



SAVAGE EXPLORER WORLDS



EAST TEXAS UNIVERSITY: MOVIE NIGHT
SUPERS: THE BLACK CLAW
ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: AARON RILEY
THE LAST PARSEC: TALES OF THE RED BAND

SAVAGE EXPLORER WORLDS

EAST TEXAS UNIVERSITY

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"Movie Night" is a mini-adventure for the *East Texas University* setting.

Beloved film The Wizard of Oz was the first ever shown in the theater and now it is back for the grand reopening. Who doesn't love Dorothy, Toto, Tin Man, Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion? What a great date night for a few college students...

BACKGROUND

The Pinebox Grande Cinema opened its doors to the public in 1939, and the very first movie ever shown on the silver screen in Pinebox was *The Wizard of Oz*. The cinema proved a very successful business through the mid-1960s, but by the mid-'70s had lost its charm. The cinema closed in 1982. Now, Gregory Dale, a successful investment banker, has returned home and decided to restore the Pinebox Grand Cinema and reopen it to the public. He spared no expense — putting in new seating, the very latest in cinema lights, sound, and projection — while keeping the classic movie-house feel.

The Grande's reopening featured many of Pinebox's social elites, food, wine, and fun. Mr. Dale decided to bring back the original *The Wizard of Oz* to the screen to celebrate. The plan is for the movie to run for the first two weeks, then new movies would begin. On Saturday, for the 7:00 p.m. show, the Cinema runs \$5.00 shows and everyone under 10 years of age gets a ticket for a dollar.

Earlier today, an adventurous and imaginative boy named Scott Perry convinced his single mother to drop him off at the Cinema to watch one of his favorite movies, *The Wizard of Oz*. As he was entering the

theater after purchasing his ticket, he met an old man by the name of Ted. Ted smiled and looked grandfatherly and even gave Scott a few quarters to play on the video games before the movie started. He then gave the boy a \$20 bill to purchase refreshments.

Finally, Ted gave Scott a special ring as a token of his friendship. "This ring is a wish ring. Anything you want, you simply wish it to be and it will happen. But you only get one wish, so make it worthwhile." Ted smiled and made his way out of the theater. Scott purchased popcorn and a Coke, then made his way to his seat in the balcony to watch the movie, Ted's words playing on his mind. One wish. What could he ask for?

Ted is actually the Chaos demon Tedrial and the ring is magical. It's also cursed, as everyone in the cinema soon learns — including the study group!

MOVIE NIGHT

This adventure is perfect for a date night or just a night out for the Study Group.

*You are excited to finally take in the ambiance of the newly remodeled Pinebox Grande Cinema in downtown Pinebox. The building has been closed down and for sale forever, but it is now restored to its 1930s atmosphere and beauty, but with new seating, sound, and all the modern conveniences. The Grande has been open for a week, and has been showing the original, fully restored 1939 movie *The Wizard of Oz*. Apparently that was the first movie ever shown in the theater, and so it has been chosen as the first movie to show in the reopening.*

Upon purchasing tickets, you make your way past an elderly man who is leaving the theater. He smiles at you and nods as you hold the door for him to exit. Despite the grand reopening, there is a small crowd for a Saturday night at a cinema. Maybe when they start showing new movies the crowds will increase.

You make your way to the line for refreshments. Just in front of you is a little boy, maybe 10 years of age or so. He has purchased a huge bag of popcorn and an extra-large drink. He grins at you and makes his way to the hot butter and loads his popcorn down with it. You notice on his left hand an adult sized gold ring with a sizeable cat's eye stone.

"May I help you?" the clerk behind the counter offers. You look back at the boy, but he is heading upstairs to sit in the balcony. "What can I get you?" The clerk asks again, glancing at the line behind you.

If the heroes choose to follow Scott or talk to him, the boy is friendly and gregarious. But if he is asked about the ring, he gets nervous and says,

"I don't think I'm supposed to talk about it."

If the heroes can persuade Scott to talk about it, he answers,

"It was a gift from a friend named Ted."

If the questioning continues, Scott says only that Ted is an old man he met, who was very nice, and that

he had seen the movie on the original opening night. If asked for the ring, Scott refuses. The magic of the ring makes drives his compulsion to protect it, keep it, and use it.

- **Scott Perry:** See below.

SCOTT PERRY

An imaginative, happy, 9-year-old who loves *The Wizard of Oz*. He is trusting and believes the world is magical.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Notice d6

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Young

Edges: —

Gear: Ted's cursed ring.

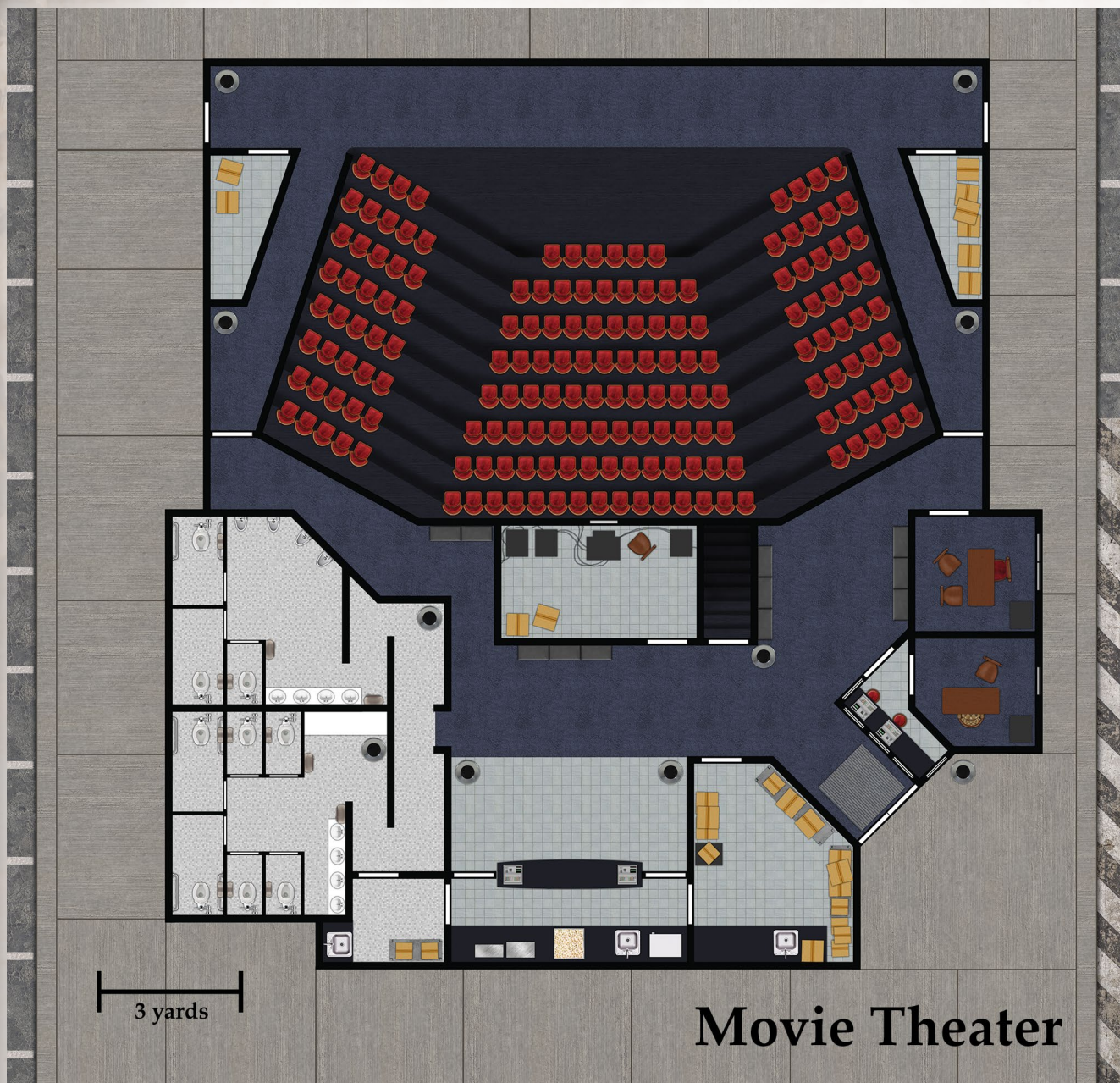
WHEN YOU WISH UPON A SCREEN

Let the heroes choose where they want to sit in the theater. How close they are to Scott may determine how things progress later!

As the movie starts, Scott is enthralled. He laughs, squeals, and even talks to the screen — making him as entertaining to watch as the movie. Then, about halfway through the film he looks down at the ring



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and thinks, *That's it. I want to be friends with all of them.* "I wish they were real," he says aloud.

Read the following to the players:

Suddenly the scene in the movie changes, as Dorothy, Toto, Tin Man, Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion turn to look directly at the audience, each one with a creepy smile of vile evilness. "Of course, Scotty. We will always your friends." Dorothy smiles and wickedly bites her bottom lip.

The audience is shocked at what they are seeing, but start screaming and running over each other for the doors as the characters from the screen suddenly leap out of it onto the stage. Behind them, four flying monkeys followed by the Wicked Witch riding her broomstick fly from the screen. She waves her hand

with a cackle and a green ball of light erupts from her fingers and hits a middle-aged man in the chest and begins burning into him, his screams of pain echoing through the theater.

The Wicked Witch turns to stare at Scott. "Don't worry Scotty, I'm coming to take you to school!" She and her monkeys fly toward the balcony as the rest of the beloved characters take off after the audience, the Tin Man swinging his ax, the Scarecrow growing huge teeth and fingernails, the Lion's face changing to that of an actual lion as he leaps onto the nearest audience member. Toto grows into a huge black dog, his eyes turning red, and he howls in bloodlust.

Dorothy simply smiles. "Isn't it wonderful, Toto?"



The study group has a few choices to make in how they take this on. Do they save Scott from the Wicked Witch and her flying monkeys? Do they prevent the Tin Man from taking human hearts and eating them? Do they stop the Scarecrow from eating brains, stand to fight the Lion, the hellhound named Toto, or the diabolical Dorothy? Or do they realize the ring is the key to reversing the wish? After rescuing Scott, they may attempt to learn a Ritual of Undoing (see below).

Approximately 50 patrons and another 10 cinema workers are inside the theater. The Oz-ites are not planning on staying in the theater. They attack for only a few rounds before heading for the emergency exit. These demons are happy to take their horror into the streets of Pinebox. Each Oz-ite is detailed on page 5 and the descriptions provided state what each attempts to do.

The most direct way to win is to simply hunt down and destroy each of the Oz-ites. Once defeated, their bodies, clothes, and even the Tin Man's ax melt into water and vanish.

- **Cowardly Lion:** See page 5.
- **Dorothy:** See page 6.
- **Flying Monkeys (4):** See page 6.
- **Scarecrow:** See page 6.
- **Tin Man:** See page 7.
- **Toto:** See page 7.
- **Wicked Witch:** See page 7.


FOLLOW THE YELLOW GOLD RING

Should the group decide to save Scott and take the ring, the worst thing they can do is make another wish. The ring is cursed; whatever they ask for is answered from Hell. For instance, if they ask that all the Oz-ites be returned to Oz, they will find themselves there as well, but in a demonic version of Oz. You may allow a Common Knowledge roll to remind them that this ring is a cursed wish ring: Using it to solve any problem will only make things worse.

If the group escapes with the ring, they may attempt to discover a ritual to send the Oz-ites back. The ritual is known as the Ritual of Undoing and requires the ring, a drop of blood of a believer, and a drop of demon's blood (any of the Oz-ites would work). The Ritual has a casting modifier of -2, though the range is infinite. If successful, the Oz-ites are all returned to where they came from.

IGNORE THAT MAN OUTSIDE THE THEATER!

The group may seek out "Ted," who is just outside the cinema on the street, watching the chaos he has created and loving every moment of it. If they can defeat him without killing him, they may win this struggle. If defeated and bound, Ted becomes desperate for his freedom. If he believes he can accept the study group's word, he has the power to rescind the wish, though the ring must be given back to him. He places it on his finger and vanishes...and the Oz-ites are sent back to where they came from.

 **Ted:** See page 6.

DEMONIC OZ-ITES

Note on Oz-ites: These are actually demons in forms of characters from *The Wizard of Oz*, but they are limited by these forms. They are not resistant to normal weapons and can be affected by them.

COWARDLY LION

The Lion is decidedly *not* cowardly. This demonic creature loves fighting and seeks out the strongest of any group to challenge. Once outside the cinema, the Lion seeks out bars and dives, such as the Angry Stick, to stir up trouble. He has the power to *shape change* into a normal looking, hairy man, though when fighting, his head changes into a Lion's head and his fingernails grow into great cat's claws.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Edges: Fleet-Footed

Special Abilities:

- **Armor (+2):** Demonic skin adds +2 Toughness.
- **Bite:** Str+d6
- **Demon:** Bane (Holy Items); immune to poison and disease; +2 to recover from Shaken; suffers +1d6 from pure iron weapons; Shaken or Fatigue by holy water.
- **Go for the Throat:** The Lion instinctively goes for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly armored location.
- **Low Light Vision:** The Lion ignores penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

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DOROTHY

Unlike the Dorothy everyone knows and loves, this Dorothy is diabolical and truly wicked. This demon seeks to use her "cuteness" to take advantage of the unsuspecting, murder them, and bring as much terror as she can. If she escapes the theater, she wanders the streets of Pinebox, going from home to home, bringing Hell with her.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Lockpicking d8, Notice d10, Persuasion d10, Stealth d8, Taunt d10, Throwing d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Edges: Charismatic, Quick

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Demonic skin.
- **Claws:** Str+d4; Dorothy has razor-sharp nails.
- **Charm:** Dorothy can use the *puppet* power on adults (21+) using her Smarts as an arcane skill. She can cast and maintain the power indefinitely, but may only affect one target at a time.
- **Demon:** Bane (Holy Items); immune to poison and disease; +2 to recover from Shaken; suffers +1d6 from pure iron weapons; Shaken or Fatigue by holy water.
- **Zombie:** She may raise undead using this power, but may only use it on the recently deceased (during the Golden Hour), and must make a successful Spirit roll to do so. She may only animate and control up to five zombies at any one time.

FLYING MONKEYS

The famous flying monkeys make up the Wicked Witch's army. They do not speak, but make guttural noises and scream like howler monkeys. They are devoted followers of the Wicked Witch and attempt to follow her orders to the letter. Their leathery wings allow them to fly. Although they don't use weapons, they like to drop or throw things at their enemies, or do a quick fly-by with their razor-sharpened nails or nasty bite.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6
- **Claws:** Str+d4. May attack twice per round with no multi-action penalty.

- **Demon:** Bane (Holy Items); immune to poison and disease; +2 to recover from Shaken; suffers +1d6 from pure iron weapons; Shaken or Fatigue by holy water.
- **Flight:** Pace 12". These monkeys are slow fliers with a Climb of 1.
- **Loyal Follower:** Any monkey within 1" of the Wicked Witch, when she is successfully targeted with a ranged attack, leaps in the way and takes the damage instead.

SCARECROW

The Scarecrow only wants brains. He wants to eat them! The Scarecrow keeps the form he takes in the movie, but his mouth grows sharp teeth and the fingers of his hands become like living steel. He uses his steel hands to strike down victims, then to rip off the cranium. He then proceeds to ingest the victim's brains — to boost his own abilities!

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d4, Notice d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6
- **Brain Consumption:** Each time the Scarecrow eats a brain, he gains a die type in Smarts, to a maximum of d12. Once at capacity, he may maintain this with one brain per week.
- **Demon:** Bane (Holy Items); immune to poison and disease; +2 to recover from Shaken; suffers +1d6 from pure iron weapons; Shaken or Fatigue by holy water.
- **Hardy:** The Scarecrow does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Slam:** Str+d8. The Scarecrow has brutal steel fists.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Fire-based attacks inflict +1d6 damage to the Scarecrow.



TED

Ted is actually the chaos demon Tedrial. He's using the cursed ring in Pinebox to spread his version of chaos and evil. Tedrial is delighted that he can use the ring — rather than his illusions — to cause fear. He currently possesses an elderly man's body (his real name is J. D. Fellows), as he has for several weeks. He used Fellows's body to steal the ring from Pinebox Pawn. Any physical wounds inflicted upon Tedrial are also suffered by J. D.'s body.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Persuasion d10, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Quick

Gear: Knife (Str+d4).

Special Abilities:

- **Demon:** Bane (Holy Items); immune to poison and disease; +2 to recover from Shaken; suffers +1d6 from pure iron weapons; Shaken or Fatigue by holy water.
- **Feeding Frenzy:** Every time a human fails a Fear roll in its presence, the demon gains +1 to all Trait rolls, Toughness, and Parry for one hour (maximum of +3).

TIN MAN

The Tin Man wants hearts. As many as he can gather. He looks exactly as he did in the movie, and carries a large ax he uses to kill his victims. He also carries a knife to cut his victim's hearts out and consume them. Like the Scarecrow, each heart he consumes increases his attributes. (Eat your heart out!)

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** The Tin Man's shell is much harder than tin.
- **Ax:** Str+d6
- **Demon:** Bane (Holy Items); immune to poison and disease; +2 to recover from Shaken; suffers +1d6 from pure iron weapons; Shaken or Fatigue by holy water.
- **Hardy:** Tin Man does not suffer a wound from two Shaken results in combat.
- **Heart Consumption:** Each time the Tin Man eats a heart, he gains one die type in Agility to a maximum of d12. Once at capacity, he may maintain with one brain per week.
- **Weakness (Water):** If doused in water, the Tin Man instantly rusts and becomes frozen. This requires immersion or large volumes of water, such as from a firehose or the cinema sprinkler system.

TOTO

Toto was a small, cute dog in the movie. Once free of the screen, he becomes a hellish hound.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Tracking d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Edge: Fleet-Footed

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6
- **Demon:** Bane (Holy Items); immune to poison and disease; +2 to recover from Shaken; suffers +1d6 from pure iron weapons; Shaken or Fatigue by holy water.

- **Go for the Throat:** Toto instinctively goes for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on his attack roll, he hits the target's most weakly armored location.

WICKED WITCH

This is the classic Wicked Witch of the movie. She rides a flying broom and can cast spells with her flying monkeys at her side. Of course, she can take on the guise of a teacher, and if she can successfully take control of Scott, she takes him to the Pinebox Junior High School. She intends to hold classes with the kids of Pinebox.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (math) d10, Knowledge (Occult) d10, Knowledge (Ritualism) d10, Notice d10, Stealth d8, Taunt d10, Throwing d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Demonic skin
- **Broom:** This animated broom answers the Wicked Witch's call and when she sits on it she may use its power of flight. The broom flies at a Pace of 24, with a Climb of 1.
- **Demon:** Bane (Holy Items); Immune to poison and disease; +2 to recover from being Shaken; suffers +1d6 from pure iron weapons; Shaken or Fatigue by Holy Water.
- **Rituals:** The Wicked Witch knows the following Rituals: *curse, familiar, forget, summon swarm, ward.*
- **Spells:** The Wicked Witch has 21 Power Points and knows all powers (she may cast each only once per day).
- **Weakness (Water):** Water melts the Wicked Witch. A large cup of Coke (or any kind of cola; this is Texas, remember) inflicts 1d4 splash damage on a successful throw, and 2d4 on a raise.



THE BLACK CLAW

An adventure for *Savage Worlds Super Powers Companion* (Second Edition).

BACKGROUND

The Black Claw wants to brainwash supers to turn them into SUPERNINJAS! Well, who wouldn't want to do that? In the guise of Yakuza mobsters, they have infiltrated the heroes' city because of the concentration of supers there. The gang war is just the front page of the cover story — a convenient way to draw supers out where they can be targeted by the Black Claw!

POWER LEVEL

This adventure is written with beginning Street Level characters in mind, using the rules that allow extra Power Points for an extra Major Hindrance. Just bear in mind you need to alter the nonplayer characters to fit different power levels if you are using this scenario with more powerful characters.

DIFFERENT SETTING RULES

Gritty: Death is “turned on” — characters roll on the Defeat Table (see *Super Powers Companion*), and mooks roll for survival after combats. Players need to be told this at the beginning of the game. If you decide not to use death as an option for the players, adjust the results of their actions in other ways to

Backstory

Things have gotten out of hand in the city, as the mobsters who have always run things here have been invaded by the Japanese mob. Gun battles have become so common on the streets, they have taxed the local heroes' ability to cope.

There have even been some deaths. A couple of weeks ago, local hero and former member of your superteam, Shatterstorm (or an appropriate, friendly nonplayer character hero the team knows), attempted to stop one of these fights and died under a hail of gunfire.

moderate the consequences, and make them care about what they do.

Bear in mind, the most common way for heroes to avoid killing is the good ol' “pulling my punch” rule — see **Nonlethal Damage** in *Savage Worlds*. Generally this requires them to use some sort of blunt object or their fists, and imposes a -1 penalty to the Fighting roll, but it's a good idea to allow this to be applied to any super powered attack and just let them take a -1 from the appropriate attack skill.

Heroic: This game is designed for characters who have at least some good intentions. They ought to be heroic; this adventure is especially inappropriate for villains. It is important the heroes are “good enough” to care about the consequences of their actions. You may encourage heroism by, for example, giving your players 1 extra skill point for choosing the Heroic Hindrance or the Vow (Law Abiding) Hindrance.

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If the players ask: Shatterstorm has not been seen since, nor shown up in typical places he'd go for help, and was purportedly killed according to anyone asked. He was simply the first victim of the Black Claw's plan to kidnap superheroes.

The super-team has some attached non-player characters. If you are playing this as part of your own campaign, you should introduce the NPCs somewhere along the way in your previous story, as either sidekick Wild Cards, who belong to the superteam (instead of any individual super), or as a team of hired agent extras (Use the Cops (Flatfoot) profile in the *Super Powers Companion*) who the group uses to help "secure the scene" or handle non-super-team level emergencies, when the team is busy. This provides convenient targets for the bad guys to kidnap — unless your group is the type that will enjoy the kidnapping.

SCENE ONE: GANG WAR!

Our story gets started with the heroes receiving a communication, phone call, TV news story, or something similar, alerting them there is a gang fight downtown (the scary part of town, where these things always seem to happen). Read the following passage to the team:

Your superhero team has been experiencing turbulent times. The city has been torn apart by a gang war over

the last few months. Now you've received word of a major gang clash taking place downtown — right now!

The Yakuza — Black Claw ninjas in disguise — and mobsters are shooting at each other from hiding places on both sides of the street. There appear to be a dozen on each side (but there are as many Black Claw ninjas as the GM prefers). A general magical effect hides the thoughts of the ninjas, and alerts supers with appropriate powers that something odd is going on.

The characters are caught in the crossfire — the mobsters are intent on shooting the heroes and the Yakuza, but once supers appear on the scene the Yakuza concentrate solely on them. They shed their guns, and reveal themselves as The Black Claw ninjas.

The "dead" hero, Shatterstorm, shows up along with the ninjas. We suggest this happens earlier than later, especially if you are in a time-limited scenario (such as running this as a convention event!), but if there is no time limit you can stretch this fight and the drama a bit by having the heroes fight the ninjas in waves of 2–3 per character, and have their "friend" come in at what seems an appropriate moment.

Ooh, are the heroes going to be careful not to really hurt him. Really really? Depending on your Setting Rules they can try to knock him out to capture him, but it's always interesting to see who is willing to forgo their heroic natures to kill the other hero. If they

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are supposed to be heroes, make sure there are real in-game consequences for ignoring hindrances...

The ninjas' main goal is to capture other supers, to take back for the mindwipe/brainwashing ritual. You can opt for this to be one of the heroes, if you think that your players will enjoy the drama, or you can use their NPC allies for this purpose. Keep throwing endless hordes of mobsters and ninjas at the heroes until someone becomes incapacitated, and then read the following:

Two of the ninjas suddenly appear in a flash of swirling smoke and grab your fallen teammate. One of them throws a smoke bomb at their feet, and when the smoke clears, they have all vanished.

Do not give them the opportunity to interfere in the kidnapping. This is fun, because...

Brainwashed heroes, or their allies, are part of the ninja clan's team in **Scene Five, The Big Fight!** (page 11). If you opted to let the players be captured, then let the player of the mind-wiped character play the newly made superninja when they fight the heroes in the penultimate fight. In that event, entertain the player who is "out" because they were kidnapped: Let him play any available nonplayer characters, or something — though the investigation leading to the big fight ought not to take an extensive amount of time. It's no fun to only sit and watch the others play. Or let the kidnapped hero play one of your campaign's nonplayer character heroes, who shows up (conveniently) at the end of the fight. If you are running the game as a one-shot, either pre-create a new hero for the missing character, or download one from the Pinnacle website at www.peginc.com.

If you did not opt to go with kidnappable player characters, the kidnapped NPCs show up at the penultimate fight, and the heroes must deal with them — adding the problem again of not hurting their employees or friends.

The heroes, if they are paying attention, now know the mindwipes are occurring somewhere because of the reappearance of their missing super friend, Shatterstorm, and should want to find where this is happening. Point them at this thought if it doesn't occur naturally to them

★ **Shatterstorm:** See page 13.

- **Black Claw Ninjas (Unlimited):** See page 12.
- **Mobsters (Unlimited):** Use the Criminals (Thug) profile in the *Super Powers Companion*.

SCENE TWO: "THE BOSS WANTS TO SEE YA."

After the bad guys have successfully kidnapped a hero or a number of NPCs that you are happy with, they make their escape — mostly teleporting away in puffs of smoke. One of the local mob thugs comes out from hiding in a nearby alley, holding out a phone. He says,

"Hey...the boss wants to speak to one of you guys."

Of course, substitute your campaign's local big boss if you're playing an ongoing campaign. Otherwise, the mob leader goes by The Big Guy. The Big Guy does not involve himself directly in anything that can ever be tied to him — he's a legitimate businessman, of course.

He has men who have been following the Yakuza locally and he thinks he knows where their "supposed" safe house is, where any kidnapped hero has probably been taken, but he doesn't have the firepower to handle superninjas. He addresses the person he speaks to, by name; read or paraphrase the following information and flavor:

"Hello there, Silver Star, I hear your friends have been kidnapped by some awful criminals. That's just terrible. I am so sorry to hear that, yes, indeed. Oh, my. Well, I have business contacts who tell me that they may know where your friend(s) have been taken. Oh, no, I don't want anything from you at all, no, no. I just want to be of service to my community. I'm a great patron of justice, my friend. That's all I'm really after. Yes, you go take care of your friend, hero. I just want to be helpful. Thank you so much for being of service to the community. Just like me. Hahaha."

He tells the heroes where the safe house is "For free."

Of course, The Big Guy is only really interested in sending the heroes to take care of his opposition for him. He hopes they wipe out the Yakuza/The Black Claw ninjas.

SCENE THREE: INTO THE MASTER'S LAIR

The location provided by The Big Guy is a giant office building downtown — all glass and shiny and new. Fancy. This is the legitimate business location of the Master of the Black Claw. It really is a business — an office with secretaries and cubicle workers. Anything the heroes do here is potentially very illegal, and you should point it out to them as they consider their options.

How the heroes approach this location can vary greatly, depending on their personalities and powers. This is primarily a role-playing opportunity and can be used to explore whether they are law-abiding heroes, or...not? This is meant to encourage them to explore

further options, by cutting off purely frontal assault style plans.

If the heroes force their way in and attack people, the police are called, then the local super-villain task force. These are regular people working regular jobs. A security guard here knows absolutely nothing about the Yakuza or ninjas. Attacking these guys is straight-up battery. The CEO Master just teleports away while the heroes break the law, if it appears they are actually intent on this approach.

If the heroes force their way to the Master, or if they dawdle too long — they are called up to the CEO's office, where the Master confronts and taunts them, until he feels it is time to threaten them with the police. They are trespassing — perhaps they have committed assault? Have they threatened anyone? Battery? Did they hurt anyone? They quickly realize there are not a lot of legal options here.

Sample dialogue for the Master:

"Hi there, Silver Star? Wow! Big fan! How can I help you guys? Ninjas? Hahaha. What? Really? Uh, no, I have no idea what you're talking about. How can I be of assistance? How sad. Your friend was kidnapped? I'd be happy to lend you whatever assistance I can, but I'm not sure what that might be. I'm so sorry, guys. Oh, goodness. Please let go of me. I believe security has already called the police — I really don't want to have to do that to you. I think it's time for you to leave."

Once again, he contacts the authorities as needed. The police come and tell them that they have to leave or come with them, depending on what they've done. If they want to fight the police — that quickly escalates to super-agents being summoned. This really is not the point of this encounter, and it should not escalate this far if you're playing with heroes who are actually law-abiding.

★ **The Master:** See page 12.

- **Security Guards (4 per hero):** Use the Cops (Flatfoot) profile in the *Super Powers Companion*.

SCENE FOUR: WHERE THE HECK IS OUR FRIEND?

There are many options the heroes might take after a simple head-on approach fails or is disregarded. Considering how the heroes might use their myriad powers, and what problems might occur, would take up an enormous amount of space. As a rule, though, the following facts allow you to deal with most of the players' ideas:

- If the heroes secretly search the building they do not find their friend. Using something like *intangibility*

or *invisibility* is the most obvious and easiest way to do something like this.

- If they come back and break in — Wow! Also illegal! — they can find clues which lead to the "real" hideout. This is probably something in the Master's office, but can also be something as relatively low-tech as a folder with notes in it about a "meeting," or computer files showing other properties the Black Claw Ninja Clan owns.
- A mob mook can potentially show up and give the heroes a new lead, if they decide to follow it. Players might not be so hot to go to yet another spot the Big Guy is directs them to, but he may say something along the lines of: "Hey, my bad, fellows. Let me send you over a case of Dom to apologize. After you go to this new place. I swear, this is right on the money this time. Toddle on down there now. Best of luck to you, my wee heroes."
- Some super powers can potentially help locate their friend — but his brain is being mucked with and the ninjas are protected by their Master's magic power, so such powers are limited to helping them find the location.

SCENE FIVE: THE BIG FIGHT!

By whatever means the players used, their characters have located the local base of the Black Claw ninjas! The warehouse is in a part of town with a multitude of other, similar-looking warehouses. The Black Claw are inside performing the ritual, brainwashing and transforming the missing character into a nasty, ninja-fied version of his former self. Let the characters approach in whatever manner they wish, potentially even getting The Drop on the Black Claw. They witness the end of the ritual, as their friend or allies kneel in front of an altar, each holding a katana in their hands!

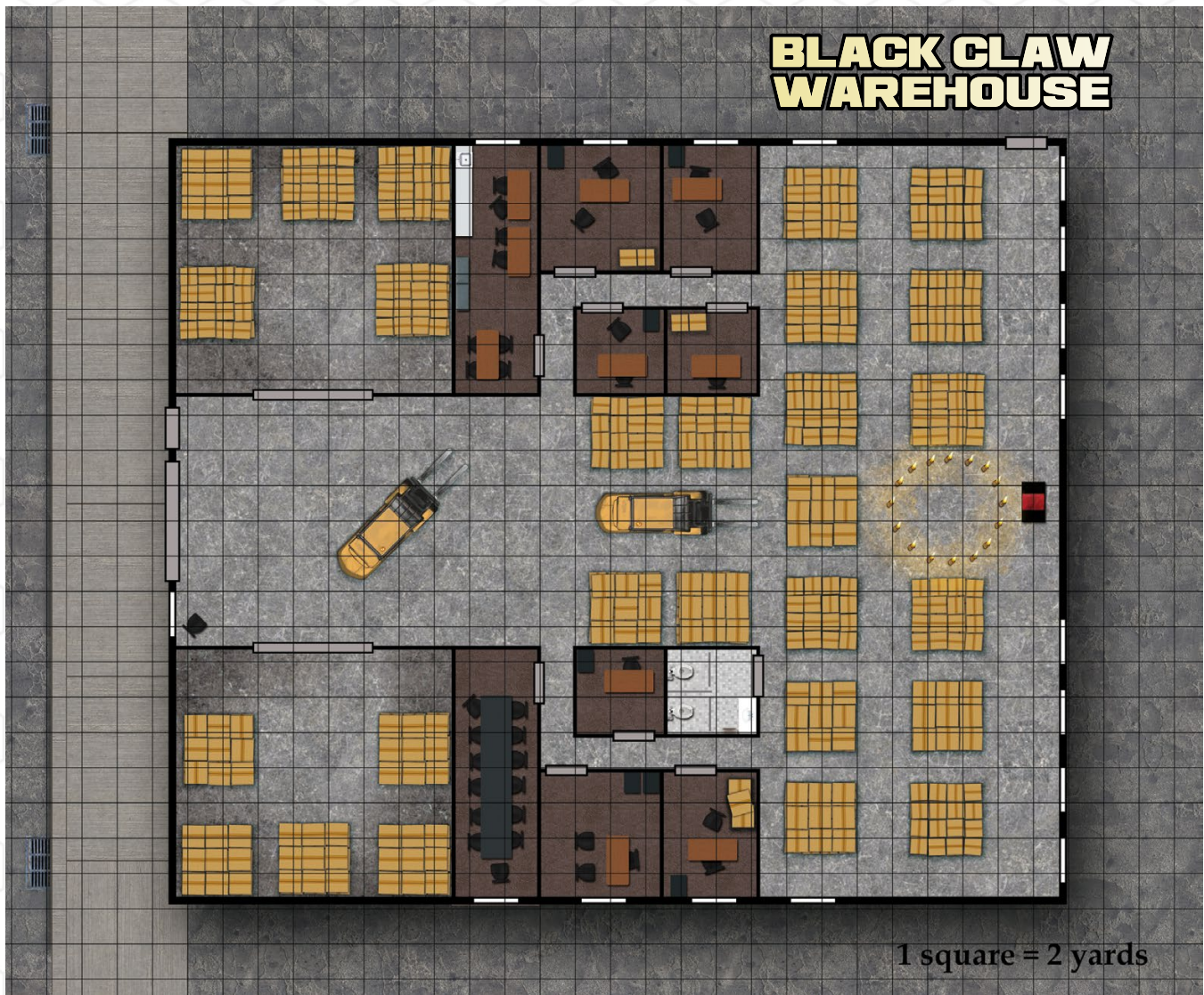
If you opted to allow a player to be kidnapped, the player gets to play his new brainwashed ninja-fied character in the fight against his friends. Otherwise, the heroes kidnapped allies are here, on the side of the bad guys! The brainwashing magic is highly effective and cannot be easily dispelled. The Master is the big bad. Defeating the Master snaps everyone out of their brainwashed state (and gives them in-game reasons to buy Edges like Martial Artist, etc.).

After the Master is defeated, formerly brainwashed heroes are Shaken with one level of Fatigue, but are no longer mind-controlled. The tides quickly turn on the remaining ninjas — finish them!

★ **The Master:** See page 12.

- **Black Claw Ninjas (2 per hero):** See page 12.
- **Brainwashed Allies:** Kidnapped allies fight on the bad guys' side. See the Black Claw Mind-Wipe Effects sidebar on page 13.

SUPERS: THE BLACK CLAW



SCENE SIX: THE END

The adventure ends with a call from the other crime boss in town, thanking the heroes for their assistance and diligence in removing his opponent. Hahahahaha!

ANTAGONISTS

BLACK CLAW NINJA

Race: Human

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d6, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Stealth d10, Swimming d6, Throwing d10

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6

Gear: 6x shuriken (Range 3/6/12, Damage Str+d4), dagger (Str+d4), ninja-to (Str+d6).

Hindrances: Vow (Serve the Black Claw), Wanted (Major).

Edges: Assassin, Counterattack, First Strike, Martial Artist

Super Powers:

- **Ninja Smoke Bomb [Teleport, Range 48", Teleport Other, Traverse]:** Allows one to disappear and reappear up to 48" distant. This counts as movement and is not an action. They must teleport along with anyone they use Teleport Other Only, as a limitation.

★ MASTER OF THE BLACK CLAW NINJAS

Race: Human

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d12, Intimidation d8, Investigation d6, Notice d8+2, Persuasion d8, Shooting

d6, Spellcasting (Ninja) d12, Stealth d12, Streetwise d8, Swimming d6, Throwing d10

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 10; **Toughness:** 11 (4)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Cautious, Ruthless, Stubborn, Vengeful

Edges: Acrobat, Alertness, Ambidextrous, Assassin, Block, Combat Reflexes, Fleet-Footed, Improved Counterattack, Improved Combat Sense, Improved First Strike, Improved Martial Artist, Level-Headed, Quick, Two-Fisted

Gear: 6× shuriken (Range 3/6/12, Damage Str+d4), 2× ninja-to (Str+d6+2d6, Heavy), body armor (+4).

Super Powers:

- **Advanced Zen Training [Doesn't Sleep]:** Requires no sleep.
- **Advanced Zen Training [Fearless]:** Completely immune to Fear checks
- **Death Touch [Infection]:** Requires a touch attack with a called shot to hit exposed skin. A target struck by the attack must make a Vigor roll.
- **Master Martial Artist [Attack, melee (Level 2), Armor Piercing, Heavy Weapon, Multiple Attacks, Stackable]:** Hero has a special melee attack. Adds 2d6 to their hand-to-hand attack damage.
- **Ninja Mystical Powers [Super Sorcery (Lvl6)]:** Grants any other power via spellcraft—Requires a dedicated altar and a “lengthy” ritual to use. This is how the Mindwipe is performed. Can also be used to simulate whatever fudgery you require.
- **Ninja Smoke Bomb [Teleport, Range 48", Teleport Other, Traverse]:** Allows one to disappear and reappear up to 12" distant. This counts as movement and is not an action. They must teleport along with anyone they use Teleport Other Only, as a limitation.
- **Recipient of the Ritual of Undeath [Regeneration (Lvl4), Regrowth]:** Make a Vigor roll every hour. If the roll is successful, your character heals one wound.

★ SHATTERSTORM

Race: Human

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d6, Investigation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 20 (14)

Gear: Ninja-to d8 (Str+d6).

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Ruthless, Vengeful

Edges: Arcane Background (Super Powers), Assassin, Counterattack, First Strike, Martial Artist, Quick

Super Powers:

- **Attack, Ranged:** d6 (3d6, 12/24/48).
- **Natural Armor:** +14.

BLACK CLAW MIND-WIPE EFFECTS

Any character who is kidnapped by the ninjas is subjected to the Ritual of Assimilation and becomes a new mind-controlled minion of the Black Claw ninja clan. While they are in this state, modify their character in the following ways:

- Increase Fighting by a die type.
- Bump Climbing to d6 and Stealth to d8 minimum.
- Add the following Hindrances (replacing the character's normal Hindrances): Bloodthirsty, Mind-Controlled (see below), Ruthless, Vengeful.
- Add the following Edges (if the character already possesses the base Edge, then bump it to the Improved Version, ignoring requirements): Assassin, Counterattack, First Strike, Martial Artist, Quick.

MIND-CONTROLLED (MAJOR)

The character is under the control of the Black Claw Ninja master. His normal Hindrances have been completely replaced while he is under their influence. This is different than normal Mind Control, and can only be broken by Incapacitating the Master.

- **Shatterstorm! [Sonic Disruption — Attack, Ranged (Lvl2)•Area Effect (Large Burst Template), Armor Piercing, Heavy Weapon]:** Hero has a ranged attack. The range is 12/24/48, the damage is 3d6.
- **Sonic Force Field [Armor (Lvl7), Heavy Armor, Requires Activation]:** Your character gains 3 points of armor each time this power is purchased.
- **Sonic Force Field [Deflection (Lvl6), Requires Activation]:** Each level subtracts 1 from Shooting, Throwing, or other ranged attacks against the deflector up to a max of -6.
- **Sonic Propulsion [Flight (Lvl4)]:** Your super can fly. Attack Penalty is the modifier foes suffer when trying to attack the flier when moving at speed. Pace 48 (120 m.p.h.).
- **Weakness (Mind-Controlled):** The character is under the control of the Black Claw ninja master. His normal Hindrances have been completely replaced while he is under the master's influence. This is different than normal mind control, and can only be broken by taking out the Master and destroying the ritual altar.

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Aaron J. Riley



How did you get into the business as a professional/freelance commercial artist?

About 15 years after graduating from The American Academy of Art Chicago, I broke my leg. Destroyed may be a better term. "A bag of broken glass" is how my doctor first described it to me. I was stuck in a recliner for about six months.

Up to that time I had done next to nothing with my education. I decided to pick up my Wacom tablet and figure out how to use it. That took me down a rabbit hole that led to a trip to Richmond, Virginia, for the Illustration Academy. Things finally clicked.

I took a year to save money and moved to Virginia. I spent another year working every day on my portfolio in a studio with some other amazing artists: Jeffrey Alan Love, Leslie Herman, Josh George, Sterling Hundley, and others. They all helped me more than I can put into words.

I started working professionally almost immediately once the portfolio was complete. They weren't glamorous jobs, but I didn't care. That was about seven years ago. I've been a full-time illustrator for about four of those years.



What is your favorite medium/subject?

I work primarily in digital. But I grew up on traditional materials. I've recently started doing my final drawings in pencil, and I still try to make it to figure-drawing classes when I can. I miss getting messy. My favorite subject is anything with a dark mood. I may need therapy.

What's your favorite setting you've worked on for Pinnacle?

Deadlands is my favorite. It's a great excuse to re-watch all those old Sergio Leone westerns that I grew up on. It has a bit more of a grounded feel for me. I still love all the dragons and space stuff, but finding a way to add fantasy or sci-fi elements to a western setting is much more fun for me.



THE RED BAND CONGLOMERATE

During the early exploration of the Known Worlds, JumpCorp survey teams color-coded bands of expansion. For several decades, the “red band” proved the most dangerous — and the most profitable. Eventually, several of these trailblazing charters joined together to form the “Red Band Conglomerate.”

Red Band is so large it defies any simple description, much like JumpCorp itself. Its charters participate in everything from galactic defense to the usual gamut of exploration, shipping, and R&D.

TALES OF THE RED BAND

“Savage Tales of the Red Band” is an ongoing serial for *The Last Parsec*. The GM can assemble its parts to form a loose Plot Point Campaign, and add breadth and depth by incorporating the explorers’ unique backstories. The GM needs access to the *Science Fiction Companion* and *The Last Parsec: Core*. See the other installments of this series, found in the *Explorer* or at www.peginc.com, for the rest of the story.

This second installment provides a GM with details of the mysterious planet Kalran-3 so the team can begin its planetary survey. The explorers are sure to find danger and thrills, and likely initiate first contact with a newly discovered, sentient species.

WHEN WE LAST SAW OUR HEROES...

At the close of part one, the crew of the *R.B.S. Indomitable* deployed an astronav buoy and began their survey of the worlds of the Kalran system in the Triangulum Galaxy, all while attempting to deal with a malfunctioning medical android and the arrival of other, possibly hostile, forces.

This chapter looks at Kalran-3 and its inhabitants in more detail, as well as outlining their goals. The crew may explore

any part of the planet they wish, but two situations may prove to be primary motivators along these lines.

The Collectors: From the moment the astronav buoy is activated, the Collectors’ insectoid servants intercept its signal and prevent it reaching Red Band HQ. As a result, its message goes no further than the Collectors. A few days after the team activates the buoy, the insectoids’ ship arrives.

The insectoids continue to jam the astronav signal and observe the crew’s actions, biding their time. They shun contact and flee from conflict...for now. See *The Last Parsec: Core* for more information on the Collectors; see **The Collectors’ Arrival**, below, for information on their vessel.

Rez the Android: As detailed in part one, Rez was reprogrammed by the Collectors’ agents at Red Band to remove a crucial component from the *Indomitable*’s FTL drive and hide it on the planet’s surface, thus preventing the crew’s escape. Depending how things went with the team’s first surveying mission, the explorers may begin this chapter on a hunt for their errant android.

THE COLLECTORS’ ARRIVAL

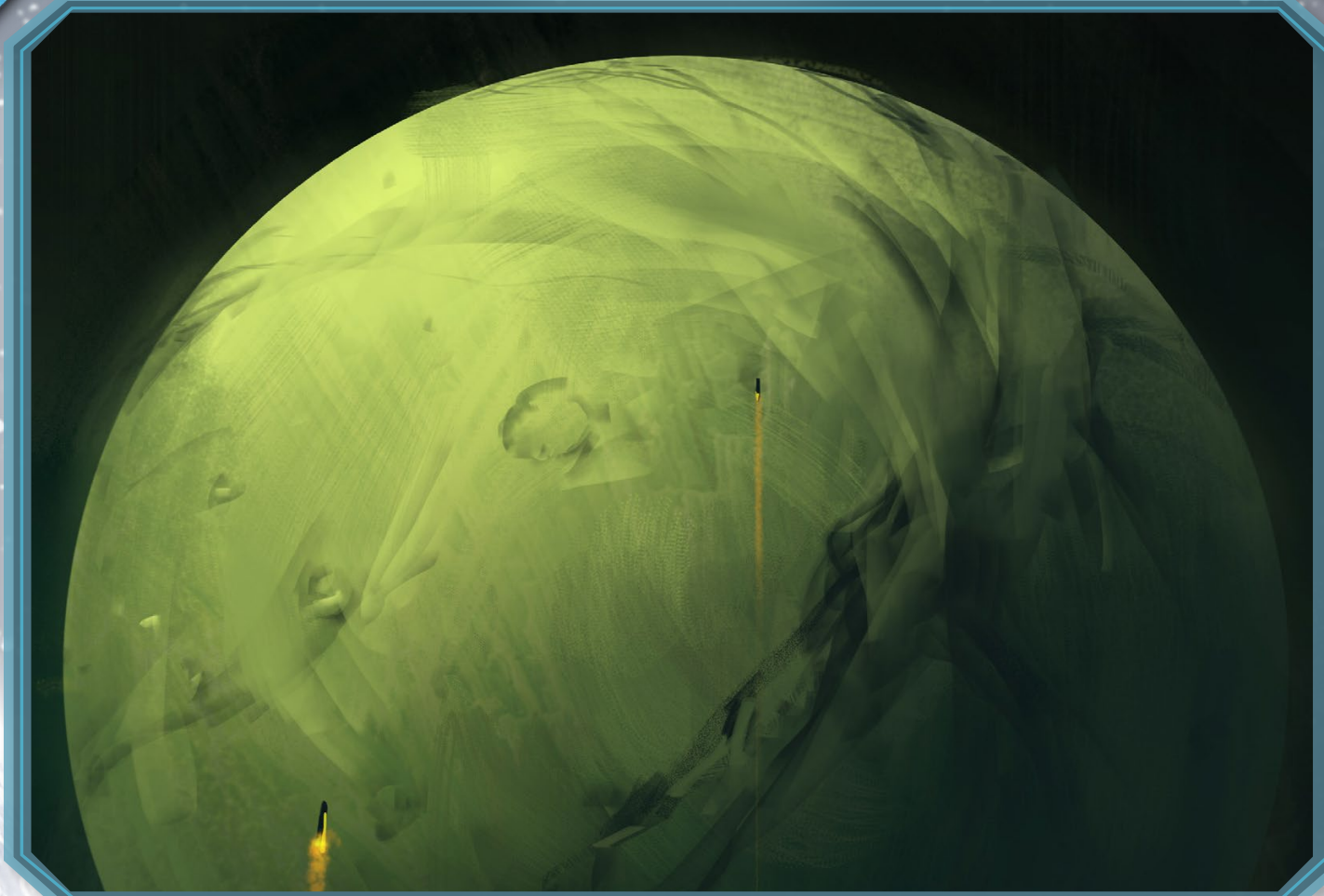
A few days after the crew of the *R.B.S. Indomitable* launches their astronavigational buoy (a process described in part one, “Death’s Frontier”), the ship’s AI reports that another ship has entered the Kalran System. Its particular configuration does not appear in Solution’s databanks, but the computer speculates given its appearance and fuel output the ship may have originated with an insectoid species. (Solution is correct.) Whatever its origin, the ship takes up orbit near Kalran-4 and hides among its 47 moons.

For now, the ship’s crew is focused on blocking the buoy’s signal from reaching Red Band HQ. The insectoid crewmen do not reveal themselves (yet), refusing all attempts to hail their ship. We provide the strange ship’s profile here for the GM, just in case the heroes go after them in earnest, but

THE LAST
PARSEC

:PART II:

SAVAGE TALES OF THE RED BAND: IONIZED ON KALRAN-3



its insectoid crew are detailed in the next installment of "Savage Tales of the Red Band."

Needless to say, the crew of the *Quell-Rak* defends itself if attacked. Their goal is not to kill Red Band operatives, but they are also not prohibited from doing so. Their hope is that the team leads them to certain ruins they seek on the surface, saving them the trouble of a planetary survey. When the explorers begin detailed analysis of the planet's forests and the ruins they hide, see **Ruins of a Previous Age** on page 24.

THE QUELL-RAK

This Collector warship's interior is outfitted with 12 "stasis cells" to hold artifacts and aliens captured by the insectoid crew, until they can be delivered to their Collector masters. The captain has been ordered not to destroy the Red Band team outright (doing so may compromise the Collectors' secret agents within Red Band's leadership), but if he's given an opportunity or excuse he's all too willing to obliterate the competition.

Medium Starship: Size 8, Acc/TS 50/650, Climb 2, Toughness 29 (10), Crew 13, Cost C\$23.67M, Remaining Mods 0

Notes: AMCM, Armor ×2, Crew Space ×2, Deflector Screens, Electromagnetic Shielding, FTL Drive, Sensor Suite (Planetary), Speed, Shields

Weapons:

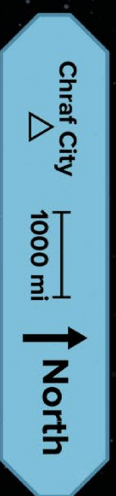
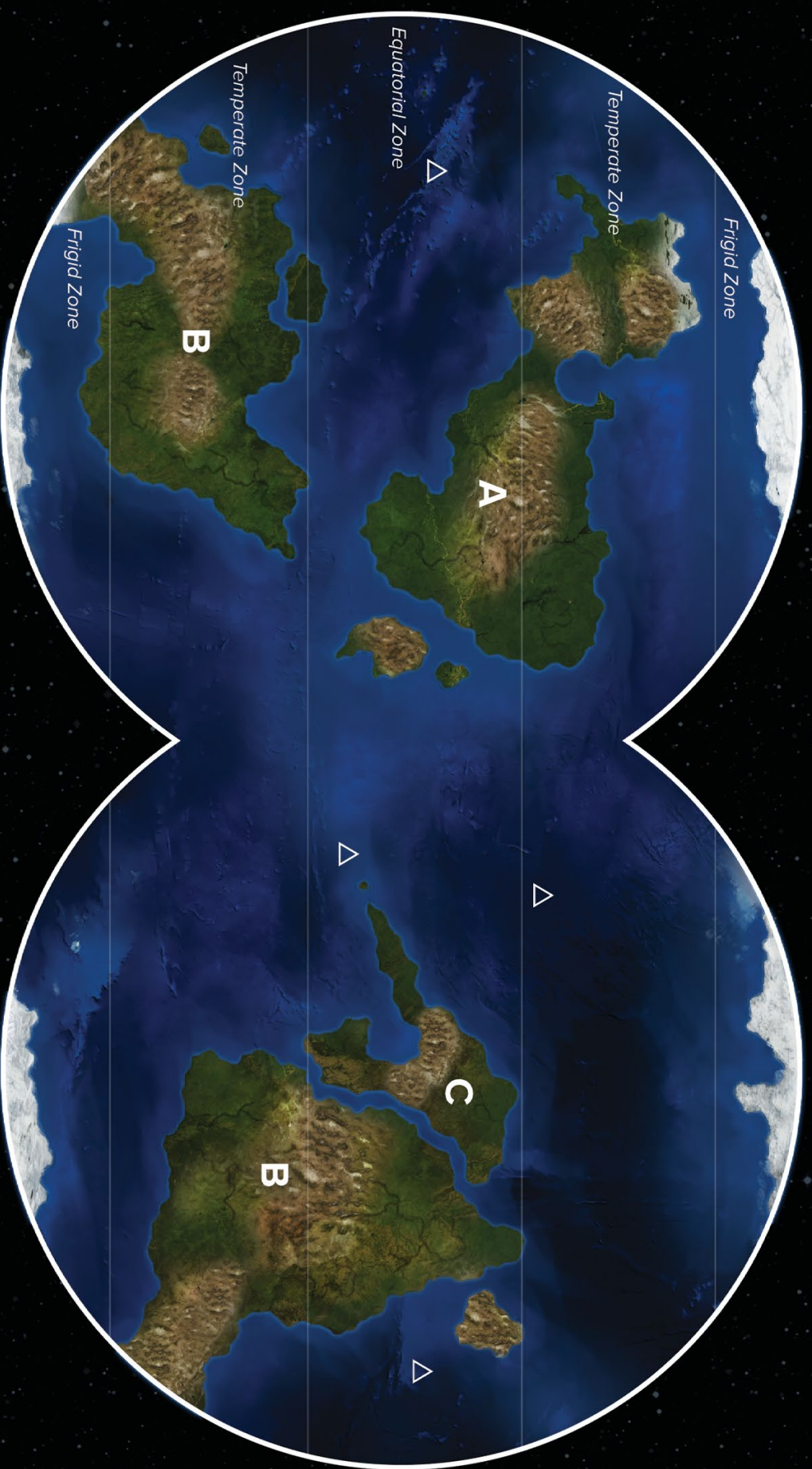
- 2× Auto-Cannons, Light
- 2× Medium Lasers

KALRAN-3

As described in the previous installment, the planet designated Kalran-3 is approximately the size of Earth, although its atmospheric makeup causes it to appear greenish from space. It has normal gravity (for humans), a breathable atmosphere, and saltwater oceans dominate its surface. Three major continents display varying land terrain, mostly forests ranging from sub-arctic to tropical.

Sensor sweeps show a massive array of lifeforms, but no immediately visible signs of intelligent habitation. That said, the planet's forested surface hides extensive ruins left behind by a now-extinct species, and its seas harbor two related varieties of an alien species unique to the Kalran system, the *chraf* (pronounced *SHRAFF*; see

KALRAN-3



page 26). A few clues to the planet's hidden mysteries lie in plain sight for those travelers clever enough to identify them as such.

SEVERAL SATELLITES

First, a number of tiny satellites — 16 in all — orbit Kalran-3 in stable trajectories. Visually, these appear to be natural accretions of rock and mineral, such as might be found among an ocean's coral reefs. But if one of these "planetoids" is scanned directly or taken aboard and investigated closely, it's found to receive and emit electromagnetic signals from the planet's surface. It is *literally* a broadcast satellite, although one created with a curious form of biotechnology.

As soon as visitors physically tamper with a satellite, either by removing it from orbit or destroying it, its signal is interrupted. From that moment on, chraf military and civil defense services are on planetary high alert as they seek to determine the satellite saboteurs' nature and intent.

TEEMING LIFE

As mentioned above, most of Kalran-3 is alight with lifeforms as far as planetary sensors are concerned. Even the polar icecaps harbor life. An observer who hits on the idea of seeking any large *concentrations* of lifeforms — especially in Kalran-3's oceans — finds an intriguing feature. Four extensive regions of seafloor, roughly correlating to the four major chraf cities shown on the planetary map, boast concentrations of lifeforms up to 18 times as dense as the planetary average. Each of these densely packed regions of activity covers about 50 square miles. They might simply represent the abundance of life in any coral reef...or they might be something more.

HIDDEN CITIES

Cross-referencing the satellites' electromagnetic signals with the densely packed regions of life reveals that all the signals either originate from or beam to one of those regions of seafloor. Recalibrating the sensors to closely scan the ocean floor through a mile of ocean (which requires success on a Knowledge: Computers roll) reveals extensive electromagnetic and radio broadcasts emanating from three of these regions. A raise on the roll picks up a chraf vid-broadcast (a civil defense alert), which may be the visitors' first exposure to the aliens' physiology and communication system.

A BELLICOSE HISTORY

Kalran-3's current situation was indelibly shaped by violence and conflict. The story of life in this sector began many thousands of years ago, when Kalran-3 was inhabited by an insectoid progenitor race, now long extinct. These

beings — their name lost to time — seeded the planet's oceans with new, sentient life. These lifeforms evolved into the cephalopod- and echinoderm-like creatures called chraf. As their society grew, the chraf built extensive underwater cities while remaining ignorant of their insectoid creators.

The insectoid creators always intended to reveal themselves to the chraf at a propitious time. But about 1,000 years ago, a planetwide geologic event destroyed their cities and poisoned the atmosphere. The creators were extinct within a few years.

In their underwater cities, the chraf suffered terribly but survived...and eventually thrived once more. But for reasons long forgotten, the cataclysmic events that killed the creators caused the chraf to initiate a bloody civil war among themselves. Over time the echinoderms gained technological and strategic advantages, but neither side has been able to eradicate the other.

KALRAN-3 TODAY

At the time of the team's arrival, two varieties of chraf share the planet in an uneasy detente. The echinoderm-chraf maintain three vast underwater cities and countless settlements in the ocean's equatorial zone. They have launched numerous satellites into planetary orbit and enjoy worldwide telecommunications and nascent interplanetary travel. Echinoderm chraf can be found nearly anywhere on the planet's surface, as they have devised biomechanical armatures that allow them to survive on land for extended periods and have even built permanent settlements.

The cephalopod-chraf have mostly retreated to a single huge city in the deepest waters of the planet's northern temperate zone, where they enjoy a slightly more primitive existence. But they too can be encountered nearly anywhere in the world's extensive oceans, sometimes raiding echinoderm settlements for plunder.

Of course, neither variety of chraf realize they share the same precursor race as "creators," or that their DNA is roughly 99.9% similar — in short, they are all chraf.

The Red Band explorers have a huge responsibility, despite the many perils they face. Depending on how they handle first contact, the chraf could be reunited into a single, powerful species capable of dominating Kalran and spaces beyond. Or interlopers might plunge the world back into a civil war from which neither side might ever recover.

Although that outcome might please the Collectors, it's not what Red Band HQ has in mind!

PLANETARY DATAFILE

Consult the previous map of Kalran-3 as you read the following key.

CONTINENTS

Three major continents form the land contours of Kalran-3, along with northern and southern polar icecaps. Land areas outside the planet's frigid zones are dominated by pristine forests and jungles, as well as towering mountain ranges. There are few obvious signs of habitation on land.

Continent A: Located entirely in the planet's western hemisphere, this continent lies mostly in the temperate zone, with its southernmost reaches and islands on the equator. Its northernmost shores are icy and cold year-round.

Continent B: The planet's largest continental shelf extends across the western and eastern hemisphere, with climatological regions stretching from equatorial through temperate to the southern frigid zone. This continent also harbors the planet's tallest mountain ranges, which are rich in mineral wealth but also rife with dangerous predators.

Continent C: The planet's smallest continent would be part of its largest if not for the water-filled fault line running between them in the form of a channel with 300-meter-high rock walls. This area is the subject of most echinoderm-chraf land expeditions, and a few experimental land-pods (filled with sea water, naturally) have sprung up in recent decades.

Polar Icecaps: Although the surface areas are icy, they support hardy fungus fields that feed vast herds of herbivores. The arctic seas harbor life nearly as plentiful as the world's other regions.

OCEANS

Relatively warm oceans cover most of Kalran-3's surface and shelter the majority of the planet's life. The planet's lack of a moon means it doesn't experience tidal effects as pronounced as those of earth.

Western Hemisphere: The western half of the planet is dominated by extremely deep equatorial waters, with a single chraf city (echinoderm) located on a high underwater ridge above the abyss. Western chraf tend to be more self-sufficient than their neighbors across the globe.

Eastern Hemisphere: Kalran-3's eastern ocean is far more populous, and also the scene of far more strife than in the west. Two chraf cities (echinoderm) lie in equatorial waters, and the sole remaining chraf (cephalopod) city lies in the temperate zone, in its deepest trenches. Along with conflicts between chraf species, the predators called many-deaths (see page 25) seem to be more plentiful as well. These creatures prey on every other type of life, so no one is safe when the many-deaths are on the hunt.

SURFACE EXPLORATION

The crew has several good reasons to explore the surface: finding whomever built the planet's satellites, investigating those odd concentrations of life on the shallow ocean floor, or simply chasing after their errant medical android, Rez. We assume any scientists among the crew are eager to land and collect physical samples, per their mission orders.

Whether the visitors remain in orbit or venture dirtside, after a day or two they receive a direct message from the echinoderm-chraf. The strange beings clearly wish to communicate, but that's easier said than done.

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

Due to the chrafs' idiosyncratic communication style — in effect, six-limbed sign language based on completely unfamiliar concepts — a language translator (see the Science Fiction Companion) isn't sufficient for comprehensible interaction. Use of a translator that has "learned" the chraf language results in one- or two-word utterances, at most, and the device's skill roll suffers a -4 penalty. All is not hopeless. A character with Knowledge (Linguistics) who succeeds on a skill roll at -2 may convey or comprehend one simple concept ("Come with us," "Stay away," "Go (to a location)," etc.). Without specialized knowledge, a character may attempt the same feat of communication using only Smarts, but the roll suffers a -6 penalty.

With success on a roll to communicate, the travelers divine that the chraf wish to meet with them and seem peaceful in their intent. On a raise, the linguist figures out that the chraf are beaming a series of numerals that correspond to a specific location on the planet's surface. (If no characters score a raise, Solution — the *Indomitable's* AI — deduces this fact and informs the crew.)

The coordinates point to a large island just south of Kalran-3's equator. On the planetary map, this jungle island lies in the eastern hemisphere, just off the tip of Continent C's northern peninsula, about 400 miles northeast of an underwater chraf city. When the crew lands their ship at or near the transmitted coordinates, go to **First Contact** below.

FIRST CONTACT

As noted in *The Last Parsec: Core*, there are no hard and fast rules concerning "first contact" with alien species throughout the Known Worlds. But the Red Band Conglomerate — like JumpCorp — frowns upon its duly appointed agents and contractors sharing technology and scientific knowledge with less-developed cultures.

Unlike JumpCorp, the Red Band authorizes its teams to use whatever measures are deemed necessary to defend the conglomerate's interests from primitive locals, should

they prove bellicose. While every effort should be made to isolate company actions from belligerent locals with energy shields, fences, barricades, and similar camouflage, Red Band teams are given quite a bit more leeway than JumpCorp operatives as to when military action is justified. Offensive strikes are never encouraged, but a controlled operation with few casualties doesn't necessarily result in an officer being decommissioned. This is doubly true for long-range "sleeper teams" like the current crew. The Red Band didn't grow to its current size by obsessing over what they consider acceptable losses.

DO YOU COME IN PEACE?

Aerial surveillance of the island reveals a large landmass about 100 miles across at its widest point. It is covered with thick, alien jungle and teeming with life. The coordinates point to its southeasternmost tip, where a strange structure straddles the shoreline.

The structure looks like a rough, natural base of coral and mineral deposits, with a huge, clear "bubble" of unknown composition atop it. The bubble's interior holds millions of gallons of ocean water, pumped from the nearby sea to fill it to the top. Inside stand towers, bridges, and odd structures made from the same accreted, coral-like substance. This is a chraf "landpod," one of the largest of Kalran-3, built by the echinoderms to facilitate land exploration.

Near the structure stands a large welcoming party, eagerly watching the *Indomitable* as it touches down. Show the players the picture of an echinoderm (page 28) and note the biomechanical armatures they wear to allow them to survive out of the water.

See **Communication Breakdown**, above, if the visitors have not yet established a rapport with the chraf. Once rudimentary communication is established, a single chraf (Jaezz the Prime) steps forward and moves its sinuous limbs in a complex display. For those who comprehend, the chraf says,

"Welcome, strangers from beyond. We wish to befriend you, and offer you what aid we can. In return, we hope you will help us to win our age-old war over the primitive ones. Our world can only know peace when they are dead."

Further conversation reveals that Jaezz is a high-ranking leader among the chraf, and his companions are military officers (Commander Kellok-veit and his chraf commandos). They have been at war with the "primitives" (what they call the cephalopod-chraf) for hundreds of years. The primitives, they claim, cannot be reasoned with and constantly raid their underwater settlements for plunder and to sate their bloodlust.

★ **Jaezz the Prime:** See below.

★ **Commander Kellok-veit:** See below.

- **Echinoderm Commandos (2 per hero):** Use the Soldier (Grunt) profile in the *Science Fiction Companion*, but add the echinoderm racial profile on page 28. All of them wear biomechanical armatures (Pace 8 on land, provides water for breathing). Half of these are equipped with 2× claws (+2 on Grappling attempts), the other half with 2× spike-axes (Str+d8, AP 2).

★ JAEZZ THE PRIME

This echinoderm is primary leader of a chraf city roughly 400 miles to the southwest. It's the closest one to the last remaining cephalopod city, making their home the traditional front in Kalran-3's endless civil war. Jaezz is desperate to befriend the heroes and gain their aid, hoping to score a major political victory by striking a blow to the cephalopods' home.

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

Skills: Driving d6, Intimidation d10, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Law) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Streetwise d10, Taunt d6

Cha: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: —

Edges: Charismatic, Connections, Strong Willed

Special Abilities:

- **Additional Action (+3):** Chraf make one extra non-movement action per round without incurring a multi-action penalty.
- **Aquatic (+2):** Chraf cannot drown in oxygenated liquid and start with a free d6 in Swimming. A chraf's Pace in water is equal to the Swimming die type.
- **Biomechanical Armature:** Some echinoderms—usually those involved with military actions or civil defense—are equipped with shell-like biomechanical armatures that provide added weaponry and the ability to move unhindered on land. A biomech armature allows a chraf to move at Pace 8 on land and provides a water supply for breathing.
- **Cannot Speak (−1):** Chraf communicate with each other by means of complex tentacle motions, but they cannot form words. Only creatures with at least six limbs can learn to "speak" chraf, and even then only clumsily.
- **Deaf (−2):** Unless they're underwater, chraf are unable to hear sounds and have the Hard of Hearing (Major) Hindrance.
- **Dependency (−2):** Chraf must be immersed in salt water for one hour out of every 24, or they take an automatic level of Fatigue each day. This Fatigue can kill.
- **Low Light Vision (+1):** Chraf ignore penalties for bad lighting in all but pitch darkness.
- **Toughness (+1):** Chraf are rubbery, muscular, and durable, and so add +1 to Toughness.

★ KELLOK-VEIT

Years ago, Kellok-veit decided it was his personal responsibility to protect his people from murderous cephalopods, the chrafs' mortal enemies. He has waged vicious wars against them ever since. Like Jaezz, he hopes the extraterrestrials lend their aid to the war effort. Unlike his leader, however, Kellok-veit is deeply suspicious of the Red Band team. If the characters fail to join the chraf cause, Kellok-veit has no qualms about attacking them in hopes of stealing their advanced technology.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4

Cha: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 11 (5)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: Command, Leader of Men, Natural Leader

Gear: Combat armor (+5), light slugthrower pistol (Range 10/20/40, Damage 2d6-1, RoF 1, AP 2), saber (Str+d6).

Special Abilities:

- **Additional Action (+3):** Chraf make one extra non-movement action per round without incurring a multi-action penalty.
- **Aquatic (+2):** Chraf cannot drown in oxygenated liquid and start with a free d6 in Swimming. A chraf's Pace in water is equal to the Swimming die type.
- **Biomechanical Armature:** Some echinoderms—usually those involved with military actions or civil defense—are equipped with shell-like biomechanical



armatures that provide added weaponry and the ability to move unhindered on land. Kellok-veit's military biomech armature allows him to move at Pace 8 on land and provides a water supply for breathing. It's also equipped with a claw (+2 on Grappling attempts) and a spike-axe (Str+d8, AP 2).

- **Cannot Speak (-1):** Chraf communicate with each other by means of complex tentacle motions, but they cannot form words. Only creatures with at least six limbs can learn to "speak" chraf, and even then only clumsily.
- **Deaf (-2):** Unless they're underwater, chraf are unable to hear sounds and have the Hard of Hearing (Major) Hindrance.
- **Dependency (-2):** Chraf must be immersed in salt water for one hour out of every 24, or they take an automatic level of Fatigue each day. This Fatigue can kill.
- **Low Light Vision (+1):** Chraf ignore penalties for bad lighting in all but pitch darkness.
- **Toughness (+1):** Chraf are rubbery, muscular, and durable, and so add +1 to Toughness.

INTO THE LANDPOD

If the characters agree to help — or at least to learn more — the chraf invite the visitors to join them inside their enormous watery landpod. The team's rebreathers (included in their survival packs; see part one) function just fine underwater, but if they're not handy the chraf offer biomechanical gear that serves the same purpose. Read the following:

The alien, starfish-like beings lead you toward their water-bubble settlement on the shore, where a round panel roughly 12 meters across sits at ground level. It grinds open along invisible seams, revealing a chamber with a floor of wet sand.

Once everyone is inside the portal grinds shut and the room begins to fill with ocean water. After several minutes the "waterlock" is full, and an inner door opens upon the alien settlement.

Like a coral reef lit by thousands of flitting, phosphorescent jellyfish and other, stranger creatures, the landpod's interior at first appears of natural origin. After a few moments of scrutinizing it, you recognize it as a biomechanical construct of great complexity. Hundreds of the starfish-beings move among domiciles and walkways, some pausing to regard your group in what must be shocked silence.

The group's hosts escort them into the central tower of the "reef," through mazelike corridors to a secured area. Inside are several small, self-contained chambers that hold other starfish creatures. Success on a Smarts roll identifies this place as a jail or cell block.

Jaezz the Prime insists,

"We do not wish to imprison you. Please speak with our prisoner, a primitive one, and perhaps you can learn more of their plans. We suspect they will attack soon."

THE PRIMITIVE ONE

The cell block is empty except for one inhabitant, a creature that looks much like the other chraf, except it seems to have evolved from octopus-like origins. When the group tries to communicate with the cephalopod, whose name is Ousil, use the system under **Communication Breakdown** on page 20.

To objective eyes, Ousil doesn't seem nearly as primitive or bloodthirsty as the other chraf described him. The cephalopod seems calm, resigned to its fate. In response to questions about an imminent attack, Ousil replies,

"No attack. No war. Only defend. They do not understand. We are all chraf. In the green, waterless spaces — far higher than we can travel — the secrets of the originals remain. You travelers of the skies might find them. We are all chraf."

Ousil has little else to say, refusing to divulge the location of the cephalopod city or its military forces' plans. If a curious scientist uses one of the team's handheld sensor suites (found in each character's survival pack) to analyze the chrafs' bodily composition, a successful Smarts roll reveals the 99.9% similarity between their DNA — for all practical purposes, they are the same species.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The team has two choices. They might ally with the echinoderms and help plan an attack on the cephalopods, which is Jaezz and Kellok-veit's preference, although the chraf are loathe to attempt to force this course of action. Realistically, the Red Band team has little to gain from casting their lot with one side or the other.

Conversely, the explorers may be curious as to the "secrets of the originals" Ousil claims lie in "green, waterless spaces" — the planet's forests. If they choose to investigate, Kellok-veit expresses disapproval in the strongest terms but doesn't interfere. It's up to the heroes to determine where they begin the search, but any forested area is liable to bear fruit in the form of clues.

SURFACE ENCOUNTERS

Rather than break encounters down into specific locations on Kalran-3, we instead provide general tables for land and sea encounters in a variety of climates. This allows the players and GM the most flexibility in how and where they seek out green, waterless spaces.

Draw a card from the Action Deck for every four hours in-game the team spends exploring or conducting scientific studies on Kalran-3's surface. On an Ace, Joker, or face card, roll a die on the table that matches the surrounding terrain.

Organisms listed in the following tables are found in the Xenos section of this adventure (page 25) or in the *Science Fiction Companion*.

EQUATORIAL LAND ENCOUNTERS

d8	Encounter
1	1d4 Acid Pitchers
2	3d6 Energy Drainers
3	1d12 Insects, Giant
4	2d4 Many-Death Hatchling Swarms (see page 26)
5	1d6 Quadrapus
6	1d4 Harpooners
7	2d6 Arc Beetles
8	Chraf (echinoderms only)

TEMPERATE LAND ENCOUNTERS

d8	Encounter
1	1d4 Loggers
2	1d20 Monkeys (Lobbers)
3	1d4 Spit Worms
4	1d4 Many-Death Hatchling Swarms (see page 26)
5	1d8 Insects, Giant
6	Chraf (echinoderms only)
7	Fisher Beetle
8	Many-death (see page 25)

FRIGID LAND ENCOUNTERS

d6	Encounter
1	Scoopjaw (This species adds Swimming d8.)
2	2d10 Croakers
3	2d20 Stryders
4	2d20 Grazers
5	2d6 Bristled Gorers
6	Stomper

EQUATORIAL OCEAN ENCOUNTERS

d8	Encounter
1	Eel, Giant
2	2d6 Loggers
3	2d6 Shock Rays
4	Many-Death (see page 25)
5	Crab, Giant
6	Chraf (1d6: 1–4, echinoderms; 5–6, cephalopods)
7	1d4 Meg-Shaan (see page 26)
8	1d4 Vomit Bird Swarms (ocean surface only)

TEMPERATE OCEAN ENCOUNTERS

d8	Encounter
1	Crab, Giant
2	Meg-Shaan (see page 26)
3	Chraf (1d6: 1–4, echinoderms; 5–6, cephalopods)
4	Many-Death (see page 26)
5	1d4 Vomit Bird Swarms (ocean surface only)
6	Orthocone
7	1d8 Shock Rays
8	Eel, Giant

FRIGID OCEAN ENCOUNTERS

d6	Encounter
1	Chraf (1d6: 1–3, echinoderms; 4–6, cephalopods)
2	Scoopjaw (This species adds Swimming d8.)
3	1d4 Vomit Bird Swarms (ocean surface only)
4	1d6 Orthocones
5	1d4 Deep Divers
6	Meg-Shaan (see page 26)

RUINS OF A PREVIOUS AGE

To discover the ancients' secrets, the group must physically explore forested areas on Kalran-3's surface. Several large, ruined cities remain, but they are extremely difficult to detect from orbit with planetary sensors; they are almost completely obliterated by plant growth and their only inhabitants are local flora and fauna. But they hold vital information for dogged seekers.

Explorers traveling among Kalran-3's temperate forests detect pervasive signs of advanced structures and roadways. For each day spent exploring, scientists make a Knowledge (Archaeology) or Knowledge (Geology) roll. Without specialized knowledge, an educated traveler inspecting the forested lands makes a Smarts roll at –3. Laymen roll Notice at –6.

Success finds the aforementioned structures, foundations, and roadways, as well as the occasional crumbling pillar, or caves whose walls are covered in odd, carved pictograms. In fact, these were the cities of the chrafs' ancient insectoid forebears, who dominated the planet until a geologic catastrophe ended their civilization. When anyone scores a raise, the explorers find the hall of knowledge.

HALL OF KNOWLEDGE

In one of the ruins (it's up to the GM to decide its exact location), success on a Notice roll at –2 reveals a round stone

shaft descending nearly 100 feet into the earth. Its walls are fairly smooth, providing few handholds for climbers, so the crew must decide whether to use ropes and similar equipment, or some other gear to descend and ascend the shaft. At its bottom is a large, hemispherical chamber.

The chamber's walls are covered from floor to ceiling with pictograms describing the history of the planet's ancient insectoid progenitors, from their earliest days of uplifting echinoderms and cephalopods into the chraf, to the eventual calamity that brought their civilization to an end. (Geologic core samples show a two-meter-thick layer of ash, planetwide, dating from roughly 900 years ago.) Many of the carvings have been defaced by time and geologic activity, so decoding them is a challenge.

A language translation device that has already "learned" the chraf language may decode the symbols, but the device's skill roll suffers a -4 penalty and it takes 2d6 hours to analyze all the information. A character with Knowledge (Linguistics) or a similar skill may also attempt to translate the symbology, but a detailed analysis and translation takes 2d4 days' work. Without specialized knowledge, a character may not read the symbols in this chamber.

On a success on either of the above rolls, scholars learn that an advanced insectoid race once ruled the planet's land masses, where they constructed extensive cities and studied the stars. Massive geologic upheaval put an end to their civilization close to a thousand years ago.

With a raise on either of the above rolls, a translator learns a far more detailed story of the chraf. In this case the GM may share most of the details found under **A Bellicose History** (page 19). In addition, the reader gleans hints of an enormous power source entombed somewhere within the planet's crust, but its exact location is unclear.

THIS MEANS WAR!

Quite suddenly, the Red Band team finds itself in possession of knowledge that might bring lasting peace to the chraf. Additionally, the hinted-at "power source" would likely be of enormous interest to Red Band Conglomerate, should the explorers discover its location and true nature. Unfortunately, Commander Kellok-veit isn't interested in ancient history, enlightenment, or pacifism. When the chrafs' new allies fail to launch an offensive against the primitives, the commander leads a highly trained cadre of echinoderm-chraf to capture them — dead or alive.

This team outnumbers the explorers three to one, and is equipped with biomechanical combat armatures to boost their fighting prowess and allow them to hunt their quarry on land. If the *R.B.S. Indomitable* lands on the surface, capturing the vessel becomes their first priority. Kellok-veit does not have a reliable means to reach the *Indomitable* if it remains in orbit...yet. In that case, he

settles for capturing one or more team members and using them as hostages to gain leverage in securing the highly advanced ship.

The attack takes place at the ancient ruin under cover of darkness. Captured explorers are taken back to the chraf city closest to where they parlayed with Jaezz the Prime and imprisoned in oxygenated cells. (Chraf cities will be detailed in the next installment.)

✦ **Commander Kellok-veit:** See page 22.

- **Echinoderm Commandos (3 per hero):** Use the Soldier (Grunt) profile in the *Science Fiction Companion*, but add the echinoderm racial profile on page 28. All of them wear biomechanical armatures (Pace 8 on land, provides water for breathing). Half of these are equipped with 2× claws (+2 on Grappling attempts), the other half with 2× spike-axes (Str+d8, AP 2).

TO BE CONTINUED!

How will the Red Band team choose to proceed once they learn more about Kalran-3's tragic misunderstandings? Do they fall victim to ravenous predators, start a bloody conflict, or gain new allies in their quest to understand the planet's secrets? How does Commander Kellok-veit's intervention threaten these goals, and what happens when the Collectors' enigmatic agents make their move? We'll cover all this and more in the next episode of "Savage Tales of the Red Band"!

XENOS

Countless species are native to Kalran-3, from avians to insects to a bizarre panoply of ocean-dwelling organisms. For most of these, the GM may improvise weird creatures as flavor or use xenos from the *Science Fiction Companion*. A few, however, are sufficiently distinctive — and dangerous — to warrant their own profiles here.

MANY-DEATH

The beasts known to the chraf as "many-deaths" are Kalran-3's apex predators, and they are almost always hungry. The so-called many-deaths are unique among the planet's species in their ability to hunt on land or in water with equal skill, although they have adapted to a watery habitat and spend most of their lives in equatorial to temperate oceans. They eat nearly every other creature on the planet, and frequently terrorize chraf communities on the deep ocean's frontiers.

Many-deaths are large, fearsome creatures evolved from cephalopod sea dwellers. These predators wield serrated tentacles, a beak-like mouth capable of severing limbs with ease, and a highly developed breathing sac containing both lung- and gill-like organs. They are extremely persistent and stubborn when they smell blood, and they're nearly always

hungry. Many-deaths spend most of their lives in the ocean, but venture onto land at night to hunt prey when pickings are slim in their native waters.

They resemble spiny balls of muscled flesh roughly eight feet in diameter, surrounded by a lethal fringe of symmetrical, razor-sharp tentacles that can be used for mobility, attack, or defense. Four blood-red eyes ring the top of a many-death's "head," giving little indication of the thing's cunning and ability to learn, both of which are prodigious. These organisms have a sophisticated means of communication among themselves, and can figure out rather complex puzzles and tool-related dilemmas, given enough time to experiment with a mechanism.

This profile reflects a fully grown many-death on the hunt. Use the statistics below for a newly hatched swarm.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d12 (A), Spirit d10, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12+2

Skills: Climbing d12, Fighting d10, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Swimming d12

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 14 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Aquatic:** Pace 16". Many-deaths use tentacles to propel themselves torpedo-like through the water.
- **Armor +2:** Many-deaths have tough, rubbery skin with bony plates.
- **Bite:** Str+d12. A many-death can only bite prey that it first Grapples with its tentacles.
- **Size +3:** Many-deaths are large, dense balls of muscle.
- **Tentacles:** Str+d8. A many-death's 10 tentacles have razor-sharp, serrated edges and toothed suckers. It may attack with up to four of them per round with no multi-action penalty.

MANY-DEATH HATCHLINGS (SWARM)

From birth, many-deaths learn to sate their never-ending hunger. Many-death breeding patterns affect entire continent's biological population when they spawn once every three years. They lay their eggs exclusively on land. A large sac of fertilized eggs, each as large as a watermelon, develops for 1d6 days high in a forested crag before hatching. As the 5d20 many-deaths hatch, they make their way to the ocean in a ravenous swarm of tentacles, devouring every living thing in their way. In this way they develop their air sacs before they ever use their gills.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Notice d6, Swimming d10

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Aquatic:** Pace 12". Many-deaths use tentacles to propel themselves torpedo-like through the water.

- **Split:** Many-death swarms are easily clever enough to split into two smaller swarms (Small Burst Templates) should their foes split up. The Toughness of these smaller swarms is lowered by -2 (to 5 each).
- **Swarm:** Parry +2; Because the swarm is composed of scores of creatures, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally, and a character can stomp to inflict his damage in Strength each round. A many-death swarm cannot be foiled by jumping in water; they pests are equally at home on land as they are in the water.
- **Tentacles:** Many-death swarms' serrated tentacles inflict hundreds of tiny cuts every round to their victims, hitting automatically and causing 2d8 damage to everyone in the template. Damage is applied to the least armored location (victims in completely sealed suits are immune).

MEG-SHAAN

Large, shark-like sea creatures, meg-shaan have mouths full of razor-sharp teeth, a number of thin, prehensile tentacles, and a bottomless hunger. They grow to lengths of 18 to 25 feet. They eat nearly anything, and their low intelligence drives them to attack even creatures larger than they. Meg-shaan and many-deaths are mortal enemies; whenever they encounter one another, a fight to the death is sure to result.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12+2

Skills: Fighting d12, Notice d12, Swimming d12

Pace: —; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 13

Special Abilities:

- **Aquatic:** Pace 12.
- **Bite:** Str+d8.
- **Hardy:** The creature does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Large:** Attackers add +2 to their attack rolls when attacking a great white due to its large size.
- **Size +4:** Meg-shaan grow up to 25 feet in length.
- **Tentacles:** A meg-shaan uses its tentacles to hold prey immobile while it tears away with its bite. Add +2 to the creature's Grappling attempts. During any round an opponent is held in a Grapple, the meg-shaan bites for automatic damage.

CHRAF

Kalran's dominant and only intelligent species, the chraf (pronounced *SHRAFF*) come in two varieties that live in extensive underwater cities nigh indistinguishable from the surrounding plant life and mineral growth.

All chraf exhibit radial symmetry, with body shapes and textures ranging from starfish-like to more octopoid



configurations. They have four black eyes without pupils, and a varying amount of prehensile tentacles. Chraf are hermaphroditic, and reproduce by budding. Create chraf characters normally, or use standard profiles from the *Science Fiction Companion* and apply the racial characteristics listed below.

★ CEPHALOPOD

Cephalopod-chraf evolved in the world's oceans, but were driven into deeper waters and a far more primitive existence than they would otherwise enjoy by their centuries-old conflict with the echinoderms.

Cephalopod chraf use low-tech melee and ranged weapons similar to swords, spears, slings, and so forth. They live in small, underwater farming communities for the most

part, although their kind maintains a single remaining city in the oceans of the world's northern hemisphere.

These chraf are pacifistic unless they are threatened or frightened by displays of advanced technology.

- **Additional Action (+3):** Chraf make one extra non-movement action per round without incurring a multi-action penalty.
- **Aquatic (+2):** Chraf cannot drown in oxygenated liquid and start with a free d6 in Swimming. A chraf's Pace in water is equal to the Swimming die type.
- **Cannot Speak (-1):** Chraf communicate with each other by means of complex tentacle motions, but they cannot form words. Only creatures with at least six limbs can learn to "speak" chraf, and even then only clumsily.

- **Deaf (-2):** Unless they're underwater, chraf are unable to hear sounds and have the Hard of Hearing (Major) Hindrance.
- **Dependency (-2):** Chraf must be immersed in salt water for one hour out of every 24, or they take an automatic level of Fatigue each day. This Fatigue can kill.
- **Low Light Vision (+1):** Chraf ignore penalties for bad lighting in all but pitch darkness.
- **Malleable Form:** Cephalopod-chraf have rubbery bodies whose internal organs are spread throughout. Given unlimited time, an adult cephalopod can squeeze its entire body mass through a space roughly four inches in diameter. If time is of the essence, the cephalopod can opt to force itself through an aperture more quickly and suffer a level of Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises (see *Savage Worlds*) in the process.
- **Toughness (+1):** Chraf are rubbery, muscular, and durable, and so add +1 to Toughness.

★ ECHINODERM

The product of ancient uplift programs, echinoderm-chraf have evolved to become Kalran-3's undisputed masters. They have established small colonies in nearly every part of the planet's equatorial and temperate zones, and maintain three massive cities around the globe.

They're capable of interplanetary travel, but have not yet achieved or acquired FTL technology. All in all, their society and technological levels are similar to Terra's in the mid-Twenty-First Century. They use a variety of high-tech slugthrowers, body armor, and biomechanical armatures (see below), but have not achieved, for example, reliable laser weapons.

By and large, the echinoderms are not a threat to explorers. The overwhelming majority of them, confronted with intelligent xenos, would show a range of reactions similar in scope to their human counterparts. In other words, the NPC Reaction Table (in *Savage Worlds*) can provide the GM with guidance when the explorers' behavior is open to interpretation. Assume most echinoderms are willing to give strangers a chance if they're not scared off or outright attacked.

Commander Kellok-veit and his forces are another story entirely. Once they become aware of extraterrestrial visitors' intent to aid the cephalopods in any way, the commander pursues them tirelessly in what he calls an attempt to vouchsafe Kalran-3 from hostile invaders.

In reality, Kellok-veit hopes to gain advanced technology he can use to complete a military coup and take over the chrafs' civilian democracy and replace it with a dictatorship under his control.

Given the chrafs' relatively primitive technology and culture, it's unlikely Kellok-veit would be able to operate the *Indomitable* if he were to gain control of it. That being said, the commander is not above using violence to coerce captured team members into piloting the ship on his behalf.

- **Additional Action (+3):** Chraf make one extra non-movement action per round without incurring a multi-action penalty.
- **Aquatic (+2):** Chraf cannot drown in oxygenated liquid and start with a free d6 in Swimming. A chraf's Pace in water is equal to the Swimming die type.
- **Biomechanical Armature:** Some echinoderms — usually those involved with military actions or civil defense — are equipped with shell-like biomechanical armatures that provide added weaponry and the ability to move unhindered on land. A biomech armature allows a chraf to move at Pace 8 on land and provides a water supply for breathing. An armature has either two claws (+2 on Grappling attempts), two spike-axes (Str+d8, AP 2), or one claw and one spike axe.
- **Cannot Speak (-1):** Chraf communicate with each other by means of complex tentacle motions, but they cannot form words. Only creatures with at least six limbs can learn to "speak" chraf, and even then only clumsily.
- **Deaf (-2):** Unless they're underwater, chraf are unable to hear sounds and have the Hard of Hearing (Major) Hindrance.
- **Dependency (-2):** Chraf must be immersed in salt water for one hour out of every 24, or they take an automatic level of Fatigue each day. This Fatigue can kill.
- **Low Light Vision (+1):** Chraf ignore penalties for bad lighting in all but pitch darkness.
- **Toughness (+1):** Chraf are rubbery, muscular, and durable, and so add +1 to Toughness.

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