

Shark Nibbles #5

THE UNOFFICIAL MONTHLY SAVAGE WORLDS NEWSLETTER



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The Message...

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History and Overview

In the millennia before the ascendancy of humanity, aliens visited the Earth. However, a shifting in climate forced them to cease their visits. They left behind a specifically designed fungus that would survive on the changing world and alert them when the conditions were once again right for them to return. That time is now.

As the fungus grows and prepares to send its message, Professor Jeffery Douglas of East Texas University happened upon it and was infected. The fungus destroys him and any evidence of its existence, but in doing so, it brings the intrepid heroes into the picture.

Professor Douglas was not the only one to discover the fungus and its unique nature. Agents of a secret government agency, identified only as the Rangers, have become aware of the fungus and hope to use it to contact alien civilizations while at the same time avoiding any public scrutiny.

The fungus is now in its final stage, preparing to send its message. It has consumed a large portion of a substantial grove of trees just outside of Pinebox, Texas, and infected the occupants of a nearby town. It hopes to avoid detection long enough to send its message. Then its work will be complete.

Scene 1: A Fiery Death

The campus of the East Texas University is filled with hundreds of students on their lunch break as you navigate your way to the second floor of the Biology building. A display of comparative anatomy near the office of your friend, Professor Douglas, doesn't encourage your appetite, but the man had promised to buy you lunch.

It's to be a celebration, Professor Jeffery Douglas said yesterday over the phone. He has something big to show you, something that he says is "the discovery of the year, possibly the decade."

But as you approach the office at the end of the hall, you are suddenly assaulted with the overpowering reek of gasoline. A cold ball of ice forms in the pit of your stomach as you watch a pool of blood spread from beneath the door. You hear sobbing and a strange, repeated "shnikt" sound.

The pool of blood continues to grow until it forms a puddle that fills the width of the doorway out to several feet beyond the door. The heroes continue to hear the odd "shnikt" sound every few seconds.

The door of Professor Douglas' office is unlocked and open, but just barely. When the door is opened, read the following:

The office is littered with papers and parts of a smashed laptop computer. On the floor lies the mangled body of a young woman. Blood flows from several large open wounds. An open gasoline can lies on its side on the desk, a trickle of gas still pouring from the open spout.

Professor Douglas sits in his chair in the center of the office. His clothes are soaked with blood and gasoline. Tears run down his gore-spattered face. He holds a lighter in his shaking right hand and strikes it, making the "schnikt" sound, but it fails to spark.

Observant heroes (Notice roll) may observe that patches of tiny, thin, white filaments are on Professor Douglas' skin and clothes. Attempts to reach the professor will be physically resisted by him.

Professor Douglas looks into your eyes and speaks, but still continues to strike the lighter.

"Stay back...I can't stop...<shnikt>...it won't...let me...<shnikt>...tell Jennifer's family...tell them I'm sorry...<shnikt>...I didn't want to hurt anyone ...<shnikt>...so sorry...<shnikt>...its stronger than I am...<shnikt>...than any of us...<shnikt>...you've got to stop it...<shnikt>...the message has to be stopped...<shnikt>...I'm so sorry...<shnikt>"

On the last strike, a small yellow flame appears at lighter's head and the gasoline fumes ignite in a fiery explosion. The heroes must make Agility rolls to avoid taking 3d6 damage from the explosion. If the team did not choose to open the door, they may hear (on a Notice roll) Professor Douglas sobbing and speaking to himself. He repeats over and over again that "the message must be stopped" and continues to strike the lighter. After the team has heard the man speak, the lighter ignites and the explosion occurs.

Moments after the explosion the building's sprinklers turn on, sending a cold shower of water onto the team and the office. However, the damage has already been done; Professor Douglas is dead and his office is a total loss.

After the explosion, students and professors rush into the hall and offer their assistance, but they will not enter the burning office. Within minutes, campus security, Pinebox police and the Pinebox Fire Department arrive. Anyone that has been burned is treated at the scene unless his or her burns are severe. Both campus security and a detective from the Pinebox police question the team to discover what happened.

Scene 2: A Visit from the Texas Rangers

While the team is being interviewed and treated by emergency personnel, several men in suits arrive and declare that the scene is under the jurisdiction of the Texas Rangers. The local cops angrily withdraw to the edge of the scene.

A muscular man who identifies himself as Ranger Albert Baker interviews the heroes. He asks much the same questions as the local cops, except he is much more interested in what the Professor told them over the phone, particularly if there were any details about what the Professor found. He also wants to know if they had any physical contact with the Professor or if they went into the office before the fire.

A few minutes later, men and women in full-body biohazard suits arrive with a large, sealed, clear plastic container. Team members with Knowledge (Science) or similar skills recognize these suits as self-contained biohazard suits and the container as an emergency containment vessel. Other characters may make Common Knowledge rolls with appropriate background modifiers (typically -2 or -4) to reach the same conclusion. The Professor's body is placed in the containment vessel and then removed to a waiting vehicle. The people in biohazard suits then seal the office in sheets of plastic.

If the team admits to having had physical contact with the Professor or going into the office before the fire, a woman in a biohazard suit passes an ultraviolet light over them, seemingly searching for something. If the heroes ask her what she is looking for, she ignores them. After several passes with the light, she says "You're clean," and leaves.

Some heroes may resist the questioning or attempt to escape from the area after the "Rangers" arrives. A "Ranger" is at every exit and those who resist are forcibly sedated.

After several hours, the heroes are allowed to go. Read the following:

Finally, after several hours under the scrutiny of the FBI agents and the biohazard team, you're allowed to go. Special Agent Baker apologizes for the treatment you received at the hands of the team.

"I'm afraid it was necessary for your own safety," Baker says. "We have reason to believe the Professor Douglas stumbled upon a lost container of nerve gas while conducting research in the field, near an old testing range. The residual effects of the gas drove him into a homicidal rage and culminated in his own suicide. I'd tell you more, but I'm afraid it's a matter of national security."

If the team questions his explanation, Ranger Baker suggests that paranoia and aggression are symptoms of the nerve agent and that perhaps the team should be re-examined. If the heroes become physically aggressive, they are arrested and spend the night in the Pinebox jail.

Note: The heroes' phones are tapped and their homes are bugged. If the team communicates over the phone they may hear strange clicking noises. Also, they are under surveillance (Notice at -2 to detect).

Scene 3: Information gathering

The team may wish to find out why Professor Douglas became so deranged and what he meant when he said, "the message had to be stopped." However, conducting an investigation is difficult as the Rangers are in the process of removing any evidence pointing to Cavalas, Texas.

If the heroes begin asking around the ETU campus (a Streetwise check), they find that Professor Douglas was well liked by the Biology department staff and his students. All are at a loss to explain his actions, but no one seems to know what he was researching. Most of his previous work had been centered around the ecology of the Pinebox area, with an emphasis on fungus. Some of Douglas' colleagues remember him saying he was going to be doing some field research, but don't recall where or what he was looking for. Speaking to the Dean of Biology, Dr. Bethany Moore, is impossible as she is attending a conference in New York City and won't be back for several days.

Attempts to get information from the ETU computer network are hampered by a sudden viral infection that is causing corruption within several databases, including the Biology department.

The administrative head of the Biology department, Suneet Sindu, is the only person who can provide much of a clue for the team. If the heroes attempt to speak to the Dean, or ask for assistance in the Biology department, they are directed to him. Sindu, an immigrant from India, is a short, wiry man who speaks with a heavy accent. If asked about Professor Douglas, he expresses his sorrow and surprise at what happened, but he doesn't know what the Professor was doing. With the computers down, he can't even pull the Professor's personnel file. However, he does have something of value; Douglas submitted an expense report that he has not had time to enter into the system yet. In the report is a receipt for gasoline from a station in Cavalas, Texas from two days ago.

Research on Cavalas, Texas (successful Investigation roll) finds that it is not located on most maps but is located in the Texas state registry. It is a small town, population 74, located approximately 23 miles to the northwest of Pinebox. According to the map, the only access to Cavalas is via a one-lane road that branches off of Highway 96.

Scene 4: Cavalas

Cavalas is a small town of 7 houses, a general store and post office, and a gas station and garage. There are another 10 houses scattered around the area. There is no school, and the few children are home taught or taken to Pinebox high. Most of the families that live in Cavalas are farmers or ranchers with land outside the town.



Arriving in Cavalas

After riding on a lonely one-lane road for nearly half an hour, you pull into what you assume is Cavalas. There is no sign announcing the name of the half-dozen houses scattered around the dirt road junction. A dingy general store sits opposite a greasy gas station and mechanic shop, and neither appears to be occupied, despite the “Open” signs.

A warm wind blows from the west, sending dust and grit across the road in small waves. An unseen radio quietly plays country-western tunes, but otherwise there is no sound besides a squeaky screen door blowing in the wind.

As described above, there are really only two locations where the heroes can inquire about Douglas: the store and the gas station. If the team attempts to knock on the doors of any of the houses in town, they appear to be unoccupied. In reality, the fungus has infected every person in the town and put them in a kind of hibernation. If the heroes look through windows (Notice at -2) or enter a house, they discover family members unconscious and coated in the white filaments. The family members awaken and attack the team.

The General Store

If the heroes enter the General Store, read the following:

A bell rings overhead as you enter the General Store. The place is exactly as it bills itself—hardware, farming supplies, tack and harness, clothing, and groceries all sit side-by-side in the narrow aisles. A chalkboard sign at the front advertises the daily special as “10% off seed, shirts, and olives.”

A few moments after you enter the store, an obese woman comes out of a storeroom with a case of canned creamed corn in her arms.

“Hello folks,” she says, smiling. “Sorry, I didn’t hear you come in. What can I do for you?”

The woman is Gretta Ashe and she is the owner of the General Store. Like the other residents of Cavalas, she is a fungi zombie, although the filaments have retracted into her body and she appears normal. However, like all zombies, her reaction time is slow and she appears somewhat groggy. She acts friendly, and answers general questions, but denies ever seeing Professor Douglas or that anything unusual is happening in the area. If the team persists, she asks them to leave. If they continue, she pretends to call the “county sheriff” and report them for harassing her.

If the heroes look around the store, they may Notice: The shelves and their contents are dusty (normal success) or that the few magazines in the racks are weeks old and the expiration dates on the milk products are several days overdue (with a Raise).

If they get into the storeroom from which Gretta emerged, they find it coated with filaments. Gretta will attack them at that time.

The Gas Station/Auto Shop

If the team enters the Gas Station read the following:

The gas station is visibly empty. Once inside, you see the auto shop is empty as well, although a pickup truck has been raised up on the lift and tools are scattered around it. A cheap AM radio on the shelf plays the country-western tunes you heard outside.

Moments after you enter the gas station, you hear a flushing of a toilet and a skinny man in a dirty undershirt emerges from the bathroom on the side of the building. He is just zipping up his pants when he sees you.

“Oh, hey, um, howdy!” he says. “I’m Zeek. You need some gas?”

The man is Ezekiel ‘Zeek’ Funk and he is the gas station owner and the only mechanic in town. Like the other residents of Cavalas, he is a fungi zombie, although the filaments have retracted into his body and he appears normal. However, like all zombies, his reaction time is slow and he appears somewhat groggy. He acts friendly, and answers general questions, but denies ever seeing Professor Douglas or that anything unusual is happening in the area. If the team persists, he asks them to leave. If they continue, he attempts to force them to leave, pushing them out of the store. Zeek also refuses to sell gasoline to the heroes, which can be a real problem, as the gas station is the only one within 30 miles.

There are fewer signs that something is wrong at the gas station, but there is one tale-tell clue; the gas meter outside is set to \$20.18 (observed with a Raise on Notice roll), the exact same as on Professor Douglas’ receipt. No one has purchased gas since Professor Douglas passed through.

There are three directions the team can explore from Cavalas; west, north, and east. Each direction is accessible from Cavalas’ only crossroad.

To the east is a road that meanders between ranches and farms. The area is rolling hills with dry grass and occasional scrub bushes. The road terminates after approximately 16 miles. The fungus has infected none of the people living on the farms or ranches and none have seen Professor Douglas. However, some of them have heard helicopters to the west in the night.

To the north, the road goes approximately three miles and ends at a defunct gravel pit. Aside from empty beer bottles (the local teens come here to drink), nothing of interest is here.

To the west, the road goes for approximately five miles through rolling hills before it meets a large grove of pine trees.

After a mile through the grove, the team comes upon a tree that has been felled across the road. Examination of the tree reveals that it has been cut with a chainsaw and intentionally dropped to block the road. They can attempt to move the tree, a difficult task, or, if they possess an axe, saw, or chainsaw, they can attempt to cut the tree apart. The most likely course puts them on foot beyond the tree, but if they drive, it won't impact the adventure.

The road cuts back and forth through the grove for another three-quarter mile and ends in an extremely lush and thick stand of grass five feet tall. This is the edge of the fungal circle.

Under Observation

The town of Cavalas, the grove of trees, and the fungal circle are all under intense covert Ranger surveillance. Two-man camouflaged surveillance teams are scattered around the area, reporting to a command center located deep in the heart of the grove, not far from the fungal circle. The team has been under observation since they came within five miles of Cavalas and their progress has been monitored throughout their journey. The surveillance teams are under orders to leave the heroes alone, so long as they don't come within sight of the command post or make some other discovery that reveals the Ranger presence.

The heroes may feel like they are being watched, but spotting the surveillance teams is very difficult (a Notice check at -6).

The Rangers know of the fungus' extraterrestrial origins but do not consider it a threat, despite its tendency to infect people and drive them homicidally insane. The Rangers are under orders to observe and report for now, but they hope to use the fungus to contact extraterrestrials. They are aware that the residents of Cavalas are infected and consider them casualties, albeit acceptable ones. They do not interfere if the heroes are infected, but observe them and attempt to bring them into custody for study once signs of infection are apparent.

Scene 5: The Fungal Circle

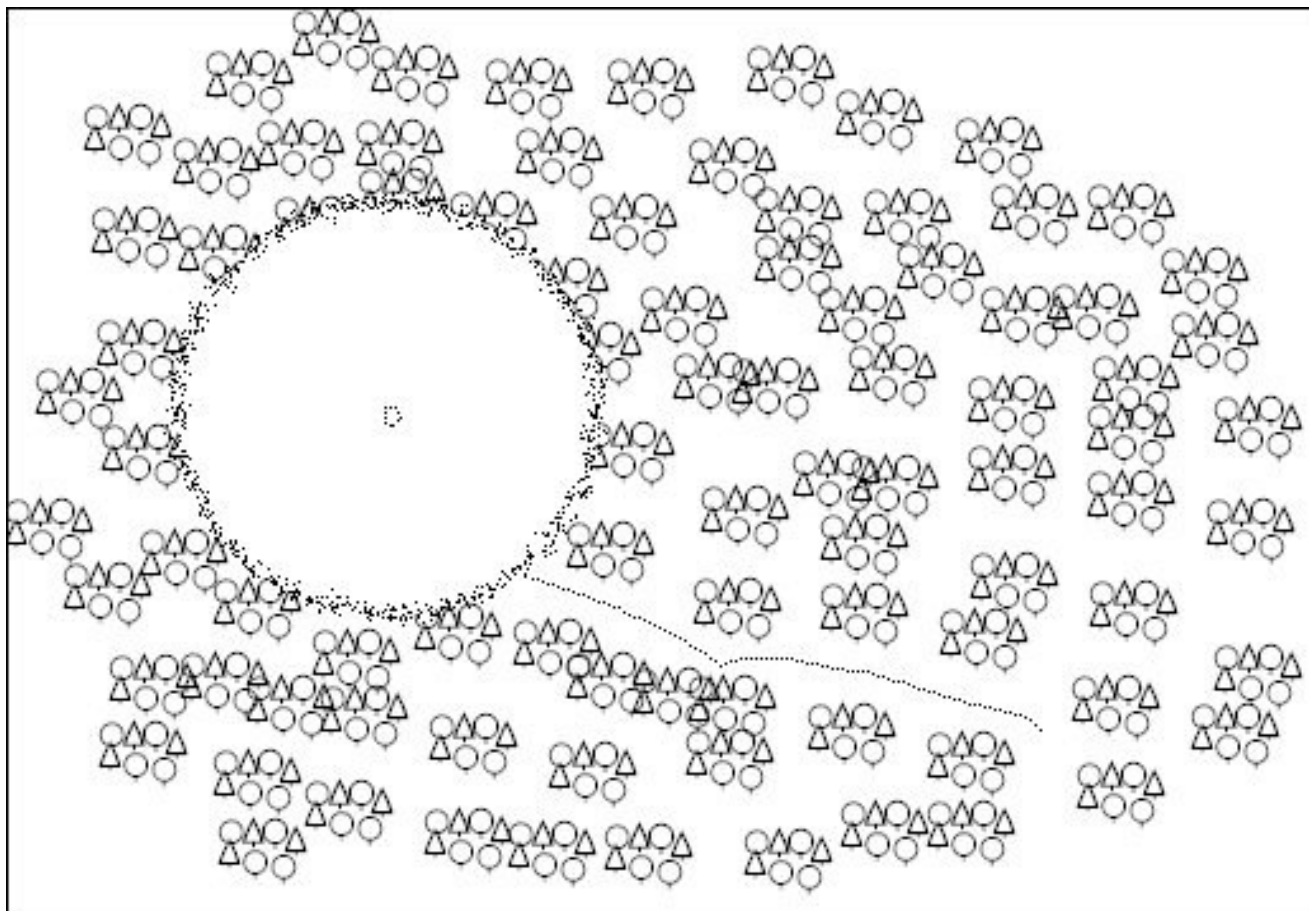
This scene works best at twilight or just after dark. When the heroes reach the end of the trail, read the following:

The dirt road becomes more and more rough and eventually turns into a trail passable only on foot. Ahead of you, there appears to be an open field in the midst of the grove, but a wall of unnaturally lush grass five feet tall obscures what you can see.

The heroes have reached the outer edge of the fungal circle. This edge is approximately 40 yards wide before it ends abruptly at the edge of the circle. If the team makes their way through the outer edge to the actual fungal circle, read the following.

After slogging your way through the dense grass and weeds, you are shocked when the blades suddenly stop and you find yourself at the edge of a large, circular open space approximately 300 yards across. All the grass and trees in the bowl-shaped depression are a withered brown and gray, completely dead. In the center, a patch of ivory-colored tufts sprout from the ground like bizarre cotton candy.

As you look at the dark and unpleasant sight, something moves in the grass behind you.



If the heroes reach into the circle, they find the grass is completely desiccated and turns to powder in their hands. This powder covers the ground and obscures the earth beneath. If they push aside the powder and examine the ground beneath, they discover that the white filaments are enmeshed in a tight weave just below the surface.

The powder is unnaturally warm, as is the whole circle. The heat they feel is the action of the fungus' acid eating away at everything. After half an hour, if they do not wash their hands, they discover an uncomfortable rash. After an hour, the rash blisters and the heroes must succeed at a Vigor check at -2 or take a single Fatigue level from the distracting pain and itch. The Fatigue can cause incapacitation, but not death. This Fatigue disappears after the rash and blistering clear up a full week later. Note that this does not indicate infection, merely contact with the fungus' powerful acids. Also, if they stick anything in the ground, such as a shovel or knife, they find it corroded after an hour.

If they venture into the circle, the heroes soon feel the heat through their shoes. After half an hour, the bottoms of their shoes become corroded to the point that they fall apart. The heroes then must make a Vigor check at -2 every 10 minutes or until they leave the circle. Failing this check gives the character one Fatigue level, as outlined above.

If the heroes examine a topographical map of the area (Smarts roll, if they have a map), they find no bowl-shaped depression. The fungus is eating away at the ground, creating a parabolic dish shape to better send its message.

If it is dark, the heroes notice that the fungal circle has a slight phosphorescent glow to it. Some parts are stronger than others, including the growth of filaments in the circle, and vein-like tendrils extending outward from the center.

The sound the team hears behind them is not a Ranger surveillance team. It is a trio of completely infected fungi zombies, now perfectly camouflaged in a covering of green fungus. Attempts to see (Notice at -4) the zombies in the dense growth are difficult.

The fungi does not want to actually hurt the heroes, merely herd them toward a spore trap, located about 50 feet away, where it can infect them as it did Professor Douglas. Consequently, the zombies attempt to scare them, making noises and threatening sounds, but attempt to avoid actual contact.

The Spore Trap

The spore trap is a large (4" x 4") fleshy green ball containing billions of fungal spores and pressurized with a noxious gas. When the heroes are within 10 feet of the ball, it "pops," sending a cloud of the noxious gas (similar to tear gas) and spores everywhere within 15 feet of the ball (the area of a Medium Burst Template). Once the team comes in contact with the spores, unless they are wearing a biohazard suit or other biological protection, they are infected. There is no roll to resist.

Black Helicopters

The Rangers decide that its time for the heroes to leave. A pair of black helicopters is dispatched from a disguised heliport nearby. Within minutes of the team's encounter with the spore trap, the pair of helicopters emerges over the treetops of the grove and swoop down low over the heroes. They are not attempting to hurt them, merely force them to leave the area. The helicopters chase the team away from the area and follow them until they reach the felled tree, then they vanish as quickly as they arrived.

Scene 6: Infection

The team likely wants to leave the area now. If they attempt to get help in Cavalas, no one comes to their aid. If they need gas, they can fill up at the gas station, but Zeek won't come out to collect any payment.

Unless a member of the team stayed behind to watch the vehicle(s), the Rangers have placed bugs and tracking devices on it.

If the team attempts to get any assistance from local authorities, such as the sheriff or police in Pinebox, they find themselves in trouble. Their names have been given to the police by the "FBI" as being "Persons of Interest" in the death of Professor Douglas, meaning that the police have the right to hold them, but they are not charged with anything.

The fungal infection is relatively rapid, and the onset of symptoms is sudden.

At infection + 1 hour, the heroes begin to experience headaches and dizziness. This causes one level of Fatigue. This likely occurs while the team is driving or escaping the fungal circle. This Fatigue can cause incapacitation (sleep), but not death.

At infection + 3 hours, the affected members feel nauseous and a rash breaks out on patches of their bodies. The team also feels a powerful lethargy, causing drowsiness and an additional level of Fatigue, as above. If a team member falls asleep at this point, they do not awaken until after full infection. However, the sleeper may be awakened by external stimuli (slapping, water, etc.)

At infection + 4 hours, the affected members notice patches of white hairs erupting from their skin. They begin to feel as if ants are moving beneath their skin (the fungal filaments are moving through their bodies).

At infection +5 hours, the affected members experience what feel like hallucinations. The hallucinations are in fact their brains being rewired to link to the fungus' mind and the memories of the fungus and everyone it has ever infected. Read the following:

A sudden falling feeling overcomes you and your senses twist and blur. Strange sights, sounds and sensations come at you rapid fire – an ageless blackness waiting for the world to change to fit your gray master's needs; ice flows covering the world around you; meat cooking over a campfire while wearing the skins of animals; living in a sod house and worried about Indian attacks; sitting up in bed and turning on the light to find the patches of white, moving hairs on your arms and chest; the world changing over the millennia and now its time to send the message in a ball of light, that its time for them to come back – and then you're back in your own mind, but you feel different, you hear a constant buzzing in the background that you realize are voices.

However, the fungal telepathy has a real advantage; the team can now communicate mind-to-mind and don't need to speak verbally. But the fungus is very strong and threatens to take over their bodies and minds.

At infection +6 hours, the investigators must make a Spirit check or be taken over by the fungus. Failure turns them into a fungal zombie. The Game Master should take the player aside and tell them that they are now infected and must follow the fungus' commands. The fungus keeps the infected members as close to the rest of the team as possible to learn more of their plans, but makes them homicidal like Professor Douglas if it feels threatened.

Despite the power of the fungal infection, it is not unbeatable. It is just a fungus, and its creators had no idea that when it would be called forth, it would face beings capable of creating antibiotics and fungicides. If any team members are currently taking antibiotics then they receive a +1 to their Spirit save to resist the infection.

The Rangers Return

If the team members are in their homes or in their cars, and speak out loud about the changes or exhibit strange behavior, they will be assaulted by Rangers, who want to take them captive and learn more about their new-found telepathy. A group of three Rangers in biohazard suits will appear near each team member and attempt to knock them unconscious with stun guns. If successful, the team is loaded into a clear isolation chamber, as was the body of Professor Douglas, and they disappear, never to be seen again. (This is GMs discretion; they may also be cured and made to repay the Rangers with their service.)

The Team Gets Better

The only way they can successfully fight off the infection is with the help of lots of antibiotics. However, if they attempt to go to a doctor or the Emergency Room, they may be caught by the Rangers. Instead, they must find an alternative source of medicines such as a doctor friend, or breaking into a pharmacy. Obviously, these actions have inherent dangers all their own.

Once the team members have ingested massive amounts of antibiotics, the fungus dies in their systems, causing incapacitating pain for about 10 minutes. After the pain subsides, the team member experiences one additional Fatigue level until she gets a full night's rest—at which time all infection-related Fatigue disappears. This additional level of Fatigue *can* result in death.

If a team member has been cured of the fungal infection, they are immune to future infection.

Scene 7, Stopping the Message

The team should be sufficiently aware that the fungus is preparing to send a message to its alien creators that the Earth is now ready for them to return. While some folks may look forward to this, most will detect a downside, such as the extermination of the human race. If they are sufficiently heroic, they should want to do something about this.

Allow them to consider how to stop the fungus- possibilities include injecting the fungus with antibiotics (very difficult to get the amounts necessary), burning it, blowing it up, etc. The fungus is actually quite fragile and can be stopped by destroying parts of it, or destroying the center, which the team will see when they approach the fungal circle.

Regardless of the plans, if just one of the team is infected at the time the plans are made, the fungus reacts by preparing the entire population of Cavalas to stop them.

Getting to the Fungus

If the team has not already alerted the fungus to their intentions, they can make their way to Cavalas unimpeded (although observed by the Rangers). They still need to drive through Cavalas to reach the fungal circle and the fungus sends all the residents of the town to stop them. 1d6 fungal zombies appear per round the team members are in the town up to a total of 70.

If the team has alerted the fungus to their intentions, they reach Cavalas, but find the road blocked by several pickup trucks and cars. 3d6 fungal zombies attack from the rear, attempting to kill the team, with 1d6 additional fungal zombies approaching per round until the entire population of the town has come out.

Into the Grove

Once the heroes get out of Cavalas and go west toward the grove, they find it infested by the weird white filaments, which seem to be growing on every surface. The filaments have a yellow-green phosphorescence that makes the area a bizarre twilight. Read the following:

As you approach the grove, you realize that it seems to be glowing. Weird white filaments seem to be growing on every surface and form a cottony web between the trees. This web glows with a yellow-green phosphorescence that slowly brightens and dims like a heartbeat.

The filaments themselves pose no danger to the team, and walking through them can easily tear them apart. Driving a vehicle through them is easy, but the growth is so thick finding the road can be a bit difficult (Driving roll at -2). Failure causes collision damage at the vehicle's current speed.

The fungus is putting out a powerful electrostatic charge as it prepares to send the message. If the team members have radio or are attempting to use an electronic device, they find that is being disrupted and a loud

waves of static comes from the speakers. The static rises in volume to match the fluctuations of the glowing. Eventually, this begins to interfere with the workings of any vehicle the team are riding in causing the engine fail.

As the filaments began to fill up the grove and surrounding area, the Rangers have pulled out of the grove and are just waiting to see what happens. They continue to watch the situation by real-time satellite and have their black helicopters on standby. The surveillance teams around Cavalas are still active and will pass on information that the heroes are driving through and the resulting events, but won't intervene.

The Fungal Circle

The fungus has grown since the team last saw it. It is no longer creating acid to eat at the ground below, meaning the heroes can walk on it without burning themselves.

The fungus has grown since you last saw it. The filaments you saw in the middle of the circle have coalesced into a rubbery mass and grown nearly 40 feet tall, resembling the receiver on a satellite dish. Fungus tendrils one foot thick radiate out from this mass all around the dish. The entire fungal mass glows a bright blue-green color, with the mass in the center glowing the most of all. You can see colors swirling within the carpet of filaments between the tendrils and they are getting faster and faster.

When the team reaches the edge of the fungal circle, they can decide how best to destroy it. Destroying the rubbery mass in the center is sufficient to stop the message, as is destroying 25% of the dish itself. As stated, this can be done through injection of antibiotics, explosives, fire, etc.

The Rangers won't do anything to the team unless it becomes obvious that they intend to harm the fungal circle. At that time, a team of 3+1d6 Rangers in biohazard suits are dispatched to stop the team by helicopter. They will not use lethal means to subdue the team members unless they shoot at them or it's obvious they intend to damage or destroy the fungal circle. After 1d6 minutes, the black helicopters reappear over the team and the biohazard-suited Rangers fast-rope to the ground. They attempt to stop the team and undo whatever damage the team has done.

The Message

At a time of the GMs discretion, preferably in the middle of the most intense moment, the fungus begins to send its message. Unless stopped by the team, the fungus' glow increases to the point of nearly blinding everyone around it and the electrostatic charge is drawn up through the tendrils and collected in the central mass. This charge is then released in a powerful explosion that hurls a sparkling mass of energy into the sky. Looking like a comet, this energy escapes into space and slowly fades from view.

If the heroes have successfully destroyed 25% of the fungal circle, or the central mass, the charge is still collected, but the attempt to send goes horribly awry. As the fungus begins to collect the electrostatic charge, the tendrils burst into flame and parts explode (1d6 damage unless the hero succeeds at an Agility check). After 4+1d6 rounds of this, the entire mass begins to burn, causing 1d10 damage per round to all still within the circle.

End Game

Regardless of whether the message was sent or if the heroes stopped it, the filaments in the grove and elsewhere immediately die and dissolve away. Any remaining fungal zombies collapse and die, and any traces of fungal infection dissolve away as well. If a team member is still fighting a fungal infection, the fungus dies and the

hero takes an additional Fatigue level—which *can* result in death. This Fatigue clears up with a night’s rest should the hero survive.

After the final events, the Rangers withdraw, but the team remains under surveillance, with disturbing clicks noticed when speaking on the phone, and being followed every now and then, just to keep them paranoid.

Cavalas is wiped off the map in a mysterious fire that breaks out shortly after the team leaves. No bodies are ever recovered from the area and attempts to find out what happened are stonewalled by the Rangers. It is assumed that the residents simply moved away after the fire, but no one knows where they moved to.

Regardless of whether the team stopped the fungus or not, a day after the conclusion of the attempt to send, the surviving heroes read the following buried on page 12 of the Texas Tattler, Pinebox’s local newspaper:

UNEXPLAINED LIGHTS SEEN

In several diverse locations around the globe, people are claiming to have seen strange lights rise into the sky. Observers in Bolivia, Eastern Europe, South Africa, Siberia, and Australia are all reporting similar sightings of large balls of light erupting from the ground. In each case, the lights rose up and were eventually lost from view. No natural explanation for what has been described has been put forward but some scientists suggest that it may be an elaborate hoax, possibly coordinated via the Internet.

Appendix

Fungi Zombie

Fungi Zombies are normal people that have been infected with fungal spores. They retain all their regular skills and memories, but are telepathically controlled by the fungus. When fighting, they can pick up simple items as weapons but cannot use firearms or complex devices.

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d4, Stealth d4, Throwing d4

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

Gear: whatever clothes they were wearing when infected.

Special Abilities

- ***Fearless:*** Fungi zombies are immune to Fear and cannot be Intimidated.
- ***Telepathy:*** Fungi zombies communicate with each other—and any infected humans—telepathically.
- ***Undead:*** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from Shaken; called shots do no additional damage, bullets, arrows, and other piercing weapons do half damage; immune to disease and poison.

Standard “Ranger”

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Healing d4, Knowledge (Occult) d6, Notice d8, Pilot d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d4, Survival d6

Hindrances: Overconfident

Edges: Block, Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Marksman

: 6; Parry: 7; **Toughness:** 10/12 (3/5)

Gear: M16A2, Glock 17, stun gun, *magic tactical vest* (+3/+5 vs. bullets, torso only). Some have biohazard suits (sealed environment).

On Bows: Savage-Style Bows and Arrows

Making the Ubiquitous Bow a Bit More Interesting, by Joel Sparks



INTRODUCTION

The *Savage Worlds* rulebook offers the players a choice of two types of bows as far as medieval campaigns are concerned: The “basic” bow and the longbow. For players interested in “fletching out” their archers (ha!), or for GMs looking to add flavor to bow-using villains, there is plenty of room to create everything from the primitive “plinker” to the bows of mythical heroes such as Odysseus, William Tell, and Robin Hood.

To accommodate the existing bows, while at the same time introducing some variation, assume that every bowshot's damage is the total of two dice: one for the power of the bow, and one for the type of arrow used. That sounds complicated, but since most archers will be using a standard bow (d6) with a standard arrow (d6), the numbers usually remain the same. On the other hand, if the heroes are facing a mighty foe, like the Uruk-Hai leader in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, they may be taking shots that do a great deal more damage—like d12+d6+1—and they may find that none of them can use that bow once they get it!

Even though the bow's damage die is based on a minimum Strength to use the bow, it is *not* a Strength roll and the character does *not* get a Wild Die.

The damage *type* of a bowshot is determined entirely by the arrow type. A blunt arrow does only non-lethal damage, for example, and a bodkin point's AP value applies to both dice.

- **Self bow:** A bow made from a single kind of wood. For our purposes, a simple piece of wood with no backing.
- **Composite bow:** A bow built up from layers of multiple materials. Also known as “built” and “backed”. Distinguished from the *compound* bow, a modern invention that uses pulleys and other mechanisms to make it easier to hold a bow at full draw. For modern campaigns, a compound bow could be said to reduce the minimum Strength to use a bow by one die type.
- **Recurve:** An improvement in bow shape, where the ends of the bow are bent back away from the user, giving more power for the same length of bow. Incidentally, the distinctive shape of a recurved bow makes it impossible to disguise as a staff or stick when unstrung.
- **Draw weight:** A measure of the bow's “punch”, in pounds. Draw weight can vary from 25 pounds or less to as much as 150 pounds, although useful bows tend to fall in the 45-80 pound range. Draw weight also gives an indication of the amount of damage a bow does. Typical draw weights are listed for comparison, but are not necessary for gaming.

STRINGING BOWS

A bowstring is a rather specialized item, of a precise length and thickness for each kind of bow and carefully waterproofed with wax or similar material. For game purposes, all bowstrings are the same, but ordinary string or gut makes a poor substitute, imposing a –2 penalty on both the attack and damage rolls, and breaking whenever the Shooting die comes up 1. A broken string means the shot automatically misses and the bow is useless until restrung. Stringing a bow is a full-round action, requiring a Strength roll by a character with at least the bow's minimum Strength. In reality, bows should be kept unstrung except when in active use, but for game purposes, stringing is only likely to come up when a string breaks in combat. Extra bowstrings cost \$5 (their weight is negligible).

BOW TYPES

We can define five types of bows for medieval-period gaming, including the two already listed in the rulebook:

- **Target Bow:** A short bow of light material, such as rattan, with no recurve. Usually used for target practice, although adventurers short on cash might find it better than nothing. These bows can also represent bows used by stone-age cultures.
- **Short Bow:** The “basic” bow. A three-foot self bow of hard wood such as hickory, with no recurve.
- **Long Bow:** A six-foot bow of specialty wood, such as yew, with no recurve. It is too long for use on horseback, or for Small characters.

- **Composite Bow:** The pinnacle of general-issue medieval bows. A short, recurved bow built up from layers of multiple materials, such as bone, wood, and sinew.
- **Hero's Bow:** For the absurdly strong, bows can be made with extremely tough layers of bone, horn, wood, and so forth. Each such bow has a Strength rating: d10, d12, or even d12+1 or more! This number is both the bow's damage and the minimum Strength to use it. It also indicates the minimum skill of the bowyer who can make such an unusual item, which would generally be an elaborate recurved bow about four feet long. The drawback of these heroically powerful weapons is that their sheer force can break the bow's string. Whenever double 1s are rolled for damage, the bowstring breaks: The shot misses, and the bow is useless until restrung.

ARROW TYPES

We can define six types of arrows for gaming purposes:

- **Blunt:** A flattened cone or rounded wood head, for punching through practice targets. For game purposes, this includes specialized tips used for hunting birds and squirrels, where a more penetrating shot might pin the game to a high tree branch, losing quarry and arrow both. In some situations, characters might use blunt arrows to subdue foes without killing them.
- **Primitive:** Head of chipped stone or fire-hardened wood.
- **Flight:** The "standard" arrow, a moderately broad metal head designed for a compromise of penetration and long, accurate flight.
- **Barbed:** As a flight arrow, but with a nasty head designed to get stuck in the wound.
- **Bodkin-point:** A very narrow, needle-like head designed to punch through armor.
- **Broadhead:** Designed for taking down large game; useful against other unarmored targets such as peasants.

MAKING BOWS AND ARROWS

In some situations, characters may need to make their own bows or arrows. Of course, with weeks of time, hundreds of dollars' worth of materials, and a complete workshop, a professional can make anything listed here—assume that each bow or arrow requires a Knowledge (Bowyer/Fletcher) die type equal to the equipment's damage die. More likely, characters would be in the wild, improvising weapons from what's at hand. In this scenario, the relevant skills are Survival and Shooting. Anyone who actually has Knowledge (Bowyer/Fletcher) can use that skill instead with a bonus of +2 and requires only half the time normally needed to create the item. Bows and arrows can't be improvised unless the environment offers plenty of plant life, loose rocks, and the like.

- With a successful Survival and Shooting roll at -2, a character can improvise a Target Bow (4 hours)
- With a successful Survival and Shooting roll, a character can make 2d6 blunt arrows or 1d6 primitive arrows (4 hours)
- With a successful Survival and Shooting roll, a character can improvise a replacement bowstring (1 hour)

Bows	Range	Dmg	Cost	Wt	Min Str	Draw wt.
Target Bow	10/20/40	d4	100	2 lbs	d4	30 lbs
Short Bow	12/24/48	d6	250	3	d6	50
Long Bow	15/30/60	d6	350	5	d8	75
Composite Bow	15/30/60	d8	750	4	d8	90
Hero's Bow	15/30/60	d10	1000*	6	d10	100
Hero's Bow	15/30/60	d12	2000*	8	d12	120
Hero's Bow	20/40/80	d12+1	4000*	10	d12+1	140

* Cost for Hero's Bows is an estimate of the cost to have one made. There is very little market for such bows, so characters would only be able to sell a Hero's Bow for perhaps 10% of this value.

Arrows	Dmg	Cost	Wt	Notes
Blunt	d4 non-lethal	1/10	1/10 lb	Armor doubled
Primitive	d4	—	1/5	—
Flight	d6	1/2	1/5	—
Barbed	d6	2	1/4	Healing -2
Bodkin-point	d4	3	1/5	AP 2
Broadhead	d8	2	1/4	Armor doubled
Bowstring	—	5	1/4	—

OGC HORROR SEEDS!

Ten Creepy Adventure Seeds Suitable for any Savage Horror Campaign

1. Demon possession has become an accepted fact of life—but possession is a symbiosis entered into willingly, not a psychic rape. The Possessed are stronger, faster, smarter, more confident; the Possessed are society's elite, and as a result of wide spread Possession, the nation's standard of living is improving in every measurable way. But the Possessed also become more like the demons that possess them—cruel, manipulative, emotionally cold, and more apt to take the expedient option, not the moral one. What will happen in a year? In five? What will happen to the Earth when all of the world's most powerful people are possessed?

2. New street gangs with names steeped in the Cthulhu Mythos are emerging all over Southern California. Are the names coincidence? Did some gang member watch the right horror movie and start a trend? The graffiti those cops think are only turf markers seem strangely like ancient carvings. And that guy in the hood...what's wrong...what's wrong with his skin?!? It looks almost...scaled.

3. A wish granting Djinn takes a sadistic interest in a Society for Creative Anachronism gathering, and decides to grant their 'wish' of being back in medieval times. The gathering becomes a blasted, dark and terrifying woodland, far bigger than it was in reality, and filled with monsters of legend. Modern enlightened thought quickly gives way to dark ages superstition and intolerance. While others can enter the fair ground, they too are affected by the changes, and none can leave until the Djinn's curse is lifted.

4. While stopped at a roadside diner, one of the heroes just happens to look out one of the windows. They see a girl lying on the hood of a car (as if she had been hit by it) that is parked in the lot. After going outside to check on her, they find no body or blood on the car, however, the hood has several dents and scratches on it.

5. The heroes see a bag on the sidewalk up ahead. Just before they get to the bag, a young teenage boy rushed up and grabs it. "Boy, almost forgot you" he says. After he picks it up, blood leaks from the bottom of it.

6. The heroes all begin having the same dream. At first it is only one of them, but after a week has gone by all of them are having it. After waking from the nightmare, the heroes are nervous and dripping with sweat. The dreams are horrifying and each time they end up dying horribly. One curious note about the dreams is the presence of a man who goes by the name of Elijah. After a week of these dreams, a man seeking their help visits the heroes. He gives his name as Elijah.

7. Stopping for the night, the heroes arrange for lodging at a roadside inn. While sifting through the drawers of a nightstand, one of them comes across a tube. The tube is rather ornate with what looks to be small diamonds and rubies affixed to it. When they open it, they find a scroll made of human skin with some sort of text written in blood. While reading it, the character notices that it's still fresh.

8. The characters watch a newscast about a group of tourists who went missing while touring a local prison. The prison, once home to some of the country's most notorious killers, has been shut down for years due to a government audit that found the facility lacking adequate security to house the inmates and protect the community. Since then, the facility has been a tourist attraction. On certain days of the year (the anniversary of a murder, execution, etc), people in the community claim to hear noises coming from the prison. Some people who live near the facility claim to see apparitions in prison attire running through their backyards. The disappearance of more than 20 tourists has the community in an uproar and some sort of action is being demanded. An investigation of the facility will reveal different clues—blood-soaked writing will appear and disappear on the walls, blood will pour from cracks in the walls, then evaporate, and sounds of riots, screams and cries can be heard throughout the facility. The cause of the disappearance is some malevolent entity that thrives on the fear of mortal humans. It has used its small legion of ghosts and spirits to keep the tourists in the basement of the facility. Some ghosts can be appeased through the destruction of the electric chair, the offering of a carton of cigarettes, and a blessing of the old prison graveyard.

9. While visiting an NPC's base of operations (whether on a raid, break in, or quite accidentally), the characters discover a room whose walls are completely covered with photographs. One party member happens to recognize each and every individual in all the pictures, from their first grade teacher, to a few old friends, to the checkout girl at the local market. As for the character that recognizes the individuals, no pictures of the hero are in the collection whatsoever. In the oldest pictures, the character is noticeably missing from photos he should be in. For example: a grammar school class photo where there is a space between pupils where the character should be seated or a photo of a group of old drinking buddies the character remembers being taken, but with a strange space separating the group in the photo where the character remembers standing. In the latest pictures the character does appear, but always with the character's form cut out of the image.

10. Due to an error at the post office, a package is delivered to one of the heroes 60 years after it was mailed. The package is badly tattered and covered with postage stamps from the 1940s. The return address is from a company, unfamiliar to the character. The fact that the package was addressed to a character who likely didn't live at their current address when it was originally mailed, much less was even born at the time of mailing, should not go unnoticed by the players. This seed is really open-ended as the package may contain: a bloody human organ or severed body part; a large, beautifully cut gem (possibly cursed or containing a trapped soul); an ancient artifact of indeterminate origin; a letter from their future self, somehow trapped in the past; a large amount of gray ash that reveals several small bone fragments as well as several human teeth after sifting; or a geode (hollow stone) that when broken open reveals a desiccated toad or frog that begins to twitch after being freed.

LOCAL HERO

A NECESSARY EVIL RECONNAISSANCE MISSION, BY MARK AYLOR

A new shopping mall in Eastpoint is reason enough to raise more than a few eyebrows among the resident blue-collar workers living there. But when Mayor Jerry Perez announces he will attend the grand opening, everyone is stunned. No one believed Mayor Perez would show his face in Eastpoint, even with protection, because of the tension between the SCPD and the IBEW. Richard Lyons and the Eastpoint Insurgents will be there to protest. This is a powder keg waiting to go off!

Omega MUST have a cell there to recon the situation and keep an eye on what happens.

ENTER OMEGA

Dr. Destruction contacts the players when they select this mission.

"Omegas,

"Go to the new Eastpoint Mall grand opening ceremony and keep your eyes open. Something isn't right. Mayor Perez and a large contingent of SCPD will be there as will Richard Lyons, the IBEW, and the Eastpoint Insurgents. You will need to be disguised. We cannot let it be known we are present unless absolutely necessary.

Report anything that happens immediately! This situation is a powder keg waiting to go off. Try to be inconspicuous. There will be more police there than you can shake a Stun Wand at. If something happens, don't get involved unless you have no other choice. This isn't our fight, but what happens here could make a difference to us."

BEHIND THE SCENES

When Mayor Perez heard they wanted a new mall in Eastpoint, he jumped at the chance to push the project through. Here was an opportunity to gain points with the Eastpointers and possibly even put an end to Richard Lyons. He outlined his plans to his V'sori masters and they agreed to it in principle. However, if it backfires, Mayor Perez's political life will be very short indeed.

The plan: Find a local who is anti-V'sori as well as openly hostile to the IBEW and the Eastpoint Insurgents. Perez found just the right man for the job in Daniel Ortiz.

THE HEART OF HATE

Daniel hates the IBEW and Lyons. Daniel is a family man who fell on hard times shortly after the V'sori arrived. His wife died from meningitis and left him to care for his daughter. Raising her and working to earn enough to provide for the both of them has put a strain on him. The IBEW did little to help the struggling dad and Daniel resented it. He still paid his dues, even though they were a drain on his poor financial situation.

When his daughter was killed several months later by a drunk driver (who also happened to be an IBEW member) it pushed Daniel over the edge. He cursed the V'sori, the IBEW (and Lyons in particular) and swore he would have his revenge. The opportunity came when Agent Max Colby made Daniel an offer—kill Lyons and he would be rewarded. What he didn't say was how Daniel would be rewarded.

THE HAND BEHIND THE WEAPON

Agent Max Colby kept an eye on Daniel after he made the initial contact. He helped Daniel out in little ways—always behind the scenes and in a manner that would not draw any attention to him—while preparing him for the assassination.

When Ortiz attempts to kill Lyons, Colby will have an SCPD unit ready to descend on him and arrest him for the murder. Ortiz is the fall guy—a local guy with nothing to lose. Mayor Perez is blameless, and may even endear himself to the Eastpointers for apprehending the local hero's killer.

THE SETUP

There are at least fifty police officers around the stage when Mayor Perez presides over the opening ceremonies and there are over one-hundred IBEW members and Eastpoint Insurgents there to protest. Before the ceremony starts, there is hostility in the air between the two groups—protesters chanting and SCPD silently holding their interlocking shields with tear gas ready and billy clubs raised. It is a tense and stressful situation. Make sure the number of SCPD, Insurgents, and the publicity at the event are enough to make the players hang back and not get involved in the brewing fight.

The players should arrive plenty early to start checking out the situation. They should “accidentally” overhear a conversation between a couple of officers who are assigned to watch Daniel Ortiz and arrest him once the assassination occurs. If the players try to contact Dr. Destruction to relay this information, he is unavailable, their Commlinks are jammed, or something forces them to make the decision on their own. Be prepared to have Richard Lyons killed if the players decide to not get involved. It would be a blow to the Insurgents, but not the end.

RICHARD LYONS

Necessary Evil, page 71.

DANIEL ORTIZ

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6

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

Gear: M2-HeroKiller (Range 10/20/40, Damage 3d6, DT, HW, AP 4)

AGENT MAX COLBY (WILD CARD)

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Bureaucracy) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (4)

Edges: Marksman

Gear: Personal Combat Armor (Armor +4, Heavy Armor), Blaster Pistol (Range 15/30/60, Damage 3d6, Shots 20, DT, Heavy Weapon, AP 4)

ORTIZ WATCH SQUAD (5)

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d4, Intimidation d4, Investigation d4, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Streetwise d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Gear: Duraweave Suit (+1, Heavy Armor) and M2-HeroKiller (Range 10/20/40, Damage 3d6, DT, HW, AP 4)

ENDGAME

Whether Lyons survives or not, a riot starts at the first sound of shots fired. The players should try to avoid both the SCPD and Eastpoint Insurgents. Use SOCorp Operatives for the police and Quisling Gangsters armed with chains, clubs, knives, and pistols (1 in 10) for the Insurgents. The Insurgents should outnumber the police by at least 2:1.

Should the players try to stop or capture Daniel Ortiz before or after the assassination, Agent Max Colby tries to take him from the players, or barring that, kill him. Ortiz probably won't talk of Agent Colby's involvement, but Max won't leave anything to chance.

AFTERMATH

No matter what happens, there is no link to Mayor Perez. If things go bad and Agent Colby is linked to the assassination attempt, he is hung out to dry as "...a rogue agent working on his own".

If Richard Lyons is killed, Benny or one of the other members of the IBEW takes over. If Lyons is rescued, the players can establish relations with the Eastpoint Insurgents to gain information and additional allies for the fight against the V'sori. Either way, if Daniel Ortiz's situation becomes public, it makes the IBEW more compassionate towards the rest of the populace and gains them more support in the long run.

Once the villains make their report, Dr. Destruction addresses them. He is secretly pleased should the players rescue Lyons as he hopes to use the opportunity to work with the Eastpoint Insurgents. Tailor the following depending on the results.

If they save Lyons:

"Well done. You took a valiant risk exposing yourselves and have prevented the loss of another ally. Granted the Eastpoint Insurgents want nothing to do with Omega, but we are all on the same team in the end.

If you can, leverage the relationship with Lyons. If we can get the Eastpoint Insurgents to work with us, we will be on our way to liberating Star City."

If they let Lyons die:

"It is a shame Lyons could not be rescued. The Eastpoint Insurgents, while refusing to work with us, have been an asset to the resistance movement as a whole. We will have to wait and see who steps up to run things. Then we can make contact with them and try to build an alliance.

At least you were not harmed. Losing an Omega cell in this situation would have been devastating."

The Minstrel's Tale

By Mark Murphee

Explanatory note: The bards and skalds of the Anglo-Saxon tradition would have sung their tales in an alliterative, not a rhyming, meter. As an English professor who enjoys *Beowulf*, I decided to recast Everheart's tale from *Evernight* into a form I liked better. Each line is divided into two half-lines, with a *caesura* (brief pause) between each, indicated by an extended space. Each half-line is linked by alliteration, usually on a stressed syllable. *The Minstrel's Tale* is © 2003 Great White Games, Inc./Pinnacle Entertainment Group, Inc.

Sat King Kaden within his castle
Watching the boats in the channel below.
Came in a crew cowering in fear
Dark was that night their mates disappeared.
Katrina their captain spoke to the King,
Told a tale of gore grimly to him.
Blood-spattered tracks from deck to the beach
Down to a cave then deeper within,
To caverns half-flooded called the King's Tunnels
Ancient tombs, abandoned for ages
Smugglers' redoubt and thieves' refuge.
King a decade ago had cleansed them with sword
But now re-inhabited new horrors within.
Comely Katrina continued her story,
The horrible monsters blue hide and white hair
Had stolen on board and stabbed her sailors
Made off with the bodies a meal for later.
Sea trolls they were, or skags as some said,
Manes were the monsters or other names
mentioned.
However you call them, horrors enfleshed,
The sailors drew back deterred at the thought.
Bold on the wave, this was beyond them
So Katrina concluded to the grim King.

Smiled then the King "Send for the Seven!"
The heroes were summoned help for the City
Hard-bitten warriors they heard her grim tale.
Swore they an oath that by sunrise tomorrow
Evil would perish pay dearly in blood.
As Solace descended the Seven did, too.
Urich the dwarf doughty defender
Small in stature but first to strike
Beheaded a dozen before the next day.

Sarrian the brave stood at his back
Her Elven-sharp blade eight more beheaded
Night-loving ranger, she knew the dark.

Wygand the Wild wielded his blade
Friendly half-orc felled all his foes
Troll-blood bespattered he loved the battle!

Zelda the Sun Priest sacred protector
Healer and helper herald of flame
A score consumed cured of their chill!

Caught Spyke a whale, a capable steed
Rode for a while, then ripped it to ribbons
Steel-clawed thief the sea-serpent slew.

Tyvek the Furious fiery in temper
Spell-weaving wizard wavering not
Facing a dragon fought fire with fire!

Finally the Seven found the main hall.
The King of the creatures, cruel Over-Troll,
A hundred by count he kept in his court
Ready to fight, fought then the Seven,
Pressed the attack, punished the trolls,
Sent to their deaths deep underground.
Long ago masons had made the tomb
Little they guessed as stone was laid
What would be buried whose bones interred
Next to their kings, no normal royalty!

Kerret with Fury, kind-hearted knight,
Famous flame-blade, fought their way through,
Faced the Troll King Fury ablaze
Kissed by the Sun. Kerret attacked,
Searing the King, soon cut him down.

As Solace arose, the Seven returned,
Cheered by the people champions renowned.
Kaden gave gold good King he was,
But the Seven refused, solemn their vow,
No mercenaries they, mighty in heart,

Pledged to the Sun pure in their purpose.

"Good Captain Katrina," Kerreth then said,
"Our duty is done the dead are avenged
These deeps are now safe from deadly foes,
No glory for us, nor gleam of gold,
Just honor Solace Sun God divine
Who blessed us in battle a victory boon."
Katrina then wept so gracious the words
Proclaimed her love for leader so peerless.
Kerreth requited and kissed her with passion.

But the Seven are different sacred to duty
Never a marriage, no, nor a child,
Are they allowed ever to have,
They live for the people, their longings denied,
Depend we on them to defend us all.



UNTIL NEXT MONTH...STAY SAVAGE!

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