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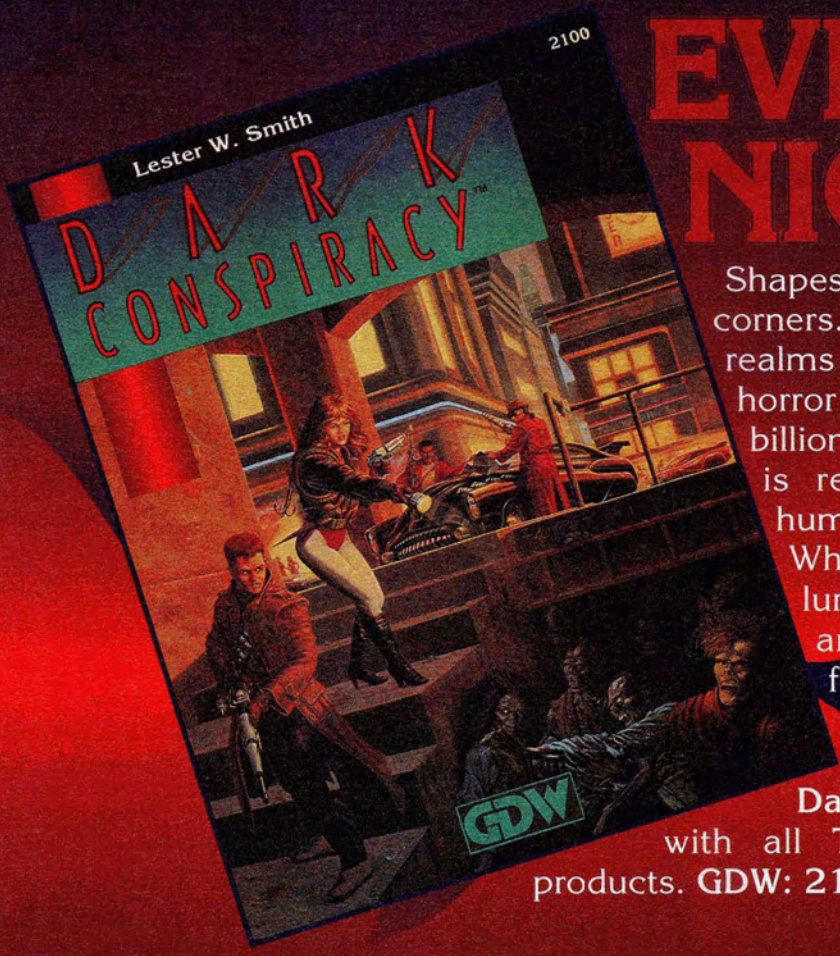
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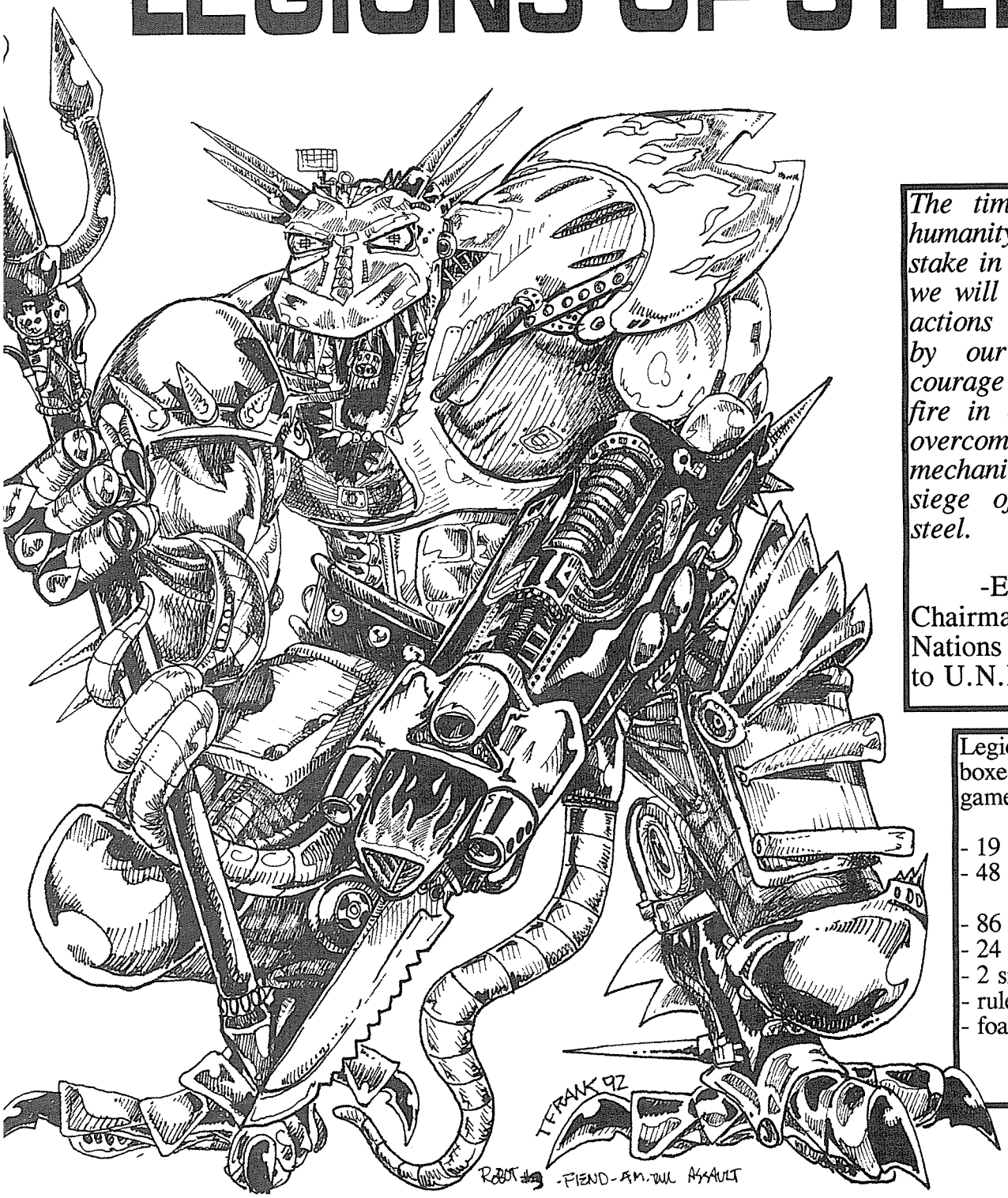
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all the credit

Challenge

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ABOUT THE COVER

This month, Tony Szczudlo shows us the fate of a low-berth occupant in the **MegaTraveller/Traveller: The New Era** universe.



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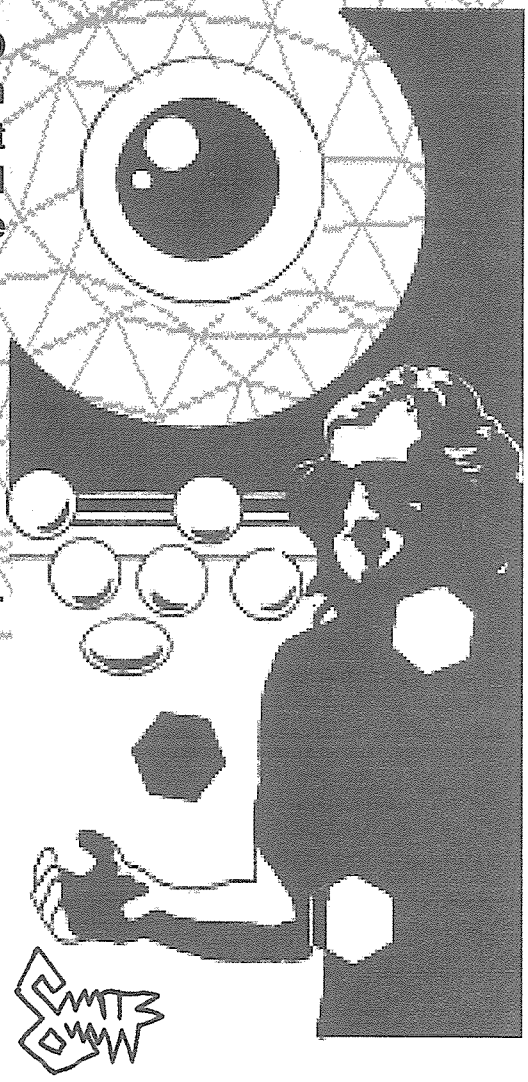
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What Happens to MegaTraveller When Traveller: The New Era Is Published?

Dear **Challenge**,

A few days ago, I received GDW's 1992 catalog, and I am a bit perplexed by your new product called **Traveller: The New Era.** I am asking that you please answer my questions concerning this product as it may affect what gaming materials I purchase and how I use them.

My uncle gave me the original **Traveller** rules and a number of supplements back in 1983 and ever since then it has been my favorite gaming system. When **MegaTraveller** came out in 1987, I was thrilled and I went out and bought the first edition of the boxed set. I am still in the process of finding all the errata to correct the many mistakes, inconsistencies and deletions, but, on the whole, I was greatly impressed. Since then I have purchased a few more supplements and now own a total of 14 books published by Game Designers' Workshop for **Traveller** and **MegaTraveller.** There are also a few more books from other companies and many more magazines in my collection. What this all amounts to, in my opinion, is a large investment on my part in your gaming system. I am concerned that this investment may be in jeopardy of obsolescence because of your new product.

My main concern with **Traveller: The New Era** is one of compatibility. Will this system be compatible with the previous two, and what will it cost me to make it so? This is a major concern of mine since I saw the same unfortunate occurrence happen in regard to **Twilight: 2000.** I am referring to the release of the second edition of **Twilight: 2000** which made all previous material obsolete and incompatible with the new system. Consequently, a whole new order had to be purchased, at a considerable cost, in order to stay up to date. Fortunately, this did not happen in regards to **Traveller** when **MegaTraveller** was released. Nevertheless, I am still afraid that, with the release of **Traveller: The New Era**, this same fate will befall **Traveller** and **MegaTraveller.**

There is also my concern that the number of products released for **MegaTraveller** will diminish or disappear while the ones for **Traveller: The New Era** will increase and dominate the system. This, of course, means that to use any new **Traveller**-oriented materials, I must first purchase this new system, which brings us back to the monetary issue. Having to but this new system will put a serious strain on my already limited gaming budget.

Jamie Ritch
Maple Heights, Ohio

Dear Mr. Ritch:

*Thank you for your interest in **Traveller** and your continued interest in our new products. I would like to begin by assuring you that we at GDW are very sensitive to the issue of new editions that make entire sets of gaming materials obsolete, and that we make every effort to avoid doing that. Everyone who works here is also a gamer, and we all know first-hand what it's like to have to buy an entire system all over again just to keep playing the new edition. Whenever possible, we use modular improvements to keep an existing game system up to date rather than starting all over again with another edition.*

There are several examples of ways that we use to avoid entirely new editions. One is to group rules modifications in new sourcebooks, like the Data Annexes *for **Harpoon** that allow a player to upgrade his **Harpoon** from 3rd edition to edition 3.2 with only the* 1991 Data Annex. *Another is the **PC Booster Kits** that we are issuing for **Dark Conspiracy** and **Twilight: 2000** 2nd edition games to upgrade their core systems to a new improved D20 system from the less flexible D10 system. Future printings of both **Dark Con** and **Twilight** will have the booster kit rules entered into them, but any players who have already purchased the booster kits will already have everything that's in the new printing, and will not need to buy anything else.*

*However, there are situations that do require a completely new edition, with the unfortunate dislocation that entails. These situations occur when we develop a dramatically improved new game system or when the background of a game becomes so untenable that it needs to be updated. Both these circumstances combined to produce **Twilight: 2000** 2nd Edition **(T2K2).** Not only did the fall of the Eastbloc make the nuclear war scenario unfeasible, but we had developed a new roleplaying system that we knew would dramatically improve the **Twilight** game. If you had occasion to play 2nd edition, I think you will know what I mean. The system has proved so phenomenally popular among our players that we went on to incorporate the system into **Dark Conspiracy** and **Cadillacs and Dinosaurs.** And now the time has come to incorporate the same rules system (already upgraded to booster kit standards) into our **Traveller** background.*

*The advantages of having several different roleplaying backgrounds that are all accessible to the same core rules system are obvious, and players of **Dark Con** and **T2K2** have told us that they are excited that they will soon be able to play classic science fiction with the same rules that they like so well. There are other reasons for updating **MegaTraveller**, some of which you have mentioned. The **MT** system has suffered through many pages of errata, and while some problems can be fixed with such band-aids, some cannot. The ship design and space combat systems, for example are unsatisfactory, and require complete overhauls.*

*If we want our players to have access to the best science-fiction system we can provide, the only way we can do it is with an all-new edition, not by producing a series of partial fixes (which would in any case be spread through several products and you'd have to go out and make sure you had each of them to get the complete effect, at no small cost—perhaps even greater than the cost of a new edition). Having said that, I would like to assure you that this will not eliminate the value of existing **Traveller** and **MT** products. **Traveller: The New Era (TNE)** will follow in the same setting as **MT** just as **MT** followed from **Traveller.** Any products that detail historical events, sector and subsector astrography and history, planetary geography and history, and UWP data will still be valid (except for the sort of changes in UWP data over time as seen in **Hard Times).** Likewise, character generation will follow the same assumptions as in earlier editions. While stats and skill numbers will have to change to fit a D20 statistical curve, characters will continue to be defined by the same sorts of characteristics and skills. We will be releasing an upgrade folio, **Survival Margin,** at the same time as **New Era** to show you how to convert existing characters and some vehicles to the new system. This way none of your current campaign need be wasted.*

*What's more, **New Era** will split its rules and campaign background into two separate books, so that use of the new rules does not lock you into any specific storyline. You may continue to play your current storyline if you wish, or purchase the **Post Imperial Sourcebook** (the current working title) and advance your campaign to the New Era of 1200. It's your call.*

*This does mean that we will no longer publish any **MT** products, because all **Traveller** material, rules- and storyline-related, will be incorporated into the **New Era** system. The value of **MT** material published in its last year (**Hard Times, Assignment: Vigilante, Astrogators' Guide to the Diaspora Sector,** and **Arrival Vengeance**) is that these all detail the historical changes taking place that lead up to the **New Era.** And since three of these four are folios, the damage to your wallet is minimal. Of course, none of these are essential to understanding **New Era** when it releases, and you may certainly abstain from purchasing any further **MT** material before the release of **TNE.** Likewise, if you are happy with **MegaTraveller**, there is no need to purchase **TNE** when it comes out. However, all **TNE** storyline material will be in the post-1200 era, and therefore of little help in generating **MT** adventures.*

I hope this answers your questions. If we may be of further assistance, please let us know.

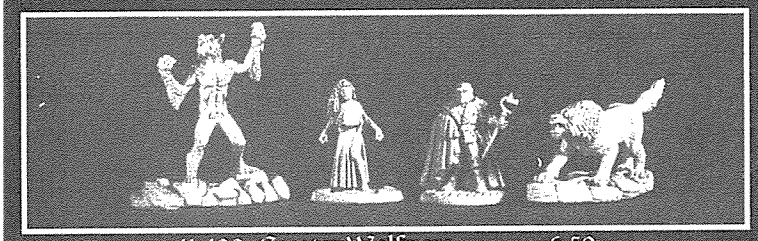
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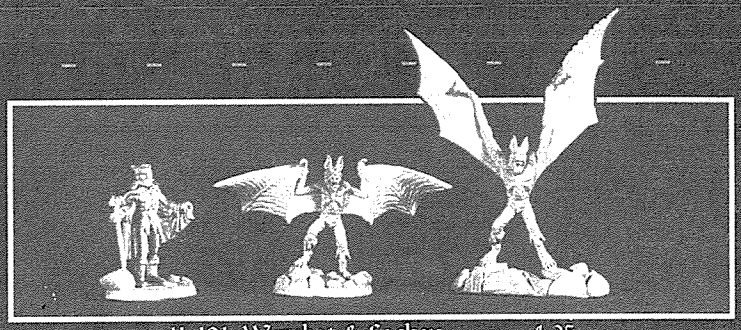
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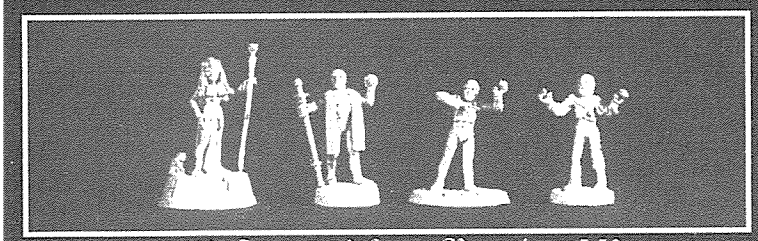
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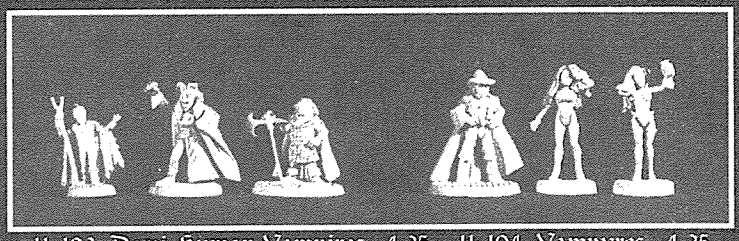
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Achtung! Minen!

Optional Rules For Getting Your Group Through A Live Minefield, Plus A "Drop In" Minefield And Two Sample Adventures.

BY MIKE SWEENEY

When I came around the vehicles, the captain was already out there, randomly jabbing his Ka-bar knife into the soil. "Freeze, Sir!" I yelled. "A guided tour through a dummy FASCAM field," I told him when I got nearer, "doesn't make an engineer out of a tread-head. There's things out there you haven't even dreamed of. Best let a Fort Lost-in-the-Woods grad take over before you get yourself blowed up. Sir."

When the PCs are pinned down in a live minefield, rounds spanging into the dust and pursuing armor roaring around the bend toward them, the lowly engineer task of getting them through becomes a key element of play.

Minefields fall into several basic classes:

Interdiction fields are used to harass the enemy, are usually FASCAM or air-dropped, and are often placed on top of

or to the rear of his advance.

Protective fields are often hastily laid, usually around defensive positions. A typical example is a brace of Claymores under electric control.

Point minefields deny a particular area to the enemy, such as an airfield or key intersection.

Tactical fields are part of a comprehensive obstacle plan, set to channelize the enemy, to create and enhance a killing zone. They are laid according to a standard pattern, marked and recorded to NATO doctrine.

In the rapid movement of the war years, a minefield may be breached, damaged, misplaced or all of the above. Mines are uncovered by weathering, some set off by shifting earth or rusting parts. Trip-wires rust and go slack, a few cow-burgers are created, and explosives get old and grouchy.

Soviet forces favor mine-laying vehicles. A typical field is three rows, at least one of pressure-fused AT and one of AP, four to 5.5 meters between mines and 10 to 40 meters between rows, the field 300-500 meters wide. A peculiarity of Soviet minefields is the use of induction, magnetic, delayed, vibratory and other sophisticated fuses to close the lanes their own troops have used.

The families of scatterable mines, dropped from helicopter or plane, or fired in special artillery shells, produce random pattern fields with densities around 0.01 mines per square meter (typical is a 35-meter radius gator-shot of 21 mines).

The standard pattern minefield is hand laid. Each strip is established between two marked points. It may contain marked turning points. Clusters of mines sit three meters from the strip, on alternate sides of the strip at three-meter intervals.

The clusters are two meters in radius, centered around an AP or AT mine, and contain no more than five mines. The clusters off a particular strip are identical, and only the AP mines on the enemy side of the strip are equipped with trip-wires. Only one mine, the center mine, is an AT; all others are AP.

To confuse the enemy, the strip on his side contains the irregular outer edge (IOE)—a series of short strips angling off the final strip. There are no trip-wires in the IOE.

Clusters may be omitted because of obstacles, turns or lanes. A person lane is two meters; a one-way vehicle lane is eight meters; and a two-way vehicle lane is 16 meters. Hastily abandoned minefields might not have closed lanes.

Minefields are marked by wire—two-strand barbed wire or a single roll of concertina. At 15-meter intervals are red triangular signs. If a lane is still established, it is separated from the minefield by wire and marked with arrows in red and white.

Average frontage is 300 meters, with a mix of mines—200 ATs of various types, 20 or so with antihandling devices, 600 bounding APs and 400 "toe-poppers" to protect the ATs and whittle down infantry. The sample minefield illustrated is somewhat smaller.

EXECUTION

The best thing to do with a minefield is avoid it. The second best thing is to take a plow, or sheep's-foot roller, and push it through the minefield with an armored vehicle. The third best thing is to use explosives.

But when there is no equipment available, or when silence is imperative, manual detection, marking and removal is the only way left. One mine detector operator, working in 20-minute shifts, takes four hours to sweep an eight-meter vehicle lane through the minefield, an Average task using CBE. If the detector operator does not get 20 minutes off for each 20-minute shift, the task becomes Difficult. As many mines have little or no metal, use of a civilian metal detector or AN/PSS-11 also makes the task Difficult. A relief operator cuts the time needed in half, but inclement weather or hostile forces doubles it.

Without a detector, the minefield must be probed. Probing an eight-meter lane, using a wooden stick (not a knife!), takes eight hours, and is an Average: CBE or Difficult: AGL task.

As each method clears a two-meter lane at a time, as many as four teams may operate simultaneously to save time. Mine detectors must be separated by eight meters because of interference.

Failure in any of these tasks means one or more mines are undiscovered (probably toe-poppers). Catastrophic failure means the detector operator/prober has set off a mine.

Removal of Mines: Once the mines are marked, someone has to go out there with nonsparking tools and cast-iron nerves.

Going around cutting trip-wires is a quick way to get dead; the M3 pull-release firing device will go off if you pull or cut the trip-wire.

The best thing to do to fuses is to replace the safety pins with a bit of wire. Trouble is, the typical antihandling device for an M21 AT is a pressure release "mouse-trap" buried under the mine.

You have to uncover the mine, gently dig around all sides, then, feeling around in the dirt, get safety pins into dirt-clogged, half-rusted holes somewhere under five kilos of hair-trigger explosive. Time per mine is 20 minutes for an AT, 10 minutes for an AP, one hour per average cluster.

To disarm a mine cluster by hand is an Average: CBE or Difficult: AGL task. On normal failure, an AP mine goes off (trip-wire, or an M14-type under the PC's knee). On catastrophic failure, an AT goes off in the character's face.

Noisy Methods: Bangalores and the like have problems—they may set off trip-wires and go off prematurely, and they only clear a narrow lane. The mines to either side of the lane may be "shocked" into greater sensitivity.

In Vietnam, the infantry would often dress one soldier in a head-to-toe smock cobbled out of five to 10 flak jackets, then he'd throw a grappling hook into the trip-wires. The standard method today is for a prone soldier in full gear to toss a grappling hook before anyone, even a mine detector operator, enters the minefield. Of course, the standard assault breaching technique calls for smoke, covering force and use of artillery to suppress the far side of the minefield, too.

To use a grappling hook to clear trip-wires is an Easy: CBE or AGL task. Failure means some trip-wires remain. Catastrophic failure means you looked up at the wrong moment. Note that nontrip-wire APs will still be deadly.

Mines may be dragged out of the ground with a long rope, or blown in place with one or two pounds of TNT per mine.

To remove mines with rope is an Average: CBE or Difficult: AGL task. Failure merely means you have to try again. Catastrophic failure means a mine goes off while the rope is being placed.

To destroy mines in place with explosives is an Average: CBE task. Failure means some mines were not destroyed and may be shocked. Catastrophic failure means the explosives go off prematurely.

AP MINES

AP mines fall into four basic classes.

Basic AP mines are trip-wire or pressure triggered, and do their job with blast and fragmentation.

Bounding mines are more effective. They leap from the ground to about waist height, then send fragmentation around like a daisy-cutter bomb.

Claymore types are essentially remote-controlled shotguns.

Toe-poppers are very small, almost undetectable, and pressure-fused. They blow off the knee or elbow of the unlucky engineer trying to disarm a nearby AT mine. Other soldiers then endanger themselves to evacuate the engineer.

AT mines are most often pressure-fused and require around 500 pounds. The tilt-rod, used in high grass or in streambeds, is more sensitive, as are antihandling devices.

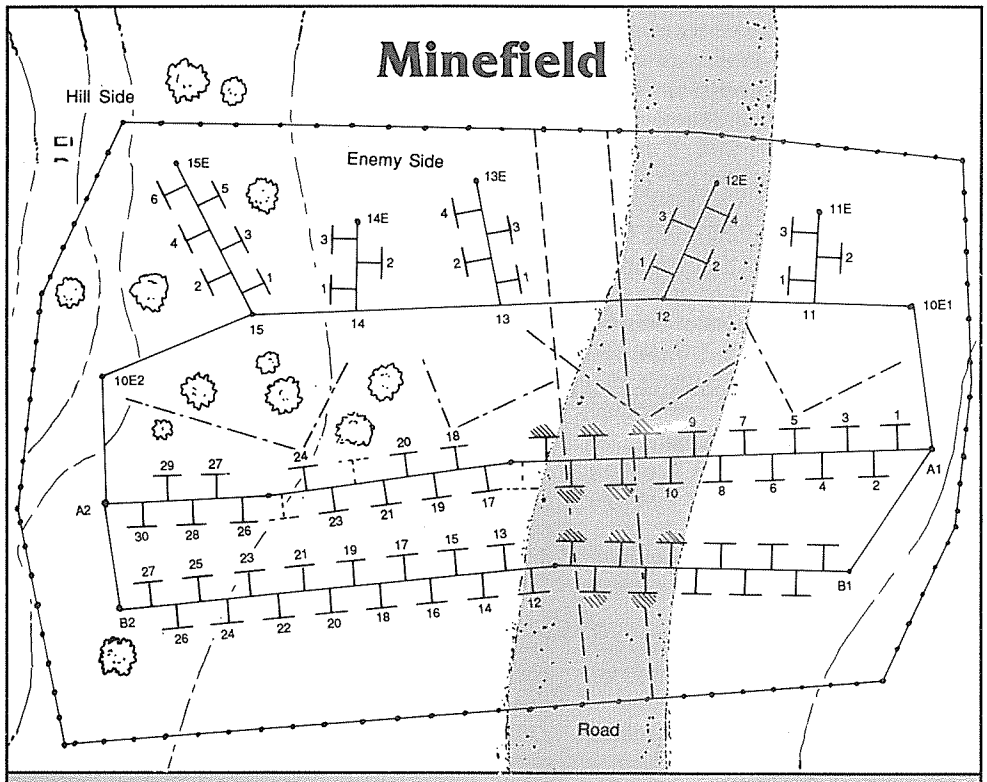
The sophisticated, acoustical, discriminating, off-road and similar mines cannot be simply categorized. They are, fortunately, rare, as opposed to Soviet chemical mines (including bounding chemical APs!).

Thus, the damage from a toe-popper is limited to one limb and is crippling, not deadly. The damage from a bounding mine affects all characters within the 30-meter fragmentation radius. An AT will not leave much of anyone within 10 meters or more, and a chemical mine will contaminate everyone within the minefield.

VILLAGE

Following is a simple adventure situation for getting the PCs involved in mine detection. The team is in the medium-sized village of Illyusun (any village, including the one described "The Village" in **Challenge 41**, may be used instead). Illyusun is far from the front lines and rather peaceful. It also has an old minefield blocking the main road, just outside the village limits.

The PCs have been trying to ingratiate themselves with the locals for a week. Then one morning there is an explosion. The PCs discover an ad-hoc town meeting being held in loud, angry voices outside the mayor's home. A local child has stumbled into the minefield and lost his life.



Area	*Composition*
IOE	One M21 "Killer" AT with pressure fuse Two M16A1 "Bouncing Bettys" with pressure fuse
Strip A	One M21 with tilt-rod, antihandling device every fourth mine Two C3 "Elsie" APs One M16A1 pressure or (every third cluster) with two trip-wires
Strip B	One M19 plastic AT (nondetectable) with pressure fuse Four M14 (toe-popper) APs, nondetectable
Lane	One M21 with pressure fuse or One M16A1 with pressure fuse

The minefield effectively closes the only road. The stream has a rock-strewn bed and steep banks. Although infantry can cross it or use it to avoid the minefield, vehicles may not. There is a bridge about a kilometer before the minefield—unfortunately, it is shaky, the wood is rotten and it would not support any tracked vehicle.

The ground climbs rapidly to the west, composed of loose shale-type rocks—it is impassable without a lengthy detour.

If one of the PCs does not suggest it, Mayor Krozny will request that the PCs use their skills to deactivate the minefield and remove the danger. The PCs will gain much goodwill, and perhaps some much-needed gear, for this service.

For this scenario, the minefield is fenced and marked, and the eight-meter vehicle lane is clear. Some of the mines are uncovered by weathering. A civilian metal detector will be provided upon request. Task levels given below are for clearing an eight-meter vehicle lane. For this scenario, each success will clear one strip (including the IOE); three series of success rolls clears the minefield.

Spicing Up the Scenario: The child, instead of being killed, is critically injured and in the middle of the minefield.

RECON

Below is a more detailed adventure involving the PCs in mine detection.

The PCs are attached to "The Dragons," a loose conglomeration of mechanized forces gathered around Major Verne Buckley and a few surviving pieces of mobile artillery.

The Dragons mean to close with a badly organized but nonetheless dangerous group of marauders (both forces may be substituted with forces active within the campaign). But to make the rapid road movement plausible, Buckley needs detailed and accurate reconnaissance.

The PCs must scout out the road, examining turns, bridges and fording sites. They must avoid enemy patrols and come up with plans to penetrate any obstacles found. Buckley will ask for a lane to be breached, quietly, the night before the attack. An AN/PSS-11 (metallic) mine detector is available from the Dragons.

If the mines are taken care of properly, the PCs may expect some gratitude. If the PCs take the long route, they may end up owning a selection of mines, which could be used as-is or rendered into explosives. They also get to keep detectors and other equipment.

For this scenario, the minefield is camouflaged, and the PCs approach from the north. The vehicle lane has been closed with one metallic mine per cluster.

Enemy Forces: The marauders have no real title, or much of a group identity. They have little equipment and little morale, but they do have numbers.

The group includes three Experienced NPCs, once part of a US PsyOps battalion. They have three M16s and one M60 (jeep mounted).

There are also 40 Green NPCs, four armed with M16s, others with a variety of civilian hunting rifles; none have more than 10 rounds of ammunition.

The group has one jeep (with a radio and pintle mount for the M60), one Econoline van (painted dark green and sandbagged, rear doors removed, used as troop carrier) and two motorcycles (one a trailbike, and the other a well-worn Ninja, used for scouting purposes).

All vehicles are converted to alcohol fuel, of which the gang has stock-piled some 100 gallons, about half in five-gallon containers (when the gang is in motion, stored in the Econoline). When not on the move, the containers are dispersed in a variety of civilian tents and rude shelters. The group has a temporary camp centered around a well-used mobile home.

Friendly Forces: The Dragons are a disciplined, well-armed force. They mean to consolidate power and are determined to restore a semblance of order and (civilian) government. They include four Veteran NPCs (including Major Buckley), 15 Experienced NPCs and two Green NPCs (locals being trained as replacements). Most of the force speaks English, and the majority are American, British and Canadian.

The nucleus of Buckley's force are two M106A2s, 107mm mortar carrier variants of M113s. The group has two M113s fitted for command-and-control duty. Each has a 50 caliber on the commander's hatch and two M60Es that fire from makeshift shields fitted on either side of the rear top hatch. Tracks have been converted with a special US-made package to dual fuel, and they carry 10 to 20 gallons each of emergency-use diesel. In addition, the group has two jeeps, a Gamma Goat and one five-ton, from various allied units.

Service Support: The PCs will have better luck if they have engineer training or, better yet, equipment. If the group is fortunate to have an engineer or two, they may have the AN/PRS-8 (density difference) mine detector. If they are very fortunate, they may have Bangalore, Diamond Lil or Miclic (previously covered in new equipment listings.) If they are completely lacking in engineers, the referee may wish to introduce Sergeant Julie Carson as an NPC.

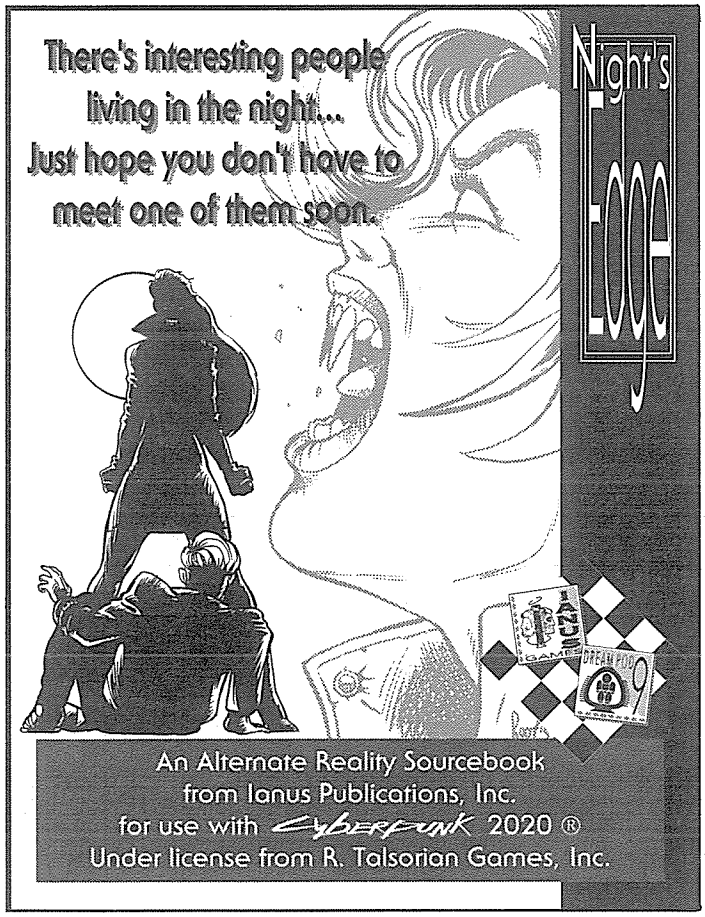
Sergeant Julie Carson (Experienced NPC): Carson is an experienced combat engineer (CBE 9, CVE 4), but her training includes ADM (MWH 6). During her reserve years, this led her stateside, into the Department of Energy. A persistent and untrue rumor of Civgov connections has made it difficult for Carson to find a permanent posting.

She is a competent but unaggressive infantryman, and use of her in a fireteam or on point is a waste of her talents. Despite her shyness, she is a good supervisor and teacher. When there are no obstacles to demolish, she is effective leading a work party in road building, water management and other civil engineer tasks.

Carson is a small woman of about 27, dark-haired, light-skinned, with a faint Tennessee accent. She is quietly professional, utterly cool under fire or when working with explosives. She hates to see innocents endangered, and will work hard to aid locals when possible. Reckless weapons fire and explosions anger her, but she has a real horror of nukes.

Alternate Solutions: Tackling a minefield with pointed sticks is suicidal. The referee should award the PCs for original thinking—for putting together a mine roller from agricultural equipment, for making an improvised Bangalore from ammonium nitrate explosives and pickets from the barbed-wire fence, for coming up with a way to reinforce the bridge, etc. If the PCs remember that minefields must be recorded, let them find the minefield record in Major Buckley's papers, or within abandoned papers at the town hall. The minefield record will reduce the time by half and make all tasks one step easier.

Spicing Up the Scenario: An enemy patrol surprises the PCs within the minefield. The only thing worse than a minefield is a minefield under fire. Ω



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YEARNING for Antiquity

For much of our history, when people went to war, the weapons in their fists were bows. At Agincourt, the yeoman archers of England decimated the French nobility despite the protection afforded by their heavy armors. Even as recently as the American Revolution, the proposal went out to arm our minutemen with the longbow instead of the musket (proposed by Benjamin Franklin) because the bow had a greater range, striking power and terror value than the musket of the time. Indeed, when first introduced, the crossbow, like the machinegun and poison gas, was thought to spell the end of war because of its terrible effect on a man. And it is not for a light reason that our nation's symbol, the eagle, clutches a sheaf of arrows in one claw as a sign of our determination to fight rather than submit.

Below is an optional archery supplement for **Twilight: 2000**. Maybe the next time a member of the Polish militia pulls out a crossbow, the players will pay attention.

By Chris Csakany


US

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BOW AND CROSSBOW

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Rld	Blk	SS	Recoil Burst	Rng
Self bow	SS	–1	N	1	4	4	—	15
Heavy self bow	SS	+1	N	1	6	6	—	20
Hunting bow	SS	2	1/N	1	5	6	—	25
Light crossbow	SS	1	N	3/1	4	2	—	20/25
Medium crossbow	SS	2	1/N	4/2	4	3	—	25/30
Heavy crossbow	SS	4	1/2/N	5/3	5	4	—	25/30
Oversized crossbow	SS	7	2/3N	5	8	8	—	30
with tripod						2	—	50

The damage code of +1 indicates 1D6+1 hits.

When attacking people wearing light body armor (AV 1) or behind thin cover (AV1 and organic, like piles of cardboard boxes or plywood siding), treat the attack as a melee attack for damage, and subtract the armor value from the damage roll. Do not use the standard penetration rules. The bolt or arrow tends to tear through ballistic cloth, rather than dissipating its kinetic energy throughout the material like a bullet does. The reload rates and range listings for crossbows are presented in the format for postwar/prewar models.

DESCRIPTIONS

Self Bow: Any one of a number of prewar practice and postwar homemade weapons of 20 to 40 pounds pull.

Ammo: Arrows
Wt: 1 kg
Cost: $50 (V/V)

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Rld	Blk	SS	Recoil Burst	Rng
Self bow	SS	–1	N	1	4	4	—	15

Heavy Self Bow: One of a number of prewar practice or postwar homemade bows of 45 to 60 pounds pull. The heavy self bow shows a much higher degree of skill and care in its design.

Ammo: Arrows
Wt: 2 kg
Cost: $200 (S/S)

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Rld	Blk	SS	Recoil Burst	Rng
Heavy self bow	SS	+1*	N	1	6	6	—	20

*1D6 + 1 damage.

Hunting Bow: A prewar compound bow with a pull of 60 pounds and up. Such weapons have been known to carry sights, be calibrated for windage, and even have quivers attached to the body of the bow. The truly sophisticated bows appear to almost be able to fire themselves. A truly deadly weapon in the hands of a skilled user.

Ammo: Arrows
Wt: 2 kg
Cost: $500 (S/R)

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Rld	Blk	SS	Recoil Burst	Rng
Hunting bow	SS	2	1/N	1	5	6	—	25

Light Crossbow: A postwar design constructed from old rifle stocks and car springs with no internal cocking mechanism and less than 100 pounds of pull.

Ammo: Bolts
Wt: 4 kg
Cost: $100 (V/V)

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Rld	Blk	SS	Recoil Burst	Rng
Light crossbow	SS	1	N	3	4	2	—	15

Light Prewar Crossbow: A prewar design of plastic and fiberglass, under 100 pounds of pull. Includes a mechanism to speed reloading.

Ammo: Bolts
Wt: 2 kg
Cost: $300 (S/S)

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Rld	Blk	SS	Recoil Burst	Rng
Light crossbow	SS	1	N	1	4	2	—	20

Medium Crossbow: A postwar design like the light crossbow, but with 100 to 200 pounds pull. Does not include a reloading mechanism.

Ammo: Bolts
Wt: 6 kg
Cost: $225 (C/C)

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Rld	Blk	SS	Recoil Burst	Rng
Medium crossbow	SS	2	1/N	4	4	3	—	20

Medium Prewar Crossbow: The crossbow made from specifically machined metals and hi-polymer plastics with pounds pull of nearly 200. Includes a reloading mechanism, and most come with a sight (use standard +15 to range for aimed shots).

This particular design, produced under a wide variety of manufacturers, was a popular hunting weapon in the United States.

Ammo: Bolts
Wt: 3 kg
Cost: $500 (R/R)

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Rld	Blk	SS	Recoil Burst	Rng
Medium crossbow	SS	2	1/N	2	4	3	—	25

Heavy Crossbow: The heaviest of the man-portable crossbows, the heavy crossbow is constructed from truck springs and battle rifle stocks, and includes some functional museum pieces. The pull is somewhere between 200 and 250.

Ammo: Bolts
Wt: 8 kg
Cost: $350 (S/S)

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Rld	Blk	SS	Recoil Burst	Rng
Heavy crossbow	SS	4	1/2/N	5	5	4	—	25

Heavy Prewar Crossbow: Using the best and strongest materials, the bolts from this crossbow do more damage than some rifle shells. The pounds pull generated by this weapon is so extreme (200-250) that some states had banned it by the start of the war. Virtually all models include a sight and some form of crank to speed loading.

Ammo: Bolts
Wt: 5 kg
Cost: $900 (R/—)

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Rld	Blk	Recoil SS	Recoil Burst	Rng
Heavy crossbow	SS	4	1/2/N	3	5	4	—	30

Oversized Crossbow: A very large ballista made with scavenged materials such as 2x4s and semi springs. Includes and requires a large crank to pull the string back. This weapon is almost too unwieldy to be fired from the shoulder. Accepts a tripod of any one size at time of purchase.

Ammo: Oversized bolts
Wt: 20 kg
Cost: $1500 (—/—)

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Rld	Blk	Recoil SS	Recoil Burst	Rng
Oversized crossbow	SS	7	2/3/N	5	8	10	—	25
with tripod						2	—	50

OPTIONS

The light reloading mechanism, medium reloader and crank each reduce the time required to load a crossbow by 1. They're only usable on postwar crossbows (the prewar models already include them).

Tripod: This is a primitive tripod designed to support an oversized crossbow. It can be found anywhere an oversized crossbow can.

Wt: 5 kg
Cost: $200 (—/—)

Light Reloading Mechanism: A postwar device that greatly speeds the cocking of a light crossbow.

Wt: .25 kg
Cost: $50 (C/C)

Medium Reloader: A mechanism to speed the reloading of the medium crossbow.

Wt: 0.5 kg
Cost $100 (S/S)

Crank: A small crank, or windlass, to pull back the string of a heavy crossbow and speed reloading.

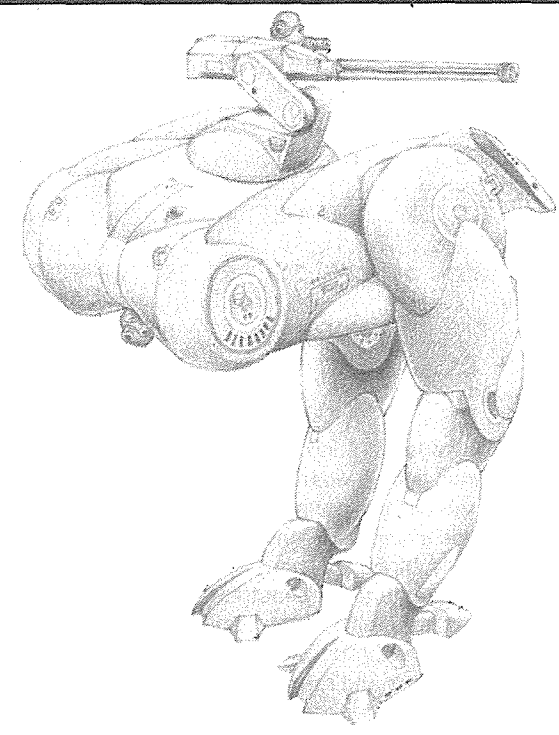
Wt: 1 kg
Cost: $200 (R/R) Ω

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While Droyne-human relations within the Imperium may not reflect a high level of mutual understanding, they've always included an admirable level of mutual tolerance and acceptance. But in the wake of the Rebellion, this millennium-long tradition of amicable relations has become strained. In this adventure, the PCs come face to face with this surprising turn of events, encountering Droyne who are ready to act in accordance with the dictates of oytritsyu'a—warfare without quarter or mercy.

The Droyne troubles

In this adventure, the characters are travelling within Diaspora sector anytime after late 1124. They should not be aware that there are any troubles brewing between human and Droyne communities when the adventure begins. As far as they know, the Droyne have been a peaceful race that takes a back seat to the other major races within the Imperium.

Where: Shelagyote X5896B7-3 (1620, Kushga subsector)

Contact: The PCs are most likely to learn of the situations in this adventure through contact with

did not start

merchants who recently visited Shelagyote, by gathering rumors in this subsector or by specifically inquiring after other human-Droyne conflicts in the sector.

The rumors coming out of the Shelagyote system are not good. According to the merchants who have made planetfall there in recent weeks, the old government has apparently been replaced by a heavy-handed—and hard-hearted—dictator. There also seem to be Droyne on the planet, which is unusual, since there were no Droyne there before.

The new dictator maintains his power by controlling the planet's only source of electricity—a large array of

with the Droyne,

solar cells, located at the world's Ancients site. Although unconfirmed, rumors suggest that Shelagyote's official government (which is in hiding) is willing to offer a large sum to any group of adventurers brave—and resourceful—enough to overturn the coup.

BACKGROUND

A number of important facts can be learned about Shelagyote before travelling there.

Shelagyote is home to a minor human race known

but with humans.

as the Shela, as well as an Ancients site. The planet was interdicted in the early years of the Third Imperium, although limited access was granted to archaeological teams involved in Ancients research.

The Rebellion brought a number of important changes. The interdiction was lifted early in 1118, and the navy began to construct a base a few dozen kilometers away from the Ancient site. In a rare attempt to curry public favor, Lucan's engineers also





By Charles E. Gannon

POWER CENTERS

emplaced a large solar panel array on the island and ran subsurface power lines back to the three largest Shelagi communities on the major continent.

In 1120, the Solomani raided the planet. They destroyed the naval base and forced Lucan's units to withdraw. The confederation forces did not damage the Ancients site or the solar panel array, but did cripple the locals' technological infrastructure. The planet slid down through TL4 and finally arrested its decline at TL3.

Shortly thereafter, Droyne from Layne (2420) began visiting Shelagyote, although they rarely mixed with the human inhabitants. Instead, their primary interest centered on the Ancients site, where they began constructing temporary shelters. By the onset of Hard Times in 1125, the Droyne had established a small community there (numbering in the hundreds) and were decidedly unreceptive to human visitors.

Kelap Coastal Patrol Boat

CraftID *Kelap* Coastal Patrol Boat, Nautical, TL4, KCr104.275
Hull 31/78, Disp=40 (Hull 35, Superstructure 5), Config=Parallel Hull, Armor=4W, Loaded=257.62, Unloaded=117.62
Power 1/2, Stream Reciproc=0.8MW, Duration=12.5/37.5
Loco 1/2, ScrewProp, Maximum=10 kph, Cruising=7 kph
Commo 2xheliographs (on the carbon-arc lights)
Snsrs 2xcarbon-arc searchlights
Off 1x6cm CPR gun (open mount, with Armor=4 gunshield)

Rng	Ammo	Pen	Dgr	Dmg	Cr@
Dist(6)	HE	5	10	10	12
	Keaper	8/4		8	12
	Keap	8/4		9	13
	Grape*	50		2	60

*See early tech rules regarding this round.

Def None
Cntrl Simple Mechanicalx4
Accom Crew=60 (Bridge=8, Deck/Watch=9, Gunnery=3, Engineering=40), 7 bunks, 53 half-bunks, Subcraft=6x10-man wooden dinghies
Other Fuel=72 kl, Cargo=17.5 kl, Magazine=300 rds, Pumps=0.5 kl/hr

The *Kelap* is a typical TL4 light-duty, powered patrol craft. Its light armor makes it vulnerable to attack by heavy weapons, relegating it to insurgency suppression and customs duties. The version presented here is the paramilitary version. Full military models mount a second gun and have double the magazine capacity. The power plant endurance assumes coal, rather than biofiber solid hydrocarbon fuel.

OBJECTIVE

When the characters arrive in the Shelagyote system (whether as ship owners or passengers), they are approached by a fighter of Droyne manufacture. The fighter's Droyne pilot will inform the PCs that they are welcome to visit the planet, but their starship must remain at 10 planetary diameters. Also, they will not be permitted to operate any airborne vehicles except to travel to and from their ship. Violation of these restrictions will result in swift reprisals by Droyne fighters. If the PCs verbally challenge the Droyne's authority to make such decrees, the fighter pilot will sim-

Oytritsyu'a

Conversations with Droyne, or a few unprejudiced humans, will give the PCs a very different picture of the situation on Umorphutwyo. However, Droyne will be very wary of humans, and will not be quick to share their knowledge. Objective humans are rare and will be very trepidatious about speaking freely; they fear that their comments might get them branded as traitors.

"The Droyne troubles," as most humans call them, did not start with the Droyne at all, but with humans. Furthermore, they did not start on Umorphutwyo.

In 1123, one of Lucan's Black War strikes against the Ilelish Federation involved the slaughter of a Droyne community. According to the Imperial press minister, the Droyne had been excavating and refurbishing the weapons of the Ancients in order to aid Dulinor. In actuality, the Droyne were only moderately involved with the excavation of a small (and unrewarding) Ancient site. Droyne oytrips (clans) throughout Imperial space were outraged by Lucan's atrocity, and many conducted reprisals against Lucan's factions.

The clash between the Droyne and pro-Lucan elements on Umorphutwyo was particularly savage, resulting in tremendous damage. The violence became so intense that it spilled over into nonaligned human neighborhoods, turning a political clash into a race war.

Months of tense stalemate followed. Droyne and human leaders on Umorphutwyo attempted to reach a compromise. The numerically superior Droyne eventually agreed to trust the economically dominant humans, and they retreated from their positions within human neighborhoods.

Shortly afterward, however, human companies began to force Droyne competitors out of business. Dismayed, the oytrips of Umorphutwyo began to grow angry and strike back. When the humans prohibited the Droyne from using the human-owned starport, the Droyne built their own, a superior facility. When human companies tried to monopolize the local markets, Droyne consumers responded by boycotting those companies and patronizing businesses belonging to the leading local oytrips. More as a matter of self-preservation than humanophobic aggression, the Droyne of Umorphutwyo turned the tables on the human community.

Many humans are convinced that the recent aggressiveness of the Droyne signifies that their entire race is beginning a social transformation that will make them as warlike—and as advanced—as the Ancients from which they are thought to be descended. Most sober observers consider this belief to be the inevitable result of Lucan's original propaganda ploy. But now that blood has been spilt on both sides, that position is largely academic.

Most humans do not understand Droyne culture well because it has never been necessary to understand the unassuming, civil Droyne. Now, the Droynes' ruthless version of absolute war (known as Oytritsyu'a, or "killing-between-communities") has been sampled by the humans of Umorphutwyo. Astounded and enraged, the humans are eager to avenge their loved ones, creating a vicious cycle of violence.

ply end the transmission.

Arriving dirtside, the PCs will discover the local human mindset to be that of a population enduring a siege. But no armed forces are in evidence. The locals have a mild distrust of off-worlders, but the PCs can overcome that by simply expressing an interest in talking to the leaders of the old government.

The officials of the old government will arrange a clandestine meeting with the PCs in a dirty, dangerous-looking tavern. There, they will explain that late last year, a group of human off-worlders arrived on Shelagyote, ostensibly to do some maintenance work on the solar power grid. Two weeks later, these off-worlders (and now, the reigning dictator) hold the three largest cities of the Shela in thrall. The Droyne newcomers have been approached for help, but these requests have been rebuffed. Apparently, the Droyne are only interested in overseeing their operations at the Ancient site. They do not want to become involved in human affairs.

The officials of the old government see only one logical course of action—take a ship to the island, travel to the solar panel site and retake it from the off-worlders. However, the characters can expect stiff resistance. The leader of the off-worlders—Mariirka—has bonded the underworld bosses of Shelagyote to his cause. Former criminals now man a number of small, steam-powered patrol boats. These boats patrol the mainland's coast, the perimeter of the island with the solar power station and the sea routes between them. The locals will help the PCs sneak their own weapons on-planet (which is not particularly difficult, since there is no starport and, hence, no extrality zone). They will also provide the PCs with a crew of combat-skilled seamen to assist them with their voyage to the island and with their attempt to retake the solar power station.

The leaders of the former government will pay the PCs Cr15,000 each if they succeed.

The PCs will be given the *Mistral* armed cargo brig. Stored on the ship are two wind-powered land vehicles (Lowlander rotary sail wheeled vehicles), which can be used to travel overland to the solar cell site. UCP data is provided below. The crew of the ship will mostly be individuals with level-0 personal combat skills. They are armed with flintlock pistols and blades. However, 15 of the gunnery crew, four of the deck watch and one of the bridge staff have level-2 combat skills, and are armed with flintlock rifles and swords.

Mistral
Armed Cargo Brig

CraftID *Mistral* Armed Cargo Brig, Nautical, TL3, MCr2.438
Hull 135/338, Disp=150, Config=Deep Displacement, Armor=2W, Unloaded=209.4, Loaded=1012 (if exceeded, will sink)
Power None
Loco 30/74, Sails=440m2; Wind Speed: 3.5 kph=10 kph, 10 kph=16.8 kph, 20 kph=24 kph
Commo 1x20km heliograph
Snsrs 2x20x telescopes
Off 12x8cm CPR guns (TL3)

Rng	*ROF*	*Round*	*Pen*	*Dmg*	*Dgr*	*Wgt*	*Cr*
Distant (6)	2	HE	1	12	20	0.007	28
		KEAP	8/4	9	—	0.007	28

Def None
Cntrl Panel=Primitive Mechanicalx6
Accom Crew 142 (Bridge=12 [2 watches], Deck=6 [2 watches], Sailsmen=40, Gunnery=84), 124xhalf-bunks, 15xsmall staterooms, 3xstaterooms, SubCraft=12x12-man rowboats
Other Cargo=1325 kl (but not to exceed 799 tons mass, or ship will sink), Magazine=1200 rounds (100 per gun), Sail Stowage (below decks)=16 kl

The *Mistral* class is similar to other TL3 nautical designs which attempt to balance speed, firepower and cargo capacity. Often used as a mercenary or pirate ship, it is reliable and simple. On Shelagyote, typical trade winds average 10 kph, with lows being about 3 kph and safe highs ranging up to 24 kph. When wind velocity nears 25 kph, the burden on the sails begins approaching levels that could cause damage to the canvas and the rigging, so ships tend to shorten their sails at this point.

Lowlander
Rotary Sail Wheeled Vehicle

CraftID Lowlander Rotary Sail Wheeled Vehicle, TL2, KCr20.3
Hull 3/7, Disp=2.95, Config=0 (open-topped), Armor=[1]Z
Power 1/3, rotary sail; Wind Speed: 12 kph=4.86 kw, 16 kph=6.48 kw, 20 kph=8.1 kw, 24 kph=9.72 kw
Loco 1/1, Simple Wheel

Wind	*Power Input*	*On-Road Speed*	*Off-Road Speed*
12 kph	4.86 kw	6.6 kph	2.0 kph
16 kph	6.48 kw	10.5 kph	3.2 kph
20 kph	8.10 kw	14.4 kph	4.3 kph
24 kph	9.72 kw	18.6 kph	5.6 kph

Commo None
Snsrs None
Off None
Def None
Cntrl 0.8xPrimitive Mech
Accom 2=Adequate Positions (1 driver, 1 rotary sail operator)
Other Passenger/Cargo Compartment=15 kl (max rated weight is 1.05 tons)

The Lowlander rotary sail vehicle is typical of its type—an early tech vehicle that is light and simple. Constructed at TL2 (with the exception of the mechanical controls), the Lowlander's primary claim to fame is that it beats walking and, given a good wind, has reasonable overland speed. The vehicle's speed ratings assume a Standard-type atmosphere. On Shelagyote, where the atmosphere is Dense, increase power generation and resulting vehicle speed ratings by 25%.

In the coastal regions where the Lowlander is used, average wind velocities range from 12 kph up to 25 kph, with profound increases during the rainy season. The vehicle's cargo bay is constructed primarily as a passenger section, allocating two kiloliters and 0.15 tons per individual. The vehicle ratings reflect this load.

If you and your players have been following the Diaspora adventures in **Challenge** 64-68, you'll want to check out the **Astrogators' Guide to the Diaspora Sector**, available from GDW in October. Featuring two full-color maps of the sector and UWPs for all 476 worlds, the Guide allows you to understand all of the complex developments in this dynamic sector.

From the Ecclesiasty of Narquel in Challenge 64 to the Union of Sufren in Challenge 68, the Astrogators' Guide ties it all together and brings you up to date.

Item 0224
$5.50



SEA VOYAGE

The sea voyage to the island will take 10+1D6 days, with longer travelling times indicating either low winds or stormy weather.

The referee should roll 1D6 for each day that the player characters are at sea. A roll of 6 indicates that they have an encounter with a coup-allied patrol boat (a *Kelap* coastal patrol boat). Regardless of the results of these daily encounter checks, the referee should include at least one encounter with a coup-allied patrol boat.

UCP data for the enemy coastal patrol boat is provided on page 20. Each patrol boat is crewed by local underworld types and their recruits.

Although aggressive and cruel if they have the upper hand, these crews will hastily withdraw from any fight in which they're taking serious losses. Each crewmember has relevant skill levels of 1. Each is armed with a cutlass and either a flintlock rifle or a percussion cap revolver.

There are many possibilities for expanding the sea voyage component of this adventure. Referees might wish to include encounters with the local marine life, an opportunity to seize a steam patrol boat, boarding actions, an encounter with a pirate-owned *Mistral*-class brig and more.

ISLAND ATTACK

The island is about 300 kilometers in diameter and is mostly low, rolling country—perfect for a wind-powered vehicle. The closest landing point for the PCs is 60 kilometers from the Ancient site/solar power center. The island's one stretch of dirt road leads from this landing point to the PCs' target—the solar power station. Other landing points are farther away and less well patrolled, but the rotary sail vehicles will be reduced to their cross-country speeds.

The referee should roll 1D6 to check for coup-allied patrols every two hours. A roll of 6 indicates that a patrol has been encountered. If the PCs are on the dirt road, a 5-6 indicates an encounter. Coup-allied patrols are 1D6+2 persons strong and are armed as the crew of the steam patrol boats.

At the site itself, there will be 10 of these local NPC patrolmen. Three of these will be armed with submachine-guns. All have TL7 HE grenades. Mariirka and his five fellow off-worlders will be there as well. Mariirka's men have relevant skill levels of 2; Mariirka has relevant skill levels of 3. All are armored in flak vests and armed with 5mm assault rifles, 7mm autopistols, and TL7 HE grenades. The off-worlders each also have a TL6 6cm recoilless

UPP

System	*Hex*	*1124 UPP*	*1129 UPP*	*1129 Statistics*		
Shelagyote	1620	X5896B9-5	X5896b7-3	Ni An	611 Ou	MO V
Layne	2420	C796A9C-D	C796A94-A	Hi D:7	305 Wi Dr	G2 V M3 D

Dr=Droyne-dominated world.

Layne: The Droyne population of Layne, disturbed by the heightening Droyne-human frictions on Umorphutwyo, are becoming increasingly aggressive themselves. They have begun to form multioytrip (clan) commercial cartels that are exerting increasing influence on the local marketplace. Some rumors suggest that the most reactionary of the Droyne may be planning a general takeover in the near future. Human businesses and groups of concerned citizens are trying to attract mercenaries to the planet to prevent such an occurrence.

rifle, personal radios and a light machinegun. They will put up a stiff fight but will run if on the verge of defeat. When they run, they will flee to the Droyne for asylum.

THE PLOT THICKENS

If Mariirka succeeds in his attempt to reach the Droyne for asylum, there are some surprises in store for the PCs before they can finally get their hands on the now-deposed dictator and his thugs. It seems that Mariirka and his group are professional political adventurists. Mariirka correctly guessed that the Droyne presence on Shelagyote was not a random event. Rather, the Droyne oytrips of Layne (2420/Alurza), reacting to the human-Droyne troubles on Umorphutwyo, had sent out a small group to occupy and protect the Ancient site on Shelagyote. This group was to unearth whatever Ancients' technology it could find for use in any future conflicts with humans. Mariirka reasoned that these Droyne would find it useful to employ off-world humans to control the local human population.

He was right. The Droyne listened to his proposition to take over Shelagyote and hired him on the spot. With the help of the Droyne credits and technology, Mariirka quickly gained control over the criminal underworld of Shelagyote, then used these forces to conduct a coup against the legitimate government of the planet. This coup's success was guaranteed by the energy embargo Mariirka imposed from his position on the island.

Given their involvement in the coup, the Droyne are not particularly willing to turn Mariirka and his men over to the PCs.

How this stalemate turns out is up to the referee. Characters with diplomatic skills might be able to secure a peaceful extradition of Mariirka and his associates. If this doesn't work, the local government will still insist on incarcerating the off-worlders—even if that means having to attack the Droyne base to take them into custody.

UPP DATA

Since these adventures are designed for use in the Hard Times era, it is necessary to include two UPP strings for each world. The first string, in the column labeled 1124 UPP, lists the world's UPP data up to the beginning of Hard Times (300-1124). The second string, in the column labeled 1128 UPP, lists UPP data after all the changes brought about by Hard Times have taken effect (181-1128 and beyond).

Note that the changes caused by Hard Times do not occur simultaneously. Referees should consult **Hard Times** to determine the order in which these changes occur and the time at which they occur (at which point between 1124 and 1128).

For referees who do not have the **Hard Times** supplement, the following rule of thumb may be helpful:

Any given world tends to experience UPP change in the following order: starport, tech level, population, government, law level.

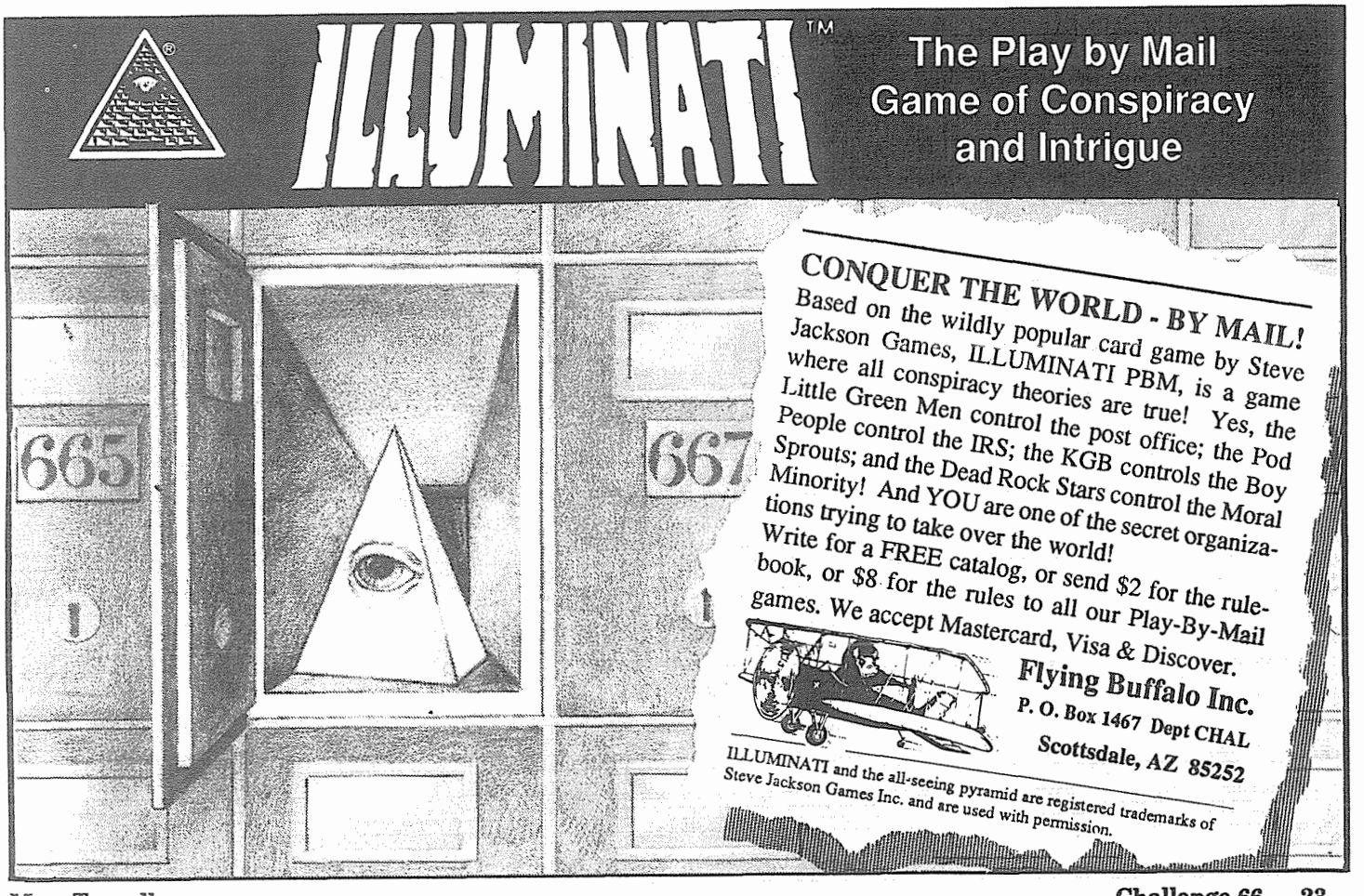
Changes are staggered at about 270-day intervals (nine months). So if a referee decides that the starport value officially changes on 001-1125, the next change (tech level) should occur on or around 271-1125. Ω

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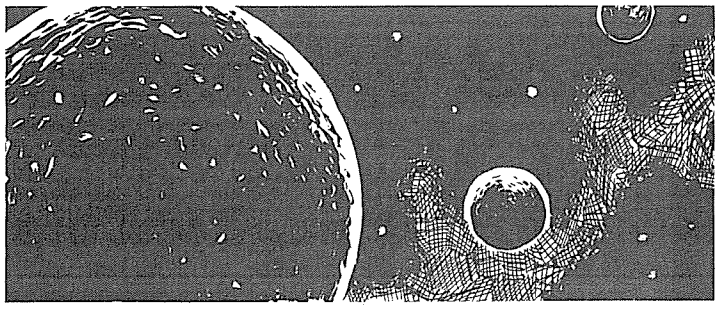
*The adventure and subsector data presented here is an extension of the material presented in the **Hard Times** supplement. It may be used on its own, or may be used to expand the play opportunities of that supplement.*

*This adventure includes vehicle designs using both the "Wet Navy" design sequence (**Challenge 53, 54 and 60**) and "Wood and Wind, Steel and Steam," the early tech design supplement (**Challenge 61**).*

*If you liked this adventure, you'll love **Astrogator's Guide to Diaspora Sector**, coming soon from GDW.*







Anton Cagliari

Position: General manager of a Travellers' Aid Society hostel in Zarushagar sector.

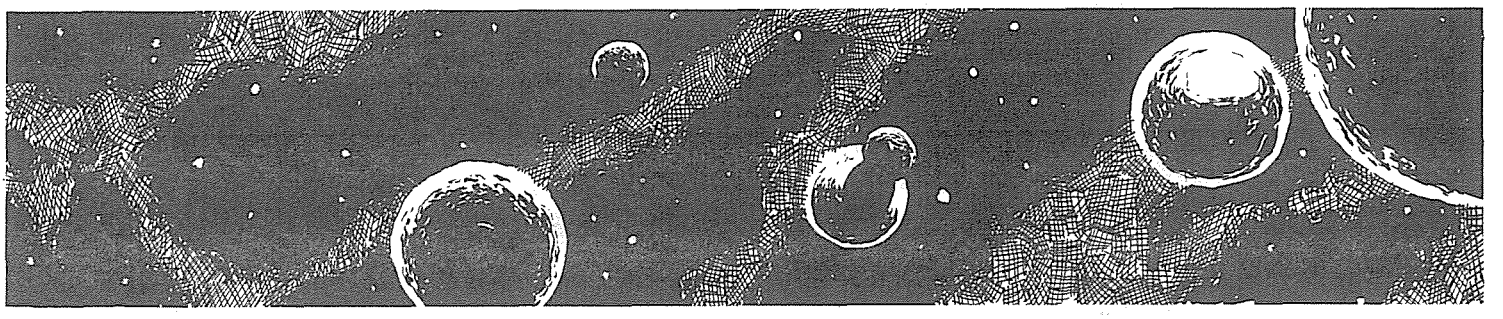
Profile: 576A99.

Age: 53.

Credit: Unlimited.

Skills: Admin-3, JOT-2, Leader-2, SMG-2, Air/Raft-1, Brawl-1, Computer-1, Intrusion-1, Legal-1, Medical-1, Pilot-1, Streetwise-1, Survival-1, Vacc Suit-1.

Article by Greg Videll



Like virtually every other organization in charted space, TAS has suffered the effects of the Rebellion and the encroachment of Hard Times. Anton Cagliari's response to these events has been to take the lead in holding back the night using the full resources of his position with this once-Imperium-spanning organization.

BACKGROUND

As a boy in Core sector, Anton Cagliari loved to travel. Just the short trip to see his semi-uncle Carlo on the next continent was enough to fire his imagination for a week in advance. It was the thought of seeing the new and different that excited him. Thus, it came as no surprise when, at the age of 18, Cagliari signed on aboard a free trader as a deck hand. While his stint with the trader lasted only a couple of years, it was enough for him to earn his merchant papers, which were in turn his keys to the universe.

Cagliari spent the next decade travelling throughout charted space. He supported himself by taking odd jobs and working passages. (He was even a bouncer at a boloball arena for a short time). All the while, Cagliari got to see the universe and know its people.

His big break came when a TAS general manager in Lishun sector hired him to locate a missing Traveller News Service (TNS) reporter. Bringing all his skills to bear, Cagliari tracked down the journalist, who was being held prisoner in Vargr space by a corsair band. He freed the individual without bloodshed, but was forced into a running gun battle from one system to the next until he made the Imperial border. For his efforts, the manager in Lishun awarded Cagliari a TAS membership and placed him on his staff. Thus began Cagliari's long association with that organization. In the years that followed, Cagliari travelled the Imperium while conducting TAS business. He even participated in the establishment of several new facilities.

PRESENT DAY

Today, Anton Cagliari is the general manager of the TAS hostel on Megalmatree/Oasis (2826 Zarushagar), capital of the Duchy of Oasis (a pocket empire located in the sector). While he no longer travels quite so much, he tries to keep his skills sharp and always has an eye out for "young talent." The widespread destruction and economic dislocations caused by the Rebellion concern him greatly. He feels that now more than ever is the time for TAS to fulfill its goal of aiding travellers.

For centuries, TAS provided a wide range of services to travellers both in and near Imperial space. Its most widely known services included publishing of the Red and Amber travel zone listings, the Traveller News Service and low cost lodgings and services to its members. TAS also maintained library data bases dealing with virtually ever facet of the worlds of charted space, sponsored local tours of planets, and provided legal and medical assistance. Almost all these services were available to nonmembers for a fee as well. The society made it both easier and safer to travel the 11,000 worlds of the Imperium.

Still, the same forces which shattered the Imperium work against TAS. Hostels can't help but fall out of contact with one another, impairing the society's efficiency. Library data files are out of date, with little hope of being brought current any time in the near future. The Imperium-spanning listing of Amber and Red travel zones is in a similar state. TNS news reporting has been forcibly slanted or suppressed altogether, despite the society's best efforts to the contrary. Deeply committed to the society's mission, Anton Cagliari means to change this.

MISSION

Cagliari has initiated a number of programs to counteract the effects of the Second Civil War, at least within his area of responsibility. He has rallied the other general managers in Oasis and is their unofficial leader. Agents hired by him or drawn from TAS' membership are going from world to world attempting to reunite the society's scattered facilities. In the process, these agents are evaluating such particulars as system allegiance(s), travel zone designations, changes in government, law levels and customs, and other issues vital to anyone travelling in the Shattered Imperium. All the information collected goes into the society's databases for dissemination to members and other hostels. Cagliari is also attempting to establish the TNS as an unbiased reporter of Rebellion events and maintain the society's tradition of political neutrality. (It should be noted that the Duchy of Oasis wholly supports Cagliari's efforts). Finally, he's also sending out contact teams to do much the same in surrounding factional territories.

The mission Anton Cagliari has assigned himself is a daunting one and may well extend past his lifetime, but in so many ways, there's no one better for the job. If successful, he may just keep the light of civilization burning, if only in his corner of the universe, and stave off another Long Night.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

The easiest way PCs can become involved with Cagliari is through his efforts to reunite TAS' disparate facilities. Entry-level positions can be gained by transporting and/or guarding one of his contact teams. Coming to the rescue of a TAS ship being menaced by pirates or commerce raiders is another way of coming to the general manager's attention. Once the PCs have met Cagliari, assuming they have a fairly clean record, he won't hesitate to call on them regularly. Although he will initially withhold TAS membership, Cagliari will allow the characters limited use of the society resources under his purview. This is a good opportunity for the PCs to meet and cultivate contacts within TAS—contacts which include merchants, other adventurers, port officials, nobles and so on. It's recommended that membership only be granted after a number of harrowing assignments in order to given the travellers a goal to aim for. Finally, outstanding performance will likely result in the waiving of a formal membership application and MCr1 fee. Ω



TL13 laser weapons to fill the gap between small arms and autocannon size, allowing a variety of zero-G support weapons and low-signature battle dress energy weapons.

Advanced Lasers

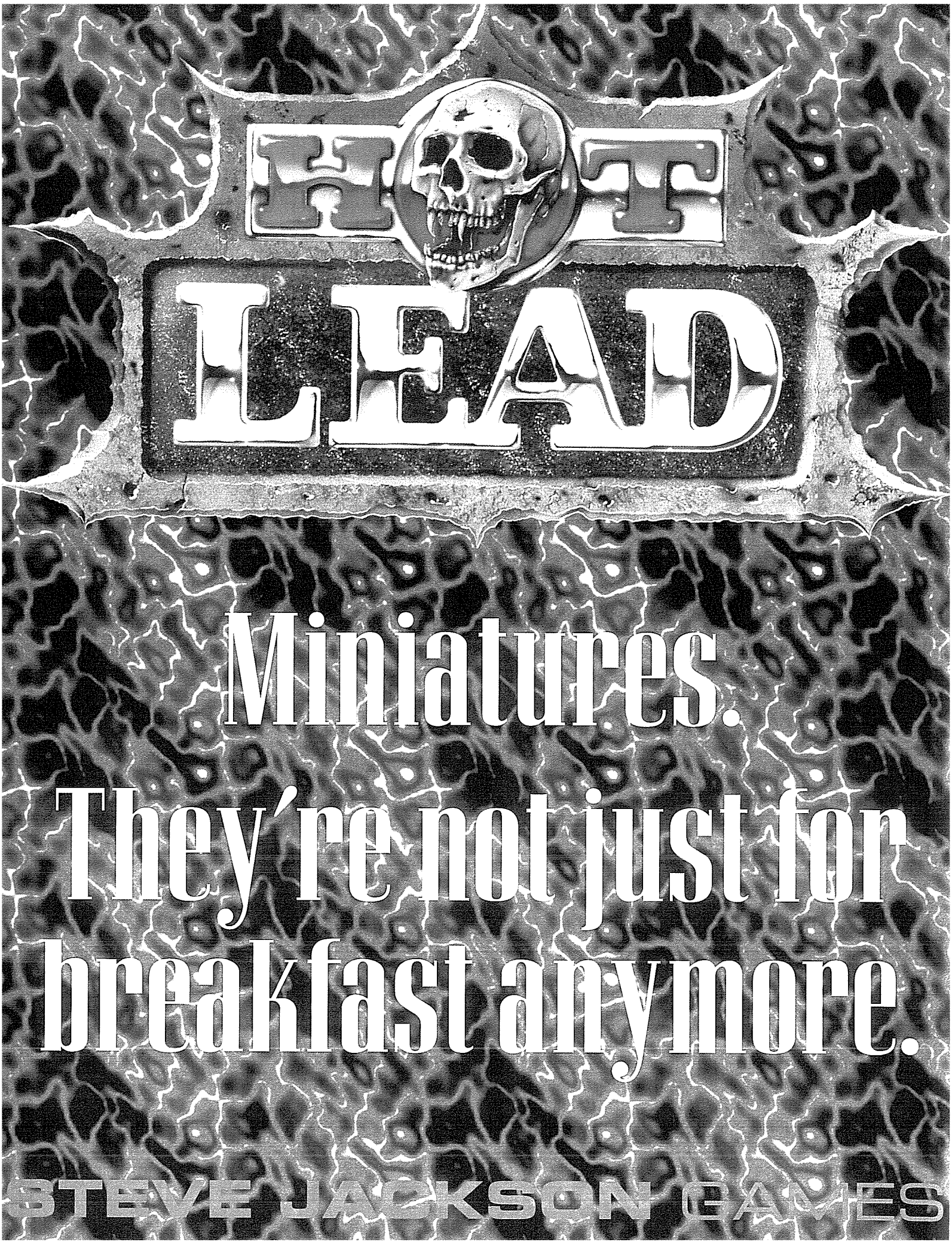
By Ken Pick

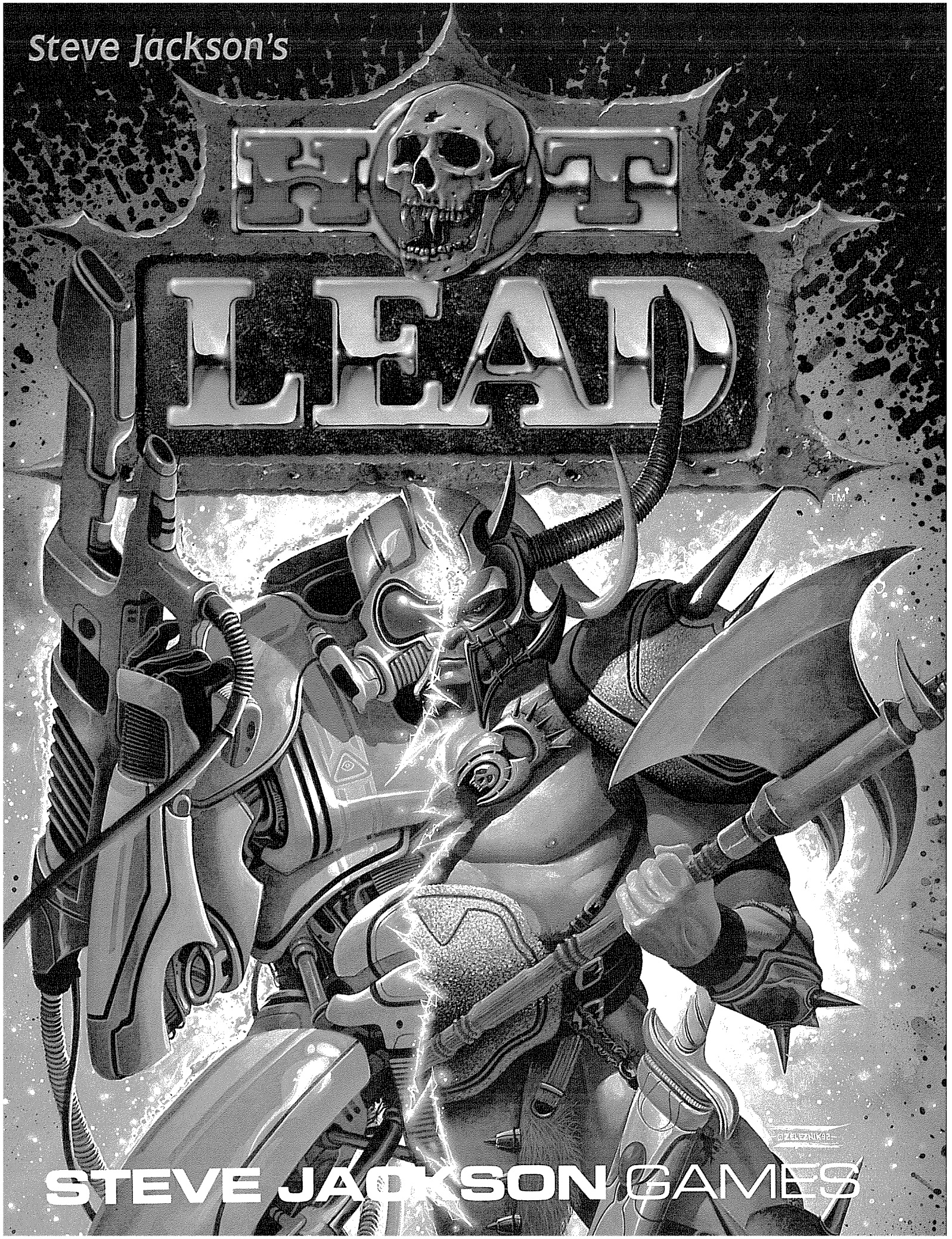
To many, the weapon most associated with high-tech civilizations is the personal energy weapon, of which the most basic is the laser.

Laser small arms are introduced at TL9 in **MegaTraveller** and are given a major upgrade at TL13. Besides the improvements listed (such as firing beams of X-rays instead of visible/near-UV light), TL13 lasers incorporate several other features which make them more competitive. A TL13 laser is less fragile than a TL9 model, though still not quite as rugged as a conventional firearm. They also incorporate a modular solid-state construction with common power feed protocols, which allow powerpacks to interchange between various sizes of weapon.

However, nothing is mentioned In **MegaTraveller** about lasers intermediate between small arms and autocannon size—the size range used for infantry support weapons and battle dress. Under the existing firearms lists, only high energy weapons (the PGMP and FGMP

Continued on page 29.


HOT LEAD
Miniatures.
They're not just for breakfast anymore.
STEVE JACKSON GAMES


Steve Jackson's
TOO
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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

Continued from page 26.

Laser Support Weapons

Weapon	Ammo Notes	Rds	Pen/ Atten	Dmg	Max Range	Autofire Targets	Signature	Recoil
Heavy Laser Rifle-13	—	*	28/2	3	Distant	—	Low	Low
Tripod Laser-9	—	*	9/2	3	Distant	2	Hi	Low
Light Tripod Laser-13	—	*	12/2	3	Distant	2	Low	Low
Heavy Tripod Laser-13	—	*	20/2	3	Distant	2	Low	Low

All weapons use Rifle skill when in battle dress and Heavy Weapons skill otherwise. All weapons have difficulty as rifle.
Rds: See section on powerpack interchangeability.
Setup Increments: Heavy laser rifle, two seconds. All tripod lasers, six seconds. No setup is needed when carried in battle dress.

series)—with their high-signature handicap—are available in this size and power range.

The following TL13 laser weapons fill this size gap, allowing a variety of zero-G support weapons and low-signature battle dress energy weapons. Except for the grav-assist harness, volume in liters equals weight in kilograms.

HEAVY LASER RIFLE

The TL13 heavy laser rifle is an oversized laser rifle intended for use by battle dress. Nonpowered troops use it as a support weapon (like a laser light assault gun or heavy sniper rifle), fired from an integral bipod.

17.6 kg, Cr16,000. Uses TL13 laser rifle, PGMP-13/14 or FGMP-14/15 powerpack.

TRIPOD LASERS

Tripod lasers are essentially laser machineguns, formed by ganging four carbine or rifle-size lasers together into a Gatling-style arrangement. Each laser "barrel" fires once in a four-shot burst; the complete weapon is about the size and weight of a heavy machinegun.

The first tripod lasers appear at TL9. Because of their expense and fragile construction when compared to conventional firearms, they see only limited production and use—mostly in zero-G applications where their lack of recoil offsets their limited effectiveness.

By TL13, both light and heavy tripod lasers come into use, primarily for battle dress (as a low-signature complement for the PGMP and FGMP) and as vehicle-mounted support weapons. In the latter role, they provide high-penetration "machineguns" that run off the vehicular powerplant without any need for ammunition.

Tripod Laser-9: Early tripod laser formed from four TL9 laser rifle tubes. Uses its own special powerpack, four times the size and weight of a TL9 laser rifle's. Not very practical for the expense. Very rare.

1.0 meters long, 24 kg, Cr14,000.

Powerpack (100 bursts): 16 kg, Cr6000. Can also use TL9 laser rifle powerpack (25 bursts).

Light Tripod Laser-13: Advanced tripod laser formed from four TL13 laser carbine tubes. Used as a support/battle dress weapon at TL13 and obsolescent afterward due to introduction of bonded superdense armor at TL14.

0.8 meters long, 17.6 kg, Cr16,000. Uses TL13 laser rifle, PGMP-13, or PGMP-14 powerpack or 0.8 megawatt power feed.

Heavy Tripod Laser-13: Laser heavy machinegun formed from four TL13 laser rifle tubes. Most widely used of tripod lasers, either as a battle dress "light" support weapon or as a vehicle-mounted "machinegun."

1.1 meter long, 35.2 kg, Cr32,000. Uses TL13 laser rifle, FGMP-14, or FGMP-15 powerpack or 1.6 megawatt power feed.

Grav-Assist Harness: TL14 grav-assist harness similar to that used in the PGMP-14 and FGMP-15, incorporating a minimum-sized low power L-grav module (100 kg maximum thrust) powered from the fusion powerpack. With the harness, a heavy laser rifle or tripod laser can be carried and used as a "rifle" or light support weapon by troops without regard to battle dress. When activated, the grav module cuts the apparent weight of the weapon and its powerpack by 90%.

3 liters volume, 2 kg, Cr30,000.

INTERCHANGEABLE POWERPACKS

TL13 laser weapons (except for the special-purpose integral laser pistol) incorporate a modular design of powerpack, allowing interchangeability of powerpacks between TL13 laser weapons. These powerpacks are based on arrays of 100-kilowatt "cells" that can be linked either serially (for peak power output) or in parallel (for number of shots). The serial/parallel selection is controlled by ROM chips in the laser and powerpack circuitry which automatically adjust the powerpack output to the weapon when the pack is connected.

The TL14 integral laser pistol—intended as a "hideout" laser weapon—is a special case and uses only its own integral powerpack.

Pistol Powerpack: 100 kilowatts; 200 pistol shots, 100 carbine shots, 50 rifle shots.

Carbine Powerpack: 200 kilowatts; 400 pistol shots, 200 carbine shots, 100 rifle shots, 50 heavy rifle shots, 12 light tripod laser bursts.

Rifle Powerpack: 400 kilowatts; 400 carbine shots, 200 rifle shots, 100 heavy rifle shots, 50 light tripod bursts, 12 heavy tripod bursts.

PGMP-13/14 Fusion Powerpack: 800 kilowatts when set for lasers; infinite ammunition for heavy rifle and light tripod laser. Powerpack also powers grav-assist harness for weapon.

FGMP-14/15 Fusion Powerpack: 1.6 megawatt when set for lasers; infinite ammunition for heavy rifle and all tripod lasers. Powerpack also powers grav-assist harness for weapon. Ω

Advertise in Challenge classifieds!
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Shelagyote/Diaspora (1620 X5896B?-3/Red) Date: 352-1127

¶Merchants who have recently called on Shelagyote are reporting an unanticipated Droyne presence on this world which had not been known to have any Droyne population.

¶The Droyne reportedly intercept incoming starships and explain that although the crew may visit the world aboard small craft, all starships must remain at or beyond the 10-planetary diameter limit. In addition, once the crew has landed at the improvised parking area which serves as a starport for this world, they are not allowed to use aerial transport again until they return to their ships.

¶The merchants report that these restrictions make trade very difficult, and although the world's human population is distressed by the arrangement, the Droyne do not seem to mind.

¶Shelagyote is home to a minor human race, the Shela, originally contacted by the First Imperium. Since the discovery of an Ancients site on the world in 217, the world has been interdicted, a status only reversed in 1118, after the onset of the Succession War.

¶Sites of known Droyne population in the sector include Layne (2420 Diaspora/Red) and Umorphutwyo (1816 Diaspora/Red), the site of horrible inter-specific warfare in 1123 which killed tens of thousands of the world's human and Droyne inhabitants.

Pharsalus/Ilelish (1711 D4208BA-7/Amber) Date: 054-1128

¶An official of the Pharsalus Aerospace Traffic Control Office announced today that a salvage fleet operating out of Pharsalus is now a month overdue.

¶The fleet, consisting of seven vessels of between 100 and 400 registered tons, routinely operates within a 10-parsec radius of Pharsalus, and remains out for three to four months at a time. This area of Ilelish was the site of numerous fleet actions between Ilelish and rebellious factional forces during the first few years of the Rebellion, and also saw many of Lucan's lawless "Black War" strikes. The area therefore contains thousands of derelict starships, each of which may contain extremely valuable technological items, items which are becoming increasingly scarce in the current "hard times."

¶Worlds like Pharsalus are attempting to maintain dwindling technological resources by taking advantage of such salvage. The missing fleet is attempting to fulfill requests for much-needed atmospheric and water purification equipment on its current deployment.

Pharsalus/Ilelish (1711 D4208BA-7/Amber) Date: 082-1128

¶"Well, I'll tell you what: I'm gonna think twice about engaging in legal salvage in this subsector again."

¶This was the response of one independent salvage contractor to news of the destruction of the missing salvage fleet by Federation of Ilelish naval forces. The entire group of seven vessels, registered out of Pharsalus, was reported destroyed or impounded by Federation of Ilelish naval forces in the Krysse system (1719 Ilelish/Amber).

¶An officer of the Ilelish Federation Navy announced that the surviving members of the salvage fleet were arrested for unlawful theft of government property and desecration of war graves, and their ships pressed into service in the Federation Navy.

¶"That's cynical legalism, pure and simple," responded the salvage contractor interviewed above, who wished to remain nameless. "All salvage operators know about the war graves regulations, and we've operated for years with absolute respect for the remains that we find. We make sure they are all properly interred and reported to the authorities, because we know how we'd want our families to be treated if the same thing happened to us. What happened is simple abuse of power. It's criminal."

¶Other local merchants and traders were equally outraged. "What was it hurting the navy that we were putting these wrecked ships to good use? At least we were recycling the equipment and doing people some good, which is more than the navy is doing. We need the spare parts, we need the heavy hull materials, we need the weapons out here on the frontier. If we don't reclaim it, the pirates will. Where has the navy been all these years, anyway? They weren't out there telling us this was illegal before now. If there had been a fleet out here to apprehend and arrest lawbreakers, things might not have gotten this bad. So where did this fleet come from, anyway, and who told them to go after us? Maybe Lucan needs a good salvage crew."

Location Withheld/Ley Sector (XXXX/SSAHPGL-T/N/A) Date: 121-1128

>>>Under Ministry of Justice Memorandum 54-1123, this story has been edited for security reasons. The TAS News Service will follow up with a more complete report as circumstances permit.<<<

¶A K'kree battlefleet that penetrated deep into Imperial territory has been "annihilated" by the closely coordinated action of two Imperial Fleets, according to Imperial Navy sources. The same report, supported by recent incidents, cites recent "acts of provocation" on the part of the Two Thousand Worlds. These began with seemingly unrelated incidents involving K'kree trading vessels, and worked up to what the report termed "pushing and shoving incidents" along the border, involving K'kree military vessels.

¶Although the exact location of the battle remains secret, it is known that it took place some 15-20 parsecs from Dukh (1210 Ley/Amber), the Sector Capital.

¶An unnamed source remarked, "All Imperial citizens, no matter which faction they might support, should understand that we in the Imperial Navy are defending them from our traditional external enemies who are still banging on the door. The League of Antares, the False Strephon, the Murderer Dulinor, Craig, and Margaret, none of them are defending the boundaries of humaniti from Centaur expansion. They may like to insult us as 'Lucan's Fleet,' but I don't see anybody else holding this frontier. When the barbarians are at the gates, maybe they'll realize that should have stood with us when it counted."

Dukh/Ley (1210 B6659CC-B/Amber Date: 184-1128

¶A K'kree diplomatic mission arrived at the Sector Capital today with a strongly worded message protesting the destruction of three K'kree merchants at Khimudire (2019 Ley/Amber) on 279-1127.

¶The message threatened "the most dire consequences, as you will soon see" if Imperial forces did not pay reparations and turn over all captured and derelict vessels, prisoners, and bodies to the K'kree legation.

¶The response of Sector Admiral Villeneuve to the delegation was reported to be a harshly worded warning that K'kree vessels operating illegally within Imperial boundaries did so at their own risk. He added that, although they were apparently as yet unaware of the truth of that statement, they would surely very soon receive confirmation of an additional lesson.

¶The subtext to the Imperial Navy press conference conference this afternoon was that the protest message arrived at Dukh at the same time the K'kree battlefleet might have, had it not been destroyed nine weeks ago.

Duwamish/Diaspora (1336 C466784-9/Red) Date: 246-1128

¶The Duwamish League central offices have announced the establishment of a new escort service for vessels moving spinward-trailing through the jump-1 central belt of the Shumisdi subsector. Cumberan ships will now escort subsidized convoys to Isee (0833 Diaspora/Red), where they make the two-parsec jump to Emeluura (0935 Diaspora/Red) to pick up the Duwamish League escort which accompanies the convoy along the jump-1 Duwamish Belt to its endpoint at Prosser (1536 Diaspora/Red). Here there are transfer facilities to cross-load cargoes to jump-2 vessels to make the remainder of the passage, which is jump-2 along one of two routes: the corely route through Tavara (2136 Diaspora/Red) to the central Khulam and Promise subsectors, or the rimly route via Pekhuraa (2236 Diaspora/Red) to rimward Khulam subsector and into the Solomani Rim at Jade and Ukarin (2502 and 2601 Solomani Rim/Amber).

¶Escorts for this route were previously obtained by contracting starmerc escorts or by paying a usage tax to the Duwamish League for an escort of Duwamish League vessels. Now by a new arrangement between the Cumber Confederation and the Duwamish League, ships carrying certain cargoes out of the Confederation are issued escort credits which are turned over to Duwamish forces at Prosser. The Duwamish forces can then use these credits to purchase starship repair and maintenance for its forces at the A and B starports in the Confederation.

¶"Because we don't have any A or B starports out here anymore, we have to take our ships elsewhere to get them worked on, and that's expensive. That's why we used to have to charge for escort through the belt, just to keep our ships running. This new arrangement actually has Cumber subsidizing our escort forces, which works well all the way around. Cumber can get its cargoes out, we get our ships serviced, and the merchants don't have to pay cash for escorts. It even works out for the starmercs, because a lot of them are willing to work for upkeep and will accept escort credits so they can go get worked on up at the Confederal A and B yards."

¶This route opens up a new trade corridor running directly between the spinward and trailing extremes of the sector. The Cumber Confederation is promoting this route as an alternative to the longer route rimward through the frontier areas of the Solomani Confederation. The addition of the escort program is hoped to assuage fears about the safety of this route, and the cargoes that earn the escort credits are the Confederation's agricultural and industrial exports, which allows Cumber to pay for the service. Concerns about Solomani rivalry to rimward, focused in the New Order Vigilance Alliance, are also certainly a factor in the creation of this route as an alternative to relying on dwindling Solomani goodwill to protect Cumberan trade.

Mora/Spinward Marches (3124 AA99AC7-F/Green) Date: 280-1128

¶Archduke Norris Aella Aledon presided today at the decommissioning ceremony of ISS *Arrival Vengeance* (CF-6415), the *Azhanti High Lightning*-class cruiser that was the subject of such speculation when it disappeared from the Trin Inactive Ships Facility in 1123.

¶Shortly after the Archduke's historic address of 110-1127, it was announced that the ship had been "borrowed" by the Archduke for a dangerous mission through the shattered Imperium to contact other leaders to assess the possibility of a re-united Imperium. As Norris himself explained in the address, these attempts were unsuccessful. The 122-year-old ship is again being decommissioned, but will remain in orbit around Mora with a full-time skeleton crew, as Norris' ceremonial flagship.

¶The ceremony, conducted at the Mora Highport, included the 600 crew that took *Vengeance* on her final three-year mission through the Aslan Hierate, Daibei, Delphi, Core, and Gushemege. They and the 20,000 other invited guests were privileged to see the unveiling of the new Deneb Navy symbol—the Deneb unicorn within an Imperial Sunburst—on *Arrival Vengeance*'s rudder. Norris explained that the symbol will soon be worn by all vessels of the Domain, and that "the old girl," as he referred to the cruiser, had earned the right to be the first to bear the symbol by "her courageous mission which established the foundation for the Domain's future."

¶Norris also honored the ship's crew, explaining that "by their courage and confidence in undertaking an impossible mission, they have become the pilots for this Domain, leading us through dangerous shoals and uncharted waters. We owe them all a debt of gratitude, for they have helped us find our future." The Archduke announced that they would all be awarded the Legion of the Bridled Steed, the Domain's highest noncombat decoration.

¶When the time came for the decommissioning itself, Norris invoked the ancient litany of decommissionings, and exhorted the ship to "rest well, yet sleep lightly, and hear the call, should we ever have need of your powers again. You will hear the call, and thanks to your magnificent crew, you are ready."

¶The ceremony was also attended by Seldrian Aledon, Norris' true daughter, and the newly-promoted Vice Admiral Brian Gou, the officer in command at Trin when the ship disappeared, and whose career was placed in jeopardy during the three years the ship was missing.

Another Exclusive Traveller News Service Interview with Professor Illek Kuligaan

Vaward/Old Expanses (1106 A795A99-F/Amber) Date: 322-1128

Our intrepid reporter has again caught up with the colorful and outspoken Professor Kuligaan, this time following a speaking engagement somewhere in the Old Expanses.

TNS: Is this seat taken?

IK: I believe so. I'm sure it must be.

TNS: But I see no parcels or belongings. Surely I can have this seat.

IK: If you know the answer, why did you waste my time with the question?

TNS: Professor Kuligaan, in your remarks earlier today—

IK: My name isn't Professor Kuligaan.

TNS: Of course it is.

IK: No, my name is Pangloss, Dr. Pangloss, and I own a cheese shoppe, a nice little place…

TNS: Professor Kuligaan, don't play games with me. I have the parking ticket that was left on your air/raft.

IK: (After a long pause) Oh, all right. I am Professor Kuligaan.

TNS: I know that.

IK: It's you again, isn't it? What do you want now?

TNS: As a former Dlani, do you find that the Virasin de-emphasis of the temporal and physical aspects of life affects your attitude toward artificial constructs, such as parking spaces, and results in your own difficulties with parking tickets?

IK: Oh, shut up. Ω

Trick or Threat

By Craig Sheeley



Remember when Halloween pranks were limited to tipping over outhouses, soaping windows, decorating trees with toilet paper and so on?

Times have changed. So have Halloween pranks.

The information presented in this article is for the referee's use only.

This scenario makes a perfect introduction to **Dark Conspiracy**. It tends to work best if the PCs have no knowledge of each other; there's nothing like being stranded in a strange situation with a bunch of total strangers to heighten the tension and feelings of alienation.

A few NPCs are a must to fill out the cast of this little psychodrama.

RUDE AWAKENING

After a good night's sleep, the PCs finally rouse themselves, to discover a very strange thing: They're not where they were when they went to sleep.

Refer to the map. The characters are in the rooms marked K, two beds to a room. If there are more than six characters, some will be sleeping two to a bed.

The first thing the characters are going to notice is that their bedrooms are chilly—around 50 degrees Fahrenheit. If they puff, they can see their breath. Everyone is sleeping on old metal-frame, king-sized beds, with flower-print cotton pillowcloths over feather pillows, and covered with linen and cotton sheets and assorted blankets and quilts. All the characters are attired in whatever they were wearing when they went to sleep. Those who were sleeping in their clothes, with equipment and identification, are missing all equipment and personal effects (wallets, watches, etc.). Those who went to sleep wearing glasses still have them on. (Be ruthless about the PCs' clothing—ask them what they were wearing when they went to sleep, then hold them to it!)

The bedrooms are spartan, each holding a couple of pieces of random furniture—one has a dressing table and chair, another has a nightstand with bowl and pitcher, and the other has an old portable wardrobe. The light fixtures are bare light bulbs on the ceilings with cords hanging down. Both walls and ceilings are covered with mismatched swatches of very old and faded wallpaper. Each bedroom has a closet—one closet is totally empty, one has some old newspapers wadded up in the corner and the third has a cardboard box with some clothing in it. The clothing (just enough to decently cover those PCs and NPCs who regularly sleep in scant attire) consists of worn old castoffs—bib overalls, jeans, a couple of large flannel work shirts in colorful plaids, etc.

The newspapers are old Kansas City papers, dated back into the late 1970s. The most recent headlines trumpet the Iran Hostage Crisis and President Jimmy Carter's response.

The lights do not work—there seems to be no electricity in their circuits. There

is plenty of light, from the early morning sunlight slanting in through the windows. The bathroom (room L) has old flush fixtures, but there is no water in the commode or water lines. Careful, or just tidy, characters will notice that there is dust on everything, sometimes up to a centimeter thick. And there are no footprints on the floors, at all.

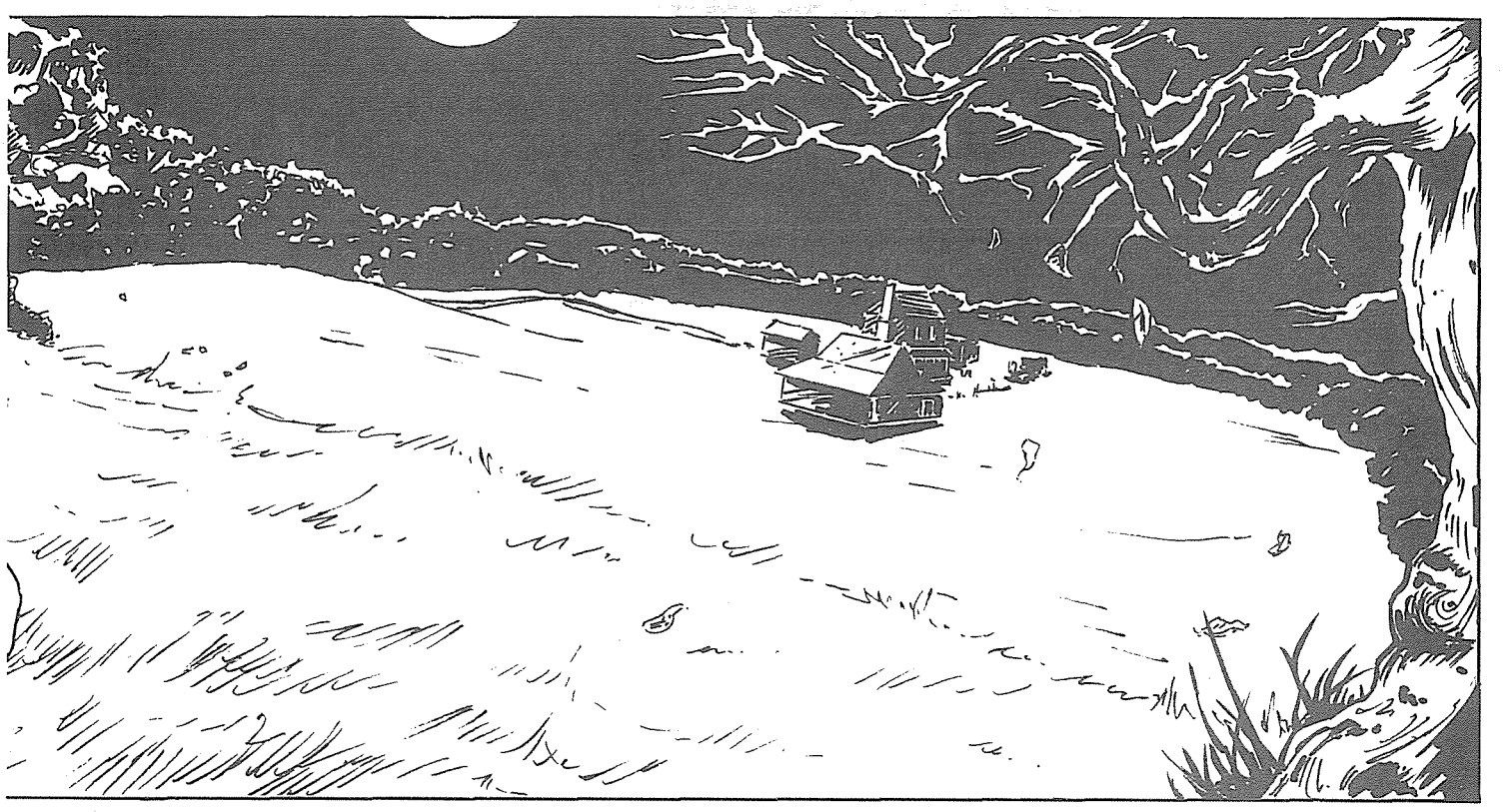
WE'RE NOT IN KANSAS ANYMORE

Looking out the windows, the characters can see that they're on the second story of a house located in a rural setting. The fields grow high with frost-browned grass, and trees are ablaze with the last remnants of colorful leaves. There is frost on the grass, and the windowpanes fog if breathed on.

After the characters come to grips that something is very strange here, they can go to the stairs to examine the other floors of the house. The attic is a lonely place, with only a couple of empty cardboard boxes in it. The first floor is another matter.

Room G: The stairs lead down into room G, an old living room. The derelict status of the room shows that the house is obviously abandoned—there are only a few pieces of furniture left, and they're all but destroyed. The fireplace looks like it hasn't been used in years, and the hardwood floor is thick with the dust that covers every surface. The windows are still in good shape, storm windows covering regular panes, like the ones upstairs. A shattered and gutted television set sits against the south wall. Drag marks on the floor, under the dust, show where other pieces of furniture were moved out of the house, taken through the front door of room F. If the dust is greatly disturbed, large stain markings can be seen on the floor in patches. Sloppy varnish jobs? Or, judging from the dull red-brown hue of the stains, old blood?

If someone carefully examines the fireplace—like peering up into the flue—he finds the flue wedged shut with an old but still serviceable poker.



Room F: Room F is nothing more than an entryway with a hall closet. This closet holds an old pair of rubber work boots. The front door is locked and bolted from the inside, and it is a solid panel of wood.

Room H: Room H is, or was, a dining room. It still has a large old wood dining table in it, too heavy to carry off and too solid to chop up. A pair of chairs still sit at it; they fall apart as soon as any real weight is placed on them. A calendar on the wall proclaims the month to be October 1983—30 years ago.

Room I: Room I is a compact kitchen, once fitted with makeshift modernization—the gas stove must surely date back to the 1960s, and the sink was probably installed before then. The cabinets and cupboards are bare but for a little trash—a used matchbook with a few matches left in it, a tattered cookbook, an old dishrag, some toothpicks, an old plastic bottle half full of liquid dishwashing detergent. If someone thinks to look behind the stove, he finds an old steak knife in somewhat useful shape—it's still sharp. A back door from the house is at the south end of Room I. The door is locked and bolted from the inside.

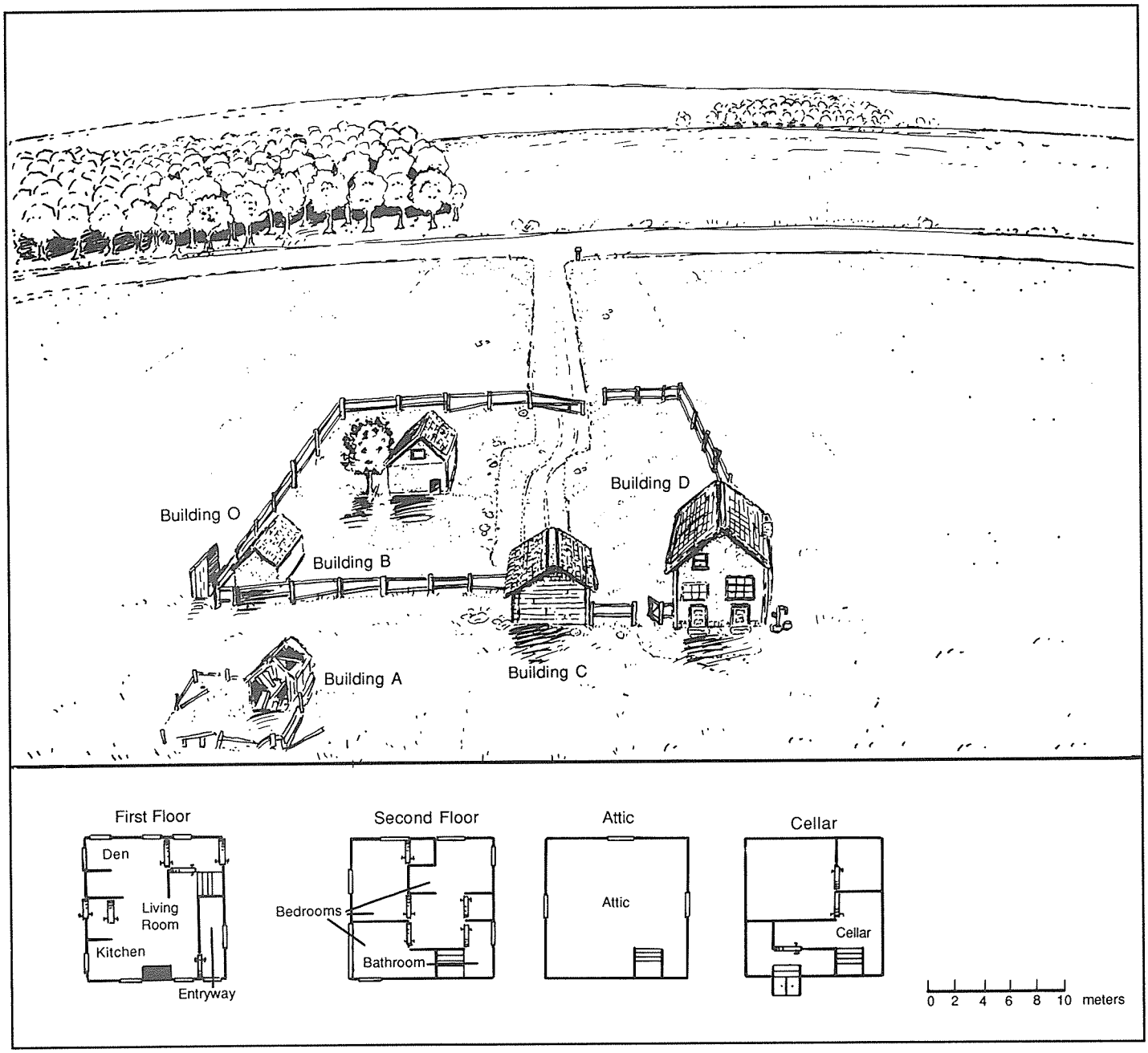
Room J: Room J was a sitting and sewing room. An old, defunct sewing machine still sits there, its stand bolted to the floor. The closet floor is littered with decaying scraps of cloth. Several spools of nylon thread can be found there, along with a rusty pair of large scissors.

Cellar: The cellar is typically dark, dank and gloomy. A brace of shelves lined with dusty glass jars sit against the east wall of room N; the jars are filled with rotted canned vegetables and fruit. The large room of the cellar contains an old propane furnace, neglected into uselessness.

SO WHERE ARE WE?

When the characters go outside the house, they discover that the air is cold, in the low 40s. The knee-high grass is wet with frost melting in the new sunlight. The sky is wonderfully clear and brightly blue, something few people see in the world of **Dark Conspiracy**.

The characters are without food and



water. There is an old water pump sited near the back door to the house; after an extended period of hard pumping, the pump groans and yields up water. For a number of pumps, the water is dirty and rusty, but eventually the pump's rust is cleared and the water turns clean. It is very cold and tastes strange to city folks used to sanitized, chemically fortified recycled water.

There are five wooden outbuildings near the house; three are within the fence. The fence itself is visible for all the vines and bushes that have overgrown it.

Building O: Building O's function is obvious to anyone with country upbringing—its shape declares it to be an outhouse. It hasn't been used in a while, thankfully.

Building A: Building A is a dilapidated wreck, falling apart where it stands, its fence broken.

Building B: Building B is an old, small workshop. An anvil still remains bolted to its ancient stump mounting there, and some old cans on the shelves hold mechanical odds and ends (old nails, screws, bolts, nuts, staples, etc.). It is clear that there were once tools here, and electrical lines still run from the pole in the yard to the shop, but the tools are gone now and there's no power. Someone with sharp eyes and a willingness to search the workshop can discover an old crowbar hanging from one of the ceiling rafters.

Building C: Building C is a garage—fresh tire tracks lead from its closed doors through the grass to the gravel drive! But the doors, both the double doors and the normal entrance, are locked from the inside! If the characters wish to try to break in, they can force the doors (requiring bruised shoulders and two people with a combined STR of 15+). Or they can pry the doors open (requiring STR 6+ and either the poker from the fireplace or the crowbar from the workshop). Or they might break in through the dusty old glass-paned window.

There's a car inside the garage. Sitting on the dirt floor is a spotless, mint-condition, green 1954 Studebaker with creme hardtop. The car looks like it's been under a glass dome in a museum somewhere—it's even freshly waxed. If the characters examine it, they find the following facts: There are no keys anywhere in the car or garage. The engine is just as spotless and clean as the rest of the car, and there are no fluids in the

engines! The glove compartment contains current maps of Missouri and Kansas, a small First Aid kit, a working flashlight and registration for the car in the name of Roger Huxley, born March 15, 1937. The plates are current 2013 plates, registered in St. Louis. The trunk (which can be reached by taking down the back seats) contains a spare tire (also immaculate), a lug wrench and a jack. The gas tank is empty, bone-dry. Yet there are grass-blades and gravel stuck in the tire treads, which shows that the car has been driven recently—the grass is still wet.

Building D: Building D is a barn, a large, two-story affair with a hay-loft. It's in fairly good shape, its walls and roof covered with corrugated aluminum sheets. Inside, the place is musty with the smell of old hay. There are few artifacts, save an old spade, a dull hand-scythe, a hay-hook (sort of like an oversized fishhook with no barb attached to a transverse handle—a valuable tool for loading hay and a vicious weapon). All these are buried under a pile of rotting hay. Also, a tin bucket hangs from a nail on one of the loft walls.

GOING TO TOWN

The terrain around the farmstead is almost wild. The fields are heavily overgrown with grass. The woods across the gravel road to the north are thick and have started encroaching on the fields to the south. The browned leaves from the trees coat the road and have drifted into the fields on the chilly northwest wind. About 300 meters to the east, a single line of trees cuts across the fields, interrupted only by the road. A bridge at that point indicates the presence of a stream, which the woods follow.

To the west, the fields stretch over a hill—atop the ridge some 400 meters away, a human figure can be seen standing motionless. On closer examination, it turns out to be a tattered scarecrow, standing in the middle of the field. A flock of big black crows rises, squawking, from the scarecrow as the characters approach. The crows circle the characters once, complaining raucously, then fly across the road to nearby trees. The stream is a dark place, overshadowed by trees bent by wind and weather. Fanciful imaginations might even see something menacing in the shape of the trees, picturing gaunt limbs grasping, seeing gnarled and fearful faces in the knots and nubs of old wood and bark. Empathic characters (Empathy 4+ or Foreboding 3+) feel uneasy when they even look at the treeline from a distance. The closer they get to the stream, the less comfortable they feel about it.

The gravel road shows some signs of traffic. To the east, the road dips down into lowlands overshadowed by ominous-looking woods. If the characters follow the road in this direction, go to the Tricks and Treats section and look up the Demonground encounters.

If the characters go west on the road, after about 1.5 kilometers, they find a two-lane blacktop road, headed north. Another four kilometers brings the characters to a small town. The ancient, faded city limits sign identifies it a the town of Charity. The population listing can't be read.

CHARITY

Charity is not a ghost town; that much can be seen immediately. It is one of those little places that can be missed if one is travelling at high speed and blinks, but there are people there, and livestock—chickens, cattle and barking dogs. In all, the little town consists of about a dozen houses, nine of which appear to be occupied, a couple of businesses (a blacksmith and a doctor's office of some kind) and a general store-cum-restaurant. Not many people are about, but most of those seen are clustered around the general store. The entire scene would look quite archaic, except that the general store has a solar cell array and a very large TV antenna on the roof.

The townspeople stare quite a bit at the characters as they approach—considering that the characters are marching in wearing mismatched castoffs and sleepware, this is excusable. But they seem friendly enough, if a little wary. The townspeople appear to be normal ruralites, thin and worn by their arduous life, dressed in patched and serviceable farm clothing—overalls, denims, linens, cotton shirts, straw and leather hats, and so on. If the referee wants to give the players a clue, or just make them nervous, he can mention that none of the townspeople seem to be fat, or even overweight. And none of them are armed.

The owner and proprietor of the general store, a tired-looking lady named Phyllis, genuinely welcomes the characters in. Despite her appearance, she is a whirlwind of energy with a broad Ozarks accent, chattering away. She wants to know who the characters are, how they came to Charity, where they're going and so on. In the course of the conversation, she answers a few questions about Charity, too. The town, she says, just sort of gets along. Folks are friendly here and help one another out. On occasion, Jack will make a run to the big city upstate and fetch some needed things back—parts for the electronics, tools, medicines for Doc, etc. What about the raiders that are always in the news, the outlaws who roam the countryside? Phyllis says they don't bother the people of Charity. Any cars in Charity? None that run—just not worth the time to get parts. Horses work better. Any horses that can take the characters back to civilization? That question gets a laugh from the audience, gathered to eavesdrop on the conversation. The only horses and beasts of burden hereabouts are needed to help get the crops in—if the crops aren't gathered, the townspeople don't eat over the winter! 'Course, old Jack might be making a run up to the big city in a week or so; they could ride with him and his wagon. Or they could hike 20 miles east up the road, hook up with I-44 and try to hitch a ride back to St. Louis. Phyllis offers to get word to the mysterious travelling Jack that there are some people wanting a ride. Old Jack, she explains, is a hermit, living in the hills out nor'-east, and is hard to find, even for the locals.

If the characters describe the farm where they woke up, the locals recoil in horror (and listen with extreme interest). Even the cheerful Phyllis looks solemn. And no one will tell the characters the reason for the reaction.

If the characters want to explore the town some more, they can. The blacksmith's shop is a strange place, a converted auto garage with a forge and anvil installed. The smith is a huge, ugly man with a misshapen face—he identifies himself as Smitty and is quite friendly, if not too bright, willing to show off his considerable skill with his craft. His young apprentice, a dour, thin-faced youth, watches disapprovingly from the background.

The doctor's office is an old storefront, where Doc has set up his examination and operating room. His facilities are frighteningly primitive, but he seems to get results. Doc is a short, thin stick of a man, with white hair where he has any. He spends most of his time lounging around at Phyllis' general store.

The rest of the people in the town appear to be women and children. The menfolk, they explain, are off working the fields and gathering the crops. The women are busy with chores, and the children, all under the age of 10 years,

play their simple games. The houses are shabby looking, but well kept. Almost all of them sport jack-o'-lanterns, celebrating the Halloween season. These carved pumpkins are very well made, and their faces are uniformly horrifying and grotesque.

If the characters ask to stay in the town until Jack can be reached, they are told that there's no room; the only houses and buildings left are being lived in, and the other buildings are cannibalized shells, usually missing a wall. No, the best spare shelter hereabouts is the old farm. Phyllis is willing to give the characters some food and essentials to tide them over. She waves off payment or promises of payment. "Just being neighborly," she says.

Should an empathic character try to read the emotions and thoughts of the townspeople, he gets the same general readings of intense curiosity, restraint and a sharp, unfocused anticipation. Treat the townspeople as having a Willpower of 5.

TURNING ON THE FEAR

So much for the introduction to the area. Past this point, the adventure ceases to have a linear timeline. The referee must decide the best possible way to spring the frights and terrors surrounding the characters. The stage is set.

The characters are only about nine or 10 miles from the major highway I-44, but they don't know that. They've been removed from their familiar surroundings and possessions, and placed in a house that is reputed to be haunted. In order to maximize the fear angle, the referee needs to get them separated, plaguing each with spooky events that only certain characters can perceive, so that each thinks the other is going nuts. Note-passing is a must at this point.

The characters are actually the victims of a hideous practical joke, a contorted and lethal Halloween "trick or treat." The townspeople are actually dark elves (remember, they're all thin, right?), even the children. They've ventured forth from their caves near the Demonground (the stream near the house flows from there) to enjoy their gruesome prank. Smitty, the blacksmith, is actually a smart, short ogre (STR 18, INT 3—a real ogre genius!). The elves lied when they said there were no vehicles—they have a pair of working pickup trucks, and the '54 Studebaker in the Huxton house garage works quite well, if you know how to command the animator spirit that makes it move. They have horses, too, including some horses from their own proto-dimension—these hell-horses are fierce and deadly opponents, with Skill/Dam: 5/4D6. And they do have arms. There are enough knives for all the dark elves, several swords, two 12-gauge pump shotguns (treat as Mossberg 500s) with 20 rounds of ammo each, three Colt Python 20/.3 pistols with 30 rounds of ammo each, and a Marlin .30-06 rifle with a scope and 50 shells.

The plot is to try to frighten the characters by spooking them with the tricks listed below, and then kill them off one by one, making sure the others find the dead.

TRICKS AND THREATS

You may want to use NPCs as the victims of many of these "tricks," for obvious reasons.

Black Dog: One of the female characters or NPCs (preferably an NPC) is targeted by a barghest. The devil dog practices its usual tricks, casting an image of following its prey into the target's mind, howling in the distance and mentally making sure only the target can hear it—in general, terrifying the hapless victim. Once the victim is alone and helpless, the barghest uses its Dimension Walk ability to go to its victim and tear her apart. The hellish hound then Dimension Walks with the mauled body to leave it on the scarecrow's stand, to be pecked on by the ptero-ravens and their ilk. The footprints of the huge hound show only near the stand, leaving no rational explanation of how the dog and body got there. This is a good trick to use to frighten the rest of the party, and it is practically impossible to stop, which is why an NPC is best for the target victim.

Birds: Everywhere the characters go, those ugly black crows are nearby, cawing and cackling in their fashion, flitting overhead and dogging the characters' steps. Should one of the characters get angry and throw anything at them—rocks, pine-cones, verbal abuse—the birds single him out as their prey.

They are more than birds—they are twisted parodies of ancient birds from an evil proto-dimension, the ptero-ravens (**Dark Races**, Volume 1, page 79). They can command other birds to do their bidding, and if they catch their selected enemy out alone during the day, they order a swarm of birds to attack! Treat the bird swarm like a bat swarm (**Dark Conspiracy**, page 189). And the cursed reptile-birds will continue to order such an attack any time they can get their target alone (or with only one other person), in the open, during the day. All the while, the proto-avians hang back and laugh in their crowish way.

The ptero-ravens are also great spies and inform the dark elves of the characters' activities.

Headless Horseman: One of the dark elves has a fondness for the old legend of Sleepy Hollow. Each night, he gallops past the Huxton house on his black horse, hoping that some brave soul will come out and follow him east down the road, toward the old bridge. Using Thought Projection, he leads one of the characters astray down the road, past the bridge. Then he rides his horse toward his victim, emphatically urging the target character to flee ahead in terror. He chases his victim to the bridge, then flings a jack-o'-lantern Molotov cocktail to splash the character with burning gasoline!

Banshee's Call: A banshee (**Dark Conspiracy**, page 220) wails from the stream, coming at night to one selected victim, attempting to drive the subject mad with terror, calling the character down to the stream to kill him.

Ogre Feast: Smitty's hunger gets the better of him. He lurks outside the Huxton house, hiding in the old shed (building A), waiting to ambush and carry off someone who comes out to use the outhouse. That unfortunate is to be his dinner. After roasting the victim in the forge, he consumes his kill and has his dark elf apprentice use his Dimension Walk ability to take the gnawed bones back to the Huxton farm and dump them into the outhouse's cesspit.

Doctor, Doctor!: Doc uses his empathic abilities to make one of the characters think he's sick and run off alone (without telling anyone) to see the doctor. Doc's specialty is vivisection, and he prefers no anesthetic. The remains of the dead victim will be placed (via Dimension Walk) in the old oven at the Huxton house.

Water Horse: One evening, around twilight, the characters see a brilliant white horse near the stream. If they attempt to capture it or approach it, the horse seems a trifle skittish but friendly, eventually allowing itself to be mounted. Once a person is on its back, it kicks into a run, neighing wildly, and plunges into a deep pool in the stream to attempt to drown its unwary rider. The horse is an each-uisge, a variant of the fuatha (**Dark Conspiracy**, pages 221-222).

Demonground: About 400 meters north of the road, the stream flows out of a big cave in the side of a cliff. The cave is solid Demonground, and looks it, surrounded by misshapen trees and

jagged boulders. The dark elves have left guards here, for the cave leads to their proto-dimension and is part of their home. The guards are a quartet of dark elves armed with crossbows (they're quiet) and swords.

Wild Hunt: After a few nights of terror, the dark elves decide to cap the escapade off with a merry reign of death. They gather their weapons, pile into the two pickups, mount horses and proceed to the Huxton house. There they use their empathic might to reduce the characters to a frenzy of fear, driving them from the house into the countryside. After a head start, the dark elves chase them, tracking them to cut them down. If the characters are still near Charity by this time, this action is the climactic conclusion of the scenario—either the characters kill the dark elves and escape, or it's time to generate new characters.

GETTING OUT ALIVE

All is not without hope. The characters can try to escape. They can steal horses or transports from the townspeople. Or they can try to walk out, headed east toward I-44 and civilization. Or, if they discover what is really going on, they can try to mount a counterattack against their dark elf oppressors.

Walking out is difficult. The characters have a good couple of days' travel ahead of them and no way to carry water, which is essential (if they think of a way to carry water, let 'em! The whole idea is to encourage original thinking). In addition, the ptero-ravens spy on them all the time and fly to alert the dark elves if they see the characters up to something. The dark elves attempt to catch the characters and drive them back to the house with wolf attacks (**Dark Conspiracy**, page 200). If this tactic fails, the dark elves gather their firearms, pile into the trucks and give chase.

There are many ways in which the characters can figure out what's going on. Capturing a dark elf alive, a very successful Empathy roll, spying on the dark elves, etc. will reveal parts (if not all) of the plan.

Counterattacking means avoiding the spies, the ptero-ravens by day and the other creatures by night, and sneaking into town to visit a little return terror on the elves. Difficult, but possible (and so satisfying).

Don't be surprised if the players turn vicious and ruthless. Their characters are fighting for their lives against a vastly stronger foe.

DEUS EX MACHINA

Merciful referees may allow their PCs an out. If a savior is desired, it shows up in the person of the mysterious Jack. He turns out to be a short (about five-foot-nothing), stout, balding fellow with a long red beard and a sunburned nose. He's taking a load of "corn likker" to the big city and is willing to help the PCs out of their jam. He has a wagon loaded with kegs, pulled by a small mule with a put-out expression. The mule is a lot stronger than it looks (it doesn't come from this dimension), and so is Jack (he doesn't, either).

Jack is a leprechaun. (Ever wonder what happened to the Little People of Ireland? They came over to the New World with the Irish and set up shop in the mountains, all the way from the Alleghenies down to the Butlers in Arkansas.) As such, he has the same statistics as a dark elf, but his Constitution is 10, his Empathy is 20, and his hits are 20/40 (they're tough little buggers). He also has a fondness for humans and no love for the dark elves' sadistic jokes. He also has a blunderbuss, a black-powder scattergun (ROF variable, Pen Nil, Blk 5, M1i, Recoil SS 5, Rng 5. Damage varies according to range, like a shotgun. At Short range it does Dam 6 with ROF SS; at Medium range it has ROF 15 and Dam 1, like buckshot), with plenty of black powder and nails for ammunition! Ω

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By Andy Slack

Diamonds FROM Premiere



Shells were starting to fall outside by the time we got into the main vault. The unmistakable rumble and squeak of heavy armor rolling past outside the bank made speech even more difficult. Stanford had found the box we were after and was stuffing it into his pack. Harris was standing quite still, thumb in his belt, rifle pointed at the ceiling, visibly wondering what was in all the other safe-deposit boxes.

"Come on," I yelled as the tanks fell back, firing as they went. "We haven't got time for that!"

Harris looked at Stanford, and they both grinned. Stanford was already pulling some sort of illegal-looking electronic device from his toolkit.

It was obviously no use talking to them. I ran back out and flopped down near a window, where I could keep watch for the Kafers.

Set on Beta Canum during the Kafer War, this scenario is suitable for a group of three to six PCs. The referee will need the **2300 AD** rules. Access to **Colonial Atlas**, **Beanstalk** and/or **Invasion** may be helpful.

Beta Canum is about to be attacked by Kafer forces. Human intelligence estimates that the planet will fall in a matter of days. The PCs' sponsoring organization (see Refereeing the Scenario) has learned that a safe-deposit box in Premiere holds a fortune in diamonds which the PCs are asked to retrieve. The PCs will each be paid Lv500 up front and Lv500 on successful completion of the mission.

The PCs will be provided with a map of the bank, as well as a letter introducing them to the bank staff and an electronic key to the correct safe-deposit box.

APPROACH

Continued safe operation of the Beanstalk cannot be guaranteed during the invasion (if it hasn't been destroyed already), so the PCs will be inserted on the outskirts of Premiere by a small spaceplane at 0200 hours local time (at a disused flying field, now only used as an emergency landing strip for the main airport, about 10 kilometers out of town).

Shortly after the spaceplane lifts off, leaving the party on Beta Canum, the PCs learn from news broadcasts that Kafer warships have entered the system and are bound for the planet. They will arrive in 1D6 hours. If they contact their sponsors, the PCs are assured that they will be picked up if they can return to the rendezvous.

RETRIEVAL

The spaceplane will alight at the drop-off point in 24 hours. It will wait one hour, then depart, regardless of whether the PCs make it back.

MAP DESCRIPTION

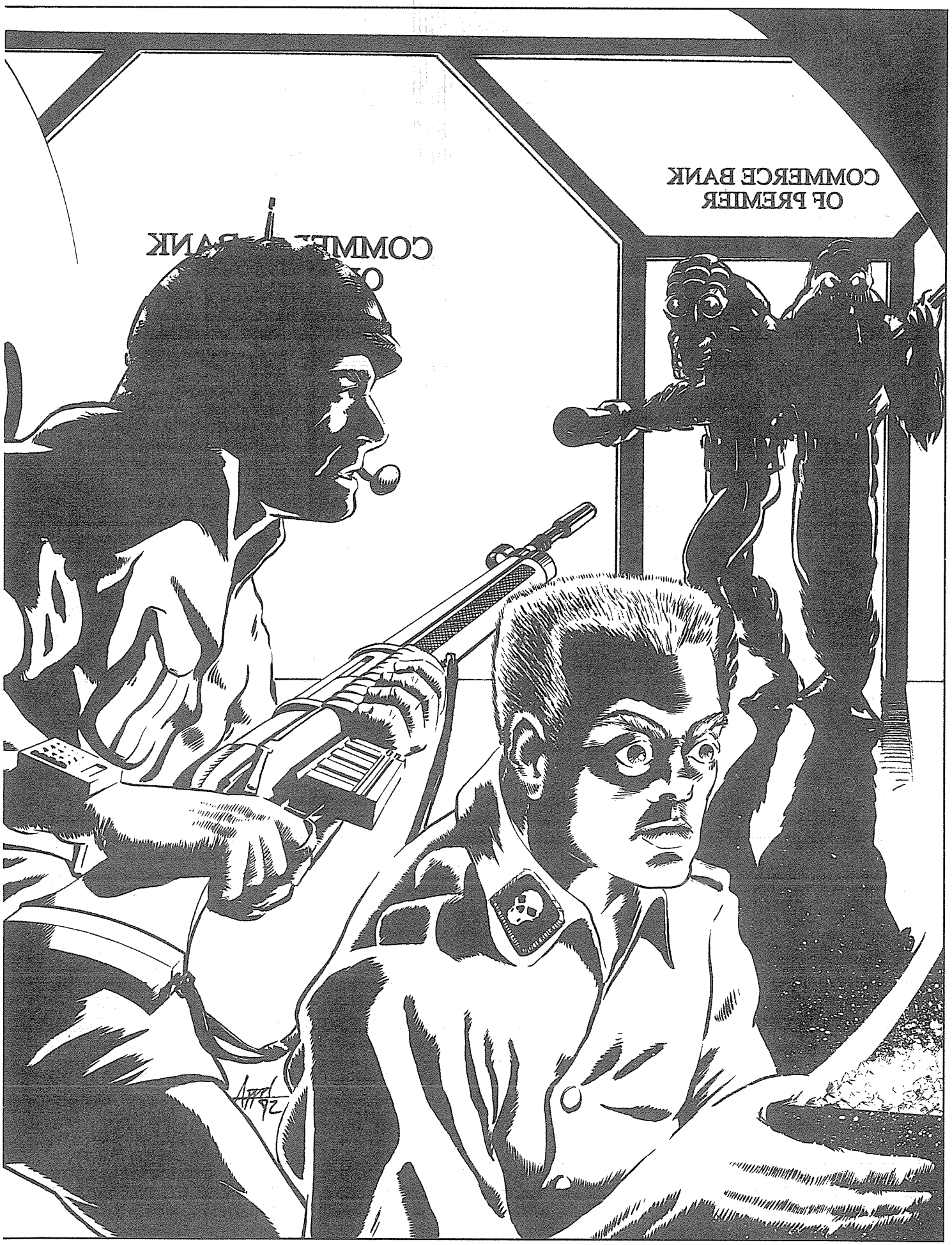
If a map is needed for an encounter on the way in or out of Premiere, simply describe or sketch an urban area you are familiar with.

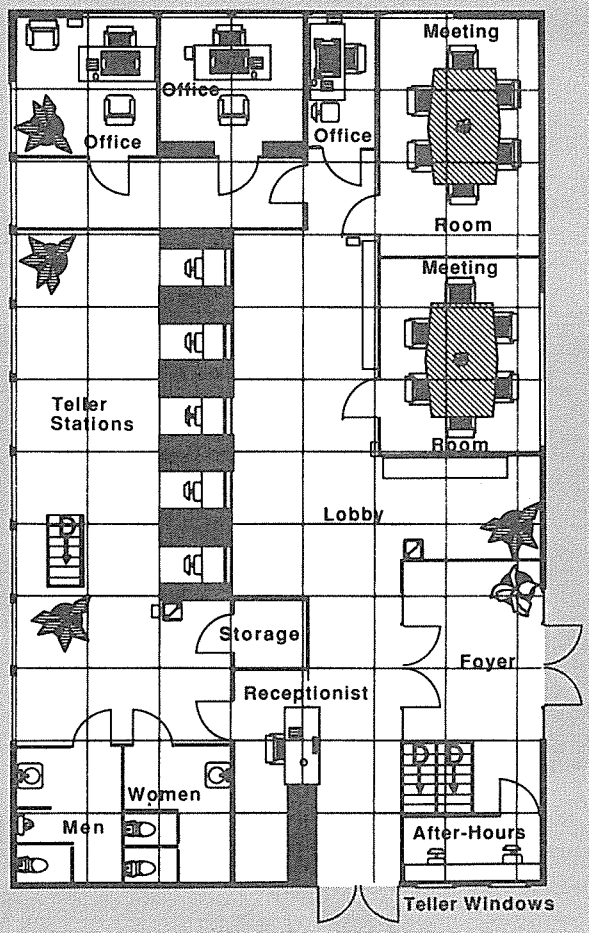
The map of the bank vault is from **Twilight: 2000** second edition, pages 182-183. Banks have not changed much over the years, although the functions are increasingly automated, and the after-hours teller positions are now manned by machines.

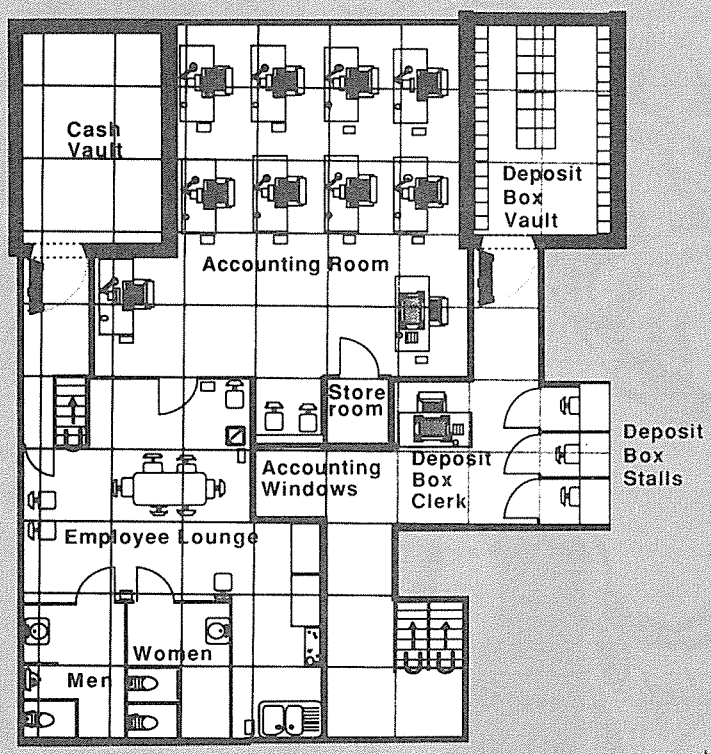
REFEREEING THE SCENARIO

The PCs' final careers should decide the nature of the sponsoring organization and the reason for retrieving the diamonds. For example:

•Field agents or military personnel can be ordered in to prevent the Kaf-


COMMERCE BANK
OF PREMIER





Basement

(2 meters below ground level)

ers from gaining access to a cache of strategically valuable industrial diamonds.

•Troubleshooters or independent traders can be hired by the person or corporation owning the diamonds to retrieve them—insurance doesn't cover acts of war, and the diamonds are worth millions. In this case, the diamonds can be industrial- or jewelry-grade items.

•Thieves, smugglers and pirates can discover the cache by means of bribery or blackmail, and seize it under cover of the confusion caused by the impending invasion. Again, the diamonds can be jewels or industrial.

•Mercenaries can use any of the above rationales.

Getting into Premiere

This is not easy, because it seems as if everyone else within thousands of kilometers is trying to get in as well (to find a way off-planet before the Kafers move in). This not only causes congestion but also ties up most of the available transport. The referee should allow the PCs to find a vehicle after a short search, then implement the following encounters in any order:

Looters: A small band of thieves, equal in number to the PCs, is looting shops under cover of the confusion. They are Green NPCs, armed only with knives and clubs (at the referee's option, they may be looting a gunsmith's shop and have access to sporting weapons such as FC-68s).

Refugees: A family (parents, several children, grandmother and dog) try to flag down the PCs and beg for a ride to the spaceport. These are Green NPCs and unarmed.

Armed Refugees: As above, but more desperate. If the PCs do not stop to pick them up, at least one of the family members will open fire with an FC-70 hunting rifle in an attempt to gain control of the vehicle. Treat the family as Green NPCs.

Riotous Mob: This mob is besieging an embassy in the city center, near the bank. They believe embassy officials inside the building will be rescued by tiltrotor and taken directly to the spaceport, and they hope to seize the aircraft and escape in it. The building is defended by Experienced troops armed with AS-89s; the mob consists of Green NPCs armed with knives, clubs and desperation.

Making a Withdrawal

When the PCs arrive at the bank, the staff will have fled. It will be necessary to resort to lockpicking or violence to gain entry to the building and vault, but PCs are usually quite capable of either. Once inside the building, they will discover a group of daring thieves with similar intentions (but, of course, less noble motives) who will dispute their possession of the valuables. There are 1D6 Experienced thief NPCs, armed with pistols and shotguns.

Task: To pick the bank locks: Formidable Security Systems or one-half Electronics. 5 minutes.

Referee: This task is Formidable for the outside door, Impossible for the secure vault. Fortunately for the PCs, the thieves inside have already opened the vault door (they locked the building doors behind them to conceal their presence).

For blowing in the doors, use the normal rules for explosives. The bank doors are made of one centimeter of wood sheathing five centimeters of toughened steel; the vault doors are 20 centimeters of toughened steel.

The thieves' lookout (if the PCs pick the lock) or the sound of the explosion (if they blow in the door) will alert the thieves, and they will ambush the party soon after it enters the bank.

No PC worth his salt will leave safe-deposit boxes unopened in such circumstances. There are several hundred present; their contents are left to the referee's imagination, and the total value of the haul depends on how much money you are willing to let your PCs have. Note that most of the paper money, deeds, contracts and blackmail letters they find will be worthless by the time they can return to a Kafer-free Beta Canum to use them.

Getting out of Premiere

This is no easier than getting in, and the PCs may well be running into the oncoming Kafers, who by now have landed the first elements of their force, although the space battle rages overhead. The referee should implement the following encounters in any order:

Kafer Scouting Party: A group of 2D6 Kafers with light weapons scouting ahead of the main invasion force. They are already aroused and will ambush the party.

Scene of a Firefight: Shattered bodies and wrecked equipment testify to a recent firefight. If you feel the PCs need heavier weapons than they have to get out alive (yes, I know it's unlikely, but it could happen), have them find some light support weapons with the bodies, still in working order (FTE-10, M2-A2 plasmagun, etc.).

Kafer Atrocity in Progress: The party members see a band of Kafers massacring unarmed civilians and/or prisoners. If they just ignore it and make good their escape, they are definitely not hero material. If they intervene and win, the NPCs rescued will try to follow the PCs (after all, they have guns). Naturally, the spaceplane is just big enough to accommodate the PCs' team and has no room for passengers.

Squad of Soldiers: Just as the PCs' spaceplane arrives, they encounter a desperate group of soldiers, cut off from their unit and looking for a way off-planet, who intend to hijack the spaceplane and escape on it. The PCs must either surrender their places on the last spaceplane out of Beta Canum or fight to keep them. The soldiers are Experienced NPCs in the ground military career, armed with FAM-90s; they are equal in number to the PCs.

ALTERNATIVES AND VARIANTS

If the PCs don't make it back into orbit, they are stuck on Beta Canum through the invasion and subsequent fighting. They can opt to lie low, join the resistance or find another way off-world. If they're still there at the end of the war, you can use many of the **Twilight: 2000** scenarios published in **Challenge** with a few changes—the Kafer War leaves Beta Canum in a similar state to Earth after WWIII, although in BC's case, help is available from outside.

Of course, it is quite likely that the player characters will "lose" the diamonds in a convenient location for future collection. The value of the diamonds, and their chances of getting away with it, are at the referee's discretion. Ω

Journey to a high mountain deep in the heart of the Amazon rain forest to discover the

SECRET of the LOST CITY

By James L. Cambias

Old Witherspoon took me aside as soon as I entered the Reform Club. "Gregson, you simply must have a word with young Wilde. He's off his head—going on about some hare-brained trip to South America—in a blimp, no less! Some nonsense about lost cities."

"As a matter of fact, old boy, I've already spoken with him about it."

"Thank heaven! You're about the only chap he'll listen to. I tried to talk him out of it, but he wouldn't hear a word. Young people!"

"Well, you won't have to listen to any more talk about Wilde's trip—we're leaving this afternoon."

The PCs are contacted by a friend named Ernest Wilde. He has inherited a strange old manuscript from his late uncle, who spent several years in Brazil. The document is purportedly the journal of a Spanish conquistador who discovered a high mountain deep in the heart of the Amazon rain forest. The local Indians spoke of a great city on top.

Wilde has decided to mount an expedition to see if the account is true. He has scraped together almost enough money to buy an airship and fly to Brazil to look for this city. If the PCs can contribute the remaining £1000, they are welcome to come along.

Wilde's late uncle Algernon acquired the old manuscript while in Brazil. It is apparently the log of a Spanish conquistador, Juan Hernandez Orlando de Vizcaya, and tells of an expedition from Peru into the Amazon jungles in 1540. The section that inspired Ernest is as follows:

July 12: We have reached a river which the Indians call Xingo. Half the men have come down with fever. To the south is a great mountain; the Indians claim that there is a city atop it, rich in gold and precious stones.

July 15: I have sent young Diego and Father Gomez, along with five soldiers and some Indians, to find a way up the mountain and seek the city there.

July 19: One of the Indians I sent with Diego has returned. He says the party found a narrow cleft leading up the mountain. When they reached the top, an earthquake made the walls of the cleft collapse. This wretch fled, abandoning the others. If Diego and Gomez still live, there is no way to reach them. I have decided to leave this pestilent place and continue downriver.

VOYAGE

Ernest has arranged to purchase a small Italian patrol blimp. The blimp weighs 83 tons (Hull Size 1). It has an oil-fired engine and carries 30 tons of fuel (60 days' supply). There are five crewmembers, 15 tons of cargo and space for four passengers. The ship can reach Very High altitude, has a Speed of 6, and costs £6080. Wilde has armed it with a 1" Gatling gun.

The expedition will travel by steamer to Rio de Janeiro. There, the PCs can spend some time sightseeing and getting supplies. Once everything is ready, and the blimp has been inflated and fueled, the party sets out. Ernest plans to head northwest across the Matto Grosso highlands to the source of the Xingu River, then follow it until it joins the Amazon, looking for the mountain mentioned in the manuscript.

After a few days spent following the course of the Xingu as it winds sluggishly through the dense jungle, a violent storm strikes. There is no safe place to land, so the pilot must ride it out. The airship is tossed by gusts as bolts of lightning flash outside. Suddenly, a break in the clouds reveals a mountain looming up before the ship!

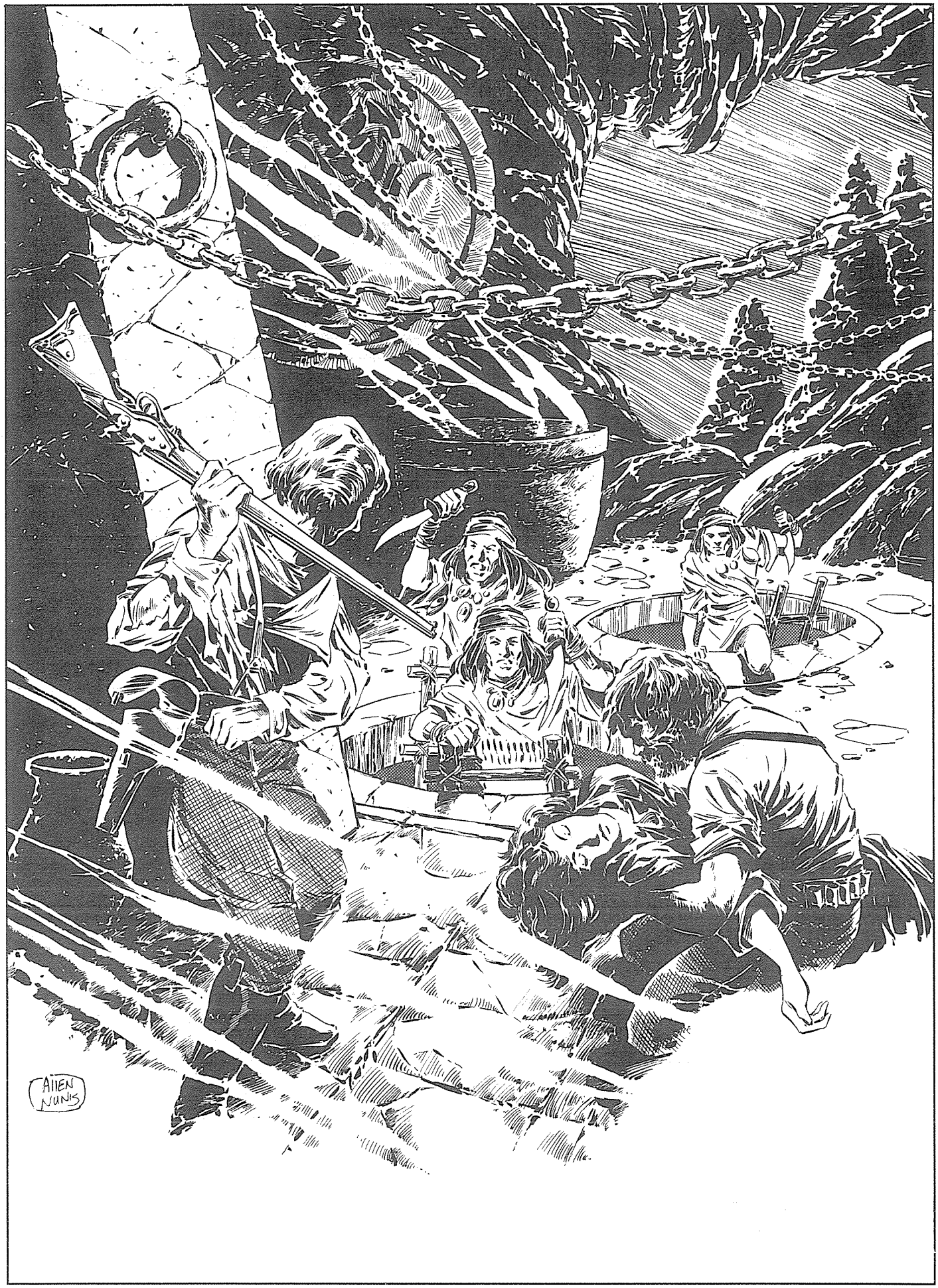
There is no time for the pilot to react, and the blimp crashes on a broad plateau atop the mountain. Each passenger must make a Difficult: Agility roll to avoid suffering one wound from the impact. An inspection of the airship reveals that the gasbag is intact, but the propeller and steering gear are smashed. "We'll need help to repair this," says Ernest. "I hope that Spaniard's log told the truth."

PLATEAU

When the storm has passed, the PCs can get out and look around. The top of the mountain is a plateau surrounded by high walls of rock—obviously the crater of an extinct volcano. The gentle slopes are covered with forest and meadows. In the distance, a city is visible, surrounded by cultivated fields.

Welcoming Committee: As the explorers survey the valley, six soldiers appear, led by a man wearing priest's robes and a steel breastplate, topped by an elaborate headdress depicting the Sun. Two of the soldiers have smoothbore carbines; the rest have crossbows. (Crossbows differ from other bows in that they need two actions to reload, and have a required Strength of 1 and a Save number of 1.) The troops wear no armor. All the soldiers are Indians, but their leader is at least partly European.

"Greetings to you, my Lords," says the priest in oddly accented Spanish.


ALLEN
NUNIS

"The arrival of your flying ship was seen by many, and the archbishop has sent me to bid you welcome to the Holy Principality of Xacaja."

City: The soldiers lead the PCs across the plateau to the city. There are perhaps 5000 inhabitants, and almost all of them are Indians. The buildings are all made of stone, with high-peaked roofs in the style of the Incas. Dominating the town is a fantastic building, a combination of cathedral and castle, mingling Incan architecture with Gothic and Baroque styles. The priest leads the party through the gates of the structure into a huge audience hall.

RULER

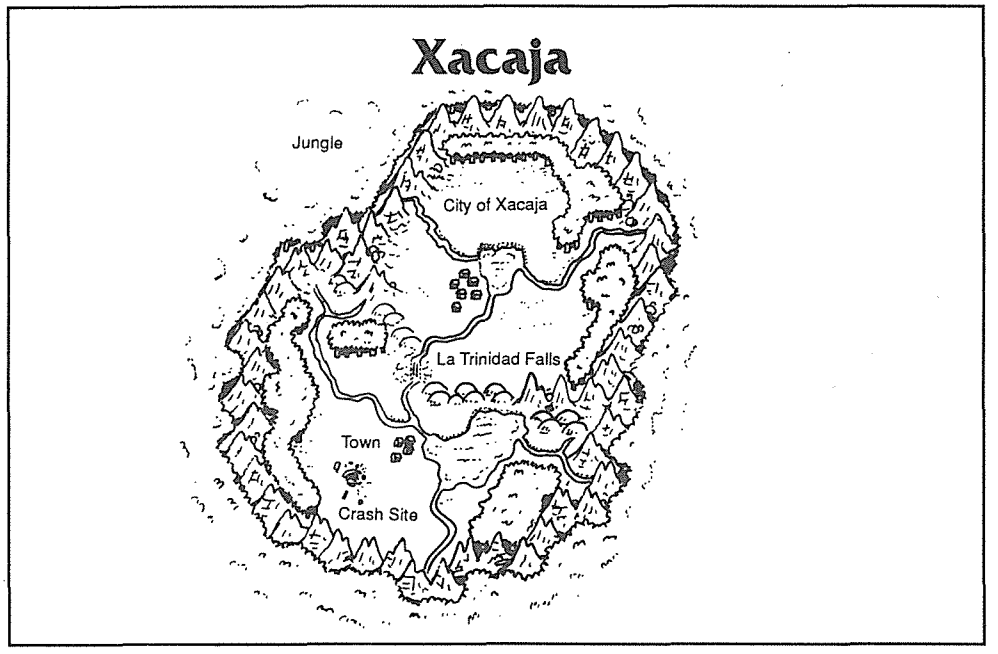
Seated on an elaborate golden throne is a wizened old man wearing crimson robes and a huge gold headdress. "I am Viceroy-Archbishop Ignatius Solar. You are welcome to Xacaja, strangers."

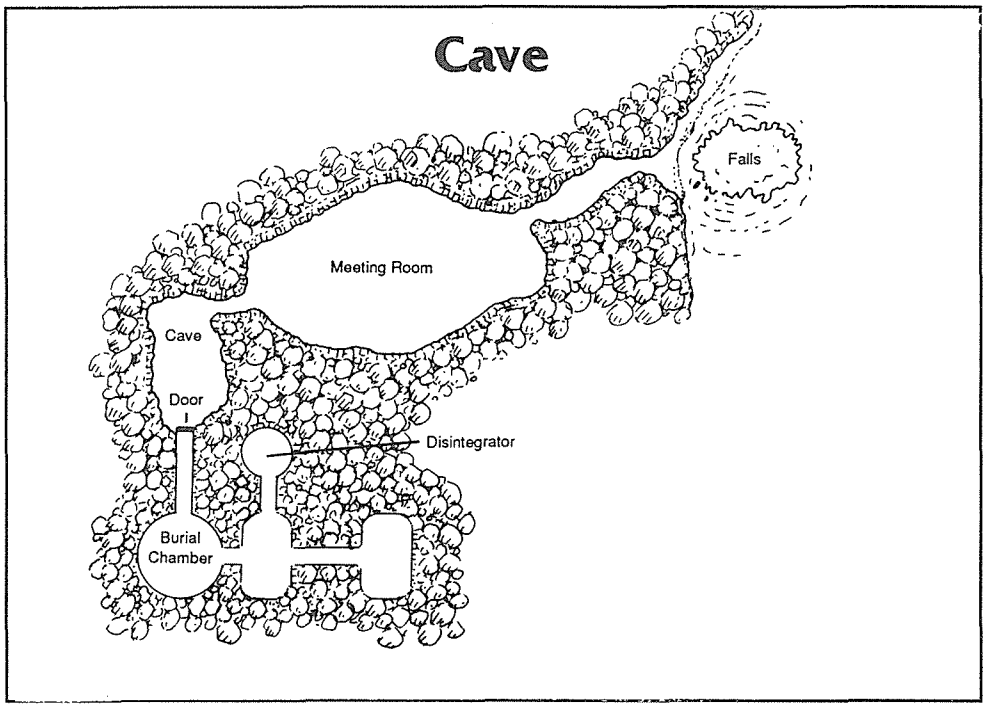
The archbishop seems quite friendly and offers the PCs a suite of rooms in his palace. Any supplies they need to repair the blimp will be provided. He is very curious about the outside world, and is particularly interested in the welfare of Spain and the Church.

History: If the PCs ask about the history of Xacaja, the archbishop will tell them the official history:

"This kingdom was discovered by Archbishop Enrique Gomez, who led an expedition here in 1540. He led a small force into this land through a narrow cleft in the mountain walls. But as soon as he entered, an earthquake caused the cleft to collapse, sealing Xacaja off from the outside world from that day to this. He found this city under the rule of wicked and unholy kings. With his small band of Spaniards, he defeated them, bringing the benefits of holy rule. Since then, his successors have governed in the name of the pope and the king of Spain."

Delays: While the PCs enjoy their stay in Xacaja, seeing the sights and conversing with the archbishop, a problem becomes apparent. The repairs to the blimp are being mysteriously delayed. Tools are defective, parts are incorrectly made, and work proceeds at an excruciatingly slow pace. It almost seems as if this is a deliberate ploy to keep the explorers in Xacaja—but of course, the archbishop assures the PCs that everything possible is being done to help them.





ASSASSIN

After the characters have been guests in the palace for a few days, they are attacked. One night, a PC is awakened by an intruder in his bedroom. The PC has just enough time to cry out before the assassin attacks! The killer is a Trained NPC armed with a knife. He will fight until wounded, then try to escape.

Naturally, the commotion brings the guards running, and the archbishop arrives soon after the assassin is captured or killed. "This is obviously the work of the Freemasons!" he proclaims. "They are the enemies of order and religion. I will have extra men placed around your rooms."

MASONS

The next day, one of the PCs finds a small slip of paper tucked into one shoe. It is a note: *"Your lives are in danger. Come to the falls of La Trinidad at midnight if you wish to live. "*

Hidden Cave: The waterfall called La Trinidad is not far from the city. To get there, the adventurers must slip past the guards assigned to "protect" them and evade the soldiers who patrol the streets at night. Roll 1D6 each hour. On a roll of 1, the group will encounter a patrol.

Near the falls, a man in peasant garb emerges from the undergrowth and hails the PCs. "Have you come alone? Good. Follow me." He leads the PCs to the base of the falls, where a narrow ledge leads back behind the falling water to a hidden tunnel.

Meeting: The tunnel leads back about 10 feet to a large cave, where 20 men are gathered. A small fire in the center of

the chamber casts weird shadows on the walls. A man wearing a leather apron steps forward to address the PCs.

"Welcome, strangers. We are the Xacaja Lodge of Freemasons, founded by the true discoverer of this land, Captain Hernando Diego, who was murdered by the false priest Gomez. For 300 years we have fought the tyranny of the wicked and unholy archbishops. You must know that your visit has greatly disturbed Archbishop Solar—he fears that contact with the outside world will end his rule. The assassin who attacked you was one of his men. The people of Xacaja have little reason to love the archbishop; only his soldiers keep him on the throne. With the help of you and your flying ship, we may be able to defeat him and bring liberty to the land. Will you help us?"

If the PCs agree, the Masons will show them a cache of muskets they have accumulated. If the adventurers decide not to help the Masons, the lodge members will still be willing to help the PCs escape from the valley, as they believe contact with the rest of the world will help their cause.

MILITIA ATTACK

Just then, a sentry rushes in. "The archbishop's men are coming! They..." His words are cut short as he falls with a crossbow bolt in the back. Soldiers are coming in through the cave entrance. The Masons and the PCs must fight them off. The battle rapidly becomes a wild melee.

Trapped!: When most of the soldiers inside the cave have been defeated, there is a thunderous explosion from the cave mouth. Some of the archbishop's men have set off a gunpowder mine, causing the entrance to collapse. The Masons and the PCs are sealed inside. (If any PCs remained at the palace, the archbishop will do nothing until morning, when he will report that the others were killed by Masons. A few days later, he will destroy the blimp with another bomb.)

GATE OF DEMONS

The bomb blast completely seals off the cave, and the mass of fallen rock is too great for the PCs and the Masons to clear. But there is a small passage at the rear of the cavern. The Masons will not enter it—"that way leads to the gate of Hell."

If the PCs explore the tunnel, they will soon discover that the Masons are not entirely wrong. At the end of the passage is a heavy metal door, with a strange and demonic face depicted on it. Wilde recognizes the visage as that of a Martian. Below the face is a diagram, showing 10 concentric circles. A Formidable: Intellect roll is needed to recognize it as a schematic of the Solar System (the referee may show the players the illustration and let them try to figure it out). Pressing the fourth planet depicted will cause the door to open.

Tomb: Beyond the door is a complex of chambers carved out of solid rock. The first is a burial chamber, containing the mummified bodies of 12 Martians, wrapped in shrouds. An Easy: Biology,

ERNEST WILDE (Trained NPC)

Ernest Wilde is a young, upper-class Englishman. He spends most of his time idling at the Drones Club in London. But every now and then, he goes out into the world in search of adventure. Wilde has bagged dinosaurs on Venus, fought aerial pirates on Mars and scaled mountains in Tibet. He is very brave, possibly because he is slightly stupid.

Attributes		*Skills*
Str:	4	Fisticuffs 3, Throwing 2, Close Combat 2 (edged weapon)
Agl:	1	Marksmanship 2 (pistol)
End:	6	Wilderness Travel 6 (mountaineering), Swimming 1, Tracking 1
Int:	2	Observation 1, Science 1 (archaeology)
Chr:	3	Eloquence 3, Linguistics 4 (French, German, Portuguese, Parhooni)
Soc:	5	Riding 5, Leadership 2, Pilot 2 (zeppelin)

Motives: Adventuresome, Spendthrift.

Appearance: Wilde is a tall, good-looking young man with fair hair and a pleasant, if somewhat vacant, expression. He speaks with a slight lisp and has an unsuccessful mustache.

IGNATIUS SOLAR (Green NPC)

Archbishop Solar is the absolute ruler of Xacaja, heir to a line of theocratic rulers dating back to Father Gomez. He is not especially clever, but he does understand that to keep power he must ruthlessly suppress all dissent. The last thing he wants is outsiders interfering with his government. When he is not oppressing his subjects, Solar amuses himself in various depraved ways.

Attributes		*Skills*
Str:	2	Fisticuffs 1, Throwing 1, Close Combat 1 (edged weapon)
Agl:	5	Stealth 4, Marksmanship 4 (rifle)
End:	1	
Int:	3	Observation 3
Chr:	4	Eloquence 4, Theatrics 2
Soc:	6	Riding 5, Leadership 6

Motives: Ruthless, Liar.

Appearance: Archbishop Solar is a wizened, inbred old man of pure Spanish descent. His shriveled form is almost completely hidden by his elaborate robes and giant headdress. Despite his age, Solar still moves with surprising quickness.

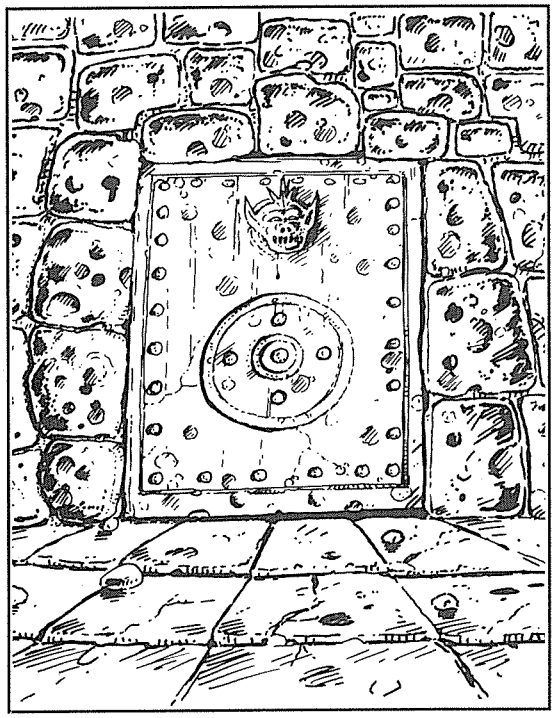
JUAN CHAMAC (Trained NPC)

Juan Chamac is the grand master of the Xacaja Lodge of Freemasons. As such, he is the leader of the rebels against the archbishop. Chamac wants the PCs to help overthrow the archbishop, but if they aren't interested, he will still help them escape from Xacaja.

Attributes		*Skills*
Str:	3	Fisticuffs 2, Throwing 1, Close Combat 2 (edged weapon)
Agl:	3	Stealth 3, Marksmanship 2 (rifle)
End:	5	Wilderness Travel 5 (mountaineering), Tracking 2, Fieldcraft 3
Int:	5	Observation 4
Chr:	3	Eloquence 2
Soc:	2	Riding 1, Leadership 1

Motives: Steady, Fair.

Appearance: Chamac is a small, barrel-chested man with strongly Indian features and calm dark eyes. He wears the clothing of a humble peasant but is never without a concealed dagger.



Medicine or Archaeology roll reveals that the bodies have been here more than 1000 years. The other chambers hold a variety of strange objects, including what look like fragments of an ether propeller. The last chamber holds a large tripod-mounted device which looks like a gun.

Disintegrator: Figuring out how to operate the strange, gun-like device requires a Difficult: Electricity skill roll, or an Impossible: Intellect roll. When fired, it disintegrates a large hole in the stone wall before it (if any PCs or NPCs are standing in front of the machine, they vanish without a trace). The disintegrator has barely enough charge to drill through the fallen rock blocking the cave entrance. It will take six turns to do so, and each turn there is a one in six chance that the disintegrator will fail. To repair it is an Impossible: Electricity or Physics task.

Inventors who want to build their own disintegrator must have an Ether or Power Production knowledge level of 39; the initial reliability modifier is 5. A disintegrator weighs 15 tons and costs £20,000. It requires 10 Power Points per turn to operate. The range of a disintegrator is 100 yards times its Reliability, and it does damage equal to twice its Reliability. It ignores armor.

ESCAPE

If the PCs succeed in getting out of the cave, they must still repair the blimp and leave Xacaja, which will not be easy with the archbishop's men hunting them. The players may come up with a solution of their own. If not, consider the following options:

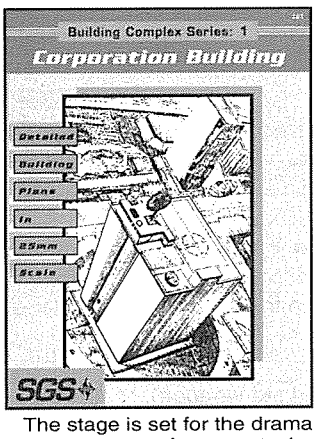
Revolutionary Development: The Masons have a plan—with the help of the PCs, they will attack the archbishop's palace and overthrow him. If the PCs agree to this idea, the Gatling gun on the blimp could prove decisive. The archbishop has 180 soldiers and six cannon (treat as Martian light cannon). The NPCs are Green; half are armed with muskets and half with crossbows. The Masons can raise 60 Trained rebels armed with muskets, and another 60 Green followers equipped with clubs and spears.

Over the Edge of the World: It may be that the PCs will decide to leave Xacaja rather than help the rebels. If they cannot get their blimp fixed, they will have to get out on foot. The rock walls surrounding Xacaja must be climbed—a Formidable: Mountaineering roll with the proper ropes, pitons and axes, and an Impossible task without gear. Once at the top of the walls, the adventurers must still climb down a nearly vertical slope 3000 feet high. A separate Mountaineering roll is needed for each 100-yard increment.

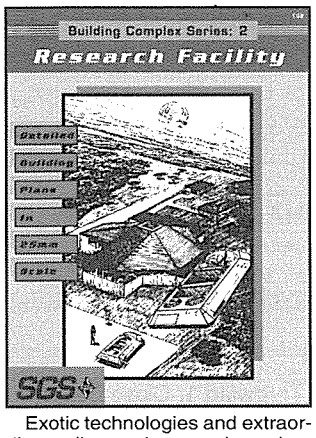
EPILOG

If the player characters assist the Masons in overthrowing the archbishop, the new government will do everything possible to get the blimp repaired. If the PCs leave Xacaja with the archbishop in power, they may wish to return and help end his rule. Award points of Renown based on the final outcome. The discovery of relics should intrigue scientists, and a follow-up expedition might be in order. Ω

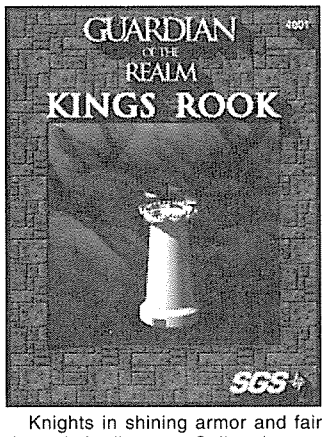
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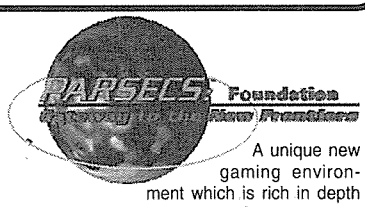
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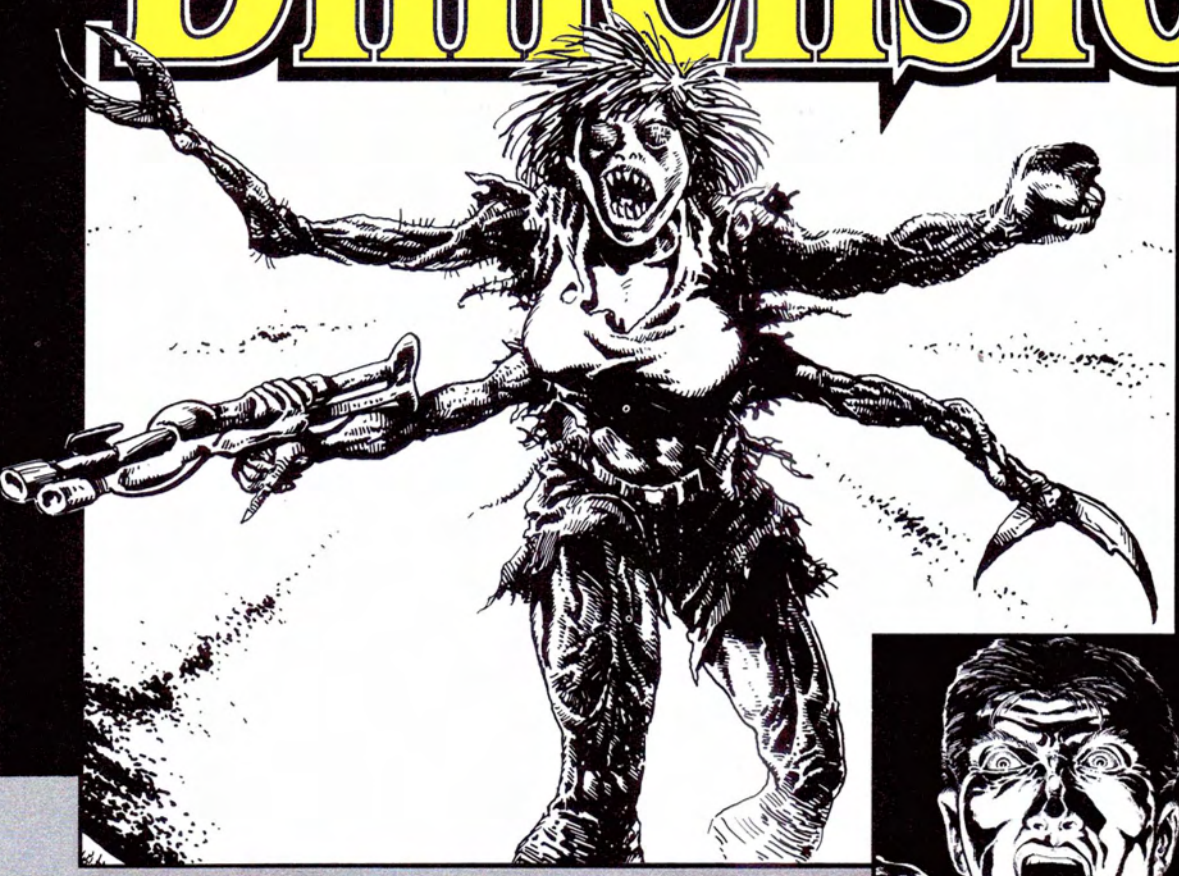
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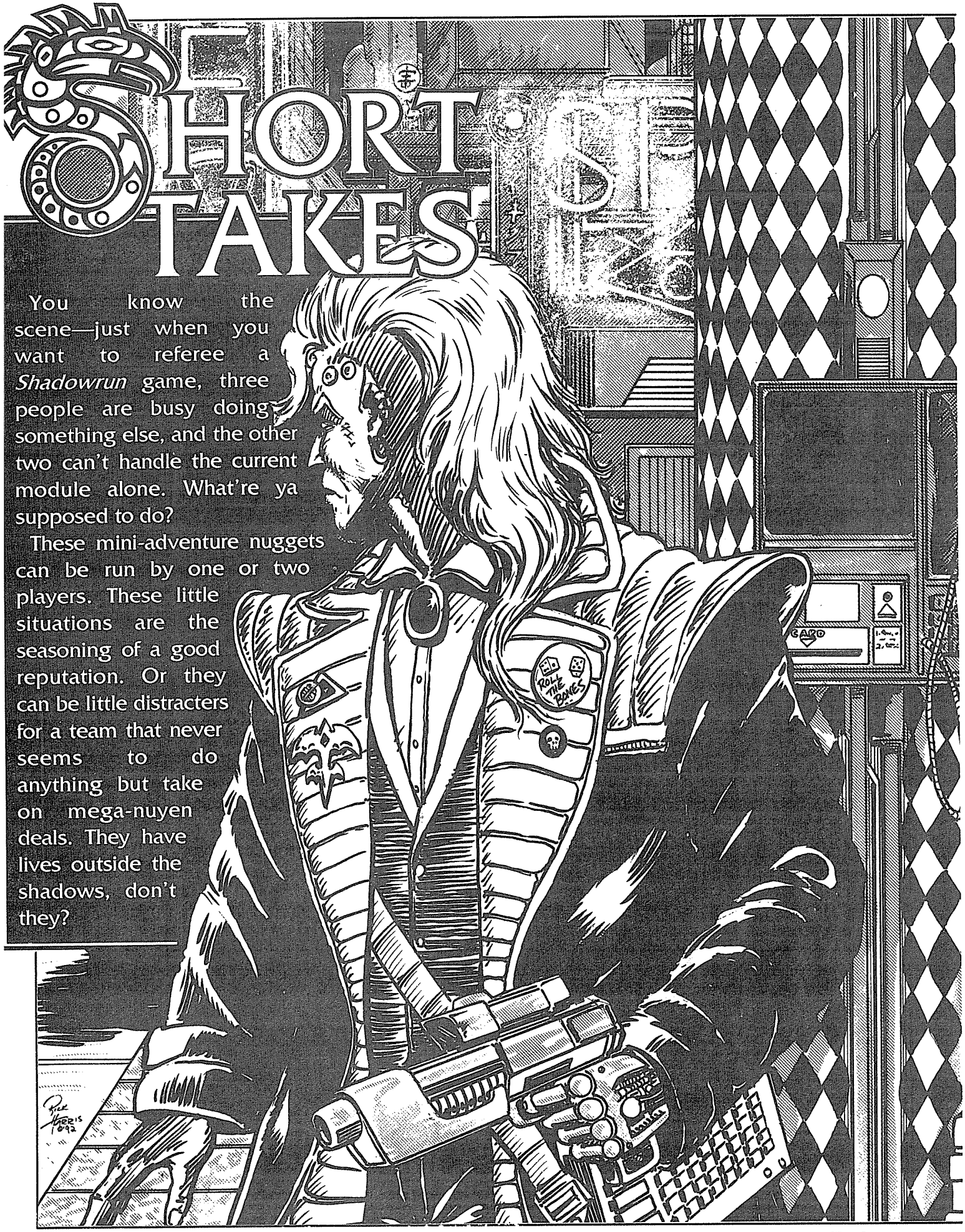
Volume 1

The time machine has yet to be built in our world. However, in **Dark Conspiracy**, you can learn to walk through dimensions. The **Proto-Dimensional Compendium** provides you new dimensions to explore. Each new dimension is presented in adventure format, describing how player characters discover them, what they encounter within, and how they might get out again. Covered in this compendium are more than 12 dimensions to explore, as well as a multitude of information for the referee so that the dimensions can be used repeatedly within a **Dark Conspiracy** campaign.

GDW: 2109. $12.

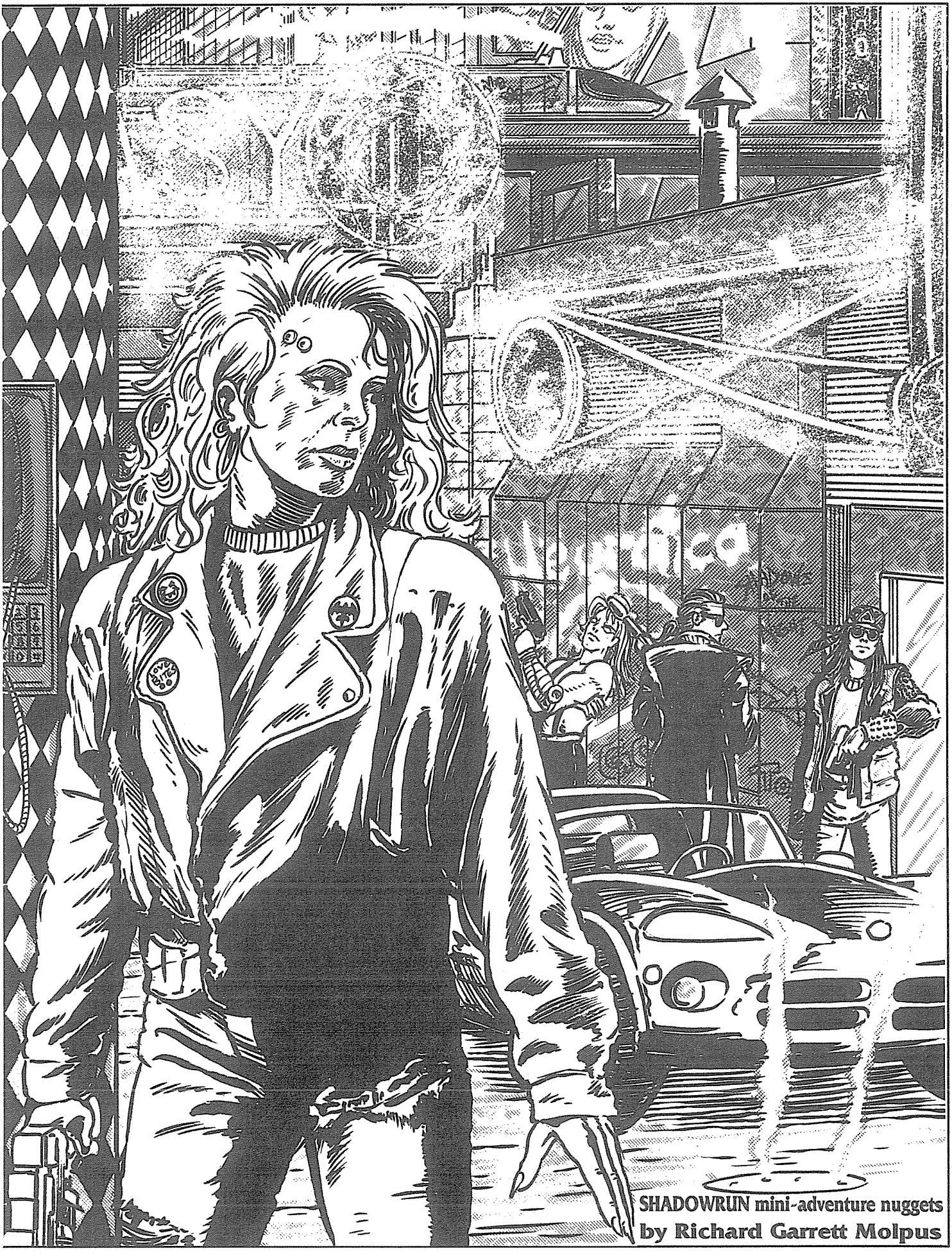
GDW

SHORT TAKES



You know the scene—just when you want to referee a *Shadowrun* game, three people are busy doing something else, and the other two can't handle the current module alone. What're ya supposed to do?

These mini-adventure nuggets can be run by one or two players. These little situations are the seasoning of a good reputation. Or they can be little distracters for a team that never seems to do anything but take on mega-nuyen deals. They have lives outside the shadows, don't they?



SHADOWRUN mini-adventure nuggets
by Richard Garrett Molpus

MALL BRAWL

Loaded: Some perps snuck loaded clips into the weapon store. You were waiting for the trigger pull to get adjusted on your Colt. What're ya gonna do?

Dragon: A young dragon has settled down in the parking lot for a siesta. The rentacops have him roped off, but you might be able to convince him to leave—for another mall?

Peacemaker?: Two gangs decide to settle a difference in the food arcade of your favorite mall. The problem is that you are there! Try to prevent serious damage, and the mall management might start paying you to help security.

Run, Rabbit, Run!: Some perp just lifted a very expensive trinket. The store owner is screaming reward! Wanna go for it? Goodwill is always valuable.

Shatterproof Crass: Some uptown kids—probably salaryman pups—are causing trouble on your turf. Looks like they need to be spanked. After all, don't the merchants pay you to keep things quiet? But be careful—Papa might be next week's Mr. Johnson.

Stick Up: A gang is trying to rob everybody they can in the food court of the mall. Can you do something about it? After all, what are you going to do when they ask you to give?

NEW TOYS

Toys from Playland: You don't know where they're from, but you haven't seen weapons like this except in the vids. Your contact wants an after-action report. Why not try the stuff out on that gang three blocks over? The one that's been causing you trouble.

Return Favors: The gang three blocks over went and got some new toys themselves. Now they're coming to play in your sandbox. Have fun!

Warranty Good Until Needed: That gear you bought last week—the really neat stuff that cost oh-so-much—seems to have some trouble. Can you get the warranty support that Dwarf promised?

BAD LUCK FRIDAY

Aaahhh-Choo!: You thought oneness with nature would eliminate these allergies, didn't you? But your eyes are red as a Basilisks' behind, and your throat is tighter than the line on tomorrow's baseball game. Just your luck that you have to patrol the park all by your lonesome today.

Apology Not Accepted: Gee, you didn't know that the place you hit last week was occupied by the current girlfriend of the southside Don, But you *did* send back all but ¥500 of the take. Unfortunately, he wants the balance—plus 50% and your arm. Luckily, you have that much money, but getting back in one piece may not be easy.

Good Deeds Never go Unpunished: You and some friends help a guy collect his car from the police pound on the far side of town. You didn't expect the cops to check everybody for outstanding warrants, did you? Maybe if you smile real nice, they'll forget whatever it is they have on you.

Not Really Your Day: First you ticked off a mage. Then you upset a shaman. They both want the honor of frying your hide. Who's going to get to you first?

Short of Everything: One clip left. Your lasersight is in the shop. Your left snapclaw needs sharpening. And you are on the far side of town from home. Don't be late for dinner!

ANOTHER DAY AT WORK

Model Citizens: A simsence store wants some real-live runners to promo for a new vid release. How good is your autograph? Remember to show up in your best warpaint and look real mean.

Courier Duty: A courier company wants a team to escort a driver for some pickups and dropoffs. What could go wrong?

Courier Duty 2: The courier company guarantees 24-hour service. But somebody keeps vandalizing the delivery vans. Find out who—and stop them.

Escort Agency: Mr. Johnson wants some muscle at his next meeting in shadowtown. Problem is that the meeting site is on the other side of turf lines.

Messy, Messy: The judge sentenced you to 10 hours of cleaning up the local park as punishment for shooting up the playground. Hope nobody sees you doing it! Just keep cool and smile.

New Kids in Town: A former Mr. Johnson wants a pair of twins protected. Just be discreet. Trouble starts when the kids rip up the best club in town.

Open-Door Policy: Somebody's been leaving the dock doors open at a warehouse. Things keep wandering away when this happens. Can you do something about it? This might be the start of a profitable relationship.

What's My Stench?: Some neighbors have been complaining about a really nasty smell. You trace it to a nearby warehouse. Why not see what's inside before you torch the place?

NIGHTTIME FUN

Beddie-Bye Dragon on the Rooftop: A dragon is settling down for a nap. He wants you to prevent disturbances. How can you refuse?

Big Lights, Small Room: That vid store down the block is running a new promo about that new Vita Revak tape. Problem is, the searchlights keep flooding your room! Go talk to the manager about the need for beauty sleep.

Decoy for Fun and Profit: A friend has a contract to visit an Aries Macrotechnology warehouse. Could you cause a diversion and keep Ares security busy for a while?

Moth to the Flame: What's that thing on the top of the Universal Brotherhood building? Kinda looks like a big cocoon.

Waltzing Matilda: Mr. Johnson wants a visitor to town followed—no matter where he goes. How do you keep track of him in the fanciest dance spot in town? And how do you get inside?

ANOTHER BORING DAY

Bogeyman Alert: A lot of kids fear the bogeyman. Heck, even you shivered in fear a few times when the lights went out. So when that little kid comes running out of the slumbox across the street screaming about the bogeyman, it's just a case of fright, right? But why are there claw marks on his arm?

Cold Nights: You stoked that old furnace every night, so it should run until morning. But something's been shutting it off at midnight. Why not wait up tonight to see who's turning the burner down? And why's that old manhole in the corner look odd?

One Good Deed Can Ruin A Day: Old Mrs. Lilly was your mother's best friend. You always were running errands for her when you were young—and she still needs help sometimes. Like now. All she needs is some help getting to the social aid office for the monthly retirement money, then a lift to the megamart. Should be easy, right?

Shooting the Breeze: Y'know, it wasn't supposed to be so hard to keep your drone airworthy, but some kid keeps taking potshots at it. Why not visit him for a simple heart-to-heart about the sanctity of private property?

Shooting the Breeze 2: Some rigger jock keeps sending his drone up to peer into your bedroom window. You keep plugging the thing, but he keeps fixing it. Maybe you should go talk to him about privacy.

Spare Parts: Ever need to fix the rear drive sprocket on a Yamaha Rapier? Ever have to buy one? Spare parts are expensive, and the parts house is across town. Unless you could "borrow" what you need.

Spare Parts 2: Somebody "borrowed" the rear sprocket from your Yamaha. And that dude two blocks over has a bike like yours. And didn't he get in a roadfight yesterday? Might be useful to pay him a visit. Ω

RudiCon 8, Oct. 30-Nov. 1 at the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, NY. Write to RudiCon 8, c/o Student Government, 1 Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester, NY 14623.

StarCon '92, Oct. 31-Nov. 1 at Union Station, 157 S. Green Bay Road, Neenah, WI 54956. Contact StarCon '92, 1112 N. Lake St., Neenah, WI 54956.

NovaCon, Nov. 6-8 at the Halifax Holiday Inn in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Contact NovaCon Society, PO Box 1282 Main, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada B2Y 4B9.

ShaunCon V, Nov. 6-8 at the Roadway Inn, 6th and Main, Kansas City, MO. Write to the Role-Players Guild of Kansas City, c/o ShaunCon V, PO Box 7457, Kansas City, MO 64116.

Command.Con.4, Nov. 7 at the cafeteria of St. Louis Community College at Forest Park, 5600 Oakland, St. Louis, MO. Write to Command.Con.4, PO Box 9107, St. Louis, MO 63117.

Lagacon 15, Nov. 7-8, at the Fraternal Order of Eagles, 116 N. 8th St., Lebanon, PA. Contact the Lebanon Area Gamers Association, 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon, PA 17042.

Rock-Con XX Game Fair, Nov. 7-8 at Rockford Lutheran High School, 3411 N. Alpine Road, Rockford, IL. Write to Rock-Con Game Fair, 14225 Hansberry Road, Rockton, IL 61072.

Sci-Con 14, Nov. 13-15 at the Holiday Inn Executive Center, Virginia Beach, VA. Send a SASE to Sci-Con 14, PO Box 9434, Hampton, VA 23670.

Game Fair XV, Nov. 13-15 at Illinois Central College, East Peoria, IL. Write to Game Fair XV, PO Box 308, Groveland, IL 61535.

Contrary '92, Nov. 13-15 at the Ramada Inn, 1080 Riverdale St. (Route 5 South) in West Springfield, MA. Contact Contrary '92, c/o Dragon's Lair, 626 North Main St., East Longmeadow, MA 01028.

Pentacon VIII, Nov. 14-15 at Grand Wayne Center in downtown Fort Wayne, IN. Contact Steve and Linda Smith, 836 Himes, Huntington, IN 46750.

Provocation '92, Nov. 14-15 at the John F. Kennedy School, 3030 Villeray, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Contact Provocation, C.P. 63, succ. M, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H1V 3L6.

SAGA 1, Nov. 20-22 at the Airport Sheraton Inn, 2150 Veterans Blvd., Metairie, LA 70062.

DallasCon '92 Winterfest, Nov. 20-22 at the Le Baron Hotel in Dallas, TX. Write to DallasCon, PO Box 867623, Plano, TX 75086.

Ground Zero '92, Nov. 21-22 at the Holiday Inn, Chesapeake House, in Aberdeen, MD. Contact Harford Adventure Society, c/o The Strategic Castle, 114 N. Toll Gate Road, Bel Air, MD 21014.

CocoaCon '92, Nov. 27-29 at the Harrisburg Marriot in Harrisburg, PA. Contact CocoaCon '92, 210 S. Grant St., Palmyra, PA 17078

Visions '92, Nov. 27-29 at the Ramada Hotel O'Hare, Chicago, IL. Contact Her Majesty's Entertainment, Ltd., Box 1202, Highland Park, IL 60035-1202.

Concoction '92, Dec. 4-6 at the Quality Inn on South Carolina and Pacific Avenue in Atlantic City, NJ. Write to Concoction '92, PO Box 222, Oceanville, NJ 08231.

Tropicon XI, Jan. 8-10, 1993, at the Palm Beach Airport Holiday Inn, Palm Beach, FL. Please contact Tropicon XI, Box 70143, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33140.

Winter Fantasy Convention, Jan. 8-10 at MECCA in Milwaukee, WI. Contact Winter Fantasy, RPGA Network, PO Box 515, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

Arisia '93, Jan. 15-17 at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel and Towers.

Warpcon III, Jan. 28-31 at the University College Cork, Ireland.

Warcon® '93, Feb. 5-7 in the Memorial Student Center, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX. Contact MSC NOVA, Box J1, Memorial Student Center, Texas A&M, College Station, TX 77844.

Life, the Universe and Everything XI, Feb. 10-13 at Brigham Young University, Provo, UT. Contact 1993 Symposium, 3163 JKHB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602.

Genghis Con XIV, Feb. 12-14 at the Marriott Southeast in Denver, CO. Contact the Denver Gamers Association, PO Box 440058, Aurora, CO 80044.

World Horror Convention No. 3, March 4-7 at the Sheraton Stamford Hotel in Stamford, CT.

CrackerCon 2, March 19-20 at the Holiday Inn Baymeadows, FL. Contact CrackerCon, Box 8356, Jacksonville, FL 32239-8356.

Origins '93, July 1-4 at the Tarrant County Convention Center in Ft. Worth, TX. Write to GEMCO, PO Box 609, Randallastown, MD 21133.

CowCon, July 2-5 at Sheraton Denver Tech Center, CO. Write to CowCon/Westercon 46 Bid, 7735 Osceola St., Westminister, CO 80030.

Archon 17, July 9-11 in St. Louis, Mo. Contact Archon 17, PO Box 50125, Clayton, MO 63105.

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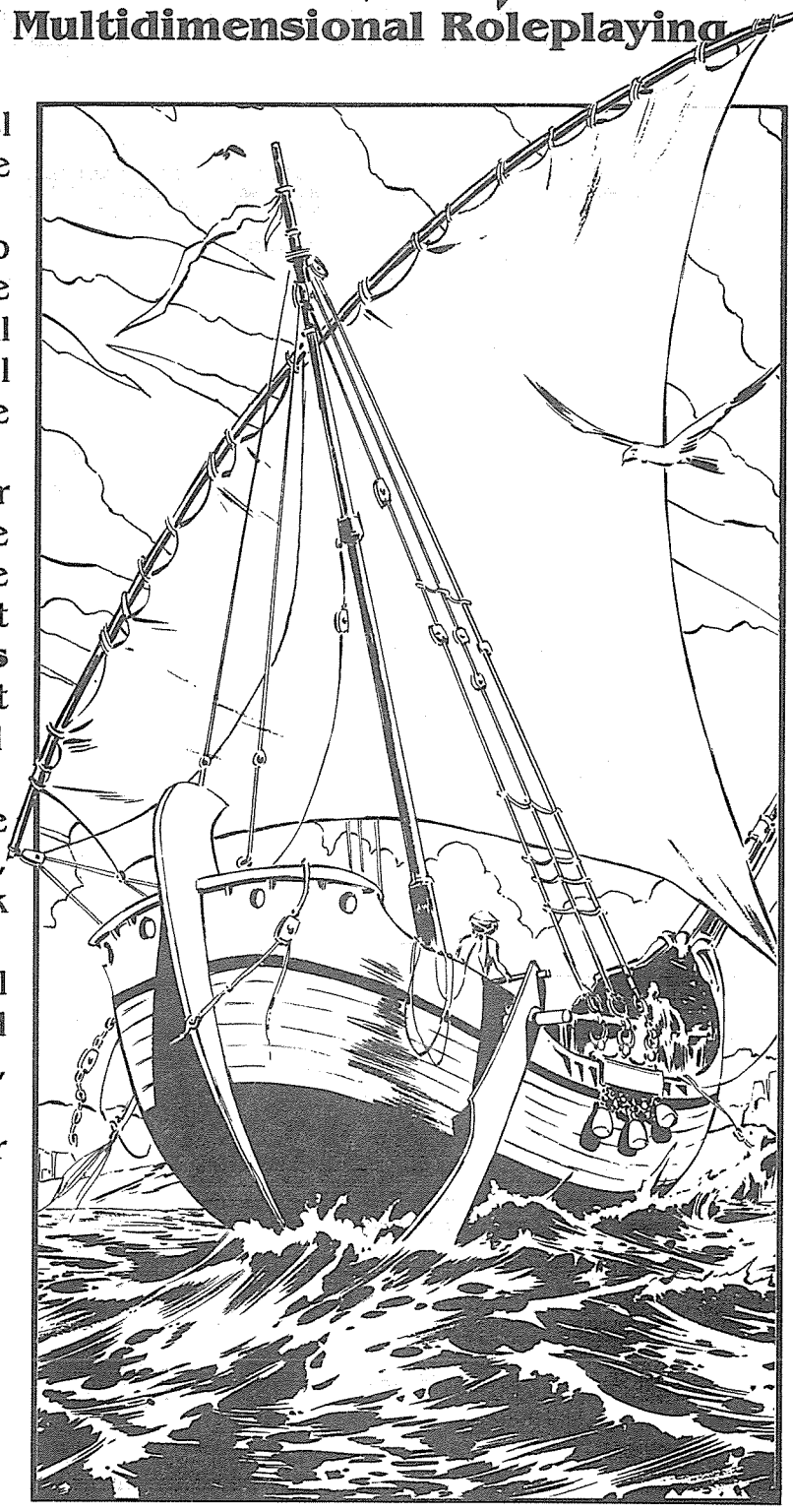
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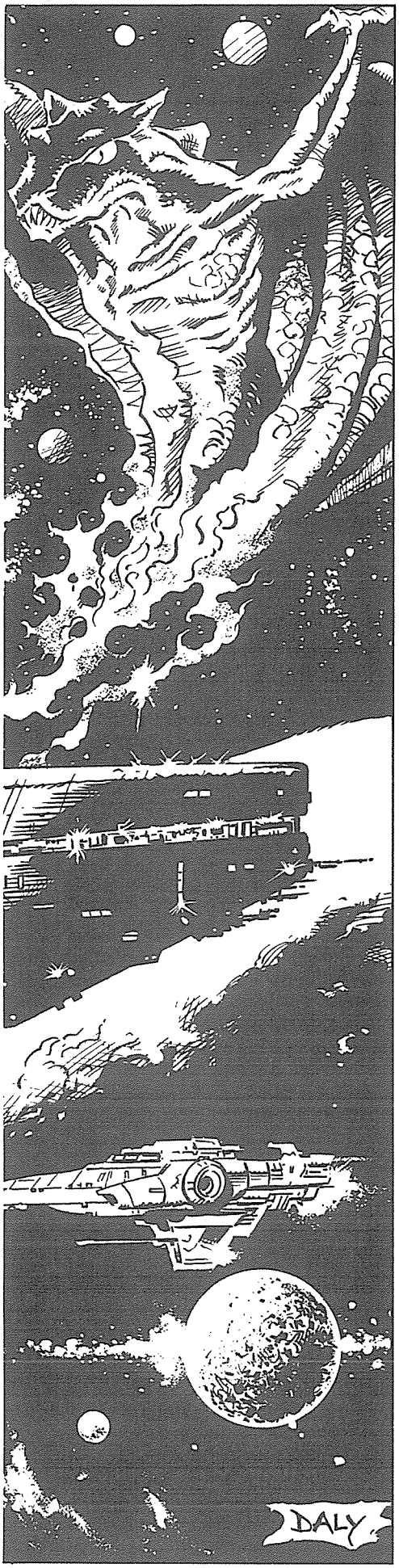


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DISTURBANCE in the FORCE

More than 20,000 years before the creation and destruction of the first Death Star, a Jedi Knight named Roni von Wasaki established order in many of the then-frontier sectors. Peaceful beings respected his just administration, while wretched villians hated and feared his skills as a warrior. And then, suddenly, Roni von Wasaki disappeared...

A gamemaster may insert this mini-adventure into his campaign when the heroes' spacecraft misjumps (due either to a failed Astrogation skill roll or the GM's meddling). The group (consisting of two to four PCs) should include at least one Force-using character and one character with high Knowledge skill.

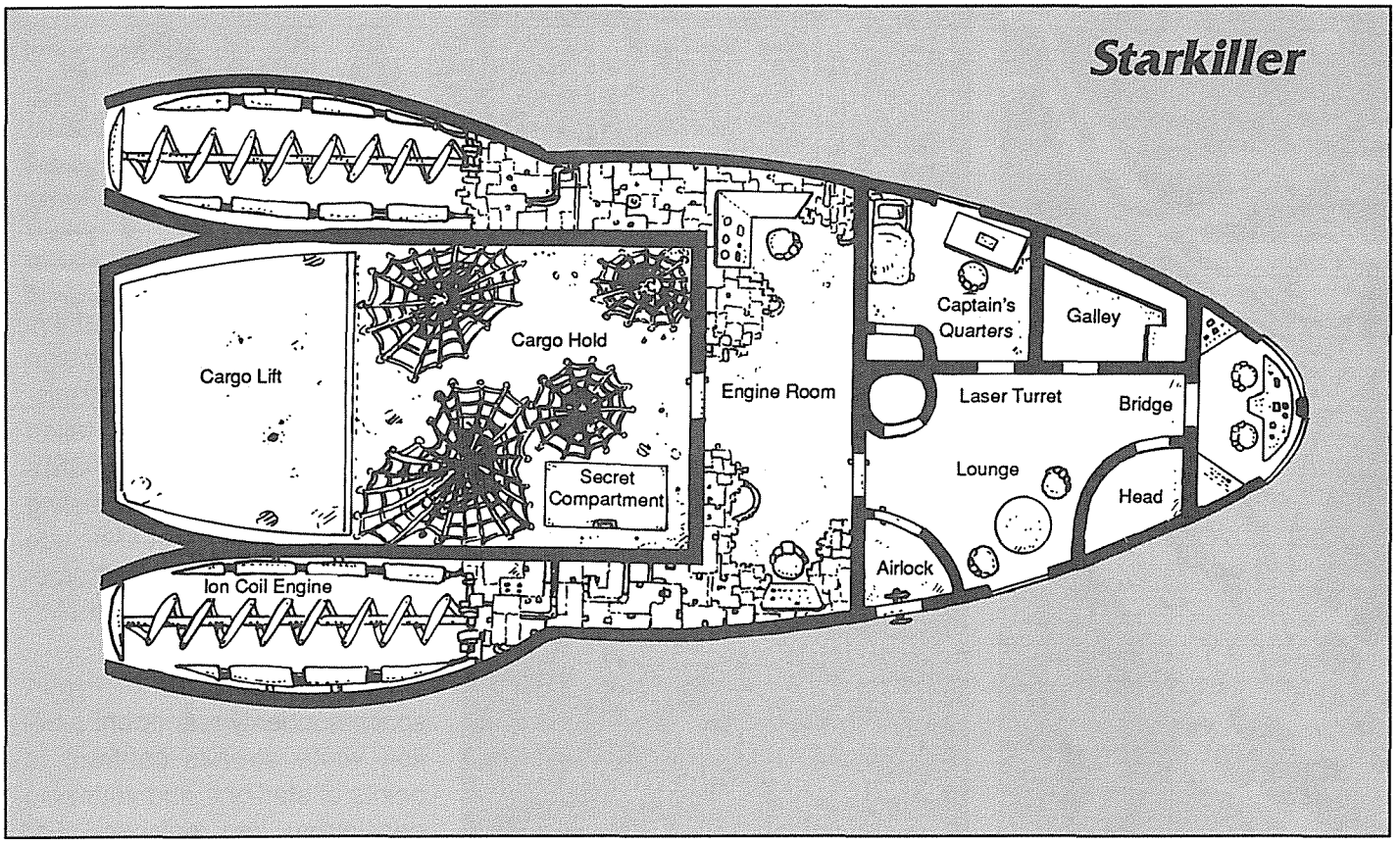
The swirling colors of hyperspace suddenly tear open; a billion white streaks contract to points of starlight; and your ship decelerates into realspace. For some reason, the hyperdrive has cut out, stranding you far from your intended destination. The astrogator replies to your glares with an "it wasn't my fault" expression and points out the cockpit viewpoint. Intersecting your flight-path but seemingly ignorant of your presence, a battered starship rumbles through the void under sublight speed. Stenciled across the side in barely legible red lettering is the name *Starkiller.*

Each PC should roll his Knowledge dice and consult the following table to determine what he has heard concerning the ship:

***STARKILLER* GENERAL KNOWLEDGE**

Roll	*Information Gained*
1-2	"Uh, what ship?"
3-5	"It looks like some sort of freighter."
6-10	"Drunken spacers and failed Jedi claim to have sighted the *Starkiller* every so often. Rumor has it that the pirate crew died when the ship depressurized during a raid, yet they refuse to lie still."
11-15	"That type of craft, the Frommon longhaul, was one of the first jump-capable freighters created during the early years of the Old Republic. Notice the crude ion coils."
16-20	"The *Starkiller* was owned by a merchant named Leshy Drobo. His freight-hauling business was apparently profitable, for he became quite wealthy."
21-30	"Leshy Drobo was actually a bounty hunter and his freight-hauling a cover for illegal operations. What? Ancient criminal activity is one of my hobbies!"

An adventure by Chris Hind



A character who makes a Difficult Technology roll notices that the upper hull has been modified, perhaps to hide something. Sensors show that most of the ship's power has been rerouted into the sublight drives but detect no life forms aboard. The Force skill Life Sense is similarly ineffective.

FLOOD OF THOUGHTS

After the PCs have made their preliminary investigations of the *Starkiller* but before they approach, the following happens to one character, optimally to a Force-user who attempts Receptive Telepathy:

A mind probes the depths of space and pours a chaotic flood of thoughts into your head. All of your senses are extinguished, and your body becomes rigid. Among the swirling thoughts and fears which threaten to drown your own thinking, you catch hold of one repeating fragment: "Not alone...found living souls. Can't escape...can't...leave me alone...." As suddenly as they came, the thoughts recede, and you regain control of your body and senses.

BOARDING THE *STARKILLER*

If the PCs approach the *Starkiller*, it opens fire and tries to out-run them. For the purposes of this combat, the pilot has 1D in each skill. When the *Starkiller* suffers severe damage, the engines shut down, and the ship plays dead.

Once the *Starkiller* has been disabled, the PC pilot may pull alongside, attach the landing claw and attempt to gain access to the battered ship. The most likely point of entry is through the exterior hatch, as detailed under Location Notes, below. The PCs may attempt to breach another part of the ship—a lightsaber or fusion cutter can slice through the exterior hull, and a Difficult Demolition roll will blast a hole large enough for human-sized access. Note that damaging the engine pods could prove messy.

Computer Access and Security: PCs may have access to the ship's computer banks through terminals described in Location Notes.

Either public or private data may be called up. Public data requires an Easy Computer Programming roll and reveals the following: The *Starkiller* is listed as having an armament rating of 0, meaning no weapons whatsoever. The ship is privately owned by Leshy Drobo; it currently holds 50 crates of repulsorlift parts.

Private data may be punched up with a Moderate Computer Programming roll, revealing the following log entry:

Log/personal [] Leshy Drobo [] Huntdate Y00/D35/H1800: Ambush went well. Gammid dead, but he was incompetent anyway. While Wasaki concentrated on me, XT-8 snuck behind and stunned him. True then, Jedi mind tricks no affect on droids. Wasaki now stored in hold, waiting delivery and my 100,000 creds. Must be boring back there. Maybe I should let him out—he's harmless without blades. No! What am I thinking. Wasaki's as tricky as a Lwen'len Wingor. Safer to leave him as is.

If a PC rolls half or lower than the necessary difficulty number while hacking into a computer terminal or bypassing a hatch's security, an alarm sounds in the bridge. The *Starkiller*'s sole crew member, XT-8, puts the ship on autopilot and investigates the disturbance.

LOCATION NOTES

Airlock: The outer hatch has been dented by collision with a meteor and is jammed shut. A power prybar or a Moderate Lifting roll will force the hatch open, as will the various destructive methods mentioned above. Once the hatch is opened, a gust of stale but breathable air escapes. The cramped airlock beyond is bare except for a security lock beside the inner hatch. This hatch opens after an Easy Security roll or forced entry.

Lounge: An undisturbed layer of dust covers this room's floor and space furnishings—a table and two com-form chairs. Red emergency lighting casts an eerie glow over the area. A PC who investigates the furnishings may accidentally activate the controls for a holoprojection disc hidden under the

dust in the center of the room:

A loud screech from the center of the room causes you to spin around. A ragged, black form rises from the floor, its bestial eyes seemingly staring through you. It suddenly spreads membranous wings and looms over you, its fang-filled mouth dripping venom.

A jumpy PC may fire upon the hologram, which is unaffected by weapons (although the room may suffer damage) and continues to pose menacingly.

Head: This room contains washing and crude waste-disposal facilities. A vidscreen opposite the toilet is programmed with reading material from periodic-files. A medpack hangs next to the vidscreen.

Laser Turret: This room appears to be nothing more than a storage locker. An emergency space suit hangs in the back, and two boxes of miscellaneous junk lie on the floor. However, a hidden hatch in the ceiling (found with a Moderate Perception or Easy Search roll) conceals a retractable ladder. The ladder leads up to the laser cannon's firing seat. An Easy Technology roll shows that the laser's firing computer links to the bridge control console.

Captain's Quarters: This room contains a bed, chair and desk with a computer terminal mounted in its top. A PC may access the ship's computer from this port. A storage cubicle set into the aft wall (requiring a Moderate Security roll to break into) contains a suit of bounty hunter armor, force pike, heavy blaster pistol and two lightsabers. One saber ignites to a three-foot blade and does 3D damage, the other a two-foot blade and 2D damage.

Galley: The galley contains everything associated with food storage and preparation. The autochef malfunctions, causing any food ordered to appear as a blue-gray slime or a black, hardened chunk.

Bridge: If the alarm has not been triggered, XT-8 sits at the control console. If anyone enters, XT-8 rises from its chair and pivots about, opening its chest panels and blasting away. The droid attempts to force the battle into the lounge, where there is less chance that the ship's functions will be damaged. If the *Starkiller* has been disabled, XT-8 attempts to shatter the bridge viewport (one automatic hit each round; one would result against STR 4) to expose unprotected intruders to vacuum.

PCs may access the ship's computer via the bridge console. A Computer Programming roll of half or less than the difficulty number, rather than setting off an alarm, springs a trap. A blast door seals the bridge from the rest of the ship, and ventilation ducts begin sucking out oxygen. Each round, each character must make a Stamina roll; the difficulty is Very Easy on the first round after decompression and increases one level each round until Very Difficult on the fifth and subsequent rounds. Each failed test results one wound level—stun, incapacitation, mortal wound and death. The blast door can be destroyed only by a lightsaber (one automatic hit each round; one wound result against STR 5 cuts a hole) or through Security rolls—a Moderate test opens the door in one minute (12 rounds), a Very Difficult test in one round.

Engine Room: The hyperdrive access panel is riddled with bullet holes, as is a mummified body slumped against it. The corpse crumbles when touched, revealing a hold-out blaster hidden in the clothes. A Difficult Starship Repair roll repairs the hyperdrive in 15 minutes.

Cargo Hold: The hold contains 50 crates marked "repulsorlift parts"—actually useless junk—secured with gravnets. The aft portion of the hold drops to load and unload cargo, although a security lock prevents this from occurring in space. A Difficult Search of the hold (Moderate for characters familiar with hidden contraband, such as smuggler, pirate or retired Imperial captain) reveals a hidden compartment under the floor. If all else fails, one character receives a telepathic suggestion on where to search, dropping Search difficulty to Easy. The compartment holds a black slab of carbonite with a frozen figure embedded within. The monitoring device on the slab's side identifies its contents as alive and in perfect hibernation. A Very Easy Mechanical roll safely decarbonizes the figure. The frozen figure is the 20,000-year-old Jedi, Wasaki.

CRAZY WIZARD

By now, the PCs may have learned of Roni von Wasaki's disappearance and pieced together quite a bit more. An unknown crime boss put a Cr100,000 bounty on the Jedi's head. Many hunters failed, but eventually two succeeded. After Drobo and XT-8 captured Wasaki, they carbon-froze the Jedi and loaded him on the *Starkiller*.

While Wasaki's body was immobile, he managed to keep his mind focused with the help of the Force. Shortly after entering hyperspace, Wasaki implanted a suggestion in Drobo's mind to free him from the carbonite. However, XT-8 learned of Drobo's intention and confronted him in the engine room. During combat between human and droid—in which Drobo died—the hyperdrive was damaged and the *Starkiller* was thrown into realspace. Starship repair was beyond the assassin droid's programming, so it simply continued with its mission under sublight speed. A trip which might have taken 30 days in hyperspace dragged on for 20,000 years. For this entire time, Wasaki has been reaching out with his mind and the Force, searching for some living being to free him. The millennia of lonely thoughts, fearful dreams and extreme sensory deprivation caused by his carbonite prison have driven Wasaki mad.

When Wasaki is free of the carbonite, he possesses no energy or emotion. He

Starkiller

Craft: Frommon longhaul all-purpose transport
Type: Modified (and outmoded) freighter
Length: 30 meters
Scale: Starfighter
Crew: 2
Passengers: None
Cargo Capacity: 100 metric tons
Consumables: 2 months
Hyperdrive Multiplier: ×4
Nav Computer: Yes
Hyperdrive Backup: None
Sublight Speed: 1D
Maneuverability: 0
Hull: 4D
Weapons:
One Laser Cannon:
Fire Control: 2D
Damage: 4D
Shields: 1D

XT-8, Labor Droid

XT-8 has the body of a labor droid—stocky, barrel-chested, painted dull green, with strong arms hanging to the knees—but it has the programming and weapon systems of an assassin droid. Its photoreceptors glow with an evil, red light. Its vocabulator produces a buzzing, barely coherent voice.

XT-8's personality matrix is crude even for an assassin droid, although the XT model was high technology 20 millennia ago. One thought has burned into its memory circuits—deliver the *Starkiller*'s cargo to its destination at any cost. During combat, XT-8's chest-panels swing apart to reveal a submachinegun which may fire 180 degrees to the front.

Template: DEX 4D, submachinegun 5D, PER 1D, search 3D, STR 4D, all other attributes and skills 1D.

Equipment: Submachinegun (damage 4D) with four bursts remaining, arms (damage 5D, may parry Brawling and Melee attacks), armor plating (Strength 6D for damage resistance).

is also blind. When asked a question, Wasaki repeats the query once or twice before answering briefly. He doesn't volunteer any information. Wasaki constantly uses Receptive Telepathy on random characters—he has been reaching out with the Force for so long that he can't help himself. Wasaki continues to act like this until the PCs have made him comfortable and have learned as much as they can from his confused ramblings. Preferably, the PCs continue the trip that was disrupted at the beginning of this adventure and have just jumped to light speed.

Before long, the blind Jedi becomes fearful. He takes one PC aside and whispers, "It is here! It has found me and is *on this ship*!" During intense questioning, Wasaki claims that the Dark Side has come for him in a physical manifestation and asks for help in fighting it. If the PC seems unresponsive to his pleas, Wasaki confides in him "You *must help me*—I am the light side of the Force! If I am killed, all that is good and true will be extinguished from the galaxy forever!" Wasaki may also use Affect Mind to add credence to his claims. Wasaki may fear that he is being talking about or watched, or that someone is prying into his mind—this may not all be paranoia.

When the PCs realize Wasaki is disturbed and start planning how to deal with him, the Jedi stands rigid with his hands held out before him. A grimace turns his waxy face into a death mask. His posture imitates someone frozen in carbonite. He is apparently unaffected by pain (although he can still be wounded) and resists all attempts to move him. While this behavior is simply bizarre, the insane Jedi also uses Force skills (i.e., Telekinesis, Injure/Kill, Inflict Pain, Telekinetic Kill) to injure the characters. The GM should record the Dark Side points Wasaki accumulates.

Suddenly, Wasaki snaps out of his catatonia and attacks the PCs with his or another Jedi's lightsaber and Force skills. Record Wasaki's Dark Side points and notify the PCs if he turns to evil, so they may fight with clear consciences.

Roni von Wasaki

Roni von Wasaki is a short human male with Oriental features. He dresses in the black robes, chest armor and ornate helm of ancient Jedi. He may attack with two lightsabers simultaneously. He is permanently blind due to acute hibernation sickness, but he has learned to use the Force rather than his eyes. However, his skill with the Force has not protected his mind from the years in carbon-freeze which have struck him with madness. While Wasaki was once a master of balancing wisdom and peace with a struggle for justice, the PCs are unlikely to see his true personality unless they heal his mind.

Template: DEX 3D, Dodge 4D, Melee Parry 4D+1, Lightsaber 6D; KNO 3D+2, Bureaucracy 7D, MED 2D; PER 3D+1, Command 6D+1; STR 2D+2, Climbing/jumping 3D+2, Stamina 4D+1; TEC 2D+1; Control 4D, Sense 6D, Alter 5D.

Equipment: Black antique armor (+2 to Strength for damage resistance, –2 to all Dexterity-based skills), lightsaber (damage 7D), left-hand lightsaber (damage 6D). Wasaki's lightsabers are found in the captain's quarters.

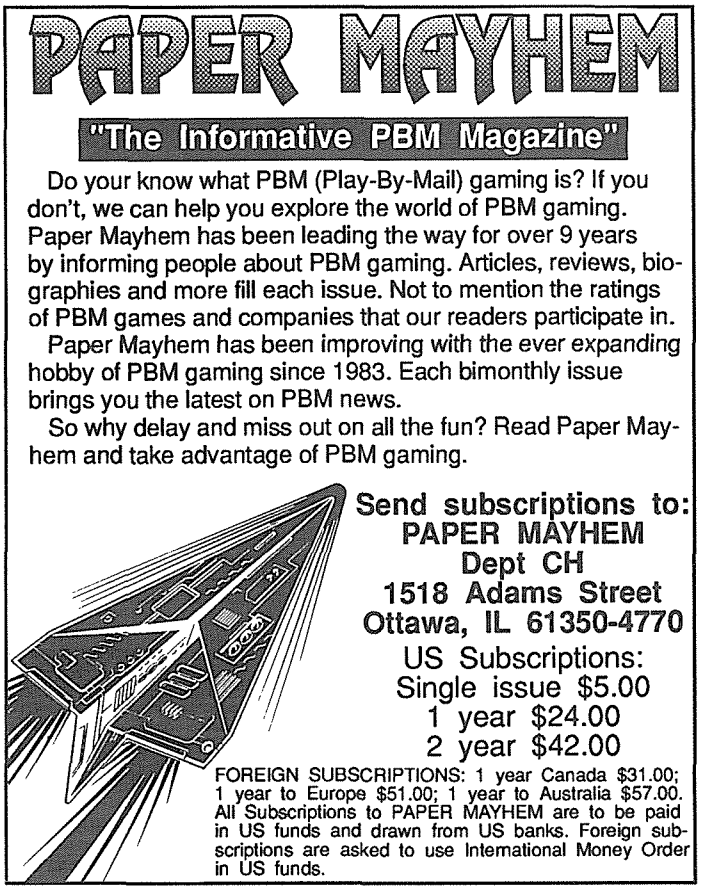
HEALING WASAKI'S MADNESS

A PC skilled at all three Force powers may attempt to calm Wasaki's mind. The Control and Sense difficulty numbers are 5, modified by proximity and relationship, respectively. The Alter difficulty number is 10. Wasaki has been reaching out with the Force for so long that he is temporarily unable to resist Force powers. If the attempt fails, he turns completely to the Dark Side and initiates a climactic battle.

RESOLUTION

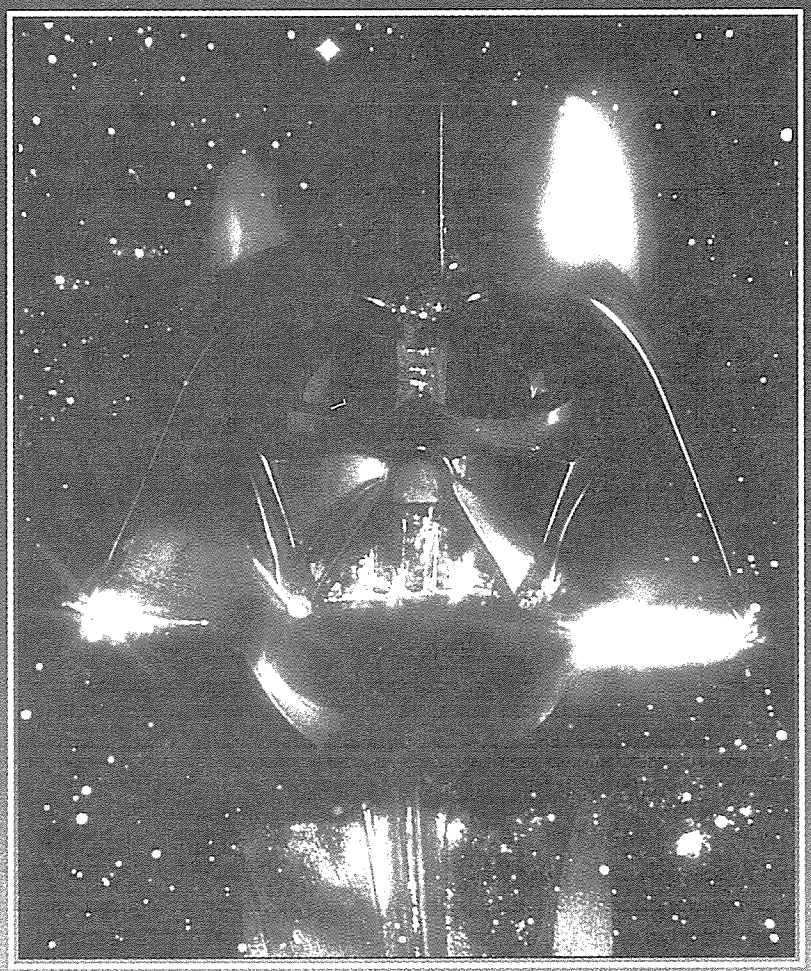
This adventure is worth 3-6 skills points. Confronting Wasaki is a "dramatically appropriate moment" to use Force points. If the PCs are successful in calming Wasaki's mind, one character may request instruction in the ways of the Force. However, should Wasaki's madness turn him to the Dark Side, the PCs may later encounter this evil Jedi as an Imperial agent. Ω





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SECOND EDITION

On the DARK SIDE of the MOON

The universe is large enough and old enough that the existence of other beings more advanced than humanity is not merely likely, it is virtually guaranteed. I have known this for a long time. But knowing this and finding a 3 million-year-old spacecraft is a lot like the relation between knowing that being shot will hurt and being shot.

Captain Ruth Milkin (NASA)

By Michael C. LaBossiere

This adventure is intended for a group of PCs with experience in space. If you intend to play in this adventure, please do not read any farther.

A copy of *Near Orbit* is required. This adventure is written with the assumption that the PCs are part of the team responsible for the evacuation and transportation of a 3 million-year-old alien spacecraft. PCs will be assigned to positions on the team based on their expertise. Exactly how the PCs end up on the team is up to the referee. The adventure can be modified if the PCs are not team members (for example, they may be hired to steal it).

BACKGROUND

Six weeks ago, a graduate student and his advisor completed an experiment in which the electromagnetic field of the moon was carefully examined. This activity was met with the indifference reserved for most academic endeavors. However, the data revealed an interesting fact: A regularly occurring electromagnetic flux was detected in an area where no human activity was occurring. The advisor suspected it was an abandoned power cell or some other junk. The grad student decided to investigate the site and, armed with more precise instruments, determined that the flux was a signal of some kind, apparently not of human origin. To ensure he would receive the credit for the find, the student filed his results with ESA and NASA. In response, an NASA/ESA team was sent in to undertake the excavation. A vacuum base camp (VBC) was established on the site, and the dig began shortly thereafter. For various reasons, a media blackout was put into effect (one of the reasons being to avoid ESA and NASA becoming laughingstocks if the whole thing turns out to be a hoax). The adventure begins as the digging ends.

VBC

The dig site is located on the moon's surface, on the dark side of the moon. Because of this, the expedition will rely on artificial lighting. The dig site consists of the rectangular dig cover, with a pile of excavated dirt on either side. In front of the dig cover is the VBC. The dig cover is a section of armored hull material (SP=45) that is being used to protect the dig site. Underneath it is the dig shaft.

The VBC is a portable shelter used in exploration of hostile worlds (the moon and Mars, so far). It is armored (SP=25) to prevent accidents. It is designed to sustain a crew of 10 for 30 days. The interior includes the following:

Airlock: The airlock is designed so that both doors cannot be opened at the same time.

Control Center: The VBC's systems are controlled from here. The room also houses the communication gear (laser communication link and radio).

Machinery: The machinery required to run the life support, airlock and so forth is located here.

Quarters: Each room is equipped with a bunk bed, two lockers, a terminal and low-gravity bathroom facilities. The rooms are double occupancy.

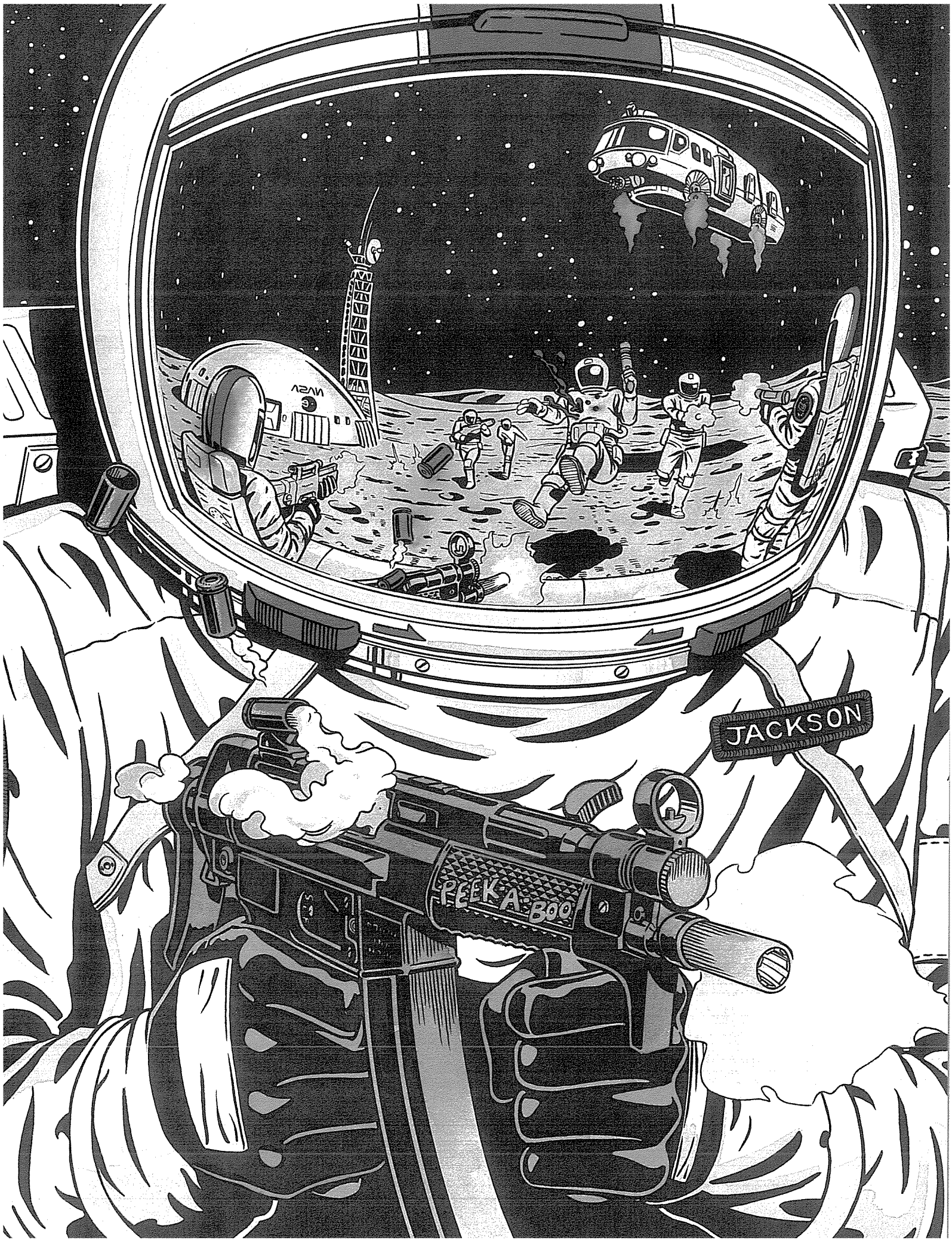
Rec Area: This area contains physical and mental entertainment designed to prevent the crew from going space happy.

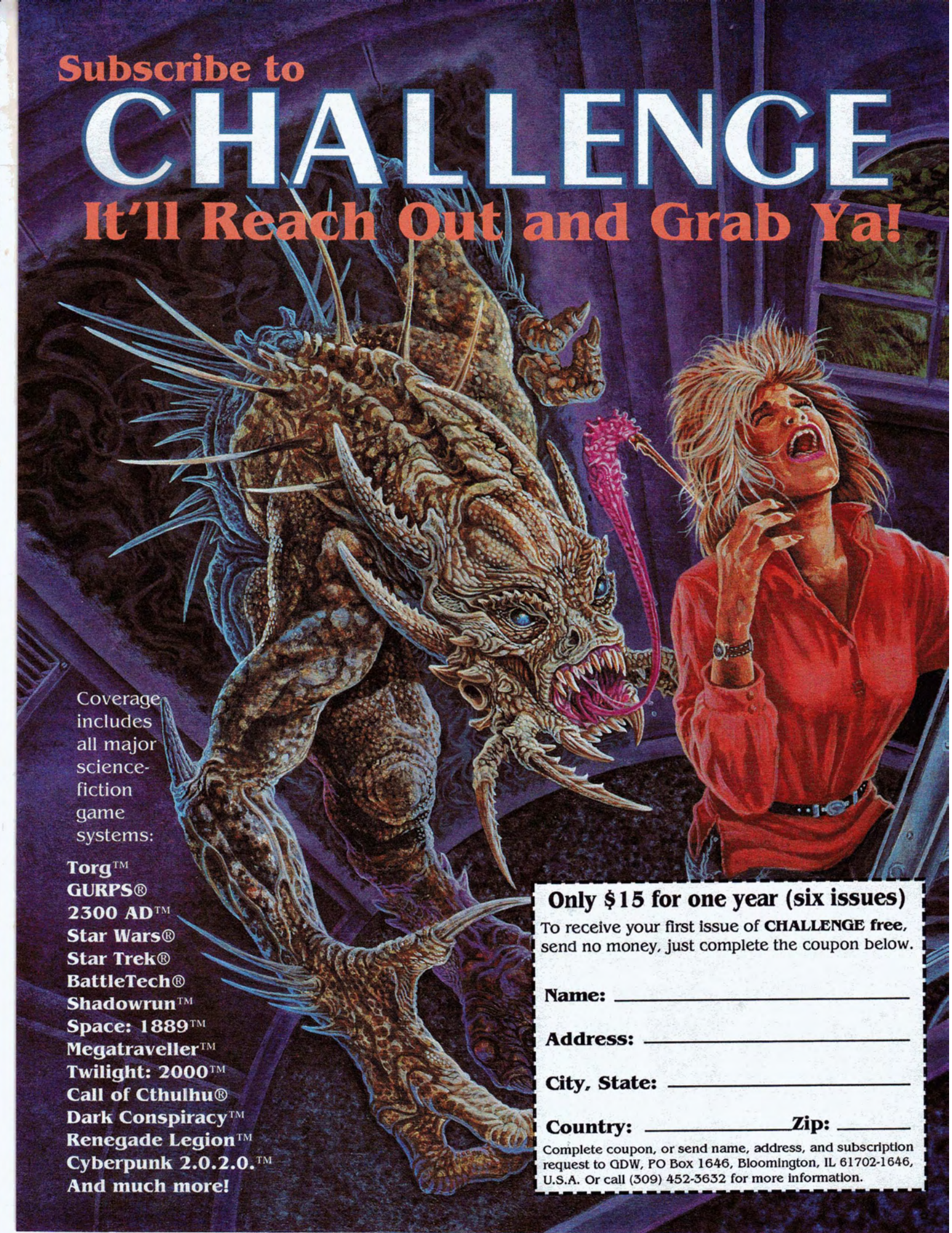
Storage/Life Support: The batteries, water, air and life support equipment is located in these sections.

ACTION

Prior to the events listed below, the referee will want to describe the dull week of work prior to the uncovering. If desired, an emergency or two (a life support accident, a nearby crash, a lost person on the moon) can be used to liven things up and make the situation more real for the players.

The first phase of the work is the scanning of the site with various instruments. This will reveal that a very high-density object is locked beneath the lunar surface and that it is emitting electromagnetic energy. The object appears


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to be encased in fused silicates, which indicates that it was extremely hot when it impacted the moon's surface. The depth of the object indicates that it arrived on the moon two to three million years ago.

The depth of the object, its encasement in fused silicates, and the extreme caution used in the digging will result in a week being required to "unmoon" the object.

Plant: An NPC (the medical officer) is actually working for a corporation which would like to have sole access to the alien object. She will be smuggling information out of the camp via a laser communication device. She will also be acting to ensure that the corporation gets the artifact and that no evidence is left of this fact. To this end, she has been equipped with a small nuclear device. She is extremely good at what she does and will set it up so an innocent team member seems to be the plant. She will also strive to create friction among the team members and put them under stress (with "accidents" and so forth).

Uncovering: At the completion of the digging and the chipping away of most of the silicates, a carefully formulated chemical will be used to dissolve away the rest of the silicate (the excavation shaft is sealed and pressurized for this). After the fumes clear, the object will be visible. It is a dull silver color, but still reflective. When the light first hits it, it will emit a strong and complex electromagnetic signal that will momentarily interfere with the operation of electrical equipment within a 100-meter radius. The lights will go out, vehicles will "stall," cyber-optics will go blind and so forth. This effect will last only a minute, then everything will return to normal. The scientists on the team will spend another week examining the artifact to determine if it is dangerous and if it can be transported to a laboratory.

Nightmares: Two days after the uncovering of the craft, the plant will introduce small doses of a chemical into the air supply of the VBC (she will take an antidote). This drug induces severe hallucinations in a sleeping mind and will make the team members experience nightmares, most centering around the alien artifact (because it is so central in their thoughts). The plant will pretend to be having the same nightmares. She will also introduce the idea that the artifact is responsible. This talk will serve to enhance and focus the nightmares onto the artifact. At this point, some of the NPCs will be getting nervous, and the atmosphere in the VBC will be tense. The chemical will gradually build up in the team members, resulting in more intense and vivid nightmares. The plant will not simply poison the team off because she has been instructed to let the team determine if the artifact is dangerous or not before the corporation takes possession of it. The scientists will be baffled by these nightmares, since the artifact is not emitting any form of energy that would be likely to have this effect. Since the plant is the medical officer, she will be able to conceal the chemical origin of the nightmares.

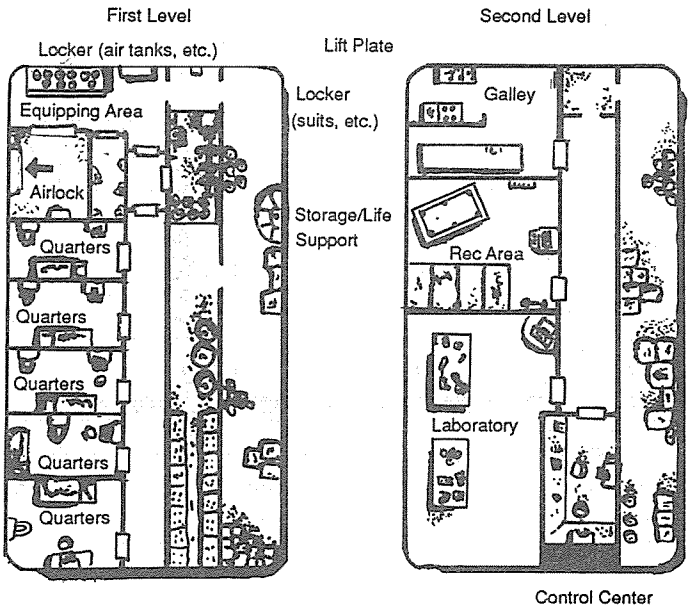
Sabotage: Three days after the chemical is introduced into the air supply, the plant will sabotage the VBC's communication equipment and the expedition's moon jumper. She will use special gloves she has prepared (using security records) of an NPC's fingerprints. She will plant evidence so it appears the NPC was responsible. She will suggest that the artifact might be using some form of mind control, and this will explain why the (framed) NPC has no memory of the incident. The extent of the damage and what would be required for repairs or jury-rigging is left to the referee.

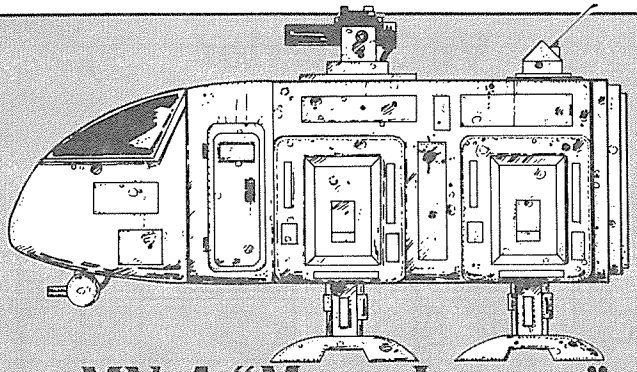
Disappearance: Four days after the chemical is introduced to the air supply, one of the team members will not be found in the morning. When the dig shaft is examined, the shredded remains of the missing person's space suit (with plenty of blood in and on it) will be found near the artifact (which will also be liberally doused with blood). The suit will also be found to be radioactive. While it appears that the artifact has killed and perhaps eaten a team member, in fact the plant lured a team member outside and killed him. She will bury his body several hundred meters from the site (after draining out the blood with a piece of medical equipment), shred up his suit and then douse it and the craft with the blood after exposing both the suit and blood to a radiation source. She will then go to sleep and prepare to be as surprised as everyone else the next day. By this point, tensions will be high, and everyone will be at least concerned about the artifact. The scientists will be very surprised by this event, as the artifact has undergone no changes (a smart PC may realize that if the artifact has not increased in mass—it couldn't have "eaten" the missing person).

Exposed: Since the tests have not revealed anything dangerous about the artifact and the plant knows she is the cause of the events attributed to the artifact, she will decide it is time to take possession of the artifact. She will use her laser communicator to signal the pickup team, prepare to introduce a poison gas into the VBC, and set her nuclear charge in the dig shaft. The charge is equipped with a broadcaster which will transmit a message just prior to the explosion claiming that the Brothers of Righteousness (a radical, anti-space cult which has as its main tenets that the devil lives in space and man belongs only on earth) have blown the site up because it was the work of the devil.

Fortunately for the PCs, the plant's own chemical will thwart her plans. An NPC will wake up due to a particularly bad nightmare and will catch the plant in the act of trying to poison everyone. The

VBC Interior

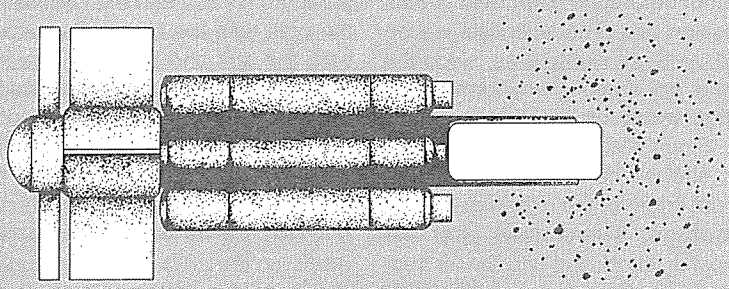




MV-4 "Moon Jumper"

Produced by the same company that produces the AV-4, the Moon Vehicle-4 is designed to operate on the moon. It has room for a pilot and copilot in the front and six passengers in the back, and has a cargo section which can be converted to seat six more passengers. It has sufficient power and life support for five days. It is equipped with radar and a multiband/tight beam radio, and has a built-in airlock. Its powerful engines enable it to carry a substantial amount of cargo, either with its four cranes or linked to the bottom of the craft (the low moon gravity enables it to carry an amazing amount of material). Top speed is 800 mph. SP=20, SDP=100.

Standard armament consists of a modified M-134 minigun in a chin turret and a laser weapon on a top turret. The laser weapon has the following stats: HVY +3 N R 3-15D6 60 2 UR 800M. It can be adjusted for shots ranging from 3D6 to 15D6. Each die of damage drains one charge from the power pack (which has 60 charges).



Alien Artifact

The alien artifact is a 3 million-year-old probe from a highly advanced nonhuman race.

The probe is basically a cylinder with four attached cylinders and what appear to be fins or wings extending from the back (or front). The front section contains the probe's "brain." The next section contains instruments and the power supply, and the section with the fins is the power plant and drive.

The probe is four meters long and is of extremely high density. It generates a very odd electromagnetic field and emits what seems to be a signal. X-ray scans reveal that the interior contains what can be best described as "fossilized" equipment, none of which resembles any known human technology. The outer shell is of an extremely dense and tough material, superior to all known human materials. The probe still has a functioning power or battery system, which indicates an incredibly advanced energy technology (after all, human corporations are proud of their five-year batteries).

Examination of the probe will lead to advances in material sciences. As the interior is examined, it will enable advances in computer technology, instrument technology and so forth. In fact, the probe is mankind's key to the stars. Examining the drive system will provide human scientists with the empirical data they would need to develop a new field of research in near light speed drives. Obviously, the artifact is priceless.

Proof of the existence (or one-time existence) of an alien race far more advanced than humanity could create quite a stir. If the information is released, all sorts of things will happen—cults will form to welcome the aliens who are on their way to save us, the tabloids will go nuts ("Elvis Found in Alien Probe!"), people will start watching the skies, militaries will begin asking for funding for more space weapons, and many books will be written. The exact impact is left to the referee.

unlucky NPC will be killed, but the others will wake up when the alarm is set off. When the plant is subdued or killed, the remote detonator for the nuclear charge will be found on her.

Attack: Unfortunately for the team, the plant's signal will bring the corporate team to the site 34 minutes after the plant is discovered by the NPC. The attack force will arrive in two moon jumpers. They will be expecting an easy job and will simply set down beside the dig shaft—assuming that the PCs don't do anything to alert them of what has actually occurred. If they are warned, they will strafe the area until the VBC and any exposed people are torn to bits. The jumpers can be spotted quite a ways off (about a 10-minute warning) because of their engines. If the PCs play their cards right, taking out the corporate team will be a piece of cake. If the PCs lose the fight, they will be killed, the artifact will be taken, and the site will be destroyed by the nuclear charge.

Yet Another Attack: The corporate team's backup will be monitoring the first attack, in case anything goes wrong. If the first team loses the fight, the backup team will send in a jet pack-equipped attack force as a distraction. While the survivors' attention is on the new attack, the backup team's moon jumper will maneuver over the dig sight, lift the cover off and carry off the artifact unless it is stopped. The attackers will attempt to finish off the survivors and once the moon jumper delivers the artifact (a 35-minute trip). It will return (35 minutes later) with another attack team and a nuclear device.

Chase: If the backup team makes off with the artifact, it will be taken to a small base camp where the teams were waiting. Over the base camp is an OTV, and the artifact will be boosted up to it by a small drone craft. The OTV will then head for a workstation which has a shuttle docked at it. The workstation is considered to be the same distance from the moon as L1 for time and fuel purposes. If the OTV reaches the workstation, the artifact will be transferred to the shuttle and then brought to earth. Once on earth, the artifact will be taken to a corporate lab and result in a massive bonanza for the corporation.

Of course, the PCs may have something to say about this. If the PCs can get a working transmitter, they can contact NASA and ESA, who can send a moon jumper to pick up the PCs. The base is 55 minutes away by moon jumper. If the PCs capture a moon jumper or fix one of theirs, they can make the trip on their

own. The NASA/ESA base has a Nighthawk STC that is assigned to the team (it was intended to transport the artifact). It is fueled and ready to go, and can catch the OTV as long as the OTV is not more than two hours and 20 minutes ahead of it. Since the OTV is unarmed, the PCs should be able to get the crew to surrender.

FINISH

If the corporation escapes with the artifact, it will introduce revolutionary new alloys within two years and other products as it solves the mysteries of the artifact. If the corporation escapes with it but it is known that the artifact was stolen, there will be a worldwide search for the artifact and it will be found, spelling the end for that corporation. If the corporation escapes with it and is identified by the PCs or NPCs, it will spell the end for it that much sooner. If the corporation does not escape with it and witnesses or evidence is left, there will be an investigation, the results of which are left to the referee. If the PCs save the artifact, they will be invited to the UN, given medals and praised as "heroes of a new age." They will also have the opportunity to write books and have docudramas made about them. If they fail, they will not make out so well. If they die, the state will pay for their burial (if they aren't vaporized by a nuke, of course).

NASA/ESA TEAM

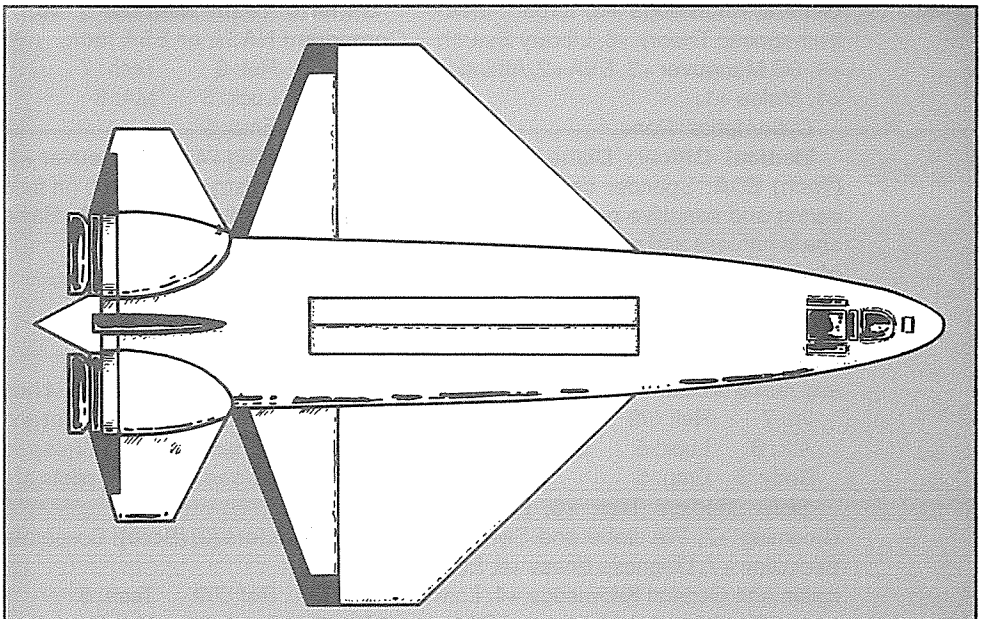
The NASA/ESA team consists of 10 people. PCs will replace NPCs on a one-for-one basis. If there are more than five PCs, another VBC can be added so that there are at least five NPCs.

The team has a moon jumper and a VBC. The VBC is stocked with equipment—tools, chemicals, food, scientific gear, space suits and so forth.

Team Commander: Captain Ruth Milkin (NASA Corporate): Milkin is the "military" leader of the expedition. She was selected because she is known as a calm leader in stressful, dangerous and odd situations. She is an experienced spacer and a good leader.

Int: 7 Ref: 6/8 Tech: 6
Attr: 6 Luck: 7 MA: 6
Body: 5 Emp: 6

Skills: Resources +7, Leadership +6, Human Perception +3, Persuasion and Fast Talk +2, Education and General Knowledge +5, Mathematics +3, Physics +3, 0G Maneuver +4, 0G Combat +2, Astrogation +4, EVA +4, Athletics +3, Handgun +3, Melee +2, Shuttle Pilot +7, OTV Pilot +4, Athletics +4.



Nighthawk STC

The Nighthawk STC (Special Transport Craft) is a high-speed shuttle vehicle produced by Lockheed AeroSpace. It is designed to transport high-priority and special cargoes, possibly through opposition. It is equipped with the latest in avionics and electronics, and is fully stealthed for those "special deliveries." It has room for a pilot, copilot and four passengers in the front section. The cargo bay can be fitted with a pressurized section and can carry 20 passengers.

Armaments and defenses include ECM, flares and chaff, chemical laser, electronic warfare, missiles (two). Fuel is 12 burns.

Cybernetics: Biomonitor, Boosterware (+2), Neural Processor, Interface Plugs.

Equipment: Militech "Black Widow" flechette pistol and two clips, Militech Electronics taser, Kendaichi monoknife.

Jumper Pilot/Security: Lt. Carl Yates (Solo): Yates is the moon jumper pilot and the security chief. He is a competent and experienced officer, and is determined to keep the artifact in the right hands.

Int: 6 Ref: 7/9 Tech: 7
Attr: 5 Luck: 6 MA: 5
Body: 5 Emp: 4

Skills: Combat Sense +6, 0G Maneuver +6, 0G Combat +6, EVA +3, Awareness/Notice +2, Handgun +6, Melee +4, Athletics +6, Basic Tech +6, Akido +4, Pilot (Fixed Wing) +3, Pilot (MV) +5, Heavy Weapons +4, Rifle +5.

Cybernetics: Biomonitor, Boosterware (+2), Neural Processor, Interface Plugs.

Equipment: Smartchipped Militech Electronics laser, smartchipped Militech "Black Widow" flechette pistol and three clips, Militech Electronics taser, Kendaichi monoknife, Kevlar vest.

Science Team Head: Dr. David Yund (Corporate) ESA: Yund is the foremost expert (on the moon) in the area of the theories regarding nonhuman technology. He is also a skilled and experienced lunar explorer. He grew up on pulp science fiction and will be especially vulnerable to the nightmares.

Int: 8 Ref: 5 Tech: 8
Attr: 5 Luck: 7 MA: 4
Body: 4 Emp: 5

Skills: Resources +7, Chemistry +2, Education and General Knowledge +8, Expert Knowledge: Nonhuman Technology Theory +5, Expert Knowledge: Moon Science +4.

Geology +4, Language (English) +2, Library Search +8, Mathematics +4, Physics +3, EVA +3, 0G Maneuver +3.

Cybernetics: None.

George Evans (Corporate): Evans is the graduate student responsible for the discovery of the artifact. He is a talented and ambitious young man who does not let his ambition override his ethics (which is odd these days). He is, however, a sharp operator and a good scientist. His discovery of the artifact will ensure him an excellent career (if he survives).

Int: 9 Ref: 5 Tech: 8
Attr: 7 Luck: 8 MA: 5
Body: 6 Emp: 5

Skills: Resources +2, Awareness/Notice +6, Chemistry +2, Education and

General Knowledge +6, Expert: Electromagnetic Theory +6, Library Search +4, 0G Maneuver +3, EVA +2, Athletics +1, Melee +1.

Cybernetics: None.

Medical Officer: Diane Spender (Tech) ESA: Spender seems to be a caring and sensitive person. In reality, she is ruthless and calculating, the type of person who would sell her parents to a body bank. She is a deep cover agent for a corporation and has been leaking ESA secrets for years. She is devoid of any moral sense.

Int: 7 Ref: 6/8 Tech: 7
Attr: 8 Luck: 5 MA: 6
Body: 5 Emp: 5

Skills: Medical Tech +6, Personal Grooming +2, Wardrobe and Style +2, Seduction +7, Diagnose Illness +6, Education and General Knowledge +4, Language (English) +4, Athletics +4, 0G Maneuver +4, 0G Combat +4, EVA +3, Akido +4, Handgun +3, Cryotank Operation +2, Demolitions +1, Basic Tech +2, Melee +2.

Cybernetics: Biomonitor, Neural Processor, Boosterware (+2), Interface Plugs, Scratchers.

Equipment: Avante P-1135 needlegun with two clips of nerve toxin darts, Kendaichi monoknife. She has a laser communication device and a nuclear charge concealed in some of her medical equipment.

Generic Team Member (Tech): Competent NASA or ESA tech.

Int: 6 Ref: 6 Tech: 7
Attr: 5 Luck: 5 MA: 6
Body: 5 Emp: 5

Skills: Jury Rig +4, 0G Maneuver +4, EVA +3, Chemistry +2, Expert: (in field of expertise) +4, Athletics +2, Basic Tech +4.

Cybernetics: Biomonitor.

CORPORATE NPCS

There are two teams. Each MV-4 has six corporate team members, a pilot and a leader. The first team has two MV-4s and the second has one. The OTV pilots are in an OTV.

Team Leaders (3) (Solo): Corporate leader.

Int: 6 Ref: 7/9 Tech: 6
Attr: 5 Luck: 5 MA: 7
Body: 7 Emp: 3

Skills: Combat Sense +7, 0G Maneuver +4, 0G Combat +4, Leadership +3, Athletics +6, Karate +4, Handgun +4, Rifle +6, Pilot (MV) +3, Melee +4.

Cybernetics: Biomonitor, Neural Processor, Boosterware (+2), Interface Plugs, Cyberoptic with IR, Low Lite and Target Scope, Independent Air Supply, Pain Editor.

Equipment: Vacc suit with jet pack, Techtronica 15 microwaver, smartchipped Militech Electronics lasercannon, Kendaichi monokatana.

Corporate Team Member (18) (Solo): Corporate space muscle.

Int: 5 Ref: 6/7 Tech: 4
Attr: 4 Luck: 4 MA: 6
Body: 7 Emp: 2

Skills: Combat Sense +5, 0G Maneuver +4, 0G Combat +3, EVA +3, Karate +3, Athletics +4, Handgun +3, Rifle +4, Melee +4 (three of the 18 are pilots, with Pilot (MV) +4 and Heavy Weapons +2).

Cybernetics: Biomonitor, Neural Processor, Boosterware(+1), Pain Editor.

Equipment: Vacc suit with jet pack, Techtronica 15 microwaver, smartchipped Militech Electronics lasercannon, Kendaichi monokatana.

OTV Pilots (2): Corporate pilots, in it for the money.

Int: 6 Ref: 6/8 Tech: 7
Attr: 4 Luck: 6 MA: 4
Body: 5 Emp: 4

Skills: Brotherhood +2, 0G Maneuver +4, 0G Combat +2, Astrogation +5, EVA +4, Handgun +2, Athletics +2, Brawling +2, Basic Tech +3, OTV Pilot +6, Melee +2.

Cybernetics: Biomonitor, Neural Processor, Interface Plugs, Boosterware(+2), Independent Air Supply.

Equipment: Pilot suit, Hammer M-11 bolt pistol and two clips, Kendaichi monoknife. Ω

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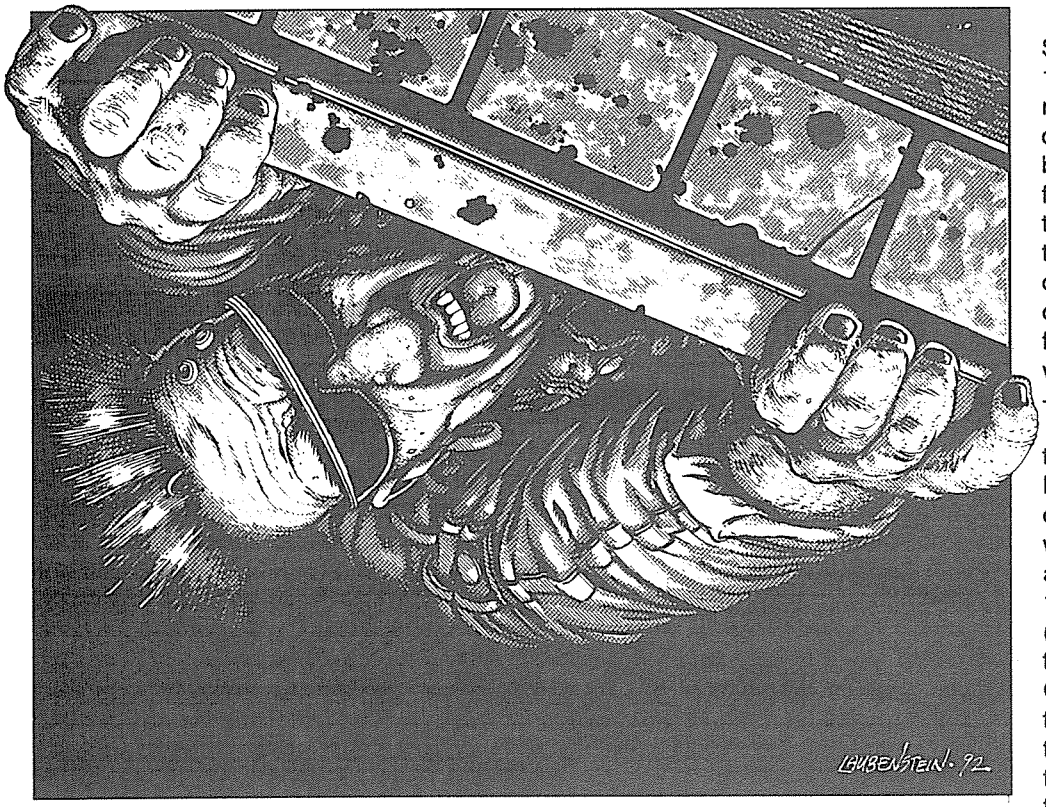
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CYBERSKILLS

By Magnus Seter



Want to make *Cyberpunk* even more interesting to play? Add another dimension to skill resolution? Get away from the simple failed/success when dealing with skills? Use the following Success Table, and you'll have your players begging for mercy.

After all, players do tend to get their characters into quite impossible situations.

Skill checks are usually handled by rolling 1D10 and adding skill and stat. The usual procedure is to check the total with the difficulty supplied by the referee—if your total is higher than the difficulty, then you've made it.

The Success Table is more devious than the name implies, and using it will have characters hanging from the balcony rail on the top floor, figuratively speaking. When you use the Success Table, you take the total obtained with the 1D10+stat+skill procedure, but *subtract* the difficulty from the total. Then consult the Success Table and apply the results.

There is one important exception to this rule that referees could make—in "all or nothing" situations. When a character is attempting an action where he may only succeed or fail, disregard the Success Table, or make your own interpretation of it.

SUCCESS TABLE

Number	*Result*
1	Partial success. If the next action is a logical extension of the previous action, add 5 to that try.
2	Near success. If the next action is a logical extension of the previous action, add 10 to that try.
3-4	Success. You barely made it.
5-8	Success. You made it.
9-16	Good move. Complete the action using only half the time normally needed.
17-20	Stunning success. Complete the action using only half the time normally needed. Impress bystanders. Gain 5 IP to skill.

Logical Extension: If the action you are going to execute after this try is a logical choice and a follow-up of the previous skill, you will gain a bonus to add to the total 1D10+stat+skill total.

EXAMPLES

Julie Angel is trying to crack a safe. She's got INT 9 and Pick Lock +7. The 1D10 roll is 6, so the total is 22. The referee rated this safe at a difficulty level of 20, which means Angel succeeded by 2. Checking the Success Table, we find that Angel gains a bonus of +10 if the next action is a logical extension of the previous. She decides to have another go at the safe and therefore receives the +10 bonus. If she had opted for an Awareness check to see if anyone was around, she wouldn't receive the +10 bonus.

Ian Frostwater makes a daring jump to reach the roof six meters away. The Difficulty is 25 (he's carrying a lot of dead weight). The 1D10 roll is a 10, which means he should roll again and add that result to the total. The next 1D10 roll is a 3, so he gets 10+3+11 (REF stat)+2 (Athletics skill), which totals 26. That means he made it by 1. Checking the Success Table, we find that Frostwater gains a bonus of +5 if the next action is a logical extension of the previous. The referee decides partial success means Frostwater barely made it and is now hanging from a ledge 30 stories up, and his grip is slipping. Frostwater wisely decides to try to climb up on the roof to safety. This is a logical extension of his first action, so Frostwater receives the +5 bonus to his next action, which is to climb up on the roof. He might also have opted to let go and try to hit the pavement at 300 mph, in which case he also would have received the +5 bonus since this also is a logical extension of his first action (so to speak).

Ken Lemon is trying to get out of a building before it blows up. The referee decides Lemon will get one try and will get out. The player rolls the die, and the result is 2 above the imposed difficulty. If we were using the Success Table, this would mean that Lemon failed, but may make another try next phase. Unfortunately, the house explodes, with Lemon still inside. The player is infuriated because he made the roll, thereby succeeding with the action, but didn't get out. Instead, the referee could decide that this was an all-or-nothing situation and that the character did get out in time. Ω

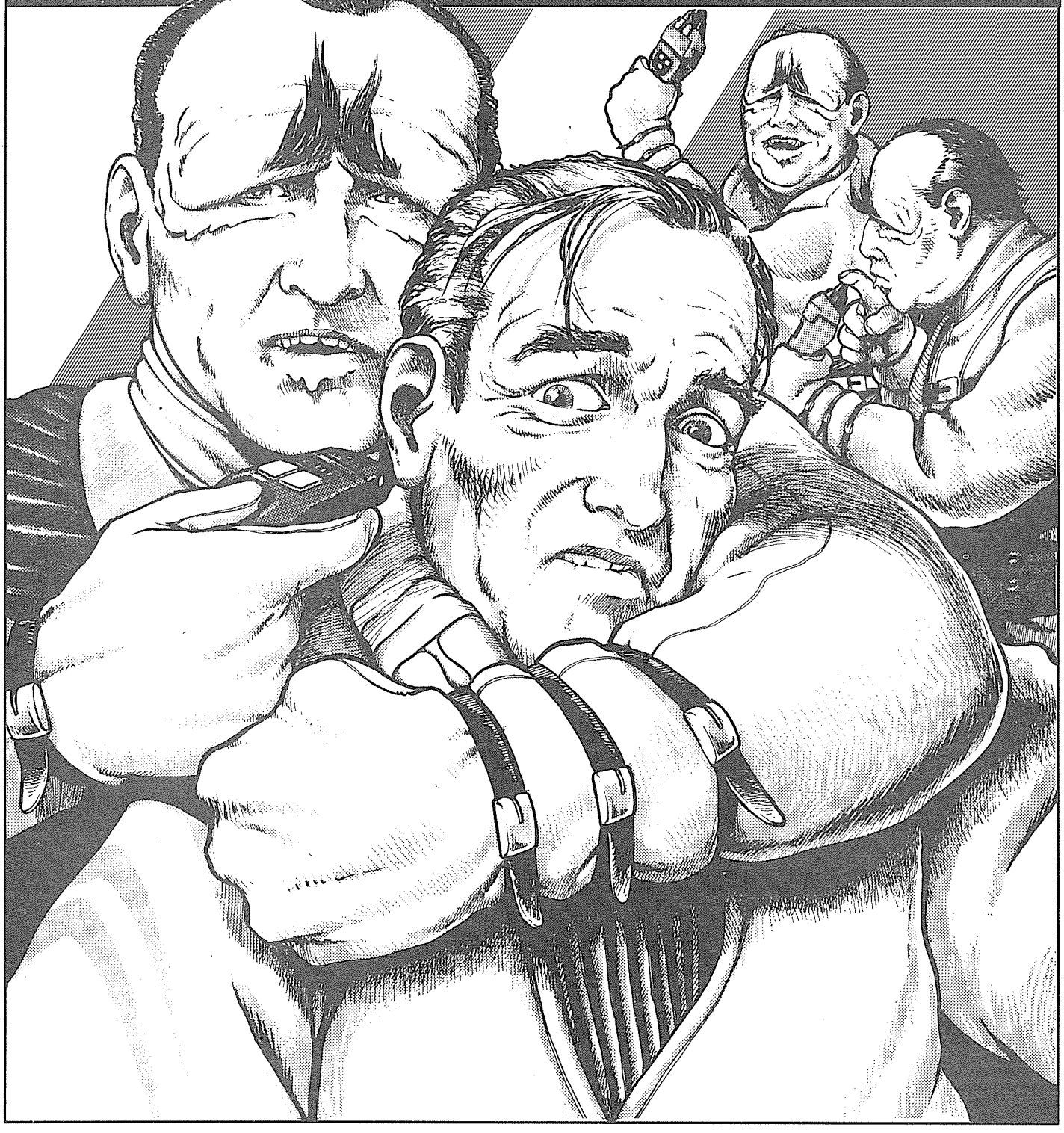
The Success Table is more devious than the name implies. It will



have PCs hanging from the balcony rail, figuratively speaking.

An adventure by James Swallow

Cogito Ergo Pakled



Starship commanders are advised that the race known as the Pakleds are to be treated with caution. Although this race possesses only a rudimentary level of intelligence, groups have been known to use their apparent shortcomings to lull potential victims into a sense of superiority before violently attacking.

This scenario is designed for use within the timeline of *Star Trek: The Next Generation,* although not necessarily with the crew of the *Enterprise*. The scenario begins with the player characters' starship returning from a failed diplomatic mission to an outlying colony world. The Federation's Ambassador Ogilo is most distressed, and morale is low.

The PCs' ship is contacted by a Pakled vessel that wishes to begin diplomatic relations with the Federation. Ogilo urges the captain to seize the opportunity to recover from the earlier failure by welcoming the Pakleds. Things, however, do not go as planned.

The commander of the Pakled ship, the *Foobah*, is Dogolog. Dogolog is no ordinary Pakled. He is a mutant, a genetic freak gifted with the one thing all others of his race lack—intelligence. Dogolog is cunning enough to have conceived a plan to capture a Federation starship intact, and use it to begin a conquest of systems neighboring his homeworlds. With Ogilo ready to welcome the Pakleds aboard the PCs' ship, Dogolog's chance has appeared.

The Pakled ship approaches the PCs' starship with weapons inactive and shields down, broadcasting a continuous hailing signal. Once a channel has been opened, Dogolog's goofy features fill the screen and plead with the captain to "let us be Federation friends." Ogilo will be on the bridge to witness this and will encourage the captain to agree to the Pakled request. The *Foobah* will move to within 20,000 kilometers and match the PCs' ship at impulse power. Scans of the vessel will reveal a crew of 20, with some highly bizarre power distribution curves and energy fluxes. More intense scans will take several hours to produce results.

PAKLEDS AMOK

At the allotted time, Dogolog and three of his crew beam across. While the PCs and Ogilo are in full dress uniform, the Pakleds wear their best soiled and smelly worksuits. Dogolog introduces his other crew, including his "people fixer," Bolonee, who demands to see the sickbay immediately. Ogilo suggests rather pointedly to the captain that a tour of the ship before dinner would be a good idea. This, however, proves to be utterly incorrect—as the PCs assigned to conduct the tour will discover. As the PCs show the Pakleds through the ship, items are broken, things are spilt, and Dogolog and his men make pests of themselves. In the captain's ready room, a vase is smashed. On the bridge, Dogolog asks the helmsman to shove up and show him which button makes the ship fly upside-down, and so on.

Sharp-eyed characters notice Dogolog being more than just nosy on two occasions (roll against INT without the PCs' knowledge, and if there are no successes, Dogolog's actions remain unnoticed). First, while in sickbay, Bolonee accidentally injects himself with a strong sedative, not fatal, but enough to distract attention from Dogolog as he examines a rack of loaded hypos. Second, while the Pakleds point at the intermix chamber in engineering and ask, "What's the big flashy thing for? What makes it go?" Dogolog covertly taps in some commands on the control console.

Eventually, after much gnashing of teeth, the PCs and the Pakleds return to the briefing room for dinner. This too proves to be a shambles as it rapidly dissolves into a food-fight among the Pakleds. After the dust settles, Dogolog burps loudly, thanks the captain for the "yummies" and beams back to the *Foobah*, leaving the PCs to clean the Tribbles á la mode off the walls. Ogilo will approach the captain and privately admit that "perhaps this wasn't such a terrific idea after all."

FIRST IMPRESSIONS LAST

PCs who compare notes on the Pakleds will generally come to the same conclusion—that they are dopey, messy and more annoying than a shuttle-full of hyperactive chimps. Any Vulcan or Betazoid crewmember will sense no overt psionic potential from them, but empaths will note that Dogolog is supremely self-confident and egocentric, and his crewmembers are devoted to him. If the PCs managed to get a medical tricorder scan of Dogolog and his men, they will find (with a successful roll against Biology or Xenobiology) that Dogolog's brain has a larger number of neurons firing, compared to his fellow Pakleds—that is, his brain works faster than theirs.

As the PCs discuss what has happened, the chief engineer and the chief medical officer are suddenly paged. In engineering, the matter/antimatter intermix has started to "wobble" for no apparent reason, and in sickbay, a loaded hypospray is missing.

The cause of the "wobble" is found to be an irregular mix ratio adjustment, and correcting it involves keeping the ship at impulse power for the next few hours.

The hypo is nowhere to be found—Dogolog stole it while backs were turned in sickbay.

At this point, too, the intense scans of the Pakled ship are complete, and they reveal the presence of a nonfunctional cloaking device, a Jaradan phaser array and a Gorn blaster cannon.

While the characters deliberate over this new piece of data, Dogolog begins his plot.

TAKEOVER

The *Foobah* contacts the PCs' ship with an emergency message—one of the crewmembers has collapsed, and Bolonee cannot save him! They ask the PCs to allow them to transport Bolonee and the injured Pakled to sickbay. Ogilo will strongly urge the crew to comply—after all, they're not animals. As Bolonee and the comatose Pakled are transported to sickbay, Dogolog transports across to the ship's computer core and also sends a trio of Pakleds to main engineering, armed with hand lasers.

After a scan, any medical officer can see that the comatose Pakled has been sedated with the missing hypospray.

Bolonee will suddenly declare the sickbay "mine, now!" Dogolog will take control of the computer core and begin to reprogram the command protocols for all major systems one by one. The Pakleds in engineering will fight to the death to secure the area. They will threaten to kill any injured crew unless the area is cleared.

Random Pakled Starship Generator

Because of the "magpie" nature of the Pakleds, as well as their tendency to steal technology from other races and retrofit it to their ships, no two Pakled ships encountered will be quite the same. In addition, because of their lack of any starship construction expertise, Pakled vessels are often totally under- or over-powered. Many do not even make it out of orbit, while others malfunction and strand their crews in space. This random generator enables GMs to create instant Pakled ships for use in the *Starship Combat Simulator* game.

1. Roll 1D100 to determine superstructure points.
2. Choose Engine Location/Detailed Damage Chart.
3. Roll 1D100×1D10 to determine number of cargo units.
4. Roll 1D10 to determine number of transporters and/or shuttles.
5. Roll 1D100+30 to determine total power units available.
6. Roll 1D4 to determine number of engines.
7. Divide total power units available among engines, as desired.
8. Roll 1D10 to determine number of weapons.
9. Roll 1D6 for each weapon. Refer to shield display to determine weapon firing arc (e.g., a roll of 4 indicates starboard/aft firing arc).
10. Roll 1D10 for each weapon to determine power range/damage.
11. Roll 2D10 for each weapon to determine Firing Chart number.
12. Roll 2D10 for maximum shield power.
13. Roll 1D10 for shield points per power unit used.
14. Roll 1D10 and consult Special Items Table, below.

Special Items

Roll	*Item*
1	Cloaking device. Power Use 50.
2	No item.
3	Phaser array. Power Range 10. Firing Chart M. Choose firing arc.
4	Plasma weapon. Power To Arm 8. Firing Chart T. Firing arc forward.
5	No item.
6	Tractor beam. Power Use 30.
7	Blaster cannon. Power Range 7. Firing Chart R. Firing arc port.
8	Cloaking device. Power Use 75.
9	Roll again twice.
10	Laser weapon. Power Range 3. Firing Chart H. Choose two firing arcs.

DOGOLOG'S PLAN

Dogolog will start with the shields, then work his way through the major ship's systems, altering the controls to respond only to him. He will alter the engineering commands last, as he believes his crew can keep control of that area for him. Herein lies the fault with his plan—he must rely on those who are not as smart as him. The characters must react quickly to the unfolding events, or else find themselves locked on course for the homeworld Paklar with the *Foobah* in tow. The other Pakleds are nasty, but they are also stupid and gullible, and the PCs must exploit this weak link in Dogolog's grand scheme. If things begin to look bad for Dogolog, he will abandon his crewmates and attempt to capture Ogilo to use as a hostage to ensure his safe getaway. He is armed with a hand laser, but he will exchange it for a phaser whenever the opportunity presents itself. Once the takeover is under way, Dogolog will drop his pretense of "the idiot Pakled" and use his intellect to the fullest.

ENDING

If Dogolog's plan is foiled, the PCs will be commended by Ogilo, and he will see that they all receive citations (partially as a thank you and partially to keep the PCs from blaming him). If the *Foobah* and its crew are captured, Starfleet orders them to be towed to Starbase 515 for trial. If the PCs do not stop Dogolog, he will use the main environmental controls to stun the crew by introducing sleeping gas into the atmosphere. The PCs will eventually be rescued from a Pakled gulag by the Starfleet Marines and taken home to face a court martial hearing.

AMBASSADOR MARZA OGILO

Ambassador Ogilo is a competent, middle-ranking diplomat in the Federation, a hard worker who hates to see time wasted needlessly. He has taken the failure of the Lumataru Colony talks as his own fault, and he initially sees the Pakleds as a chance to recoup some of the favor he might lose with the Federation. Ogilo is a native of Deneva and is 43 standard years old.

Attributes: STR 45, END 40, INT 75, DEX 40, CHA 88, LUC 50, PSI 14.

Significant Skills: Administration 78, Carousing 54, Computer Operation 30, Gaming 68, Language: Orion 70, Language: Vulcan 55, Marksmanship: Archaic 40, Negotiation/Diplomacy 67, Psychology: Human 45, Streetwise 30, Federation Culture/Law 80.

DOGOLOG

Dogolog appears to be an ordinary Pakled, but due to a one-in-ten-million genetic aberration, he is possessed of a far greater intellect than his fellows. From an early age, he realized it was his destiny to rule over all Pakleds, and he has slowly been educating himself and working his way to a point where he can get his hands on a real starship. He regards his fellow crew as nothing more than tools, to be used as needed. They obey him because, "He is smart. He is strong. We like strong."

Attributes: STR 65, END 80, INT 93, DEX 60, CHA 35, LUC 40, PSI 03.

Significant Skills: Computer Operation 75, Computer Technology 50, Leadership 40, Marksmanship: Modern 40, Electronics Technology 40, Navigation/Helm 50, Astrogation 60, Warp Drive Technology 35.

TYPICAL PAKLED

Pakleds hail from the planet Paklar (technological/sociopolitical index 656431-35), located in the Rhomboid Dronniga system.

Attributes: STR 40+3D10, END 50+3D10, INT 10+2D10, DEX 20+2D10, CHA 20+1D10, LUC 20+1D10, PSI 30-1D10.

Significant Skills: Marksmanship: Modern 2D10, Navigation/Helm 30+2D10, any two technical specialties 30+2D10. Ω

For more information, see the Star Trek: The Next Generation *episode "Samaritan Snare" and FASA's* Star Trek: The Next Generation First Year Sourcebook.

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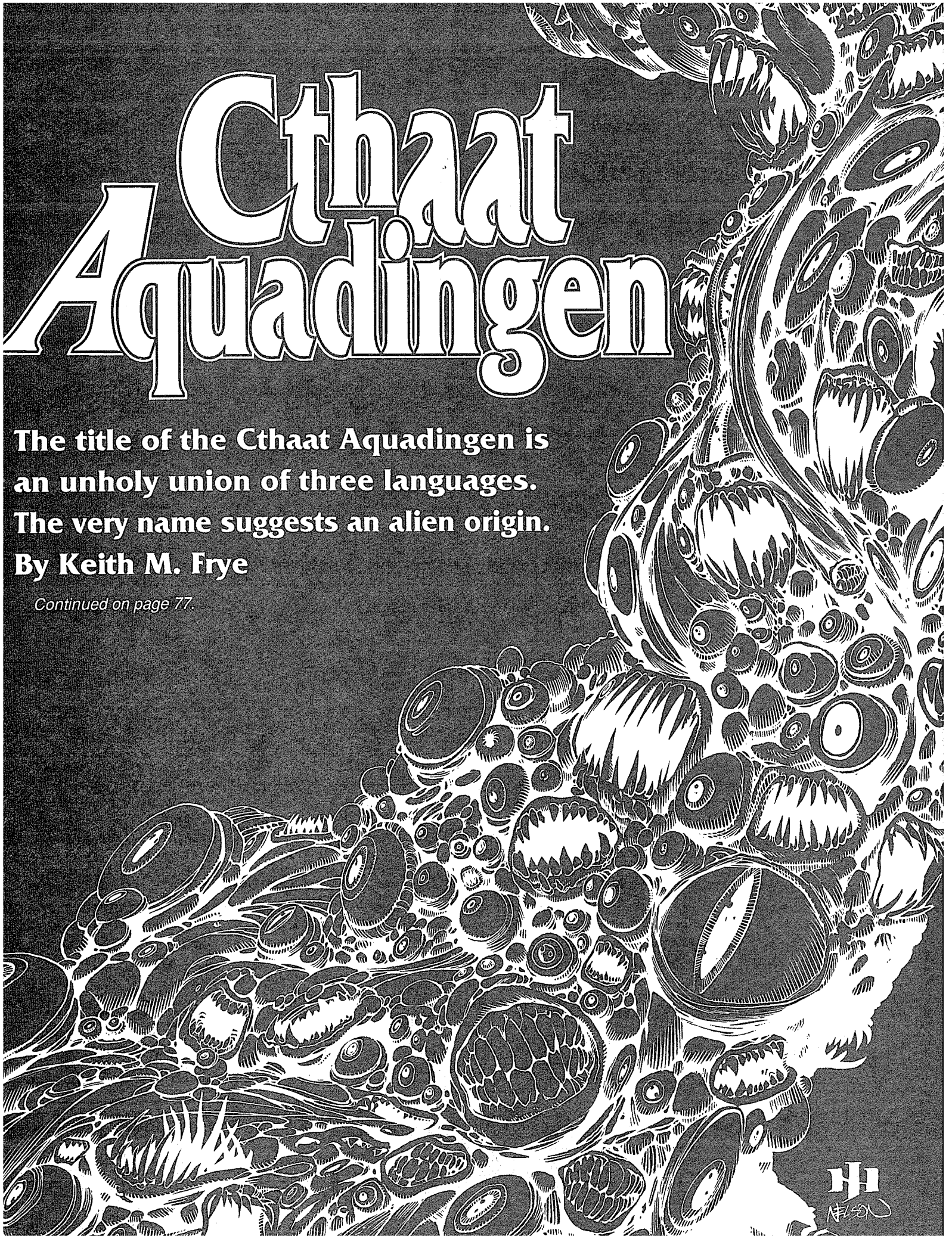

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Cthaat Aquadingen

The title of the Cthaat Aquadingen is an unholy union of three languages. The very name suggests an alien origin.

By Keith M. Frye

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Continued from page 74.

The *Cthaat Aquadingen* is a book whose name suggests an alien origin. Ranked by Brian Lumley as second only to the *Necronomicon*, the *Aquadingen* appears most often in his fiction as an English work. Yet there is darkly hinted at the rumor of another, even rarer tome. This article investigates the existence of this second volume, which bridges the previous nonhuman version with the safer, English one.

The title of the *Cthaat Aquadingen* is an unholy union of three languages. The first word may be derived from ancient Kthatan, a language said to predate primal Nacaal (Betelguese). Is this an implication that the book, or at least its language, is older than the Elder Gods?

The second word, "aquadingen," translates as "water-things." It is a combination of Latin and German, implying that the edition preceding the English one may have been in both Latin and German. This was not uncommon among certain German monks during the Middle Ages. The monks of Medieval Benedictburn, who compiled the Carmina Burana, were partial to bilingual and even trilingual compositions.

As for physical characteristics, the English version was translated from Latin/German circa 1550. The printing run must have been very short, since we are told that only three books remain in existence. One of these is bound in human skin that still sweats when the barometer falls.

The Latin/German edition would be rarer still, being in hand-written calligraphy, possibly illuminated with painted scenes from the Mythos (lots of sanity lost here—just the book for players who like to "flip" through the pages to see what its about!). Thus, the possible existence of the older edition, in alternating Latin and Medieval German, derived from a third inhuman—and probably bloody—tongue.

CTHAAT AQUADINGEN (MEDIEVAL EDITION)

Compendium of lore by a nameless monk (Latin/German, +15 Cthulhu Mythos, –2D10 SAN, x4 spell multiplier).

Spells: Elder Sign, Contact Formless Spawn, Contact Tsathoggua, Contact Star Spawn, Contact Cthulhu, Call Bugg-Shash (described below), Call Yibb-Tstll (see *Call of Cthulhu* 5th edition).

We are warned that this book contains complete sets of working spells and invocations, devised to raise things out of the water—demons of the ocean or Cthulhu. Among these is the Nyhargo Dirge, the spell for the Elder Sign, the Tsathogguan Rituals and at least four of the Sathlatta (spells for summoning a variety of beings). The tome also introduces us to the concept of Cthylla, a being described vaguely as the "daughter" of Cthulhu. Her significance in revivifying the Lord of R'lyeh is, mercifully, only hinted at.

CALL BUGG-SHASH

Contained in the Third Sathlatta, this is an extremely dangerous spell, due to the nature of the entity. An enchanted pentagram, with a circle in the center, is drawn. Candles and braziers of mild hallucinogens are placed in a precise pattern around the pentagram. After magic points are expended, the lights within the pentagram wink out, one by one. Then the bubbling mass of mouths and eyes that is Bugg-Shash will fill the pentagram in an ever-increasing pillar. A human sacrifice will allow the caster to command Bugg-Shash to perform one service. The command must be phrased carefully, for Bugg-Shash will attempt only to obey the working, not the spirit, of the command.

If there is no sacrifice at hand, Bugg-Shash will attempt to engulf and take the caster. Bugg-Shash can be dispelled by any direct source of light, even a candle. However, the next time the caster finds himself in near or total darkness, Bugg-Shash will be waiting.

DISMISS BUGG-SHASH

The Dismiss Bugg-Shash spell is very rare, involving reversing the Third Sathlatta. The pentagram is drawn as before, with the caster standing inside it. As in the summoning, the candles dim as the spell is cast. Bugg-Shash will then fill the area around the boundary of the pentagram, gradually forming a grotesque ceiling above. If the caster neglects to keep a light source in the pentagram, this ceiling will slowly descend and engulf him. The Dismiss spell is found only in the *Cthaat Aquadingen* and must be learned separately.

Bugg-Shash

Eibon described Bugg-Shash, the Filler of Space (Great Old One), as a "drowner," one whose "kiss is the slimy kiss of hideous death." Its trail is like that of a monstrous snail, leaving pools of clear, stinking liquid. It attacks its victims by engulfing and drowning them in its own hideous essence.

Bugg-Shash can only manifest itself in darkness and can be dispelled with the flick of a light switch. Unfortunately for the victim, such dispelling is only temporary. At the next opportunity, when the lights fail or a cloud obscures the moon, Bugg-Shash will appear and engulf the screaming wretch.

Starting with the first round, anyone who is engulfed by Bugg-Shash must make a drowning saving roll, as per the *Call of Cthulhu* rulebook. If the roll fails, take damage as normal, as the lungs fill up with the juices of Bugg-Shash. If the victim is near an electric light, he may make a DEX×4 roll to turn it on and dispel the horror. Should the character die, then Bugg-Shash departs for its own dimension, taking the body of the victim with it.

The final horror is that Bugg-Shash, who "wakes the very dead to his command," can reanimate anyone it has drowned. These undead servitors retain much of their earthly knowledge, can cast any magic they knew and can perform complex tasks (like sabotaging the lights).

Statistics: STR N/A, CON 40, SIZ 80, INT 21, POW 35, DEX 20, Hit Points 60, Move 7, Weapon Attk50%, Engulf 90%.

Armor: None, but Bugg-Shash will take minimum damage from firearms, ignoring impales. Fire and electricity do half damage but are more likely to dispel it (temporarily). Spells will affect Bugg-Shash.

SAN: If seen at the instant of dispelling (in a beam of light), 1D20/1. If the subject of attack, 1D20/1D3.

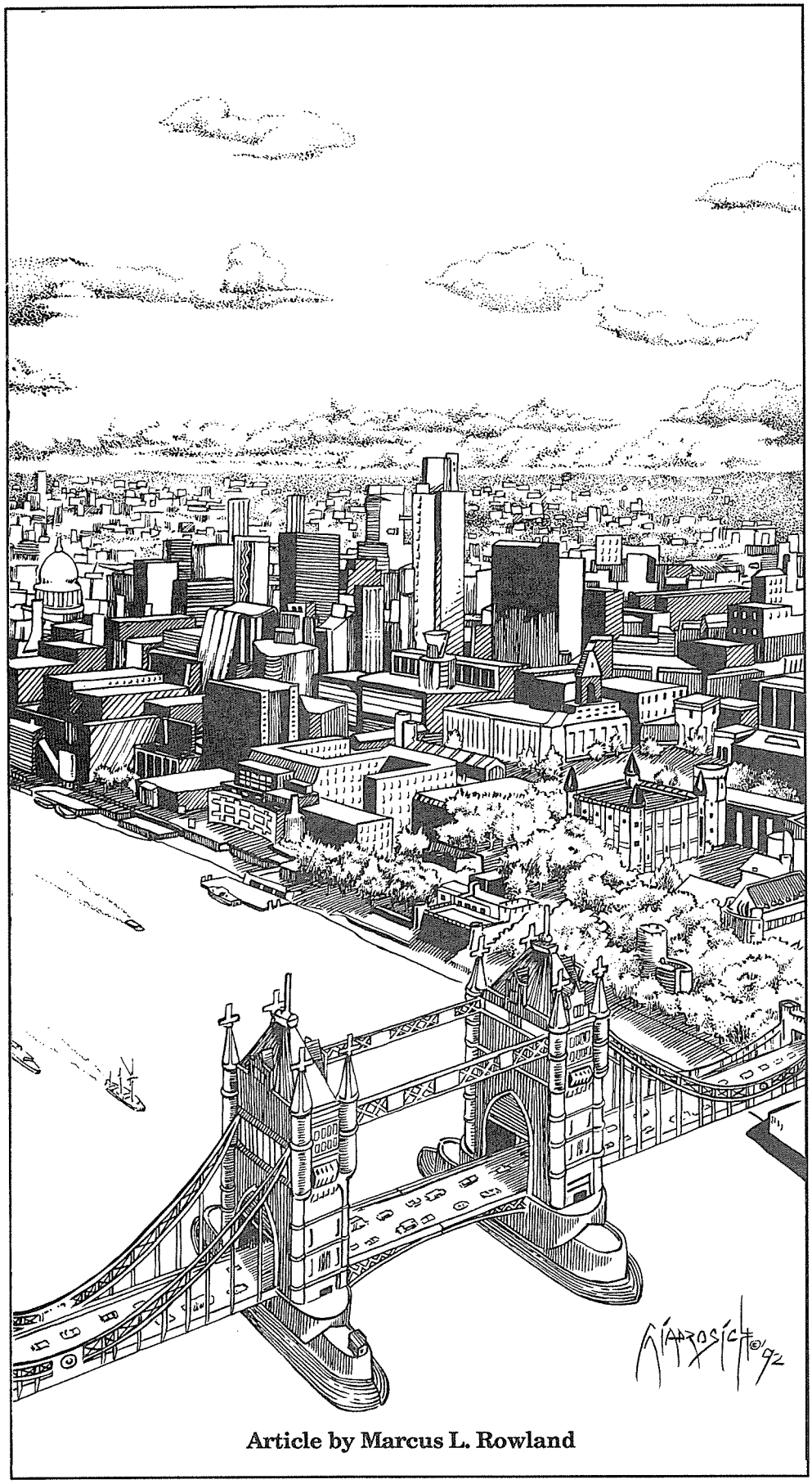
Game Suggestions

Kiss of Bugg-Shash: The investigators are visited one night by a frantic man who claims to be cursed by a "thing/demon" that visits him in the dark. He may be an associate of the investigators. Unless the characters are willing to help him, he will briefly turn the lights out, subjecting all present to the horrible "kiss" of Bugg-Shash. Needless to say, the investigators who have been visited are now prone to attacks themselves. Now they must help in banishing the thing—or suffer the same fate.

Revenge: An enemy invokes Bugg-Shash against the investigators, but makes a mistake in the summoning/binding and is carried off in their place. Soon he returns to this world, undead, slime coated and seeking revenge—revenge that Bugg-Shash is all too ready to assist with.

Summoning: The investigators discover the spell Call Bugg-Shash, and after learning the spell, decide to try it. During the summoning, either one of them or an assistant goes insane and oversteps the boundary or, worse, accidentally puts out the last candle. Ω

Conference Games



Article by Marcus L. Rowland

What RPG can involve 40 or more players, and often be played without rules or dice? Experienced roleplayers will probably think of freeform games, but there's an alternative that is usually ignored by gamers, but widely used in business, government, education and military planning.

Conference games simulate situations where organizations come into conflict. Players take on the role of officers in these organizations, military staff, senior police, lawyers and their clients, or management and unions. Contact between the organizations is controlled by the referee, and games revolve around the consequences of the decisions the teams make. Usually the referee is aided by runners who relay messages from the teams, but some games have made use of telephones and computer links. Several TV programs have used this system to simulate legal and military problems; examples have included NATO response to Soviet escalation and intelligence agency responses to persistent security leaks.

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MILITARY CONFERENCE GAMES

A classic military conference game is the blind staff wargame, where teams of officers give orders which are carried out by field units on a battleground that the players can't see. The officers know what orders they've given and occasionally get messages from the units they control, but unit movements and combat are carried out by referees who will do their best to (mis)understand orders and maintain the fog of war. The referees are the only people who know all the rules and can see all the movements of both sides. It's not uncommon for such games to include attacks on friendly or allied units, air raids on the wrong target, and other accidents caused by confusion and faulty intelligence.

Another military example for roleplayers is the Command and Control section of the *Star Trek RPG* starship combat rules, where players act out bridge combat duties. They don't just maneuver counters on a map board; each takes responsibility for starship systems, using control panels (sheets of paper with boxes) to keep track of power points allocated to various functions. For example, on the original *Enterprise*, Scotty controls 44 power points, which must be split between all the systems on the ship. He might give 20 points to the shields, 15 to weapons and the rest to movement. Spock monitors the sensors and controls the shields. Sulu follows the captain's orders to maneuver (move the ship counter) and open fire, but usually chooses the exact course and aiming point. Captain Kirk tries to keep track of what everyone else is doing and issues orders, but doesn't control any systems directly.

Since there's rarely enough power to go around, there's a continual struggle to use it effectively, and endless scope for misunderstandings and confusion. Although this system is usually used with a team of players controlling a ship, opposed to a referee who runs a ship single-handed, there's nothing to prevent the same system being used for several ships. Put a referee in between to move the ship counters and relay sensor information, and you have another interesting blind wargame.

ALTERNATIVES

Both of the above examples require combat systems and other aids, but it's possible to run some interesting conference games with nothing more than a few pieces of paper and some prepared background information. Running the game without rules forces players to concentrate on roleplaying, back-stabbing and persuasion.

One interesting example was a two-hour game run by ASTRA, a Scottish group interested in space travel, at the 1990 British SF convention. The idea was simple; roughly 40 players were divided into four teams representing the governments of the EEC, Japan, the USSR and the USA. Players chose cabinet posts and were given some background information on the world situation and their own resources, then told that an American space probe had run into possible alien contact near Saturn. Initially only America knew exact details of the encounter and the message received; everyone else was relying on information from spies and other intelligence sources. Runners took messages to the referee and back to the tables.

I can't give a full account of the organization of this game because I was one of the players, acting as the Soviet minister for broadcasting. Under the benign leadership of our party chairman, alias SF author John Brunner, and in the full spirit of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, we wrecked the referee's carefully prepared script.

We later heard that the game-plan called for hackers to break the story in week five, but by the end of day three, Russia and Japan had independently leaked the story to the Western press, most notably the *National Enquirer* and *Sunday Sport* (Britain's equivalent of the *Enquirer*), to embarrass America and force disclosure of the message. After a week, Russia was offering launcher space to all interested parties and had gone public to the extent of publishing a transcript of the alien signal in *Pravda*. My ministry ran an SF film season on TV and co-ordinated dozens of transmitters to send our own signal to Saturn. Other nations followed their own peculiar policies—paranoia from the USA, mutual distrust between Europe and Japan and total inscrutability from space. We never did find out if there were really aliens out there or what they were trying to tell us, but we had a lot of fun deciding how we'd react.

PITFALLS

The above scenario showed some of the pitfalls of conference games. All messages to the referee and to other teams were relayed by four runners, who were overworked and sometimes garbled the information they were trying to convey. Messages between the teams were the biggest problem; the system used meant that they were discussed by all four runners and the referee, and were often distorted by the time they reached their intended audience. The runners weren't always sure who knew what, and we sometimes learned things that were probably intended for other teams. At one stage, there was an outbreak of paper dart throwing as an alternate form of communication, but occasional useful signals were hidden in a blitz of spurious messages from Elvis (currently in heaven but still taking an interest in events on Earth), the aliens ("Eat plutonium death you disgusting mutant alien weirdos"), God, the Bavarian Illuminati, and L. Ron Hubbard. Afterward, most players agreed that it would have been better if representatives from the teams could have talked to each other directly, without the delays caused by the use of runners. Computers would be very good in this role; a terminal at each table, with each team able to talk to one or more of the other nations or the referee, and all messages copied to the referee. You could even simulate espionage by having some of the private messages relayed to the wrong audience.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Obviously, a lot depends on the number of players and their willingness to sustain their roles, and on the amount of work the referee wants to put into preparing characters and game plans. For example, in the alien contact game I've described, some of the players could have been double-agents, working for another nation or for the aliens themselves, or there could have been a power struggle between members of an uneasy coalition government. The degree of complication also depends on time; in a two-hour game, there isn't time to deal with important issues like the actual contents of the alien message, but a longer game could incorporate these details.

One thing that should always be considered is the time scale of the game. Twenty minutes seems to work well as the base time for order writing and discussion; 10 is definitely too short, and 30 is too long for a reasonable number of order cycles. The first contact scenario I've mentioned assumed that each 20-minute cycle was one day; if it had gone on longer, the referees were prepared to switch to one week or one month per order cycle. Volatile situations such as hostage negotiation might use a shorter scale, such as 20 minutes in real time representing an hour in game time.

SAMPLE GAMES

Below are some simple ideas for conference games. All need a lot of work preparing background information and game plans.

Is London Drowning?

A counter-terrorism game for one team.

Time scale: 20 minutes=one hour.

The players are members of the COBRA committee, the British Cabinet office that coordinates responses to terrorism. Interests represented include intelligence organizations, police, armed services, the prime minister and other cabinet members.

Gunmen claiming to be members of the terrorist organization of your choice have seized the Thames Barrier, a massive barrage that is used to stop flooding in London. They are making unreasonable demands—independence for Scotland, summary execution of the queen, release of political prisoners or whatever else seems appropriate. They say they have planted explosives, and they are holding several hostages. In five hours, it will be high tide. If the barrier is destroyed, much of central London will be flooded.

The committee must negotiate with the terrorists (via the referee), find out if they can follow through on their threat and prepare a plan for combating the terrorists. The referee relays reports from police and military units and the press, and uses a prepared terrorist plan to react to the actions ordered by the team.

There are a lot of ways to complicate this scenario. For example, one of the players could be a double-agent with a secret radio link to the terrorists, or the terrorists could be agents of a "friendly" power, staging an operation to discredit their enemies. Optionally, the committee game can be followed by a combat game using any suitable system; the British forces must begin by obeying the orders drafted in the cabinet game, even if they prove to be disastrously bad.

Useful Sources: *GURPS Special Ops* (Steve Jackson Games), *Top Secret/S.I.* commando supplement (TSR), *Temps* (Roc books), numerous novels and films.

Hey Diddle Diddle

A fantasy game for several national governments.

Time scale: 20 minutes=one day.

The solar system has fallen through a hole in the space-time continuum and come out in a universe where the laws of nature are a little different: Magic works. This has caused a few problems, but after a couple of years, people have gotten used to the idea and can cope with routine spells (and defenses against them) in their daily lives. Naturally, magic is now the cutting edge of "technology."

Magical researchers in Ecuador recently discovered that suitably enchanted beans grow an enormously tall stalk.

The top of the stalk wrapped around the Moon last week, and the Moon has stopped orbiting the Earth and is now tethered at the top of the stalk. This is all very odd, but the laws of celestial mechanics in this universe apparently allow it. Some intrepid astronauts have climbed the stalk (using seven-league boots to make the journey a little easier) and have discovered that the Moon now appears to be made of cheese. It's very good cheese, in a variety of flavors, and shipping it back to Earth should be easy. Ecuador claims the Moon (after all, it's now tethered above Quito), but is prepared to sell mining rights at very reasonable rates.

Faced with these facts, the cheese-producing nations of the world must brainstorm a solution to the economic problems of a near-infinite supply of cheesy comestibles. There's also going to be a glut of giant beans. Meanwhile, branches of the stalk are heading inexorably toward the Milky Way, which spectroscopy suggests may really be made of milk. Is this the end of dairy farming as we know it?

To complicate the scenario, the astronauts suspect that there may be other things at the top of the beanstalk, not necessarily friendly. Fee Fie Foe Fum.

Useful Sources: *Shadowrun* (FASA), *Spelljammer* (TSR), *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes, A Report on the Nature of the Lunar Surface* (John Brunner).

The End is Nigh

An SF scenario for several national governments.

Time scale: 20 minutes=one month.

Scientists have discovered conclusive proof that the galactic core is exploding. In approximately two years, the Earth will be bathed in lethal radiation, and it seems likely that the sun will go nova as the wave-front of charged particles hits it.

It may be possible to keep the secret for a year; after that, the situation will rapidly deteriorate.

There is no hope whatever of saving the human race; the best the governments of the world can hope to do is keep a lid on the situation and maintain order.

Of course, that isn't necessarily what they want to do—there are old scores to settle, and anarchy or a nuclear war or two wouldn't make much difference at this stage.

Referees who don't like total doom may prefer to use a slightly different scenario, where the sun is about to go nova but a few hundred survivors may be able to escape if enough nations cooperate to build a starship. That just leaves the tiny problem of deciding who'll be aboard, and persuading the population of most of Earth to join in the greatest engineering feat in history.

Useful Sources: *One in Three Hundred* (J. T. McIntosh), *The Songs of Distant Earth* (Arthur C. Clarke), *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (David Bowie). Ω

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feedback

Challenge 66

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Tales from the Forlorn Hope

R. Talsorian Games. $10.00.
Written by William Moss.
104-page adventure supplement for *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.*
Published in 1992.
Review by Craig Sheeley.

This is R. Talsorian's first official *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.* adventure supplement. And while published adventures have always been a low point of *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0* material, this book more than makes up for it.

Tales From the Forlorn Hope is a location sourcebook, with eight adventures drawn from the NPCs associated with the Forlorn Hope. The Hope is a mercenaries' bar located just on the fringes of Night City's Central Business District—close enough to the CBD for easy access by potential employers and far enough into the Combat Zone to scare away the casual and curious. A bar started by a former special forces soldier, the place caters to ex-military mercs in general and ex-special forces personnel in particular. Interviews with the staff and regulars, floorplans of the multilevel Forlorn Hope (formerly the Hotel Sierra), and statistics for the staff and regular NPCs round out the background section.

The rest of the book is made up of the eight adventures, arranged in such a way as to provide a sort of mini-campaign, with the player characters gradually inching their way into acceptance at the Hope, accompanying regulars on their jobs and jaunts. The adventures can be played in any order the GM desires, and they encompass all sorts of mercenary action, ranging from the special forces-style operation of "Agency Job" through a road trip to disaster (Mad Max fans will love it), all the way to Rambo-style hostage rescue and grudge matches between heavy hitters (with the PCs stuck in the middle). The adventures even head off into left field with a trip to Transylvanian terror and a night out with the Dirty Pair! Sure, they're named Roxxi and Kissy here, but there's no mistaking Kei and Yuri. Sadistic GMs will have great fun with this one. I did.

EVALUATION

In case my opinion hasn't leaked through above, here's my verdict: Thumbs up. The bar and its NPCs are well-written, the adventures are fun, short (one-nighters) and fairly easy to follow, with ample maps and GM aids. One problem that cropped up had to do with a lack of easy access to the main NPC profiles—the main NPCs for each adventure should have had their stats included somewhere in the adventure text in order to prevent the annoyance of constantly flipping back to the front of the book to look at them. Another problem was the accidental omission of interior maps to the first adventure in the series. The maps to the Steiner Building can be acquired by contacting R. Talsorian Games and asking for them.

This is an exceptional product, physically. It's very large for the price—normally, such a supplement would run $12-15. The cover art is good—this is expected—and the interior art is excellent! Darrel Midgette (of *Macho Women With Guns* fame) and Chris Hockabout have similar art styles, as well as a sense of humor to match the author's.

If you like Cyb*erpunk 2.0.2.0.,* buy this. And I'm sure that you'll join me in looking forward for William Moss' next publication.

GURPS Illuminati

Steve Jackson Games. $16.95.
Written by Nigel D. Findley.
128-page sourcebook for GURPS.
Published in 1992.
Review by Craig Sheeley.

They dictated the oil crisis. *They* fluoridated the water. *They* caused World War II, Korea, the Cuban Missile Crisis, Vietnam. *They* choose the leaders. *They* make sure there's nothing good on TV. *They* orchestrated JFK's assassination. *They* are responsible for Elvis' disappearance. Perhaps Elvis was even one of *them*. Who are *they*? *They* are the Enlightened Ones. *They* are the Illuminati.

GURPS Illuminati explores the idea of roleplaying in a world of conspiracy, of secret societies and hidden masters, of coincidence and synchronicity. Author Nigel Findley apparently possesses the warped and convoluted sense of whimsy necessary to approach the subject with the correct attitude of mixed intrigue and humor. He digs back into the past to present a capsule history of the Bavarian Illuminati, which serves as a springboard into paranoia.

Conspiracies abound in this dark world. Everywhere you look, there's something happening that seems strange, weird or just off. Things just seem to "work out" in disturbing patterns, and it's no great stretch of the imagination to conceive of sinister figures working behind the scenes to manipulate the whole of mankind.

And that's describing the *real* world! *GURPS Illuminati* simply gives it a sideways twist and assumes that all the conspiracy theories are true. There really is a group (or groups!) of people controlling the destiny of mankind for their own ends, moving humans and nations like pawns on a worldwide chessboard. There are a very few people who tip aside the veil of secrecy and see the truth, and they are silenced before they can do any harm.

GURPS Illuminati gives wonderful and funny information about the various Illuminati groups. The "50 Awful Things About The Illuminati" is a list worthy of David Letterman (and somewhat disturbing). Theories about the Illuminatis made familiar by the *Illuminati Card Game* are presented, with possible motives and methods of operation. The phenomenon of the Men in Black is examined, possible *Illuminati GURPS* player characters explored, and adventure situations presented. There is even a section on how to use the card game to fabricate Illuminati plots and adventure backgrounds, a natural development.

The main strength of this worldbook is that the conspiracy theory of the Illuminati can be plugged into almost any other genre (one of the strengths of the GURP*S* system, by the way)! The idea of secret masters is perfect for inclusion into *GURPS Prisoner* and vice versa! Think about it—doesn't The Village seem a natural for certain Illuminatis? And the idea of hidden conspiracies fits into GURP*S Horror, GURPS Cyberpunk, GURPS Space* and *GURPS Time Travel,* too. It is truly a supplement sourcebook and begs to be used in conjunction with other worlds—by itself, it's too predictable. There is no fun in being paranoid when you know that they really are out to get you.

Items of note include the book's cover—through a clever printing trick, the solid black of the cover is overlaid with "illuminated" phrases that can be read when the book is tilted into the light just right (the lead phrase is "Disclaimer: We have no wish to offend you unless you're a twit."). And the book is studded with delicious one-liner cartoons. Alexis Gilliand did these jokes over a decade ago about conspiracy, paranoia and politics, and they're still extremely timely and funny.

EVALUATION

GURPS Illuminati is one of this

season's bestsellers for Steve Jackson Games, outselling even their masterpiece, *Hacker.* This is not to say that there are a lot of people out there who buy the conspiracy theory, or that there are a lot of gamers wanting to actually play the game of paranoia (West End Games' *Paranoia* has *nothing* on this!). More likely, there are a lot of people who appreciate a good product and a funny read.

Of course, the book might just be another one of *their* plots to discredit the conspiracy theorists—self-ridicule is an effective tool for that purpose. So go ahead and buy this. Read it. Believe it. Or don't. It's all the same either way, to us.

Tharkold

The Sourcebook of Techno-Horror Reality.

West End Games. $18.00.

Written by Paul Hume and Greg Gorden.

144-page sourcebook for the *Torg* gaming system.

February 1992.

Review by Dirk DeJong.

Like West End's other *Torg* products, *Tharkold,* West End's techno-horror worldbook for *Torg,* is a high-quality, perfect-bound book; the type is easy to read; and, for the most part, the rules, tables and equipment lists are where they are supposed to be, with large, easy-to-find headings to direct you to them.

In this worldbook, you find yourself in Los Angeles, one changed by the invasion of the technologically oriented demons from the cosm of Tharkold. While much of LA retains its quaint flavor of gang wars, casual murder and assorted other forms of violence, the demons' coming has introduced some rather ingenious new ways of upping the body count. Some of the monsters introduced are not as scary as the upgunned gangs that roam the streets of this transformed landscape, and while the city has not physically changed very much, the mood definitely has. Add to this one of the most interesting political scenes so far in the *Torg* setup, and you have the background for a good (?) time. But somehow, it just doesn't live up to what you expect.

Tharkold is one of the two largest *Torg* worldbooks so far released, and as such came with perhaps the highest expectations. An overview of the book reveals that, like its sister worldbooks, *Tharkold* contains a history of the invading cosm; a history of the invaded area; a timeline of the invasion to date, including the changes in both the invaded area and its neighbors; a rundown of the relations Tharkold has with the other invaders and Core Earth; a list of major personalities whom you might meet or who will influence your stay in Tharkold; religious, magical, cybernetics and netrunning rules; equipment lists; descriptions of what the axiom changes mean to you and the area invaded; special laws for the nature of Tharkold; and a section on how to create some special character types just for Tharkold.

The cosm of Tharkold is one forever at war with itself, as human and demon strive to wipe each other out, resulting in some rather incongruous items, like a society with advanced cyberware, but nothing beyond a late 1990s-design jet. Even the special world rules and axioms reflect the nature of this special reality by having the first split axioms in the *Torg* system (i.e., the Social Axiom is 20 unless the social interaction is of a nonviolent nature, when it falls to 11 or 12). In fact, the entire social structure of *Tharkold* is based on dominance and submission, with everyone intriguing against everyone else, to gain a higher place in the hierarchy. Those who don't fit in the hierarchy are branded renegade and hunted down. At this point in development, *Tharkold* only encompasses the city of Los Angeles, though future updates may include other major cities. It is definitely a system for urban play, though it could conceivably be used for rural or wilderness settings.

The religious, magical, cybernetics and netrunning systems are extensive, interlinked and more complex than any previously put forth for *Torg.* In fact, they are so complex that to get all of the rules you not only need *Tharkold* and the basic system, but also *The Cyberpapacy, The GodNet, Aysle* and *Pixaud's Practical Grimoire.* The rules are different than the other systems, but the majority of the material included in this book seems to assume that you have a working knowledge of those other systems. In some places, particularly the magic and technomagic areas, entire concepts that are central to the system are not explained, it being assumed that you know the material in question or will buy the worldbook or supplement that contains it. However, the cybernetics setup is rather complete on its own, and the netrunning rules are a complete system, though it is noted that this is intended as a "quick" system just to get netrunning results, not have a netrunning adventure.

HIGH POINTS

The monster and equipment lists are the high points of this book as they are as full and complete as any I've seen in *Torg.* The equipment lists and rules are excellent, though overly combat-oriented, and include the ability to design your own equipment and have it manufactured. If the rest of this book had lived up to this standard, I would have been ecstatic. Even the monsters are good for the most part, scary and deadly as they should be. This cosm is no place for creatures that can be killed easily.

LOW POINTS

There are some serious problems with the system, not the least of which is the lack of information about certain topics, the presence of which has been taken for granted in the other *Torg* worldbooks. As an example, while you are told what is going on with Nippon Tech's relations with Tharkold, any information about Orrorsh is left out, which is particularly puzzling as Orrorsh's current leader is a Tharkoldu demon prince. And while many references are made to the stelae surrounding LA, no real information is included other than the fact that a currently damaged device was supposed to control them and that they teleport. This, in a system whose purported end is to have you destroy these stelae? There's not even a description of the maelstrom bridge that the Tharkoldu created. For fairness sake, it should be noted that the forthcoming LA sourcebook and the *Torg* comic contain some of this material, but it should have been included in this book, not in two or three others. Cutting down on some of the wordiness of the introduction would have allowed plenty of space for the omitted items.

EVALUATION

Now to the question of whether or not you should buy *Tharkold.* For those of you who love *Torg,* you'll probably buy this no matter what. Just don't say I didn't warn you about its shortcomings. For the rest of you, even if I didn't consider West End's pricing policy to be ridiculous in many cases, this is one book I wouldn't recommend. If the people at West End are reading, I say that a good rewrite—paying attention to what's been left out and creating a system that doesn't require buying almost $70 of extra books to make it really work—is definitely in order. Better luck next time, guys. Ω

classifieds

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PLAYERS WANTED

STAR TREK RPG: Are you a northwest Indiana Trekker who wants live adventure as well as tabletop thrills? Then beam aboard the USS *Ainsworth*, Indiana's premier *Star Trek* club. Our ship is a chapter of the International Federation of Trekkers. For free information and application, send a large SASE to the USS *Ainsworth*, Box 5292, Lake Station, IN 46405. (66)

STAR WARS RPG enthusiasts/players needed by intermediate GM in the Pittsburgh, PA area. Campaigning, adventuring in the *Star Wars* style. Contact Edgar B. Schodde, PO Box 10142, Pittsburgh, PA 15232-0142 for details. (66)

LOOKING FOR gamers in southeast Nebraska, southwest Iowa, northeast Kansas or northwest Missouri. Preferred game system is *Shadowrun*, although I also enjoy *GURPS, Vampire* and **Dark Conspiracy**. Also looking for playtesters for adventures/sourcebook material for these systems. Benjamin J. Rogers, RR 1, Box 1, Stella, NE 68442. (66)

TORONTO TWILIGHT COMMUNICATIONS BBS. Specializing in RPGs on-line as well as networked. RPG message bases. BBS # (416) 733-9012. Free new user access. (66)

PLAYERS INTERESTED in a *Cyberpunk* corporations PBM please write to Ross Mackenzie, 3 Dunlin Close, Sandpipers Estate, Kingswinford, West Midlands, United Kingdom DY6 8XP. Some knowledge of *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.* is helpful but not essential. (66)

NEED PLAYERS in Michigan in the Macomb County, Rome or Washington area. For *Shadowrun, Cyberpunk, Rifts, AD&D, Star Wars, Cthulhu, Floating Vagabond, Car Wars, Vampire*, and many others. Contact Steve Matovski, 39504 Della Rosa, Sterling Heights, MI 48313. (65)

ATTENTION GMs in NE Ohio/western Pennsylvania area. New gaming society is looking for experienced game masters for *Call of Cthulhu, Chill,* **MegaTraveller**, *AD&D, RuneQuest* and others. Write to Bruce Jones, 1236 Robbins Ave., #2, Niles, OH 44446. (65)

GAMERS WANTED in Maryland. Players of *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0., Shadowrun, Star Fleet Battles* and other games please contact MD Gamers, 9984 Guilford Road, Suite 102, Columbia, MD 20794-3931. And ask about our upcoming BBS! (65)

PLAYERS WANTED! *The Borderlands of Khataj* is an open-ended, high-complexity, GM-done FRP PBM game. Character races include half-dwarves, half-ogres, deep gnomes and more than 20 others. Extended turns for US players. Contact Mailed Gauntlets, 189 First Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4M 1X3. (65)

THE CITY OF BRADFORD Roleplayers Guild is a club for all ages. If you have never roleplayed before, have become bored with boardgames, or would like to contact other roleplayers, then get in touch. Contact The City of Bradford Roleplayers Guild, c/o The Guildmaster of Administration, 54 Blackshaw Drive, Buttershaw, Bradford, West Yorkshire, England BD6 2AY. (65)

LOOKING FOR players/GMs for **Twilight: 2000** or **Dark Conspiracy** in Pinellas County, FL or Baltimore area (moving this fall). Contact Steve Enzor, 506 13th Ave. NW, Largo, FL 34640. (64)

ARMORCLADS is an exciting sci-fi arena combat PBM game. You control your stable of warriors as they battle other warriors in huge, humanoid-shaped tanks. Once you step into the arena, there is only one law—do or die! For free information, write to DVS Productions, 45 Mountain Ave., Fairfield, ME 04937. (64)

PEN PALS wanted for lonely inmate/gamer. I need some interesting reading. All welcome. All answered. Send stamp. Eddie Stahl, #21101, PO Box 19100, Jean, WV 89026. (64)

LOOKING TO JOIN players of board wargames and **Twilight: 2000** or **2300 AD** RPG in the Suffolk/Nassau Cty areas of Long Island. J. Broder, 41 Hunting Hills Drive, Dix Hills, NY 11746. (64)

SHADOWRUN players wanted in Houston area. Anyone interested please contact Austin Govella, 10015 Cane Creek, Houston, TX 77070. (63)

NEED PLAYERS of **Dark Conspiracy**, *Cyberpunk* or any Palladium game (*Rifts* is okay but hard to run). Have experienced game master. Write to Nick Christenson, 2191 Spinning Sheel, Cincinnati, OH 45244. (61)

CAR-PGa Inc., a nonprofit organization, is looking for dedicated gamers who want to advance the hobby through positive public awareness and defense from censorship. To join or to receive free informative literature, write to CAR-PGa, 111 E. 5th., Bonham, TX 75418. *Please enclose 52¢ postage.* (61)

PLAYERS WANTED for a *Living Steel* play-by-mail game. Swords and Alpha team members are needed to secure a base of power on the planet Rhand. For more information, please send a SASE to David Peters, 5422 Pine Glen Road, La Crescenta, CA 91214. (60)

FOR SALE

JTAS 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 (very good condition), plus FASA *Adventure-Class Starships Vol. I-II* (mint). Best offer. Contact John Kovalic, P.O. Box 9461, Madison, WI 53715-0471. (66)

WARGAMES and supplements from the '70s and '80s. Many out-of-print titles from Metagaming, SPI, TSR and Yaquinto. Molst in perfect or good condition. Send SASE for list to Gary Kalin, 1026 Timberfield Drive, Ballwin, MO 63021. (66)

TRAVELLER, *Runequest, Rolemaster, Spacemaster, Shadowrun* and *GURPS* books and games for sale. Most in good condition. Send SASE to Kevin Knight, 6520 US Highway 60 East, Henderson, KY 42420. (66)

ITEMS FOR *BattleTech* (*Compendium, Technical Readout 3025, Mechwarrior* 1st ed.) and **Dark Conspiracy** (rulebook, **PC Booster Kit**). Also *Middle-Earth* boxed set. Contact Steve Matovski, 39504 Della Rosa, Sterling Heights, MI 48313. (65)

USED RPGs for sale or trade. Contact Eric Nelson, 2401 W. Broadway #1107, Columbia, MO 65203. (62)

VINTAGE **TRAVELLER** ITEMS, wide magazine selection: *Space Gamer, S&T, F&M.* Diverse mint game collection must go: civil war, roleplaying, science fiction, *AD&D*, WWII-III. Priced to sell. For list, write to Andrew Pierce, 7825 SW 57th Ave., Apt. C, Miami, FL 33143. (61)

MARTIAN METALS 15mm miniatures for **Traveller**, all in original blister packets. K'kree, Zhodani, Sword Worlds, Darrian, Citizens, Patrons, Striker Force, Air/Raft, etc. For list, send SASE to Paul Sanders, 612 S. Patton Ct., Denver, CO 80219. (61)

TRADE

TRAVELLER information exchange. I wish to trade photocopies of out-of-print **Traveller** books, supplements, adventures, fanzines, articles, etc. Please send a list to Larry Davis, H-8 Casa Grande Dr., Liverpool, NY 13090. (61)

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JTAS 4 and DGP's *Referee's Kit.* Contact John Kovalic, P.O. Box 9461, Madison, WI 53715-0471. (66)

TWILIGHT: 2000 1st edition products: **Going Home, Pirates of the Vistula, Ruins of Warsaw, Black Madonna, RDF Sourcebook, Armies of the Night.** Contact Dexter Davis, 924 East 48th St., Brooklyn, NY 11203. (66)

GAME SCIENCE rules of *The Petal Throne*, any rules supplements and miniatures. Please send list with price and condition to David Peters, 5422 PineGlen Road, La Crescenta, CA 91214. (65)

BETA/VHS copy of 1979 *Star Wars Christmas Special.* Contact Gotham Highlanders, 120 Gorrion Ave., Ventura, CA 93004. (65)

CHALLENGE 36, 37, 40, 45, 46, 48, 57. I would prefer originals, but photocopies will do. Also, any *Striker* 15mm miniatures. Any reasonable price. Send details to Joe Boeke, 2520 Camino del Sol, Fullerton, CA 92633-4825. (65)

25MM **TRAVELLER** miniatures from Grenadier. Prefer unpainted, but will consider painted if in good condition. Will trade duplicates of other **Traveller** miniatures or old **Traveller** material, or will pay cash. I am expecially interested in the following numbers (found on the bases): T-2, T-6, T-7, T-10, T-12, T-15, T-27, T-29 through T-35, T-40, T-41 and (if they exist) T-47+. Also, the boxed set of about 12 figures. Contact David Pildner, 3984 Massillon Road, Apt. D, Uniontown, OH 44685. (65)

CALL OF CTHULHU magazine articles for bibliography I am writing. Have all **Challenge**, *Different Worlds, White Dwarf* and *White Wolf* articles. Mainly need fanzine, nongaming and foreign magazine appearances. Information needed: magazine name, issue, article name, author(s), type of article (scenario, rules, spells/books, essay on Lovecraft...), plus any pertinent notes. Willing to trade copies of articles. Anyone helping will be listed on credits if article published and sent copy of bibliography. Brent Heustess, 4305 Duval St #107, Austin, TX 78751. (64)

LOOKING TO PURCHASE **Twilight: 2000** modules **Armies of the Night** and **RDF Sourcebook**. Will pay reasonable amount over cover price and shipping. J. Broder, 41 Hunting Hills Drive, Dix Hills, NY 11746. (64)

HELP! I'm a struggling RPG gamer and novice GM who is incarcerated in the Arizona prison system with no funds. Would any fellow RPG gamers be willing to help by donating *AD&D* (2nd edition), **2300 AD**, **MegaTraveller**, **Space: 1889**, *BattleTech, Shadowrun, Marvel Super-Heroes* gamebooks, novels or magazines, or any **Challenge**, *Dragon, Dungeon, White Dwarf* or *Polyhedron* magazines? Photocopies would be greatly appreciated. Please send whatever you can to Richard Steinberg, #69458, Arizona State Prison, Florence/smu, PO Box 4000, Florence, AZ 85232. (64)

MORROW PROJECT and *AfterMath* material/ideas. Contact A. W., PO Box 69, New Almaden, CA 95042-0069. (64)

DRAGONTOOTH, Archive, Heritage miniatures. Will pay reasonable prices for fantasy, sci-fi/historical miniatures. Also interested in old Martian Metals 15mm **Traveller** figures. Mitchell White, 1418 Basilan Lane, Nassau Bay, TX 77058. (64)

HELP! While I was away, all my original **Traveller** was stolen. I *desperately* need photocopies of everything by GDW and Digest Group but **Book 4, 76 Patrons**, *Grand Survey* and *Grand Census*. Anything readable okay. Will pay expenses, if necessary, but outright altruism also appreciated. Also would like copies of all Traveller News Service bits except those in **Journal 26-28** and **Challenge 54+**. Send to John R. Barton, c/o Katrina Reef, 900 S. Baker St., Unit 2220, Linfield College, McMinnville, OR 97128. (63)

LOOKING FOR the *BattleTech* novels *Mercenary's Star* and *The Sword and the Stars,* published by FASA. Will pay any reasonable price for a complete copy of either. Michael Gray, 1909 Winterset Parkway, Marietta, GA 30067. (63)

SHADOWRUNNERS or cyberpunks wanted to send ideas on new cyberwear, weapons, spells, vehicles and other gear. Particularly wanted are programs and gear specifically for the decker or netrunner character class, plus scenario ideas for the Houston and Texas locales. Will trade ideas. Send ideas to Austin Govella, 10015 Cane Creek, Houston, TX 77070. (63)

SUPERIOR STARSHIP MODELS, Any types, painted or unpainted. Also looking for Superior catalog with photos/drawings of the starships they produced. Jed Docherty, 400 Grant Ave., Highland Park, NJ 08904. (62)

A COPY OF FGU's *Bunnies and Burrows* and/or a boardgame titled *Christians and Lions*. Willing to buy or trade for this material. Eric Nelson, 2401 W. Broadway #1107, Columbia, MO 65203. (62)

STILL SEEKING *Security Leak* and *Third Imperium* fanzines. Originals or photocopies. Willing to pay all copy and postage costs, or trade for other materials. Contact Richard Artis, 151 G. Meadow Place, Hope, IN 47246-9441. (61)

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK RPG and all adventures. Willing to pay reasonable price. Contact Patrick Morgan, 3905 Northern Lights Drive, Pocatello, ID 83201-5934. (61)

ANY PROFESSIONAL or personal work, article, background, etc. dealing with *Star Trek*'s Vulcans or any similar pacifist/logical/scientifically advanced race in any science-fiction RPG (Transhumans, etc.) Please write to Jean-Francois Virey, 17 rue St. Andre, 59800 Lille, France. (61)

ANY AND ALL *FGU Space Opera* supplements/modules, including the following star sector atlas/sourcebooks: *The Galactic Peoples Republic, The Hiss, The Sikozant Belt.* I will buy or pay for photocopies. Contact M. Yount, PO Box 1744, Corbin, KY 40701. (61)

LASERBURN rules, scenarios, miniatures. Send any information to Paul Sanders, 612 S. Patton Ct., Denver, CO 80219. (61)

FANZINES

ALLIANCE ADDRESS: The only known *Star Wars* roleplaying 'zine in the galazy needs subscribers and contributors. We are open for submissions and ideas. Send a large SASE for information to Universe Publications, PO Box 10142, Pittsburgh, PA 15232-0142. (66)

APART newsletter is free and covers a wide range of games and topics, with computer game reviews, plus RPG articles and scenarios. Send your name and address for a free copy. We are also looking for submissions from authors and artists (unpaid). Write to David P. Kufner, PO Box 373, Barpt, HI 96862-373. (66)

AMBERZINE is now published by Phage Press, PO Box 519, Detroit, MI 48231-0519. (64)

HORROR GAMING APAZINE seeks participants. Focus will be on **Dark Conspiracy**, *Call of Cthulhu, Vampire* and *Chill.* Fiction and other games accepted. For more information, please write to Dan Snuffin, TESC Building D, Room 114D, Olympia, WA 98505. (63)

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITANNIC TECHNLOGICAL SOCIETY, a newsletter dedicated to the **Space: 1889** RPG, is seeking art and article submissions relating to Victorian SF adventure. For submission guidelines, please send a SASE to *The Journal of the Britannic Technological Society*, c/o Dragonshead Gaming Concepts Ltd., 21W127 Tee Lane #3, Itasca, IL 60143. (63)

MELBOURNE TIMES: Newsletter of the Earth Colonies Development League provides background material for completely new, non-Imperium campaign setting. Features include news service, world briefs, character sketches, sophont descriptions, corporate portfolios, political analysis, cultural events and more. Subscribers and contributors send SASE to *Melbourne Times*, c/o David Johnson, 2800 NASA Road One #514, Seabrook, TX 77586. Overseas include three IRCs. (62)

MOTIVE: An Amateur Press Alliance (APA) which covers all aspects of the RPG hobby, is looking for new members. Members contribute to and receive a 200-page (+/–), bimonthly APA. RPGs most often covered are *MERP*, *HERO* System, **Twilight: 2000**, *CoC, Shadowrun* and *BattleTech.* Please write to Wayne Peacock, 190 Reed St., Athens, GA 30605. (60)

THE SWORD & BLASTER: A new publication detailing games and groups in the Atlanta, GA, area, is now available. The publication covers all aspects of roleplaying and boardgames, including reviews, poetry, game schedules, group contacts and much more. For information, contact Jeff Leggett, 2102-B Wexford Dr., Norcross, GA 30071. (60)

next issue

Don't miss ***Challenge 67****, available in December.*

Merc: 2000
Operation: Boomerang

A chief coordinator of CIA operations in southeast Europe sends the PCs a priority message and airline tickets to Switzerland. Are they interested in making a little money?

By John T. Swann

Twilight: 2000
All That Glitters

Something is up when the Soviets attack a US Army garrison in Poland for no apparent reason.

By Andrew Borelli

MegaTraveller
Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

For a brief moment in interstellar history, it seemed as if ignorance and racism had been defeated. Unfortunately, Hard Times have changed all that.

By James Maliszewski

Personal Weapons

Discover the "missing links" in the evolution of slugthrowers up through TL13, with a natural upgrade of military small arms from TL6-13 and an additional selection of civilian firearms to "beat the law level."

By Ken Pick

Outback

With increasingly divided Solo-mani forces on their doorstep and fierce competition for resources dominating every world, Khulam is an area full of opportunities for adventure, profit and danger!

By Charles E. Gannon



2300 AD
Old Enemies

A prospecting vessel is mysteriously attacked while on a routine mine mission in this **Star Cruiser** adventure.

By Michael C. LaBossiere

Cyberpunk 2020
What Goes Up

PCs engaged in a simple courier job are thrown into the midst of industrial contamination.

By Michael C. LaBossiere

Space: 1889
To Rescue a Lady Fair

It is the promise of cold, hard cash that pries most great dis-coverers and explorers from their homes and sends them into the mysterious boundries of known space.

By Craig Sheeley

Shadowrun
Nega-Magicians

Experts scoffed at the ridiculous theories of Professor Matthew Hawkins. Imagine their embarrassment when two years later he reappeared with Miles Freeman, the world's first nega-magician.

By David Perry

Dark Conspiracy
Mall Rats

A teenager disappears at the local mall. Police log her as a possible runaway, but something darker may be lurking beneath the incident.

By James L. Cambias

Star Wars
Buried Treasure

A few surprises await the PCs when circumstances force them to make for the Muugrah system to repair their starship.

By Greg Videll

High Colonies
Soldier Ants

A shuttle has failed to arrive on schedule. When a cloud of debris is spotted with the orbital parameters expected of the shuttle, the PCs are sent to investigate.

By Andy Slack

Cthulhu by Gaslight
Death on the Docks

The news sweeping London in late October 1893 is that Jack the Ripper is back plying his trade in the back alleys of Whitechapel and Stepney.

By Robert James Christensen

BattleTech
On the Cutting Edge

Introducing the Apple Churchill Hawkeye 4077 weapon linkage system. No longer will the enemy sneer at a machinegun-armed 'Mech!

By Vincent J. Tognarelli and Ryan Gore

Referee Tips
Changelings

Tips for translating characters, equipment and entire campaigns between gaming systems.

By Andy Slack

Reviews

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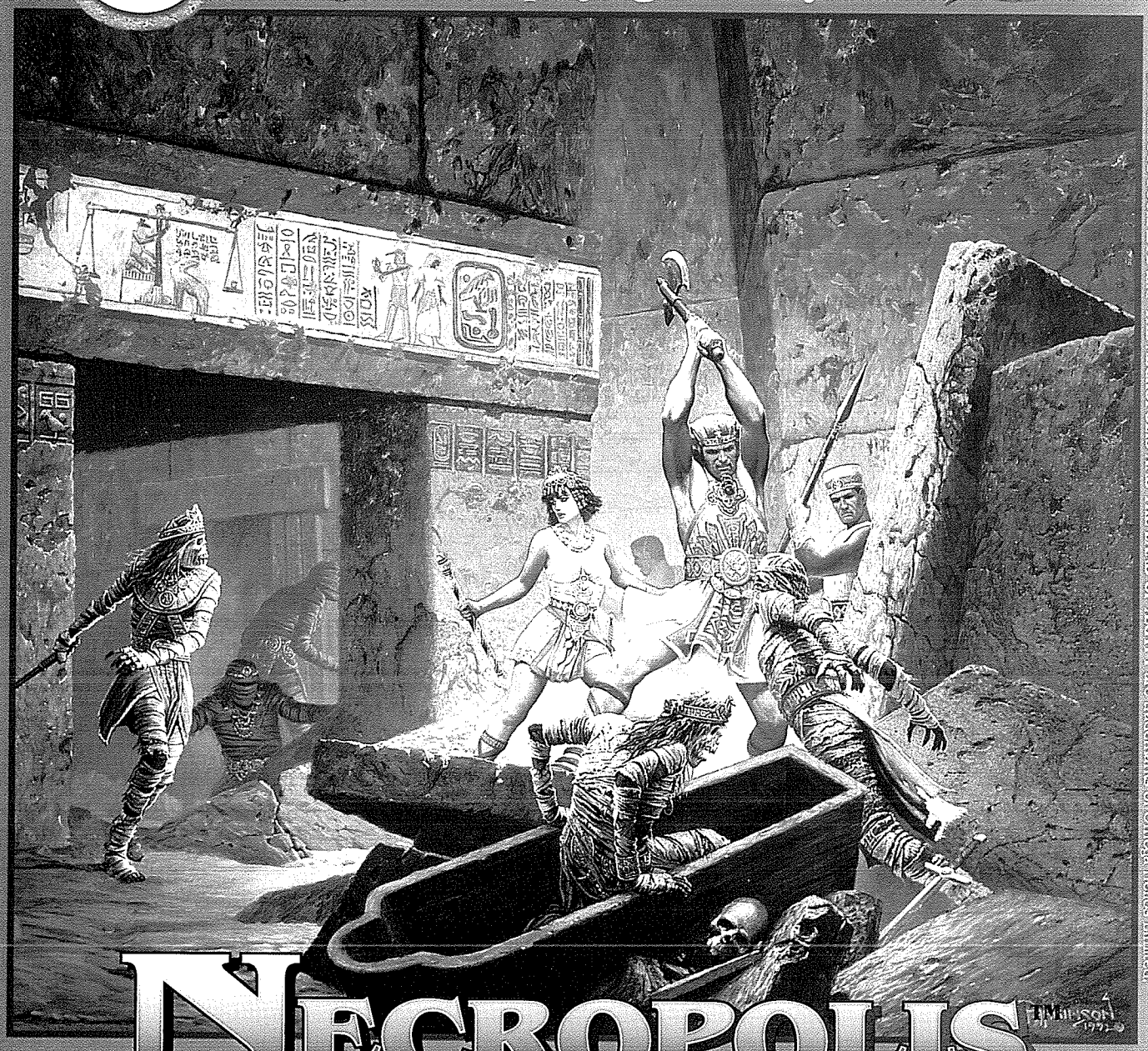
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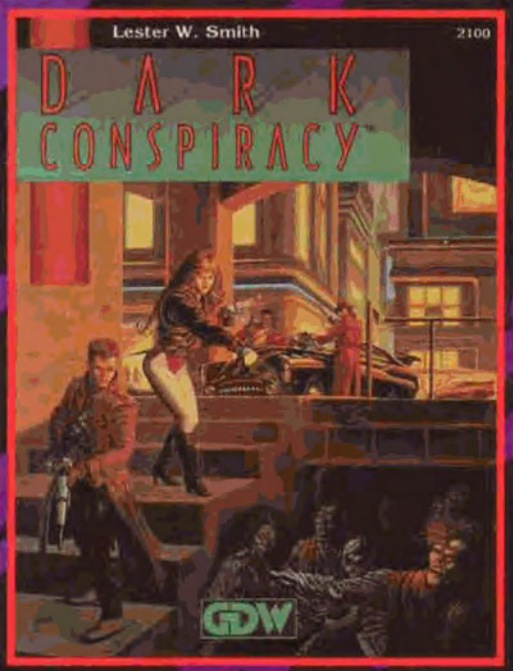
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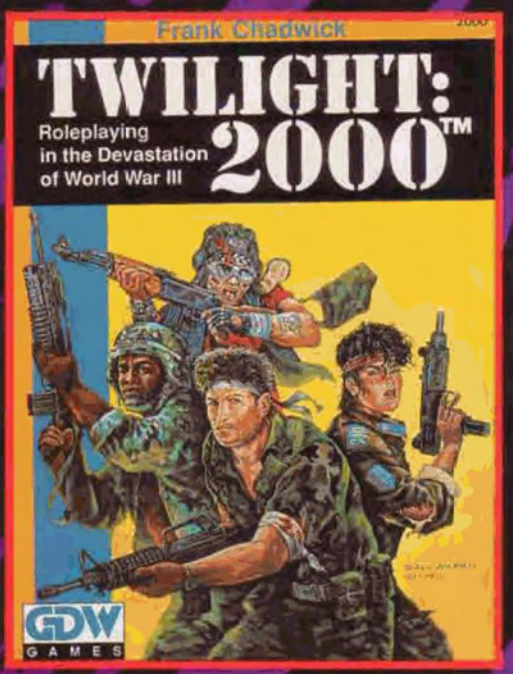
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