CHALLENGE 64

The Magazine of Science-Fiction Gaming

US $3.50

DARK CONSPIRACY™
Shadow Over New Brunswick
Dustin Browder

CALL OF CTHULHU®
Valley of Twisted Apes
Paul Sudlow

MEGATRAVELLER™
Missing Links
Ken Pick

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WHEN EMPIRES FALL

GDW

TO BOLDLY GO WHERE NO ONE HAS GONE BEFORE...

July 7th, 1993 is when Orb Society intends to officially introduce itself and its ambitious three missions to the community of nations.

We're very happy to announce that Orb Society will invite one of the world's most celebrated persons to officially introduce us. **Guess who? In the text of this announcement, there is the person's most commonly used identifier. The first three persons to correctly identify this person may accompany Orb Society if we meet _____. Good Luck!**

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For example, the medieval adventure will use horses, the castles (Yes, in Europe there are castles for sale), the moats, the deep forests, the rich rolling green, the costumes (reproductions) for each participant, a new identity, an active role in the drama (led by prof. actors), living the life of the era (culture, music etc.) If it isn't real, it isn't an Orb Adventure. It's ten steps beyond live role playing!

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An introduction to Orb Society's prized patron, our representative who embodies the ideals of Orb Society. He is an accomplished British Naval Captain.

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Your glad involvement in the achievement of Orb Society's ambitious three missions.

Watch and enjoy! We may have a starting capital of up to $900,000. This will go well with other planned revenue sources.

– beyond paper, beyond stage, beyond cinema. The challenge is to build a better world and to punctuate the lives of its builders with adventure, living adventure. Founderships are limited, so apply soon!

Yours sincerely, Michael Trewland, H.K.O.

To apply for foundership, send $4.50 (CDN) to **Orb Society**, P.O. Box 26033, King Centre, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2G 4V7. Please enclose the following data: Full name, full address, a brief personal introduction highlighting skills/talents you possess and for now, the type of adventure you request (details later). Acceptance is not based on your skills and talents but is **guaranteed** if your have the spirit for adventure. **Send today!**
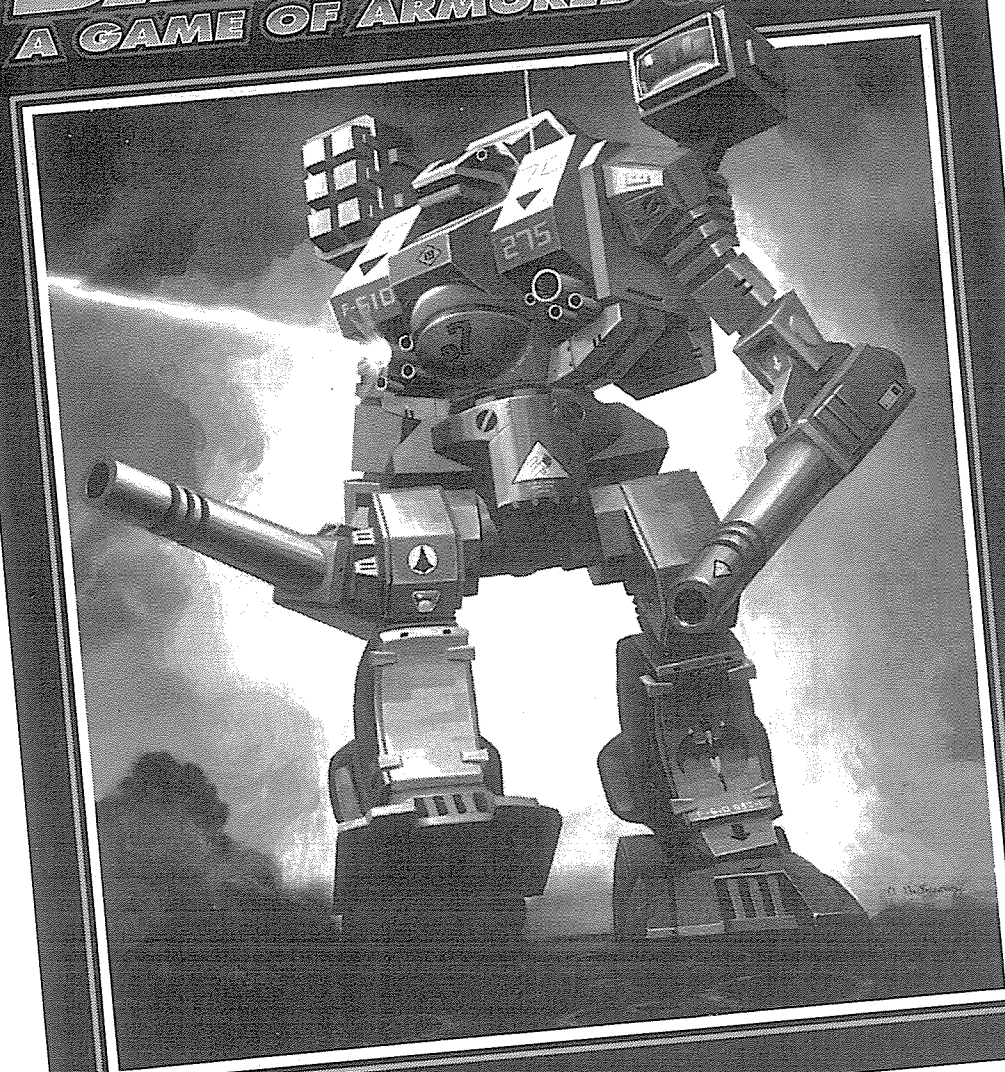
CHALLENGE

The Magazine of Science-Fiction Gaming

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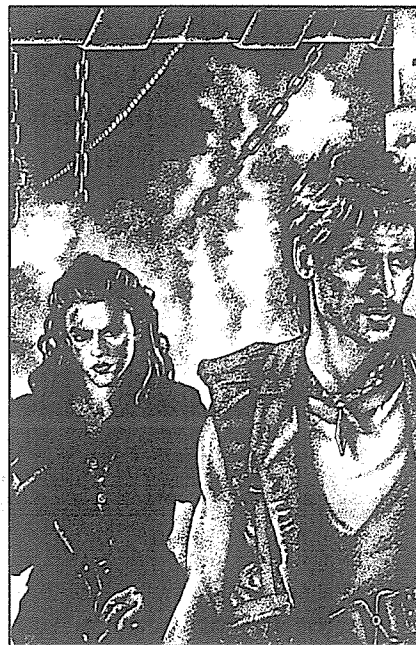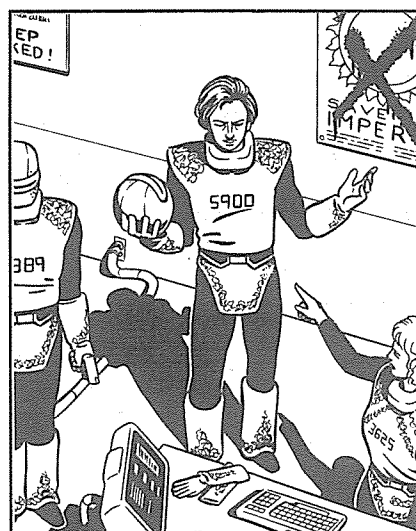
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CHALLENGE *Opinion*

APRIL FOOLS FEEDBACK

I have just received **Challenge 59**, and I wanted to congratulate you on a fine issue. Both the Mysteries and April Fools section were well done. I really enjoyed it.

The April Fools section contained a good amount of genuinely funny material, a lot of which many readers will not understand. Fortunately, I was in on some of it, like the David C. Nilsen Game "Adventures in Moving." The classifieds section was great, too. I almost considered applying for the position of one of Lucan's twisted, sick research scientists until I saw that computer software expertise was necessary. Unfortunately, I'm still using a typewriter. Maybe someday soon.

Without a doubt, though, my favorite piece was the "TNS Conventional Wisdom Watch." As a reader of *Newsweek* and a **Traveller** fan, this was terrific. I'd love to see it in every issue. My only complaint was that Brzk and the League of Antares were treated badly by CW, but then I'm biased.

Keep up the good work on **Challenge.** I look forward to every issue (even those in which my work does not appear). The April issue is something to be proud of.

James Maliszewski
Baltimore, MD

MORE DARK CONSPIRACY!

I am writing to enquire about some aspect of the **Dark Conspiracy** game. Firstly, let me congratulate you on a superb game with some excellent back-up material. I particularly like the idea of the £2.50 suplements and scenarios. Are you planning to release any world sourcebooks? I would love to know more about Phoenix. I would also like to see some proto-dimensional sourcebooks. Although I enjoy creating my own, a sourcebook detailing the dimension in the Fiddleback trilogy, as well as expansion rules for dimension walking covering the abilities up to the level shown by Coyote in **Evil Ascending** would be great.

One final enquiry is the one for which I most eagerly await the answer. That is, do you have any plans to support **Dark Conspiracy** with a range of licenced minatures? I am a keen figure collector and I tend to use minatures as props in my roleplaying sessions.

Keep up the good work both with **Dark Conspiracy** and with **Challenge.**

Simon Webb
London, England

Simon,
Thank you for the kind comments.
Concerning your question about world sourcebooks, we have an **Omniplex** *boxed set scheduled for release in '93. It will be a general source for metroplex adventures, with 25mm scale maps, figures as in* **Minion Hunter,** *and streamlined combat rules for mass combats, as well as for refereeing metroplexes.*

As for lead miniatures, we're expecting to have a line farily soon.

WRITERS GET READY!

CHALLENGE™

has a contest for you!

Rules

Write a unique **Twilight: 2000** (2nd ed.) or **Merc: 2000** adventure set in the Pacific or Asia.

Enter as many times as you like. Each entry should be less than 3000 words in length and include one or two maps. Entries must be typed, double-spaced, on standard-sized white or off-white paper. Staple each submission separately. The first page must contain the author's name, address and social security number, as well as the title of the article and the game it refers to (**Twilight** or **Merc**).

All manuscripts become the property of GDW and cannot be returned. GDW is not responsible for articles lost in the mail.

Judging

Entries will be judged on creativity, content, organization/writing style and feasibility within the gaming universe.

Prizes

Winners will receive a copy of every **Twilight** product GDW publishes in 1993, plus a one-year subscription to **Challenge** magazine. Also, winning entries will be featured in upcoming issues of **Challenge**.

Deadline

All entries must be postmarked by October 1, 1992. Send entries to Adventure Contest, **Challenge** Managing Editor, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646, USA.

Handgun Alternatives

Black powder revolvers for Twilight: 2000.

By Daniel Casquilho

In the worldwide collapse of **Twilight**, a variety of firearms would be available to the civilian populations. NPCs are often armed with high-tech, modern, military weapons, all of which cannot possibly be covered in the rules.

who used the weapon was Wild Bill Hickok, who carried a matched pair of 1851 Navy revolvers.

The 1851 Navy was a light pistol, weighing in at two pounds. It had a 7½-inch barrel length and an overall length of 14 inches. This made it very popular because it was light and could be quite handy.
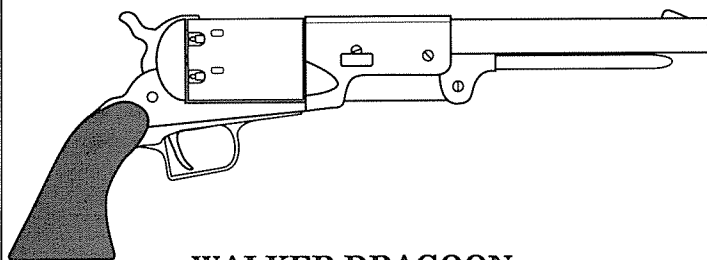
WALKER DRAGOON

The Walker Dragoon was designed by Texas Ranger Captain Samuel H. Walker and Samuel Colt, the originator of the Colt firearms company. The Dragoon was one of the most powerful handguns of its time.

The Dragoon was quite a large weapon at four pounds, 11 ounces. It had a barrel length of nine inches and an overall length of 16 inches. Despite its size, the Dragoon turned out to be liked by the troops and served throughout the Mexican War.
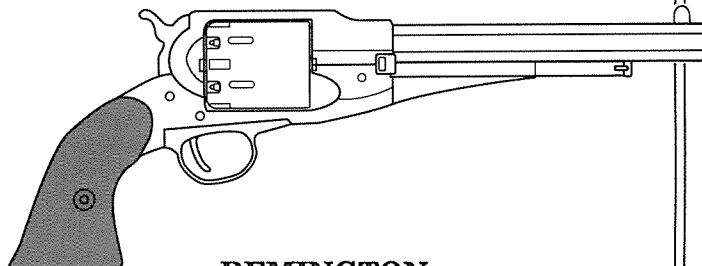
REMINGTON NEW MODEL ARMY REVOLVER

This is one of the last cap 'n' ball designs purchased by the US military. The Remington has a solid frame. This gave it a better accuracy, so was well liked by the troops. It was second in popularity only to the 1851 Navy Colt, both during and after the American Civil War. This .44-caliber revolver was not quite as powerful as the Walker Dragoon, even though they were the same caliber. The cylinder was shorter, so less powder could be loaded into it.

The Remington weighed two pounds, eight ounces. It had a barrel length of eight inches and was 14¼ inches long.
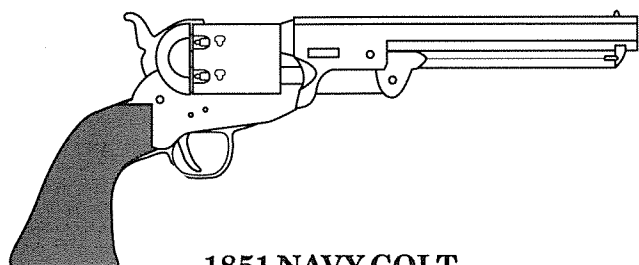
1851 NAVY COLT

This .36-caliber revolver is one of the more famous Colt revolvers. Many of the later revolvers manufactured by Colt followed the styles and patterns originally developed in both the Walker Dragoon and the 1851 Navy. The 1851 Navy was used by both the Confederate and the Union troops throughout the American Civil War. Probably one of the most notable individuals
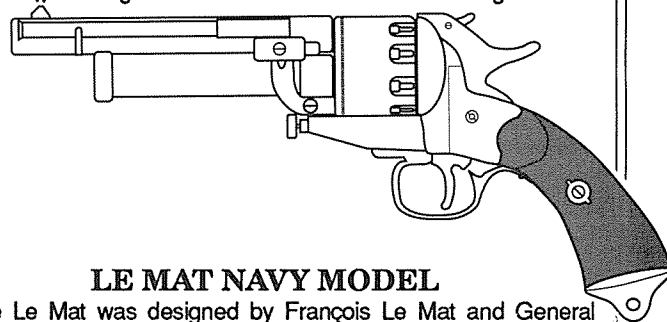
LE MAT NAVY MODEL

The Le Mat was designed by François Le Mat and General Beauregard. It was a nine-shot, .44-caliber revolver with a .65 smoothbore barrel doubling as the cylinder axis pin. This design gave the Confederate officers a very powerful handgun. Another unique feature of the Le Mat was that the same hammer could fire both the

BLACK POWDER REVOLVERS

Weapon	ROF	Dmg	Pen	Blk	Mag	Recoil SS	Recoil Brst	Rng	Ammo	Wt	Cost
Dragoon	SAR	3	1-Nil	2	6R	3	—	10	.44/BP	2.2	250
1851 Navy	SAR	1	Nil	2	6R	2	—	8	.36/BP	1.0	135
Remington	SAR	2	Nil	2	6R	3	—	8	.44/BP	1.2	150
Le Mat .44	SAR	2	Nil	2	9R	3	—	8	.44/BP	1.6	550
Le Mat .65	SS	3	1-Nil	2	1I	4	—	10	.75/BP	1.6	550
Stock	—	—	—	+1	—	-1	—	+3	—	1.0	150

Weight is listed in approximate kilograms. Cost is approximate modern dollar cost.
The stock attachment can only be used with the Walker Dragoon or the 1851 Navy.

revolver or the smoothbore. This was done by flipping a miniature hammerette at the top of the hammer. The user could choose between firing the nine .44-caliber shots or flipping over and firing the single smoothbore. And even when it was completely field stripped, the user could still load and fire the single-barrel smoothbore. The Le Mat was a favorite of General J.E.B. Stuart. General Beauregard also carried a Le Mat. The weapon was mostly manufactured in France and England. Note that the ram rod was located on the left side of the weapon and not below the barrel as in most revolvers.
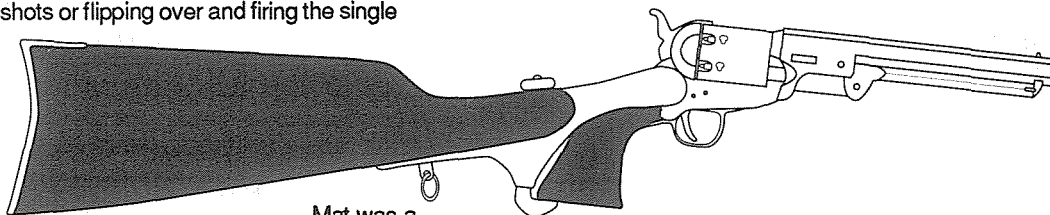
1851 NAVY COLT WITH STOCK

GAMING IDEAS

Black powder revolvers can be introduced into your campaign in a variety of ways. Following are three examples.

Gun Collector: A gun collector has used his collection to arm his family, friends, men or gang. This can be a way to introduce many different weapon types to your PCs.

Junior Militia: A local militia uses black powder weapons to train younger members, leaving the modern weapons to the more experienced men.

General: A man riding a horse and dressed in the uniform of a Confederate general shows up. He claims to be J.E.B. Stuart, complete with his Le Mat. This NPC can provide either a comic relief or a real problem.

NEW EQUIPMENT NEEDED

All the revolvers will need the same items to fire—namely, a ball of the correct diameter, some black powder, a patch and a primer cap. For ease of play, the black powder ammo listings found in the basic rules can be used.

Ball, Black Powder, Patch and Primer Cap: These may be wrapped in paper as separate units or in grouped in bulk. The powder used should not be the same powders used in modern firearms. Most black powder revolvers are not strong enough to use the new, more powerful, powders.

Weight: 1 kg per 40; *Price:* $25 per 40.

Black Powder Tool Kit: A black powder tool kit contains the wrenches, ball molds, powder measure, powder flask and cleaning tools needed to maintain a black powder firearm. Cleaning is very important to the life of a black powder firearms, as the powder residue can damage the weapons very quickly.

Weight: 1.5 kg.; *Price:* $150.

Stock: An attachable stock can be added to the Walker Dragoon or the 1851 Navy Colt to create a light carbine. Statistics are listed in the weapons table. Ω

The following were used as references and idea material:

Navy Arms Company Catalog, *689 Bergen Blvd., Ridgefield, NJ 07657.*

Guns of the Wild West *by George Markham, published by Arms and Armor Press.*

Ship Shape

By John T. Swann

JAMISON-PRICE SHIPPING

T he PCs are approached by a courier who identifies his employer as Mark Price, junior partner of Jamison-Price Shipping. Price has heard of the PCs by reputation and would like to arrange a "mutually beneficial" meeting. If the PCs agree to the interview, they are directed to go immediately to a small hotel just outside of Port Angeles, Washington.

SITUATION

Price informs the PCs that valuable shipments leaving his company have been found short of the full order lately. Price believes there are leaks in his company who inform a group of smugglers about valuable cargo. Price would like the mercs to go undercover, discover the leaks and subdue the smugglers. He initially offers $15,000 but is willing to pay up to a maximum of $25,000. He will pay $5000 up front, with the rest upon completion of the mission.

JAMISON-PRICE SHIPPING

Jamison-Price Shipping sees a fair turnover in employees, so a few new faces will not rouse much suspicion. But simply reporting for work is one thing—earning the confidence of the crew is another. To gain any information during their undercover stint, the PCs must "mesh" with the employees. Skills which may help the PCs fit in include Persuasion, Scrounging (resourcefulness), Small Boats and Mechanic.

Even if they make a few new friends, all will not be smooth sailing. Each day, the PCs will face 1D6+2 situations that could jeopardize their cover. The exact nature of these situations is up to the referee, but some suggestions include: hidden weapons could be accidentally revealed, incriminating evidence could be seen in the PCs' lockers, the PCs may not tell consistent or convincing tales, their questions might seem too pointed, etc. The referee can determine the seriousness of each potential breach of security, depending on how the PCs handle the encounters.

Eventually, if they earn the employees' trust, the PCs will be approached by Peter Davies, one of the night security guards. Davies will offer the PCs a "cash bonus" if they "help with night security on Wednesday."

NIGHT SECURITY

As they probably suspect, a large cargo hand-off is planned for Wednesday night, with Davies and Vince Harmon in charge. When the PCs arrive, they will be met by Davies. Harmon will arrive soon after on his motorcycle, acting skittish and casting the PCs more than one sideways glance. Shortly thereafter, the smugglers will make their debut from the area of the docks.

If the PCs did something earlier to jeopardize their cover, the smugglers may have set up an ambush.

Otherwise, it will be up to the PCs to make the first aggressive move.

The shipping area is well lit, so there will initially be no penalties for combat. However, the lights may be shot out. Davies and Harmon will initially fight on the side of the smugglers. But neither is willing to die for the cause, and they will surrender or flee if their lives are on the line.

NPCS

Peter Davies: A night security guard for Jamison-Price Shipping. He is the one who originated the idea of leaking information to smugglers, and he talked Harmon into the scheme. Davies is a Novice NPC. He has Small Boat: 1, Mechanic: 1 and Small Arms (Pistol): 2. He is armed with a .357 magnum.

Vince Harmon: A night security guard for Jamison-Price Shipping. Harmon dislikes the idea of inviting the PCs to help in this mission. However, he and Davies cannot handle this large shipment alone and must seek help. Harmon is an Experienced NPC. He has Small Boat: 1, Mechanic: 2, Small Arms (Pistol): 3 and Unarmed Combat: 1. He is armed with a .357 magnum.

Smugglers: There are 11 smugglers, including Michael Clive and Janos (see below). The smugglers are loyal to their leaders, and won't lose morale unless Clive runs or is incapacitated and Janos is incapacitated. The smugglers are Experienced NPCs. They have Small Boat: 2, Mechanic: 1, Small Arms (Rifle): 3 and Melee Combat (Unarmed): 1. Each is armed with an M9, an Uzi with an extra clip and a frag grenade.

Michael Clive: Clive is the captain of the smugglers. He shows a carefree, nonchalant attitude, but in reality is a stoic killer. Clive is skilled, but if he looks to be outclassed, he will make a run for it. Clive is a Veteran NPC. He has Small Boat: 5, Mechanic: 3, Navigation: 4, Small Arms (Pistol): 5 and Melee Combat (Unarmed): 4. Clive is armed with an HP-35 and a Vz-62 Skorpion with two extra clips. He wears a Kevlar vest.

Janos: Janos is the massive Polish first mate. He says nothing. Janos will fight until he is killed or incapacitated, and will take as many PCs as possible with him. Janos is a Veteran NPC. He has Small Boat: 4, Mechanic: 4, Heavy Weapons: 3, Small Arms (Rifle): 5 and Melee Combat (Unarmed): 5. Janos is armed with a .38 revolver, an FAMAS with four extras clips, and two frag grenades. He wears a Kevlar vest.

PAYOFF

If the PCs are successful in defeating the smugglers, they will be paid the amount promised and may keep any weapons they confiscate. Price will offer to retain the PCs as regular enforcers. If they accept, they will receive an extra $5000 stipend.

The PCs will receive partial payment if they capture Davies and Harmon, but not the smugglers. Ω

Jamison-Price Shipping has a leak.
Can a group of undercover PCs solve the mystery
and bring the smugglers to justice?

UNHOLIER than Thou

H umanity has always garnered strength from faith in a higher order, a universal structure that rewards the just and punishes evil. However, in times as troubled as Hard Times, the need for something to believe in can become a vulnerability—and an unsuspecting innocent may be an easy target for a clever con-man. In the worst cases, this evil-wrapped-in-righteousness can dominate whole nations or planets. And when it does, no one is safe.

This adventure may be set anytime after late 1124. The characters may hear of the adventure opportunities while travelling within Diaspora sector, or they may be contacted by any of the worlds in need of assistance. The characters should not be too familiar with the Ecclesiasty of Narquel prior to the adventure.

The adventure and subsector data are extensions of the material presented in GDW's **Hard Times** supplement. "Unholier than Thou" may stand on its own or may be used to expand the supplement. Referees are encouraged to offer players the opportunity to pursue some of the situations in the library data as sideline adventures as well as local color.

WORSHIPERS OF POWER

As the characters enter either the Narquel (SS A) or Shadigi (SSE) subsector, they are sure to hear about the Ecclesiasty of Narquel. A once-placid religion, it has recently taken a swing toward radical militantism—and seems poised to make a bid for dominance in this region of space. Unfortunately, the ecclesiasty is not simply a momentary aberration of the spiritually misguided, but a front-organization for ruthless—and utterly unspiritual—humans of limitless ambition.

Founded late in 1123, the ecclesiasty arose from Narquel's previous government, a religious dictatorship known as the Theocrat's Administrate. Unhappy with the ruling theocrat's nonaggressive stance, his ministers restructured the religious government into a form that was more responsive to secular aims. Within the year, Narquel occupied two neighboring worlds and established the ecclesiasty.

The religious fundamentalists of the ecclesiasty have a militaristic bent, combining their spiritual duty to convert with their secular desire to conquer. The seven-person ruling board of the city-state perceives the nearby worlds of Soyuz and Gasudarsk as major impediments to expansion. Sensing Narquel's disfavor, these two systems have contracted the shipyards at Neto to build military hulls for them, while monitoring the ecclesiasty's growth and increased aggressiveness.

The ecclesiasty military is a TL12 spit-and-polish organization. Ecclesiasty uniforms tend to be a bit gaudy, sporting red and gold piping, as well as various medals and ribbons commemorating theological accomplishments and military service. TL11 combat armor is still standard; production of TL12 suits hasn't caught up with the demand.

One particular unit, the Orthodoxen Brigade, warrants special mention. It is a respected shock-unit, and applicants must have a Strength attribute of 11 or better to be considered for admission. Extreme strength is essential for the "Oxen," since their standard arms are a mix of 4cm ram automatic grenade launchers, PGMP-12s and auto-shotguns. Many adversaries have simply assumed that the Orthodoxen are a high-firepower berserker unit. They have discovered that this is not the case. Although the average Oxen intelligence is not remarkable, they are well-disciplined troops with good leaders on both the officer and NCO level.

The ecclesiasty's officer corps has maintained a dueling tradition, so blades and cutlasses are seen frequently in place of or in addition to sidearms.

CHUEJOU REPO

Where: Chuejou B253454-A (0510, Narquel subsector).

Contact: Listening to rumors on Soyuz (or anywhere interstellar gossips congregate).

While travelling through the Narquel sub-sector, the PCs learn that there's a bit of friction developing on the planet of Chuejou.

Chuejou has been one of the ecclesiasty's primary targets for almost a year, but until recently, the ecclesiasty had been unable to get a legitimate foothold on the planet. The Chuejoun government, the ChobolBund, had prohibited Narquellian companies from buying real estate or stockholding positions that gave them control over anything in the Chuejou system. However, several months ago, the ecclesiasty assumed ownership of a failing company on the planet Isaasakhur (0407, Narquel). This company's holdings included a small business on Chuejou. Within three weeks, the company's new Narquellian owners had assigned 40 security guards to the Chuejoun installation. Chuejou asked the Narquellians to remove this force; the request was ignored. In all probability, the security platoon is just the first wave of a major troop buildup.

Some hotheaded members of the ChobolBund wish to nationalize all on-planet assets, which would allow them to legally evict the Narquellians. Wiser members have dismissed this option; having the Chobol-Bund usurp their rightful property may be just what the Narquellians want. The ecclesiasty would then have an excuse to take overt action against Chuejou.

Instead, the ChobolBund wants to pursue a more indirect strategy. Financial analysts have discovered that the Isaasakhuran company had outstanding debts to several small Chuejoun companies. The new Narquellian owners have not honored those debts. Accordingly, the ChobolBund has intimated that it would "not be averse" to private attempts at repossessing the property as repayment for the debts.

Job

There are several ways in which the players can become involved with the efforts to dislodge the Narquellian presence on Chuejou. They could join the repo trade and attempt to oust the Narquellians from their Chuejoun facilities. They might join with other potential repossessors and retake the facility by force. Or they could attempt to

(Hex map: SOYUZ, BAYSE, NARQUEL, FERRY subsectors — Narquel / Shadigi)

B ○ SOYUZ · X ● BAYSE · D Vita Levu · D ○ Sadiishumar · A ○ · D ● NARQUEL · D ● Quelleff · B ● Chuejou · Narquel / Shadigi · C ● Mosul · D ○ Emma · C ○ Quota · B ● FERRY · D ○ Thea · X ● Toga · D ● Renaasha · B ○ Martina · C ● Khaavu · E ○ Allenwald · E Kovuu · C ● Ainor Lisea · E ○ Baanis · D ● Chengtu · D ● Kashaashii · △● · C ○ Gai · C ○ Ninja · D ● Jalhoun · D ● Karaguuka · B ● Niilushaga · Terra Far · C ○ Sudan
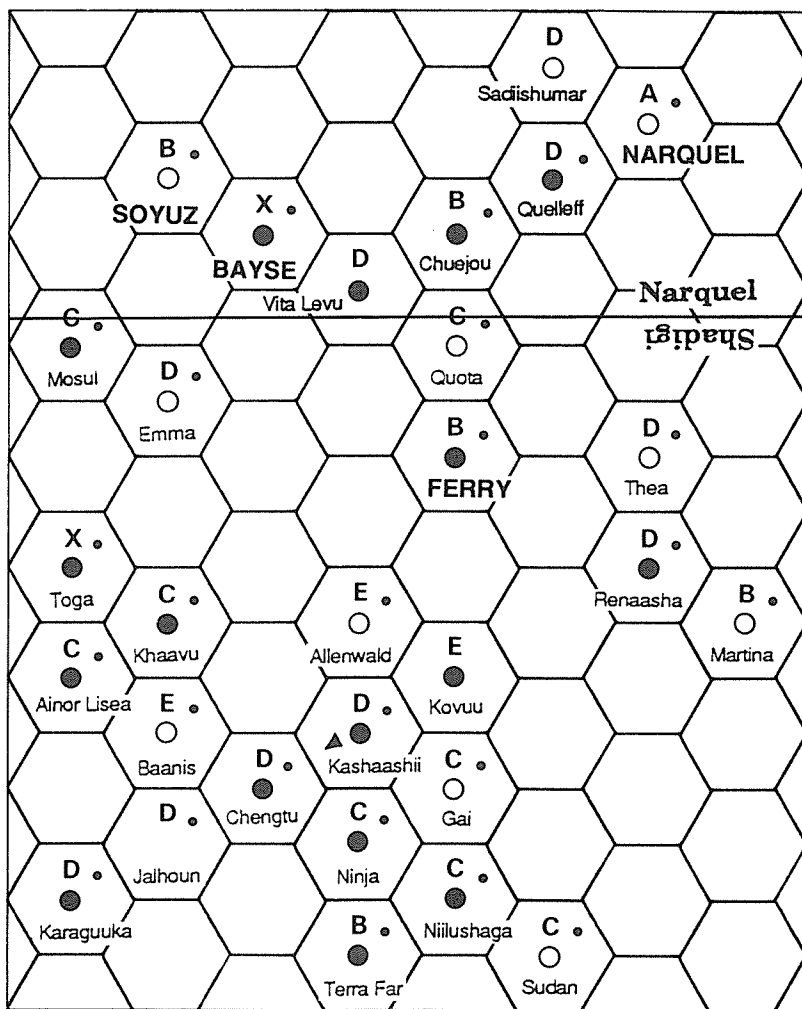
compel the current occupants to evacuate of their own free will (a false fire alarm, dangerous equipment malfunction, etc.). Either way, the referee should balance the amount of monetary reward to keep it commensurate with the level of responsibility and risk taken by the PCs.

Referee

A direct attack on the Narquellian front company is unlikely to result in success, unless the PCs operate or form a merc unit. The destruction caused by a direct assault will be expensive to repair, and such an overt operation might cause political problems for the Chuejouns. Infiltration by a small unit is more advisable. If such a unit were to seize control of the facility's communications, power plant and other essential operating systems, an infiltration should incur minimal casualties and damage. Less violent ruses might also work, such as fire alarms, widespread malfunction of the waste removal system, plumbing failure and flooding. Once the majority of Narquellian personnel evacuate, occupation by the repossessors should be easy. The intelligence level of the opposition is not particularly high, and if the PCs come up with a plan that skirts the normal security precautions and strikes at vulnerabilities, they should meet with success.

However, time is against them—the Narquellians are sure to send more troops. If the PCs still haven't made their move after one week, the next 15-man detachment of security guards will arrive. The commander of this group is shrewder than the previous CO and will be more difficult to take by surprise. In that same week, Someela Likharam (see page 16) will arrive to oversee the operation. She is extremely clever and will not fall for a simple trick. She is also quite accomplished in legal matters, and will be able to delay or defeat any legal avenue the PCs might try. The PCs will not be able to capture or incapacitate Someela Likharam, who will flee to fight another day.

With every additional week that passes, 15 more troops will arrive, and the installation's protective measures will improve.

The Narquellian security forces are armed with snub revolvers (50%) and 5mm assault rifles (50%). They wear flak vests, and 25% of them are equipped with 5km headset radios. All troops have skill levels of 1 in all relevant areas. The command staff (10% of the total force) have skill levels of 2.

If the PCs are a well armed, highly skilled group, the referee should consider adding a fire team of troops from the Orthodoxen Brigade. The Oxen will have been smuggled into the facility a week before the PCs arrive.

They are armed and armored in accordance with their unit norms. These are high-morale troops; they will neither flee nor panic.

SCUTTLED ALONG THE WAY(S)

Where: Terra Far (0416, Shadigi subsector)

Contact: This adventure could come to light when the PCs put into any port to conduct routine repairs and maintenance and swap stories and rumors with the local workers, or when the PCs are contacted by a shadowy representative from the government of Ferry (0516) who's heard about their fine work on Chuejou and wants them to solve a problem for him.

Some weeks after the Chuejou affair, the PCs will learn that a clandestine security organization on Ferry is interested in hiring the group to do a little "aggressive research."

After some skullduggery, the group finally makes contact with the organization's representative, who refers to himself as Elijah. Over watered-down drinks in a seedy startown bar, the PCs learn that not everyone in the Shadigi subsector is happy about Ferry's plan to upgrade its starport to an A-class facility within the next five years. In particular, the LightFleet Corporation of Terra Far (0831), a noted and respected producer of commercial and paramilitary starships, has exhibited mixed emotions about this development.

Almost 70% of LightFleet's contracts are with the government of Ferry or major corporations on that planet. If that business leaves LightFleet's ways on Terra Far, the company may fold. There are whispers in underground circles that the executives of LightFleet are willing to take preventive measures to ensure their continued dominance as a local starship manufacturer.

Job

Elijah wants the PCs to investigate the rumors regarding LightFleet Corporation. The characters are to determine who at LightFleet is involved with this conspiracy and how they are planning to stop (or ruin) Ferry's starport upgrade project. To conduct this investigation, the PCs will need to travel to Terra Far.

On the Case

When the PCs make planetfall on Terra Far, they note that it is a pleasant planet with an overburdened starship production industry. Otherwise, there doesn't seem anything particularly unique about the planet.

Although Terra Far's law level of 4 doesn't prohibit much, it certainly does make big personal artillery an unacceptable weapon option. The local law enforcement agencies take a dim view of armed groups roaming their streets, regardless of the legality of the

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weapons. Rule of thumb—have a reason to be carrying the weapon or leave it at home.

Investigating LightFleet through conventional sources will turn up only conventional information. Therefore, the PCs will eventually need to resort to alternate methods.

Computer Break-In: This is a Formidable task, unless the PC hackers proceed with extreme care. It will take several days to wind delicately through the maze of defensive programming which LightFleet uses to protect its central computer. After an exhaustive search of files, a bright PC might notice that a number of sequentially coded correspondence files all have random data glitches within them. If these glitches are strung together, the "random data" spells out a number of terse messages concerning a plot to sabotage Ferry's starport upgrade project. The plan involves seeding agents into the work force contracted for the upgrade. The construction saboteurs will make sure that a series of interconnected flaws remain hidden until the project is completed. These faults can be triggered for collapse with a minuscule explosive device—rather like breathing on a house of cards.

Physical Break-In: Both live and robot security units patrol the premises, which sports ample surveillance fixtures of various types. A lack of forethought is likely to result in early detection and a sharp firefight with the security forces.

Not only will the PCs come across the computer break-in information, but they will find an electronic (computer mail) memo to one of the conspirators sent by "Aunt Sophie." The memo refers to "the architect's model" and how to recruit the "best possible technicians" for the job of constructing it. The stilted language marks the document as a coded communiqué. Backtracking the memo's electronic letterhead (user account and codename, rather than a physical address) is a Difficult task. If the PCs succeed at this task, they will discover that the individual who sent the note works for a Narquellian-financed import company which is suspected of serving as a front for the ecclesiasty's covert operations. Observation of the import company will reveal that well known ecclesiasty operative Someela Likharam occasionally visits its premises. She is probably the face behind the name "Aunt Sophie."

This particular piece of information is critical. It indicates that the leadership behind the plot to undermine Ferry's starport project is not coming from the executives of LightFleet, but is in fact being provided by Someela and the ecclesiasty.

Infiltration: Instead of breaking in, the PCs may try to get nighttime employment at LightFleet. There are some openings for security personnel and robot-custodian over-

Narquel

System	Hex	1124 UPP	1228 UPP		1128 Statistics	
Soyuz	0209	B300948-F	B300940-D	Hi In Va Na	401 Ou	MO II
Bayse	0301	X6859B8-7	X685900-6	Hi	505 Ou	K1 V
Vita Levu	0410	B6A38CE-D	D6A38FA-8		300 Ou	M2 V K4 D
Chuejou	0510	B253499-F	B253454-A	Ni Po	224 Ou	KO V M3 D
Sadiishumar	0608	B8D0685-E	D8D0682-A	Ni De	910 Ou Ec	GO V
Quelleff	0609	A624753-F	D624710-C		505 Ou Ec	G1 V
Narquel	0709	A1109DG-F	A1109FD-C	Hi In Na	505 Ou Ec	K4 V

Ec: Ecclesiasty of Narquel.

Narquel: This planet's state religion is known as the Panamica Orthodoxy, a radical off-shoot of the Panamica creed. In its original form, the Panamica creed interwove the gentler tenets of Judeo-Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism and animistic traditions of old Terra. The new Panamica Orthodoxy is essentially militant pacifism; all sophonts must submit to the infinite wisdom and goodness of the Unknowable One and its secular ministers.

Narquel's last theocrat was deposed by his council of ministers, who now rule as the Theocratic Administrate. Their desire to convert the universe is being conducted with a particularly aggressive flair, and some observers wonder if the ministers are simply using the creed as a shield for their own political adventurism.

Shadigi

System	Hex	1124 UPP	1228 UPP			1128 Statistics	
Mosul	0111	C5868B9-9	C5868B7-7			401 Ou	M1 V
Toga	0113	X674200-5	X674221-0	Ni Lo	F	812 Wi	K8 V M4 D
Ainor Lisea	0114	C777510-B	C777510-8	Ni Ag		704 Wi	M3 IV M9 D
Karaguuka	0116	D789655-9	D789655-7	Ni Ri C:O		214 Ou	G1 V M4 D
Emma	0211	D5A0888-8	D5A0850-4	De	F	802 Ou	M9 IV
Khaavu	0213	C327631-B s	C327630-7	Ni		404 Ou	K4 V
Baanis	0214	C100120-F	E100173-7	Ni Va Lo		903 Ou	K5 V
Jalhoun	0215	C210320-B	D210373-5	Ni Lo	F	704 Ou	K9 V M6 D
Chengtu	0315	C537521-D	D537542-8	Ni		313 Ou	K1 V
Allenwald	0413	D110400-C	E110420-6	Ni	F	303 Ou	M1 V M8 D M3 D
Kashaashii	0414	D574400-B s	D574471-5 s	Ni		703 Ou	M1 V
Ninja	0415	C665862-B	C665864-A	Ri C:6 0:0416		303 Ou	K6 III M1 D
Terra Far	0416	A4448BF-F	B4448BA-D			113 Ou	M4 V G5 D
Quota	0511	A100362-F N	C1003A8-8	Ni Va Lo		813 Ou	K2 V
Ferry	0512	A647955-F	B647910-E	Hi In		203 Ou	F3 V
Kovuu	0514	D374373-B	E374393-7	Ni Lo		800 Ou	G6 V
Gai	0515	C110673-E	C110676-D	Ni Na		534 Ou	M0 V M6 D
Niilushaga	0516	C773559-C	C773550-A	Ni		803 Ou	M4 V M7 VI
Sudan	0616	B6A0000-E	C6A0071-7	Ni De Ba Lo		725 Ou	F2 V
Thea	0712	D100100-E	D100172-9	Ni Va Lo		302 Ou	A8 V
Renaasha	0713	D341410-9	D341410-6	Ni Po		204 Ou	M8 IV K3 D
Martina	0813	B11068A-E	B110693-A	Ni Na		514 Ou	M4 V M6 D

Terra Far: Terra Far is the primary source of maintenance for ships travelling the small jump-1 route that snakes through Shadigi subsector. It is a regular stop on almost every captain's itinerary. A locally grown plant, the maratmor, is a powerful stimulant that local underworld kingpins refine into a drug known as morandmor. Terra Far Downport is a major distribution point for this dangerous substance, even though local authorities are attempting to put an end to the trade.

Ferry: Ferry is run by the ManuFactors Associative, a collection of companies that had dominated the planet in the pre-Rebellion era. Ferry is a major source of high-tech goods for the surrounding area, as well as the key transport node connecting Shadigi subsector to Narquel subsector. It is also a major producer of TL12-14 military craft, particularly grav vehicles and fighters—two staples of the booming mercenary trade.

Many of the starships that move through Ferry are 600 tons displacement and greater, and most of them are jump-2 capable. These factors attract a wealthier clientele than is customarily observed in most of the high-volume, B-class ports throughout Diaspora. As a result, Ferry's goods tend to remain in the hands of merchants and customers who are already powerful and rich. Few high-tech cargoes trickle down to the small, tech-starved worlds nearby.

seers, but the PCs will have to wait quite a while before they have legitimate access to the executive areas they need to search. However, this is still a lot easier than having to cut or sneak into LightFleet's very secure corporate headquarters.

Forceful Interrogation of Suspects: This is almost sure to backfire, even if the suspects have been conclusively identified. Unless the PCs are willing to engage in severe physical threats, the suspects will refuse to speak. The PCs will have to commit a number of crimes (abduction, unlawful detainment, assault and battery) to even attempt this kind of coercion. These felonies will ruin the strength of the PCs' case.

Referee

If the PCs gain enough information to prove that the junior executives at LightFleet were acting without their corporation's knowledge or consent, the most grateful individuals will be the senior executives of that same company (which has just completed secret negotiations to build a facility at Ferry's new starport). LightFleet's executives will clear up any legal entanglements the PCs might have accrued while conducting their break-ins and will even pay each of them a reward of Cr700. They will not help the PCs with any charges of abduction or other felonies.

If PCs enjoy the kind of skullduggery involved in this adventure, they could expand their operations. For instance, they might wish to gather damning evidence against the Narquellian export company and Someela Likharam.

A squad of the ecclesiasty's Orthodoxen troops is deployed inside the offices and the warehouse of the export company. If the PCs try breaking in, the Oxen will open up with everything they've got.

If the PCs are hanging around and acting suspiciously, the Narquellians will tail the characters to their lodgings and try to discover who they are and what they're doing. If the PCs are troublesome or unusually persistent, the Oxen will be ordered to set up an ambush near their lodgings. The troops are supposed to take the PCs as prisoners, but they will not risk their own men to do so.

SOMEELA LIKHARAM

Someela Likharam was born into a very religious family on Narquel and is one of the ecclesiasty's most effective "liaisons to the unlearned." Likharam is responsible for interacting with individuals who do not ascribe to the tenets of the state religion. She excels in this role, largely because she finds it easy to be tolerant of, and patient with, outsiders. This empathy is a product of her own experience; her mixed Solomani-Vilani heritage has always attracted the unwelcome attention of bigots.

Although not a fanatic, Someela is a true believer of the Orthodox creed and is willing to do anything to advance its spread. Her current assignment takes her to worlds in the Narquel and Shadigi subsectors, and puts her in daily contact with the unlearned.

Someela is the primary contact for any off-worlders pursuing mercantile or military contracts with the ecclesiasty. She also is responsible for solving any problems created by off-worlders. This dual role means she could encounter the PCs' either as a potential employer or a potential adversary on subsequent adventures in this region.
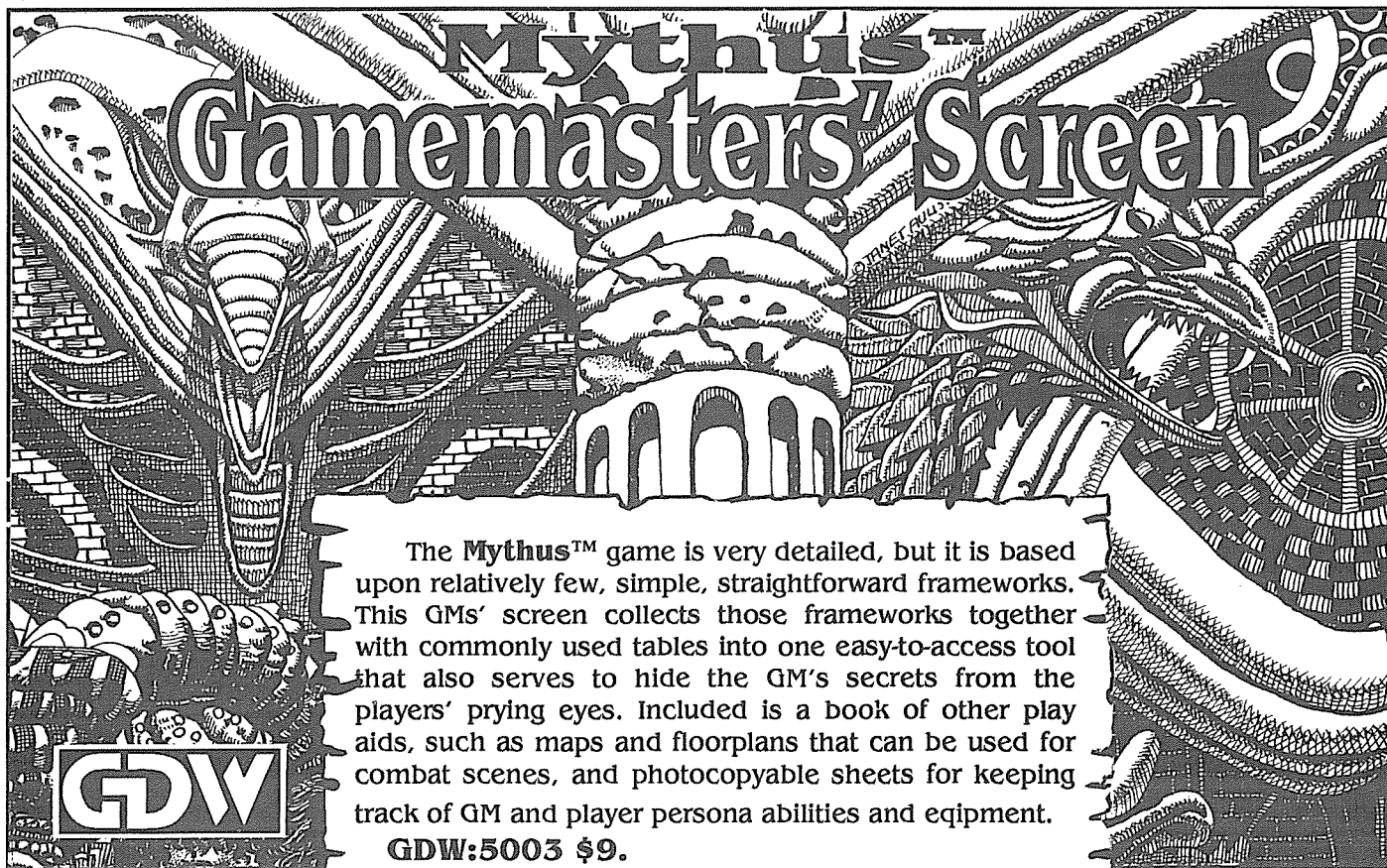
SUBSECTOR DATA

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

Note that the changes caused by Hard Timers do not occur simultaneously. Referees should consult the **MegaTraveller** supplement **Hard Times** to determine the time and order in which these changes occur. For those who do not have **Hard Times**, a world tends to experience UPP change in this order—starport, tech level, population, government, law level. Changes are staggered at about 270-day intervals. So if a referee decides the starport value officially changes on 001-1125, the next change (tech level) should occur around 217-1125. Ω

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

TRAVELLER News Service

Vaward/Old Expanses (1106 A795A99-F)   122-1127

¶Free traders operating in the Old Expanses have reported a small flotilla of Hiver starships passing through the sector, travelling corespinward from the Solomani frontier. Travelling under the name of the Imperial History Club of Manchus, the group of ships has initiated contact with the human ships in all reports so far collected.

¶The flotilla, numbering between eight and 12 well-armed vessels in the 200-800-ton range, requests human ships to come alongside for trade and discussion. Those ships which have accepted report that they are allowed to trade for a small quantity of high quality Hiver-made goods, and are invited to stay for a reception. The reception, like the trading opportunity, is observed by armed Ithklur guards, and consists of a meal and a several-hour conversation with members of the Imperial History Club. These members described their voyage into Imperial space as a "field trip," which is apparently headed to Diaspora, and then beyond to Daibei.

¶Many of the traders reporting were not familiar with Hivers, and found the experience to be strange, particularly the quality of the food served at the reception. Said one trader, "For the most part, they don't seem to have a real grasp of the kind of stuff that we consider to be edible. But the corn dogs were good."

Khavle/Diaspora (2605 C334965-B)   141-1127

¶"Hard Times got you down? Why not fast-forward right through them? Go to sleep today in the comfort of our safe hibernation pods and awake when things are better."
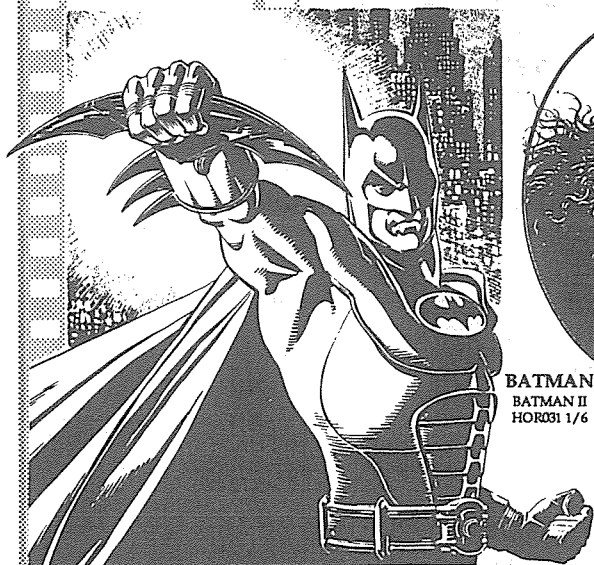
¶So reads the ad copy from one of the growing number of low-berth companies operating in the rimward portions of the former Imperium. While some of these companies are simply selling low berth units to interested buyers, others maintain large hibernation facilities where patrons can come and rent space for a pre-arranged period of time. "It's nothing new. It's just like a hotel, except instead of spending the night, you spend a decade," explains another reassuring advertisement.

¶There are an estimated 25 companies offering these services in Diaspora and the Old Expanses alone, with more springing up in Daibei and the Solomani Rim.

¶The principle is not a new one; "timer clubs," composed of members who "travel to the future" via low-berth for recreational purposes, have existed for centuries. In fact, the oldest, the Timer Club of Terra, has apparently appeared to endorse some of these services, and offer some of its own. However, the sheer number of such organizations is unprecedented, and is a measure of the lack of faith many former Imperial citizens have in the near future.

¶"People are desperate. They don't know where to turn for the needs and answers that used to be provided for them, and we provide the alternative. Our rapid growth is proof that we do provide something that people today want," explained a representative of one of these companies.

¶Reportedly, many planetary governments, plagued with unemployment and distribution shortfalls for the most basic goods and services, are making plans to put large portions of their societies to sleep for several years at a time. This will reduce the strain on food supplies, and will only require the trickle of electrical power to keep the low berth running. Current plans call for these governments to offer financial incentives for their citizens to "lay off" for a year, and will pay for all expenses associated with the installation and revival procedures. Several options are being considered, including family plans where entire families are frozen and revived together, and relay plans, where family members rotate turns being frozen and staying out and keeping the family affairs up to date. Both of these plans ensure that families age at approximately the same relative rate. Addressing such emotional concerns are crucial in selling these plans to a population, according to several government officials.

¶In response to this movement, the Travellers' Aid Society has issued the following statement:

¶"The Travellers' Aid Society has long been opposed to the practice of cryogenic suspension as a form of interstellar travel. It should therefore come as no surprise that the Society views the recent increase in low berth use with concern. However, we wish people to know that this stems from no collusion with industries that provide more expensive modes of live travel. The Society understands that such modes are beyond the means of many Imperial citizens, and that our clientele represents those who can afford live travel. In addition, the current profusion of cryogenic services is not intended for spatial travel, but rather for temporal travel to a better future.

¶"This announcement is not an advisory to our membership; rather it is intended for nonmembers. Cryogenic suspension is an inherently risky venture. It is fraught with potential for abuse and deception. While you are hibernating, you have no control over your own future or the future of your loved ones. Be aware that even the most reputable and well-intentioned companies and governments can lose control of your hibernation while you are helplessly frozen. In some cases, low sleep may be the best option for many citizens and families, but this does not eliminate the risk. Please be careful."

A Traveller News Service Interview—In the Spotlight with Ililek Kuligaan

Vaward/Old Expanses (1106 A795A99-F) 122-1127

Ililek Kuligaan, the controversial former Dulinor Astrin Ilethian chair at Dlan University, is again the center of controversy. This time the reason is his new book, *Conspiracy of Fools: How the Imperium was Betrayed by Its Intelligence Services*. It is being published later this month by The Imperial Academic Press, Vaward, in electronic and hard formats. Pre-publication excerpts make it clear that the he is still not afraid of attracting dangerous attention to himself by the dissemination of his views. A reporter from the TAS News Service who has been following the story was able to interview the professor at an undisclosed location somewhere in the Old Expanses or Diaspora sectors. The following excerpts resulted from that meeting.

TNS: Professor Kuligaan. You are no stranger to controversy. You became famous by inviting a charge of treason from the Federation of Ilelish—

IK: I invited no such thing. I merely spoke the truth as my profession obliged me.

TNS: Since your departure, Tredek Jurisor has been given your old chair at Dlan University. Does this surprise you?

IK: Tredek Jurisor? That old kiss-up. No, actually it doesn't surprise me at all.

TNS: Yes, well. Having already alienated Archduke Dulinor, you have now, rightly or wrongly, incurred the wrath, deadly wrath, some will point out, of *17* powerful intelligence organizations by my count, including Imperial Naval Intelligence, Naval Counter-Intelligence, the Imperial Ministries of Information and Justice, IRIS, the Vermene—

IK: *Bureaucratic ninnies all, I assure you. But what is your question?*

TNS: What do you hope to gain by making such powerful enemies?

IK: First of all I should like to point out that these enemies are not so powerful as everyone imagines. Were they half so powerful as everyone believed, the Imperium would not have disintegrated into the state in which we find it today.

What I "hope to gain" is the chance to warn people about these high priesthoods of information, which is how the intelligence organizations present themselves: as the annointed adepts of the arcane knowledge of statecraft. But this is buncombe. What they are actually adept at is perpetuating their own insular, parochial organizations.

TNS: But these organizations possess information that can manipulate entire factions.

IK: Yes, that is what they would have you believe. Leaders during this civil war are insecure, and looking for ways to solidify their power. They want experts to whisper thrilling secrets in their ears. They want to believe that like puppeteers, they can pull strings and manipulate societies into happily dancing to their tune. Imperial leaders have grown up with these notions of psycho-historical manipulation, that through little tricks of guile and legerdemain, they can deftly move populations into new ways of thinking, if only they had the information and expertise. These leaders are only too eager to make themselves dependent on their intelligence services, and the services are only too happy to oblige.

The faction leaders went into this war actually believing, many of them, that they could actually *win the war,* come out at the end of this sitting on the throne. What a patently fatuous notion! And who told them this? Their intelligence agencies, perpetuating the old myth that behind the scenes one bit of secret information can win a war, one secret plan can bring their enemies to ruin. "Listen Emperor," they whisper, "Listen Empress, listen to the string pullers, we can put you on the throne, all you have to do is listen."

And what do they tell their rulers? Exactly what they already know their rulers want to hear. Because the mighty puppeteers are all liars, whores and liars, selling the Imperium just to perpetuate their own positions. And the war goes on and on, and the puppeteers keep whispering, "Emperor, Empress, victory is just around the corner, just one more campaign, one more planet burned away, and our plan will reach fruition."

And with each intelligence organization whispering this same lie into the ear of each faction leader, how is this war to reach an end? It will reach its end over our dead bodies.

TNS: What do you mean, these organizations aren't powerful? They are full of highly trained, deadly operatives, and you yourself have, in the title of your book, described them as being involved in a conspiracy.

IK: There's quite a mythology about those deadly operatives. At one time the intelligence organizations were a good place to put violent, bloody-minded youngsters so they could exercise their proclivities in the service of their society, rather than against it. And there were always enough plots or schemes to keep these youngsters busy and out of trouble until they were either killed in the line of duty or grew up and calmed down. But those that calmed down and survived did not become enlightened public servants, because they were never trained to be such things. Instead, they became experts at bureaucratic infighting, at fighting for their agendas within the government, and *not* at diligently searching for the truth, *not* at courageously reporting unpleasant truths to their superiors. Because the power of the intelligence organizations flows from secrecy. If a piece of information is public knowledge, then it has no particular power. You cannot use it to blackmail someone, you cannot lord it over someone. But if you have a secret, or if you *pretend to have a secret...*aah, then power is yours.

Lie, my son, lie, and you will have the ear of kings. The Vermene was perhaps the only honest group out there, because at least they tried to kill Margaret when she stopped listening to what they had to say when IRIS started whispering things in her ear about becoming Empress. So IRIS liquidated the Vermene, and the prostitutes went back to business as usual in the sacred temples of intelligence.

TNS: Sacred temples?

IK: Yes, it's a metaphor. Perhaps you've heard of them. I feel that the religious metaphor is a particularly apt one, because there *is* an orthodoxy of intelligence, a corporate faith in flimsy stacks of numbers that is easily subverted by ambition.

TNS: As a Virasin, do you find that your faith in—

IK: Don't I know you? Haven't you interviewed me before?

TNS: No, I don't think that's very likely. As I was saying, does your religious faith make you more inclined to believe in powerful super-human forces, conspiracies if you will, that shape the flow of history?

IK: I *do* know you. And you've become completely fixated again on some peripheral detail: the word "conspiracy." Look, the title of the book was just some marketing ploy to attract the shallow attention of people such as yourself, and it worked, didn't it? *Conspiracy of Fools*. Well, you've got the fool part down, and the conspiracy bit has you so mesmerized it might as well be tatooed on your eyelids. Aren't there any other reporters in your organization?

Nevermind. Just *listen to me.* Your readers need to know this. This war should never have started. This war should never have continued. The reason that it has is because there are people, outwardly appearing just like you and I, who are morally corrupt and have been engaged for 10 years in doing nothing but perpetuating their own personal power. They have been playing at some twisted zero-sum game; the former Imperium is their playing board, *and their currency is your lives.*

*They are killing you. Don't ever let anyone do this to you again.*Ω

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M SS NG L NKS

Filling the gaps in slugthrower evolution support weapons.

By Ken Pick

he firearms lists in **MegaTraveller** show a distinct evolution of the basic service rifle by tech level, from the TL5 bolt-action rifle through the TL6 semiautomatic rifle to the TL7 assault rifle to the TL10 ACR and TL12 gauss rifle. Pistols also show a clear evolutionary path from the TL4 revolver through the TL6 autopistol and the TL10 snub pistols to the TL13 gauss pistol. Grenade launchers also show such evolution, from the original TL7 "blooper" through the various tech levels of RAM grenades.

The evolution of other types of small arms is spotty. For example, autofire support weapons are represented by the TL6 automatic rifle and various machineguns and the TL10 VRF gauss gun (more akin to a high-rate-of-fire autocannon than a machinegun). Other types, such as the TL6 heavy machinegun, are known only from single examples, with no data about any precursors or descendants.

The introduction of battle dress at TL13 allows individuals to carry heavier loads, including weapons able to penetrate other suits of battle dress. Under existing firearms lists, only expensive high-energy weapons (PGMP and FGMP) are available.

The following weapons provide the "missing links" in the evolution of slugthrower heavy weapons up through TL13, allowing a natural upgrade of military small arms from TL6 through TL13. Except for the grav-assist harness, volume in liters equals weight in kilograms.

EVOLUTIONARY CLADOGRAM

TL5	MMG-5		
TL6	LMG-6	13mm HMG-6	Autocannon
TL7		Gatling-7s	
TL8		Gatling-8s	
TL9		15mm HMG-9	
TL10	LMG-10s	Gatling-10s	VRF Gauss
TL11			
TL12			
TL13	Gauss LMG	LRF Gauss Gun	
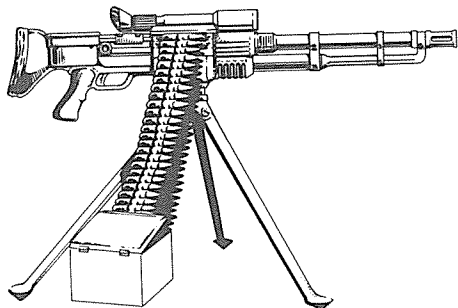
15MM HEAVY MACHINEGUN-9

A TL9, 15mm improvement of the TL6, 13mm heavy machinegun. The HMG-9 is a lower-priced, shorter-range alternative to light autocannon for ground and pintle mounts. The weapon fires in 10-shot bursts, like other machineguns. A dual-feed system allows the weapon to switch between belts of slug and discarding-sabot ammunition; the switchover takes one **MegaTraveller** combat round.

The HMG-9 replaces the TL6 HMG-6 at TL9-10 and is often used as an individual weapon (assault rifle style) by mercenaries who have acquired battle dress but not the accompanying (and expensive) high-energy weapons. It is based on the *Fabrique Nationale* BMG-15 prototype.

15mm HMG-9: TL9, 1.8m, 25kg, Cr4000.
15mm Ammunition: 100-round belt, 15kg, Cr300 slug, Cr450 DS.
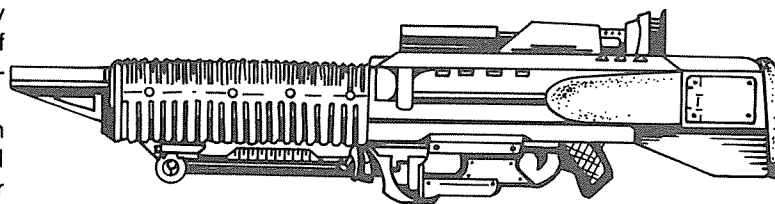
7MM OR 9MM LIGHT MACHINEGUN-10

An improved, TL10 light machinegun intended as a squad-level support weapon for ACR-armed troops. The weapon is chambered for ACR ammunition, and incorporates the ACR's sighting and stabilization systems. Though primarily used from its bipod, the LMG-10 may also be tripod- or pintle-mounted. It replaces previous light machineguns at TL10.

The LMG-10 may "tank up" from the equivalent-caliber ACR magazine; in this case, it fires as the equivalent ACR.

7mm LMG-10: TL10, length 1.0m, weight 5kg, Cr2500.
7mm Ammunition: 100-round belt, 2kg, Cr75 slug, Cr100 DS.
9mm LMG-10: TL10, 1.2m, 6kg, Cr3000.
9mm Ammunition: 100-round belt, 2.5kg, Cr75 slug, Cr100 HE, Cr125 DS.
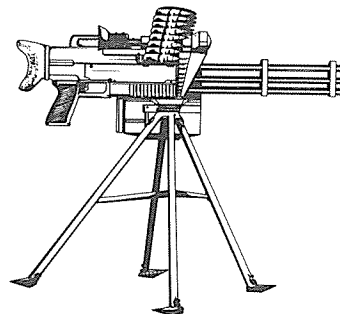
7MM OR 9MM GATLING-10

TL10, six-barreled heavy machineguns with the same improvements over the original TL6-7 Gatlings as the LMG-10. Again, this is primarily a vehicle-mounted weapon. It replaces earlier Gatlings at TL10. It is sometimes used by battle dress-wearing mercenaries in much the same way as the 15mm HMG-9.

7mm Gatling-10: TL10, 1.0m, 80kg, Cr30,000.
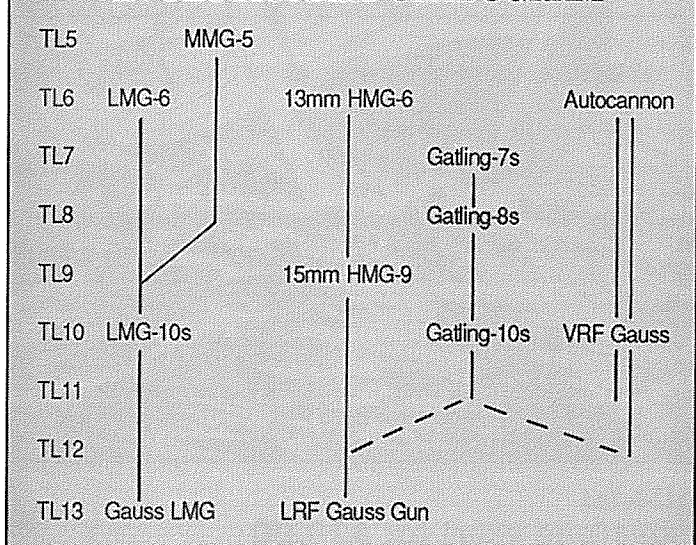
SLUG THROWER SUPPORT WEAPONS

Weapon	Notes	Ammo Rds	Pen/ Atten	Dmg	Max Range	Autofire Targets	Signature	Recoil
Heavy Machinegun-9	—	100	9/3	4	VLong	2	Hi	Hi
(15mm)	DS		12/3	4				
Light Machinegun-10	—	100	3/3	3	VLong	2	Hi	Med
(7mm)	DS		4/3	3				
	Tranq		2/—	1				
Light Machinegun-10	—	100	4/3	3	VLong	2	Hi	Med
(9mm)	DS		6/3	3				
	HE		3/3	4				
	Tranq		2/—	1				
7mm Gatling Gun-10	—	5000	3/3	3	VLong	3	Med/R*	Hi
	DS		4/3	3				
	Tranq		2/—	1				
9mm Gatling Gun-10	—	5000	4/3	3	VLong	2	Med/R*	Hi
	DS		6/3	3				
	HE		3/3	4				
	Tranq		2/—	1				
Gauss LMG (4mm)	—	200	8/4	3	Distant	3	Low/R*	Low
	Tranq		2/—	1				
LRF Gauss Gun (4mm)	—	200	21/4	10	VDist	2	Low	Med

All these crew-served weapons have difficulty as rifle. All except the Heavy Machinegun-9 are gyro-stabilized. Rifle skill is used when using these weapons with battle dress; otherwise, Heavy Weapons skill is used.

Setup Increments: Light machineguns, two sec. Heavy machinegun/LRF gaussgun, six sec. Gatling guns, 15 sec. No setup is needed when carried in battle dress.

7mm Ammunition: 5000-round hopper, 100kg, Cr3750 slug, Cr5000 DS.

9mm Gatling-10: TL10, 1.2m, 120kg, Cr35,000.

9mm Ammunition: 5000-round hopper, 125kg, Cr3750 slug, Cr5000 HE, Cr6250 DS.
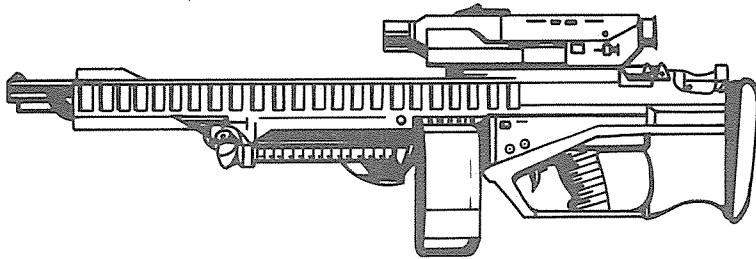
4MM GAUSS LIGHT MACHINEGUN

A squad-level support weapon replacing earlier light machineguns for gauss rifle-equipped troops. Based on a heavied-up gauss rifle, the gauss LMG incorporates a bipod and pintle socket, and mounts a 200-round drum magazine with high-powered integral batteries for slightly increased range and penetration. Like other machineguns, the weapon fires in 10-shot bursts.

Similar to the LMG-10, the gauss LMG may "tank up" from a gauss rifle magazine; in this case, it fires as a gauss rifle.

4mm Gauss LMG: TL12, 1.0m, 5kg, Cr4500.
Magazine: 200 rounds, 2kg, Cr200.
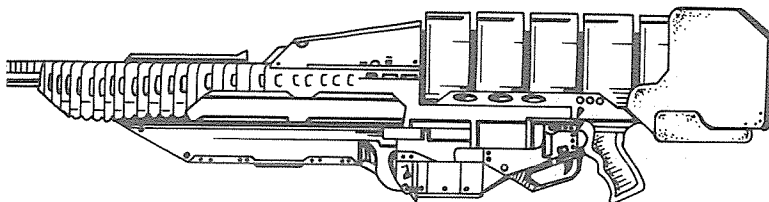
LIGHT RAPID FIRE (LRF) GAUSS GUN

A much lighter TL13 version of the VRF gauss gun, the LRF gauss gun replaces earlier heavy machineguns, complementing the heavier VRF gauss gun. The LRF gauss gun fires the same ammunition with the same range and penetration as the VRF. But the LRF has a much lower rate of fire (equivalent to a gauss LMG) and feeds from 200-round drum magazines instead of from a hopper. The weapon is intended to be used in a tripod, pintle or light remote mount instead of the turret required for a VRF. Up to five magazines can be stacked together end-to-end, feeding from one to the next as if they were a single oversized magazine. The weapon fires in 10-shot bursts, like a gauss LMG.

4mm LRF Gauss Gun: TL13, 1.6m, 50kg, Cr15,000.
Magazine: 200-round module, 4kg, Cr2000.
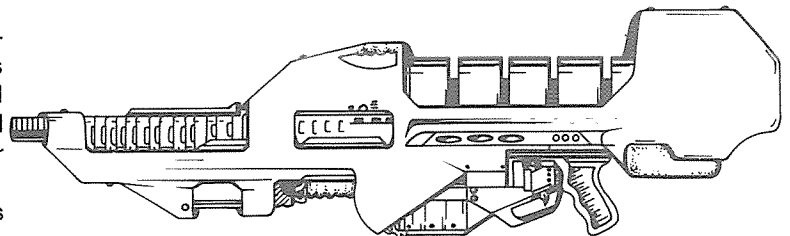
GRAV-ASSIST JACKET
(AS USED WITH LRF GAUSS GUN)

At TL14, an LRF gauss gun can be fitted with a grav-assist harness similar to those used by the PGMP-14 and FGMP-15. It can be carried by battle dress as a "light" support weapon. The grav-assist harness incorporates a minimum-sized, low-power L-grav module (100kg maximum thrust) and enough batteries for a 24-hour duration. When activated, the grav module cuts the apparent weight of the weapon and its magazine by 90%, to approximately 8kg.

100kg Grav-Assist Harness: TL14, 12-liter volume, 10kg, Cr60,000. Ω
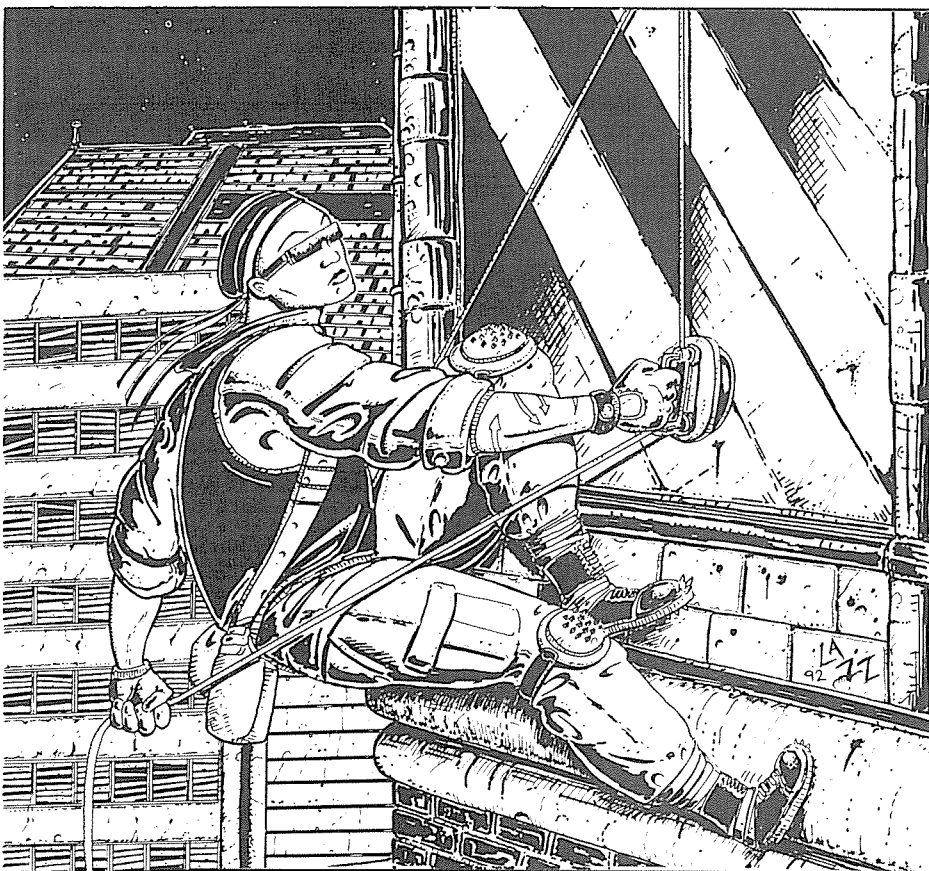
By David Kufner

Jack slid down the black rope and clung to the side of the Yakuza headquarters building with his cyberarm.

He pulled a vile of yellow gel out of his back pack with his free hand.

After smearing the goo onto the window, he produced a spritz bottle and coughed slightly as the chemical reaction took place and the window began melting.

*H*ave you ever created a character who was really boss? The best thing since cheese in a can? You probably ran this character through thick and thin. You brought him from fleshless stats to a breathing relative, only to have a referee move away or drop your current game version.

The following tables offer a small solution for the disillusioned cyberplayer or for someone who just wants to take a look at a different gaming system with a tried-and-true PC.

These tables will help you convert characters to and from *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0., Shadowrun, Cyberspace* and *Space Time*. Consult your referee for weapons stats and other nuances.

CONVERTING *SHADOWRUN* TO AND FROM *CYBERPUNK*

Shadowrun Attributes (D6)	Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0. Statistics (D10)
Body	Body
Quickness	Reflexes
Strength	Movement Allowance
Intelligence	Intelligence
Willpower	Cool
Essence	Empathy
Reaction	Technical Ability
Charisma	Attractiveness
Magic	Luck

Add 4 points to attributes when going from *Shadowrun* to *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.* Subtract four points from statistics when going from *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.* to *Shadowrun.*

Conversions

Converting Character Classes

Shadowrun Archetypes	Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0. Roles
Decker	Netrunner
Detective	Cop
Company Man	Solo or Corporate
Merc	Solo
Gang Member	Fixer
Tribesman	Nomad
Rigger	Media
Rocker	Rockerboy
Shaman	Med Techie
Wage Mage	Techie

There are no modifiers for skill crossovers. When going from *Shadowrun* to *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.,* you lose the general bonus, so you gain the general bonus when going from *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.* to *Shadowrun.* Since there is no magic in *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.,* apply skill points to technical skills.

CONVERTING *CYBERSPACE* TO AND FROM *CYBERPUNK*

Cyberspace Attributes (D100)	Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0. Statistics (D10)
Constitution	Body
Strength	Body
Self-Discipline	Cool
Presence	Cool
Quickness	Movement Allowance
Reasoning	Intelligence
Appearance	Attractiveness
Empathy	Empathy
Memory	Technical Ability
Agility	Reflexes
Intuition	Luck

Divide by 10 when going from *Cyberspace* to *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.* Multiply by 10 when going from *Cyberpunk* to *Cyberspace.* Add two together and divide by five going to *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.* Use statistic multiplied by 10 for both stats going to *Cyberspace.* Skills convert straight up for points.

Converting Character Classes

Cyberspace Characters	Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0. Roles
Sleaze	Corporate
Sneak	Fixer
Killer	Solo, Nomad or Cop
Net Junkie	Net Runner
Jockey	Rockerboy or Media
Tech Rat	Techie or Med Techie

CONVERTING *SPACE TIME* TO AND FROM *CYBERPUNK*

Space Time Attributes (D20)	Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0. Statistics (D10)
Constitution	Body
Strength	Movement Allowance
Bravado	Luck
Stamina	Cool
Intelligence	Intelligence
Appearance	Attractiveness
Willpower	Empathy
Perception	Tech

This applies when converting skills and statistics. Divide by two when going from *Space Time* to *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.* Multiply by two when going from *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.* to *Space Time.*

Now maybe you'll find it easier to convert characters between gaming systems. Good luck! Ω

By Paul Sudlow

Valley of Twisted Apes

hen one sets out for adventure in the universe of H.P. Lovecraft, one quickly learns to expect the unexpected. Not all dangers are From Beyond, and not all trails lead to the Spawn of Cthulhu, though investigators tend to assume they do. Sometimes, otherwise sinister and unearthly-seeming investigations lead to truly unexpected conclusions. Natural, terrestrial ones. That there is absolutely nothing of the supernatural about this adventure is what makes it so unusual for a horror-genre game. That is not to say, of course, that there is no danger! Nature can be a harsh mistress, as foolish investigators will discover.

"Valley of Twisted Apes" is a short adventure intended to be run between major episodes of a campaign, probably as investigators are travelling from here to there. It is primarily intended for play with the *Cthulhu by Gaslight* background, though it can easily be adapted to a 20th-century *Call of Cthulhu* campaign (since the Dutch were in Java up to the 1940s), or even the **Space: 1889** game system. In the latter case, the adventure might take place in a Lizard-man village on Venus; replace Batavia with Venusstadt, and replace the Dutch with Germans.

Due to the absence of powerful, mind-blasting beasties, this scenario is suitable for investigators of any number and ability. A low-power group with its wits about it will do as well as a more powerful group. This interlude serves nicely as a recovery period for otherworld-weary investigators who aren't quite over their last bout of insanity.

The key to running this adventure is atmosphere; build the tension just as you would with any other horror scenario. There is plenty of the weirdness typical of Mythos adventures present to keep the investigators nervously flipping through the Necronomicon looking for ape references, absolutely sure that the Creeping Horrors are just about to come out of hiding. Any time now. Stringing your players along can be lots of fun (just remember, they're the ones assuming Mythos creatures are behind all this). Of course, if the guilt gets to you, just put a group of ape ghouls in the valley, together with some sort of Weird Artifact!

Java

Java is the dominate island in the Dutch East Indies (other islands of note are Sumatra, Borneo and Celebes). It is part of a mountain chain that runs through Thailand and into the Pacific, to rise up again farther to the south as the Indonesian islands. Most of the higher mountain peaks are volcanic in origin, and many are still active. There are plains on the north and south coasts.

Java is very hot and humid, and since it is almost on top of the equator, it stays that way all year round. Rainfall is heavy, especially in the summer and winter monsoon seasons. The east of the island is characterized by a savanna-type climate, while the remainder is covered in lush tropical rain forests.

Since crops thrive in the fertile volcanic ash that is found throughout Java, it is not surprising to note that in the 1890s, Java is the most densely settled island of the Dutch East Indies. Almost 30 million people live on Java by the late 19th century—among them the Dutch colonists, and Chinese, Indian and Arab laborers and merchants.

Batavian Layover

After a grueling case in Australia, the investigators are returning to England via the *Miranda Gale,* a steamer of the Adelaide-Tilbury Company. The ships of the Adelaide-Tilbury line ply regularly between Essex and Sydney, with numerous stops along the way, including Singapore, Rangoon, Bombay, Aden and Cairo. Batavia is the first stop out of Sydney and is a one-night layover.

Batavia is the largest city in the Dutch East Indies, the center of the Dutch trading empire. Once a walled fortress carved out of tiger-infested jungle, Batavia is now surrounded by gardens, orchards, fields growing sugarcane and rice, and mills for sugar, corn and gunpowder. Batavia is about as lively a city as one can manage to cultivate in a predominantly Islamic country.

The Dutch colonizers occupy fine neighborhoods in the center of town. Due to the European architecture, the canals running through the city, and the streets cobbled with the ballast stones from merchant ships, the downtown area is very reminiscent of cities in Holland. The middle-class sectors are well demarcated ethnic neighborhoods in which the Chinese, Indians and Arabs live. The shanty-town areas and run-down slums at the edge of town and around the harbor are the domain of the urban Javanese.

British Embassy

One of the upper-class PCs has an old school chum posted at the British Embassy and suggests that the group look him up and have him show them the town. When they arrive, they find the embassy in a quiet uproar. Apparently, a British subject has disappeared under strange circumstances, and the staff is casting about for a way to look into the matter without appealing to the Dutch for help.

At this point, the school chum, John Becket, bustles up. He is a fit man of indeterminate age (though he will, of course, be the same age as the investigator he knows), with a thick blond mustache, a matching thatch of hair and a strong grip. After a brief reunion and introductions, he recalls from past correspondence that his investigator friend is a "bit of a adventurer with an odd taste for eerie and occult affairs." Noting that he has been placed in charge of this "damned Stadwick affair," he wonders if the investigators might be interested in helping him out, since the case seems right up their alley.

After settling the group in his office, Becket tells the investigators what the commotion is all about. Apparently, Dr. Roger Stadwick, an anthropologist associated with the British Museum, had been travelling around Indonesia for the past few months, studying totemism in small villages. Stadwick had sent weekly reports to the museum via the British Embassy in Batavia. Early reports dealt with the mundane matters of organizing an expedition through the steep mountains of Java, with preliminary studies of various tribes and villages encountered.

Subsequent reports grew a trifle stranger, as Stadwick described his discovery of a village named Tanjungselor, which was surrounded by trees on which were weird carvings of horribly distorted simians. Then mention was made of some damned-odd secret valley, a valley in which no natural animal can live—or some such rot.

Just this morning, Stadwick's guides returned to Batavia, extremely excited and bearing the news that Stadwick had disappeared into the jungle three days ago looking for the mysterious valley. When the village boy who had guided Stadwick into the jungle returned gibbering about the horrible ape gods making off with Stadwick, the poor buggers made for home.

The Dutch authorities have offered to mount an investigation, but it so happens that Stadwick is the brother-in-law of an MP of some note. This being the case, the embassy would prefer a quiet, British inquiry, with no Dutch entanglements.

Appealing to their curiosity in such a strange case, Becket asks the investigators to look into the matter and find Stadwick—or at least his remains. Moreover, Becket hopes the cause of Stadwick's death can be established once and for all and, if it be murder, that the murderer be brought to justice. Surely, he says, there is enough of the eerie and macabre surrounding this unfortunate affair to interest them.

The crown will pay for reasonable expenses (Becket trusts his friend to be honest) and will transfer the group's berthing to the next England-bound ship to stop in Batavia. Becket provides the names and addresses of Stadwick's guides, directions to Tanjungselor and any needed funds (in guilders), then wishes them luck. Unfortunately, the embassy cannot spare any marines to accompany the group.

Stadwick's Guides

The guides, three brothers, live in a crude shanty in a rather unassuming section of town. They speak broken English, but will not be very forthcoming unless one of the investigators makes a successful Oratory roll. In this case, they tell their tale.

According to the guides, the party entered a small village named Tanjungselor after visiting several other unremarkable villages. This village was surrounded by trees on which were carved weird drawings of horribly distorted simians, and their presence made the guides very nervous—they had never heard of such totems in Java.

The group lived with the villagers of Tanjungselor for several weeks, while Stadwick conducted his research. He seemed very curious about some secret valley that had something to do with those horrible monkey statues, but no one would tell him where it was. Then one morning, he roused the guides and told them he had found a boy to take them to the valley. The guides refused to go, and Stadwick left with the boy, cursing.

They never saw him again, but the whole village was roused very early the next morning by the boy running back into the village, shouting that the apes had got Stadwick. That was it for the guides; they left at once in a terrible fright. They will under no circumstances agree to return to that "awful village of leering ape faces." If the PCs mention that they are looking for guides to take them to the village, Stadwick's guides might be persuaded (with another Oratory roll) to suggest a relative or friend who speaks English and may be interested in an expedition. Such a reference will cost a few guilders.

Hiring New Guides

The PCs may want to hire guides of their own, unless one of their number speaks one of the Malay languages spoken on Java. Guides who are familiar with the inland areas and people are not hard to come by, but most of them speak only Dutch, Javanese and some of the inland dialects.

English-speaking guides are quite uncommon. The investigators' best bet is to ask Stadwick's guides for references. Becket might be able to offer some leads as well.

Typical English-Speaking Guide

STR 16, CON 15, SIZ 15, INT 10, POW 11, DEX 13, APP 09, EDU 5, SAN 40, HP 18.

Skills: Hide 60%, Ride 65%, Sneak 75%, Speak Dutch 85%, Speak English 35%, Speak Javanese Subdialects 50%, Spot Hidden 85%, Track 80%.

Weapons: Knife 50%, 1D6 damage; lever-action rifle 45%, 2D6 damage.

Trip Inland

Tanjungselor is roughly 80 miles from Batavia to the interior. The first leg of the journey can be made by train. Travel from
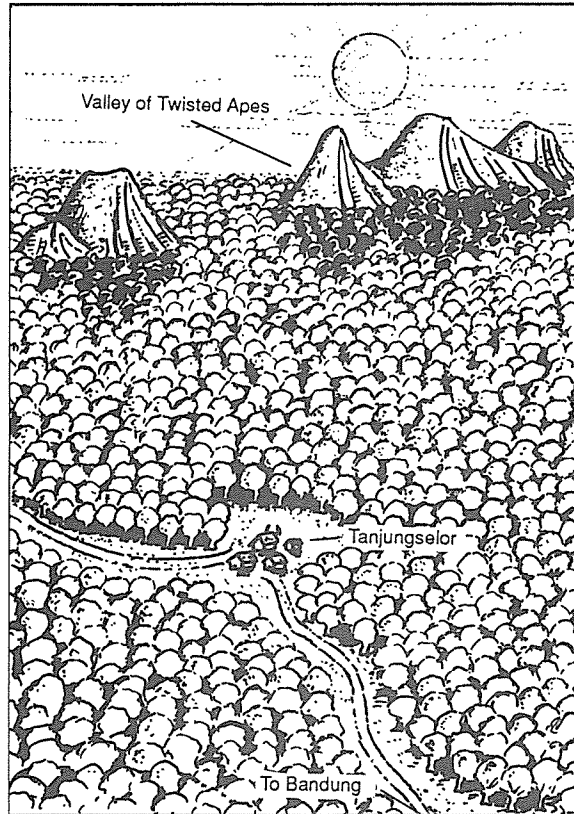
Kota Railway Station in Batavia to Bandung will take a few hours. From Bandung it will be necessary to travel south by road for 20 miles to Tanjungselor. Wagons, horses and mounts can be rented in Bandung. This last leg of the journey will take five hours, due to the poor quality of the clay road. The weather is hot and very humid, and heavy but brief showers are frequent. The road goes steadily uphill, surrounded by jungle and heavy growth. Mountains can be seen in the distance. From time to time, small animals can be glimpsed moving about in the underbrush, as well as an occasional tiger or panther (the latter encounters can be a source of considerable excitement on the part of the guides, who are eager to display their prowess with their rifles).

Tanjungselor

The approach to Tanjungselor will be marked, as Stadwick warned in his reports, by hundreds of carvings in tree trunks of gnarled and grimacing ape figures. Many are obviously ancient, while others look newer. Some are fat, squat beasts with bulging, pouting lips, while others are tall and distorted, with distended mouths yawn-

ing wide to display huge fangs. All are eerie and ugly as sin.

Tanjungselor is a clearing in the jungle through which the rude road wanders. It lies in the shadow of a modest dormant volcano, which rises from the jungle some distance away. Rice patties and small gardens surround the area. The village is made up of small rattan and palm thatch huts, some 40 of them sprawled in a rough circle. In the center of the circle is a much larger building, apparently the village mosque, with an elaborate, wooden, tiered roof. Beside it is a long house with a roof that curves up at the ends like the horns of the buffalo.

Interviewing the Headman: The investigators will be seen at once by workers in the fields and will be directed to the horned building, which is, as it turns out, the community building. Here the investigators will be received by the village headman. He is a large, imposing fellow, who will greet the Westerners impassively. He does not need to guess why they are here—no European visited Tanjungselor before Stadwick.

The headman will confirm the guides' story—Stadwick slipped out of the village one morning with a foolish local boy while everyone was working in the fields. Regarding the valley, he will say only that it is cursed—a valley in which no bird sings, no animal lives, and only large moths and butterflies hover over unpleasantly lush plants. He will not show the investigators where it is.

If asked about the simian carvings adorning the landscape, he will smile and say that it is an ancient tradition for each boy of the village to carve the image of the creature that reveals itself to him in the vision that accompanies the passage-to-manhood ritual. Since the guardian animal of Tanjungselor is the ape, it is not surprising that the boys claim it as their guardian as well.

The headman will be hospitable to the PCs, though he plainly wishes them gone. He apologizes for not being able to be of more service to the investigators after their long trip. He will offer them use of the community house as a sleeping area for the night, since he expects they will be leaving for Bandung in the morning.

Fast Talk attempts will come across as being very rude. If the headman is so accosted, he will react negatively, and insist the investigators leave the village at once. Other skill rolls will have no such effects but will be as ineffective—the headman has said all he will say.

Interviewing the Villagers: The investigators may elect to interview as many villagers as they like, but few will even speak to them. Those who do will say no more than the headman did. Those who might have spoken more freely before Stadwick came have been frightened into silence by his disappearance (and more so by the insanity of the local boy). Fast Talking Westerners will strike the villagers as extremely impolite.

Interviewing the Local Boy: The headman will not grant the investigators an interview with the boy who accompanied Stadwick into the forest, and, indeed, there is no real way of determining who he is. All the older boys the investigators see seem sane enough, albeit shy of strangers. However, some time after the investigators have entered the village, the boy will burst out of a nearby hut and beg to speak with the group.

The boy is quite insane. Though there is nothing supernatural about the valley, the combination of superstitious fears, the dark night, Stadwick's collapse in the valley among the ape corpses and an already unstable mental condition culminated in an encounter that pushed the boy over the edge. He is now a babbling idiot and will have little to say which is readily coherent. Most of his conversation will consist of random utterances about creeping horrors and ape gods, but he will indicate the direction of the valley in his ravings, pointing at the lone mountain towering over the village. He will lapse into incoherence in moments and be led off by upset villagers. They will not welcome or honor any requests to see the boy again.

Into the Woods

The investigators can spend as much or as little time in Tanjungselor as they like, though there is little more to be learned here. Indonesia's Islamic heritage came by way of India and is, therefore, colored by strains of animism. The valley's proximity has inspired a more than usual reverence for apes and a strange form of totemism. However, there are no degenerate religious practices or cults to be found in the village, though there likely were such in the distant past when the volcano was more active. The villagers simply give the valley a wide berth and seek to placate its "gods" with their statues.

Sooner or later, the PCs will want to investigate the valley Stadwick wrote of. They will wear out their welcome if they stay in the village more than two days, especially after the encounter with the village boy. If they haven't offended the headman, they have a hut to stay in for a night. After that, they must rely on their own resources. If the investigators openly declare their intentions to go on to the valley, they will be paid little attention. They have been warned.

There are five miles of dense jungle between Tanjungselor and the mountain the village boy indicated, which means wagons and horses must be left in the village or elsewhere along the road. The trip will take most of a day and will be an exhausting one. The forest is very dark, because most of the light is intercepted by the canopy of upper branches. The ground is clear of heavy undergrowth due to this lack of sunlight. Hogs, deer, tigers, panthers and apes abound, and snakes and lizards are also common. Most animals ignore or avoid the group, but some of the predators might follow for a distance out of curiosity and may attack if provoked. Having a curious ape tail the group might unnerve the players.

Investigators who make a successful Spot Hidden roll will notice an occasional ape carving in a mossy trunk, which is a good sign that the investigators are on the right track.

Valley

The valley is actually at the top of the lone mountain—the long-dead crater of the extinct volcano. The mountain is not particularly large and the slope is not steep. Its sides are covered in foliage. It can be ascended in a matter of two hours.

The crater is a shallow bowl which gradually slopes toward a central low point. Its slopes are covered in a tangle of vines, scrub growth and great, larvae-white mushrooms. The floor of the valley is likewise covered in unwholesome growths of lush, unnaturally green plants.

Ringing the valley are thousands more of the ape totems. These carvings, if anything, are more morbid than their fellows back at the village and appear to be quite old. Some depict humanoid figures being thrown into a volcano while apes dance and cavort (this isn't just a cliché—people really were sacrificed to volcano gods by some isolated Javanese tribes in past centuries, though the practice has been abandoned by this tribe). The artists were probably not young boys. There do not seem to be any recent additions to the collection.

Multitudes of butterflies and other insects hover and flutter over the valley, though someone making a successful Spot Hidden roll will observe that they do not seem to actually enter it to any great degree.

The valley's most distinctive feature is the hundreds of ape corpses and skeletons sprawled on the valley floor. This morbid feature of the local terrain is at the root of Tanjungselor's slightly off-kilter religious observations and explains why the village's religious traditions are even more animistic than the mainstream Javanese ones. There is no sign of Stadwick.

Deadly Secret

Large quantities of carbon dioxide seep up out of fissures in the floor of the extinct volcano. The toxic (and invisible) gas builds up in the valley's low points, displacing the oxygen as it fills up the cavities. Since it is heavier than air, the gas hugs the ground—the most toxic levels are concentrated in a six-foot-high layer blanketing the floor of the valley.

Anyone under six feet tall moving about on the floor of the valley will slowly asphyxiate, eventually to die from lack of breathable air. Those over six feet will only suffer the milder effects of the gas, as described below.

The poisoning will be a gradual process, as investigators move from the clean air at the rim, to the mildly contaminated air on the slopes, to the toxic air on the valley floor. Symptoms begin with a shortness of breath and proceed to a mild dizziness. Everyone is susceptible to these general symptoms.

At the investigators move onto the valley floor, begin using the drowning rules in the *Call of Cthulhu* rulebook to determine how everyone under six feet fares with the gas. An investigator (or NPC) failing a roll will be overpowered by an overwhelming sleepiness and will faint if he does not leave the valley that round. Once a character is unconscious, he will take 1D8 points of damage each round until carried out of the valley or until death comes.

Taller PCs will expose themselves to the gas as they kneel to examine fallen comrades or the corpses.

The valley is periodically purged of its noxious fumes as particularly fierce winds lash through the jungle in the monsoon seasons. There have been no such storms recently, but a Mythos spell might be cast that would have a similar effect.

Stadwick's body can be found among the apes in the center of the valley. Stadwick died of the same malady the apes did—curiosity (they are drawn into the valley by the sight of so many fallen comrades). His body is in moderately good condition for a week-old corpse in a tropical climate, and it doesn't seem to be disturbed. His pack lies nearby, containing his personal effects, positive identification, camera and anthropological notes. The British Museum would be glad to claim the notes and may even consider sponsoring future expeditions by the investigators if said expeditions coincide with museum interests and are led by a reputable scientist or academian. Ω

The peculiar aspect of the valley in this adventure was inspired by a story that ran in Weird Tales *a number of years ago, "Funeral of the Fog" by Edward D. Hoch.*

SHADOW OVER NEW BRUNSWICK

When you arrive in the small farming town of New Brunswick, all you can think about are a bed and a hot meal. The accommodations in the barn aren't exactly a bed, and the food isn't exactly hot, but it's better than nothing. When the entire population of the town disappears without a noise, you get that sinking feeling that something horrible is about to happen.

This adventure is designed to add zest to a cross-country journey. New Brunswick can be located in any rural setting, most likely in the Midwest. When the PCs arrive there, they want only to find a place to stay. This is harder than it sounds, since the inhabitants of little farming towns in these Dark times are not very friendly to strangers. The PCs will find few people around in the late afternoon, but they can try talking to the senile old man in front of the general store, the storekeeper, the sheriff and several farmers. They also run into Jack Ranier and his gang of ruffians. They ridicule the PCs and warn them that strangers aren't wanted in this town so they had better clear out if they want to stay healthy. Before the situation escalates to the point of violence, the gang members saunter off, throwing insults and threats over their shoulders.

As the PCs continue their search for a place to stay, they meet up with someone who mentions that Mrs. Daniels may be willing to put them up for the night. The Daniels place consists of 10 acres of unpromising fields next to an old Agricorp field. All that is left of the field is bedrock and chemical sludge left from strong synthesized fertilizers. Mrs. Daniels has a rather pretty daughter (age 17) and a young son (12), both of whom are rather excited to see strangers. Mrs. Daniels is more reserved, however, and will only give the PCs a place in the barn in return for a couple hours of labor (milking cows, chopping wood, etc.). An Average: Bargaining test will reduce the number of work hours to one apiece. No roll, no matter how good, will make Mrs. Daniels take money instead of work.

IN THE DARK OF THE NIGHT

After finishing their work and finally snuggling down into the itchy hay, the PCs find that they cannot sleep. The hay is too uncomfortable, or the horse is making too much noise, or there are bugs in the straw tickling their skin. An Average: Empathy roll will reveal that this insomnia is unnatural, and a Difficult: Foreboding test will reveal that something very bad is about to happen.

Eventually, one of the PCs may wander outside for a breath of fresh air or to look for a more comfortable place to sleep. Once outside, the PC notices that the door to Mrs. Daniels' house is wide open. The PCs will no doubt quickly search the house and find it empty. The family is gone. If they call for help or go to look for help, they discover that the entire town is empty. Televisions are still on where people fell asleep in front of them, perhaps somewhere a bath is still running or even a cigarette is still smoking in its ashtray. Play up on the bizarre aspect of this scene, and the PCs will be jumping out of their skins. .

Finally, just before sunrise, the PCs hear the report of a gun. If they follow the sound, they find Ranier and his little gang standing around a body. A semi-truck is parked beside them, and the body looks to be that of the driver. He has been shot execution-style, once through the back of the head. The PCs can now have a little gunfight, if they are so inclined. If captured, none of Ranier's men will talk. They show frightening military discipline under fire and are obviously too skilled to be just an ordinary gang.

After the gun battle is over, the PCs hear the sound of a screen door closing from one of the houses nearby—one they found empty earlier. By the time they get to the house, they meet only a very irate owner, who wants to know why he has been woken up in the middle of the night. He says he didn't hear any gunfire and will you please go away—don't you know what time it is? There is a similar response from other residences, as all the citizens of New Brunswick seem to have magically reappeared.

DARK MINION PLOT

The Dark Minions (you can pick your favorite group) are testing a new device called the Dreamaker. This device generates horrible dreams in its victims and kills them instantly through terror. It is based on a bio-computer and is ca-

pable of independent motion and thought. When it was delivered just outside of New Brunswick, it was expected that all the inhabitants would soon be dead. However, Thomas Kaseko (the senile old man who spends his afternoons sitting in front of the store) is an empath, and he protected his own mind, as well as the minds of those around him. Kaseko is truly senile and does not think well during the day, but once he goes to sleep and his subconscious takes over, he comes alive. Kaseko's powers are very great, but the Dreamaker was stronger.
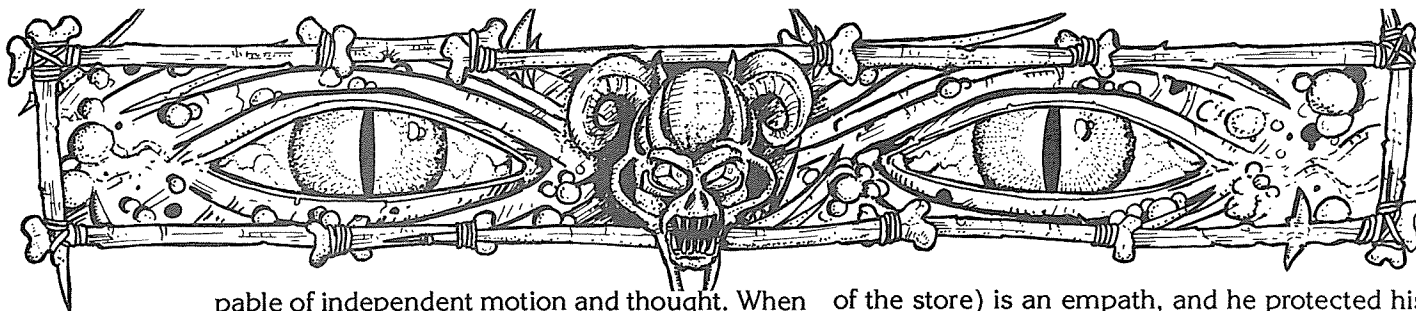
Kaseko realized he would be overpowered, so he contacted the people of the town through their subconscious, and they marched out to fight the Dreamaker. Once the Dreamaker saw them coming, it realized it was doomed unless it could raise a physical defense. So it drew on the townspeople's own dream energies, which (now that they were so close physically) were very strong. With this energy, it raised up illusions of physical beings that look and feel so real that they can scare a person to death. The illusions are very powerful, but they cannot leave the Agrifield—the Dreamaker lacks the power to project them that far.

So the battle has continued every night for several weeks now. The people go to sleep; the Dreamaker attacks; and Kaseko raises them up to do battle. The Dark Minions have now sent a few of their agents disguised as hoodlums and criminals into town—Ranier and his gang. These punks assumed that the PCs would fall victim to the Dreamaker, so they did not attack them outright when they came into town. Besides, the Dark Minions ordered them not to interfere in the activities of the Dreamaker. The Dark Minions want to ensure that it is properly tested.

THE MORNING AFTER

The dawn will find the PCs wondering what happened during the night, and they will no doubt spend the rest of the day trying to find out. They have a variety of options.

The PCs may want to question Mrs. Daniels. If they approach her house, they notice after a few minutes that her daughter, Lucy, is not around. If the PCs ask where she is, Mrs. Daniels thinks a moment and then says that Lucy went away to college. The longer she is questioned, the more she will stick to this story. If anybody presses her, Mrs. Daniels will get very defensive and act offended.

The PCs may try to follow the tracks of the nighttime wanderers (an Average: Tracking task). They might find tracks coming out the back doors of various houses and leading across the fields to the old Agricorp field. The field is full of tracks, as

MRS. DANIELS

Mrs. Daniels was with the original group forced out of the little town of Brunswick by the Agricorps. Her husband frequently spoke out about the Agricorps and their takeover and how things would be different after the town was bought out, no matter what the corp promised. He disappeared one night and was found dead a week later, apparently killed by a group of criminals fleeing west. The police and the Agricorp assured Mrs. Daniels that the criminals were in custody and would get everything they deserved. Mrs. Daniels had to do the best she could, and this has made her tough. Still, she has a soft spot for hard luck cases, and this prompts her to take the PCs in.

    Experience: Novice
    Attributes: 5
    Skills: 3
    Initiative: 2

THOMAS KASEKO

Kaseko was quite a hero in his day. He has several medals from his time in the army, and he was a skilled, though rather unknown, baseball star after that. After his wife died 10 years ago, he lost his will to go on living, but his body is too tough to let him die. He just sits on the porch of the store, watching the people go by, until he can't remember anything because he doesn't want to. When the Dreamaker woke him from his sleep, his Empathy skills came alive. At night, he is as coherent and bright as when he was young. But like everybody else in New Brunswick, as soon as he wakes up, he is back to his old self and doesn't even remember the night before (except as a dream).

Kaseko is an empath of incredible ability, and some of the things he does are not governed by the basic rules. The Dreamaker contacts him by trying to kill him with his fears, and he channels his Project Thought and Emotion powers back through the Dreamaker to all the other people the Dreamaker is contacting. Once the Dreamaker ceases to contact him, he cannot contact anybody else. Fortunately, the Dreamaker hasn't figured this out yet (nor is it likely to get a chance).

    Experience: Veteran
    Attributes: 6. Intelligence 8, Empathy 5
    Skills: 4. Willpower 5, Project Emotion 7, Project Thought 7
    Initiative: 6 (asleep), 1 (awake)
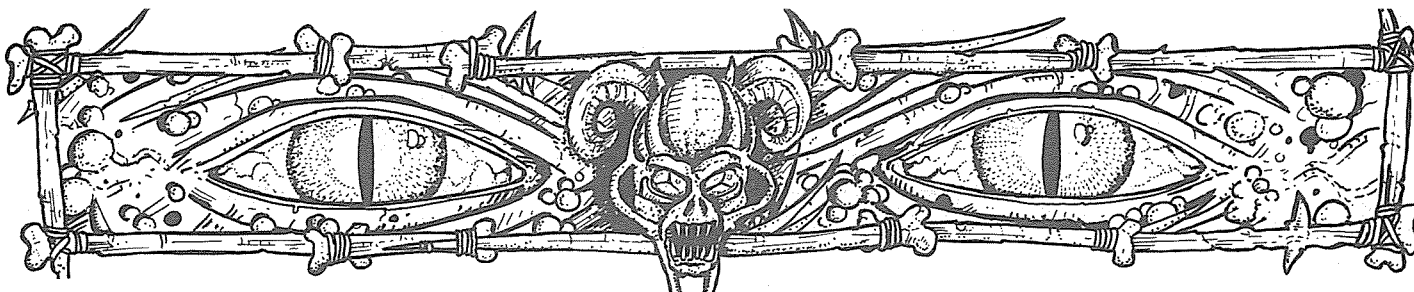
though all the people of New Brunswick came out and had a town meeting. Lucy Daniel's body is half buried in the sludge. Unless the PCs specifically search the area, it is a Difficult: Observation test to notice her. If an autopsy is performed, it will be apparent (after a Difficult: Medical test) that she died of heart failure. She was slain by her own nightmares.

The PCs may also try to break into people's homes. Many locals are out farming during the day or performing other chores. So if the PCs are careful, they should be able to get into several homes. After a careful search, they can discover mud tracks on some floors leading up to bedrooms. And every home sports dirty clothes, covered with mud and sometimes blood, shoved in the back of closets or under beds. The mud is from the field, and the blood is from scratches and wounds caused by falling down or battling physically with the Dreamaker.

Interviewing the townspeople will produce nothing but obvious lies that even the liars themselves don't seem to believe. The use of the Human Empathy skill will tell the PCs that these people are repressing the truth, and that right now they don't know what is true and what is not. Psychology skill can be used to a similar effect (Average difficulty).

All the townspeople act a little confused and very angry at being questioned about such silly things. Even if the PCs find some way of proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that something is going on, the citizens will deny it.

MARAUDERS

At about noon, a band of nomad marauders drives into town in two dune buggies (use the stats for the Range Rover II). They call themselves the Dust Devils. Except for a few jeers and insults, they are not aggressive and will avoid fights if threatened.

The Dreamaker is getting desperate, and has called out to nearby marauders for help. Lacking Kaseko's protection, they were unable to fight off the Dreamaker's attempts to plant suggestions in their minds through their dreams, and they are now under its control.

The Dreamaker is losing its battle against the townspeople. It is getting weaker, and its weapons are fewer. Many of the townspeople have defeated their nightmares and are no longer afraid. This allows the citizens to lend support to their friends and gang up on the illusions.

SHERIFF

Ralph Hobbs has been the elected sheriff of this town for five years. He gets paid by the town, but he also has his own farm on the side. He is only here to organize resistance to nomad marauders and to keep everybody in line. He often carries a pistol and a shotgun.

If the PCs approach him, Hobbs will be sympathetic to the PCs' fears, but totally unhelpful.
Experience: Experienced
Attributes: 5
Skills: 3; Small Arms (Pistol) 5
Initiative: 3

TOWNSPEOPLE

New Brunswick is based off the population of an original town simply called Brunswick. This town was bought out by an Agricorp (choose your favorite) which promised that all the farmers could stay on their land, only now the Agricorp would buy all the crops instead of somebody else. This turned out not to be true. The people almost started a riot until they saw all the security the Agricorp had hired for just such an emergency. Now they live here, on a dusty little patch not more than 50 miles from their old fields, which have long ago been used up by the Agricorp and turned into chemical wastes.
Experience: Novice
Attributes: 5
Skills: 3
Initiative: 2

DEADLY DREAMS

The PCs may decide to spend a second night in town and try to solve the mystery. As the dusk fades into night, doors begin to creek open all around town—the locals are coming out. If the PCs try to stop one of the travellers from going to the field, they will be violently attacked—the people will do anything to get to the field once Kaseko has called them.

If the PCs follow the townspeople to the field (or wait for them there), they will see a large brain with insect legs rising from the sludge. In a circle around the brain are horrific figures that only dreams could envision. Boys stand across from giants; girls square off with giant insect larva; and adults face horrific creatures and people too numerous to count. An old man growls as he closes in on a Nazi, while an old woman fights with Death himself.

Back from the fighting stands Kaseko. He no

longer looks senile. His dull, flat eyes sparkle; his broken old body stands tense, ready to spring; and his bored, featureless face is twisted into a snarl of concentration. Kaseko will not like being interrupted and will be impossible to talk to during the fray.

Empaths will be going crazy at this point. A Difficult: Empathy roll will indicate that the monsters are illusions. Another Difficult roll reveals that all the citizens are contributing to the growth of these illusions through the Dreamaker even as they try to destroy them. An Average roll will tell the PCs that Kaseko is in control of the situation and that he is helping the citizens with his talents.

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DARK MINION AGENTS

Jack Ranier and his four followers are Dark Minion agents disguised as a band of hoodlums which has settled down in this little town. By day, they make a nuisance of themselves, but by night, they kill anyone who causes too much trouble. They might harass the PCs when they first arrive in town and give warnings about how the PCs don't want to stay here overnight—it simply isn't "healthy." Gang members carry a mixture of Beretta M92Ss, Mossberg M500 shotguns and Uzis. The referee may adjust their numbers, skills or firepower to give the group a challenge.

Experience: Experienced
Attributes: 5
Skills: 6
Initiative: 4

DUST DEVILS

These kind, country gents are all young, a little wild and psychotic. They come mostly from bankrupt homes (all too common in the country) and are angry and embittered toward the world. Now they make a living with their fists and guns. There are five of them, all carrying Uzis. The referee may adjust their numbers, skills or firepower as needed.

Experience: Experienced
Attributes: 5
Skills: 3
Initiative: 3

NIGHTMARE ILLUSIONS

Abilities are discussed in the Combat section.
Experience: Veteran
Attributes: None. They take 20 points of damage to kill. They have perceived physical attributes well above 10
Skills: Attack 4
Initiative: Equal to that of the mind that created them

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Any PCs with Willpower skill can enter into combat with the citizens.

COMBAT

Fighting illusions with one's mind is not quite the same as fighting real opponents. To make a successful attack against an illusion, make an Average: Willpower roll or a one-fourth roll against Intelligence (whichever is greater). This represents the strength of your mind and your ability to realize that you are only fighting your own fear.

If you are fighting somebody else's nightmare and you make a successful roll, you have given them moral support, and their attack this round does twice as much damage. After a successful attack, damage is figured by rolling a 1D6 and adding your Willpower (if any).

The illusions do damage straight to your torso. This is only perceived damage, and it disappears as soon as the fight ends (unless, of course, you're dead).

The quick-kill rule doesn't apply here.

The illusion has an Attack skill of 4, which is reduced by the target's Willpower. Thus, a character with a high enough Willpower can become immune to the illusions' attacks. Every hit causes 1D6 damage. Note that a nightmare can only attack the person from whose mind it is drawn. So if you have defeated your own nightmare, you won't be under attack from the nightmares of others.

However, there is always lingering doubt. Every time the Dreamaker shows you the nightmare again, you must make an Average: Intelligence roll, or you are again vulnerable to attack. If you make the roll, the illusion simply grabs and snarls at you harmlessly and eventually melts away into nothing as your mind dismisses it.

Two combat turns after the PCs arrive, the Dust Devils come through the hole in the Agricorp's old fence and start firing at the crowd. They are very careful not to hit the Dreamaker. The PCs must now deal with this new threat so the battle can go on.

After six combat turns (assuming nothing has gone wrong), the citizens finally defeat the Dreamaker. The Dust Devils become confused and run away. The citizens immediately return home and go to sleep.

CARRYING ON

The following morning, the residents of New Brunswick remember nothing of the strange events

that occurred during the previous night, not even Kaseko.

If the PCs again ask Mrs. Daniels what happened to her daughter, she looks very sad and replies that she is dead. If asked how she died, Mrs. Daniels will reply that she isn't exactly sure—some sort of accident. She remembers nothing else.

This adventure leaves many questions unanswered. Solving these mysteries can lead to a host of other adventures. Who has made this thing? Why do they want to kill people in this way? Why don't they just attack? Why did they continue to fight a losing battle in New Brunswick? From what brains is the Dreamaker/bio-computer made? Will there be later developments and improvements on this prototype? Do these Dark Minions want to unleash any other dream technology on the world? What will happen to Kaseko? Was all of this a test to draw him out? What do these Dark Minions think of the PCs now? Will they attack or torment the PCs through their own nightmares?

DREAMAKER

This device is a green, glowing brain the size of a horse, with eight long insect legs.

It is very intelligent, though it can have trouble with abstract thought.

The Dreamaker takes 3D6 damage each combat turn from sunlight and can use its legs to burrow into the ground. Its body is soft, but it takes 50 points of damage to kill it (the various levels of wounds having little effect). Each leg takes 10 points before snapping in half (assume all hits affect the main body unless aiming specifically for the legs).

Despite its great strength, the Dreamaker is nearly helpless in hand-to-hand combat due to a lack of effective limbs or weapons.

Experience: Veteran
Attributes: Intelligence 8, Strength 8, Empathy 7.
Skills: None. It has the powers previously described
Initiative: Illusions are made at Initiative 6; all other activity is performed at Initiative 1 Ω

Side View

Engineering

Quarters

Cargo

Bridge

Drives

Sensors

Electronics

Deck 1

Engineering

Quarters

Cargo

Bridge

Deck 2

Electronics

Engineering

APPROACH

Once the ship is outfitted and the crew is selected, the team will head toward the last known location of the alien vessel. If the referee desires, the vessel used by the expedition can suffer from a variety of minor (but annoying) glitches. For example, the food dispensers might occasionally mix the beverages into the main course (orange mashed potatoes due to the orange soda mixed in, scrambled eggs and beer, etc.), the vacuum toilets may get out of control, or the entertainment system may show only Lawrence Welk tapes and Madonna videos from the 20th century. Use your imagination.

The trip can also be spiced up a bit with a few accidents (engineering problems, computer failure, etc.) or perhaps an encounter with a (small) Kafer vessel. These side encounters should not pose insurmountable obstacles, however.

Once the ship gets into the area where the probe encountered the alien ship, the crew will be surprised that the vessel has not gone very far. The scientific team will suggest that the vessel has been waiting for them.

ALIEN VESSEL BEHAVIOR

The alien vessel will not respond to any attempts at communication. It will maneuver around apparently at random, using what appear to be chemical jets. If the science team members examine the situation, they will determine that the vessel is moving through pockets of material in space and seems to be scooping up the free-floating elements. It is also emitting a broad range of radiation in what appear to be scanning sweeps.

If the players' vessel is brought within one kilometer of the alien vessel, it will move toward the human ship and attempt to touch hulls. It will also move toward any smaller vessel (like a missile, for example) that might be launched from the human ship or any space-suited human.

From the outside, the alien vessel looks odd to humans. Rather than the smooth hull that human ships have, the alien vessel has a convoluted and knotted hull that looks almost like it was grown instead of built. It also looks oddly shrunken, as if it were once larger. The hull is scarred from encounters with small objects in space, giving the impression of being very old and very alien.

INSIDE THE VESSEL

An obvious metallic airlock can be seen on the side of the ship. The interior contains an atmosphere, but it is very thin and contains elements humans would find unpleasant. The team members will need space suits or oxygen masks to live within the vessel.

Being inside the vessel will give the play-

the appearance of a vessel. And the more scientifically minded asserted that this could be a vessel from a previously unencountered alien race.

Eventually, a compromise was reached, and it was decided that an armed vessel with a research team would be sent to meet the vessel. The player characters are to be part of the crew of the vessel. If they own their own ship, it can be hired for the task. If they do not own a ship, then they will be hired as part of the crew. The exact vessel is left to the referee, but it is likely to be an auxiliary cruiser. The exact location of the adventure is also left to the referee, but it is recommended that it begin on a frontier world.
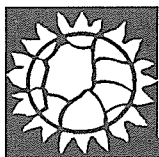
WHEN
EMPIRES
FALL

A NEW ERA

I had a dream. A dream of a wood, old beyond imagining, rich with life, thick with deep, heavy fertility, laden with the smells of eternity. The trees were tall; the trees were strong. And they beckoned, though they did not need to move. Their proud straightness alone was a magnetic force. Their silence was a pregnant moment waiting for a voice. And I was drawn toward them.

How many other travellers had heard this call? How many had become lost in this wood or found a home here? But the silence pressed in tight, and the wood closed around me. And where I had expected to hear the distant conversing of birds and the careless accompaniment of splashing water, there was only the soughing of a dry wind. The soughing of a dry wind through brambles, thick, black and wicked, clinging closely to the bases of trees, sinking thorns deep into aged bark. And what had been the rich, sticky-sweet smell of life swelling deep in the earth became the cloying scent of decay, of death bursting through the soil in repellant, fungous growths.

The wood cringed about me, as if each creature in every nest and burrow and cocoon were recoiling from the smell that I had caught. And although the motion subsided quickly, the vision remained with me, like bright flashes in darkness. The wood was steeped with life, saturated with creatures, each cowed, as was I, by the unexpected intimation of doom.

But the trees were tall and proud. The brambles, though twining vine-like through the limbs, were nothing to the ancient strength of the trees.

A soft groan touched my ears, the sound of weight shifting, settling. It came from a tree, like many of the others around me, heavy with sigils and signs, carved deep with coats of arms and patents of rectitude. With a dull pop, it sagged against its neighbor, a younger tree, uncarved and unmarked, but no less tall or broad. The young tree bowed, trying to roll with the weight of its older neighbor, but the groan of its bending ascended to the shriek of living wood splintering. The two trees crashed to the forest floor, leaving the final shriek hanging in the air. While the young tree crashed and splintered bitterly and violently, leaving a quivering stump and savage echoes, the older tree landed with a dull thud, and disintegrated to reveal an interior seething with insects and pungent with dead ichor. Where it had entered the ground, the trunk had pulled free, leaving a shallow, musty wound, where all its roots had long since dissolved into the gray leprous soil that remained.

And suddenly I saw how many of these dead but still erect trees there were, each sagging against the living ones beside them, hanging like a sword above the healthy trees of the forest. These standing dead were holding the living hostage against their pride, their will to outlast their lives. It was then that the silence found a voice, and it was singing a song of death.

How could no one have seen that the wood had been dying for so long? How many young trees could shrug their way through the dead weight entangling them?

A shadow passed near me, a force shrouded in blackness, which left a bright flickering behind as it fled. A flickering of fire. Before I could move, the fire leaped to the fallen tree, consuming the crumbling, dry wood, destroying the insects with pops that merged into a steady sizzle.

The wood came alive again, with creatures mindlessly fleeing the blaze, but not quickly enough, for the fire leaped ahead of them, tree to tree, bramble to bush, cutting them off, mercilessly devouring them. Leaves ignited on branches in the searing air, and trunks exploded as the sap inside them flashed to steam. Somehow, above the infernal roar, arose another sound, a shrill keening, the combined cries from the throats of a million million incinerated creatures, and the creaking of a million million falling trees.

After a time, which was forever, or might only have been an instant, the fire was over. Smoke and steam concealed everything, and the sounds were of fading hissing and crackling, and the exhausted groan of great weights shifting one last time to their last resting places. A wind stirred, but not a dry wind—a fresh wind, which stripped the smoke from the smoldering wreckage and carried away the sounds of ruin.

The trees that remained stood battered and blistered, but untangled in the sunlight. The brambles were seared away, and the standing dead were ashes. The creatures that returned were the strong and vigorous, and the song they took up was the song beyond the song of death: It was a song of of defiance, of renewal. The voice had found the song of life.

Some things can only be cleansed with fire.

I had a dream. A dream of fire.

THE FALL OF EMPIRE

By 1130, the Imperium was dead. Perhaps it had been dead for a long while, wanting only one dramatic event to prove it. The Rebellion filled the bill. And the Rebellion exposed something that perhaps nothing else could have exposed: The Imperial social contract was dead. That contract was the contract of empire. Eleven thousand worlds collected into one group need a set of values that they all share in order to remain together. And because it is time-consuming and inefficient (not to mention impossible)

to expect every single inhabitant of 11,000 worlds to comprehend and internalize those values, the values were abstracted out of the general population and placed in the care of the nobility. The nobility, whose job it was to represent their worlds to a level of nobility above them, who would represent their subsectors to a level of nobility above them, and so on all the way up to the emperor, the most powerful being in the known galaxy.

The essence of the Imperium could be distilled into a deceptively simple ancient Solomani phrase, "*Noblesse oblige*," literally from the French, "Nobility obligates." Obligates the noble to repay the fortune of privileged birth by using that privilege to obtain the talents of stewardship. Obligates the noble to use those talents of stewardship to take care of the land, to take care of the people. To understand that everything comes with a price, that even privilege must be paid for. Must be paid to the people beneath, whose willingness to serve legitimates the noble. Must be paid to the higher nobility above, whose recognition of service legitimates the noble.

"My lord," "my liege" is not kowtowing; it is social contract. But the Rebellion revealed the unpleasant reality that, by 1100 at least, the Imperium had entered the era of *Noblesse n'oblige plus*, "Nobility no longer obligates." The often repeated notion that societies have life cycles—that they are young and vigorous, then mature, wise and productive, and then over-aged, spent and decadent—applied to the Imperium, although few saw it.

When enough nobles no longer took the long view, and began thinking in terms of short-term or local gain, the Imperium was in trouble.

When enough nobles forgot that their positions were not guaranteed by invisible forces, but lasted only so long as the Imperium as a whole was vital and healthy, the Imperium was doomed.

When Dulinor shot Strephon, then fled to Ilelish, never imagining to take the reigns of Imperial power, but only intending to flee to his home ground and prepare for war, *noblesse n'oblige plus*.

When other Imperial nobility formed their own factions to back their own claims to the throne, instead of maintaining the empire as a whole against internal forces of destruction, *noblesse n'oblige plus*.

When the admirals of the Imperial Navy, nobles all, and entrusted with power enough to snuff out billions of lives, committed their fleets to battle against other Imperial fleets, they turned their backs on the proud service that gave meaning to their careers. They, better than any other humans, knew the appalling power of the Imperial fleets, knew the annihilation that would result if fleet were pitted against fleet. Only the Imperium, the navy, and humanity would lose. But the admirals did not stand together and refuse to do battle against humanity itself. *Noblesse n'oblige plus*.

When lesser nobles girded for war, sent their best and brightest to swell the factional battle fleets, not thinking that lesser nobles in other factions would do the same, and therefore every lesser noble in the Imperium was sending the best they had to certain and senseless deaths, *noblesse n'oblige plus*.

Why should these lesser nobles have been expected to think so far ahead? Because that was their jobs. The wealth and leisure of noble birth not only allowed, but *demanded*, by the tradition passed down by generations along with the titles, that the nobility be smart, temperate and foresighted. For they were the keepers of the social contract. The Imperial Moot was the symbolic recognition of that fact.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

It was ironic, and yet instructive, that the most promising source of true independent artificial intelligence was unknown to the majority of humaniti. Ironic because of the vast influence that it would have, but instructive because of the anthropomorphic myopia that it highlighted.

If asked about viable artificial intelligence, most anyone would have pointed to various experimental robots such as those revealed by the Rhylanor Institute of Technology, or the organic computer cores that pulsed at the center of most TL13+ computers.

Hardly anyone would have mentioned the tiny semiconductor chips native to a harsh world in the Solomani Rim.

While the sophistication of personality simulation programming was impressive, and the facility with which organic brain tissue could control the function of starships was useful, these paled beside the potential of the tiny etched bits of silicon that could reproduce themselves and grow their own circuitry.

To be fair, the chips of Cymbeline were not widely reported, but among those who were aware, they were dismissed as a curiosity, thought of as cute objects somewhere in between clever pets, fascinating toys and precocious children.

After all, what threat could they be?

Anthropomorphic robots, on the other hand, looked like us. Now that was a threat. They could secretly live among us and usurp our positions. And organic computer cores were like our human brains in direct control of machinery.

What was at work was simple racism, specism or morphism.

Humans were the masters of the universe, or among the broad minded, humans and things that look an awful lot like us with arms and legs, and if you stretch it, funny star-handed tentacles. But a little chunk of glassy stuff was just a *thing*, not a being that could usurp our position.

Ah, where would dramatists be without hubris? And what a tragic fall it would be.

From the introduction
Wham! An Irreverent Look at the Virus,
the Collapse and the New Era,
Dr. Eneri Kuniholm,
Mora, Deneb, 1198
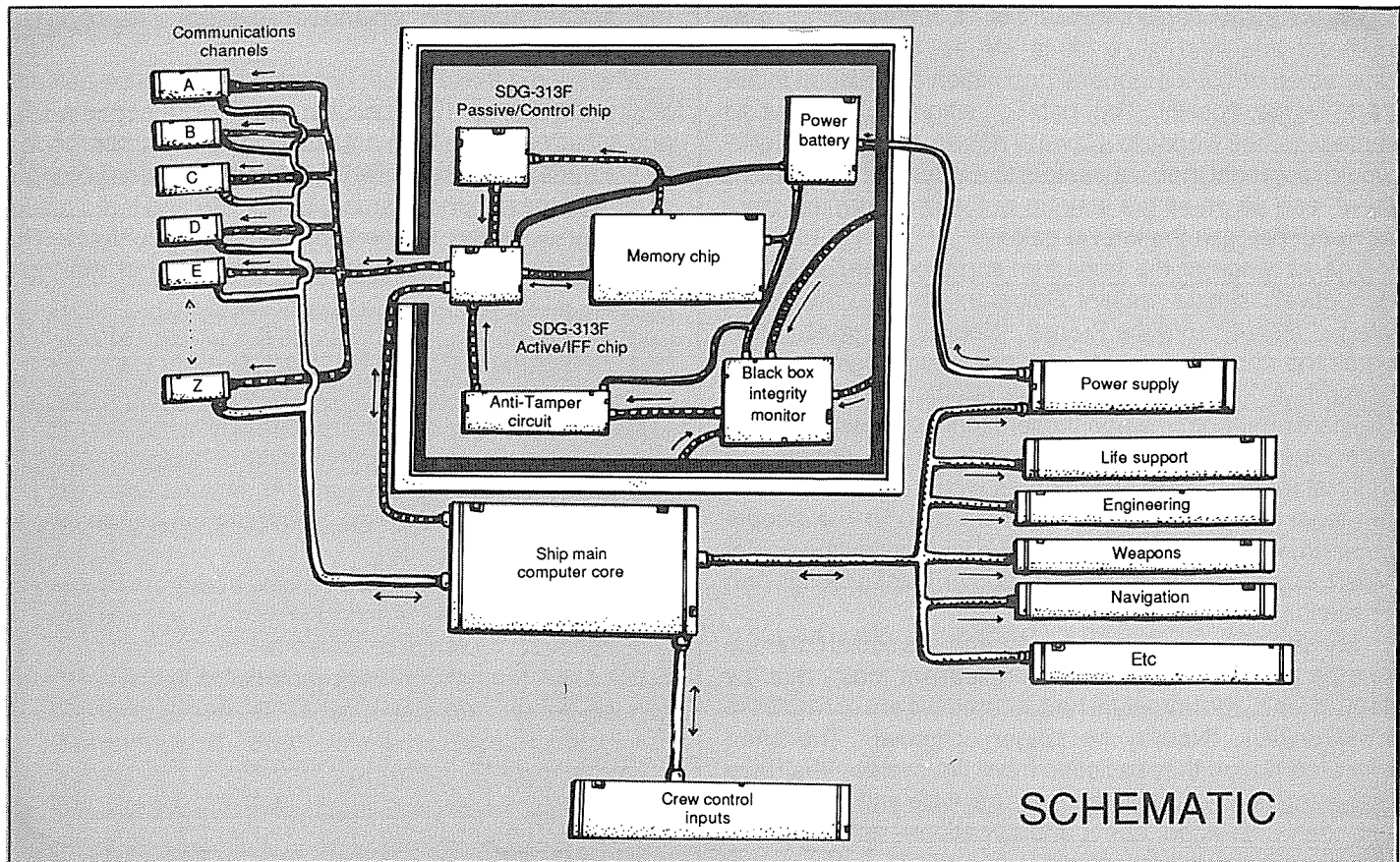
Functioning, as many thought, as a rubber stamp to confirm new emperors or Imperial decrees, this role was in fact a symbolic recognition that the empire only lived, only functioned, only succeeded, so long as the lesser nobility affirmed the greater Imperium and its policies as a whole. The Moot's single greatest power was to dissolve the Imperium. The Imperial nobility, the repository of the Imperial social contract, could call into question the legitimacy of human society as a whole, and hopefully remind all concerned of what was at stake. Instead; they stood aside, inert, impotent, and permitted the Imperium to die by their inaction. If ever a body of persons deserved the contempt of all humanity, it was the Imperial Moot. For a decade they did nothing, while more human lives were extinguished than by any other single event in history.

When they thought that they could maintain their positions by siding with their factional or domain leaders, they forgot their jobs. Why did they forget the Civil Wars of 604-622 when the Moot and the Imperial bureaucracy, by carrying on with their jobs and refusing to allow themselves to be split, prevented the howling forces of chaos to take the life of the Imperium? Why did the Moot not stand as one and forbid lesser nobles to drain away the lifeblood of the Imperium by fighting each other? What if they gave a war and nobody came? Because *noblesse n'oblige plus*.

The Imperial nobility started the job. The Virus only finished it.

ARTIFICIAL VS. INORGANIC INTELLIGENCE

What would occasionally flare up as the subject of bitter debate was, in the final analysis, a moot point. Generating rather more heat than light at conferences dedicated to robotic intelligence, attempts to distinguish between artificial (manufactured) intelligence and inorganic (non-biological) intelligence were irrelevant to the general public, who used the terms interchangeably.

The terms were less than helpful, at any rate. If a computer with a synaptic, vat-grown organic core attained intelligence, it would surely be artificial, but would it be organic or inorganic? If silicon chips could develop intelligence independently, they would surely be inorganic, but since such a chip could be readily manufactured once its function was investigated, could it not also be described as artificial?

Much of this etymological hair-splitting finally collapsed, exhausted, at the rationalization that science was to blame. Since the biological sciences obviously lagged behind electronic sciences, meaningful comparisons between the manufacture of organic and inorganic life were impossible.

In the end, it was a distinction without a difference.

The real acid test of intelligence proved to be that intelligence, whatever its adjective, defines its own parameters.

STARSHIP TRANSPONDERS

The least appreciated daily miracle of Imperial society was the starship transponder. Its simple purpose, to prove the identity of a given starship to ground facilities and to other starships, was confounded by the sheer magnitude of the task. At 920 parsecs from the Solomani Rim to the Zhodani border, the one-way passage of a packet of information across Imperial territory would take three years at maximum theoretical speeds of jump-6 with no turnaround

time required for successive jumps. But because cosmography does not conveniently place worlds at six-parsec intervals, jump-6 ships are rare, and turnaround time adds up—practice dictates that the period is considerably longer.

Given these distances, it is clearly impossible for a central authority to keep track of all the changes in status of starship ownership and registry, much less issue and confirm those changes, in a timely fashion. But localized administration permits too much variation in procedure, which over the span of an Imperium, would only create more confusion. Either way, the system is ripe for fraud, abuse and intrigue. And because the stakes in a ship's identity and allegiance are high, often life and death (it is no accident that military vessels refer to transponder systems as IFF, for Identification, Friend or Foe), such shortcomings cannot be permitted. Eleven thousand worlds cannot function as an efficient economy if each starship encounter is treated as the arrival of Greeks bearing gifts.

Distance dictates that identity registration must be localized, but cohesion dictates that registration must be nonconterfeitable. The solution was elegant and successful for quite a long time. It also proved to be the manifestation of the Imperium's Achilles' heel.

Imperial science was aware of the possibility of inorganic microchip intelligence before its discovery on Cymbeline in 1067. The fact that the existence of the intelligent chips remained a secret until Dr. Arnold Rushorin's heavily expurgated paper was allowed to be published in 1114 is a measure of the importance that the Imperial government placed on these creatures. Even before they were discovered, they were chosen to be the ultimate solution to the Imperium's IFF problem. However, the creation of such circuits, though theoretically predicted, proved impossible until living examples were found that could be studied and, most importantly, allowed to reproduce.

The Cymbeline chips reproduced by impressing their circuitry patterns onto existing silicon chips, using conductive materials present in the environment. In many cases, the chips would impress their circuitry over existing chips, converting an existing circuit to a new pattern. It was the chips' ability to reproduce that allowed the program to gain momentum. Now the researchers could actually guide the evolution of new circuitry patterns by offering different chip "blanks."

In 1086, the researchers acheived their goal—the creation of a strain of chip, the SDG-313F series, with a low, constant rate of self-mutation over time that would reproduce offspring identical to the current form. This would allow the creation of a pool of identical chips, all of which would change at the same gradual rate. This pool could be expanded at any time by retaining a breeding population which could create new chips, each at the same state of development as all their siblings. These chips were also bred not to have full independent intelligence, but rather to respond in a sophisticated fashion in only a few prescribed areas. These areas were the ability to communicate with each other, to exchange and update information and, most importantly, to recognize other sibling chips as authentic,

ACHILLES' HEEL

We can talk all year about the vulnerability of certain Imperial systems to offensive data system exploitation, and we won't solve a thing. We're vulnerable to computer viruses today, and this law will allow us to be vulnerable to them tomorrow.

So what? That's the name of this game. The Imperium wouldn't exist without that kind of vulnerability. We can't legislate it away. We will always be vulnerable. There is no iron-clad defense against anything. The history of warfare is measure and countermeasure, then counter-countermeasure and counter-counter-countermeasure, on and on forever. Technology will not stop. Weapons will be devised against our current defenses, but we will work to anticipate and prevent them, and each new generation of threat that will develop.

Would you have us go back to writing with pointed sticks on wax tablets? That might be invulnerable to a computer virus. And if not, we could throw away the wax tablets and write in the dirt with our toes.

Two neighboring walled cities can either fight each other until only one survives to grow, or can grow by placing a larger wall around the both of them and becoming a state. Two walled states can enlarge the walls and create a nation. Two nations can expand their horizons to defend the society of a continent. Two continents unite to form a hemisphere, hemispheres to a world, worlds to a subsector, to a sector, to an Imperium.

Each level of consolidation increases your strength by an order of magnitude, but it comes at the price of trust. You always have to trust someone. If you extend that wall around a sister city, you can both be rich, but if they decide to stab you, you're *dead*, because you gave up the ability to defend yourself against those people when you jointly agreed to stand back to back and move your defenses outward. Any great society proceeds from the acceptance of its members' joint vulnerability to each other.

And look at what we've acheived. This Imperium is the most powerful organization known to history. We're invulnerable to everyone but ourselves, because only we have the inside access to the undefended vital organs.

Our awesome power lasts only so long as we continue to justify our faith in each other. At some level, we must all trust each other.

The other choice is to give up being a powerful Imperium and become a collection of squabbling sectors, or subsectors or individual worlds. We'll be able to more surely control our own security, but look at all we'll lose. If we can't trust each other, technology *can't* save us.

Marquis Pyotre haut-Bastien,
addressing the Moot, 103-1086, during testimony
for the 12th Standard Data Systems Law of 1088

unaltered, untampered members of their specific strain. By additionally limiting the chips to only receiving new information from other authenticated sibling chips, the information loop could be sealed to exclude counterfeit data.

The new SDG-313F transponder system consisted of the traditional sealed, tamper-proof "black box," inside of which were two SDG-313F chips. One of these was the active IFF circuit, while the other had no active role, but was the control chip against which the active chip could compare itself. Connected to the IFF chip was its larger memory chip. By using the same electrochemical processes that the chips used to reproduce, the IFF chip would create and update data storage circuits on this chip. When each transponder was built, the chips inside were educated by trainer chips of the SDG-313F strain. This initial training consisted of contextual data, which included the date, the world on which they were created and selected items of history passed on from the trainer chips' individual memory. This created a common frame of reference within which all of the chips could orient themselves. Once installed, the SDG chips would be given detailed registry information for their ship. Any change in a ship's registry, configuration or status was reported to the SDG chip, which would record this information. New information of this type did not replace or overlay the previous registry. Rather, the SDG chip kept a current running history of itself and of the ship it represented, and it was this complete history that was broadcast to other transponders during the authentication process.

Most people are not aware that transponder systems are constantly broadcasting and receiving information while they are in normal space. They assume that a transponder only broadcasts a discrete identity "squawk" when interrogated by another transponder system. While this is true, it is only a small part of what goes on. The identity squawk is for the benefit of the ship's crew, as it gives them the details and particulars of the broadcasting vessel, but it is not here that the authenticity of the other ship is established. This takes place during the conversation between the transponders themselves. The transponders have direct access to a ship or port's communications channels, and they are, therefore, "frequency agile," able to use whatever comm system or frequency is needed and not otherwise in use.

In conversing, the chips interactively exchange information from their dedicated memory chips, and from their own ship's main computer core and databanks, to which the transponders have unimpeded access. It is by these conversations that the chips convince each other of their authenticity. This is not controlled by any arbitrary codes or passwords that could be discovered and misused or counterfeited. The chips simply judge whether they *believe* the other chip to be authentic, based on the information presented and the way each chip demonstrates its thought processes. As all authentic chips are also slowly mutating at the same constant rate, they also show incremental change in their thought processes over time. The recognition of this change in a previously encountered chip is crucial to establishing that it has not been merely copied and counterfeited. By testing these indicators against the

parallel SDG control circuit and its own data in the ship's computer and its own memory chip, the chip assesses a new contact as authentic or flawed. This judgment is then passed on the squawk that was received by the crew, telling them whether to believe it or not, and allowing them to act accordingly. This entire procedure is independent of crew oversight. The large volume and high rate of data exchange is more than could be controlled by a human, and keeping the crew out of the loop is necessary to minimize transponder fraud from the outset.

A squawk judged as flawed must be investigated further. It is not on its own a sign of hostile intent—it may be a sign of a deliberate act of deception or some sort of malfunction. Similarly, an authenticated squawk may be that of an enemy vessel, but the identity received is correct.

In a very real sense, the SDG chips are a population of "honest brokers," outside of governmental or interpersonal allegiance. They are responsible only to perform their jobs, and they make no allowance for the consequences of their actions. For example, the transponder of a stolen starship will not attempt to conceal the fact that it is a stolen vessel, should the data at its disposal confirm that fact. However, the ship's crew must often assess the significance of an authentic identity squawk. For example, the questions, "Are we at war with that world?" or, "Was a ship by that name reported stolen?" are outside the purview of the SDG-313F transponder circuitry.

The true nature of the SDG circuit is completely unknown to the public. By presenting the new transponder as a self-contained black box which functions unobtrusively and without need for human interaction, Imperial authorities have forestalled popular curiosity about its details. And when dealing with the curious, the eminently reasonable response that prevention of fraud and counterfeit require transponder contents to remain secret is readily accepted. To thwart tampering, each black box contains a tiny antitamper circuit. If the box's integrity monitor detects any breach in the container, a surge of power from the antitamper circuit melts the SDG circuits to slag.

Prototype SDG transponders were in final testing in 1086, and with the passage of the enabling laws in 1088, the new transponders, popularly known as the "Deyo Circuits," became mandatory equipment on all spacecraft operating within the Imperial boundaries. These were installed as standard equipment on new construction vessels, and over the course of a 12-year phase-in period, were retrofitted to all existing vessels as part of routine annual maintenance and re-licensing procedures. SDG-313F transponders were also installed at all starports and other locations with at least orbital communications facilities, to permit interaction with the spacecraft transponders. The SDG circuits were also exported vigorously, for any of the alien powers that wished to trade with the huge Imperial markets also had to be integrated into the system. Many governments, particularly the Aslan, Vargr, Zhodani, Darrians, Sword Worlds and Solomani, adopted the system for themselves rather than carrying two separate IFF systems. By 1116, the Deyo Circuit was ubiquitous within the Imperium and along its

DEYO CIRCUIT

Interviewer: Where did the Deyo Circuit get its name? Omicron's rosters show no Dr. Deyo.

Jarrah: [Laughs] Now that's a good story. You may be aware of this—the actual series numbers on the transponders that are being installed under the new regulations are in the SDG sequence. It's right there on the casing of every transponder box: SDG-313F-152467, whatever. SDG is the name of the new standard transponder model, but that's actually the name of the circuit itself, the SDG circuit. That, I believe, is from Strain D, Group 313F—I don't recall the distinctions between all of them. The breeding guys would be able to tell you that; I just tested the chips they sent up to me.

Anyway, that's the way we kept track of the different circuit lines we were breeding. SDG-313F was the pure-strain constant mutation rate chip that carries the collective memory in all of the transponders that are going into the ships now. We had literally thousands of strains and breeds of those things. Remember, these guys can mutate and evolve at a *phenomenal* rate because they breed like crazy; you don't have to wait for sexual maturity or anything. Zap! It's born; it's a circuit; it's wide awake; it's happy to see you; it's ready to go; and by the way, it asks, can I have a look at that little flake of silicon over there? The trick was to *hold down* the mutation rate, because we needed a chip that had a constant, predictable rate of mutation over time. That took us close to 20 years, but we finally got one, like I said, the SDG-313F.

So anyway, this story is to my mind proof that these chips are truly intelligent, just like you and I—they just don't have a big data storage system they can haul around, which is what's been holding them back. I had one hooked up to a big data library, actually using it to run diagnostics on the SDG series, because it could get in and appraise the circuits better than we could, and there was a period of down-time, and I guess it got bored and decided to look through the library. It must have hit a Bach entry, because a minute later the chip tells me [through the voder attached to the chip interface circuitry] that it thinks the SDG series designator stands for, "Soli Deo Gloria [to God alone goes the glory]."

[Laughs] Who would have thought that these chips were thinking about religion? But it makes sense, really—like any other intelligence, they're wondering why they're here, what's the story, why *are* things? And it comes across some connection that seems to make things fit, and it wonders if it has an answer. Other people have told me about similar experiences, particularly early on, when we carried the first chips away and told them that we had created them via the old Terran MILSPEC chip. The chips for a while must have thought we were their gods or something. That sounded really human to me.

Now there are a lot of people here who firmly feel that these guys aren't intelligent—it's just "simulated intelligence," whatever that is. I mean, what's *simulated* intelligence, anyway? People talk about how the human brain works like a just slightly busted computer, making tenuous connections, little short circuits which is where you get worldview and opinions out of events, and they'll be different for different people. But our brains are always looking for these little missing pieces, fitting bits here and there, trying to make a pattern, to bring order out of chaos, and that's what I see these chips doing all the time. If you talk like a drunk, stagger like a drunk, and fall down like a drunk, do I say, "Oh look, a simulated drunk"? No, I just don't let you drive my g-pod. But I got a big kick out of the Soli Deo remark, and I told a lot of people, and we started calling them the Deo circuits around here. It just got written down somewhere "Deyo," and it went from there.

There's a postscript to the story, too. I thought it was so interesting that the one chip came up with that idea, I ran it past a few other chips when we had them on the diagnostic circuit. One day I ask this one chip, like all the others, "What does 'Deo' mean to you?" I still haven't figured out the reference for this yet, but it came back with, "Daylight come and me wan' go home."

They're sophisticated and unpredictable. If unpredictability isn't a hallmark of intelligence, what is? The thing to keep in mind is that the SDG circuits were bred to be subintelligent, without some of the connections for real oversight and self-modification, but they're almost there. The structure is there. It would just require some specific improvements, and, wham, intelligence. Just add water.

From the Imperial Research Station Omicron oral history tapes, Volume XXVII, Cycle B,
Dr. Jamys Jarrah, 211-1106, assigned to Provisions of the 50-Year Rule,
Code 16, Case 4, Imperial Security Act of 893

frontiers, and was well-represented even at the core of K'kree and Hiver space.

However, Admiral Herzoch Stearns, chief of Combined Imperial Intelligence from 1097 to 1108, ordered the exploitation of a newly discovered "wild strain" of Cymbeline chip. These symbiotic parasites were, in some cases, able to change the circuitry of their prey at a distance by convincing the prey circuit via broadcast messages to modify its own circuitry to the parasite's wishes. This research was intended to give the Imperium an ultimate fail-safe to use against invaders or insurrections. Had Stearns been up on his Plato, however, he would have known that any truly effective tool is distinguished by its capacity for opposites. Ω

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ers an odd feeling, as if they are inside a living thing. One of the science team members will dub it the "Jonah Feeling." This expression is quite apt, since the vessel is actually alive.

The science team will want to spend at least a few days examining the vessel and will conduct a wide variety of tests. They will eventually determine that the vessel is a cybernetic organism. The vessel consists of a fusion of organic parts and mechanical parts, and it possesses a rudimentary intelligence. They will also determine that the vessel has been adrift for centuries, maybe even for thousands of years or longer. They will also find out that the vessel is nearly dead, due to lack of food and spare parts.

Unfortunately, an accident may convince some of the humans that the alien vessel is an alien monster. One of the science team members will find what he takes to be a bunk set into the wall. He will climb into it and be shocked when the opening begins to close. He will call for help over his radio, and his transmission will end with a horrible scream as acids break him and his radio into component elements. It seems that the vessel ate him—but not out of any cruel intentions. The science team member blundered into a waste disposal area, and the vessel did not register him as living, due to breakdowns in its sensors. So the waste disposal converted him into raw materials. This incident may set off

a debate on the PCs' ship as to what should be done about the alien vessel. If the situation is carefully investigated, the truth may turn up and the incident revealed as a horrible accident, but an accident nonetheless.

If the team members decide not to destroy the alien vessel, they may want to bring it back with them. The vessel is not large and could be linked to the players' ship (depending on its size). The vessel would be a gold mine of information in terms of technology and data on the civilization that produced it. If it is left alone, it will perish in a few weeks. If it is destroyed, it will be a loss for the human race. If the vessel is brought back and cared for, it will expand a bit, and its hull and interior walls will smooth out. It will also regain its full consciousness and will be willing to communicate with the humans, within its limited abilities for communication. It may even live for a few more centuries.

NPCs

There are three groups of NPCs.

Military Team: A Veteran NPC leads four Experienced NPCs, armed with military rifles and equipped with light armor.

Ship's Crew: These are Experienced NPCs equipped with light sidearms. The exact number of the crew members depends on the vessel used.

Science Team: These include four Novice (for combat purposes) NPCs, without weapons.

VESSEL DIAGRAMS

The alien vessel consists of an organic hull with organic and artificial equipment in its interior. The doors, airlock and many of the controls are machines. The walls have an odd, shrunken organic look to them. Everything looks quite old.

Drives: The ship has two drives. The mechanical drive has failed and seems to be similar to human stutterwarp drives. The other drive is a cybernetic chemical drive which is fueled by hydrogen and oxygen. This drive is still working.

Bridge: The bridge contains odd, organic-looking chairs for a multilimbed, nonhumanoid race. There a numerous mechanical control panels set into the walls and linked into the vessel's nervous system. The floor hatch is metal.

Cargo: This area is the vessel's cargo bay. The airlock is metal. Two waste disposal systems are set into the walls of this section.

Quarters: This area contains the sleeping, eating and bathroom facilities for an obviously nonhuman crew. The door is metal.

Engineering: Deck 1 contains mechanical and electronic engineering panels. The hatch in the floor is metal. Deck 2 contains controls for manipulating the organic parts of the ship.

Electronics: This area contains the ship's electronic systems, including the main computer. Ω

KROLIK RUN

Andy Slack

DALY

The PCs learn that a local fortress villa has a krolik pen. Krolik meat is a rare delicacy, valuable on the black market of those wishing to impress their dinner guests (or those simply curious to taste it). If the PCs can break in, steal some kroliks and get out, they can sell the meat on the black market for a tidy sum—say, 10/— per krolik.

APPROACH

The PCs must organize their approach to the villa, ideally under the cover of darkness. The journey will not be too difficult as the villa is only a mile or so from the outskirts of the Canal Martian city where the PCs are currently based.

The villa stands on a low hill a few hundred yards from a main canal. If desired, the referee can roll for encounters along the way using the standard **Space: 1889** encounter tables.

RETRIEVAL

The PCs must also organize their own escape route. This leg of the trip will be more difficult than the approach, as the villa guards will probably be in pursuit. Additionally, the PCs may be encumbered with a number of wildly thrashing kroliks. Again, the referee may roll for encounters, if desired.

MAP DESCRIPTION

The map shows the standard Martian fortress villa from **Space: 1889** in suitable surroundings. It can be located on the outskirts of any convenient Martian city, depending on where the PCs are currently located.

The krolik run is in the courtyard, between the northeastern gun tower and the main gate.

REFEREEING
THE SCENARIO

Kroliks are very similar to Earth rabbits, and the referee should use rabbits as a model for answering any questions raised by the PCs on krolik behavior. However, these creatures have six legs and much shorter ears.

Detailed statistics are not really necessary, but the animals weigh about 10 pounds each.

Once the PCs are in the pen, catching a krolik is a Difficult: Agility task which takes a character's complete attention for one combat round.

Unless the beast is immediately killed (any PC with an edged weapon can do this simply by stating so), its frantic at-

tempts to escape make it count as 40 pounds of weight for encumbrance purposes.
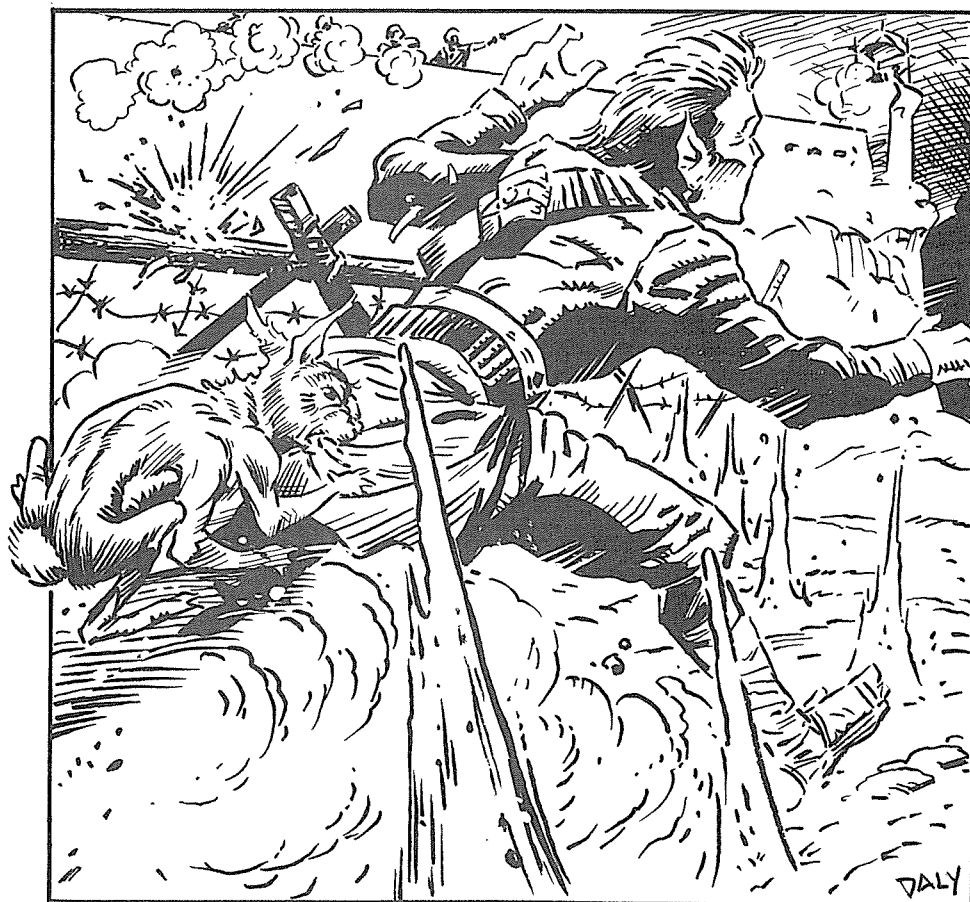
The PCs can make their getaway wrestling with live kroliks (and the scenario is much funnier if they do), but those of a practical frame of mind will despatch the animals first.

Kroliks can (and will) bite and scratch furiously. But while these assaults are painful, they do only superficial damage—not enough to count in game terms.

NPCS

Kaashneek is the ideal NPC to alert PCs to this business opportunity. His stats and description can be found in **Space: 1889** on page 42.

For those running the second scenario in other game systems—a TL4 **Mega-Traveller** world springs to mind as a viable alternative setting—Kaashneek is a cheerful, streetwise orphan from the local slums with no taste in clothing and a weakness for crazy get-rich-quick schemes. He has continually pestered the PCs until they agreed to take him on as a local guide or party mascot, and has proven valuable for his contacts in the local underworld.

For other NPCs, use the human stock NPC characteristics in the **Space: 1889** quick reference charts. The Martians en-

Fortress Villa

countered are similar enough not to need separate statistics.

ALTERNATIVES AND VARIANTS

If the PCs are too honorable to undertake this adventure as thieves, they can be invited to dinner at the villa on the night that a band of NPC Canal Martians attempt to steal the krolik. Their host may ask the PCs to help round up kroliks set loose by the thieves.

If you can't resist the idea of your PCs fighting wriggling kroliks all the way home (I couldn't), advise them that their buyer wants the kroliks alive. Truly sadistic referees will have the kroliks make loud embarrassing cries at inopportune moments (e.g., when the PCs are sneaking back into town with "nothing to declare"). Ω

LIVE BAIT

"I greet you anew," the dragon Lofwyr coughs. "I have another task for you." His toothy smile is not reassuring, and probably not meant to be. "This will be one of the most straightforward jobs you've ever had, and legal, too." Already it sounds bad.

By Craig Sheeley

lone figure walks out of the rain, water streaming off his hat and slicker. A familiar man, short, silent and uncommunicative, approaches the designated meeting place—an awning. In a thunderstorm. In Seattle. He sets his briefcase vid player up on the shop windowsill and opens the lid. The flatscreen flickers to steady on an image of reptilian intellect and ferocity.

"I greet you," the dragon Lofwyr coughs. "I have a task for you." His toothy smile is not reassuring, and probably isn't meant to be. "This will be one of the most straightforward jobs you've ever had, and legal, too." Already it sounds bad. "Tomorrow morning, I want you to assemble at the address my man provides. Bring transport capable of moving a man-sized box, weight 75 kilograms. Such a box will be delivered to you at 0845 exactly. I want you to take the box and drive around the city with it, checking in with my organization by telephone for instructions every half-hour. At 1700 hours, I want you to deliver the box to a location you will be given at the last check-in."

He chortles, a sound like a rock-crusher. "You want to know the biggest joke of all? There's nothing in the box." He pauses for a moment to enjoy his jest. "Nothing at all. All you have to do is take an empty box around the city all day long. By the way, don't try to

open it yourselves. It's rigged with alarm systems and some fairly nasty active anti-burglary systems, for nosy types trying to get a look at the void inside. I'm hoping some of my enemies do try."

He sobers quickly. "Of course, no one will believe it is empty. There are forces that will strive mightily to relieve you of your cargo. Do not let them. Protect the box with your lives. You can tell them it's empty if you wish; they'll not believe you. But deliver that box to the specified contact point at 1700 hours if you wish to be paid."

The image is only a recording, but Lofwyr seems to have anticipated the shadowrunner reactions. "That's right. You're bait again. And I'm casting you to flush out some people. Of course, you'll have help—I shall have security forces with extraordinarily heavy armament following you, at a distance, to mop up troublemakers you can't handle. And you'll be cared for—any damage suffered in the course of this job will be repaired at my expense." He pauses again.

"Did I mention the remuneration? Fifteen thousand nuyen apiece, with 1000 of it in advance. That is the price of success when you deliver that box. As for the price of failure, you're still all far too young to even begin to imagine it. Do not fail me."

With that, the screen goes blank, and the small man closes the case. Silently, he takes an envelope from his pocket and hands it to the closest runner, picks up the case and walks out into the rain—which stops immediately like a thrown switch. He climbs into a small black city car and rides off.

ONCE YOU'SE BEEN BAIT

It don't matter whether you catch a fish or not; once you'se been bait, you ain't much use for nothing else nohow.

Walt Kelly's *Pogo*

The envelope contains a sheet of paper with the address where the shadowrunners are supposed to be and the telephone number they're to use, and 1000 nuyen per shadowrunner in crisp 100 nuyen bills.

The adventurers have about 15 hours to prepare for their mission. They have to acquire a vehicle that can carry a man-sized, 75-kilogram box—no matter how strong they are, they're not going to lug the thing all over town! In addition, they can use their new

booty to grab some gear, stash in their account, go for information or just throw one really big farewell party.

Why a farewell party? If anyone taps the street telegraph, the drums are thumping, and the natives are restless. People with street-type contacts (street samurai, street mage, street shaman, gang member, bartender, fixer, gang boss, squatter, etc.) have a target number of 3 for gathering info; those without such contacts have a target number of 5 for finding out what the word is on the street. The appropriate skill is Etiquette (Street).

Roll	Rumor
1-2	Something ugly is gathering. The squatters and homeless are clearing the area, moving away from center city Seattle. It's not supposed to be healthy tomorrow.
3-4	The Rotters and the Gideon Goads have stopped fighting! This is the first time in two years they've ceased fire. Rumor has it that they're arming up for some important mission tomorrow. Heaven help anyone caught in between them. Something nasty is going down.
5-6	Gangs all over town are going after someone tomorrow. Whoever's in the middle is toast. The cops are bringing in heavy-armor riot gear, fearing an all-out war over some unidentified target. Stay away from downtown tomorrow, chummer.
7+	Someone is offering a 50,000 nuyen reward to anyone who recovers a large box. The word's out everywhere; it even seems that more than one reward has been posted, apparently by rival agencies. Every money-hungry gang in the city is preparing to do a number on the delivery boys— and each other, if the opportunity arises.

Get the picture? All over the city, gangs and thugs are going into lock-and-load mode on that box.

And guess who's got the box. The adventurers. And who has to defend it? The adventurers!

Of course, the runners might decide to double-cross Lofwyr, sell the box for one or more of the rewards and bug out of Seattle. This won't help, naturally. Should they do something this stupid, assume they're sui-

cidal and let them run a bit before the dragon's forces crush them. The adventurers are certain to meet with a nasty end—at the short end of a colossal firefight against overwhelming odds, victims of a group of Adept ninja, captive experimental subjects of an excruciatingly disgusting spell or chemical process, etc. If they cross Lofwyr, they'll die, and their highly publicized deaths will serve as a warning to others who get similarly stupid ideas.

NICE DAY FOR A DRIVE

It looks like the adventurers are going to have an easy time of it (yeah, right). They arrive at the northwest corner of the South Jackson Street Bridge at 0845 hours, as ordered. There's a motorized rickshaw waiting there, its seat occupied by a box that looks like nothing so much as a coffin! The driver, an impassive dwarf dressed in a rain-slicker and boots, shifts his sucker in his mouth and passes the runners a piece of plastic with a phone number written on it. "Here's the number," he squeaks in a high-pitched voice. "Call it every half-hour. Use pay-phones; cell-phones can be tapped too easy. Don't lose the box. Cruise around the park for awhile." He kick-starts the rickshaw and putts off; from various vantage points around the bridge, groups of armed men and orks slouch away to unmarked vehicles and drive off.

At least the runners have a nice day to run around in. The near-perpetual cloud cover of Seattle has broken, and the sun beams down on the city, making it sparkle like a fairy-tale land. Blue skies serve as a backdrop for the skyscrapers and helicopters flitting from building to building. But the adventurers have work to do.

Their job is to drive around and defend the box. Each half-hour, they're to call their contact number and find out where to go next. The directions are very vague—pass every civic building, or cruise up and down Denny Way, or circle the Remraku Arcology, etc. For a half-hour at a time. You're bait; get out there and dangle!

What kind of vehicle are the adventurers parading around in? Are they showing any kind of heavy armament? Truculent displays of vehicle-mounted weapons, or hand-carried assault arms, are certain to attract the attention of Seattle's finest. Lofwyr did say the job was legal, after all. And in Seattle, the cops get nervous when a Beachcraft Patroller slides by brandishing an autocannon and a missile launcher—they even get itchy when they see people in a normal car aiming assault rifles out the windows. If the runners are too blatant about their weaponry, the cops stop them and issue a ticket for violating vehicle safety regulations. (Under Se-

attle municipal code, even carrying a loaded weapon in a vehicle is a safety violation. Most of the time, the cops treat the ordinance as "we don't see it, we don't ticket it.") The fine is 100 nuyen for hand weapons, 500 nuyen for antivehicle weapons like autocannon and missile launchers, 1000 nuyen for turret-mounted vehicle cannons, Gatling cannons, autogrenade launchers and missile tubes! (Don't laugh, there are riggers who drive minipanzers mounting such hardware.) And that citation is only a warning; if the cops catch the adventurers on this again, they run them in for questioning.

Please note that the cops aren't interested in what's in the box. They might care, but it's not their legal business.

The runners might try to fight it out with the police. Bad idea. Police cars use Ford American stats, but have 2 points of armor, Body 3 and Speed 60/160. These cars also mount a heavy MG under the hood and have a "sun-roof" mount for a grenade launcher on the roof (this is an auto-GL that fires three grenades per shot and has a 50-round belt). Use Corporate Security Guard stats for the police; they wear heavy armor and use heavy handguns and assault rifles. And even if the adventurers off a single patrol car, that just gets the rest of the force angry at them. And Lofwyr won't raise a claw to stop the police from doing their duty—that kind of business he doesn't need.

THE BOX

The box looks very much like a coffin. It's made of molded plastic, and apparently has no lid, hatch or other entry point. On the outside, it seems featureless, just a molded hunk of plastic. Obviously, it has a hollow center, or it would weigh a great deal more than the mere 75 kilograms it masses. It's pretty sturdy—treat it as having a Body of 6 if it's hit by fire or attacked.

What the adventurers can't see is that the box is wired, wired, wired—it's got more electronic security systems than a Nightsky parked in the slum zone. It won't do anything if moved, jostled or electronically probed. If it's struck hard or physically probed (i.e., hit by something that might do damage to it) the box speaks: "This unit is equipped with an active defense system. If the container is breached, an explosive charge will destroy it, as well as collateral damage extending in a 50-meter radius." It repeats this message again for effect, intending to deter anyone from breaking in.

In truth, the box does have an explosive charge in it, and the message is for real! Four kilograms of the box's mass is Compound 12 explosive, enough to devastate an area 48 meters in radius. The explosive is wired to detonate if the box is breached (that is, if the

box sustains damage that would "injure" it, or someone manages to drill a hole in it), on a 20-second audible countdown: "This unit will now self-destruct. Sequence started. Detonation in 20 seconds, 19 seconds, 18 seconds..." and so on. Lofwyr's men following the adventurers have a remote-control reset device, so they can turn off the self-destruct charge if they think the box really isn't in danger. However, they just might wait until that last second to turn off the charge.

Are the adventurers curious as to what's in the box? Well, there's no way to find out short of breaking it open. X-rays and other scanning methods reveal nothing but the speaker; apparently, the interior of the box is lined with metal. And it's dark inside, so clairvoyants can't see anything but blackness. The box has been systematically designed to frustrate attempts to see inside it.

MEAN STREETS

The forces arrayed against the adventurers are mighty, but fragmented. Over a half-dozen gangs are looking for the box, packing plenty of heat. Fortunately for the runners, these gangs are in it for themselves and will not cooperate with each other—indeed, they're more likely to fire on each other than on the adventurers!

Various gangs fix on the runners at various times. There is no timetable to their attacks; the referee can route them to his liking. If the referee is feeling merciful, or nasty, have two gangs show up at the same time and let the players dither as to what they're going to do! At least two of the gangs hit at almost the same time, though, to give the adventurers real trouble with a one-two punch (the final encounter below). All these encounters use standard NPC archetypes and weapons from the *Shadowrun* book.

Of course, these are not the only attacks and attempts that could occur. The referee is free to add or subtract attacks and attempts, according to his choice. If the adventurers seem to be catching on to the blatant attacks too easily, try slipping them a subtle approach—having some innocent-looking person crash into their vehicle, or showing them a victim in need of help (surely there's someone altruistic among the PCs?), etc.

Street Toughs: A small group of street toughs is going for the money. There are five Gang Member NPCs (with two Uzi IIIs, one Remington Roomsweeper shotgun and an AK-97) and a Gang Boss NPC (with an H&K 227S). They have a description of the runners' vehicle and try to hijack it when the adventurers stop at a red light. This is a simple carjacking, where the gang members stroll out into the stopped traffic, walk up to the vehicle, poke their guns into the windows and yell, "Get out!" They will fire if the adven-

turers don't comply. If the runners kill or wound three of the gang members or kill the leader, the gang flees.

Motorcycle Madmen: A cycle gang tries a "stage robbery," bringing their cycles right up behind the adventurers' vehicle(s) and opening fire. The gang consists of four people—three Gang Member NPCs and a Gang Boss NPC (the boss has Bike 5). All carry Uzi III SMGs, wear synthetic leathers, armor vests and helmets. The bikes are Harley Scorpions mounting an AK-98 apiece—and the minigrenade launchers are loaded with explosive 6M3 minigrenades. The cyclists burn rubber and scoot if the runners wound two of them or damage two of the bikes.

Magick Show: While the runners are driving through a section of the city where roadwork is going on, they are slowed to a crawl by heavy traffic jammed at a lane blocked by heavy equipment. A group of down-and-out runners hired to prey on their brethren strikes.

These runners consist of a Burned-Out Mage NPC, a Former Company Man, a Former Wage Mage (the Former Company Man's wife) and a Street Samurai. Their plan is to raise a Force Rating 5 Earth Elemental from the mass of clay and earth exposed by the "open trench" works and send the elemental to retrieve the box. The Former Wage Mage summons and controls the elemental from the rear (she's hiding behind a piece of earth-moving machinery). The Former Company Man stands guard over her. The Burned-Out Mage and the Street Samurai are positioned in cover (in the trench, behind other vehicles, whatever) to provide cover fire for the operation. The elemental is the group's big attack.

These are shadowrunners, not stupid, low-rent gangers. If the adventurers knock out the elemental, the runners break off their attack and retreat. They do the same if the adventurers wound or kill one of the runners.

Corporate Strike Team: It gets nasty here. One of Lofwyr's enemies has dispatched a strike team to recover the box, disguised as a gang. Of course, anyone watching the team members in action will soon figure out that they're no bunch of undisciplined gangers.

There are two teams of three Company Men NPCs. They are dressed in synthileathers, but wear armored vests with plates. They are armed with stun batons, Super Shock tasers, Ares Sliverguns and three-shot grenade launchers (full-sized), with one concussion grenade, one Neuro-Stun VIII gas grenade and one HEDP (6D4/3S2 vehicle damage). The attackers have had the proper injections to allow them to breathe Neuro-Stun VIII without effect.

The two teams are on opposite sides of the street, hiding in building doorways. They announce their presence by shooting a concussion grenade in front of the adventurers' vehicle(s), hoping to make them crash. Then the teams shoot all their Neuro-Stun gas grenades to make a fog of stun gas in the area—anyone exposed to the gas has to take 652-Stun damage each combat turn while they are in the 20-meter-radius gas cloud. In addition, the gas smoke cuts visual range to six meters. Only people in sealed suits or vehicles are exempt from the gas effects.

If the concussion grenades don't stop the adventurers' vehicle(s) because of heavy armor or chance, the attackers fire two HEDP grenades at each vehicle (or at the first three, if there are more than three enclosed vehicles), aiming to stop the vehicles rather than destroy them.

Once the area is smoked, the attackers move out, trying to fight their way to the vehicles with their stun batons and tasers. They're deliberately trying to avoid killing people. The attackers retreat if over half their number are wounded or killed.

Mercenaries at Play: A squad of human and Ork mercs make a play for the reward money, doing it the proper way—with overwhelming firepower! There are three Ork mercenaries and two human mercs. The human mercs have a missile launcher loaded with three HEM missiles and one AVM missile (as well as another pair of AVM and a pair of HEM missiles for reloads). They set up an ambush at a T intersection, at the cap of the T. The plan is for the human mercs to use the missile launcher to stop the adventurers' vehicle(s) when they close to 100 meters range, then for one merc to use the HEM missiles while the other uses his Ingram LMG to lay down cover fire for the Orks moving forward to retrieve the box. These are professional soldiers, and they retreat when two of their number have been immobilized, trying to take their wounded with them if they can.

One-Two Punch: Two gangs hit one after another. In a congested part of town, the first gang sets up an impromptu roadblock of stolen cars—if the ad-venturers want to go through it, they've got to bash their way through! The gang, consisting of 10 Gang Member NPCs and one Gang Boss, wait to mug the runners' vehicle(s) when they try to run the blockade or stop to move it.

The Gang Members are equipped like the NPC archetype, but they have clubs and improvised pole arms as well (the ones with the pole arms go for tires in order to stop the PCs' vehicles). The Gang Boss has an Enfield A57 shotgun. They flee if three of their number are seriously wounded or killed.

While the runners are engaged with fighting off the first gang, a second gang strikes! Led by their Street Shaman (a Rat shaman, a Deceiver, substituting invisibility for Entertainment), the gang of two Street Samurai sneak up to the adventurers' box-carrying vehicle from the rear, under a cloak of Invisibility (two successes for each person, the two Street Samurai and the Street Shaman). They intend to steal the box while the adventurers are busy. If discovered, the Street Shaman backs off while the two Street Samurai stage a fighting withdrawal.

BACKUP

It might seem that the adventurers stand no chance, with so many attacks by foes ranging from the comical to the hyper-armed. Lofwyr did promise back-ups, though, and he meant it. A large force of unmarked

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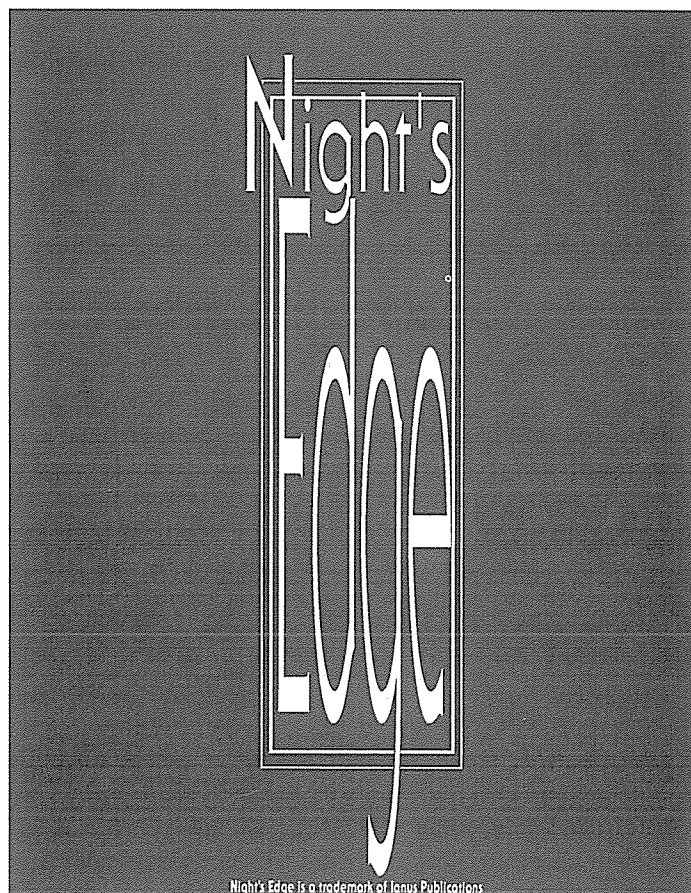
fiberpunk

Cyberpunk is filled with mechanized psychopaths who would kill without a second thought. Why has the world fallen into such decay and depravity? The answer is simple— a low-fiber diet.

By Justin Schmid

W hile the boosters fight the corporate domination and the runners hack their way into black files, a new breed of rebels has hit the street. They move with vibrant energy. They're fiberpunks! Health food addicts with an attitude!

"Fiberpunk" can provide a temporary relief from the stressful campaign world of *Cyberpunk* or an on-going part of the background, providing a new angle on the dark future.

BACKGROUND

Since the early '60s and the hippie movements, a new consciousness has been spawning. One that casts off the shroud of fast food imperialist and bourgeoisie, and dons the vestiges of a high-fiber, low-cholesterol diet.

In the '90s, the fiberpunks infiltrated the Yuppies and converted cereals across North America to fiber and bran versions. Through the chaos of the turn of millennia, they have kept in the background, subtly influencing the masses. They are responsible for the New Age movement, and are adamant believers in reincarnation, channeling and spirituality (the latter being utterly foreign to any cyberpunk).

The fiberpunk movement is needed now more than ever. Deca-

dence and poor nutrition reign over the land, and a new breed of fiberpunks have taken over the fight.

Armed with rock-hard bran muffins and rice-cake launchers, they've taken to the streets to help the hapless cyberpunks mend their unhealthy ways. Needless to say, fiberpunks have very short lifespans on the street.

CYBERPUNK VS. FIBERPUNK

The fiberpunk philosophy is radically different from that of the cyberpunk. While there is a great deal of diversity, the fiberpunk philosophy is based on three golden rules:

Substance over Taste: The better the food tastes or appears, the worse it is for you. Thus, foods resembling building materials are considered the best of the bunch, especially when they also *taste* like building materials.

Fiber is Everything: When you eat, make sure the fiber content rivals that of the thickest carpets. If you eat fiber, then you are fiber. If you don't eat fiber, you are nothing. Well, except maybe a cyberpunk.

Live in Harmony: Harmony is a state of being that few non-fiberpunks attempt, perhaps due to ignorance, perhaps due to cowardice (or perhaps due to sanity). To be harmonious is to be one with the universe. Whatever that means.

FIBERPUNK CHARACTERS

Fiberpunk character generation begins with selecting a role to play. While roles such as solo and netrunner really don't fit in with the fiberpunk image, most other roles can be altered to suit the fiberpunk philosophy. A few examples are health food salesman (fixer), health activist (media) and folk singer (rocker), as well as a new fiberpunk role, the quasi yogi-shaman.

Quasi Yogi-Shaman

You grew up among unenlightened mundanes. But you always knew you were special, even when the teachers suggested you consider a full-time career in fast food. When you reached adolescence, you found your true calling. Playing with Ouija boards and Tarot cards, you learned you could foretell the future (well, at least 20% of the time). Then, in university, you discovered the way of health and the wonders of channeling. Soon, you had Rocky Raccoon from the animal kingdom beyond speaking through you, among others. Some call you crazy, insane, weird, freak, nutcase—but you know you are gifted. After all, all those baby boomer books told you so, right?

Quasi yogi-shamans can take any skill that does not involve combat, favoring the fiberpunk skills over all others.

Quasi yogi-shamans are able channel spirits, people, animals, insects, lamp shades, etc. What the character contacts or whether he reaches anything is up to the referee. Roll on the Channeling Result table for what the character thinks he reaches.

Channeling Result

Roll	Result	Roll	Result
2	Rocky Raccoon	12	Living relative
3	Lamp shade	13	Shakespeare
4	Caveman	14	Distraught maiden
5	Loch Ness monster	15	Elvis
6	Ghengis Khan	16	Alien (rude)
7	Mickey Mouse	17	Guy named Bob
8	Alien (nice)	18	Phantom of the Concert
9	Dead relative	19	King Kong
10-11	Elvis	20	Demon (very polite)

STATS

Three new stats are added for fiberpunks and cyberpunks alike. These are Regularity, Health Level and Harmony. Like other stats,

they have a maximum of 10 and a minimum of 2. Cyberpunks roll 1D6 for this state, rerolling results of 1. Fiberpunks roll 2D6, rerolling results of 11 or 12.

Regularity (REG): One of the most vital stats of any real fiberpunk, this is a measure of how regular he is. This is beneficial, as one would hate to be hit with the need during a crucial firefight. Laxatives can help for those with low ratings.

Health Level (HEL): This statistic represents just how healthy the foods the character eats are, indicating his relative blood pressure, cholesterol level, fiber count, etc. Kibble does not improve this statistic. Sorry, cyberpunks.

Harmony (HAR): This is a relative rating of how "in tune" the character is with the universal consciousness. The higher the score, the better the character is at relating to other characters. Note that the statistic Empathy is similar, but fiberpunks made up a name they liked better and claimed it for themselves.

LIFEPATH

Fiberpunks use the same lifepath tables as cyberpunks, except that two new tables are added for accuracy in a fiberpunk's background.

Fiberpunks roll 2D10 (add rolls together) three times on the Past Life Table and 1D10 on the Family Experience Table.

Past Life Table

Roll	Result	Roll	Result
2	Shepherd	12	Cleopatra
3	Elvis	13	Picasso
4	Slug	14	Nobleman
5	Vestal virgin	15	Elvis
6	Alien	16	Mozart
7	Mickey Mouse	17	Napoleon
8	Ghengis Khan	18	Mr. Ed, the talking horse
9	Roman soldier	19	Shakespeare
10-11	War god	20	Aphrodite

Family Experience Table

Roll	Result
1	Dysfunctional family, father's fault.
2	Dysfunctional family, mother's fault
3	Dysfunctional family, brother's fault
4	Dysfunctional family, sister's fault
5	Dysfunctional family, uncle's fault
6	Dysfunctional family, mailman's fault
7	Dysfunctional family, third cousin twice removed's fault
8	Dysfunctional family, pet that died's fault
9	Dysfunctional family, anyone but your fault
10	Partially dysfunctional family, therapist's fault

SKILLS

As fiberpunks represent a different background and life-style, different skills are available to them. Here are some new fiberpunk skills, available only to fiberpunks (not that any cyberpunks would want them).

Astrology: The character is able to tell when a person is going to be lucky and when he should hide in a nuclear shelter, according to his sign. Characters with this skill tend to use the line, "What's your sign?" a lot!

Crystal Science: The character is knowledgeable of what crystals do what, and he can prescribe crystals to help the character in any way. (Got any antibullet onyx?)

Health Expert: The character knows what foods are healthy and what their fiber count is. This skill can also be used to help cook.

Magic: The character thinks he can actually cast magical spells.

Meditation: The character is able to calm himself and add this to his Harmony rating. Calm and silence are required, so no meditation during firefights.

Past-Life Regression: The character can regress people back to their former lives (see Past Life Table to determine results). Validity is up to the referee's discretion.

OUTFITTING

Fiberpunks *never* buy anything that has been used on animals, taken from animals or in some way abused animals. Now, since most animals are extinct in cyberpunk, this shouldn't be a problem. A fiberpunk will rarely use a gun or anything weapon-like (well, except bran muffin projectiles and rice-cake launchers). Fiberpunks try to avoid technological items, but Yuppie influence may result in a couple of cereal coffee-makers. All fiberpunks get $1000 no matter what role or level, because material gains are not important to them.

FIBERPUNK EDGE

Whereas cyberpunks have automatic weapons, boosted reflexes and hidden cyberweapons, fiberpunks are not without their own edge. They may be peaceful, but they're not stupid (well, not all of them). They use their own tools of the trade:

Bran Muffin Projectiles: These are rock-hard muffins that cause 1D6 damage per hit. Treat them as grenades for throwing purposes. Goat cheese muffins have five-meter area effect of nausea. $1 each.

Channeling: The character is able to have spirits speak through his body. Use the Channeling Result Table for what the character channels when attempting this. Make sure he adopts a funny voice, too!

Crystals: Depending on what the crystal is, it may grant certain "powers." Validity is up to the referee's discretion, but a certain amount of belief may cause an actual effect.

Fiber Food: This is any food that has a high fiber count. It often tastes more like cardboard than anything. An Average BOD check is required to actually bite into the stuff, but +1 Regularity is gained for the week. Cost is $200 per week.

Organic Health Food: This is any food that is not artificial and was grown with no insecticides. Meaning that insects were allowed (nay, encouraged) to feed upon this food and may still be living within. Health rating is improved by 1 per month of eating this food. $200 per week.

Past-Life Regression: Someone skilled in this is needed for success. Finding out one's past life can help explain one's current situation. (I was Napoleon in my last life? I guess that's why I simply love french fries!)

Rice-Cake Launcher: This ingenious device was created by the inventor Frankfurter, who commented after designing it, "Well, what else was there to do with the little cardboard pucks?" Accuracy is – 2; maximum range is 20 m; damage is 1-2 points per hit; and ROF is 2. $25 for the launcher and $1 for a package of 10 rice cakes.

Therapy: Only characters who come from dysfunctional families need therapy. Therapy is attended regularly by all real fiberpunks.

ADVENTURE

The characters come across a man holding a drum one night, instead of a random encounter. He is dressed in an archaic, tie-dyed T-shirt with a necklace of beads. He is dancing and beating the drum in the middle of the street, chanting "Blog" over and over. When he notices the characters, he stops, points at them and states, "I am Moonwalker, and you will help me. Blog has sent you." Assuming the characters do not simply blow this man away, they may talk to him without further interruptions from Blog. Blog, by the way, is the spirit of a great warrior who could find his way through the most difficult mazes to defeat Arag the Evil. Moonwalker "channels" his spirit. Moonwalker is intent upon destroying the great corporation McDodo. Blog counsels that Moonwalker and the characters charge at dawn and take no prisoners, but perhaps the characters will come up with a more suitable plan.

McDodo has no great assets in Night City. Its city headquarters is guarded by about 40 security personnel, all with clogged arteries and barely able to run a few steps without gasping for air. Therefore, raiding the place should not be difficult, though more subtle means are preferable.

Moonwalker

A quasi yogi-shaman, Moonwalker is on a quest to defeat McDodo, a fast food megacorporation. Blog, who came to him in a dream (after Moonwalker ate a good helping of sushi and pizza), has been offering advice on how to destroy the corporation. Blog has also adopted a high-fiber diet and prides himself on his exceptional regularity.

INT 8, REF 5, TECH 4, COOL 4, ATTR 7, LUCK 9, MA 6, BOD 6, EMP 7, HEL 8, REG 10, HAR 7.

Skills: Channeling +8, Astrology +8, Crystal Science +4, Health Expert +7 (specializes in high-fiber diets), Magic +4, Meditation +6, Past-Life Regression +3, Awareness +3, Athletics +4, Martial Arts: Tai Chi +6.

Personality: Very optimistic and constantly discussing ideas with Blog. He speaks in a deep, funny voice when speaking as Blog.

CONTINUING THE FIBERPUNK CAMPAIGN

There are countless ways to keep fiberpunks regular features in your cyberpunk game. Perhaps powerful corporate executives begin to fund their corporations according to the counsel of channeled spirits. Or a group of fiberpunks team up and begin kidnapping people off the street to convert them to a healthier way of life. There could even be rival groups of fiberpunks, one in favor of high-fiber diets, another in favor of low-cholesterol diets, and the next in favor of photosynthesizing.

Surround the cyberpunk characters with fiberpunks every time they reach for that Kibble dinner; inundate them with literature; and fill the mean street of Night City with groups of chanting fiberpunks.

In short, bring the fiberpunk influence into your campaign en masse, and confuse your players. They won't know whether to help the fiberpunks or get in some target practice. Even if the health food rebels are but a passing influence, they are sure to liven things up and make the players think twice about ordering that pizza. Ω

OGRE
MINIATURES

**ogre**, the classic wargame of the too-near future, is now *live* on your tabletop! Pit lightning-fast G.E.V.s., lumbering superheavy tanks and swarming infantry against the cybernetic killing power of an Ogre Mark V! Can you keep your command post from being crushed? With rules by Steve Jackson Games and miniatures from Ral Partha, *you're* in command . . . Ask for it at your local hobby shop!

Mudd in Your Eye
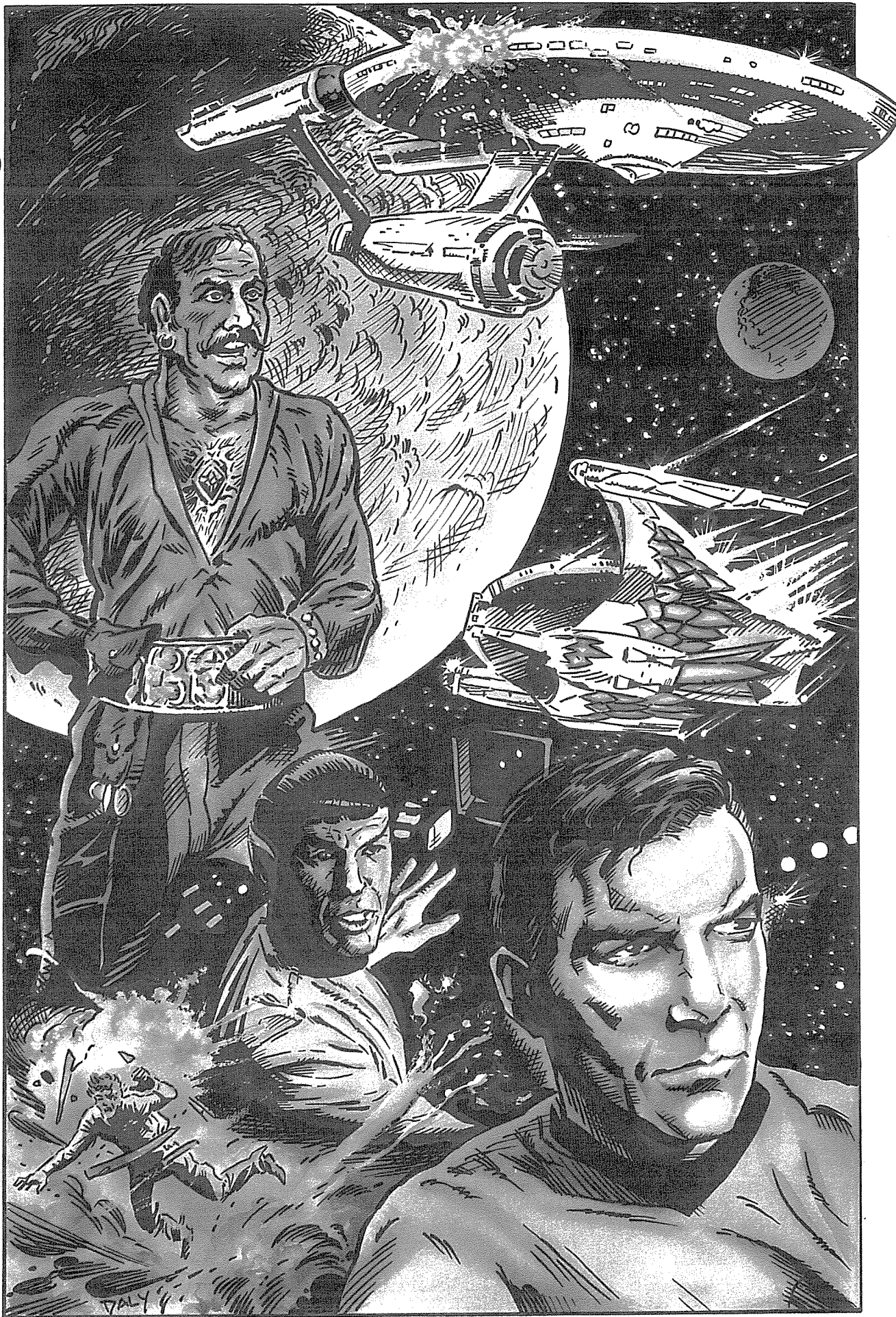
By James L. Cambias

Captain's Log: Stardate 2567.4. The Enterprise has been assigned to clearing asteroidal debris from the Sadalbari system. Though this is necessary, it is fairly monotonous. I'm sure everyone on board is hoping for a more interesting assignment soon.

his adventure takes place during the time of the original *Star Trek* television series. The PCs' starship has been assigned to the extremely dull business of clearing asteroidal debris in the uninhabited Sadalbari system, not far from the Romulan Neutral Zone. The job consists of blasting asteroid chunks with phasers to prevent them from posing a hazard to shipping. Clearing the debris should take six days.

During the third day on the job, the ship's long-range sensors suddenly detect a small scout ship approaching, pursued by a Romulan *Bird of Prey!* The Romulan ship is trying to destroy the scout and has already damaged it severely. The warbird's commander will not launch a frontal attack against a Federation cruiser, so if the player characters take action to protect the scout, the Romulans will switch on their cloaking device and withdraw.

Once the Romulans have been driven off, the characters can see to the scout ship. It is irreparably damaged, but the pilot is still alive. His communicator is not working. The players will have to beam the pilot aboard.

If the player characters are the officers of the *Enterprise*, they will recognize their guest instantly: Harcourt Fenton Mudd, interstellar rogue. Personnel on other ships will have to consult Star Fleet files. Mudd's record includes smuggling, transport of stolen goods, purchase of a space vessel with counterfeit currency, sale of invalid patents, failure to pay fines, attempted theft of Star Fleet property, fraud, theft of sacred objects, perjury, failure to appear for trial, conspiracy to commit fraud, attempted piracy, failure to perform community service, failure to submit to psychiatric rehabilitation and improper use of subspace radio. In addition to these Federation offenses, he is wanted for a number of crimes on various planets.

Mudd is very grateful to the PCs for saving his life. At first, he will claim to know nothing about why the Romulans were chasing him, but if pressed, he will explain.

While doing a little "harmless commerce" in Romulan space recently, he came into possession of an unusual crystalline pendant. The fellow whom Mudd "borrowed" it from said it was an ancient artifact found on a dead world. But the Romulan authorities got on Mudd's tail, trying to get the pendant from him. And he couldn't give it to them because he can't get the blasted thing off!

WILD ABOUT HARRY

Mudd is telling the truth—he is wearing a large crystal pendant which is somehow sticking to the skin of his chest. The object glows with shimmering colors and resembles no known technology.

The crystal is a mixture of silicates, metals and organic compounds, with a highly complex structure. It emits a low-intensity electrical field. The source of the glow is unknown. The computer records have nothing on file that even remotely resembles the crystal.

A medical examination of Mudd will reveal that the crystal has extended tiny fibers into his skin, which have somehow fused with his nervous system. Removing the pendant by surgery could be very dangerous. As far as anyone can tell, the object isn't doing any harm to him.

The pendant is actually an amplifier for psionic abilities. It has gradually been raising Mudd's psionic potential. Nobody (including Mudd) is aware of this at first, but over time his new abilities will manifest themselves. He will begin to know what people are thinking and can broadcast his thoughts to others. He will also begin to develop telekinetic powers.

Mudd's PSI ability initially is 14, but each day it doubles, reaching a maximum of 200 after four days. The crystal enables Mudd to use all the Vulcan psionic disciplines described in the *Star Trek: The Roleplaying Game* rulebook, subject to the same limitations as Vulcan telepaths.

Mudd's telekinetic powers give him the ability to move and manipulate objects at a distance, using a Strength level equal to his current PSI. This ability is not limited by range, but Mudd must be able to see what he is manipulating. He can also use this ability to create a force field around himself and protect against Vulcan nerve pinch attempts.

Mudd's power allows him to deflect damage from phasers or other weapons. Subtract his PSI from all damage that hits him. Note that a phaser set on disintegrate is assumed to do 200 points of damage, so once Mudd reaches his full psionic strength, no hand weapons can harm him.

Used offensively, Mudd's telekinesis allows him to inflict damage at will. Against a living opponent, he must roll a percentile die, subtracting the enemy's PSI level from his own. The resulting damage is equal to Mudd's PSI minus the defender's. Mudd can deliberately reduce the amount of damage he wishes to do (he will not kill anyone if he can help it). Used against nonliving targets, his power acts like a phaser and can disintegrate man-sized objects. Used against a starship in space combat, this ability lets Mudd inflict 20 points of damage, ignoring shields. He can select what part of the target will be damaged.

At first, Mudd will be as surprised as

everyone else at the strange manifestations of his powers. But as time goes by, he will shrewdly begin concealing his abilities from the PCs, using them covertly to cheat at three-dimensional chess and similar petty chicanery. Any player characters with psionic abilities will notice a strange sensation when Mudd is around—a sort of mental "static." A successful Psionics roll will enable a PC to sense enormous power emanating from Mudd. It seems to be growing.

IN MUDD WE TRUST

After several days have passed and the *Enterprise* is nearly finished with the debris-clearing mission, the Romulan warbird will attack again. The enemy will sneak up on the Federation ship while cloaked, then appear and launch a sudden barrage of plasma torpedoes. (This will probably happen while the player characters are not on the bridge.) The surprise attack damages the *Enterprise,* and it is not at all certain that the Romulans can be driven off this time.

Suddenly, Mudd arrives on the bridge. "Having a little trouble, Kirk?" he asks grandly. "Allow me." He gestures at the Romulan ship, and a huge explosion rocks the enemy vessel, destroying the warp engines. Crippled, the Romulan ship limps away.

Mudd smugly announces that he is taking over command of the ship. This is no idle boast, as he can operate all the controls mentally. He sets a new course and takes possession of the captain's chair. From time to time, he will make grandiose pronouncements over the ship's intercom. ("This is Captain Mudd. As a reward for my loyal crew, I'm ordering an extra ration of grog with dinner tonight. Afterward, there will be a dancing contest in the shuttle hangar.")

MUDD-SLINGING

The player characters will undoubtedly seek a way to regain control of the ship. Mudd's telekinetic powers make him invulnerable to harm—he can deflect damage or mentally snatch weapons from his enemies' hands. The PCs may come up with their own plan for defeating him—there are several options.

One method to regain control of the ship is to overload Mudd. Controlling the whole ship by telekinesis is difficult and requires constant concentration. If the player characters can arrange a massive amount of inputs from all over the vessel, Mudd will burn out the crystal trying to control everything at once. Arranging this will require a half-dozen successful skill rolls, including at least one Computer Operation roll, one Ship Systems roll and various Engineering rolls. If the plan succeeds, the strain of controlling the ship will burn out Mudd's amplifier.

Anyone making a Geology or Physics skill roll realizes that it might be possible to

destroy the crystal using high-frequency sound to shatter it. The PCs would have to find some way to distract Mudd's attention while a suitable sound generator is procured, then prevent him from destroying it until the crystal is shattered. (One sure-fire way to distract Mudd is to have an attractive female crewmember show interest in him.)

The characters might also make use of the fact that Mudd is a great carouser and glutton. Getting him into a guzzling bout with some hard-drinking Star Fleet officers could solve the problem. But Mudd is a formidable drinker, and it might be the PCs who wind up under the table. If Mudd is incapacitated, any attempt to remove the crystal will automatically destroy the artifact. Mudd will suffer 1D10 points of damage.

The referee should discourage any plans aimed at killing or seriously harming Harry. He is a comic character, after all, and should be played as such. Giving him a hotfoot is much more appropriate than shooting him.

Bad Timing: Unfortunately, just as the players regain their ship, the Romulans return. This time they have an entire squadron—two *Bird of Prey*-class ships and a converted Klingon *D-6* armed with a Romulan plasma torpedo and a cloaking device. (If the characters are aboard a ship smaller than the Federation heavy cruiser, the referee should adjust the enemy forces accordingly.) By bad luck, there are no other Federation ships nearby. The Romulan leader, Commander Thraz, will demand that

the PCs hand over Mudd and the crystal, or his squadron will destroy the *Enterprise.*

Without the crystal, Mudd can't do anything against the Romulans, and the *Enterprise* is outnumbered and outgunned. The characters may decide to give Mudd to the Romulans, but that would mean sending him to his death. A successful Negotiation attempt by the Federation captain might persuade the Romulans to accept the crystal and let Star Fleet deal with Mudd. A properly executed bluff might frighten them away. Or the *Enterprise*'s crew can try a heroic battle against superior odds.

HIS NAME IS MUDD

Shorn of his psionic powers, Mudd will try his best to talk his way out of being thrown in the brig and hauled off to the nearest starbase. It is fortunate for him that Star Fleet regulations do not allow summary executions without trial.

Whatever the PCs decide to do with him, Mudd probably will manage to get out of prison before too long and will return unrepentantly to his usual ways.

Harcourt Fenton Mudd
Race: Human.
Age: 51.
STR 50, END 47, INT 81, DEX 48, CHA 73, LUC 24, PSI 14 (initially).
Skills: Bribery 59, Carousing 78, Computer Operation 40, Federation Law 81, Gaming 54, Language: Romulan 22, Marks-

manship (Modern) 43, Negotiation/Diplomacy 83, Personal Combat (Armed) 34, (Unarmed) 24, Psychology (Human) 71, Small Vessel Pilot 72, Streetwise 82.

Mudd is a large, paunchy man with an elaborate mustache. He dresses in garishly colorful clothes. He is greedy and unscrupulous, but basically harmless. Unfortunately for him, he is not as clever as he thinks he is, and frequently his schemes land him in more trouble than he can handle.

Commander Thraz
Race: Romulan.
Age: 49.
STR 72, END 69, INT 78, DEX 70, CHA 62, LUC 47, PSI 30.
Skills: Administration 53, Language: Federation 76, Leadership 77, Marksmanship (Modern) 64, Personal Combat (Armed) 53, Negotiation/Diplomacy 52, Starship Combat Tactics/Strategy 67.

Thraz is a typical Romulan officer, convinced that his species is superior to all others. He has been extensively briefed about the crystalline artifact and its mysterious powers, and will be a little nervous. Thraz has been ordered to recover the crystal or destroy it to keep it out of Federation hands. Initially, he will be in command of a single *Bird of Prey*, pursuing Mudd. Once that ship is damaged, the high command will place a squadron at his disposal. Like all Romulans, Thraz would rather die than surrender, and he never takes prisoners. Ω

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COMPUTER BBS GAMING

By Mitch Lavender

P laying an RPG campaign through a BBS message base is a practice that goes back more than 10 years, to the earliest BBS and RPGs. Today, with sophisticated BBS programs and better-developed RPGs, the games continue to be played through this mode as much as ever.

There are a number of differences between standard roleplaying (where the players and referee are all together at a table, and results can be determined quickly with full participation) and BBS roleplaying (where the players leave their responses in messages on the message base, and the referee reads those responses and leaves a mes-

sage describing the results). The limitations of the BBS medium simply will not allow it to be as interactive. Thus, RPGing via a BBS is not a replacement for standard RPGing. But within those parameters, a talented, imaginative referee can still run an effective campaign or scenario that challenges the players and keeps their interest.

REFEREEING ON A BBS

Before you go telling anyone you are going to referee a game, make certain you really want to do it. The time it takes to responsibly run an RPG on a BBS is taxing. Reading the messages from the players, determining the results, then recording the results and setting the players up for the next round can take several hours—just for one turn. The game will undoubtedly go on for a

month or more, so stamina on your part is required. Sometimes the players hold the game up by failing to leave their responses on time. And whether the game is a success will depend on you, the referee. If you don't stick with it, then neither will the players— bet on it. So if you have the time and desire to run a game after considering these factors, more power to you! You've got moxie!

STARTING THE GAME

First, get the approval of the sysop of the BBS before you do anything. If he grants your request to let you run a RPG, you might ask him to leave a message in the log-on announcements that you are accepting players and that anyone interested should leave a message. Also, get him to set up a sub-board for the game. This is an area of the

message base that will be solely for messages between the players of the game and you. If he can password-protect it, then all the better, but that isn't mandatory.

Invite any of the users you think would be good participants to play in your game. Personal invitations generate more interest than a generic message but do reach fewer users.

When you have enough players to begin the game, ask the sysop to take the log-on announcement off. Once characters are generated, you will be all set to begin the adventure.

CHARACTER GENERATION

There are several ways to go about character generation. It's all a matter of preference. I've asked two experienced referees regarding their methods, and their experience may help you develop your own style. On the BBSs, they go by the pseudonyms Lancelot and Sage Whip.

Lancelot: I like to develop the characters myself, usually before I even put out a request out for players. When I get a player, I tell them the categories and classes they have to choose from, and they have to pick one of the characters. It's a first-come, first-served process, so the last player to sign up gets stuck with the anemic elf with low Dexterity that nobody else wanted. I type in all the characters in one long list and leave it as a file in the message base for the players to download and print out.

Sage Whip: I require that the players in the game be familiar with it and develop their own characters. I use a point system, giving each player a certain amount of points to distribute among their character attributes, and I generally allow them to flesh out the skills and background within the allowances of the rules. They then type the information in to me, and I record it. It's more time-consuming and trouble than Lancelot's method, but it lets the players be the character they want to be, and I think that promotes interest in the game. I usually run a popular, well known game like *AD&D* or *MegaTraveller*. If I run a less-known game, I can't get enough knowledgeable players.

BEGINNING
THE SCENARIO AND
RUNNING THE GAME

Lancelot: I provide the background information and setup for the scenario in one message. I usually type it up on my word processor and then upload into the message base. It gives me more time to think about it, and I don't tie up the BBS leaving a long message that way. I always conclude at a point that requires a response of some sort from the players.

I wait three days for responses from the players, and I let them know that up front. If even one player has responded in that time, I go ahead and figure the results, playing the

players who didn't respond as NPCs. I provide the results for all the players in one message for them all to read.

Sometimes a solitary player will be given certain information that the rest of the party will not be privy to, such as from an empathic sense, and I leave this in a private message or E-mail so that he is the only one who receives it. I then leave it up to the player as to informing the others about it or not. This helps promote communication and real roleplaying between the characters.

In the results, I like to let the players know what I was doing dice rolls to determine, so I include notes in parenthesis like "(Difficult Observation Check—Success)." It helps them correlate how their characters' skills are used. When it comes to combat, I let the players set themselves up (i.e., tell me what weapons or mode of fighting they will use, where they will take cover, etc.), and then I play the whole combat out to its bloody conclusion from there. This keeps things moving along at a fair pace.

Sage Whip: I generally write four to five pages of background info for the players, outlining the world the game is being played in, as well as the scenario they are beginning. I always try to include some form of sketchy map as well. I upload this as a text file, and let them know to get it and print it out.

I almost never provide a defined direction for the adventure. I let the players decide what they are going to do and where they are going to go. I try to reward intelligent actions and let the fools get what they deserve. One player will be appointed the leader, and while the other players tell me what they individually will do, the leader is the one who says what the group collectively does.

I wait as long as a week, sometimes less, for all the players to post their responses. If they don't respond in that time, then they are zombies that turn and don't take any real actions other then going along and doing what the rest of the party does.

I post the turn results in individual, private messages to each player, then summarize everyone's results in one public message.

I am pretty structured about how combat is resolved, and one round of combat per turn is usually all I will do, because I want to give the players opportunity to try something imaginative, not just pull out their sword and hit the monster every time. This means an entire combat between the players and some foes can easily take a couple of months of real time to conclude. I think the added detail makes it worth it.

MAINTAINING
PLAYER INTEREST

Lancelot: Just consistently posting turn results seems to be the single most important factor in keeping the players interested. If the referee doesn't keep up with his own

game, then the players won't either. And if you lose some of your players, you might not get them back. Keep things happening, and you'll keep them interested.

Sage Whip: If a player stops consistently posting responses in the game, I will leave them a private message inquiring what the problem is. If they are having some personal situation that is conflicting with their playing the game, I usually encourage them to get in and do a turn whenever they can. If they just lost interest in playing, then I take them out of circulation, killing the character the first opportunity that arises. I then post a message on the main message area of the BBS stating that a position is open in the RPG for one player, and I introduce this new player into the game as quickly and smoothly as possible. Players drop out of the game periodically. It just happens.

CHOICE OF RULE SYSTEMS

Lancelot: I prefer Chaosium's rule system, and *Rune Quest*, as well as **Twilight: 2000** or **Dark Conspiracy**. But the more detailed the system is and especially the more detailed character generation is, the harder it seems to be for the player to become acquainted with the system and get comfortable with their character. So I often lean on the simpler systems like the defunct *Star Frontiers* or Blade's *Tunnels and Trolls*. I once used the *TWERPS* system (*The World's Easiest Role Playing System*), but the characters had one attribute and that was it. It was too simple.

Sage Whip: The *Role Master* rules system is my stand-by, but since I require my players to be familiar with the system I'm using, I often resort to more well-known systems. Because of this, I sometimes adopt the world of one system to the rules of another, such as playing **Dark Conspiracy** with *Top Secret* rules for character generation and combat. Some of the players who played in that game got interested enough in **Dark Conspiracy** to go out and buy the rules for it. So now I have a full complement of experienced **DC** players for the next game of **DC** I run, and I can do it with **DC**'s rules, which are better suited rules for that game.

I think knowing the rules to the game is an important element in being able to enjoy it, as well as making the player a more interesting participant in what's going on.

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Lancelot: I am the sysop of a BBS. On that BBS several years ago, we had some program problems. An error would occur and knock the user off the BBS, then reset the board for the next caller. It was annoying to me and to the users, and eventually I solved the problem. Still, anytime something goes wrong on the BBS, we would blame it on the Evil Syntax Error C000.

I started an RPG using the *Star Frontiers* rules system, but modified it to a new genre that I called Error Busters. The players played characters who were sucked into the BBS computer and became Error Busters, seeking out the Evil Syntax Error C000 and his minions with the goal of eradicating them and freeing the sysop, who was being held captive somewhere within the computer. It was a ridiculous premise, sure, but that never stopped me before. The game started, and all was well, but I didn't allow the players to start with any armament—they had to find it. On the BBS. I hid little messages all over the place—in files and announcements. I put hints in messages and bulletins, and whoever found the weapon got to arm their character with it in the game. (A small text message said something like: Syntax Blaster with 6 charges. Leave Lancelot a message you found it RIGHT AWAY! IF you aren't playing in Error Busters, please ignore this.) It wound up in a finale where most of the characters were taking over behind fluff in the message base, fending off the file leeches and program bugs while one other player released a **one**, which attacked and destroyed the Evil Syntax Error C000. It was one of the most enjoyable and interesting RPGs I have ever run, and it couldn't have been done RPGing in the standard way.

Sage Whip: I once ran a *Pendragon* campaign on a BBS. It wasn't just a scenario—it was a full-blown campaign. Six months into it, we were perhaps one-third of the way through the adventure. Realizing that this game could easily go on another year, I arranged for all the players to get together at my house, and we would conclude it in the traditional RPG style. I didn't know any of these people personally, and I wasn't sure what I was getting into, but I did it anyway. All but one player showed up, and the game went great! The players had six months to get used to this obscure RPG, and they were all very much in character. It took seven hours to complete the game. That was three years ago, and every now and then I come across a message in the message base from one of the players to one of the other players about one of the events that transpired in the *Pendragon* campaign. To have a game so fondly remembered after so long is quite an achievement, but I will *never* run another campaign as long as that one again!

JOINING AN RPG ON A BBS

If you're interested in joining a BBS RPG, watch the log-on announcements on the BBS. This is where you will usually find information about new games starting. If you are aware of a closed RPG being run on the board, leave the referee a message requesting to be put on waiting list in case an opening occurs in the game. If you are knowledgeable about the rule system, say so! If the game is going slow, the referee might put you in it just to try and pump things up again.

RPG ETIQUETTE

No two referees run a game the same, and what one may consider usual practice may be illegal in another's game. There are some rules of thumb, however, that all players are expected to adhere to:

Recognize the referee's word as law and respect that. It's okay to question a ruling on a particular situation, but after the referee has heard you out, whatever he decides is what will be done. Period.

Do not conspire against another player outside the parameters of the game. For example, don't leave a private message to one player trying to work out an agreement to attack another player without first coordinating it through the referee. The referee may rule that he must first describe the two of you going off away from the party, discussing something in hushed whispers.

Do your turns! Participate in the game as much as possible, and try not to miss even one results post.

RPGing on a BBS is different from standard roleplaying, but that doesn't mean it doesn't have something to offer. With a dedicated referee and players, you can still adventure to the nether regions of Capernia without leaving your computer. Ω

*This article is the second in a three-part series on computer BBS gaming by Mitch Lavender. For more information, refer to the first segment in **Challenge 63**, and don't miss the conclusion in **Challenge 65**.*

CHALLENGE Conventions

MagiCon, Sept. 3-7 at Orange County Civic & Convention Center, Orlando, FL. Write to MagiCon, Box 621992, Orlando, FL 32862-1992.

Gateway 12, Sept. 4-7 at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel. Contact Strategicon, PO Box 3849, Torrance, CA 90510-3849.

Texi-Con '92, Sept. 4-7 in Houston, TX. Contact Greater Houston Gaming, Ltd., PO Box 631462, Houston, TX 77263-1462.

Emperor's Birthday Convention, Sept. 5-6 at the Century Center, 120 South Saint Joseph St., South Bend, IN 46601.

Fantasy Fest Fall '92, Sept. 5-7 in Sunbury, PA. Contact A&B Entertainment, PO Box 645, Shamokin Dam, PA 17876.

SummerGameFest '92 Episode 3, Sept. 11-13.

DefCon IV, Sept. 11-13 at the Ramada Inn, Raritan Center, Edison, NJ.

Operation Green Flag: BattleTech, Sept. 12-13 at the Embers in Carlisle, PA. Contact M. Fonier's Games Only Emporium, 200 Third St., New Cumberland, PA 17070.

Miraclecon '92.2, September 19 at the Liedertafal Club, S. Burnett Road, Springfield, OH. Write to Wolf's Lair Games, 601 W. Leefels Lane, Suite P, Springfield, OH 45506.

22nd Emperor's Birthday Game, Sept. 19-20 at the Century Center in downtown South Bend, IN, across from the Marriott Hotel. Contact Mark Schumaker, PO Box 252, Elkhart, IN 46515.

Oklanomicon Games Show and Convention, Sept. 25-27. Write to Oklanomicon, c/o John Hunter, PO Box 7743, Moore, OK 73159.

Tol-Con X, Oct. 3-4 at the University of Toledo, Scott Park Campus. Contact the Toledo Gaming Convention, c/o Mind Games, 2115 N. Reynolds Road, Toledo, OH 43615.

Phantasm '92, Oct. 3-4 at the Peterborough Public Library, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada. Write to Phantasm '92, 276 Parkhill Road West (rear), Peterborough, Ontario, Canada K9H 3H5.

RoVaCon SF, Oct. 2-4. Send a SASE to RoVaCon, PO Box 117, Salem, VA 24153.

Quad Con '92, Oct. 9-11 at Palmer Auditorium, 1000 Brady St., Davenport, IA. Send a large SASE with two stamps to Quad Con '92, The Game Emporium, 3213-23rd Ave., Moline, IL 61265.

NerdCon II, Oct. 16-18 at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Contact Randi Walvick, 7 Livingston Dr., Peabody, MA 01960.

Not Just Another Con, Oct. 16-18 at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Contact Science Fiction Conventioneers of UMass (SCUM), RSO 16, Campus Center, UMass, Amherst, MA 01003.

Nebulous Con IV, Oct. 16-18 at the Comfort Inn in Wheeling, WV. Contact The Nevulous Association, PO Box 6638, Wheeling, WV 26003.

NOVAG VII, Oct. 16-18 at the West Park Hotel in Leesburg, VA, less than an hour's drive from Washington, D.C. Contact NOVAG, c/o Ralph Allen, PO Box 122, Sterling, VA 22170.

Tacticon '92, Oct. 17-18, sponsored by the Gaming Guild of Connecticut.

Octacon '92, Oct. 23-25 at the Alaskaland Civic Center. Contact Octacon '92, PO Box 85105, Fairbanks, Alaska 99708.

World Fantasy Convention, Oct. 29-Nov. 1 at Callaway Gardens, Pine Mountain, GA. Send SASE to World Fantasy Convention '92, Box 148, Clarkston, GA 30021.

Con of the Weird and Supernatural (COWS '92), Oct. 31-Nov. 1 at the Embers in Carlisle, PA. Contact M. Fonier's Games Only Emporium, 200 Third St., New Cumberland, PA 17070.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Arisia '93, Jan. 15-17, 1993, at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel and Towers.

World Horror Convention No. 3, March 4-7, 1993, at the Sheraton Stamford Hotel in Stamford, CT.

Announcements cannot be included unless sent in a minimum of four months in advance. **Challenge** *is not responsible for errors in convention announcements. Write to* **Challenge** *Conventions, Managing Editor, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646 USA.*
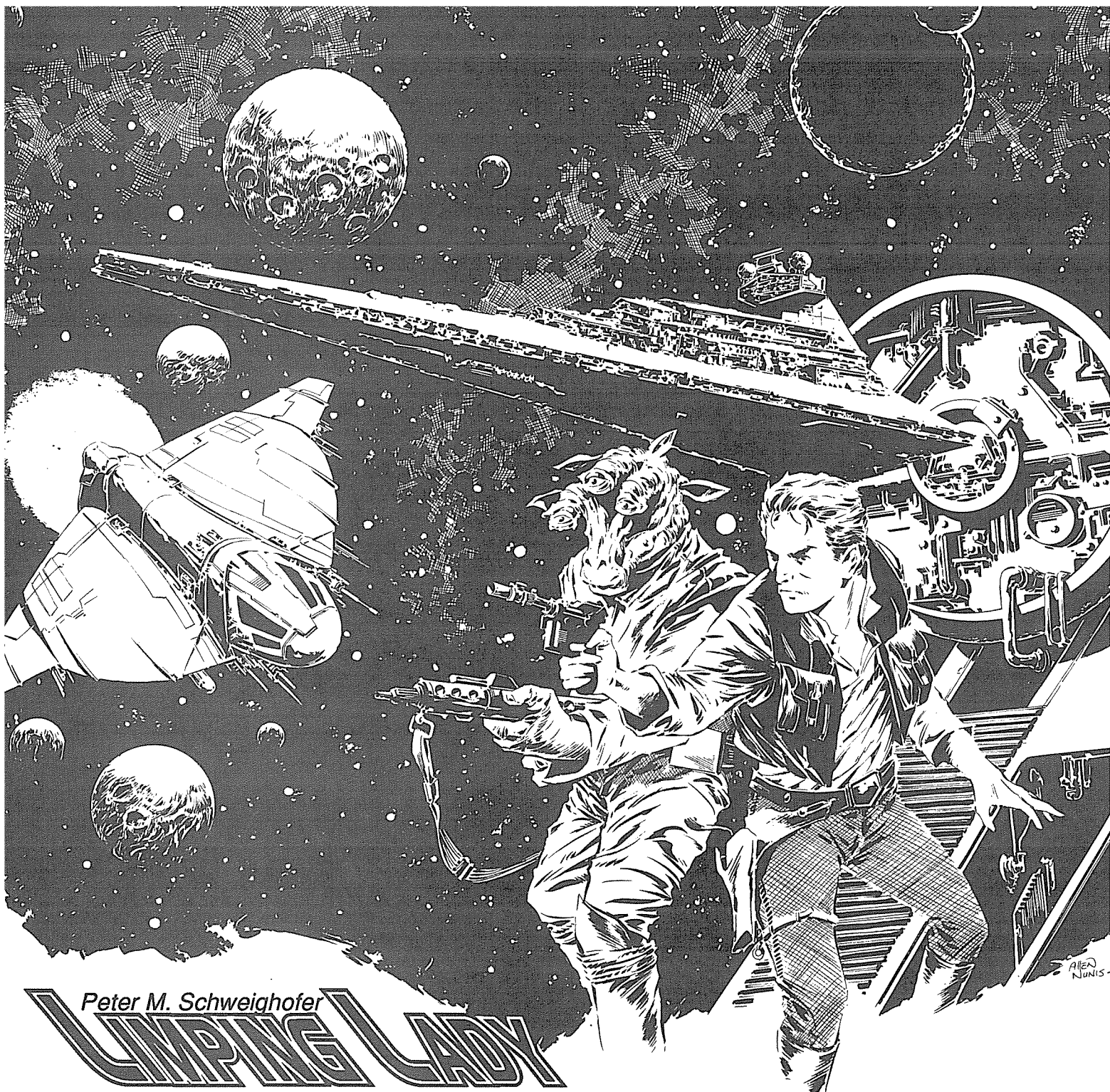
Peter M. Schweighofer

LIMPING LADY

T he PCs have found their way to Mos Eisley Spaceport on Tatooine and have already met each other through failed business ventures, barroom escapades or previous jobs. They have been seeking a way to join the Rebel Alliance for fame, glory, the chance to fight the Empire, or possibly personal gain. They hope to find a contact in Mos Eisley who can provide them with passage to a Rebel base. Nobody has a starship, and everyone wants to get off the miserably hot planet.

"Limping Lady" is an introductory adventure for a beginning group of *Star Wars* characters.

ON THE WAY
TO THE CANTINA

The characters are strolling down one of Mos Eisley's main thoroughfares around midday, pushing through the crowds to get to the cool sanctuary of the cantina at the city's center. Suddenly, they hear shouts coming from a nearby alley overflowing with trash. They also hear the sound of blaster fire! Seconds later, a haggard man in pilot's gear stumbles through the pile of garbage and falls out of the alley face-down at the characters' feet! He is clutching a data cartridge in his outstretched hand. The man mumbles. Characters drawing closer hear him whisper, "The tape—our only hope."

The data cartridge holds Imperial Navy data the Rebel Alliance needs to plan future attacks. Engraved by knifepoint on the back of the cartridge are astrogation coordinates to a secret Rebel base on an uninhabited planet in the Reginard system.

Closer examination of the haggard man reveals he is very dead, probably from a large blaster hole in his back. Running toward the character and the dead Rebel agent are four Imperial Stormtroopers!

The characters have four rounds before the Stormtroopers arrive; each round the Stormtroopers close one range (beginning at Extreme) unless the characters take the data tape and run. If they don't take the data

cartridge, a bystander picks it up and runs after the PCs, claiming they forgot it. Either way, the Stormtroopers still chase the PCs. Characters have several ways to ditch the Stormtroopers:

Run Very Fast: This requires a Moderate Stamina roll.

Hide: This requires either a Moderate Hide/Sneak roll to blend into the crowd or an Easy Stramina roll and an Easy Hide/Sneak roll to duck down an alley.

Shoot: Follow normal combat procedures. Street combat might attract other patrols!

When any firefight or chase is over, the characters find themselves hiding down an alley, with a clear view of the entrance to Docking Bay 35. A sign has been ultrapainted on the wall next to the entrance: "Must sell today! Stock light freighter. Inquire within."

SITHLESS LEETHE

Inside Docking Bay 35, the characters find a stock light freighter, slightly dented and carbon-scored here and there, with the name *Limping Lady* painted beneath the bridge viewport. Sitting near its landing ramp are several reptilian Saurians wearing swamp-patterned fatigues and cleaning their blaster rifles. If the characters inquire about the ship for sale, one of the Saurians steps up the entry ramp and returns with another Saurian who is not wearing swamp-patterned fatigues.

Sithless Leethe is a minor crime boss who sometimes runs scams for Jabba the Hut. He is a snake-headed Saurian like the others in the docking bay, but wears flashy robes with sashes and carriers no visible weapons (he keeps a knife up each of his sleeves). Although Sithless speaks with a Saurian lisp and hisses occasionally, he is a shrewd bargainer and crafty salesman.

Give the players the statistics for the *Limping Lady* as Sithless shows the characters the ship and extols the virtues of the outdated mass drive cannon. If anyone mentions the term "used," he quickly substitutes "pre-owned." The previous owner couldn't pay up on the ship and terminated, but Sithless insists an old Squid-face used it as a pleasure ship before retiring to Eridicon IV.

Sithless is asking Cr25,000, with Cr5000 now as a down payment. The difference is payable in full within one year—any time the PCs happen to return to Tatooine or find themselves in the Epsom Asteroid Belt, where Sithless has a summer residence. Sithless expects the balance to be paid within one year. If the balance isn't paid, Sithless assures the PCs he will send some "incentive" in the form of bounty hunters who will "persuade" them to pay.

Sithless is willing to let the characters pay only Cr3500 if they impress him, win his favor or make some good Bargain skill rolls. If the characters ask why Sithless seems so anxious to get rid of the ship, he'll tell them he needs some cash in hand for another business transaction.

Once the agreement to purchase the ship is made, Sithless insists on finalizing the deal and imprinting the data contract over drinks in the Mos Eisley Cantina in a hour, giving him time to get all his Saurian thugs out to the ship and have a data contract drawn up by one of his legal "advisors."

If the characters decide they'd rather steal the ship than buy it, see Impounded, below. Have the PCs make some Security rolls to break the code card reader lock on the main hatch before entering the ship. Characters stealing the ship will be relentlessly pursued by Sithless' Saurian thugs and several ruthless bounty hunters.

FORKED TONGUE DEAL

An hour later, Sithless enters the Mos Eisley Cantina and takes a booth. Several Saurian thugs take positions near the booth, at the bar and near the entrance. Sithless invites the PCs to sit across from him in the booth and orders drinks for everyone. He produces two data pads with the terms of the contract—payment of the Cr25,000 minus the down payment within a year, and delivery of the current cargo to Zoma V on the maiden voyage. Sithless explains this second part as a slight extra (possibly in return for a lower down payment). To ensure the safe delivery of his goods, he is sending along Slopper, one of his suspicious Saurian thugs, to make sure the cargo arrives on Zoma V intact. Slopper is already aboard the *Limping Lady*, which is securely locked from the outside in Docking Bay 34. If the characters ask what the cargo is, Sithless tells them it consists of a few crates of supplies. What he does not tell the PCs is that the 10 crates sitting in he *Limping Lady*'s hold are filled with stolen Imperial weapons. The guns are meant for primitive Felinians on Zoma V.

The characters must agree to transport the weapons for the deal to be complete. Whether they actually do so or deliver the weapons to the Alliance instead is up to them. Both Sithless and one of the characters (the official owner of the ship) must sign and thumb imprint the contract on the two data pads, one for Sithless and one for the characters. When the deal is complete, Sithless gives the characters two duplicate code key cards to enter the ship. (An extra is provided in case one is lost.) The cards act as keys to open and lock the main entry ramp. If the characters attempt to board the locked ship without a code key, they'll have to use heir Security skill to break in.

After the contracts have been imprinted, Sithless reminds the characters not to be late with his payment. Sithless and his Saurian entourage wish the characters clear skies and leave the cantina.

NICE SHIP YOU JUST BOUGHT

As soon as Sithless and his Saurian thugs leave, a few cantina patrons take interest in the characters and the deal they just signed.

Hawker Bryce-Kelly: After hearing that somebody actually bought the *Limping Lady*, smuggler Hawker Bryce-Kelly approaches the characters with his copilot, the lovely yet silent female Twi'lek Rypka. "G'day, mate," he says. "Care to put a little wager on your starship?" The smuggler proposes a race to any system the PC captain chooses (hopefully either Zoma V or Reginard, the system the data tape coordinates designate). He dares to match any bet over Cr2000 the characters can make; whoever arrives in the system first wins the money. Hawker and Rypka fly the bulk freighter *Queen's Victory*, an awkwardly large ship compared to the character's stock light freighter.

Hawker seems very fair, offers to buy everyone drinks and is not above flirting with any attractive ladies. Although Hawker is a rouge, he loves a good challenge. If characters treat him honorably, he befriends them (even if he loses the race) and is a good contact for future adventures.

Hawker agrees to wait in orbit until the characters finish their business planetside and are ready to race. The smuggler knows the location of any target system the characters choose. If the PCs do not want to race Hawker, he understands, chuckles to himself, and returns to the bar with Rypka.

Stormtroopers: Soon after the smuggler leaves, a squad of four Stormtroopers enters the cantina and begins questioning the bartender. They are asking such questions as: "Have you heard of an Imperial armored transport ship named the *Valiant*? Have you encountered anyone in this city selling stolen Imperial issue firearms? Do you know of the starship *Millenium Falcon* and its crew?" If all answers are "no," those questioned will be allowed to go about their business. If PCs are smart enough to sneak out the back door, they can avoid a confrontation.

IMPOUNDED

When the PCs return to Docking Bay 35, an Imperial "impounded" notice is posted over the "ship for sale" sign. Eight Stormtroopers guard to entrance to the bay, while an Imperial naval officer speaks with two technicians piloting a service landspeeder with a large and nasty looking piece of equipment in the back. Characters making an Easy Technology skill roll recognize the device as an industrial beam drill. Characters can try several ways to enter the docking bay.

Blast Their Way In: This is an easy approach if the group is heavy on firepower, but this option is messy and slightly obvious. The Stormtroopers attack with their usual efficiency; the officers duck for cover within

the bay entrance; and the two technicians fire from behind the landspeeder. Should any shots at the technicians miss, they hit the landspeeder and the industrial beam drill! The landspeeder might begin to move slowly or spin, and the beam drill might activate or overload, exploding in several rounds. If characters are hit with the beam drill or any explosion from it, they take 5D damage unless they can find cover nearby.

Con Their Way In: Only the officer can be conned. The Stormtroopers are too loyal and have been ordered not to let anyone but official Imperial personnel within the bay.

Sneak Into the Bay: This option might require roped or rocket packs to get over the high docking bay walls.

Once the PCs are inside the bay, Sithless' code keys open the locked entry ramp. Inside the ship, the cockpit contains standard control stations for pilot, communications and sensors, and shields. Saurian thug Slopper is sitting in the hold on several crates covered with a gray tarpaulin. He will not allow characters to look in the crates, but if they can somehow trick him or throw him off the ship, they can remove the tarp and inspect the crates. Each of the 10 metal crates is marked with the insignia of the Imperial Navy. Each crate contains 10 standard-issue Imperial heavy blasters with an extra energy clip for each. Shortly after the PCs gain access to the

ship, more Stormtroopers arrive in the docking bay entrance and begin shooting, possibly encouraging them to make a speedy blast-off.

ESCAPE FROM TATOOINE

Once the characters blast out of Mos Eisley spaceport, their communications channel crackles with the voices of irate traffic controllers and Imperial picket vessel commanders in the system, specifically officers on the Imperial star destroyers *Vengeance* and *Belligerent.*

"Tatooine surface control to unauthorized craft, please return to Docking Bay 35. You do not have take-off clearance.

"Imperial star destroyer *Vengeance* to unauthorized craft, heave to and prepare for boarding."

If characters agreed to race Bryce-Kelly, they also hear from him. "G'day, mates," he says. "Looks like you've got some Imperial flack up 'ere. Any case, I suppose you'll be ready to start our little race. See you, mates!"

Before characters can make the jump to hyperspace, they must evade four TIE fighters in pursuit. The PC pilot or copilot needs three rounds to input the astrogation coordinates to the nav computer. Any one round the astrogator spends on other actions, including evasive maneuvers and raising shields, delays astrogation by one round.

Characters firing the weapons systems get 1 skill point bonus for each TIE fighter kill. The TIE pilots strafe the characters' ship in pairs. Although TIE fighter pilots only get one shot per attack run at medium range, PC gunners my choose to shoot at the TIE fighters as they strafe the ship or after they pass over the ship, both at medium range, since the dorsal and ventral guns can rotate 360°.

Once the astrogation coordinates are input, the PC pilot may "punch it" into hyperspace.

If the PCs are racing Hawker Bryce-Kelly, have the PC pilot and astrogator make Piloting and Astrogation rolls. Hawker's ship has the same hyperdrive multiplier as the characters' ship. Roll the smuggler's Piloting (6D+2) and the copilot's Astrogation (4D+2)—the team with the highest total arrives at the destination first and wins the bet.

EPILOGUE

After the characters escape Imperial forces on Tatooine, they may need to clean up several loose ends.

Racing Bryce-Kelly: Whether or not he wins the race, Hawker invites characters aboard the modified bulk freighter for drinks and payment of the bet. If for some reason characters agree to race Hawker but do not show up at the race destination, the smuggler loses trust in them and demands payment the next time they meet.

Going to Zoma V: Slopper isn't too bright and can easily be duped or taken prisoner. This enrages Sithless Leethe when he eventually hears about the incident and causes him to immediately put a bounty out on the characters for breach of contract. Characters can avoid this fate by delivering the crates of weapons to the jungle cat-people on Zoma V, who will give Slopper Cr5000 worth of precious stones in return. However, PCs who decide to bring the weapons to the Alliance on Reginard with the data cartridge get 2 bonus skill points.

Arriving at Reginard: Once they have entered Reginard's atmosphere, the PCs are met by Rebel air speeder pilots. When their intentions are known, the PCs are led to a secret base carved into the cliff on a small island in an archipelago in the vast Reginard sea. General Corros, commander of Reginard Base, welcomes the PCs (and possibly their load of weapons) and expresses interest in their willingness to join the Alliance. He takes the data tape and uses the information to log warships vital to fleet the Rebel Alliance. Characters should be awarded between 7 and 9 skill points based on their participation in firefights, bargaining for the ship, starship combat and roleplaying.

TIE/IN STARFIGHTER
Craft: Twin ion engine/in starfighter
Crew: 1
Passengers: None
Sublight Speed: 5D
Maneuverability: 2D
Hull: 2D
Weapons:

Two laser cannons (fire linked)
   Fire Control: 2D
   Damage: 5D
Pilot's Skills: Piloting 4D, Gunnery 4D

LIMPING LADY
Craft: Corellian YT-1300 transport
Type: Stock light freighter
Crew: 2
Passengers: 6
Cargo Capacity: 100 metric tons
Consumables: 2 months
Hyperdrive Multiplier: ×2
Nav Computer: Yes
Hyperdrive Backup: No
Sublight Speed: 2D
Maneuverability: 1D
Hull: 4D
Weapons:
One laser cannon(dorsally mounted)
   Fire Control: 2D
   Damage: 4D
One mass drive cannon (ventrally mounted)
   Fire Control: 1D
   Damage: 5D

The mass drive cannon uses an incredible amount of energy to fire its projectile. Each time it is used, one ship system randomly powers down—the shields, the other weapon, the nav computer, the ion engines or the maneuverability jets.
   Shields: 2D

NPCs
Stormtroopers: DEX 2D (1D), Blaster 4D (3D), Brawling Parry 4D (3D), Dodge 4D (3D), STR 2D (3D for damage purposes only), Brawl 3D. All other attributes and skills are 2D. The numbers in parentheses reflect modifications made by Stormtrooper armor. The troopers are armed with Imperial-issue heavy blaster pistols which do 5D damage.

Imperial Naval Officer: DEX 2D+2, Blaster 3D+2, PER 3D+1, Command 5D. All other attributes and skills are 2D. The officer is armed with a blaster pistol which does 4D damage.

Imperial Technicians: DEX 2D+1, Blaster 3D, MECH 2D+2, Repulsorlift Operation 3D+2, TECH 4D. All other attributes and skills are 2D. The technicians are armed with hold-out blasters which do 3D+1 damage.

Sithless Leethe: DEX 3D+2, Melee 4D+2, Dodge 5D, KNO 3D, Streetwise 5D, PER 4D, Bargain 5D, CON 5D. All other attributes and skills are 2D. He is armed with two knives which do 2D+1 damage.

Saurian Thugs: DEX 3D+2, Blaster 5D, Dodge 4D+2, Grenade 4D+2, PER 4D, Hide/Sneak 5D. All other attributes and skills are 2D. The Saurian thugs carry blaster rifles which do 5D damage and grenades which also do 5D damage.

Hawker Bryce-Kelly: DEX 3D+1, Blaster 5D, MECH 3D+2, Starship Piloting 6D+2, PER 3D, CON 4D, Bargain 5D, TECH 2D+2. All other attributes and skills are 2D. Hawker is always armed with a heavy blaster pistol (5D damage) and wears a bush hat.

Twi'lek Rypka: DEX 3D, Blaster 5D, MECH 2D+2, Astrogation 4D+2, Starship Gunnery 4D+2. All other attributes and skills are 2D. Rypka is armed with a blaster pistol (4D damage) and carries a clipboard minicomputer. She never speaks, but communicates through subtle gestures. Ω

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FULLERTON BROTHERS

FISTS
OF THE EMPIRE

It was a good riot. One of the best for a long time, and I've been stirring up trouble for the TOG for a dozen years on as many worlds. Local enforcers had tried to block off the Forum, but that only made things worse. "Burn the capitol!" someone cried, and the next minute the same cry was roaring from a thousand throats. Mobs are like that—they have a raw power, an exhilarating and primitive fury all their own. Suddenly I caught a daint shift in key that spells trouble. Round the side of the capitol nosed a black APC, then a dozen armored figures trotted out in well disciplined files. Vigiles. With unhurried competence, they fanned out along the broad steps, and I automatically began shifting my way back through the crowd. Next time, maybe.

Mark Galeotti

VIGILES

The Vigiles, or population control troops, are the strong arm of TOG and the Lictors. Despised by the population at large, they are recruited largely from SSora—relatively backward planets and indentured criminals—and serve under strict discipline. They live in barracks in the outskirts of major cities. But they are isolated from the locals and rotated from planet to planet on a regular basis—all to prevent the danger of developing undue sympathies with them. Should that fail, each platoon has a Lictor agent, and all Vigiles are subject to constant combat discipline.

The basic unit is the century, made up of three PCT platoons and a command platoon. Platoons consist of three six-wheeled Molossian riot carriers, each carrying a squad, without bounce packs and with only a single light mortar. While the mortar can be used to fire normal homing and AP rounds, in riot control operations it more usually launches specialized janglerounds. These burst at a height of about 25 meters and shower an area with a diameter of 50 meters with a combination of tear gas bomblets and electromagnetic pulsers which project a brief but powerful burst of low-frequency waves, disrupting the nervous system. The result is akin to a brief and very painful epileptic fit.

This tends to be a powerful disincentive to further treasonable activity. Increasingly, rounds are being used which also disperse aerosol munitions, coating the area with a very fine, harmless, but almost indelible dye, which marks troublemakers a distinctive color—easy prey for the Lictors and police.

The command platoon contains an Aeneas light gray tank, equipped as the Centurion's HQ vehicle, two support groups, each a squad with TVLGs mounted in Molossians, and a fourth platoon of two Stikes marine combat sleds. Usual tactics are for the squads in wheeled vehicles to seal off control zones and repel mobs advancing on key centers or funnel them into areas either less sensitive or more open (and hence easier to carpet with janglerounds or rake with gunfire).

MOLOSSIAN

The Molossian is a widely used vehicle, cheap and effective. Named for the huge dogs used as the guardians of choice by the Old Romans, it is a solid, six-wheeled vehicle, with a high ground clearance and a chassis armored against mines. Despite not being a grav vehicle, it has good mobility, with advanced suspension to assist it in crossing rubble and barricades, and a dozer-blade mounted under the prow to clear away

what cannot be driven over. Its AP laser provides adequate firepower to repel normal threats, with a twin TVLG in case of more serious threats. Its major assets, though, are the squad of riot troopers it carries and a janglefield generator which takes up a location in both hull 1 and hull 2. This acts much like the mortar shells, and while it cannot harm modern combat troops in their insulated armor, it is a powerful weapon in sweeping away the common rabble.

Molossians costs two scenario points; a squad of Vigiles with a light mortar is a single point; and a squad with TVLGs is 1.5 points. Add all units together, rounding fractions up.

Class: Wheeled riot vehicle.
Cost: 154,275.
Mass: 48.5t.
Engine: 300.
MPs: 6.
Sc. Pts.: 2.
Infantry: 1 squad.

Armor:
Front 30.
Right 20.
Left 20.
Stern 15.
Bottom 30.
Turret 20.

Weapons

Type	Location	Damage	Range
AP laser	Turret	S	3
TVLG (2)	Hull 2	6	T
Janglefield	Hull 1 and 2	Special	1

MOBS

The mob in *Renegade Legion: Centurion* is a dangerous and unpredictable force. Even with their specialized training and equipment, plus all the might and majesty of the TOG behind them, the Vigiles can be hard-pressed to deal with a mob. And if left to themselves, mobs can spread to engulf a whole city in destructive and disloyal anarchy.

Mobs are immobile. They "move" by spreading into adjacent urban or rubble hexes. In each initiative phase, roll one die and consult the Riot Table. A maximum of three mobs may be stacked in one hex. Ignore results which would exceed this limit.

Riot

Roll	Result
1	Mob disperses
2-8	No change
9+	Additional mob generates. Roll a die on the Scatter Table. A result of 7-10 means the mob is in the same hex.

Mobs cannot paint targets or call in artillery fire. All they can do is attack infantry units, ground vehicles and grounded grav vehicles in the same hex. In the combat phase, roll one die. If the result is less than or equal to the number of mobs in the hex, the infantry squad loses one soldier, or the vehicle loses one die's worth of armor on a random facing, ticked off from the top left.

A mob can be attacked normally, as if infantry. Resolve the attack as normal, but the result needs to result in two casualties for the mob to be dispersed—anything less has no effect. If attacked from outside the hex but not destroyed, add 2 to the roll on the Riot Table next turn for each such attack: Shelling towns does tend to breed ill will. For these reasons, an attractive alternative is to attack mobs from within the same hex by infantry. Normal infantry must roll below the number in the squad minus two to disperse a mob, while riot-equipped forces need only roll below their squad strength.

Mortar janglerounds act as normal mortar shells on mobs only, but affect all in the same hex. A janglefield generator, while having a range of only 1, is very effective and can disperse any mob given time.

Roll for each mob in the target hex, with dispersal on a roll of 6 or less, with the roll one easier for every MP the carrier "spends" immobile within one hex of the target. This represents the added power of continued and steady fire.

VIGILES IN *LEGIONNAIRE*

Vigiles in *Renegade Legion: Legionnaire* wear distinctive padded battledress, ferox (AF 6) torso armor, lamina (AF 4) on the limbs and a light helmet (AF 6). Such riot suits cost 3500 and have a power reserve of 75. Officers' and sergeants' helmets also incorporate an integral loudspeaker. Standard issue is a stun staff, Marcus SMG and Anthony grenade launchers, with a mix of gas and AP rounds. Each squad also has a sniper with a Divider spike carbine (used for eliminating ringleaders and armed rioters), two Mastati with Manichore spike rifles and, for the sergeant, a K-burner laser pistol.

The Molossian is a ground vehicle with a power use of 2 per kilometer, a reserve of 4000, two crew and eight occupants, maximum speed 150 kph and armor value 4.

Characters and NPCs may have also take the Vigile career path, using Rank Table 3.

Officer
Min IQ 11, CN 10, ST 10.
Cost: 8 skill points.
Rank Modifier: +1.
Adds four years to character's age.
Take These Skills: Brawling/Pugilism (Martial Art), Leadership, Demolitions, Negotiation, Electronics, Projectile Firearms, Environmental Survival (Urban), Security Tech, Laser Firearms, Tactics (Ground).

Enlisted
Min IQ 8, CN 10.
Cost: 4 skill points.
Rank Modifier: 0.
Adds 2 years to character's age.
Take These Skills: Brawling/Pugilism, Projectile Firearms, Environmental Survival (Urban).
Take Two of the Following: Gambling, Tracking, Support Weapons, Wrestling.

CENTURION SCENARIO: CRY FREEDOM

The destruction of the 816th Strike Legion in the ill-starred assault on Syriph XX of 6829 was greeted with joy on Ciria. For it was the 816th that led the punitive reprisals of 6819-20 that left not a single Cirian family without its share of relatives "disappeared" or "indentured" to service in the mines of New Caernavon.

The result was a spontaneous series of local uprisings against the thinly stretched TOG forces. Most such actions were one-sided affairs: Hunting rifles are notoriously ineffective against titanium armor and airburst flechettes. In one of the smaller cities, though, local rebellion, mutiny in the TOG ranks and personal animosity combined to create an explosive compound.

Charismatic and impulsive Optio Susan Tsun-Ming of the 2nd Cohort, 14559th Infantry Legion, had been sickened enough by having to raze farmsteads and accompany the labor recruitment teams as they scoured the countryside for slave labor. When passed over for field promotion, though, she mutinied and led her century off to support Doren, the city next due for a little lesson in TOG might.

Although her unit was intercepted by aerospace fighters and suffered heavy casualties, she made it to Doren and turned her fire and passion to organizing some sort of militia to face the approaching punitive forces. Just as the city's Vigiles got the order to deploy for action, the Free Doren Commando was born, uniting Tsun-Ming's remaining forces, local police, homesteaders in the area and some escaped penal troops the homesteaders had been sheltering (the cause of TOG's wrath). Meanwhile, the fiercely loyal Centurion Viktor Pompilius, once Tsun-Ming's comrade in arms, swore terrible oaths to see her burn.

Board Setup
The maps are laid out as for the scenario High-Risk Delay, but with buildings laid out in the following hexes of map 3 to represent the city of Doren: 1011, 1108-11, 1206-13, 1305-9, 1311-3, 1407-12, 1507, 1510-12, 1606-11, 1709-13, 1809. These buildings all have an armor value of 20 and an elevation of 4, except the one in 1408, which represents the Cathedral of the Six Martyrs and has an

Population Control Cohort

elevation of 6. The cathedral is an important holy center for the island population, and damage to it would be an affront to all believers. Hex 1310 is the forum, symbolic center of the city.
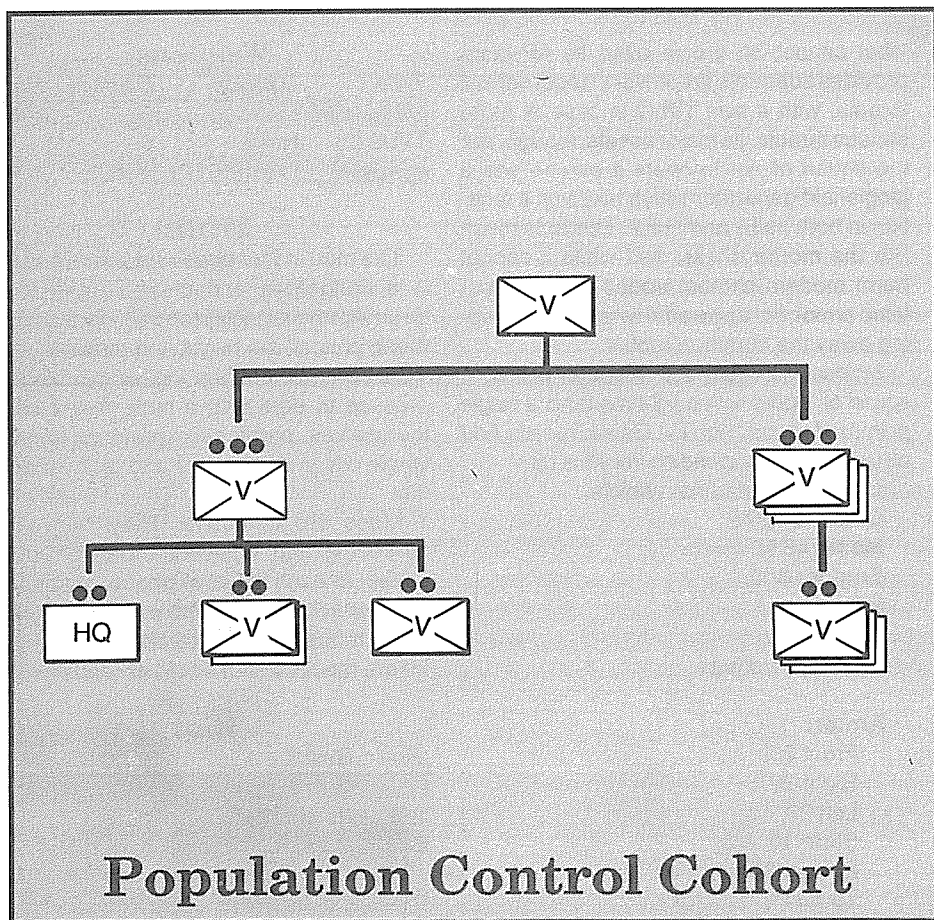
In addition, place two building counters in 0513 and 0612 as the population control center (armor value 40, elevation 3) and in the following hexes of map 4 for homesteads: 1110 (Kam Selling's), 1403 (Amerstan Co-op), 1508 (Seward's Green) (all armor value 25, elevation 3). If there are inadequate building counters, use reversed crater markers.

Rebel Forces

Optio Susan Tsun-Ming, Commander, 4th Century, 2/14559th Infantry Legion
  1st Platoon (Regular)
    2 Aeneas
    1 Horatius
  2nd Platoon (Regular)
    2 Romulus
    2 Bounce Squads with TVLG
Elements, 3/2166th Penal Infantry Auzilia (Green)
  6 Infantry Squads with TVLG
Doren Police (Green)
  2 Rangers (1 scenario point)
  6 Infantry Squads with TVLGs
Homesteaders (Green)
  3 Infantry Squads with light mortars
Onboard Minefields: 3
Centurion Leadership Rating: 2

Setup: Tsun-Ming's forces and the Doren Police set up anywhere within the city or within one hex. Vehicles may be grounded or in craters, if desired. Infantry need not start within their APCs. Units in craters or buildings may be considered hidden. The minefields may be hidden anywhere within three hexes of the city boundaries, but not within one hex of the Vigile base. One Squad of homesteaders is placed at each site, with the penal infantry anywhere within three hexes of a homestead. Infantry starting the game inside woods may be considered hidden. Use Bata Revo counters for the Aeneas, Liberator for the Horatius, Spartius for the Romulus, and Nah Tikal for the Rangers.

TOG Forces

Centurion Viktor Pompilius, Commander, 3rd Century, 2/14559th Infantry Century
  1st Platoon (Regular)
    3 Aeneas
  2nd Platoon (Regular)
    3 Lupis
    3 Bounce Squads with TVLG
  1st Platoon, I/2/36362th Vigiles (Elite)
    1 Aeneas
    2 Molossians
    2 Vigile Squads with TVLGs
  2nd Platoon (Regular)
    3 Molossians
    3 Vigile Squads with one light mortar each

Offboard Artillery
  1 Fire Mission/turn
Centurion Leadership Rating: 3

Setup: The Vigiles start, immobile, in the population control center. The loyal elements of the 14559th enter the game at the start of turn 2 along the southernmost row of the map. Entering units may face any direction, but all are operating at TTF and have a current starting velocity of 15. Squads start mounted in their APCs. Molossians should be represented by other counters.

Special Rules

As soon as any Vigiles leave or fire from their center, a mob forms in a city hex of the rebel player's choice. Two mobs are also formed when the main TOG forces enter the board, and one more on turn 3. In addition, every time TOG ranged weapon fire is aimed at a target in the cathedral hex, a mob will form on a die roll of 10.

The forum counts as an urban hex for the formation of mobs only.

Game Length

Combat continues either until one side or the other is destroyed (this includes mobs, which count as rebel units), or until TOG forces have uncontested control of the city (no mobs or rebel forces in any of the city's hexes) for three consecutive turns.

When the game is over, ration victory points and use the outcome table.

Victory Conditions

The TOG objective is to quell the unrest and deal with the rebels as quickly and as surgically as possible. The rebels want to hold on as long as possible and go down fighting.

In addition to the normal victory points for the destruction of enemy units (mobs do not count), the following points are awarded:

Rebels: For each turn, at least one rebel vehicle or infantry unit survives after the first: +2

For each time TOG forces use ranged weapons fire at targets the Cathedral of the Six Martyrs: +1

For each turn each homestead remains occupied by its squad after the first: +1

For each turn the forum is occupied only by rebel units (including mobs): +1

Extra, for each Vigile vehicle or squad destroyed: +1

TOG: For each rebel element of the 14559th destroyed by loyal 14559thers: +3

For each rebel element of the 14559th destroyed by Pompilius' command vehicle: +6

For each turn the forum is occupied by TOG units only: +2

Tactical Notes

For the rebel player, victory lies in sur-

vival. With their TVLGs, the penal infantry can help slow the advance of the TOG grav armor, or at least make it costly, while Tsun-Ming's handful of tanks had best disperse—keeping it emplaced in the city for fire support is just a recipe for artillery casualties. An early attack on the Vigiles is worth considering, although it risks leaving vehicles out of cover and vulnerable when Pompilius' vengeful armor arrives. On the other hand, the infantry must use the city's defensive cover to the full—remember the forum and the cathedral, and try to keep a "hotbed" of mobs safe. If all mobs are destroyed after the second turn, no more will form unless you can sucker the TOG into shelling the cathedral.

The TOG player must start by making two operational decisions:

First, how much effort to put into occupying the homesteads and mopping up the penal infantry and hence securing the route of advance.

Second, how quickly to deploy the Vigiles. A successful early strike and occupation of the forum can clinch the game, but Molossians are no match for grav armor.

More generally, always be aware of the political dimension. Use Vigiles to secure not only the forum, but also the cathedral, for it is expensive to dislodge rebels from it. After all, if two ranged weapon shots destroyed a Ranger in that hex, TOG gains one scenario point, but the rebels gain 2—and may acquire mobs in the hex, as well. Ω

Mythus Magick review by Jimmie W. Pursell Jr. The Osiris Chip and Battle-Tech OmniMechs reviews by Craig Sheeley.

Mythus Magick™

No fantasy world is complete without magic. Thus, it is fitting that **Mythus Magick**, **Mythus™ Fantasy Roleplaying Game Book II**, is the first supporting piece for the **Dangerous Journeys™** roleplaying system. The 380+-page book provides the full magick system introduced in the **Mythus** game.

The book is primarily a list of Castings (spells for you noninitiates), but many more things are included. The Castings themselves are grouped according to school or Vocation. General Castings, common to all dweomercræft or priestcræft practitioners, are given, as well as individual castings for the dweomercræft schools and priestcræft ethoi. In addition, lists are provided for Castings available to possessors of cer-

tain Knowledge/Skill Areas, such as *Fortune Telling* or *Mysticism.*

Within each group, the Castings are graded in power from I to IX, with IX being the most powerful (and difficult). The more powerful the Casting, the larger the amount of Heka (magickal energy) required.

Castings are labeled, as well, the label indicating the time needed to cast. These labels can range from Eyebite, a simple Casting which requires less than three seconds to cast, to Ritual, a time-consuming Casting which could take several hours. Generally, the more powerful the Casting, the longer it takes, but this is not always the case. The *Mass Invisibilty* Charm, for example, a Grade IX casting of the Gray Dweomercræft School, requires but three seconds to cast.

The magick rules, like the rest of the **Mythus** game, are based on a percentile system. A Heroic Persona capable of using magick has a STEEP (Study/Training/Education/Experience/Practice) score in each school or Knowledge/Skill Area which provides Casting knowledge.

A Difficulty Rating, determined by the Casting's Grade compared with the caster's STEEP, gives the multiple to be used to compute the roll needed for success. For instance, an HP with a STEEP of 30 is trying to cast a Casting of Grade II. A glance at the chart reveals that the Difficulty Rating is "Hard," giving a multiplier of 1. Therefore, the HP

needs a 30 or less on percentile to succeed at the Casting.

With nearly 1500 Castings given, the **Mythus Magick** book could already be described as the "Spell Book from Hell." But wait, there's more.

The **Mythus Magick** book also provides rules for Specific Castings (i.e., Castings invented by the player). Within the framework given, the possibilities are incredible.

The diversity of Castings makes the **Mythus Magick** book one of the most flexible magick systems available. A vile, evil Mage of the Black Dweomercræft School will have quite a different repertoire than a kind, wise Mage from the White School. And as powerful as both may be, they lack the abilities peculiar to the fortune teller or herbalist.

Oddly enough, this diversity might well be the book's single drawback. There may be too many Castings. However, the designers seemed to have anticipated this problem and have given rules for known, recallable and studyable Castings. Known Castings can be cast without penalty; recallable Castings require a few moments of thought; and studyable Castings require pouring over tomes. An HP has a certain number of each type based on that character's ATTRIBUTES. Since these numbers average around 60 for the Full Practitioner, the lists can still be quite long, but they help.

Also included are descriptions of Heka-engendered Powers available in the milieu. This section also contains the rules for psychogenics, allowing one to adapt these abilities from upcoming **Dangerous Journeys** genres. Now how much would you pay?

With the addition of the **Mythus Magick** book to the **Dangerous Journeys** game system, the **Mythus** RPG becomes a complete game. Though the sheer number of Castings available may be somewhat daunting to new players, it is well worth the effort required. The versatility of this book combined with the diversity of the **Mythus** book itself provides the most flexible, complete game system currently on the market. **Mythus Magick** retails for $24 and is now available. Don't miss it.

The Osiris Chip

Atlas Games. $8.
Written by Thomas M. Kane.
32-page licensed adventure supplement for *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.*
Published in 1992.

An ambush set up on an unidentified truck run through gang territory. A gang torn by internal dissension, its old leader discredited and new blood trying to rewrite gang history to suit itself. A mysterious secret installation in the middle of the combat zone—an installation known only to those unfortunate enough to be invited to it. Plot and counterplot, with cross and double-cross, and the characters caught in the middle of a scheme that goes far beyond a small stretch of gang turf—the quest for the perfect cybersoldier.

The Osiris Chip is a much more "cyberpunk" adventure than the last Atlas Games product, *Arasaka Brainworm.* How can you get more punk than a gang war enlivened by cybercosis cases appearing from nowhere? The only way to make the adventure any darker is to set it during a rainstorm and play The Doors' *Riders on the Storm.*

Naturally, a review can't go into too much detail without the risk of telling too many plot details and wrecking the adventure for all readers. However, the adventure is fairly straightforward (for the referee—the players will be wondering what's going on, which is what they should be doing), with decent illustrations, very complete NPC descriptions and outlines, a nifty street map of the area in question done in three-quarter computer-generated splendor (as well as maps I can't mention).

This adventure has two strengths: It's relatively short—the entire adventure is supposed to take place in the space of an evening, and it can be dealt with in a single longish play session. And it places a great deal of emphasis on roleplaying. Not just pulling out guns and going to town, but real conversation with the NPCs, most of whom have excellent, if concise, personality profiles. If the PCs don't talk a lot to the NPCs, they won't even begin to suspect the machinations afoot.

On the down side, the adventure's a little short for the price, and the serious referee will note some new rules interpretations in the text. I personally wonder if these interpretations are official. As in *Arasaka Brainworm,* there were NPC statistics that broke the rules on statistic maximums.

A phone call to R. Talsorian Games revealed that these stats were not at all official, leaving me to wonder if these new rules are.

Still, *The Osiris Chip* is fun, a good time for both the combat-monsters and the problem-solvers of any *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.* group. And, true to the genre, even if the player characters win completely, the repercussions of their actions will catch up to them later.

Or maybe sooner.

BattleTech OmniMechs

Ral Partha Enterprises.
Light 'Mechs: $16. Sculpted by Dave Summers.
Heavy 'Mechs: $20. Sculpted by John M. Garrity and Richard Kerr.
Assault 'Mechs: $23. Sculpted by Walter Vail.
Lead figures for the *BattleTech* **game of futuristic battlemachine combat.**
Produced in 1991.

Although the *OmniMech* line is actually four separate packs of different 'Mechs, this review lumps three of the four packs together for review purposes.

BattleTech recently added the new threat of the Clans of Kerensky in an attempt to revitalize the conflict-basis of the game's background (stagnant since the last Succession War). This plot development brought in new foes with overwhelming technical and firepower superiority—the clans—and gave them a "warrior's code" excuse not to use their superiorities, with the clan warriors preferring to work as individuals rather than as a whole. Sort of an invasion of Paladins instead of a horde of well-organized "barbarians," like the Mongols. With the technical superiority the clans possess, if they fought as one, the Inner Sphere would be conquered

almost instantly, and the whole rationale for the *BattleTech* universe would collapse.

The coming of the clans did serve to introduce their new technologies, developments of the old technologies lost with General Kerensky's space fleet, to the game. New rules, new gear, new armor and new BattleMechs flooded the playing field (and the game boards), striking fear and envy into the old 'Mech jocks, whose outmoded machines were clearly inferior to the clan monsters. Not that an old 'Mech couldn't defeat a clan OmniMech—it just took some strategy (and luck). The OmniMechs in these three packs are part of that clan invasion, some of the nightmares the Inner Sphere 'Mechwarriors have to face.

MODELS

Each pack contains four Omni-Mechs. The light pack contains a Dasher, a Puma, a Koshi and an Uller. The heavy pack contains a Vulture, a Madcat, a Loki and a Thor. The assault pack contains a Daishi, a Masakari, a Man O' War and a Gladiator. Additionally, each pack contains a fairly detailed instruction sheet, showing how the various parts of each model fit onto the others and a Partha Paints painting instruction sheet, with helpful suggestions and tips on how to glue together and paint the models. The individual pieces are well protected in compartmented foam inside the boxes.

The light OmniMechs are fairly detailed—not up to MicroArmour standards, or even up to fantasy figure standards, but not bad—and come with hexagonal bases to affix to each 'Mech so that they fit well on the *BattleTech* hex-maps.

The set comes with an adapter piece to fit Uller legs to a Dasher or Koshi. It does not come with a spare pair of Uller legs and the feet-mount, though, and there's nothing to indicate that an Uller can use the legs from a Dasher or Koshi in return, so if you make the Dasher/Koshi-Uller leg conversion, you'll end up one 'Mech short, with spare parts of that lost 'Mech.

The parts are a bit spindly, which is faithful to the scale, but some of these models won't take a great deal of

physical punishment. It would have been a cute idea to cut the foam in the pack's box to hold the assembled models.

There's an inordinate amount of flash on the pieces, with rather exposed seams that will take a deal of careful work to cut off and smooth to leave a clean, seamless model.

In Ral Partha's defense, I must commend putting the smaller pieces in a Ziploc plastic bag and including a pair of piano-wire aerials for the models. But the instructions don't show which 'Mechs are supposed to have these, and the back cover photos (which are supposed to be used as painting guides) are far too dark to show either the aerials or much in the way of paint schemes.

Taking the pictures against a black backdrop and dark scenery was not a good idea.

The heavy OmniMechs have a little better detail work than the light OmniMechs—there is more model size to work with. Fortunately for the confusion factor, these four heavies are actually two pairs of variants. The Vulture and Madcat share common leg structures; the Loki and Thor share common leg structures; and the Madcat, Loki and Thor all have the same arms! Thus, there are fewer different pieces to locate in order to construct the models. Thankfully, these models have fewer flash and seam problems than the light set. Assembling them looks fairly easy. And the Parthans have included a 3$\frac{1}{2}$-inch-long piano wire which can be cut to proper lengths to make radio aerials for all four models. These models come with the proper hexagonal bases, and painting is somewhat easier because the legs (which is where the majority of the paint job goes) are larger.

And the pictures here are taken with light scenery in the background, allowing details and paint schemes to be seen. A definite step up from the light pack.

The assault OmniMechs are also slightly more detailed than the light 'Mechs, for the same size reason. Two pairs of variants, these models show only moderate flash and seams. Most of the pieces are large enough to cut the flaws off without damaging

the piece.

There are more pieces, because these 'Mechs all have different arms, and some of the pieces are rather small. Together with the hexagonal bases and good, well-lit back cover photographs, these models should dress up any *BattleTech* battlefield (and scare the pants off Inner Sphere 'Mechwarriors facing these four beasts).

A word to the innocent: The Omni-Mechs pictured in the photographs on the pack backs are exquisitely painted and assembled to perfection. The actual models are a lot smaller than the impression given in those pictures. The models in the photos were painted by a very skilled painter, David Hoppock, with a lot of patience and a very fine brush. Matching their

quality will be quite a challenge.

VERDICT

The light OmniMechs are not up to normal the *BattleTech* figure standards. They're too flimsy, and the flash situation was intolerable. At $4 apiece, they're a trifle expensive for the amount of lead (and for the amount of work they'll take to make them look decent).

The heavy OmniMechs are a bit better and are priced about right.

The assault OmniMechs were almost a bargain—after all, four similar 'Mechs would cost around $22.

The heavier OmniMechs were up to the standards set by other Ral Partha BattleMechs.

This is not to say that these standards are equivalent to those set for other Ral Partha lines. Ω

GDW Product Distribution

GDW products (including Traveller) are available through distributors as follows:

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•**Italy:** Imported and distributed by *Books and Games* Via Paisiello No. 4, 20131 Milano, Italy. Some titles are translated into Italian.

•**Japan:** Printed and distributed by *Post Hobby Japan Co.*, Ltd., 26-5, 5-chome, Sendagaya, Shibuyaku, Tokyo, Japan. Titles published are translated into Japanese.

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

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I AM STARTING a *Talislanta* PBM. If you are interested in a unique fantasy PBM set after a cataclysmic war of magic, contact Matt Johnson, 625 W. Malvern, Fullerton, CA 92632. (59)

BATTLETECH player looking for worthy opponents in the San Francisco Peninsula area. Interested parties please write to J. M. Hiatt, 832 N. Humbolt St. #1, San Mateo, CA 94401-1439. (58)

ATTENTION RENEGADE LEGIONNAIRES! Playtesters needed for scenarios in any or all *Renegade Legion* game systems. This is real playtesting! I will send scenarios and a questionnaire to fill out and send back. Criticism and suggestions are welcome. If your group is running out of scenarios to play, this is perfect for you. For more information, contact Christopher King, Box MWC-1847, 1701 College Ave., Fredericksburg, VA 22401-4666. (56)

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MOVING—Need to get rid of the games I no longer play. *Shadowrun*, **Space: 1889**, *GURPS* (hard cover), *Paranoia, Boot Hill* (old), *Runequest* (old), **Sky Galleons**, *Car Wars* (deluxe), *Car Wars Tanks, Autoduel Champions, 2300 AD*, lots of supplements and more, plus magazines and comics. Send SASE for list. David Farnell, 2327 Deadwood, Austin, TX 78744-2804. (62)

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TRADE

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GDW'S **Rebellion Sourcebook** (MegaTraveller) or ICE's *Spacemaster* modules or sourcebooks. I will trade for **Twilight: 2000** material (first and second editions) or TSR's *Top Secret* game material. Contact Kurt Searfoss, 708c NE Ball Drive, Lees Summit, MO 64063. (57)

KALISZ TOWN-GUIDE with map (original in Polish). I will trade for a fair copy of **Black Madonna**. Arne Rassek, Berliner Str. 23, 3005 Hemmingen 1, Germany. (56)

WANTED

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

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

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MELBOURNE TIMES: Newsletter of the Earth Colonies Development League provides background material for completely new, non-Imperium campaign setting. Features include news service, world briefs, character sketches, sophont descriptions, corporate portfolios, political analysis, cultural events and more. Subscribers and contributors send SASE to *Melbourne Times,* c/o David Johnson, 2800 NASA Road One #514, Seabrook, TX 77586. Overseas include three IRCs. (62)

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Challenge 64

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☐☐☐☐☐☐ 3. Unholier than Thou (MegaTraveller)
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"It Was Unlikely": Of course we don't believe in werewolves. But this *is* an odd little town. And the world *has* become has become a strange place. And there is a full moon tonight... *By Legion.*

MegaTraveller
"A Deadly Artifact": The PCs may be in for a surprise when they encounter an ancient warship drifting through space. *By Michael Brines.*

Dark Conspiracy
"Dark Halloween": The PCs are looking forward to a hard-earned vacation, driving through a small New England town or just searching for a quick source of money. But no matter what their destination, their path leads to trouble. Journey into the Dark in three thrilling adventures. *By Michael C. LaBossiere*

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Feedback Results for Challenge 60

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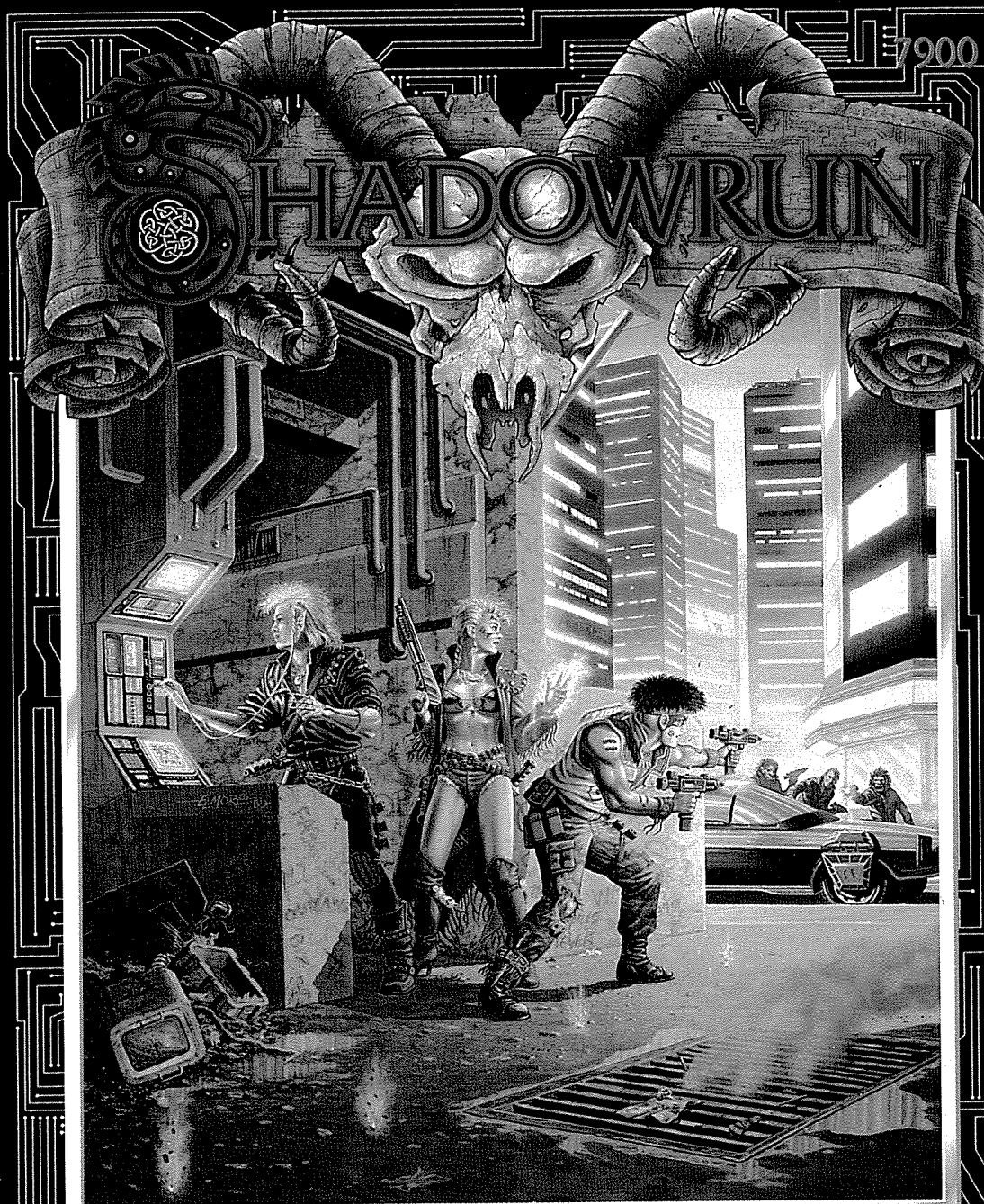
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