

Santa's Secret



A **GATECRASHER**
2nd Edition

Adventure

with "All The Rules You Need To Know"

by Ann Dupuis



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A *Gatecrasher* (2nd Edition) Adventure by Ann Dupuis

(with ideas stolen from Paul Dupuis, Scott Gray, Sharon Tripp, Andy Uetromile, and lots of animated holiday specials)

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Background Story

In the year 2351 (twenty years before this adventure takes place), one Jeremy MacAllister, age six, asked himself a very basic question: How did Santa know if someone's been good or not? The answer was obvious: Santa's Secret Service had agents and hidden cameras and microphones everywhere. Jeremy convinced some friends that this was so, and they convinced *their* friends, and in a jiffy the legend of Santa's Secret Service had spread across the solar system. Enough paranoid young children believed it to make it real. Their belief empowered an evil elemental who used the magical energy stirred up by all this certainty to usurp Santa's powers and take over the operations at the North Pole. (In the *Gatecrasher* universe, an elemental is the embodiment of an idea, given form by the magical energy that pervades the solar system.)

For twenty years, the evil Santa Claws has ruled the North Pole with an iron hand and no velvet glove. The elves were forced to abandon their happy tasks of making wooden toys and cloth dolls in their sunny workshops – to labor, instead, twenty hours a day in the underground, semi-automated toy factory installed by Santa Claws. Orc guards stand over them constantly to ensure “quality control.” Rudolf, Santa's lead reindeer, has so fallen under Santa Claws's power of Domination that he willingly obeys his master's every command. The real Santa has been kept unconscious in a field generated by a mini-Mesonic Time Disruptor, sleeping through ten minutes for every year that passes outside the MTD chamber.

Mrs. Claus languished in the dungeon all this time – until a few weeks ago. Several half-starved but determined elves managed to break her out of her cell and spirit her out of the compound. They tried desperately to get her to safety. All fell victim to the dangers of the rescue attempt: Santa Claws's orc minions, Abominable Snow Things, or simple exposure to the arctic weather. Only Mrs. Claus herself made it to the remote village of Simpleton, where she told her story and begged for help to free Santa....

The Player Characters

For those of you who don't have *Gatecrasher* characters of your own, we provide some (see next 3 pages). *Gatecrasher* GMs may want to run this scenario as a one-shot adventure, leaving your group's normal player characters out of it. If you do run your own *Gatecrasher* characters through this adventure, you'll need to get them to the North Pole somehow. This may not be an easy task, especially if the PCs are from off-world (due to Luna's spacefighter-enforced moratorium on any contact with the Earth). Use your imagination! If you absolutely can't come up with a good way to get the PCs near the North Pole, simply have Mrs. Claus use the last of her energy to summon the “heroes” to rescue Santa.

Mike Hammer

Mike Hammer breeds and trains large mountain goats for riding. As a child of poor dwarven farmers, he yearned for his very own goat – and was overjoyed to find a just-weaned mountain goat kid on the doorstep one Christmas morning. The thought that the good Santa Claus could be held prisoner by someone who withholds gifts from all but the richest children has made him very, very angry.

Lorien

Lorien is a talented bard who makes a good living roaming the countryside, entertaining folks – and occasionally taking fair payment even when the customers don't see fit to offer it themselves. Lorien was in Simpleton for the summer festival, and was outraged to hear of the terrible conditions elves have endured for so long at the North Pole.

Gabrielle Darkwing

Gabrielle Darkwing is a mage specializing in healing. Angels believe that good people should be rewarded; evil people must be punished. If the universe has not yet arranged suitable rewards or punishments, it is the angel's responsibility to take matters into her own hands. As elementals (magical creatures), angels must carry out this function or risk losing their powers. Gabrielle, as Simpleton's foremost healer, tended to Mrs. Claus when she first arrived in the village – but left the tough old woman in the hands of another healer to go do what had to be done at the North Pole.

Glorganthal

Glorganthal, being a wyvern, looks like a small, scaly, toothy dragon with arms, wings (functional), tail (for balance), and combat-usable claws. Glorganthal is a kineticist – a mage that specializes in motion magic. A sheep farmer by trade, Glorganthal took up magic as a hobby. Glorganthal's mage mentor is the head of the local chapter of the Society for Creative Adventuring, which stages “adventures” for its members on weekends. Most of Glorganthal's combat experience has been gained in mock combats against illusionary foes, but Glorganthal has done a lot of mock adventuring. Now, at last, Glorganthal has a chance to go on a real adventure!

Peter Running Bear

Peter Running-Bear is a human/bear lycanthrope who makes a living as a hunter and guide in the wilderness around Simpleton. When he heard the others were mounting an expedition to rescue Santa Claus, he knew they'd need a guide (even one that had never been further than the edge of the Great Glacier before). Besides, he wants to ask Santa why he never got that teddy bear he kept wishing and wishing for.

Gatecrasher Character Sheet

Name: Mike Hammer

Player: _____

Unspent EP: _____ Fudge Points: 1

Character Story & Personality: Dwarven blacksmith

Mike Hammer breeds and trains large mountain goats for riding. As a child of poor dwarven farmers, he yearned for his very own goat – and was overjoyed to find a just-weaned mountain goat kid on the doorstep one Christmas morning. The thought that Santa Claus could be held prisoner by someone who withholds gifts from all but the richest children has made him very, very angry.

Native Gravity: Standard Tech: -6 Wizardry: +2

+3 Superb

+2 Great

+1 Good

0 Fair

-1 Mediocre

-2 Poor

-3 Terrible

Most Gifts and some Skills are non-existent unless specified on the character sheet.

EP = The cost (in experience points) to raise a skill to this level from one level below

1,2 Scratch

3,4 Hurt

5,6 Very Hurt

7,8 Incapacitated

9+ Near Death

Word Levels

Attributes	Supernormal Powers	Skills
Awareness: Fair Constitution: Great Dexterity: Good Id: Fair Reason: Fair Strength: Superb Magic Points: 32 Magical Effect: 0 Move: Good (24/36) Damage Capacity: Good	<i>Infrared Vision</i> Range: Sight. Cost: Permanent/ always on. <i>Invisibility</i> Range: Body. Cost: 1 MP per minute. <i>Resist Heat</i> Range: Body. Cost: 1 MP per 10 minutes. Equipment Hammers (1 small, 1 medium, 1 sledgehammer); shovel; 5-lb iron sphere; lockpicks; tobacco pouch; week's worth of iron rations; water skins (1 water, 1 dwarven ale); tinder box; horseshoeing kit; pack and riding animals ("Surefoot, Jr." and "Cluefoot," mountain goats) and fur-lined boots, trousers, underwear, shirt, blacksmith's apron, full length sheepskin coat, mittens, fur cap	Animal Husbandry Animal Training (Riding Goat) Area Knowledge (Farms Simpleton) Art (Ironwork) Blacksmithing Endurance Engineering (Mechanical, Tech -6) Farriery Jury Riggering Lockpicking Riding (Goat) Survival (Mountains) Swimming Throwing Unarmed Combat Weapon (Hammer)
Gifts	Damage Factors	
<i>Increased Damage Capacity</i> (1 level, from Fair to Good) <i>Increased Tech Knowledge</i> (2 levels; understands Tech up to Tech -6, the advent of steam trains, due to an apprenticeship to an ironshaper in the Big City)	Offensive: +4 (iron hammer) Defensive: +3 (Damage Capacity +1, blacksmith's leather apron and sheepskin coat +2)	
Failures		

Gatecrasher Character Sheet

Name: Lorien

Player: _____

Unspent EP: _____ Fudge Points: 1

Character Story & Personality: Elven Bard

Lorien is a talented bard who makes a good living roaming the countryside, entertaining folks – and occasionally taking fair payment even when the customers don't see fit to offer it themselves. Lorien was in Simpleton for the summer festival, and was outraged to hear of the terrible conditions elves have endured for so long at the North Pole.

Native Gravity: Standard Tech: -8 Wizardry: +2

+3 Superb

+2 Great

+1 Good

0 Fair

-1 Mediocre

-2 Poor

-3 Terrible

Most Gifts and some Skills are non-existent unless specified on the character sheet.

EP = The cost (in experience points) to raise a skill to this level from one level below

1,2 Scratch

3,4 Hurt

5,6 Very Hurt

7,8 Incapacitated

9+ Near Death

Word Levels

Attributes	Supernormal Powers	Skills
Awareness: Great Constitution: Fair Dexterity: Superb Id: Good Reason: Good Strength: Good Magic Points: 37 Magical Effect: -3 Move: Fair (20/30) Damage Capacity: Fair	<i>Create Illusion</i> Range: 10 meters. Cost: 5 MP per minute per cubic meter. <i>Infrared Vision</i> Range: Sight. Cost: Permanent/ always on <i>Radiation Absorption</i> Range: Body. Cost: Permanent/ always on	Acrobatics Acting Body Language Climbing Disguise Dishwashing Dodge Fast Talk Gambling Game (Poker) Game (Shells) Juggling Lie Literacy Literature (Fairy Tales) Magical Familiarity Musician (Pan Pipes) Musician (Small Harp) Musician (Percussion) Pickpocket Poetry Riding (Horse) Savoir-Faire Sense (Hearing) Singing Sleight of Hand Streetwise Survival (Cities) Survival (Forests) Swimming Throwing Unarmed Combat Weapon (Longbow) Weapon (Longsword)
Gifts	Damage Factors	
Beautiful singing/speaking voice Ambidextrous Musical talent Lucky (can re-roll skill checks and other dice rolls once per hour of playing time)	Offensive: +3 (Longbow; +1 to hit up to 10m; +0 up to 50m; -2 up to 100m); +4 (longsword) Defensive: +1 (thick woolen clothing)	
Failures		

Gatecrasher Character Sheet

Name: <u>Gabriele Darkwing</u>		Defaults:		EP
Player: _____				
Unspent EP: _____		Fudge Points: 1		
Character Story & Personality: Angelic Healer Mage Gabriele Darkwing is a mage specializing in healing. Angels believe that good people should be rewarded; evil people must be punished. Gabriele, as Simpleton's foremost healer, tended to Mrs. Claus when she first arrived in the village – but left the tough old woman in the hands of another healer to go do what had to be done at the North Pole.				
Native Gravity: Standard Tech: -8		Wizardry: +2		
Word Levels		1,2 Scratch	3,4 Hurt	5,6 Very Hurt
		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Attributes		Supernormal Powers		
Awareness: <u>Great</u>		Biochemistry		
Constitution: <u>Fair</u>		Biology		
Dexterity: <u>Good</u>		Epidemiology		
Id: <u>Great</u>		First Aid		
Reason: <u>Good</u>		Flying		
Strength: <u>Fair</u>		Herbalism		
Spells: _____		Literacy		
Magic Points: <u>42</u>		Literature		
Magical Effect: <u>-6</u>		(Herbals and similar folk medicine)		
Move: <u>Fair (20/30)</u>		Magic (Psionics)		
Damage Capacity: <u>Fair</u>		Magical Familiarity		
Medicine		Medicine		
Psychology		Physiology (Humanoid)		
Surgery		Good		
Swimming		Fair		
Toxicology		Good		
Veterinary Science		Terrible		
Fair		Good		
Gifts		Equipment		
Is an Angel (can detect lies when concentrating; also has halo and functional wings)		First Aid kit (+1 to First Aid skill); large pouch with herb collection (+1 to First Aid and Medicine skills if extra time spent tending to patient); almagest of herbalism; custom-knit body stockings; canvas leggings and moccasins; woolen earmuffs; harness to attach various pouches to; water-skin; trail mix (granola, enough for a few days); small pouch with tea collection (green, black, orange pekoe, herbal, etc.)		
Falls		Damage Factors		
Humanitarian (helps the needy for no pay) Vow (vegetarianism) Addiction (ice)		Offensive: -1 (unskilled at combat, no weapon) Defensive: +0 (no armor)		
Is an angel (behaving contrary to angelic nature will cause loss of Detect Lies and other powers)				

Gatecrasher Character Sheet

Name: <u>Glorianthal</u>		Defaults:		EP
Player: _____				
Unspent EP: _____		Fudge Points: 1		
Character Story & Personality: Wyvern Kineticist (Mage) Glorianthal looks like a small, scaly, toothy dragon with arms, wings, tail, and claws. Glorianthal specializes in motion magic. A sheep farmer by trade, Glorianthal took up magic as a hobby. Glorianthal has done a lot of mock adventuring with the Society for Creative Adventuring. Now, at last, Glorianthal has a chance to go on a real adventure!				
Native Gravity: Standard Tech: -8		Wizardry: +2		
Word Levels		1,2 Scratch	3,4 Hurt	5,6 Very Hurt
		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Attributes		Supernormal Powers		
Awareness: <u>Mediocre</u>		Magic Ability: Fair (Kineticist)		
Constitution: <u>Superb</u>		(Add spell's Ease to player's roll against Magic Ability when casting spell)		
Dexterity: <u>Good</u>		Id: <u>Good</u>		
Reason: <u>Fair</u>		Flying		
Strength: <u>Good</u>		Herbalism		
Spells: _____		Literacy		
Magic Points: <u>37</u>		Literature		
Magical Effect: <u>-3</u>		(Herbals and similar folk medicine)		
Move: <u>Good (24/36)</u>		Magic (Psionics)		
Damage Capacity: <u>Fair</u>		Magical Familiarity		
Medicine		Medicine		
Psychology		Physiology (Humanoid)		
Surgery		Good		
Swimming		Fair		
Toxicology		Good		
Veterinary Science		Terrible		
Fair		Good		
Gifts		Equipment		
Is a Wyvern (has fire breath weapon, can use once per hour; roll Magic Targeting to hit. Difficulty Level Fair or higher, 3 points of damage & target may catch fire; takes half damage from weapons Tech -3 or less unless they're silver or enchanted, can fly).		Adventure Kit (backpack, 50' rope, grappling hook, walking staff/pole, waterskin, dagger, bullseye lantern, 5 flasks oil, 3 torches, flint and steel, 2 large sacks); 3 live sheep (traveling provisions); "Slyler," sheepdog; wool cloak; wool shirt; woolen trousers; sheepskin boots; ledger with quill pen for tallying expenses incurred; chain mail vest.		
Falls		Damage Factors		
Brave to the point of foolhardiness Overconfident Prone to pyromania Is a Wyvern (<i>lots</i> technology, avoids using it at all costs; going against this wyvern nature may cause loss of powers)		Offensive: +1 (staff/pole); +2 (dagger); +2 (claws); +3 (teeth) Defensive: +1 (chainmail vest); see also Gifts for weapon immunities		
Attributes		Supernormal Powers		
Awareness: <u>Mediocre</u>		Aerial Acrobatics		
Constitution: <u>Superb</u>		Agriculture		
Dexterity: <u>Good</u>		(Northern Temperate)		
Id: <u>Good</u>		Animal Husbandry		
Reason: <u>Fair</u>		(Sheep, Dogs)		
Strength: <u>Good</u>		Animal Training		
Spells: _____		Literacy		
Magic Points: <u>37</u>		Literature		
Magical Effect: <u>-3</u>		(Herbals and similar folk medicine)		
Move: <u>Good (24/36)</u>		Magic (Psionics)		
Damage Capacity: <u>Fair</u>		Magical Familiarity		
Medicine		Medicine		
Psychology		Physiology (Humanoid)		
Surgery		Good		
Swimming		Fair		
Toxicology		Good		
Veterinary Science		Terrible		
Fair		Good		
Gifts		Equipment		
Is a Wyvern (has fire breath weapon, can use once per hour; roll Magic Targeting to hit. Difficulty Level Fair or higher, 3 points of damage & target may catch fire; takes half damage from weapons Tech -3 or less unless they're silver or enchanted, can fly).		Adventure Kit (backpack, 50' rope, grappling hook, walking staff/pole, waterskin, dagger, bullseye lantern, 5 flasks oil, 3 torches, flint and steel, 2 large sacks); 3 live sheep (traveling provisions); "Slyler," sheepdog; wool cloak; wool shirt; woolen trousers; sheepskin boots; ledger with quill pen for tallying expenses incurred; chain mail vest.		
Falls		Damage Factors		
Brave to the point of foolhardiness Overconfident Prone to pyromania Is a Wyvern (<i>lots</i> technology, avoids using it at all costs; going against this wyvern nature may cause loss of powers)		Offensive: +1 (staff/pole); +2 (dagger); +2 (claws); +3 (teeth) Defensive: +1 (chainmail vest); see also Gifts for weapon immunities		

The Adventure

Although it's summertime in Simpleton (a pleasant temperate area with warm summers but cold winters), the characters are prepared for wintry travel. One day's journey north of Simpleton lies the southern edge of the Great Glacier, beyond which lies the North Pole. (No, not that pole; the *real*, candy-cane North Pole.) The edges of the Great Glacier never move much, no matter what the season. Some say that's because Jack Frost lives near the North Pole, and it's always winter when he's around. Others say the Great Glacier is really made of candy icing, not ice and snow at all. But they're wrong.

That first day's journey is an easy one, first through the farmlands to the north of Simpleton and then through deciduous forest – an area Peter Running-Bear is well familiar with.

Journey to the North Pole

The Great Glacier

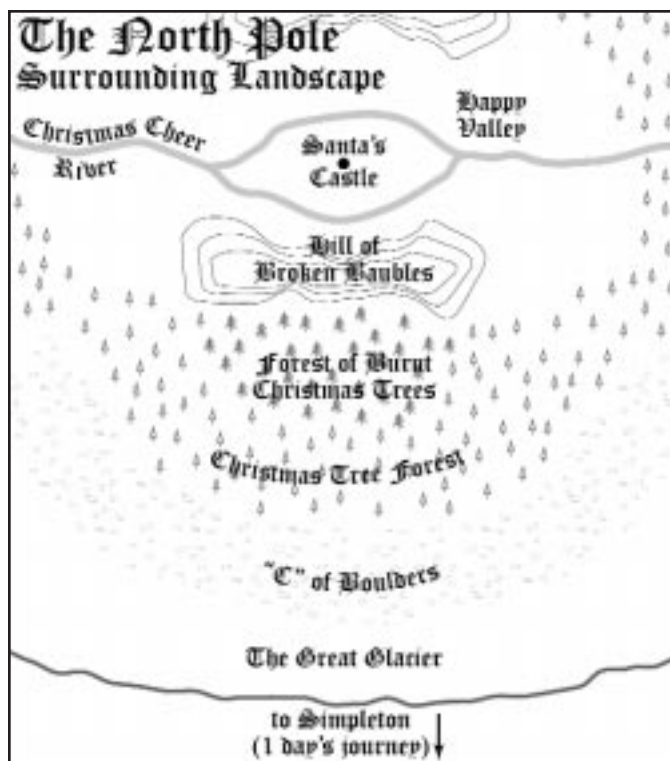
When the PCs reach the Great Glacier, they're confronted with a massive wall of sheer ice roughly 30' high. The winged characters can easily fly up to the top, of course, although Gloganthal may protest that that takes all the fun out of it. If anyone attempts to climb the ice cliff but fails, the attempt starts a mini-avalanche. But Mike brought a shovel, so that's okay....

Just a half mile to the east of where the PCs come up against the glacier, there's a crevasse that cuts into the side of the ice. This can be negotiated by the animals – Mike's goats, Lorien's horse, and Gloganthal's sheep and sheepdog – with much coaxing and wheedling and a few mis-steps. The characters will need to look around, or listen for running water, to find this alternative route.

Once up on the glacier, it should take them about a day and a half to journey north to the next terrain feature. Dangers on the glacier include the terrain itself (ice crevasses, blinding snow glare, exposure to cold) as well as various snow creatures (polar bears, the Abominable Snow Things, and possibly the Bumble, see p. 7). At dusk, the characters will be treated to the sight of the Northern Lights; twinkling, sparkly ribbons of softly luminescent colors dancing in the sky to the north.

During the PCs' first night on the glacier, Frosty will approach their camp. He'll come up quickly, sliding on his belly (making a strange "whooshing" noise), then continue in his usual slow shuffle ("squeak, crunch") over the snow. He'll try to approach cautiously and quietly, but isn't very good at it. If anyone's watching with infrared vision, Frosty won't show up on anything less than a Superb Awareness roll (in which case he appears as a cold shadow). He'll be glad to hear the characters are on their way to rescue Santa, and will offer to help.

Frosty will tell them how to get to Santa's Castle. "Keep going the way you're going. You'll have to cross the "C" of



Boulders; it's too far for you to go around. After that there's the Christmas Tree Forest. That's nice. Lots of my friends live there; the squirrels, the seals...." He'll go on forever about his friends unless prompted to return to the topic of directions. "Oh, yes, then there's the Forest of Burnt Christmas Trees. Very sad. None of my friends live there anymore...." If asked what happened there, all he knows is that "It burned. For a very long time." After that is the "Hill of Broken Baubles," which is between here and "Happy Valley." Frosty may or may not mention the Christmas Cheer River. Finally, to the Castle itself. "But be careful – there are cameras everywhere."

The characters, all being of fairly low Tech levels, should have no idea what Frosty is talking about when he starts mentioning "cameras" and "robots" and "surveillance equipment" – and Frosty won't be able to explain very well.

Frosty is also be your chance to introduce a running gag into the adventure – the difference between Santa Claus and Santa Claws. Everyone the PCs meet around the North Pole will expect them to know exactly who they're talking about, whether they pronounce it "Santa Claus" or "Santa Claws."

After chatting pleasantly with the PCs for a while, Frosty will volunteer to "go tell everybody" that the PCs are coming, so maybe they can help. If the PCs have a better idea, he'll certainly listen to them. Otherwise, he slides off on his belly in search of any help he can find. He'll go around the "C" of Boulders, because he's fastest on snowy ground. The next time the PCs see him, he may have with him only Burl and Ivy (the only help he could find); or he may be at the head of a veritable army of deer and reindeer (the non-flying kind) and seals and squirrels and birds; or he may be a puddle of icy water with a hat floating in it at the base of the North Pole in the castle courtyard (GM's choice).

Abominable Snow Things

Attacks: 2 claws, or 1 bite, or 1 stomp

Combat: Fair

Scale: +3

Size: 3 meters tall

Damage Factors (Includes Scale):

Offensive: +4 (claws), +5 (bite), +2 (stomp)

Defensive: +4 (includes thick, matted hair)

Wound Levels: 4 Hurt, 12 Out of Battle

Move: Fair (20 m sustained, 30 m sprinting)

Encountered: 1-6

These big, white, hairy humanoids roam the Great Glacier looking for things to eat. And they'll eat anything. (Well, except rocks. Or at least except hard rocks. They'll crunch up crumbly rocks to clean their teeth.) They have a particular appetite for sled dogs. And elves. Sheep are nice, too, as are mountain goats and Christmas seals.

Polar Bears

Attacks: 2 claws or 1 bite

Combat: Good

Scale: +3

Size: 1.6 meters at the shoulder

Damage Factors (Includes Scale):

Offensive: +5 (claws), +6 (bite)

Defensive: +4 (includes thick fur)

Wound Levels: 4 Hurt, 10 Out of Battle

Move: Fair Great (28 m sustained, 42 m sprinting)

Encountered: 1-6

These polar bears are curious creatures with very good senses of smell. They'll trail the characters for a while; if they come upon them in camp, they may do a lot of damage as they rummage about through packs and tents looking for the tasty-smelling food.

Frosties (Animated Snowmen)

Attacks: 1 Body Slam

Combat: Poor

Scale: 0

Size: 1.5 m

Damage Factors (Includes Scale):

Offensive: +1 (body slam)

Defensive: -1 (unarmored and soft-bodied)

Wound Levels: 3 Hurt, 6 Out of Battle

Move: Terrible (12 m sustained, 18 m sprinting) when shuffling about; Superb (32 m sustained, 49 m sprinting) when belly-sliding over snow (halve for minor uphill grade; double for minor downhill grade; quadruple for major downhill grade).

Encountered: 1 or 2 or 3

Frosties are especially susceptible to heat damage, taking double damage from any heat source. They begin to melt when exposed to any temperatures above freezing, taking 1-6 damage points per half hour (1 when just above freezing; 3 when comfortable "room temperature" for humans; 6 in "heat wave" conditions). There are three Frosties living around the North Pole: Frosty, Burl, and Ivy. Frosty is the one who stays mostly toward the south of the North Pole, and will hence be the one the PCs will most likely run into. Burl and Ivy reside north of the North Pole as snow man and snow wife. Frosty's snow wife, Icy, was sonically blasted and melted by the robotic reindeer several years ago. Frosty's still very sad. If only he could get her bonnet back from Santa Claws, he may be able to bring her back to life.

The Frosties are friendly, but not very bright. They can't count very well. They speak fairly slowly, too, with frequent pauses for thought. They'll do whatever they can to help the PCs, but they're not much good in a fight. They can be good sources of information, though, if the PCs prompt them with the right questions and maintain their patience long enough to learn something.

Bumble

Attacks: 2 claws, or 1 bite, or stomp

Combat: Mediocre

Scale: +8

Size: 8 meters tall

Damage Factors (Includes Scale):

Offensive: +9 (claws), +10 (bite), +6 (stomp)

Defensive: +10 (includes thick, matted hair)

Wound Levels: 4 Hurt, 12 Out of Battle

Move: Mediocre (16 m sustained, 24 m sprinting)

Encountered: 1

The Bumble is a giant Abominable Snow Thing. There's only one. He's easily confused, outwitted, or rendered unconscious by dropping rocks or iceballs on him. He's also easily tamed and befriended once his rotten teeth are pulled – his nasty temper is due to chronic toothache.

Alternative Encounters – Great Glacier

Game Masters may wish to make up stats for such creatures as ice dragons or Jack Frost himself to make the journey across the Great Glacier more interesting. But let the PCs make friends along the way, too, or they'll be too worn down to rescue Santa when they finally make it to the North Pole. There may be Eskimos, a prospector and his sled dogs, or giant penguins. The Great Glacier can cover a larger area than shown on the map to stretch out the overland journey a bit. Adjust travel times accordingly.

The "C" of Boulders

A day and a half north of the Great Glacier's southern edge lies the outer curve of the "C" of boulders. Here, the ice and snow gives way to frozen ground littered with boulders, large and small. Patches of snow remain in the shadows. Picking one's way around the boulders is tedious, but less dangerous than crossing the glacier. The biggest danger is the Bumble (see above) – his cave lies in the midst of the southern curve of the "C." Unless delayed, the PCs should be able to cross the "C" by nightfall.

Alternative Encounters – The “C” of Boulders

Polar bears may venture in among the boulders, especially if they’re following the PCs and their food supplies. For a particularly nasty obstacle, the GM may include a stretch of the terrain in which the boulders are near-perfect spheres. Easily dislodged, they will roll about, crashing into one another, sending other boulders rolling, and so on.

The Christmas Tree Forest

The Christmas Tree Forest is a lovely pine forest carpeted with fallen pine needles and patches of soft, fresh-looking snow. The trees are small and gaily decorated with strings of popcorn, garlands of golden bells, and colorful glass ornaments. A perpetual soft breeze blows through the Forest; just enough to set the tiny golden bells tinkling. The ornaments soak up the sunshine all day long and radiate it back out as the Northern Lights. Their soft, colorful display fades two hours after dusk. The Forest is brimming with life; birds, squirrels, and deer all nibble at the popcorn, which grows back by morning. All too soon, the characters will pass through the Christmas Tree Forest (deer paths make this an easy task) and approach the edge of the Forest of Burnt Christmas Trees.

Alternative Encounters – The Christmas Tree Forest

If the Bumble has not yet been dealt with, he may catch up with the characters here. He’s always looking for tasty, soft food (anything too crunchy hurts his teeth). He’ll bumble about through the trees, scattering wildlife before him, completely oblivious to the fact that his furry coat is sweeping baubles off trees left and right.

Christmas Seals

Attacks: 1 bite, or 1 tail slap

Combat: Mediocre

Scale: +0 (female)/+2 (male)

Size: 1.8 m long (female)/2.5 m long (male)

Damage Factors (Includes Scale):

Offensive: +1 (bite), +0 (tail slap) (female)/+3 (bite), +2 (tail slap) (male)

Defensive: +0 (female)/+2 (male)

Wound Levels: 3 Hurt, 6 Out of Battle

Move: Terrible (12 m sustained, 18 m sprinting) on land;

Superb (32 m sustained, 49 m sprinting) in water

Encountered: 2-7

These Christmas Seals may be found in the Christmas Tree Forest, swimming in the Christmas Cheer River, or near the North Pole itself. They seem to have a genetic need to play, and delight in tossing Christmas tree baubles on their noses. They’ll do their best to get the PCs to join in their games. When excited, they’ll “ork, ork, ork” to the tune of Jingle Bells. If they see any of Santa Claws’s minions, they’ll frantically bark “ork, ork, ork” and dive into the Christmas Cheer River.

Alternatively, the characters may encounter 2-4 Robotic Reindeer, out on patrol. If things go badly, there may soon be a new Glade of Burnt Christmas Trees....

The Forest of Burnt Christmas Trees

This area of the Christmas Tree Forest is pretty desolate. Blackened stumps of burned Christmas trees are everywhere. Any domestic animals still with the PCs will be reluctant to enter this area. Broken and melted glass crunches underfoot. Forest life is at a minimum; gone are the squirrels and birds and deer, and the happy chirruping and singing and munching that goes with them. But there is hope; here and there small, green shoots of young Christmas trees tentatively poke their way through the layer of ash. If the characters haven’t already encountered any robotic reindeer, you may have them do so in the burnt forest.

The Hill of Broken Baubles

This large, fairly steep hill lies between the Forest of Burnt Christmas Trees and Happy Valley. The Christmas Trees lining its slopes escaped the fire that destroyed the Forest of Burnt Christmas Trees. Despite this, the southern slopes of the Hill seem fairly quiet. There are a few squirrels and birds, but not nearly as many as found in healthier portions of the Christmas Tree Forest.

The reason for this relative quiet may be found on the northern side of the Hill. Santa Claws’s orc minions (see p. 12) occasionally take their R&R here, throwing rocks at anything that moves. They’ve cleared the northern slopes of almost all moving targets, and sometimes venture over the hilltop to terrorize the southern slope. More often, they turn their attention to the Christmas trees themselves, and especially their colorful (and easily broken) ornaments. The northern slopes are now littered with broken baubles. The PCs may happen upon 2-7 orcs enjoying themselves this way.

Happy Valley and the Christmas Cheer River

Once past the Hill of Broken Baubles, the characters are back in a wintry wonderland. The Christmas Cheer River burbles happily to itself as it flows along its colorfully pebbled bed. Ice extends out over its sides, although the center of the river is pretty much clear of all but the occasional ice floe. Christmas seals cavort in the river, or play with baubles and balls along its banks. They’ll do their best to get the player characters to join in their games. If attacked or startled, they all swiftly disappear under the ice.

If the PCs have real difficulties crossing the river, have them discover a patch where the ice looks solid all the way across. The horse will refuse to cross here, though. If anyone falls through the ice and into the river, it’s fairly cold – but

not as cold as it looks. A successful Constitution check (Difficulty Fair) is all that's needed to avoid catching a chill after a dunking. (Well, that and some warm, dry clothes.)

GMs in a particularly nasty mood may plague the characters with any remaining Robotic Reindeer while attempting to cross the Christmas Cheer River. In this case, there may not be any Robotic Reindeer left to guard the main gate; the PCs will then be able to enter the castle courtyard undisturbed.

If the GM wishes, there may be a few wet and cold half-starved elves here (see p. 11), doing the orcs' laundry in the river.

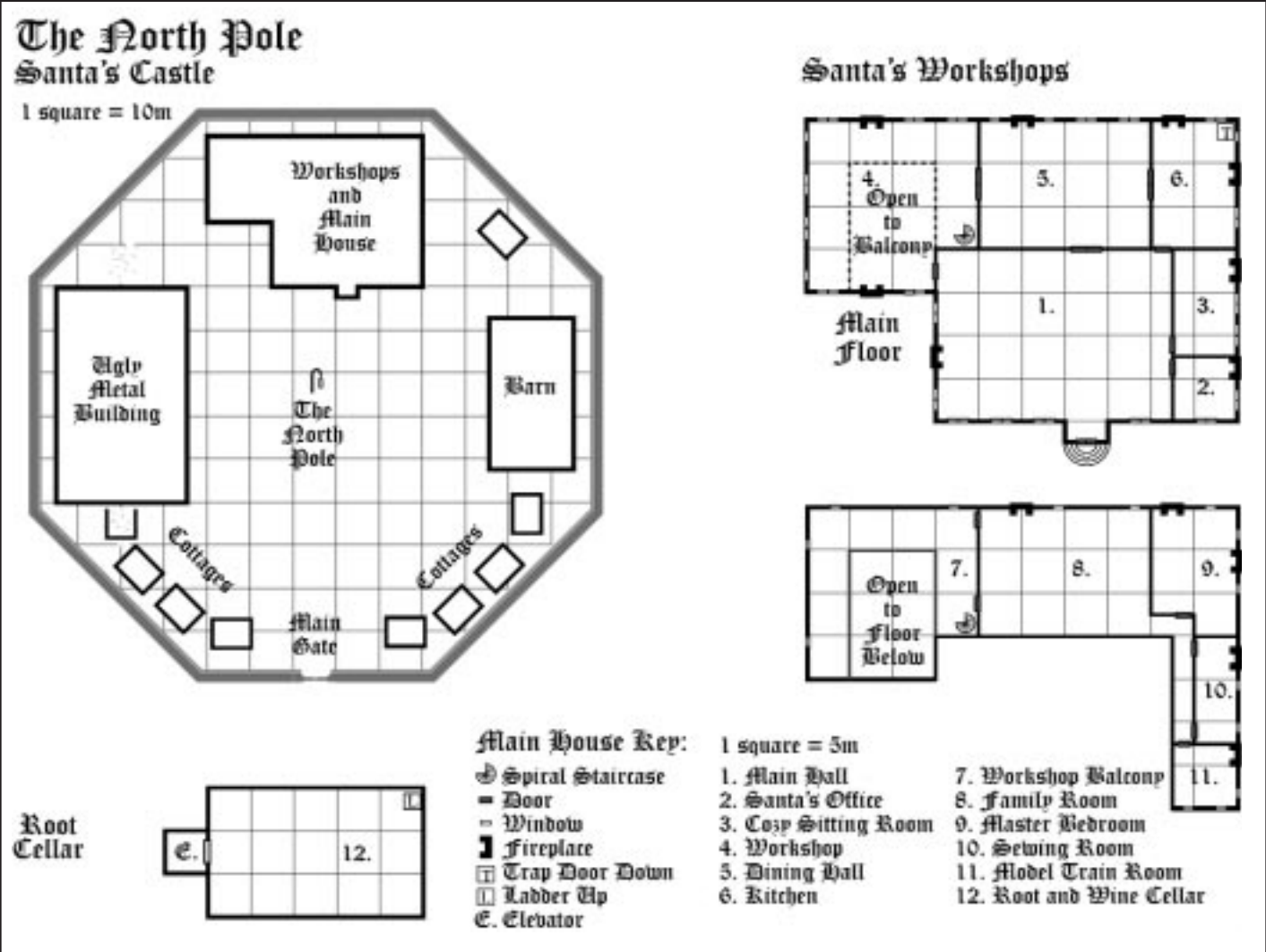
At the North Pole

Santa's Castle

In the center of the island formed by the split in the Christmas Cheer River lies Santa's Castle, with the North Pole in the center of the castle's courtyard. The castle wall is made of fitted stone. It once glistened shiny white, but is now dingy with soot and dirt. A thin ribbon of smoke wafts its way up from the northern side of the courtyard, where

the main house stands. A much thicker, darker plume of noxious smoke belches its way out of a hole in the ground a hundred meters to the northwest of the castle wall. (This hole, surrounded by muddy ground where the snow has melted, leads into a network of ventilation ducts that circulate the air for the underground complex beneath the castle. The whole ventilation complex "breathes," inhaling relatively clean air from the surface alternately with exhaling exhaust fumes from the various generators and machinery. If the GM wishes, the ventilation ducts may provide an alternative access to Sub Level 3, via the fusion generator room beneath that level.)

The characters aren't likely to approach the castle unwatched. As Frosty mentioned, Santa Claws has cameras and surveillance equipment everywhere. And the electronic eyes and ears of the Robotic Reindeer provide a direct feed to the security monitors in the main control room on Sub Level 3. (Note that Santa Claws's surveillance equipment is Tech +5; if a character is using magical invisibility the GM must roll a Good or better Situational Roll for the character to avoid being seen by a camera. There's a -1 penalty for every two Tech Levels between the character's Magical Effect and the Tech Level of the equipment. Invisibility provides no protection against sound, heat, or motion detectors.)



Unless already defeated, two Robotic Reindeer are on hand to meet the characters at the Main Gate (or in the air above the castle if any PCs attempt to fly in). These reindeer, although artificially intelligent and capable of speech, aren't likely to engage in conversation unless directed so by Santa Claws (who may want to learn a bit about these intruders before having his minions annihilate them). They're programmed to guard the area from intruders, and will do so unless instructed otherwise by their master or by any of the Men In Red.

Once the Robotic Reindeer are dealt with, the characters will have a chance to look around the courtyard. There are three main buildings: a large barn (its thatch roof in disrepair), an ugly metal building (a pre-fab warehouse of corrugated steel, although the PCs aren't likely to have ever heard of anything like corrugated steel), and the main house and workshops. There are also several once-cozy-looking cottages, all abandoned and in various stages of disrepair or ruin. The main house is a large three-story timber-framed house (the third story, not shown on the map, is empty attic space) with eight stone chimneys. One of these chimneys – the one by the Main Hall – emits a thin plume of smoke.

In the center of the courtyard is the North Pole; a red-and-white striped candy-cane shaped pole with an iron cage suspended from it. Within the cage is Harley, an elf near death from starvation, beatings, and exposure. Harley is the last survivor of the elves who helped Mrs. Claus escape. Unless tended to by a healer, he'll die within a few minutes. If he survives long enough for the characters to speak to him, he'll

be able to give them some valuable information about the underground complex and perhaps about the Men In Red. Rather than give everything away from one source, though, either have Harley be beyond the healer's capabilities, or have a bunch of orc minions interrupt the conversation. One of them will try to kill Harley before he can reveal too much.

The Cottages

Several of the cottages are snow-ruined skeletons, their thatched roofs having completely fallen in. Those that have fairly intact roofs are in better shape. The characters can surmise that these cottages once housed Santa's elves. They may even find some tiny belled slippers with curling toes, now moldy and rotting, under one dusty bed. At least two cottages were obviously destroyed when the Ugly Metal Building was erected.

The Ugly Metal Building

The large sliding doors on this ugly metal building are chained and padlocked shut. If the PCs manage to break in, they'll find a bewildering array of crated and boxed toys, mostly of the variety that encourages greed, avarice, and violence among children: a precious few of the blue superhero action figures; lots of toy soldiers and toy guns that look real

Reindeer (Robotic, Tech +5)

Attacks: two hoofed attacks, 1 antler attack, 1 breath weapon (sonic blast), or 1 beam attack (laser beam eyes).

Combat: Good

Scale: +3

Size: 1.5m at shoulder

Damage Factors (Includes Scale):

Offensive: +6 (hoof), +7 (antlers), +3 (laser beam or sonic blast)

Defensive: +6

Wound Levels: 10 Out of Battle.

Move: Great (28 m sustained, 42 m sprinting).

Encountered: 1-8.

Santa Claws created eight robotic reindeer. He uses these reindeer (plus the duped Rudolf) with his shiny new sleigh to deliver presents to the chosen few on Christmas Eve. The rest of the time, the robotic reindeer remain in storage in the warehouse (the Ugly Metal Building) or act as guards and patrol the area surrounding the castle.

In addition to having robotic strength and high-tech damage-resistant bodies, the reindeer have the following special robotic powers.

Robotic Enhancements:

Audio Recording: can record up to 300 minutes of audio

Direct Access: can plug directly into computers

Electrical Output: can send and receive power through an electrical hookup

Heightened Damage Capacity: +3 to Defensive Damage Factor (already figured in to factors listed above)

Heightened Strength: +3 to Offensive Damage Factor for hoof or antler attacks (already figured in)

Hover: high-speed air jets in feet allow hovering above ground and moving in any direction at 1m/second

Jump: can leap up to 30 meters horizontally and up to 25 meters vertically

Life-Support: don't need to breathe, halve damage from radiation and extreme temperature

Radio Communication: built-in radio transceiver, in constant communication with the Control Room on Sub Level 3

Weaponry:

Laser Beam Eyes: fires a bright red beam of coherent light (*maximum range* 100 meters; *Accuracy* +1 up to 10 meters, +0 up to 50 meters, -2 up to 100 meters; *Damage* +3; *Rate* one shot per combat phase).

Sonic Blast: Fires an invisible beam of coherent sound (*maximum range* 50 meters; *Accuracy* +3 up to 10 meters, +0 up to 50 meters; *Damage* +3; *Rate* one shot per combat phase).

Half-Starved Elves

Attacks: 1 unarmed, or 1 weapon if something's handy

Combat: Poor to Fair

Scale: -1

Size: 1 m

Damage Factors (Includes Scale):

Offensive: -2 (unarmed), -1 (small sharp object), +0 (medium sharp object, or large blunt object), +1 (large sharp object)

Defensive: -1

Wound Levels: 3 Hurt, 6 Out of Battle

Move: Poor (14 m sustained, 21 m sprinting).

Encountered: As many as necessary to keep the orc minions and other nasties out of the way once the PCs tackle Santa Claws directly.

The elves of the North Pole are stunted (er, "Vertically Challenged") versions of *Gatecrasher* elves (such as Lorien). Under normal conditions, they have rosy cheeks and twinkly eyes and an annoying propensity for finding joy and happiness in their work. Two decades of oppression and lack of sunlight have made these elves sallow, skinny, and sad. They will be reluctant at first to do anything to incur the wrath of Santa Claws or his minions, but once a few are convinced to join the "rebellion" others will follow.

Reindeer (Flying)

Attacks: 2 hooves or 1 antler

Combat: Mediocre (Great when in full health)

Scale: +2

Size: 1.2 m at the shoulder

Damage Factors (Includes Scale):

Offensive: +1 (hooves), +2 (antlers)

Defensive: +2

Wound Levels: 3 Hurt, 7 Out of Battle

Move: Mediocre (16 m sustained, 24 m sprinting) (Superb when in full health)

Encountered: 1-8

There's Dasher, and Dancer, and Prancer, and Vixen; Comet, and Cupid, and Donner, and Blitzen. Donner is the leader – and the father of Rudolf.

Supernatural Talents:

Magic Points: 50 (100 when in full health)

Levitation: Can levitate, and also move 1 meter per second for each Magic Point expended. *Range:* body. *Cost:* 1 Magic Point per combat phase.

Resist Cold: Takes half damage from cold. *Range:* body. *Cost:* 1 Magic Point per 10 minutes.

enough to get the kids in trouble if they take them to school; dolls that wet their pants and cry in whiny voices; and of course the type of toy that comes in a series (once a kid has one, he'll want them all). Also video games and computer games, especially the type that kids play with the intent of annihilating one another over a network. Many of the toys are fairly high Tech, and hence incomprehensible to the PCs without a lot of experimentation (and maybe not even then).

Under a tarp in the center of the warehouse lies a gleaming metal sleigh with lots of chrome and red leather upholstery. Some of the Robotic Reindeer may be in storage here. If disturbed, they'll activate and carry out their programming to guard against intruders.

The Barn

The barn has two large carriage doors that slide (albeit reluctantly) on rollers. Set into each carriage door is a humanoid-sized door that can be opened without bothering with the larger carriage door. The barn itself is fairly dark – the filthy windows let in very little light. Most of the light in here comes from a hole in the northeastern corner of the roof; there's a small drift of snow on the wooden floor below the hole. The warm, musky smell of animals that pervades the barn is overpowered by the less pleasant smell of animal droppings and urine no one's seen fit to remove in far too long a time. Characters with keen senses of smell will also notice the smell of moldy hay – far less hay than one would expect to find in a barn housing eight reindeer.

These eight reindeer cluster dispiritedly in the center of the barn. Each is shackled to large iron weights, one chained to each hoof. Their antlers are shaggy with unshed velvet, and their dull coats sag loosely over their protruding ribs. One lies on the ground, panting; it struggles to stand as soon as anyone enters the barn.

These are Santa Claus's flying reindeer. If anyone asks "Which one of you's Donner?" (this is the way Donner's name is pronounced in the song "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," which Lorien knows) seven reindeer will shuffle forward. The eighth will hang his head and shake his antlers sadly.

Along the barn walls hang dusty and moldy leather harness with tarnished brass bells, interspersed with rusty pitchforks and a few shovels and tattered brooms. Off to one side sits a dusty old sleigh, its paint peeling and its wooden runners warped. The southern third of the barn contains some empty box stalls and a tack room, with a hay loft overhead. A rickety-looking ladder leads up to the loft.

Before the characters can do much to free the reindeer, four orcs (see p. 12) drop down from the hayloft, bypassing the ladder. (They'd been napping in what little hay remains in the loft.) They attack the characters without so much as a "how-do-you-do." The characters may notice that the orcs make no attempt to raise the alarm (they assume Santa Claws is already aware of the intruders). If captured alive, they'll refuse to talk – although one may be persuaded with the right incentives. They know nothing of Sub Level 3, except that Santa Claws and the Men In Red hang out there.

Once the reindeer are freed, they will do all they can to help the PCs. Donder will warn them that Rudolf is completely duped by Santa Claws, and is highly dangerous. He'll plead with them not to hurt his son if they can possibly help it. The reindeer will offer to stand guard against any of Santa Claws's minions returning from various errands beyond the castle (although in their condition the eight of them wouldn't stand much chance against even one of the Robotic Reindeer).

The Main House

The Main House is eerily quiet; the only sign of life is the thin wisp of smoke wafting out of the main hall's chimney. The glass-paned windows are all dirty and frosted with condensed moisture. Inside, every room is curtained with dust and cobwebs. Only the Main Hall and the Kitchen show signs of life.

1. Main Hall.

This large hall, now dingy and dusty, hints of past celebrations. A dried and brown Christmas tree droops in the corner between the hearth and the front entranceway. Its tinsel and ornaments look as sad and dingy as the tree does. The once beautiful wooden parquet floor now bears scuff marks from heavy boots. The small, smoky fire crackling in the fireplace is dwarfed by the hearthstones around it. An equally small, wan elf crouches despondently by the fire, carefully tending it with small twigs. (If the PCs knock on the door rather than just bursting in, the elf timidly answers the door.) A makeshift twig broom leans against the hearth; it looks like it's been used recently to clear cobwebs.

The elf's name is Kelsey (see *Half-Starved Elves*, p. 11; Kelsey's Combat ability is Fair, Offensive Damage Factor is -2 (unarmed), +0 (twig broom), or +1 (meat cleaver from the kitchen)). He's the doorman, a duty that's usually

uneventful. Deathly afraid of letting the PCs know what's going on, he'll do his best to convince them that Santa's "away" and that they should come back some other day, when Santa will be home. If that doesn't work, he'll do his best to keep the PCs from discovering the sub-levels. He'll try to distract them with offers of hot cocoa, but insists he doesn't want any help in the kitchen –he ducks in there just long enough to get some rather stale cocoa mix and a pot of water to hang over the pitiful fire in the Main Hall. If the PCs discover the trap door in the kitchen, Kelsey will beg them not to go down there ("Oh, no, that's just the root cellar, nothing's down there but moldy roots, you don't want to go down there...."). If the PCs insist on exploring the house, he'll follow them about nervously, flapping his hands and saying things like "Oh, that's just the workshop – goodness, it needs a dusting, doesn't it?" (giggling nervously) and "Oh, don't go in there, that's Santa's private place...."

2. Santa's Office.

In the center of this room, underneath a layer of dust, is a large oaken table with a sack of unopened letters spilling out over its surface. A roll-top desk, its top rolled down, occupies the corner next to the cold hearth. Wooden shelves line the walls, containing countless leather-bound ledger books (filled with the names of children, with symbols of stars and frowney faces in columns to the right of the names). There are a few miscellaneous books, as well, on topics such as "The Care and Feeding of Magical Reindeer." If someone opens the roll-top desk, they'll discover a large calendar/blotter (the top sheet shows the month of May, twenty years ago), a strange box (a desktop computer), and a snow-globe paperweight. The snow-globe contains a replica of Santa's Castle – minus the Ugly Metal Building. Shaking the globe makes it "snow" over the replica. (If anyone looks outside, it's started snowing out there, as well.)

3. Cozy Sitting Room.

This dust-filled room was once a cozy sitting room. A rocking chair sits forlornly by the fireplace, an unfinished sweater and knitting needles lying in a basket beside it. Overstuffed chairs with brocade upholstery surround a mahogany coffee table; some equally overstuffed loveseats occupy the wall by the windows. A large hutch across from the fireplace displays a collection of decorative plates and pewter figurines.

4. Workshop.

This room contains numerous wooden benches, tables, and cabinets filled with the tools of toy-making. Some half-finished or broken toys are scattered here and there. A few paint pots lie open, their contents long since dried out. A wrought-iron spiral staircase leads up to a balcony level.

Orc Minions

Attacks: 1 weapon (knife, shortsword, or whip) or fists

Combat: Fair to Great

Scale: +0

Size: 1.7 m

Damage Factors (Includes Scale):

Offensive: +0 (fists), +1 (knife), +2 (shortsword), +2 (whip; can entangle on a Superb or greater result)

Defensive: +0 (unarmored) or +2 (armored)

Wound Levels: 3 Hurt, 6 Out of Battle

Move: Good (24 m sustained, 36 m sprinting)

Encountered: As many as necessary to challenge the PCs

These orcs are rude, crude, nasty brutish soldiers who get pretty bored up here at the North Pole and take their frustrations and boredom out on Santa's elves. They'll look on the PCs as great sport, at least at first....

5. Dining Hall.

Double doors lead into this dining hall from the main hall, kitchen, and workshop. It's filled with rows of tables and benches – some of the latter are overturned, and all are dusty. To either side of the doors to the kitchen are large hutches containing dinner china, tarnished silver place settings, and table linens.

6. Kitchen.

This large kitchen contains two brick ovens (one to either side of the fireplace), a large sink with a pump-handle faucet, and some accouterments the PCs aren't likely to recognize (a refrigerator, a dishwasher, and a number of electric kitchen appliances). There are also cabinets, shelves, and drawers with pots and pans and utensils, and a large assortment of knives, serving forks, and other kitchen tools. A wooden trap door in the corner leads down to the root cellar (#12).

7. Workshop Balcony.

The balcony overlooks the workshop below. A once-beautiful wooden railing protects the edge. Shelves containing toys and books on toymaking line the walls between the windows. Two doors lead from here to the room next door; a spiral staircase leads back down to the workshop floor.

8. Family Room.

Comfortable sofas, recliners, armchairs, and coffee tables are pleasantly arranged throughout this large room. There are also a few objects the PCs aren't likely to recognize (a wall-screen TV and fully equipped entertainment center). Along one wall there's a large rectangular glass box filled with murky, smelly water (once a thriving aquarium).

9. Master Bedroom.

A massive canopied featherbed dominates this room. There are also various wardrobes and armoires and dressers. Another unfathomable object (an electric foot massager) lies beside the bed. The clothes and shoes and other accouterments within the various drawers and cabinets are mostly moth-eaten.

10. Sewing Room.

This room contains two tables piled with clothes and socks and shoes in various stages of mending and darning and repair. The half-finished fur-trimmed red suit in one corner hints that Mrs Claus sewed all of Santa's clothes.

11. Model Train Room.

Mike Hammer will be the only PC likely to make sense of this room – he's seen a steam train before. This type's new to

him, though – a miniature train, with lots of miniature scenery (dusty and inhabited by various spiders and other insects). It really works, provided someone can figure out what all the little switches and levers and buttons do.

12. Root and Wine Cellar.

A wooden ladder leads down into the root cellar from the kitchen above. The cellar has numerous bins (containing moldy and desiccated vegetables) and wine racks (holding only a few dusty bottles). There's a Man In Red lying in ambush here (see p. 14). He'll attack the first PC to come down the ladder. His weapon of choice is the hypno-ornament, if it looks like only one PC will be coming down – he'll then command the PC to guard the ladder. Otherwise he'll try to stun each PC with his candy-cane ray gun as they come down the ladder.

E. Elevator.

At the far end of the root cellar is a strange metal gate that opens by folding to one side, like an accordion. It's currently closed. A shaft with curious cables running down its center can be seen through the gaps in this gate. To the right of the gate is a metal box set into the stone foundation of the root cellar. There's a button here, that lights up when pressed.

This is an elevator with an old-fashioned safety gate. The elevator itself is stopped two levels down, at the entrance to Sub Level 2. It's operated by a bellhop (one of Santa's half-starved elves). Pushing the button lights a corresponding light in the elevator, alerting the bellhop to someone needing the elevator. A lever within the elevator itself controls the elevator's movement up and down. The lever can be locked into its central position to stop the elevator. Special brakes block the elevator from Sub Level 3 unless a key is first inserted into a keyhole on the light panel. The bellhop does not have a key – only Santa Claws and the Men in Red carry the appropriate keys.

The bellhop, like all of Santa's elves, is scared stiff. He's also very serious about his job, and about the rituals surrounding the use of the elevator. He intones such things as "Going Dooowwwwnnnn..." and "Watch your step, Sir," in an ultra-serious voice.

Underground Complex

Sub Level 1

Factory Floor.

This enormous space reverberates with the sounds of machinery, the rattle of chains, and the occasional crack of a whip and cry of pain. Enormous steel girders support the ceiling, which in turn supports tracks for the robotic toymaking machinery. Countless elves scurry about, applying oil and raw materials and hasty repairs as necessary to keep

Men In Red (MIRs)

Attacks: 1 weapon (candy-cane ray gun) or device (hypno-ornament)

Combat: Good to Great

Scale: 0

Size: 2 m

Damage Factors (Includes Scale):

Offensive: +0 (unarmed) (see *Attacks*, above, for special abilities)

Defensive: +0

Wound Levels: 3 Hurt, 6 Out of Battle

Move: Good (24 m sustained, 36 m sprinting)

Encountered: 1, 2, or 4.

The Men in Red (MIRs) are Santa Claws's human agents. No one knows how many of them there really are (except Santa Claws himself, perhaps). But there are a lot of them, as evidenced by their proliferation in malls and on street corners throughout the solar system beginning as early as November and continuing through Christmas Day. They form the most visible part of Santa's Secret Service. They take care not to let any onlookers discover that they're monitoring all passers-by (especially the children) with their Karma Kounters (disguised as rose-colored glasses). During the "off-season," the MIRs continue their work in secret, planting bugs and monitoring equipment wherever children are to be found. All Men In Red are telepathically linked to Santa Claws, who can "tune in" on these links at will to learn everything his MIRs have discovered. Santa Claws can also pass orders and information to his agents telepathically. Only a few (maximum 6) are actually present at the North

Pole at any one time. In bad lighting, they're easily mistaken for Santa Claus (well, until you're close enough to see that the beard's fake and the costume's padded).

Special Equipment

Candy Cane Ray Gun: When hit, target must make a Constitution check, Difficulty Level Superb, or lose consciousness for 1 minute for each level by which the roll is missed. Maximum range 50 m, +1 up to 10 m, -1 up to 50 m, 1 shot per combat phase, 20 shots per battery.

Hypno-Ornament: This golden Christmas-tree ornament shoots out scintillating rays of hypnotic light when activated. Anyone within 10 m who does not have appropriate eye protection gear (rose-colored glasses) will be affected. Each target must make an Id check, Difficulty Level Superb, or be hypnotized. While hypnotized, a victim will be susceptible to suggestion – in the form of a single simple command (as per the Domination Supernatural Talent, see Santa Claws, p. 19). *Cost:* 3 Magic Points per victim in range. At a higher setting (9 Magic Points), the Hypno-Ornament will cause memory loss (the victim will lose all memories of the past 15 minutes and of the 15 minutes immediately following the hypno-flash). Each hypno-ornament has a reservoir of 30 Magic Points, but can be activated only once every 5 minutes.

Rose-Colored Glasses: These glasses provide infrared vision to the wearer, as well as protection from light (not even Rudolf's nose can blind someone wearing these glasses). They also have built-in Karma Kounters, special sensors that sample the auras of passers-by to determine whether they've been good or bad.

the machines churning out toys. The din and racket goes on 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The orc guards wear earplugs to keep from going deaf. They sometimes remove them long enough to relish an elf's cries for mercy, though.

Cell Blocks A-D.

The elves are so driven to exhaustion they welcome their return to their cells after 16 hours of work. The elves are forced to work in shifts, so that roughly 2/3 of them are working at any time. The work is hard; more than one elf has lost a finger (or more!) to a greedy machine. Elves in their cells do little but eat the gruel offered by their guards, and sleep. No personal possessions are allowed in the cells. Harsh electric lights are kept on at all times, both in the cell blocks and on the factory floor.

E. Elevators.

These two adjacent elevators provide the orc guards a quick means of access between their quarters and the cell blocks. These elevators are also used to bring the elves' meager food up from the kitchens below. Smaller than the main elevator, they have access to Sub Levels 1 and 2 only.

Sub Level 2

13. Interrogation Chamber.

This most unpleasant room is filled with low- and high-tech instruments of torture. One of the orc officers may be interrogating an elf prisoner, attempting to find out what he may know of Mrs. Claus's escape. If the PCs are captured by the orcs or by the Men in Red, they're likely to end up here.

14. Torture Chamber.

This chamber is equipped much like the Interrogation Chamber. The only difference is in the orcs' minds – they use the Interrogation Chamber when they want something from their victims, and the Torture Chamber to inflict punishment or just have fun. One or more orcs may currently be having "fun" here.

15. Dungeon Cells.

Mrs. Claus languished for two decades in one of these tiny cells. Most of them are currently empty. Santa Claws has mistreated the elves badly enough that they're now short-staffed; nearly every elf is needed on the factory floor.

16. Storage.

These storage rooms contain such things as cleaning equipment (mops and brooms and buckets and solvents and the like), extra lightbulbs, step ladders, linens (nearly clean), and similar. The orcs don't use these, of course; they're here for when the elves are sent in to do the monthly cleaning.

17. Officers' Quarters.

These luxuriant (by orcish standards) quarters are for the four orc officers. (There may be eight officers instead, if the PC party seems strong enough and is doing all the right things to get help dealing with the orcs.)

18. Grunts' Dorms.

If the GM wants to be generous to the orcs (and to the PCs), each dorm room has only one bed. Otherwise, they have 2 or 4 bunk beds per dorm room. You can increase the number of half-starved elves to enough to at least keep all these orcs distracted while the PCs go after Santa Claws – assuming the PCs free enough elves to start a rebellion. Otherwise the orcs will pose a problem.

19. Rec Room.

There's a beat-up billiards table in here, and some equally beat-up pinball machines (at least half of them stuck in the "TILT" mode and hence not working). One entire wall seems devoted to graffiti and dart target practice. There's some furniture in here for the orcs to lounge on (a couple of beat-up couches and an armchair or two), and some orc-girlie magazines strewn about on the coffee table and on the floor.

Orc Officers

Attacks: 1 weapon (whip) or fists

Combat: Great

Scale: +0

Size: 1.8 m

Damage Factors (Includes Scale):

Offensive: +1 (fists) +3 (whip; can entangle on a Superb or greater result)

Defensive: +2 (armored)

Wound Levels: 4 Hurt, 8 Out of Battle

Move: Good (24 m sustained, 36 m sprinting)

Encountered: 1-4 (maximum 8)

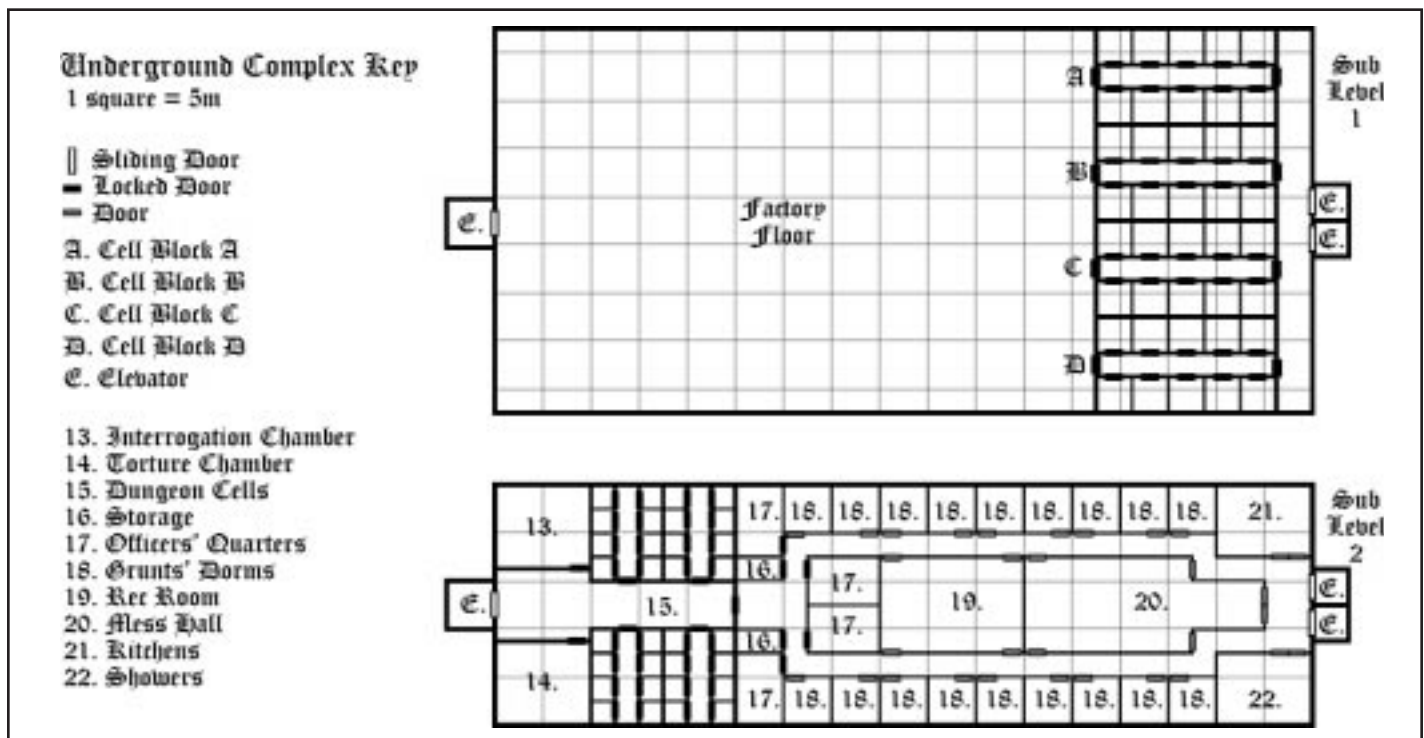
The orc minions are kept roughly in line by their officers – slightly stronger orcs who can fight better, too. But except for the fact that they're all wearing armor, and that they boss the others around more, there's little to distinguish the officers from the minions.

20. Mess Hall.

This dining hall lives up to its name – it's a real mess, with unbussed trays and dirty napkins and leftover foodstuffs strewn about. The orcs simply haven't bothered to send any elves in to clean up recently.

21. Kitchens.

The kitchen's as messy as the rest of the orc quarters are. This kitchen supplies all the meals to the orcs and to the elves. There's one orc cook and an orc assistant on duty at any one time. If attacked (or if they hear a ruckus in the hallway), they'll arm themselves with frying pans (+1) and kitchen knives (+1) and have at it.



22. Showers.

These showers are just what you'd expect communal showers for orcs to be like; messy and smelly. One corner, with a hole in it, serves as a latrine.

Sub Level 3

B. Bathroom

The Men in Red rate semi-private bathrooms complete with porcelain sink, toilet, and shower/bath combos.

C. Closet

These closets contain spare Red Suits and casual clothing for off-duty MIRs.

E. Elevator

Getting this elevator to Sub Level 3 requires the use of a special key. Each Man in Red has a key, as does Santa Claws. If the PCs can't secure the key, they can still reach this level by burning or bashing their way through the elevator floor (while it's on Sub Level 2) and climbing down the shaft.

S. Storage/Supplies

These small storage rooms contain spare parts for the control room and computers, blank disks, and the like.

W. Weapons Locker

These lockers contain spare Candy Cane Ray Guns, Rose-Colored Glasses, and Hypno-Ornaments (see *Men in Red*, p. 14). They may also contain more mundane weapons. *Example:* Flak Pistols that fire shards of plastic. Most metal or armor stops flak instantly, but exposed flesh takes full damage. *Max Range:* 100 m. +0 up to 10 m, -2 up to 50 m, -4 up to 100 m. 2 shots per combat round, 10 shots per clip. Damage +2.

Note: The PCs don't have the skills to use high-tech weapons; Glorganthal, being anti-tech, should object strongly to any attempted use of them.

T. Trap Door

This steel trap door (at the junction of the corridors leading to the storage and weapons lockers) leads down to the crawl-spaces and access corridors on the lowest level. Here lies the fusion reactor that powers Santa Claws's complex.

23. Lounge.

This lounge provides the Men in Red with a place to relax. There are couches, and recliners, and a couple of coffee tables, and an entertainment center. The hallway beyond has several doors. The door at the end of the central hallway is a sliding security door; opening it requires inserting a security card into the appropriate slot.

Note: If Santa Claws sees that the Men in Red are unable to stop the PCs, he'll issue a security override to open all three security doors between his quarters and the Lounge. He'll then send Rudolf to deal with the intruders. (See 35. *Rudolf's Cave*, p. 18.)

24. Dining Hall.

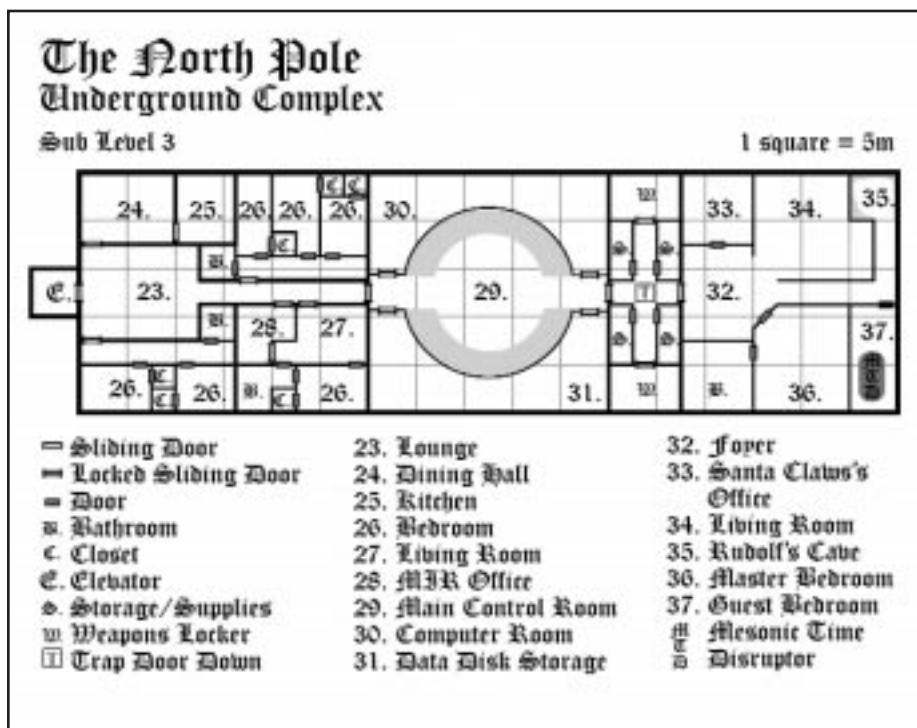
This dining hall is clean, well lit, and nicely decorated with mahogany tables and good-looking dinnerware.

25. Kitchen.

Unlike the orc kitchens, this kitchen is clean and well organized. It's staffed by two barely-starved elves who sleep in the laundry basket in the corner when off-duty. The elves are wearing electronic security devices about their necks. These issue stunning electric shocks if they ever try to enter the elevator, any of the bedroom suites, or pass through the security door at the end of the hall.

26. Bedroom.

The Men in Red each have a private bedroom. There aren't many personal effects in here, though, as only the Chief Director of the MIR lives here permanently. The others rotate between the field and duties in these Central Headquarters.



Rudolf the Laser-Nosed Reindeer

Attacks: 2 hoofed attacks, or 1 antler attack

Combat: Good

Scale: +2

Size: 2 m

Damage Factors (Includes Scale):

Offensive: +3 (each hoof) +4 (antlers)

Defensive: +2

Wound Levels: As per player characters

Move: Superb (32 m sustained, 49 m sprinting)

Encountered: 1

Awareness: Fair

Constitution: Fair

Dexterity: Great

Id: Poor (was once Fair, but has declined due to the decades-long Domination by Santa Claws)

Reason: Mediocre (normally Fair, but clouded by brainwashing)

Strength: Good

Tech: -6

Wizardry: +4

Magical Effect: +6

Magic Points: 100

Rudolf is a kind-hearted soul completely duped by Santa Claws. Due to the effects of Domination over two decades, Rudolf doesn't even question Santa Claws any more. In his current world view, Santa Claws is Right and Good and This is the Way Things Are. He doesn't even remember when there was another Santa.

If the PCs try to reason with Rudolf, he'll get another chance to check against his Id and hopefully throw off the effects of the Domination. This will leave Rudolf confused, depressed, and remorseful – and definitely on the PCs' side. Otherwise, Rudolf will view the PCs as the Enemy right up until the moment the real Santa wakes up.

Supernatural Talents:

Acceleration: Can move at twice normal speed, adding +2 to hit in combat (making combat skill Superb) and giving him the first chance to move each combat phase. *Range:* body. *Cost:* 1 Magic Point per combat phase.

Laser Nose: Has three strengths. *Light* creates a powerful reddish light (approximately as bright as a high-tech street lamp). *Laser* creates a focused laser beam (maximum *Range* 100 meters; *Accuracy* +1 up to 10 meters, +0 up to 50 meters, -2 up to 100 meters; *Damage* +3; *Rate* once per combat phase; *Cost* 3 Magic Points per shot). *Photon Blast* causes a bright red flash (anyone within 5 meters of Rudolf's nose will be blinded for 1d6×10 minutes unless wearing protective eyegear).

Levitation: Can levitate, and also move 1 meter per second for each Magic Point expended (double that if Accelerated). *Range:* body. *Cost:* 1 Magic Point per combat phase.

Resist Cold: Takes half damage from cold. *Range:* body. *Cost:* 1 Magic Point per 10 minutes.

Superfast Flight: Can take himself, eight other reindeer, and a sleigh with presents and Santa Claws at supersonic speeds for up to 24 hours. Can't, by himself, take all this stuff nearly as fast as the real Santa can, though. *Range:* Self, other reindeer, sleigh. *Cost:* 100 Magic Points.

27. Living Room.

The head of the MIR lives in this suite. Unlike the other MIRs, he is a permanent resident. He does have a few personal possessions in his living room and in his bedroom, but he likes his work and spends most of his time in the office (#28) or in the Control Room (#29).

28. MIR Office.

This office is well appointed with a mahogany executive's desk and oak filing cabinets. A desktop computer is linked to the artificially intelligent matrix computer network in the computer room (#30).

29. Main Control Room.

This circular room has glass paneling offering good views of the equipment in the computer room (#30) and the data disk storage room (#31). Complicated control panels with sliding levers and buttons and blinking lights and various view screens and monitors curve around the two sides of the room. Two Men in Red are on duty here at all times, wheeling madly back and forth on their office chairs. The doors to either end of the central aisleway are locked security doors.

Opening them requires inserting a valid security card into the appropriate slot.

30. Computer Room.

To the PCs, this room will contain a bewildering tangle of large metal boxes with blinking lights and humming noises and spinning disks and thick black and gray wires snaking every which way. To anyone who understands Tech +5 computer equipment, this room contains a not-quite-state-of-the-art network of matrix computers programmed for a variety of functions – most involving collating data from various input devices. These computers filter all the information gleaned from the security systems at the North Pole and from the vast network of Men in Red with their Karma Kounters and the audio and video “bugs” planted in strategic locations throughout the solar system.

31. Data Disk Storage.

This room is filled with rack upon rack of data disks, all containing massive amounts of data from the past two decades – eating habits, spending habits, behavioral quirks, etc. on millions of children (and adults!).

32. Foyer.

The entrance hall to Santa Claws's private quarters is empty of all but a few decorative items; some vases and statues on delicate stands in the corners, and a few pieces of art hanging on the wall. The foyer is open to the living room (#34). The door between the foyer and the weapons and storage area is a sliding security door that opens when a valid security card is inserted into the appropriate slot. Santa Claws may open or close all three security doors on this level, through the use of his control unit (see *Santa Claws*, p. 19).

33. Santa Claws's Office.

This office is sparsely furnished (an executive desk and leather-upholstered swivel office chair, some mostly empty shelves) and has very little paperwork or other items lying about. There is a desktop computer (with links to the network of matrix computers and the control room), but most real office work is accomplished by Santa Claws's minions.

34. Living Room.

This luxuriantly furnished living room sports the granddaddy of all entertainment centers and an impressive library of video and audio disks. There's a well-stocked bar as well. A variety of trophies adorn the walls; the stuffed heads of a reindeer, a polar bear, a Christmas seal, and an Abominable Snow Thing. There's also a faded, well-worn straw bonnet with a yellow ribbon hanging on the wall, as though it, too, were a trophy.

35. Rudolf's Cave.

This room has been decorated to resemble an icy cave. Here, Rudolf spends his free time, secure in his delusions that this is his cave and that all is right with the world. If Santa Claws calls upon him to attack the intruders (in the lounge area, after opening all the security doors; see 23. *Lounge*, p. 16), he will trit-trot out of his cave, around the corner, and then rapidly gain speed as he gallops down the very long corridor. He'll attack first with a devastating antler-slam against whomever's in his way (additional +2 to damage due to ramming force of blow), then begin using his other weapons (laser nose, etc.).

36. Master Bedroom.

This room is decorated with a plethora of mirrors. Even the ceiling is mirrored. The four-poster bed has no canopy, but it does have a naked female elf chained to one post. (Her name is Esmerelda, and she'll be happy to do anything she can to destroy Santa Claws. She's barely starved, so has Combat Fair. She's currently unarmed.) The master bathroom is well equipped with a Jacuzzi and bidet and other plumbing fixtures the PCs have probably never heard of.

37. Guest Bedroom.

This "guest bedroom" contains only one thing: the miniature Mesonic Time Disruptor chamber Santa Claws is using to keep the real Santa under wraps. The MTD slows time within its field. Santa is in a drugged sleep which, for him, has lasted a little over 3 hours. The door to this room is another sliding security door. Like the other security doors, it can be opened with a valid security card (carried by any of the MIRs, and by Santa Claws himself).

The MTD is a sophisticated piece of equipment (Tech +9). The chances of any character knowing how to operate it are slim. However, the MIRs understand it well enough to shut it down without harming its occupant – if any can be persuaded to do so. Some of the elves might be able to figure it out, given enough uninterrupted time. If worst comes to worst, there's actually a user's manual tucked away behind one of the unit's access panels. Allow the PCs to discover this manual on any Good or better roll for examining the unit or searching the room.

If the PCs attempt to shut down the MTD and revive Santa, have them roll against any applicable Engineering or Computer Operation skills. They'll be at –1 for every 2 tech levels between their usual Tech and Tech +9 (in other words, a whopping big penalty for most of the PCs and even most of the elves, who are used to Tech +2 at the most). These skills default to Poor for those characters who have no training in such matters. Add +1 for having access to the user's manual, and an additional +1 for every 10 minutes the character spends studying the manual. A Mediocre result or better (after all modifiers and penalties are applied) is required to shut the MTD down properly, reviving Santa completely within 5 minutes of the successful shut-down. A Poor or worse result indicates the shut-down fails. The PC can try again, up to a maximum of 3 attempts. If the third attempt fails, or if a sub-Terrible or worse result occurs, the MTD shuts down improperly, losing power but not opening the inner chamber or reviving Santa. The PCs will have to either power the MTD up again (and try to shut it down once more) or smash through the thick glass wall to extract Santa.

If the PCs start pushing buttons and sliding levers and turning knobs at random, simply roll a Situational Roll (not added to any skill or attribute), with a –3 penalty, each combat round they continue messing with the controls. On a Good or better roll, whatever they did that round works. (Note that with the –3 penalty, the best result possible is a Good, +4 on the dice.) On a Fair or better roll, the penalty for future rolls is reduced by one (from –3 to –2 the first time the Situational Roll comes up +3 on the dice). Additional Fair results can reduce the penalty to 0, but will not result in any bonuses to future rolls. If at any point a sub-Terrible result occurs, the PCs have damaged the MTD. It begins smoking, or sparking, or making strange hissing noises. If the PCs don't succeed in shutting it down in three more tries, the MTD is permanently damaged; the only way to remove Santa will be to smash through the thick glass.

continued on p. 20...

Santa Claws

Attacks: 2 claws, or 1 belly-slam

Combat: Good

Scale: +0

Size: 2 m

Damage Factors (Includes Scale and Strength bonuses):

Offensive: +4 (claws), +3 (belly-slam)

Defensive: +6 (being a Major Elemental, Santa Claws can laugh off many blows)

Wound Levels: As per player characters

Move: Mediocre (16 m sustained, 24 m sprinting)

Encountered: 1

Awareness: Great

Constitution: Good

Dexterity: Good

Id: Superb

Reason: Good

Strength: Great

Tech: +10

Wizardry: +10

Magical Effect: +8

Magic Points: 150/Unlimited (see Power Transformer)

The evil Santa Claws looks like Santa Claus, down to the chubby cheeks, white whiskers, fat belly, and fur-trimmed red suit. But he doesn't act like Santa Claus. He has a nasty sense of humor, and prizes "efficiency" above all else. He doesn't care how many elves have to starve to make the factory run efficiently....

Santa Claws will let his Men in Red monitor the situation with the PCs as it develops. He'll expect them to deal with it using the weapons and robots and cannon fodder (orcs and elves) at their disposal. If things go really badly, he'll send Rudolf after the PCs. If all else fails, he'll attempt to deal with the PCs himself. He'll use illusions and Domination techniques first, but won't hesitate to attack physically if it's warranted. After all, he can always teleport away to regenerate, then teleport back....

Supernatural Talents:

Absorption: Absorbs half of all Magic Points in spells and/or Supernatural Talents directed at him. Can use absorbed Magic Points as his own. Unabsorbed Magic Points affect him normally (effects will be at half power; or completely negated if the effect requires full power to perform). *Range:* body. *Cost:* none/always on.

Create Illusion: Can create an illusion that seems real in all details (can be touched, etc.). Anyone viewing an illusion can check against Awareness or a Sense Skill (Difficulty Level Great) to see through it. (The GM should roll this in secret.) An illusion cannot inflict lasting damage on believers. *Range:* 10 meters. *Cost:* 5 points per minute per cubic meter of illusion.

Domination: Can bend wills. Santa Claws has an extraor-

dinarily powerful version of this Supernatural Talent. He can give complex commands as well as simple ones, with no increase in the Magic Point cost. The victim follows the command until he realizes something is wrong. A victim can roll against Id once when Domination takes effect, again every two hours thereafter (for the first day), then once each day for a week, once each week for a month, once each month for a year, and then once each year. On a Good or better result, the victim notices the Domination and shakes off the effect. If someone tries to reason the victim out of the domination, the victim can make an Id check even if another one's not due for a while. Only one check is allowed per argument, though; if one argument doesn't work the reasoner will have to try another. *Range:* 30 meters. *Cost:* 3 points per level of the victim's Id (3 points if Terrible, 6 points if Poor, 9 points if Mediocre, etc.).

Perception: Gives Santa Claws a sixth sense. He can see through walls with this, although tech items show up as "blank spots." *Range:* 30 meters. *Cost:* 1 magic point per 10 minutes.

Regeneration: Can instantaneously heal himself. Regenerating a limb costs 20 magic points and takes 10 minutes. Note that Santa Claws can regenerate his cybernetic claws in this manner. *Range:* body. *Cost:* 5 magic points per point of damage healed.

Telepathy: Has a telepathic link with his Secret Service network of MIRs (Men in Red). *Range:* wherever they are. *Cost:* none.

Teleportation: Can teleport instantaneously. *Range:* 1 meter per Magic Point expended. *Cost:* 1 Magic Point per meter.

Cybernetic Implants:

Claws: Santa Claws sports long, razor-sharp, retractable blades that shoot out of his knuckles when he balls his hands into fists. He does +4 damage with these claws (including his bonus for Great Strength).

Special Equipment:

Control Unit: Santa Claws has a sophisticated computer control unit attached to his belt (alongside the Power Transformer). With this, he can monitor all nearby radio communications, and access any of the complex's security systems.

Power Transformer: Santa Claws gains nearly unlimited access to Magic Points through a device attached to the fusion generator beneath the underground complex. This device takes technological power from the generator, transforms it into magical energy, and beams this energy to the receiving unit Claws wears on his belt. This receiving unit will not work for anyone but Santa Claws – even if the PCs wrest it from him they won't be able to use it to access Magic Points. Neither will Claws, though – he'll be reduced to his own innate 150 Magic Points if he loses the power transformer.

Smashing the MTD

In desperation, the PCs may resort to smashing the MTD to get Santa out. This actually bears little risk to Santa, who's pretty much immortal and can withstand a lot of damage. However, the PCs are likely to sustain injuries as the damaged MTD suffers a series of minor explosions and some major electrical arcs. Characters within 1 meter of the MTD will suffer 4 points of damage; subtract 1 point of damage for every additional meter from the MTD. When the smoke clears, a groggy-looking (and still smoking) Santa will be standing amid the wreckage of the Mesonic Time Disruptor.

Concluding the Adventure

Once Santa is freed, he'll know what needs to be done to overcome Santa Claws. He'll ask the PCs and the elves to continue to distract Santa Claws and any remaining minions,

while he makes his way down to the fusion generator – and the source of Santa Claws's unlimited Magic Points. Santa knows how to disable the power transformer (see *Santa Claws*, p. 19). With his source of Magic Points gone, Santa Claws will be able to teleport away and regenerate himself only so many times. Eventually, the PCs will be able to either drive him away or defeat him entirely. (If the PCs are in really rough shape, Santa Claus can take on the evil impostor himself, but this smacks of deus ex machina and will probably be unsatisfying to the players.)

If the PCs have been unable to convince Rudolf of the error of his ways, but have been able to keep Rudolf alive, Santa will restore Rudolf's mind and Id. He'll then pack the PCs and any toys they would like into the sleigh, hitch up his eight reindeer (if all survived) and Rudolf, and fly off to Simpleton to take the PCs home and claim the recovering Mrs. Claus.

All The Rules You Need To Know

Gatecrasher (2nd Edition) uses a customized version of the FUDGE game system. Here are all the rules you really need to know in order to run this adventure. (These rules assume you're already familiar with role-playing games.) You can also get a copy of FUDGE (available free, on the Internet, at <http://members.aol.com/ghostgames> and other sites), or of *Gatecrasher* (from your local game retailer), or adapt the adventure to another game system.

Character Traits

A few character traits may require explanation for those who don't have the *Gatecrasher* game. Character traits not defined here are assumed to be self-explanatory. Refer to the complete *Gatecrasher* rulebook for more information.

Id: This attribute is a measure of the character's sense of self, which affects willpower and presence (charisma, if you will). People with a low Id are unsure of themselves; people with a high Id often have the added Fault of "Overconfident."

Native Gravity: The level of gravity in which the character feels most comfortable. Earth inhabitants are most used to "Standard Gravity," although magic is strong enough around the Earth that gravity (and the stability of any given terrain) sometimes fluctuates.

Tech: Tech determines the limits of the character's technological experience. The PCs provided here all grew up in a Tech -8 environment (roughly medieval or Renaissance technology, with some fairly unreliable muzzle-loading firearms available). Tech Level 0 is roughly equivalent to late-20th-century technology.

Wizardry: This determines the character's level of understanding of magic. The higher the Wizardry, the more advanced the "science" of magic understood. The pre-generated PCs are mostly familiar with Wizardry +2, a level well beyond the first formulations of the "laws" of magic but just short of the level of knowledge necessary to create matter in violation of the Guideline of Conservation of Mass.

Magic Points: This measures the inherent amount of magical power the character has. Magic Points drop and climb as the character uses power or rests. At the North Pole, the recovery rate is 3 points per level of Id for every four hours of sleep or meditation. (A character with Terrible Id will recover 3 points; a character with Fair Id will recover 12 points; and so on.) If in proximity to any of Santa Claws's tech devices, this recovery rate drops to 2 points per level of Id.

Magical Effect: This delineates the Tech levels a character's magic can affect. Magic and technology are so opposed to one another that less powerful magic has a better chance of affecting a technological item than more powerful magic. When a character uses magic against an object with a Tech greater than his Magical Effect, the player makes a Situational Roll. On a Good or better result, the spell succeeds. Apply a -1 to the roll for every two Tech levels the item exceeds the character's Magical Effect.

Move: Move measures how quickly a character can run, in meters per combat phase (which is also kilometers per hour). A move of Fair (20/30) means the character can move 20 meters per combat phase at a sustained pace, or 30 meters per combat phase in a sprint.

Damage Capacity: This measures a character's resistance to injuries. It defaults to Fair, but may be raised by taking Increased Damage Capacity as a Gift.

Scale: This measures a creature's mass and strength. Humans are Scale 0. Smaller, weaker creatures have negative Scales. Individuals are of Fair Strength, or Good Strength, etc., relative to those of their own Scale. Each level of Scale is about 1.5 times heavier and stronger than the Scale beneath it. Scale adds to Strength: an ogre (Scale +1) with Good Strength is roughly as strong as a human (Scale 0) with Great Strength. Both are at +2 Strength compared to humans of Fair Strength. Scale also adds to a creature's Defensive Damage Factor; the more massive a creature is the harder it is to inflict serious damage.

Damage Factors: A character's Offensive Damage Factor combines the bonuses and penalties for weapon type and character Strength (in hand-to-hand combat) into one modifier that's added to the Relative Degree by which the character wins a combat round when determining damage inflicted. A character's Defensive Damage Factor combines bonuses and penalties for armor, Damage Capacity, Scale, and other factors into one modifier that's subtracted from damage points received to determine the level of any wound sustained in combat. See *Wounds*, p. 22.

Skills

Most skills are self-explanatory. Here is some information for those that may not be.

Body Language: Can read someone's mental state from his posture and motion.

Dodge: Can dodge missiles and other weapons or fast-moving objects. Opposed roll versus opponent's combat skill, or roll against GM-set Difficulty Level (see *Unopposed Actions*, p. 22).

Endurance: Can roll against Endurance to treat wounds as though they were one level less severe; Incapacitated has same effect as Very Hurt, etc. Difficulty Level: Fair.

Farriery: Trimming and shoeing horse's hooves, diagnosing hoof problems, etc.

Lie: Conceals that one is lying. Useless against Angels.

Magic (Particular Magic Type, such as Psionics or Kinetics): Measures knowledge of magic type (used for learning spells). For actual ability in casting spells see character's Magic Ability gift.

Magic Targeting: Use for aiming spells with Range measured in meters. Also used to target breath weapons.

Magical Familiarity: Recognizing spells and types of magic (a general skill for non-magicians).

Spatial Sense: Orienting one's self quickly despite confusing motion.

Actions

There are two types of actions in *Gatecrasher* – Opposed Actions, and Unopposed Actions.

A fight between two creatures will most often be resolved as a series of Opposed Actions.

An attempt to climb a cliff will most often be resolved as an Unopposed Action.

Note that very easy actions should be automatic; no need to roll. Likewise with impossible actions; the character just can't do it, and will fail in the attempt no matter how lucky the player is with dice.

Rolling the Dice

When a character attempts an action, roll percentiles (or use 100ths of a second on a stopwatch) and consult the table:

Rolled

1	2-6	7-18	19-38	39-62	63-82	83-94	95-99	00
-4	-3	-2	-1	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4

Result

If you have FUDGE dice, roll them instead.

The result (from -4 to +4) is used as a modifier to a skill or character trait.

FUDGE Trait Scale/Level Modifiers

Character attributes and skills are measured on the following scale, from best to worst:

Superb +3
Great +2
Good +1
Fair
Mediocre -1
Poor -2
Terrible -3

For example, a character with Fair Climbing skill is attempting to shimmy up the North Pole. The player rolls percentiles, and gets a +1 (72%); added to his character's Fair Climbing skill, this is a Good result. A roll of -1 would have given him a Mediocre result. If the character had a Great Climbing skill instead, a +1 result on the dice would mean a Superb result in the action. This modified result is compared to a GM-set Difficulty Level (in an Unopposed Action), or to an opposing character's own modified result (in an Opposed Action) to determine success or failure. When a character gets a "sub-Terrible" result, he has failed in just about the worst way imaginable. When the result is "trans-Superb," he has succeeded as spectacularly as possible.

If the character doesn't have an appropriate skill to attempt a task, the GM may allow the player to roll on the default level for that skill (usually Poor). The GM may call

for a roll against an attribute instead of a skill whenever it seems appropriate (asking for a Dexterity check rather than a Climbing check, in the example above), although an unskilled character should get a negative modifier to the dice roll.

Unopposed Actions

The Game Master sets a Difficulty Level for any unopposed action. This includes most ranged weapon combat; it's difficult for a character to actually hinder someone's attempt to fire at him, although if he has the Dodge skill he could attempt to dodge out of the line of fire.

The Difficulty Level should take into account everything but the character's skill (and modifiers to that skill provided by equipment or character condition). A task with a Difficulty Level of Poor is very easy, while something with a Difficulty Level of Superb is very hard. For legendary feats, set the Difficulty Level even higher (Superb +2, for example). When in doubt, set the Difficulty Level to Fair. That will give a character with a Fair skill a 62% chance of succeeding.

Opposed Actions

When attempting an opposed action (including hand-to-hand combat), the players of each contestant roll percentiles, and compare the results. The GM rolls for all NPCs. Relative Degree measures the difference between the results. If one character has a Good success in an Opposed Action, and the second character has a Mediocre success, the Relative Degree is +2 from the winner's perspective, and -2 from the loser's perspective. In combat, the winner adds the Relative Degree to his Offensive Damage Factor to determine the number of damage points inflicted.

Combat

In *Gatecrasher*, a combat phase is defined as four seconds. Each character can usually do one thing in a combat phase; operate a device, fire a weapon, move through a doorway, etc. The players of characters engaged in opposed actions will roll the dice once each combat phase; the result determines the winner of that phase.

Special Circumstances

A Terrible hit never damages the target, even if the character's opponent gets a sub-Terrible result.

When multiple opponents attack a single target, the lone fighter is at -2 to skill for each foe beyond the first. The player rolls once; compare the result with *each* of the opponents' rolls. The solo combatant has to defeat or tie *all* of the opponents in order to inflict a wound. If he beats all of his foes, he may hit one of his choice. Otherwise, he can only wound another whose result is at least two levels below his. The

lone fighter takes multiple wounds if two or more enemies hit him.

Wounds

The severity of a wound is measured in damage points. Damage Points inflicted = Offensive Damage Factor (for the weapon, plus Strength bonuses if applicable) + Relative Degree (by which the winner wins the opposed action) - Defensive Damage Factor (the target's armor, etc.). If the result is 0 or less, no damage is inflicted. If the result is positive, look at the table below to determine the level of the particular wound.

1,2	3,4	5,6	7,8	9+
Scratch	Hurt	Very Hurt	Incapac.	Nr. Death
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The boxes below the wound levels represent how many of each wound type a character can take. The player checks off one box for each wound received. A 6-point wound requires the "Very Hurt" box to be checked, and so on. If there is no open box for a given wound result, the character takes the next highest wound for which there is an open box.

A wounded character suffers penalties to most actions:

Scratch: no penalty

Hurt: -1 to most actions

Very Hurt: -2 to most actions

Incapacitated: incapable of any but the most basic, painfully slow actions

Near Death: unconscious, will die in less than an hour unless helped

Penalties are not cumulative. Only the penalty for the highest recorded wound level counts.

Scratches go away after a battle, provided the character has five or ten minutes to attend to them.

Random Icky Things and cannon-fodder NPCs have only two wound levels to worry about: Hurt (-1 to actions) and Out of Battle. Don't keep track of individual wounds; just keep adding up the damage points inflicted until there are enough of them to knock the Icky Thing Out of Battle. Track wound levels for major NPCs (Santa Claws and Rudolf) the same way you do for PCs.

Situational Rolls

A Situational Roll is used to show luck, outside events, or the overall situation. It isn't based on any character traits. Simply roll the dice. A Situational Roll of -2 gives a Poor result; the situation is not good.

The GM can use a Situational Roll to determine anything from the weather to a non-player character's attitude. In *Gatecrasher*, a Situational Roll may simulate a character's luck when casting spells, activating Supernatural Talents, and the like.

Fudge Points

Fudge Points allow players to “fudge” a game result. The PCs given here each have 1 Fudge Point; the GM is welcome to give them more. Spending a Fudge Point will allow the player or character to:

Accomplish an Unopposed action automatically and with panache. The GM may veto this use for actions with a Difficulty Level beyond Superb.

Alter a die roll one level, up or down as desired. The die roll can be one the player makes, or one the GM makes that directly concerns the player's character.

Declare that wounds aren't as bad as they first looked. This reduces one wound by one level (a Hurt becomes a Scratch, etc.).

Get an automatic +4 result.

Supernatural Talents

Gatecrasher characters all have supernormal powers. Some have cybernetic implants; some have supernatural talents (inherent magical abilities); some have honed their talents into the ability to cast magic spells. Here are descriptions for supernatural talents used in this adventure.

A character can activate a Supernatural Talent whenever he wishes (no preparation or actions or dice rolls required) simply by expending the required number of Magic Points. Talents with a listed cost of “permanent/always on” use no Magic Points and cannot be deactivated.

Create Illusion: Can create an illusion in all five senses. May change the illusion (to simulate movement, etc.) but must concentrate fiercely while doing so. Illusions will not be intense enough to inflict damage. Anyone viewing the illusion can check against Awareness (Difficulty Great) to see through the illusion. *Range:* 10 meters. *Cost:* 5 Magic Points per minute per cubic meter.

Heightened Smell: +3 on Awareness rolls involving scent. *Range:* variable. *Cost:* permanent/always on.

Heightened Strength: +3 to Strength. *Range:* Body. *Cost:* permanent/always on.

Infrared Vision: Can see infrared (heat). *Range:* Sight. *Cost:* Permanent/always on.

Invisibility: Can turn invisible (including everything carried, provided it's of a Tech equal to or less than the character's Magical Effect). Mechanical eyes of greater than the character's Magical Effect may be able to see the character, as can Infrared Vision. Doesn't confer silence or mask odor. *Range:* Body. *Cost:* 1 Magic Point per minute.

Radiation Absorption: Damage the character would take from radiation (including lasers) actually reduces the character's current Wound level. Smaller wounds heal first. For every 2 points of radiation damage absorbed, one Scratch will heal; for every 4 points, a Hurt wound will heal; for every 6 points, a Very Hurt wound will heal, and so on. Absorption does not work with explosive damage. *Range:* Body. *Cost:* Permanent/always on.

Resist Cold: Takes half damage from cold. *Range:* Body. *Cost:* 1 Magic Point per 10 minutes.

Resist Heat: Suffers only half damage from heat, including heat-based attacks. *Range:* Body. *Cost:* 1 Magic Point per 10 minutes.

Shapeshifting: Lycanthropes can switch between human and animal form at will, at a cost of 10 Magic Points for each transformation. Character must stay in current form for at least 1 hour before making another transformation.

Magic

Casting a Spell

The steps for casting a spell are:

Determine how many Magic Points to expend. Spells are listed with a Cost – expending that number of Magic Points will cause the spell to work as described. Increasing the number of Magic Points increases one aspect of the spell's effects. Increases must be in whole multiples of the base Cost. Example: casting a Dissipation with 5 Magic Points (normal cost is 1) will dissipate 5d6 Magic Points from the target.

Have the character devote the necessary time and actions (speech and/or gestures) to cast the spell.

Roll against the character's Magic Ability, Difficulty Level Good, to see if the magician successfully casts the spell. (Add the spell's Ease to the character's roll.) Wounded characters suffer the normal penalties for wounds.

Roll against the character's Magic Targeting skill (only necessary for spells requiring targeting, such as Dissipation and Pyrokinesis). Set the Difficulty Level based on circumstances such as range, whether or not the target is moving, etc. (base Difficulty Level Fair).

Determine the spell's effects, based on the spell's description and any further dice rolls required.

Tech vs. Spell-Casting

When a magician casts a spell on something with a Tech Level higher than his Magical Effect, the player must make a Situational Roll. On a Good (+1) or better result, the spell works. There's a -1 penalty for every two Tech levels the item exceeds the character's Magical Effect.

Spells

Characters that have studied to be magicians can shape magical energy to cast spells. Here are some spell descriptions. To see how to use spells in the game, see *Casting a Spell*, p. 23.

Aura (Ease +3, Cost 1)

Range: Sight.

Actions: none.

Time to Cast: 1 combat phase.

Duration: 1 second.

The magician can see magical auras around everything in his field of view. The aura shows how many Magic Points a person has, and, with a successful Magical Familiarity check (Difficulty Level Fair), any magical effects (curses, domination, etc.). When looking at an object, the magician can see how many Magic Points it has, if any, and on a Fair or better Magical Familiarity check can see any enchantments, magical markings, or effects.

Barrier (Ease +3, Cost 2)

Range: caster's body.

Actions: must make gestures.

Time to Cast: 1 second.

Duration: 1 hour, or until spell is used up.

The magician glows brick-red during casting. Barrier creates a magical wall around the caster. Barrier negates one spell or Supernatural Talent directed at the caster or his belongings. The magician may expend additional Magic Points at the time of casting to increase the number of spells Barrier will negate.

Deceleration (Ease +4, Cost 5)

Range: 12 meters.

Actions: must speak and gesture.

Time to Cast: 2 combat phases.

Duration: 5 combat phases.

The recipient moves at half normal speed. Extending additional Magic Points does not lower speed further, but does extend the spell's duration. The effects of poison may also be reduced to half normal speed.

Dissipation (Ease +4, Cost 1)

Range: 12 meters.

Actions: gesture only.

Time to Cast: 3 combat phases.

Duration: permanent.

A target hit with Dissipation loses 1d6 Magic Points (visible as rays of prismatic light erupting from the target). Dissipated creatures regain lost Magic Points normally; dissipated magic items must be recharged or re-enchanted.

Empathy (Ease +4, Cost 1)

Range: 30 meters.

Actions: none necessary.

Time to Cast: 1 second.

This spell gives the caster a complete emotional picture of one person of the caster's choice within range. For 10 magic points, Empathy can be used to scan an area (within 30 meters) for self-aware creatures.

Firestorm (Ease +3, Cost 6)

Range: 6 meters.

Actions: must speak and gesture.

Time to Cast: 2 combat phases.

Duration: 1 second.

Firestorm fills 8 cubic meters with a cloud of flame, doing 3 points of damage to everything in the area and igniting anything flammable. Increasing Magic Points will multiply either area of effect or damage done.

Heal (Ease +3, Cost 10)

Range: touch.

Actions: must speak and gesture.

Time to Cast: 1 combat phase.

Duration: permanent.

This spell heals one wound one level. It will not restore missing limbs or other body parts.

Pyrokinesis (Ease +4, Cost 5)

Range: 13 meters.

Actions: must speak and gesture.

Time to Cast: 1 second.

A line of flame leaps from the mage to the target. Pyrokinesis does 3 points of heat damage to whatever it hits (roll against Magical Targeting to hit, Difficulty Level Fair). If the target is flammable, it begins burning for an additional point of heat damage per combat phase. If the caster misses, the spell hits 1d6 meters from the intended target.

Regaining Magic Points

Characters recover Magic Points through sleep and/or meditation. For every four hours of sleep or meditation, recovery is as follows:

3 per level of Id (beginning with Terrible; characters with Fair Id recover 12 points), maximum 50 per day (cannot exceed normal Magic Points level).

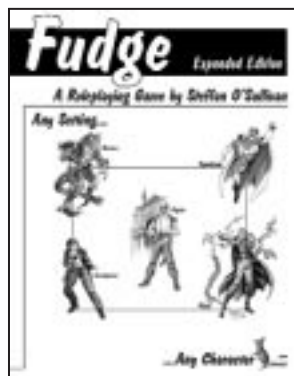
This rate drops to 2 per level of Id when within the semi-automated factory installed by Santa Claws (Tech interferes with the flow of magical energy).

The Only Rule You Really Need To Know

When in doubt, just fudge it! Simply have things happen in a way that will let the players have fun. If you don't see a rule that covers a particular in-game situation, just use your best judgment.

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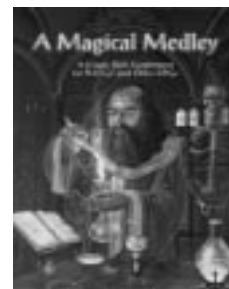
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