CHALLENGE

55

The Magazine of Science-Fiction Gaming

MEGATRAVELLER®
Going Places (Barely)
*Thomas J. McCarroll
and Charles E. Gannon*

STAR TREK®
Eltanin the Avenger
James L. Cambias

TWILIGHT: 2000™
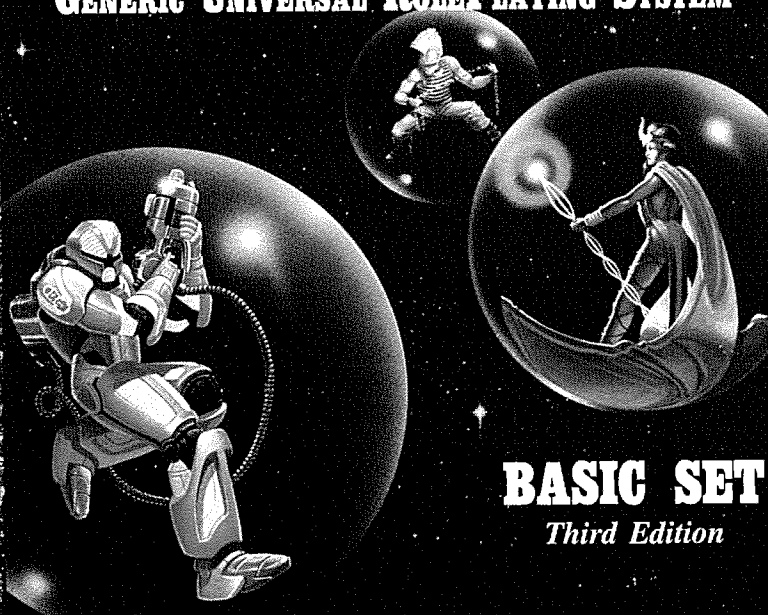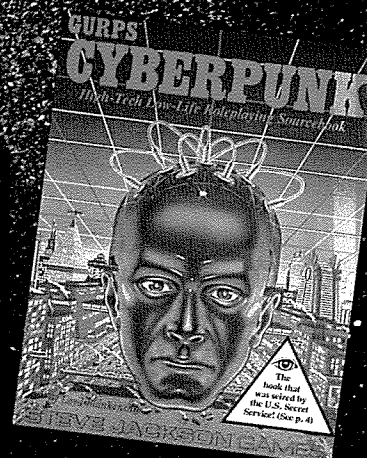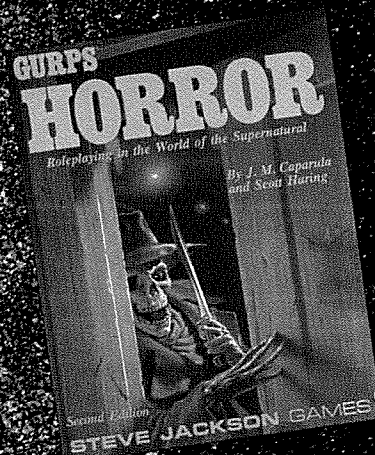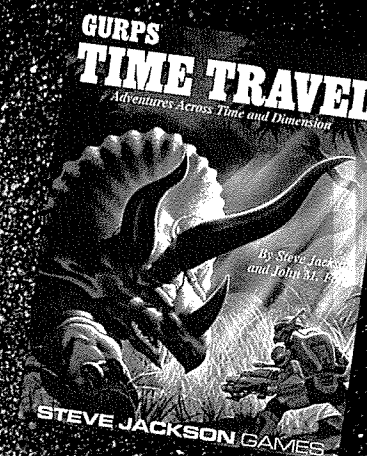New Vehicles
Keith Potter

GDW

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CHALLENGE
The Magazine of Science-Fiction Gaming

Twilight: 2000

MegaTraveller

Dark Conspiracy

2300 AD

Space: 1889

Features

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CHALLENGE *Opinion*

As I write this, convention season has just wound down. This season presented me with some interesting opportunities—especially at GenCon, where I had the chance to sit on a panel about gaming art. Since not every potential artist was at GenCon—and those who were probably didn't want to go to an (ugh) 8 a.m. seminar—I'll recap our conclusions.

Most importantly, artwork should be well rendered and easily reproducible. To judge this quality in your work, see how it photocopies and gauge it from there. If it photocopies well, you know it ought to print well.

Artwork should also tell a story. Rather than just a static drawing of a person standing still, you need to show action or create a mood. Give your viewer something exciting to latch onto.

There are two categories to work within, and each approach is equally valid:

Illustration directly from the text. This is self-explanatory. Take a scene from the text and illustrate the action described. Allen Nunis' Star Wars artwork is a terrific example of this approach.

Mood illustration. Mood illustrations don't necessarily relate to anything on the page, but they do give insight into the feel of the world. Tim Bradstreet's Shadowrun work is the blueprint for mood illos.

Bearing all this in mind, it's time to submit your portfolio. Remember:

Send photocopies, not originals! Originals can get lost. Besides, we can keep photocopies, and when that next big job comes up, you'll be in our files.

We're probably not going to actually use any of your samples. Samples give us an idea of what you can do, but chances are, they don't illustrate any text we have. If we like your samples, however, you'll probably get an assignment.

Don't be discouraged if you don't get work immediately. If you have talent and are persistent, sooner or later you'll get your chance.

Steve Bryant

IN SUPPORT OF 1889

Several months ago I wrote expressing dismay that the wonderfully crafted (and refreshingly nonviolence-oriented) **Space: 1889** game was in danger of dying an early death, and asking my fellow devotees of the game to come forward and be counted.

Respond they did—and how.

The ads section is filled with notices from people starting **Space: 1889** newsletters and looking to get in touch with other players. I myself am running a successful PBM campaign, *Countdown to Armageddon*, with players both in this country and abroad, and already have a sequel in the works. Almost every issue has had a letter from someone voicing their support of the game.

Challenge...is a great magazine, and I'm glad it's going monthly. The article in **Challenge 52** on *Tales from the Floating Vagabond* compelled me to purchase the game and begin work on a Space: 1889 adventure in which the characters, fresh from once again making the solar system safe for Cricket, stumble wearily into their favorite pub and fine themselves you-know-where.

I also enjoyed the "Dwellers in the Dark" adventure, especially the illustrations by Paul Daly.

So what am I asking for? Not all that much. Some cover art, for one. Some adaptations of other games to the **Space: 1889** universe, such as a **Dark Conspiracy** adventure set in the back alleys of Victorian London. Some articles on new equipment. And how about a news service like you already have for MegaTraveller?

Another suggestion would be some how-to articles on adapting figures and vehicles from other games for use in **Space: 1889**. I myself have found the *Landraider* and *Rhino* kits put out by Games Workshop for the *Warhammer 40,000* game to be quite adaptable into impressive land juggernauts for **Space: 1889**.

Donald E. Brynelsen
Itasca, IL

Challenge is happy to consider any and all **Space: 1889** submissions or article proposals. But first, be sure to send a SASE for our free writers' guidelines.

FAN FROM WAY BACK

Congratulations on **Challenge 50**. I have been collecting **JTAS** and **Challenge** since about issue 5 , and it has been getting better all the time.

Having recently resumed playing **Traveller**, I find it a great resource for my campaign.

As Scott Moir observed in issue 50, almost all articles and scenarios may be adapted in some way into the **MegaTraveller** universe. **Twilight: 2000** and *Cyberpunk* appear to be particularly useful.

Keep up the good work.

Alistair Langsford
Australia

Have any comments on this issue? How about gaming in general? Letters from our Readers provides gamers an opportunity to air their views. The opinions presented do not necessarily reflect those of the magazine. **Challenge** reserves the right to edit letters. Write to **Challenge** Letters, **Challenge** Managing Editor, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646 USA.

Errata

The following are errata for "Wet Navy Part 1: Ship Designs" in **Challenge 53**.

Page 19, first paragraph and third paragraph: You can select a hull size from any of the three hull size tables in the basic hull design section—not just from the Small Craft Hull Table as stated.

Page 21, Powered Ships section, third paragraph: The formula should read $R=(\sqrt{D})\times rf$.

Page 24, sixth paragraph from the bottom: The potential speed formula should read $V^2=P2/R$.

Page 24, fourth paragraph from the bottom: The resistance formula should read $R=(\sqrt{D})\times rf$.

M35 2.5-Ton Gun Truck

Price: $21,000 (C/R)
Armament: M2HB HMG, 2×MAG MG (P)
Fuel Type: D, A
Load: 1 ton
Veh Wt: 4.5 tons
Crew: 4 +8
Mnt: 6
Night Vision: Headlights

Damage Record

Crewmembers: Commander ☐ Driver ☐ L. Gunner ☐ R. Gunner ☐

Passengers: 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐
Sight/Vision: Night vision equipment ☐
Radio: ☐
M2HB HMG: ☐
L MAG MG: ☐
R MAG MG: ☐
Engine: ☐
Fuel (% Consumed or Destroyed): ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐
Suspension: Minor damage: ☐ Immobilized: ☐

WEAPON DATA

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Brst	Rng
M2HB	5	8	2-2-3*	8	105B	3	14	65
tripod	5	8	2-2-3*	8	105B	2	7	150
MAG MG	10	4	2-3-Nil	6	100B	1	7	65
bipod	10	4	2-3-Nil	6	100B	1	5	90
tripod	10	4	2-3-Nil	6	100B	1	2	125

*.50 caliber SLAP ammunition has a penetration of 1-1-2.

M35 2.5-Ton Gun Truck (Armored Cargo Vehicle): One of the most innovative vehicle types seen during the war was the "gun truck," standard cargo carriers field modified into makeshift armored vehicles by adding improvised armor and weapons mounts. Originally developed during the Vietnam War as a means of providing escorts for poorly protected supply convoys, the idea proved successful and was widely used.

This is a representative American design, produced from a standard M35 2.5-ton truck. There is welded steel armor protecting the cab and cargo area, and three weapons mounts located in the truck's bed—one NHT mount firing forward over the cab, and two NMT mounts, one firing to each side. The most common armament on these vehicles consisted of machineguns and AGLs. Note that in order to provide adequate fields of fire for the gunners in the bed, the cargo bed must be at least half empty, and the gunners must also expose themselves to return fire when firing their weapons.

Tr Mov: 100/15
Com Mov: 25/4
Fuel Cap: 195
Fuel Cons: 70

Combat Statistics
Config: Stnd   HF: 4
Susp: W(3)   HS: 4
HR: 4

AMMUNITION
Use the MAG MG and M2HB HMG ammo records from page 5 of the **American Combat Vehicle Handbook**.

By Keith Potter
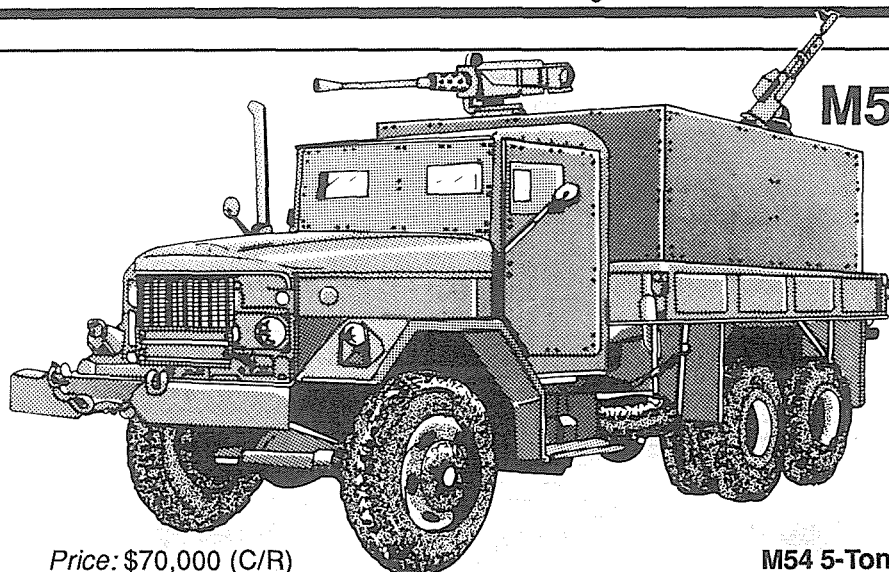
M54 5-Ton Gun Truck
M113 Version

Price: $70,000 (C/R)
Armament: M2HB HMG, 2×MAG MG (P)
Fuel Type: D, A
Load: 350 kg
Veh Wt: 10 tons
Crew: 4+8
Mnt: 6
Night Vision: Headlights

Damage Record
Crewmembers: Commander ☐ Driver ☐ L. Gunner ☐ R. Gunner☐
Passengers: 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4☐ 5☐ 6☐ 7☐ 8☐
Sight/Vision: Night vision equipment ☐
Radio:☐
M2HB HMG:☐
L MAG MG:☐
R MAG MG:☐
Engine:☐
Fuel (% Consumed or Destroyed):☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
Suspension: Minor damage: ☐ Immobilized: ☐

WEAPON DATA

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Brst	Rng
M2HB	5	8	2-2-3*	8	105B	3	14	65
tripod	5	8	2-2-3*	8	105B	2	7	150
MAG MG	10	4	2-3-Nil	6	100B	1	7	65
bipod	10	4	2-3-Nil	6	100B	1	5	90
tripod	10	4	2-3-Nil	6	100B	1	2	125

*.50 caliber SLAP ammunition has a penetration of 1-1-2.

M54 5-Ton Gun Truck (Armored Cargo Vehicle): During the Vietnam War, it was discovered that M54 five-ton cargo trucks could carry a stripped-down M113 hull in their cargo bed. During the War, the design was rediscovered as a number of units found themselves with damaged M113s which they had no way of repairing. The disadvantage was that the truck itself was more vulnerable to fire than the M113, and it was easier to put out of action simply by immobilizing the truck with welded steel and kevlar sheets, with varying degrees of success.

In order for the system to work, the M113 must first be stripped of all excess weight—the engine, suspension, transmission, wheels and tracks must all be removed to avoid overloading the trucks' chassis.

The services of an ARV (such as the M88 or M5) are required in order to build one of these vehicles. If one is unavailable, some other way of removing the M113's engine and then getting the hull into the truck bed must be found. The job can be done by any team of qualified mechanics and takes about 12 hours.

Because these vehicles were field modified, no two were exactly alike. The vehicle given is typical design, used by the 5th Infantry Division in Europe. It incorporates an M113 ACCV into the design.

Tr Mov: 85/15
Com Mov: 30/4
Fuel Cap: 280
Fuel Cons: 80

Combat Statistics
Config: Stnd   HF: 4
Susp: W(3)   HS: 4
HR: 4

Ammunition
Use the MAG MG and M2HB HMG ammo records from page 5 of the **American Combat Vehicle Handbook**.

M54 5-Ton Gun Truck
M901 Version
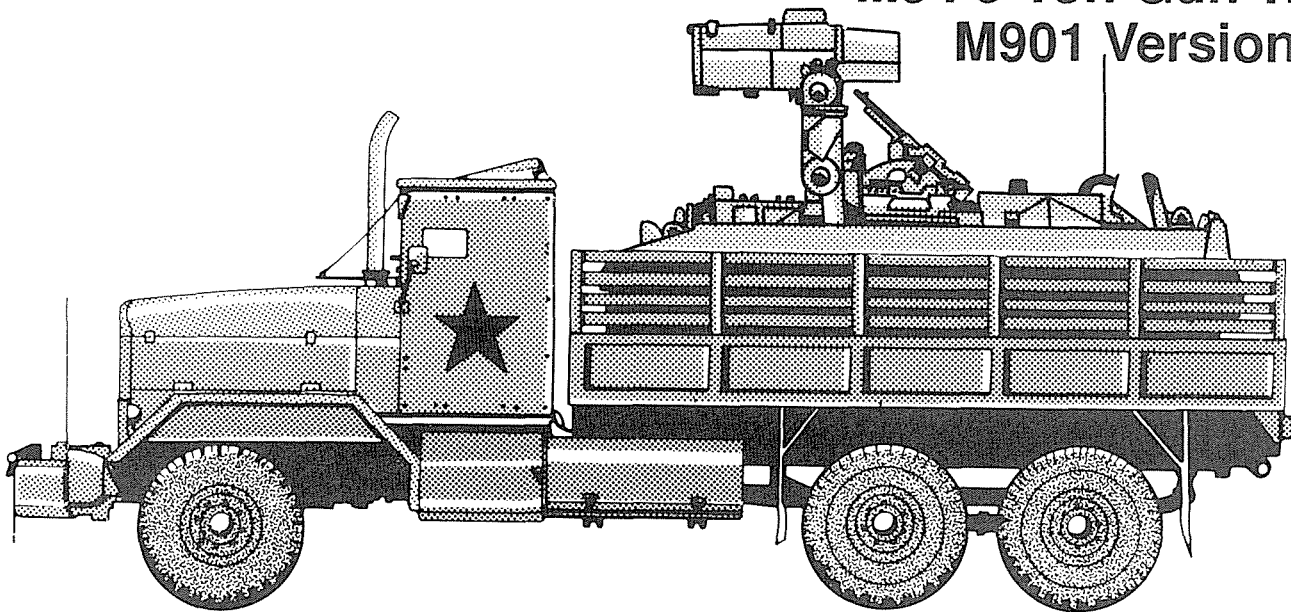
Price: $70,000 (C/R)
RF: +2
Armament: Twin TOW launcher, MAG MG (P)
Ammo: 10 TOW II missiles
Fuel Type: D, A
Load: 250 kg
Veh Wt: 10 tons
Crew: 3+3
Mnt: 6
Night Vision: Headlights, passive IR

Damage Record
Crewmembers: Commander ☐ Driver ☐ Gunner ☐
Passengers: 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐
Sight/Vision: Gunsight ☐ Rangefinder ☐ Night vision equipment ☐
Radio: ☐
Twin TOW Launcher: ☐
Traverse: ☐
MAG MG: ☐
Engine: ☐
Fuel (% Consumed or Destroyed): ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐
Suspension: Minor damage: ☐ Immobilized: ☐

M54 Gun Truck (Armored Cargo Vehicle): This vehicle incorporates an M901 ITV into the design, providing a serviceable antitank vehicle of sorts.

Tr Mov: 85/15
Com mov: 30/4
Fuel Cap: 280
Fuel Cons: 80

Combat Statistics:

Config: CIH	TF: 2	HF: 4
Susp: W(3)	TS: 2	HS: 4
	TR: 2	HR: 4

Ammunition
Use the MAG MG ammo records from page 5 of the **American Combat Vehicle Handbook**.

TOW Missiles (10)
☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐

WEAPON DATA

Type	Rld	Rng	Damage	Pen
TOW II	2	3500	C: 12, B: 12	160C
TOW IIC	2	3500	C: 12, B: 12	160C

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Brst	Rng
MAG MG	10	4	2-3-Nil	6	100B	1	7	65
bipod	10	4	2-3-Nil	6	100B	1	5	90
tripod	10	4	2-3-Nil	6	100B	1	2	125

Jumpy Jehosophat

umpy Jehosophat can appear in any part of the **Merc: 2000** world, serving as a messenger, an enemy, a source of information or, most often, the agent of patrons who choose to remain unnamed.

His real name is Jehush Ovir, but his friends call him Jumpy. He has the jack-in-the-box nerves to prove he's spent time under fire, mixed with just enough bravado to earn any merc's respect.

Jumpy works as a freelance correspondent on the military beat and knows just about everything that takes place in the mercenary world.

Some of this knowledge goes into his articles. He applies the rest to his career as a middleman for mercenary deals.

An Israeli by birth, Jumpy began his career as an intelligence advisor to the South Lebanese Army militia.

The Israeli Defense Forces organized this force of Lebanese nationals to keep order in the IDF security zone during the 1980s. There, he took a bullet in his right arm, which forever disqualified him for military duty.

Rather than let his skills and contacts go to waste, he began writing for the European press. His career blossomed from there on.

Mercenaries consider Jumpy a mascot, a confidante, a friend. He earns their trust with his discretion, never publishing anything which might harm his sources.

However, although Jumpy keeps secrets buried, he also has a talent for flattering the mercenaries he knows in print, even when he must mention them only by pseudonyms. Whether they admit it or not, almost all soldiers of fortune harbor a suppressed hunger for glory.

By making friends, Jumpy makes himself valuable. The employers of mercenaries treasure him for his ability to recruit the best.

The mercenaries, for their part, stand in awe of Jumpy's ability to find high-paying jobs from reliable patrons, although his assignments rank among the toughest many soldiers of fortune must face. Jumpy can also acquire information and equipment of almost any sort he desires.

For the past three years, Jumpy has lived with a woman named Rachel Fruze. Rachel has the statistics of a Veteran, with a Pistol skill of 6 and an Interrogation skill of 4.

Rachel has straight black hair and a permanent frown. She quite frequently takes a disliking to Jumpy's contacts, and most of them, in turn, resent her as well.

Nevertheless, Rachel's prejudices have saved her mate from more than one setup.

Furthermore, Jumpy likes Rachel's ironic wit, and he has come to trust her skill with an uzi.

Jumpy's mercenary friends must learn to get along with his companion.

Jumpy lives in a moderately sized apartment, which doubles as an office. For protection, he owns an ultrasonic motion detector which alerts him to intruders by silently flashing a light at his bed. Two Alsatians, named Yassir and Nidal, roam the apartment freely. Jumpy, Rachel and their "guests" complete the security precautions.

Jumpy looks like the veteran he is. His right arm hangs limp and useless, although his left arm has an almost unnatural strength. Black sunshades top his square, unshaven face.

Jumpy stands 5' 5" tall and weighs 150 pounds. He typically wears a concealed kevlar vest and carriers a Beretta pistol.
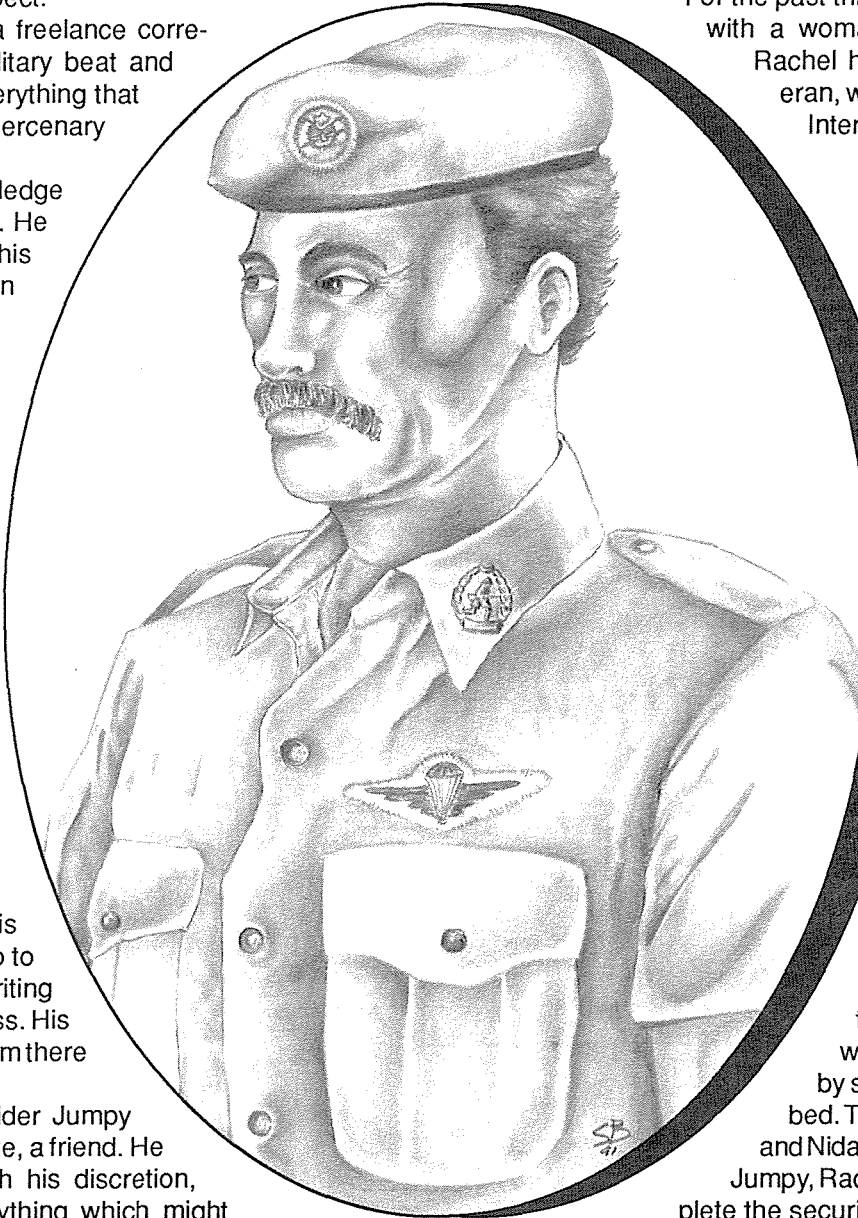
By Thomas M. Kane

MEETING JUMPY

The referee can arrange an encounter with Jumpy to meet the needs of his particular campaign. In general, though, the following ideas are suggested for introducing Jumpy into play:

Jumpy Has Jobs

Jumpy knows where the jobs are and how to get them.

If player characters need employment, they may find making friends with Jumpy well worth their while. This scenario tests the player characters' social skills and their ability to glean useful material from past missions. Since winning Jumpy's interest is as much an art as a science, the referee should decide the results based largely on his own appraisal of their performance.

To win Jumpy's approval, the player characters must prove that they can cope with tough missions. They also need to offer Jumpy something he needs.

Jumpy wants information, either for his stories or to further his career as a middleman of mercenary deals. He eagerly seeks photographs, hot tips and chances to meet major figures of the shadow world. This does not mean the player characters should spill the beans on their last covert mission—Jumpy has no use for loose-lipped mercs. Instead, the party must find untraceable morsels from its past, things that seemed peripheral at the time but might mean a great deal to Jumpy.

Jumpy Has Enemies

The party meets two men in suits, who hint that they want mercenaries for a simple job, which will pay quite well.

According to the strangers, a reporter named Jehush has overlooked some debts to some very important people. They want to gently remind him about his credit rating, specifically by firebombing his combination apartment/office.

Afterward the area is firebombed, the men want photographs proving conclusively that all files and computers were destroyed.

They offer to pay their employees $10,000 each. The mercs may bargain for up to double this price.

If the player characters do some spadework, they will discover a few things the men in suits did not tell them. For one thing, their patrons work for the CIA.

Furthermore, Jumpy does not owe anybody anything. Actually, Jumpy arranged the hiring of two mercenaries for a company raid in Belize. They failed their mission and are now prisoners.

Naturally, "none of this ever happened," so the company wishes to destroy all records of the hiring.

The climax of this scenario depends on how the player characters react to the CIA's plot.

● They may go ahead and attack Jumpy, keeping in mind that mercenaries throughout the world count him as a close friend.

● Alternatively, the party might tip him off and risk the CIA's revenge.

● PCs who feel willing to make lots of enemies could steal Jumpy's documents instead of destroying them and look for the highest bidder.

● The truly adventurous may opt to reject this mission and volunteer instead to rescue the prisoners from Belize.

Jumpy Jehosophat
(Experienced NPC)

Age: 40
Weight: 78
Throw Range: 20
Initiative: 3
Load: 24
Unarmed Combat Damage: 2

Strength 5
- Heavy Weapons 2
- Melee Combat (Armed) 2
- Melee Combat (Unarmed) 5
- Small Arms (Pistol) 7
- Small Arms (Rifle) 3
- Thrown Weapon 1

Agility 4
- Electronics 2
- Forgery 4
- Lockpick 5
- Stealth 5
- Tracked Vehicle 2
- Wheeled Vehicle 5

Constitution 3
- Swimming 1

Charisma 10
- Hebrew 10
- English 6
- French 7
- Arabic 6
- Afrikaans 4
- Persuasion 9

Intelligence 7
- Observation 3
- Tracking 2

Education 5
- Computer 2

Hit Capacity
- Head 6
- Chest 24
- Right Arm 16
- Left Arm 16
- Abdomen 16
- Right Leg 16
- Left Leg 16 Ω
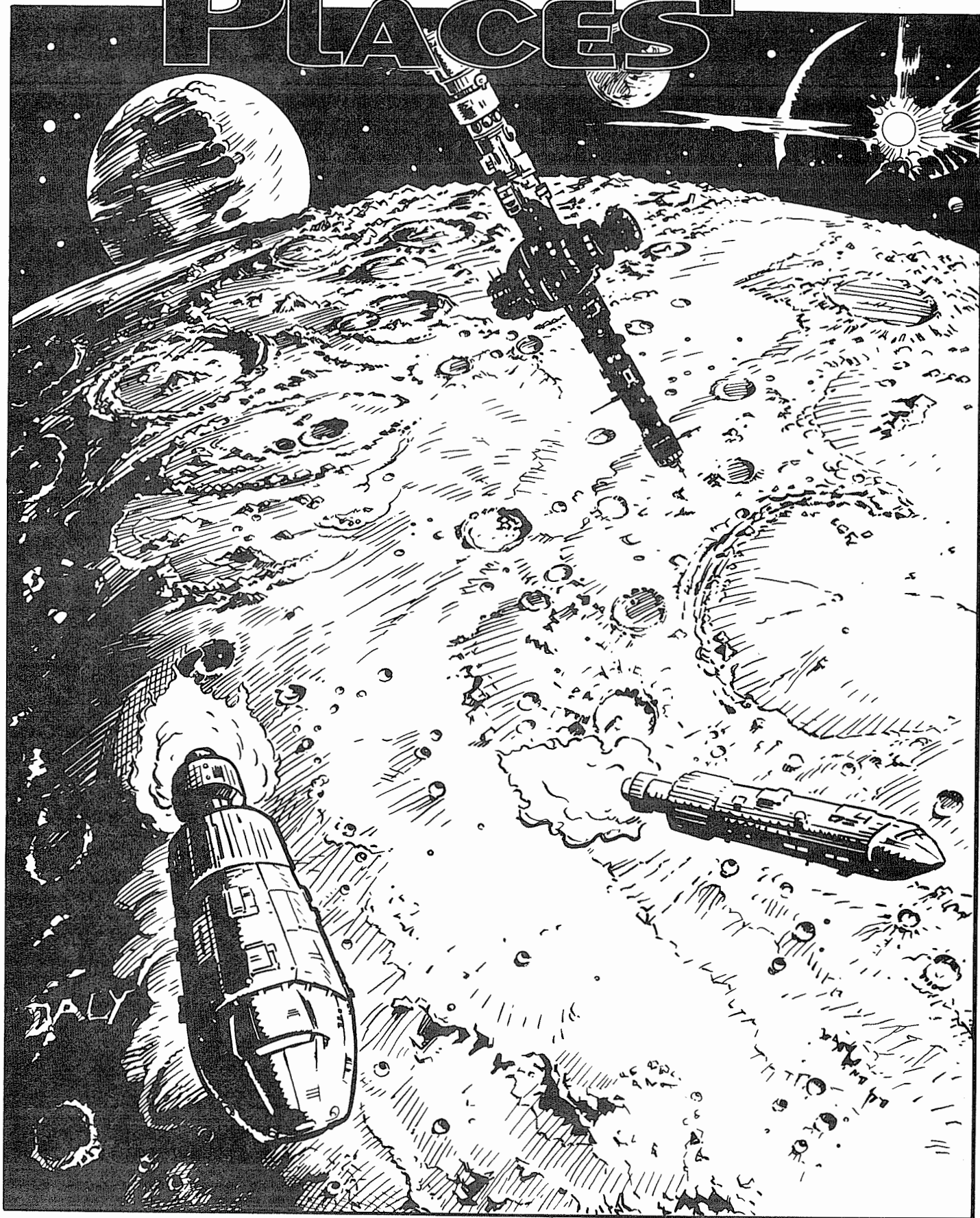
he **MegaTraveller** universe, as it is presented in most of its support products, would seem to be a place in which the highest level of generally available technology—TL15—apparently dominates the Imperium's space-lanes.

Given the many years that the Imperium has had access to TL15 technology, there is reason to expect quite a lot of TL15 gear. Certainly, there wouldn't be many hulls (of any size) still in service that would be more than—say—a century or two old. Even with tremendous advances in durability and easy maintenance, irreparable system failures are simply a fact of life and will tend to cull out the more dated vehicles.

Obviously, therefore, most hulls would reflect the current state of the art in ship design. However, even a modern hull might evince retrograde technologies. After all, those almost innumerable TL9 and 10 worlds with A-class starports are building something that is jump capable.

Consequently, this article takes a look at the other end of the starflight and spaceflight technological spectrum. Not only are the UCP values of TL9 star ships significantly different from their more advanced TL15 descendants, but the nuances of life aboard such craft are unique. They certainly offer referees just the sort of detail that can help remind players that all space travel experiences are not created equal.

TL9 STARCRAFT AND SPACECRAFT

At the end of this article, many of the most commonly encountered types of star and space craft are presented with TL9 design values. But where would players encounter these apparent dinosaurs? Almost anywhere. A ship that's still jump-capable is a ship that somebody will still be willing to operate, even if the profitability is questionable. This is particularly true in the post-Rebellion Imperium, where shipbuilding has dropped off dramatically, making any jump-capable hull a pearl of great price—no matter what its tech level is.

The actual age of a TL9 hull can usually be inferred from the area in which it is encountered. In a frontier area with plenty of TL9 worlds, it is very likely to be of fairly recent local manufacture. In a more cosmopolitan region of known space, it is more likely to be a hand-me-down vessel that is as much as 60 years old that is still running only because of the basic dependability of these tried-and-ture workhorses of Imperial commerce.

Either way, the masters of TL9 craft are not likely to be as well-off as the masters of higher-TL craft. This might at first seem contradictory, given the fact that lower-TL craft tend to be more expensive than their higher-tech counterparts. However, since the demand for higher TL hulls is so high, the producers of those craft can—and do—expect better credit credentials of their purchasers. TL15 starship builders tend to experience the lowest level of default and barratry because of this policy, meaning that there is only a small chance that there will be any discrepancy between their anticipated sales revenue and their actual sales revenue.

For TL9 shipyards, it's a different story. They are confronted with the inescapable fact that they are producing an inferior product at a higher price. Logic dictates their only course of action: Be less choosy about your buyer.

Consequently, individuals who want to own a hull but don't have a lot of collateral or backing usually wind up buying a TL9 hull. This in turn tends to influence the construction of the vehicle. TL9 ships are made to last, to be dependable, but not to be particularly attractive—inside or out. They represent the epitome of the generic spacecraft. Or as one old-timer from the Spinward Marches put it, they are the Imperium's version of "no-frills flying."

One of the reasons that TL9 hulls are built to last is that given the often near-destitute nature of their purchasers, shipyards often have to extend the mortgage to a 50- or 60-year period (instead of the normal 40-year term). Obviously, if the shipyard wants to collect its rent, the ship has to remain in working order, so despite their homeliness, many TL9 vessels are rugged, reliable vehicles.

MEGATRAVELLER

LIFE ON-BOARD EARLY STELLAR STARCRAFT AND SPACECRAFT

Operating a TL9 craft involves dealing with some interesting quirks not encountered at higher tech levels. Rather than present the quirks in descending order of magnitude (since that could well be a matter of opinion!), they are presented here in roughly the same order as one would encounter them while following the section-by-section format of the UCP design sequence.

Communications: Communications on board an Early Stellar vehicle are notably different in only one regard—the lack of meson communicators. However, this can be a major difference when the craft has need of secure communications. Other secure media (laser or maser) require essentially unobstructed line-of-sight transmission environments, a requirement that can be difficult (or impossible) to meet when trying to establish contact with other communicators located under opaque surfaces or deep within dense atmospheres. Consequently, TL9 starships have the tactical disadvantage of always being visible from the perspective of whatever communication node they are trying to reach.

Sensors: The sensor limitations of TL9 craft have equally interesting tactical ramifications. At this early tech level, there are no densitometers, neutrino sensors or neural activity sensors. The lack of densitometers means that cross-sectional views of scanned objects are simply not available, and that an object's mass can only be inferred, not conclusively determined. (Frequently, such inferences are very wrong!)

The lack of neutrino sensors is perhaps the major shortcoming, preventing the TL9 craft from being able to determine the presence of other vessels based on their emissions. Consequently, it is much easier for an adversary to sneak up on a TL9 vessel, even if the intruder is running its power plant at full tilt.

Lastly, while the lack of neural activity sensors has few (if any) ramifications in space, it can have some significant impacts on first-contact parties, or other planetfalling groups who would like to get an idea of whether or not their immediate surroundings are inhabited before the first survey team leaves the vessel. A neural activity sensor is a lot more reliable at gathering this sort of information than are the external audio and video monitors that a TL9 ship is compelled to rely upon.

Another interesting limitation is the lack of integrated EMS arrays (both active and passive). This means that separate instruments have to be included in order to get reasonable analysis of light-waves, sound-waves, radiation, etc. It also means that sensor operators have to personally integrate this data, rather than having it all presented in full spectrum analysis format.

Weaponry: Weaponry on board TL9 craft is often much different from that of later equivalent models. Due to the less efficient power plants, less energy is generally available. Consequently, few of the smaller craft mount any energy weapons at all. Even the larger vessels tend to have fewer energy-consuming weapons than their more modern counterparts.

At TL9, there are no plasma or fusion weapons available at all. Furthermore, particle accelerators are available only in cumbersome models that fit into bay-sized (or spinal) mounts. This makes missiles the weapon of choice for most Early Stellar-era craft. Therefore, TL9 navies often use a high percentage of nuclear

warheads in their ship-to-ship missile systems, trying to compensate for their other major offensive limitations.

Another common sight on many TL9 ships is the presence of tactical-scale weapons—for instance, 5 MW lasers that are normally used in land or COACC vehicles. While not tremendously effective across the vast distances involved in space combat, they do carry some offensive punch, offer good protection in atmospheres and against boarding attempts, and, best of all, do not require reloads (the only drawback to missiles).

Controls: Computers and control panels on TL9 vessels are somewhat primitive and bulky, meaning that a greater proportion of the craft is taken up by internal command electronics. Since there are no holographic projections or controls, this means that every command relay on board a craft must be physically present.

Only a few TL9 ships boast dynamically reconfigurable controls, which means that there is usually a one-to-one correspondence between each command-guided system and a matching control mechanism (every discrete function has a separate button, lever or touchpad dedicated to it). For users who are more accustomed to the polyconfigurable, space-economical holographic controls of TL15 vessels, TL9 controls seem baroque and complex. Such a user would be left with the distinct sensation of working with a slow system that is decidedly not user friendly—sort of like trying to use an old 32K Apple computer instead of a modern PC equipped with a mouse and user-friendly software.

Life-Support and Accommodations: Probably the area with the most immediately noticeable differences is life-support and accommodations. These differences affect both day-to-day living and general operations.

• One difference that affects general operations is the lack of either materials or field effect generators capable of providing adequate protection against all types of radiation. In particular, the lack of damper technology makes it impossible to defeat radiation via a field effect device, and the absence of superdense or even crystalliron hulls means that most damaging forms of ionic radiation can be quite dangerous to crews venturing into high-exposure areas.
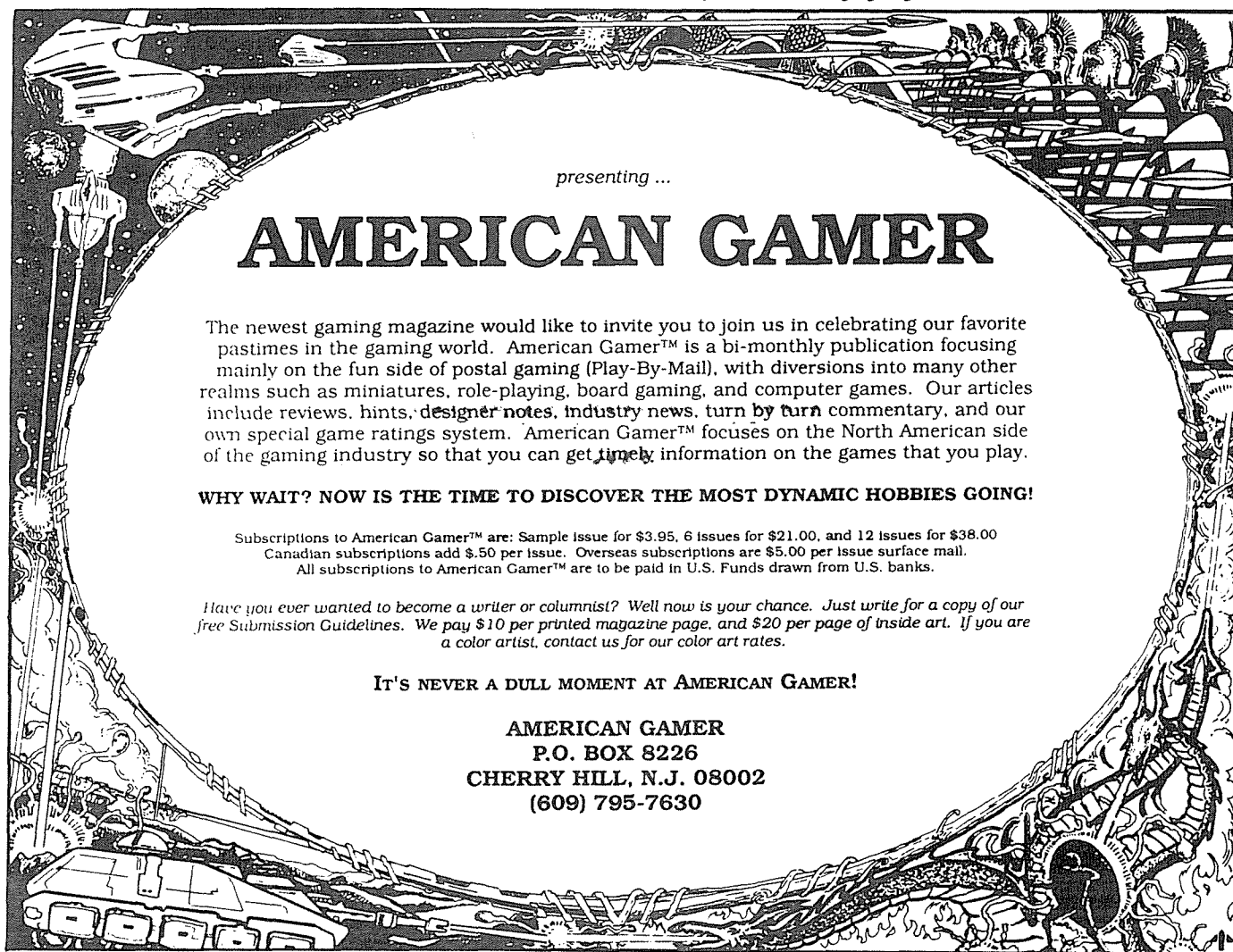
TL9 craft compensate for this with a variety of design features. Most notably, the hull is pervaded with a two-tier electromagnetic grid which works to repel electron and proton radiation. Being composed of charged particles, these radiations can be repelled by a strong enough like-charge. However, since the field only works when the power plant is running, this makes power loss on TL9 ships an even more worrisome event than normal.

Another TL9 tactic that is used to defend against radiation is a layer of gel between the internal hull surface and the external hull surface. This gel layer is specially designed to stop neutron radiation, which is more susceptible to softer, fluidic materials, rather than dense armor plating. Of course, the hull itself serves to decrease all these forms of exposure.

However, even with these protective measures, TL9 spacecraft must be careful when operating in the vicinity of gas giants or in close proximity to stars. Both objects are powerful radioactive emitters and are capable of delivering as much as 50,000 rads per day. While much of this is easily repelled ionic radiation, other emissions are still considerable and should be avoided at all costs. This leads to what TL9 spacehands refer to as rad-dodging tactics, most commonly used when spacecraft are conducting refueling runs near large gas giants.

Many, if not most, large gas giants have radiation belts of tremendous

intensity girding their magnequators (which may or may not be aligned with their rotational equators; see axial tilt statistics to determine the degree of variance). Fortunately, these belts are somewhat donut-shaped, tapering to very low (read: survivable) intensity levels near the planet's magnetic poles. Consequently, TL9 ships that need to skim such gas giants traditionally employ polar insertion trajectories in order to get inside the radiation belts before heading down into the dense, protective atmosphere. This generally reduces the exposure levels encountered by the vessel to the point where TL9 shielding can offer full protection. These navigational strategies also make the refueling activities of such vessels highly predictable, which can be a major tactical disadvantage. In TL9 systems, pirates often lurk in the polar regions of gas giants, awaiting just such hapless prey.

Consequently, many TL9 captains prefer to conduct their refueling operations at small gas giants, where the radiation levels are a great deal less savage and can therefore be easily handled by their ships' innate protective systems.

These considerations of radiation exposure have an even greater impact upon EVA procedures. Within 20 planetary diameters of most large gas giants, TL9 suits—even those designed for hostile environments—generally do not offer enough protection to permit long EVA excursions. External mission times are measurable in minutes at best, not hours. And during peak intensity periods, such EVA operations may not be possible at all.

Consequently, many TL9 captains like to have some kind of teleoperable servicing/manipulation device—usually a four-armed, wire-controlled gadget with ion thrusters and maybe a small chemical rocket. In this way, they have a constant EVA capability, even if they cannot send living crewmembers outside. Note that these teleoperated drones (TODs) are not robots; they are simply remote-control manipulators.

● Another major difference when it comes to TL9 EVA operations is the lack of small-scale antigrav thrusters. Consequently, all EVA personal propulsion systems are some kind of reaction thruster (compressed gas and ion being the most common for extended use, with cryogenic rockets being employed in special search and rescue suits).

● The absolute lack of environmentally oriented gravitic technologies is at the root of the most glaring—and omnipresent—difference connected with TL9 ship technology—the lack of artificial gravity and inertial compensation.

Persons used to the smooth, almost unnoticeable accelerations of technologically advanced ships are in for a surprise the first time their TL9 craft kicks over into 2G of acceleration. The G forces crush crewmembers back into their seats, push floating individuals aft and make an absolute mess of any unsecured objects. On military ships, where extended high-G operations may be required, many beds and bunks are swivel-mounted along their long axes, allowing the occupant to tilt the sleeping pallet so that it faces the direction of acceleration (which is generally preferable to catching those same forces along one side of the body).

The ramifications of high-G maneuvering cause TL-9 ship designers to equip their hulls with distinctive furnishings, such as heavier seats with extensive padding, compression systems, and safety restraints. Operations (or simply ops) chairs, such as those occupied by pilots, navigators and gunners, have simplified duplicates of their most important control systems built right into their armrests. This allows the occupants to operate crucial controls even if the extant G-forces prevent them from raising their arms to reach the console that is just inches in front of them. Such personnel are also equipped with G-suits, special pressure-variable flight garments that prevent blood pooling and high-speed blackouts.

On most TL9 ships, pierced handrails line the corridors and crew quarters at about waist height. These structures allow individuals to—if necessary—drag themselves around the ship in a hand-over-hand crawl.

Military vessels often sport powered rails which are designed to tow persons to their destinations during high-G accelerations. On both types of vessel, most crew-members are required to wear a lanyard tipped with a heavy-duty C-clasp; this is used for hooking-on to a solid mooring place in the event of sudden, unanticipated high-G maneuvers. Without such precautions, unsecured individuals can easily be dashed to death against hard surfaces or the sharp edges of machinery.

The inevitable corollary to the consequences of no inertial compensation is the lack of ambient gravity. Without grav plates, the crews of TL9 ships are forced to wear magnetic-soled shoes in order to maintain easy, constant contact with the floor. As a result, the floors themselves tend to be smooth and uncarpeted, with powerful electromagnets located just beneath the surface tiles (another reason why power loss can be a less-than-pleasant experience—suddenly, your magnetic shoes don't work and you're in free-fall!).

In addition to the operational inconveniences of life aboard a gravity-less ship, each person on board must take precautions to mitigate the deleterious physiological effects of prolonged gravity deprivation. These effects include decrease of cardiac silhouette, suppression of the immune system, decalcification of the bones and a host of others. The most highly recommended method of combatting this difficulty is to ensure that each passenger and crewmember spends at least eight hours a week in the centrifuge. Designers of large military and commercial hulls include large centrifuges that can mimic a standard gravitic field at a practical rotational rate of two to three rpm.

However, this solution is impractical with the smaller starships most often encountered. In order for a small vessel with its short linear dimensions to accommodate a 1G inducing centrifuge, the centrifuge with its small moment arm must be spun at a far higher rate. Unfortunately, speeds greater than four or five rpm disconcert the human inner ear, causing nausea, disorientation, sleeplessness and loss of appetite.

On such smaller vessels, typically anything of fewer than 5000 tons, another solution is practiced. A special type of metabolic drug, known as zero-G or free-fall decompensation drug, has been developed to mitigate the effects of bone and heart deterioration. It has proven universally effective on humans, allowing it to be produced economically and in large quantities, even at low tech levels. The drug can therefore be dispensed to passengers at no extra cost above their middle or high passage tickets.

In either case, whether practicing centrifugal or chemical zero-G compensation, TL9 crews and their passengers should not spend more than three weeks without setting foot somewhere that offers them real gravity: Even as little as 0.3G allows the human body to "reset" to its accustomed physiological standards.

Another aspect of the ship's environmental machinery that may surprise first-time visitors to a TL9 hull is the profusion of hydroponic systems. Unlike the more advanced reprocessing technologies of the following tech levels, TL9 closed-loop ecologies require various special bacteria, virus, algae and plant cultures. Those vessels which need to have an integral capacity for reprocessing wastes into food require even more complex hydroponics systems. These are usually included only on far-ranging exploratory vessels.

The cost of the special requirements of a TL9 environmental system is usually in the form of sacrificed amenities. Staterooms have a little less floor and closet space (that's been dedicated to hydroponics and antineutron radiation gel shielding). Beds have to be tiltable, so you can't utilize the space under them, meaning that overhead areas have to be turned into storage spaces. Wall-spanning environment displays and overhead lights that can also serve as video viewers are rarely, if ever, encountered (perhaps on luxury liners).

For the most part, medium passage in a TL-9 starship is somewhat like a cross between travelling in a railway sleeper-car and staying in a small double-occupancy dormitory room.

Free Trader

CraftID: Free Trader (and Far Trader), Type A (and A2), TL9, MCr 52.291
Hull: 180/450, Disp=200, Config=1AF, Armor=40D
Unloaded=1495 tons, Loaded=2679 tons
Power: 6/12, Fusion=528Mw, Duration=30/90
Loco: 4/8, Maneuver=1, 4/8, Jump=1
NOE=40kph, Cruise=810kph, Top=1080kph
Agility=0
Commo: Radio=system, Maser=system
Sensors: Radar=FarOrbit, Active audio=Distant,
Magnetic=VDist, Radiation=VDistant,
Environment
ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout,
PasObjScan=N/A, PasObjPin=N/A,
PasEng Scan=Form, PasEngPin=N/A
Off: Missiles=x02 PulseLaser=x01
Batt x01 Batt x01
Bear x01 Bear x01
Def: DefDM=+2, Sandcaster=x01
Batt x02
Bear x02
Control: Computer=1x3, Panel=computer linked x377
Special=1x heads-up display
Environ=basic env, basic l/s, extend l/s,
centrifuge
Accomm: Crew=5 (Bridge=2, Engineer=1, Maint=0,
Gunnery=2, Flight=0, ShipTroops=0,
Command=0, Steward=0, Medical=0,
FrozenW=0)
Staterooms=10, LowBerths=20, Bunks=0
Other: Cargo=1107Kliters, Fuel=460Kliters
ObjSize=Average, Em Level=Faint

Crew=5.77 or 46.16 sophont/hours per 24hrs.
W/O gunners=2.62 or 20.96 sophont/hours per 24hrs.

1. Power plant supports only one energy weapon.
2. If not needed to support weapons, power plant is powered down to just 46 Kl (276 Mw), endurance is 57/171 days, emission level is unchanged.
3. An alternate version, classified as the Type A2, incorporates an extra 405 Kl of fuel tankage. This reduces cargo capacity to 702 Kl, increases range to two successive jump-1s on internal tankage, and has no other major impact on basic performance ratings.
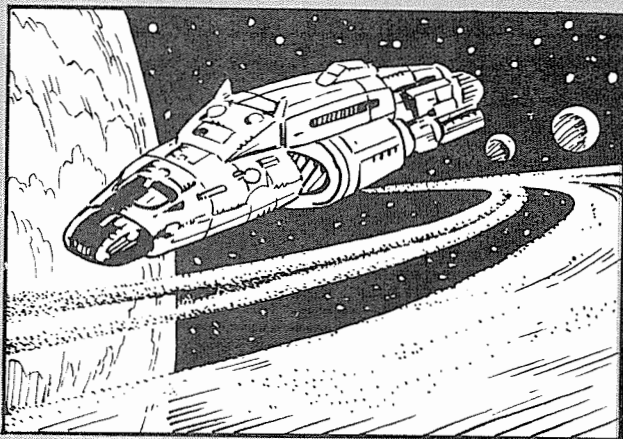
Cruiser

CraftID: Cruiser, Type C, TL9, MCr 372.339
Hull: 720/1800, Disp=800, Config=5SL,
Armor=40D
Unloaded=11745.5tons, Loaded=13083tons
Power: 80/160, Fusion=7218Mw, Duration=30/90
Loco: 57/114, Maneuver=3, 14/28, Jump=1
NOE=130kph, Cruise=750kph,
Top=1,000kph
Agility=0
Commo: Radio=system, Maser=system
Sensors: Radar=FarOrbit, Active audio=Distant,
Magnetic=VDist, Radiation=VDistant,
Environment
ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout,
PasObjScan=N/A, PasObjPin=N/A,
PasEng Scan=Form, PasEngPin=N/A
Off: Missiles=x04
Batt x01
Bear x01
BeamLaser=x03,
Batt x04
Bear x04
Def: DefDM=+4,
Control: Computer=3x6, Panel=Computer-
linkedx1,819
Special=2x Heads-up displays
Environ=basic env, basic l/s, extend l/s,
centrifuge
Accomm: Crew=45(Bridge=2, Engineer=3, Maint=0,
Gunnery=8, Flight=8, ShipTroops=20,
Command=3, Steward=0, Medical=1,
FrozenW=0)
Staterooms=25, LowBerths=0, Bunks=0
HighPsg=0, MidPsg=0, LowPsg=0
SubCraft=Pinnace x2; 324 Kl of surface craft
Other: Cargo=540Kliters, Fuel=3678Kliters
ObjSize=Average, Em Level=Moderate

1. Internal fuel supports one jump-1, bladder tanks in the cargo hold allow a second jump-1, or "excess" power plant fuel can be cross-pumped into the j-drive system.
2. If not required to support weapons, power plant is powered down to just 701 Kl (4201 Mw), freeing 1084 Kl of fuel for an extra jump or expanding endurance to 51/153 days. Emission level is unchanged.
Note: Using power plant fuel to extend jump range leaves only enough to support full (weapons) output for *eight* combat rounds! Not recommended for entry into unsecure systems.
3. The size and complexity are more then one TL9 model 3 can handle. Therefore, the ship has two complete triple redundant systems operating in parallel to share the load.
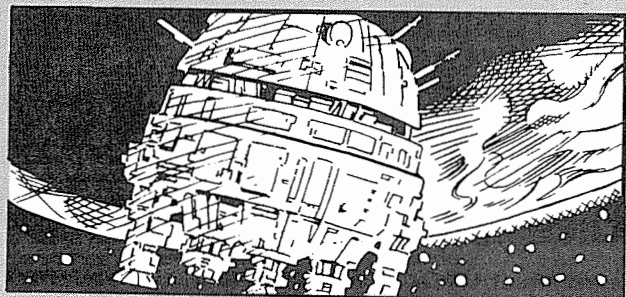
Subsidized Liner

CraftID: Subsidized Liner, Type M, TL9, MCr 122.085
Hull: 540/1350, Disp=600, Config=4USL,
Armor=40D
Unloaded=4230tons, Loaded=6060tons
Power: 18/36, Fusion=1584Mw, Duration=30/90
Loco: 11/22, Maneuver=1, 11/22, Jump=1x3
NOE=40kph, Cruise=225kph, Top=300kph
Agility=0
Commo: Radio=system, Maser=system
Sensors: Radar=FarOrbit, Active audio=Distant,
Magnetic=VDist, Radiation=VDistant,
Environment
ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout,
PasObjScan=N/A, PasObjPin=N/A,
PasEng Scan=Form, PasEngPin=N/A
Off: Missiles=x02 BeamLasers=x03
Batt x03 Batt x01
Bear x03 Bear x01
Def: DefDM=+3,
Sandcaster=x04
Batt x01
Bear x01
Control: Computer=2x3, Panel=Computer-linked x
882
Special=2x Heads-up displays
Environ=basic env, basic l/s, extend l/s,
centrifuge x2
Accomm: Crew=15(Bridge=2, Engineer=1, Maint=0,
Gunnery=5, Flight=0, ShipTroops=0,
Command=1, Steward=2, Medical=4,
FrozenW=0)
Staterooms=30, LowBerths=80, Bunks=0
HighPsg=5, MidPsg=10, LowPsg=80
Other: Cargo=1620Kliters, Fuel=3000Kliters
ObjSize=Average, Em Level=Moderate

1. Fuel supports three jump-1.
2. If not required to support weapons, power plant is powered down to just 137 Kl (822 Mw), endurance is 57/171 days, emission level becomes *faint*.
3. Life support does not extend to fuel tanks, nor during routine flight operations to drive machinery spaces.
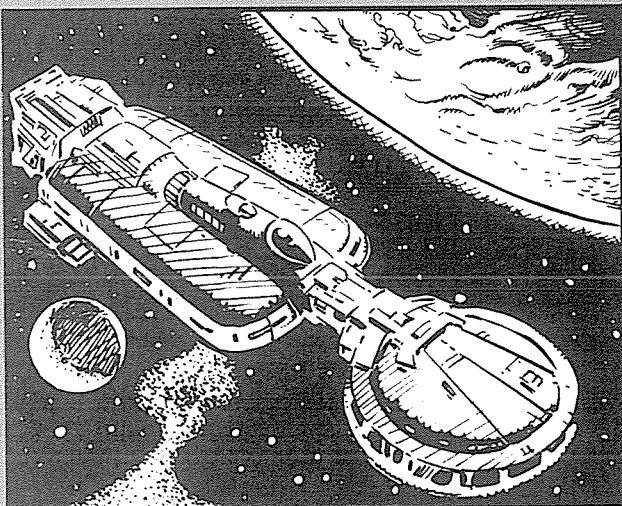
Subsidized Trader

CraftID: Subsidized Trader, Type R, TL9, MCr 90.54
Hull: 360/900, Disp=400, Config=4SL,
Armor=40D
Unloaded=2817ons, Loaded=5987ons
Power: 12/24, Fusion=1062Mw, Duration=30/90
Loco: 8/16, Maneuver=1, 8/16, Jump=1
NOE=40kph, Cruise=750kph, Top=1000kph
Agility=0
Commo: Radio=system, Maser=system
Sensors: Radar=FarOrbit, Active audio=Distant,
Magnetic=VDist, Radiation=VDistant,
Environment
ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout,
PasObjScan=N/A, PasObjPin=N/A,
PasEng Scan=Form, PasEngPin=N/A
Off: Missiles=x02 BeamLasers=x02
Batt x03 Batt x01
Bear x03 Bear x01
Def: DefDM=+3 Sandcaster=x02
Batt x01
Bear x01
Control: Computer=2 x3, Panel=Computer
linkedx640
Special=2x Heads-up displays
Environ=basic env, basic l/s, extend l/s,
centrifuge
Accomm: Crew=10 (Bridge=2, Engineer=1, Maint=0,
Gunnery=5, Flight=0, ShipTroops=0,
Command=1, Steward=1, Medical=0,
FrozenW=0)
Staterooms=13, LowBerths=9, Bunks=0
HighPsg=5, MidPsg=0, LowPsg=9
SubCraft=1x 20t boat
Other: Cargo=2700Kliters, Fuel=922Kliters
ObjSize=Average, Em Level=Moderate

1. Fuel supports one jump-1.
2. If not required to support weapons, ower plant is powered down to just 92 Kl (552 Mw), endurance is 57/171 days, emission level becomes *faint*.
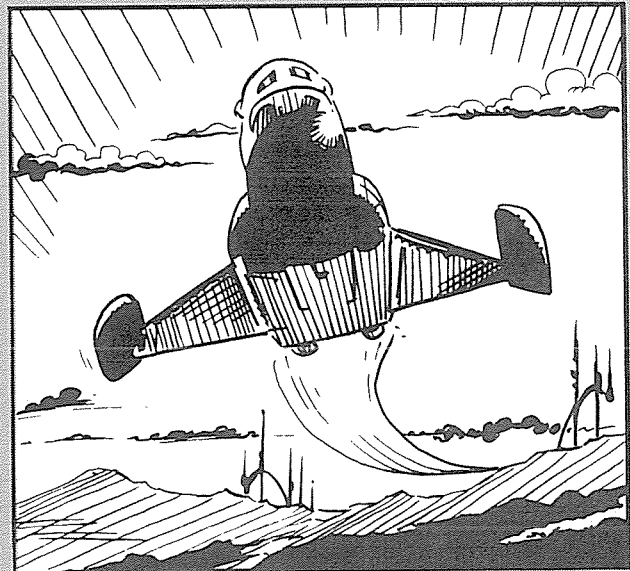
Scout

CraftID:	Scout, Type S, TL9, MCr 53.543
Hull:	90/225, Disp=100, Config=1AF, Armor=40D
	Unloaded=1441 tons, Loaded=1605 tons
Power:	13/26, Fusion=1086Mw, Duration=30/90
Loco:	5/10, Maneuver=2, 2/4, Jump=1
	NOE=40kph, Cruise=1431kph, Top=1908kph
	Agility=0
Commo:	Radio=System, Maser=System
Sensors:	Radar=FarOrbit, Active audio=Distant, Magnetic=VDist, Radiation=VDistant, Environment
	ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout, PasObjScan=N/A, PasObjPin=N/A, PasEng Scan=Form, PasEngPin=N/A
Off:	BeamLaser=x03
	Batt 001
	Bear 001
Def:	DefDM=+2
Control:	Computer=1bis x3, Panel=Computer-linked x458
	Special=1 Heads-up Display
	Environ=basic env, basic l/s, extend l/s, centrifuge
Accomm:	Crew=1x4 (Bridge=2, Engineer=1, Maint=0,
	Gunnery=1, Flight=0, ShipTroops=0,
	Command=0, Steward=0, Medical=0, FrozenW=0)
	Staterooms=4, LowBerths=0
	SubCraft=air/raft
Other:	Cargo=40.5Kliters, Fuel=660.96Kliters
	ObjSize=Average, Em Level=Moderate

Crew=3.93 or 31.44 sophont/hours per 24 hours.

Without passengers=3.72 or 29.76 sophont/hours per 24 hours.

Without gunners=1.84 or 14.72 sophont/hours per 24 hours.

Without both=1.60 or 12.80 sophont/hours per 24 hours.

1. Fuel supports two jump-1.

2. If not required to support weapons, power plant is powered down to just 56 Kl (336 Mw), endurance is 97/291 days, emission level becomes *faint*.
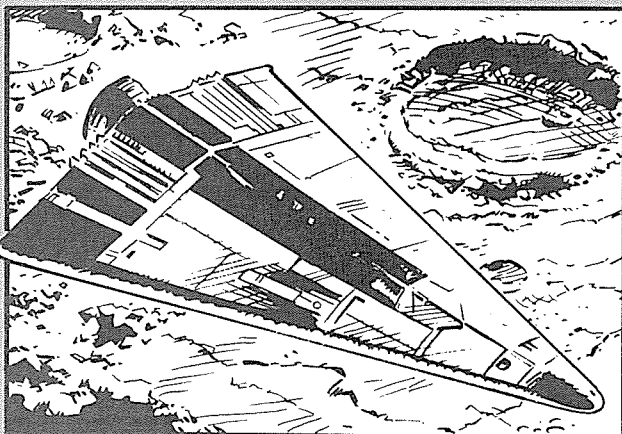
STARSHIPS

Yacht

CraftID:	Yacht, Type Y, TL9, MCr 49.185
Hull:	180/450, Disp=200, Config=4NSL, Armor=40D
	Unloaded=2377tons, Loaded=2645tons
Power:	9/18, Fusion=780Mw, Duration=30/90
Loco:	4/8, Maneuver=1, 4/8, Jump=1
	NOE=40kph, Cruise=225kph, Top=300kph
	Agility=0
Commo:	Radio=system, Maser=system
Sensors:	Radar=FarOrbit, Active audio=Distant, Magnetic=VDist, Radiation=VDistant, Environment
	ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout, PasObjScan=N/A, PasObjPin=N/A, PasEng Scan=Form, PasEngPin=N/A
Off:	BeamLaser=x02,
	Batt x01
	Bear x01
Def:	DefDM=+2,
	Sandcaster=x02
	Batt x01
	Bear x01
Control:	Computer=2 x3, Panel=Computer-linked x 514
	Special=2x Heads-up displays.
	Environ=basic env, basic l/s, extend l/s, centrifuge
Accomm:	Crew=10(Bridge=2, Engineer=1, Maint=0,
	Gunnery=5, Flight=0, ShipTroops=0,
	Command=1, Steward=1, Medical=0, FrozenW=0)
	Staterooms=16, LowBerths=0, Bunks=0
	HighPsg=6, MidPsg=0, LowPsg=0
	SubCraft=Ship's boat, air/raft, ATV
Other:	Cargo=168.75Kliters, Fuel=464.4Kliters
	ObjSize=Average, Em Level=Faint

1. Fuel supports one jump-1.

2. If not required to support weapons-power plant is powered down to just 47 Kl (282 Mw), endurance is 82/246 days, emission level is unchanged.

3. Vehicle bay will hold 486 Kl of assorted craft.
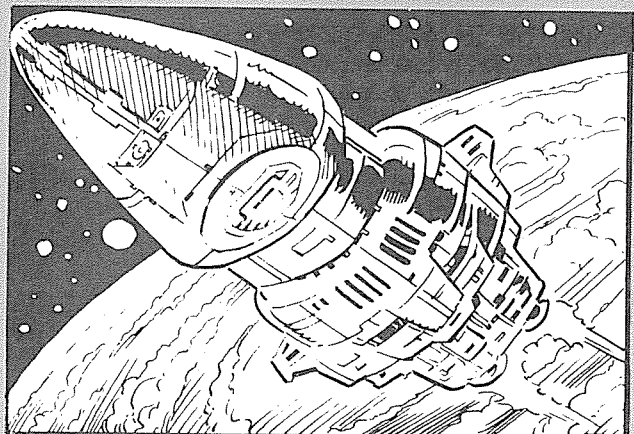
Spaceships

Cutter

CraftID: Cutter, Type QY, TL9, MCr 23.9
Hull: 45/113, Disp=50, Config=1AF, Armor=40D
Unloaded=708 tons, Loaded=919 tons
Power: 4/8, Fusion=366 Mw, Duration=30/90
Loco: 5/10, Maneuver=4
NOE=130 kph, Cruise=2,295 kph,
Top=3,060 kph
Agility=0
Commo: Radio=System, Maser=System
Sensors: Radar=FarOrbit, Active audio=Distant,
Magnetic=VDist, Radiation=VDistant,
Environment
ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout,
PasObjScan=N/A, PasObjPin=N/A,
PasEng Scan=Form, PasEngPin=N/A
Off: Unarmed
Def: DefDM=+2
Control: Computer=0 bis x3, Panel=Computer-linked
x468
Special=Heads-up display x1
Environ=basic env, basic l/s, extend l/s
Accomm: Crew=2
Small Staterooms=6, Bunks=1
MidPsg=12
Other: Cargo=202.5 Kliters, Fuel=131.76 Kliters
ObjSize=Average, Em Level=Faint
Passenger count assumes double-occupancy mode.
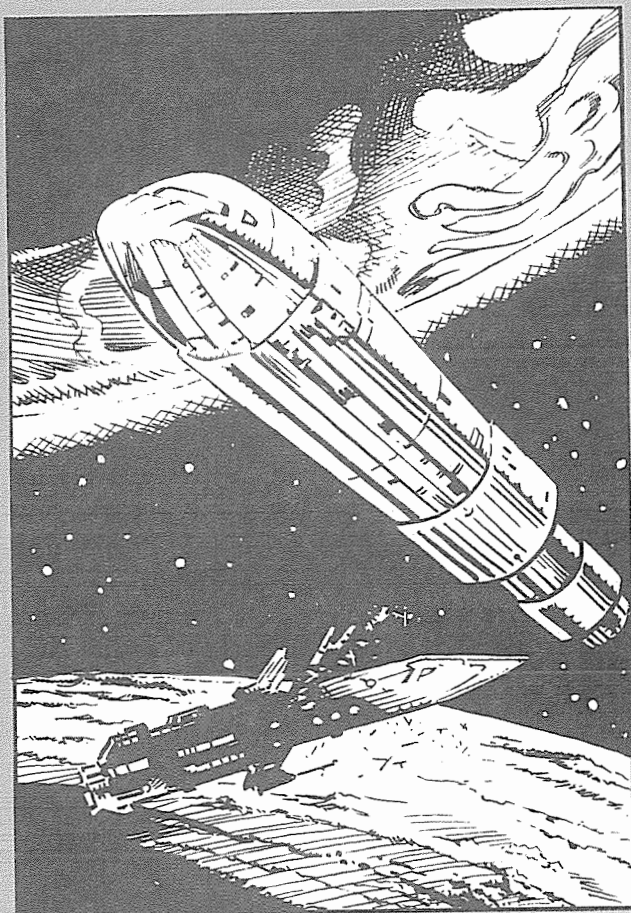
Lifeboat

CraftID: Lifeboat, Type QB, TL9, MCr 8.70
Hull: 18/45, Disp=20, Config=1AF, Armor=40D
Unloaded=199 tons, Loaded=204 tons
Power: 1/2, Fusion=40 Mw, Duration=93/281 days
Loco: 1/2, Maneuver=1
NOE=130 kph, Cruise=810 kph, Top=1080
kph
Agility=0
Commo: Radio=System, Maser=System
Sensors: Radar=FarOrbit, Active audio=Distant,
Magnetic=VDist, Radiation=VDistant,
Environment
ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout,
PasObjScan=N/A, PasObjPin=N/A,
Pasng Scan=Form, PasEngPin=N/A
Off: Unarmed
Def: DefDM=+2
Control: Computer=0 bisx3, Panel=Computer-
linkedx 117
Special=Heads-up display x1
Environ=basic env, basic l/s, extend l/s
Accomm: Crew=2
Extended use Roomy crew positions=2
Small Staterooms=1, Emergency low
berths=5
Other: Cargo=0 Kliters, Fuel=67.5 Kliters
ObjSize=Average, Em Level=Faint

By using the stateroom and both crew positions in rotation, it is possible to support three conscious sophonts at once.
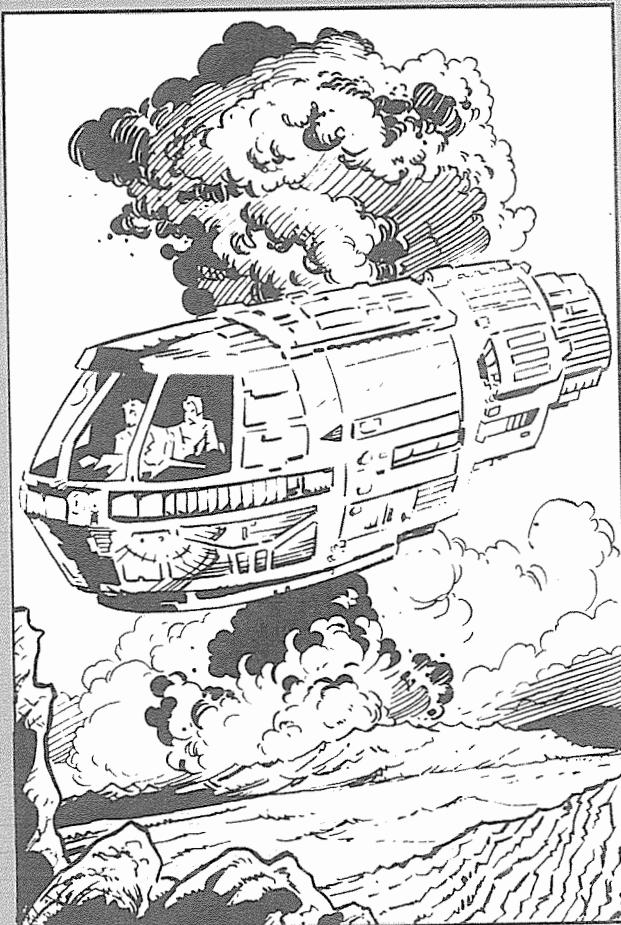
Pinnace

CraftID: Pinnace, Type WF, TL9, MCr 23.5
Hull: 36/90, Disp=40, Config=1AF, Armor=40D
Unloaded=820 tons, Loaded=829.25 tons
Power: 5/10, Fusion=372 Mw, Duration=30/90 days
Loco: 5/10, Maneuver=5
NOE=130 kph, Cruise=2,592 kph,
Top=3,456 kph
Agility=0
Commo: Radio=System, Maser=System
Sensors: Radar=FarOrbit, Active audio=Distant,
Magnetic=VDist, Radiation=VDistant,
Environment
ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout,
PasObjScan=N/A, PasObjPin=N/A,
PasEng Scan=Form, PasEngPin=N/A
Off: unarmed
Def: DefDM=+2
Control: Computer=0 bis x3,
Panel=Computer-linkedx460
Special=Heads-up displayx1
Environ=basic env, basic l/s, extend l/s
Accomm: Crew=2
Small Stateroomsx3, Bunksx1
HighPsg=0, MidPsg=6, LowPsg=0
Other: Cargo=162 Kliters, Fuel=133.92 Kliters
ObjSize=Average, Em Level=Faint

1. Life support does not extend into fuel tankage, nor during routine flight operations into power and drive spaces.

2. Passenger complement is reduced to six double-occupancy or three in single-occupancy mode.
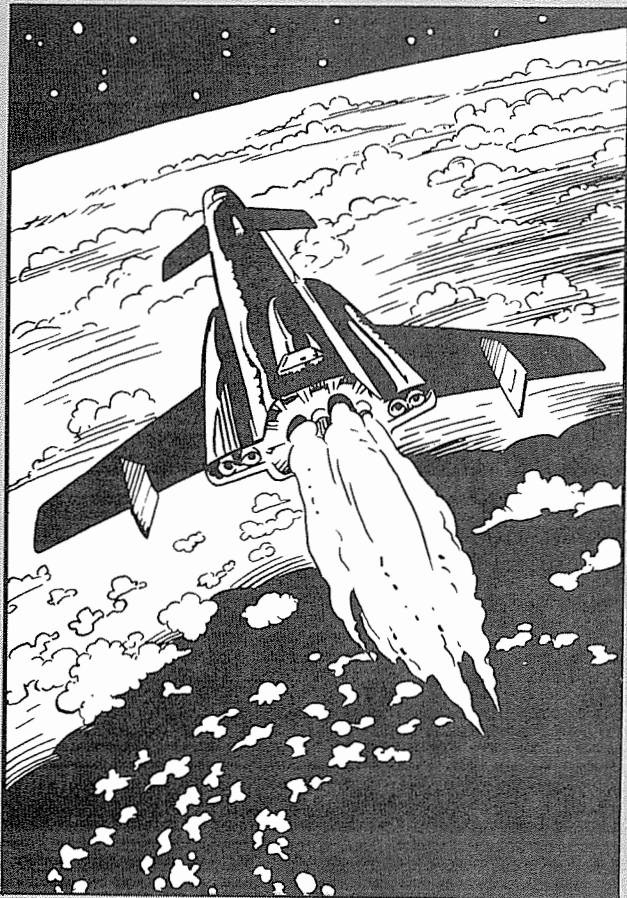
Ship's Boat

CraftID: Ship's Boat, Type QF, TL9, MCr 21.9
Hull: 27/68, Disp=30 , Config=1AF, Armor=40D
Unloaded=557.25 tons, Loaded=646.5 tons
Power: 4/8, Fusion=336 Mw, Duration=29/87 days
Loco: 6/12, Maneuver=6
NOE=130 kph, Cruise=2835kph,
Top=3780kph
Agility=0
Commo: Radio=System, Maser=System
Sensors: Radar=FarOrbit, Active audio=Distant,
Magnetic=VDist, Radiation=VDistant,
Environment
ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout,
PasObjScan=N/A, PasObjPin=N/A,
PasEng Scan=Form, PasEngPin=N/A
Off: Unarmed
Def: DefDM=+3
Control: Computer=1x3,
Panel=Computer-linkedx172
Special=Heads-up displayx1
Environ=basic env, basic l/s, extend l/s
Accomm: Crew=2
Small Staterooms=2, Bunks=1
MidPsg=4
Other: Cargo=81 Kliters, Fuel=56 Kliters
ObjSize=Average, Em Level=Faint

1. Life support does not extend into fuel tankage.

2. Passenger capacity is reduced to four with double-occupancy, two in single-occupancy mode.

3. Maneuver system complexity requires a more complex computer system.

Ferry Shuttle

CraftID: Ferry Shuttle, Type YF, TL9, MCr 28.17
Hull: 86/215, Disp=95, Config=1AF, Armor=40D
Unloaded=1779 tons, Loaded=1785 tons
Power: 4/8, Fusion=336 Mw, Duration=20/60 days
Loco: 5/10, Maneuver=2
NOE=40 kph, Cruise=1462 kph, Top=1950 kph
Agility=0
Commo: Radio=System, Maser=System.
Sensors: Radar=FarOrbit, Active audio=Distant,
Magnetic=VDist, Radiation=VDistant,
Environment
ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout,
PasObjScan=N/A, PasObjPin=N/A,
PasEng Scan=Form, PasEngPin=N/A
Off: Unarmed
Def: DefDM=+2
Control: Computer=0 bisx3,
Panel=Computer-Linkedx563
Special=Heads-up displayx1
Environ=basic env, basic l/s, extend l/s
Accomm: Crew=2xExtended roomy positions,
Passengers=30xAdequate positions.
Other: Cargo=945 Kliters, Fuel=80.64 Kliters
ObjSize=Average, Em Level=Faint

1. This is a short-range, short-duration, workhorse. Designed to move passengers and freight from a world surface to ships or stations in orbit, not for long intrasystem flights.

2. Performance is cut to 2G.

3. Cargo capacity is trimmed to 70 tons.

4. Unrefueled endurance is only 20 days of continuous operations, but in single-shift use this will stretch to two months.
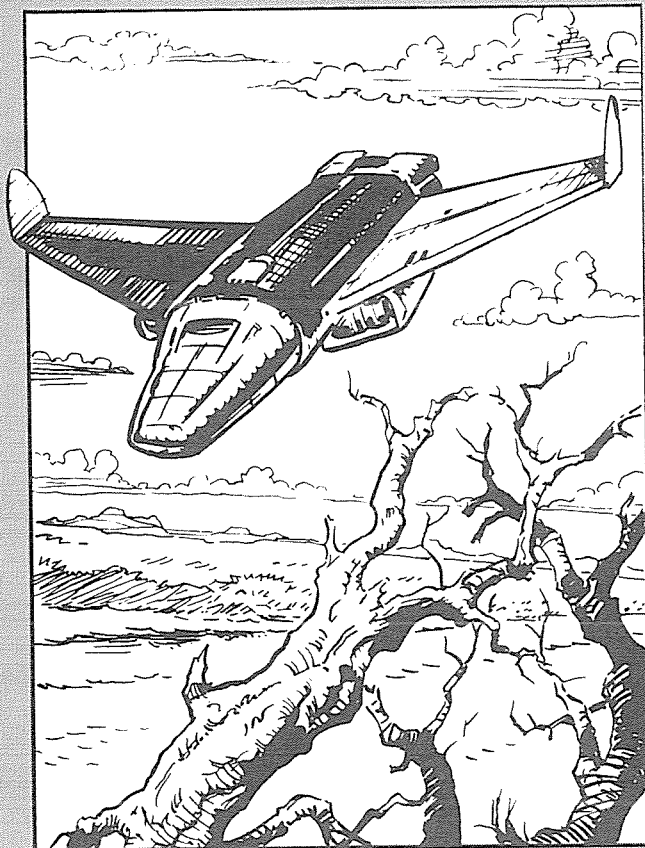
Express Shuttle

CraftID: Express Shuttle, Type YX, TL9, MCr 36.1
Hull: 86/215, Disp=95, Config=1AF, Armor=40D
Unloaded=1719 tons, Loaded=1732 tons
Power: 13/26, Fusion=528 Mw, Duration=30/90 days
Loco: 8/16, Maneuver=3
NOE=40 kph, Cruise=2040 kph, Top=2720 kph
Agility=0
Commo: Radio=System, Maser=System
Sensors: Radar=FarOrbit, Active audio=Distant,
Magnetic=VDist, Radiation=VDistant,
Environment
ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout,
PasObjScan=N/A, PasObjPin=N/A,
PasEng Scan=Form, PasEngPin=N/A
Off: Unarmed
Def: DefDM=+2
Control: Computer=0 bisx3,
Panel=Computer-linkedx742
Special=Heads-up displayx1
Environ=basic env, basic l/s, extend l/s
Accomm: Crew=2
Small Staterooms=15, MidPsg=28
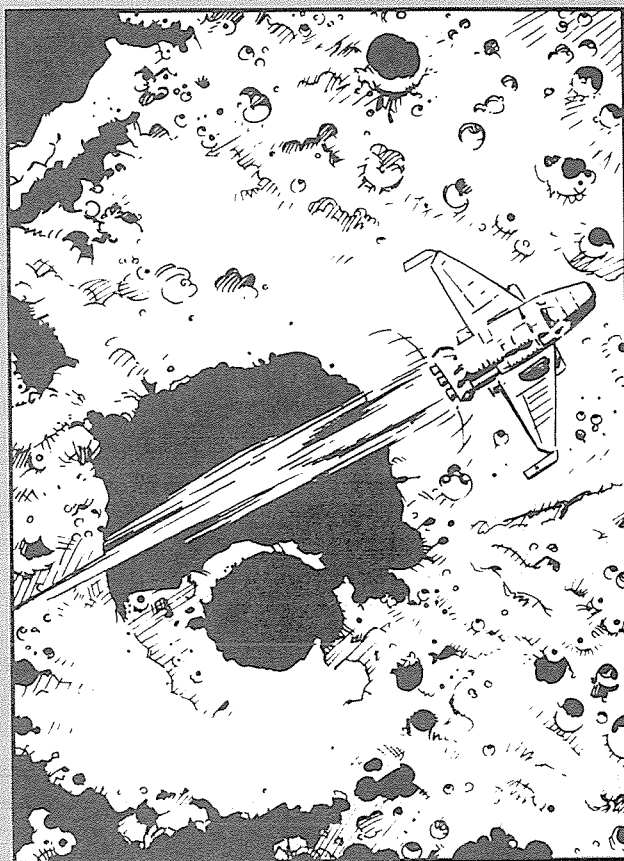**Other:** Cargo=675 Kliters, Fuel=190.08 Kliters
ObjSize=Average, Em Level=Faint

1. This is the long-range, high-endurance version. It is well suited for interplanetary trips or support of extended expeditions on world surfaces.

2. Fifteen small staterooms allow for up to 30 sophonts (at double occupancy).

3. Cargo hold space has been reduced to only 50 tons. Ω

TRAVELLER News Service

Zimila/Zarushagar

¶The small industrial city of Sharis was raided by corsairs today during the local predawn hours. Taken completely by surprise, Sharis' defense forces were thrown into a state of general confusion by a series of well-planned and well-executed surgical strikes against their command and control assets.

¶Civilian losses were light, although several dozen persons were taken hostage for a short time. The hostages report that they were not harmed and were treated in an acceptable fashion by the corsairs.

¶The accounts of these abductees supports a growing body of official reports that indicate the raiders to have been highly organized, well-equipped and exceedingly well-disciplined. Although positive identification has not been established, defense administrators believe that the raiders were supported by one Type C *Mercenary* cruiser, one Type P *Corsair* and one Type K *Hunter*. Observers noted a number of strange sigils on the fuselages of the raiders' attack landers, along with images of stylized saurian creatures. Several of the raiders were noted to be wearing similar imagery on their personal armor.

¶Although officials in Sharis have not completed their assessment of losses, they are already noting that the raiders' primary targets seem to have been the warehouses of a number of heavy industrial firms. In particular, large quantities of ammunition, vehicle parts and power plant spares were removed. There is no evidence that any civilian houses or small businesses were intruded upon.

Tiawan/Verge

¶The forces of the Verge Combine has successfully repulsed forces sent by the Federation of Ilelish in an unexpected display of expertise and elan. The greatest surprise seems to have been among the Federation command staff, who consistently underestimated the will, ability and equipage of their adversaries.

¶Starting with a disastrous attempt to wrest control of the system's main gas giant from local defense boats, the six-day campaign was one long series of misadventures for the Federation forces. Although the attackers gained marginal control of Tiawan's close orbit and airspace for two days, they were never able to exploit that advantage to full effect in support of their ground forces.

¶Conservative estimates suggest that at least three full divisions of Federation and loyal regional troops were lost as a result of beachhead landings that were never fully consolidated due to intense fire by defending forces.

¶Naval activity was sporadic, but definitely one sided, with locally manufactured, remote-operated suicide craft (some as large as 20 tonnes displacement) seriously damaging a number of Federation heavy cruisers.

¶By mid-day yesterday (local standard time), the Federation forces had begun to withdraw in good order. Official Combine sources indicate that the last of the attacker's ships jumped out-system early this evening.

Irim/Fornast

¶Starport Authority security forces today barely managed to contain and control widespread violence between a group of independent merchants and members of a brokers' guild. The incident—which at its height involved at least 40 crewmembers from merchantmen, 50 brokers and associates, and 20 Starport Authority security personnel—is without local precedent and has shocked the mercantile community of the planet.

¶Fourteen persons were hospitalized with serious injuries, and another 20 were treated for minor injuries at the scene.

¶Although accounts conflict, the cause of the melee is said to be a disagreement over tacit trading agreements and rights. Apparently, three independent merchants were attempting to sell individual items directly to interested parties at wholesale prices. This is not the customary means whereby merchants trade, depending instead upon large lots of goods sold with the aid of a broker.

¶Reportedly, several brokers noticed this irregular "independent" sales activity and began arguing with the merchants, accusing them of violating a "traditional understanding" between merchants and brokers. The merchants allegedly responded that they "weren't breaking any laws" and continued to conduct their business. The brokers attempted to interfere with their operations, and angry words led to a general brawl, which drew in nearby allies of both groups.

¶Although the Starport Authority security forces haven't brought any charges against either group, Chief lislag Romor commented that he "can understand why the brokers got so hot under the collar." "After all," he said, "if the merchants don't make their sales through the brokers, the brokers will have no way of doing business. If the merchants don't understand that, I'm afraid we'll have another incident like this one—worse, maybe."

¶The Irim Incident is only the most dramatic of many such occurrences with have begun to erupt throughout the Imperium over the past six months. Reports of friction between merchants and brokers are widespread.

¶Market experts suggest that the reason for this new contentiousness is because of the general state of economic decline prevalent in most areas of the Imperium. With cargoes becoming harder to find, merchants are trying to get the most money for their wares. Many do this by selling their goods at wholesale prices, thereby increasing their base revenues without having to pay a broker's percentage.

¶Most frequently, this practice is observed in conjunction with the sale of high-tech items that are no longer available in the area of sale. Consequently, market prices on such products are beginning to climb in areas which have never had much—or have lost—industrial capacity.

Bogustin/Core

¶Imperial Ministry of Justice agents have uncovered what they believe to be the source of a number of incidents of anti-Lucan starship sabotage in Grapis Dar, the capitol city of Bogustin. Grapis Dar, which is host to the local class-A starport and attached scout base, has also been used increasingly by Imperial naval units as a repair and refit facility over the past three years.

¶In particular, the base's state-of-the-art, fluidic systems, purging apparatus is well thought of by captains and crews whose ships have begun to take on characteristic odors that seem to be unremovable. Consequently, many ships get their fluidic systems cleaned at Grapis Dar.

¶Apparently, anti-Lucan saboteurs capitalized upon this trend in their efforts to cripple a number of the ships serviced. Their method involved nodules of pure sodium coated with a delayed-action, water-soluble coating. These nodules were pumped into water-carrying fluidic systems—along with the replacement water—after the system purges were completed.

¶When each nodule's coating eventually dissolved some 2-4 weeks later, the resulting exothermic reaction between the water and the sodium usually ruined environmental systems and, often, power plant coolant assemblies.

¶IMJ agents had suspected Bogustin as the source of the sabotage for the past month, but only managed to break the operation today, locating the nodule production facility and a huge supply of the innocuous-looking gray spheres.

¶Although there is no official word on the group behind the sabotage operation, certain anonymous inside sources suggest that a radical terrorist group known as the Brothers of Varian is responsible for the act. The Brothers of Varian is largely held to be a mostly legendary organization, supposedly dedicated to "avenging" Lucan's alleged murder of the rightful heir to the Iridium Throne.

Khalu/Fornast   Date: 233-1122

¶NewView Entertainment formally declared the commencement of bankruptcy proceedings today in a statement that sent shock waves throughout the local economy. Local law enforcement officials found NewView CEO Dragus Liklaster dead of a self-inflicted shotgun wound at his residence only two hours after the conclusion of the press conference.

¶NewView, one of the largest fully independent (i.e., nonmegacorporation controlled) producers, syndicators and distributors of holographic and 2-D video entertainment, employs over 30 million persons on Khalu. The ancillary markets and dependent economies linked to NewView's fortunes employ at least five times that number.

¶Long known to be in serious financial trouble, NewView is described as the latest victim of the Rebellion and the fragmented markets that have resulted from the dislocation of trade and commerce. In addition to a steady decrease in disposable income throughout the Imperium's private sector over the past five years, NewView executives cited unreliable distribution as the major cause of their bankruptcy.

¶According to industry experts, the low cargo priority of entertainment products, as well as increasing interruptions caused by piracy and war losses, all conspired to create a downward cycle of decreasing demand for NewView's exports.

Sebasta/Solomani Rim   Date: 247-1122

¶The Captain-Governor of Florina Arcology—the second largest on this world—announced that he was ordering the general abandonment of the massive structure, effective immediately. Although provisions have been made for an orderly departure, aided by Solomani military units, local experts point to the complete lack of residential, sanitary and medical facilities for the over 15 million residents who are being displaced.

¶The abandonment of the Florina Arcology, long a concern of the planetary government, is the result of insufficient spares for the structure's repair and maintenance needs. Although Solomani administrators have spared no expense or effort in their attempt to locate and/or produce appropriate spares, their endeavors have apparently been in vain.

¶According to Senior BioSystems Specialist Meomi Tasawara, "Almost all of the Florina Arcology's subsystems are of Imperial design. Unfortunately, the war has so disrupted the Imperial economy and industrial sector that replacement parts are simply no longer available. And there's simply no way to get local industries to produce the necessary replacement parts in time."

¶System breakdowns tripled in 1121 and earlier this year began affecting water purification and air filtration systems. Over 20,000 cases of amoebic dysentery have been treated since then. Abandonment became unavoidable when the air filtration system failed altogether.

¶As soon as the population of Florina has been evacuated, officials intend to strip the arcology of all working systems, in order to provide spares for the world's other arcologies.

Anaxias/Delphi   Date: 259-1122

¶IRIS head Garran Trainor-Hughes announced today that Lucan's failure to acquiesce to public hearings regarding his alleged murder of Varian and several other individuals leaves the regents no choice but to formally suspend the legal process whereby his claim to the Iridium Throne would be verified and confirmed.

¶When asked how the regency—or anyone else—intends to enforce such a decision, Trainor-Hughes commented, "The regency is not charged with the enforcement of its succession rulings. Such a duty would obviously be well beyond the capacities of IRIS. Instead, it is our responsibility to identify and confirm rightful successors in accordance with Imperial law. This statement does not eliminate Lucan from eligibility, but until and unless he meets the legal requirements, we cannot proceed in the matter of his succession."

¶Trainor-Hughes, speaking from the new regency offices on Anaxias, went on to state that while this turn of events does not mean that the regency *de facto* declares for Margaret, it does mean that IRIS considers her to be "the single person best suited to be the custodian of the rights, responsibilities and honor of Imperial station." When asked if this in fact meant that IRIS was designating Margaret as a form of "empress-in-waiting," Trainor-Hughes responded, "This in fact means that, in our opinion, Duchess Margaret holds the highest position of royalty that is formally recognized by the regency at this time."

¶In other matters involving Anaxian politics, various rumors regarding fierce infighting between IRIS's newly arrived covert operation assets and Tukera's Vermene remain impossible to confirm.

Susadi/Gushemege   Date: 267-1122

¶Over one million civilian casualties were inflicted today by a sneak raid that devastated Karshai, one of the smaller pressure-dome cities on this world. Although details of this tragedy are still unclear, reports indicate that the attackers were part of Lucan's naval forces.

¶The attacking vessels were identified as one *Midu Agashaam*-class destroyer, one *PF Sloan*-class fleet escort, one *Chrysanthemum*-class destroyer escort and three 400-ton *Lurushaar Kilaalum*-class patrol cruisers. A number of unidentified fighters were also used in the attack and are thought to have been using the *PF Sloan*-class fleet escort as their mother ship.

¶The attacking vessels emerged from jump space just 150 planetary diameters from the main world and immediately commenced a surface bombardment of Karshai. While most of Susadi's surprised defensive resources went to the rescue of the city, the fighters and the patrol cruisers launched a second, surprise attack upon Susadi's class-A starport, inflicting considerable damage upon that facility.

¶As soon as the strike against the starport was completed, Lucan's forces withdrew. Subsequent observation suggests that they refueled at the nearest gas giant and jumped out-system.

¶Although many local military personnel expressed rage and dismay at this attack, Federation of Ilelish Commodore Satina ba-Rek offered an explanation: "Lucan's changing his tactics, I think. I would guess he's moving to a "scorched-earth policy." Since he can't have this region of space, he's going to destroy everything of value within it. Obviously, an A-class starport on a high-population world is a valuable asset—one which could easily be put to use against him. So he decided to eliminate it."

¶ba-Rek went on to say this "may only be the first of many such attacks—and if it is, we're in for some very black days ahead." Ω

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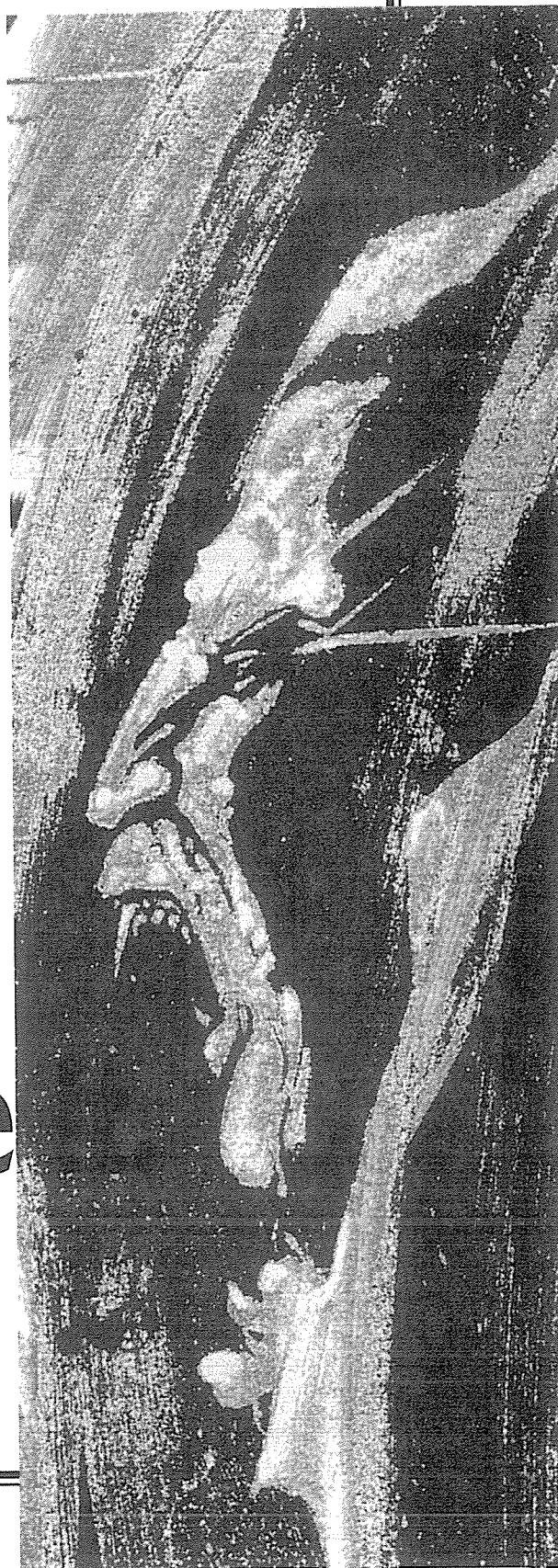
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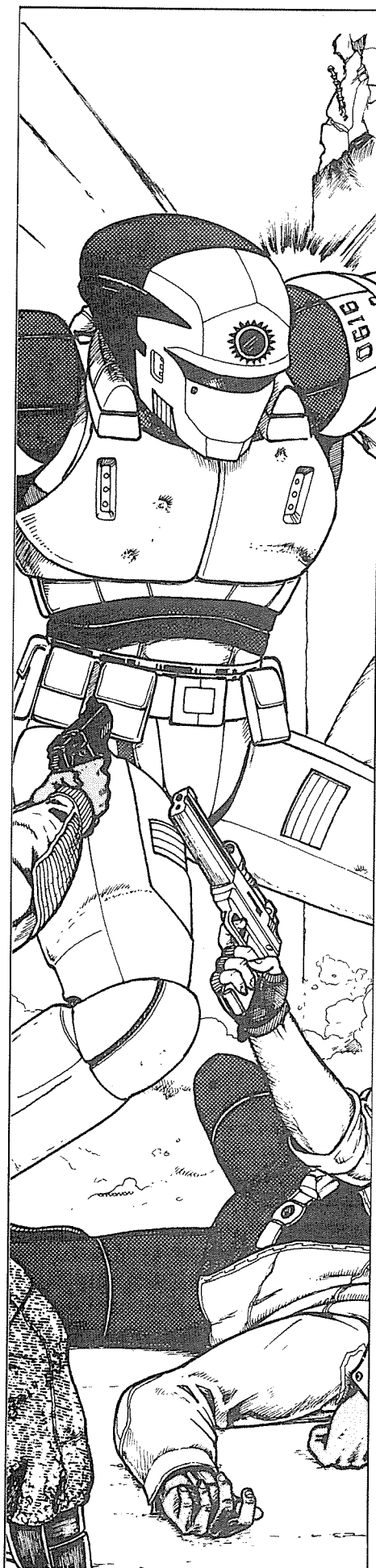
By James Maliszewski

Contact: ANSWERIN

*W*hen the Vilani began their exploration of their home sector, they found that several of the worlds there supported intelligent life, with three supporting human life. One of those three is Answerin (0431 B584A85-F), home to a minor human race. For a number of reasons, both physiological and psychological, the Answerin are unique among the minor human races.

ANSWERIN PHYSIOLOGY

All Answerin have dark brown or black skin tones. The world of Answerin orbits a close binary star system composed of a main sequence GO V star and an A7 II star, and the combined ultraviolet radiation output of these two stars is considerable. This radiation has stimulated massive melanin production in the Answerin skin. Hair color is likewise dark, with wavy hair being the most common. To protect their eyes from the brightness of their twin suns, the Answerin have evolved slight epicanthic folds. In some individuals, these folds give an almost squinting appearance, while others could be best described as looking sleepy.

Answerin is a hot world, and, consequently, the humans there have adapted their circadian rhythms to a more nocturnal existence. The local day is 25 standard hours long, which the Answerin divide into two eight-hour periods and one nine-hour period. The Answerin generally sleep for eight hours during the hot day, then work for nine during the evening, finally resting for eight more hours at night. Through time, they have evolved an aptitude for night vision that is somewhat superior to that of other humans—they can see clearly for about five meters in the dark. Their other senses are about average for humans in most respects.

The Answerin have developed an almost strictly vegetarian diet due to a shortage of highly developed animals on their homeworld. The Answerin are by no means militaristic or chauvinistic abut their vegetarianism as are the K'Kree; they merely are unused to eating meat and thus prefer a vegetarian diet. The native plant life on Answerin possesses a compatible biochemistry with humans, so there is no need for any extensive food preparation.

Given the lower gravity of Answerin, the humans of that world are somewhat taller than are most other humans. The average Answerin measures about 1.9 meters tall and weighs about 75 kilograms.

Finally, it should be noted that the Answerin are fully interfertile with most other human races. The Answerin do, however, prefer to marry among their own kind, so cross-breeding does not usually occur. The offspring of any cross-racial matings results in little or no genetic blending—the child is either fully Answerin or will resemble whatever human race the other parent was.

ANSWERIN PSYCHOLOGY

The Answerin place great stock in the ability of the human mind to overcome physical difficulties, with proper training and discipline. Pain and fatigue result from a laxity of the mind, they say, and anyone is capable of overcoming merely physical ills. By conquering the frontiers of the human psyche, the Answerin believe that they will be able to better master themselves physically, and with that mastery comes freedom from the physical.

Foremost among the psychological traits of the Answerin is the belief that fear in any of its forms, from simple lack of confidence to anxiety to sheer terror, is simply a disease of the mind. Fear has no ontological reality; rather, it is a corruption, a cancer on the usual and natural calmness of the human mind. Like any disease, fear must be eradicated to better the human condition. But since fear attacks the rational faculties of the human mind and renders one susceptible to error, this disease is the worst of all. Many other ills stem from fear. Thus, to eradicate fear means to eradicate a host of other human problems.

The Answerin believe that humanity's intelligence and rationality are what separates it from animals. Given this viewpoint, it is little wonder that the Answerin believe a calm and tranquil mind to be capable of great feats. The Answerin, then, sometimes appear as a very self-assured people. Their confidence can sometimes be overbearing, and they can appear quite conceited.

ANSWERIN ADRENALINE SURGES

The Answerin are renowned among the minor human races for their fighting skill. This renown goes back even to the days of the Vilani Ziru Sirka when the Answerin were used as shock troops and marines. Their fighting skill is due in part to their rejection of fear and its resultant weaknesses. But it also has a physiological basis.

Every Answerin is able to, at will, induce an adrenal surge in his bloodstream. Like the adrenaline reactions of other humans, this surge allows the Answerin to gain better strength and dexterity in order to meet danger. Unlike normal adrenaline rushes, the effects of this surge are far greater than those surges produced by other human races.

Simply by willing it, an Answerin may increase his life force by 3 for 10 combat rounds. After those 10 rounds are up, the life force returns to the initial level minus 3. After an hour has elapsed, the life force returns to its original level, and the Answerin may again choose to increase it by 3 for 10 combat rounds. Thus, an Answerin with a life force value of 3/5, for example, could increase it to 6/5 for 10 rounds and lapse into 3/2 for an hour.

Any surprise attacks against an Answerin get the first round of normal attack (after surprise has been lost) at the original life force value. This is because the Answerin needs to consciously will to increase his adrenaline reaction, and that takes one combat round.

ANSWERIN MENTAL DIAGNOSIS

The science of psychiatry is highly
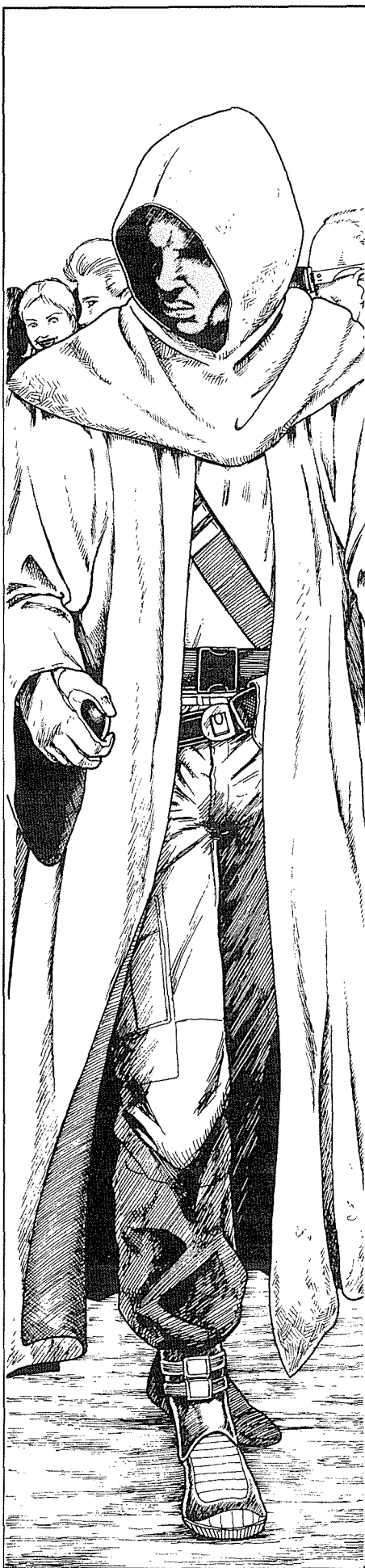
developed among the Answerin people, and the present-day Answerin are the product of thousands of years of psychiatric and psychological research and treatment. Many of the breakthroughs in physical medicine actually came from observing the effects "mental medicine" had on the body, and their "mind over matter" philosophy certainly influenced the development of psychiatric and psychological methods.

The Answerin have developed a number of devices that allow them to further explore the human psyche and decide the best treatments for mental and physical ailments. One of the main Answerin devices is a portable apparatus somewhat like an Imperial stress detector but much more sophisticated.

This device allows a qualified operator to detect stress and anxiety levels. Based on these readings, appropriate action can then be prescribed. The device borders on psionic in its operation. As such, its sale and use is restricted to Answerin itself, although illegal versions can be found throughout Imperial territory.

ANSWERIN SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The Answerin have a democratic bent, based on their belief that rational human minds, unfettered by fear, should be able to order the affairs of state and to create just laws to further unfetter the minds of humans from cares and worries. From the earliest times, individual voters were able to voice their opinions and ideas in a folk moot. As time went on, though, and tribes of Answerin united to form nations, this self-representation proved impractical. Representative structures were established to meet the needs of a larger population. Vilani influence added to this the idea of bureaucracy, a new idea to the Answerin, whose traditional government had always been streamlined.

Still, the present-day size of the Answerin bureaucracy is small by Vilani standards, but the fact that such a concept exists at all is due to Vilani influence.

Despite their belief in democracy, the Answerin are a discordant and factional people. In earlier times, the world was divided into many small independent states. Without the usual fear of death that restricts most beings, the Answerin

often fail to realize the potential loss involved in warfare. As a result, their history is fraught with conflict after conflict and war after war. The basic dichotomy in Answerin society, therefore, is this: Within certain small groups, there is equality of treatment, harmony and a democratic spirit. But outside of that group, there is much fighting. Thus, Answerin society as a whole is relatively stable (not changing in its basic forms or assumptions), but the status and power of the various Answerin states have varied with the years.

It was only through Vilani influence that a world government on Answerin was ever established. With the advent of world government, though, the tendency toward factionalism and warfare has been sublimated and redirected somewhat. Now, the Answerin draw together to enable them to war with others. In the Rebellion era, the Answerin are once again being utilized by the Vilani as shock troops and marines. As before, they are showing themselves to be tenacious fighters and deserving of the reputation given them.

CHARACTER GENERATION

Answerin are adapted to lower gravity. Their initial strength is generated as 1D6+4, as is their endurance. Dexterity is generated by 2D6+1, and all other abilities are rolled normally.

Given the democratic bent of the Answerin, a social standing of B+ does not necessarily indicate noble rank. Those Answerin whose social standing rises to B+ through career standing of B+ and whose social standing does not rise through prior service have only high standing among the Answerin people, not an Imperial noble title.

Answerin usually enter military careers, although they do serve elsewhere. Answerin cannot become barbarians, and relatively few become diplomats, bureaucrats or scientists. Answerin doctors usually specialize in psychiatry.

Answerin characters possess both a given name and a surname. The surname comes first, followed by the given name. Typical Answerin given names are: Theri, Aqanany, Swenwas and Heshanwy (for males), as well as Anyly, Penniver, Symthea and Qensheri (for females).

Warriors' Kin

This adventure takes place on a highly populated world called Debort (Vland 3235 B481778-9) in Vland sector near the border with Lishun. The characters may be neutral with regard to the Rebellion or of any political allegiance other than pro-Lucan

The player characters meet their patron, Norman Laduun, in the starport on Debort. Laduun is an agent for Mangell Carriers, a Lishin sectorwide corporation. Mangell is currently locked in a trade war and has a great need for mercenaries. Unfortunately, the Rebellion has made it most difficult to find mercenary units that are not already fully employed. On Debort, however, there is a company of Answerin warriors.

FORTUNES OF WAR

The Answerin crossed the border between the Ziru Sirkaa and Lucan's Imperium in early 1120 in an effort to wreak havoc against the insane policies of the emperor ad-interim. After several successful raids, the Answerin retreated to Debort, a world whose allegiance to Lucan is lukewarm at best.

Debort does, technically, possess a centralized government, although it is an extremely weak one known as the Debort Central Authority. Most of the world's land is parcelled out as property among the 18 separate families of Solomani descent who truly control the planet. Each of these families has absolute authority over their respective territories, effectively making Debort balkanized. The families control the DCA and have proportional representation equal to the number of people on their land.

The DCA, however, controls the world's small seas and the lands the families did not claim. These lands were vacant when the families were established back during the Rule of Man, but now hold 20% of the world's population. The DCA controls the armed forces and is charged with keeping the peace between families and protecting rights. It is also responsible for all interstellar relations. All starports built on family property are under DCA control. Only those starports built on DCA land, however, have extrality and are under Starport Authority control.

At Debort, the Fallston family accepted the Answerin, and allowed them to shuttle down and bivouac for a time. Since most of the families did not wholeheartedly support Lucan, the DCA allowed the Answerin onto Debort. During their visit, however, naval elements from Lucan's Imperium surprised the Answerin vessels in space and nearly destroyed them, forcing the remaining ships to flee the system. This left the company effectively stranded along with many Answerin crewmembers on liberty.

After Lucan's fleet destroyed the Answerin vessels, a lukewarm allegiance and resistance to Lucan became less popular on Debort. No longer welcomed by the DCA, the Answerin could only retreat to lands belonging to families who would welcome them. Even these eventually dwindled to nothing, reducing them to an outlaw company forced into hiding and ever on the run. Being 100% grav-mobile, they have marauded over Debort's lands, occasionally pillaging, then crossing property lines before the defenders can catch them.

PRESENTING THE TICKET

Norman Laduun wants the PCs to make initial contact with the Answerin. Mangell wants to hire them as a force of mercenaries in his employer's trade war. Although they will not be fighting against Lucan, the proposition will get the PCs off-planet (via a low berth in cargo holds) and give them a chance of acquiring new ships. As a gesture of goodwill, Laduun will give the PCs a *renewysher*, a traditional Answerin blade, to the give to the company's leader. It is an especially well-crafted weapon, being a museum piece from the Long Night period.

Laduun does not recommend that the PCs chase the Answerin across the Debort countryside. The group would have to cross property lines regularly. Family sovereignty is guarded most jealously, making cross-country travel (even air travel) quite difficult because of the many checkpoints, tolls and regulations. If there is a fault in this procedure, the PCs could be killed on the spot as trespassers.

Without a more exacting knowledge of their location, it is perhaps best to

contact the Answerin by less direct means. The company will not likely remain isolated from supplies or services available on Debort. The group's first objective, then, is to find the covert contacts the Answerin are using to obtain these things. Although Debort has several large cities, the best place for the PCs to focus their attention is the local Startown since that is the best source of high technology.

Note: Mangell Carriers will probably be able to make contact eventually with or without the PCs' help. Their performance, however, will determine whether they receive additional rewards in the end.

The PCs may come up short on ideas as to where to look for clues. If they are at a loss, perhaps suggest that those who have Streetwise skill search for leads. This task will put the PCs in touch with casual contacts in bars and illegal gambling halls, corrupt officials, black marketeers and professional informants. The remaining PCs can act on new information while the PCs with Streetwise continue the search for more leads.

To make a casual contact:
Routine, Streetwise, Carousing, 1 day.

The leads important to this scenario appear below. Other leads should not bring the group any closer to their goal, but may make the Answerin aware, even indirectly, that the PCs seek to rescue them, thus giving them cause to respect the group.

EXAMPLES OF LEADS

Weapons Suppliers: The Answerin are dealing with weapons suppliers. They may be purchasing the most advanced weapons available on Debort. They might even be having higher-tech level weapons imported to Debort from nearby worlds and funnelled through these suppliers. Of course, the suppliers will deny their involvement since this is all under the table.

Purchasing Agents: Purchasing agents for the Barnard family have been particularly active in the city outside the Startown. They are buying fruits and vegetables, for the most part, since Answerin are vegetarians. On occasion, even one of the family elders is supervising the buying directly,. In fact, the "elder" is an Answerin, cloaked and cowled in the fashion of an elder to disguise himself. Answerin, while human, still differ enough from the Solomani-descended natives of Debort to be noticeable.

Note: The Barnard family is merely using the Answerin as dupes to suit their political ends. The Answerin believe that Barnards are fighting other families supporting Lucan. In actuality, no such fighting is occurring. Worse, the Barnards plan to turn the Answerin over to Lucan and become heroes.

Synthetic Blood: The Startown hospital recently produced several pints of synthetic blood of types H, M, N and Z. These are blood types found among the Answerin, not the Solomani humans of Debort. This was done at the request of a smaller hospital in a nearby city. Administrators at the smaller hospital will claim that the order was a clerical error. Two seriously injured Answerin, however, were brought in the previous night for emergency surgery.

Advanced Weaponry: Local news programs report that humans with advanced weaponry have robbed two banks and an armored car. These humans possessed seemingly superhuman strength and resistance to pain. Holovid cameras show the scene of a third bank robbery where police believe they have these humans trapped. In fact, they have slipped away on grav belts. If the characters rush to the scene, they will meet John Truly, a reporter investigating the story.

MEETING THE ANSWERIN

Someone will eventually approach the PCs and offer to put them in contact with an Answerin—for a price, of course. Provided that their offer meets his demands, he will make an appointment for them to meet the Answerin in a Startown bar. At the meeting, the PCs discover that the "Answerin" is actually a Vilani human.

This Vilani, Iikush Khagikkir, is a

member of the Answerin company, although she is not of the Answerin minor human race. She will tell the PCs that the Answerin company knows of their mission and approves. They are to attend a second meeting at the Kreta Club in a nearby city—there they will meet the Answerin leader. The Kreta Club is known to feature professional fights as entertainment.

Until the appointed time, the PCs are free to do as they wish. Eventually, members of Lucan's Imperial Naval Intelligence forces on Debort will notice the PCs. They will arrest at least a few of the PCs and will interrogate them, but without resorting to extreme measures (i.e., no truth drugs or torture). If they learn that the PCs are serving as agents attempting to hire the Answerin as mercenaries, the intelligence officers will let them go with little more than a slap on the wrist and a warning that they will impound their ship right where it sits if they are caught involved in this matter again. (The PCs will probably find it wise to move their ship to the adjacent class-C starport under the jurisdiction of the Winslow family.)

Naturally, the INI men will follow the PCs to the Kreta Club just to be sure. There, Iikush Khagikkir will greet them and then introduce Force Commander Aqanany Rwarthysher, leader of the Answerin company on Debort. He will graciously accept the group's gift as a sign of goodwill and will agree to Mangell Carriers' terms. He will then reveal that the remaining members of his company (about 40 men) are hiding in an abandoned warehouse complex in another city. The party should accompany him and Khagikkir to the warehouse in Rwarthysher's ground car. Once there, they can formulate their plan of attack.

Once the PCs have left the city limits on their way to the warehouse, eight INI men will attack, swooping down on the PCs in an air/raft. Unfortunately for the INI men, their orders are to take the group alive, most especially the Answerin.

The INI men will at first attempt to force the ground car into a ditch by threatening to ram it. This will actually be a feint, however, since a serious collision would probably be far more dangerous to the air/raft than to the ground car. If the ground car driver calls their bluff, forcing the air/raft to swerve,

this will impress the Answerin. If he instead swerves, he must roll a task to keep control of the vehicle.

To maintain control of a ground car: Difficult, Ground Vehicle, Dex, 10 seconds (unskilled OK)

Exceptional Success: The air/raft is avoided and disappears behind a stand of trees, where it will temporarily lose the car for 1D6 rounds.

Success: The air/raft is successfully avoided.

Failure: The car is knocked into a ditch, and all characters must roll 3+ to avoid taking a hit of damage. The car suffers only superficial damage but is caught in the ditch.

Exceptional Failure: The car is knocked into a ditch, and all characters must roll 7+ to avoid taking a hit of damage. The car takes a point of chassis (hull) damage and is caught in the ditch. It will also require a new front left tire (there's a spare in the trunk).

After the collision attempt has been made, the air/raft will restart its pursuit. The INI men will then use the air/raft as a firing platform. (Take note of movement die modifiers.) Up to 1D6 INI men will fire each round. Every other round, one of them will cautiously fire a TL-13 laser rifle, attempting to pinpoint his shot to disable the vehicle while minimizing the injury to the occupants. Meanwhile, other INI men will be firing single-shot tranq rounds, particularly at those PCs who have exposed themselves to fire back. The Answerin commander will, of course, take note of who fires back and who crouches for cover.

Meanwhile, Aqanany Rwarthysher will be preparing to use his LAG, uploading HE rounds into it. He will then instruct the driver to stop the car, and will step out and fire at the air/raft. The shot will hit regardless of what the referee secretly rolls. The air/raft will fly out of control, travelling quite some distance, although the crash will not be visible, being blocked by trees.

Eventually, as the PCs proceed to the city where the Answerin are hiding, their ground car will fail. A PC with mechanical skill can diagnose the problem.

To diagnose the ground car's failure: Routine, Mechanical, Int, 1 minute

Any repairs will take at least one hour. Rwarthysher says that walking the rest of the way will take less time. The Answerin will reload his LAG before heading off through the open countryside to the city.

After a few minutes, a second air/raft will make an appearance. The combat situation is very similar to the previous one, except that the PCs will not be in a ground car. The INI men still have the same instructions not to use lethal force. During the combat, Rwarthysher will be hit by a tranq round and will be disabled. The PCs' only hope is to use the LAG—later on, such an action will be perceived well by the Answerin and will help them in their mission. As before, the LAG will automatically hit and disable the air/raft if fired. Unlike before, however, the crew will not all die in the crash .

After the combat, Iikush Khagikkir will lead the PCs to the city area where the Answerin company is located. Rwarthysher will still be unconscious unless the PCs have antidote. As they near the warehouse, the PCs will hear a loud shout, ordering them to surrender. A figure dressed in battle dress will run toward them, using a suit-mounted speaker to amplify his voice.

This encounter takes place amid a group of buildings in the light industry section of the city. Because of his battle dress, the INI man is able to move large objects, jump great distances because of enhanced strength (assisted by Debort's lower gravity), see in total darkness, hear incredibly well, have doubled running speed, walk through fire briefly, submerge himself indefinitely, and ignore gas, vacuum, and some levels of radiation or corrosive chemicals. The PCs may manage to overcome the INI man, but they will definitely get a sense of how useful battle dress is in combat.

If they overcome this suited INI man, three more will appear from the air/raft. At this point, several of the Answerin, sporting laser rifles, will join them from the nearby warehouse where they were hiding. They will fight along with the PCs to overcome the INI men.

Rwarthysher, if he hasn't already, will finally awaken and order his men to prepare to leave the city. The Answerin will get into several hidden grav cars and, along with the PCs, head to the class-C starport under the control of the
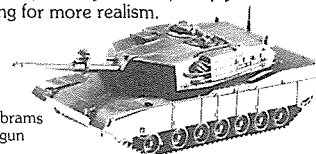
MEGATRAVELLER™

Winslow family. There they will meet Norman Laduun, who will have a ship waiting to take the Answerin off-planet in low berths.

Provided that everything has gone well, Laduun will pay the PCs Cr200,000 in bearer bonds. He will express the gratitude of Mangell Carriers and add that his corporation may well have further employment for the group in the future. If the PCs acted bravely and in accordance with the Answerin code of honor and military sensibilities, they will have made earned the Answerins' respect, and Aqanany Rwarthysher will return the *renewysher* to the PCs as a sign of his gratitude. The blade is worth Cr10,000 to collectors, but its real value is to designate the PCs as friends of the Answerin people. Ω
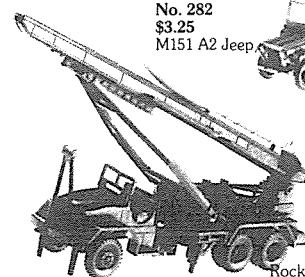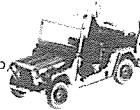
The Thing
on the Bike Path

By Michael C. LaBossiere

It's like something out of those spooky books by that old Maine horror writer.

People are disappearing off the University of Maine bike trail, and only pieces of them have been found. The police think it might be bears. But I know bears, and bears don't do stuff like what was done to those bodies.

It's something else, something from a long time ago.

Two young women recently vanished while running on the University of Maine bike trail. In these times the story would normally be unremarkable (maybe a mention on the local news). But one of the young women is the daughter of megastar Ashley Cameron. This fact has made the disappearance front page news. Articles note that three area youths disappeared four days earlier on the same bike path.

Ashley Cameron would like to hire the PCs to help locate her daughter. She will pay their transport, housing and expenses, plus $100-$200 a day (exact pay depends on reputation and what they accomplish). A large reward is promised for her daughter's safe return.

A creature of the Darkness has awakened from its century-long dormancy and has begun preying on people it encounters on the bike trail. The trail is located between Old Town and Orono, two small towns. The University of Maine (at Orono) is a mid-sized campus (about 10,000 students) and is located at one end of the trail.

KILLINGS

The map indicates where the thing has killed or will kill. It is left to the referee when the first killing occurred, but each subsequent killing will occur at four-day intervals.

Spot 1: This is where the thing attacked the local youths. An examination of the area will reveal a broken buck knife (snapped in half). Torn bits of clothes are strewn among the pine needles, and dried blood decorates the tree bark.

The bodies are buried about 300 yards off the trail. They have been torn to bits. Perhaps the most horrible thing is that their heads are unharmed, except that their faces have been meticulously removed,as if by a surgeon. Locating the clothes and knife will be rather hard, since the bike trail area is large and the police have no idea where the youths vanished.

Spot 2: This is where the two young women died. About 360 yards back in the woods, a shattered Walkman tape player and a bloody running shoe are hanging from a tree. Both belong to the women Janet Cameron was running with. Their bodies are buried about 50 yards from the shoe and tape player. Like the youths, their bodies have been mutilated horribly and their faces carefully removed.

Spot 3: The incident here will occur after play has begun. Two UM runners will be attacked here. One runner, Will Carter, will be killed, and the other, Tom Malone, will outrun the thing but will be driven insane by his experience. The body of the other runner (sans face) is buried about 100 yards north of the trail.

Spot 4: If the PCs fail to intervene, four days later two animal control officers will be killed. Their faces will be removed and their bodies buried in the woods 50 yards north of the killing spot. Their weapons and flashlights will be at the attack site.

Spot 5: If the PCs fail to intervene, four days later a police officer will be killed. His car will be found parked on the bike trail with its door open. His gun lies in the woods and has four shots missing. Two of them are in trees, and two hit the thing. His faceless body is buried 80 yards east of the site. The body is horribly broken—worse than the others.

Other Killings: If the PCs fail to intervene, the killings will continue. They will start to occur in the residential areas or at the university if the bike trail is closed. There will be a killing every four days, until the thing is stopped.

MAD RUNNER

As noted earlier, one victim, Tom Malone, will survive his encounter with the thing. He will run screaming from the trail one night into Old Town, where a police officer will eventually catch him. He will be taken to the Bangor Mental Health Institution (BMHI) for treatment, as he will be in a state of profound shock.

The PCs may learn about the incident from the media, from local residents or from police.

If the PCs talk to the officer who picked Malone up, Wayne Edgecomb, he will describe how the young man came running down the road. "He was screaming, and his eyes were as wide as saucers. He was running like the devil himself was behind him. When I caught up with him, he was yelling about something eating his friend and something about a woman's face falling off. He was a real mess, I tell you. I hope those shrinks can do something for him." The officer doesn't know any more, but he suspects something bad is going on. If he thinks the PCs are acting to stop the situation, he won't interfere with them and will be willing to look the other way. If he suspects that they are involved in a more sinister way, he will keep a careful eye on them. He is a Veteran beat cop.

If the PCs visit the BMHI, they may be able to meet with Malone. He will be semicoherent and will be able to talk. He will give the following story: "Will and I were on a cool-down run after speedwork. Since there were two of us and Tom is a black belt in Akido, we weren't too worried. Will spotted a beautiful woman runner up ahead working a cramp out of her leg. I felt something was wrong, but couldn't tell why at the time. Will ran up ahead. When he got to her....she.... it....grabbed him...and...her...its....face fell off. It tore into him, and blood was everywhere. I don't remember anything after that until the cop stopped me."

If Tom is shown a picture of the missing Janet Cameron (either in the newspaper or a photo),he will scream, "That's her! That's it! That's the thing that killed Will!" This will drive him into a highly disturbed state, and the PCs will be forced to leave.

Based on Malone's story, the police will be able to find his friend's body. For the PCs to get a look at the body at the police coroner's in Bangor will be difficult. The coroner will only reveal that a body has been found. Local officials will insist that it was the bears and that the animal control people will take care of the problem shortly.

MYTH

Local residents or officials at some point will direct the PCs to Dr. Thomson at the university. Dr. Thompson is an avid reader of American Indian mythology, and the events on the trail will remind him of a local legend. He will tell the following story (similar information can be garnered from the library,

Bomb Shelter

Room 1

Room 2

Empty Room

Empty Room

Empty Room

Room 3

Generator Room
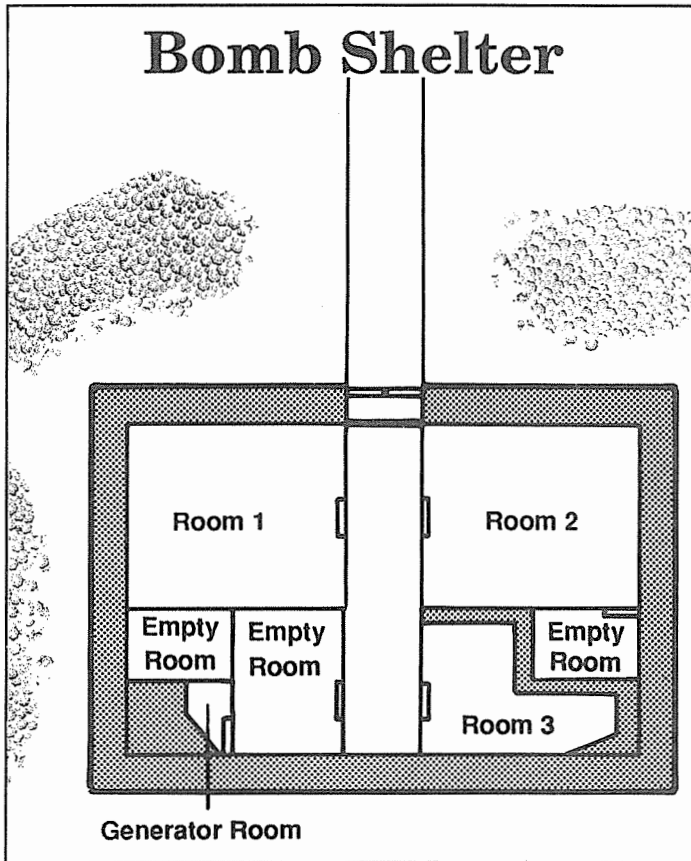
but less detail will be given, and it will take a while to find the information):

According to the legend, two great stars fell from the sky into the woods. The creatures of the woods fled the area, and the people were alarmed by all this. One of the tribe's warriors and a French trapper named La Roup went to investigate these star stones. The two men did not return that night. Soon after, a hunter was killed and was found without his face.

Four days later, another killing occurred, and four days later, another. Finally, two warriors were attacked. One was killed, and the other was badly wounded. He said it was La Roup that attacked him. He said that he had put an arrow through La Roup's chest, but he had not died. Four days later, another death occurred.

Twelve days and three deaths later, a stranger came to the tribe. He was called "Sky Eagle" by the tribe, and he said that he had come to slay the monster that plagued them. Sky Eagle had magical arrows that shown like the sun and a knife as bright as the stars.

He hunted La Roup, and fought him and cut off his face with his knife. After doing this great deed, Sky Eagle departed, but he left five arrows and a knife with the shaman. According to the legend, La Roup would arise every century to look for his face. If he was slain with an arrow and had his face removed with the knife each time until the arrows ran out, La Roup would be gone forever.

Bike Trail Area

N →

Residential Area

Stores

Old Town

Residential Area

② Killing Spot ① Killing Spot

Killing Spot

Bomb Shelter

③ Killing Spot

④ Killing Spot

Thing's Lair

Ritual Site

Bike Trail

Key

Woods

Field

Paved road

Dirt road

⑤ Killing Spot

To UM
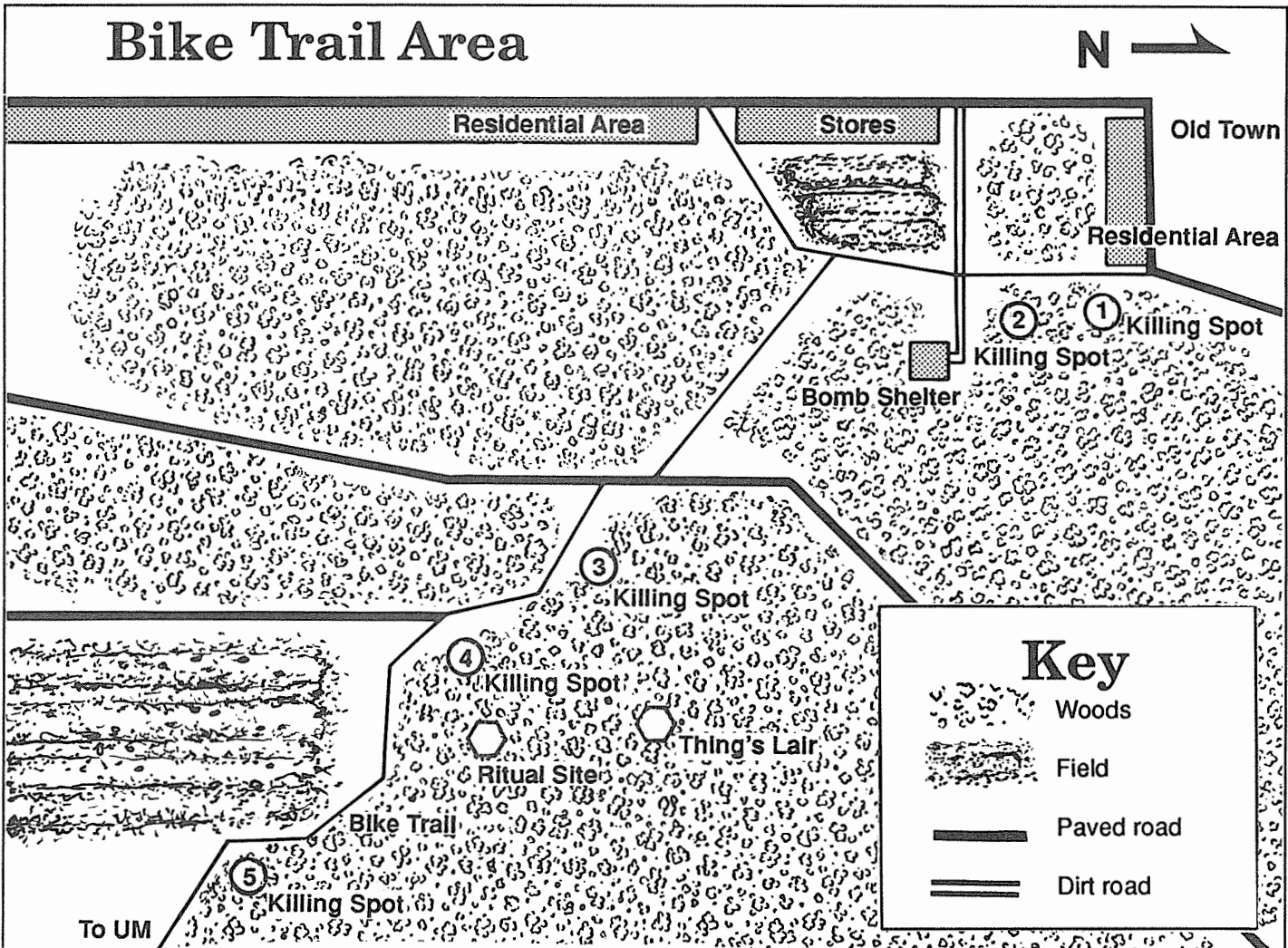
ARROW

Dr. Thompson will tell the PCs that he knows an old shaman of the Penobscott tribe who might know more about what is going on. The shaman lives on Indian Island, a reservation near Old Town. It can be reached via a two-lane bridge. The inhabitants are suspicious of outsiders, and there may be trouble with some of the young men (treat as gangers for skills—they will be armed with knifes). If the PCs are with Thompson, they will have no trouble.

The shaman is a very old man and is nearly blind and deaf.

He will listen to the PCs' story carefully, asking intelligent questions to find out what they know and believe. If he believes it is appropriate, he will say to them: "You have been brought here on purpose. The thing that hunts the woods is back again. There has always been a warrior to stop it with Sky Eagle's arrows and knife. This warrior has been a shaman or a son of a shaman. My son was killed in the Vietnam War, and his son died in Iraq. My granddaughter died in a laboratory explosion. So you have been brought here to fight it."

He will go to a locked cabinet and take out a cloth-wrapped box. Within it is an arrow with a glowing head and a knife with a glowing blade. The shaman will say, "These are the weapons of Sky Eagle. You must pierce the thing with the arrow and then remove its face with the knife."

He will give the arrow to the PC with the highest Emp and Bow skill (Bow skill taking precedence) . The knife will go to the PC with the highest Emp and knife combat ability (knife combat ability taking precedence). He will bless them in his native language as they leave.

The arrow and knife are made out of a non-Terran metal. An Average roll using Physics or something like Metallurgy will reveal that the metal has some rather odd properties, but is not harmful to humans. A Difficult task roll will indicate that the metal is not native to earth. The metal is machine-tooled. The arrow shaft is a metal like aluminum, and the knife has ceramic grips. But they test as being over 500 years of age.

Unknown to the PCs, the metal of the weapons will draw the thing to them, whether they are in the woods hunting it or inside a building in town.

FINISH

If the PCs kill the thing, Ashley Cameron will pay them a cash reward. If they fail, Thompson (if he survives) will attempt to recover the arrow and knife (the thing cannot touch them) and will try to destroy it after getting some help. The exact results are up to the referee. If the thing is not killed, it will continue to kill at least once every four days and will range further on its hunts.

LOCATIONS

The following locations may be of importance to the player characters in their investigation.

Bike Trail

The paved bike trail is about the size of a one-lane road. Some spots are bumpy, but it is well maintained.

Refer to the Bike Trail Area Map for the specific area layout. Residential areas along the path are one-family houses and apartments, most in good condition. The store section consists of a YMCA, video rental store, hardware store, and food store (Doug's Shop & Save). Fields along the

The Thing

Strength: 18   **Education:** 1   **Move:** 3/10/20/35
Constitution: 15   **Charisma:** 1   **Skill/Dam:** 7/7
Agility: 6   **Empathy:** 8   **Hits:** 20/40*
Intelligence: 3   **Initiative:** 5   **# Appear:** 1

Special: Animal Empathy 6, Human Empathy 8, Project Emotion 7, Project Thought 8, Willpower Drain 4.
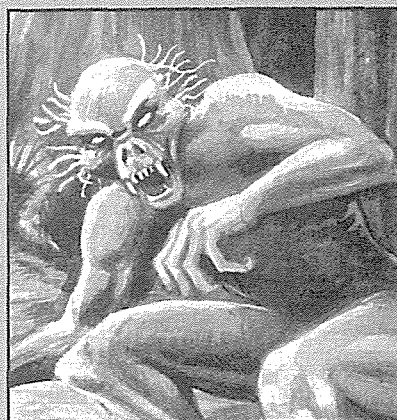
It does not suffer double damage from head hits, heals very rapidly and cannot be killed by most standard weapons. See below for details.

The thing is a vile and horrible beast which exists only to feed on its victims. It can project thought and empathy. In order to generate an illusion of being human, the thing needs a human face. It must be taken from a victim and treated on the rack for four days. After that, the thing can use it for a number of days (it can take the face off while it sleeps) equal to the victim's empathy score. After that, the face disintegrates. While wearing a face, the thing can look like the person whose face it has stolen and even talk like them. However, it has none of their memories.

After killing, the thing will sleep for four days. If it is wounded, it will kill until it is healed and then will sleep. If it is disturbed while sleeping or during the day, it can fight, but its abilities are cut in half.

Under its illusions, the creature looks like a slime-covered corpse of a human. There is no flesh on the face, only a layer of slime over the bone. The eyes are sunk back in the skull and are dim red points which glow like hellish embers. Around the edge of the face are writhing tentacles, which look like maggots. These tentacles are used to hold a stolen face in place. It strikes with its clawed hands and fanged jaws, and can fight like a human in combat and can grapple and so forth.

It takes damage from normal weapons, and if it is "killed" by them, it will dissolve into a puddle of putrid fluid, which will seep into the ground. It will reform two days later, with all abilities and stats at half normal. After it kills, it will regain points at a rate of one point of ability/attribute per point of empathy of the victim (this is one point in every ability/attribute per point of empathy). If it is wounded, it will heal one wound level for every point of empathy the victim has. It cannot heal naturally. The thing suffers no loss of Initiative from damage, and does not suffer from things like shock and unconsciousness from combat effects.

The thing can be killed permanently by weapons which can destroy its entire physical body: nuclear weapons, napalm, molecular acid and so forth. Since it is unlikely that the PCs will nuke Maine or get a fighter bomber, they will have to rely on the arrow and knife. A hit by the arrow will instantly render it unconscious for 1-3 minutes. During this time, it can be killed permanently by removing its stolen face with the knife and then removing its real face. When this is done, it will permanently dissolve, as will the weapons.

The creature is from a vile and corrupt dimension that borders our own. It came here via a vessel made out of the stones in its lair and in the ritual site. The craft was constructed by the ability of another creature which did not survive the breakup of the craft in Earth's atmosphere.

path are university fields in which experimental crops are grown. The woods have various ski /running/mountain bike trails running through them.

Bomb Shelter

The old bomb shelter was damaged in an accident while it was serving as a women's prison. The new bomb shelter is really a corporate lab site, but locals still call it the bomb shelter. The new building has two-meter-thick concrete walls and steel doors with a complex electronic lock, and is topped with a thick layer of soil. The bomb shelter is empty during the day and filled with workers during the day.

The lock can be picked, but the task is Difficult and requires an electronic lock-picking kit. If they are caught breaking in, the PCs may be in for some jail time for breaking and entering, and trespassing. If they walk up during the day, they can enter but will be asked to leave since it is a work area. If the PCs get obnoxious, the police will be called. If the PCs run into corporate people, they will be suspected of being industrial spies and treated accordingly.

Nothing evil is going on here, but the bomb shelter can be a useful sidetrack. One way to lead the PCs on a wild goose chase is to sow rumors that the corporation has been involved in shady activities, or have an oddly behaving worker make them curious.

The interior of the bomb shelter is dark and unfinished, and smells strange.

Generator Room: The generator is currently off, but is fueled and can be started. Starting it will cause the light to come on (including the outside lights—this will attract attention).

Room 1: This room contains various boxes and fixtures. A dark red stain is on the floor, and a strange smell fills the air. The stain is actually an industrial chemical, but looks like blood. The strange smell is a mix of chemicals and building materials.

Room 2: This room is filled with with boxes. One box is stained red and contains many bones. The red stuff is an industrial chemical spilled on the box, and the bones are cattle bones (for lab work with bone structures).

Room 3: Various metal structures have been set up in the room and appear to be frames designed to hold computer equipment. A sharp knife, coated with a dark red dried fluid is halfway under a terminal frame (an Easy task to spot, but make it seem like an accomplishment). The knife was used to apply a glue to the frames and was forgotten by a worker.

Ritual Site

The ritual site is where the thing prepares its faces. It is located near the mountain bike path. Both animals and people feel this location to be a "bad place" (the intensity of the feeling will be in proportion to the sensor's empathy).

The ritual site has many sick-looking pine trees and two large rocks. The rocks are not of any kind native to Maine and are in fact not native to earth. A person with Geology skill will notice the oddness of the rocks with an Easy roll and can tell they are not native to earth on a Difficult roll (Average with proper equipment).

Between the rocks is a drying frame. Four wooden poles are driven into the ground, and strange markings (in blood) are on them. Between the poles are the faces of some of the victims. They are linked to the poles by strips of skin and held by thorns of wood. The faces are oddly fresh, and while flies buzz the area, none approach the poles.

If the PCs do not find the area, a student will, and the police will be alerted. Officials will remove the remains and close off the area. Naturally, the media will be present.

The PCs will only have access to the site if they go at night or if they have the status to get in. If the PCs investigate at night, the thing may be there putting on a face, taking one off, or preparing one. It will attack the PCs if it is present. If it is not there, it will sense the PCs if they touch the stones, poles or faces, and will rush to the site.

Thing's Lair

Like the ritual site, the lair exudes a palpable evil. Only here it is much, much stronger.

The area around the lair is devoid of normal animal life. Particularly large and vile-looking insects, some with too many legs and strange fluids leaking from them, buzz and crawl around the moldy trees close to the lair. The trees and insects get viler the closer they are to the lair, but the area very close to the lair is devoid of nearly all life.

Two rocks in the lair glow with a sickly yellow-green color at night—they are similar to the rock at the ritual site. Anyone with Geology skill or any native of the area will notice that the rock is not native to Maine. An Easy roll by someone with Geological skill will reveal that the rock is not native to North America, and an Average roll will reveal that the rock is not of terrestrial origin. A Difficult roll using Geology, Physics or Chemistry and the proper equipment will reveal that the rock does not seem to be native to the known solar system. The rock emits a form of radiation that damages the DNA of living things spending a considerable amount of time around it.

Next to the rocks is a scooped out pit in the ground. It is lined with human bones, bits of clothing, and various slimes, molds and fungi. The pit glows very dimly, in a color similar to the rocks. A close look will reveal a sprinkling of rock dust over the area. The creature "sleeps" in the pit during the day, with a layer of slime-covered bone and cloth to keep it hidden from the light. At night, the area will be empty. Ω

CHALLENGE *Conventions*

COCOA CON '91, December 27-29 at the Holiday Inn in Grantville, PA, sponsored by Pastimes Hobby and the Fantasy Fortress Gaming Club. For information, write to Cocoa Con '91, 210 South Grant St., Palmyra, PA 17078.

PANDEMONIUM IX, January 18-19, 1992, at the Ryerson Hub Cafeteria, Toronto, Ontario. For more information, write to Pandamonium IX, 17B Wales Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T 1J2.

EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN '92, February 7-9, 1992, at the Student Center of Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. For additional information, send a SASE to the SIU Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4425.

WARCON '92, February 7-9, 1992, in the Memorial Student Center, Texas A & M University, College Station, TX. For more information, write to MSC Nova, Box J1, College Station, TX 78440-9081.

DUNDRACON XVI, February 14-17, 1992, at the San Ramon Marriott, 2600 Bishop Drive, San Ramon, CA 94583. For information, write to DunDraCon, 386 Alcatraz Ave., Oakland, CA 94618.

ORCCON 15, February 14-17, 1992, at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel. For more information, you can contact Strategicon, PO Box 8399, Long Beach, CA 90808.

TOTAL CONFUSION, Feb. 21-23, 1992 at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel, 181 Boston Post Road, Marlborough, MA 01752. For information, write to The Total Confusion Convention, PO Box 1463, Worcester, MA 01607.

WORLD HORROR CONVENTION, March 5-8, 1992, at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, Nashville, TN. Contact the World Horror Convention 1992, PO Box 22817, Nashville, TN 37202.

GAMEX '92, May 22-25, 1992, at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel. Write to Strategicon, PO Box 8399, Long Beach, CA 90808.

GATEWAY 12, September 4-7, 1992, at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel. For more information, contact Strategicon, PO Box 8399, Long Beach, CA 90808.

*Announcements should be sent in a minimum of four months before a convention takes place. **Challenge** is not responsible for errors in convention announcements. Write to **Challenge** Conventions, **Challenge** Managing Editor, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646 USA.*

CHALLENGE

WEST END GAMES' new releases include *CY-lent Scream* (*Torg*) and *G.G. 8: PlanetBook*(*Star Wars*). Other recent products include *Creatures of Aysle* (*Torg* roleplaying supplement) and *Death Star Companion*(*Star Wars* roleplaying supplement), plus *Crucible of Pain* (*Torg* adventure module) and *Gamemaster Pack* (*Star Wars* roleplaying supplement).

THE *AD&D TRIVIA GAME* is now available from TSR. This is a survival-of-the-fittest game, and you need both brains and brawn to play. Pick a character and draw a card. If you answer the question right, reach into the skull pool and cross your finters. If you answer the question wrong, step aside and hope for the best—your neighbors won't be very kind.

CAR-PGa, the Committee for the Advancement of Role-Playing Games, is welcoming new membership applications for reporting members, state coordinators and district representatives. Send a large SASE (with 52¢ US postage) for free information packet. Potential members should request application information and the CAR-PGa 1991 policy guide. Contact CAR-PGa International HQ, 8032 Locust Ave., Miller, IN 46403.

CHAOSIUM's releases include *Horror on the Orient Expres*, a journey from London to Constantinople and back, and to realms beyond. This *Call of Cthulhu* adventure includes detailed background information, plentiful plush handouts and maps, and an astonishing Lovecraftian tale of Mythos horror.

MECHA! from Seventh Street Games is an explosive system for science-fiction combat. Write to Seventh Street Games, PO Box 720791, San Jose, CA 95172-0791.

FASA has announced the release of *The Rigger Black Book*. This fully illustrated *Shadowrun* sourcebook features dozens of vehicles, support gear, cyberware, and new and expanded vehicle rules. Also available are *BattleTech: Falcon Guard (Legend of the Jade Phoenix Vol. 3)*, *ClanTroops* (boxed supplement to *BattleTroops*), *Prefect* (*Renegade Legion* boxed game simulating a planetary invasion) and *Unbound* (*MechWarrior* 2nd edition adventure).

ASCII ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE announces the Showcase System and Portable Carry-All DLX for the Game Boy Compact Video System. For more information, contact ASCII Entertainment Software, 11105 Dana Circle, Cypress, CA 90630.

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

Ashes To Ashes

A Storyteller™ Supplement
for Vampire™
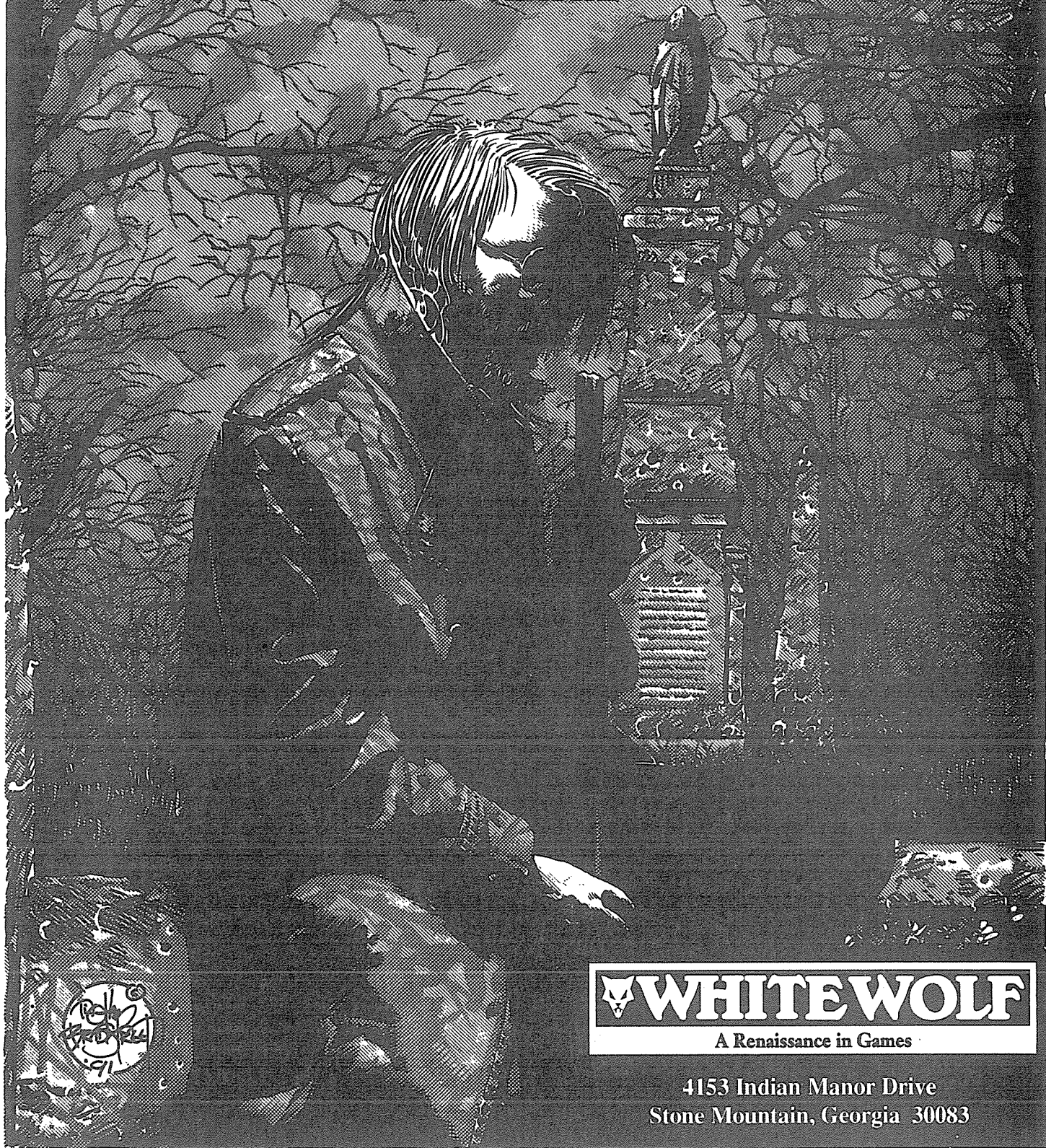
MOTORCYCLES

By Jay Adan

In a science-fiction gaming universe, futuristic vehicles like the air cushion vehicle or maglev trains sometimes overshadow the more mundane automobile or motorcycle. In fact, two-wheeled transportation in **2300 AD** is in widespread use. Economy vehicles like the electric scooter are used for inner-city commuting, trips to the store and recreation. They're quiet, clean and inexpensive.

The two vehicles covered here are far less numerous than the electric scooter, but adventurers are more likely to use a vehicle like the Llama or the Foxfire in the course of a campaign. They are less expensive and easier to transport than the only current alternative—the ultralight air cushion vehicle.

SUZUKA FXR "FOXFIRE"

Type: Wheeled, high-performance motorcycle
Crew: Driver
Weight: 150 kg
Armor: Suspension 0.1 All faces 0.2
Signature: 1
Evasion: 2
Cargo: 5 kg
Max Speed: 240 kph
Cruising: 170 kph
Combat Move: 420 m
Off Road Mobility: One eighth
Power Plant: 0.04 MW hydrogen fuel cell
Fuel Capacity: 12 kg H2
Fuel Consumption: 1.5 kg/hr
Price: Lv4500

Introduced in 2301, the Foxfire is on the cutting edge of sportbike technology. Because of the nature of the sportbike enthusiast, high-tech gadgets and high speed are found within the fairings of the Foxfire.

Standard features include gyro-stabilizers, sidepivot seat, two-wheel drive, antilock brakes and an antitheft system. Popular options include: helmet headsup display, Pentapod-designed self repair fairings (expensive, but worthwhile for those with a tendency to exceed their riding limitations), and the helmet/headlight night vision package (illegal in most countries but favored by those with a need for stealth).

This bike and others like it are the kind most favored by the high-tech scooter gangs that roam the streets of 24th century Earth and Tirane. Because of the quality of road needed to operate a vehicle of this type, they are almost unheard of anywhere but the Core.
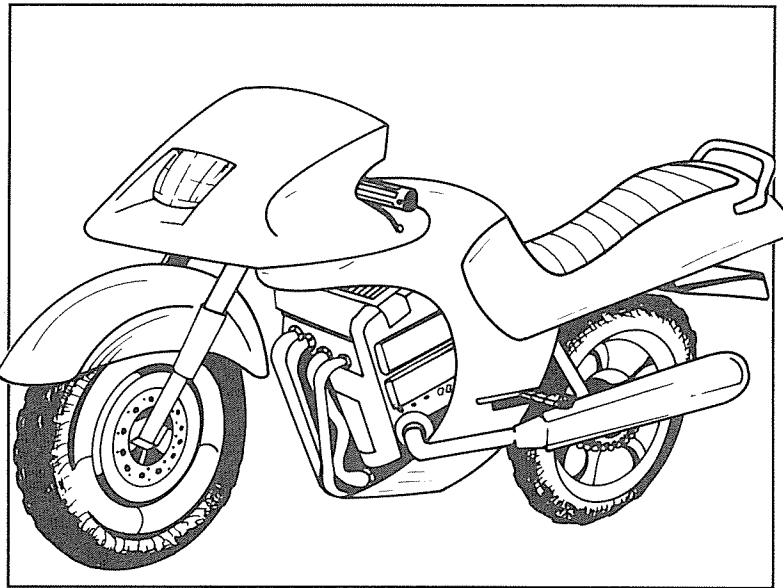
TRILON MOTOR CORP LL1 "LLAMA"

Type: Two-wheeled all-terrain motorcycle
Crew: Driver, passenger
Weight: 180 kg
Armor: Suspension 0.1 All faces 0.2
Signature: 1
Evasion: 2
Cargo: 10 kg or 1 passenger
Max Speed: 160 kph
Cruising Speed: 100 kph
Combat Move: 300 m
Off Road Mobility: Full
Power Plant: 0.035 MW hydrogen fuel cell
Fuel Capacity: 10 kg H2
Fuel Consumption: 1 kg/hr
Endurance: 10hr.
Price: Lv2000

The Llama is the first in a new line of motorcycles from Trilon's new motorized vehicle division. While in most cases the ultralight ACV has replaced the "dirtbike" as a lightweight scout style vehicle, Trilon
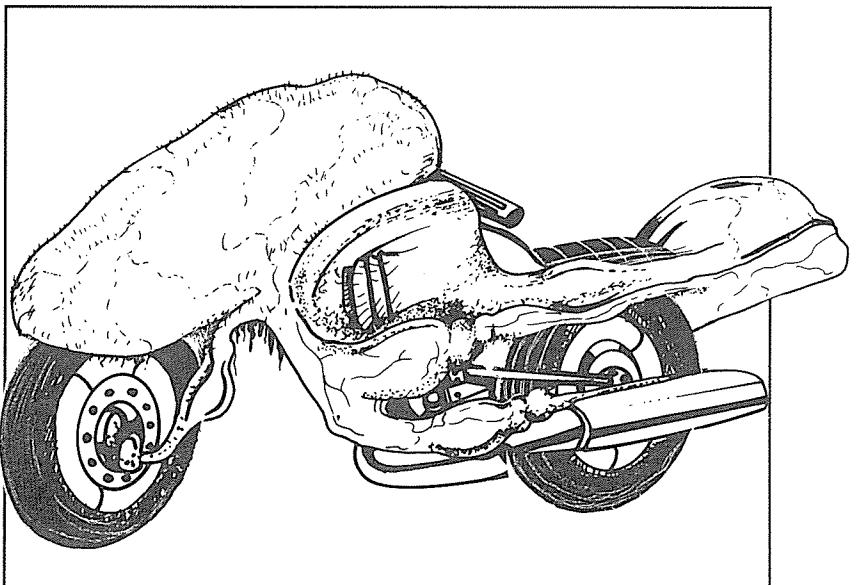
has recognized the need for an inexpensive alternative. Of course the manufacture of these vehicles has never ceased entirely, but Trilon's design advances make possible features normally only seen on high-performance street bikes. The most notable of these features is the gyro stabilizers that make difficult terrain easier to manage. Options include extra 10 kg backup fuel tank, rifle racks (rear or handlebar mounted) and sport fairings. It has not yet been confirmed, but rumors suggest that Trilon has a Pentapod design team working on off-road tires for an '02 release.

HELMET HEADS-UP DISPLAY(HHUD)
Weight: 2 kg
Price: Lv800-Lv1500

This is the latest in military equipment to go civilian. The HHUD actually replaces all the external instrumentation on the motorcycle in favor of a specially designed helmet that comes in various models. The least expensive ones use a wire to connect from helmet to the motorcycle (similar to "jacking in" as cyberjockeys do), passing all vital information such as speed, RPMs and remaining fuel to either a liquid crystal or holographic display inside the helmet. There is also a version that uses a transmitter inside the motorcycle and a receiver in the helmet, thus eliminating the need for a wire.

Software packages are also available. The most common is for area maps (only available for Core worlds, with Earth being the most thoroughly mapped), mileage to destination charts (normally included in map packages) and vision enhancement (which improves visibility and cuts down on tunnel-vision in high-speed situations). Most models are also equipped with short-range communication gear. Ω

IMPRISONED in NOACHIS

By James L. Cambias

I had warned Phipps about offending the natives, but he seemed convinced that their rules did not apply to Englishmen. "These Martians have no real concept of law, old boy. The only things they understand are gold and force. If there's any difficulty, a small donation to the right person will solve everything. And if not, they still wouldn't dare harass British citizens. Remember Shastapsh and all that."

He didn't look so smug as we knelt before the prince, with soldiers holding naked swords against the backs of our necks. Prince Khaizan sat sprawled on his throne, an evil-looking brute if ever I saw one. There was a kind of obscene joy in his eyes that I didn't like at all.

"So, Red Men, you have dared to offend the sacred memories of my ancestors. This is a serious crime. The ancient penalty for such an offense is the Week of Steel and Fire. Still, I will show mercy—you will not die by any Martian hand. Instead, you will lie and rot in the cells beneath my palace. Your bodies will wither, your minds will rot and your souls will drown in the darkness. Perhaps someday my grandson will set you free when he becomes prince in Noachis."

Phipps lunged to his feet. "This is an outrage, Your Highness! Her Majesty's government will not look kindly upon your actions!"

Khaizan laughed wickedly. "Your Queen Victoria can do nothing to save you. The Oenotrians tell me the British colony will soon be but a memory, and the Red Men will be driven from the face of Mars. Who will come for you then? Guards, take them to the pit!"

They led us down endless stairs, past scores of guards and locked doors, deep into the foul-smelling dungeons. Only one thing relieved the utter misery of the situation—at last Phipps had nothing to say.

This scenario is not intended as a stand-alone adventure; rather it is designed to be used by referees in the event that their PCs have managed to get put in jail by a Martian prince. In the course of adventuring and serving the British Crown on Mars, characters will occasionally run afoul of local rulers. Often a little gold or the threat of British intervention will smooth over any legal obstacles, but now and then the adventurers will fail a crucial die roll or make a staggering blunder, and as a result must suffer the consequences of being imprisoned.

This adventure assumes that the PCs have been thrown into prison; the reason is unimportant. The Martian city-state used throughout is Noachis, but naturally the referee can change the setting to suit the circumstances. The ruler of Noachis is Prince Khaizan, a brutal, human-hating despot. One can expect little justice at his hands.

PRISON

The prison consists of a complex of cells, torture chambers and guard rooms underneath the royal palace. Over the years, the dungeons have been expanded into empty cellars, ruined sewers and ancient underground chambers left by the Canal Builders. The result is a bewildering maze of cells and passages, extending well beyond the walls of the palace.

The PCs will be stripped and carefully searched. Everything but their clothes will be taken (and any especially expensive or unusual garments will be taken as well). PCs may try to make an Impossible Bargaining task roll to attempt to keep one personal item, but no weapons or tools will be allowed.

All the PCs will be put into the cell called "the pit," whether male or female, human or Martian.

Pit: The PCs' cell is a cramped little chamber about 10 feet square. It is lit only by the light coming in through the small grating in the door, which is dim at best. The room is perpetually damp and stinks like a cesspool. Foul water drips down the walls constantly. There are no beds or other furniture—merely some filthy straw infested with bugs.

The cell's walls and floor are granite slabs, each about a yard wide. The slabs are too hard to dig through and too heavy to move the slabs aside. The ceiling is 10 feet high at the highest point and is made of brick, forming a barrel vault. The walls and ceiling are all covered with a layer of slimy moss and lichen.

The cell door is four inches thick and is constructed of two layers of heavy timbers faced on both sides with bronze sheets. The door opens outward, so the prisoners cannot reach either the lock or the hinges. There is a small grating, six inches high and 10 inches wide, set at about eye level in the door. The grating has a single steel bar in the center. The lock is a heavy steel bar fitting across the width of the door, secured by a padlock at one end. It is impossible to break it open, and the lock cannot be reached from the grating.

Daily Routine: The prison has a set daily schedule, which is the only way the prisoners can keep track of the passage of time (any valuables such as watches will be taken from them upon imprisonment). The guards change watches

Nature Spirits

By Mark L. Chaffe

There are bad runs, and there are really bad runs—this one was disastrous. The shaman, Asks-Many-Questions, encountered only misfortune. One bad break lead to another, and now he was preparing to leave the Aztechnology VTOL at an altitude of 10,000 feet. The security goon hefted him out the door, and Many-Questions began his long descent. His first thought was that the next time Vision-Seeker suggested he learn a song, he would listen. His mentor had once tried to teach him to fly, but at the time, Many-Questions had been more interested in spirits. Now he was about to join those spirits in the next world.

Wait, he thought, perhaps a spirit could save me. He was, of course, in the domain of Wind, but none of the more-well-known spirits (like Storm or Mist) were present. A less studied conjuror would have been lost, but Many-Questions knew who to call upon.

Welcome to *Talking Eagle's Spirit Guide*, the foremost reference to the habits and powers of nature spirits in North America. We're uploading parts of the text in an effort to bridge the gap of knowledge which exists between those fortunate enough to have an experienced shaman to guide them and those who are spoken to by the spirits without a mentor to turn to. The Sysop asked me to keep the initial file small, so we're only going to upload the entries for about a dozen of the more common nature spirits other than those included in *The Manual of Practical Thaumaturgy* <a.k.a. *The Grimoire* (Sysop)>. As well, we will be including Eagle's up-to-the-nanosecond comments on the spirits that are in the manual, and his wonderful overview of spirit domains. More will be added later if we generate enough interest. Happy conjuring.

Mycroft Pym Th.D.

Arctic

Type: Spirit of Land.

Domain: The Arctic Spirit is native to the frozen wastelands and may be conjured from any land where the topsoil never thaws (i.e., permafrost). This includes very high mountaintops as well as certain lands above the Arctic and below the Antarctic circles. For example, Antarctica is suitable, but the majority of Canada is too mild.

Appearance: Arctic Spirits do not normally take a visible form, but, rather, they choose to manifest as a sudden drop in temperature and a crispness in the air. If compelled to further manifest, they appear as beautiful men or women formed of snow and ice.

Eagle's Comments: The Arctic Spirit is a very difficult one to work with. Several people have reported to me that this spirit is actively hostile toward most forms of animal life—including mankind. There are also unconfirmed reports which suggest that the humanoid manifestations are sufficiently cold that contact with them immediately causes severe frostburns. Extreme caution is advised when dealing with these spirits.

Powers: Accident, Binding, Concealment, Confusion, Guard, Immunity, Movement.

Beach/Island

Type: Spirit of Land.

Domain: Any sandy area with a moderate climate is within the domain of this spirit. Tropical islands and beaches are within the domain of this spirit (while sandy areas with extremely high temperatures, like the Sahara are the domain of Desert Spirits).

Appearance: These spirits will normally manifest as constantly moving ripples in the sand or small mounds of sand. Serious researchers view with skepticism the reports of little men and women in colorful swimwear with surfboards.

Eagle's Comments: These spirits can be very trying if there is a sense of urgency in what you are doing because of their relaxed, unhurried disposition. I attribute this characteristic to the ease with which this environment can sustain life. The spirits of less hospitable environments seem to be the ones with the greatest sense of urgency.

Powers: Accident, Concealment, Guard, Movement, Search.

Cave

Type: Spirit of Land.

Domain: Naturally occurring underground structures like caves, tunnels and fissures.

Appearance: Cave Spirits manifest as areas of deep shadow with voices that seem to echo from far away. Their more humanoid forms appear as stone faces rising out from the cave or tunnel walls.

Eagle's Comments: While not quite as indifferent to humans as the Mountain or Desert spirits, the Cave Spirit takes little interest in human affairs. This trait may inhibit the success of its Search ability if you are seeking objects from the civilized world. The Search power is most successful with moderately worked mineral objects, and is somewhat adept at locating plant or animal matter. A Cave Spirit is completely unable to distinguish between two machines of a similar size.

Powers: Accident, Concealment, Confusion, Fear, Guard, Search.

Hail

Type: Spirit of Wind.

Domain: Any area where hail is currently falling—if you're getting hit, you're in the right place.

Appearance: Hail Spirits may appear as patches of ice or small gray clouds. They may also assume a roughly manlike shape formed of icy slush.

Eagle's Comments: You will find this spirit to be reluctant to use its powers of Guard and Immunity to benefit anyone other than the shaman who summoned it. The Hail Spirit delights in its ability to cause damage, but it is not actually hostile. It would appear that knocking things down is this spirit's idea of fun. It seems to have little or no awareness of how such action could be harmful to others.

Powers: Accident, Concealment, Confusion, Guard, Immunity.

Jungle

Type: Spirit of Land.

Domain: Areas rich in vegetation with a tropical climate. This spirit is closely related to the Forest Spirit, the principle difference between their domains being one of temperature and of the general type of vegetation growing there.

Appearance: The Jungle Spirit will first be perceivable by an area of complete silence around the summoner. Then, the spirit will manifest as a rustling of leaves and other movements in the flora. If the shaman orders the spirit to manifest further, it will appear as a human form composed of soft, green, vegetable matter.

Eagle's Comments: Jungle Spirits are extremely adverse to taking on their humanoid forms. It appears that they generally seek to avoid human contact and feel exposed when in their more substantial form. It should be noted, however, that they do not feel threatened by most shamans (whom they perceive as part of the jungle itself). If required to take a humanoid form, the spirit is only comfortable if alone with shamans or engaged in physical combat with the shaman's enemies.

Powers: Accident, Concealment, Confusion, Fear, Search.

Market

Type: Spirit of Man.

Domain: Market Spirits are found in places of open commerce (where people gather to shop or find entertainment); they are also present within the corridors of enclosed malls. While a Market Spirit may be found in a bar or an electronics store, it will not be present in places of private

business (areas that are closed to the general public such as offices or clinics)—these are occupied by Hearth spirits.

Appearance: The Market Spirit generally manifests as a small merchant, often with a rather large girth.

Eagle's Comments: A most gregarious spirit and one prone to talking quickly (often in street jargon). This spirit is one of the most adept I have ever encountered at distinguishing between man-made artifacts. While it may have difficulty finding a particular example of a thing with its Search power, it has no trouble locating generic items or specific brands. A Market Spirit could, for instance, locate a motorcycle or a red Yamaha Rapier, but it would not be able to find a bike by means of its license plate number.

Powers: Accident, Confusion, Guard, Movement.

Sky

Type: Spirit of Wind.

Domain: You are within this spirit's domain when you are separated from the ground—such as when you are flying (in a plane or by spell) or falling (with a parachute or unaided).

Appearance: The Sky Spirit will manifest as a slight breeze. When it speaks, its voice seems quiet and distant—like a wind moving over reeds in a pond. It may also assume the more substantial form of a whirlwind or tornado.

Eagle's Comments: The Sky Spirit is the least predictable of all the spirits I have encountered. Personalities and dispositions vary widely from one conjuring to the next. The spirit's personality appears to correlate (to some extent) with the direction the wind is blowing, air temperature and humidity. Further research is necessary before I would be confident enough to venture a guess as to the actual relationship.

Powers: Accident, Confusion, Guard, Immunity, Movement.

Snow

Type: Spirit of Wind.

Domain: Any area that is covered with at least half an inch of snow, or where snow is currently falling, will have a Snow Spirit present.

Appearance: Snow Spirits typically manifest as little flurries of snow hanging in the air. There have been reports of manifestations in the form of snowmen wearing battered top hats, smoking corn cob pipes and having features of coal; however, these reports remain questionable.

Eagle's Comments: Snow Spirits are generally fun loving and mischievous. They enjoy the company of humans and have a well-developed sense of play. One of my colleagues reports them as exhibiting a small degree of malice or spitefulness. It should be observed, however, that she has an unusually strong dislike for the winter, and this may be influencing her relationship with the spirit.

Powers: Accident, Concealment, Confusion, Guard, Immunity, Movement.

Transport

Type: Spirit of Man.

Domain: This is the spirit of any vessel or vehicle which is intended to be used as a dwelling while in transit. Suitable examples are cruise ships, submarines and slow passenger trains; campers are not included as they are only intended to be lived in while at rest.

Appearance: A Transportation Spirit will manifest as a small human dressed as part of the vehicle's crew.

Eagle's Comments: These spirits are extremely solicitous and will make an extra effort to assist the summoning shaman. They are also gifted with a good ability to distinguish between objects of technology, especially anything that might be considered normal equipment for their vessel. They are even able to find lost luggage on occasion.

Powers: Accident, Alienation, Concealment, Confusion, Guard, Search.

Special Power: A Transport Spirit may increase the speed of its vessel. The vehicle's speed may be improved by 10% times the force rating of the spirit to a maximum of double.

Tunnel

Type: Spirit of Man.

Domain: A Tunnel Spirit will be present in narrow, manmade, underground structures, such as sewers or subway tunnels.

Appearance: This spirit typically manifests as a small mound of dirt or a puddle of stale water.

Eagle's Comments: "Dreary," "unkempt," and "confining" are the words that spring to mind when describing the impressions generated by these spirits. While not actually reluctant to help, a Tunnel Spirit would prefer to be left alone.

Powers: Accident, Confusion, Fear, Guard, Movement.

DOMAINS

Some students are confused by the concept of domains. So I am going to take a moment to clarify how they operate. It is obviously possible to be physically in two or more domains at the same time. To illustrate—if you are standing on a beach with one foot on the shore (Beach/Island Spirit) and one foot in the water (Lake or Sea Spirit), you are physically in contact with both domains at once. Furthermore, if it began to rain, you would also be in the domain of a Rain Spirit. However, for the purposes of conjuring, none of this matters in the least.

When you conjure a spirit you are reaching out with your mind and soul to the astral realm where the spirit exists. In order to bridge this gap you must decide to which realm you are calling. It is impossible to stretch your consciousness sufficiently to reach two realms at the same time. It is also beyond the powers of a shaman to embrace the different qualities of two realms in a way that would allow for the summoning of a spirit that was of both realms. Please, just take my word for it; I visit the cells and the graves of those who have tried to extend their reach each time I get up the urge to make an attempt.

Another point of confusion for some lies in knowing exactly where certain spirits can be found. To clarify this, I am going to list definitions of the domains for City, Hearth and Field Spirits, and comment on Spirits of Wind in general.

City: All open and/or public areas of a city, town or village are appropriate for summoning a City Spirit. Anything that is paved and that is lacking a roof is part of the city spirit's domain. This includes streets, fairgrounds, airports and stadiums. Since the City Spirit will also appear on interstate highways, I find that I have begun to consider this spirit more as a spirit of "road" than of "city".

Hearth: The Hearth Spirit is found in any building or man-made structure that is private or semiprivate in nature. Specifically, this includes homes, offices and hotels.

Field: Field Spirits dwell in agricultural areas controlled by man, such as farms and hothouses.

Wind: Most Spirits of Wind are associated with a particular metrological phenomena (rain, snow or hail); they may be summoned from any area that is exposed to that

specific weather. Note that, generally, the shaman will physically be in the domain of some other spirit at the same time. This means that the summoner must focus his awareness away from the undesired realm and concentrate upon being in the realm of the Wind Spirit he wishes to summon.

ADDENDUM

I have found through my work with spirits that certain discrepancies exist between material in the current edition of *The Manual of Practical Thaumaturgy* and results obtained in actual practice. These differences are catalogued below for your reference. It is recommended that you test these results yourself, rather than taking the my word for it—or even that of the excellent researchers who compose *The Grimoire*.

City Spirit: Several of my colleagues claim to have successfully conjured City Spirits with the power of Movement. These experiments have generally been conducted on empty stretches of road and have been used for the benefit of land vehicles. This may indicate that the power is only present in some of these spirits or that the power can only

be used to benefit a vehicle. If the later is the case, then I advise caution in invoking this ability while in an area of heavy traffic or with difficult terrain. Remember, Movement only makes you travel faster—it does not improve your ability to react to obstacles.

Storm Spirit: I have personally summoned Storm Spirits which have been capable of causing accidents to occur on wet and slippery terrain. While my results may be explained by other researchers as fortunate coincidences, reliable repetition makes such an explanation unlikely. I have also noted that a Storm Spirit conjured during a nonelectrical storm lacks the power of Electrical Projection as well as that of Fear.

Forest Spirit: Several of my colleagues (as well as myself) have been able to summon a Forest Spirit and command it to exercise the power of Search. .

IMMUNITY

Immunity is a new power that bears a strong resemblance to Guard. It is most commonly found possessed by Water or Wind. A few Spirits of Land are known to exhibit it as well, but there remain no documented cases of a Spirit of Man
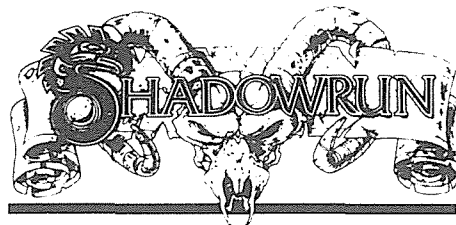
possessing this power. Whereas Guard protects the recipient from accidents within the Spirit's domain, Immunity protects from inevitable sources of harm. For example, a Desert Spirit may use Immunity to protect the shaman from heatstroke or dehydration, while a River Spirit could invoke Immunity to keep a shaman safe from undercurrents and hypothermia. Immunity offers no protection from chance happenings such as falling objects or lightning (although a Rain Spirit could shield you from the inevitable fall of the rain itself). The Spirit is also unable to protect the recipient from unnatural occurrences (e.g., attacks from other nature spirits, being held underwater, etc.). In basic *Shadowrun* the following spirits have the Immunity power: Desert, Lake, River, Sea and Swamp.

Game Information

Name	B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Attacks
Arctic	F+1	F×2	F+1	F	F	F	F	F	FS3
Beach	F+2	(F−1)×2	F−1	F	F	F	F	F	FM3
Cave	F+4	(F−2)×2	F+3	F	F	F	F	F−2	FS3
City	F+3	(F+1)×3	F	F	F	F	F	F+2	(F−1)M2
Desert	F+2	F×2	F+2	F	F	F	F	F+1	(F−2)S3
Field	F	F×2	F+1	F	F	F	F	F	(F−1)M2
Forest	F+3	F×2	F+2	F	F	F	F	F	FM3
Hail	F	(F+3)×3	F−1	F	F	F	F	F+1	(F−1)M2
Hearth	F	(F−1)×2	F−2	F	F	F	F	F−1	(F−1)M2
Jungle	F+3	F×2	F+1	F	F	F	F	F	FM3
Lake	F+1	F×2	F−1	F	F	F	F	F−2	(F−1)M3
Market	F+3	(F+2)×3	F	F	F	F	F	F+2	(F−1)M2
Mist	F−2	(F+2)X3	F−3	F	F	F	F	F+2	(F−3)M1
Mountain	F+5	(F−3)×2	F+5	F	F	F	F	F−2	FS4
Prairie	F+2	(F−1)×2	F+2	F	F	F	F	F	FM3
River	F+1	(F+2)×3	F	F	F	F	F	F+2	FM3
Sea	F+3	F×2	F	F	F	F	F	F−1	FS3
Sky	F−2	(F+3)×4	F−3	F	F	F	F	F+3	(F−2)M2
Snow	F	(F+1)×4	F−2	F	F	F	F	F+1	(F−2)M2
Storm	F−1	(F+3)×4	F−2	F	F	F	F	F+2	(F−2)M2
Swamp	F+2	(F−1)×2	F+1	F	F	F	F	F−2	(F−1)M3
Transport	F+2	(F+2)×3	F+2	F	F	F	F	F+1	(F−1)M2
Tunnel	F+3	F×3	F+2	F	F	F	F	F	(F−1)M2

This chart shows the typical statistics for the manifest forms of all the nature spirits from *Shadowrun* as well as this article. Those spirits that are able to assume a manlike form may substitute their Strength for the number derived from Force as the Power Value in melee combat. Ω

Palace Dungeons

Torture Chamber   Guard Room

Stairs Up

Pit
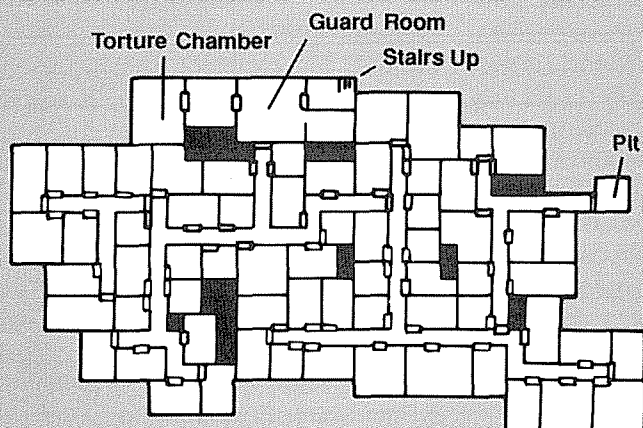
"Imprisoned in Noachis" continued from page 47.

every six hours, and the inmates are fed at the start of the first and third shifts, 12 hours apart.

The feeding is done by one of the prison trustees—an inmate who has been given special privileges in exchange for labor. Such trustees are usually in for a minor offense and are not about to endanger their status by helping an escape attempt. The trustee is accompanied by three guards. One guard checks the identities of the prisoners during feeding to make sure nobody has died or escaped, while the other two guards hang back in case of treachery.

To be fed, the prisoners must appear at the grating, show their faces to the guard and then pass their bowl through the grating. The trustee dumps a ladle-full of foul-smelling, lukewarm slop into the bowl and returns it. The inmates eat with their hands.

Guards: The guards are all soldiers of the city's army, usually men with slightly disabling injuries or those on punishment detail. They are all Trained NPCs, fitting the statistics for stock soldiers. The guards wear doublets and helmets. If the PCs have anything of value, they can attempt to bribe the guards. This requires a successful Formidable Bargaining task roll and can be used only to obtain minor luxuries, such as a light, clean water or new straw. The guards will never do anything that might help prisoners escape—there are worse things than imprisonment awaiting a guard who lets prisoners get away.

The guards are very bored all the time, and only a Difficult

Pit

8 feet

10 feet
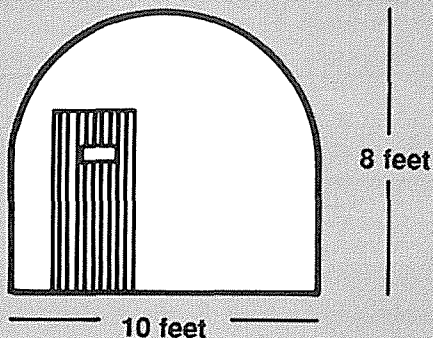
Front View

Shaft

Side View

Tower

Open Windows

Windows sealed on first three floors.

Shaft from Prison
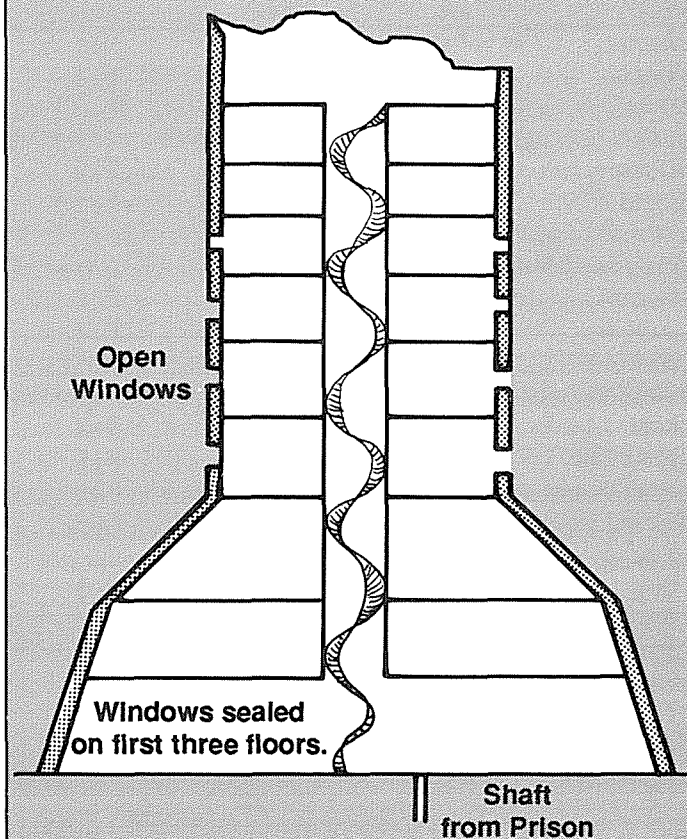
Eloquence task roll is needed to engage them in conversation. They will happily chat about trivial topics and can even help fill the adventurers in on news of the outside world.

Hazards of Imprisonment: More dangers await the prisoners the longer they wait in the pit. The plagues which frequently decimate Martian jails will not affect Earthmen, but the cramped, unhealthy conditions and abysmal food will begin to wear down the PCs. Each week the characters must make a Moderate Endurance task roll. If anyone fails the roll, their Endurance is reduced by 1. If any PC's Endurance reaches 0, he begins losing Strength at a rate of one point per week. Once the character's Strength is gone, he will die. These losses can be made up at a rate of one point per week with good food, fresh air and moderate (but not grueling) exercise. With medical attention, the recovery rate is doubled.

ESCAPE ROUTE

There is only one way out of the cell, and it requires a bit of mental work to find. At mealtime, a PC who makes a Difficult Observation task roll will notice that the guard's torch flutters as if there is a current of air leading into the adventurers' cell. A Formidable Observation roll is required to trace the faint breeze to a small gap between the bricks of the ceiling at the rear of the cell.

Vent: The gap between the bricks can be widened by loosening the bricks around it. This needs a Difficult Strength roll to accomplish. The hole reveals a vertical shaft of stone leading up into blackness. Probing reveals the shaft to be about three feet across. Climbing the shaft requires a Difficult roll of either Agility or Mountaineering. Success means the characters can shinny up the narrow vent. It is difficult, and progress is slow. The shaft is completely unlit and seems to extend infinitely.

Things in the Shaft: The shaft is not devoid of living things. There are small harmless insects crawling around, and the stone walls are covered with more lichen and moss. A number of large spiders have spun webs spanning the shaft. The spiders are aggressive and will bite the first PC to encounter the webs, doing one point of damage. The bitten PC must make a Difficult Agility task roll to avoid slipping and falling when bitten. If the lead PC does fall, he will land on the second PC, who must make a Formidable Strength roll to avoid falling. If this roll fails, the entire party will start tumbling down.

To recover from such a fall requires a Difficult Agility roll, and the party must make the rolls in order from top to bottom—if any character fails the roll, then everyone below him will automatically fail. Anyone unable to recover will fall back down to the cell, suffering 1D6 wounds.

PRISONER IN THE TOWER

After what feels like an hour of climbing, the PCs will reach the top of the shaft, which is blocked by a stone grating. It requires a Moderate Strength task to open the grating.

Tower: The grating opens into the base of a huge ruined tower. The tower has an airshaft running down the center and a spiral staircase following the edges of the shaft. The top of the tower is gone, knocked off in some ancient cloudship battle. The building still looms up about 100 feet, and nine floors remain intact. There are no doors in the tower—all the entrances have been carefully bricked up, and the windows on the bottom three floors have also been sealed. The workmanship is recent.

Prince Khaizan

Since acceding to the throne by treachery, Khaizan has divided his time between utter debauchery and brutal suppression of any opposition. By imprisoning Terrans, he is giving his own ego an enormous boost, as well as impressing others with his power.

Motives: Ruthless, Sadistic.

Appearance: Khaizan is a middle-aged Martian, plump and dissolute. He dresses in incredibly opulent robes that are usually stained and dirty. His beady eyes dart about constantly, missing nothing.

Attribute		Skills
Str:	4	Fisticuffs 3; Throwing 2; Close Combat 2 (edged)
Agl:	2	Stealth 1, Marksmanship 1 (bow)
End:	3	Wilderness Travel 2 (mapping) 2
Int:	5	Observation 4, Gunnery 2 (muzzle-loading)
Chr:	1	Linguistics 3 (Oenotrian, Koline, Bootnai)
Soc:	6	Riding 5 (gashant), Leadership 2

Prince Oortai

Oortai was a fairly good ruler, but had one serious flaw: He was more interested in studying the artifacts and inscriptions of the ancient Canal Builders than in protecting himself against plotters. His imprisonment has changed him somewhat, for now he burns with the desire to revenge himself upon Khaizan. That hatred is what has sustaine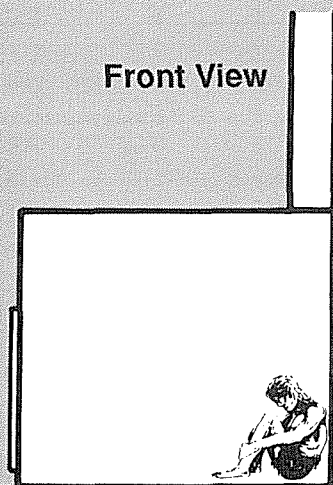d him during his years of solitary confinement. Oortai is determined to expose Khaizan's treachery, even if it costs his own life.

Motives: Knowledge, Hatred.

Appearance: Prince Oortai is a very old and incredibly thin Martian, suffering from exposure and malnutrition. He wears old and tattered state robes, along with the hides of small animals crudely sewn together.

Attribute		Skills
Str:	1	Close Combat 1 (edged)
Agl:	2	Stealth 1
End:	3	Wilderness Travel 2 (foraging)
Int:	5	Observation 4, Engineering 2 (earthworks), Science 4 (archaeology)
Chr:	4	Eloquence 3, Linguistics 4 (Koline, Oenotrian, Bootnai, Khallan)
Soc:	6	Riding 5 (gashant), Leadership 4, Medicine 2

Prince Oortai: On the fourth floor the PCs will discover an old, blind Martian. He is dressed in the tattered remnants of ornate robes and is painfully emaciated. The old Martian will at first be terrified of the PCs, but if they speak to him calmly and soothingly, he will recover.

The old Martian is in fact Prince Oortai, the former ruler of Noachis. Everyone believes him to have died in a fire in the palace 10 (Martian) years ago. In fact, he will explain, the fire was a ruse to conceal the fact that Khaizan had kidnapped

Oortai and confined him at Khaizan's country house outside the city. Once Khaizan was confirmed as the ruler of Noachis, he had Oortai blinded and sealed into the tower to die. (An old Martian tradition holds that anyone who kills a prince will die within a year.)

Oortai survived by trapping rainwater, catching the small birds that live in the upper floors of the tower, and eating the vines and mosses growing between the stones of the tower. He is suffering from malnutrition and is incredibly emaciated, but he is still alive.

Because he was put in the tower in 1869, Oortai knows nothing of human beings. He will at first think the adventurers are Martian children. But he is still very sane, and with the PCs' help, he is determined to escape.

ESCAPE FROM THE TOWER

From the windows on the fourth floor, the PCs can see that the tower is one of several ruins that stand on the grounds of the royal palace compound. The compound is surrounded by a high stone wall patrolled by guards, and there are numerous servants, bureaucrats and soldiers roaming about the grounds. At night the compound is mostly deserted, but sentries are posted on the wall.

Getting Down: The walls of the tower slope outward, with wide gaps between the huge stones of which they are constructed. It requires only a Moderate Mountaineering or a Difficult Agility task roll to climb down the walls. A character of Strength 4 or greater can carry Oortai down with no problem; anyone of lesser Strength must increase the difficulty of the climbing task by one level in order to carry the prince down. Anyone failing the climbing task rolls will tumble down the side of the tower, suffering 1D6 wounds.

There is a 1 in 6 chance that the PCs will be detected as they climb down the tower walls—this will result in their being met at the bottom of the tower by a party of 12 guards. Otherwise, they will reach the ground undetected and can move about the grounds.

THE TRUE PRINCE

Oortai has no intention of escaping from the palace; he will resist if the PCs try to force him to accompany them. Oortai has only one goal—to enter the throne room and confront his nephew. If stopped by guards, either Oortai or the PCs must accomplish a Formidable Eloquence task roll to convince them that the old man is in fact the rightful prince, or must subdue the guards in combat. There will be at least two sets of guards to get past to reach the throne room.

A state function is going on in the throne room, and all of the great nobles of Noachis are present. Everyone is wearing gorgeous regalia, and Khaizan presides over it all from his throne. If Oortai reaches the throne room, Khaizan will first react with superstitious terror at the sight. Hysterically, he will order the guards to slay the old man. Several of the nobles will recognize Oortai, and shocked murmuring will fill the hall. A Difficult Eloquence task roll by the PCs will be needed to convince the assembled nobles of Noachis that Oortai is their true ruler. Khaizan will then demand that the issue be settled by the ancient test of combat. Because Oortai is blind, one of the adventurers will have to fight in his place.

Khaizan will fight with a saber, and an old nobleman will donate a sword to whichever PC is acting as Oortai's champion. The outcome of the battle will determine the fate of the characters: If Oortai's champion wins, then Khaizan will be deposed and Oortai restored. The PCs will be treated regally and released with many valuable gifts. If Khaizan wins, he will order everyone executed. Ω

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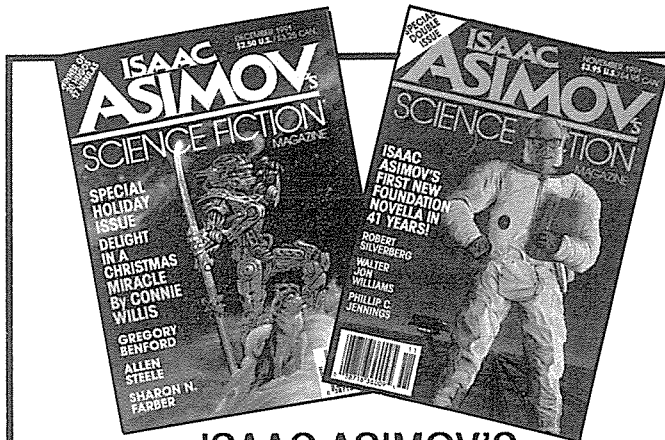
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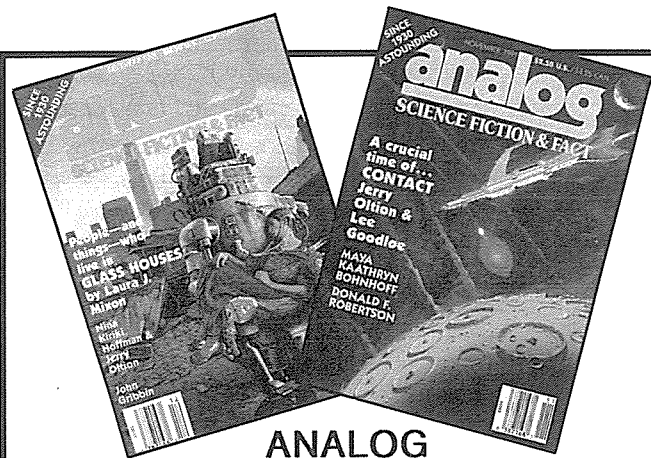
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*T*he PCs' ship has been sent to the Eltanin system to take on an envoy to begin negotiations about Eltanin joining the Federation. Because of the complex political situation on Eltanin V, Starfleet Command has temporarily assigned Commander Zubyla, an expert on the Eltanins, to the ship.

ELTANIN SYSTEM

The ship's computer holds all the necessary data about the Eltanin System and the inhabited planet Eltanin V. Commander Zubyla can provide the PCs with information about Eltanin society and politics.

System: The Eltanin System has 15 planets, eight of which are gas giants. Of the remaining seven, two are class M, Eltanin V and Eltanin VII. Eltanin V is home to the Eltanin civilization; a colonization program over the past few decades has given Eltanin VII a population of nearly a million.

Eltanin V: Eltanin V is an earthlike planet; its surface is 80% ocean, and the climate is warm. Thee are no large landmasses, but a dozen island continents are scattered across the surface. The largest of these covers the south polar region. The local animal life is unusual; vertebrates are unknown on Eltanin V. The largest creatures are arthropods and molluscs, some of which achieve enormous size.

The planet produces a variety of resources, including hydrocarbons, pharmaceuticals and adamantium ore. In addition, the planet has industries manufacturing a wide variety of products.

Inhabitants: The intelligent inhabitants are definitely not native, but must have arrived on Eltanin V at some point in the distant past (presumably transplanted by an ancient alien race such as the Preservers). The Eltanins are completely human; genetic analysis indicates that they diverged from Terran humanity within the last million years. They tend to be above average in height, with the full range of Earth human skin

ELTANIN
the Avenger

and hair pigments.

Civilization: Eltanin V has over three billion inhabitants, with a technology nearing Federation levels in the physical sciences, but lagging in other areas (Civilization code 7-986652). The society is similar to mainstream Federation culture—rationalistic, technological, bureaucratized. One noteworthy element is the strong cultural identity retained by the various regions of the planet despite a unified government and mass media. Regional costume, dialect and customs are strongly followed, especially in the northern continents. It is suspected that this strong regionalism is in reaction to the political situation.

Politics: The planet Eltanin V is dominated by the inhabitants of the southern continent. During the past centuries they have gradually extended their control over the entire planet through war and diplomacy. Despite the fact that all parts of the planet are now represented more or less equally in the planetary council, there is still a great deal of resentment of the southern domination, and this is one of the chief questions that must be resolved before Eltanin joins the Federation.

The Eltanin government is divided along similar lines. A hard-line conservative faction of southerners oppose joining the Federation, preferring to continue expansion to other stars. It is reported that the Klingons have encouraged this, in the hope of creating another trouble spot along the Federation's border. The moderates, currently in the majority, urge sharing power with the rest of the planet and cooperation with other races. A few radical organizations in the northern regions desire independence, and have occasionally mounted terrorist attacks on government officials and facilities.

Diplomacy: Eltanin V is an independent spacefaring power, with recognized sovereignty over the Eltanin system and unchallenged claims to three neighboring star systems devoid of life. Contact with the Klingon Empire has been extensive, and there is a great deal of trade with the Orions. Relations with the Federation were initially poor, due to a dispute over trade policies. On at least two occasions the Federation sent warships to patrol the border zone because of high tensions. Recently,

however, Eltanin has made friendly overtures toward the Federation, and this diplomatic mission is the culmination of a series of agreements.

ARRIVAL AT ELTANIN

The players' vessel will be met at the edge of the Eltanin system by a squadron of 10 Eltanin frigates. The squadron commander, Fisopu Bycame, will welcome the Federation vessel and offer to escort the PCs' ship to Eltanin V. The frigates have minimal shields up and no weapons powered.

Eltanin Frigates: Each frigate masses 10,000 tons, with one warp engine generating nine power factors, and an impulse engine generating one. The ship has two Klingon KD-1 disruptors mounted forward (0-4 power points, firing chart nine), and has shields of five points per hexside, costing one power point per shield point. Each frigate has a crew of 20 and is equipped with two transporters and a shuttle. The ships have four Superstructure points; they use turn stress chart G/E and ship damage chart A.

As they enter the Eltanin system, the PCs may notice a number of Klingon merchant vessels in orbit around Eltanin V. Scans of the escorting frigates will also reveal the their weapons and shields are of Klingon design. Zubyla will only point these things out of the PCs do not notice and will openly speculate that perhaps the Eltanin government has secretly allied with the Klingon Empire.

HARDLINE ATTACK

The hardline conservative faction has managed to put a supporter in command of a single frigate in the escorting squadron. The ship will attack without warning just as the PCs' ship enters orbit around Eltanin V. The other ships in the squadron are taken by surprise and will not react for 1-5 turns (roll for each ship). They will assist the Federation vessel against the renegades.

Zubyla will react strongly to the attack. "It's a trap! They've lured us here to destroy us! We've got to hit them with everything we've got right away! I know where the command center is—we can neutralize their whole fleet." He will urge an immediate, all-out counterattack against the Eltanin fleet and their command center on the southern con-

tinent. (If the PCs do this, then they have failed in their mission. The ambassador will not be sent, and Eltanin V will be plunged into civil war as the southern hardliners and the rebels on the northern continents struggle for control.)

The battle should be resolved fairly quickly, as the frigate cannot stand up to a Federation starship and the rest of the Eltanin squadron. Good Starfleet officers should try to find a way of immobilizing the frigate without injuring the crew.

AT THE RECEPTION

Captain's Log: Supplemental. The Eltanin government has extended its fullest apologies for the attack by a renegade officer. Those responsible will be tried for their crimes. I and my senior staff have been invited to a reception in our honor at the Eltanin capital. The government has assured me that there will be no security risk.

Once the hardline attack is dealt with successfully, the Eltanin government will offer profuse apologies for the actions of the "terrorists." A reception has been planned to welcome the Federation vessel and send off the ambassador. The chief speaker of the planetary council, Gotury Cadeni, will personally assure the Federation commander that there is no security risk. Zubyla will accompany the captain and his officers to the affair.

During the reception, Zubyla disappears from the group inconspicuously while Cadeni is giving his welcoming speech. If the PCs search, they will be unable to find him, but a call to the ship will reveal that he beamed up a few minutes before, claiming a medical problem.

A short time later, there is an explosion outside. Starfleet personnel will recognize the sound as that of a ship's phaser being used for surface bombardment. A broadcast over all channels is heard a moment later: "The southern tyranny is at an end! Heviso
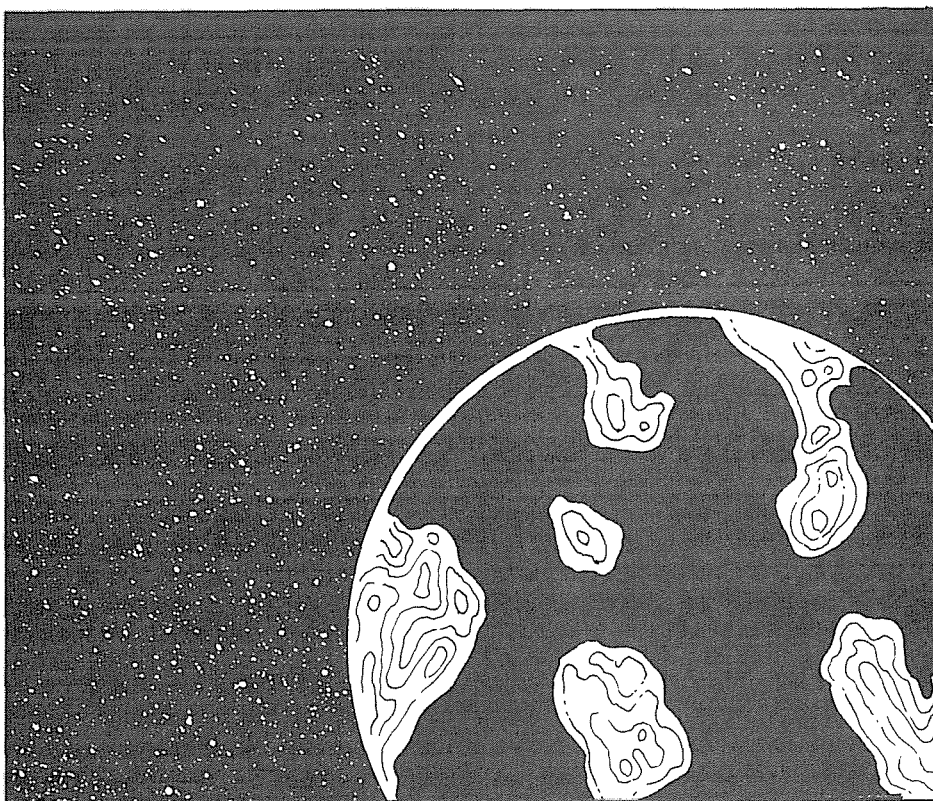
Zubyla will be avenged!" The PCs will recognize the voice as Zubyla. All calls to the ship go unanswered.

ZUBYLA TAKES CONTROL

Upon returning to the ship, Zubyla will go directly to the computer core on deck eight and seize control of the ship from there. PCs on board the ship will discover what is happening when the bridge controls go dead. Zubyla has taken control of the ship's computer and has disabled all other command functions. The officers on board can only watch helplessly as their ship attacks the planet surface.

Naturally, the Eltanin squadron will not ignore what is happening. When they can get no reply to their messages, they will attack the ship, surrounding it and battering at the shields with the disruptors.

Zubyla can operate only one control panel per turn—so if he is adjusting power allocation, the ship cannot steer or fire weapons. If the referee does not wish to go into detail, simple allow Zubyla to move and fire every other turn. He will fire on the Eltanin ships half the time and on the capitol half the time. Each shot at the capitol city destroys several city blocks, causing hundreds of casualties.

GETTING BACK TO THE SHIP

Undoubtedly the PCs on the surface will want to return to their ship. Transporting is impossible with the shields up, but the PCs can borrow a shuttlecraft from the Eltanins. Eltanin shuttles are of Klingon make, with a crew of one, space for six passengers, and a top speed of warp 0.83.

Zubyla will not attack a shuttle, as he is too busy fending off the Eltanin vessels and bombarding the capitol. Getting through the ship's shields in a shuttle requires a successful Shuttlecraft Pilot skill roll, and then another roll is needed to reach the hangar deck and dock while the starship is in combat.

Opening the doors requires an Electronics Tech roll. If the roll fails, the doors will not open, and Zubyla will be alerted to what is going on. He will spend a turn using the ship's tractor beam to fling the shuttle away. A successful Shuttle Pilot roll will be needed to avoid crashing into the planet.

Alternatively, PCs aboard a shuttle can attempt to force entry to the ship through other openings in the hull. Openings suitable for this purpose include the photon torpedo bank on deck three, the physics lab on deck three, the phaser banks on decks five and 11, and the main tractor beam assembly on deck 24. Getting one of these

ports to open will require an Electronics Tech roll and will automatically alert Zubyla. Characters attempting to get in this way must wear vacuum suits to cross from the shuttle to the ship.

REGAINING CONTROL

Zubyla has barricaded himself in the computer core on deck eight and has disabled all other control centers. (Basically, he has told the computer to ignore command from anyone but himself.) The turbolifts and transporters are shut down, and doors do not open without an Electronics Tech roll. The ship can receive messages, but cannot transmit.

If a PC officer is on board, he can direct efforts to regain control. If not, the crew will regain access to most regions of the ship, opening doors and using ladders to go from deck to deck. The computer center, weapons and shuttlecraft bay remain sealed off, however.

Disabling the Weapons: It may be possible to disable the ship's weaponry by physically disconnecting the power feeds to the phaser and torpedoes. This would prevent further damage being done to the Eltanins. Disconnecting the weapons requires a Ship's Weaponry tech roll for each individual weapon.

If the weapons are disabled, Zubyla will attempt to crash the ship into the Eltanin capitol. The PCs may be able to talk him out of it, or they may have to prevent it. It will take a few minutes for Zubyla to override the navigational safeties—the computer will not ordinarily allow the ship to ram a planet.

Getting to Zubyla: The real problem is getting Zubyla out of the computer core without causing any damage to the machinery. He has physically disabled the doors to the computer cores on decks seven and eight, and has instructed the computer to depressurize the corridor surrounding the computer core on deck eight. The doors are armored against phaser attack and can absorb 1000 points of damage (the walls of the computer room are similarly armored). A phaser set on disintegrate is assumed to do 200 points of damage.

None of the doors leading into the airless corridor will open (automatic safety locks prevent it). It requires a successful Electronics Tech roll to override the safety locks. The result will be a hurricane gale into the corridor as the computer tries to keep the corridor depressurized while simultaneously

maintaining life support in the rest of the ship. Anyone entering the corridor will need a vacuum suit.

Zubyla is armed with a phaser II pistol. He will try to hold out as long as he can to continue his vendetta against the Eltanins, but will try not to injure any Starfleet personnel, using his phaser on stun as much as possible.

AFTER AWARDS

If Zubyla is defeated, the PCs will have the gratitude of the Eltanin government. Ambassador Huvysa Defipo will come aboard with his entourage for the trip back to the Federation, and the PCs will be commended for resolving a difficult situation. Commander Zubyla will be sent to a Starfleet hospital for psychiatric rehabilitation.

If Zubyla crashes the ship into the planet, surviving PCs will be court-martialed for allowing it to happen. The hardliners will take power on Eltanin, and the planet will become a Klingon ally. (The referee may wish to avert such a tragic ending by having another starship arrive at the last minute to drag the PCs' ship away from Eltanin with a tractor beam.)

COMMANDER DERINO ZUBYLA

STR 50, END 52, INT 80, DEX 75, CHA 66, LUC 54, PSI 04.
Marksmanship (Modern) : 61
Personal Combat (Unarmed): 31
Significant Skills:
Administration: 40
Communications Systems Tech: 30
Computer Operation: 92
Computer Tech: 52
Federation Law: 61
Languages: Eltanin 41, Klingonaase 30, Orion 32
Leadership: 40
Negotiation/ Diplomacy: 71
Psychology (Eltanin): 21
Racial Culture/ History (Eltanin): 22
Starship Combat Tactics: 42
Starship Communication Procedures: 40
Starship Helm Op: 41

Commander Zubyla is a tall, slender man, 37 standard years old. His father, Heviso Zubyla, was a rebel leader who was executed by the southern government.

Derino was just a child at the time, and he and his mother escaped to the Federation colony world Tania Borealis IX.

Zubyla is a Starfleet diplomacy specialist and has played an important part in establishing relations with several other species. He is also an extremely gifted computer programmer, and has written several lucrative commercial software products. He has served aboard several starships, but was removed from his position as second officer aboard the U.S.S. Long March after suffering severe mental stress in a battle with Orion pirates. Zubyla is now on detached duty, assigned to the Federation diplomatic service.

Zubyla will not bring up the fact that his is an Eltanin, but will admit to it if asked. His personal and family histories are available from his Starfleet record. He is careful not to let his fanatical hatred of the southern government show. Ω

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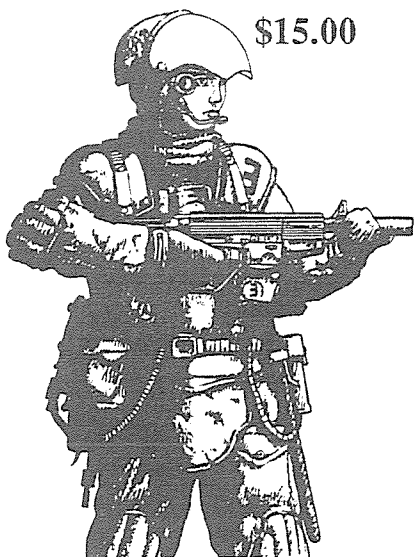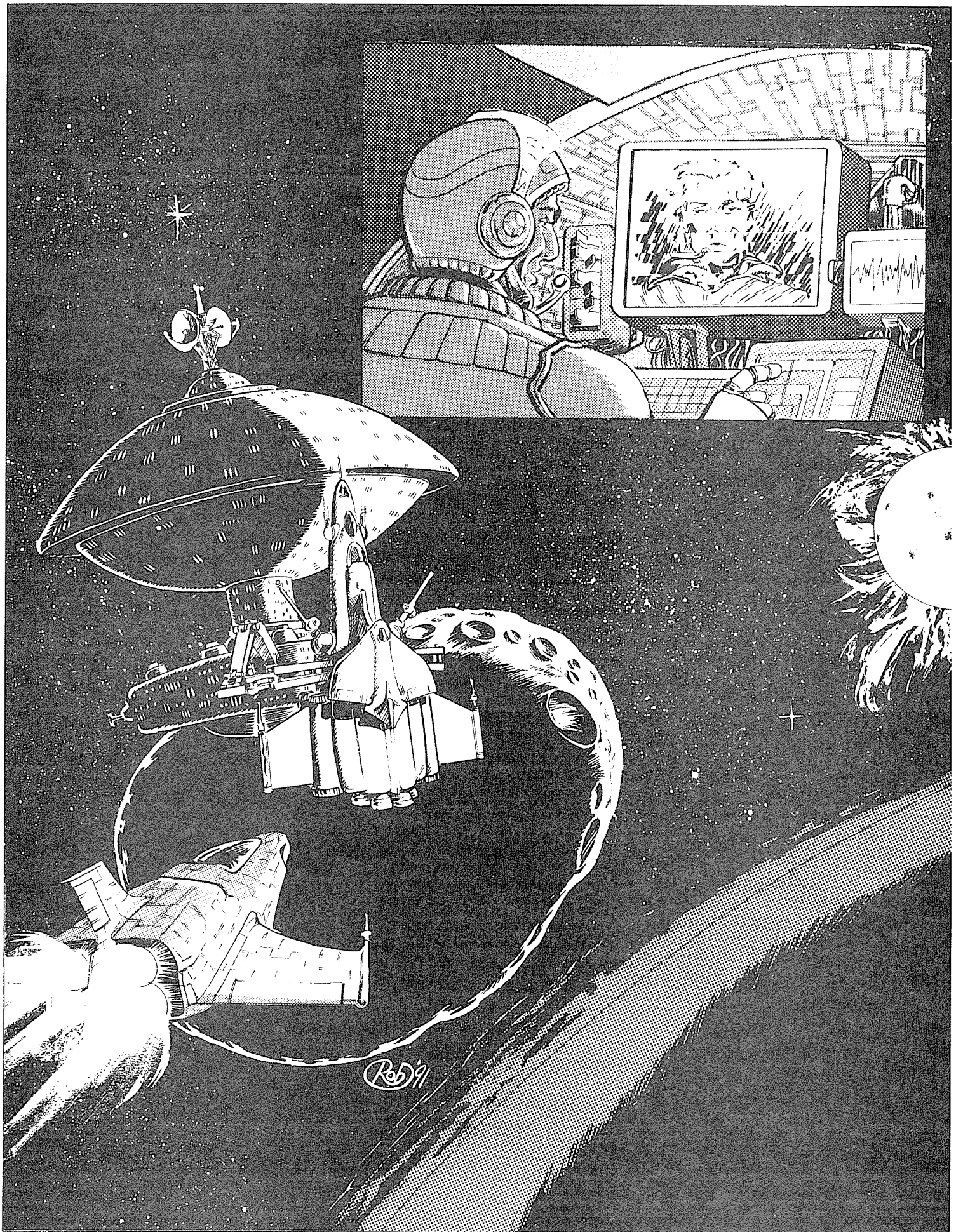
SHADOW of the Sun

Facts and Myths Concerning Interplanetary Communications

By Marcus L. Rowland

It's February 1, and you're stuck at Phobos spaceport with a faulty logic module in your fusion converter control system. The module is only worth 1000 Cr—but the drives were built on Venus, and the part isn't stocked at the port and can't be found anywhere on or around Mars.

If you were paranoid, you might start to think RAM wanted to delay you for some reason.

While you're on Phobos, the port charges 200 Cr a day plus lots of service fees, and there are time penalties on your contract to haul synthetic gems to Pallas. If you can't pay the next installment on your ship the bank will repossess. Come to think of it, RAM owns the bank....

Things look desperate, but there's an answer. Currently it takes a week for a fast freighter to travel from Venus to Mars, and the port shipping office computer says one is scheduled to leave Venus in about two hours. You can afford another week on Phobos. It takes about 17 minutes to get a message across, leaving roughly an hour and three quarters to find and load the part—ample time if you send the signal quickly.

So why are you sweating?

*T*he shortest distance between two points isn't always a straight line. If you try to work out the time taken by an interplanetary message, the procedure looks simple—just lay a ruler on a chart and read off the time lag. There's just one tiny problem—that big orange and yellow thing in the middle of the chart, commonly known as the Sun.

The Sun blocks all known forms of interplanetary signal. Usually this isn't too much of a problem; with four planets in the inner system it's possible to route a message via a planet that isn't blocked by the Sun. The delay isn't usually serious. The operative word here is *usually*.

Set up the interplanetary chart for February 2456 (all markers one space counterclockwise of their starting positions) and you'll notice something interesting. Venus and Earth are on the opposite side of the Sun from Mars, and both are in the Sun's electromagnetic "shadow" as seen from Mars. It should still be possible to relay messages via Mercury, and the extra stage would only add a minute to the total transmission time. Unfortunately Mercury is very close to the Sun; the signal will be subject to a lot of interference. To make matters worse, the beam would also have to travel well inside Mercury's orbit, deep enough into the Sun's gravity field to add relativistic problems to the normal aiming difficulties. Although signals are coded to prevent errors, there's a significant chance that they won't be received correctly on Mercury. If there's a Solar flare ,the chance drops to near-zero, as gas clouds and intense magnetic fields can also distort the path of the beam.

Let's stay with the disabled spaceship for a little longer and assume that the Sun is doing its usual job of fouling up signals, ruling out Mercury as a relay station. Is there any other way of getting a message across?

RAM's subsidiaries and other communications companies have often tried to establish deep-space relay stations, usually in the Trojan points of a planet's orbit. In theory, they would allow a message to be relayed when the planet was blocked by the Sun. In practice, relays are valuable, extremely vulnerable and isolated. Years of war and piracy mean that very few work. Your chances of finding one where and when you want it are slim to nonexistent. This doesn't apply to communications satellites in normal planetary orbits; there are lots of them, and they are usually protected by the local fleet or ground-based defense systems.

Relay via Vesta seems the best bet. Unfortunately that pushes up the transmission time dramatically; 26 minutes from Mars to Vesta, then another 17 minutes from Vesta to Venus—total time, 43 minutes. Using any other asteroid as a relay makes the delay even worse.

All this assumes that signal will get through by the shortest practical route whenever possible. Since RAM owns most communication systems, that shouldn't be taken for granted. To explain why, it's necessary to look at the technology of interplanetary signalling in more detail.

TECHNOLOGY OF INTERPLANETARY SIGNALLING

An interplanetary videophone message begins life as a normal mixture of video and speech. The videophone circuits convert the signal to digital form and compress it to approximately 0.1% of its original size, using advanced fractal techniques which are beyond the scope of this article. Circuits in the receiving system expand the data to its original form. Compression and expansion are so fast that they are rarely noticeable in a local call; at worst they sometimes show up as a ripple of static or a slightly fuzzy patch in the image. Many users add some form of scrambling to protect confidentiality, but real secrecy is well-nigh impossible; a digital personality can crack the toughest security in minutes.

For local messages no further compression is needed. The Earth-Moon and Mars-Phobos-Deimos communications links are the only interplanetary networks that routinely transmit data in this primary compressed form because the distances are short enough for real-time conversations. All others compress signals again, using much more powerful techniques, to pack the maximum number of messages into the laser link. A 10-minute videophone message can be compressed into a one-second data "packet" before it's transmitted. Processing takes several seconds, but that's a trivial delay compared to the time lag of interplanetary communications. Most messages are sent as single packets; very long signals may be split into several packets, but that's comparatively rare. The packets are relayed to the nearest communications satellite, then on into deep space.

Each compressed data packet consists of a code header, the message itself, and a signal block containing data used to verify that the signal has been received correctly. Packets are usually repeated five or 10 times to guarantee data integrity, but there's unfortunately still a small chance that all the packets will be lost or garbled enough to render the message meaningless.

The code header usually contains the following information:

1. Packet serial number (used to ensure that no messages are lost).

2. Main destination (e.g., Venus).

3. Routing information (e.g., via Mercury).

4. Local destination ID (e.g., New Elysium Spaceport Control).

5. Type of signal (e.g., videophone).

6. Coding details (e.g., length of signal).

7. Reserved data space (information for the owners of the network, e.g., billing data).

In theory, all this information could be packed into a few bytes; in practice, the code header is kept large enough to cope with the most complex signals and routines used in the network, and the minimum charge for a call is based on the cost of transmitting a standard header and a few seconds of video. It's notable that the headers used by RAM subsidiaries are twice as large as those used by other companies; RAM justifies this (and charges accordingly) as a consequence of the size of its network, but at least 90% of the extra capacity seems to be reserved data space. It's also notable that a small percentage of non-RAM customers encounter peculiar difficulties; messages that are mysteriously garbled or relayed via two or three more planets than would appear to be necessary. There are many suspicions about the uses RAM finds for data packets, but little firm evidence.

Although every signal is computer-manipulated, that doesn't mean RAM can monitor every one of the hundreds of thousands of signals passing through its network at any given moment. That would tie up every computer RAM owns. RAM probably studies a small percentage of randomly selected messages (and usually finds nothing interesting) and monitors selected targets continuously. Unfortunately, computer technology is developing more rapidly than the growth of interplanetary communications, so this may not always be true; it wouldn't take a huge technical advance to allow continuous monitoring of (for example) 10% of all messages, or all the messages to and from a given planet.

RAM isn't the only organization with interplanetary data packet facilities. Most planetary embassies have their own systems; the Belt has its own data network base on Ceres; and the Mercurians and Ishtarians operate smaller commercial systems. There are also a few independent corporations, though most are under continual pressure from RAM. NEO undoubtedly has its own network linking major bases, but no details are available. There are probably illicit links between NEO's system and commercial networks (for example, a call apparently directed to a local videophone will be recorded then relayed to NEO's packet transmitter).

Spaceship Communications Equipment: Another way of avoiding the normal interplanetary networks is to use spaceship communications equipment. Very few spaceships carry the equipment needed for data packet signalling; only battlers are stable enough for accurate aiming of such tight beams in flight. The standard shipboard system is a broad-beam laser transmitter/receiver, sending primary compressed

signals in real time. Provided that the beam is aimed correctly, the receiver has time to pick up the signal and lock in on it, even if the receiving antenna isn't initially pointed in exactly the right direction.

There are several drawbacks. This isn't a secure system. Also, the message is long and is transmitted on a broad beam, so it is easy to intercept if you know the frequency and roughly where the signal is coming from. The transmitters need a lot of power; at least 10 times as much as the narrow-beam packet system, and for much longer periods. Transmitting signals back to a spaceship is usually very difficult; its position must be known to within a few kilometers to stand any chance of making contact. Messages sent from a ship to a commercial videophone must enter the commercial network at some point; this means using either an illegal station tied into the network or one of the network relay stations. Most commercial facilities are equipped to receive primary compressed signals but charge much more than their normal rates to transmit them.

Spaceship transmitters are extremely directional; angular changes and Doppler effects in their signals can be analyzed to reveal a lot of information about the position and course of a ship.

ELECTROMAGNETIC SHADOW

The Sun is surrounded by clouds of ionized particles, gas and strong magnetic fields. Near the Sun the curvature of space is distorted by gravity—this effect isn't noticeable in everyday life, but is enough to swing laser beams slightly off course.

Without tampering, packet data signals in the commercial communications network have a 99% chance of reaching their destination receiver—the odd 1% suffer problems because of computer glitches, misdialing, and other mechanical or human errors. Each packet has a serial number, and if it doesn't reach its destination, the receiving system will eventually discover that it is missing. If a data packet was sent from Mars to Mercury and didn't arrive safely, it would take approximately 30 minutes to notice the error, send a signal to Mars asking for a repeat, and send and receive the message. Natu-

rally, this time is greatly increased if one or another of the intermediate messages also goes astray.

Use the system map and ruler to plot the course of a signal. Signals should be plotted from the exact center of the planet (the month mark on the orbital track) if they are sent from a planet or an orbital communications satellite.

Signals cannot pass through the sun—an alternate route must be used. Signals passing through the corona (the yellow "flame" region around the Sun) have a 20% chance of getting through safely.

Signals passing inside the orbit of Mercury have a 50% chance of getting through safely.

These chances are reduced by 10% for broad-beam primary compressed signals; additionally, sending such a signal at interplanetary distances always requires a skill roll. There is an additional 10% reduction on all messages throughout the inner system if there is a Solar flare.

COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS

Commercial networks won't try to send a direct signal inside Mercury's orbit; they'll always try an indirect route to bypass the Sun. If there is a genuine emergency and the signal needn't actually pass through the Sun, it's possible to beat the odds by sending a message directly and repeating it several hundred times at different laser frequencies. This capability isn't advertised because it ties up lasers and computers for much longer than a normal message.

RAM has attempted to take advantage of relay delays and this unadvertised capacity to manipulate stock markets on Mercury and Venus; fortunately the plot was discovered. The market rules on these planets now stipulate a three-hour delay in all stock transactions. Ironically, the Martian stock markets still allow fast stock transactions; RAM uses this capability to drive independent traders out of business.

RAM military signal traffic uses multiple data packets whenever possible for security and reliability. At least one battler per fleet (usually the flagship) is equipped with a data packet system; other ships in the fleet use short-range laser links to communicate with the

flagship, reserving their long-range broad-beam transmitters for emergencies.

This reliance on a master communications ship is a potential weakness, and players should be encouraged to think of ways to exploit it.

NEO high command is aware of the pitfalls of the commercial networks, but uses them for low level code messages where there is no reason to expect interception. For example, an order for 1000 kilos of ore might actually be a coded message ordering an act of sabotage. It's advisable to avoid anything that might arouse suspicion and to keep known NEO operatives off the videophone.

NEO's own network is limited to a few data packet transmitters in the inner system, some broad-beam transmitters for contacting ships and a lot of illicit links to other people's networks. On the whole, it works reasonably well. NEO routinely uses the multiple-message technique to keep delays to a minimum; the NEO network doesn't suffer the economic constraints of commercial systems.

RESERVED DATA SPACE

RAM can use data packet headers for many clandestine purposes. Each can contain up to five special instructions, in addition to normal billing data. Here are a few examples:

"Copy this message to _____" (usually to RAM HQ on Mars).

"Identify the recipient" (to the local RAM network manager).

"Kill the recipient."

"Delay this message by _____ minutes."

"Recipient videophone must be monitored."

"Message is linked to NEO movement."

"RUSH! Use multiple data packets if necessary."

Alternatively, the packet header can contain a computer virus. The virus

programs the receiving videophone to transmit sound continually, allowing RAM to eavesdrop on all conversations in its vicinity.

There is no reason why any data network organization shouldn't have similar capabilities, though probably in a less sophisticated and formidable form.

SHIP COMMUNICATIONS

The rules governing communications are listed in the *Characters and Combat* book. Some optional rules follow.

● Long-range beamed messages can only be sent during course changes if a successful Programming roll is made to give the computer the necessary instructions.

● The location, speed and course of any ship transmitting such a message can be found on a successful Programming roll.

● The location and course of any ship transmitting such a message can be concealed on a successful Cryptography roll.

If a ground station is trying to locate a ship and the ship's communications operator is trying to conceal it, make repeated skill rolls until one succeeds and the other fails. If the ship's operator is successful, the ship remains concealed. If the ground operator succeeds, the ship is located. If both fail or both succeed, the ship remains hidden.

Comm Station Zebra

NEO learns that RAM has placed a new communications station at Mercury's Trojan points. The plans show it as bigger and more heavily armed than any previous station, and it seems to have a lot of computer capacity—much more than should be needed for a relay station. For some reason, the Mercurian government isn't objecting.

NEO has decided to upset RAM by hijacking the station. Buck Rogers and Wilma Deering will infiltrate the next supply shuttle to the station, then sabotage its defense computer and let a NEO assault team aboard.

Meanwhile, the adventurers are assigned to a secondary mission—to find out why the Mercurian government

hasn't objected to the Martian move. They have a week before the assault on the station.

Plot: RAM agents have seized control of one of the Mariposa satellites orbiting Mercury, and RAM is using the threat of vaporization to blackmail the Mercurian government into silence. The station is a fake—a battler with dummy antennae. The whole operation is aimed at NEO, and the plans have been leaked deliberately via a RAM double-agent. When Rogers and Deering board, they will be captured and drugged to force them to send an "all clear" message to the assault ship. The ship will be vaporized by the Mariposa's power beam. RAM then intends to stage a show trial before a System Alliance puppet court, framing Buck and Wilma as terrorists who captured the Mariposa and destroyed "an unidentified ship."

As the PCs investigate, they'll find that the Mercurian police also seem to be paying a lot of attention to the local RAM HQ, while RAM agents prepare subtle traps for NEO operatives. Ideally, the team should gradually learn the truth and find the ground station from which the Mariposa is controlled. The adventure may end with the team leading or joining a police raid on the RAM control bunker and vaporizing the fake station just in time to stop Buck and Wilma from entering the trap.

Here Is The News

Here is the news,
Coming to you every hour on the hour,
The weather's fine,
But there may be a meteor shower....
Electric Light Orchestra—Time

The PCs are not NEO operatives; they are innocent spacecrew, currently spending a week on Ceres while their ship is in dock for minor repairs. They are contacted by Tamiko Minemata, anchor-person of the Astronews channel, one of four new services based in the Ceres Co-op.

Astronews has an unusual problem—news bulletins from the inner system are arriving roughly an hour later than those sent to rival news services. A few weeks ago, Astronews ran a searing

exposé of RAM activities on Earth, and she suspects that RAM is deliberately delaying messages in an attempt to close down the service. She heard that the PCs have come up against RAM's goons in the past and might be interested in taking them on again.

Plot: For once, RAM is more or less blameless. Fergus Gruneruden of the rival NEWSCeres network learned about the data packet system while researching a story and realized that it might be possible to subvert the system to sabotage his rivals. He bribed a RAM technician to send a message to Astronews with a code header that means, "All messages sent to this data address must be diverted via Pallas until further notice."

Gruneruden doesn't want to use the same technique on the other two services because it would be too obvious. Instead he has faked documents identifying CBC, the Ceres Broadcasting Corporation, as a NEO-backed organization—he hopes RAM will use economic pressure to shut it down. The fourth service is CERESports—it only carries sports, show-biz gossip and other "soft" news, and Gruneruden has decided it isn't worth sabotaging. Ironically, CERESports is actually the cover for a NEO communications base and is run by operatives who would love a chance to embarrass RAM.

This mission calls for detective work rather than brute force. The team should decide who's benefiting from Astronews' problems. An analysis of audience figures will reveal that NEWSCeres has gained the most, and a bomb attack on CBC's offices will suggest that they might not be the culprits. Meanwhile CERESports offers to pay the PCs for an exclusive story if they find out who's behind Astronews' problems; after all, Tamiko is a celebrity, and any attack on her is show-biz news. This may lead the team to suspect CERESports and discover the real nature of the operation.

Proving the truth about NEWSCeres and RAM shouldn't be easy; surviving the aftermath of CERESports' shock probe story will be even harder. RAM really doesn't want any publicity....

This adventure may be a good way to put independent characters in touch with NEO and reveal some of the less scrupulous activities of RAM's data services. Ω
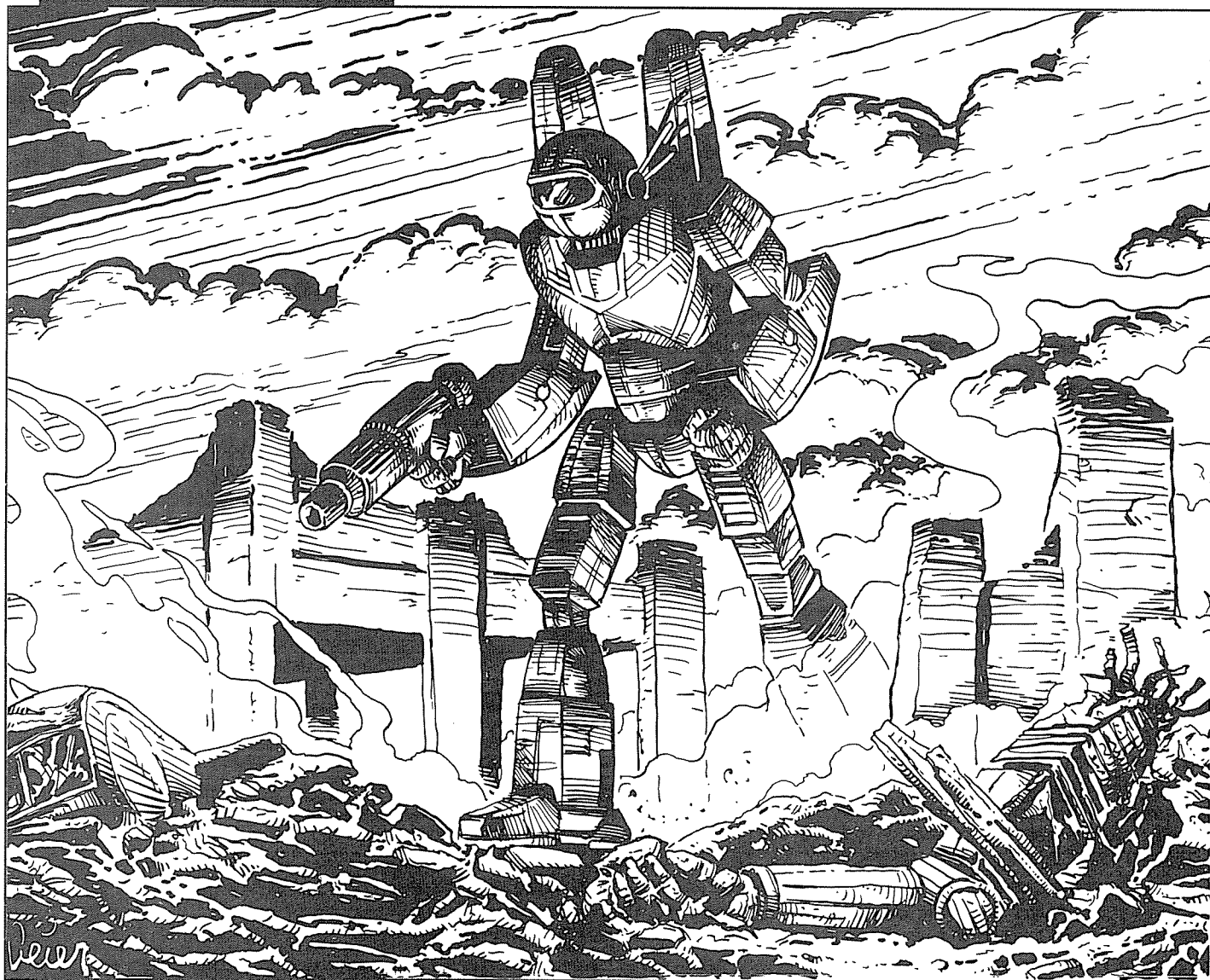
CONNER'S WORLD

By Michael C. LaBossiere

onner's World is an earthlike planet located in the Periphery. After the fall of the Star League, Conner's World became rapidly balkanized as each political faction grabbed for a piece of planetary pie. Years of near-constant warfare have scarred the planet, hardened its people and diminished its resources. The warfare has also reduced the number of states to four—two oligarchies, one military dictatorship and one republic. These states are constantly at each others' throats as each wishes to expand its domain to include the entire planet.

Conner's World would simply be another war-ravaged planet, of little interest to any major power, except for two facts. First, one of the few operational Comstar hyperpulse generators in the Periphery is located on Conner's World (and is constantly fought over to see who can charge Comstar for protection). Second, several Star League-era factories are still operational—and some can produce fusion weapons and 'Mech parts. Both the generator and the factories still exist because the convention of not attacking them has become a tradition respected by all warring parties (this is their only point of agreement). Conner's World is a site of constant warfare. As such, it is an ideal location for BattleTech scenarios.

Border Incident

The new guy was complaining about how dull border duty was. He was right, of course. There we were, a few thousand klicks from the nearest bars, in the middle of some forsaken stretch of bare territory, guarding some red line on some map. Of course, as I told the kid, the only excitement around here is worse then the boredom. No one has ever died of boredom, but border attacks have killed a lot of people.

This scenario represents an attack on Josper (one of the oligarchies) border station by Nietzche (the military dictatorship, not the philosopher).

GAME SETUP

In all the scenarios in this article, the part of the map with the word "BattleTech" on it will be referred to as the bottom of the map.

The setup for this scenario is as follows: Place one map adjacent to the other (as the long sides are touching) with the bottom of each map toward you:

	North	
Map 1		Map 2
Bottom		Bottom
	South	

The area is a desert region: Treat all wood and water hexes as clear.

DEFENDER

The defender consists of a Josper Border Defense Force:
- 1 level-two heavy building in hex 0109 of map 2. The building is armed as follows:
  North and West Arc: Autocannon 5 with 20 shots and two machineguns with 200 shots.
  East Arc: Two machineguns with 200 shots.
- 2 platoons of rifle-armed infantry. They may be set up within the building or within two hexes of it.
- 1 platoon of machinegun-armed foot infantry. They may be set up within the building or within two hexes of it.
- 1 platoon of rifle-armed motorized infantry. They may be set up within six hexes of the building.
- 3 Scorpion light tanks set up within six hexes of the building:
  1: Piloting 5, Gunnery 4.
  2: Piloting 6, Gunnery 5.
  3: Piloting 4, Gunnery 4.
- 2 J.Edgar light hover tanks set up within six hexes of the building.
  1: Piloting 5, Gunnery 4.
  2: Piloting 5, Gunnery 4. Has had the two two-pack SRMs replaced with two medium lasers.
- 1 ASN-21 Assassin set up within six hexes

of the building. Piloting 5, Gunnery 4. The center torso jump jet is nonoperational, the left leg only has seven structural points, and the SRM 2 jams on a 10+ (2D6—roll each time it is fired).
- 1 PXH-1 Phoenix Hawk set up within six hexes of the building. Piloting 5, Gunnery 4. The right arm medium laser has been jury-rigged and generates an additional point of heat each time it is fired.

ATTACKER

The attacker is a raiding force from Nietzche.

The attacker enters the map on turn 1 on any portion of the west edge of the map.
- 4 wheeled APCs, each carrying seven rifle-armed foot infantry. Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. The Nietzchen variant of the APC has three machineguns and 100 shots.
- 2 Bulldog medium tanks.
  1: Piloting 5, Gunnery 4.
  2: Piloting 5, Gunnery. Has had one four-pack replaced with four machineguns. The four-pack ammo has been reduced to one ton, and two machineguns have been added to the front.
- 1 STG-3R Stinger. Piloting 5, Gunnery 4. The machinegun ammo has been reduced to a half ton, and an extra machinegun has been added to the left arm.
- 1 HER-2S Hermes II. Piloting 5, Gunnery 4. The left arm flamer has been replaced with a medium laser. The right arm only has four points of internal structure.
- 1 SHD-2DH Shadow Hawk. Piloting 5, Gunnery 4. The AC/5 has been replaced with a large laser and four heat sinks.

SPECIAL RULES

The extreme heat of this desert region generates an extra point of heat per turn in the 'Mechs. The "sand" has strange properties and tends to form low-friction areas. Any running 'Mech and any vehicle moving at flank speed and turning must roll 1D6. On a 6 result, a low-friction area has been encountered, and the hex should be treated as pavement for skidding purposes.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The attacker wins by destroying or crippling all of the defender's 'Mechs and vehicles, killing all the infantry, and destroying or crippling the building's weapons. The defender wins by destroying or driving off the attacker.

Rumble During the Rumble

A recent earthquake in a desolate zone between the Jefferson Republic and Harken (the second oligarchy) unearthed a Star League supply vault. Satellites from both

BATTLETECH

states spotted the vault at about the same time, and fast 'Mechs were sent to secure the treasure.

GAME SETUP

Use the two *BattleTech* maps and one *CityTech* map. Set them up as follows:

	North	
BT Map 1	*CT* Map 1	*BT* Map 2
Bottom	Bottom	Bottom

The concrete area on the *CityTech* map is used to represent the area split open by the earthquake. The ·water beside the concrete level zero and the split open area is considered to be two levels down from the surface. The bunker is a level one hardened building in hex 0909 on the *CityTech* map.

DEFENDER

The defender represents forces from the Jefferson Republic's Regular Army.
- 4 hover APCs. Piloting 5, Gunnery 4. Set up within two hexes of the east side of the depression, facing west. Each has seven rifle-armed foot infantry. The infantry may be deployed within four hexes of the APCs, but may not be within the depression.
- 2 Harasser missile platforms, set up within three hexes of the west side of the crater. Piloting 5, Gunnery 4.
- 2 Scimitar medium hover tanks, set up within three hexes of the west side of the depression. Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. The second tank carries four machineguns and 200 shots in place of the SRM2s.
- Engineering vehicle, set up on the east side of the depression, adjacent to it. It has two machineguns and 100 shots in place of 1.5 tons of equipment.
  2 Ferret light scout VTOLs set up on the Star League vault, along with their infantry. Piloting 5, Gunnery.4.
- 1 WSP-1A Wasp, set up adjacent to the vault. Piloting 4, Gunnery 4. The SRM2 and ammo have been replaced with a medium laser in the left arm and a small laser in each arm.
- 1 GRF-1N Griffin, set up within three hexes of the bunker. Piloting 5, Gunnery 3.

ATTACKER

The attacker represents elements of the Harken Royals, a 'Mech unit.

The attacking forces enter the map from the west side on turn one.

Lance One:

- 2 LCT-1V Locusts. Piloting 5, Gunnery 4. The first has four medium lasers (two in each arm) in place of the machineguns and ammunition.
- 2 WSP-1A Wasps. Piloting 5, Gunnery 4. The second has a faulty center torso jump jet which generates an additional point of heat when used.

Lance Two:

- 2 WSP-1A Wasps. Piloting 5, Gunnery 4.
- 1 CLNT-2-3T Clint. Piloting 5, Gunnery 3. The left and right torso jump jets have been removed, and a medium laser has been added to the left arm.
- 1 TBT-5N Trebuchet. Piloting 4, Gunnery 3. The left arm medium laser has been removed, and a ton of LRM 15 ammunition has been added.

SPECIAL RULES

Due to long-standing tradition, no unit will fire upon the Star League vault. Units on or near the vault may be fired upon, however.

The depression is filled with broken stone and is treated as rubble for movement purposes. The depression also has mud and water in it, which means a +1 on all Piloting saving rolls made within the depression.

The area is also unstable. At the beginning of each turn roll 2D6. On a 12, a minor quake rocks the area, requiring 'Mechs to make a Piloting saving roll at +2 to remain standing. Units adjacent to the depression must make a roll to avoid falling into the depression in addition to the roll required to remain upright. Infantry are not affected.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The winner is the side which retains control of the vault at the end of the game. The game is ended when one sides' forces have been destroyed or disabled, or have withdrawn.

Guard Duty

We had been brought in by Comstar to protect an HPG on one of those backwater

worlds. *I guess they had become tired of the locals blasting one another for the privilege of receiving protection money and decided to bring in some reliable outsiders. I wasn't too worried about the locals. They were good fighters but had nothing to match our new tanks. Of course, I didn't expect two of the local nations to hit us at once. I don't think either one of them was expecting the other guy to show up either. It turned into a three-way nightmare."*

This scenario depicts an attack on an offworld mercenary force protecting the Comstar HPG by forces from Nietzche and Josper. This is a three-player scenario, with two attackers and one defender.

GAME SETUP

The maps should be set up as in scenario 2. In this scenario the concrete area represents what was once the city of Lendersan. The hyperpulse generator station is located in hex 0812. It is a level-two hardened building. In hex 1109 is another level-two hardened building. This is a rebuilt building that houses the mercenary unit. The rest of the city hexes are either empty (former street or stripped for raw material) or are filled with rubble. Place 20-30 rubble counters as desired on the concrete section of the map. A few intact or semi-intact buildings can be included. Hexes 1209, 1109, 1110, 1010, 0911, 0811 and 0812 have been cleared by the mercenary unit.

DEFENDER

The defender represents elements of the 442nd Light Armor of the famous Merc, Inc., which operates primarily in the Inner Sphere.

- 1 hardened building. The hardened building has an autocannon 5 with 40 shots and a 6 SRM with 30 shots for each of the north, west and east arcs.
- 2 platoons of SRM-armed foot infantry, set up in the hardened building or within three hexes.
- 2 platoons of SRM-armed foot infantry, set up in the hardened building or within two hexes of it.
- 2 platoons of rifle-armed foot infantry, set up in the hardened building or within two hexes of it.
- 2 engineering vehicles, set up in hex 1209. Piloting 5.
- 4 Ferrets and accompanying infantry, set up on landing pads on the hardened building. Piloting 4, Gunnery 4.
- 1 Pike support vehicle (Comstar-owned) set up anywhere within the city. Piloting 5, Gunnery 3.
- 3 Rudra hover tanks, set up anywhere on the *CityTech* map. Piloting 4, Gunnery 3.
- 3 Agni hover tanks, set up anywhere on the *CityTech* map. Piloting 4, Gunnery 3.
- 2 CN9-A Centurions, set up anywhere on the *CityTech* map. Both 'Mechs have had the rear center torso laser moved to the front.

Agni and Rudra Hover Tanks

Produced by Indra Arms, the Agni and Rudra hover tanks are fusion-powered combat vehicles. The fusion power plant provides them with a considerable advantage over conventionally powered vehicles. The Rudra and Agni are both based on the same chassis. The difference in the two vehicles lies in their turret armament.

The combination of speed, excellent armor and heavy firepower make both vehicles dangerous opponents on the battlefield. The key to effective use of these vehicles is to capitalize on their high battlefield speeds—always stay moving at high speeds. While the Rudra has good ranged weapon capacity, the Agni vehicle must get rather close, but its array of SRMs and medium lasers makes it a lethal close fighter.

Variants: None.
Type: Rudra/Agni
Movement Type: Hover
Cruise Speed: 8
Flank Speed: 12
Engine: Fusion (10 tons)
Control: 2.5 tons
Lift Equipment: 5 tons
Internal Structure: 5 tons
Turret: 1.2 tons
Armor: 176 points (11 tons)

Location	Points
Front	46
Lteft/right side	35
Back	22
Turret	38

Rudra Weapons and Ammo

Type	Location	Tons
PPC	Turret	7
SRM 6	Turret	3
SRM 6	Turret	3
Ammo (SRM) 30	Body	2
Cargo	Body	0.2

Agni Weapons and Ammo

Type	Location	Tons
Medium laser	Turret	1
Medium laser	Turret	1
Medium laser	Turret	1
SRM 6	Turret	3
SRM 6	Turret	3
SRM 6	Turret	3
Ammo (SRM) 45	Body	3
Cargo	Body	0.3

1: Piloting 5, Gunner 4.

2: Piloting 5, Gunnery 3.

● 1 WHM-6D (variant) Warhammer, set up anywhere on the *CityTech* map. Piloting 3, Gunnery 3.

ATTACKER 1 (NIETZCHE)

The first attacker represents elements of the Nietzchen Army. This attacker enters on the north half of the western edge of the map (*BattleTech* map 1) on turn one.

● 2 Hunter light support tanks, Piloting 5, Gunnery 3. The flamer on each tank has been replaced with a front-firing medium laser.

● 4 Vedette medium tanks. Piloting 5, Gunnery 4.

Lance One:

● 4 WSP-1A Wasps.

1, 2: Piloting 5, Gunnery 4.

3: Piloting 4, Gunnery 4. SRM and ammo have been replaced with one medium laser in the left arm and one added to the right arm.

4: Piloting 4, Gunnery 3. Weapon modifications as per number three.

Lance Two:

● 2 RFL-3N Riflemen.

1: Piloting 5, Gunnery 3. Both medium lasers have been replaced with heat sinks.

2: Piloting 4, Gunnery 3. Weapon modifications as per number one.

ATTACKER 2 (JOSPER)

The second attacker represents elements of the Josper military. This attacker enters on the southern half of the east edge of the map (*BattleTech* map 2) on turn one.

● 6 Scorpion light tanks. Piloting 5, Gunnery 4

● 2 Pegasus scout tanks.

1: Piloting 5, Gunnery 4.

2: Piloting 5, Gunnery 3.

● 2 Condor Heavy Hover Tanks.

1: Piloting 4, Gunnery 4.

2: Piloting 4, Gunnery 3.

Lance One:

● 4 STG-3R Stingers.

1, 2: Piloting 5. Gunnery 4. Machineguns and ammo replaced with four medium lasers (two in each arm).

3,4 : Piloting 4, Gunnery 4. Weapon modifications as above.

Lance Two:

● 1 ARC-2R Archer. Piloting 4. Gunnery 3. The rear lasers have been removed, and two additional tons of LRM ammo have been added.

● 2 MAD-3R Marauder. Piloting 4, Gunnery 3. Both arm-mounted PPCs have been replaced with large lasers and four heat sinks. The right torso has only 14 points of internal structure.

SPECIAL RULES

No unit may fire on the Comstar HPG installation.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The side with the only operational units left on the map is the winner. Ω

Soul Pirates

Slowly, Pellandar turned. "Something is coming, I can feel it."

A cold feeling of dread passed through Zaettra as well. She managed to hide it from her partner—or was she her rival? She would show no sign of weakness to a friend or an enemy, however, so it made little difference. "The IDF has no hope of finding us, and even if they did, they have no way of getting to us here."

As if on cue, a citadel rocked from the flaring of the star in which it was hidden. It was as if even her star sensed the coming of something.

"No, I don't mean the IDF. Something cold. Something evil. Something so foul it's beyond our nightmares, and beyond our fear. Something seeping through the vastness of space even as we speak. It wants us, or at least it wants this place. I don't know why."

Dark Space is a science fiction/fantasy/horror game from Iron Crown Enterprises. This adventure is for three to six players, levels 10 to 15. If such characters are not available, see Section 4.3 of *Dark Space* for how to create high-level characters. The PCs will need to be adept at subterfuge skills as well as combat—invisibility or silence spells, abilities and/or items will probably be necessary.

BIOSPHERE

In the area of the other-dimensional realm of nullspace that corresponded to the realspace location of the swampy, humid world of Bothom, the Cartel set up what it called the Biosphere. Financed by the most powerful government on Bothom, construction began 20 years ago, in the year 9442. Huge, living, breathing "islands" of protoplasm were grown in the swamps of the world's surface. Tunnels and chambers formed within them—people could reside on the surface and inside as well. Large flight grafts were attached to them, and they were moved into space and quickly shifted into nullspace. This process took a great many years.

Eight years ago, the first colonists were transplanted in the Biosphere. The great organic masses, which had grown to 10 miles across, floated like islands in a sea of sky. Zero gravity farms were planted, and zero-gravity Softech growth tanks set up. Both proved to be incredibly efficient. Each year, the colonies grew, and the Biosphere became a province under the rule of the Thougidiah emperor. The project was an astounding success. (The Thougidiah emperor rules the land of Burghoin, the largest nation-state on Bothom. His is a powerful but slightly despotic rule, and Burghoin is a wealthy if slightly oppressed land.)

JIRRAITH'S DISCOVERY

That same year, an evil magician named Jirraith Thedorrin was conducting experiments of his own, on the far-away world of Lo Bidar. A devout servant of the Dark Gods (actually, of course, the Elder Worms), Jirraith worked hand in hand with two Zhainmoths, believing them to be demonic servants of the foul gods he worshipped. His experiments dealt with some encoded organic molecules that normal orgmol receivers somehow missed. While he was not able to determine their source, he believed them to be tied to the beings that had long ago placed the famous red stone monument on that world. With the help of his "demonic" servants, he altered an orgmol device to receive and decode these message-carrying molecules. All he discovered were spatial coordinates indicating a location inside Avalyn, the sun around which Bothom orbited.

The Zhainmoths aiding Jirraith were intrigued by this find and contacted their foul masters, the Vlathachna. These evil beings instructed the two Zhainmoths to take the human magician to the location, using an item of black magic they would provide. The Zhainmoths and Jirraith used the the device, called the Starslayer, to transport themselves, and appeared within an ancient citadel, surrounded by a dampening field, floating within the fiery furnaces of the star.

Within the strange, alien structure, the companions discovered a great number of artifacts, strange combinations of Hardtech and magic, most beyond even the Zhainmoth's comprehension. They also discovered a large device they ascertained to be a magical portal. When activated, the portal opened up into another space (similar to nullspace, except its atmosphere is poisonous methane, and distances correspond more closely to those covered in realspace). Within that other-dimensional realm were demons, which leapt from the portal as it was opened and slew the Zhainmoths almost instantly.

By Monte Cook

CYBERDEMONS

Jirraith discovered that he could communicate with the strange beings and that they were the servants of entities that they referred to only as "the Masters." The Masters had dwelled within this fortress which they had called Zvorth Cirrol, the Citadel of the Sun. The Masters were great and powerful, and had used their abilities to battle the "Dark Forces of the Nebula." With their magic, the Masters had summoned these demons from a nether realm and placed them within the space that Jirraith had found them in. The masters had also used their knowledge of the near-forgotten science of Hardtech to add technological replacement limbs and other body parts or additions to the demons, and had named them Cyberdemons. More than 1000 years ago, the Masters left Zvorth Cirrol with some of the demons to battle something called the Peeryth Onpurge, leaving the 50 remaining demons trapped in a dimension that no one had accessed since. The demons believed Jirraith to be one of the Masters and so were willing to serve him. Plans began to formulate within Jirraith's evil mind.

REVOLT

In the Biosphere, one year ago (9461 YI), the revolt began. The colonists felt that they had the right to govern themselves, and they told the emperor on Bothom that in no uncertain terms. Since the Biosphere wasn't even in the same dimensional space as Bothom and since the emperor had not even been to the colonies, they believed he had no idea what was best for them. The emperor sent troops to the Biosphere to keep the peace, but the act provoked the first of many bloody battles. The war dragged on for a year, with the emperor's forces, supported halfheartedly by the Interworld Defense Force, trying to contain the hostilities. The colonists, however, used guerrilla tactics to establish an upper hand. Presently, the Imperial forces have only a foothold in the Biosphere city of Ktham and its surrounding area. Despite its loses and the cost of the conflict, the Thougidiah emperor has no intention of ending the conflict.

During the war, a mysterious force of pirates began raiding the colonies and craft travelling to and from them. Because of the confusion of the rebellion, no one has been able to stop these pirates. The only thing known about them is that while they take the possessions of those they plunder, they value most greatly the souls of their victims and possess some foul magic to take them.

SOUL PIRATES

Jirraith, realizing that he needed souls to empower the Starslayer to its full potential, counted himself lucky when he discovered the use of some of the devices within Zvorth Cirrol. These items projected a field of energy about them which could absorb the soul of anyone who died within the field. These contents of these "soul traps" could then be deposited within a huge glass sphere that Jirraith also found within the citadel. Ignoring for the time being other wonders, Jirraith used the Starslayer to travel to Bothom. There, he met up with an albino woman named Zaettra and her dark companion, Pellandar. She had connections in the underworld of Bothom and had a small force of assassins under her command. When she learned of what Jirraith had found, they joined forces and became the Soul Pirates, raiding the Biosphere and the craft around it to steal souls.

Jirraith keeps a number of the souls for himself to sacrifice through the Starslayer (of course, he tries to keep the Cyberdemons ignorant of this). The rest are sold to the servants of the Dark Gods, the Lords of the Five Chains, evil spellcasters, or anyone else willing to pay for them—and pay well.

Investigation

The IDF wants to know where the Soul Pirates are operating from, who they are working for and what they are doing with their morbid booty. The IDF will make it known throughout Bothom and the rest of the worlds that it is looking for free-lance agents. If the PCs can gather significant information, such as who the leaders are, where the base is, etc.,

they will receive 1000 tradits each. If they bring back significant physical evidence, such as one of the soul traps, they will receive an additional 200 tradits each. Lastly, if they go to the citadel and do the pirates incredible damage or wipe them out, the IDF will give them a total of 4000 tradits each.

VLATHACHNA

While Diiacodda, the Vlathachna who supplies power through the Starslayer, knows of the existence of Zvorth Cirrol, many of the other Elder Worms do not. The citadel's original inhabitants were enemies of the Vlathachna, and they have long wondered what became of them, the cyberdemons and their technological/magical devices. If they still exist, the Elder Worms would like to see them destroyed before the Vlathachna's plans of domination come to fruition.

They suspect that the Soul Pirates have some connection, and informants within the IDF will tell them that the PCs are out to find the pirates' base. The Rescritad faction of the Elder Worms will send an invisible, mentally cloaked Sasaach (using Unpresence, illusions, and other cloaking spells or psions) to follow the party.

KTHAM

The IDF will transport the PCs to Ktham via a biot ship. From there, the PCs are on their own. Ktham is a city of about 10,000 people, located both above and below the "surface" of the island. All the buildings are sturdy to protect their occupants from the violent storms that plague nullspace. Imperial troops, as well as a IDF garrison, figure prominently here and make their presence visible.

There is no gravity in most of the Biosphere (although certain establishments, the homes of the wealthy and government buildings all have magically provided artificial gravity). Possessions are tied down or otherwise secured from floating away. Winged Softech-created beasts pull floating wagons down streets filled with floating or flying pedestrians. Some colonists have wing grafts, while others simply float (although they have less control and can lose their momentum).

The inhabitants of Ktham know only rumors about the Soul Pirates. What PCs can discover, by asking the right questions, is this:
 ● Almost everyone knows that they steal the souls of those they slay.
 ● An imperial officer named Thoni knows they are using some sort of Hardtech device, augmented by magic, to steal the souls.
 ● Reuphiv, the barkeep in the Dusty Top Shelf, a small tavern, will say the pirates are lead by a vampire.
 ● Blir Choridin, a bar patron, will say the pirates use arcane demons to assist them on their attacks.
 ● A city official, Claique, will say that most of the attacks have occurred in the particularly war-ravaged areas, most recently on the island of Ydraph.

TRAVELLING TO YDRAPH

Since the war, there are no means of public transport among the 50 or so islands of the Biosphere. If the PCs do not have a flying craft of their own, they will need to purchase wing grafts or flying mounts. The Cartel has created avias through Softech science—they resemble huge, winged, mammalian snakes. The mounts cost 800 tradits, and can carry up to four riders or 1000 pounds of dead weight in their specially made harnesses. Anyone can give the PCs directions to the island, or the PCs can purchase of a map of the Biosphere for about 25 tradits. The journey will take about six hours,

assuming that the PCs stop for a few rests on available islands.

Almost everyone outside of Ktham supports the revolution. Island colonists are suspicious of everyone, particularly those coming from Ktham, and will not tell the PCs anything unless the PCs assure them that they are not Imperial agents from Burghoin. Island colonists will know all the rumors listed above, as well as the fact that the pirates are led by two women—one of whiteness and one of blackness. Behind it all, they say, is a spidery demon.

YDRAPH

Ydraph is an island about 11 miles across, with three settlements—Thistledark, Lharm Kator and Parridin.

Thistledark, a major research center, has seen a fair amount of fighting in the past year, and a number of government supporters remain there. (For more on Thistledark, see Battle, below.)

Lharm Kator, a small farming village, has remained free from warfare. The characters will learn little there.

Parridin, the place last attacked by the pirates, was almost completely destroyed by battle about a week ago. The city is a ruin, with wreckage of buildings and other things floating about. Motej, a metamorph with stone-like skin, leads the survivors within the ruined village. He will say, "They'e merciless killers, with magical aura devices that feed on the souls of those they slay. They're assisted by metal and flesh demons. Their leaders are two women who don't seem to get along." Motej will also tell the PCs that the pirates are very protective of the soul-draining devices. The colonists killed a few of the pirates, and the leaders directed the demons to concentrate their full resources on recovering the fallen pirates' bodies and

equipment. An old woman named Chrisnaria (a scholar of occult history on Bothom before moving to the Biosphere) will say she found scraps of evidence long ago (before the Purge) of a group of magicians and technologists who lived in this area of space and fought against "a great and mysterious evil older than time itself." Their allies were a race of demons that they modified with their strange Hardtech ways and that hated this alien evil as much as they did. While these men were said to have been wiped out during the Pirathon Purge, Chrisnaria believes they have something to do with the Soul Pirates.

BATTLE

If the characters travel to Thistledark, they will walk right into a battlezone. The government sympathizers have been discovered by the colonist rebels and are attempting to slay them. Winged Imperial troops are attempting to rescue the sympathizers (most are Softechnicians who worked in the zero-G research centers). Each side is armed with weapons ranging from swords, spears and crossbows to spore pistols, burners and biobombs. The rebels are first- or second-level fighters, 58 in number, with one or two third- to fifth-level spellcasters. The soldiers are third-level fighters, 13 in number. The sympathizers are fifth- to eighth-level Softechnicians, 18 in number.

In the middle of the battle, a biot ship will appear, shifting in from realspace. It is the Soul Pirates, using the confusion of the battle to arrive unexpectedly and feed off the dying souls from the conflict. A hatch on the bottom of the hovering craft will open, disgorging 10 cyberdemons. They will go down into the fray to cause panic and even more confusion. Then the 20 pirates will come down, accompanied by Pellandar and Zaettra, and will attempt to kill anyone they encounter .

If the PCs battle the pirates, they do not have to take on all their foes at once, as they will spread out among the buildings. However, Pellandar and Zaettra will watch over as much of the fray as possible. If the PCs kill a few pirates, one of them will notice and direct all the cyberdemons to attack the PCs and retrieve the bodies and equipment. If the PCs are not quickly destroyed, Pellandar will sound a retreat. Pellandar will teleport herself away in the event of any personal danger, while Zaettra will surrender before she is killed. If the PCs destroy or capture all the pirates, they will permanently put the pirates out of business. They can learn the location of the base in general from any of the pirates, although only Zaettra pilots the ship and knows the nullspace/realspace coordinates.

Instead of fighting the pirates outright, the PCs may choose less obvious methods. Sneaking aboard the pirates' ship, the Death Adder, during the raid is easy due to the confusion of the battle. Only three pirates are still on board, and they are watching the battle through the open lower hatch. This hatch opens into the center section of the ship—use the layout of the biot ship on page 121 of Dark Space. Invisible characters could easily come in through there and go past the three (if they are quiet), or visible characters could come in through the top hatch. Once aboard, invisible (and quiet) characters or well-hidden, visible characters should also have few worries of discovery. If the PCs are not very well hidden or make a great deal of noise, make a few +30 perception rolls for the pirates. Anyone found on-board will be instantly killed, and their soul will be trapped.

ZVORTH CIRROL

Unless the PCs killed or wounded any pirates, the pirates escape with only two crewmembers injured. They win 25,000 tradits worth of booty and 27 souls.

Once the pirates are all on-board, the ship will shift to nullspace, travel for a few minutes, then make the delicate shift into the vacuum bay of Zvorth Cirrol. If Zaettra misses her navigation roll, the ship will end up unprotected inside the star. During the journey, observant characters may learn of Jirraith's existence back at the citadel. They

may also learn that only Zaettra can pilot the ship and that the pirates prefer Pellandar over Zaettra as a leader (she is kinder and more fair to the crew).

Once they have arrived and the bay is filled with air, the pirates will go to the central chamber to load the souls from their soul traps into the sphere and to escort the demons back through the gate. Only then will some of them return to the ship to unload the loot. If the PCs are stealthy, they can explore the citadel, perhaps learning more information or discovering a way to destroy the operations here or free the souls. Maybe they will attempt to assassinate one of the leaders, or perhaps they will try to manipulate the controls in the central chamber. To determine what the machines and controls do is a Hard Maneuver (using a Reasoning bonus or a skill using Hardtech machines or Attunement skill with a –30 penalty as the machines are both magical *and* technological). It is another Very Hard Maneuver to get the machines and controls to operate as desired.

Thirty minutes after the PCs have arrived at Zvorth Cirrol, the Sasaach that was following them will have successfully summoned assistance to deal with the pirates and the citadel (both of which they want destroyed). The assistance will be in the form of a Crus Verin with two Sscree hounds, a Galogthraas, and 10 Obann. This force (including the Sasaach) will appear in the vacuum bay and systematically attack each and every one of its occupants.

Once he discovers the attack, Jarraith will attempt to communicate through the Starslayer to its master and convince him that if the pirates are destroyed, he will no longer have a supply of souls. Upon hearing of the attack, Diiacodda will realize that if the Starslayer is found in Zvorth Cirrol, the other Vlathachna will know he knew of its existence and location, and that they will destroy him. He will either teleport two Zhainmoth servants and three Gohrmgraat to "aid" the pirates in the battle, or he will come himself (referee's discretion). Either way, his goal will be to destroy the citadel to erase any shred of evidence of the place.

The cyberdemons, once their portal is opened—and it almost assuredly will be by either Zaettra or Pellandar—will attack any Vlathachna or Elder Brood before attacking anyone else. And if they discover that Jirraith summoned some of them, they will turn on him, rending him to bits.

If the machinery for the protective field is destroyed or shut down, the PCs will have only about three minutes before the entire citadel is consumed by the sun. If the PCs do not attempt to stop Diiacodda or his forces from destroying the protective field, or if they do not strive to keep anyone from accidentally damaging or destroying the equipment, the citadel will be destroyed.

CITADEL

The referee can create a map from the following information. Rooms are lighted by sliding roof panels that let in the light of the star outside the citadel, but can be closed for sleeping. There are no doors to any of the rooms, as a permanent, powerful magical spell encompasses the entire structure, allowing instantaneous teleportation from any chamber to another. The pirates will use this ability to its full extent in a battle, teleporting into attack and out when wounded. There is no way to control where in the room a teleporter will appear (except that it will never be inside any solid matter), and at least one round must be spent orienting one's mind to the new surroundings.

Vacuum Bay: The large ship bay can magically be filled with atmosphere or reduced to a vacuum, allowing ships to shift in and out of nullspace within the chamber. The controls for this function are in the central chamber. Either process takes about five minutes.

Storeroom: This room contains all the pirates' supplies, plus all the booty they have stolen but not yet sold. There is approximately 200,000 tradits worth of stuff here, although most of it is not readily transportable (furniture, statuary, piles of coins, bales of cloth, crates of foodstuffs, etc). About 75,000 tradits worth is easily transported

in the form of gems, jewelry, Softech items (kept in nutrient tanks), etc.

Barracks: The 32 pirates sleep in bunks here. There are three large tables and two oil-burning stoves. A curtained-off area serves as a latrine.

Day Room: The furniture, both biological and not, is plush but mistreated. Also here are some orgmol recorder/players and musical instruments, including a tonard.

Zaettra's Room: It is always dark here, as the sliding light panel is closed. The room is well-appointed, but disheveled. Among her normal belongings can be found 3000 tradits worth of jewelry and 10,000 tradits worth of drug applications. The pirates never teleport into this room.

Pellandar's Room: This room is as well-appointed as Zaettra's but is much tidier. Paperwork on the desk details a suggested list of the five next targets for raids. Also present is a list of buyers of stolen goods and souls. The pirates never teleport into this chamber.

Central Chamber: This room contains the soul-containing sphere (a glass globe, 3 feet in diameter, with the ghostly images of dozens of people within), the cyberdemon gate (a large doorway both technological and magical), and other mysterious magical/technological devices left by the builders of Zvorth Cirrol. Also here are the magical/technological devices and controls for the vacuum bay, the air supply for the citadel and the energy field which protects it from the heat of the star, as well as other functions the occupants are not even aware of. This would be a dangerous place for a fight.

Inner Sanctum: The teleportational capabilities of the citadel do not extend to this room. Jirraith stays here, using his own spells to get in and out. It is a lavish room with a definite spider motif, and is filled with spiders of all sorts, including a giant spider which acts as a "guard-dog."

SOUL PIRATE TACTICS

Zaettra and Pellandar share duties in commanding the raids. The cyberdemons are used as protection and backup muscle, softening up targets and covering the pirates' retreats.

The soul pirates almost never take prisoners or use weapons meant to subdue. Wounding, maiming, capturing or knocking out are simply not as profitable as killing.

It is common practice to retrieve a fallen pirate, in part to leave behind as few clues as possible, but mostly to recover his equipment and souls trapped. A pirate wears the soul trap on a belt while engaged in close combat. In a longer-range fight, the soul traps attached to a rope are thrown into the midst of the enemy as a volley of crossbow bolts or burner blasts strikes.

PELLANDAR

Age: 9 (Appears≈25). Eyes: Black. Hair: Black. Build: Shapely. Height: 6'. Race/Sex: Metamorph/female. **Skin:** Black. **Demeanor:** Dominating. **Dress:** Black veils. **True Attitude:** Cruel, ambitious. **Home:** Zvorth Cirrol.

Pellandar is the creation of Lord Draccivan and his demon lover, N'abbish. A unique metamorph, she is made from organic, black steel. Her body is exactly like that of a normal woman, save that her flesh, muscle and bone appear to be made of steel. Because of her composition, she quickly regenerates damage she takes. Despite her appearance, she can use any normal Softech graft or microrg. She needs to eat, drink and breathe as does any organic being.

When Zhainmoths attacked Draccivan's icy tower on Zairic, Pellandar escaped, journeying into the Twenty Worlds on her own. It did not take her long to realize that she craved power like nourishment and that her greatest desire was to rule. To achieve that goal, she has joined together with Zaettra and her band of Soul

Pirates, quickly assuming a position of leadership, finding that the pirates and mercenaries were more willing to follow her than the strange albino and her odd ways.

She and Zaettra have a relationship of distrust and unease, neither quite sure of the other. Pellandar fears Jirraith, and many of the things he does and says only worry her. She has a fear of the Vlathachna—although she is not completely sure of their existence, she knows that something is out there.

Hits: 190. **Melee:** 60da. **Missile:** 50 spore pistol.

AT(DB): 20(45). **Sh:** N. **Gr:** N. **MovM:** +10.

Lvl: 10. **Profession:** Sorcerer. **Stats:** St-100, Qu-85, Em-95, In-96, Pr-97, Ag-79, Co-99, Me-75, Re-91, SD-93. **AP:** 95. **PP** 40 (20x2).

Skill Bonuses: S&H50, Perc60, Amb5, Chan50, Rune40, S&W45, MASt50, Lead80, Inter40.

Spells: Base Spell OB: 20 Directed spell OB: 20 Knows all Sorcerer Base lists to 10th, as well as Dispelling Ways, Shield Mastery, Delving Ways, Lofty Bridge and Detection Mastery to 10th.

Special Abilities: Due to her composition, Pellandar is naturally AT 20 with DB 40. She regenerates one hit per round.

Dagger of Spells: This +10 black steel dagger acts as a x2 PP enhancer and allows sorcerers to prepare spells one round faster than normal.

Spore Pistol: This Softech weapon is loaded with 10th-level blinding spores. She also has spore loads of fifth-level nerve poison spores and eighth-level sleep spores.

Sheath Buds: She uses these as a holster and a sheath for her two weapons.

Soul Trap: This magical/Hardtech device is a rectangular metal plate, 6" long and 4" wide, which projects a 10'-diameter gray energy field. This field is harmless unless someone dies within it. If this occurs, then the dying victim's soul is absorbed and stored within the soul trap. The device can store up to five souls, which can then be transferred into a storage sphere.

Use Within the Scenario: Pellandar is just as evil and power-hungry as her two partners, but she is more cautious. She likes to plan out the missions carefully, and she always looks before she leaps. If she encounters Elder Worms or their servants, she will make all RRs versus shock, fear, etc. at −10 due to her already growing dread that something evil is coming through space to get her. The pirates respect her more than Zaettra or Jirraith because she successfully gives the illusion of caring for their welfare. It is what she believes all good leaders do.

ZAETTRA

Age: 31. **Eyes:** White/pink. **Hair:** White. **Build:** Shapely. **Height:** 5'6". **Race/Sex:** Human/female. **Skin:** White. **Demeanor:** Uncaring, distracted. **Dress:** Tight white bodysuit. **True Attitude:** Scheming, immoral. **Home:** Zvorth Cirrol.

Zaettra was born an albino on the world of Bothom. Shunned by her poverty-stricken parents, she was passed from relative to relative until she ran away at a very early age. While out on her own, she developed some various addictions and desires. She is a slave to a number of drug applications, but worst of all, she is addicted to killing.

Zaettra drinks blood, much as a vampire would. Often she will kidnap or capture someone and use him as a "blood cow," keeping the victim from bleeding to death with a few spells she has learned. She also gains great pleasure at touching or holding someone as they die. Her need for killing, usually at close range with a bladed weapon, must be satiated at least once every few days.

Her albinism makes her weak and vulnerable to the sun, but her diet of blood and drugs (as well as her appetite for death, according to her) keeps up her vitality.

Using her talents and her lusts for death and blood, she became an assassin for hire and earned a great deal of money and prestige. She then used her money to hire a cadre of pirates and mercenaries. First based on Bothom, then out of Zvorth Cirrol (the citadel within Bothom's sun/star

Avalyn—she loved the irony it held for an albino/vampire) these pirates attack the Biosphere and its inhabitants, taking advantage of the war between the Thougidiah emperor and the rebellious colonists. Using magical/Hardtech devices, these men steal not only the valuables of their victims, but their souls as well.

Zaettra has lost to Pellandar much of the command she once had. The men are quite afraid of Zaettra's strange desires and lusts, and think her insane. She refers to herself as a vampire, due to her vulnerability to the sun and bloodlust, although she is not undead.

Hits: 90. **Melee:** 130da. **Missile:** 70 thorn pistol.

AT(DB): 1(60). **Sh:** N. **Gr:** N. **MovM:** +30.

Lvl: 15. **Profession:** Assassin. **Stats:** St-80*, Qu-99*, Em-73, In-89, Pr-84, Ag-98*, Co-70*, Me-87, Re-85, SD-97. **AP:** 89. **PP** 15.

Skill Bonuses: Climb90, S&H120, Perc65, DTraps65, PLocks100, Amb30, AMov50, MASt75R4, Acro90(+40), Act75, Cont50(+40), Seduct75, Subdu65, Track90, Nullspace Pilot60, Space Pilot50, Nullspace Nav80, Space Nav75.

Spells: Base Spell OB: 0, Directed Spell OB: 0, knows the Blood Law list to fifth.

Special Abilities/Weaknesses: If directly exposed to sunlight for more than one minute, Zaettra will take 1-10 hits per minute. This damage can only render her weak and/or unconscious. It cannot kill her. Statistics marked with an asterisk will be cut in half if she cannot meet the addictive requirements of her drugs and other needs.

Implanted Finger Blades: Use with Martial Arts Strike Kata—Medium Claw attack.

Thorn Pistol: Magically enhanced (+15) Softech weapon that fires small thorns (treat as light crossbow or needler) that are poisoned with Lvl 8 Circulatory poison. It is grafted onto her forearm. Fires 20 shots.

Armband: Gives +25 DB protection and +25 RR bonus vs. spells.

Four +10 Daggers

Five Biobomb Grenades: Lvl 10 Sleep spores.

Two Bio-Iron Lockpicks: These lockpicks can be made to shape themselves into any form, giving them a +50 bonus to pick conventional locks. They can also be made to take other shapes as well, such as small daggers.

Soul Trap: This magical/Hardtech device is a rectangular metal plate, 6" long and 4" wide, which projects a 10'-diameter gray energy field. This field is harmless unless someone dies within it. If this occurs, then the dying victim's soul is absorbed and stored within the soul trap. The device can store up to five souls, which can then be transferred into a storage sphere.

Microrgs in Use: Lvl 5 Balancers (+25 to balance), Lvl 8 Flexibility Enhancers (+40 to tumbling, contortions and acrobatics), Lvl 3 Nerve Stimulators (+15 Qu), Lvl 5 Bone Hardeners (ignore 50% of bone crits, +25 hits).

Use Within the Scenario: If the PCs spend time on Bothom, then it may be in the referee's best interest to introduce her there first, before the Soul Pirates scenario. In this way, he can establish her character, desires and addictions. She is evil to the extreme, and her lusts for death and blood often make her act irrationally (which is why the pirates are often leery of her). She is the only Soul Pirate who may try to take the PCs (or at least one) captive—while she would want to use the PC for blood or other tortures, the rest would rather just kill them to take their souls. If she survives the adventure, she will almost certainly attempt to gain revenge on the PCs.

JIRRAITH THEDORRIN

Age: 58. **Eyes:** Brown. **Hair:** None. **Build:** Normal. **Height:** 5'11". **Race/Sex:** Human/male. **Skin:** Pale, scarred. **Demeanor:** Snide. **Dress:** Black trousers. **True Attitude:** Uncaring, cruel. **Home:** Zvorth Cirrol.

Jirraith was born on the world of Lo Bidar and quickly fell in with the wrong crowd as a youth. Abandoning his elderly parents, he became a devout believer and follower of the Dark Gods, although he never realized their true nature (see *Dark Space*, Section 2.5.4).

He served the "gods" so faithfully that they sent two Zhainmoths to serve him, making him believe they were demons.

Jirraith had long had a fascination with spiders, their webs, and their poisons. Since the time when he left his family, he has been injecting or consuming small doses of spider poison in the hopes of attaining some sort of mystical connection with them. It worked to some degree, and now he calls himself an Arachnemancer. Spiders now seem naturally predisposed to like him, and he has an almost empathic way of communicating with them.

He allows them to crawl all over his body and had some special buds constructed so they can live on his flesh.

Hits: 88. Melee: 80staff. **Missile: 0.**

AT(DB): 4(30). Sh: N. **Gr:** N. **MovM:** +10.

Lvl: 15. **Profession:** Evil Magician. **Stats:** St-68, Qu-90, Em-97, In-93, Pr-91, Ag-76, Co-69, Me-94, Re-90, SD-72. **AP:** 61. **PP** 90 (30×3).

Skill Bonuses: S&H30, Perc70, Chan35, Rune70, S&W75, SpellMast55, FloraL60, PoisonL50, Hardtech Use60.

Spells: Base Spell OB: 15 Directed spell OB: 60 Knows evil magician base lists to 10th, Spell Reins, Spirit Mastery, Elemental Shields, Living Change, Lofty Bridge, Starsea Ways, and Foul Changes I (RMC IV) to 10th, Arachnemancy (RMC IV) to 20th.

Special Abilities: Immune to poisons of most sorts due to numerous small doses taken throughout his life.

Starslayer: This foul artifact is of Vlathachna make. It appears to be a nine-pointed star made of a blackish silver metal, 6" in diameter. It acts as a direct energy conduit to a Vladaam named Diiacodda. If the Elder Worm is willing (i.e., if it serves his needs or plans), he will channel power points or spells through the star for free.

In exchange for a human soul, transferred through the star, the Vladaam will grant the wielder 100 extra power points and the ability to cast spells up to 30th level with no penalty. These abilities last for one day, and are only available once per week.

Staff of Smiting: This staff is +20 in combat and inflicts an additional crush critical of the same severity.

Spider Buds: These numerous buds are on every part of Jirraith's body and house spiders of every sort. They are hollow, and holes allow the spider's access in or out of them. The spiders often build small webs within the buds or on parts of Jirraith's body. The buds not only house the spiders but provide nourishment (they are edible) as well. There will be, at any given time, 20-50 spiders on his body, either within these grafts or crawling on his skin.

Soul Trap: This magical/Hardtech device is a rectangular metal plate, 6" long and 4" wide, which projects a 20' diameter grey energy field (Jirraith has manipulated it so that the diameter is double that of normal soul traps). This field is harmless unless someone dies within it. If this occurs, then the dying victim's soul is absorbed and stored within the soul trap.

The device can store up to five souls, which can then be transferred into a storage sphere.

Use Within the Scenario: Jirraith is the force behind the Soul Pirates, but he rarely goes with them on raids. In the citadel, he spends most of his time within the Inner Sanctum plotting his schemes and playing with his spiders. Jirraith himself is a great horror element, and can be used as such. He often licks the spiders that crawl all over his body, and whis-

pers sweet nothings to them. He treats people with the ultimate disdain and regards them as nothing but playthings, slaves or cattle.

SOUL PIRATES

Lvl: 4B. **Base Rate:** 80. **Max Pace:** Dash. **MNBonus:** 5. **MS:** MF. **AQ:** MF. **Size:** M. **Crit:** —. **Hits:** 65D. **AT(DB):** 13(20). **Attacks:** 45Melee/50Ranged Wpn. **#Enc:** *. **Treasure:** *. **Outlook(IQ):** Varies(AV). **Bonus EP:** B, 5-7' tall.

*Special.

For consistency of form, the Soul Pirates have been included here in the creature format. The stats are only to show an average of their abilities for the referee. Actual pirates will vary greatly.

Currently 32 in number, these men and women are vile, loathsome, and evil to the extreme. They all wield some melee weapon, with cutlasses, knives and morningstars being favorites, and some form of ranged weapon, which can be anything from crossbows and throwing knives to spore or burner pistols. Spores used are almost always poison spores that kill the victim quickly. A few (20%) have some sort of Softech item such as a graft, bud or microrg. All pirates carry at least one soul trap.

The Soul Pirates dress in dark or muted colors over their synthisteel chain vests. They can be any nonspellcasting profession.

CYBERDEMONS

Lvl: 6B. **Base Rate:** 120. **Max Pace:** Dash. **MN Bonus:** 30. **MS:** VF. **AQ:** VF. **Size:** L. **Crit:** LA. **Hits:** 90E. **AT(DB):** 12(20). **Attacks:** 70MCl/65Wpn. **#Enc:** 1-6. **Treasure:**—. **Outlook(IQ):** Agress(MD). **Bonus EP:** E. 6-8' tall, NA.

Cyberdemons were at one point "normal" demons. They stand about seven feet tall. Their gray skin is stretched tightly over their muscular, yet skeletal, frame. Long claws and teeth-filled mouths make the demons look all the more fierce. However, now they are just as much Hardtech machine as demon. At least one arm is cybernetic, as are both legs and portions of the head and torso. These replacement body parts are stronger, faster and better armored than the original body portions of the demons. Often, the cyberware also contains additional Hardtech equipment, such as sword-like claws, built-in burner pistols, variable vision (infra-red, ultraviolet, etc.) eyes, and other Hardtech equipment. The referee can add cybernetic parts to the demons as he thinks appropriate.

The cyberdemons will serve their master completely, without question. They hate the Elder Worms and their foul servants, and will attack them on sight. Ω

Freebooterz

Games Workshop.
$29.95 (U.S.).
Design: **Bryan Ansell, Rick Priestley and Nigel Stillman.**
144-page hardbound book.
Supplement for *Warhammer 40,000/ Rogue Trader* **and** *'Ere We Go.* **For gamemasters and players.**

The supplement to *Freebooterz* is only useful if you already own or have access to *'Ere We Go* (the Ork supplement to the miniatures game *Warhammer 40K*). *Freebooterz* completes (hopefully) the Ork rules for the game, detailing the rules for new (and strange) Ork heavy weapons, providing new mob lists for Ork armies and finishing up the clan warband lists.

Dere's lottsa stuff in 'ere, so watch it. Yer turn a page too fast, yer can miss out onna great deal, see?

G'wan, tell 'em 'bout da Lifta-Droppa, hur hur hur!

The book leads off with descriptions of four amazingly cheap and bizarre Ork crew-served weapons.

The *Traktor Cannon* is nothing more than a tractor beam to pull troops, vehicles and buildings over.

The *Lifta-Droppa* is a tractor beam used to grab a target, lift in into the air and drop it (probably onto another target, while all the crew gleefully screams "SPLAT!" at the top of their little green voices).

The *Pulsa Rokkit* is a rocket-launched force field that pushes people and machines out of the way, with startlingly effective results.

And the most fiendish machine is the Bubble Chukka ("Lawrence Welk meets Force Fields"), which covers vehicles— sometimes—with an invisible force-field that bounces the unlucky vehicle's shots back at it. And no one knows the field's there until the vehicle shoots or is shot (while all the Orks in sight laugh uncontrollably and yell, "SURPRISE!").

For 50 points apiece, these weapons will be well worth buying the figures to have, when the figures are released.

Fergit dat stuff! Da real meat o' dis book iz da Freebooterz.

Quite right. The middle of the book is crammed with bewilderingly diverse force

lists, detailing mobs of Freebooterz. Freebooterz are Orks without tribes—Orks who have been banned, "wandered orf" or just decided they wanted to be pirates. They become mercenary goons, wandering the cosmos looking for a fight and some good loot. Twenty-two different types of Freebooterz are available for the enterprising/ clever/desperate Ork warboss to use in filling out his band or supplementing a need, or just finding some troops that look good. A single unit of Flash Gits can really brighten up a table full of drab Goffs.

Of course, the process of hiring Freebooterz isn't certain. The Ork player rolls percentile dice on the Freebooterz list, taking the first Freebooterz mob that he rolls, as long as he has figures for them. In future battles, he can hire additional Freebooterz, as gangs rolled previously are assumed to still be in the area and spoiling for a good brawl.

Freebooter mobs range from simple pirates to extremes. This is only a small sample of the Freebooter forces available to an Ork warband; there are yet more in the book:

Flash Gits: Pirates that really struck it rich. They dress rich, they get a free battlewagon, they usually field kustom weapons and heavy armor.

A dead 'ard bunch, dis.

Renegade Meks: Mekaniaks who decided to stick together after a big project. Better than no maintenance at all, but still not too reliable.

Wiv all dem kustom weapons, dey is real shooty.

Speed Freeks: Evil Sunz and other vehicle fans who were banned after one too many destructive wrecks, they race around in their hot-rodded battlewagons, frequently running right over the enemy.

An' right orf da battlefield, heh heh. Dat way dey don't stick around fer lootin'.

Bad Docs: Ork Painboys that make Dr. Frankenstein look quite sane. Banned for strange and sadistic experiments, they hire out as battlefield medics.

Jus' keep a eye on da Boyz deze gits bring in. Make sure da doc don't do brain sergery onna 'angnail.

Stormboyz of Khorne: These Stormboyz never broke the mold. They like discipline, killing and regimentation. So much so that they've taken up worship of the Blood God.

Possessed Warpheads: Ork psykers who not only like channeling warp energy, but also picked up a strange visitor. Demons don't usually possess Orks; normally there's no way in.

Warpheads can accidentally suck a de-

mon into their head while practicing their deadly talent. What happens then is the main reason demons don't and won't possess Orks: They can't control the Ork and can't get out!

This makes the Warphead more powerful, but it's no fun for either party.

Dis bunch talks to demselfs alot.

The last pages of the book outline the army lists for the Bad Moons, Evil Sunz and Death Skull tribes, ending with a reprinted article on constructing scale Ork buildings, rules for super cyboars and kombi-weapons, and a very nice list of Ork glyphs, including some new and entertaining word glyphs.

Get ready. Now dat 'e's told yer what's inna book, now 'e's gonna tell yer wot 'e finks ovvit.

Boooo-rrrring!

EVALUATION

Freebooterz is a good product, complete with the new Games Workshop binding (much more solid than the old products). The illustrations are plentiful, if not quite up to par, and the rules are clear (remarkably so for English rules).

The subjects are interesting and the army lists definitely needed.

On the down side, I decry the slimy method of drumming up sales by including half of the clan army lists in another book half the size of *'Ere We Go* and costing 75% as much. Of course, anyone wanting to play Evil Sunz, Death Skulls or Bad Moons—or even include any mobs from these clans!—requires *Freebooterz*, at an additional $30. This book raises the cost of the Ork trilogy (*Waaargh the Orks!, 'Ere We Go* and *Freebooterz*) to $95. Whoosh.

For the expense, I believe *Freebooterz* should have had more illustration, and better illustration at that. Furthermore, there's almost none of the fiction that usually brightens up Games Workshop's products—and their Orky fiction is the best. *Freebooterz* gives the impression that it was made up from leftovers that couldn't be fit into *'Ere We Go.* That's the only way it could be produced and circulated within a month of *'Ere We Go's* release.

Of course, there's one last big problem with *Freebooterz*. Within a few battles, my Ork warband will include a mob of Flash Gits with kustom weapons and a Blitzkannon, a gang of Outcast Oddboyz featuring four Meks and a half-dozen kustom weapons, a sneakily effective and cheap group of Gretchin Pirates and an Possessed Warphead who can wade barehanded

through a squad of Purestrain Genestealers. Interest in facing my Ork warband has waned even further.

As much as I like Orks, I wish that the Games Workshop boyz would leave them alone for awhile.

There are so many Ork rules now that some *Warhammer 40K* players are giving up any hope of playing Orks—too many rules to learn, too many books and figures to buy. There are so many Ork articles in *White Dwarf* that I've heard it referred to as "Ork Monthly."

Instead, the Games Workshop boyz would do well to work on catching up some of the other races of their *Warhammer 40K* universe.

Work is already progressing on the *Space Marine Compendium*, which will update and upgrade the Marines.

More work needs to be done in completing the new vehicle system (integrating dreadnaughts) and revamping Squats, Eldar and adding the Tyrannids and their bio-creations. Recently, the Workshop boyz have had a one-track mind, and Orks are riding the rail. Ω

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HIWG (Australia and New Zealand) is looking for **MegaTraveller** players and referees down under who are interested in discussing the future of the Imperium and contributing to its development. For information write to David Schneider, 5 East Ave., Allenby Gardens, South Australia 5009. (52)

SPIRITED GAMERS WANTED. Players of *Star Wars,* **Merc: 2000,** and most other SF games in San Antonio, TX area. Contact Clint Williamson, 11845 West Ave. # 411, San Antonio, TX 78216-2536. (51)

THE GAMESMITHS want you—players, gamemasters and game designers to join our club. We exist to play and enjoy all aspects of roleplaying games. If you live in or around the Richmond, VA, area, please write to Eddie Burns, 510 Buckingham Court, Hopewell, VA 23860. (51)

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BATTLETECH play-by-mailers: Since the disbandment of the 472nd Swordsmen, Captain Equinox and his 'Mech company are looking for employment. Anyone with an established PBM please contact Jim Domarad, 3730 S. Mill, Greenbriar Apt. J104, Tempe, AZ 85282-4906. (51)

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SS&V (Starships, Starports & Vehicles) is a fanzine that covers the areas listed for **MegaTraveller**. It includes one article, with the rest devoted to designs. *AR (Alien Realms)* is a quarterly fanzine covering aliens in **MegaTraveller**. Currently, two issues are available. For more information, you can write to Bryan Borich, 3890 50th St., San Diego, CA 92105-3005. (53)

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Challenge 55

Rate each article from 0 to 5. 0 means you did not read the article. 1 indicates great dissatisfaction, and 5 indicates great satisfaction. 2, 3 and 4 are shades in between.

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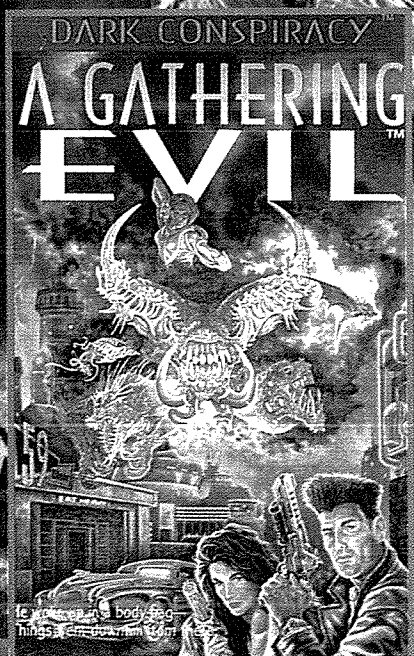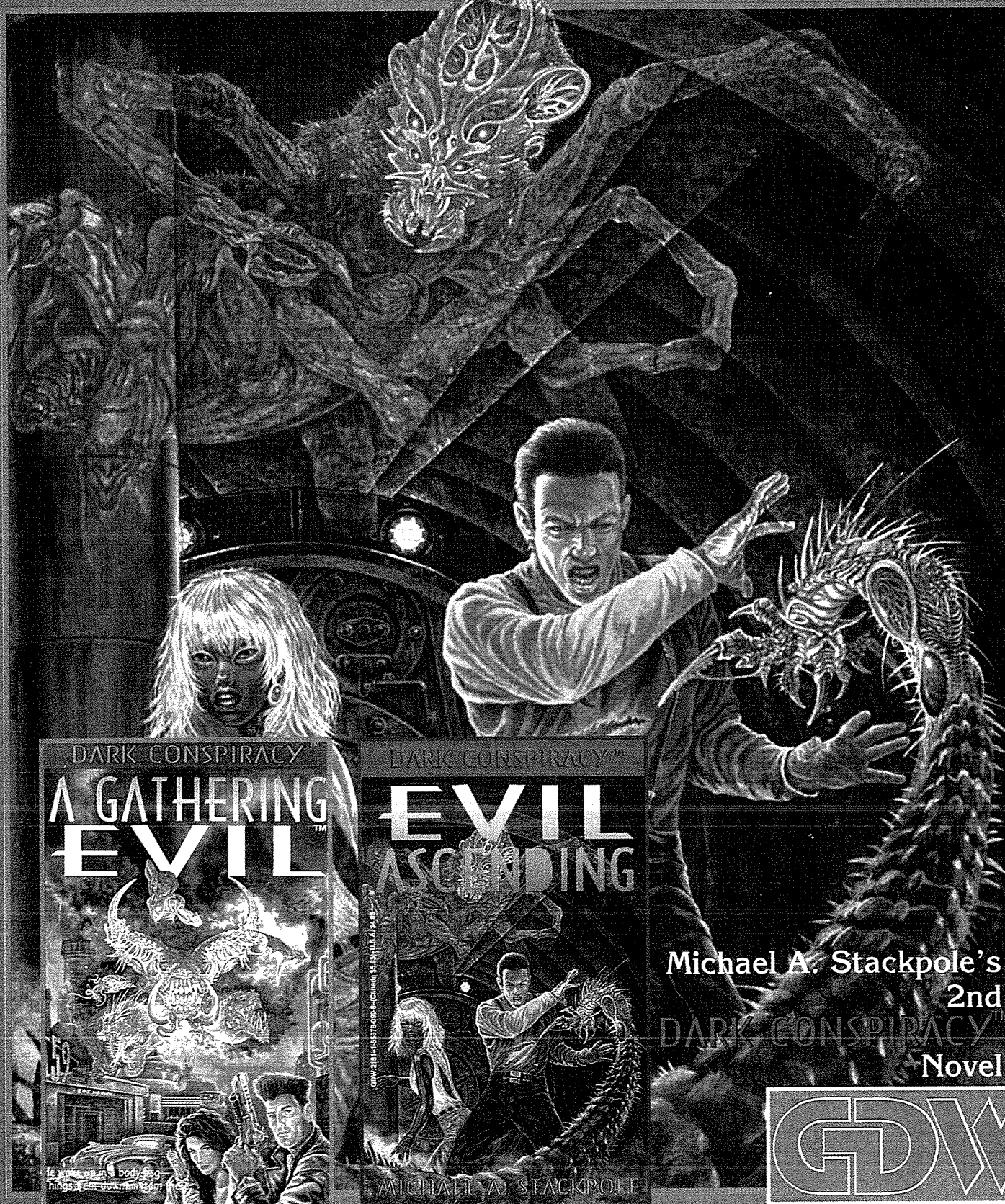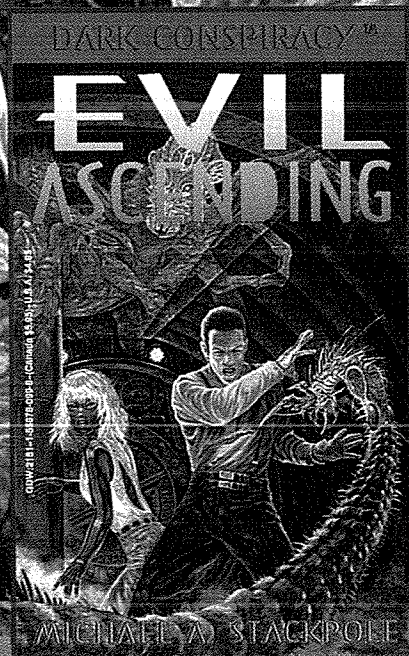
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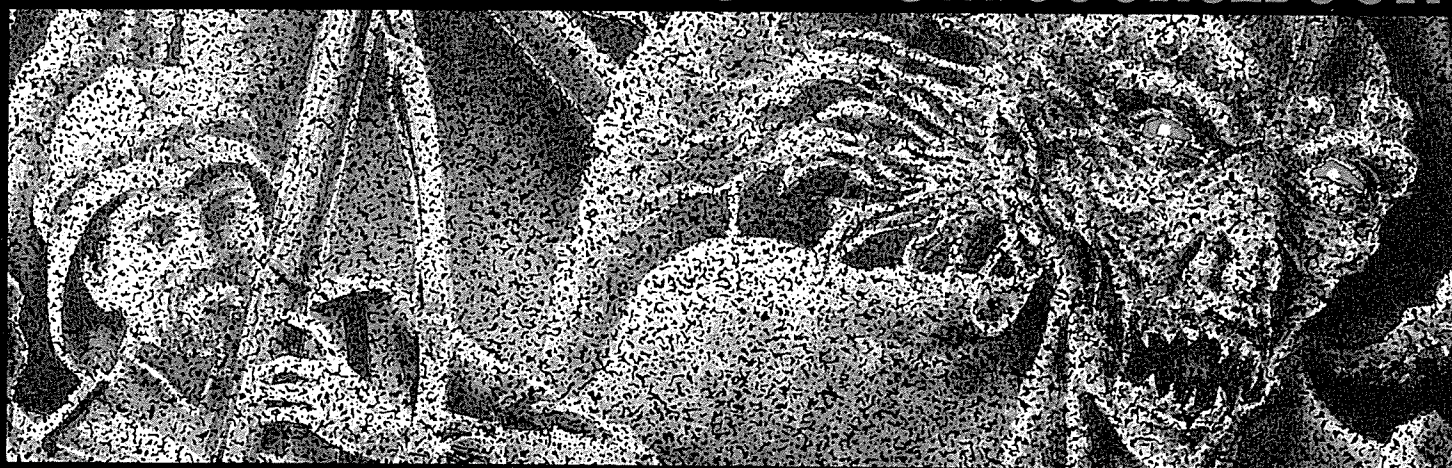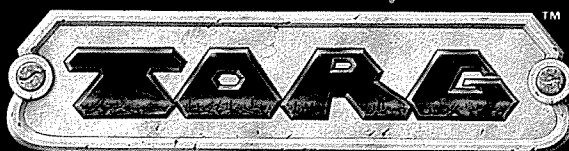
Available from B. Dalton, Waldenbooks, and other fine hobby stores.

Look for *Crucible of Pain* in September and *Creatures of Aysle* in October!