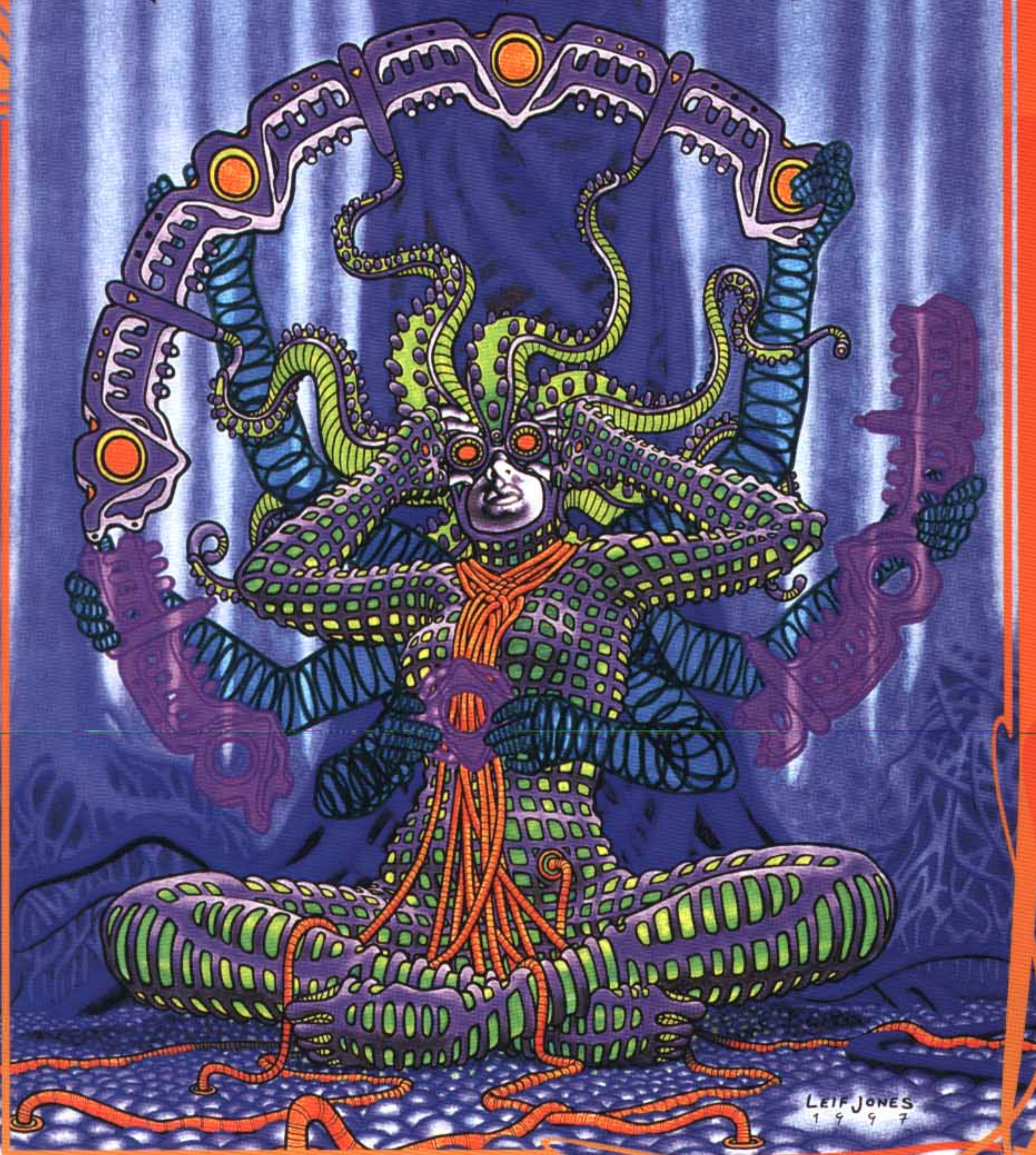


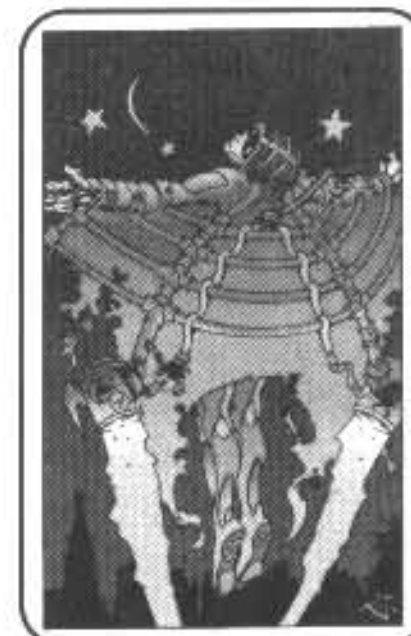
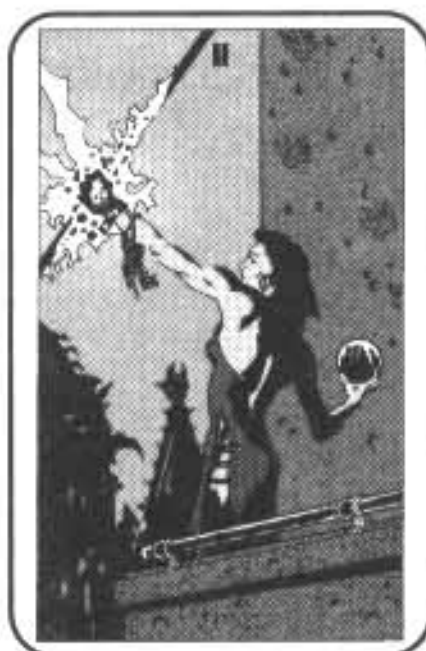
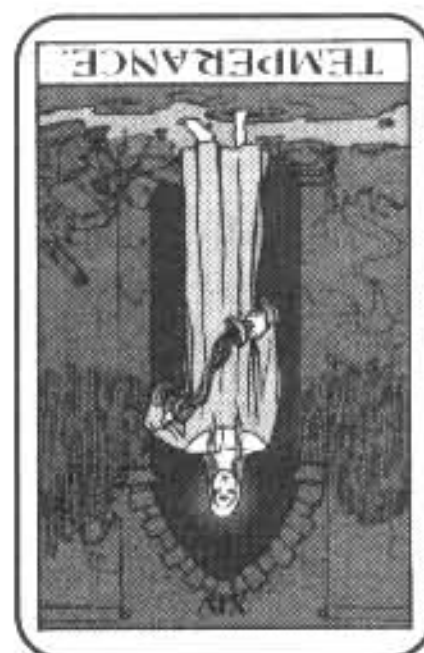
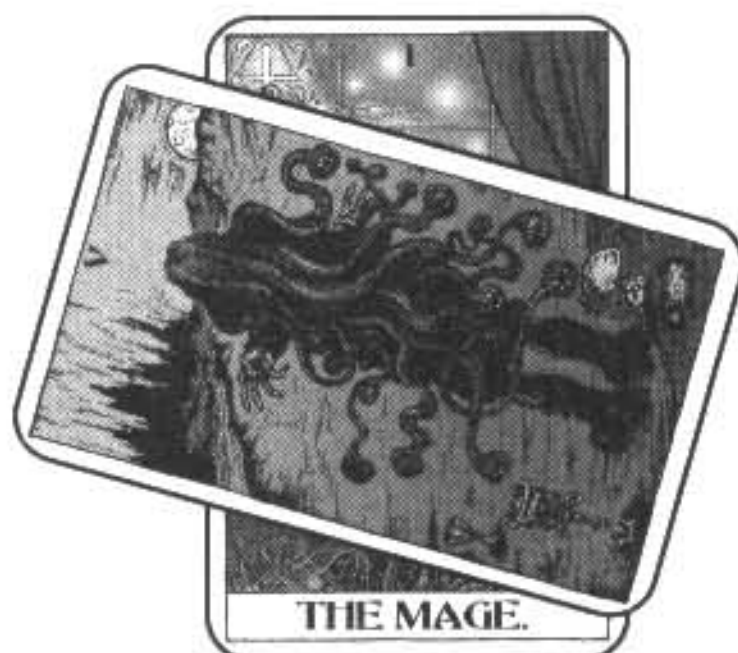
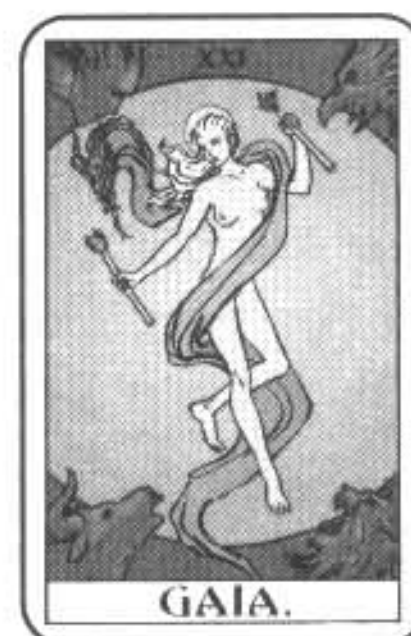
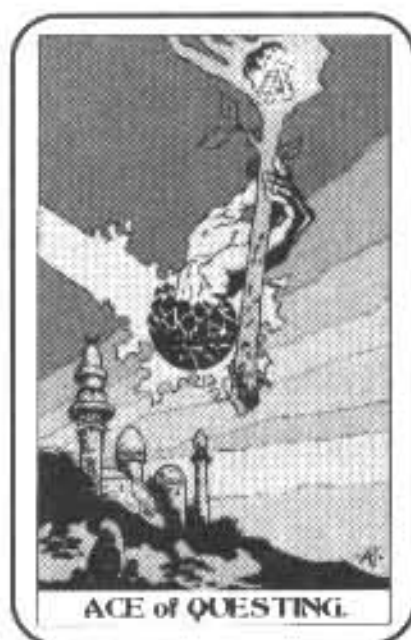
THE TECHNOMANCER'S B-O-X™



A Sourcebook for Mage: The Ascension®

THE TECHNOMANCER'S toybox™

Goodies and Gadgets



Where does he get those wonderful toys?
— The Joker, Batman

By Bill Bridges, Phil Brucato, Brian Campbell, Roger Gaudreau,
Angel Liegh McCoy, Judith McLaughlin and John R. Robey

Credits

Written by: Bill Bridges, Phil Brucato, Brian Campbell, Roger Gaudreau, Angel Liegh McCoy, Judith McLaughlin and John R. Robey

Prelude by: Kathleen Ryan

Developed by: Phil Brucato

Edited by: Allison Sturms

Art Director: Aileen E. Miles

Layout and Typesetting: Aileen E. Miles

Art: Scott Baxa, Mike Chaney, Fred Hooper, Mark Jackson, Leif Jones, David Leri, Heather McKinney

Front Cover Art: Leif Jones

BackCover Art: Alex Sheikman

Front and Back Cover Design: Aileen E. Miles



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SUITE 128

CLARKSTON, GA 30021

USA

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THE TECHNOMANCER'S

to-do-X™

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Prelude

By Kathleen Ryan

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is your Captain speaking." Thomasina Gundermann's voice echoes off the bulkheads of the newly christened *Atomic Jalopy*. "If you look to port just now, you'll have a wonderful view of Mars. Wave hello to those crazy kids in Eris, and pray they don't shoot at us." She has to shout — the intercom hasn't been installed yet.

"Just drive, Tommy," says David Cho, *de facto* leader of the Second Seven. His eyes flicker around the galley. Across the cabin, Father Timothy Hurley rests quietly, belted into an old Volkswagen seat. Beside the priest, Jeremy Hurst turns to see out the porthole, straining against the mass of climbers' webbing that hold his lanky body on the towel-padded countertop. Next to David, bungee-corded to the other side of the support beam that tethers the Cultist himself, sits Amanda Janssen.

David watches her thoughtfully.

As she is now — gray-tinted eyes searching the starscape; coffee-colored hair falling in great coils about her shoulders; long, slender legs braced against the doorsill — the assassin is lovely. In another guise, dressed to kill, she took David's breath away.

Because this woman killed a man, the Seven are fleeing for their lives — but Jeremy and his master live only because she defended them.

She turns suddenly toward David, like a cat resenting a stare, and her eyes are corpse-cold. He flinches.

"Coming up starboard, the debris field that constitutes the physical aspect of the Horizon. Asteroids, kids. That blue-white, kinda lumpy dot near Orion is Earth." In a much lower voice, Tommy goes on:

"We'll be swinging 'round and easing in backwards." She switches control over to her co-pilot, Zachary McCoy. The husky Akashic takes the stick gently, looking for orders. Tommy pulls out a new set of levers and slider bars, her freckled face frowning in concentration, and mutters, "Just hold her steady, Zack, let me power up the Dimensional Destabilizer."

Amanda's gaze returns to the nearby hatch. She sees no asteroids, no space-dust ring. There is sky, infinitely black; there is the transparent, gray plane of the Umbra beneath them; there is the endless edge of the Horizon, red-black and rippling in the solar wind — nothing else. Not even the sun shows through, though she saw it well enough half an hour before. Faintly, slickly, wetly, the barrier reflects the starshine.

The Destabilizer's hum rises in pitch. The vibrations, carried along stanchions and through deckplates, assault the passengers. Amanda watches the cuffs of her jeans buzz, fast as hummingbirds. A steady whine creeps into her consciousness. Her teeth ache. She closes her eyes.

"Okay, Zack. We've broached the secondary effects," Tommy says. "Here comes the main disturbance. Stay on your toes — there may be some Etheric turbulence."

Strapped in and helpless in the belly of the steel ship, yet too nervous not to watch trouble, the assassin lets her lids flicker back open. She sees stars and relaxes, then stretches to look down upon the skin of Reality. Six inches below the porthole, lacquer-smooth, it swirls and puddles over the contours of the ship.

Amanda stares. The incarnadine miasma swallows that scant half a foot. The meniscus crawls slowly up the surface of the glass, past her head, suffocatingly. Cold, she shivers, shaking one shining lock of hair closer to her throat. The unexpected, feathery touch shocks her, freezes her — it seems to be the razor's delicate edge, the breath of Gericault, on her collarbone. As the blood-red sea drowns out the last stars, she braves the razor and tilts her head to follow them. The coils of her hair graze her cheek and neck — becoming the Caul's membranes sliding over Mercy's jaw — and she descends into evil memories.

The *Atomic Jalopy* sails on.

...

"This is fantastic! Just like flying through the Aurora Borealis, all pink and blue and dreamy — Oh, look, Zack...that goldish lightning, two o'clock high. Gone, now. Roll her over a bit, let's stay out of that, okay?"

David smiles, knowing Zack sees the Teeth of the Dragon closing over them and steers to avoid its attendant demons — as real to him as Tommy's starstorm. Jeremy, the alchemist, no doubt gazes on some logical obstruction in the ordered astrological cosmos. Father Tim, martyr to Dramamine, rests his eyes — perhaps in prayer, perhaps in felicitous sleep. Tommy's chatty tour guidance is nearly completely useless, yet none of the cabal cares to trouble the sixteen-year-old Captain with a reminder, and David takes absurd pride in this fact.

A slight movement at his side captures his attention. Amanda — head fallen forward, jaw slack, arms tense, but still — Amanda is shivering. Curious, he wonders: *What in all the hells could make her shudder?* For an instant, curiosity tempts David to borrow her eyes — until chivalry and wisdom catch up with the unethical — she hasn't asked for help — and dangerous impulse. The assassin is too frightened and too fast to her knives for him to risk aiding her. David leans back, shaken, and lets Tommy's awed, cheerful vision dictate what he sees. He loses his worries in the peaceful, sapphire nebulae — taking refuge in a world without inexplicable horror.

...

A half hour later, Amanda recovers, hearing:

"All right, almost through. Turn her 180 — we want the Destabilizer out last. Give me, um, about 20 percent more on the main drive. Great. Cycling...five...four...three..."

Looking down, the Euthantos watches the other side of the bloodbath ooze reluctantly away from the superstructure.

"...two..."

Huge ripples like from those of a tsunami rush away from the ship, crashing into one another and splashing high.

"...one..."

The floating froth curls into tendrils, twisting crazily at the fringes of sight. One enormous prominence whips around the corner of the cargo hold, just as Tommy yells, "Out! We're out!"

The *Atomic Jalopy* lurches, and spins suddenly weightless, struck by the collapsing tendril — but free of the barrier.

"Shit! Something hit us. Shut down, shut down!" Loud thumps and clangs drown out the Captain's voice for a moment, and then, "Dammit, I told you to wear your seatbelt. Grab hold and stop drifting. Hit that red switch there and take yourself downstairs. I'll handle this!"

Zack dives gracefully into the galley; he has practiced in free fall before. One hand tows a duffel bag, the other a katana and wakizashi. He stashes them in an empty cabinet. After a moment's thought, he pulls out a plastic bag and passes it quietly to Father Tim. He grabs a handhold on the ceiling nearby. The sirens die off.

Tommy pokes her head down the hatch, her radiating brown curls moving freely.

"Let me say this now, 'cause it looks to be about the only fun I'm gonna get today, David." A random sweater drifts in from the bunkroom, and she scowls at it furiously. "I told you so. I said she wasn't ready. So don't blame me if we're stuck out here a week, okay?"

David lets her cool a moment. "What's wrong?"

"Gravity's out," says Zack, deadpan.

"I *knew* that!" Tommy sputters. She bites her lip and continues, "No gravity. No main drive, 'cause we had it powered down for the crossing. It won't restart, probably because one of its slave units blew — coolant, or regulators, or something. Shields aren't connecting to the main reactor — I don't know why — but they are holding with the emergency generator. Unfortunately, that means I'll need to kill shield power to do the repairs. I think. There's a visible dent, and probably microfractures leaking air in the cargo space. If all this takes *more* than a week, we're breathing Ether. And the absolute *last* straw on the camel is that my jury-rigged diagnostics have completely short-circuited, so I'm just guessing about half of this."

"Guessing? Goddamn, Tommy!" Zack yells, sitting up straight, hitting his head on the ceiling. "We can't afford to guess—"

"Don't yell at me! I did what I could in three hours with a ship that's only supposed to do a beer run to Venus. *You* try installing salvaged gravmods with duct tape and mag vises. You're such a bonehead, you can't understand anything more complicated than a *screwdriver*! I'm sick of you knocking her — you haven't the faintest idea how she works. And... and... you all gave her a stupid name, she *hates* it." Tommy loses her grip on the ladder and starts falling slowly into the galley.

Zack rolls his eyes. "The *Jalopy* can't hate anything — it's just a heap of metal, Tommy."

"Hey, cool it, guys. Calm down a second—"

Tommy blinks back tears. "If you're supposed to be so tuned in, Zack, why don't *you* figure out where she's hurt? Can't you feel that?!"

Father Tim noisily interrupts. The fight breaks off; the combatants find opposite corners, shame-faced.

"All right, team," says David. "Let's take stock for a minute. Father, I think you should go down. Join us when you feel you can. Jeremy — is there anything in that six-demon bag of yours that'll help him? Great. Zack, help them get settled."

He waits for the younger men to return, then continues soothingly, "Zack and Tommy brought up a very interesting point. *Can* any of us sense where the *Jalopy* is damaged? I see the current in the wires, but I wouldn't know a resistor from a transistor, broken or whole."

"I didn't use anything that primitive anyway," the Captain sulks.

"Something's wrong," Amanda says, "under this hatch."

The Second Seven turn as one entity toward their guest. Her hair is pulled back and netted, her feet bare, her clothes and weapons taped down, her bag clipped to the wall, her former seatbelt tied into the belt at her waist — ready for work in free fall. *She's been busy while we argued*, David thinks.

"Let me see," The Captain says as she pushes over and pops the access panel. "You're right. The Metadatastacizers are on the fritz. I wouldn't have guessed that. How did you know?"

"I felt...corrosion there."

Zack grunts. "Of course. Rot calls to rot."

"Shut up, Zack," Jeremy snaps back. "I can handle those."

"Okay. I'll take Amanda around the ship," Tommy says. "Jeremy knows the Metas and coolant system — he mixed the gel in the first place — and Zack can start in cargo, sealing leaks — he doesn't need to understand the advanced theories for *that*. Send Pop down to the drive as soon as he's feeling better. We're going to need his specialty. And you can... um," Tommy says to David, then falters, thinking hard, "you can sort of clean house — maybe tie down floaters and cook dinner or something. And brief Pop when he wakes up. I'd let you monitor communications, but the Etheric's busted, too."

"It's all right, Captain," David answers. "I'm sure I'll find something to do."

(To be continued....)



LEIF
JONES
1947

Introduction

*Why do we act like
Why do we act like
Why do we act like machines?
— Die Krupps, "Metal Machine Music"*

>

>

**FOLLOWTHEYELLOWBRICKROADFOLLOWTHEYELLOWBRICKROADFOLLOWFOLLOWFOLLOW
FOLLOWTHEYELLOWBRICKROAD.**

THERZNOPLAZLIKEHOME

Hi, hello and welcome to the world's most dangerous website!

Assuming you made it here through the various spamtraps, backdoors, riddlesites, encryptions, blindsidz, false leads, dummies and nightmare drops (man, I pity you if you ended up in one of *those!* Nasty, ain't they? %-)), you're at least halfway decent. If you can actually *see* what we've got on display here at Dr. Volcano's Emporium for the Anarchistically-Inclined, you must have other talents that the average nethead just ain't got.

????????????????????????????

***WAP!* You're Awakened, dumbass!**

See me? Hear me? Touch me? Feel me? Good! That means I'm reaching your oh-so-Elite synapses on some level, anyway. I am (as the Man in White once said every goddamn week) Doc 'Cano, your host. Welcome to Fantasy Website! :^)

What's so fantastic? Only a treasure trove of conventional and unconventional goodies, straight from the chambers of the mad scientists among us. Browse with me and we'll examine a pile of stuff from all sides of that little bout of paradigmatic self-abuse called the **kaff! kaff! Ascension War. Some of it's just for show; some of it's for sale if you've got the right connections. All of it's specialized – not just **anybody** can get this stuff – and most of it's supposed to be secret.**

As if.

Here it is, for your assimilating pleasure: A collection – not exhaustive, but entertaining – of gadgets, hardware, vehicles and sundry items that I've been able to pry out of watchful hands. Is it for sale? That's for me to know and you to find out (try sending me your c.c.# and expiration date! Snarf!). Does it work? All of it, I promise. () :-)

Why am I putting up here?

'Cause you deserve to know about it.

Look, I don't care if you're an Adept or a Mirrorshade (well, scratch that – I **do care, but not for these purposes). The information deserves to be out there, if only to Special Parties. Trust me, this isn't all I know, and I don't know everything (damn near, but that's another story). But by casting these shadows on the wall, I'm hoping you can grok the bigger picture: Machines-R-Us. Us-R-Machines. We make things to fulfill our needs, and then we shift our needs around to accommodate our things. In time, we **need** more things, so we **make** more of 'em, and then we make **way** for more of 'em, and then we have new false needs. See the cycle? It's like birth, death and rebirth, only it's funneled through technology. And since our needs make reality, our creations – our machines – **become** reality. And then **they** make more reality.**

Is there anybody else out there who's wondering why the world's little reality pool has been growing more stagnant by the year?

Am I a Luddite? Am I a Verbena? Am I advocating a complete return to the Good Old Days when we chased each other around trees with sticks until we died of the common cold? No.

I'm simply making a point. This stuff is out there. It's making our world. It might even cack you in the middle of the night if you're not careful.

And most of it looks pretty cool, too. :)

So you deserve to know about it.

That is all. Clazz dismissed. Check the site link spot for directions and have fun, kids.

Try not to get yourselves killed.

– Doc 'Cano

General Gamespeak

It's the car. Chicks dig the car.

— Batman, *Batman Forever*

So what's the difference between a Talisman and a Device? Well, technically, there isn't one. Both of them qualify as "Talismans" under the Background and "Talisman and Fetish Creation Rules" (see **Mage: The Ascension**, pages 133-134 and 245, respectively). The grand distinctions come from the story and Storytelling. A *Talisman* is a magickal item that looks like a magickal item — a flying broom, a magic wand, that sort of thing. A *Device* is a magickal item that, to quote Clarke's Axiom, is "any sufficiently advanced technology (that) is indistinguishable from magic." In the World of Darkness, hyperscience is magick, literally.

In game terms, a Device is a Talisman that uses scientific principles — albeit weird ones, but scientific ones — to create its magickal Effects. It's not an arbitrary thing — it's a machine constructed for a specific purpose by some highly skilled personnel. While all Technomancers use scientific foci — a.k.a., apparatuses — to channel their Effects, a Device carries the power to alter reality within itself. Anyone who understands how to use it can do so.

In most cases, that understanding translates to Awakening. Some Devices, however, are so complex or esoteric that the potential user needs training before he can do anything with the machine. The Technocracy loves to screw its enemies over by building fail-safes into its equipment; if you've been trained by the NWO, your side arm is a snap to use. If some reality deviant grabs the gun away from you, though, it might take him a while to figure out how to make the gun work. Time that you can use to get the gun away from him — or to run.

Typically, you'll need at least one dot in Technology to utilize the average Device; things like firearms or sound systems are pretty easy to figure out, but the average guy on the street is not going to understand the workings of a Trinary computer power glove! Depending on the machine, other Traits — Computer, Computer Hacking, Cryptography, Medicine or Science — might be required. You can't reasonably expect to walk into a room and use an NWO Sleepteaching Device (see **Technocracy: NWO**) without understanding the principles of psychology and technology.

Activation

If you've got the necessary skills, using a Device is easy: you the player roll the Device's "Arete" against the appropriate difficulty. Since many Devices are coincidental, that difficulty will usually be based on coincidental magick (Device's rating +3), not vulgar magick (Device's rating +4 or 5).

(I say "Arete" in quotes because the machine itself isn't especially enlightened; in most cases, it's simply a machine.)

From that point on, all systems work as if the character, not the Device, had cast a magickal Effect, *with the following exceptions*:

- Devices cannot spend extra points of Quintessence or Willpower to lower their difficulty number.
- A Paradox backlash probably affects the Device, not the one who uses it, although a really big backlash might harm both.

Certain Devices might be so easy to operate that any idiot can do so (see the item descriptions for details). If this is the case, it's easier just to say "such-and-such happens" than to roll every time someone uses the gadget. Un-Awakened people might be able to use these inventions, too. In these cases, the Storyteller should use the Device's "Arete" as a sort of "activation roll." If the roll fails, the machine does nothing; if it botches, the Device breaks, rendering it useless, at least for a while. Most "Sleeper friendly" Devices will still require some kind of advanced training — usually a high Technology or Computer rating — from their un-Awakened handlers. Hypertech isn't for wimps!

Paradox

Throughout most of the modern world, Devices have a definite coincidental edge. Obvious magick is chancy — most people don't believe in magic spells that can levitate a car. Ah, but if that car grows turbo jets and sprouts helicopter blades, it suddenly "makes sense." Events that seem impossible by "magic" become acceptable through "science," even if both of those things are, at the basic level, the same. Thus, many Devices can be used with minimal Paradox risk; some are so close to "normal" technology that even Sleepers can use them. (See above.)

The downside is that machines break down. The more "advanced," powerful or unlikely the Device, the more likely it is to fail when you need it. Machines usually require skill, prep time, maintenance and a power source to function; take any of those elements out of the equation and you're risking a breakdown. When Paradox *does* strike, it usually knocks the Device out of commission; backlashes can make technomagickal machines jam, break, feedback, erase themselves or even explode, depending on what the Device is, what it does, and what it was *supposed* to be doing when things went wrong.

Design and Creation

However weird it might be, every Device functions according to some scientific principle. The inventor might have made the theory up himself (most Sons of Ether do just that), but there *must* be some kind of theory behind the design. While the metaphysical ins and outs behind the gadgets in your chronicle might not be important to the story, it's worth remembering that no Device is created without a reason, a theory or a design.

Devices are machines, created by an inventor to fill a need. Thus, they must be researched, designed and constructed. In story terms, this can be as detailed or as sketchy as you want it to be. In game terms, it requires a couple of dots in Technology, the proper Spheres and the right mix of Skills and Knowledges; it helps, for instance, to have Forces, Prime, Gunsmithing and Science (Physics if you're trying to design a laser cannon). From there, an inventor needs a design. Many Technomancers create their own schematics, but there's a brisk trade in black-market design specs, too.

Most advanced technomagick is done in special research and construction centers — that is, Sanctums, Horizon Realms and Constructs. The forces of creation are not juggled lightly. Besides, nothing beats a well-stocked workshop. Unlike magickal Talismans, Devices do not require the sacrifice of a Willpower point (see "Talisman and Fetish Creation," *Mage*, page 245); they do, however, take twice the usual time to build unless there's some sort of assembly line in the Realm. Most Technocracy Constructs do include mass-production facilities — *that's* where they get those wonderful toys! — but most Sons of Ether and Virtual Adepts still prefer the personal touch. To them, the creation process is part of the miracle.

Repair

Machines, even magickal ones, break. Fixing them is often a matter of understanding the technology and the technomagickal principles used in the Device's construction. Once again, a would-be repair tech must possess several dots in Technology and at least one dot in the Spheres employed by the machine. A character won't need the Device's full Sphere ratings, but she should have at least a basic understanding of the principles involved.

Generally, an Intelligence + Technology roll can fix a broken Device, assuming the technician has time, tools and room to work. (Other Traits, like Computer, Demolitions, Gunsmithing or Science, might be more appropriate than Technology for some machines.) A really extensive repair job might demand several successes as well. The roll's difficulty depends on the extent of the damage: A jammed gun will be pretty easy to fix (one success, difficulty 6), while the same gun, pounded flat by a raging werewolf, would be a lot harder to fix (five successes, difficulty 9). An Intelligence + Jury-Rigging roll (see Appendix) can field-slap a broken Device back together for a limited time without the use of special tools; the rigged machine will not, however, be terribly sturdy and might be dangerous to use again.

Although it's not a firm requirement, any mage who's trying to fix a broken Device really *should* be a Technomancer of some kind. It's easy to see how an Ether Scientist could repair a HIT Mark's special gun, but a voodoo-using Verbena ought to be completely lost, even if she has several dots in Forces.

Example: Sarasota Kane, a weapons specialist for the NWO, understands Forces, Prime and Mind; when a Void Engineer's Dimensional Gateway breaks down, however, she probably won't be able to fix it — she doesn't have Dimensional Science (a.k.a. Spirit). Two Dreamspeaker shamans happen upon the broken Device before the Mirrorshades can get it out of the area; Broken Arrow, a medicine man, is totally bewildered by the machine — this isn't the Spirit medicine he understands! — but his companion, Tracy Black, learned the ways of the Machine Gods. Tracy prefers techno-shamanism to primitive rites, so she can fix and activate the Gateway even though her Spirit rating is only 2 (the Device uses Spirit 4).

About This Book

As the Doc says, machines are created to fill a need. Thus, each of the listings in this book presents the machine, its creator and its reason for being. The game system specifics can be found "out of character" in brackets below each listing.

It's all too easy to say, "Here's a jetpack, here's what it costs, here's what it does." The real magick of the Device, however, is not the distance and speed it flies, but the fact that it exists at all. The stories that accompany each machine's description show how each Device came to be. Those tales can inspire any number of plot hooks, complications and story threads in your own game, and give your troupe some examples of the "process of invention" — a process your characters should experience as they create their own Devices. Any good machine has a story behind it, and stories are what *Mage* is all about.

Buyin' Stuff

Most of the goodies herein are available to player characters with the right connections. A Virtual Adept might have a hard time getting her hands on Progenitor cloning equipment, but if she really wants it, she'll probably be able to get it. The Background Cost listings reflect an optional rule: If your player character wants to possess a certain item, she'll have to pay the points for it. Obviously, this provides an exception to the rule that Background ratings cannot be raised with experience points, and as we said, it is optional (though recommended). Some Devices cost more than their Background ratings would suggest; those costs often reflect the rarity or increased "Arete" of a certain Device. Several inventions are technically available on the Awakened "market," but they're exceedingly hard to come by. A Storyteller, we should add, can forbid any player from purchasing any Device at any time if he feels it would interfere with his game.

(Technocratic characters might be able to requisition certain Devices from the high command, too. **Technocracy: NWO** and **Technocracy: Syndicate** both include a system for "assigned gadgets" on pages 52-53 and 55, respectively. These

toys don't actually belong to the agent in question; she borrows them, uses them and, if possible, returns them after the mission is completed. This option does not exist for Tradition characters, although certain mages might decide to lend an associate a Device or two in return for a big favor later.)

Items marked with a "Ω" are unique. Player characters cannot buy them with Background points, although they might — *at the Storyteller's discretion* — come across them in the course of a story. We recommend that such Devices be kept out of players' greedy little hands; these are the Mage equivalents of the original Wright Brothers Kitty Hawk plane — historical, irreplaceable, often powerful, but most importantly unique. Whole stories can be built around the prophecies of Zelly's Eternal Theatre or the side effects of the RetEncO. That's why we've presented those Devices here — to spark your imaginations and provide story-fodder. No player cabal, however, should acquire a "trophy room" filled with unique historical Devices. If nothing else, such "Monty Haulism" would devalue the worth and wonder of these machines.

Does Dr. Volcano's Forbidden Website exist in your chronicle, and if so, can player characters buy things from the Good Doctor? That depends on what you, the Storyteller, want for your game. The Website has been set up as a framing device for the book; though it exists in "official continuity," nobody's quite sure about whether it's an actual clearinghouse, a joke, a rip-off site or propaganda. The truth behind the site is left to you, the Storyteller. Just keep a few things in mind:

- Doc 'Cano is a Virtual Adept, a hacker and possibly a thief. He has uncanny sources of information, and he may decline to sell anything to anybody; he might just take your money and disappear.
- Websites are notoriously unreliable marketplaces to begin with.
- Supplies are limited. Certain things might be permanently out of stock.
- The whole site might be a smokescreen, code or a staging ground for something else entirely.

If you, the Storyteller, decide to let players purchase items from the Doc, have 'em pay in cash, Background points and possibly favors. Dr. Volcano has his own agendas, and may attach certain tasks to the price tag of an item. These favors might inspire new stories by themselves; imagine the trouble your troupe could get into when the asking price for a set of Fractal Symphonies includes a practical joke played on Hermetic Master Caeron Mustai....

As the Doc says, there are plenty of technomagickal Talismans already in print. Check out **The Book of Shadows**, **Sons of Ether**, **Digital Web** and any **Technocracy** book (see Appendix). Including them all in this book would've made it twice the size it already is. The tidbits in this tome are all brand new. Enjoy!





V I R T U A L
A D E P T

Link 1: The Virtual Adept Shop

They say that certain mystics can send e-mail without a computer. They just think a thought and it zips across the internet like nobody's business. Researchers think their modems are highly developed parts of their medullas, using a microwave interface right behind the nose. Every time they sneeze, the internet freezes up for a few seconds. Fortunately, these mystics are few and far between.

— Ask Dr. Science

All right, I admit it. I'm a bit biased when it comes to these folks. Them's my people, understand? I can hang with all types, but these guys are (with a few exceptions) the folks with a clue. In my book they are, anyway.

As we all know, the world as we know it is stuck with a terminal case of suckage. Cities crumble, forests tumble, ozone fades, carcinogens breed. What a shitty world, right? Well, the Adepts have a plan, no less than world salvation. Reality 2.0, as the esteemed Dante calls it. "Virtual" reality, hell — as these people can attest, it's as real as you are. All you need are the gear and the guts to travel there and help build this place from scratch. I'm not talking about Net "surfing." >:-P I mean *world building*. Literally.

Now, this isn't news to any of you. If you want the details, check out <http://genesis2.0rant@fku.com>. The reason I digress for a brief but shining instant is because I want you to know why I play favorites in this part of the site. Lots of people look at the Adepts and see assholes with targets on their backs and computers at their fingers. Not many think to look beyond that image. And to understand the hardware on this site, you've gotta look beyond the cyberpunk shit, understand?

You *do* realize, of course, that this may all be diversionary propaganda, too. We may have these machines, we may not. We probably have much more advanced stuff in our basements, but choose not to brag about it. Or the whole thing could be a great big lie that none of you sorry shits will ever understand until we come humming in behind you and erase your credit rating or something. Only the Elite really know, and we wouldn't tell you the truth anyway! ;^)

• Portable Virtual Reality System

Arete 2, Quintessence 10, Background Cost 3

Computers, too, keep getting smaller and more portable, but even the most portable computer's value is diminished if you've got to rely on the same old clunky VR helmet and gear in order to get into the Web. The helmet gets heavy after a while, and though you might not feel it while you're in the Web, your aching neck will remind you for hours after you leave the system. Not to mention how difficult it is to carry the damn thing around with anything resembling secrecy.

The Portable Virtual Reality System solves all those problems. The creation of RAM Hog, an Adept from Los Angeles, this system replaces the heavy VR helmet with a pair of dark glasses fitted with side moldings that conform to the wearer's face and block out all external light. The user wears a pair of thin, black gloves with sensor pads along her fingers and palms, and a pair of similarly-constructed black socks with sensor pads along the bottoms of her feet. Mono-filament wires run from these units to three small processors attached to the user's belt, and these processors connect to a fourth processor jacked into the user's computer. All in all, the entire PVRS weighs less than two pounds and is easily concealed.

Despite RAM Hog's claims that the PVRS is just as good as any normal VR rig, the folks I know who've used it say it's not quite as sensitive. A Webspinner in a PVRS rig feels slightly removed, a bit detached. Static is a problem too, from what I'm told, and whiteouts (Paradox backlashes in VR, for the Great Unwashed) boot you straight out of Webspace. On top of all that, I'm told that the sensory input just isn't that clear. It takes a lot of energy to work through a PVRS for any real length of time. Still, it's a great idea and fairly well-executed. RAM Hog, I know you're out there — work out a few bugs in this rig, man, and you'll be the toast of the Tradition!

[This mini-rig allows a mage to enter the Digital Web, either through sensory access or astral immersion (see *Mage: The Ascension*, pages 242-243). A character using this gear adds one to all of her difficulties, due to disorientation. Since there isn't anything overtly "unreal" about VR sensing, the PVRS is coincidental to use. The mage can concentrate on only one world at a time, however; when she's projecting her consciousness into the Net, her mortal body is completely vulnerable and mindless. A would-be Webwalker is advised to have someone covering her back if she plans to go for a spin outside the safety of her home or Chantry.]

•• Electrical/Electronic Signal Inhibiting Pulse Generator (E/E, Personal Cloaking Device)

Arete 2, Quintessence 10, Background Cost 4

With the Technocracy always breathing down your neck, you need some provisions for privacy. Personally, I consider Devices that baffle and mislead inquiring minds to be the ultimate in recreational tech. The Electrical/Electronic Signal Inhibiting Pulse Generator (a.k.a., the "Easy Pulser," "E-slash-E" or "Personal Cloaking Device") is one such Device.

Designed by an Adept named Trekkie (yeah, I know, I know, but what can you do?) in the early 1970s, the first versions of the Easy Pulser looked like tricorders from you-know-what. Trekkie still makes the things in fanboy configurations, but now there are enough variations on the basic model that you can carry one without looking like a dork. Most of the variants can be worn on your wrist or carried on a belt. A few models look like flip-phones and fit into a custom pocket for easy concealment. An Easy Pulser unit operates in two modes, real and virtual, and has a serial cable that can link you to your computer. In either mode, the E/E looks the same, sitting on your icon's wrist or belt or in your virtual pocket.

The E/ESI Pulse Generator makes a person "invisible" by disrupting any electrical or electronic signals of sensory equipment that might be trained on him at the time. Said sensory equipment includes anything that communicates images through electrical or electronic signals, including video cameras, radar and the human eye. When you activate the Easy Pulser, it sets up a tiny scrambling field that confuses sensory signals. In the real world, this makes it difficult-to-impossible to see you; in the Web, your icon seems to disappear or de-rez. Any programs or utilities interacting with you at the time lose track of you. Simple.

The Easy Pulser doesn't have battery life, since the invisibility effect needs a lot of juice. The more observers the Device has to fool, the shorter the effect lasts. In crowded places — like a New York subway station at rush hour or a stadium at game time — the E/E can use its charge up in just a few seconds, burning out completely and becoming totally useless as it fries itself trying to meet the demand. Under spare observation, it can last up to an hour before frying. A couple of folks have jury-rigged Quintessence batteries to keep their units intact; these cells can extend the E/E's life span several factors, but nobody has perfected a portable indefinite-use power cell that's compatible with the design.

When used virtually, the Pulser runs off your computer's power supply. The constant signal redirection uses up so much processing power, however, that everything you do in Netspace requires twice the usual time. That's right, kiddies — you're invisible, but moving at half speed.

Even so, this beauty can be worth its weight in dylithium crystals. Clouding the minds of men — or machines, for that matter — is a handy talent to have when the Borg comes sniffing around looking for someone to assimilate. Futile, my ass! Resistance is eternal!

[In realspace, this Device generates an effective Arcane Background of 4, or adds four to an existing Arcane rating. The E/E has to be turned on (the "Arete" roll) to function and burns out quickly under heavy surveillance. Aside from those factors, the "blur" acts in all ways like Arcane (see *Mage*, pages 130-131).

[In the Web, the E/E sets up a literal invisibility field; in the weird reality of cyberspace, this Effect is coincidental unless the mage starts moving things around and hitting people while in plain sight. An invisible character effectively disappears to all senses except biological touch, smell and hearing. In other words, a mage interacting with the Web through a VR set-up and icon cannot sense the cloaked character in any way. A shaman

who has stepped sideways and is now running around the Web in holistic immersion mode can still touch, smell and hear the invisible one normally, however. Many Technocracy sectors have scanning Devices that can spot a cloaked intruder (Perception + Technology, Dice Pool of 6, difficulty 7), and all Virtual Adept sectors do.

[Invisibility mode has its price: The shielded character moves at half the normal speed; any action she performs — including an attack or dodge — has its Dice Pool split in half unless the mage takes extra time to do it. If the mage uses Time magick to speed herself up, the Storyteller should roll for a Paradox backlash at that point. A successful roll indicates a whiteout; the system crashes and the character is kicked out of the Web. Otherwise, the mage simply adds another point of Paradox to her total and waits for another backlash....

[As usual, an "Arete" roll activates the Device. A botched roll discharges the entire Effect at once, rendering the Easy Pulse useless.]

•• Fractal Symphonies

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 5

Mathematicians and artists have studied fractals for decades. For the uninitiated, fractals are sets of self-replicating and reducing equations that produce colorful, sometimes infinitely-repeating patterns. Written down, these patterns produce wonderful images. Some of these images turn back in on themselves, creating a single picture. Others cycle outward, spawning smaller versions of the larger image as they go; these smaller versions spawn still smaller versions until the image turns into a panorama of a single theme in ever-smaller and more numerous repetitions.

The Polish mathematician Mandelbrot was the first to discover fractals, and his studies inspired other students to discover different sets of fractal equations that produced different types of images. Creating fractal images requires solving thousands of repetitions of a fractal equation and visually plotting the results. Obviously, a computer is an essential tool when you're working with fractals. And as we all know, the sky's no limit when a Virtual Adept starts fooling around with a computer.

Recently, an Adept named Chanter started experimenting with translating fractal image equations into sound, creating a musical version of fractal images. These mathematical compositions have a lot in common with their visual cousins — they're complex, self-perpetuating melodies that can go on forever, endlessly repeating a single musical theme in a larger, almost symphonic, framework.

Chanter soon discovered that his fractal music could seriously influence his moods — or the moods of anyone else who happened to hear them. He figured that the mathematical patterns worked their way into people's synapses, setting a tune for neurons to dance to. Chanter's early experiments simply induced relaxation or frustration; once he figured out what he was doing, the devious bastard began fooling around with the patterns to see what kinds of emotions he could inspire. In time, he worked out equations that induced certain emotional effects

(see below). Recently, he's let a few of his designs out for, shall we say, field testing. Fun, huh?

Chanter's sneaky symphonies aren't 100% reliable, and they don't bring on sudden emotional shifts. It takes a while for the intricate patterns to have their effect on the human nervous system, although some animals process that data quicker than we humans do. It usually takes several minutes for a fractal symphony to work its gentle magic (or is that magick?), although I've heard that Chanter has several top-secret prototypes that can turn someone's head around in seconds. If he has, I'd imagine that he's keeping them to himself.

It takes a pretty good sound system to handle the full range of a fractal symphony. Since no self-respecting Adept should have anything less than a 32-bit wavetable emulation sound board in his rig, those systems set the minimum specs for an effective fractal performance. Anything less plays a simplified rendering of the composition, but the song, while interesting, lacks depth and significance (translation: It won't do dick). With a solid state-of-the-art system, though, you can unlock the full power of these mathematical symphonies. A **3-Dim Sonographic Sense Factory** (see that item's reference listing) converts the symphonies into fractal sonographic images. That, I can tell you from experience, makes for a hell of a show!

Some of Maestro Chanter's little ditties include:

• The Crescendo Set

This group of equations creates symphonies that produce strong, active emotions. The music is loud and gripping, filled with drum cascades and cymbal crescendoes. The end of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* is a perfect example of the kind of music a *Crescendo* equation creates.

This set breaks down into three subsets: The *Inspirational Subset* (christened "The Lincoln Cathedral Overture") instigates courage, pride and patriotism; the *Aggression Subset* ("the Skinhead Concerto") evokes anger, hatred and disgust; the *Selfishness Subset* ("La Gate Grande Serenade") creates emotions like fear, greed and lust. Once you're fired up by these arithmetical anthems, it takes a strong will to act in a calm and rational manner.

• The Discordant Set

Imagine King Crimson on crack and you've got some idea of what these braintwisters sound like. Discordant equations produce symphonies that cause mental confusion and physical clumsiness. The music itself jumps tempo, key and rhythm in ways that would make Charles Ives scream and clutch his ears. People who listen to these compositions have a hard time concentrating; they forget what they're doing and where they are, and occasionally even go blank on their own names. Their short-term memory gets screwed up, and simple mental tasks turn into serious chores. Simple physical actions become tougher than usual, too. Working a computer or driving a car gets difficult. The proverbial walking while chewing gum is out of the question.

• The Ballad Set

Symphonies in this set evoke quiet and relaxing emotions. The music is calm and gentle, with soothing melodies and with a gradual rising and falling of rhythms. These symphonies never

contain harsh passages or percussive beats. Instead, the sounds flow and flutter like mountain streams and butterfly wings.

These symphonies (which go by names like "The Gossamer Thread," "Angel's Passage," "Lament of Eurydice," and my favorite "The Enya Suicide Concerto in D Minor") induce emotions like love, sadness and nostalgia, sometimes with a heavy dose of introspection thrown in for good measure. Angry listeners cool out and settle into quieter states of mind. Aggression and conflict don't last long when one of these symphonies plays in the background, and hysterical people quickly get a handle on themselves.

[In most cases, the Fractal Symphonies have the same effect as the Mind 2 **Subliminal Impulse** rote (see **Mage**, page 210). Discordant Set songs also reduce all listeners' Physical Dice Pools by one die for every two successes scored.

[To set the Device in motion, a mage must have a state-of-the-art sound system and willing listeners. As it plays, the song acts as an extended magick roll, working its coincidental Effect on the listeners over several turns. Assume that each song gets three "Arete" rolls against difficulty 5; the more successes it scores, the deeper the mood and the longer it lasts. The sound system's owner is *not* immune to a symphony's effects, by the way, and listeners may leave the room before a song ends. Like all Mind Effects, a Fractal Symphony can be resisted with a Will-power roll if the listener *really* doesn't want to change his mood.]

•• Kaleidoscopic Repigmentation Organic Memory Module (KROMM)

Arete N/A, Quintessence N/A, Background Cost 4

Who'd've guessed that fungal biology would have anything to do with computers? "By Crom (or is that KROMM?)," as a certain hypersteroidal Schwarzeneggerian might say, "a plant is just as much a machine as any other living thing, even if it be the mold beneath my toes!" Groanan has a point: If you take biotech synthesis to its logical conclusions, there's no reason why a good Adept couldn't program a fungus. The bandwidth might be a bit narrow and the processing speed a bit sluggish, but the results, as we can see, can be pretty damn useful.

The Kaleidoscopic Repigmentation Organic Memory Module uses a fungus that's incredibly sensitive to certain narrow wavelengths of light. This fungus was first discovered by researchers at U.C. Berkeley, but it got commandeered for computer use by an Adept named Trixter. When exposed to a laser of the appropriate wavelength, the fungus instantly changes color, from a dull green to either a bright red or a bright blue. The color change precisely matches the illuminated area, spreading no more than a nanometer (0.000000001 meter). Better still, the fungus stays light-sensitive even when dried out and dead.

Trixter sealed the fungus in a case of thin glass and lit it up with an unthinkable narrow laser beam. The glass case was constructed to cancel the beam's refraction through each surface, assuring that the beam would travel straight through without deviation. Trixter couldn't quite make a laser beam small enough to take full advantage of the fungus' sensitivity, but

the memory system he built with it can store 40 billion bits in a one millimeter square area. This translates to a storage of slightly over 4.5 gigabytes. Using a square platform 75mm on a side, a KROMM stores 25.5 terabytes of data.

Unfortunately, the fungus' sensitivity to light is also its weakness. Though lasers of the appropriate wavelength can toggle the fungus between blue and red, white light cancels any color changes and returns the fungus to its original dull-green color. Exposing a KROMM's memory platform to daylight instantly re-formats it and eradicates any data you might have stored there. Additionally, the KROMM's laser assembly is complex and delicate, making it extremely susceptible to damage from unexpected shocks and rough treatment. Lastly, areas of the fungus that have changed color slowly return to their natural color, requiring periodic maintenance of the KROMM's surface. Hence, this isn't really a portable unit, but a stay-at-home archival deck. Trixter and some friends are working to correct these problems, and the KROMM is quickly becoming the hard drive choice among the truly Elite.

[Aside from its phenomenal memory capacity, this Device acts like a normal computer module. Its hyper-advanced design makes the KROMM a technomagickal item, but it doesn't have any really exceptional powers. (See **Mage**, pages 244-245, for details about computers.)]

•• Personal Cerebral Translation Unit

Arete 2, Quintessence 10, Background Cost 4

The world keeps getting smaller every day. It used to take three days by wagon from Boston to Providence. Now we send vast amounts of data around the world in a few minutes and put people in different countries face-to-face in no time. All that shrinking has made communication more difficult. Lots of people learn English because they have to, but there's no guarantee that the next face you meet while walking through the Web will understand what you're saying. The Personal Cerebral Translation Unit helps make sure that he will.

Created by Übermensch, an Adept in Zurich, this Device is programmed with over 60 Sleeper languages and over 30 programming languages. You "install" the PCTU by swallowing it. It comes in a huge pill, and once the coating breaks down, a dozen tiny modules make their way toward the user's brain, where they assemble themselves at the direction of the master control module. This process usually makes you weak, dizzy and vomitous, but that only lasts a few hours. When finished, the PCTU goes immediately to work; from that point, you can turn it on and off with a mental command.

Once the unit's up and running, it works automatically. If you hear something in an unfamiliar language while the PCTU is active, the unit translates it for you. If you want to respond in kind, simply flash a mental command to activate the PCTU's outgoing translation filter. That'll let you speak properly, if a bit stiffly. Fortunately, it's self-upgrading: The machine adds new vocabulary, idioms and slang to its memory as you encounter them. Best of all, the PCTU translates computer code, too, allowing a user with access to a program written in one language

to convert it to another. (That, of course, assumes that both languages are fairly advanced. Some programming languages just can't do some things. A Brother WP50 is never going to be able to shut down NORAD's security grid no matter how skilled the translator may be!)

Naturally (sigh), nothing's perfect. Extended PCTU use causes migraines that could cripple Frankenstein's Monster. I recommend shutting the unit down whenever you're not in direct communication with someone speaking a foreign language. The brainbreaker I had after an extended negotiation with some Javanese hackers made a Tequila Sunrise hangover look tame. Also, the translator only works on one language at a time; multiple "signals" cause overload, which send your mind into shut-down mode. Try listening to two or three folks speaking different languages at the same time and I guarantee you a day's worth of reflex spasms and muddled thinking. There's also the paranoia factor to consider: These things go inside your body and work inside your brain. Where'd they come from? Who built your unit, and did they install any backdoors that you don't know about? A reputable Unit biodegrades within five days, but I've heard of variant models that last for a month or more. How long? Who knows? And who's really pulling the strings on that Unit, anyway? These are all questions worth considering before you pop some microtech, but they're especially pertinent when we're talking about something that sits inside your brain. Using a PCTU's kinda risky — if your chosen line includes lots of cross-

cultural diplomacy, though, this Device beats night classes in Italian any day.

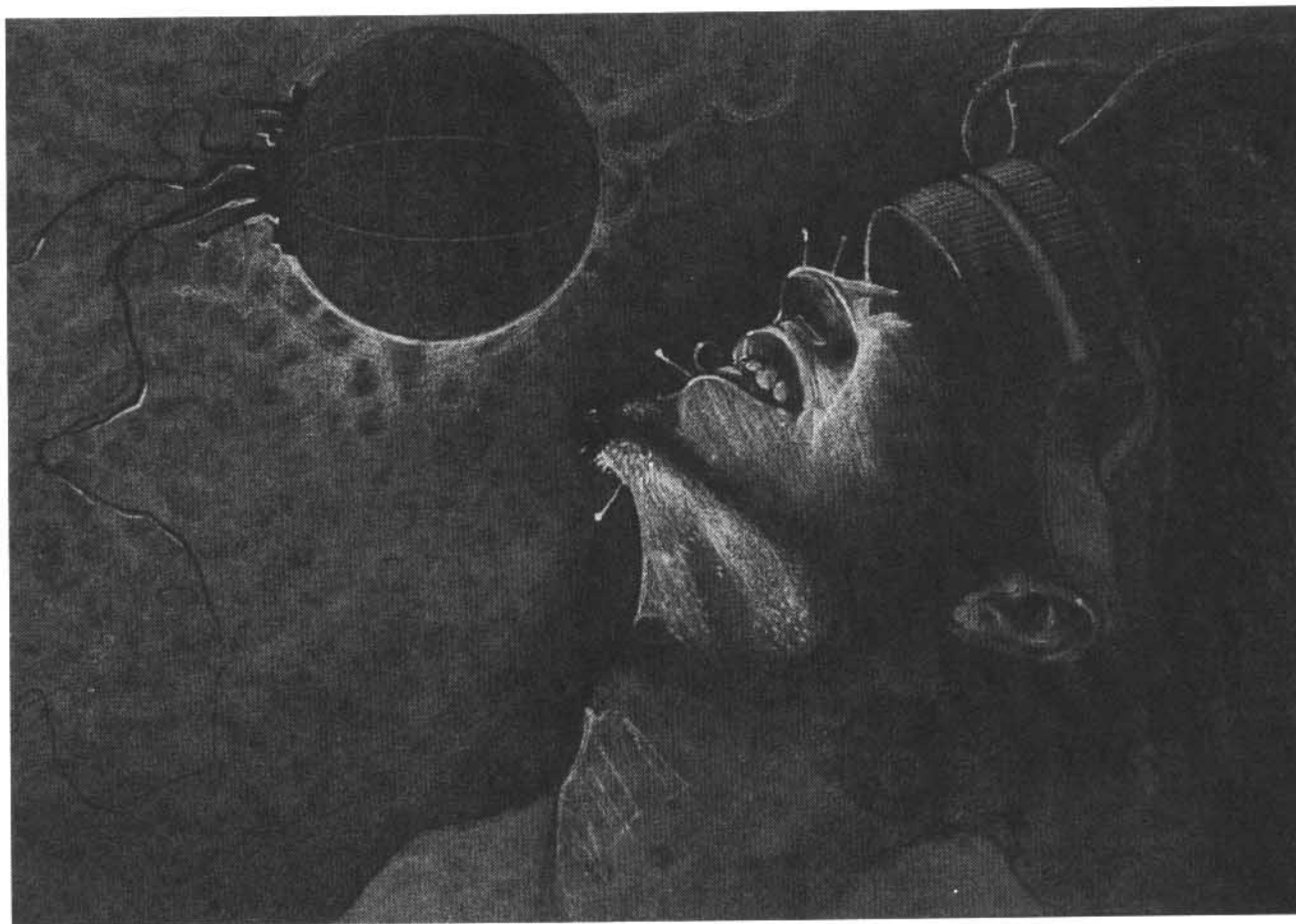
[An "Arete" roll activates the multi-speech function. From that point on, simply assume that the mage can converse with and understand a wide variety of languages and computer programming codes. Naturally, really obscure languages may remain unintelligible; it's safe to assume that the PCTU "knows" French and Japanese, but Basque may still be beyond its program.

[The translation Effect lasts five days, then fades; the new languages are *not* added to the mage's character sheet. All other functions and side effects can be left to roleplaying and Storytelling.]

•• Rapid Text Stream Data Reader (Magic 8-Ball)

Arete 4, Quintessence 20, Background Cost 6

Everyone knows there are plenty of rotes and Devices to help a Web-walking Adept find the data she wants. Seekers are quick and reliable, but they cave when they run into defense programs. The **Hacker's Glance** rote sifts through a lot of data in a short time to find the information you want. What does the Adept do once she *has* the data, though? In most cases, she's gotta read it. If the data is something she needs immediately (maybe she has to know which "uniform" her icon should be wearing to fit in with the bulletheads coming around the corner, or perhaps





she's got less than an hour to crack that stubborn security code), this can be a real problem.

Created by an Adept named Incanta, the Rapid Text Stream Data Reader is a piece of software that increases a user's ability to read online data. Incanta loves to read — fiction, nonfiction, Classic literature, the works. Even though digitizing books is a relatively new trend for Sleepers, we've been doing it for years. With so many books online, Incanta created the Data Reader to help her read as many of them as possible in her short life span. These days, books get digitized faster than even *she* can read them; still, she's happy to keep working toward her goal.

The Data Reader works by firing the text content of a file in a rapid stream of single words. Instead of being distracted by a flurry of text, the person reading the file concentrates, albeit briefly, on a single word at a time. With a little practice, this technique can double, triple, or even quintuple your normal reading speed, allowing you to read large amounts of data in minimal time.

In the Web, the Rapid Text Stream Data Reader looks like a small black globe with a pair of short, round wires sticking out the back; some Adepts call it "The Magic 8-Ball." To use it, you attach the Reader to a file by inserting the wires into the file's digital representation. The Reader then displays the file's contents in a rapid stream on the globe's surface. It has no decryption capabilities, however, and will display encrypted files in a steady barrage of garbage. If you wanna read encrypted files with this little gadget, first unscramble them with some other piece of software.

There's a rumor that the Technocracy has turned Incanta's software into a torture tool. The human brain tends to believe the things that it hears or sees often enough. This software makes the brainwashing process more efficient by inundating the target with a continuum of information. Using video display goggles that keep the wearer's eyes open and moist, the Technocrats can feed an endless supply of propaganda into a captured Tradition mage. If they channel the output through a text-to-speech converter, the Black Hats can cram propaganda through two senses at once. That kind of onslaught could crash the strongest mind, I'll bet, and without access to rat cages or Beethoven's Ninth. There's such a thing as TMI, my friends, and if any Device could deliver that heretical notion better than the Magic 8-Ball, I don't know what it is.

[A successful "Arete" roll sends an impression of the scanned text directly into the reader's subconscious through a combination of **Multi-Tasking** and **Subliminal Impulse**. The mage might need to make an Intelligence + Technology roll to absorb the information correctly, depending on the circumstances and the complexity of the input. A failed roll causes gobbledygook to spiral past the viewer, while a botched roll sends the *wrong* information. This Device is coincidental to use.]

•• Stage II Power Glove

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 5

As compact and easy to carry as modern portable computers are, there are still times when an Adept can't or won't carry his rig. He might not want to risk his best stuff in a raid on a Technocracy stronghold; he might have to crawl through sewer pipes to get where he's going; maybe he just wants to look unprepared so he can

surprise his opponents. For these situations, or just for looking cool and Elite, the Stage II Power Glove comes in "handy."

The Glove's name is a little misleading, since it's not really a glove at all. A computer console eight inches long, two inches wide and half an inch thick wraps across the user's forearm with a pair of nylon straps. The display is a flexible plastic only a millimeter thick that rolls into a tight cylinder along the computer's top edge and rolls out to create a screen eight inches wide and four inches high. Exposure to air makes the plastic of the screen semi-rigid, and a pair of supports that fold out of the computer's back edge help to hold it up. The unit's most interesting feature is its pair of AutoAdapters, one on each end. Each AutoAdapter is connected to an incredibly thin, retractable cord that connects to the machine's internal processors. Using a technique involving malleable, electrically-conductive plastics, these adapters can match and interface with any port and any connector on any Sleeper computer anywhere. (That last feature is risky, though, folks, so you wanna make sure the kiddies aren't watching when you use it! ;^))

As I understand it, the Stage II Power Glove is the brain-child of Xythlord (he would've chosen Sithlord, but somebody was already using that name), an Adept who still dreams of building the ultimate portable computer — one that would go anywhere, do anything and wouldn't cost a fortune. Two out of three ain't bad: The machine's expensive — Xythlord's still working on that part of the equation — but really flexible and rugged. To the well-groomed Virtual Adept, the Stage II is essential evening wear. I know plenty of people who have them, and I'll swear to the unit's versatility.

Like most portable computers, the Stage II Power Glove is limited by its internal power source. Though its hyper-lithium chlorate battery keeps it running for six hours at a time, you've still got to plug it into a standard power source to recharge it every once in a while. The Stage II also earns its nickname — "Dox in a Box" — because it goes so far out of acceptable Sleepertech. Most operations are pretty vulgar when the Stage II is involved, but Xythlord's working on that bug. According to him, a big-budget film is underway that'll have every Sleeper in the Western World convinced that mundane tech is far more advanced than common wisdom admits. I'm not sure if that's a good thing or a bad thing; wouldn't that give the Mirrorshades an advantage, too?

Xythlord has nothing to say to that.

[Aside from its compact nature, the Power Glove works in all ways like a Trinary Computer. The universal interface feature requires an "Arete" roll versus difficulty 6, 7 if un-Awakened folks are present. In the presence of Sleepers, the Glove's owner may need to make an "Arete" roll for the Device; a botch indicates a Paradox backlash — usually a systems freeze or crash — that must be taken care of before the Glove will work again.]

... Coalminer's Handy Identity Randomizing Processor Card (CHIRP)

Arete 4, Quintessence 20, Background Cost 7

The Digital Age ushered in tons of improvements in communication, automation, entertainment — and security. A host of



(fairly) efficient guard systems has followed in the wake of other technological improvements. Successful as such systems are, most companies trust them implicitly. After all, it's pretty hard for the average thief to break through a state-of-the-art security grid.

Not all intruders are amateurs, though. And for grid-crackers who understand the ins and outs of high-tech systems, their presence is an open invitation. No 'cracker can resist a good challenge. One Adept, "Coalminer" by name, loves to duel with electronic security systems that track the identities of people entering a secured area. This passion led him to create Coalminer's Handy Identity Randomizing Processor Card — a.k.a. "CHIRP," or the Randomizer.

A plain gray plastic card with a magnetic stripe along the top edge on one side, the Randomizer resembles a standard ATM card. One corner of the CHIRP sports a pair of thin wires, which connect the card to a small processing unit, typically worn strapped to one wrist. When the card slides into a magnetic card reader, the processor unit goes to work, initiating a low-level data query to the security system controlling the card reader. This query gets a list of people authorized to open the lock, then supplies a randomly chosen identity and pass code from that list. The cardholder goes through the door, and the system thinks someone else is inside.

The CHIRP is flexible enough to bypass systems that require only alphanumeric input, as long as there's a place to put the card. Coalminer's supposedly working on attachments to fool fingerprint and retinal scanners as well but hasn't perfected the process yet. At the moment, it's pretty hard to get your hands on a good CHIRP; Coalminer's constantly refining the Device — security system technology never rests and neither does he. That's the drawback to using a CHIRP: If you set one into a system more advanced than the one it was designed to counter, the card chokes and you're nailed.

[To begin a switch, the player has to make a successful Wits + Security, Computer or Computer Hacking roll (difficulty depends on the system: An old, simple system with very few people would be 6 or 7, while a state-of-the-art grid on a busy system might be 9 or 10). Once the card has been accepted, a coincidental "Arete" roll activates the CHIRP. A failure means that the card is rejected; success means it has been accepted. A botch devours the card and sets off whatever alarms the system employs. In either case, the Device cannot change an intruder's appearance in any way. The system simply assumes that he is who he says he is and registers his presence. This is, of course, a useful diversion, especially if you're trying to get someone else in trouble ("What do you mean, 'What was I doing in the president's office at 4:00 A.M....?'")]

... Heisenberg Electron Array Trinary Processor (HEAT Chip)

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 6 (but rare; see below)

Things around us get smaller, sleeker and more efficient every day. Portable phones that used to need 10 lb. battery packs now weigh a few ounces. Instead of having a secretary filling out message pads, people carry pagers that can also keep track of sports scores and stock quotes. Computers have gone from building-sized mon-

strosities to hand-held devices that can do things the Sleepers never even dreamed of back in the '50s. Trinary computers keep getting smaller, too, but the Heisenberg Electron Array Trinary Processor will break all barriers and make the next wave of Trinaries the smallest, fastest, most powerful computers you can imagine.

An Adept named Kaiser showed off his first HEAT chip in a home-baked system that he showed to some friends at M.I.T. in 1994. The chip uses a regulated electrical charge to keep metal ions in a carefully maintained array. Each ion has a single extra electron, and careful modulation of the charge moves each electron back and forth between two positions, making each ion a binary place holder. The Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle enables the chip's Trinary capacities. According to the principle, you can't precisely know an electron's position and energy at the same time. Since the chip always knows the position of each electron in the array, the energy of each electron is always uncertain. This uncertainty gives the chip the "fuzzy logic" capability of a Trinary computer.

The problem is electricity dissociates a metal atom's electrons from its nucleus, which keeps Kaiser from making the HEAT chip even smaller than it is. Each ion has to be completely surrounded in a non-conductive shell to keep it from touching other ions and losing its electron. This structure, added to the special channels that bring electricity to each ion, take up a hundred times as much space as the ion transistors themselves. Even so, the HEAT chip's transistors are so small that these processors have at least 10 times the speed and power of ordinary CPUs. Once Kaiser figures out a better way to protect each transistor, even this phenomenal speed will be old hat.

The uncertainty that makes the HEAT perfect for Trinary operations is also the source of the chip's main problem: overload and total shut-down. Since the chip can never know the exact energy of each electron in the array, extended use traps residual electricity in each transistor, building the energy of each electron higher and higher. After around two hours of continuous use, the unit overloads and shuts down. An overloaded HEAT chip can be reset, but the process is a real pain in the ass and takes almost as long as building a new one from scratch. Some Adepts have tried different cooling systems, but none has improved the processor's operating time.

Kaiser and a handful of close Adept friends build every HEAT chip by hand. They keep the process as secret as they can, and the chips have a tendency to explode when someone other than Kaiser or one of his buddies takes them apart. The Technocracy would love to get its hands on Kaiser; HIT Marks and other equipment outfitted with stable HEAT chips would be real nightmares for the rest of us. The Black Hats' attempts to kidnap Kaiser have only driven him so far underground that the Devil shares his mailing address. Word is that the Men In Black got some of Kaiser's notes when they raided his old lab, but their data is incomplete. (My bet is that they're dummy docs, too; Kaiser's not stupid enough to leave sensitive specs where the Borg can find them.) The Technocrats are on the lookout for Kaiser or any HEAT chips they can get, so Adepts who have one should shut the fuck up about that fact. If a chip needs work, a quiet message on the right boards (and those of you who *know* know what those boards might be) is usually enough to get his attention.

[For all intents and purposes, the chip simply allows a character to use a really fast, really small Trinary computer. All particulars can be left to Storytelling. (See **Mage**, page 245, for more details.)]

...Magnatronic III VASD Computer

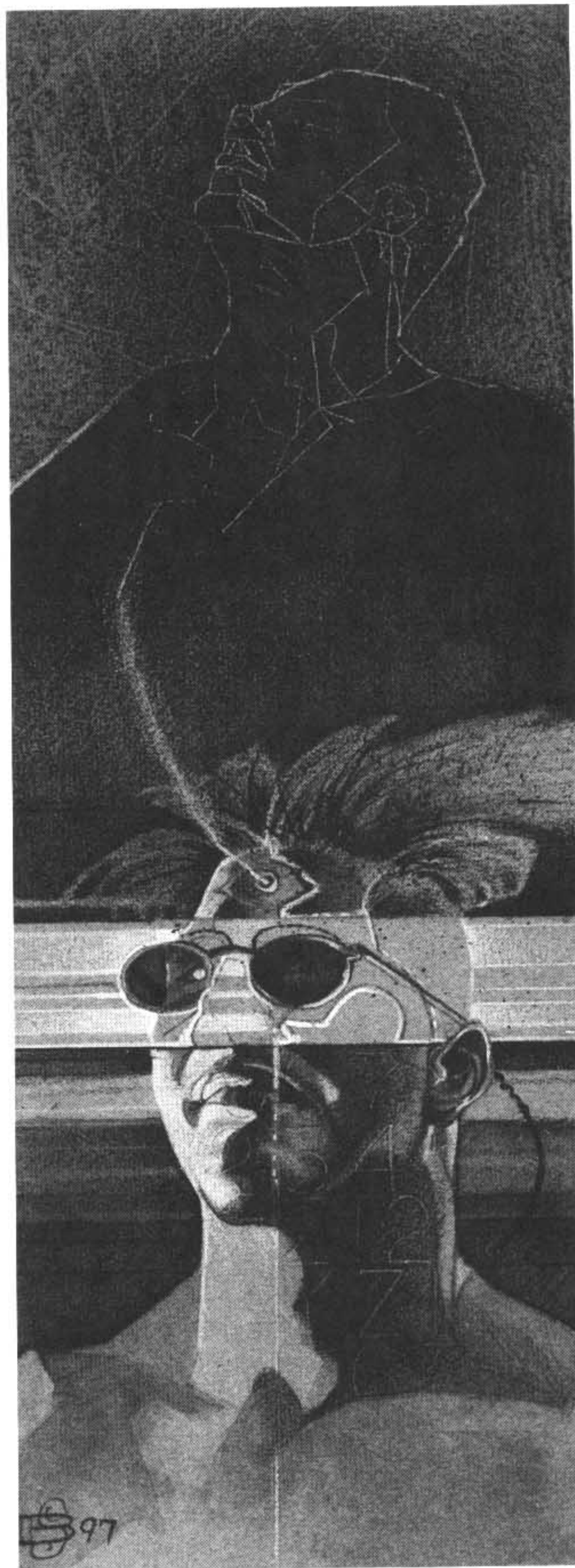
Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 6 (but very rare; see below)

Another Virtual Adept advancement in the world of miniature computers is the Magnatronic III Voice Activated Spectacle Display Computer. The most elite compact computer we know of, the Magnatronic III is a rare beast. No more than 10 of them exist, and these few are all carefully and jealously guarded by their owners.

The Magnatronic III is the size of an average pager and is designed to hang from the user's belt. Voice commands activate all of the machine's applications and utilities. The computer delivers its output to a pair of specially-designed shades through an ultraviolet wavelength transmitter. Most of these displayspecs are mirrorshades, but I know of at least two units that transmit their read-outs to regular eyeglasses with polarized lenses (you can see out but no one can see in). The Magnatronic III comes equipped with a miniature version of the Cosmic Communications Package, allowing it to commune with other computers through their modems. Since the hardware lacks a standard data and program port (it's kinda hard to pop a disc into a pager), the Cosmic Communications Package software is hard-wired into the Magnatronic III unit. That way, you can download software from other machines. A simple LCD display and several small buttons allow the Magnatronic III to display small amounts of text if the glasses are unavailable — this makes the unit look more like a pager and less like a computer.

No one knows who invented the Magnatronic III VASD Computer, but word on the street is that it came from the workshop of the great Dante himself. If Dante *did* invent the machine, no one knows why he won't take credit for it, since the rig's Eliteness is obvious. Rumor holds that each of the known Magnatronic IIIs came to their owners under mysterious circumstances, without any indication of their origin. Some Adepts think the Magnatronic IIIs are a clever Technocracy ploy to get information on the Adepts, but if that's true, no one I know of has seen any proof. Still other rumors claim that the Magnatronic IIIs were the first experiments of an Adept named James McPherson, the man who created the **MEGA Pen** (see listing).

The Magnatronic III suffers from power source problems, but its small size means that its compact battery can keep it running for up to a nine-hour stretch. It comes with a special cradle that plugs into a wall outlet, and the computer sits in the cradle to recharge. Thanks to the increasingly widespread concept of voice-activated computers, and the fact that the user's the only one who can see the display, magick performed with the Magnatronic III is almost always coincidental. Since everything on the unit works through voice-activation, a new user has to spend at least three hours attuning himself to the computer, and vice versa. This demands a few hours of "conversation" — the user speaks, watches the computer display interpret his speech patterns, then "conditions" it to accept his voice (and his voice



alone) by pressing the appropriate button on the machine's LCD. When the unit has keyed a perfect match, it's ready to go. From that point on, any other user must reprogram the Magnatronic III with her voice if she wants it to work at all. Commands that have not been "cleared" will not be accepted.

[Another hyper-advanced Trinary computer, the Magnatronic III contains a package that allows it to transmit signals to any machine that uses radio waves. Hence, the computer can also function as a cellular phone, remote control, radio or modem. Changing functions requires a little work (a turn or more) and a Wits + Technology roll (difficulty 6 for close targets, 7 for ones nearby, 8 to transmit more than a block, 9 for a half-mile, and 10 for a mile, the Device's maximum range).

[Aside from its transmitter package, the Magnatronic works like a very small, very portable, voice-activated Trinary deck. Its advanced nature makes it susceptible to crashing when an un-Awakened mortal tries to use it ("Arete" roll, difficulty 8 to avoid dumping the deck). All other particulars can be handled through Storytelling and roleplaying.]

... Pandora's Random Electrical Transference Inducer (the Pretty Gun)

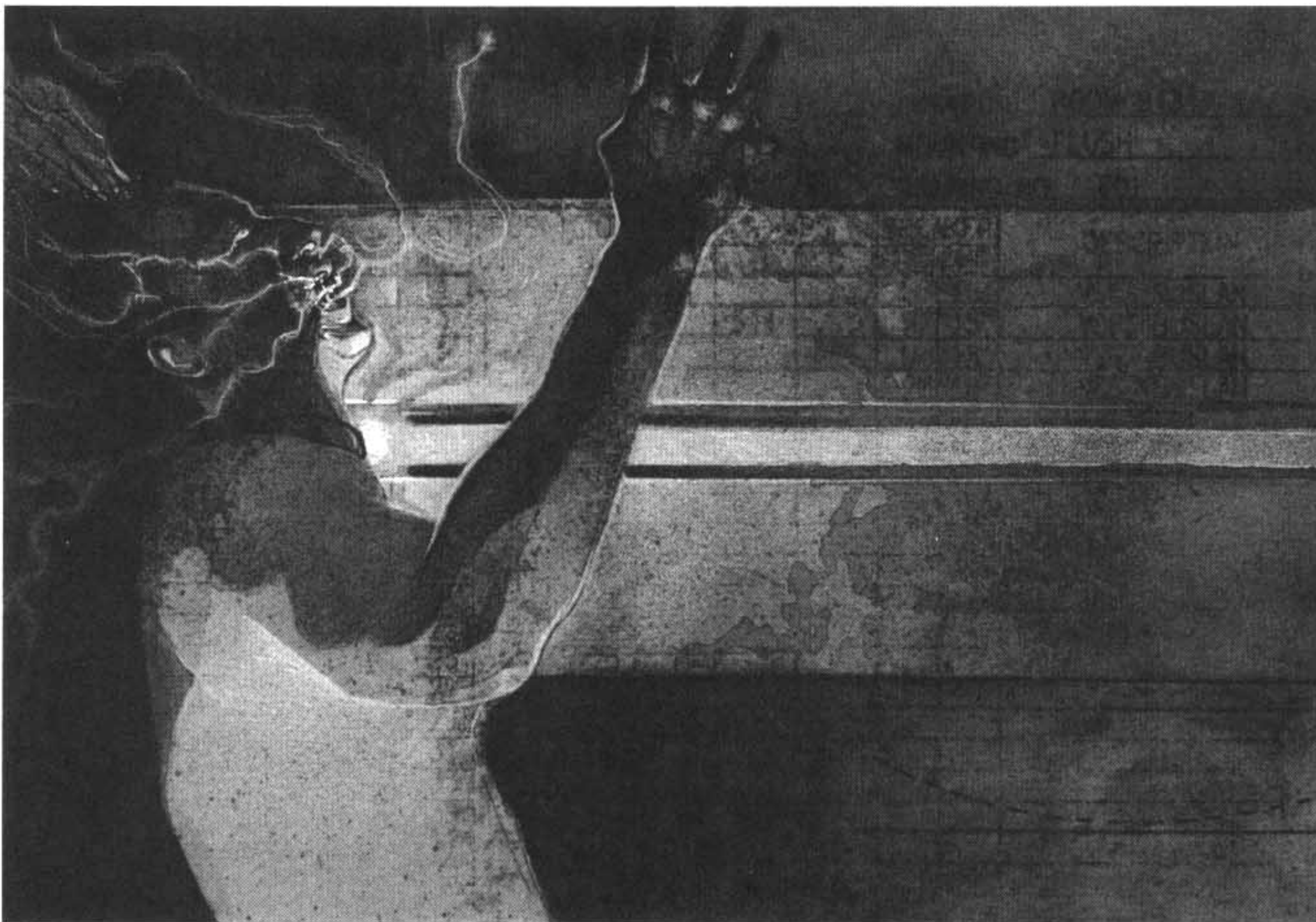
Arete 4, Quintessence 6 (see below), Background Cost 7

Weapons, weapons, weapons. With Iteration X and the Void Engineers so hot on our tails, any Virtual Adept has to be

ready to fight. Being the resourceful bastards that we are, we've got all manner of rotes, toys and Sleepertech at our disposal. All the same, someone's always on the lookout for something bigger, better and badder.

Pandora's Random Electrical Transference Inducer (PRETI), nicknamed the "Pretty Gun," came out of some experiments with electrical weaponry performed by an Adept in Chicago. Starting with a mundane taser, Pandora increased the weapon's range and prepped it to fire electrical discharges from a distance. Named with our customary irony, the Pretty Gun is a mean-looking snub-nosed pistol bristling with a crown-like arrangement of stubby spikes at the business end. The gun fires a blue globe of energy (yeah, I guess you could call it "pretty," too); when that globe strikes its target, out comes a sparkling blue tendril that taps into the nearest source of electrical power. Once it establishes the link, the globe drains the power source and channels that electricity into the unfortunate target. The bigger the source, the worse it hurts. A strong enough source can fry a man to ashes. If the power source is one that can't be drained (e.g., a wall socket), the connection channels electricity into the target for five seconds, then overloads and pops. If there isn't a source of electrical power close by, the target suffers a moderate jolt of electricity that causes slight pain and disorientation.

This weapon is equipped with an interface cable that lets you take it into the Digital Web. When used there, the gun retains its normal appearance. Since the Digital Web is itself an



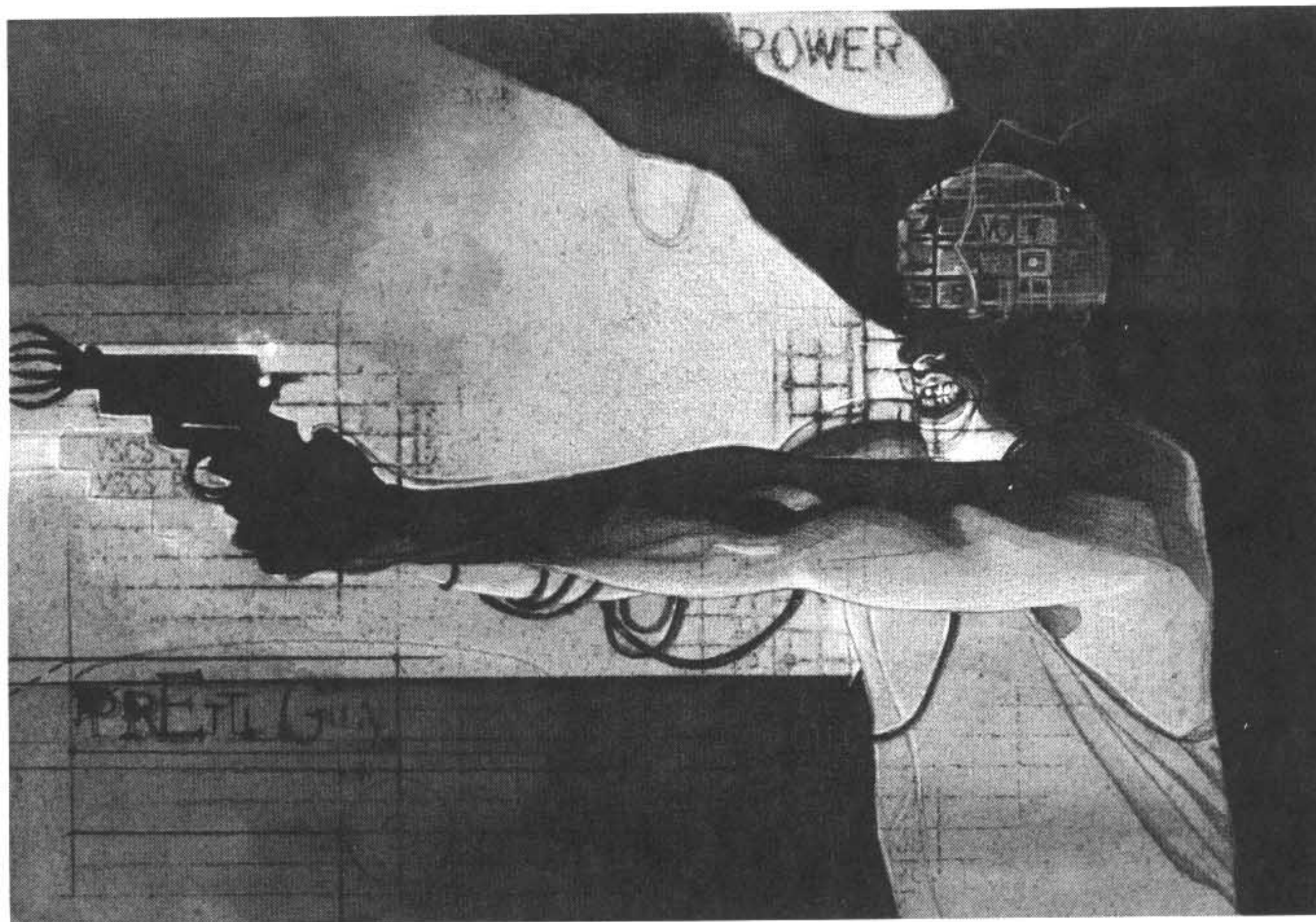
endless construct of electrical energy, populated by icons created of electrical energy, the PRETI functions a bit differently there. When the gun's energy globe strikes its target, it sends out hundreds of tiny tendrils that absorb electricity directly from the Web and channel it into the target in a very short, very intense, burst. This attack can easily de-rez an icon, and it can toast the living hell out of anyone who has physically or holistically projected himself into the Web. The blast produces a slight but noticeable drain on the Web in a large area, which can call attention to you if you're not careful. Because it draws most of its power from the surrounding Web, the gun doesn't work well in a Restricted Sector. In these areas, all shots act as though they were fired too far from an appropriate source of power in the physical world.

The PRETI Gun uses a battery pack that slots into the pistol's grip. This pack gives the gun six shots before it drains and has to be replaced. The gun's maximum range is only about 50 yards, and a source of power must be within five yards of the target for the weapon to have its full effect. If you use a Pretty Gun, keep some distance between you and your target — the gun's own battery pack could serve as a source of power for the electrical transfer; if any shots remain, the transfer will drain your power pack. I've heard rumor that some Void Engineers have become familiar with the weapon's function and have taken to carrying around powerful watch batteries to pull the gun's teeth. The

Pretty's a useful toy to have, but like most sharp swords, you've got to beware of its double edge.

[In realspace, this gun is vulgar; the "Arete" difficulty, therefore, would be 7. The PRETI's initial blast is pretty minor — only one normal Health Level per success. The real kick comes when the lightning ball connects with a power source. In most cases, the discharge inflicts the usual Forces damage in addition to the shock from the initial blast. If a really big power reserve — like a generator, electric fence, power cable, etc. — happens to be nearby, the damage can be pretty ungodly. Depending on the source and circumstances, the Storyteller may multiply the usual damage by two (six Health Levels would become 12, for example), or simply add a few Health Levels to the total as she sees fit. *Note:* To "coincidentally" have such a source within reach, a mage would have to create it first, unless it already existed in that spot.

[In the Web, a PRETI is considered coincidental (difficulty 6). The gun inflicts normal Forces damage, except in Restricted Sectors, in which it deals out half its usual damage. Paradox backlashes — in or out of Webspace — tend to fry the gun's user instead of the target. A character with Forces can attempt to redirect the ball of lightning as it streaks toward him; a successful countermagick roll sends the ball careening into a nearby power source, leaving the target unharmed. Otherwise, the victim takes damage normally.]



... 3-Dim Sonographic Sense Factory

Arete 3, Quintessence N/A, Background Cost 6

Better graphics and faster applications aren't the only things to come out of the more powerful processors of today's computers. The creation and manipulation of sound can be just as important. Music soothes the savage beast, and the creation of music soothes the savage hacker — if she's got a musical mind, that is.

An Adept with the handle "Terpsichore" created early prototypes of the Sonic Sense Factory by tinkering with the shitty sound boards available in the early '90s. Making improvements here and there, she increased the power of the boards, adding the ability to handle multiple sound channels, duplicate real instruments and interface with normal stereo equipment. She showed some of her designs to sound card manufacturers, and the general quality of computer music slowly went up.

Despite Terpsichore's work, sound stayed the red-headed stepchild of the computer business. Who cares what it sounds like as long as it *looks* good? (The eternal battle of graphics vs. sound, y'know.) When 128-bit video cards were introduced, Terpsichore used their architecture as the basis for a new sound card. This card's power gave her new Sense Factory more capability than its earlier generations, but the interaction of the architecture intended for visual images and the algorithms written to produce sound created some wild side effects. The first time she tested her new creation, the room filled with flowing 3D images sculpted from the sounds her computer generated. Formed of both light and sound, these images literally *felt* like music when Terpsichore walked across the room. Overjoyed, she named her new songs *sonographic images*, or SIs.

SIs aren't really good for much other than entertainment — Sense Factory units aren't portable enough to make good weapons — but they're really cool. There's an awesome beauty in sound literally made flesh. Marianna of Balador has a few Sense Factories installed in various places around her Realm, and she claims that the entrancing song-dances can inspire Seekings in mages who seem inclined to go searching for themselves. When a Sense Factory's SIs combine with **fractal symphonies**, the results are truly fucking amazing. Terpsichore's doing her best to make the 3-Dim Sonographic Sense Factory widely available on the mortal market, but the high cost of the set-up system makes it a rich man's toy for now. Chanter and Terpsichore have supposedly gotten together to see what else they can do for computer music; an impromptu gig at Balador filled Altua's Arena to capacity. (I missed it, myself, but heard great things about it.)

[A normal "Arete" roll activates the Device; if it isn't made, the soundboard balks and nothing happens. If it succeeds, a Forces 3 Effect amplifies the sound waves, splits them into equal sets and shifts one set of sound waves into light waves — a complex operation, but not an overpowering one. Even so, a clever player could put an interesting spin on such a Device, disorienting or distracting her opponent with a sudden light show.

[When the bullets aren't flying, a sonographic system can add a whole new dimension (literally!) to parties, Seekings, seductions and meditations. For the most part, this Device's effects should be left to Storytelling and roleplaying — it's more a source of atmosphere than of destruction. An appropriate "light symphony" could reduce — or raise! — a player's Social roll difficulties by changing the atmosphere to suit (or undermine) her purposes. A really chaotic light show might add penalties to a character's Perception attempts, too; imagine how distracting Rage Against the Machine could be if each tone became a light-wave....

[The 3-Dim Sonographic Sense Factory is not an independent, hand-held unit. It can only generate sonographic images if its computer is connected to a state-of-the-art stereo system. Even without this output, the Factory uses a highly advanced sound card and MIDI sequencer. Creating sonographic images is usually vulgar magick, since nothing in the mundane world is even remotely capable of this sort of thing. An elaborate light system — strobe lights, lasers, mirror globes and smoke machines — can "explain" the dancing patterns; "light symphonies" that come from nowhere, however, are pretty vulgar.]

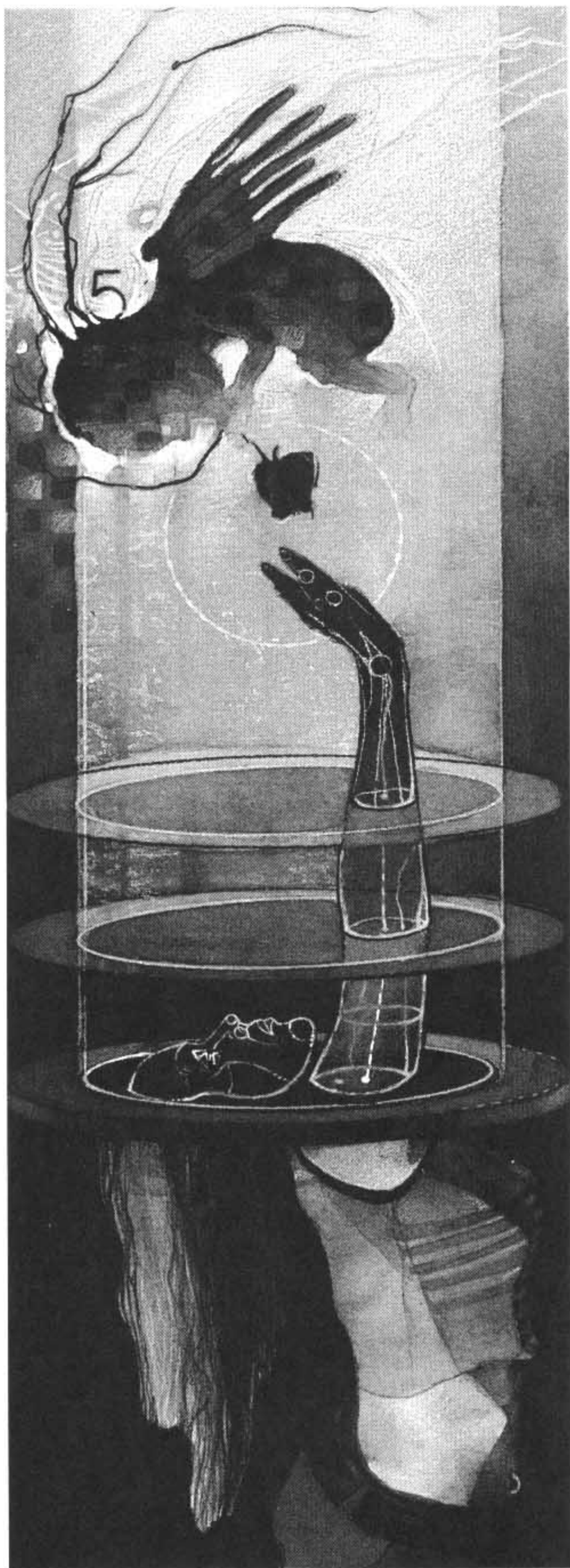
... TDR "Living" Computer and Video Games

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost none (sold on the open market; see below)

Admit it: You love computer and video games. We all do. Fight games, dungeon-crawls, shoot-outs and strategic world-builder simulations are the new opiate of the masses. Most games do nothing more than turn kids into mindless zombies wired for constant stim, but a select few provoke careful thought and encourage players to develop their mental acuity, puzzle-solving skills and critical thinking.

TDR Games (TDR stands for "Too Damn Real") is a small computer and video game company, one of a handful of business ventures funded by everybody's favorite hackermagi. An Adept named Josephine runs this company of a half-dozen "employees" and has become the driving force behind the games that the company sells. Despite the quality of their products TDR isn't a household name. Granted, this has a lot to do with the small size of the company and its limited distribution network. It has more to do, however, with the Technocracy and their own covert agenda in the video game market.

It's no secret that the Black Hats hype computer and video games that focus kids' natural aggressions and frustrations into mindless orgies of video slaughter. Iteration X and the NWO use fight games as a kind of preschool for virtual Rambos, developing the kids' reflexes and bloodlust through a barrage of "fight or die" scenarios. Josephine's games do just the opposite. TDR games make players think on their feet, change the way they solve problems; the games, in turn, learn how the players think, and force them to come up with more creative and inventive solutions. Powered by low-level magickal Effects, these games are incredibly responsive and seem almost intelligent. The video games — which include *Eagle Talon II*, *Vampire Stalkers* and *Cyborg Rage* — operate in one- or two-player mode. The com-



puter games — *Cubicle Carnage*, *Master's Challenge* and *Ratman's Delight* — include options for solo play, network play and online play. (The latter is by far the most enjoyable because, in online mode, you can interact with dozens of other players across the world — including a few Virtual Adepts. *Wah-hoo!*) An end-user who plays the video game, or who buys a VR helmet to go with one of the computer games, experiences a level of interaction that seems impossible. Some users say they literally feel, smell and taste the game environment — not always the most pleasant experience (especially in the case of *Ratman's Delight*), but one that most gamers find impossible to resist.

TDR games aren't just wake-up calls for vid-addicts — they're recruiting tools, too. You see, we Virtual Adepts keep tabs on the online users; a really promising candidate might receive a special set of challenges. TDR monitors the player's physical and mental responses to the game environment. If it seems like she's skirting along the Awakening, TDR tabs her and tracks her for future reference. Each of the video games contains a Cosmic Communications Package that transmits similar information to TDR's computers. If the user reaches certain "cookie levels," the tracking systems trip and broadcast the game's location to nearby TDR monitors; they, in turn, send the game a few new kicks and see how the player responds. Those who do well are noted for later recruiting drives.

The Technocracy isn't happy about TDR's inroads into the game industry. They trash the games in magazine reviews, buy up all the copies of a given game, ban certain "ultraviolet" machines or sic their pet politicians on the gaming industry as a whole. I know of at least one Technocracy spokesman who's appeared on tabloid teevee shows claiming that TDR's games cause mental breakdowns and hysteria. As usual, the bulletheads have had mixed results: Some gamers get scared away, but others (who usually exhibit the perfect Virtual Adept mindset in the first place) are drawn to the forbidden games. Go figure!

[Designed for Sleepers, these powerful Devices handle all of their functions themselves. TDR cartridges and discs don't actually give their users any magickal powers; rather, they send streams of vivid impressions through the TV screen and directly into a player's mind. If that player happens to be markedly skilled or insightful, the cartridge sends a special signal to a satellite relay — a signal that alerts the folks at TDR to a promising recruit.

[An "Arete" roll stimulates the special impressions. Sometimes they work, sometimes they don't. These sensations exist completely in the user's mind. Given the suggestive powers of normal television sets (proven in lab tests to induce low-level trance states), TDR games are completely coincidental.]

.... Digital Dollz

Arete 4, Quintessence 20, Background Cost 8

Sometimes real people are more trouble than they're worth. For you, the shy boy (or girl) with discerning tastes, we offer the Digital Doll, a virtual companion that you build to order.

Digital Dollz started as a spare-time project when an Adept named Roland combined AI programming ("artificial intelligence," for all you trogs) with polygonal graphics and CGI

(computer graphic imaging) movement models. As you can imagine, Roland's a perv — his first experiments centered around chesty chicks with no brains and cybertrash tastes. He showed off the prototype to a few friends and when one of them (who shall remain nameless for his own dignity) spent lots of time with Roland's new toy, our little Doctor Frankenstein realized that he might have a gold mine on his hands (no pun intended). More advanced generations followed; the most recent of them might just as well be people — *dumb* people, but people nonetheless — if they existed outside Webspace.

Digital Dollz come in all shapes, sizes and personalities, male, female and otherwise. Across the board, they're pretty stupid, but most of the folks I know who set them up aren't interested in deep chat. Roland's software lets you program a companion of either sex and any race. The specifics are up to you. The program allows for custom tailoring, or for random-generation for the truly brave and jaded. Other configuration features include intelligence level, topics of interest and sexual aggression. Once configured, the software creates a highly advanced AI and icon — a virtual person. From that point on, you can interact with your digital companion on your computer screen, through VR gear or, with the right version of the software, in the Web.

This program really shines when you meet your dream date in the Web. Face to face, these icons are as full-sized and perfectly rendered as any real person. As long as the program's engaged, your Doll acts according to her (or his) personality profile. In Webspace, a Doll exhibits full tactile and sensory feedback, too. Aside from an unusually vacuous personality, she's as real as any traveler's icon.

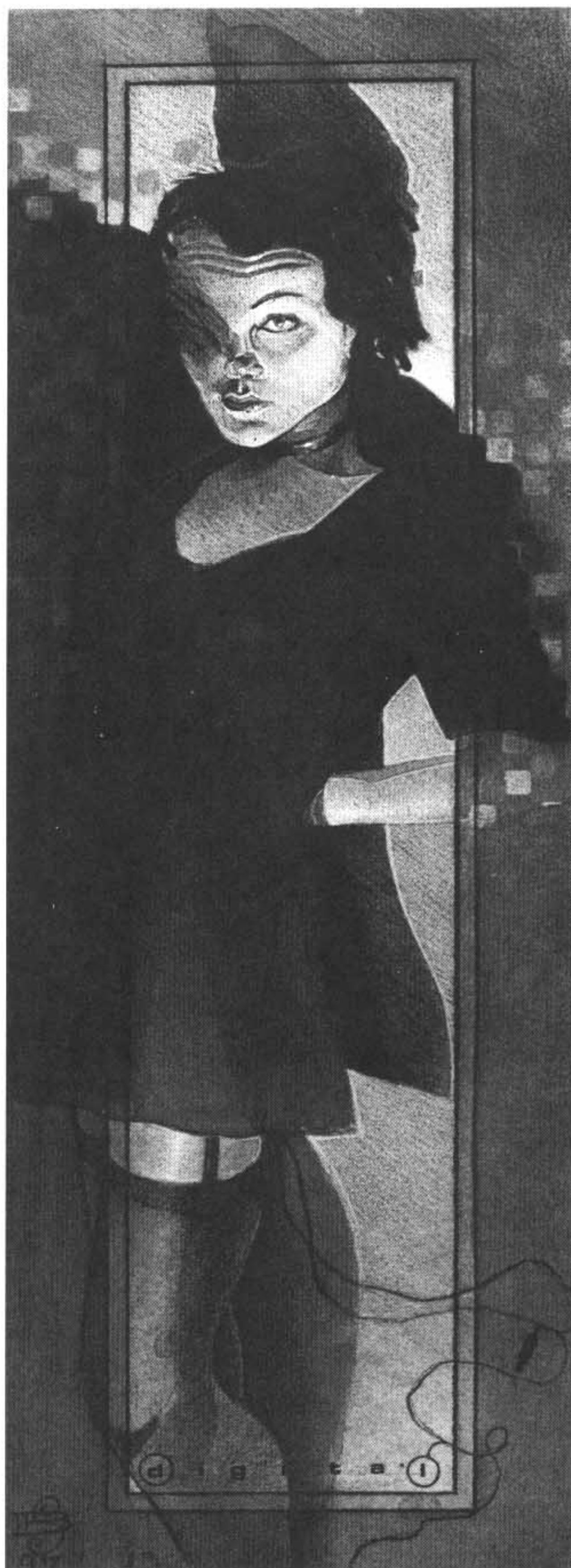
But Danger, Will Robinson, Danger. Those of you with fantasies of virtual Rambos or Xena-clone bodyguards — be forewarned that Digital Dollz are just that: dolls. They're constructs, and flimsy ones at that, made for pleasure, not for firepower. The program isn't designed for combat situations, and it crashes if you so much as slap your plaything. In slow-tactile contacts, a Doll has got a lover's touch; high-stress system shock shuts the program down and weapon inserts are for decoration only. In short, don't put a Digital Doll at your back if you're expecting anything heavier than a good back massage.

Dollz have become pretty popular with guys and girls alike. The best programs — the ones you get from Roland and me, of course — allow you to connect your playmate to an online database for stimulating conversations. Lesser shareware boots a Doll's "mind" into easy-access websites or pre-programmed response sets (which make for pretty boring pillowtalk). All configurations must be set before you enter Webspace. Once you and your Doll are face-to-face, the only interactions she'll accept are, let's say, mutual.

[Three important things to remember:

- A Doll exists only in the Web; it has no substance whatsoever in material reality and cannot be transferred from cyberspace to realspace. (See **Mage**, pages 242-244, for details about the Digital Web and Net icons.)

- A Doll's "personality" is a construct drawn from databases, hypertext links and a limited AI simulation program. It acts in extraordinarily limited ways and reacts along a limited set



of parameters. Although there are rumors of Dollz "growing" their own personalities, this is not the rule. The truth behind the tales is left to the Storyteller's discretion. (She, however, can have as much fun with the "character" as she wants.)

- Dollz have no combat abilities, magickal talents or damage resistance. They're illusions — very realistic ones with tactile components, but illusions nonetheless. Any form of trauma — including a whiteout Paradox backlash — makes the Doll disappear. Until it is activated again (see below), the icon ceases to exist.

[Aside from these considerations, a Digital Doll appears as real as any other Net icon. In story terms, it can act like a character, albeit a stupid one with limited interests. The player and Storyteller should create the Dollz' image and personality template before the new "character" enters play. Either person can play the Doll once it's up and running. Web veterans can recognize a Doll icon for what it is with a successful Perception + Technology roll, difficulty 8; most other folks accept the Doll as a real person until something proves otherwise.

[The "Arete" roll activates the program; the Doll appears in a crackling haze, then resolves into the desired image. Once set up, the icon lasts until the user either exits the Web, shuts the Doll program down or falls victim to a Paradox backlash. The Doll itself is coincidental, but a botched "Arete" roll diffuses the program and burns a point of Quintessence. The icon can be set up once per point of Quintessence; unless you're really into keeping records, however, we recommend that you simply treat the Doll as a lasting character in Web scenarios — one who needs to be "created" every time the player characters re-enter the Web, but a character just the same.]

.... The Ragnaroc Home Security System

Arete 4, Quintessence 20, Background Cost 8

Don't you just *hate* it when company arrives unexpectedly? And isn't it even worse when they wear black suits? It's bad enough when you're at home. Things *really* suck if you've gone out for a nice night of companionship and return home to find that robbers, enemies or Men in Black have turned your crib into a clearinghouse, a romper-room or a trap.

Knowing the importance of pest control, a dude named Loki whipped up this elaborate home security system and now offers it to all his "friends." A collection of well-aimed microguns, stun-cannons, sensors and power chips slaved to a Trinary PKII V minideck and a Tass battery, the Ragnaroc System keeps an eye on your pad while you're away. Meanwhile, a hand-portable display unit links you to the sensor array so you can check on things back home. A custom set-up option allows you to program in body heat, fingerprints, pattern-recognition coordinates or all of the above; this way, your cat won't trip the system by mistake. The scanners will ignore patterns they're been set to recognize, but go off if a new pattern enters without authorization.

This great little system's got three settings: "Observation," which scans the area with multi-level sensory gear and triggers a silent alarm to warn you if someone breaks in; "Penetration," which sends a non-lethal pulse-grid rippling through the area,

knocking out anyone who might be standing in the wrong place; and "Extermination," which essentially begins World War III, home-style. Hidden laser guns literally pop out of the woodwork (and tile work, and furniture, and wherever else you happen to install 'em), take aim and blow the living hell out of uninvited guests. Tracking systems (integrated into the main sensors) lock onto anyone standing, sitting, kneeling or praying and send him off to the Great Beyond. The guns won't stop shooting until the power system *runs* down, the house *burns* down, or every living thing in the location *falls* down — dead.

The big problem with the Ragnaroc System is its lethality; "Penetration" just stuns the trespassers, though; they'll wake up soon enough none the worse for wear. If it's set to kill, the system'll wreck the house. Now, if you're one of those folks who doesn't mind trashing his crashspace to make a point, that's not really a problem, but if you're one of the lucky handful of Adepts who's got an S.O. (or even a mom who shows up for those "surprise" visits), things could get messy fast. And then there are the cops, who *will* investigate an apartment that exhibits tendencies toward spontaneous combustion. As far as I'm concerned, the Ragnaroc's a great idea for home monitoring and a fantastic last-ditch trap — unless you're expecting nasty company, however, I'd keep the thing set on "Observation," not "Extermination."

Oh, yeah, and don't forget to turn it off when you get home. Especially if you've just made a new friend....

[This network has four functions; the first three are coincidental, the last is not:

- **Monitor:** Level One perception Effects from the Correspondence, Forces, Life, Prime and Time Spheres scan the area, ignoring programmed patterns and responding to alien ones. The scanners have an effective Perception + Technology Dice Pool of 8, and spot most intruders at difficulty 6.

- **Broadcast:** A linked Correspondence Effect sends signals to a hand-held monitor carried by the system's owner, while a linked Forces Effect maintains a silent alarm. This way, the Virtual Adept can check back home periodically.

- **Stun Grid:** When the alarm goes off, a light Forces Effect sends out a stun grid. Anything standing over three-feet-tall receives a non-lethal charge of six normal Health Levels per turn until it either falls down, leaves or ducks for cover beneath the grid. This damage can be soaked, and leaves no permanent harm. The grid lasts five turns and uses one Quintessence per turn.

- **All-Out War:** Things get ugly when the hidden guns pop out and start blasting. The Device has an effective Dice Pool of 8. Although the system targets moving objects over stationary ones, anything in the room is fair game. Each turn, the blasters let loose a barrage. Every living thing in the area suffers one attack roll; if it hits, the target takes six lethal Health Levels of normal damage; if it misses, the target got lucky this turn; if it botches, the weapons system burns out and flatlines. War mode consumes two points of Quintessence per turn and destroys the area. Most systems include a self-destruct feature, which detonates for 10 Health Levels of fire damage when the Quintessence runs out or the system crashes.

[A Virtual Adept with the hand-monitor and the code sequence can shut down any function in the Ragnaroc array

before it becomes terminal. Assume that the Monitor and Broadcast features work without an "Arete" roll; Storytellers may wish to roll the Device's "Arete" to trigger the damaging Effects, however. Paradox backlashes short out the system; if the Ragnaroc has a self-destruct setting, this could be a problem....]

.... Trusty Wrist-Unit Rote Processor (TWURP)

Arete 5, Quintessence 25, Background Cost 9

We've all seen those sleek little wristwatch calculators that were so trendy a while ago. Although they may have passed out of fashion for Sleepers, many Adepts still wear 'em and use 'em — often more than one at a time. In the hands of someone who knows what she's doing, those wristwatches can do a lot more than perform simple math and store a few dozen phone numbers. A lot more.

Take the Trusty Wrist-Unit Rote Processor, for example. With just four small buttons and a display with three lines of 10 characters, this unit can manage a mage's schedule, record up to 2,048 names, addresses and phone numbers, and send and receive simple text messages (sending requires connecting it to a cellular phone). The TWURP's most important feature, however, is storing and casting rotes.

The TWURP works much like a Magickal Macro Keyboard (see *Digital Web*), in that it stores rotes and later releases them at the touch of a button. A special cable connects to a computer's serial port and allows you to take a virtual copy of your TWURP with you into the Digital Web. To use it, you download your rote into the TWURP and set a button to release it. All results and possible Paradox are resolved when the rote is released, rather than when it is cast. A TWURP can store up to four rotes at once, but the unit's limited abilities make stored spells a bit more difficult to use than "fresh" ones. The TWURP's got definite ceiling problems, too; really sophisticated programs (rotes, for the clueless) are ~~too~~ advanced for the current model's performance capacity. In short, you can't use really powerful technomagick with one of these things. Still, it's a handy toy to have around.

Mercanto, the Hacker of Venice, is credited with the creation of the first TWURP. Mercanto always complained that his Magickal Macro Keyboard was too big and unwieldy, drawing unwanted attention and questions. Despite the unit's limitations, he's proud of his creation. The TWURP makes it easy to carry ready-to-go rotes into any situation. It's a hell of a lot faster to push a button and send a spell flying than it is to work out the program under fire. Granted, the unit's performance limits the kinds of rotes you can store, but still, there are a lot of nasty surprises that a clever Adept can pack into his wristwatch.

[A TWURP stores up to four rotes; each spell can be used only once, and must come from the first through fourth levels — fifth and sixth rank Effects *cannot* be stored. The programmed rotes must be input by a Virtual Adept, or by a mage familiar with their magickal style; other metaphysical approaches are incompatible with the Device's configuration. In other words, Dante

could set a few of his favorite tricks into a player character's TWURP, but Heasha Morninglade could not.

[The Device "casts" the stored spells with its own "Arete," not with the wearer's or programmer's Arete rating. Each casting discharges a point of Quintessence, but the Device cannot spend any additional Quintessence to reduce a magick roll difficulty. The stored rotes might be cast in coincidental or vulgar ways — it's the wearer's call. Any Paradox that comes up adds to the user's total pool. Paradox backlashes go against the Device first, although the wearer might be caught in the fallout. Although a mage with a TWURP can use Effects that would normally be outside his range, he cannot cast magick as though he had a higher Sphere or Arete rating.

[The TWURP's minor features can be taken care of with roleplaying and Storytelling.]

..... Compact Hypergeometric Organization and Purification Processor (The Chopper)

Arete 5, Quintessence 25, Background Cost 10

There's nothing like a good virgin — Virgin Web, that is. For the cephalopods among us, Virgin Web's what we call an area of netspace that hasn't been claimed with a format. Adepts, It Xers, Void Engineers, random hackmagi and a couple of Hermetic Thigs have divided the Web up so badly that despite its theoretically infinite size, the Web is pretty heavily formatted. Hence, Virgin Web is harder to find than a 30-something who *hasn't* seen *Rocky Horror*.

A brilliant chick named Jackal came up with a creative solution to this problem. As a kid, she hacked her school computer to change her grades and her parents' bank computer to pay their mortgage. As a teen, she broke software encryption and pirated games for her friends. A few years later, she developed techniques for decompiling programs, reducing them from finished product to source code. From there, she could modify them in any way she wanted. Shortly after that, she met us.

Jackal was a smart kid. When she heard about our search for Virgin Web, she decided it would be easier to *make* more of it than to *find* more of it. There's an old joke about earning your virginity back. Jackal took the joke to a technological conclusion. Envisioning the Web as a large construct of formatted storage space and compiled programs, she applied her decompiling and re-formatting techniques to the Web, to see if she could undo a sector's imprint. Theoretically, this would restore a portion of the Web to its virgin state and allow her to re-format the area to her own specs in the bargain. That way, Jackal could decompile areas of the Web out from under the Void Engineers and re-format it for the Adepts, hurting the steelskulls while boosting the VAs' prestige. A woman with a mission, Jackal designed and built the Compact Hypergeometric Organization and Purification Processor, affectionately nicknamed "the Chopper."

The Chopper looks like a large keyboard curved around the surface of a dark glass sphere. The keyboard houses eight Pentium processors that have been Trinary-graded and fine-tuned to operate at over 300 MHz. The dark globe serves as a display screen for someone using the keyboard, but glows with a pulsing green light when performing its true function.

Given the processing load she'd need to decompile and reformat the Digital Web, Jackal decided not to use a virtual copy of the Chopper, since going through a VR connection would slow it down. Using **Virtual Talisman Transmogrification** (check out the Virtual Adept rote database for specs), she brought the Chopper into the Web, converting its physical form into an energy construct. Then she turned on the machine and got to work. Jackal stood at the edge of a Technocracy Restricted Sector, placed the Chopper's sphere against it and started the decompiling process.

Nobody's really sure what happened next. We do know that everyone in the Sector got dumped; most had headaches for weeks and a few died from the shock. The whole Sector flickered and faded; cracks appeared in virtual walls and lightning forked down from the virtual sky. This went on for a few moments; then suddenly, every Formatted Sector in the Web rang like a gong. Jackal and the Chopper disappeared in a big whiteout. Some say Jackal got burnt by the defenses of the Technocracy Sector that she was trying to rub out. Other folks — who claim that the Web is alive and aware — think that the Web woke itself up and knocked Jackal silly.

So where'd this model come from, I hear you ask? Jackal built several different Chopper generations before she went out to play. I've got a few of them available if you want them. I warn you — they're really unpredictable. Me, I'm not trying the thing out, but you might be able to work out enough bugs to make the Chopper a viable, if risky, Webspinner.

[A combination of heavy duty Prime, Correspondence and Forces Effects leap into action when the Chopper's "Arete" roll comes up winning. The difficulty is high (7), the shock is intense, and the results are spectacularly destructive. Each success dumps — erases — 10 meters (roughly 35 feet) of formatted space. In the Web, this is effectively the same as firing a rocket into the side of a building.

[For simplicity's sake, assume that a portion of the site is demolished. Anyone in the blast area must soak one Health Level for every success the Chopper achieves. This damage isn't aggravated, but it can kill you. The shock travels back into the material world; if the blast victim was wired into Webspace at the time, his real body suffers hemorrhages and sensory overload.

[The Chopper drains three points of Quintessence from its reserve each turn. The Storyteller should roll for a Paradox backlash whenever the Device is activated, even if the "Arete" roll is successful — this monster shunts around a lot of power in an unstable environment! A botch accumulates double the usual amount of Paradox, and it will probably have a really nasty effect on anyone standing too close to the Chopper....]

Ω McPherson's Eternal Greatness Assured Pen (MEGA Pen)

Arete 5, Quintessence 30, Background Cost N/A

Though the search for smaller and more efficient Devices continues every day, it may be that the smallest possible fully-functional computer that can be built already has been. Billed as the ultimate in computer portability, only one MEGA Pen was ever made, and no one knows whether or not it still exists. This unique item mysteriously and magically wraps all of the necessary features of a Trinary computer into a package no larger than a Montblanc pen, borrowing and improving upon the advances that make other miniature Trinaries possible.

The MEGA Pen was created by James McPherson. A cousin of the legendary Euthantos Michael "Firecracker" McPherson, James refused to take a handle, preferring to be known by his real name. McPherson worked with Kaiser after that Virtualite created the **HEAT chip** (see listing). With that innovation in his clip, James worked up a HEAT processor for his own ultimate portable computer. The MEGA Pen contains a miniaturized **KROMM** unit, too (see listing); that package uses two round memory platters 6mm in diameter, giving this computer a 250 gig storage capacity. An ultra-miniaturized version of the Cosmic Communications Package is hardwired into the Pen too, allowing it to communicate with radio transmitters and receivers, modems and cellular phones. All of the Pen's applications are activated and manipulated by voice command, a fact that leads some Adepts to think that McPherson also created the **Magnatronic III VASD Computer** (see listing). Where the writing end of a pen would be, the MEGA Pen contains a laser projector that creates a computer display on any convenient flat surface.

When McPherson first revealed the Pen to his fellow Adepts, he refused to divulge the nature of the unit's power source, calling it his "little secret." Whatever the source, the Pen needs no external power. Some folks think the MEGA Pen is somehow connected to the primal energy of the Digital Web itself, but all experiments along those lines have failed.

Unfortunately, McPherson isn't around to answer questions about his masterpiece. Shortly after his first demonstration of the MEGA Pen's abilities, a Paradox fire tore through his lab and destroyed everything. Nothing the firefighters could do would quench the flames. Though the fire stayed contained in McPherson's workspace, it totally gutted it and the fire burned itself out once everything was consumed. They never found a body, though, and some Webslingers have reported meeting an icon of a man on fire, carrying a large pen that seems to do amazing things. If McPherson somehow transported himself physically into the Web to escape the fire, he doesn't seem to be telling anyone about it, and he's obviously trying to lie low.

[The Pen combines all the features described under the appropriate listings into one self-powered, hypercompact unit. Its functions are vulgar, even in the Web, which may account for McPherson's fate.]



Link 2: The Etherites

Eccentric science is that branch of learning, taught in no university curriculum, which rejects the imperative for reproducible results, favoring instead the impressionistic approach: it propounds what ought to be right. Whereas eccentric artists create their strange worlds in their art, eccentric scientists use the world itself as their canvas, reinventing the physical universe to satisfy their creative impulses.

— Dr. David Weeks and Jamie James, *Eccentrics: A Study of Sanity and Strangeness*

I wanna dedicate this area to some personal friends of mine – the Sons and Daughters of Ether. Oh, sure, some of you probably dismiss them because they seem silly; while most of us stay wrapped in some Gothic pity-party, the Etherites fly around in impossible ships, strap themselves into Victorian wonder machines, smoke silly pipes and generally make a mockery out of all that is sullen and serious.

That's why I like them so much.

There's nothing quite as subversive as the refusal of cynicism. When everyone around you is dressed in black and dripping hostility, what could be more subversive than to dress in bright, bold colors and run headlong with almost suicidally-optimistic abandon? The Ether Folks have this wonderfully skewed vision – one part future, two parts past and one part totally demented – that I have no choice but to admire. Anyone who can make a toaster grow wings, fly and play Beethoven's Fifth is a man or woman worth respecting.

Etherites work within their own weird parameters. For them, Science (as opposed to dreary old science with a little "s") is more adventure than ultimatum. Each one devises his or her own theories, defends them against all comers, and proves their validity by making weird Devices like the ones included here. By turning the Technocrats' reality straitjacket inside-out, laughing up their sleeves and making mockeries out of all oh-so-serious tragi-hipsters, the Etherites have become the most subversive Tradition of them all.

Not that they're all happy aunts and uncles – these folks are damned serious about their work, if nothing else. Laugh at it and you might find yourself trampled beneath a giant robot's feet or hypnotized by the Five-Facet Crystal of Gaboom. Best just to hop on for the ride, hang on tight and keep enough distance to run like screaming Jesus when the inevitable Paradox backlash comes.

•• Doc Eon's Action Jackets

Arete N/A, Quintessence N/A, Background Cost

All-weather, all-action gear worn by Doc Eon's Terrific Trio. These jackets, styled after World War II-era aviator jackets, are well-insulated and keep the wearer warm in the cold and relatively cool in hot weather. Large pockets allow you to carry tools, weapons or survival gear.

These jackets can take a lickin.' Made from the tough hide of the extinct *smilodon* ("saber-toothed tiger," for those of you who never liked dinosaur stuff; supposedly, they're still alive in the Hollow Earth) and treated with a special oil developed by Doc Eon, these jackets can deflect knives and small-caliber bullets. Blunt blows, like punches or clubbings, are no trouble at all. Although the jackets are really flexible, they're virtually tear-proof and can even resist small, open flames.

Doc kept a number of extra jackets on hand "just in case"; since his disappearance, the remaining jackets have been distributed between a few worthy Ether mages. Some jackets were lost on Doc's adventures, and you can occasionally find them in the strangest places.... Although such artifacts are always good finds, the really valuable Action Jackets feature Doc Eon's emblem, a stylized sandclock and lemniscate (infinity symbol) — and some still have pieces of the Doc's own equipment in the pockets.

[A character wearing one of these beauties has armor worth four additional soak levels. This armor carries no Dexterity penalty, although the jackets are fairly heavy and warm. Unprotected areas remain unprotected, of course, but "full-body" blows (falls, explosions, shrapnel, etc.) allow the wearer two Health Levels worth of coverage. These "Devices" are entirely coincidental and may be used by anyone.]

•• The Kaleidoscopic REM Suit

Arete 4, Quintessence 20, Background Cost 6

The Reconnaissance Environment Mission spy suit was invented in the 1960s by Professor Digby, an Etherite working for the British Secret Service — and now it shows its age. Using a complex, hypnotic photon array (which fools people and cameras), the REM Suit can appear to be up to three different outfits: SAS commando garb, a 1960-era Russian guard uniform, and a crazy, hip nightmare of outrageous psychedelic fashion.

In addition, each outfit secretes special pheromones for its mission: The commando suit helps hide you by unconsciously convincing people nearby that they don't see or hear you — as long as you don't get too violent or obvious, you're not there! The Russian uniform makes you far more impressive; no matter what you might do or say, you become a figure to be obeyed. The hip suit is really suave, baby. It lets chicks and groovy dudes know that its wearer is cool — "he's the Face," in the lingo of the British '60s Mod.

While this last option seems pretty lame these days (cynicism is cool, don't cha know?), it still works. Show up at the Way Down in the psychedelic monstrosity and they'll laugh you out the door — until the pheromones kick in. Sure, everybody'll still see a ridiculous suit, but suddenly you're untouchably cool. Hey, that retro thing's pretty brave. If you've got balls enough to wear it in public, you're cool enough to hang out with. (Rave or retro clubs are *real* playgrounds if you've got this suit on; everyone's

trying to relive the spirit of the times as it is. Throw in a headful of pheromones and Crackhead Joe himself could get laid!)

I have no idea how many of these suits were made. U.K. agents on assignment all over the world received REM outfits — and some of their enemies got a hold of them in return. As far as I know, however, Professor Digby is the only one who knows how to repair a torn REM Suit. From what I hear, he's in retirement in a quaint village on the coast of Wales.

Anyone know a good ether-tailor?

[These Devices were custom-made for Sleeper troops; although the pattern-shifting power is technically vulgar, it's considered "without witnesses" if a commando changes the outfit's colors out of sight. On a successful "Arete" roll (difficulty 6), an REM Suit gives its wearer certain abilities:

- **Camouflage:** An effective Arcane Background worth four dots.
- **Officer's Dress:** Four dots in the Leadership Skill.
- **Mod:** Four additional dots of Charisma.

[These additional Traits apply only against "targets" who can breathe normally and who stand within 20 feet of the commando. If the Suit is damaged, the technomagickal Effects fade.]

•• Martian Purifier

Arete 2, Quintessence 10, Background Cost 4 (but rare; see below)

Using lore given to him in dreams by a Martian (broadcasting into the future from his race's past long ago, before they met their doom), Professor Oddity built this Device that purifies all of the channels of the body, allowing for complete mental and physical health. The pen-shaped Device uses two tiny Mu stones, which, when tapped together with the press of a button, emit a calming field. In a few moments, a tingling rush purges the user's body of all unpleasant sensations.

The Martian Purifier, which cures depression, fatigue and minor aches and pains (including arthritis flare-ups), has proven to be a popular pick-up. Several copies of Professor Oddity's original Device have gone into circulation; the Etherboys can't resist something that dispels fatigue, and can you blame them? Those long nights in the lab get rough! Despite the rarity of the Purifier's prime elements — the Mu Stones — over 50 copies of the Device have been made. The good Professor is long gone, but his creation lives on in dozens of Etherboy laboratories.

Still, it's awfully hard to find one of these beauties on the open market. The Purifier's main components are two Mu Stones, fragments of iridescent crystals that activate the Device's healing powers. These crystals are supposedly the last remains of the sunken continent of Mu; supposedly, they can be found only in the so-called Hollow Earth, a mythical Realm that the Sons of Ether insist lies below our planet's crust. Wherever these stones come from, they have a number of alleged properties, from memory storage to force field manipulation. Few Ether Scientists have yet to study their full potential. Even the great Doc Eon appears to have been stumped by the shining stones.

From what I've heard, the Martian Purifier does have some odd side effects. Although the rush leaves you feeling fresh and clear-headed, it may leave you unusually susceptible to outside

suggestions. According to rumor, Professor Oddity disappeared one night while answering "the call of the Red People." While some of his contemporaries joked that he had gone off to join a Native American tribe, I have a feeling he went somewhere else entirely. The recent excavations outside Doissetep (see **Beyond the Barriers: The Book of Worlds**, pages 144-145) indicate that something once lived on Mars. Maybe it still does...and it has sent this design as a stepping stone to our earthly minds...

[This Device's effects can be described through Storytelling alone. No rules or die rolls are necessary. Each Purifier works 10 times; after that, it's pretty, but useless.]

... The Black Rat's Rats

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 6 per dozen

Of the many 1930s Ether mages inspired by the pulps, the Black Rat is among the most popular — for Sons of Ether, that is; the un-Awakened do not even remember him, and the pulp magazines featuring his crime fighting exploits are among the hardest issues to find.

The Black Rat took the good fight to the grimy streets, instilling fear in criminals ("I will become like them — vermin!"). He used a host of high-tech equipment, such as the robot rats he unleashed onto the wharves to spy on hoods. These quirky surveillance Devices still work — although they look a bit "cheesy" by today's standards.

Different models come in different sizes and species, from small, gerbil-size rats to large, hairy wharf rats. All are extremely mobile and quick, with tiny transistor brains capable of adapting

to stimuli on an animal level. These low level drones are programmed to react like normal rats (running to avoid humans, skulking in shadows, etc.), but they can be operated remotely through a large, desk-sized controller (complete with a cathode-ray screen to see through the rat's eyes). Up to 10 rats can be operated through one controller, from distances of up to 10 miles away. The Black Rat's main lair was under a lighthouse on the rocks near the seedy harbor docks of his city, but he did have other hideouts. Nostalgic Etherites have uncovered those "rat holes" and the inventions therein; some have been preserved in The Great Hall Chantry, but others have circulated among the Tradition's pulp-inspired Scientists.

Anyone who gets a good look at one of these silly things will quickly realize that it's fake. Therefore, the rat must stay in the shadows to be effective. Another problem confronting the modern-day user is technology; few people today understand the odd mechanics that the Black Rat used — delicate, interlocking gears and transistor tubes mesh in a seemingly random mess wrapped inside a steel rat body. While the drones are still pretty sturdy, most are prone to malfunction in odd ways, usually when their programmed instincts go awry — instead of running for cover from an intruder, the rat may lunge at him and bite him. On top of that, there's the matter of antiquated technology meeting modern-day innovations. Anyone who knows anything about radio-controlled technology could probably trace the signal to its source. Since the controller isn't exactly portable (unless you place it in a truck), this may attract unwanted visitors to the laboratory. So if you manage to get your hands on a few of



these little darlings, kids, keep them in the shadows and avoid spying on RC toy aficionados!

[The Black Rat's Rats essentially enable a properly equipped mage to spy on some distant location. Naturally, everything he sees and hears comes through a rat's-eye perspective, but the Devices function quite well, all things considered.

[The rats effectively have a Stealth Dice Pool and a Perception Dice Pool of six dice each. When discovered for what they are, these Devices tend to break down and shut off almost immediately. In all other ways, the Black Rat's toys conform to the statistics of normal rats (see *The Book of Mirrors*, page 112).]

...Blade-Blaster™ Brand Rocket Blades

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 6

Any loser can strap on a set of inline skates and go tooling around the neighborhood, but if you want the coolest in raw, in-your-face 'tude, you've gotta get Blade-Blasters™!

Blade-Blasters™ are supercharged with the latest in mini-thruster technology that let you go from standing still to 200 MPH in just over 20 feet! If you can see where you want to go, Blade-Blasters™ can get you there with one blast! Perform wild, over-the-top stunts as short bursts of super-high speed allow you to go up sheer surfaces or even blast along totally upside-down!

(Note: Always wear proper safety gear, including helmet, elbow pads, and wrist guards. Blade-Blaster™ assumes no responsibility for broken bones or burns due to improper use. Do not attempt to go up sheer surfaces or skate upside-down for more than a few seconds at a time. Gravity bites! IMPORTANT SAFETY TIP: Always use genuine Blade-Blaster™ brand Thruster Recharge Packs. Bootleg recharge packs have been known to cause serious injury. Blade-Blaster™ accepts no responsibility for injuries caused by using bootleg recharge packs and will not help relocate refugees!)

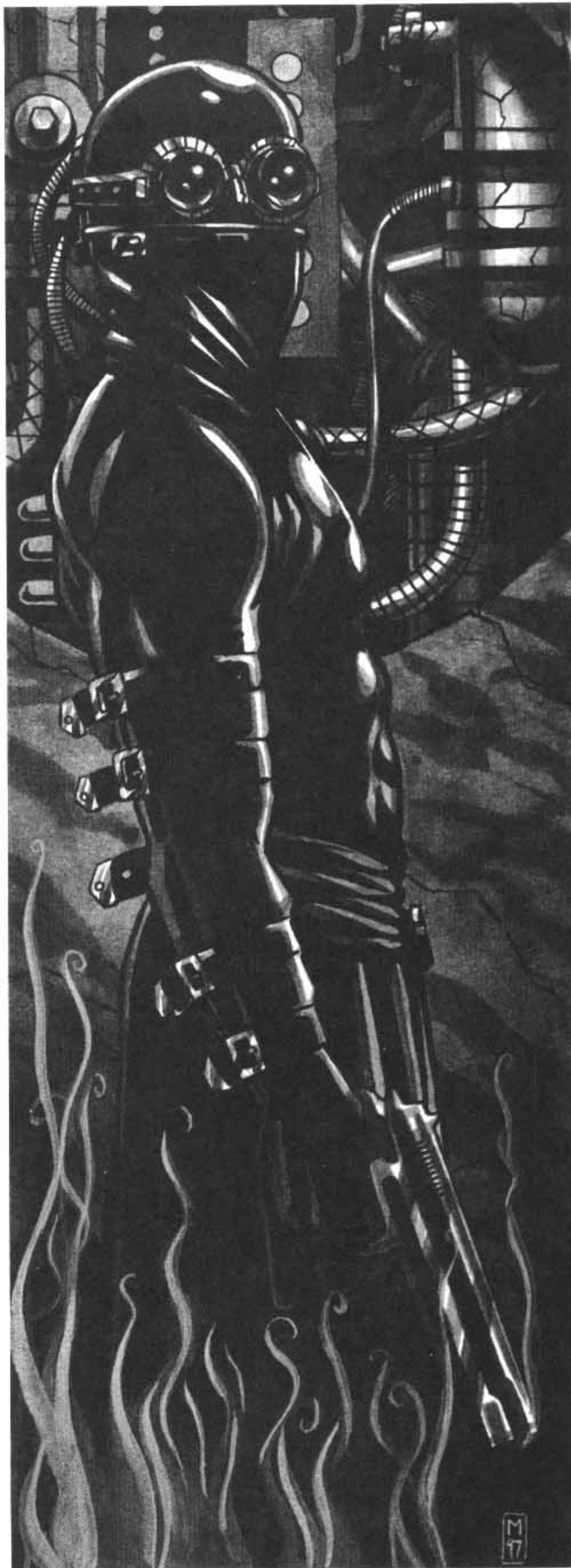
Blade-Blaster™: The name to trust for supercharged skate action!

[Anyone crazy enough to strap on these suicide-skates had better have an Athletics rating of at least 3; simply standing upright while rocketing around at 150 MPH requires a Dexterity + Athletics roll, difficulty 6. Stunts get harder from there, and the consequences of a botched roll are pretty scary. Is there a Verbena in the house? The thrust lasts for one turn — or one minute — per point of Quintessence. Afterward, the Recharge Pack will have to be replaced. Yes, these skates are vulgar. Don't wear 'em to the park!]

...Doc Eon's Gas Bullets

Arete 3, Quintessence N/A, Background Cost 6 per dozen

These sane and humanitarian gas bullets were designed by the Man of Many Tomorrows to render foes unconscious, while leaving no traces in the body. Fired from a normal handgun, the pellets splatter on contact, releasing a gas cloud that affects victims through inhalation or skin contact (causing many of Doc's recurring rivals to adopt full-body suits with breathing masks, such as the comical, yet hideous, Mandarin Squid).



Originally powerful enough to knock anyone out, these Pills have deteriorated with age (they were manufactured in the '30s). Newly manufactured versions don't work any better — the Technocracy got a hold of the formula and disproved it. Although the guns that fire the Doc's special bullets don't need any modification, the shells themselves must match the pistol's caliber. Since Doc Eon equipped his Terrific Trio with .45 caliber weapons, nearly all of the Doc's original Gas Bullets are made to fit those guns.

Not all Gas Bullets, however, come from the Good Doctor's hands. Certain Ether mages, harkening back to a time when their society promoted a rational, humane philosophy toward violence, now strive to create a new gas that would improve Doc's old (and discredited) formula, allowing adventuresome Scientists to deal with enemies without dealing with death. As Professor Ingestor has stated: "Today's world is one of fetishistic bloodshed, a result of the failed social policies of the authoritarian Technocracy. We aim to return the word 'good' to the vocabulary of the Consensus." Many young Etherites regard this as naive but respect their elders' research — more so if that respect means they can get their hands on a "trial batch" of reconstructed Gas Bullets.

[Gas Bullets inflict non-fatal Forces damage on their targets on a successful "Arete" roll (difficulty 6). The gas clouds are too small to bother bystanders — a Bullet must strike its victim in order to have the desired effect. Naturally, the target can try to dodge the missiles or hide behind cover. Thick armor and breathing gear render these Gas Bullets powerless. The shell casings sting when they hit, but do no damage. These Devices are coincidental.]

... Dr. Wingbat's Etherjet Rocketpack

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 6

*with his jetpack on full blast
he flies into a technicolor sky
facemask filters poison air
ornithopters flash*

— The Changelings, "Johnny Ether's Great Escape"

Not the first or last jetpack design, this mainstay is still considered one of the best. During the airwar of '41 (known by Sleepers as the Battle of Britain), Dr. Horatio Wingbat perfected his version of the ubiquitous jetpack. Powered by a cold fusion reactor (several decades before the concept became common fodder for mundane "scientists"), the Etherjet Rocketpack propelled the intrepid professor into the clouds, where he battled the Hun with efficiency, valor and his infamous **Havoc Gun** (see listing).

Sadly, Dr. Wingbat was shot down over Normandy. Fortunately for posterity, he left several samples, experimental specs and copious notes. His allies and rivals plundered the remaining stock and have copied and modified his invention ever since. Ether Scientists who've studied surviving Rocketpacks claim the rocket's advanced design leads to occasional Paradox effects. Some samples explode during use, while others malfunction at

critical times — often when the rider is several hundred feet in the air. Despite its flaws, Dr. Wingbat's innovative design remains the standard flight Device among the Sons of Ether — until, of course, someone else invents a better jetpack.

[A "simple" Forces/Prime Effect carries the rider into the air and guides him through his aerial ballet. The "Arete" activates the magick, which lasts for five minutes per point of Quintessence. From that point on, the rider controls his flight through Dexterity + Technology rolls (see "Stunt Driving" in **Mage**, pages 252-253; take-offs and landings are difficulty 7).

Safe Speed: 50 MPH Max Speed: 100 MPH

Maneuverability: 8

[Channeled as it is through a fairly acceptable focus, the Effect is usually coincidental (even if it does exceed the limits of mundane science and technology). Gods help the rider if he incurs Paradox during his trip, however; the Rocketpack tends to get temperamental if its wearer has a Paradox Pool of 5 or more.]

... The Havoc Gun

Arete 7, Quintessence 30, Background Cost 10

War brings out the worst in everyone; it also encourages tech-vention like nobody's business. The two World Wars shoved Sleepertech and hypertech alike so far ahead of the old paradigm that for a while it seemed as though anything was possible, as long as it killed people.

One of the greatest innovators of the Second World War took the name Dr. Horatio Wingbat. Unlike many of his sedate colleagues, Wingbat loved a good fight. He didn't just invent neat stuff and send others out under the cover of darkness to test it out, either — he dove headlong into the War, trusting in his inventions to pull him through. His luck crashed (along with the good doctor himself) in 1944, but until then, he made amazing advances in deadly Ethernatech. Considered a war criminal by both Jetboy and Doc Eon (Wingbat supposedly tested his contraptions on captured Nazis), Wingbat kicked some major ass nonetheless. To this day, the Etherites haven't decided if he was a hero or a villain. That hasn't kept them from reconstructing his Devices and adding their own innovations, but it makes that space in the Son of Ether Hall of Fame pretty hard to fill.

Wingbat's favorite weapon, the Havoc Gun, displays his warlike ingenuity. Blending a machine gun, a laser rifle and a grenade launcher, the Havoc Gun fires a rapid spray of exploding energy bolts. The power comes from a hip-mounted Quintessence battery. Don't ask me how this thing works — the Etherites understand the theory, but it makes my brain hurt — just glory in the sheer destructive potential of your very own hyperplasma-waste-shit gun. It rips, it shreds, it blows stuff up. No psychotic Technomancer should be without it!

(Oh, one little note: As Dr. Wingbat himself discovered, this toy is a Paradox magnet. It breaks down, overheats and has been known to blow itself — and its owner — to smithereens. Just thought you'd like to know.)

A two-handed cannon fed by a belt-strapped power pack, the Havoc Gun requires steady hands and steady nerves. It makes a hell of a spectacle and chews everything in the area to pieces. As you can imagine, this isn't a weapon for subtle missions, but

when the Fallen are at the door, it's only natural to meet them with all the grace and firepower you can find.

Happy hunting!

[This toy inflicts ungodly amounts of damage — it employs Forces, remember, and thus adds one success to its total when determining damage. Targets can soak the attack (it's normal, not aggravated), or dodge it (see *Mage*, pages 166-167) — the incoming firestorm is hard to miss. Each shot uses one point of Quintessence, but many Etherite warriors carry a spare clip of 30 Tass just in case the fight lasts awhile.

[Although it appears to be an advanced-technology weapon, the Havoc Gun still exceeds Sleepertech levels by several generations. Thus, it's often vulgar, although certain settings — like paramilitary bases or SF conventions — might "accept" it as coincidental. Paradox backlash usually take the form of physical damage — that is, huge explosions and meltdowns.]

... Innovation, Inc.'s Personal Lift Generator 5000 (a.k.a. "The 250-hp Beanie")

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 6

Innovation, Inc., the nation's leading manufacturer of groundbreaking devices for home or office, is proud to present the Personal Lift Generator 5000. Dubbed "The 250-hp Beanie" by one of its developers, the PLG5000 looks remarkably like a 4' helicopter rotor blade mounted on a motorcycle helmet. Set on a reinforced framework (to protect the user's neck and spine) that also houses the super-efficient natural-gas-powered engine, the PLG5000 makes the dream of personal flight a safe and effective reality! With rudder controls built directly into the hand-held control unit, maneuvering the PLG5000 is easier than driving a car!

The PLG5000 has a maximum ceiling of 5,000 feet, a range of approximately 50 miles, and an average cruising speed of 35 MPH, making it perfect for beating rush hour traffic! If you're crazy (and Paradox-addicted) enough to want your own PLG5000, call Innovation, Inc. at 1-800-SON-ETHR today! Operators standing by.

[It should go without saying that this Device is vulgar as all get-out. To control it, the Etherite should have the Pilot Skill (see *The Book of Shadows*, page 24). Starting the PLG5000 requires a point of Quintessence, but it runs on standard fuel thereafter.

**Safe Speed: 40 MPH Max Speed: 80 MPH
Maneuverability: 8]**

... Plutonium Pill

Arete 3, Quintessence N/A, Background Cost 6 for six

This pharmaceutical marvel unleashes the power of the atom to super-accelerate the mind. Invented under a government grant in 1950s America by Dr. Ward Beaumont, the Plutonium Pill provides the ingestor with vast intellect far beyond normal human ken. The most complex logic puzzles or mathematical conundrums become child's play. Statistical calculations come so easily that events and behavior can be predicted

by figuring the most probable outcome (not *what* will happen, but what is *most likely* to happen). Amazing scientific innovations come many steps closer to fruition under the influence of the Pill, as new possibilities can be entertained much quicker.

However, the Pill is highly addictive. One use will cause cravings immediately after its 24-hour effect has ended. Successive uses last for a shorter period of time (20 hours for the second Pill, 12 for the third, eight for the fourth, and only two hours for any future Pills). Repeated use has further side effects: After the third dose, the brain and skull begin to swell to a lightbulb shape, eventually (after 10 doses) turning the user into an image of the super-braniac human of the future.

The effects don't end there: The user's moral capacity erodes with his increased intellect, allowing him to logically accept just about any proposition. ("Who cares how many die, doctor? If only a few gain such intellect, we will breed a new race, better than the last!") Finally, thanks to the Technocracy's "laws" of nature, this atomic Pill causes brain cancer in most users.

Despite the Pill's nastier effects, it's still quite popular among the Etherites. Manufactured in dozens of laboratories across the Tellurian, this little "smart drug" tends to come out of a hidden drawer right around the time when some spectacular breakthrough is essential. The work stress, coupled with the Plutonium Pill's effects, might explain some Etherites' weirder excesses, but then again, I may just be reaching. Anyway, this innovation hasn't gone completely unnoticed, either inside or outside the Traditions. I've got an old B-movie poster on my wall: *The Plutonium Man* — "Beware the logic of the Atomic Mind!" The picture, as far as I can tell, features Ol' Lightbulb Head himself — Dr. Beaumont. Gee, I wonder if there's any connection...

[Taking the Pill activates its "Arete"; for every two successes scored against difficulty 6, the imbiber gains a dot in some Mental Attribute (player's choice of which one). This bonus fades after 24 hours, and a craving for more Pills begins.

[Multiple doses within 48 hours of each other have the weird effects described above. After 10 doses in a single year, the effects stop fading; the Etherite adds a permanent Paradox point to his total and adjusts his scores (Mental and Social) accordingly. After all, a guy with a lightbulb-shaped head is going to encounter some...difficulties...when he deals with other people. The other side effects — cancer and eccentricity — should be left to Storytelling and roleplaying.]

... The Pocket Poltergeist

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 6

Yes, I know it sounds obscene, but grow up and read on:

Before his untimely disappearance in 1937, the famous magician Harcourt Langthorpe patented a small black box that could fit into a coat pocket or clip onto the user's belt, with a white cord that ran up and plugged into the user's ear. Called the "Pocket Poltergeist," this amazing machine received the electrical and psychic energy from the user's mind and translated it into applied kinetic energy. In short, it let the user move things with his mind. Langthorpe created the Pocket Poltergeist for his



magic act, and he caused a sensation by floating the audience's drinks, jewelry, or other personal items up to the ceiling. He also used it to devastating effect on some muggers who accosted him after a show one night, deflecting their knife thrusts into each other instead of into him! Encouraged by his success, Langthrope made more Poltergeists.

Unfortunately, (or perhaps fortunately), the Pocket Poltergeist doesn't work for everyone. It requires a level of psychic energy that most people simply can't produce, and it leaves even the most active mind exhausted after a few uses. The larger the objects moved, naturally, the more exhausted the user tends to be. A further problem is that, while the patent paperwork is readily available to the public, the original blueprints for the device disappeared at roughly the same time as Langthrope did. (The general belief, popularized by an episode of *In Search Of...*, is that Langthrope was kidnapped by Nazi agents.) Only a dozen working models of the Pocket Poltergeist are known to exist, and they're jealously guarded by their owners.

[This Device duplicates the **Telekinetic Control** rote (see **Mage**, pages 198-199), but allows the user to move a stationary object as well. The "Arete" roll sets the machine to work; from that point, it uses its powers to siphon energy from the user to his task. The mage can manipulate objects for two turns (or minutes) for every dot he has in his Intelligence rating; after that, the Pocket Poltergeist wears him down, and he needs to rest.]

... Telepathy Specs

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 6

Manufactured by the Pinnacle Joke and Novelty Company and advertised in the backs of comic books, these cheap-looking plastic goggles claim to allow you to stare at anyone and read her mind. Unlike X-Ray Specs, however, Telepathy Specs work exactly as advertised! Unfortunately, they only work for kids, or for people with similarly open minds. Any normal adult (or kid who doesn't believe that they could work) who wears the Telepathy Specs sees only a prismatic rainbow effect.

People who can use the Telepathy Specs see a cloudy image of the target's thoughts superimposed over the target's head. The image will vary widely depending on the target. A cheerful simpleton's thoughts will be bright and cartoony; a Bauboy's thoughts will be muted, bleak and painfully *Gothik*. Most people's thoughts will look like grainy videos with a lot of the details missing, but with some details vastly overemphasized. The images you supposedly see when you try to scan a vampire or werewolf would leave Stephen King shaking. Go figure. It's not always a happy thing to see other people's thoughts, BTW; lots of kids have had their innocence splattered all over the walls when they looked at Mommy's head at the wrong time, or saw what Daddy *really* wanted to do when the front window was shattered....

[These Specs allow a character to see a visual representation of the subject's surface thoughts, as if she'd used the **Probe Thoughts** rote and could see the results (see **Mage**, page 210). The glasses, unlike the rote, can only see the strongest, most obvious thoughts. Secrets, memories and subconscious impressions remain hidden. Although the Specs are coincidental, most

images cannot use them — after all, those stupid plastic things won't *really* work, now will they?]

.... X117 Death Ray (Intended for Purely Peaceful Purposes)

Arete 8, Quintessence 40, Background Cost 12

Dr. Oscar Lightwell was commissioned by the United Nations to build a Death Ray (for purely peaceful purposes) in 1954. The X117 Disintegrator was the result. Essentially a large, very powerful laser, the X117 is the size of a large machine gun and requires a tripod mount. It fires a cutting beam that stays on as long as the trigger remains pulled and power feeds into the weapon. Great care must be used when firing it to ensure that nothing comes between you and your target. Early mishaps in the development of the X117 caused one assistant to lose a hand when Dr. Lightwell swiveled the weapon on its tripod while firing it.

Unfortunately, the X117 was never delivered to the United Nations. It was stolen by an unknown criminal organization who had anything but peaceful purposes in mind for it. The gun has turned up from time to time, usually in the back of a van or pointed out the side of a helicopter, used to rob banks (burning open the vault from the outside), or to terrorize cities. Its current location is unknown. Dr. Lightwell has retreated from the world in disgust at the abuse that his invention has been put to, although he was never able to explain satisfactorily just what peaceful purposes a Death Ray could be used for. The United Nations has a standing reward of \$25,000,000 for the return of the Ray.

[Naturally, the X117 has been duplicated, overhauled and distributed several dozen times since its inception. This weapon — too large to be carried by human hands — packs an outrageous punch. The game systems are simple: The Death Ray inflicts aggravated Forces damage at a cost of three Quintessence per turn. The machine's high "Arete" assures a pretty high level of destruction. By common reckoning, this machine seems pretty vulgar; even so, it kinda sits on the juncture between acceptable technomagick and paranoid fantasy. There are, of course, more deadly weapons in the Sleepers' arsenals these days, so perhaps this Death Ray isn't so far-fetched after all....]

.... The Electrographic Matter Recombinant Translocator (ELMART)

Arete 4, Quintessence 20, Background Cost 7

Created in secret government experiments in the early 1950s, the ELMART is an enclosed metal box, roughly the size and shape of a large refrigerator, covered in glorious art deco chromework. Step into the ELMART and activate it, and you're instantly converted into sentient electricity. From there, you can be fed into the country's power grid, allowing almost instantaneous travel to any place within the country that is connected to the grid. With more effort, you can be beamed *via* satellite to practically anywhere in the world.

In the form of sentient electricity, you can lurk just about anywhere undetected: Spy on people by listening to them through their stereo needle or telephone receiver. Watch them through their camcorder (if they happen to have one around). Sneak into their computer and, through it, onto the Web. If you're really practiced with this form, you can wreak ungodly amounts of havoc on people by causing their electric appliances to go berserk, making lightbulbs and televisions explode, and so on.

Although the ELMART was originally conceived as a teleporter, it has several drawbacks in that regard — not the least of which is that the transmogrified traveler has to enter another ELMART at the other end (or go back into the same one where he started) in order to be changed back into matter. Also, even though travel *via* power grid goes at the speed of light, the power grid is *huge*; it's *really* easy to get lost in it. (Imagine traveling the world's highways at the speed of light, without a roadmap. One wrong turn at a junction box and you're suddenly stuck in somebody's blender.) I've also heard about travelers who got trapped in rechargeable batteries — it's probably just a tall tale on the part of a morbid researcher, but when you're dealing with the Sons of Ether, you can never be too sure.

[A powerful Life/Forces Effect turns the user into living electricity with a successful "Arete" roll. Naturally, the procedure is extremely vulgar and dangerous; a Paradox backlash scatters the mage all over the room, essentially catapulting his consciousness into a distant Paradox Realm until someone manages to put his electrons back together again.

[If the procedure succeeds, the Etherite can travel all over the wired world. His consciousness guides a powerful stream of electrons wherever he wants to go. Physical and Social Traits disappear as the mage becomes a creature of pure will and energy. With a Willpower roll, he can shrug up a power surge (one Health Level of aggravated damage for every point of Willpower in his current rating), which can destroy electrical equipment and harm living things. Naturally, the traveler must be able to reach the affected target; he cannot simply arc across the room and hit whomever he wants unless some conductor exists. His target must be in contact with the proper power conduit at the time.

[Finding the proper conduit is the real trick. There are millions of miles of electrical wiring in the average city, and powerful as the mage may be, he's not strong enough to cause a major outage. While he can use any Spheres that do not require a focus, the traveler is effectively blind in his electrical state. He may "hear" through vibrations and fluctuations, but he possesses no physical senses. Hence, navigating in this alien form is exceedingly difficult. To find his way around, the mage must home-in on power concentrations. With a raw Perception roll (difficulties 8 to 10, depending on the mage's target and his experience with electrical travel), our hero needs to find his target, orient himself and close the distance. The latter is easy — electricity moves at incredible speeds. A wrong move, however, and he may overshoot his target by miles — sometimes by hundreds of them.

[In his electrical form, our intrepid mage is highly susceptible to energy fluctuations—especially those caused by blackouts, electricity elementals and Forces-skilled wizards. A sorcerer with Forces and Life perceptions may notice the traveler for what he is (Perception + Occult, difficulty 8); if she does, the fun begins. Our hero is putty in the hands of a skillful mage; if she taps into the current he rides, her powers can literally scatter him like ashes. Both opponents make resisted Arete rolls (difficulty 7); if he wins, he suffers pain but stays intact; if she wins, the Etherite is dispersed—possibly forever. Each success the attacker has over the defender subtracts one point of Willpower from the traveler's total; if he reaches 0, our hero's consciousness is annihilated and he dies. The same process goes for bouts with electrical elementals (see the **Control Electrical Systems, Lightning Bolts and Short Out Charms, Mage**, pages 238-239). In this case, the resisted roll is the mage's Willpower versus the spirit's Rage. If the traveler wins, the spirit suffers the fate it had in store for the mage.]

[Blackouts simply strand the traveler in the nearest generator or junction box until the problem is cleared. This hurts—a lot—but leaves no permanent damage. A power drain may trap the mage in some other appliance or battery until the conduit is hooked to another network or current. A Forces-trained wizard might use this option as an alternative to total destruction, channeling the Etherite into some battery for safe keeping.]

[To regain his human form, the Etherite must return to an ELMART unit and have someone begin the re-formation process. A second "Arete" roll reconfigures the mage, who'll be disoriented for at least a day by the unnerving experience of becoming raw electrons then switching back to normal. A botch at any point of the process could destroy the character for good. It takes a very brave, very foolish mage to step into an ELMART and become one with the electrical flow.]

.... Professor Parallax's Displacement Device

Arete 6, Quintessence 30, Background Cost 10

This Device makes onlookers believe that you're standing *here* when you're really over *there*. A small holographic field mapper latches onto the wearer's belt, it "draws" a picture of the person, then transmits it to a tripod placed wherever he wishes to appear (practical range: about 25 yards). The tripod emits the mapped holographic field, making the person appear to be where the tripod is (the tripod is invisible beneath the field), thus disguising the prankster's true location. The belt projector houses all the important elements. For reasons that should be obvious, the tripods are disposable.

The Displacement Device can send pictures of several people, as long as every one of them possesses a belt projector unit. A multi-image setting links all participants together in a virtual panorama. Obviously, there *are* some limitations—the unit can't project more than four human-sized objects without fizzing out. And if those objects happen to be moving or talking, the chance of overload goes skyward.

An enemy with a radio wave scanner (or some other Forces-based detection Device) can trace the signal back to its source.

As you can imagine, it's a good idea to stay hidden when you're faking someone out with the Displacement Device!

Professor Parallax used this invention with great success when his Chantry was raided by HIT Marks. The tripod was placed over a carpet; Professor Parallax's Ecstatic Chantrymate opened a spirit gate into the Umbra underneath the rug. The cyborgs were fooled and went for the fake image. Their weight collapsed the carpet and they fell out of this world.

Wonder where they ended up?

[This Device has to be "smart"; a complex illusion demands three to five successes on the "Arete" roll. A simpler projection (of one person standing, for example) is much easier and only requires a single success. The illusions are completely without any form or substance; anything that strikes them passes right through. Under most circumstances, the Device is coincidental; no one who sees the projections attacked believes that they're anything but illusions and will begin looking for the equipment.]

[A small sound-projecting component allows the user to "throw her voice," but loud or unusual sounds are beyond the gadget's capacity. The Displacement Device is limited to duplicating its user(s); a clever holographologist might be able, with an Intelligence + Technology roll, to modify the Device to project other illusions, but the difficulty would be pretty high and the results would be fairly simple (human-sized and generally static).]

..... Doc Eon's Time Watch

Arete 5, Quintessence 25, Background Cost 10 (but very rare—only three exist)

The signature Device in legendary Doc Eon's arsenal, the Time Watch, resembles a large wristwatch with telescoping antennae. The top case (with the time piece and a compass) flips open to reveal compact transistors and vacuum tubes. By extending the antennae and pressing the button on the side, you begin to warm up the tubes. Five minutes later, the watch is ready to go: Another press of the button will reverse time locally—everyone and everything within a 10-yard radius will suddenly move backwards in time.

This was one of Doc's early experiments in time manipulation physics. It can only reverse the temporal flow by 15 seconds or less—after that, it has to cool down, then warm up all over again. As the Doc himself discovered, it isn't wise to use the Time Watch too often; time itself begins to unravel, summoning fourth-dimensional entities and Paradox spirits by the score. The backlashes that this invention has unleashed had to be seen to be believed (so I'm told—I wasn't there, you understand). Joe "Lucky Skunk" Ross chronicled one spectacular snapback in "The Moons of Madness" (*Astonishing Science Stories*, June, 1947). As far as I know, this tale of temporal vengeance marks the first recorded appearance of Wrinkle, the most fearsome Paradox spirit in the modern world, who dragged the Carmine Countessa screaming off into neverland.

Doc Eon later developed a much more effective time Device, one that allowed him to shunt himself into the future. When the Doc's foes demolished that Device, the Man of Many Tomorrows disappeared. According to most Ether Scientists,

Doc Eon went back into the future (from whence, they say, he came in the first place).

[In game terms, this Device allows your troupe to replay one turn as if it never occurred — except that everyone involved still remembers the original events and can try to “rewrite” them. Most un-Awakened people who are affected simply experience a sense of *deja vu* (they don’t know how else to interpret the event). Awakened beings, however, recognize that time has taken a few steps back.

[An “Arete” roll triggers the Effect. Yes, it is highly vulgar, and it adds at least one point of Paradox onto the user’s total. Using the Device once is dangerous; using it repeatedly can be fatal. Each attempt after the first raises the activation difficulty by one (+1 on the second try, +2 on the third, etc.). Each try brings another point of Paradox, too. The backlash, if it comes, will be huge and dramatic.]

Ω Doc Eon’s Lemurian Lightning Gun

Arete 5, Quintessence unknown (see below), Background Cost N/A

This odd weapon, shaped somewhat like an old dueling pistol, is ornately carved with Lemurian glyphs — the handwriting of the ancient civilization of Lemuria, whose only remnants survive among the Goro monks of the Hollow Earth. In place of a pan, the hammer strikes a red Mu Stone, which in turn ignites the sealed polarium container inside the gun, sending forth a bolt of lightning-like energy from the barrel. When the bolt hits its target, the blast is powerful enough to rend metal. Supposedly, this energy destroyed Lemuria in much the same way that many believe nuclear weapons will destroy the modern world. Because of its dangerous forces, Doc devised a dial that allows the gun to fire a limited stream, capable of stunning most people but not killing them.

The “ignition source,” polarium, is a enigmatic metal discovered in the North Pole, near the entrance of the Hollow Earth. Its properties, like Mu Stones, have not been fully studied, but the Lemurian containers — artifacts of an older time, now owned by the monks — are sealed airtight and seem to be indestructible.

The Lightning Gun’s most remarkable features, however, are its glyphs. According to Doc Eon’s friend and biographer Joe “Lucky Skunk” Ross, the Lemurian runes made the Device immune to Paradox energies! All attempts to replicate these mysterious sigils have failed, which leads the Etherites to conclude that some ancient Lemurian Science managed to overrule the most basic tenets of reality. As of yet, no one has managed to duplicate the feat (not to say that they haven’t been trying...). The Goro monks themselves seem to have lost the secret; the glyphs were carved onto the Doc’s gun by the last Lama to fully understand their significance.

Naturally, the only two surviving Lightning Guns are pretty valuable. One supposedly rests in the Gernsback Continuum. I have no idea where the other might be. “Lucky



Skunk" would like to know where it is, though — supposedly, it once belonged to him.

[Although this Device is highly vulgar, its odd runes (which cannot be duplicated — sorry) make it immune to Paradox. The "Arete" roll unleashes a bolt of lightning that inflicts normal Forces damage. A "mercy dial" allows the user to tone the Effect down, reducing the damage by half. Nobody knows how many shots these guns are good for; the special combustion combination might make a pistol's energy supply effectively infinite, or it might be just about exhausted. Until the gun refuses to fire again, its limits remain a mystery.]

Ω The Physiognomizer

Arete 5, Quintessence 25, Background Cost N/A

Physiognomy is the belief that someone's personality can be judged by the shape of their face and body, or by reading the bumps on his head. The Physiognomizer, created by the mysterious Crimson Claw, takes this principle one step further and allows you to radically change someone's personality by performing super-precise cosmetic surgery on him....

To use the Physiognomizer, you must begin with a non-resisting subject. The Crimson Claw's personal predilection was for attractive women who'd been captured and drugged by his sinister agents, but the Physiognomizer works equally well on either sex. You place the subject on a standard wheeled medical table, then carefully roll him into place so that his head is inside the Physiognomizer. (The Physiognomizer is an enormous, blinking-light-covered box 10-feet tall, seven-feet wide, and three-feet deep, with an open area just big enough in which to fit a person's head.) You then set the dial of the Physiognomizer with the personality traits you wish to instill into the subject. Choices range from abject obedience (always a popular one) to unbridled creativity, to white-hot rage. Custom traits also can be programmed into the Physiognomizer, through a complex binary code and a large bank of switches on the unit's side.

Once set and activated, the Physiognomizer uses robotic appendages (programmed with advanced surgical techniques) to raise or smooth bumps on the subject's head. This process involves a certain amount of pain if the subject is still conscious. (Another reason drugged subjects are generally preferred.) Fortunately, in all but the most radical of procedures, the subject's appearance remains unchanged except for his scalp. Naturally, if your subject happens to be bald, your "alterations" may be plainly visible. (Don't try this on Patrick Stewart, girls!)

It is vitally important to double-check your programming when using the Physiognomizer. The Crimson Claw, attempting to instill himself with more genius than he already had, misplaced a binary switch and turned himself into a vegetable. The Physiognomizer is currently in a warehouse full of items confiscated by the FBI, somewhere in Maryland. Torture will never get me to reveal the exact location, but good chocolate or a backrub just might.

[The Crimson Claw's machine effectively works a **Manipulate Memory** rote on its victim (see **Mage**, page 211), reconfiguring her psyche to the user's specifications. Since the procedure involves physical mutation, however, Mind spells cannot undo its effects. The subject can still try to resist the programming with her Willpower (difficulty 6 to disobey some undesirable impulse), but otherwise assumes a new Nature and Demeanor, or gains some new aspect to her personality. On the good side, the Physiognomizer can undo phobias, break down inner blocks and release pent-up creativity; by the same token, it can unleash psychological demons, murderous impulses and paralyzing fears. This Device's effects, should they ever occur, should be played for all they're worth.

[Undoing the procedure requires a combination of Life 3, Mind 4 and a working knowledge of Physiognomy. Since this isn't exactly a common occult science, the changes this machine works may very well be permanent.]

Ω Vrum Vrum Boom

Arete 6, Quintessence 30, Background Cost

A turn-of-the-century convertible car (complete with engine crank with which to start it), the so-called "Vrum Vrum Boom" machine still has some surprises. Built by a Dr. Dike, a children's book author of the 1910s, it was meant to take children on adventures. Unfortunately, the Good Doctor — obviously missing that fine line between fantasy and reality — had a pretty psychotic view of "safe and healthy adventures for children." This car sprouts wings and takes off to far lands — sometimes even into the Umbra or Etherspace! Oh sure, the car comes home once the adventure is over. The riders, if they're lucky, might come back with it. Or they might not.

There's nothing wrong with the car itself, it's just programmed strangely. Its creator imbued it with a "mind" of its own and a host of helpful gadgets: armor, hidden taffy guns, superspeed, flight and submarine capabilities. Vrum Vrum Boom will do whatever it can to aid its passengers, but due to a quirk in the design, it "sees" everything as a long, rousing adventure story. As is widely known, the heroes never *really* get hurt in children's books, and nobody ever dies. Equipped with this naive perspective, Vrum Vrum Boom gets itself into suicidal situations, secure in the "knowledge" that no one's going to get hurt, maimed, decapitated, etc.

Vrum Vrum Boom's engine uses a combustible design based on fragments from Czar Vargo's research. Dr. Dike did a really good job of adapting what little information was available and integrating it into his own design. Even so, it's kinda antiquated in all the wrong ways; although it can reach speeds of over 100 KPH, you have to start it with a hand crank. Despite its unconventional construction, the car's mechanisms seize up at "dramatic moments" — usually during the times when the riders are most likely to be hurt or killed!



The car's really special powers come from an even stranger brand of Science: Solarium gas. A large container of Solarium runs along the central drive shaft. Through a unique design, the gas can be slowly released from the small chamber (where it is in a compact, and thus inert, state) into a larger chamber, where the gas spreads out and lifts the vehicle into the air. A lever on the dashboard controls the Solarium release valves. Fold-out wings help steer the car while it's in the air, and propellers and rudders on the car's rear help steer it when it's in water.

Like any good vintage car, Vrum Vrum Boom is a convertible. When the leather roof is on and the windows are rolled up, Vrum Vrum Boom becomes airtight and has its own supply of oxygen (that lasts for about three hours). When the roof is cranked back, the passenger compartment is open to the wind and weather. A bewildering array of switches, dials, levers and gauges covers the dashboard; I've been told that figuring out what does what is half the fun.

No one really knows what became of this odd car; every so often, it shows up somewhere new. One San Francisco Ether mage claims to have seen a Hollow One joy-riding around in what could only be Vrum Vrum Boom, but no one has seen either the car or its driver again. Presumably, they're both off on some adventure somewhere.

Who knows where they'll end up?

[For the most part, Storytelling can cover the odd powers of Vrum Vrum Boom. The car's more specific technomagickal features include:

- **Umbral Passage:** At odd moments, the car takes itself and its occupants into the Near Umbra by way of a Spirit 4 gateway. At *really* odd moments, it flies straight past the Horizon — a terrifying journey that leaves the Earth behind. Like an Ethership, Vrum Vrum Boom protects its passengers from the vacuum of space — provided the windows are rolled up!

- **Armor:** With its custom-reinforced sides and chassis, Vrum Vrum Boom can take a lot of punishment. Assume that anything less than a tank shell merely scratches the paint. Passengers inside the car are safe from gunfire and other missiles, as long as they crouch behind the car's sides. The leather roof, while tough, is not reinforced to this degree; consequently, it needs to be replaced often.

- **Taffy Guns:** These non-lethal weapons squirt streams of thick, gooey candy all over anyone who threatens the car or its passengers (Dice Pool of 6, 360° radius at the car's level only). These strands entangle the car's enemies; anyone trying to escape the taffy must either dodge the streams or roll his Strength against difficulty 8 to pull free of the mess. The taffy reserve is effectively endless — after all, the car was designed for children — and perfectly edible.

- **Flight:** Vrum Vrum Boom flies; sometimes at a fairly slow pace (50 MPH), often at a quicker one (100 MPH) and occasionally at breathtaking speed (200 MPH, straight up). Clumsy on the ground, the car excels at air travel. The faster the car goes, however, the quicker it runs out of Solarium gas. If you

happen to be a mile in the air when that happens, things could get ugly.

• **Timing and the Lack of It:** You can tell that a writer created Vrum Vrum Boom. The car has a weird sense of timing. It works like a charm or fumbles like a jalopy, depending on the whims of fate (and the Storyteller). The "audience" inside might not appreciate the car's sense of drama, but you never know....

Safe Speed: 30 MPH ground/60 MPH air **Max Speed:** 80 MPH ground/200 MPH air **Maneuverability:** 7

[To adult eyes, Vrum Vrum Boom is vulgar as hell. In the company of children, however, the car works at "vulgar without witnesses" level. Kids seem to love this old car — even cynical '90s kids — and the machine, in return, seems really fond of them. The machine's "timing" caters to children; the car is liable to leave an adult behind, especially if there's a child who's in deeper trouble somewhere else. Still, an adventure with Vrum Vrum Boom should be fun, not fatal. Somehow, things always seem to turn out right in the end.]

Ω The War Machine

Arete 6, Quintessence 30, Background Cost N/A

From the recently-discovered, blood-stained diary of Sgt. Major Kyle Stewart:

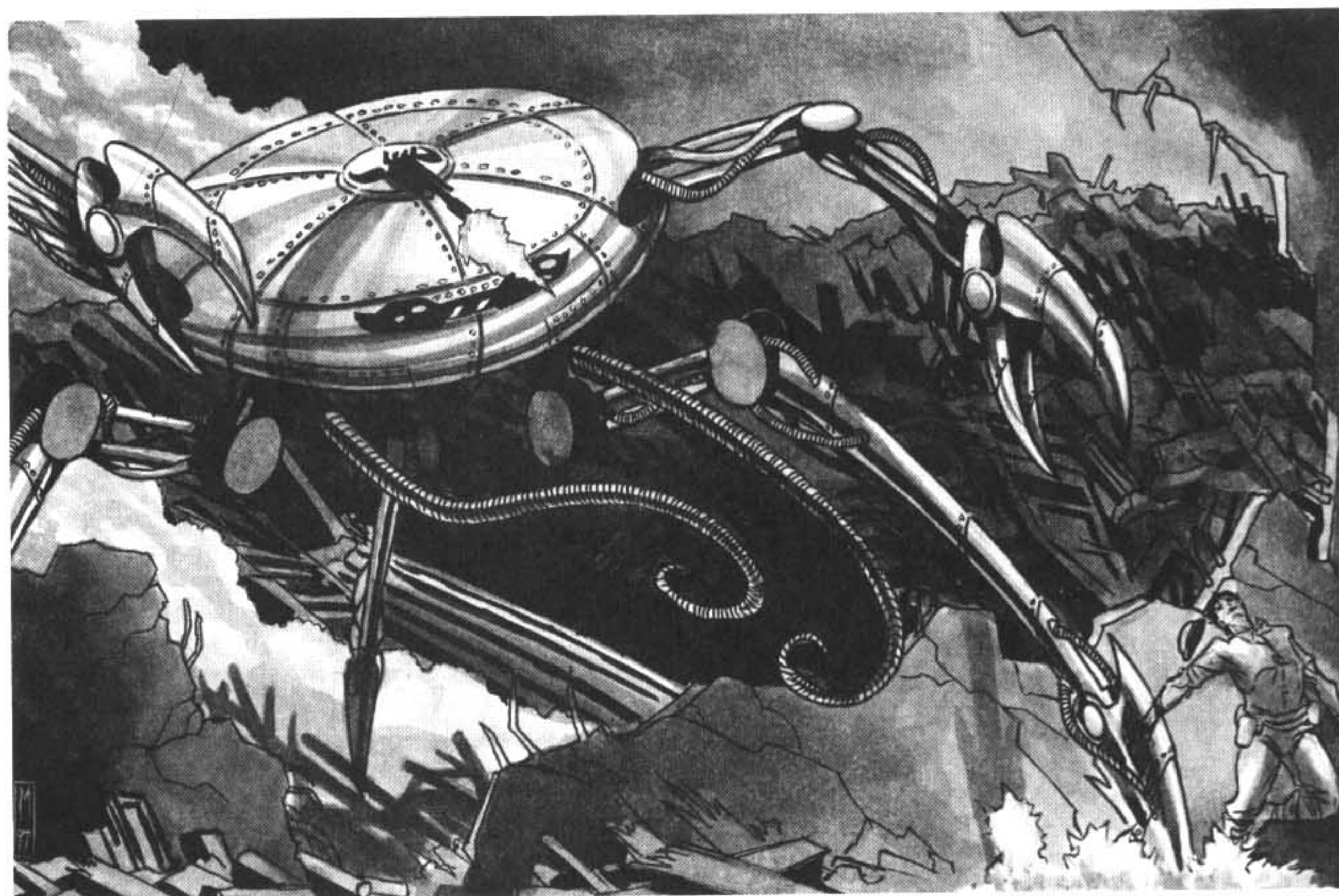
"[name obscured by bloodstain] France, [exact date obscured by bloodstain] 1914

"I can barely move my hand to write this, but if rescue doesn't come in time, it's vital that this information get back to

Brigadier Wainwright. My unit was patrolling the coast, as per orders, when we came upon a small village which had been completely obliterated — but not by artillery shells. There were no fires, no signs of explosions. Rather, the buildings all looked to have been torn apart, as if by a giant. We were perplexed by this, and as commanding officer, I decided to investigate. I ordered Lascaux to take two men and scout ahead, while I took the rest of the unit around the perimeter of the village.

"We were on the beach, examining a smashed fishing hut, when this thing rose out of the calm waters of the Mediterranean. It was a machine, an enormous machine, standing at least two, probably three stories tall, it was hard to tell while it was still in the sea. It stood on three immense legs that moved on three joints, like an enormous bird. The body of the machine was smooth, with bulbous protrusions along its horizontal axis, a small, dark sort of viewport in the front that suggested eyes, and a pair of enormous clawed arms that were attached on either side. The entire apparatus seemed to suggest some sort of monstrous clockwork crab. It lurched towards us, moving faster than any of us would have guessed it could, due to its very long stride. Two long, flexible tentacles extended from the underbelly of the beast, while a panel on the top slid open to reveal a machine gun.

"We knew that a thing like that couldn't be friendly, so we immediately opened fire. In three, maybe four strides, it was upon us. Bancroft was the first to die, impaled horribly on a tentacle; at the same time, a claw closed on Addison, crushing the poor man's skull.



"As you might imagine, the fight was short and rather one-sided. I ordered the survivors to retreat and we took shelter in a collapsed church two blocks away from the beach. The war machine began to go through the village, methodically smashing every remaining building or ruin to sand and rubble. Finally, it brought what was left of the church down upon our heads. I was pinned under a column, my hip and leg smashed and my side terribly lacerated, but I fared better than poor Marsden. Wells was somewhat shaken and, I think, nursing a concussion, but he was still more fit to run for help than I. I ordered him to find Lascaux's detachment and get back to base. He was upset about leaving me here, but he finally went.

"That was two hours ago. The war machine eventually stopped its horrific tantrum and descended to the ground in the town square, squatting like an enormous and nightmarish chicken. The viewport has opened now, and I can see men getting out. They're wearing black uniforms that I don't recognize. If they're German, they're certainly not part of the regular army. Their faces are completely covered by chromed, bullet-shaped helmets, and they are carrying large, ornate rifles of some sort. The more I see of them, the more convinced I am that they aren't German.

"I'm beginning to wonder now, if they're even human."

They were. Servants of the deranged Dr. Reinhardt (who many Etherboys claim went Satanic during The Great War) piloted the Device against both Allied and Central powers. Driven into a sort of berserk frenzy by the carnage they caused, this Ethernaut and his psychotic crew smashed their way through northwest France, southern Germany and to the borders of Belgium until mechanical failure stranded the Machine several yards in front of an Austria-Hungarian bunker. The hull was bulletproof, but not, apparently, howitzer-proof. The battered remains were whisked off to the Great Hall Chantry in Paris; after years of secret display, they were taken to the Gernsback Continuum for safekeeping — and to demonstrate a lesson: The Sleepers can destroy the greatest works of High Science. (Personally, I'd add that it's not nice to trash innocent villages, but hey, what do I know about the Wonders of High Science? I'm just a scummy V.A.)

For such a blatant display of hyperscience, Dr. Reinhardt's War Machine was unusually successful. A few Sons of Ether speculate that the War Machine escaped a catastrophic Paradox backlash because The Great War's influx of techno-monstrosities — mustard gas, machine guns, tanks, warplanes, flame-throwers, mortars, you know, all the stuff that makes such pretty piles of human remains — had numbed the soldiers' sense of disbelief. By the time Dr. Reinhardt's contraption appeared, they just shrugged their collective shoulders; "Oh no," they probably said, "not another one!" The current popularity of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells probably hadn't hurt the War Machine's chances, either. From what I've heard, the schematics are still out there, somewhere. No one ever reported finding Dr. Reinhardt's lab, but I'm sure that someone eventually did. I wonder how well this classical War Machine would fare against today's high-tech weaponry and SF-saturated paradigm?

I'm not sure I'd want to be on either side of that contest.

[In the modern era, this Device is broken junk, in a historical chronicle, it might have the following stats:

Safe Speed: 20 MPH **Max Speed:** 30 MPH **Maneuverability:** 5 **Crew:** 6 **Armor:** 10 **Weapons:** one twin-mounted .30 caliber machine-gun, two tentacles (Str. +2), two claws (Str. +5) **Strength:** 10

[The War Machine's magickal "vulgarity," or lack of same, is left to the whims of the Storyteller.]

Ω Dr. Worvil's Wand

Arete 4, Quintessence 20, Background Cost N/A

Made of the darkest mahogany, this magician's wand appeared in the early 20th century. Designed and carved by traveling magician Etherite Elijah Worvil, it added a whole new dimension to his stage performance. Worvil took his show, called "Dr. Worvil's Wonders of the World of Magic," across the United States, entertaining crowds with amazing feats of magic, prestidigitation and Science.

The wielder can fold the segmented wand small enough to fit in his pocket; and with a snap of the wrist, he can extend it to its full length. Tiny compartments inside the wand hold buttons, seeds, feathers, and glitter, all of which Worvil used in his show. The wand employs principles of Correspondence, Life, Matter and Prime to produce rabbits out of a hat, make a beautiful young woman disappear, or transfer a man's pocket watch from his coat to Worvil's.

Unfortunately, the wand does not discriminate between functions, and Worvil soon learned to be careful about where he pointed it. Eventually, one of Worvil's assistants found the wand sitting next to a fuzzy white rabbit. Worvil was never seen again. His Wand, however, can be viewed in a display case in the Great Hall Chantry. This splendid Device works on a "rotating phenomena" theory that seems unduplicatable. Many have tried to copy Dr. Worvil's Wand, but no one has succeeded yet.

[The Wand commands four functions: making simple creatures "appear," creating small inanimate objects or smoke clouds out of nowhere, transferring objects and creatures from one place to another, and transforming simple items into something else. Used in a "stage magic" setting, the Device's powers are often coincidental; the larger powers (creating or moving large or living things) get risky, however. Nothing is a sure thing when you're using Dr. Worvil's Wand.

[Dr. Worvil's theories harnessed the power of random chance and mutation. They did not, however, do so reliably. A character using the Wand needs to roll her Wits + Occult (difficulty 7) whenever she presses a button on the handle. If she succeeds, the Device does what she wants it to do; if she fails, it does something else (or nothing at all); if she botches, some odd phenomena — including things the Wand is not supposed to be able to do — manifest, usually to the mage's detriment.]

Ω Zephraim Pincke's Automata Arcade

Arete 6, Quintessence 30, Background Cost N/A

This infamous museum of robots was designed by Professor Zephraim Pincke to teach history — albeit a Son of Ether's take on it. Etherite Scientists were displayed discovering their wonderful inventions, from the medieval Golo transcribing his famous scroll to Czar Vargo and his airship. Some of these Scientists' creations — the real Devices — were featured in the museum, too. Naturally, this didn't sit too well with the Technocracy, particularly not with Zephraim's arch rival, Sir Evan Dandridge of the NWO.

Sir Dandridge arrived with a crew of agents to shut the museum down — only to find a trap. Zephraim had built the museum specifically to lure his old enemy to him. Once inside the museum, the doors locked and Dandridge and his crew had to dare each room's robot horrors one by one, led through a labyrinth of dangerous Scientific propaganda like mice in a maze. Only Dandridge survived to reach the final room, where he faced off against Zephraim. During their heated "argument," Paradox finally kicked in, destroying them both.

The museum was carefully dismantled by Zephraim's faithful servants, pieces packed individually in boxes and shipped to different destinations, now long-forgotten. These highly advanced automata and Devices still exist, waiting in their packing crates in the backs of warehouses and storage units scattered over the world. They're programmed to entice by displaying Scientific lore — and then to kill, using the same innovations.

From what I hear, Zephraim programmed his maze with certain riddle passwords; Sons of Ether or their well-educated allies could pass through the place without harm, but a trespasser who didn't know Etheric lore was toast. It's a gambler's guess as to whether the Arcade, if reassembled, would even accept the old passwords, or whether it would destroy anyone who tried to enter its doors. I've heard rumor that someone *has* restored Zephraim's final wonder, but its reputed location (if it exists at all) changes every time I hear the story.

[Each exhibit features a special power and a special doom. These figures are left more to the Storyteller's fancy than to rules — you could build a whole plot around the search for such artifacts. Most of the traps can be simulated with Forces damage (normal in some cases, aggravated in others) based on an "Arete" of 5 or 6. These staturs are elaborate, vulgar and deadly. The Storyteller should design specific figures and traps to suit his chronicle and cabal.

[The exhibits include (but are not limited to):

- Dr. Victor Frankenstein and his monster Elias, with a lightning trap that strikes those who confuse the master with the monster.

- Professor Jacques Etienne addressing the original Sons of Ether, with a floor that opens up and swallows the audience at the end of the speech.





- Czar Vargo and his Etherships, which fire deadly laserbolts at spectators who seem hostile, warlike or Technocratically-inclined.

- Colonel Arno Valiant and his deep-space balloon team; this exhibit poisons the air around it, simulating the “airless” void of the Technocracy’s space.

- Professor Thunder and a Tyrannosaurus Rex; three guesses what this trap does.

- Lorenzo Golo, transcribing the *Kitab al Alacir*. This trap suffers an “alchemist’s fire” in the workshop that surrounds the figure. Water only makes the flame grow hotter.

- Sir Simon de Laurent raising a glowing broadsword. He comes to “life” and chases the audience if they cannot identify his role in the Tradition.

- Baron Brimstone and his Inferno-gun — which actually works — battling the savage Garou of the Wild West.

[See **Sons of Ether** for further details about Etherite history and the noted heroes of the Tradition.]

Ω Zelly’s Eternal Theatre

Arete N/A, Quintessence N/A, Background Cost N/A

This unique machine was built by Sir Lawrence Lewis to amuse his bed-stricken, dying niece Zelly. After his quests for a cure for her cancer failed, he spent long nights in his laboratory devising the delicate engine that drives this wondrous Device. Sir Lewis was not popular or well-known among his colleagues;

his mastery of Time, Spirit and the natural Forces, however, is well-proven by the wonderful Eternal Theatre he created.

This Theatre is an ornate, Victorian box with hand-painted scenes of an opera house on its sides, complete with balconies and chandeliers. The art isn’t particularly accomplished — Lewis painted it himself — but it does have a certain, quaint quality about it. When the box is wound with the tiny crank on its top, one side falls open to reveal a curtain. The scrim slowly opens, revealing a cast of puppets — a gentleman, a lady, a monkey and a thief. These puppets enact a short, five-minute play, complete with voices and music.

The odd thing about the Device is that each play is different, no matter how many times it runs. Long after Zelly and Sir Lewis both died, the Theatre was discovered at an estate auction by Dr. Reginald Quirky. The new owner soon realized that the Device is an oracle of sorts — that each play reveals hints about the future in much the same way that entrails did for ancient augurs.

Dr. Quirky quickly showed the Device to his fellows in the London chapter, and word soon spread of Sir Lewis’s invention. Quirky will allow Scientists to visit and play the Theatre; he’ll even help them decipher its meaning. He will not, however, allow it to be moved — not for any price or any threat. Dr. Quirky fears that dismantling the Device could destroy it for good. He knows that the “programming” comes from an internal wax cylinder that apparently rewrites itself after each play. The mechanism — or entity — behind this is unknown.

Sometimes the plays are vague and extremely hard to interpret; only by looking back on past events can you see the predictions made by the machine. Other plays are incredibly obvious — in the late '80s, the Theatre's Gentlemen proclaimed, "A coming storm will quench the desert of the Yanks' patriotic thirst." Quirky interpreted this to mean that America would soon be at war. He was soon proven right by Operation Desert Storm.

Another commentator, Scientist Justin Fordfellow, believes that the cast of characters represents all of the conditions of human experience: "Are we not all, at times, either gentlemen, ladies, monkeys or thieves?" A Dreamspeaker who saw the Device posited that the spirit of Zelly writes the plays from her afterlife perspective. Most Ether Scientists appreciate the

shaman's speculations, but they prefer explanations that run parallel to their own pet theories. To date, they've been disappointed. The Eternal Theatre remains an enigma to all who watch its limitless plays.

[This Device creates prophetic scenes. Its predictions — always couched in cryptic or symbolic terms — *will* come to pass, but there's no saying when, how or to whom.

[Zelly's Theatre is pretty vulgar by mortal standards; for now, it sits in the mansion of Dr. Quirky, safe in a Sanctum built especially for its performances. If the Device is ever moved, it may fall apart or cease its magickal plays forever. The Theatre is more a plot hook than a Talisman and should be used for dramatic effect, not for mystickal pyrotechnics.]





Link 3: Black Hats & Mirrorshades

"When do I get my own flashy memory-messer-upper-thingie?"

"When you grow up."

— Jay and Kay, *Men In Black*

You'll forgive me, I hope, if I get remote in this section. I can't help but be torn between admiration and disgust by the innovations I've uncovered in the ranks of our august adversaries. While the Technocracy employs more gadgets than I could possibly describe here (*see Chapter Three* in the various *Technocracy*: supplements for dozens of additional Devices and procedures), the following toys provide an intimate and disturbing glance at our tight-assed little friends among the *Terminator* jet set.

(Oh, just for the note: "Q Division" refers to the Black Hats' gadget shop. Although technically an adjunct of the NWO, Q Division combines resources from the Void Engineers, NWO and Iteration X, with a bit of help from their fellow Progenitors and even a few Syndicate think tanks. These inventive little bastards get more than a little assistance from Etherite defectors and turncoat Virtual Adepts. While I can't crack on the playthings I've seen come off Q Division's workbench, I'm not, shall we say, a fan of the people who work there — distinctively not of the ones who jumped the fence in search of better research space. Watch your backs, you fucking Benedicts — your time is coming!)

For your perusal and purchasing pleasure, I give you the Technocracy's newest playthings. Read 'em and weep, boys and girls. Look and learn.

For all of you Black Hats out there, this stuff should be open knowledge to you; since most of it probably isn't, you can blame your superiors for granting you such a lousy clearance that even an asshole Virtual Adept like myself knows about things you haven't heard of. Now that you *do* know about them, feel free to bug the living hell out of your local Q Division until you get what you want. Meanwhile, be assured that the specs for all of these wonderful toys have been made available to all the right parties.

See you at midnight, pal!

• Disposable Camouflaged Monitoring Devices (DCMDs, or "TrashCams")

Arete 1, Quintessence 5, Background Cost 2 per dozen

These miniature surveillance devices, generally designed for use in urban areas, make Orwell's worst nightmares a reality. Disguised as "used disposables" — Technocrat jargon for "trash" — these spy cameras record events in their vicinity. Disguised as bits of junk — cigarette butts, discarded fast-food containers, even crumpled newspapers — these tiny Devices lie nestled in piles of ordinary trash, keeping a covert eye out for unusual or magickal activity.

Although "security" devices have been recording important discussions since the first sycophant got bored of hiding behind trees and reporting back to the Head Honcho, credit for the TrashCam goes to Dr. Kenneth Aldrich of the NWO. He invented the first Disposable Camouflaged Monitoring Devices in 1951 for a group of Progenitors attempting to infiltrate an urban werewolf caern. Although their attempts to capture "research specimens" failed, the data recorded by their DCMDs — irreverently "TrashCams" by some Progenitor — provided the information they needed to stage a Chantry raid several months later.

Cheap, disposable and easy to use, TrashCams became very popular. Now all kinds of Technocrats use the damned things. Small as they are, DCMDs have a limited range and shelf life. A typical unit — roughly the size and shape of a cigarette butt — records in sound-only mode and lasts for 20 to 40 hours; larger TrashCams — which resemble fast-food boxes or crumpled soda cans — can record sight and sound, and frequently track biodata (heart rate, presence of chemicals, genetic code matches, etc.) from nearby creatures as well. Special models — which tend to be large in size — spot Quintessence emanations, Paradox energy flows and sudden paranormal fluctuations within a one-block radius. The two larger models can store data for up to a month before their power cells burn out. Naturally, these latter units are more expensive — and more difficult to justify on an expense report — than the smaller, cheaper models.

TrashCams are easy to customize. An agent can slip the internal device out of her cigarette and into a flowerpot, or into another cigarette so that she can discard it in a more strategic location. A privileged Technocrat can requisition 'Cams designed to record magickal activity, pattern weaknesses and even the surface thoughts of passersby. The requisitioner is advised, however, to retrieve such data in a properly secured laboratory; a Paradox backlash can destroy all records, and often, the Device as well.

DCMDs have several weaknesses: They don't project or transmit data, they just collect it. A unit has to be retrieved and downloaded in order to pass on its secrets. TrashCams can be retrieved by drone robots that sift through trashpiles

after the Devices have been crated off, by agents who clean up the streets as part of "community service efforts," or by hyperintelligent rats bred and trained in Progenitor labs. Once the 'Cams have been collected, the information can be analyzed; the DCMDs themselves become worthless junk.

You need a special retrieval Device — DCMT, the Disposable Camouflaged Monitor Transliterator — to recover data from a TrashCam's memory. Roughly the size and shape of a typewriter (remember those?), a Transliterator breaks the DCMD's seals, transfers the recording and translates it into a readable format. In other words, you can't tap a TrashCam's data in the field.

Once the information downloads into the DCMT, the 'Cam becomes a useless collection of tiny wires and lenses. This may happen before the information can be retrieved, of course — the smaller DCMDs fail about 30% of the time. The beauty of the TrashCam, though, comes from the fact that they're cheap, plentiful, versatile and easy to use. One intriguing rumor claims that a certain unnamed Technocrat has them embedded in her business cards. Who needs a fly on the wall when you've got a TrashCam in someone's pocket?

[The TrashCam's "Arete" roll signifies whether or not it went off. Once it begins recording, a DCMT picks up and stores its data. The more advanced models employ Correspondence, Life and Prime Effects instead of Forces ones. These Devices are coincidental.]

• Erg Cola

Arete N/A, Quintessence 1, Background Cost N/A

Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the dead.

— the translation of a badly researched Pepsi slogan in China

This stuff would bring your ancestors back, if you could figure out how to get it into them!

— an Erg fan

The tired and hungry NWO agent sits at her dreary stakeout, watching for the Trad killer and wondering where the hell her relief is. The communicator crackles briefly and Headquarters informs her that her relief isn't coming. She sighs and reaches into the cooler. Another long night. No sleep. She pulls out a can of Erg, the soda of the Technocracy.

No one had ever really thought to combine all the ingredients before: stimulants, nutrients, sugar and Quintessence. Operatives on the go usually made do with fast food and coffee. Finally, some overworked and underfed agent dropped a note into a Progenitor suggestion box, proposing it as "Pop Plus!" Six months and 65 clinical trials later, Dr. Mitch Harris submitted Erg to the review board for approval. The carbonated beverage chugged through the Syndicate's marketing machine and came out with its familiar bright yellow and green label.

Ramped-up, time-release caffeine suffuses the carefully prepared nutrient solution, which contains needed vitamins,

minerals, sugars and amino acids. Erg boosts the drinker's body for up to six hours without depriving it of nutrients. She also gets "all the calories, half the grease!" that she would otherwise get from a drive-thru fast-food dive.

At the moment, Erg is only available to Technocrats. Considering that the average Black Hat is a hyperdrive workaholic, the soda's sending a hefty profit back into the Techno-till. A toned-down version is being considered for distribution among the Masses. Considering the failure of Jolt Cola, however, the marketing mavens are watching current food trends — and checking their future test-marketing sites for things like mid-terms, SF conventions, SCA events and other unusual occasions that might throw off their sales data.

[The game effects of this super-soda are best left to roleplaying and Storytelling.]

• Seekers

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 4

The Progenitor Genengineers recently developed another engineered insect. That's pretty much all of the rest of the Technocracy knows about this special project (but I, of course, have inside information (-P)). Everyone's favorite psychogeneticists decided to withhold the information about these mutant bugs out of concern over politics and paranoia. (And possibly to stir up a little of both — not that such notions would ever occur to sober scientists like the Progenitors! Perish the thought!) Dr. M. Pelledrino created the first template for his doctoral thesis in 1995, and he was subsequently promoted to the upper ranks of his lab for his ingenuity. In true academic fashion, however, the rest of the Convention regularly credits his research director, Dr. B. Wolf instead (Wolf holds the patent for the fully developed creature).

Adapted from household roaches — nothing beats a roach for durability and reproductive efficiency — these lab-produced vermin are attracted to Quintessence. Released into an urban area, they seek out the nearest Nodes and gather there. The first generation carries a virulent influenza virus with a human survival rate of 20%. Later generations do not continue to harbor the virus, and the species (*Americanus pelledrinus*) is genetically programmed to die off after 10 generations. Each insect that actually reaches the Node proper emits a large amount of a particular pheromone, then promptly dies without moving from the spot. The pheromone, although odorless to the human nose, and almost odorless to any other mammal, can be picked up by specialized instruments.

In short, the roaches find a Node, infect the people there, and then provide a biological homing beacon for the Technocracy. The flu virus utterly devastates the guardians of the Node. Theoretically, Convention agents should be able to walk in the door and accept the surrender of the few desperately ill survivors.

Seekers still have a near-fatal flaw, though: They're too efficient. The Progenitors have a vaccine for the virus the roaches carry but lack a way to keep them from infesting every Node within an attack vicinity. A typical colony release (about 200 individuals) infests every Node within a radius of 1 to 10 miles (depending on the location and size of the Node or Nodes).

The colony labs — Itex, Inc. in San Bernardino, California, and the Mercher Research Institute in Boston, Massachusetts — carefully field-tested these super-roaches twice. The first run destroyed a small group of transients (apparently Orphans), and the Black Hats promptly took control of the locus. The second run, however, demonstrated the bugs' flaw. Oh sure, they accomplished their mission — the infection of a werewolf caern — but the march didn't stop there. A nearby NWO safehouse attracted the buggies, too. Since the left hand didn't know what the right hand was doing, the Black Hats killed each other — the virus wiped the floor with the Men in Black, and the survivors iced the retrieval team that came to take possession of the Node. To top it off, the Geneopaths discovered — the hard way — that werewolves are fairly resistant to little things like disease. The second retrieval team's agents had to be cleaned off the walls with a hose.

[In game terms, this little pack of pests homes in on its favorite food — Tass or Quintessence. The Storyteller should use the group's "Arete" as a Perception roll to spot Quintessence wells.

Source	Difficulty
Huge Node (Level 5+/ 50+ Tass)	6
Large Node (Level 4/ 40 Tass)	7
Strong Node (Level 3/ 30 Tass)	8
Weak Node (Level 2/ 20 Tass)	9
Tiny Node (Level 1/ 10 Tass)	10

["Nodes" includes Nodes, Tass stockpiles, werewolf caerns and even mages with Quintessence ratings of 10 or more (a Level 1 Node).

[The effective range of the swarm is 10 miles, but many never make it that far. A colony gets one "Arete" roll upon its release; if this comes up as a failure, the roaches disperse; if it comes up as a botch, they turn around and infest the nearest Technocracy Node or Tass store.

[The "Seeker Plague" comes with a large concentration of the bugs. Anyone within the area must make a Stamina roll, difficulty 8, or contract the disease. Mortals are usually doomed — normal medicine cannot counter the virus, though its communicability rate is quite low. Mages and faeries with healing Arts can cure the disease, and werereatures, spirits and the undead are essentially immune to it. A second Stamina roll reveals the effects of the sickness: Success indicates a mild case (recovery in 48 hours or so); failure reflects a bad case (disabling illness for a month or more), and a botch is a 12-hour death sentence.]

•• Block Party Videos

Arete 2, Quintessence N/A, Background Cost N/A (see below)

Why bother with worrying about life when you can rent a movie instead? With cheap video rentals and friendly service, your local movie store has everything you need to take your mind off your troubles. This philosophy not only inspired an amalgam of Men in Black to develop the Cephatic VCR, but it also helped a group of Syndicate associates make a fortune with their rapidly growing chain of Block Party Videos stores.

While standard operating procedure for the NWO includes media manipulation, most cloak-and-dagger Operatives don't often care about generating profits. The Grand Financiers, however, look at the bottom line everywhere they go. Several years ago, an ambitious Syndicate entrepreneur gained strong support from his Symposium by conditioning the Masses of a Chicago suburb with subliminally programmed videocassettes rented from his modest video store. While the original cassettes had rather simple messages planted within them ("accept authority," "the television is your best friend," and the ever-popular "marry and reproduce"), later videos integrated more complex ideas. For instance, the entrepreneur composed an extensive subliminal exposé on sexual misconduct in a homeless shelter run by Celestial Choristers nearby. Within a week, harassment and death threats from local citizens drove the Choristers from the neighborhood.

The NWO loves working within Syndicate media fronts. They profit not by making money, but by gathering information on people in the neighborhood. You can learn a lot about somebody from the movies they watch — at Block Party, they keep very good records of each client's rentals and amass the records into a large data base. (You never can tell when such facts might come in handy!) To "Join the Party," every patron must submit credit card numbers, three pieces of identification, a social security number and a fingerprint for the store's files. Natch, all of this information goes into the database, too.

Today, Block Party Videos is the fastest-expanding video chain in the United States. A series of "acquisition strategies" and "corporate mergers" continues to sweep independent shops and rival chains into the Party. A huge selection of tapes and their now-famous advertising campaign make the club a natural stop for the average consumer, and the chain's near-monopoly in many locations makes it the only game in town for most videophiles. With clean stores, friendly staff and a "family values" approach, Block Party seems like a wholesome entertainment center. That's exactly the kind of image that the chain likes to promote.

The videotapes themselves are unremarkable — unless you can pick out the subliminal messages keyed into the magnetic tracks. Messages like "support your police," "protect

your family — report all strangers," and "it is good, so very good, to belong." Operating in a hidden Construct (possibly outside of mundane reality), Block Party's tech staff dubs these messages onto all of your favorite films. Within a few weeks, local citizens become concerned watchdogs. Before long, they reevaluate local individuals, locations and philosophies. If someone seems too strange or steps too far outside "community values," local couch potatoes can become an irate mob.

Now *that's* entertainment! And it's suitable for the whole family....

[The effects of a Block Party tape should be left to roleplaying and Storytelling. These Devices are insidious propagandists, not instant lobotomizers. Most people simply absorb the impression without dramatic effects; however, some really unstable individuals (every community has 'em) take the subliminals to heart and act on them.]

•• Lon McAin's Cool Shoes

Arete 2, Quintessence N/A, Background Cost 4

There's nothing worse than dangling at the end of a cable behind a spaceship traveling at near-light speeds. That's what happens to poor schmoe who lose their grips while they're outside the ship doing repairs — if they're lucky enough to have a tough lifeline! Whimsical Void Engineer Lon McAin experienced that joy firsthand. Having survived the experience, he created the Tarsal Electromagnetic Compensator: Stick it in your boot and you stick to the ship. Bright boy that he was, however, McAin quickly realized the broader marketing potential of his innovation. A few calls to friendly Syndicate agents gave him what he wanted: a small fortune, a patent and several contracts. Now "McAin: Footwear for Technos" is on every young, fashion-conscious Technocrat's lips — and on his feet!

In the spirit of the various forms of athletic shoes on the market in the "real world" these days, McAin Footwear produces running shoes, climbing shoes, all-purpose shoes, amphibian shoes, combat boots for all climates, zero gee boots — footwear for all occasions. McAin Cloudwalkers, the bottom-of-the-line standard, are canvas hightop chucks with cheap, low-grade TECs set in the soles. These modifications allow the wearer to run twice as fast as she normally could and jump twice as high as she normally would — perfect for the Pharmacoepist on the street who's trying to impress the locals with her athletic style. McAin Cosmos, the top-of-the-line elite models, are well-cushioned combat boots fashioned from fabric that repels dirt, grime and liquid. They seal to spacesuits for deep-space work, and the high-powered TECs in the soles and sides work miracles: A Technocrat can run up walls, stick to the side of a speeding spacecraft, or even walk on water.

McAin is the name to remember for your fashion footwear needs!

[The game effects of Cool Shoes should be obvious (see "Dramatic Systems" in *Mage*, pages 250-251). The footwear adds four dice to the appropriate Dexterity + Athletics Dice Pools, and it allows the Technocrat to do things she normally couldn't do — like walk up walls and jump twice her usual distance. As long as the Technocrat keeps her Shoes on, the bonuses apply. If she's smart, she'll limit her activities around mortals; walking upside-down or straight up a wall is a good way to ask for a Paradox backlash. Such activities are, of course, vulgar; the Technocrat's Shoes will add an additional two dice to her usual Paradox Pool if this occurs.]

•• PKD Paranoia Amplifier

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 5

In the early '70s, several California Security Collectives worked overtime trying to shut down the burgeoning Cult of Ecstasy. Not surprisingly, many Traditionalists found it easy to recruit people to support these Cultist Chantries. Lots of folks were eager to work with these mystickal deviants, that is, when the drugs they got in return were so damn good. The Technocratic Union quickly developed a system of procedures designed to deal with these drug cults. The infamous PKD Paranoia Amplifier was one of their more remarkable countermeasures.

These remote transmitters, which resemble tiny black sugar cubes, amplify the normal paranoia that comes with a

delusional mental state — a natural side effect of using an illegal psychoactive in a police state. While the original Devices were roughly an inch long on all sides, the modern generation's measure about 10mm per side and come in a variety of colors. Technocratic infiltrators stash these hummingbirds around the area, then send in signals and power. Once this covert Device is activated, paranoid delusions become visions, and even, in some cases, physical manifestations. In the beginning, the Black Hats employed these Devices in places where lots of people used hallucinogenic drugs. These days, the mere threat of a Technocratic bust provides enough fuel to spark an interesting little fire.

Consider the fate of the Fritzenjammer Commune in Eugene, Oregon. Three Cultists and a Dreamspeaker had established a communal Chantry in the woods outside the city, and several mundanes had come to depend on them. Over time, their network of consors established a food program for homeless folks, an environmental action group, and a distribution network for illegal substances manufactured in the Chantry's basement.

A Gray Suit Operative infiltrated the group soon thereafter. He was casually accepted into the group and kept his head even though he later admitted to being tempted by the idea of "going native" and staying with the Chantry. After he hid a few Paranoia Amplifiers in the stereo speakers, his exfiltration was assured. The Operative's amalgam sent in the



juice and the delusions began; one Cultist became convinced that the phone lines were tapped. She began frantically searching fringe magazines for information about wiretapping sounds. Another Ecstatic began to worry about the growing number of roaches in the house; in his mind, the bugs were attracted by the marijuana plants growing in the basement.

Over the next week, the delusions became visions. While under the influence of "chemical recreation," the Dreamspeaker became convinced that the cockroaches had taken over the house's electrical system, and that the bugs were now plotting against the mages. He began to hear a flutter in the refrigerator's electrical system and quickly interpreted it as a series of messages broadcast in Morse code. When one of the Cultists finally invoked a Paradox backlash while making a large batch of Quintessence brownies, the Dreamspeaker found concrete evidence of his belief: 10 cockroaches, armed with miniature cameras and microphones, were hiding in the oven.

From there, the hallucinations went wild. One mage began smashing holes in the walls where he thought "the roaches were listening to him." Another erected a banner on the front porch with the words "Earth For Humans! Roaches Go Home!" A tragic accident involving a can of Raid and a cigarette lighter eventually sent the Dreamspeaker to the hospital with second-degree burns. By the time the Gray Man called in an infestation of ants (using a Life-powered insect-breeder courtesy of the Progenitors), the cabal was shattered. The locals turned their backs on the commune and looked for a saner place to get their kicks.

PKD Paranoia Amps are still commonly used today. A covert Op goes in, plants a few of the Devices and flees, then activates the Amps. Minor delusions become paranoid visions. When the first big Paradox backlash occurs, the visions become hobgoblins (see **Mage**, page 178). These persist and grow worse until the victims either crack or leave the area. In the words of one noted pulp writer living in a Chantry in San Francisco, the PKD Paranoia Amplifier "Kills Minds Dead."

[A simple Mind procedure begins the siege; the "Arete" roll sets up the amplification field and dementia takes its course. Anyone who spends 12 hours or so in the affected area needs to make a Willpower roll or notice...strange things.

[If the subject in question has a clean conscience, the roll's difficulty is 3; if he's got some reason to be paranoid (he's been doing drugs, is hiding from the cops, has betrayed someone or possesses some other dark secret), the roll begins at difficulty 5. For each additional day the PKD remains "on the job," increase the Willpower roll's difficulty by one (two days +1, three days +2, four days +3, etc., up to a maximum of 10).

[If the character makes his roll, everything remains normal; if not, he begins to hallucinate. Since crowds tend to share a delusion, the first person to speak her mind usually sets up the nature of her friend's hallucinations.

Alternately, the delusions may simply make secrets come to light, as in Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart." Group hallucinations depend on the minds of the characters and the whims of the Storyteller, and they grow worse every day, until one of two things occurs: The victims flee the area, or the PKD runs out of juice. Clever engineering makes these little buggers very efficient. Left to its own power, a PKD runs for 15 days. If supplied by an outside energy source, it can run indefinitely.

[The PKD is subtle. Characters in the affected area must go out of their way to notice the Device; a successful Perception + Technology roll (difficulty 9) combined with a Level One Mind Effect is necessary to track the source of the group's delusions. Even then, the PKD is hard to spot. Assume that it requires a Perception + Technology roll (difficulty 10) to notice the Device, even if characters have been searching for it. Once discovered, the PKD is easy to destroy. The delusions, however, may take days or even weeks to go away.]

•• Universal Identification Card Kit (UICK)

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 5

Bullshitting takes work, even if you're an agent of the NWO. Sick of the routine, Operative Richard Drake used a little technomagickal "influence" to simplify his life. Since the right papers allow you to go anywhere, Drake crafted the ultimate false ID: the Universal Identification Card Kit. His Universal ID was a small, leather-bound booklet containing a microcomputer, two business cards and a badge. All ID forms were completely blank. By storing the proper procedure and enough Quintessence in the computer and keying the cards to accept different configurations, he soon perfected a Device that could fake anything from a business card to a detective's badge. The key was expectation: The cards themselves remained blank, but they projected a mental suggestion based on what the viewer *expected* to see.

The original Device had a few bugs, of course. During a chase through an Atlanta science fiction convention, Drake was identified as "Fox Mulder." The local news stations carried the story and Drake's cover was compromised. After that, Drake modified his kit somewhat. The kit's current version requires a bit of fast thinking from the agent who uses it; through probability influence (read: Entropy/Mind magick), he guesses the identity that would work best under the circumstances — one that will carry some weight without standing out too much. Once he's got a persona worked out, the Operative keys the badge and cards to accept that identity, then he proceeds with his investigation. If he guesses correctly, the Device does the rest of the work; if not, he may have to fall back on fast wits, fast talk, and the occasional impression of David Duchovny.

[A simple Effect creates the illusion of a badge with a successful "Arete" roll, difficulty 6. Activating the Device

takes several minutes, but once the procedure has been finished, the UICK is coincidental. The Kit may not fool everyone (a character needs to make a roll of Perception + either Subterfuge or Law, difficulty 7, to spot a fake UICK badge), but it usually does the trick.]

... The Bond Watch

Arete 4, Quintessence 20, Background Cost 7

The saga of this Device begins not on the frontlines of the War for Reality, but in the movies. The producers of the successful James Bond films understood the value of product placement. If 007 hid some of his gadgets in an expensive wristwatch, and if he had to check the time while he was using them, the face and name of a mass-manufactured brand of wristwatch — Bond's watch — would be displayed 10-feet high on silver screens throughout the world.

While academicians and isolated researchers like to be as subtle as possible, they realize that a really talented NWO Operative may insist on the occasional perk — like a flashy little gadget or two — before he'll give his all in the field. Thus, the so-called "Bond Watch" has become a commonly-requested item in Q Division, much to the consternation of the analysts in charge.

These watches are usually made-to-order. With a little bit of Quintessence and programming, a Bond Watch can:

- track a homing signal;
- cut through ropes and cables with a miniature circular saw;
- emit a fine-tuned laser;
- function as a communications device;
- radiate an electromagnetic field;
- deliver an electric shock from the face plate;

...and perform many other minor but useful functions.

Here's word to the wise: Agents who go in for flashy, vulgar procedures and Devices really irritate the Q Division supervisors. If a field Operative can be responsible with his Devices (or in the words of some Gray Men, "not get caught"), his privileges increase. By contrast, anyone caught rescuing a beautiful young blond by firing lasers at the "bad guys" will wind up waiting behind the mook at the Hertz Rent-a-Car booth who's waiting to check out his black luxury sedan. Nonetheless, agents will be agents, and the more people who line up to see the latest spy movie, the easier it will be for field agents to convince witnesses that they've got a good deal going with M.I. 5. So be it.

[For the most part, a Bond Watch's powers should be left to Storytelling. An "Arete" roll determines whether or not the Watch functions, and a simple Matter or Forces/Prime Effect performs the task. In the media-saturated Western World, this Device is often coincidental; in rural areas, however, the Watch refuses to work at the most inconvenient times....]



...Exo-Musculature and Exo-Skeletons

Arete N/A, Quintessence N/A, Background Cost 6 (Exo-Musculature) or 8 (Exo-Skeleton)

Iteration X shock troops sum up the armor issue in two simple words: Exo-skeletons suck. While they may look good on the posters on your wall, six-inch thick armor-plated suits are slow and difficult to maneuver. While it's fun to watch the effect one has on a bunch of reality deviants while you're playing Metallica through the external speakers, it's rather pointless if the herd can easily outrun you. Thus, Q Division and the Clockwork Convention have put a lot of work into a suit of armor that is, as they say, sexy as all-hell.

Exo-musculature is one of the most recent improvements. Strands of Primium are integrated with synthetic muscle tissue. The result is a muscled "body suit" that not only augments agility and strength, but it resists light gunfire as well. Most of the armor is ablative, since a few chunks are going to get shredded by heavy weapons fire anyway; nonetheless, with a few tailored adjustments, an It X'er in an exo-muscle bodysuit looks more like a die-hard bodybuilder than a Go-Bot or Transformer. (As some cyborgs point out, beautiful women don't want to fuck Transformers. Body-builders? Well....)

On the Horizon — that is, away from Earth and the watchful eyes of Sleepers — exo-skeletons still come in handy. Improvements in development have made the armor tougher than ever, although it does slow down the user's agility. Nonetheless, this type of armor doesn't get chewed up quickly in a fight — it reduces a fairly consistent amount of damage and is rapidly repaired or replaced. ExoJocks remark that none of the alleged "beautiful women" that frontline cyborgs brag about would really want to see what a fusillade of gunfire does to the flesh and bone of exo-musculature. No one wants to sleep with a walking serving of Hamburger Helper. This, then, gave rise to a common ExoJock motto: "Get Hard. Steel is Safer."

Admittedly, exo-musculature takes time to repair when it gets damaged. A trained Progenitor can restore the implants through procedures that require a little less than twice the time it takes to restore flesh. For this reason, ExoJocks who favor synthetic flesh prefer bulky clothes — trenchcoats, dusters, padded ski vests, that sort of thing — to hide the scars while their bodies heal. Somehow, their style hasn't caught on among the non-augmented Operatives who've been assigned to work with them. Go figure.

[Essentially, these modifications create a permanent **Better Body Effect** (see **Mage**, pages 202-203), which boosts the "wearer's" Strength, Dexterity and Stamina, grants him



innate countermagick and allows him to soak aggravated damage — something normal human beings cannot do. The cost: a few Background points and three permanent points of Paradox, which are added to the character's sheet. These points add three dice to any Paradox backlash roll, but do not go away unless the biomodifications are somehow removed from the cyborg's body. In story terms, these Devices can be problematic, too; they often come with the expectation of loyalty, selflessness and periodic brainwashing (see **Technocracy: Iteration X** for details). It's been said that a cyborg's body belongs to the Convention, not to him. A lot of dead ExoJocks can attest that the saying is true.

- **Exo-Musculature ("Muscleboy") Traits:** +2 Strength, +1 Dexterity, +2 Stamina, Armor 2, one die of countermagick, six additional Health Levels

- **Exo-Skeleton ("Transformer") Traits:** +4 Strength, +0 Dexterity, +4 Stamina, Armor 8, three dice of countermagick, six additional Health Levels

[This equipment may be installed on either Enlightened personnel or conditioned Sleepers. (See **Mag**, page 276, and **Technocracy: Iteration X**, pages 51-53, for more details.)]

... Kinetic Transfer Safeguard (KTS)

Arete 5, Quintessence 25, Background Cost 8

The joy of every Technocrat agent! The Kinetic Transfer Safeguard (KTS) turns the standard issue trenchcoat into useful armor. Different models provide different levels of protection, but for maximum efficiency, each unit is tailored in the shape of a slightly oversized coat. The basic material is Kevlar, but a piezoelectric crystal lattice has been integrated into the layers of the defensive textile. Grown in zero gee by Sanddrop Laboratory — a division of Sandler & Alexandrotos Void Engine Designs — the crystals form the key to the effectiveness of the KTS.

Every kinetic bump, thump and crash that the agent — and therefore, his trenchcoat — suffer is translated into electricity. The jacket insulates the wearer from the shock; the same cannot be said for the next person, place or thing that the Technocrat touches. With a KTS, a Black Hat can expect to come through most car crashes, falls and gunshots with some minimal damage and a hefty electrical jolt to discharge. This discharge is usually channeled through a handy magnetic gun, implanted in an agent's lower arm for just this purpose, or through a sharpened claw, blade or other hand-to-hand weapon.

According to the stolen memoirs of subterranean researcher Dee Wegman, the KTS enabled her to survive the surprise attack of an enraged Verbena. The force of the caber (an extremely large tree trunk) that the Scotsman threw at her generated enough electricity to melt the barrel of her Wasp Mark 7 energy rifle. The Verbena, we are told, was cooked like a Waffle House special. Dr. Wegman was knocked down and slightly burned, but otherwise unhurt.

Still, a KTS doesn't make a Mirrorshade invincible. An energy overload — caused by a extremely hard blow, a series of shocks or a powerful discharge — can destabilize the crystalline structure. This, in turn, wrecks the coat's ability to translate kinetics into electricity. Fortunately for Technocracy agents at large, the KTS can be realigned in a powerful magnetic field set especially for that purpose. Realignment centers receive KTS trenchcoats and other clothing daily; an agent simply drops her damaged contraption off at her local safehouse or sends it to an approved realignment center *via* a Convention-approved courier (with all of the appropriate forms filled out in triplicate, of course). The clothing that houses the KTS isn't nearly as sturdy — most jackets must be remade from scratch. Total reassembly takes between three to nine working days.

[A vulgar Forces Effect absorbs kinetic energy, then translates it into an electrical shock. The "Arete" roll (difficulty 7) determines how much damage the coat can take. The player or Storyteller makes the roll and checks the Damage and Duration chart. The jacket absorbs harm as if the mage was *inflicting* it, then dispels that amount of damage in an electrical attack. Remember that Forces attacks add one success to their total.

[Example: Judy's Progenitor takes a hit worth eight Health Levels of damage. Her character's coat "rolls" its "Arete" and wins two successes. With the addition for Forces, this becomes three successes, or six Health Levels of damage. Judy's Technocrat absorbs six Health Levels, takes the other two normally, and generates a six-Health Level blast of electricity against the next thing she touches with her hand.

[On a botch, the material rips and the KTS becomes useless. The Progenitor, if she survives, can send the Device back to the shop for repairs. Until then, it's a normal jacket made of thick Kevlar-cloth mesh. A coat that runs out of Quintessence (that is, one that takes more than 25 hits without repairs) tears on its 26th shot. A KTS that's taken this much punishment must be retired — it's no good anymore.]

... Lesser Viasilicos (VEE-a-SIL-i-cos)

Arete 6, Quintessence 30, Background Cost 9 (but rare; see below)

Owning one of these relics from the 15th century is a source of pride for high-ranking Technocrats. As the millennium approaches, many Men in White and Comptrollers feel a need to look to the Union's past to justify their actions. Each Viasilicos is a relic from the days of the Order of Reason, a legendary Device that gave Enlightened Ones a prodigious edge over anachronistic magi.

The Lesser Viasilicos is a type of "seeing stone" used for communicating over great distances. When Artificers first crafted these Devices, they sculpted them into symmetrical shapes — polygons, crystals and other simple orderly forms.

Carved from quartz and illuminated with refracted sunlight, these large "stones" displayed images in their polished facets. Throughout the 14th and 15th centuries, Enlightened leaders used them to debate and converse across many leagues. These Devices also made it possible to coordinate conspiratorial activities in major cities with more remote guilds and brotherhoods in outlying communities.

Operating one of these "seeing stones" still requires a high degree of Enlightenment. Communicating with other stones is somewhat difficult, as most Viasilicos have been keyed only to certain locations. Activating one usually requires a full hour of meditation, but going to the trouble of activating a Lesser Viasilicos can be quite impressive. Administrators find it somewhat flattering and inspirational to be contacted by another high-ranking official through a historical relic. Most of the necessary Viasilicos lore has been lost, however, and many powerful suits consider owning one to be a matter of prestige — rather like displaying an autographed baseball or a silver-plated nine-iron — than a matter of expertise. These items are rare; therefore, the suits reason, they must be valuable.

It is said that the seven most powerful stones, the Greater Viasilicos, were linked to a forum chamber high atop the infamous White Tower of Languedoc. Inner Circle conspirators held meetings there not unlike those conducted in the original Ivory Tower. Only three of the stones used by the Circle of Languedoc have survived. (The other four have been presumed destroyed.) The scholar Terrence Whyte keeps one of the surviving stones on his desk, locked in a Plexiglas case and surrounded with arcane security systems.

Of course, some loyal Technocrats have begun to suspect a conspiracy among the elite owners of the Lesser and Greater Viasilicos, possibly one that involves the resurrection of long-gone principles of the Order of Reason. A resurfacing "urban legend" circulating through the hallways of Research Collectives concerns the missing four Greater Viasilicos from the Circle of Languedoc and their purpose within the Inner Circle. As one would expect, the rumor is fervently denied, and Technocrats who pursue the matter too freely are often summarily punished.

[A vulgar Effect links two or more stones together for an archaic "conference call." Once the connection is established (through an "Arete" roll, difficulty 7, on the part of the caller), the conversation takes place like a normal phone call.]

...PlastiSkin

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 6

Life often imitates art — especially when the "life" in question comes from the demented minds of young Progenitors. A certain group of Progenitor Students (also noted for creating weird beasts like Pander the Frog-Tongued Cat) got kinda wired one night while watching *Mission: Impossible* reruns. Inspired by the old gimmick wherein an enemy spy is duped by a "close friend" who's actually an IMF agent in an

elaborate mask, the infamous amalgam went to work perfecting a real-life version of the M.I. gag. Thus, PlastiSkin was born.

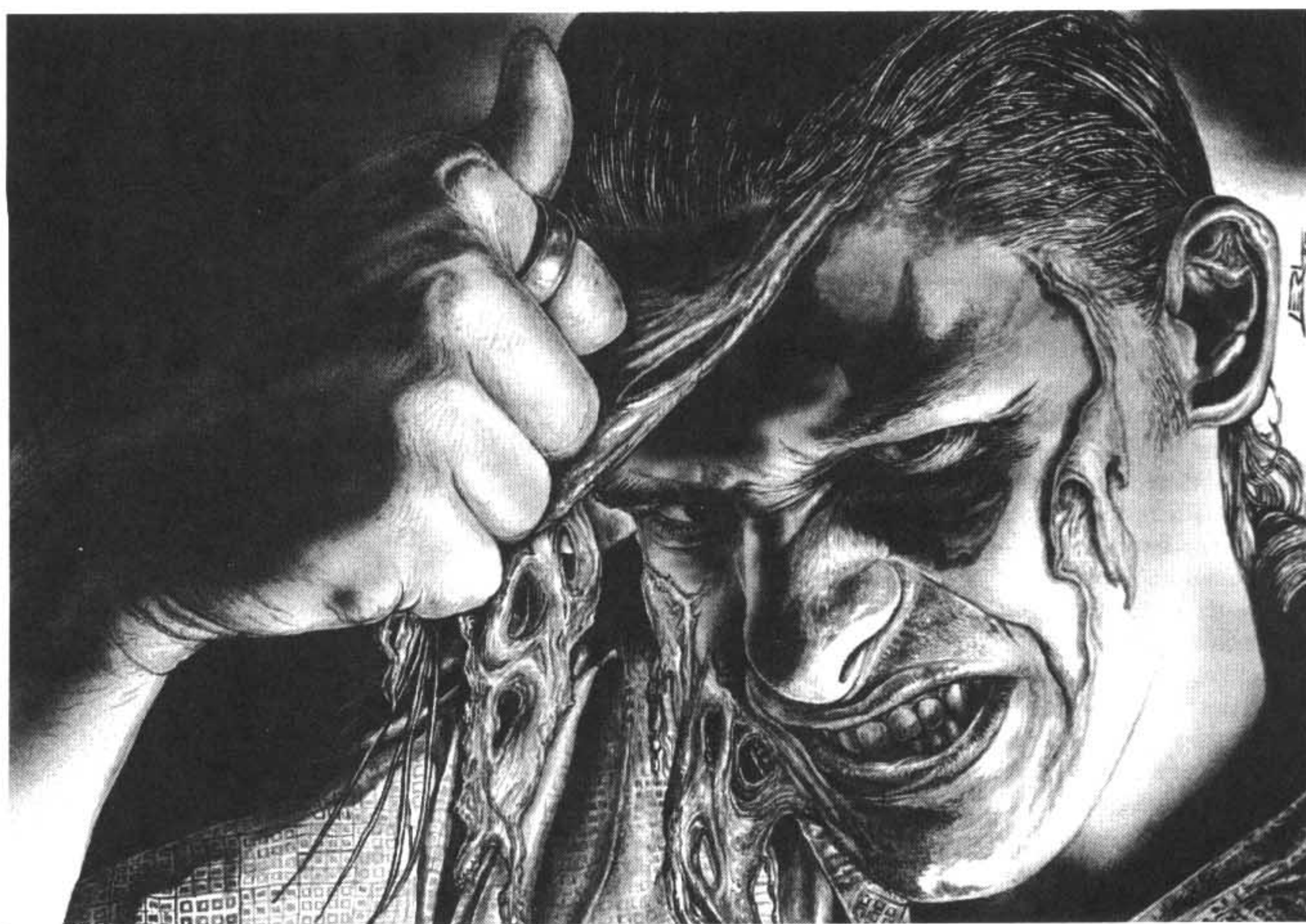
Take two parts synthetic skin, a dose of Quintessence and a little bit of artistic ability, and you've got the makings of a perfect disguise. Before a PlastiSkin face can be sculpted, the Progenitor making it needs photographs of the subject from several angles and a little influence over Mind. Once all of the pieces are assembled, the Progenitor can sculpt the 'Skin to whatever likeness she desires. This process involves more than just re-creating the features, though; a series of adjustments must be made to allow for a range of facial expressions, voice modulations and identifying marks. The whole process of creating a PlastiSkin mask takes several hours.

Putting on a PlastiSkin face only takes a few seconds, but the Device cannot be worn for longer than 24 hours. Even though the disguise is close to flawless, you still need to know your subject and possess a significant amount of acting talent. It's easier to fool a mundane than a mage. There are a number of ingenious magickal techniques for seeing through even the best disguise. Nonetheless, PlastiSkin tends to be a great propaganda tool; mages who learn about it tend to become overly paranoid, constantly invoking their Arts to confirm the true identities of the people they encounter. (Not that I'm encouraging paranoia, mind you, just trying to tip you off to both sides of this particular coin.)

A few weeks after this Device was invented, three proctors visited the university to witness the final exams of a class of student Progenitors. Out of a class of several dozen students, seven graduates were to be shipped to a much-vaunted Research Collective in Richmond. Five minutes into the exam, Alvin Zenforth, the leader of the university's most infamous study group, still hadn't shown up. Stephen Thundran, a representative from the Richmond Collective, expressed great concern over Zenforth's absence. He then began to praise Alvin's study group, interrupting the first test by stating to the assembled students how sorry he was that one of the most promising students in the school could not attend. Thundran then canceled the exams.

The students' confusion was met with howls of laughter from the speaker. As the theme song from a certain mid-'90s spy movie played over the classroom's sound system, Alvin Zenforth tore away his newly invented PlastiSkin replica of Stephen Thundran's face. He then declared to the two remaining professors that his "mission had been accomplished." Fearing the consequences of what might happen if a student like Alvin defected to "the other side," the remaining proctors promoted Alvin within a matter of days, gave him more than a passing grade and promptly assigned him to a deep-space patrol with an amalgam of Void Engineers.

[A coincidental Life Effect replicates the target's features; an additional Mind tweak plants the suggestion that the Technocrat is indeed the person she claims to be. A good



mimic can masquerade as anyone in her general size category with the help of her disguise; additional Wits + Acting or Manipulation + Subterfuge rolls might be necessary to carry the disguise off, but unless the Device's "Arete" roll fails, the PlastiSkin creates a perfect physical match.]

...Remote Sensors

Arete 5, Quintessence 25, Background Cost 8

When trouble breaks out, every amalgam of the notorious Men in Black has one overriding imperative: The individuals must function as a team. The leader of that team must constantly search for ways to improve his group's performance. Ten years ago, Special Agent PK7728 requisitioned a rather simple Device to solve this basic problem.

Like many Black Suit amalgams, his team was a mixture of slightly Awakened Technomancers and un-Awakened Sleeper sympathizers. They had experience working together, but PK7728 still wasn't satisfied with their results. Their response time was slow, and coordinating 10 agents at a time was extremely difficult. Thus, Agent PK7728 made a special request to Q Division: Equip all of his agents with simple surveillance Devices so that he could watch their progress in the field. Through extensive Mind procedures, PK7728 would then be able to respond to what he saw by giving his team more precise telepathic commands.

Fortunately, it's easy to hide a miniature camera in the frame of a pair of sunglasses, or to stash a Quintessence-sensing Device in a lapel pin. PK7728 employed a full range of sensor gear, from visual monitors to technomagickal scanners. Through these tiny sensors, any Technocratic team leader — Enlightened or not — can mark his soldiers' progress. An Awakened Operative maintaining contact with his team through remote sensors can rapidly shift his perception and watch through the eyes of a dozen men. If he has enough influence over Correspondence, he can see the perspectives of several agents at once. In larger amalgams, one NWO Gray Suit (an NWO infiltration officer) can use remote sensors to direct several Men in Black simultaneously, while the more experienced Technomancers move into position.

After years of perfecting his equipment and tactics, PK7728 makes it a habit to keep a laptop in his luxury sedan. From the safety of his bulletproof "command center," he observes several Operatives at once by multi-tasking their remote sensors through his computer. As a result, he has the highest success rate of any team leader in the New York area. Watch your backs in the Big Apple, kids — PK7728 is on the job, and he's got eyes on all sides of his head.

[Through a combination of Correspondence and Mind focused through a monitor, sensors and transmitters, an NWO

field commander can almost literally “see through his troop’s eyes.” The “Arete” roll sets up the link, which exists for up to 25 hours before the batteries go dead. In the meantime, what they see, he sees. In game terms, assume this lets a distant officer coordinate battle plans as if he views everything from a godlike perspective. If the troops can’t see something, of course, the commander can’t see it either. This Device is coincidental and may be used by Enlightened or un-Enlightened personnel.]

... Scout Drone

Arete 4, Quintessence 20, Background Cost 7

Lots of scientists like to take credit for these literal bugs. No one knows where the original design came from, but they’ve been flying around since the Cold War began. To resolve a pile of patent suits, the Technocratic Patent Review Board finally released the schematics into open (Technocratic) circulation — a Solomonian decision if I ever heard one! Now everybody’s got a different version; I’ve heard there are nearly as many “custom” Drone designs as there are species of insect. Personally, I doubt that’s true, but you’ve gotta give the Mirrorshades credit. Every microtechnician worth the title has cooked up a Drone or two, and most have perfected a dozen or more. In use on all sides of the Ascension War, Drones are the quintessential spying Devices — quick, tiny and hard to catch.

The basic concept is pretty simple: A small machine, built on the aerodynamic principles of wasps and hornets, carries a sensor array. The “head” houses a tiny camera system, and the midsection contains tiny energy cells and wing-engines. Adaptive camouflage on the outer shell makes the Drone difficult to see; when it hovers, it’s damn near impossible to spot. These little spies don’t make much noise — they’re about as conspicuous as a trapped insect, and appear to be exactly that, unless you get a really close look.

Drones can fly in through open windows, make quick passes through rooms or down halls, and even drop a few listening devices (shelled with the same adaptive camouflage) before retreating. Extremely stealthy, fast and subtle spies, these beasts go to pieces if you hit ‘em. This fragility is a mixed blessing — an idiot with a flyswatter can end a crucial survey attempt, but on the other hand, a smashed Drone tells no tales, either.

[The average Scout Drone has an effective perception Dice Pool of four, an Arcane Background of 2 and a transmission range of three miles. Many variations exist. Under most circumstances, Scout Drones are coincidental.]

... Styx Armor™

Arete 3, Quintessence N/A, Background Cost 6

Achilles was brought down by a shot in his heel because his careless mother did not dip that one part in the River Styx. Now we bring the river to you, and no part goes uncovered by our miraculous technology.

— From an advertising brochure for Styx Armor™

Nanotech is a booming field in the Technocracy. Everyday, the un-Enlightened are allowed to “discover” more and more innovations in microtechnology. Styx Armor™ (patent #AO46,327) is a simple and effective application of the wonders of machines too small to see. Invented by Dr. Kurisaki at Knossos Labs in California, this brilliantly designed “technovirus” provides people with armor as close as their skin — because it is their skin.

The self-replicating microscopic machines that create Styx Armor™ are injected into the wearer’s bloodstream. From there, they migrate to the basal connective tissue under the skin and begin their work: weaving a flexible latticework of super-strong fibers (based on spider silk, which is 10 times as strong as steel) just under the skin. The “wearer” notices nothing aside from a slight thickening of his skin and a tendency to form calluses. The nanotech remains in the host body, repairing and maintaining the fibers. When the body suffers a shock, the fibers absorb most of the impact, then rebuild themselves once the trauma has passed.

Styx Armor™ is not as effective as, say, Kevlar, but it’s far more versatile and effectively invisible. It won’t turn bullets, but it can deflect the worst of the tissue damage. Knife wounds become scratches and punches feel like kisses. As long as the wearer avoids X-ray machines, microscopes and magickal life-scans, the armor remains completely undetectable; the Black Hat seems really tough and really lucky, but not inhumanly so. Hence, Styx Armor™ is, under most conditions, Paradox-free. (The complications come, I’m told, when you try to combine this stuff with other cybernetics. Apparently, the whole mess turns on itself, making oatmeal of the Technocrat who was stupid enough to pile the gadgets on.)

Styx Armor™ is moderately expensive, but easy to obtain. Maintenance is almost nil — the wearer must consume a few hundred extra calories a day to fuel the nanotech, but things are normal otherwise. Monitoring physicians administer Maintenance Capsules during bi-weekly check-ups, providing the biotech with whatever materials it can’t get from the host body. Unlike the really comprehensive nanotech that the Progenitors *supposedly* keep under wraps (see **Technocracy: Progenitors**), Styx Armor™ doesn’t throw its “wearer’s” body completely out of whack. It does, however, occasionally cause tissue rejection in some cases. Be warned, meshheads!

[Styx Armor™ grants its “wearer” four additional soak dice and allows her to soak aggravated damage. Unlike most forms of armor, this Device covers the entire body. The “Arete” roll is made against difficulty 6 when the Device is first “installed”; if it’s successful, there are no complications. If it fails, the user’s body rejects the modifications and new cybernetics must be “installed” at +1 difficulty. If the roll comes up a botch, the tissue rejection is pretty extreme. Some nasty side effects — tearing flesh, serious illness, chronic pain, deformation, etc. — results, and the nanotech will be effec-



tively useless. Any attempt to add more cybernetics or nanotech to an agent equipped with Styx Armor™ demands an additional “Arete” roll at difficulty 9; unless this roll succeeds, the agent is in for a very bad time....This Device, which may be used in un-Enlightened agents, is usually coincidental.]

...X14 A Thunderhead

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 6

The biggest problems with a BFG (Big Fucking Gun) involve recoil, weight and ammunition. The Thunderhead sequence X14 A solves two of these difficulties and minimizes the third. Hence, this nasty S.O.B. has become one of the most popular heavy-duty weapons in the Technocracy, a blessing for phallically-impaired enforcers of every Convention.

Designed for maximum intimidation, the Thunderhead is BIG. Its Gatling configuration boasts 10 spinning barrels and a huge ammo clip. A definite two-hander, this monstrosity weighs in at around 10 kg and chambers custom-made 10mm AET (Accelerated Energy Transfer) rounds. It roars like its namesake, sending 1000 metal bolts per minute into its target. Anything remotely mortal that stands in this gun's path is dead before it hits the ground — which, of course, makes this a perfect mop-up weapon if you've got no reason to be subtle.

Despite its size and power, however, this gun is surprisingly easy to use. If the gun were designed by un-Enlightened manufacturers, Arnold Schwarzenegger himself couldn't handle the recoil it would create. Given the (ahem) advanced nature of the Thunderhead, it transfers most of that power back through a custom-designed kinetic-absorption system. The weapon itself is made of crafted alloys (read: Matter science by-products) that can withstand stresses that would tear a normal gun apart. Since the average person — conditioned as he is by TV and action films — can't be expected to know just how advanced this feat of engineering really is, the X14 A Thunderhead is usually coincidental. Even a Sleeper can use one, although he'll find that it has a tendency to jam whenever he fires it.

Since the gun went into production in 1987, several thousand of them have been produced. Although the majority of these killers reside in Technocracy safehouses and Horizon Constructs, there are a fair amount of them in open circulation. Fortunately for the state of the world, the Thunderhead is pretty fragile; it takes a skilled (read: Awakened) gunsmith to fix any problems it might have, and it chambers a special ammunition that only Iteration X makes. These “control measures” ensure that a Thunderhead in the wrong hands has a limited — if lethal — shelf life.

[In Awakened hands, assume that the Thunderhead is simply a really nasty gun. If a Sleeper or other supernatural creature attempts to use the gun, however, roll the Device's “Arete” to activate the mechanism. If the roll fails, the gun

refuses to fire; if it comes up as a botch, the gun jams and must be fixed by a Technocratic (or at least Technocracy-trained) gunsmith.

[X14 A Thunderhead Statistics

Difficulty: 8 Damage: 12 Range: 200 Rate: 5
Clip: 100 Conceal: No way!]

... Youth Drugs

Arete 3, Quintessence N/A, Background Cost 6 per dozen

With an efficiency that would do Ponce de Leon proud, these Technocratic bribes provide "water from the fountain of youth" to a select few. While the Progenitors (and their predecessors, the Hippocratic Circle) had developed youth potions centuries ago, the weight of modern medical thought had worn away the efficiency of the old formulae. New paths toward longevity had to be developed.

• Stasis

The most dramatic modern anti-aging drug was developed earlier this century. Dr. L. Keogh, a Pharmacopeist of remarkable standing, created the first test-run of Staticorpidrin in 1943 while looking for a "youth drug" for use by Technocrats themselves. She named the drug Staticorpidrin, from the medical graecolatin *staticorpi*, or "body halt." The initial clinical trials revealed ravaging side effects. A review board examined the detrimental consequences and, determining them too great for regular Technocrat Operatives, approved a more refined form of the drug for use in "encouraging loyalty" among the un-Enlightened.

The effects of Staticorpidrin, better known as "Stasis," are astounding, but remain well within the reaches of coincidental magick. Usual explanations for the dramatic consequences range from "providing the body with anti-aging agents" and "slowing, and even halting, the production of harmful free radicals" to "deactivating genetic obsolescence." Patients take the drug daily, gently shaping their lives to a soothing ritual — too soothing, apparently, to notice that within a week, they've become addicted to the treatment.

Stasis halts all aging (skin and hair changes, body aches, joint stiffness) as long as it's taken regularly, and it provides a brief shot of euphoria within a half-hour of each daily dose. It also halts internal aging, such as atherosclerosis and Alzheimer's Disease, making it a dramatic draw for many elderly folks who might otherwise patronize Dr. Kevorkian's services. However, Stasis does not extend the human life span — in fact, it may shorten it, since it increases the chance of kidney disease in long-term users.

A patient attempting to withdraw from the drug suffers uncontrollable trembling, depression and "accelerated aging" for between three days to a month. Her hair may turn white, or her skin may wither to the consistency of dry tissue-paper; her joints might flare into arthritic agony. These symptoms deliberately mirror the effects of old age, sending a

not-so-subtle message to the would-be defector: Return to us, and we'll make it go away. Stay on your own — and perish.

• Quin

Quinachronodine (from *Quintessence* and *achrono*, "without time"), better known as "Quin," is a much more powerful drug than Stasis. Created by R.A. Hunt during the search for a long-term stimulant, this drug was approved by the review board for use in desperate situations where someone needs to be convinced to do a large favor for the Technocracy *right now*. It's usually administered by weekly injection, accompanied by other "treatments" designed to make its powerful effects somewhat more coincidental.

Quin actually reverses the aging process. People look and feel younger after a few days, even hours. It cannot turn gray hair black again, but it does eliminate arthritis and wrinkles. Older people become more vigorous and active; young people feel stronger and smarter. The patient's metabolism increases to astounding levels, forcing her body to build muscle, drop weight and create fresh, smooth skin. ("Why, *dahling*, that new diet has done *wonders* for you! You're barely half of yourself now!")

Simply put, Quin makes people look nubile and fiercely attractive. Nothing, however, comes for free. Like Stasis, Quin is physically addictive, but the withdrawal symptoms are much more vicious: Hallucinations, seizures and heart failure strike within 24 hours of a missed dose.

Patients can take Quin only for a limited time, though. The drug creates a build-up of neurotransmitters in the brain. After anywhere from 3 to 10 years of use, the patient begins to lose REM sleep, the level of sleep that allows dreams. Subjects in this phase of drug use die of the side effects of dream withdrawal; psychotic breakdowns or intense suicidal depressions usually get them before they can go comatose.

Quin is an extremely useful drug for short-term Operatives since its effects are so *very* desirable. Some personality types will do *anything* for a steady supply. The drug is, however, *extremely* expensive, since it takes actual raw Quintessence to produce (one dram of Tass for every 10 doses).

Subjects using either Stasis or Quin need to be closely monitored. An extremely small percentage of Stasis users (0.8% according to the statisticians) show signs of psychic abilities. A slightly larger percentage of Quin users develop violent flu symptoms — symptoms that appear to be communicable. Speculations abound that Quin might be the cause of a superflu strain that even the Progenitors haven't been able to defeat. Despite the side effects, many frontline Operatives keep ready supplies of both drugs for special missions or faithful supporters.

[The effects of these wonder-drugs are best left to roleplaying and Storytelling. They do not increase Physical Traits in any way, although they may counteract the Age Flaw (see *The Book of Shadows*, page 35) at the Storyteller's discretion. Both drugs do set up a physical and psychological dependence, however, and may give a character the Addiction Flaw (*ibid.*, page 30), again at the Storyteller's insistence.

[As an optional rule, your troupe may decide to require an "Arete" roll when a character begins taking a drug; if it succeeds, the effects are normal; if it fails, nothing happens; if it botches, the side effects begin immediately. These drugs were designed to be used by Sleepers, and are totally coincidental.]

.... The Cephalic VCR

Arete 5, Quintessence 25, Background Cost 9

Crafted from the shell of an ordinary video cassette recorder, the Cephalic VCR turns falsified video images into memories. Seeing really is believing when the Black Hats hook you up to one of these babies.

From the outside, the Cephalic VCR looks perfectly typical. The invention's interior features an arcanelly-wired series of circuits that would make an electrician cringe. Even so, the VCR can still play regular VHS tapes without any unusual effects. This amusing toy includes an added feature, however: Several multi-colored wires plug into extra sockets in the back, and each one is attached to a small circular half-inch paddle that can be affixed, with a specially-formulated saline solution, to the temples of an abductee. When a doctored tape is inserted into the VCR, the viewer receives a gently massaging flow of electric current through his cerebral cortex. The current eases him into a relaxed trance-state. In the comfort of his own living room (and his own mind), the abductee then experiences a high-fidelity video recording through his frontal lobes. It's a pretty vivid recording — so vivid, in fact, that it seems to the viewer as though the images are real, that he's experiencing them first-hand. The images then become memories, perfect in every sensory detail.

The history of this Device demonstrates its most useful function: planting false memories in a subject's mind. When a writer in Berkeley became convinced that he had witnessed a spacecraft crash in Muir Park, a group of NWO Operatives quickly "sanitized" the site, erasing all evidence of the crashed Void Engineer ship. However, they still needed to convince the only witness that the event had never occurred. By extensively videotaping the cleaned-up site, they "acquired" enough evidence to prove to the young ufologist that there were no telltale scorch marks in the woods, that there had never *really* been a small, two-man craft caught in the higher branches of a redwood tree.

Late one night, black-clad representatives from a "government agency" drove up to the witness's front door. Showing the tape on his VCR wasn't enough to convince him the accident hadn't taken place, so the small group of "concerned citizens" who had been invited into the writer's home rendered him unconscious with a carefully administered electric shock. They then secured him in his soft, padded livingroom chair with duct tape. After jury-rigging a system of wires to the respected ufologist's forehead and playing the tape again, they persuaded the unconscious witness that, in fact, he had never really seen any evidence of an "alien visitation." Believing that he was reliving his trip through the woods, the witness was convinced that he had seen nothing at all.

Sadly, events take a darker turn at this point. The three Men in Black realized the full impact of their discovery. They wanted to test out the invention's application further before submitting the prototype to Q Division. The witness had a six-year-old daughter who (thankfully) was sleeping over at a friend's house that night. *What kind of results, the Operatives wondered, would we get if we tried other tapes in the VCR?*

Within a matter of hours, the ufologist was on the Internet reporting further details of his marvelous discovery. He recanted his story about what he had seen at the alleged crash site; he then insisted that he had witnessed the playful antics of a village of blue Smurfs instead, received revelations from a creature named "Elmo" about the glory of the number four, and spent a cheerful evening singing songs with a large purple dinosaur. The boundary between reality and television had been shattered, and the ufologist's reputation in his parapsychological community was demolished. He currently resides in a small apartment in downtown San Jose where he waits for his friends in the television set to "come out and visit him again."

[This brainwashing tool sets up an intense false memory in the subject's brain with a successful "Arete" roll and some proper "indoctrination" time. Like many Mind-influenced Devices, the Cephalic VCR is often coincidental.]

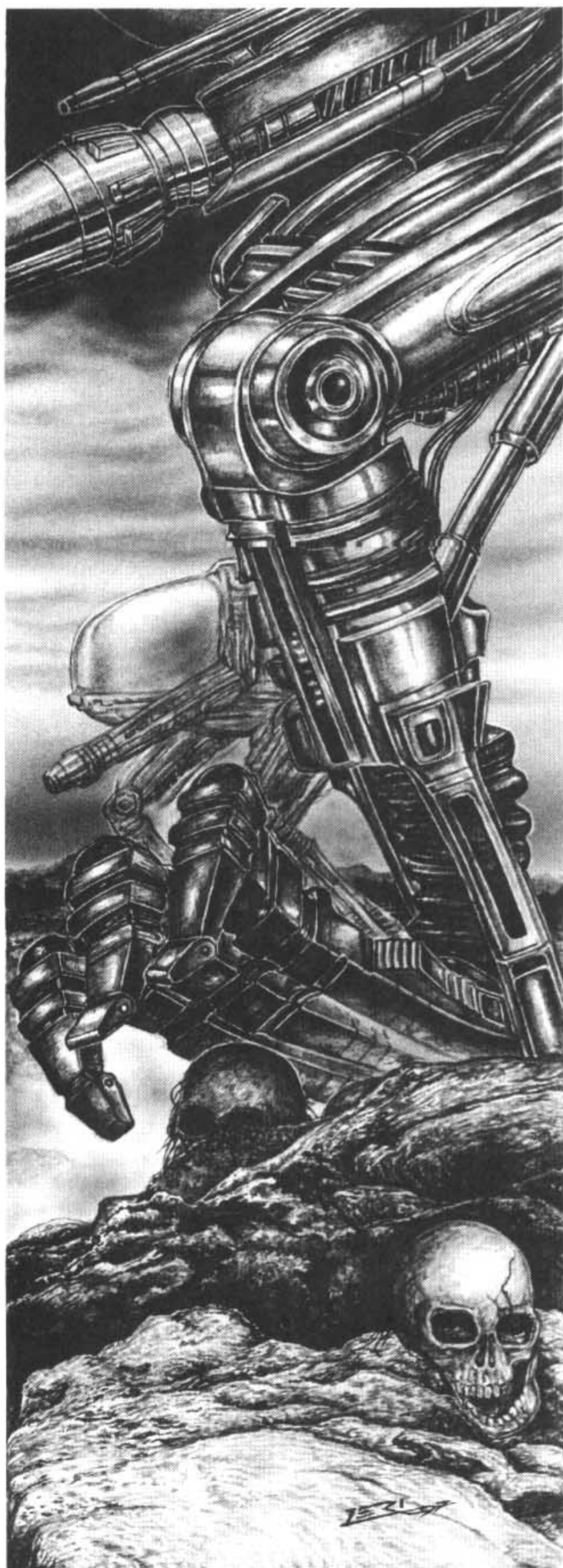
[To resist the Device's effects, a victim must pit his Willpower against the VCR's "Arete" in a series of four resisted rolls (difficulty 7). If the character wins, he keeps his original memories intact; if the machine wins, the impressions on the tape — no matter how ludicrous they might seem — become real recollections, perfect in every detail. Naturally, the very perfection of those false impressions might make a trained psychologist suspicious. Under most circumstances, however, the Men in Black are too clever to create really unbelievable scenarios. (See **Technocracy: NWO** for further details on mental reprogramming.)]

.... Heihō no Sebrio, the Samurai Suit

Arete 6, Quintessence 30, Background Cost N/A

A combination of protection, symbolism and weaponry, armor has been a mainstay of the Convention since the earliest days of the Order of Reason. While the old suits of Titan Armor that made the Order's troops so invincible during the Renaissance are long obsolete, their legacy has carried over into the newest battle suits that the Technocracy has to offer.

Most Western power armor designs enhance the strength of the stereotypical beefy farmboy recruit and provide him with some shielding and big guns. A small group of Void Engineers in Japan, headed by M.R. Fujikawa, developed a revolutionary new armor system: the *Heihō no Sebrio*, a.k.a., the Samurai Suit. Working on the tenet that the strength of the warrior is in his spirit, not his bicep diameter, this suit completely supplants the need for brawn. A small pilot becomes a distinct combat advantage when his suit can pack



100 more pounds of ammo than the muscle-boy recruit's standard issue mechanical wet dream.

The Samurai Suit itself stands almost three meters high. The pilot rides in a fetal position within the torso, running all operations *via* direct nerve impulses through jacks into the pilot's brain. The original test pilots volunteered from the ranks of aging World War II veterans, whose experiences in brutal Pacific battles remained imprinted in the recesses of their minds. Their amazing store of tactical and combat skills needed a little nudging from Pharmacopeist drugs, but soon their facilities and finesse returned full-force. Now they live in the armor, sustained by life support systems and periodic physical therapy, surrendering their near-useless flesh bodies for powerful, mechanical ones. Their original eyes, failing from age and poor health, have been removed and replaced with datajacks and associated biochips. The armor provides perceptions far beyond the normal human range through the cerebral umbilicus, and the biochips permit the pilot to interpret this data accurately. With help from the Samurai Suit, these elderly men can preserve their warrior spirits despite the betrayal of their flesh.

Each suit of armor is designed a bit differently; the modifications favor the pilot's skills and the commander's needs. The basic weaponry package includes a rapid-fire 5.56mm anti-infantry weapon on the left shoulder, an automatic cannon set on the right arm, an enormous battle claw set on the left hand, and the Suit's innate strength. Other common mods include flame-throwers, dart cannons, deflection fields, electric-pulse grips and pinpoint laser batteries.

A *Heihō no Sebrío* is formidable, no doubt about it. Too formidable, sometimes, for its own good. Despite the popularity of animé, manga and American SF flicks, a 10-foot, three-ton man-like monstrosity is still a Paradox magnet whenever it shows up on the consensual side of the Gauntlet. The Void Engineers keep this Go-Bot squad in the Deep Universe for now, just to be safe. With the "close encounters" they have out there, I'm sure they keep their Frankensteins busy. Every so often, I've heard about extreme mop-up operations that required moving a Samurai Suit or two across to this side of the Barrier. I'm glad I wasn't around to see the mess they must have made! From all indications, the Engineers are getting ready to release "prototypes" into the public view to prepare the Sleepers for the inevitable power armor brigades. Naturally, this is all part of "top secret government military experiments"; the current treaties regarding Japan's military hardware are being slowly shredded to make way for "innovations" that have already been on the Technocracy payroll for some 15 years. What better staging area could they have than Japan, whose movies and comics have featured power armor suits for nearly three decades?

As I understand it, the current *Heihō no Sebrío* squad includes 15 battle-ready units. A second squad (composed of younger recruits) is supposedly in training. Fujikawa and his team hope to buy a significant amount of influence in the

coming years. With innovations like the *Heihō no Sebrio*, I've got my money on them.

[These monstrosities stride into battle using their "Arete" as sensor Dice Pools. To lock onto a target, a power armor suit rolls its "Arete" against difficulty 6; Arcane, Stealth and other modifiers may increase that difficulty somewhat, but normal targets are easy to spot, even in darkness or bad weather.

[In the Deep Umbra, the Storyteller may consider a Samurai Suit coincidental; at the moment, it's vulgar on this side of the Gauntlet and needs to make an "Arete" roll (difficulty 8, or 9 if Sleepers are present) when it first appears. A failed roll indicates some minor mechanical problem, like fluttery sensors or balky weapon systems. A botched roll creates a major malfunction — perhaps even an explosion — at some appropriate moment. The disaster may strike at some future time, but it *will* happen!

[The Quintessence pool represents one of the Suit's biggest drawbacks: fuel consumption. A Samurai Suit can walk around all day, but it burns energy very quickly in a fight. The Quintessence rating reflects the Suit's "battle state"; under normal combat conditions, the Device can work for 30 turns (or minutes) before it needs to be recharged. This process requires at least a half-hour and a proper recharging facility.

[No normal human being can ride in a Samurai Suit; the pilots have undergone special training, biomodification and indoctrination, and cannot leave their Suits without dying. Although they're technically Sleepers, these pilots have been conditioned to accept their state. Neither men nor machines, these modern *bushi* are semi-Awakened hybrids of both.]

[Power Armor Traits]

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Intimidation 6, Firearms 4, Melee 4, Technology 3, Computer 3, Linguistics (computer translators) 6

Spheres: none (but see below)

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK (x3), -1 (x3), -2, -4, Destroyed

Armor Rating: 8 (13 soak dice, total)

Attacks/Powers: 5.56mm cannon (400 rounds, Difficulty 7, Damage 10, Range 200, Rate 3); 20mm auto-cannon (five rounds, Difficulty 6, Damage 13 die explosion, Range 100, Rate 1); claw (Difficulty 6, Damage 9); infrared, ultra-violet and tracking sensors (six dice)

Possible Modifications (up to two per Suit): Flamethrower (Difficulty 6, Damage 6 [aggravated] per turn); dart cannons (Difficulty 4, Damage 5, Range 50, Rate 5); deflection field (adds +2 to attackers' "to hit" difficulties); electric pulse grips (Difficulty 6, Damage 6 per turn); pinpoint laser batteries (Difficulty 6, Damage 10, Range 500, Rate 3)

.... SkinSuits

Arete N/A, Quintessence N/A, Background Cost 8

For Void Engineers, the Etherite "space suit aesthetic" just doesn't cut it. The ultimate vacc suit has to be easy to use and easy to wear. With this in mind, SkinSuits have been the latest trend among Voids performing EVA missions. Made of form-fitting rubber derivatives and various biocomponents, SkinSuits surround an engineer's flesh with 5mm of black synthetic skin. The helmets are completely clear and provide 360° vision, although they're somewhat smaller than the traditional Etherboy "goldfish bowl" designs.

By touching helmets, Voids can speak without additional comm Devices (though such Devices are, of course, standard equipment). This is considered a very friendly gesture when you're in the vacuum of the Deep Universe with a comrade — more so when this comrade is of the opposite sex. SkinSuits can convey a slight degree of tactile sensation, as well. A Voider in a 'Suit can feel something brush against his fingers...and against many other sensitive parts of his anatomy, for that matter. (This is considered even friendlier and isn't entirely uncommon on extremely long patrols.)

Styles of vacc suits come and go. Some Voids are terribly trendy about the whole issue, but more traditional scientists get sick of the whole "fashion" debate. Why not stick to what works? Besides, how are the Engineers going to keep up their false image of jumpsuit-wearing, clipboard-toting geeks in front of the other Conventions if they're wearing glorified latex bondage gear? The debate rages on. One thing's for sure: SkinSuits do the job, and they look good doing it.

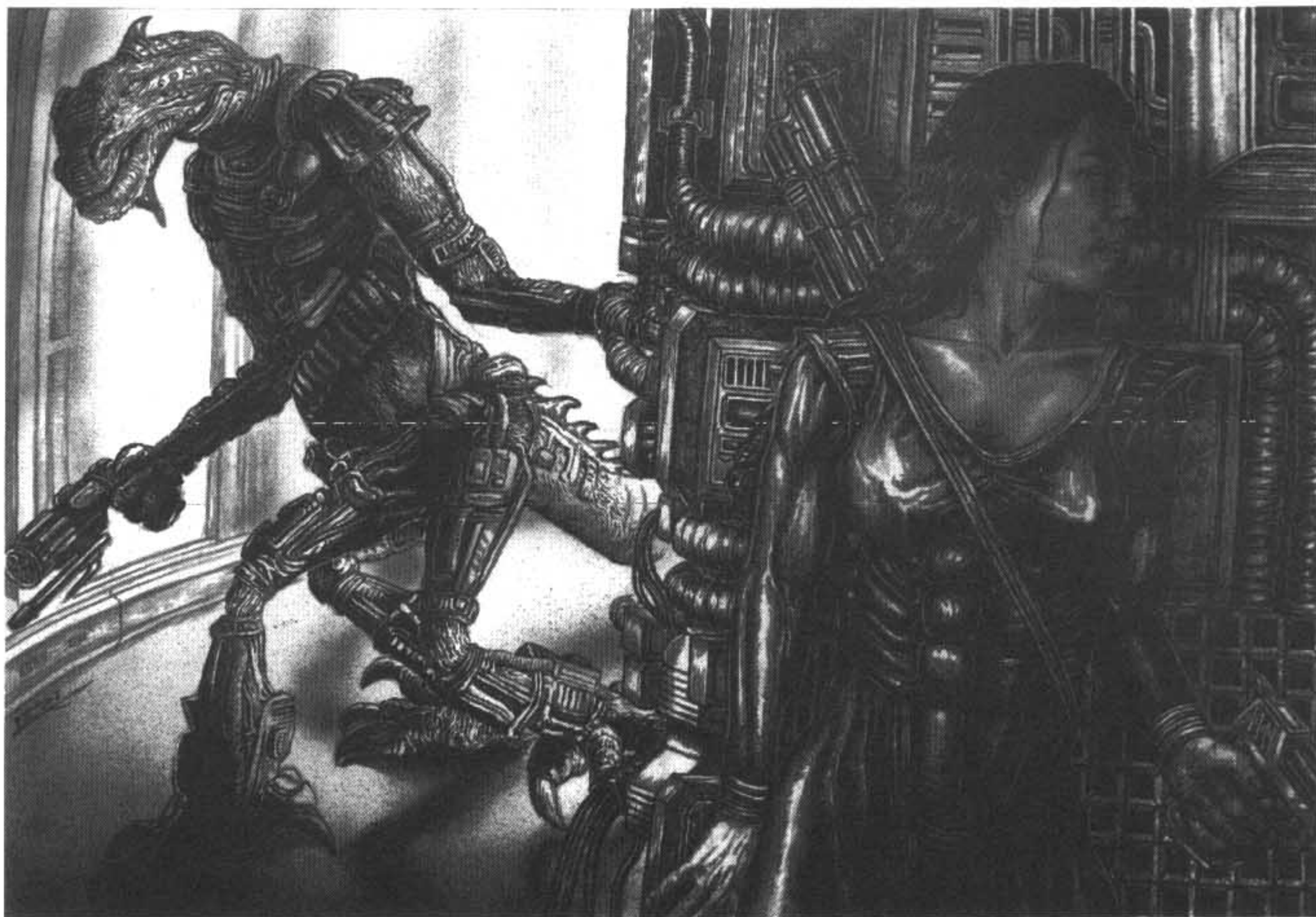
[A SkinSuit allows a human being to survive the vacuum of space, deep water, or some other hostile environment. The elaborate biocomponents allow her to recycle sweat, blood, urine and breath into breathable oxygen for up to a week; after that, the Void Engineer is on her own. This Device is vulgar, but considering that it's usually used in the Deep Umbra, that's a moot point.]

..... Trans-Dimensional Superior Protective Vehicle (TDSPV)

Arete 5, Quintessence 25, Background Cost 10

Technocrats (poor babies!) live in constant danger. Tradition mages, vampires, lycanthropes, un-Enlightened criminals and internal politics all serve to shorten many a life span, keeping the Progenitors busy with clone work. A wise Technocrat always has an eye out for potential hazards. And as everyone knows, one of the most dangerous places to be is in transit — especially if you're going to any kind of appointed meeting.

Given this, though, it is not surprising that the Mirrorshades have spent a lot of time and cash on the transportation problem. To date, their crowning achieve-



ment is the TDSPV, a vehicle based on the principle that the best way to survive an attack is not to be there when it happens. Dr. Elizabeth Harrington of the Void Engineers constructed this vehicle using some truly unique approaches to Correspondence, Mind and Dimensional Science. No one, as of yet, has been able to duplicate her results — a fact that renders the patent she holds as pretty much unnecessary.

As you might expect, TDSPVs are rarer than a Bill Clinton bumpersticker at a hacker's convention. Officially, 27 cars exist, each one of them supervised and partially constructed by Dr. Harrington. Only the most influential earth-bound Technocrats get to ride in these machines, and they tend to save them for occasions where it's important to look impressive. Naturally, a TDSPV resembles a normal (if well-appointed) limousine. The passenger compartment is completely sealed off from the outside and the driver by a sheet of tinted bulletproof glass. The driver communicates with the passenger compartment only through an intercom. The pure genius of the design is that once the passengers enter the vehicle and shut the doors, they're not actually inside the vehicle *at all* — they're someplace else entirely. Where is this other place? That's open to debate, though some folks hypothesize that the TDSPV links to a small pocket Realm. The passengers remain there (wherever "there" may be) until the vehicle reaches its destination and they step out. The alternate interior looks to all the world like the inside of a limousine; thus,

our Friends in Black can take un-Enlightened passengers for a ride without tweaking anyone's sense of "reality."

From what I've heard, the mileage sucks. The beasts get about 30 MPG (hey, for a *Technocrat's* wheels, that's bad) and they need roughly 10 drams of Tass for every 100 km traveled. Under most circumstances, a TDSPV is Paradox-free. If anything should happen to the car in transit, well, gee, it's a good thing those folks inside switched to the decoy car before the attack/accident/act of God, isn't it? However, magickal attacks can provoke a backlash if things get really scary — after all, we all know there's only so far you can push Mother Nature before the bitch gets mad — and as for technomagick in the car: *Not* a good idea. I've heard of at least one Grand Poobah who disappeared into null-space when his cybernetics malfunctioned. (God, can you imagine a Technocratic Paradox Realm? Talk about *boring*....)

[A successful "Arete" roll (difficulty 7) shunts the TDSPV's passengers from the inside of the car to the inside of the Realm. A failed roll leaves them inside the car, and a botch...well, you know that Technocratic Paradox Realm? Any time a passenger tries to activate a magickal procedure inside the space, the Storyteller should roll the "Arete" again; a successful roll means that nothing drastic happens; a failed roll indicates some minor mishap (a misfired spell, a cybernetic malfunction, etc.). A botch sends the characters into

the aforementioned Paradox Realm, a cramped limousine interior with doors that never open.

[If the car is destroyed in transit, a homing beacon activates back at the owner's Construct. A retrieval gate (a Spirit/Correspondence Effect) opens the Realm and frees the occupants. Activating the gate might require an "Arete" roll (difficulty 8) if the Storyteller wants to complicate matters further. This selfsame gate might be able to rescue passengers who've been trapped in the Paradox Realm, but that roll's difficulty rises to 10. Only one "retrieval roll" is allowed per day.]

..... Black Helicopters

Arete 5, Quintessence 25, Background Cost 10

Any mook can take a trip down to Hertz and rent a black luxury sedan. It takes an amazing lack of subtlety to threaten a Chantry by parking a big-ass black car on their lawn. Experienced Black Suits rarely use such crude methods. In fact, few elite frontline Operatives actually drive to the scene of a reality crime. Some Iteration X Armatures and NWO Operatives take to the air in specially-equipped black helicopters.

Contrary to the urban legend, black helicopters are not invisible. They are, however, cloaked with the best tech the Black Hats can manage on this side of the Gauntlet. Arcane technomagick renders the 'copters inconspicuous; hyper-modified "hush engines" dampen engine noise; thermal camouflage deflects heat sensors and adjusts light refractions off the 'copter's surface; finally, mental projectors send "not my business" vibes out to anyone who might be watching. While most of these helicopters are literally painted jet-black, their counter-sensory array allows them to essentially disappear. A intimidating variety of sensors, armor and weaponry completes the package.

This mode of transport was originally used by the New World Order to move its troops between urban war zones. In the beginning, the technology was far from perfect. Devoted conspiracy theorists became suspicious of "mysterious helicopters" flying over trouble spots. True to form, the conspiracists quickly misunderstood the 'copters' real purpose. Some folks began watching the skies for *any* kind of helicopter; now they dutifully record the large registration numbers painted underneath standard police and news choppers, then disseminate those numbers through their networks. The Mirrorshades, in the meantime, updated their technology, ironed out the bugs, encouraged the rumors to hide their own activities, and consequently, sent the theorists barking up all the wrong trees.

Say what you will, the Black Hats aren't *entirely* stupid.

Now a wide range of theories "explain" the "conspiracy in the air," ranging from cover-ups over UFO crash sites to speculation about U.N. detainment camps. Misinformation is a powerful ally, and the few mundanes who notice the black helicopters circling overhead don't see them as clearly as they think they do.

[A black chopper has an effective Arcane Background of 5, even when it's directly overhead. Its countersensors wipe out all detection attempts — magickal and technological —

with a successful "Arete" roll (difficulty 6). The Technocracy, of course, possesses counter-countersensors that can defeat this array. As the man said, the Technocrats aren't completely stupid.

[Although the majority of the Black Helicopter fleet flies without Primium protection (it's too expensive and rare to use on *everything*), a few elite 'copters do have countermagickal armor that subtract five successes from any magickal Effect cast in their direction. The average Black Helicopter relies on a counter-procedure array (that is, a countermagick Dice Pool), which pits the machine's "Arete" against an attacking mage's own.

[A Forces-based baffle system silences the 'copter's engines and deflects radar, sonar and microwave transmissions. Custom-tuned radio waves can breach the shield (the Technocrats need a way to communicate) and signals sent out from "behind" the scramblers pass through without distortion. This wasn't the case in older models, which often wandered off course or crashed when their communications and sensory gear went haywire. Advanced scanners track Quintessence, life energies and other paranormal activities through a combination of Correspondence, Forces, Life, Prime Spirit and Time perception Effects (Dice Pool of five). A nasty weapons package and thick armor complete the nightmare.

[Safe Speed: 200 MPH Max Speed: 400 MPH Maneuverability: 10 Crew: 4 Armor: 10 Weapons: Two 30mm cannons, two 2.75" rocket pods of eight rockets each

[This vehicle is coincidental. Although it requires at least one Enlightened crewman, it can be flown with a support crew of un-Enlightened Providers.]

..... Cloning Devices

Arete 5, Quintessence 25, Background Cost 10

In recent months, the mass media has fallen all over itself to bring us all the "latest news" on cloning. Naturally, this reinforces the belief that human cloning (which, as we all know, was perfected several decades ago at the very least) is just around the corner. Hell, when the President of the United States issued public policy statements on the subject, the idea entered the mainstream — which is, of course, exactly what the Technocracy wanted.

Not surprisingly, a great deal of hot air and ink have been spent on the ethics of cloning — particularly the ethics of cloning humans. These debates irritate Sarah Dinsdale, a Progenitor working with an amalgam of Gray Men in Austin, Texas. For her, cloning isn't an abstract ethical issue — it's one of the greatest weapons in the War for Reality. Many of her amalgam's missions involve abducting and cloning the friends and families of suspected reality deviants (translation, kiddies: us). A little conditioning assures the loyalty of the "replacements," who then go to work subverting their "loved ones." Once in place, the clones either win their targets over, or destroy them.

With cloning in the forefront of sociopolitical debate, Sarah and her team have been able to make some pretty drastic improvements to human clone designs. In the recent past,

human Xeroxes have been Paradox magnets, quickly deteriorating or suffering "design flaws" like poor memory, cancer or spastic reflexes. These problems are fading quickly. The new generations of human clones are harder, smarter and more mentally stable than their so-called "Superior" predecessors, the "Victor"-model superhumans. As far as I know (and my sources of information are pretty damn good), Sarah is still working out the bugs in her systems. Two of her innovations, the Memory Dump and the Field Cloning Vat, have gone a long way toward accomplishing that goal. Once the flaws are expelled from the design (if such a thing can happen), she plans to distribute her findings throughout her Convention. If she succeeds, the real-life Clone Wars may reach a whole new level of intensity.

• The Memory Dump

Sarah has found that replicating an individual is much easier if her team can abduct him and dump as much of his memory into storage as they can. By making arcane modifications to an external computer hard drive, she's been able to expand its capacity from a few gigs to enough to hold a sizable chunk of the information in a human mind. The resulting portable "memory bank" has become a standard item for her operations. Q Division, seizing the idea, has begun construction on similar models.

Unfortunately, the download time of a memory bank is a bitch — almost 24 hours — and even then, the information recovery isn't always complete. There's always a chance that a replicant with an uploaded memory may forget the name of his dog or the last four digits of his social security number. These telltale clues may tip off a target, especially if she's got reasons to be suspicious to begin with.

It should be noted that the memory downloaded from a human mind isn't accessible from inside the storage device. An obscene amount of data compression makes it nearly impossible to access the information until the data is uploaded into a clone. This frustrates the hell out of the Boys in Black — many of their missions would be much easier if they could just pour the sum of an abductee's knowledge into a memory dump and retrieve it quickly! Despite this limitation, a clone with a reconstructed memory is always easier to condition than the original abductee would have been — and can be used to break the original "parent" after the cloning and conditioning process has been completed. People, as they say, always hate to be betrayed by their own flesh and blood.

• Field Clone Vats

Dumping the memory from an abductee is the first step toward cloning him. Once the internal data has been preserved, gathering enough cellular material to make a coherent clone takes only about five minutes. Even with that amount of tissue, however, growing a clone takes about a week. With a smaller amount of tissue (say, a few hairs or dead skin cells), the process of replication can take as long as a month.

The equipment required for this procedure fits into a space about the size of a large backpack. Once it's set out and

reassembled, most of the equipment can be used in a regular bathtub. This makeshift device then functions as a primitive clone vat. On more than one occasion, Sarah has used her invention in cheap motel rooms. (Fortunately for her, she has yet to be discovered by the cleaning staff.)

Convenience has its price, of course. "Bathtub clones" have higher flaw ratios. A replicant may display strange habits, like putting salt on his cereal or whiskey on his Oreos, or suffer strange skin conditions or tumors. (Curiously, many clones created for the Men in Black in the early '90s were all created with the same "flaw": to melt and then evaporate when killed. Cloning techniques have advanced considerably since then.) Although several clones can be made from the same original, making copies of copies is futile, as the chances of degeneration increase. Besides, releasing more than one clone into the general public drastically increases the chance of a Paradox backlash.

Fortunately for the world-at-large, the Progenitors have yet to successfully clone an Awakened Avatar; although some of their creations have Awakened on their own, those mystick selves are probably "random souls" trapped in artificial bodies. Thus, cloned mages "lose their powers" — a sure sign that your Chantrymate has been Xeroxed! Hence, our friends among the *Jurassic Park* set prefer to duplicate our friends and family. It's too damn risky to try to copy a mage!

Once the replication is complete, the original is replaced with the copy. To avoid a nasty scene, the two organisms must be kept separate. If the two ever meet in the same location, especially around mundane witnesses, the chances of Paradox skyrocket. (Ever seen a clone turn into an instant-cancerous mass? That's what can happen when Paradox catches two "twins" together, when one of them came from a test tube.) For this reason, Sarah's team always makes sure the original has been stashed away before his replicant is put in place. Once abducted, the original template can be destroyed, although it's often far more efficacious to mindwipe, condition, brainwash or in some other way set the first one aside for later. In fact, a fully-conditioned original can always be re-substituted for the clone later, as the more complete memory and genetic structure of a conditioned human makes "it" a far more useful tool.

Sarah uses the state of the art in her field. With her talents at their disposal, Gray Team #ZA99 is quickly gaining a reputation for ruthless efficiency. With the boundaries of Paradox being pushed further away from the cloning horizon, Sarah hopes to teach her methods to other Progenitors. Now if they could only purge those "alien abduction" memories from a few of their subjects....

[The Memory Dump uses a powerful procedure to copy the subject's memories and place them into an "open" mind. This requires two "Arete" rolls — one to pull the target's memories and another to place them into a "receptacle." Information overlap and overload makes it damned near impossible to dump the info into a sentient subject; the two minds clash and their memories mesh together into a nearly-



incomprehensible mess. Thus, Progenitor Operatives create fresh new bodies to receive the Dump's contents.

[This new body comes courtesy of an elaborate procedure; the process takes quite a while (see above) and requires a workspace, samples, the equipment and a thorough knowledge of anatomy and cloning science (represented by Science Knowledges of the fields in question, with ratings of 3 or higher). The Progenitor needs to get at least five successes on a vulgar magick roll; the base difficulty of 9 can be modified to 6 with the proper preparations and equipment. Three rolls are allowed before the clone deteriorates. As you can imagine, cloning requires a really advanced Progenitor — unless these Devices, which facilitate the process, are involved.

[Theoretically, any Technocrat with the proper training — the Life and Prime Spheres, the Medicine Trait and the Science Knowledges described above — can use the Field Clone Vats and Memory Dump to create living clones. If the Device has a higher "Arete" rating than the mage does, the Storyteller should roll that Trait; if the mage's skills exceed the machine's, her Arete takes the place of the Device's "Arete." Still, very few mages outside the Progenitors understand the workings of these arcane inventions. The equipment's advanced nature makes it almost impossible for a non-Progenitor to employ. This way, the Mad Doctors keep their edge over their fellow Conventions.]

[Once created, the clone becomes the "property" of the Storyteller. Depending on the creation roll, the circumstances of the "birth" and the needs of the story, the clone may be almost perfect, slightly skewed or deeply flawed. A botch during the cloning process creates either a mess of living cells or a monster (Storyteller's option). The latter often end up in the garbage, or become enforcers for the more disturbed members of the Convention.]

Ω The Orrery of Madame des Bellestours

Arete N/A, Quintessence N/A, Background Cost N/A

The eccentric Madame des Bellestours is regarded today as one of the heroes of the Enlightenment — a fact that would have surprised and amused her in equal measure. Widowed at a young age, this 15th-century genius devoted her life to the study of astrology. As modern chemistry evolved from alchemy, so did modern astronomy evolve from astrology. Many elder Technocrats believe that Madame des Bellestours was a significant evolutionary force in this change.

She was met with ridicule in her day, as most great scientists do, but this didn't deter her from her studies. Of her publications, only two copies of her treatise *On the Influence of the Planets* exist today, and her first work, *On the Mathematics of the Stars*, exists only in manuscript form. Even so, excerpts of these works are required reading for all young Void Engineers.

Madame des Bellestours' library consisted of over 600 volumes, most of which were devoted to the study of the stars

and planets. The upper floor of her house contained a star-watching dome and telescope of her own design and construction. Then she built an orrery, a clockwork model of the solar system, long before a word existed for such a device. She used this apparatus as an assistant in her examination of the skies.

No one who has read about Madame des Bellestours would consider her a "mage" in the classic sense, even though that's clearly what she was. She would have laughed at the idea herself. Clearly, however, she used what we would call technomagick to build her orrery. She herself constructed it out of bronze and steel, going so far as to teach herself metalworking when she realized that other artisans were not going to be able to make the gears and mechanisms her designs required (and wouldn't do so for a lady, at that!) The finished — or almost-finished, since she spent all of her life making adjustments and additions and changes — Device measures 7.4 meters at its highest point and 8.5 meters at its widest. Wide rings of metal support models of the planets, moons and stars — each one enameled with designs and colors, and some inset with the corresponding astrological gems.

Dr. Ruth Christopher's biography of Madame des Bellestours, *The Invisible Woman*, revealed that this remarkable lady knew a great deal more than any modern scientist would expect someone from her century to know. Several moons of Jupiter, details of the rings of Saturn, and other things that were not "discovered" until well after her age are all included in her model. A team of Void Engineers are presently concerned with examining some "unknown astrological phenomena" that were *also* included in her model. The "experts" haven't decided whether the anomalies are inaccuracies in the model or whether there's something there that the scientists haven't discovered yet.

And then there's the magick woven into the model itself — a mixture of Correspondence principles, Prime patterns, Mattercraft and a Spirit Master's understanding of the outer worlds. Madame des Bellestours' orrery possesses strong arcane connections to, as far as anyone can tell, the entire universe. Dr. Miriam Jacobin published a journal article proposing that the orrery was the basis for the current model of the universe. She goes on to suggest that the model actually controls or runs the universe in some basic way. (The Technocratic community, as a whole, received the article with great disfavor and Dr. Jacobin subsequently disappeared. She may be undergoing re-education, or she may be a Child of Ether by now.) More "moderate" theories hold that the arcane connections enable the universe to control the model, thus, making it more accurate. The model can certainly be used to make remarkably accurate predictions about phenomena, both astrological and terrestrial.

Today, the model sits in a dome of copper and glass located on Madame des Bellestours' family estate, not far from Lyons, France. It rests on a slate floor that still bears some of the scratches and mappings from its original construction, and which, according to legend, Madame des Bellestours used as a

chalkboard for calculations. The orrery is powered by a mill-wheel not far away, and her remarkable engineering — both mechanical and magickal — is so delicately balanced that moving it is not presently an option. The property currently belongs to Dr. Ruth Christopher's team of Void Engineers, and it is heavily guarded. Maybe the Mirrorshades take the "controlling the universe" idea more seriously than they claimed to have. Or maybe it's just too good of a piece of history to lose.

Unfortunately, both the awesome library and the remarkable telescope of Madame des Bellestours are now gone. One of her descendants sold the library off in 1817, and the fate of the telescope is not known. Many scientists regret the latter loss in particular; the amazing accuracy of the orrery suggests that the telescope was pretty phenomenal. Many Technocrats would give nearly anything to study it.

And no, I wouldn't possibly have any idea where it might be.

[This Device doesn't really *do* anything special — it's what the orrery is that makes it a treasure. No one who beholds this magnificent machine can doubt that Madame des Bellestours was a visionary genius with some phenomenal perceptions of the galaxy. Visitors who've actually traveled in the Deep Universe can attest to the model's accuracy, and mysticks who enter the room where the orrery rests can feel a low but noticeable "vibration" in the area.]

Ω Retinal Encoding Organism (RetEncO)

Arete 4, Quintessence 20, Background Cost N/A

A 1975 appeal by an NWO agent facing Technocratic judicial proceedings paved the way for a most irregular parole. The leader of the inquiry panel, Sebastian Tallow, requested that a renowned Progenitor researcher named Patricia Zevis (who also happened to be Tallow's wife) be allowed to produce an organism that would permit the agent to prove her loyalty to the panel. One interesting rumor claimed that Tallow and the agent were secret lovers. Later, dark rumors (spurred by some of Tallow's more erratic behavior) suggested that both Tallow and the agent had tripped down the Nephandic Path together. Perhaps Tallow had repented for his explorations and tried to draw his partner back from the edge. Only he knows for sure. At any rate, his wife obligingly created the RetEncO.

A simple bacteria with an extragenetic engine, the RetEncO colonizes the target's retina. Every scrap of visual data falls upon the thinly spread colony. The bacteria take this information, encode it into DNA strands, and secrete it into the subject's tears and saliva, which are then collected and analyzed.

The agent on trial reported every 24 hours for tear and saliva collection, and Zevis's DNA sequencer pulled the encodings apart. A computer program deciphered them, producing a grainy motion picture of everything the agent had seen. Tallow, unfortunately, found the woman guilty of betraying

Convention secrets and ordered her to receive immediate psychological restructuring. He now had the RetEncO, though, which he proceeded to use on all his Operatives and sycophants. A team of Zevis's best technicians worked day and night, decrypting the incoming data for him.

RetEncO's nasty side effect did not appear until three years later, after Zevis had defected from the Technocracy and become the Child of Ether known as Dr. Jupiter. At that point, a hidden gene in the bacteria activated, causing the organisms to become microscopic, flesh-eating monsters. Everyone infected with RetEncO had their retinas eaten by near-invisible parasites genetically bonded with their eyes. Tallow's frantic staff soon discovered that this aggressive phase could not be arrested. One after another, Tallow's most carefully monitored (and therefore, trusted) staff members went blind, then violent, then catatonic.

As far as I know, Tallow is still the only person with RetEncO close at hand. He might, however, grant a treatment of it to some other high-clearance Mirrorshade in exchange for some huge favor — like the location of his elusive ex, the notorious Dr. Jupiter....

[In game terms, this "Device's" effects are simple; in story terms, they're incredibly advanced. An "Arete" roll (difficulty 7) determines whether or not the RetEncO records the information. A successful roll indicates complete data retention; on a failure, the data is garbled or nonexistent; on a botch, the bacteria begin their carnivorous phase a few months early and begin eating the wearer's eyes. Short of replacing the eyeballs completely, there's nothing that can be done at this point. The user's vision blurs, then disintegrates as he spirals down into a well of unbearable blindness and pain.

[Sooner or later, this vicious side effect occurs anyway. The Technocracy has banned the RetEncO, but that little fact hasn't kept Tallow from circulating the Device among some of his dimmer employees.]

Ω Verrecchia's Marvelous Lions

Arete 5, Quintessence 25, Background Cost N/A

The workshop of master Artificer Benno Verrecchia spawned some of the most amazing machines beheld during the Age of Reason. No other machine, however, was as purely wondrous as this pair of regal clockwork lions. These full-sized beasts were wrought of bronze and articulated in a manner that almost reproduced feline motion. Fine golden threads, cunningly bonded to the bronze fell, became the lions' remarkable coats, and their manes shone with deep-blue enamel. Eyes of faceted topaz glimmered with somewhat more than feline interest at the courtiers who looked with glee upon the handiwork of Benno Verrecchia.

The lions became great favorites among the nobility of the courts of Europe. Standing beside the most powerful individual in the room, the lions would, at suitable times,

perform astonishing acts — declaiming courtly praises in deep clarion voices, or springing open their chests to present bouquets of flowers to great ladies. Everyone wanted — demanded! — to see the lions, and the apparently astonished creator found himself in a year-round tour of the great courts, presenting his lions for the delight of the rich and noble.

Naturally, the lions were intended to be more than simple toys. Their travels afforded them excellent opportunities to record the conversations of Europe's most powerful celebrities. Golden cylinders spun within the massive feline bodies, etched with a code that only Verrecchia and his apprentices could decipher. Verrecchia's assistants could also see and hear all that transpired nearby, courtesy of the eyes and ears of the golden-furred spies. The agents of Reason also used the creatures to focus their own magickal abilities; the grand presence of the lions let the master Artificer manipulate his audience (and, by extension, their dealings) through the mere presence of his wonderful creations.

The perpetual clockwork of the lions failed only once, during a visit to the Royal Court of France. As Verrecchia later discovered, le Comte du St. Germaine disappeared from the gathering shortly after the lions broke down. The monitoring assistants reported that they had been about to turn the lions' eyes to the mysterious count when everything went dead. When the Artificer took the lion apart later that evening, no problem could be found.

Only one of these treasures still remains in the Technocracy's gentle hands; the fate of the other is an enigma. The lion we do know about presently resides in the laboratory of the Void Engineer Ruben Caldwell, who won it from an Iteration X colleague during a vicious poker game. A substantial reward has been offered from all sides of the Ascension Conflict for the recovery of the missing bronze lion.

[Like many unique Devices, the functions of these twin wonders are best left to Storytelling. Verrecchia's creations are in no way substitutes for normal big cats — their artificial origin is quite obvious, and their activities are limited to a few impressive stunts, performed at the Storyteller's discretion.

[The Device's "Arete" roll reflects both a Lion's perception Dice Pool (for spying purposes) and its Dexterity Dice Pool (when the machine performs a stunt or attack). Although these Devices were not built for combat, an automaton's paw can swat an offending bystander for six dice of normal damage, if the machine's owner so desires. If it winds up on the receiving end of some damage, a Lion has eight Health Levels and five points of armor; if the punishment exceeds those eight Health Levels, the machine is badly wrecked. If it exceeds 10 Health Levels, the technomagickal treasure is forever destroyed.

[Presented as "marvels of lost engineering," the Lions of Verrecchia are coincidental. On their own, they're horrifically vulgar.]



Link 4: Other Technomancers

*solid steel, cold and angry, bitter leather,
silver terror of the distance between us now
whitest pallor of blackest lips
i have always stared at them and drowned my sails inside of you
my whole body in a rage over
air-brushed battles we have waged
so terrified
so terrified*

— Autumn, "...Of Moondrop Teas"

Not all Technomancers belong to the usual clubs. Some work in wooded Chantryhouses, twisted laboratories or computer shops, bringing their own mystick/metaphysical theories to the so-called "sciences" and bending them to suit their Enlightened wills.

For the most part, our friends simply focus their Arts or Sciences or theories, or whatever, through technological gadgets; every so often, though, some inventive little bugger puts his heart and soul into a new and powerful invention – a Device that carries its own brand of power. I've included a few samples here to show you how imaginative those folks can be, but don't be fooled into thinking that this tiny list is the be-all-end-all of off-kilter Technomancers. That wicked witch or Satanic stormtrooper just might have a nasty edge hidden under her robes – a gadget that works a more modern form of magick.

•• The Mad Fiddles of Dr. Mercer

Arete 4, Quintessence 20, Background Cost 6 (but very rare; see below)

It was 1907 when an eccentric violinist shared a Paris stage with the radical dancer (and noted Ecstasy Cultist) Isadora Duncan. While the half-naked wild girl whirled and leapt, the fiddler played a mad tune. According to contemporary accounts, the concert hall flickered in and out of reality; at some points, it seemed to be a ruined Greek temple — at others, the clouds of Olympus diffused a pagan sunlight throughout the room. Some folks went crazy that night, others got really pissed and began to riot. The majority of the audience, however, were literally seduced by the interplay between the mystick dancer and her accompanist — a short, slender man named Dr. Paulinus Mercer. When the concert was over, Paris would never be the same again.

Mercer and Duncan never played together in public again. The Paris police saw to that. In the smoking rooms of the early Sons of Ether, however, Dr. Mercer and his beautiful friend caused a sensation, and not just for their talent. Both artists were accomplished mages, and they melded their Arts and Sciences together into a dizzying interplay. Even archmagi paused when the music began; the notes flickered through their subconscious like lightning bugs. As the performance progressed, the listeners were swept into a Dionysian mood. Their passions freed — they danced, drank, saw visions, got laid and indulged in all manner of scandalous behavior. Sounds cool to me!

Isadora was an Ecstatic from the word "go." The fiddler stood proudly between the wild Cultists and the early Ether Scientists. This was the period of transition from the Electrodynne Engineers to the Sons of Ether, and lots of folks wandered between the two. Dr. Mercer decided not to choose sides at all. Entranced by the doctrine of free love and rebelling against Victorianism, he built his first Mad Fiddle and played it to symbolize the marriage of art, Science, passion and vision. Not everyone appreciated the message. Mercer was eventually reviled by his Etheric colleagues (who still exclude his name from their rolls). Exiled from their Chantries, he wandered with the Cultists. When Duncan died (or got whacked, depending on the story you believe) in 1927, Mercer declined. He died during a special performance at Victoria Station in 1946 (where he was still welcome).

Dr. Mercer's secret wasn't really his playing; oh sure, he was good, but his fiddle did most of the work. A tin microamp installed in the instrument's body took the strokes of the bow and translated them into specially-keyed sound waves. The Doc's pet theories centered around brain waves, sound waves and combinations of the two. The concept of sound influencing mental patterns and reflexes was nothing new, but Doc Mercer put a spin on it that made the old Devil's Bargain myths into scientific reality — or Scientific reality, as it were. Combined with the power of Duncan's dance and Mercer's music, the audience had no choice but to respond.

Mercer built a number of these instruments. Some were smashed during or after performances, others were sold or given away. By my count, there are eight left in existence, but I could be wrong. They're considered real prizes by Ecstatic musicians, but some Etherites treasure them, too. The Tradition isn't



nearly as rigid as it once was, and Mercer *was* a genius. He was obviously ahead of his time.

[A simple but powerful Mind 2 Effect stirs the passions of the audience to a fever pitch. Occasionally, it invokes wild hallucinations as well. The Device's "Arete" works a subtle but irresistible coincidental spell; anyone in the general vicinity must make a Willpower roll to avoid being swept up into a helpless, sensual fit. That roll's difficulty begins at 7, but gains an additional +1 for every two successes the fiddler scores on a normal Manipulation + Expression roll. Naturally, the character must know how to play the violin; he need not be Awakened, however, to set the mystick power in motion. A failed "Arete" roll means that nothing magickal occurs, and a botched one turns the music into an unbearable screech.]

•• Mad Mook's Million Eyes on the World

Arete 2, Quintessence 10, Background Cost 4

Everyone's seen the glass rings or pendants that look like eyeballs. Kids love these stupid things, and some of my odder friends do, too. Mad Mook, a Marauder from the Third Darkness Realm, noticed them on a venture to Earth. Inspired, he created his own eye-jewelry, then he slipped copies into machines and toy bins filled with the harmless toys. His plan worked. There are an awful lot of kids out there these days with Mad Mook's Eyes on their hands and around their necks.

Mookie was (is?) an insidious little bastard. Each of his so-called Eyes contains a bit of liquid Tass on a slow-release mechanism. This elixir of the gods seeps into your skin and sends your senses reeling — literally. After a very short time, an Eye-wearer ends up seeing and hearing things way outside the mortal spectrum. Mad Mook calls this "The Gift of a Thousand Sunrises." Lots of poor folks call it "insanity."

Mad Mook's Eyes fuck with your perceptions. Eventually, they will drive you crazy. Studies done on the Eyes have shown that they actually "see" the world, but from a crackhead's perspective — a perspective *you* get to share if you've got one of these things on your finger! The longer you wear the jewelry, the crazier the world appears. All the masks are off — you can see the Penumbra, and auras, and lots of other stuff that mortal eyes just weren't meant to see.

And then there's the "Thought-O-Vision" feature. Say you're talking to someone while you're wearing the Eye: The Eye transfers that person's *true* thoughts to you, reading them out in a ghostly whisper. The contrast between what is said and what is thought can get pretty jarring, especially when the two are laid over each other in a double-talk double-track. Most folks just aren't ready to hear what people really think about them, and the truth tends to push their sanity into the proverbial blender. Brain cocktail, anyone?

In the late '80s, several Sons of Ether realized what Mad Mook had done — he'd scattered over a thousand of these trinkets among the millions of mundane pieces distributed throughout the world. The Etherites launched a campaign to retrieve Mad Mook's Eyes but failed miserably. Despite this failure, the Sons never gave up. To this day, many Sons of Ether empty out dispensing machines in

grocery and drug stores when they see the glass eyes staring out from their little plastic bubbles.

[Mad Mook's little joke begins as a slight buzzing in the back of your mind and with a vague fuzziness of vision. Eventually, odd patterns and lights begin to emerge, reflexes fumble, voices rise and sanity begins to slip away. An "Arete" roll starts the ball rolling; the rest just flows in and out like a demented ocean of warped perceptions. The weird stuff starts to fade when the wearer removes the ring, but those impressions often linger for hours, or even days, afterward.

[The Eyes' most obvious feature is a combination Effect that mingles Level One perceptions with Matter, Mind, Life, Prime, Spirit and Time *simultaneously*. Since few folks outside the Cult of Ecstasy can handle such skewed perceptions, this information overload does terrible things to a person's sanity. Even a mage who's become accustomed to multi-perceptual viewpoints suffer a +5 penalty to her perception difficulties (see *Cult of Ecstasy*, pages 62-63). Her worldview simply becomes too crazy to decipher.

[Mad Mooks' second "present" afflicts the wearer with a steady flow of surface impressions from the thoughts of the people around her (Mind 2). Unlike true telepathy, this feature skims just enough mindspeak to throw the wearer for a loop — especially if people don't like her to begin with. Since the Eyes can make a person do crazy things, her behavior drives people up the wall. The result: more harsh thoughts, which she can "hear" bits and pieces of....Talk about paranoia!

[Since this odd Device has been designed with Sleepers in mind, anyone can experience the madness that is Mook's gift. Since many of the kids who wear the Eyes tend to have unsettling thoughts from the start, they're not entirely surprised when the world begins to go crazy. Hence, the Eyes' effects are often coincidental and best reflected in Storytelling, not dice-rolls.]

•• Siren's Tears and The Breather Collar

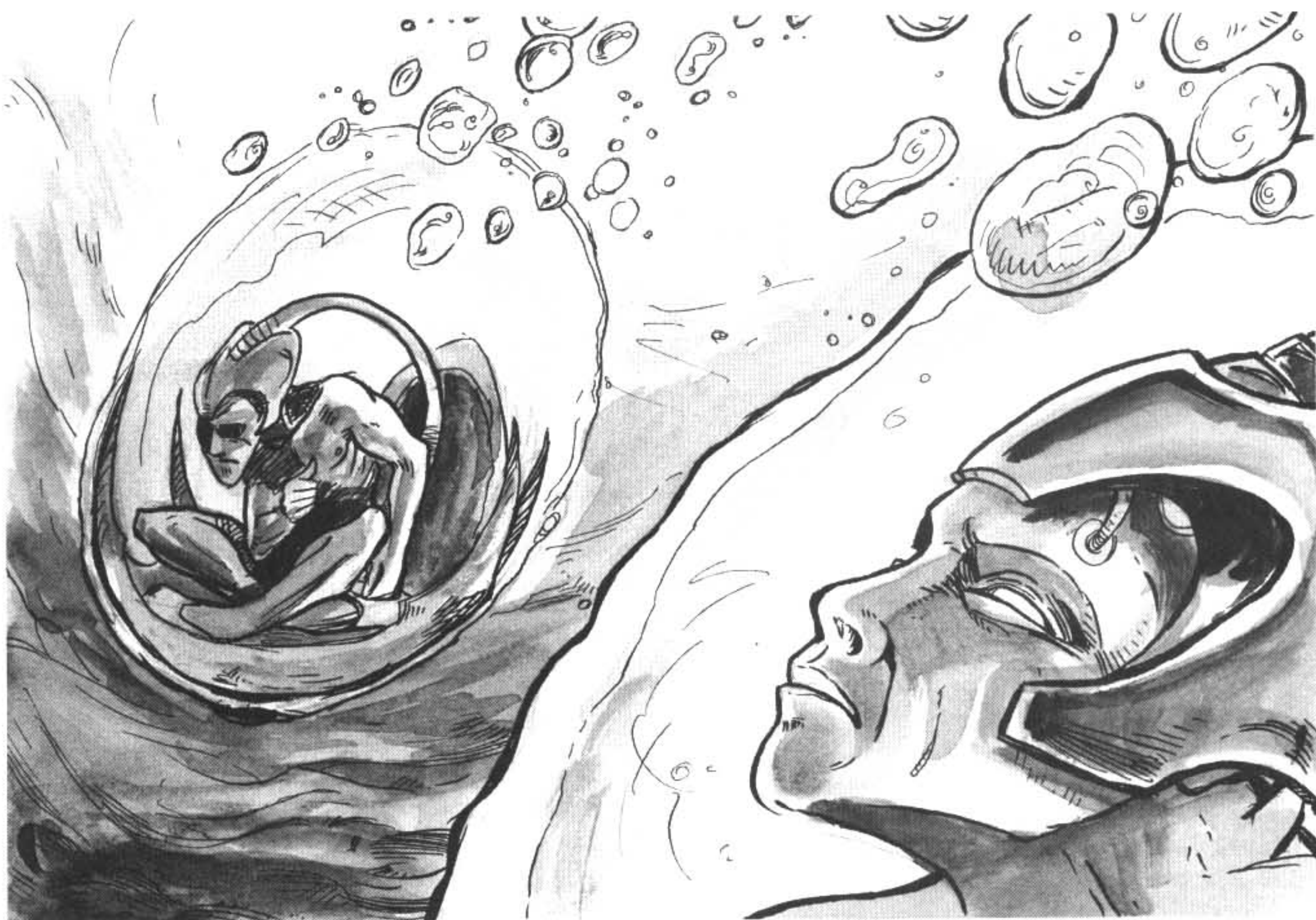
Arete 4, Quintessence 20, Background Cost 6

Off the coast of Santa Barbara, deep in an undersea grotto, lies Xsiaquotal Labyrinth. The resident Gilledian, a cheerful dude named Marcus Delarey, uses the local gangs as footsoldiers and the beach bunnies as bait. His network runs like a poisoned thread through the surfer culture; all the boardwalk shops pay him tribute one way or another. Anyone who refuses to play Delarey's games ends up with a weight around his ankles — if he's lucky!

According to rumor, the entrance to Delarey's hidey-hole lies in the face of an underwater cliff, where a shelf drops off into the black depths of the ocean. Spaghetti caverns gradually lead upward into a large grotto where the Nephandi gather, craft their plans and bring converts to the Caul for Rebirth.

Inside, the Labyrinth has a forced-air environment. To get to it, however, the Fallen have to dive down through hundreds of feet of water. No mortal swimmer can make the trip, and a scuba diver would be out of her mind to enter the endless passages with a limited air supply. The Satanics get home by way of two deceptively simple Devices: Siren's Tears and Breather Collars.

A Siren's Tear resembles a water spider's air bubble. A thick mucous membrane keeps the water out and controls



ascent and descent by drawing and expelling air through its contours. One of these slimy, transparent goxies holds three or four intrepid souls, who usually have to be bombed out of their skulls before they'll climb into a big bubble and go hundreds of feet down into the sea. I have no idea how reliable these things are, but I suspect a Tear's integrity depends a lot on Delarey's good graces (or lack thereof).

The Breather Collar — designed by Carl Franklin, an ex-Navy Seal and Akashic *barabbi* — is a small collar that straps around the wearer's neck. Made of hard, shiny-black leather, the Device injects probes directly into the wearer's bloodstream through her jugular vein. Drawing oxygen from the water, the Breather feeds the blood and cleanses it of carbon dioxide at the same time. I'm told that novice users often have a hard time holding their breath despite the fact that they don't feel the effects of oxygen deprivation. Aside from its name, the Breather is not a breathing apparatus; the wearer's mouth and nose remain uncovered. As you can imagine, this can be...unnerving. Your instincts say "BREATHE!!" and some people have a hard time getting around such things. My guess is that Franklin and Delarey consider these Devices good test-marketing equipment. If a potential recruit is smart enough to use one properly, she's a worthwhile addition to the team. If not, well, the beaches are full of beautiful bodies.

[These cheap, simple Devices simply keep human beings alive through a deepwater trip. Designed for un-Awakened use, these sorcerous "machines" are vulgar. Their usual occupants,

however, are used to such things, and do not count as "witnesses" to dark magick.

[The "Arete" roll (difficulty 6) determines how effectively the Device functions; after all, the Nephandi have better things to do than play nursemaid to some stupid mortal pawns! A successful roll indicates a working Device — a failed one means the Breather or Tear is defective in some way and refuses to work. A botched roll means the Device works about halfway, then gives out several hundred feet down....]

•• or ••• Theresita's Thousand Magick-Finger Bed

Arete 2 or 3, Quintessence 10 or 15, Background Cost 5 or 6

One night in a dirty hotel in New Mexico, Ecstatic Theresita Gonzales put a quarter in the little machine by the bed and the mattress came to life. As it moved beneath her, she reveled in what the Ecstatics call "the Lakashim." The experience inspired her to design a bed of her own, one she could use at home. In time, she got her wish. Theresita's Bed plugs into any 110-volt wall socket and activates with the touch of a button. It runs until the occupant shuts it off. Plug it in, hit the button, turn on and get off.

After a while, vibrations weren't enough. Theresita went a step further and installed sensors that reacted to the rolls and bumps of the occupant (or occupants). Theresita wanted the bed to tailor its vibrations to her, shall we say, activity level.

Again, she got what she wanted. When she wants to lounge, the Magick-Finger Bed gently massages her back and legs with soft, rolling waves; when she wants to have a little fun, the magick-fingers kick in, stimulating her everywhere they touch. When she really gets going, the bed joins in — she bucks, the Bed bucks back, and so on, and so on, and so on....

Theresita's Bed became more popular than ever. Now there are copies of it scattered throughout Chanceries across North America. Some are pretty simple, while others feature an additional gimmick from the original Bed: a time-dilation Device that speeds the passage of time for anyone lying on the mattress. Hours pass in a few minutes of "objective time"; in other words, you can screw all night and leave the room five minutes later. Not hard to see why the Magick-Finger Bed is one of the Cult's favorite modern toys.

Naturally, the last feature adds to the Bed's risk factor. The normal functions are pretty mundane; no one's going to question the "reality" of a hyper-responsive piece of high-tech furniture. Dilating time, on the other hand, is a major no-no and has led to the occasional Paradox hazard. Time passes normally in the rest of the room, a witness sees figures moving at hyperspeed across a rapidly vibrating mattress, kinda like the William Tell Overture scene in *A Clockwork Orange*. As you can imagine, it's a good idea to make sure the door's locked! A watch in the Bed and a clock beside it will register different times, and events pass by at subjectively "slower" speeds. Falling out of bed can be pretty disastrous, too; it might take you a minute to climb back in, but your partner may have gotten bored by the time you return.

And then there are the Paradox backlashes, which can be...distressing. One Cultist, who'll remain nameless for the sake of his reputation, took a Sleeper on a Magick-Finger ride and experienced a truly embarrassing Paradox backlash. Not only did his once-proud dick shrink to one-third its normal size, but his partner also remembered the experience as a flash, a whimper and a snore. She was not, shall we say, impressed.

[The temporal-dilation Effect speeds time within the Bed to 10 times its normal rate; thus, one minute outside the Bed translates to 10 minutes for those on it. As long as the Bed makes its "Arete" roll, simply assume that it does whatever the character wants it to do. A botch may signal some amusing but non-fatal Paradox backlash — often a Flaw with some embarrassing side effects. A failure means that the Bed does nothing at all. Each hour of "bed-time" costs one point of Quintessence.]

... Correlli's Badass Jackhammer

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 6

In the late '70s, Butch Correlli, a New York Euthanatos who had worked in construction before his Awakening, designed the Jackhammer to help him and his buddies break into a Technocracy stronghold in New York City (the famed Ghetto Assault of 1978). Foot-thick, concrete walls protected the Construct on all sides, but that didn't stop Butch. Turning his new Device on the barriers, he tore through them in time to launch a spectacular — and successful — surprise raid.

During the assault, Butch learned a few important things about his new toy: It made a hell of a lot of noise, it bucked like a motherfucker, and it worked better against stone and steel than against flesh and bone. When the dust settled, Butch built a few similar models and distributed them to his friends. Those who are strong enough to use these Jackhammers find that walls do not a prison make.

Correlli's Jackhammer packs a real whollop. Approximately two feet in length and weighing just under 20 pounds, Butch's invention requires two strong hands to control its bucking and jumping. Once its bit is set against a wall, sidewalk, door or other solid object, the 'hammer tears through the material in record time, leaving two-or-three-foot holes in its wake.

This baby runs on regular gas and starts like a chainsaw — one quick pull primes the motor and the 'hammer's off and running. A combination of Matter and Entropy accelerates the machine's usual effectiveness, breaking down barriers at the molecular level. As I said, this "special feature" isn't much good against living tissue, but if you swing a jackhammer bit into somebody's gut, it's gonna hurt, magick or no magick. The thing roars like a storm god in heat and sends chips flying everywhere; anyone strong enough to handle this monstrosity had better dress for protection. Stone and steel make nasty hail.

[When held against a solid, inanimate object, the 'hammer chews through roughly three feet of stone or one foot of metal per turn. The resulting debris flies out in a 10' circle, tearing into exposed flesh for one normal Health Level per turn. Living — or undead — targets suffer Strength + 7 Health Levels of damage if the mage scores a hit with the Jackhammer (Dexterity + Melee, difficulty 8). The Device spends one point of Quintessence per turn and runs for 10 minutes on a single tank of gas. After that, a bit of Quintessence keeps the 'hammer primed until more fuel can be added.

[If the "Arete" roll fails, the 'hammer acts like a normal demolition tool, ripping concrete apart but skidding across thick metal surfaces. The machine carries quite a kick and tires out even the strongest mages in a hurry. A character needs a Strength of at least 4 to use the Jackhammer; a weaker sorcerer cannot control the Device — it controls him!]

... The Hot-Mach I Speedster

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 6

Aristotle "Speed" Carter loved to go fast. As soon as he had his driver's license, he pushed his parent's '58 station wagon to its limits on Highway 95. The only reason he survived the wreck was because his Avatar Awakened during the drive. For a while, he averaged six speeding tickets per month — and those were just from the times the cops managed to catch him.

Late one night, Speed had a hearty mushroom vacation, during which he created the Hot-Mach I Speedster. In a flash of hallucinogenic inspiration, the Ecstatic envisioned the key that would unlock the power of speed. Working all night and all day, he turned his vision into reality. Speed tested the Hot-Mach I on the local race track. After that, he took the car out on the street and began road-testing. He soon realized that he

still had a lot of work to do on the Hot-Mach I. First, he designed a special timing device which made the car invisible to police radar. Then he added a remote control that triggered stoplights, making them turn green a block before he hit the intersection.

Once Speed finished the car, he spent several years zooming back and forth across the country, just *because*. Unfortunately, Paradox finally caught up to him when a tire blew in the mountains of West Virginia. He skidded off the road and the car exploded into a huge ball of flame. Speed died, leaving the design templates of his Hot-Mach I to his mentor, Franklin "Lightening" Ryan. Lightening shared Speed's passion for... well, *speed*. In honor of his beloved student, he immediately built a new car, following the original specs. Then Lightening put the blueprints on the free market. Today, there are around 20 Hot-Mach I's zipping across the U.S. and Europe, most of 'em featuring special modifications added by their owners.

The Hot-Mach I has a cherry-red finish. Speed insisted that the color was crucial to its performance. Amazingly, the car doesn't run on gasoline, but on grain alcohol. A couple of liters in the tank will take the car over 100 miles. The Hot-Mach I's potential speed tops off around 230 MPH, but most folks go up in flames long before that. Y'see, it's one thing to *reach* 200 MPH, but another thing entirely to be able to *control yourself* at that velocity....

[The Hot-Mach I's main power simply increases kinetic velocity to incredible levels; its minor gadgets allow it to slip under police radar (+4 difficulty to any electronic detection attempts) and change traffic lights (assume it can do this without a roll). An

"Arete" roll activates the "speed factor," jumping the car into high gear without consuming vast amounts of gas.

[Since the car goes at tremendous, but not unearthly, speeds, the Hot-Mach I is coincidental, not vulgar. Driving it can present problems, however. A character who wants to handle the Hot-Mach had better have at least three points in Drive if he wants to avoid a fiery death. Stunt driving or high-velocity turns may (at Storyteller's discretion) demand a Dexterity or Wits + Drive roll, with horrible consequences for failure (see *Mage*, pages 252-253, for stunt driving rules, and consider the Hot-Mach I to have a Safe Speed of 130, a Max Speed of 230 and a Maneuverability of 10.)

... The Jangler Pod

Arete 5, Quintessence 20, Background Cost 8

Milton Jangler studied electrical engineering in college before he Awakened to the world of the Verbena. An idealist, he wanted to use his talents with electrodes and circuitry for the benefit of humankind, so he concentrated on developing equipment to revolutionize the health field. Shortly before the Techno-war in Chicago, 1988, he moved into the Naperville Chantry. As tensions heated up between Chicago's Technocracy and Tradition mages, Jangler joined his fellow Verbena in the fight.

A special Etherite exhibit at the Chicago Institute of Science and Technology had Awakened an unusual amount of Sleepers. The folks at Naperville learned about this around the same time the Black Hats did, and the race was on to see who



could get to the new mages first. The Technocrats pulled out all the stops — HIT Marks walked, bank accounts plunged and black limousines cruised through the night. Naperville called in a few favors and threw some vampires and Garou in the Mirrorshades' general direction. It, as you can imagine, made a real mess.

Every war has casualties, and this one was no exception. Naperville's healers worked until they literally dropped from exhaustion, but each night brought more bodies to the Chantry. Jangler worked his ass off, but the design seemed riddled with bugs. Driven by desperation, he finally put the unfinished Pod to work — people were dying, and he had to do *something*!

Half the people who went into the Jangler Pod came out fully healed; even severed limbs and split spinal columns repaired themselves in the arcane glow of magickal energy. The other half of the subjects died painfully. The Pod couldn't muffle their screams and Jangler literally deafened himself to block them out. He worked himself nearly to death, but the upgrades kept killing one patient out of two. Finally, the fighting ended in a draw. Casualties on both sides outnumbered the new mages by a wide margin and most of the newbies got wasted by the crossfire anyway. Veterans of the Chicago Techno-War maintain that Jangler's Device allowed them to survive as long as they did; Jangler himself considered the invention a failure. He wound up fixated on the idea of bringing people back from the dead, and he eventually disappeared into the Shadowlands, searching for the souls of those who had died in his Pod. Other techno-Verbena picked up where he had left off, with slightly more success. Their upgrades can be found here and there — usually in mixed-Tradition Chantryhouses. As a whole, the Verbena are too hung up on ancient methods to be entirely comfortable with modern variations on the Art.

The Jangler Pod resembles a white tanning bed — or coffin — with golden tubes lining the inside of the lid and the cushioned satin bed on the bottom. Once its lid clicks shut, the Pod channels Quintessence into the fractured Life Pattern and reweaves it in really vulgar ways. As the machine hums, golden light flows out from beneath the lid, bathing the area in a warm glow. If the process works, the patient emerges fresh and whole from the Pod, sleeping, but healed of every wound and disease — if things go poorly, the machine rips the poor bastard apart. Jangler kept a hose and sponges nearby, and I can only imagine how it felt to wash his patients out of the machine that he built to save them. Modern upgrades feature deadman switches on the Pods; by shutting down the system, the technician can keep the patient alive, if only just. Obviously, the Jangler Pod is a last-ditch measure — the risks this Paradoxical Device incur are left to literal life-or-death situations.

[A Jangler Pod is deeply vulgar; any Paradox backlash rebounds on the person inside the machine and takes the form of physical damage (see **Mage**, page 177). For simplicity, the Storyteller should simply make one roll (difficulty 7, 8 if there are Sleepers present) to check the machine's effects. Success heals the subject of any and all damage or disease; failure sends him into intense pain but doesn't inflict any further injury; a botch shreds the subject's body with five Health Levels worth of

aggravated Paradox damage — enough to kill most human patients.

[In story terms, a Jangler Pod takes roughly an hour to heal a badly injured person. The patient sleeps for several hours afterward and bears the scars of newly regenerated wounds. Each activation costs the Device two Quintessence points. Setting a Pod in motion often requires an experienced technician or an Intelligence + Technology roll, difficulty 8. A failed roll may either raise the difficulty to 10 or keep the machine from functioning at all.]

... Lady Wudlowe's Menhirs

Arete 5, Quintessence 15, Background Cost N/A (see below)

In the Burning Times, many mages rigged escape routes in their homes and Chantries. They knew that a quick and secret path to safety meant the difference between survival and dying on a pyre. Lady Wudlowe MacCannae commissioned her means of flight from master carver and fellow Verbena, Coryn Nemue. The Lady provided the concept and helped to guide the design — he carved the stone.

At that time, menhirs dotted the countryside. Giant stone monuments, they were leftovers from a more primitive time. As plentiful as the menhirs were, the Inquisitors hardly noticed them. Lady Wudlowe designed a hollow menhir with a skillfully hidden door through which she could simply disappear. When it worked, she commissioned a total of six of her special menhirs, only four have survived to the present day.

Each of her hollow monuments stands eight feet tall and weighs nearly a ton. Hidden in the Celtic cross that graces the menhir's face, a trigger activates a system of ball bearings and pulleys. This inner mechanism draws aside the front plate and reveals a doorway into the monument. The door remains open for a few seconds, then slides back into place. Through a Correspondence portal, the menhir then whisks its inhabitant away to the place foremost in her mind.

Unfortunately, neither Lady Wudlowe nor Nemue the Carver thought to install an interior trigger. Many decades later, Ether Scientist Josef Blaucreit acquired one of the menhirs. He opened it to discover Lady Wudlowe. Apparently, its magick had failed and she, drained of her energy, couldn't get out. Her last words, scratched into the chamber's stone, provide a fascinating testimonial to the despair of the Burning Times. They begin (translated from Gaelic), "*Woe betide thee who, in impatient fervor, create without the tempering of mindful forethought....*"

[A combination of Mind and Correspondence magick (hopefully) sends the menhir's occupant wherever she wants to go. The closer the destination, the greater the mage's chances (see the Correspondence Ranges chart, **Mage**, page 170). The portal activates for a brief moment, then fades.

[Only one human-sized "passenger" may fit inside these hollow stones, although two small people may squeeze in with difficulty. As usual, this gross teleportation Effect is vulgar; hidden as it is, however, it counts as "vulgar without witnesses" unless some mortal observer watched the mage enter the Device and disappear.]

... Sin-TV

Television is an invention that permits you to be entertained in your living room by people you wouldn't have in the house.

— David Frost

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 6

Bored with the stupidity of mundane television, Ecstatic Sinclair "Sin" Geoffrey set out to create a TV that would transcend the limits of the movie set, the actors and the stunt men. Sin always believed that fact was stranger than fiction. For a while, he watched his neighbors through fancy telescopes and listened to their conversations with sophisticated listening devices. This didn't satisfy Geoffrey, though. He wanted to capture the live-action stories going on behind closed doors. To do so, he finally developed Sin-TV.

To his delight, Sin channel-surfed through his neighbors' miseries. He watched as the newlywed couple downstairs had their first fight, as the transvestite in 11-B dabbed clear nail polish on the run in his hose, as the drunk bastard on the top floor sneaked into his daughter's room while his wife was asleep, and as a group of gangers mugged a suit on the building's front steps. Sin drooled, and smoked, and drank, and ate vast quantities of popcorn while his neighbors made love, fought, cried, laughed, partied, lived and died.

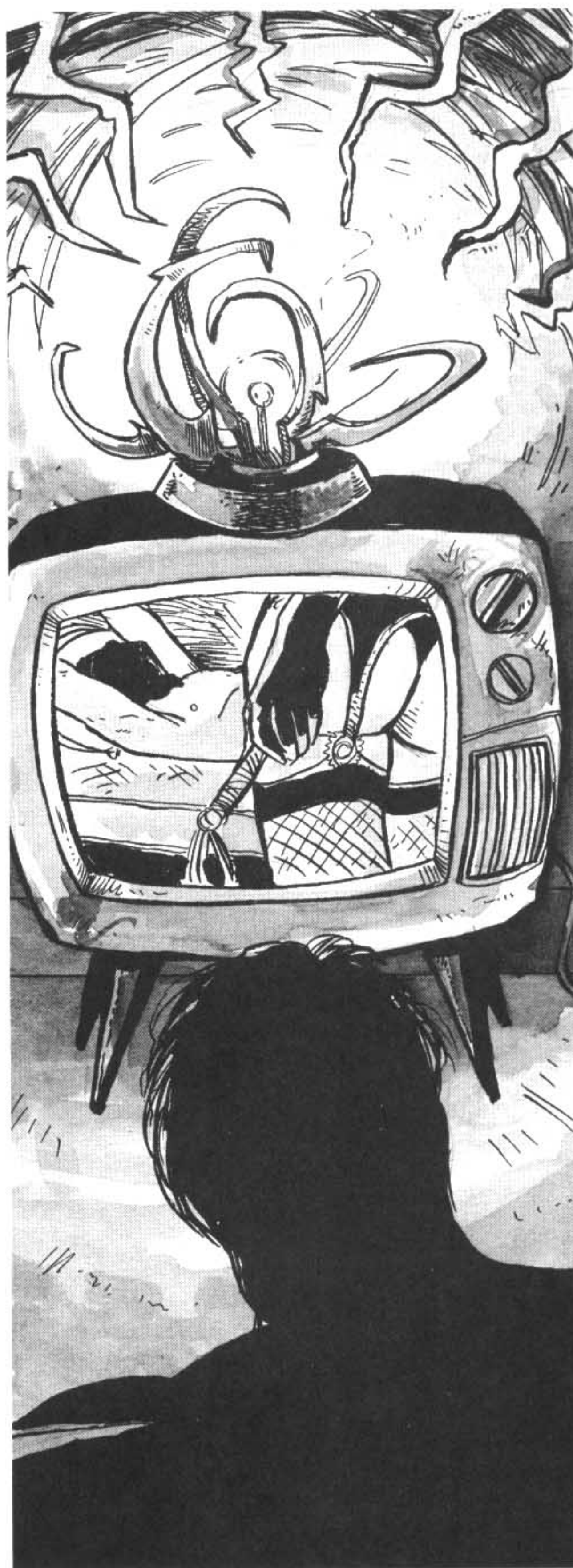
Loser.

Sin-TV looks like a standard television with a pair of elaborate rotating antennae on top. Correspondence spells allow the Device to show what's happening in neighboring apartments. Sin-TV has a range of half a mile — enough range to open yourself to a lifetime of wild stories. The Device plugs into the wall and a standard remote runs on two AA batteries. Sin made only two Sin-TVs, but the principles of the Device are easy enough.

Unfortunately, like both of its namesakes, Sin-TV is *really* addictive. Sin was a vidiot of the worst kind before he finished his invention. After which, he became a total loss. He'd sit for days on end in front of his Sin-TV, watching the live soap operas. He stopped bathing, stopped eating, stopped leaving the apartment — hell, stopped leaving his chair — until a bunch of his friends battered down the door, waded through the waste and hauled the stupid prick away from the TV. A serious intervention put him back on the rails for a while — or so they thought. Secretly, Sin built another TV, better than the first. This time, nobody bothered to save him. As far as I know, he died, still watching everyone around him live.

There's a lesson in that, kiddies. Take it as you will.

[Once this Device is activated (via the "Arete" roll, difficulty 6), it runs indefinitely, searching through local "channels" until the viewer finds something he wants to watch. A weird quirk in the invention shifts the "camera angle" around for dramatic effect and keeps the "lighting" and "sound" strong and vivid. Once running, the Sin-TV makes its own programming. The viewer can change channels (see below), but she cannot affect the "picture"; the "camera angles" and "sound levels" are totally beyond the viewer's control.]





[A remote control changes channels, shifting the viewer to other apartments; once again, however, the view is out of the mage's control. Sin-TV's "cameras" go where they will, not where the viewer wants to send them. The "selector" switches "channels" at random, too, and occasionally changes itself. Channel 21 may have shown your 14-year-old neighbor doing terrible things to his German shepherd, but if you change channels and return to 21, you may see the mailman on his rounds instead. The Sin-TV recognizes no boundaries of taste, censorship or familiarity. It's just as likely to show your housemates as it is to display your neighbors. The Device seems to have a prurient streak, however, and often centers on the most sordid thing within range. Sometimes an odd temporal fluctuation displays events that occurred hours or days earlier — or events that have yet to occur! Nothing the viewer can see or control will reveal when or where an event takes place — the only clues are the ones he can pick up from the "scenery" and "costumes."

[Sin-TV offers the Storyteller a pretty generous tool for plot threads, revelations, foreshadowing and clues. Imagine the fun that could arise when a character watches his girlfriend make out with the next-door neighbor — particularly if the encounter happened weeks ago. Think about the implications of a 2-doors-down Satanist, a drug-addicted superintendent, a kleptomaniac best friend or an unfaithful parent. Sin-TV can be humorous, tragic, mysterious and shocking; it's also horrifically addictive, both as a story device and a character possession. Player characters who spend large amounts of time in front of Sin-TV may need to make Willpower rolls to pry themselves away from the chair and resume their normal lives.]

... VBC-3 Bio-Computer and the Mind-Link XF251

Arete 3, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 6

Aside from a few minor details, the VBC-3 resembles a giant orchid. A network of silver veins runs just under the surface of the stem, connecting all of the plant parts together. Small brown nodes dot the leaves, marring their otherwise smooth, waxy plane. A large flower sprouts from one of the stalks — a flower with broad, translucent petals that glow with an opalescent swirl when not in use.

Designed by Verbena Samuel Halverson, the VBC-3 Bio-computer represents a successful fusion between computer technology and organic material. After years of hybridization, this orchid flourished with all the correct components and peripherals necessary to allow a Verbena to tap into the world's computer matrix. The VBC-3 relies on a natural sensitivity to radio waves and other electronic pulses. This complicated, sophisticated computer pulls its information from the air, translates it into code and displays the results on the translucent petals of the flower. The image comes in with surprising clarity; better still, the user can open a different window on each petal. The nodes on the leaves serve as a weird ergonomic keyboard.

Halverson has successfully grown five working VBC-3s. Two of his earlier prototypes died. The Bio-computer's silicone makes it particularly susceptible to I.C.E. and computer viruses — these buggies kill the flower on contact. Halverson hopes to increase the VBC-3's hardiness with the next hybrid.

Due to the organic nature of the computer, most systems don't recognize it as an intruder. Using this baby, you can log into high-security links and databases with less trouble than a standard computer provides. Unfortunately, Halverson hasn't figured out how to make the VBC-3 copy data to a disk, although it does store information inside itself. To date, Halverson hasn't reached a data storage limit on the memory. According to his findings, the VBC-3 sustains near instantaneous data transfer as long as he remembers to water it.

Halverson also whipped up a peripheral Device that connects his mind with the VBC-3. The Mind-Link XF251 resembles a miniature ivy vine, with tendrils shooting off one main stem. It grows in the same soil as the VBC-3 and their roots intertwine. Halverson lays one of the off-shoots near his eye and sticks another up his nose (um, right...). Over the course of several hours, one vine slowly pushes its way past his eyeball to his optic nerve. The other climbs into his brain, seeking the electrical impulses there. Through this connection, the Mind-Link XF251 transmits and receives data from the VBC-3. For some odd reason, no one except Halverson has the balls to field-test the XF251.

Halverson claims his second innovation is perfectly safe; his assistants beg to differ. According to them, this techno-Verbena has experienced some major memory loss. The plant's read-outs, on the other hand, have begun to mimic Halverson's peculiar expressions and linguistic idiosyncrasies. According to outside observers, the Mind-Link feeds on the user's brain. Halverson dismisses the claims and continues with his work. Me, I'm staying away from the damned thing!

Never trust a plant that crawls up your nose.

[Aside from its odd configuration, the VBC-3 functions like a normal computer (see *Mage*, pages 244-245) with a deadly susceptibility to viruses and countermeasures. It cannot be wired to a network, printer or modem, can't copy discs or software, and it requires a bit getting used to. Without an introduction, an outside user won't even recognize the computer for what it is. A mortal watching the VBC-3 in use will either think the mage is insane or freak out at the unreality of it all (making the computer's operations vulgar).

[The Mind-Link works its way into the user's consciousness, establishing a symbiotic relationship and adapting its "host's" mannerisms. This bond wipes out small bits of the user's memory, bits that are easy to dismiss at first. As the vine takes greater and greater bits of memory with it, the character enters a state of denial. Others may notice the mage's forgetfulness, but the user himself remains convinced that the Mind-Link is completely and utterly safe.]

.... The Bilateral Pattern-Fusion Suit

Arete 4, Quintessence 20, Background Cost 8

Black Jack Killigan, *bani* Sons of Ether, and Josie Smithereens, *bani* Cult of Ecstasy, lived together in the Gernsback Continuum. Lovers and partners, they often traveled together, returning to the Horizon Realm between adventures. After one such trip, they were relaxing in the sunlit, velvet smoking room of the Great Hall and drinking brandy and

discussing their next foray into the unknown, when one of them commented on how convenient it would be if they could find a way to intertwine their patterns so that a single Scientific Effect would work on both of them at the same time. *Blink*. Great idea! They went to work on it immediately and developed the Bilateral Pattern-Fusion Suit.

Needless to say, the experiment was a success. After a series of tests, the two found themselves literally joined at the soul, partners at the molecular and metaphysical level. Neither one could be without the other for any length of time; eventually they retreated to their shared laboratory in the Gernsback Realm. According to my sources, they're working there to this day, wrapped in some exotic Device that resembles a B&D toy and a thneed. Other Scientists, intrigued, created their own variations on the design.

Made of strong vinyl, the Bilateral Pattern-Fusion Suit comes in a variety of stylish colors. A series of straps bind two mages together by the arm and leg, like an oddly designed potato-sack-race device. An attached belt forms an infinity symbol when it's wrapped around the two bodies. Special golden buckles attach the straps, and the main one, which crosses at the waists, locks with a Victorian key. If the "occupants" lose the key, they'll have to cut the suit off to escape. This is not as easy or painless as it may sound: The Fusion Suit intertwines its wearers on a metaphysical level; cutting the suit off shreds the life patterns of the people trapped inside. Literally ripped apart, these poor bastards suffer some pretty serious side effects: personality transfers, physical damage, memory loss and unnatural degrees of co-dependency.

The Suit temporarily entwines two mages' patterns, creating a single, bilateral pattern — a mystickal Siamese twin. Any spell that affects one wearer affects them both, even after the Suit is removed, and all emotions and sensations are shared between both parties. Most people find they can only wear the Fusion Suit for 24 hours or so; the bonding effects linger for two or three days afterward, then fade, leaving a hunger for further contact. The wearers can have sex inside the Suit, of course, but the bond woven between them is deeper than any sexual rapport. It's a heady experience, I'm told — kinda like having an incestuous twin. Smithereens speculated that the wearers' Avatars actually bond to each other after a prolonged Fusion, but that may just be a theory no one cares to test.

A deep bond forms between two mages who share this Suit — friendship and love are only the beginning. Even enemies develop a profound emotional attachment after "exposure" in the Suit, and lovers become closer than ever. After a few wearings, an empathic bond begins to spread like oil on water. That bond later turns into need, then obsession. Some Hermetics have speculated that the Suit stimulates the hermaphroditic form sitting at the peak of alchemical achievement — the so-called *rebis* that mingles male and female. Yet the bond arises between any two mages who wear the Suit, male, female, or both.

Folks who share Suit-space a couple of times find themselves mimicking each others' mannerisms; they finish each others' sentences and share thoughts, even after they've stripped off the Pattern-Fusion Suit. The more time they share, the more alike they become — and the more obsessed with each other they get. If separated, both parties fall into crushing depressions



and suffer agonizing separation anxiety. Some *rebi*, like Black Jack and Smithereens, have chosen life together in the Suit over a life of just being in each other's company. Weird. The ultimate lover's pact remains a mystery, even to the people who build these Devices. Officially, it's still in the testing phase and should only be used with caution — as if people were ever cautious when it comes to affairs of the heart!

[A combination of Life, Mind, Spirit and Prime binds two living patterns into a single shared consciousness. This bond requires at least 24 hours in the Suit and a successful Arete roll (difficulty 9). From that point on, any sensation or alteration that affects one character affects them both equally, including emotional extremes, telepathy, Paradox, Quintessence and physical injury (that is, Health Level damage). This bond lasts for one week, then fades, replaced by a deep longing for more and deeper contact. Players whose characters share a Fusion-Suit bond might want to play each other's mages for a while, or switch between them to reflect the differences that the two characters display.

[A failed "Arete" roll leaves the two parties with a strong empathic connection but no lasting effects; a botched roll melds the two parties into one flesh — a messy conglomeration that permanently destroys the Suit and turns the wearers into virtual Siamese twins. Only a powerful (and vulgar) Life spell can return the wearers to their original forms after such a disaster. Mages trapped in the Suit by losing a key must rip themselves free — this process shreds the Device and inflicts five aggravated Health Levels on both parties.]

.... The Espiritus Mini-Vac

Arete 4, Quintessence 20, Background Cost 8

Dreamspeaker "Rolling Thunder" Ridgway found himself plagued with a platoon of minor spirits drawn to his drumming. They were not, shall we say, an appreciative audience, and made a lot of snide remarks about his musical skill (or lack thereof). Finally, they got on his nerves. Rolling Thunder picked up the mini-vacuum he kept in his truck and aimed it at the spirits, hoping to chase 'em away. No such luck, paleface! The whirring engine sent the spirits scurrying a few feet back, but they laughed and returned as soon as they realized what he held. However, Rolling Thunder had an inspiration. He began to steadily work on the Mini-vac, customizing and consecrating it. He channeled his magick into it and designed special filters of native cotton and cactus-root fibers. All the while, the spirits plagued him. Finally, Rolling Thunder finished it. This time when he turned the Mini-vac on the spirits the apparatus sucked them into its holding container and trapped them there. Score one for modern technology!

The Mini-vac uses a D-cell battery. Its customized filters hold the spirits until the mage chooses to release them, if ever. Pleased with his invention, Rolling Thunder built extra Mini-vacs with the intention of distributing them to his friends. Unfortunately, the Dreamspeaker elders were, shall we say, perturbed. They confiscated Rolling Thunder's stash and kicked him out of the Tradition for spiritual bankruptcy and disrespect.

Rolling Thunder withdrew to his Minnesota cabin and built a new Mini-vac, along with a couple of spares that he keeps hidden. Despite the elders' disapproval, a few Mini-vacs made it into circulation anyway. These few are considered highly illegal by the Tradition as a whole, but for those who don't care, the Devices are available in very limited quantities.

More often than not, Rolling Thunder uses his own Mini-vac to trap spirits temporarily, then takes the annoying entities where they won't harm anyone and releases them. On more than one occasion, Rolling Thunder has had to defend himself against these spirits upon their release. Trial-and-error tests have revealed that the Mini-vac is a bit limited: It only works on really minor spirits. Rolling Thunder's attempts to use it against more powerful entities only succeeded in pissing them off. So beware, young warrior! Coyote may be waiting around the corner, and no Mini-vac'll suck him up!

[The Mini-vac essentially becomes a fetish (see *Mage*, pages 219, 245) that imprisons minor spirits. Although the user cannot employ the trapped spirits' powers, he'll feel their influence seeping through the mystickal protections of the bag. A shaman who literally "bags" a Bane, for example, will suffer from pains, nightmares and personal corruption until the spirit is released. All told, the Mini-vac can trap four spirits before it needs to be emptied; the longer they remain in the bag, the angrier they'll be once they're let loose.]

[A Mini-vac user pits the Device's "Arete" against the spirit's Willpower in a resisted roll (see *Mage*, page 81), difficulty 6. If the spirit loses, it's sucked into the Device; if the mage loses, the entity remains free — and it's a fair bet that that spirit won't be happy! This Device is vulgar unless the spirits are invisible to mortal sight (at which point the shaman merely looks like a looney-tune). The Dreamspeaker Tradition has censured this blasphemous item and consider anyone who uses it an enemy of the spirits.]

.... The Sorcerer's Apprentice (The Mentor, The Speak-n-Spell)

Arete N/A, Quintessence 20, Background Cost 8

Leave it to the Ruby Children, an unruly cabal of Hermetic techno-brats, to invent an instant spell-teacher for impatient wizards. House Thig, a recent addition to our oh-so-important Comrades in Hermes, had a lot of ground to cover in their quest for respectability. In the company of Houses founded before Willy the Conqueror's time, the so-called Ruby Children of Thig were shoved off into the Sidekick's Lounge until they proved their worth, which they eventually did through a combination of political savvy, technological vision and an understanding of modern paradigms. While the old-time puffers labored under protocols dating from the Renaissance — at best! — House Thig streamlined their operations with innovations like the Speak-n-Spell.

Oh sure, it wasn't supposed to be called that. The original Device, created in 1947 by a now-deceased lad named Elron Saine, bore the awkward moniker "Elron's Umbrood Protocol Schematic and Incantation Mentor." Essentially, Elron's little gimmick allowed an inexperienced Hermetic to teach himself

the elaborate rituals and arcane designs you need to request help from Umbrood entities. As we know, the Merlins have a way with the Old Ones; that way takes time to master, though — years, if not decades. Elron came up with a shortcut around the limitations of human consciousness: By recording rites and designs and then projecting them straight into the sleeping Hermetic's mind, the Mentor teaches the protocols in a fraction of the time it takes to read, practice and memorize the spells. Thus equipped, the wizards of Thig gained ground on their old-fashioned elders and made new pacts with the Old Gods. This new edge ticked off a number of fogeys, but until 1962, the Device itself remained a secret. By that time, House Thig had assembled enough resources (and created enough clones and upgrades of the original Device) to block the Order's attempts to ban the machine.

Elron's visionary thinking did not extend to names. Despite Elron's grumbling, no one wanted to call the Mentor by its intended designation. In honor of the re-released Disney film *Fantasia*, Elron's colleagues began referring to the thing as "The Sorcerer's Apprentice." All things considered, that wasn't an inappropriate name. Like Mickey's hapless character, Thigs who relied too heavily on their Apprentices dug themselves into early graves — or Otherworldly punishments. It's one thing to know a design and an incantation, yet another to understand the purpose and significance of both. Lots of Thigs got themselves into very deep and very hot water by taking a few naps and waking up with the impression that they were master wizards. A combination of attrition and House wisdom got Apprentices moved into the back rooms of many Chantries, where mages could absorb the necessary knowledge without thinking if they were ready to handle it. This shift from secret weapon to teaching tool prompted a new name change: The Sorcerer's Apprentice became the Speak-n-Spell.

Elron's original Device has been copied, modified and upgraded a hundred times since its invention. The prototype disappeared (along with Elron) when a major demon threw a tantrum in Elron's Chantry. Oops! Fortunately for House Thig, the schematics survived, providing a basis for future designs. A modern Speak-n-Spell consists of a keyboard, monitor, RAM and hard drives, an independent power source, a somnambulistic teaching system, a headjack headset to channel the information, and a comfy chair or couch. The end-user programs in the ritual she wants to learn and sets the program running and takes a snooze; as she sleeps, the Speak-n-Spell works the necessary words, designs and sequences into her subconscious. She awakens with the worst breath of the day — and a working knowledge of Hermetic protocol.

The downside of this shortcut is inexperience. Summoning isn't the kind of magick you just fuck around with until you get it right. Worse, the impressions occasionally wind up garbled by either a bug in the program or a hiccup in the user's subconscious. The only way to tell if you've learned the lesson wrong is...well, draw your own conclusions. Worse, if the ritual is learned the wrong way, it stays learned the wrong way; the only method Thig has devised to "erase" a badly understood rite is to go through the process all over again and hope you get it straight the second time around. The proof is in the pudding, as

they say, and sometimes pudding's all that's left of a Hermetic who calls up what she can't put down.

[When a mage employs a Sorcerer's Apprentice, the Storyteller — *not the player* — makes a secret roll of the mage's Intelligence + Occult against difficulty 8. The results should be kept from the player until she tries to use her new skills; the Storyteller merely tells her "Your mind swirls with new designs and arcane sigils. You feel like you could command the world!"

- Success allows the Hermetic access to the **Holy Pentacles** rote (see **Order of Hermes**, page 66) even if she does not possess Spirit or Arete rankings of 4. Additionally, she learns or adds one dot of the Spirit Lore Knowledge for each success she wins on the roll. These gains are fairly permanent, engraved into her subconscious by the power of the Device. They do not allow her to employ other Spirit 4 Effects or use other spells as if she had an Arete of 4. The Storyteller should make a note about the new powers, the player does *not* list them on her character sheet. The new Knowledge is intuitive, not learned. It applies to the appropriate Dice Pools but does not carry over into educated discussions ("Damn! I *know* what I'm talking about! I'm just drawing a blank right now....").

- If the mage fails the roll, her knowledge is incomplete. She has learned something, but that understanding is unreliable. Until her skill is tested, however, the player won't know how well the character absorbed the lessons. She might be able to do great things without a hitch one minute, then foul them up the next. The Storyteller ought to keep his options open when the mage attempts to bargain with the spirits. At this point, she knows just enough to be dangerous.

- If the roll comes up a botch, the mage is in deep trouble. Oh yeah, she *thinks* she knows what she's doing; she doesn't, though, and that fact will be painfully obvious the next time she tries to use her new skills. Something *will* show up, but that something won't be happy, friendly or bound by any of the Hermetic protocols....

[Naturally, any mage can use the Apprentice to increase her store of Hermetic secrets. House Thig guards its trump cards pretty jealously, however, and rarely admits that they exist at all. A character who gains access to an Apprentice needs to activate the machine (Intelligence + Occult, difficulty 7, with Wits + Computer Hacking as an additional roll if she's not a member of House Thig) or have it set up by someone who knows how to use it. After applying the headset and pasting its nodules to her temples, the mage falls into a deep coma for 48 hours. During this period, her consciousness spins through endless amounts of Hermetic spirit lore. When she awakens, the above results apply.

[Undoing a bad learning experience requires another trip under for 48 hours; a new attempt demands a third voyage to la-la land and a new Intelligence + Occult roll. A character who blows three learning attempts should give it up. The difficulty rises to 9 on the third trip and to 10 on the fourth. At that point, the mage's sense of what is and isn't accurate magickal lore become so scrambled that she also loses two *permanent* points of Occult. A greedy mage who tries to boost her Spirit Lore rating by making repeated trips to the Apprentice raises her difficulty

as above; a botch on the return trip undoes the effects of earlier successes, although the wizard won't realize that at the time. Since Hermetic magick depends on precise execution, scrambled signals are a *very* bad thing....For details about Umbrood protocols, see **Order of Hermes**, pages 60-61.]

.....Leng Chao's Chamber of Yin-Yang

Arete 5, Quintessence 25, Background Cost 10

An Akashic Brother, Leng Chao dedicated his life to the pursuit of the Way and continually sought greater physical achievement. In the mid-'80s, Chao became dissatisfied with simple physical exertion and began looking for equipment that would push him farther than he had ever gone. He experimented with a variety of exercise machines, but they all tied him down, strapped him in, positioned him and restricted him more than they freed him. He wanted a static tool that would push him physically, but leave his body and mind free to move. Finally, he turned his attention to astronaut training programs. Anti-gravity chambers, he learned, tested the astronauts in ways they had never experienced before. Over a period of five years, Chao developed his own chamber.

Chao's spherical chamber measures approximately four meters in diameter, and it spins on a platform. The Chamber of Yin-Yang rotates in perpetual motion while a system of magnetics changes the gravity from high to low at the user's discretion. This revolutionary Device walks the taut line between coincidental and vulgar magick. Only a scientist would ever know to question its feasibility.

The Akashic worked out daily in his chamber. Alternating between heavy gravity and no gravity at all, the chamber offered extra resistance for awhile, then left Chao floating as he went through his routine. In heavy gravity, Chao's muscles struggled with the effort; in low gravity, only his phenomenal balance and dexterity allowed him to continue his routine. The Brother found the challenge quite exhilarating — after each workout, he left the chamber renewed. His magicks came easily to him, and his reflexes and skill attained perfection. Unfortunately, the Chamber of Yin-Yang proved as deadly as it was helpful.

Chao lived in the Blue Phase Chantry in western Arizona. Unfortunately, our old Satanic buddies sent a strike team to his home one night in 1991. Unsuspecting, Chao entered his chamber and began his nightly routine. The Nephandi attacked. Magickal energy crackled throughout the mansion, sparking through the electrical wiring. Chao never found out about the attack. His Chantry-mates found him — or what was left of him, anyway — splattered all over the chamber's walls.

Y'see, Chao's Chamber had become a giant Quintessence battery. Seen from the Umbra, it glowed like New York City at night. If Chao hadn't hidden the Device in his warded, protected Chantry, it would have attracted a lot more attention than it did. As it was, the notice was enough. The Fallen Ones never got what they came for, but they made sure the Chantry paid for it with Chao's life.

Since Chao's death, other folks have taken his idea and run with it. Supposedly, the Technocracy has one that they use to experiment on captured mysticks. The Black Hats drop the

poor suckers into the chamber and keep them there in the alternating high and low gravity until they keel over dead from heart failure, brain aneurysm or starvation. If the guinea pig tries to break free magickally, she fries herself. Her efforts recharge the battery. Once the mage's body releases its Quintessence, the chamber collects it. Certain Sons of Ether who've studied the original Device theorize that it also captures and stores the Avatar, but they can't prove their theory (yet). As far as I know, the original Yin-Yang Chamber remains — deactivated — at the Blue Phase Chantryhouse, a memorial for the man who invented it.

[The "Arete" roll activates an exercise sequence. While advanced Forces Arts shift the gravity inside the chamber, Prime channels Quintessence from the occupant to the Device. As long as the mage has some degree of energy, the chamber keeps the workout going. If the occupant passes the point of exhaustion but keeps going (possibly with a Willpower roll, difficulty 8), the chamber begins sending his own Quintessence back into him.

[The whole process takes 10 minutes per point of Stamina — five to draw it off and five to put it back. If the mage cannot make it through the whole sequence, he emerges drained of Quintessence and physical energy; if he can (see above), he comes out energized and alert (possibly with an extra bonus to his Dice Pools, at the Storyteller's discretion).

[The machine gets vicious if the occupant goes past the "return" stage. After the Quintessence has been restored, it drains away at twice the normal rate — three minutes per point of Stamina. The Willpower roll difficulty rises to 9 at the end of this phase, then the process begins again (roughly a minute per Stamina point, difficulty 10 to keep going). By this point, the mage begins to take physical damage from exhaustion. He'll survive this punishment for one sequence per point of Stamina, then die. A suitable Device or Effect can draw off the stored Quintessence after the occupant has passed away.]

Ω Dr. Day's Hypodermic

*Some people think that he is out of his mind
Oh, but they don't appreciate the extent of his crimes
But when he gets out his drill
You don't have no choice
You know you're a goner when you hear his voice
He leans right up close, you think "This is it,"
He looks you in the mouth and says "This won't hurt a bit"*
— The Jazz Butcher, "Death Dentist"

Arete 5, Quintessence 25, Background Cost N/A

A former medic in the fields of wonder-Science, Dr. Benjamin Day worked for the Red Cross for years. A genius with life-force and life-fluids, he supervised blood-drives across the southern states. Day Awakened in 1982. By mid-1994, he had joined the Nephandi and renounced his loyalty to the Etherites. This struck the Traditions with a hard blow. His connections, influence and genius made him a powerful and formidable enemy.

Dr. Day's out there somewhere, but he keeps a low profile and spreads his subtle brand of evil through contacts in the mundane world and vampiric community. He still works in blood-drive vans and facilities throughout the South, and he has invented a number of medical tools to keep him...supplied. He prides himself on the most daunting toy of all: his hypodermic needle.

Dr. Day uses his special hypodermic to draw blood — and more. With it, this death-doctor takes samples of his victim's life essence, too. His well-intentioned blood donors suffer from various illnesses after contributing to "the cause" — illnesses like chronic fainting spells, memory loss, anemia and terminal confusion. Unfortunately for Dr. Day, Red Cross investigators recently noticed the correlation between blood donation and long-term amnesia, markedly in the southern U.S. He sent them barking up the wrong sapling with a bullshit story about a new blood disease — a contagious virus that affects the memory. You may have heard of it: The so-called "Red Plague" — a nonexistent blood virus that had people in a panic a few months ago. These days, the Red Cross enforces extreme sanitary regulations on the bloodvans, hospitals and clinics in the South. Dr. Day, of course, oversees a covert project to research the virus — and uses his privileged access to add to his collection of specimens.

Once Dr. Day captures a patient's life essence, he consumes it, literally. The patient's memories — both mental and physical — go to the doctor, making him more powerful, more educated and more dangerous. The process is not without side effects, however; Dr. Day often experiences an odd MPD effect, shifting from one personality to another during stressful moments. When faced with a challenge, he switches to a personality that fits the particular crisis best. His speech patterns change, as do his mannerisms and facial expressions. From what I've come to understand, our friend Dr. Day is fighting a losing battle against the personalities of his victims. To keep his head, he has to mentally claw his way over the "bodies" of the people he's consumed. The more he feeds his habit, the harder that fight becomes. My guess is that he's losing.

Recently, Dr. Day opened several clinics in New York. In the basement of his main clinic, he keeps a refrigerated vault where he stores carefully labeled samples of the people he's "stolen." He no longer consumes them. He stores them for future use instead. I imagine he's got quite a collection by now.

Maybe someone should help him return those "samples" to their proper owners before his collection gets too big for him to handle.

[Dr. Day's Hypo is a unique item combining Life 3, Mind 4 and Spirit 5 into a single magickal function: capturing the essence of mortal souls. It should be noted that the Hypodermic doesn't steal the entire soul, only a portion of it; nevertheless, the essence of the patient's personality flows out along with her blood. It's this soul essence, mixed with the life-force, that makes Dr. Day a slave to his own medicine.

[An "Arete" roll activates the Effect when blood is drawn through the syringe; this cannot be done in combat and may



require a Dexterity + Medicine roll (difficulty 6 on a resistant patient, 4 for a cooperative one). The soul-transfer effects occur after the doctor (or some other party) has consumed the blood; for the most part, such side effects should be left to roleplaying and Storytelling.

[A victim whose soul has been drained by the Hypodermic feels listless and confused for weeks afterward; it's a fair bet she will never Awaken in the magickal sense after a portion of her

Avatar has been drawn off this way — but nobody has tested that theory yet. Sheer dumb luck has kept Awakened folks away from Dr. Day's soul-stealing syringe. If the good doctor were to take a sample from a mage, the results might be catastrophic, both to the doctor and the patient. We leave these possibilities to the Storyteller, but we do suggest some big and nasty consequences — a Paradox explosion, a Gilgul, switched souls, or something else along those lines.]



Appendix: Hardware

That's right, I'm an asshole...with an Uzi.
— Agent Baxter, *The Frighteners*



Sleepers are not without their own resources. The following weapons and vehicles are common throughout the Western World, and a good portion of the Eastern World as well. A modern mage would do well to know such things; after all, it takes more than a few rotes to take on the National Guard.

This Appendix is presented in no-frills gamespeak. The rules given here can be considered optional if your troupe would rather keep things simple. None of the following devices are magickal in any way, although “advanced” technomagickal versions of many of them exist. Some Technomancers channel their Effects through machines like those described below, while others build special “enhanced” variations.

Weaponry



The following "tools of ill omen" are presented in the systems and format given in the **Mage** rulebook (pages 258-263). Really detailed weaponry descriptions can be found in the **Vampire Players Guide**, **Destiny's Price** and **World of Darkness: Combat**. Have fun!

Bows and Crossbows

- **Normal Bows:** I think we all know what we're talking about here. Bear in mind that there's a big difference between a 20-pound bow at the RenFest and a 50-pound bow with sharp arrowheads in the hands of a master archer.

- **Compound Bow:** Compound bows are more efficient and accurate than "simple" bows. A compound bow has a system of cables that reduces the "pull" of the bow by 50 percent once the string has been pulled halfway. Thus, a character pulling a 60-pound bow would only hold 30 pounds on the string while aiming.

- **Crossbow:** A crossbow can be cocked and held ready to fire indefinitely. Crossbows typically have a "pull" of over 100 pounds. Many crossbows fold in the middle to create a lever for cocking the bow. Others require the use of a small windlass (called a cranequin) to cock the bow. Still others use a lever (called a goat's foot). If a character does not have a mechanical aid of some sort to help in cocking the bow, then the Strength needed to cock the bow is four. Anyone can fire a cocked crossbow. Crossbow arrows are properly called "quarrels" or "bolts."

Support Weapons

Support weapons provide heavy or sustained firepower and require a separate Heavy Weapons Skill to use (see **The Book of Shadows**, page 22). Machine guns are the only exception to this; they require the Firearms Skill instead. Firing a tripod-based weapon without its base requires a minimum Strength of 6; even the cybernetically enhanced HIT Marks and cyborgs of Iteration X have a hard time with such powerful weapons.

In other White Wolf books, many of these weapons have outrageous rates of fire. For simplicity's sake, you may decide to use the damage and rate stats given in parentheses instead of the normal damage and rate statistics. It beats rolling 40 different attack rolls!

- **.30 Caliber Machine Gun:** This weapon is often found on vehicles, or as a squad support weapon among Third World armies. It comes with a bipod; ammunition is belt-fed.

- **.50 Caliber Machine Gun:** This weapon is often found on vehicles, or as a squad support weapon. It comes with a tripod; ammunition is belt-fed.

- **30mm "Chain Gun" Cannon:** A belt-fed weapon found only on vehicle mountings. The high rate of fire allows the gun to "drill into" a target. Consider all successes during one turn cumulative for the purpose of defeating armor thickness.

- **M-79 Grenade Launcher:** The M-79 grenade launcher looks (and operates) like a stubby shotgun with a two-inch barrel. The grenades explode on impact. This weapon has no magazine; after one shot, the gun has to be reloaded.

- **M-19 Grenade Launcher:** This fully automatic 40mm grenade launcher rests on a tripod and can either fire from its belt or from individually chambered rounds.

- **Mortar:** An indirect-fire weapon, the mortar lobbs an explosive shell high into the air. When it comes down, the shell blows up (see "Explosives"). Mortars cannot be fired inside buildings, or in areas where some obstacle would interfere with the projectiles' flight. They may, however, fire at targets within a huge range (the "Min" and "Max" listings indicate minimum and maximum ranges for the weapon). Small mortars can be carried by one person; large ones require a three-man crew and must be broken down into several pieces before they can be moved.

- **Flamethrower:** A backpack carries tanks of napalm, and a hose connects it to a rifle-like launcher. The flamethrower weighs 50 pounds with all three tanks, but only one tank is necessary. Each tank is good for five minutes of constant spraying.

Archery Chart

Bow Type	Pull	Minimum Strength	Range	Damage	Weight
Small Bow	30 lbs.	2	60 yards	2	10 lbs.
Large Bow	60 lbs.	3	90 yards	3	15 lbs.
Compound Bow	Special	3	180 yards	3	15 lbs.
Crossbow	100 lbs.+	Special	100 yards	3	15 lbs.



- **LAW:** LAW stands for Light Antitank Weapon — a disposable, one-shot rocket and launcher. The launcher is a tube about two and a half feet long and about four inches in diameter. The rocket is about 14 inches long.

The LAW and the Stinger (below) produce “backblast” when fired. That is, flames and rocket exhaust fire out the back of the firing tube. Because of the backblast, there’s a two-yard danger zone directly behind any such weapon. Anyone in the danger zone when the weapon is fired suffers four dice of aggravated damage from the flames.

- **TOW:** This is a wire-guided antitank missile that is vehicle- or bipod-launched and produces backblast like an LAW.

- **Stinger:** A shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missile with a heat-seeking guidance system. This is a “fire and forget” weapon; you aim it, fire it and let the missile do the rest. After you send the weapon on its way, it’s usually a good idea to run.

- **2.75" Rocket:** These rockets are used as vehicle-mounted artillery, found mounted in clusters of 6 to 60.

- **105mm and 120mm Guns:** These guns come mounted on tanks. Such weapons normally fire armor-piercing ammunition, either “shaped charge” or solid shot. Armor-piercing ammunition (of either type) does not have a blast effect. Only the target takes damage.

Support Weapons Chart

Name	Difficulty	Damage	Range	Rate	Capacity	Weight
.30 Caliber Machine Gun	6	6 (12)	800 yards	21 (5)	100	25 lbs.
.50 Caliber Machine Gun	7	8 (16)	1000 yards	30 (5)	200	40 lbs.
30mm Cannon	7	10 (15)	1200 yards	42 (8)	100	Special
M-79 Grenade Launcher	6	grenade	400 yards	1	1	6 lbs.
M-19 Grenade Launcher	6	grenade	600 yards	2	1	80 lbs.
Small Mortar	8	12	25 (min)/1320 (max)	1	1	50 lbs.
Large Mortar	9	24	600 (min)/two miles (max)	1	1	660 lbs.
Flamethrower	6	napalm	60 yards	1	Special	Varies
LAW	7	12	200 yards	1	1	5 lbs.
TOW	6	16	2500 yards	1	1	60 lbs.
Stinger	7	14	2 miles	1	1	25 lbs.
2.75" Rocket Launcher	8	15	3000 yards	1	Special	Special
105mm Gun	7	20	1200 yards	1	1	Special
120mm Gun	7	30	2000 yards	1	1	Special

Explosives

When all else fails, blow shit up. After all, what gets more attention than a firestorm? It's hard to walk away from a mortar attack, and nothing destroys evidence like a pile of flaming rubble.

Explosives make wonderful "cover" for Forces Effects, too. In open warfare, the Technocracy resorts to demolition weapons to make its deadliest Devices coincidental. Even so, the Inner Circle avoids making big messes unless all other options have failed. An explosion creates an investigation; a building that blows sky-high leaves a mountain of paperwork, backpedaling and evidence suppression for the Operatives responsible for the blast. More often than not, nuking the site from orbit (so to speak) is more trouble than it's worth.

Worse, from the perspective of a dedicated Technocrat, is the risk of innocent casualties. Explosives are notoriously careless about who they kill. A raid that murders Sleepers while the reality criminals flee is going to get someone into very hot water....As you can imagine, the Council of Nine also frowns on blowing shit up unless innocent bystanders have been cleared from the area first. Marauders and Nephandi, on the other hand, don't really care who gets hurt in the course of a mission. The latter love to set off truly heinous explosions, then plant evidence linking the disaster to the Traditions, the Technocracy, or both.

Systems

When something blows up, it sends flames and debris scattering across a wide area. To reflect this, plant the full damage amount at the center of the blast and subtract one die from the damage pool for every yard removed from the detonation point. If several characters get caught in the blast

radius, simply roll the damage once and subtract one Health Level per die as the blast fans out.

Example: Cyborg X344 hurls a grenade at Jennifer Rollins, Atropos and Dante. The Virtual Adept stands at Ground Zero, while the two women are three and five yards away. X344's weapon does 12 dice of damage; the Storyteller's roll comes up with a total of nine Health Levels of damage.

Dante absorbs the full nine Levels (he can soak it, but we won't go into that right now); Jennifer, standing three yards from Dante, gets nailed for six Health Levels, and Atropos takes four. The mages are hurt, perhaps badly, and X344 readies another grenade....

Some of the explosives listed below have been rated in terms of Blast Power. Each point of Blast Power is worth one die per pound of the explosive. Nitro, which has a Blast Power of 3, causes three dice of damage for every pound of nitro that goes off. Each listing also mentions whether or not the explosive will burn without exploding, and each includes descriptions of the things that set the material off.

Blasting Powder

Modern gunpowder, used in many small-arms ammunition types. Within the U.S., this explosive is legal in small quantities.

Blast Power: 1 **Detonator:** Flame, heat **Burn:** Yes

Concussion Grenade

A less deadly variation on military-issue weapons. The blast rocks the area with a deafening bang and a blinding flash. Not generally fatal, but a real pain if you happen to be on the receiving end.

Blast Power: 8 die explosion **Detonator:** Internal timer **Burn:** No

Dodging the Blast (Optional Rule)

Mages, being masters of coincidence, can often "duck and cover" from blasts that would kill a normal human. At the Storyteller's option, a mystick with Entropy, Forces, Matter, Life or Time may make a Dexterity + Dodge roll to avoid an explosion's worst effects. She "found that last bit of cover" or "rolled with the force of the blast," or experienced some other barely coincidental stroke of fortune. (See the average action-adventure flick for examples of such luck.) This dodge is instinctive, a reflex rather than a spell. Success means that the mage takes half damage, or — with a really good roll — none at all.

Massive blasts — like those that wipe out whole city blocks — cannot be dodged this way. Naturally, the mystick could still use vulgar magick to survive a huge explosion, but that carries its own risks. A coincidental Effect, cast normally, might shield her from some damage, too: The collapsing wall just happened to absorb the impact, the floor dropped her into the basement as the bomb went off, etc. (See the "Fast Casting" modifier on the Magick Difficulties Chart, *Mage*, page 171.) Still, a mage shouldn't walk into a killzone expecting an easy time; depending on the circumstances, the mystick's focus and magick style, a last-ditch spell might not be possible.

Difficulty	Size of Explosion
6	Small detonations (grenades, Molotov Cocktails)
8	Large explosions (gas tanks, small bombs)
10	Huge explosions (artillery rounds, tanker trucks, vehicle bombs)

Dynamite

A stabilized mixture of nitro and charcoal, the ever-popular TNT can be carried safely and makes an excellent demolitions weapon. Dynamite that undergoes severe temperature shifts or long storage becomes "sweaty"; crystals of pure nitroglycerin form on the outside of the stick, turning the normally waxy surface shiny and slick. At this point, the TNT is only slightly more stable than a similar amount of nitro.

Blast Power: 3 (6 dice per stick) **Detonator:** Primer
Burn: Yes

Fragmentation Grenade

Standard military issue frag grenade. Pull pin, throw and duck. The explosion rips the container apart, creating a rain of hot metal fragments in addition to the blast — a fact the movies often forget.

Blast Power: 12 die explosion **Detonator:** Internal timer
Burn: No

Gasoline

The really explosive part of gasoline isn't the liquid, it's the fumes. Packed into a sealed container (like a fuel tank), gasoline ignites in a roar; spread out in a trail or pool, it burns but does not explode.

Blast Power: 2 **Detonator:** Fire **Burn:** Yes

Gas Grenades

Smoke grenades release large clouds of thick white or colored smoke. Tear gas canisters let loose similar clouds of chemical irritants. The former simply cover an area, marking targets and concealing movement or escape. The latter can incapacitate most normal humans with a burning, stinging, choking mist. Neither weapon actually explodes; instead, the gas escapes through holes in the canister. The resulting cloud fills a 10-yard by 10-yard area within a minute, and lasts roughly 10 minutes in still air.

Tear gas causes living beings to gag, cough and essentially go blind for several minutes. Characters doused with the gas subtract two dice from all Dice Pools until the cloud clears and the irritant is washed away. Gas masks protect the wearer's face, of course, but most forms of tear gas still burn exposed skin. Standard smoke clouds reduce all sight and smell perception Dice Pools by two dice, but they do not inflict damage.

Blast Power: None **Detonator:** Internal timer

Burn: No

Molotov Cocktail

A perennial favorite among urban guerrillas. The old gas-in-the-bottle trick turns a regular glass container into an incendiary device. A rag provides the wick; the thrower lights the rag, then throws the bottle and runs. The resulting spill explodes into a small but potent blaze. A cocktail's blast radius is half the usual size, but the fire burns until it is either consumed or put out.

Blast Power: 8 die aggravated explosion

Detonator: Fire, impact **Burn:** Ignites on contact with flame

Napalm

Mean stuff. This material clings to whatever it hits and burns until it's consumed. Made from jellied gasoline, napalm comes in canisters, flows through flamethrowers and explodes from fragile projectiles. Anything — or anyone — within the blast area is set aflame and burnt to a crisp.

A target hit by napalm is covered in fiery goo; the Storyteller rolls one die to determine how much of the victim is burning, then rolls that many dice one per turn for 10 turns (a roll of 5, for example, would mean five dice rolled per turn for 10 turns). This damage is aggravated. If the troupe uses the optional dodge rule (see box), the player can try to "dodge" the flying napalm. Her roll would subtract one success from the initial die result for every success she won.



If she got three successes, for instance, a roll of 7 would become 4 (which is still bad, but not as bad as 7). Water will not extinguish napalm; the only way to get it to stop burning is to move the flaming object to a place without oxygen, or to wait until it burns itself out.

Blast Power: 0 **Detonator:** Fire **Burn:** That's the point
Nitroglycerine

A clear, oily liquid that's easy to make if you know how. It's pretty unstable stuff, and often goes off by accident if you're not careful with it. A character with the Demolitions Skill or Science: Chemistry can try "safety-packing" the nitro, but the explosive remains a real health risk to those who use it. A botched Dexterity roll, a hard fall, a bad hit — all of these shocks can set nitro off. Whoever's carrying the stuff had better be light on her feet and have her life insurance paid in advance.

Blast Power: 3 **Detonator:** Shock, impact, bad luck
Burn: No

Plastique (C-4)

A putty-like substance that explodes when primed. This explosive comes in a variety of strengths, from home-produced "blasting wax" to military-grade plastique, and can be molded to fit around doors, slipped into cracks or packed into shells or pipes.

Blast Power: 1-20 **Detonator:** Primer only **Burn:** Yes
Primacord

Instant fuse material. This explosive, created in string form, can either be used to set other materials off, or be packed into tight, intense bombs.

Blast Power: .5 **Detonator:** Primer or open flame
Burn: Ignites on contact with flame

Vehicles



Get your motor runnin'

Head out on the highway

Lookin' for adventure

And whatever comes our way

— Steppenwolf, "Born to be Wild"

For the most part, you won't need statistics for the various vehicles that come and go in your world. They're best handled as story elements, as not lists of stats. Even so, it's occasionally helpful to know how thick that tank's armor is, or how easily an F-14 can overtake a Lear jet. For those times, we present the following optional rules.

Mage (pages 252-253) offers some brief systems for vehicles and stunt driving. The Traits that follow add some new specifics to the original rules:

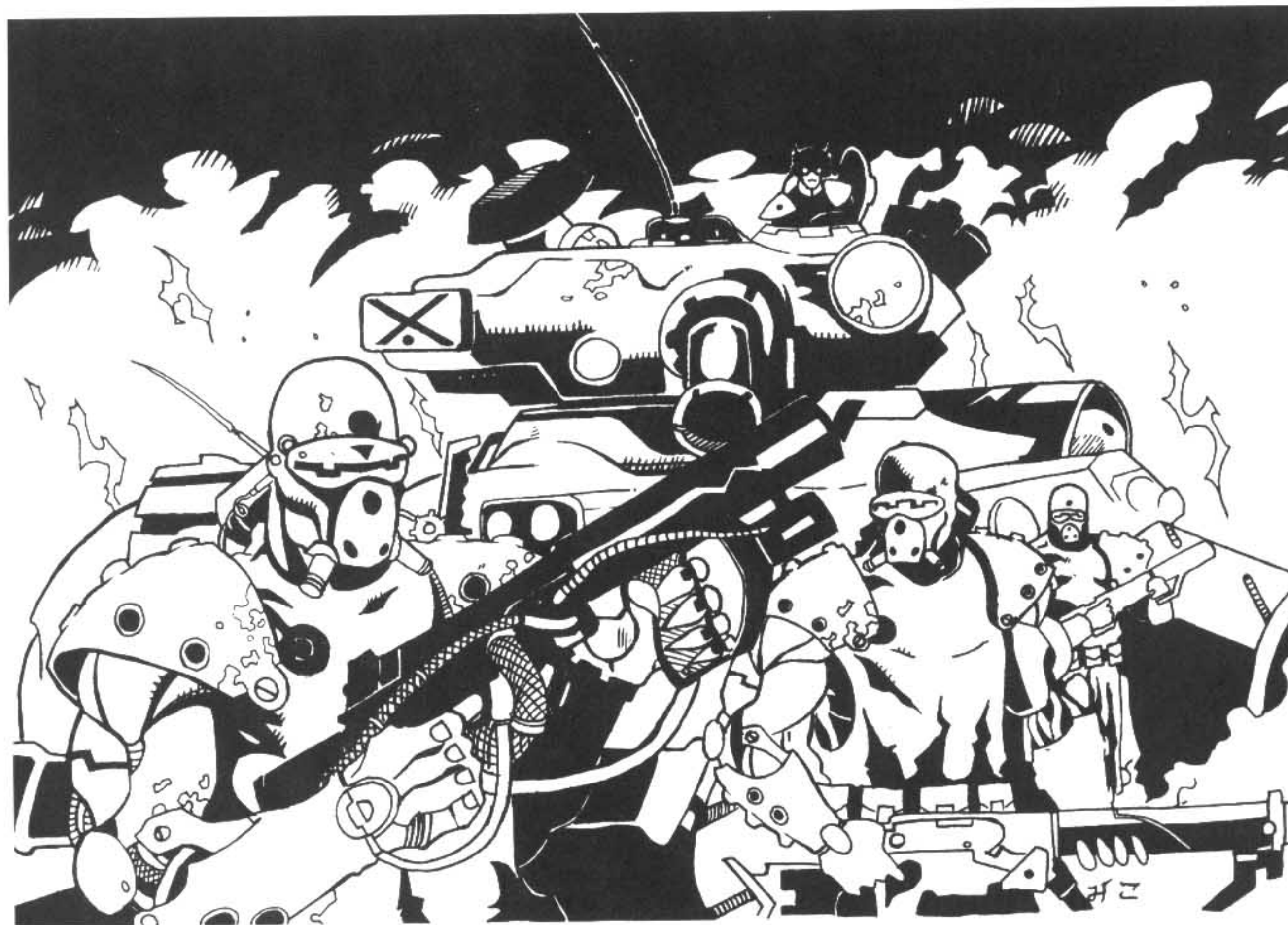
- **Safe/Max Speed:** This Trait, which can be found in the rulebook, defines how fast a character can safely drive the vehicle, and how fast the machine in question will go when driven at top speed.

- **Maneuverability:** The Maneuverability Trait (also presented in the rulebook) shows the maximum Dice Pool a driver can use behind the wheel or controls.

- **Crew:** The minimum personnel it takes to drive or pilot the vehicle. Passengers (pass.) are in addition to the crew.

- **Armor:** The number of successes a damage roll needs before it can penetrate the armor. Anything less simply bounces off the side of the machine.

- **Weapons:** This is obvious. See "Support Weapons" for some specifics.



Vehicle Reference

Wheeled Vehicles

Vehicle	Safe Speed	Max Speed	Maneuver	Crew	Armor
Bicycle	3 x Strength	8 x Strength	5	1	0
Compact Car	70	130	6	1	2
Mid-Sized Car	70	120	5	1	3
Sports Car	130	170	9	1	2
Race Car	140	240	10	1	2
Limousine	70	110	4	1	4
Mini-Van	70	120	6	1	2
Van	60	100	5	1	3
RV	60	80	3	1	3
Small Motorcycle	75	130	8	1	1
Large Motorcycle	90	170	5	1	2
Off-Road Bike	50	80	9	1	0
Pick-Up Truck	70	110	5-8	1	3
Large Truck	60	110	4-8	1	3
Tractor-Trailer	70	110	4-8	1	4

Aircraft

Vehicle	Safe Speed	Max Speed	Maneuver	Crew	Armor	Weapons
Small Prop	110	170	5	1 (3 pass.)	3	none
Medium Prop	180	230	4	2 (10 pass.)	4	none
Large Prop	270	380	3	3 (50 pass.)	5	none
Lear Jet	350	450	4	2 (20 pass.)	4	none
Fighter Jet	Mach 2	Mach 2.5	7	2	3	*
News Copter	140	220	6	2 (2 pass.)	2	none
Large Helicopter	150	240	6	2 (8 pass.)	3	none
Attack Chopper	180	300	9	2	9	&
Military Utility Copter	180	280	7	3 (10 pass.)	5	#
Hot Air Balloon	Wind	Wind	0	1 (3 pass.)	0	none

Weapons

* = Four Sidewinder missiles (Difficulty 8, Damage 15, Rate 1, Range 3000 yards); six Sparrow missiles (Difficulty 8, Damage 20, Rate 1, Range 3000 yards); 20mm cannon (Difficulty 7, Damage 15, Rate 3, Range 1000 yards); 14 250-lb. bombs (Difficulty 8, Damage 40)

& = 30mm cannon, 16 TOW missiles, 16 2.75" rockets

= Two .30 caliber machine guns, or two 30mm cannons, or six 2.75" rockets and two .30 caliber machine guns

Military Vehicles

Vehicle	Safe Speed	Max Speed	Maneuver	Crew	Armor	Weapons
Jeep	60	80	6	1 (4 pass.)	3	%
Humvee	80	120	5	1 (6 pass.)	4	%
APC	30	45	3	3	10 (10 pass.)	\$
Riot Tank	30	50	3	3	10	@
Light Tank	20	30 (on road)	2	4	16 (front)/10 (sides)	!
Heavy Tank	30	50 (on road)	2	4	18 (front)/12 (sides)	!!

Weapons

% = One .30 caliber, .50 caliber machine gun, 30mm cannon, heavy mortar or M-19 grenade launcher, or six TOW missiles

\$ = One 30mm cannon, two .50 caliber machine guns; sometimes carries a heavy mortar instead of the 30mm cannon

@ = Two M-19 grenade launchers (used for gas canisters), two .30 caliber machine guns, ram (knocks down walls)

! = 105mm cannon, two .50 caliber machine guns (front and turret), two smoke grenade launchers; can be sealed against gas or water.

!! = 120mm cannon, three .50 caliber machine guns (front and turret), four smoke grenade launchers; can be sealed against gas or water.

New Skills



The following optional Traits might be of some use in a chronicle with a strong emphasis on high tech. Alternately, you can simply employ the Technology Skill in their place.

Jury-Rigging

With a little time, some tools and a handful of odds and ends, you can whip together a one-shot focus or Device, or make a broken machine work again for a few brief moments. You've got to have something to work from and some room to move, but given the opportunity, you can perform miracles.

Obviously, you ought to have a host of other Traits before you can use this Skill. Technology is a must; Computer, Gunsmithing, Security and a variety of Sciences are really helpful for certain kinds of work. If you can impress people with your mechanical skill, however, you might be able to justify some magickal sleight-of-hand as "technological aptitude." This won't work for blatantly impossible stunts, of course, but it may make quick repairs or conversions seem totally believable.

(**Storytellers Note:** This Skill might be out of place in a realistic chronicle. It's not really suitable for **Vampire: The Masquerade** or other gritty settings, but it can be perfectly appropriate for those Ether wizards or Iteration X geniuses who can cobble a working machine together from a pile of scrap parts. Remember, it is a Skill, not a Sphere; a character shouldn't be able to use it to perform obviously impossible engineering feats.)

- Novice: Basement tinkerer.
- Practiced: Mr. Fixit.
- Competent: A pit crew chief.
- Expert: MacGyver.
- Master: Reed Richards or Tony Stark.

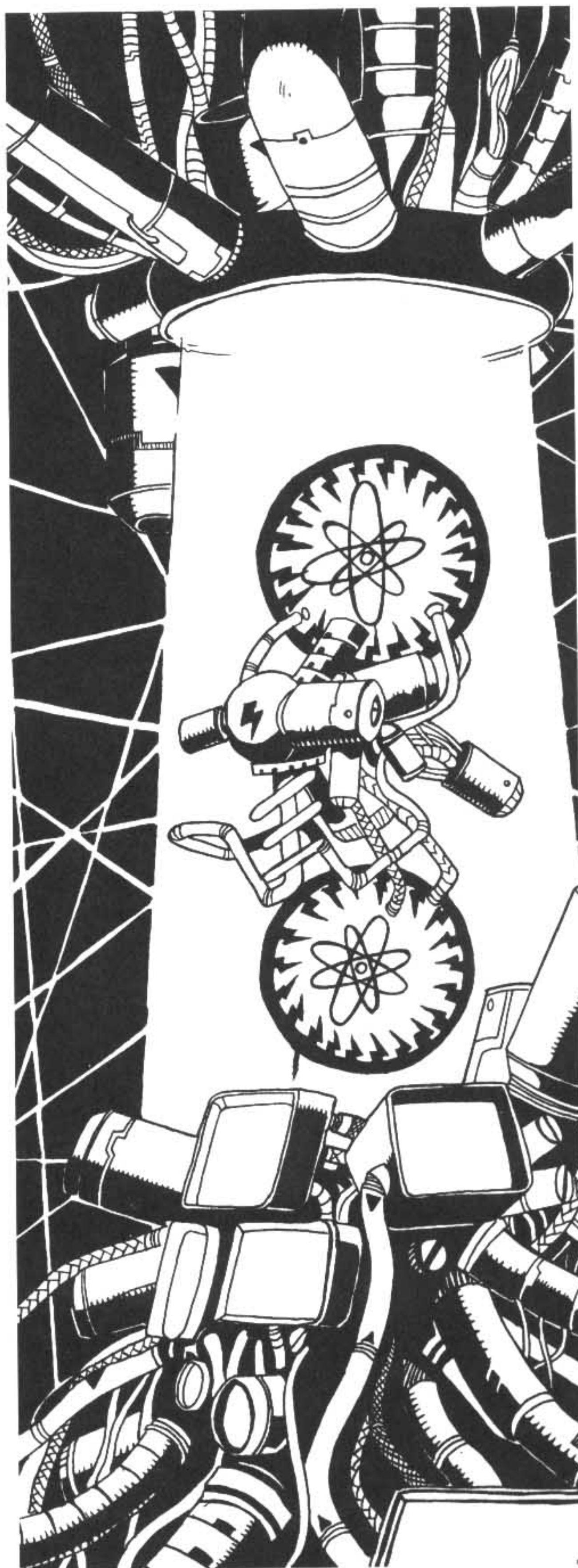
Possessed By: Scavengers, Mad Scientists, Gadgeteers, Crimefighters, Orphans, Vagabonds, Repairmen

Specialties: Traps, Repairs, High-Tech, Found Objects, Junkyards, "Should Be Impossible"

Security

You understand the ins and outs of high security systems — not the simple locks and bolts of standard home protection, but advanced networks of high-tech devices. Placement, wiring, triggers, combinations — you know it all. Or at least you like to *think* you do....

This Skill allows you to set, scope or disable a security layout. The more elaborate the system, the higher the difficulty. Most systems will demand a series of rolls before you can pass through all the hazards. Many also require a couple of related Skills and Knowledges, like Computer,



Computer Hacking, Technology and Traps. A Perception + Security roll lets you notice guard features; Intelligence + Security can help you puzzle out a system, either to set it or to foil it; in a pinch, Wits + Security might allow you to notice that one important clue that disables the network — or that nails the thief who thinks he's just cleared the fence.

- Novice: Read a book.
- Practiced: Trained on one side of the law.
- Competent: Trained on *both* sides of the law.
- Expert: Burglars ask you for advice.
- Master: Catwoman

Possessed By: Burglars, Commandos, System Designers, Glamour-Thieves, Infiltration Experts, Elite Guards

Specialties: Computer Systems, Sensor Equipment, Cat Burglary, Tricks

Device Index

Key

BoS = The Book of Shadows

DW = Digital Web

IX = Technocracy: Iteration X

M2 = Mage Second Edition

NWO = Technocracy: NWO

P = Technocracy: Progenitors

S = Technocracy: Syndicate

TT = The Technomancer's Toybox

VE = Technocracy: Void Engineers

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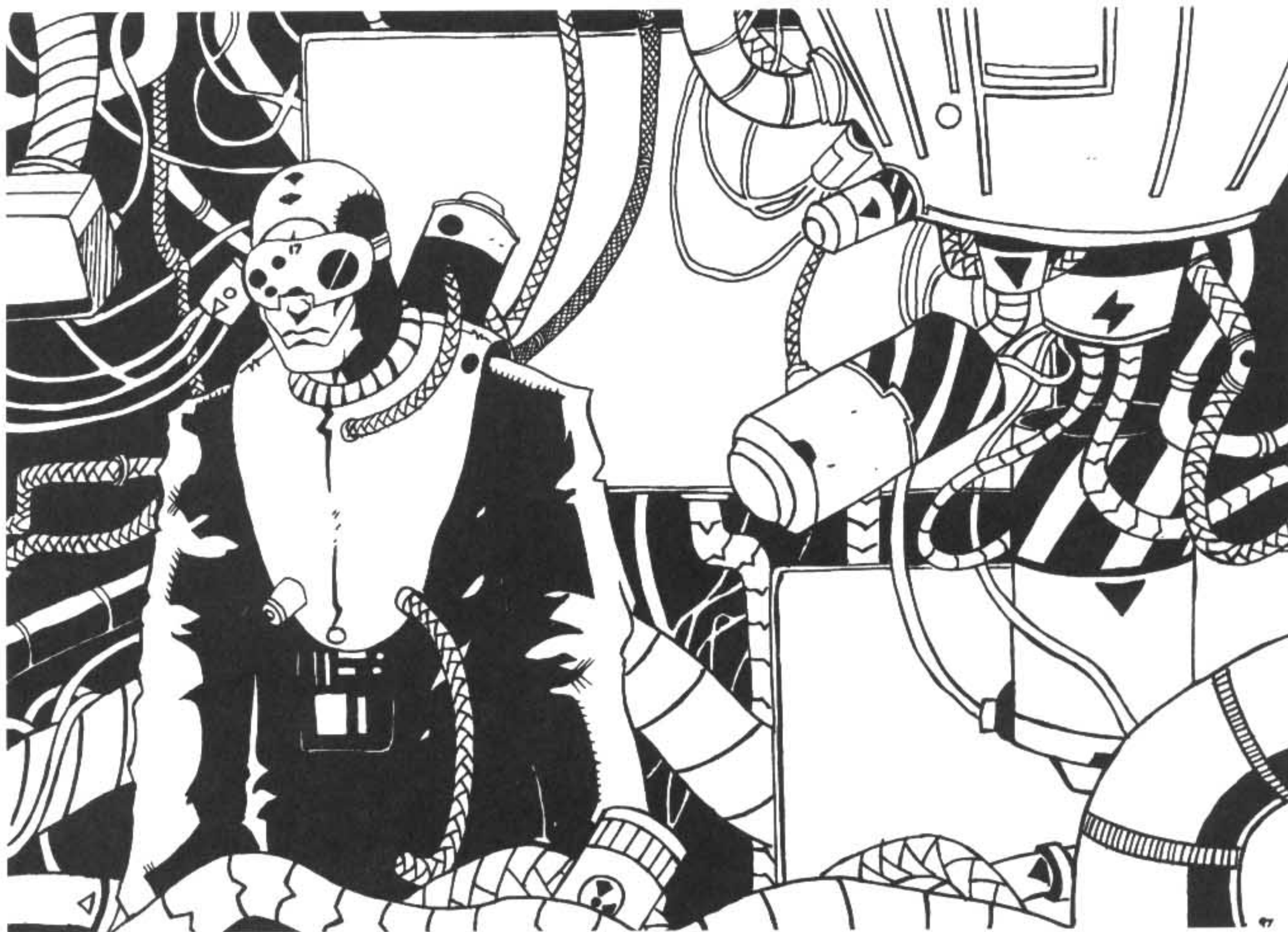
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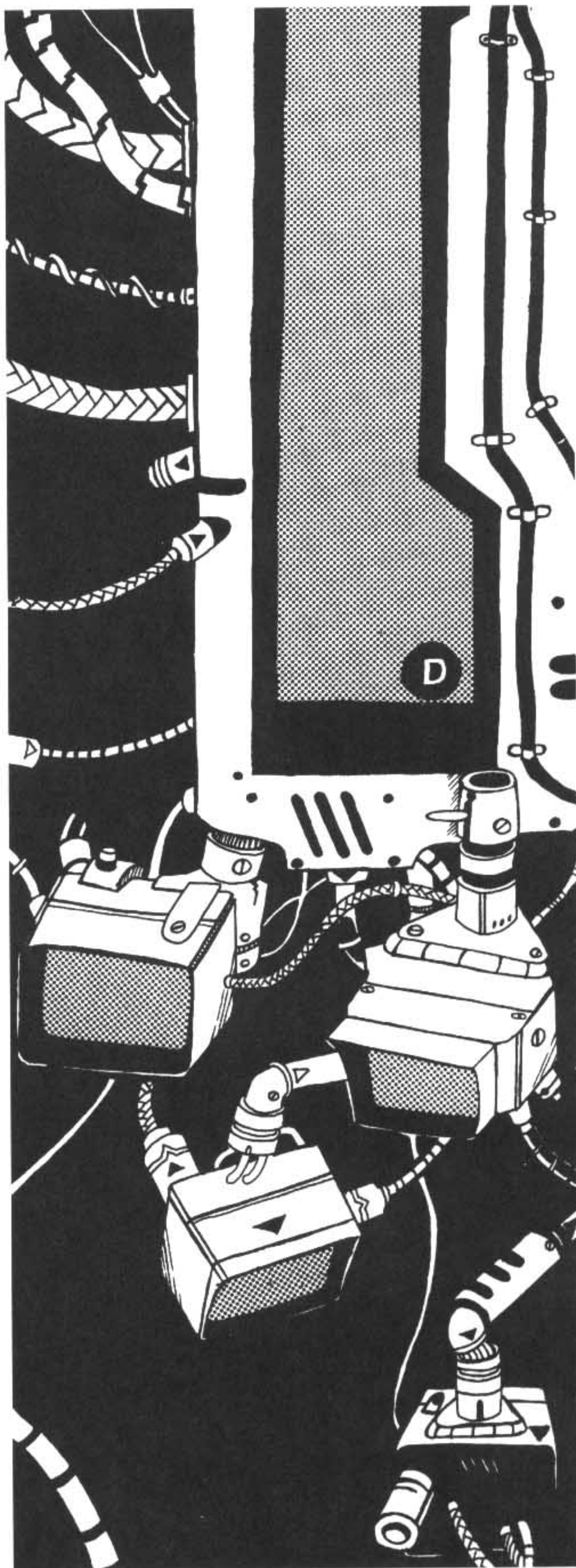


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