

Special HORROR Issue

# CHALLENGE™

# 54

The Magazine of Science-Fiction Gaming

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MEGATRAVELLER®

To Sleep,  
Perchance  
to Scream

*Charles E. Gannon*

TWILIGHT: 2000™

Seeing is Believing

*Legion G. McRae*

CYBERPUNK 2.0.2.0.™

It Came  
From Cyberspace

*Marcus L. Rowland*

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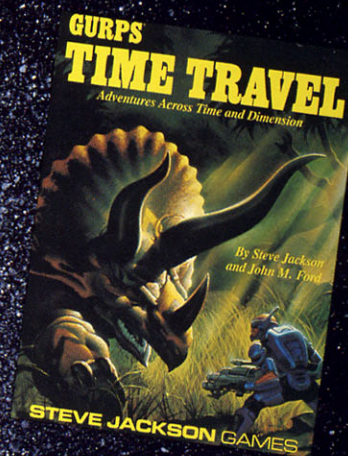
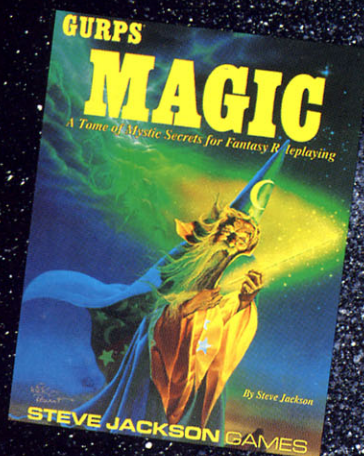


# GURPS

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*Any place . . .*

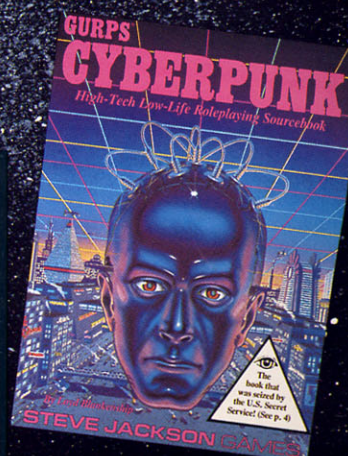
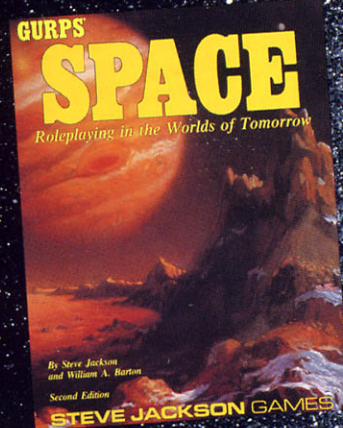
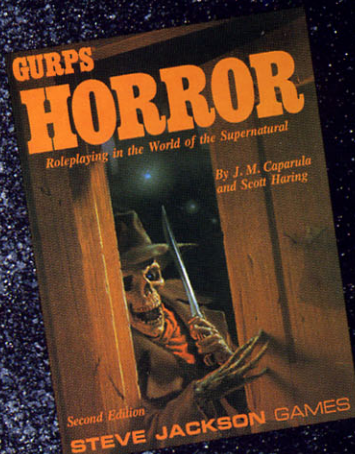
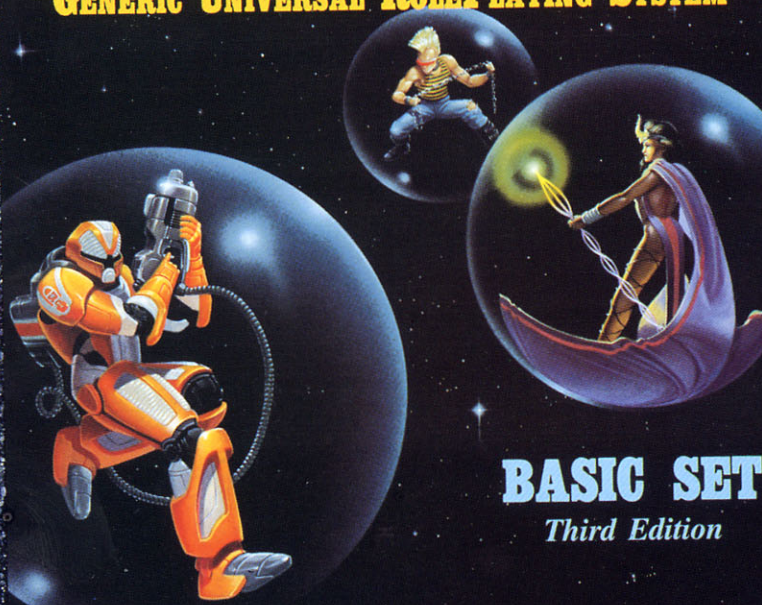
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*Steve Jackson's*

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About the Cover

This month, artist Dell Harris shows us the hazards of proto-dimensional beings showing up for dinner with "Into the Darkness."

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# CHALLENGE

## The Magazine of Science-Fiction Gaming

### Twilight: 2000

- 6 Seeing is Believing**  
Take a nightmarish journey through an already nightmarish postwar world. If you have little or no sense of the bizarre, don't read this adventure—you'll just end up with a migraine. *Legion G. McRae*
- 10 Terror in the Jungle (Merc: 2000)**  
Getting too enamored with big firepower? Tired of the usual "move in, shoot 'em up" adventures? Try adding an element of terror to the usual carnage of war. *Adam Geibel*

### MegaTraveller

- 14 To Sleep, Perchance to Scream**  
Something killed every last member of the research team on Ixion. Not some undetectable, unfilterable microbe—it was a little bit bigger than that. *Charles E. Gannon*
- 24 Wet Navy**  
Part 2: Naval weapons and design sequences. *Terry McInnes*

### Dark Conspiracy

- 32 Your Own Worst Enemy**  
A simple investigation is plagued by sudden ambushes, evil dreams and brutal killings. *Lester Smith*

### 2300 AD

- 42 Master Race**  
A clandestine organization thinks it has found a new way to fight the Kafers. *Craig Sheeley*

### Space: 1889

- 48 City of Death**  
Andryn's prince once committed an abomination so heinous that the gods caused the canal to cease flowing and placed the sign of death upon the city. Now Andryn is abandoned, silent and covered over by sand—and the archaeologists studying the ruins have disappeared. *James L. Cambias*

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## Shadowrun

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Walking the streets of Seattle is *always* dangerous—all sorts of folks out there would like to ruin your day. But on some occasions, like Halloween, the especially nasty types come out—like ghosts, vampires, zombies, nuggoths and werewolves.

*Eric W. Haddock*

## Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.

### 64 It Came From Cyberspace

Imagine everything that can go wrong with a computer, from voltage spikes to parity errors and system crashes. Now imagine all these things happening inside your brain.

*Marcus L. Rowland*

## Cthulhu

### 70 Deep Trouble

A rare book is stolen from the private collection of C. Arthur Locke. The entire population of Rockport, Massachusetts vanishes without a trace. A cargo freighter loses radio contact during heavy storms and is presumed sunk. Then things really get weird.

*Dan Snuffin*

## BattleTech

### 74 Ghosts in the Machines

Carson spotted Danto's 'Mech over by some wreckage. It was upright, but had some serious damage to its torsos and head. I could see Danto's body sprawled in the wreckage of his cockpit. Then the 'Mech started walking toward us, jerking like a zombie, with Danto's body swaying in the broken cockpit. Things were bad, and they would only get worse.

*Michael C. LaBossiere*



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Page 32



Have you ever dreamed of becoming a game designer?

I'm going to tell you how.

What I'm about to say will work whether your dream is simply to get a boardgame or adventure published, or you want to land a job with a game company.

The secret is very simple: Write magazine articles.

I know you can do it; virtually every gamer I've ever met has an idea for an adventure, or a boardgame, or a rule for one game or another. All of those things have great potential as magazine articles.

What's more, game magazines have a continual need for new pieces, and they ALL take submissions from newcomers. In fact, it is probably easier to sell an article in the game industry than in any other type of publishing. And you're more likely to get a personalized response too.

Don't think your articles have to be perfect prose, either. If you're worried about your writing, don't be. That's why companies have editorial staffs. Don't worry that your idea isn't interesting enough. If you think it's interesting, other readers will too.

When selling an article to a magazine, you gain more than you may realize. The pay is nice, of course (and you can use it to buy more games!), but you also learn what it takes to get a piece done, which will give you a better idea of the work involved in writing modules or designing games.

More importantly, by selling articles, you begin to build a rapport with publishers, and your reputation grows.

Gaining rapport means that you learn what publishers are most interested in, and how they like to have things done. As a result, your writing becomes increasingly more valuable to them.

As your reputation grows, you'll begin to hear others talk about your work. You'll read their letters to the editor and catch them discussing your article at your local game store. And that's a good feeling.

But what's more, you can begin to bank on your growing reputation to land module contracts, or even a full-time job.

That's how lots of current designers got started. It can work for you, too.

Lester Smith

## MORE MAPS

I read Loren Wiseman's article "How To: Obtain Maps for Gaming" in **Challenge 49** and found it very interesting and useful.

Another source of maps I would recommend is Map Link. Their catalog has maps of every country on earth, and they have a lot of city maps.

I don't know the cost of the catalog; I suggest that anyone interested send a SASE to: Map Link, 25 E. Mason, Santa Barbara, CA 93101.

Jonathan Gjessing  
St. Thomas, VI

## THANKZ BOYZ

I have been pleased to see that your magazine gives a good range of coverage to a variety of disparate SF gaming systems.

Specifically, you have printed scenarios for the miniatures game *Warhammer 40,000*.

This is extremely helpful to those of us who play the game but who have no place to turn for good scenario/adventure ideas as *White Dwarf* typically does not publish scenarios for this game (merely new rules and artwork), and few American magazines see fit to cover anything but their own games.

Jim Foster  
Mission, KS

## DARK CONSPIRACY

I wanted to let you know how well **Dark Conspiracy** is selling for us. It's super! Mind you it's not doing as well as the **Desert Shield Factbook**, but it has to be our best-selling single item since *Origins*. Which naturally makes me rather pleased.

Three different groups have really taken to the game, and we expect that two of them will run it in-store, while the other runs games at the home of one of the players. I suspect that we will continue to do well with this type of activity.

The customers who have purchased the book have only good things to say about it.

The store staff has been making sure that everyone with roleplaying interests sees the book, with particular attention

to customers looking at **Twilight: 2000** and *Shadowrun*.

Customers and staff have both mentioned that **Twilight: 2000** source information already available is an asset.

The only negative comment I have heard is in regard to miniatures for the system. We have shown those customers the *Future Shock* miniatures, which have picked up some.

Kevin Fitzpatrick  
Games, Crafts, Hobbies & Stuff  
St. Louis, MO

I just purchased **Dark Conspiracy**, and I wanted to let you know I think it's great! It actually lives up to the advertising, which is amazing in and of itself.

The artwork and presentation are in a class by themselves and add a lot to the book. They are much appreciated.

While I really like the system, there are still a few bugs. For example, the explosive damage system could have been referenced better, especially for bursts. I think this could be avoided by a page reference or two, saying what they are at the beginning of that section. Or a definition. Either one would do it.

Thanks for a great game, and I hope to see more of it in the future.

Trey Palmer  
Jackson, MS

Thanks for the comments. I'm glad you like the game.

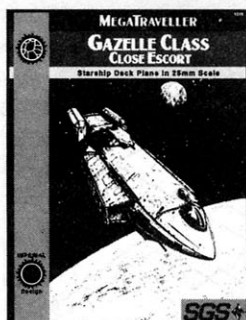
We tried to make everything as easy to reference as possible, but we'll look at explosions again and see what can be done in future printings.

Have any comments on this issue? How about gaming in general? Letters from our Readers provides gamers an opportunity to air their views. The opinions presented do not necessarily reflect those of the magazine. **Challenge** reserves the right to edit letters.

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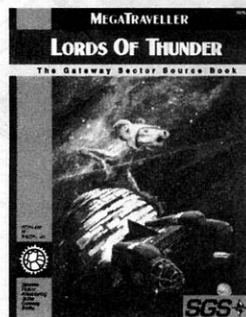
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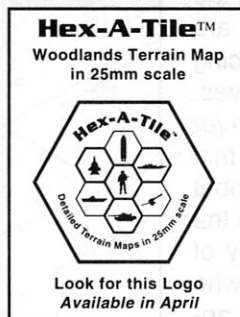


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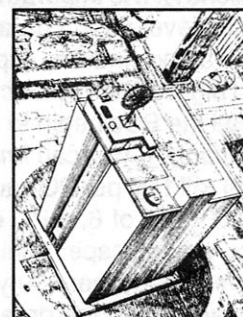


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# Seeing is Believing

By Legion G. McRae

**T**he month (*coincidentally*) is October, 2000. Near the end of a long day, the PCs come across an abandoned farmhouse. They set up camp, eat a meager supper and turn in, hoping for a good night's rest.

One by one, they close their eyes, comforted by a warm fire and a roof over their heads.

One by one, they doze, lulled by the sound of the wind against the creaking house frame.

One by one the PCs drift off to sleep—along with any sentries posted to keep watch.

One by one, they all begin to dream.

## GOOD NIGHT, SLEEP TIGHT

The adventure is set just north of an east-west stretch of State Highway 20 in central Oregon. But it could take place on any abandoned farm beside any disrepaired highway in any shattered country in the world.

To head off any suspicions, a few sessions before running this adventure the referee may want to start making sentries check against CON once per half hour or hour to stay awake at night. This entire adventure takes place in the playercharacters' dreams (*what do you mean, cliché?*). It is imperative that the players believe their characters are awake all along and are experiencing the worst night of their characters' lives.

Once all the PCs begin to dream (*or "to nightmare," if you can imagine that as a verb*) roll 1D6 per PC each combat turn. On a result of 6, a PC enters the collective dreamscape, joining any of his fellows already there. Any PCs who have not yet joined the dream will appear to be asleep to those who have. Player characters who are not "awake" cannot be roused by their friends. They will only make groggy "almost awake" sounds and then fall back to sleep.

*So what if people don't normally share the same dream. Stranger things have happened.*





# TWILIGHT: 2000



Grant G. 1991



## A HARD DAZE NIGHT

Outside the farmhouse, the weather has gone sour. The night sky is overcast, a strong wind blows through the yard, and leaves and twigs dance in the night air. The shutters upstairs are clattering against the house. All is dark.

Five turns after the first player character enters the dreamscape, someone will glance out the window. In the woods to the north beyond the farm buildings, glowing red lights are moving through the fields. They look for all the

world like pairs of disembodied eyes. (No, this isn't *Dark Conspiracy*—let's call it *Twilight Zone: 2000*.)

## I HEAR YOU KNOCKIN'

As the player characters scramble around in the dark house, a rock suddenly crashes through a window, followed by more rocks and chunks of wood through other windows. Red lights flash over the front and back doors. The PCs can hear shouts all around the house but can't make out any words.

Then whoever, or whatever, is outside bashes on the doors with fists and with what sounds like rifle butts.

A human-looking hand reaches through one window, then another, as someone climbs in on the south side of the house.

Out on the porches is the sound of cocking guns....

*If this hasn't degenerated into a save-your-skin firefight by now I must commend your players on their nerves of steel.*

The adventure is set just north of an east-west stretch of State Highway 20 in central Oregon.

The farm is in a sorry state of disrepair. Junk and garbage are strewn about—left by previous stop-over groups and squatters who have long since moved on. A split-rail fence runs along the highway and the driveway and around the farm buildings. The driveway's gate is splintered and broken—it looks like a tracked vehicle ran over it.

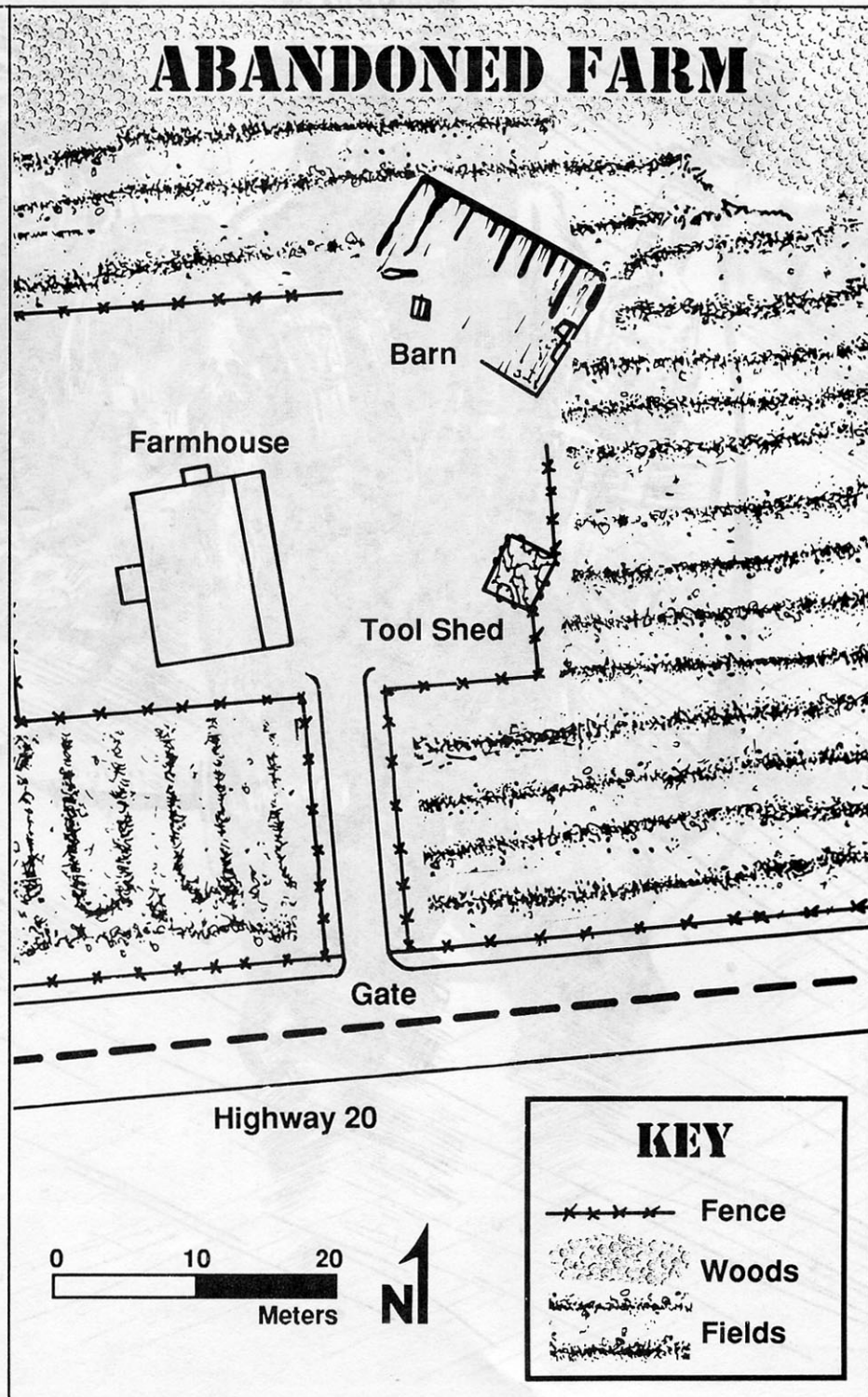
A shed contains a few construction tools (see page 60 of *Twilight: 2000*). It is wood-sided, shingled, and overgrown with tall grass and vines.

A large barn has been gutted by fire, a few months ago by the looks of it. Inside is 300 square feet of corrugated tin siding that could be salvaged if anyone so desired.

The farmhouse is a large, once-comfortable, two-story affair with a full basement. Broken furniture remains in a few of the rooms. Some of the windows are smashed, mostly on the top floor. A stone chimney runs up the north side of the building, and a single fireplace, on the main floor, is full of ashes.

A sizeable porch runs the full length of the front of the house on the east side, and a smaller one graces the back door on the west side. Both front and back doors are intact and still on their hinges.

To the north of the farm is a large expanse of forest of mixed coniferous and deciduous trees. Stretching to east and west between the highway and the forest are what were once fields of grain, now overgrown with weeds.





## SOMETHING WICKED

The PCs' assailants are killer-insane-none-is-too-many-NPCs-from-heck called Night Creepers. They are Veteran NPCs, wearing flak jackets and steel helmets, carrying flashlights fitted with red filters, and armed with M16A2s with bayonets and four magazines. Night Creepies (*uh, that's Creepers*) have bone-tight, gaunt faces and hands, five o' clock shadow, tattered combat uniforms, worn-out boots, rusty weapons and graffiti all over their helmet covers.

The big trick (*or treat*) is that Night Creepers have hit capacities like the PCs do—20 hits per hit location, not 20 total! There are two Night Creepers per PC, so the number will vary from group to group. If the PCs wipe out all of them, bring in more! If any PCs try to escape, cut 'em down!

## YOU'RE GOING TO LIVE IF IT KILLS YOU

Eventually, all the PCs die or become unconscious. As soon as the last PC is overcome, the Night Creepers will vanish as suddenly as they appeared.

But surprise! Once the last of the Night Creepers disappears, the PCs wake up. This time, the nightmare is over, and everyone is safe and sound. Sweating buckets, but fine.

## EPILOGUE

*Okay, the party's over. Everybody wake up and go home. Nothing really happened—it was all just a bad dream. So who left the flashlight on the porch? ☹*

*This is a sample folio adventure from **Twilight Nightmares**, an adventure anthology for **Twilight:2000**.*

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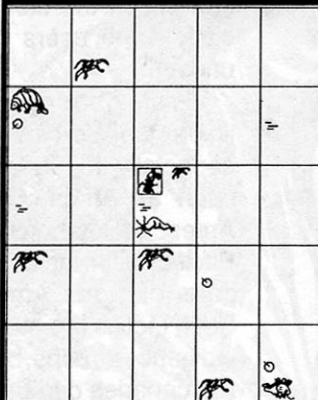


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**Space Combat** was designed to be easy to learn, but difficult to master. Every game starts with ten players, and as each is eliminated, the chances of the game ending will increase. Turnsheets are custom made on a laser printer to aid you in filling out your next turn. The games run about 12-18 turns. Cost is \$3.50 per turn. A rulebook (required before you can join) is \$1.00 (free if you mention this ad!).



**Twin Engine Gaming; Dept 209; 3254 Maple Leaf Ct.; San Jose, CA 95121**





**W**ar strips away the thin veneer of civilization man wraps around himself—proving that man's capacity for cruelty is boundless. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the psychiatric operations (psyops) game, where terror is combined with the usual carnage of war.

Psyops can result in lowered Initiative, frequent moral checks and drained stamina. At worst, enemy troops may be slightly unsettled. At best, entire units may panic and vacate the premises. A spectacular psyops campaign may even result in outright revolt.

Under the guise of ancient religions and beliefs, cultural terror, or "bad juju," can be an especially effective weapon—often more effective than modern technology. Options run from the subtle to the blatantly obvious. Skulls or bodies

The following **Merc: 2000** miniadventure explores the use of primitive terror tactics. It may be used along with the Biafran Civil War scenario on page 100 of **Merc: 2000**.

### MISSION BRIEFING

The Biafran/Nigerian front is in a low-attrition stalemate and has been without any significant action for the last two weeks.

Occasional incursions by heliborne Nigerian commando (mercenary) units have enjoyed some small amount of success—but are really more annoying than dangerous. The Nigerians have also mounted a psyops campaign against the Biafran troops, either creating or broadcasting what has been identified as a native "cursing ritual." Friendly specialists feel the heliborne incursions and native broadcasts may be a coverup

# TERROR IN THE JUNGLE

*By Adam Geibel*

of animals or enemies mounted on stakes along a unit's front is crude—but chilling. Night tactics—such as screaming, drums, whistles or bugles starting at dusk and lasting until dawn—can be ominous. The use of primitive weapons, such as bows and arrows, blowguns, spears or crossbows made more lethal with quick-acting poison, can spook the stoutest hearts, especially if the users manage to remain unseen.

Violating strong cultural mores or religious beliefs can also be unsettling, especially in underdeveloped areas such as Africa, South and Central America, Southeast Asia, parts of the Pacific Basin, the Caribbean, even some parts of North America and Europe. Such tactics are most effective against indigenous troops, but even well-trained mercenaries can become distracted.

for a larger operation—something ominous may be in the works.

### APPROACH

The PCs have been assigned as a "reaction force." Their purpose is to intercept and thwart the next Nigerian insertion, taking prisoners if possible, in an effort to uncover the Nigerian plot.

When they receive word of a Nigerian heliborne sighting, the PCs will move in. If they don't have a vehicle, a Land Rover will be loaned to them (no friendly helicopters are available at the moment). The PCs' main problem at this point is timing—if they move too fast, they may fall into an ambush, but if they move too slow, the Nigerians will outrun them.

### RETRIEVAL

No pickup is planned after the mis-







sion. The PCs will have to leave by the same vehicle they arrive in—or walk if it is destroyed.

## MAP DESCRIPTION

The map covers a small section of the Biafran/Nigerian front—the left flank (for the Biafrans) of the intended target area. The only points of interest are the team's starting point, the Nigerian LZ, the Nigerian outpost and the targeted point in the road.

## REFEREEING THE SCENARIO

The Biafrans are correct—the Nigerians do have a secret plan. They intend to bring the war to a quick end by first setting the Biafrans on edge through an effective psyops campaign. Then they will release a small stock of nerve agent—a fast-acting, nonpersistent chemical that is lethal if absorbed or inhaled. The amount of agent is strategically insignificant, but the Nigerians hope their enemy will be panicked by the apparent effectiveness of the curse.

The Nigerians have enlisted a local "specialist," also known as a witch doctor, to create the illusion of a mass curse on the Biafran troops. They have recorded a particularly vile-sounding ceremony and are broadcasting it on six large speaker systems. The noise starts at nightfall and ends shortly before daybreak. The Nigerians have also secretly evacuated their section of the lines opposite and for some distance downwind of the target area. The only units left there are mercenaries equipped with MOPP 4 gear—they are monitoring the broadcasting equipment and perpetuating the illusion that the lines are manned.

Just after moonset (20:35 local time), a Nigerian Hip helicopter will insert the witch doctor and a team of mercenaries in the Biafran rear area on the flank of the front to be sprayed. The witch doctor—carrying a five-kilogram sack containing marking paints, feathers, "medicine bags" and a strangely marked human skull—will emplace fetishes, jujus and other objects of black magic. The

Nigerian group must be extracted no later than 02:00 in order to be clear by 04:00, when the nerve agent will be released.

If the PCs capture a Nigerian mercenary or the witch doctor, finding out what's going on will get easier as the 04:00 deadline approaches (Interrogation: Difficult to Easy). But even the Nigerian commandos don't know that the attack will be called off if the witch doctor does not succeed in emplanting his artifacts. In that case, the Nigerians will consider an alternate use of their nerve agent resources.

The PCs cannot use Biafran troops on their reaction force mission, but they may meet a regular Biafran patrol or supply mission. Any Biafrans with the PCs when they encounter the witch doctor or his artifacts will panic on a 1D6 roll of 1-3. If the witch doctor is killed, the Biafrans will only panic on a roll of 1-2.

## NPCS

The Nigerian mercenary team protecting the witch doctor has six Experienced NPCs, each armed with one AK-74 and four grenades. The group has three night vision binoculars, six Claymores, one PK machinegun and one SVD sniper rifle with a night vision scope.

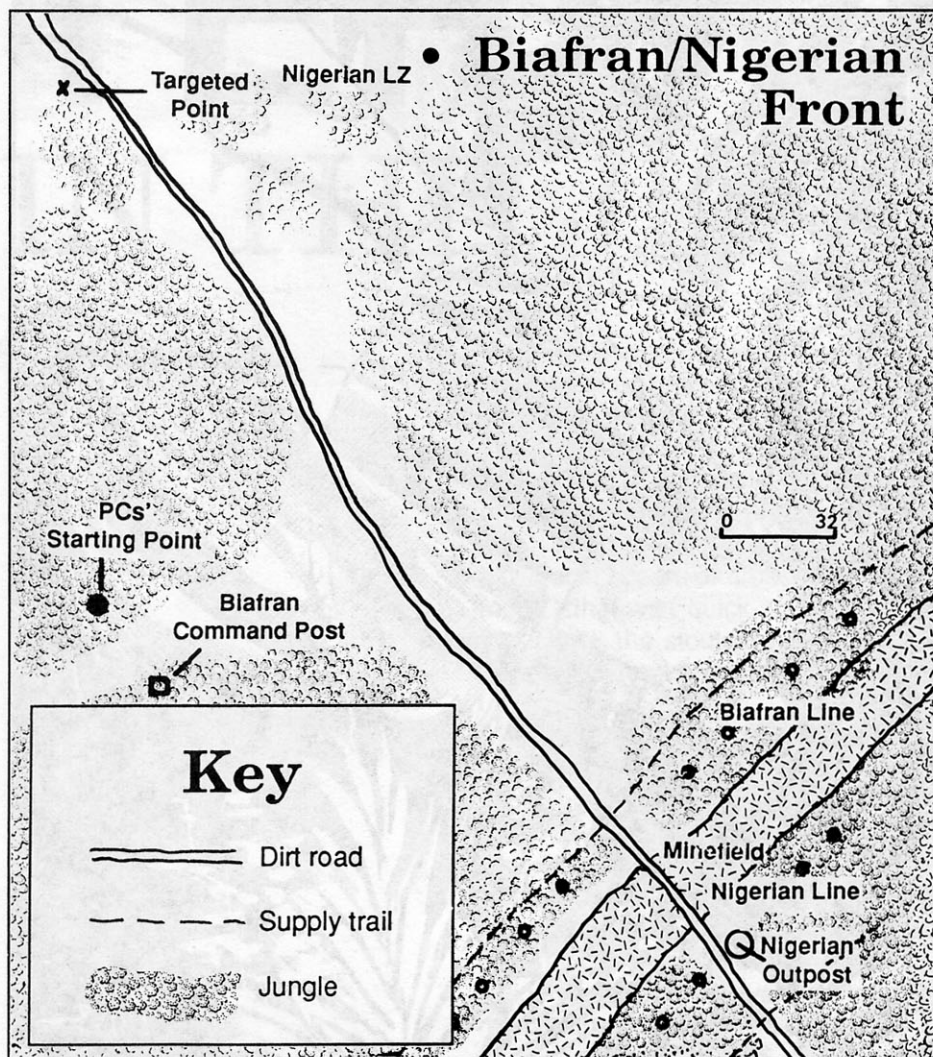
Another Nigerian mercenary team at the Nigerian outpost has four Veteran NPCs, each armed with one AK-74. The group also has one PK machinegun with a night vision device.

## ALTERNATIVES AND VARIANTS

If the PCs get impatient waiting for a Nigerian heliborne insertion, they might infiltrate across the lines for reconnaissance purposes. If they overrun the Nigerian outpost, NBC suits found there may give them a hint as to what's really going on.

The team can play the role of the Nigerian mercenaries assigned to protect the psyop operative. If so, they must pay particular attention to their extraction time—they may want to deal with the extra burden of NBC gear, despite the risk of detection and compromise.

Finally, the referee may want to throw in some spooky events and strange coincidences to bring out the terror of the scenario. The PCs may be well-trained mercenaries, but that doesn't make them immune to the effects of a well-executed psyops campaign. Ω





# CHALLENGE Conventions

**GAME FAIR XIV**, November 8-10 at the ITOO Hall, 4909 W. Farmington Road, Peoria, IL, sponsored by the Illinois Central College Game Club. For information, write to Game Fair XIV, PO Box 308, Groveland, IL 61535.

**LAGACON-12**, November 9 at Kasper's Ark (five miles north of Lebanon, PA on Route 72). For more information, write to Lebanon Area Gamers, 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon, PA 17042.

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To Sleep  
Perchance to

# SCREAM

By Charles E. Gannon











hile in Urlaqgash (3023, Reaver's Deep sector) Downport, the PCs discover the following ad scrolling past on a startown bar's vidtext monitor:

*Wanted Immediately: Small party of seasoned travellers with troubleshooting experience. Diversity of skills a plus. Duration of contract undetermined, but weekly rate is generous. Employer supplies transportation, gear, lodgings, board, amenities. Will cover any berthing or storage costs incurred if party wishes to leave possessions behind. Contact comm account DGF-R11236 for further information.*

If the PCs are less than surreptitious about their interest in this employment opportunity (or if they seem to be hesitant about taking the bait), one of the barkeeps will lean in their direction and remark that local rumor suggests that the pay on that job is pretty good—over 10,000 credits per week.

A vidcomm call reveals that the listed account number receives and transmits text-only messages: No audio or visual link is established. The individual on the other end of the line inquires as to the group's number, experience, skills, etc. Regardless of the answers, the PCs will be invited to attend an interview the following day.

The address for the interview corresponds to a building owned by the Technoplex Corporation, a commercial entity that is a major economic factor throughout this subsector. Upon arriving at the Technoplex building, the characters will discover that they are to meet with the chief operating officer of one of TC's smaller subsidiaries, Ecoform Research Associated.

Ecoform's COO is Landa Urshikkur, a briskly professional woman in her late fifties. After curt but cordial introductions, she gets down to business.

Ecoform is a firm that specializes in information and research, not manufacturing. Its primary involvement is with terraforming assessments and, occasionally, mutagenic research into creating hybrids for introduction to alien worlds (i.e., other than those they evolved naturally on).

However, one of Ecoform's newer projects seems to be having problems—and that's where the PCs come in. The research team surveying Ixion (3025, Reaver's Deep sector) hasn't been heard

from in over five weeks. Although the research team doesn't have a ship of its own, it has access to a number of remote-operated jump couriers in far orbit. These automated couriers can be activated by uplinked commands, then carry messages and data back to Urlaqgash.

Typically, the research team is to send one such jump courier every two weeks (more often in case of a major discovery or breakthrough). Urshikkur rules out the possibility that the extended silence is simply the result of jump-courier malfunction. According to the inventory, the team should still have eight couriers on station—it is unlikely that all of them malfunctioned prior to jump. In-jump malfunctions could explain the situation (since the research team would have no way of knowing that the courier never got to its destination), but only if there were two such malfunctions in a row (thereby accounting for four weeks of silence).

For these reasons, Urshikkur largely rules out courier malfunction as a possibility. She considers two explanations to be the most likely. Either some external threat has interfered with the operation of all the couriers (stolen by corsairs?) or something has happened to the research team. The team hasn't been on Ixion for very long, and it is possible that something in the environment may have made communications—or survival—impossible. The possibilities are many—which explains why Ecoform wants to hire investigators who are diverse and accustomed to all sorts of unusual phenomena.

If the party accepts the job of finding out why the research team is out of contact and—if possible—correct the problem, Urshikkur will offer them 9000 credits per person per week. If the group decides to haggle, she'll offer 10,000, but will go as high as 11,500. She will also insist on sending three security personnel with the group—ex-colonial army professionals who are all brawn and very little brain. The group will be asked to pilot the starship that Ecoform has acquired for the job—a TL11 Type S scout. If the group has no pilot/navigators, Ecoform will provide one (in place of one of the security guards).

## OVERVIEW

Landa Urshikkur is not withholding any information from the group. The

research team is simply out of touch, and nobody really has a clue as to why.

The real explanation is that they're all dead—something on Ixion has killed every last one of them. Their fate was not sealed by some undetectable, unfilterable microbe—they were killed by something a little bit bigger than that—as the PCs will learn once they arrive on Ixion.

The referee should strive to keep an atmosphere of mystery and threat throughout this piece. For instance, Urshikkur's almost brusque demeanor could be interpreted as a means of concealing information. The referee should encourage such misconceptions.

Similarly, the environment on Ixion is designed to be suitably eerie. Referees are urged to toss in the occasional unexplained sound, mysterious shadow, etc., to keep the tension level high.

The murderous creature behind the demise of the research team should be terrifying enough, but try to lead up to its discovery with all sorts of nerve-grating false alarms—the violent conclusion of the scenario will be much more effective if the characters have been brought to a high state of anxiety and paranoia first.

## PREPARATIONS (FOR THE PLAYERS)

As a minor subsidiary of Technoplex Corporation, Ecoform does not have a lot of top-shelf resources available. Consequently, the best it can manage is a TL11 Type S starship.

The security guards are fairly taciturn individuals with the following stats: B8A555 Combat Rifleman-2, Recon-1, Carousing-1, Mechanical-1, Tracked Vehicle-1, plus four other skills of the referee's choosing. Each security guard is equipped with a combat environment suit, a 7mm semiautomatic rifle (due to Ixion's low level restrictions regarding fully automatic weapons) and a 9mm autopistol. They are neither very concerned nor very interested in the upcoming mission. In their opinion, this is a big false alarm, probably caused by "some scientist who forgot how to throw the automatic uplink switch for the automatic jump couriers."

Ixion (UCP C6A1234-9) is only two parsecs distant and considered to be a rather uninviting world. However, de-



spite occasional run-ins with pirates, the system is generally considered to be safe for all forms of traffic.

Ecoform will offer the PCs access to weapons which are permitted on Ixion, as well as any gear they deem necessary that can be stored on-board. Science gear is a little on the primitive side, but is available. The Type S, *Snaggletooth*, is a fourth-hand decommissioned scout hull that is well-worn, full of idiosyncrasies, but still dependable.

## PREPARATIONS (FOR THE REFEREE)

Ixion is indeed an uninviting world. Its exotic atmosphere is heavily inundated with CO<sub>2</sub>, as are its small, slushy, polar seas. An unusually long day/night cycle of 32 hours produces considerable temperature variations, enough to cause puddles of CO<sub>2</sub> to freeze overnight, only to sublime into billowing clouds of "dry ice" vapor early the next morning. Although the planet does have native flora and fauna, the research teams which have visited Ixion haven't been particularly interested in conducting xenobiological studies.

This is largely due to the fact that Ixion's biosphere is potentially attractive as a terraforming project. Ecoform's experts hypothesize that if the oxygen that is currently tied up in the form of CO<sub>2</sub> could be liberated, Ixion's atmosphere might rapidly evolve into one friendly to oxygen-breathing species. The primary key to this was to liberate more gaseous hydrogen in order to fix most of the freed oxygen in the form of water. This would create an environment in which a variety of green plants would thrive, converting increasing amounts of the CO<sub>2</sub> into oxygen and other atomic building blocks essential to the emergence of a Terra-normal biosphere.

The pre-war population of Ixion—rated at approximately 700 persons—has dropped dramatically in the past five years. At last count, no more than 300 individuals remained. Over half of these were researchers or persons charged with maintaining the planet's C-class starport. The other half are settlers, hermits, or war-refugees who found life in this forsaken outback to be preferable to the war-torn Imperial mainstream. Ecoform's research station—the largest on the planet—was capable

of housing up to 40 personnel and at last report was operating at full capacity.

Although Ecoform would like to be able to provide the characters with advanced sensor gear, that simply isn't possible. Never a subsector with a heavy influx of high tech, Urlaqash Subsector has found itself resorting to even more basic technologies since the onset of the Rebellion. Advanced handheld sensor gear (such as neural activity sensors, densitometers and biosniffers) is not available for any price. If the characters should have any of their own, Ecoform will welcome their willingness to volunteer the use of the technology—but will not ensure against its being lost or disabled. If referees wish to get a more complete idea of the specifics of the Urlaqash subsector, they are advised to pick up a copy of

# MEGATRAVELLER

*Traveller's Digest 16*, published by Digest Group Publications (the entire subsector is presented in detail).

Fianlly, the referee should bear in mind that the three security guards are being sent along not only to assist the player characters in their endeavors, but to protect Ecoform's substantial investment (plenty of equipment, a starship, etc.). If the security personnel have any reason to suspect that the PCs are going to run off with any of Ecoform's possessions, they will take corrective action.

## Snaggletooth

<b>CraftID:</b>	Scout, Type S, TL 11, MCr 77.8
<b>Hull:</b>	90/255, Disp=100, Config=1AF, Armor=40E Unloaded=1575 tons, Loaded=1735 tons
<b>Power:</b>	14/28, Fusion=1206Mw, Duration=30/90
<b>Loco:</b>	5/5, Maneuver=2, 3/6, Jump=2 NOE=140kph, Cruise=1431kph, Top=1908kph Agility=0
<b>Commo:</b>	Radio=system, Maser=system
<b>Sensors:</b>	PassiveEMS=InterPlanetary, ActiveEMS=FarOrbit Densitometer=LowPen/Surf, Neutrino=DirOnly ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout, PasObjScan=Form, PasObjPin=Imp, PasEng Scan=Rout, PasEngPin=N/A
<b>Off:</b>	BeamLaser=x03, Batt x01 Bear x01 Def: DefDM=+2
<b>Control:</b>	Computer=1b x3, Panel=Computer-linked x610 Special=1x Heads-up display Environ= basic env, basic I/s, extend I/s, grav plates, inertial compensators
<b>Accom:</b>	Crew=5(Bridge=2, Engineer=1, Gunnery=2 Staterooms=4, LowBerths=0, Bunks=0 HighPsg=1, MidPsg=0, LowPsg=0 SubCraft=Air/raft (appx. 75 kl )
<b>Other:</b>	Cargo=40.5 Kliters, Fuel=636.66 Kliters ObjSize=Average, Em Level=Moderate

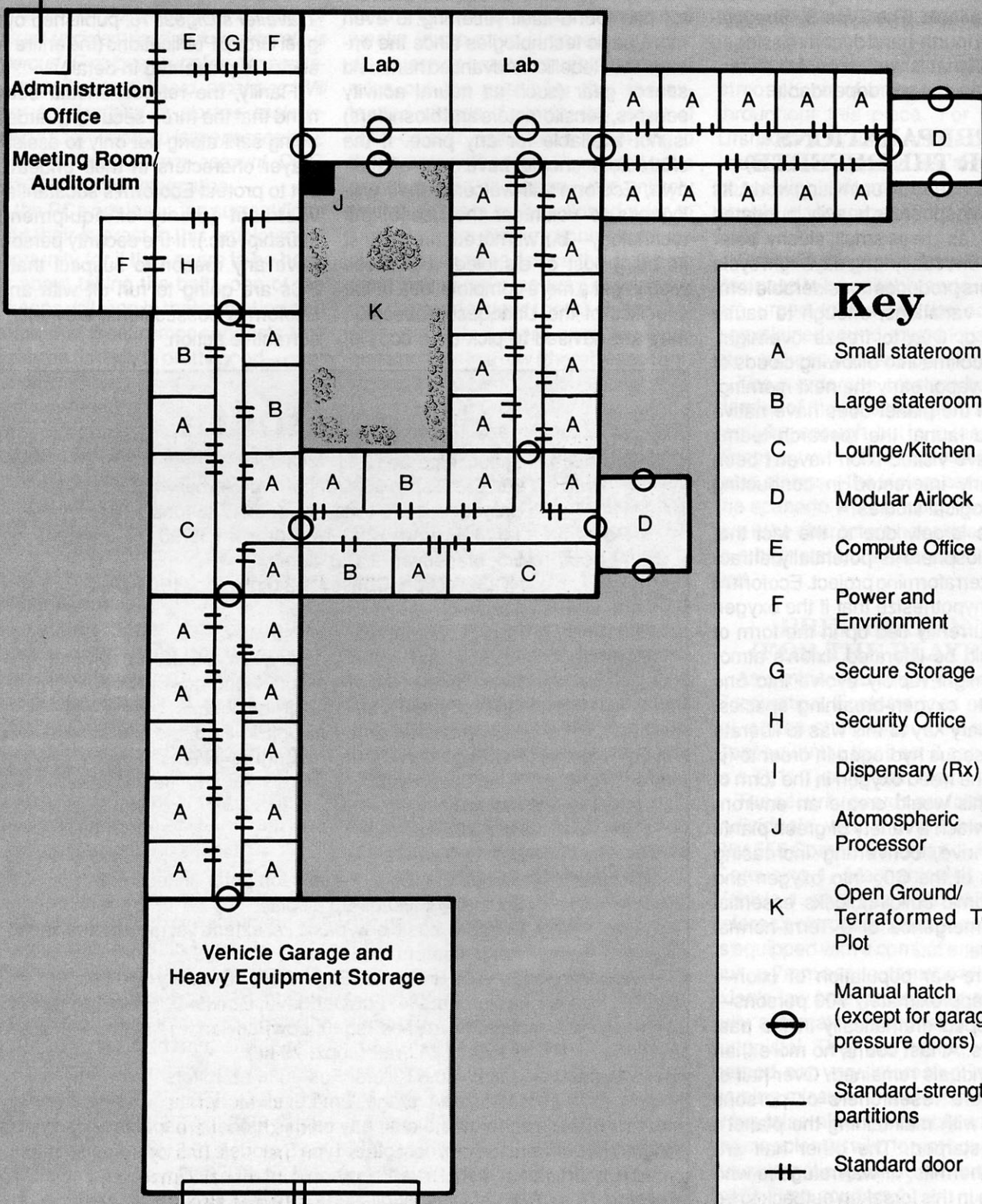
Note that the subordinate craft bay on this model is capable of carrying a slightly larger vehicle than most other Type S models (5.5 tons displacement).

The recommended ship's vehicle should be a TL11 *Cova* enclosed air-raft (design 74 in *101 Vehicles*, published by Digest Group Publications). It is capable of carrying 10 persons and 13.5 kiloliters of cargo at a cruising speed of 135 kilometers per hour for eight days of constant travel.



# Ecoform Research Facility

Facility Administrator's  
Office



## Key

- A Small stateroom
- B Large stateroom
- C Lounge/Kitchen
- D Modular Airlock
- E Compute Office
- F Power and Environment
- G Secure Storage
- H Security Office
- I Dispensary (Rx)
- J Atomospheric Processor
- K Open Ground/Terraformed Test Plot
- Manual hatch (except for garage pressure doors)
- Standard-strength partitions
- Standard door
- Bulkheads

1.5m x 1.5m





## JOURNEY (FOR THE PLAYERS)

The journey to Ixion is relatively uneventful. Repeated attempts to get to know your new security-guard friends don't progress too far; they're affable, but not very communicative.

Arrival in the Ixion system is not particularly noteworthy. The system is quiet, traffic being nonexistent—even out near the largest of the four gas giants. Automated navigational beacons guide you in-system to Ixion. As you near the planet, you detect eight small hulls in a stable, high orbit: the automated jump couriers. Attempts to hail the research team go unanswered.

Planetfall at Ixion is about what you'd expect on this kind of backwater. A single ground operator—simultaneously wearing the hats of space traffic controller, customs officer and welcome committee—talks you down through the approved approach vector and onto the pad at Adakai Port, Ixion's main urban attraction with a population of almost 120 souls.

Adakai port is a run-down collection of modular buildings, a third of which seem to be boarded-up and deserted. Locals are glad for the chance to meet—and speak with—off-worlders in Am'Shai'Votu's Bar and Grille, the only commercial eating and drinking establishment left in town.

Not many people know anything about the Ecoform research station, which is located approximately 1000 kilometers north of Adakai Port. The researchers only came into town on rare occasion, since their level of supply, entertainment and housing were all generally superior to that enjoyed by the locals. Radio contact was more frequent, but stopped about five weeks ago.

If the PCs express a desire to take the ship directly up to the research station, the locals will politely but firmly insist that they can't permit that; it's against the law. However, a variety of vehicles (such as a Horronon ATV) can be rented for a reasonable rate—and charged directly to Ecoform's local account (assuming the party doesn't want to use the scout ship's Cova air-raft).

The travel overland (or via air) to the research station is easy, being over level, firm ground. Attempts to raise the site by radio (or any other communica-

tion device) go without response. At last, through the white mists, the research complex becomes dimly visible.

## JOURNEY (FOR THE REFEREE)

Ixion has never been a shining mecca for visitors, and—with the onset of the Rebellion—it became an almost forgotten, abandoned world. Having little or nothing of interest to other planets, Ixion's economy revolved around the ever-more-infrequent tramp traders that pass through. And every time, a few more Ixionites take passage off-world, never to return.

Consequently, the locals are glad for the visitors. Adakai town is easily sightseen in three minutes, and what becomes quickly boring for the visitor becomes intolerable for locals. News—any news—of the universe beyond their mist-enshrouded world is welcome and eagerly attended to.

The one person of interest for purposes of the PCs' investigation is a silent wanderer, hidden in the deepest shadows at the Bar and Grille. Known simply as Old Sam, this fellow has spent the last 15 years roaming the misty wastes of Ixion from pole to pole. The locals consider him to be a little "tetched," and while all concede that he is an excellent source of knowledge regarding the planet's flora and fauna, they simply ignore his tales of "monsters" in the lowlands and hills to the north. Tired of being the butt of jokes and contemptuous ridicule, Old Sam stopped telling these stories years ago. It would take a very direct appeal, friendly encouragement and a considerable fee for him to tell what little he knows of the creatures.

Old Sam lost a partner to one of the monsters seven years ago, although he never saw the creature himself, nor has he seen one since. However, he can describe its large, taloned tracks, as well as the wounds it inflicted upon his old partner—who was killed in under three seconds.

Information from this point on is all directed to the referee, since events will start to move more quickly and less predictably as soon as the PCs arrive at the Ecoform research facility.

## DISCOVERY

The characters will find the research

# MEGATRAVELLER

facility completely deserted—except for nine badly mangled bodies. The referee should scatter these at random, with the following exceptions:

- One corpse is that of the base's med tech, found just outside the dispensary.

- Of the three corpses which belong to security guards, one is located inside the southernmost airlock module, and the other is located inside the medical dispensary.

- Two other corpses, which were apparently undergoing autopsies, are also inside the dispensary.

As the PCs arrive at the base, you can hand them the basic map, since the security guards have a copy, but don't tell them where the bodies are.

The station is open to the environment, with all the hatchways thrown wide. Only the huge power-driven garage bay doors are still closed (although the hatchway leading into the garage area is ajar).

The bodies are not displaying advanced decomposition, since the air temperature at this northern latitude is fairly cool (0-5° centigrade, daytime average). Also, the local bacteria (or its analog) does not seem overly interested in human flesh. However, whatever killed the eight remaining bodies was obviously thorough and armed with an impressive selection of weapons.

To identify the nature of the weapons: Difficult, Education, Intelligence, 1 hour.

**Referee:** If the character has either Forensic or Zoology skill (or a related natural science), the task becomes Routine.

Success will reveal that most of the individuals were killed by deep, slashing penetrations by some kind of claw and by equally imposing bites. One of the bodies also shows evidence of having been stuck with some kind of lance or other pointed shaft.

In addition to their thoroughness, the



# The Creature

The creature that has caused so much chaos and carnage on Ixion is a rather unusual lifeform. Descended from carnivore/killer stock, it is an asexual creature which produces and fertilizes its own eggs internally. Rather than bearing live young, it injects these eggs into the bodies of suitable prey.

This has had the evolutionary effect of making this creature absolutely engrossed with the hunt and the kill. Since it both feeds and procreates by hunting and killing, it has virtually no other drives, making it an implacable and ruthless foe.

With large specimens massing somewhat over 400 kilograms, the creature is a large, slope-backed biped with heavy limbs, a broad torso and a wide tail. Its thick hide is articulated in such a way that it emphasizes the creature's already impressive musculature.

Due to Ixion's generally poor visibility, the creature's primary sense is hearing. It is able to detect sounds well above and somewhat below human ranges, using two sets of retractable antenna-clusters for audio pick-up. Although not capable of echolocation, it is quite good at *estimating* an object's location, rate of movement and vector via sound. Sight is fair, but not very keen beyond 200 meters (most things are an indistinct blur). Smell and taste are quite keen, however. In fact, the most common pursuit profile of the creature is that it is first attracted to a general area by smell, hears the target and homes in on it, then effects its final attack via eyesight.

The creature vaguely resembles a small, lobster-headed dinosaur. Its 10-centimeter teeth and 15-centimeter claws are formidable weapons, the jaws being a trap hinge design triggered to shut closed with extreme

(stored) force when mandibular sensors encounter a foreign object. This lends the creature an expectant, open-mouthed look as it pursues its prey.

The creature's last form of weaponry is an 18-centimeter-long stinger, located at the tip of its armored tail. Not just a weapon, this stinger is used to inject the pupate young into a host. The young then consume the body of the host, emerging after about two weeks. The small scavenger species outlined in the Investigation section subsists on the neophyte creatures, thereby controlling the population of this dangerous and ravenous predator.

Despite its broad, ugly build, the creature is quite swift, having a speed rating of 2 (approximately 60 meters covered for every 5-6 seconds of time).

There are two particularly surprising aspects about the creature, however. The first is that despite its incredible savagery and distinct antisocial tendencies, it is actually an intelligent being (albeit rather marginally so). This was not recognized for a number of predictable reasons. First off, the scouts never conducted a thorough assessment of Ixion's biota—not unusual for a world which has such a generally inhospitable environment. In such cases, full exploration of flora and fauna is left for eventual colonists or interested experts.

Equally important, the creature does not manifest the almost universally recognized signs of intelligence. Its moment-to-moment behavior is dedicated to savage hunting and killing. It leaves no social artifacts since it is not a social creature. For the same reason, it has no language (which is the primary reason it has remained at this marginal level of intelligence).

However, the creature is capable of rapidly recognizing and understand-

ing abstract concepts. For instance, when this particular specimen (a venerable and dangerous example of the species that gets an extra +1 when calculating its to hit tasks) first came across the research base, it quickly understood that for humans, red light indicated danger and green light indicated safety. It discerned this by noting color changes on external indicators on the base's airlocks, and later confirmed its hypothesis during exploratory forays into the station, where it observed various system lights.

It also quickly understood that the humans couldn't breathe the native atmosphere and used some form of artificial means to survive. Of course, the concept of tools is foreign to the creature since it has no need of any. It simply sees tools as environmental features, some of which it must learn to manipulate and others which it may ignore. For instance, it learned how to open and seal manual hatches, but never bothered learning how to operate interior doors (it simply crashed through those).

However, having no sense of tool use, no mythic tradition and no basis of comparison, it is also not awed by technology. It is simply careful of things which it does not know about or which have a proven capacity to hurt it. It took one hit from a shotgun round during its initial attack, which taught it a healthy respect for guns—and the wisdom of destroying them to prevent further use by the humans. That is why it now attacks from the rear or flank—an opportunity easily afforded by its other unusual innate feature: psionic powers.

The creature of Ixion has two innate psionic skills: teleportation (limited to medium range or less) and telepathy (also limited to medium range or less). Its telepathy is a special variety that makes the target sleepy, rather than impelling an emotional state. It uses these talents in tandem, lulling a target into a near-sleep state, then teleporting in for a quick (and lethal) surprise attack. While innate psionic abilities in sophonts are quite rare, precedents exist (the Chirpers, for instance).

Ratings for the creature are:

Type	Mass	Hits	Weapons/+Hit	Pen/Dmg	Armor
Carnivore/killer	400 kg	11/6	Teeth/+2	4/5	Cloth
			Claws/+2	5/5	
			Sting/+1	6/6	

The creature's behavioral profile is A3 F5.



attacks were also apparently quite ferocious. Evidence suggests that the attacker continued savaging its victims even after they had expired.

Of course, since the station was inhabited by just over 40 individuals, the PCs face still another mystery: Where are the other 31 researchers? While there are no signs of them in the complex, there is evidence that several major battles were fought (judging from areas liberally smeared with dried blood). The worst of these fights was probably in the waiting room/lounge area just outside the administration office/auditorium. However, the confused trails of blood droplets, smears and footprints makes it impossible to reconstruct the melee or to discern who—or what—the researchers battled. The only clue is that the base's three security guards hadn't been of much use; only one ever seems to have gotten a shot off (from his now-mangled shotgun). The other two were apparently attacked from behind.

The three bodies in the dispensary do not seem to be different in any way from the other corpses, but an examination of them shows that someone (or something?) had begun to perform autopsies on all of them.

The base itself is still in fairly good shape, except that the communications and computer facilities have been badly smashed. Also, the environmental plants will require a few hours of repairs before general life support can be reestablished. Whatever attacked the researchers must have realized that these technologies were somehow key to the researcher's operations—or their ability to get help.

The base is mostly comprised of 400-kiloliter habitat modules, each measuring about 7.5 meters by 15 meters by 3.5 meters. Two larger structural modules—the administration complex and vehicle garage—are of the same manufacture (Technoplex HabMods, of course). A small "courtyard" is framed by the surrounding modules. Covered over with a sheet of TL9 polyplastic, it was apparently a small test-bed for converting the local environment into a more Terran-friendly biome.

Base records have been badly strewn about. After hours of collating and analyzing, a diligent group can piece together enough of the story to determine that whatever happened to the base

started 38 days ago. That is when regular scientific journals no longer have entries, the chief administrator's log stops, etc. By computing the difference between current remaining power plant fuel levels and the last listed level (39 days ago), the group can arrive at the conclusion that whatever attacked the base finished the job in two days.

## FIRST SLAYING

After arriving at the base, enduring the anxiety of discovering it to resemble a mortuary and gathering what clues are available, the characters should be tired. Watches can either be organized by them, or left solely to the initiative of the three NPC security guards. Either way, the Ecoform guards will want to stand a watch or two.

On the last such watch, the PCs will hear one of the Ecoform guards screaming frantically for a few seconds, along with two rifle reports. No matter what the party's plans are, at least one guard will insist on remaining behind whenever the investigators are bedding down, to prevent anything from doubling back on them. He will encourage at least one PC to stay with him. If not, the other guard will stay with him.

Upon arriving at the sentry post, the group will find the body of the guard who had been standing watch—mauled almost beyond recognition. The characteristic claw and bite wounds are evident, as is the more enigmatic puncture wound observed on one of the research team corpses. The guard was apparently dragged some distance from where he was initially attacked, judging from the smeared trail of blood. He was apparently being dragged toward the nearest external hatchway. However, there is no sign that anyone—or anything—had opened any of the hatches. The PCs may find (on a successful Recon roll) some droplets of blood in another nearby module—apparently a short trail of some kind. But the trail appears without warning and ends just the same way.

At about this time, the group will hear shouts and screams from behind them—coming from the area they were bedded down in. Before they arrive there, you may need to resolve what has occurred in that location if a PC did in fact remain behind with the rearguard security man. The rearguard PC (if any)

# MEGATRAVELLER™

will be advancing toward the nearest hatchway or door and suddenly become very sleepy—so sleepy in fact that he/ barely manages to stay on his feet by slumping against the door jamb. At about that moment, the guard behind begins shouting, fires off a single shot and then starts shrieking in high-pitched tones of agony. Turning groggily around, the PC will have the impression of some huge form tearing into the guard, who falls aside into a heap. Then the form seems to come closer to the PC, who may attempt to fire (but will miss, having barely managed to raise the gun up to a 45° elevation). Just as the form—which seems to be all teeth and claws and tiny black eyes—is about to close with the PC, it stops, seems to listen (it hears the other PCs returning), then storms past (or rather, *over*) the PC, knocking him out cold.

If a PC did *not* stay back with the rearguard, this same story will be told by the other security man who will have stayed behind (and now is the only surviving NPC guard).

The returning PCs will find their friend (PC or NPC guard) unconscious on the floor and another guard dead, once again slashed to pieces. But this time, there is no sign of a puncture wound in the corpse. Attempts to follow the creature will prove fruitless; a small trail of blood droplets leads out the door and into the corridor beyond—then ends abruptly. No other trail can be discovered.

The referee is encouraged to pull out all the stops in order to make this sequence particularly terrifying. Remember; the attack is occurring in the middle of the night. People are awakening to blood-curdling screams and abject terror. Then, just when it seems like the attack is over, sounds of a similar event start up behind them—back where one of the PCs may be standing guard! And remember, this is all being done by an apparent phantom killer—a murderous entity that leaves almost no trace of its coming or going.



## INVESTIGATION

The following day, the PCs are likely to become *very* aggressive in their attempt to learn more about what is attacking them. This will probably take the shape in two ways:

- A more extensive and scientifically exacting analysis of available data and clues inside the base.

The extensive analysis will suggest a couple of things. The medtech made some frantic scribbles that will be found in the dispensary lavatory. Apparently, he was looking for some common factor between the individuals he was performing autopsies upon. His reason for doing so is a bit unclear, but some good intelligence and forensics task rolls will leave PCs with the impression that the creature removed most of its kills. These two corpses were the only ones left behind (evidently, the other bodies found in the complex were killed *after* the medtech was slain). And whatever else the creature did, it didn't seem to want to enter the dispensary.

The medtech never got around to searching the quarters of the autopsied individuals for common lifestyle elements. However, the PCs can easily do so. They will find a number of things in common. They can then search the rooms of the other individuals whose bodies were left behind by the creature. Fewer common elements pop up. If the characters are smart enough to realize that the creature was attempting to remove the first guard it killed the previous night, but seemed to have no interest in removing the second, they will manage to isolate the one variable shared by the corpses which the creature ignores. (See *Solving the Mystery* to learn what this key variable is and how the PCs can use it to save themselves.)

Further forensic examination suggests one last piece of information—most of the corpses seem to have been killed from behind or from the side. This is true even for those found far away from any door, and whose backs were apparently to the wall. How could such an obviously large creature get so close without causing the victim to either run away or to begin shooting? Perhaps a closer analysis of the attacks of the previous night may provide some answers (if the PCs don't think of this themselves, the last surviving security

guard should point out the value of this line of inquiry).

- An armed reconnaissance of the surrounding area.

The armed reconnaissance party will be in for some rude surprises. First off, whatever vehicle the investigators arrived in will have been thoroughly ruined. Even a keypad-entry-only vehicle will have been (somehow) entered, its control elements and power plant circuitry hopeless ruined.

If the party continues on foot, it will make some interesting discoveries (and will not have to go far to make them).

The reconnaissance team will begin coming across the remains of the other 31 researchers once they get more than 50 meters from the base. If they stick together, they will not be attacked by the creature (which is lurking nearby and wants to regain its special strength before launching any more assaults). Over the course of two hours, the PCs will find all the missing researchers. Twenty-three of the bodies will be barely recognizable; whatever killed them apparently dragged them off and made a meal out of them. It ate almost everything except for the bones and—interestingly enough—the liver.

The last eight bodies are more unusual. In each case, the corpse's torso seems to have ruptured from the inside out, almost as though the individual had swallowed a grenade. There is no indication that the creature fed on these remains. However, close inspection of the ruptured area will show that the corpse shows signs of having been hollowed out or devoured from the inside.

Near these eight corpses, the PCs will catch occasional glimpses of small (10-kilogram and less), fast animals. They are impossible to catch. An attempt to shoot one will be at one task level greater than normal, due to their small size and great speed.

A specimen of this species will show it to be a small scavenger/hunter of some type. Analysis of its alimentary canal shows no human remains; however, some other kind of creature with a tough hide is found as digestive residue. A few good task rolls involving life science skills (almost any type will do) suggest that the creature that had been consumed was a very small predator of some kind.

With all this, the PCs should have enough information to piece together *most* of what is going on. One final clue will probably complete the picture. Sometime just before the beginning of the second night, one of the PCs may notice that the body of the first security guard (the one that the creature was attempting to drag off) seems a bit bloated. Even a medically untrained individual will be able to conduct a post-mortem exam that indicates that something is *growing* inside the corpse. Dissection will reveal a small, semilarval predator species which will be quite easy to kill.

## SECOND NIGHT

The creature will try to attack the second night. However, if the PCs have decided to stand watch in threes or have taken precautions against drowsiness (such as ingesting stimulants), at least one of them will get a glimpse of the creature and be able to get off a few shots at it before it can complete its first attack. At the very worst, one individual may be struck (a round of combat) simultaneous with the PCs' responding gunfire.

The creature will flee immediately, not being used to (or fond of) taking damage from its prey.

If the PCs have already deduced how to develop a "creature repellent," then the monster will not approach any closer than 10 meters, at which point it will let out a furious bellow and immediately withdraw.

## SHOWDOWN

At this point, the PCs will have gained the upper hand on the creature and may have seen most, if not all, of its various tricks. Consequently, the actions of the creature will now be dependent upon the actions of the PCs, rather than vice versa.

In general, the referee can anticipate one of three basic stratagems from the PCs. These are:

**Hunt:** The PCs sally forth to track down and kill the creature. This will prove difficult, given their lack of a vehicle and the poor visibility caused by Ixion's vapor-filled environment. However, Recon or Hunting skill will eventually allow the group to pick up the creature's trail. Not needing a great deal of stealth (due to its other traits),



the creature will be fairly easy to track. Once discovered, it will attempt to bluff the party into splitting up. Failing this, it will immediately get behind the party and start causing as many casualties as quickly as it can. Don't be surprised if one or two PCs are badly wounded or killed before this monster can be brought down; it is one *tough* beast.

**Watch:** A more reasonable approach is to assume that the creature will eventually return for another attack, even if it is defeated (or repelled) on the second night. The PCs are likely to set up all sorts of passive alarms, possibly cannibalizing video gear from the base, creating makeshift electric eye barriers, etc.

Some impressive boobytraps are also possible (there's still plenty of electric current on hand). Probably key to any such strategy is the creation of an ambush point where the characters can lay down a withering barrage of conventional arms fire. The referee is encouraged to allow any individuals with military firearms experience to create custom reloads from the available standard ammunition. Such rounds will have one additional point of penetration and inflict one additional point of damage. However, these rounds are very unstable, and on a to hit task roll of 2 or 3 will have either misfired or caused the gun to jam (after firing).

**Lure:** Perhaps the most effective tactic is to lure the creature in with a potential victim. Of course, given the creature's ability to *rapidly* close the distance between itself and its prey, this could indeed be quite dangerous. However, if the victim were to keep moving (and stay near concealed friends), it would be very difficult for the creature to land right on top of him. This might make it possible to maneuver the creature right into a booby-trapped area or free fire zone.

Whichever of these ploys the PCs use, they should be able to kill the creature and (if desired) bring it back to civilization for analysis. However, Ecoform will need to get the creature population under control if it's going to move ahead with its terraforming project. And since the PCs proved to be so capable at removing this one, Ecoform might have another, more extensive contract in mind. Assuming, of course, that the PCs are interested.

## WEAK SPOT

Despite the daunting aspect and specifics of this creature, it does have one weak spot. The environment of Ixion has made it unaccustomed and highly vulnerable to a toxin that humans are only mildly affected by: alcohol. It is repelled by both methanol and ethanol, although it has a markedly more aversive reaction to the latter. This is the common variable that explains why the creature refused to eat certain individuals: they were regular drinkers (or had done so recently). To the creature, these individuals smelled like poisoned meat, and after killing them, it simply left their bodies behind. Nor would the creature inject its young into such a toxic host body.

This is the reason why the creature stayed away from the medtech and the dispensary—both were inundated with the smells of medically pure methanol. It is also why the creature refused to eat the livers of several of its victims; traces of ethanol consumed weeks, even months, before still lingered in that organ.

If the characters have managed to do a good job of tracking down and isolating as many variables as they can regarding the individuals who were not dragged off versus those who were, they will find that the ones left behind enjoyed alcoholic beverages on at least a semiregular basis. This can be determined by checking their rooms, where pint bottles of bourbon, vodka, etc. can be found.

None of the missing individuals (those eventually found outside) have any such substances stored in their rooms. The medtech wasn't a drinker, but worked regularly with methanol as a disinfectant, cleanser, etc.

If the PCs think of it, they will be able to rig any number of alcohol-based weapons. Some possibilities include:

- A huge alcohol atomizer that can spray methanol vapor at the creature (effect is equivalent to being gassed with a compound that induces incapacitating nausea).

- A dart with 80% pure ethanol, which will be fatal within one minute. Incapacitating convulsions (strongly resembling anaphylactic shock in a human) will begin immediately. Can also be mounted on the end of a probe, sort of like an antishark bang stick.

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- A personal repellent. A half-pint of externally applied ethanol or methanol will cause the creature to completely avoid the individual and abort any planned attacks against him. However, the effect will only last 4-6 hours.

## USING THIS ADVENTURE IN OTHER LOCALES

"To Sleep, Perchance to Scream" may be used in any subsector of the Imperium without problem, since the realities of the external political environment do not impact upon the resolution of this scenario. However, referees should be careful when selecting an alternate Ixion.

Note that the atmosphere should be either tainted or exotic in order to keep the environmental restrictions and details consistent. Also, the planetary size should not be less than 5; anything less would be an unlikely place for so large a carnivore to evolve.

The population of the planet should not be very large—10,000 is a reasonable maximum. This is important if you want to create a situation in which the PCs are truly on their own.

Finally, the law level of the subsector should be somewhere between 4 and 6. Any less and the player characters will be able to bring in heavy artillery that will reduce the awesome creature to smoldering beastie briquets in a matter of seconds. Conversely, a higher law level will force the player characters to try to slay this monster with steak knives—a great plan if they want to commit suicide, but not much use for anything else.

No matter where you situate this adventure, it's recommended that you capitalize on every opportunity to make the player characters worrisome and anxious, anticipating the imminent doom that must surely lurk around every corner, within every shadow, behind every door.

And just when you've got them thinking they've been purposelessly paranoid, the real fun can begin. Ω



# WET NAVY

## Part 2: Naval Weapons and Design Sequences By Terrence McInnes

Many ships sailing on or under the seas of many worlds are warships—they are armed with a variety of weapons for diverse missions at different technological levels. Weapons mounted on ships count against the vessel's remaining free buoyancy. Some, particularly primitive weapons, are deck- and/or hull-mounted. Others are contained within turrets. Still others, principally torpedoes and vertically launched missiles, are contained within the hull. Hull-mounted weapons and their launchers use up available hull volume, and this must be calculated along with the weapon's weight.

### PRIMITIVE NAVAL WEAPONS

**Rams:** The underwater ram, mounted on a galley's bow just below the waterline, is the first true naval weapon. TL1 naval tactics are built around the ram with the object of ramming enemy vessels broadside, staving in the hull and killing rowers. Rams are long and pointed, often sheathed in metal. Since rams are an integral part of the hull, volume and displacement do not need to be calculated separately. However, they are heavy. If adding a ram, add 10% of the hull weight to the vessel as the ram's weight.

**Torsion Projectile Weapons:** Torsion projectile weapons are mounted on some ships. They are used to toss stones, fire pots and javelins at shore and naval targets. All torsion projectile weapons are available beginning at TL1.

**Catapults:** Catapults launch their missiles in a high-angle trajectory and are notoriously difficult to use against moving targets. However, they are the most powerful and long-ranged of these weapons, and are quite useful in battering down walls and shelling towns.

**Ballista, Mangronel, Scorpion:** All of these weapons are based upon the crossbow principle. The ballista is simply a very large

crossbow (ammunition masses four kilograms). The mangronel is a wide-bowed variation on this, which launches a cluster of short spears (javelins). The Scorpion is a still smaller version of the ballista, which launches a single missile (a standard spear).

When including these systems in a design, also remember to include space for ammunition (one kiloliter for 10 firings of any weapon) and to include the weight of the rounds (which are either indicated in these rules, or are already defined in **MegaTraveller**—for instance, the spear).

**Early CPR Guns & Low Velocity CPR Rounds:** CPR guns first come into use in TL2, although at this time, all such weapons use the Howitzer Table to determine their characteristics, even though they are direct-fire weapons. It is not until TL5 that true high-velocity weapons become available.

To determine the characteristics of early tech level CPR weapons, use the charts from steps 6/20 and 6/21 (page 76 of the **Referee's Manual**) with the following modifiers:

#### • Tech Level 2:

All weapons are only 50% of the listed price.

All weapons have their range reduced by one band (Distant becomes Very Long).

Divide ROF by 20.

Ammunition weight is only 30% of the listed weight.

Only KEAP ammunition is available. Determine the penetration of the round by reading up *four* rows.

Penetration attenuation is reduced by *one*.

Example: A 10cm TL2 cannon would have a range of Very Long, a Penetration of 3, and an attenuation rating of 3. Damage is not altered, so the 10cm value of 14 is still the damage rating for the weapon.

#### • Tech Level 3:

All weapons are only 35% of the listed price.

All weapons have their range reduced by one band (Distant becomes Very Long).

Divide ROF by 10.

Ammunition weight is only 50% of the listed weight.

HE and KEAP, Grapeshot ammunition is available. Determine the penetration of the round by reading up *three* rows. In the event that this is not possible (there are less than three preceding rows), the weapon's penetration is 1.

Attenuation is reduced by *one*. Damage of the round is not altered.

Mortars read up an extra *three* rows when determining the Penetration and Damage values of their ammunition.

### TORSION PROJECTILE WEAPONS

Type	Pen	Dmg	Max Rng	Diffcly As:	Vol/Wgt	Price
Lgt. catapult			Vry Lng(.6)	Indirect	25/1.2	2300
Stones	5	4			/03	
Javelin	7	3			/006	
Firepot	Nil	Fire/1.5*			/004	
Catapult			Distant(1)	Indirect	60/2.6	3500
Stones	7	5			/13	
Javelin	9	3			/01	
Firepot	Nil	Fire/3*			/007	
Ballista	4/2	4	Very Long	Rifle	10/75	1800
Mangronel	3/2	2/1.5*	Long	Rifle	5/55	1400
Scorpion	3/2	2	Long	Rifle	3/35	1000

\*/x equal the danger space of the round. Firepots splash burning oil or naptha in the indicated space. Mangronels throw multiple javelins at their targets, thereby affecting an area around the primary target.







● Tech Level 4:

Divide ROF by 2.

HE, KEAPER, KEAP and Grapeshot ammunition are available at standard costs. Incendiary rounds are available at *twice* the standard costs. Determine the penetration of the round by reading up one row. In the event that this is not possible (there is no preceding row), the weapon's penetration is 1.

Two special types of CPR guns are available at this tech level, each with its own special attributes:

**Muzzle-Loading Smoothbores:** These weapons are only 30% of the listed price. Ammunition weight is only 30% of the listed weight. Maximum range and penetration ratings are only 70% of the listed values.

**Breech-Loading Rifles:** These weapons cost twice the listed price and have double the maximum range (the number in parentheses) shown on the Howitzer Table.

Mortars read up an extra *two rows* when determining the Penetration and Damage values of their ammunition.

## NEW AMMUNITION TYPE: GRAPESHOT

Grapeshot is essentially a huge shotgun shell which fires multiple pellets out the muzzle of the firing gun. Grapeshot is therefore resolved using the same characteristics as a flechette shell of identical bore size. However, the danger space begins at the muzzle of the firing gun.

## CPR GUNS

Ships may mount any of the CPR guns listed in the **MegaTraveler** gun tables. They may be mounted in individual deck mountings, or single, double, triple or quadruple turrets. Autocannon of 40 mm or smaller may be grouped in double, triple or quadruple mounts, while autocannon larger than 40 mm may be mounted in single or double mounts. Stabilization gear is highly recommended.

At TL5, long-range heavy naval rifles become available at calibers greater than 30 cm. Their weight, volume and other characteristics will be presented in a future issue of **Challenge**.

At TL8, the multibarrel autocannon listed in **COACC** may be mounted as radar-guided, close-in, point defense systems.

## MASS DRIVERS AND ENERGY WEAPONS

Ships may mount any mass driver, laser, plasma gun or fusion gun listed in the **MegaTraveller Referee's Manual**. Beginning at TL13, submarines may mount spinal meson guns making them the equivalent of self-propelled planetary meson gun sites.

## TURRETS

Turrets for guns, mass drivers and energy weapons may be included in ship designs. To calculate turret weight, total the weight

of all weapons in a single turret and multiply by 5. The result is total turret weight including the turret, its guns, and its ammunition-handling machinery.

Not all weapons need turrets. But if a mount does not have a turret, it may not have any more armor than a simple gunshield.

## MISSILES

A number of naval missiles are available for shipboard use beginning at TL7. These include antishipping missiles, antisubmarine missiles, and antiaircraft and spacecraft missiles.

Antishipping missiles are designed to severely damage or destroy ships. They may be fired from shipboard canister-launchers, within watertight capsules, from submarine torpedo tubes or watertight bin launchers, and they may be launched from aircraft.

Antisubmarine missiles are essentially rocket-boosted torpedoes. These are fired from launchers aboard surface ships or submarine torpedo tubes after the target has been located by the ship's sensors. The torpedo separates from its rocket booster, is slowed by parachute, and drops into the ocean where its own on-board sonar begins searching for the target.

Antiaircraft missiles may be long-range area defense weapons or relatively short-range but speedy point defense weapons. Specialized antiaircraft destroyers and frigates use area defense AA missiles to guard a naval battle group against high-flying intruders. Each ship within the battle group mounts point-defense AA missiles to catch any "leakers" that get through the area defense screen.

Beginning at TL9, standard 150mm starship's missiles with a booster stage may be mounted aboard surface ships equipped with sensors capable of detecting spacecraft at far orbit ranges, giving surface ships an antispacecraft capability.

At TL10, submarines may mount antispacecraft missiles in vertical launch tubes. Sensor antennas must broach the surface to detect targets in orbit and give missiles preliminary guidance, although the missiles may be fired from the submarine at periscope depth. At TL11, remote detection and guidance buoys enable the missiles to be fired from 100 meters below the surface.

**Missile Notes:** The light SS/US includes a one-meter, 150kg booster. The light AS missile is an air-launched variant of the light antishipping missile. Its historical equivalent is the Harpoon.

The medium AS missile is an air-launched variant of the medium antishipping missile. The medium SS/US may be launched from a deck-mounted, four-round cannister, a shipboard vertical launch system, a submarine vertical launch system or a submarine torpedo tube. Its historical equivalent is the Tomahawk.

The heavy SS/US is launched from large, sealed, deck-mounted bins aboard surface ships or submarines, or from a shipboard

## NAVAL MISSILES

Type	Cost (Cr)	Weight (Kg)	Volume (Kliters)	Range (km)	Pen.	Dmg.
Light SS/US	6000	650	0.6	Regional (180)	32	38
Light AS	5500	500	0.5	Regional (180)	32	38
Med. SS/US	150000	1200	1.8	Regional (400)	36	42
Med. AS	120000	1000	1.5	Regional (400)	36	42
Heavy SS/US	600000	5000	7.4	Continental (600)	48	60
Heavy AS	550000	5000	7.4	Continental (600)	48	60
Antisubmarine SU	12500	500	0.6	V. Distant (10)	32	16
Antisubmarine UU	15000	1800	2	Regional (60)	32	16
Light SA	1100	100	0.05	V. Distant (10)	14	16
Med. SA	3000	200	0.2	V. Distant (35)	18	30
Heavy SA	150000	700	0.6	Regional (100)	26	32
Heavy SA (long range)	175000	1400	1	Regional (200)	26	32

SA: Surface to air SS: Surface to surface AS: Air to surface US: Underwater to surface SU: Surface to underwater UU: Underwater to underwater.



vertical launch system. Its historical equivalent is the SSN-12 Sandbox.

The heavy AS is an air-launched variant of this missile. Its historical equivalent is the AS-4 Kitchen.

The antisubmarine UU is launched from a standard submarine torpedo tube. Its historical equivalent is the SUBROC with a conventional warhead.

The heavy SA (long range) is the heavy SA with a booster stage attached that essentially doubles its range. Its historical equivalent is the SM2-ER.

Other missiles and their historical equivalents include:

Antisubmarine SU (ASROC)

Light SA (Sea Chaparral, RIM116A RAM)

Medium SA (Sea Sparrow, Sea Wolf)

Heavy SA (Standard SM2-MR, Sea Dart)

## LAUNCHERS

Launchers must be provided for missiles. Several types are available:

**One-Shot Canisters:** These are shipped with the missiles sealed inside and are installed on deck hardpoints. Light and medium SS missiles may be launched from canisters. VLight SA missiles may be launched from canisters clipped onto a pedestal launcher. Missiles plus canisters weigh 110% of the missile weight.

**Single or Twin-Arm Rapid-Fire Launcher:** These are deck-mounted launchers automatically fed from magazines within the hull. They weigh 2.5 times the weight of the heaviest missile they fire times the number of arms on the launcher. As an example, a twin-arm launcher capable of firing the heavy SAM (long range) would weigh 7000 kilograms.

**Bins:** These are similar to canisters except they are fixed, permanent, reloadable installations. Models are available that fire from one to four rounds. Loaded bins weigh 1.5 times the combined weight of the missiles they fire. Empty, they weigh 0.5 times the combined missile weight.

**Box Launchers:** These are reloadable launchers that contain two to eight missiles within watertight boxes mounted on a deck-mounted pedestal. They traverse and elevate according to fire control computer commands. Box launchers weigh two times the weight of the heaviest missile they fire times the number of boxes on the launcher.

**Rail Launchers:** Rail launchers are mounted on a pedestal and contain two to eight missiles mounted on launch rails. Like box launchers, rail launchers traverse and elevate, and are reloadable. However, unlike box launchers, rail launchers do not protect their missiles from the elements, small arms fire or shrapnel. Rail launchers weigh 1.5 times the weight of the heaviest missile they fire times the number of rails on the launcher.

**Vertical Launch Systems:** These are launch cells mounted in the hull. Each cell weighs 5% of its missile's weight but takes up 110% of its volume. This design eliminates on-deck launchers and is less vulnerable to battle and weather damage.

## TORPEDOES

Torpedoes are swimming missiles used by submarines against surface ships and other submarines, and by surface ships against submarines and other surface ships. They may also be dropped from aircraft against surface ships and submarines.

Early torpedoes are unguided, free-swimming weapons aimed at a target's expected position. If calculations were correct and the target doesn't change course, the torpedoes hit. They have no homing capability and can only be aimed at surface ships.

Crude acoustic homing devices are available at TL6, enabling torpedoes to guide themselves toward a target's propeller noises. Wire-guided torpedoes are available at TL7—these are steered toward a submarine or surface target by the firing submarine's sonar

system. TL8 torpedoes have their own on-board active and passive sonars, and can independently seek out submerged and surface targets.

TL8 torpedoes may also be equipped with directed energy (HEAP) warheads. As tech levels increase, torpedo range, speed and endurance increase. By TL14, miniaturized grav drives and fusion power plants give torpedoes unlimited range.

**Torpedo Tubes:** Standard torpedo tubes occupy 110% of the volume of the torpedo. These launch torpedoes with compressed air or gas, or, in the case of surface ships, with gunpowder charges. They may be deck-mounted or hull-mounted on surface ships or submarines. Empty, they weigh 10% of the torpedo's weight. Deck-mounted torpedo tubes on submarines cannot be reloaded if the vessel is submerged.

Swimout torpedo tubes are also available beginning at TL7. These occupy 125% of the volume of the torpedo, but when empty weigh only 5% of the torpedo's weight. As the name suggests, the torpedo starts its motor while in the torpedo tube and literally swims out of the tube. The launch is virtually silent, without the blast of compressed air associated with a standard tube, and the sub's compressed air supply is not drained by the launch.

## MAGAZINES

Sufficient magazine space should be provided for reloads of shells, missiles and torpedoes if your ship is expected to see combat for more than a very short time. To calculate needed magazine space, multiply your ammunition's weight by the number of reloads you wish to carry. Magazines are usually located beneath the waterline, where they can be easily flooded in case of fire and can be protected by the hull's belt armor.

## ARMOR

Hull materials have a minimum armor value as indicated by the hardness modifier in the Hull Materials Table. As with any other vehicle, a ship's armor value may be increased by increasing the thickness of the hull and the superstructure, if any. Remember, there is a maximum added armor factor for all vessels—tech level multiplied by 5.

## ELECTRONICS

Electronics must be added for communications detection, and other purposes. Any communications or sensor device listed in the **Referee's Manual** may be installed aboard ship. In addition, the sonar sensors listed below may be included in any surface or submarine vessel design. At TL7+, sonar sensors may also be built into air-dropable sonobuoys. Variable-depth sonars may be installed aboard surface ships, helicopters and grav vehicles, and may be lowered beneath the thermocline layer from a ship or hovering aircraft.

## COMPUTERS

Computers may be added for navigation and control. Add computers according to the rules in the **Referee's Manual**.

## CONTROL POINT REQUIREMENTS FOR EARLY TECH VEHICLES

Early vehicles are much simpler in design and operation, and therefore have greatly decreased control requirements.

Vehicles of TL0-2 have no CP requirements. They are equipped with "direct" controls (reins, tillers, guidelines, etc.) that are integral to the various systems being operated.

At TL3-4, only three sections are included in the control point

# MEGATRAVELLER



equation (step 8/2 on page 81 of the **Referee's Manual**). The three included sections are power, locomotion and environment. All other sections either have negligible control requirements or are operated via direct controls.

Normal masted sails incur no power or locomotion CP costs; they are always handled via direct controls, no matter the TL of the craft.

## CONTROL PANEL UNITS (ADDITIONS)

Type	TL	v	m	Pr	CP
Direct	0	—	—	—	—
Primitive mechanical	3	1.0	.25	100	.2
Simple mechanical	4	.6	.15	20	.2

## POWERED VESSEL CREWS

Calculate the number of crewmembers you need aboard your vessel.

**Gun Crews:** For each gun, assign one crewmember per each 2 cm in gun bore. The minimum crew is one per gun. Reduce the crew requirement per gun by two for each tech level higher than 6.

**Missiles:** One crewmember per mount if single shot or autoloading launchers are used; one per mount plus one person per 50 kilos of missile weight if launchers need to be manually reloaded.

**Torpedoes:** Four crewmembers per tube for reloadable launcher, one for each one-shot launcher.

## ENGINEERING CREWS

At least one crewmember must be provided for each kiloliter of power plant aboard a TL6+ powered vessel with a power plant of one kiloliter or greater. If the vessel is fueled with solid hydrocarbons or wood, at least two crewmembers must be provided for each kiloliter of power plant. If the vessel is to be underway for more than eight hours, enough engineering crewmembers must be provided to stand two four-hour engineering watches every 24 hours. Engineering crew requirements may be doubled aboard a naval vessel to

provide replacements for combat casualties.

**Bridge:** On merchant vessels, two senior officers, the master and first officer, plus an officer and crewmember for each watch. Naval vessels have triple the number of watch personnel so that casualty replacements are theoretically available.

**Deck Department:** Minimum of three crewmembers to serve as lookouts on watch and handle maintenance, plus one additional crewmember per 1000 tons fluid displacement. Triple the deck department's size for naval vessels.

**Sensor Operators:** Dedicated sensor operators are only found aboard naval vessels. Each sensor system requires three operators so it can be crewed around the clock.

**Steward:** As detailed in the **Referee's Manual**.

**Security/Ship's Troops:** As detailed in the **Referee's Manual**.

**Medical:** As detailed in the **Referee's Manual**.

## PRIMITIVE VESSEL CREWS (TL0-3)

Oar-powered craft must have at least one crewmember for each oar. Up to four crewmembers may pull on one oar. If the craft will be rowed for more than eight continuous hours, a relief rower must be available for each oar. Sail-powered craft must have one crewmember per 10 square meters of sail in addition to the command crew, gunners or ship's troops. Primitive gun crews must include one member per every kilo of each gun's weight of shot (e.g., each gun firing an eight-kilo shot must have eight crewmembers).

## ACCOMMODATIONS

Calculate the volume, weight, and cost of accommodations for all by the Vehicle Accommodations Table and accommodation rules found in the **MegaTraveller Referee's Manual**. Vessels under 100 tons may be treated as vehicles. Vessels of more than 100 tons are treated as spacecraft in these rules. If the vessel is to be at sea for more than 30 days, provide one kilogram of food and two liters of water per day beyond 30 days.

In truly cramped vessels of TL0+, a more basic type of extended

## TORPEDOES

Type	Cost (Cr)	Weight (kg)	Volume (Kliters)	HE Pen	Dmg	HEAP Pen	Dmg	Range (km)
Early steam (TL5)	10000	1400	1.7	30	34	—	—	5
Lightweight (TL7)	100000	250	0.3	32	16	38	12	12
Heavyweight (TL7)	250000	1600	1.7	32	40	53	28	26/40*
Super heavyweight (TL8)	500000	2500	3.8	48	60	60	34	50/100*

\*High speed/low speed will be discussed in a future issue of **Challenge**.

## PASSIVE SONARS

Weight in tons by TL

Range	5	6	7	8	9	Price
Distant (5 km)	0.1	0.05	0.03	0.01	0.005	200
V. Distant (50 km)		1.0	0.5	0.3	0.01	2000
Regional (500 km)			10.0	5.0	0.5	20000
Continental (5000 km)				10.00	1.0	200000

Power requirement (Mw)=weight in tonsx1.

Volume=weight in tonsx2.

## ACTIVE SONARS

Weight in tons by TL

Range	5	6	7	8	9	Price
Distant (5 km)	2.0	1.0	0.5	0.01		5000
V. Distant (50 km)		20.0	10.0	5.00	0.5	50000

Power requirement (Mw)=weight in tonsx5.

Volume=weight in tonsx2.

Variable-depth sonars are available beginning at TL7. They cost 150% of normal sonar and occupy volume equal to weightx3.



accommodation is available: the half bunk. The half bunk is either a light frame double bunk or a hassock with just enough space for the individual's gear and provisions. Such accommodations are still found on many tightly designed, low-tech spacecraft.

## EXTENDED ACCOMMODATIONS (ADDITION)

Type	Pwr	Vol	Wt	Cr
Half bunk	—	6	.25	25

All other accommodation ratings are the same as listed in the **Referee's Manual**, although at TL0-3, there are no power costs.

## COST AND WEIGHT OF FUEL (ADDITIONS)

The following additional fuel types are all Hydrocarbons. However, each type includes certain important properties that make it distinct from basic petroleum-based hydrocarbons.

Type	Weight	Price	Consumption Rate
Solid hydrocarbons			
Wood/biofibers	1.0	15	x5
Coal	2.0	75	x2
Additional hydrocarbons			
Ethanol	1.0	100	x3
Methanol	1.0	30	x4

**Consumption Rate:** These new hydrocarbons are consumed faster than standard hydrocarbons in order to release the same amount of energy. Engines burning these fuels therefore use up their fuel much more quickly. The consumption rate indicates how much faster than standard hydrocarbons these fuels will burn. (For example, if an internal combustion engine could consume one kiloliter of hydrocarbons per hour, it would consume three kiloliters of ethanol or four kiloliters of methanol in that same time.)

Wood/biofibers and methanol are available on any world with a carbon-based biosphere. Ethanol must be produced from edible flora, and therefore is both more rare and more expensive. Coal is usually available on any planet that has petroleum.

## COLD-STARTING AND ACCELERATING WITH STEAM ENGINES

All steam engines require five minutes to be cold-started. For every 50 kilowatts of power output (or fraction thereof), they require one additional minute. Therefore, a steam engine with a maximum output of 100 kilowatts would require seven minutes to start.

In the event that a steam engine is not being run at maximum output, it requires one minute to generate every additional 50 kilowatts of power that it wishes to add. Therefore, if a 200-kilowatt steam engine was running at only 50 kilowatts output, it would take three minutes (of full fuel consumption) to increase its output level all the way to the maximum of 200 kilowatts.

## SUBMARINES

There are a number of design considerations for submarines that do not affect surface vessels. These include ballast tanks and buoyancy, pressure hull strength, minimal superstructure, periscopes, snorkels and pumps.

**Ballast Tanks:** Submarines need negative buoyancy to submerge and neutral buoyancy to stay at a fixed depth. When completed, a submarine design's weight should almost equal its displacement. The submarine will float with only a small portion of the hull above water. Include in the design ballast tanks with enough volume that when they are filled with water their weight added to the weight of the submarine will be greater than the weight of the water displaced by the vessel. Sea water weighs 1.02 tons per kiloliter.

As an example, a submarine displaces 1000 tons, and when loaded with its machinery, crew, weapons and fuel weighs 995 tons. Ballast tanks are included

that hold 10 kiloliters of water. When these tanks are flooded, the sub weighs 1005 tons and sinks because the weight is greater than the weight of the water it displaces. When the captain reaches cruising depth, he orders neutral buoyancy, and half the water is pumped out of the ballast tanks and replaced with air. The sub weighs 1000 tons and displaces 1000 tons. It stays at a fixed depth. Later, the captain decides to surface and blows out the ballast tanks with compressed air. The sub's weight drops to 995 tons, less than its displacement. It rises to the surface and floats.

**Pressure Hull and Maximum Depth:** A submarine's maximum diving depth is calculated by multiplying its armor factor by 15. The result is the depth in meters a submarine can reach before its hull risks cracking under pressure. For example, a submarine with an armor factor of 10 can dive to 150 meters, while a sub with an armor factor of 40 can dive to 600 meters.

**Minimal Superstructure:** The smoother a submarine's hull design, the quieter the sub will move while submerged. Consequently, the smaller the superstructure the better. Most designs limit superstructures to fin-shaped conning towers. In more advanced designs, these retract within the hull and are only extended when the sub is surfaced. Allow 110% of the superstructure's volume for a well in the hull to house the superstructure when retracted. Unlike surface ships, a submarine's superstructure is included in its displacement as well as its weight.

**Periscopes:** Submarines mount periscopes to enable them to see above the surface while travelling submerged. These are long, thin tubes that retract into the sub's conning tower. Most submarines mount at least two periscopes—one a night periscope with large light-gathering optics, the other an attack periscope for daylight attacks. The attack periscope is smaller in diameter in order to reduce the chance of it being spotted.

The night periscope occupies 15 kiloliters of volume and costs Cr1500. The attack periscope occupies 12 kiloliters and costs Cr1250. Retractable radio and sensor masts may also be fitted to enable the submarine to use its radios and make sensor scans without surfacing. Radio masts occupy 10 kiloliters, sensor masts 15 kiloliters.

**Snorkels:** Diesel-electric boats may mount snorkel systems that allow them to run their engines to recharge their batteries without surfacing. Snorkels occupy 30 kiloliters and cost Cr1000.

**Pumps:** Submarines must have pumps in order to clear ballast tanks and surface. See the section on pumps in this article for details on pump capacity and size.

## AIR CUSHION VEHICLES

Design air cushion vehicles according to the design sequence in the **MegaTraveller Referee's Manual** for vehicles with thrust-based suspensions.

## NAVAL AIRCRAFT

Many wet navies include a fleet air arm of fixed, rotary-winged or grav aircraft. These may be shore or ship-based. They may fly off dedicated aircraft carriers and/or aircraft landing platforms on other surface combatants. Helicopters and VTOL aircraft may fly off any vessel with a clear landing platform large enough to accommodate their rotor diameter or wingspan. Fixed-wing designs weighing less than 30 tons that have been equipped with arresting gear may operate from dedicated aircraft carriers, including submarines

# MEGATRAVELLER



equipped with flight decks and aircraft hangars. Fixed-wing aircraft equipped with floats may be launched from ships and submarines by catapult or lowered over the side by crane for a water takeoff. Amphibians and seaplanes are widely used as scouts, spotters and patrol aircraft by moderate-tech wet navies.

A number of aircraft designs found in **COACC** are well suited for carrier operations. They include:

**Fighters:** Laramie (TL7), Abilene (TL8).

**Attack Aircraft:** Chicago (TL6), San Diego (TL7), Port Stanley VTOL (TL8), Seattle (TL8).

## NAVAL AIRCRAFT FACILITIES

**Flight Decks:** Treat an aircraft carrier flight deck as a superstructure. The flight deck volume should be calculated as being one meter thick, times 110% of the ship's beam (width), times the ship's length. Add 20% to the flight deck area (length times 110% of the ship's beam) if the flight deck is angled to allow simultaneous takeoffs and landings.

Helicopter/VSTOL carriers may have a flight deck with the width of 100% of the ship's beam. Carriers may also have an off-center island for command and control facilities as a second superstructure. The island may be retractable into a well in the ship's hull (see Minimal Superstructures) or may be lowered on tracks down the outside of the hull. The elevating mechanism takes up hull volume equivalent to 10% of the island's volume.

**Catapults:** Catapults must be fitted if conventional jet aircraft are to fly from a carrier. Carriers must have steam catapults if aircraft take-off weights exceed 10 tons. Nonaircraft carriers may have catapults to launch float planes.

**Hangar Decks:** Any vessel, aircraft carrier or otherwise, which flies off aircraft must allocate enclosed hangar space for aircraft servicing if aircraft are to be permanently based aboard. Allocate 120% of the total volume of the aircraft for hangar space.

**Aviation Magazines:** Sufficient space must be provided for aircraft ammunition including bombs, rockets, missiles, torpedoes and autocannon shells for the carrier's air group. Provide room for ammunition for at least seven days of combat operations by the air group.

**Aviation Fuel:** Provide space to store enough fuel for at least seven days of combat operations for the carrier's aircraft.

**Helicopter/VTOL/Grav Vehicle Platforms:** Nonaircraft carriers may allocate flat, open, reinforced deck space for helicopter, VTOL aircraft or grav vehicle operations. Each landing pad costs Cr10,000.

## POWERED VESSELS

Ship design sequence, evaluation and checklist for powered surface and submersible vessels.

1. Determine hull volume. Note basic hull price.
2. Determine hull damage points for inoperative (volume/15) and destroyed (volume/6) values.
3. Determine hull material (wood, iron, steel, fiberglass, etc.). Modify hull price with hull material price modifier.
4. Determine hull configuration (displacement, deep displacement, planing, hydrofoil, etc.). Modify hull price with hull configuration price modifier.

5. Calculate hull weight.

6. Determine hull displacement as a fraction of hull volume depending on configuration of hull.

7. Subtract hull weight from displacement. Difference is free buoyancy available for accommodations, crew, weapons, passengers, cargo.

8. Determine top design speed.

9. Calculate power needed to reach design speed using these formulas:

A.  $R = \sqrt{D} \times r_f$  where  $\sqrt{D}$  is the square root of the hull's UCP displacement and  $r_f$  is the hull resistance factor found with each hull type in the Hull Types Table.

B.  $P = RV^2/2$  where  $P$  is power in kilowatts,  $R$  is the hull's resistance calculated in the previous substep, and  $V$  is the top design speed. If you wish to calculate the power in megawatts, divide the result by 1000 or calculate the power needed with the formula  $P = RV^2/2000$ .

10. Determine engine/power plant type(s). Calculate weight and volume of engine units required to generate total required power output.

11. Determine engine/power plant damage values.

12. Determine power transmission agent (paddle wheels, propeller(s), hydrojets, gravitic drive units).

13. Determine power transmission damage values.

14. Calculate effective power, determine if sufficient to reach design speed, adjust if needed.

15. Calculate remaining available weight for components.

16. Add controls.

17. Add deck house(s) or other superstructures, noting added volume, weight and price.

18. Determine superstructure destroyed damage value (volume/6).

19. Add weapons (and turrets), if any.

20. Add magazines for ammunition storage.

21. Add electronics (sensors, communicators).

22. Add computers.

23. Determine crew needed.

24. Add accommodations.

25. Add cargo space, if any.

26. Add passenger staterooms, if any.

27. Add life support.

28. Determine power needed for computers, sensors, controls, accommodations, weapons. Subtract from power available for propulsion. Adjust top speed if necessary.

29. Allocate fuel storage. Include fuel storage for any on-board aircraft.

30. Calculate fuel consumption and vessel endurance and range at top speed, cruising speed (75% top speed) and idle.

31. Calculate loaded weight of hull, fittings, crew, accommodations, cargo, weapons. If total weight exceeds displacement, it will sink. Redo design.

32. Rating.

33. List price.

34. List UCP hull tonnage.

35. List volume.

36. Calculate and list hull damage points.

37. List fluid displacement.

38. List weight.

39. Calculate total power in megawatts.

40. Calculate top speed (in kph).

41. Calculate cruising speed (75% top speed).

42. Calculate slow speed (25% top speed).

43. Calculate endurance and range at top speed, cruising speed, slow speed.

44. Calculate and list engine damage values.

### AVAILABLE CATAPULTS

Type	TL	Cost (Cr)	Length (meters)	Weight (tons)	Capacity (tons)
Gunpowder turntable	5	50000	20	5	3
Hydraulic turntable	6	100000	30	10	8
Hydraulic fixed	6	100000	30	10	8
Large hydraulic fixed	6	300000	50	15	13
Steam fixed	7	800000	100	40	35

# Technology Overview

**TL1:** The ram, a metal covered underwater extension of the bow, is the major antiship weapon. Ramming, boarding and burning is the main antiship tactic at this tech level.

Catapults throwing stones or fire pots are mounted on some galleys.

**TL2:** Smoothbore muzzle-loading cannon firing solid shot with a maximum effective range of 200 meters (Very Long).

**TL3:** Chain shot to de-mast ships, grapeshot antipersonnel rounds, and explosive shells are developed for smoothbore muzzle-loading cannon. Effective range increases to 300 meters (Very Long).

**TL4:** The first rifled breech-loading cannon appear, although lack of recoil mechanism limits quick firing capability. The first torpedoes are developed for launching from torpedo boats. Moored mines come into use.

Primitive armor, turrets appear.

**TL5:** Turret guns up to 14" (355 mm) developed with ranges up to 30 km. Quick-firing recoil mechanisms for secondary armament. Accurate optical range finders appear along with effective coordinated salvo-based fire control. Armor-piercing shells developed to defeat most armor. Aircraft first used on ships initially as scouts and artillery spotters. Primitive submarines appear firing steam-powered torpedoes.

**TL6:** Ultimate development in naval artillery occurs with primary turret guns of up to 500 mm with ranges up to 120 kilometers. Radar-based fire control allows accurate night and foul weather fire. Massed automatic antiaircraft cannon installed to defeat air attacks. Dedicated aircraft carriers and naval aircraft appear in large numbers, radically altering naval tactics. By end of tech level, naval artillery platforms are relegated to aircraft carrier escort and shore bombardment/naval gunfire support roles.

Virtually silent, wakeless electric torpedoes are developed. Submersibles are capable of extended patrols. Sonar sensors and primitive acoustic homing torpedoes improve surface and submersible vessel ASW capabilities by late TL6.

**TL7:** Increasingly accurate and powerful antishipping missiles first supplement then supplant naval artillery in most ship designs. Guns are used primarily in antismall-craft and shore bombardment missions. Naval antiaircraft missiles appear first for area defense then point defense against hostile aircraft and incoming missiles. Massive fission-powered super carriers are developed. Although their aircraft are potent weapons, these ships are vulnerable to massed missile attacks. First true submarines appear. Powered by fission reactors, their streamlined hull forms allow virtually unlimited, high-speed underwater cruising. Sophisticated sonar sensors and wire-guided high-speed torpedoes make submarines potent ASW as well as antishipping weapons. Both underwater-launched ballistic and cruise missiles appear.

**TL8:** High-speed computers, 3D radar sensors and vertical launch systems turn ships into potent aircraft and missile killers. Improved sonar detection systems, minicomputers and lightweight homing torpedoes with their own on-board sonar systems and microprocessors make the helicopter the primary antisubmarine weapon.

Medium-caliber automatic cannon prove to be effective bombardment weapons. Multibarrel, light-caliber, automatic cannon are mounted as close-in antimissile/antiaircraft weapons backing up point-defense missile systems. VTOL aircraft prove to be versatile antishipping, antiaircraft and close-support weapons

capable of flying from any open deck space, turning virtually any ship into an aircraft carrier.

The first ship-borne antiaircraft lasers are mounted aboard ship. Aircraft and submarine-launched antishipping missiles become the main surface ship killers.

**TL9:** Mass drivers appear as shipboard bombardment weapons. Ship-mounted lasers become increasingly accurate and powerful close-in defense weapons, supplementing automatic cannon. Fusion systems begin powering surface craft and submarines, giving both unlimited range. Missile systems give surface craft limited defense capability against satellites and spacecraft in close orbit. Fire control systems are now fully integrated into ships' computer systems and sensor suites, and disappear as distinct subsystems. The first air-rafts and g-carriers are used as ship-to-ship liaison craft and for clandestine over-the-beach troop insertions.

**TL10:** Antispacecraft missiles are loaded aboard submarines in vertical launch tubes. Submarines must breach the surface for accurate first-stage missile guidance to their targets in close orbit. Blue-green lasers are added as close-in antitorpedo weapons. "Blooming" of the laser beam caused by suspended solids in the water limits weapon effectiveness to less than 100 meters.

**TL11:** Improved launching systems, improved pressure capsules and miniaturized guidance systems aboard buoys released from submarines enable submarines to launch antispacecraft missiles from 100 meters or more beneath the surface. This new capability makes submarine-launched antispacecraft missiles a surprising and effective planetary defense against hostile spacecraft and orbiting weapons platforms. Meanwhile, missiles and beam weapons fired from orbit force all but the smallest, least valuable naval assets underwater.

**TL12:** Improved armor technology enables submarines to routinely dive to 4000 meters. Improved construction technology leads to a wide variety of submarine vessels, including submersible aircraft carriers equipped with VTOL aircraft, and amphibious submersible landing craft capable of beaching themselves and crawling inland directly from the depths. Plasma and fusion guns are mounted on small craft and on submersible assault support ships as direct-fire support weapons. Antispacecraft lasers are mounted aboard floats connected to a submerged submarine. These floats are released and surface to fire upon hostile spacecraft in low orbit.

**TL13:** Except for grav-propelled hydrofoils on safety and law enforcement patrol duties, all Nautical Force Command craft are now fusion-powered, grav-propelled submarines. Meson guns are mounted aboard the largest submarines as mobile antispacecraft weapons. Others function as mobile underwater system defense boat tenders, servicing and supplying SBDs that hide on the deep ocean floor. Advanced x-ray lasers give submarines close-defense capabilities against hostile torpedoes.

**TL14:** Submarines have unlimited dive depths. Miniaturized fusion units and grav propulsion modules give torpedoes unlimited range.

**TL15:** Grav propulsion modules and increasingly efficient fusion power plants enable many submarine designs to have a flight capability enabling them to make rapid transoceanic deployments.

Some smaller models have a true sea-air-land triphibious capability.





# Your Own Worst ENEMY

By Lester Smith

**T**o the world at large, Abraham Sylvester is known only as a reclusive billionaire (albeit one with a propensity for open-handed donations to charity). But a select few individuals know Sylvester as one of Earth's most cunning opponents to the Dark Ones. The player characters belong to that latter group. They are each acquaintances or employees of Sylvester, people who have worked with him in the past to uncover Darkling plots and thwart them. The PCs have come to respect and trust Sylvester completely. Now he has called them all together to help him on a new investigation. He has stumbled upon a black market in infants, located in Miami, and has asked the group to meet him there to check it out.

When the adventure opens, the PCs have just completed their travel to Miami. They gather at their host's hotel suite for dinner and talk the case over with Sylvester, then go to bed with plans to get started in the morning. But evil dreams disturb their sleep, and when they awake the next morning, they find Sylvester missing. What's worse, they are all spattered with blood, and they discover that an elderly couple was murdered during the night in this very hotel.

With no other leads to follow for solving the mysteries they face, the PCs begin pursuing the black market. Each day takes them closer to its heart, but each night finds more murders and evil dreams.

Soon, the PCs are ambushed by a group that turns out to be Dark Minion hunters. A note the hunters carry—signed by Sylvester—states that the PCs have been taken over by the Dark Ones. From that point on, the cycle continues: The PCs grow closer to the criminal ring; they continue to have evil dreams; innocents continue to die; and more hunters come to kill them.

The secret to the mystery lies in two main plots. The first involves the cobra people and their black market ring. The

other involves dark elves who kidnapped Sylvester and are toying with the PCs. The dark elves are committing the murders, but they have captured an ET device that puts the PCs into a deep sleep, during which incriminating evidence can be planted on them. To further torture the PCs, they have replaced Sylvester with a changeling who is out recruiting hunters to destroy them, which is, in a way, a third plot.

Ideally, the PCs will solve both mysteries: They will find the lair of the cobra people, and they will catch the dark elves in their act. Of course, they may instead decide that they really have been taken over by the Dark Ones and simply destroy themselves.

## RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

To run this adventure, the referee will need to keep track of three different courses of events: the PCs' investigation of the Miami black market in babies, the dark elves' taking every opportunity to do murder and blame it on the PCs, and the changeling's sending hunters after the PCs. Keeping track of these things is not as difficult as it might seem. Basically, the referee should concentrate on the PCs' progress toward solving the Miami black market mystery, then insert episodes from the other two courses as opportunity arises. Most of the explanation that follows involves the black market mystery. But first, two short sections detail how to graft the dark elves' murders and the Dark Minion hunters' attacks onto the course of that investigation.

Note that Abraham Sylvester is a very rich man, and his employees (Silvers and Randall) are authorized to use that wealth in a good cause. As a result, the PCs should have no lack of whatever equipment they need. Really exotic equipment might take some time to be delivered, however.

## THE DARK ELVES' MURDERS

At one point in their past, Sylvester and the PCs thwarted the plans of a band of dark elves in New York City. Those creatures have been plotting their revenge ever since. Recently, six of them captured a sleep projecting device in a raid on some humanoid ETs, and they came up with a plan for vengeance on the PCs. According to that plan, these six followed Sylvester, waiting for him to gather those people together again. Once that group had rejoined, the dark elves used the sleep projector to immobilize the PCs while they kidnapped Sylvester and murdered some innocents with the PCs' own weapons. Then, while two of the dark elves took Sylvester to a safe place where they could create a changeling version of him and then slowly torture him to death, the remaining four continued to follow the PCs, waiting for another opportunity to put them all to sleep again and implicate them in another murder. They plan to continue this for as long as they can get away with it.

As has been explained, the PCs all arrive in Miami one evening, meet at dinner and discuss the black market case with Sylvester. The adventure actually begins on the next morning, when the PCs wake up fully dressed, with blood spattered on their clothes and with Sylvester missing. A search of the suite reveals no bodies—to all appearances, there has been no violence in the suite. Further investigation of the hotel reveals that an elderly couple staying on the floor above were brutally murdered in their sleep. (Of course, if the PCs investigate without cleaning themselves up first, they are likely to be the primary suspects.)

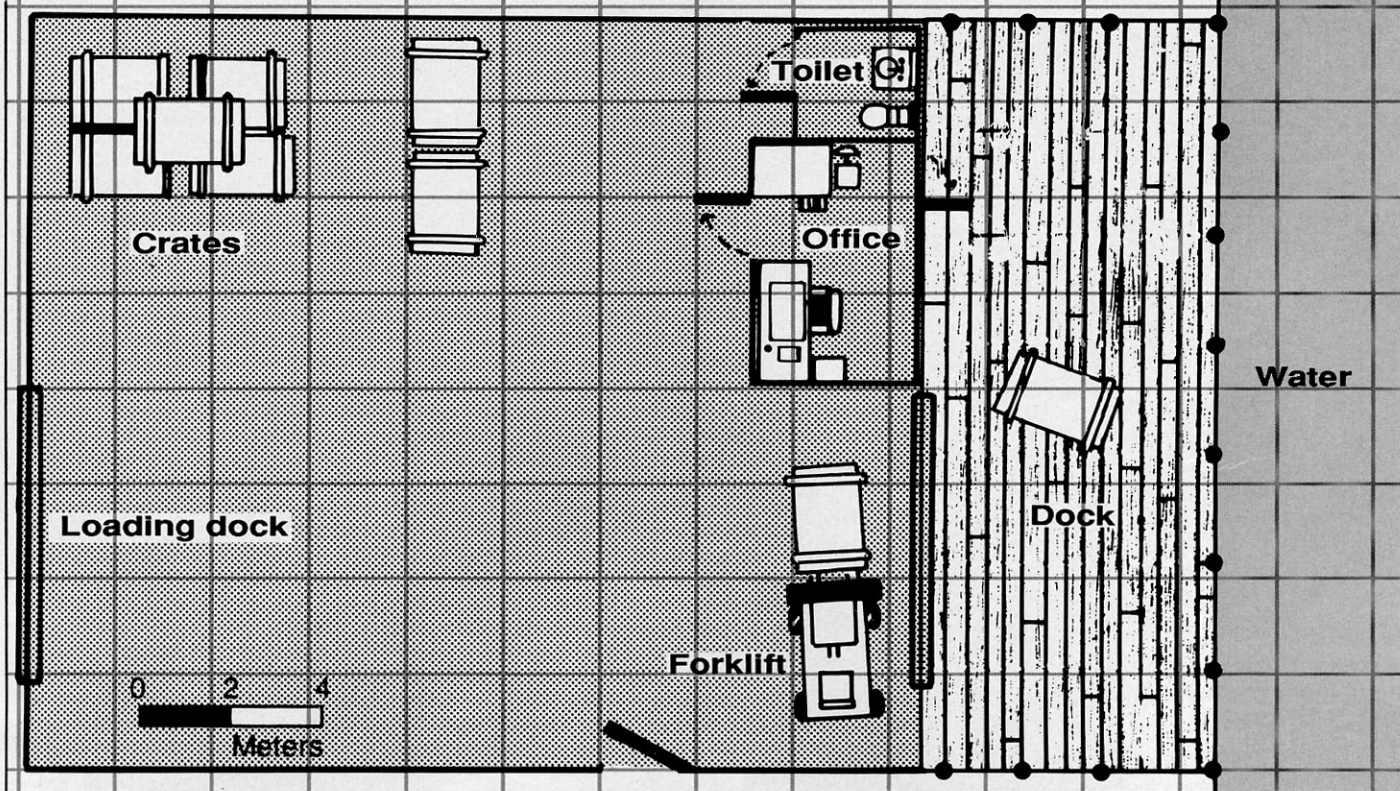
All the PCs can remember of significance from their talk with Sylvester the night before is that he wanted them to contact Lenny the Stoooge at the Green Flamingo Bar and Grill in downtown Miami. Following up on this lead will take several days. During that time, the four dark elves with the sleep projector will be tracking them, waiting for other opportunities to put the PCs to sleep, borrow their weapons and murder more innocents nearby. (The referee should use his imagination for determining who these innocents are, based upon the PCs' location at the time.) How successful the dark elves are will depend on what precautions the PCs take (guards set, etc.). The referee should consider







# The Cobra People's Warehouse



the dark elves as having a Stealth rating of 8 in their attempts to put the PCs to sleep. (Other stats for the dark elves are included on page 220 of the game rules.)

If the PCs are canny enough, they may eventually catch the dark elves at their game. If Sylvester is still alive by then, any dark elves that survive the encounter will gladly trade Sylvester for their own freedom.

## Sleep Projector

This device looks like an overly large bullhorn (nearly one meter in length). It projects subsonic sound waves that lull mammalian targets into a sleep so deep that they can be moved about quite freely with no danger of waking. Targets that are awake at the time the device is turned on them can remain awake if they succeed at a Difficult test of Willpower or Constitution (whichever is higher). Add +1 to the die roll for each hour beyond 20 that the target has remained awake. Victims of the device wake naturally after sleeping a number of hours equal to 14 minus their Constitution rating.

The sleep projector has a range of 50 meters and projects in a cone 25 meters wide at its furthest end. Its effects can be projected through glass (such as a win-

dow, which is how the dark elves typically use it), but the cone's length and base diameter are halved as a result. The device has been designed as a disposable model; it has enough energy for 16 uses and cannot be recharged.

## CHANGELING PLOT

While four of the dark elves plague the PCs, the other two have taken Sylvester and are creating a type I changeling replica of him (see pages 215-16 of the game rules for changeling details). That process will take them one day to complete. On the second day, the changeling begins to contact Dark Minion hunters of Sylvester's acquaintance and recruits them to come hunt the PCs, claiming that the PCs have been taken over by the Dark Ones and are now Dark Minions themselves. Also on the second day, the dark elves begin torturing Sylvester to death. It will take them four days to kill him (each day he receives six wound points, and he heals none back).

On the evening of that second day, the first group of hunters arrives in Miami and begins looking for the PCs. Each day thereafter, another group of hunters arrives as well. How soon any of these hunters find the PCs depends upon how

skilled they are and how many days they have spent looking. The referee should roll an Average test of the group leader's skill level once each day, subtracting one from the die roll for each day spent in Miami after the first (make a mark next to each group each additional day that group is in town). If the test is successful, the group finds the PCs and attacks. If unsuccessful, the group gives up for that day and tries again on the next. If more than one group discovers the PCs on the same day, the attacks will come separately. In each case, the referee should decide when the attack occurs based upon the PCs' actions for the day and what seems dramatically appropriate.

Note that whenever the PCs defeat a group of hunters, they will find evidence revealing that the group has been sent by Sylvester and that Sylvester believes the PCs have become Dark Minions. (This evidence might be a note in the pocket of a hunter's body, the explanation of a hunter taken captive, or the curse of a routed group.) In any case, the purpose of these encounters is to give the PCs more evidence that they have been taken over and to add some excitement to the course of their black market investigation.



## COBRA PEOPLE PLOT

Solving the cobra people plot actually involves no great mystery. Basically, a nest of cobra people has infiltrated the local criminal underground and taken control by the simple expedient of converting that underground's leaders to worshippers. Only those leaders know that cobra people run the show now—the rank and file of the underground think things are going on as always, except for the increased traffic in black market babies. That increase is, however, disturbing enough criminals to make the PCs' job a little more easy than normal.

All that is involved in solving this mystery, then, is legwork. The PCs find a contact, convince him to talk, and thereby learn the name of another contact one step closer to the top of the underground's hierarchy. From there they continue to the next step up, and so on, until they are given the location of the underground's headquarters, in a warehouse on the waterfront. Once there, the PCs will encounter the cobra people.

The PCs can effectively meet with only two people per day, given the time spent asking around for those people, travelling from location to location, and conducting the meeting. (If the PCs make an Outstanding Success at their roll during an interview, however, they may meet with another person that day.) The referee is encouraged to play these meetings out.

The stages of revelation are as follows.

### Stage One:

#### Lenny the Stooge

During his dinner with the PCs their first night in Miami, Sylvester told them he had set up a meeting with Lenny the Stooge—a local confidence man and part-time stool pigeon—at the Purple Flamingo Bar and Grill the next evening at 6 p.m. When the PCs get to the Purple Flamingo, they find Lenny easily enough. Getting him to reveal the name of someone one step higher in the organization (Mamma Andrews) requires a bribe of \$10 and an Average test of Bargain, Interrogation, Persuasion or Human Empathy. If these fail, an additional bribe of \$30 will do the trick.

### Stage Two:

#### Mamma Andrews

Mamma Andrews appears to be a street person, and she typically hangs out on the square in what used to be downtown Miami

(before the megacorps moved downtown Miami to Miami Beach). Actually, she is a bookie. A bribe of \$20 and an Average test of any of the skills mentioned above will get Mamma to reveal the name of someone higher up (Weasel Willy). If these tests fail, an additional bribe of \$50 will bring success.

### Stage Three: Weasel Willy

Weasel can be found hanging out at the Loop D Loop club, a strip joint on the west edge of town. He is of mixed Cuban and Irish blood, and considers himself quite a ladies' man. He works as a pimp, and will constantly interrupt himself to proposition any women in the PCs' group. Weasel wants \$100 to give the PCs the phone number of someone more "in the know" about the criminal scene in Miami (Sam Weisenthal), but an offer of \$75 and an Average test of any of the skills mentioned above will loosen his tongue. So will serious threats of physical violence, but they will also bring an automatic Dark Minion hunter attack today, as Weasel will begin spreading the news of the PCs around town.

### Stage Four: Sam Weisenthal

Weisenthal is the person who answers when the PCs call the phone number Weasel gave them. He is a small-time pusher with contacts in the headquarters of Miami's criminal underground. For \$150, he will pass the PCs' names along to his supplier (Ace). For \$250, he will guarantee that they get a call back within 12 hours from the time he takes payment. A Difficult test of Bargain will drop each price by \$50. But first, Weisenthal has to see the money, which means the PCs have to meet him. He sets up a meeting at an abandoned convenience store in a deserted residential area of town. Weisenthal shows up for that meeting on a motorcycle. He is half an hour late (he has been scoping the PCs out). As Weisenthal rides away with their money, he tells the PCs they had better have a good reason for wanting to see the bosses, if they expect to get past Ace.

### Stage Five: Ace

Weisenthal's contact is a woman who simply goes by the name "Ace." She calls the PCs at their hotel room exactly 12 hours from the meeting time Weisenthal originally set with the PCs, and asks what they want with the top brass. Convincing her to set up

# DARK CONSPIRACY

a meeting requires a test of Streetwise, Act/Bluff, Bargain, or Persuasion, and the referee should set the difficulty of the skill by the exact argument the PCs make. Don't make the tests too easy. If all else fails, an offer of \$1000 will pique her interest enough to set up a meeting for midnight at the warehouse where the cobra people are nesting.

### ENCOUNTERING THE COBRA PEOPLE

When the PCs arrive at the abandoned warehouse from which the cobra people run Miami's criminal underground, they find themselves outnumbered two-to-one by guards and lieutenants. The lieutenants insist on frisking the PCs, and they collect any weapons the PCs are carrying. Then the PCs are ushered inside.

Three cobra people are nesting here; one of them comes forward to question the PCs about their purpose in seeking the meeting. (See page 216 of the game rules for a description of the cobra people, noting particularly their disguise abilities.) After a few moments, regardless what the PCs say, the interrogator hisses, "You lie! You die!" Immediately, the cobra people all extend their fangs and attack (begin combat at phase 5, which is the cobra people's Initiative rating). Most of their cronies stand by and watch to make sure none of the PCs escape, but several prepare to advance on the PCs, to make sure the cobra people need only deal with one PC at a time.

But the dark elves are not about to be robbed of their prey so easily. As soon as phase 4 begins (the dark elves' Initiative rating), the four of them who have been following the PCs step through the door and sweep their sleep projector across one side of the room, being careful not to hit the PCs. Half the guards and lieutenants fall asleep (providing a ready source of weapons for the PCs), and the dark elves leap into the fray.

### STACKING THE DECK

Ideally, the combat should work out so that the cobra people and their cronies are all defeated, and the dark elves then



either turn to battle the PCs or run off, depending upon how badly they have suffered in the fight. If the PCs are losing at some point during the battle, however, the referee has a natural trump card to swing the balance in the other direction. That is, by this time a group of Dark Minion hunters has unmasked the Sylvester changeling. Word has gone out that the PCs have most likely *not* been taken over by the Dark Ones, but have been the victims of a hoax. Consequently, a group of hunters has been shadowing the dark elves who have been shadowing the PCs, and this group shows up to help the PCs out (although, undoubtedly, the PCs' first thoughts will be that even more enemies have now arrived, given the hunters' earlier attacks).

## REVELATION

Once the battle is over, the referee should assume that there are enough clues lying about (sleeping cronies to be interrogated, hunters to be questioned, black market bookkeeping records to be read) to pretty much solve all of the mysteries the PCs have faced. If any of the dark elves survive to be questioned, they also reveal the spot where Sylvester is held. Assuming that the PCs have made the best use of their time in tracking down the cobra people and that they are quiet in their approach to the dark elves' hideout, they will be able to rescue Sylvester while he remains alive.

Naturally, given the tangled nature of the experience they have all just been through, they will all undoubtedly be ready for a vacation—at Sylvester's expense, of course.

## ABRAHAM SYLVESTER

Abraham Sylvester is a billionaire who devotes his money and energy toward redressing the wrongs in his world. A carefully groomed, middle-aged man of average height and weight, Sylvester has a quiet but forceful personality and a passion for justice. Sylvester is no stranger to violence and is well able to hold his own in a fight.

**Experience:** Veteran

**Attributes:** 6; Charisma 7, Empathy 4

**Skills:** 5

**Initiative:** 4

## CHANGELING SYLVESTER

It looks just like Sylvester, but it isn't

him. It's a type I changeling acting in his place. Those who know Sylvester best can sense that something is wrong, but not enough to put their finger on anything specific.

**Experience:** Veteran

**Attributes:** 6; Charisma 6, Empathy 5

**Skills:** 5, including Darkling Empathy

**Initiative:** 4

## LENNY THE STOOGES

Lenny is a skinny, oily little man with beady eyes, a pencil moustache and a nasal voice. He tends to dress in stained white cotton suits. Lenny will do nearly anything for a buck, as long as he doesn't have to expose himself to any real danger. He carries a switchblade for defense, but has never really used it, relying on whining to get him out of trouble.

**Experience:** Novice

**Attributes:** 5

**Skills:** 2

**Initiative:** 1

## MAMMA ANDREWS

Mamma Andrews looks like every ancient bag lady the PCs have ever seen. But that's just a disguise. Mamma has a comfortable apartment in a respectable part of town, one she keeps well furnished with her earnings as a bookie. In her bag, Mamma carries a billy club and a sawed-off shotgun (311-R), for use when customers get too pushy.

**Experience:** Experienced

**Attributes:** 5

**Skills:** 4

**Initiative:** 3

## WEASEL WILLY

Willy is a cocky young pup of above average height and better than average looks. He makes his living as a pimp and considers himself God's gift to the ladies. Willy likes being pushy and obnoxious to those he deals with. He carries an HS .22 pistol in a shoulder holster for those times when his pushiness generates a violent response.

**Experience:** Novice

**Attributes:** 5

**Skills:** 2

**Initiative:** 1

## SAM WEISENTHAL

A battle-scarred man in his mid forties, Sam Weisenthal likes to project the image of a Hells Angel sort of biker,

though he has never actually belonged to any biker group. He is a quiet, icy-eyed man, and has made his living selling drugs for over two decades. Weisenthal carries a length of chain (treat as club) and a DE .357 Magnum pistol for self protection, but he is wise enough not to use them unless he has no choice.

**Experience:** Experienced

**Attributes:** 5

**Skills:** 4

**Initiative:** 3

## ACE

A small, lithe Oriental woman in her late twenties, Ace is one of the cobra people's lieutenants and worshippers. She is a tough street fighter, but knows that the best armament is lots of allies at your back, so she seldom actually leaves the warehouse where the cobra people nest. Ace is the only one of the cobra people's cronies with an experience rating of Veteran. She carries a Colt Krait for self-defense.

**Experience:** Veteran

**Attributes:** 6

**Skills:** 5

**Initiative:** 4

## HUNTER GROUPS

Basic statistics for the groups that come looking for the PCs are as given below. The referee should arm them randomly to make each group seem different, but all will carry melee weapons of some sort, and the leaders will carry small arms.

**Group 1:** One Experienced leader, seven Novice followers.

**Group 2:** Two Experienced leaders, five Novice followers.

**Group 3:** One Experienced leader, three Experienced followers, one Novice follower.

**Groups 4+:** One Veteran leader, two Experienced followers, two Novice followers.

## COBRA PEOPLE'S CRONIES

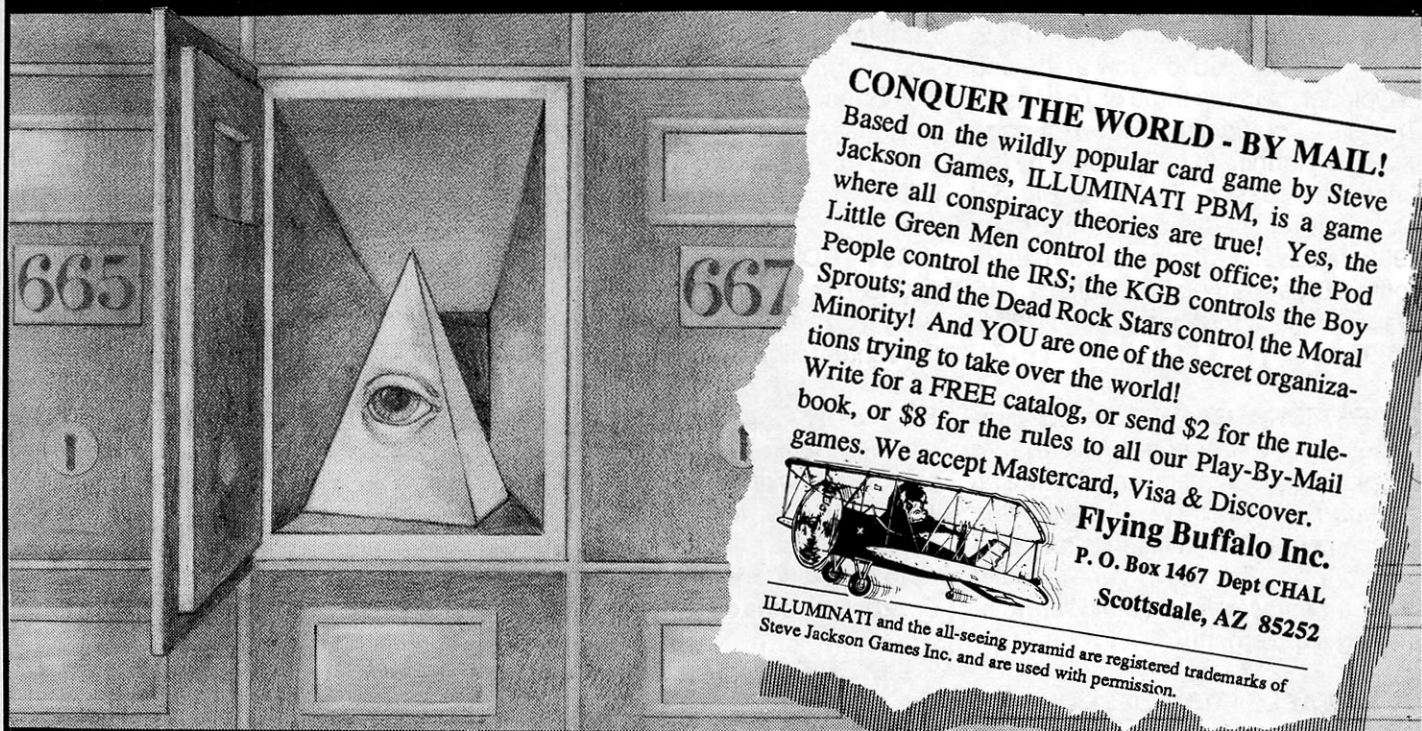
Ace (see above) is the only Veteran-level follower of the cobra people. All the others are Experienced and carry concealed M1911 A1 pistols. Ω

*This adventure served as the basis of the GenCon '91 RPGA event for Dark Conspiracy.*



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"Wet Navy" continued from page 31.

45. Calculate and list power transmission damage values.
46. List maximum depth (if submarine).
47. List commo.
48. List sensors.
49. List offensive weapons.
50. List defensive screens.
51. List controls.
52. Describe accommodations.
53. Others: Fuel capacity, aircraft fuel capacity, ammunition, cargo capacity, subordinate craft and aircraft, etc.

### WIND/MUSCLE POWERED VESSELS

1. Determine hull volume. Note basic hull price from Hull Table.
2. Calculate and list hull damage values.
3. Determine hull material (wood, iron, steel, fiberglass). Note price modifier and modify price.
4. Determine hull shape. Note price modifier and modify price.
5. Calculate hull weight.
6. Determine hull displacement as a fraction of hull volume depending on type of hull.
7. Subtract hull weight from displacement. Difference is available weight for masts, accommodations, crew, weapons, passengers, cargo.
8. Determine sail configuration (square rig, fore and aft, combination).
9. Calculate total sail area. Calculate sail price.
10. Calculate forces on sails, maximum wind speed capacity of full sails, and power output of maximum wind on full sails.
11. Calculate sail and mast damage values.
12. Calculate total number of oars and rowers.
13. Calculate total power output of rowers.
14. Calculate remaining available weight for components.
15. Add controls.
16. Determine crew needed.
17. Add accommodations, if any.

18. Add cargo space, if any.
19. Add weapons, if any.
20. Add electronics (sensors, radios).
21. Add auxiliary power supply (auxiliary engine, batteries, fuel cells, solar cells, wind generator).
22. Add auxiliary engine(s).
23. Add fuel for auxiliary engines.
24. Total weight of hull, fittings, crew, accommodations, cargo, weapons. If total weight exceeds displacement, it will sink. Redo design.
25. Calculate total price.
26. Rating.
27. List price.
28. List displacement.
29. List weight.
30. Calculate total power in kilowatts (based on sail area, sail configuration and/or number of oars and rowers.).
31. Calculate potential speed for a number of wind speeds (based on kilowatts of power modified by resistance of vessel using the formula  $V^2 = P2/Rf$  where P is force in kilowatts and Rf is hull resistance).
32. Top speed (in kph).
33. Cruising speed (75% maximum sail load).
34. Auxiliary engine speed.
35. Calculate endurance of auxiliary engine.
36. List commo.
37. List sensors.
38. List offensive weapons.
39. List controls.
40. Describe accommodations.
41. Others: Fuel capacity, cargo capacity, subordinate craft and aircraft, etc.

For the first part of the "Wet Navy" design sequence, refer to Challenge 53.



# CHALLENGE

## Briefs

**DIGEST GROUP PUBLICATIONS'** second 104-page volume for the **Mega-Traveller** alien series, *Solomani & Aslan*, is scheduled to show at the end of October. Number three of *The Mega-Traveller Journal* (the first 104-page issue) is planned to be in stores by the Christmas season. The *AI Basic Set* has been rescheduled for a February 1992 release. For more information, contact Digest Group Publications, 515 Willow Ave., Woodburn, OR 97071-2109.

**WEST END GAMES'** October releases include *Creatures of Aysle* (Torg roleplaying supplement) and *Death Star Companion* (Star Wars roleplaying supplement). Also available are *Crucible of Pain* (Torg adventure module) and *Gamemaster Pack* (Star Wars roleplaying supplement).

**AVAILABLE FROM DELTAX GAMING** are *World Emperors II* (a strategic

game of conquest in a time-distorted ancient/medieval world), *Shadow Lords* (a fantasy game of battle between good and evil), *Star Quest* (a long-term, closed-end, SF game) and *Subterranea* (entry level game of moderate interaction). Write to Deltax Gaming, 548 Great Hill Drive, Ballwin, Missouri 63021.

**SIR-TECH SOFTWARE** has announced the November release of *Wizardry: Crusaders of the Dark Savant*, the sequel to the bestselling *Bane of the Cosmic Forge*. Also available is *The Playmaster's Compendium: The Official Hint Book*, a comprehensive clue book for *Bane of the Cosmic Forge*. Sir-Tech Software, Inc., a leading recreational software publisher and manufacturer, also publishes *Freakin' Fuzzballs* and the classic *Wizardry* titles.

**SILVER GRIFFIN** is a new roleplaying game magazine for those interested in SF, fantasy and horror. Write to

Silver Griffin, PO Box 1751, St. Paul, MN 55101.

**FASA's** recent releases include *BattleTech: Falcon Guard* (Legend of the Jade Phoenix Vol. 3), *ClanTroops* (boxed supplement to *BattleTroops*), *Prefect* (Renegade Legion boxed game simulating a planetary invasion) and *Unbound* (MechWarrior 2nd edition adventure).

**AVALON HILL** has announced *Adel Verpflichtet* (a board game) and *Bar Wars*, a supplement for *Tales from the Floating Vagabond* ("ludicrous adventure in a universe whose natural laws are out to lunch").

**Challenge Briefs** describes gaming news and releases from a variety of publishers. Announcements should be sent in at least four months before a product is released, if possible. Write to **Challenge Briefs**, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646 USA.

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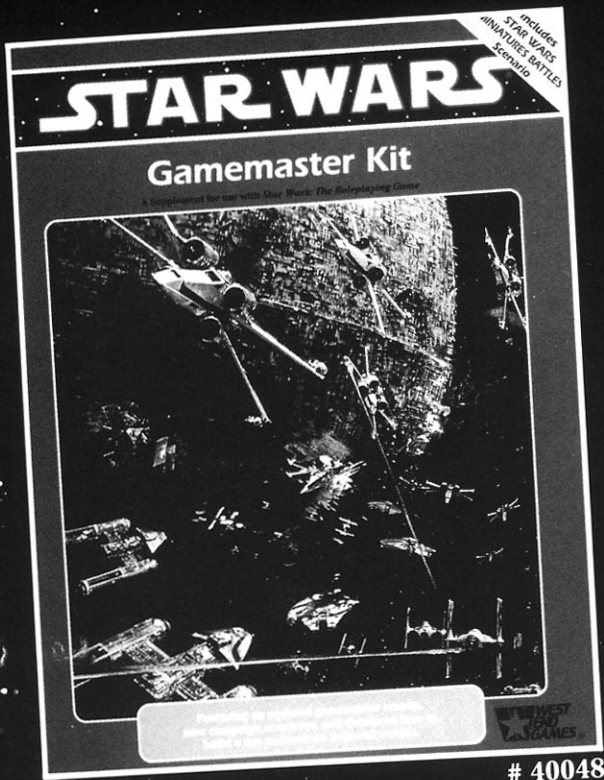
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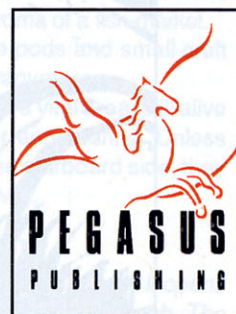
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# MASTER RACE

*By Craig Sheeley  
Inspired by Lester W. Smith*



**T**he war with the Kafers has been inconclusive. But the Kafers seem to be gaining ground, advancing technologically thanks to the new equipment provided by the Ylii. Frightened by that prospect, a clandestine organization within the French government has contracted with the Pentapods to develop a new type of human, one capable of defeating Kafers on their own terms. (See page 47 for the PCs to be used in this adventure.)

Unfortunately, the PCs' names turned up on a list somewhere, and their services were "volunteered" for experimentation. They were told only that they were needed for a highly secret and patriotic mission, and that their services would be rewarded. The next thing they know, they wake up aboard a Pentapod ship, a living organism in space. They have been almost completely changed: They are now four-foot-tall, meter-wide parodies of humanity. Their perceptions have been warped to save them the shock of actually seeing the changes that have been wreaked upon them (thus, all measurements given are relative to the PCs, not to reality).

A search of the ship will reveal that the vessel is deserted—except for the PCs—and is coasting in deep space. The Pentapod ship is dying—even the ship's maintenance bio-constructs are dead, littering the vessel. It is shutting down, has a limited amount of power, and has lost all long-term memory, as well as internal repair systems and peripheral life-support. All escape pods have been jettisoned, and



no small craft are left in the launch bays. The PCs can only make the ship do immediate things that use instinct programs—they can activate the stutterwarp engines (they have no real navigation capability; it's a matter of point-the-ship-and-pray) and use the ship's equipment (such as communications, sensors and weaponry).

While the PCs explore the ship, a few other abandoned inmates will wake up and prowl around—a group of Kafers kept around to test the new humans. Neither side has any weapons other than their bare hands/claws, but the new humans can squash a Kafer without much trouble (they're unbelievably strong and tough now). A lethal game of hide-and-seek ensues as the two sides battle for control of the ship.

Just as the last Kafers are dealt with, the PCs' ship is attacked, sustaining damage to the midsection! The attacker is another Pentapod ship, closing in with the apparent intent of destroying the already crippled space creature. The PCs must fight back or die, because the Pentapods answer no communications attempt and continue to attack the damaged ship. With clever weapons use, the PCs can drive off the other ship.

An unidentified starsystem is fairly close by, and there's enough power to stutterwarp the dying ship to it. If the PCs reach that system, they will be intercepted by a human privateer in an armed merchant ship. Horror of horrors, the creatures aboard it are hideous alien parodies of humanity, all tall and spindly (they are real humans, but the PCs' warped perceptions don't see it that way). These alien creatures react in similar horror, because they can see what the PCs really look like, and they attack. A desperate fight decides who owns the ship.

Radio traffic in the system proves that the system is inhabited by humans, a French military outpost! By this time, the PCs have proven their superiority in battles against Kafers, Pentapods and humans—and they may have realized that something is very wrong with them. If they take the privateer ship off into space, congratulations! They've won, because they survived. If they go to the military outpost, they'll be destroyed—the French invite them to shuttle down and send a shuttle full of explosives.

Why this wish to vaporize the PCs? The war with the Kafers is over, for now—a major push mashed the bugs back to their own stars. The need for these new humans is gone, and the French and the Pentapods are trying to tie up loose ends—neither conspirator needs the kind of publicity these new humans would generate if they lived.

## PLAYER INFORMATION

*You each wake with a vague, fuzzy feeling of disorientation. All you remember is that you "volunteered" for a secret mission to fight the Kafers. This mission is of the utmost importance, and great rewards await you upon its completion.*

*You are lying in a sweet-smelling, soft bed. Something warm and moist presses against your faces and body, like a hot towel laid over you. You can hear nothing except a low, long pulsing sound every minute or so. Do you wish to get up? The wet, fleshy blankets over you curl back when you push them. You are all dressed in minimal underwear, made of slightly stretchy, tough, fibrous, flexible material. You have no shoes, but the floor feels comfortable.*

*You are in a room with maroon walls and ceiling shot through with blue veining. The floor is dull pink-white, and feels like hard rubber, slightly ridged for good purchase. The room is perhaps 12 meters across by eight meters long. Dim light seems to radiate from the ceiling. The only furnishings are the half-dozen open cocoons, resembling Pentapod stabilizer units.*

*A pink-colored double-door at one end of the room is closed, and there are no visible knobs or handles on it. The atmosphere is breathable, but stuffy, and smells slightly of decay.*

*If you wish to examine the doorway, it opens automatically as you approach, the panels curling back to make a two-meter-wide opening. The doors appear to be flat muscle; once opened, they lock up, clenching and turning slowly blue-purple.*

*The hallway outside is a sickening purple-pink, about four meters wide and stretching off to the right and left. The lighting is very dim, emanating from glowing bulb-like ceiling*

*projections at four-meter intervals. The ceiling is high and curved, strengthened by ribbed supports at 10-meter intervals. The floor is the same composition and texture as the room you came from. The air isn't quite as stuffy, but the smell of decomposition is stronger.*

*If the PCs decide to sit down and do nothing, they will eventually fall asleep and die: The walls slowly change color toward the darkest blue-purple. The air grows fetid and rank, filling with carbon-dioxide and the stench of busy bacteria. The door uncurls and hangs limp as the lights fade to darkness.*

*If the PCs head down the corridor, they find themselves headed for the stern. If they go left, they head toward the bridge. Either way, they encounter other rooms, monitoring stations, etc.: As you walk, the lighting gradually grows stronger. Other doors begin to appear on the same side of the corridor as the room where you awoke. Some of the doors are open, some are not. Peering into several of the open rooms, you can see things resembling sunken baths filled with stinking, fermenting slime, some obvious but seamless lockers, looking more like grown things than manufactured items, and furnishings protruding from the floor—meter-tall, coffee-table-sized, flat surfaces of varying sizes. The walls and furniture are all the same blue-pink color, shot through with blue veining.*

*Opening unopened doors reveals rooms featuring strange items: More "stabilizer pods" of all sizes and shapes, bee-hive-like structures (most of the compartments filled with curled-up, tentacled dead things; the stench here is unbearable). One door opens to a long, dark corridor that leads to a small room featuring a wall that is a window—this window looks out into deep space, an unfamiliar star-scape. The window is hard and cold, so cold to the touch that it almost freezes fingers to it.*

*Some doors will not open, and you can't try to force them, for there are no seams where you could gain purchase.*

*Something lurches down the corridor toward you. It seems to be walking, but drunkenly, weaving from side to side. It looks like a combination of crustacean and land-walking octopus, stumbling on six tentacles. It's about a meter tall and has no visible sense organs, or even a mouth. It makes a strange sucking noise as it wanders toward you, but abruptly falls and collapses. Its tentacles twitch and then go limp.*

*The PCs may examine the fallen organism to their liking. It is one of the internal-function organisms of the ship, and it's dead. Each tentacle ended in a mouth; it was a floor-cleaner, licking residue off the floor and collecting it for reprocessing. If the PCs handle it too roughly, it vomits its collection all over them in one last muscle spasm. Yuck!*

*As the PCs continue to explore the ship's living quarters (the rooms with the slime-baths), growth labs (with the stabilizer pods) and internal organism storage areas (the places with the beehives), they meet more aquatic-looking corpses, all small, all grotesque, and all very dead and very smelly—the place begins to take on the aroma of a fish-market.*

*The doors that won't open lead to escape pods and small craft bays—the pods and small craft aren't there anymore.*

*Eventually the PCs are going to wander into a vital area, still alive and ticking: a gunnery station, the bridge or engineering. Unless they wander completely around the ship to the starboard side, they won't find the Kafers waking from their captivity.*

## GUNNERY STATION

*One door is brightly marked with a series of red bands. It opens as soon as you push it—the door-muscle is thick and tough. The*

# 2300AD



walls are pearly and hard, and meter-tall consoles stand before each wall. The tops of the consoles feature simple touch-pads, which are a bit low, but still comfortable for use. Touching any button on any touch-pad makes the pearly-hard wall opposite it light up, showing deep space with target roundels (you know, circles inside circles, like a target) in the center of the wall-screen, for such it seems to be.

There are very few buttons on the touch-pads, and with some experimentation, you find that several of them move the star-scapes around the roundels, like a video game. One button glows abruptly red when you touch it; if you touch it again, there is a flash on the screen, and the button stops glowing. It's no great feat of intellect to identify this place as a gunnery room.

## ENGINEERING

The room at the rear of the ship is huge, well-lit, and filled with machinery. The assemblage resembles stutterwarp drive machinery, although it is subtly changed, rounded and streamlined. There are no wire or power connections; instead, the drive machinery seems to be directly grown into the ship, with living connections and power conduits. Several consoles, similar to the ones found in the gunnery station, stand before pearly viewscreen walls. You seem to understand that the symbols on the console touchpads are concerned with arcane and inexplicable engineering functions. Henri can translate some of them.

**Task:** For Henri to call up engineering data.  
Difficult. Ship Drive Engineering. 3 minutes.

If Henri succeeds in defining some engineering data, this is what he learns: The stutterwarp drives are in good shape, but that's about all that is in good shape. Very little power is left in the reserves, perhaps enough to move half a light-year. The normal reaction drives have almost no power and life-support is slowly powering down. The main "power plant" is completely shut down, and the ship is working on battery power. (No, Henri has no idea how to reactivate the power plant. It doesn't look possible.)

## BRIDGE

The bridge is a large room (20 meters by 15 meters). Three walls appear to be some hard, pearly material. The fourth wall, looking forward, is a huge window. A half-dozen small meter-high consoles outfitted with complex touchpads stand facing various walls; two face directly forward, looking like helmsmen's posts.

The touchpads are defined in Pentapod writing, which you seem to understand instinctively (that is, you know what the glyphs mean, but you would be hard put to translate). Most of the consoles seem to be information-oriented; one of the forward consoles is definitely concerned with navigation and piloting the ship, while the other controls engineering and gunnery.

**Task:** To determine the ship's navigational position.  
Difficult. Pilot. Int. 90 seconds.

The ship is between systems and has been for awhile. The last navigational program entered into the helm was a directive to head straight out into deep space. The computer seems to have no idea of the passage of time and has to struggle to even remember that last directive. At the moment, a star system is about 1/5 light-year away. Unfortunately, there is no memory in the computer to identify it from star-charts.

**Task:** To activate the stutterwarp drives and point the ship in the right direction. Difficult. Pilot. 5 minutes.

**Referee:** If all goes well, the drives will have the ship cruising through the star system in about four hours.

**Task:** To call up computer readouts of the ship's status.  
Routine. Int. 30 seconds.

The ship is in terrible shape. The normal-space reaction engines (maneuvering drives) are dead, the power plant is completely shut down, life support is failing in peripheral areas, the only power left is diverted to vital spots, and the computer/brain is losing function. In short, the ship is dying. Its last instruction was to shut down!

No information about the ship's past can be found in the memories; that data has been lost as the ship shuts down.

**Task:** To monitor the inside of the ship.  
Formidable. Int. 6 seconds.

Turning the internal bio-monitors on reveals little (most of the monitor nodes are already dead, as are the internal bio-organisms that supplement them). But they do reveal motion in the starboard areas of the ship!

## KAFER CLASH

While the PCs have been exploring, another group of castaways have awakened. Eight Kafers were stored on the opposite side of the ship. Two officers are with them, one of almost human intellect (even when he's not working on adrenaline—wait until he gets frightened!). The officers have been trying to wake the soldiers, but there are no pressing dangers and the vitalized intellects soon dull. To make matters worse, the officers don't have anything to clobber the soldiers with except their bare pincers.

If the PCs don't explore the starboard side of the ship first, the Kafers find them, either at the bridge or in engineering. A pair of Kafers will approach the doorway and peer in; unless the PCs posted someone to watch the door, they won't see the Kafers. Roll 1D10. On a 1-2, the Kafers are frightened and gain intellect after about 10 seconds. They then split up, one going to fetch the others, while the second one hides by the doorway to ambush anyone coming out. On a 3-8, they stand there dumbfounded until someone notices them. On a 9-10, they experience a flash of actual thought and slink off to report the incident to the officers.

If the PCs explore the starboard side of the ship first, they meet the Kafers stumbling around after emerging from stasis: *You see something moving ahead. It could be another of the strange dying creatures—but it's not quite the right shape and seems bigger in the dim light. As you approach, you see another one behind it. They don't seem to see you. When you're about 10 meters away, you can realize they're Kafers—sort of. They're way too tall and spindly to be regular Kafers, almost twice your height and somehow fragile-looking.* At this point, the PCs have the advantage. The ship's lights are too dim for effective Kafer vision—the pair doesn't even see the PCs. If the PCs make much noise, there's 50% chance the Kafers will hear them (footsteps make little sound on the rubbery floors). If the PCs want to ambush the Kafers, they may strike the first blow without Kafer response—after that, it's every being for itself. Of course, if the PCs want to sneak away quietly and plan, they can, the Kafers never the wiser.

Wherever they meet, if the PCs and Kafers end up fighting, the sounds of combat will attract the other Kafers in a minute. If the PCs don't see the Kafers first and the other Kafers come to do battle, the fight will be between eight stimulated Kafers (the officers have been rather free with their fists) and the surprised PCs.

The Kafer officers aren't stupid, and they see the PCs as they really are: short, wide, ugly and formidable—worthy opponents. If the PCs succeed in killing or knocking out a couple of Kafers, an officer sounds the retreat and the Kafers run off, faster than the PCs can follow on their short legs.

The Kafer leader then takes up guerilla warfare, positioning his forces in two equal-sized groups with an officer in charge of each, waiting to ambush the PCs. They will use tricks: Hiding in doorways; lurking in the foul pools in the rooms; sending a single aroused Kafer out as a decoy, then having him flee in simulated panic to draw a few



PCs into an ambush. One group will definitely be sent on a flanking maneuver, through engineering, to strike from the other flank. Don't worry about mapping out the confrontations; the ship is so large that the Kafers have plenty of room to maneuver. Their only limit is the fact that the ship's living areas are divided into the port corridor (and the rooms attached to it), the starboard corridor and its rooms, the engine room at one end and the bridge at the other end. There's more to the ship than that, of course, but the cargo and boat bays below can't be reached at the moment.

On the way through engineering, the Kafers stop to try to dismantle parts of the engines for weaponry! This action registers all sorts of pain sensors on the bridge, alerting the PCs there to the danger. They will have to drive off the Kafers before they blow up the ship or shut down the stutterwarp drives.

## A NEW PROBLEM

The PCs have to kill all the Kafers. The bugs won't sue for peace, fighting to the last, er, man. After the PCs have won (and perhaps sustained a few wounds themselves), give them a few minutes before: *The ship shakes violently, throwing you off your feet. As you struggle to regain your footing, the ship shakes again, less violently. There is a sound too familiar to space warriors, the noise of momentary decompression.*

PCs on the bridge or in a gunnery station can see what is happening. *A strange, pearl-pink creature is matching course with the ship. It resembles a squid to some extent, with a grayish shell covering its nose, broken only by a glowing golden dome, like a huge compound eye. Its tentacles trail behind in a streamlined mass, each arm tipped with what appears to be a thruster jet. As you watch, light beams stab out from the peculiar creature and your ship shudders. The wall displays tell the story: You're under attack!*

What the PCs do not know is that the creature cruising alongside them is a dead ringer for the ship they're in. They are under attack from a Pentapod battlecraft, the size of a battleship (but only armed like a cruiser). The PCs may use their ship's weapons from the bridge, trusting automatic responses, or they may take control of the guns from one of the gunnery stations (there are two on the starboard corridor and two on the port corridor). While they frantically try to activate the weapons, the other ship continues to take potshots, trying to destroy the engine room.

For purposes of gunnery, assume that both ships are within the same 600,000-kilometer hex. Actually, they're separated by about one kilometer, making this a completely point-blank range battle!

**Task:** To activate the ship's weapons from the bridge.  
Difficult. Gunner. 1 minute.

**Referee:** If the weapons are activated, the ship starts replying to the attack, firing one weapon per turn with a Gunner-0 skill level. Roll 1D10 to determine what kind of weapon is fired: 1-5: 1x1 laser 6-9: 5x1 lasers 10: Death missile.

**Task:** To use ship's lasers from a gunnery station.  
Routine. Gunner. 30 seconds.

**Referee:** Once a gunner has figured out how to activate the lasers, he may fire either x1 laser at the enemy using standard gunnery rules, or he may make the gunnery task a Difficult one and fire a 5x1 laser group at the enemy. Up to three gunners may man lasers at any one gunnery station.

**Task:** To prepare and fire a death missile.  
Difficult. Gunner. 1 minute.

**Referee:** A gunner working at a gunnery station may try to use the toxin missile controls at the station. He has to puzzle out the correct touchpad sequence and define the target correctly; this is represented by the task. If successful, a death missile is launched at the enemy. A death missile is self-targeting; at this range, it hits on a roll

of 5+. The enemy will try to shoot it down, succeeding on a roll of 7+. If a death missile hits (and if it gets past the armor), roll 1D10 each turn, per missile. On a 5+, the enemy ship dies. Completely. Along with every life-form on board. The enemy ship is a husk, filled with dead meat.

# 2300AD

## DEATH MISSILE

The death missile is a stutterwarping, living organism that carries millions of tiny submunition spores loaded with a devil's brew of short-lived viruses and organic poisons. Any carbon-based lifeform with a circulatory system dies moments after being hit by one of these spores; this includes Pentapod living ships. There is no antidote since a hospital of antidotes couldn't cover every poison and virus included in a single spore submunition. The PCs' ship has been death missiled repeatedly, but its own slow death has stopped the outer circulatory system and prevented the spread of the weapons' deadly cargos.

## DAMAGING THE ENEMY

The enemy Pentapod is a fairly large ship. It has 50 hull hits and an armor factor of 4, thanks to its shell. Armor prevents damage; any weapon hitting an armored ship must roll 1D10 higher than the armor factor of the ship to damage the hull. Surface features such as sensors, thrusters and weapons mounts are not protected by armor.) To drive it off, the PCs have to do 25 hits worth of damage to it, or hit it with a death missile.

In the meantime, the PCs are in danger. Roll 1D10 every turn to determine what important damage occurs: On a 1-7, nothing vital is hit. On an 8, the bridge is hit. Roll for one PC at random on the bridge to sustain crewmember damage. A result of 9 means gunnery station hit. (There are four gunnery stations; roll at random to see which one is hit. If there are PCs in that station, they all suffer crewmember damage, +1 to the die roll.) A result of 10 means engines hit. (Test for engine failure; there is a 10% cumulative chance per engine hit for something irreducibly vital to be hit, which kills the stutterwarp drives.)

## RESCUE SHIP

Should the PCs manage to drive off or kill the Pentapod ship without sustaining critical stutterwarp engine damage in the process, they can continue their voyage to the nearby star system (this system is actually DM +27 28217, an occupied system and French outpost) and try to find habitable worlds.

**Task:** Using the ship's sensors to scan the system.  
Difficult. Sensors. Int. 6 minutes.

Success indicates that the PCs have swept the system and found nothing even resembling a habitable world, just some asteroids and planetoids. However, one planetoid is broadcasting radio traffic, and there is a gravity-disturbance resembling a stutterwarp drive in action about three million kilometers away, headed their direction at a warp efficiency of about 1.5. If the PCs are not successful, they learn little, trying to puzzle out how to make the sensors work. By the time they'd get to try again, they have company.

*The other ship parallels your course, drawing to within visual range. It's heartbreakingly familiar—an old, use-streaked Anjou-class freighter! It flies alongside, making no maneuvers, as if the crew is studying you. To communicate with the new ship, the PCs must find and activate the communications network of the perishing vessel.*

**Task:** Using the communicators.  
Routine. Communications. 30 seconds.



The communicators are not working perfectly; the link is sporadic and filled with static. Furthermore, there is no visual signal, only audio (the ship's pretty far gone, and that battle didn't help it any). The voice on the other end speaks French with a slight twang to it, and is strangely high and squeaky. "Hello, alien vessel. This is the SS *Bounty*. Can you hear me? Please respond."

If the PCs ask where they are, the *Bounty*'s man tells them, "In the DM +27 28217 system. Didn't you know that?"

If the PCs tell the *Bounty* they are in need of assistance, they are directed to turn off their stutterwarp drive and stand to for docking. Otherwise, the *Bounty*'s man requests them to shut down and stand to for docking so they can investigate the strange and unique vessel (most Pentapod ships look like fish—this is a large battlecraft). Either way, if the PCs want to dock with the *Bounty*, they have to take a moment to discover where the docking bay is aboard the alien craft.

**Task:** To prepare the ship for boarding.

Routine. Pilot. 1 minute.

**Referee:** This shuts off the stutterwarp drives, stops the ship's spin and puts the interior into freefall (the entire craft has been rolling to create a gravity simulation; the PCs have been walking on the inside of outer shell) and opens the docking bay amidships.

## MUTATION ON THE BOUNTY

If the PCs don't want to be boarded by the *Bounty*'s crew, they can change course to prevent it. The *Bounty* will take umbrage and open fire with several heretofore concealed weapons: two double x1 laser turrets, a masked x3 particle gun mount, and a 5 x1 laser array, with +1 ship's targeting. Obviously, this ship is only an *Anjou* on the outside. Roll for damage on the PCs' ship as before.

If the *Bounty*'s crew boards the PCs' ship, or the PCs board the *Bounty*, a new horror becomes quickly apparent. The crew of the *Bounty* looks human. Sort of.

*The Bounty has obviously been taken over by aliens! They look like*

*thin, spindly, stretched-out parodies of humanity—easily three and a half meters tall—shouting with squeaky, high voices when they see you. And they're armed, carrying guns that look vaguely familiar. One of them points an instrument at you, and a bright photo-flash fills the room.*

The half-dozen crewmembers who meet the PCs (either on the PCs' ship or on the *Bounty*) are armed—two have Model 579mm pistols, three have M-2 assault rifles and one has a Model 10 riot gun. They wear nonrigid armor vests. They're terrified when they see the PCs—test for panic. If they don't panic and run, they open fire. One of the *Bounty* boarding crewmembers is a Veteran NPC; the rest are Experienced. One *Bounty* crewmember took a picture with a self-developing digital camera; it prints out a photo at the touch of a button.

*The aliens gape, their long, skinny mouths opening inhumanly wide. Some run, some level their weapons at you and fire!* The PCs must fight or die; the range is not long, perhaps 10 meters. If the PCs grab the guns, they can use them, although they seem large and ungainly. If they defeat the *Bounty* crewmembers, they can invade the *Bounty*. There are only another five crewmembers aboard her, and they have only Arno Five-Fifteen pistols with which to defend themselves. These remaining crewmembers fight as Green NPCs.

## FINAL DECISION

By this time, the PCs may have pieced together the clues and realized that they have been drastically altered from their former selves. If the PCs look at the picture that was taken of them, they will see the truth: They're ugly, squat, vile-looking grotesqueries that would look normal in a freak show.

Now the PCs have to decide what to do. They can take the *Bounty* and stutterwarp away to a life of free piracy; they can get away from the *Bounty* once they've killed the boarding crew; or they can go to the French planetoid outpost in-system.

If they choose the first option, they're home free. The *Bounty* has a lot going for it. If they choose the second option, they're almost out of time, for their ship is nearly dead. If they choose the last option, the French are very cordial about the whole thing and offer to send up a shuttle to rescue the PCs; this shuttle is remote-controlled and contains a single fusion bomb big enough to vaporize the entire now-dead Pentapod battleship.

## REFEREE

Measurements given in the adventure are twice the actual distance. The PCs are shorter now, but still think they're normal. If you want real distances, divide the stated distances by two. To avoid tipping the players to the fact that their characters are more than human, their stats are given in letter form. Conversions are: A=10, B=12, C=15, D=18, E=20, F=25, G=30, H=35. Some of these statistics are high—the Pentapods had to modify the base humans quite a bit. The PCs cause blunt weapons trauma when they strike with their strengthened, spike-knuckled hands. They may not realize this at first, rationalizing that their outsized, skinny opponents are fragile. Likewise, their strengthened frames and musculature, augmented by cartilaginous plates over joints, neck and other vulnerable areas, give the PCs an armor rating of 0.5 on all locations.

## KAFERS

Size: 18	Det: 15	Melee: 1/5
Str: 12	Int: 2/12 (8/18)	Armor: 0.8 (from the back only)
Dex: 12	Con: 7	
End: 16	Life: 14	

Numbers separated by slashes indicate the difference between stupid Kafers and aroused Kafers. When aroused, one of the officers has an Int of 18 (this fellow has an Int of 8 otherwise).

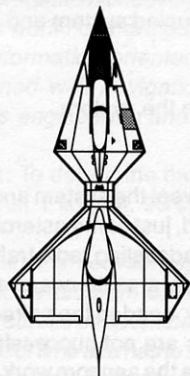
*For the PCs to be used in this adventure, see the Master Race Character Sheets on the following page.*

*This adventure served as the 2300 AD RPGA event for GenCon '91.*

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# Character Sheets

The following character sheets contain information *for the referee only*. Before showing them to the players, the referee will need to block out the Att. Number and Task Modifier column on each sheet. See Referee on page 46 for more information.

## Frank Larson

Att. Code	Att. No.	Task Mod.	Skills
Size D	18	3	Combat Rifleman-4
Str G	30	7	Demolitions-1
Dex A	10	2	First Aid-1
End E	20	5	French-0
Det B	12	4	Ground Vehicle-2
Int A	10	2	Gunner-0
Elo A	10	2	Heavy Weapons-3
Edu C	15	3	Hunting-2
			Melee-5
			P-Suit-0
			Riding-2
			Sidearm-3
			Stealth-1
			Survival-2
			Thrown Weapon-2

Mass 156 kg, Enc 66 kg, Con 7, Life 15, Cool 5.  
Born in Texas, on Earth. Age 38.

He spent his early adult years with the Texas Rangers, acquiring much experience with space travel and planetary duty. His temper kept him from reaching officer ranks, and he left the Rangers to join the foreign legion, where he has served since. He volunteered for this mission, under the idea that he'd get to kill Kafers. Larson is violent, with little finesse or subtlety. He enjoys a good time as much as the next guy (but his idea of a good time is spending a week on the open range in west Texas with only a horse, a six-gun, a bottle of whiskey and lots of snakes to shoot). There's nothing he likes better than combat. He is as exhilarated by combat as any Kaffer. He's chauvinistic, behaves as if Texas is the center of the universe, is bigoted, hates all aliens, and is hot-tempered.

## Lin Mao-Tuan

Att. Code	Att. No.	Task Mod.	Skills
Size A	10	2	Anthropology-4
Str C	15	3	Bureaucracy-1
Dex D	18	4	Computer-2
End C	15	3	Electronic-3
Det C	15	3	First Aid-2
Int E	20	5	French-1
Elo D	18	4	Info Gathering-2
Edu F	25	6	Melee-2
			P-Suit-1
			Sidearm-1
			Survival-2
			Writing-1

Mass 105 kg, Enc 35 kg, Con 5, Life 10, Cool 2.  
Chinese. Born on Chengdu. Age 24.

She is a xenanthropologist, specializing in research concerning the Kafers. When she caught wind of this mission, she insisted that she be included. She recognizes Duval by reputation. Lin is quiet, methodical and retiring, preferring to let others take the lead. She is, however, fanatical about amassing information about the Kafers, and will pass up no chance to examine and record data concerning any alien life-form, regardless of any danger.

## Mark Gottas

Att. Code	Att. No.	Task Mod.	Skills
Size C	15	3	Combat Rifleman-2
Str F	25	6	Communications-0
Dex B	12	3	Computer-2
End C	15	3	Demolition-2
Det B	12	3	Disguise-2
Int A	10	2	Forgery-1
Elo A	10	2	Gunner-2
Edu D	18	4	Leader-1
			Melee-3
			P-Suit-1
			Pilot-2
			Sidearm-2
			Streetwise-2
			Survival-1

Mass 145 kg, Enc 55 kg, Con 7, Life 14, Cool 8.

German. Born on Neubayern. Age 32.

An ardent pro-Unification German, he took to the stars with anti-French privateers and eventually succeeded in commanding his own little vessel, the *Rache* (Revenge).

He was captured while attempting a terrorist bombing of a French starport.

He "volunteered" for this mission with the understanding that he'd be pardoned and released.

If Gottas attempts anything against the mission or tries to desert, the French government told him it has implanted a cortex bomb that can be used to execute him at any time—there is no bomb in actuality, but he doesn't know this.

He recognizes the legion tattoo on Larson, identifying Larson as a legionnaire.

Gottas is loud and domineering, and is used to having his way. He is cautious about space battles, as he realizes how deadly they are. He hates France and the French.

## Geninne DeLuca

Att. Code	Att. No.	Task Mod.	Skills
Size C	15	3	Computer-4
Str D	18	4	Electronic-2
Dex E	20	5	Forgery-2
End C	15	3	Melee-2
Det B	12	3	Security Systems-2
Int A	10	2	Sidearm-2
Elo B	12	3	Stealth-1
Edu B	12	3	Streetwise-2

Mass 130 kg, Enc 48 kg, Con 6, Life 13, Cool 2.

French. Born on Davout. Age 22.

DeLuca was a very successful burglar and mercenary spy. She was caught by the French government and sentenced to death, but was given the choice of going on this mission instead.

She is bright, cheerful, and a trifle overconfident. She prefers to use skill rather than brute force.

## Claude Duval

Att. Code	Att. No.	Task Mod.	Skills
Size B	12	3	Anthropology-3
Str E	20	5	Biology-2
Dex C	15	3	Communications-1
End E	20	5	Computer-1
Det C	15	3	Ground Vehicle-1
Int B	12	3	Linguistics-2
Elo C	15	3	Medical-3
Edu C	15	3	Melee-1
			P-Suit-1
			Psychology-2
			Sidearm-1
			Survival-2
			Writing-3

Mass 136 kg, Enc 44 kg, Con 6, Life 13, Cool 1.

French. From Beta Canum. Age 37.

Claude began his life as a contact anthropologist, and has published several works on alien cultures and biology. He volunteered for this mission when he caught wind of the fact that Lin Mao-Tuan had already been accepted.

Claude knows Lin on sight and hates her. She is a rising genius in the xenology field, and his star is falling. He is on this mission solely to upstage and disgrace her.

Duval is an indifferent researcher, preferring to take personal notes rather than amassing loads of data. He is lazy and very emotional.

## Henri Orland

Att. Code	Att. No.	Task Mod.	Skills
Size D	18	4	Aircraft Pilot-1
Str H	35	8	Computer-2
Dex B	12	3	Communications-1
End C	15	3	Electronic-1
Det C	15	3	First Aid-0
Int D	18	4	Gunner-2
Elo A	10	2	Leader-1
Edu D	18	4	Melee-1

Remote Pilot-1

P-Suit-1

Pilot-3

Sensors-1

Ship Drive

Engineering-2

Sidearm-1

Survival-1

Mass 154 kg, Enc 71 kg, Con 7, Life 15, Cool 5.

French. From Beta Canum. Age 30.

Orland joined the French Navy as soon as he was old enough. His hulking size was more than matched by his intelligence, and he soon reached officer status. He is presently a captain.

Orland recognizes Larson's legion tattoo, and he knows (and loathes) Gottas on sight, as a pirate and terrorist.

Orland is chivalrous, well-mannered, and completely patriotic. He volunteered for this mission out of patriotism, and will work to ensure the success of the mission. He will not tolerate insults to *la belle France*. Ω



# CITY OF DEATH



DALY

*By James L. Cambias*





party of archaeologists from Cambridge University sets out to investigate the ruins of Andryn in the Eden Desert of Mars—and never returns. The PCs are invited to join a rescue expedition to discover the scientists' fate.

The missing expedition left Syrtis Major aboard a small steam flyer four months ago, intending to spend eight weeks exploring the city. It is now two months overdue. Led by the eminent Mars scholar Dr. Phillip Carter Howard, the team included Professor Benjamin Fine, Dr. Cyril Hardy, Mr. Jordan Treslingham and the Reverend Archibald Gannet. They were accompanied by two human servants, Jamshid Singh and Alf Haggage, and a Martian guide named Strookh.

## RESCUE EXPEDITION

The rescue expedition—financed by the Royal Geographic Society with help from the Crown—will proceed in a small steam flyer, escorted by an Aphid-class gunboat, the *Firefly*. The gunboat will leave the party at the ruins of Andryn, then must head south to hunt for Oenotrian privateers preying on British shipping in the Sinus Meridiani region. The *Firefly* will return in a week to escort the PCs back to Syrtis.

The Royal Geographical Society has raised £400 through public subscription with which to equip the expedition. The PCs may spend this money on whatever items they need, but anything purchased will become the property of the R.G.S. once the whole thing is over. The steam flyer belongs to the society, as well.

The two ships will depart Syrtis Major, take on water and coal in Avenel, then steam across the Aerial Hills. As the PCs travel westward above the Martian desert, they will have the usual random encounters. The *Firefly* should be able to deal with any threats that appear.

The voyage should take about eight days. During the last two days there will be no random encounters—even aerial traffic avoids the cursed city. If an encounter is rolled, the characters see a mirage. In the hazy desert sky, heat shimmers create the image of a huge city with vast towers and broad avenues.

When at last the two ships reach the city, the *Firefly* will remain long enough to check for any large hostile force of nomads or High Martians. But there is no sign of anyone. With that, the gunboat will turn southward and steam off, to return in a week.

## ANDRYN

Andryn is accursed, according to Martian legend. Desert caravans avoid it, even though it has a good source of water. Hill Martian nomads say Andryn was once a mighty city

in the middle of fair and green lands, but its prince supposedly committed an abomination so heinous that the gods caused the canal to cease flowing and placed the sign of death upon the city.

Andryn was once a metropolis of some 50,000 people. It was abandoned 3000 years ago when the Eden pumping station to the south was destroyed in an earthquake, drying up the canal. The city has been thoroughly looted and vandalized, and damaged by the ceaseless desert winds and the pitiless passage of time. All the buildings are now roofless, many collapsed, and everything is covered with about a foot of sand. It is possible to find shelter on the lower floors of some multistory buildings. Water is available nearby—a pond in the dead canal bed is still fed by a trickle from the old city sewers.

The outlying areas of the city have all been covered by shifting desert sands. Only the citadel section, built on a rise overlooking the dead canal, remains intact. The surviving section of the city is surrounded by a steep cliff (needing a Formidable Mountaineering task roll to scale), which is 50 feet high on the northern side of the citadel and rises to 80 feet high on the southern side.

One thing explorers will notice very quickly is the utter silence of the city. Aside from the whisper of the wind, there is no noise. The footsteps of explorers echo loudly in the abandoned streets.

## LOCATIONS IN ANDRYN

In addition to the encounters described above, there are several notable sites in the city.

**Academy of Wisdom:** This was once a school where the elite of Andryn were educated. A careful search of the building will uncover a set of slate tablets inscribed in the nearly extinct Khallan dialect, describing some of the operations of the old pumping stations.

**Expedition Campsite:** This mansion was used by the ill-fated Howard expedition as a base of operations. It is described more fully below.

**Temple:** This domed building is in good condition, but the statues of Martian gods inside have all been mutilated. Their heads have been knocked off and replaced by skulls. Only the image of the death god remains undefiled. Behind that statue is a flight of steps leading down to the temple crypt. The steps are booby-trapped—anyone going down will set off a shower of darts dropped from above. Roll 10 hit dice: Each dart inflicts 1 wound on a roll of 6. Normal saving rolls apply.

**Mansion:** Jamshid Singh's corpse lies in one of the downstairs rooms, partially dismembered. He has a rifle with him, and the room is littered with spent shells. This house has a cellar connected to the undercity.



**Sewer Outlet:** A small stream flows sluggishly from the sewer outlet set in the old stone quay. It is screened by tough thornbushes, but can be seen from the floor of the canal bed.

**Palace Service Wing:** This wing held the kitchens and servants' quarters. It is in very bad shape, but on the second floor are the desiccated corpses of three Hill Martian warriors, apparently dead by suicide. They are decades old.

**Palace Throne Chamber:** The domed roof of this building is intact, and the huge carved stone throne of the princes of Andryn remains in the center. The throne is occupied by a Martian skeleton, wearing a crown made of finger-bones and a cloak apparently made of the skin of a Martian. In the rear of the chamber is flight of steps down to the palace dungeons. The steps are booby-trapped—anyone descending will cause a sharpened pendulum to swing down the center of the stairwell. It requires an Agility roll to avoid the pendulum, which otherwise will inflict 2 wounds.

**Palace Old Wing:** This wing once held the royal apartments. Some rooms still contain highly indecent murals on the walls, and the prince's chamber still holds an exquisite sandstone statue about eight feet tall (weighing nearly a ton). The statue would fetch a good price in Syrtis Major, if it could be moved.

**Ruined Keep:** This half-crumbled tower is dangerous to enter: There is a 1 in 6 chance of falling debris, requiring an Agility roll to avoid suffering a wound. Amid the rubble is the smashed hull of the Howard expedition's flyer. It is damaged beyond repair.

There is an entrance in the tower to the old storage cellar of the palace. To discover this entrance amid the rubble is a Formidable test of Observation skill.

**Guard Tower:** The body of Dr. Fine is here, still clutching his heavy revolver. He apparently died from multiple stab wounds. Written on the wall beside him in dried blood are the words "Death comes at night."

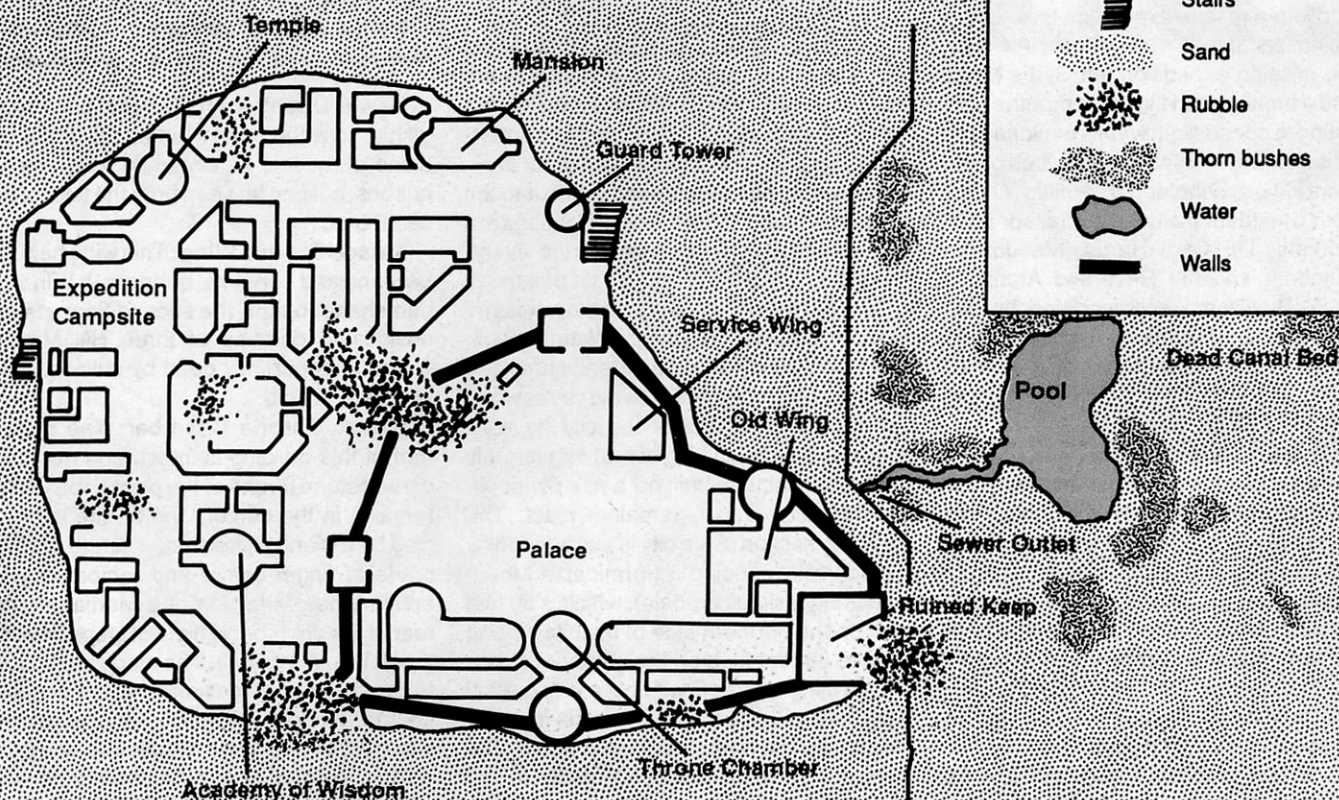
## ENCOUNTERS

When characters enter a new building, the referee should roll on the table below.

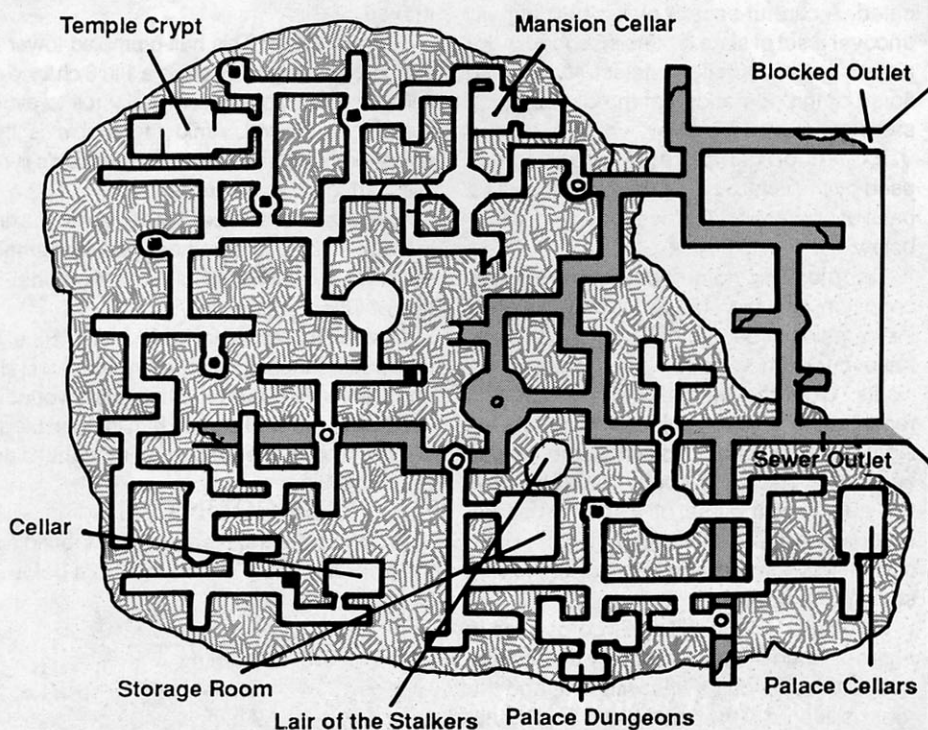
Roll	Encounter
1-3	Nothing
4	Skeletons
5	Animals
6	Booby-trap



# Andryn



# Undercity





**Skeletons:** The building contains 1-6 bodies, at least several months old and possibly centuries old. Most will be Hill Martians, and the rest will be Canal Martians or humans. They will often be in positions of agony or arranged in horrifying poses. None will have any useful weapons or possessions.

**Animals:** This will probably be a small group of Roogies, Eegars, or possibly an Eelowaan. They will behave normally.

**Booby-Trap:** A trap is set at the entrance of the building. This is generally a bow-trap, in which a trip wire releases an arrow aimed at the door. The arrow hits on a roll of 5 or 6, and PCs get their normal saving rolls. It is unlikely that the arrow is poisoned.

## LOST EXPEDITION

The mansion where the Howard expedition made its headquarters is a scene of bloody horror. In the main room lies Dr. Howard, his body horribly mutilated. Anyone with Medicine Knowledge can determine that he was still alive when most of his wounds were inflicted. The bodies of Mr. Treslingham and Alf Haggage are wrapped in tarpaulins and laid out in an adjoining room. Reverend Gannet's body is in an upstairs room; he was apparently played alive before being killed.

The expedition's supplies and apparatus are untouched. All the ammunition brought by the Howard party has been used up, and the steam flyer is gone.

**Howard's Journal:** Dr. Howard's expedition journal is under his cot. The first few days describe perfectly normal activities—setting up the camp, photographing the city from the air, and so on. Trouble begins to appear with the entry for June 20.

*June 20, 1889: A great tragedy. Mr. Treslingham died at approximately 10 a.m. Upon entering the doorway of building A-31 he was struck with an arrow, piercing the carotid artery and causing his death a few minutes later. Rev. Gannet was with him and informs me that an infernal machine was set up in the doorway to protect an arrow at whoever might enter. It is senseless and tragic death. I have suspended our investigations pending a search for more traps of this sort.*

*June 21, 1889: Horror! Alf was slain in his bed last night, even as we all slept! He was stabbed through the heart. Singh is undoubtedly guilty of this foul murder, though he denies it, of course. I have ordered that he be secured, that we may take him back to S. Major for trial. This will certainly mean cutting short our investigation. Damnably nuisance.*

*June 22, 1889: Dr. Fine is missing. Strookh, Hardy and I will search while Gannet remains to watch Singh.*

*Later: Singh escaped while that idiot Gannet was making tea. It is too dangerous to remain here in our present circumstances.*

*No sign of Fine—I fear he may have stumbled into a trap. Strookh keeps repeating his nonsense about a curse. We will depart as soon as Fine is found.*

There are no further entries.

## STALKER STRIKES

The first night the characters are alone in the city, the Stalker priest will attack. He will prefer to attack any PCs left alone, but if necessary will take on a pair, or even three PCs. He will emerge from the shadows, a hideous knife-wielding figure, attacking with inhuman ferocity.

While this attack is going on, or shortly thereafter, other members of the cult will disable the party's flyer. They will secretly cut the flyer's rudder and trim-control cables. The first time anyone attempts to take off in the ether flyer, it will not respond to controls at all. An Impossible Piloting skill roll is needed to land the ship safely; otherwise it will crash, injuring those aboard. No pilot can prevent the flyer from being damaged in the crash. (A really good way for the referee to stage-manage this is to have an NPC panic and try to escape aboard the flyer, only to discover that it has been sabotaged when he crashes.)

## DEATH THE STALKER CULT

The cult of Death the Stalker is an insane Martian religion, similar to the Cult of the Worm. Cultists worship Death the Stalker of All. The high priest is thought to become an avatar of Death, and goes out stalking victims to slay.

When a Stalker priest goes out hunting, he is always intoxicated with the Kroosht drug. This drug radically enhances one's physical attributes—at the cost of shortening one's life. Kroosht users generally die after a year or two from the effects of the drug. Kroosht raises a person's Strength by 2, Endurance by 1 and Agility by 2. The user never becomes unconscious due to wounds—he remains conscious until killed.

Kroosht also reinforces the fanaticism of the cultists, making them absolutely fearless. Cultists never need to make Morale rolls. The Stalker priest must have a one-ounce dose of Kroosht every 24 hours or his attributes return to normal.

There are as many Stalker cultists hiding in the city as there are members of the adventurers' party. Whenever one Stalker priest is killed, he is succeeded by another member of the cult. At any one time, only a single Stalker priest hunts the party (although his mobility and resistance to damage may give a different impression).

## STALKER TACTICS

A couple of NPCs wandering off alone will probably be the first attacked—and found horribly mutilated by the PCs. If the PCs are smart and remain in groups, the Stalkers will



try to pick them off from long range with arrows (possibly poisoned), or prepare elaborate booby-traps. The Stalkers have a superb knowledge of the city and can often find secret passages into rooms where prospective victims have holed up.

The Stalkers are clever and utterly merciless. Some cultists will pretend to be killed and go down, only to rise later and continue their bloody work—a seeming corpse come to life. They may kidnap a PC or NPC and keep him alive, perhaps torturing the captive so that his screams will bring others out.

## UNDERCITY

Underneath Andryn lies a complex network of sewers and basements, mostly intact. The cultists hide in the tunnels and use them to get from place to place secretly.

The sewer tunnels are an example of superb ancient Martian construction. They are 10 feet across and are diamond-shaped in cross-section. Smaller pipes enter from above and on the sides, but none of them are large enough to fit a person.

Shafts to the surface can only be found from underground; there is too much sand and debris on the ground up above. These shafts have a stone cover at the top, and stone handholds are carved into the side of the shaft. It requires a Formidable Strength roll to successfully open one of the lids from underneath.

Shafts between the upper and lower sewers have no ladders. It requires a Routine Mountaineering roll to go down and a Difficult roll to climb up these shafts. The upper sewer system is 10 yards above the lower system.

Sections blocked by debris are partially collapsed. They are completely impassable without digging machinery.

## LOCATIONS IN THE UNDERCITY

**Palace Dungeons:** These grim cells once held enemies of the ruling prince. One chamber now holds instruments of torture, the dried body of a Hill Martian still resting in one device. A secret tunnel leads from a cell to the sewer system; it is concealed by a piece of cloth daubed with mud to resemble stone. A Formidable Observation roll is required to spot the tunnel.

**Palace Cellars:** This was once the storage area for the palace. A grating connects to the sewer system. There is nothing here of interest.

**Sewer Outlet:** This is one of the main sewer outflow pipes, and a small trickle of water still seeps out to feed the pond outside. The cultists



have booby-trapped the entrance with a dart trap. Anyone entering will trigger the trap, which fires 12 darts. Each dart hits on a roll of 5 or 6, doing one wound. Normal saving rolls apply. Darts which miss the lead person may hit anyone following.

**Blocked Outlet:** This sewer outlet is partially blocked and is screened by thorn-bushes. It requires a Difficult Observation or Fieldcraft roll to spot the outlet from the canal bed. The cultists have not placed any traps at this outlet.

**Lair of the Stalkers:** This chamber is the headquarters of the Stalker cultists.

**Mansion Cellar:** This is the basement of the mansion where Singh's body lies. A grating leads into the sewer system from here, which can easily be opened. A pit has been dug on the sewer side of the grating, concealed with a cloth cover daubed with mud. The pit is lined with sharp stakes. An Impossible task of Observation will spot the pit; otherwise, the first person passing through the grating will fall in, suffering 1D6 wounds.

**Temple Crypt:** This was the burial chamber of the royalty and nobles of Andryn. All the sarcophagi have been looted of any valuables, and the mummified skeletons have been removed from their wrappings and seated atop the tombs.

The Martian guide Strookh's body is here, impaled upon a stake and pinned to the ground. Someone making a Routine Observation roll will notice a trail of bloodstains leading from him to one tomb. If moved, the

tomb reveals an entrance to the sewer system. Moving the tomb is a Formidable test of Strength, but two people can work together.

**Cellar:** This cellar has no access to the surface, as the building above has collapsed. The chamber contains a great deal of domestic trash—broken furniture, rotted rugs and so forth—but one small chest holds a beautiful idol carved from a Moabite Fire Jewel. The idol is worth at least £1000.

**Storage Room:** This chamber's opening to the surface is blocked by tons of rubble. The Stalker cultists use this room for storage. There are several gashant carcasses, and a collection of foodstuffs looted from caravans and passers-by. There is also a small hoard of valuables collected in the city, stored in a small chest. The miscellaneous gold items, coins and bits of jewelry are worth about £300. The cultists store their Kroosht drug supply here; a large glass bottle holds 80 ounces.

## LAIR OF THE STALKERS

The Stalker cultists' headquarters is in the deepest part of the undercity, where the original sewer catch-basin was. All approaches to the chamber are booby-trapped, with trip wires hidden in the standing water that cause huge blades to spring up from the floor. Each person passing a booby-trap will trigger it on a roll of 3 or less. Avoiding the blades is an Impossible task of Agility. Those who fail to avoid the blades suffer four wounds (the referee may simply rule that those hit by the blades are dead).

The lair of the Stalkers is a huge domed room, reeking of filth and decay, with puddles of murky water on the floor and a deep pool in the center. The room is decorated with shocking trophies of the Stalkers' grim activities: Hideously mutilated bodies of Martians and humans are hung upon the walls, and a horrifying idol of Death the Stalker stands beside the pool in the center of the room.

All remaining Stalkers will be in the room; about half will be asleep—unless one of the booby-traps has been tripped. In that case, the Stalkers will be awake and armed. They will fight to the death with knives and swords, showing no mercy and asking for none. One cultist will be disguised as a mutilated body on the wall; he will not strike unless most or all of his comrades are killed.

**Horror From the Depths:** In the central pool is the hideous creature worshipped by the death cultists—a huge, tentacled horror resembling an enormous and bloated Knoe Shoshu, but with a face shockingly reminiscent of a Martian's. It will rise from the depths if all of the Stalkers are killed, and ooze toward the surviving PCs.

**Size:** 3x3 **Move:** W10, L4 **Wounds:** 12 **Weight:** 1000 lbs **Tentacles:** (4,4,4,4).

The horror can attack with up to four tentacles at once.

## ESCAPE

Once their flyer has been disabled, the PCs have only two ways to escape the city: They can try to leave on foot, or they can wait for the *Firefly* to return. Departure on foot will be difficult. It is at least 500 miles to the nearest city, Emden, along the dead canal bed. The city of Thymiamata is 700 miles away across open desert. To the north lie mountains inhabited by High Martians; it is doubtful that they would be any improvement over the Stalker Cultists. A party on foot will still be hounded by the Stalkers, who will attack at night, poison water sources, drive game away, and generally do their best to help the desert claim its victims.

The *Firefly* is scheduled to return in a week to escort the party back to Syrtis Major. It can be delayed by Oenotrian privateers for several days, if the referee wishes the PCs to have a longer stay in Andryn. And even after departure, a mad cultist might stow away aboard the gunboat, to turn up when the PCs least expect it.

**Rewards and Experience:** The PCs will undoubtedly get some combat experience during this adventure. Scientists may also improve their Archaeology skill.

A newspaper will undoubtedly pay handsomely for an exclusive account of the adventure, and the resulting publicity might generate some renown. A description of the Stalker Cult and the monster might earn a scholar some scientific prestige. There are still some items of value hidden in the city, for those who crave mere money.

## PLAY HINTS

This horror adventure is *very dangerous*—the mortality rate among characters is likely to be high. Since PCs are often very attached to continuing characters, it might be wise to use temporary PCs for this mission.

The scenario depends a great deal on atmosphere and tension. The referee should emphasize the isolation of the party, the spooky silence of the city, the horrendous condition of the bodies found.

The referee should also pay attention to the moods of the party, and plan Stalker attacks accordingly. For example, after the first Stalker priest is killed, the PCs may think there was only a single fanatic. Only when their confidence has begun to return should the next Stalker priest strike.

Many alternatives are possible to add to the mood. The Stalker cult is widespread—a Martian servant with the group may secretly be a cultist. Perhaps one of the archaeologists (the missing Dr. Hardy) is not dead, but instead has gone insane and joined the Stalkers. If so, he will act as bait to lure the PCs into ambushes, or be rescued and then turn against the adventurers. Or maybe one of the PCs will go insane from terror and begin emulating the Stalkers. Ω

### Stalker Priest

Att.	Skills
Str: 6	Fisticuffs 5, Throwing 3, Close Combat 5 (edged)
Agl: 7	Stealth 6, Marksmanship 4 (Bow), Crime 2 (pick locks)
End: 7	Wilderness Travel 6 (mountaineering), Tracking 1
Int: 3	Observation 2
Chr: 2	Eloquence 1, Theatrics 1, Linguistics 1 (Koline)

Soc: 1  
These statistics include the effects of the Kroosht drug.

**Motives:** Mad, Sadistic, Loyal.

**Appearance:** A Stalker priest is a terrifying sight. Pale and emaciated, with burning eyes and long fingernails, a cultist dresses in filthy rags, ornamented with the bones of past victims, with a big black cloak for concealment. Some wear garments of human skin or hair. A Stalker priest's face is decorated with abstract designs in blood. He moves silently about the city, invisible in the shadows, and strikes suddenly, creating terror in his victims.



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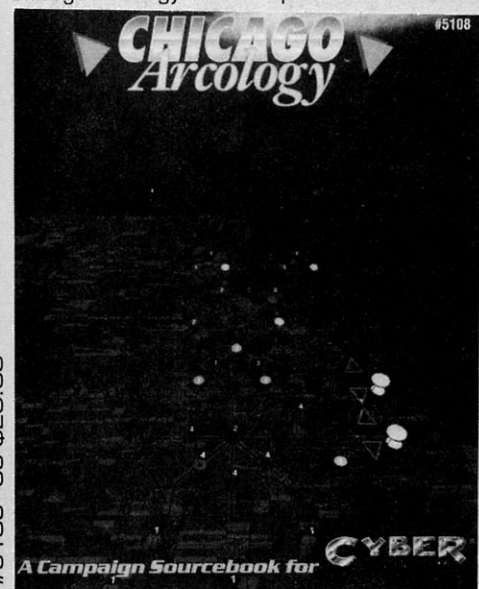
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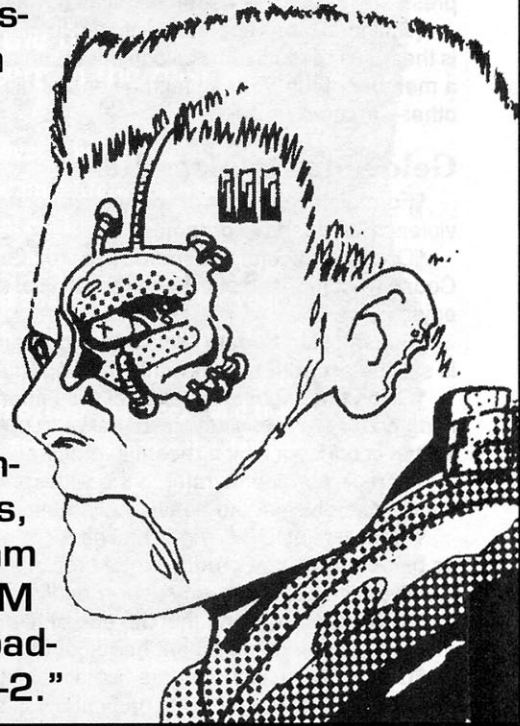
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# TRAVELLER *News Service*

## Dlan/Ilelish

Date: 101-1122

¶Dulinor has appointed Tredek Jurisor as his minister of information and communication after weeks of rumors regarding an upcoming political move of major consequence.

¶Jurisor is one of the most influential of the Virasan leaders who led the Synod members of the 457th Khanu in their precedent-setting decision to revise certain precepts of the religion's stance on afterlife and enlightenment.

¶Previously, dying a nonviolent death on Dlan was a primary condition for a believer to attain full revelation in the afterlife. However, the Synod of the 457th Khanu decreed that this is no longer a requirement.

¶Jurisor, along with the other reformationists who refer to themselves as the leaders of the Enlightenment movement, met with stiff resistance from the more conservative and traditional Synodans of the 457 Khanu.

¶The elements who have resisted the reform, now known popularly as the Orthodox sect, reacted to Jurisor's appointment with bitter—but unsurprised—disappointment.

¶Farthik Dorsokuguur, unofficial leader of the Orthodox sect and oldest Synod member of the 457th Khanu commented, "This is precisely what we feared would follow Jurisor's reformations—an alliance between the leaders of our faith and the leaders of our state. The heresies of the 457th Khanu are not an advancement of our spiritual vision; they are the precursors to an amalgamation with secular governments and aspirations."

¶Dorsokuguur refused to comment on rumors that the Orthodox sect has begun assembling a "star chamber" court in which to try Jurisor for his "crimes against the faith."

¶Jurisor has dismissed such rumors as groundless, observing, "My esteemed colleagues are individuals of honor and faith. They would not embark on any such course of action, which could easily be mistaken for treason—given my new position in the secular affairs of Dlan."

¶Jurisor, who is 43 years old, is a familiar, dynamic public figure on Dlan and has left the world on three occasions to oversee what his press secretary calls essential secular matters.

¶Dulinor's press secretary refused to make comment on the religious discord on Dlan other than to say, "The selection of Tredek Jurisor is the result of much careful consideration as to who would do the best job in this important post. The Emperor Dulinor is pleased to have a member of the Virasan faith as one of his close advisers, but issues of religion neither swayed his decision pro or con in this—or any other—matter."

## Gelornamite/Massilia

Date: 119-1122

¶Formal declarations of war were exchanged today between the AutoMech Ltd Bloc and the Tarnasse Industramiation Group here on violence-plagued Gelornamite.

¶Once a peaceful, prosperous planet, Gelornamite's decline into bitter internecine strife began late last year, when the Development Council—comprised of the chairpersons of the planet's eight leading firms—became seriously divided over industrial and economic strategies.

¶In particular, Sagata Arms and Procurement Associates announced its decision to break from the "standardized arms approach" that is still the accepted norm within the Imperium.

¶Citing the ongoing breakup of the Imperium, Sagata Chairman Sharda Sorku observed, "The only standards that we should be worrying about are those which will serve to optimize our local defensive capabilities, not some antiquated concept of technological universality—a concept which recent events have made extraneous."

¶Sorku's comments refer to the widespread adherence to Imperial Data Package designs as the standard for widely used designs of weapons, vehicles and heavy equipment.

¶While use of IDP designs has never been required or urged by the Imperium, most member-systems have used these data packages as blueprints for the production of crucial systems.

¶In addition to being very user-friendly and well-supported with supplementary programs and inexpensive industrial start-up packages, most worlds have found that the use of IDPs aids their economies by enabling them to be conversant with, and capable of meeting, the maintenance and equipment needs of most visiting starships and crews.

¶Calling Sorku's comments "isolationistic and economically perilous," Head Councillor Tayla Hai-Lei moved to quell any attempts to depart from the use of IDPs, particularly in the area of personal weapons.

¶Sorku rallied other corporations to his cause, however, creating a political alliance known as the AutoMech Ltd Bloc. Sorku's initial desire to terminate production of 7mm and 9mm ACRs and instead shift to a unique 8.2 mm general purpose weapon expanded into wider departures from Gelornamite's traditional IDP-biased industrial strategies.

¶The Tarnasse Industramiation group—led by the late Hai-Lei's successor, Gatta Ndompo—received the bloc's official notification of secession three days ago. The group immediately commenced operations to occupy the bloc's major production centers. Bloc troops—armed with the new 8.2mm ACRs—halted these offensives after taking heavy casualties.

¶Head Councillor Ndompo is said to have put in a request for immediate assistance from Margaret's Imperial forces.

## Warinir/Daibei

Date: 125-1122

¶Duke Craig formally announced today that over 20 worlds on the borders of the Federation of Daibei are now designated as red zones, according to the TAS.

¶The majority of these worlds are located in the Mulaar, Hermes and Dudin subsectors of Daibei, and in the Riftrim subsector of Reaver's Deep.

¶When asked why he was personally announcing the TAS designations, Duke Craig responded, "I want to make it clear that I not only accept these travel recommendations—I actively support them. I'm the last person to want to admit that some of our finest regions are no longer safe for travel, but the facts are incontestable. Even though the intensity of fighting between this Federation and the Solomani invaders has died down, there is an enormous upswing in pirate activity. Each morning, I get a missing persons update—and there are



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never less than 5000 new names on that list. Much of this is due to the raiding that is plaguing these hotspots right now."

¶Duke Craig declined to speculate on when these areas might become secure and safe for travel once again.

¶Rumors that the duke's 24-year-old cousin is among the missing have gone unconfirmed by official sources.

## Strela/Zarushagar

Date: 139-1122

¶Lucan's Vengeance Fleet has retired from the Strela system after six days of intense fighting.

¶In what some experts are calling "the last great fleet engagement of the Rebellion," Lucan's and Dulinor's naval assets battered each other mercilessly, resulting in the destruction of at least four BatRons, 10 CruRons, three TankRons and an untold number of destroyers, escorts, patrol craft and auxiliaries.

¶Ground and COACC forces suffered equally heavy losses. Personnel casualties are assessed to be in excess of two million.

¶Unofficial reports suggest that medical supplies have run out, forcing field hospitals to resort to unanaesthetized meatball surgery techniques that are usually seen only on pre-industrial planets.

¶Against this backdrop of human misery, Dulinor's commanders are claiming victory, although even they are compelled to admit that the cost in lives and equipment was "unacceptable."

¶Unable to press their advantage in numbers here at Strela, Lucan's commanders are now assumed to be withdrawing back to Core, marking the end of the long and costly vengeance campaign which has dominated so much of the Rebellion.

¶In a special report to the TNS, retired Imperial Admiral Ilina Robokovsa states that she doesn't expect to see Lucan attempting to resume his offensive.

¶According to Robokovsa, "He (Lucan) has taken too much damage here and has nothing to show for it. The vengeance fleet was at the end of a very long, very vulnerable supply line, and Lucan simply doesn't have the logistical assets to support this kind of massive offensive anymore. Core may be able to reproduce these assets but is the only political region within the postwar Imperium that lacks a safe rear area. Every centimeter of Core's periphery borders on hostile space. That's going to make even Lucan think twice before he tries to mount another offensive as huge—and costly—as this one."

## Vaward/Old Expenses

Date: 151-1122

¶Concern mounted in financial markets here today as the headquarters analysts of Hortalez et Cie announced that earnings had declined by 12 % during calendar year 1121.

¶While much of this assessment is based on algorithmic projections (actual reports often taking years to reach HeC's headquarters here on Vaward), market experts were forced to concede that this estimate was probably accurate to within 0.1%.

¶When asked to speculate on what had caused this sudden downturn, the experts almost universally cited Hortalez's massive asset trade with the four Vilani megacorporations which had been concluded on 090-1121.

¶Although the trade had been conducted and conceptualized with a great public show of amity, anonymous spokespersons from Zirunkarish now speculate that Hortalez et Cie "had little faith in the long-term viability of markets within the Ziru Sirkaa—a common mistake amongst financiers with decidedly Solomani mindsets."

¶When asked to comment on these various speculations, HeC Senior Administrator Nils Petersen suggested, "People should watch a little more closely and patiently, and speculate a little less. From our (Hortalez et Cie's) standpoint, everything is proceeding right on schedule and just as we expected."

¶Petersen declined to make any further statement that might shed light on his enigmatic comments.

## Capitol/Core

Date: 153-1122

¶Emperor Lucan slew a regency emissary with a flurry of laser bursts early today in a dramatic scene reminiscent of the tragic assassination carried out here six years ago.

¶The emperor stormed from the throne room immediately afterward. The court was cleared by the Imperial Honor Guard.

¶Although details were not immediately available, fragmentary information suggests that the emissary was Judith Isaacs, a regent of the Imperial Regency of Intelligence and Security.

¶According to a courtier who spoke on the condition of anonymity, Isaacs had travelled to Core to effect formal delivery of the regency's request that Lucan submit to answering charges of murdering his brother, Prince Varian, and several other persons.

¶In keeping with the Imperium's succession laws, the regency is required to ensure that a potential successor satisfactorily refutes any allegations of felony that might be outstanding against his person. This process must be a matter of public record and must be completed before there can be any recognition of a right to succession.

¶The emperor is said to have become enraged when Isaacs delivered this message (both verbal and hardcopy, according to succession law), at which point he jumped to his feet and fired four laser bursts into the regent.

¶Isaacs is thought to have died immediately.

¶Spokespersons for the emperor have explained that Lucan initially believed Isaacs to be an assassin and that his sudden departure from the court was motivated by remorse for having made this mistake.

¶However, no official statement has been issued by the Imperial staff, nor has an official apology been sent to the regency.

## Turin/Verge

Date: 172-1122

¶The leaders of the newly formed Verge Combine announced their succession from the Federation of Ilelish today, after weeks of bitter dispute over Dian's recruitment policies and mandatory "mutual defense tariffs."

¶It was also announced that fighting has broken out on several worlds friendly to the combine in the past three weeks and that Federation forces were already on site, participating in acts of "shameless oppression."

¶Analea Mekatan, senior chamberlain of Turin and perhaps the most influential member of the combine, stated, "We have allowed our economies, our militaries and our aspirations to be drained by Dulinor ever since the Rebellion began. Now, even as it is drawing to a close, his demands upon our livelihoods—and our very lives—continue to increase. This is not tolerable. His flat rejection of our petitions for tariff freezes and recruitment reductions has left us no choice but to secede."

¶Unconfirmed rumors suggest that two Federation fleets—the 42nd and the 1300th Reserve—have already sided with the combine, along with their attached ground and COACC combat assets. Ω



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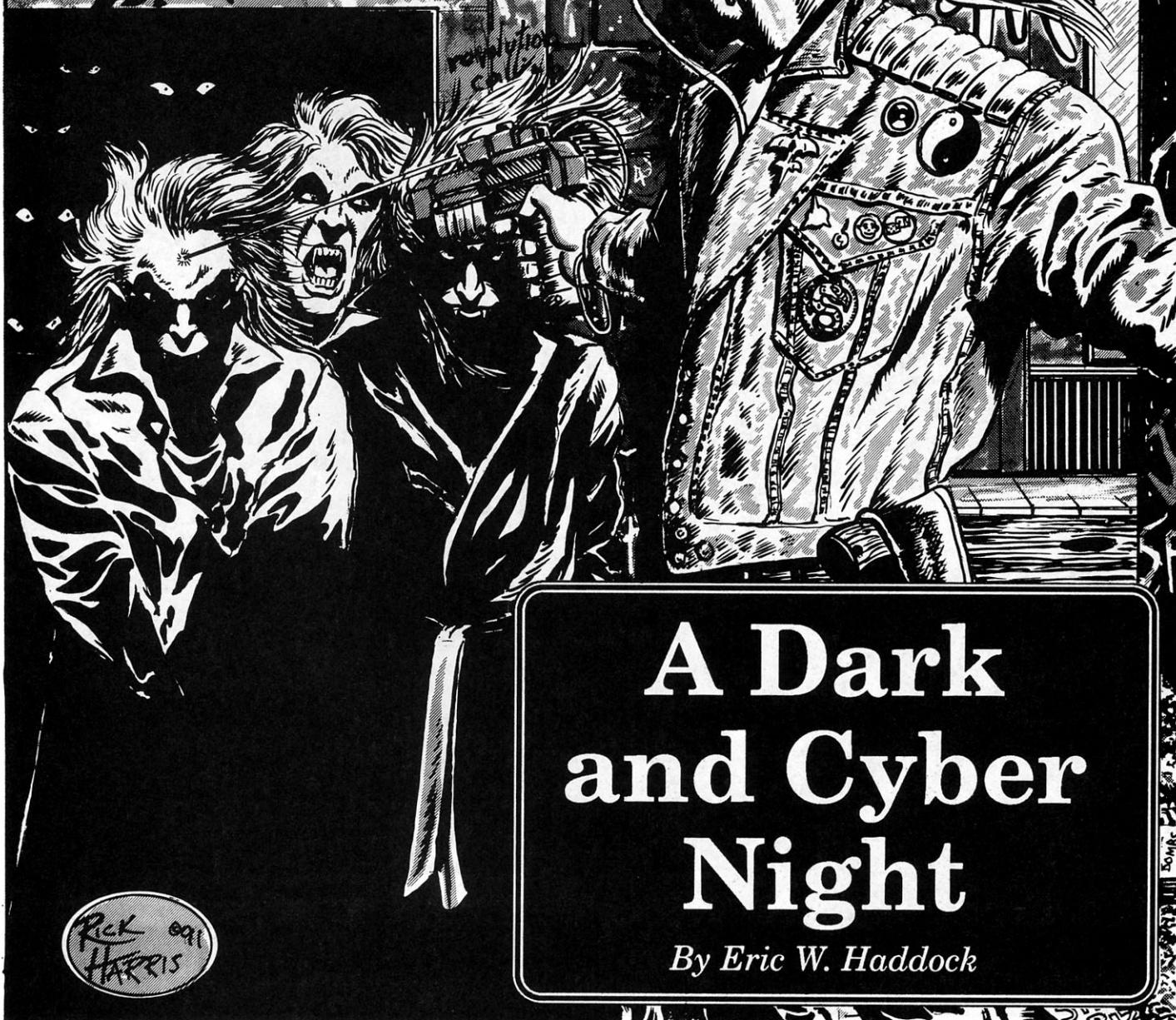
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Walking the streets of Seattle is *always* dangerous—all sorts of folks out there would like to ruin your day. But on some occasions, like Halloween, the especially nasty types come out—ghosts, vampires, zombies, nuggoths and werewolves. This article details some of the people and places you just might run into on a dark and stormy night. Each of these encounters can be used as a subplot for an existing campaign, an impetus for a larger plot or a quick diversion for a night's play.



# A Dark and Cyber Night

By Eric W. Haddock





**E**veryone's heard of theme gangs where all of the members have some kind of surgery to make them look alike. Not everyone's heard of the smaller—more violent—gangs that roam the streets. Most of these groups try to work with at least some amount of subtlety. Some are underground gangs, which don't establish a turf or make themselves a public force.

Each gang, almost by definition, has to have a leader. These leaders could be fanatic individuals or corporations hoping to achieve some grand plot. Players can come in contact with these gangs in a variety of ways. Attributes and other statistics for the gangs described below have been left out so the referee can tailor the gang strength to suit his needs.

### Ghosts

People who have encountered the Ghosts recall travelling down a street and suddenly being aware of a light, faint moan coming from all around them. As they walk, the moaning grows louder until it is almost unbearable. Suddenly, the traveller is ambushed by spectral figures brandishing old-fashioned weapons like spears and bows. Although the Ghosts aren't more violent than others, they are a threat that has eluded police for some time.

The Ghosts number at least 100, but like the Nuggoths, they tend to stay underground, and their overall purpose appears to be extortion and other petty offenses.

The weapons they use imply that they might have more powerful means at their disposal and that the hand weapons are for show.

**Using the Ghosts:** When shadowrunners have an occasion to walk down a dark street, they could be ambushed by the Ghosts. Depending on the cyberware the player characters are equipped with, they may be able to tell that the spectral effect surrounding each of the gang members is caused by an unusual type of gas that looks slightly neon-like in tone. PCs may also discern that the Ghosts use artificial amplification devices in their throats to create the haunting moans. Characters with low-light enhancement will see that each of the gang members is wearing a small gas mask or filter.

If the PCs subdue and question the Ghosts that attack them, they will find out that the Ghosts are indeed on a mission—they are robbing people, convenience stores and other shops to raise enough money to make a shadowrun against a corporation that has been destroying large portions of wilderness outside of Seattle.

The PCs can, of course, join in the shadowrun.

### Vampires

It's becoming more common nowadays to hear stories about a vicious gang that makes very unusual attacks on people in the residential sections of Seattle.

When the Vampires strike, they always hit a group of people at once—such as small meeting groups, bingo halls, and the like. When they hit, they burst into the building, sealing off the exits, and throw stun gas and stun grenades into the crowd. Once everyone is out, the Vampires (of course) steal blood from each of their victims.

Each Vampire has pure white hair, red eyes and (naturally) a pair of extended canine teeth. The teeth, however, are not capable of drawing anything into them—the Vampires extract blood from their victims with syphons and other means. They do not seem to care about how much blood is withdrawn from each person, just the total they leave the building with. Because of this, some people will be totally drained of their blood and dead, while others only slightly drained and dizzy.

Police have theorized that the Vampires actually work for a research company that has a crying need for human blood.

**Using the Vampires:** The PCs might come across some clue as to the Vampires' purpose during another shadowrun—such as a company or individual buying large amounts of blood. The specific use of the blood is left up to the referee—perhaps an individual or research firm is studying ways to exterminate a certain race (metahuman or not) via a biological attack, like a virus or contamination.

### Zombies

It's no secret what the Zombies want: "Liberation of the mind through advanced chemical stimulation." Unfortu-



nately, they want this "liberation" for everyone, and they've taken it upon themselves to make sure everyone experiences it.

A few years ago, when the Zombies first formed, they poisoned the Seattle water treatment plants (those plants that take sea water and desalinize it into drinking water) by introducing a hallucinogenic into the water. A few people in Seattle died before authorities discovered the drug. Since then, they've tried to be more subtle and have concentrated their attacks in the past few months on bottled water companies in Seattle and the surrounding towns.

Their efforts have produced paranoia among people everywhere. Although the city strengthened the security around the desalinization plants, no one likes to drink that water anyway (the taste is terrible). Now, not even water imported from a water factory is safe. "One sip, and your mind could trip" is a common phrase. Authorities are trying to locate and eradicate the Zombies but have so far had no luck.

The gang gets its name from the effect the drugs have on the members. When they aren't out on a mission to contaminate something, they usually wander around in a daze, stumbling about like they have no mind of their own.

Zombies generally wear Jamaican rastafarian hairdos, have beads and dress like "elite hippies"—their clothes are of the best quality and their vehicles of the best class. They detest the "peace" sign (a fist but with the index and middle finger extended). Both humans and metahumans belong to the Zombie gang.

**Using the Zombies:** Clearly, the Zombies are a threat to everyone. Someone will eventually hire shadowrunners to follow up on a lead as to their whereabouts. In addition, the Zombies and the Ghosts have conflicting interests (purity of the environment verses chemical alteration) which could mean a kind of underground gang war that the party could become involved in.

## Nuggoths

The Nuggoths are a gang of only 10 to 15 members. Although they don't have any policy or practice of racial purity, the gang is composed of humans only. Their mission seems to be anarchist in nature, as they target individuals in government, especially low-level government employees.

They don't really have a turf, and no one knows for sure who the leader is or where their headquarters is, but a few things mark their presence: First and foremost, they like to kill—that much is obvious. They also like to do it in a ritualistic style. Bodies of their victim aren't mutilated or found in a grotesque manner. But the victims are always found with knife wounds that suggest the use of hand razors (page 128 of *Shadowrun*) of an unusually long length. In addition, the wounds always originate from the back of the neck, suggesting that the Nuggoths attack from behind.

It is unclear where the gang gets their name.

**Using the Nuggoths:** Nuggoths tend to attack anyone remotely associated with city or government institutions—even runners who take part in government-sponsored raids. And few things are more frustrating than having your government contact ritualistically killed by a gang of anarchists.

## Werewolves

The Werewolves are the simplest—but most dangerous—of all the gangs. They are also very predictable—every full moon, they go on a violent rampage akin to the apocalypse.

The Werewolves howl before they strike, and they have tapped into the air raid and public warning sirens. As soon as the full moon rises, all the sirens around the city go off, producing a chilling howl that lasts for several few seconds. Residents have learned to be leery of full moons, and the howling and sirens strikes terror in the hearts of many. Those who are smart stay inside during the full moon, and many 24-hour stores and businesses close down.

Their methods are simple—hit something big with everything possible. Favorite targets are large structures or places that “go up with a big bang.” They have some sort of intelligence information that tells them what targets

are the best defended, so naturally they always avoid them and go for places easy to hit. They have already hit nearly all of the major corporate headquarters, stadiums and fireworks factories in Seattle.

The Werewolves begin a strike with some kind of shoulder-launched missile, then gang members throw grenades through the windows and shower automatic gun fire at anyone in the area.

After a single big target is hit, they go on to create mayhem throughout the city. Apparently the gang members split up and go on a crime spree, trying to accomplish whatever acts of violence they can during the night. Once the night of the full moon is over, they retreat to wherever their headquarters is and do not return until the sirens carry their howls over the air a month later.

**Using the Werewolves:** It would certainly spook the PCs if they are about to steal some data from a corporate building and find that it is suddenly under attack by a bunch of crazed gangsters. Not only do the PCs have to worry about getting blown up or shot, but the Werewolves tend to attract maximum attention very quickly—almost worse, during a shadowrun, than getting shot at.

## PLACES

Groups are not the only source of danger in the city. Some places, too, offer their own threat. The PCs might some night walk innocently into a store or other business—and find themselves in the midst of illegal implants, psychokillers or mysterious murders.

## A Special Service Body Shop

There's really no place more dangerous than an illegal body shop. If a character goes in to have something done, the outcome can be more horrific than a botched operation or a lost limb.

**Brain Chip:** The characters have the misfortune of picking a body shop whose doctor for reasons of his own (or to extend a plot of the referee) decides not to follow procedure to the letter. In addition to implanting the equipment desired by the patient, he introduces something of his own creation—the nightmare chip.

The nightmare chip alters the user's

perception, although the actual senses of the character remain the same. The result is that every time the character is in a stressful situation (as defined by the referee) the chip begins to make the situation seem much worse than it really is. This happens automatically, with no real chance of resistance. The effect is that opponents seem tougher and stakes seem higher—so the character is likely to shoot a few more bullets than normal or not call as many bluffs.

During excessively stressful situations (like a firefight, melee combat, recovering a stalled plane) the chip also induces an extreme sense of paranoia and hopelessness, causing the victim to collapse or retreat. This effect can be resisted as an opposed success test. The strength of the nightmare chip in producing the debilitating paranoia is four dice, and the target number is also four. The chip will make an “attack” into the person's willpower every five minutes of extreme stress.

The chip can easily be identified by even a novice cybertechnician and can be removed like any other implant.

## The A-Train to Hell

Monorails are an important part of public transportation. Almost every train is in good condition and is reasonably well secured—but there are some that you wouldn't want to carry cash on. PCs on such a train might experience some of the city's more diverse night life.

**Catching the A-Train:** Jacob Nelson knew he liked movies, especially the classics from the 1980s and 1990s. But it wasn't until he started to hear voices that he knew exactly how much those movies meant to him. So he's decided to follow those voices and see how many people he can visit on a monorail at night.

Jacob's mission the night the characters run into him is to kill as many people with his butcher knife as possible. He's pretty sure he saw a movie once about a middle-aged businessman killing people on a train with a butcher knife, but it doesn't matter anyway—the voices are helping him out.

His first job is to get on a train that goes a long time between stops. The second is to kill the interior lights, including the emergency ones, so he can run about in his night goggles easier. The third is to disable the emergency



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**B**UT FIRST, LET'S GO TO THE...

**1991  
GOW  
HALLOWEEN  
PARTY!**

WHAT THE HEY...

SO LET'S MINGLE!

BUT STEVE YOU GOTTA GET ME OUT OF THIS STORY!!

SORRY DUDE. THAT'S OUT OF MY HANDS.

NICE COSTUME MAAM!

THANKS!

DON'T MENTION IT.

COMON' LOREN HAVE A BIT OF PITY ON ME, HUH?!

NO, NED NOT IN MY AREA.



CHUCK, ARCHIE, I'M NOT GOING TO GET YOU A NEW ARTIST SO YOU'LL HAVE... "COOL LOOKING GUNS!!"

SAY MARC, AREN'T THOSE GUNS IN THAT COMIC STRIP WE RUN IN CHALLENGE? SAY...

OK YOU LAZY BOLOS, FUN TIMES OVER. NOW BACK TO WORK!! GEEZ, WHAT COMIC CHARACTERS GET AWAY WITH THESE DAYS!

YOW!

EEEK!

WHOA!

NUTS!

NEXT: WAIT, HERE'S THE SCRIPT. HEY, WHAT THE DEVIL IS GOING ON HERE?!

TO RETURN CHARACTERS TO STRIP PULL EVER

brakes, and set off some smoke grenades to cause panic and hide his presence. Jacob works for a company that makes demolitions, so he's well prepared to have everything happen at once with preset charges and timers, while Jacob sits comfortably in the train.

Jacob is wearing armor (a lined coat) and hopes to be able to kill at least one person. When the lights go out and the smoke starts filling the cars, he will stand and go after the closest person to him, hoping to strike from behind. By some coincidence, he will be in the same car as the player characters....

Jacob has no cybernetic enhancement but will fight with an uncanny zeal. Use the Humanis Policlub Member (page 168 of the *Shadowrun* rules) statistics and skills for Jacob.

**Possible Subplots:** Jacob might have been influenced by the nightmare chip and gone insane, or he might have ingested some of the drugs the Zombies are trying to spread, or he might have been brainwashed for learning too much about one of the gangs (the voices tell him not to tell anybody) or

traumatized to prevent him from spreading the word.

## You Check in...

The PCs at some time may stay in an hotel. They might expect the visit to be short and sweet, without incident. But even with all the usual precautions of the experienced shadowrunner, something unexpected might happen.

**A Cry in the Night:** The PCs are startled awake by the screams of what sounds like a human female in the next room. If the PCs put their ears to the door, they can hear what sounds like a baseball bat striking a side of beef.

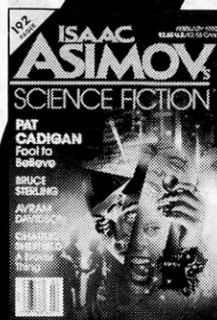
If the PCs call the front desk and complain about the noise, nothing will happen to them for the rest of the night. If the PCs decide to take action and burst through the door, they will find that the room is empty, but a trail of blood leads from a pool on the bed to the open window. There is no fire escape, and the ledge beneath the window shows only a few drops of blood. Nothing out of the ordinary can be seen from looking out the window.

The next day, the PCs hear from the

hotel staff that a hotel guest was horribly mutilated a block from the hotel. The victim was a human female and she was very difficult to identify. Police have no clues or motive for the slaying.

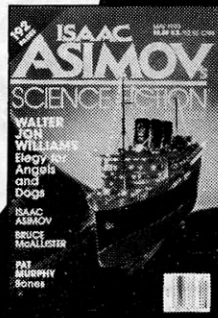
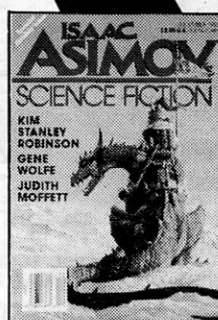
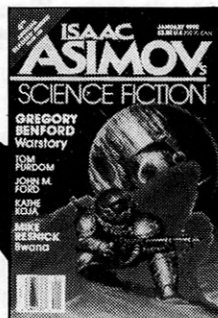
The woman was killed by a troll suffering from an acute mental disorder. He believes that he is a troll because human women gathered in a council and had his genes altered. Therefore, he is on a mission to kill human females as an act of twisted revenge. Unfortunately, he's good at skulking around the city. He was able to rapell down to the hotel window of the victim, kidnap the woman, and use his incredible strength to practically propel himself back up the rope before anyone knew what was going on. He will continue until he is caught or killed. Use the Troll Bouncer (page 173 of the *Shadowrun* rules) for statistics and skills.

**Subplots:** The troll could be part of a gang or cult that is like a policlub, only sadistically violent. The poor troll could be a victim, like Jacob, or he could be the escaped experimental specimen of a local research firm. That firm might need someone to hunt the troll down and bring him back in secrecy. Enter the shadowrunners. **Ω**



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# It Came From **CYBERSPACE**

Horrors of Realistic  
Cyberspace Technology  
*By Marcus L. Rowland*





**T**he idea of neural interfacing (connecting the human brain to electrical equipment) is at least 100 years old. In science fiction it began with Frankenstein and early robot stories, took in radio, television, and radar as they were developed, and added mentally controlled prosthetics and spaceships in the 1940s. The computer revolution led to stories in which characters were linked to mainframes, and new concepts developed along with the technology of the computer era. The current incarnation of the idea, typified by William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, is used in most near-future roleplaying games.

The details of neural interfacing are often vague. Gibson mentions "dermatrodes," presumably skin electrodes, but glosses over details of their operation. I tend to assume the equipment he describes looks something like a cross between a medical EEG set and stereo headphones. It has a data transfer rate that is fast enough to allow recording of human personalities and mechanized telepathy.

Even in the perfected form described by Gibson and others, this equipment is far from safe. Characters in *Neuromancer* sometimes suffer violent epileptic fits and heart attacks, the drastic effects of antihacker programs. At least two authors have shown characters "possessed" by the recorded personalities of other programmers. Occasionally the results include brain death.

If the equipment really worked as described, I'm not sure that I'd want to use it. I suspect that things could be much worse. The IBM and Compaq versions of neural interfaces would be frightening enough—I wouldn't go anywhere near one built at the cut-price end of the market. Imagine everything that can go wrong with a computer, from voltage spikes to parity errors and system crashes. Now imagine all these things happening inside your brain.

## INSTALLATION

To begin at the beginning, our brave cyberspace explorer needs a few thousand implanted electrodes. Why so many? The reason is that most are going to

be useless. The only way to make this technology pay is to sell a lot of units; millions of sales are needed to cover development costs. If each electrode were implanted by a trained surgeon, every neurological clinic in the world would be doing nothing but putting in electrodes, at a cost of many thousands of dollars per patient, and the manufacturers would still only be able to sell a few hundred units a week.

The most obvious way out of this dilemma is to automate the process completely and use a fast method which doesn't require pinpoint accuracy. One way to do this is a shotgun approach—if enough electrodes are in approximately the right areas, some are bound to be in the correct locations. The electrodes will have to be extremely thin to avoid brain damage, thinner than current glass or carbon filaments. Since the brain can move inside the skull, they also need to be very flexible. Persuading them to penetrate the skull and brain won't be easy.

Picture a device like a high-tech sand blaster firing a few thousand tiny harpoon-shaped electrodes into your brain at supersonic speed. Each electrode is the spool for a few centimeters of microscopically thin superconducting wire which unwinds as the electrode moves. The unwinding wire makes the electrode spin, causing a gyroscopic effect which keeps it on course. Once the electrodes are inserted, installation software finds those which are tapped into useful nerve areas. Many others will be in connective tissue or blood vessels, and some will be faulty by the time they are in place—damaged during insertion or during manufacture. There's no safe way to remove useless electrodes, so they'll just be left in the brain.

If the electrode material is carefully selected, rejection won't be a problem. The strands must be biologically inert, not just corrosion-resistant—the body has a nasty habit of attacking foreign material or coating it in inert fibrous tissue, which could easily damage the brain. Fortunately, there is already some medical

expertise in this field, and there should be a lot more by the time electronics developments allow this sort of work. Even so, I suspect that these electrodes might have a finite life span and need replacement every two or three years.

What are the electrodes linked to? For the data transfer rates we're discussing, it has to be something like a fibre-optics cable, which implies that the signals need to be amplified and converted into infra-red pulses. Since the system will be fine-tuned to match the user's brain, the amplifier-transmitter unit might as well be permanently attached to the body. With luck, and with 21st-century miniaturization techniques, this relay should be no larger than a small coin, containing a highly stable memory recording the setup information, translation circuitry and communications systems. Power is picked up inductively by a tiny Tesla coil or possibly comes from a long-life battery. I think that we can rule out nuclear batteries this close to the brain unless shielding gets much better.

The relay could be embedded under the skin with just a tiny socket to reveal its location, but anyone prepared to go to the lengths of submitting to this operation may choose to advertise the fact by leaving the interfaces visible. A few chromed studs protruding from the forehead do a lot to establish your street-cred as a hard-core hacker.

We'll ignore the tiny problem of decoding thousands of neural signals and passing computer signals back into the brain; presumably someone will have the answers by the time this technology is available.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

One possible answer is sensory overload. If a child is born blind and cured surgically later in life, the patient sometimes can't cope with the flood of new data. Effects can range from confusion to epileptic fits. There may be a similar effect with implanted



electrodes, and it would probably be best to start slowly. Begin with a little text, then gradually work up toward three-dimensional graphics and other senses, and ultimately the full cyberspace experience. It's possible that the brain may only be able to cope with a little extra information. For example, if you cover one eye and look at the "m" in "information", your eye is only clearly focused on the "m" and two or three letters to either side. Beyond that you see semifocused shapes of varying degrees of clarity. The illusion of clarity over the full visual field is maintained by memory, eye movements and stereoscopic vision. It's possible to speed up visual data acquisition by training, but it still takes time to process the information. The main limitation is probably the data-handling speed of the brain, not the data-acquisition rate of the eyes. Speed up the flow of information or bypass the visual cortex completely, and there are likely to be problems.

Let's say, for the sake of argument, that with practice these implanted electrodes will let you assimilate data about four times more rapidly than reading a display screen, with the same advantage in feedback to the computer. Let's also assume that the brain can handle this flow of information, interact with it and make meaningful decisions. This possibly means that you can use your computer about 16 times more rapidly than a conventional operator. It sounds very impressive; unfortunately, it still means that the computer will spend about 95% of its time waiting for input because computers are going to be much, much, faster by the time that this surgery is available. It's also likely that true artificial intelligence will have been developed. Computers can already keep track of the stock market more rapidly than any human stockbroker—by the next

century, the easiest way to get a major computing job done may be to tell the computer what you want and stand clear while it gets on with the work. Constant interaction won't speed things up and is far more likely to slow them down.

Having said all this, you may wonder what neural interfacing is good for. To be frank, I doubt that it will ever be the major economic and social force depicted in most games and SF. Access to an infinite sea of data is meaningless without a good idea of what you intend to do with it and where the useful information will be found. Picking up a nearby book and opening a page at random, I learn that "...myoglobin remains fully saturated at tensions well below that required for hemoglobin to give up its oxygen." The sentence means something to me; if it didn't, the book probably wouldn't be in my house. Now imagine that I have equally easy access to any book in the world and try to guess the results of a random sampling. Data can only be important if you know what it means, and a near-infinite data field implies a near-infinite number of ways to hide, lose, garble, or misinterpret the data.

In many ways conventional network facilities may be more useful than direct neural interfaces. A computer mailbox doesn't mind waiting a few hours or weeks for messages; a human operator is likely to get thoroughly bored, especially while processing data 16 times more rapidly than someone calling in from a conventional system. A well-automated data retrieval and indexing service in the hands of a professional who knows how to use it is likely to be a lot more useful than an amateur with a head full of electrodes and an idea that it might be fun to knock over a bank.

## SYSTEM PROTECTION

I suspect that the ease and profitability of hacking is greatly overestimated by most cyberpunk authors. The genre assumes vulnerable computers and an accessible flow of information. Both seem unlikely if

super-hackers are known to exist. If corporations start to take major damage, they are likely to spend major money protecting their systems. Some organizations will simply stop using public networks; others may stay on line, but they will be very well protected. The antipersonnel software described by cyberpunk authors is one answer, but data encryption seems a more practical bet for long-term protection. There are already public key encryption methods that can theoretically resist a Cray for several days; you can't buy software incorporating the best systems because Britain's GCHQ and America's NSA won't allow anyone else to use them. If hacking started to cause real economic damage on a national level, it seems likely that the security agencies would have to loosen the reins. There are many other ways to make data transmissions secure; most involve equipment which costs a lot of money and won't be readily available to hackers. Military systems will use entirely separate networks, with even higher levels of protection.

As a last cynical thought on the subject of hacking, it's unlikely that anyone would produce neural interfaces for a small market like hackers. They only make commercial sense with a big pool of customers. The only organizations with the resources to build them will be the multinationals that the hackers are trying to crack. Is it really likely that these corporations will sell equipment that can easily be used to harm them?

## ENTERTAINMENT AND THE ARTS

If hacking is ruled out, where will this equipment be useful? My best guesses are in entertainment and the arts.

Entertainment uses should be obvious. If you can pipe images and/or body sensations to the brain, you have the perfect medium for everything from industrial training to hard-core pornography. If the technology is feasible at all, this is where the real money will be made. There are too many unknowns to say how it would work, but interac-

tive programs seem most likely. The user experiences sight, sound and other sensations in a totally convincing virtual reality simulation.

The frightening social effects of these systems have been examined by many authors. Apart from the obvious possibility that people might choose to spend all their time immersed in a fantasy universe, there seems a good chance that the technique might be used for advertising and political or religious indoctrination. Whether these techniques would be more successful than other methods remains unknown; the potential is there, and someone is bound to try it if the technology is developed.

The ability to visualize an effect and immediately "see" it should be very useful in design and the graphic arts. With practice, users should be able to acquire an intuitive feel for the medium, bypassing many of the steps required by older technologies. As an example of how drastic such a change could be, take a look at an old-fashioned typesetting machine and printing press, and compare it to the latest desktop publishing system. Now imagine similar streamlining applied to every form of art. This may sound unlikely, but industrial robots have already been used for sculpture and painting; the output side of the process already exists, and it's now the input side that lags behind.

If this technology becomes affordable, we're going to see a lot of art. Much of it will be poor, instant "stream of consciousness" work because this process will allow impatient or incompetent artists to produce finished work in a matter of hours, rather than spending the days or weeks needed to get things right. So 90% of it will probably be rubbish, but 90% of everything is rubbish anyway. Provided that it's recyclable rubbish, it probably doesn't matter much. There'll be some gems amongst the crud, work as fine as anything from the Renaissance or the 19th century. It might not be anything we'd recognize as art today, but we should be ready for it by the time it comes along.

The rest of this article sug-

gests a variant background, some extra rules, and adventure outlines for cyberpunk-style games. Most parts are primarily intended for referees, and if you play in such a game you may want to stop reading here.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Computer hacking was declared illegal by all major governments by the mid-1990s. This did not stop computer hacking. By 1999 hacking was blamed for several major disasters—the London floods of 1994-6, the destruction of Vandenberg Air Force Base in 1995, and the accidental activation (and mutual annihilation) of several Star Wars prototype systems in 1997. Losses attributed to computer hacking rose from a few million in the 1980s to several billion in 1999. The financial instability that resulted led to the splintering of national governments and the rise of dozens of global and national power groups, most notably religious and paramilitary organizations, multinational corporations, etc.

Today most areas are controlled by one or more of these organizations. For example, Lower Manhattan is run by the Salvation Army/Toyota/IBM alliance. Today these groupings seem to have stabilized, and there has been an explosive flowering of technology and the arts, fuelled by rapid advances in computing. Meanwhile the technology of hacking continues to develop. Recent advances in man-machine interfacing make it possible for human personalities to enter cyberspace and tap into data far more effectively than ever before.

## THE REAL STORY

While hackers caused some of the problems of the late 20th century, they were never the major menace portrayed by the media. It was simply convenient to blame the shortcomings of government and industry on a small and relatively defenseless group. For example, the London floods were mainly the result of government cut-backs which neglected maintenance of flood defenses.



The global economic collapse and its aftermath were engineered by business cartels who wanted an end to interference in their operations. One consequence affected hacking; corporations could finally use secure data encoding algorithms, previously banned because government computers couldn't crack them effectively.

Today there's rarely a direct link between commercial data banks and publicly accessible communication systems. Where such links are needed, it takes hours of computer time for an outsider to decode a few second's data transmission, by which time the data is too old to be useful. Systems change their codes several times a second, using atomic clocks to synchronize the change. Equipment this sophisticated isn't available to hackers.

Public records and minor commercial systems are still accessible; this may be useful if you need Swedish census data for 1982 or a comprehensive summary of Korean Ung poetry. Otherwise, it's unlikely that they will produce worthwhile information. The vulnerability of major financial systems is a myth; there are approximately 50 successful penetrations a year, usually inside jobs, with an average yield of \$150,000 before detection. While 65% of offenders are caught, most seem to suffer unfortunate accidents.

The authorities perpetuate this myth because an immense amount of futile effort is channeled into attempts to crack major data systems, effort that might otherwise be devoted to more lucrative forms of crime or rebellion. Soft targets (hospitals, small businesses, universities, etc.) have learned by experience; it is possible to penetrate their systems, but nothing useful is left accessible to hackers. Critical systems are never left on-line to the public networks.

The technology used for hacking is developed and marketed by the very corporations that the hackers are trying to penetrate or by allied companies. And 90% of sales are to students, attracted by the myth of easy fame and wealth, who typically discard the equipment within a year or turn it to other uses. Cyberspace inter-

faces were originally developed for entertainment, and their use for hacking is less efficient than normal techniques; it is also expensive and dangerous. Naturally news is slanted to give the opposite impression.

The setting is very like that in existing games. The main differences are that cyberspace hackers tend to be young and naive, much less effective than they believe, and vulnerable to a range of interesting medical problems.

## WE HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY

Every time a set of electrodes is implanted, there's a significant chance of brain damage or other neural effects. For example, one of the filaments might loosen a small blood clot and trigger a stroke a few hours or days later. The risk is small at first, but rises with the number of electrodes implanted and increases if the brain isn't given enough time to heal between implants. Incidentally, cyberspace hacking is addictive; there is a strong tendency to fit more electrodes, whether or not they are really needed, to improve the "reality" of the experience. Useless wires can't be removed and are broken down by the body very slowly, so the brain eventually fills with many thousands of microscopically fine filaments.

Cyberspace systems haven't been in use long enough for the extent of the danger to become apparent. Domestic entertainment users are rarely affected since they only have one set of electrodes fitted every two or three years. The few incidents that have occurred have been carefully hushed up. Deaths and illness amongst riff-raff like hackers don't interest anyone but those involved.

Apart from style, there is a practical reason why experienced hackers have chrome covers on their interfaces—they are very vulnerable to infra-red jamming. A TV remote control can cause a jolt of pain; a cordless computer keyboard can trigger a migraine headache. Most laser weapons use infra-red on similar frequencies, and even a near miss would generate enough spurious signals to wipe out the configuration data in the terminal unit, making cyberspace access impossible until it is reprogrammed.

## BRAIN DAMAGE PROBABILITY

Each player character is assumed to have been involved in cyberspace hacking for two to four years. Roll 1D100 on the Brain Damage Probability Table for years and for the number of

electrode sets, then roll for brain damage effects (if any). Record the number of electrode sets for future use; if more electrodes are added at a later date, reroll for brain damage. After year four the chance of brain damage stays at 4% per electrode set.

### Brain Damage Probability

1D100	Years	Electrodes	Probability
01-50	2	2+1D3	2% per electrode set
51-85	3	3+1D4	3% per electrode set
86-00	4	4+1D4	4% per electrode set

## EFFECTS OF BRAIN DAMAGE

1D100	Effects
01-05	<i>Stroke.</i> The victim is semiparalyzed down one side, walks with a limp or uses a wheelchair, and suffers major penalties to all physical characteristic and skill rolls. This problem does <i>not</i> affect cyberspace dopplegangers.
06-25	<i>Migraine.</i> About an hour's worth of headache per minute spent in cyberspace. This starts as soon as the character drops out of cyberspace.
26-50	<i>Epilepsy.</i> One attack per cyberspace trip, with a good chance of taking physical or mental damage.
51-75	<i>Memory damage.</i> Reduce 2D3 skills a little (e.g., by 5-10%).
76-80	<i>Wireheading.</i> An electrode has penetrated the pleasure center of the character's brain. This means that the character's body feels intense pleasure in cyberspace but suffers withdrawal symptoms at other times.
81-85	<i>Motor damage.</i> This reduces dexterity or its equivalent a little. All related skills are affected.
86-95	<i>Speech center damage.</i> The character stutters or slurs words. This affects the real body and the cyberspace personality.
96-99	<i>Sight damage.</i> The character has been partially or completely blinded, or suffers other visual problems. Since this is a neurological problem, not eye damage, it can't be corrected by bionic implants or transplants. Any cure will be hideously expensive. All problems affect the cyberspace personality.
00	<i>Roll twice.</i> If you roll 00 again or roll the same damage twice, reroll for another result.

## SIGHT DAMAGE

1D100	Effects
01-30	<i>Color blind.</i> All color vision is lost.
31-50	<i>Visual memory impaired.</i> The character will have problems recognizing written words, numbers, etc., and suffers dyslexia.
51-70	<i>Eye coordination lost.</i> Unless the character makes a conscious effort, the eyes don't focus on the same point, resulting in blurred double vision.
71-90	<i>Low-definition vision.</i> The visual center which detects the edges and shapes of objects has been damaged. There should be a penalty on all rolls to recognize people, spot danger, etc.
91-99	<i>Blind in one eye.</i> Limited depth perception, affects marksmanship etc.
00	<i>Both eyes blind.</i> Referee may optionally reroll.

# Full Metal Pizza

As you check the local bulletin board, a message slowly appears. It looks like someone might actually be typing it in, rather than downloading it from a neural interface:

Hi hackers.

Take a look at FMPI data node, access code 23-9585-2913243. Looks like a big corporate database. It's tough, heavily protected, should be interesting. My rig isn't up to it. Anyone out there gets inside, let me know what's in there.

Logging off for tonight,  
Zippy

A lot of people spend a lot of time in cyberspace. Most of these people are teenagers and young adults. After an evening's interfacing, they are tired, thirsty and hungry.

Enter Amalgamated Global Convenience Foods and its new subsidiary, Full Metal Pizza Inc.

AGCF's marketing division has noticed this potential customer pool and decided to tap it by luring cyberspace explorers into an automated order system. It's supposed to be fast and fun; as they work their way through the system, the choices they make will determine the size and ingredients of the meal, which will be charged to their credit card accounts. Messengers will deliver the food a few minutes later. If all goes as planned and customers like this idea, an international chain of FMPI computers will spring up. First, though, the system must be given a trial run. No one expects any trouble because it's been designed by expert programmers. Want to guess who'll happen to be the first hackers into the system?

Once the PCs try to investigate the "database" they find themselves trapped in a nightmare maze, like a really bad computer adventure, in which the only way to progress is to pick types of meat, vegetables, pasta and other ingredients and trimmings. For example, one scene dumps the team in an Italian mar-

ket, where a Godfather-style character tries to make them an offer they can't refuse; delicious garlic bread, guaranteed to "keepa da vampires away." Another scene puts adventurers in a shooting gallery where they must fire at different animals and meat products. Some of the scenes have bugs and expose the characters to effects as dangerous as Black Ice or your game's equivalent.

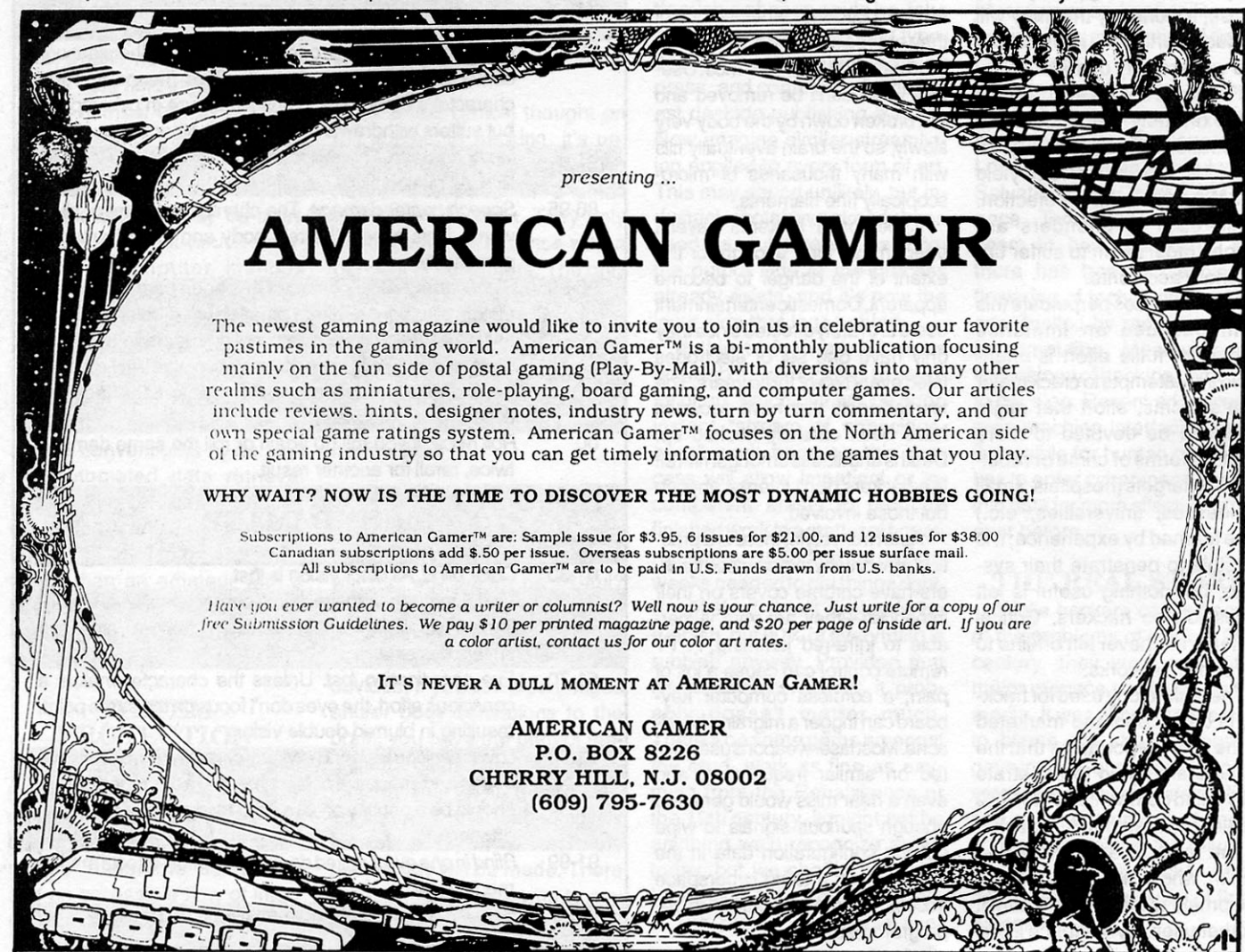
Eventually the PCs should fight their way to the final scene, the check-out, where their bills are itemized and must be paid. The game won't let PCs log out without producing a valid credit card number. Any attempt to use a fake results in a visit from the company's mobile goons, who suggest that characters might want to think twice before committing credit card fraud again—and they bring home the point by breaking an arm or two.

If the PCs try to argue with the program, it suggests that they should complain in writing to the corporate headquarters—Full Metal Pizza Inc, c/o Amalgamated

Global Convenience Foods, Box 329458, Liberia. There will not be any reply. Anyone who persists in arguing will abruptly find that he is slumped in front of a cyberspace terminal; the Full Metal Pizza system has cut the last links, leaving the adventurer with a severe headache and no real desire to plug in again that evening.

Whatever happens, in the early hours of the following morning, each of the adventurers hears a loud knock at the door. When they look outside, they'll find a pile of cartons and tubs, full of cold pizza, warm ice cream and other goodies, plus a large credit card bill. Residents in poor neighborhoods may also find a rat or two busily gnawing at the cartons. Any resemblance between the goods ordered and those received is purely coincidental.

Anyone who eats any seafood pizza gets severe pollution-related poisoning, resulting in a spell of illness lasting several weeks. Anyone who eats chilli gets mild amoebic dysentery. The rest of the food is relatively innocuous. □



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# DEEP Trouble

By Dan Snuffin

New York City, NY: Police are investigating the theft of a rare book from the private collection of C. Arthur Locke. The thieves broke into the residence early in the evening and stole a rare copy of *Daemons of the Fire*.

Locke shot and killed one of the burglars, but the other escaped with the book. The value of the stolen book was not known.

One of the PCs stumbles upon the above article, dated September 8, 1926, while reading the morning newspaper.

A successful Cthulhu Mythos roll will reveal to the characters that *Daemons of the Fire* is a Mythos book.

This adventure is located in Boston, but the referee may adjust the location to fit his campaign. The referee will have to decide how to involve the characters based on their situation and history. If one of the PCs is a professor, Miskatonic may send him to investigate. Or possibly one of the characters knows C. Arthur Locke or is interested in the stolen book.

## KEEPER'S INFORMATION

A horde of Deep Ones is plotting to melt the Arctic ice by summoning Cthugha. The rise in sea level will expand their underwater domain while causing serious disasters for the surface dwellers. The Deep Ones have stolen *Daemons of Fire* because it contains the Summon Cthugha spell. They have hijacked the freighter *Blue Star* to carry them and the more human members of the horde up to the Arctic Sea. After all, that's a long way to swim!





## NEW YORK CITY

Locke will not conduct any interviews over the telephone, but he will invite the investigators to his home to discuss the theft. Travel by train from Boston to New York City will cost \$5.70 and will take seven hours.

The Locke residence is a two-story mansion of weathered brick surrounded by a large, well trimmed lawn. C. Arthur Locke is a tall, healthy looking man in his early fifties who wears a green sweater of questionable taste. He will cooperate with the investigators after a successful Oratory roll has been made.

Locke will tell the investigators that he was sitting in the den when he heard noises coming from the reading room where he keeps all his books. He pulled a revolver from his desk drawer and went to investigate. He saw two men sneaking down the hallway toward an open window, one carrying the book. He yelled at the men to stop, and the first turned toward him while the second continued down the hall. When the first made as if to attack him, Locke shot the man in the chest. The other jumped out the window and escaped.

Locke is not aware of the Mythos value of the book, nor is he aware why that particular book was stolen. He will explain that he tried to read it once, but the messy old English text required too much effort.

If the PCs ask to see the rare book collection, Locke will proudly oblige. There are many rare titles, but no Mythos books.

If asked about anything unusual that may have happened or about the man killed, Locke will remark. "The man looked very unhealthy. His skin was dry and scaly, and he had no hair."

A Fast Talk or Oratory roll will get the PCs into the city morgue to view the body. Gunshot wound aside, the man looks unhealthy indeed. His skin is dry and scaly, and he appears to have lost all of his hair. His ears are set too close to his head, and his eyes are a little large. His identity is still unknown. A successful Cthulhu Mythos roll will tell the PCs that this man is halfway through the transformation from human to Deep One.

## DISAPPEARANCE

The next day, the party will get an alarming phone call. If one of the inves-

tigators is a journalist, it will be from his editor. Otherwise, the caller will be a journalist contact acquainted with one of the characters. The caller will inform them of the mysterious disappearance of the whole population of Rockport, a small coastal village in Massachusetts. Approximately 125 people completely vanished with no trace. The disappearance was discovered late last night.

Rockport is about 35 miles from Boston, two and a half hours away by car. It is a remote fishing village of old, weathered wooden buildings and shacks in various states of disrepair. Most smell only of fish, and everything looks undisturbed. A Fast Talk or Oratory roll will get the party past the loose security surrounding the area.

Although very old and warped, the docks of Rockport are very strong. Boats are still tied up on most docks. While looking in this area, anyone making a successful Spot Hidden roll will notice a life ring caught in some cattails right off shore. The white ring has the words "Blue Star" on it, and the preserver looks relatively new.

One building in Rockport is identified by the sign over the door as the "Esoteric Order Of Dagon." Those making a successful Cthulhu Mythos roll will know who Dagon is. Inside are many old chairs leisurely organized in rows facing a bare stone altar. The building is otherwise completely empty, as everything of importance was taken on the voyage. Obviously this is a very poor excuse for a house of worship. While looking in this area, anyone making a successful Spot Hidden roll will notice a small scrap of paper lying beneath one of the chairs. The paper contains the word "tar," with anything once preceding that inscription torn off.

Rockport has a grocery store, but there is no food here—the shelves are bare. The inventory records are missing, but there are many empty crates and boxes in the back room. If the PCs check the labels to see what was once in the crates and boxes, they will find three labeled "fur parkas." The rest of the boxes are labeled "candles," "oars," different types of food, etc.

## BLUE STAR

A call to the Boston Port Commission (BPC) will reveal that the *Blue Star* is a

cargo freighter that left Boston harbor on September 2 for Libson. One day later, all contact was lost, and it was presumed that the freighter may have sank in the heavy storms that hit at the time radio contact ceased.

If the PCs ask the BPC for details about the *Blue Star*, a successful Fast Talk roll will reveal that the captain of the freighter was Samuel Westhouse. A total of 32 crewmembers were on board. The cargo was wheat, various foodstuffs and tobacco.

If the PCs mention that they found a life ring from the *Blue Star* in Rockport, the BPC will say that's not possible, considering the ship's position and the currents concerned.

If the PCs investigate the matter further, they may discover that two of the crewmembers were from Arkham. This is a red herring, but it might lead the characters on an interesting wild goose chase.

## MISKATONIC UNIVERSITY

The best place to find information about the Esoteric Order of Dagon or *Daemons of the Fire* is Miskatonic University. At the library, many hours of work and a successful Library Use roll (or a suitable contact, if the PCs have one) will reveal that Dagon is an extremely large, fishlike humanoid and leader of a race of similar beings smaller than himself. The Esoteric Order of Dagon is not mentioned.

The rare books section of the library where *Daemons of the Fire* or more sensitive information on the Esoteric Order of Dagon can be found may only be accessed if a PC is a professor at the university or the PCs are accompanied by a professor. A translation of *Daemons of the Fire* is available to those with the proper clearance.

If the investigators try to find out more about the Esoteric Order of Dagon, *Daemons of the Fire* or cult activity at Rockport through the faculty, they will eventually be referred to Dr. Jim Aarensen, professor of Anthropology. If any of the characters either teach or attend Miskatonic University, assume they know Dr. Aarensen. Aarensen will tell the investigators that he is not surprised to hear of cult activity in Rockport



because Dagon is often worshipped by simple fisher-folk in remote coastal villages. He can give the adventurers the same general information as the library but will be hesitant to say much more. He is all too familiar with the Mythos and does not wish to subject anyone else to the horrors of that knowledge. However, if the PCs show him that they already know the Mythos, he will open up to them. If the PCs mention the possible connection with the *Blue Star*, Aarensen will show sudden interest in the case and will be more than eager to help.

### SIGHTING

Six days after they begin their investigation, the PCs will learn that the *Blue Star* has been sighted by a trawler off the coast

of Greenland. The ship, which appeared almost lifeless, was heading northeast, possibly toward the Arctic Sea.

Three days after the sighting, the International Ice Patrol (IIP—an organization set up to monitor icebergs after the *Titanic* disaster) will report that it has found the *Blue Star* loosely locked in the Arctic Sea off Greenland. Heavy storms prevent the IIP from investigating further.

If the PCs do not decide to travel to the Arctic, Miskatonic may ask them to join a team sent to investigate the apparent link between the *Blue Star* and the mysterious disappearance at Rockport. In either case, Aarensen will want to accompany the group.

#### Dr. Jim Aarensen, Professor of Anthropology

STR 10, CON 12, SIZ 09, INT 17, POW 17, DEX 11, APP 12, EDU 18, SAN 66,  
Hit Pts 11.

**Skills:** Anthropology 95%, Archeology 55%, Chemistry 25%, Cthulhu Mythos 33%, Debate 45%, Dodge 22%, First Aid 40%, Geology 20%, History 65%, Library Use 90%, Make Maps 30%, Occult 80%, Oratory 75%, Spot Hidden 45%.

**Spells:** Call Cthugha, Call Ithaqua, Create Gate, Powder of Ibn-Ghazi, Summon/Bind Byakhee, Voorish Sign.

Aarensen is 47, although he looks like he is in his sixties. His hair is gray and thinning, his skin wrinkled, and his voice low and raspy. He habitually polishes his sunglasses when talking, and, yes, he does love his work.

The professor's office is a small archaeological museum and library. Fossils, stones and ancient tools line the shelves of one wall, and a complete library fills another wall and the space above his desk. Everything here is neat and orderly.

### Daemons of the Fire

**Language:** English.

**+ to knowledge:** =5%.

**Spell Multiplier:** ×3.

**Effect on SAN:** -1D8.

This book was written in the early 1800s by a man who identifies himself in the text only as "William." It is primarily about Cthugha, his existence on Fomalhaut, and the cult around him. It also contains two spells: Call Cthugha and Summon/Bind Fire Vampire. A day of browsing through the book will reveal these general details:

Cthugha resembles an enormous burning mass continually varying in shape. Its place of origin is the star Fomalhaut, but it may be summoned to earth. Once summoned, Cthugha will blast and burn the area with intense heat and flame, destroying it completely. The book also contains a 21-page postscript. It mainly discusses the fabled existence of the City of the Old Ones and of strange creatures referred to as the Elder Things that existed before the dawn of life on Earth. It hints that what remains of this city is still locked somewhere in the ice, great secrets frozen within it. (Of course, this postscript is thrown in only to mislead and confuse avid Lovecraft readers.) This knowledge will add +1% to the reader's Cthulhu Mythos skill and cause a SAN loss of 1D4.

### ARCTIC

Travel by plane will take approximately four days. The closest settlement to the *Blue Star's* reported location is Hudsonland, a small fishing community on the coast of Greenland. The Greenland Sea is frozen at this time of the year—everything is covered with snow and ice. Temperatures are generally in the teens, and the wind chill factor may bring the actual temperature close to zero degrees. A PC not equipped with warm clothing can survive outside a number of minutes equal to his CON before taking a point of damage. This cycle is repeated until the PC loses half of his hit points in this manner, at which time he falls unconscious. If unattended, he will freeze to death quickly thereafter.

A small store here carries most essential supplies, charging 150% of the normal price.

If the PCs contact the IIP, they will learn that fierce snowstorms have prevented the organization from investigating the freighter's condition. Luckily, the weather is much more hospitable today. Travel by sled to the site of the *Blue Star* will take three hours. The freighter has been ransacked, and the whole ship smells of dead fish. Much of the floor is covered in slime. Aarensen will tell the PCs that this is a sure mark of the Deep Ones.

The Deep Ones have not strayed far from the ship; they are camped only five miles away. For each hour after one hour that the characters search, there is a 25% chance of discovering the Deep Ones, and there is also a 20% chance that the Deep Ones will discover them. If the characters are discovered, 35-50 Deep Ones will chase them 3-4 miles and will post guard around their settlement thereafter. Otherwise, the party should be able to find a suitable vantage point from which to observe the Deep Ones. There are 115 Deep Ones and 74 humans present. The sight of 115 Deep Ones will cost the PCs maximum SAN (six points) if they fail their SAN roll—one point if the roll is made.

What happens after the discovery of the Deep Ones depends upon when they were discovered. If they were discovered within a day of the discovery of the abandoned boat, they will be at-





tempting to summon Cthugha. If the PCs arrived at any later time, the investigators will be around just in time for Cthugha to appear.

If the PCs try to take on the Deep Ones as a group, they will have the element of surprise, but they will nonetheless be ripped to shreds unless they come up with something very clever. If the PCs do succeed in disrupting the ritual, the Deep Ones will try the summoning again in three days. Only death will stop the fanatic cultists from eventually completing the summoning. If the PCs are unable to interrupt the ritual or just wait around to see what happens, Cthugha will arrive five minutes after the chanting is completed.

### CTHUGHA ARRIVES

Only four of the Deep Ones actually know the spell, and they will be leading the Deep Ones in the casting. The cultists are ringed around a large bonfire. They will have to chant for 25 minutes, but the spell will be automatically successful. Suddenly, the flames turn blindingly white, and an intensely

bright point of light floats up from the fire. When it reaches a height of about 22 feet, it erupts into the huge flaming ball that is Cthugha, while fire vampires begin to jump from the bonfire. All present must make their SAN rolls or lose 1D20 SAN. Those making the roll lose 1D3 SAN.

Suddenly, it is very hot. The Deep Ones will flee, running back toward the freighter. The hard-packed Arctic ice instantly begins to melt.

The characters will only have one chance to try to banish Cthugha. Aarensen will lead them in the banishment spell, expending full magic points. Each character who knows the spell may also expend all his magic points, while others may only contribute one magic point. Nine points must be expended to match Cthugha's POW, and each additional point will give them a 5% cumulative chance of dismissal. If the spell succeeds, Cthugha will leave in a blinding flash of light before doing any serious melting. The PCs will gain 1D20 SAN. They will also gain 1D10 SAN, realizing that they have saved the

world from disaster.

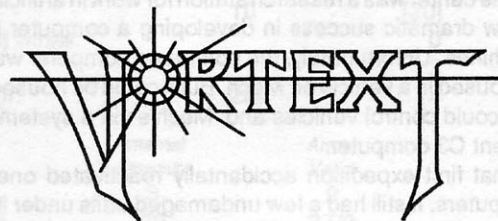
If the spell fails, the PCs will have to run to avoid being burnt to a crisp. The PCs have failed, and Cthugha will gleefully turn most of the Arctic ice cap into water, causing numerous weather problems, plus worldwide coastal flooding as sea level rises about 60 feet. The horrified PCs will lose 1D20 SAN, and life on earth will be changed forever.

### CLEANING UP

If the PCs successfully prevent Cthugha from melting the ice cap, the Deep Ones will not try to summon it again, thinking that they somehow lost favor with the being.

If our heroes let it get out that they were responsible, they can expect many Deep One revenge encounters in the future.

Finally, when the PCs return to Boston, they will be contacted by C. Arthur Locke, who wishes to hire them to recover *Daemons of the Fire*. Regardless of whether the book survived (keeper's option), this could be the beginning of a completely new adventure.  $\Omega$



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# GHOSTS

## in the Machines

By Michael C. LaBossiere

*We hadn't received any word from the earlier expedition to the wrecked planet Laren, so Major Donaldson decided to send my unit in to see what had happened. I've seen some heavy action and some bad damage, but this place looked really bad. Spooky too—sort of like a planet-sized tomb.*

*After we dropped in, we quickly located the camp. It was totalled.*

*Carson spotted Danto's 'Mech over by some wreckage. It was upright, but had some serious damage to its torsos and head. I could see Danto's body sprawled in the wreckage of his cockpit—there was no way he was alive. I was shocked and horrified when the 'Mech's arm swung up and a laser bolt slammed into my torso armor. I was even more horrified when the 'Mech started walking towards us, jerking like a zombie, with Danto's body swaying in the broken cockpit. Things were bad, and they would only get worse.*

With the attack of the Clans, a great impetus was generated to locate and recover old Star League technology. Worlds that had been long abandoned or shunned were visited again, sometimes with disastrous results to those bold enough to disturb the dust of time.

One such planet investigated in 3051 was Laren. This inhospitable world was the site of an advanced Star League research center destroyed at some point—the record of what exactly occurred have been long lost (or never existed).

The center was a research station for work in artificial intelligence. It saw dramatic success in developing a computer to control war machines. Unfortunately, the command computer was too large to be housed in a vehicle or 'Mech. But it could be housed in a building, and could control vehicles and 'Mechs via a system similar to the current C3 computer.

That first expedition accidentally reactivated one of the battle computers. It still had a few undamaged units under its control, and it used these resources to attack. The expedition's BattleMech was damaged, and the pilot was killed. The AI computer had a control module installed so it could operate the 'Mech. The second expedition now faces an array of computer controlled vehicles and one of its own 'Mechs.

### DEFENDER

The defending forces consist of the computer-controlled war machines.

One *Phoenix Hawk* located in hex 0612 on map 1. It is damaged as follows: The head has two points of internal structure left, center torso (front) has 14 points of armor left, and the right torso has six points of armor left. The antimissile system has six shots left, and the machinegun has 196 shots left.

Two *Ripper* VTOLs, landed in any clear hex in the concrete sections.

One *Cyrano* VTOL, landed in any clear hex in the concrete area.

One *Burke* heavy tank, located in any clear hex in the concrete area. The *Burke* has only four shots left of LRM 10 rounds. It has taken 16 points to its front and 10 to its turret.

One *Magi* heavy tank, located in any clear hex in the concrete area. The *Magi* has taken 22 points to its front and 12 to its right side. It has 190 rounds of MG ammo left.

Two *Laumer*-class heavy tanks, located in any clear hex in the concrete area.

Three hardened buildings, each equipped with a 50-point armored turret armed with an extended-range PPC. These are set up by the defender within the concrete areas and cannot be closer than five hexes to another building.

Four hardened buildings, with no weapons, set up as the armed buildings.

One command building, hardened, with weapons as per the armed buildings, set up as they are.

### ATTACKER

The attacker represents the second expedition.

Lt. Corbahn's *Achilles*: Piloting 3, Gunnery 3.

Sgt. Carson's *Myrmidon*: Piloting 4, Gunnery 3.

Pvt. Enfer's *Wolfhound*: Piloting 5, Gunnery 4.

Pvt. Dieter's *Hatchetman*: Piloting 5, Gunnery 4.

Four *Scorpion*-Us (replace the AC/5 with an AC/5 Ultra and remove the MG and ammo): Piloting 5, Gunnery 4

### GAME SETUP

Lay out the *City Tech* maps with the word "BattleTech" at the bottom, so that the words are parallel to each other: Liberally disperse rubble counters through both "concrete" sections of the maps, leaving a few open areas.

The defender sets up to the left of hex 1612 (Map 1), no closer than two hexes to the *Phoenix Hawk*.

### SPECIAL RULES

The game begins with a surprise attack from the *Phoenix Hawk*. This attack is made at -2, with the defender considered to have moved its full walking speed. After the surprise attack, play proceeds as normal.

The use of the hidden units optional rule is recommended. All defenders (except the *Phoenix Hawk* and the buildings) may be hidden.

The hardened buildings all look identical, and cannot be distinguished by type until weapons are used or a unit equipped with a Beagle Probe gets within detection range. The command building can be detected by a Beagle Probe or by a unit equipped with a Guardian ECM suite that is within three hexes (it detects the computers transmissions).

All defending units are computer-controlled by the AI in the command building. This has advantages and disadvantages.

First, all units are treated as if they are linked by a C3 computer.

Second, all of the units have a Piloting skill of five and a Gunnery skill of four.

Third, if a hostile Guardian ECM suite is within six hexes of a computer-controlled unit, that unit loses the C3 effect and has its Piloting and Gunnery skills increased to 7 and 6 respectively, due to the ECM interference. If the Guardian Suite is within six hexes of the computer itself, these effects apply to all defending units.

The *Phoenix Hawk* is being controlled by a receiver located in its head. Destroying what is left of the head will render it inoperable (as will destroying the CT, of course). The vehicles have had their crew sections replaced with computer systems. The *Phoenix Hawk* should be considered to have a Piloting of 6 and Gunnery of 5 (increase each by 2 if ECM is present) and is not part of the C3 net.

Destroying the Command center will destroy the computer, and all defenders will cease to operate.

### VICTORY CONDITIONS

The attacker wins by destroying or crippling all enemy units on the map (destroying the computer will fulfill this nicely). Naturally, it would be desirable to capture as many vehicles intact as possible.

The defender wins by destroying or crippling all enemy units on the map.



## LAUMER-CLASS HEAVY TANK

Originally designed as a battlefield superiority vehicle by the Star League military, the *Laumer* incorporated two of the more advanced weapon systems of the time: the Arrow IV system and the Gauss rifle. These weapons and its superior armor made the *Laumer* feared on the battlefields of its time. Unfortunately, the design became virtually extinct as *Laumers* were used up rapidly during the early wars after the fall of the Star League. This was due to the small numbers of available *Laumers* as well as the fact that their power made them first-priority targets.

The discovery of the design as well as several damaged and even a few mint-condition units on Laren has lead to the resurrection of the *Laumer*. The tank is still rare, due to the fact that it requires very advanced technology, but it has made a showing on a few battlefields, including some use against the Clans.

**Capabilities:** With its heavy armaments and advanced armor, the *Laumer* is a difficult foe for vehicles and BattleMechs alike. The tank is equally at home in indirect fire combat as it is on the firing line. Its massive Gauss rifle can hole lesser vehicles and smaller 'Mechs in a single shot, and its Arrow IV (which it can designate itself) is literally death from above.

**Mass:** 80  
**Movement Type:** Tracked  
**Power Plant:** 320 Pitban XL  
**Armor:** Ferro Fibrous  
**Armament:**  
**Manufacturer:** GM  
**Communications System:** HiAud-8

		Tons
Movement type: Hover		
Tonnage:	80	80
Cruise Speed:	4	
Flank Speed:	6	
Engine: (320 Pitban XL)		17
Rating:		
Type:	Fusion	
Control:		4
Lift Equipment:		
Internal Structure:		8
Heat Sinks:		0
Turret:		2.4
Armor:	224	12.5
<u>Location</u>	<u>Points</u>	
Front	56	
Lt./Rt. Side	45	
Back	30	
Turret	48	

Weapons and Ammo:

Type	Facing	Tons
Med. pulse laser	Turret	2
Med. pulse laser	Turret	2
Med. pulse laser	Turret	2
Gauss rifle	Turret	15
Gauss ammo (16)	Body	2
Arrow IV	Front	15
Arrow ammo(15)	Body	3
SRM 6	Turret	3
SRM ammo	Turret	3
TAG	Front	1

## ACH-1 ACHILLES

The *Achilles* is a command 'Mech designed to serve as the commander's vehicle. As such, it is equipped with the latest C3 computer, as well as a Guardian ECM suite. The *Achilles* also takes advantage of many other advanced technologies by employing Endo Steel in its internal structure and the massive Gauss rifle as its main armament.

## Capabilities:

The *Achilles* is well designed for its role of command vehicle on the contemporary battlefield. Its armor and armament enable it to stand up to almost any enemy, and its sophisticated electronics enable it to remain in command and direct the actions of its lance mates.

**Variants:** Being a new 'Mech, it has only one variant. The noncommand version is known as the *Myrmidon*. It has a slave computer in place of the C3 system and the Guardian ECM suite. In place of the C3, it carries an additional 6 SRM launcher and a ton of ammo in the left torso. A medium laser is also added to the right arm and a small laser is added to the left.

**Mass:** 75  
**Chassis:** Endo Steel  
**Power Plant:** 300 Vlar XL  
**Armor:** Standard  
**Armament:**  
 1 Vereff Gauss rifle  
 1 Holly SRM—6  
 4 Defiance B3m medium lasers  
 2 SolKill large lasers  
**Manufacturer:** Aitia Battleworks  
**Communications System:** Partec 7  
**Targeting and Tracking System:** Guardian systems

		Tons
Tonnage:	75	75
Internal Structure:		3.75
Engine: (300 Vlar XL)		9.5
Walking MP:	4	
Running MP:	6	
Heat Sinks:	10	[20]
Double Heat Sinks:		0
Gyro:		3
Armor Factor:	224	14
	<u>Internal Structure</u>	<u>Armor Value</u>
Head	3	9
Center torso	23	37/8
Rt./Lt torso	16	26/6
Rt./Lt arm	12	22
Rt./Lt leg	16	31

Weapons and Ammo:

Type	Location	Critical	Ton
C3	Lt	5	5
ECM	LT	2	1.5
Gauss rifle	RT	7	15
Gauss ammo(16)	RT	2	2
SRM 6	LT	2	3
SRM ammo(15)	Lt	1	1
Med laser	Lt	1	1
Med laser	LA	1	1
Med laser	RA	1	1
Med laser	HD	1	1
Large laser	RA	2	5
Large laser	LA	2	5

**Variant:** Delete C3 and ECM. Add the following:

SRM 6	LT	2	3
SRM ammo(15)	LT	1	1
Med laser	RA	1	1
Small laser	LA	1	1

## Rifts World Book 1: Vampire Kingdoms

Palladium Books.

176 pages.

\$14.95.

Written by Kevin Siembieda.

It would seem that 1991 is the year of the vampire—or perhaps the year of horror gaming. At Origins and GenCon this year, several new horror products were released: *Dark Conspiracy* from GDW, *The Orrorsh Sourcebook* from West End games and the *Chill Companion* from Mayfair, to name a few. Following them up were *Vampire* from White Wolf, the *Vampires* sourcebook for *Chill* from Mayfair and *Vampire Kingdoms* from Palladium. While I'd love to chill you with the details of all of these, space limitations demand that I limit my discussion to one—so I've chosen *Vampire Kingdoms*, which is a world book for the *Rifts* roleplaying game.

*Vampire Kingdoms* begins (after the obligatory page-long tirade) with the author's admission that the book was late (little surprise there)—but it was late for a good reason. It is now more complete, with more comprehensive material than originally planned. I liked *Vampire Kingdoms* and would have to say that the additional material was well worth the wait.

### THE VAMPIRE RISES

The first aspect of the book that surprised me was how much information is devoted just to the vampire creature. To quote: "(W)e have taken the classic undead vampire of myth and examined him under a microscope. We have considered the many aspects of his nature and have speculated on how vampire might function in a society; something no other RPG has ever done." While the last half of the previous sentence is untrue (*Vampire* from White Wolf is all about vampires in society), *Vampire Kingdoms* does contain complete rules for handling vampires in virtually every conceivable manner in a *Rifts*—or about any other Palladium game—campaign.

*Vampire Kingdoms* pries open the proverbial coffin and focuses a microscope on the vampire—detailing the three different types of vampire, revealing the creature's powers and abilities, explaining how to play

a vampire as a player character, describing the vampires' social structure in the world of *Rifts*, and listing examples of vampire clans.

Most exhaustive are rules for vampires in combat. Specific rules are given for killing vampires, and their vulnerabilities and what they can do to humans are also described. Rules for humans fighting vampires include several new weapons, like Anti-Vampire Rail Gun Rounds, water weapons (everything from plastic squirt guns to ceramic water shotguns), 20 or so Techno-Wizard devices, bow weapons, and more.

### THE REAL WORLD

After you know everything there is to know about the vampire, the latter half of the book moves on to Central America and the vampire societies there—some of the vampire kingdoms make adventuring in the Central American wilderness much easier on the referee. Several cities in Central America are detailed for the referee, along with adventure ideas for each in the form of city gangs, prevailing social trends in the city, and even master villains and heroes for the characters to interact with.

The city of Ciudad Juarez is particularly well explained (although the map for it is awful). Juarez is detailed with everything anyone would want to know about it, and the book even includes many specific shops and statistics for some of the shop owners.

The next section deals with Doc Reid and his vampire hunters, a group of NPCs sure to give a referee ideas on how to further his campaign. Each of the NPCs is given extensive descriptions and statistics, enough to clearly define them as living characters in the *Rifts* world.

After the vampire hunters, a section details the various travelling shows that entertain people all around Central America, and gives a complete example. Rules are given for constructing shows to fit into existing campaigns. Travelling shows in the *Rifts* game add color to campaigns, and serve as a convenient avenue for referees to give PCs contacts, information, hints, allies and enemies.

The book concludes with a section of ideas for adventuring in the Yucatan peninsula. Here are shorter descriptions of various regions, some new monsters, assorted guidelines for travelling in the Yucatan wilderness, and general environs.

### APPEARANCE

This book is much like the *Rifts Sourcebook One* in that the same artist once again is on nearly every page, and only two out-of-

house artists were brought in to work on this product.

However, the two artists, Timothy Truman and Michael Gustovich, were given more to do than in *Rifts Sourcebook One*, with full page illustrations in addition to smaller works throughout the book. This shows that Palladium is *finally* making strides (if little ones) toward artistic diversity in their *Rifts* line.

The few maps are well drawn, except for the Juarez city map, which looks like it was done five minutes before press time.

### EVALUATION

Although when I was running *Rifts* neither I nor my players had an overwhelming desire to go into Mexico and invade vampire country, I have to say that this product makes me want to start up a campaign *just so we could all go down south*.

**Difference:** This book in some ways is a direct contrast to the *Rifts Sourcebook One* in that it contains a great deal of information usable by every player of *Rifts*. There really is something for everyone—even material for adventuring without concentrating on vampires. *Vampire Kingdoms* allows for referees to balance their campaigns exactly the way they want to, allowing for just the preferred amount of vampire influence. In your campaign, you can reserve the vampire creature to the master villain role or instead have vampires as common as house flies—both environments are presented.

**Rules:** *Vampire Kingdoms* is a major rules supplement for the *Rifts* game. The rules for vampire powers and combat notes are also therefore applicable to the many other Palladium games, so no matter who you are or what Palladium game you play, there is something here for you to use in some way or another.

The only slightly disappointing aspect of the vampire rules was that nothing really new was shed about the vampire mythos that isn't already part of the popular myth or that wasn't already outlined in Palladium's horror game *Beyond the Supernatural*. Things are explained better, and references found in *Beyond the Supernatural* are fleshed out, and a third type of vampire was added, but the vampires in *Rifts* aren't really unique compared to the vampires of other games. There are some differences, but you definitely know a vampire when you see one in *Rifts*. This doesn't detract from the fun of having vampires in your *Rifts* campaign, as they can potentially be as horrific in *Rifts* as in other games.

**Ideas:** For adventuring in Central America, the word that sums up the present-

*Review by  
Eric W. Haddock*



tation is "complete." Months of real time can be spent going through the adventure ideas given.

Although there aren't any complete adventures with set, linear encounters and the like, this is more than made up for with the multitude of scenario possibilities offered.

The disadvantage is that the referee will

still have to devote time to creating the night's adventure, probably nearly as much time as he would without the book. This may not please referees or beginning players who are looking for complete adventures they can read and play the same night. But the referee has hundreds of adventure ideas to draw on, which should lead to some interesting gaming sessions.

*Vampire Kingdoms* stands out among the other Palladium products in content. It is, on the whole, a definite improvement over the *Rifts Sourcebook One* in diversity, wealth and usefulness of material. For \$14.95, it's a very good buy—essential for the referee who looks to the vampire mythos to deliver horror to his campaign regardless of location.  $\Omega$

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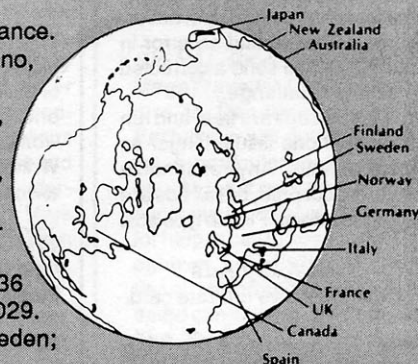
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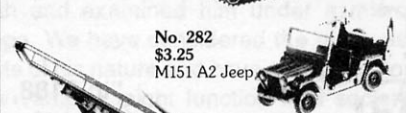
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## WANTED

LOOKING FOR THE GAME (or supplement) which features Larry Niven's *Ringworld*. I can remember seeing the cover in 1985. If you know where I can find it—or, better yet, have a copy—please contact me. Benjamin J. Rogers, 902 Fulton Ave., Hannibal, MO 63401. (54)

**JOURNAL of the Travellers Aid Society** 1 and 4, *High Passage* 1. Photocopies are fine. Send details to Mark Clark, 598 Thompson Station Road, Newark, DE 19711-7520. (53)

VIDEOTAPES of British TV series *Star Cops*. VHS or Beta formats acceptable. Rob Prior, 262 Dunforest, Willowdale, Ontario, CANADA M2N 4J9. (53)

PHOTOCOPIES in good condition of various articles in **Challenge** 27-31, 33, 34, 40-44. Write for list to OB Vollant APA, 266 577 840, GD "A" Block, FO Halifax, Halifax, Nova Scotia,

CANADA B3K 2X0. (53)

PHOTOCOPY of an early *White Dwarf* article giving statistics for the Blood Guard of Stephen Donaldson's *Chronicles of Thomas Covenant* series. I will pay a reasonable price or exchange articles. Please respond to Rick Taylor, 916 S. Booker, Little Rock, AR 72204. (53)

**ATLAS OF THE IMPERIUM** and **76 Patrons**. If you can help, write to Marc Grossman, 21 Manor Ct., Building 2, New Brunswick, NJ 08901. (53)

**ALL TWILIGHT: 2000** articles from the following issues of **Challenge**: 25, 26, 27, 30, 31 and 36. Am willing to pay all copy and postage costs. Contact Donald K. Doll, 830 S. Wenonah Ave., Oak Park, IL 60304-1036. (52)

ORIGINALS/PHOTOCOPIES of *Stardate* or *Stardrive* magazine. Price negotiable. Also need *FASA's Triangle* supplement. Contact Cary Layton, PO Box 416, Cape Girardeau, MO 63701. (52)

IDEAS for computer programs to aid in playing and refereeing **MegaTraveller** game system. Programs will be PC compatible. Other game systems will be considered. Also want any available PC-compatible **MegaTraveller** programs (buy or trade). Programs will eventually be for sale, but the person who had the inspiration will receive a free copy of the completed program and credit in the documentation. Write to Russell Wetherington, 2611 Forbes St., Jacksonville, FL 32204. (52)

ANY **ROBOTECH** RPGs, preferably book one, *Macross*, but any will do. Contact Matt Schafer, 1796 Barker St. NE, Palm Bay, FL 32907. (52)

**SECURITY LEAK** magazine, Third Imperium. Originals or photocopies. Richard Artis, 151 G Meadow Place, Hope, IN 47246. (52)

ORIGINAL **TRAVELLER** material. Need rule books (#4 and up), supplements (#12+), *Adventures* (#9+), *Challenge* (#26, 29-35, 37-47), *Traveller's Digest* (any), *Grand Survey* (or *Robots*), *Action Aboard*, *Rescue on Galatea*, *Fate of the Sky Raiders*, *The Harreusa Project*. Photocopies okay. Send list, prices, conditions to Ken Bartold, 26939 Sheahan, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127. (52)

**CHALLENGE 31, 32** (only 2300

AD material). Will pay decent price for photocopy or original. Write to Patrick Drew, 40583 Road 80, Dinuba, CA 93618. (51)

**PARTICIPANTS** for a *Shadowrun*, *Cyberpunk*, etc. fanzine. Please write to Niko Wieleba, 400 Paula Ave. #226, Glendale, CA 91201. (51)

## FANZINES

**TRANSACTIONS of the Royal Martian Geographical Society** is a quarterly fanzine devoted to roleplaying in the Victorian age. We focus primarily on the **Space: 1889** game system, but also include material for *Cthulhu by Gaslight*, *Boot Hill* and other games set in the late 19th century. We invite both submissions (send SASE for guidelines) and subscriptions. For more information, you can write to Mark Clark, 598 Thompson Station Road, Newark, DE 19711-7520. (53)

**SS&V (Starships, Starports & Vehicles)** is a fanzine that covers the areas listed for **MegaTraveller**. It includes one article, with the rest devoted to designs. *AR (Alien Realms)* is a quarterly fanzine covering aliens in **MegaTraveller**. Currently, two issues are available. For more information, you can write to Bryan Borich, 3890 50th St., San Diego, CA 92105-3005. (53)

I WISH TO ESTABLISH a fanzine dedicated to *Warhammer* fantasy roleplaying enthusiasts. Interested parties should reply to Rick Taylor, c/o *Der Chroniken Kaiserlich*, 916 S. Booker, Little Rock, AR 72204. (53)

**ABA PROCEEDINGS**. Exclusively **MegaTraveller** fanzine covering Vland Domain and all areas coreward and spinward. Each issue includes 1+ starship of TL14—(no TL15). Issues 12 and 13 were 10 and 12 pages. For more information, contact Clayton R. Bush, PO Box 119, Limon, CO 80828. Send letter-sized SASE for list of available HIWG documents. Starship spreadsheets available in WK1 (IBM) format on 5.25" disks. (52)

**NQUISITOR—Warhammer 40K** news-

letter/forum for experienced players. EQ/vehicle design, open forum, scenarios, question and answer, army calculation worksheets, unit stat cards and more. Write to *Inquisitor*, PO Box 14485, Santa Rosa, CA 95402-6485. (52)

**SPINWARD TIMES**—a new fanzine dealing with the merchant and economics in **MegaTraveller**. Also included are adventures, medical data, news and equipment. For additional information, write to *Spinward Times*, c/o AG Games, 823 Ponsard St., Brossard, Quebec, CANADA J4W 1W1. (51)

**SIGNAL-GK**—New, exclusive **MegaTraveller** fanzine. Adventure in Dagudasuaag sector! Each issue will detail a subsector, a particular race and planets. At least two adventures in each issue. *Signal-GK*—A call for help; a call to adventure. Recognized by HIWG. For additional information, those interested can write to Jay Campbell, The Sanctuary, 45 Fairfield, Hebden Bridge, West Yorks, UK 4X7 6JD. (51)

**JUMPSPACE**—A new fanzine exclusively for **MegaTraveller**. Includes adventures, equipment, news, players' tips, fiction, and much more. For additional details, write to *Jumpspace*, c/o AG Games, 823 Ponsard St., Brossard, Quebec, CANADA J4W 1W1. (51)

WE'RE LOOKING for writers interested in having articles reviewed for publication in a new RPG 'zine. Other specific inquiries are welcome. Send articles or SASE for additional information to Barry Osner, Editor, PO Box 6208, Eureka, CA 95502-6208. (50)

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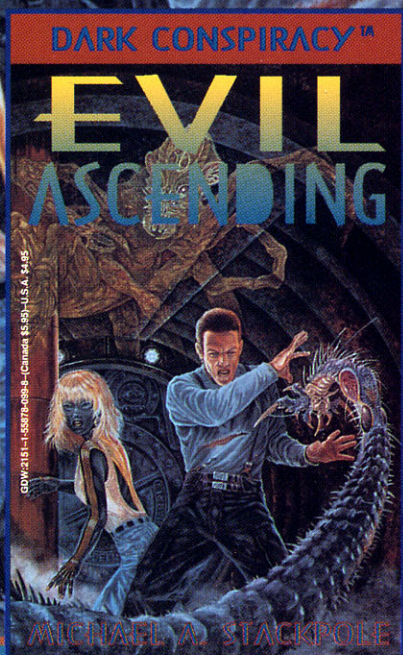




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