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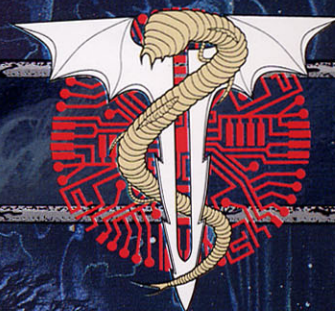
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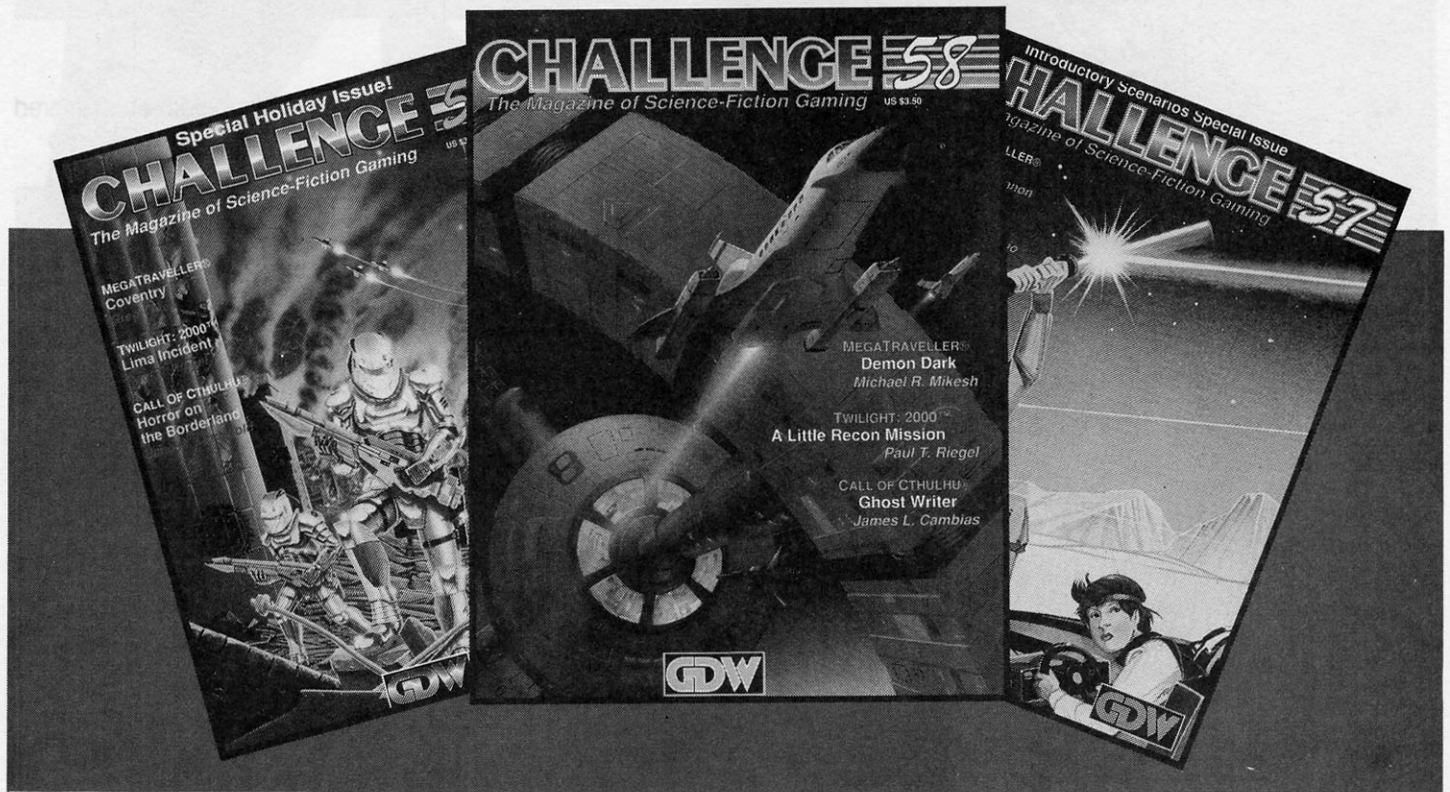
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"The Sphinx Prophet."

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The Magazine of Science-Fiction Gaming

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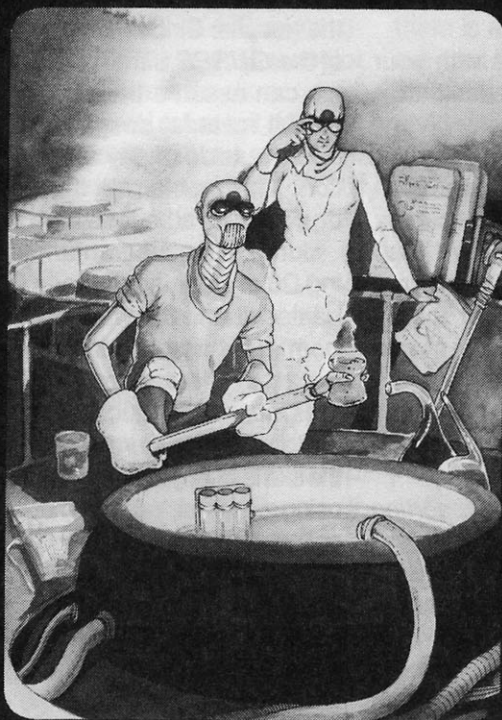
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FROM THE MANAGEMENT

I thought I'd use my first trip to this bully pulpit to talk about the *Traveller* revision, *Traveller: The New Era*, due out this November. Announcements that there will be an updating of the game's background have caused some concern that *Traveller* will become just one more "dark" game.

I should point out that I wear badge #1 in the "if you want to play cyberpunk, play cyberpunk, not *Traveller*" society (IYWTPCPCNTS).

I should also point out that from the moment Dulinor shot Strephon, inciting faction leaders to embark on the jolly war to command the Imperium, humanity has had an irrevocable appointment at the precipice to look over into the abyss. This cannot be negotiated or waved away. Why? Because *Traveller* has a commitment to realism on personal, technical and sociological levels. And because you have to pay the piper if you want to dance to the tune.

By 1123, six years of war have shown that the warring factions can only succeed in annihilating the foundations of Imperial society, not in controlling them. The Rebellion has claimed more lives than any other single event in human history—and by a wide margin. It doesn't get any darker than that.

The New Era is only as dark as the spirits of those unwilling to face the challenge of resurrecting a civilization. Darkness is to be overcome, not wallowed in. Hari Seldon knew it, and *Traveller* players know it. And so did the holder of badge #1 in the "if he's not a star viking, he should have been" society (IHNASVHSHBS), Robert Frost, who wrote:

Ah, when to the heart of man,
Was it ever less than a treason
To go with the drift of things,
To yield with a grace to reason,
And bow and accept the end
Of a love or a season?

The phoenix is waiting.

Dave Nilsen

CONVERSIONS

I found Scott Moir's letter to your magazine (*Challenge* 50) to hit the nail exactly. I strongly believe *Challenge* should once in awhile publish conversion articles instead of the usual plethora of *Traveller* articles. I'm sure plenty of weary GMs out there would love it.

Just think of all those demoralized FASA *Star Trek* players out there. Since FASA has failed to publish any *Star Trek* material in years, I have long ago converted my FASA characters into *GURPS/Star Trek* characters. My friend recently converted his *MegaTraveller* campaign into a *GURPS/MegaTraveller* campaign. The conversion in both cases was smooth, but we both have nagging doubts. An article on how to convert characters would be great.

Thus, I was disappointed with your response to Scott Moir's letter that a conversion article "would be very (very, very) extensive." Come, now, surely you can fit a basic character conversion article within *Challenge*'s 95 pages. What could be more innovative than such an article? It would be challenging, but isn't that the name of your magazine? Don't tell me that *Challenge* magazine isn't up to the challenge.

John Psinas
Quebec, Canada

I received several letters supporting the conversion article idea. *Challenge* tends to lean toward adventure scenarios, because that's what our readers say they want. But we do run new equipment, rules variants and sourcebook-type information, and we've accepted conversion articles in the past. Before submitting any article, though, be sure to send a SASE for the *Challenge* submission guidelines and schedule of special issues. Also, you might want to include a brief proposal of your idea to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

REVIEW FEEDBACK

I recently read *Challenge* 52 and the review of our product *Age of Ruin*. I would like to complement the reviewer, Eric W. Haddock. It was obvious that he had read the material and put a great

deal of thought into the review. I felt that his criticisms were valid and fairly voiced. He did not dwell on the negative but also pointed out the positive aspects of the game.

It is important to give notice to people who are doing a good job. *Challenge* seems to be getting better each issue. I must also congratulate you all on your new product, *Dark Conspiracy* (GDW). It was very well done.

Clay Gibson, President
Cutting Edge Games

BATTLESUIT DAMAGE

In *Challenge* 50 David L. Pulver introduced a number of battlesuits usable with *GURPS Space*. He included descriptions of new equipment used in these suits. Since Pulver is the author of the *GURPS UltraTech Sourcebook*, we can assume these devices to be official material despite making their debut outside of any *GURPS* publication. The problem is that one of the devices has a serious flaw.

Jump jets cause an armor bypassing D6 of crushing damage to both the battlesuit and the wearer each time a normal failure occurs and 4D6 armor bypassing damage on a critical failure. This is a bit too much.

Consider the Demolitions skill. Using the skill is clearly a higher-risk activity than using a jump jet. Yet a normal failure does not cause the character who blew the roll to be blown to pieces. There are a large number of ways the failure can manifest itself, from mis-setting the timer to having too much or too little explosive for the job, to having a dud because the detonator wasn't properly hooked to the explosive.

Instantaneous detonation is a result for critical failure.

Yet a simple skill failure on the "lower risk" use of jump jets causes damage, and a critical failure here is just as likely to be lethal as with demolition, as the average character is at Hits=4 and comatose as he hurtles upward from the jump and likely falls to his death.

The only explanation for the armor bypassing damage would be an internal explosion of the jets. Whiplash and spinal damage effects would not be

A straight and level roll result does not mean the character isn't out of control. He is heading in the proper direction, but too fast! (Optionally, the GM may rule

13-15: Fuel leaks. If flammable, have fun! Until fixed, the unit will leak two charges of fuel per turn until it reaches one-tenth normal capacity, if it is a liquid

For those thinking this chart shows favor toward externally mounted jump jets, you are correct. Realistically, if the character has battlesuit armor between the jump jets and his body, he should be better protected. For those who prefer game balance to realism and insist the (more expensive) internally mounted jump jets be "better," please remember an external jump jet can be targeted and destroyed a lot easier.

*GURPS equipment published in **Challenge** is optional, not official, regardless of the author. It has not been endorsed by GURPS publisher Steve Jackson Games.*





When your group runs across a mysterious piece of never-before-encountered equipment, "take your best guess" isn't always the best MO.

RICK
HARRIS
912

A Question of Identity

By R. D. Crofts

We're on a deep-penetration mission is the Zagros mountains. Suddenly, this combat chopper starts sweeping the area, and we all make for cover. All except Freddy, that is. He just carries on driving as if he can't see the bird. The chopper just buzzes us, then flies on its way.

Freddy explains: "Quite a rare old bird, that French Aloue. Surprized they can find one that still flies!"

Freddy amazes me. There ain't a vehicle he doesn't know. I guess it goes back to all those model kits he collected. He used to try to educate the rest of us. Those helis all look the same to me!

And I can't help feeling that maybe even the Russians have got an Aloue tucked away somewhere.

When your group runs across a mysterious piece of never-before-encountered equipment, "take your best guess" isn't always the best MO. Wouldn't it be great if someone in the group had the ability to identify technical equipment of a military nature? Hence, Equipment Identification skill.

Equipment Identification is a new skill for **Twilight: 2000**. The associated attribute is Education. The skill is available from the following careers as a subsequent terms skill: national military academy, government agent and all military occupations. It is also available as a secondary activity (wargaming or modeling).

Intelligence Gathering: The proper identification of military equipment, especially vehicles, is a vital part of intelligence-gathering. Major tactical decisions may have to made dependant on the information supplied. Consider the following situation:

The recon team for an armored cavalry squadron encounters Soviet forces. The Soviets are equipped with BRDMs armed with SA-13s. The recon team unfortunately identifies the missiles as AT-5s.

Perceiving a threat to his tanks on receiving this intelligence, the squadron commander calls in an air strike to destroy the "antitank" vehicles. Several A-10s are sent in response but fall easy to prey in the SAMs.

Clearly, bad intelligence can lead to tragic consequences.

Setting the Mood: By keeping the identity of a vehicle secret, the referee can instill that feeling of uncertainty which keeps them on the players toes. It will discourage the rules merchant who takes the edge off the fear of the unknown when he quotes, "Oh, that's got a 73mm gun which will only hurt our vehicle if it rolls 18 and hits us from the rear. We can attack without fear."

Determining Success: The amount of information the players receive from the skill depends on the level of success in the skill roll.

Identification amounts to three levels of information.

- **Nationality:** Determined by an Easy roll.

- **Function:** For example, MBT, APC, comms vehicle, decontam unit. Determined by an Average roll.

- **Game Statistics:** Determined by a Hard roll.

Catastrophic failures result in major errors. These should be as realistic as possible. Nobody in a sober state of mind is likely to identify a jeep as an MBT. A turreted APC, on the other hand, could be confusing. And an attack chopper could be wrongly identified as a scout or transport chopper with potentially nasty consequences. Above all, let common sense prevail.

The game referee may also use this skill for identifying equipment from the character's own armed forces. In this case the skill rolls should be one level easier.

The referee may require that the skill be averaged with skill appropriate to operation of the equipment. For example, to identify a helicopter, average the skill with Pilot.

Visibility: A major factor that will affect identification is visibility. It is pretty easy to

TWILIGHT: 2000

recognize the function of a piece of equipment if you are standing next to it on a bright sunny day. It is something else to even recognize the nationality while on a smoky battlefield in dim light.

In any circumstances, a character will have a maximum visibility range. Any piece of equipment beyond half that range requires that the skill is one level harder.

Appropriate vision devices will negate this handicap.

It is probably worth mentioning that binoculars are in fact useful for night observation. However, the light level must be above zero. They will always be inferior to starlight and the like in such circumstances, however. Ω

Don't miss "Surprise Party" for Merc: 2000 in this issue's April Fools Special Insert.

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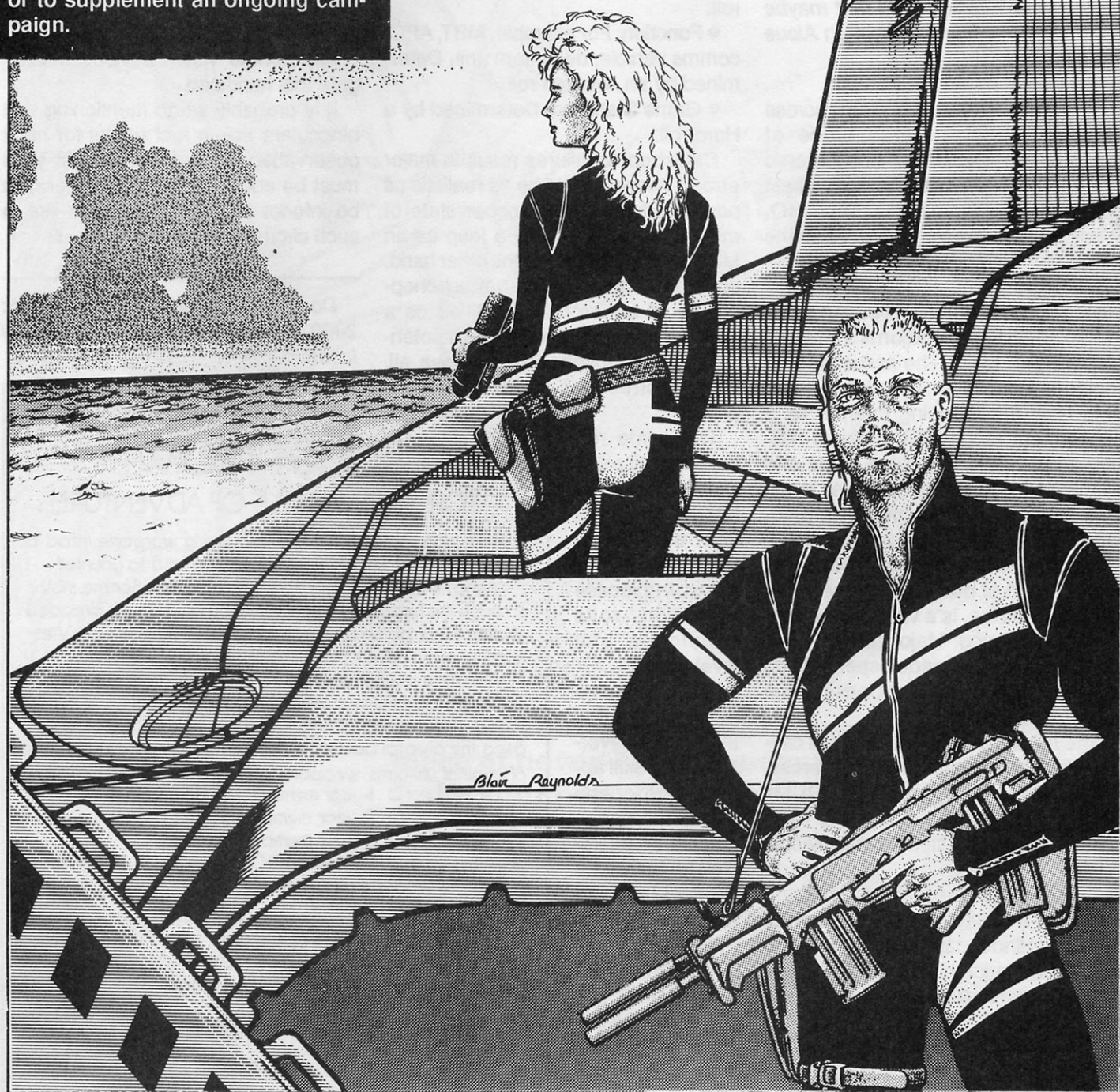
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Amber Zones

By Greg Videll

Three Rebellion-era mysteries to help the referee generate new ideas or to supplement an ongoing campaign.



Dragon's Fate

Required Skills: Tracked Vehicle.

Required Equipment: None.

Scene: You can feel that the ocean is near. There's that certain tang to the air and the almost imperceptible hiss of the heaving sea. The cries of marine avians, you hesitate to call them birds, punctuate the early morning air.

One of your number stops to check his hand computer, referring to a street map. None of the overly wide avenues are marked, so he takes his time studying the display. An ATV streaked with corrosion rumbles by as it goes to keep its appointment with the deep. Moving forward again, you pass a business displaying the tools of the trade on this wet world—a robotic mining dredge, sonic fish fences and, older than time immemorial, fishing nets.

You are greeted by an awesome sight as you round the final corner. Larger than the ship which brought you here, larger than any surface vehicle you've ever seen, the *Tiamat* dwarfs the buildings surrounding it. The size of the mining crawler is brought home to you by the diminutive figures scurrying around its treads. It's hard to believe that anyone could lose such a hulk.

Action: The characters, known for their reputation as troubleshooters, have been recruited by a sectorwide mining and refining corporation, Durdashilu Li Durdash (DLD). DLD's chief of operations on this world, Antonia Vegas, explains that one of its *Tiamat*-class mining crawlers, the *Bahamut*, has disappeared while working the ocean floor. She hires the group to find out what happened to the vehicle and bring it back, if possible. Vegas will provide the planned route of the crawler, as well as a Gasheda underwater ATV. Vegas is willing to pay the player characters a 10% recovery fee, which amounts to about MCr1, to regain this valuable corporate asset and its crew.

The vehicles used in this encounter can be found in *101 Vehicles* (Digest Group Publications). Possible resolutions are listed below:

- Vegas informs the group that the *Bahamut* was actually leased to a local mineral exploitation firm for one month (a not uncommon occurrence on this world).

In reality, the local company is a front

for a band of black marketeers. They learned that several years ago, an opposing faction placed a secret supply dump on the ocean floor in anticipation of a future military action. That faction never returned to the dump as it was eventually pushed out of the region. The cache contains such mundane items as med supplies and field rations, but it also includes weapons, ammo and tac missiles.

The entire supply dump is about 100 displacement tons in size. The freedom fighters plan to retrieve the supplies and then ditch the *Bahamut* off an island where they'll be picked up by their compatriots.

- A secret supply dump exists on the ocean floor as described above. It was discovered by a pirate band using the sea to hide its ships. The pirates have since established a base at the site of the cache. The characters, in the course of conducting their mission, will stumble over the base and the pirates.

- Several decades ago, the world was heavily balkanized, and few nations maintained friendly relations with each other. Because of Imperial intervention, nuclear weapons were banned planetwide, so the various countries turned to chemical and biological weapons as a substitute. A close call involving such weapons brought the contentious nations together under a central government. In a fit of international brotherhood, all existing stockpiles were destroyed or dumped at sea. Some of the canisters dropped at sea went wide of their target, a deep trench, and ended up on the continental shelf. There they stayed until discovered by the crew of the *Durdash Bahamut*. Crewmembers brought one of the canisters aboard, thus signing their own death warrant.

The character group will find other canisters, clearly marked as biohazards, near the parked crawler. The *Bahamut* is contaminated with an ultra-lethal disease, but it can be cleaned out if it's flooded with sea water.

- The *Bahamut* accidentally stumbled onto a secret SDB base. The crew is being held until the base can be relocated. The characters will suffer the same fate when they track down the missing vehicle.

- Intelligence agents, belonging to the local or an opposing faction, leased the *Bahamut* to search for the remains

MEGATRAVELLER

of a battlecruiser which crashed into the ocean. The ship broke up in the atmosphere after a space battle, and an important section tumbled into the sea. That section contains missile batteries or a code room. Further details are up to the referee.

- The *Bahamut* has been hijacked by antigovernment terrorists planted among the crew. They plan to ram the mining crawler through the dome protecting an underwater city unless a number of political prisoners are released from captivity. (Of course, they didn't specify the exact target when they informed the government of their intended action.) Not much time remains until they make good their threat.

The entire matter has been kept under wraps, so even if the PCs manage to stop the terrorists, their heroic deed will never be known.

In addition, Durdash doesn't need the political flak should it become known that one of its crawlers was involved or that terrorists infiltrated the company. (The player characters may consider asking for a "bonus" in return for their silence.)

Hostage

Required Skills: None.

Required Equipment: None.

Scene: The only thing standing between you and your first vacation in a year is an hour wait for the next shuttle to the surface. Just the thought of some time off without someone shooting at you is enough to bring a smile to your face. Evidently the rest of the adventurers feel the same way—they're positively giddy.

As advertised, the view from the lounge is magnificent. Clean white clouds swirl above the blue-green planet below. You can imagine yourself on one of the beaches visible from where you sit. Looking directly out from the orbital station, you can see the world's three moons. All appear as crescents in the light of the system's main sequence

primary. The slight haze of an atmosphere denotes the more populated one. It's amazing how such a scene can still captivate you when you have time to appreciate it.

Just as you settle a little deeper into your seat and contemplate ordering another drink, you hear a commotion from the lounge entrance. Without turning to look, you already know that your holiday had just been put on hold.

Action: The characters are preparing for a well-earned rest on a reasonably peaceful resort world. While waiting for a shuttle to the ground port, they are interrupted by the arrival of three men to the orbital lounge. Several variations are possible:

- The three men are government agents posing as antigovernment rebels. The system government has become exasperated with the dictates of the faction, but the faction enjoys wide popular support. By making it look as if the faction is attempting to overthrow the government and install a more dictatorial regime, the pump will have been primed to switch public support to another nearby faction. The terrorist incident is the culmination of a year-long effort, which has included a number of scripted incidents, to achieve this end.

Sufficient clues should be present to tip the characters off to the true situation. What they decide to do after they realize what's going on is up to them. The government is serious enough in its attempt to defect that it's willing to sacrifice a few innocent lives to gain the system's liberation (but only if it's absolutely necessary).

Ultimately, a special forces unit will assault the lounge and free the hostages. The unit is part of the plot and is just following a set script. This also provides an opportunity for sharp-eyed characters to realize the truth behind the incident.

- The leader of the three is Musgah Ganz, a criminal sociopath whose cult has been terrorizing the planet for some time. Guilty of a long list of grizzly atrocities, the cult was recently captured by local law enforcement. Ganz and his two lieutenants have been deemed too violent and dangerous to remain in the system. They were in the process of being transported to a primitive exile world when they escaped, seizing their

captors' weapons.

Ganz demands a fully fueled and crewed ship to take him out of the system, and he sets an impossibly short deadline for compliance. If planetary authorities fail to give him what he wants, Ganz promises to start tossing out hostages one by one. What he threatens to do to such hostages almost defies imagination.

The government, of course, will not comply, but will ready an assault force of colonial marines to retake the lounge. The longer the situation drags out, the more unstable and violent Ganz will become. The player characters are the only occupants of the lounge who retain enough presence of mind to formulate a plan against Ganz.

- The three are escaped prisoners of war being transported to a nearby naval base. Their impromptu attempt at freedom has been cut short, and they now find themselves trapped in the lounge. Factional and colonial marines as well as port security mass outside the lounge in preparation for an assault. The POWs have little chance to escape and will not seek to harm their hostages if they can help it.

This incident can be used to bring out information normally restricted by the local faction or to paint another faction in a more sympathetic light. The men might also secretly ask for the characters' assistance in aiding some of their comrades in hiding.

- The three well-armed men are veterans of the on-going Rebellion. Each was wounded sometime in the recent past and received cybernetic prosthetics as "replacement parts." After being discharged from the army, they found that the local public harbors a deeply seated prejudice against cyborgs. They, as well as other cyborg vets on-planet, have worked peacefully to educate the public and change their views, but to no avail. Denied such basics as housing and jobs, these three vets have decided to publicize their plight in a radical manner.

The "terrorists" plan to hold the occupants of the lounge hostage until they are allowed to make a statement to the media (including reporters and journalists from across the subsection). They will defend themselves from attack, but will go to great lengths not to harm the hostages. Each vet realizes that he

may be killed and accepts this as the cost of his actions. This doesn't mean that the group is suicidal, though. At worst, they want to be perceived as good men driven to desperate ends.

- The three men are all members of an ethnic minority on the planet. The sector duchess had been applying pressure to the local government to change its ways, but the Rebellion cut her efforts short. Since the start of the war, the government has renewed its policy of repression and segregation. The goal of the terrorists is to publicize their plight and seek the release of political prisoners.

All three have limited military skill, and it shows in the way they handle their weapons. Just because they're inexperienced doesn't mean they're stupid, though. They are willing to die for their cause, if necessary. The terrorists have a homemade explosive device in their possession, and one of their first actions will be to attach it to one of the floor-to-ceiling viewports. Further events are up to the referee.

- All three men are powerfully built, identical clone workers. Clones are considered property on this world and are denied all rights as citizens. Unlike the ethnic minority, however, the three workers have no lofty illusions. They're simply seeking to escape to somewhere, anywhere, else.

They are amenable to reason and really don't seek to harm anyone, but will return violence if violence is offered. They are very strong and dextrous, and armed with the few weapons they managed to steal. (UPP C9A77O. Their social standing reflects their status in the eyes of the system government.)

Children's Crusade

Required Skills: Starship Operation.
Required Equipment: Starship.

Scene: Your ship is illuminated by the harsh glare of the overhead lights of the hanger bay. Maintenance panels are hanging open at various points while the engineer performs her periodic checks. A string of grav lifts bearing provisions hover not far from the loading hatch. You can see someone moving around on the bridge, but can't immediately tell who it is.

Squinting to make an identification, you almost miss the approach of the oddly dressed man. He's about your height and build, but his clothing is an odd mixture of styles and materials which don't quite go together. Pulling your attention away from his strange garb, you nod and smile. He nods back, touching finger tips to forehead in the local ritual greeting.

"Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Hirem Mokbar, and I have need of a ship. Yours is listed on the port net as being available. I was wondering if you'd be interested in a job that pays well?"

Action: Hirem Mokbar is attempting to arrange transport for a group of children on a nearby world. That world is caught between warring factions, and no one wants the children to be in the middle. Final destination for the refugee children is the world the PCs are now on. Mokbar tells the group that he is willing to pay Cr6000 a head for the flight (but he is willing to go to Cr7500 a head if the characters haggle). Mokbar will pay one quarter of the money up front, with the remainder held in an escrow account pending completion of the job.

Since the children will require only half the life support of an adult, the PCs can expect to carry twice the normal number of passengers.

Several variations are possible:

- One of the children in the group, a five year old, is actually the heir to the throne of a monarchy which rules a nearby world. At the start of the Rebellion, he was sent into hiding along with a guardian to prevent him from becoming a pawn in an anticipated power struggle at home. The guardian was killed early in the conflict, and the child ended up in an orphanage, unaware of his background.

Now, control of that monarchy has become very important to a Rebellion faction. It has dispatched agents to find and retrieve the heir so that it can apply pressure to the ruling family. Should the child be captured by the faction, the monarchy will cave in and do anything necessary to safeguard the child.

Mokbar is a local entrepreneur making a quick credit.

- Upon arriving at their destination, the PCs learn that Mokbar and his compatriots on-planet are actually mem-

bers of an underground movement which opposes the local dictatorial regime. The movement has rescued a group of war orphans from a slave labor camp and is trying to get them off-planet. The underground will attempt to recruit the characters for the cause or at least get them to make additional trips back to the planet for more rescued children. Whether or not the movement harbors any ill will against the PCs if they refuse is up to the referee.

At the referee's discretion, the local secret police can arrive during passenger boarding, causing further complications. The referee could also run this encounter as stated, except that it is Mokbar who is the slaver and the police who are the rescuers.

- Mokbar is a member of a religious order indigenous to this region on space (hence the gaudy clothes which constitute his clerical garb). The children are war orphans who have been living in a camp run by the order, and payment for the mission came from donations by the faithful.

The children, ranging in age from four to 10, are all very well behaved and present no special problem during the trip (except possibly the odd stuffed animal flushed down the fresher). The characters are not only paid in full, but also gain some useful contacts among the faithful of that religion (some of whom are quite powerful or well informed).

- Same as above, with the following changes. The children range in age from 11 to 18 and have been inculcated from birth to "go forth and convert the unfaithful." They will make the PCs' lives miserable throughout the trip by trying to show them "the error of their ways" (all with the utmost sincerity). The PCs will still gain some useful contacts and potential patrons, but they will think twice about taking advantage of them.

- The children range in age from five to 12 and are all from noble families (whether local or former Imperial nobility is up to the referee). The nobles have paid Mokbar very well to have their progeny, and future heirs, transported off planet. While at the landing site on the destination world, an armed party will stop the boarding process and demand that the characters take another group of children. The new arrivals are industrial workers without the funds to

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buy their children's way off-planet.

The characters are faced by the nasty choice of which group to transport. Taking their intended passengers could lead to a gun battle, while off-lifting the workers' children could lead to retribution from the nobles. They are all refugees from a psionic institute. Not only have they been caught in the middle of the war, but they're also running from the local government, which blames them for its troubles. The PCs will be paid in full and will also gain an in for psionic training.

At the referee's discretion, several of the passengers have been traumatized by the war, leading to nightmares and the unintentional use of their psionic powers. Ω

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Coreward Conspiracy

By James Maliszewski



The PCs are members of a "voodoo team" to uncover a mysterious plot to undermine the political stability of the League of Antares. That is, they are freelancer agents utilized by the league's intelligence network, Trasilon, for certain missions. Voodoo teams operate under the jurisdiction of Trasilon, but have much greater mobility than regular agents.

The adventure takes place on Ambemshan (Antares 0216 A4457BC-B), capital world of the Shurlarlem subsector (subsector E) of the Antares sector. Ambemshan is close to the Antarean border with the Vargr corsairs of the Antares Pact. After arriving on Ambemshan, the PCs are required by Trasilon regulations to check in with Trasilon officials for debriefing.

Trasilon maintains a safe house at a Scorpion Society hotel in the startown of Shiraag starport. There the PCs will meet with Gwilliam Namashiir, the PCs' Trasilon contact on Ambemshan. (The Scorpion Society, native to the Antares sector, is an organization similar to the Travellers' Aid Society. It has a history stretching back to the early days of the Third Imperium, and has experienced a resurgence since the breakup of the Third Imperium.)

Namashiir is an older man with a balding head and a distinguished look. He is familiar to the PCs by reputation only as having been one of Trasilon's top agents decades ago. Namashiir's room, on the 20th floor, is by far the most luxurious of the rooms Trasilon uses in the hotel. Trasilon is very concerned about security in all its safe house areas, and Namashiir's room requires a complex alphanumeric code to be entered into a keypad near the door to enter.

The room itself is completely safe from all forms of unwanted electronic surveillance. Trasilon internal security agents in nearby rooms monitor Namashiir and the PCs. Should anything go awry, these agents will enter the room within seconds to deal with any threat.

Namashiir begins his briefing by explaining why he is so concerned about security: Trasilon may have stumbled across something big, he says, and the agency will once again require the activation of its trusted voodoo team.

HOLOCRYSTAL

The whole affair started a few days ago when the Shiraag city law enforcement bureau captured a thief, a mugger actually, by the name of Claarke Aroueta. The bureau was ready to book him on charges of armed robbery and possession of an illegal weapon. The whole matter was purely routine and would have remained a local matter were it not for the holocrystal.

Among the stolen possessions recovered was a holocrystal of the sort used in information transfers. It was learned to be of a very advanced, high-tech design, far more sophisticated than anything produced locally. Naturally, the police turned the crystal over to league authorities, who in turn delivered it to Trasilon.

After a good deal of effort by their best cryptographers, Trasilon was able to crack the code of the holocrystal. The code was so advanced that its source could only be from the highest levels of the Imperial government. The crystal was a clear indication that the intelligence agencies of Lucan's Imperium were at work in the League of Antares.

The holocrystal contained highly detailed and specific information about an upcoming diplomatic visit to Ambemshan by a delegation from the Vargr of the Antares Pact, including Chief Emissary Kfoukhzaekso. This delegation is to discuss with the league government the possible integration of the Vargr of the pact into the political structure of Antares in a more substantive way. Very few people know about this, and it has not been widely publicized by the sector's media.

The remaining portion of the encoded crystal contained a holographic greeting from the owner of the crystal, to his superior, whom he does not mention by name. Namashiir plays this portion of the holocrystal for the PCs. The hologram shows a human male in his middle thirties with brown hair and a mustache. He is dressed in the uniform of an Imperial Naval officer, technical branch. He also wears insignia which ex-navy PCs will recognize as being that of Imperial Naval Intelligence (INI).

The man speaks: "Lieutenant Commander Jonathan Ekkair reporting, captain. I have proceeded as requested here. I am in continued contact with our other agent, and we are coordinating

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our efforts in preparation for the completion of our duties. My recent surveillance has brought to light more information regarding the plot against the Vargr. No doubt Capital will be very desirous that I continue to uncover what I can. I believe the prospect of the blight working is very great and would like to continue to find out what I can. As requested, after finishing here, I am heading to the world of Sarar, where I shall meet you at the Central Discovery Hotel on 100-1122. Included on this crystal is the information I used in setting up our operation here. Our plan will bring ruin upon the rebels and ensure our future victory. I have used the highest level codes in order to make certain that no one could read this but you. I have destroyed all other copies of this information. With any luck, I shall finish here and make our meeting as scheduled. We can determine our next course of action based on my new-found data and further instruction from Capital once I reach Sarar. Health and long life to His Imperial Majesty Lucan, emperor of the 11,000 worlds of the Third Imperium! Ekkair out."

CHOICES

The man who appears on the crystal has been identified by the local police as Jeofroy Dobzhanski, a member of the bureau assigned to the Vargr delegation as a bodyguard. Dobzhanski has been missing for several days, so the bureau concurs that Ekkair and Dobzhanski must be one and the same. Ekkair, the mastermind of this operation on Ambemshan, was killed by Aroueta during the mugging, but that still leaves his mysterious partner of whom he spoke to his superior. One can conclude that the other INI agent intends to assassinate Kfoukhzaekso or other members of the delegation. Thus, the PCs must find this assassin and stop him before he succeeds in his mission.

The PCs may decide to go to the police and talk to Aroueta. Unfortunately,

he is of little help. He does not even remember when or where he mugged and killed Ekkair—and the body has not been found. He only took the crystal because he thought it might be worth a few credits. He did not know about the sensitive information on it.

The police know little about Ekkair/Dobzhanski. He came to the Shiraag bureau only a few months ago, highly recommended by the Discovery bureau on the world of Sarat (Antares 1115 B57399C-D) to trailing. He kept to himself and did not socialize much. He was the sort of person no one wanted to talk to, and he made people uncomfortable. Still, he was a good officer and had an excellent arrest record.

EKKAIR'S APARTMENT

Ekkair lived in a rather posh apartment complex in a more fashionable part of the city. The PCs may want to go there and look for clues. The police have already sealed off the third-floor apartment and placed a guard. The PCs need only tell the desk clerk that they are on official business for the Shiraag city police. The clerk is talkative, exclaiming how awful it is that such a nice man like Dobzhanski would be killed in cold blood. Inside the well-furnished apartment, the PCs will find things in very good order. Nothing has been disturbed. The PCs may find a few interesting things in the room.

The closets are full of clothing, including an Imperial Navy uniform and police attire. There are a large number of suitcases, some packed with clothing and other belongings. If they spend some time looking through the suitcases, the PCs will find a pair of high passage tickets with reservations for an Interstarlines liner to Sarar. The reservations are for 70-1122 at the Shiraag starport.

The room also includes a Naasirka personal computer and a number of holocrystals—similar to the crystal found by the police. All the crystals are blank or contain business-related programs.

The PCs may find Ekkair's bank book in a desk drawer. The account is made in the name of Dobzhanski and is registered at a local bank. Checking up at the bank will reveal that the account contains quite a lot of money—a good portion of it deposited directly into the

account from another anonymous account on Sarar.

Last, the PCs may find a worn business card on a small table. The card is for local exclusive club known as the Academy. The Academy is well-known as a meeting place for some of the city's most important people. The police know that several suspected underworld figures from as far away as the Julian Protectorate frequent the establishment. Trasilon has even sent an agent to the club to infiltrate it and check out its clientele.

ACADEMY

The PCs may want to go to the Academy and check out the place for its connection to the suspected INI plot. With the Vargr delegation arriving tomorrow, time is of the essence. Trasilon's inside man cannot arrange for the PCs to get into the club—it is very exclusive, with an extensive initiation process. If the PCs do succeed in getting in, the Trasilon man, Astyanax Fox, will help them however he can.

The club is located not far from Ekkair's apartment in an expensive part of the city. The Academy is separate from all surrounding buildings and has only one floor. The main entrance is well-guarded by bouncers. A servants' entrance in the back leads through the kitchen. With a well-placed bribe to one of the staff, the PCs should have no trouble getting in through the back.

To bribe one of the club's staff members:

Routine, Bribery, Int, 1 minute (unskilled OK).

Referee: This profile assumes a minimum bribe level of Cr1000. For a lower bribe, increase the difficulty by one. For a higher bribe, decrease the difficulty by one.

ACADEMY

The Academy's interior is beautifully decorated with exquisite taste. The building is divided into distinct dining, lounge and gambling areas. Side rooms with closed doors are guarded by tough-looking men in business suits.

The clientele is indeed high class. A number of local and off-world business and political leaders are present. The PCs should recognize a few reasonably famous individuals from league

politics talking, drinking and gambling.

Before long, a waiter approaches the PCs and asks them if they would like to have a drink. If the PCs are receptive to this, he takes their order. If they are not interested, he says he thinks it best if they have something. This waiter is, of course, Astyanax Fox, and he subtly makes sure that the PCs know his identity. He then leaves the PCs and goes to the kitchen to fill their order.

Club members might ask the PCs who they are or make other small talk—they are only being sociable. No one in the club admits to knowing either Ekkair or Dobzhanski. Members are somewhat incredulous at the idea of a law enforcement officer possessing the funds needed to join or even being recommended by the membership committee. Only league citizens of some fame and fortune or noted outsiders are allowed into the club.

Eventually, Fox returns from the kitchen. He does not bring the drinks and walks with a pronounced limp, looking very pale and appearing to be in pain. One of the toughs in business suits is trying to catch up with him, but Fox keeps one step ahead.

Fox reaches the PCs and covertly hands them a piece of paper, just as the guard catches up and grabs Fox. The tough apologizes for the waiter, saying he is just overworked. Fox then goes limp, and the tough carries him into a back room.

The paper reveals the following scrawled in shaky handwriting: "Khagarash Towers, Room 2120."

As the PCs leave the Academy, they notice that some of the toughs have taken a particular interest in their activities, although they make no threatening moves.

KHAGARASH TOWERS

Khagarash Towers is a hotel in Shiraag not far from where the Vargr delegates will be staying tomorrow. In fact, the towers loom so high that they offer a potential assassin a perfect vantage point from which to shoot someone in one of the opposite buildings.

The PCs should be able to reach the towers with ease from the Academy. No matter how they choose to enter the room, they will find it empty and the balcony door open. The balcony is likewise unoccupied. As soon as anyone

steps out onto the balcony, a shot will fire down, narrowly missing the PC. Anyone quickly looking up three floors to the roof will see an INI assassin perched with a gauss rifle. A rope ladder leads from the balcony to the roof.

The PCs can get to the roof by the rope ladder or by elevator. Anyone using the rope ladder will have to deal with the assassin shooting at them. A character hit by the gauss rifle must roll the following task to remain on the ladder. Otherwise, the PC has lost balance and has fallen to the balcony.

To maintain balance after having been shot:

Difficult, Str, Dex, Instant (Hazardous, Fateful).

The assassin will take aimed shots at the PCs to ensure that they will fall. If confronted on the rooftop, he will fight to the death and will not allow himself to be captured.

The assassin's body has nothing of value on it, with no identifying marks or items.

While the PCs ponder the assassins remains, five thugs from the Academy will appear in an air/raft and open fire. The four toughs not driving will open fire

with laser rifles, using the air/raft as a firing platform. Like the assassin, they intend to kill the PCs and will die rather than be captured. The driver will take up attacking the PCs too if his fellows are defeated, landing the air/raft on the roof.

ENDGAME

Once the assassin and the thugs are defeated, the PCs will probably report to Gwilliam Namashiir. He is pleased with their work. The police recently found Ekkair's body in a trash heap in town, he tells them. In addition, Trasilon agents raided the Academy after it had closed for the night and were able to capture the INI agents working there. Astyanax Fox was likewise found, dead, poisoned with a lethal injection. Undoubtedly, INI was onto him and tried to eliminate him before he told anyone about the location of the assassin. The Vargr delegation has been placed under extra security and moved to another part of the city.

Trasilon has successfully shut down one of INI's operations of Ambemshan. But the mastermind of this whole operation, Ekkair's superior, remains at large—if not on Ambemshan, then perhaps on some other Antarean world.

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NPCS

The player characters are likely to encounter the following NPCs in this adventure.

Astyanax Fox: UPP 769897, age 30, three terms.

Handgun-1, Streetwise-2, Grav Vehicle-1, Steward-2.

Gwilliam Namashiir: UPP 545998, age 58, 10 terms.

Admin-3, Handgun-2, Interrogation-2, Stealth-1, Intrusion-2, Gambling-1, Disguise-1, Persuasion-2, Linguistics-1.

Assassin: UPP 697986, age 34.

Combat Rifleman-5.

Thugs in the Academy: UPP 989655, age 28.

Laser Rifle-1, Brawling-2. Ω

The author wishes to thank Kevin Brennan, Paul Drye and the History of the Imperium working Group (HIWG).

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TRAVELLER *News Service*

Warinir/Daibei (0507 A889978-F)

Date: 282-1123

¶The annual naval review, traditionally held on Duke Craig's official birthday, will not take place this year, according to a spokesperson for the ducal office.

¶The prepared statement read, "Naturally, this does not mean that there are insufficient naval forces to spare for a review. Rather, fleet operational and maintenance commitments continue at normal levels. However, His Grace, in keeping with his previous statements that 1123 will be a year of peace, feels that martial celebrations would be inappropriate."

¶Speaking not for attribution, a Federation of Daibei naval officer remarked, "He'd probably rather save the ships to throw a review for the Aslan out in the [Reaver's] Deep."

Regina/Spinward Marches (0310 A788899-C)

Date: 301-1123

¶Archduke Norris Aledon publicly appeared today on his ancestral home for the first time since the beginning of the recent wave of Ine Givar terrorism and allegations that rogue Zhodani elements had dispatched an assassination team to kill him.

¶Although a household spokesperson indicated that this visit was a normally scheduled tour and vacation at his ducal holdings, the public relations impact of his arrival was significant. Among the stops on his itinerary was the Regina Imperial Hospital, where he privately visited with recovering victims of Ine Givar bombings.

¶His only public reference to the recent terrorism was during an impromptu press conference when he responded to a question about the status of the talks he had proposed with the Ine Givar.

¶Acknowledging that there has been no progress toward starting the talks, he added, "I come to these discussions in all good faith. Sadly, I also carry a certain amount of faith about human nature, which these recent events have only served to verify."

¶The archduke, as a consummate crisis leader, is certainly aware that with recent events, the mere fact of his public appearances speaks volumes about his faith in the stability of Deneb as a social and political body and in his own personal safety.

Regina/Spinward Marches (1910 A788899-C)

Date: 303-1123

¶Zhodani Consulate Ambassador Shterbifriashav flatly denied in a press conference that the Ine Givar are receiving any aid from his government.

¶Shterbifriashav said in his prepared statement, "The Consulate officially severed their alliance with the Ine Givar at the conclusion of the Fifth Frontier War."

¶"Terrorists are no one's friends and as the official representative of my government, I condemn these attacks as an atrocity against civilization."

¶The conference was called in the aftermath of a bombing yesterday of a Regina Colonial Navy recruiting office in which two naval personnel were killed. There have also been allegations of Zhodani collusion in a discovery last week of what was initially identified as nerve agents at the Regina downport.

¶The ambassador pledged financial and medical assistance to the victims of the bombings and their families as a gesture of good will.

Trin/Spinward Marches (3235 A894A96-F)

Date: 329-1123

¶What do you do when you lose a 60,000 ton cruiser? Hope that the Aslan didn't steal it?

¶This is the dilemma facing the personnel of the Imperial Navy Inactive Ships Facility at Trin. The *Arrival Vengeance*, an *Azhanti High Lightning*-class frontier cruiser, was one of five of that class mothballed at Trin since 1114. With the establishment of the Patrol, or *Trekhyair*, in 1120, one *Lightning*-class cruiser per year has been reactivated for service with this force, beginning with *Azhanti High Lightning*, *Children of the March* and *Refractor Loathesome*. The two left, *Bard Refuge* and *Arrival Vengeance*, were scheduled for reactivation in 1124 and 1125 respectively. However, while conducting an inspection of *Bard Refuge* prior to moving her to the shipyard, the inspection team discovered that her sistership, *Arrival Vengeance*, was missing.

¶There are currently no theories or explanations for this phenomenon.

Cymbeline/Solomani Rim (2527 A9F4840-E)

Date: 355-1123

¶A force of half a dozen *Gazelle*-class close escorts, tentatively identified as belonging to Lucan's Imperium, yesterday engaged in a brief orbital engagement here, then made for the 100 planetary diameter jump gradient to enter hyperspace. The purpose of this force's presence is unknown.

¶The force was spotted by the Home Guard cruiser *Durhamon* on a routine system sweep. The cruiser's officers reported that although the intruders were not operating their transponders, a drone-mounted sensor package showed what appeared to be the Imperial sunburst symbol on the retreating vessels before it was destroyed by laser fire. The laser attack on the drone

was the only fire exchanged before the six vessels broke off for the jump gradient. Their identity as Imperial-built *Gazelle* class vessels was confirmed soon after when their expended drop tanks were discovered near their hyperspace entry point.

¶However, their status as units of Lucan's forces is doubtful, as they made no attempt to engage *Durham*, which they clearly as a group outgunned. However, *Durham's* captain pointed out that it would not be long before their true identity was revealed, for without their drop tanks, they would not be able to get far.

A Traveller News Service Special Feature An In-Depth Interview with Professor Ililek Kuligaan

Warinir/Daibei (0507 A889978-F)

Date: 131-1124

Professor Ililek Kuligaan has been, since 213-1123, fleeing a warrant for his arrest issued by Archduke Dulinor himself. Kuligaan's public remarks on 212-1123, critical of the Rebellion, and by extension, the self-proclaimed Emperor Dulinor, have sparked numerous responses, in addition to Dulinor's.

For three quarters of a year, Kuligaan's whereabouts were unknown. Then on 126-1124 it was announced that he had met with Duke Craig at Warinir. Following several days of requests, Professor Kuligaan finally agreed to meet for an interview with a member of the TAS News Service Warinir branch. Although he refused to discuss the details behind his meeting with Duke Craig, he did reveal more of his outspoken views on the Rebellion. The following is an excerpt from that fascinating interview.

TNS: How long until we see the Imperium reunified?

IK: Never.

TNS: So you feel it will take a long time, then.

IK: No, I said never, and I mean never. There will be no reformed Imperium; there can be no peace or unity among these factions. No, we must go farther into the darkness before we can see the light again. That is proper, that is *proportionate*.

TNS: Proper? By whose standards?

IK: You see, if peace were to come now, that would justify what has already happened. Surely even you have read the figures, tens of billions dead. The horror that we have already visited upon each other, that would somehow become acceptable. Leaders would be able to countenance other wars just like this one. "You see," they would say, "we could do that again and still pull back and be okay again." That cannot happen. Peace now would redeem what we have done, and that is just not possible. It is irredeemable; the sin has gone too far.

TNS: The sin? Against God?

IK: No, not against God; against the only thing you *can* sin against, *humanity*.

TNS: So you feel that it is only humans that matter in this equation.

IK: No, you idiot. Who assigned you to this story, anyway? [The sin is] Against the thing inside every living, thinking being that makes it unique. The Vargr must call it vargranity, the Hivers call it hivranity or some such. Whatever word you happen to hang on it locally, the object is the same. But the word has to be local to you if it is to have any power for you. Yes, I call it humanity. And the Vargr have it, the Hivers have it, the Aslan have it, the K'kree have it. You might even have it. The issue is—

TNS: Are you a member of the Virasa faith?

IK: Do all reporters have such short attention spans? The issue is—and by the way, the phrase is, "Are you a Virasin?"—that what we have done is a crime against all life, all decency, and not in a contextual way, but in an absolute way. We cannot put a happy face on this, brush ourselves off, and go on. We are corrupt, we are polluted, we are *death* to each other. And in this case, yes, the issue *is* about humans, *homo sapiens*. We have to see our way through this hell that we've created and see to it that it does not happen again. There is something inside us that has allowed us to embark on this monstrous war, and we must burn it out of us. This war, if all of these deaths are to have any meaning, must force us to come to grips with the fact that we cannot remain this way if we expect to have an interstellar society.

If, on the other hand, we can justify to ourselves what we have done here in this "Rebellion," then we can never be saved, which is to say, we can never save ourselves.

Editorial Announcement

¶The Travellers' Aid Society News Bureau would like to apologize for errors that have been discovered in some TNS dispatches to this distribution area for the period 101 to 213-1123. The data nexus for this distribution area has been one of the targets of Imperial investigations of "treasonous tendencies" among TNS employees (see report Capital/Core, 081-1123). An unfortunate side affect of these intrusions has been the mutilation of software systems and data compiling programs. This has mostly been evidenced by the garbling of textual material, but in some cases the emergency use of outdated software to bring damaged systems back on line has resulted in the broadcast of anachronistic information, such as the obsolete informational coding of Regina/Spinward Marches in some reports. At this time, all of these defects have been corrected, and TNS is proceeding with plans to bring suit against the Imperial government for harassment. We apologize for any inconvenience that these defects may have caused.Ω

Rumor has it that some of the major labels have been threatening independent bands to get them to sign. The grapevine also says a major corp was behind the "riot" that killed off that up and coming independent band, Cygnus. Maybe it's true that rock 'n' roll will never die. But rock 'n' rollers do die—and a lot more often than they used to.

This adventure can take place on Earth or one of the more urbanized worlds. The PCs are walking through an urban area when they see a young woman struggling with a man and a woman. The two are trying to force her into a waiting ground car. The young woman is dressed in a somewhat outlandish outfit and is resisting the two with the aid of an electronic guitar. The PCs can either ignore the attack or try to intervene. If the PCs ignore the incident, they will see a report of the woman's death (drug overdose) in the news the next day.

Attackers: If the PCs instead choose to interfere, they should be able to capture or drive off the two attackers off. If the attackers are captured, they will say they were hired to find the young woman and bring her to a abandoned warehouse. The two attackers are two-bit muscle and do not know who hired them or why. If the PCs investigate the warehouse the attackers mentioned, they will find it empty, but there are signs of a hasty departure by a small group of people.

Damsel in Distress: The young woman the PCs saved is very talkative. She explains that she is in a band and that her band has been threatened by certain corporations in the past. She thinks the corporations have stopped being polite. She says a few other successful independent bands have been threatened, and the members of at least one band were killed in a faked riot.

Bodyguards: She tells the PCs that she was impressed by the way they handled "those two little prob-

Rock 'n' Roll Never Dies

By Michael C. LaBossiere

lems back there" and offers them a job as bodyguards. She explains that her band will only be in the city for one concert and could use protection in the hotel and during the show. And, if things work out, she might hire the PCs to go on tour.

APPROACH

The young woman is quite right about the corporations. A growing wave of nostalgia has swept a large portion of humanity, and there is a massive market for old-style (20th-21st century) rock 'n' roll. Most of the corporations are aboveboard, but some have gotten use to exploiting any commodity, including people, as they choose. These corporations are determined to cash in on this nostalgia and are willing to use any means possible, including threats of force and force.

Hotel: The young woman will take the PCs directly to the hotel. If they want to get their equipment first, she asks them to pick it up later. The band is staying at a luxury hotel and has the entire eighth floor of the building—which indicates that the band is doing remarkably well.

While the PCs are being intro-

duced to the rest of the band, a corporate hit team attacks. The attackers enter via the stairs and attempt to kill anyone on the floor. They do not expect the band to have any weapons or guards, so they are quite surprised to see the PCs.

Concert: If the PCs and the band survive the first attempt, the PCs' next job is to guard the band on the way to the concert. The band travels in three ground limos. The trip to the concert hall takes 20-30 minutes, due to the crowds near the concert site. The PCs have to keep the fans from tearing apart the limos and the band members (and themselves). A second hit team will try to take the band out somewhere along the route.

When the limos arrive at the concert site, they drive around back, and the band members head into the dressing room. The PCs are supposed to secure the area. Half an hour after their arrival, the band will be up on stage. The concert will last approximately four hours. One more hit team will attack the band during the concert.

Protecting the band during the concert is difficult. The concert area is packed with thousands of people, and fans constantly rush toward the stage. Naturally, it would not be very pleasant for the PCs if they gunned down a few fans by accident.

NPCS

Band: Six Novice (for combat purposes) NPCs.

Roadies: Eight Experienced NPCs.

Others: Three Novice NPCs.

Attackers: Two Experienced NPCs armed with Arno Five Fifteens.

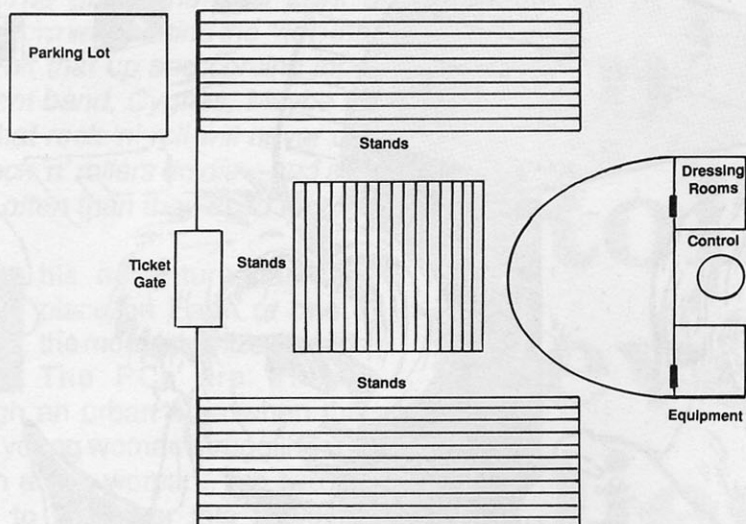
Hotel Hit Team: Two Veteran NPCs armed with Traylor Model 57s and SG-77s, two Experienced NPCs armed with SG-77s.

Street Hit Team: One Songbird equipped with an MG-7, one Veteran NPC armed with a Stracher P-11mm and the MG-7, two Experienced NPCs armed with Stracher P-11mms and SG-77s.

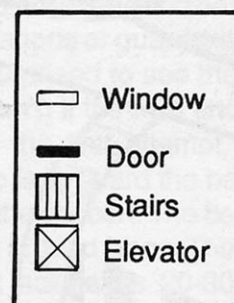
Concert Hit Team: One Elite NPC armed with a Mueller-Rivera F-19.



Concert

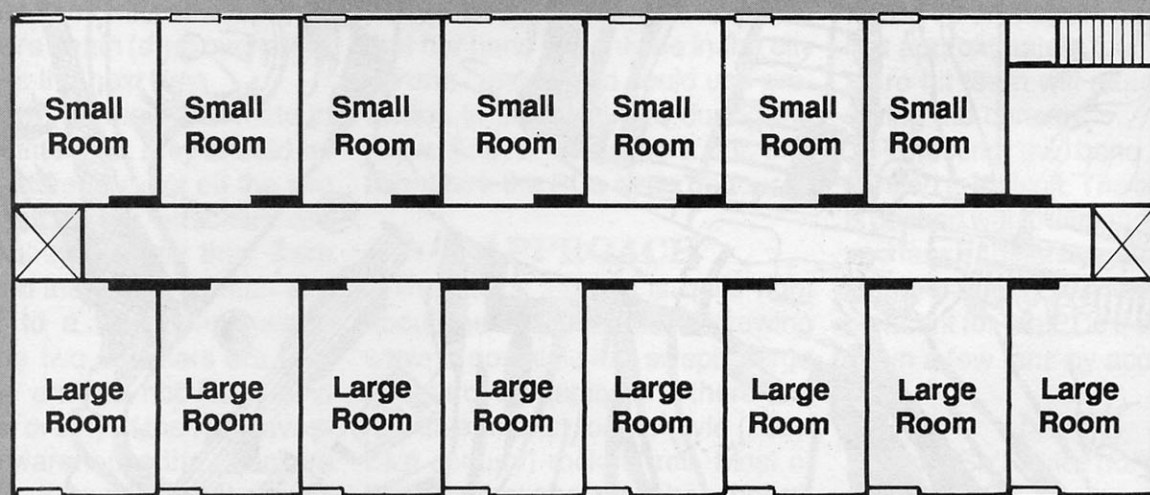


Key



**2300 AD
logo**

Hotel



HOTEL MAP

The hotel is a luxury hotel with doormen and so forth. It is tastefully decorated with all sorts of valuables. The band has the entire eighth floor, and the elevators only stop on the floor if instructed with a special electric key.

Small Rooms: Each small room is equipped with a bed, desk, closer, bathroom and so forth. The band's

road crew is staying here.

Large Rooms: The large rooms are equipped the same as the smaller rooms.

The band members each have a room, as do the managers, press agents and so forth.

CONCERT MAP

The concert area is a large outdoor structure used for everything

from concerts to ballet to political debates.

Ticket Gate: The gate is carefully designed to prevent a crowd from rushing through.

Control: This tower rises over the stage and houses the controls for the stage lights, sound system, special effects and so forth. It also has a camera system that can be used to scan the crowds. Ω

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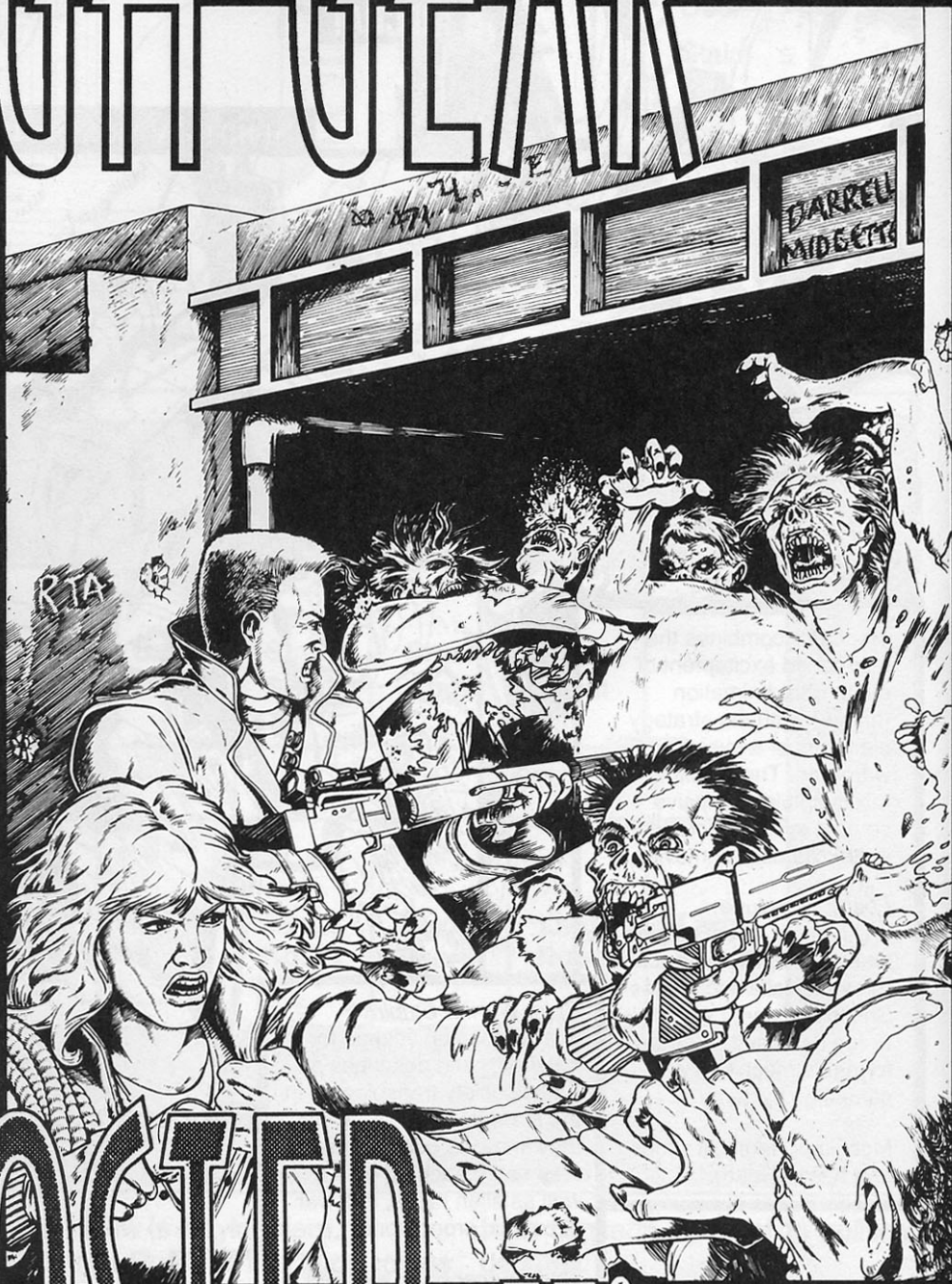
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ESCAPE FROM DIOSCURIA

We were travelling eastward from the Boreosyrtris League to Cydonia, aboard a big merchant cloudship stuffed with spice. The ship stopped for a few days in Dioscuria, so Dr. Blogsworth and I decided to tour the Martian city. We had just finished having a cup of strange, smoky flavored Martian tea in a little cafe in the Old City, when Blogsworth suddenly grabbed my arm. "I say old chap," he said, "Did you just hear some- one scream?"

The group is touring the Old City area of Dioscuria. As they wander the

quaint streets, admiring the architecture of the Martian buildings and the charming atmosphere of the neighborhood, the characters suddenly hear a feminine scream coming from a nearby alley.

If the adventurers investigate (and what sort of cad would ignore the sound of a damsel in distress?), they see two German officers (Wegenspach and Zweigmann) struggling with a beautiful young Martian girl. Wegenspach

brusquely orders the PCs to leave: "Be off, Englishers! This is none of your concern!"

The two officers are unarmed except for Wegenspach's pistol. If confronted with superior numbers, they leave the girl and flee. "You'll suffer for this, Englishers!" cries Wegenspach as he departs.

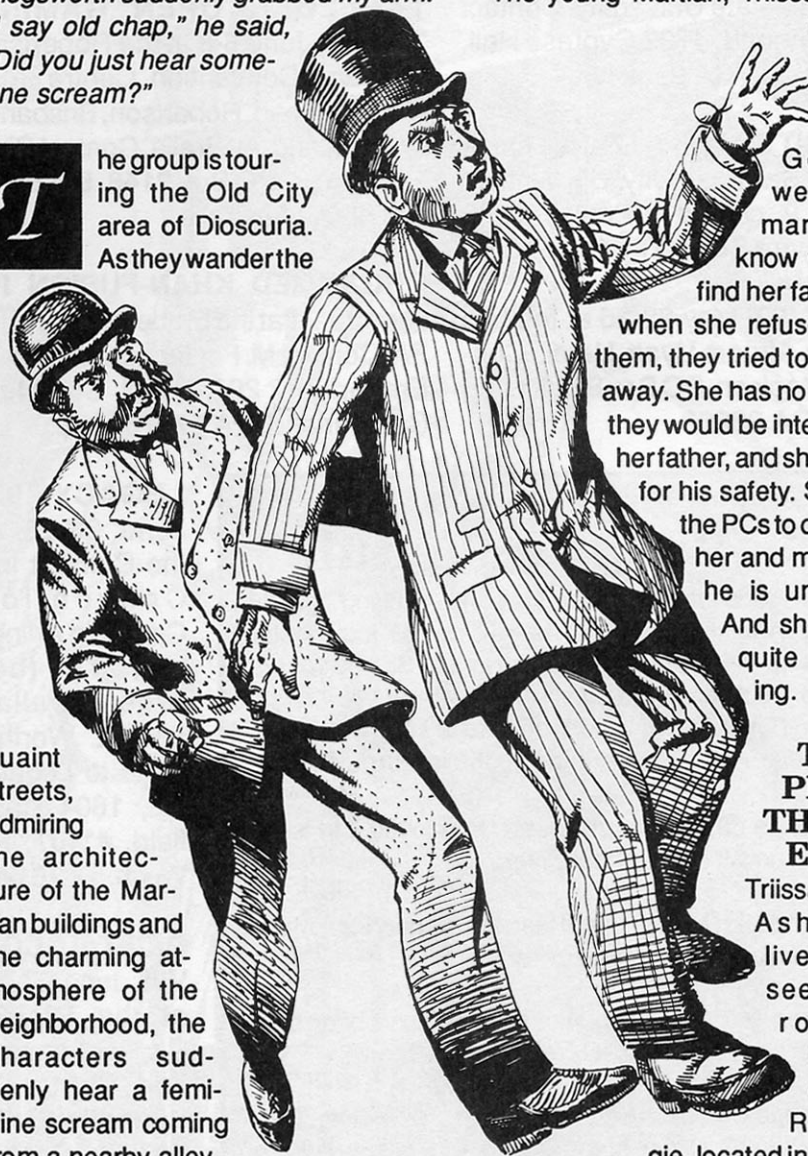
The young Martian, Triissa, thanks the PCs for helping her. The Germans were demanding to know where to find her father, and when she refused to tell them, they tried to drag her away. She has no idea why they would be interested in her father, and she is afraid for his safety. She begs the PCs to come with her and make sure he is unharmed. And she can be quite convincing.

THE PLOT THICK- ENS

Triissa's father, Ashaasth, lives in a seedy old rooming house called the Red Roo-

gie, located in the poor-

er part of Old City near the old landing field. The building is dark, and reeks of filth and Martian cooking. Ashaasth lives in a tiny room in the basement, sparsely equipped with broken furniture. A dirt-encrusted window gives a rat's-eye view



By James L. Cambias

of the street.

Ashaasth is not present when the PCs arrive with Triissa. The young Martian girl is beside herself with worry, and will beseech the characters to help her find her father.

If they search his dwelling, the PCs will find only one thing of any real interest—a letter, apparently initialed by High Minister Ssaskeen, authorizing the assassination of Prince Hasthiith seven years ago.

After the PCs have had a few minutes to investigate the premises, an old Martian bursts into the room, wide eyed and stinking of alcohol. "Father!" Triissa calls out joyfully.

Ashaasth's replies in a panicked voice: "They're coming! We're going to be killed!"

Suddenly, the PCs hear loud voices barking orders in German and heavy footsteps. Any character who understands German can interpret the orders: "Take no prisoners!" A glance through the window will reveal a squad of armed soldiers from the New Model Regiment drawn up in the street outside, while another two squads search the building.

The PCs seem to be in a jam. They can try to fight their way out against incredible odds or find a way to sneak past the Germans. If they search for an escape route, the PC with the highest Observation skill will notice an old stone manhole cover set in the floor underneath Ashaasth's bed. Raising the cover is a formidable task of Strength (up to three people may combine their Strengths to make the attempt).

The hole leads to a shaft with crude handholds down one side, extending down into foul-smelling darkness. The passages are unlit, so if no one thinks to bring a light, the PCs will have to grope their way in complete darkness. Ashaasth and Triissa will follow their lead.

The sewers form in a vast web underneath Old City, extending for miles on

several different levels. Passages are known to lead into the New Town section, so the PCs might try to find their way to the British Consulate, the old landing field or New Town. Or they may simply plunge ahead blindly,



table below for every 20 yards travelled.

ASHAASTH'S STORY

While they are fleeing through the sewers, Ashaasth will stoically refuse to answer any questions concerning the German attacks or the letter the PCs found in his room. Triissa knows nothing of the matter, and will intervene if the PCs pressure her father too forcefully.

The PCs will undoubtedly tire of

without making any plans at all. Some sections have collapsed, and new tunnels have been dug, creating a three-dimensional maze confusing even to the engineers in charge of maintaining the system. The referee can either map out the sewer system or determine the PCs' route randomly by rolling 1D6 on the

Random Sewer Layout

Roll	Result
1	Straight: The tunnel continues unchanged.
2	Bend: The tunnel bends. Roll 1D6: 1-3: The tunnel turns left. 4-6: The tunnel goes right.
3	Junction: Roll 1D6: 1: The tunnel intersects another at right angles. 2: The tunnel intersects another at right angles and ends. 3: A passage enters on the left. 4: A passage enters on the right. 5: The passage forks into two. 6: 1D6+3 passages enter.
4	Chamber: A room, two to 12 yards long by a two to 12 yards wide. Roll 1D6: 1-3: There are no other exits. 4-5: There is one other exit. 6: There are 1D6 other exits.
5	Special: Roll 1D6: 1: A shaft with crude handholds leads up to the surface. The shaft is covered by a heavy stone or bronze lid. 2: A vertical shaft leads down to a lower level of the sewers. 3: The tunnel ends, either at a stone wall or a pile of rubble. 4: The tunnel floor has given way, leaving a huge pit. It is 1D6×10 yards down to the tunnel level below, and the pit is a two to 12 yards across. 5: A secret door opens into the tunnel on one side. PCs making an Impossible Observation task roll may spot the passage. Passages may lead into basements or hidden chambers. 6: The tunnel floor slopes downward into a section filled with murky, foul-smelling water. The water is eight feet deep at the deepest and extends for three to 18 yards.
6	Encounter: Reroll on this table to determine what the tunnel section is like, then consult the Sewer Encounters Table below.

Sewer Encounters

Roll	Result
1	Lunatic: An insane Martian who has taken to living in the sewers. He will appear as a filthy, inhuman figure, and will attack frantically on a roll of 1-2. Lunatics are Green NPC types, with no attribute higher than 4, and are armed with clubs.
2	Scavengers: A group of 1D6 poor Martians who make their living by scavenging the sewers. They will attempt to rob weaker parties, but can guide the PCs out if promised a reward. They are identical to the standard Martian thief NPC.
3	Green Koko: A large water snake, as described in the basic rules.
4	Germans: The party's pursuers have caught up. The enemy has 1D6 Veteran Martian troopers from the New Model Regiment, armed with bolt-action rifles and led by either Sergeant Zweigmann or Lieutenant Wegenspach. They will attack automatically.
5	Grigian: The party encounters one or two Grigians. Grigians are small, furry, lizard-like creatures about a foot long, kept as pets by wealthy Martian ladies. The sewers of Dioscuria are infested with a giant strain of albino Grigians, which have been known to attack unwary explorers. A giant Grigian is a huge, six-legged, white-furred creature with big red eyes and a mouthful of fangs. <i>Number Appearing:</i> 1-2 <i>Size:</i> 1×2 <i>Move:</i> L20/W10 <i>Wounds:</i> 5 <i>Save:</i> 1 <i>Weight:</i> 300 lbs <i>Weapons:</i> Teeth (3, 3, 0, 2).
6	Thieves: A group of one to three thieves hiding out in the sewers. They will attack weaker parties and flee from stronger ones. Use the standard thief NPC.

Ashaasth's evasive manner. If they convince him that they deserve an explanation to the mysterious goings-on, and if they confront him when Triissa is not in earshot, he will finally give in—to the point of breaking down in tears.

"It is all my fault," he moans. "My sins have come back to injure my daughter. I'm so ashamed! The blood of the old prince is on my hands! I took their gold and did what they asked, and my spirit will suffer for it in the afterlife."

It will take some time to get the full story from Ashaasth, as he meanders and weeps and forgets what he is talking about. With patient prodding, he will reveal that he was the assassin who planted a bomb aboard the royal yacht seven years ago, killing Prince Hasthiith and placing High Minister Ssaskeen in power as regent of the child prince and puppet of the Germans.

Ashaasth has proof of his tale, including the letter with Ssaskeen's own signature. The old Martian is willing to admit his own guilt and suffer the penalty as long as those who paid him are punished as well. But he wants to tell Triissa himself and in his own way.

In the right (i.e., British) hands, Ashaasth's testimony could bring down Ssaskeen and drastically undermine German power in Dioscuria. No wonder the Germans were trying to find him.

OUT OF DIOSCURIA

Ashaasth will now ask the PCs' help in getting him and Triissa away from Dioscuria. If the PCs' patriotism is not enough to convince them to do what they can to bring down Ssaskeen and weaken the German influence in Dioscuria, then Ashaasth can offer them a moderate payment for their efforts (his life savings).

The PCs should develop their own plan for escaping from the city—the three main routes are by land, by air or with the help of the British Consul.

Land: The PCs must first get past the city walls, if they are still in the Old City. They can try to cross into the New Town district through the sewer tunnels. Finding their way will require a great deal of exploring unless the party hires scavengers as guides.

Or the PCs can try to slip past the guards at the city gates. Each of the three gates will have 10 soldiers from

the city guard force (Trained soldiers armed with Martian rifles and swords), and a squad of five troopers from the New Model Regiment (Veteran soldiers armed with bolt-action rifles). A German officer will be at each gate (Wegenspach is at the western gate, and Zweigmann is at the northern one). The guards will search all vehicles leaving the city, looking for anyone matching the PC groups' description. In addition, the *Hamburg* and a couple of aerial steam launches are patrolling the main roads out of Dioscuria. If caught, the party will be imprisoned in Fort Friederich-Wilhelm and charged with whatever crimes the Germans come up with.

Air: In addition to the stepped-up security at the city gates, the Germans will have a platoon of 10 German soldiers guarding the new landing field. If the adventurers arrived in Dioscuria by ship, that vessel will be detained in port until the fugitives are caught.

Security at the old landing field is poorly maintained, so it might be possible to slip in past the six city guardsmen at the gate. The field is patrolled by Dioscurian Marines, the only effective soldiers in the city who are not pro-German. At any given time, there are one or two small merchant cloudships at the old field.

Captured intruders will be taken to the naval authorities commanded by Admiral Shaasthan before being given to the city police.

Consulate: A final means of escape for British characters is the British Consulate. Consul George Creighton is also an intelligence agent for the Foreign Office and will be highly interested in Ashaasth's story. He can keep the party in the consulate for a few days, but no longer—eventually word would leak out.

The Germans keep the consulate under surveillance as a matter of routine and will know if the PCs have sought refuge there. The Germans cannot enter the building without provoking an incident with Britain but may arrange for "thieves" to break in. And even if the adventurers have found safety at the consulate, they must still get out again.

For a complete guide to this Martian city and more on Dioscurian NPCs, see "Dioscuria" by James L. Cambias in Challenge 58.

Triissa

Triissa's is devoted to Ashaasth and will do anything to keep him safe. She is cool-headed in danger, but can have a temper when annoyed.

Attribute Skills

Str:	2	Fisticuffs 2, Throwing 1
Agl:	4	Stealth 4
End:	4	Wilderness Travel 4 (foraging)
Int:	3	Observation 2
Chr:	6	Eloquence 7, Bargaining 5, Linguistics 2 (German, Koline)
Soc:	1	Riding 1 (Gashant), Medicine 1

Motives: Love (for Ashaasth), Steady.

Appearance: Triissa is young and pretty. Her slightly reddish hair hints at some Hill Martian ancestry.

Ashaasth

Ashaasth was once a crewman aboard the royal yacht. He accepted the bribe to assassinate the prince hoping to make enough money to provide a good life for his family. But remorse over the deed drove him to drink, and the death of his wife sent him over the edge.

Attribute Skills

Str:	4	Fisticuffs 3, Throwing 1, Trimsman 1 (cloudship), Close Combat 2 (edged weapon)
Agl:	5	Stealth 5, Marksmanship 1 (rifle), Crime 2 (lockpicking)
End:	6	Wilderness Travel 6 (mountaineering), Engineering 1 (explosives)
Int:	3	Observation 3, Gunnery 1 (MCL)
Chr:	2	Eloquence 1, Linguistics 2 (Koline, German), Theatrics 1
Soc:	1	Piloting 1 (cloudship)

Motives: Disgraced, Eccentric.

Appearance: Ashaasth is an elderly Martian, still fairly strong and healthy despite being an alcoholic. He is ragged and unkept, and his attention wanders.

Lieutenant Wegenspach

Wegenspach is a dedicated soldier and a loyal subject of the kaiser. He hopes his success in this mission will lead to promotion.

Attribute Skills

Str:	3	Fisticuffs 2, Throwing 1, Close Combat 2 (edged weapon)
Agl:	5	Stealth 4, Marksmanship 2 (pistol)
End:	2	Wilderness Travel 3 (mapping), Fieldcraft 2
Int:	6	Observation 7
Chr:	1	Linguistics 2 (English, Dioscurian)
Soc:	4	Riding 3 (horse), Leadership 4

Motives: Ambitious, Loyal (to Germany).

Appearance: Wegenspach is a small, nimble man with a sharp mind and abrasive manner. He is dark-haired and dark-eyed, looking more Italian than German. He is never without his service revolver.

Sergeant Zweigmann

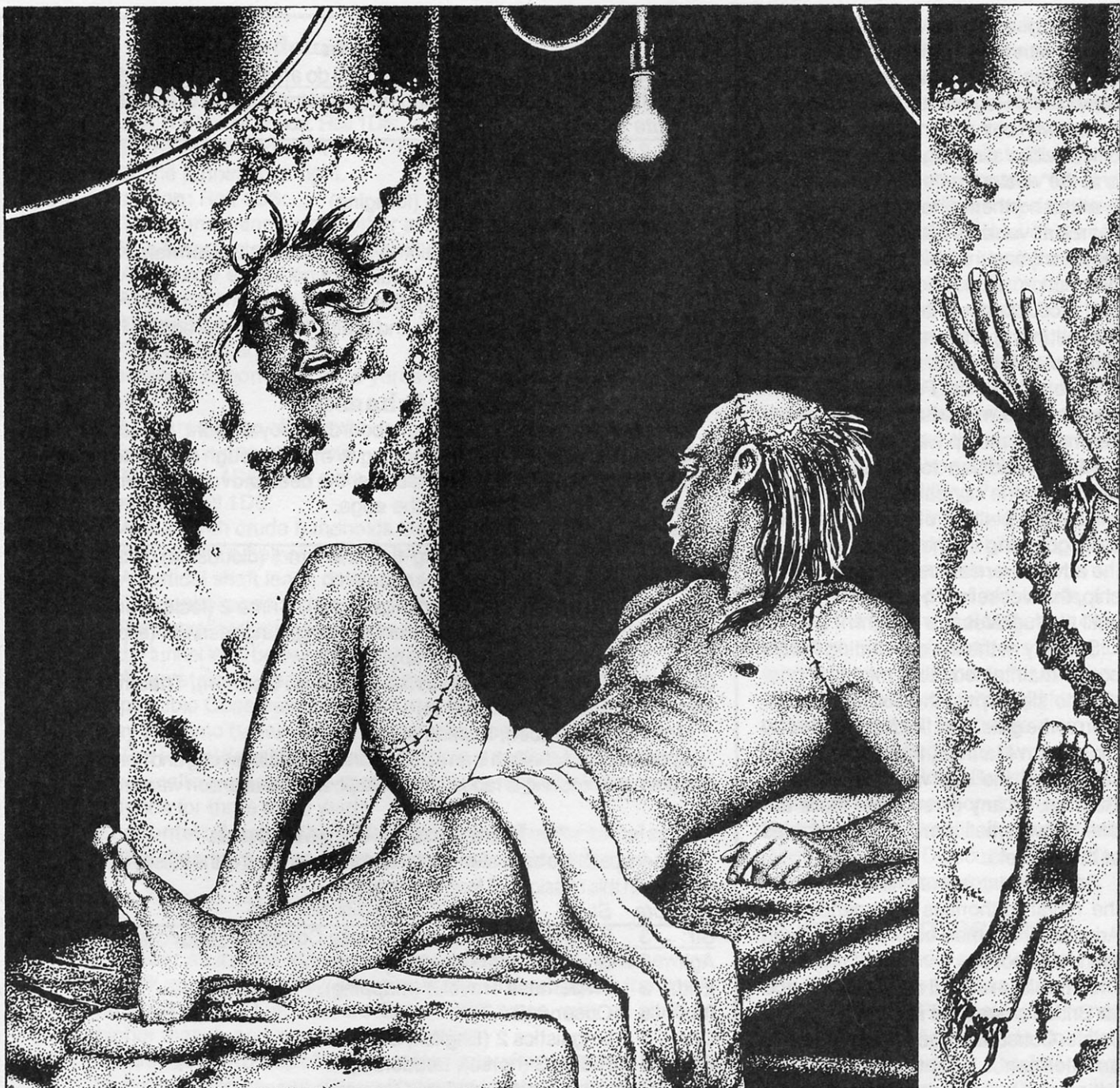
Zweigmann has settled comfortably into army life because it requires little thought from him. He dislikes Wegenspach, but respects his rank.

Attribute Skills

Str:	6	Fisticuffs 5, Throwing 3, Close Combat 2 (edged weapon)
Agl:	4	Stealth 3, Marksmanship 4 (rifle)
End:	5	Wilderness Travel 6 (foraging), Fieldcraft 4
Int:	1	
Chr:	3	Eloquence 2, Linguistics 2 (French, Dioscurian)
Soc:	2	Riding 1 (horse), Leadership 2

Motives: Sadistic Loyal.

Appearance: Zweigmann is a giant man. His boyish good looks belie the fact that he is a sadistic brute. He carries a pistol but prefers to fight with his massive fists. Ω



Me, Myself and I

I opened my eyes and immediately regretted it. My head was pounding, and every muscle in my body was stiff and sore. I felt strange—sort of lightheaded and woozy. Where was I, anyway?

I shook my head, tried to sit up, and discovered that I was strapped to a table. That brought me awake fast. I didn't recognize the room I was in. The walls were grungy concrete, with dried, reddish-brown spots.

Big glass tanks surrounded my table, filled with a clear liquid. There were things floating in the tanks, but it took a minute before I realized what they were. They were body parts. Human body parts. And it looked as if I were about to join them.

By James L. Cambias

This *GURPS Cyberpunk* adventure requires a campaign background that includes the existence of braintaping and clone banks. Similar to the Gold Cross clinics of *GURPS Autoduel*, clone banks keep clones in hibernation, with frequent memory updates via braintaping. If the individual is killed, his clone is brought out of hibernation. The scenario requires that at least one player character have a clone bank contract with the Lazarus Corporation.

The initial episode is intended for a single character only. If more than one PC has a clone in storage, then two or even three PCs could start out together in the same situation. The referee should add one additional organlegger to the scene for every two additional PCs.

A STRANGE AWAKENING

The PC wakes up to find himself tied to an operating table in a room filled with medical equipment. He cannot remember how he got there. The PC is naked, and any cyberwear he might have is missing. Strangely, any mechanical limbs have been replaced with healthy organic ones. It is as if the PC never had the cyberwear at all.

The room is small and poorly lit. The walls and floor are bare, blood-spattered concrete, and the ceiling is rusty sheet metal. A single bare bulb hangs from a cord in the center of the ceiling. The PC is on an operating table in the center of the room. Surrounding the table are organ tanks and a surgical equipment cart holding a pneumo-spray hypo and an array of scalpels and saws.

The PC is strapped down to the table, but not very securely. An Escape roll would allow the character to wriggle free of the restraints. A Strength roll would permit the PC to break his bonds.

Meat Merchants: Just as the character frees himself, a woman enters the room. It is Doc Sally, the organlegger who runs the underground body bank. She will not be expecting her "patient" to be awake, so she will be startled for a round. Then she will attack the PC, trying to grab the hypo loaded with paralyzing nerve poison from the equipment cart and subdue the character. Sally will try to avoid damaging the character. (Using the injector requires a standard hand-to-hand attack plus a successful Dexterity roll to inject the drug. See the *GURPS Cyberpunk* rulebook for a description of the effects of nerve poison. The injector holds four doses.)

The PC can defend himself, of course. The scalpels on the equipment cart can be used as knives. PCs with Physician or First Aid skill will recognize the hypo and may try to use it against the organlegger—though there is no way to tell what it is filled with.

Getting Away: With Doc Sally either subdued or killed, the PC will probably want to leave. He has no clothes, money or weapons, unless he appropriates the organlegger's belongings. Doc Sally has her clothes and \$100 in cash, but no weapons.

The "meat market" is in a rough neighborhood—one of the sprawling slums of the decaying future. On his way out the PC may encounter street gangs or other threats, as the referee chooses.

LOOK WHO'S HERE

The character will probably want to return home, get some clothes and weapons, and find out what is going on. But a shocking surprise awaits him at his home—there's another "him" there!

Up to this point, the player has been unaware of the fact that the character he is playing is in fact a clone of his "real" character. Now the clone and the original have come face to face. The referee can choose one of four options for the remainder of the adventure:

- He can keep the "original" character as an NPC and make the player continue to play the clone.
- He can let the player run both characters.
- The player can resume his normal character while the clone becomes an NPC.
- Another player can take over one of the characters.

Who's Who: The clone and the original confront each other. They may even do battle, each convinced the other is an impostor. However, there are ways to tell a clone from the original. The original character will still possess all his cyberwear, scars, blemishes, tattoos and other acquired features. If the character is over 30 years old, the clone will appear noticeably younger than the original. The clone will be free of all physical disadvantages possessed by the original, except for those which are genetic in origin. (This may affect the clone's point value, but initially should be balanced by the clone's reduced attributes.)

Newly revived clones also have several telltale features, which anyone with Medical skill or any biological skill will recognize. The clone's hair (head and body) is very short, as it is kept depilated while in hibernation. The clone's skin is extremely soft and pale, with no scars, pimples or calluses.

Because a clone body is grown in a tank, it is not in good physical condition upon revival. The clone's DX is reduced by 6 and IQ by 2 (to a minimum of 1). Each week, a clone's player can make an HT roll to see if the character can regain a level. A critical failure on the HT roll will reduce the attribute by 1. The rate of increase can be doubled if the clone follows a program of intensive exercise and training. Skills are reduced along with the attributes.

The clone's memories are the same as the original's up to the last time the original stopped by the clinic for a brain-scan. The Lazarus Clinic prefers its clients to come in for a scan monthly; the character's last visit was three weeks ago.

LAZARUS CLINIC

The PCs will probably want to pay a visit to the Lazarus Corporation to find out what is going on. The clinic is in an upscale neighborhood, near a large hospital. Law enforcement is good in that part of town, and heavily armed people wandering the sidewalks will be stopped and questioned by the police.

The clinic is managed by Dr. Gomez, who has recently become the chief physician at Lazarus. Getting to see Gomez requires the character to convince Rosemary O'Doul, the receptionist and security guard. O'Doul will not allow anyone to bring weapons into the clinic and will be suspicious of strangers. But a paying client of the Lazarus Corporation will be treated politely.

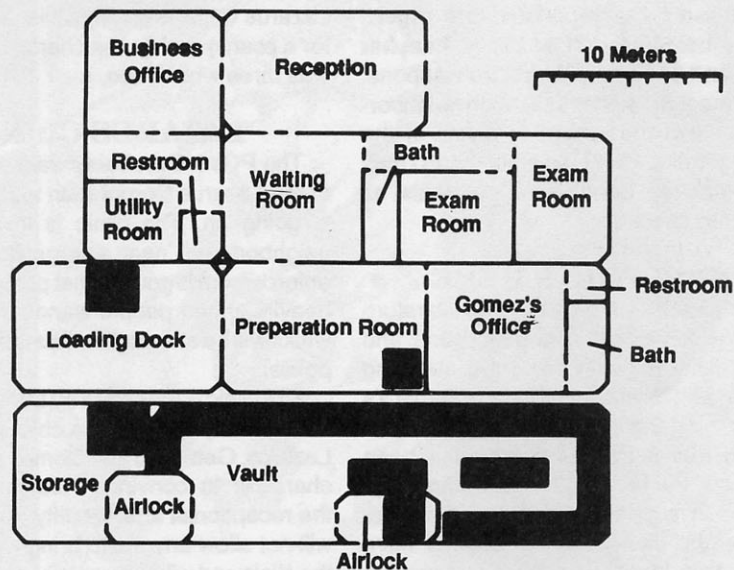
Dr. Gomez will assure the character that his clone is perfectly safe. The Lazarus Corporation has not been selling clones to organleggers. He will even take the PC down into the body vaults where the clones are kept in their hibernation units. The character's clone is there, completely intact in its tank. Gomez will suggest that perhaps the organleggers somehow got hold of an unlicensed clone made without the PC's knowledge.

COMPUTER HACKING

The characters may wish to get information from the Lazarus Clinic's computer system. The computer is part of the local medical network, sharing data with hospitals, pharmacies and insurance carriers. The details of the medical network are left to the referee. It is a relatively "open" part of cyberspace, but certain nodes—patient monitors or financial databases—are well protected. The medical net has a cyberdeck operator on duty full time to protect against intruders. The referee should make the enemy decker roughly equal to the PC hacker trying to get in.

The Lazarus Clinic machine is a Complexity 4 microframe with 8 ROM slots and 40 gigabytes of disk storage. It has decent security software. Access is guarded by a Password and a Codewall program, monitored by Regenerate. A Bluff program simulating Black Ice will be activated if the Regenerate program detects tampering. During the day, if the software notices an attempt to break in, it will notify O'Doul, and she will either disconnect the computer from the net, or notify the medical net security. At night, the software will contact medical net security.

Lazarus Clinic



Beyond the security are some interesting files. Much of the computer's memory is occupied by a large technical database for use in cloning; this is incomprehensible to anyone without medical training. Anyone with Physician, Genetics or Physiology skill who goes through the database will note that it contains some recently downloaded material on experiments in implanting one person's brain scan in another person's clone.

There is a file of data on all 235 clones currently in storage. Anyone looking through the file must make an IQ roll to notice that the creation dates listed for all the clones are within the past two months, even though some of the clients have had contracts with the clinic for years! The PC's clone has a creation date two days before his clone woke up in Doc Sally's lab.

A second noteworthy fact is buried in the accounting database. For the past two months, the clinic has taken in several thousand dollars from "surplus tissue disposal." Each payment corresponds to the creation date for one of the clones in storage. The accounting program also lists higher-than-usual expenditures for nutrient solution and growth hormones during the past few months, but this can be detected only with an Administration or Accounting skill roll.

A third puzzling note is that the computer holds extremely detailed files on the personal lives of all the Lazarus Clinic's patients. There are complete biographies of the individuals and some information which must have been acquired by illegal hacking into private databases. The files list the members of the clients' families, their co-workers, where they were educated, what their favorite colors are and other information. They are a bizarre mix of sensitive information and utter trivia.

ORGANLEGGERS

The PCs may want to speak with the organleggers about where they acquired the clone. Doc Sally was understandably rattled by what happened, so she is lying low for awhile. The building where the clone awoke is now completely abandoned, with no sign of ever having been used as a body shop.

Finding the Organleggers: Characters could use their Streetwise skill to get in touch with the meat merchant. Contacts might also help—an unlicensed doc or cyber-technician might know where to find Doc Sally. Cops or other official types will have a harder time locating the organlegger because she is deliberately trying to avoid the authorities.

The organlegger will initially be afraid that the PC is out for revenge—she will consent to a face-to-face meeting only after a fair amount of negotiation through a third party. If the PC can convince her that he is not out for blood—and can make it worth her while financially—the organlegger will agree to meet with him at a bar called the Tissue Culture Club.

Meeting: The Tissue Culture Club is a sleazy dive in one of the city's most dangerous neighborhoods. It occupies the basement of a condemned building and is decorated with huge blowups of illustrations from medical journals. The place is frequented by organleggers, street docs and hustlers involved in illegal biotech. Many of the customers have bizarre body modifications—fangs, fur or extra organs.

Doc Sally is waiting at a booth in back. The organlegger will be nervous, particularly if the clone is present at the meeting.

The meat merchant will haggle a bit about payment and so forth—this can either be roleplayed or resolved with a contest of

Merchant skills. But she will eventually let the PCs know that she bought the clone body from a fence named Uncle Harry, who occasionally deals in spare body parts. They can provide the PCs with Harry's phone number.

Rude Interruption: Just as the characters are getting the information from the organlegger, the Tissue Culture Club goes silent as a dozen punks enter wearing gang colors. They are the Rippers, a street gang, who have been hired to kill Doc Sally and the cloned PC. The Rippers are not subtle—they will simply attack the group without preamble. All the gang members are essentially identical except for the leader, Bloody Jack. The Rippers should have half again as many gang members as there are people in their target group. They will fight until half the gang has been incapacitated or until Bloody Jack is seriously wounded.

None of the Rippers knows who hired them except Bloody Jack, and he will not talk voluntarily. If the characters somehow coerce him into telling, all he can reveal is that a tall woman with white hair paid him \$1000 to waste the group. He doesn't know who the woman is.

UNCLE HARRY'S SHOP

Doc Sally bought the clone from a dealer named Uncle Harry, who makes his living buying and selling illegal goods and services. She can provide the PCs with the phone number for Uncle Harry's front business, Uncle Harry's Adult Video and Novelties.

If the PCs contact Harry by phone, he will try to brush them off—a fence doesn't stay healthy by naming names. The characters can try Fast Talk or Merchant skill on him, but Harry will only be interested if they offer money. Once an agreement is reached, he will instruct the party to meet him at his store; he won't give out information over the phone.

Store: Uncle Harry's Adult Video and Novelties is an incredibly sleazy store selling some of the most degenerate pornography available. He stocks holotapes and dream chips showing people doing things the PCs cannot even imagine. The shop also has a full line of accessories for unknown perversions.

Back Room: Behind the sex shop is Uncle Harry's real business. The back room is filled with second-hand cyberwear, some illegal weapons, unlicensed software and stolen hardware. The stockroom is separated from Harry's office space by a folding bamboo screen, and the only light in the place comes from a single lamp in the office. Uncle Harry is sitting behind his cluttered desk when the PCs enter. He is quite dead.

Assassin: Dr. Gomez has sent O'Doul to deal with Uncle Harry. She is still lurking in the stockroom and will try to kill off the cloned

PC and the clone. Her strategy will be to use her laser carbine to pick off the most vulnerable members of the party. She is wearing a ski mask to conceal her identity; only if she is defeated can the PCs get a look at her face. Anyone who has been to the Lazarus Clinic will recognize her.

GOMEZ'S PLAN

Dr. Gomez has devised a bizarre and sinister way of gaining wealth and power. He has prepared new clones for all the Lazarus Clinic's patients, but has read braintapes of his own mind into all of them. So any contract-holder who dies will be replaced by a clone with Dr. Gomez's personality. In effect, Dr. Gomez will become a whole legion of people. He has been disposing of the old clones by selling them off to organleggers.

Once Gomez realizes his plan may be discovered, he will have O'Doul kill anyone who can provide information about what is going on. Otherwise, he will take no action—time is on his side, after all. If O'Doul is defeated, Gomez will hire other assassins to get the job done (if the referee has any favorite killing-machine NPCs, use them. Otherwise, the assassins will be identical to O'Doul, but with extra skill levels).

If the PCs figure out what is going on, there are several ways they can thwart the doctor's plan. Those with media or police connections can try to get an official investigation of Gomez started. Naturally, this will take awhile, and Gomez will have assassins after the PCs the whole time. Or the characters can take matters into their own hands, and destroy the clones and their creator.

CLINIC BUILDING

Reception Area: This is where O'Doul works. Clients enter here and conduct all the necessary paperwork before seeing Dr. Gomez. While at work, O'Doul keeps a heavy laser pistol in her desk drawer to deal with any unforeseen problems.

The front door is bulletproof clear plastic and has a beam sensor alarm inside it.

Business Office: This is where the administrative work is done. Hardcopy files contain all the information stored in the computer, and a terminal gives access to the clinic's computer with no security software.

Utility Room: The clinic's computer is in here, along with the air conditioning, electrical junction box, phone connectors and water valves. The controls in this room can shut off all the alarms in the building and deactivate the elevators. However, life support for the clones in hibernation is on an independent system. This room is always locked.

Preparation Room: This is where Dr. Gomez prepares clones from tissue samples. Several small tanks of culture medium contain clone fetuses in various stages of development. Once they reach full size, the clones are transferred to hibernation tanks in the vault downstairs. An

elevator platform in the corner connects to the vault through an airlock.

The prep room is guarded by a sonic sensor which will trigger an alarm and a gas canister filled with knockout gas. A Stealth 4 roll is required to avoid triggering the sensor. It runs off building power, so it will be deactivated if the power is cut.

Examining Rooms: These rooms are where tissue samples are taken and braintapes made. Each room contains a full set of braintaping equipment. The walls are decorated with soothing holograms of forests.

Gomez's Office: This is where Dr. Gomez works. The room is lavishly furnished, with an Oriental rug, leather chairs and fine paintings. The desk has a terminal linked to the clinic computer. The top drawer of the desk is locked—it contains a laser pistol and Gomez's journal. The journal is full of paranoid ravings and grandiose plans, but anyone devoting at least 10 minutes to reading it will be able to determine what Gomez is up to.

Loading Dock: This is where supplies are brought into the clinic. The outer doors are steel, and a beam sensor alarm covers the doorway. There is a large freight elevator in the floor, going down to the storage area next to the vault.

Storage: This room holds spare tanks of nutrient solution and freon for the clones in hibernation. An airlock connects it with the vault. The airlock can be operated even if the electricity has been shut off.

Vault: The vault is a large room lined with hibernation tanks containing over 200 clones. Each tank has its own refrigeration machinery, and all are equipped with emergency batteries which can keep them running for a week without external power. Inside the tanks, the clones wait, covered with a light frost layer. They look very peaceful.

NEW DISADVANTAGE

Masochism -10 points

Whereas a sadist gains pleasure from the infliction of pain on others, the masochist enjoys feeling pain himself. This does not alter the effect of injuries, but it does mean that the masochist will not avoid painful situations. Often a masochist and a sadist will form a dependent relationship (masochists react to those with the sadism disadvantage at +3). A masochist frequently has numerous scars (though in a high-tech world it might be possible to inflict pain without injury). Ordinary people will react to masochists at -2, but characters with the sadism disadvantage will be at +2.

DOC SALLY (200 POINTS)

Doc Sally is a disbarred physician who now makes a living as an organlegger, providing illegal transplants and surgery. She

enjoys inflicting pain (which is what got her license revoked) and consequently prefers to have her subjects awake but paralyzed while she operates on them. She dislikes combat, however, and in dangerous situations will fight only long enough to get away. Doc Sally is a short, slender woman who usually dresses in studded black leather.

ST: 10 Thrusting: 1D-2 Swinging: 1D

DX: 14

IQ: 16

HT: 10 (13 hit points)

Speed: 6 Move: 6

Advantages/Disadvantages: Rapid healing, sadism (-3 reaction from others), struggling (\$2700 cash).

Cyberwear: Biomonitor, Extra Hit Points (3 extra points).

Skills: Biochemistry 14, Chemistry 14, Computer Operation 16, Diagnosis 15, Forgery 15, Genetics 14, Guns (Gyroc) 14, Knife 15, Physician 17, Physiology 16, Scrounging 16, Stealth 13, Streetwise 16, Surgery 16.

Equipment: Light Monocrys suit, vibroblade, Gyroc pistol (loaded with Stingray, SLAP and APEX), medikit.

ROSEMARY O'DOUL (250 POINTS)

O'Doul is an extremely well-trained professional bodyguard. Dr. Gomez pays her to protect him and eliminate his opponents, and that is what she does. She usually seems completely emotionless—almost like a machine. But in battle, O'Doul comes alive—she is only really happy when she is fighting. She is almost impossible to bribe.

O'Doul also works as Dr. Gomez's receptionist at the Lazarus Clinic. She is a reasonably competent administrator and is as bland as a robot while on the job. O'Doul is a tall, muscular woman with crewcut white hair.

ST: 13 Thrusting: 1D Swinging: 2D-1

DX: 13

IQ: 12

HT: 12 (+10)

Speed: 8.25 Move: 8

Advantages/Disadvantages/Quirks: Alertness (+1), bloodlust, combat reflexes, average wealth (\$2450 wealth), duty to Dr. Gomez, no sense of humor.

Cyberwear: Bionic Reconstruction (+5 hit pts.), Night Sight Bionic Eyes, Extra Hit Points (+5 hit pts.), Chip Slot, Incapacity Override Chip (flight/berserk).

Skills: Stealth 13, Administration 14, Beam Wpns. (Laser) 17, Computer Operation 13, Computer Programming 11, First Aid 13, Guns (Gyroc) 16, Karate 13, Knife 15, Knife Throwing 15, Running 16.

Equipment: Laser carbine (with built-in laser sight), Gyroc pistol (loaded with SLAP, Stingray and APEX), medium Monocrys armor bodysuit (PD2, DR 16), reflex armor bodysuit (over Monocrys), vibroblade, four throwing knives.

DR. JERONIMO GOMEZ (250 POINTS)

Since childhood, Gomez has been determined to live forever. He became a physician in order to prolong his own life, and then became a specialist in braintaping and cloning.

Gomez is paranoid about germs and disease, and dislikes touching others.

He is a slender, intense, good-looking man in his early forties. Dr. Gomez always wears his armored vest and has an implant laser to protect himself with.

ST: 10 Thrusting: 1D-2 Swinging: 1D

DX: 13

IQ: 16

HT: 10 (+5)

Speed: 5.75 Move: 5

Advantages/Disadvantages/Quirks: Ally: O'Doul. Fanatic (about own immortality), greed, megalomania. **Phobias:** Dirt (mild) and insects (mild). **Quirks:** Will not shake hands, habitually scratches nose, makes puns frequently. **Status:** +1 level, strong will (+2), wealthy (\$49,400).

Cyberwear: Biomonitor, Bionic Eyes with +1 vision, Extra Hit Points (+5), Implant Laser Pistol (in right arm), Optic Readout, Weapon Link (+2).

Skills: Administration 14, Beam Weapons 16, Biochemistry 17, Chemistry 16, Computer Operation 16, Computer Prog. 15, Diagnosis 16, Electronics (Cyber) 14, Genetics 16, Karate 15, Law 14, Mechanic

(Cyber) 14, Physician 18, Physiology 16, Poisons 13, Psychology 16, Savoir-Faire 17, Surgery 16, Zoology 13.

Equipment: Medium Monocrys vest, emergency medikit.

RIPPERS (100 POINTS)

The Rippers are a bunch of kids from one of the vast housing projects of the city. They have almost no hope of getting a job or escaping life on the dole.

Being in the gang gives them a little wealth, some companionship and a taste of power. Most of the Rippers will be killed by drugs or fights before they are old enough to vote, but there are always more kids in the projects.

ST: 14 Thrusting: 1D Swinging: 2D

DX: 14

IQ: 10

HT: 12

Speed: 8 Move: 8

Advantages/Disadvantages/Quirks: Bully, impulsiveness, low status (-2), patron (Bloody Jack), poor (no cash), youth (two years underage).

Skills: Area Knowledge (City) 13, Brawling 15, Carousing 12, Holdout 10, Knife 15, Motorcycle 14, Running 12, Stealth 13, Streetwise 13.

Equipment: Vibroblade, light Monocrys vest, four doses of Slammer drug, 10 doses of Sin drug, motorcycle.

BLOODY JACK (200 POINTS)

Bloody Jack leads the Rippers gang. He is an effective leader and street fighter, but he is smart enough to see that the gang life leads nowhere, and he has set his sights higher.

Jack is slowly accumulating the equipment and training to become a cyberspace computer cowboy. This has led him to begin operating his gang as a mercenary outfit to earn money.

ST: 14 Thrusting: 1D Swinging: 2D

DX: 14

IQ: 11

HT: 10

Speed: 8 Move: 8

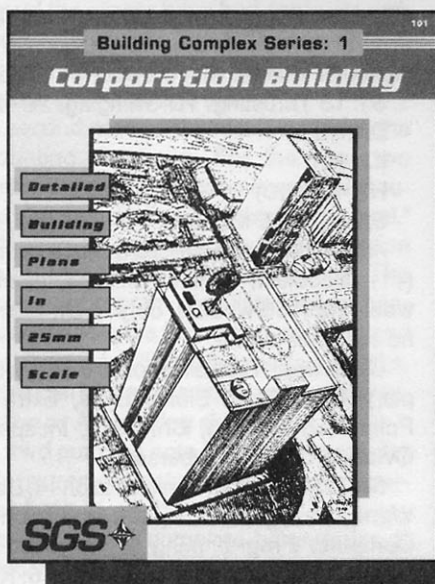
Advantages/Disadvantages/Quirks: Ambidexterity, bloodlust, code of honor (pirate's, poor (no cash, reputation (-2 reaction).

Cyberwear: Interface Jack, Retractable Claws (+2 damage), 4 Chip Slots, Macho Chip, Computer Prog. Chip (Skill 16), Karate Reflex Chip (Skill 18), Amp Chip.

Skills: Acrobatics 13, Area Knowledge (City) 12, Beam Wpn (Laser) 16, Brawling 15, Carousing 10, Computer Operation 13, Computer Programming 12, Computer Hacking 10, Fast-Draw (Pistol) 15, Knife 16, Knife Throwing 16, Leadership 11, Motorcycle 15, Running 16, Stealth 13, Streetwise 12.

Equipment: Laser pistol, reflex armor jacket, medium Monocrys vest, two throwing knives, vibroblade, motorcycle. Ω

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A08

al·li·ance \ ə-'lī-ən(t)s \ *n* (13c) **1** : union by relationship in qualities : AFFINITY **2** : union, relationship, or connection by kinship, marriage, or common interest

In 1992, GDW will unveil the product of a creative alliance unprecedented in the history of the gaming industry.



Space Fleet

Games Workshop.

\$24.95.

Designers: Jervis Johnson and Andy Jones.

Boxed game with two sprues of plastic starships (two starships per sprue), four-page rules pamphlet, four six-sided dice, six cardboard mapsheets, four cardboard helm displays and two countersheets of damage counters.

Space Fleet is one of Games Workshop's entries into lower-priced games, a game of titanic starship combat. Based on the *Warhammer 40K* Imperium universe, it simulates battles between Imperial Gothic battleships and Eldar solar-sailing Wraithships.

The game is very easy to learn and play. Each player takes a ship, which has its own maximum speed, shield rating, weapons capability and damage capacity. Shields are allocated before play according to the player's judgment, the direction of the solar wind is determined, and the players secretly decide on their maneuvers. All ships are moved simultaneously. Before combat, all ships that ended up in the same map square have to take damage from collision (how big are those ships when compared to the squares, anyway?).

Combat is simultaneous and simple. Each ship can only fire one direction per turn, at one target, in a certain range. The players decide who they're going to shoot and drop a number of dice in the box lid. The lid's bottom is divided into nine equal squares, five marked "Hit" and four marked "Miss." Hits damage a shield or the starship if no shields protect that side. If a Hit die comes up a 6, there is an additional critical hit effect, ranging from weapons damage to complete shield loss to engine damage.

There, now that you've read that description, you can play the game. No fooling.

RULES ADDITIONS

Of course, the GW boyz didn't want to leave it at that. Long ago they advertised a starship combat game tentatively called *Battlefleet Gothic*, a game which was never published. In the issue of *White Dwarf* that first debuted *Space Fleet*, new rules—lots of new rules—and ships were introduced, and successive issues introduced more ships and more rules. Still fairly simple rules, but

more of them nonetheless.

The physical detail of the plastic models in this game is impressive. The models are about three inches long, come with their own mounting stands and paint up very prettily. The Gothic battleship is a long, knife-like ship with cathedral superstructure, while the Wraithship resembles a streamlined fish-shape with lanteen sails—no, the blunt end is the front. It fooled me the first time, too. And, surprisingly, the plastic models have better detail and molding than the metal ones of the same ship types. So naturally you can't order more plastic ship sprues here in the states. Typical GW policy.

EVALUATION

The verdict? There's not much to this game for \$24.95. Oh, it's fun, but not half as fun as the extended game with the extra models and ship types outlined in *White Dwarf*. If you're looking for a fun ship game for the price, try *Silent Death* from I.C.E. If you're desperate for a *Warhammer 40K* ship game, willing to invest a lot of money in the lead ships, and willing to put up with Games Workshop's on-again, off-again style of putting rules in *White Dwarf* (they still haven't finished the new *40K* vehicle rules!), go ahead and buy this. I did.

'Ere We Go

Games Workshop.

\$39.95 (US).

Design: Bryan Ansell, Rick Priestley and Nigel Stillman.

208-page hardbound book with 10 pages of cardboard cut-outs.

Supplement to *Warhammer 40,000/Rogue Trader*. For gamemasters and players.

May 1991.

Skarbad Grimork 'ere again. Yer remembers back a few issues when me an' dis reviooin' git took a look at Waaargh da Orks? An' 'ow we sez dere wuz no rules innit for da Boyz? Well, 'ere day are. As you 'oomies sez, "Da ovver shoo 'as dropped."

In *Challenge 47* (with poignant comments from Skarbad) I reviewed Games Workshop's opus on Orks, *Waaargh the Orks!* At that time I noted that *Waaargh the Orks!* contained no rules whatsoever pertaining to any play in *Warhammer 40,000/Rogue Trader*. *'Ere We Go* is, as Skarbad notes, the other shoe dropping.

And an impressive one it is. *'Ere We Go* is one of the most massive books Games Workshop has yet produced, a hardbound monster that instantly daunts the casual

player and adds a good two to three pounds to an Ork player's gameload. Between the brightly colored covers (the cover illustration is the same one that Games Workshop uses on its plastic Orks box) is a compendium of all the *White Dwarf* articles previously printed that have to do with Ork rules, along with new rules sections, complete army lists for three of the six Ork clans, cardboard cut-out sheets for malfunction cards, repair cards and Orky templates, and a seven-page Ork fiction story.

The last sections of the book outline complete army lists for Goff, Snake-Bite and Blood-Axe warbands, complete with sample armies (a very nice touch; the lists are somewhat confusing without examples to follow). The story "The Morning After" precedes these lists. Like all Ork stories, it's enlightening and funny. I wish it had been illustrated.

RULES

Yer. It's a pretty funny 'un, too. Nuzzgrond gets 'imself inter trubble again, hur hur hur. Wot a naffin' git!

We'll get to that later. The bulk of *'Ere We Go* is what every Ork player has been waiting for—the rules for running Orks. These rules range from straight reprints of *White Dwarf* articles—the Weirdboy rules are a good example—to slight revisions of other articles and a few added rules sections, such as the weapons and wargear chapter. It seems that when rules worked in the original articles, Rick Priestley (the ultimate arbiter of *Warhammer 40K*) decided to leave them alone instead of messing with them further.

Armed with *'Ere We Go*, an Ork player can construct an entire warband using the army lists in the back of the book and powerhouse it through whole chapters of *Space Marines*. Complete rules are included concerning what can happen during the battle, after the battle, and in preparation for the next one (to Orks, existence is a series of battles broken by periods of bor

edom). The Painboy section describes (often humorously) Orky medical treatment and the bionic parts used to repair da Boyz—so long as they have teeth to pay for them! Weirdboyz, Ork psykers, are still as potent as when they first appeared in *White Dwarf*. The Madboyz rules are reprinted verbatim, which is excellent, because there's doubt as to whether they could be made funnier (Madboyz are one of the dubious benefits of playing Orks—a gang of pathetically, pathologically, comically insane Orks stumbling around doing totally unhinged things in the middle of battle. They're worth it for the

Reviews by
Craig Sheeley

comic relief, and sometimes even do something useful. Maybe).

The vehicles chapter not only contains rules governing the feared Kult of Speed and kustomized vehicles, but also includes complete vehicle templates for every Ork vehicle, allowing the use of all Ork wagons and bikes with the new vehicle rules. Further rules explain the maniac Shokk Attack Gun, a sort of wormhole-through-Hell weapon that drops warp-crazed Snotlings onto troops and into vehicles, and detail other less-insane weapons such as the Gretchin blunderbuss and the Stormboy jump pack.

The rules for Ork robots are some of the best and most complete I've ever seen. Ork robots act like robots—well, most of the time.

MEKANIACS

The Mekaniak rules deserve some explanation all their own. Orks don't maintain their gear very well, and it breaks down eventually. These rules postulate that the majority of these breakdowns occur during combat. To this end, 54 cardboard cards are included in the book detailing occurrences peculiar to Orks (Orky Events) and various breakdowns. The player fighting against the Orks draws 1D6 of these cards each Ork turn. One random card is drawn from the Orky Events and the malfunction cards are held, waiting for the Orks to do something. Whenever an appropriate weapon or vehicle is used, a malfunction card can be played on it. Weapons fail, jam or explode; vehicles break or inexplicably self-destruct, killing crew, passersby and point values; force-fields and equipment fail, etc. Murphy's Law comes for a visit and stays.

Of course, the Orks have some hope. Each Mekaniak in the force allows the Ork player to repair one malfunction, pretty much at random, using randomly drawn repair cards. Since an average *Warhammer 40K* game lasts three to eight turns, an Ork player really needs five to 10 Meks to even hope to protect his investment in any equipment. Unfortunately, getting this many Meks with a battleforce under 2000 points is very difficult.

The malfunction cards change the strategy of the game for the Ork player. The wide diversity of repair cards encourages the Ork player to take an extremely mixed force, but the wider diversity of the malfunction cards means that any equipment except bolters and kustom weapons are guaranteed to break, fail or blow up eventually, and there's not much the Ork player can do about it.

KUSTOMIZATION

Cummon, it's not 'opeless, lad. Tell 'em 'bout da kustom stuff, den!

The Orks have other compensations:

Personal force fields that take no saving throw modifiers (not even Terminators have it this good!), and the ultimate in firepower, Ork kustom weapons. For half the price of a heavy weapon (or less), Ork warbosses, nobbs and Meks can equip themselves with mek-built mutations of regular weapons—kombiweapons, where one gun acts as several, or kustom weapons, which usually turn out to be cheap, unbelievably powerful heavy weapons, enjoying many new advantages and few of the disadvantages usually accruing to heavy weapons. The first time I used one, I watched eyes pop as a Blood-Axe Mek walked out of obscuring psychic mist and fired three multi-melta shots at 36" range into a Marine squad. I had to show the Marine player the rules on kustom weapons to validate my tactic. Interest in facing my Ork force declined from that point on.

EVALUATION

Ah. Da part we been waitin' fer, eh ladz? Dis iz where da reviewin' git whinges a lot, har har har!

'Ere We Go is a nice piece of work from Games Workshop. In a pleasant change, its binding appears to be almost book-industry standard, capable of taking some use. (I'm not taking chances, though. I'm protecting my book from indiscriminate use. At least it looks sturdy.)

The rules are well-arranged, although I recommend players to read them all—I found two references to Space Marine autosenses being able to see through smoke, a brand new rule not printed anywhere else! Special mention must go to the vehicle, Speed Freek, post-battle and robot rules; they're very good, and very needed.

'Ere We Go contains plenty of rules, but it's not complete. Four new weapons are mentioned that aren't included; the Dreadnaught rules are still incomplete (that's more the fault of Rick Priestley and company, who need to finish the revision of vehicles rules and extend them to include dreadnaughts and robots). Why, the four-armed Ork Super Attack Onslaught isn't even mentioned or profiled, and that's the only kind of Ork dreadnaught Citadel sells any more.

I could have lived with some additional psychic rules for Weirdboyz; in *Waaargh the Orks!* fiction, a Weirdboy telepathically monitors an Imperial attack force.

There are no rules allowing this or any other kind of psychic activity save offensive capabilities in the current Weirdboy rules. And to top it off, only three out of the six clans have army lists presented—the others are in *Freebooterz*.

Likewise, I found the figure painting article to be a waste of space and color plate pages that could have been used for some of

Games Workshop's excellent artwork, something lacking in this book (certainly by comparison to the artwork in either *Realms of Chaos* volume. Hmm. Does this indicate a artists' preference for daemonic art over simple, fun-loving Orks). To be blunt, the illustrated conversions were adequate but the paint jobs were nowhere on par with those usually demonstrated in *White Dwarf*'s monthly 'Eavy Metal section. Some of these 'Eavy Metal pages were also printed in this chapter, totally embarrassing the artist who painted the central warband.

Every now and then I wish for some better playtesting from the Games Workshop workshop.

Judging from actual play, I suspect that the Mekaniak malfunction cards were not rigorously playtested. It's pretty gruesome when they knock out one Ork heavy weapon per turn and totally destroy one Ork vehicle every three turns, while the Orks have very little recourse except their highly limited Repair cards. I know Ork technology breaks, but that often?

And, strangely enough, the mad mek kustom creations aren't included in the Malfunction cards, even though logic indicates that they should malfunction with annoying regularity rather than tried-and-true designs like standard missile launchers and heavy bolters.

Yer. 'Sweeerd, inna? An' day left out da part about da meks fixin' fings durin' da battle, too.

Indeed. In one of the unpublished "gentlemen's agreements" that have made English game rules infamous, Ork Mekaniaks are allowed to try to repair broken gear during the game, using the same rules allowed Techmarines and Adeptus Mechanicus. That is, according to the person I spoke to at Games Workshop U.S.

'Ere We Go only costs \$5 less than *Realms of Chaos II* and is about 40 pages thinner. I'd have gladly paid the higher price to have the other three Ork clan army lists included, instead of having to wait for a much thinner but nearly as expensive book to follow.

I can't say that I can't complain about the inadequacies of *'Ere We Go* (I've been griping for the last five paragraphs), but I can't deny that I ordered *'Ere We Go* the moment it was available and started using it the moment I received it. For Ork players, it's invaluable.

And I must admit that the tactic of including more rules in another supplement to come, *Freebooterz*, was completely effective, setting me up to spend more money. It's an old tactic, and thoroughly slimy, but it worked.

Humies is so stooopid. Dis 'un blew most ov 'is teef on deese fiddly-bit books. Yoo gits probably will, too. Ω

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Challenge 59

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See page 80 for April Fools Insert feedback form.

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TWILIGHT: 2000

"Sailing": The real highways in 2000 are the rivers, lakes and oceans. Plus "One Night in the City" for **Merc: 2000**.

MEGATRAVELLER

"Wet Navy 3": Maritime environment and naval combat. And "Ships of the Black War" by Charles E. Gannon.

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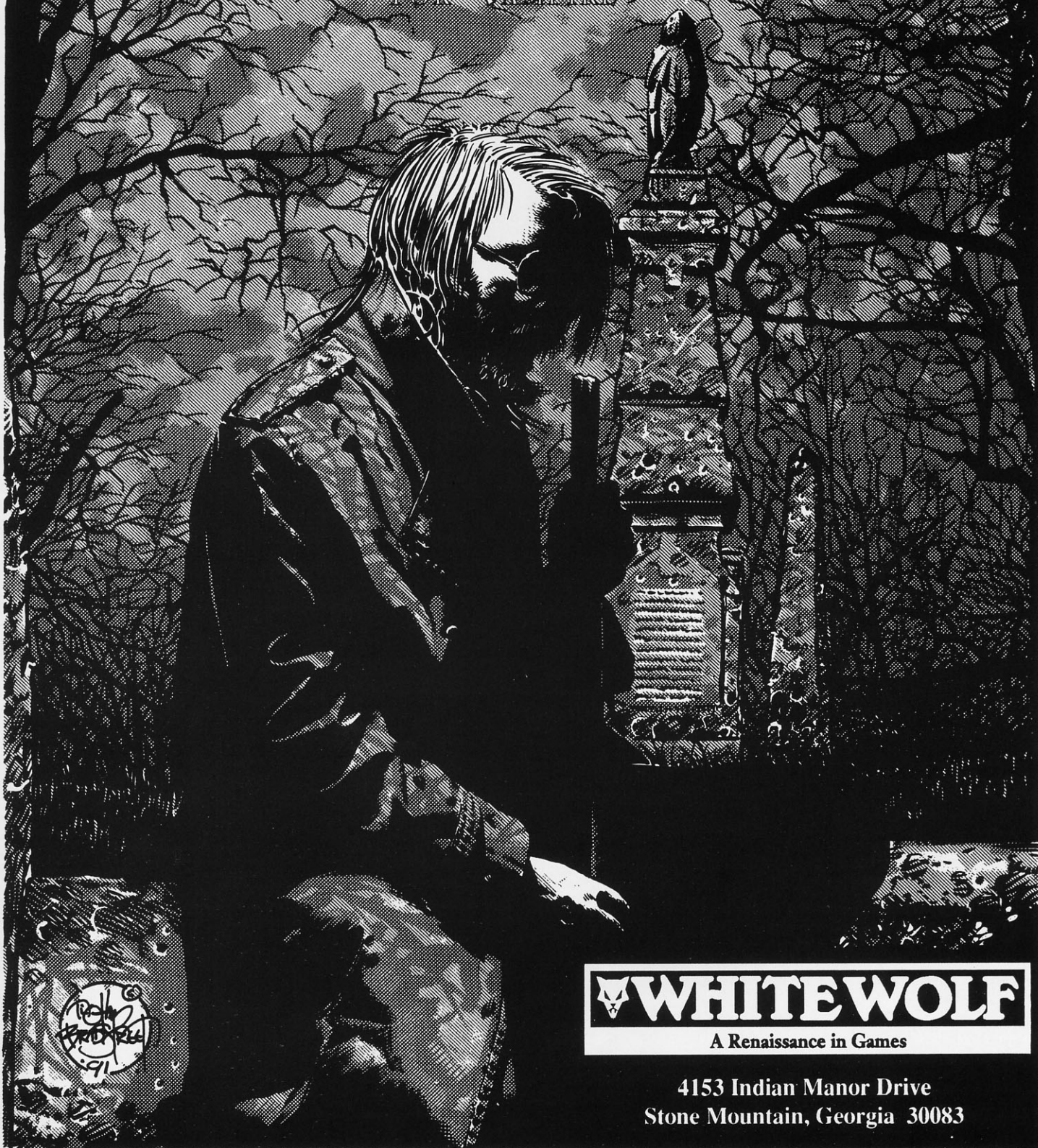
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April Fools Special

CHALLENGE 59½

The Magazine of Science-Fiction Gaming

DARK CONSPIRACY™

I Hate Mondays

Adam Geibel

MERC: 2000™

Surprise Party

George W. Herbert

CYBERPUNK 2.0.2.0.™

Send in the Clowns

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GDW

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Gift of the Maggi

Dem What Plays Wif Sharp Objects
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About the Cover

"Still Life With Blue Car, Number 6" by Jeff Laubenstein...the Rock Laubster...Baron von Laubenstein...the Laubenator...Laub-orama...Jeff.

Challenge, the magazine of science-fiction gaming, is published monthly.

Why is it published monthly? I'm glad you asked that. First, if it were published less often than monthly, it just wouldn't seem like a "real" magazine (no offense to those publications out there that aren't "real"). And second, if it were published more often than monthly, we'd probably all go screaming off into the night, pulling our hair out and gnashing our teeth.

Anyway, why am I blithering? Probably because it's 3:18 a.m., I just got the baby asleep for the zillionth time, and one cat is chewing on my copy while the other is sitting on my computer with her tail hanging in front of the screen. And you expect me to write something sane, interesting and life-changing? Bah, humbug.

Anyway, nobody ever reads this part of the magazine. To prove it, I just had a great idea. I'm going to conduct a little experiment, and you can help me. The first person who sends in the feedback form for this issue with "I LOVE Challenge" written across the top will win a free one-year subscription. I mean, let's face it—if you read the fine print on the credits page, you *must* love the magazine. Either that, or it's 3:24 a.m., you're supposed to be studying or working or something, and you've already read every cereal box in the house.

Anyway (haven't I heard that somewhere before?), I want to thank Loren, Lester, Dave, Nick, Steve, Steve, Steve and all the rest for their great ideas on this issue. I hope you like it. I do.

I'm going to get some sleep.

CHALLENGE

The Magazine of Science-Fiction Gaming

Merc: 2000

46 Surprise Party

The PCs must rescue a kidnapped businessman from a remote island in the Bahamas. The catch is, they have to go in unarmed. *By George William Herbert*

Dark Conspiracy

50 I Hate Mondays

A lifetime ago—or was it only a few minutes?—I stumbled like a zombie into the bathroom, intent on my morning ritual. Boy was I in for a change of plans. *By Adam Geibel*

Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.

56 Send in the Clowns

Want to be famous? Then this adventure is for you! Too bad you didn't ask what kind of fame you were going to acquire. *By Craig Sheeley*

Shadowrun

60 Law Enforcers

Most *Shadowrun* characters live life on the edge. But a few have gone too far in their zeal and right over the edge of what's considered normal behavior. *By Jeffrey L. Groteboer*

Star Trek

64 Last Generation

Energy bolts lash out from the alien vessel, snapping the *Enterprise's* warp nacelles off like twigs. #1, sticking out his chest: "What do they mean by this?" Data: "It would seem they intend to kick our &%%\$#@&, sir." *By Michael C. LaBossiere*

Ghostbusters International

66 Apocalypse Cow

A new power has risen in the United Galactic Council. This new threat to humans, this force of a third kind, is popularly known in the galaxy as the Jersey State. *By Lester Smith*

Tales from the Floating Vagabond

68 Bughunt

The Floating Vagabond is infested with Denebian, Pandimensional, Exponential Omni-Roaches. *By Nick Atlas*

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Mysteries Special Issue

Twilight: 2000, MegaTraveller, Space: 1889, 2300 AD, GURPS Cyberpunk and much more! See pages 1-40.



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Page Act II

Page Number Conversion Chart

Hey kids, it looks like mean old Dr. April Foolster has changed the page numbers to make it hard for us to find our way! So get out your 3-D decoder combs and follow me to the conversion chart in search of stupid remarks and prizes! Collect all six! Elf noses! Bavarian, please! Fnord!

Take the first digit of the number to the left-hand column, and index the second digit across the top, and we're off to thwart the bad doctor's nefarious plans.

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CHEEZ WHIZ STATISTICS

I would like to take exception with your ratings for one of the weapons listed in the **Merc: 2000** supplement, **Improvised Weapons of the World**.

In general, I found the book to be very informative and extremely entertaining. But my enjoyment was almost completely destroyed by what is obviously a *glaring* error on page 81, where you give the burst length of a Cheez Whiz can as 10 centimeters and list its magazine size as 20 bursts.

Well, my uncle works at a Cheez Whiz factory, and he informs me that it is unreasonably difficult to try to hold a burst down to anything shorter than 30 centimeters, and that given this burst length, the most bursts one can expect to get out of a can is five.

Obviously, you did not do your research carefully enough.

In order to correct this error, I would like you to recall all copies of the book, reprint them all with corrected statistics, and print a full-page apology to me and my uncle in the *New York Times*.

Thank you very kindly for your attention, and I look forward to your next release in the **Merc: 2000** line of products.

Fred Knoblach

Thanks very much for your letter, Fred. It is obvious that you are a serious aficionado of improvised weapons. However, from our extensive study, we believe that your uncle's ratings are inappropriate in this case.

Most likely, your uncle has been firing Cheez Whiz in the factory where he works. The fact that this is a very warm, enclosed environment, that the product is likely still hot from its processing, and that the propellant is at its freshest, combine to create longer bursts from each can.

In actual field conditions (which is what we work with), the cans are much cooler, the propellant much weaker, and the product itself much less flexible, yielding much shorter, more controlled bursts.

However, your letter points up a problem that is easily enough fixed with the following formula:

Burst length (cm) = STR × Initiative / [°C (can) - °C (ambient)]^D

D = expiration date printed on the can.

Try out this formula for yourself, and we believe you'll find it accounts for the variance between your uncle's data and ours.

It will also, of course, add a new level of tension and excitement to your role-playing, as your players will now be eternally uncertain as to just what performance they will get out of their ammunition.

By the way, we are currently testing out variants of this formula for use with whipped cream and even toothpaste pumps.

TALISMAN EXPANSION KIT

Could you give us some information about GDW's upcoming *Talisman* expansion kit?

Tommy Dweebles

Sorry, Tommy. Talisman is by Games Workshop (a company in a far-away kingdom called England). We are Game Designers' Workshop (a company in nearby Normal, IL).

IDAHO WAREHOUSE BATTLES

I am writing to complain about the review you printed a few issues ago about my new boardgame, *Idaho Warehouse Battles*.

Your reviewer called the game "stupid," but he is biased. I demand a second opinion.

Jasper Clutch

Okay, Jasper. We went out (at some considerable trouble) and got someone else to play and review your game, asking for a second opinion. This second reviewer said, "It's ugly and it's stupid." Is that good enough?

POLITICAL AGENDAS

I've just read another of your alleged company's ads, and I've about had it with your pinko political agendas. It's socialistic lefto claptrap like yours that

has sapped this country's will and made it the laughing stock that it is today.

You low-life Fellow Travelers (get it: *Travelers*) think you're getting away with something, but I'm onto you like a cheap suit. I know what's going on. I don't need a Weatherman to tell me it's raining.

If I had actually *bought* any of your alleged games, I'd demand a refund, but I wouldn't give you scum the satisfaction—and anyway, they won't let me have control of my checking account any more.

The fact that people like you are still allowed to sell such *garbage* is just one more example of the subtle manipulation going on in this country! The Stringpullers, the Controllers, all expect us to lie down like Sheep and fall into lockstep behind them.

But not me. I *know* what's happening! I *know* what they're putting in the water. I *know* about the food additives. I *know* about the psychic mind-control laser beams in the TV set in the patients' lounge!

I *know* the orderlies are out to kill me—that's why I wear aluminum foil in my underwear, so the microwave beams from the moon can't destroy my purity of essence!

And don't even ask about the flies—crawling all over the place rubbing their filthy little legs together, talking about me behind my back. Yes, I *know* all about the flies! And about the beaded curtains!

And I've scraped and scraped the hearts and diamonds off 76 decks of cards to make a bomb—and I've hidden it in my mattress so *they* can't find it.

Soon! Soon I'll use it to make the voices stop bothering me. I tried to make them stop with the power drill, but *they* caught me at it, and now I can't even work in the wood shop any more!

I ask you, is that *fair*? Ah-ooooooooo! AH-OOOOO!

Please send me one of your catalogs.

Fenris Woofaroonie

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(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

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(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(Miniature players list time periods)

GC3

Surprise Party

By George William Herbert

An apparently legitimate businessman from Florida, Pedro Guerremo, wants to hire the PCs. He says that a friend of his, Doug Sewell, has been kidnapped and must be rescued from a remote island in the Bahamas. He doesn't want to involve the authorities, as they would undoubtedly pry into his friend's business, which is somewhat less than legitimate. And to avoid legal repercussions, Guerremo insists that the rescue be pulled off without harming anyone.

Guerremo offers \$3000 total per person, paid half now and half upon successful completion of the mission. If the characters insist that the nature of the mission (nonlethal weapons, etc) makes it more dangerous than usual, he's willing to go as high as four times that much.

Guerremo can provide waterborne transport (a high-speed, deep-V, ocean racer yacht) to the island for insertion and extraction. He also gives the PCs a map of the island and several photos of his friend.

The rescue will be made three days hence between 10 p.m. and midnight local time.

REFEREE

The PCs may think they're wading into a nest of drug dealers. Despite what Guerremo told them, they will probably go well armed. But they should remember that the rest of their payment depends on their completing the mission without harming anyone.

The truth of the matter is that Guerremo is lying to the characters. His friend has not been kidnapped, though he's about to get tied down. Three days hence, Sewell's bachelor party is going to be held at a friend's mansion on the island of Baranos. Guerremo was asked to provide "a surprise" for the party.

Guerremo never did have very good judgement.

ISLAND

Guerremo meets the PCs at the airport and drives them to the boat. The boats' skipper and owner is in on the joke. He has brought along a friend (and a pair of M-16s) just in case, but both will stay with the boat.

The island is about a kilometer long and half a kilometer wide, with the long axis running east-west. The mansion is the only structure on the island, sitting about 50 meters from the north shore near the middle of the island. Except for a lawn between the mansion and the beach, the rest of the island is lightly forested.

On the evening of the planned rescue, there is light, high cloud cover and a quarter moon (Light Level 3). The boat has silencers on its motors (Sound Level II if it moves under five kilometers per hour).

If the PCs observe the island from a distance, they will see 10 apparently unarmed individuals engaging in unknown activities around the mansion and on the beach.

How the PCs proceed with the rescue is up to them. The boat will land them wherever they want and wait there until they return.

Ambush: When the characters set foot ashore, they will be "ambushed" by two people sleeping in the bushes. If the characters don't threaten them too badly, the two will assume the characters are part of the party and go back to sleep. In any case, they're too drunk to explain the purpose of the party.

Rescue: The mansion is two stories tall. The ground floor is filled with party-goers, about 100 overall. On successful Observation skill checks, the characters will locate Sewell. He's apparently unconscious, tied to a chair in the middle of the main room, disheveled and shirtless. His best man (6'3", 220 pounds and obviously physically fit) stands next to him. The PCs will probably assume he's been beaten and is being guarded, a sick party sideshow.

Presumably, the characters will go in guns (or stun grenades, etc) blazing. Perhaps five of the guests are armed (handguns only), but are unlikely to fire unless they think their life is in danger.

If the characters are there for more than a minute or two, someone will try to tell them that this is Sewell's bachelor party.

The characters may respond as they believe.

Guerremo: The man responsible for all this is upstairs. If he hears anything beyond normal party sounds, he'll come downstairs to investigate in a couple of minutes. If the characters haven't left yet, he'll try to explain to them that this is all a big joke. Again, the characters may respond as they believe.

CLEANUP

Eventually, the characters will learn that Sewell indeed was at his bachelor party.

If no one else tells them, Sewell will clue them in when he wakes up on the boat on the way home.

What they do at that point is up to the PCs. Assuming that nobody got killed in the raid, they can return Sewell and try to collect their pay from Guerremo.

If someone was killed or seriously injured, the PCs forfeit their pay, and the local authorities will want to know what happened.

If the characters have relatively good reputations or high renown, or if Guerremo survives to explain, the authorities will buy the explanation—but they'd better stay out of the Bahamas for awhile. If the PCs went berserk, they'll probably be charged with any crimes they committed.

Either way, Guerremo is in a bit of hot water. He'll be held responsible for any damage and injuries that occur.

If no one was hurt, Sewell may reward them for having made his bachelor party a memorable experience. After all, it was a good surprise. Ω

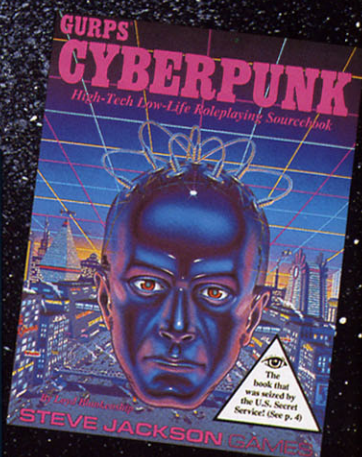
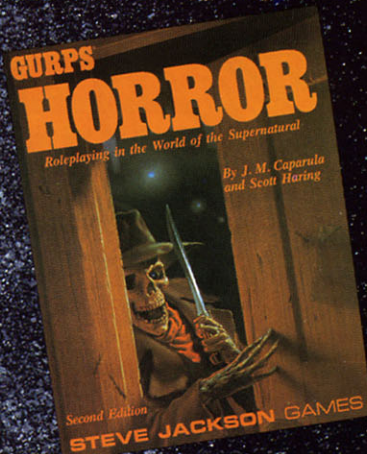
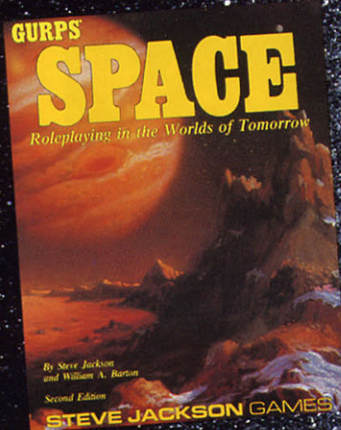
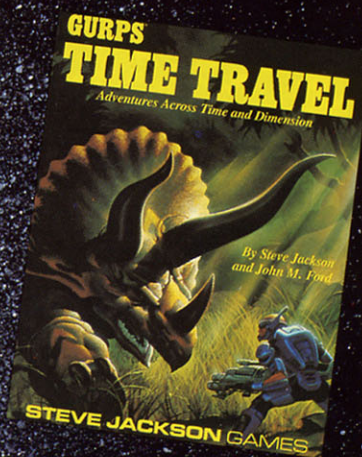


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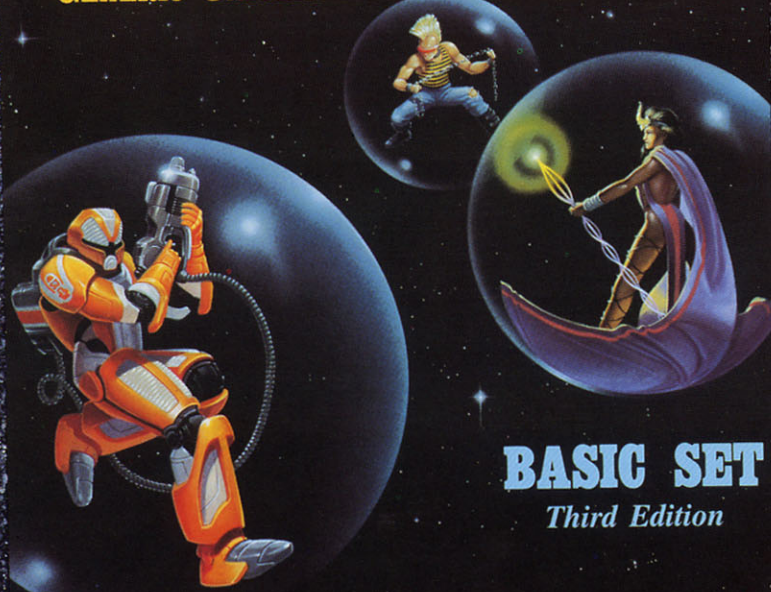
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Foot-pounds? I wanted Newton-meters!

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By Adam Geibel

I hate Mondays. Take today, for instance: A lifetime ago—or was it only a few minutes?—I stumbled like a zombie into the bathroom, intent on my morning ritual. I flipped back the toilet lid and nearly got a faceful of needles.

This...thing...jumped out of the stool and slamdanced around the bathroom like a ping-pong ball on coke. All I could do was try to avoid becoming its breakfast.

Finally, I got my little friend securely wrapped up in a towel. And now I'm ready to call the gang, the FBI and the local liquor store—but not necessarily in that order.

It's early morning and a lone player character stumbles to the bathroom. During the night something malevolent has gurgled up into the toilet, patiently floating...waiting.... It's a Bloat, and it isn't pretty.

Most encounters with Dark Minions and their ilk occur out

in the world, when the adventurers are at least somewhat prepared to face horror. Rarely are the PCs challenged when and where they are the most vulnerable, immediately after waking up and in the supposed safety of their home. Or maybe after a party or night of drinking, during a lunch hour, or in someone else's dwelling.

The beastie opposition should be tailored so that the meeting isn't overwhelmingly one-sided. (For example, instead of a Bloat, the resident of the bowl could be a leech, rat, giant cockroach, snake or baby alligator.) The player character will be in a state of undress (e.g., two pieces of underwear, cartoon-printed pajamas, or naked as the day he was born). He will start the encounter at a slightly reduced Initiative (at least two levels below his regular Initiative, with a minimum of Initiative 1). The character's regular Initiative returns as soon as the action begins, since being attacked by a small, nasty homicidal pincushion first thing in the morning is more electric than any cup of coffee.

WHAT'S BEHIND THIS DOOR?

Most bathrooms have a linen closet, hamper, mirror, shelves, sink with a cabinet below it, standard toilet bowl with the toilet's water closet behind it, bathtub with showerhead and faucets, and shower curtain or glass shower door. The toilet lid can be open, closed or broken. A vent and fan draw off the steam into the dwelling's central venting system.

The linen closet, shelves and sink cabinet generally hold an assortment of generic or gender-specific items—towels, toilet paper, soap, razors, shaving cream, scissors, rubbing alcohol, band-aids, medicines, combs, hand mirrors, cosmetics, hairspray, muscle and moisturizing creams, cleaning supplies, plungers, portable radio etc.

A power switch generally activates lights over the mirror and on the ceiling, as well as an electrical socket.

ALTERNATIVES

When the Bloat attacks, the PC will basically have three options—annihilate the little bugger, capture it or just try to get away. Do not allow the player much more real time than game time to think! This is a situation where imagination is the best guideline for player and referee alike.

Get Me Out of Here! Running away merely puts off dealing with the inevitable. The PC will have to go home sometime, and the Bloat will be waiting.

I Got It! In the ensuing fight, the character will scramble for whatever he can use to nail this critter. The referee will have to determine the effectiveness of any attempt to capture the Bloat. For example, is the towel big and thick enough to trap the little bugger?

Kill It, Kill It! The Bloat's capabilities make it a formidable

opponent in a small enclosed space, as it can bounce off of the walls like a maniacal pinball. The effectiveness of expedient weapons is a subjective decision of the referee. Will the bright blue cleaning fluid be toxic to the bloat? A fast swat might just send the portable radio head-on into the Bloat as the critter makes its leap out of the bowl, sending both beastie and electronics back into the water for a shocking resolution.

Help Me! The worst-case scenario is that the character is stuck by the Bloat and rendered helpless until somebody arrives to unplug it. If that somebody isn't friendly, the PC could be in for a worse turn of luck.

If the PC "wins," questions will begin to brew as soon as he's had a chance to calm down. How did the critter get in the toilet? Is it somebody's warped idea of a joke? Revenge tactic? Combination of bad luck and worse plumbing? And what will the PC do with the critter now that the dust has settled?

BLOATS

Bloats are amphibious creatures about the size of a human fist, housed in a leathery black shell and covered on all sides with tough, barbed spines which are about four centimeters long. For statistics and additional information on Bloats, see page 190 of Dark Conspiracy.

LEECHES

To down-scale the opposition in this scenario, the referee may use a somewhat less formidable an opponent than the Bloat—a parasitic slug known as a Leech. It is unknown whether the Leech is a new alien lifeform, a genetically engineered creature, or a variation or deliberate mutation of the insectoid alien.

The Leech measures 0.3 to 0.5 meters in length and 0.15 meters in diameter. It resembles an overgrown terrarium garden snail, with slimy gray skin, two eye stalks, and three 0.3-meter-long chitinous tendrils above a toothless mouth.

The Leech is a very intelligent creature that uses human hosts to interact with society and achieve its unfathomable goals and missions. After entering the human body, it attaches itself, via its tendrils, to the host's spine, "hotwiring" itself to the host's central nervous system. In this configuration, it can access to 95% of the host's thoughts, acquired knowledge and skills.

Infestation by a Leech short-circuits the host's freewill and increases the host's necessary caloric consumption. Other symptoms of infestation are sluggish, almost jerky body movements and a less social demeanor—both signs of the creature's difficulty in relating to human society.

Humans can theoretically recover from infestation by a Leech, though no recoveries have been known to date.

Leech

Strength: 3/as host

Constitution: 6

Agility: 1/ (as host-1)

Intelligence: 8

Special: Darkling Empathy.

Education: 2/as host

Charisma: —/(as host-1)

Empathy: 4

Initiative: 4

Move: 2

Skill/Dam: 5 (as host)/1D6

Hits: 3/10 (+host)

#Appear: 1

Statistics for infesting creature are listed in parentheses. In preinfestation form, the creature attacks to enter host body. Ω

TRAVELLER *News Service*

Lair/Oorraenang

Date: 123-4567

¶"Woof! Woofwoofwoofwoof." "Grrrrrrrowff!! Grrrrrr, grrrrr." "Browff!" "Grrrowwowowow! Hrrrrrrmff! Owooooo! Owooooo!" "Snrrrruff! Yap! Yapyapyapyapyapyap."

¶And so the conversation continued on inconclusively for hours between Minister for Tennis Balls Halifax Gvererererrrrnd and Shadow Councilor for Chew Toys Wisconsin Snnfzbut.

Dlan/Ilelish

Date: SOT-HERE

¶Responding with irritation to a number of recent public statements in which Lucan has compared himself to his uncle Strephon, Dulinor took a moment in a public appearance to open a new pizza joint to issue the following rebuttal:

¶"Now Lucan, I know you've been talking about how much you're like Strephon and how much your rule will be like Strephon's. Well let me tell you something. I knew Emperor Strephon. I shot Emperor Strephon. You're no Emperor Strephon."

Vland/Vland

Date: WOW-MAN

¶The entire Vilani language has collapsed under the weight of excess syllables in a shocking, although to be quite honest, not altogether unforeseen, development. Native Vilani speakers have been reduced to using words of only one syllable.

¶"It's bad. Real bad." said Enkiligimaggilakundun "Big Gashuggamaggaterium" Dagushaggaknockthreetimesontheceilingifyouwantmelikkigerkun.

¶"I can't say...the things I want to say...like, you know, my own name," responded another stunned citizen, Mrs. Makhigarkhurunershili Asarampulishagerukkundelikikkikkikkikasaurus, housewife and mother of two. She attempted mightily to give the names of her two children to this interviewer, but she was ultimately unable to do so. "It's...just...so...hard, you know?"

Remulak/France Sector

Date: SAT-NITE

¶Imperial sources report that perhaps the single Imperial world most hard hit by the collapse of trade following the Rebellion is the planet Remulak.

¶Planetary spokesperson Beldar Conehead takes up the story. "Due to our need to constantly consume mass quantities of beer and chips, we are rapidly exhausting the ability of our ecosystem to support us. Many people have tried to help by sending single beers, but as we can only drink them six at a time, this has proven to be of no assistance. Normally we would be able to exist on fried chicken embryos, but we have donated them all to trick-or-treaters."

¶More on this tragic story as it develops.

Kirur/Ruupiin

Date: WIL-BURR

¶After years of study, the Kree—known colloquially as the Centaurs and known until recently as the K'kree—have conquered their stuttering problem. Rumors that this is just another Hiver manipulation intended to put the surly Centaurs off their feed have been quashed by declassified government documents.

¶Apparently the trick is simply to take a moment to chew your cud and relax before you start speaking.

¶Despite this dramatic breakthrough, members of the government of the Two Thousand Worlds indicate that they will maintain all their other policies, including their crusade to k'kill the c'carnivores!! Oh n'no. Here we g'go ag'gain. Have a c'carrot.

Glea/Centrax



Zhdant/Zhuan

Date: WE-KNOW

¶Tavrched' headquarters has announced two new thought crimes, so all you proles, *listen up!!!* And don't try to pretend you didn't hear.

¶The first is taking those little paper tags off your mattress, and the other is not getting a clean plate from the waitress on each subsequent trip up to the salad bar. Punishment in both cases is to be locked with your entire family into a mobile home or nuclear submarine for several months and shipped in a cargo module to some backwater area of the Imperium.

¶You wipe that smirk off your brain. We're not the type to kid.

¶Starships throughout the Imperium are flocking to starports in order to undergo expensive refits.

¶This is the result of widespread rumors of a new ship design system to be instituted with a new rules revision that will, at a stroke, make all existing starships obsolete. Starship captains are feverishly hoping to second-guess the forces of galactic harmony and anticipate which modifications their ships will need in order to prosper under the new rules system. Many ships have had perfectly useless fraznium generators or doubletalk fields installed and then torn out to make room for fusion-powered elbow rests on the basis of the prevailing state-of-the-rumor art.

¶Currently at the top of the speculation heap is the "fuzzy dice" rumor, which states that the new rules system will penalize any starship that doesn't have a pair of fuzzy dice hanging on the bridge by assessing a -2 DM to hit when firing its weapons. This rumor only recently beat out the similar "pine tree air freshener" rumor, much to the relief of small pine-tree-shaped cardboard animals throughout the Imperium.

¶Demand for fluorescent-colored fur is at an all-time high, much to the chagrin of cyperpunk characters everywhere. Currently, however, just about everyone is getting nervous about the newly rumored "vending machines in the freshers" rule.

Capital/Core**Date: OOP-SORY**

¶A spokesman for the Imperial household read a prepared statement this morning:

¶"The Imperial government would like to apologize for any inconvenience caused by the past six years of civil war. Sources close to the Imperial bathroom this morning reported that Strephon has emerged from his shower after an unusually long wash, surprised to hear of the events that have taken place during his toilet.

¶"While this may be hard for many of you to understand, particularly those whose homes have been burned and families butchered, we just hadn't been able to find Strephon.

¶"We looked for him for days. We had no idea he'd still be in the shower after all that time. So we just figured that, rather than announcing that we'd lost him, it would be easier to say he was dead.

¶Who knew?" Ω

**News Summary!!!
A Traveller News Service Special Feature**

**Gripping Eyewitness Account,
Based on an Interview
with Archduke Dulinor Astrin Ilethian**

Dulinor woke up in the bathroom.

"Oh man, not again," he thought. "I can't take this anymore. I'm the Emperor. I've got to pull myself together." But wait. Something wasn't right. This wasn't the morning after one of his binges. There were no tell-tale Yoo-Hoo bottles, no Archie comics with all the pictures of Reggie scribbled out.

In fact, he wasn't sure if this was a bathroom at all, come to think of it. Unless people started putting toilets in sumptuously appointed living rooms. But he felt like he'd been here before.

It was the master bathroom of the emperor's personal quarters at Capital. "But I haven't been here in six years. I told them I just splashed my pants while I was washing my hands. But they wouldn't believe me. They just kept laughing and laughing, the whole Empire. I had to kill them. I've got to get out of here before someone arrests me."

Dulinor tried to massage away the kink in his neck and noticed that he'd fallen asleep with a cheap paperback holoreader in his lap. "Thrilling Stories of Political Intrigue." He didn't remember reading that. He abruptly noticed that he was straining to see the chainmail-bikiniéd bimbo on the cover through a rapidly building cloud of mist that was filling the room. "What's this?" he wondered.

Before he could stop, he found himself groping through the blinding fog, hot and humid, tangy with the smell of deodorant soap. Somewhere a spray of water pattered against a wall. He made his way toward the sound and heard the sound of uncertain whistling.

"Manly, yes. But the empress likes it too."

There—through the fog. Behind a marbled glassteel panel was the shape of a man scrubbing his back. Dulinor wished he had a gun.

The water stopped.

The figure opened the sliding glassteel door.

A man stepped out into the swirling fog, a man with a stupid piece of metal wrapped around his head.

"Aren't you glad you used Dial? Don't you wish everybody did?"

The fog eddied and swirled, the figure grew firmer, more distinct, as the fog opened to reveal...*Strephon!*

"Dul, you old voyeur. Hand me a towel, would you?"

"Str-Str-Str-Str..."

"Strephon," the emperor replied helpfully. "Oh, Dul, you haven't been here all night, have you? Don't tell me I'm going to have to be pulling pictures of Reggie out of my john for the next week."

"Your highness," was all Dulinor could think to say. Ω

The Rebellion

This whole mess started out with the assassination of Emperor Strephon by Archduke Dulinor. Then it turned into a full-blown civil war between eight or more factions struggling over the Irridium Throne. As the Rebellion enters its seventh (or is it eighth?) year, it is only fair for TNSCW to reevaluate various faction leaders

PLAYERS

Conventional Wisdom

Dulinor		Old CW: Reformer who will shake up the complacent. New CW: The idiot responsible for the Hard Times.
Craig		A political nobody who became a hero when the Solomani invaded, but everybody still thinks he's a lizard.
"Strephon"		He looks like Strephon, he acts like Strephon, but will he play in Peoria?
Norris		Old CW: He's been cut off by the Vargr, tough break. New CW: He's been cut off by the Vargr, lucky break.
Lucan		His Black War strategy shows us that we won't have a kinder, gentler Imperium.
Ishuggi		The real power resides with the four bureaux; maybe he should be called Milli Vilani.
Margaret		Due to the recent discrediting of IRIS, old Marge is fighting the Rebellion blind.
Brzk		Ever since he formally seceded from the Imperium, the human population renamed him Duke Berserk.
Solomani		They were winning until they started arguing over who is a Solomani. They have met the enemy and "he is them."
Vargr		Maybe if we roll up a newspaper and hit them with it really hard, they will finally stop invading our space.
Zhodani		Old CW: These guys can read your mind. New CW: These guys can see the future.
Aslan		They keep the Solomani in check, but they also believe the Imperium's territory is up for grabs.
Droyne		They have watched the Imperium gradually destory it-self. Could they know something we don't?
Strephon		You may have been one of the most boring emperors who ever lived, but at least you held it all together.

CHALLENGE *Submissions*

The Magazine of Science-Fiction Gaming

Unsolicited manuscripts become the property of GDW and *cannot be returned* unless accompanied by a large SASE. GDW is not responsible for articles lost in the mail. *Never* send your only copy of an article, diagram or illustration. You will normally be notified within 90 days of your article's acceptance, rejection or need for a rewrite. If you have not heard from us within 90 days, you may inquire. Accepted articles are subject to editing.

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Format: We cannot consider handwritten manuscripts. All manuscripts must be *double-spaced* on standard-sized white or off-white paper. The first page must contain the *author's name and address*, and his *social security number*, as well as the *title of the article*, the *game it refers to*, the *publisher of that game*, and an *estimated word count*. Each page must be numbered and contain the author's name. If more than one manuscript is submitted at a time, include the title on each page.

Articles may be *no more than 4000 words in length* unless previously approved by the managing editor. Always include clear, precise sketches of maps, diagrams or pieces of equipment for artist reference. If you send photocopies for artist reference, always indicate the original source or publication. If your article includes tables, send a printout of each table the way it should appear to help our typesetters set it up correctly.

Always send with your submission a copy of your technical design spreadsheets, if applicable (especially for *MegaTraveller*). Also, please include a bibliography of your sources, especially with historical or geographical submissions. Please mark both technical design sheets and bibliographies "for reference only—not part of the article."

Articles generally use three levels of headings (*refer to past issues for specific examples*). The first level is the title of the article. Next, any divisions within the article need *section headings*, which are all caps on their own line (like Subject Matter, below). Any further divisions within a section need *subsection headings*, which are upper and lower case, followed by a colon and text (like Payment, above).

Computers: *Submissions on disk are strongly encouraged*. Send the disks in a suitable mailer, *along with a printed copy* in case of software problems. Disks will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped disk mailer. Always keep all printer commands, page numbering, and so on out of the text, and *always save files as text or ASCII*, no matter what type of computer you use. We are able to take submissions only from the following machines: *Apple Macintosh, IBM PC and compatibles* (must be MS-DOS).

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SUBJECT MATTER

Articles deal with science-fiction roleplaying in all its myriad forms (we adopt a rather liberal definition of "science fiction"). We will look at articles on any science-fiction roleplaying game by any publisher, including *Twilight: 2000*, *MegaTraveller*, *Dark Conspiracy*, *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs*, *Space: 1889*, *2300 AD*, *Shadowrun*, *Torg*, *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *Battletech*, *Warhammer*, *Renegade Legion*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *GURPS*, *Paranoia*, *Rifts*, *Cyberpunk*, and others.

Adventure scenarios are preferred. *Sourcebook-type* articles should be combined with adventure ideas using the new information whenever possible. *Game variants* should be playtested in advance by you and be applicable to a broad range of gaming situations. *Referee's notes* should give hints to the referee on how to increase interest in the game, make his life easier, or spark his own imagination. In general, articles should be consistent with previously published information.

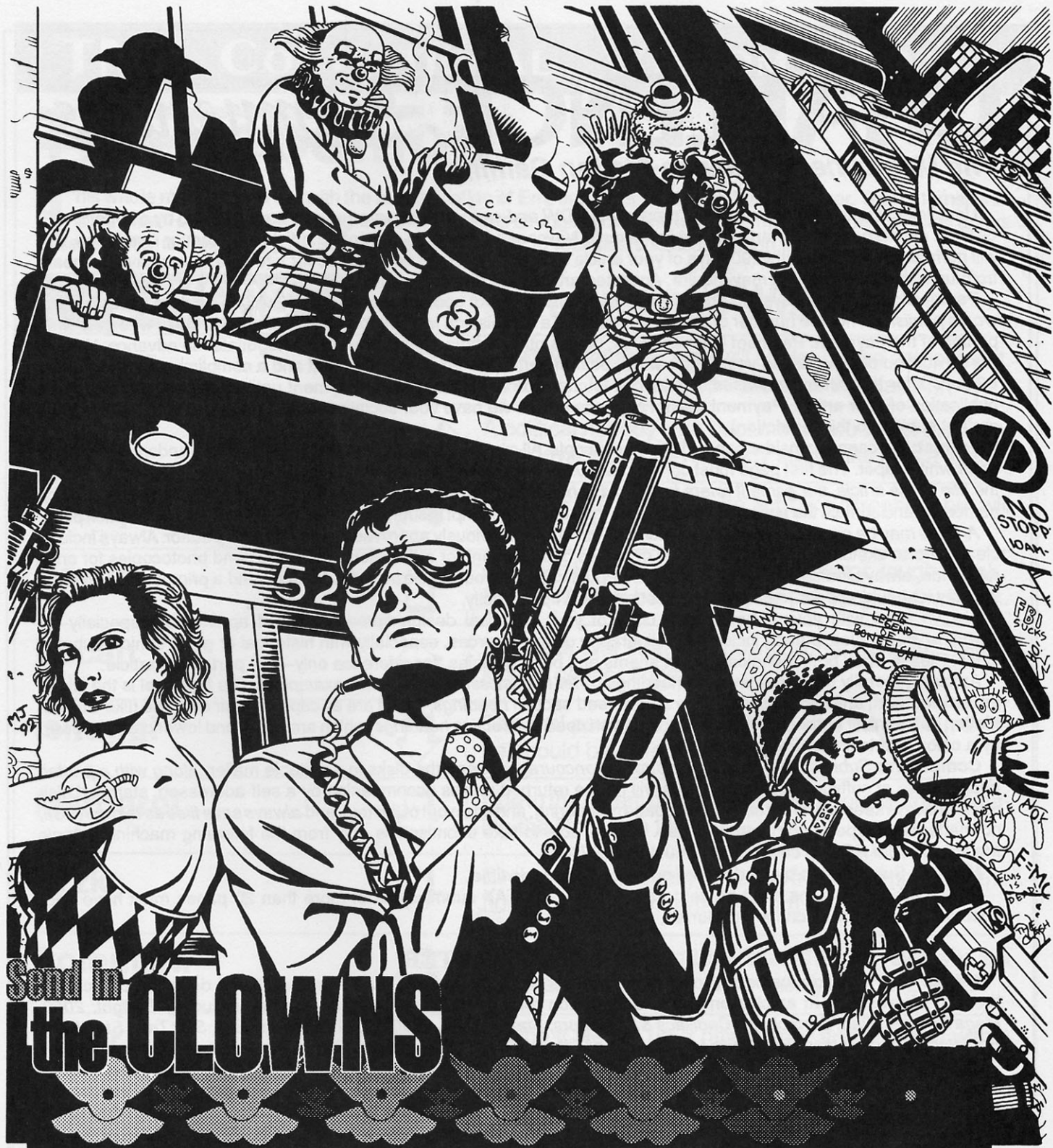
Twilight: All *Twilight* articles must be usable with *Twilight: 2000 2nd edition*. Ideas include an adventure situation with a geographical setting, equipment descriptions, generic personalities or locations for use in a variety of situations, and examinations of modern military life or military equipment.

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Space: 1889 and 2300 AD: Short adventures (1000-2000 words), plus a page or so of maps. See *Twilight Encounters* for samples of the preferred format.

Good luck. If you have any questions, send them along with an SASE to:

Michelle Sturgeon, managing editor, Challenge magazine, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646 USA
January 1992



Want to be famous?
 Want to be recognized everywhere you go?
 Want your name to be on everyone's lips?
 Then this adventure is for you!
 Too bad you didn't ask what kind of fame
 you were going to acquire....

By Craig Sheeley

The following information is for referees only. Any
 prologue that could be given to the players would
 give away the gist of the adventure.

"Send in the Clowns" requires that the referee
 improvise a lot of sick people whose brains went belly-up
 long, long ago. Weirder than normal, even for roleplayers.
 The referee may want to watch silly stuff in preparation—
 cartoons with loads of sight gags. The idea is slapstick, with
 a side order of seriously demented mayhem. The best mood-
 setter would be to watch an episode or two of Fox's *Beetlejuice*
 cartoon. For more details on the Bozos, refer to R. Talsorian's

This scenario is a seat-of-the-pants operation. Referees know what buttons to push to annoy and infuriate their players, and can tailor jokes, frustrations and pace to suit individual groups. The idea is to stretch out the situation for maximum frustration until the players can't take it anymore, then wrap up quickly when the PCs move on the Bozos. For the moment.

The Bozos are a grisly gang whose members have been biosculpted to resemble clowns. They've had their faces altered into permanent clown masks, their feet enlarged to fit those floppy shoes, their bodies modified to include some unusual options. When they first appeared, the Bozos were mere annoyances, perpetrating pranks on poor passersby. Then their pranks started getting violent, turning to the sadistic and bizarre. This change coincided with the arrival of a new Bozo leader, the Great Bozo—his leadership has brought out the dark side of the clown-posers.

The Bozos have their own pirate TV station. One of their favorite shows, *Night City's Most Outrageous Demises and Practical Jokes*, has actually drawn away enough viewers to register in the ratings! The show consists of video-taped segments showing Bozos setting traps for victims apparently chosen at random. These bits are alternated with good, bloody news footage (not the actual news, just the juicy parts) and home videos of messy street fights and auto fatalities. And now it seems that some of the Bozos have chosen the player characters as the targets of the show's next series of bad jokes and overly physical humor.

SETTING

The PCs become involved in this funny business by pure chance. For some reason, at least one of them is in Night City's Artists' Quarter, located near 12th and Farren. This is corpzoner territory, patrolled by the police at routine intervals. The area is relatively clean, overshadowed by the twin towers of the Night-Marriot Hotel and the Night-Marriot Convention Center across the broad boulevard of 6th Street. Manners are fairly good here—you see some hardware and firepower, but it stays on safety. The cops respond fairly swiftly to problems—there's too much money and power living here to ignore civil disruptions.

In truly ironic Bohemian style, the studios and unkempt chaos of the artists' dwellings sit straight across the street from high-security corpypuppie condos. This adds color to the district, as well as providing a stream of affluent neighbors to buy artworks and support starving artists. Very neo-Parisian.

The Artists' Quarter is as bizarre as ever. Max Willig is having a sidewalk display of his talked-about Dead Nudes sculptures, and Holli Lidingi is countering with an impromptu showcase of Braindance paintings (each painting has an appropriate braindance chip imbedded in it—expensive, unique and very, very strange). The street buzzes with the rumor that J.T. Pickman might join the art war and blow everyone else's exhibits away in an hour. The other artists are out in force, along with street performers and vendors. And with a surprisingly sunny day following a bad week of rain, 12th Street has taken on the feel of an open-air festival. Some of the Beavers (suburbanites) have come all the way in from Rancho Coronado, south of the city, to attend,

sprinkling tight family groups among the crowd of college students and corporates. Real nice.



LET THE JOKES BEGIN

Just as the PCs are getting bored with the setting, or just as they're beginning to enjoy themselves, one of them runs afoul of a pair of unusual street performers. Two clowns are doing a juggling act, tossing various objects over the ducking pedestrians crowding the concourse. These objects range from rubber ducks to Indian clubs, with several stuffed toys and water balloons!

The clowns are Bozos, looking for a chance to annoy people and controlling their zeal with the certain knowledge that the artists will rally and run them off the moment they start causing trouble. They fix on one of the PCs as their next victim, choosing someone who is trying to look cool or who otherwise looks like a stuffed shirt that could do with some deflating. On cue, both the Bozos switch to juggling knives, cleavers and other sharp objects, which they deftly flip at their target, narrowly missing the hapless person and neatly outlining him in cutlery on a nearby wall. The Bozos burst into laughter, take their bows and vanish into the applauding crowd. If the PC attempts a violent response, the crowd scatters out of the way, shrieking, and police arrive in five minutes, looking to arrest the PC while the Bozos merge with the crowd.

Whatever the PC's response, the Bozos decide that this person would make a perfect patsy for a starring role on *Night City's Most Outrageous Demises and Practical Jokes*. And the PC's friends are included in the "invitation."

The PCs find themselves the victims of numerous gags both infantile and cunning. Furthermore, they may sense that they're being watched—the Bozos have cameras on their victims when a joke is about to spring. The gang members use about every espionage trick available—planting microcam bugs in the PCs' dwellings, breaking into the local security nets and "borrowing" security cameras, monkeying with their vidphones so that the broadcast function can be activated remotely, even trailing their victims with camera crews and drone cameras.

The first jokes are simple: roof ambushes with paint-filled balloons, door- and vehicle-egging, prank phone calls, doorbell ringing, window soaping, ordering expensive pizza deliveries, toilet papering, the old bucket-of-water-over-the-door trick, pie throwing, whoopie cushions, etc. The beleaguered PCs have little or no way to retaliate, because the Bozos go to great lengths to avoid being detected. If the PCs decide to stay home all the time, guns ready, the Bozos merely leave them alone until they let their guard down—the spectacle of PC paranoia is a side-splitting joke on its own.

SMILE! YOU'RE ON KLWN-TV!

The PCs' torture is aired biweekly on the Nightly Nuisance feature of *Night City's Most Outrageous Demises and Practical Jokes*. Since 5% of Night City's TV-watching population

watches this example of trash-TV, the PCs gain two points of reputation (for being prize schmucks and chumps) every week they are featured on the show. Any previous reputations are overridden once they are exceeded by this new reputation total. This will affect the PCs' lives, jobs and tempers.

The host of *Night City's Most Outrageous Demises and Practical Jokes* doesn't help the PCs' situation. He is a singularly repulsive creep with the most obnoxious voice in history. It's high-pitched, scratchy and loud, and gets worse when he laughs—producing what sounds like a horse's neigh combined with a hysterical hyena. He sounds like a typical game show host, but ever more annoying, sarcastic and abusive: "And here's tonight's Nightly Nuisances, clowns and girls! Oh, boy, are they gonna get it tonight! (Insane laughter.) Here we have (insert PC name), tough guy and professional violence freak. Well, he's about to have a surprise or two. You see, he doesn't know it, but we've finished the entire floor outside his apartment with no-traction polish! Let's see how tough he is tonight! (Jeers and guffaws.) That nullware needs to put his head on straight. Hey, ripperboob, think seriously about some inner ear implants next time you decide to remove brain cells! (More grating laughter.) And now let's move on to the next poor shill. She's going out tonight, and doesn't know that we replaced her makeup with a specially concocted mixture that changes color after a hour—and it's permanent! She should really attract attention with green hair and scaly skin. Well, it worked for Godzilla!" And so on—you get the picture.

FIGHTING BACK

Not only are the PCs subject to purile humor at any time, but they're becoming known as chumps. And who's going to hire a PC who's a public fool twice a week?

Eventually, the harassment and public embarrassment will drive them to the point where they will have no choice but to stop the Bozos. There are many things they can do to prevent the Bozos from setting up their jokes:

Hire Private Security: This idea is expensive, but effective—for awhile. Even the Bozos are smart enough to avoid crossing a bunch of toughs ready to shoot anyone who looks like a clown or anyone tries to play practical jokes on the PCs. But the clowns will wait until the PC runs out of money to pay the goons. Or, if the guards get careless after a few days of no action, the Bozos will strike—and include the guards in the jokes!

Go Electronic: This option is expensive and more easily foiled. The PCs can acquire every electronic security measure in the book—but most of these measures are immobile, and most people can't stay cooped up in burglar-proof rooms all their lives. Furthermore, the Bozos have their own techs, who will delight in booby-trapping the PCs' security to backfire on the owners.

Leave the City: Leaving the city for awhile is a good way to frustrate the Bozos. But in retaliation, KLWN-TV will show footage of the PCs packing up and bugging out, and the host of *Night City's Most Outrageous Demises and Practical Jokes* will take great pride in hooting and trumpeting about the Bozos' triumph. "Let's see that shot again, shall we? Look at this, folks, these wimprunners couldn't take the heat, so

they ran out of the kitchen yelling for Mommy!" This retreat is good for another three points of reputation as weenies.

Circle the Wagons: "Safety in numbers," the old proverb says, and for good reason. If the PCs work together, they can provide the equivalent of paid security, but at a much lower cost. They may even be able to thwart Bozo pranks before they start. But this will only encourage the Bozos to double their efforts, while they continue to broadcast footage of the PCs.

Fight Fire with Fire: A class option is trying to out-prank the Bozos. Good luck. These guys are professional whackos with years of practical jokes to their credit. If the PCs score a good joke on the Bozos, like trapping them with a booby-trap set on something the Bozos are trying to booby-trap, the Bozos will gleefully run the turn-about gag on the show—and launch a serious campaign of malicious mayhem. After all, the PCs have just proved they're worthy of the attention! Such a triumph against overwhelming odds will also attract the attention of the Philharmonic Vampyres (see below).

Fight Fire with Napalm: Few PCs smart enough to trick the Bozos are going to have the good sense to leave it at that. Instead of a stink bomb rigged to explode when the car is tampered with, the PCs may decide to rig up antipersonnel grenades and frag some clowns. This will immediately turn the jokesters into killer clowns, bent on the sadistic (and funny) demise of the PCs.

IT'S NOT FUNNY ANYMORE

As time passes, the Bozo jokes turn more and more abusive. They spraypaint PCs' phone numbers on bathroom walls in the Combat Zone, accompanied by messages like, "For a good time call (insert PC name)." They plant bombs in the PCs' sewer lines, causing explosions in toilets and sinks. They modify the videophones to permanently broadcast so that anytime a PC passes the phone, anyone tapped in can get a full view! Other options are itching powder in the air-conditioning, regurgitant in the tap water, laxative in the food, disabling the brakes on vehicles or polluting their fuel, etc.

A real crowd pleaser is removing the safety interlocks and boosting the power rating on a heavily cybered character's microwave oven. When he goes to use it, the door pops open, and a plastic toy clown on the turntable cackles, "Surprise!" while the microwave zaps the PC. (Treat this as an attack from a microwave gun.)

Netrunners find themselves tracked and hindered by Bozo netrunners, who often work in small gangs. Nothing permanently harmful, just painful.

When the Bozos turn violent—and they will, sooner or later—they get vicious. Their pranks turn sadistic: explosive devices in vehicles, trapping people in elevators and dropping in a couple of bushels of rabid rats, altering PC credit ratings, dropping heavy objects from heights, trapping PC vehicles between a pair of Bozo-driven garbage trucks, etc.

Another favorite prank is drugging and kidnapping the PCs, then dumping them unarmed in rippergang turf while dressed in rival gang colors. Drug strength/body save modifiers are cumulative—if hit by four sleep-darts, you don't get four saves, you get one at -12!

At this point the Bozos will be exposing themselves to retaliation, open to a little lead persuasion to cease and

desist. That won't stop them—if one gets gunned down, the others just laugh and go on. Remember, Bozos are not sane, even by 2020 standards.

BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE

The PCs can always try to shut down KLWN-TV. The studio is located at the eastern edge of the Combat Zone, a few blocks from the Artist's Quarter! But finding it is rather difficult—getting a positive fix on the broadcast location is enough to stump the SCC. The Bozos pipe the signal in to multiple broadcast antennas, and the antennas are moved about once every half-hour.

The easiest way to find the broadcast studio is to discretely trail the Bozos. But the Bozos are likely to notice shadowers and ditch them (the average Bozo has Awareness 6 and Hide/Evade 7).

Getting into Bozo turf undetected is difficult—they're on the lookout for people trying to take down their station. And the deserted looking building is guarded by sharp-eyed Bozos with submachineguns and explosive rubber ducks (treat as hand grenades).

The studio is a funhouse inside, so the referee can use his imagination! Tilted hallways, mirror-walled mazes, tumbling-tube passages, trapdoors, slides, rooms dimly lit by color-changing lights, floor grates that blow steam, and a PA system blaring that terrible repetitive laugh common to all funhouses. Putting the station out of action won't be boring.

POSSIBLE ALLIES

Of course, the Bozos aren't the most popular people around. They've made a few enemies. A connection with the Julliards can net assistance and perhaps information—the street performers feel that the Bozos' jokes don't do anything good for the reputation of street performers in general. The Voodoo Boys might be interested in trashing the Bozos, whom they consider wimps. And nearly any boostergang will be interested in a good rumble, as long as it's worth their while.

The best ally the PCs could have would be the Philharmonic Vampyres. The Vamps will take an interest in the situation if the PCs start pulling jokes on the clowns, and they will contact the PCs about taking the Bozos down a peg. The Vamps are the most prestigious pranksters in Night City. They're the ones who released giant inflated balloons of the governor over city hall the day the governor decided to pay a visit. And more. They want to humiliate the Bozos, not kill them.

If the PCs go along with that idea, the Vamps can supply lots of logistic support. (Need an AV-4? No problem. Five cows flown in from Bolivia? Easy. How about 500 kilos of organic fertilizer, Arasaka uniforms and a typewriter? As long as the gag's good, they can provide.). They can also offer several escorts (armed with needleguns and sleep drugs).

If the PCs want to gain real approval, they must supply their own tuxedos and vampire fangs (the gang's uniform) for the raid.

If the PCs trash the Bozos' TV station (or play a good practical joke on them), their acquired reputation is wiped clean. And a really good practical joke with the help of the

Vampyres is good for a point of positive reputation.

Of course, the Bozos will still be around. And they won't forget anyone who defeated them...



BOZOS

INT 7, REF 7, TECH 5, COOL (do crazy people truly have cool?), ATTR (how do you feel about clowns?), LUCK 8, MA 6, BODY 8, EMP 2.

Typical Skills: Awareness 6, Brawling 7, Basic Tech 7, Electronics 5, Handgun 6, Hide/Evade 7, Intimidate 6, Juggling 7, Melee 7, Pharmaceuticals 4, SMG 3.

Typical Cyber: Boosted reflexes, cyberoptics, cybersaudio, voders, chemskin, cyberarms and hands with weapons.

Typical Weapons: Heavy handguns, bats with nails in them, SMGs, cartoon-style "bowling ball" bombs and explosive toys (treat as hand grenades).

PHILHARMONIC VAMPYRES

INT 6, REF 7, COOL 7, TECH 6, ATTR 8, MA 6, BODY 6, LUCK 10.

Typical Skills: Awareness 6, Basic Tech 5, Dodge/Escape 6, Drive 4, Fencing 3, Handgun 2, Human Perception 5, Martial Arts 3, Perform 9, Seduction 4, Social 5, Stealth 7, Wardrobe and Style 7. Ω

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ENFORCERS

By Jeffrey L. Groteboer

T Most *Shadowrun* PCs have at least one thing in common—they live life on the edge. And many of the characters they encounter have gone past the line and right over the edge of what's considered normal behavior. Consider, then, these humorous archetypes—characters who have gone too far in their zeal to enforce the standards of society.

These archetypes are general enough to be easily converted to *Dark Conspiracy*, *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.*, *Paranoia* and other near-future RPGs.



NONSMOKERS

Nonsmokers gained a lot of ground in the 20th century, but in the 21st their clout diminished as the political scene went into turmoil. Legislation passed in the 1980s and 1990s was rescinded in the 21st century, raising the ire of nonsmokers. Suddenly, people were allowed to smoke in restaurants, bus stops, movie theaters and airplanes.

When lawmakers didn't listen to their pleas, some nonsmokers decided to take action.

In 2037, a group of nonsmokers in Minneapolis organized themselves into a paramilitary organization called the Nonsmokers' Supremacy League (NSL) to combat public smoking. Armed with small arms, they raided restaurants and other public places which no longer had separate seating for smokers and nonsmokers.

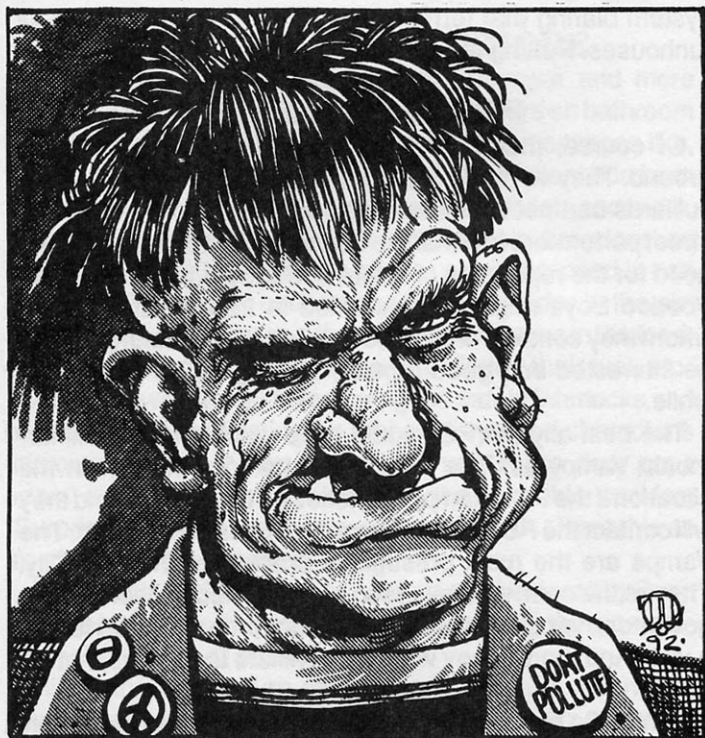
In 2039, a fringe group of the NSL based in Chicago bombed a United Airlines 797-jetliner, killing 161 people. The act was followed by a declaration of de facto war by the NSL against smokers everywhere. Despite feverish attempts of

the Minneapolis home branch to segregate itself from the Chicago group, the NSL became the focus of nationwide law enforcement attention, and their activities were quickly halted.

Today, fringe elements of the NSL remain across North America and Europe, but their activities are uncoordinated and unfocused. NSL members come from all walks of life, and gather into small groups, no larger than minor gangs. They typically carry small arms hidden in holsters or purses, and will attack smokers only when the smokers "invade their airspace." Attacks could come at a bus stop, in a grocery store or restaurant, or virtually anywhere.

Most NSL members are not hardened criminals. They generally don't try to kill the smokers—they just want to teach them a lesson. They might shoot for the legs or stab the smoker in the posterior in an attempt to attach pain to the act of lighting up a cigarette.

Some NSL members are not opposed to all tobacco uses. The referee should consult the following table to determine the NSL member's degree of hatred toward tobacco products.



LITTERBUGS

Litterbugs International is devoted to stopping anyone who dumps trash anywhere other than into a trash bin. Members scout the highways and byways, as well as shopping centers and city streets, watching for infractions.

The organization began, oddly enough, as a civilian extension of the Saint Louis, Missouri police department. Trash in that city reached such enormous proportions that in 2001 the city enacted the Citizen Trash Patrol (CTP). Members of the patrol could phone in reports of littering, and the police would

issue the offender a ticket without question.

The law was repealed in 2004, but the CTP kept at it. Without the police behind them, members turned to their own method of enforcement. They poured trash on the lawns or in the cars of known infractors. One unlucky litterer awoke one morning to find his house buried up to the eaves in garbage!

It wasn't long before CTP members became violent, using threats and scare tactics to assuage their frustrations. The police rounded most of them up, but not before word of their deeds had inspired fringe groups around the world. In 2011, the group became known as Litterbugs International, a group which now numbers more than 10,000.

LEFTLANERS AND SPEED DAEMONS

The 55 mile-per-hour speed limit restriction was lifted in 1988 on less-populated interstate highways. In 1998, police stopped writing speeding citations except during "reckless conditions."

In 2012, the "smooth flow of traffic" concept replaced speed limits. The new laws stated that anyone disrupting the



Nonsmokers

Roll	Target	Goal	Battlecry
2	All tobacco products	Kill	"It's going to kill you anyway!"
3	All tobacco smoking	Injure	"You're ruining your lungs, so how about your legs, too?"
4	Cigarettes and cigars	Maim	"So tell me, what <i>does</i> a hole in your lungs feel like?"
5	Cigarettes and cigars	Injure	"Here, let me help you light that!"
6	Cigars	Injure	"Stinky, filthy, stogies!"
7	Cigarettes	Injure	"You're trying to put me in the hospital. I'm just returning the favor."
8	Cigarettes	Maim	"Doesn't that leave a nasty taste in your mouth? Think this bullet will?"
9	Cigars	Maim	(Brandishing weapon.) "Put your finger in that cigar clipper and cut it off. Now!"
10	Pipes	Injure	"A pipe gives a wise man time to think and a fool time to die!"
11	Chewing tobacco	Injure	(Brandishing weapon.) "Swallow it."
12	Chewing tobacco	Kill	"You want to spit on something? Then spit up a lung!"

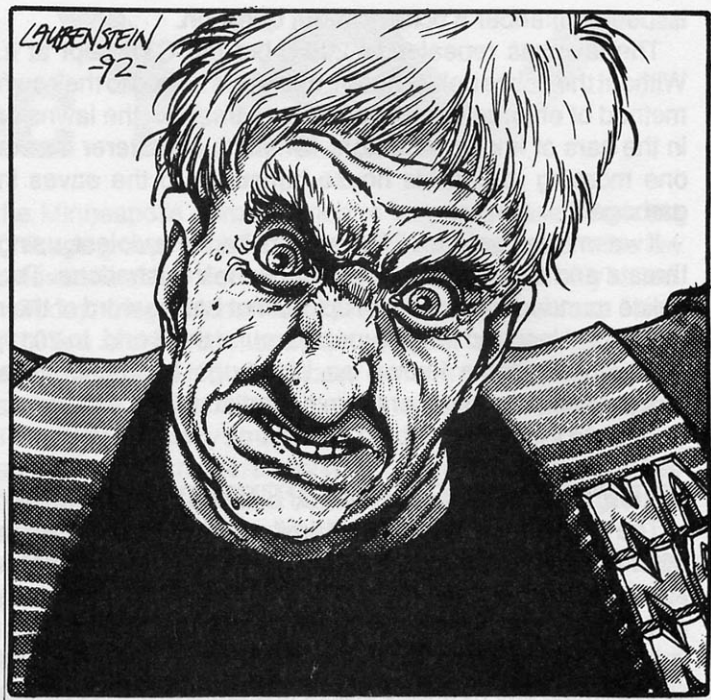
Litterbugs

Roll	Goal	Battlecry
2	Kill	"Climb into that trash can. You may be a litterbug, but I'm not. And after I kill you, I won't feel like picking up trash like you."
3	Maim	"So you like spilling things on the planet, eh? Spill some blood."
4	Taunt	(Brandishing a weapon.) "Pick that up. Now eat it."
5	Taunt	(Pulling up alongside a littering motorist.) "You dropped this a ways back. Your car's a junk heap already. Don't make the world one, too."
6	Embarrass	"Hey, you dropped this. Hey, you dropped this. Hey! You...."
7	Embarrass	"Is this yours? Don't drop it on my planet!"
8	Embarrass	(Reading paper litter.) "Hey everyone! It says here that...."
9	Taunt	"Lose something, bozo? What if I lose this soda pop can in your nose? How would that feel?"
10	Injure	(Repeatedly striking target.) "Feel good? No? Then don't litter. What happens when you litter? I hit you like this. Feel good? No?"
11	Maim	"I don't like people who litter. So when you're done bleeding, make sure you clean it up."
12	Kill	This maniac runs litterbugs off the road, then shoots their car (and them) full of holes. He leaves a note that the offender was caught littering. There are rarely any witnesses to attest to the battle cry.

smooth flow of traffic was to be cited and that actual speeds were irrelevant. The average rate of travel in urban areas climbed to 72 mph, while it soared to a staggering 91 mph on cross-state highways.

Still, there are those who cling to the older, safer speeds. Leftlaners of North America is one such group. First organized in Tampa, Florida in 2017 by a group of irate retirees, Leftlaners believe in slowing traffic down to safe speeds set by previous laws. They enforce their beliefs by driving in groups and not allowing anyone to pass. Really belligerent groups arm themselves, shooting the tires of speeders or running them off the road.

To counter the Leftlaners, the Speed Daemons were organized in 2022 and now number more than 50,000 casual members. The logo of the Speed Daemons is a stylized demon portrait with SD superimposed on it. Casual members display the emblem on a window or bumper sticker, while serious members emblazon the logo on the hood or roof of their cars.



TURNFLASHERS

In city driving, there's nothing worse than some bozo who changes lanes without signalling, right? Well, the Turnflashers Club is taking action against such people.

In 1998, the practice of a Turnflasher was to shower a target vehicle with paint pellets. When the person pulled over to clean off his windshield, the Turnflasher would explain the purpose of the attack and continue on his way.

In 2001, Turnflashers took to shooting out the turn signal lamps on cars that didn't use them. The justification was, "If they're not using them, they must not want them on their cars!" Since the use of high-caliber weapons on city streets was forbidden, the police got involved, and Turnflashers went underground.

In the intervening years, the Turnflashers Club has grown to a nationwide network, with more than 10,000 members in 30 cities across North America and in three European cities as well.

HANDICAPPERS

Most cities levy fines on those inconsiderate enough to park in spaces reserved for the handicapped. And many people get upset when nonhandicapped people violate the law by parking in these reserved spaces. But not Handicappers of America (known as HA)!

HA was formed in 1993 to protest the abundance of handicapped spaces. HA targets handicapped parking spots which are used less than once per week. Their claim is that if too few handicapped people use the spaces, why should they be retained?

At first, their protests took the form of parking an unlicensed, untraceable wreck in the "offending" space. But since the turn of the century, their protests have turned to outright attacks. Handicapped vehicles are towed without warning; bombs are exploded under handicapped vehicles, etc. In Seattle, the local HA group went so far as to hire a trench-digging machine and carve up the parking lot at a popular shopping mall only days before Christmas.

In most cities, HA is now considered an outlaw group.

OTHER CHARACTER TYPES

Following are some other characters who litter the landscape of the 21st century.

Wattwasters: The target is anyone who doesn't bother to shut off electrical appliances when they're not in use.

Loudmouths: There's growing resentment against people who talk in the movie theater, especially if they already know the plot. Attacks during movies are on the rise, including dousing loudmouths with hot caramel and popcorn (a modern version of tar-and-feathering).

Grocerybaggers: Users of plastic grocery bags are squaring off against users of paper bags. And the environmentalists who buy reusable cloth bags would like to see them kill each other!

Vegetarians: Vegetarians who take things one step too far believe that the world meat industry is a major contribut-

ing factor to global warming (animals produce methane and carbon dioxide). Group members slaughter livestock or simply antagonize meat-buyers in grocery stores.

Ghettoblasters: Loud portable stereos are the targets of a number of groups. The most peaceful approach has been the Philadelphia Philharmonic Orchestra, which has taken to the streets with stereos blaring "Wellington's Victory" (Opus 91) by Beethoven. Less cultural responses include shooting the stereos or smashing them under the wheels of busses.

Antistyllists: Anyone who is sick of the constant style changes is an antistylist. Frustrated parents, especially, have begun to attack trendsetters.

A recent style of wearing fashionable shoes with untied laces has come under attack. Antistyllists tie the offenders' laces to anything handy—signposts, grates in the floor, etc.—and leave the youths to get themselves loose.

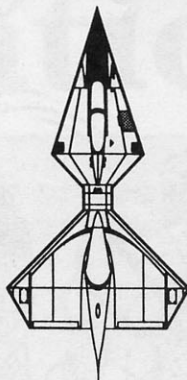
In other cases, roving bands of parents armed with hair clippers have "balded" entire groups of students who wore their hair in offensive patterns and colors.

Technophobes: There's growing resentment against computerization of industry and commerce. Technophobes are people who refuse to answer machines. They don't pay bills until a person asks for the money, and they refuse to shop at automated stores or do business at automatic teller machines. Some refuse to be categorized by a number, such when stores request you to "take a number." The more fringe elements actually smash automatic teller machines or other "modern conveniences" in an effort to make their neighborhood "more personal." Ω

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Last Generation

The USS Enterprise is facing an alien vessel in orbit over a Federation planet. The entire surface has been reduced to a state closely resembling charcoal briquettes after a cookout.

Captain: "Worf, open a hailing frequency to that ship."

Worf: "Aye, sir."

Captain: "We come in peace. I am sure we can discuss this little misunderstanding."

Alien Captain: "I'm going to kick your &%\$#@&!"

Ship Counselor: "Sir, I sense hostility from the alien ship."

Data: "They seem to be firing on us, sir."

Suddenly, energy bolts lash out from the alien vessel, snapping the Enterprise's warp nacelles off like twigs.

Worf: "Captain, they are without honor!"

#1, sticking out his chest: "What do they mean by this?"

Data: "It would seem they intend to kick our &%\$#@&, sir."

By Michael C. LaBossiere

This article introduces new rules for playing in the *Last Generation* universe. By rolling on the following tables, the referee can accurately simulate the TV show in a gaming situation.

ADVENTURE GENERATOR

Roll	Adventure
1	Enterprise confronts an alien menace. See the Menace Generator Table.
2	Wesley saves the Enterprise.
3	Incoherent series of events understood only by Guinan.
4	Secret plot against the Federation.
5	Tech variations save the Enterprise. See the Tech Variations Table.
6	Shameless ripoff of an old episode.

TECH VARIATIONS

Roll	Effect
1	LaForge does the impossible by revolutionizing some aspect of starship design.
2	Enterprise gets new warp 47 drive.
3	New transporter use discovered.
4	Torpedoes fire from phaser banks, or phasers fire from torpedo bays (referee's option).
5	Transporters work through shields.
6	Enterprise has 1D6 more phaser banks.

MENACE GENERATOR

Roll	Menace
1	Menace is Romulan.
2	Menace is Ferengi.
3	Menace is a new race from a previous episode of the show.
4	Menace is a brand new race from a previously unknown border of the Federation. See the Alien Generator Table.
5	Menace is a super powerful force.
6	Menace is a super-super powerful force.

ALIEN GENERATOR

Roll	Description
1	Aliens look like humans.
2	Aliens look like Playboy bunnies and beefcakes.
3	Aliens look like humans with seafood glued to their heads.
4	Aliens look like humans with old stereo equipment glued to their bodies.
5	Aliens look like humans painted a funny color.
6	Aliens look like the designers were on bad drugs.

New Prime Directive: Never do anything to anyone, anytime, for any reason.

New Star Fleet Rules of Engagement: Never fire at anything, anytime, for any reason. Ω



Lester Smith

Apocalypse Cow

or Close Encounters of the Third Kine

In our last episode ("Attack of the Ice-Age, Cyborg, Kamikaze Holsteins," **Challenge 52**), it was revealed that the dominant intelligent life form everywhere throughout the galaxy is cows, with the one exception of Earth. Some member groups of the United Galactic Council (particularly the oft-renegade Holsteins) find it particularly irksome that humans have usurped cows' rightful position on Earth. In a large part, this irritation is due to racial prejudice, but

it also has to do with the fact that Terran cows being dumb prevents the development of any "unified field theory" of galactic cow civilizations.

In the millennia since they first sent their four agents to dispense an evolutionary readjustment on Earth (agents who managed to get their ship frozen in an ice-age glacier, unable to continue their mission until issue 52, just in time to be thwarted by the Ghostbusters), the Holsteins have been eclipsed in power on the United Galactic Council (UGC) by the more visionary Guernsey faction. It was the Guernseys, in fact, who instituted a prime directive for allowing the human race to develop unhindered on Earth. According to that directive, the galactic cow civilizations would continue to observe Earth, but they would do nothing to shape its development. The directive was formalized in the manner of a joke—"Humans are to be seen and not herded"—and therefore was officially dubbed the Prime Rib.

Now, late in Earth's 20th century, just a short time after the Holstein mission came to an abortive close, a new power has risen in the UGC, a power inimical to human existence. This new threat to humans, this force of a third kind, is popularly known in the galaxy as the Jersey State. Like the Holsteins, the Jerseys have set their sights on Earth with the intent of supplanting humans. The site they chose for their first foray was, appropriately, Jersey. But due to poorly folded maps, they landed instead in the Atlantic, just off New York City.

The method of attack the Jerseys have chosen is a giant robot cow originally designed for hauling trash, but now beefed up with heavy weaponry and sent to meat <sic> out some destruction upon the city. That's right, in this adventure, New York is attacked by a CattleMech. The Jerseys are out to make hamburger of the city. (Of course, New Yorkers are used to such trouble by now; for them it's pretty much the same old grind.)

The Ghostbusters are first alerted to the danger when a woman named Ann Thrax phones and says she sees a giant cow swimming into the harbor from the open sea. (The robot's pilot is homing on a radio signal from a cow buoy dropped into the harbor from orbit.) By the time the PCs become involved, the CattleMech will have trashed a long line of warehouses along the docks, creating a new and different sort of New York strip. The destruction is so extensive as to make it obvious that intelligent cows have much more of a stomach for violence than do humans. In fact, cows have twice the stomach for it.

When the Ghostbusters confront the robot, its pilot shouts to them on an external bullhorn, "We cows have passed your intelligence," (to the players it sounds like "pasture intelligence") "and have come to make this planet our own." The machine then blithely stalks on by to continue its destruction.

The Ghostbusters will quickly discover that none of their equipment has any real effect on the robot. Even the beams from their proton packs slide harmlessly off its hide. Careful observation will reveal two weaknesses to the machine's design, however. First, the CattleMech's legs have thousands of tiny holes through them to facilitate radiating heat. If the Ghostbusters were to prepare some steel poles—cut to 10-foot lengths and ground perfectly circular to fit snugly—and push them through one set of holes on each leg, they could pin the limbs in position, preventing the robot from walking any further. Second, the robot is extremely narrow

compared to its length. If the Ghostbusters were to somehow crash a vehicle into one side of the robot (perhaps by running the vehicle up a ramp to fly into the robot's side), they could tip the cow and knock it over. Once on its side, the robot will not be able to rise again.

Both plans have merit. It will be up to the PCs to decide whether to go for the ground round stakes or try for the T-bone collision. In either case, the robot threat will have been ended, and the Jerseys will be too embarrassed to retain their power on the UGC.

Lucky Things, etc: Facing the terrible puns in this adventure.

Action Opportunities: Tackling the robot. Throwing things at the referee who inflicts this adventure on them.

Nifty Problems: Thinking of some way to defeat the CattleMech while making a bad joke of the process (other than the two methods suggested above).

Neat Characters: Giant robot cow.

Potentially Tricky Stuff: Trying to stop groaning long enough to tell the referee what their characters are doing.

Campaign Hooks: None. If you can think of any cow-related puns I've missed between this and the previous adventure, you're terminally sick but welcome to do another adventure of your own. Ω

It behooves us to apologize to FASA for butchering its BattleMech trademark and to thank Nick Atlas, who was responsible for this pun. Moo!

The Scroll



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You're walking toward your favorite bar, thinking about nothing more than who will be there and how that first drink will taste. As you step through the door, you are distracted from your thoughts by a low-flying 100-eyed sludge creature. Its violent squirming motions and loud screaming seem to indicate that this type of creature is not normally capable of flight. The foul-smelling beast splats against the wall next to you, and a large, muscular, bipedal moose sits down at the bar with a satisfied grunt, rubbing the excess slime from his hands...uh, hooves... uh, forelimbs. Yes, off his forelimbs.

As the splatters of slime turn orange and walk out the front door, you notice that this is not your bar. In fact, you've never been here before in your life.

Overall, the place looks pretty normal except for the customers. The individuals at the corner table are all wearing opaque bubble helmets with antennae that emit strange beeping noises. Their only other attire consists of tribal war paint and loincloths. The elves and the martians at the nearby tables don't seem to notice anything odd about the space warriors, and the pink elephants sitting around the stage are all nursing their drinks as if everything is just as it should be.

Suddenly, a deep, grating voice draws your attention to the bar. The bartender is so ugly that your aesthetic sensibility runs screaming to the back of your mind, hides behind your lid, and pulls the blanket of your subconscious over its head. Temporarily left without any sense of ugliness, you find the bartender's presence almost bearable. "Welcome to the Floating Vagabond," he says. "I'm Hawk Luger, the bartender. Yer first drink's free. After that, you pay. The house speciality's the Singularity. What'll it be?"

BUGHUNT

By Nick Atlas

The PCs mysteriously find themselves at the Floating Vagabond. As they settle in and recover from the initial shock, Arithon Kinkade introduces himself.

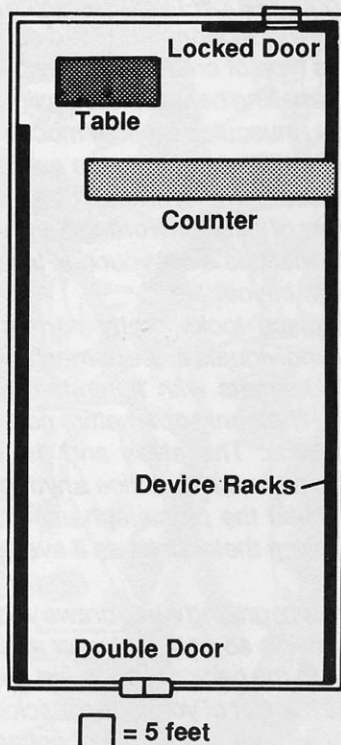
He explains that the PCs have stepped through a dimensional portal generator to get here. The off switch for the generator disintegrated years ago, so the PCs are trapped here for the foreseeable future. Kinkade runs an adventure brokering service out of the bar and can help the PCs obtain jobs to make ends meet.

Kinkade will freely relate any information contained in Chapter 5 of the main game, and he can introduce all of the main NPCs by basic stereotype.

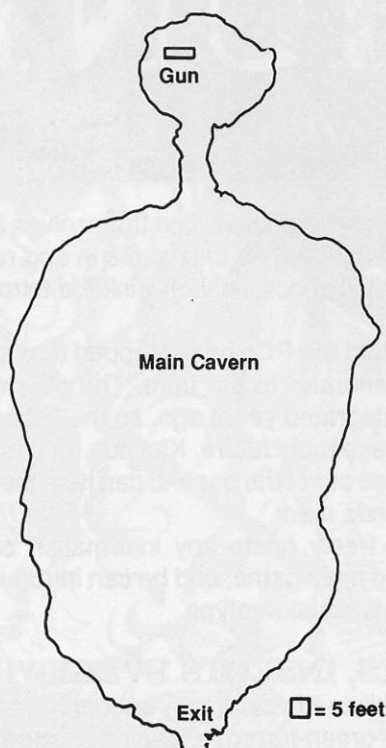
INSECTS, INSECTS EVERYWHERE

As the PCs talk to Kinkade, they suddenly hear a hideous shriek from the green-furred, tentacled creature in the corner. He drops his drink and runs screaming from the bar. Around his chair crawl several large cockroaches.

Acme



Cave



Kinkade explains, "The infestation has gotten out of control! Listen, I've got a job for you. Get rid of those roaches. I'll pay you each a C-note, and I'll even pay cab fare! What do you say?"

Kinkade will go as high as 2 C-notes each to convince the PCs to take the job. If they still refuse, then they'll have to find somewhere else to sit because the place is rapidly filling with roaches.

These roaches are, of course, the Denebian Pandimensional Exponential Omni-Roaches. There are two important things that the characters don't know about these bugs: As the roaches grow in size, they also grow in intellect. And there is only one way to kill these creatures—the MkVII Megablat, Unidirectional, Liquid-Hydrogen-Cooled, High-Speed, Laser-Targeted Pestcrusher Gun.

Obviously, the PCs won't have much success if they just try to squish the critters. Kinkade will suggest that the PCs try to get a few suggestions from the guys at Acme Exterminations and Eliminations Ltd. If the PCs take his advice, continue below. If they are really stubborn and refuse to leave, skip right to the last scene, Cockroaches in Paradise.

ACME

As they exit the bar, the PCs may have to overcome the shock of realizing that they are on an asteroid in the middle of the void. Once they've had a few moments to adjust, the driver of a space cab parked out front will lean out the window and say, "Hey! You people need a cab?" If so, he will instruct the PCs (in a thick New York City accent) to get in. He can take them to any destination in the Vagabond dimension, and will wait for them to return, if so instructed.

When the PCs arrive at the Acme site, they see a large tower made of dripping dark stone. A dim red glow comes from the upper windows of the tower. On the nearest wall of the tower, flanked by two trees overgrown with Spanish moss, is a glass door holding two signs: "Acme Exterminations and Eliminations Ltd." and "Come In. We're Open."

Inside is a large room with a high counter along one wall, and mysterious devices hanging over every available surface. Behind the counter is a tall, thin, bald man. He wears a white lab coat and has a monocle in his eye. He will greet the PCs with a thick German accent. When the PCs tell him of their problem, he will snap his fingers sharply and call, "Igor!" Igor is a short, muscular, hunchbacked man of indeterminate species. He is wearing a WWI flight suit, complete with hat and goggles. The doctor will instruct Igor to fetch him several books (*The Big Book of Bugs, So You Want to be an Exterminator?, Destruction of Insectoid Species in Ten Easy Steps*, etc.)

Allow the PCs a few minutes to poke around the room. If they fiddle with any of the devices on the wall, immediately consult the I Wonder What This Button Does? Table. If a particularly loud device is activated, the mad doctor will leave his research, fly into an insane rage and attack. Igor will, of course, join in.

If the PCs are patient, the doctor will give them the following information: The roaches are in fact Denebian, Pandimensional, Exponential Omni-Roaches. The only way to kill the roaches is to remove their invulnerability—this can be accomplished by use of the MkVII Pestcrusher Gun. This

gun can only be obtained from the planet Rade—in particular, the village of Rochemoetel.

Once the doctor has revealed this information, he will call Igor to him and begin whispering hurriedly.

As the adventurers start to leave, Igor will grab the weakest-looking PC, quickly drag him inside, and tie him to a vivisection table behind the counter (using the Grab And Strap skill). With any luck, the other PCs will run inside after Igor to rescue their compatriot.

FIGHT! FIGHT!

Igor and the Doctor will fight the PCs as long as they are able. During this combat, every time someone misses with a missile weapon, roll 1D6. On a result of 1-4, the stray missile hits a device, activating it. For the effect, roll 1D20 on the I Wonder What This Button Does Table.

RADE

If the PC are looking for a MkVII Pestcrusher Gun, then they're off to planet Rade. Home of the Termite Burger (over

3,000,000,000,000 served), Rade is a curious result of the evolutionary process. For over 1,000,000,000 years before humanoid life, the insect world was in full flower. When humanoids appeared, they evolved to their present form only through the constant battle with insect life. Thus while technologically is still in the late Stone Age, the natives have surpassed all other civilizations in the known universe at one pursuit—pest control. They faced with the cockroach problem over 25,000 years ago. It was viewed as a fairly minor nuisance and was dealt with in short order by two elderly men, a four-year-old child and a rather unkempt dog. The gun used for this was still undergoing refinement and was immediately brought back to the tribal lab cave.

Over the last 25,000 years, the technological pest control methods of the tribe have been replaced by their own genetic antiinsect powers. These powers allow them to deal easily with any creepy-crawly menace that presents itself. Only two types of insect are immune to these powers: Denebian, Pandimensional, Exponential Omni-Roaches and Mantis Humongus Sapiens (see below).

I Wonder What This Button Does Table

Roll	Result
1	This device creates a bizarre strain of Trask Mutagenic Virus. Everyone within 20 feet of the device when it is activated must make a Hard Luck test to avoid infection. If a PC fails this test, something bizarre will happen to him (his skin will change colors, he will grow a new appendage, his arms will grow extra elbow joints, etc.).
2	A strange green beam fires from the device in a random direction (1D8 on compass directions). Anyone struck by this beam immediately loses all head and body hair.
3	The device emits a high, keening wail. The noise causes a temporary loss of one Cool point to all within hearing range.
4	Three small, fuzzy animals emerge from this device per round. The incredibly cute creatures immediately try to make friends with anyone present. Use the stats for the Disgustingly Cute Furry Thing from the main game.
5	Bluish clouds of fog pour from the device, filling the available space within two rounds and applying -1 to all Aim-based skills involving vision.
6	The device sprouts legs and walks away.
7	Roll on the Singularity Effects table in the main game. The effects apply only to the activator.
8	Roll on the Mess With Dangerous Goop Table in the main game.
9	The device produces a bright red flash that inflicts 1 Oops! point of damage on all beings within 30 feet.
10	The entire building starts to shake, and a voice comes from the device: "You have just activated the planetary destruct system. I'm certain that you'll be happy with the results. Thank you for using Trask Industries Demolitions Systems. It has been a pleasure serving you." After three rounds, the shaking will stop and the device will power down.
11	The device coats the closest being in phosphorescent dust that allows him to breathe under water.
12	The device dumps an alcoholic beverage at the closest being's feet.
13	The device strips the activator of one point of each Luck, CS and SMRT. These points are then replaced by three points of superpowers (see <i>Bar Wars</i> supplement) or are added randomly to the other four stats. This can be temporary, at the referee's option.
14	The device is a piece of cyberware. Roll 1D6. Results are as follows: 1, the device is a cybergun; 2, clawed arm; 3, sensory device (eye or ear); 4, leg; 5, internal organ; 6, dud bomb that will announce its intent to explode (This bomb will explode in 10 seconds. This bomb will explode in nine seconds. Etc.).
15	An orange beam hits a random PC. This target becomes frictionless for five rounds.
16	This device reverses gravity for every sentient being in the room (Igor does count). Inanimate objects ignore this effect.
17	This device simulates the effects of a Really Big Gun.
18	This device simulates the effects of an Incredibly Big Gun.
19	This device falls from the wall and buries itself in a pool of fire-retardant foam.
20	This device is known as a Plot Contrivance Beam. In this case, it can heal damage and raise the dead (but only a limited number of times, as determined by the referee). The device will self destruct if taken from the room. If it is struck in combat, the device can do whatever the referee wants it to do.

The natives have long since lost the knowledge necessary to make a MkVII Pestcrusher Gun. The only surviving example of this weapon, the ultimate expression of pest control technology, has been stolen by The Great And Powerful Ug. Ug is holed up in a cave in the forest to the north of the native village of Rochemoetel.

The inhabitants of the planet Rade are (with a few major differences) typical Polynesian islander natives. But these natives' entire culture is based on their own version of the fast food industry. The native village is full of tacky restaurants—literally every other building is a fast food joint. These restaurants serve such delicacies as big mosquito burgers with sides of deep-fried maggots. But most of the food tastes like normal fast food—after that much frying and processing, anything would.

All the natives know that Ug is guarding the only surviving MkVII Pestcrusher Gun, but they will not reveal this information unless the PCs buy some fast food or give the universal substitute for buying (presentation of open hands while speaking the phrase "I'm broke"). The natives will fail to mention that Ug is a 30-foot-long, 20-foot-tall, intelligent, spellcasting preying mantis.

No native of this planet will allow the PCs to pass by without giving them a fast food or pizza delivery ad. By the time the PCs reach the city limits, they should have collected at least 200 such ads.

FOREST OF ROCHEMOETEL

The forest to the north of Rochemoetel is infested with small insects, but nothing really dangerous. There will be hints of large insectoid forms following the PCs and strange noises from all around. These are not a threat—they are only intended to keep the PCs suitably paranoid. After approximately five miles, the PCs will come to the entrance to the cave of Ug.

The Great And Powerful Ug is a gigantic insect that waits to devour unsuspecting adventurers. After all, this is what all monsters really do—they wait around in caves to eat intruders.

The PCs will recognize the cave by the giant lighted signs that read, "Home of The Great and Powerful Ug! Over 300,000 Devoured," "Wholesome Ingredients Only. No Slime Creatures, Please," etc.

This mighty insect will attack anyone who enters the cave.

The MkVII Pestcrusher Gun is lying on the floor in a small cave which extends from the back of the larger cave. This gun is capable of destroying Ug in one shot. That same shot will also take the entire front section off the cave.

Before it can be fired, the gun must be set. The settings are all contained in the 8,327-page instruction manual. The PCs may be frustrated by the length of the instructions. Any PC with a cybernetic datajack can plug into the computerized spine of the book.

Or the PCs can refer to the comprehensive index. The settings necessary to fire the gun are under the heading "Ug, Great and Powerful, The."

Once Ug has been destroyed, the only place left to go is back to the Vagabond. The cab will be waiting back in the village, with the meter running.

COCKROACHES IN PARADISE

The PCs walk into the Vagabond and immediately notice that something is different. There are four cockroaches playing poker at the corner table, three asleep across the bar, one in lingerie performing on stage and an exceptionally large one in a dirty white T-shirt tending bar.

Strewn about the bar are numerous bullet casings, crossbolts, broken furniture and shattered glasses. The regular customers are all tied up in the corner. The dog-headed man is bound with thick chains and has a high-carbon steel chew toy bound to his mouth. On a table at the center of the bar, a large Merc is tied up, and two roaches are worshipping him as the creator who elevated them to their present incarnation.

The cockroach behind the bar says, "What'll you have?"

WRAPPING IT UP

There are two ways to get rid of the cockroaches. The first is to battle them into submission and throw them out. Or, the roaches may challenge the PCs to a drinking contest for the bar—the contestants must match each other drink for drink until all of one group is unconscious.

A drinking contest with the roaches is very difficult to win. Due to the roaches' high STR and Power Drinking skill, unless the PCs are exceptionally large and strong, they will need to resort to guile. One excellent tactic is to use the Exchange spell to exchange the whiskey in the glass with either coffee or dishwater, both of which are visible. But if the PCs are caught cheating, the roaches will immediately attack.

If the roaches are forced to leave and the customers are freed, Kinkade will thank the PCs, pay them their money, and give them free drinks for a week. Experience awards are as follows:

For finishing the adventure: +100.

For drinking the roaches under the table: +20.

For using the MkVII Pestcrusher Gun on Ug: +10.

For wanton violence beyond the call of duty: +10.

Roaches

STR 6, NIMB 4, AIM 4, SMRT 2, COOL 2, CS 1, LUCK 2.

Oops! Points: 18.

Luck Points: 2.

Schlick: Schwarzenegger Effect.

Skills: Hurt People-Hack (8), Power Drinking-Dabbler (7), Dodge-Dabbler (5), Duck-Expert (7), Party Like a Madman-Hack (6).

The Denebian, Pandimensional, Exponential, Omni-Roaches are of the most dangerous variety—big! Really big! The small ones are 6'5", and the large ones are in excess of 7 feet tall. When you attack the roaches, they don't die. Instead, they just split into more big roaches. If one of these roaches is knocked down to zero or less Oops! points, then it will split into three roaches. If one is lowered to below -10 Oops! points, it will split into four roaches.

The only way to kill one of the beasts is to shoot it with the MkVII Pestcrusher Gun. Once shot, the roach loses its special brand of invulnerability. It is then vulnerable to normal weaponry.

MAD DOCTOR

STR 2, NIMB 4, AIM 3, SMRT 6, COOL 1, CS 1, LUCK 4.

Oops! Points: 18.

Luck Points: 4.

Schtick: Escher Effect.

Skills: Invent-Expert (9), Mess With Dangerous Goop-Expert (4), Fiddle With Electronic Gadgets-Professional (10), Swing Nasty Pointy Thing With Panache-Hack (6), Shoot Things (Gadget)-Expert (6), Use Gadget-Hack (8), Act Like Raving Lunatic-Specialist (6), Specific Knowledge (Insects)-Master (12), Dodge-Expert (7), Duck-Expert (7).

The doctor will, at first, seem halfway normal (except for unusual mannerisms and a mild facial tick). But as any conversation proceeds, he will grow progressively more insane.

Finally, he will try to vivisect one of the PCs and fight the rest to the death. In combat, he will either single one PC out for a dramatic sword duel, or he will grab a device from the wall and use any effect from the I Wonder What This Button Does? Table.

IGOR

STR 7, NIMB 6, AIM 5, SMRT 1, COOL 1, CS 1, LUCK 3.

Oops! Points: 36.

Luck Points: 3.

Schtick: Trenchcoat Effect.

Skills: Berserker Rage-Professional (5), Shoot Things (Primitive Missile Chucker)-Expert (8), Dodge-Expert (9), Duck-Expert (9), Hurt People-Hack (9), Grab and Strap-Master (13), Assist Scientist-Specialist (6).

Igor is the perfect assistant and enforcer. He can grab a person and strap him to a table like no one else. In combat, he uses two high-tech, self-loading crossbows that can fire twice each per round.

On the first round, he will immediately go berserk and attack everyone in sight (except the doctor). He will fight to the death.

THE GREAT AND POWERFUL UG

STR 15, NIMB 6, AIM 8, SMRT 4, COOL 5, CS 2, LUCK 3.

Oops! Points: 50.

Luck Points: 3.

Spell Points: 4.

STR Damage Bonus: +7.

Schtick: John Doe Effect.

Skills: Hurt People-Dabbler (16), Cast Spells-Dabbler (5), Claw People-Expert (11), Stomp On People-Hack (8), Specific Knowledge (Additives and Preservatives)-Professional (8).

Ug is the ultimate in this planet's fast food connoisseurs. In recent years, however, he came to notice that live humanoids were the best fast food the planet had to offer. After chowing down on the contents of a packed McAphids restaurant, he was driven off. In fear for his life, he took with him the only remaining MkVII Pestcrusher Gun. He's really hungry.

How fortunate the PCs stopped in for lunch.

Ug's claws inflict 1D10+3 Oops! points, and his Stomp inflicts 1D10+5 Oops! points. He can claw twice and stomp twice in a round.

MKVII PESTCRUSHER GUN

Type: RBGUN.

Shots: 5.

Mass: 3 Med.

Cost: N/A.

Notes: Y.

The MkVII Megablat, Unidirectional, Liquid-Hydrogen-Cooled, High-Speed, Laser-Targeted Pestcrusher Gun was created thousands of years ago and is the ultimate expression of pest control technology.

When fired at Denebian, Pandimensional, Exponential Omni-Roaches, this gun will inflict Really Big Gun damage and will also make the roaches vulnerable to normal weaponry.

Unfortunately, this one-of-a-kind gun has not been used in centuries. At the end of the adventure, it will cease to function. Fixing it will take a Nigh-Impossible Invent Test, followed by a Very Hard Luck Test. Then, after three more uses, the gun will break down again, requiring the same repairs, ad infinitum.

Due to its antiquity, the gun could still fetch quite a price from antique collectors. Simon Trask is always looking to expand his collection. He would probably pay at least three grand for it.

Tales from the Floating Vagabond is Avalon Hill's game of ludicrous adventure in a universe whose natural laws are out to lunch. For more information, see "The Night Was Fluffy" by Nick Atlas in *Challenge 52*.

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Twilight: 2000

Design: Frank Chadwick.

Development: Loren K. Wiseman and Julia Martin.

Art Direction: Amy Doubet.

Review by Dave Smith and Lester Nilsen.

The two of us have been roleplaying for a combined total of lots of years, and we believe we have come to recognize what makes a good roleplaying system and what makes a poor one, what makes an okay but not really exciting one, and what makes a pretty good one but with some problems.

Of course, no one really plays with a roleplaying game as it is printed—everyone creates their own collection of house rules, one of which we'll be publishing as official in the very near future. But that's not important right now. What is important is that we give you an intelligent, carefully thought-out, carefully worded (with the most accurate and concise phraseology possible) review of the above, aforementioned game of roleplaying simulation.

So let's hop to it.

But first, a word about reality.

All gamers should realize that roleplaying is imaginary. That is, roleplaying itself is real, in a way, but what is being played is imaginary, though it has some measure of contact with reality. The problem is that some people cannot distinguish between when people are working in their imaginations and when they are simply stumping their way through reality. These people tend to assume that people working with their imaginations are out of touch with reality, when in reality it is they who are out of touch with reality by not realizing that the people who are imagining have had to recognize reality as something apart from their imaginations in order to imagine in the first place.

Now to the review proper.

While **T2K2** (as we roleplay aficionados call it) works very well for modern military adventures, this makes it completely inappropriate for a wide world of other adventure types.

The character generation system reveals one example. Using the system provided, we were able to create a quite impressive Navy SEAL character. But when we got that character involved in his first battle—one involving a group of terrorists holding school children hostage in an ice-cream truck—the holes in the game's background began to show

through. Specifically, despite the fact that this character is supposed to have been trained in every imaginable form of combat arts, when we attempted to have him cast a fireball spell against the side of the truck, we found the game unable to simulate the results, regardless of how many times we tried.

In a nutshell, **T2K2's** magic system sucks.

Other problems with the game are as follows:

- Players can only create human characters—no elves, dwarves or halflings, let alone orcs, trolls and the like.

- As for character alignments, it would seem that every **T2K2** PC is chaotic neutral. There are no guidelines for playing other character types.

- There is no common tongue listed in the language tables. This makes communication very difficult for characters from different cultural backgrounds, and it can cause some very uncomfortable situations in play.

- The statistics listed for dragons are ridiculous. The designers of **T2K2** have relegated their dragons to tiny little tubes capable of being carried by a single person, rather than the gargantuan beasts of legend.

How, we wonder, can anyone be frightened by dragons in this game?

- There is not enough treasure in the dungeons.

Conclusion: In all, we are very disappointed in the fantasy aspects of **T2K2**. By concentrating on modern military adventures (which, admittedly, it does very well), it leaves a wide world of fantasy options untapped.

I Am Not a Lizard

By Archduke Brzk.

Review by Duke Craig.

In this tedious and self-serving biography, Brzk systematically wastes his readers' goodwill by belaboring the tendentious thesis that he is not a lizard.

Well, jeez, so what if he's not a lizard, I mean, he's a dog!!! I mean, do you really care about the difference between a lizard and a dog? I mean, jeez.

The real issue here is that people think I'm a lizard too, and I'm not a lizard!!!! So why didn't I write this book? I mean, that's the problem with animals like Brzk—they're always off writing books that they

oughta leave for other people, instead of chasing sticks for the K'kree or something. And speaking of K'kree, I'm not a K'kree, nor am I a Hiver, an Aslan or a Vargr. I am not a fish, I am not a squirrel, I am not a cricket, I am not an animal. I am a human being! I am a man.

But it's got a beat and people were dancing to it, so I give it a 6.

Rox

By Dullinor Astrin Iethian, shadow emperor and part-time geologist.

Have y' ever noticed how granite can't seem to decide what color it is? Oh, sure, it's hard and easy to build tall buildings with, but what color is it? Is it pink with little green spots in it, or is it gray with white and black spots in it, or is it just white, or gray, or black? I just don't get it. If someone were in charge around here for a change, this sort of thing wouldn't happen. Somebody oughta get shot—that would straighten people up.

On a scale of 1 to 10, I give granite a 2.

In the Bathroom

By Emperor Strephon.

This Month: Shower curtains.

Hello everyone. I hope this month finds everyone having a wonderful time in this, the best of all possible Imperia.

As ruler of all human space, I find that I frequently have to look my best. And for this emperor, that means taking a shower at least once a day.

This is, quite honestly, the time of day that I look forward to the most, as it gives me a chance to get away from the incessant kissing up and whining that characterizes court life.

As I believe one of my illustrious ancestors said, "Give me a brigade of marines and a good hot shower, and there is nothing I cannot do."

A really good shower begins and ends with the shower curtain, that thin barrier that holds the water in and the world out, and I have discovered the finest shower curtain available in the Scrubbarrier 5000. Its convenient antigravity design allows you to say goodbye forever to those pesky curtain rods, and the clever electromagnetic seal keeps that hot sudsy water in the stall with you, not running down the outside of the tub and all over your Sunday crossword puzzles.

But what's best about the Scrubbarrier is its 100% soundproof feature which is

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crucial when you have acquaintances like, well, to be perfectly frank, Dulinor of Illeish. He's always staying over with me on long weekends, whining about this and that, and periodically interrupting my private time so he can throw up in the toilet. You know, I only gave him that lousy archdukeship to get him to shut up, but is he satisfied? No. You'd think he wanted to be emperor or something. So anyway, with the Scrubbarrier, he can be out there mooning over Veronica, and I don't have to hear a word of it.

The secret is the thin layer of oblivium that actually *interrupts the time-space continuum* and takes you and your shower out of the normal flow of events and into your own glorious flow of bath-water. I'm telling you, with a shower curtain like this, you can have showers that last for days, maybe even *weeks*. I know I do.

So, until next time, bye bye, and keep that tile shiny.

Next Month: Bullet-proof bathrobes.

Dirt Clod Wars

Lost Generation Games.

\$8.95.

Design: Merle Chigger.

Development: Mort Sylvester.

Art: Dusty Brown.

Review by Simon Fitzwater.

Remember when you were little and used to have dirt clod fights with your friends? Remember how exciting it was to watch them explode in a puff of dust (the dirt clods, that is)? Remember imagining that those puffs of dust were the impact of bullets, just like in the westerns on TV before the advent of exploding blood cap-

sules? Well, now you can recapture all the excitement of those childhood days in *Dirt Clod Wars*.

But *Dirt Clod Wars* takes you a step beyond those childhood games, in which the really big kids could throw real hard and really fast, pelting you with tons of clods before you could even find one to throw. In *Dirt Clod Wars*, each contestant is gauged for upper body strength, and those who are strongest have to stand furthest away from their targets, while the "biceptually challenged" are placed much closer to theirs.

Differences in reflexes are evened out by use of a carefully staged turn sequence. Basically, under this system, I bend down, pick up one dirt clod, and throw, then you perform the same sequence, and so on. The game comes complete with uniformly sized clods, to ensure fairness.

In all, I cannot recommend *Dirt Clod Wars* heartily enough. Buy a copy, get some chums together, and chuck away. You're sure to have a good time.

Dirt Clod Wars, 2nd Ed.

Lost Generation Games.

\$28.95.

Design: Merle Chigger.

Development: Duke Palooka.

Art: Ty "Razor" Jackson.

Review by Buzz Adams.

Everyone knows that the first edition of this game was for wimps. If you've ever seen it played, the contestants are always skinny, little, pencil-necked geeks

with thick glasses, tossing teeny fragments of dirt underhand at each other like sissies, consulting the rule book every other throw, giggling like teeny little mice when they miss an opponent, and crying like babies when a clod hits them in the eye.

Now don't get me wrong. The game itself wasn't really a bad design. It's just that in order to secure a market for itself it had to be toned down to appeal to a bunch of snivelling little weenies.

Not so with the game's second edition. The rules have been simplified to a smooth and easy "pick up and throw as fast and hard as you can" sequence. And not only have the enforced target distances been done away with, but the optional rules even allow players to hide behind bushes and hit their opponents from ambush!

In terms of physical components, the game has changed somewhat as well. Where the first edition had a box of clods of a uniform size and weight, the second edition increases your fun by including clods of all different sizes and compositions of soil. In fact, on the average, one in every 10 of the clods in the box is actually a rock!

You absolutely *have* to buy and play this game. It will keep you in stitches.

Cow Patty Wars

Lost Generation Games.

\$14.95.

Design: Merle Chigger.

Development: Max Farmer.

Art: Philbert Crustacean.

Review by Larry Metropole.

This game stinks. Ω

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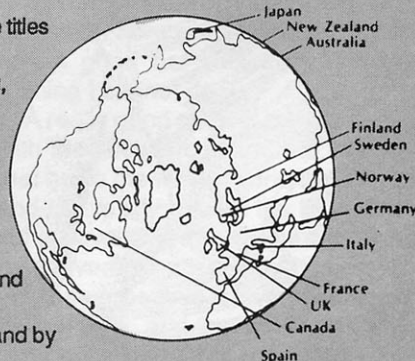
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Page Number Conversion Errata

Alert readers may have noticed that the page number conversion chart presented earlier doesn't work. That chart was printed in error.

Well, not exactly in error.

You see, Loren and I were up on Bryant's back trying to screw in this light bulb. Now if it was a right-hand incandescent, it would have been a Difficult throw against Dexterity, but if it was a two-prong fluorescent, it would have been Easy vs. Mechanical. So we had to call Frank out for a ruling.

But what you have to remember is that Steve, being such a small guy compared to Loren, me and all the light bulbs— well, we had to ratchet the difficulty up to Impossible and Difficult, respectively.

So Frank tells Maggi what kind of bulbs we need, and we figure, since he's already there, we'd ask him if the whole thing was funny. Well, Frank has this theory, which is his own, but before he can say anything, Les comes around the corner and bursts out laughing, which causes the whole heap of us to fall down, bumping this ladder that's always taking up space leaning against the wall.

Of course, the ladder falls down, knocking all the little metal letters out of the printing press bed, and by the time we fit them all back in, the page number table was completely trashed, and we hoped you wouldn't notice.

But Michelle said we had to fix it. So what you do is this:

Take the number you want, and if it's 29, write "Skip to My Lou" in blood instead of a page number.

If it's a prime number whose digits add up to 10, write the initials of the 16th president's wife instead of a page number.

If it's a prime number whose digits add up to four, write the initials of the 23rd president down on a piece of paper. Wad it up and throw it away, as you won't be needing it anymore.

Then take the number, multiply it by two, take the square root, round to the nearest whole number and put a little letter "a" after it.

For any odd number, multiply by 43.

If the last digit is a five, multiply by $3\sqrt{2}$, and you're done.

Otherwise, divide by the last digit, and—oops, looks like the light bulb just burned out.

I'd better go find Loren. Ω

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ALLEN VARNEY phone home.

SO, MARGARET, did you get the french fries I sent you? So how's about allying with me, you know, doing the emperor-empress dance? Or are you frightened by my cabbage for a head? When I was a kid, a K'kree tried to eat my head (could be true). In other words, I had a bad childhood, kapiche? Call me. Strephon Cabbage-for-a-Head, Gushemege sector.

NOW HIRING twisted, sick research scientists with expertise in computer software. Con-

tact Lucan, Oooh, in a really bad mood now, Capital, Core sector.

TEST SUBJECTS WANTED for twisted experiments involving long periods of isolation in unlikely containers. Apply to Tavrchedl', Zhdant. We heard that. Stop it right now.

THE IMPERIUM IS FULL. Full of Usurpers, Pretenders, Assassins and Emperors. And then there's me. Usurper, Pretender, Assassin, Emperor, Diani. See? I can even make the word Diani sound sexy. Dulinor, Dlan, Illeish.

LOOKING FOR PLAYERS of any game from Allen Varney Games. Anyone interested can contact Bartholomew Irwin Jones, 1435 Lightbulb Court, Yakutsk, Iowa 91827.

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VARGR FEMALE seeking human male for interracial, long-distance relationship. Please contact Halifax Gvererererrrrnd, Regina, Spinward Marches.

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SMALL BUT GROWING neo-nazi group seeks new members. So far we hate jews, blacks, hispanics, asians, foreigners, northerners, southerners, well-educated people, liberals, commies, and all people with long hair and/or earrings. If we do not follow your particular hate, we will be happy to expand the list. Interested individuals may contact Heinrich Bimmler, 98 Klan Drive, Hissler, Brazil E56 U67

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PLANET REMULAK, France Sector, desperately seeking relief from breakdown of trade resulting from collapsing Imperium. Please send mass quantities of beer and potato chips to Remulak Relief Fund, GDW, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646.

LIGHT BULBS for important test program. Right-hand or left-hand thread okay. GDW, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646.

INFORMATION WANTED: What the *&^\$* were we doing in this habitation module, anyway? We were in here for months. Six desperately confused Zhodani.

SMALL DEAD ANIMALS wanted. Will pay top dollar. Contact Doctor Frankenstein, Ed Poe County, TX 66655.

AM LOOKING FOR nothing for *Torg*. Will pay reasonable

price. If you have nothing available for *Torg*, please contact Adam Johnson, 1892 North St., Anaheim County, Ohio 24586.

GROWL YIP YIP YIP. Yipe grrr roof roof roof, growl arf arf grr roar grr. Woof, woof, woof. Growr grr yip yipe Spot Gvererererrrrnd Halifax Gvererererrrrnd, Regina, Spinward Marches.

FANZINES

FANZINE X is a new fanzine devoted entirely to being the most exclusive fanzine available. Writers are wanted for the first issue. Printing has so far been delayed because we have yet to find a subject exclusive enough. Contact William Neville Winthorpe, 1542 Snubthorn Drive, Emtorich, CA.

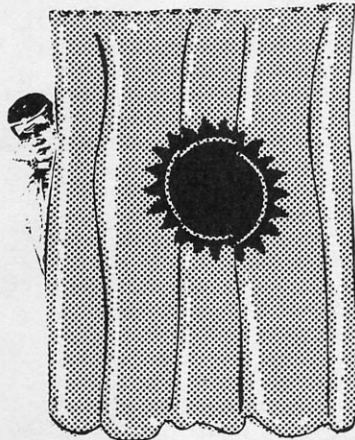
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Feel: Your fingers go numb from gripping the steering wheel

Hate: Life

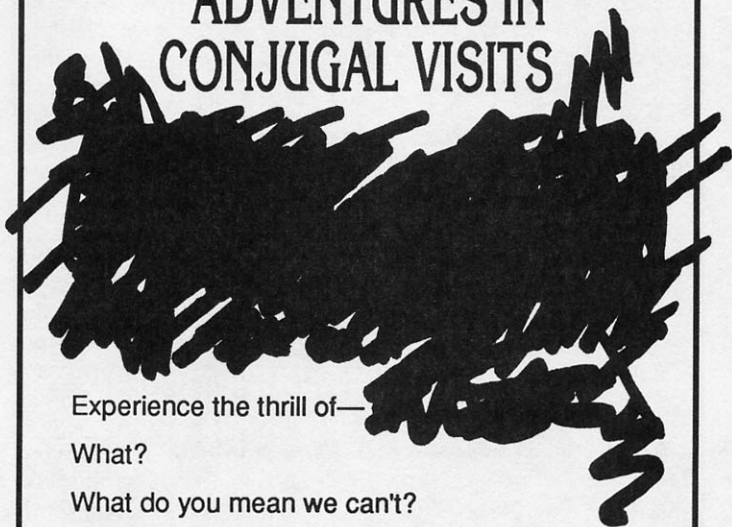
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What?

What do you mean we can't?

Oh, really?

Okay, forget it.

Challenge 59^{1/2}

Rate each article from 0 to 5. 0 means you did not read the article. 1 means, "Say, that's a nice article." 5 means, "Wow! It changed my life!" 2, 3 and 4 are shades in between.

To use a separate sheet, list each article number, then your rating.

Send responses to:

Challenge Feedback

Managing Editor

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- +	
0 1 2 3 4 5	Article
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	1. Surprise Party (Merc: 2000)
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	2. I Hate Mondays (Dark Conspiracy)
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See page 38 for Mysteries Special Issue feedback form.

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"Canteens of the World." Loren K. Wiseman gives us an evocative look at the various means in which warriors retain water.

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Strephon says, "Iphigenia's still on the phone?!" Halifax and Wisconsin take over the Windhorn, and we discover the answer to the burning question...I'm sorry, what was that again?"

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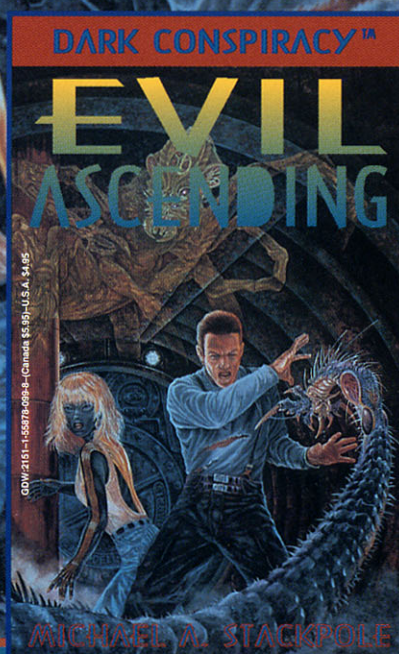
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