost-forgotten theological stance is not heretical only because no patriarch remembers it long enough to write a bull against it.

Appearance: Fine, fur-trimmed robes and accouterments. He has a gold-gilded, handheld think machine with a copy of the Omega Gospels for quick reference.

[illegible]

Alfrock Jurgan (Engineer)

A taciturn and practical-minded technician, Alfrook enjoys critiquing others' work, even in areas he has no experience with (fine arts, culinary arts, music, theology, etc.). Anyone who refuses to argue with him he brands a coward without the courage of conviction to defend his stance.

Appearance: Middle-aged with shaggy hair, he is well-dressed in a jumpsuit with a stylish leather tool pack.



Name: Alfrock Jurgan	Race: Human	LEARNED SKILLS <i>LVL</i>
Gender: Male	Alliance: Engineer	Academia 3
Age: 34	Rank: Crafter	Artisan 4
		Drive Aircraft 5
CHARACTERISTICS		NATURAL SKILLS
Body	MIND	Charm (3) 3
Strength (3)	Wits (3) 7	Dodge (3) 3
Dexterity (3)	Perception (3) 3	Fight (3) 5
Endurance (3)	Tech (3) 7	Impress (3) 3
SPIRIT		Melee (3) 5
Extrovert (1)	1 / 3 (3) Introvert	Observe (3) 3
Passion (1)	1 / 3 (3) Calm	Shoot (3) 5
Faith (3)	3 / 1 (1) Ego	Sneak (3) 3
Vigor (3)		Vigor (3) 3
COMMON ACTIONS		BLESSINGS/COURSES
Action Goal	+/- Trait Situation	
Repairing simple tech 14	+2 Tech Inventing new things	
	-2 Extro Among serfs	
COMBAT		STR bonus:
Action Init Goal DMG RNG		
Hvy Autofeed 5 10 6 30/40		
Knife 5 10 3		
OCCULT	COMBAT	SHOTS FIRED
Psi / Urge	STR bonus: —	(8 /clip)
Theurgy / Hubris		
Powers/Rites Goal		
VITALITY	VICTORY CHART	Successes Pts
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0		1-2 0
Round penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2		3-5 +1
WYRD		6-8 +2
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0		9-11 +3
		12-14 +4
		15-17 +5
		18 +6
		Critical success = x2



Oblix (Ukar Scraver)

Oblix is the baron's guard against psychic powers, ever watchful that others might attempt to gain occult control over him. She thus hangs nearby him but never too close, always watching those who interact with the baron and those in the area who act suspicious, such as staring from afar.

She doesn't enjoy this work, but it sure pays better than her true love: archaeology. She loves digging through ruins seeking what the earth has reclaimed. Anyone who can get her conversing about digs can easily distract her from psychic watchdog duty.

Appearance: Medium height and build, with *baa'mon* scar tattoos on her hands and face. A long-sleeved leather outfit hides any other marks. Her skin is pale white, as is her hair.



Name: Oblix Gender: Female Age: 22		Race: Ur-Ukar Alliance: Scravers Rank: Associate		LEARNED SKILLS <i>LVL</i> Academia 1 Artisan 2 Drive Aircraft 2 Drive Landcraft 4 Etiquette 1 Lore (Anunnaki ruins) 3 Read Urthish 5 Science (Archaeology) 7 Search 5 Streetwise 3 Tech Redemption (Mech) 1 Tech Redemption (Volt) 3 Think Machine 3 Xeno-Empathy 4	
CHARACTERISTICS		NATURAL SKILLS			
BODY		Charm (3) 5			
Strength (3) 4		Dodge (3) 5			
Dexterity (4) 7		Fight (3) 4			
Endurance (3) 4		Impress (3) 3			
MIND		Melee (3) 4			
Wits (3) 6		Observe (3) 7			
Perception (3) 5		Shoot (3) 6			
Tech (3) 6		Sneak (3) 4			
SPIRIT		Vigor (3) 3			
Extrovert (3) 6 / 2 (1) Introvert					
Passion (1) 1 / 3 (3) Calm					
Faith (3) 3 / 1 (1) Ego					
COMMON ACTIONS		BLESSINGS/CURSES			
Action Goal		+/- Trait Situation			
Talking about digs 11		+2 Per Sensitive touch			
OCCULT		COMBAT		SHOTS FIRED	
Psi 4 / 1 Urge		STR bonus: Init Goal DMG RNG		(10 /clip)	
Theurgy / Hubris		Med Autofeed 6 13 5 20/30			
Powers/Rites Goal		Knife 4 11 3			
Premonition 13					
Subtle Sight 13					
MindSpeech 11					
MindSight 13					
Emote 6					
Intuit 9					
VITALITY		000			

Entrox Eldentine (Apothecary)

A well-groomed man who nonetheless oozes such a foul temperament he seems too dirty to touch, let alone meet eye to eye. He thus tends to ward away any but the most curious partygoers, and is used by the baron when he wants to judiciously escape a boring conversation, by summoning Entrox over.

Entrox despises brute force, preferring elegant solutions to violence, such as a well-placed backstab or delicate rapier thrust. He thus tends to openly criticize military endeavors and veterans when they are within earshot — except for nobles, of course, who rise above the common rabble of soldiery by dint of their upbringing, breeding and intellect.

Appearance: Small and of medium build, he wears dark velvet outfits (coats and pants) and rarely removes his leather gloves. He affects a monocle in his left eye even though he doesn't need it.

[illegible]

All Hands on Deck

The characters have all been invited on a star-voyage from Pandemonium to Byzantium Secundus aboard a luxury vessel, either to pose as members of a noble's entourage, or perhaps as a reward for a job well done.

As the ship exits the Grail system, where it docked at a spacestation to fill up on stores and pick up new passengers, it is attacked by pirates, who board the ship and fight their way through it, seeking booty from all aboard.

The noble host is rather feckless, and locks himself in his cabin following the announcement that the pirates' grapple cables have attached to the hull. He won't exit for anyone.

The ship is leaderless. None of the other guests are nobles — except for any among the player characters — and most are simply not used to such aggression. They mewl and whine, afraid for their lives.

There is a small marine contingent aboard. However, their captain is ill (food poisoning from the spacestation), and they look to the characters for leadership.

It is up to the characters to rally the marines and any competent guests to push back the pirates, perhaps even capturing their ship in the process. (It's a Decados raider class vessel.)

If they win out, the noble owners of the ship will be endlessly grateful, promising to talk their great deeds up to no end once they arrive at Byzantium Secundus. This will lead to even greater opportunities for the crew — perhaps even an invitation by the Questing Knights for an interview.

Note: As with the "Dark Liner" drama presented earlier in this book, the luxury liner deckplans from *Letters of Marque: Starship Deckplans* are a good resource for this short drama.

Cap'n Tarquin (Leader)

A fairly successful pirate, Tarquin has contacts with the Keddah royalty on Grail who will purchase his booty for good money and no questions asked. He hides behind the outer moons and preys on defenseless ships coming and going from the spacestation or planet.

If the heat gets too much, Tarquin will get out of the kitchen. In other words, he's not above calling a retreat if a ship's defense is more than his boarders can handle.

Appearance: Medium height and build, brown hair and beard, with a scar on the neck from a previous hanging attempt. Colorful but mismatched jacket, shirt and trousers.



Name: Cap'n Tarquine Gender: Male Age: 33		Race: Human Alliance: Pirate Rank: Captain		LEARNED SKILLS Drive Spacecraft 5 Lore (Jump routes) 3 Remedy 3 Search 5 Sleight of Hand 4 Social (Leadership) 5 Streetwise 8 Tech Redemption (Mech) 4 Tech Redemption (Voli) 3 Tech Redemption (Hi Tech) 2 Think Machine 2	
CHARACTERISTICS Body Strength (3) 6 Dexterity (4) 7 Endurance (3) 5 Mind Wits (3) 5 Perception (3) 5 Tech (3) 4 Spirit Extrovert (3) 3 / 1 Passion (3) 3 / 1 Faith (1) 1 / 3		NATURAL SKILLS Charm (3) 6 Dodge (3) 7 Fight (3) 6 Impress (3) 8 Melee (3) 8 Observe (3) 4 Shoot (3) 7 Sneak (3) 4 Vigor (3) 4			
COMMON ACTIONS Action Giving orders 8		BLESSINGS/CURSES +/- Trait Situation		ARMOR Duelling shield (5 / 10) Hits:	
OCCULT Psi / Urge Theurgy / Hubris Powers/Rites Goal		COMBAT Action STR bonus: +1d Scimitar Init Goal DMG RNG Knife 8 15 7 Laser Pistol 8 15 4 Fist 7 15 5 Kick 6 13 3 Grapple 5 13 4 4 13 3		SHOTS FIRED (15 / clip)	
VITALITY		COMBAT		VICTORY CHART Successes Pts 1-2 0 3-5 +1 6-8 +2 9-11 +3 12-14 +4 15-17 +5	
Wound penalties: -10 -8 -6 -4 -2		WYRD		18 +6 Critical success = x2	

A motley assortment of freemen, escaped serfs and peasants with no other path to riches and glory than pirating. Few morals to speak of here.

[illegible]

Marines

Well-trained to repulse boarders, these marines are used to fighting with greater numbers on military ships. The lesser complement on this cruise ship leaves them somewhat at a loss for tactics other than to meet their enemy sword to sword. They look to any nobles or military veterans for leadership.



Name: Marines	Race: Human	LEARNED SKILLS LVL
Gender: Males & Females	Alliance: Noble house	Gambling 2
Age: 18-25	Rank: Marines	Search 2
		Warfare (Gunnery) 5

CHARACTERISTICS			NATURAL SKILLS
Body	Mind		
Strength (3)	5 Wits (3)	3	Charm (3) 3
Dexterity (4)	6 Perception (3)	3	Dodge (3) 4
Endurance (3)	5 Tech (3)	4	Fight (3) 6
	Spirit		Impress (3) 3
Extrovert (3)	3 / 1 (1) Introvert		Melee (3) 6
Passion (3)	3 / 1 (1) Calm		Observe (3) 3
Faith (3)	3 / 1 (1) Ego		Shoot (3) 6
			Sneak (3) 3
			Vigor (3) 3

COMMON ACTIONS		BLESSINGS/CURSES
Action	Goal	+/- Trait Situation

OCCULT	COMBAT	SHOTS FIRED	VICTORY CHART
Psi / Urge	STR bonus: _____	(10 /clip)	Successes Pts
Theurgy / Hubris	Init Goal DMG RNG		
Powers/Rites	Med Autofeed 6 11 5 20/30		1-2 0
	Broadsword 6 11 6		3-5 +1
	Knife 6 11 3		6-8 +2
	Fist 6 11 2		9-11 +3
	Kick 5 11 3		12-14 +4
	Grapple 4 11 2		15-17 +5
			18 +6
			Critical success = x2

VITALITY	[O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O]
Wound penalties:	-10 -8 -6 -4 -2
WYRD	[O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O][O]

INTO THE DARK

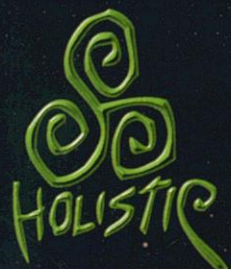
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