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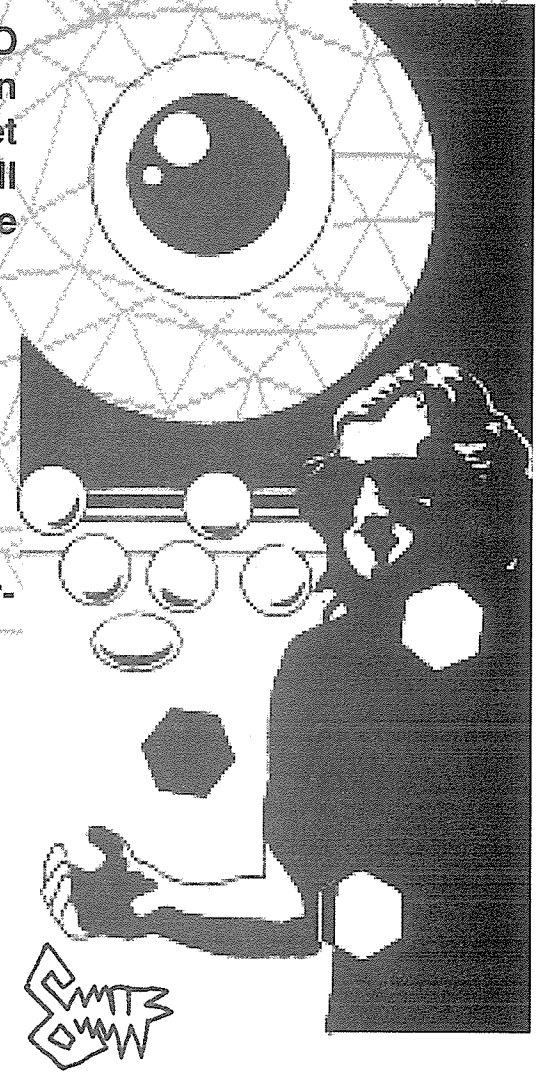
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Of course we don't believe in werewolves. But this is an odd little town. And the world has become a strange place. And there is a full moon tonight. *By Legion*

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I wondered why we always stayed in adjacent rooms and took turns standing guard, even in the swankiest hotels. When I finally asked, no one would give me an answer.
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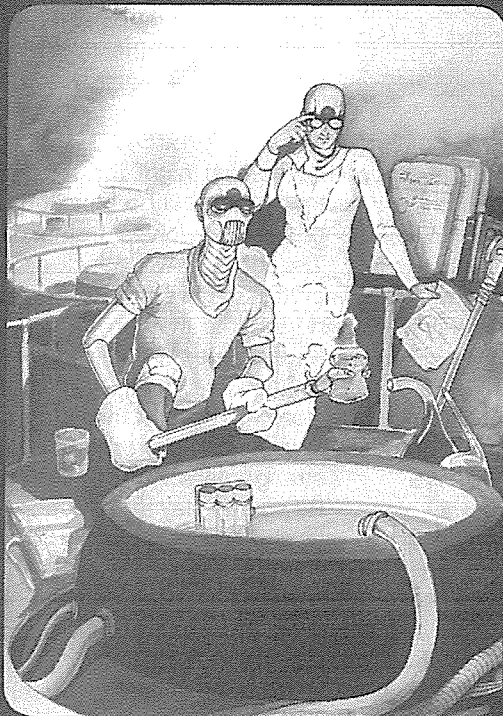
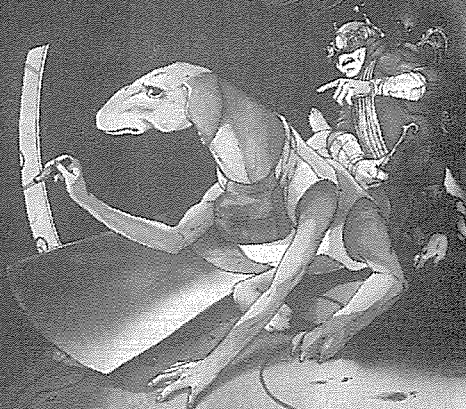
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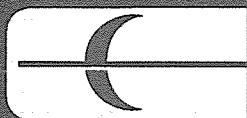
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Challenge

Issue 65, October 1992

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ABOUT THE COVER

This month, artists John and Laura Lakey demonstrate that in the world of **Dark Conspiracy**, looks can be deceiving, as several Nukids plan on getting some of those Halloween goodies for themselves.

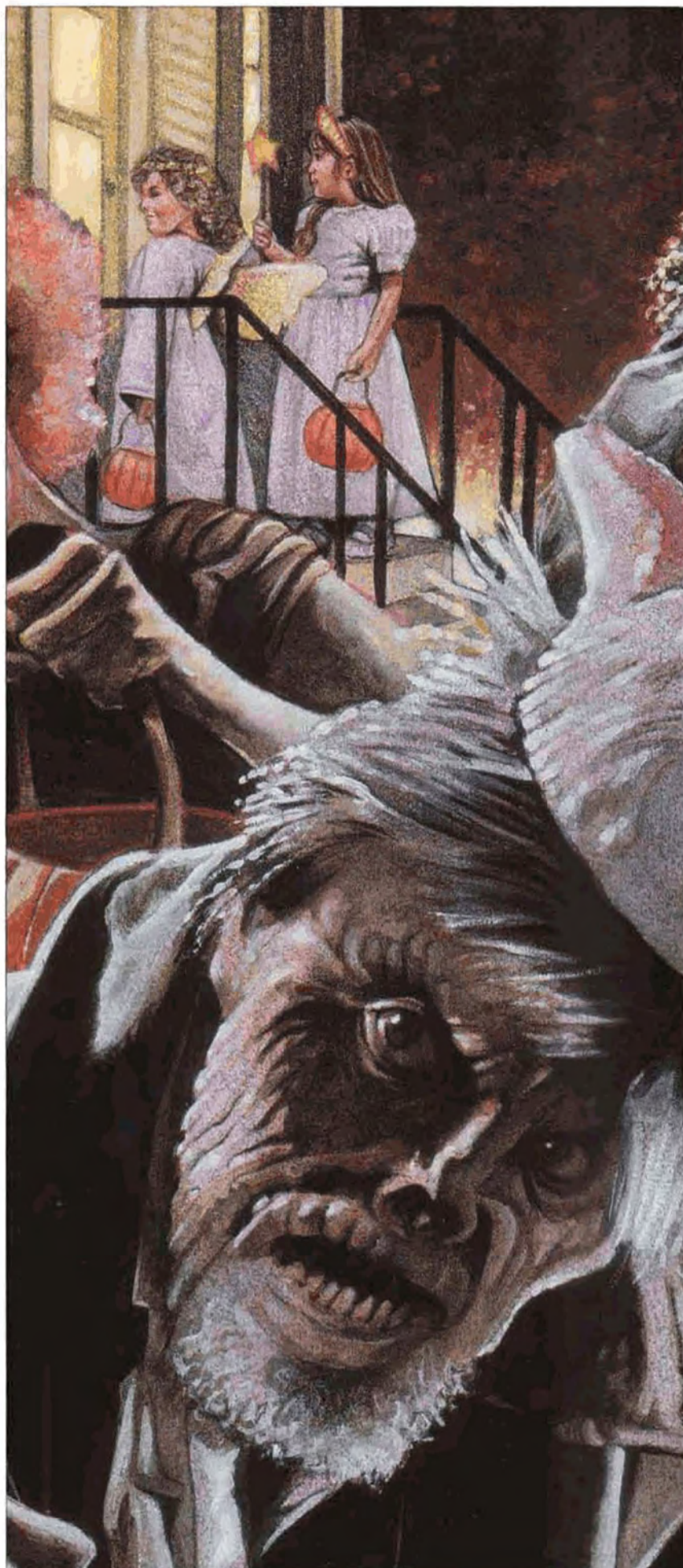
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Challenge ©1992 GDW, Inc. Printed in the USA. All rights reserved. ISSN 0894-5535. The issue price is \$3.50. Six issues are \$15 in the US and Canada. Foreign subscriptions (outside the US and Canada, but not to APO or FPO addresses) by surface mail are \$30 per six issues. Please make all payments in US funds drawn on a US bank.

Submissions: We welcome articles and illustrations for **Challenge**. Please inquire before submitting manuscripts, enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope. We will send submission guidelines. All manuscripts, editorial and general mail should be sent to **Challenge**, Managing Editor, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646 USA. Art portfolios should be sent to the art director, c/o **Challenge**. Foreign inquiries (except APO/FPO) please include International Reply Coupon.



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FROM THE MANAGEMENT

HORROR.
TERROR.
FEAR.

Kind of shivers your timbers right there. My first experience of being scared silly and loving it still sticks in my mind. It was 1972, and ABC broadcast a made-for-TV movie called *The Night Stalker* starring Darren McGavin. McGavin was Carl Kolchak, crusading reporter after a vampire in Las Vegas. The whole thing blew my 7-year-old mind, as did the next Kolchak TV movie (*The Night Strangler*) and the subsequent series, *Kolchak, The Night Stalker*. (Side note: The Science Fiction Channel has announced that they'll be running the series.... Cool.)

Since then, I've continued my love affair with horror. Novels, especially the work of H.P. Lovecraft, Clive Barker and Anne Rice, have all broadened my view on the genre. And, of course, fear on film can really lay you out when done right: John Carpenter (*The Thing*, *Prince of Darkness*), Kathryn Bigelow (*Near Dark*) and Ridley Scott (*Alien*) have sent repeated chills down my spine.

As entertaining as all that stuff was, none of it comes close to what Kolchak did. Not that it was *that* great of a show, mind you. It was good, yes, but most of the entertainment, fear and fun came from me and my imagination. I was receptive and eager for adventure. I guess that's what we want to achieve with this issue—for you to turn back the clock, suspend your disbelief and be swept away. So put on some mood music, maybe Orff's *Carmina Burana* (y'know, that eerie chanting from *The Omen*) or Concrete Blonde's *Bloodletting*, turn down the lights, and have some good scary fun.

BOO!

Did I getcha?

— Steve Bryant

WHY IS ICE LEFT OUT IN THE COLD?

One absence I note among the covers of *Challenge* is any coverage of Iron Crown Enterprises' excellent *Space Master* and *Cyberspace* gaming systems. Why? Is it a deliberate ploy, or does no one submit articles on these systems?

In my case, I use both *MegaTraveller* and *Space Master*. From *MegaTraveller* I use the Imperium universe. Currently my campaign is based in subsector District 268 of the Spinward Marches, so *MegaTraveller* is my source material, while I use the *Space Master* system to game with the Imperium. The official *Space Master* universe is about what tech 18 to 20 compared to the Imperium's 15. By taking the appropriate technology levels into account, an entertaining mixture is provided. Does *Challenge* publish hybrids like this *MegaTraveller/Space Master* admixture? If not, why not?

Mark Ryan

Dunedin, New Zealand

We would publish adventures for ICE's science-fiction games like Space Master and Cyberspace but your second theory is correct, we haven't received any submissions.

We also don't publish hybrids because our readers tell us they aren't interested in these types of adventures.

THE FUTURE OF 2300 AD

I am an avid fan of GDW and almost all of its games. I umpire a *Twilight: 2000* campaign and am interested in starting a *2300 AD* group. I am writing to, first, be one among many to tell you that without your games my life would be a very dreary affair and, second, to ask some questions. As I previously mentioned, I am thinking of starting a *2300 AD* group but I am concerned about the lack of literature being published to support the system. I subscribe to *Challenge* and the articles are usually top-notch. However, I would be very reassured if I knew for sure that you will continue to support the system with more modules and sourcebooks. I have also been glancing through the index in *Challenge* #50, and have spotted several interesting articles in previous issues that I don't possess. Do you still have the back copies? If so, which issues? I would like to receive a pilot issue of *Eternal Soldier* and information on how I can subscribe. I saw

your panel about seeking new submissions but I haven't come up with a really good idea yet. I'd like to say again that GDW is the best as far as I'm concerned and I'm eagerly waiting on issue #60 of *Challenge*! Oh yeah! Please tell Bob Larkin that "The Sphinx Prophet" on the cover of issue #59 was... well, awesome! Keep up the good work!

Brad Sweet

New Orleans, LA

GDW is not planning any 2300 modules/sourcebooks at the present. Challenge will support the system.

CYBERPUNK FICTION

The *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* and *Challenge* built their reputations on GDW's excellent games: *Traveller*, *MegaTraveller*, *Twilight: 2000* and *2300* to just name the games I own. It is a shame to see you wasting your magazine space on games like *Shadowrun* and *Cyberpunk*. Is it any surprise that in the issue 58 feedback, all the articles on both games were in the lower 50%?

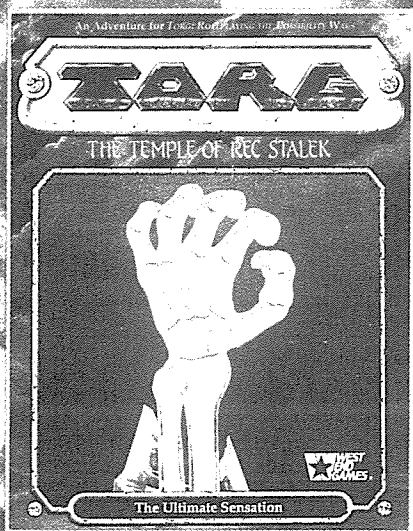
You have published many items of cyberpunk fiction, but I cannot recall you ever publishing any *Traveller/Twilight/2300* style fiction (according to my magazine database: five pieces of cyberpunk, and no other fiction!) As a computer professional (both hardware and software, all levels), I have my own problems with cyberpunk's dream about computing into the future, so I am not unbiased.

I am seriously considering letting my subscription expire. This is a major decision, since I have all the issues back to issue number 7. It would also be the only gaming magazine that had drifted so far away from my interests that I dropped it. You cannot be everything to everybody! Look at TSR's *Dragon* or AH's *General*. They limit themselves to certain genres and succeed admirably.

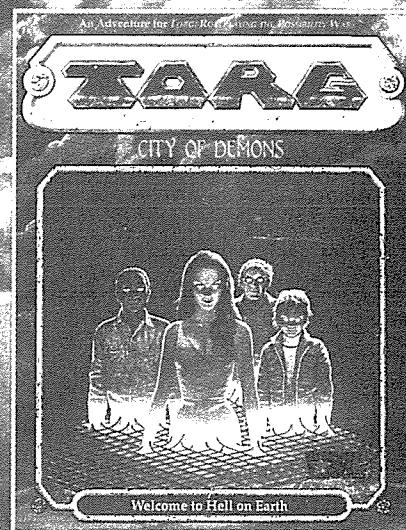
So, a last plea, return to your roots before you lose your readers!

Scott Romanowski
Wilmington, MA

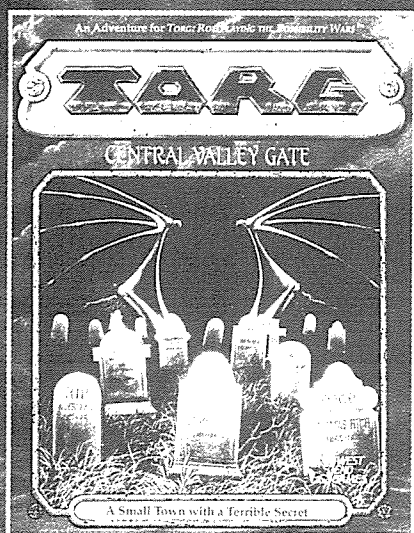
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It Was Unlikely...

...That America would come apart at the seams.

But it did.

...That a town would be deserted.

But after the attack on the US, the town of Cedar Rapids, Nebraska was abandoned by its inhabitants. People took what they could carry and left, leaving an intact, unlooted jewel in the heartland. A ghost town in the middle of nowhere.

...That lunatics would rule the land.

Willowview Mental Hospital lies 10 kilometers southeast of Cedar Rapids. In late-1997, the staff released the 150 patients, reasoning that their only chance of survival lay in escape. Now, the lunatics have made Cedar Rapids their home. And visitors are always welcome.

...That werewolves would stalk at night.

But they seem to be terrorizing this strange, small town.

By Legion

A SAFE HAVEN?

Cedar Rapids is a strange place to visit. About 100 lunatics live there now, so daily life is admittedly somewhat bizarre. The inhabitants do their best, though, to emulate a normal town. Of course, that task is made easier since most of them *believe* they are just your average rural folk.

What is most remarkable is how their isolation in Willowview has affected them. The staff there felt it was best not to bother the patients with the more mundane aspects of life outside—like the war, for instance. So after their release, it was not too difficult for the patients to form their own world view, doing their best to carry on a “normal” life. And normal lives don’t include wars. Their collective reality remains locked at about mid-1997, when America was still a normal working, living, spending country of “hot dogs and apple pie.” Only one of them (Old Man Wilson) believes the war even took place!

These people are lunatics, not idiots. They hunt, keep gardens and fish. A couple even brew alcohol for fuel (“I sure can’t figure out why the gas delivery is so late this week.” Week after week.), and most will defend themselves if attacked.

Some of these townfolk have opened stores and now run them as though they were pre-war businesses. Of course, they will only sell things for pre-war US dollars. Some will even take credit cards! None, however, will take gold or barter.

That ought to mess with your players’ minds.

SEND IN THE CLOWNS

The PCs are travelling east along State Highway 56 in eastern Nebraska. Lying directly across their path is the town of Cedar Rapids, Nebraska. The road bridge across the river at the north end of town is ruined. To continue on their way, the PCs can try to build a makeshift bridge, find a suitable ford or go back the way they came to attempt a crossing at some other point. During their stay in town or from reconnaissance of the area, the PCs will discover that the only place where vehicles can cross the river is at Willowview, over a covered bridge. Meanwhile, the townfolk are very nice for these times. Why don’t the travellers rest up for awhile?

PAYDIRT

In October 1998, Cedar Rapids was “discovered” by detachments from

both the 35th Engineer Brigade (Combat) and a sizable marauder group operating out of Grand Island to the southwest. During the short but furious engagement that followed, the 35th lost an M60A3 to the marauder’s antitank fire. Both sides withdrew, badly bloodied. The 35th abandoned its knocked-out M60 half buried in a collapsed house, and the marauders blew up the bridge just north of town to prevent pursuit.

Now, lying abandoned and rubble-covered in a house near the center of town is a burnt-out M60A3. The vehicle is irreparable—its interior was completely gutted when the tank’s ammunition blew up. Covering the turret and hull front are a number of Blazer Block reactive armor units. The PCs can recover 11 units if they clear away the rubble. Salvaging the Blazer Blocks will take four hours if the PCs have appropriate tools, eight hours if they’re winging it. Add another four hours to clear away the rubble and another four to recover the rest of the reactive armor.

WEREWOLVES

The first night the PCs spend in town, they will be attacked by three rabid “werewolves” from the asylum. The lunatics will attack until one of them is injured, at which time they will retreat into the dark woods, running for their “den” in Willowview.

Of course, the PCs don’t believe in werewolves. But this is an odd little town. And the world has become a strange place. And there is a full moon. Be sure to play the situation up for all its worth.

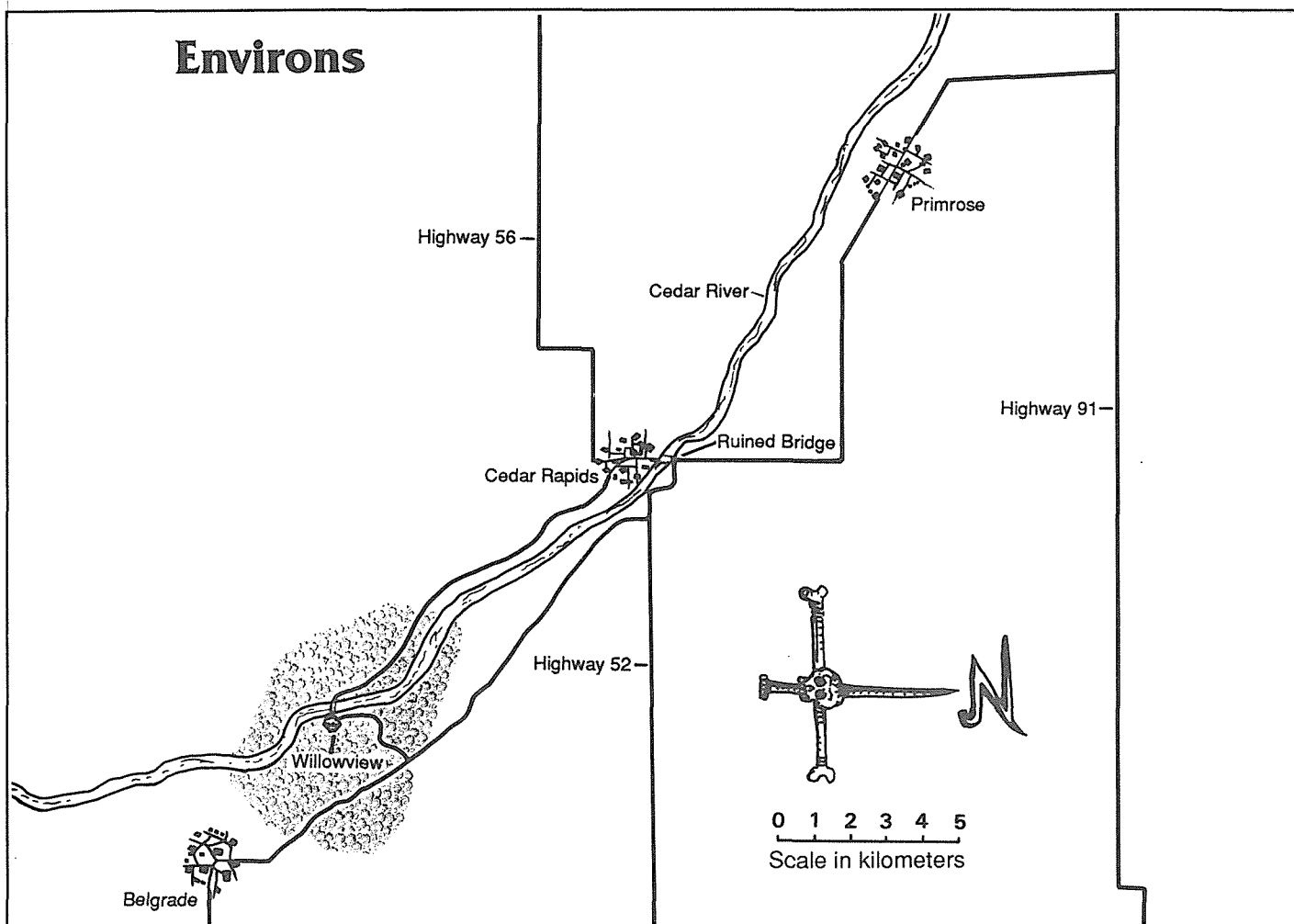
If any of the PCs are bitten by the werewolves, they may want to visit the asylum and raid the pharmacy to find relief from possible rabies infection. If they decide to search for and destroy the rabid lunatics terrorizing the town, their quest will lead them to the asylum, where the werewolves are holed up. Either way, looks like they’re going to the asylum.

WILLOWVIEW

Willowview Mental Hospital was built in the mid-1990s as a residential sanitarium for persons diagnosed with nonviolent and “quiet” mental illnesses.

Located on the north bank of the Cedar River, which flows shallow and slow here, it is surrounded by thick





woods. The establishment is accessed by a two-lane drive which runs up one side of the river and down the other.

A 10-foot-high chainlink fence runs around the entire perimeter of the site. Before the war, it was electrified with a very low charge, more to keep the woodland animals out of the grounds than to keep the patients inside.

Covered Bridge: This modern-built replica has a concrete superstructure and is covered by a wooden tunnel. It once had electric lighting, but since the war, it remains dark and gloomy. The ceiling is covered with cobwebs, the walls with moss, the pavement with twigs and dry leaves. This is a fairly lightweight structure, as bridges go. Two lanes wide, it has a maximum load limit of 15 tons.

Only vehicles 15 feet high or lower may pass through the bridge's "tunnel." If they so desire, the PCs can reinforce the bridge (Average: Civil Engineer) to allow heavier vehicles (like tanks) to cross.

Lying at the south end of the bridge

is a man's corpse. He is curled into the fetal position, his mouth gaping in a drawn, silent scream. This poor wretch was one of the four rabid lunatics terrorizing the area. His disease finally got the better of him.

Security Shacks: These two buildings are both one-story, 10-foot-square wooden structures. A variety of office supplies and furniture inside might be of interest to the PCs.

Administration Building: This expansive building is one-story high. It also is made of wood and contains office equipment and stationery.

Hospital Building: This is a two-story, concrete monolith. The most interesting part of the hospital, as far as the PCs are concerned, will be the pharmacy. Because rabies had been contracted by over-friendly patients in the past, the hospital maintained a few lots of antirabies serum in the dispensary. There are still two complete treatments worth of serum in the locked pharmacy room, at the back of the infirmary. To make the PCs' lives a little easier, the serum is still good. But if you really want to

throw a PC a scare, have him get an expired lot of serum.

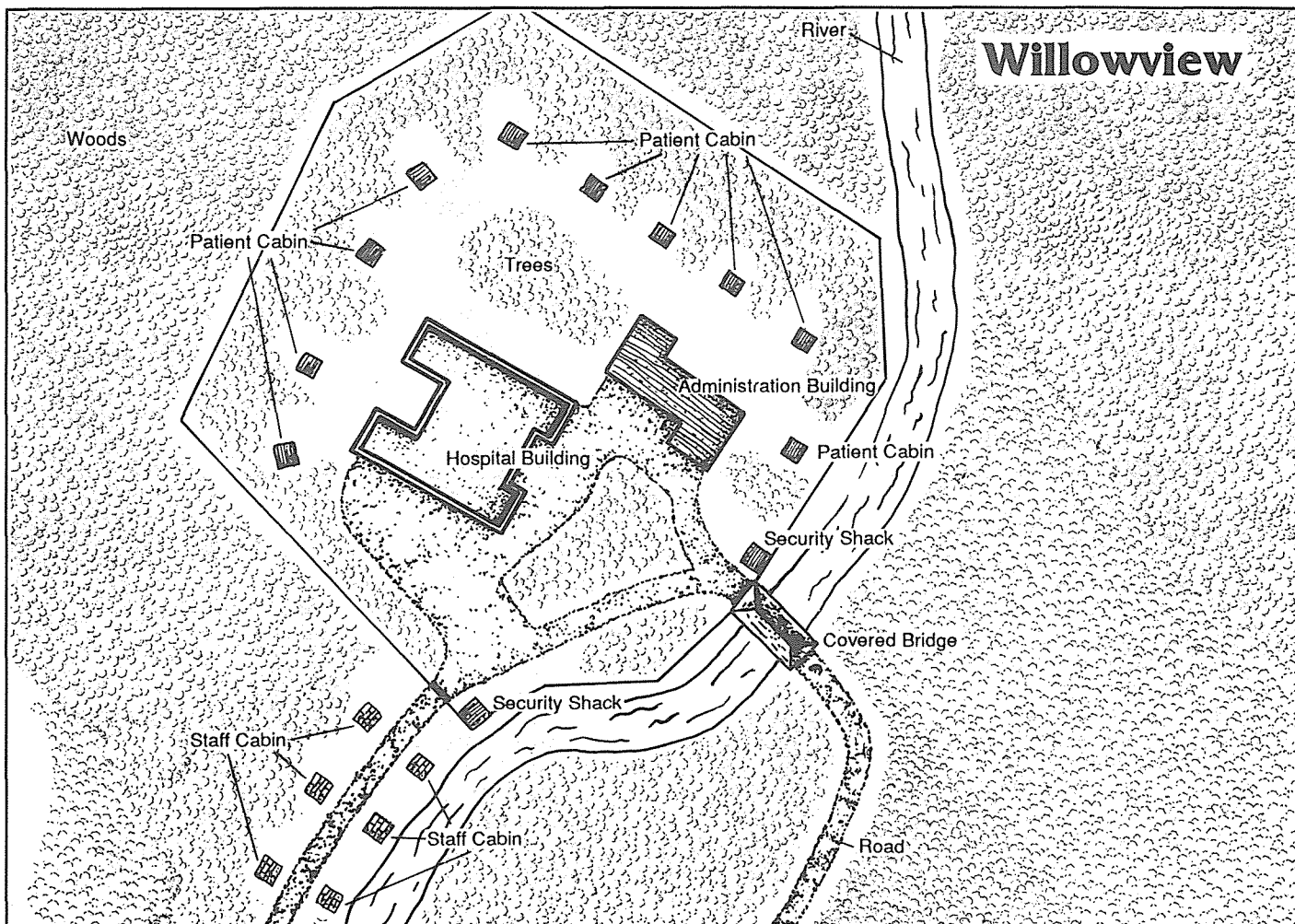
Patient Cabins: These buildings are similar to the security shacks described above. Each is a 15-foot-square, one-story, wooden construction. Inside are an assortment of bedding and furniture.

Staff Cabins: These six buildings were permanent quarters for the hospital's live-in staff members. They are one-story, brick buildings. Searches might turn up anything that could be found in an unlooted home.

CONCLUSION

Any surviving werewolves will attack the PCs in multiple hit-and-run ambushes from the cover of woods and buildings on the asylum grounds.

They will continue to harass the PCs until they are eliminated or until the PCs leave the area. If the werewolves are allowed to continue their depredations against the surrounding area, they may infect more people. The last thing post-war eastern Nebraska needs is a rabies epidemic. If that is not enough to



motivate the PCs, the townsfolk can offer some sort of reward for the PCs' services.

Like I said, these people are lunatics, not idiots. Who wants to be terrorized by werewolves?

NPCs

The following nonplayer characters will be useful in this adventure.

Doc Witherspoon

In the late 1980s, it was revealed that Doc Witherspoon had absolutely no real medical training. Shortly thereafter, he was arrested for practicing medicine without a license. Still, he believes he is a fully trained and licensed doctor.

Of course, when the patients from Willowview moved into town, he took over the town doctor's clinic.

He looks and acts for all the world like he knows what he is doing. It is a Difficult task (Observation+Medical)+2 to notice his lack of Medical skill.

If the player characters get injured and go to him for help, they better

take their lucky rabbits' feet with them. Doc is a Novice NPC.

Sheriff Hoover

This man labors under the delusion that he is J. Edgar Hoover. He will willingly help anybody he doesn't suspect of being a communist. He will come to the PCs' aid when they are attacked by the werewolves. If any of the PCs have been bitten by the foamy-mouthed terrors, he will tell them to go see Doc Witherspoon. He will also mutter something about "the hospital."

The PCs should know from their drive through the town that there is no hospital here.

If they question the sheriff further, he will whisper that there is a hospital southeast of town, on the river, that he is "sure is where subversives meet to plot."

Despite his zealous belief in this, he will not go to the hospital himself. "I've got to stay here to protect the townsfolk," he explains.

Hoover is a Veteran NPC.

Old Man Wilson

This unpleasant but well informed individual lives in the mansion on the hill near the center of town. He is crabby and very rarely leaves his house during daylight. He is the most knowledgeable resident of town regarding the war because he has found and read the previous occupant's diaries of the events of the late-1990s. He will never volunteer information.

He is an Experienced NPC.

Werewolves

A few weeks ago, four lunatics out for a walk in the woods near town were attacked and bitten by a rabid fox which they attempted to take home as a pet. These poor wretches are now in the excitation period of their rabies infection—beyond help—and will perish in less than a week.

Each believes he is a nocturnal monster of one variety or another. When not attacking other people, they often claw and bite each other. They hide out at the asylum during the day and only "hunt" at night.

They are all Veteran NPCs. Ω

TERROR

The SCO drilling and production platform has stopped responding to radio messages. A corporate team sent to investigate has lost contact. Now SCO is looking for mercs with special operations experience to figure out what's going on.

The characters are contacted by a representative of South Coast Oil (SCO) Company. They are looking for some mercenaries with special operations experience for a short counterterrorist operation. An SCO drilling and production platform, SC-14, has stopped responding to radio messages, and a corporate team sent to investigate lost contact after landing by helicopter on the platform. All SCO knows for sure is that the team reported the rig to be visibly intact, but with no human presence visible. SCO received a serious if vague terrorist threat recently, and believes that the platform may have been taken over by hostiles.

The SC-14 rig is within Cuban waters, part of a joint SCO/Cuban government project. As a result, SCO can't call for US government help, and SCO doesn't trust the Cuban police and military with the safety of the platform. SCO guarantees that it will cover any international legal repercussions with the Cubans, should they come up. All the team has to do is figure out who's holding the platform and eliminate them.

The platform is worth over \$200 million and produces roughly that amount of oil per year. SCO is willing to pay \$100,000 per person on the raid (an eight- to 12-person team is expected) base salary, plus 1% of the following year's production value from the platform, thus encouraging the team to avoid damaging the production facilities. SCO will provide transport to near the platform on a company helicopter. Once the situation is under control, the team is to call in company workers. If things go wrong, the PCs can opt to abort the mission, in which case SCO can provide any pickup option the team wants short of a submarine.

REFEREE

The SC-14 platform has indeed been the victim of a terrorist attack. A previously minor anticorporate terrorist gang called "Libre" arranged for one of its members to be hired as a worker on SC-14 several months ago, and a week ago he smuggled a medium-sized chemical agent bomb onto the platform. It was supposed to contain a disabling chemical agent, one that would not hurt the workers on the platform but that would totally disrupt production until an expensive and

time-consuming cleanup was completed.

Unfortunately for the terrorists, the bomb they purchased from a black market arms dealer contained a very different chemical agent from what they thought they were getting. Though labeled "incapacitating," it actually contained a powerful psychotropic agent. The drug, the experimental HD-45 acts very powerfully on the visual center of the brain and on the optic nerve, producing strong hallucinations and psychosis that intensify greatly when the victim is exposed to light. A strong dose also takes two to four weeks to wear off.

When detonated in the ventilation system three days before the team arrives, the bomb dosed everyone on the platform with enough HD-45 to make them psychotic during the night—and uncontrollable and self-destructively violent during the day. The bomb went off just before noon. It affected the rig's crew fast enough that nobody sent a distress call. Before nightfall that day, half the crew had died of suicide, accidents or at each others' hands, including the hapless terrorist. After nightfall, a few of the less effected individuals tried to make it to the radio room, but the lights in that section of the rig had been left on, and they lost control of themselves before they got close to the radios.

A residue of the drug remains on the platform, and it will take a week to become inert by exposure to natural forces. When the helicopter investigating the radio silence arrived, the three crewmembers contacted this residue and (since it was daylight at the time) reacted very badly. As the copilot and technician they'd brought along became psychotic, the pilot of the helicopter tried to take off and flee, but instead flew into the ocean.

PLATFORM

The platform is built on a truss structure going down to the sea floor 250 feet down. The rig is about 80 meters square, with five levels in the main structure (averaging four meters high) from A level (the main deck, with the drilling derrick and the helicopter pad) down to E level, with most of the levels containing either oil drilling or pumping equipment, or storage for drilling pipe. Above the main deck, opposite the helicopter pad, is a smaller eight-story living tower, with 25 apartments

By George William Herbert

in the Light



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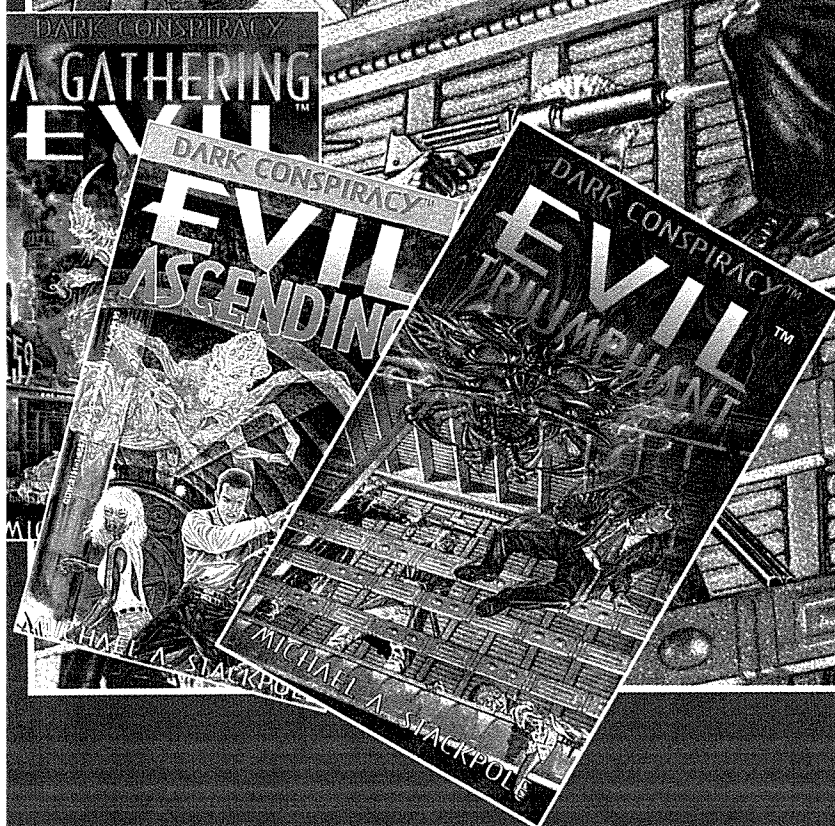
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on each level. Offices and common rooms like the cafeteria and exercise rooms are mostly on B level, immediately below the main deck. There are limited access routes to the girder structure under the platform (ladders and narrow catwalks).

WHEN THE PCS ARRIVE

Of the original 220 crew, only 25 are left alive on the platform. The rest all died of suicide (quite a number have jumped into the ocean and drowned), accidents or at each others' hands. The survivors are all quite insane, very violent and hiding down in the darkest sections of the SC-14 rig's interior.

Unless the PCs are wearing chemical protection gear (unlikely), as soon as they arrive on the platform, they will begin to absorb small doses of the drug from the residue around the platform. The concentration will be low enough that they won't notice any strong reactions at first, especially since they're undoubtedly highly tense and a bit paranoid already. In low dosages, the hallucinatory effects of the drug don't appear, just slowly increasing fear and paranoia. Most teams will choose to arrive at the platform at night, so the worst effects of the drug will be masked by the darkness.

About half the platform is still lit (internal lights and electricity are working) or has natural lighting during the day (the main deck and equipment well, for instance). The rest of the rig is dark even during the day.

As the team explores the platform, the referee should roll 2D6 on the following table once every 10 minutes.

Encounters

Roll	Result
2-4	Nothing occurs.
5	1D6 dead bodies discovered, along with signs of violence.
6-7	A survivor can be heard moving somewhere nearby, but the characters can't locate exactly where.
8	A survivor armed with an improvised weapon (club) attacks. Even if subdued, he is psychotic and cannot be reasoned with. Survivors will shy away from, or attempt to destroy, any lights or flashlights present.
9-10	Nothing occurs.
11-12	The characters encounter a pocket of stronger drug residue. 1D6 of them become noticeably more irritable and paranoid. After three such doses, a character will begin hallucinating, and after four, he will become violent.

A CALL FOR HELP

Eventually, the team will probably figure out that something is very wrong here and will try to call for extraction or rescue. If they've waited until daylight to make the call, anyone outside (or in bright inside lights, for that matter) is treated as having been exposed to one more dose of HD-45 than they actually have been. When they do call for help, a nervous company executive who's manning the radio will give the wrong confirmation codeword for the early extraction request. The characters should become extremely agitated, especially the ones who have received stronger doses of HD-45. The company executive, unable to tell what the characters want as the conversation becomes less coherent, will not do anything. The characters will have to wait it out through the rest of the day and the following night.

If they stay to the upper levels or the deck of the platform, the characters won't get any worse, though during the day they will feel worse. If they explore or camp in the lower levels, roll 2D6 on the following table.

Further Encounters

Roll	Result
2-5	Nothing occurs.
6	1D6 dead bodies discovered, with signs of violence.
7	A survivor can be heard moving somewhere nearby, but the PCs can't locate exactly where.
8	A survivor attacks with an improvised weapon (club).
9-10	PCs hallucinate sounds of movement and other sounds nearby. If characters talk about the sounds, other characters will start to "hear" them also.
11	If any characters have been exposed to the stronger dosage, one of them will suddenly collapse and start babbling about strange visual hallucinations.
12	The PCs encounter a pocket of stronger drug residue.

The characters should survive the night, but in extremely frazzled condition. The next morning, the company sends a helicopter out with a team of protective-suit-equipped investigators, having guessed that there's some sort of contamination on the rig. If the characters don't massacre them on sight, they'll rescue the team and return them to shore and a couple of weeks of recuperation in a mental clinic. The rig will be decontaminated quickly, and the team will recover completely over the next few weeks.

ROLEPLAYING PSYCHOSIS AND PARANOIA

Some referees and players may have problems roleplaying the sense of slowly disintegrating personalities. Here are a few tips on how to create the right mood for this adventure.

The key is information. Make it clear to the players that they shouldn't idly chat about what's going on during this adventure—what they say is what their characters say. Don't let them talk enough to "figure it out" among themselves.

The referee is encouraged to write notes to his players. A note can be anything from a message that could have been said out loud ("Frank, your character sees something moving behind the stacks of pipe."), to messages designed to induce paranoia in the recipient ("Hernandez keeps looking at your character, Bill. Remember when those federal agents said he'd been working with the Cubans?"), to messages designed to induce paranoia among someone else ("Nothing important happening that you can tell" given to the player running Hernandez immediately after the above note to Bill).

Don't be afraid to take a player out of the room and privately tell him that his character is going insane or psychotic. If they're a good roleplayer, they'll take that information as a challenge and will do quite a bit of your work for you.

Finally, build mood. Tell the team that there's this funny creak behind them wherever they go. Pass a note to one character saying that some bodies you saw before moved since you last saw them (if the others ask, roll dice and tell them, "You don't think so."). Surprise them if at all possible.

VARIATIONS

To add additional twists, consider the following ideas:

Aggressive Survivor: One of the survivors is better armed and coherent, if insane. Think of Dr. Hannibal Lecter from *The Silence of the Lambs*, but with an arc welder and nailgun.

Cubans: At an inconvenient point, a Cuban navy patrol boat shows up to investigate reports by fishermen nearby that "something weird is going on."

The Stranger They Come: One of the characters gets a heavy dose but feels fine, until he gets a single catastrophic hallucination (i.e., a seagull on the platform turns and starts reciting maritime poetry to the character) that may leave him with a character quirk for life. Ω

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS, aboard their own ship or hired by a merchant patron as crewmembers, are located at the far edge of the system, about a week at their maximum maneuver drive from the local starport.

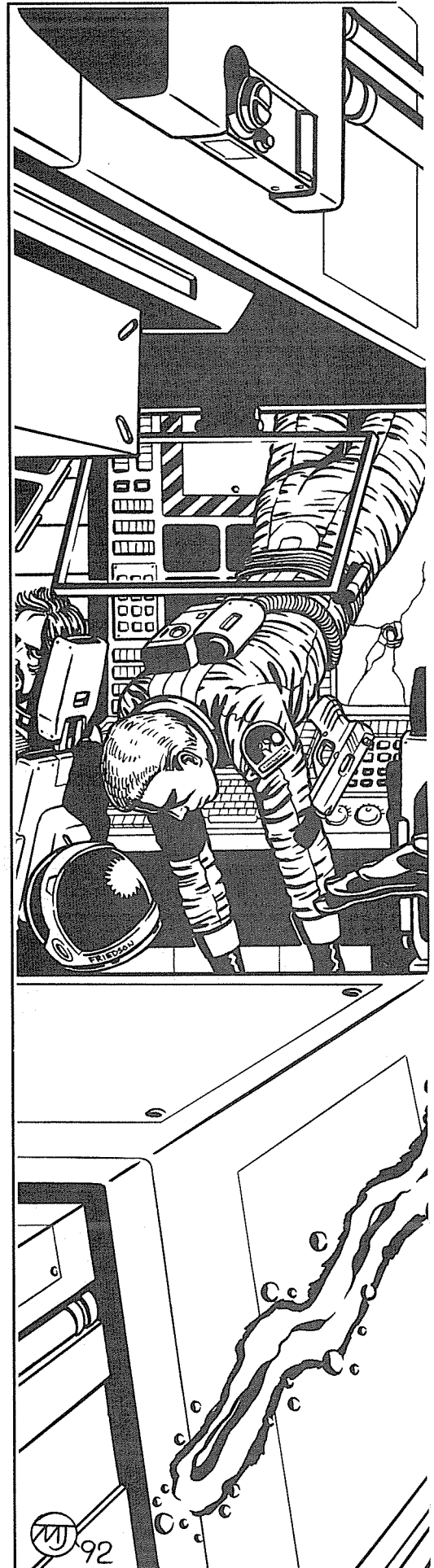
They encounter a derelict starship drifting through space at high speed, apparently undamaged but unpowered.

A sensor scan shows the derelict ship to be a warship from the time of the Rule of Man. Its course shows that it is from out-system—it has probably drifted for thousands of years. The player characters will undoubtedly match courses and board.

The airlock of the derelict starship is open, and the ship is depressurized. The temperature inside is that of deep space. While exploring the ship, the player characters find that it is essentially undamaged and well preserved. If fueled, the fusion plant could be restarted, the airlock closed and life support restored. Bodies of the crewmembers are still on the ship, but no clue is apparent as to who killed the crew or why.

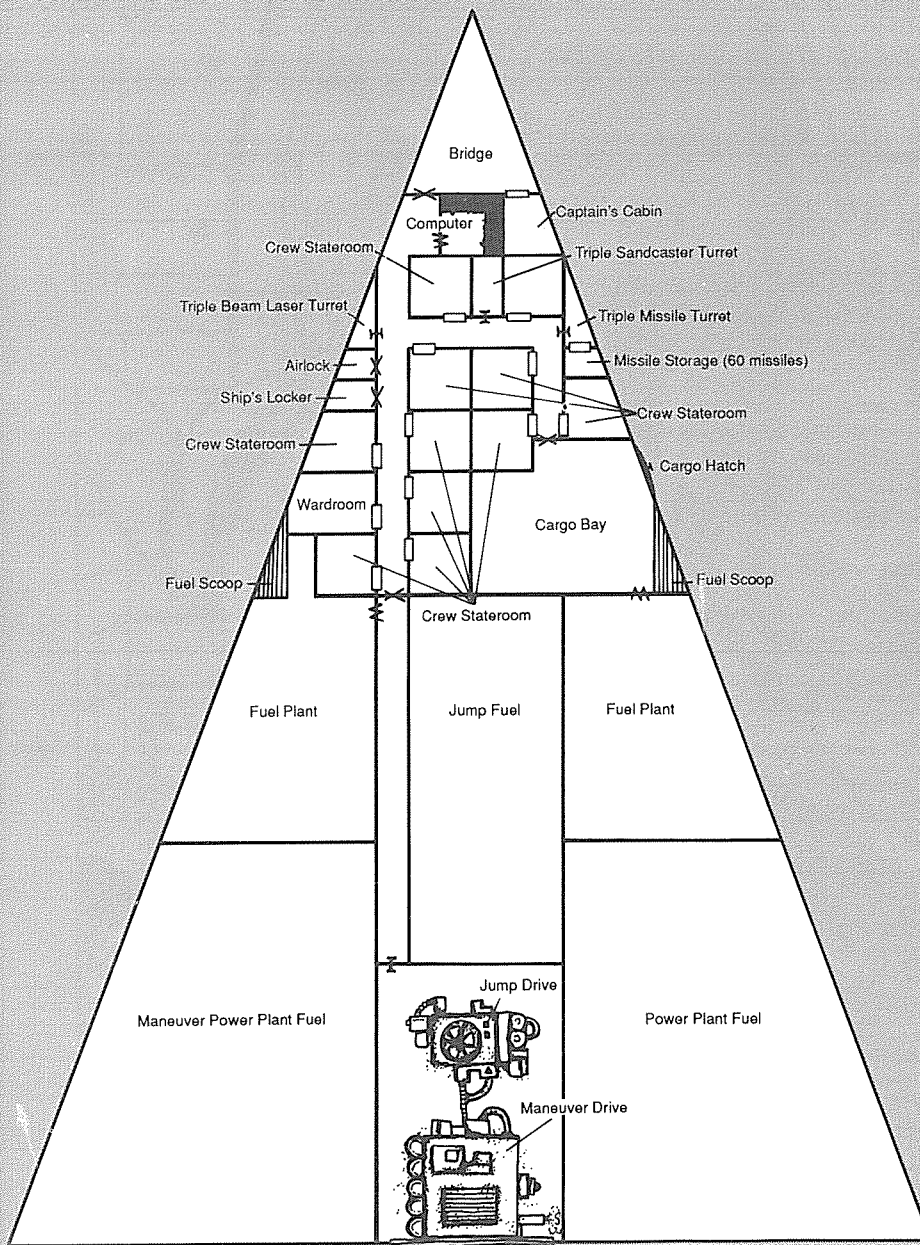
Airlock: Both the outer and inner doors are open, the safety interlock overridden.

Ship's Locker: Includes eight vacc suits of obsolete design, hull and suit patches, a 240-liter drum of "polymer seal coating," with a large spray canister (the size and shape of a fire extinguisher) of "resin fixative" for sealing large hull punctures, several TL12 hand radios, empty 10-slot laser carbine rack, empty six-slot pistol rack, radiation counter, flare gun (no flares), mechanical tool set and folding camp stool.





Ancient Warship



Bridge: The iris valve is locked open. There are four frozen corpses here, and several of the consoles are scarred by laser fire and bullet holes. All the crewmembers are wearing vacc suits without helmets. The helmets are nearby. One crewman lies frozen near the open door, arms outstretched, as if reaching for his helmet, an apparent victim of explosive decompression. Another (the captain, but the PCs won't recognize his rank insignia) lies slumped near the captain's chair, also dead from decompression. Two men near the radio and engineering control panels have been shot through the head with slugthrowers. All four are armed with 9mm slugthrowers, and each has a laser carbine handy nearby. There is a stack next to the captain's chair of six charged laser carbines, several loaded 9mm pistols, a large box of ammunition for them, two breaching charges and an electric welder. There is a large hull patch welded over the life support vent on the bridge.

If the controls are examined, the captain's console has buttons pressed ordering an emergency override on the bridge iris valve to open it even though the outside was not pressurized. The engineering panel has several of the fusion plant's safety interlocks overridden, as though the engineer was determined to blow up the ship.

Captain's Cabin: The door is welded shut from the outside.

Wardroom: Large table, chairs, food synthesizers, etc.

Cargo Bay: Mostly empty except for seven frozen corpses wrapped in sheets. Each has his head bashed in and his brain missing. There is also a 250-liter drum of industrial solvent, a 100-meter spool of electrical cable and a wooden packing crate marked "missile, anti-starship, high explosive, Mark VI, one each" filled with several small statuettes of Droyne (artifacts left by the Ancients and discovered by the ship's crew).

SALVAGING THE SHIP

The PCs (or their NPC captain) will undoubtedly repower and repressurize the ship, put a prize crew on-board (including the PCs) and try to take it back to the starport to claim it as salvage. A minimum crew of five is needed, and 12 is standard.

To connect the fuel line to transfer fuel from one starship to another:

Routine, Vacc Suit, Dex, 2 min.

Referee: Use the power up and prepare maneuver drive tasks from the

Imperial Encyclopedia page 92, but raise the difficulty one level due to the unfamiliarity the crew has with the old technology and control panels.

The PCs may want to store the bodies by stacking them in the cargo hold, pending investigation by the starport authorities. If they don't think of this, have one of the NPCs mention it: "I wouldn't want to be accused of piracy, would you?"

SHIP'S LOG

After the computers are powered up, the PCs may want to check the ship's log. They may begin with the most recent entry (March 31) and work backward:

Prior to March 20: Log entries are routine accounts of patrol duty.

March 20: *May God have mercy, we have misjumped. Our jump drive is damaged but repairable. However, we are low on fuel, and no star system is within parsecs of us.*

March 21: *Sparks has detected a strange infrared source about 100 million kilometers to starboard. We are going to investigate. Repairs to the jump drive are continuing.*

March 22: *Morale is low. Unless we find fuel, we'll never reach home, even if the drive is repaired.*

March 23: *It's huge. The infrared emitter is a huge sphere millions of kilometers in diameter. Ensign Schering says it is a "Dyson Sphere," made by breaking up a system's planets and surrounding the star with the material to absorb all its energy. That's why no one spotted the star system here. Who could have built such a thing? I hope they will prove to be friendly and give us the fuel we need to get home.*

March 24: *They have not responded to our signals. We have located a landing site. I will lead a landing party to explore. I hope they are friendly.*

March 25: *We found a passage through the "crust". The "surface" of the interior of the sphere is incredible. A "planet" with a surface area equal to millions of Earths, and completely devastated. There is little plant life, mostly lichen, and the city we found has been deserted for thousands of years. The sun is very weak and cold. This place must be very old. Who built it? Where are they? We found stored fuel and have refueled. Lt. Smithson says repairs to the jump drive will be completed tomorrow. We have recorded the coordinates of this system for future reference and may return.*

March 26: *We have lifted off and are heading for the jump point. This sphere*

is so large, at full thrust it will still take us several days.

March 27: *Chief Anderson was found in the cargo hold with his head bashed in and his brain gone. Doc is doing an autopsy to help find the guilty party. I can't believe one of my crew could commit such an inhuman act. After the court martial, we'll see how long the bastard can breathe vacuum.*

March 28: *Doc's autopsy is no help at all. He insists Chief Anderson was dead for at least two days before we found the body, yet I talked with him just yesterday outside engineering.*

March 29: *Doc won't be doing any more autopsies. Whoever it is smashed in his head and then killed Cookie, too. Three dead out of a crew of 12. At Ensign Schering's suggestion I have issued arms to the crew. He believes some creature came aboard during the landing. I have also given orders to search the entire ship, all crewmembers to travel in pairs.*

March 30: *Two more deaths have been reported, both killed by having their heads bashed in. I believe it must be some kind of creature. We're all armed. A human murderer would have used his sidearm. We continue the search.*

March 31: *Lt. Smithson was killed in engineering, and Crewman Bates saw and heard nothing. Later, we found Bates dead in the airlock. There's only four of us left now—me, Ensign Schering, Chief Johnson and Sparks. We've given up the search and barricaded ourselves on the bridge. I've depressurized the rest of the ship. Perhaps that will kill it. Now we wait. Why couldn't we find the creature during the search? It must be big and strong to break a man's skull. Where could it hide? Could it be invisible? That's not possible. Wait, what if it...you?! Johnson, blow the...(tape incoherent, gunshots, screaming). (End of tape.)*

MEANWHILE...

The creature will thaw out and begin to kill again. First it will kill an NPC, eat his brain and hide the body in the cargo hold. In a day or two, the body will be found. If an examination is made, the time of death will be determined to be several days before, yet several crewmembers will report having seen him alive in the meantime.

Soon a second person will be found dead, also with his head smashed in and his brain missing.

THE REST OF THE STORY

The crew has picked up a bioconstruct killer android made by the Ancients and

Android

Attributes: FFF400

Hits: 15/1

Armor: 8

The android has any necessary skills up to level 4 each (absorbed from the brains of previous victims.) It can only retain one skill at a time, and loads them from molecular storage, as needed.

used to kill the entire population (including animal life) of the Dyson Sphere over a period of several thousand years during their war millennia ago. The android is made of a living polymer which can reconfigure itself into virtually any shape or form. Kinetic energy weapons will only splatter it, slowing it as it reforms unharmed. It can make itself reflective to laser fire, and it is impervious to poisons and gas attacks. It is resistant to electricity, plastic being a poor conductor. Freezing it near absolute zero merely preserved it for thousands of years.

The android feeds on brains. After digesting the brain DNA, within a few minutes it has assimilated the memories of the dead creature and can impersonate it to a high degree. It will look like the person, talk like him, know what he knew. It may look and act like a human, but if cut, it won't bleed. Wounds are self sealing, somewhat like slashing jello. It can also imitate just the external appearance of beings, without having killed them.

The android is programmed for one purpose—to kill. If the PCs do nothing, it will kill the entire crew, one by one, impersonating recently dead men to catch the others off guard. It will be able to pilot the ship back to a starport and will then depopulate that world, later the whole subsector, eventually, who knows. This thing was made by Grandfather for the purpose of genocide. It is just as efficient as other Ancients' technology.

The PCs' only chance is that the android cannot kill on a small ship without arousing notice. There are no crowds of billions of beings to become lost in.

The PCs will know there is a murderer on board. But who is it? If they keep the crew at their stations, the android will kill them by approaching one or two people alone, gaining their confidence by impersonating a crewmember, then killing them in a surprise attack. The PCs will have to assemble the whole crew in one place to determine who is the murderer. It may take them a while to figure this out—which is why you need a lot of NPCs on the ship. Of course, the PCs can't fly the ship if they remain in one

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large group to watch each other.

There are several ways to determine who is the android. The most obvious is the fact it won't bleed like a human. PCs who have seen *The Thing* will probably think of this. Remember, the android can mimic other humans, so questioning it won't work (although the PCs won't know this). Tranq gas won't tranq it, but if it knows it's being gassed, it can fake unconsciousness.

CONFRONTATION

Eventually, the android will confront the player characters, either because they have unmasked it or because there's nobody left but the PCs, and it figures the odds are in its favor. It will then attack until either it or the PCs are dead.

The PCs will have to figure some way to kill it. Here are a few suggestions for the referee. Inventive players will, no doubt, come up with even more:

Freeze It: This won't kill it, but later they could dump it into the sun or something. It would have to be really cold to freeze it. The PCs could lure it into engineering and spray it with liquid hydrogen. Depressurizing the ship won't help if the android can get to a heated suit in time.

Fusion or Plasma Guns: These do

normal damage if you hit. The android is very fast. Increase the task difficulty by one level if it can dodge.

Laser Weapons: These do normal damage the first round, until the android goes mirror. They will still do one wound, even then, on an exceptional success.

Sealer: In the ship's locker is a large container of sealer for holding hull patches in place. It sets instantly when sprayed with the fixative, even in vacuum. It won't kill the android, but could leave it vulnerable to attacks.

Solvent: The solvent in the cargo hold will cause extensive damage to it. (It is plastic, after all.)

Airlock: Perhaps they could suck it out the air lock?

REWARDS

If the PCs survive and get the ship back, it will be seized for the war effort, but they can claim a 10% salvage award of MCr36. If the PCs notice them, the artifacts in the hold are worth MCr1 to a museum. The Dyson Sphere is located several sectors away (apparently the ship drifted at high speed for a long time). If the coordinates are found in the ship's log and sold, they could be worth millions. Unfortunately, the location is behind enemy lines. Getting there could be an adventure in itself. Ω

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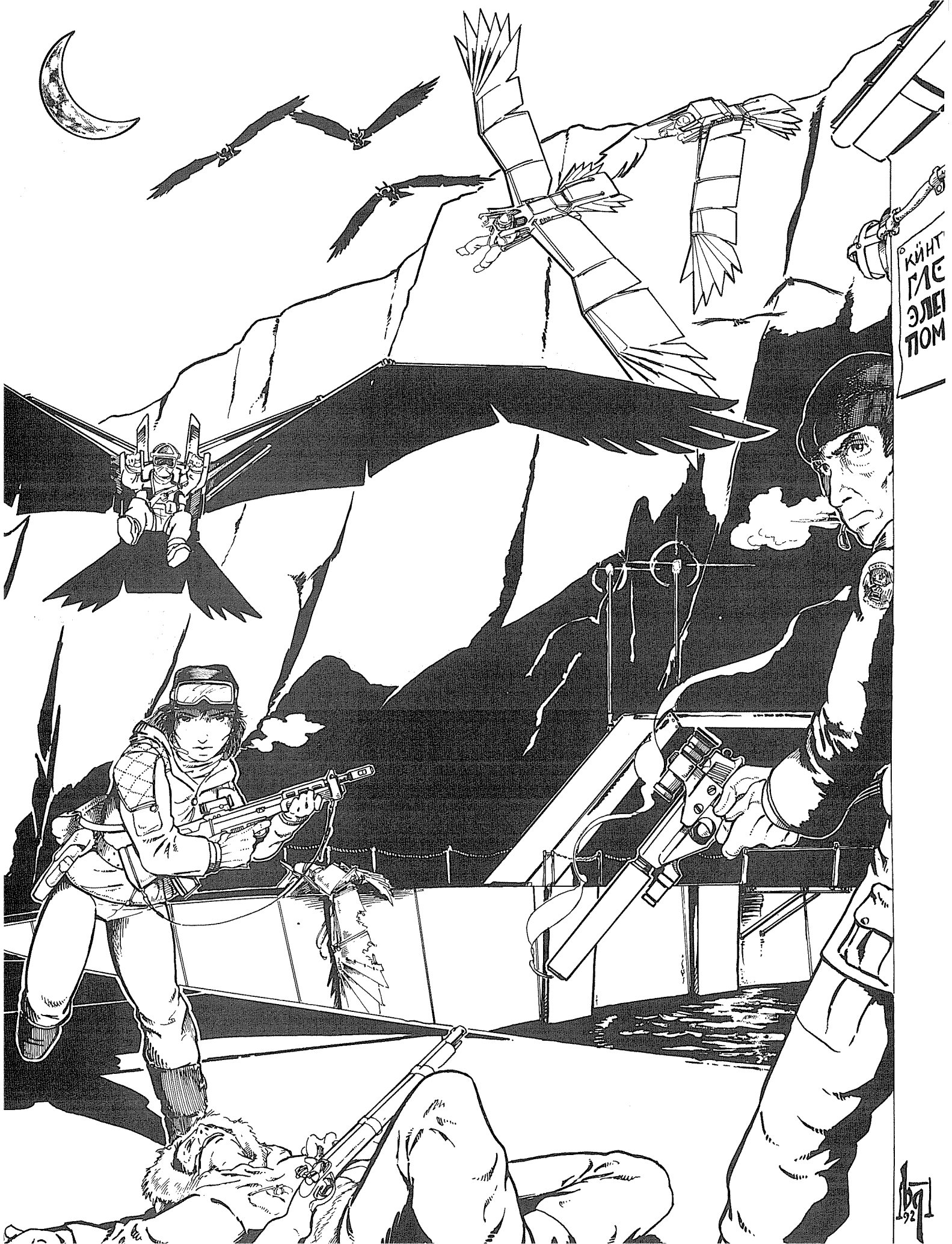
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PHOENIX FACTOR

By Charles E. Gannon

Shortly after completing business on Chicago D371484-3 (1331, Shumisdi subsector) (referee's discretion), the PCs return to their ship at Chicago's D-class starport, only to find that all craft are grounded until further notice.

A local conflict has become an armed stand-off, and the side opposing the legitimate planetary government has (reputedly) contracted a pirate ship to destroy any airborne vehicle—no exceptions. Ships attempting to take off will be blasted as soon as they leave the pad. Furthermore, any attempt to lift-off will be taken by the opposition forces as an indication of hostile intent. In response, they will cut off the population's only water supply—a claim they can easily live up to.

Unfortunately, there isn't a single combat-experienced person amongst the Chicagoans. Consequently, they are eager to hire the PCs to lead a detachment against the rebels. Not a rich ticket—but if the PCs don't do something, they could wind up stuck on this little planet forever.

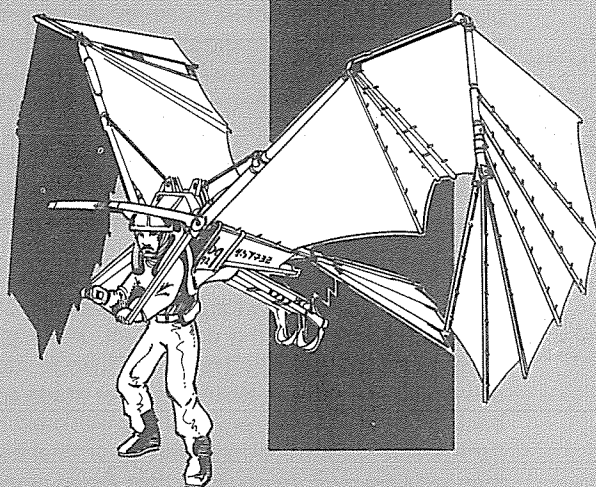
WELCOME TO CHICAGO

Chicago's decline from TL11 to TL3 compelled some major rearrangements in the structure of everyday life on that planet. Chicago is a cool world, orbiting at the outer ranges of its sun's habitable zone. Most of the planet's water is tied up in polar icecaps. Rather than live in these glacial regions, the Chicagoans settled in the northern temperate zone, some 400 kilometers from the nearest source of water.

That water source is a glacier-fed mountain lake at the southern tip of the Peoria Mountains. This mountain range runs southward from the north pole, serving as a high-altitude cradle for the glaciers which dominate its frosty valleys and crevices. The mountains are a wilderness of unforgiving shale and flint outcroppings. At the southern end of the range, the glacier protrudes beyond the slopes into the surrounding foothills, where the steady melt-off forms a large lake. Early settlers dammed this lake and ran underground conduits 400 kilometers south to their desert settlement, Little Windy.

In the post-Rebellion years, the fiercely independent population gradually acknowledged the need for greater coordination and political solidarity, eventually adopting a strong central government. This did not please everyone.

The wealthy Holowak family owns the dam and does not like the idea of submitting their private water monopoly to the dictates of the new government. Arguments over water rights and access began almost immediately. Those arguments have now come to a head; the patriarch of the Holowak family



Sparrowhawk Ornithopter

CraftID: Sparrowhawk ornithopter, KCr=9.640, TL3

Hull: 1/1, Disp=0.05, Config=1, Armor=(1)W, Unloaded=0.0045 tons, Loaded=0.083 tons

Power: As per individual. Muscle=0.63 watts (avg. human), Duration=As per individual

Loco: 1/2, Ornithowing: 0.09 Tt (relative) Duration=See power, NOE=25 kph, Cruise=75 kph, Top=100 kph

Commo: None

Sensors: None

Off: None

Def: None

Control: None

Accom: 1 cramped position

Other: Cargo=0 (other than what individual carries), ObjSz=Small, EmLvl=None

The Sparrowhawk ornithopter is an exceedingly simple design. A passenger cocoon is nestled under the juncture of the ornithowings. From there, the operator powers the wings and steers the craft. Given the extremely light weight of the 'thopter, a practiced operator does not need to land on the belly skids, but can "bring it in bird style" (i.e., standing up).

The one drawback to the 'thopter is that it is not conducive to large-sized operators. A practical maximum of 78 kilograms—including operator, garments and shoes—is all the 'thopter can manage. The modest size of the wings means that their full lift potential can be generated by an average individual.

Made of wood, the 'thopter cannot be detected by most sensors.

Thrust-Based Suspension

Per Ton of Thrust*

TL	Type	M ² **	Power (Watts)	Vol. (kl)***	Weight (kg)	Cr	Min/Max M ²
3	Ornithowing	70	700	70	50	15000	4/100
6	Ornithowing	70	700	70	30	3000	2/200

*The thrust rating presented for ornithowings assumes the wing is being used on a world with a dense atmosphere and light gravity. On most worlds, an ornithowing is capable of only 10% or less of the (relative) thrust indicated by these ratings. Specific effects of planetary values upon ornithowing performance are covered in detail in the Design Evaluation section of this supplement.

**Square meters defines the wing surface of the ornithowing.

***The volume of the ornithowing is external to the hull of the craft and should not be subtracted from the available hull volume.

has closed the dam's sluices. Little Windy is now on meager water rations, and its subsistence farms are faring even worse than the populace.

Chicago's government has no organized military; the planet's history of absolute personal liberty precluded the development of such organizations. Now, however, the parliament of Little Windy needs troubleshooters with military training and, hopefully, equipment. Otherwise, the fledgling parliament will have to surrender control to the Holowaks, who would probably rule as autocrats. The situation is complicated by the fact that the Holowaks have threatened to dynamite the dam if they are attacked.

THE JOB

The Chicagoans are willing to offer the PCs Cr1000 each if they can recapture the dam intact. If the group has a starship, the parliament will not permit them to use it. Reliable sources report that the Holowaks have made a deal with a band of pirates who now provide them with orbital overwatch. If the pirates spot an in-bound starship or other aerial vehicle, they will destroy it. In addition, they would surely warn the Holowaks, who would then dynamite the dam.

The only hope for success lies with a stealthy approach by ornithopters (too small to be detected by orbital scans) and a fast, fierce battle for the dam itself. Chicago is perfect for ornithopters, which are now the primary means of transport for the natives. The characters will, therefore, be urged to take a few quick flying lessons.

REFEREE

The Chicagoans will send four expert 'thopter flyers/guides along with the PCs. These individuals will be armed with flintlock pistols and cutlasses.

A force of eight to 15 individuals defend the dam (adjust number as needed). Most are armed with percussion cap rifles and blades, but three of the Holowak family members have preserved more advanced weapons. These include one 5 mm assault rifle, one 7 mm rifle, and one TL7 grenade launcher. All NPCs have relevant skill levels of 1.

The PCs must land on the dam, locate the demo charges and disarm them. If they attempt to conduct landings against cadre elements first, they may be unable to prevent the destruction of the dam. The attack will be much more difficult and costly if the PCs opt to conduct it during the day, rather than at night.

SPECIAL DESIGN RULES

Thrust-Based Suspension (3/6): The ornithowing is introduced as an addition to table 3/6.

The ornithowing is literally a mechanical bird wing. Al-

though low-TL ornithopters are not practical in a Terran-like environment, planets with light gravity and dense atmospheres make muscle-powered ornithopters feasible.

Note that any ornithowings have both minimum and maximum size limits. These size limits are defined in terms of the total square meters of ornithowing that may be mounted on a single vehicle. Exceeding the maximum number creates aerodynamic stresses that are likely to tear the wings apart.

An ornithopter's final UCP hull displacement rating is determined by adding the volume of the wing (which includes space required for guidelines, stays and operating room) to the volume of the hull. Compare this total to the UCP hull chart volume ratings (*Referee's Manual*, page 62). Find the hull volume which just equals or exceeds this total (the vehicle's hull volume plus the volume of the ornithowing). The displacement rating that corresponds to this total volume is the vehicle's new displacement rating. This change only affects the hull's displacement rating; weight, cost and armor are not affected. Note, however, that the inclusion of a rotary sail will cause any vehicle's configuration to become unstreamlined.

DESIGN EVALUATION

Power: Most ornithowings use muscle power. They have levers and cranks built-in, so crew positions serve as the transmission requirement. However, power for an ornithowing can be done via any type of power plant. Full details on mechanical muscle power can be found in the "Wet Navy" design sequence (**Challenge 53, 54, 60**) or in "Wood and Wind, Steel and Steam," the early tech design supplement (**Challenge 61**). If these sources are unavailable, the following basic rules can be used:

Any species that is capable of generating mechanical power via muscular work generates a number of watts equal to one-half of the species' average weight in kilograms. For humans, the average weight is approximately 70 kilograms. Therefore, the basic work value is 35 watts when generating mechanical power.

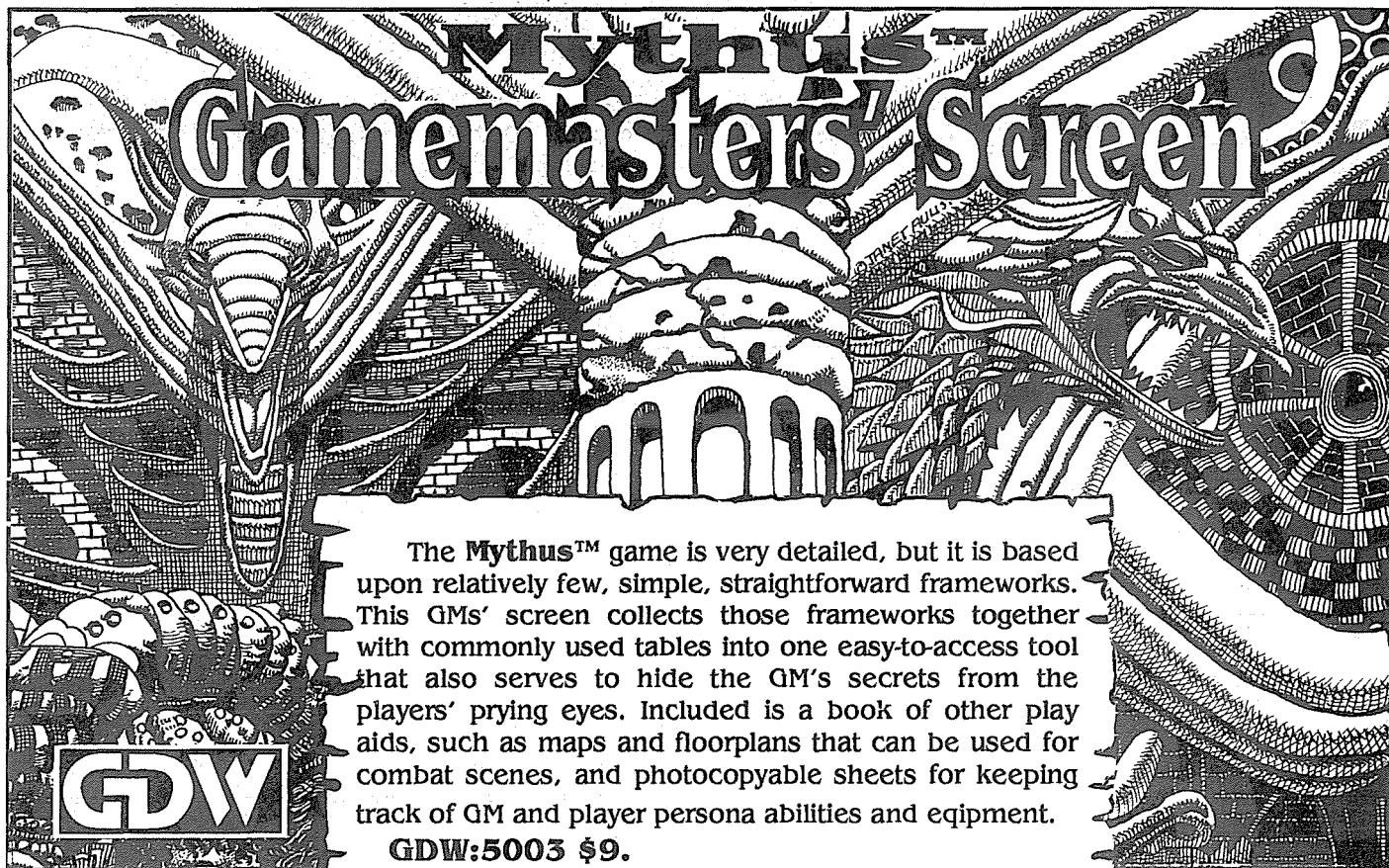
Basic wattage values can be modified by an individual's working ability. The working ability is determined by totaling the *Strength attribute DM plus the Endurance attribute DM*. This sum equals a person's working ability. For each point of working ability, a worker is able to increase his basic mechanical power output by 40%. So an individual with Strength 8+ (DM+1) and Endurance (8+) (DM+1) has 2 points of working ability. This means that his basic mechanical power output is increased by 2x40% or 80%. In the case of a human, this would mean that 35 watts of basic output times 1.8 equals 63 watts total mechanical power.

Damage Points: When calculating the hull damage points for ornithowings, do not include them in with the hull section. The hull and the locomotion section are identical, so simply include the hull damage points under the locomotion DP listing. Divide the inoperative result for ornithowings by 10—they are very fragile.

Performance: Ornithowings only receive their listed thrust rating in environments where the planet's UWP atmosphere value is 3 greater than its size rating, UWP atmosphere rating is 6 or greater and UWP size value is less than 6.

In other environments, the ornithowing cannot generate enough thrust to make flight possible. In environments where the atmosphere is 6+ and is at least as great as the UWP planetary size, 10% of the listed thrust can be produced. In all other environments, generated thrust is negligible. Ω

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



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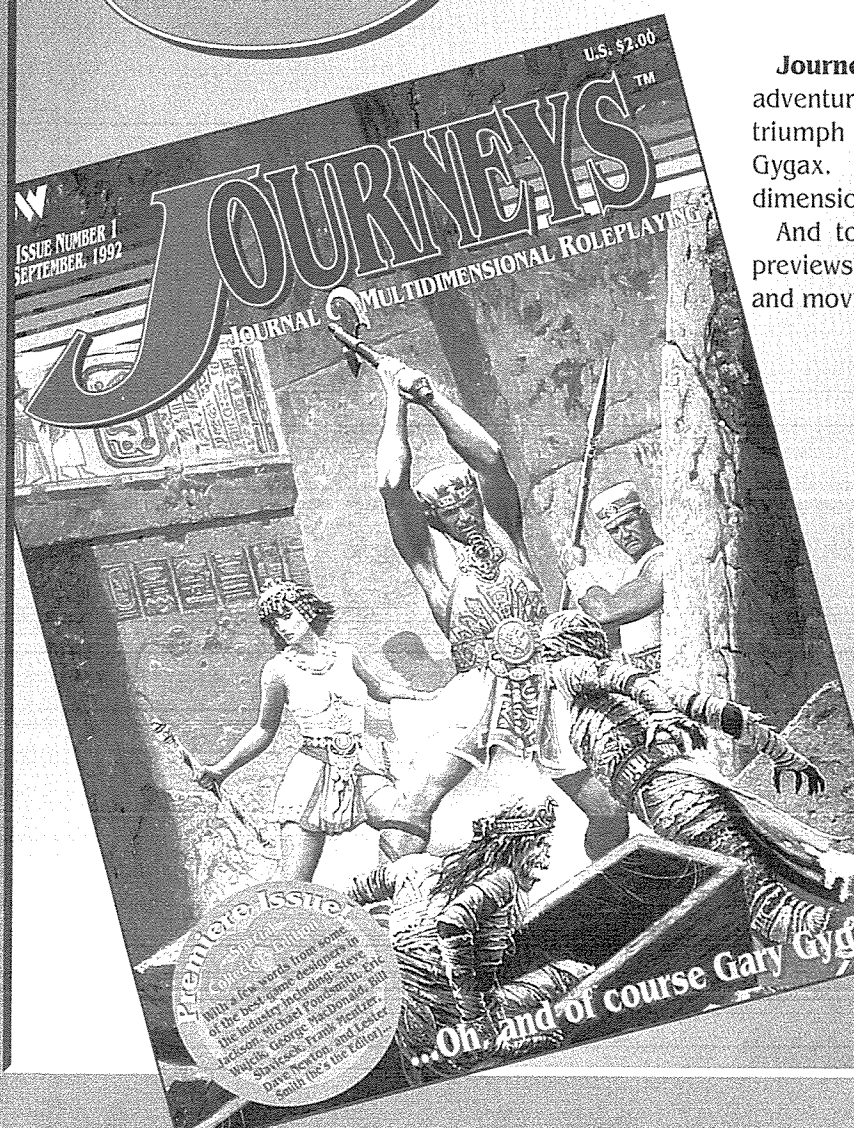
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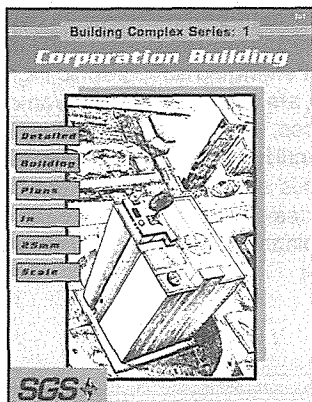


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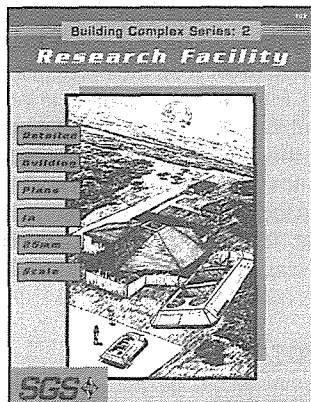
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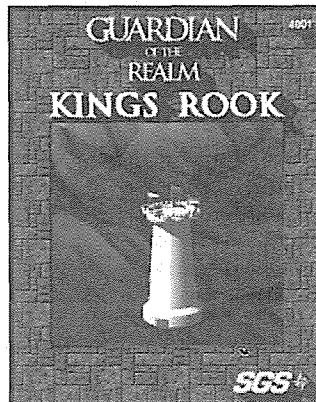
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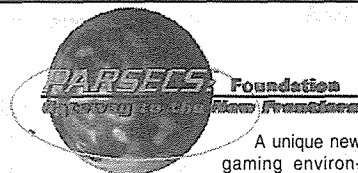
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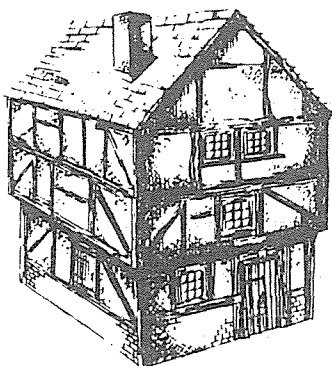
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150-1127

>>>The Travellers' Aid Society central office, responding to requests from its constituent field offices, announces the following blanket Travellers' Advisory. <<<

>>>The previously successful system of designating Amber and Red Zone worlds on a case-by-case basis has hereby been discontinued. Instead, a new blanket advisory system is being instituted which more accurately reflects the dangers of travel in the Third Imperium at the present time. This system is based on the recognition of emerging astrographic regions resulting from the Rebellion. These regions, known as Safes, Frontiers, Outlands, and Wilds, are differentiated by the amount of combat that has taken place in them and the consequent loss of order and social services. <<<

>>>In the interest of the safety of all interstellar travellers, the Travellers' Aid Society will, until further announcement, issue a blanket Red Zone classification for all worlds located in the so-called Wilds and Outlands areas, and a blanket Amber classification for all worlds located in Frontier areas. Worlds located in Safe areas may be designated as Green Zones, but will continue also to be designated on a case-by-case basis. To further assist travellers in planning safe journeys, all future Traveller News Service stories will include the travel zone classification in the dateline.<<<

END SPECIAL ADVISORY END

DATA NODES RETURN TO LOCAL FEED

TNS 1127-6761A-150 PRIORITY FEED BRAVO/BRAVOΣ

Cymbeline/Solomani Rim (2527 X9F48C9-?/Red)

163-1127

¶While it is clear that life on this savaged world will never again be the same, a measure of order has returned to the world, 100 days after it was savagely assaulted with an estimated 135 megatons of thermonuclear explosive force.

¶Once it became clear that the nuclear strikes were not a prelude to a planetary invasion, the hastily assembled military government was able to turn its attention away from planetary defense to damage assessment and rebuilding. Unfortunately, the destruction of Cymbeline's once extensive starport has made it difficult to coordinate the disaster-relief assistance that has been arriving from nearby worlds. Hospitals have been overwhelmed by patients requiring treatment of primary and induced injuries. This was compounded by the fact that many hospitals were themselves damaged or destroyed.

¶An estimated 575,000 were killed and 3 million more injured by primary effects of the nuclear strikes. An additional 5 million are thought to have died from induced causes, such as loss of life support and other necessities. Horrible as these numbers are, it seems clear that the strike could have done more damage to the human settlements had that been its primary intent. The concentration of explosions in the volcanic highlands have led to several speculations. Two leading theories have emerged to explain the strike.

¶One has it that the strike was an entirely new form of warfare: an attempt to destroy the world's surface by attacking weak points in tectonic plates, causing the planetary crust to disintegrate. Supporters of this theory hold that Cymbeline's well-documented tectonic activity would make it an ideal proving ground for such a conceptual super-weapon, which could be refined for use on more stable worlds. Such "planet buster" concepts have been speculated, along with such other doomsday-type weapons as the supposed "star trigger" developed by the Darrians, a minor human race in the Spinward Marches. The appalling viciousness of the attack has led to supposition that Lucan's forces are responsible for the strike, and Lucan's well-publicized remarks about super-weapons gives credence to this theory.

¶The second theory is more prosaic, and postulates that the attack was not against the human inhabitants, but rather against the naturally occurring microchip life that inhabits the highlands. While this is in accord with the particulars of the strike, it is difficult to determine what group might have made such a strike. The increasingly doctrinaire and violent struggles within the Solomani Party are put forward as one possibility, although these have been limited to assassination attempts before now. However, if success is a clue, this theory gains in prominence because it appears that every sentient chip on the world was destroyed by a combination of blast, electro-magnetic pulse, and radiation effects.

¶There is no way to prove either theory, nor is it likely that there will ever be.

Promise/Diaspora (2827 B54299 8-D/Red)

198-1127

¶Officials of the Unity of Promise government played host this week to the travelling Hivers of the Imperial History Club of Manchus. Attendees report that the unusual visit has provided a welcome distraction from the many crises that have dominated the government's attention in recent months. Among these crises are the continuing succession war being fought on Asena (3022 Diaspora/Red), now reported to include the landing of "volunteer" troops from Hervestia (2310 Diaspora/Red), and the repeated attempts to raise sufficient forces to lift the occupation of Tazmania (3123 Diaspora/Red) and Cosenza (3228 Diaspora/Red), both under the control of pirate bands. All of these are complicated by the inability to commit units of the well-respected UP regulars, as their numbers are considered too low to spread beyond the UP member worlds.

¶Entertaining highlights of the Hiver visit began before the meeting began, with a pre-visit briefing on when not to shake hands around Hivers, delivered to a bemused government delegation by a former Imperial protocol officer. During the visit itself, a scheduled military review was interrupted when members of the Hiver delegation requested sample uniforms and weapons to take back to document their research. Later, while attending a ballet performed by the Promise Light Ballet Company, several members of the Hivers' detachment of Ithklur guards apparently mistook the dance for a participatory sporting event. They efficiently tackled several human dancers, scoring several points by their own reckoning, before they were convinced that it was a performance, rather than a game.

¶The visit was also interrupted when a member of the Hiver delegation collapsed during a state dinner. The human hosts feared that the Hiver was a victim of food poisoning from some of the unfamiliar human dishes being served. But the Hiver leaders assured their hosts that it was simply a rare, though harmless seizure, and had nothing to do with the human hospitality. There was, however, disappointment among the caterers that the Hivers would not touch the platter of corn dogs thoughtfully provided. A member of the UP government who had previously attended a Hiver-organized function, remarked with some concern, "It looks like those other things weren't really corn dogs."

Cumber/Diaspora (0532 B1109A7-C/Red)

233-1127

¶Effective today there is another new government in Diaspora, the Cumberan Confederation. Joining the ranks of the Ecclesiasty of Narquel (Narquel/Diaspora), Union of Sufren (Sufren/Diaspora), Vassalry Judicate (Sufren/Diaspora), and the Unity of Promise (Promise/Diaspora), the other independent polities in Diaspora, it is one more sign of the need for local authority and stability in the face of declining control and law on the sector level. The announcement was made at a formal summit today, attended by representatives of the six worlds which comprise the organization.

¶Announcing itself as more a commerce collective rather than a full-fledged government, the announcement concentrated on the need to maintain secure shipping routes and focus on the development of finely-balanced "micro-economies" until the current "hard times" are over. These issues are only a formalized statement of some of the preferential trade policies that the six worlds have been pursuing for several years, and are nothing new.

¶The announcement, although an accurate portrayal of some of the Confederation's clear goals, does not address certain recent trends that have surely influenced the Confederation's birth. Chief among these is the friction between the Confederation's worlds and the Solomani Confederation over the status of displaced Vegans. Cumber now boasts one of the highest populations of Vegan expatriates in the sector, refugees from the Solomani offensives against the former Vegan Autonomous Area in the Solomani Rim. Solomani authorities claim that many of these refugees are actually dangerous terrorists and resistance leaders, and have made increasingly strident demands for their extradition. In clear violation of Cumberan sovereignty, many "hit squads" from Solomani Security, the internal security apparatus of the Solomani Confederation, have kidnapped or assassinated Vegans living on Cumber.

¶Nor did the announcement allude to the true federal qualities of the new confederation, including unified foreign policy, centralized civil service appointments, and unified armed forces, built around the cadre of the Cumber Army.

¶The Cumberan Confederation's establishment was clearly intended to invoke Cumberan independence without overtly challenging the Solomani Confederation. Even so, the message was clear enough. One Cumber Army officer present at the summit concluded, "SolSec isn't going to like this one bit."

¶The worlds uniting as the Cumberan Confederation are Vision (0431 Diaspora/Amber), Angebo (0432 Diaspora/Amber), Attax (0531 Diaspora/Amber), Cumber (0532 Diaspora/Amber), Sheshene (0533 Diaspora/Amber), and Fuquay (0632 Diaspora/Amber), a possession of Cumber.

Tripolis/Verge (2612 C885A98-A/Amber)

268-1127

¶"It blotted out the stars."

¶So reported one of many accounts of a large battle fleet, repeated over the past several weeks throughout the trailing portions of Verge. The quote above was from a free trader who blundered into the fleet's operations and was warned away with the gruff message, "Depart the area immediately or risk impoundment." All reports agree that the force was of huge, pre-Rebellion proportions and broadcast Imperial Navy identity codes corresponding to the Illeish forces of the Shadow-Emperor Dulinor.

¶Historically, Verge has been the site of many naval maneuvers and wargames, some of which in pre-Rebellion days actually lasted a year or more. If Dulinor has managed to construct new battlefleets, it would be logical for them to conduct working-up exercises in these instrumented test ranges, where they would also be safe from discovery or pre-emptive strikes by Lucan's forces.

Dukh/Ley Sector (1210 B6659CC-B/Amber)

315-1127

¶"A stupid, needless accident" is how officers of the Imperial Navy describe the destruction of three K'kree trading vessels, with the deaths of all on board. Units of the Imperial Navy's Destroyer Squadron 1440 took the K'kree ships under fire and destroyed them after they repeatedly failed to respond to transponder IFF queries. "The ships were well within Imperial boundaries at the time, and we were fully within our treaty-described obligations to ensure compliance with the interstellar rules of the road." So reported Commodore Etienne Brabazon, commander of DesRon 1440. "They know damn well that ships within Imperial boundaries must be equipped with current series transponder suites. The damn things have been available for years, and the K'kree didn't seem to find it that hard to comply before the Rebellion. But now they're trying to take advantage of a situation, and frankly it's nobody's fault but their own. Before they started taking evasive action the situation might have been resolved, but after that we just had no choice. It was just really stupid. Stupid and unnecessary."

Commodore Brabazon was referring to laws, in place for centuries, requiring adherence to certain clearly defined transponder standards within Imperial space. The current series of transponder, the SDG or Deyo circuit, has been in service since 1088, and has long been standard equipment on any vessel that routinely enters Imperial space. However, compliance has been difficult to enforce since the beginning of the Rebellion, although failure to comply has been dealt with rather harshly. It is widely known standard policy for all factional navies to shoot first and ask questions later when confronting vessels that fail to keep their transponders on the air, known in space parlance as "squawking."

¶The incident took place in the Khimudire System (2019 Ley Sector/Amber), during what was described as a "routine sweep" by the squadron through the outland areas trailward of Lucan's Safe. "Just because things have been a little tenuous the past few years does not relieve us of the responsibility to ensure the viability of the Imperial borders," explained Brabazon.

¶Interstellar law stipulates certain minimal conditions for the maintenance of sovereignty, which includes periodic patrols of proclaimed borders. Lucan's Imperium has made it a policy to maintain contact, via such sweeps, with the trailing Imperial borders. All other factions practice similar policies in their regions, often with the same uncompromising results.

¶A protest is expected from the 2000 Worlds regarding the incident. When asked about this possibility, Brabazon made a dismissive noise. "They should have thought about that earlier. They know the rules. Nowadays you can't be too careful." Ω

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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 **Dark Conspiracy** adventures: *Scarecrow*, *Down to New England Town* and *The Bet*.

SCARECROW

The adventure is ideal to run when the PCs think they are about to go on a hard-earned vacation. In this case, they have decided to go out into the untainted country and spend a weekend at a nice place, far away from the creatures of evil. This can be arranged by having a patron provide them with a free stay as a reward. Sadly, they will get no rest on this vacation, only more horror.

The PCs will be staying at the Contented Cow, which is a replica of an old-style farmhouse (except for the fact that it has dozens of bedrooms). It is located in an area of the country that has not been overly affected by pollution. It is a rather nice place, with various tame farm animals to add to the ambiance. There is even an old-fashioned scarecrow out in the field. The land itself is surrounded on two sides by a river, and a canal has been dug, making the area into an island (to keep out the riffraff). Access to the island is via a bridge, which has one gate that is kept locked at night. There are four other houses on the island. Only one is occupied—the other three are owned by corporations.

The first day of their stay will be enjoyable, and the PCs will get a chance to relax. Not so on the next day.

A STORY

If the PCs are curious about the place, the old handyman, Carl O'Donald (a former enlisted man who is an Experienced NPC and has a Colt Ar-15 in his room), will tell them of its dark history. According to legend, a group of Indians were massacred on this spot by another tribe. The dying Indians are supposed to have cursed the ground so that none would be able to live here. Shortly afterward, or so the story goes, the tribe that had perpetrated the massacre vanished, leaving only a deserted village.

ANOTHER STORY

While the PCs are outside, they will see a middle-aged woman, Betsy Carter (a Novice NPC with no weapons), working in her lawn next door. She will wave



to them. If they stop to chat, she will tell them how happy she is that nice people have finally moved in next door, adding that the last group of people who owned the land were "odd, you know, spooky—like there was something not quite right about them." If asked what happened to them, she will say that one night she heard gunfire ("Probably a fight over drugs. They all looked like they were on something."), and the next day the house was deserted. The police investigated, but found nothing. The land was eventually sold to a development company which made it into the farm setup. She doesn't know anything more about what happened, but will speculate for as long as the PCs are willing to listen.

MURDER

The first night of the PCs' stay, there will be an intensive thunderstorm, complete with loud thunder and flashes of lightning. One bolt will strike an old tree in the yard and split it open. The next morning, another guest—James Cocil, an innocuous businessman from North Dakota—will be found murdered in his room. The room is on the first floor, and the window has been smashed in. There are muddy footprints on the floor leading to and from the window. The man appears to have been strangled. If the body is inspected by someone with Medical skill (an Average task), it will be clear that the marks on the neck are not those of human hands. Examination at a medical facility will reveal tiny bits of hay in the victim's neck, as if he were strangled by hands of straw.

A dead cow will also be found in the morning, with most of its major organs gone. This is the result of "Tamara's" need to feed (see below).

If the PCs try to call the police, they will find that the phone lines are dead. Anyone going to check out the bridge will find that it has been destroyed (the noise of the explosion was covered by the thunder). The river has also swollen to dangerous proportions. Anyone attempting to swim across must make a Difficult check of Swimming or be swept away and possibly drowned. There are no boats on the island, although a raft could be made by tearing apart part of a

wooden structure. Getting across safely would require a Difficult check of Vessel Use (Boat) skill.

WITNESS

If the PCs become involved in the situation, a young boy will come up and tug on one of the PCs' pant legs. He will say, "I was scared by the thunder, and I looked out the window. I saw the scarecrow." At this point, the boy's mother will pull him away from the PCs. She will not want him around them and will keep a careful eye on him. The boy saw the scarecrow walking across the field to the building. He will be killed that night if the PCs don't solve the mystery.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

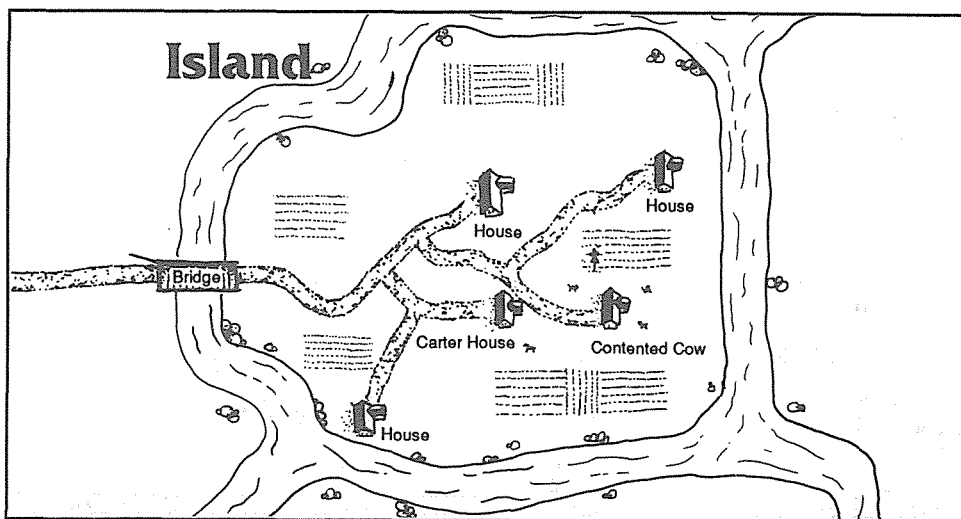
The house on the land prior to the farmhouse was owned by a group of dark elves. They used it as a cover for their assumed identities as humans. The dark elves were discovered by a group of Minion hunters who put an end to their cruel activities in a brutal, but effective, manner. Two dark elves, posing as husband and wife artists (The Windflowers), have recently arrived at the Contented Cow to gain revenge on humanity for the deaths of those killed on the site. They will stay at the Cow until they have killed everyone, then they will burn the place to the ground. But they will not do any of this directly. Rather, they will use animator spirits. Being dark elves, they will try to kill the humans in the most horrible and frightening ways their twisted and evil minds can think up. All the while, they will be playing the role of terribly frightened artists and will be given to faking hysterical attacks when bodies are found.

FINISH

The "Windflowers" will continue their attempts until everyone has died or until they are thwarted. If the PCs save the day, they will be welcome at the Contented Cow anytime, for free. Of course, they may wish never to return.

NPCS

Twenty guests are staying at the Contented Cow. Ten of these are adult men, all unarmed Novice NPCs. Nine are adult woman, eight of them unarmed Novice NPCs. One woman is a vacationing security guard (see page 176 of the rules), who has an S&W Model 36. If the PCs don't take charge, she will. The 20th human guest is Billy Barnes, the boy who talked to the PCs. There are six men on staff who are unarmed Novice NPCs and seven Novice NPC women.



"Tamara Windflower"

Strength: 5 Education: 6 Move: 3/10/20/35
 Constitution: 4 Charisma: 10 Skill/Dam: 7/4
 Agility: 9 Empathy: 9 Hits: 10/20
 Intelligence: 8 Initiative: 4
 Special: Dimension Walk.

"Tamara" is a Dark Elf posing as a human artist. Like virtually all of her race, she considers inflicting pain and suffering on humans an enjoyable pastime. While she poses as a somewhat spacey artist (she lived in California for several years and has the role down pat), she is actually a vicious, cruel and sadistic killer. She is, however, actually quite talented as an artist.

Equipment: She is far too intelligent to carry any obvious items of DarkTek. Instead, she carries a Walther PPK, and she has a Ingram M10 .45 hidden in her art kit. She has a Animator Generator.

Animator Generator: This particular device is in the shape of an ornate ring with a jet-black stone. It can generate animators of the sort used to animate hands, skeletons and so forth. This device requires a number of hours equal to the highest attribute of the animator (for example, it would take nine hours to create a zombie animator). The animator generated by the ring is loyal to the one who generated it and will obey simple orders. Each animator has a lifespan in days equal to the empathy rating of the creator, after which time, it dissipates. Using the device is extremely draining.

User Cost: Feed: 1 per hour spent generating the animator

Wt.: Negligible

Price: N/A (—/—)

"Jason Windflower"

Strength: 6 Education: 4 Move: 3/10/20/35
 Constitution: 5 Charisma: 8 Skill/Dam: 7/4
 Agility: 7 Empathy: 7 Hits: 10/20
 Intelligence: 6 Initiative: 4
 Special: Dimension Walk.

"Jason" poses as "Tamara's" husband and plays the role of an angst-ridden artist. He dresses in black, smokes cigarettes and is given to long bouts of disturbing poetry about the meaninglessness of life. Like his "wife," he is a cruel and sadistic being who revels in the opportunity to make humans suffer. Of course, most of his poems are about human suffering.

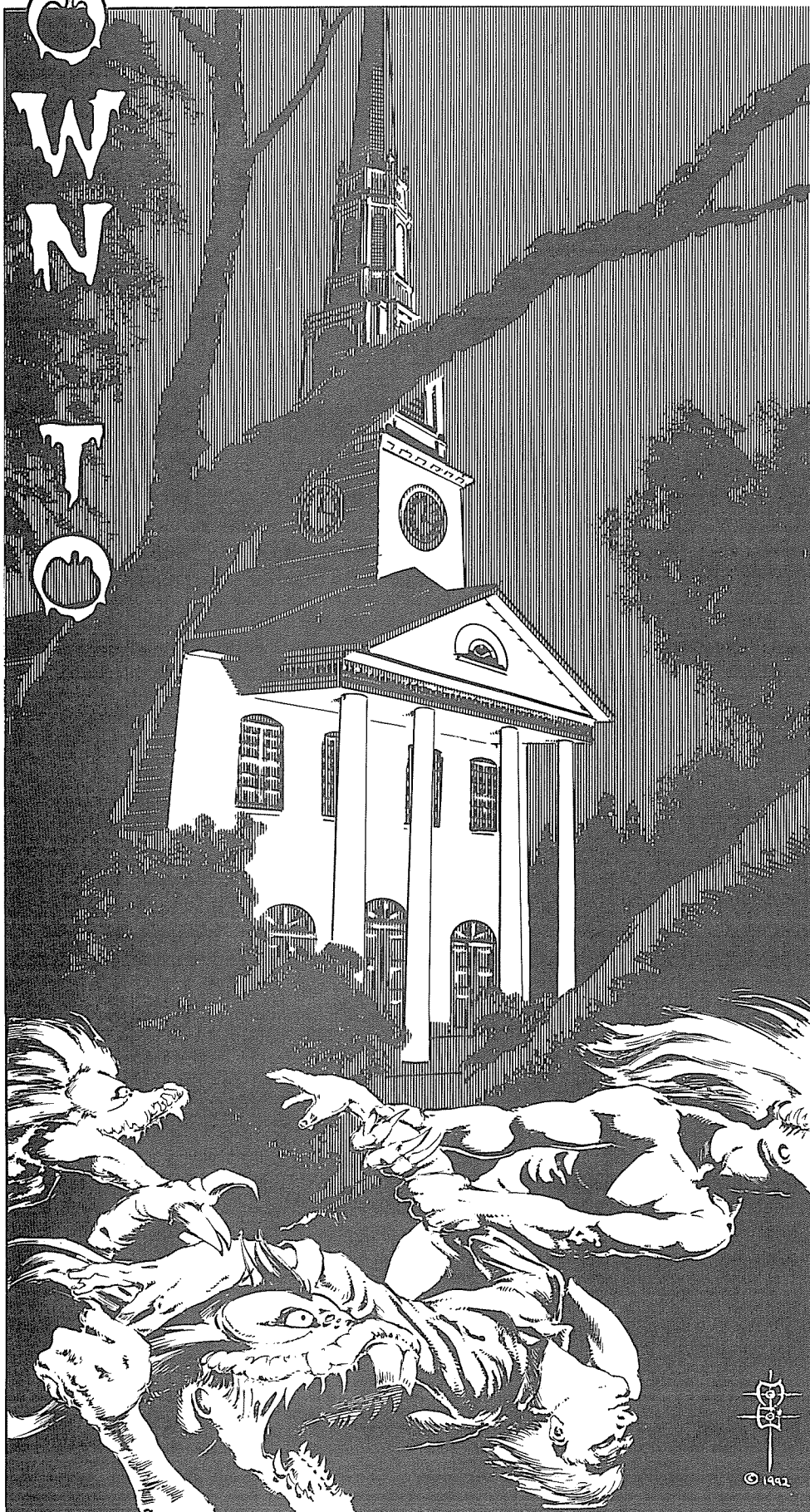
Equipment: He has a M9 Beretta and a Ingram M10 .45 in his luggage.

Animated Scarecrow

Strength: 2 Education: 1 Move: 3/9/18/25
 Constitution: 2 Charisma: 1 Skill/Dam: 6/1D6
 Agility: 6 Empathy: 1 Hits: 5/10
 Intelligence: 1 Initiative: 5 #Appear: 1

An animated scarecrow is a scarecrow that has been infused with an animator. Depending on the material the creature is made out of, it may be extremely vulnerable to fire.

D W N T O New England Town



The PCs are driving through a small New England town on their way to some other place when they encounter a police road block. There are two police cars and four officers (use the beat cop NPC stats on page 173 of the basic rules) armed with M9 pistols and AR-15s. They are stopping all cars and searching them carefully. When the PCs reach their turn, one of them will recognize Officer Jennifer Hansen (she went to high school with the PC, and they were friends for a while), who tells the PC the following: "It's the oddest thing. Old Roger Colwin passed away recently. He's the guy who wrote those horror movies a while back. His funeral was set for the other day, but they found the church broken into and his body gone. Roger was going to be buried with all his jewelry, and it's worth quite a bit. The chief thinks someone stole the body. The family's offering a good-sized reward to anyone who solves the case." If the PCs are interested, she tells them to go see the chief.

MEETING THE CHIEF

The police station is an old house that also serves as the city offices. There are a total of 12 officers in the town. The chief, Dale Chipman, is a likable man in his mid forties who speaks in a heavy New England accent. Use the stats for a beat cop for him, but add 1 to the leadership rating. He carries an M9 pistol.

Chipman's story is the same as that of Officer Hansen, except he adds that the body was probably stolen out of the town church, where it was kept before the funeral. If the PCs ask about what the police found, he says they didn't find any useful clues. If a PC with Psychology skill makes an Average roll, he becomes aware that the chief is holding something back. If the PCs are able to persuade him into talking, or if he thinks he can trust them, he tells them that the footprints of large dogs or wolves were found around the church. He also says this isn't the first disappearance of a corpse—there have been six other such disappearances from the church and the local funeral parlor. In most of the cases, the tracks of large dogs or wolves were found in the dirt near the buildings.

CHECKING FOR CLUES

If the PCs decide to check out the church, they find numerous prints that seem to be of large dogs or wolves. If a

PC with Tracking skill checks the tracks carefully (and passes an Average test of the skill) he learns that while the tracks are dog like, they were made by human-sized creatures walking on two legs.

The door to the church has been forced open. With a successful Average check using Observation skill, a PC spots a log in the nearby bushes. The log was apparently used as a battering ram. There are some hairs caught on the log. If they are analyzed at the nearest hospital (about a 20-minute drive), they turn out to be from no known creature.

If the PCs try to follow the tracks, they lose them when they reach the tar road.

TO CATCH A CROOK

If the PCs don't come up with a plan, the chief will say, "Well, I guess we could always have somebody die, then hide in the church to catch the crook." After getting permission from Harvey Carnnet, he will then have the local paper post that Harvey has died and that he will be buried with his valuable collection of antique scrimshaw. Harvey, of course, will go into hiding prior to the announcement. The PCs, the chief and one other officer will hide in the church and wait for something to happen.

Slightly after midnight, those in the church will hear something sniffing around outside, then they will hear scratching at the door. As they turn to watch the door, a pack of New England ghouls (see below) will burst through the windows to attack. If more than half the ghouls are wounded or a quarter of them are killed, they will flee into the night. If the PCs pursue, they will see the ghouls head into the graveyard. Since it has rained recently, the ghouls will leave tracks in the mud that are easy to follow. These tracks will lead up to a stone slab (it weighs 50 kilograms). If the slab is removed, a narrow tunnel into the darkness will be visible, and a horrid stench of decay will waft forth. The ghouls will be waiting in ambush in their warrens and will fight to the death.

If the PCs do not go along with the chief's plan, or if they come up with one of their own, the results are left up to the referee.

GHOUL WARREN

The ghoulish warren consists of tunnels large enough for human-sized creatures and larger chambers. They are unlit and smell like a well ripened grave.

Entrance: The entrance consists of a tunnel shorn up with wood and slabs of stone.

Chamber 1: This chamber, like the

others, is shorn up with logs, stone slabs and hunks of coffins. Animal bones are strewn about. The younger ghouls use this area. Four younger ghouls are initially present.

Chamber 2: This chamber is used by the older ghouls. There is a mix of animal and human bones (all well gnawed) on the floor. There are initially five older ghouls present.

Chamber 3: This chamber is used by the ghoul leader. All the bones in the chamber are human. Many of the bones have been pressed into the walls in patterns, and Colwin's jewelry has been inserted among the bones. There are seven pieces of jewelry, ranging in value from \$5000 to 25,000.

FINISH

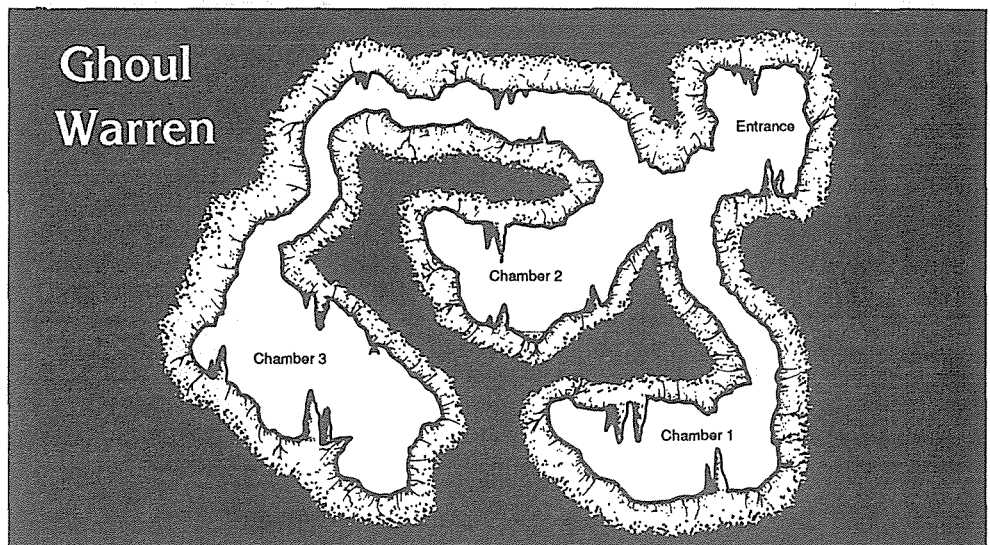
If the PCs kill the ghouls, the chief will be extremely pleased and will become a useful contact. He has several good

friends in the FBI and will be sure to tell them how the PCs helped him out.

If the PCs return the jewelry, they will receive a reward of \$15,000 from Colwin's daughter, who came to town for her father's funeral. She will also be grateful for their help. She has contacts in the movie industry and has inherited her father's wealth (it runs in the millions), and she may be willing to become a patron for the PCs in their fight against the Dark.

If the PCs keep the jewelry, Colwin's daughter will thank them for solving the mystery and may be willing to become their patron, unless, of course, she learns that they have stolen her father's jewelry. In such a situation, she will have them arrested.

If the ghouls defeat the PCs, more will come into the area, and they may well eventually overrun the town, making it into another stretch of Demonground.



New England Ghoul

Strength: 9	Education: 1	Move: 5/10/18/35
Constitution: 12	Charisma: 1	Skill/Dam: 7/1D10
Agility: 6	Empathy: 1	Hits: 18/36
Intelligence: 4	Initiative: 5	#Appear: 2D6

New England ghouls are loathsome beings that hail from another dimension. In their home dimension, they live underground and feed primarily on dead organisms. Those that have arrived on earth have continued their old habits, but they have found that they have a taste for dead humans. They generally prefer to gather already dead bodies, but they are not adverse to killing. They will, however, let a corpse age a bit before feasting on it. Given their feeding habits, they are generally found near graveyards, funeral homes and hospitals.

These ghouls are intelligent, but they are not known to use any form of technology—though they will use tools and are skilled at constructing underground lairs. They have been known to deal with humans, primarily exchanging valuables they have stolen in return for bodies.

Younger ghouls have statistics one less in each category (except Move and #Appear), and their skill is 6. Damage remains 1D10. Each group of ghouls will be made up of half younger ghouls and half adult ghouls. There will also be a leader, who will have stats one higher in each category (except Move and #Appear, which will always be 1) and a skill level of 9.

THE BET

At some point the PCs will be short on cash and looking for a quick source of money. They will come across an ad that attracts their attention: The person placing the ad claims to have a real haunted house that no one can stay in for a full night without fleeing in terror. The owner is so sure of this that he is willing to match any amount of money at

5 to 1 odds (for each dollar the person puts up, he'll match it with five).

If a PC calls the number listed in the ad, a woman answers the phone, saying, "Haunted House Enterprises. How may I help you?" If the PCs want to place a bet, she will tell them that there will be an event this weekend, and that they are to come to the office to make arrangements.

If the PCs go to the office, they will find it to be well appointed, with several secretaries and officers. The PCs will be asked to have a seat while they fill out forms and sign liability waivers (which makes Haunted House Enterprises (HHE) responsible for nothing that happens to the PCs while they are in the house). Once the forms are completed, the PCs can place their bets. HHE accepts cash, money orders and major credit cards. It does not accept personal checks from first-time customers.

A LITTLE CHECKING

If the PCs decide to check up on HHE, they will find it to be entirely above-board. It began 10 years ago when the company's founder, Nathan Paskin, inherited the house from his uncle. The house has always had a dark reputation, and several people have been killed or committed suicide within its walls (none since HHE has taken over, however). Further checking will reveal several news stories about the house and the business. Most of the photos and films show terrified people fleeing the house. There are, however, no photos of the inside (no cameras or other recording devices are allowed inside).

HAUNTED HOUSE

The house is a very frightening structure, its windows like the eyes of an empty skull. Looking at it gives rise to a feeling of fear in people. This is all the result of cleverly concealed images and patterns in the paint of the house that have been carefully designed to trigger a fear response. A roll against one quarter of a person's Observation skill (if they announce they are examining the house carefully) will reveal these patterns. The rooms inside the house also have similar modifications. Everything is set up in an extremely subtle manner to disturb the human psyche. These modifications make people edgy and nervous. Further, the lighting is set up so that it always seems like things are moving in the corner of one's vision. The same roll is required to spot the modifications inside as the roll required to spot the exterior modifications. If these modifications are spotted and the HHE representative is told about them, he will say that they are the work of the spirits. Since there is no way to prove that HHE is guilty of modifying the house (there are, in fact, no records of such modifications being made), there is little the PCs can do. HHE will not refund their bet, and if they leave, they lose.

The house's windows and external door are equipped with sensors which set off extremely loud sirens if someone



attempts to open them once the event is in progress. There are also infrared cameras set up around the house. All of these systems are run by a respected security company.

Basement: The basement is dark and smells of old mold and mildew.

Storage Area: This area contains a portable generator and two cans of fuel for it.

Furnace: This area contains the furnace, water heater and so forth. The furnace is kept running.

First Floor: The first floor includes five rooms:

Kitchen: The kitchen is stocked with food and has slightly outdated, but usable, appliances.

Dining Room: The dining room has a large oak table with a dark spot on its surface, with a knife mark in the center. The HHE representative will say that Martin Jones killed his wife on the table (this is true). The walls of the room are decorated with animal heads. The heads seem somehow wrong (they have also been modified), and the lighting makes them seem to move when they are viewed from the corner of the eye.

Living Room: This room is well furnished and has deep shadows which seem to move.

Bathroom: A standard bathroom. The pipes have been set to produce eerie gurgling noises.

Laundry Room: A standard laundry room.

Second Floor: The second floor contains bedrooms and a bath.

Bedrooms: Each bedroom has two single beds, a dresser, desk and so forth. The floorboards have been set to creak when walked on. The rooms are also lit so that it appears that shadows move around. The trees near the house have been grown so that they scrape against it when the wind blows.

Bathroom: This is a full bath, set up like the downstairs bathroom.

THE EVENT BEGINS

Early in the evening of the day they are to stay in the house, the PCs will be picked up by an HHE employee in a van. There will be three others in the van—a bloodkin vampire posing as a beautiful model who needs the money to revive her career, a corporate security guard named Bruce Huntington (use the stats on page 176 of the basic rules), and an eco-warrior named Jill Weston (use the stats on page 174). She is posing as a college student seeking tuition money, but she is actually trying to get enough money to purchase black market explosives to blow up a chemical factory.

The PCs will be taken to the house, where they will be searched for cameras and weapons. All such items will be taken for safe keeping. The PCs and NPCs will be joined by an HHE representative, who will conduct them into the house, then leave. He will go to an area behind a clump of trees, where an underground chamber is concealed.

During the course of the evening, the HHE representative, a highly empathic human (treat as skill level 9), will use his Project Emotion ability to instill fear into each individual, and Project Thought to motivate them to flee. The power level of these tasks is generated as normal, but with an additional +1 modifier per hour spent in the house (due to its horrific environment).

The empath will use his abilities to create images of ghosts and moving objects in the minds of those present. He will, however, be extremely careful not to allow anyone to come to harm.

THINGS GO WRONG

During the night, the PC with the highest Empathy rating will get a strange feeling. Immediately afterward, the images and fear will increase in intensity, and they will become horrible and disturbing.

The bloodkin vampire masquerading as a participant has killed the HHE representative. It will continue to generate fear in the participants, wanting to feed on their fear before killing them and consuming their blood. It will continue until it is stopped, or until it kills or drives everyone away. I

Dealing with the bloodkin will be extremely difficult. The only available weapons are the knives in the kitchen, and pieces of furniture and the fuel in the basement, which could be used to create molotov cocktails.

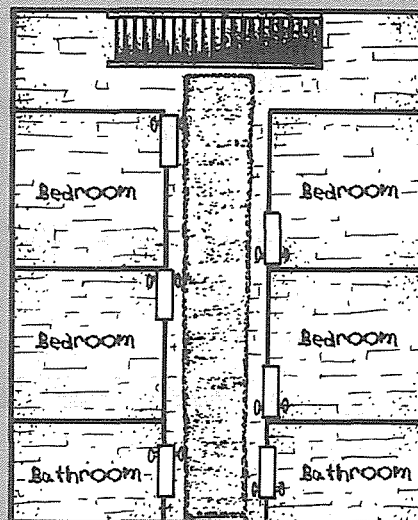
FINISH

If the PCs flee the house, they will lose the bet. The bloodkin will eventually join the HHE staff and feed on those participating in future bets. More of its kind will eventually infiltrate and take over HHE and turn the house into their feeding ground.

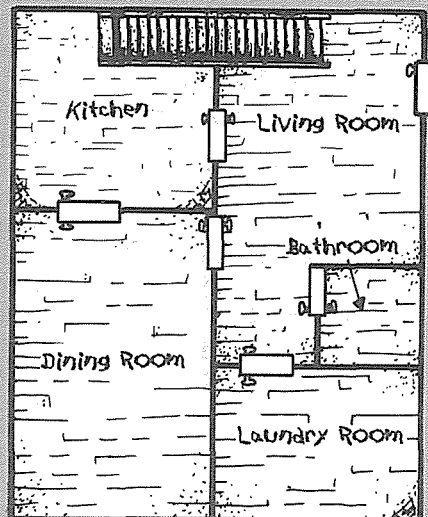
If the PCs expose the bloodkin and drive it away or kill it, they will be lavishly rewarded by HHE for their actions (and to keep their mouths shut). They may even be hired to keep watch over the house so something like this doesn't occur again.

If the PCs talk, HHE will lose business, and the PCs will be targeted by any Dark Minions who pay close attention to the human news services. Ω

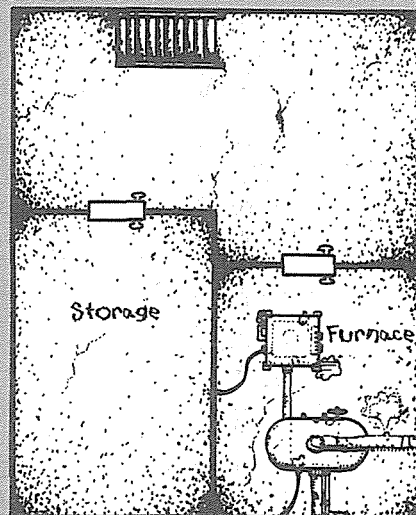
Haunted House



Second Floor



First Floor



Basement

it PLAYS with its food

A spatter of static blurred the video image for a moment and then faded away, leaving a clear view of the room—tumbled furniture, two sprawled bodies and one little girl. She was staring up in the camera, her arms wrapped tightly around a lanky, orange cat.

Pintada, the senior remote operator, grunted. "Seen enough, Sarge?"

"Yup. Bring it back out."

Pintada hunched over the small control unit and swiveled the control rods. The video angle rotated away from the girl, centered on an open doorway and headed toward it.

From the other side of that doorway, I could hear the electric whine of the whirlygig's central rotor. Then the little robot helicopter angled around the door jamb and slowly floated toward us. Pintada stopped the hoverdrone in mid-air, reached under it and snapped off its electric motor. The rotos stopped, and it fell into his assistant's waiting hand. Behind me, I heard Pulaski readying the entry team.

I shook my head. "Not yet, Stosh."

Pulaski looked at me, surprised. "What gives, Sarge? It's clean, ain't it?"

I shrugged, opened my mouth to respond.

Pintada sneered and jerked his head in my direction. "Typical ghostbuster burnout syndrome—they start seeing ghosties everywhere."

Pulaski snarled at the bandy-limbed remote operator. "Watch your mouth, Pinty. And watch your terms. Sergeant Graymoor is a special phenomena investigator."

Pintada nodded unenthusiastically. "Right. Like I said, he's a ghostbuster. Well, go right in Sarge. The poltergeists are waiting." Pintada moved back and swept an inviting hand toward the doorway. I went in.

There's something about a Dark Minion crime scene that sets it apart from all others. It seems crazier, somehow. Even

humans who are whacked out on angel dust or icedrops evince a method to their madness.

This was one of those crazier-than-crazy scenes. The radio was still on, but the music—crushrok, as offered up by



By Charles
E. Gannon

the Velvet Hammerheads, I think—was laced with static. Amidst the tangle of tilted chairs, fallen lamps and smears of blood, the little girl stood silently. One hand was cinched tightly around the tabby's abdomen, and the other was coiled out of sight, supporting the spine. The cat stared at me silently, flicking its tail occasionally in my direction.

I approached the two of them slowly. "I'm Detective Graymoor. The police are right outside. We're here to protect you and find out what happened."

She kept looking at me—somber brown eyes that didn't blink. Shock, probably.

"Are you all right, honey?"

Nothing.

"Can you tell me your name?"

Still no response.

"What about your Mom? Can you tell me where she is?"

Once again, no response—despite the fact that her mother's feet were clearly visible, sticking up from behind an overturned easy chair. Its upholstery was mottled with blood.

Okay, one last try. "Can you tell me what happened here?"

She lowered her eyes and hugged her cat. It would have been nice if she had responded, but it wasn't necessary. Anyone with eyes could tell what had happened.

The perpetrator had come in through the window. And I don't mean that he had wriggled in over the sill—I mean he came *through* the window.

The mother had apparently been having a drink at the counter next to that very same window—an empty shotglass lay on the floor. The perpetrator apparently had clambered across the counter to attack the woman—bright red blood was all over the Formica.

The woman had stumbled back against the small refrigerator, and the perp had fallen to the side, overturning the sofa. Judging from the bloodstains, the mother had vaulted the little fridge and ran to the night table. I took a few steps deeper into the apartment to get the rest of the picture.

Mom had yanked open the night table's top drawer and pulled out a gun, turning just in time to unload into the perp, who had charged across the room to resume his attack. He must have cut her at least once, as she had fallen back onto the bed. More blood was smeared across the sheets.

Judging from the darker blood splattered against the opposite wall—and the bullet holes in the plaster—she had hit him with a pretty fair-sized cannon, probably a .357 magnum. The impact of the slugs had spun the perp around and sent him crashing into the night table.

Mom had used that one spare second to roll to her feet on the other side of the bed. She must have been emptying the gun into him when he came diving at her; they went over the back of the easy chair together.

She had lost the gun during the scuffle. The gun had fallen...somewhere. I didn't see it near the body.

I walked over and looked at her. Pretty, probably about 32 going on 70. But there wasn't much of Mom's upper body left. The perp had grabbed a handful of sternum and yanked—hard.

Must have been his last act, though—there were four exit wounds in his back. The size of the wounds suggested that Mom was fond of lead hollowpoints, one of which is more than enough to stop any normal attacker. But there was nothing normal about this guy.

His clothes were in tatters, and his hair was frayed, receding and patchy, sort of like you find on year-old corpses. He hadn't bled too much either, and the color of his blood was unusually dark—so dark that it was hard to imagine how it could have carried enough oxygen to sustain him. Of course,

maybe it didn't have to. Most disturbing of all was the strangely contemptuous grin on his face, as if everything, even his own death, had been a source of unbearably wry amusement.

I wandered over to the window, shards of glass crunching underfoot, and called the all-clear. Out in the hall, booted feet thumped toward the doorway.

I stared out the window, past the jagged glass. The skeletal towers of the metrosprawl climbed toward a gray-green sky. Some view.

As Stosh came through the doorway, I studied the room again, looking for the mother's gun. She had to have fired the shots right as the perp ripped out her chest. Which meant that it *had* to be lying near the bodies. Which meant....

Even as I was turning, I heard the cat hit the floor with a hiss. I was too late. My Wildey-Wolf .475 was still clearing the holster as I watched the little girl draw a bead on me, a huge grin on her face. The kid had been holding Mom's gun behind the cat. It was a S&W Slimline Snubnose Special. And the hammer was falling.

The blast hit my ears at the same instant the slug slammed into me.

I felt myself folding over and flying backward as I brought up the Wildey-Wolf. Squeezed the trigger and kept squeezing. Didn't feel myself crash back into the counter, but I did see the girl do a mid-air somersault, a red rooster-tail of blood cartwheeling after her. She fell and did not move.

Then I realized I couldn't breathe. Stosh was shouting, but I couldn't hear him over the sudden roar of static from the radio. Darkness seemed to be cutting off my peripheral vision, and my head felt very heavy. As it drooped forward, I saw the cat, hiding behind Pintada's legs, purring, staring at me in amber-eyed amusement. Then it flicked a whisker and sauntered out of the room. Ω

STONE MOUNTAIN MINIATURES

Presents DENIZEN 25mm SCIENCE FICTION

- DSF385 **WARBOT COMMAND SECTION:** Command bot, 2 Scout Bots, 2 Laser Bots
- DSF386 **WARBOT LASER SECTION:** 5 Laser bots
- DSF331 **RIFLE SQUAD:** Male troopers (2 firing advanced combat rifles, 1 running, advanced combat rifle, 1 advancing, ACR)
- DSF332 **HEAVY WEAPONS SQUAD:** Troopers (Male throwing grenade, female/laser cannon, female/rocket launcher, male/laser cannon)
- DSF400 **K'HIFF EMIR & ELITE GUARD:** 1 Emir, 3 Elite Guard/Assassins
- DSF402 **ELITE GUARDS/ASSASSINS:** 4 Advancing (Laser rifle)
- DSF405 **K'HIFF ANSAR (Warriors):** 4 Advancing (AP rifle)
- DSF406 **ANSAR:** 2 Advancing (Laser rifle), 2 firing (VRF AP rifle)
- DSF410 **K'HIFF ANSAR:** 4 Advancing (Flamer)
- DSF411 **ANSAR WITH HEAVY WEAPONS:** 2 with rocket launcher, 2 firing (SMAW)



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MOON OF MADNESS

BY JAMES L. CAMBIAS

Hartmann's rapid breathing resounded inside the vacuum suit helmet as he fled across the barren landscape. Behind him, he could see his pursuers emerging from the cave. Ahead lay the ether flyer—and safety. But when he finally reached the ship, he could see the airlock gaping open, the heavy door torn from its hinges. A shadow blocked the sunlight. Hartmann turned, drawing his pistol. "You'll pay for this!" he screamed, firing wildly. But neither words nor bullets had any effect.

Four weeks ago, an Austro-German expedition landed on Phobos, using a new rocket motor. The explorers were only supposed to remain on Phobos for two weeks. They are now a fortnight overdue, and the Germans and Austrians are worried. Emperor Franz Josef is offering a reward of £5000 for their rescue. The English have a ship at Syrtis Major which can land on Phobos, and they are sending it to learn what happened to the group. Seasoned adventurers are needed.





RESCUE PARTY

The PCs will be travelling aboard the Royal Navy's 100-ton etherflyer *H.M.S. Bellona*. The *Bellona* is outfitted with biochemistry and geology laboratories, and carries a three-pound Hotchkiss rotating cannon. *Bellona* can carry up to eight passengers, with a cargo capacity of 10 tons. Airspeed is 6, and interplanetary speed is 3. The *Bellona* is fitted with a Scott-Ridley rocket motor, which allows landings on airless bodies the size of Luna or smaller. The commander is Captain Horatio Cornett.

The ether flyer is fully stocked with a month's supply of preserved food, climbing equipment, ropes and other gear which explorers might need. The PCs must supply their own weapons, plus any unusual items they want to bring along. The ship carries 12 experimental vacuum suits; these are self-contained suits with a four-hour oxygen supply.

TRAVEL TO PHOBOS

The ascent to orbit is a fairly routine trip. The *Bellona* climbs to the upper atmosphere using her liftwood panels, then the ether propeller accelerates her to orbital velocity. Once that is done, the ship must match orbits with Phobos. This is a Difficult task of Piloting. If any PCs have a higher skill than Captain Cornett, he will gladly turn the helm over to the expert.

As the *Bellona* maneuvers near the moon, the PCs will be able to get a good look at Phobos. It is roughly potato-shaped, about 17 miles long by 13 miles wide. At one end gapes the enormous pit of Stickney Crater, six miles across. The *Kaiserin Viktoria* was supposed to land at the opposite end of Phobos, and it is there that the rescue mission will search.

Landing: The really tricky part of the trip is the landing on Phobos. The Scott-Ridley rocket motor is a new and delicate device. Landing with it is a Formidable task of Piloting skill. If the roll fails, the ship crashes—see the Turbulence/Meteor Damage Table in the rulebook to determine what happens.

Exploring Phobos: Once the *Bellona* has landed, the PCs will probably want to go exploring. The extremely low gravity of Phobos makes getting around very difficult. Even in their vacuum suits, the PCs can move in huge leaps, but they must make Routine Agility rolls to avoid smashing into rocks or landing badly. On a failed roll, characters suffer one wound.

The small size of the moon also means it is very easy to get out of sight of the ship—the horizon is only 200 yards

away. Characters who do not mark their way will get lost unless they make a Difficult roll of Mapping or Intellect.

LOST EXPEDITION

The *Kaiserin Viktoria* is only a mile or so away from the *Bellona*'s landing spot. The ship's large gasbag is deflated and stowed neatly on top. From a distance, it looks perfectly intact. But when the rescuers approach, they will see that something terrible has happened. A dead man in a vacuum suit lies at the base of the gangway; his nametag identifies him as Ernst Hartmann. The airlock doors have been torn open, and the interior of the ether flyer is cold and airless.

Within, the ship is severely damaged. The bodies of six crewmembers lie frozen and stiff. Strangely, much of the cargo and some of the ship's furnishings are missing. The laboratory and the common room have been stripped clean. Two of the crew cannot be found—Anton Vorstein and Elsie Radek. Even their personal belongings and the furniture from their cabins have been removed from the *Kaiserin Viktoria*.

The door is locked from the outside, and a robot is always on guard.

Journal: A thorough search of the ship will uncover Captain Sigmund Prot's journal in his cabin. The last entry is dated eight days after the expedition landed:

"Monday. Today we discovered a cave at the bottom of the crater, two kilometers north of the landing site. Vorstein, Hartmann and Fraulein Radek will explore it in search of geological specimens. I still consider it unwise for a woman to go venturing into unknown territory, but Elsie insists."

CAVE

If the PCs find Prot's journal, they may want to investigate the cave he mentions. It lies at the bottom of a small crater north of the landing site. On a Routine Intelligence roll, a PC will notice that the cave is perfectly circular—very unusual for a natural formation. A Difficult Observation or Tracking roll will reveal footprints around the entrance—

far more than just a few explorers would make. They are nearly twice the size of human tracks.

Descending into the cave is fairly easy in the low gravity. The shaft ends about 10 yards down, and there is a metal door set in one wall. A lever set in the center of the door will open it, but moving the lever is a Formidable task of Strength (up to two characters may combine their Strengths for the task).

COMPLEX

A series of large rooms and tunnels have been carved beneath the surface of Phobos by the ancient Martians. All the chambers are lit by glowing panels set in the ceilings. Unless specified, all doors are unlocked. Opening a locked door requires an Impossible Lockpicking skill roll or an Impossible Strength task.

Room A: This room contains some old Martian equipment, including six vacuum suits. There are also two suits from the *Kaiserin Viktoria*—Anton Vorstein's and Elsie Radek's. An airlock connects to the cave.

Room B: If Vorstein takes any PCs prisoner, they will be confined here. The door is locked from the outside, and a robot will be on guard. There are three cots in the room.

Room C: Vorstein uses this room as his living quarters. Many of the furnishings from the ship (including the pipe organ) have been set up here.

Room D: Vorstein sleeps here, and the room contains all his personal effects.

Room E: This room has been set up as living quarters for Elsie Radek. She is not allowed to leave without a robot escort. The door is locked from the outside, and a robot is always on guard.

Room G: This chamber contains the life-support equipment for the complex, including a glass tank filled with green plants.

Room H: This spherical room contains the power plant that runs the complex. Its workings are mysterious. A large crystal sits in a metal framework, surrounded by cables and copper grids. This contraption is the source of the broadcast power which supplies the robots—it requires a Formidable Electricity or Physics skill roll to recognize its function. Characters who study the plant for a full day and make a Formidable Intellect roll can gain an extra research die in Power Production. The door to this room is locked.

Room I: This is Vorstein's laboratory. Several long tables hold an array of complicated scientific apparatus, both Terran and Martian. Characters with

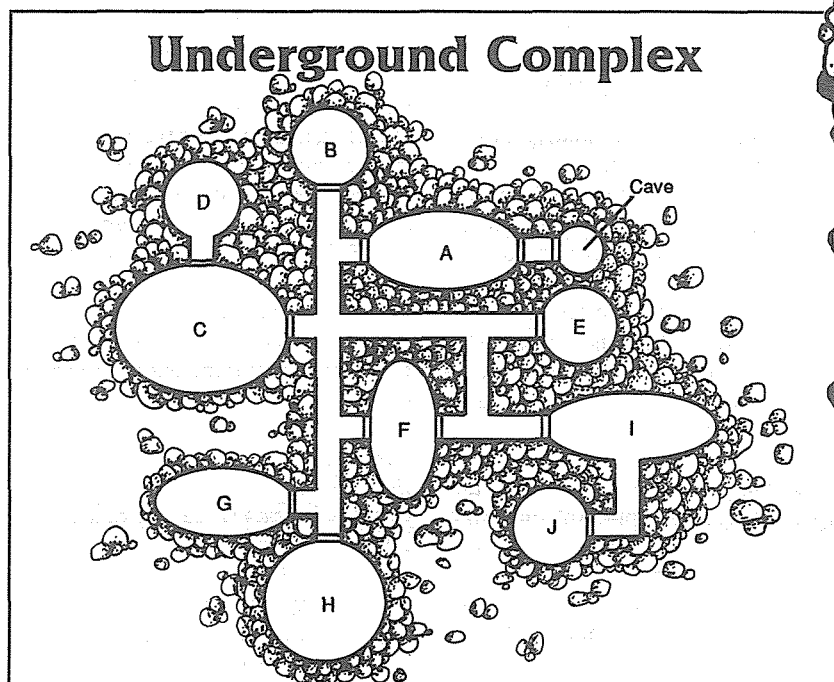
Room J: This room holds all the robots not in use, plus the machine to control them. Vorstein has programmed the robots to respond to a small device which he carries, and the programming can only be overridden by the control machine. Operating it is an Impossible task of Intellect. The door to this room is locked.

Vorstein will be aware of anyone entering the complex—telltales in the laboratory show when the airlock is in use. He will allow intruders to wander about for a while, then will send five robots to disarm them and bring them to him. If the PCs manage to damage a robot, two others will be sent to replace it. The robots will confiscate all guns, but will leave swords and knives.

The robots will lead the PCs to Room B and lock them in. If the characters try to fight the robots, they will learn quickly that it is better to cooperate.

"I'm so glad you could attend," beams Vorstein. "But now to business: I require your ether flyer. The *Kaiserin Viktoria* was damaged, and repairs would take an inconveniently long time. Since I deduce you are not the entire crew, it will be necessary to persuade those on-board your ship to cooperate with me. So I am afraid you must remain here as hostages. I do apologize for the inconvenience." With that, he calmly starts to eat.

Elsie's Story: Elsie Radek can tell

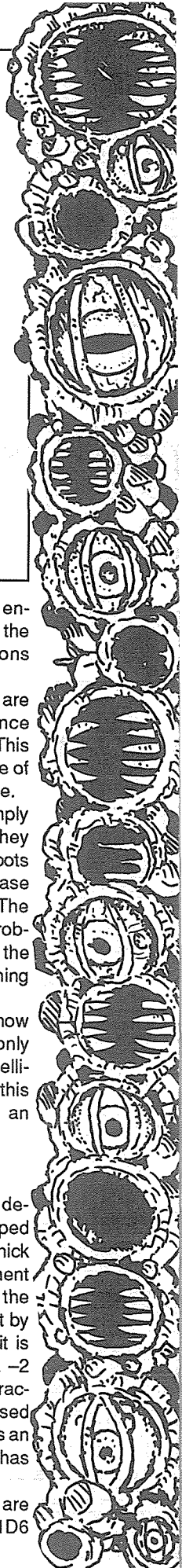


After hearing Elsie Radek's story, the PCs will probably want to stop Vorstein. Though mad, he is still incredibly intelligent, and the robots obey him alone. The referee should encourage the players to devise their own plans. Here are some possibilities.

Covert Operations: If any of the PCs are skilled at Stealth and Lock-picking, it might be possible to reach the robot control room, lab or power plant. At the control room, the robots can be reprogrammed to ignore Vorstein's con-

Waiting: Though the PCs don't know it, the cerebral amplifier's effect is only temporary. Vorstein's increased intelligence will wear off in another week; this may provide the adventurers with an opportunity.

On a failed reliability roll, there are several possible side effects (roll 1D6 minus modified reliability):



SIDE EFFECTS

Roll	Result
0-	No effect. Intelligence is not raised.
1	Brain damage. Intelligence is reduced by 1D6.
2	Amnesia. Intelligence is raised, but patient's memory is erased.
3	Injury. Intelligence is raised, but patient suffers 1D6 wounds.
4	Insanity. Intelligence is raised, but patient becomes insane.
5+	Serious injury. Intelligence is raised, but patient suffers 2D6 wounds.

Recovery from physical injuries and brain damage takes place at the normal rate. Amnesia wears off after a month. Insanity is permanent.

Inventing a cerebral amplifier requires a Biochemistry knowledge of 36; the reliability modifier is 5.

ROBOTS

The ancient Martians left 10 robots in the complex to maintain it until the builders return. These are highly advanced humanoid machines, far more sophisticated than the clumsy mechanical men some inventors have constructed.

The robots have Strength 8 and Agility 4. They can take 14 wounds before being disabled and have Armor Value 3. In combat, they have an effective Fisticuffs skill of 6.

Controls: The robots are controlled by two devices—the large control machine in Room K and a small unit which Vorstein wears on his wrist. The portable device allows him to monitor and command all the robots, wherever they are in the complex.

The robots can remember up to three commands at once.

Usually one command is related to operating the complex, such as "monitor and maintain the power plant." Vorstein has established the second command as "obey commands given by the wearer of the portable control device." The third slot is left for orders from Vorstein, such as "disarm the intruders in the complex and bring them to me."

The robots are fairly intelligent, and will ask for clarification of contradictory or confusing orders. They understand only the ancient Martian dialect of Khallan.

Stations: At any given time, one robot is in Room H, one is in Room G, one is guarding Elsie in Room E, and two are with Vorstein, either in the lab or guarding him while he sleeps. The remaining five will be in Room K.

CAPTAIN HORATIO CORNETT (Trained NPC)

Captain Cornett is a well-respected Royal Navy officer who has led several exploring missions. He was with one of the first expeditions to Mercury and commanded one of the missions to the asteroid belt. Now he has been given the *Bellona* to survey the moons of Mars.

He is not very congenial, but keeps a distance between himself and those he commands to compensate for the fact that he is naturally shy.

Attribute Skills

Str: 2	Fisticuffs 1, Throwing 1, Close Combat 2 (edged)
Agil: 3	Stealth 2, Marksmanship 3 (rifle)
End: 5	Wilderness Travel 6 (mapping), Fieldcraft 1, Swimming 1
Int: 4	Observation 4, Science 1 (physics)
Chr: 2	Eloquence 1, Linguistics 2 (English, Parhooni, Koline)
Soc: 5	Riding 4 (horse), Leadership 3, Pilot 4 (ether flyer)

Motives: Adventuresome, Proud, Frugal.

Appearance: Cornett is a tall, lanky fellow with a full beard. His uniform is old, but always neatly mended and pressed.

These are highly advanced humanoid machines.

ANTON VORSTEIN (Novice NPC)

Vorstein was the most brilliant inventor in Austria. His rocket motor made the Phobos expedition possible. But his insatiable curiosity led to tragedy when he tried out the cerebral amplifier.

Now he is much more intelligent than normal humans, but he is totally insane. He plans to make himself ruler of the Solar System and hopes to create a new form of superintelligent humans. He has always been attracted to Elsie Radek and now plans to make her his queen.

Attribute Skills

Str: 2	Fisticuffs 1, Throwing 1
Agil: 6	Stealth 5, Mechanics 2 (steam)
End: 3	Wilderness Travel 2 (mapping)
Int: 10	Observation 9, Science 6 (physics), Engineering 4 (naval architecture)
Chr: 1	Linguistics 3 (English, German, Khallan)
Soc: 4	Riding 3 (horse), Pilot 1 (ether flyer)

Motives: Mad, Knowledge, Love (for Elsie Radek).

Appearance: Vorstein is a small, slender man with a high forehead and intense eyes. He wears a small mustache. Vorstein usually dresses in a lab coat.

Research Areas: Biochemistry 15, Ether 35, Geology/Metallurgy 17, Flight 14, Precision 11, Power 19, Combustion 27.

Inventions: Etherometer (reliability 5), lightning cannon (reliability 4), weather control ray (reliability 1), rocket motor (reliability 4), detonite (reliability 2).

ELSIE RADEK (Green NPC)

Elsie is an intelligent and adventuresome woman, who has defied social conventions by getting a scientific education and accompanying the Phobos expedition. As a woman in a male-dominated field, she is not adverse to using her looks and charm to get what she wants. Elsie has expensive tastes and enjoys the best of everything.

Attribute Skills

Str: 1	Close Combat 1 (edged)
Agil: 3	Stealth 2, Marksmanship 1 (pistol), Crime 1 (pick pocket)
End: 2	Wilderness Travel 1 (mountaineering)
Int: 5	Observation 5, Science 4 (archaeology), Engineering 2 (explosives)
Chr: 6	Eloquence 6, Linguistics 4 (German, English, French, Turkish, Hungarian), Theatrics 2
Soc: 4	Riding 3 (horse), Leadership 1, Pilot 1 (ether flyer)

Motives: Adventuresome, Ambitious, Spendthrift.

Appearance: Elsie Radek is a very beautiful woman, with dark red hair and pale gray eyes. She speaks with a charming Hungarian accent, and she always dresses in stylish and expensive clothes. Elsie usually carries a small dagger concealed in her stocking. ♀

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I'd been with Stanford and his crew a couple of months before I got the nerve to ask why we always stayed in adjacent rooms and took turns standing guard, even in the swankiest hotels. They didn't answer. Just got a kind of blank look that we used to call the thousand-meter stare on Aurora—the kind you get from staring out of a foxhole over open sights for too long.

But these people were troubleshooters, not mercs. I figured I ought to know what they were running from, for their good as well as mine. I said as much to Chan one night, while we were alone and she was checking out the jacked 9-23 she slept with. I was ready for most possibilities—the police, Americo, Provolution, maybe the Tongs, something like that. Her answer was a surprise.

"One of us always stays awake," she grinned tiredly, "in case of vampires."

The following is a **2300 AD** scenario for a small group of troubleshooters or similar characters, set on Kwantung in the Chinese Arm. The referee will need the **2300 AD** rules, plus **Colonial Atlas** for details of Kwantung and the DNAMs used to prepare colonists for life on King.

No maps are provided, so the referee may design street setups or building interiors as necessary.

While resting between jobs on Kwantung, the PCs are approached by an old friend, Jim Harker, now an ecologist, who is convinced that a predator is eating local colonists. The authorities have dismissed his story as the rav-

One of us Always Stays Awake

ings of an idiot—now he turns to the PCs for help.

As the PCs investigate, they discover that all the clues point toward Harker's predators being vampires. The predators do, in fact, exist, but they are results of a Provolutionist experiment that went wrong.

The "vampires" try to kill the PCs and Harker to conceal their existence. Depending on the referee's wishes, the PCs can be allowed to wipe out the creatures, removing a menace to humanity, or some of the vampires can escape and begin a prolonged vendetta against the PCs.

HARKER'S STORY

The PCs are in a bar near Changpei spaceport on Kwantung, looking for work and sampling the local rum, when someone enters the bar.

He sits down by the PCs and orders a large rum, looking somewhat harassed. Suddenly, both he and one of the PCs (of the referee's choosing) recognize each other as old friends; Harker greets the PC by name joyfully.

"Am I glad to see you," he says. "I really need help." For the sake of their old friendship, the PCs should agree to at least listen to Harker's story.



The scientist is convinced a predator is eating local colonists.

Over the course of several drinks in a corner booth, Harker tells the PCs that he is employed in Changpei's Statistical Office to analyze data collected at farms and towns across the planet, and to monitor developments in the world's ecology. The hope is that agronomists will be able to centralize planning and improve farm productivity. Weather and insect problems will be predicted and forestalled by the scheme; tailored applications of chemicals and benign insects will improve crop growth rates and yields; and crops can be genetically engineered more precisely to take advantage of better knowledge of local conditions. The aim is to create a system which feeds all the population of Kwantung at minimum cost and effort.

Harker is especially interested in the energy flow from layer to layer of the ecology. He explains that plants convert roughly 10% of the energy received from the sun; herbivores use about 10% of the energy stored in the plants; and carnivores use about 10% of the energy stored in the herbivores' meat. Harker intended to trace the energy input from Tau Ceti through the food chain up to human consumers. This would

highlight any shortfalls, wastage or overproduction for attention by the government.

However, the amount of energy reaching the human level of the food chain was larger than other figures showed that level actually used or needed. Trying to reconcile the figures, Harker had an inspiration: What if there were some predator living off the human population of Kwantung? The extra food energy reaching the human level would then be siphoned off by whatever is preying on humanity. Harker was disturbed to find that this theory fit the numbers precisely. His data indicates that there are several dozen of the predators on Kwantung.

Harker went to the authorities and the police with his theory, but no one believed him. He is convinced that the authorities know about the predator and are covering up the

story to protect their own positions and prevent widespread panic. He is sure that he will soon be silenced for uncovering this conspiracy, either by the police or the predators—hence, his hunted look.

He appeals to the PCs for help. He needs protection and he needs to prove his theories so that he can force the authorities to act.

VAMPIRE MURDERS

The PCs will probably realize that if there is something out there on Kwantung eating people, there ought to be bodies being found or people missing. The first steps should be to check for evidence of these. Several possible approaches are outlined.

The PCs may well suspect a government cover-up. In fact, there is none—the authorities are simply not aware of the problem. If given sufficient evidence, they will be glad to investigate. All the authorities know so far is that a number of citizens are being horribly murdered for no apparent reason.

The PCs may well flounder at this stage. If they seem lost or too far from the right track, the referee should focus their attention by having a few vampires find out about their inquiries and try to kill them—in which case, go to the section Night of the Vampires below.

Old News

The PCs may check for reports of bodies or missing persons in back issues of magazines, old newspapers and tapes of old news broadcasts in public libraries.

Task: To find evidence in old news reports (uncertain): Routine. Information Gathering. 2 hours.

Referee: Success in this task gives the PCs the following information: First, there are an unusually high number of murders and disappearances in Changpei and other cities on Kwantung. Second, the bulk of the victims are attractive young men and women who seem to have been murdered late at night in a ritualistic way, the bodies being efficiently drained of blood. Third, the first such murder occurred three years ago, and before that the pattern of murders and disappearances was normal for a colony world.

The gruesome killings are referred to by the press as the "vampire murders," and the unknown perpetrator is referred to as "the vampire," due to the victims being drained of blood. There is no apparent motive for the killing in any of the ritual murders, but there is a pattern to the choice of victims—each is a single person who disappeared late at night, often after leaving a singles' bar in the company of a tall, dark and attractive stranger.

A fumble on this task indicates that the vampires get word of the PCs' interest in this subject (perhaps by a monitoring program set up in Changpei's computer net, perhaps by overhearing their conversations). If so, an attempt will be made on the PCs' lives that night. Go to the Night of the Vampires section.

Talking to Police

If the PCs decide to question police, they will get the same polite brush-off as Harker unless they can convince them that the case is serious.

Task: To persuade the police to get involved (uncertain): Formidable. Eloquence. 1 minute.

Referee: This task will need to be successfully repeated three or four times with different officers before the PCs have

Jim Harker

An old friend of one of the PCs (probably one with prior service in an academic, contact or scout career), Harker worked for Trilon Industries as a biologist in a survey team and later achieved modest fame as a specialist in non-Terran ecologies.

Three years ago, Harker took an interest in the unique mix of Terran and alien life on Kwantung. He then sought work as an ecologist there, working for the Manchurian government. He is a Green NPC.

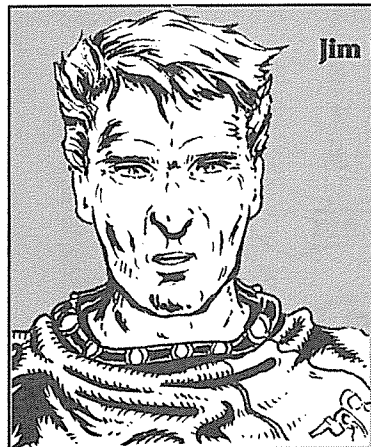
NPC Motivations: *Club Queen:* Harker is stubborn to the point of pig-headedness. His determination to uncover the truth makes him a thorough and methodical scientist. *Spade 7:* Harker is willing to take responsibility and wants to occupy a position of importance. He considers it his duty to see that action against the vampires is taken, for the good of mankind.

Li Ta-Chao

Li was part of the team which created the vampires. Once converted, however, the vampires made the remaining human members of the team their first victims, draining their blood. Li is the last survivor of the team and expects to die soon. But before he dies, he wants to tell the story to someone, and he will make the player characters promise to pass it on in the hope that someday the tale will be known.

NPC Motivations: *Spade Queen:*

Li is utterly unscrupulous in his pursuit of Provolutionist goals, and he is quite content to see humanity become the pets or prey of the next stage in evolution. He hadn't expected to become one of the first prey himself, of course, but he has been here long enough to become philosophical about it—he dies that he creations might live. *Spade 4:* Li is a braggart. While he is used to the idea of dying, he can't bear the thought that posterity might never learn of his part in making this happen. This is why he insists on telling the PCs his story.



worked their way far enough up the chain of command to reach someone who can make a decision. If the PCs fail at any stage, the police will promise to look into the matter and promptly forget all about it. If they succeed, the police will interview the PCs and Harker, taking the case off their hands and eventually arresting several vampires. Before that time, the PCs will probably get restless since they don't know what the police are doing and tackle the case themselves.

However the discussions with the police go, at some stage one of the officers should berate the PCs for wasting his time when he could be out solving the vampire murders. If the PCs now repeat their search through old news reports, the relevant task become Simple rather than Routine.

Interviewing Relatives

The PCs may decide to interview relatives of some of the murder victims. This will prove a blind alley. Few of the victims were in close contact with their relatives (this is one of the criteria the vampires use to pick a victim). Also, no one will be keen to talk to the PCs, and if they are persuaded to talk, they will not be able to provide any information of interest.

DOWN THOSE MEAN STREETS

Once they work out that the vampire attacks at night in cities, the PCs may decide to go around the backstreets at night inviting attack from the predator so as to capture or kill one and thus gain hard evidence. If they stroll around the seedy districts of Changpei at night, armed, they are likely to run into trouble one way or another. Some possibilities are:

Street Gang: A street gang discovers the PCs on their turf and attacks them with mayhem and robbery in mind. The gang may be composed of young toughs, criminals, travellers like the PCs down on their luck or Provolutionists looking for experimental subjects. They will be Experienced NPCs armed with knives and clubs. If the PCs lose this fight, they will be beaten and robbed, and possibly worse. If they win, but kill some of the gang in doing so, they will be held by police for questioning—they should be released unless carrying suspicious amounts of weaponry (say, more than a knife or pistol).

Street People: The PCs may be accosted by street people wishing to sell them various illegal drugs or show them a good time. If the referee is feeling mean, he may have the street people be undercover police who arrest the PCs for any interest they show in the illegal wares or services. Street people are Experienced NPCs with knives and possibly small pistols (e.g., Arno 5-15).

Police Patrol: The PCs are noted by a police patrol which stops and searches them. If your PCs are anything like mine, this will be acutely embarrassing for them as a variety of hidden weapons and semilegal devices are exposed. If not, and if they have a reasonable cover story, they should be released with a caution to get out of the bad side of town before someone attacks them. If the PCs reveal their true purpose (vampire hunting) the police will think they are being mocked, and immediate arrest will follow. An example of a believable cover story is: "We're new in town, and we're lost." The police are Experienced NPCs with hand communicators, Taylor M-57s and clubs.

NIGHT OF THE VAMPIRES

Eventually—either because the PCs are with Harker and the vampires wish to silence him, because their investigations are floundering or because the vampires select them as victims—the PCs will be attacked by vampires. At least one PC will be captured during the fight.

The vampires are Elite NPCs equipped with inertial armor, clubs and stunners (they like their blood fresh and don't want to waste any of it). They are equal in number to the party. They are DNAM-modified, giving them Strength 16, Dexterity 8, Endurance 16, a Consciousness Level of 6 and a Life Level of 12. Treat hits on vampires as if they were PCs rather than NPCs, giving them the full benefit of their Consciousness and Life Levels; this alone will make them formidable opponents. Appropriate careers for vampires would be ground military, thief, academic or smuggle/pirate, reflecting their origins in Provolution and their intended use as biological terror weapons. They are as cunning as Kafers and know the area intimately, so they should be able to strike at will and vanish into the shadows.

PCs who are captured, or who track the vampires to their lair, will find the vampires who survived the attack on them, plus three or four more, masquerading as nightshift workers sharing a run-down house near the starport. All have AS-3s and clubs at hand, and those fresh from the fight will still be in inertial armor. The others are asleep, setting up transfusion equipment or just lounging around—they are not expecting trouble.

Bound and sedated in the basement are victims being slowly drained of their blood. After binding their captives, the vampires take a small sample of blood from each (anyone with First Aid or Medical skill will realize this is to determine the blood type), drain some blood from one of the less recent victims and disappear upstairs (there they will use normal medical gear to give themselves transfusions, but the PCs won't know this until they've gained control of the house).

Some tasks which may prove useful are:

Task: To track the vampires to their lair after the attack (uncertain): Difficult. Streetwise or Recon. 1 minute.

Referee: A fumble on this task means that any surviving vampires detect the PCs as they approach the lair and prepare an ambush. A failure means the PCs lose the scent, and the vampires start shadowing them the next night. The task becomes Routine if the abducted PCs say they want to mark their trail.

Task: To escape from one's bonds when tied up in the vampire's lair: Difficult. Dexterity. 2 minutes.

Referee: This task can be retried three times before the vampires notice the PC is up to something. A fumble indicates that a vampire notices the attempt. PCs who escape their bonds and search the room will find that only those kidnapped that night are in good enough shape to fight, the others being weakened by loss of blood. Most are drugged to keep them quiet, but the "evening meal" has been allowed to come out of sedation so the vampires aren't drugged when they take his blood. Clubs and knives can be improvised from materials in the room (furniture, bottles, etc.).

Whether or not the captured PCs escape their bonds, the "evening meal" will engage them in conversation, providing the information in Logical Explanation, below. This man is Li Ta-Chao, an aging Manchurian biochemist who was part of the project which created the vampires.

LOGICAL EXPLANATION

The vampires are the result of a Provolutionist experiment. The intent was to produce a race of genetically engineered superman by creating a virus with the same strength and endurance boosting effects as the DNAMs administered to King colonists, but without the effects those viruses have on the human respiratory system. The modified personnel would

Continued on page 51.

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

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

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

Traveller: All Traveller articles must be usable in the Traveller: The New Era universe. Include tasks and game statistics where appropriate. Ideas include an adventure with relevant background data, bestiary or short equipment description. Articles may follow either the "adventure nugget" or traditional Challenge format.

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

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*Good luck. If you have any questions, send them along with a SASE to:
Michelle Sturgeon, Managing Editor, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646 USA*

Continued from page 49.

be strong and tough, without needing to wear respirators at all times in normal atmospheres.

Unfortunately, creating DNAMs by genetic engineering is difficult even for major government research programs. As a terrorist group working in hiding with less-than-perfect facilities, it was almost inevitable that the Provolutionist team would produce a faulty product. Their DNAM works almost as intended, but also affects the subject's genetic code in the areas concerned with porphyrins and pheromones, leading to two side effects: First, a subject's pheromone output is enhanced and altered so as to make him very attractive to those of the opposite sex. Secondly, undergoing the DNAM transformation triggers a condition known as Gunther's disease in the subjects.

Gunther's disease, also known as congenital erythropoietic porphyria, is normally transmitted as a recessive genetic disorder. Its minor symptoms include a reddish-brown discoloration of the bones and teeth, and enlargement of the spleen. The two main symptoms in game terms are anemia and blistering of the skin when it is exposed to light. There is no cure for porphyria; treatment is aimed at alleviating the symptoms and minimizing skin damage.

The vampires are unable to seek medical attention for their problems for fear of revealing their illegal genetic modifications. They have attempted to overcome their disabilities in two major ways—by hiding during the day to avoid the painful and disfiguring blisters which would develop on their hands and faces, and by abducting people and draining their blood for transfusions to counteract their anemia. Since their enhanced pheromones make them almost irresistible to the opposite sex, they find easy prey in singles' bars.

The vampires have formed a breakaway faction of Provolution. They see themselves as the next step in human evolution, and they consider it their right and duty to rule all of human space, looking after the rest of humanity in the same benign way that cattle ranchers look after beef cattle. They believe the best way to do this is by slow infiltration of local government, leading to an eventual takeover of Kwantung (and later, other worlds as well). They intend to keep their existence secret for obvious reasons.

FIGHT

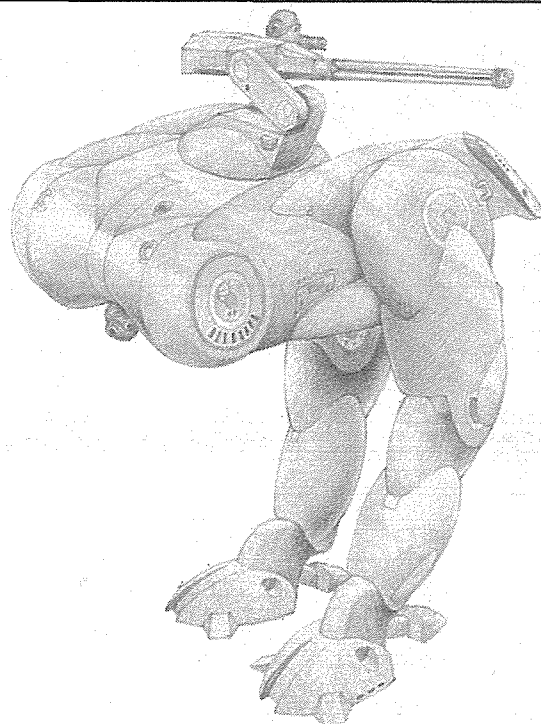
By this stage, there is at least one PC in the vampires' lair. He will probably contrive some way to signal his comrades, or they will successfully track the vampires home. If not, perhaps the PCs recognize one of their assailants leaving the house while wandering aimlessly around to pick up clues. Or perhaps a local drunk can be bribed with a shot of rum to reveal where the off-worlder was taken. Or perhaps another vampire hunter watching the house can direct the PCs in exchange for help in freeing her fiancée.

No matter how they find it, the PCs must now enter the house, clear it of vampires and release the hostages. This will almost certainly entail violence.

AFTERMATH

The PCs should have destroyed a nest of vampires, possibly as many as 25% of all vampires on Kwantung, and have enough evidence to persuade the authorities to act. There is no financial reward, but the PCs each gain one Renown point. They will acquire several useful contacts in Changpei, probably Harker and a detective in the local police, who can provide information and help in future adventures. The PCs may also acquire deadly enemies—any surviving vampires, plus a senior police official who lost face when the truth came out. Ω

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CURSE of the CENTURIES

BY
J. B. HILL

Many *Call of Cthulhu* players expect to meet huge, sanity-destroying monsters or ancient, bandage-shrouded mummies. In this adventure, they discover that a pretty creature an inch and a half long can be just as deadly. The adventure is written for the 1920s but fits easily into either the 1880s *Gaslight* era or *Cthulhu Now*. Although it was written to be placed in London or Cairo, any town or city with a museum and a river will do. If the investigators are not already members of the museum staff, they can be brought in to investigate the death of Sir Richard Lesley-Smith, a leading Egyptologist, by the museum or his next of kin.

NEPHRA-KA

Sir Richard Lesley-Smith was a leading Egyptologist who recently returned to London (or Cairo) after leading an expedition to discover the tomb of Nephra-Ka. In 1911, he discovered the mummy of a handmaiden of Nephra-Ka and returned it to America at the request of New World Industries, which is sponsoring the expedition. This mummy was placed in a storeroom near the bridge on the *Titanic*. Unfortunately, it was, of course, lost when the *Titanic* sank on April 4, 1912. After much research, he subsequently believed he had again discovered the mummified body of a servant of Nephra-Ka in a rough tomb far to the west of the Nile on the border with the Italian colony of Libya. Because of the earlier loss, the mummy has now been brought to London (or Cairo) by land for initial investigation. With the body were brought various objects from the tomb. They were kept in the basement rooms for examination and were not planned to be placed on display or transported to America yet.

On night one of the adventure, Sir Richard decided to start work on the examination without waiting for his assistants, Alan Griffiths and Emma Ward. He had a meeting during the day with the museum curator, Dr. Henry Usher, and so was not able to start work on the mummy until early evening. The following morning, his body was found by Ward. The investigators may be brought in on day two.

MYSTERIOUS DEATH

The basement of the museum has a large table in the center. On this lies the mummy. All the bandages have been carefully removed and placed to one

side. The head of the mummy has been removed using a sharp instrument. The head itself is missing. The body is not a normal mummy in that the internal organs have not been removed and stored in canopic jars. This is clear from the lack of the usual large opening down the length of the body. There is, however, a circular hole in the center of the chest in the region of the heart, about two inches in diameter. Next to the body lies a dissection kit comprising a set of very sharp scalpels, probes, etc. Around the room are shelves containing all the other items removed from the tomb. They include a bronze mirror which still retains a reflective surface, a clay jar with a picture of a flying scarab beetle and an inscription in hieroglyphics, a statue of the cat goddess Bast, a statue of Osiris (protector of the dead), and some gold jewelry. On the floor lies the mummy of a cat.

To one side is a desk containing Sir Richard's notes of the discovery of the tomb, a list of all the items found in the tomb and copies of his published books, *Secrets of the Ancient Egyptians* and *Khephu: The Black Pharaoh*.

The basement door was found open. Next to it is a second room containing the furnace which heats the central heating for the museum.

Sir Richard's body was found lying on the floor in the main basement room near to the desk. His face had a look of utter horror on it as if he had just witnessed something which had affected his sanity. His mouth was open as if he died screaming. He had slashed both his wrists with a scalpel and bled to death very quickly. He lay in a large pool of blood. Next to his body lay the scalpel. Obviously, his body was removed to the local mortuary. The time of his death was difficult to calculate as rigor mortis set in surprisingly quickly.

CLUES

The museum curator, Dr. Henry Usher, will tell the investigators that the expedition was sponsored most generously by New World Industries, which is noted for its support of both

the arts and scientific research. Dr. Usher did not go on the expedition. He met Sir Richard on the day of his death. Sir Richard had no worries, no money problems and no enemies, although he was upset by criticism of books and his ideas. On the day in question, he had no reason to kill himself. He had appeared happy and relaxed, although perhaps too eager to start his research on the mummy.

Griffiths and Ward both went on the expedition. They can describe the discovery of the tomb in the desert. It lay behind a thick stone slab which was inscribed with a curse calling down the "Curse of the Centuries" on any who disturbed it. Either of the assistants, or the list of items recovered, will reveal that no mummified cat was found in the tomb. Both the assistants can help with Sir Richard's theories, which are contained in his books. Each book will take one full day to read.

Secrets of the Ancient Egyptians: *Secrets of the Ancient Egyptians* mentions Sir Richard's theories concerning the origins of Egyptian mummification. He believed in the reality of the lost continent of Mu and believed that the Egyptians learned of mummification from the priests of Mu. The people of Mu worshipped gods more ancient than the Egyptian gods, and mummification was a form of sacrifice to those

The graphic features the title "Night's Edge" in a large, stylized, outlined font. Below it, the word "Cyberpunk" is written in a similar, more fluid, outlined font. The background is dark and textured. At the bottom, there is a line of small text: "Cyberpunk is a trademark of R. Talsorian Games. Used with permission. Night's Edge is a trademark of Ionos Publications."

ancient gods. In Egypt, the most terrible form of punishment was to be mummified *alive*. No one knows how this was achieved. But to protect the body from anyone showing mercy on the victims, a curse was placed on the mummy that either death or living mummification would befall anyone who interfered with the body.

This book received wide criticism from the Egyptologists, who compared Sir Richard's ideas with those of Charles Piazzi Smyth—a great insult to someone of Sir Richard's standing.

Khephu: The Black Pharaoh: *Khephu: The Black Pharaoh* describes the chaotic fourth dynasty of Egypt, which was ruled by the evil black pharaoh Khephu and his daughter-wife queen Nitocris. He worshipped an ancient evil god known as "the Black Pharaoh." As a living god, Khephu himself took the same title. He was challenged by an equally evil wizard-priest named Nephra-Ka whom he slew, but the priest's followers stole the body and hid it in the western deserts. In revenge, Nitocris hunted down those followers of Nephra-Ka and subjected each of them to the ultimate horror of living mummification.

Sir Richard's Notes: Sir Richard believes the mummy he found was that of a follower of Nephra-Ka who had been mummified alive by Nitocris. He was found in a rough stone tomb. The body itself was found in a stone sarcophagus. The bronze mirror was held in the mummy's wrappings in such a position that the victim would be able to see into the mirror. The sealed clay jar was nearby, as were the statues of Bast and Osiris. The tomb had a large stone slab across its entrance.

Clay Jar: If translated, the inscription reads, "May the winged death destroy those who seek to disturb the rest of he who awaits Osiris." Inside is a papyrus with more hieroglyphics. If translated, it is headed, "Curse of Centuries" and contains the spell Summon Ghatanothoa. The spell need not be read aloud—reading it silently to oneself will suffice. If read near an enchanted mirror, an image of Ghatanothoa will appear.

Other Clues: A spot hidden roll whilst examining the mummy will reveal that the wound in the center of the chest is new and was caused from the inside outward. Ward will comment that the museum's pet cat, Cleo, has run away and cannot be found.

NEXT DAY

When the museum's furnace is cleaned out the next day, a human skull

is discovered. The top of the skull has been removed. The teeth show no dental work at all, possibly indicating that it is not modern. The skull is very delicate, and anyone touching it must save against DEX or it will crumble to dust.

The museum's library has a restricted section. If the investigators gain access, they will find a copy of the *Book of Eibon* and von Junzt's *Nameless Cults* (the Bridewell translation of 1845), also known as *The Black Book*. The British Museum, but not the Cairo Museum, has a copy of the *Neuronomicon*. If they research the lost continent of Mu, they will find references to the ancient god Ghatanothoa, the sight of whom petrified the luckless victims and converted them to living mummies—the living brain magically preserved in the dried mummified body.

Finally, at the end of the day, the PCs will hear from the mortuary that a strange wound has now been discovered in the center of Sir Richard's chest. It is a circular wound about two inches in diameter and reaches to the area of his heart, but gives the impression of being caused from the inside outward.

FACTS

The investigators should be able to piece together the facts and confirm them by an experiment on the cat (SAN loss of 1D6 if they do).

Sir Richard's theories are, of course, perfectly correct. The Egyptians did indeed learn about mummification from the evil priests of Mu. The punishment of being mummified alive, known as the Curse of the Centuries, was performed by a victim being bound in bandages with an enchanted mirror in front of him. A priest would read the spell Summon Ghatanothoa from behind the safety of a solid stone slab, and Ghatanothoa appeared in the mirror. The victim turned into a mummy, but his brain remained alive, trapped in the body for eternity. He could only be released by his brain being destroyed. To prevent anyone from taking pity on the victim and releasing him, and to bring revenge on those who did, a sacred scarab beetle was placed in the mouth of the still-living victim. It crawled down the throat to remain near the heart, to eat its way out and seek revenge if anyone cut the body. When Sir Richard started the autopsy on the mummy, he started with the head. Upon opening the skull, he discovered a still-living brain. Before his sanity fled forever, he removed the whole head, took it to the furnace and consigned it to the flames. By the

time he returned, the scarab beetle had eaten its way out and had started to perform the spell Summon Ghatanothoa in front of the mirror. Fortunately, Sir Richard bled to death before the spell was completed, and only the museum's pet cat was mummified. Still disorientated, the scarab then crawled into Sir Richard's mouth and hid near his heart to eat its way out the following night after the body was removed.

The scarab will now hunt down all those involved with Sir Richard—including the investigators.

DEATHS CONTINUE

The scarab starts a series of killings. Dr. Usher is seen by many witnesses to run from a side road into a main road and is instantly crushed to death beneath the wheels of a heavy truck—his head is torn off, wedged between the rear tires (SAN loss 1D6/0). Witnesses will describe him running, looking backward and swinging his arms around. Several will have the mistaken impression that he was being chased by some giant invisible monster.

Alan Griffiths is found lying face down in the river, which seems unnaturally misty at the time. He has drowned, but when his body is recovered, it is obvious that both his eyes have been bitten out (SAN loss 1D6/0).

Emma Ward can be visited at the museum or at home. When the investigators arrive, Ward crashes through the third-story window and is impaled on the spiked iron railings below (SAN loss 1D8/1D4). She does not die immediately but manages to say, "Gold. Gold. It's alive," before dying. On her right hand is a strange injury similar to a large insect bite. On investigation of her rooms, the doors and windows are all locked from the inside, and one window has been left open by an inch to allow some fresh air to enter. On a table, a collection of gold Egyptian jewelry is laid out which she was apparently cataloguing.

The scarab will start to hunt down and attack the investigators—preferably while each is alone. Their best plan is to try to trap the scarab in a sealed room or in a car, and destroy it by fire.

REWARDS

Solving the mystery of the death of Sir Richard: 1D6 SAN.

Destroying the jar and papyrus: 1D6 SAN.

Freeing the cat from the horror of live mummification: 1D6 SAN.

Destroying the scarab: 1D6 SAN, plus they get to live.

DIFFERENT TIMES

The following will help a referee adapt this scenario to a different setting.

1880s Cthulhu by Gaslight or Space: 1889: This was the great age of Egyptology with most European countries digging up Egypt. It was dominated by the greatest expert of Ancient Egypt ever—William Matthew Flinders Petrie. His 1885 book, *The Pyramids of Gazah*, adds 10% to the investigators' knowledge of Egypt, and his massive, three-volume *History of Egypt* adds 25% but should be published too late for this era. These books will, of course, be available in the 1920s or 1990s. If the investigators wish to contact Petrie for help, he will be excavating the pyramids at Hawara and be out of contact.

The investigators may also learn of Charles Piazzi-Smyth, the astronomer royal for Scotland. His book, *Life and Work at the Great Pyramid*, attempts a mathematical analysis of the pyramids and was much derided by his peers. It was used by subsequent writers to prove a magical basis for pyramids. Anyone reading this book must roll against Intelligence. A successful roll reveals the book as rubbish; a failed roll indicates the theories are believed and means a loss of Egyptian Knowledge of -5.

In this age, Dr. Usher is killed by a horse-drawn vehicle and is decapitated by iron-rimmed wheels.

1920s: It will be well-known to all investigators that Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon discovered the tomb of Tut-ankh-amen in 1922 and opened it in March 1923. A curse fell on all the members of the team. Carnarvon died later from an infected mosquito bite to his cheek, and 30 other members all died soon afterward. The curse of the Pharaoh became well-known via the press—there was an Egyptian mummy on the *Titanic*.

1990s: The plundering of Egypt has ended, and Egyptian treasures remain in the Cairo museum. Research still continues, however. In a present-day adventure, the scarab is also slightly radioactive, sufficient to show on radioactivity detector badges and to register on Geiger counters. The scarab is not immortal, but its life span is linked to the radioactive decay. Tut-ankh-amen has, of course, changed his name to Tutankamun.

GHATANOThOA

The full description and statistics for this ancient evil god are found in the 4th edition of *Call of Cthulhu*. Its most important aspect is the fact that when summoned to appear in an enchanted

mirror, all present must save against their CONx5 on 1D100 each round the image is present, or they will start to mummify. A victim loses 1D6 DEX a round as his body stiffens until at 0 DEX he is totally petrified, only his brain remaining alive forever (or until destroyed) in an immobile body. Everyone seeing the god also loses 1D100 SAN on a failed roll or 1D10 on a successful roll. (The petrification process will occur even if the god is not actually seen because the victim has his eyes shut or is asleep, although no SAN is risked in such a case). Seeing a friend mummified costs 1D10/1D3 SAN. The summoning spell takes one round to cast.

SCARAB BEETLE

The scarab beetle, a lesser independent race, is approximately one and a half inches long. It is not the common black scarab of Lower Egypt (Scarabaeus sacer) but the original golden-green scarab of the Upper Nile (Scarabaeus egyptorium). It is evil, highly intelligent and very dangerous. It is also bent on revenge.

STR: 1, CON: 10, SIZ: 1/10, INT: 15, POW: 18, DEX: 1 Crawling/17 Flying, APP: 18, EDU: 18, SAN: 0, HP: 1, MOVE: 1 Crawling/9 Flying.

Skills: Bite 60% for one hit point of damage. The bite is poisonous, inflicting an infection of (CON 19).

The wound is often mistaken for an ordinary mosquito bite but soon goes septic and can be fatal. The beetle deliberately attacks exposed areas of skin, especially the face and eyes. A specific attack area is still at 60%.

Unless a room has been specifically sealed with cloth or similar substance around the doors, over the fireplace, etc., and all windows are closed, the scarab will find a way to enter.

Spells

Summon Ghatanothoa: Because of the differences in the eye structure and nervous systems, insects are not affected by the appearance of Ghatanothoa and do not become petrified. Scarab beetles worship him. If an enchanted mirror is present they will

summon him.

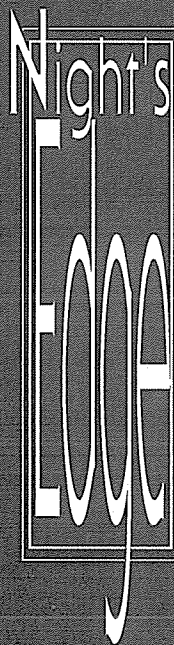
Mist: The scarab can raise a thick mist for an area up to 200 yards around itself but can only do so where there is a large body of water. The ability can be used at sea, or on or near a large lake or large river.

Misdirect: Although not magnetic itself, the scarab uses the Earth's magnetic field to navigate as do many insects. The scarab can however also cause a temporary local variation in the magnetic field and so change compass bearings. It can use this to make ships sail off course.

The scarab has a high flying dexterity and is very small. It is impossible to hit with a rifle or hand gun. Shotguns at point blank range however are at their normal percentage chance. It is susceptible to fire but not to poisons—the normal insect sprays are useless against it. All other blows with blunt instruments are at 1/4 their normal chance.

The scarab is golden in color and rather attractive to the greedy. It can remain still for long periods of time (centuries) and can pretend to be an ornament until someone touches it or tries to pick it up when it will bite their hand.

It is intelligent enough to wait to attack victims while they are driving a car, causing them to crash. It will normally try to make its attacks appear like accidents. Ω



THEY SAID IT WAS A DARK FUTURE, BUT THEY DIDN'T COUNT ON US. AFTER ALL, WE ARE CHILDREN OF THE DARK, SO, FOR US TO BE PRESENT IN THIS "DARK" TIME IS ONLY... LOGICAL, NO?

SOME CALL US LEECHES, VRYOLAKLAS, MONSTERS OR SIMPLY VAMPIRES. BUT WE KNOW WHAT WE ARE: MASTERS OF THE NIGHT, CHILDREN OF THE DARK, FOREVER PRESENT IN THE MIND AND HEART OF GENERATIONS.

WE'LL ALWAYS BE THERE, HIDING IN THE NIGHT. COME PLAY WITH US, WON'T YOU?

By Justin Schmid

An Alternate reality sourcebook for

CYBERPUNK
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The

Genecorp Biolabs has initiated a program of “sledgehammer” biology to create a hormone-based drug which could be administered to already-bioengineered cattle to cause their bodies to generate more muscle mass and, therefore more meat. In a move to usurp Biotechnica’s supremacy, the marketing department has already prepared its campaign, which will, it is hoped, make Genecorp Biolabs “the corporation that feeds the world.”

But as the researchers are conducting tests on simple lab rats, something goes terribly wrong. Practically overnight, the rats become horribly mutated and disfigured. Genecorp decides to abort the Seattle

Dank

branch of this project, which was also being carried out at the corporation’s San Francisco labs.

All the test animals that haven’t already died from the test are destroyed by lethal injection. Autopsies are conducted on some, then all the carcasses are dumped ignominiously into the sewers.

But one survives.

Unfortunately, Genecorp’s technicians didn’t notice that one of their pets had startling regenerative abilities. Within a few days, the creature was fully recovered, lost underground and hungry...

IPt

Article by Legion



ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?

The player characters are contacted by Genecorp Biolabs to conduct a clandestine cleanup operation in Seattle's sewers. Genecorp states that a rash of disappearances in and around the city's sewers "may be" being caused by a research animal which escaped from the laboratories on the corporation's second floor two weeks ago.

The PCs are given precise instructions that this is to be a live retrieval operation—Genecorp wants the creature brought back to its labs so researchers can study what happened to it. Another condition of the contract is that no media agencies are made aware of the mission for at least one year.

Two of the PCs will be issued Nelspot Wombat airguns with one clip of 20 sleep poison pellets each, and any PCs who don't already have infrared will be loaned a pair of smartgoggles with that option built in. The PCs will also be given a black body bag to carry the creature in. Remember that having no one else find out what's in the bag is imperative.

In payment, each PC will receive \$5000 Euro—\$1000 in advance and the remaining \$4000 on completion, with \$2000 deducted from each if the animal is not brought in but proof of its destruction is provided. If no proof is given, the PCs will not be paid any more than the advance.

SECRET AGENDA

Genecorp has a plan which hasn't been divulged to the PCs. Corporate leaders realize that the creature in the sewers is a deadly menace. They wish to avoid unwanted public investigations and allegations, and they would also like to not have to pay the PCs the rest of the money for the job. Thus, Genecorp has given the PCs airgun pellets filled with plain water and smartgoggles with batteries that will run dead in one hour.

A few minutes after the PCs enter the sewers, Genecorp security personnel will lock the door behind them. Even if they do subdue the creature and return, they will not be able to exit the sewers by this route. They must go back in and find a different route.

Genecorp hopes these measures will ensure the destruction of both the animal and the PCs in the sewers. No one will ever find out what happened, and the corporation can get back to its research.

If the PCs do find an alternate route out of the sewers, Genecorp will apologize profusely, explaining that the door was locked due to human error, and will

fulfill its end of the contract—for the time being. At a later date, however, Genecorp may put a contract out on the PCs to ensure their silence.

CITIES UNDER CITIES

This adventure takes place beneath Seattle's city and corporate business core, downtown in the area bordered by Interstate 5, Highway 99, Pine Street and South King Street.

When the new corporate city center was developed in the early 2000s, the multinationals bought and brutalized their way around and through the city's Historic Preservation Ordinance. Most of the Pioneer Square Historic District disappeared under towers of concrete, steel and armored glass. The southern fragment which remains borders the city's extensive combat zones and is not a nice place to live or visit!

People soon forgot that the historic district used to be there. They also forgot about the underground.

The underground sprawls beneath about half of the downtown area, along its western and southern boundaries. It is an amalgam of the very old 1800s underground (which was a popular tourist site in the late 20th century) and the remains of buildings buried by construction crews in the first decade of the 21st century when the city's new corporate center was being built.

Referees can use the sewer/tunnel complex tiles in **Challenge 46**, page 8, to map out the underground and Seattle's sewers. A scale of five feet to one square is suggested.

WHAT WAS THAT?

Encounters under Seattle are random. Roll for an encounter once per half hour on the appropriate table, more frequently if you are a cruel master.

Sewers

2D6	Encounter
2	Creature
3	Rats
4	Sewer maintenance/cleaning robot
5	Overhead manhole/grate
6	Sewage/trash
7	Loud noises
8	Flash flood
9	Exit to Elliot Bay
10	Entrance to underground
11	Sewer works crew
12	Undergrounders

Creature: I hope your guns are loaded! (See page 60.)

Rats: A pack of five to 50 sewer rats is in the PCs' path. Roll 1D10. On a roll

of 1-4, they attack; on 5-8, they flee squealing into the darkness; on 9-10, they stay where they are and watch the PCs warily.

INT: 0, REF: 7, COOL: 4, LUCK: 4, MA: 4, BODY: 2, Run: 40, Leap: 1, Lift: N/A.

The rats have the equivalent of the skill Melee +3, and their bites cause 1D6+3 points of damage. In addition to their normal damage, the bites will cause infection on a 1D10 roll of 1. Infection will reduce a medic or doctor's medical skill check by -2.

Sewer Maintenance/Cleaning Robot: A cylindrical treaded machine blocks further passage. It is approaching the PCs with an array of steam guns and scrapers going. It will have to be destroyed or allowed to pass by backtracking to an intersection and sidestepping out of its way. However, on a 1D10 roll of 1-2, it turns in the same direction the PCs moved to get out of the way.

It will in no way resist if the PCs attempt to destroy it; it has 30 SDPs and an armor SP of 5.

Overhead Manhole/Grate: These are locked by the city in an effort to keep people out of the sewers on a roll of 1-9 on 1D10. Grates are too small for a person to fit through, anyway. They have 30 SDPs and the equivalent of 10 SPs of armor. Manhole covers have 40 SDPs and 15 SPs.

Sewage/Trash: The PCs come across a stream of sewage and trash between knee and waist deep and 30 or 40 yards long. There is an awful stench here also, and there is no way to get by the muck except by retracing their steps. Each PC must pass an Average Cool check or be racked by a fit of nausea which will make them incapable of any other action for five turns. Each PC must only make this check once each time this encounter is rolled.

Loud Noises: Assorted creepy scrapes, squeaks, slides, slithers, shrieks and screams.

Flash Flood: A flash flood of water/sewage between waist and chest high washes over the PCs. Each PC must pass an Average Reflex check or be swept off his feet and along the tunnel for five to 50 feet.

Exit to Elliot Bay: Hearing the unmistakable sound of falling water as they approach, the PCs come to a massive grate blocking the end of the tunnel. Beyond, peering through pilings under the docks, they can see the city harbor of Elliot Bay. This grate is locked and has 50 SDPs and the equivalent of 15 SPs of armor.

Entrance to Underground: A break in the sewer masonry gives onto a slightly higher, and noticeably drier, room or corridor. It appears not to be part of the sewers. Tunnels stretch off further into the darkness.

Sewer Works Crew: A wary group of two to 12 municipal workers. They are armed with pistols because of all the recent disappearances, and will be surprised and startled by the appearance of the PCs out of the sewers. Some may be trigger happy. They could be readying a maintenance robot for release or doing a spot check on a cistern or blockage.

All are wearing head lamps on their hard hats.

Undergrounders: Another paranoid group of two to 12 people. They are all armed with pistols and are carrying flashlights. They will react to the appearance of the PCs the same way the works crews will.

See Undergrounders section on the following page for more details.

Underground

2D6 Encounter

2	Creature
3	Creature's lair
4-5	Rats
6-7	Loud noise
8-9	Undergrounders
10	Entrance to sewers
11	Entrance to subways
12	Undergrounders' camp

The creature, rats and undergrounders entries are the same as on the Sewers Table.

Creature's Lair: This 15-foot-square chamber has a dirt-covered floor strewn with bones, scraps of clothing and personal effects. On a 1D6 roll of 1, the creature is here as well. The creature's lair is in the southeastern corner of the underground.

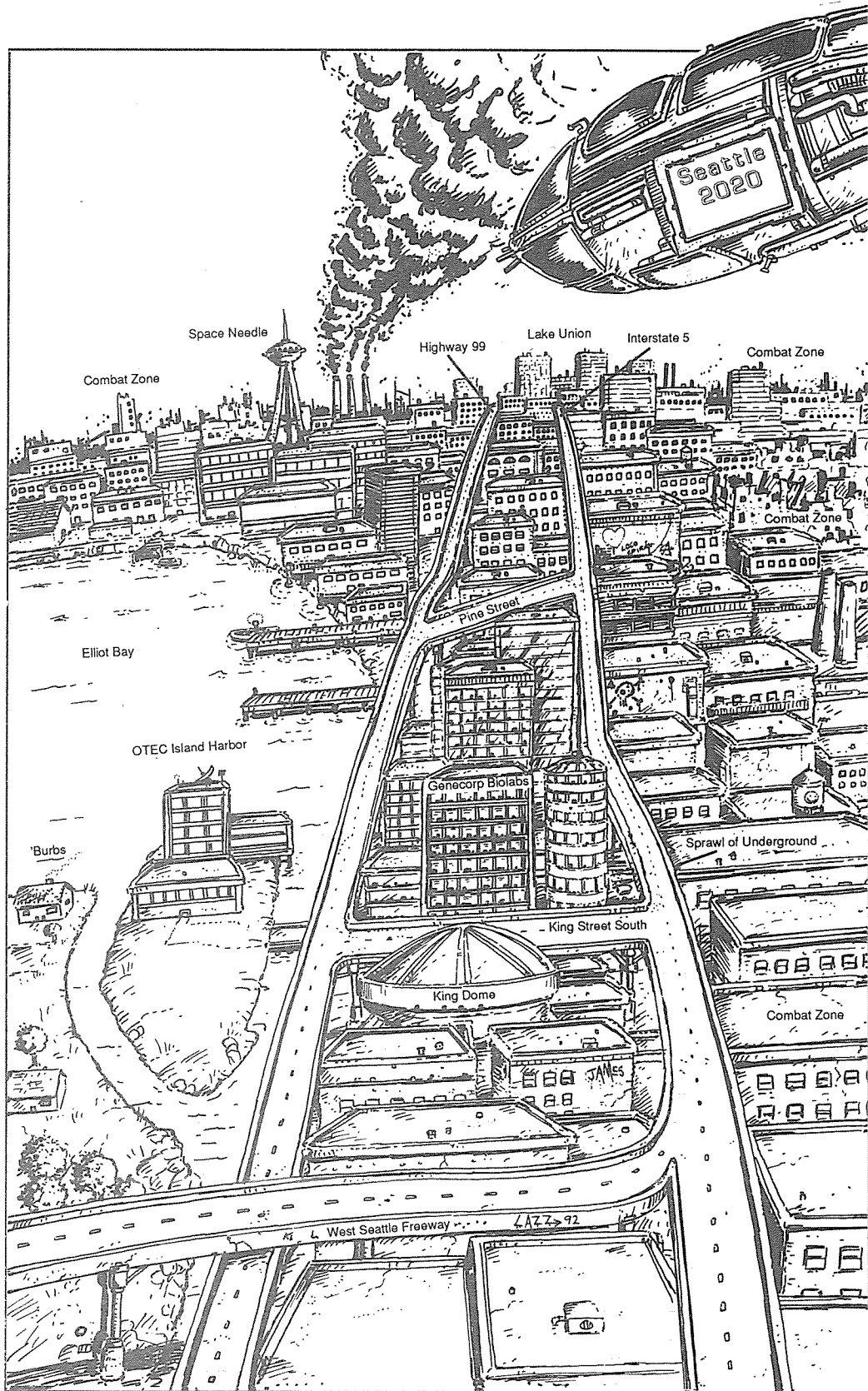
The creature found an entrance into these catacombs from the sewers and has been roaming beneath downtown and the surrounding areas in search of food.

Loud Noise: Same as on the Sewers Table, except the PCs may also hear the roar of a speeding subway train while they are in the underground.

Entrance to Sewers: A hole in the wall of the passage leads back into the sewer tunnels.

Entrance to Subways: An opening at this point leads to a square tunnel with train tracks running down its center. In the distance is a rumbling getting steadily louder.

Undergrounders' Camp: This is a



series of well lit, small rooms and slightly wider corridors.

Approximately 100 people of all ages live here, although as few as 50 are present at any one time, the rest being out in the subways, the sewers, the rest of the underground and above in the streets of the city. All entrances to this camp are guarded by pistol-armed sentries.

Subways

2D6 Encounter

2	Undergrounders
3	Entrance to underground
4-5	Rats
6-7	Loud noise
8-9	Train
10	Platform
11	Subway works crew
12	Master criminal's hideout

The first four entries on the Subways Table are as detailed for the above two tables.

Train: Coming fast! Each PC must roll an Easy Dodge and Escape skill check to get out of the way or be clipped by the train as it goes by, taking 1D6 points of damage (ignoring all armor since it is meant to stop bullets, not speeding locomotives).

Platform: The PCs walk out of the tunnel into a wide, high-roofed gallery. Silence descends on the bustling crowd on the subway platform as they watch the PCs approach from the gloom.

Subway Works Crew: These municipal workers are armed and react to the PCs as the sewer works crew does. They are wearing helmet lamps.

Master Criminal's Hideout: Use your imagination!

UNDERGROUNDERS

Parts of the underground are inhabited by undergrounders (as mentioned in *Night City Sourcebook*, page 160). They are essentially a Nomad pack. They have developed very good Stealth skills while avoiding the municipal works crews which regularly move through the sewers and subway tunnels that connect to their underground.

The undergrounders are as unaware of the creature's lair as it is of their camp, which is near the northern tip of the underground's sprawl.

These people are mistrustful of strangers and, now, are paranoid as well because of the slaughters that are occurring beneath Seattle.

Some of their own people have even disappeared.

They will be startled and suspicious (and slightly impressed) if the PCs find their camp since no one else has done so.

If they intend to befriend the undergrounders, the PCs will have their work cut out for them. The use of any social skills to do so will have to pass Very Difficult checks to meet with success. If the undergrounders do befriend the PCs, they might be willing to loan them a guide or two to show the PCs how to get around down in the tunnels.

If the PCs befriend the undergrounders and then capture or destroy the creature, they will have earned the undying gratitude of the undergrounders. The PCs will each be granted the equivalent of a Family skill level of +2 usable with the undergrounders.

If they don't befriend the undergrounders, then the PCs won't get any recognition from that quarter if they eliminate the creature.

CREATURE

INT: N/A, REF: 9, COOL: 8, LUCK: 6, MA: 9, BODY: 10, Run: 45, Leap: 2.75, Lift: 50.

Skill (Equivalents): Melee +7, Awareness/Notice +8, Stealth +7.

Traits: Enhanced Senses (Hearing), Rapid Mass Gain, Rapid Healing, Malleable Skeleton, Claws and Fangs, Resilient Skin (SP 10).

This wretch started its existence as a lowly rat. Now that Genecorp has toyed with its DNA, it is a twisted mockery of its former self. Its rotting flesh is dry and blistered, covered with broken patches of fur. Its limbs are gnarled and malformed, ruined by the biological processes unleashed upon its body.

The creature has superior hearing, equivalent to the Amplified Hearing and Enhanced Hearing Range cyberaudio options, which it uses to hunt. Thus, it can be easily deafened, but, unfortunately, so can the PCs in the sewers.

The creature's trait of rapid mass gain causes it to grow about five centimeters taller and half a kilo heavier every time it feeds.

It walks erect on its hind legs, and is now 2.5 meters long from nose to tail-tip and around 225 kilos in weight.

It has developed malleable bones, allowing it to squeeze through narrow cracks in the underground's brickwork which would block the passage of an ordinary creature its size. Its eyes are reflective like an alligator's, and it is easily blinded by bright light down in the dark where it hunts. Its claws are equal to rippers, and its fangs are equal to a full-mouth set of implanted fangs. It may make three attacks each turn, one with each of its weapons. These must all be directed at one opponent, however.

If it is critically injured during a fight, it will flee to its lair to lick its wounds. Here its rapid healing ability (4 points per day) will get it back up and running in fairly short order.

The creature hasn't yet come across an entrance to the subways from the underground, nor has it found an exit to Elliot Bay.

FREAK SHOW

Following are rules suggestions to help *Cyberpunk* create biotech horrors of their own. These rules are intended to be skeletal and adaptable to your particular campaign situation.

To begin with, the following must be determined:

Type of Experiment: Anything from breeding bigger Komodo dragons to gene-splicing human and wolf DNA. It's up to you.

Type of Animal: This will be determined in part by what the experiments were supposed to accomplish. Again, it's up to you.

Statistics: Roll the animal's stats (1D10 for each). All animals have INT, REF, COOL, LUCK, MA and BODY. All animals have an INT of zero unless they develop the INT Gain trait.

Apply any modifiers to these stats that make sense. For example, a gorilla is going to have a BODY of higher than 10, while a goldfish's BODY is going to be 1 or 2 at the most.

Skill Equivalents: Creatures should also be given a number of skills (or their equivalents) to account for their learned abilities and instincts. Common sense should prevail here.

Number and Type of Traits: Roll for these, or decide how many traits your beast has, then roll or pick them from the following table:

Traits	
2D10	Encounter
2	Armor plating (SP 10+2D10)
3-4	Claws/talons/fangs
5	Cloning (replication from pieces)
6	Enhanced senses
7	Flexible/malleable skeleton
8	Gills
9	INT gain (+1D6)
10-12	Larger (1 to 100%)
13	Poison bite/stinger/skin
14	Rapid mass gain (size increases every time it feeds)
15	Regeneration (rapid healing, 4 points per day)
16	Resilient skin (SP 2D10)
17	Smaller (1 to 100%)
18	Spines/tail
19	Superhuman STR (Body 10+1D10)
20	Webbed "hands" and "feet"

Traits possessed by the creature will depend on what the experiments were meant to accomplish.

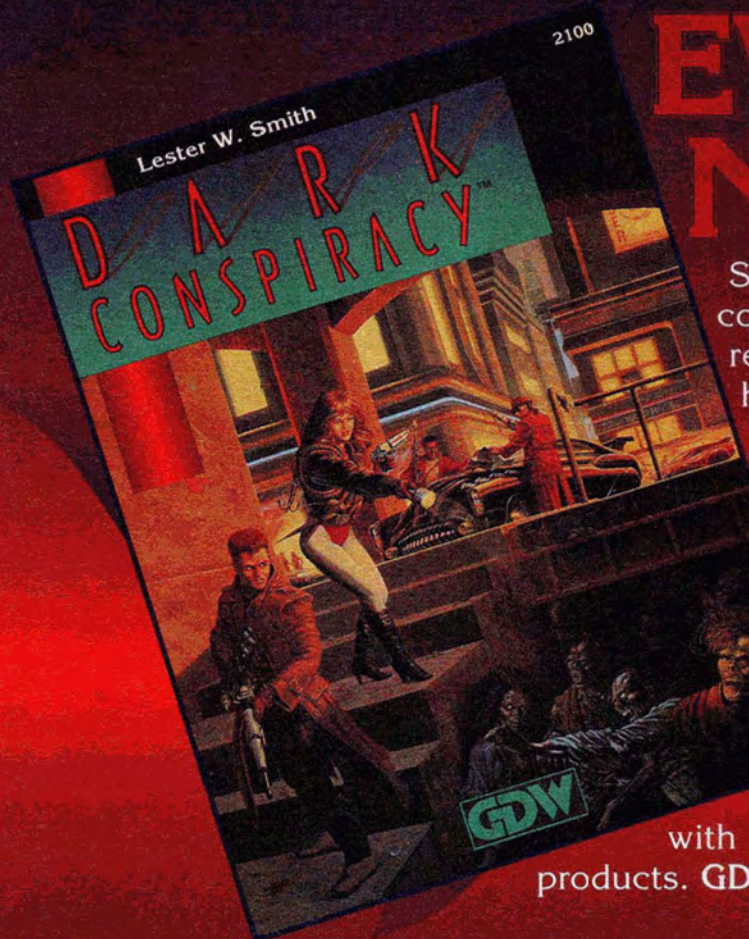
For ease of conversion, all traits (where possible) should be the equivalent of one or more cybernetic enhancements described in the game's basic rule book. Thus, it should be easy for referees to come up with newer and more gruesome traits. Ω

To find out more about the Seattle underground and tours that go through, write to Bill Speidel's Underground Tour, 610 First Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104.

Thanks especially to Phyllis for being so helpful.

W

ELCOME TO EVERYONE'S NIGHTMARE



Shapes that rip and tear. Shadows that live in corners. Windows in space and time that lead to realms of madness and decay. A dark, lurking horror that feeds off the echoing anguish of a billion souls. When an ancient, brooding evil is released from its dimensional prison, humanity's worst nightmares come to life. What is the link between this eldritch, lurking horror and the alien visitors from another star system? Set in the near future, the world of **Dark Conspiracy** is fraught with peril and challenge. Can you turn back the forces of darkness?

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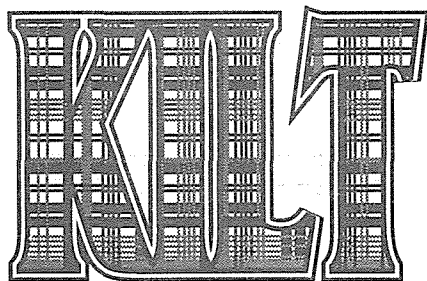
WELCOME TO DARK CONSPIRACY



FRESHLY

Article by
Christopher E. Wolf

The further we went from civilization, the weirder it got.



dwarven stats because they are naturally rugged folk.

The professor will mysteriously make it through the brawl unscathed, without even a hair out of place. If the PCs question him or comment on this, he will state that he has always been naturally lucky.

REFEREE

The goal of the referee is to exploit the spooky aspects of the adventure, setting the players' nerves on edge as much as possible before the confrontations in the cave.

The professor should come off looking extraordinarily lucky—unnaturally so. In fact, there is nothing supernatural about the professor—he just happens to be naturally lucky.

JOURNEY INTO THE WILDERNESS

The trip consists of driving north to Fort William, then travelling a half-day's ride on horseback to the foot of the Cairngorm Mountains. The PCs will deal with a variety of threats and obstacles along the way.

Check for encounters using the Daytime Encounters or Nighttime Encounters Table, as appropriate.

As they ride further and further from civilization, the PCs may begin to feel somewhat spooked, with a creepy-crawly feeling down the back of their necks. Play this up, with strange animal noises off in the distance, followed by complete silence, foliage seeming to reach out toward them as they brush by, and an ever-increasing feeling of being alone—or not so alone.

The player characters may begin to ask themselves what they're really doing here and what the lucky professor is all about.

When they finally arrive at their campsite at the foot of the mountains, it is near dusk. They are then in for a long night of strange howls, grunts and an eerie whistling wind.

After the PCs get a fitful night's rest, the professor (who proclaims he slept like a baby) is wide awake and eager to

begin his work. The runners will need to unpack the mountaineering equipment, for what the professor seeks is at the peak of the mountain.

Runners who climb the mountain must make an unresisted success test, target number 5, using Climbing or Athletics, or, if all else fails, Body. They must make this skill test twice—once ascending and once descending.

If the runners rope themselves together, the target number is decreased by 1. Then, if anybody fails the test, instead of falling and taking a serious wound, he is caught and takes a light wound.

The gamemaster should also make a daytime encounter check when the characters reach the top of the mountain.

The trip up the mountain is an adventure in itself. Previously sure footing suddenly crumbles, threatening to topple the PCs into a ravine. Strange birds or bats dart out of crevasses into a climber's face. And the wind constantly threatens to snatch them from their precarious perch.

Still, no matter how much it looks like the professor is in danger, he'll never take more than a light wound, and he'll ask, "What the devil is everyone so worked up about?" The PCs may begin to wonder why he thought he needed bodyguards.

CAVE DWELLERS

After the samples are collected and the characters begin their descent, the professor announces that he needs a certain ore from a nearby cave. What he forgets to mention is that the cave is a radiation site. Fun in the sun, chummers—better put on some sunblock 99!

Deep in the cave is the vein of ore that the professor needs. To get there (and back), the PCs will face a variety of threats, determined by rolling on the Toxic Encounters Table. Once they reach the vein, they will find it guarded by the group of giant spiders which live nearby. Looks like the PCs get to earn their pay.

The player characters are told by one of their street contacts (a mage would be best) that a certain alchemist is looking to hire bodyguards for a wilderness expedition. If the characters are interested, he'll slot them a contact number for £30 sterling. When the characters call the number, a cultured female voice will tell them to slot their names so their reps can be accessed. After a few moments, the voice will tell them to be at 7A Frith St. at 8 p.m. The location is Serena's Hermetical Supply Shop (see page 72 of the *London Sourcebook*).

The PCs will be directed to Shaw's Edinburghers (see page 130 of the *London Sourcebook*) to meet their patron. When they arrive, the PCs will be greeted by Professor Elias Wetheral, a small man dressed in shorts and wearing a pith helmet. He explains that he is an alchemist, and he needs bodyguards to protect him from the denizens of the wilderness while he collects some samples he needs. He is willing to pay £5000 a day.

If the PCs accept his offer, he tells them to be ready to leave early tomorrow morning.

Their trip, however, is not set for an uneventful beginning. While they are still at Shaw's Edinburghers, they are caught in a brawl between two feuding clans (the Campbells and the MacDonalds). All the combat is nonlethal, unless the runners stupidly make it lethal. If that should happen, both clans will turn on the runners and attack them jointly.

Depending on how the player characters acted during the brawl, they could have made some contacts or enemies. The Scottish clansmen use regular

DAYTIME ENCOUNTERS

Roll 2D6 for encounters in the morning, at noon and at dusk, and consult the following table:

Roll Result

2 Free Spirits: 1D6 are present. Roll 1D6:

1: Field Spirit: Force 9, Energy: 6, Powers: Animal Form, Wealth, Personal Domain, Aura Masking.

2: Water Elemental: Force: 6, Energy: 2, Powers: Animal Form, Personal Domain, Hidden Life, Possession.

3: Mountain Spirit: Force: 7, Energy: 5, Powers: Dispelling, Human Form.

4: Water Elemental: Force: 9, Energy: 7, Powers: Astral Gateway, Wealth, Human Form, Aura Masking.

5: Earth Elemental: Force: 10, Energy: 7, Powers: Human Form, Hidden Life, Possession.
6: River Spirit: Force: 9, Energy: 8, Powers: Aura Masking, Personal Domain.

3 Scottish Druid/Hermit: Not feeling too sociable today, he will summon up a Mist spirit to conceal himself from the group.

4 Bombardiers: A group of bombardiers drop ordnance on the party from trees and chitter squirrel talk at them.

5-6 Bogies: Three Bogies attack the group (see page 34 of the *Paranormal Animal Guide to North America*).

7 Guardians: Characters stumble across a standing stone guarded by three Watcher Spirits and a Salamander. If anyone approaches within five feet of the stone, the Salamander will attack.

8 Spirits: One to three are present:
1: Air Elemental: Force: 9, Energy: 6, Powers: Astral Gateway, Wealth, Hidden Life.

2: Nature Forest Spirit: Force: 8, Energy: 5, Powers: Animal Form, Aura Masking, Astral Gateway.
3: Mist Spirit: Force: 4, Energy: 2, Powers: Animal Form, Aura Masking.

9 Clan of Bear Shapeshifters: They will not be overly hostile unless they are provoked.

10 Broobies: A flock of broobies is nearby. If left alone, they will leave the group alone. If somehow the party disturbs them, they will attack.

11 Dzoo-noo-quaa: Dzoo-noo-quaa is out foraging for food. It is quite possible that one or two of the party members might look quite appetizing.

12 Trail: The characters come across a strange trail that leads into the wilderness.

NIGHTTIME ENCOUNTERS

Check once at late evening, midnight and just before dawn. Roll 2D6 and consult the following table:

Roll Result

2 Spirits: Same as on the Daytime Encounters Table.

3 Gloaming Owl: It attacks.

4 Snake: A runner at random is awakened by a snake in his sleeping bag.

5-6 Stonebinders: Flock of stonebinders attacks the group.

7 Rabbit: A homicidal rabbit (possessed by a nomad) attacks whoever is on watch at that time. If the character kills the rabbit, the nomad will attempt to possess him.

8 Green Man: The runner on guard duty sees a giant, green man riding on a great antlered horse with a large number of hell hounds around him. If the runners don't attack him, he will curb his hounds and approach the group. He has a wager for anyone who would care to take him up on it. Being the gambling man that he is and times being what they are, he has this offer: Play a few hands of poker with him, and he will grant the winner one wish within his power if they win, but the runners must put up not money, but karma points. At this point the gamemaster can get out a deck of cards and play out a game of poker. Or the runners involved in the game can make a skill test 4 using Gambling skill or Intelligence. The Green Man's Gambling skill is 6. Whoever rolls the most successes wins the hand.

9 Spirits: Same as on the Daytime Encounters Table.

10 Spirits: Same as on the Daytime Encounters Table.

11 Saber-Tooth Cat: A saber-tooth cat attacks the group.

12 Mysterious Animals: The player characters see glowing eyes and hear noises off in the darkness, but they can't find anything out there.

TOXIC ENCOUNTERS

Make two encounter checks on the way into the cave and two checks on the way back out, rolling 1D6 on the following chart:

Roll Result

1 Earth Spirit: The runners come across a black standing stone. A toxic Earth Spirit is nearby and will attack anyone who gets close to the stone.

2 Water Elemental: The runners encounter what looks like to be an oil slick, but it is actually the domain of a toxic Water Elemental that will attack the group.

3 Devil Rats: The runners come across the ruins of some sort of dwelling. If they investigate them, they will be attacked by 2D6 devil rats.

4 Corpse Light: A random PC is attacked by a corpse light.

5 Bogies: The runners are attacked by a sickly looking pack of bogies.

6 Giant Spiders: The runners are attacked by a group of giant spiders. See the sidebar for more details.

Giant Spiders

The spiders try to inject their victims with a paralyzing poison. They then wrap them in sticky webbing and hang them upside down from the scraggly trees. The spiders will wait at least 24 hours before they suck the fluids from their victims, which may give the PCs enough time to devise a plan of escape.

Body: 9

Strength: 6

Quickness: 4x4

Charisma: -

Intelligence: 3

Willpower: 3

Essence: 6

Reaction: 4

Attacks: 3L2+special

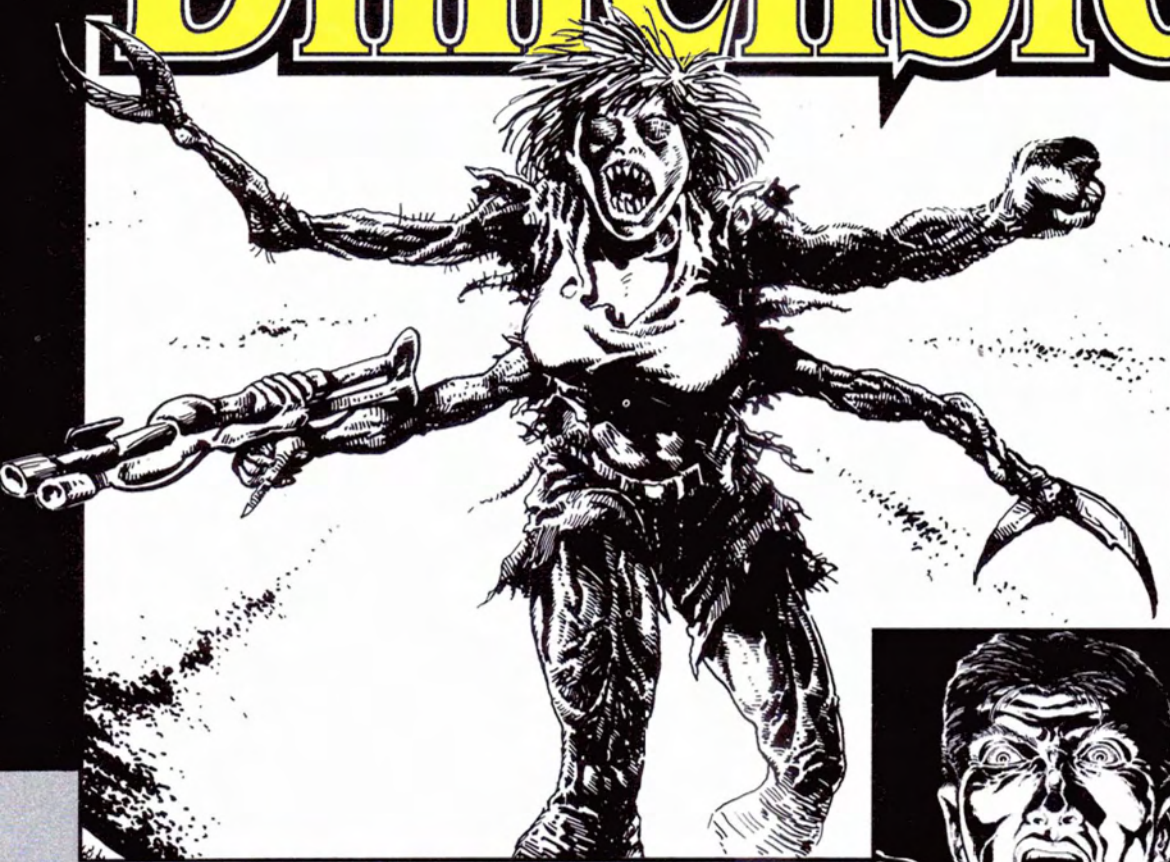
Powers: Venom, Regeneration, Silence (the venom has the damage code of 6S2, but has the same effect as paralyzing touch)

Vulnerability: Orichalcum, Severe

CONCLUSION

Assuming the PCs can escape from the, ahem, sticky situation, they will walk away with their promised pay, a bonus from the professor, and perhaps a phobia of the wilderness in general or spiders in particular. They will also have developed a future contact with Serena's Hermetical Supply Shop and the mysterious professor. Ω

Proto-Dimensions™



Warning:
Proto-Dimensional
walking can
have severe
side effects...
maybe.

Volume 1



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

GDW: 2109. \$12.

GDW



Shadow of the Dark Side

Standing behind the pilot's chair, the once-Jedi apprentice studied the beautiful green and blue planet below through the transparisteel cockpit view port, trying to discern a reason for his anxiety and uneasiness. Somehow, he didn't feel quite right about what, by appearances, was a peaceful, benevolent world.

Suddenly, the minor Jedi tensed, his eyes widening in surprise as he clutched at the headrest of the pilot's chair in front of him. A low moan escaped his lips as tears welled up in his eyes and ran down his cheeks.

By James B. King



Seated in front of him, the pilot turned to look over her shoulder, then laid her hand on his forearm. "What is it? What do you sense?"

The minor Jedi's eyes remained transfixed on the vast globe below. When he tried to speak, he began to sob, but he forced the words. "They...are calling to me. A hundred souls...such terrible anguish...." The Jedi apprentice effortfully calmed his trembling body and cleared his eyes, then returned the gaze of the concerned pilot. "They are imprisoned in blackness...in the shadow of the Dark Side. We must help them."

The following adventure takes place on a newly discovered planet on the fringe of the Outer Rim. If the PCs are rebels, they may have been sent to the planet to conduct an initial survey after another rebel ship stumbled upon the planet by accident. If the PCs are free traders, perhaps they heard rumors in a cantina of a trader who discovered an unknown jungle planet with abandoned treasure cities—haunted by ghosts. Or maybe the PCs' hyperdrive malfunctions, sending them off course, and they discover a planet barely within sensor range that does not appear in their data.

TELEPATHIC CONTACT

The character group should include a PC or NPC trained in the ways of the Force. Shortly after the PCs establish orbit above the unnamed jungle planet, the Jedi character experiences an almost overwhelming sense of anguish emanating from the planet below—the cries of 100 despairing people. Though he cannot understand the language they use, their emotional distress is quite clear. What is also clear is that these people are simultaneously using some form of Projective Telepathy—a Force power. The Jedi character senses that

these people are trapped in some sort of Dark Side emanation on the planet's surface. When the telepathic contact ceases, the Jedi is left with an impression of the general location of the emanation.

A Jedi's goal is to sustain freedom and life, and to defeat those who would impose tyranny and death. As this is part of the Jedi code, the Jedi character should feel strongly compelled to go to the aid of those in need on the surface below.

LANDING ON THE SURFACE

With the Jedi acting as guide, the pilot drops the ship toward the largest continent. As the ship approaches the site over dense jungle foliage, the characters spot several massive stone structures that rise above the concealing trees—indicating the presence of a native sentient species!

Though heavily overgrown, it is obvious that these stone temples are highly ornate and of complex construction, though some show serious disrepair and decay. They appear to be abandoned; not a single person or creature is visible among the temples.

Because of heavy tree growth, the nearest clearing large enough to accommodate the PCs' ship is about five kilometers distant.

Once the rebels have exited their ship, allow each of them a Moderate Perception roll. Upon success, a character spots what appears to be a small ship concealed within the foliage at the edge of the clearing. Investigation reveals that the vessel is a small four-person ship. An Easy Technology roll reveals that the vessel is a type that hasn't been manufactured for four decades, though there are still many in operation. A Moderate Technology roll reveals that the vessel is a type that was used by the Interstellar Survey Corps, the forerunner to the current Imperial Survey Corps.

The ship is abandoned and has been here for a long time. However, it has remained sealed all these years, and the interior is clean and unsoiled.

The foliage has grown up around the vessel and has actually lifted the landing gear a meter off the ground. With several days of concerted effort, the ship could be freed from the jungle's grasp. Then, after some lengthy servicing of drives and computer systems, the ship could actually be flown.

JUNGLE PASSAGE

Because the rebels are very near to the Dark Side emanation, the Jedi will

continually feel anxious and ill at ease. This feeling will become increasingly discomforting as the group approaches the temples.

If the rebels have speeder bikes, it requires but a short hop to get to the temples. Otherwise, they must trek through the jungle to get there. Keep in mind that landspeeders, with their low flight ceiling, will not be able to navigate the jungle; even speeder bikes will do so with some difficulty.

If the rebels trek into the jungle on foot, describe how the sunlight is diffused by the tree canopy high above, leaving the thickly overgrown jungle floor dimly lit, and how the jungle is alive with the buzz of insects and the muffled cries of animal life. Within moments, heat, humidity and exertion leave the group drenched in perspiration.

If the PCs have vibroblades (or a light saber) to cut a path through the brush and vines, they can manage a steady two kilometers per hour with considerable effort. Without them, they'll manage no more than one kilometer per hour (there are animal trails, but none go in the direction of the temples).

When the group has penetrated two kilometers into the jungle, allow each player an Easy Perception roll to realize that there are no more animal trails, no buzzing insects, no animal cries. In the ominous silence, it appears that even the lowly creatures of the jungle avoid living in the shadow of the Dark Side.

DANGEROUS SHADOWS

The Jedi apprentice effortlessly swung his light saber through the thick, moisture-laden vines hanging before him, scorching the severed ends and creating small clouds of steam. He stopped to check the progress of his companions, then wiped his sleeve across his brow to remove the perspiration that threatened to flow into his eyes.

Suddenly, the hairs on the back of his neck prickled, and a shiver ran down the length of his spine. There was a disturbance in the Force emanating from the jungle around him, a disturbance emanating from the Dark Side—and quickly closing in from all sides!

The Jedi signaled his companions to take cover, then prepared himself for combat, grasping his light saber tightly before him with both hands.

Then he saw them. Shadows separated from the dimness of the jungle, slowly approaching. The dark forms began moving rapidly, weaving patterns around him, apparently unhindered by brush or trees and never touching the ground. Though they were humanoid in

form, he sensed no life in them.

Suddenly, the Jedi felt excruciating pain stab into his chest and rapidly spread to his entire body—as if he were on fire. He gasped, then slumped to the ground, his lungs unwilling to release the air that would allow him to scream.

When the Rebels get to within one kilometer of the temples, they are attacked by Dark Side wraiths—shadow forms of ancient Dark Side priests who cling to a half-life through the powerful Dark Side emanation. The wraiths are visible only to Force-sensitives. The other PCs will not see their attackers.

The Jedi is attacked first, by a single wraith using the Inflict Pain power. This attack continues until the Jedi uses his Control Pain power (avoid stunning the Jedi to unconsciousness). Once he does, the attack is switched to another character. It continues until the Jedi attempts the Control Another's Pain power (assuming he has the Alter skill—if the Jedi has the Alter skill but does not have this particular power, you may have to remind the player that he can still attempt to use it, though at greater difficulty) or until the second character loses consciousness (which is what happens if the Jedi does not have Alter skill).

At this point, the attack ceases, and the wraiths disappear back into the jungle. Having detected a Force-sensitive among the rebels, they have succeeded in their intent to determine his level of skill and training.

If the rebels have speeder bikes or airspeeders, this attack occurs when the characters step away from their vehicles after their arrival at the temples.

Dark Side Wraiths

There are six wraiths. Though they hold onto a semblance of life, they lost some of their skill levels and many of their powers upon their deaths (including Injure/Kill and Telekinetic Kill).

Force Skills: Control: 6D, Sense: 5D, Alter: 5D.

Powers: Life Sense, Projective Telepathy (which they use to communicate with each other), Telekinesis, Inflict Pain, Affect Mind, Sense Force and Dim Other's Senses.

TEMPLE

Upon arrival at the temples, the group finds six large, stepped, pyramidal structures surrounding a 100-meter by 200-meter rectangular, stone-surfaced plaza. Atop each pyramid are the ruins of an ornate temple structure. A pyramid at one end of the plaza is considerably

larger than the others, as is the temple atop it. Surrounding the temples are the remains of a city, most of which is now fallen down and overgrown by the encroaching jungle.

There is little massive stone sculpture at the site, but there is considerable architectural embellishment and relief sculpture. The relief sculpture portrays a short, stocky, bipedal race with large eyes and ears. An Easy Cultures roll reveals from the scenes depicted that there were six priests or leaders who were greatly revered—if not worshipped—by the inhabitants of the city. It is also apparent that the people had enemies. Several battle scenes are depicted, as well as scenes showing the priests standing over what appear to be sacrificial victims. The priests are holding their hands toward their victims, who appear to writhe about in pain, clutching at their throats, while what appears to be their souls or spirits leave the bodies in a semi-vaporious state.

Searching the city and temples reveals nothing living. However, at the base of the large temple are the skeletal remains of four beings. The skeletons are partially dismembered. A Moderate Medicine roll for each reveals the cause of death—bludgeoning. Two have crushed skulls, while the other two suffered serious crushing damage in the torso area.

If the rebels search the immediate area around the skeletons, a Very Easy Search roll reveals a tarnished metal insignia (four successful rolls will find all four). A Moderate Knowledge roll (or possibly Bureaucracy) reveals the insignia to be that of the old Interstellar Survey Corps.

THE SHADOWS RETURN

While the whole plaza reeks with the stench of evil, the Jedi senses that the strongest emanation is atop the largest pyramid. However, before the rebels can begin the climb, the wraiths assault them again.

Each wraith attacks an individual PC. If there are fewer PCs than wraiths, then each PC suffers one attack. The wraiths use the Affect Mind power, aiming for effects which are Very Difficult. Each attack should be different. For instance, one PC might be convinced that he has been a complete failure in everything he has attempted in life and is a complete embarrassment to his family. In his utter depression, the only recourse left is suicide. If the attack is successful, the PC draws his blaster and shoots himself. Another PC may be convinced that he has irrefutable evidence that one of

his companions is an Imperial spy and that the traitor must be executed before he can escape. Another may be convinced that a companion has stolen his fiancée, and he's just got to give him a good thrashing to vent his anger. Even if a wraith's attack fails, describe the thoughts and feelings that pass through the character's mind. This should alert him to the attack, and he may be able to intercede with reaction skills and stop another character from harming others.

CLIMBING THE PYRAMID

At the top of the pyramid, two meters from the edge of the steps, is a two-meter by six-meter pit that is 10 meters deep. During sacrificial ceremonies, the dead were deposited here and removed later by servants via a passage through the side of the structure. If the rebels reach the top, the wraiths strike again using Dim Other's Senses. The wraiths combine their attacks on the first three characters, two attacking each. Either roll for or allow the players to make Very Easy Perception rolls after you have determined the results of the attack. If a PC fails, he walks into the pit. Allow falling PCs a Moderate Dexterity roll to grab the edge of the pit, then allow a Moderate Strength roll to hold on and stop the fall. Treat these rolls as Reaction or Haste rolls. Any character who fails suffers 4D damage. An unaffected PC who is within two meters of a falling PC can attempt an Easy Haste action against Dexterity to grab his falling companion and pull him to safety.

ALTAR OF THE DARK SIDE

At the top of the pyramid, the rebels find a meter-high altar with six man-sized depressions on its top surface. At the head of each depression is a small dais large enough to stand on. Narrow steps behind each dais are constructed into the back side of the altar. The altar is identical to the one depicted in the sacrificial scenes in the relief sculpture.

The Jedi senses that the altar is the primary source of the emanation. The players may by now suspect that their search for anguished souls is exactly that—the souls of dead beings who are trapped in the stone altar.

At this point, one of two things happen: either the Jedi initiates Receptive Telepathy (if he attempts Projective Telepathy, tell him he can't grasp onto a mind to do so) or one of the souls in the stone projects his thoughts to the Jedi.

If the Jedi uses Receptive Telepathy (with very high modifiers because of relationship), success reveals little because of the person's language—though

the person's anguish can be felt. After the first attempt, the Jedi is overwhelmed by what he senses in the stone—there are not 100 souls trapped in the altar, but thousands! Allow the Jedi to continue, but drop the relationship modifier by -10. Upon success, the Jedi has grasped onto the thoughts of a person who speaks Basic. Immediately, a soul in the stone uses Projective Telepathy to contact the Jedi (which also happens if the Jedi does not himself initiate contact) and relates the following story (have the Jedi player read the following passage, as if he were relating the tale to the others as he received it):

I am Master Zik'tath. I, like you, have learned the subtle ways of the Force. We are grateful that one who is free of the taint of the Dark Side has come to our aid. You must free us. But first, I will tell you of the plight of my people, in hope that yours will not choose the dark, seductive path that destroyed mine.

Perception of the mystical nature of the Force came easily to many of my species. But while many of my ancestors studied the Force and chose the road of light and harmony, many instead chose the dark path. Sadly, the order of darkness soon overpowered that of light, and my ancestral brethren were forced into hiding, hunted by the avatars of the Dark Side.

Over time, the dark masters became the overseers of both government and religion; the six strongest of the avatars became priests who were like unto gods. And, as gods, they thirsted for war and death upon those who would not cower under their heel. They established a system of daily sacrifices—if there were no chained enemies to slay, they chose from their own followers by lottery. At times, hundreds were killed in a single day.

Because the priests killed by using deadly Force powers, the stench of the power of the Dark Side settled into the altar stone like black tar flows into a depression in the soil. Over time, the foulness of the stone became so great that the souls of the dead, instead of being free to join with the Force, were instead sucked into the reeking stone of the altar.

Over the sad course of 2000 years, death and war continued. Through all this time, there were always a few servants of light who labored against the darkness. But, in time, any who served light were found and sacrificed. I, Zik'tath, was one of the last of my brethren, and am one of 100 followers of light, Force-sensitives, who are trapped within this stone.

Shortly after my death, there was great civil strife and rebellion. The Dark Side manifested itself in horrible wars—in the brutal and savage slaughter that followed. A decade of slaughter ended with the destruction of my people. But in the end, the avatars of darkness were destroyed as well. However, the black priests managed to maintain a wraith-like semblance of life because of the powerful Dark Side emanation of the altar. It was they who killed the four of your kind who visited here some 40 years ago. And, because the humans died in close proximity to the altar, their souls were sucked into it as well. It is from them that I learned your language.

Our world is empty of the people who once thrived upon it. All were destroyed because of the depredations of the Dark Side. Now you must destroy the altar and free us so that the last souls of my people, both good and evil, can join in harmony with the Force.

DESTROYING THE ALTAR

The rebels likely have explosives of some type, though they may have to return to their ship to get them. If they do not, this is a good opportunity to use the information in *Cracken's Rebel Field Guide* for assembling jury-rigged explosives.

The altar is constructed of unmortared

cut stone. Treat it as having a Strength of 10D (character scale).

Just when the PCs get their plan in order and are ready to place the explosives, the Jedi senses a rapidly growing disturbance from the Dark Side—the shadow wraiths are attacking!

The six shadow priests use Telekinesis, picking up stones and "throwing" them at the PCs (this is how they killed the four survey crew). The priests pick up a variety of stones of varying sizes during the attack. Once a stone has been successfully picked up, the power can be kept "up," though a separate Telekinesis roll must be made for each attack. Use the same difficulty number to attack with a stone as was required to pick it up (i.e., Easy for a 10-kilogram rock) and apply the following damage scale:

Weight	Difficulty
Up to 1 kg	2D
1-10 kg	3D
11-100 kg	4D
101 kg to 1 metric ton	5D

Through the attack, the PCs will be trying to reach the altar, set the explosives, dodge flying rocks or destroy the rocks. If they try to destroy the fast-moving rocks, treat them as having a Strength equal to the damage they in-

flict, but ignore damage results that are less than destroyed.

If the PCs do exceptionally well against the rocks, you might consider having the wraiths pick up a character or two and drop them down the pit, or fling them into a wall or down the steps of the pyramid, inflicting 4D damage.

A damage result less than destroyed will not affect the wraiths or the Dark Side properties of the altar. When the altar is successfully destroyed, the telekinetically propelled rocks abruptly drop lifelessly to the ground. The Jedi senses a rapid dissipation of the strength of the Dark Side. Though the darkness still flows through the rock of the temple site, its power is greatly reduced.

The Jedi senses overwhelming emotions of peace and relief. Then, 100 alien beings, made familiar by the temple relief sculptures, appear all around the rebels, all haloed by a bright blue glow. The Jedi senses the peace and contentment of their souls, and their everlasting gratitude. An alien steps from the assembly to stand before the Jedi, a smile illuminating his face. It is Zik'tath. He nods toward the Jedi, then speaks. "May you one day champion the way of light as a true Jedi Master." With that, the alien Master raises his hand in farewell. Then the assembled souls fade away, to become one with the Force. Ω

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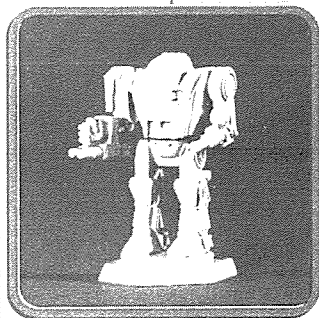
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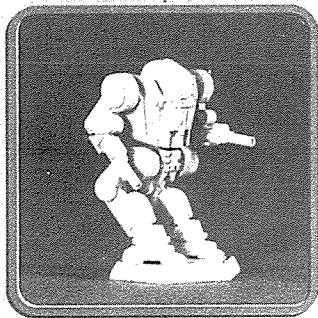
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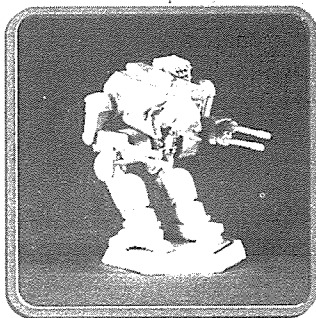


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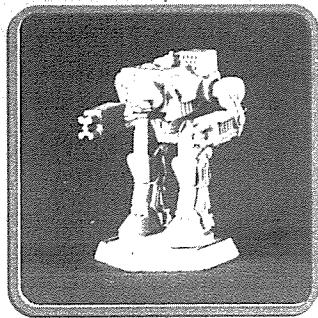


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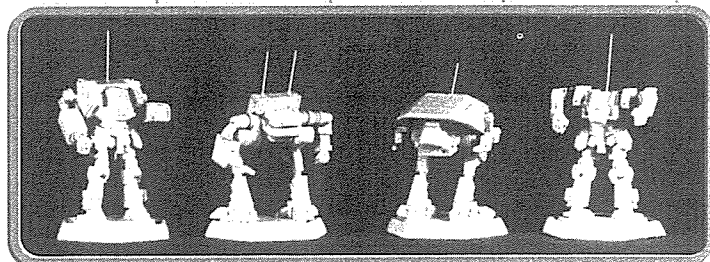


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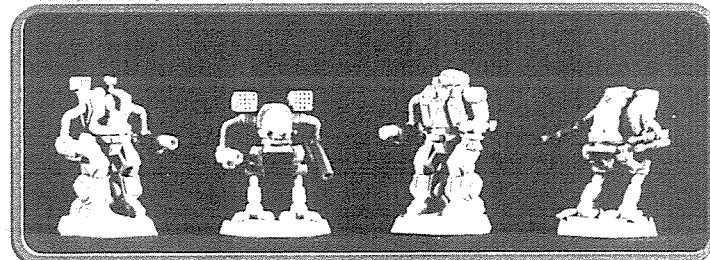
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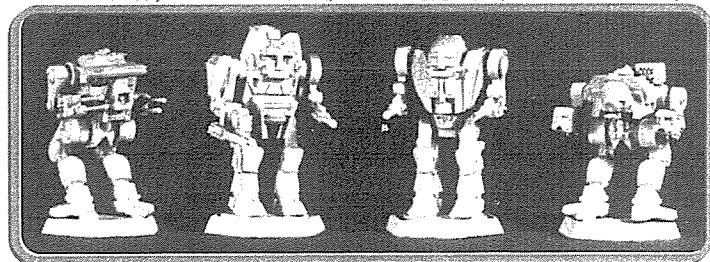
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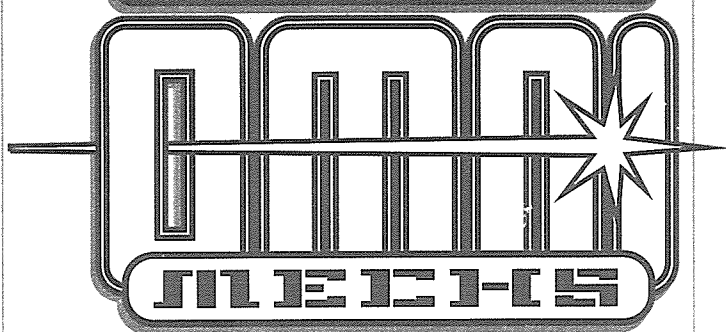


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COMPUTER BBS GAMING

By Mitch Lavender

Do you like the competition and level of strategy that play-by-mail games offer, but hate the wait in-between turns? Try computer BBS on-line games.

Computer Bulletin Board Services (BBSs) offer a variety of on-line games (sometimes called "doors"), often for no charge at all, although most BBSs do accept donations to help offset the costs of maintaining the computer and phone line(s). Users who make a donation to the BBS are usually given privileges such as additional time on the BBS or access to special areas.

The big difference between a computer game and a BBS on-line game is the player

interaction. Rather than competing against a computer player, or perhaps two or three real players, there are 20 or 30 real players in the game. Huge alliances can be formed, concerted attacks and joint ventures, and woe to the victims! The game can take a day, a week, a month or more to complete, and the players can call and take their turns when it is convenient for them (provided, of course, they are willing to auto-dial until they get through). Only PBM offers similar features, but PBM can be quite costly, and the time between turns can be as long as two or three weeks.

The ease of access to on-line games produces a problem, though. Not all the players in a game know what they are doing or even what they are playing. They may have just been curious about what the game

was like, went in to take a look at it and then left. They are now on the list as a player in the game, but they may not call back again. I once started playing in a game of Galactic Warzone, seeing that there were 15 or so names on the player list. Three days and 450 moves later, I noticed mine was the only score that had changed. I was the only one playing the game.

This is discouraging, and it seems that the more complex and strategic a game is, the more likely it is that participation will be low. Hopefully, you live in an area that has a selection of BBSs to call, and you can locate one that specializes in on-line gaming. These types of BBSs draw the more dedicated players and generally have more active games going on than a typical BBS does. If you don't, then do what you can to fire

interest in the other users on the board. Hype the game, leave them messages inviting them to play, etc. Some people just need a little encouragement to get them going.

TURN PROCEDURE

The way turns are handled in an on-line game is unique to each game, but most follow a procedure similar to this:

1. The user logs on to the BBS via a computer, modem and phone line.

2. He selects a game to play from a game menu within the BBS. The game loads (this takes a few seconds).

3. Once in the game, a title screen will be displayed, and the user is usually given another menu with selections like, "Read instructions," "Play," "Return to BBS," etc.

4. If the user chooses to play, he is allowed to enter an alias to use within the game.

5. The user begins the game, receiving a specific amount of moves and a maximum time allowance for use in the game each day.

6. The user can interact with others within the game by sending messages, thus forming alliances with other players. This varies from game to game. In one on-line RPG, the player moves around on a map and has to locate and move adjacent to another player before communicating with him. In a space game, the player might simply be able to send a "sub-space message" to another player, regardless of location within the universe.

7. When the player has completed his turn, he may quit the game, and his status will be saved by the BBS computer. The next time he logs into the game, he will resume where he left off, assuming no one attacked in the time that passed between calls.

8. Sometime during each 24-hour period, usually at midnight, the game runs its maintenance. It restocks ports and moves computer-controlled players, wipes out players who haven't called in 21 days to clear a space for new players and checks to see if anyone has won yet.

9. Most games are played to a specific goal or victory condition. Once that point is reached, the game declares a winner and restarts. Some sysops offer prizes in the form of additional time on the BBS or some other token, but most games are just played for the enjoyment they offer.

ON-LINE GAME REVIEWS

Following are some reviews of the more popular and widely available SF on-line games. I have devised a system for evaluating various characteristics, including a rating on a range of 1 to 10 when appropriate:

Complexity: How hard the game is to master and the level of strategy required to play the game effectively. Monopoly would rank 2, Risk would rank 5 and Supremacy would rank 8.

Devotion: A ranking of 1 means you could play the game whenever you wanted and still do well competitively. A ranking of 10 indicates that it is necessary that you call and do a turn in the game every day or every other day if you want to have any chance of winning.

Player Interaction: This measures how much interaction and communication between players the game allows. Includes the ranking of the importance of interaction between players in the game.

Graphics: This is a ranking of how much graphics the game uses, as well as support for additional input devices such as a mouse. A ranking of 1 would indicate noncolored text and keyboard-only input, while a score of 10 would indicate commercial-quality graphics and mouse support. Most of the games use ANSI graphics and require that the player use a communications program that supports ANSI. If you aren't sure if yours does or not, check your user manual.

Average Time: How long it takes to complete a game.

Type: Type of game—space exploration, war, RPG, etc.

I have also included support site information. If you are a sysop of a BBS and can't locate the game in your area, you can call these support site BBSs, or you can call The State Of Confusion BBS (817) 738-3879 and download the files from there.

Alpha Colony VI

The Solar Realm BBS (713) 855-1665

Complexity: 6

Devotion: 6

Player Interaction: 7

Average Time: Indefinite

Type: Space colonization

In Alpha Colony VI, each player assumes the responsibility of a governmental authority in a space colony. Each turn, players must make decisions as to what commodities will be bought or sold, what technologies will they work to develop, which colonies will be attacked and which colonies will they attempt to ally with.

While the game offers little in the way of graphics, it makes excellent use of the colors available to differentiate the data in the many information screens that the game displays each turn. Players can trade and ally with each other, and a wide variety of attacks can be made, from conventional to nuclear. An intergalactic stock market allows the players to dabble in the economic well-being of the universe.

Alpha Colony VI is the second generation of another game called Solar Realms Elite, both programmed by Mehul Patel. The two are very similar in concept and execution, but Alpha Colony VI has additional features lacking in its predecessor. Both games are currently in circulation.

Galactic Warzone

The Not yet Named BBS (602) 577-3650

Complexity: 10

Devotion: 8

Player Interaction: 8

Graphics: 6

Type: Space conquest/strategy

Galactic Warzone is a game in which players compete against each other and three large, computer-controlled factions—the Federation, the Cabal and the Pirates. The object of the game is to acquire enough power to overthrow these three computer-controlled leagues and take their planets, thus taking control of the galaxy.

Players start out with a weak ship and a few cargo bays. Moving from port to port, they may buy and sell materials, earning credits to further advance their vessel. Some ports also have gambling. Players can establish their own outposts, which function like ports, except they buy and sell only the goods the player stocks them with and only at the rates he specifies. There is a stock market that the players can invest in, and they can contract missions from the Federation to hunt down Cabal ships. Even reporting the location of previously unknown Cabal ships earns a reward.

Only through months of play can a player fully realize the depth of the strategy woven throughout this game.

There are in excess of 100 different "devices" which a player can equip a ship with, each performing a different function. The size of the universe in Galactic Warzone is configurable by the sysop, but 5000 sectors is usually adequate, and some sysops run the game with much smaller universes.

Global War

ProVision BBS (206) 353-6966 or (206) 353-2494

Complexity: 6

Devotion: 8

Player Interaction: 9

Graphics: 6 without the terminal program, 8 with the terminal program

Average Time: 1-3 weeks

Type: Wargame

In this game, three to six players compete for domination of all the countries on Earth. The world map display shows all the countries and armies, as well as the owning players. Combat occurs by attacking from one country into an adjacent country. Computer dice rolls determine the results, and if the attacker destroys all the occupying player's armies, he may move some of his own armies in and claim the country.

This is a Risk-type game. The few differences from the classic boardgame are small. The terminal program allows the player to use a mouse and considerably increases the speed at which the screens are drawn. The game also allows for playing in team

games and allows each player to play in a set number of games simultaneously, usually five. A maximum of 99 games can be going on at one time.

For the average gamer, Global War offers a diversified strategy without requiring a lot of time. For the devoted Risk player, this game is a dream come true!

Operation Overkill II

By Dustin Nulf and Tom Hazel

Complexity: 5

Devotion: 6

Player Interaction: 8

Graphics: 6

Average Time: 1-3 months

Type: Post-holocaust RPG

Players are survivors residing in a hidden complex on post-holocaust Earth, fending off mutants and Hydrite aliens who have come to steal the last of the water crystals. The players struggle to gain experience and strength to eventually take on and defeat Overkill, the leader of the Hydrite invasion, and recover the stolen water crystals for the benefit of all mankind. Amen.

This is one of the best on-line RPGs available. The characters develop in a number of attributes; the game has a diverse selection of weapons, armament and supplies; and the base has a game room in which the users can compete against each other in arm wrestling, target practice or Hydrite darts. When they leave the complex, they are on their own. A semi-detailed map shows the terrain immediately around the character, and combat occurs in a verbose, blow-by-blow text report. The player has the option of letting the computer determine his hit accuracy randomly or by a keyboard input (a row of dots start across the screen,

and the player must hit the space bar at a certain point.) The map has multiple levels, and players can eventually construct bases of their own. The winner is the first player to locate and defeat Overkill, but just surviving outside the complex is in itself a challenge.

The game has a map and monster editor, so the sysop can create worlds inhabited by creatures of his own design, and the programmers are continuing to develop Operation Overkill II, adding new features and monsters and keeping the game from becoming stale.

PIT

Midas Touch Software BBS

(806) 797-2239

Complexity: 4

Devotion: 2

Player Interaction: 6

Graphics: 6 without the terminal program, 10 with the terminal program

Average Time: Indefinite

Type: Gladiatorial RPG

Each player assumes a character who has travelled to Regal City to compete in a tournament and challenge the minions of the Pit to a contest at arms.

This is a gladiatorial combat game in which opponents maneuver around in an arena and combat each other. There are a variety of melee and ranged weapons and armor, as well as magic items, to choose from or acquire from defeated opponents. The graphics are animated, and if the EGA Pit terminal program is used, are quite excellent. The terminal program also speeds up the animation considerably. As the players win combats in the Pit, they gain experience and become more powerful and harder to kill. Players can choose to combat other players or select an opponent from the menu, anything from a trainee or goblin to a red dragon or Norse god. There is even a casino for the players to go and play various gambling games with the gold they earn from their combat wins, and a bar for them to go and brag about their conquests. It's very easy to get spammed in the arena, especially with a new, comparatively weak character, and if a player is defeated in a combat, the game saves his status and exits him back to the BBS. When the player returns to the game, he can resume with his previous character (thanks to the healers), but he may lose some experience points and possessions.

Pit is fun, and the graphics are superb, but there is no real goal in the game. If you play long enough to achieve experience level 1000, the game puts your name on the list of immortals and starts you over with a new character. But most players tire of the repetition after a couple of hundred fights, usually when they are around level 7 or 8. For mindless slaughter, though, Pit is the best.

Star Market

The Neutral Zone BBS (405) 257-6938

Complexity: 3

Devotion: 1

Player Interaction: 1

Graphics: 4

Average Time: About 15 minutes

Type: Space stock market game

In Star Market, the player tries to form corporation chains by placing bases adjacent to stars or already existing bases on a two-dimensional map. Once chains are formed, the player can invest in stock in those chains. The larger the chain, the more the stock is worth. Once chains grow large enough, they can merge with other chains, and the stocks start to pay off.

Star Market is based on Avalon Hill's boardgame *Acquire*. The game has an enticing strategy to it, and it is a pleasant change of pace to be able to start and finish a game all in one sitting, but Star Market doesn't have any player interaction. Each player is the only player in the game. The scores are saved so players can compete for high score, but other than that, the game offers no player competition at all.

Trade Wars 2002

Martech Software BBS (913) 842-0300 or (913) 832-0248

Complexity: 10

Devotion: 8

Player Interaction: 8

Graphics: 8

Type: Space conquest/strategy

Trade Wars 2002 is similar to Galactic Warzone in many respects, but it is by far the most polished of the two. The player starts with a small space vessel and a few cargo bays. As they advance and accrue credits, players can choose from several different types of spacecraft, each with its own special abilities and limitations. ANSI graphics are used liberally throughout the game, and the screens in the game show some of the best ANSI artwork I've ever seen. While the game lacks a defined goal, the players usually play until one player achieves a set number of points. Alliances are possible, and some BBSs run games that don't allow individual players in the game, only teams.

Trade Wars 2002 is considered by many to be the ultimate in on-line gaming. New strategies are constantly evolving, and huge, seemingly invincible, alliances crumble to dust while new ones emerge and take their place in this endless quest for galactic conquest. Ω

This article concludes our three-part series on computer BBS gaming by Mitch Lavender.

For additional information, refer to the first two parts in Challenge 63 and 64.

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LESTER SMITH

POST MORTEM

IN THIS LOST SOULS ADVENTURE, A
MAILED INVITATION TO A HIDDEN MAYAN
TEMPLE LEADS TO DEATH AND BEYOND.



An Overview of *Lost Souls*

Lost Souls is a horror roleplaying game with an unusual twist. In this game, players take on the roles of people who have died "before their time," with unfinished business to attend to, and with too much stubbornness to let go of life. (This stubbornness is reflected as WTL—Will to Live—which serves as "hit points" in the game; characters who run out of WTL run the risk of being reincarnated prematurely.) Consequently, the characters wander about the afterlife, using various supernatural powers to accomplish their purposes, trying to set things aright and thereby gain enough karma to be reborn as something other than pond scum.

Each character begins as a living person, with a specific vocation. From that point, a cause of death is determined, and the character becomes one of 21 different types of ghost, each type with its own collection of distinctive supernatural powers. It is also possible to play a living medium of one sort or another, rather than a ghost.

Adventures spring from the characters' deaths, as well as from various background details generated for each character (the adventure here provides a perfect example). And various other sorts of supernatural creatures exist to make the characters' afterlife both difficult and horrifying. A detailed sample adventure is provided to get referees started and demonstrate how to create new ones. And the game mechanics are based around a simple but unusual system that keeps play moving quickly and smoothly, while encouraging high drama.

If you can't find *Lost Souls* in your local game store, you write to the publishers at the following address: Marquee Press, 14314 SW Allen Blvd., Suite 400, Beaverton, OR 97005.

Possible Deaths

Like many *Lost Souls* adventures, this adventure is tied specifically to a PC's cause of death. The particular type of PC can be either an Arcane Scholar or an Explorer, and various different causes of death are possible. In particular, the following causes are appropriate (the player introductions below provide for them specifically):

(1) Arcane Scholar: Airplane crashed on way to Mayan tomb.

(2) Arcane Scholar: Translated ancient parchment—teleported to Limbo.

(3) Arcane Scholar: Accidentally summoned a Creature from Beyond.

(4) Explorer: Run over by bus while looking for a post office.

(5) Explorer: Left to die by treacherous companions.

Of course, after reading the text, the referee may think of other combinations that will serve as well.

Note that only *one* PC's death should serve as the spark for this adventure. If more than one of your PCs is eligible, choose a single one of them.

"History"

(The following information is for the referee's eyes only.)

In aeons past, the evil priests of Atlantis practiced foul Black Arts in their pursuit of power over death. They played with portals to the supernatural, summoning evil spirits, and creating hideous half-living abominations, many of which still prowl the darker corners of our modern world. Eventually their ex-

cesses led to their own ruin, and proud Atlantis was dragged down by monstrous forces to moulder in the lightless depths of the sea.

But in their toying with the bounds of death, a few of the ancient priests achieved a sort of grim immortality, and as the chill waters of the Atlantic closed over them, they transmogrified. They became a sort of "merghoul," a type of being well suited to lurk in the cold muck of the ocean's floor, feeding upon the rotting corpses of seaside villagers they dragged beneath the waves and drowned.

And so the ages passed.

A bare millennium ago, the Mayans, in an effort to contain these merghouls, built a triangle of mystic pyramids outside the Gulf of Mexico. One they constructed within the Florida Everglades; a second was built on a tiny island at the eastern end of the Virgin Islands; and the last was constructed on the shore of Bermuda. Together, the three formed a mystic fence, trapping the merghouls within. Desperately, the evil creatures sought to break the triangle's efficacy, in the end drawing even upon the powers that sank Atlantis. First, they attacked the Everglades pyramid, and it sank into the swamp, but the power of the triangle was undiminished. Next, they turned to the pyramid at Bermuda, thinking that it would be weakest, given its placement furthest from the Mayan homelands. But though they sank it as well, the lines of the triangle held firm. Finally, they assaulted the Virgin Island

pyramid, but it had been built upon firmer bedrock and refused to sink. So they called upon mighty spells of decay, lashing the pyramid with eroding winds and waves, then assaulting it with invasive vines and creepers, hoping to reduce it to rubble. But though buried beneath a shroud of jungle growth, the pyramid stood firm, bolstered by the mystic forces of the triangle. Frustrated, the degenerated Atlanteans gave up the attack and lapsed back into the muck to "sleep," biding their time in hopes that the passing ages would finally crack their prison.

Then, about a century and a half ago, a young vampire emigrating from France to the New World passed through the triangle as a passenger on a sailing ship. His undead spirit sensed the presence of the merghouls far beneath the waters, and in turn, the merghouls were wakened by his evil. Like a beacon, it lead them upward through the waters to the ship, where they clambered aboard, hideously slew the passengers and crew, then sated themselves upon the raw flesh. But they had not counted upon the powerful will of the vampire; like flies in a web, they were caught fast. The vampire recognized that he had a rare opportunity at hand, and he seized it. From that day forward, these ancient Atlantean priests would prey upon selected shipping through the area, free to feast on the humans involved, but bound to save the cargoes for the vampire. The wealth thus attained would buy the vampire great ease among mortals, purchasing the finest homes, the best security, and even hapless victims upon which to feed. And so began the mystery of the Bermuda Triangle.

Time passed again, with the vampire firmly established in Miami, a band of ancient ghouls to garner treasure for him, and a host of mesmerized human minions to collect it from the Virgin Island pyramid where the merghouls were commanded to deposit it. But then, bare months ago, an archaeologist from the University of Miami (and friend to one of the PCs) discovered an ancient Mayan schematic of the mystic triangle. Recognizing this as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, the Professor used his life savings to put together a small expedition, traveled to the Virgin Islands, searched out the pyramid there, then returned to Miami to apply for research funds (and government approval), and to send a letter off to his PC friend, asking for assistance. He left his team members on the island to work at opening the pyramid.

Unfortunately for the Professor, the vampire had firmly ensconced himself as a benefactor for the college, and when the paperwork began its way through the system, he learned of the professor's discovery. Quickly, he set about destroying all leads to the pyramid. First, he set the merghouls upon the team on the island. Then he killed the Professor, and the chairman of the History Department, who had received the Professor's application for funds. Finally, he arranged for the PC's death, which brings us to the beginning of the adventure.

PCs' Introduction

(The following information is intended to be read to the players, directed specifically to the PC whose death serves as the spark for the adventure. Remember to read, after the first two paragraphs of general introduction, only the single death scene that applies.)

It had been quite some time since you had last heard from your old teacher, Dr. L. Winfred Smithers. The last you knew, he had taken a position on the History Department at the University of Miami, saying that the climate was good for his old bones. Then, amazingly, you received a letter from him. You were surprised—and flattered—that he had kept track of your whereabouts. The message was hastily scrawled, betraying a great excitement. "My dear, dear student," it said, "I've made an amazing discovery, and I would like your aid in pursuing it. I've found an incredible Mayan construction. Can you meet me in two weeks at my home in Miami? Should you choose to do so, I will make arrangements for your air travel. I will be difficult to reach between now and then, so it will be best if you write me with your reply. Please let me know as soon as possible. I apologize for the suddenness of this situation, and for any inconvenience it puts you through. But I would sincerely appreciate your help, and I believe you will find it to be more than worth your while." There followed his signature and a series of numbers written in a variant cuneiform he once taught you. Translated, they read: 18 41 64 43.

Without hesitation, you wrote back to the Professor, telling him that you would be happy to work with him once again, and you set about clearing your schedule for the trip. Slightly more than a week later, you received notice from the Post Office that there was a package from the Professor waiting there for you. Eagerly, you set out to pick up the package.

Referee's Note: The cuneiform numbers on the letter are the coordinates for the Virgin Island with the pyramid—18.41 north, 64.43 west. If you like, you can make the clue somewhat easier by adding an N just after the second number, and a W just after the last.

Arcane Scholar, airplane crashed on way to Mayan tomb: Inside the package was a collection of photographs of a vine-covered pyramid—obviously (to your trained eye) Mayan—and an airline ticket for Miami. Excited at the prospect of learning the reasons behind the Professor's message, and the significance of the photographs, you went to the airport, boarded the plane, and set out.

The flight made it *nearly* all the way to Miami. But just outside the city, as the plane looped out above the Atlantic while circling the airport, a mysterious patch of light appeared in the night-darkened waters of the ocean on the horizon. Mesmerized, you watched the light come rapidly closer. It was only at the last second that you realized it wasn't the light that was approaching the plane, but rather the plane that was plunging toward the sea. The next thing you knew was oblivion.

Referee's Notes: The light is a gigantic corpse light (see the Atlantean Merghoul sidebar) created by the merghouls to lure aircraft into the sea. Directed by their vampire master, they have drawn the PC's plane to its doom.

Such a PC will begin the game on the shore of Miami Beach, and will be lacking 5 WTL from the very beginning of play (because the PC's body has been consumed by a merghoul; see the Atlantean Merghoul sidebar).

Arcane Scholar, translated ancient parchment—teleported to Limbo: Inside the package was a large photograph of an ancient parchment. Amazed that the Professor would send you such a thing, and curious as to what bearing it could have on the situation, you set about translating it. As you spoke the final syllables, you realized, with a sinking feeling, that you had made a horrible mistake.

Suddenly, a vast funnel cloud seemed to open in the ceiling above your head (without harming the architecture!), and it sucked you in—or at least part of you. Your naked consciousness watched, horrified, as your body collapsed lifelessly below and the funnel closed around you—then you found yourself in Limbo.

Referee's Note: Having killed the Professor, the vampire found the PC's letter and sent the parchment's photo-

graph as a trap.

Such a PC should begin the game at home, likely far from Miami.

Arcane Scholar, accidentally summoned a Creature from Beyond: Inside the package was a large photograph of an ancient parchment. Amazed that the Professor would send you such a thing, and curious as to what bearing it could have on the situation, you set about translating it. As you spoke the final syllables, you realized, with a sinking feeling, that you had made a horrible mistake.

Suddenly, an extra-dimensional hole appeared in the air before you, spewing flames and noxious vapors into the room. A cacophony of hideous laughter rolled out from it, and before you could move, a great warty hand and arm shot forth and closed around your torso. As it drew you inexorably into the hole, you felt your ribs snapping under the crushing grip. Then oblivion took your senses.

Referee's Note: Having killed the Professor, the vampire found the PC's letter and sent the parchment's photograph as a trap.

Like the PC above, such a PC will begin play at home, likely far from Miami.

Explorer, run over by bus while looking for a post office: But as fate would have it, you did not survive the trip to the Post Office. You got as far as the street corner across from it, and stood waiting for the traffic to clear. The crowds were thick, with people jostling one another as they walk. Someone was shouting incoherently a few feet away, and like everyone around you, you turned your head to see what all the commotion was about. Suddenly, you felt a powerful shove from behind. Instinctively, you stepped forward to catch your balance, but a foot caught yours, tripping you. Arms windmilling, you toppled forward into the street, right in front of a speeding Greyhound bus. The last thing you heard was the screaming of bystanders, merged with the screeching of air brakes—then, oblivion.

Referee's Note: Upon killing the Professor and searching his home, the vampire found the PC's letter, but the package with the airline tickets was already on its way. The vampire sent a pair of human toadies to deal with the PC. They trailed the character for quite some time before an opportunity presented itself for murder. Taking advantage of the street-corner crowd, one toady drew everyone's attention while the other shoved the PC into the path of the bus. They hung about only long

Carlo d'Yvonne, French Vampire

Agility: Superior; **Strength:** Awesome; **Knowledge:** Great; **Defense:** Good; **Stamina:** Great; **Charm:** Superior

Type: Evil spirit, semi-material.

Appearance: Carlo d'Yvonne has the physical appearance of a classic vampire, though he dresses in much more modern style, in keeping with his position as an important man of wealth in Miami.

Personality: Arrogant, selfish, cruel, and cunning (though not so cunning as he'd like to think).

Motivation: to "live large."

Combat: When he has to fight, d'Yvonne fights bare-handed, doing (Defense vs. Passable)×4 damage, or in animal form. Normally, though, he has his human toadies or enslaved merghouls do his fighting for him.

Powers: Cloaking, Compel, Life Drain (double damage, but only by bite, and only after the victim has been immobilized, may push the vampire's WTL above 20), Rise from Dead (but triple duration, and fully conversant), Seduction (duration in days, rather than hours), Transform (bat and wolf form only, but double duration)

Special: As a vampire, d'Yvonne loses 1 WTL per day, to a minimum level of 1, at which point his Rise from Dead power requires a minimum Awesome roll rather than Passable. Also, d'Yvonne takes double normal damage from blessed items such as crosses and holy water; if impaled by a wooden stake he cannot Rise from Dead; and if beheaded and burned he is destroyed forever.

Atlantean Merghouls

Agility: Good; **Strength:** Superior; **Knowledge:** Awesome; **Defense:** Passable; **Stamina:** Great; **Charm:** Superior

Type: Evil entity, semi-material.

Appearance: See Ghoul in the game, but add a kelp-like mane.

Motivation: See Ghoul in the game. But additionally, these merghouls have a great sense of pride in having been the very best of ancient Atlantis' priests. Because of this, they chafe at the constraints of the Bermuda Triangle, and they resent the upstart vampire Carlo d'Yvonne for his control over them, considering him to be a mere babe compared to their millennia of existence.

Combat: See Ghoul in the game.

Powers: See Ghoul in the game. Additionally, Corpse Lights (target's Empathy vs. User's Knowledge)×1 minute (requires cooperation of three merghouls to achieve). Finally, the merghouls possess the following ability, generated by rod devices of ancient Atlantean design: Blinding (Good vs. single target's Will)×3 turns.

enough to learn for certain that the assassination had been successful.

This PC should begin play on a street corner near home, likely far from Miami.

Explorer, left to die by treacherous companions: Inside the package was a collection of photographs of a vine-covered pyramid—obviously (to your trained eye) Mayan—and an airline ticket for Miami. Excited at the prospect of learning the reasons behind the Professor's message, and the significance of the photographs, you went to the airport, boarded the plane, and set out.

Upon arriving in Miami, you were met by a pair of fellows with a placard bearing your name. "The Professor sent us to meet you," one explained, "because he's not at home. We're supposed to take you to him." Gamely, you followed them to their car, and let them drive you out of town to the meeting point. The trip

took nearly an hour, from highway, to side road, to a narrow track in the boonies of the Florida Everglades.

Unexpectedly, the car stopped far from any habitation. "Where are we?" you asked. In reply, the driver stuck a pistol in your face and ordered you out of the car; then, after you had complied, he shot you in the knees, and drove off, laughing. In agony, you dragged yourself along for what seemed an eternity, seeking more traveled roads, hoping desperately to find someone to help you. Apparently, you eventually passed out from shock and blood loss, and died without finding aid, because you woke up in Limbo.

Referee's Note: Upon killing the Professor and searching his home, the vampire found the PC's letter, but the package with the airline tickets was already on its way. The vampire sent a pair of human toadies to meet the PC at

the airport, take the character out into the boonies, and do away with him or her.

Such a PC should begin the adventure on a trail in the Everglades, near a messy bloodstain with a few tatters of rag and fragments of bone in it. This is all that's left of the PC's body after alligators found it.

Half the Fun

The referee should keep in mind that regardless of how the PCs choose to pursue the adventure, a major part of their effort will be involved in simply getting around in the world of the living. Much of the fun of playing *Lost Souls* is in that the PCs, as spirits, cannot directly effect the physical world, except by use of their supernatural powers, which are limited in effect, duration, and number of uses per day. Even a task as simple as flipping a light switch or opening a door requires the use of a power. On the other hand, the physical world very much affects ghosts in this game. Daylight burns away their ectoplasm; collisions with physical objects injure them (though the objects, in turn, are not affected by the ghosts); and walls block their passage (unless they use a power to pass through).

Also, although the rule book does not specifically say so, for the purposes of this adventure it is assumed that most incorporeal and semi-material beings cannot freely pass through moving water, except for a period of 30 minutes near high tide and low tide, when the line of gravitation from Earth to Moon is directly vertical to the being's location, lending ectoplasm an abnormal cohesiveness. At all other times, immersion in moving water dissipates the being's ectoplasm, causing damage at the same rate as does sunlight.

However, there are spots in the depths of large lakes and seas where the water is relatively still, allowing ectoplasm to exist in them perpetually without harm. And, there are a few ghosts (some drowning victims, etc.) that spend the majority of their time hiding in the mud of a lake's or sea's bed, coming out to haunt only at high and/or low tide.

Remember, too, that while in life the PCs could stop passersby to ask for directions to a place or for other aid, as ghosts they are very much on their own. Generally, if they manifest themselves to the living, the best reaction they can hope for is terror. And travel is typically a serious problem, with ghosts trying to get on and off closed vehicles, or mov-

ing ones, having to dodge the living to avoid being crushed or trampled, and always having to find a place to hide from the sun during daylight hours.

With such things in mind, the referee is encouraged to play a recalcitrant world that yields to the PCs only when they think creatively. Make "life" tough on them; they'll love it.

Launching the Adventure

At the outset of the adventure, there are only a limited number of options for the PCs to pursue in unraveling the why of what has happened to the central PC. It is possible that they may wish to investigate the PC's death itself (searching for the giant corpse light, attempting to follow the toadies' tire tracks from the swamp, trying to identify the origin of the parchment that was translated, etc.), in which case the referee should play things "by ear," based upon knowledge of the overall situation. Or the PCs may correctly guess that the cuneiform numbers in the Professor's original letter are latitude and longitude lines, and set out for that location, in which case the referee can jump to the section "Cruising Crews," below. But most likely, the option the PCs will take is to go looking for the Professor, as detailed in the following section.

Missing U.

When the PCs search for the Professor in Miami (remember, it should have been a considerable undertaking for them to get there), they discover that he is missing, and his home has been ransacked, as has his office at the University. A bit of research (listening in on a neighbor's conversations, or those of other History staff members at the University, or reading recent news stories in the archives of a local newspaper or library) will reveal that no one has seen nor heard from him in over two weeks (the last sighting having been at the University, the same day that the PC's original letter from him was postmarked). Furthermore, the stories reveal that the Chairman of the Department, Mark Wilson, is missing as well. His secretary's calendar for the last day he was seen reveals that the Chairman had a 10:30 AM appointment in his office with a grad student, followed by an 11:00 appointment at the barber, then lunch at the home of Carlo d'Yvonne, a local millionaire and patron of the University. Investigation will reveal that the result of the meeting with the grad student was that he was put on

probation for poor grades, and Dr. Wilson made it to his barber's appointment; but d'Yvonne called the Department at 1 PM, asking why Wilson had not shown up for lunch. Finally, if the PCs are particularly detailed in their investigation (as judged by the referee), they may hear that the Professor had a couple of promising Graduate assistants who left with him to parts unknown some months ago and haven't been heard from since. According to friends and family, the two were leaving on some hush-hush mission for the Professor and refused to give details.

If the PCs go to d'Yvonne's mansion, they find it empty, save for two Doberman Pincers roaming the grounds (who will bristle at the PCs' presence), and a middle-aged Pinkerton guard inside (who will run screaming from the building if the PCs haunt him at all—and will suffer a fatal heart attack if they pursue him). The furniture inside is covered with drop cloths, and there are crates of precious items in every room. Most of the crates are filled with normal, everyday furnishings for a mansion, though of finest quality—gold clocks, silver candlesticks, crystal goblets, Persian rugs, etc. In the main hallway, however, are numerous crates of priceless antiques, including jeweled swords, pearl-inlaid dueling pistols, gold doubloons, marble statuary, rare paintings, and illuminated manuscripts of all sorts (one of which holds, pressed within its pages, the scroll whose photograph the central PC received, if applicable—to be found on a Poor Search or Conceal roll). In the basement is a secret room (discernable on a Good Search, Conceal, or Danger Sense roll; or automatically to such as the Cop's Contact power), with dozens of crates filled with heroin, cocaine, and other illicit drugs, as well as five coffins with earth in them, and a briefcase containing writing paper and pens, two paperback novels (horror, of course), an array of men's colognes, a clean shirt and underclothing, a fist-sized Mayan idol, and the central PC's original letter from the Professor (now somewhat bloodstained). The fact is, d'Yvonne has been packing up to move his base of operations elsewhere until the story of the Professor's and Chairman's disappearance has had a decade or so to blow over. At the moment, he's hiding out at the Mayan temple in the Virgin Islands.

Cruising Crews

Sooner or later, the PCs will have to head for the island among the Virgins,

to continue pursuing their investigation. But getting there is definitely easier said than done. It's a trip of roughly a thousand miles—across water—so the PCs will be forced to hitch a ride on a boat or plane. Ideally (for purposes of the adventure), they should take a boat. Most likely, they will take a series of rides, first to several progressively more eastern spots in the Bahamas, then to Puerto Rico, and finally progressively across the Virgin Islands. You may wish to let them haunt a pleasure cruise part way, ride a series of planes, hitch on fishing boats, etc., and playing out the results can be a lot of fun. Unfortunately, however, there is no regular travel to the island with the pyramid. It is too small for general habitation, and instead contains (besides the hidden pyramid) only the winter retreat of an oil-rich Arab sheik. To get to this island, then, the PCs will have to convince someone to take them, likely a native of the area with a small fishing boat, but possibly a vacationer with a yacht, or whatever other idea the players come up with. Convincing the person means communicating with the living in some way so as to get cooperation. Again, a large part of the fun of the adventure will be in accomplishing that, especially considering that the trip should be at night, so that the PCs won't fry in the sun.

When the PC's final transportation approaches the island, the vampire becomes aware of its approach and, suspicious of its purpose, sends the merghouls (at low tide) to destroy its crew. Without warning, their pale forms will suddenly rise through the waters and clamber onto the ship's deck, then lurch about (the merghouls are more comfortable swimming than walking) to kill everyone on board. (If the PCs somehow hitch a ride on an aircraft instead, the merghouls will create their gigantic Ghost Light, and the craft's living crew will become mesmerized and crash into the ocean. The only way the PCs can avoid this is to disable the crew and physically take control of the craft themselves.) Note that the merghouls can see the PCs, but will ignore them unless they interfere with the slaughter.

Initially, there will be one more merghoul attacking than there are PCs. Each 1D6 turns thereafter, another merghoul will show up, until the crew is dead and carried overboard, the merghouls have been beaten so badly that they judge their cause hopeless, or ten minutes of time has elapsed (leaving just enough time for the creatures to

Continued on page 83.

Challenge 65

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Feedback Results for Challenge 61

Spooktek (Twilight:2000)	4.0
Murder Century (Twilight: 2000)	3.3
Equalizer Project (MegaTraveller)	3.5
Wood and Wind (MegaTraveller)	3.6
Out of the Depths (Dark Conspiracy)	3.3
Tom Fleet (Space: 1889)	3.2
This is Only a Test (2300 AD)	3.1
Machines (Shadowrun)	3.0
VTA (Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.)	3.2
Video Nightmare (Call of Cthulhu)	3.5
Rogue Metal (Star Wars)	3.3
New Discoveries (Torg)	2.1
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This issue's cover art	3.9
This issue's interior art	3.9
This issue as a whole	3.7

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Continued from page 81.

get back to the ocean floor before the tide changes). They will not stick around just to fight the PCs, nor will individual merghouls fight beyond the loss of half their hit points.

Note that if the central PC's body was eaten by a merghoul (see "PCs' Introduction," above), there is a 2 in 10 chance for each merghoul present that it was the one who ate the PC (see the Atlantean Merghoul sidebar for the significance of this).

A Moonlight Dip

When the merghouls flee, the PCs might decide to continue on their trip, operating the boat themselves, if necessary (or a life raft from the crashed aircraft). If this is the case, skip forward to "All's Well that Ends Well."

On the other hand, the PCs might decide to pursue the merghouls to the ocean floor. If they do so immediately, they'll be safely within the low tide window. If they delay for more than five or 10 minutes, they'll only make it part way before being forced back to the surface by damage from the moving water.

If the PCs make it to the ocean floor, they'll find it sloped upward toward the island of their destination, and the slope is covered with a "graveyard" of wrecked ships and aircraft. The waters at this depth are normally still enough to pose no threat to ghosts and the like, but on the occasions when the waters are more vigorous, these craft serve as shelters for the individual merghouls. Each such "home" is furnished with an odd assortment of items from across the ages since Atlantis' sinking.

In the center of this merghoul "village" is the opening to an underwater cave.

If pressed, the merghouls will flee into it, and if the PCs pursue, they'll find themselves coming out in the central well inside the Mayan temple, where they'll have to fight both the merghouls and the vampire (see "All's Well that Ends Well," below).

All's Well that Ends Well

If the PCs travel over the water to reach the island of their destination, once they arrive there it will take some doing to find the Mayan temple (the research team was very careful to remain hidden from the inhabitants of the Arab sheik's winter home). Have each of the PC's make a Search roll, then take the best result and multiply it by two hours for each column it falls less than Awesome.

Obviously, they'll find the winter home of the sheik very easily as they're researching the island (and depending upon how much time has passed, they may be forced to hide there from the rising sun). What they do with that discovery is entirely up to them, and your creativity as a GM. Once they find the temple, however, they'll discover the vampire inside, surrounded by more crates of ill-gotten loot. When he sees them, he'll attack, first blowing upon an ornate silver whistle (to summon the merghouls). He'll fight viciously, because he's cornered in this, his last refuge.

Each turn, 1D10/2 merghouls will arrive, until the point at which the merghouls outnumber the PCs by at least one.

If, instead of traveling over the water, the PCs pursued the merghouls into the cave on the ocean's floor, they'll find themselves coming up through a well into the center of the pyramid. In this case, the vampire will be ready and waiting for them, with his enslaved merghouls (one more than the number of PCs).

In any case, if the PCs manage to bring the vampire's WTL to a mere five points, d'Yvonne will lose his mental hold on the merghouls, and they'll join in the attack on him (remember, they hate him). He, in turn, will use his silver whistle on them (see its description in the Afterword, below). If d'Yvonne is destroyed, they'll begin hauling the vampire's treasure back down the well to their "homes," fighting the PCs if necessary to do so. But each merghoul will flee when it has less than 7 WTL left.

Afterword

If the PCs are able to prevent the merghouls from carrying away all the vampire's treasure, they may wish to award it to living friends and/or relatives. The only thing the merghouls will not try to take with them is the various cases of drugs stashed here. On the body of the vampire, the PCs will find the silver whistle that calls the merghouls, and a journal detailing his experi-

ences for the past two hundred years and explaining what he has pieced together concerning who the merghouls are and what the significance of the pyramids is (you can read the "History," above to the players). Of course, the merghouls will try to carry away the whistle, and the journal as well, if they learn of its existence.

PC karma awards should be based upon individual PC's deeds, but a minimum award of two points per person is suggested. If the PCs try to profit off the stash of drugs, penalize them five points apiece.

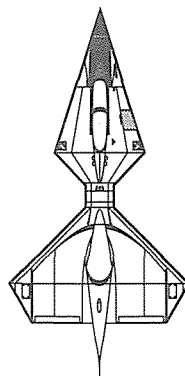
If the PCs manage to capture the vampire's silver whistle (like the merghouls, it is magically semi-material), they will be able to summon the merghouls whenever they like, as long as they are within the bounds of the Bermuda Triangle. (Of course, the merghouls are under no obligation to cooperate with the PCs when they arrive.) Better yet, the silver whistle will do Passable vs. Willx2 damage to Evil Entities, as a Passable Occult roll will reveal from the markings inscribed upon it.

Finally, the PCs may capture some Blinding devices from the merghoul's (although they'll have a difficult time carrying them, as they are material items). Ω

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Coup: Down with the Leader!

Steve Jackson Games, Inc. \$20.

Written by Steve Jackson. Illustrated by Ben Sargent.

Two-player boxed wargame. 112 counters, six-sided die, two ziplock bags for counters, mapsheet, eight-page rulebook.

Published in 1992.

Review by Craig Sheeley.

Coup: Down with the Leader! is a simple little wargame set in no particular country. ("The map represents the area around the capitol of a small country... European, South American, African...take your pick.") As the title suggests, the scenario concerns the revolution against the tyrannical ruler of the small country, a ruler with the appropriate title of Maximum Leader. The rebels command a fairly vast force of irregulars, turncoat police and angry, torch-wielding mobs. The Maximum Leader has a slightly outnumbered but more powerful army of police, troops, tanks and helicopters.

The object of the game is to capture various parts of the capitol city (nine locations in all) and hold onto them. These locations include such places as the Factory, the Power Plant, the Armory, the University and the Radio Station. Each location is worth 1 victory point per turn—in addition, killing the Maximum Leader is worth 5 points, and each of the three rebel leaders is worth 1 point. When one side has 15 or more victory points' lead on the other side, the game is over.

The Radio Station is crucial in the struggle. The side holding the radio station can exhort the populace to rise up in support, generating cheap military units. The rebels are better at this than the Maximum Leader's forces, but it's still worth it to try—some new forces are better than none at all. And the mobs make a nice addition to the reinforcements scheduled for each turn.

The Maximum Leader must try to win within seven turns, because both sides' reinforcements stop at that time, except for the mobs raised by possession of the radio station. It's a tricky tactical problem, because the rebels are everywhere, and they usually seize the radio station first. Both sides have a temptation to spread their units, because the combat resolution table is bloodthirsty—a simple 1-to-1 combat has a 50% chance of harming the defender and only a 16.67% chance of harming the attacker. And

there are so many locations to fight over that covering all the angles becomes impossible, spreading a force too thin and leaving it vulnerable.

EVALUATION

The game system works well, and the rules are clear and easy to understand, making for a fast, furious and fun game. The cartoon art by Ben Sargent is amusing and right on target. There is a basic game and an advanced game, mostly for those people who have trouble learning rules. The advanced game adds four more simple rules and is a lot more fun. The map is colorful and made for easy game play—the CRT is printed on the map, with one for each player!

Unfortunately, the price is high—very high for such a simple game. This is due to the necessity of putting the game in a box. In my opinion, the game's price could have been lower if it had been ziplock-bagged—but distributors won't accept such packaging! The small, low-priced fun games of a decade ago are gone, driven to massive prices by distributor prejudice.

Coup: Down with the Leader! is entertaining, swift and challenging. But it's not worth the \$20 price tag.

Armies of the Imperium

Games Workshop. \$29.95.

Written by Jervis Johnson and Rick Priestley.

Boxed supplement to *Space Marine* 2nd edition. 64-page rulebook, 21 sheets of unit cards.

Published in 1992.

Review by Craig Sheeley.

This is the first in a series of supplements for Games Workshop's game of epic SF combat, *Space Marine* 2nd edition. Each supplement in the series gives in-depth coverage of two different army forces in the game, with complete rules and unit cards for each army.

Armies of the Imperium deals with the Imperial Space Marines and the vast armies of the Imperial Guard. The first half of the book outlines the marines. Four marine chapters, the Ultramarines, Dark Angels, Blood Angels and Space Wolves, are presented as examples of the various strategies of composing Space Marine units. The rest of the marine section is made up of descriptions of specific marine units, from regular troops and scouts to Terminators, Inquisitors, special command units (Chaplains, Techmarines, Librarians,

Medics) and their vehicles (land raiders, dreadnoughts, the new *Thunderhawk* gunship, orbital drop pods, land speeders, battle tanks, missile carriers and so on).

The center section consists of painting schemes for Imperial Guard vehicles, and Space Marine and consolidated model data sheets for all Imperial forces presented in the supplement.

The last third of the book covers the huge armies of the Imperial Guard. It introduces special rules for the guard's chain of command—the Imperial Guard is supposed to be less flexible than the marines and the alien Eldar—and the fearsome (and very useful) Commissars. Like for the Space Marines, individual descriptions for Imperial Guard units follow the special rules.

The 21 sheets of unit cards provide unit construction data for the units presented in the book, as well as a pair of templates for the HellHound flame-thrower vehicle.

EVALUATION

The supplement is fairly well made. The rules are clear and easy to follow (a rarity in most British-written games, though *Space Marine* has long been exempt from the typical sloppiness of British rules). The cards are easy to lose, though; photocopies should be made of them immediately in case some are lost.

Other armies, beware. With the rules in this supplement, the Imperial Guard is an extremely potent force, equipped with heavy firepower and artillery support. In a point-to-point conflict, the Imperial Guard is heavily favored because of its artillery support (surprisingly, it is the only army which appears to have heavy indirect-fire artillery included in its force mix). I can see a great many Space Marine forces bringing along some "wimpy guard" for the extra firepower.

I question some of the construction of this supplement. Many of the cards are duplicated. Why is this? If a player were only limited to the cards he had on hand, I could see duplication for certain popular unit types. But on page 5, the statement, "Ambitious players with huge armies may wish to photocopy existing cards to make new sets," indicates that there is no limitation on the size of army by available cards. The cards were the only logical reason for the boxed format. I submit that Games Workshop stuck in the duplicate cards to make the supplement feel heavier, to give it a better "shake factor," so it could bump the price an extra \$5. *Codex Titanious*, the

supplement to the 1st edition game, only cost \$22.95 and contained much more information and cardstock (thicker cardstock, too) than this supplement.

You don't need this supplement, or any of the others, to play *Space Marine 2nd edition*. It is very nice, and the units presented in this supplement are better than those in the original game—they allow use of all the special figures and models Games Workshop sells, at inflated prices. But it's not essential.

Amber Diceless Roleplaying

Phage Press. \$22.95.

Written by Erick Wujcik.

256-page diceless roleplaying system.

Published in November 1991.

Review by Dirk DeJong.

A well designed, perfect-bound book, with stunning cover art, *Amber* caught my eye the minute I walked in the store. The fact that I have been a fan of Roger Zelazny's *Amber* books for years now induced me to buy, breaking one of my cardinal rules (i.e., never buy until, at least, you read the back cover in full). On the way home, I glanced at the back cover and saw the ominous word "diceless" staring out at me. "What's the big deal, I thought. So someone did another "scissors/paper/stone" system. I can always convert it." That was my second mistake.

Amber does an excellent job of being a sourcebook for the family *Amber*, and it provides one of the better systems that I've run across for handling special artifacts. In fact, the background aspects of this book are so well done that it almost stands on its own as a super-sized sourcebook for running an *Amber* campaign. Every royal person, dead or alive, that you meet in the original series (not the second series—there's a book on its way covering that) is covered, complete with optional versions, so the players can't predict what an NPC's capabilities are just by buying a copy for themselves. In fact, you can completely customize the royal family of *Amber* to suit yourself, with Eric as king, and Corwin dead, or any other way you want. Each character comes with a picture, a description of possible attitudes and agendas, and a list of powers and artifacts for each version. In fact, my only complaint with this section is that some of the designer's character interpretations didn't quite jive with mine, but that's part of why the options for customization are there, so that you can build *Amber* to your own interpretation.

PROBLEMS

The biggest problem with this endeavor,

and its downfall, is the nature of the conflict systems. First, they are diceless, really diceless, and don't involve any sort of random factors at all, aside from those that you can introduce by roleplaying them out. Thus, if you get involved with a character who's better than you at sword-fighting, even if only by one point out of 100, you're pretty much dead meat, unless you can act your way out.

Admittedly, this does force more cautious play, as most fights are simply to test your opponent's prowess, rather than for blood. As your stats are secret from all the other players and, as your character advances, even from yourself, a certain amount of politeness is engendered.

Second, the conflict systems are overly dependent on player and GM interpretation of events, with the author saying that if you don't like a rule or result, junk it. I thought the entire idea of using rules and random results was to prevent the type of arguments that I can see arising from this setup. Properly done rules prevent arguments without crushing creativity, contrary to what anyone might want to believe.

Third, some of the descriptions of what a high statistic can allow are, frankly, ridiculous. One example is of a character who, being invisible, sneaks up behind another character to stab him. When the intended victim turns and parries the knife, he is so good that he just goes around imagining where an invisible character would want to stand and stab him. Get real!

Also, there's something called, for lack of a better term, "Stuff," which, depending on whether it's positive, zero or negative, can influence how things turn out. So having "Good Stuff" can be almost as important as being good at something—your character will always get the lucky breaks. And a character with "Bad Stuff" will get the bad breaks.

PRAISE

In *Amber's* favor, I have to say that the gamemaster help sections, the sections for players on how to be a better roleplayer, and the amount of time spent on how to really create a fleshed-out character were excellent. If more RPGs had this quality of work and obvious love of roleplaying put into them, the entire industry would benefit. Examples of good and bad roleplaying, transcripts of actual encounters and more help to give you a better understanding of what roleplaying is all about and how it should be done.

I would also like to praise the artifact, power and character creation systems, which are rather closely intertwined. They are simple in that there are no tables to check out and cross reference, and there are no real limitations on anything except point costs and your imagination. If you can describe it, you can pretty much build it. And the powers system, while not quite as well done as the other two, in light of the knowledge that I gained reading the second *Amber* series, is still a work of art, self-consistent, easily handled and understood, and of great flexibility.

EVALUATION

As to whether or not you should buy "Amber," I have to profess that it really is up to you. If you love Zelazny and the *Amber* series, jump on it, as this is the premier sourcebook for running an *Amber* campaign. Just don't expect miracles from the game system itself. Personally, I just can't get turned on by a system that expects me to either be content with a simple subtraction of numbers to find out who won, or to describe an entire combat blow by blow, just so that I can attempt some trick to win. In my final estimation, the good and the bad pretty much balance out, leaving me with "Zero Stuff." Ω

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

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

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

LARGE COLLECTION of used games in good condition: SF, *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Cyberpunk* and *GURPS* games, and some out-of-print TSR products. Contact Matt Johnson, 625 W. Malvern, Fullerton, CA 92632. (59)

TRADE

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

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)

WANTED

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

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

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

25MM TRAVELLER miniatures from Grenadier. Prefer unpainted, but will consider painted if in good condition. Will trade duplicates of other *Traveller* miniatures or old *Traveller* material, or will pay cash. I am especially interested in the following num-

bers (found on the bases): T-2, T-6, T-7, T-10, T-12, T-15, T-27, T-29 through T-35, T-40, T-41 and (if they exist) T-47+. Also, the boxed set of about 12 figures. Contact David Pildner, 3984 Massillon Road, Apt. D, Uniontown, OH 44685. (65)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SHADOWRUNNERS or cyberpunks wanted

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BRITISH BATTLETECH fans who have copies of *MekTek* issues 4 and up. Willing to swap for purchase. Please contact Michael Bolda, 1183 Violet St., Atlantic Beach, FL 32233. (59)

CLASSIC TRAVELLER material. *Vanguard Reaches*, *The Beyond* and *SORAG* by Paranoia Press, and *Glimmerdrift Reaches* and *Ley Sector* by Judges Guild. Would also like any issues of the **Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society**. Prefer originals but good photocopies okay. Please send list, prices and condition of items to David Feltmeyer, 7535 Dale Ave., St. Louis, MO 63117. (58)

FANZINES

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

HORROR GAMING APAZINE seeks par-

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

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITANNIC TECHNOLOGICAL 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, Itasca, IL 60143. (63)

MELBOURNE TIMES: Newsletter of the Earth Colonies Development League provides background material for completely new, non-Imperium campaign setting. Features include news service, world briefs, character sketches, sophont descriptions, corporate portfolios, political analysis, cultural events and more. Subscribers and contributors send SASE to *Melbourne Times*, c/o David Johnson, 2800 NASA Road One #514, Seabrook, TX 77586. Overseas include three IRCs. (62)

MOTIVE: An Amateur Press Alliance (APA) which covers all aspects of the RPG hobby, is looking for new members. Members contribute to and receive a (+/-) 200 -page, bimonthly APA. RPGs most often covered are **MERP**, **HERO System**, **Twilight: 2000**, **CoC**, **Shadowrun** and **BattleTech**. Please write to Wayne Peacock, 190 Reed St., Athens, GA 30605. (60)

THE SWORD & BLASTER: A new publication detailing games and groups in the Atlanta, GA area, is now available. Covers all aspects of roleplaying and boardgames, including reviews, poetry, game schedules, group contacts and more. For information, contact Jeff Leggett, 2102-B Wexford Dr., Norcross, GA 30071. (60)

ETHER ILLUSTRATED NEWS: A **Space: 1889** newsletter. For additional information, please contact Tom Gray, 101 Hackberry, Apt. 1503, Clute, TX 77531. (59)

INQUISITOR: *Warhammer 40K* newsletter/forum for experienced players. Eq./vehicle design, open forum, scenarios, Q&A, army calc. worksheets, unit stat cards and more! *Inquisitor*, PO Box 14485, Santa Rosa, CA 95402-6485. (58)

GALACTIC ANARCHY: A PBM game of exploration and conquest set after a protracted civil war. Two to 30 players vie for control of the universe, with up to 70 artifacts, 700 systems and 1000 fleets in one game. Write to Anarchy By Mail, PO Box 873, Allen, TX 75002. (57)

TRANSACTIONS of the Royal Martian Geographical Society: A quarterly publication devoted to roleplaying in the Victorian age, with a primary emphasis on the game **Space: 1889**. Send a SASE to *TRMGs*, c/o Mark Clark, 598 Thompson Station Road, Newark, DE 19711-7520. (56/53)

Don't miss **Challenge 66**, available in November.

TWIGG: 2000

Achtung! Minen! Optional rules for getting your group through a live minefield, plus a "drop in" minefield and two sample adventures.

By Mike Sweeney

Yearning for Antiquity: When first introduced, the crossbow, like the machine-gun and poison gas, was thought to spell the end of war because of its terrible effect on a man. And it is not for a light reason that our nation's symbol, the eagle, clutches a sheaf of arrows in one claw as a sign of our determination to fight rather than submit.

By Chris Csakany

MEGATRAVELLER

Power Centers: While Droyne-human relations within the Imperium may not reflect a high level of mutual understanding, they've always included an admirable level of mutual tolerance and acceptance. But in the wake of the Rebellion, this millennium-long tradition of amicable relations has become strained.

By Charles E. Gannon

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

with this once-Imperium-spanning organization.

By Greg Videll

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

By Ken Pick

DARK CONSPIRACY

Trick or Treat: Remember when Halloween pranks were limited to tipping over outhouses, soaping windows, decorating trees with toilet paper and so on? Times have changed. So have Halloween pranks.

By Craig Sheeley

2300 AD

Diamonds from Premiere: Stanford had found the box we were after and was stuffing it into his pack. Harris was standing quite still, thumb in his belt, rifle pointed at the ceiling, visibly wondering what was in all the other safe deposit boxes. "Come on," I yelled as the tanks fell back, firing as they went. "We haven't got time for that!"

By Andy Slack

SPACE: 1889

Secret of the Lost City: Discover an ancient civilization atop a high mountain deep in the heart of the Amazon rainforest.

By James L. Cambias

SHADOWRUN

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

By Richard Garrett Molpus

STAR WARS

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

By Chris Hind

CYBERPUNK

Dark Side of the Moon: The universe is large enough and old enough that the existence of other beings more advanced than humanity is not merely likely, it is virtually guaranteed. I have known this for a long time. But knowing this and finding a three million-year-old spacecraft is a lot like the

relation between knowing that being shot will hurt and being shot.

By Michael C. LaBossiere

Cyberskills: Want to make *Cyberpunk* even more interesting to play? Add another dimension to skill resolution? Get away from the simple failed/success when dealing with skills? Use the following Success Table, and you'll have your players trying to talk themselves out of some really impossible situations and begging for mercy. After all, players do tend to get their characters into quite impossible situations.

By Magnus Seter

STAR TREK

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

By James Swallow

CALL OF CTHULHU

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

By Keith M. Frye

How To

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

By Marcus L. Rowland

BATTLETECH

On the Cutting Edge: Introducing the Apple Churchill Hawkeye 4077 weapon linkage system. No longer will the enemy sneer at a machinegun-armed 'Mech!

By Vincent J. Tognarelli and Ryan Gore

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