



THRILLING TALES  
ADM3230

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AN UNDERGROUND  
EMPIRE

A MERCENARY  
ARMY

AND

A TERRIFYING  
DESPOT

KEITH A.  
GARRETT &  
ERIC  
TRAUTMANN

# THE SUBTERRANEAN MONARCH



A SUPPLEMENT FOR

## THRILLING TALES





## PULP VILLAINS

# THE SUBTERRANEAN MONARCH

by Keith A. Garrett  
with Eric Trautmann

### WHAT LURKS BELOW...

*"Oh, yes, my children! Like you, I have been hunted. Like you, my birthright was lost to misadventure and folly. While you toiled in darkness, deep beneath the surface, you lost your way. You forgot your illustrious history! And above you, weak-minded simpletons have forged kingdoms that are but pale imitations of your forebears. They have grown fat and decadent, and are unworthy of their purloined place in the sun.*

*"But no more! I will restore your kingdom. I will rule. And I will finally reap the rewards owed to me...and elevate you back to your rightful glory!*

*"Woe betide any who stand against the Subterranean Monarch! Forward, my Mantle Men! Forward to victory, in the name of your god-king!"*

**ARTHUR SLINGSBY WAS** orphaned as an infant in the late 1800s, never knowing his parents. As a child and into his early adulthood, he operated as a minor confidence trickster (and later, a machinist and part-time inventor) drifting between London and Belfast. It was in Belfast that he learned that, long ago, his family had some small claim to nobility—a peerage, a small barony in England, long fallen into ruin.

In the early 1900s, he was forced to flee Belfast after one of his gifts put him at odds with a local crime figure. Settling in rural England, he moved into an abandoned manor—the last crumbling holdout of his family's former glory.

His family's fortunes had fallen

prey to the obsessions of Malcolm Surewood Stanley Duncombe-Parker, the Third (and last) "Baron of Macclesfield." Malcolm was obsessed with the idea of lost civilizations—ancient cultures that had amassed vast technological and occult powers, only to be swallowed up and shrouded in the mists of antiquity.

Malcolm extravagantly spent the family fortunes, investing in trade expeditions to the Galapagos Islands and acquisition of rare volumes of mystic lore and lost history, before finally dying in poverty and dementia in Bedlam.

Malcolm had studied the works of Madame Blavatsky intensely—even sporadically corresponding with her—and was particularly obsessed with her writings on the lost continent of Atlantis. Malcolm

believed that Atlantis had existed, a city-state of vast wonders and treasure that had succumbed to an ancient catastrophe. He further theorized that pockets of the Atlantean civilization had escaped the calamity and fled into the world. He believed that a diaspora of Atlanteans had formed colonies within the Earth's crust—a culture of advanced beings living just below the skin of the world.

By 1919, Arthur Slingsby (now calling himself a "Baron" and adopting the persona of "Arthur Slingsby Duncombe-Parker," ersatz Peer of the Realm) had managed to restore portions of the Macclesfield manor house. In addition, he had engineered—from his ancestor's copious notes—a "vibrational particulate detector array," a device he was convinced would locate emissions from Atlantean technology and lead him to one of that civilization's lost colonies.

By 1921, Arthur had located an entrance to the underworld. He became its ruler the following year.

Duncombe-Parker was searching for evidence of the "vibrational particulates" that Malcolm had postulated, and successfully located traces of them, deep within the Earth's mantle, and accessible through a massive cavern beneath

the manor. More than that, he discovered a primitive civilization—calling itself the "Vol-Tay Bajuu"—living in vast caverns that extended under the rest of the countryside for many miles.

Reasoning that he could use a population of superstitious primitives as a labor force, Duncombe-Parker conceived a plan to recruit them. He used one of his inventions to generate earthquakes and employed it to panic the underground natives, then presented himself to the people—in a pidgin form of their language, culled from his great uncle's copious notes—and pretended to rescue them using his advanced technology.

The scheme worked better than Duncombe-Parker had hoped. The natives—whom Duncombe-Parker calls his "Mantle Men"—fell upon the ground, swearing their allegiance to the surface-dweller, declaring him a deity.

The Mantle Men refer to Duncombe-Parker as "Lotokka-Quorr," which roughly translates as "God King"; the Mantle Men absolutely consider him to be their lord and master and are fiercely devoted to him and his chosen lieutenants.



## "BARON" ARTHUR SLINGSBY DUNCOMBE-PARKER

LOTOKKA-QUORR OF THE KINGDOM BELOW



**Attributes:** Agility d6,  
Smarts d12, Spirit d12,  
Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8,  
Intimidation d10,  
Knowledge (Geology) d12,  
Knowledge (Subterranean  
Earth) d12, Notice d8,  
Persuasion d12, Repair  
d12, Shooting d8, Weird  
Science d12

**Charisma:** +4; **Pace:** 6;  
**Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** Arrogant, Stubborn,  
Vow (Major, Rule the World)

**Edges:** Arcane Background  
(Weird Science), Charismatic,  
Command, Followers, Gadgeteer,  
Inspire, Natural Leader, Noble,  
Filthy Rich, Strong Willed

**Gizmos:** Earth-phase Belt (see  
page 13), Earthquake Pistol  
(see page 13), Magma Rifle  
(see page 14).



## THE METHODS OF A MAD KING

Duncombe-Parker's initial interest in the subterranean world was founded in greed. His dreams of wealth were quickly borne out as the Mantle Men could wrest precious metals and stones from the earth with ease.

Over time, however, his power over the Mantle Men proved even more satisfying to him than the acquisition of wealth, and he began to plan a takeover of the surface world, as well—dreaming of a united world, under his control.

Through the 1920s and into the 1930s, the Baron and his Mantle Men extended the tunnels of the Mantle Men's environment, creating what Duncombe-Parker calls "The Kingdom Below." His "kingdom" is located deep under the earth's surface—a complex of caves and unmapped passageways that extend hundreds—or perhaps thousands—of miles in every direction (and causing small earthquakes and volcanic eruptions throughout the process).

So far, the Baron has spent his time creating his underground kingdom, "civilizing" his Mantle Men (teaching them English while studying their language), and preparing his surface army for action. Soon, he will use these resources to gather wealth, acquire more formidable weapons, and begin taking control of the surface world.

To speed the expansion of his empire, Duncombe-Parker created a fleet of "drillmobiles"—large, tracked vehicles crafted from exotic metals and ores mined from deep within the Earth. These vehicles speed the creation of additional tunnels.

The drillmobiles also serve as combat vehicles and troop

transports, creating underground passageways to virtually any city on Earth and delivering raiding parties into the hearts of armories, banks, or other intended target. Earthquakes of increasing intensity are harbingers of an impending attack from below.

Duncombe-Parker's ultimate plan is to amass uncountable wealth, then launch terror attacks that shatter cities, forcing the nations of the world to bow to his ultimate control. Once pacified, he intends to bring the glories of ancient Atlantis to life, and consign humanity to eternal servitude in the darkness of the underworld.

## SERVANTS OF THE SUBTERRANEAN MONARCH MANTLE MEN

These primitive underground dwellers are a tribe of humans of unknown origin who diverged culturally from their surface brethren centuries ago, after their forebears fled some legendary topside catastrophe. Duncombe-Parker believes they are of Atlantean descent.

Inhabiting simple villages built into caves and tunnels, the Mantle Men are ruled by a small tribal council, led—until the arrival of Duncombe-Parker—by a high priest/chieftan, or "Akkatta-Quorr."

The current Akkatta-Quorr, Duukal-Quon, is secretly suspicious of Duncombe-Parker, but is dutiful in honoring the wishes of his new god-king.

The rest of the Mantle Men revere Duncombe-Parker as a savior and would follow him straight to their blinding, brightly-lit hell. They are significantly less friendly toward the Baron's new guests—the surface soldiers, many of whom

## PULP VILLAINS: THE SUBTERRANEAN MONARCH

mistreat the Mantle Men whenever the Baron isn't watching.

The Baron uses the Mantle Men as his personal slave labor force. They know the underground better than any other living creatures, they serve as its guards, operate its ancient machinery, and provide for all the Baron's needs.

The Mantle Men are unsophisticated—their lack of knowledge of the surface world puts them at a disadvantage when dealing with outsiders—though they are far from stupid.

Their religion (a complicated blend of superstitions and mistranslated Atlantean lore) focuses on elevated beings of "warm shadow" who descended from the world above and who served as stern deities. Their hell is an endless blinding realm of pure light that incinerates its inhabitants for eternity. (Mantle Men are consequently terrified of electric lights of sufficient brightness.)

There are further legends of monsters from the deepest caverns, titantic worms burrowing from the Earth's core, bringing rivers of magma with them. The source of those tales have been lost to time, but Duncombe-Parker views them as silly fairy tales.

Mantle Men wear very little clothing—usually just a loin cloth over their pale skin—and on their forays to the surface they wear protective goggles and simple tunics and belts (threaded with Atlantean alloys to provide additional, albeit rudimentary, protection).

### **VOL-TAY BAJUU/MANTLE MEN**

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Driving d4, Fighting d6, Healing d6, Knowledge (Subterranean Earth)

d10, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Throwing d6

**Charisma:** -; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

**Hindrances:** Illiterate, Loyal

**Edges:** —

**Gear:** Goggles, Knife (Str+d4), Spear (Str+d6)

### **Special Abilities**

**Weakness (Bright Light):** Mantle Men are Blind when in areas of bright light (or what surface dwellers would consider "normal light." When on a mission to the surface, Mantle Men usually wear goggles to protect their eyes from this effect.

### **DUU-KAL-QUON**

Duu-Kal-Quon is the "Akkatta-Quor" (high priest and chieftain) of the Mantle Men, who ruled his people peacefully for many years. With the arrival of Duncombe-Parker, his standing has been reduced, but—as required by his religion—he serves his new god-king faithfully.

Duu-Kal-Quon is one of the few that can decipher the glyphs and symbols of his ancestors (though his understanding of them is incomplete; the Mantle Men's comprehension of their written history has been degraded over the centuries. Duncombe-Parker works closely with Duu-Kal-Quon, as he attempts to piece together a working lexicon of the Mantle Men's lost written language.

Duu-Kal-Quon is slightly taller and thinner than his fellow Mantle Men. He wears a primitive headdress fashioned from hammered metal, and carries a stone and metal staff—a totem that supports a softball-sized crystal



formation and which may have strange abilities.

He quietly despises the commander of Duncombe-Parker's mercenary company, Bastiaan van der Bil, for the upworlder's naked disdain for the Mantle Men; the fact that they are now roughly equivalent in the tribal hierarchy also rankles.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Subterranean Earth) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Survival d10

**Charisma:** 0; **Pace:** 6, **Parry:** 6, **Toughness:** 7

**Hindrances:** Loyal

**Edges:** Command, Gadget\*

**Gear:** Goggles, Knife (Str +d4), Staff of Huu-Baju (see below).

### Special Abilities:

**Gadget:** Staff of Huu-Baju—staff mounted with Atlantean crystal. If used as staff, Str+d4 damage. As a gadget, staff has 20 power points (and recharges 1/hour). Using the Shooting skill, the Akkatta-Quor can project a sonic bolt (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6, +Deafen (as per *Savage Worlds* rulebook, page 107)). Using the Persuasion skill, the Akkatta-Quor can use the crystal to summon a Magma Worm (as per the Summon Ally power in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook, page 117, with a cost of 7. Duration is 3 rounds, plus 1 additional round per each power point spent to maintain.).



Duu-Kal-Quon

### Weakness (Bright Light):

Mantle Men are Blind when in areas of bright light (or what surface dwellers would consider "normal light." When on a mission to the surface, Mantle Men usually wear goggles to protect their eyes from this effect.

\* indicates an edge from the *Thrilling Tales* core book.

### THE STONE FISTS OF LOTOKKA-QUORR

The Mantle Men are plentiful, but not inherently good warriors; to augment his ranks, Duncombe-Parker has recruited an army

## PULP VILLAINS: THE SUBTERRANEAN MONARCH

mercenary soldiers brought down from the surface world.

This army (the “Ekkit-Muoor,” or “Stone Fists,” in the language of the Mantle Men) is a melting pot of disenfranchised, opportunistic individuals from numerous nations—most with military training and experience from their service in the Great War).

The field commander of the Ekkit-Muoor is Bastiaan van der Biil, a veteran of the Second Boer War. Van der Biil was a *veldkornet* in the Boer commando, and is bad-tempered, violent, ruthless, cunning, and cruel. He secretly plans to overthrow Duncombe-Parker, but is held in check by the Baron’s personal arsenal—the Boer soldier is deeply suspicious of the exotic weapons that the Subterranean Monarch and his Mantle Men have crafted—and fear of the Magma Men’s response to an attempt usurpation.

He also knows the men under his command are loyal only to money, and as such, can’t trust any of them not to try and overthrow him in turn.

In addition, Duncombe-Parker has hinted that, somewhere below the surface lies a massive diamond, one which the Baron continues to search for. While the search for the gem continues, van der Biil is forced to bide his time.

Until he can find a means of assuming control, he takes his frustrations out on the Mantle Men who cross his path and despises Duu-kal-Quan.

### BASTIAAN VAN DER BIIL

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Climbing d8, Driving d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Survival d8

**Charisma:** -2; **Pace:** 6, **Parry:** 6, **Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** Mean

**Edges:** Hard to Kill, No Mercy

**Gear:** Knife (Str +d4), Pair of M1910 Bergmann-Bayard pistols



*Bastiaan van der Biil.*



(Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6+1, Shots: 6), Martini-Henry MKI SX Artillery Carbine (Range: 24/48/96, Damage: 2d8+1, ROF: 1, Shots: 5, AP2)

#### EKKIT-MUJOR SURFACE SOLDIERS

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Driving d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8

**Charisma:** -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** Greedy (Minor), Mean

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes

**Gear:** Earthquake Pistol (Cone Template, ROF: 1, Shots: 5) or Magma Rifle (Mode 1: 15/30/60 Damage: 2d6, ROF: 1, Shots: 5; Mode 2: 12/24/48, Barrier, ROF: 1, Shots: 10\*)

## THE STRANGE LEGENDS OF THE MANTLE MEN

The Mantle Men practice a form of ancestor worship—honoring the kings and queens who came before, through an oral tradition that requires a thorough recitation of the “Akkatta-O-Kun” (a comprehensive listing of all the tribe’s prior leaders).

To become Akkatta-Quorr (the head of the tribe), one must be conversant enough in the remains of their ancestral written tongue to “bring forth the baleful light of the Staff of Huu-Baju”—a series of incantations that illuminate the crystal mounted in the artifact.

Among the Mantle Men’s beliefs are stories of ancient god kings, who led their people through a terrifying cataclysm and into the comforting safety of their underground domain. These ancestors’ names are unknown, but the legends of them collectively refer to them as the “Lotokka-Tu-Shah” and refer to their abilities to reshape the stone into complex



tunnel systems, create magical devices (such as the Staff of Huu-Baju), and summon tremendous earthquakes to defeat foes.

In Mantle Men mythology, the Lotokka-Tu-Shah are portrayed as capricious, prone to conflict amongst themselves, and vindictive. A common mantra recited by the Akkatta-Quor is "Ko Vasha Von Da-Allo, Pra Ka Lo Makk-Ta Sheh" (which translates to "The god kings are cold as stone, and woe betide those who fail to honor them..."). To "modern" Mantle Men, this means the long-lost god kings were creatures with hearts of literal stone.

The fall of the Lotokka-Tu-Shah, according to Mantle Men

tales, came from a pitched battle with strange, demonic figures—worms that ride the underground currents of magma. Mantle Men live in perpetual fear of a return of these creatures, and many secretly believe that the rise of a new Lotokka (Duncombe-Parker) may summon these hellish beasts from the depths.

The story that most interests Duncombe-Parker is one of a massive crystal—thousands of feet in diameter—that lies miles below the main Mantle Men settlements (deeper than the primitive tribe is generally comfortable with), a gem he believes is a diamond of unprecedented size and value.

### **A BRIEF MANTLE MEN LEXICON**

**Akkatta-O-Kun:** A ritual recitation of the complete lineage of all former Akkatta-Quor (Priests/Chieftains). Roughly: "The Names of our Holy Kings."

**Akkatta-Quor:** Priest/Chief. "Akkatta" meaning "holy" or "chosen"; "Quor" meaning "Leader"/"Chief"/"King"; "Quor" is similar in meaning to "Quorr," though the elongated "R" sound denotes a higher level of divinity—the source of divine power, rather than the chosen recipient of divine power.

**Cha-Tes Lo Kaa:** "The Shining Heart," a legendary gem of tremendous size and possibly magical power.

**Ekkit-Muuor:** "Fists of Stone." The term refers to soldiers on a holy mission.

**Fes-Ah-Nay-Takka:** "The Beyond Place." The Mantle Men term for the surface world.

**Huu-Baju:** The name of an artifact of power; "Huu" meaning "Gift", "Baju" denoting an inheritance.

**Ka-Voh-Sah:** A Mantle Men cry of surrender, usually screamed. Roughly: "Don't take my blood!"

(CONT.)



### A BRIEF MANTLE MEN LEXICON (CONT.)

**Ko Va Naa-a Loh Tey:** A formal greeting, requiring a formal response.

**Ko Vasha Von Da-Allo, Pra Ka Lo Makk-Ta Sheh:** A Mantle Men mantra/proverb: "The god kings are cold as stone, and woe betide those who fail to honor them." The implication of the phrase is that all "Lotokka" are infallible and as "perfect" as stone—they are not made of mortal flesh and blood.

**Lah Tey-Ko Naa-A:** A required response to a formal greeting. Failure to provide the response is considered a grave insult.

**Lotokka-Quorr:** "God King" ("Lotokka" meaning "Infallible" or "Divine," "Quorr" meaning "Leader"/"Chief"/King).

**Lotokka-Tu-Shah:** "The First God Kings"; the pantheon of god kings that the Mantle Men believe led their people to safety from the Atlantean cataclysm.

**Maa-Geh Lotokka-Ey:** "God Eater." The name of a legendary species of titanic worm that swims in magma and is responsible for the deaths of the Mantle Men's ancient gods.

**Sha-Oh-Ta:** "Stone And Blood." A combat ritual, to resolve disputes—opponents stand in a stone circle and try to kill each other with stone clubs. It is a battle to the death.

**Ta-Voh-Toh:** A Mantle Men battle cry, usually screamed. Roughly: "I will take your blood!"

**Vah-Oh-Ney-Lah:** "The Kingdom Below." The Mantle Men term for their underground environment.

**Vol-Tay Bajuu:** The Mantle Men ("Vol-Tay" meaning "The Stone People" and "Bajuu" meaning "Inheritors")

## THE STRANGE MACHINERIES OF THE KINGDOM BELOW

Duncombe-Parker's natural affinity for engineering coupled with the bizarre artifacts of the Mantle Men has resulted in the creation of several weapons and vehicles, which the Subterranean Monarch uses to further his schemes.

### DRILLMOBILES

The Baron has built a fleet of these tunneling tanks and uses them both to carve out his subterranean empire and to travel to the surface world. Drillmobiles tunnel through solid rock using a high-speed drill that takes up the entire front of the vehicle. The designs have been adapted from stolen schematics of German armored vehicles from the Great War, and upgraded with the unique ores and metals mined by the Mantle Men.

**Acc/TS:** 5/15

**Toughness:** 20/10/10 (2/1/1)

**Crew:** 1+5

**Cost:** \$30,000

**Notes:** Heavy Armor, Sloped Armor, Tracked

### Weapons:

Earthquake Gun (Cone Template, ROF 1, Shots 5)

Magma Gun (Mode 1: 15/30/60 Damage 2d6, ROF 1, Shots 5; Mode 2: 12/24/48, barrier, ROF 1, Shots 10\*)

\* Each shot in mode 2 is treated as one Power Point for the "Barrier" power. Any number can be expended in a single shot.

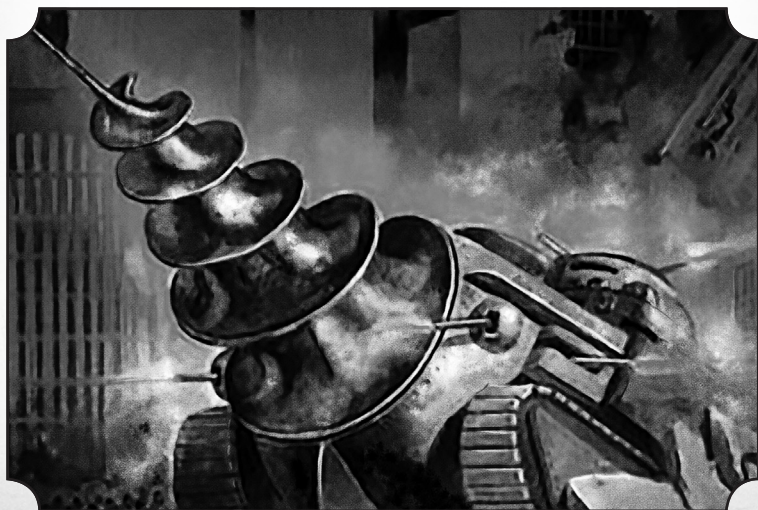
### DRILLMOBILE TROOP CARRIER CAR

When the Baron wishes to send an army to the surface (made up of either Mantle Men or Surface Soldiers, but almost never both), this is the form of transportation he uses. These cars attach to the back of a drillmobile, which can haul a train of six of them without losing speed.

**Acc/TS - ; Toughness** 12 (2)

**Crew** 0+25; **Cost** \$5,000

**Malfunction:** On a malfunction, the operator either fails to phase





at all, or succeeds at entering solid matter but the device fails while phased, trapping and perhaps suffocating the user (using the drowning rules on page 100 of the *Savage Worlds* rulebook).

## EARTH-PHASE BELT

When cornered, the Baron's primary escape plan is his Earth-Phase belt. When activated (by turning a dial mounted in the belt's buckle), this device allows the Baron to phase through solid matter long enough to find a hallway or tunnel suitable for fleeing the heroes so he can fight them another day.

Activating the device causes the user disorientation and some discomfort—one can “feel” the material they are passing through. The user is also still subject to physical requirements, like breathable air. This limits the range of the device to how long the wearer can hold his or her breath.

Activating the Earth-Phase Belt requires a Weird Science roll. The belt's effect uses the “Burrow” power from the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.

## EARTHQUAKE PISTOL

This sleek silver weapon uses the power of vibration waves to cause a highly localized mini-earthquake around nearby targets. The Baron carries one of these guns, as do his senior officers who can be trusted to only use them when there's no danger of bowling over their own nearby troops by mistake.

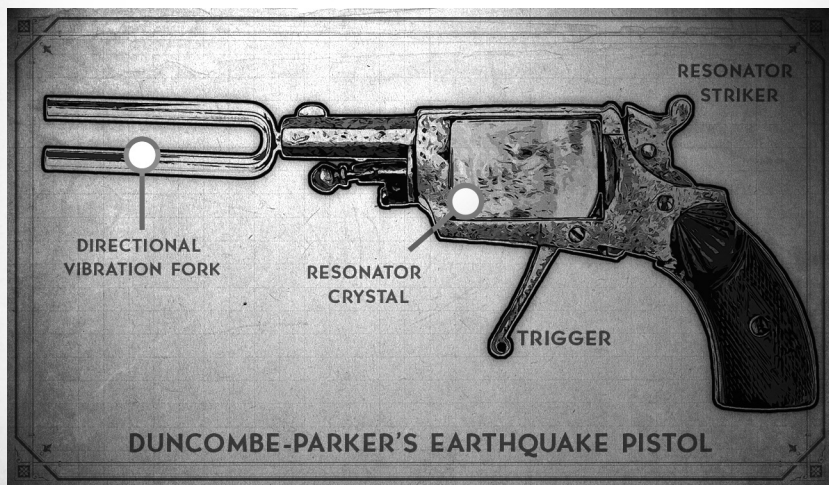
The earthquake gun uses the pummel power from the *Savage Worlds* rulebook. Firing it requires a Shooting test.

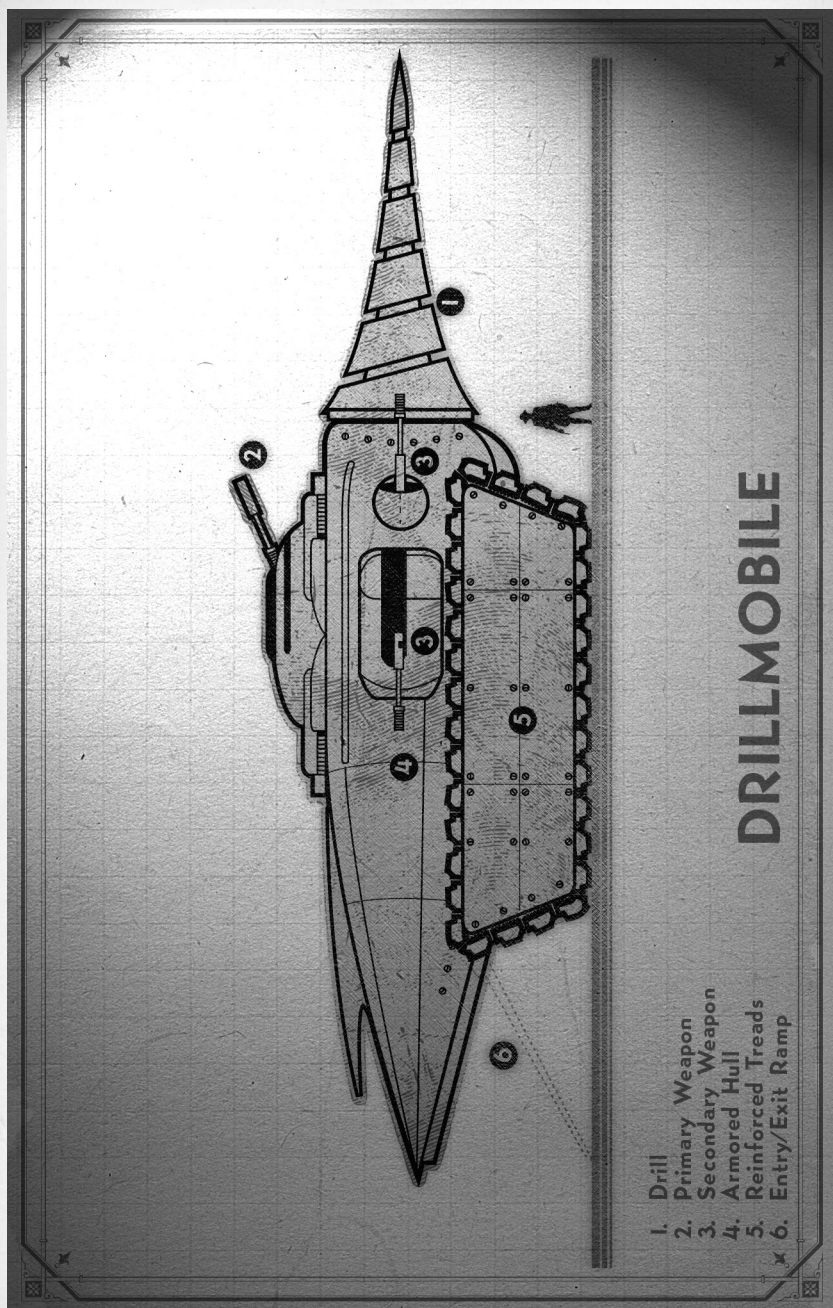
**Range:** Cone Template;

**Damage:** pummel; ROF: 1;

**Shots:** 5

**Malfunction:** On a roll of 1 on the Shooting die (regardless of the result of any Wild Die), the user is also targeted in the earthquake gun's effect. The user must also make a Strength roll at -2, with failure indicating that he drops the gun.





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## MAGMA RIFLE

The magma rifle is based on a surface world rifle design, cast in Mantle Men exotic metals capable of dealing with extreme heat and pressure. A liquid reservoir is slung under the barrel, with a quick-release lever for rapid reloading.

The magma gun has two settings: Mode 1 fires a blast of heat at a single target, and Mode 2 creates a wall of magma that solidifies instantly (as the “barrier” power from the *Savage Worlds* rulebook).

**Mode 1 Range:** 15/30/60,  
**Damage:** 2d6; **ROF:** 1; **Shots:** 5

**Mode 2 Range:** 12/24/48,  
**Damage:** Barrier; **ROF:** 1;  
**Shots:** 10\*

\* Each shot in mode 2 is treated as one Power Point for the barrier power. Any number can be expended in a single shot.

**Malfunction:** On a roll of 1 on the Shooting die (regardless of the result of any Wild Die), the magma gun fails in a way that depends on its current mode: a Mode 1 failure causes the rifle to blow up in the user’s hand, causing 3d6 damage to everyone in a Medium Burst Template, while a Mode 2 misfire results in the gun becoming petrified (possibly along with the user’s hand, or another nearby target). The petrification is not reversible.



MAGMA RIFLE

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

### WHAT LIES BENEATH...

A series of bizarre events rock the player characters' area of operations: strange rumblings emanating seemingly from nowhere in the dead of night; entire buildings suddenly disappearing, leaving behind only craters; bank vaults being ransacked, with their massive steel doors melted to slag.

The only clue available to the player characters is an eccentric scientist developing sensitive experimental detection technology (seismic, or possibly parallel development of the "vibrational particulate" apparatus pioneered by Duncombe-Parker), who claims something is moving beneath the ground and who is being dismissed as a "kooky egghead" by the authorities. (He may be an acquaintance of one or more of the PCs; alternately, he could seek them out due to their reputation, or even be directed to them by an exasperated police contact of the group.)

The scientist—Professor Barnham "Doc" Dixon—demonstrates his equipment (which indicates that the recent strikes are clearly forming a path toward a local armory which contains a variety of explosives).

If the PCs intervene, they will face the Ekkitt-Muor and a handful of Mantle Men. They have now attracted the attention of the Subterranean Monarch!

### WHERE IN THE WORLD IS DUNCOMBE-PARKER?

Once the player characters are aware of the threat that is Baron Duncombe-Parker, they may wish to take the fight to him, attempting

to identify him and find a path into the underworld. The Mantle Men (and surface soldiers) often rig their tunnels to collapse behind them, so there's no guarantee that anyone can follow a drillmobile's tracks back to the source. In addition, the Baron may have multiple headquarters—and even various underground cities—at his disposal.

Nonetheless, wily adventurers still have options: they could interrogate (or impersonate) the Baron's soldiers; they might find clues that suggest the Baron is maintaining a residence in a particular surface city (either his original manor or one of several alternate homes); or they may figure out a target they could present to the Baron that would lure him into sending his troops—then arrange to capture or follow them.

The PCs may succeed in capturing a Mantle Man and releasing him in order to track the strange creature back into the depths of the Earth...and into the lair of the Subterranean Monarch.

### ONE OF OUR SCIENTISTS IS MISSING!

A Mantle Men strike succeeds in kidnapping a key ally to the player characters (such as "Doc" Dixon). The abductee manages to leave a trail for the PCs to follow (a radio signal; a seismic "ticker" used to calibrate detection equipment; or other campaign-appropriate method).

The rescue operation could be complicated by the PCs being captured themselves and forcing them deeper into the underground during an escape.

Alternately, their ally could be so



fascinated by the Mantle Men they wish to remain behind to study this culture and unlock the secrets of their strange technology.

## THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING

Van der Biil's desire to take over Van der Biil's plan to usurp Duncombe-Parker's role as head of the Mantle Men is set into motion. The PCs are captured or lured underground to confront the Boer mercenary, who claims to know the location of a slave colony of Mantle Men laboring on a terror project for Duncombe-Parker—diverting channels of magma to the surface to trigger volcanic eruptions that could destroy entire cities. "I'm a soldier, not a madman," he tells them. He suggests that they use a Mantle Men conflict-resolution ritual, "Sha-Oh-Ta," to settle the matter. He indicates one need only invoke the ritual and the matter will

resolve itself; he fails to mention that Sha-Oh-Ta is a battle to the death. Defeating Duncombe-Parker (and his various weapons) will be difficult enough; complicating matters is van der Biil's seizure of a Drillmobile and his subsequent release of a flood of magma to cover his tracks (as he searches for Cha-Tes Lo Kaa, the fabled mystical diamond).

If the PCs defeat Duncombe-Parker, one or more of them may be confronted by Duu-Kal-Quon; they have proven surface dwellers like Duncombe-Parker are most assuredly not deities (especially if one of them draws blood from the charlatan "god king"); fast talking will be required to prevent the tribe from tearing the PCs apart.

Allying with the Mantle Men can allow the PCs to hunt down van der Biil. Failing that, the PCs will have to race against the incoming flood of lava!



## LET THE WORLD ABOVE BURN!

Alternately, the PCs discover that the Subterranean Monarch plans to use lava and volcanic eruptions as a weapon (as outlined above)—but he plans simultaneous strikes against several cities. The PCs must venture into his territory in a captured Drillmobile in a race against time—and a fleet of the Baron's exotic vehicles—to divert the magma back to where it originated, and destroy Duncombe-Parker's operation in the process.

Can the heroes find out what cities to protect—perhaps by befriending some Mantle Men (or turn Duu-Kal-Quon into an ally) or developing a drilldozer detector—and then help them mount a defense in time to stop the beginning of Underworld War I?

## RIDE OF THE MAGMA WORMS

Duncombe-Parker and van der Biil discover Cha-Tes Lo Kaa and learns that it is not a diamond; it is a unique crystal formation that emanates energy connected to the

various crystal based weapons of the Mantle Men.

Duncombe-Parker intends to use it to make larger, more powerful weapons; van der Biil intends to use it to make himself impossibly wealthy (once Duncombe-Parker is out of the way). The Mantle Men and the PCs are caught in the middle, as they surface dwellers spark a subterranean civil war.

As the battle for the crystal rages, the proximity of the Mantle Men's crystal powered weapons and artifacts (notably the Staff of Huu-Baju) create a strange harmonic—one that summons the terrible beasts of the depths, the Magma Worms!

If the Magma Worms, frenzied, destroy the crystal, all of the underworld will collapse, and the Mantle Men will be doomed.





## MAGMA WORMS

### LEGENDARY SUBTERRANEAN HORROR

Massive worms, 50 feet in length, tunneling through the earth, and capable of projecting magma from their digestive tracts. Magma worms sense vibrations through the earth, hearing a walking person at around 200 yards.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d10, Strength d12+10, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d10, Shooting d8, Stealth d10.

**Pace:** 6, **Parry:** 5,  
**Toughness:** 22 (4)

**Special Abilities:**

- **Armor:** +4 (Scaly Hide).
- **Bite:** Str + d8.
- **Burrow (20"):** Magma worms can disappear and reappear on the following action, anywhere within 20".
- **Gargantuan:** The worms are Huge and thus suffer +4 to attacks against them. Their attacks count as Heavy Weapons, and their Armor is Heavy Armor.
- **Hardy:** The creature does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Magma blast:** Magma worms can vomit forth a stream of hot magma using the Cone Template. Characters within the cone must beat the worm's Shooting roll

with Agility or suffer 2d10 damage, plus the chance of catching fire.

- **Size +10:** Magma worms are approximately 50' long and up to 10' in diameter.
- **Slam:** Magma worms attempt to rise up and crush their prey beneath their massive bodies. This is an opposed roll of the creature's Fighting vs the target's Agility. If the worm wins, the victim suffers 4d6 damage.
- **Weakness (Water):** Magma worms suffer an additional 1d10 damage when doused with at least a gallon of water, +2 per additional gallon.
- **Weakness (Cold):** Magma worms are Fatigued by attacks based on cold.
- **Weakness (Staff of Huu-Baju):** The staff repels them and can, in certain cases, roughly direct the creatures (with a successful Spirit test).

## WE HAFF VAYS OF MAKING YOU DIG

The Nazi occult society, the Ahnenerbe, has become aware of the existence of the Mantle Men and their underworld realm, and have launched *Operation: UNTERVELT* to form an alliance with the Baron.

The PCs may become aware of this by intercepting communications between Nazi spies who are attempting to locate the mysterious Baron.

For his part, the Baron has few sympathies with the Nazi Party—and indeed would prefer to control the world himself—but he is willing to meet with them to see what they're willing to offer. This meeting might take place (covertly) at the Baron's manor, at another place controlled by the Baron (such as an island base), or on neutral ground in a country neighboring Germany. If the meeting doesn't go favorably for the Nazis, they will consider forcibly annexing the *Unterwelt*—assuming they learn how to find it.

## IT'S LONELY UNDERGROUND

Feeling the need to have an heir to carry on his underground empire, the Baron is seeking a bride. Only the best candidates will do for the Baron, so he abducts women from around the world: an heiress, a movie star, a scientist, and other such notable ladies. The heroes must find out where the Baron has taken them (likely one of his impressive above-ground mansions) and either infiltrate the place or find some other way to get the women out without endangering them.





## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Keith Garrett** is a freelance writer from Memphis. He's been a roleplayer for 30 years, and firmly believes you can never have too many dice. You can find his gaming-skewed blog at [adventuresofkeithgarrett.com](http://adventuresofkeithgarrett.com).

**Eric Trautmann** was the *Star Wars* line editor at West End Games; later, he was a founding member of Microsoft's entertainment licensing apparatus, wrote dialogue and ancillary material for videogames like *Halo: Combat Evolved* and *Crimson Skies*. He has written for DC Comics on titles like *Checkmate*, *Final Crisis: Resist*, and *JSA vs. Kobra: Engines of Faith*. Currently, he is "minister without portfolio" for Adamant Entertainment, tackling various design, layout, and illustration chores.

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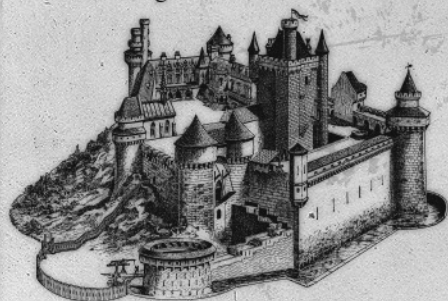
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