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The Magazine of Science-Fiction Gaming

71

TRAVELLER®,
THE NEW ERA
Lasers in Space
Combat
Frank Chadwick
& David Nilsen

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CONSPIRACY™
Dusted
Dan Snuffin

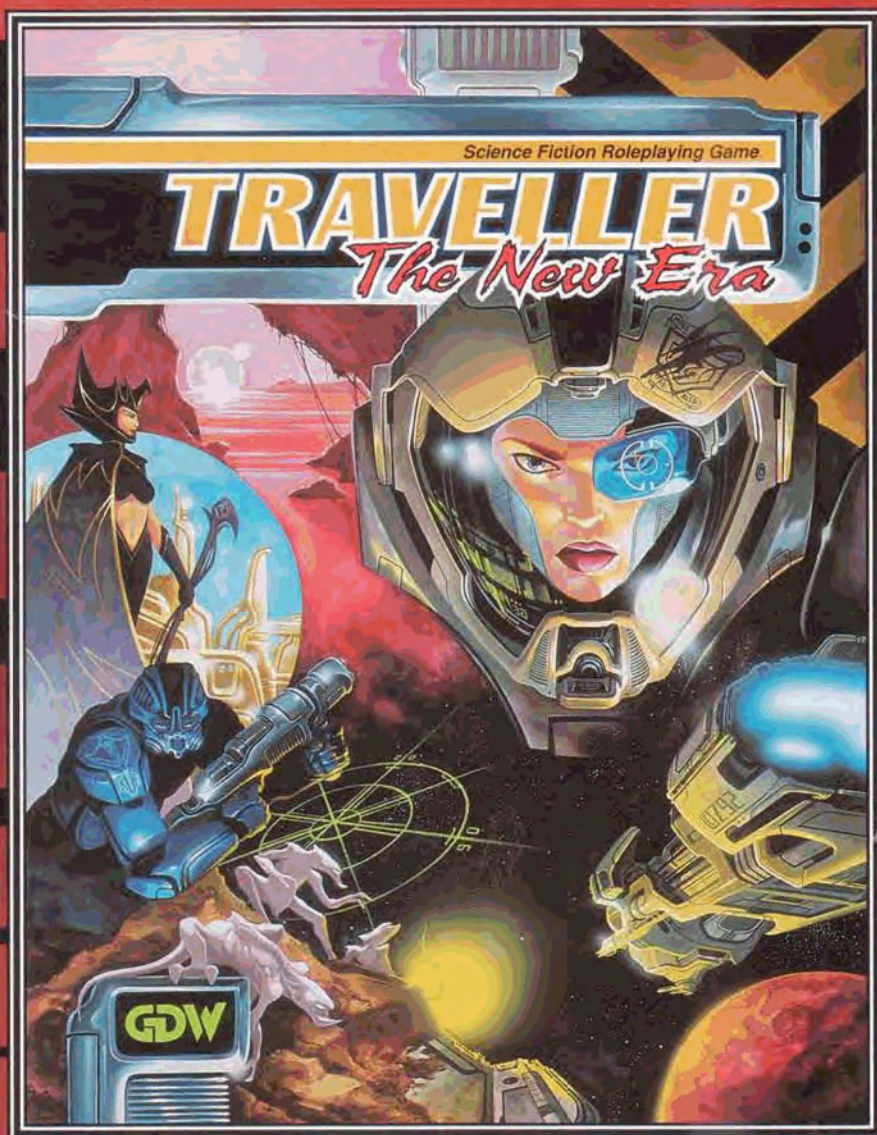
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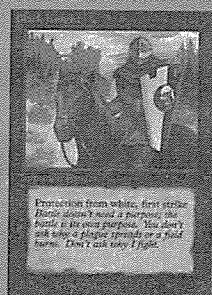
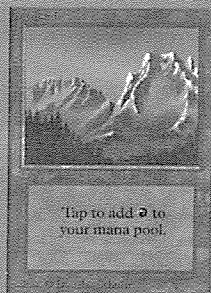


The MAGIC Primer

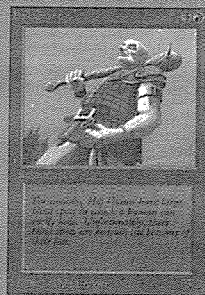
The Gathering



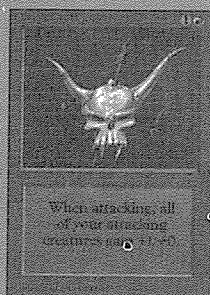
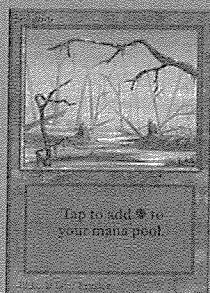
Lesson 2: The Battlefield



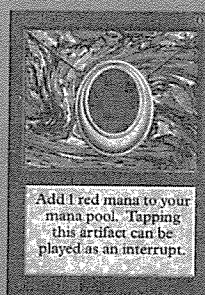
Summoned Creatures



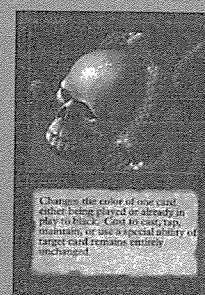
The Library



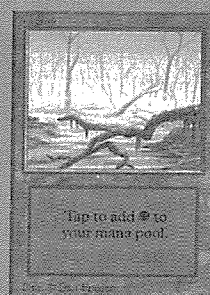
Cast
Enchantment



Artifact in play



The Graveyard



Mana Pool



Your Hand

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Twilight: 2000™

- 6 Tools of the Trade**
This difficult-to-obtain hardware may help to engender a more complex roleplaying atmosphere in your gaming group.
By Chuck Kallenbach II

- 10 Goin' Up the Country**
It's time to destroy the cancer that has managed to take over Breckenridge County.
By Robert James Christensen

Traveller®

- 20 Space Race**
The delicate political balance on Gila is about to be upset.
By James L. Cambias

- 26 Lasers In Space Combat**
A look at some of the technical problems which arise when lasers are used across great distances.
By Frank Chadwick and Dave Nilsen

- 32 Design Notes**
For Brilliant Lances: Traveller Starship Combat.
By Dave Nilsen

- 36 Straits of Magellan**
Help usher Humanity over the threshold of a New Era.
By James Maliszewski

Dark Conspiracy™

- 42 Dusted!**
The one remaining eye flicks open, and you try to jump back, but the bony arm whips out and grabs your shoulder before you can begin to react.
By Dan Snuffin

Shadowrun™

- 48 Half the Attitude**
Sometimes, the shadows favor the small, the quiet, and the sneaky.
By Michael O'Brien

- 54 Thief Archetype**
"So you want me in on your job, huh? Can't say I'm surprised. Seems to me you could use someone who can do something more than kill people."
By David Perry



Page 10



Page 36



Page 56

Space: 1889™

- 56 Secret of the Swamp**
When the PCs set out to explore the Mylomeroean Swamp, the last thing they expect to find is a burned village filled with piled bodies of the dead.
By James L. Cambias

BattleTech™

- 60 Maxed Out!**
An Armor Construction Table.
By Dan Snuffin
- 80 Ant Hill**
Bandit forces stumble onto a society with Star League-era technology.
By Michael C. LaBossiere

2300 AD™

- 64 Stowaway**
Someone—or something—unexpected has stowed away on-board the PCs' ship.
By Andy Slack

Cyberpunk™

- 68 Competition**
How far will you go to keep your company job?
By Justin Schmid

How To

- 72 Names, Names, Names**
Creating a name generation library can help you avoid a lifetime of frustration.
By Brent Raymer

Cthulhu™

- 76 Tea and Biscuits**
The MacGillivrays have a special dinner planned—a family reunion of sorts. But where in the world is Junior?
By Greg Unger

Features

Opinion	4
Traveller News Service	35
Submission Guidelines	47
Conventions	52
Reviews	82
Ask Commodore Bwana	84
Feedback Form/Results	85
Product Distribution	85
Classifieds	86
Next Issue	88

Challenge



Issue 71

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ABOUT THE COVER

Doug Anderson (note the rare and prized Scandinavian spelling) shows us a *Traveller: The New Era* aerial encounter from somewhere in or near the Regency. This exotic tableau shows an air raft of typically unruly Vargr who hate being left out of a good scrap (or is it that they like a plate full of good scraps to be left out?). The title? "Dog Fight," of course.

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Peering Down the Cracks

If you live long enough, it will occur to you that life is one big crack into which fall all sorts of things that you hadn't wanted to lose track of. There are many folk wisdom renditions of this truth, and one of my favorites is, "Life is what happens to you while you had other plans."

Every once in a while, things slow down enough to allow you to try to clean up some of the stuff that didn't go right the first time. In that spirit I would like to give some credit where credit is due, and which, unfortunately, fell through some crack the first time. The **MegaTraveller** folio **Assignment: Vigilante** contained seven starship designs that represented the work of Rob Dean, for which he was unfortunately not credited at the time. The **A:V** adventure was based on some ideas and settings in the Diaspora sector that were written by Chuck Gannon, and although I obviously remembered Chuck Gannon in the **Vigilante** credits, I somehow failed to realize that Rob Dean had produced the starships in Chuck Gannon's material. These designs, which formed the basis of the visualizations created by Rick Boquist, myself, LaMont Fullerton, and Steve Bryant, were an obviously important part of the adventure. With the appearance of Ray Van Tilburg's painting of the Good Ship "Viggie" on the cover of **Challenge** 69, I understand that Rob was again saddened at the oversight, and he was right to feel that way. I hope that this late correction can serve as a satisfactory apology. With the recent publication of the starship design rules for **Traveller: The New Era in Brilliant Lances**, I hope we can look forward to seeing Rob's name attached to many new ship designs.

I also understand that Rob and his wife have just become the parents of a baby boy, William Stewart Dean. Congratulations.

On a related issue, we have received a great number of letters in the past few months, particularly from **Traveller** fans. Time being what it is (in short supply), I have not been able to respond to as many of these letters as I would like, and if you are one of those who is still awaiting a reply, please accept my apology for the delay, and my assurance that if I could answer them all, I would. Thank you for your obvious enthusiasm, and I haven't given up yet.

TNE REQUESTS

I just picked up **Traveller: The New Era** and **Survival Margin**. After sitting and reading them for the past two hours, I am impressed. This is a great system, and I can hardly wait to play my first game with it.

Just a couple of things. First, I wish that a booklet would be produced collecting all the charts into one easy reference place. I really hate having to page back and forth through an almost 400-page book, or several books, to find them. You did that with the original **Traveller**, putting them in a stapled booklet. This was good because I was able to separate the book and put the pages in sheet protectors in a ring binder. It really helps in speeding up my refing the game.

The second thing is that it would be great if you were to do an updated **Atlas of the Imperium** for the New Era. This collection of maps has been great with my campaigns for **Traveller** and **MegaTraveller**, but a new one showing uninhabitable or destroyed worlds and bases would be a great help.

Well, that's it. Keep up the good work. I'm hoping this new house system is the big secret development coming soon for **Space: 1889**.

Your loyal customer
(for a long time to come),
Rob McNay

Thanks for the nice words.

I know what you mean about consolidated charts. Given format and space restrictions in the **TNE** rulebook, this didn't prove possible (we barely had room to reprint each chart or table once, much less twice). However, this October we will be releasing the **TNE Referee's Screen**, which will do just what you propose.

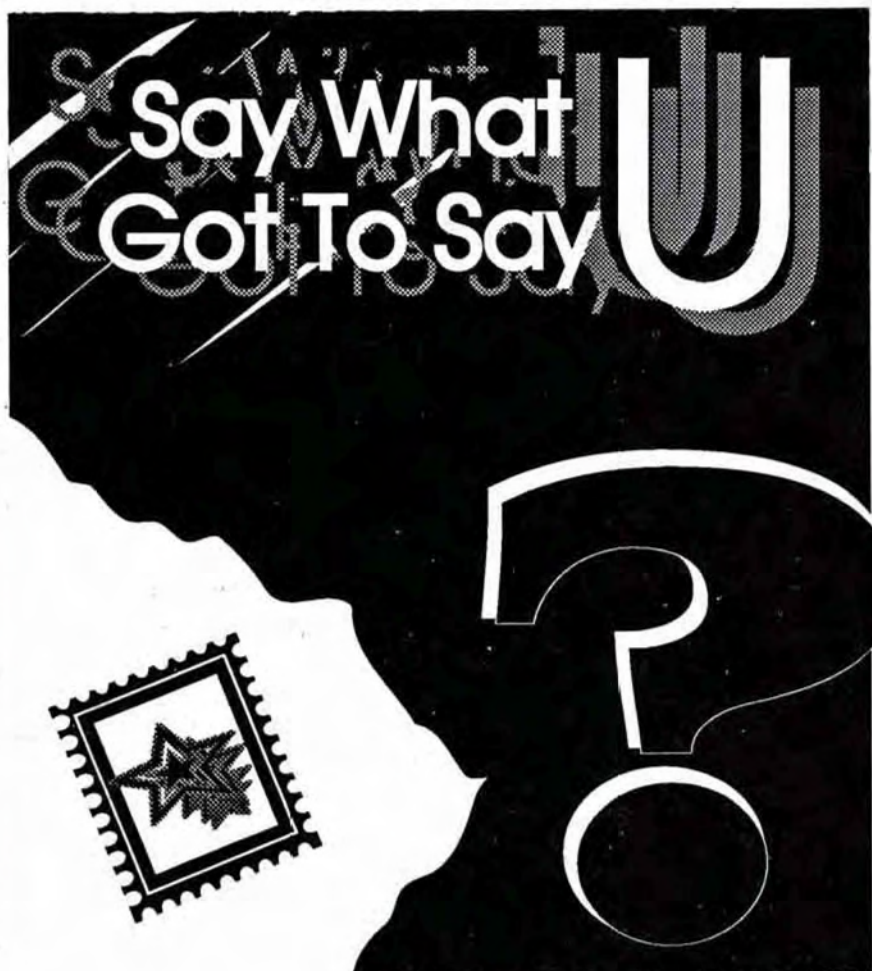
We will be doing **A of I** updates periodically, but one sector at a time, rather than the whole thing on one swell foop, as that would be giving away too much.

Space: 1889, huh? There have been a lot of secret **Space: 1889** fans rearing their pith helmets this summer. If this renaissance of interest keeps up, you never know.

Good to hear from you, and I hope we continue to justify your enthusiasm.

Aqueously,
Dave Nilsen for
Commodore Bwana

Challenge magazine welcomes your letters. The opinions presented do not necessarily reflect those of the magazine. **Challenge** reserves the right to edit letters. Write to **Challenge** Letters, Managing Editor, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646 USA.





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THE SECOND EDITION OF
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THE ROLEPLAYING GAME
IS A MUST HAVE!

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This difficult-to-obtain hardware may engender more complex roleplaying in your gaming group

TOOLS

of the Trade

By Chuck Kallenbach II

Modern- and future-era roleplaying games are often criticized because hardware is just too easy to acquire and thus can reduce the amount of character interaction. To encourage your **Twilight: 2000**, **Merc: 2000**, **Dark Conspiracy** and even **Cadillacs and Dinosaurs** characters to interact more effectively, below are examples of hardware which is more difficult to obtain. These items may engender more complex roleplaying in your gaming group by forcing characters to cajole, threaten, seduce or otherwise interact with NPCs in order to locate and pay for them. In the case of the more obscure equipment in the "why-the-heck-would-anyone-want-this-junk" category, a true roleplaying challenge is presented as the PC develops peculiar persona traits explaining the attachment he has to his "plastic submachinegun." Rock and roll!

Desert Eagle .50 Action Express (Semiautomatic)

The popular Desert Eagle pistol is also available with a thunderous .50 caliber "Action Express" round.

Ammo: .50 AE

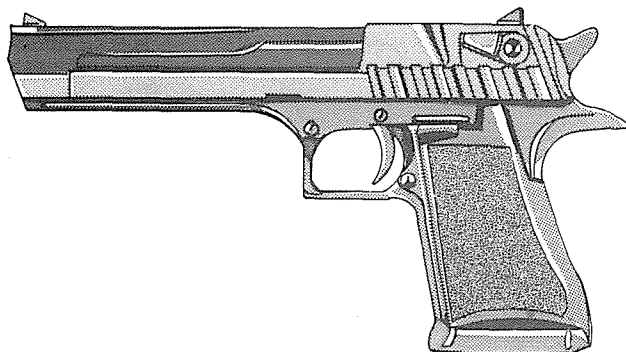
Wt: 1.5 kg

Mag: 7 box

Twilight: 2000 Price: \$1450 (—/R)

Merc: 2000 Price: \$1200 (R/S)

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	—Recoil—		
						SS	Brst	Rng
Desert Eagle .50	SA	3	2-Nil	1	7	6	—	12



.50 AE (12.7mm "Action Express")

Wt: 1 kg per box of 50

Twilight: 2000 Price: \$100 per case (—/R)

Merc: 2000 Price: \$60 per case (R/S)

8.58mm (.416 Rigby Rifle Modified)

Wt: 20 kg per case of 500

Twilight: 2000 Price: \$250 per case (—/—)

Merc: 2000 Price: \$200 per case (—/R)

5.56mm SCF (5.56mm×45mm/1.6mm Flechette)

Wt: 5 kg per case of 1000, 0.6 kg per 24-round magazine

Twilight: 2000 Price: \$1200 per case (—/—)

Merc: 2000 Price: \$1000 per case (—/R)

Ares FMG Folding (Submachinegun)

Concealable as an unremarkable, rectangular plastic box 26cm×8cm×4cm in size, the Ares FMG is useful for undercover duties. It can be unfolded, cocked and fired in two seconds (takes a five-second turn to prepare). A fashionable, blue plastic version of the weapon was featured in the movie "Robocop 2."

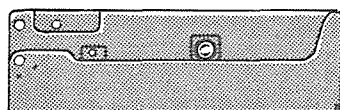
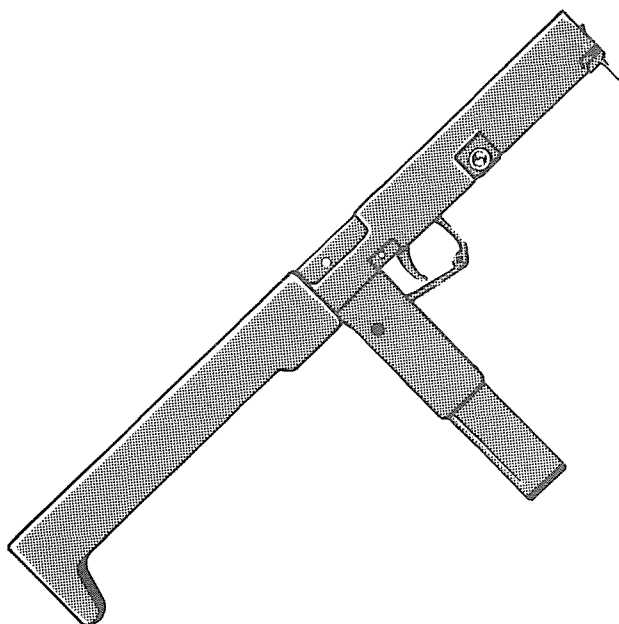
Ammo: 9mm P

Wt: 2.8 kg (32 rounds), 2.7 kg (25 rounds), 2.6 kg (20 rounds)

Mag: 32/25/20 box

Twilight: 2000 Price: \$1800 (—/R)

Merc: 2000 Price: \$1500 (R/S)



Folded

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	—Recoil—		
						SS	Brst	Rng
Ares FMG Folding	5	2	Nil	3	20/25/3	2	3	8 30

Spectre M-4 (Submachinegun)

This handy-to-use weapon features large-capacity, four-column magazines. The Spectre is a recent design. A folding stock is included, and a front grip aids in control.

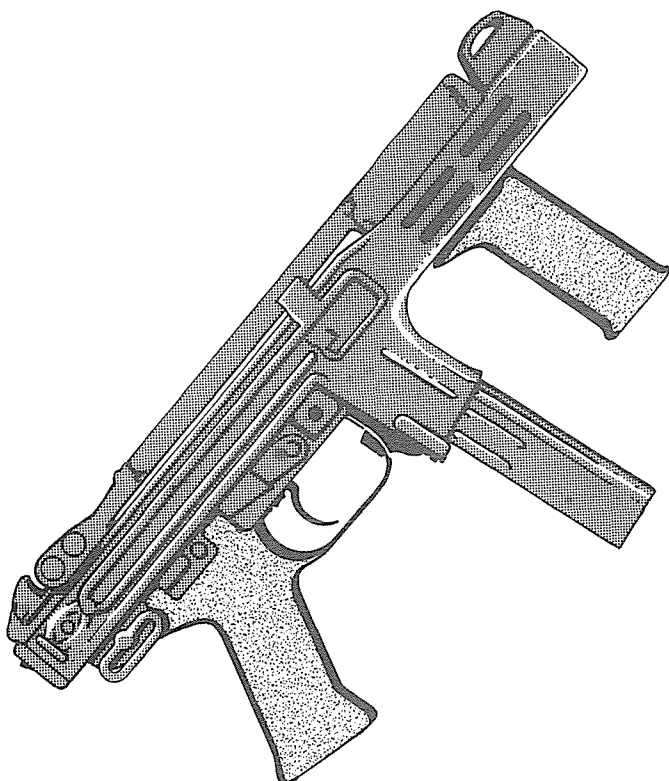
Ammo: 9mm P.

Wt: 3.8 kg (50 rounds), 3.5 kg (30 rounds)

Mag: 50/30 box

Twilight: 2000 Price: \$900 (—/R)

Merc: 2000 Price: \$750 (R/S)



Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	—Recoil—		
						SS	Brst	Rng
Spectre M-4	10	2	Nil	2/3	30/50	2	8	30

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	—Recoil—		
						SS	Brst	Rng
Steyr ACR	3	2	1-Nil	3	24	1	2	75

Steyr ACR (Assault Rifle)

A radical design for an advanced combat rifle, the Steyr ACR fires an extremely high-velocity flechette round. Similar in configuration to the H&K G11, the ACR is also a bullpup weapon in a molded synthetic stock. Unlike the G11, the Steyr is contoured in an ergonomic fashion to fit the firer's hands and shoulder.

The 5.56mm SCF (synthetic-cased flechette) has a muzzle velocity of 1500 meters per second. The round operates like a discarding-sabot tank shell and is fin-stabilized to give a long effective range. The light weight of the projectile produces almost no recoil, but the lethality of the flechette is suspect.

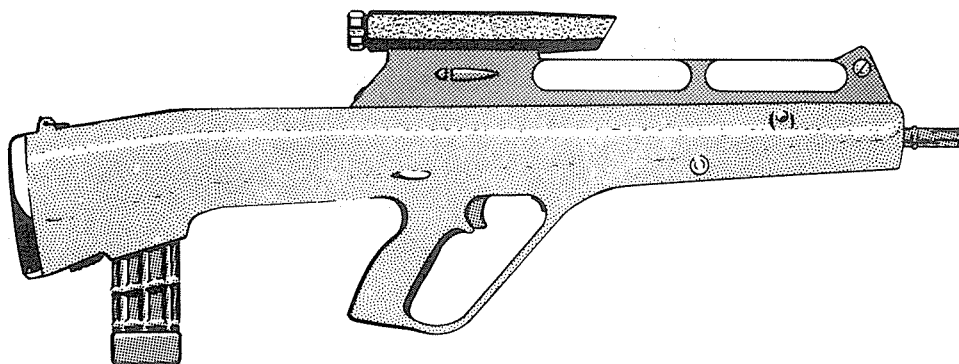
Ammo: 5.56mm SCF

Wt: 3.5 kg

Mag: 24 box

Twilight: 2000 Price: \$800 (—/—)

Merc: 2000 Price: \$650 (—/R)



RAI Model 500 (Sniper Rifle)

Similar to the RAI Model 300, this weapon is designed to fire the .50 BMG round and includes a dual muzzle brake and flash hider.

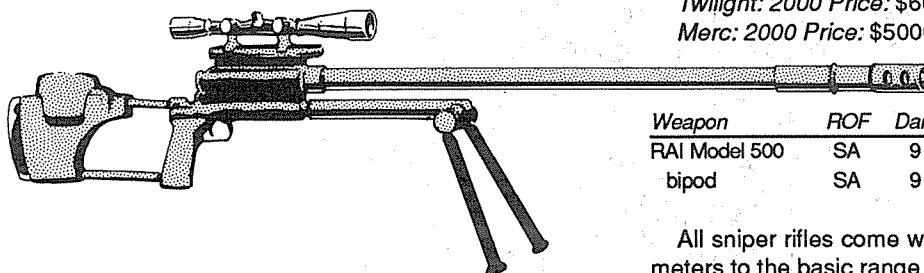
Ammo: .50 BMG

Wt: 15.3 kg

Mag: 1i

Twilight: 2000 Price: \$6000 (—/—)

Merc: 2000 Price: \$5000 (—/R).



Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	—Recoil—		
						SS	Brst	Rng
RAI Model 500	SA	9	2-2-3	5	1	9	—	50
bipod	SA	9	2-2-3	5	1	5	—	90

All sniper rifles come with a scope. With the scope, add 15 meters to the basic range for aimed shots. If the scope is later damaged or lost (or for quick shots), this modifier is not added.

RAI Model 300 (Sniper Rifle)

This rifle is designed as a long-range, high-powered sniper weapon. It is supplied with an adjustable bipod and buttstock. A telescopic sight is provided. The Model 300 is available in two calibers, 7.62mm and a special 8.58mm round which is a modified .416 Rigby rifle round. Statistics for the 8.58mm round are listed in brackets below.

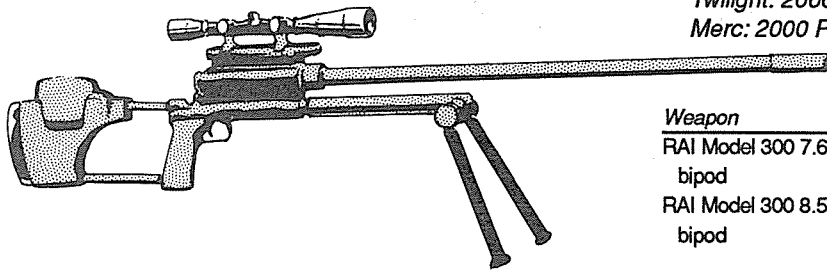
Ammo: 7.62mm N (8.58mm)

Wt: 6.7 kg (6.8 kg)

Mag: 5 box (4 box)

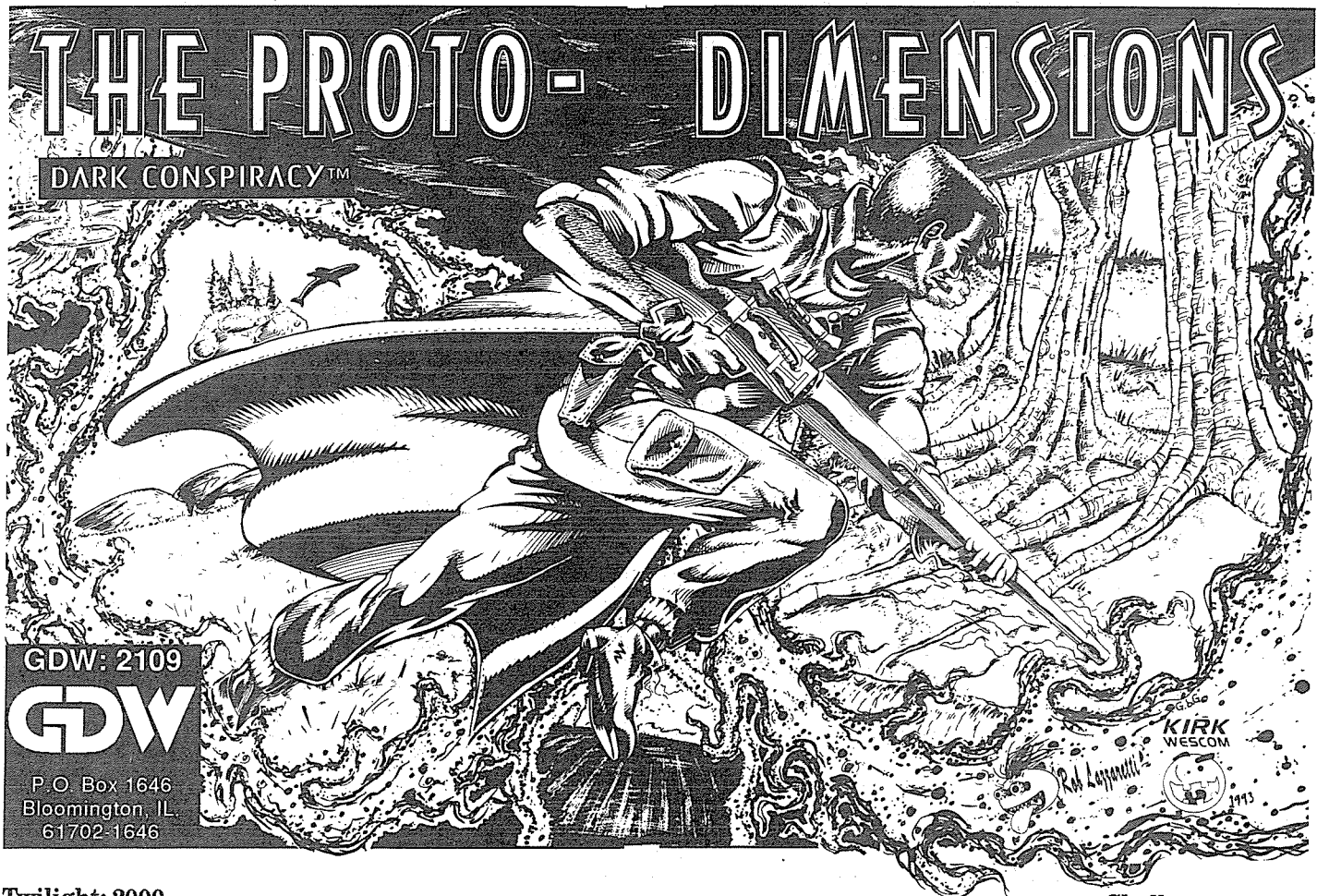
Twilight: 2000 Price: \$8400 (—/R) [\$9600 (—/—)]

Merc: 2000 Price: \$7000 (R/S) [\$8000 (—/R)]



Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	—Recoil—	
							Brst	Rng
RAI Model 300 7.62	SA	4	2-3-Nil	5	5	5	—	60
bipod	SA	4	2-3-Nil	5	5	3	—	75
RAI Model 300 8.58	SA	6	2-3-Nil	5	4	6	—	75
bipod	SA	6	2-3-Nil	5	4	2	—	95

All sniper rifles come with a scope. With the scope, add 15 meters to the basic range for aimed shots. If the scope is later damaged or lost (or for quick shots), this modifier is not added. Ω



It's time to destroy the cancer that
has taken over Breckenridge County.

Go in Up the Country

Robert James Christensen



Breckenridge County used to be a quiet rural area, the main source of business coming from farming and the surrounding Albright State Forest. But that was before drugs moved in. Since the late 1980s, drug dealers first used the rugged terrain and forest thickets to farm marijuana, than started air-dropping small amounts of cocaine. The dealers and growers were quite secretive, and since the county sheriff's department was minuscule, nothing was ever done in terms of large police actions. But in the mid '90s, the drug business exploded when a Columbian cocaine cartel moved in. Soon the streets of Mathusen, the county seat, were teeming with bikers, urban gang members and other sleazy types, including a large number of transients who camped out in the state forest. The current county sheriff is paid by the main gang to look the other way, and the local police now deal only with the unruliness in the city streets. But a prominent businessman, Dean Whaley, is fed up with the situation and has contacted the PCs to destroy the cancer that has infected his hometown.

Whaley has promised the team a total of \$120,000 to "take out" the leaders of the gang and their lab, now housed in a former hunting lodge in the state park. He will provide room and board in his home for the team members while they're in town.

BACKGROUND

Albright State Forest is over 14,000 acres of rugged pine forests, ravines, trails and meadows. Park attendance is way down due to the poor US economy, lower funding, and the presence of the drug gang. Having a police force on the take doesn't help either.

Luckily, one of Whaley's allies is Deputy Mitch Ivanson. A former marine, he is supposed to be on the gang's payroll, but has instead been giving his take to Whaley (to help pay for the team) and collecting information. He would have liked to take out the gang himself, but he knows the gang is heavily armed, and he is not stupid. Gathered intelligence indicates the following facts:

- The gang is under the control of a mid-level Columbian cartel member, Juan Vannesquae, and is headquartered in a private lodge about 29 miles inside the park via a dirt road.

- There are a total of 36 gang members, including the four "chemists" and Vannesquae's lieutenants, along with

seven female companions. There are also an indeterminate number of pickup men out in the woods.

- Visible weapons range from semi-automatic pistols to assault rifles and SMGs. The gang seems to have plenty of ammo.

- A lot of the transient guards are paid with money and drugs, so they might be easier to overpower.

- The road to the lodge is heavily guarded by better-armed men.

- Drug drops are carried out by para-

chuting drums of pure liquid cocaine into the forest to be picked by groups of transient "campers."

- Most of the high county officials are on the gang's payroll, including the entire sheriff's department except for Ivanson.

Ivanson and Whaley believe the last bit of info is the reason no major law enforcement agency has investigated the drug problem in the county.

- The following tactical facts are revealed by consulting the local county

NPCs

Mitch Ivanson: Honest, all-American boy-next-door-type seeking to help save his town from the drug gang. Big, blond, with rugged ex-marine looks. Level: Veteran. Initiative: 4. Motivation: Honorable, Sociable. Skills: Observation 6, Small Arms (Rifle) 5, Ground Vehicle (Wheeled) 4, Unarmed Martial Arts 4, Interrogation 3, Climbing 3. Weapons: .38 revolver (24 rounds), pump shotgun (30 rounds), 30.30 hunting rifle (50 rounds).

Dean Whaley: Elderly but energetic, businessman who never forgot his humble roots. He lost a daughter to cocaine 10 years ago and hates all drug dealers and their ilk with a vengeance. If not for the leg he lost in Korea, he would eagerly join the PCs in fighting the gang. Level: Experienced. Initiative: 2.

Juan Vannesquae: A mid-level officer in the Caralone drug gang, he sees this operation as his way to top of the illegal drug trade. His appearance is all style and slickness covering a demonic temperance. Level: Veteran. Initiative: 4. Motivation: Ruthless, Very Greedy. Skills: Chemistry 8, Armed Martial Arts 6, Small Arms (Pistol) 6, Unarmed Martial Arts 6, Swimming 6, Small Arms (Rifle) 5. Weapons: 1 gold-plated Ruger Supreme 9mm pistol and a concealed VZ-62 Skorpion SMG.

Senior Gang Members (5): Vannesquae's most trusted lieutenants. Level: Veteran. Initiative: 4. Skills: Small Arms (Rifle) 6, Unarmed Martial Arts 4, Observation 4, Armed Martial Arts 3, Unarmed 2. Weapons: M12s, various handguns, four clips ammo each.

Typical Guard (26): Less trusted gang members from Miami, Atlanta and other large cities. Level: Experienced. Initiative: 4. Skills: Small Arms (Rifle) 5, Observation 5, Armed Martial Arts 4, Armed Unarmed Martial Arts 3. Weapons: AKMs, 9mm pistols, knives, six clips ammo.

Typical Transient (43): A motley collection of crooks, hoboes, ex-bikers, crazies and other social derelicts who have turned to working for the Vannesquae drug gang to survive. They are all quite antisocial. Level: Experienced. Initiative: 3. Skills: Small Arms (Rifle) 4, Armed Martial Arts 4, Observation 3, Unarmed Martial Arts 2. Weapons: Sawed-off shotguns, .38 pistols, clubs, knives, 2D10 .38 rounds, 2D6 shells.

Ken Whitledge, Head Chemist: A longtime maker of illegal drugs, he's also been using hallucinogenics since the late '60s. He is 49, but he looks much older. Level: Experienced. Initiative: 2. Skills: Chemistry 5, Biology+3, Ground Vehicle (Wheeled) 4, Unarmed Unarmed Martial Arts 2, Small Arms (Pistol) 2. Weapons: 9mm Glock 12, three clips.

Assistant Chemists (5): Ranging in age from 20 to 38, they assist Whitledge in the manufacture of various drugs, refined cocaine and crack being the most prevalent. Level: Experienced. Initiative: 3. Skills: Chemistry 3, Small Arms (Rifle) 2, Ground Vehicle (Wheeled) 3, Armed Martial Arts 3, Unarmed Martial Arts 3. Weapons: .38 snubnose, knives.

Sheriff Glenn Burns: The stereotypical corrupt rural lawman who got hooked on the easy money the drug trade doles out. He does try to kept the town's streets clear of trouble but ignores Vannesquae's operation. Level: Experienced. Initiative: 3. Motivation: Greedy, Selfish. Skills: Rifle 4, Ground Vehicle (Wheeled) 4, Small Arms (Pistol) 3, Interrogation 2.

Corrupt Deputies: Four good ol' boys who somehow managed to land jobs via nepotism and favoritism. The bribes keep them away from the gang's compound, but just as well—they're too scared to do anything. Level: Experienced. Initiative: 2. Motivation: Greedy, Cowardly. Skills: Rifle 4, Ground Vehicle (Wheeled) 3, Small Arms (Pistol) 3, Interrogation 2.

land title office: The lodge is located on a bridge overlooking a small river, fairly accessible from below (Average: Climbing or Difficult: Agility). The estate grounds cover about 100 acres. The compound consists of a two-story, 19-room lodge and four outbuildings, garage, covered shooting range, barn and generator shed.

Building permit records from the county courthouse will disclose the original floor plans, a pool and deck addition

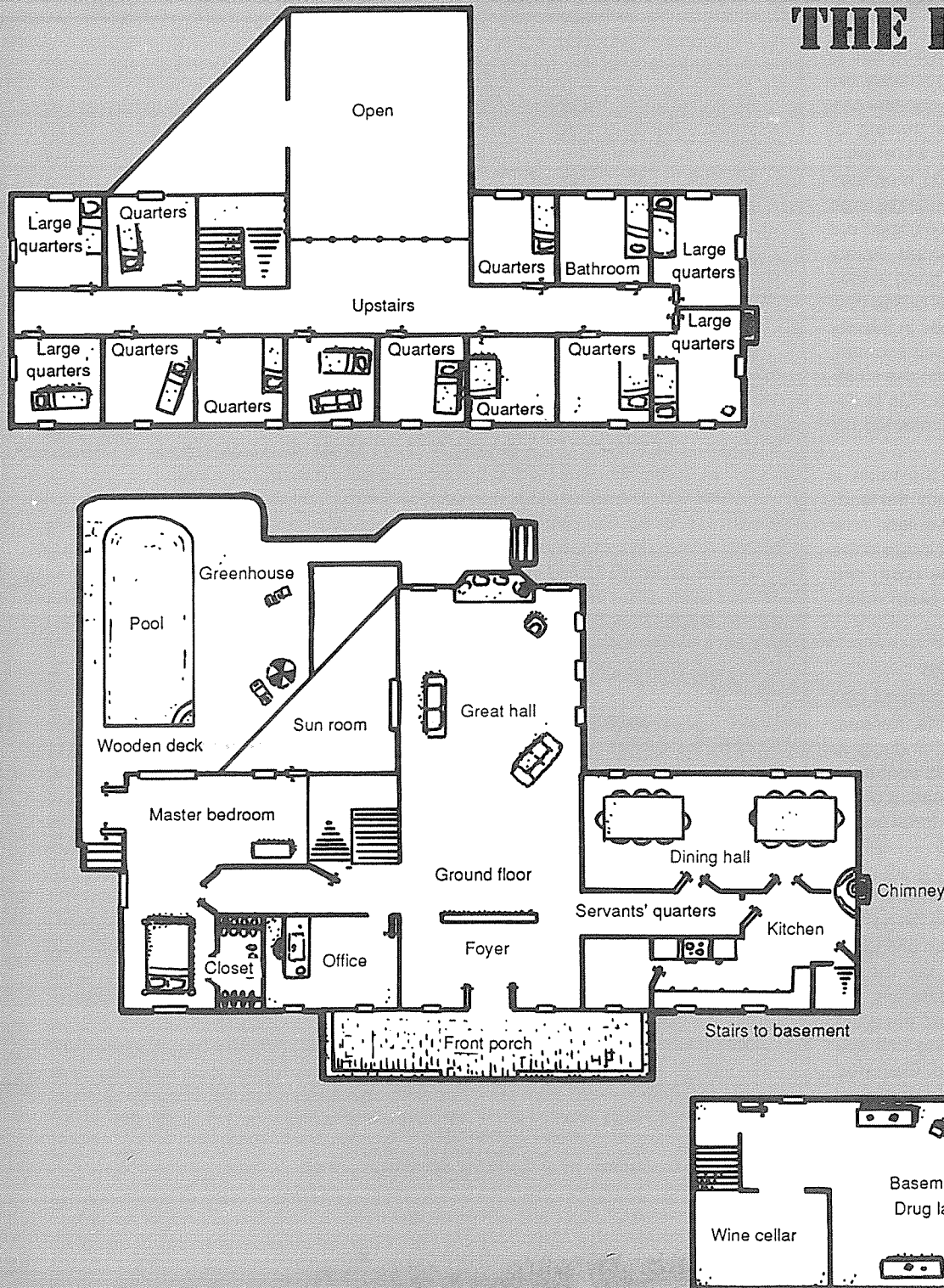
(1973), and a built-in solar energy system (1982).

WILDERNESS

The rugged terrain, dense flora and relatively few main roads make the Albright State Forest a perfect area for Vannesquae's mode of smuggling in his cargoes—shock-proof drums in HALO rigs dropped from 25,000 feet and picked up by the transient element recruited by Vannesquae.

Hobo Camps: These camps consist mainly of 2D6 ragged and filthy people lounging around a small fire amid mounds of trash and smelly bedding. One to four will be women. One to three will be on guard outside their camps. Their main job is to spot the drop-off plane (signaling with two flares), retrieve the parachuting drum, then take it to the main compound. Only the transients who find the package first get paid (\$300 and "samples"), so quite a

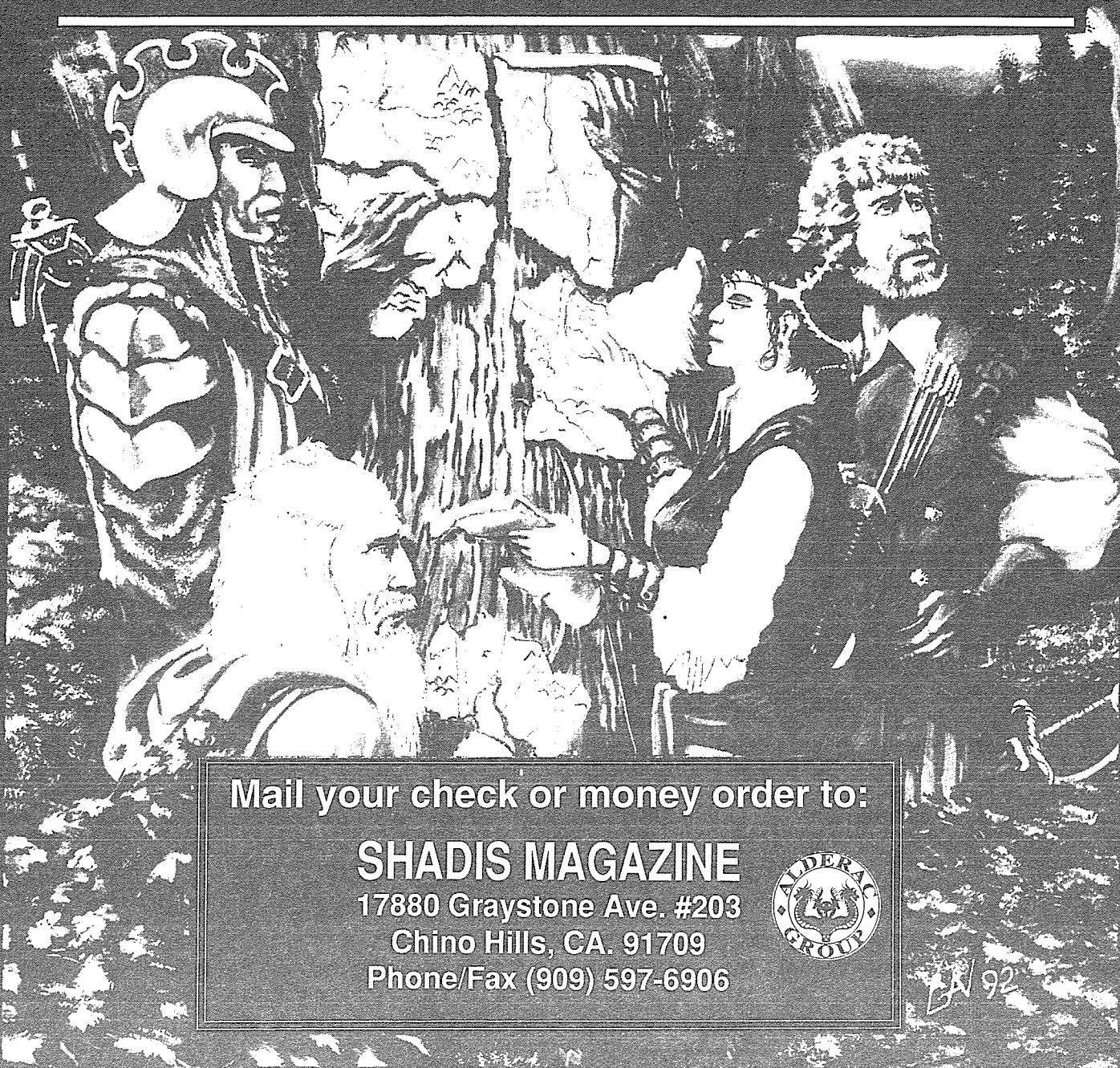
THE LODGE



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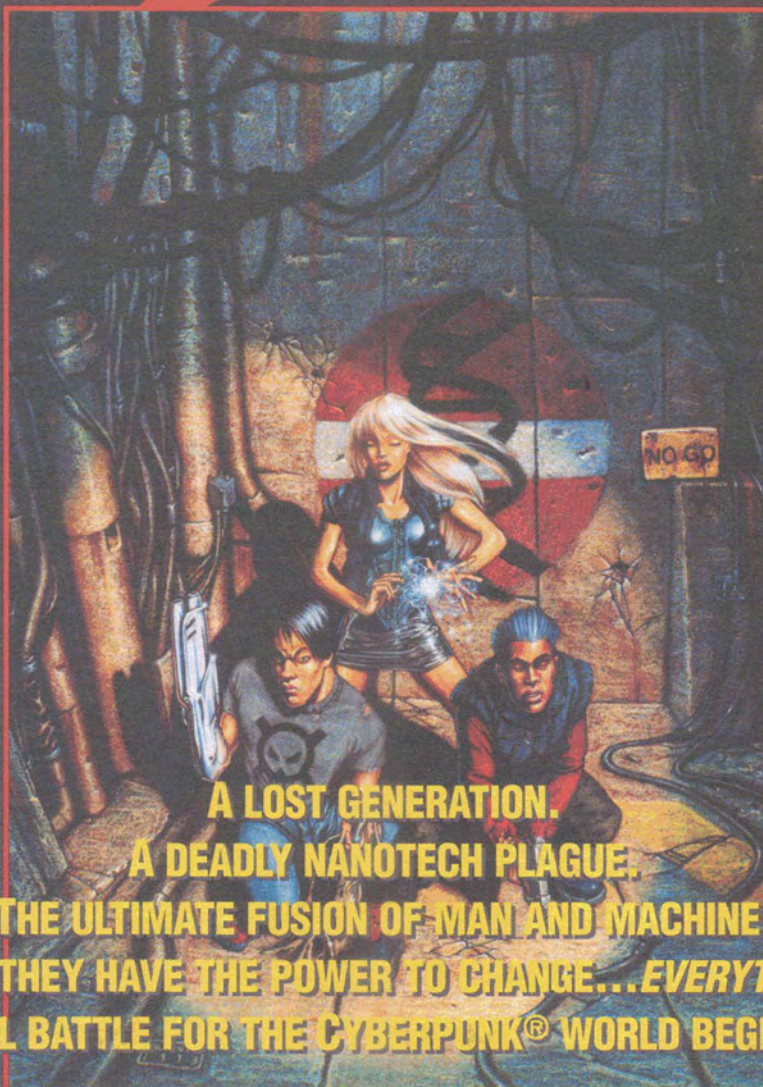
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few bloody fights have erupted. However, these lackeys are poorly armed with only knives, axes and one to four handguns. A strong showing by the PCs *might* convince them to give up quickly.

Combat in the Forest: The thick vegetation provides excellent cover and some sound absorption. Gunshots and loud yelling will be heard for 2D6x100 meters, heavy weapons and explosions twice that. Sounds of hand-to-hand combat will carry only a few dozen meters. Trails are usually only three to 10 feet in width.

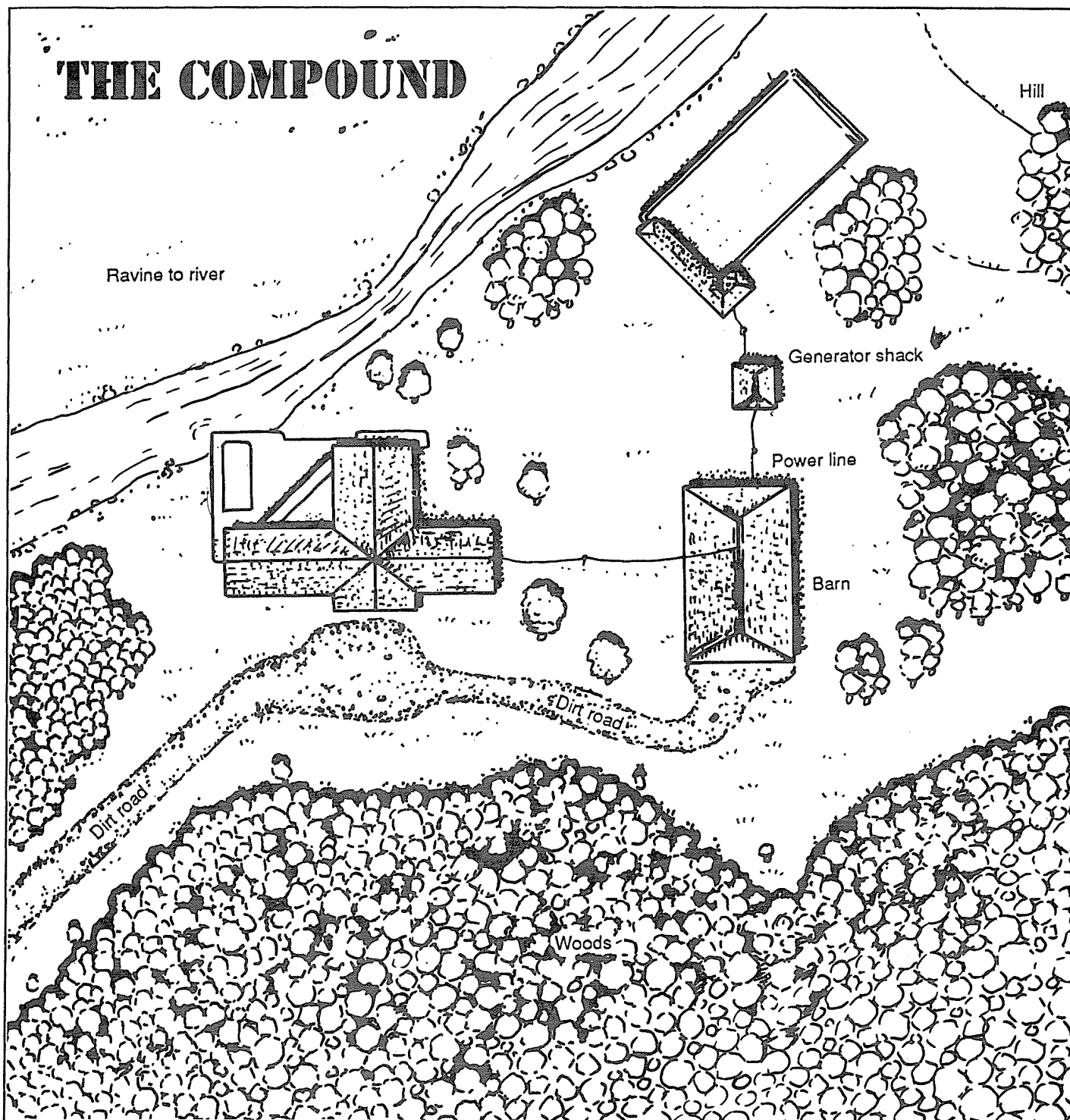
There are plenty of vines available for snares and traps.

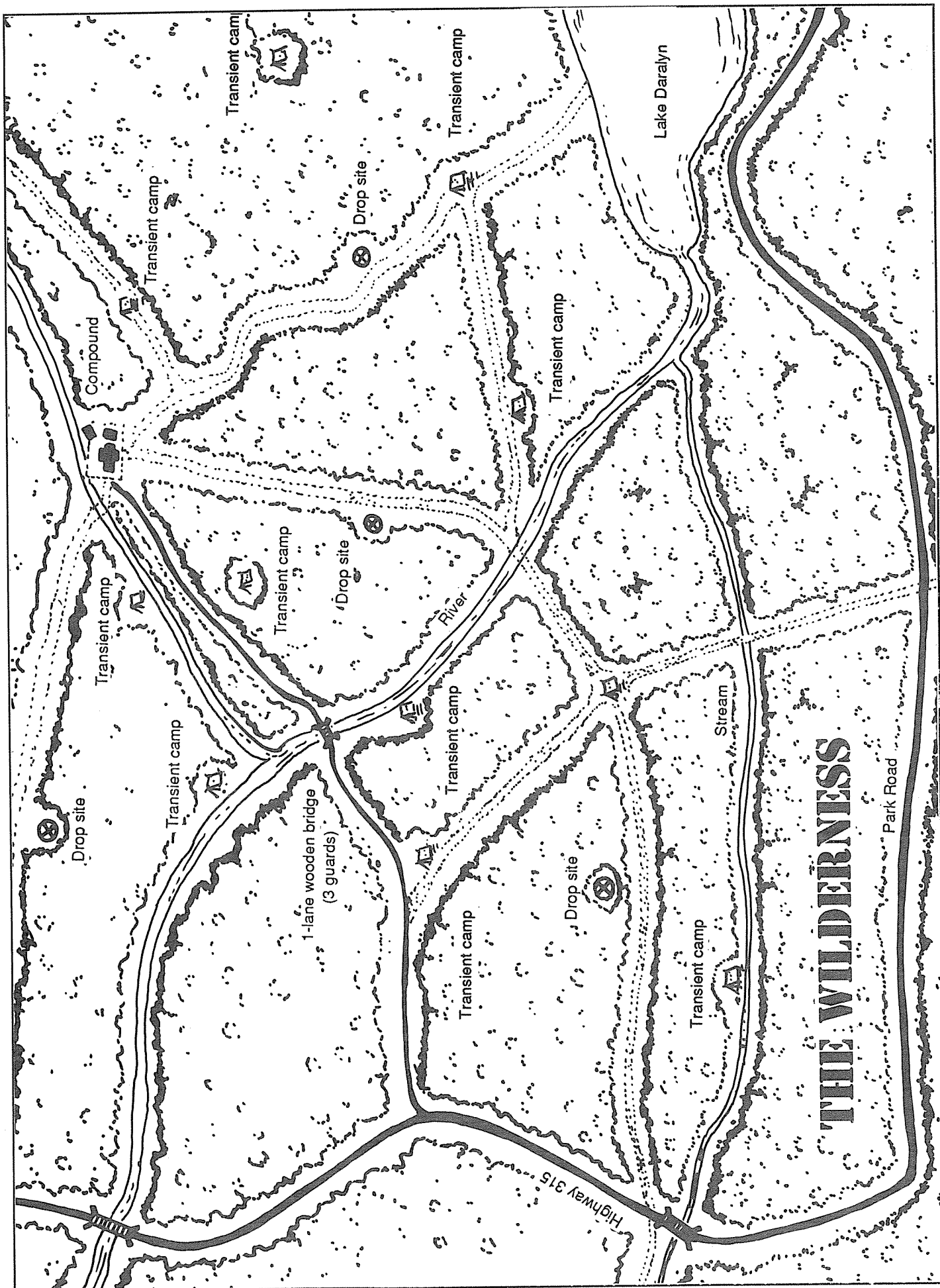
COMPOUND

The lodge was built and owned by a wealthy steelmaker in 1912. It sat empty for 13 years until it was bought in 1972 by a prosperous local, but the gang took it over in 1989. The gang's leader, Vannesquae, began taking out the other pot growers in the area and started flying in coke. Then Vannesquae began hiring a gaggle of homeless squatters to pick up his airdrops out in the roughest part of the Albright wilderness.

Shooting Range: There is a 20% chance that one or more of the gang members will be using this facility to combat boredom. If shooting is going on here, distant gunshots will go unnoticed.

Barn: This was first used as a horse barn, then a marijuana drying shed, and now a garage for five luxury cars that belong to Vannesquae and his officers. They include a Jaguar SX10, a BMW 995, a 1999 Dodge SuperViper XL, a '97 Lexus Q66, and Vannesquae's armored Mercedes, which is equipped with a computer, cellular phone and





defensive oil-discharger. There are, however, three guards with AKRs on constant watch here.

Generator Shed: A 500-kilowatt generator and 100 liters of fuel are located in here. A lackey comes out once a night to check up on it.

The wilderness provides a good bit of cover with thick foliage, so any guard who happens to look out would require Formidable: Observation to spot the team, barring loud noises or gunfire. There are two armories in the lodge and the shed, which contain a total of three Italian M12 handguns, with about 3500 9mm rounds and 2500 5.56P rounds. They also have 29 dynamite sticks and four HE grenades.

LODGE

Once was what a pristine and well-kept forest vacation home has slowly turned into a dilapidated dump. The gang has not done any maintenance to the lodge and the other buildings. Broken windows and bullet holes scar the outside, and trash is strewn across the compound. Loud music blasts from one of the open windows. The covered shooting range is littered with spent bullet cases and shredded targets. An occasional 1D6 guards walk from building to building.

Front Porch: One to three bored guards are here at all hours.

Foyer: The main entry with a small fireplace against the north wall.

Great Hall: Taking up most of the center lodge, this room has slate granite floors, rough hewn log walls, a large fireplace and damaged furniture. It also has a TV set which two to four gang members may be watching.

Sun Room: Added on by the previous owner, this room has an eight-meter-high floor-to-ceiling window, and terra cotta flooring which provides passive infrared heat at night. The greenhouse addition is cluttered with broken panes and clay pots (noise!). There is always at least one guard in here at night.

Kitchen: Vannesquae has two servants cooking for the gang; they sleep in the side room, are Novice NPCs, and will hide if an attack is under way. Meals are served at 9 a.m., noon, and 6: 30 p.m.

Dining Hall: An eight-meter-long oak table dominates this room.

Upstairs Quarters: These rooms are where gang members sleep and relax. One to two gang members will spend the day kicking back while boom-boxes blare out the broken windows and two to four sleepers snore away the

night, weapons within easy reach. The senior members and the head chemist use the bigger corner rooms. Occasionally, the lower-grade members bring in female hoboos.

Bathrooms: Dorm-style showers and toilets, with frosted windows.

Master Bed Chamber: This is the most elegant personal room in the lodge (in a tacky '70s kind of fashion), and Vannesquae has claimed the room for him and his consort, Channa, with its waterbed, velvet shag carpet/wall covering, paintings, and 36-inch TV and VCR. A gold-plated .357 Magnum (five rounds) is on the nightstand, along with various drug paraphernalia and extra keys to the Mercedes. Channa will surrender, but then attack unwary PCs with a hidden switchblade.

Office: Vannesquae's private office is a former den converted to a make-shift business center. He will be here 75% of daylight hours, either behind the desk or pacing the floor arguing obscenely over a cellular phone.

Porch and Pool Area: An odd-shaped redwood deck fits around the backside of the lodge and surrounds the backside of the new pool. Vannesquae, his officers or their lady friends usually lounge here during warm days. There is a two- to five-foot clearance underneath the porch, except where the pool is.

Basement/Lab: The stairs down here are located underneath the main staircase. There is a heavy door (STR=25) at the bottom leading to the lab. This is where the 55 gallons of pure cocaine extract is turned into several thousand "rock" doses. The lab is occupied by the "head chemist" and his five assistants, along with 1D6 guards. Entry points are the stairwell, a coal chute and four small windows at the ceiling level. The room has another added danger—the amount of flammable material used in processing.

TROUBLE BACK IN TOWN

Meanwhile, back in town, Sheriff Glenn Burns and his corrupt deputies are preparing to take action. If the team members attack the

camp, then saunter back into town like nothing happened, they will find themselves under arrest for murder and robbery as Burns does not want to go down with Vannesquae.

But if the team keeps the action up at the lodge relatively quiet, or coordinates with Ivanson, they have a good chance of taking the entire department without bloodshed.

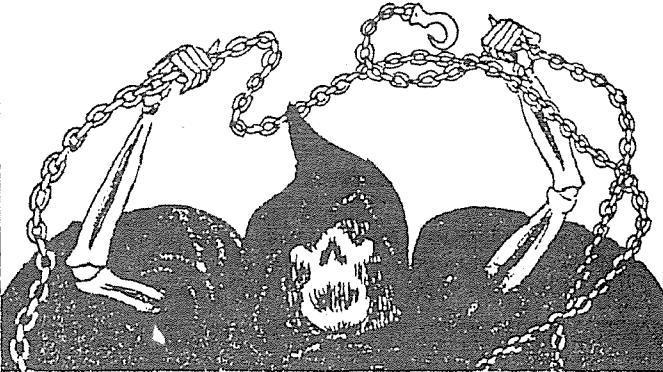
If not, the PCs will have a royal shoot-out with the local cops resulting in either complete victory, prison, or becoming fugitives from the law, not to mention widespread damage to the town. Deputy Ivanson will then take the matter into his own hands and contact state authorities.

FINISHING THE ADVENTURE

Once the PCs take care of the gang's leaders, most surviving members will flee the area in panic, trying to carry as much cocaine as they can get a hold of. Whaley and Evans will provide the team with sanctuary until federal authorities clean things up. Remember, the US government frowns on internal merc actions. However, turning Vannesquae over alive to authorities will bring \$30,000, even renown, and a contact at the DEA. The cars in the barn are, of course, available for "confiscating."

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Whaley will pay the team upon completion of the mission.

VARIANTS

Referees can substitute real national or state forests, counties and cities for a more realistic game or for having fun in their own local areas. Basic NPCs would remain the same. Other scenario options include:

- Turning the drug dealers into Mafia-backed heroin importers. Add 1D10 more mob enforcers (Veteran NPCs) armed with Uzis and 9mm automatic pistols. Not used to the country, these guys wander around the compound avidly looking out for "lions, tigers and bears" (or snakes). Add 1 to their Observation rolls for city slicker paranoia. Defeating these guys will land the PCs up to \$75,000 and contacts at the US

Justice Department, but also vendettas from several mob leaders.

Mob Enforcers: Level: Veteran. Skills: CRM=3, OBS=3, Persuasion=4, MC=3. Weapons: Pistols, SMGs, black-jacks, knives.

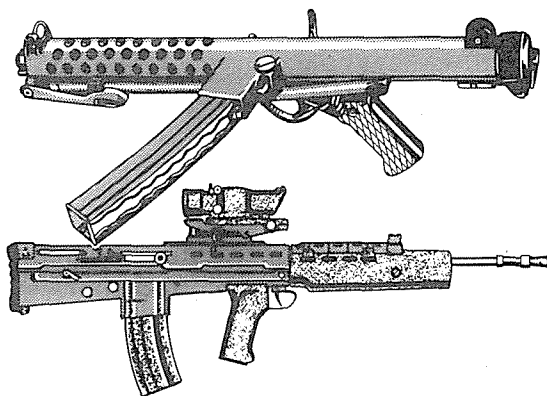
- The drug cartel leaders have signed a pact with various Middle East terrorist groups. Now, in trade for heavier arms, the cartel has started infiltrating Libyan terrorists into the US via their Albright base. Now include 3D6 Libyans each armed with either AKRMs or AKRs, one to three grenades and 1D6 RPG-7 ATRs. Add 1D10 more AKRs and 6D10 kilos of Plastique explosives. The Libyans are restless due to their recent insertion into "evil Amerika" and have pretty itchy trigger fingers. Defeating the terrorists and turning the survivors over to authorities will get the team an additional \$100,000, exoneration for past legal infractions (i.e., this and other merc jobs) and contacts at the CIA, FBI and US State Department for other possible missions.

Libyans: Level: Experienced. Initiative: 3. Skills: CRM=5, Observation=4, HW=3 Stealth: 3.

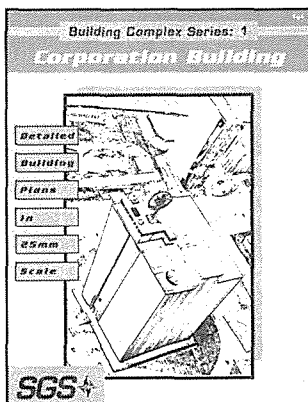
- Just prior to the assault, head chemist Whitledge suffers a complete chemically induced mental breakdown; now he sees the local denizens of the county as "monstrous beings from an alter-

dimension seeking to conquer the world and devour his immortal soul." After killing one to two of his own assistants, he is planning to dump over a 110 gallons of highly potent liquid cocaine and 95 gallons of other toxic materials into the local reservoir in order to destroy the "alien invasion." This all comes from his journal sitting on a lab countertop. The team, after taking control of the lodge, will have to race him to the lake to avoid a mass poisoning which could kill hundreds. He is driving a small four-wheel-drive ATV (treat as a motorcycle) with the chemical drums in a cart towed behind. Watch what the PCs hit, as any stray rounds could cause a toxic spill or, worse, a large toxic explosion. Only fast talk (Formidable: Persuasion) or a well-aimed bullet will stop him.

- The PCs can be government agents, either with the FBI, the DEA or Delta Force. In this case, treat Whaley as the state agency coordinator and Ivanson as an undercover agent. The main plan will be to capture the accomplices in the woods, then attack the main compound. The PCs will be assisted by members of the state militia in arresting and holding any prisoners taken. PCs will have to abide by law enforcement restrictions, rather than just blasting the bad guys to pieces. Ω



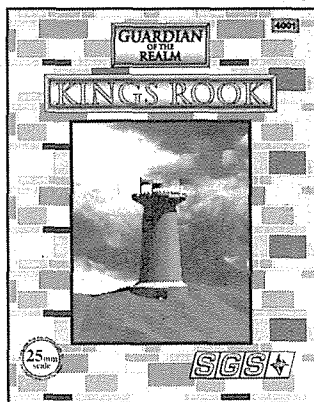
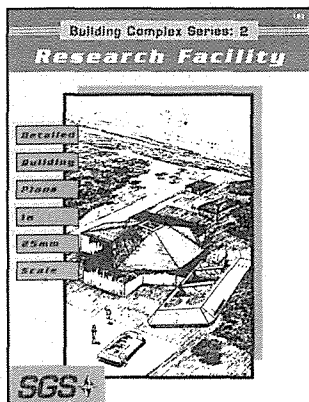
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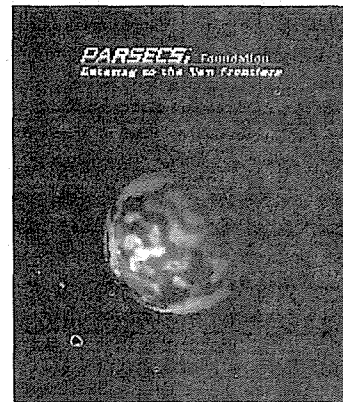
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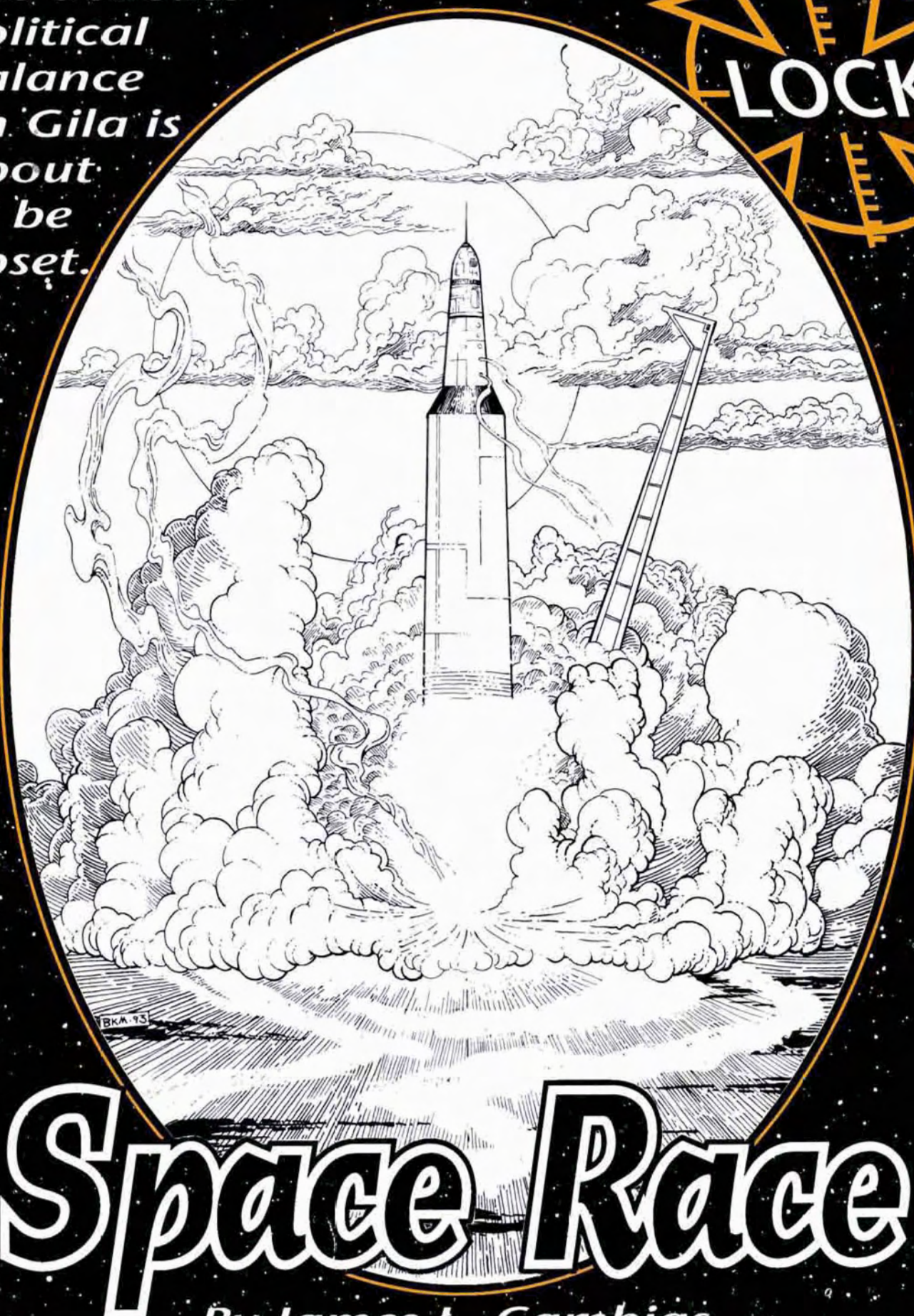
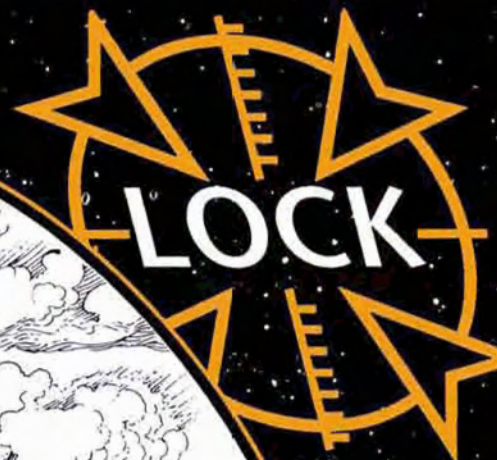
The perfect companion to the Referee's Screen, this booklet contains a multitude of ready-to-use forms to organize and detail your New Era campaign, useful for players and referees.

Revised, more useful character sheets and worksheets head the list, followed by NPC and ammo sheets. But the remainder of the book is all-new forms: player possessions register, ship design and hit location worksheets, blank ship data profiles, subsector data sheets, animal encounter forms, and trade forms. For the cartographically inclined, the book also includes blank map forms that use a convenient multi-scale hex grid system that zooms in or out all the way from local surface scale to continental scale all the way to an entire planetary surface.



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*The delicate
political
balance
on Gila is
about
to be
upset.*



Space Race

By James L. Cambias

While between jobs in Deneb Sector, the PCs are contacted by a man named Makkar Haniman. Haniman is the minister for space of the Deltrine Khanate, a country on the planet Gila (Deneb 1504).

He is looking for experienced individuals to work on a low-tech space program. At least one character with Ship's Boat or Pilot skill is required; other Space and Space Tech skills are useful, as are Instruction, Naval Architect, Physics, and Zero-G.

Haniman is offering 50,000 credits per person for a one-year contract. Player characters with Space skill levels of 3 or more can get 60,000. If the adventurers have a ship, Haniman can pay a bonus of 100,000 credits. He will furnish transport to Gila aboard a Vargr far trader.

GILA SYSTEM

The planet Gila orbits a K5V star with a K5 dwarf companion. The primary has three planets and an asteroid belt; the companion has five planets. There are no gas giants, and only Gila is inhabited.

Planet Gila: Gila is the innermost planet of the primary star, occupying orbit 1. The UWP is E-663674-6; trade classifications are Nonindustrial and Rich. Gila has two moons, both size S, one in Orbit 9, the other in Orbit 50. Gravity is 0.82 standard, the year length is 122 days, the day length is 20 hours, the axial tilt is 34°, and the air pressure is 0.76 standard.

Gila is a hot planet—daytime temperatures at the equator normally run about 70° C (158° F). Most of the population lives in the polar regions. Hardy native life forms thrive in the desert, while imported species dominate the cooler portions of the planet. The oceans are intensely salty.

Gila's few exports include meat and grain, petrochemicals and phosphates, processed foods, building materials, and excellent TL6 computer software.

Technology: In the most advanced regions (the Polar Free State, Tanqueru, Deltrine and Lisarba), the common tech level is 6, verging on 7. The other states are TL5, and in the desert the wandering tribes are TL2 or 3. There are some exceptions: Energy production in the advanced states is TL7, as is most land and air transport. Water transport is only TL5. The advanced countries have been able to equip their best military units at TL7 standards.

POLITICAL SITUATION

Gila is a balkanized world. Seven major powers control the valuable regions of the planet and continually struggle for dominance. They are:

Polar Free State: A participatory democracy (law level 4) with 260,000 people. All governmental decisions are made by popular meetings and referendums. Separated by ocean from the other countries, the Polar Free State tends to be isolationist. Despite a strong pacifist lobby, the PFS does have nuclear fission weapons.

Empire of Silusia: A civil-service bureaucracy (law level 8) with 330,000 people. It is the weakest of the major powers, as it lags behind the others technologically. The general tech level for Silusia is TL5, with imported TL6 equipment for the army. Government is by a massive elite bureaucracy serving the hereditary emperor, who has little or no remaining authority. Silusia's chief foreign-policy goal is simple survival. Alone among the nations of Gila, Silusia has a large Vargr minority. They make up about 15% of the population and are thoroughly integrated into society.

Union of Tanqueru: A self-perpetuating oligarchy (law level 4) with 130,000 people. It is the preeminent power on the planet and recently conquered the neighboring League of Vore. The government is a republic dominated by the Union Party, an organization intent on unifying the planet under Tanqueru rule. Tanqueru controls the only functional starport on Gila and consequently has a monopoly on off-world trade. The Union has fission weapons and is working on fusion bombs.

League of Vore: Formerly a participatory democracy but now controlled by Tanqueru (law level A), with 330,000 people. The government is operated by a Tanqueru-appointed Unification Council. Vore is technologically backward. A rebel movement still battles the conquerors and has tied up much of the Union's military.

Deltrine Khanate: A hereditary monarchy (law level B) with 200,000 people. The Khan is the chief executive, assisted by a legislative Council of Chieftans and local Councils of Elders. Law enforcement is heavy-handed, with passports required for travel within Deltrine, and a complete ban on personal weapon ownership. Since the fall of Vore, Deltrine has taken an activist stance against Tanqueru imperialism. A major part of this is the space program, intended to end Tanqueru's monopoly on interstellar goods. The Khanate has recently developed fission weapons.

Republic of Lisarba: A self-perpetuating bureaucracy (law level C) with 330,000 people. It is the chief rival of Tanqueru for planetary domination. Government is handled by a massive bureaucracy; there is an elected president with little actual control. Lisarba quietly supports the Deltrine Khanate's efforts to oppose Tanqueru, while plotting to annex Silusia. Lisarba has nuclear weapons and is in a race with Tanqueru to develop fusion bombs.

Prairie League: A republic (law level 7) with 400,000 people. Despite being wealthier and more populous than the other states, the Prairie League is only a medium power due to laggard technology. An elected parliament serves all functions of government. The parliament is greatly concerned about Tanqueru aggression and has openly come out in support of the Deltrine space program.

Interstellar Affairs

Tanqueru controls the only starport on Gila; a type E facility built and operated by the Lamas Trading Company. This effectively gives Tanqueru a monopoly on off-world technology, and in return, Lamas Trading has nearly total control of trade with Gila. Tanqueru charges a high tariff on imports and does not let any high-tech products out of the country.

One result of this is that Tanqueru has been able to import TL9 armaments to fit out a mechanized division with grav APCs and laser-armed grav tanks. This made the conquest of Vore possible and has alarmed the other powers. Tanqueru has not been able to import any advanced strategic weapons.

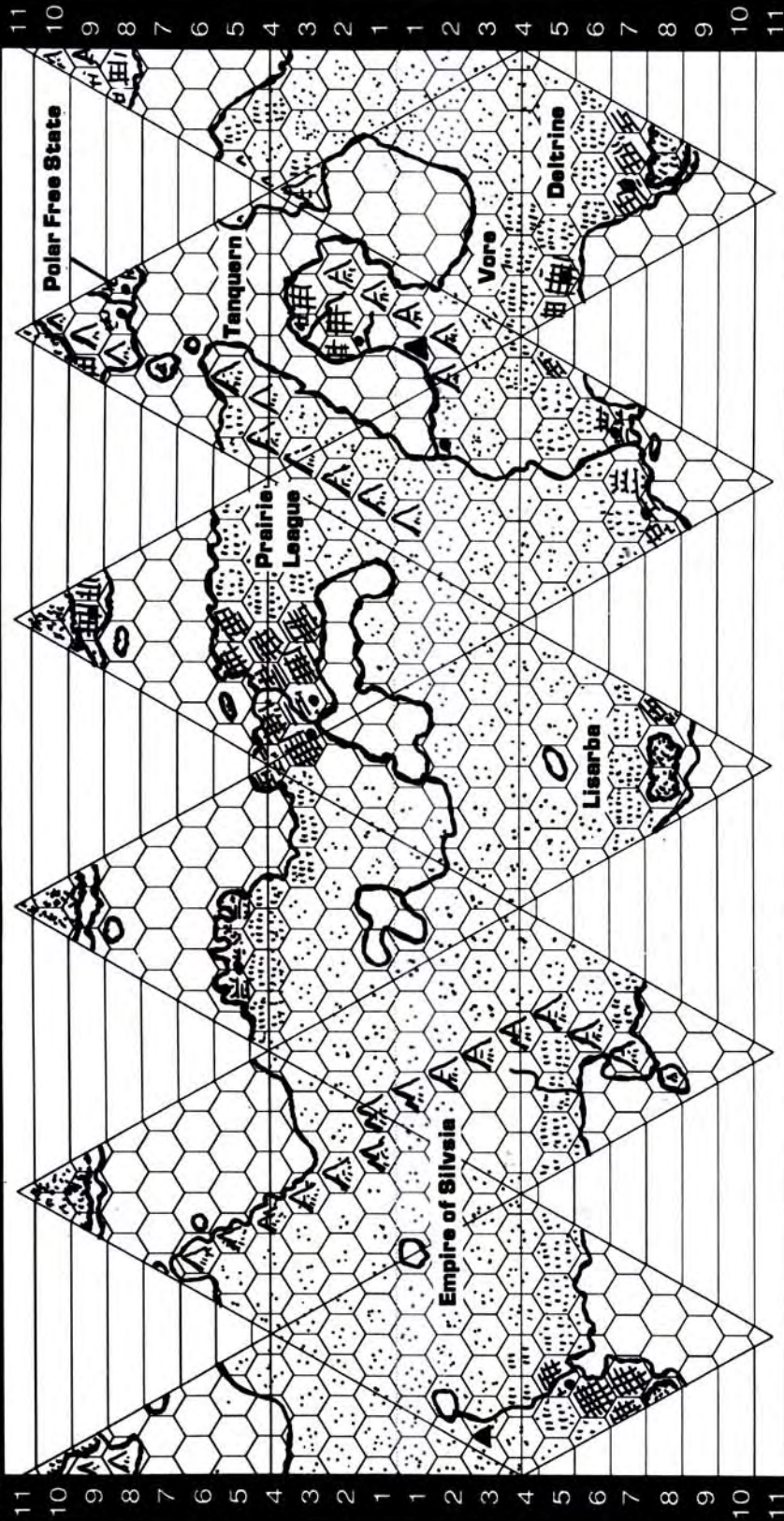
Lamas Trading Corp

LTC is a subsidiary of Delgado Trading, LIC. The company is based at the subsector capital and operates a fleet of subsidized merchants in the area. LTC sells high-quality goods to low-tech planets in exchange for resources and handcrafts. The company has an "arrangement" with the Vargr corsair band based at Gzonksoeg—in exchange for not attacking LTC ships and not raiding Gila, LTC provides the corsairs with information about rival corporate shipping and Deneb naval movements.

The starport at Tanqueru is operated by LTC; while they cannot prevent other ships from using the port, company vessels get first priority on landing and fueling. There are a few repair technicians at the port who will only work on LTC ships.

Date of Preparation 1122 World Name and UPP E6636746 Hexagon Scale in Kilometers 530

Subsector and Sector Location of World Lamas/Deneb IS DATA VIEW 21



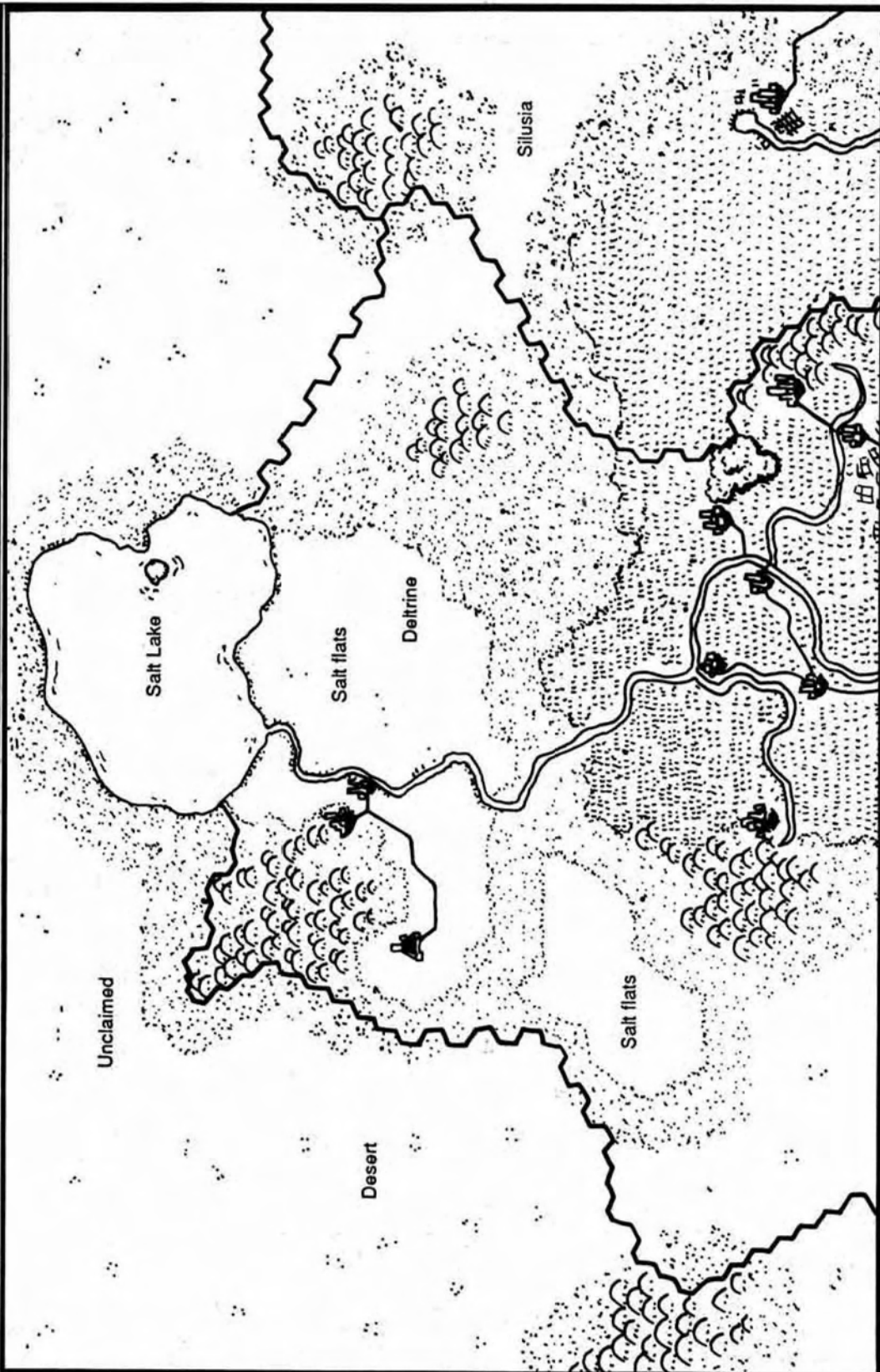
Northern Deltrine

World Name and UPP E6636746

IS DATA VIEW 22

Date of Preparation 1122

Subsector and Sector Location of World Lamas/Deneb



Deltrine Spaceship

The Deltrine spaceship has two parts—the manned capsule and the booster.

Capsule

The capsule is a one-man vehicle, built to carry a cosmonaut to orbit and return him to the surface via parachute.

Craft ID: Special Experimental, Type ZZ, TL6, MCr6.749
Hull: 1/1, Disp=10 tons, Config=5SL,
Armor=40B,
Unloaded=351 tons,
Loaded=380 tons
Power: 1/2, Fuel Cell=0.25-MW, Duration=1100 hours.
Loco: 1/2, High-performance rocket producing 390 tons of thrust; Maneuver=1.026-G, Duration=20 minutes, Agility=0
Commo: Radio=planetary
Sensors: None
Off: None
Def: DefDM=+3
Control: Computer=1bisx3,
panel=enhanced mechanicalx40, Environ=basic environ, basic ls
Accom: Crew=1, Bunks=1
Other: Rocket fuel=80 kl, Power fuel=110 liters, ObjSize=Small, EmLevel=Faint

Booster

Though the manned capsule gets more attention, the booster is actually more important. It has been designed to be the workhorse of the space program, and is fully reusable. The listed performance ratings are with maximum payload; with the one-man capsule on-board, the booster can achieve 2.2 G acceleration.

Craft ID: Unmanned carrier, Type CZ, TL6, MCr50.38.
Hull: 7/17, Disp=100 tons, Config=3SL,
Armor=40B,
Unloaded=1450 tons,
Loaded=2496 tons
Power: None (rocket engine generates 99 MW while operating).
Loco: 1/2, High-performance rocket producing 4992 tons of thrust, Maneuver=2, Duration=23 minutes, Agility=0
Commo: Radio=Far Orbitx2
(for remote-control use)
Sensors: None
Off: None
Def: DefDM=+2
Control: Remote-controlled, Computer=1x3
Accom: None
Other: Payload=623 tons,
Fuel=1209 kiloliters of cryofuel, ObjSize=Average, EmLevel=Faint

Pirates

A band of 40 Vargr pirates is based nearby at Gzonksoeg (Lamas 0803). They have two ships: a far trader and a 440-ton patrol cruiser. A second corsair band is also based at Gzonksoeg, but does not raid in the Gila system.

The Lamas Trading executive at Gila occasionally alerts the Vargr when a particularly valuable cargo is being transported aboard a rival company's ship. LTC also pays out protection money to the corsairs to keep them quiet. The lack of refueling facilities at Gila has made the pirates reluctant to operate in the system, but non-LTC ships must still worry about encountering them.

SPACE PROGRAM

The delicate political balance on Gila is about to be upset: the Deltrine Khanate is building a spaceship. The ship is the first step in a plan to create a starport facility on the inner moon and end the LTC-Tanqueru monopoly. The plan also envisions building a lunar defense station to repel Vargr raids. This would also make Deltrine the pre-eminent power on Gila. It is important that the project requires no outside help or imported technology—while it would be simple to hire a spaceship and build the base, this would leave Deltrine dependent on outsiders.

Needless to say, Tanqueru, LTC and the Vargr don't like this plan. Tanqueru cannot go to war over the matter—Lisarba and the Prairie League support the project, and the bulk of Tanqueru's army is still tied up in Vore. But Tanqueru's secret service, aided by LTC and the Vargr, can try to stop the project covertly.

Project Base: The Deltrine space program is headquartered in the far northern reaches of the country, at an air force base on the salt flats. The nearest civilization is a couple of phosphate-mining settlements on the Brine River.

Makkar Haniman is the absolute ruler at the base, but the PCs will be given a fair degree of authority, depending on their skills. There are about 1200 people at the base working on the rocket program, plus another 400 air force support workers and a battalion of army troops for security.

Security is naturally very tight; passes are required to enter or leave the base. All mail is censored. Most workers live in old air force barracks, but senior personnel get to live in house trailers. The PCs will probably share a trailer. The base is surrounded by a heavily

patrolled electric fence, and periodically a helicopter will search the salt flats.

Deltrine's high law level means that the PCs will have to surrender any personal weapons to the police. To avoid this, they must get Haniman's permission, or else try to bribe or intimidate the police.

ADVENTURES

There are a number of interesting situations the PCs can get involved in during their contracts.

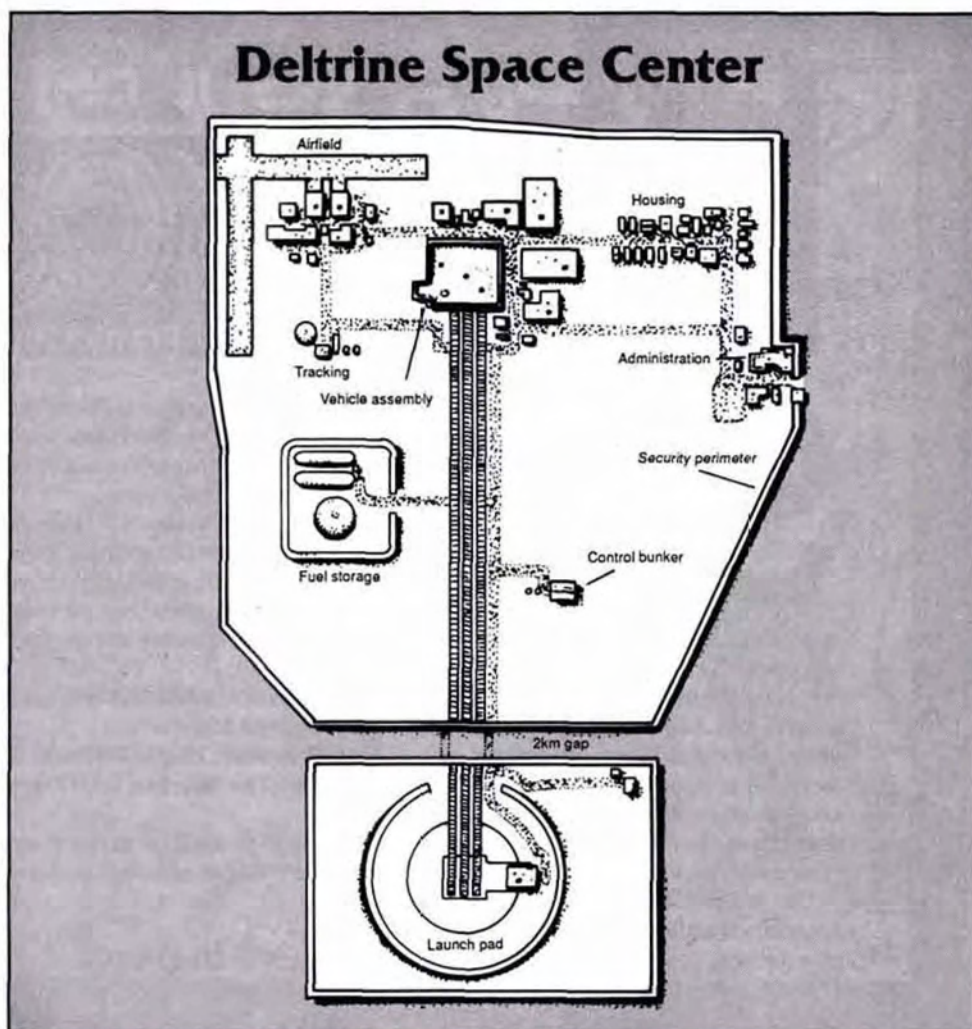
Rocket Scientists: If the players have the time and the right mindset, the referee may simply let them design the Deltrine spaceship, using the rules presented in the **Hard Times** supplement (or in "One Small Step" and "Two Small Steps," by Charles Gannon in **Challenge 45** and **47**). The budget limit is the price of the ship described above. The ship must be able to reach orbit and return with at least one man on-board.

The Right Stuff: There are six cosmonauts preparing for the flight. Just before the rocket is scheduled to go up, a bomb blast rips through their quarters, killing or injuring all six. Training new cosmonauts will take months, and who knows what other sabotage might happen during that time. The obvious solution is for one of the PCs to go up instead. The character must be in good physical shape and should have as many applicable skills as possible. The other PCs must find the saboteur before he strikes again.

All Systems Go: On the eve of the launch, Tanqueru launches a last-ditch effort to stop the project. A group of 20 commandos disguised as desert tribesmen attacks the base. They are armed with laser rifles and have two air/rafts. They will try to destroy the command center and the rocket, using satchel charges.

If the PCs have a ship, then some of the Vargr pirates will be hired by LTC to raid the base. The PCs must fight off the enemy ship, and perhaps learn who is behind the attacks.

New Frontier: The PCs may elect to remain with the project after their initial contacts are completed. There are a number of jobs they can perform: hiring starmercs to protect against Vargr raids, helping design and build a moon ship and moon base, and stopping future efforts by LTC and Tanqueru to halt the project. The PCs may decide to gather evidence against Lamas Trading Corp to present to the Domain of Deneb government; this will not be easy, par-



ticularly since LTC and its parent company may well try to eliminate the adventurers.

NPCS

Dugarin VI: The young Khan of Deltrine has naturally had the finest education and upbringing available in his realm. He is in superb mental and physical condition, and is exceedingly handsome. His Majesty is a restless, innovative man, who came up with the space program idea after a trip to orbit aboard an LTC vessel while still a boy. 9BC9AD, age 32, 3 terms.

Skills: Gun Combat (rifle)-1, Blade Combat (foil)-2, ATV-2, Tactics-2, Medical-1, Leader-3, History-1, Admin-2.

Makkar Haniman, Deltrine Minister For Space: Haniman has served the Khan's family his entire life in a variety of posts. He initially thought the space program was a foolish notion, but as director he has staked his reputation and prestige on its outcome. Haniman is a tall, slender old man with a long beard and an air of tremendous dignity. 584B9C, age 43, 6 terms.

Skills: Wheeled Vehicle-1, Pistol-3, Engineering-1, Leader-3, Computer-1,

Recruiting-2, Interrogation-1, Admin-1, Instruction-2.

Flight Leader Delvin Shunkie, Cosmonaut: Shunkie is one of six cosmonauts selected from the Deltrine Air Force. He is considered to be the best of the six, and the most likely to be first into space. Shunkie has the normal ego for a fighter jock. He is short and wiry, and not particularly handsome.

9999A9, age 28, 2 terms.

Skills: Jet Aircraft-3, J-O-T-1, Carousing-1, Vacc Suit-1, Mechanical-1, Electronics-1, Communications-1.

Trissia Lemoda: Lemoda is the head of LTC operations on Gila and directs the company's offices in Tanqueru. She must carefully guard the company's interests, playing off the Domain of Deneb, the Vargr and local elements on Gila against each other. So far she has succeeded, but the Deltrine space program is about to upset her delicate arrangements. Lemoda is very small and slender, and is very attractive. 696CBA, age 34, 4 terms.

Skills: Grav Vehicle-0, Computer-1, Vacc Suit-1, Pilot-2, Forgery-3, Pistol-2, Streetwise-2, Admin-2, Electronics-1. Ω

▶ LASERS ◀ In Space Combat

By Frank Chadwick and David Nilsen

Space is big. Really big. Anytime it takes seconds for a light beam to get from one place to another, you know you are talking big. One problem science fiction has always had to deal with was how to attack hostile targets across distances of light-seconds, or even significant fractions of a light-second. One traditional answer has been lasers. This article takes a look at some of the actual technical problems which have to be addressed when lasers are used across the sorts of distances encompassed by science-fiction stories and games.

Our benchmark scale is the light-second, the distance that light travels in one second, roughly 300,000 kilometers (186,000 miles). To take some GDW games as reference points, **Star Cruiser** used 600,000-kilometer hexes and one-minute turns, a result of the phenomenal speed of stutterwarp ships in the **2300 AD** universe. Vector movement games tend to have smaller hexes scales and longer turns. **Mayday** used 300,000-kilometer hexes and 100-minute turns. **MegaTraveller** used

25,000-kilometer hexes and 20-minute turns. **Traveller The New Era** uses 30,000-kilometer hexes ($\frac{1}{10}$ of a light-second) and 30-minute turns.

Based on these scales, it is possible to calculate the speed of a vessel moving one hex per turn. (Most ships move faster than that, but one hex per turn gives us a good baseline comparison number.)

Star Cruiser: 36,000,000 km/hour.

Mayday: 180,000 km/hour.

MegaTraveller: 75,000 km/hour.

Traveller: The New Era: 60,000 km/hour.

These numbers will be useful in examining the target solution problem later.

DELIVERED ENERGY

A common picture in science-fiction movies is the laser firing at a target, hitting it, and there being a large explosion, just as if an exploding round had been fired at it. In the dozens of films of laboratory lasers you've probably seen, however, you probably noticed that the beam just punches through metal plates without much attendant pyrotechnics. Which is a more accurate model for combat lasers in space?

Interestingly enough, Hollywood's portrayal is closer to the mark. Laboratory laser experiments are all done with fairly low-power lasers. Very high-energy lasers with very short pulse times, however, do more than just burn through the target; they produce such a dramatic and sudden elevation in the surface temperature of the target that it vaporizes and explodes away from the hit, just like in the movies, and propagates a shock wave into the target.

So, very high-energy lasers with short pulse times cause explosions where they hit as they dump their energy. How much of an explosion? Actually, that's pretty easy to calculate. A watt is a measure of power over time. A watt acting for one second produces one joule of energy. So a laser with a continuous output of 1000-megawatts (as-

suming it was able to deliver its full output over the distance fired, which we'll cover in a minute) with a $\frac{1}{100}$ -second pulse would actually deliver 10 megajoules of energy to the target.

How much is 10 megajoules? It is the equivalent of roughly two kilograms (four pounds) of TNT. That is, one pound of TNT generates 2.5 million joules (megajoules) of energy when it explodes, and so a 25-megawatt beam projects the equivalent of 10 pounds (roughly five kilograms) of high explosive per second.

PENETRATION

Penetration is pretty easy to calculate based on existing data. Experiments with laboratory lasers have shown that a beam with a delivered power density of 2 megawatts per square centimeter can punch through one-half inch of aluminum in less than half a second. Some simple extrapolation from this gives us a penetration value for lasers of roughly one centimeter of steel penetrated per 1 megajoule of delivered energy (assuming the beam has a sufficiently high power density, which we will assume from now on, as we will always be talking about very short pulses and very high powers).

HITTING THE TARGET

Hitting the target is simultaneously very easy and extraordinarily difficult.

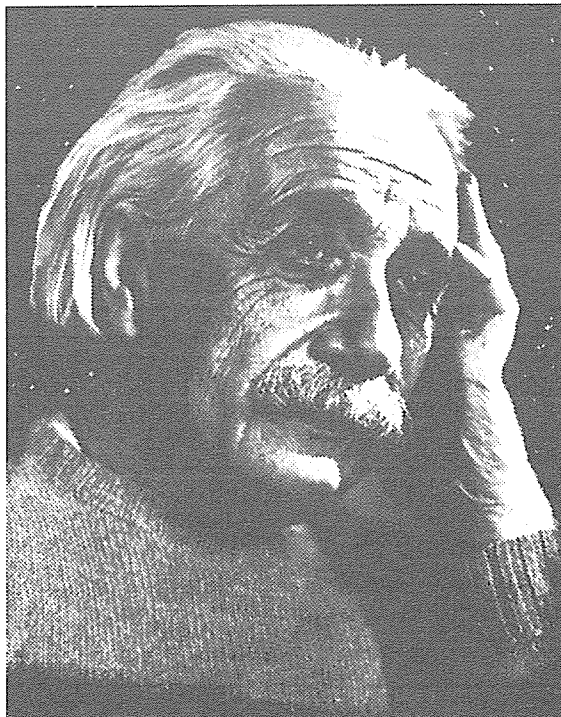
First, the easy part—mathematical prediction of where the target will be. Let's leave aside the question of relative target velocity for now, as that is mathematically unimportant. If a target is travelling at a constant velocity, it is as easy to predict its position at the moment the laser will arrive as if the target was stationary.

What is important is how far the target can shift that predicted location, and that is a function of acceleration and time. A ship's predicted endpoint only moves by about five meters per G of acceleration per second. At one light-second of range, there is a two-second

Change in Endpoint
in Meters per G of Acceleration
Range

LS	1G	2G	3G	4G	5G	6G
0.1	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.2
0.2	0.8	1.6	2.4	3.2	4.0	4.8
0.3	1.8	3.6	5.4	7.2	9.0	10.8
0.4	3.2	6.4	9.6	12.8	16.0	19.2
0.5	5.0	10.0	15.0	20.0	25.0	30.0
0.6	7.2	14.2	21.6	28.8	36.0	43.2
0.7	9.8	19.6	29.4	39.2	49.0	58.8
0.8	12.8	25.6	38.4	51.2	64.0	76.8
0.9	16.2	32.4	48.6	64.8	81.0	97.2
1.0	20.0	40.0	60.0	80.0	100.0	120.0
1.1	24.2	48.4	72.6	96.9	121.0	145.2
1.2	28.8	57.6	86.4	115.2	144.0	172.8
1.3	33.8	67.6	101.4	135.2	169.0	202.8
1.4	39.2	78.4	117.6	156.8	196.0	235.2
1.5	45.0	90.0	135.0	180.0	225.0	270.0





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lag between detection and arrival of an offensive laser beam (one second for the return leg of the sensor data, one second for the outgoing beam). The actual lag varies with the range to the target, which affects how far the endpoint of the target can move, as reflected in the Change in Endpoint chart on page 26.

Another way to look at this is to think of it in terms of hull radii. If the target cannot alter its projected endpoint by one hull radius, you can mathematically guarantee hitting it. The table below shows the hull radii of spherical hull ships by order of magnitude of displacement (which work out to progressive doublings, approximately, of hull radii). Displacement is expressed in standard *Traveller* displacement tons (14 cubic meters of volume).

Target Sizes

Tons	Radius	Class
10	3.5	Very Small (VS)
100	7.0	Small (S)
1000	15.0	Medium (M)
10,000	32.0	Large (L)
100,000	70.0	Very Large (VL)
1,000,000	150.0	Gigantic (G)

Combining these two charts (and extending the first one a bit) we can get the acceleration values necessary to avoid a sure hit at various ranges and for various sized ships. Surely this has some interesting applications to a ship combat system. Note that a gigantic ship with just a 1G maneuver drive still can't get out of the way of a laser at 2.7 light-seconds distance, or over 800,000 kilometers. *Nothing* can avoid being hit at 0.1 light-seconds (which is a powerful argument for the kind of detonation laser missiles used in **2300 AD**, which blow up out at two- or three-hex range to pump an X-ray laser, but more on that later).

Refer to the Range chart at right. Remember that these are *best case* numbers for the target. They assume a spherical ship (which will have the shortest distance to move to get out of the way) and they further assume that no time is spent positioning the ship for acceleration. If the ship always accelerates in one direction, of course, this will soon become predictable and of no value. Also remember that these are not ranges where the ship is safe; they are ranges at which it is no longer *guaranteed* dead meat.

But now comes the hard part—engineering an accurate target tracking system. I think we can agree that at most ranges up to a light-second or two the

math of hitting a target is pretty simple. One of the variables we dumped out of the equation early on was relative velocity difference, because mathematically it is easily dealt with. The engineering task of dealing with it is another story.

In the *Traveller: The New Era* ship combat scale (30,000-km hexes, 30-minute turns), a ship moving one hex per turn (that is, a ship coasting along at a very leisurely velocity) is moving at 60,000 km/hr, or 17 kilometers *per second*.

So suppose the target is not maneuvering at all—just coasting along. You can predict to the meter where it will be when the laser pulse arrives. Let's say you can deliver 1000 megajoules of power in a one-square centimeter laser dot (a dot 1.13 cm in diameter) at the receiving end, and it's all delivered in a nice short pulse one-thousandth of a second long (a 1,000,000-megawatt laser with a pulse time of one-one-thousandth of a second, which ain't too shabby). You point, fire, and hit!

However, that target is moving at 17,000 meters per second, which means that for the one-thousandth of a second that your laser pulse is focused on it it moves 17 meters. We'll give you the benefit of the doubt and say that the target is 17 meters long and so none of the beam misses. However, your laser dot is no longer one centimeter square; it is now a line 1.13 cm wide and 1700 cm long, which reduces your incident power density all along that line to 0.6 megajoules per square centimeter. This may heat its hull up, but it isn't a high enough power density to cause serious structural damage.

What does this mean? It means that it's not enough to mathematically predict where the target will be and aim there. Instead, the ship's targetting computer must know where the target will be at the start of the pulse, where it will be at the end of the pulse, and actually *traverse* the laser during the one-one-thousandth of a second that the beam is emitted, and do so with an accuracy of plus or minus a couple centimeters at a distance of anywhere between tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of kilometers.

As engineering problems go, the Great Pyramids were child's play compared to this. The angles are so microscopic (at a range of one light-second the arc covered by 50 meters is 1/559,000th of one degree!) that it's absolutely impossible to imagine engineering tolerances good enough to allow for any sort of mechanical traverse.

LS	Range					
	1G	2G	3G	4G	5G	6G
0.1	—	—	—	—	—	—
0.2	—	—	—	VS	VS	VS
0.3	—	VS	VS	VS	S	S
0.4	VS	VS	S	S	M	M
0.5	VS	S	M	M	M	M
0.6	S	S	M	M	L	L
0.7	S	M	M	L	L	L
0.8	S	M	L	L	L	VL
0.9	M	L	L	L	VL	VL
1.0	M	L	L	VL	VL	VL
1.1	M	L	VL	VL	VL	VL
1.2	M	L	VL	VL	VL	G
1.3	L	L	VL	VL	G	G
1.4	L	VL	VL	G	G	G
1.5	L	VL	VL	G	G	G
1.6	L	VL	G	G	G	G
1.7	L	VL	G	G	G	G
1.8	L	VL	G	G	G	G
1.9	VL	VL	G	G	G	G
2.0	VL	G	G	G	G	G
2.1	VL	G	G	G	G	G
2.2	VL	G	G	G	G	G
2.3	VL	G	G	G	G	G
2.4	VL	G	G	G	G	G
2.5	VL	G	G	G	G	G
2.6	VL	G	G	G	G	G
2.7	VL	G	G	G	G	G
2.8	G	G	G	G	G	G

So immediately we have to assume the *traverse* is all internal to the beam reflector, that the traverse consists of minute bending of the beam while it is being pulsed. Okay—still a tall order, but at least that's somewhere short of the miracle of the bread and fishes.

A tougher problem is GIGO—garbage in, garbage out. To make all of these precise mathematical calculations, you have to have precise range and bearing information for the target. Seeing roughly where this 17-meter object is at 100,000 kilometers or more is do-able, but getting exact resolution at that range is pretty tough.

Resolution is a function of a lot of things, but a real basic limitation is the number of receiver elements in relation to the area examined. For example, if you examine an area 20 meters across and collect that information in an antenna that has 100 receiver elements across, you are not likely to be able to resolve anything finer than 20 centimeters across. This is the same sort of resolution limits imposed by the grain of photographic film or the pixel density of a computer monitor.

The logical way to deal with this is a very tight beam sensor which looks at a very limited chunk of space. It will have excellent resolution, but hardly any abil-

ity to scan a large area (for the very reason that its focus is so tight). Think of scanning the heavens through a long straw. Therefore, a fire control sensor array would have to consist of a number of sensors of increasing resolution and decreasing field of view. The lowest focus sensors would search for a target and, once it had its approximate location, hand off the target to the next sensor, which would know where to look and get a better fix on it and hand it off to the next one and so on until a sensor with a good enough resolution (probably a laser itself) could lock on and point the weapon. These are expensive propositions, but again doable.

One final engineering aspect that it will be very difficult to overcome will be vibration. With the sorts of microscopic angles involved with fixing a one-meter or 10-meter target at ranges of over 100,000 kilometers, any vibration at all will throw the calculations off by kilometers, and it will be very difficult to avoid vibration in a warship with an active power plant and which may be maneuvering at high Gs. Insulation and gyroscopic stabilization can help, but microscopic vibration will be impossible to eliminate altogether and will inevitably add back an element of luck and randomness to any fire control solution.

BEAM FOCUSING

Now we come to the area where contemporary science slams into a brick wall. All light disperses over distance, even laser light. Lasers have the advantage of starting focused, and powerful focusing elements can hold that focus for longer. The key variables are wavelength, diameter of the focusing elements, and range.

Wavelength: The longer the wavelength of light used, the greater the dispersion. This is why lasers will usually use the shortest wavelength of light possible. At present our reflecting surfaces are not quite up to reflecting coherent ultraviolet laser light (in fact, they have to be protected from being destroyed by the powerful UV laser beams), but they soon will be and this will be the wavelength of choice for space combat lasers. (Once reflecting technology is sufficient to handle coherent X rays, they will supplant UV lasers.) Visible light lasers, by the way, will probably remain weapons of choice for ground combat, as UV and even X rays shed power quickly in an atmosphere and long focus ranges are not required for ground-based systems.

Focusing Element Diameter: This is

simple. The bigger the diameter, the tighter the focus.

Range: Also simple. Dispersion increases with the square of the range.

These three variables, along with the discharge power of the laser, interact according to the following formula: $I = (P/[L+D]^2)+R^2$

Where: I = Delivered Power Density (watts/cm²), P = Discharge Power (watts), L = Wavelength (cm), D = Mirror (focusing element) diameter (cm), R = Range (cm).

Why do we say that we have slammed into a brick wall? Take a minute and figure out how big laser mirrors have to be to deliver significant power over the distances we are talking about. Let's assume we want a laser that can punch through a respectable amount of armor at a range of one hex (30,000 km). For armor, let's say that a reasonably protected starship has the same armor as, say, a contemporary M1A1 tank — the equivalent of 60 cm of steel, which we know from our penetration calculations will require 60 megajoules of energy. Let's further assume a pulse duration of one-one-thousandth of a second, which means that we need a discharge power of 60,000 megawatts and a delivered power density of 60,000 megawatts/cm². We'll assume a UV laser with a wavelength of 0.2 microns (2×10⁻⁵ centimeters).

In the units in the formula above, our known values are: $L = 6 \times 10^{-10}$, $P = 6 \times 10^{10}$, $L = 2 \times 10^{-5}$, $R = 3 \times 10^9$.

Solving for mirror diameter, the equation becomes: $D = L + \sqrt{(P+IR^2)}$

We get a mirror diameter of 60,000 cm, or 600 meters. Not only is a lens or mirror this size at variance with the standard science-fiction image of space lasers, it also raises some serious questions about ship design issues, particularly with regard to streamlining. There is, it seems, some fertile ground here for science-fiction authors. In the case of *Traveller*, however, we have bypassed the problem by proposing some rapid and dramatic advances in beam-focusing technology, using a combination of artificially constructed crystal light tunnels and both electronic and gravitic light bending/focusing.

ENERGY STORAGE

This is the last aspect of space lasers we'll deal with. Above, we have discussed some pretty huge output powers (in the thousands of megawatt range), but for very short discharge times. There is no need (and even less practical capability) for a ship to continuously generate power levels of this

sort. Instead, the logical solution is a power plant of much lower output which pumps an energy storage system which, when it reaches full charge, discharges its energy in a short, powerful pulse.

In this case the important variable is not the power level of the discharge (watts), but the total energy of the discharge (joules). If the energy of the discharge is 60 megajoules, a 1 megawatt powerplant can produce this much energy in 60 seconds, store it in a storage system, and then release it when needed.

How big would such a capacitor have to be? That depends on the sort of storage technology used. Capacitors are the traditional mechanism for short-term storage of energy, but energy weapons designers are turning increasingly to homopolar generators, which store energy by means of a rapidly spinning flywheel. Currently, homopolar generators have energy density storage capabilities of about 4 megajoules per metric ton of mass, and since this is a very young technology, rapid increases in capacity are expected in the near future.

The above discussion covers most of the important physics of laser engineering, and we hope that it will be not only of interest to science-fiction fans, but also of value to referees as well when it comes time to generate adventures or simply describe a science-fiction future in believable terms. There are three other brief issues that we would like to conclude with.

NUCLEAR DETONATION MISSILES

There is a certain amount of controversy over the introduction of nuclear-pumped X-ray laser missiles in *Traveller: The New Era*. So why did we do it? Is it so it will make it easier to integrate TNE with a future 2300 AD revival? No, although that certainly won't hurt.

The reason has very much to do with the laser fire control solutions that we discussed above. It no longer makes any sense to require a missile to actually touch its target to do any damage. Why? Because it will never get there. Think for a moment about all of the tremendous engineering work necessary to hit targets at a range of a light-second or so, and to control the beam so that it deposits its maximum load of energy. Then imagine how hard it would be to hit something that is *not* a light-second away, and not maneuvering to avoid being hit, but is rather coming right at you, and is simply maneuvering to occupy the same bit of space that

you do. The missile just keeps getting closer, making it easier and easier for you to hit it. In fact, the fire control solution becomes completely two-dimensional; the z-axis just drops right out of the calculations.

Okay, fine. So what if we fire a whole mess of missiles; he can't hit them all, can he? Well, maybe he could, but you no longer have that many missiles to throw at him. Remember that **TNE** has done away with the magical thruster plates and the something-for-nothing reactionless drive. In order to maneuver in space, all vehicles in **TNE** require reaction mass, and lots of it. A missile needs reaction mass not only to move across tens of thousands of kilometers, it also needs reaction mass to maneuver to match vectors with the target and hit it. All of a sudden, missiles get big. Really big. It's no longer a question of throwing a lot of dumb, cheap missiles at him, because there are no cheap missiles anymore. As big as they are, missiles have to be smart, and maximize their ability to damage the enemy.

This means that they shouldn't have to get so close to the enemy that they'll get toasted before they can do any damage. Remember what we said earlier about the range within no ship can avoid being hit by a laser? Well what if you put a really good laser on your missile and get it within that range, but still outside of the range at which the missile itself becomes an auto-hit from its target? Pretty good plan, and the way you do it is with a bundle of metallic fibers surrounding a nuclear warhead. Pop off the nuke, and in the milliseconds before the fibers are consumed, they will direct powerful beams of X rays down their lengths at the target.

LOOK WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO MY REFLEC, MA

Players will discover that **Traveller** **The New Era** does away with Reflec armor. We did so for fairly simple reason: It probably won't work. High-energy laser reflectors are very difficult engineering projects, and cannot easily be replicated in the field with shiny suits or polished mirrors. Foil and mirrors can reflect part of the energy of a laser, it's true, so why not have them reduce the effect of the laser by the amount of light they reflect?

Simple. A very high-energy laser generates so much energy that the fraction of energy not reflected (i.e., absorbed by the reflective surface) almost instantly destroys the reflectivity of the surface. In other words, a mirror capable of reflecting 60% of the energy of

a laser does so for the first ten-thousandth of a second or so, by which time its reflective characteristics are so degraded that it absorbs all of the rest of the laser pulse. This is not the case with low-energy laboratory lasers, because the energy absorbed is insufficient to destroy the reflective surface; it merely heats up the mirror. A battlefield laser designed to punch armor, however, is an entirely different prospect.

Besides, the old **Traveller** image of the virtually weightless, unencumbering full-body reflec suit that could be worn undetectably beneath clothing seems rather too much of a good thing. With all of the wrinkling and crumpling that the suit would undergo, it hardly seems likely that it would retain an adequately reflective surface. Besides, that reflec stuff just doesn't breathe the way good natural cotton does.

THE THINKING PERSON'S GUIDE TO HOW NOT TO DESIGN A ROLEPLAYING GAME

Finally, laser damage to human optics is worth mentioning, if only to explain why we haven't put it in the game. At present, most industrialized countries have or are on the verge of having an effective anti-personnel laser based not on conventional tissue wounds but rather on blinding the target. Lasers with sufficient power to damage retinæ and optic nerves are well within current power and reflector technologies (in fact, many ex-Soviet tanks are equipped with special viewscreens that prevent their commanders from being blinded by the reflections from their *own* laser rangefinders), and there is at present no effective counter to them.

No counter? you say. But what about laser-protective goggles? It is true that protective goggles can guard against laser light by not allowing through the wavelength of light used by the laser. However, this is only useful if you know in advance what wavelength the enemy laser is using. As we will soon be able to "tune" the wavelength of a laser within certain limits, and could in any event deploy a system with multiple lasers at different wavelengths, the only option would be goggles

which protect against all wavelengths.

Unfortunately, goggles which block all wavelengths of light are completely opaque and prevent the soldier from seeing.

Nevertheless, opaque faceplates are probably the answer, with televisual images projected on the inside of the faceplate substituting for the classic "Mark I eyeball" sensors. A laser would still burn out the electronic optic sensors, but those can be replaced and would at least leave the soldier uninjured.

The reason we don't discuss this is that, from a roleplaying point of view, it's a drag. There is something about being blinded that is so much more horrifying than having a hole punched in your flesh. Not only is it more personal somehow, but in reality, it's much easier to blind them than to actually kill them. So why bother killing them at all? There are no more angry mobs to overwhelm the bad guys; they just blind them. Several thousand low-tech infantry are no longer a problem for a squad of high-tech soldiers; just blind them. And don't leave your ship without your helmet plate down—you might go blind at any instant. Imagine how much fun a game would be when many of the player characters were perfectly healthy, aside from being blind.

We hope you will forgive us for dispensing with this particular piece of scientific accuracy in **The New Era**. Ω

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Because of space problems, we were unable to include the Designer's Notes in the **Brilliant Lances** rulebook. Because Designer's Notes are very useful in explaining why certain decisions were made, we decided to put them into **Challenge**. Herewith, we present the

Brilliant Lances Design Notes

By David Nilsen

(writing on behalf of himself and Frank Chadwick)

Brilliant Lances is a highly detailed, highly tactical presentation of space combat in the **Traveller** universe. It is intended to be used along with the roleplaying rules to resolve the inevitable space combat that occurs in roleplaying situations. It is clearly a refinement of the space combat rules that appeared in the **Traveller: The New Era** rulebook, but adapted to two dimensions rather than one dimension. It fills a very profound gap that has existed in the **Traveller** line for a long time.

Original **Traveller** had its vector movement combat system which was played miniatures style, on a table or floor, with rulers and protractors. While this system worked well, it was time-consuming and a fair amount of bother, and I suspect the vast majority of **Traveller** players didn't use it very often ("Guys, my ship has gone under the couch, do we want to move the couch or shift all of the ships a few feet?"), and instead resorted to a more abstract, storytelling version: "Okay, the enemy ship comes at you until you're within range, start firing."

Mayday was easier to use than the miniatures system, and had the distinct advantage that it came with a map and counters so you didn't have to cajole players over the cutting-and-pasting hurdle of making their own ship markers, finding rulers, etc. But since not all **Traveller** players had **Mayday**, you couldn't really use it as the official **Traveller** space combat system.

High Guard's combat system was more abstract, and an awful lot of fun for major fleet actions. Unfortunately, it was unsuitable for roleplaying, as the system was scaled for large numbers of large ships and consequently killed PC ships quickly and without remorse (unless your player group owned a battle fleet of 100,000-ton battleships).

MegaTraveller again provided its own space combat system (sort of **High Guard** bred through the old **Traveller**

rules), but it too proved unsatisfactory, and incidentally provided the answer to the age-old question, "When is a vector movement game not a vector movement game?" So again, we had players discarding the rules in favor of an abstract storytelling style. This became a real problem, because we kept getting adventure submissions that contained scenes like this: "At this point, a small planetoid passes by at a range of less than 50,000 kilometers, and a ship that had been hiding behind the planetoid pops out and joins the fight."

All of which should prompt a roleplaying group to burst out with some combination of the following:

"What planetoid? I didn't see any planetoid. Don't we have sensors for this sort of thing?"

"How far away is 50,000 km? I mean, can we normally see that far? How long does it take to travel 50,000 km?"

"So how come if we didn't see the planetoid, did that other ship see us? And if the planetoid was so far away that we didn't see it coming, how come that other ship can start firing right away?"

The moral to this story is that when space combat rules are unsatisfactory, people don't use them, and consequently no one has any clear picture of the "geography" of space, such as how far apart ships and moons and planetoids are, and over what ranges their weapons and sensors can function. Our solution was to release the **Traveller** space combat board game as the first supporting product to encourage players to gain a sense of how things work in **Traveller** so that they can better visualize how to create adventures that have internal logic and consistency, while also encouraging players to gain proficiency in space operations and tactics.

Basic Concepts

The game scale was arrived at by noodling around with hex sizes and turn lengths that would yield whole numbers when computing acceleration measured in whole numbers of Gs. We really liked

hexes of $1/10$ light-second, so the 30-minute turn length was inescapable.

The next step was defining the performance of starship systems over distance, primarily the ability to see and fire at the enemy at distances of tens or hundreds of thousands of kilometers. Old **2300** fans will notice a similarity between **Brilliant Lances** and **Star Cruiser** in this regard, and some have asked if this is because we are trying to make it more like **Star Cruiser** so we can someday combine **TNE** with **2300**. The answer to that is no (although we will eventually re-release **2300** as a campaign setting using the **TNE** rules), the reason is that the designers felt that sensors and fire control solutions were the critical *sine qua non* (oooh, Latin!) of space combat. Since this was also the underlying concept of **Star Cruiser**, the games will necessarily have similarities. The result is that the electronic battle becomes very important in **Traveller**, in ways that it was not before. We believe that this adds a great deal more excitement and strategy to the game. It also means that those Sensors skills really mean something now.

Our model for sensors and weapons performance was drawn from the most accurate projection of future space combat that we could get our hands on, the report on the Strategic Defense Initiative to the House Armed Services and Senate Foreign Relations Committees which was prepared by the Congress' Office of Technology Assessment. (All of which, by the way, has nothing whatever to do with the recent charges of disinformation or cheating.) While some of the current limitations on sensor and weapon performance can be beaten in **Traveller** by advancing tech levels, some are limited by physics itself and will never get any better without breaking laws of physics. For example, the passive sensors in **TNE** and **Brilliant Lances** are actually synthetic aperture arrays, where a set of small sensors spread over a large area with diameter D mimic the resolution of a single large

sensor with the same diameter. The ability to electronically scan the synthetic array becomes better with tech level, but the diameter of an array of given resolution is fixed by physics, and does not change with tech level.

Breaking Laws of Physics: Our approach to game design at GDW is to break the fewest laws of physics that we possibly can when creating science-fiction games. Of course everyone knows about jump drive, and has presumably forgiven us for breaking that law. We consciously broke one other law of physics in **TNE** and **Brilliant Lances**, and we call it laser focusing.

In order to penetrate an opponent's hull, laser energy must be focused onto a small point on the target's surface, measured in watts or joules of energy per square centimeter. The equation goes like this: $I = (P + [L + D]^2) + R^2$, where I is power density (intensity) at the target, P is the laser output power, L is the wavelength of light, D is the diameter of the focusing element, and R is the range. For purposes of delivering laser power to a target, you want that power to be focused into as small a point as possible, with one square centimeter being a good benchmark.

So how big does our focal dish need to be? Let's go out on a limb and say 10 meters in diameter, much larger than anything ever visualized for **Traveller**. And let's set its wavelength in the ultraviolet (UV) range, better than we can handle today, but not as good as X rays (which we have left appearing at TL 13, as in previous **Traveller** products), and we'll set its output at 1000 megajoules. The bad news is that its spot size at only 30,000 kilometers (one hex) is almost 70 meters in diameter, diluting the 1000 megajoules down to only 0.3 megajoules per square centimeter.

That's no good. We were hoping for a range of about 10 hexes with an intensity per square centimeter equal to the output. What do we need to get a 10-hex range? We need a divergence angle of around 0.3 picoradians (10^{-12} radians), which we can get by using shorter wavelength light or a larger focal dish. But since we've already decided that UV is as short as we can go before TL 13, we're left with a dish diameter of 6000 meters.

To make a long story short, we had to come up with a system that would allow lasers to perform pretty much as we've been visualizing them in **Traveller**, which requires us to break the laws of optics. Our solution was to introduce gravitic focusing of the laser beam, which appears at the same time as contra-gravity technology. We create the effect of a larger diameter dish by creating an intense point source of gravity within the

focusing area to bend the light with gravity. We just thought you should know.

Detonation Lasers: Here is another feature which is similar to **Star Cruiser**, but which has its own roots, separate from **2300**. This result was driven by two considerations.

First, the accuracy of lasers. Once we designed lasers to be accurate enough to hit targets that are several tenths of a light-second away, it didn't make a whole lot of sense to require missiles to come into virtual physical contact with their targets. The fire control-firing cycle lasts as long as it takes for sensor data to move from the target (at the speed of light) to the firing vessel, and for the laser beam to make it back to the target (also at the speed of light). A target can only move so far during that time, and the closer the target gets to the firing ship, the less time available to jink out of the way of that laser fire. For each target size, there are ranges at which they cannot get out of the way at all, given their G performance. And it's worse for targets like missiles which are coming straight at the firing vessel, because the fire control solution becomes a two-dimensional problem instead of a three-dimensional problem. Somewhere in the last 30,000 kilometers a missile will get killed.

Add to this the fact that **TNE** puts reaction mass back into space movement (instead of the reactionless drives of **MegaTraveller**), and we find that missiles get bigger in order to carry sufficient reaction mass to reach their targets, and have precious little left over for violent evasive maneuvers. In any case, evasion would require a missile to present its long axis to its target in order to apply transverse thrust, making itself a larger target.

Detonation laser missiles, allowing the missile to damage a target from a distance, were the only answer to this problem for purposes of space combat, but numerous other types of non-nuclear missiles are available for planetary bombardment, etc.

Why No Neutrino Sensors: **MegaTraveller** players will notice the lack of neutrino sensors in space combat. This is because they are useless for finding starship fission and fusion drives. Nuclear reactions give off neutrinos as a by-product, but the energy of these neutrinos varies with the exact type of nuclear reaction. The standard fusion reaction, the proton-proton chain, produces neutrinos of rather low energy. The ability to detect these neutrinos varies with the material used to detect them, but for one real-life neutrino experiment, it was calculated that an Earth-bound sensor would detect only about

one neutrino per day from our sun. Given the much smaller size of a starship's fusion plant, a neutrino sensor would detect (on average) only 7×10^{-21} neutrinos per second per ton of detector per watt of the fusion plant. This comes out to one neutrino every 50,000 years for a one-ton detector vs. a 100 MW power plant. Even with a very large neutrino sensor, say 1,000,000 tons, and a large power plant, say 100,000 MW, it would still take 26.3 minutes (approximately a turn) to detect one neutrino, scarcely enough to build up a sensor track.

Higher energy fusion reactions, the sort that take place at the core of very hot stars, produce more energetic neutrinos that are easier to detect, but these reactions require far more temperature and pressure than those used in fusion drives. For this reason, neutrino sensors are only useful as survey sensors to obtain information about the reactions going on in the interior of stars.

Our thanks to Kris Miller for some of these figures. Kris is perhaps the only **Traveller** player who works with a real neutrino sensor, so we're inclined to believe him.

Jamming: Jamming in **Brilliant Lances** is of two types: deceptive jamming and barrage or noise jamming. The former is represented by the EMS jammers, and the latter by the area jammers.

Deceptive jammers are subtle in their function. First, they detect enemy active sensor emissions, and then analyze their function and locate their emitter. The jammer then sends spurious "false target" returns back to the enemy sensor, by generating its emissions so that the enemy sensor accepts them as its own. Thus, it can confuse the enemy as to its location, speed, or direction of travel. Tech level of sensors and jammers plays a major role in the success of these competitions, because of the many subtle improvements which are incorporated into each new generation of electronics to defeat the countermeasures of earlier tech levels.

Area jammers, on the other hand, simply emit large amounts of electromagnetic "noise" which complicates the task of hearing the real signals amid all of the more powerful emissions.

The Big Change: Players who have already tried the starship combat system in **TNE** will notice that **Brilliant Lances** is very similar, but they will also notice one very big change. In **TNE**, starships fire 10 times per 30-minute turn, while in **Brilliant Lances** they fire only once. When we began transforming the mapless system in **TNE** into a boardgame, the first thing we noticed was that there was not enough move-

ment. In a mapless, counterless system like in **TNE** this was not a problem, but this is a Big Problem in a boardgame.

There is an important law which some people call Frank Chadwick's Law, but which Frank is always careful to correctly attribute as Glenn Kidd's Law: "You can never have too much movement." Moving and then firing 10 times before moving again is not satisfactory, so we cut the firing by a factor of 10 to once per 30 minutes. Movement, hence tactics and maneuver, are now restored to their primary place. My, that was easy.

What?!! We're that capricious and thoughtless? Well, not in this case anyway. When you fire at a distant starship, the motion of the target (note that a speed of only one hex per turn comes out to about 1700 centimeters each one-thousandth of a second) will "smear" that precious 1 cm² footprint and dilute the laser intensity to the point where it only scorches the paint, but does no damage. Thus, the firing laser must follow any target motion to hold that spot steady for the duration of the laser pulse. This is very hard to do over tens of thousands of kilometers, given vibration, etc. While each laser fires 10 times each 30 minutes, and may contact the target several times, many of those shots will only warm the enemy hull in this fashion. An actual hit is one which is held steady to inflict its full damage. To reflect the 10 shots per turn, we allow an Outstanding Success to score two hits.

We encourage players using the **TNE** system to likewise cut their fire rates by a factor of 10.

Guiding Principles

As compared to earlier **Traveller** space combat systems, **Brilliant Lances** places tremendous importance on the role of individual crewmembers. **Traveller** has always had as its core assumption the idea that people make a difference, and this is a key facet of the **TNE** space combat system.

While the **High Guard**, and by extension, **Mega Traveller**, space combat systems created combat results tables that were based on installed technology, the **TNE** system bases the success or failure of any task on the competence of the person operating that system. Unlike **High Guard**, which could actually be resolved on a purely statistical basis (see **Trillion Credit Squadron**), **TNE** space combat uses the installed technology to define the difficulty of task to be attempted by its crew. And because **Brilliant Lances** is intended to be used as part of a roleplaying adventure, this makes space combat more of a roleplaying experience than it has been before. Now players will understand

why they have all of those Sensors, Communications, Gunnery, or Screens skills for, because they will be using them a lot. They will also learn how best to use their equipment and skills, and create their own tactics.

Open-Ended System: Another aspect of the PC-centered concept is the fact that **Brilliant Lances** is intended as an open-ended system. It was designed from the bottom up to present a number of capabilities that the players learn to use to their best advantage, rather than from the top down, where decisions were made in advance about what tactics or equipment work best, with the rules written to reflect those preconceptions.

There is no right way to fight a space battle. Instead, **Brilliant Lances** players will learn to use certain equipment or tactics to counter a certain enemy, and will learn to build and deploy their own ships accordingly. Unlike a top-down design which has a certain "right way" to win embedded in the rules, **Brilliant Lances** will be driven to a large extent by how the players interact with the system, and the solutions and standard procedures that they develop. The dominant tactics and weapons will not be dictated by the designers' opinions or assumptions. They will be discovered and developed by the players, in their own games and in tournament play.

The Future of Brilliant Lances: **Brilliant Lances** is a detailed and complex game. Again, this is because it is to be used with roleplaying adventures. Damage is detailed because players want to know what has happened to *their* ship, their pride and joy, carefully modified and customized over the years of campaigning. What systems were hit? Which PCs were wounded? What do we have to repair? How bad is the damage?

There are also a number of decisions to be made that enhance the roleplaying experience, and make the players feel like they are really sitting on the bridge, working out strategy with their fellow PC crewmembers. Do we go active? Should we launch a drone? Do we speed up or try to evade? Which of those bogeys should we head toward?

As a highly detailed game, **Brilliant Lances** is clearly not directed toward large fleet actions. In 1994, we will release a **Brilliant Lances** add-on package designed for fleet actions with large numbers of large ships, called **Brilliant Lances Express**. It will be based on the same principles as **Brilliant Lances**, but with the level of detail scaled back a bit. This will ensure that the new system will be compatible with **Brilliant Lances** in that the results of both systems can be translated to the other scale.

We will also be publishing **Brilliant**

Lances control panel supplements. Space considerations made it impossible to include custom control panels for each of the 33 spacecraft included in **Brilliant Lances**, so we will be issuing supplements which present custom-made control panels for already existing starships, variants of existing starships, and all-new starships. These will speed up preparation for play, and will also allow useful tables and other data to be printed on the control panel.

Finally, we will be supporting **Brilliant Lances** tournaments during the summer convention season, for which players can design their own ships and try out their own tactics.

Scenarios: **Brilliant Lances** is intended, first and foremost, to be used in resolving situations that arise in the course of **Traveller: The New Era** campaigns. The scenarios included with the game barely scratch the surface of the types of engagements that are possible, but are intended to give players ideas of the sorts of situations that can arise. These scenarios do not use all of the ships available in the counter mix or in the data profiles, nor do they provide for the use of advanced concepts, such as drones. Think of the scenarios as tools to discover how **Traveller** starship combat works, and then add new concepts to see how they alter the outcome. If a scenario is unbalanced, see if the addition of a few drones or a missile-firing vessel helps out the weak player. Try allowing one or both players to start play with several drones already deployed, so that players will not know where their opponents have concentrated their forces. Try using more map space. Although the three large maps included with **Brilliant Lances** provide considerable space, actual space is infinitely larger, and the options presented by having to defend or attack across greater areas will help you visualize many of the important issues of space combat. Larger maps can be created by purchasing extra maps from GDW, or by picking up blank hex maps from your local game store. Some companies even sell large area fabric hex sheets, or white hex grids that can be ironed onto black sheets for large play areas.

Clarification: Although most players understand enough about physics to already know this, I omitted the explanation that all missiles, drones, and small craft launched from a spacecraft begin play with the same vector as the craft they were launched from. Since the Launch Phase precedes the Plotting Phase, this allows the launched craft to plot its new movement based on that original vector. I apologize for the oversight.





"The Confederation of Antares was the product of a political union between the defunct League of Antares and the Confederated worlds of Ot Zell in the tempestuous years following the death of Regent Brzk. The confederation was intended by its founders to keep alive the ideals of Brzk until such a time as the League could be re-established. The year 1201 proved to be such a time. But, New Era or not, there were those who thought those ideals no longer applied and would do anything to prevent their being put into practice."

This scenario is intended to be the beginning of a new campaign set within the pocket empire called the Confederation of Antares. The Confederation consists of four worlds within the Ot Zell (L) subsector of Lishun Sector. Although this entire adventure takes place within the Ot Zell system, included for reference is a map of the entire subsector. Like pocket empires throughout charted space, the Confederation is making its first tentative steps toward interstellar exploration. This map is meant as an aid to the referee in setting additional adventures in the region surrounding the Confederation.

PCs should be generated in accordance with **The New Era** rules for pocket empire citizens. The PCs should come from one of the Confederation four worlds. They may choose any career, although the nature of this scenario demands that some be skilled with operating a starship and have decent exploratory talents. Other than this, there are no restrictions on the types of PCs playable in this scenario.

VOODOO TEAM

The Confederation of Antares has

recently begun to build up its meager fleet for the purpose of exploring and recontacting the worlds of Lishun and Antares Sector. For this purpose, the Confederation's Ministry of Defense has started training small groups of specialists to act as explorers and diplomats for the Confederation while on these recontact missions. The ministry calls these operatives by the name "voodoo team" after similar groups in the old League of Antares. Like the Star Vikings of the Old Expanses, the voodoo teams represent trade and civilization. They are the vanguard of growth in the Coreward regions of space like Antares and Lishun.

The ministry has been preparing for months to launch a number of small vessels into space. The first to be launched will be the *Magellan*, the vessel to which the PCs, as voodoo team members, are to be assigned. After an initial shakedown cruise in the Ot Zell system, the PCs have been instructed by their superiors at the ministry to explore farther afield into the surrounding subsectors. Before the Collapse, many of these areas sported worlds friendly to the League of Antares and its ideals of tolerance, peace, order and good government. Perhaps now, 70 years later, they are ready to be recontacted and to help in rebuilding interstellar society.

The PCs should be given ample opportunity to familiarize themselves with the *Magellan*. It is an old, Imperial-style, 400-ton, laboratory ship. The vessel has been outfitted with all that could be required for an extended exploratory and diplomatic mission. The PCs should be given a map of the *Magellan* and shown its main features. Since the PCs are likely to be aboard the ship for months on long recontact missions, the Confederation wants to be certain that they are familiar with it.

MAIDEN VOYAGE

After the PCs are familiar with their vessel and have been briefed as to their general mission of recontacting the nearby worlds of Lisbon and Antares, they are to be sent off for the *Magellan*'s shakedown cruise. They are to pilot the vessel into Ot Zell's outer system beyond the orbit of its farthest planet. They are then to travel around the system and scan the area with their sensors. All of this is intended as a final testing of the ship's main systems. If this goes well and without any difficulties, they are then commanded to begin their mission proper.

The PCs will not be the only crewmembers aboard the *Magellan*. A number of other NPC crewmembers will fill out various tedious duties unfit for the PCs. They can be created as needed by the referee using the NPC templates. The only significant NPC among the crew is Cyril Ainley, the ship's cargo master. He will introduce himself to the PCs at some point before the ship leaves Ot Zell. He is friendly and expresses great hope in the mission. His stats can be found on page 39.

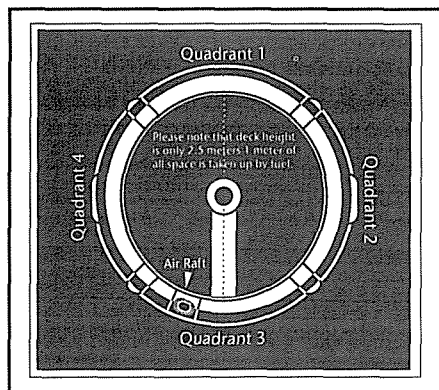
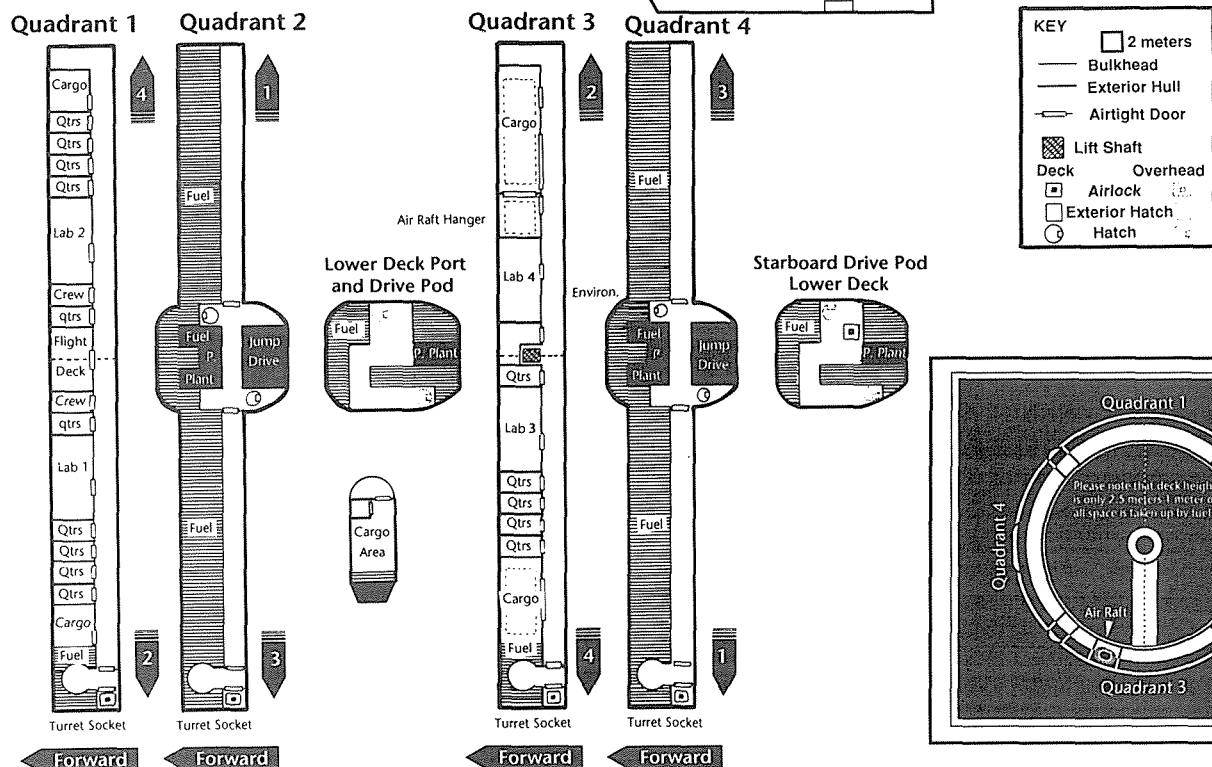
Unfortunately, not everyone feels the same way about the *Magellan*'s mission. At the starport before the *Magellan* takes off, the PCs and their superiors are greeted by a large group of protesters. As the PCs are well aware, there are many on Ot Zell who think that the Confederation government should spend its resources on safer ventures than the voodoo teams. Others fear that an exploration vessel travelling "out there" might bring the Virus back to the Confederation government, a fate avoided in the past. Several members of the Confederation government, chiefly Vice Regent Diomedes Donaldson, are known to sympathize with such views.

Despite the protesters, the *Magellan* can be launched on schedule. There is no need for undue alarm. Thus, the PCs can successfully pilot the ship to the outer system. During this time, they are ordered to keep in periodic contact with starport control on Ot Zell. Their final orders depend on whether or not the Ministry of Defense believes that the *Magellan* is indeed ready to be sent out into the Wilds of Lishun and Antares.

OUTER SYSTEM

The PCs arrive in the outer system with little difficulty. The *Magellan* appears to be working well within the parameters set by the ministry. The

Magellan 400-ton LAB SHIP



only system not working as expected is the communications system, which is unexpectedly erratic in its operations, although it still works. An examination of the system by PCs reveals nothing unusual to anyone who does not make a Difficult: Electronics roll. Success reveals that the system has been subtly sabotaged to short out at various times. Given the age of this vessel, fixing the system will take some time. Nevertheless, the PCs will want to repair it as soon as possible. Doing so will take at least five hours. Until then, the PCs will have to cope with erratic communications.

Soon afterward, the PCs are informed by a sensor operator who was conducting a standard sweep of the region as per their instructions that he has detected something entering the system. A pinpoint scan reveals that it is another vessel, a subsidized merchant vessel of old Imperial design. Its markings indicate that it once operated in League of Antares space. Furthermore, its trajectory suggests that it has been travelling on maneuver drives alone from the direction of Mechport (Lishun 3123). Other than this, no further information can be gained.

MYSTERIOUS VISITOR

Undoubtedly, the PCs will want to investigate this mysterious vessel from the League of Antares. The PCs can successfully meet the merchant ship and dock with it by making a successful Average: Ship's Tactics or Astrogration skill roll. Failure indicates a close scrape with the merchant ship, causing minor damage to the *Magellan*: The communications system shorts out entirely, adding five more hours to the repair time.

Once docked, the PCs may board the vessel and explore it. They will find that the entire ship is deserted and that most surfaces are covered with a thick layer of dust particles. More careful examination will reveal that the ship possesses a number of cold berth units. In four of these units, there are still living human beings. If the PCs open low berths, the occupants will awaken in a matter of minutes.

The occupants, three men and a woman, wear old uniforms which indicate that they are members of the Antarean military. The leader of the group, named Enli Haeckel, asks to know where he is and when. When told, he explains that he and his fellows were

part of Project Vesta, an attempt by the League of Antares to salvage some of itself after the death of Regent Brzk (see **Challenge 69** for details). Unfortunately, they missed their rendezvous with the other vessels heading for Ot Zell. Then they were damaged by Vargr corsairs and lost their jump capability. Rather than give up, they elected to go into cold sleep and head for Ot Zell on M-drives.

Now they have succeeded in their intention, even if it has taken them 70 years to reach Ot Zell. Haeckel and the others will want to know the present state of affairs throughout charted space. They will also wish to be of help in any way they can, offering the PCs their services. In addition, they explain that they have valuable cargo containing high-tech items which may be useful to the Confederation. They ask that they be brought over to the *Magellan*. They appear extremely pleased to have been rescued and say so to the PCs often.

The other members of the *Magellan*'s crew are pleased to meet the remnants from the League of Antares. The fact that the *Magellan*—on her training cruise, no less—was able to make such

a find suggests that future endeavors will be equally successful. Perhaps the Confederation is correct in sending out voodoo teams at this time. Cyril Ainley in particular believes this to be the case; he spends as much time as he can with Haeckel and the other remnants.

WHAT NEXT?

The PCs may now continue their shakedown cruise as instructed by their superiors at the Ministry of Defense. Further scans of the system reveal nothing more like the vessel they found. Since the Confederation is desperately short of working starships, Haeckel offers to give his ship to the government. After all, if he and his ship had not been damaged 70 years ago, their vessel would be in the possession of the Confederation anyway. The PCs may inform the ministry of the vessel's whereabouts once they return to Ot Zell.

According to their orders, the PCs are to pilot the *Magellan* back to Ot Zell's starport to receive their final orders. These will be to head out into the Wilds surrounding the Confederation and begin recontacting the worlds of Lishun and Antares. The maiden voyage of the *Magellan* was intended simply as a test of the vessel's capabilities and to familiarize the PCs with her workings. The fact that they stumbled across a starship full of remnants from the Last Imperium is only an added bonus.

The *Magellan*'s communications systems are still not working properly. Now, if this has not happened already, the systems short out entirely. No messages to or from Ot Zell are possible. The extent of the damage is such that the PCs will reach Ot Zell before they can effect adequate repairs. As was stated earlier, the systems were carefully sabotaged. It is likely that the sabotage occurred before the *Magellan* was launched, although suspicious PCs may well suspect members of the crew of being in league with those who oppose the Confederation's efforts at recontact. Whatever the case, the systems cannot be repaired before arriving at Ot Zell.

During the four-hour journey back to Ot Zell, the PCs may do whatever they wish. Since everything is going as planned and since their genuine mission of exploration is only hours away, they may wish to relax. They may also wish to talk with the remnants they picked up. They are all quite willing to talk and will tell what they can about the days before the Collapse. In particular,

they speak very highly of Regent Brzk and the League of Antares government. Referees should feel free to impart as much or as little information about the pre-Crash Imperium as they wish to the PCs. It should be noted that, during these discussions with the remnants, no more than two of them will ever be together in the same place. The others will be "busy."

The PCs may wish to examine the cargo the remnants brought aboard the *Magellan*. The cargo is contained in a magnetically sealed crate. The remnants will claim that the cargo contains high-tech items such as uninfected computers but that the crate can only be opened in the presence of Confederation officials. If the PCs press the issue, they will "admit" that the crate also contains secret instructions from Regent Brzk which were made before he was killed. That is why they must keep the crate sealed.

Naturally, some PCs may wish to try to open the crate while the remnants are away from it. To do so requires a Difficult: Intrusion roll. Failure indicates that the PC has damaged the seal and cannot try again due to the damage. If the PCs are successful, they will find inside a large collection of junk and debris. In fact, almost nothing inside is of any value whatsoever except as dead weight. Among the debris is a section of aluminum pipe whose manufacturer stamp indicates that it was made on Ki'qondesta (Lishun 2825) within the past five years! Clearly, this is not the sort of thing one would find in relic cargo. Something is obviously wrong.

HIJACKED!

At some point when the remnants are away from the PCs, they will start to do what they have intended from all along: hijack the *Magellan*. This can occur at any time according to the referee's wishes, although the surreptitious opening of the crate may accelerate this process. As the PCs will learn in short order, the "remnants" are not what they appear. They are mercenaries hired by a faction within the Confederation government headed by Diomedes Donaldson which opposes exploration and recontact. They claim that this is because of the danger from the still-active Virus. In truth, Donaldson and his cronies fear that the rebirth of the League of Antares and all that it stands for will undermine their positions in the current government. Such an outcome must be prevented at all costs, even the lives of brave explorers like the PCs.

The mercenaries have help on the

Magellan. Cyril Ainley is their contact and will supply them with weapons. Each of the mercenaries will get a laser carbine and cloth armor. They intend to take the bridge of the *Magellan*. Once they have control of the ship, they intend to simulate the erratic behavior associated with a Virus infection, such as opening fire on orbital installations and the like. Then, once the people on Ot Zell understand what has happened to the *Magellan*, Haeckel, Ainley and the other conspirators will use the ship's pinnace to escape just after they have piloted the ship on a collision course with Ot Zell's atmosphere, thereby destroying the ship and any witnesses.

Of course, the PCs will want to stop them from doing this. How they do so is largely up to their imagination and ingenuity. Since it is beyond the scope of this scenario to detail all the different avenues open to the PCs, it will suffice to make a few general comments.

First of all, Haeckel and Ainley will always stay on the bridge of the ship, looking for the PCs so as to kill. For the purposes of simplicity, the other crewmembers of the ship can be assumed to be either captured or killed by the mercenaries, leaving only the PCs to stop them. If the referee is prepared for the added complications involving the rest of the crew, he may use them.

Cyril Ainley

(Spade King, Diamond 5)

Level: Experienced.

Combat Assets: Energy Weapon, Slug Weapon, Unarmed Martial Arts.

Other Assets: Electronics 12, Communications 12, Engineering 9, Computer 9, Pilot (Interface/Grav) 9.

Enli Haeckel

(Diamond 9, Spade 8)

Level: Veteran.

Combat Assets: Act/Bluff 10, Disguise 8, Intrusion 10, Observation 10, Stealth 10, Computer 12, Electronics 12.

Diomedes Donaldson

(Diamond Jack, Spade 10)

Level: Novice.

Combat Assets: Energy Weapon, Unarmed Martial Arts.

Other Assets: Persuasion 12, Interrogation 12, Intrusion 9, Pilot (Interface/Grav) 9, Computer 9.

Magellan Crewmembers

Use Star Viking Space Specialist template.

Mercenaries

Use Regular Troops template.

Information on this page should not be made routinely available to players who do not have access to pre-Collapse starcharts and navigational information. In many cases, it may require research to gain even such an outdated level of information.

Name	Hex	UWP	Remarks	PBG	AL	Stars
Megaira	2521	X556000-0	Ba Lo Ni	022	Na	K0 V
Ryszem	2523	E947686-5	Ag Ni	124	Na	F4 V
Kaalgami	2529	X200000-0	Ba Lo Ni Va	000	Na	K9 V
Epishama	2621	D444330-7	Lo Ni	804	Na	K9 V
Gakan	2622	C895491-7	Ni	814	Na	K6 V
Kidama	2624	X201000-0	Ba Na Va Ic	002	Na	M4 V MO D
Sepidon	2628	C235653-8	Ni	522	Na	M5 V
Agarle	2630	B6867BA-9	C Ni	810	Na	K1 V
Ashgipar	2722	C897577-8	Ni	100	Na	G6 V M7 D
Pellucidar	2723	X310000-0	Ba Na Ni	010	Na	M3 IV
Limkanaad	2724	D366547-7	M Ag Ni	410	Na	F3 V M3 D
Caina	2725	X611000-0	Ba Na Ni Ic	002	Na	GO V
Gushida	2726	D546477-9	M Ni	610	Na	F3 V MOD MOD
Delar	2729	B594454-B	Ni	400	Na	G8 V
Diamond	2730	C888754-8	Ag Ri	603	Na	M3 V
Oceania	2821	E84A699-6	Ni Wa	202	Na	M6 V
Greystones	2823	C548630-A	M Ni	713	Ca	K6 V
R'lyeh	2824	C9AA688-B	Ni Fl Wa	815	Ca	M4 V M3 V
Ki'qondesta	2825	A7498AE-D		320	Ca	F2 V
Sirris	2829	E8547FH-6		300	Na	FO V MO D
Rhea	2830	C476487-9	Ni	203	Na	FO V M7 D
Tuktoyaktak	2921	C200534-B	Ni Va	200	Na	M8 V
Coemgen	2922	X484000-0	Ba Lo Ni	000	Na	K4 V M7 D
Idmaku	2923	E876424-4	Ni	200	Na	GO V
Oi Zell	2924	C9B798A-D	Hi Fl Cx	710	Ca	K4 V M7 D
Tasaitana	2925	X363000-0	Ba Lo Ni	005	Na	F2 V
Ankehpil	2928	X432000-0	Ba Ni	000	Na	M4 V
Derish	2929	X000000-0	Ba Lo Ni Po De	000	Na	G7 II
Eshgar Belt	3021	D000416-5	Na Ni As	801	Na	M4 V K4 D
Khurma	3022	X300000-0	Ba Ni Va	001	Na	M4 V K4 D
Barshadi	3024	C467251-9	Lo Ni	104	Na	F2 V M7 D
Limdaga	3026	C541554-6	Ni Po	300	Na	MO V M5 D
Gikar	3030	E589561-9	Ni	405	Na	F1 V
Kalgari	3122	B656584-C	M Ag Ni	800	Na	K4 V M1 D M9 D
Mechport	3123	E5A38DG-6	M Hi Fl	200	Na	F4 V
Zuhra	3125	X654576-4	Ag Ni	410	Na	K5 V M7 D
Rimmer	3126	B587449-B	M Ni	700	Na	M3 V
Gelaashe	3129	X300000-0	Ba Na Va	004	Na	K5 V M7 D
Xi'an	3221	C786555-7	Ag Ni	104	Na	G9 V
Niradu	3222	C779856-7		120	Na	F3 V
Peake	3223	X468ADA-9	M Hi	104	Na	K4 V
Masakaa	3225	D7666CC-5		500	Na	G2 V
Amiihkar	3226	E76A786-4	Ri Wa	910	Na	G8 V M6 D
Kinika	3227	A150000-G	C Lo Ni Po De	013	Na	K9 V M7 D
Kewarghen	3229	D689656-5	Ni Ri	734	Na	G2 V
Asidda	3230	XAC8000-0	Ba Ni Fl	012	Na	K2 V

Na=Nonaligned world.
Ca=Confederation of Antares.
M=Military base.
C=Corsair.

The New Era population of Ot Zell subsector is 17 billion. The highest tech level is G at Kinika, a world controlled by Virus and home base for a roving Vampire Fleet.

Second, the PCs will have access to weapons lockers and the weapons there. These they may use to fight against the mercenaries.

The mercenaries, especially Haeckel, while bloodthirsty and ruthless, are by no means stupid. They are well-trained and fanatical about their mission.

They intend to stop the *Magellan* from ever leaving the Ot Zell system intact.

The referee should play the mercenaries intelligently as they stalk the PCs throughout the ship. The PCs will have to be equally intelligent and resourceful to defeat them. This part of the scenario should not degenerate into a shootout. It is meant to be a suspenseful race to the bridge of the ship in order to stop the mercenaries. The mercenaries, in turn, are doing their best to prevent the PCs from doing just that.

BRIDGE

When the PCs finally get to the bridge of the ship, they will be met by Haeckel and Ainley, who have been waiting for them. If the PCs do not yet know why they are doing this, Haeckel will explain it to them, saying, "The time is not yet right to return to the stars. Humaniti is not yet ready to return to true interstellar governances." Of course, this is a lie

he intends to use as a way of gaining some sympathy with the player characters. Then, he and Ainley will open fire on the PCs, hoping to kill them.

If the PCs succeed in defeating the last two mercenaries, the problem remains that they are headed on a collision course with Ot Zell's atmosphere which will destroy the *Magellan*. To avert this disaster, the PCs will need to make an Average: Electronics roll so as to jury-rig a direct link into the ship's navigational controls. Succeeding this will allow a Difficult: Ship's Tactics or Astro-gation roll in order to alter the ship's course. Both of these rolls together will enable the PCs to bypass all of the alterations which the mercenaries effected while they had control of the bridge. The *Magellan* will now be safe and able to return to Ot Zell in the usual manner.

ENDGAME

Upon returning to Ot Zell, the PCs and the *Magellan* are greeted anxiously by their superiors. Among them is Diomedes Donaldson, who feigns concern. Since ground control lost communications with the *Magellan*, everyone has been concerned as to its fate. Upon learning of the attempted hijacking and destruction of the ship, the PCs' superiors will be shocked but not surprised.

Any survivors among the mercenaries will be arrested, and tried for treason and a host of other crimes. Donaldson will never be formally connected with the hijacking attempt, although many will have their suspicions.

After a suitable period of debriefing and repairs, the PCs will be finally commissioned to head out into the Wilds in order to recontact worlds once part of the League of Antares. The PCs are expected to act as goodwill ambassadors and as explorers. Charted space is ready to reawaken; Humaniti stands on the threshold of a New Era. If this new age is to be different from the old one, if the mistakes of the past are to be corrected, the player characters will have to be daring in their endeavors. They will have to try very hard to live up to the details of those who have sent them.

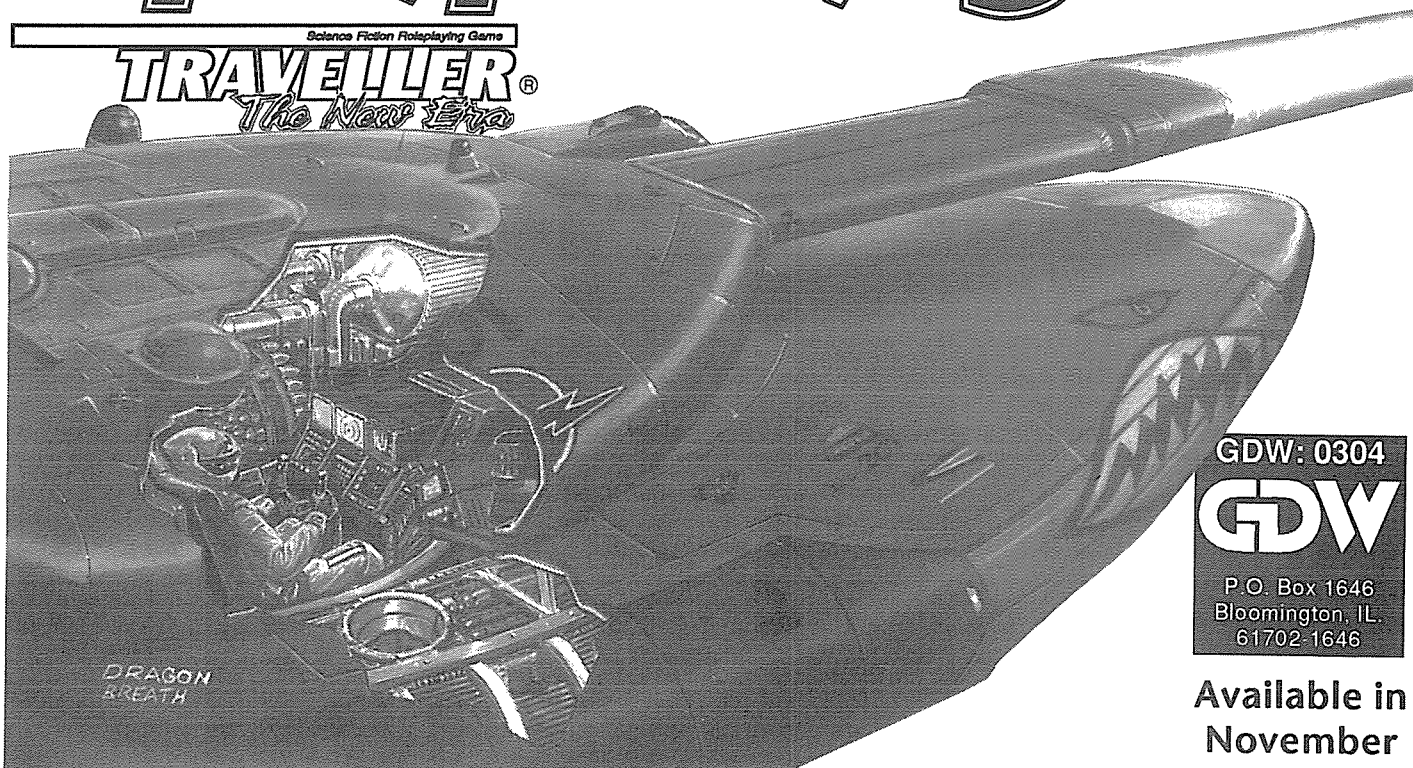
This is only the beginning for the *Magellan* and her crew. The Confederation of Antares is intent on expanding outward once again. This is one pocket empire which is not stagnating and which offers many opportunities for adventure.

To that end, the referee is encouraged to use the subsector map and data included with this article as a springboard for further adventures in this region of space. Ω

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You are in a small, deserted town at night. A cold, disturbing wind howls through the empty streets, carrying a strange yellow dust through the air. The fine powdery substance clings to everything, including your clothes and skin, but you do not breathe it.

You walk without volition down the dusty streets. Ahead is a person lying in the street. You walk up to him. He lies on his stomach, his leather jacket and jeans coated with the yellow dust. You turn him over, and you are startled to see that the left half of his face has been clawed away, clear to the bone. His chest cavity has been hollowed out—little more than bone and skin are left.

An envelope is in his hand. You pick it up and read it. It is addressed to Walter Stone, 1198 Court St., Phoenix, AZ. Suddenly, the envelope fills with blood, and you drop it in horror.

Then you notice that the corpse, although obviously dead for at least a day, is bleeding. The one remaining eye flicks open, and you try to jump back, but his bony arm whips out and grabs your shoulder before you can react. His one-eyed gaze holds you motionless for seconds that seem like hours. "Help us," he rasps, then falls into death and decay. As you stand up, you notice that your shoulder is covered with mud. Looking closer, you realize that it is blood many days old. Then you awaken.



Walter lives in the crowded, cluttered mike-town of southwestern Phoenix. His neighborhood consists of narrow, two-story houses, almost identical in appearance, crowded together as if to conserve space. Nonetheless, individual housing is a modest yet prominent symbol of status in a world where the majority of the population is too poor to afford such a luxury.

When the PCs show up on Walter's doorstep, there will be nobody home. That's because Walter left to visit his brother in Blitzville the evening of the dream.

There are two ways to find out Walter's whereabouts.

The neighbor across the street—a frizzy-haired, middle-aged woman named Bernice—knows where he went and would be happy to tell anyone who asks *politely*. She will get suspicious if the characters are rude or too probing in their questions.

If the PCs are daring (or stupid), they can break in and see what they can find. Unless they are very careful, there is a 50% chance that Bernice will spot them and call the cops. Inside the home, the PCs will find a calendar on the wall. The day of the dream is marked "go home"

with an arrow running through the next five days.

The real evidence is on the kitchen counter. It is an envelope—the same envelope from the dream! The dreaming PC will have no trouble recognizing it. The return address is Frank Stone, 866 Forsythe Road, Blitzville, IN. Inside is an invitation to a family reunion at his brother's house scheduled to take place today.

WELCOME TO BLITZVILLE

Blitzville is a quiet little town 40 miles southwest of the Indianapolis metroplex, with a population of only 3000. The only industry that keeps this place on the map is the CX Agricorp, responsible for tons of wheat every year.

The town has no airport, so the PCs will have to fly to Indianapolis, then rent a car and drive to get there. It is suggested that the PCs not arrive in Blitzville until early evening, giving them little time to make themselves comfortable or harass the Stones. If they insist on a tight schedule, delay their flight or give them car trouble.

The people here are very uncomfortable with outsiders. They will act very nervous and cautious when dealing with

Dusted

BY Dan Snuffin

Blitzville, Indiana is about to be in big trouble. The Dark Ones are going to open a portal to another dimension, releasing horrible creatures to victimize the population and take over. One night, the PC with the highest Foreboding skill has the dream related above. Blitzville is future Demonground, and the PC has foreseen this disaster in his dream. Walter Stone is significant in that he is to be the first victim of the skinless ones.

NOBODY'S HOME IN PHOENIX

If the PCs obtain Walter's phone number through information and try to give him a call, there will be no answer. The PCs will have to travel to Phoenix to find him. (A unique and colorful description of dark future Phoenix can be found in Michael A. Stackpole's novel, *A Gathering Evil*.)



the PCs. Drive this resentment home by making the PCs stop for gas in town (after all, it's a long drive), forcing them to deal with the locals. If the PCs do anything in town, they will be constantly watched unless they are accompanied by a local (like Frank).

Frank Stone lives in a modest, one-story brick home on the west edge of town with his wife and teenage daughter. There are a number of old cars scattered in the overgrowth at the back of the house, most of them pieces of junk.

If the PCs knock on the front door, Walter will answer. At this point, the dreamer should make an Average test against Empathy. If he succeeds, he will recognize Walter as the "dead" man in his dream, and if he does not make a Difficult test versus Willpower, he will faint.

Generally, the referee will have to rely on his judgment to handle this situation, using the NPC's motivations as a guide. If the PCs reveal that they followed Walter to Blitzville because of a dream, Walter and Frank will both take it as some sort of joke. When the two realize that the PCs are serious, Walter and Frank will both become very stern

and may ask the PCs to leave, depending on how the encounter has gone up until that point, especially if they revealed the full details of the dream. Both should remain skeptics, at any rate.

Regardless of how the encounter goes, soon the PCs will have to call it a night. The Roadside Inn in the middle of town is as generic as its name. The rooms are very basic, but the price is very modest.

Unless the PCs do something to get themselves in trouble, nothing will happen until noon the next day.

GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER?

At noon, the Dark Ones will open a gate between Earth and the alien dimension. This gate just happens to open in the field, about 50 feet away from Frank Stone's home.

About 12:15, a fine yellow dust will appear in the air around town, sticking and settling on most everything. The warm breeze that carries it comes from the west. Before the PCs are able to investigate this phenomenon, they will bump into a terrified Frank Stone and his family in a old, dark green pickup. He will stop with a skid, jump out and con-

front the characters, logically blaming the mysterious strangers in town.

When he realizes that the PCs don't really know what's going on, he will calm down a bit and tell them what happened.

"We were sittin' in the house when boom! we were hit by a big dust storm of this yellow dust. We didn't know what was goin' on.

"We were lookin' out the window, trying to figure it all out, and we saw this thing. It was like a man with no skin and no eyes. And then there was another one coming from the field headin' this way, and we knew we had to get out of the house, so we ran out to the truck.

"But Walter didn't make it. He took the rifle, and shot one of the things as the family was getting in the truck. But then he lost his glasses, and one came around the corner and started ripping him up." He starts to cry.

Meanwhile, the dust is accumulating. The PCs may notice that while the dust coats everything, it does not get in their eyes or choke them. It will make breathing a little difficult, as if they were at a high altitude. The dust will be notably absent from any water within sight, not even lying on the surface. Visibility will be limited, and all ranged combat will be conducted at one difficulty level higher, with range limited to 30 meters.

If asked, Frank will tell the PCs that the wind and dust were coming from the field out behind his place. He will want to be part of any attempt to get the things, and the PCs should realize that they will need his influence in the town if they want any cooperation. Frank's wife will drive the truck away, and Frank will want to get some guns, ammo and possibly some help—if the referee feels they need it.

WHERE WORLDS COLLIDE

Everything in sight is completely coated with yellow dust, making Frank's neighborhood look almost completely unfamiliar—like an alien landscape. The warm winds that carry the dust are stronger here. The townspeople will be completely stunned, their facial expressions molded in awe and horror.

As they approach Frank's home and the gate, they will encounter 1D6 skinless ones. Another 2D6 skinless ones will be prowling around Frank's place. From there, the party will be able to locate the gate by following the dimensional winds.

It is important to play up the horror of the skinless ones. Let them maul one of the townspeople who freaks out. Use the limited visibility to suggest that there

are many more of the creatures just out of sight, appearing and disappearing as they move in and out of view.

The gate is a rectangular "door" of "moving" blackness seven feet high, four feet wide and three inches deep set in the field. The winds howl as they are funneled through this portal. Empathic characters will be able to feel its energy, as well as the "residue" of the malignant entity that created it.

Furthermore, everyone will be forced to fight the skinless ones if they plan on sticking around for any length of time. There will be 2D6 creatures in the vicinity of the gate. There is a 50% chance each combat turn that another skinless one will come through the gate.

CLOSING THE GATE

There are two ways to close the gate.

First, the characters can block the Earth end of the gate, preventing anything from getting through. Unless the blockade is sturdy, this will be a temporary solution at best.

The hard way to close the gate is to go through it and destroy the control mechanisms on the other side. Those who pass through the gate will feel cold, accompanied by a tingling sensation and goosebumps. The whole experience will be slightly disorienting for those not used to dimensional travel. To reflect this, all rolls will be conducted at one difficulty level higher for one combat turn after they emerge on the other side.

The alien dimension is like a desert of yellow dust dotted with alien sand structures that resemble sandstone arches. There will be 2D6 skinless ones present on the other side, with a 50% chance per combat turn that 1D6+2 more will arrive.

This side of the gate has the same dimensions described above. The appearance is much different, though. Green veins bulge around the edges of the dimensional slab, leading to a large organic generator behind it. The generator is an eight-foot-high mound of green, slimy flesh with jagged bones protruding from it at all angles. It pulsates like a giant heart.

Despite its enormous size and appearance, the generator is actually a very sensitive piece of equipment, and it will take only 10 points of damage before it shuts down and the gate collapses. The PCs will have to figure out how to destroy it and still get back home. (Timed explosives are great!) If anyone is trapped in this dimension, they are as good as dead unless they have a Dimension Walk skill.

CLEANING UP

If the PCs succeed in closing the gate, the only task left is to hunt down the remaining skinless ones wandering around town. The PCs will have the gratitude of the citizens of Blitzville.

SKINLESS ONES

Strength: 8
Constitution: 8
Agility: 5
Intelligence: 3
Education: 1
Charisma: 10
Empathy: 1
Initiative: 3
Move: 2/8/15/30
Skill/Dam.: 6/2D6
Hits: 15/30
Appear: 1D6

The skinless ones are humanoid in form, but have a clear, viscous fluid that surrounds their bodies instead of skin. This makes their insides clearly visible. Their anatomy is obviously alien. They possess no apparent muscles, and display strange organs and pulsing veins, all having a sickly red color. The color of the insides and the shiny fluid that covers their bodies makes it look as if they are bleeding.

Their limbs are gaunt, and their hands and feet end in large claws. They use their claws to rip out the organs of humans which they use to decorate their bodies. (They do not understand why humans would hide such wonderful things under such a dull covering!) They also do not understand that humans need their organs, and they desire humans for their organs the same way humans desire minks for their hides.

The native dimension of these creatures is characterized by a fine yellow dust that clogs the air and makes up the ground. This dust sticks to anything except fluids, which seem to repel it. Thus, it does not stick to the skinless ones.

Any portal that is opened to this dimension will be marked by the large concentration of dust. The constant winds of the alien dimension will carry this dust through any open portal and into the air.

The skinless ones have the ability to solidify this dust into any shape they desire using unique mental facilities. This solidification process takes one minute for every kilogram of mass of the desired object. These objects are very strong and not easily broken.

When encountered, they will use this ability to create small rock-like spheres that they throw with deadly accuracy. (Skill Level: 7, Damage: 1D6. Throw Range: 32 meters. Note that the dust

clouds do not reduce the range of this attack.) This form of attack takes two actions to complete—one action to create the rocks and another to throw them. They also use this ability to form the alien structures of their dimension.

These beings take double damage from fire, which dries them out. However, due to the unique nature of their "skin," their bodies do not catch fire. The skinless ones have never seen fire before and are likely to ignore its effects until one of their number is killed by it.

FRANK STONE

Frank is 5'7". He has blond hair and can often be found in oil-stained clothing. He has a long, thin scar on his left forearm.

Level: Experienced

Skills: Mechanic 7, Small Arms (Rifle) 5.

Initiative: 3

Motivation: *Club Queen:* Frank is very stubborn, and once he has made up his mind it is very difficult to get him to change it or convince him that he is wrong. A first impression will last forever in Frank's mind. *Heart 10:* Frank gets along very well with people if they don't make a bad first impression. He is well liked in Blitzville.

Weapon: Marlin .30-06 bolt-action sporting rifle.

WALTER STONE

Walter is a thin man in his 40s with wispy brown hair and a dense mustache. He likes to dress as casually as circumstances allow, and will be in jeans and a T-shirt during the adventure. He is virtually blind without his glasses.

Motivation: *Heart 5:* As an investment banker, Walter must deal with many people, and thus is generally friendly in attitude. *Diamond 5:* Of course, Walter also values money as much as he values friends, which creates interesting conflicts.

TOWNSPEOPLE

Four townspeople will accompany the characters and Frank to the farm. The first three are Novice NPCs armed with Marlin .30-06 bolt-action rifles. The last is Jon Dinnerstein, a war veteran and thus an Elite NPC. He will be carrying an M16 assault rifle and a knife. It is suggested that the referee use Jon to balance combat and provide support for the PCs. (Dinnerstein will approach the PCs after the adventure, offering to help them in their battle against the Dark Minions. The PCs can put him down as a contact, and he will be available to show up in future adventures.) Ω

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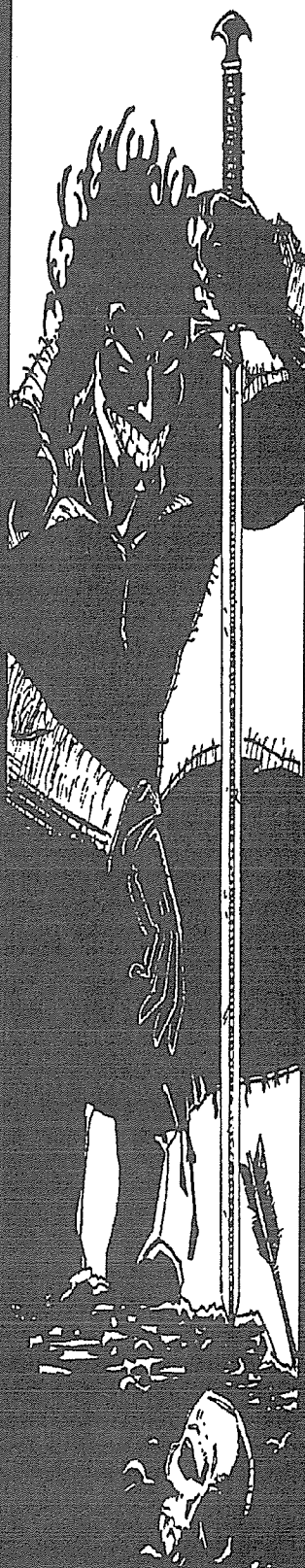
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We will consider articles on any science-fiction roleplaying game by any publisher, including Twilight: 2000, Merc: 2000, Traveller, Dark Conspiracy, Space: 1889, 2300 AD, Shadowrun, Star Trek, Star Wars, BattleTech, High Colonies, Call of Cthulhu, Paranoia, Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0., Vampire, Werewolf and others. We will not provide coverage for any products produced by or licensed to Palladium Books, at the request of Palladium Books.

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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.

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*Good luck. If you have any questions, send them along with a SASE to:
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Halflings as Characters in Shadowrun 2nd edition By Michael O'Brien

Halflings provide the gamemaster a chance to rattle the cages of his more jaded players. They also provide players a new roleplaying challenge—a character who doesn't need three miles of attitude. Sometimes, the shadows favor the small, the quiet, and the sneaky. And remember what most cyberpunk RPGs have forgotten: The *really* dangerous ones don't need to advertise it—they *know*.

Following are optional rules on introducing Halfling characters into your campaign, along with two sample Halfling characters.

HALFLING BACKGROUND

Halflings took a long time to come to world attention after the Change, and many people still consider them mythical. Most average humans will see more dragons in their lifetimes than Halflings. Researchers theorize that the metagene for Halflings is recessive, possibly linked to rare genetic diseases in populations unexposed to magic until 2011. Therefore, only severely inbred populations are liable to produce Halflings, and the unusual regional distribution bears this out.

Halflings generally come from extremely rural areas and tend to favor the hilly regions near mountains. Most recorded examples of Halfling appearance occur in North America's Appalachian Mountains and Mississippi Bayou country, Hokkaido and northern Honshu in Japan, the Welsh Habitable and Western Habitable Zones of Britain, the steppes of northwest Asia, and central Germany. Rumors abound of sightings in Tir Nan Og. There are no recorded appearances on the South American, African or Australian continents, and no useful data from southern and eastern Asia.

An average Halfling stands 110 centimeters tall and weighs 57 kilograms. While they simply do not carry the joint leverage for great strength, their small bodies and quick minds are naturally tough, which gives them heavy resistance to injury, disease and harmful magic. They can be found with most of the facial features, skin tones and body types of humanity, though a 1.4-meter-tall Halfling would be considered a giant.

Though some old tales mention underground burrows, Halflings actually live much as humans do, which is only logical, as they grow up in human families. In the backwater areas they inhabit, Halflings are rarely exposed to any technology of post-Industrial Revolution vintage, and most of them grow to prefer it that way. All Halflings are allergic to petroleum products. This allergy to plastic only encourages their distance from technological products.

Interestingly, few Halflings have the psychological problems experienced by many victims of UGE; this may be because they are usually born into tightly knit families where the child's appearance is of little concern. As Halflings tend to live to 90 or 95 years old, surviving elderly ones are

generally looked upon as the keepers of great wisdom, some of it superstitious.

Halfling PCs will usually be different from most of their ilk, however. Most Halflings are content with a sedentary existence, but PCs will often be affected by wanderlust. Some may wish to experience Sprawl culture, or they may be looking for training in the magic that is said to have returned. Entertaining and medical careers are common, and Halflings tend to make great bartenders (though height allowances must be made so the bartender can see his customers!). If they take to the shadows, few Halflings are outright fighters such as Street Samurai or Mercenaries. Some become mages. Many take up the shaman's destiny, as most Halflings feel a kinship to nature. (It's not quite as loud a kinship as some Native American and Elven groups claim. It's generally quite matter-of-fact.) A Halfling decker is quite rare, due to the allergies involved, though Beta cyber and "bioware" from the *Shadowtech* supplement may be options. Such cyberware would usually be kept as limited as possible, however. Halflings are powerfully sensitive to changes in their own Essence, and avoid such changes. (This relates to the kinship with nature mentioned earlier.)

Halfling characters must take Metahumanity as their highest priority (Priority A) in the archetype creation system. Those wishing magic must take it next (Priority B) as usual. Racial modifiers are as follows: -2 Strength, +1 Quickness, +1 Strength, +1 Willpower. All Halflings have two dice of Stealth over and above any bought with skill points. All Halflings also have the allergy to plastic described on page 46 of the *Shadowrun II* rules, and may choose the severity as usual. This will give the character extra creation points or nuyen, which the player may distribute as he sees fit. Players determined to have no allergy must consult their gamemaster for justification and character adjustment.

Halflings relate interestingly to the other human races. Generally, they're most comfortable around humans, who tend to find them curious but quite acceptable. They get along decently with Dwarves, but the high-spirited Halflings usually consider Dwarves dour and patronizing. On average, Orcs and Trolls think of Halflings as punier humans, and there is no love lost there; but the small race's relationship with Elves is quite interesting. Halflings look on Elves from afar as creatures of wisdom and wonder; and, in return, most Elves consider Halflings uncommonly sensible and rational. Unfortunately, a growing number of Elves see the other races as petty, unsophisticated "lower orders." Halflings tend to treat such an Elf as if he does not exist, which usually infuriates the Elf in question. All Elves, friendly or not, seem wary around Halflings, and no member of either race has offered to explain why. Theories include the idea that Elves knew of Halflings, but did not expect them to appear in the Sixth World, that the existence of Halflings came as a complete surprise to a race which believes itself to be all-knowing, and that the Halflings know secrets of the Elves which the latter would prefer to keep hidden.

Halfling Woodsman

Give me the outdoors any day. The smog, filth and crowds of the city.... Well, let's just say it's an interesting place to visit, and leave it at that, okay?

I prefer the hunt where the prey and I understand each other. When I kill something, I know it's going to feed someone. Why some city boy would use one of those fancy machineguns on a deer just so he could hang its pelt on a wall, leaving the rest to rot—that's beyond me.

What's that? Yeah, I can take you into the woods. These paranormal critters can be tricky, but I've handled their tricks before. What do you want it for? Magic, huh? Okay. I've got some time this weekend. You know, my kid wants to be a magician. Maybe you'd be willing to give him a few pointers for a little discount on my fee?

The Halfling woodsman is a little rustic, but he's no fool. Deal straight with him, and he'll get you what you want. He only goes into the city once in a while, but if you convince him to join the run, he's just as good at tracking two-legged, intelligent critters as four-legged ones. And Kevlar gives little defense against hunting points.

Attributes:

Body: 5

Quickness: 6

Strength: 3

Charisma: 3

Intelligence: 4

Willpower: 4

Essence: 6

Reaction: 5

Initiative: 5+1D6

Cyberware:

None

Contacts:

Shaman

Halfling "Tribesman"

Gear:

Medium crossbow with 20 bolts

Binoculars

Survival knife

Real leathers

Ordinary clothing

Skills:

Armed Combat: 2

Biotech: 3

Etiquette (Rural): 4

Firearms: 4

Projectile Weapons: 6

Stealth: 5

Throwing: 4

Notes:

Nuisance allergy to plastic

(Bonus +2 to skills)

3 months low lifestyle prepaid

Starting Cash: 11,175¥



Halfling Shaman

Yes, the others insist that earth and sky are too complicated for ordinary man to understand. It is—to them—because they insist on seeing things that way. There are better ways to understand the living world, and one of the simplest ways is to just ask it. Sounds like nonsense to you? That's okay, it did to me, too, at first. But I guess if you could see the world as I do, you wouldn't be coming to me for assistance, huh?

I can help you with your problem; I am the friend of much that is still powerful in this world. But my help will cost you. This puzzle will not be assembled easily, and I, too, must eat and keep a roof over my head. I am not so friendly with the sky spirits that rain cannot soak me to the skin.

My price surprises you? I said the world was simpler than you think. I said nothing about it being less dangerous.

The Halfling shaman has even more of a naturalistic worldview than his plains and urban counterparts, but has less of a problem integrating modern science and technology into it. To him, all is a reflection of the eternal truths that the universe is built on. His totem can be any appropriate to his home turf. The very concept of pollution is repulsive to him, and open displays of such will disgust him thoroughly.

Attributes:

Body: 3

Quickness: 4

Strength: 1

Charisma: 5

Intelligence: 4

Willpower: 6

Essence: 6

Magic: 6

Reaction: 4

Initiative: 4+1D6

Cyberware: None

Contacts:

Metahuman Rights Activist

Talismonger

Gear:

Staff

Medicine lodge materials (2)

Survival knife

Real leathers

Ordinary clothing

Skills:

Conjuring: 6

Etiquette (Rural): 3

Magical Theory: 4

Sorcery: 6

Stealth: 3

Totem: The Halfling shaman may select a wilderness or urban totem, as his background dictates

Spells:

Sleep: 5

Heal: 4

Invisibility: 3

Mask: 2

Notes:

Moderate allergy to plastic

(Bonus +2 to Attributes, +3 to Skills)

2 months low lifestyle prepaid

Starting Cash: 14,053¥



GAMING SUGGESTIONS

Players who choose to take Halfling characters need to spend a little more time developing them before the start of play.

FASAgives us mountains of information in gaming supplements and novels on the attitudes, goals and character of a generic member of the other races; players will be playing catch-up for a while, until the other players get used to this new race.

Use the tendency to wander, mentioned earlier, to justify a new entry into your campaign. Your players can have some fun with the "awed but pretending otherwise" schtick as the Halfling adjusts to Seattle.

Alternatively, a Halfling with a corporate history may have been transferred to Seattle recently by the corp before abandoning it for the shadows.

Perhaps there's even a small colony of Halflings living quietly in the Barrens somewhere, and your player has decided to run the shadows as a way of getting out, getting rich or getting revenge on someone. As always, imagination is your prime tool.

Halflings are almost always more laid back than their larger cousins, tending to think a matter through before acting, and saying only what they mean.

A Halfling character who doesn't prove to have a calming influence on his shadowrunning friends is either an unusual specimen or hangs around with dedicated "scream-and-leap" types.

They are quick to forgive and slow to forget. In a fight, they usually attack your flanks or back, preferably sneaking past you completely (after all, few Trolls are impressed with the punches of a Halfling). Ω

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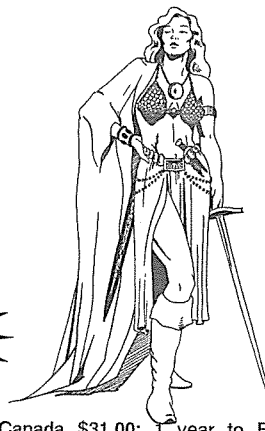
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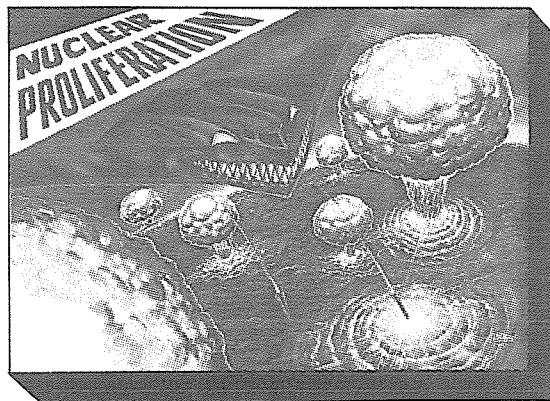
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Summit City Con '93, Sept. 11-12 at the Indiana National Guard Armory in downtown Ft. Wayne. Contact Phoenix Rising Game Shop, 6252 St. Joe Road, Ft. Wayne, IN 46835.

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Earth '93, Sept. 25-26 at the Freizeitheim Stocken, Eichsfelderstr.101, Hannover/Germany. Contact Arne Rassek, Berliner Str.23, D—W 3005 Hemmingen 1, Germany.

Gamemaster '93, "Fall of the Dragon," Oct. 2 at the Student Union Building of Boise State University. Contact The Gamemasters Guild, PO Box 8823, Boise, ID 83707.

NOVAG VIII, Oct. 2-3 at Elks Lodge #2188, Fairfax, VA. Contact NOVAG VIII, PO Box 729, Sterling, VA 20167.

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Nuke-Con III, Oct. 9-10 at the St. Bernard's School in Omaha, NE. Contact Nuke-Con III, PO Box 1561, Omaha, NE 68005.

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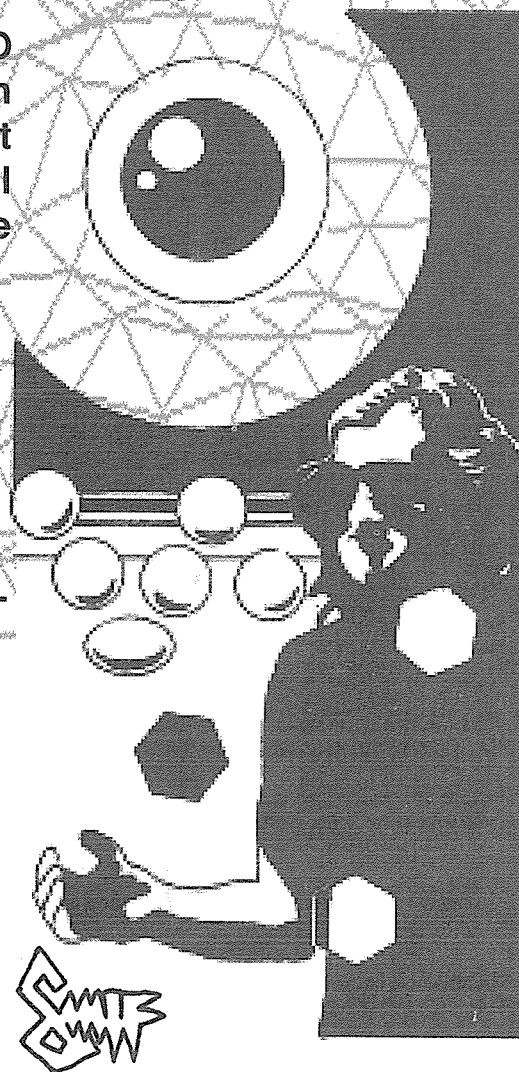
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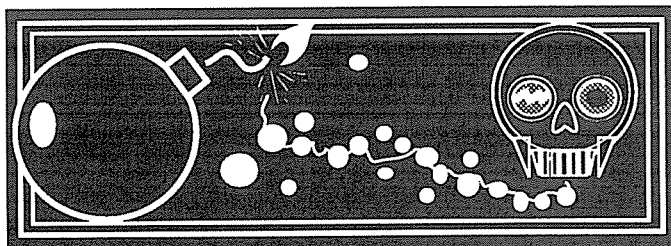
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Thief Archetype

"So you want me in on your job, huh? Can't say I'm surprised. Seems to me you could use someone who can do something more than kill people.

"I'm making a living. Not a great living, I grant you. So if you want me in, better make it a good offer.

"Good enough. I'm in."

The thief derides the more obvious and unsubtle methods of the more violent archetypes, preferring stealth and cunning to force. His motto is, "Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent."

Attributes

Body: 3 (4)
Quickness: 5
Strength: 2
Charisma: 2
Intelligence: 5
Willpower: 5
Essence: 2.5
Magic: 0
Reaction: 5 (7)

Skills

Car: 3
Etiquette (Street): 4
Negotiation: 5
Firearms: 5
Unarmed Combat: 5
Stealth: 6
Electronics: 6
Athletics: 3
Computer: 3

Cyberware: Datajack, low-light eyes, dermal plating (level 1), wired reflexes (1), air filtration (6).

Gear: Voice mask, doc wagon contract (basic), armored clothing, knife, narcojet pistol, maglock passkey, neuro-stun grenade.

Contacts: Fixer, Decker, Undercover Cop.

Description: Deliberately nondescript clothes, immediately forgettable face. Practically impossible to accurately describe to the police. Ω

By David Perry

Shadowrun

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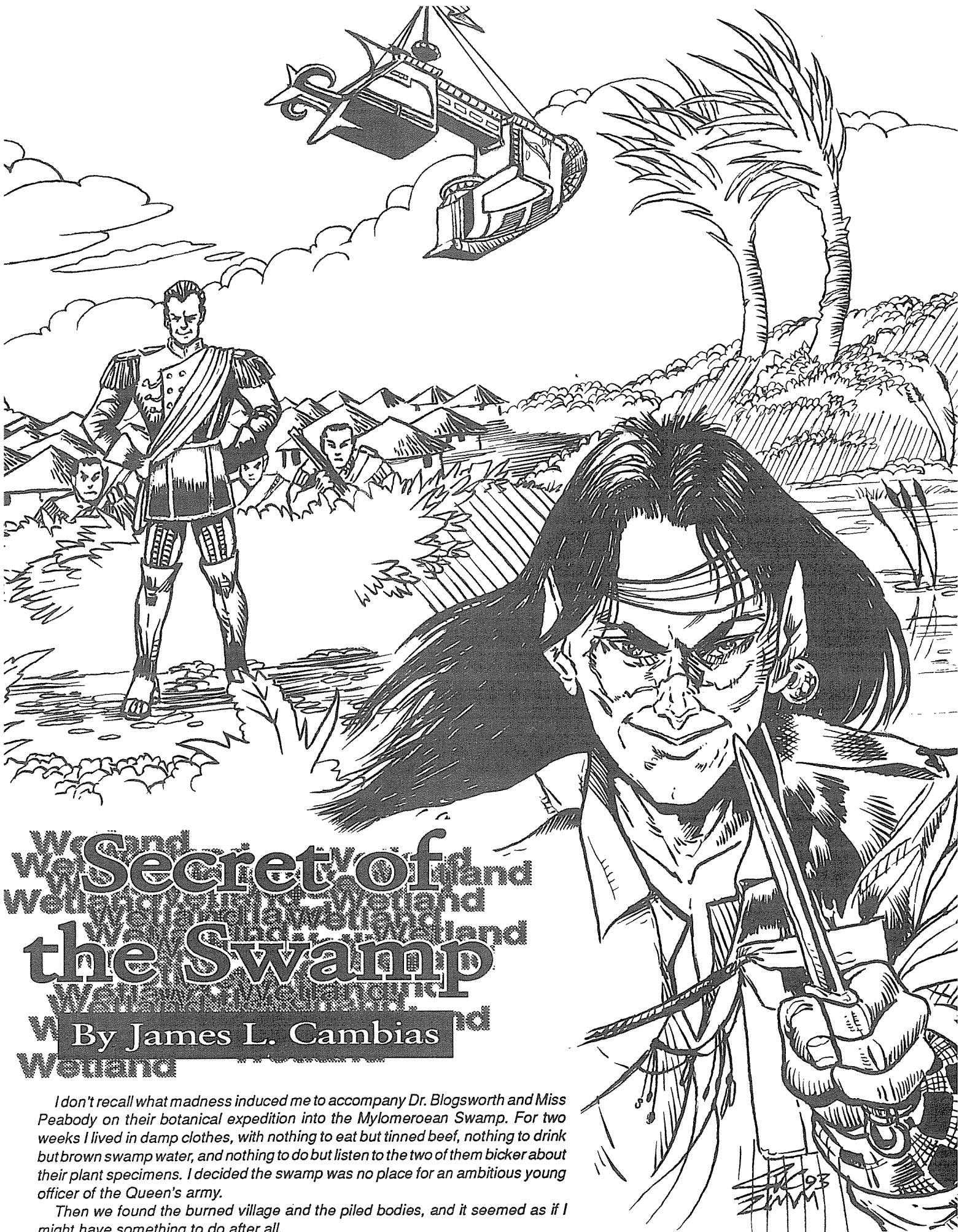
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Secret of the Swamp

By James L. Cambias

I don't recall what madness induced me to accompany Dr. Blogsworth and Miss Peabody on their botanical expedition into the Mylomeroean Swamp. For two weeks I lived in damp clothes, with nothing to eat but tinned beef, nothing to drink but brown swamp water, and nothing to do but listen to the two of them bicker about their plant specimens. I decided the swamp was no place for an ambitious young officer of the Queen's army.

Then we found the burned village and the piled bodies, and it seemed as if I might have something to do after all.

The PCs have been persuaded to accompany a scientific expedition into the mist-shrouded backwaters of the Mylomeroean Swamp, north of the British colony on Mars.

The leader is Dr. Clement Blogsworth, a noted scientist, who is offering explorers £200 to join the expedition. (The adventure "The Lurker in the Moor," published in GDW's **More Tales From the Ether**, involves a trip into the Mylomeroean Swamp; at the referee's discretion, that scenario and this one can be combined.)

Expedition Plan: There will be six Terrans on the expedition, including Dr. Blogsworth and the PCs (extra Terrans will be NPC scientists). The party is taking food and supplies sufficient for four weeks of travel in the swamp. The entire expedition will travel in 10 collapsible canvas canoes, with 14 Martian bearers. The group will travel north from Syrtis Major aboard a commercial canal-boat. The referee should encourage the players to plan what supplies to bring, within the limits of what the bearers and the canoes can carry.

Goals: The expedition's purpose is to explore a large section of the swamp, gathering samples of plants and animals, mapping important terrain features, and establishing friendly relations with the swamp tribes.

WITHIN THE SWAMP

The Mylomeroean Swamp is a vast tract of land flooded by a rupture in the Mylarkt-Meroe Canal. It is heavily overgrown, and the waterways are almost always covered by fogs, so that aerial mapping is impossible. No city exerts control over the region, and the constantly shifting waterways are an ideal hideout for bandits and outcasts.

Travel in the Swamp: The published adventure "The Lurker in the Moor" contains an excellent map of the swamp and a description of travel conditions there. Referees lacking a copy of it can use the following simplified system to generate terrain. For each new 10-mile hex entered, roll on the table below for the actual ground condition.

Swamp Terrain

Roll	Result
1	Bog
2-3	Swamp
4	Lake
5	Grassland
6	Forest

Travel is standard for each terrain type. A hex contains a swamp dweller village on a roll of 6. These are mostly small settlements of only a few dozen, but on a second roll of 6, it is a permanent hamlet of 100 people.

Fever: For every day spent in the swamps, each member of the expedition has a 1 in 6 chance of contracting Martian Swamp Fever. Once infected, the sufferer must make an Endurance task roll each day to recover (Easy if resting and under a doctor's care; Routine if resting or under a doctor's care; Difficult if neither; injuries increase all rolls by one level of difficulty). While suffering from fever, a PC's physical stats are all reduced by 1, and he must make an Easy Endurance roll to avoid suffering hallucinations.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE SWAMP

All encounters should be rolled on the table on page 209 of the basic rulebook. All "swamp pirate" and "swamp pirate camp" rolls should be replaced by one of the special encounters described below.

Suspicious Villagers: An ordinary settlement of two dozen tribesmen, but they are tremendously hostile to outsiders. The eight warriors and braves will attack the party, first with arrows and then with swords. The tribe will flee if defeated and will not negotiate.

Abandoned Village: The PCs come upon a large swamp village that has been completely abandoned. Nothing has been taken from the huts, and food has been left out to spoil, but there are no people anywhere around.

Creepy Feeling: All day the members of the expedition will have the feeling they are being watched. Characters may catch a glimpse of someone lurking in the underbrush, but no amount of searching can find the culprit.

Destroyed Village: A small settlement is the scene of a terrible massacre. A dozen bodies are scattered about, and all the huts have been looted and burned. There are no survivors.

PIRATE ATTACK

After the PCs have been exploring for a while and have had a chance to experience the special encounters, their camp is attacked by a large band of swamp pirates. There should be twice as many pirates as there are members of the expedition. The bandits will kill Martians but will try to take the Terrans alive as prisoners. As the bearers flee in panic and the pirates close in all around, the PCs should realize that surrender is their only option.

The pirates are all armed with cutlasses and rifle muskets, and are all Experienced NPCs. They fight with a discipline and tactical sense unusual for mere bandits.

When the characters have been captured, they will be securely tied and bundled into canoes for the trip back to the pirate camp. All the precious scientific specimens will be left behind.

SECRET BASE

The boat ride seemed to last an eternity. The ropes cut into my arms like knives, and my wound throbbed painfully, but the worst part of the journey was not knowing what lay at the end of it. From the look of my captors, it probably wouldn't be anything pleasant.

As the pirate canoes round a bend in the waterway, the PCs will be startled to see two Oenotrian cloudships moored at the pirate camp. All around the ships are numerous tents and temporary buildings, while teams of swamp dwellers labor to construct walls and defenses. The two cloudships are a *Hullcutter* and a *Sky Runner* class.

There are 40 swamp pirates living in tents and huts in the center of the camp, and 10 Oenotrian Marines are bivouacked in tents near the two ships. Some 60 swamp villagers have been forced to work at the base, and they sleep out in the open, guarded by pirates and Oenotrians.

To anyone with any military experience, the presence of Oenotrians here is a grave threat to the British colony. The two ships can raid traffic on the canal, blockading the spice trade and endangering the alliance with the Boreosyrtis League. And with much of the British aerial fleet patrolling to the south, the vessels could raid Parhoon and Gorovaan.

Captain Dasgaar: The PCs are dragged from the canoes and led through the camp to the big tent, where Dasgaar, the Oenotrian captain, and Katooq, the pirate chief, are waiting.

"What have we here?" exclaims Dasgaar sarcastically. "Red Men! And so very far from their little rat-hole in Syrtis Major, too. You should not have come here, Earthlings. The swamps belong to Martians, not to you. Now who are you and what are you doing here?"

Dasgaar proceeds to grill the PCs about why they are in the swamps. Anyone reluctant to talk will be encouraged by blows and kicks from the Oenotrian Marines guarding the captain. When he is at last satisfied with the

information, Dasgaar will gesture dismissively. "Take them away and confine them with the hostages until dinner-time. I think it would be amusing to be served by an Earthling. We can wait until tomorrow to execute them."

PRISONERS OF THE OENOTRIANS

The adventurers will be held prisoner aboard the big *Hullcutter*-class screw galley, along with eight tribal leaders from the swamp villages, who are being kept as hostages. The prisoners are locked in the ship's brig, which is guarded by two soldiers. The room has no windows, and the heavy door is bolted from the outside. The PCs will be searched thoroughly, and all tools, weapons or valuables will be taken from them.

Hostages: The eight tribal elders will tell the PCs that they and their people were rounded up by the Oenotrians and the pirates, and forced to build fortifications for the base. If the villagers try to resist, the Oenotrians will execute the hostages. The elders are all fearful and will not assist in any escape attempts, but will not betray the characters to the Oenotrians.

Discovery: A Routine: Observation skill roll will enable one of the adventurers to notice that one of the swamp

villager hostages is wearing a peculiar dried root around his neck (he says it is a charm against toothache). A Formidable: Biology roll will reveal that the root is actually a potent hallucinogen and soporific. (If none of the PCs can recognize the root, then Dr. Blogsworth will.)

If it could be introduced into the Oenotrian officers' dinner while the PCs are serving them, most of the leaders might be incapacitated, giving the adventurers a chance to escape.

SLAVES OF THE SWAMP PIRATES

That night, the PCs are removed from the cell and taken to the big tent, where the Oenotrians and the pirates are feasting. Captain Dasgaar and his 10 officers are there, along with Katooq and a dozen of his pirate henchmen. Four Oenotrian Marines and half a dozen pirates are on guard, and everyone is armed.

The Terrans are put to work carrying dishes, cleaning spilled wine, and performing humiliating menial tasks for the Martians. Dasgaar and the others make numerous rude jokes at the expense of the characters, and any women will be coarsely harassed.

Special Ingredient: If the PCs have the dried root in a powder, it requires a

Difficult: Agility roll to slip it into the food unnoticed. The drug takes about 15 minutes to take effect. The diners will start to seem drunk, with slurred speech and loss of coordination. Once the hallucinations begin, things will get interesting. The Martians may attack each other or the PCs; the guards may suspect treachery. Both the Oenotrians and the pirates are suspicious of each other anyway, and the drug could bring hidden feelings to the surface. If a brawl begins, the adventurers might be able to slip out of the tent unnoticed, or else attack one of the guards.

Other Methods: If the adventurers are not using the drug, they may still be able to sow dissent among their captors. It is easy to see that the pirates and Oenotrians don't quite trust each

other. Appropriate use of Theatrics and Eloquence could be quite effective. A suicidally brave PC might try a show of bravado, challenging one of the leaders to combat. Or else an attractive lady character might distract one of the pirate guards.

BREAKOUT

If the PCs get a chance to slip out of the dining tent, they have several options. They may simply flee on foot or try to rouse the swamp villagers in revolt. Or players may come up with a plan of their own.

Escape Into the Swamp: If the adventurers are all in good health and are skilled at wilderness travel, they may simply run off into the swamp. A band of pirates will follow in pursuit a few minutes later, and the adventure becomes a long chase through the swamp toward the main canal, several days away. The PCs may be able to ambush their pursuers or possibly lose them in the marsh.

Slave Revolt: If the PCs are good leaders and are sufficiently eloquent, they may be able to rouse the captive swamp villagers to fight against the Oenotrians and the pirates. The villagers understand Parhooni, and most speak Koline and Umbran as well. It requires a Formidable: Eloquence or Leadership skill roll to get them to fight. If the adventurers have somehow been able to liberate the hostages from the Oenotrian ship, then the task is only Difficult.

Forces: There are 40 Oenotrians: 32 sailors (Trained NPCs), armed with swords, and eight marines (Experienced) armed with rifle muskets. There are 20 Trained swamp pirates armed with swords and 15 armed with bows, plus five Experienced pirates armed with rifle muskets. If the PCs have drugged the food in the banquet tent, then the pirates have no leader, and the Oenotrians have only a junior officer aboard the *Hullcutter* to command them.

There are 60 swamp villagers, armed with clubs and knives. They are all Green NPCs. Initially, the villagers have surprise, and attack the pirates in a wild melee. If the PCs are leading the villagers and can do something spectacular, the pirates' morale will break, and they will flee. If not, the pirates will regroup by the Oenotrian ship and try to subdue the villagers.

The Oenotrians' chief concern is to protect their ship, and they will make ready to cast off at the first sign of trouble. They can use the ship's guns with devastating effect against the villagers.

COMMAND POST QUARTERLY

Command Post, the newsletter supporting GDW's **Command Decision** miniatures rules is now a full-fledged quarterly journal!

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OUTCOMES

If the PCs can reach the main canal through the swamp, they can hail a passing canal barge and get safely to Mylarkt.

Once there, they can warn the British military attache at the consulate, and a squadron of gunboats will be sent to attack the secret base.

A successful revolt of the villagers against the Oenotrians will result in the base being permanently abandoned. The swamp tribes will be very friendly toward Earthmen in the future, and can provide scientists with a huge store of knowledge about the flora and fauna of the wetlands.

If the PCs fail to escape or to defeat the Oenotrians, then Captain Dasgaar will order them executed at dawn. Just as the marines of the firing squad are taking aim at the helpless adventurers, a British gunboat appears overhead and opens fire on the Oenotrians. (Luckily for the characters, the gunboat was passing by just as a break in the swamp mists allowed a glimpse of the two cloudships moored at the base.)

DR. CLEMENT BLOGSWORTH

Dr. Blogsworth is an eminent botanist and physician who has travelled widely on Mars gathering plant specimens. He is particularly interested in discovering new medicinal plants. The expedition into the Mylomeroean Swamp was his idea, but he is perfectly willing to share command of the party with other experienced travellers.

Attribute Skills

Str: 2	Fisticuffs 1, Throwing 1
Agl: 1	Marksmanship 1 (rifle)
End: 5	Wilderness Travel 4 (mapping)
Int: 6	Observation 7, Science 5 (biology), Engineering 1 (explosives)
Chr: 3	Eloquence 2, Linguistics 3 (German, Koline, Parhooni)
Soc: 4	Riding 3 (horse), Medicine 3

Motives: Knowledge, Steady, Ambitious.

Description: Dr. Blogsworth is of medium height, slightly built, and extremely untidy looking. His hair is unbrushed, his clothes are ill-fitting and carelessly mended, and his pockets are stuffed with notes and biological specimens. He is rather shy and quiet, and is only really happy when digging up a newly discovered plant.

Space: 1889

CAPTAIN

RUTILAAN DASGAAR

Dasgaar is the commander of the Oenotrian forces in the swamp. The idea of the hidden base was his, and he is passionately committed to making it work. If his plan succeeds, then the Oenotrians will be that much closer to driving the Terrans off of Mars, and Dasgaar's prestige and power will be greatly increased. He does not like the swamp very much, as he prefers the comforts of his ship and distrusts his swamp pirate allies.

Attribute Skills

Str: 2	Fisticuffs 1, Throwing 1, Trimsman 2 (cloudship), Close Combat 2 (polearms)
Agl: 2	Stealth 1, Marksmanship 1 (rifle)
End: 3	Wilderness Travel 2
Int: 4	Observation 4, Gunnery 1 (MLC), Engineering 1 (earthworks)
Chr: 5	Eloquence 5, Linguistics 3 (Parhooni, English, Umbran), Bargaining 1
Soc: 5	Riding 4 (ruumet breehr), Piloting 2 (cloudship), Leadership 2

Motives: Aggressive, Arrogant, Hatred (of Terrans).

Description: Dasgaar is a very handsome Martian, with an urbane and polished manner of speaking. He dresses in an ornate uniform which is always immaculate, and goes armed with a knife and a concealed single-shot pistol. His native language is Syrtan.

AKHAGAAN KATOOQ

Katooq is the chief of the swamp pirates, a position he won by being tougher and more brutal than anyone else. He has a terrible temper, and has been known to kill men for trivial reasons. Katooq doesn't trust the Oenotrians one bit, but is willing to cooperate with them as long as they pay him well.

Attribute Skills

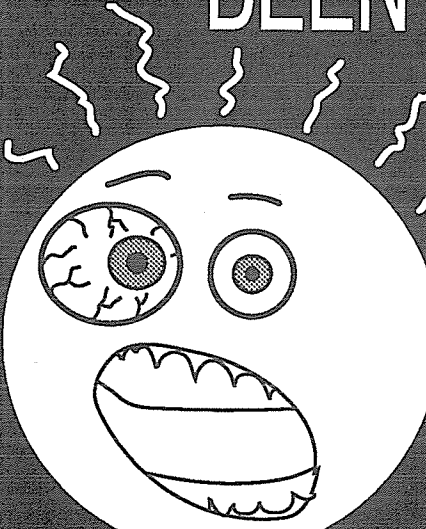
Str: 4	Fisticuffs 5, Throwing 3, Close Combat 2 (edged)
Agl: 5	Stealth 5, Marksmanship 4 (rifle)
End: 6	Wilderness Travel 7 (foraging), Fieldcraft 2, Swimming 2
Int: 3	Observation 2
Chr: 2	Eloquence 1, Linguistics 1 (Koline)
Soc: 1	

Motives: Greedy, Rage, Ruthless.

Description: Katooq is not especially big, but he moves with the strength and grace of a steppe tiger. He would be quite handsome were it not for a jagged scar across his face. Katooq dresses in a motley outfit of leather armor and soiled finery, topped off by a bloodstained British officer's coat. His native language is Parhooni. Ω

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Maxed Out!

An Armor Construction Table by Dan Snuffin

For those of you into 'Mech design, the following Armor Construction Table contains the precalculated maximum armor values for any desired tonnage.

Mech Tons	Max Armor Per Body Part					Armor		FF Armor	
	CT Torso	L/R Torso	Arm	Leg	Total AF	Max Tons	(AF)	Max Tons	(AF)
10	8	6	2	4	41	2.5	(40)	2.0	(38)
15	10	8	4	6	55	3.5	(55)	3.0	(55)
20	12	10	6	8	69	4.0	(64)	3.5	(67)
25	16	12	18	12	89	5.5	(88)	4.5	(86)
30	20	14	10	14	105	6.5	(104)	5.5	(105)
35	22	16	12	16	119	7.5	(119)	6.0	(115)
40	24	20	12	20	137	8.5	(136)	7.0	(134)
45	28	22	14	22	153	9.5	(152)	8.0	(153)
50	32	24	16	24	169	10.5	(168)	9.0	(169)
55	36	26	18	26	185	11.5	(184)	9.5	(182)
60	40	28	20	28	201	12.5	(200)	10.5	(201)
65	42	30	20	30	211	13.0	(208)	11.0	(211)
70	44	30	22	30	217	13.5	(216)	11.5	(217)
75	46	32	24	32	231	14.5	(231)	12.0	(230)
80	50	34	26	34	247	15.5	(247)	13.0	(247)
85	54	36	28	36	263	16.5	(263)	13.5	(259)
90	58	38	30	38	279	17.5	(279)	14.5	(278)
95	60	40	32	40	293	18.5	(293)	15.0	(288)
100	62	42	34	42	307	19.0	(304)	16.0	(307)

Total AF represents the maximum number of armor points needed to completely armor a 'Mech of the indicated tonnage.

Max Tons is the maximum tonnage of armor that can be purchased for a 'Mech of the indicated tonnage.

(AF) is the maximum armor factor based on Max Tons. Note that in some cases, excess points may have been shaved from the maximum armor factor in order to stay within the maximum limits. It is suggested that when an armor factor lower than the maximum is desired, the armor factor be recalculated.

Remember that 9 Armor points are always allocated to the head when using this table. Ω



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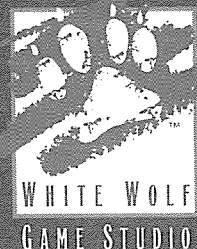
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ÆRTH ANIMALIA

By Gary Gyga, Dave Newton & Michele Newton

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Someone--or something-- unexpected
has stowed away on-board the PCs' ship.

X Stowaway

By Andy Slack



When PCs acquire a ship, either their own or a patron's, they need to become familiar with its characteristics and layout. This scenario provides such an opportunity while being more enjoyable than simply looking at photocopies of ship diagrams. For the sake of convenience, deck plans for a *Thorez*-class courier are provided, but use whatever ones are appropriate for your campaign. Further details on the *Thorez* class can be found in **Challenge 34**.

MISSION BRIEFING

The PCs are outbound from their last port of call when the 3rd officer (responsible for life support and environmental control, and usually the day-shift navigator) discovers that oxygen consumption is high. Evidently, someone—or something—unexpected has stowed away on-board the ship.

REFEREEING THE ADVENTURE

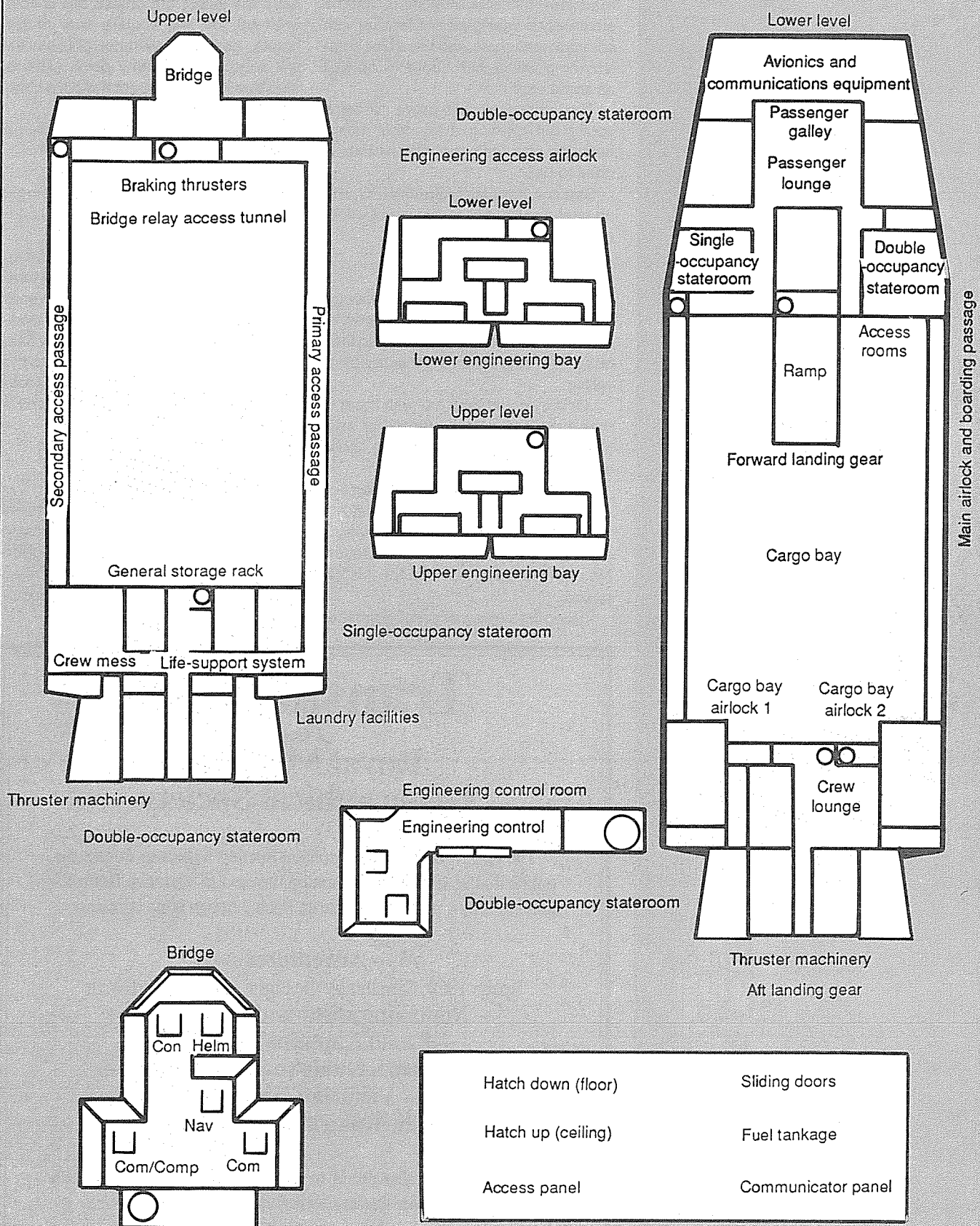
The players should be allowed access to the deck plans for the PCs' ship (after all, they live here). The PCs will need to conduct a compartment-by-compartment search of their ship to locate the uninvited guest.

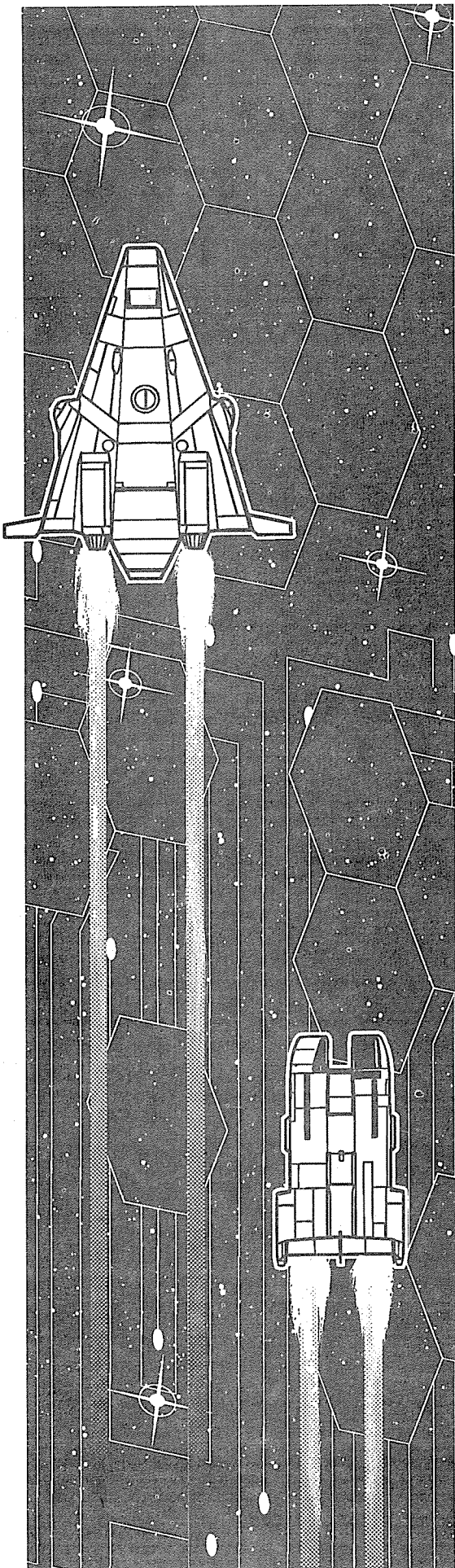
The referee should decide on the stowaway's hiding place, bearing in mind the need to stay hidden while having easy access to food and water (on the *Thorez* courier shown, the bridge relay access tunnel on the upper level is recommended).

If the selected area would normally be locked, the lock will have been broken either by accident or by the stowaway.

The PCs are bound to have paranoid thoughts about hijackers, lethal aliens and the like; these should be encour-

THOREZ-CLASS COURIER





aged. However, if they think to check the autochef, they will find that their uninvited guest is consuming ship's rations and has not damaged the vending machine—this should tell them that the stowaway is intelligent and familiar with common autochefs, and has a biochemistry compatible with humans (as well as some cash).

The stowaway will prove to be a young girl running away from home because she feels her stepmother is cruel to her.

She is a harmless, Green NPC with no useful skills; her family is not especially rich or influential.

OPTIONS

Once they've found the stowaway, the crewmembers have several options. In theory, they should return her to their last port of call, assuming the captain is willing.

Or they could take her with them to their next port of call, adopt her as a ship's mascot, or evict her into space without a p-suit.

Turning back will delay the voyage by several days and increase the costs for the voyage—typically by several thousand livres—at the referee's discretion. No one will repay the PCs for this expense.

Taking the stowaway with them makes

the PCs legally responsible for any costs incurred in returning the stowaway to her port of origin under armed guard.

The captain is within his rights to have her killed, but unless this is covered up, he will acquire two infamy points, and each member of the crew will acquire one infamy point. (This is also true if the PCs enter the girl's hideaway with all guns blazing.)

Covering up the incident requires a task:

Task: Falsifying the ship's flight logs: Formidable. Security Systems or one-half Electronics. One hour.

Referee: Any failure leaves evidence that the flight recorders have been tampered with, which will be discovered automatically at the ship's next overhaul. The penalty for this is a heavy fine, and repeated violations can lead to the captain losing his master's certificate and therefore his right to command a ship.

ALTERNATIVES AND VARIANTS

If you don't like the idea of a harmless and innocent stowaway, or if you want to run the same scenario again, trigger-happy hijackers and cunning alien predators also come highly recommended. Ω

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**How far will you go to keep
your company job?**

COMPETITION

By Justin Schmid

The company is your friend—or at least that's what the recruiter told you only a few weeks ago. You were promised all sorts of luxuries, given expense accounts and treated as valued members of the company. Even the jobs you had to do were 10 times better than the dangerous street contracts, wherein you never knew who would betray you and when. But with the company, things were great. Until now.

Profits are down, competitors are edging the company out of the market, and to compete, costs have to be lowered. And, what's the first way to save money? Cut personnel. It's come down to three teams they are considering cutting, and, you guessed it, yours is one of them.

The next week is called "comparative evaluation," which will be basically a bunch of internal affairs suits seeing which team wastes the most company money. No sense in a fair contest—you're not about to lose your job that easily. This is 2020, and it's war!

REFEREE'S BACKGROUND

Being in the company is very nice. The PCs have quickly grown used to lavish expense accounts, with credit limits of 20,000eb. They are also provided with very nice apartments and a safe lifestyle, as opposed to that on the street. It is also very unlikely that they will be able to get jobs from the other companies. All told, the PCs will probably want to keep their jobs at all costs.

Over the next week (five days), three evaluators will be randomly watching over the three teams. Also, the expenses of each team will be closely monitored.

There are many ways to sabotage the other teams, including running up incredible tabs on their accounts, even destroying their equipment (causing more expenses for replacements). Also, since utility is being considered, making a team appear incompetent will increase the chance that it will be cut. Of course, it is not necessary to mention that each of the other teams will also be trying to sabotage the PC group.

To make matters worse, three days into the "assessment," the company will announce that two of the three teams will be cut, so the fighting should intensify and destroy any possible "team-ups" that could have developed.

COMPANY

This is a generic company which is multinational and so diversified that it is involved in everything known to man. The company has a large division in Night City (or whichever city your game takes place in) and is in general a very nice corporation compared to most. It pays well, provides good services and seems honorable. However, it is also doing badly in the market and losing money, and so has decided to cut costs wherever possible.

SPECIAL OPS

The players are assumed to be part of the Special Ops division of the corporation, specifically handling fighting duties. However, this division is simply an example, and can easily be modified to fit almost any type of *Cyberpunk* team. Here are some examples of different divisions that could replace the Special Ops one described.

Note that the other teams will be approximately equal in terms of ability, numbers and skill as the PC group, so they are in for an even fight. Create the opposing team members by slightly modifying the players' characters.

- A corporate team might be in the research department, doing all the necessary research for the company. In this instance, the adventure would probably consist of organizing research within the team to discredit the others and to disrupt their research efforts as much as possible.

- A band would probably have been signed on by the company and would be competing against other bands. The adventure might take a turn for running



competing concerts to demonstrate their popularity, and discrediting the other bands, destroying their popularity.

- A trauma team might be competing in the medical department against other emergency service teams. In this case, the adventure could turn very dirty very quickly, as the teams fight to be first on the scene, possibly sabotaging each other's equipment.

- Mercenary teams are already covered by the adventure, as an extraction team, but they could also be a group assigned to guard top-level executives. In this case, eliminating the other team's executive would certainly guarantee success, providing their part in the assassination is never revealed.

- Gangs and nomad packs might be hired by the corporation for various duties. If the corp decides it doesn't need as many "small time" groups, the fighting will undoubtedly turn ugly very quickly as the gangs or packs fight over who will keep the contract with the company.

- Cops will undoubtedly be in charge of security within the corporation, and in this case, sabotaging each other's efforts by destroying each other's security would be possible. Show which team is laziest or most ineffective, and you guarantee that they will be let go.

- Media teams would be the news-gathering teams of the company. The fighting would not necessarily involve gunplay with this type of a team, perhaps working more on discrediting one another, beating the other to the story, exposing the other's flaws.

LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

The announcement comes at 9 a.m. Monday morning, with no advance warning—and no time to get a head start on the other teams. Over the next five days though, the PCs can certainly work overtime or come in early for sabotage.

The evaluators show up immediately, three rather snotty corporates who do not look like they enjoy mingling with the "lower class." They work from 9 to 5, with one hour for lunch. Most work is simply administrative stuff, filling out reports, etc.

Remind the players three things:

- They still have to work, and every hour they miss of work, they lose points.
- Missed sleep causes lesser efficiency.
- Their jobs are on the line here.

SCORING

Every day, calculate the characters' score from the following, starting with a base 30. Remember to count up how much time is spent not working, and count every penny of company money they spend.

Team mission completed successfully: +5

Team mission failed: -5

Every hour missed per person: -1

Working through lunch per person: +1

Expenses (per \$100): -1

PARTICIPANTS

There are three separate teams for the adventure, all within the Special Ops division. One specializes in security (Sec Ops), another in covert operations (Covert Ops) and the last in assault missions (Hard Ops). However, the company assumes that they are pretty much interchangeable, so why both with three separate teams? The PCs could be on any of the three teams, possibly making up an entire team on their own. So, all three are presented below, allowing players to choose. The information can be altered to suit the skills of the player characters.

SECURITY OPERATIONS

The first team is in charge of security operations, particularly surveillance duties, bodyguarding and netrunning. There are six members, including four cops, one netrunner and one techie. The cops typically take the beat and do the bodyguarding, with the techie and netrunner as backup and surveillance experts. The following are sample Sec Ops attacks on other teams:

Max Accounts: The netrunner can hack into 1D6 of another team's accounts and charge their credit accounts to the maximum with false purchases. It will take 2D6 days for the bank to clear this up. (25, 1 hour, netrunner.)

Change Security Codes: The Sec Ops team may want to change the security codes on another team's offices. The team affected will need six hours of work before they can get back into their office. It will also cost 1000eb. (30, 1D6+2 hours, techie and netrunner.)

Alert the Enemy: Sec Ops can also give advance warning to one of the other team's targets. The affected team will have the difficulty of its mission increased by 10. (15, one hour, one person.)

Kidnapping: The team can attempt to kidnap another team's target, to prevent the affected team from completing its goal. They can probably release the target 24 hours later. (30, 24 hours, four cops.)

Total Defensive Posture: Sec Ops team members can lock themselves in, watch all others by camera and not do anything else. This means they cannot complete any operations outside of their office, and it increases the difficulty of any attack on their offices. (20, unlimited, all.)

Missions

The team will be sent a maximum of one mission per day. Every day, roll 1D6 on the Missions Table below to determine the nature of the mission.

Roll Mission

1	Track down low-level novice netrunner. (Difficulty: 15. Netrunning.)
2	Surveillance on corporate suspected of defection. (Duration: 6D6 hours. Difficulty: 20. Surveillance.)
3	Protect Level 6 corporate at his home. There will be 1D6+3 attacks on his life. (Duration: 24 hours. Difficulty: 20 + 5 per attack. Bodyguarding.)
4	Watch over a black operation, to make sure nothing goes wrong. Some fighting does ensue. (Duration: 6 hours. Difficulty: 25. Surveillance.)
5-6	No mission.

The base chance of succeeding at a mission sent on depends on who goes. See the Chance of Success Table below. Add the point values of all going on the mission, then add 1D10. The team succeeds if the total exceeds the mission difficulty. Failure in a mission by 5 or more means one team member dies.

Bodyguarding	Surveillance	Netrunning
+4 per cop	+2 per cop	+10 per netrunner
+2 per techie	+5 per techie	

Typical Security Ops: INT 6, REF 7, TECH 6, COOL 9, MA 4, BODY 8.

Skills: Authority +4/Interface +4/Jury Rig +4, Awareness +8, Handgun +6, Aikido +4, Submachinegun +4, Stealth +4, Electronic Security +4, Streetwise +4, Shadow +2.

Cybernetics: Adrenal Booster, Subdermal Armor/Neuralware Processor: Interface Plugs, Cybermodem Link.

Possessions: (6) Arasaka Minami 10s (two clips each), (6) Sternmeyer 35s, (6) Flak Vests, (6) Nylon Helmets, (6) Mastoid Commos, (1) Cellular Phone, (1) standard Cybermodem, (1) Tech Tool Kit.

Description: There are four cops, one netrunner and one techie in the group, reflecting the different special abilities.

COVERT OPERATIONS

The second team is in charge of covert operations, involving alternate weaponry, particularly covert assassinations, sabotage and high-tech operations. There are six members, including three solos, two techies and one medtechie. The solos typically do the actual attacks, whereas the medtechie and techies are the behind-the-scenes operators, setting things up.

The following are sample Covert Ops attacks on other teams:

Pestilence: The medtechie can drug an opponent team's food with a nausea drug. It causes a loss of -4 REF, and -2 INT

and nausea for 2D6 hours thereafter, rendering those affected unable to work or do anything for that time period. (15, one hour, medtechie.)

Annoyance: The team can find another team currently on a mission and fire Microwavers at them during the mission. This will cause malfunctions as described in the *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0* game, raising the difficulty of the mission by 5. (10, three hours, two people.)

Disarming: They can break into another team's offices and steal all their weapons. This will mean the team affected will be unarmed for two days before new weapons can be bought, and the cost of the new weapons will be added to their account. (20, two hours, two techies.)

Hallucinations: Another team's ventilation system can be rigged with a hallucinogenic gas, so that all within will start experiencing the effects in one hour. It will cause hallucinations for 1D6 hours. (25, six hours, medtechie and two techies.)

Black Death: As a last resort, the team can apply Biotoxin I to the door handles of another team's offices. It will be on the outside, so no breaking in is required. (20, one hour, medtechie.)

Missions

The team will be sent a maximum of one mission per day. Every day, roll 1D6 on the Missions Table below to determine the nature of the mission.

Roll Mission

1	Kill an enemy corporate with biotoxin. (Duration: 6 hours. Difficulty: 25. Drugging.)
2	Kill an enemy covert operative on the street using silenced guns. (Duration: 1 hour. Difficulty: 25. Assassination.)
3	Sabotage an enemy plant by destroying the machinery. (Duration: 6 hours. Difficulty: 20. Sabotage.)
4	Assassinate corporate in his home. Method is left up to the team. (Duration: 6 hours. Difficulty: 20. Assassination.)
5-6	No mission.

The base chance of succeeding at a mission sent on depends on who goes. See the Chance of Success Table below. Add the point values of all going on the mission, then add 1D10. The team succeeds if the total exceeds the mission difficulty. Failure in a mission by 5 or more means one team member dies.

Sabotage	Assassination	Drugging
+5 per techie	+5 per solo	+5 per medtechie
+3 per solo	+2 per techie	+3 per solo
+2 per techie		

Typical Covert Ops: INT 8, REF 5, TECH 9, COOL 8, MA 5, BODY 5.

Skills: Combat Sense +4/Jury Rig +4/Medical Tech +4, Awareness +4, Handgun +6, Aikido +2, Submachinegun +2, Stealth +6, Electronic Security +6, Chemistry +4, Basic Tech +4, Pharmaceuticals +2.

Cybernetics: Chemical Analyzer, Nasal Filters.

Possessions: (6) Sternmeyer 35 (two clips each), (6) Silencers, (1) Microwaver, Nausea Drug (10 doses), (6) Hallucinogen gas grenades, (5) doses of Biotoxin I, (6) Light Armor Jackets, (6) Smartgoggles, (6) Mastoid Commos, (1) Tech Toolkit, (1) B & E Toolkit, (1) Electronics Toolkit, (1) Medkit, (1) Drug Analyzer.

Description: There are three solos, two techies and one medtechie in the group, reflecting the different special abilities.

HARD OPS

Hard Ops is in charge of head-on assaults, overt extractions and demolitions. There are six members, all solos trained in heavy weapons and highly skilled in combat. One always knows when they are involved, as they do not hide their activities, instead using loud explosions to mark their presence.

The following are sample Hard Ops attacks on other teams:

Threats: Bomb threats can be phoned in to an opponent's office. Normally, this requires leaving the office for 1D6 hours while a bomb disposal unit searches the offices. (10, negligible, anyone.)

Vandals: The team can break into another team's offices and vandalize it, causing over 2000eb in damages. This will be charged to the team involved. Also, ammunition can be replaced with blanks. If it is not discovered, add 10 to the difficulty of completing a mission. (20, four hours, two people.)

Attack Target: They can actually attempt to assassinate the extraction target of another team in an attempt to make them fail in their rescue. (30, six hours, All.)

Bombing: If things are looking bad for the team, they can try bombing another team's office, destroying all the equipment inside and causing over 10,000eb in damages. (35, four hours, four solos.)

Attack Team: An outright, head-on attack on members of another team can take place. (40, one hour, all.)

Missions

The team will be sent a maximum of one mission per day. Every day, roll 1D6 on the Missions Table below to determine the nature of the mission.

Roll Mission

1	Bomb enemy corporate's car. Must get into underground parking lot as well. (Duration: 2 hours. Difficulty: 35. Bombing.)
2	Assault enemies of the corporation. Kill all in encampment outside city limits. (Duration: 6 hours. Difficulty: 30. Assault.)
3	Extract corporate spy from another corporation. (Duration: 4 hours. Difficulty: 25. Extraction.)
4	Attack gang which has been harassing corporate operatives. (Duration: 1 hour. Difficulty: 25. Assault.)
5-6	No mission.

The base chance of succeeding at a mission sent on depends on who goes. See the Chance of Success Table below.

Add the point values of all going on the mission, then add 1D10. The team succeeds if the total exceeds the mission difficulty.

Failure in a mission by 5 or more means one team member dies.

Assaults	Extractions	Bombing
+3 per solo	+4 per solo	+5 per solo

Typical Hard Ops: INT 5, REF 9, TECH 6, COOL 5, MA 7, BODY 8 (10).

Skills: Combat Sense +6, Awareness +4, Handgun +2, Karate +4, Submachinegun +4, Rifle +4, Heavy Weapons +4, Stealth +4, Demolitions +4, Weaponsmith +4.

Cybernetics: Grafted Muscle, Adrenal Booster.

Possessions: (1) Barret-Arasaka Light 20mm (one clip), (3) Kalishnikov A-90 Heavy Rifles (two clips each), (6) Militech Ronin Light Assault Rifles (four clips each), (6) Uzi Miniauto 9 (one clip each), two kilograms of C-6, (6) timer detonators, (6) Mastoid Commos, (1) radio detonator, (6) Fragmentation Grenades, (6) Flak vests, (6) Nylon Helmets.

Description: There are six solos in the group, reflecting the different special abilities.

CONCLUSION

The adventure ends after the five days are through, or when two teams have been eliminated. Tally up the totals for all surviving teams, and award the winning team a continued contract with the company.

If the player characters are fired, then they now have a black mark on their names and will have a hard time finding new employers, probably having to start back with minor street samurai jobs. Ω



Joe Plometa Tony Zoe Jeremy

Jenny

Lary

Rebecca

Al

Danell

Eddie

Alison Sam Xeno Monica Jim Lisa

My players have infiltrated the enemy's headquarters and in an unusual bout of cleverness have decided to set up a phone tap. As they listen in on the conference between the villain and his crony, I find myself at a loss for a name for this minor character—information my players will need to know if they intend to intercept the villain's fiendish plot. In a brainstorm of creativity, I snatch the oh-so-inventive moniker Larry Baker out of the air. Later, when the players corner him, I mistakenly identify him as Larry Barnes.

Boring names and dumb mistakes often can turn an otherwise interesting gaming session into a tedium of contemplation and correction. To counter this, you need only to put in a small amount of energy and research with which to create a name generation library. This one-time investment will help to avoid a lifetime of frustration.

Two main criteria must be considered before beginning to build a name generation library. First, where is the story taking place? Second, *when* is the story taking place? You will have an easier time creating the names of modern Americans than those of Medieval Europeans. Here are a few suggestions which should help in making a library for most any setting. Modern names are much simpler to create, so we'll begin there.

HERE AND NOW

If your story is set in the United States, sources abound for easy reference. One of my personal favorite methods is to

can't handle the distraction of one of your classmates' names being used in a roleplaying session, use the same strategy as the cards. Take one person's first name and another's last to create an entirely new name.

However, all of these approaches still take time and some effort, and they are fairly bulky. Since no one wants to carry any more books than absolutely needed, this is where the concept of a name generation library comes in.

THE LIBRARY ITSELF

A name generation library is actually no more than a list of first and last names which may be cross-referenced to immediately create a necessary name. By using some of the same methods already described, or by a method of your own devising, make a list of first names (male and female) down one side of a page. Then make a list of last names down the other side. Whenever you need a name, create one by choosing one off each list.

Not only does this make your job that much easier, but by having a preselected list, characters will have much more interesting and memorable names. Once a name has been used, you may want to put a mark next to it so as to avoid overusing the same one.

Now that we have these memorable names, how do we keep up with who they connect to? The answer to that question is simple, but it is something which all too many gamemasters fail to do. Keep a spare piece of paper around and make notes. Whenever you name a

Now, what if my story line is set in the heart of downtown Rio de Janeiro? I'm afraid most of us don't have a Brazilian *Who's Who* or a copy of the Rio phone book, so how do we come up with good names when we don't even know what a Brazilian name is?

This task will require a little work. First of all, it is always a good idea to build your foreign name library some time before you actually need it. Read through the international news in your newspaper, and when you spot a foreign name, jot it down and note the country it is from. Then make a generation library for that country listing the first name on one side of the page (you may want to note whether it is masculine or feminine) and the last name on the other. This way, over time, you will create a fairly expansive list ready whenever needed.

If, however, that list is not long enough when you are beginning to prepare your story, go to the library and find a (recent) history book of the country in question. In it, you should discover a more than satisfactory number of names with which to complete your library.

Another, less reliable system of generating foreign names is to page through your phone book and look for them. If you find a name which you believe is of a specific nationality, make a note of it. You can then list that name under the heading of whatever nationality you believe it to be. The primary problem with this method is the possibility of misidentifying the name's origin, which can lead to an embarrassing situation ("Wait a minute! Wong isn't Irish!). As



keep a box of baseball cards handy, and whenever I need a name, I draw two out. The first name on the first card and the last name on the second become my character's name. This is not one of the most reliable methods (every once in a while, I end up with something like Fernando Jones), but it is one of the most fun.

Other simple techniques are to keep an old yearbook, phone book, or *Who's Who* handy, and when the situation arises, open to a random page and use the first name you find. One big advantage of this over baseball cards is the ability to generate female names. If you want to add more variety, or you just

character, make a quick note of who they are and what significance they have. This doesn't have to be a biography, just whatever information you may need to recall. Typical NPC notes of mine read similar to this: Matthew Steephill, murder victim; Donovan Burney, sheriff; Tanya Fulenwider, pharmacist. You can also use this space to record any other notes about the NPC, such as their attitudes toward the characters, a secret allegiance to the enemy, or just an odd quirk.

STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

Okay, so much for the easy stuff.

long as your players don't know any better, you're safe. But don't count it.

A LONG TIME AGO...

Up till now, we have been assuming that these stories are taking place in a modern setting. Let us not forget that for many people the term roleplaying game means one thing—Medieval Europe. The primary problem with creating ancient names lies in the origins of last names, or surnames. Most modern surnames are derived from descriptive terms, used long ago to distinguish be-

By Brent Raymer

tween people with the same first name. For example, if two men in the same village were named Peter, they may have been distinguished by their occupations (Peter the baker and Peter the weaver), by their heritage (Peter the son of John and Peter the son of Jacob), or by some other feature (Peter of the woods and Peter the elder).

From descriptive terms such as these come our modern surnames (e.g., Baker, Weaver, Johnson, Jacobson, Woods and Elder). Eventually, somewhere down the line, someone's children would begin to use the same surname as their father, especially if the name was an occupation (most children carried on in the same occupation as their parents).

The next problem lies in the lack of lists of common names of the period. I don't know anyone who has any Medieval phone books lying about. And baseball cards from the Dark Ages are, at best, hard to come by. So almost all information on names is going to have to come from history books.

You can, however, generate a fairly comprehensive list by using some common sense. Once again, most surnames came from occupation, heredity or some other descriptive quality. Don't be afraid to make up a few of your own. Remember, if the description fits, it makes perfect sense to use it (sure, Helios the fat may be unkind, but you do know which Helios they're talking about). By making a list of such items, you can come up with an adequate generation library.

First names for this period are somewhat trickier. A few general facts:

Many names from this time were biblical (John, Peter, Mary, etc.), so a quick paging through the Gospels will provide a healthy list

There were few nicknames (David would not be called Dave, Alexander would not be called Alex), so avoid their use.

Only the wealthy had long or complicated names (the poor were mostly illiterate, and therefore had little knowledge of fanciful names).

Once again, feel free to create your own first names, but these will tend to be less convincing than self-made last names.

A good strategy to consider when making a Medieval name library is this: Generate a separate name list for each broad category of careers—merchants, warriors, priests, craftsmen, etc. This will give you the advantage of having a preselected list of names applicable to each occupation. For example, a library of surnames for warriors may contain such titles as "the victorious," "the brave,"

"the swordsman," "the trollslayer," etc. A good way to get a little more mileage out of your lists is to use the name again and drop the "the," making a name like "Anton Battleborn" instead of "Anton the battleborn." However, I do not recommend using the same first name with it again.

Insofar as other periods of history are concerned: If you are playing in a period sometime before the Middle Ages, villages and towns were so small that no two people usually had the same name at the same time, and surnames were unnecessary. So just use the first names section of your list. Historical examples of this include Plato, Socrates, Charlemagne and Hannibal. As you move back to truly ancient times (as in B.C.), the only real options left open in order to generate names are research and imagination.

If your setting is sometime between the Middle Ages and now, most players won't notice if you get lazy and just use your modern lists. But it does add flavor to the game if names that were common then, but are uncommon now, make appearances. For example, in the 1800s last names such as Pinkerton, Teasdale and Peabody, and first names such as Schuyler and Levi, were in use much more than today. A GM who wishes to add color to his stories can gain a lot by a one-time research trip to the library.

As for foreign historical names, you can usually get away with using the same lists you use for modern foreign characters. If your players are both linguists and historians, I recommend using the same techniques mentioned above, but in the required language.

...IN A GALAXY FAR FAR AWAY

In case you science-fiction gamers think I'm leaving you out, there are a few suggestions which can help generate names for your starfaring cultures. In a science-fiction or futuristic setting, just about anything goes. Who's to say what names are going to move toward, or what names from an alien culture are going to be like? There are several options open to you. You can fall back to the descriptive terms of the past, substituting terms that apply better to your game universe (Skywalker and Solo are good examples of this), or use a continuance of modern names (such as Ripley, Hicks, Hudson), or create your own unique language and names (e.g., anything Klingon). Or you may wish to do something else, completely different from these. The more original and personalized you make your library, the

more entertaining it becomes.

Some game systems give you a good head start by naming alien characters in adventures, sourcebooks or timelines. For example, from movies and television we know that all Vulcans have only one name, which usually begins with an S and ends with a K (Spock, Sarek, Sybock, Saavik, etc.)

Once you decide how you want names of that culture to sound, all that is left is for you to create a library of first and last names (or possibly, only first names) and use it as described above.

LIONS AND TIGERS AND ORCS, OH MY!

The process of name library generation for races of intelligent monsters uses much the same tactic as for aliens. Create a pattern of names that you feel sounds right. For example, when naming Orcs, I like to take into account their harsh outlook and warlike culture. First names such as Grak, Strag and Bronkk precede surnames like Bonesnapper, Axebiter and Bloodletter. These are of my own creation, though I based them on similar names I read in sourcebooks. If you like a particular name you read, feel free to add it to your list. It can only make it better.

HEY, WHAT ABOUT US?

These lists do not have to be the sole properties of NPCs, either. Many players would be aided immensely by them in character creation. GMs can give the players access to the library when they are naming characters and contacts. This will help end the age-old quandary of "I just can't figure out what to name him."

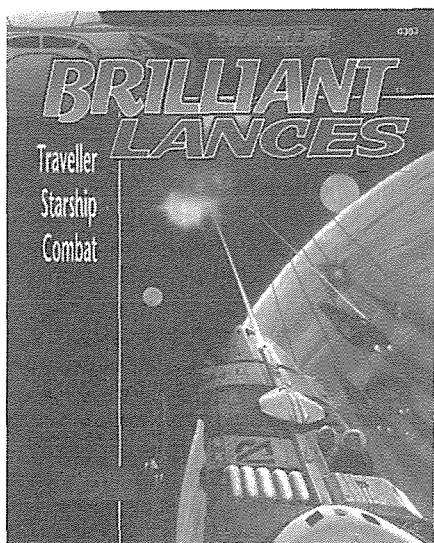
BEFORE I GO

One last tip: When making your libraries, it is a good idea to avoid names which are highly distinctive or famous. Sure, Rambo is a legitimate last name, but your players will probably have too hard a time holding back a chuckle every time they hear someone identify himself as such. Likewise, if your story is set during the American Revolution and every person they meet is named Franklin, Washington or Jefferson, the game will quickly begin to seem silly.

Once you have created your name generation libraries, they should be of use to you for some time to come. A library of only 20 first and 20 last names allows some 400 different complete names. Effective use should save you just a bit of brain strain and provide a more interesting, rewarding and realistic playing experience for your players and yourself. Ω

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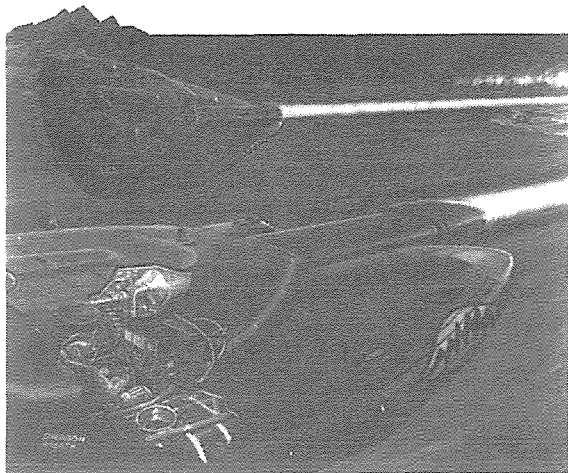
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Tea and Biscuits

This scenario is intended for a single investigator. It can be used as an initial background for a young investigator and could be stated as being the motivation for the character to begin investigating the Mythos in the first place. Alternatively, the keeper can run this scenario as an episode from the investigator's past—perhaps one that he has chosen to divulge years later to compatriots for their consideration.

The investigator has taken up residence in a boarding house owned and operated by the MacGillivray family. The character could have been hired as a servant or else is simply a boarder, perhaps living there temporarily while working through university. Either way, the investigator should have considerable time to spend in the MacGillivray house.

The MacGillivrays

have a special

dinner planned.

But where

in the world is

Junior?

By Greg Unger

KEEPER'S INFORMATION

The MacGillivray family has gone insane. Roy Jr. (or just Junior), son of Roy and Millie MacGillivray, has been living as a ghoul beneath the Boston area for some time now and has decided to pay his old family a visit. Seeing as ghouls are, by our definition, insane anyway, Junior has decided to eat a civilized meal with his family. The human MacGillivrays are all afflicted with Panzaism and consequently act as if everything is perfectly normal. It is up to the investigator to notice that the family is acting rather peculiarly. It should be quite clear that since the MacGillivray family is providing the character's wages and/or keeping him as a boarder, the player character has no real business objecting to what the MacGillivrays say or do; he does so at the risk of being



dismissed or evicted.

If the investigator is a servant, he will be responsible for serving the family at meals, dusting, cleaning up, etc. The keeper should decide on additional duties for the character based on gender and the period. Servants eat in the kitchen.

If the character is a boarder, he will eat with the family and can, to a limited extent, participate in the family's conversations. The character has no say in the meal, and is limited to his bedroom, the veranda and the dining room.

BOARDING HOUSE

The MacGillivray boarding house is situated on Chapel Street in Boston, both facing and flanked by establishments of similar purpose. At the southeastern end of Chapel Street lies the stone Grace Church. The house is constructed of crumbling reddish-brown brick and a brownish-black gambrel roof, offset by fresh green trim. Out front is a dun-colored veranda with thick wooden railing which overlooks a cobbled front walk and a roughly clipped yard. In the tiny back yard, amidst a tangle of dark and shriveled brown and green vines, is an ornate, lichen-encrusted fountain. The planked, wooden fences enclosing the back yard are rife with untended shrubbery, and a weathered tongue of stone pokes from one clump. An adequately maintained path of stone leads from the rear entrance of the house to the fountain, paralleled by a clothes line which has been secured to a spur of carved stone extended from the fountain's top.

Occupants: The master of the house is Roy Jonas MacGillivray, a 30-year veteran of the army. He is a large and boisterous man in his early fifties, with several commendations to his record. Roy is currently a warrant officer and works as a military engineer. He is planning to retire from the service in May and maybe begin sharpening his carpentry skills.

His wife, Millie, is the one who manages the boarders. The MacGillivrays are placing the petty money gained from their boarders toward Roy's retirement. Millie is not afraid to speak her mind. She is small, a busybody, and a bit stern and caring in a schoolmarmish sort of way.

Also living in the house are the MacGillivrays' daughter, Mabeline, and her fiancé, Dirk Brotworth. Mabeline is normally a very reserved girl, but is very talkative in the presence of her betrothed, almost condescending in her manner. Dirk is generally pleasant, but

a Psychology roll reveals that he is only putting on a facade of nicety for the MacGillivray seniors. He is rather well-to-do and somewhat arrogant, and often injects subtle sarcasms when conversing with those he dislikes.

Interior: The house's interior is done in polished hardwood. The living room, dining room and all bedrooms have been wallpapered, with mahogany trim. All the furniture in the house is very well-crafted. Both the foyer and the living room contain plush Oriental rugs. Convenient shelving is fitted in the corridors and the rooms, providing space for brass-framed photographs, ornate kerosene lamps, statuettes, sculptures and carvings, among other bric-a-brac.

The master bedroom is used by Roy and Millie. The other four rooms serve Mabel, Dirk and the investigator, with the last to be tenanted by Junior when he arrives.

The smallish library also doubles as a study and contains a number of old books. These include many family journals, histories, genealogies, military accounts and military fiction, carpentry and craft books, a 65-year-old medical text in Latin and many Christian religious books (Protestant-oriented), including a fat Lutheran Bible. The room contains an oaken desk and two bookcases, and several family photographs and war commendations hang on the walls. A small glass case rests on an ornate corner table, displaying a pair of war medals and a monocle.

Policy: Millie will tolerate no cussing, no alcohol and no night visitors. Smoking is allowed after dinner, but no one may begin smoking until Roy has lit his after-dinner cigar. Also, no one may read the newspaper, which is always folded neatly on the mail table, before Roy has. The family generally eats its meals at 6:30 a.m., noon (sans Roy on weekdays) and 7 p.m. How serious missing a meal is depends on whether the investigator is a boarder (minor) or servant (major).

EVENTS

1: The scenario starts with the investigator overhearing a dinner conversation in which Millie mentions, "Brother should be arriving soon, tomorrow perhaps." If questioned, Millie will answer that the person mentioned is their son, Junior, who has been away for quite a while. If pressed as to the exact reason for Junior's absence, Roy responds, chuckling, "Oh, to get away from the nest a bit, I suppose, and try his hand at some things. Just like Mabel here will be doing soon." The MacGillivrays are

pleasant and discuss a few courteous inanities with their boarder.

2: Due to either an errand, work or studies, the investigator will not notice whether Junior has arrived or not. No new boots, coat or other outerwear are present in the main closet if the investigator is of the mind to look.

The keeper should secretly make a Spot Hidden roll for the investigator. If successful, the investigator notices considerable dirt smeared on the Oriental rug in the foyer. An Idea roll gives him the idea that someone has wiped his feet on the rather expensive hall rug. Some crumbles of dirt are also on the stairs.

By either curiosity, cleaning duties or chance, the investigator should notice a weak trail of damp soil that leads up to the only vacant guest bedroom. Knocking will elicit no answer, and a nosy investigator will find the door locked. If the investigator is uncouth enough to try to break down the door, the room is unoccupied.

3: Sometime the next day, a freshly pressed gray suit arrives. If the investigator is a servant, it is likely that he will be the one to pick up the suit from the tailor. Millie is rather busy, but if asked, she will say the suit is for Junior.

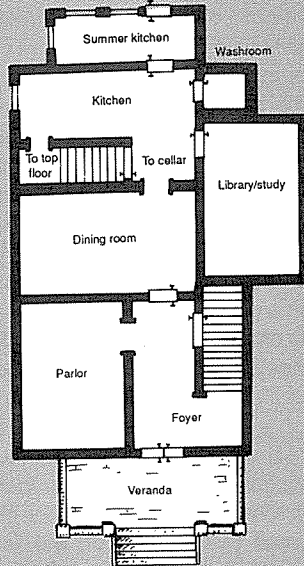
4: Later in the day, the investigator notices an unholy odor that seems to be permeating the halls of the house. The smell is faint, but rank and putrid, with a vague hint of sulfur mixed in. The rest of the family appears not to notice this smell at all, and everyone insists they smell nothing out of the ordinary if it is remarked upon by the investigator.

5: Another day passes, and the investigator has yet to see Junior, who is apparently not showing up for meals. Millie says that he has some business to attend to and that he will be having dinner with the family tonight at 7:30 sharp. If the investigator is a servant, Millie will announce that this is to be a special meal, so the good silverware and royal china are to be set out.

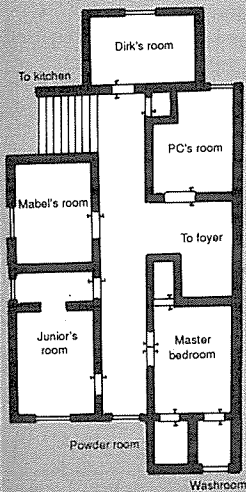
With the exception of the dining room and the kitchen, the investigator will notice that the house is getting a bit shabbier. The family members are not picking up after themselves, and dirt has been tracked throughout the house. Various ornaments are in disarray. A servant will notice when dusting that there are a few deep scratches on the mahogany mail table in the foyer. Some of the food in the icebox, including the milk, has gone rancid unexpectedly (Junior has been thirsty). The stench noticed earlier is more pronounced. There is a large, filthy stain on the Victorian sofa in the living room.

MacGillivray House

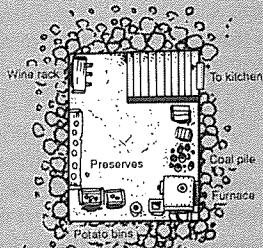
MAIN FLOOR



TOP FLOOR



CELLAR



6: When going up to his room, or when on cleaning duty, the investigator will overhear arguing in the spare room (Junior's room). The only voice discernible is that of Millie. A Listen roll, if the investigator chooses to try to eavesdrop, reveals that only Millie is speaking, apparently scolding someone in the room. "Look at this terrible mess," she says. "Now, I don't care how old you are, I expect you washed up for supper. Here, give me this. Can't you control yourself? And lying in it all night? Dear oh dear oh dear." If the investigator is a servant, add the following, "Now move. We can't expect poor (insert servant's name) to clean up this filthy mess, can we?"

Any knocking at the door or attempt to enter will result in an angry Millie ushering the investigator away, rather insulted that this person would intrude on what she calls "personal business."

CLUES

Some clues are only available at certain times, based on which events have occurred. Such clues will have a range listed after their title (e.g., "4-6") which indicates the first event and last event in which the clue is available.

Back Yard: The tongue of stone protruding from the shrubbery is in fact a tombstone, which the MacGillivrays say has been there since they moved in. The inscription has been removed.

Grace Church: Church records lists the tombstone of Roy MacGillivray Jr. to have been erected in the church cemetery in absentium. Anyone bothering to search the cemetery will find no such tombstone.

Public Records: Junior was listed as missing and presumed dead over five years ago. A tombstone was erected in Grace Church Cemetery.

Newspaper: Any research into the disappearance of Junior uncovers an article dated five and a half years earlier that details the search for the boy, who was 15 at the time, when he failed to come home from school. He was thought to have run away until several articles of his clothing were found near a drainage ditch. He was then presumed drowned, and a memorial service was held at Grace Church. Millie, who did not attend, was reported as being quietly adamant in her belief that Junior was still alive.

MacGillivray Library/Study (4-6): Anyone looking at the display case in the corner will notice that the monocle is gone. No one will admit to have taking it, though a Psychology roll reveals that the investigator is the one suspected.

A Library Use roll made in here, with the intent of researching the family or Junior, reveals that there have been several officially undocumented cases of insanity in the MacGillivray line, taking place in isolated incidents, with the exception of a single violent outburst involving the entire clan about 65 years ago.

A second Library Use roll uncovers a journal written by Junior's grandfather (now deceased), who began the compilation of family history. This journal states that both of the MacGillivray children (Mabel and Roy) had difficult births, and that Millie had four stillborn children prior to her two successful pregnancies.

Cellar (4-6): Should the investigator go into the cellar (to fetch some potatoes for the meal, for example), he will notice a depression in the floor. Examination reveals that someone was apparently digging here. A wooden bucket in a corner has some fresh soil clinging to the inside. The strange smell noticed earlier is stronger here, even mixed with the cellar's dank and earthy smell.

Junior's Room (5): A servant investigator will have a legitimate reason to enter this room, which will be unlocked and unoccupied. The room is rather shabby, and there is dirt tracked on the floor. The furniture is not quite in disarray, but far from neatly arranged. Underneath its covers, the bed is coated in damp soil, within which squirm a few small earthworms. It emanates a terrible smell. An Idea roll yields the realization that there is no luggage, no suitcase, no personal effects and no clothes in the room—except for the room's general disorder and filth, no one appears to be living here.

Guest Washroom (6): A look at this washroom reveals a tub with a ring of mud and filth. The sink and toilet have fared slightly better. One of the towels on the rack is black with dirt. A frayed toothbrush, sticky with baking soda and a yellowish slime, is stuck to the counter.

DINNER

Junior finally decides to sit down to a meal with his family. Regardless of whether the investigator is a boarder or servant, he will enter the dining room last, without seeing Roy until then. A boarder will be sitting down to have dinner, while a servant will enter only when after-dinner tea is called for. A servant eavesdropping on the dining room conversation will hear laughing, talking and, beneath this, a horrendous smacking, sucking and slurping, as if someone were eating grossly.

Within the well-furnished dining room,

the entire MacGillivray family is sitting down to dinner around the large hardwood table. Everyone is enjoying a splendid meal of roast duck garnished with rich gravy, spiced bread and creamy butter, all of it served in the family's best china. A freshly baked apricot pie and basket of sweet rolls and biscuits are waiting on a nearby serving table. Everyone seems to be thoroughly enjoying the meal, and the family is laughing, discussing things, reminiscing old times. Millie has put on a lovely pink silk dress and her good pearls for the evening, Roy is wearing his military uniform complete with medals, and everyone around the table is looking quite impeccable and in good humor. Evidently, a bottle of white wine has been opened for the occasion, probably with the slight disapproval of Millie, though she has a dainty wine glass in her hand.

This is not what makes your jaw drop in horror.

Perched awkwardly on one hard-backed ornate chair, sipping wine from a glass held with freshly manicured digits, and interacting normally with the rest of the family with a bubbling laugh and nods, is a well-dressed figure in a handsome gray suit, replete with flowered lapel, cufflinks and monocle. This warped parody of a man, which more resembles a scabrous canine with

hooked, crocodile teeth, freshly brushed, sets the engraved wine glass down, wipes its mouth with an embroidered cloth napkin grasped delicately in one crooked, leprous claw, and beckons for the potatoes.

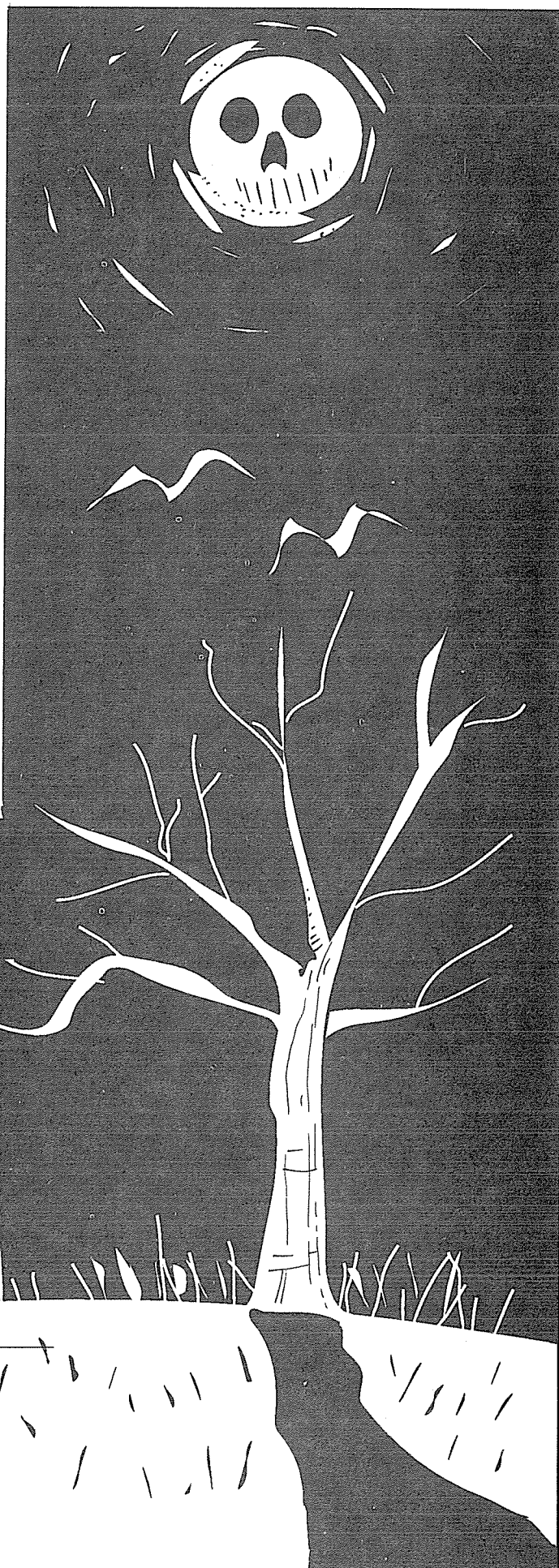
Millie notices the PC standing in the doorway, and asks if he would like to join Junior and the rest of the family for tea.

RESOLUTION

Seeing Junior prompts a Sanity roll, with failure indicating that the investigator loses 1D6 SAN.

There are several possible outcomes to this adventure, probably including the investigator fainting, or running screaming from the MacGillivray house and off down the street.

The investigator may even decide, while in the clutches of madness, to sit down for some tea and biscuits with Junior and his family. Ω



ANTHILL

By Michael C. LaBossiere

When Kerensky's fleet left the Inner Sphere, not all the ships completed the journey. With such a large operation, the loss of several vessels was not unexpected. Some of these losses were the results of second thoughts on the parts of the military on-board the vessel. Others were the result of catastrophic drive accidents. Some were the result of less serious drive accidents that resulted in vessels ending up off course.

One such accident befell the Star League jump ship *Grant*. The *Grant* was assigned to carry several infantry and conventional armored units and their drop ships. Unfortunately, the *Grant's* drive system was suffering from a minute, but serious, malfunction. The *Grant's* initial jump went well. It was the "landing" that was problematic. When the *Grant* reentered normal space, its drive system overloaded.

Acting quickly, the bridge crew released all the drop ships and advised them of the situation.

Mere minutes after the drop ships escaped the predicted danger zone, the *Grant* exploded. Left with no alternative, the drop ships landed on the planet below them.

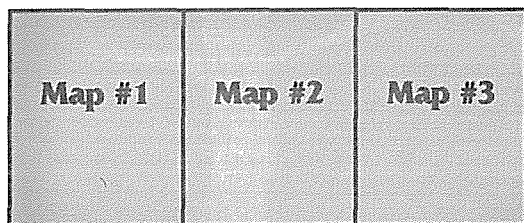
Since the families of the soldiers had accompanied them and there were several engineering units among the forces, colonization was relatively easy. The colony thrived for decades, and things were going very well. At least until Bandit forces stumbled onto the world and found out that a fully functioning society with Star League-era technology existed on the world. After that, the inhabitants of Grant (the world's name) knew little peace.

SCENARIOS

The following three scenarios depict attacks by various forces on the city of Walker.

The first depicts a bandit incursion, the second an attack by Kurita forces, and the third an intrusion by a Clan force. All scenarios use the following map setup.

Map Setup



Maps 1 and 2 are the *BattleTech* maps. The word "*BattleTech*" is to be at the bottom of each map. Map 3 is a *CityTech* map. It should also have the word "*BattleTech*" at the bottom of the map. The "concrete" part of the map should have numerous buildings set up in it, including three hardened buildings representing factories. They should be set up near the city center. You may wish to record the setup of the city for continuity between scenarios. All damage will be repaired between scenarios as they are years apart.

BANDIT ATTACK, AD 3021

We had dealt with a few minor incursions in the past, but this was new. Orbital Command reported at least two jump ships in orbit and multiple dropships. I knew some of these were intended for us when I saw 'mechs dropping from the sky. No doubt vehicles would be coming in later. Watching the 'mechs descend, I noticed that they were rather sloppy about their operation. A closeup view with my tank's image enhancer revealed that the 'mechs were in poor condition. Maybe things wouldn't be quite as bad as I expected.

Setup: As above. All buildings are intact.

Victory Conditions: The attacker wins by destroying or crippling all defending units. The defender wins by destroying, crippling or driving off all attacking units.

Defender

The defender represents elements of the Grant Regular Army and the Walker Militia.

Regular Army Forces:

Four Cyrano VTOLs, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. Set up anywhere on Map 3.

Two Nightshade VTOLs, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. Set up anywhere on Map 3.

Two Lightnings, Piloting 4 Gunnery 3. Set up anywhere on Map 2.

One Demon, Piloting 5 Gunnery 3. Set up anywhere on Map 2.

Two Magi, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. Set up anywhere on Map 2.

One Fury, Piloting 5 Gunnery 3. Set up anywhere on Map 2.

Militia Forces:

Three Echidna, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. Set up anywhere on Map 3

Three Tapir, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4, carrying two platoons of jump troops each (regulars, if infantry quality is used). Armed with SRMS. Set up anywhere on Map 3.

Four Platoons of machinegun armed foot infantry. Set up anywhere on Map 3 (Regulars).

Two Platoons of laser armed mechanized infantry (Regulars). Set up anywhere on Map 3.

Attacker

The attacking forces are elements of a Bandit raiding party. Attacking forces may be set up anywhere within five hexes of the left side of Map 1.

Lance One:

Warhammer, Piloting 4 Gunnery 3. Left arm PPC generates two additional points of heat per firing. Two heat sinks do not work. Left leg has only 11 points of internal structure.

Crusader, Piloting 5 Gunnery 3. Right torso LRM ammo rack only holds seven volleys. Left arm has only 9 points of internal structure.

Rifleman, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. Both medium lasers have been replaced with AC/5 ammunition. Right torso has only 11 points of armor on the front.

Rifleman, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. Right torso medium laser generates an extra point of heat when fired. The AC/5 ammo bay only holds 16 shots.

Lance Two:

Cicada, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. This Cicada has the inferior heat sinks and each one only disperse 0.6 heat points.

Stinger, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. The internal structure of both legs is only 2 points (each).

Stinger, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. One heat sink is nonoperational.

Wasp, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. The right arm has only 2 points of armor and 2 points of internal structure.

Demolisher, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. The front has only 32 points of armor.

Vedette, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. An additional machinegun has been added to the front, and MG ammo has been reduced to 0.5 tons.

Hetzer, Piloting 6 Gunnery 5. The unit has a faulty engine that reduces Flank Speed to 5.

Four Scorpion light tanks, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4.

KURITA ATTACK, AD 3029

House Kurita had made us an offer: Turn over the technical data on your combat armor and consent to Kurita rule or be subjugated. Our leaders' response was just as I expected: "We do not recognize Kurita as an legitimate authority."

The Kurita response was also what I expected. Once again, enemy dropships appeared in our atmosphere. It was time to fight again.

Setup: As above. All damage that was inflicted seven years ago will have been repaired.

Victory Conditions: The attacker wins by destroying or crippling all defending units. The defender wins by destroying, crippling or driving off all attacking units.

Defender

The defender represents elements of the Grant Regular Army and the Walker Militia.

Army Forces:

Four Ripper VTOLs, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. Set up anywhere on Map 3.

Two Kangas, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. Set up anywhere on Map 3.

One Demon, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. Set up anywhere on Map 2.
 One Rhino, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. Set up anywhere on Map 2.
 One Fury, Piloting 5 Gunnery 3. Set up anywhere on Map 2.
 Four Decades of SRM-armed CombatArmor Troops (Elite). Set up anywhere on Map 2 or 3.

Militia Forces:

Two Echidna, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. Set up anywhere on Map 3.
 Two Tapirs, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4, with two platoons of SRM-armed infantry (Veteran) each. Set up anywhere on Map 3.

Six Platoons of machinegun-armed foot infantry (regular). Set up anywhere on Map 3.

Four Platoons of laser armed mechanized infantry (regular). Set up anywhere on Map 3.

Four AC/5 field weapons, Gunnery 4. Set up anywhere on Map 2. Weapons are emplaced with 15-point walls on all sides.

One Puma, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. Set up anywhere on Map 3.

Attacker

The attacker represents Kurita forces. Attacking forces set up within five hexes of the left-hand edge of Map 1.

Command Lance:

Marauder, Piloting 4 Gunnery 3.
 Warhammer, Piloting 4 Gunnery 4.
 Grand Dragon, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4.
 Grand Dragon, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4.

Support Lance:

Archer, Piloting 5 Gunnery 3.
 Catapult, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4.
 Catapult, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4.
 Trebuchet, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4.

Recon Lance:

Jenner, Piloting 4 Gunnery 3.
 Jenner, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4.
 Wasp, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4.
 Locust, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4.
 4 platoons of SRM-armed mechanized infantry (Veteran).
 2 platoons of SRM-armed jump infantry (Veteran).

THE CLAN, AD 3052

At first, we rejoiced when we learned that forces from the Exodus had returned. After all, but for a defective drive, we would have been among them. Sadly, our joy soon died when we learned of their behavior. Instead of waiting in joy to be reunited with our family, we dug in, awaiting the attack of strangers. Luckily, when the attack came, Davion forces were been on-world, accompanying a scientific mission.

Setup: As above.

Victory Conditions: The attacker wins if all defending units are destroyed or crippled. The defender wins if all attacking units are destroyed, crippled or driven off.

Notes: Given the large forces involved in this battle, it is recommended that there be several players on each side. If miniatures and a large surface are available, this is a good battle to play on the larger surface afforded by such conditions. This is a tough battle for the defender, given the superiority of the Clan technology.

Defender

The defending forces represent elements of the Grant Regular Army, the Walker Militia and a Davion unit.

Regular Army:

VTOL Wing 4 "Skyhawks". Set up anywhere on Map 3.
 4 Rippers, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4.
 3 Cyranos, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4.
 Heavy Armor Unit:
 3 "Thunderers". Set up anywhere on Map 2.
 1 Rhino, Piloting 5 Gunnery 3.
 1 Fury, Piloting 5 Gunnery 3.
 2 Burkes, Piloting 5 Gunnery 3.
 Artillery Unit 2 "DeathRain":
 1 Thor, Piloting 5 Gunnery 3. Set up anywhere on Map 3.
 1 Chaparral, Piloting 5 Gunnery 3. Set up anywhere on Map 3.
 1 Zephyr, Piloting 4 Gunnery 4. Set up anywhere on Map 2 or 3.
 1 Marksman, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. Set up anywhere on Map 3.

BattleTech

Combat Armor Infantry Unit:

2 "Lancers". Set up anywhere on Map 2 or 3.
 2 Decades laser-armed Combat Armor Troops (Elite).
 2 Decades SRM-armed Combat Armor Troops (Elite).
 2 Decades machinegun-armed Combat Armor Troops (Elite).

Militia Forces:

4 Echidna, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. Set up anywhere on Map 3.
 3 Mules, Piloting 6 Gunnery 5. Set up and emplacements as AC/5s.
 2 Medusas, Piloting 5 Gunnery 4. Set up within 20 hexes of the remote systems they control.

3 AC/5 field weapons, Gunnery 4. Set up anywhere on Map 2 or 3. These FW are emplaced and have 15 point walls on all sides. If the optional rules for hidden units are used, they may be hidden.

2 LRM 20 field weapons. Gunnery 4. Set up and emplacements as AC/5s.

8 SRM 6 remote weapons. Set up in emplacements (15 points, each side) on any map. If optional rules regarding hidden units are used, these weapons are hidden.

4 Platoons Armor 2 laser-armed foot infantry (Veteran). Set up anywhere on Map 3.

4 Platoons Armor 2 SRM-armed foot infantry (Veteran) Set up anywhere on Map 3.

2 Platoons Armor 2 SRM-armed jump infantry (Veteran). Set up anywhere on Map 3.

Davion Forces:

Lance 1:

Axman, Piloting 4 Gunnery 3. Set up anywhere on Map 2.
 Rifleman, Piloting 4 Gunnery 3. Set up anywhere on Map 2.
 Enforcer, Piloting 5 Gunnery 3. set up anywhere on Map 2.
 Enforcer, Piloting 5 Gunnery 3. Set up anywhere on Map 2.

Attacker

The attacking forces are composed of Clan BattleMechs and BattleArmor units. The Clan is the Smoke Jaguars. Attacking forces set up within eight hexes of the left edge of Map 1.

Command Star:

Daisho Piloting 3 Gunnery 2
 Masakari, Piloting 4 Gunnery 3
 Ryoken, Piloting 4 Gunnery 3
 Ryoken, Piloting 4 Gunnery 3
 BattleArmor Point

Support Star:

Vulture, Piloting 3 Gunnery 2.
 Vulture, Piloting 4 Gunnery 3.
 Ryoken, Piloting 4 Gunnery 3.
 Ryoken, Piloting 4, gunnery 3.
 BattleArmor Point

Recon Star:

Ryoken, Piloting 3 gunnery 2.
 Ryoken, Piloting 4 Gunnery 3.
 Koshi, Piloting 4 Gunnery 3.
 Koshi, Piloting 4 Gunnery 3.
 BattleArmor Point

BattleArmor Star 1:

Daishi, Piloting 3 Gunnery 3.
 4 BattleArmor Points.

BattleArmor Star 2:

Masakari, Piloting 4 Gunnery 3.
 4 BattleArmor Points
 BattleArmor Star 3:
 5 BattleArmor Points

Point 1:

Koshi, Piloting 3 Gunnery 3.

Point 2:

BattleArmor Point

Point 3:

BattleArmor Point Ω

*For optional field weapons and infantry type additions to FASA's BattleTech Compendium, refer to "Infantry and Field Weapons" by Michael C. LaBossiere in **Challenge 69**. For new vehicles designed to carry infantry, vehicles designed to fight infantry, and vehicles designed to support field weapons, see "Infantry & Field Weapon Vehicles" by Michael C. LaBossiere in **Challenge 70**.*

COVER NOT AVAILABLE

CORPS

Gamemaster Screen
Blacksburg Tactical Research Center. \$4.95.

Written by Greg Porter.
Cardstock gamemaster screen for CORPS with 16-page adventure.
Published in 1992.

Review by Craig Sheeley.

CORPS is a somewhat complex game, with a lot of tables to keep track of. This is to be expected from the man who brought the world the supplement *Guns, Guns, Guns* (easily the most complex firearms system in all creation). As with most games that depend on a number of critical tables, a gamemaster screen with those tables is welcome.

With *CORPS*, this screen is doubly necessary. Not for the tables, though; some sort of screen is a necessity to shield confidential material from the players. This screen does nicely in that role.

The three information panels of the screen list the essentials of the *CORPS* system. From left to right, they display firearms (an impressive and lethal list), combat tables and skill use tables. Concise, compact, complete—an excellent use of limited space. Almost too excellent, though. In order to cram all that information onto three panels, the type got a bit on the small side—some people will have trouble with this. And while the D.T. Midgette art on the other side of the screen is pretty good, it's all done in neon-green line on black, like seeing graphics on green-screen. The overall effect is eerie and hard to see.

The small adventure has no art in it, save for maps. It's short, sweet and twisted—Greg Porter has a flair for the sadistic (this is also the man who unleashed *Macho Women With Guns* on

the unsuspecting universe). The adventure is set, in all places, in Milwaukee during GenCon (the convention is never named, but anyone who's been there knows it by heart—some of us see the MECCA in our nightmares). The player characters have to safeguard a computer nerd from Milwaukee to Washington D.C., through the opposition and the mayhem that is GenCon. And the nerd looks and acts just like any of several thousand other gamers attending the convention, right down to his ever-present backpack! The overall effect is one of pandemonium, mixed with a healthy dose of unreality and served up garnished with the paranoid, secret-agent corporate atmosphere of *CORPS*. (*CORPS* should have been differently named, but the title *Paranoia* was already taken. Pity.) The adventure includes three very nice maps—downtown Milwaukee, the MECCA convention center, and the Safe House—that are completely accurate and may even prove useful for the occasional poor lost soul trying to find his way around at GenCon. (People like me.)

Overall, this is a nice little treat for the *CORPS* gamemasters. The content could have been better, perhaps with more panels on the screen (four instead of three and larger print), but for the price, this sort of project can't be beat!

COVER NOT AVAILABLE

Dream Park

Gamemaster Pack
R. Talsorian Games. \$12.00.
Written by William Moss.

Laminated cardstock gamemaster screen with NPC cards and 48-page gamemaster guide. Supplement for Dream Park.

Published in December 1992.

Review by Craig Sheeley.

At last, someone in the gaming industry heard my oft-repeated comments about GM screens and took heed of my words! This GM screen has not one wasted panel on it! There is no exterior art and only a small space devoted to the graphics necessary to identify the product and provide consumer information and UPC codes. Every other bit of both sides of the three panels is used for game information.

With a game as simple as *Dream Park*, you'd think there would be no need for so much information space. But the sides facing the players are lined with information on skills, weapons and character classes, while the gamemaster sides feature movement, actions range, special effects, armor, falling, impact and wound tables—everything needed to run *Dream Park*.

The NPC cards cover a number of the main gaming NPCs from the three books written about *Dream Park*, including Alex Griffin, Acacia Garcia, Oliver Norliss, Nigel Bishop and Chester Henderson. The cards are well done, but could have been better. For example, not one of these NPCs has any character advantages or disadvantages listed, even though a casual read of the books will reveal several (Acacia and Alex are attractive, for instance). Perhaps Will Moss couldn't see burdening any of these characters with the crippling disadvantages that the game designer demands to counterbalance even the most trifling advantage? (The designer claims this was to prevent "super-characters." Instead, it succeeds in limiting the game to every character being the same.) And the illustrations were certainly complimentary—Gwen Rider was described as slightly attractive and somewhat overweight, not as the buxom knock-out on the card.

The "Gamemaster Guide" is just that. This pack does not include a small adventure, as most GM screens do. Instead, the guide goes over the tables of equipment, animals and NPCs that usually swell most gaming rulebooks. Weapons and armor from all times and cultures are represented, including some that won't be found elsewhere (few other games list such exotics as the Pakistani Jezail musket, or a complete list of Inuit/Eskimo war gear!). The weapons and vehicles are all right, but the guide really shines when it hits the NPC section! Some are identified (Cleopatra, George Washington, Adolf Hitler, Socrates, King Arthur, etc.), and some are not but are easy to identify (the Dashing British Secret Service Agent just happens to use a Walther PPK and drive an Aston-

Martin, the Galactic Dark Lord has an energy sword and telekinetic powers, the Dark Superhero has equipment just like a certain Warner Bros. commodity, etc.). From Sneak Thief through Franklin Delano Roosevelt to High Priestesses and Deities, the guide gives examples of almost every kind of NPC the *Dream Park* gamemaster will ever need.

This is a pretty good product. It's a bit more expensive than the usual GM screen, but it certainly gives you all it can for the money. The only thing that RTG could have done to make this better would have been to reduce the price or bump the price up to \$15 and include a short adventure as well as everything else.

COVER
NOT
AVAILABLE

Unnatural Diplomacy

Isaac's Universe, Volume Three.
Avon Books. \$4.99.

Edited by Martin H. Greenberg. Introduction by Robert Silverberg. Stories by Harry Turtledove, Lawrence Watt-Evans, Janet Kagan, George Alec Effinger, Hal Cement, Rebecca Ore and Karen Haber.

258-page paperback anthology.
Published in 1992.

Review by Paul Lucas.

This is the latest in a series of anthologies dedicated to a universe created by the grandmaster of science fiction, Isaac Asimov. Like its two predecessors (sub-titled "The Diplomacy Guide" and "Phases in Chaos"), volume three continues the thoughtful, high-quality fiction that has become the hallmark of the series.

Conceptually, Isaac's Universe shares some remarkable similarities to the universe of GDW's *Traveller*. The

explored galaxy is dominated by six starfaring races, including humanity, with thousands of less advanced, planet-bound species forever at the mercy of their whims. Most of the stories of the series focus on the search for and acquisition of mysterious artifacts left behind by a technological super-race, the long-vanished Hidden Folk (or, in *Traveller*, the Ancients).

There the similarities end. Unlike the *Traveller* universe, where the major starfarers have had a long history of interspecies war, the six races of Isaac's Universe are far more concerned with peaceful co-existence. There has never been an interstellar conflict, and everyone fears the awful consequences of such an event. The dominant powers often go out of their way to avoid being the cause of (or being blamed for) a violent confrontation. Diplomacy and one-upmanship are far more important to the six races than military might.

The major strength of the series is in its portrayal of its aliens. Over the course of the three volumes, the six major races have been extensively detailed, and readers will get a good feel for each in *Unnatural Diplomacy*. Each race has its own peculiarities and strength, as well as its own closely guarded secrets. They range from the near-indestructible but ultra-pacifist Samians, who resemble giant slabs of animated beacon, to the Crotonites, strutting, conceited avians who consider invective just good manners. The other races include the insectoid Locrians, the aquatic Cella phonians, and the empathic Naxians. Even humanity (referred to in the stories as Erthumoi) has changed in the millennium or so since it burst onto the galactic scene. Humans now live for a very long time, undergoing rejuvenation every century or so. Humanity's greatest asset lies in its ability to create exceptional artificial intelligences, which the other races both cover and fear.

This book and its two predecessors are packed with ideas gamers can use to enliven their own science-fiction campaigns. The aliens and their respective cultures are three-dimensional enough to allow for their easy grafting into existing game uni-

verses. The technology and science presented in the book, both the starfarers and the enigmatic Hidden Folk, are detailed enough so that they can also be easily transferred. Many of the situations presented in the stories can be made into one- or two-session adventures. Of course, ambitious referees can also set up a campaign in Isaac's Universe itself, letting the characters get involved with the affairs of the six races first hand.

EVALUATION

The stories of this volume range from the average to the exceptional, with the majority leaning toward the latter. The best are "One Man's Meat" by Lawrence Watt-Evans, about a very unusual dinner guest, and the title story, "Unnatural Diplomacy" by Karen Haber, about one Crotonite's distressing vision of the future of galactic civilization. Other tales of note include "Breakups" by Harry Turtledove, in which a deeply coveted secret of the Samians is revealed; "Fighting Words" by Janet Kagan, wherein outcast Crotonites seek refuge on a human world, and George Alec Effinger's "Water of Life," a rather depressing story of a shipwrecked Cellaphonian.

Overall, "Isaac's Universe, Volume Three: Unnatural Diplomacy" is an enjoyable, thought-provoking read that's guaranteed to inspire new ideas for your science-fiction campaign. Ω



Ask Commodore Bwana



Being in the main a continuing column chronicling the state of the art of Traveller: The New Era

and not, sadly,

a swashbuckling scenario of flashing swords, booming broadsides, courageous heroes, and cunning villains set against the thrilling tableau of the Age of Sail

Volume 1, Number 2

Dear Commodore Bwana,

I just bought and read *Survival Margin*. If nothing else, it stands as a very good piece of fiction. Kudos.

I'm wondering two things since I bought *TNE*:

1) Will those of us who are referees be able to find out what you have in mind for what is happening behind the Black Curtain in order to keep a campaign consistent with official GDW releases?

2) Since the actions of player characters in pocket empires affect history so dramatically, is GDW interested in compiling information from different campaigns from different parts of the old Imperium and piecing together any sort of known space history?

Signed,

Name withheld by nom du bulletin board électronique

Dear Withheld,

Those are two very good questions, which bring up two fairly complex answers.

The answer to your first question goes right to the heart of the philosophy behind *TNE*. *TNE* is going to have secrets, hence mysteries. Without secrets and mysteries there can be no sense of wonder, and no sense of real fear of the unknown. Things that you don't understand can awaken a real sense of wonder or dread within you, but this wonder is lost when you understand too much. If the players themselves can't experience that sense of "creature feeling," then much of the roleplaying experience is lost.

This was one of the problems with *Traveller* and *MegaTraveller*, where the mystery of the Ancients was destroyed by explaining too much about them. Once too much is known about a topic, it becomes mundane and its components can be pigeonholed into normal commonplace categories. Things that awaken our subconscious fears are much more powerful than purely rational things. We fear bullets because we understand how they work and we know what they can do to us. But that fear is nothing compared to deep-seated fears of evil and magic and things that go bump in the night. Think of the scene in the movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*™ when the Nazis™ open the Ark of the Covenant and all of the ghosts come out and melt the Nazis™. That scene is powerful because of its supernatural quality. What would be more frightening to a group of *Traveller* players: a roughly man-sized lizard-like creature racing toward them wreathed in billowing, swirling clouds with fire playing from its fingers, or Grandfather, a freak Droyne who couldn't control his children, using his TL 35 grav belt, TL 35 weather control backpack, and TL 35 laser gloves?

Traveller covers an infinitely large universe, and it is tragic to allow that huge space to become drab and over-rationalized. Players should periodically be put into situations where they have no idea what they've gotten into, and their imaginations fill them with an infinite variety of nameless dreads. What is more exciting, a hulking form lurking in the shadows up to who knows what, or a monster laid out on a well-lit table with all sorts of measuring equipment and a perfectly simple explanation for everything that it does?

It's certainly true that referees would benefit from knowing more about the Black Curtain and other things in order to run their games. The problem is that everything we write down will become common knowledge among *Traveller* players in very short order, and that will destroy any sense of mystery and suspense.

For the time being, the Black Curtain is a figurative name like the Iron Curtain. The Black Curtain describes the frontier beyond which nothing is known, because no expeditions have returned. It is black in the sense of not being illuminated by data and exploration and simple rational analysis. One thing that is known is that the curtain is characterized by large number of Vampire ships. This alone can explain why no one has ever come back. But what are the Vampire ships doing there? Are they hiding or guarding something? Do they live within the Black Sphere, or are they also trying to get in? Are they controlled by a single force, or are they fighting among themselves? These answers will be revealed only gradually, in *TNS* and in published *TNE* adventures, and we will probably leave some questions forever unanswered so that referees and players can pick the explanation they like best for their campaign, without worrying that it diverges from the "official" campaign.

The answer to your second question is related to the answer to your first. The geography of the New Era, was, as I'm sure many *Traveller* fans are aware, deliberately created to allow three different kinds of "terrain" for three different types of *Traveller* players. The pocket empires were intended for groups that like to create their own unique campaign without having the "official" campaign get in their way and step on them all the time. For this reason, we don't intend to write any kind of grand history that includes all of the pocket empires, because this would interfere with allowing pocket empire campaigns more of a free hand in creating their own stories. Not everything that works well for an individual pocket empire campaign would work in an official grand history, because a number of changes would have to be made to coordinate all of the individual stories and assumptions with each other. Not only would that be a lot of work for Dave Nilsen, but it would take away some of the freedom and autonomy that pocket empire players desire. However, if pocket empire players want to send in their stuff, I would like to see it, because we could incorporate bits and pieces of pocket empire histories into the larger "official history" without trying to weld them all together into a seamless whole. And who knows, maybe they will all fit together without any problems and we can publish a grand history. Just don't bet your house on it.

Well, that's all the time we have for this week, kids. Stay tuned for more of Commodore Bwana's effusive expostulations in *Challenge 72*, and don't forget to drink your milk. This is Commodore Bwana, aboard the starship *Roxy Music*, signing off.

Challenge 71

Rate each article from 0 to 5. 0 means you did not read the article. 1 indicates great dissatisfaction, and 5 indicates great satisfaction. 2, 3 and 4 are shades in between. To use a separate sheet, list each article number, then your rating (be sure to indicate the issue number). Send responses to:

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Feedback Results for Challenge 67

Operation Boomerang (Twilight)	2.7
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Wolf in Sheep's Clothing (MegaTraveller)	3.8
Personal Weapons (MegaTraveller)	3.3
Outback (MegaTraveller)	3.6
Old Enemies (2300 AD)	3.5
What Goes Up (Cyberpunk)	3.7
Changelings (Referee Tips)	3.4
To Rescue A Lady Fair (Space: 1899)	3.0
Nega-Magicians (Shadowrun)	3.4
Mall Rats (Dark Conspiracy)	3.3
Buried Treasure (Star Wars)	3.1
Soldier Ants (High Colonies)	3.1
Death on the Docks (Cthulhu)	3.3
On the Cutting Edge (BattleTech)	2.9
Traveller News Service	4.3
Conventions	3.0
Reviews	3.3
Classifieds	3.3
This issue's cover art	3.6
This issue's interior art	3.6
This issue as a whole	3.3

We look forward to receiving your feedback for this issue.

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feedback

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FGMP-16, a quarterly newsletter dedicated to Traveller miniatures rules, equipment, battles and campaigns. Features terrain-building techniques, new battle tanks and Aslan mercenary battalions. Every issue will contain a new vehicle or two, and 15mm starship deck plans. The exploits of Kelly's Highlanders, a tank mercenary battalion, will also be covered. Contact Mike Kelly, 10710 Evergreen Way, C-308, Everett, Washington 98204. (71)

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IMPERIAL NEWS SERVICE seeks writers and artists. Our fanzine is devoted entirely to original Traveller (not MegaTraveller or any new version). We publish adventures, supplements and campaign aids. Please contact StarQuest Games, RR 1, Box 81, Flat Rock, IL 62427-9735 for subscriptions and guidelines for writers and artists. (70)

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Traveller: The New Era

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MegaTraveller

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DUSTED!

His one-eyed gaze holds you motionless for seconds that seem like hours. "Help us," he rasps, then falls into death and decay. *By Dan Snuffin*

2300 AD

STOWAWAY

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Space: 1889

SECRET OF THE SWAMP

When the PCs set out to explore the Mylomercean Swamp, the last thing they expect to find is a burned village filled with piled bodies of the dead. *By James L. Cambias*

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HALF THE ATTITUDE!

HALFLINGS AS CHARACTERS
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small, the quiet, and the sneaky. And remember what most cyberpunk RPGs have forgotten: The *really* dangerous ones don't need to advertise it—they *know*. *By Michael O'Brien*

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"So you want me in on your job, huh? Can't say I'm surprised. Seems to me you could use someone who can do something more than kill people." *By David Perry*

Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.

COMPETITION

How far will you go to keep your company job? *By Justin Schmid*

Call of Cthulhu

TEA AND BISCUITS

The MacGillivrays have a special dinner planned—a family reunion of sorts. The tantalizing smell of roast duck fills the air, Millie has put on her best pink dress, and everyone is laughing and reminiscing—but where in the world is Junior? *By Greg Unger*

How To

NAMES, NAMES, NAMES

Creating a name generation library can help you avoid a lifetime of frustration. *By Brent Raymer*

BattleTech

ANT HILL

When Bandit forces stumble onto the world and find a fully functioning society with Star League-era technology, the inhabitants of Grant know little peace. *By Michael C. LaBossiere*

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Isaac's Universe, Volume Three: Unnatural Diplomacy from Avon Books.

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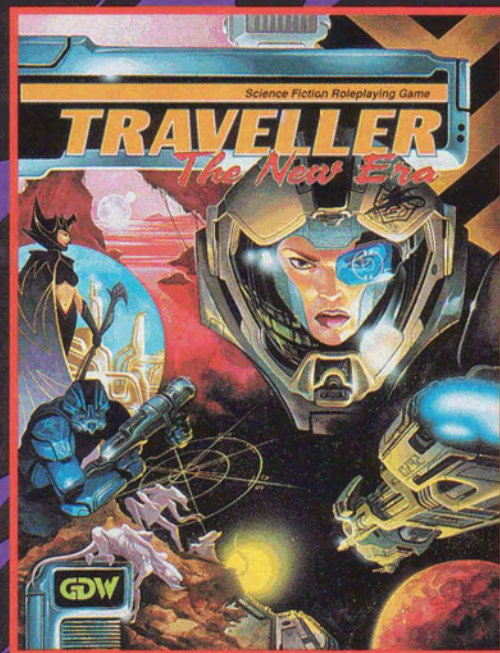
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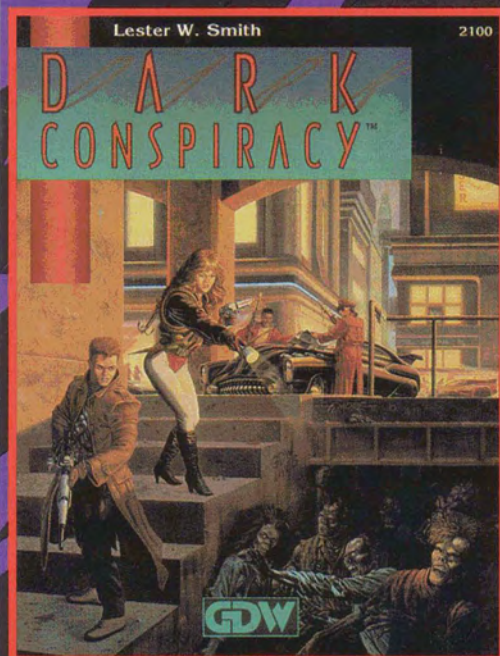
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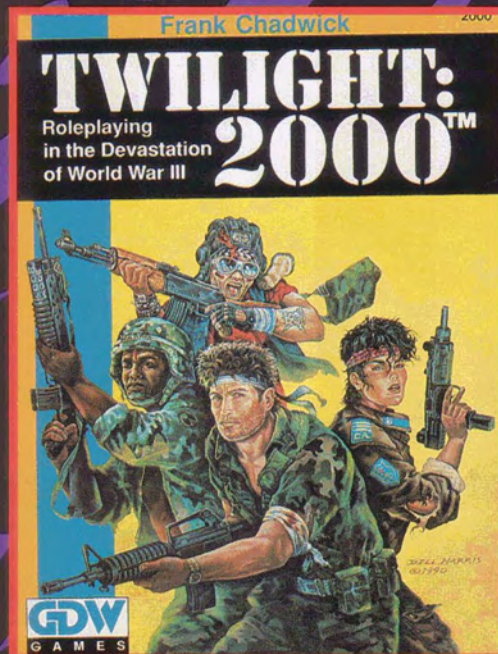
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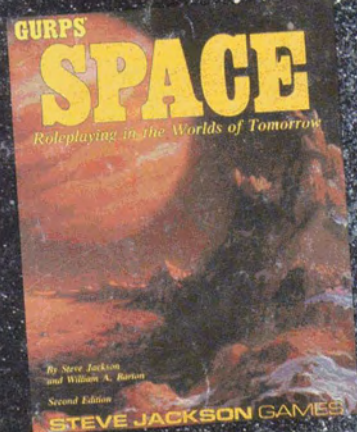
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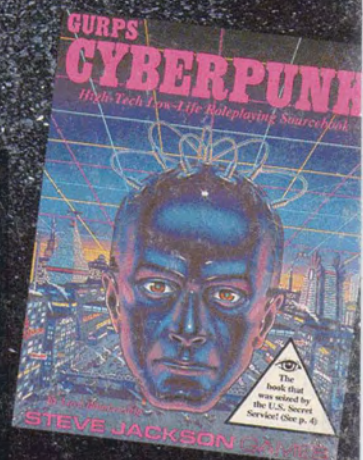
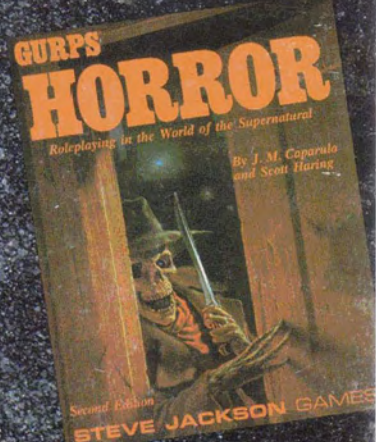
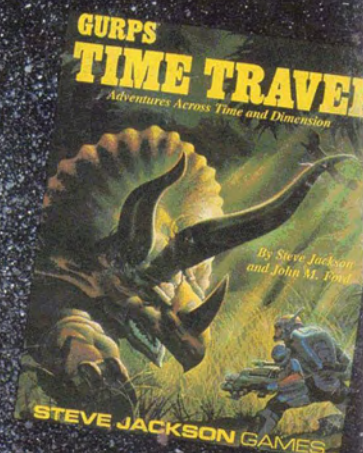
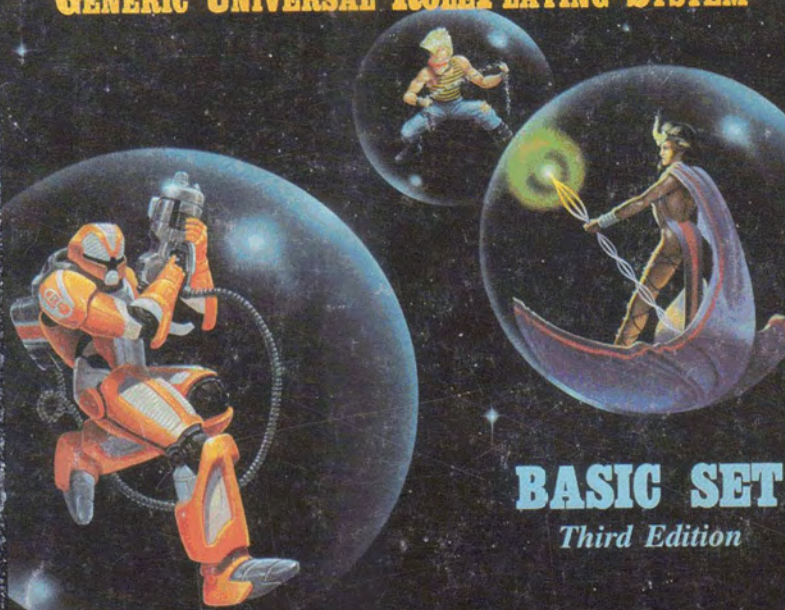
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