

SPACE GAMER FANTASY GAMER

THE MAGAZINE OF FREE-STYLE ROLE-PLAY™

Issue #5

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Featured Game:

Guardians Of Sol

High-Tech Police Investigations In ERA TEN

ÆRTH™ BESTIARY

GARY GYGAX'S

DANGEROUS JOURNEYS™

The first bestiary for the Mythus™ game includes all creatures and inhabitants of Exterior Ærth and Interior Ærth. Each creature entry includes all the statistics, habitats and descriptions needed to run them for an Ærth-based campaign (or a campaign of your own design).

GDW: 5005

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Dangerous Journeys is an Ærth Bestiary
Volume 1 for Mythus and Mythus: The Game.

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THE MAGAZINE OF FREE-STYLE ROLE-PLAY™

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Diceless Gaming

I have a suggestion. This will work for any game. Instead of rolling dice each time you are prompted, select the roll you want to make. Here's how this works. At the start of the game write down the numbers one to twenty (to represent a twenty-sided die). Whenever you get in a situation like combat where you must roll, instead you select one of the numbers and cross it off. Need to make a save, well again select a number and cross it off. If you use too many of your "high numbers" you may later be left with limited options. Once a player crosses off all the numbers, then he gets a new complete set of twenty.

For a game that uses a pair of dice, instead write out two sets of numbers to represent both dice. In the case of Battle Born, write one to eight and one to eight. The player selects from the pair to make his task resolution rolls. I'd also let the player select two numbers from the same set. Again in Battle Born, a player might make a Basic roll by selecting the four and five of the same set. Or he could do such by combining two numbers in different number sets, like a three in the first list and a six from the second. Once he uses all eight numbers, completing a set, he gains a new group of numbers one to eight.

The initial set of numbers can be written even during the creation of characters. The player might write out his dice results and cross off numbers to generate his character. The referee must monitor this at first to prevent cheating or dummy rolls just to use the low ones. Perhaps limit the rolls to one failed attempt in any round of combat. I feel this balances the game and lets each player control his own fate. (K Sakai, CA) *[Ed Note: I think this is brilliant. I can't wait to try it or incorporate the concept into a game. The difference between dice and card games is always the strategy. Yet by adding your selection method, you've turned the dice rolls into a hand of cards that can be played in each circumstance. The player still doesn't control his encounters, but he does control his level of reaction and his dice intensity to each situation. Good stuff.]*

Battle Born Q&A

Boys, Girls, Vegetables or Minerals (take your pick), love the new Space Gamer unconditionally ... Are the rules in Space Gamer available separately? How do you pronounce Cimmer — Simmer or Kimmer? On the cover of SG# 1, you showed three types of guns. Are they extruded from the EE Suits or are they separate items. I can see they're attached by hoses. [Signed] just another squishy. (Jeff Crowder, MO) *[Ed Note: The game rules right now are not available separately. We still have stock of the first issues and until they run out, we don't need to address the subject. We'll probably release the games in sets (like the Battle Born of issue one, combined with the G/Sol rules here and perhaps Fusiliers appearing later). Incidentally, Fusiliers has been our highest rated game. Not a real surprise considering the approval rating you guys have for Battletech. (See the game survey at issue's end.)]*

I pronounce it Khy-Mer with the accent on the first syllable, rhymes with Weiner (a dog I once had), but I'm not a stickler. Is it Celt as in Selt or Kelt? I think both are right, and so it is for the Cimmer. I discovered the word, like many of the race names in ERA TEN, with a thesaurus. In my first drafts in 1979, I called each alien race by a shade or color. The Cimmer were dark — bingo, page 84, Cimmerian Darkness; hence as well, Skia (shadow), Xanth (yellow), Verdigris (green) and Stygian (black). I can't recall why Cruz — it may be

related to their anatomy. For the record, the origin of the word Cimmer is a race that appeared around 750 BC in the area we now call the Crimea, a peninsula in lower Russia. They raided Asia Minor (Turkey) with iron weapons and the first horse archers, destroying the Lydians (also called Stygians or those who lived on the river Styx.) I discovered Conan from the movies. (You can see at times in my editing the fact I did not read much as a boy.) I learned then that Robert E Howard also used the names of ancient people in his works. I'll state for the record that Cimmer did not come from Conan, though the obvious comparisons will be made.

The original game Battle Born didn't have a lick of artwork. When Todd Pickens drew the first EE Suit, he set the style. He took artistic license and penned a variety of weapons (more pleasing to the eye, but probably not exact to military specs). Yet, his ideas got me to thinking, why not? If you can modify gear, reassemble components in different ways, then simply extrude a cover out of a J-unit, ..., soldiers will tailor and detail their own Suits. I always pictured certain squads as having Viking horns, racing stripes, cowboy hats, etc. Anything to build team morale and a sense of joint identity and comradeship. Yet back to the weapons, the pistol grip became a free-style skill that people were using to gain extra attacks (during play-test at the LA conventions). When I later wrote G/Sol, I incorporated it as one of that group's innovations. The three types of weapons are probably three of thousands that exist — just encourage your players to use their imaginations.]

Calling All Cthulhu Players

It is good to see the new incarnation of SG/FG back. I don't think you have any CoC stuff yet. If you do any, please write. I need help for a project of mine. I am compiling a complete bibliography of the Call of Cthulhu game. I am including everything related to Cthulhu, except game reviews. That means rule/scenario books, magazine articles, miniatures and ephemeral material. And in any language, not just English. I have been contacted by Chaosium and they have adopted me as the official biographer ... So far, the list has over 350 English and 100 foreign articles ... Since I trade for articles I do not have, I also own about 90% of what's on my list ... Anything produced with Cthulhu in mind ... This means coffee mugs, bumper stickers, posters, buttons, shirts ... If you would like to help, contact me or pass along my name to anyone interested. (Brent Heutess, 4305 Duval St #107, Austin, TX 78751) *[Ed Note: Like the game, your task sounds scary.]*

For Your Info

A firm in Huntsville Alabama is offering vacationers a \$4900 package to participate in Russian cosmonaut training at the Yuri Gagarin Center in Moscow. Applications will only be accepted from teachers. The winner of a secondary contest will fly in a rocket to the orbiting space station in the fall of 1994. (Andrew Barton, TX)

Through the Mill(er)

After reading Conrad's list of spy shows, all I can say is he has too much time on his hands. But that's not my main reason for writing. While trying to organize a game of Battle Born, a heard someone complain that he didn't like the rules because, "it's too hard to make the roles." A character has a 56% chance of succeeding at an unmodified Basic roll of nine or higher. That by itself is pretty fair.

More spies...

	Wile	Suave	Gizmos	Martial Arts	Marksmanship
James West (Wild, Wild West)	††	†††	†††	†††	†††
Artemus Gordon (Wild, Wild West)	††	††	†††	†	†
Jim Phelps (Mission Impossible)	††	††	††	†	†
Barney Collier (Mission Impossible)	†	†	††††	†	††
Steve Austin (\$6 Million Man)	†	†	††	††††	†
Mike Gambit (New Avengers)	††	††	†	†††	††
(Vance Gray, CO)					

yet consider that the game encourages teamwork. A player can be aided by another player with a skill like Battlefield Discipline. Because the players can aid one another or prepare their own attacks, it's pretty safe to assume that most characters in Battle Born are usually operating at a plus two to their dice rolls. The chance of making Basic, modified to seven or higher, goes up to 77%. A plus four shift takes this up to a 91% success. Granted, the 5% chance of making a Limit roll (fifteen or up) is pretty slim, but Limit represents pushing the envelope. Even a Limit becomes a possible 16% when shifted to a thirteen by applying a typical plus two bonus. These figures also apply for Rogue Swords of the Empire. If you're playing Good Guys Finish Last, then the odds are slightly better — 67% unmodified Routine. (Mike Miller, CA)

Vox Populi, Vox Dei

When the new Space Gamer started, I thought the comic strip was a waste. After this last issue through I must say it has really improved! The only problem I have with it is it seems like he's trying to develop a plot-line on half a page every two months. How about devoting a full page to the strip so we can get the full story out before the 10th anniversary issue. (Stacy Robinson, CO) [Ed Note: Too late, the tenth anniversary issue of Space Gamer appeared, I believe, in 1986. As for doubling his space, he'd only take five years instead of ten — any difference? Maybe we'll go monthly as readership increases. But to your point, each comic must have its own satiric quality and stand alone. If the author connects these, he gains a following but it does not decrease his responsibility to make each funny. I was hoping to attract a Fantasy comic for the other half of the page, though I got to admit our game survey has a good spot above Mike's comic. If Mike wants to draw more, great. And I'll pass your kudos on to him — "Hey Mike, you got a fan; now get back to work." (Just kidding, I've always liked the comic.)]

I would like to see more things on the Barony system. I particularly would like to see more fantasy encounters. (Examples, Wilderness, In a City, Enchanted Forests, Along the Caravan Ports, the High Seas, etc.) I would also like to see a short compendium of animals and creatures along the lines: "Screaming Banshee, Basic, one wound of each type." Hopefully it could list most of the common creatures of fantasy and myth. (Jimmy Cox, NC)

The first two issues are nice looking, inside and out. The general consensus of the people I've showed them to is that they like the idea of Rogue Swords, are not interested in Battle Born, and find vampire articles interesting and informative. They wanted a copy for their own games (Runequest, AD&D, Powers and Perils and Shadowrun). The gamer's forum is pretty great. I always look forward to your biting satire and your gaming digs ... The SG/FG mags are easy to read and entertaining. The dialog is witty, appealing, and uses enough small words to grab your attention. The articles are easy to find and the artwork is decent. [Ed Note: Please don't stop, continue the praise.]

One of the "problems" is a plus for me. There is a lot of meat in these issues that can't be grasped in the first reading, much less in a skim. I read again and again and get ideas ewach time. The magazine seems to be written for the gamemaster, referee, omnipotent lord-creator of the paper-world, etc. I estimate this to be somewhere between 10% and 15% of the role-play gamers. (Tell me if my figures are right.) I think you need a few helpful articles for the players. Hints, Q&D's for down-time, ... or solitaire adventures. If a character came back to my campaign and said he played the Rogue Sword solitaire in SG/FG and checked two ignobles, I wouldn't have a problem with that (after I heard his narrative). (John Morgan, VA) [Ed Note: I agree with everything you said. We pack a lot into each issue as if it will be our last. If I only get a few issues to make a mark, I want it to cover a wide range of themes. The main thing we give the players in each issue is the game. I agree that articles like you described, especially something solitaire, would be nice to have. Anyone interested in writing some? The magazine is also striving to make the referee's job easy. So easy, that I hope to raise the 10% ratio of refs. Someone inclined will have source material or a scenario to give it a try.]

I didn't motivate to fill out surveys until I saw the results printed in issue three. [Ed Note: The squeaky wheel gets the grease. If you want to see a certain game produced, you better let us know via the feedback.]

I got the submission guidelines ("put on these handcuffs and bend over ...") The writer's guidelines and accompanying letter were quite clear, you are successfully communicating. I see this stuff about a new editor. Okay, fine, but the last time you rolled out a new editor (or is that rolled out the old editor?) in the Newsletter, we got a ton of cryptic stuff like "Con in a box! (snap)" Now all you have to do is explain HDYSR and KIUTC. Failure to do so is treason and will result in your execution ... C'mon Red, I agree that Triplanetary was a cool game, but how can you not be able to deal with the vector movement rules? The hex grid made it pitifully easy. Something tells me you never played much Star Fleet Battles or Advanced Squad Leader ... Hopefully you'll run demos at Gen Con. I'd like to see the [old] encounter system at work. (Dave Schrader, IL) [Ed Note: I cut my teeth on Panzer Blitz and France 1940, buddy (read lighthearted). I've played a complete game of DNO (four months of weekends). I played several complete games of Global War. (In one, I dropped five nukes on Germany and still lost.) My partner has the original Star Fleet game that has the cut out ships that you glue on tiles. We've played dozens of times with large groups scattered all over the floor in battle formations. (Come to think of it, we haven't done this yet at an LA con.) As for the acronyms, they stood for "How do you spell role-play" and "Kick it up to corporate." (Yes, I'm sure you were expecting more.) Now don't despair when you see none of our games in the Gen Con schedule. That doesn't mean we're not playing. If you (or anyone) want to stop by our booth, I'll take the time to explain any of our past or present game systems. Maybe we'll make an on-demand schedule, assemble players at our booth and head off to find a table in open gaming. And for anyone else, if you haven't ever attended a Gen Con, do so. The experience the first time of seeing that many players and manufacturers is indescribable.]

The High Speed Chase Q&D was the piece de resistance. How to do vehicle combat in four easy pages! ... As far as future game plans: ... I'm not keen on historical topics. I already know who won the Civil War and who ended up owning South Viet Nam. There isn't much suspense to playing scenarios about them ... [I find most] superhero games confusing. [They] are poorly written and want to be Champions ... Champions is to superhero games what D&D is to fantasy. Everybody interested in the genre has played it, uses the concepts from it, and plays it far more than all the others put together. And, it is not really all that good and certainly has nothing to do with role-playing, but rather is an exercise in dice rolling ... [I use] the ideas from Palladium. The intelligentsia of gaming seem to hate Palladium. However, while the philosophy is very different from yours, they are the only other company that provides a truly universal system. It is playable, even though not as role-play oriented as yours. GURPS Supers is Champions done right, but it is still too close to that game. (Ron Pehr, NV) [Ed Note: I too wish Champions would make a simpler version. No one seems to be playing Champions by the verbatim rules. The players of superhero games buy every game and use the ideas in their own hybrid game systems. The same was once true for fantasy. Everyone bought games to enhance the play of D&D. Later good systems came out, like In the Labyrinth or Palladium's, till eventually AD&D corrected many problems and incorporated the innovations of other games. I can't say that I'm completely happy with Good Guys. I like the players also being the writers of the comics. That way no character seems to dominate or be out of place — you don't get one too many "bricks." Yet Good Guys was by far the hardest game I've had to write, and as a genre it is not one I play a great deal. Dave Van Domelen, an avid comic book gamer, has written some simplified variations for Good Guys. He may have hit on something; check them out.]

Keep Barking Red Dog

TSR and Sci-Fi, why do the two sound so funny in the same sentence? Well, could it be that TSR's last couple of forays into science fiction have been dreadful? Just as GDW is trying to make a fantasy game, TSR is again producing Sci-Fi, this time under the marketing vehicle of something they call "Amazing Engine."

So what's Amazing Engine? Well, TSR is making a generic rules system that will be the mechanics used in a variety of games. The financial resources of TSR behind a "GURPS" has the potential to yield some great stuff for the hobby. Yet much of the bite, necessary for a well crafted science fiction story, seems to be lacking in past TSR products. Their first entry of the Amazing Engine, "Faerie, Queen and Country," would tend to support the nay-sayers who cry that TSR should stay with fantasy. Yet, don't be too hasty. Talking with Harold Johnson, he assured me that TSR can make a Sci-Fi game that is something more than Buck Rogers or Spelljammer. By the way, the current Buck Rogers 25C has been scrubbed and will be released in a new format to promote a series of pulp hero games along the lines of Gangbuster or Indiana Jones.

But back to Sci-Fi — Harold points out that TSR has always had Gamma World, and they were the first to create a Battletech style, big robot game with Proton Five. (I'm not familiar with that one.) I did comment that most of TSR's Sci-Fi has a general silliness and tendency to become little more than Toon. Alpha Metamorphosis tried to be hard-core, but the mutated nuisances like intelligent raccoons could not be taken seriously. Gammaraiders, If you've seen Gammaraiders with its mix of dinosaurs and military gear, you'd probably agree it was more for the fifth grade mentality of Sci-Fi.

So he reminded me of Star Frontiers. Okay, a nice Space Opera game, that's a given. Certainly of the same spirit as the role-play versions of Star Wars or Star Trek. He also commented that it sold over 165,000 units in three years! (By comparison, Traveller finally broke the 100,000 mark after fifteen years, and it was the first of its kind on the market.)

Back to Amazing Engine — the players will collect experience points for their time spent playing, not for the kind of character they play. That's not a bad idea. A player of their first game in the series, Faerie, Queen and Country, will be able to take the game bonus he earns while combating magic in Victorian England and apply what they call "dice pools" to his next character in Bug-Hunter (Aliens), Magi-Tech (Modern age w/ magic; not cyberpunk, but probably more like "Cast a Deadly Spell") or Galactos Barrier (Big Robots). Sure, the player could just start with an advanced character, but most players like to feel they've earned the character they're playing. With TSR's control of the young gaming market, I wouldn't be surprised to find some players with very powerful "dice pools." (Yet all power to them, if they enjoy the system.)

Harold also said that in the past, TSR games had the bad habit of being "low level die, high level invincible." To remedy this, all the games will be designed so that a player's chance is at least a 20% for success while at best a 12% failure. Give TSR credit for knowing their market and as well constantly trying to be more consistent with their rules. They understand the problems (player arguments) that can arise in games and seek to eliminate these. With a simple change like this, a group of advanced and starting characters can adventure together, and everyone will have a role to play — no one should dominate.

Now if you ask me, TSR for a long time has held this hobby together with two really important functions. They introduce new players to adventure games, and they have the legal resources to combat the crack-pots out to ban us all. But they also have shown that they are becoming a progressive company that can take the great ideas of other companies, like a GDW's Space 1889, and produce their own innovation: a game that's attractive and entertaining. Those small game companies who say they hate TSR, are akin to movie producers who say Spielberg is childish, but secretly wish they could film an Indiana Jones.

I doubt TSR will produce a crime-ridden, drug infested, collapsed society, cyberpunk game. (Don't get me wrong; if you know anything about Empire of the Petal Throne or In the Company of Delves, two games I enjoy, I don't get offended by any topic in gaming.) Yet, maybe the younger gamers don't need to learn such systems till they're twenty. When I sit down with my son and play, it's not Champions (a bit complicated) or Vampire the Masquerade (a bit mature). We play Dragon Quest and Dungeon. As he gets older, we'll probably even play D&D before Rogue Swords. (Though I'll probably use the Conan background from GURPS.) TSR makes the best game for a new player — themes simple to understand and nonthreatening to the parents. They promote creativity and keep

the industry thriving. (Harold Johnson also told me that TSR doubled their warehouse space, so they're profiting from their endeavors.)

Us, older gamers, have a certain responsibility to learn new systems and teach them to younger gamers (especially at conventions). I play a more character interactive game when time and players allow, but I still enjoy the TSR line. I run a twentieth-level character, AD&D monster bash at the LA conventions, which one elitist gamer described as the worst example of role-play. (To which I reply, to each his own.) TSR, Fantasy and Sci-Fi, sounds pretty good. I'm looking forward to Amazing Engine. And, I bet I'll soon be able to run a space marine bug-bash.

Pawns and Princes by Conrad Hillmer

When I was a young lad, at night my brother and I played an interesting game that I wish to share. From a large sheet of cardboard we fashioned a mythical world to fight an epic struggle. With Stratego® pieces and the like, we occupied territories. Our method of conflict simulation or combat was to match opposing armies for numerical strength. Then using tape marks on the floor for the various rankings and a daisy hand held BB gun, we would shoot at each other's armies. For example, if I had three to one strength, I stood very close with the BB gun and he stood quite far. If the piece struck fell face down, it was removed from play. If it fell face up, it was removed but later returned as reinforcement. If you had inferior strength, it didn't mean that you were going to lose; but as they say, "that's the way you bet."

The point is that in the classical sense of gaming, some form of conflict simulation (i.e. combat) is needed. In simplistic form, a role-play game is a genre or style, player objectives and resources and conflict simulation. Ponder this for a moment and consider what is required for conflict simulation and why.

The first reason for combat that comes to mind is that it is fun. The real meaning is perhaps deeper. Combat must be described in a role-play game not because the players must use it. Rather, so they can understand how the universe works. I know not to jump off my roof because it will surely harm me. My experience with the real world tells me this. However, in a game world, the rules change slightly. Can the hero take a sword blow without being slain or will one stroke put the stoutest man under? As a player, it is very important to have confidence in how the world works. A player is not required to use a weapon for all tests, but he needs to know what he can do with it should the need arise. This is a very important element in a game. It frames the basis for our role in the paper-world, because death of the character is the only hard and fast negative sanction. Without understanding the bounds, one cannot adequately participate. And ultimately, the referee tailors adventures to his players' taste. All these things must be there for the referee to choose.

Consider the physics of a pistol. By the use of expanding gases, a slug is projected across the intervening distance between the source and the target. The slug carries some momentum as a function of its mass times its velocity. When it strikes another body, this momentum is conserved. Even if it does not penetrate the target (a.k.a. body armor), it still transfers momentum in terms of mass times velocity. This is related to, but different than, energy which can become sound, heat, pressure, mechanical deformation, etc. When the interaction between the slug and the target are done, momentum is conserved as mass times velocity. Now, the new mass may be greater but it is required to react to the impact.

Conservation of momentum means that a guy in space vectors in a new direction, the gun fighter is toppled when his pocket bible stops a slug from the villain's weapon, or that the swordsman is tumbled from his horse by the blow from the mace wielding footman.

Or, does it? By the spirit that the referee gives the game, these things are changed. And since we don't spell these things out, our players develop this by inference from such matters as how many times they can be hit or how lethal is a single great blow.

Somewhere along the way, games have evolved into simply variations of the twenty die method. "My guy statistically does this amount of damage each round while your guy does this statistical value." We roll a die. And, if we really want to get fancy, we allow a parity or defensive roll or even apply weapon speed

factors. The damage is assessed from a numerical rating called hit points. Attempts at hit location are usually too cumbersome and distracting from play. Things are seldom so Cartesian that such accuracy is anything more than a damage or hit point penalty. Wouldn't it be great if we had a better system?

Well, what is required?

One of the first observations that one will note about combat mechanics in a game is that a player will generally chose the simplest method that delivers the statistically most destructive attack. If all things were equal, I would hit the guy with my sword rather than "overbear, grapple, pummel table" this guy. Simply because both do the same amount of hit points. In fact, if it were substantially more difficult to find the appropriate table buried on page 352, most players would attempt a less advantageous attack just to keep the action moving. And they should. The obvious choice for combat should be the simplest. In my Mexican Cinema Wrestling game (starring Mill Mascaras), the obvious choice is using hands or possibly the suplex (@ I'm sure). While, the Arthurian game must certainly have jousting as the simplest. All attack options should be easy for the player, but if you have to make a trade off, make the obvious choice the simplest.

Consider for a moment, the obvious choice. Among a group of strangers at a superhero tournament. I witnessed as all attempted their Neutron Presence attack, their Laser guided Woozles and Pantoozles and their weakness sensing hair analyzers. Finally, after these attacks did their feeble worst, I was allowed to move forward with my Titanium muscles glistening in the Spring air and flick the villainous flea bag with his treacherous rodent powers from this god-fearing universe. The referee had been smiling away as we went down our list of impressive powers waiting for one of us to realize that all we need do was fist-sandwich this guy. (And was I red-faced after my hair analyzer failed.)

Damage from the combat system should be lingering. Not only should the combatants suffer from loss of their hit points, consider that they can lose equipment and even suffer physical and psychological effects. When we played "fungo bat" games in my back yard, I remember getting hit on my hands a lot. I think my brother was intentionally hitting me on my sore hand like I was intentionally hitting him on his head. While his hair line got worse, my grip was loosened. I probably could have shot the BB gun better if my hand wasn't hurting. His shield fashioned from a fallen stop sign haunts my memory of battles gone by and brings me to wince at the worst times.

On a hot day in a field near the grand old Sherwood forest, out comes Sean Connery done up like Robin Hood. Robert Shaw comes out to oppose in his scale mail. The two fight the climactic battle in a must see movie, "Robin and Marion". After very few minutes, the two are drained physically. They cannot hold their weapons up and their helmets have been voluntarily thrown aside. (Egads, the AC effects.) Even without injury, the poetry that is the human body needs to rest. This is rarely allowed for in role-play games even in those that espouse realism.

Next, I've noted when playing in some super hero games that my character, a particularly mediocre bespectacled ubermensch, can be hit with every conceivable destructive force on the planet (and beyond) from molten plasma sucked from the core of the sun to skewering by a small metropolitan sky scraper. The sum total of these attacks was a dozen or so hit points from my generous thousands which, of course, I instantaneously regenerated. I'm sure the result would have been a lot worse had that last roll been doubles but as it was, I suffered the equivalent of a crease in my glorious emerald uniform (not even a mused hair.) A game has to have real negative sanctions. That's college-man talk for it has to sting.

If you've ever get a chance to play in the game store in Norfolk Virginia (no I don't know which one) when the group pulls out The Morrow Project, do so. One summer during college, I rode the bus across Virginia to attend a wedding. While in Norfolk, I enjoyed a moment away in the jungles of a post holocaust world while a guy I only know as "The Torch Man" screamed at me with veins bursting from this throat. "If you get more than five feet from your buddy in a fire fight, your dead! Dead. Man. Dead!" I don't know if that's true but I believed it while I played. I can still see the tint of the gun metal that never existed as we crawled through that jungle. No one was shot (took hit points). I think we were chasing

a badger. I'm not sure, but the emotion of that jungle was there. Not only do the mechanics have to sting, the players have to know it without being stung.

And if I have to say it, the combat system should be fun. It should provide for unexpected results regardless of how prepared the combatants are. It should allow for desperation to work some times. My brother was merciless with that Daisy pistol but I think he was jimmying the sight. I told him not to do that but my guess is that he couldn't hear because his ears were ringing from the "fungo game."

After describing the hellish beast and his impenetrable hide in great detail for the last ten minutes with elaborate pie charts and comparisons to the 747 Jumbo Liner, along with his supporting hellish cast of thousands, you would think that the stout warriors would realize their predicament and flee for their collective lives. Imagine my surprise when they never considered the option. Instead drawing their weapons with impressive screams of doom. (Just exactly who is this Crom guy?) I consider running at even such mundane experiences as a crossing guard with a stop sign. Sure some of this recklessness can be given simply to bloodlust, but usually there remains some confusion on how the "Run Away" rules work. The combat system should allow the player an option for escape. If this is integrated into the combat system in a seamless manner, it is so much the better.

The combat system should allow for some reasoning. "We've hit the pulsating alien creature with fire, cold, deep space vacuum, lead slugs, kung fu kicks from Kevin (and we're going to miss Kevin), tepid water, intolerably bad smelling chemicals, nuclear emissions and the only thing he responded to was that cottage cheese that we left on the mess table. Gee I don't know, anyone got a pointed stick?" I've made a personal vendetta to kill, personally with my sore hands, the next referee who lets the party deliver thousands of hit points to the creature without telling us that we have not even removed the sheen from the creatures hide. There is nothing confidential about the creature's blood hydraulically jetting from open wounds and if I don't see the wonderful ooze after a few hours worth of hacking, I'm going to get suspicious. Enough said, you've been warned. Combat systems should allow for reasoning.

The system should allow for multiple participants and allow for other things to be going on at the same time. Before he was the cunning detective Sherlock Holmes, Basil Rathbone was quite the swordsman. And in every fight, a delicate verbal banter would progress. Even Skywalker had to talk to guys that just wouldn't stay dead while making shots that would even beat my brother. Not only polite conversation but other action should be possible. The cliché example is trying to disarm a bomb or free a bound colleague. And there are times when you just gotta' tend to your hair. (I jest.)

The system should allow for participants to get better. Why? I use the example that once you've driven at eighty miles an hour (though I've never done this), it makes it easier to drive fifty five (that I've done.) Having stood against a terrible foe and survived, you have some advantage over those that have never stood the test. A novel approach would be to allow for growth quickly up to a certain ability and then make the growth hard as it surely must be. And of course, always wear your seat belt.

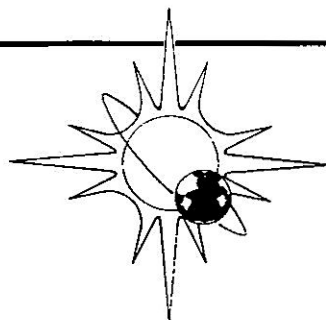
Before you start brandishing those terrible accusations like "roll-playing" (oh, I'm scared) allow for a moment that the referee of his game decides how the conflict system will be used in his own game. He sets the tone for aggressiveness and guides the reality of the game. It is the game designers' responsibility to allow for the referee's touch. True, some games such as "Victorian Parlor Conversation™" do not need conflict simulation, but in a hobby dominated by fantasy mass battle and space shoot-outs, combat is important. Expect more from your game. Maybe someone will give it to us.

Oh, for those considering my BB gun game, remember, that a good conflict simulation shouldn't upset the rest of the board and shouldn't require spackle to fix the walls when you're done.

**YES, WE ACCEPT SUBMISSIONS.
SEND FOR OUR WRITER'S
GUIDELINES.**

Guardians Of Sol

Character's Name:



Race:

Traits:

Task Force ID:

Advancement Title:

G/ Sol Suit Functions

- () AAD
- () Access Data Files
- () APB
- () Auto-ECM
- () Auto-Ranging
- () Auto-Star Point
- () Bull Dozer
- () C-Cubed
- () Cartridge Load
- () Catalog Immunes
- () Chemical Disbalance
- () Cluster Bomb
- () CLVS
- () Counter-ECM
- () Crowd Control Mode
- () Cryogenic Containment

- () Dead Man's Pose
- () Desperation Load
- () Demolitions
- () Dust-Off
- () ECM
- () Entrenching Tool
- () EDPP
- () FREMA
- () GOP
- () GPMG/SF
- () Guard Dog
- () Hand Cuffs
- () High Impact Kinetic
- () Holographic Imager
- () Hydraulic Press
- () Jet-Pack

- () Limpot Mine
- () Linear Shaped Charge
- () Neural Shock
- () Neutralizing Reagent
- () Physiological Monitoring
- () Pistol Grip
- () Power Generation
- () Remote Defusing Ordnance
- () RFSD
- () RPG
- () Rubber Bullet
- () Seeker Round
- () Static Defense
- () Structural Analysis
- () Sub-Orbital Interceptor
- () Taser

- () TIR
- () Universal Joints
- () Upgrade #24B
- () Viso Grip

Command Functions

- () Calming Voice
- () Charisma of Presence
- () Imprint Memory
- () Mental Discipline
- () Official Report
- () Override Directives
- () Psychological Warfare
- () Scramble Suit Codes
- () Tactical Analysis

Tech-Ninja Functions

- () Battlefield Sequencing
- () Chemical Dart
- () ESS
- () Exotic Weapon Training
- () ISC
- () Matrix Watch-Dog
- () Optical Link
- () Poly-Extruder
- () System Bypass

Task Resolution (2D8)

Degree	Overkill	Success	Mixed	Fail	Major Mishap
Basic	(16)	9 or better	8-6	5-3	2 or less
Difficult	(15)	11 or better	10-8	7-4	3 or less
Tasking	(15)	13 or better	12-10	9-6	5 or less
Limit	(16)	15 or better	14-13	12-8	7 or less

EE Suit or Equivalent Universal Damage Chart

Type I (Abrasive)	Type II (Morale Test)	Type III (Walking)	Type IV (Vicious)
Base	Base	Base	Base
Duro-Armor	Duro-Armor	Duro-Armor	Duro-Armor
Player	Player	Player	Player
Durable	Fierce	Durable	Durable
Spirited	Imperial	Upgrade #24B	Upgrade #24B
Cruz		Cruz	
Upgrade #24B			
Overflow	Morale or Walking	Unconscious	Vicious
			KIA - Dead

Character's Level

Multiple Attempt Bonus

Defensive Modifier

Make-Rolls Remaining

IGNOBLES

- Adventure (Space Travel, Dangerous Encounters, Intrigue)
- Ambition (Profit, Revenge, Power)
- Battle (Military Engagements and Strategy)
- Cunning Plays (Clever Execution of Skills and Ingenuity)
- Experiences Beyond Comprehension (Aliens, Technology, Unknown)
- Growth (Leadership, Comradeship, Political Authority)
- Heroics (Boldness, Courage, Audacity)
- Judgement (Exercising Prudence, Forethought Plans, Precautions)
- Publicity (Fame, Triumph, Notoriety)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Guardians of Sol

Summary of initial report from Guardians of Sol team X56 on investigation of the disaster at the now deserted Sumter Base:

"Bronson report," called agent Zulu, the team leader.

"Let's see. Cremat 9C interior wall coating with standard J-unit density gives 'audit' parameter of Cap, I got a definite loss of all audible signals at T-minus fifteen point nine days. Lots of typical chatter before that point, then panic and after that all silent. Could also be an explosion of airlocks, but this area isn't ideal. It's a tad too large. Whatever happened though, occurred about sixteen days ago, and it was all over by T-minus fifteen point nine."

"Anyone else confirm that?"

"Walker here. Yes, I'm picking up signals from my probe stationed at distance fifteen point seven three. Doing a 'rough send' I verify there is a tremendous amount of radio signals in standard vessel and EE Suit range. Maneuvering to that point of highest amplitude."

"Is it worm hole interference?"

"No way, I'm signaling you through a repeater that's 180 degrees opposite your position. Whatever I'm hearing, it came from your station just under sixteen days ago."

"Right, keep me posted, Vex, any patterns in the matrix?"

Now fully absorbed in the station control systems as a 'watch-dog,' Vex reports, "Negative. This wasn't a safety failure that blew the three airlocks and activated all the escape pods. Commands were initiated but their source is unknown."

"Cap, Urban here. I was running a standard 'adept image' on this lower engineering bay, and I think I hit pay dirt. Tuning to fifteen point seven three, bingo. We got ourselves a three-dimensional replay. Looks to be one man being shot twice in the face at close range by some guy in an EE Suit. I could use Bronson and Jeffrey down here."

The group reassembles in the lower engineering bay to conduct their specialties. Jeffrey scans the air content for any anomalies; Bronson acquires vibrational studies of the walls and floor, and Urban continues to correct distortions in his EDPP to clarify the visual. Soon all are ready to report.

"Captain Zulu, I got 75% replay of most of the action. I concentrated on the EE Suit helmet and using 'attire' I pulled the ID number. The Suit was outfitted on a trooper named Phil Dancer in Battle Born squad thirty-six. I'll need some uplink time with Vex to really get the whole image preserved."

"Vex, establish a link to HQ and signal all our information. Also get us an APB, last know whereabouts for MACE/BB Trooper Dancer, first name Phil."

"Cap, I took audio signal traces of the time of death. The blast wasn't high impact. I found similar audio records that confirm the victim was slain by 'GOP,' of rather low charge I might add. A few minutes before he was killed, there is evidence of pacing, but no struggle. I hear the victim pleading and then the murder. Real sick bastard, made the guy beg for mercy. However, he isn't alien — my best guess without more processing time is that the murder suspect is Terran, the voice patterns reveal such."

"A trace sample of the blood collected with 'ee ess scan' and confirmed with the DNA records in my 'Catalog Immunes' shows the victim to be you're not gonna like this Captain — the dead guy is Phil Dancer."

"Great, we got another rogue Suit. It didn't just appear on his body. Ok, again from the start — we got a technical guy with an affinity for diabolical acts. Who are we looking for and why did he raid this station? Give me some more correlated data. Jeffrey scan the Suit image. Bronson, Urban check hallways leading to engineering. I want a crew manifest Vex. Which stateroom was Dancer's and how did he get here? Walker, what were all radio transmissions twenty-four hours before the crime. Give me some psychological profiles on related crimes and people. You're the experts"

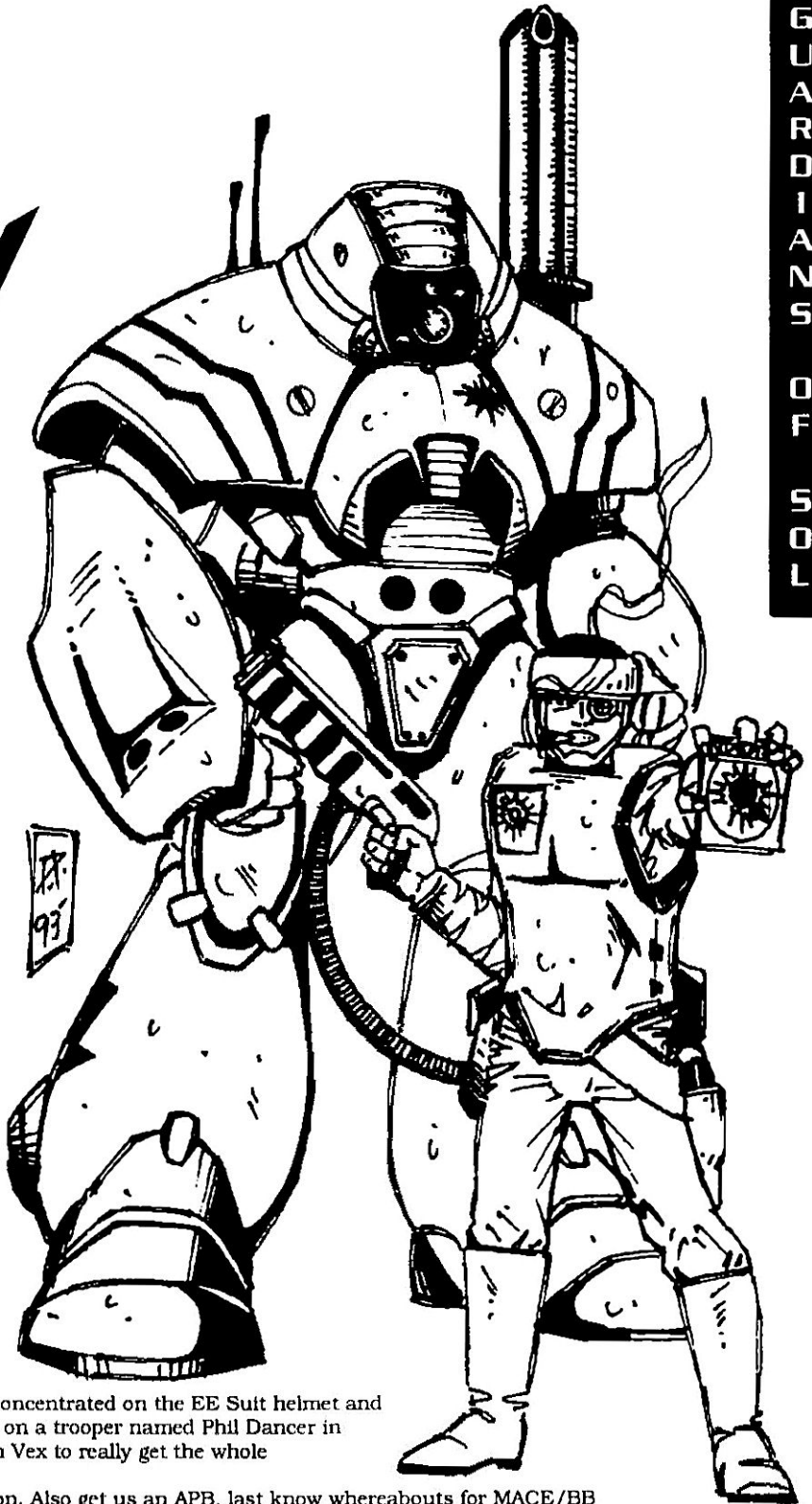


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Guardians of Sol Concept

Billions of people rely on the protection of but a few. The Guardians of Sol (G/Sol for short) is another branch of Tetra-League's Military Assault and Combat Expedition forces (or MACE). MACE is composed of a thousand squads, of which the G/Sol number under three hundred. They serve three distinct functions in the security of the Tetra-League. Their commands encompass most of the static defense forces, secondly various investigation patrols as well as prosecution units, and lastly all of the military intelligence and system governors. In larger battles, they perform a wide array of functions from handling prisoners of war to planning and initiating psychological warfare operations. They control the Tetra-League's "Bridging Unit" (which actually is a force which attacks or routes troop movements through very specialized worm holes junctions). Plus, they also handle much of the combat engineering and non-mobile, large scale anti-vehicle and anti-orbital defenses not supervised by the Fusiliers. They are the only squads trusted to man the defense grids and matrix records on Terra. They even have a special unit which monitors traffic control for Jack Foster's Worm Hole Cartel and another that oversees the transport of restricted purified substances for use in research. But more the major purpose of play, the G/Sol are the cops. G/Sol players are high-tech law enforcement characters. They mainly catch bad-guys and turn them over to the courts.

Relation to the Battle Born

As described in the first game of the ERA TEN campaign series, the Battle Born are MACE's commando troopers. They were detailed in issue one of Space Gamer. In that issue, the Battle Born were portrayed in a somewhat light-hearted vein, treating them primarily as collective squads of misfits (yet extremely capable under duress). If a combat comparison is desired, the G/Sol typically could fend-off the best attacks of any three equivalently rated Battle Born squads. Sure, the top squads, like Chief Cherub's Battle Hymn (Squad #1) or the highly decorated MacNamara's Band (Squad #8 but changes, depending upon last TV sweeps) would be able to quickly dispatch a force of G/Sol, but most others are afraid of these humorless defenders of these Terran way of life. The G/Sol is more of a straight-up high-tech game without the levity of Battle Born. They consider the job of enforcing the law serious business.

G/Sol Operations

The G/Sol operate in squads of troopers, or as they say, in task force groups of agents. Like their counter-parts in the Battle Born, each squad is given a com-

plicated efficiency rating that determines their assignment ranking. Yet the G/Sol have a number of uniquely trained and equipped task force groups who watch-dog and investigate only certain types of crime and Tetra-League intrigue.

The players' squad usually will be one of the elite security or investigative forces. If players want to take the roles of basic grunts, then Battle Born's assault missions are probably a better way to game. The player guardians are serious professionals; experts in their fields assigned to the highest priority assignments as issued by MACE high command or on contract to one of various major cartels that control most systems in Tetra-League. The players are well aware of their political role and are accustomed to being referred to as "body-guards" and "policy enforcers." The role of G/Sol is paramount. Without them, survival of the fittest and general anarchy would ensue. They uphold the law and protect the politically elected.

Because the Tetra-League was formed from the collapse of the Terran Empire, these guards and investigative patrols enjoy great power and position by almost hereditary right. Many systems, not just criminals, fear the G/Sol, but those are the systems in which crime is usually prevalent. Those who obey the law are protected by the law. The guilty will be punished.

G/Sol Philosophy

All G/Sol members swear allegiance to their leader of long standing, Kiel Steiner, the commander of post Terra. They obey his orders with a reverence normally associated with brain-washed cult members. They are aware of their organization's history and take great pride in their reputation for utter loyalty, as well as ruthless efficiency. They seldom laugh, unless in a manner to mock those who dare oppose their enforcement of the law. One should never joke about crime or law enforcement, especially the threat of terrorists.

Though the universe is filled with technological luxury available to all, criminals have squandered their freedom and victimize those who would do no harm. The G/Sol protect the innocent (Taints) and defend the status quo. Mankind is free from the burden of a short life by using Mortality Reduction Drugs (MRD), so criminals could terrorize forever unless they are opposed. Since most humans are Tainted with the Pacification Virus, the G/Sol protect the innocent from those who would lord over their misfortune. The players are those one in a million who are unaffected by the Pacification Virus — Immunes. The Tetra-League is threatened by external forces (hostile aliens), so every Immune must defend the Terran values. The G/Sol ensure that they do.

Characters

Players seldom start as raw recruits. Steiner, as commander of the G/Sol, picks only two races to staff his ranks — Terrans ("Spirit and Heart of Law") and Cruz ("Strong Arm of Law"). Players will either transfer from Battle Born squads (at specific points along the character progression path) or else start as new characters, candidates selected for service.

To generate a new character, the player first selects a race and then rolls for Traits. Then he picks various combat and investigative skills (more correctly Duro-Armor Suit functions) to simulate his training. After this is done, a player has a character and is ready to adventure. Cadets start with proficiency in but a few special functions and skills with which to adventure. However, by completing assignments (making arrests), they immediately gain additional abilities. Duro-Armor and guidelines on the Combat Environmental Enclosure (EE Suit) are detailed later in the text.

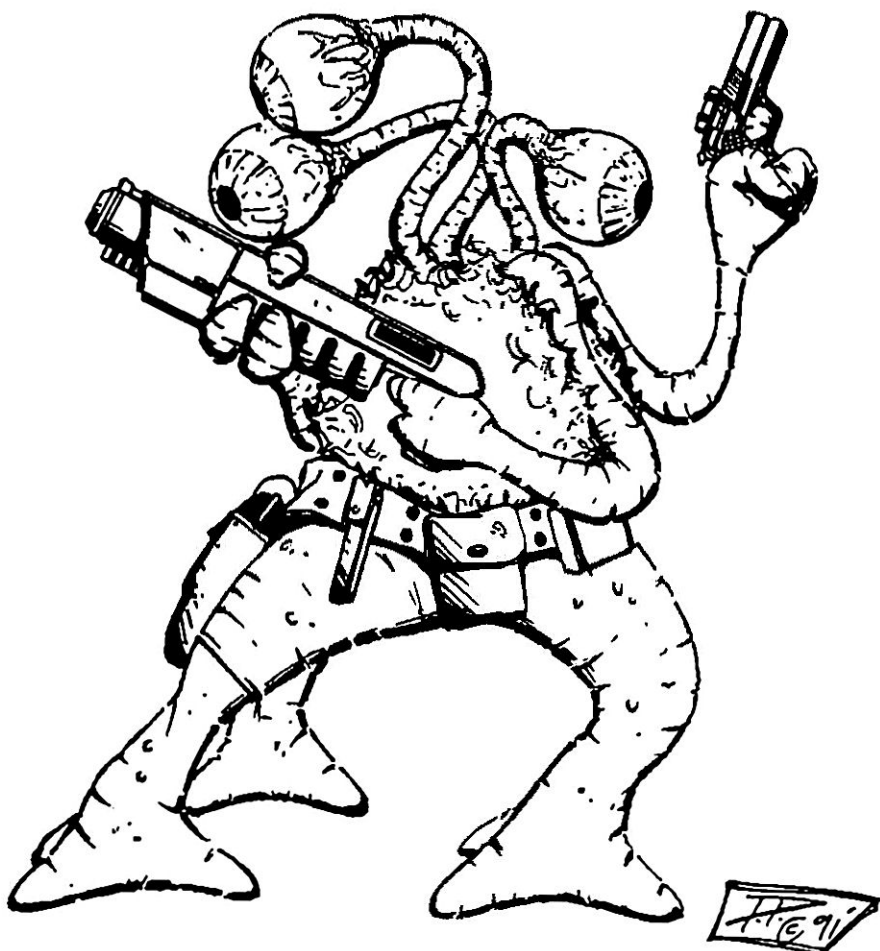
G/Sol recruit only the most creative and energetic, as well as extremely loyal. They also seek resourceful agents. Initial characters, of both the Terran and Cruz race, find they have greater trait possibilities with fewer restrictions that would limit their skills, over their Battle Born counterparts.

Special Note on Funky Powers

Though occasionally the G/Sol have used Empaths to allow their vessels to Trip, or they may employ a paranormal free-lance agent to assist in an investigation, they do not use or cultivate strange, funky powers. Such abnormal psychic powers are too unreliable for the precise nature of G/Sol operations and arrests. No innocent person should be convicted based on a hunch (or peering into crystal balls). Proof is found in the facts. The G/Sol agency's close ties to all major cartels, including the Worm Hole Cartel, usually makes travel a simple manner of filing the paper-work. Space travel by crystal melding (Trip power) and actions involving Twizzle drives are left for the Battle Born to risk.

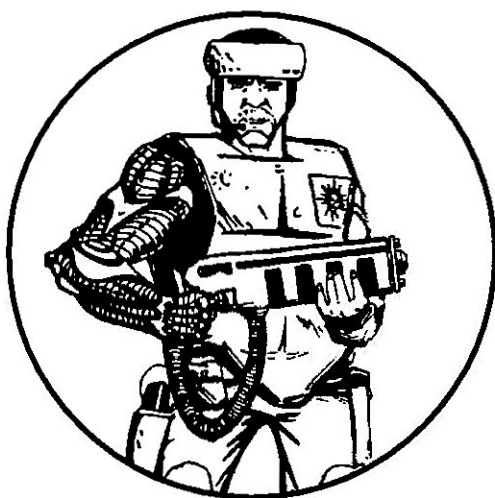
Initial Race Selection

In the G/Sol the principal races from which the players may choose are only two — Cruz and Terran. Although the galaxy is populated by almost a dozen intelligent races and the Tetra-League itself has four great races — Cimmar, Cruz, Skia and Terran — only two of the four races may swear loyalty to the G/Sol. The players choose from these two.



Organization

Official records on G/Sol staffing and locations are highly classified. Many false entries exist to confuse hostile agents. The members of G/Sol tend not to carry any specific ranks and titles like the Battle Born's "DOC" or "Spec." Instead most are simply called "Agent" with their code-name (i.e. Agent Brain-Rush or Agent Vanguard). Commanders do not suffer from short-falls in manning. (Or perhaps they refuse to admit or complain about their manpower problems.) G/Sol do not tolerate grumblers. They are not forced to accept problem troopers or condemned convicts like the Battle Born. The G/Sol's role is different. Instead of going to the enemy, more often the G/Sol garrison certain systems and await the upcoming threat. The advantage of permanent surroundings and the privilege of close ties to both the War and Journeymen Cartels, means the G/Sol are seldom suffering from a lack of amenities. They are well supplied, especially in intelligence reports of danger. Their equipment is state of the art and various enhancements have been implemented. Besides the static forces, the players will be part of one of many selective special units involved in counter-terrorist, contra-band interdiction and secret service escort of cartel executives. Those, aspiring to positions as investigators, hold great power and liberty while upholding the laws.

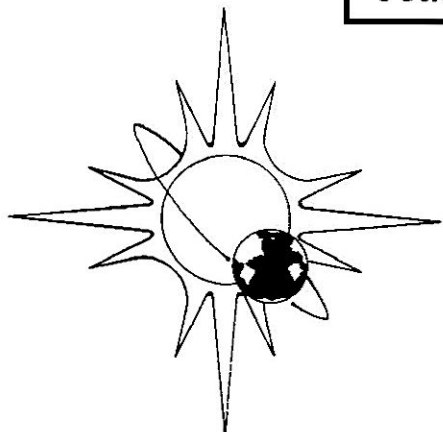


Upon initially generating a character, the player will select a race and then roll a D8 to determine his traits.

Terran Traits — G/Sol Initial Recruit (*)

- 1 or 2 Fierce and Inventive**
- 3 Fierce, Inventive and Spirited**
- 4 to 6 Fierce, Imperial and Spirited**
- 7 or 8 Fierce, Imperial, Inventive and Spirited**

*Note: * — If the character has entered from another branch of service, he already has his traits defined for him. These rolls only apply for entry-level characters into the G/Sol (and the game).*



Terran ("Spirit and Heart of the Law")

— administrative, ambitious, domineering; we know them, because we are them.

Cruz ("Strong Arm of Law") — dog-like, loyal, tri-axial symmetric humans, trained solely for battle.

The original forces of the G/Sol were all Cruz, organized to fill the security needs of the immortal and peace-loving Terrans involved in a heinous war against fanatic religious groups in Era Three. At that time the commanders were all Terran, while the Cruz were the sole troopers. Even today, Cruz find advancement limited, but any dissatisfaction with their role is voiced solely by external groups. (Those who would seek to spread criminal protest throughout the League.)

Traits

There are five principle Traits in characters: Durable, Fierce, Imperial, Inventive and Spirited. There is no degree that measures a trait; they are either present or not. The absence of a trait denotes the character is not any better than the norm in that area.

Durable means the character has general ruggedness, size, strength, superior pain threshold, and endurance over most individuals. Durable characters can suffer more wounds before falling in combat. Cruz are all Durable. Unfortunately because of their size and body structure, Terrans can never be Durable. However, the training and prowess imparted by an EE Suit tends to make the physical abilities of the races equal. (Equally tremendous.)

Cruz Traits — G/Sol Initial Recruit (*)

- 1 Durable and Fierce**
- 2 or 3 Durable, Fierce and Inventive**
- 4 or 5 Durable, Fierce and Spirited**
- 6 or 7 Durable, Fierce, Inventive and Spirited**
- 8 Durable, Fierce, Imperial and Spirited**

Fierce means the character is seemingly invincible, unyielding and without fear. The Fierce trait offers immunity to the penalties caused by pain of wounds received in combat. The extreme loyalty and indoctrination practices of the G/Sol makes all initial candidates to the ranks Fierce in nature.

Imperial characters are leaders. Most are comely and persuasive, good managers able to handle bureaucratic hassles without anger and able to offer diplomatic solutions. Trait shows an ability to control others, give coherent orders, and command the actions of

robots during times of battle or duress. A common enough trait among the ambitious Terrans; however, the only Cruz attributed with Imperial trait are found in the G/Sol (or executive retirees with prior duty service.) Only characters with the Imperial trait may develop and use Command functions (see skills).

Inventive is a trait showing resourcefulness, cleverness, and shrewdness of the character. Those without the trait are not hampered from making decisions or planning schemes, but spot judgement and taking advantage of the situation are better accomplished by an Inventive character. All Terrans exhibit the Inventive trait, and the G/Sol have had great success developing the Cruz technical aptitude and training them in a variety of technical fields. Only characters with the Inventive trait may develop and use Tech-Ninja functions (see skills).

Spirited represents agility, speed, balance, and superior freedom and independence of motion. The character is quick, dashing and energetic. Spirited trait allows a character to observe and react to his combat armor's sensory and warning data at superior rate, allowing increased chance to avoid or counter incoming danger (attacks). Both races, but not every member, exhibit this trait.

Starting Skills

A player begins with a partially trained character, either someone who was recruited and underwent intense conditioning, or else a person who transfers from another branch of MACE (like the Battle Born). Anyone who transfers from Battle Born (or another MACE outfit) has the advantage of already having a variety of skills (even the Reservist). But then again, not all Battle Born transfers have the Fierce trait gained even by Terrans for completing G/Sol candidate indoctrination. (See the Progression Path for details on future ranks and titles or for crossing over from the game Battle Born.) If the player creates a new character and starts him in the G/Sol, he will select his first title as either a "Raw Recruit" or "Political Appointee." Both entry-level characters are outfitted in Duro-Armor (an advanced form of the EE Suit) and trained in the following four functions: Access Data File, C-Cubed, High Impact Kinetic and Jet-Pack. Check those skills as known on your character record sheet. The player will then select another eight additional skills if he is a Raw Recruit, or four more skills as a Political Appointee, from those described in the sections that follow. That completes his training. Don't worry, additional skills should come quickly as the player agent makes his first arrests.

The new agent will be assigned to an investigation unit made up of the collective force and abilities of all the players. They will work together as a team and might start by selecting complementary skills. (i.e. Not all assignments call for snipers, so take some much needed surveillance functions. And try to avoid repeating a skill known by someone else in the group.)

The team is usually led by a more senior agent with far greater abilities than either the raw recruit or political appointee. In fact, it would be equally rare for a team to consist solely of a leader and a bunch of rookies. Yet, the referee can tailor his mission and opponents to start all the players together, should he decide not to let some of the players start with advanced characters. But usually the team has a leader and at least one of the players should begin with an advanced character (maybe double his starting skills). Or perhaps, generate a non-player character for the group's leader.

Overview of Suit Functions

Duro-Armor functions can be as straightforward as their definition. For example, Crowd Control Mode means the character is ready for riot control over a wide area. It may be effective under the circumstances; it may not. Yet don't forget, play is enhanced by interpreting broader uses for skills and expanding their possible uses beyond the obvious. Variety also adds texture and strategy to play.

The player becomes proficient in his skills. He may strive for selection or concentrate on specialties. Selecting the same function or skill another time (in essence studying the function further) will allow a plus one dice modification when using the ability. The player gains "+1" to his rolls. Example, when allotted an advancement and upon gaining three new skills, the player may select three new skills he did not have before, or he may take die-roll bonus in skills he has obtained (i.e. three skills like Dust-Off, GPMG/SF and RFSD, or one skill GPMG/SF with a "+2" bonus). This can be done again and again; however, no player may gain better than a plus four in any function, including skills and other combat techniques.

Actions related to a skill are divided into three degrees: Basic, Difficult or Tasking. A fourth degree, Limit (of Ability), can occur when attempting functions together which raises the degree of the tasks, or also applies when attempting something that the referee deems defies logic or strains the normal uses or abilities implied by the function or skill. In most cases, to use a function or skill the character must have the ability. Yet the player may attempt a function or skill he does not have, by rolling dice at two degrees greater than normal. (i.e. Basic skill is resolved at the Tasking level for results.) For obvious reasons, skills de-

fined as degree Tasking can only be attempted by someone skilled, and one must have the skill before attempting it at its Limit (of Ability). Tasking level skills can not be performed by characters without the function. There is no "Shift Limit" roll.

Skills and functions are normally attempted one at a time, but similar (or complementary) functions may be activated together to hopefully create a unique result. The degree of each of these skills is increased by one. This form of function synergy is the real thrill of gaming in a free-style system as the player dares the danger in order to produce just the perfect result.

All attempt rolls are based on the task resolution table on page fourteen — Duro-Armor functions, investigation skills and combat. The referee should interpret the actions and limits for each skill attempt. In most cases, the players do not roll for every action. The duress of the situation causes an otherwise routine action to become an attempt at degree Basic or a higher.

The overkill does not result in a band of numbers. The result is seldom desired; it could be real good, more often it is an undesired fluke. An overkill results when the player's final outcome is either a fifteen or sixteen (as stated). The player's skill bonus does modify the roll. Thus a player attempting a Difficult task with plus two on his skill, rolling a total of his two D8 for fifteen would generate a final result of seventeen, a success. While the same player rolling a thirteen, adding two for a net result of fifteen, generates an overkill.

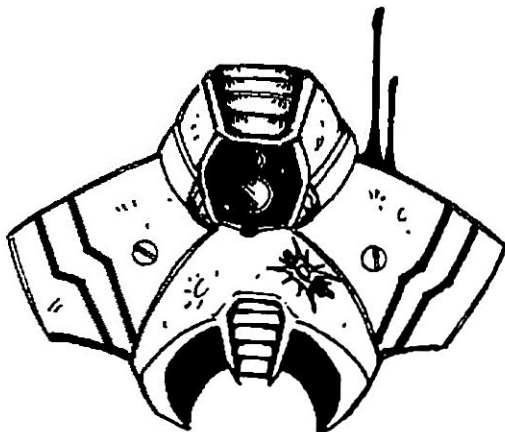
Overkill, Mixed and Mishaps

While performing combat actions in Duro-Armor, special tables are provided later in the combat section to reflect the player having a fluke or serious problem with his Suit. But sometimes tasks are not performed in an EE Suit or else an action is attempted that is more skill oriented. Some actions represent a display of special knowledge and aren't truly a matter of having a working Duro-Armor function. The player performing something like "audit" (AAD) is almost always certain the computers are giving him the right result — the box isn't broken — he just may not be skilled enough to interpret his findings. When actions occur outside of combat, the referee must interpret the less than perfect success results.

The referee should treat an Overkill as being basically a success to the utter extreme. The player gains a great deal of knowledge, but he usually causes detrimental effects to others in the area. This can be wounds or more often confusing the investigative functions of another. Example, our audit may distort the sonic vibrations and amplifies the result. The player may get very good audio recep-

Duro-Armor, the EE Suit used by the Guardians Of Sol

The principal piece of gear of an agent is his EE Suit. This enclosure performs all functions of combat and personal maintenance. Though some investigators have shunned their EE Suits for undercover and covert operations — adopting a variety of selective gear, including miniature versions of most EE Suit functions — the Suit is combat ready and serves as the basic support equipment for the G/Sol. Each suit was designed to be generic (all alike), but unlike the Battle Born variety, the G/Sol actively research new functions and upgrade the configuration for their members. The new EE Suit, called Duro-Armor, is composed of numerous modules with tactical capabilities. When a character must leave his Duro-Armor on certain assignments, he may only selectively take certain functions with him — usually a few choice weapons and the biological implant versions of his Access Data Files and C-Cubed gear. The referee decides, as usually dictated by his scenario, which functions are allowed to be detached and carried.



Skill List

G/ Sol Suit Functions

AAD	Guard Dog
Access Data Files	Hand Cuffs
APB	High Impact Kinetic
Auto-ECM	Holographic Imager
Auto-Ranging	Hydraulic Press
Auto-Star Point	Jet-Pack
Bull Dozer	Limpet Mine
C-Cubed	Linear Shaped Charge
Cartridge Load	Neural Shock
Catalog Immunes	Neutralizing Reagent
Chemical Disbalance	Physiological Monitoring
Cluster Bomb	Pistol Grip
CLVS	Power Generation
Counter-ECM	Remote Defusing Ordnance
Crowd Control Mode	RFSD
Cryogenic Containment	RPG
Dead Man's Pose	Rubber Bullet
Desperation Load	Seeker Round
Demolitions	Static Defense
Dust-Off	Structural Analysis
ECM	Sub-Orbital Interceptor
Entrenching Tool	Taser
EDPP	TIR
FREMA	Universal Joints
GOP	Upgrade #24B
GPMG/SF	Vise Grip

Command Functions

Calming Voice
Charisma of Presence
Imprint Memory
Mental Discipline
Official Report
Override Directives
Psychological Warfare
Scramble Suit Codes
Tactical Analysis

Tech-Ninja Functions

Battlefield Sequencing
Chemical Dart
ESS
Exotic Weapon Training
ISC
Matrix Watch-Dog
Optical Link
Poly-Extruder
System Bypass

To determine success, the player rolls two eight-sided dice (2D8) and compares below:

Task Resolution (2D8)

Degree	Overkill	Success	Mixed	Fail	Major Mishap
Basic	(16)	9 or better	8-6	5-3	2 or less
Difficult	(15)	11 or better	10-8	7-4	3 or less
Tasking	(15)	13 or better	12-10	9-6	5 or less
Limit	(16)	15 or better	14-13	12-8	7 or less

tion, but he has blurred any visual picture that may be gained by "adept image" (EDPP). Or else he simply turned-up his signal so far that he caused a feedback in a friend for a Morale Test wound. In similar function a Mixed result is also a success but at less than perfect ability or having undesired side effects and penalty. The same "audit" may on a Mixed result only give a partial replay of the audio, or perhaps it alerts the criminals that they have been "wire-tapped." A Fail is something that just doesn't work or isn't possible. ("Now maybe we should check the equipment.") Lastly, a Mishap result is a Fail that results in undesired impact or regretful consequences. A Mishap with "audit" may generate a sonic boom that knocks the group unconscious or levels an area under search. In some of the investigative skills that follow, examples of typical Overkill, Mixed and Mishap results are given for clarity. The referee is encouraged to decide the outcome on the spot when the roll is made, instead of relying on a standardize list of results that occur on other than successful rolls of the dice. Assess a penalty befitting the situation or environment.

G/Sol Duro-Armor Functions

While the Battle Born tends to emphasize conformity and a general purpose trooper, the G/Sol have become hallmark in their development of specialized combatants. Innovation is highly regarded. The Battle Born would claim that they can turn anyone into a soldier. G/Sol commanders, both ruthless and efficient in obtaining objectives, hand select their teams, looking for abilities that complement one another. Being nonsense and absolute hounds for secrecy, many specialized applications are never made public knowledge, nor even shared with other MACE squads. What criminals don't know, will result in their apprehension or destruction. Despite this, with slight reconfiguration of a basic EE Suit, Battle Born characters can also train to utilize these example functions. Yet the referee may impose restrictions.

Skills are classified as Basic Trooper

(or functions that every set of Duro-Armor can perform). Command (or something developed through military experience and practice) and Tech-Ninja (or something that is often taught or developed with technical study). Not all characters have the ability to learn and develop an expertise in every function of their Suits. Only characters with Trait Imperial may select and utilize Command functions. These functions are limited by the character's abilities. Additionally, the Tech-Ninja functions are limited to those of Inventive Trait. However, remember that even though a character doesn't have (doesn't know) a skill, he can still attempt the function at two levels of difficulty higher than normal. This Trait limitation applies to gaining skills, not exclusively using them. Yet, the two degree penalty will keep unskilled uses to only the simplest of methods.

For most examples, a basic root EE Suit function (as described in the game Battle Born) is specialized in Duro-Armor to give a new application. Unless otherwise noted, G/Sol may acquire through training any of the functions listed for an EE Suit. Refer to Battle Born for more details on specific functions. However, G/Sol also have the ability to take a general purpose skill, like C-Cubed, and develop specific case functions to meet their assignments. As a guideline, when the referee says an action is of specific degree, like Tasking, if a special function could apply to make the job easier to perform, then the degree should drop by one. (i.e. Limit to Tasking, Tasking to Difficult, Difficult to Basic and Basic automatic success.) Thus C-Cubed, as will be seen by example to follow, might be used to reconstruct in holographic form the activities in an area from transient disturbances in the walls. Basically a player may view what happened a short time ago (or even longer), like watching a TV replay. The acronym loving G/Sol call this function "EDPP," pronounced "adept" and short for Electron Density Photo-Plating. Battle Born might say the trooper was simply real "adept" (or lucky) with his C-Cubed. The referee might set the degree as Limit for C-Cubed, but such an action is Tasking or even easier for the highly specialized Duro-Armor of the G/Sol.

Sound like hocus-pocus? Technology in a thousand years will be so advanced that a lot of things will appear mystical. The G/Sol are specialists at using their basic equipment, a modified EE Suit called Duro-Armor. Yet, they must face the most dangerous criminals, who are often skilled at countering even these superior actions.

Remember, what follows is just a list of example skills. The referee and players are encouraged to create their own specialized applications. The skills should have elements of crime solving,

because the majority of missions will be ones where the players are investigators following a criminal or solving a mystery, preventing an act of espionage or doing reconnaissance for MACE. The scenarios where the players are simply troopers waiting in garrison tend to be dull. Liven these up with the players forced to perform patrols and solve a variety of local conflicts. Cartels are always plotting against one another and with outside groups. The G/Sol tend to be caught between these rivalries.



Agent's View of his Suit

The older model EE Suit is a cage designed to trap recruits into the service, especially glory hounds like the Battle Born. Basic designs were flawed and without considerable reconfiguration the Suit becomes almost unbearable to wear. As for the impenetrability of the armor, that's just hype fed to new cadets. Sol Guards know enough not to be hit. The worst part about an unmodified EE Suit are the functions collectively called "Active Cells." Original bacteria smears have long since reached expiration date and their use can result in limb regeneration processes that tend to concentrate on combat functionality rather than comfort, appearance, or any other type of normality. Over time, armored troopers could lose their integumentary system (skin), that is unless you first remove all those probes and metabolic stabilizers — the type that violate most body cavities and circumvent your actual organs. Those are simply left over test gear from trial runs, not required and possibly harmful.

The EE Suit is also too powerful (for it's own good). Sure a few maniacs (again in the Battle Born) like to be able to super-charge their kinetic load and create a plasma, but such field generation tends to cause intense synapse firing, or basically a constant dull pain. Once you get into your Suit, erase all those information systems. Most haven't been kept current. At any quality matrix interface (computer network) with the right access codes and security clearance, the latest info on all known Tetra-League resources can be down-loaded. Hey, if they give you some trouble getting the latest records, a routine hack will usually get all the data you possibly would want. The absolute, best part of the EE Suit is the head's up visor displays. They provide the latest targeting, telemetry and warning conditions. I've heard tell that it takes a genius to comprehend all the information, but I've never had any trouble finding what I need, especially after upgrade #202-65/7 tied the display into the Bio-Computer Interlink. The Battle Born will probably stop moaning once they get all their squads field retrofitted. Still I don't envy Logistic Command's task of tracking down those squads all over the galaxy. At least with the Sol Guards, I stay in one place. The only guys moving around are agents. I wouldn't want to be on the wrong side of the law when those guys are assigned to track you down. I hope to make the grade and get assigned to investigation; that is, after I serve for a few decades and get proficient in my Suit.

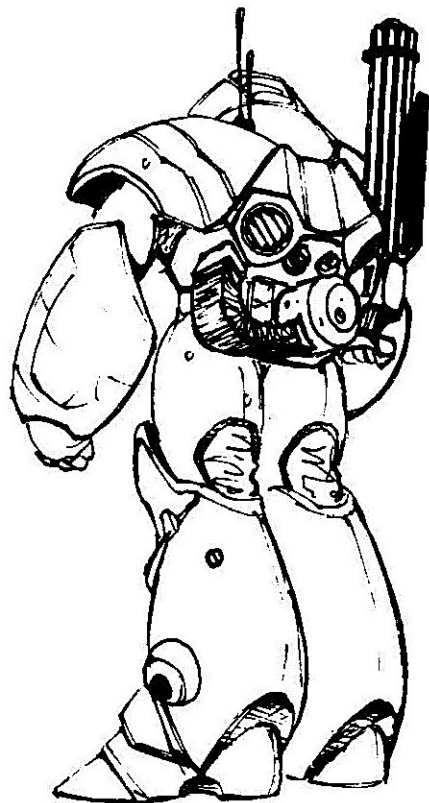
We all look good in the practice simulator. But just try to ready your shot while a screaming maniac is running at you!

The Battle Born think a trooper is just a place to mount weapons. In the G/Sol, we get respect.

My audit says that last blast was from a Masgo made Armageddon 34-Zed. I'd bet we got a Kro sniper at vector 37.26, angle above the horizon twenty-one point two-zero — that's Harrison building, third floor, fifth window from right.

In an almost unbelievable case, an agent using APB claims to have controlled the Master Suit Codes for an injured trooper and secured his escape from captivity.

In one of the few recreational activities of the Guards, they have been known to play a sport like rugby with most of the team members configured in bulldozer mode.



Specific Examples of Functions

AAD, usually pronounced "Audit" (root C-Cubed): Short for "amplifying audio differentials," a type of filtering and processing of sonic residue which screens all modulation and residual sound vibrations to create an undamped approximation of conversation at the time of the crime. The function collects data then processes the vibrations (sounds), canceling known sounds and enhancing others suspected to be verbal orders or specific conversations that happened previously in an area. The function acts as a form of electronic eaves-dropping, yet this can occur long after the suspects have left an area. Function works best in box enclosures (inside buildings), that have had few people cross the area after the criminal event. Because of this, they tend to be easily countered by someone weary of surveillance. Audit is best when used against the careless or unsuspecting. Luckily, most criminals are too insane to care who listens to their plans and arguments. Audit has also been used effectively to determine the exact distance, location and type of weapon following an explosion on the battlefield. A Mixed result will usually only reveal a partial conversation or the presence of audio traces, but their content will be unclear. An Overkill result will provide crystal clear information, but the sonic vibrations must be manipulated to such extreme that other types of data (like visual or chemical) will be obscured. Mishap results in the crime scene being fouled so that almost all evidence is corrupted and rendered unusable.

Access Data Files (general purpose EE Suit function): Through a Bio-Computer Interlink, the player can recall and display vast amounts of material and specialized information. The G/Sol files are far better than most, but specific questions still take time to answer. A skilled user can streamline his search.

APB (root Access Data Files and C-Cubed): Short for "all points bulletin," this function is the ability to issue a warning and alert other G/Sol of a threat. APB is also used to transfer valuable data on an event. An enhanced version of normal communication, the skill imparts the ability to aim information streams down worm holes and suffer little of the refraction, static and distortion sometimes associated with long range communication. Think of this skill as an intergalactic telephone, but only through systems which are connected by worm holes. (No worry, those are the only active places G/Sol patrol.) The referee sets the limits for this ability, but such a skill allows agents more than just a way of keeping in touch with higher command.

Auto-ECM (root ECM): These are automated versions of the EE Suit's

electronic counter-measures. They are designed to be user-free and activate themselves when required. Though not 100% effective as a counter-measure, the function is not as player interactive as regular ECM. The skill is not effective in computer matrix operations where active identification of friend from foe is necessary. Often an agent will be skilled first in standard ECM, then upgrade his Suit to respond with automatic functions to certain threats learned by experience to always be dangerous.

Auto-Ranging (root Double-Precision Targeting): A form of targeting that allows the player to shoot with more accuracy and greater severity. The Duro-Armor is constantly assessing threats and vulnerabilities. This data is relayed to the agent so that all he need do is make the decision to fire; the Suit does the rest.

Auto-Star Point (root Star Point Field Overload): Each Suit is equipped with an E-unit regulator, the same type that is used in ship and planetary shielding; however, most Suits are unable to generate and sustain the power necessary to make this shielding completely impenetrable. The common mercenary trick, overloading the Suit battery systems to generate a temporary star point repulsion field, is automated and triggered by threat assessment programs. When hostile conditions exist, the Duro-Armor will rout battery power through the Suit's amplifier to generate a momentary star point field. Though not 100% effective as a counter-measure, the function is better than suffering the impact of an unmodified attack.

Bull Dozer (root Entrenching Tool): Modified form of the Suit's configuration used during excavations. This mode is not constantly active but instead aids construction actions or preparations prior to battle. The function is too slow to be used as a weapon. (The standard entrenching tool yields a better attack.) Instead, the bull dozer can augment terrain and create a pretty formidable barrier in a short amount of time. The function fashions the EE Suit into a construction kit. A guard can dam or reroute a river, construct trenches, bunkers, clear foliage, remove rubble, clear a landing zone, etc. On a Mixed result, the huge construction blade will not quickly break-down for removal, and the player continues at a combat penalty. Serious effort will be required to change his EE Suit back to normal. A Mishap can injure the occupant as systems overload and shut down under the strain of the work. An Overkill result is impossible to shut-down and the player will tend to level the area in an undesirable manner.

C-Cubed (general purpose EE Suit function): Short for "command, control and communication," besides the regular transmit and receive communicators, the player has video recording, sight enhancers (binoculars), flood-lighting, recording microphone, external public

address, motion detectors, heat detecting, x-ray imager, electronic emission detecting, radioactive counter, toxicity read-out, chemical composition probe, and numerous other support faculties. The skill is also very useful as a catch-all to determine if the player spots, avoids or overcomes a trap or other dexterous task.

Cartridge Load (root Rapid Burst): Sometimes called the anti-ambush device, this function is a high-tech version of the basic shotgun. Considered anti-ambush, because guards will frequently soften an area known to contain the enemy, by picking a direction and opening fire. If a target is seen, high impact attack is best, usually enhanced in accuracy or number of rounds by any of a number of complementary functions. But, when the enemy is concealed or only the direction of hostile fire is known, the cartridge load is employed to blanket an area with a cone of projectiles. The attack is also ideal in close quarters like hallways and streets.

Catalog Immunes (root Access Data Files): Since there are only about two-hundred thousand Immunes in the Tetra-League, complete histories, personal patterns, known associates and haunts, criminal potential and past nefarious dealings can be collected into a master volume that becomes an agent's technical companion. Most agents update their own files and carry complete information on many hostile threats like aliens and robotic free-booters. (Those being criminals of races other than the four pacified, and renegade machines including program hacking worms and virus released in important computer matrix.) These records also include sophisticated psychological profiles that can be used to predict actions that certain people will make when confronted in a variety of manners — threatened, coerced, blackmailed, befriended, placated, etc. Such a catalog becomes the basis for determining criminal buzzwords when solving mysteries and investigation searches. Overkill results give the player too much information, and he will either lose his facts among the overflow of data or lose time sifting through the information. Mixed gains partial information. (Perhaps the file was being updated and only some information is available, but don't immediately roll again.) Mishap will erase data on other members. (When fully discovered, this information will need to be reentered, usually after the present assignment.)

Chemical Disbalance (root Initiate Active Cells): Ability to change the biochemistry of one's body functions for brief periods of time. Agents may even implant micro-biological versions of this function, hidden internally, to counter the ill effects of narcotics while posing undercover. This function is used to counter the effects of nerve gas, poisons, truth drugs, hallucinogens, as well as allow a guard to out-drink any ignorant Battle Born recruit, while still reporting

for duty stone-sober in the morning.

Cluster Bomb (root Mortar and Rapid Burst): Less accurate, longer range form of explosive delivery. The function can rain explosive shells on positions at the periphery of a battlefield. It will have no function in close combat, and many agents remove these support modules to lighten the size and complexity of their Suit. (By selecting the skill, in essence the player is stating he doesn't mind the bulk.)

CLVS, usually pronounced "Clovis" (root C-Cubed): Short for "cross-linking vibrational study," more immediate form of surveillance that allows an agent to measure latent stresses in a low gravity facility and after screening all variables determine the approximate location, size, number and activity of people or functioning robots in a complex. Perfect for tactical display of vessels and orbiting stations, though some areas with greater degree of moving parts, like engineering or manufacturing centers, will give more vague results or require closer inspection and monitoring for accuracy. Another skill useful for the referee to allow miniatures to be laid out on a table so battles can be handled as a table-top game. Can work with less effect on the surface of planets, so long as targets are inside of buildings of component structure. Inside of other irregular dwellings or ancient stone cities, forget it — too many variables to screen. Likewise, outside restricted terrain will not become any clearer with clovis. When used as an investigation function for clue collection, the Overkill, Mixed and Mishap results will have less than perfect outcomes like those described under AAD.

Counter-ECM (root ECM): Most G/Sol have developed techniques for canceling the other side's protective measures. Once again realizing that the biggest threat is from automated opponents and other EE Suited mercenaries, free-lancers and revolutionaries, guards use this function to increase the damage potential of their own attacks on those types of opponents.

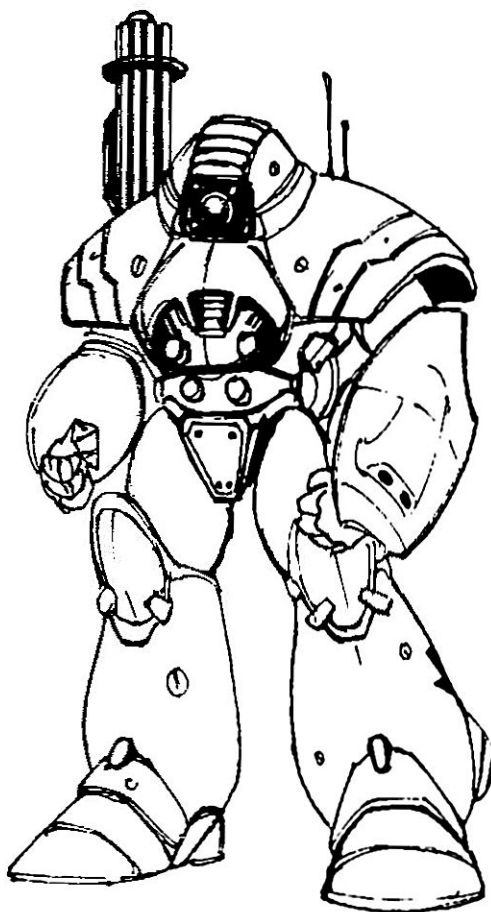
Crowd Control Mode (root Spray Hose and Vacuum Pump): Basic essentials of tear gas and ability to connect into a pipe system to operate a water cannon. Since the riots of the previous eras are no more, and an area is lucky to have organized protests that number above one-hundred Immunes, the functions seldom are used. And yet, who knows what alternative ability could be obtained from this mode. Another skill left to players and the referee to find more practical game uses.

Cryogenic Containment (general purpose EE Suit function): All Suits can function to suspend the wearer's vital signs, breathing, heartbeat, body heat, etc. This ability is marketed as an alternative to the boredom of long space travel. It is also used to freeze the badly wounded, shut-down and render harmless prisoners or even subdue confused or mutinous troopers.

Kiel Steiner, commander G/Sol, usually insists on a percentage of any money won from drinking bets while using Chemical Disbalance.

My Clovis is shot in these caves, we got to fight the running gun battle one room at a time.

Via controlling master codes, the team leader can "switch-off" a subordinate who steps out of line and becomes aggressive by activating the EE Suit's Cryogenic Containment. If the Suit codes of an EE Suited criminal are discovered, he too can be subdued in this manner.



You're plus three in Desperation Mode! What sort of agent gets in so much trouble that he gets good at this function?

I have a Dust-Off function, then why do I ride up and down the Sky-Hook?

G/Sol policy is not to stay at all costs — an Immune life is too precious; besides when idiots are needed for suicide defense, the Battle Born always has a few "death-row" squads to commit.

Adept Image is like playing one of those kid's puzzles where you try to find the illustration of the cat or dog in the leaves of a tree.

During a siege by Androxian fanatics of the Journeymen Cartel's executive resort, FREMA was so precise and the Walker heat signature was so well cataloged, that Delta Force sharpshooters targeted and killed all fifteen terrorists from orbit! Yet to restate, FREMA requires prior exhaustive study of an area to maximize its effectiveness.

The War Cartel tried to develop a multi-tasking analysis module that could recreate FREMA from any instant collection of data. Marketed as the TM-Death Sight, its failure during field-testing, and the resulting EE Suit fires, have led to discontinuation of the program.

Assassins do not consider Gulps archaic, and as for being one-shot, most assassins know not to expect expect a second.

Dead Man's Pose (root Cryogenic Containment): Ability to suspend vital functions like breathing, heartbeat, body heat, etc and yet stay alert to the surroundings. Besides an excellent way to fake death, this ability allows a trooper or agent to position himself with no heat signature, no motion, no life-signs, while attached to a facility or matrix to make observations. On a Mixed result, the user's ability to restart and take action after this function is greatly impaired (perhaps a loss of a combat round or two).

Desperation Load (root Cycle Plasma Containment Field): Function not commonly used by the G/Sol, but most agents know the Battle Born trick of turning high impact slugs into plasma. MACE orders strictly forbid the use of plasma (which includes common Battle Born function incendiaries), since all battlefield simulations show that such a projectile is not necessary and far too dangerous to the user. G/Sol command agrees, but will allow their members the option to use such a weapon in times of extreme duress. Plasma use should only be attempted when situations dictate. (The referee and players must be their own judge on the matter.) Whenever this function is used, the team leader or user must file an official report.

Demolitions (general purpose EE Suit function): Allows player to properly set time delays, motion activators, radio detonators, command word triggers and other options on explosive ordnance. The skill also allows the player to spot and deactivate a variety of battlefield mines and explosive traps.

Dust-Off (root Jet-Pack): Enhanced version of the jet-pack function that can be configured to allow a booster mode which allows a one-time surface to orbit movement. When a battlefield situation becomes hopeless, garrisons can call in robotic flotilla ships for a rescue. Dust-Off allows a trooper to evacuate to orbit for pick-up. Actually many Battle Born troopers also have this function, but either have expended the resources and never sought to have them restored or never realized they had the ability. In battlefield conditions, the G/Sol's supply and refurbishment ensures their guards are out-fitted with a ready Dust-Off.

ECM (general purpose EE Suit function): Short for "electronic counter-measures" or also "evasive counter-measures," these basic functions protect the trooper from incoming attack. Counter-measures employ both active ballistics and disruptive magnetic pulses, to destroy or redirect attacks. These measures are very good at spotting and disabling most forms of incoming ballistics and missiles. The function can be activated to counter or destroy just one threat, or applied in a global manner to protect a larger area from all incoming danger.

Entrenching Tool (general purpose EE Suit function): Device originally in-

tended for excavations, but now the tool is used almost exclusively as a close combat knife.

EDPP, usually pronounced "Adept Image" (root C-Cubed): Short for "electron density photo-plating," ability to scan walls and floors for electromagnetic emissions and extract transient disturbances in the plates surrounding a crime scene to reproduce a hologram (three dimensional image) of the previous activity in an area. Like an image being imprinted forever on film, all heat and light sources leave an electronic image in an otherwise blank wall or panel. Basically the agent can view what happened a short time ago or even longer, like watching a TV replay. As with many other specialized C-Cubed functions, the more recent the crime or unspooled by later motion, the better the image will become. However, do not be confused into thinking that just because the image is not clear enough to read lips or make out faces that the action was wasted. Rough images can give much in the way of simply what transpired, and how many people were involved. Part of the skill is also knowing how to see the activity out of a possible clutter of overlapping images. Mixed. Overkill and Mishap results will have less than desirable ramifications similar to those described under AAD.

FREMA, usually pronounced "Free-Ma" (root C-Cubed): Short for "full range electromagnetic analysis," used in hostage situations to get a heat signature and motion reading on all beings in a previously scanned complex. Only an expert can gain greater knowledge or increased targeting from this function over that provided by the basic C-Cubed skill. Most major facilities, headquarters of cartels and private residents of executives are fully cataloged for all climate conditions to allow FREMA at the skill's best advantage. The referee will determine when the FREMA bonus applies, usually decreasing the degree of nearly impossible actions. Yet for static forces, with lots of time to prepare, FREMA is an SOG trooper's best friend.

GOP, usually pronounced "Gulp" (root Silent Ballistics): Short for "gas operated projectile," ordinary firearm where metallic or plastic bullet is propelled by expanding exploding gas (frequently gun powder). Perhaps a tad archaic, but favored by certain agents, because of the gun's compact size. Smallest versions have been installed as needle sized implants under a Terran's finger tips. Almost all forms of the weapon are silenced and equipped with a laser sighting system that has cross-hairs as an implant in the user's eyes. Of no use against an EE Suit, except at point-blank range; however, the weapon can kill an unarmed "squishy." Agents also carry such items since they can be configured to look like ornaments or rather common objects. They typically are one-shot then expended, but are still available to an agent even when he is completely stripped

from his Duro-Armor.

GPMG/SF. usually pronounced "Gimme Some Fun." (root Rapid Burst): Short for "general purpose machine gun with sustained fire," another augmented function that delivers a rapid burst attack without the regular round delay for preparation. However, the weapon tends to be more wasteful than its counterpart. Rapid Burst, and should only be used on open battlefields where the risk of secondary destruction or injury to non-combatants is minimal.

Guard Dog (root Decoy Drone): Robotic support unit used for surveillance and patrols. G/Sol version of these drones often allow remote activation of any EE Suit function. Think of these as the player detaching part of his Suit and sending it out as a weaker form of himself. They are perfect for hostage negotiations and long ranged surveillance or bomb disposal. The trooper is in no way handicapped by detaching and sending off his "dog," but each trooper has only the spare components to configure one such robot. Skill will also allow an agent outside of his Suit to activate a command and return his Suit to him, even if it is stashed in orbit or out of the system. Since the function is a form of remote with only limited independence, a player may not constantly "walk his dog," activate the function to gain an extra set of weapons. Permanent robots should be played like NPCs, servant slaves of various intelligence and frequently unarmed to prevent encouragement of free-booter ambitions. The referee may decide with the guard dog's detachment, the character loses some of his EE suit functions until the guard dog mechanism is retrieved.

Hand Cuffs (root Vice Grip): Modified form of EE Suit gloves that can be detached and locked over a suspect's own hands (or appendages), preventing them from hostile movement. Hand Cuffs are designed to restrain an already subdued or highly damaged suspect until the person can be cryogenically contained or isolated. Mishap and victim (target of skill) is thought to be secured, but he actually can break free at any desired moment — player will be soon surprised.

High Impact Kinetic (general purpose EE Suit function): Trooper's main weapon, a piece of magnetic plastic is accelerated in a Gaussian field to produce a ballistic that travels faster than ancient chemical igniters. Not just a bullet, this shot can blow a decent hole in most anything.

Holographic Imager (root False Image): Instead of the basic blur or camouflage, this function creates a copy or duplicate image in another location. Duro-Armor will generate a silhouette of the Suit in another location with visual, heat and electronic emissions, all perfectly copied. The function is used often to draw fire or confuse pursuit. The imager will even make projected images, but only the most skilled can make believable illusions.

Hydraulic Press (general purpose EE Suit function): Suit amplifies the strength of the person inside, but in order to take full advantage of this function, the Suit must be put in a stabilized mode with support anchors and a rigid back. When properly configured, the Suit can crush objects with the force of several tons.

Jet-Pack (general purpose EE Suit function): Normal movement in the Suit is enhanced by compressors that circulate the external environment (atmosphere), propelling the Suit airborne (or skimming along the surface of water). The jet-pack function is not an anti-gravity ability, and it takes an appreciable atmosphere in order to sustain hovering. The Suit itself is streamlined, to allow the player to glide (silently), or it can also be used to "giant-step" across terrain, bouncing from position to position. Hydraulics in the legs can sense low gravity worlds that usually have no atmosphere for the jet-pack; instead the Suit will take advantage of the slower falling rates and allow the player to bound farther which each step. Additionally, in the total absence of gravity, the weightlessness of space, the Suit can exhaust mass from containment tanks to allow limited maneuvering. However, in order to get to orbit, a Suit must be specially outfitted with a chemical booster or dust-off package. Likewise, when falling from orbit, the Suit is equipped with either a thruster or a parachute to change its drag profile. In almost all cases, movement requires no rolls. Only in the most awkward conditions or actions would a player need to make a Basic roll. However, like C-Cubed, the jet-pack function is another good catch-all roll to avoid hazards and unforeseen danger. (i.e. Plus four jet-pack is not a wasted skill bonus.)

Limpet Mine (root Demolitions): Like demolitions, this skill is more truly a practiced knowledge rather than an actual EE Suit function. Person has specialized knowledge of spotting ordnance placed onto structures as a booby trap. The guardsman knows what to look for when scanning an area for explosive defenses. He can also tell with greater accuracy when a vessel or vehicle has been tampered (trapped). The reverse is also imparted by this skill, a knowledge of how to trap objects and structures with explosive mines. Though unlike demolitions, the Limpet Mine commonly uses natural setting to pose the danger, rather than simply an abundance of plastic explosives. The player usually needs no elaborate tables — they got their own imagination to aid them to devise booby traps. (But just to highlight and set the mind working, consider doors that explode off their hinges, vehicles that lose control following minor detonations in actuator systems, or the ever popular bomb that opens an area of a vessel to the vacuum of space). The referee determines the task's degree and the inflicted damage with a rough

The use of real, living animals in battle has been long declared illegal by Green Space legislation. With very limited exception, only intelligent humans, able to accept responsibility for their own actions, may operate in MACE. Fact that battlefields in ERA TEN frequently turn quite inhospitable after any short exchange makes the use of animals at best a novelty, so no opposition of Green Space restrictions has been filed. The days of even drug and bomb-sniffing critters are long past.

In one documented case, a solitary guardsman using his Holographic Imager made himself look like twenty troopers and called successfully for the surrender of half a dozen heavily armed criminals. ("Would you believe two battalions of commandos are right outside? How 'bout a Boy Scout with a toothless German Sheppard.")

Phillips Pods are always on the verge of detonation; limpet mine is simply a way to aid them along.

The plutonium detector on my ready-pack is reading off the scale?

If you know how to spot a limpet mine, you also usually know how to booby trap an area yourself.

I once saw an agent use a Linear Shaped Charge to carve out portals through walls or doors in the shape of the letters "G/Sol."

Think of physiological monitoring as having a trainer constantly coaching you to your best performance, while also having a fight doctor right there patching you up between rounds.

Like a typist or pianist who doesn't need to think where his fingers are falling, frequent use of Pistol Grip gives the guard the ability to attack with high impact kinetic and still activate other functions.

What is widely known, but often denied is that the Remote Defusing function doesn't work as well against Black-Box explosives and chemical based incendiaries. (i.e. Explosives that are not Suit based in origin, the most primitive being a simple Molotov Cocktail; though admittedly, now more sophisticated than a burning rag in a bottle.)

G/Sol has a standing policy to open worm holes in systems for official and not so official uses of Rough Send.

baseline being Basic creating a trap that does Abrasive injury. Difficult a Walking. Tasking a Vicious and Limit causing the death of all in the area. If the blast affects a great space, the degree should increase. Only with a special external device, usually the War Cartel's TM-Bomb, can someone destroy a large area of a planet's surface. Yet an entire complex or vessel could be set to blow in a chain reaction. The true talent of limpet mines is placing them so that murder looks like an accident. So the reverse is true for detection. The easiest degree to spot are a series of limpet mines that would destroy a whole complex, while very subtle booby traps that create at most an Abrasive explosive blast (which then creates an even greater hazard) may take Tasking or degree Limit to detect.

Linear Shaped Charge (roots Ordnance and Welding and Cutting Torch): Specialized variation of explosives that are configured to explode in a pattern designed by the user. The impact direction and burn rates on these devices are almost an art-form. Highly skilled users can selectively destroy certain parts of a structure. Linear Shaped Charges also can deactivate robots, strip an opponent of weapon systems on his EE Suit or eliminate Static Defenses.

Neural Shock (general purpose EE Suit function): Inside a mere's helmet is his Bio-Computer Interlink, a device that allows computer data to be stored and retrieved from the synapses of his brain. The speed of this device can be changed by increasing its current, thus increasing the agent's awareness of his environment and sensory data. This function is also used by a person to attack others inside of a computer matrix. Since the G/Sol once garrisoned many networks to prevent hackers from stealing or damaging information, the function still remains a prime method for driving a foreign intruder from a matrix. Now as the number of Immunes is limited, permanent watch-dogs assignments are practically non-existent. (Only the central core of the major cartels maintains human security.) Yet in many assignments and investigations, agents will enter a matrix to either flush-out violators or perform specialized surveillance. Neural Shock is the mind-game version of high impact kinetic.

Neutralizing Reagent (root Incendiaries and Star Point): Another counter devised with the Suited criminal mercenary in mind. The plasma base of an opponent's impact slug — when improperly activated during bastardized functions like incendiaries or cycle plasma field — can be neutralized by a collapsing Star Point field. This function can also lessen the impact of direct plasma attacks. Neutralizing Reagent renders harmless the flame-thrower commonly generated by an EE Suit; however, this counter function is not designed to stop massive chemical flame attacks created by canisters of inflammables. But

then again, those seldom harm an agent in Duro-Armor. An EE Suit actually does not contain ample amounts of chemical fuels to sustain a flame, instead they create a molten film of matter (plasma). Neutralizing Reagent creates enough counter agent to stop fire from a trooper or vehicle. With this skill, the G/Sol have a primary counter to EE Suit generated incendiary threats.

Physiological Monitoring (root Internal Baffling): Perhaps a function only of reference note. Part of the reason that all G/Sol obtain the Trait Fierce, is the fact their Duro-Armor have been programmed with a more correct analysis of injury and damage control. This skill can automatically suspend all but essential body functions, as well as artificially produce life functions, while numbing nerve paths. The person doesn't just ignore minor injury, like the Battle Born's function internal baffling, he ignores pain, stress and fatigue.

Pistol Grip (root High Impact Kinetic): Ability to fire a weapon with one hand. Could also be used to simulate an agent's activation of Suit functions or detaching modules with his hands, instead of using the thought and verbal activation codes normally associated with EE Suit functions.

Power Generation (general purpose EE Suit function): Ability to supply power to an external device from a Suit's S-unit storage cell. Not as important as to their Battle Born counterpart, since the G/Sol tend to be in better supply conditions. Yet, the skill does also help in matrix operations, providing a reserve of power to be tapped by other hacking members.

Remote Defusing Ordnance (root Decoy Drone and Demolitions): Specialized form of guard dog which requires almost no components, but does take total concentration of the user. Function allows player to deactivate a variety of battlefield mines and explosive traps without exposing himself to harm. Skill when used against an EE Suited mercenary can also deactivate and render harmless ordnance and explosive grenades on a person in battle. This specialized case involves use of counter-codes which can be reset or thwarted; however, many a would-be terrorist has entered battle with guards only to find his repertoire of ordnance completely neutralized.

RFSD, usually pronounced "Rough Send" (root C-Cubed): Short for "radio frequency selective decoding," form of electronic emission detection, recovery and translation that relies on mobility. Includes knowledge of decoding ciphers and interpreting the psychology of aliens to allow translation of messages. Basically, a person must be able to travel away from a known crime scene and literally catch-up with the electromagnetic waves generated by a person using standard radio communication (still universally common). Just as radio and TV signals from earth will beam into

space forever, so will the electronic signals of various command vessels or criminals using radio and video type communication. This type of decoding is especially good since EE Suited criminal mercenaries make almost all conversation and issue directions with helmet radio signals. Such signals travel at the speed of light, which means the agent must go pretty far to catch-up with certain signals, but that's the beauty of having worm holes reserved for investigations. Alpha-Centauri (closest star to our Sun) is about five light years away. By going to Alpha-Centauri and activating this function, the agent could conceivably intercept every radio transmission that occurred on Terra about five years ago. Via worm hole travel, the time it takes to get to Alpha-Centauri would be matter of hours or at most days. (Or a passage of time meaningless in terms of game-play.) With coordination and configuring of worm holes, the agent can intercept a conversation and once again overhear what was said (transmitted). The more exact information known on the time of the criminal radio transmission, transmission type and location point will aid in more accurate decoding. Even cryptically protected signals can be decoded, though granted with more difficulty. Again the function requires mobility (or proper placement of recovery drones), so it has limited battlefield application.

RPG (roots Ordnance and Rapid Burst): Short for "rocket propelled grenade," this function is a more energetic form of near field explosive delivery than typical ordnance. The trooper can discharge a series of explosive rounds to positions about the immediate battlefield or combat area. This skill requires a longer preparation time to execute the function but the increased damage is usually an acceptable trade-off.

Rubber Bullet (root High Impact Kinetic): Form of projectile slug that travels at reduced velocity and simply stuns rather than kills. High Impact shots tend to go right through things. That's a tad too random and dangerous for many applications. Rubber Bullets are a restrained attack that leave the area undamaged and the fugitive alive for questioning.

Seeker Round (root Opportunity Fire): Weapon attack that will only hit a designated target, especially accurate and useful in cases where terrorists are using hostages as shields. Neither truly a high impact Gaussian slug, nor an ordnance grenade, the Seeker has the unique ability to be programmed to only strike a specified target. The shot will not pursue a victim nor deviate highly in course, but it does analyze its own ballistic route and will impact in a harmless position or split into multiple particles rather than strike another living object other than the specified target. Again, this is not a "cartoon bullet" that will follow someone around corners as they run away. These are more correctly shots

that decide whether to continue path, slightly change or render themselves harmless. If this analogy makes more sense, consider the weapon as simply not firing ("click and no shot") if the path would have struck an innocent person. However, actually the "shot" has telemetry circuits so complex that during flight they correct speed, direction and ballistic path to hit the intended target or adopt a secondary goal to avoid hitting anyone else. The specified target need not be living, and thus the seeker round can be used to disable or deactivate certain gear for a distance.

Static Defense (roots Demolitions and Ordnance): G/Sol pride themselves on their ability to place antipersonnel mines like claymores in a defensive pattern. These are not specifically booby traps, but rather a cross-grid of ordnance that is activated by the movement of enemy forces. The result is a perimeter defined in terms of injuries received while crossing. Use a guideline of degree Difficult does Abrasive injury to all. Tasking does Walking and Limit will inflict Vicious injury on all who blindly pass. Unlike a Booby Trap, the explosion is not just one blast which then generates various degrees of damage; rather, static defense is used to set a layer of mines and injure any and all who enter. These defenses can be layered, but seldom will a skilled soldier blinding walk through a second field of mines. Mixed result catches the person himself in a position that he has trapped. ("I painted myself into corner.") He will take some damage or undo his work. Mishaps cause the obvious (often fatal) accidents, while Overkill tend to destroy the enemy and the player's own forces upon later activation.

Structural Analysis (root Access Data Files): Provides detailed drawings and layouts on most buildings and vessels in the Tetra-League. Also provides step-by-step plans to configure many defense grids or infiltrate important external defenses or computer matrix. Perhaps simply a game aid, this skill allows the referee to place a sheet, battle map or schematic in front of the players without the obvious questions like "how do we know what the area looks like out of eye view?" Mishap and acquire wrong information, but proceed as if correct — "Hey, I thought plans said the engineering deck was four?"

Sub-Orbital Interceptor (root Mortar): Having realized early on that the basic battlefield meson cannon on each EE Suit was dangerous or at best inconsistent, the G/Sol developed their own form of long range artillery. Sub-Orbital Interceptor is a form of guided missile. Though still not developed with absolute simplicity, the targeting displays are less confused and misleading. To gain other than the basic mortar explosive impact, the guardsmen must actively control the weapon all the way to impact. Since human reaction has limits, this form of smart-bomb flies along the battlefield at

Some guardsmen have been known to fine-tune their Rubber Bullet attacks with the capability of downing an EE Suited mercs with a concussion hit. I saw one agent even alter the direction of a vehicle. I guess he shot for the "tires," like in the old cop shows.

Static Defense is great, but certain hostile aliens, like the Kro in particular, attack with such unbelievable numbers that they might first sacrifice thousands of lesser troopers to clear the way for more dangerous assaults.

I once saw one of those trained Battle Born demolition pinheads, tie a TM-Bomb, that's a "planet cracker" in case you didn't know, into his static defenses. He said, "I'll fix anyone who tries to enter my camp." If I hadn't deactivated the work, we might not have any reason for a garrison on Iota Upsilon.

Though it may seem that an artilleryman might run-out of Sub-Orbital Interceptors, like normal ammunition and power, consider their use unlimited, until the tables or encounters state otherwise. Each guard may not have a virtually unlimited number of these interceptors, but perhaps the components for this function can be collected in debris at any battle field depot. ("Hey, it's all just J-units right?") If the referee feels that this is not practical in some remote areas, he may disallow use of this function or require the character to suffer some penalty as he expands useful suit parts to gain repeated uses of the function.

The identity of someone may be too altered to match a catalog database, yet Attire may even reveal who did the cosmetic alteration. Microscopic differences in restoration surgery can be detected. Most cosmetic surgeons have styles registered with G/Sol. Like fine painters or sculptors, they all leave their mark in the patient. ("We'll check with Dr Masonite on his list of patients.") Attire has also been used to tell where a Suited mercenary has had repairs and upgrades. It even can analyze the style of work in a structure. ("That concave complex is a style renovation typical of artisan James Caliph.")

These skills may also serve to give the referee ideas to expand his game. Remember not to allow options beyond what the campaign can accept. All upgrades do not have to be improvements as well. Some upgrades were designed to improve the suit from an administrative perspective. An upgrade may slow the response or inhibit previous suit functions from working properly. MACE is constantly removing functions that are found to be too deadly and prone to mishap. A player's favorite option may be removed in an upgrade. He may have been one of the few who used the function (or found a special use) and the top brass removed it to make room for something else, like a newly enhanced "parade and drill in formation mode."

Calming Voice is also a humane way to ease critically injured troopers into death.

Battle Born troopers tend to become more aggressive or angry when subjected to charisma of presence, but maybe that is the desired result.

slightly less than supersonic speed. The weapon has increased ability to change course or even to enter a delaying hover while waiting a chance to strike home. For game terms, best to have the player detach a missile and move it through the battlefield schematic (or table top miniature array). Instead of gaining normal actions, the player's attentions are devoted to moving the bomb to target. Once reached, the damage can be considered tremendous (at least Vicious to all in the area if not all outright slain). If spotted by the enemy, the sub-orbital interceptor can be destroyed before detonation; however, its speed should make targeting and destruction at least Tasking in degree. Also for safety reasons, they will not arm (and become explosives) until they move a considerable distance from their operator. The weapon is not for typical close combat firefights.

Taser (root Power Generation): Strong electrical shock that has a stunning effect and produces paralysis in an unprotected human. Yet also the ability to overload an object's S-unit storage cell and deprive either an EE Suit or robotic machine of power. These stun effects can be warded and may only result in Abrasive injury to victim, but otherwise they remain an effective form of defensive action, rendering someone harmless.

TIR, usually pronounced "Attire" (root C-Cubed): Short for "transparent image reintegrator," process used to strip away disguises. Gives a detailed image of a person that strips away his artificial implants and cosmetic coverings to reveal the image of a person behind a mask or EE Suit helmet. Secret Service and ATF branches of G/Sol frequently use the skill to spot concealed weapons, identify people through disguises, note foreign objects or explosives in containers, etc. Can also analyze heavier bone structure to ascertain possible identity of suspects that have undergone surgical alterations. If a person has had cosmetic surgery or even changed his flesh covering, the skill usually can determine what the character looked like at maturity for comparison to a baseline record compiled before the change. The person or object being screened must be visible, though perhaps as only in EDPP. Function also gives a three-dimensional rendering from two dimensional views, like photos. The longer the suspect or material is observed, the greater the detail that can be collected. Such a process is often used to build mug-shots or missing person's reports, as well as determine what a person looked like when presented with only parts of his body. Agreed, the function won't reform someone from a pile of ash or his disintegrated form, but often even plasma strikes blow someone to fragments, not make them disappear like a "ray-gun" in an old Sci-Fi movie; these fragments can be collected and with this skill an image can be constructed of who (or what) was slain. The more complete the body parts or Terran in appearance, the better the

analysis.

Universal Joints (root Hydraulic Press): Reinforced agility that makes a guard respond almost as fast as the incoming threat. Though no one can dodge a shot — such a reflex action would be even more deadly than the incoming round — the reflexes of the user are so energized that their ability to respond to hand-to-hand attacks and initiate the same becomes exceptional. Against primitive threats, like knives or punches, the function is superior to even the best martial art training. (Though adamantly denied by the function designers, certain hands as weapon training specific to highly secret independent agents, has been found superior.) Note that only Cruz are able to use this function. Other races with hardened bones tend to snap off limbs when executing universal joint functions.

Upgrade #24B (root Initiate Active Cell): Armor enhancement activated in battle and consisting of a biological ooze that serves to strengthen the J-unit coating of Duro-Armor. Immediate result can be seen on the G/Sol damage chart. (User gains an extra Abrasive, Walking and Vicious before overflow.) This is a highly special upgrade that is usually only provided to special teams like the ATF, EOD, Secret Service or Delta Force. (See the Progression Path for details.) The referee decides when a player gains the upgrade and the extra damage sustaining abilities imparted by such.

Vise Grip (general purpose EE Suit function): Gloves on the Suit have the force of bolt-cutters. Though mostly used as a technician's function, the original design was considered a battle option for close range combat.

Examples of Specialized Command Functions (Imperial Trait required to acquire)

Calming Voice (root Psychological Warfare): Ability to sooth and quell excitement. Skill has direct application in hostage negotiations where criminal is disturbed by another incident or desires publicity. When a suspect's profile reveals he has low criminal potential, and yet he is involved in a crime, then duress, feelings of inferiority, or desperation often cause that person to break the law or join a conspiracy. The agent with this skill has the ability to talk a suspect into surrender or stop an act before it becomes serious. Mixed result might make victim (the target of the skill), run instead of surrender. Mishap incites opposite effect, a berserk hatred or paranoid fear.

Charisma of Presence (root Protocol): Ability to awe the public, capitalize on many societies' admiration and love of their local police force, or ability to generate a movie star appeal with tales of heroic deeds. Perhaps this skill represents the ability of a player to simply use

his Imperial Trait to influence a reaction. A skilled player is seldom at risk in casual settings and easily gains the trust of others. Unfortunately such appeal only seems to influence Terrans and Cruz. Mixed may be interpreted as the effect quickly wearing off. While with an Overkill, the player acquires a ardent, but often detrimental, follower. Mishap can lead to violence or at least serious resentment.

Imprint Memory (root Interrogate): Ability to extract information from another person's Bio-Computer without their willing agreement. Worse still, skill can be used as a form of hypnosis and neural path reshaping that allows a person to change someone's memory of events or plant time or event triggered orders in the victim. Bio-Interlink is a device which uses chemical portions of brain as place to store information. This skill can transfer programmed information into a person's actual psyche. Emotions are easiest to imprint. ("You hate your foster father.") Highly skilled practitioners have rebuilt whole life-histories. Because personal liberty is very highly regarded, any use of this function must be reported, documented and justified before a court of inquiry. A commander risks grave charges by randomly exercising this function. Mixed and wrong memory is installed, while an Overkill causes subtle changes that lead to psychological (often dangerous) flaws. Mishap and victim is catatonic or violently insane.

Mental Discipline (root Motivation): G/Sol training has created a form of self-motivation in many of the guardsmen, especially an ability to calm terror and inspire others to action. Such a skill usually has direct application on the battlefield to "heal" Morale Tested wounds. Mishap and player's morale usually breaks.

Official Report (root Bureaucracy): Extended version of dealing with the redundant processes used by the courts and cartels. If something is desired that is not easily obtainable, an official report can be used to requisition such information or materials. This skill can strike apprehension into most government servants. Only the most criminally minded (or those having the Battle Born's love of ignoring threats and facing challenge) can ignore an official report. Mixed may remove one governmental obstacle, only to replace it with another. An Overkill may remind a clerk that additional restraints are placed on acquisition or data required. ("Oh, you're right; this form is obsolete. I'll get the new version.") Mishap and the players will be charged with crimes or incriminate themselves in past activities. ("So you're person who illegally requisitioned those parts.")

Override Directives (root Event Triggered Orders): Ability to selectively negate programs and instructions normally imprinted in a Suit. For instance, most Suits will not activate a weapon which would impact and kill a creature listed

as an endangered species. Event triggered orders would activate and prevent the function. With the skill override directives, such orders can be canceled. Not all troopers can disobey their programmed orders, but some commanders with this skill can. Mixed will perhaps leave a trail of accountability, and the player is reported with breaking his directives. Mishap, one directive is switched for another, usually one that makes the player look foolish or exposes his character to harm. Overkill has been known to alter a person's psychology and make him more maniacal, autonomous and disrespectful of authority.

Psychological Warfare (fundamental skill): Ability to confuse and undermine someone's beliefs. This strategy can be used to lower enemy morale in direct actions, or develop a policy designed to disrupt a whole planet's society. Battlefield psychological warfare puts the player attacking his enemy not necessarily with words, but with confusing orders, images and emotions. This function allows the player to access remotely and disrupt enemy's communication, visual displays or even Bio-Computer Interlink. Such techniques were designed specifically with the EE Suited criminal in mind.

Scramble Suit Codes (root Set and Control Master Suit Codes and some ECM): Ability to take control of another EE Suit. With scramble suit codes, an agent can temporarily take over all control functions of a person in an EE Suit just like the function set and control master codes allows. To explain, master codes were designed with the obvious purpose to restrict the chance of mutiny by troopers in EE Suits. In case of trouble, a commander can access master codes and take control of an EE Suit away from its operator (i.e. the person inside). The access codes of all suits are regularly changed, and only the commander is suppose to have all the codes. However, certain universal master codes are supplied to chief executives and with the right priority G/Sol agents. Unfortunately, many a squad has been sold-out, having their codes known by the enemy. The G/Sol prevent this by having certain members able to block their Suit master codes and direct their own actions. This skill gives the ability to stop someone else from taking control of an agent's Duro-Armor. Before anyone can activate master codes, he must first overcome the defensive measures imposed by this function. When a code is issued, the person with this skill can try to stop the command from ever reaching the victim's Suit. Otherwise, the last ditch defense from unwanted command codes is to freeze and physically shut-down all active functions for a period of time. ("That's how most prevent their codes from being tampered.") Mishap will activate a number of undesired Suit functions.

Tactical Analysis (root Battlefield Discipline): Basically knowing and implementing tactics to advantage, plus the

With imprint memory, I saw one guy think he was born in Era Six and served with no distinction in the Battle Born. He thought he separated and opened a business as a salvage hunter. All this in a guy who was a G/Sol agent.

An official report, like the Battle Born's bureaucracy skill, also implies a proficiency at bribery, forgery and suave talking — the real way to get through the "paper-work." Skill also can impart the ability to threaten other Immunes with investigation and legal hassle. Just like the mention of the IRS today tends to stir mixed feelings in most people.

G/Sol are allowed great latitude (i.e. have been at times excused in breaking the law, while enforcing the law). They protect the common good; corruption in their own ranks, when uncovered, is dealt with severely.

Even when access codes are regularly changed, certain commanders have all the codes. Squads of greater importance almost always have access to even higher master codes for other Suits. For instance Chief Cherub's Squad One has the source numbers for all EE Suits in the Tetra-League. Well not all guardsmen are happy about having their Suits possibly controlled by someone else, so they developed counters in form of scrambled codes.

Unlike the Battle Born, which frequently attack aided by last year's ground surveys and intelligence reports, G/Sol actively employ forward observers, field agents and undercover operatives to gain accurate details on threats.

Some agents wouldn't know a 357 Magnum even if it was staring them in the face – at least with exotic weapon training, I know when to duck.

An optical link would simply be too easy if it allowed someone to access the enemy computer and shut them off – "Hey what do you think this is, 'Wrath of Space Trek'?"

I've seen poly-extruded foam even be used to encase criminals and trap them from fleeing. Sure it sounds like a comic book power, but let me remind you what a thousand years of studying surface tension has created.

Now realize that G/Sol tend to have an oppressive overtone, but that can be partially dismissed as the outsider's view of law enforcement. Agents act on orders and hence the law established by executives. When an agent oversteps his mandates and instructions, he is as guilty as any free-lance espionage criminal. That said, the G/Sol command and tech-ninja skills are dangerous in that many agents have been known to go free-lance and use their talents for personal gain.

ability to size-up the enemy and terrain to allow maximum use of space and firepower. Includes a practiced ability to use intelligence information with immediate survey information to make threat assessment. Such information aids the commanders of garrisons, and event investigators, during clashes. Mishap will lead to reduced effectiveness of allied forces or a flawed assessment of threat.

Examples of Specialized Tech-Ninja Functions

(Inventive Trait required to acquire)

Battlefield Sequencing (root Damage Control): Only usable on person in a Suit that technically has no active brain functions (i.e. a dead man), skill allows user to activate certain functions in that dead EE Suit, such as Jet-Pack or Dust-Off to retreat the body from the field. Or else a combat skill like GPMG/SF can make the Suit fight long after the owner has expired. These turn a dead trooper into a form of tin-head robot. Use of this skill on a living person causes that person greater damage or at least interferes with his own actions. Mishap action can lead target EE Suit to self-destruct and considerably alter the area (producing a real big crater).

Chemical Dart (root Atomizer): Form of ballistic that is used to deliver a shot of drugs into the victim. Typical darts can inject strychnine (poison), nitrous (laughing gas) or sodium pentothal (truth serum). Other darts may be allowed by the referee.

ESS, pronounced "Ee-Ess Scan" (root Atomizer): Short for "emission spectroscopy scanner," provides detailed analysis of all chemicals in the air and contact surfaces of an area, looking for anything out of place. Though extremely difficult to use to sense an ambush, the function often applies at crime scenes as another clue-gathering technique. Like AAD and EDPP, length of time and number of people crossing an area since the crime was committed will have effect on the degree. In similar fashion to AAD, evaluate Mixed, Overkill and Mishap results.

Exotic Weapon Training (root Pre-Component Technology): Knowledge and experience handling primitive electronic and mechanical devices, particularly black box technology created before universal component standards were implemented. Skill specifically applies to items of deadly nature, and also includes an ability to fashion such weapons from primitive supplies. Mishaps almost always involve accidental discharge of the exotic weapon.

ISC, pronounced "Ice State" (root Configure Components): Short for "industrial setting camouflage," ability to become part of the cityscape, part of walks, physical structure of ships, blend into any other structure of components. Since the twenty-four universal building block components come together to make

almost every object in the Tetra-League (including Duro-Armor) and these same blocks can be disassembled, an experienced agent with this knowledge can put himself into a wall, door, piece of machinery, vehicle, anywhere. While in ice state the agent usually travels mentally about the complex matrix hacking his consciousness to various parts of the facility. He thus can anchor his body, secure and out of sight, and wander around collecting information. Mixed result may leave player unable to detach himself from the surroundings, and Mishap can lead to player thinking he is hidden, but in fact he sticks-out (highly visible and out of place). At least one possible Overkill might leave the complex dependent upon the player for support functions; he has circumvented all the controls and the functions he replaced were removed as obsolete. ("Hey, I'm not a tin-head, I gotta leave." To which the matrix controls replied, "Be quiet; you're just a bit confused. They'll deactivate you as a free-booter if you keep this up.")

Matrix Watch-Dog (root Interface Equipment): Ability to couple and join a Suit with a larger system in order to prevent override of system functions, protect information, and ensure normal operations. This talent can be used to enhance security systems, seal doors, create electronic barriers, augment sensors, reset alarms, instruct robot support, as well as identify and harass other matrix hackers. When this specialized form of interface equipment is used to solely keep the present system from being tampered, not make changes oneself, the degree of action is considerably easier. Possible mishap might leave the player lost or catatonic, until someone goes into the matrix to rescue the stumbling consciousness of the player.

Optical Link (root Interface Equipment): Ability to counter security systems, unlock doors or lower electronic barriers, shut-down sensors, set off false alarms, as well as pilot and navigate a space vessel, without having to join physically the Duro-Armor with the larger system. Though less effective and all actions have higher Degree, agent maintains his own integrity and does not risk having hostile programs enter his own brain. Skill has the additional ability to allow a form of interface equipment from a distance, though granted very hard to maintain effective connection with something like an opposing vessel. Mishaps almost certainly damage this device, leading to destruction of the optical link function.

Poly-Extruder (root Extruding Nozzle): Skilled use at producing foam paste that solidifies into a permanent structure or casing. These foam fabrications are much better than those produced by Battle Born type EE Suits. Mishap often traps the player, immobilized until he is rescued or fights his way free.

System Bypass (roots Diagnostic and Repair and Jury-Rig): Basically, a specialized form of technical repairs and an understanding of how to circumvent losses caused by combat. These are far from permanent fixes, but this ability applies both battlefield medicine and equipment restoration. The agent can also supervise robotic repair systems to increase the efficiency of repair tasks, including the ability to switch-off a Suit function undergoing mishap or make a piece of equipment serve more than one function to replace a damaged system. Overkill will make the activation of one function also initiate others. Though it may be exciting to press one button and fire everything, the resulting power drain will make the Suit eventually shut-down. Mishap will cause additional damage or even electrical wounds to user.

Combat Summary

1. Players decide to take action before or after the opponents in the Advantage or Responsive phases.
2. Advantage attacks tend to do more damage.
3. Defensive actions are only allowed in the Responsive phase.
4. Spirited roll twice for defensive actions.
5. Players may attempt more than one action, but the Degree of these multiple actions increase by one.
6. Players may attempt functions they do not know, but those attempts are made at two Degrees higher.

Combat Resolution

Combat is an extension of the Suit and skill system. Combat is fought in terms of actions, activating Suit functions or performing other character skills. The main difference is that combat actions are performed while risking attack from opponents. Combat is used to resolve most arrests and confrontations. Some battles will put the players all against one opponent, but many will leave them battling opponents that outnumber their group. The referee determines, perhaps based on the placement of miniatures, which characters are sighted in combat and by how many opponents.

Phases of Combat

The combat round is broken into two phases called Advantage and Responsive. Initiative, or simply who hits first, is determined by the player. Each player decides to take his action first in the Advantage phase or delay and wait to react in the Responsive phase after the opponents attack.

Advantage attacks usually mean the player ignores his warning systems and battlefield data, instead taking the initiative and firing before he is fired upon. Advantage attacks tend to do a more fierce injury, since the beam, blast or burst is sustained for longer period of time. On the other hand, by waiting a

Responsive attack, the player can maneuver and activate counter-measures, perhaps avoiding incoming injury.

Resolve all attacks in the Advantage phase, then continue with actions made by the surviving opponents, and finally determine the success of attacks or defenses made in the Responsive phase. All rolls are made with 2D8 to determine if a hit is scored or an action is successful. The criticality of the wound — Abrasive, Walking or Vicious — is also determined from the outcome of the dice roll. Overkill and Major Mishaps will also result during combat. When these are rolled, consult the appropriate table.

Opponent Attacks

The enemy (criminal bad guys, opposing mercs, robots, aliens, and scary monsters) attack between the player Advantage and Responsive actions. When a player attacks another player over an argument, both must take their actions in the Advantage phase; neither has time for finesse. (Though discouraged, such situations arise.) When a player against his will attacks another player (maybe he is controlled by some funky power), the referee should treat his attacks like any other opponent. His actions occur between the Advantage and Responsive phases.

The referee attack table details twelve forms of attacks which inflict damage. The referee may use these or create his own unique table for each adventure's opposition. You may notice that the enemies' attacks cause more damage, in general, than the players' attacks. To simplify the referee's task, much of the action and counter actions of the opponents are implied. The "bad guys" would perform their own maneuvers, tactics and electronic counter measures; these are not generated specifically, and the player attacks are in essence being decreased in impact by those actions. Also true is the fact that the player attacks may initially do higher criticality, but opposing damage control and repairs (again implied) lower the end result. Opponents also do not roll Overkill, Mixed or Mishap results. This keeps the referee's job uncluttered. All of this tends to even out the battle and make the referee's job easy.

When special opponents (like other troopers in Suits) attack, the referee may opt to use either a special table or regular Suit functions to determine the damage result. Yet for simplicity, human opponents should also use the referee attack chart.

What about a Direct Hit Nuclear Strike?

Well, depending upon the type of game your players enjoy, such a hit will either send the suited players bouncing like super-balls several miles away or else

Example of Combat

Now that you've absorbed all that (or possibly have grown very confused), let's review the combat procedures by fighting a quick example: Agents Zulu, X-Ray and Urban fight five Androxian Fanatics (terrorists in protective Suits).

Round One: "Halt While I Shoot"

All three of the player agents attack in the Advantage phase. Zulu attempts Auto-Star Point. X-Ray attempts AAD. Urban would like to use his Cluster Bomb, but the opponents are too near. He uses Structural Analysis. Zulu's action is Difficult. His attempt roll of six at first fails, but because he is Spirited he may roll again on defensive actions. He dices a twelve and gains a success. He will reduce any damage he receives, plus he may take actions in the Responsive phase this round. X-Ray rolls a seven on his Basic attempt; that's a Mixed result. He too may take Responsive attacks against anyone who attacks him, but the Degree of these actions are increased by one. Urban also rolls a seven, which fails his Difficult attempt. He gains no benefit, and that's all the actions he will take this round.

The five terrorists attack with Magnetic Ballistics. They roll two D8 each for results of ten, six, fifteen, seven and nine. Looking at the referee's attack chart, we can see that these attacks will score hits of wounds Vicious, Abrasive, Vicious, Walking and Walking. The wounds are directed evenly — Zulu receives a Vicious and Abrasive; his activated Auto-Star Point makes these just a single Walking. The Abrasive wound reduces to no damage. X-Ray takes a Vicious and Walking, and Urban takes a Walking.

Both X-Ray and Zulu have Responsive actions. X-Ray may attack anyone who attacked him, but his responding attacks are increased a Degree. He fires his Seeker Round for results ten and thirteen. The attempts are Tasking, and his rolls are a Success and Mixed. One trooper (Guy A) takes a Walking and another (Guy B) takes an Abrasive. Zulu uses his GPMG/SF and rolls an nine. That's a Mixed. He delivers a D8 Walking wounds, but then he may not use the function again this battle. He rolls a seven for his total hits. He decides to deliver two to Guy A, three to Guy C and the last two on Guy D. Both Guy A and C are dead. Guy A takes his second Walking which overflows to a Vicious, and his third Walking overflows to KIA. Likewise, Guy C takes a Walking, then another which becomes Vicious and a third which kills. Guy D is severely injured taking a Walking and also an overflow Walking for a Vicious, but he is still up in the battle. Guy E is untouched (for the moment).

Round Two: "Combine and Blast"

This time X-Ray elects to wait the Responsive phase, while the other two attack in the Advantage. Zulu uses Pistol Grip and rolls a six. He adds his skill bonus of three for a result of nine. He has a success and will attack with a D8 high impact in the Responsive phase. (Continues in sidebar on next page)

Referee Attack Table (2D8)

Form of Attack (with examples)	Vicious	Walking	Abrasive	Miss
Physical,* i.e. Young Blood Immune with a crow-bar	Not Possible	Not Possible	12 or better	11 or below
Chemical,* i.e. Dumped Barrel of Caustic Chemicals	Not Possible	Not Possible	8 or better	7 or below
Electrical,* i.e. 50,000 volts at steady amperes	Not Possible	15 or better	14-5	4 or below
Ballistic, i.e. Airport Police with Ballistic Hand Gun	Not Possible	14 or better	13-10	9 or below
Heat,* i.e. Flame Thrower or Gasoline Cocktail	Not Possible	15 or better	14-8	7 or below
Focused Energy, i.e. Laboratory Laser or Dental Drill	15 or better	14-11	10-7	6 or below
High Explosive, i.e. Overhead Mortar or Trip Mine	15 or better	14-9	8-4	3 or below
Explosive Fragmentary, i.e. Terrorist Rocket or Grenade	12 or better	11-9	8-6	5 or below
Explosive Magnetic, i.e. Near Field Nuclear Explosion	11 or better	10-8	7-5	4 or below
Magnetic Ballistics, i.e. High Impact Kinetic	10 or better	9-7	6-4	3 or below
Plasma Weaponry,* i.e. Many opposing EE Suit attacks	8 or better	7-5	4-3	2 or below
Deadly Mistakes,* i.e. Falling into Ship's Phillip's Reactor	12 or better	11 or below	-	-

Note: * - ECM does not work to counter or stop this type of attack.

(Combat example cont. from previous page)

sive. Urban uses Structural Analysis again and rolls a two (snake eyes). He has had a Mishap. Consulting the table, his event roll of eleven creates an ECM penalty to his own group. His own players are minus one on their dice next round.

The remaining three terrorists continue to fire and roll seven, fourteen and four. That's good for damage Walking, Vicious and Abrasive. All three of these attacks are directed at Zulu. The referee decides this.

Zulu takes his D8 attacks gained by Pistol Grip and rolls a total four attacks. He rolls Pistol Grip as an attack of High Impact Kinetic four times and results in four more Abrasive. He decides to put these all on Guy E, who drops from overflow. X-Ray wants to help defend Zulu, but he also wants to take other actions. He decides to attempt three actions at the same time. Yes, this is allowed (See page 25 *). However, the Degree of all these tasks increase by one. X-Ray attempts Auto-Star Point to protect Zulu; plus he performs Counter-ECM and Seeker Round. He rolls nine for Auto-Star Point, now a Tasking attempt. That's a Fail. He also fails his Counter-ECM with a seven at Tasking. Yet, he delivers an Abrasive wound by rolling a ten for Seeker Round Tasking, a Mixed result. He hits Guy D, which loads him up. Guy D has now taken one of each type of wound — Abrasive, Walking and Vicious.

Round Three: "Last Warning"

Of five opponents starting in the battle, two rounds ago, only two remain. Guy B has a single Abrasive and Guy D is one blow from death. The players have a minus one penalty on their dice this round from Urban's mishap. Urban wants to get this combat over, since his own actions so far have been ineffective. He attempts Counter-ECM, though he doesn't know the function. He must make a roll at two Degrees higher than normal (i.e. Limit). His roll of a fourteen, even after subtracting one for the ECM penalty, means he Mixed. He loses his actions next round, but all damage delivered by the players this round is increased by one. X-Ray

(Continues in sidebar on next page)

Criticality of Attack

make their remains very hard to identify. (Deliver Vicious as opposed to Slain.) Counter-measures can be used to destroy the guidance on such attacks or Cadmium poisons can be fired (injected) into the oncoming round and inhibit the reaction rate of such explosive devices. Automatic sensors in the Suit scan for nuclear bombs. Large concentrations of fissionable materials tend to attract an agent's attention. Most criminals don't like nukes, because they take the fun out of battle. Terrorists still employ the devices, but not normally in battle. Appearance of nuclear weapons will usually result in a time-race to the climax to defuse the bomb. Bottom line, sure there are millions of devices that destroy instantly, but shouldn't the players be fated to avoid such utter traps?

Special Attacks

The referee's attack table listed only methods of causing damage. That's not the only actions the opponents might attempt. Some opponents will have special attacks designed to prevent the players from using some of their functions. One of a group of opponents might even attack with a form of magnetic pulse which causes the players a die roll penalty on their Responsive actions. Opponents may even be "wired" with suicide settings or limited opportunity fire which causes the players damage only as they inflict wounds. Some opponents might hit multiple targets, and even take a D8 peppered attacks against a single victim (ouch). Attacks which create a higher chance of Mishap or directly cause a Mishap are also possible. The basic designs for Duro-Armor and its weaker cousin the EE Suits are well known. Some criminals take a delight in figuring out counter-measures or shut-down engagement tactics. Extruding foam might be used to create a tremendous amount of bubbles which solidify (like styrofoam) and divide the players. The enemy might also resort to inflicting damage on the unprotected civilians or

manufacturing obstacles that will divert the players and allow the criminals to escape. Finally, very common tools, like the vise grip or welding torch, can be used to disable an opponent's Suit. Feel free to add these "monkey wrenches" into some battles as the players become proficient at using the combat system.

Surprise

If the players attempt to surprise their opponents (i.e. they sight the enemy, but the enemy doesn't see them), they may have one or two rounds to activate functions without the enemy realizing he's about to be attacked. However, most of the functions do not operate (at their best) when simply activated and left on while players wander around. Sure, the Suits would be great if they operated that way, but they simply fall out of calibration, lose intensity, and worse generate such a pronounced electronic and heat signature that they alert the enemy of police presence. (That may turn the tables and let the enemy surprise the players.) The players must direct the actions; the politicians don't want a bunch of rogue Suits walking through society as avenging justices. Exceptions allow the player to take opportunity fire and quickly react to the enemy that may just briefly come into his field of fire. For such actions, the player should roll as a target presents itself. Likewise, two very useful functions are C-Cubed and Pistol Grip. Both can be a test for "fast draw" to avoid attack or quickly activate a function in reaction to a hazardous situation. (i.e. When something catches the players off-guard, like a grenade suddenly appearing on the ground between them.) Thus, in some cases the player will need to attempt a test roll or reaction, before he takes his regular actions — the first a basic or difficult C-Cubed roll, followed upon success with the desired Suit function made in response to an unforeseen, surprise threat.

Range and Duration of Attacks

Basically the game has three ranges: Close (face to face), Not Close (shooting distance) and Out of Range (off planet). Close range is within arm's reach (grappling if you wish). Not Close is an attack anywhere in the person's line of sight (or best guess, since sight is often blurred). This means that the standard High Impact Kinetic discharge, aided by the Suit's visor, can hit from a few inches to several miles distant. Forward observers (scouts closer to enemy) can transmit signals to increase line of sight. Ordnance is even better, in that it can hit basically anywhere on the battlefield, which could be into orbit or anywhere on one side of a planet. Accuracy of Suit attacks falls off only slightly; but more critical is the fact that ranged attacks allow increased time to counter incoming danger. Suffice to say, anything the referee describes can be "shot" by the players. Likewise, after the referee takes his opening "pot-shot" (ambush) roll, the players quickly ascertain the exact location of enemy. Yet at his option, the referee can apply penalties and increase the degree for ranged attacks.

Many of the Suit functions and their attacks are described in vague terms, like a range of ten arm-lengths or lasting till the end of battle. These descriptions are provided for comparison to each other and for visualization when using miniatures. In Free-Style Role-Play™ nothing needs to be overly exact, and an expression like "once activated this function lasts for the duration of the battle" means that the player must attempt the function during a clash with opponents and from then on till the conclusion with that particular group, for the next combat round or several rounds, until the enemy is defeated or the players retreat, the function applies its modifier. For the next battle, it must be reactivated. Of course some functions can be deactivated during battle, but others don't turn-off like a switch. The referee must decide some specific cases for he ultimately describes the Sci-Fi battlefield to the players.

Terrain and Artificial Protection

Most attacks hit a point, but others deliver damage along an implied line of sight or to an impact area. Basically ordnance can injure anyone in a strike zone, while all other attacks effect but one victim. Sometimes a target will be blocked or shielded by obstacles, and the referee may decide to reduce the damage of an attack. Remember, if a High Impact Projectile can hole a Suit, don't be confused into thinking it's stopped by mere walls or ship bulkheads. A single shot may also wound one

person and continue its path to injure a second, third, fourth, etc. Yet, some terrain will be too restricting to allow ranged attacks. Flora and mineral formations tend to ricochet direct shots and disrupt the path of beams. Likewise, urban streets tend to funnel attacks in certain directions; that is until the criminal grows tired and simply reduces the area to rubble. The referee can apply restrictions or add a defensive bonus or penalty as desired. In fact, setting the scene can make for as interesting a diversion from regular combat as inventing a new scary-monster or deadly opponent attack. Example, players fight in various odd-shaped caves, constantly moving through waterfalls and sinkholes; their high impact attacks are inoperative. Yet be aware, terrain is usually a neutral modifier, and restrictions should apply to the players and opponents alike.

Suit Ammo, Power and Life Support

Does it really matter? We've all played games where you must write down a whole lot of ammo boxes, but when it comes to play, you never seem to roll enough dice to exhaust your supply (even if you do remember to keep track). Ammo, power and life sustaining support (like air) are things that are exhausted (or fail) through mishap. The players have an unlimited amount of everything, until mishap rolls or encounters say otherwise. If you're interested in battle accouterments, you might get a subscription to a firearm magazine; else, order a catalog from a weapon manufacturer. But for our games wouldn't the characters carry enough? Logistics a millennium in the future ensure that our troopers are self-sufficient — armed with a generic weapon, containing the same basic repair parts, using the same basic ballistic rounds.

The patent answer is to say that the ammo is actually small pieces of the Suit (magnetic plastic); likewise, explosives are manufactured from this same material. Power is supplied from a storage cell that actually converts heat differentials into electrical energy, and air is recirculated (conditioned and cleansed) internally. Mass is energy; energy is mass — use your imagination. Hey, give yourself a break from record keeping. Power can be had in many ways; ammo and explosives can be refined from almost anything. Suffice to say a new universal element "Amaze-ium" (or "Bologna-ium") has made power, ammo and air cheap, plentiful and compact (at least for the "paper" characters). If the referee wants different, change the game — after all it's free-style. Otherwise, the mishap tables will let the player know when he has made the mistake of exhausting his unlimited supply.

(Combat example cont. from previous page) and Zulu follow with Advantage attacks. X-Ray uses his Seeker round against Guy B. His modified roll of twelve, a Success, means that the guy takes a Vicious. Shifting the wound for Urban's Counter-ECM result, places the final damage at kill. Likewise, Zulu uses his Pistol grip to fire (again like High Impact Kinetic). He has High Impact Kinetic, but he wants to take advantage of his skill bonus in Pistol Grip. Not that it truly matters, since he rolls a nine and delivers a Walking. Even without the shifting, this overflows Guy D and the last opponent falls.

Aftermath

Zulu took a total of one Vicious and two Walking. The Abrasive goes away at the end of battle. X-Ray took a Vicious and Walking, while Urban ends battle with a Walking wound. These will continue with the players into further action, unless they attempt a final round of damage control (via System Bypass) to restore some of the loss.

Note: * — Before someone gets the wrong idea, to clarify, a player may activate more than one function in a round, but he may not activate the same function more than once a round. So don't think someone can attempt a dozen High Impact attacks by simply rolling each at Difficult. Yet, everyone could attempt to also fire a High Impact in the same round as performing other functions. The danger of resulting Mixed or Mishap results usually provides the proper restraint on these "eager" battle actions.

Agent Zulu (Cruz Raw Recruit)

Traits: Durable, Fierce, Imperial, Spirited

Functions: Auto-Star Point, GPMG/SF,

Official Report (+1) and Pistol Grip (+3)

Damage Chart: six Abrasive, five Morale, five Walking, four Vicious

Agent X-Ray (Terran Political Appointee)

Traits: Fierce, Imperial, Inventive

Functions: AAD, Counter-ECM, Seeker Round and Matrix Watch-Dog

Damage Chart: three Abrasive, five Morale, three Walking, three Vicious

Agent Urban (Cruz Political Appointee)

Traits: Durable, Fierce

Functions: Cluster Bomb, EDPP, RPG and Structural Analysis

Damage Chart: five Abrasive, four Morale, five Walking, three Vicious

Plus all have Access Data Files, C-Cubed, High Impact and Jet-Pack.

Bad Guys — Androxians in Suits take one wound of each type and fight using Magnetic Ballistics.

Mishaps in Duro-Armor (2D8)

2 or less: "Cracked Knuckles" — Joint servos rupture. For a D8 rounds, increase the Criticality of any wound received. (i.e. Type I become II, II become III, III become IV and IV are KIA.)

3: "Sauna" — Cooling line fouled or overtaxed. Before each attack attempt, the player takes an Abrasive wound from exertion. Only functions which deliver damage are affected.

4: "Blast Off" — Dust Off function activates, and the player departs the field of battle. He will be out of the action for a D8 rounds (until he returns). If the player is inside (a ship or complex), he takes a Walking wound as he's stopped and embedded into a random wall.

5: "Lost Car-Keys" — For a D8 rounds, one regularly used Suit function becomes inoperative.

6: "Straight Jacket" — Hydraulics seize and Suit becomes stiff, like a statue, for a round. Player may not attempt any function next round, then the Suit repairs itself.

7: "Clumsy" — Electronic control failure, so player must switch to manual. For a D8 rounds, all task resolution rolls for functions are made at minus two to the dice.

8: "Dancin' Fool" — For a D8 rounds, a power imbalance causes the player to attempt two rolls for every function attempt and take the worse result.

9: "Crippled" — Your weapon is damaged or depleted of ammunition. For a D8 rounds, the player may not use one of his attack functions.

10: "LOC" — Loss of control, the actual damage or mishap usually depends upon the terrain or active mode of transportation when the result occurs.

11: "Traitor" — ECM own side's attacks. All player attack rolls next round are made at minus one to the dice.

12: "Eureka" — Accidentally discover a Suit function. The referee picks the skill that the player acquires. An attack function is usually discovered and fired in error at an ally.

13: "Blue Sparks" — Bio-Computer Interlink failure means that regular thought activation of functions becomes impossible. For a D8 rounds, the player is limited to one ready function per hand — meaning the tri-ped Cruz may attempt at most three skills, and Terrans may activate only two.

14: "Red Sparks" — Mechanical failure restricts mobility. For a D8 rounds, the player can marginally rotate to fire in any direction, but he may not move from his present position in the battlefield. If the player was airborne, he suffers a Vicious wound from the free-fall.

15: "Winged" — The player has torn himself apart. His hydraulics have seized and attempted to move in two directions opposite to the normal flexibility of his body. He loses of appendage and suffers a Vicious wound.

16 or more: "Critical" — roll twice and combine two results.

Duro-Armor Overkill or Flukes (2D8)

2 or less: "Action-Reaction" — For the remainder of battle, the player may attempt actions in both the Advantage and Responsive phases. However, his actions in the Responsive phase will increase by one Degree if he takes any Advantage actions.

3: "Automatic Everything" — For the remainder of the battle, the Degree of all the player's function attempts is decreased by one. (i.e. Tasking becomes Difficult and treat Basic actions as an automatic success without the need to roll.)

4: "OJT" — After all function attempts this round, the player discovers he has become additionally empowered. He suddenly gains an aptitude in a random skill function. This result is permanent.

5: "Outboard Tutor" — After all function attempts this round, one player at random in the battle area has become additionally empowered. He suddenly gains an aptitude in a random skill function. This result is permanent.

6: "Check Mode" — The player is stunned by his own uncontrollable fury, and expert systems take control while he's dazed. For the next D8 rounds of the battle, a random combat function is activated by the player's Suit. These should not be out-of-place information or ineffective surveillance functions; instead, the referee should select a function of self-preservation or mass destruction. (Cartridge Load or GPMG/SF are good choices.) The Suit will attack both friend and foe, but usually picks the most aggressive opponents and will not fire on the helpless. After a D8 rounds the player recovers to take back control of his Suit. Yet during this period, even his Master Suit Codes won't shut him down. (The Suit has a mind of its own, don't you know.)

7: "Follow the Flag" — The player's display of firepower has intimidated everyone in the area. More so, the other combat armor has keyed on his actions as the new authority for command. For the next D8 rounds of the battle, the actions of all the other players are increased one Degree, unless they perform the same function as the player. (If he shoots High Impact Kinetic, the other Suits want too as well.)

8: "Sideshow" — Everyone is stunned by the player's release of destructive force (both friend and foe). Everyone except the player, loses their actions next round, fending off assault, diving for cover or conducting minor repairs. The player gets a free round to take his own actions. These need not be direct attack attempts on the opponents.

9: "E on the Gauge" — The player is out of ammo (roughly speak). The player may not use any projectile delivering combat function, for the rest of the battle. The referee may decide other specifics. He's out of plasma, grenades, bullets, what-have-you; and no, he may not borrow from his buddies. After the battle concludes his abilities return back to normal.

10: "Worker Bees" — After all actions this round, the player feels invigorated with new-found power. He restores a D8 wounds; however, he may not gain more than he had when he started the adventure. He regains only damage he's previously lost to this point.

11: "Paranoid Targeting" — For the remainder of the battle, the player's attacks do damage on a random person in the area, possibly a friend or foe. The player must first attempt his attack, and then roll too see who becomes the victim. Only functions which deliver damage are affected.

12: "Wave Attacks" — For the remainder of the battle, whenever the player attempts an attack, it strikes everyone in the area (friend or foe). Only functions which deliver damage are affected.

13: "Blinded" — For the remainder of the battle, whenever the player attempts an attack, he takes a Morale Test wound. The attempt need not even be successful for the wound to occur. Only functions which deliver damage are affected.

14: "That's Odd" — Something total bizarre happens. The referee must decide the details, but reality or memory may be altered. Two players might swap control systems, or any Suit function activated by one person becomes activated in every Suit in the area. Things will be very confused, and the result must be interpreted by the referee.

15: "Counter-Alt" — The Suit enters a self-preservation mode, activating all of its counter-actions. For the remainder of the battle, only half of the opponents may attack each round. Yet the other players are effected as well; the Degree of all the other players' function attempts is increased by one. (i.e. Difficult becomes Tasking and treat Limit actions as an impossible or "dice don't roll that high.")

16 or more — Roll twice and combine results.

EE Suit or Equivalent Universal Damage Chart

Type I (Abrasive)	Type II (Morale Test)	Type III (Walking)	Type IV (Vicious)
Base	Base	Base	Base
Duro-Armor	Duro-Armor	Duro-Armor	Duro-Armor
Player	Player	Player	Player
Durable	Fierce	Durable	Durable
Spirited	Imperial	Upgrade #24B	Upgrade #24B
Cruz		Cruz	
Upgrade #24B			
Overflow Morale or Walking	Unconscious	Vicious	KIA - Dead

Damage and Wounds

If any attack scores a hit, the wound inflicted is determined based upon the Criticality — Abrasive, Walking or Vicious. The fourth category of injury, Morale Test, occurs mostly from excessive wounds, special encounters, battle stress or psychological warfare attacks. (And of course, the referee may make certain opponents deliver these types of wounds.) A single impact usually delivers just one wound, but chemical enhancement (drugs and poisons), unforeseen hazards (including booby-traps) or natural elements (like fire and falls) can

increase both the criticality and number of wounds. Example, agent hit by surprise at close range by a howitzer, and subsequently destroys his jet pack, causing him to fall the height of an eighty story tower, can be considered slain. Likewise, a defenseless opponent, whether knocked out or encased in a failed Suit, dies from any blow.

All normal people and basic creatures take at most one wound of any type before passing out or falling dead. Enemy mercs in EE Suits take usually one Abrasive, one Walking and one Vicious injury before being slain. The injured players, opposing mercs or special "scary-monsters" must record their own damage loss, striking off wounds in columns from a damage record chart.

When all the blocks in a column are struck off, the result on the Overflow line is applied. For example, if a normal man takes two Type III, Walking injuries, the first one is struck from the Walking wound column and the next is applied to the Vicious column. When selecting overflow for Abrasive wounds, the player may choose to lose either a Morale Test or Walking (at his option). Feel free (in the style of game) to list others. For example, Androxian terrorists may get an additional Morale Test wound. When creating a scary monster the players must face in the adventure, the referee must consider its description — facts such as Tough Hide, Segmented Body, Large Beast, or Energy Based Life. For example, the dreaded Electrified Sol are Large Energy Creatures and therefore can suffer three wounds of each type. That's as good as many players!

Specific Differences from Battle Born

Most of the guidelines presented in Battle Born for combat and injuries still apply, but G/Sol have certain beneficial upgrades and battle training that is reflected in their ability to receive wounds. The damage chart has two main additions. The first is the fact that besides the Base imparted by an EE Suit, all Soul Guard gain the Duro-Armor bonus. They have a better EE Suit than the typical Battle Born trooper. Second, Upgrade #24B is a new damage record. The upgrade is a biological ooze that serves to strengthen the J-unit coating of a Suit; it is acquired like any Suit function and must be activated during battle. Recall, all starting G/Sol recruits are Fierce, but not all G/Sol. (Some are cross-over entrants.) The Fierce trait makes the trooper immune to the handi-cap caused by pain. Hence, no discussion of pain effects and penalties are presented. Like Battle Born, to keep the referee's job simple, opponents as well aren't fazed by pain.

Cruz Special Considerations

Cruz, the "Strong Arm of Law," benefit from a physiological phenomenon called Biological Boosting. When groups of Cruz band together (bond like a family in brotherhood), they physically become stronger, faster, more energetic, basically healthier. In game terms the most practical example is that in squads having four or more Cruz (not new guys, but mercs seasoned in battle together), all these "brothers" take an extra Abrasive wound before suffering overflow. Combined with G/Sol indoctrination, Cruz have shown superior pain and wound tolerance and also gain an extra Walking wound as well.

Avoiding Damage and Special Defenses

When a player (as victim) would receive injury, he may not suffer damage; the player or his comrade may elect to use the Response attack and instead attempt a Suit function (like ECM or Star Point Field Overload), rolling to avoid or reduce the inflicted damage. Characters of Trait Spirited, gain two chances to avoid damage (rolling twice taking either result). Note: by attacking in Advantage phase, player sacrifices his chance to avoid (dodge, destroy, confuse or deflect incoming projectile) injury — brash actions are made to detriment of defense. Additionally, the referee may state that certain wounds or attacks can be ignored based upon immunity conferred by EE Suit or special terrain situations (i.e. player can not be hit by ballistic or rocket through a dense forest). Some creatures as well are immune to particular types of wounds, but usually only players may attempt rolls to dodge a blow ("we don't want combat to take a lifetime").

Wound Recovery

Type I, Abrasive, are temporary. They recover after the conclusion of each battle (repaired or treated in the quiet aftermath before moving on). Type III and IV, Walking and Vicious, wounds usually heal with hospitalization and detailed reconstruction after the conclusion of the scenario (just in time to take next). Attempts to repair and restore these losses by application of skill can also be made during or after a battle. Since most failed attempts at field operations and repairs may result in additional wounds or further damage to a Suit, a critically damaged character could be playing Russian Roulette with his life when he tries to restore a Vicious loss. Type II, Morale Test, wounds can be cured with treatment by a command skill. Usually only one attempt per person can be made to raise morale during the mission. Success restores wounds, but they can be inflicted again.

Character Advancement

The tangible reward for play is improvement of abilities. Though many systems for determining advancement have been developed (an alternate method of performing Ignobles appears later), the mission completion method is perhaps the easiest and best start. Whenever the players complete an investigation, arrive at some conclusion, take an important suspect to trial, they gain additional skills. How many and of what type? Well that can depend on the referee, but as a rule of thumb, a character gains a D8 skills in new Suit functions or improvement points for every completed mission. What is a mission? Well, that again depends on the referee. Often the end of a day's play signifies a completed mission. Can this lead to characters with numerous skills and powerful players? Yes, but the referee can start raising the competition to increase the challenge. As the players game, their characters attract contacts, friends and enemies. However, the eventual demise of most characters is often not from death, but rather from the final fate of retirement. (i.e. The player obtains his goals and retires the character, perhaps as an NPC for stimulating play.)

Titles for Character Advancement

Characters advance in titles by completing investigations. If a character completes a significant arrest and his collection of clues leads to a conviction, he may advance one step along the arrows of the progression path, improving his character's skills or fighting abilities. The path shows only the spectrum of society in which a G/Sol agent could expect to obtain. Advancement must be along the arrows.

At certain steps in the Progression Path, the titles have an asterisk (*); these are titles that also appear in Battle Born (Space Gamer one). Once a player obtains the corresponding title in Battle Born, he may transfer to the G/Sol at that position in the Progression Path. Likewise, a character may switch out of the G/Sol into the Battle Born upon obtaining a position marked by asterisk.

The referee may expand the progression chart and add titles appropriate to his own campaign. Additional requirements for progression may be added for some titles. Some would obviously require a political appointment; others must first have a vacancy.

New Inductees

If a player creates a new character and starts him in the G/Sol, he must select his title as "Raw Recruit" or "Political Appointee." Both are outfitted in Duro-Armor and trained in the following four functions: Access Data File, C-Cubed, High Impact Kinetic and Jet-Pack. He may then select another eight additional skills (for Raw Recruit) or four skills (as Political Appointee) to complete training. Transfer from Battle Born has the advantage of already having a variety of skills (even the Reservist).



But then again, not all Battle Born transfers have the Fierce trait gained even by Terrans completing G/Sol indoctrination.

Clarification of Titles

SOG Trooper is short for "same old grind," a patrolman or guard of various degrees of experience and possibly lamenting his long hours of little action.

SWAT Forces are special weapons and tactics, an assault force organized along similar lines as the Battle Born. These are used to support G/Sol raids and to quarantine hostile systems. G/Sol trust their own strengths whenever possible, and do not rely on the Battle Born for assault troops.

ATF Agent are combination of customs inspectors and contraband investigators. Though the acronym is often incorrectly translated, the meaning relates to the ancient bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Favorite Son is a guardsmen sponsored and promoted by a cartel or social organization. The player has an active fan club (including letters and goodwill packages) and some good press support. Since many G/Sol raids are shown on TV shows, like SOGs or Tetra-League's Most Wanted, most agents have a cooperative or adversarial relationship with the press.

Psychopath is a person who has suffered injury or tragic loss and is now classified as dangerous. He normally would be terminated (assassinated), but in this case his popularity and success in previous assignments make such an action politically unfeasible. The character usually will be given a few more assignments to see if he sobers, but most do not. The player should not be a random killer of friend or foe, but instead develops a mania to kill a particular person (usually an executive) that has done him wrong. Psychopaths are often manipulated (memories changed), so they can be used to commit nefarious deeds for certain other corrupt agents.

EOD Team is short for Explosive Ordnance Disposal. They respond to bomb threats when able, but more often clear areas of past battle (both planet surface and space). After any major engagement there still remains unexploded mines, rogue missiles and renegade robots. Many EOD agents also hunt down free-booters and smart bombs before they detonate. They alone have the resources and abilities to track down blood knights.

Secret Service are agents assigned to directly protect political leaders like the Star Ward or various cartel executives.

Delta Force represents the counter terrorist squad assigned the primary task to neutralize Androxian Fanatics.

Shades of Grey represents a corrupt agent, but also one usually untouchable by normal channels. His crimes are either rumors created by professional jealousy, or else well disguised and hard to substantiate.

Knighted Lord of the Tetra-League is a status given to certain guardsmen who have proven their loyalty and worthiness to move to executive status, but have not had enough press coverage to extend their role politically. At this step the player's image is usually molded, and past friends are brushed away.

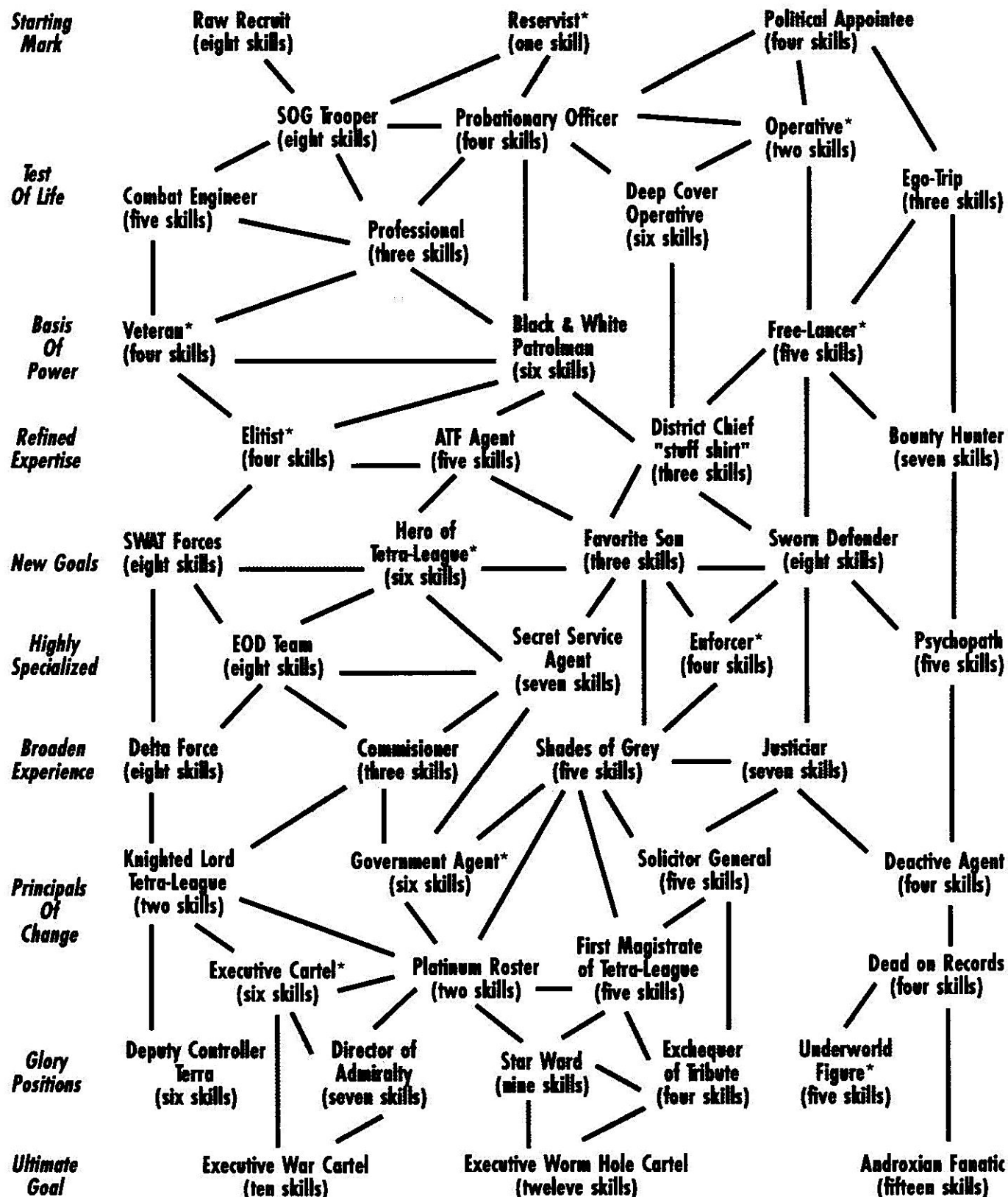
Platinum Roster is a role-call of the honored few. By viewing the next progression steps, the player can see how highly his performance is regarded. Unfortunately, some agents with past criminal dealings also obtain this status.

Dead on Records is a person who has completely erased his identity. He assumes any of a variety of cover profiles to continue his actions. Unlike the Deep Cover Agent, even the G/Sol have lost the records on this character. He is usually targeted for termination (assassination), being too dangerous to run loose unchecked; however, such a character usually still has friends and fellow agents who refuse to enforce the death warrant.

Deputy Controller of Terra is usually the person directly under Kiel Steiner, Commander of the G/Sol. If the player should choose this path, he will not last long. If a player survives various intrigues associated with the post, the G/Sol will enter internal war, between those who support Steiner, and those who back the new usurper (the player) for command. Nine out of ten times, the player will disappear; but as deaths go, attempting to seize the true power of Tetra-League, is perhaps the greatest. Well done to anyone who decides to accept this post.

Androxian Fanatic has lost his mind. At least that is what the G/Sol claim; the character may be perfectly rational (most are). Androxian Fanatics pledge a new oath — death to Immunes. They do not kill for personal advancement; they kill to purge the world of the corrupt and profit seeking, which pretty much covers every executive. Androx himself formed the G/Sol, and many secretly support his actions as the hidden agenda of the G/Sol in Era Ten. (See the history or ten most wanted list for other details.)

Guardians Of Sol Progression Path



(*Marks titles which can cross-over to or from the Battle Born.)

Opinions of the G/Sol

"Every kid-Cruz wants to grow up and join the Soul Guard. We're taught as young bloods that the G/Sol predates MACE."

"Most of what I've got to say about 'Ge-Sol-Stapo' isn't printable. They are arrogant, complacent and simply a smug bunch of stuffed shirts. They play 'holier than thou' with the rest of us."

"Buncha mustard sucking apes, that's what they are. Okay like, anytime my bloods some free-running wanna do — you know like, vent some sweat, so bust we don't — well, those fascists our fun spoil. It's so bloods parlor cruise we can't thout some Salt harassing. You know like, asking you — why curfew is you violating; what six S-units with you doin; that kinda thing. If it's not stopping, it's Salts come in and spill humors."

"I saw the final apprehension of the blood knight that ravaged Centauris Vega. The G/Sol agents are second to none."

"It was only logical that when the system governors organized MACE after pacification that they begged the Soul Guard to join. They were the only group left with a semblance of order and a stable commander. The Battle Born's commanders were all considered traitors, and the only other force with any unity, the Silver Brigade of Skia, sold all their equipment after the war (in Era Eight)."

"The records show that about forty percent of G/Sol operations involve apprehending Battle Born troopers. Considering that as many as twenty percent of the Battle Born are condemned prisoners and over eighty percent possess criminal records, I'm surprised they don't spent all their time arresting the Battle Born."

"They like the press exposure, that's why they accept the hazardous duties, like hunting for blood knights or uncovering the latest Androxians conspiracies."

"I thought those guys were supposed to be killing Kro or something. The Trideo broadcasts always show them accepting some award from a fat-cat, cartel royal."

"In theory, all MACE squads are under the jurisdiction of the Star Ward, G/Sol included. Of course, the position of Star Ward changes so often. Most commanders consider it ceremonial. As a matter of fact, I couldn't even tell you who's the current Star Ward."

"Before you ask about the high number of Battle Born troopers with criminal records, let me point out that the G/Sol love to prosecute the Battle Born on trumped-up charges. Most of these records are civil violations that have no relevance except in backwash systems with cultures still living the dark ages of Era Nine. They've yet to bring any active

Alternate Advancement

(Ignoble System for Sci-Fi)

As the player adventures, he will perform deeds and accomplish goals. To increase levels is the ultimate goal of play. On occasion a player might start a scenario with an advanced character; however, all players begin the campaign with new-starting characters at level zero. Each player should keep track individually of which title (i.e. level) his character has obtained. Instead of simply completing a major investigation to gain a level, the character must perform at least one act to satisfy each of nine Ignobles.

As the character performs an exploit in one of the areas, the player should check-off (✓) the category on the character's record sheet. Also keep a diary of all events (or accumulated events) that yielded the check for the area. This can be kept on the back of the character sheet for reference. Past deeds will both help and haunt the character. If a feat is repeated or a similar deed is accomplished, there is no need to double mark the category. Once all the categories are checked, then the character is elevated to the next level.

The Ignobles purposely overlap and should remain vague. No single deed can ever check more than one Ignoble, but a repeated deed might check a different Ignoble. The concept of a deed, act, feat, or achievement is also left vague. In a single engagement, it may appear that all nine Ignobles are satisfied, but the referee decides exactly which ones are eligible for checking. Such determinations should be based on enthusiasm, the character's needs, and campaign requirements. A similar deed performed by different characters may check different Ignobles — tailor the possibilities to fit the person.

The referee obviously has the power to withhold all levels, but the game is designed to create player leaders of extraordinary prowess. Equally true, the referee should never be bullied into giving away freebies, especially to someone at higher level. In a single adventure, the players will log countless Ignobles, possibly even more than one level, but never will one encounter or a single arrest gain several Ignobles. Use a fair bit of temperance and at times ask the players for advice on whether they deserve the Ignoble — they are, after all, your friends.

Two final notes, once checked (✓) the Ignoble may not switch categories, even if at the time, the deed may have satisfied the conditions of several Ignobles. Thus the player forces the character to strive and perform in other areas. Secondly, every player seems to have a weakness, we are after all not the characters we portray. If a certain Ignoble tends to elude a player (Cunning Ploys comes to mind), again look at the purpose of play — enjoyment. Some players, particularly new gamers, will not be as inspired, conspiring, or aggressive as others. This should (and must) not penalize their characters — reward attempt as well as accomplishment. Equally true for us of high conceit, make it tougher on those who do conspire adroitly to gain Ignobles.

Adventure (Space Travel, Dangerous Encounters and Intrigue)

At early levels this is merely movement from system to system. For the higher levels, the need for dangerous encounters or chases perhaps into uncharted space might be required. Both the length of the voyage and specific events during the voyage should be considered by the referee.

Ambition (Profit, Revenge, Power)

Only those agents able to bend and manipulate the office politics of the G/Sol can advance. The player must at times overstep his authority to obtain higher position. This can also be monetary gain, but more often the player must set and obtain specific goals. Or when the player settles a score to his own satisfaction, he checks this Ignoble. Accumulation of power and authority from several sources of wealth and clout might also collectively equal a check.

Battle (Military Engagements and Strategy)

Combat between ships satisfies this Ignoble, as does combat between small forces using personal combat. However, the player must engage a person or group of at least equal, if not superior, abilities to check the Ignoble. Yes, the opponent must be armed and fighting. No one need die, nor must the player's character be the victor, but he must make a good sport in the battle and likewise so must the opponent. Brawling and fighting other player characters may or may not check the Ignoble, depending upon the motive (the referee decides). Practice duels and marksmanship tests do not satisfy this Ignoble. A helpless or unaware victim attacked by surprise or assassinated from other than direct battle should deny the check. Bottom line, the character must be in jeopardy or risk some loss in the action. Combat between larger forces using Tactical Assault Q&D may count as the Battle Ignoble. And strategy can also check this Ignoble, for a well planned, organized and supplied attack is as character building as leading the troops.

IGNOBLES

Adventure (Space Travel, Dangerous Encounters, Intrigue)

Ambition (Profit, Revenge, Power)

Battle (Military Engagements and Strategy)

Cunning Ploys (Clever Execution of Skills and Ingenuity)

Experiences Beyond Comprehension (Aliens, Technology, Unknown)

Growth (Leadership, Comradeship, Political Authority)

Heroics (Boldness, Courage, Audacity)

Judgement (Exercising Prudence, Forethought Plans, Precautions)

Publicity (Fame, Triumph, Notoriety)

Cunning Plays (Clever Execution of Skills and Ingenuity)

When a player exhibits a novel use of one of his character's skills or Suit functions, he may check this Ignoble. This is not just a trooper using GPMG/SF. Invention, adaptation and spontaneous use of skills checks the Ignoble. However, a clever action at a moment, a deduction made from an observation, or even someone saving an important character are equally sufficient to check the Ignoble. Having the right skill at the right time, or making a skill fit the need, is the essence of this Ignoble. The Ignoble is designed to keep the player from turning a character into a simple gun-toting sniper. Skills are designed to be infused into play to enhance the options of a player. Anyone who avoids combat, instead using bluff or deception to capture a foe, is truly showing ingenuity. Thus, clever ideas that require no particular skill also check this Ignoble.

Experiences Beyond Comprehension (Aliens, Technology, Unknown)

Now let's get something real straight up front — Sci-Fi is science fiction. It's not science, in that everything makes sense; nor is it fiction, in that anything is possible. So what? Well, everyone has his own way of doing things, likes and dislikes. Some people like a game that is more extraordinary, and others like basic problems in a modern world. When a player experiences something that is out of the ordinary, bordering on extraordinary, or even something that seems impossible, that's an Experience Beyond Comprehension. This Ignoble is not watching the Technician repair a Suit; this is watching a Suit come to life on its own after it is attacked by an advanced computer virus. Surviving seemingly hopeless circumstances certainly allows checking this Ignoble. Attempting to control Advanced Technology by a trial and error or cause and effect manner is another example. And finally battling scary-monsters or witnessing funky powers will also check this Ignoble.

Growth (Leadership, Comradeship, Political Authority)

This includes making friends and enemies, advancing politically or economically, attending social engagements, displaying or earning the comradeship and loyalty of servitors, and having strong moral or environmental convictions. The purpose of this Ignoble is to emphasize that the most important high-level characters of the Tetra-League have genuine ties of family, friends, estates and cartels. Player characters tend to be aloof in regards to the mundane (the daily buying of bread), but without anything meaningful in their lives, they become reckless. At the highest levels, the character must not simply become powerful; he must have the clout and connections to use this power at a distance.

Heroics (Boldness, Courage and Audacity)

To check this Ignoble, the player must make his character attempt a daring feat or outlandish act. The higher the level, the more danger or gall required to check the Ignoble. In the lower levels, facing a dangerous criminal or rescuing a captive can serve to check this Ignoble. As referee, do not become dulled from long play to simple acts. This can be a judge of the entertainment the player provides the referee, but should not solely represent this. The player need not be foolish or gruesome, but these possibly are bold, audacious acts. Also, there is no penalty if a player "hams-up" simply for the right to check the Ignoble; this is fine. In the reverse, a player constantly on the "edge" should not be expected to perform the preposterous to check the Ignoble. The referee is encouraged to goad the players into actions with the promise of checking this Ignoble (yet no guarantees).

Judgement (Exercising Prudence, Forethought Plans or Precautions)

Oh the duality of a character; he must show blind faith and courage, yet turn around and display prudence. More to the point, the character must be more than a "kill 'em all" kind of guy. What good is it to rebuild or maintain society (law and order) through anarchy. Most players have little self-restraint. In the G/Sol, such must be a handicap. In order to advance in abilities and levels, the player must show some respect for the everyday order of things. He must respect the authority of the cartel executives, and realize that some actions are simply out of line. True is the fact that this ignoble can be gained from NOT doing something (stupid). A check is also gained by taking precautions that prove later to be valuable to the investigation. Though it will not always be the case, a player's poor judgement, leading him to adopt a different or more cautious outlook on life (i.e. learning from mistakes), will also check this Ignoble.

Publicity (Fame, Triumph, Notoriety)

This Ignoble is recognition or acclaim (either pro or con). It is capturing a wanted criminal or being appointed to a governmental post. A respect gained from a superior, especially a cartel executive, will also check this Ignoble. Any trend of extravagance in a search, or notoriety for arresting one type of criminal in particular, anything that develops into a reputation, can also supply a check. An act counted for fame will of course not count in any other area, and the referee should decide whether it was the act or the aftermath that allows the check of this Ignoble. At low levels the deeds need not, by any means, have historic implications; further, a satisfied patron or prosecutor who obtains a conviction after the players collection of clues is notoriety enough. Any event or encounter that the character can brag about with both honesty and pride will satisfy this Ignoble provided the deed was commensurate with the character's level. Having a story to tell in a parlor later in life is satisfactory for low level types. However for the highest levels, the event or deed must be of historical importance to the Tetra-league.

Battle Born member up on charges of Crimes against the Tetra-League. A J Mac was never convicted, and she accepts house arrest out of honor till they finally have the guts to admit their wrong and ask her to again return and organize a real effort to defeat the Kro or Verdigris. I can't wait for that day and to see the Battle Born parade in triumph again on Terra."

"In the past, I've contracted Battle Born as security, but I've found them to be undisciplined and trigger happy. I've tried hiring free-lance mercenaries and found them to be more concerned with spending their pay on shore leave than actually doing their jobs. I even tried Cyberline robots, but found them totally unreliable. Fortunately, as a cartel owner I pulled some strings and got the G/Sol to loan me some of their troopers."

"Right now, three-hundred squadrons of Soul Guard ensure that we still live in a Terran empire."

"They've gained too much autonomy, ever since the Stygians tried to deactivate the Battle Born in Era Five. Before the Battle Born were fully reinstated, G/Sol solidified their political power. I doubt anything today could shatter their alliances and network of covert deals."

"The G/Sol are vital to War Cartel operations, and to the Tetra-League as a whole."

"G/Sol sit on their butts. Hey, most of those paper-pushers have never even been on a Jump and Die, so why should they get issued that bestest gear? When the G/Sol do anything, more often than not, it's harassing guys like me on shore leave."

"I've found G/Sol agents to be a kind, courteous, efficient and trustworthy police force for the Tetra-League, and consider my cartel very fortunate to have contracted their services."

"The Battle Born also have squads with centuries of distinguished service. Certain MACE units have upgraded to Duro-Armor. I can name two — Cherub's Battle Hymn (#1) and MacNamara's Band (#8). Plus, I bet there are a few covert Battle Born squads — those not revealed to the public — that have gear that would make even Duro-Armor look like an J-unit Erector Set."

"It comes down to this — they play the political game better than men who are just good honest troopers. They have a lot of cartel big-wigs in their collective back pocket."

"G/Sol spend a lot of down time baby-sitting Assembly representatives and cartel executives. I wish we could accept more action, like the Battle Born."

"What many don't know, issss that the G/Sssssol fought Era Eight with a different agenda. They sssselected assss their primary goal, the undermining of command sssstructure among the enemy and alliesss alike. They ssssupervissed the disssmantling of the Ssssilver Brigade. I'll never forgive them for that."

"A trooper gives his first loyalty to Kiel Steiner, cause Steiner does what's best for the Tetra-League."

"I've heard the G/Sol hiipe and I gotta say, we're not all condemned men, assigned to the service in the Battle Born by the courts. If you buy the propaganda, we should be called the Dirty Dozen! That isn't too obscure a reference, is it? Just don't tell me that the Battle Born are too high a risk to be issued the new gear. That's an insult to my honor as a Cimmer."

"Off the record — I could name certain Cruz and Terran troopers who have transferred to the G/Sol for the sole purpose of getting issued the latest Duro-Armor. Most are waiting to transfer back into their old Battle Born units. As you Terrans like to say, 'If you can't beat them, join them.'"

"If the Salt don't stop messing with free-runs and raves, it's just a matter of time before Salts gonna spill."

Briefing on Tetra-League's Ten Most Wanted Criminals

#1 — Alexander Androx, AKA "Anarchist": Wanted for crimes against humanity for the numerous murders of cartel executives and their adopted children. Let me state some important background. The first Star Ward, Alexander Androx, was accidentally dumped in real-space at least five-hundred years from the closest system. He should have died. But he survived and limped, as only an immortal on MRD can, slowly back to the Tetra-League. However, the Terran empire he once knew had changed greatly, the worst change of all being pacification. Like a genie in a bottle, Androx and his crew stayed locked away and isolated until they were found by a Skia salvage hunter. Yet upon exposure to the virus, all of Androx's crew who survived the ordeal with him, were pacified and rendered tranquil. Needless to say, he did not take the event in good spirits.

In his new madness, he adopted an insane purpose, to kill all Immunes. By his own logic, he somehow believes that the true state of mankind should be one of bliss, and only the innocence of pacification can ensure this utopia. Real twisted logic folks. He and his followers, now called Androxian Assassins or Anarchists of Androx, terrorize the Tetra-League and murder Immunes at random. Though they themselves are also Immune, they somehow rationalize their own role as that of executioners who will one day take their own lives. This dilemma is valuable when facing an Androxian. Many times they can be captured or at least confused by arguing and using their own immunity against them.

Many ecclesiastics have adopted Androx's philosophy, so anyone who appears to be unnaturally aged should be suspect. Androx's own cunning in avoiding capture is legendary, yet his intellect is understandably superior considering who he was. Add to this fact, that certain misguided G/Sol agents consider his mission (which mostly entails killing cartel executives) a blessing. As memoranda from HQ have repeatedly detailed, there are far better ways to ensure a constant request for G/Sol protection services. Regardless of the fact that Androx was the G/Sol's true founder, and though understandable many of the Cruz agents sympathize with Androx, G/Sol officers are reminded that Androx is our most wanted criminal and no one may refuse to properly investigate his acts. Commander Steiner would like to tell Marge Sankey of Galactic Sixty Minutes that her reports about death-squads inside of the G/Sol secretly led by Androx are completely unfounded. We all must seek to dismiss such conspiracy theories and reduce the chance of scandal. No matter what you think your priorities may be, never refuse an Androxian case or you may find yourself before the Independent Counsel of MACE Office of Special Investigations. I've been there; it isn't any fun. (No, they're not the guys that run the MACE Commissary Services.)

#2 — Tango-Nine Theta, Free-Booter: Don't just watch your backs, watch what's underneath the skin. Review your directives, and recent policy still holds. Anyone caught with over fifty percent bio-mass replaced by inorganic implants or cybernetic gear is considered a tin-head, just another robot in the eyes of the courts. They don't deserve full rights; they shouldn't expect full rights.

Tango-Nine Theta is wanted for numerous crimes against humanity, especially the kidnapping and surgical alteration of Taints for the purpose of sheltering renegade robots. Cyberline robotics denies any link to TNT — yeah I know his name is cute — and they continue to refuse our petition to have memory units similar to TNT released for our psychological evaluation. Simply put, we don't know how capable this guy is, so treat him like a bonafide psycho-SOB. Some have reported that he can transform like the best ISC gear, and I'd say it's safe to say you would lose a game of chess with him.

Don't take any chances. Shoot him on sight. No need to waste any court time if we don't have to.

#3 — Darko, Crime Lord: I'm pleased to say that one of our operatives has a fifty-fifty chance of saying for certain that he winged this guy in a theme park raid a couple of weeks ago. However, until the processing lab generates a full profile, we have to act as if our "number three on the hit parade" is still active. Regardless, if Darko is dead, I bet his second in command will be just as fierce and soon will be taking his place. Darko has been implicated with contraband in almost every system. If he were recognized as a cartel, he would have assets that rival the Worm Hole Group, if not the Journeymen themselves. Whatever he offers to you guys, it isn't worth it. Let me tell you; once you sell out, you'll never be the same again. Keep focused on the job, and everything will come your way. Darko and his type can't offer you anything but a one-way trip into the Battle Born.

#4 — Blood Knight, serial number 25-8-913: Continuing in my overview of tin-heads — ever since Era Nine, we've operated under a standing order that anything that is less than ten percent bio-mass is a machine. And any machine which takes free action is a free-booter. Well, shortly after pacification, for only a short period mine you, the War Cartel produced an armament of EE Suits that work without an occupant. Think of this as an upscale version of the System Bypass or Battlefield Sequencing. Yes, I realize many of you have not seen those functions in action. And you don't want to, if the result is a blood knight. Think of a Suited mercenary

who can activate every one of his Suit functions simultaneously and with proficiency that rivals Konrad Kane of Boot-Camp Parris Island System.

Okay, okay, calm down. You don't need to arrest these guys. We got a special team called the EOD, that's Explosive Ordnance Disposal for you rookies. They have a direct commlink to War Cartel manufacturing centers, specifically the ones that created these monsters. They will get their codes and shut them down. Else, they have a few Plan B operations. But what you have to know is that Blood Knights, and the serial number listed is known to be active, are dangerous and by their erratic nature must be destroyed for crimes against humanity. Hey and I might add, if it weren't for the general amnesty of 2985, we would be executing the designers of these freak boxes with the blood knights themselves.

#5 — Madeline de Sade: The cop who scores the collar on this lady has the admiration of every Terran male. She's wanted for crimes against humanity for the mutilation of Taints. She's the recognized cult leader of a group which advocates the castration of all male Terrans. Boy, that's tough to say aloud. Her followers ran amok in the Taint sector of Lempento system and now have gone into hiding. We want to get this lady real bad, but not bad enough to take her down (with an auto-target). We need her for questioning to find out how many of her whacked followers are on the loose.

#6 — Bollee-Bee, Kro Commander Karfu Horde: Opposing commanders seldom make the top ten, but this Kro has a string of war crimes. He's likewise charged with crimes against humanity for his whole-sale slaughter of systems and refusal to accept surrender of MACE forces in the field. As leader of the Karfu Horde, the Kro Empire's death fleet, Bollee-Bee on countless occasions has tylerized systems. His actions are too notorious to be dismissed as the price of war and the acts of an enemy general. Even though he operates outside of the Tetra-League, he is still widely feared and wanted for prosecution. I (like many G/Sol) will admit that his arrest is unlikely, and his name appears probably on our most wanted list for recruitment publicity. Yet this is my good words of advice to our garrison forces — don't bother to read him his rights, just take him down.

#7 — Unni, Verdigris Slaver: Unni is not your average smuggler. For those who don't know, the Verdigris are a symbiotic life-form comprised of two parts, a large green lizard with about twelve limbs and a small bat-like rodent, hardly even seen on the reptile. Yet it's the small mammal that has to be arrested. They're the intelligence and should have the good sense to know better. The reptile is just a big stupid passenger vehicle, so to speak. Well, Verdigris in general are thieves and hoodlums, but Unni is a real standout. He's wanted for crimes against humanity for the kidnapping and murder of Immunes. The race seems to have a fetish for torturing the helpless. Screams of pain get them excited. Just another sick race that Tyler should have vaporized, but we can thank Karl Dreggor. He discovered them. Looking at his own nefarious deals, I guess it was fated that one bastard would unleash another on society. Hey, but that doesn't leave this room — understood.

#8 — Lord Maath of the Mars Colonies: I must admit I feel sorry for this guy, but then again I wasn't on Mars with him when the worm holes shut off. Yes, we go back to Era Nine again for this guy. He was once #4 on our list, but he keeps getting usurped by badder dudes. Plus, unless he's changed greatly, he only has the one outstanding warrant. Unfortunately for him its for a crime against humanity with the death sentence already gone through appeals.

Oh, his crime — as governor of Mars, his resources were limited. He depended upon regular shipments from Earth. Yet Earth was dependent upon tribute from the colonies. Be patient, I'm about to get to his crime. As I said, in Era Nine, the worm holes were shut-off to stop the spread of pacification. Mars always had an active worm hole; they used a mass-driver to toss materials back and forth between close orbits in Earth and Mars. Without his worm hole, he would have to reestablish a long range pipeline. Originally he was told even that would be denied. He was faced with a disaster, no supplies of even air or water. So he tylerized his own planet's poor to ration everything at a steady state level.

Okay, sure he sounds pretty despicable, but he was faced with the classic lifeboat problem. Who do you save, and who do you not? What was unfortunate for him was that Jack Foster, owner of the artifact, correctly reasoned that a worm hole between Mars and Earth threatened nothing. So a few weeks after Maath's decision, they turned the transport lane back on. Maath was labeled a mass murderer, arrested and sentenced to die. Foster at first was also blamed, but his allies in the assembly shifted the guilt fully on Maath. The evidence still looks a bit manufactured, but we arrest them, not sit in judgement.

During an eleventh hour stay, Maath escaped and has been wanted ever since. He's probably got a completely new identity, but he is still our number eight most wanted (mostly for political reasons). The assembly is not a forgiving bunch. Maath should even have been pardoned by the amnesty of 2985, but the assembly passed an exception just for him. Yet as I said, I got some sympathy for him: a commander has some ugly choices that must be made.

Real Pay Off for Levels

As the character obtains levels, he becomes better able to survive (anything). The referee may allow the players several advantages to simulate the level the character has obtained. All three of these Level Bonuses have been play-tested and found to increase the intensity of play, allowing players to adventure and not fear instant death in combat. However, they can perhaps take some getting used to on the part of the referee. The bonus listed should be infused over time as the rule mechanics are mastered. Otherwise, the referee may not anticipate the increased prowess or overly estimate the characters' abilities creating a disbalanced play session.

Multiple Attempt Bonus

(Optional Rule)

Characters can gain a bonus when attempting a skill. When attempting a roll, the character may get to roll more than once and take the best result. In case it

Bonus Make-Rolls, The Gumshoe's Luck (Optional Rule)

At times the player will do actions that are beyond probability. With each experience level the player achieves, he gets a bonus ability to use during an investigation. Instead of attempting a roll on the dice in game play, he automatically may declare the roll successful. More so, at the referee's option, the player may augment any roll to an exact value. (i.e. This next D8 on the Q&D is a roll of six.)

This special bonus may be used a number of times equal to the character's "make-rolls" (i.e. level number). After the player uses all his make-rolls, he must await his next assignment to get more. Unused rolls may not be accumulated from mission to mission; all are forfeit upon completing or quitting the investigation.

The make-rolls can not modify the referee's dice. Also the referee may insist on a possible explanation from the player to describe how the escape, happen-

Wanted Criminals

#9 — Dr Edward Enrimmon. Formerly member of Phi Sigma Trust: He's the latest addition to our list. Seems Dr Enrimmon was working on a cure for the pacification, at least that what he claims. What he finally developed was a chemical catalyst that when mixed with MRD — that's the stuff we take each day to stay young boys — in even trace amounts causes a build-up of toxins. He may be an ecclesiastic opposed to immortality. Or he may be a victim of circumstances. That's not for us to judge. He's wanted for crimes against humanity, though I'm pretty sure they'll plea bargain the case back to a crime against the Tetra-League. When we catch him, he'll probably be shipped off to the Battle Born. I wouldn't at this time even consider him armed and dangerous. Yet, the crime is heinous and be aware of any punked-up young blood that may have a needle injector primed to give you a dose of Enrimmon's Serum — that's a walking death sentence!

#10 — Angel Sims (AKA "The Simp"). I've arrested this guy once before, be careful. He's as wily as they come. If I wasn't told by HQ that Rophorodo were all killed in viral plagues in Era Nine, I'd swear this guy was a shape-shifter. He at least has some great chameleon skin, the kind only issued to certain MACE special

ops. He might appear as anyone at any time. Visual, voice, chemical trace and smell, electrical emission. he's going to be hard to detect. My guess is that a routine capture will on a later detailed analysis show the arresting agent has bagged The Simp. He's wanted as the ring leader of a group that performs murder for hire. I've seen a minor cartel executive faint when he heard the name Simp. His crimes are at least Tetra-League in severity. But he's killed enough big-wigs that I'm sure the prosecutor will press for crimes against humanity which allows the death penalty. He's already been conscripted once into the Battle Born. They insist he served with distinction and even have him listed on active duty in a squad. Yet, field operatives have followed-up these claims and found that the squad in fact only existed on matrix records. The Battle Born command had awarded three

distinguished battlefield crosses to a squad that only existed in computer models (ha, ha).

Watch-out though, if he is a Rophorodo and even if he isn't, he can assuredly be considered armed to the teeth and will kill without sympathy.

Closing Remark — Most of these men have been wanted for numerous decades; they represent a cross-section of criminals in the Tetra-League.

Player's Level	Normal	w/ Trait Inventive or Spirited	w/ Both Inventive and Spirited
0 — Starting Mark	one	one	one
1 — Tests of Life	one	one	two
2 — Basis for Power	one	two	two
3 — Refined Expertise	one	two	two
4 — New Goals	two	two	three
5 — Highly Specialized	two	two	three
6 — Broaden Experience	two	three	three
7 — Principals of Change	three	three	four
8 or above — Glory Positions	three	four	four

Note: Defensive rolls made twice for Spirited are replaced by this table.

isn't obvious, a "normal" character is one without the traits Inventive or Spirited. With this bonus, all rolls for skills or Suit functions are allowed multiple attempts. The best generated result is applied.

Defensive Bonus

(Optional Rule)

Characters as victims of Referee's attack gain benefit from level and Traits. In case it isn't obvious, a "normal" character is one without Traits Fierce or Spirited. These numbers are subtracted from the dice roll of any attack made by the referee's forces against the player. In this way, the high level player character may become immune to damage from more basic attacks. The referee can always try to overwhelm a character with several lesser soldiers or protesters (opponents) and thus change his attack table. (i.e. Six home-bodies attacking together with chain-saws roll like a Magnetic Ballistic.) But even this may not be enough for the highest of levels — true heroes (like in the novels).

stance or deed was made (occurred). For blows, blind-luck will suffice, but for escapes and seemingly unlikely detection or deduction feats, the player must be a tad more colorful. The referee may refuse the make-roll or modify the outcome on multi-tasked attempts. Again the key is judgement. No one wants to see a favorite character captured, maimed or slain, but these outcomes are part of game-play. Impossible acts, that violate the rules are still not achievable with make-rolls.

Player's Level	Normal	w/ Trait Fierce or Spirited	w/ Both Fierce and Spirited
0 — Starting Mark	0	0	1
1 — Tests of Life	0	1	2
2 — Basis for Power	1	2	3
3 — Refined Expertise	1	2	3
4 — New Goals	2	3	4
5 — Highly Specialized	3	3	4
6 — Broaden Experience	3	4	5
7 — Principals of Change	3	5	6
8 or above — Glory Positions	4	6	8

G/Sol History

To understand the origin of the Guardians of Sol is to understand some of the events of Era Three and Era Four. The discovery of the Cruz race in Era Three provided Terra with their soldiers. Terror tactics during the reign of the Star Wards established how these soldiers would be used. The G/Sol serve the cartels (their employers) and Kiel Steiner (their leader).

The event that began Era Three was when explorers Bucky Swift and Lancer Smith, while traveling in the outer reaches of the worm hole expanses on contract for the Worm Hole Cartel, reported the discovery of the planet Torgal containing the intelligent life form, called the Cruz. The Cruz were the first extraterrestrial life encountered that classified as intelligent. The Cruz were technologically many centuries behind the Terrans, but they were as culturally diverse and had spread to all climes of the planet. Torgal was a planet of higher gravity than Earth, making the Cruz doubly as strong.

Once the team determined that the race was of no threat, a wider array of social and economic ambassadors traveled to Torgal. Liberal elements from Earth's Green Space Society arrived and exchanged ideas. They convinced the Cruz to hold non-violent protests at Earth's Assembly, demanding more rights. When security troops were called to the Assembly to remove these protesters, they discovered how powerful the Cruz were as a race. Several people were hospitalized, but luckily no one was killed.

The Crossboard Cartel (later becoming the War Cartel) recognized the advantage of using this new race of non-immortals in the armed forces. Abandoning further research on the creation of android warriors, the Cruz - a cheaper alternative to the previously used military drones - were recruited into the expanded security forces that patrolled the established colonies on the worm hole routes. With an expendable troop now under arm, Earth began a new campaign to destroy the Ecclesiastics. After a very successful propaganda campaign written by JW Walker of the Journeymen Cartel, both races were geared for expanding the war.

Since the Cruz were not primitive, they easily understood the personal arms training provided by Earth. The Cruz were equipped with a repeating rifle, modified for their tri-limbed body structure. After a period of wasting ammunition and a resettlement of Cruz nerves when first exposed to the explosions of mortar and missile ballistics, the Cruz were ready for their trial by combat.

In their first engagement, an assault on a known Ecclesiastic colony, the Cruz were destroyed. Cruz were restrained by their battle orders from advancing, instead they were ordered to maintain a position on the far side of the battlefield and engage in an artillery duel with Ecclesiastic positions. The experience of Ecclesiastic gun crews won the day.

Second engagement proved more a success. The Terran officers commanding the Cruz decided to adopt the new tactic of allowing them to engage in close assault (a position expressed in a thesis by a young military cadet, Alison Janice McDyme). Man to man combat on the scale proposed had not been waged since the days of the dual block: Socialist and Capitalist. Such a practice was considered archaic and personally repugnant - "to think, the soldiers might actually see the opponents as they die." Cruz were dropped en masse into Ecclesiastic positions and faced their opponents in hand-to-hand. For the first time, many Ecclesiastics discovered that they were battling an alien race. The Cruz were stronger, often faster and certainly more aggressive than their human opponents. Though losses were heavy, this time the Cruz won the field and captured the colony.

In following engagements, the Cruz become very capable soldiers. Engineers in the Crossboard Cartel developed versatile combat gear for the Cruz

Crimes and Punishments

Although I think none of us need a lesson in what is a crime, the game still needs a system for determining the proper punishment for someone caught in a criminal act. Also, at times the players may wish to follow a legal recourse for settling their grievances, so the rules must offer the referee a guideline.

Before describing the classifications of crimes, first understand that there are four types of "people" (so to speak) in Tetra-League society. These are (1) executives, which include many high officials in MACE, (2) Immune citizens, all humans including Taints, (3) robotic intelligence including android "tin-heads," and (4) non-league humans and all hostile alien races. When a person obtains the status of executive (of which there are probably only a few hundred in all the Tetra-League, not counting the JW Walker clones), that person obtains greater rights and freedoms in society. Sure, it should not be so and truthfully on record is not, but the fact remains that executives make most of the decisions and draft out the laws. They are simply too important to face the myriad of minor charges that may keep them in litigation forever. Instead, as will be seen, they face a lighter punishment for all but the most heinous of crimes. Most non-player characters identified by a name in the game, as opposed to a nameless servitor, will be executives in one manner or another. So the players will be hard-pressed to file charges and arrest these Immunes of power. ("But that's where the fun is, catching them red-handed.")

Basically the game has four classes of crimes: Crimes against Property, Crimes against Immune, Crimes against Tetra-League, and Crimes against Humanity. Many illegal activities are perpetrated - most Immunes are simply not law abiding. People commit acts to further their aims that are strictly speaking, unlawful. However, though most crimes can be committed without much fear of retaliation, some crimes are more devious and demand urgent prosecution. Every player should keep track of his character's criminal actions that may come back one day to haunt him.

Crimes Against Property - these include any acts of destruction or theft that a character may perpetrate such as theft, burglary, embezzling, arson, damaging of privately owned robots, etc. Character must be caught in the act in order to face prosecution. Otherwise a common practice is to say that the "machines" damaged turned free-booter and "needed killing." Since everything is made up of Components, and most devices are robotic with some degree of artificial intelligence, the claim usually stands. If a crime is witnessed and the witness will state that the destruction was unwar-

ranted, the person's accuser must still be of the same or a higher social position. Most executives are protected by their Cartel from prosecution for Crimes against Property if the victim who suffered the loss is not of same stature in society. Even if the crime was witnessed by another executive, the act will go unpunished. (Cases have been argued that common men technically don't own anything. Cartels simply allow them to use their possessions.) In many cases of the reverse in social position, a Crime of Property committed against a powerful executive will be treated instead as a Crime against Immune. Crimes of Property on MACE ships, garrisons or depots may be treated as Crimes against Tetra-League. The punishment for citizens who commit Crimes against Property is usually servitude in a penal colony or automated factory ship to work off the debt. Executives accused of damaging another executive's property tend only to suffer fines and then only after years of litigation.

Crimes Against Immunes - these will include all violent acts or threat of violent act such as murder, assault, robbery, extortion, rape, etc. Though in some cases dueling is considered illegal and a Crime against Immune may be warranted, self-defense is an argument for acquittal. Death or destruction of non-League members is not a crime, unless the figure had diplomatic importance. In such cases, treat crimes as those against Tetra-League. Otherwise, all hostile aliens, renegade robots and other assorted independent criminals can be killed with impunity. A character must be apprehended shortly after the crime in order to face punishment. The statute of limitations even on murder was changed in Era Nine and made quite limited. The act need not be witnessed by another Immune unless an executive is charged with the crime. Evidence need not be shown to prosecute a common citizen or trooper. Surveillance techniques are beyond description and also can be fabricated to any level of detail. The only fact that is relevant is whether a character was in the area in which the crime was committed. An alibi is important to claim otherwise. If a Crime against Immune is committed in an area, then someone (usually the stranger) will almost always be blamed for the deed (perhaps rightly so). If the victim is a member of the system's governing body, the crime is usually elevated to one against Tetra-League. If the victim is well respected (usually a historic figure of note), Crimes against Humanity are instead often charged. The punishment for proven Crimes against Immunes is usually assignment to a Battle Born Squad in direct conflict with the Kro or other hostile threats. (This is considered by most a death sentence.) However, if the victim of the crime was a mere citizen without social importance, most execu-

tives will instead be sent into exile in a remote outpost (i.e. a cake assignment.) Convicted player characters will often find themselves assigned to the Battle Born to fight and live long enough to redeem themselves. If a person committing the crime is already a member of the Battle Born, unless the crime can be elevated to that against the Tetra-League or Humanity, the person will simply be reassigned to a squad more in harms way. Most system leaders do not like when a Battle Born squad arrives to visit, since they tend to scoff at the punishment for most local crimes.

Crimes Against Tetra-League — these crimes are acts of treason against the league. Actually most are crimes charged by a cartel. They include spying, assassination, destruction of MACE property, causing rebellion, desertion from MACE, mutiny of MACE vessel, forgery of MACE orders, stealing from garrison, harboring a fugitive, failure to obey MACE orders, etc. The crime must be charged by a registered cartel. (Referee decides.) Then the cartel itself will fund the G/Sol investigation and apprehension. The War Cartel often initiates charges. For most crimes, the alleged criminal character must be in a system controlled by the aggrieved cartel in order to be prosecuted. Since most cartels do not cooperate fully, almost all crimes of this class will remain as outstanding warrants once a suspect leaves to a neutral base or system controlled by a different cartel. Extradition is possible, though infrequent. Unless the cartels involved wish to swap prisoners, most often these crimes simply restrict the travel of a criminal or threaten when he enters another system where charges are filed. However, the punishment for these crimes is usually death for both common men and executives, though players often find themselves recruited for a private mission to clear them of charges. Recognized heroes of the Tetra-League have been known to plead their cases before the Assembly on Terra and have charges removed. Of note, the last person to do so was subsequently killed in a fluke ship accident entering a worm hole. ("Need anymore be said.")

Crimes Against Humanity — unfortunately, the most heinous of crimes will also be the hardest to define. To say upfront, the referee usually decides (as a scenario requires) when such crimes are committed. Usually any trend of insane violence or acts of destruction against the principal figures of the Tetra-League will be considered a Crime against Humanity. Any assassination of a major cartel executive is also considered a Crime against Humanity. Of additional note, tin-heads (robots) only have rights among themselves. Mechanical life is not recognized by the Tetra-League, and any android tin-head which declares its own

personal freedom of will, becomes free-booter in nature and is guilty of Crimes against Humanity. Also in this class are certain crimes of blasphemy declared by the Church of Galactic Vision or decree of the Assembly, as well as environmental terrorism or serial crimes which impact several cartels. These crimes also include activities that are vicious and repulsive like mutilation of a dead body or engaging in obscene behavior with Taints.

Unlike all the others, there is no time limitation on these crimes. A character can be apprehended on any later date in any land. G/Sol distribute a video (and run a TV program) listing their Tetra-League Most Wanted which is an up-dated list of those wanted for Crimes against Humanity. Alexander Androx's name has remained longest on the list, as well as the Free-Booter Tango-Nine-Theta. Yet other notables such as Garcia Jones (Independent Buccaneers) or Glypus (of the Cimmer Vikings) have never been formally charged with Crimes against Humanity, despite their record of economic war, piracy and inciting rebellion. Many of the non-league confederations and neutral alien empires (like the Stygian and Eliens) will recognize and punish Crimes against Humanity, but hostile empires (of the Verdigris and Kro) have harbored fugitives and allowed them to go unpunished when it furthered their own aims.

The punishment for these crimes is always extended torture followed by burning, then the person's ashes are scattered throughout several systems. After committing such a crime, the character will always be an outcast and always live in fear. All MACE Corps EE Suits have programmed into them an Event Triggered Order which activates and forces other troopers to attack (with greater ferocity) any person who on cross-reference is found to have committed a Crime against Humanity. Because rewards increase dramatically, many independent bounty-hunters will also seek the persons who committed Crimes against Humanity. As with many crimes, being in the right place at the wrong time is grounds enough for conviction. ("There he is," the man cried pointing at the player; "I say that man is Androx!")

Special Crimes

A few other crimes are committed while traveling between systems within the jurisdiction of the Tetra-League, but are not specifically associated with a cartel system. Piracy, mutiny or theft of a vessel is a Crime against Immune, but notorious renegades and Cimmer Vikings have been considered traitors who have committed Crimes against Tetra-League. Mutiny is punished by destruction of the robots involved and marooning the crewmen. Murder of a vessel's station chief or commander is punished by death. Insubordination and fighting is punished by electronic

enhancing their already superior prowess. Cruz were able to carry many devices that before were only transported in vehicles. The repackaging of equipment made the Cruz able to operate in many different atmospheres and in all types of terrain. Cruz were also found to work and fight better in teams (the "pack theory" as it was called). Several Cruz could combine their strengths to carry even larger devices in synergetic fashion. Where several humans became only as strong as the stamina of their weakest team member, it was reversely found that several Cruz each aspire to abilities beyond even that of their strongest member. Scientists attempted to explain this biological boosting, but their research was curtailed when the Green Space Society discovered they were performing vivisections on the Cruz.

After several very tough conquests over intermediate bases, the apex of the Ecclesiastic strongholds was finally attacked. Lempento could have easily been an exercise in close bombing, but the Crossboard Cartel wanted to capture the planet with its facilities operational. There was also a vast stockpile of equipment and refined materials that was worth capturing. Battle hard Cruz numbering 35,000 descended to the planet's surface and annihilated the Ecclesiastic garrison of 200,000. The military hailed the battle as an ultimate victory, yet the Cruz lost three quarters of their soldiers. The same soldiers that had been praised in weekly dispatches were now returned to Torgal in body bags. Popular opinion in both races changed as many expressed their shame for sacrificing another race to eliminate, quite frankly, God. The Worm Hole Cartel joined with Green Space in a call for an end to the conflict.

Despite the continuing war, a reduction in the armed forces was instigated. A garrison philosophy of live and let live was adopted. The Journeyman Cartel was out voted when Jack Foster appealed to Mr Mann of the Crossboard Cartel, stating that without their shipyard facilities at Lempento, the Ecclesiastics would be decades away from rebuilding an offensive space program. The Earth Assembly agreed to an armistice, and many ships were converted into commercial craft. Both Earth and remaining Ecclesiastic vessels were limited by treaty in fire power and complement of marines. Certain demolitions and nerve gases were proclaimed illegal and non-humanistic. The term "human" was also debated as to whether it applied to the Cruz. Finally most agreed that the term "human" would refer to any intelligent race that could document her culture, demonstrate advanced use of tools and communicate with non-race members. The earthly race would be differentiated from others by acceptance of their title as Terrans.

Cruz were accepted as full political partners with the Terrans and allowed representatives in the Assembly. This created no disbalance, since Cruz in all cases supported Terran cartels and formed no independent voting blocks of their own. Many retired Cruz soldiers had already been employed as bodyguards by executives in all of the cartels. Cruz had accepted a role of support of their Terran leaders.

A long term problem was now aggravated. As most of the best and brightest humans left Terra for the stars, what remained was an odd collection of social misfits, that mostly earned their living from hand-outs supplied by the various cartels for their voting support. A full war erupted in the cities of Terra between coalitions that advocated an overthrow of the cartels and a return to the ideals of socialism. The combatants boasted many slogans, but the conflict became mostly a clash between the "haves" and "have-nots." For many, immortality meant nothing when they were faced with another day of watching the TV or wandering the streets waiting for a hand-out. The Cruz fought on both sides; not for any particular idealistic fury, but rather in support of their leaders or to secure their paychecks — the "war-dogs" served both masters.

The commander of the military, Alexander Androx, brought in his crack troops - the Battle Born, a mixed group of Terran and Cruz soldiers -

and secured a staging base on the surface of Luna. He did not assault the surface of Terra, but instead arrived alone and appeared before the Assembly. Androx, the man proclaimed Star Ward was a hero, loved and respected by all. The people of Terra stopped their skirmishes, and the cartels refrained from conflict out of fear of his troops on Luna. The civil war ended, but Androx was still faced with the problem of the unemployed (mostly the Cruz soldiers). Androx bestowed medals of honor on all the Cruz that were involved in the fighting. He immediately formed a new elite unit called the Guardians of Sol (or as often called, the Soul Guard). By separating the Cruz from their plotting masters, he effectively ended any possibility of open fighting. He also created another force of troops that was loyal to himself.

With peace returned, the populace of Terra proclaimed their support for their new leader, Star Ward Androx — First Citizen of the Humans. For the moment, the cartels lost their political control. With the G/Sol established, this event ended Era Three.

To begin Era Four, Star Ward Androx continued his reforms of the military. He wished to reduce the chance of rebellion and possibility of individual commanders forming their own empires. Androx divided the military into two branches: Patrols and Guards. Patrols were composed mostly of skilled ship technicians and their vessels, while Guards were mainly garrison soldiers and ship board marines. Each branch had separate chains of command that converged at Androx. The strategy was reasoned that Guard units would lack mobility to escape reprisal, and Patrols would lack the weapons and manpower to resist reprisal. The G/Sol, a unit that was comprised mostly of unemployed Cruz on Terra, were stripped of their ships. Although Kiel Steiner (the Terran commander of the G/Sol) disagreed, stating his force should be exempted, amazingly no incident resulted. Androx's popularity and the loyalty of Cruz to him prevented such.

In Era Four many servant robots were destroyed and their manufacturing virtually stopped. "Man has become fat and lazy; he must bear his own burdens," was the common sentiment. Machines that replaced man were soon outlawed. Instead machines that worked with man (under man's control) were developed. Such laws also served to employ Terra's growing population with the goal to eliminate idleness. Cruz as well wanted their concerns alleviated. Cruz did not like machines competing for their position as soldiers, so pilot-less drones and other operator free war devices were in turn declared illegal (in violation of Terran law prohibiting autonomous robots).

Androx faced new problems as several colonies, aided by deserting units of Guards, joined with ships supplied by the Journeyman Cartel and declared their "refusal to feed Terra." Androx's strategy of dividing the military had proved prudent — the Guards prematurely attacked ground bases, but they failed to capture enough ships to secure their systems. By the time ships from the Journeyman Cartel arrived, the Patrols were in battle formation and scattered the opposing ships. It was only a matter of time (a luxury that immortals can easily pay) before the "refuse-niks" (the term for colonies that failed to pay taxes) were isolated and surrendered. The populace of these systems was rather humanely spared; only the local leaders and all Guard members involved were prosecuted and executed. The executives of the Journeyman Cartel claimed no affiliation with the revolting ships. ("Our cartel is not even legally recognized is it? How can all be held in blame for the actions of a few?" Walker argued.) Walker was fined, but no other penalty was extracted.

After this first rebellion was subdued, numerous cartel members in the Senate decided the time was right to try to wrestle some authority away from the Star Ward. They first argued that the Battle Born should be removed from Luna and distributed to

Quick Summary

- Crime against Property** — must be caught and charged directly following the act.
- Crime against Immune** — must be caught and charged by end of a scenario.
- Crime against Tetra-League** — stay on permanent records, but fade with time.
- Crime against Humanity** — hounded till apprehended and added to the most wanted list.

flogging. (i.e. The character continues his adventure wounded.) Likewise, soldiers and other combatants in wartime will receive a harsher punishment depending upon their leader's need for discipline. Outside the Tetra-League, laws are not enforced, but independents usually set their own policies down in the form of a charter of operations.

Typical Investigation

Hopefully the opening narrative (page 7) demonstrated a few Suit functions. Crime-Solving in ERA TEN is almost always a matter of cataloging the criminal, collecting evidence at the scene for a positive ID, then following with a search or chase to apprehension. Guardians of Sol play will many times be a matter of following the trail — it's a big galaxy. The players will make a good-guess of where the criminal has fled and follow after the person (usually as new crimes are committed), until they catch him just prior to a criminal act. The players will be responding to tips and clues. They must anticipate the next crime in a spree from information given to them by the referee.

Technology

With just a few skills a team will be able to recreate a crime scene with accuracy beyond question. Seldom does a team start totally in the dark. Here's a few of the facts known at just one scene:

- All radio signals voked (RFSD)
- All conversations and sounds (AAD)
- Holographic video of the scene (EDPP)
- Heat and mass data at the scene (CLVS)
- Chemical data to tell who's involved and which systems the criminal has visited (ESS)

Dangerous and elusive criminals can learn to counter these actions, but most stop trying. After all, most seem not to care who knows — a criminal still must be caught. In this way, many adventures will be the action, suspense and thrill leading to the arrest, not a detailed search and mystery of who committed the crime. Any witness means the crime will be revealed by scanning a trauma victim's brain, or even the recently dead can reveal much. Most EE Suits, planet Immune sections and Tetra-League ships have camera recording (far more than a convenience store security monitor). All activities are taped and recorded. Everyone knows this and doesn't care. No record can be completely and fully erased.

Besides, cameras also provide alibi. That's another reason why matrix hacking is attempted — changing images or time-stamps of certain files.

Mystery (Clue-Points)

If you have the ability to write a proper mystery, all power to you. More so, why are you wasting your time playing this game — publish. From experience, most role-play mysteries simply fail. The clues are either too subtle and impossible for the average person or so blatantly obvious that they generate no interest. Mysteries are also a problem in a free-style format which encourages people to pick-up a game and wing-it. Yet, the referee can still moderate the players through a mystery by giving clues, and here are a few guidelines that may aid in telling a better mystery.

The main item of importance is the list of suspects. After a criminal mystery begins, the referee should introduce the principal suspects. Play from that point should narrow these down to the actual culprit (or conspirators). When a crime has an unlimited number of suspects, then it can not be solved or at least proven to successful conviction in court. A crime with one suspect is usually solved on the basis of collected evidence. Those with several suspects require the collection of additional clues to reduce the number of suspects to one. Most mysteries can be solved by application of a simple set of game mathematics. The players must accumulate Clue-Points equal to one less than the number of true suspects. Five suspects tend to require four clues. Eight suspects need seven clues. A certain clue might instead significantly cut the list. Example, by stating that a clue implies the criminal was female, then drop all the male suspects.

Mysteries are solved after clues are discovered and collected. Clues should not be elaborate, have double-meanings or add to the confusion. Clues should be absolute facts — when they become only hear-say, rumors or what-if the players will become confused and over analyze the crime. The players (not as engrossed in the setting as their paper character counterparts) need real data to solve a mystery, information they can trust. If their evidence becomes compromised that too should be known. More importantly clues should follow a simple pattern of logic. Clues should seldom reveal who commits a crime or why, but more often tells who is not involved or what reasons seem unimportant. Clues should not tell why or specifically how a

crime is committed, but rather clues should reveal which methods were not used.

Another important aspect of an investigation is each suspect's alibi. Have each suspect state (or lie about) his whereabouts at the time of the crime. Those suspects with proven alibi are dismissed from the list of possible criminals. Different scenes of an episode can show how the players check on the alibi of important suspects.

Next, every crime must have a motive — why was the act committed? Was there monetary gain? Or more importantly who doesn't profit from the crime. If the crime seems to imply revenge, then which suspects hold a grudge. Crimes of mayhem imply insanity, so who seems sane. Once again, by discovering who has no motive, suspects are narrowed and the crime can be solved. Crimes which involve intrigue and conspiracy are the toughest to solve, since the common motive is hard to discover, and usually those involved find alibi from their fellow conspirators.

One further aspect which can relate to alibi, becomes the opportunity. Each possible suspect must be able to commit the crime. Clues will eliminate suspects from suspicion. Crimes might show a certain required strength or specialized knowledge. Others may display a skill like marksmanship or a total lack of planning. Of course any master criminal may be able to disguise his own actions or frame another, but there should always be certain mistakes. Obvious alterations of the clues can also point the finger of guilt. The criminal may want the G/Sol to think his motive involved merely monetary, but as players find inconsistencies (clue-points), they solve the mystery.

Once again adopt a strategy of reverse logic. When players inspect a crime scene or interrogate a witness or informants, they gain information. However, they should seldom gain exact details or a confession. Else where's the mystery? Give the players clues in the form of reverse logic, such that, once all the clues are known, then by the process of elimination, the players determine who committed the crime, why the crime was committed and how it was perpetrated.

Buzzwords

Buzzwords are simply descriptive words, similar to character traits, that tend to point toward a certain motive or specific culprit. Criminal psychological profiles, prior arrest records, or even the players' own files of observations provide good background for buzzwords. Over time the G/Sol have built a master catalog of all Immunes and their criminal potential. Psychological profiles can determine under what circumstances a person will break the law. Most repeat criminals exhibit patterns with typical motives and methods in their crimes. As yet another alternative to developing a mystery, the

use of buzzwords will enhance play and reduce the referee's burden to develop full-scale mysteries in every adventure. As the players arrive at a crime scene, assuming they do not intercede while the act is committed and catch the person red-handed, the players will search the area for clues. Rather than give specific aspects of the crime and criminal rival, instead allow successful searches (display of skills) to gain clue-points that can be exchanged to discover buzzwords about the criminal. How many clues a team must collect before they gain an actual buzzword is left to the referee.

With the following twenty buzzwords, over a million criminals can be uniquely described. (i.e. Person characterized as Alien and Risky is different from one labeled Alien and Careless or even one called Alien, Careless and Risky.) Considering that there are maybe as few as 200,000 Immunes in the Tetra-League and most hostile aliens like the always Messy Kro, certainly Diabolical Verdigris and considerably Spooky Rophorodo are registered in huge blocks - these groups usually are not considered as having various personalities and all their members are driven by same motives and actions - then the possible combinations are far from exhausted. To start everyone's list, Alexander Androx is the only criminal ever known to exhibit all twenty buzzwords — if a crime exhibits all twenty criminal traits, Androx is to blame.

Twenty Buzzwords Defined

Alien — crime that has evidence of involvement by Non-League members.

Baffling — crime that is devoid of material clues, contain confusing or unrelated facts.

Careless — crime with no attention to detail or shows lack of practice.

Contemptible — crime that is repugnant, distasteful or simply non-productive.

Desperate — crime that seems sudden, violent, emotional or with definite motive of self-defense.

Diabolical — crime that implies ruthless efficiency and overwhelming desire to inflict pain.

Exotic — crime that seems impossible, defies logic or has superhuman characteristics.

Foolhardy — crime that is bold, outlandish or even heroic for underdog.

Glorified — crime that is sensational, displays bravado or contains elements that are self-gratifying.

Habitual — crime that repeats in a pattern or has similar trends.

Haphazard — crime that is chaotic, without discipline or seemingly hasty.

Immune — crime that is independent of others, exhibits disrespect for authority, or basically an act of someone insane.

Messy — crime that is disruptive and destructive, though not always in a random manner.

new bases in the colonies. Mr Mann was especially vocal in his call for action. Possibly he knew that wars meant increased sales of his universal components. Androx could not remove the Battle Born and stay in power. The G/Sol were now loyal only to their free-lance salaries. Since many Cruz worked flexible hours, they were moonlighting as bodyguards to executives of the cartels.

New problems developed with the armistice with the Ecclesiastics. The Ecclesiastics discovered the Kro race and trained them for battle to balance the Cruz threat. Androx called for all the G/Sol to join him in the "hunt for the dreaded Kro home-world." The removal of the G/Sol threatened many executives of the cartels — their own security forces were deserting them. Less powerful cartels had in the past tried to usurp authority through assassination; now would be a prime time. Many also feared that Androx would use the Battle Born to restructure the cartels, while he gallivanted and renewed the G/Sol loyalty to the Star Ward. The greatest conspiracy of history and the cartels was initiated.

As the G/Sol fleet set off, Mr Mann organized a tribute to the Star Ward. A parade and series of official galas were held. Such pomp and ceremony had not took place in years. Androx very much enjoyed the attention. His fleet was dispatched to Lempento, and he would follow soon after. When Androx finally left, he instructed his second in command, Tyler, to watch Terra and especially monitor the Crossboard, Worm Hole and Journey-men cartels until he returned.

As Androx set out on his flight plan, Foster of the Worm Hole cartel readied his part in the plot. Androx in his command ship entered the worm hole accompanied by a minimum of escorts. Androx specifically stated he did not want any ship within an astronomical unit and his mandate was eagerly followed. Androx feared some plot, and he did not wish to be attacked by surprise; unfortunately, he took for granted his flight path. Like using an escalator every day of your life, you know it could possibly fail, but you take for granted it won't. Androx's mistake proved he was fallible — Foster shut off the worm hole, dumping Androx somewhere in real space.

When Androx failed to join the fleet at Lempento, the worse was feared and rightly so. Tyler instantly assumed the position of Star Ward. However, he did so prematurely and thus lost the support of the Terran masses. The people of Terra wanted to mourn the death of Androx — he was their hero (this only recently so strongly reinforced by the parades and celebration). The cartels controlled the media, another mistake Androx made. They effectively convinced the masses that Androx was the victim of Ecclesiastic terrorism. When Tyler assumed command, he was seen as ambitious, an upstart. He was not the Star Ward — "how dare he claim such a title."

The Cruz in the G/Sol also believed that Androx was slain by terrorists. In light of the perceived threat of Ecclesiastics in the Terran system, Kiel Steiner returned with the G/Sol. Tyler wanted to block this return, but he was not prepared to face a unit so ready for battle and so inspired by the sacrifice of Androx.

With the G/Sol returned, a tense stand off resulted. Tyler claimed to be Star Ward, but he didn't have the authority nor presence like Androx. Besides, the G/Sol were now organized and newly equipped for battle. Tyler decided that his only hope to solidify his claim was to defeat the Kro. He stated he would take the Battle Born and finish the mission that Androx started. The cartels liked this new attitude — "soldiers should be away at war (where they may possibly die.)"

The cartels settled into new rounds of bickering, debating how the "new order" will govern Terra and her colonies. Most executives liked the idea of a ruling Senate, and they toyed with the idea of eliminating the right of the masses to freely elect their Senators. Jack Foster refused to support Mr Mann on this extreme. Kiel Steiner was offered a

position in the Senate, but he declined in order to keep his title as Commander of the Guardians of Sol. He instead took the power of Deputy Controller of Terra — the person who monitored all imports and exports from the system. Though originally intended as a means of restricting the illegal shipment of arms and commodities, Steiner used the post to become exceedingly rich from unauthorized tariffs and graft.

While the empire continued to expand and prosper, Terra did not. Androx tried to reduce the population of Terra by sponsoring new colonies; however, his programs were not continued by Tyler. Tyler spent much of his rule in hiding, afraid of enemies both real and imagined. The situation on Terra became critical with a shortage of both jobs and wealth. The masses needed entertainment and MRD. Riots followed that had to be suppressed by armed action. Tyler again felt the new cartels and their senate was plotting. With the situation critical, representatives from Terra's cartels went to Lempento to appeal to Khuchov to take power away from Tyler. Khuchov agreed and assassinated Tyler. His first decree, following the usurpation, was that the G/Sol would be deactivated.

Kiel Steiner was not happy when he heard that Khuchov wanted to deactivate his unit and transfer most of his loyal Cruz to Guard units in the colonies. He and a detachment of Cruz raided and murdered Khuchov. Steiner again showed great restraint and did not accept the position of Star Ward. Instead, he held an auction, in which, the post of Star Ward was to be sold to the highest bid. He made this offer to anyone (or even any creature) that could guarantee the wealth. Although, many strange offers were given (at that time there was no common currency, and speculators daily changed the value of all commodities and universal components), the best offer was made by Mr Mann who said that the G/Sol would receive all profits from the sale of J-units constructed by the Crossboard Cartel. Mann became Star Ward, but only briefly.

The Battle Born had no unity without Tyler; he left no recognized second in command, because he felt such a position promoted intrigue. However, the various subcommanders would not sit idle while the empire was bartered like a piece of Rensselaer silk cloth. The various force commanders agreed to attack and remove the threat posed by Mann.

The Battle Born raided Terra and met the G/Sol. The G/Sol prevailed (their forces though not as well equipped, had a larger percentage of Cruz). The destruction was considerable: a harsh means of reducing the Terran population. Over a billion perished in direct actions and ten billion more died later from complications to injuries. Most of the power and transportation systems were irreparably damaged, and with tribute from the colonies temporarily interdicted, Terra could not feed itself. Mr Mann was not to be found. He fled the planet and decided it was best to wait out the remainder of the conflict and the era at a resort around Saturn. Terra would rebuild, yet again the post of Star Ward was vacant. Steiner survived and made an alliance

Orchestrated — crime that requires planning or shows a conspiracy of various parts.

Risky — crime that is ill-timed or attempted with great chance of injury.

Ritualistic — crime that follows a ceremony or seeks a historic objective.

Senseless — crime that was needlessly rash or showed no restraint.

Spiritual — crime with religious or ecclesiastic aspects, else one fanatically driven of queerly inspired.

Spooky — crime that could only occur via unusual, paranormal methods or else is bizarre in motive.

Technical — crime which exhibits skilled aspects or overly depends on equipment or robotic support.

Crimes reveal buzzwords about the person responsible, but not always in a ratio of one crime produces one distinct buzzword. A single crime inspection (early in the scenario) should give enough clues to eliminate over ninety-nine percent of the possible suspects. The first inspection of a crime scene defines or definitely eliminates dozens of buzzwords. Also a crime scene later in a scenario can also exhibit degrees of these buzzwords. An act might be said to be "partially Haphazard" or "possibly Senseless." Thus the players do not get a real clue, but instead gain insight that on additional inspection of another related crime scene might yield the actual clue, evidence or fact to solve the crime. Many times describe scenes in the negative: "All that you can tell for sure is that the crime was not Ritualistic."

Once the players have eliminated all the impossible, then as Holmes might say: "Whatever is left, no matter how improbable, has to be the truth." If a crime spree eventually reveals that the crimes are not Alien, Baffling, Careless, Contemptible, Desperate, Diabolical, Exotic, Haphazard, Messy, Orchestrated, Risky, Ritualistic, Senseless, Spiritual or Spooky, and the criminal has displayed the buzzwords Foolhardy, Glorified, Habitual, Immune and Technical, then only one listed citizen of the Tetra-League has that profile: "case solved; our files list those buzzwords for Dawn Martinique; now hunt her down."

When the referee wants to clue the players that a certain criminal is Terran, then he can describe his clues over several scenes as Diabolical, Immune, Orchestrated and Technical. That is not to say a Terran is never Careless, but Terrans tend, as buzzwords work, not to be such. A Terran's carelessness is often called in psychological catalogs or electronic analysis of a crime as the buzzword Immune. Correctly, the buzzword Careless reflect elements in a crime as blatantly ignorant and excitable, like a Cruz with Durable & Spirited traits. Likewise, a criminal having Durable trait, could have his actions described (again at several different crime scenes) as Risky, Ritualistic, Senseless or Technical. Remember, not all Technical criminals are Durable in trait, especially since Terrans are never Durable, but the technology associated with becoming more Durable can be implied in crimes characterized as Technical.

What if someone is a combination like Durable, Fierce and Spirited? Well, then perhaps define his criminal actions as both Careless and Exotic, or maybe also Foolhardy, Messy, Risky, and Senseless. Again, the association of traits to buzzwords is to imply trends and give the players more clues to the type of person they face. Don't try to solve a mystery without all the clues, and don't try to understand the buzzword concept without knowing all guidelines (read on).

Thus when the player agents discover or deduce that a crime scene can be characterized as Exotic, they might know the criminal is either a person with a motive of revenge or someone with the traits of Durable or Fierce. If at another incident they discover a crime pattern has evolved and that the latest act seems to be Immune, they might know the criminal responsible definitely has the trait of Fierce, since both these buzzwords imply such. Yet, the crimes may not be related. (i.e. Crimes committed by two different criminals or a very twisted plot has begun.) More than likely, a common criminal of Fierce trait is involved. From the same examples, note that certain buzzwords will tend to discount certain types of criminals. Perhaps the players

have an old enemy named Chris Croix who does not have the trait of Fierce. He would probably not commit crimes that are characterized as "Exotic," since he prefers to target victims from a distance and runs when confronted. Chris Croix should be ruled-out as a suspect in favor of more viable foes when the Exotic buzzword is exhibited.

Buzzwords' Relationship to Traits

Criminal's race and characteristic traits can also be implied in buzzwords.

Secondary or Associated Trait

Primary Trait	Durable	Fierce	Imperial	Inventive	Spirited
Durable (Cruz)	Durable	Exotic	Spiritual	Habitual	Careless
Fierce (Cimmer)	Risky	Fierce	Glorified	Alien	Foolhardy
Imperial (Stygian)	Ritualistic	Contemptible	Imperial	Baffling	Haphazard
Inventive (Terran)	Technical	Immune	Diabolical	Inventive	Orchestrated
Spirited (Skia)	Senseless	Messy	Desperate	Spooky	Spirited

Typical Motives and Associated Buzzwords

Crimes with motive of Monetary Gain usually appear **Habitual, Messy, Risky, Ritualistic or Technical.**
 Crimes with motive of Revenge usually appear **Contemptible, Desperate, Diabolical, Exotic or Glorified.**
 Crimes with motive of Intrigue usually appear **Alien, Baffling, Orchestrated, Spiritual or Spooky.**
 Crimes with motive of Insanity usually appear **Careless, Fearful, Haphazard, Immune or Senseless.**

Practical Example

Let's say the players are drawn to a research station where a murder has taken place. Only three men had both motive and opportunity. (This is discovered as fact by play or display of skill.) These are Dr Bucharest, Mr Crawford and Agent Robinson. Background checks, personality profiles, and even personal revelation (i.e. more stuff found out in play) show the suspects are associated with the following buzzwords:

Dr Bucharest, Skia — Messy & Technical
Mr Crawford, Terran — Immune & Technical
Agent Robinson, Cruz — Immune & Messy

This information is given to the players. Notice how the buzzwords apply in pairs so no single clue reveals whodunit. Players will need to find at least two clues (two buzzwords of the three possible). The buzzwords also aid well in characterizing the dialog and personality of these suspects. Dr Bucharest will be impulsive, while Mr Crawford will seem more refined and boorish. Agent Robinson can be a tad absent-minded and bitter about his assignment to guard the computer matrix of the station. Through further play (interviews, witness reports, follow-on clues, detail checks of evidence, direct interrogations, etc.) the criminal perpetrator is discovered to be Technical. (i.e. Doing things that require skill.) Agent Robinson will not be the criminal. The players may safely reactivate his firearm.

A second clue later in the adventure reveals the criminal is not Careless. Well that gave us little, but may imply he is not of trait Durable or Spirited. The fact that Bucharest, as a Skia, is Spirited and Robinson, the Cruz, is Durable gives them some more respite. Crawford is neither Durable nor Spirited, and should be watched. There is not enough evidence (facts) to convict, but certainly suspicion is now justified. Finally a clue will show the criminal was Immune and had a hardy disrespect for higher authority. Perhaps later the victim of the crime was discovered to be appointed soon as supervisor of the station, and Crawford was recently passed over for promotion. All this means Mr Crawford will be arrested. (That is if the players can catch him as he flees in an escape pod, but that's more of the particulars of play.

Environment of Arrests

The players will move about the Tetra-League in ships that travel the worm hole routes. These need not be detailed in any great manner. Since the G/Sol have the authority to open new worm holes while traveling on assignment, the players usually encounter little or no conflicts in space. Seldom will they enter a disputed system that unknowingly flairs along the worm hole routes. The G/Sol monitors the complex system of contracts and rivalries between cartels to avoid being caught off-guard. Yet certain systems that harbor fugitives will have wars — clash of ideology, ethnic tension or economic disparage. Other times, cities or bases will rebel and cause a disturbance in specific areas of a planet or district.

In these little wars, both sides battle to hold bases of refuge such as cities, orbiting platforms, asteroid fields, remote planetoids or moons, elaborate mining strongholds, etc. Each side will store components and purified substances, commodities of refined materials the most important of which is munitions. Local governors and garrisons often refuse to admit they have a problem until serious losses to commercial traffic are experienced. Most system governors, fearing their own replacement or removal by G/Sol, will blame all manner of accident on external threat, trying to substantiate claims that their policies and dealings are not responsible for any disruption of trade and tribute from the system.

The other side in the revolt will seek to publicize their plight and call for new leaders. However, they try to keep MACE involvement to a minimum. Most of these disputes end once the G/Sol establish a intermediate military governor in the system. The systems with longest self-rule or minor cartel ownership are ones with a history of compromise and strong dialogue between interested parties.

When the players enter a disputed system, the referee must consider a number of aspects to further define the events. Consider first, who is at war? Are players strongly allied to either side? If players support a side, is the side defending bases or raiding in the territory? When players strongly support one side in the cause, this will spark battle against opposing forces and petitions by friendly forces. If the group is neutral, both sides in the conflict will suspect the group or attempt to recruit them as mercenaries (hired muscle).

The players arrive at a planet, now what? Connecting most cities on a planet

with each new Star Ward that came to brief power.

What followed was known as the "Period of the Endless Tyrants." The Star Ward position changed from one commander to the next, the longest reigning but two decades. The senate and cartels were outlawed, reinstated, divided and finally replaced once again by the electronic Assembly. The names and deeds of most of the Star Wards, during this unfortunate period, are inconsequential. Most died violent deaths at the hands of their own ambitious accomplices or by corrupt agents in the G/Sol. Through all the changes, Steiner remained independent and was still even paid a percentage of all J-units sold.

From these beginnings the G/Sol have continued as both a political and security force for the Terrans and now Tetra-League. They received a great boost in authority when the Stygians deactivated the Battle Born in Era Five. They thrived under the intrigues of the Third Terran Empire (Era Seven). Finally they became more specialized and by necessity became the Tetra-League's main police force following pacification in Era Nine. Today they serve in many roles, mostly to prevent those who would destroy the order of the ruling Assembly and the major cartels.

Trial of the Accused

After collecting the evidence that reveals the buzzwords to identify the criminal or else after collecting enough clue-points that the criminal is revealed, then the case is solved. The criminal must then be captured and taken to trial. Seldom will most criminals fight to the death; conviction is just another minor set-back. There are many ways to make amends and return to free society. The players, as well, should refrain from killing all their adversaries. Their main job is apprehension. A dead-man will bring permanent enemies and will seldom be able to repay society (or G/Sol commander Kiel Steiner) for his actions.

When the case finally comes to trial the referee can either make the players describe the case with free-style story-telling of the events, or make the players make a final conviction roll with adjustments based on amount of evidence or hardship associated with the case. After conviction, the criminal is sentenced based on the severity of his crimes. The players' roles have ended though they will probably meet the criminal again in a later adventure after he serves his time. The trial may also be delayed or relocated, and the players may need to guard their prisoner or move him to another trial location. This sort of action can be used to generate a few more events, possibly as allies of the captured criminal attempt his escape or other action foreshadows future missions.

When determining the final trial result, a Mixed or Mishap result requires a special roll.

Legal Mixed Results in Tetra-League Court (D8)

In almost all cases, the players are excused from their duty, though the fate of the criminal will be left unknown.

1 or less: "Interviews" — Press makes the players into heroes. This can be a mixed blessing for agents that would like to keep their lives and identity out of the public eye.

2: "New Orders" — Prisoner is wanted for more serious charges and other forces of Guardians of

Sol arrive to take possession of the prisoner.

3: "Distress Call" — Emergency assignment takes priority and the players must leave the system at once. They may even have to drag their prisoner in cryogenic storage along into the next mission. Else, another agent or government takes responsibility for the prisoner.

4: "Good Work and Goodbye" — A major cartel intervenes to take possession of the prisoner.

5: "Styglans" — A foreign or non-league confederation has reached a deal with the G/Sol or the Tetra-League and arranged an exchange for the prisoner.

6: "Howls for Justice" — Fear of protest requires trial location to change, and the players are called to a new assignment.

7: "High Profile" — Press compromises the trial, and the players are called to a new assignment.

8 or more: "Last Laugh Elsewhere" — Criminal is assassinated or commits suicide before the trial. The referee may decide additional results, but the event can not be stopped. Further, the players may be blamed for improper procedures. ("We needed his testimony in another case.") Otherwise the players are called to a new assignment.

Legal Mishaps in Tetra-League Court (D8)

In almost all cases, the players can not prevent the event and they have been transferred to a new assignment. The criminal will be released with no punishment, but seldom seeks revenge.

1 or less: "Mindless Jury" — Criminal will use an alien technology or funky power to manipulate the proceedings.

2: "When?" — Statute of limitations will run out or recently was changed in error before the criminal is brought to trial.

3: "Tin-Head Coin-Toss" — Computerized jury will be compromised by a matrix hacker.

4: "Disintegrate the Smoking Gun" — Evidence will be lost or tampered so that it will become inadmissible.

5: "Catch a Real Criminal" — Chief Justice will be too back-logged or unwilling to take the case. The judge has usually been bribed or blackmailed.

6: "He Walks Free" — Criminal will get-off on a technicality or failure by the arresting officers to follow new procedures.

7: "Approach Bench" — Criminal will plea-bargain for a lesser sentence, usually receiving only a stern warning.

8 or more: "Call Next Case" — Criminal will escape before trial is completed. Such an event can not be stopped, yet players may still be blamed. Criminal must be apprehended again or will exist as a known fugitive in later scenarios. The referee may decide additional results.

are a series of railways to cross the planet, and each pole of the planet will have a sky-hook rail to take travelers and commerce to and from orbit. These are the Metro, but they are known by many slang terms. Most of these public transportation systems were constructed in antiquity (as far back as the building projects of Era Five). Some rails have fallen into neglect. Other rails will pass through private reserves of executives, automated agricultural and manufacturing centers, vast power grids and warehouse storage bunkers, huge tenement apartment complexes for Taints, and finally and most importantly to the Immune sections of a planet. Travel on these rails draws no encounters (unless prompted by the referee). Most places have so few Immunes that the odds of meeting another person in the same rail car or even on an opposite course at a junction station is incredibly rare.

The real place that other Immunes are met will be in the specially monitored and sanctioned Immune sections of a planet. Freedom of travel is not a right. Only those with true commercial or military assignments (from cartels) may freely move. The majority of Immunes live together in small mall-style communities where they interact with their own kind. The danger that Immunes might prey on innocent Taints initially led to the decision to "cage" Immunes in their own towns. The condition of these places will be at best indifferent. Some were well thought out, planned communities. Others are simply theme parks given over to the gangs. Robotic staff once kept these areas well supplied and maintained, but over time no one kept the robots maintained. Also the fear of free-booters, androids trying to demand equal rights for tin-heads, have led many places to simply do without.

Immune sections are mostly slums. These places are foul and dank. But they often serve a purpose, because the players will frequently visit these locales to enlist the aid of nefarious characters. Almost every event will give some form of information to the players. Most events can be dangerous, but seldom will the players usually fear direct attack (exception being snipers). The only direct threat would be from security forces when the players are moving through an area undercover, or asking the wrong questions. Yet Immune teens are particularly destructive. Even the ones who find good homes among executive foster parents enjoy the power and freedom of action offered as an Immune. Most young bloods (teen Immunes) form gangs and never grow-up. However, gangs laying in ambush are rare. More often the group will meet officially sanctioned thieves — enforcers of local slum-lords collecting rent and tolls. Taking a portion of someone's wealth as tax is not

common, except in emergencies. The executives placed in charge of an area are expected to make their own living and fund the government off their own estates or by selling commissions and appointments. Tariffs paid to import goods from other systems and tolls paid to travel the rail lines are the exception. Both of these funds are consumed supporting planetary and orbiting garrisons.

Locals in these sections may speak a number of slang dialects of the Tetra-League's official language, but never too awkward to prevent bartering or directing their services. Part of a G/Sol's gear are translation modules to interpret most slang or at least provide the general ability to ask and gain answers to investigations. Travel can also be complicated by seasonal weather, but only when the integrity of a city's protective dome is breached, which is frequently the case when the local planet conditions are not immediately life-threatening. Sometimes sections become impassible and rubble or decay turn these sections into mazes of danger.

The players will hop from parlor to parlor on their searches. They do not rest in a single parlor or mall, but instead visit many. The players will often travel without much rush and follow any lead in their investigation. The encounters will be small group. Let encounters follow one after another in the same section or arbitrarily move the players to the next parlor as the action wanes. Money is seldom a problem for the characters. Their expense accounts can buy many a good night's fare without much thrift. They can and often do buy drinks for the entire parlor's occupants at each stop of their journey. Use generic NPCs over and over to represent typical local folk.

Gathering Clues at the Scene

When characters approach a crime scene they can gain valuable information to aid them in their search and apprehension of the perpetrator. These clues can either be given by the referee, or they can be discovered with Q&D resolution. The table below will reward significant "clue-points" for successful searches. Players may also "cash" previously received clue-points and subtract this number from their event dice roll. Thus, several points gained by previous searches and following prior leads may be used to lower the die-roll and bring the players to a crime scene at the moment of the crime.

Only one roll may be made by the investigating team. Treat a Mixed result as requiring a reroll, with a second Mixed treated as failure. Mishap, assume the area has been tampered or provides conflicting information. The team loses a clue-point gained on a previous search.

Q&D "Scour Crime Scene" (2D8)

- 3 or below — Arrive at the scene while the crime is occurring; continue with a chase of the criminals.
- 4 — Discover a clue about the rival's next action by collecting a series of transmissions made from the area by one of the rival's henchmen. Attempt a Tasking roll. If any of the agents has RFSD, the roll becomes Difficult. Success and the referee should reveal the next step of the rival's plan. Else, players gain two clue-points toward entering climax arrest.
- 5 — Discover a clue about the rival's plan from conversations at the scene. Attempt a Tasking roll. If any of the agents has AAD, the roll becomes Difficult. Success and the referee should reveal one important aspect of rival's master-plan or crime pattern. Else, players gain two clue-points toward entering climax arrest.
- 6 — Discover a clue about the rival's sanctuary (hide-out) from obscure chemical traces at the scene. Attempt a Tasking roll. If any of the agents has ESS, the roll becomes Difficult. Success and the referee should reveal one important aspect of rival's regular haunts. Else, players gain two clue-points toward entering climax arrest.
- 7 — Discover a clue about the rival by correlating his pattern and methods with computer records. Attempt a Tasking roll. If any of the agents has APB, the roll becomes Difficult. Success and the referee should reveal new information on rival's abilities or vulnerabilities. If rival has been faced before (repeat appearance from another adventure), then the full identity should be revealed. Else, players gain one clue-point toward entering climax arrest.
- 8 or 9 — Crime Scene is devoid of clues. Nothing is gained by the investigation, unless at least three detection and information gathering skills are completed at Difficult. If so, reroll on the table for another result.
- 10 — Discover a witness still in shock or injured at crime scene. Attempt a Tasking roll. If any of the agents has Calming Voice, the roll becomes Difficult. Success and gain one clue-point toward entering climax arrest. Else, victim must be taken to a hospital for recovery. Once the victim overcomes his trauma, the referee may reveal new information on rival's plans, abilities or vulnerability. That is unless the rival gets to the witness first.
- 11 — Capture one of rival's minor accomplices and get him to make a full confession. Attempt a Tasking roll. If any of the agents has Charisma of Presence, the roll becomes Difficult. Success and the referee should reveal the identity or frequent hang-out of the rival. Else, players gain one clue-point toward entering climax arrest.
- 12 — Discover there was a witness to the crime who has fled the scene. Attempt a Tasking roll. If any of the agents has EDPP, the roll becomes Difficult. Success and discover the identity of the witness. The rival may also know about this witness.
- 13 — Discover a clue that suggests there is another person also in search of rival. This might be a mere police detective or bounty hunter. Character might also be another criminal that competes with the rival, or someone out for revenge. The referee decides who becomes involved.
- 14 — Crime scene is laced with contradictory or baffling evidence, or the witnesses at the scene give vastly differing accounts of the incident. Lose one clue-point.
- 15 or above — Crime scene is trapped or players entered an ambush. Everyone must attempt a Difficult roll to avoid a Vicious wound. If any of the group has skill Limpet Mine, all rolls becomes Basic. At the referee's option, continue battle between players and the criminal rival.

Bureaucracy Effect on Investigation

Though the players are investigators with a great deal of power and liberty, they still encounter local government officials and robotic services that cause problems or pose obstacles to their search for information, witnesses and suspects. Local bureaucrats may even block extradition of an apprehended criminal. Whenever the players arrive in a new system, they may be required to roll on the following table to determine minor hassles involved in gaining necessary information, accessing local records or finding a person they need to question. Players visit the local law enforcement office and usually find it deserted, except for a few robotic clerks. After dealing with these "tin-heads," the players may gain the answers to their questions — most important being "where is the chief security officer in this area?" More than one obstacle may be present. (Or usually, each time the players fail to overcome one obstacle, their alternative is surpassing two others.) In each event described, the players must display their skills and resolve the difficulty with character interaction (dialog or free-style story-telling).

Q&D "Paper-Trail" (2D8)

- 3 or less: "Finding Head Mother Chicken What's in Charge" — Initial requests for information are made, but team realizes they are talking to the wrong person. Overcome this hassle to receive the frequency codes of your proper contact.
- 4: "Pick-up Line Three" — On a monitor from a remote site, a clerk states, "Information will be available shortly." After waiting, none will come. Track the radio signal to find the location of your contact.
- 5: "That's What the Last Guy Said" — Clerk states, "Your request will be handled with the utmost priority." Of course, you need "ultra emergency priority" to get anything done. "Utmost priority" leaves you in limbo. Overcome this hassle by changing your priority.
- 6: "Need To Know" — Clerk states, "You are not authorized for that information." Obtain the proper clearance or find someone to collaborate your authority.
- 7: "Become Rude" — You get angry at the robotic clerk. Restrain yourself and keep from destroying the station. Or at your option create a disturbance and attract armed response. That way you can talk with someone face-to-face.
- 8: "Greasing the Palm" — Team is authorized to receive the information, but another clerk says such information is not available "write" now. The robot seems to hint with his misspelling that his systems are in disarray from neglect or past incidence. Repair the faulty transfer lines, so they can properly interpret and complete your request.
- 9: "Yeah, Yeah, Sure" — Receive a lecture from the clerk that the process is not meant to be violated. The robotic program is either caught in a very inefficient loop or else the programming is flawed and it never obeys your request. Threaten, coerce, trick or maybe cajole the tin-head into action.
- 10: "Who's Right?" — Two robotic clerks start to argue. The first states that he cannot issue authorization, because today is a holiday. The other says that he cannot issue authorization today, because today is NOT a holiday. The team may have inadvertently destroyed their programming. The team must resolve this disagreement with logic that makes both robots right, because they can not operate correctly without each other.
- 11: "Do You Know Who We Are?" — After threatening to hunt down the robot clerk and boot him into orbit, it panics and gives you a wrong set of information meant for another unit. Players will lose time verifying that the information is out of date or flawed. The referee may also give classified information to players that could result in other problems (hunt by agents, attract spies, hinder a plan, etc).
- 12: "Man in Command" — Local support is too ineffective. Verify your need and contact command of G/Sol to determine whether a secret location on the planet or in system may contain other contacts.
- 13 or 14: "Former Partner" — Meet and talk with a security trooper in the area, perhaps another agent of G/Sol. Usually this agent or guard has a local problem on which he needs special help with a skill or just more firepower. If the players aid him in his activities, he can give the required information. They may also make a new enemy in the system.
- 15 or more: "Pss, Buddy" — Talk with someone under arrest and awaiting booking. He may be able to help. But he usually wants his freedom or at least a kind word to the magistrate. If players aid him in his release, he can give the required information. If the players make demands, take a hard-line or renege on their deal, they can gain information; however, they may also make new enemies in the system. Such a criminal may have allies and friends even if he can not directly hinder the players.

Known Facts on Criminal

The referee may allow players to roll on this table prior to the start of a mission to determine any information known by other agents on the rival's plans. Otherwise, this information can also be gained after successful resolution on Q&D Bureaucracy table.

Q&D "Roll-Call Briefing" (D8)

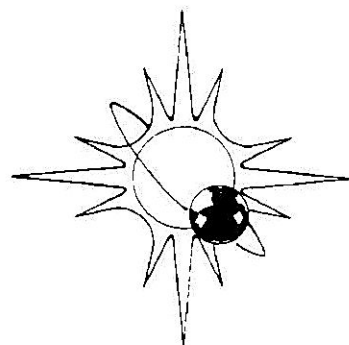
- 2 or less – Conversation and actions of the rival are monitored by authorities. Everything on the rival's plan is known. (At least till he discovers his actions have been discovered.)
- 3 – Local authorities arrested one of the rival's henchmen for a charge unrelated to the newly planned crime. Players have an informant inside the rival's force. (At least till this minor criminal is discovered and then found dead).
- 4 – Players know rival's plan requires service or information from someone currently in prison. Rival travels to break that person free.
- 5 – Players know rival has time constraints that force him to hurry his organization for the crime. His next crime scene should be sloppy. (Players gain double the clue-points.)
- 6 – Players know rival's plan requires a rare item or special commodity that he initially must steal.
- 7 – Players know rival's plan requires services or information from someone he must first threaten for information.
- 8 or above – Players gain no new information about the rival or his plan. The information is dated, and they already know what they are told.

Q&D "Getting Past Evidence the Trail's End" (2D8)

- 2 or less: "Godfather" – To continue, the players must make guarantees to Karl Dreggor, Deputy Controller of Lempento. The Tetra-League press and Green Space Society frequently accuse Dreggor (rightly so) with criminal actions. Dreggor can do just about anything with impunity, yet association with him, as a fellow MACE member attached to the Civilian Guards, is not in itself criminal. Dreggor will one day ask a favor of the player and he dare not refuse.
- 3: "Rival's Rival" – To continue, the players must make guarantees to an organized criminal agency in exchange for service.
- 4: "Rival's Former Partner" – To continue, the players must enlist the aid of a minor hoodlum to perform a service or reveal critical information.
- 5: "Turn on the Charm" – To continue, the players must seduce, entice or coerce an innocent into performing a service.
- 6: "I Know a Secret" – The players must blackmail a local politician to break the stall in the case.
- 7: "Greased Palm" – To continue, the players must bribe a minor executive for information.
- 8: "Locked Away" – Hound suspect, until he breaks the law no matter how trivial, then deliver him and the evidence to trial. Players may be accused of harassment or neglecting other duties.
- 9: "Truce" – Before continuing, the team must resolve a conflict between old enemies to gain their services to break the stall in the case.
- 10: "Frame" – At another crime scene, evidence is planted that implicates the rival with other unlawful actions. He did not commit these new crimes, but now is sought for more serious activities. If the players do not know the rival well enough to frame him, then a crime agency may have deliberately targeted the rival to act as a scapegoat for their own illicit affairs.
- 11: "Taint Involved" – Discover there was a witness to the crime, but his testimony is inadmissible. More than likely, the witness is another criminal, an unreliable line of artificial intelligence (robotics) or a child or pacified human. The testimony may still be used by the players to renew their search or trap the rival, but it alone is not enough to complete the case. The witness may also be injured or suffer total amnesia from shock. The witness may have been paid to keep silent or fears reprisal and will not testify.
- 12: "Lucky Break" – Rival's minor accomplice is later arrested after spending marked data-files (money) or pawning very recognizable items like awards, trophies or specialized gear marked for ownership that he took from a crime scene. Like any witness, such a person could ensure conviction if he squeals his story.
- 13: "Watch Your Back" – Discover something to suggest that another person besides the law, searches for the criminal. This extra investigator might be a mere private detective or bounty hunter with exceptional abilities. Person could also be previous victim or someone out for revenge. This new character might also be another culprit that competes with the criminal. Regardless, he has the information needed to continue.
- 14: "Change of Address" – Discover that suspect has moved or relocated to another system. The suspect may even have fled for an independent system out of jurisdiction of the G/Sol.
- 15: "Trail Ends in Paper" – Suspect is lost in the witness protection program.
- 16 or more: "Cheated" – Suspect is now listed as legally dead and buried. The player will be forever plagued with doubt about the certainty of the rival's death. The referee may decide additional results.

Other Persuasion Techniques

When the criminal stops committing crimes, but the players have yet to gain enough evidence or clue-points to gain a conviction, they may end their investigation as failed. Else, the players will hit a dead-end in their quest and must do something that technically is grey in legality or can be characterized as above and beyond the call of duty. All these actions are optional, but usually the players won't abandon their case and leave another one for the unsolved files. All of these situations are handled with character interaction (dialogue).



Appendix Of G/Sol Suit Functions

High Impact Kinetic or Pistol Grip (Basic)

Success: Delivers Walking wound in Advantage phase or Abrasive in Responsive.

Mixed: Delivers Abrasive wound in either phase.

Seeker Round or Auto-Ranging (Difficult)

Success: Delivers Vicious wound in Advantage phase or Walking in Responsive.

Mixed: Delivers Walking wound in Advantage phase or Abrasive in Responsive.

Crowd Control Mode or Chemical Dart (Basic)

Success: Knock unconscious everyone in the general area not protected by an EE Suit. Or deliver Morale Test wound to one specified opponent.

Mixed: As success, but lose actions next round.

Entrenching Tool or Chemical Disbalance (Basic)

Success: Close combat (arm's reach) deliver Walking wound in either phase.

Mixed: As success, but entangle with opponent and lose actions next round.

Vise Grip or Guard Dog (Difficult)

Success: Close combat (within reach) crush for Vicious wound.

Mixed: As success, but lose attack next round releasing grip.

RPG or Rubber Bullet (Basic)

Success: Deliver a total D8 Abrasive wounds to opponents in the general area.

Mixed: As success, but also suffer an Abrasive yourself.

Hydraulic Press or Universal Joints (Basic)

Success: Close combat (arm's reach) deliver Walking wound in either phase.

Mixed: As success, but strained by the action and suffer Abrasive wound.

Power Generation or GOP (Difficult)

Success: Close combat (within reach) deliver a Vicious wound.

Mixed: As success, but burn self for a Walking wound.

Cartridge Load or Linear Shaped Charge (Difficult)

Success: Deliver Walking wound to all opponents in front of the player (180 degree arc).

Mixed: As success, but lose control, wildly swing and deliver wounds to everyone (friend and foe) in a 360 degree circle.

Cluster Bomb (Tasking)

Success: Deliver a D8 Vicious wounds to anyone in a distant explosive impact area.

Mixed: As success, but exhaust ammo. Lose this function for the rest of the battle.

Desperation Load (Tasking)

Success: Deliver a Vicious wound in either phase to everyone in the general area.

Mixed: As success, but spill and cause a Walking to yourself.

GPMG/SF or RPG (Difficult)

Success: Deliver a total D8 Walking wounds in either phase to any opponents in the area.

Mixed: As success, but foul feeder controls and lose this option for the rest of combat.

Psychological Warfare or Cartridge Load (Tasking)

Success: Deliver a Morale Test wound in either phase to all opponents in the area.

Mixed: Subtract two from the attack rolls of all opponents in the area.

Chemical Disbalance or Neural Shock (Basic)

Success: Add plus one to all actions for the rest of the engagement. Both of these actions will work in conjunction for a plus two benefit, but the Degree of the Chemical Disbalance function becomes Tasking.

Mixed: As success, but take a Morale Test wound.

Counter-ECM or Seeker Round (Difficult)

Success: All damaged delivered to robots or EE Suit opponents is increased by one Criticality. (i.e. an Abrasive becomes a Walking or Vicious results in outright Kill.) In the case of Seeker Round, only the player's own attacks are increased.

Mixed: As success, but overload and lose actions next round.

Dead Man's Pose or Structural Analysis (Basic)

Success: Use protective cover and stealthy advance so that all enemy attacks made against you are decreased one Criticality for a D8 rounds. In a riot of poorly armed people. Crowd Control Mode can obtain the same result.

Mixed: As success, but after the D8 rounds, action may not be attempted for the rest of battle.

*Examples of
Typical Attacks:*

*Examples of
Attacks with
Mixed Results
that Cause Loss
of Actions:*

*Actions that
Damage the
Enemy, and
Maybe Yourself:*

*Typical Actions
that Deliver
Damage to an
Area
(Enemy Group):*

*Special Attacks or
Enhancements:*

Special Attacks or Enhancements:

Examples of Functions that may allow Actions in both Phases – but have Special Results for Failure:

Rubber Bullet or Hydraulic Press (Basic)

Success: Knock unconscious a non-robotic or EE Suit protected opponent. Or in low gravity, disbalance any opponent so that he loses his attacks this round.

Mixed: As success, but run out of special ammo. Lose function for rest of battle.

AAD or Mental Discipline (Basic)

Success: Take one attack on every opponent that directs attacks at you this round. This preparation is attempted in the Advantage phase, but these attacks are made in the Responsive phase.

Mixed: As success, but the Degree of these attacks is increased by one. (i.e. Difficult would become Tasking or Tasking now is Limit.)

Failed (Special Case): Lose actions next round, blinded by computer crash.

Auto-ECM or Poly-Extruder (Difficult)

Success: Reduce all enemy attack rolls next round by three, and take actions in the Responsive phase of the round.

Mixed: Reduce all attack rolls, both friend and foe, this round by one. Only attacks are affected.

Failed (Special Case): Lose actions next round, blinded by computer crash.

Auto-Ranging or Dead Man's Pose (Difficult)

Success: Take actions in the Responsive phase of this round and any attack scores one better Criticality. (i.e. Abrasive becomes Walking or Vicious becomes outright Kill.) Will not modify attacks that deliver damage to an area.

Mixed: Take regular actions in the Responsive phase without benefit nor penalty.

Failed (Special Case): Lose actions next round, blinded by computer crash.

Auto-Star Point or Upgrade #24B (Difficult)

Success: Take actions in the Responsive phase and decrease the Criticality of all damage you receive this round.

Mixed: Take regular actions in the Responsive phase without benefit nor penalty.

Failed (Special Case): Lose actions next round, blinded by computer crash.

GOP (Difficult)

Success: Silently delivers a Vicious wound in the Advantage phase and take Responsive actions. Same result can be obtained with High Impact Kinetic at Tasking.

Mixed: As success, but exhaust ammo. Lose this function for the rest of the battle.

Failed: Misfire and lose this function for the rest of the battle.

Jet-Pack or Holographic Imager (Difficult)

Success: Take actions in the Responsive phase of this round, and each of these gains a bonus of plus two on the roll.

Mixed: Take regular actions in the Responsive phase without benefit nor penalty.

Failed (Special Case): Lose actions next round, stabilizing spin.

Pistol Grip or GPMG/SF (Difficult)

Success: Take a D8 High Impact or Seeker Round attacks in the Responsive phase.

Mixed: Take regular actions in the Responsive phase without benefit nor penalty.

Failed (Special Case): Lose actions next round, seized by servo overload.

Structural Analysis or Limpet Mine (Difficult)

Success: Take one attack on every opponent in the general area. This preparation is attempted in the Advantage phase, but these attacks are made in the Responsive phase.

Mixed: As success, but the Degree of these attacks is increased by one. (i.e. Difficult would become Tasking or Tasking now is Limit.)

Failed (Special Case): Lose actions next round, blinded by computer crash.

Universal Joints (Basic)

Success: Take a D8 attacks in the Responsive phase of this round as long as each is at close range (i.e. Entrenching Tool or Vise Grip).

Mixed: Take regular actions in the Responsive phase without benefit nor penalty.

Failed (Special Case): Lose actions next round, seized by servo overload.

Typical Actions of Defense:

CLVS or EDPP (Difficult)

Success: Track the movement of opponents to reduce the Criticality next round of all enemy attacks directed against the group.

Mixed: As success, but lose own actions next round.

C-Cubed or Jet-Pack (Tasking)

Success: Make evasive moves that confuse enemy targeting, reducing the Criticality of all opponent attacks aimed at you this round.

Mixed: As success, but then lose control, collide with an obstruction and take Abrasive wound.

Charisma of Presence or Auto-ECM (Difficult)

Success: Intimidate all opponents, causing them to lose their next attack.

Mixed: As success, but lose this option for the rest of battle.

ECM (Difficult)

Success: Counter, destroy, deflect and render harmless one opposing attack this round. If the attack is plasma or explosive ordnance the same result can be obtained with Neutralize Reagent or Remote Defusing Ordnance as referee decides.

Mixed: As success, but override controls and lose attack next round.

Holographic Imager (Difficult)

Success: All opponents automatically miss their next attack.

Mixed: As success, but lose this option for the rest of the battle.

Neutralizing Reagent (Basic)

Success: For a D8 rounds, one opponent may not attack with plasma weaponry (includes high impact incendiaries and magnetic ballistics). All opponents in the area are thwarted by making a Tasking.

Mixed: As success, but lose actions next round ensuring the protection.

Physiological Monitoring or System Bypass (Basic)

Success: For a D8 rounds, ignore Abrasive injuries.

Mixed: As success, but then lose this function for the rest of battle.

Poly-Extruder or Counter-ECM (Difficult)

Success: Reduce the Criticality of every attack targeted against you next round.

Mixed: Decrease Criticality, but confuse own systems and lose actions next round.

Remote Defusing Ordnance (Basic)

Success: For a D8 rounds, opponents may not attack with high explosives (includes ordnance, explosive fragmentary and explosive magnetics). All opponents in the area are thwarted by making a Tasking.

Mixed: As success, but lose actions next round ensuring the protection.

Static Defense or Desperation Load (Difficult)

Success: Provide covering fire, reducing all opposing attack rolls by three.

Mixed: As success, but all attacks both friend and foe are affected.

Taser (Basic)

Success: Close combat, cause an opponent to lose his next attack. Degree becomes Difficult if opponent is extremely large, robotic or wears protection like an EE Suit. The same result can be obtained with Power Generation at Difficult.

Mixed: As success, but drop in power causes you to lose actions next round.

Upgrade #24B (Basic)

Success: Activate additional wound sustaining ability as shown on the character wound chart.

Mixed: As success, but lose actions next round.

Calm Voice (Difficult)

Success: Calm someone in terror and restore all his Morale Test wounds. The whole squad is restored on a Tasking.

Mixed: As success, but you take a Morale Test wound from the effort.

Mental Discipline (Difficult)

Success: Restore all your own Morale Test wounds. The same result can be obtained with Cryogenic Containment, but the player loses a D8 rounds.

Mixed: As success, but lose own actions next round.

System Bypass or Physiological Monitoring (Difficult)

Success: Repair and correct damage results of an EE Suit Mishap. Or restore a wound completely in the next round immediately after the injury. Or reduce the Criticality of a wound after the battle. However, a Walking wound converted at battle's end into an Abrasive does not go-away like those suffered during the battle.

Mixed: As success, but both injured person and yourself lose actions next round. After the battle a Mixed result is rerolled with a second result of Mixed treated as failed.

Tactical Analysis (Basic)

Success: Next round, everyone in the squad gains bonus of plus one to their dice rolls. The same result may be obtained by other functions, like RFSD intercepting opposing communications or Static Defense dug-in. Though several skills may be attempted, only one bonus of plus one can apply no matter how many are successful.

Mixed: As success, but lose own actions next round coordinating squad.

TIR or Catalog Immunes (Basic)

Success: Learn the principal attack methods of all opponents.

Mixed: Learn the attack method of one opponent.

Typical Actions of Defense:**Typical Actions of Support Nature:**

Twenty-Four Universal Components

Since Universal Components are mentioned in the game, perhaps an explanation is in order. Starting in Era Four, Terrans adopted uniform standards on the production of all goods. Everything manufactured had to be constructed from basic building-block components. Over the subsequent eras, the list of Universal Components was distilled to Twenty-Four. These should never be totally listed (that bit of omniscience can't be claimed); however, some of the Twenty-Four can be listed, as well as an explanation of what is and isn't possible when Configuring Components.

The Components are labeled with letters of the alphabet. (The two missing letters are I and O, omitted because they were unneeded and caused confusion with 1 and 0.) The most important Component is the J-unit. J-unit is a magnetic plastic that can be molded into basically any shape. The J-unit replaced metal as building material for both ships and cities. It also replaced metallic conductors (like wire) and ceramics (like glass). The standard of currency for Tetra-League is the mini-J (1000th of a J-unit). Other important Components are A-unit (amplifiers), E-unit (regulators) used to produce among other things a Star Point), R-units (used in Phillip's Pod power reactors) and S-unit (Six-Pack storage cells). How big or small, how much or how pure, are questions that aren't truly important. An agent knows his stuff is simply Components wrapped in plastic, but as long as it works, he doesn't think about it (nor should players).

The referee when describing equipment can simply spew-out letters. (Well if you had two A's and three X units, you could fashion a hover craft.) The main point is the idea, the gadget. (By adding an A and E-unit to the bunker we can build a motion sensor.) If the players need some specific piece of gear that isn't a function on their Suit, they can often fashion it from parts of their Suits or ship. (Let's see, couple M-units and an R and we could start extracting Trigonal Isomers from this rock.) When the gear is overly specialize or exotic, the referee can state, "You don't know how to Configure the parts." Or give them a laundry list of Components. (Okay, to build a satellite relay you'll need two A's, an E and an S-unit, that will shut down at least one agent's Suit.) Let the players experiment, seeing how far their minds can imagine the great and wonderful gizmos that will be possible a millennium in the future. (If I took the power relays from everyone's Suits and coupled them together, I might be able to fashion a drill with enough force to cut through that bulkhead.) Can they build helicopters, planes, tanks, mortars? You're thinking small, how about PAV (Planetary Annihilation Vehicle) or a vessel capable of space travel. (Except for the fact we'd never find a D-unit this far out.)

Elements of the Grand Tactical (Ships)

Ships in G/Sol are used for conveyance from one system to another. They range from the very small snub fighters to the extremely large dreadnoughts. The player agents will usually travel in their own "squad car," either a destroyer or frigate.

Eclipse Class — Frigate. Often used by diplomats and minor executives; typical ship for travel with enough potential firepower to keep raiders and terrorists at bay.
Marauder Class — Destroyer. Ship sacrificing armament for speed; favored by Cimmer raiders, ship is the most practical warship and only class of warship still in regular construction.

Detailed schematics may aid the referee in planning an adventure, and because of Component construction there need not be any standard that must be followed. Smugglers and other independent criminals will have a variety of vessels of all shape and capability. Likewise, though aliens have needs perhaps different from Terrans, they have adopted the Universal Component standards and employ Tetra-League (Terran) designs.

Glossary of ERA TEN Campaign Terms

AT — Advanced Technology, something not made of components, so it is not easy to duplicated. Very valuable stuff.

Aliens — Intelligent races as opposed to scary-monsters. There are ten alien races known to exist, including Terrans. Of these, four form the Tetra-League; the rest oppose the Tetra-League at various levels of hostility.

Battle Born — Combat assault branch of MACE, assigned the duty of raiding external threats and enforcing the collection of tribute for the Tetra-League. They are considered a rival group to the G/Sol and have on occasion this rivalry has erupted into outright civil war.

Bio-Computer Interlink — A probe that allows a person to use the chemical storage capacity of his brain to hold programs that operate external devices. Essentially everyone is cybernetic, using their brains to manipulate coded data or operate machines.

Black-Box Technology — A form of AT, but this stuff existed before the use of components. Though ancient, most of these devices have been preserved for highly illegal uses. In general, black-box technology is sought by collectors and its ownership is a crime. Typical examples are black-box firearms, i.e. handguns.

Blood Knight — A cybernetic super-robot with single-minded purpose of annihilating anything that moves. All were supposedly deactivated and dismantled in Era Nine, yet recent events have shown otherwise.

Cartels — Factions that control the trade of commodities or services. Cartels are essentially the political parties in the Tetra-League. Executives of the cartels are the most powerful and wealthy people in Era Ten.

Cimmer — Race of heroic warriors who believe in a Viking lifestyle and that honor is only found in the glory of battle. They make a solid trooper and are used by the Battle Born. But they are felt to be too unstable for G/Sol agents.

Ecclesiastics — Various religious groups who believe that death is natural. Most do not use MRD, and further follow a xenophobic lifestyle to prevent exposure to technology. They have been known to practice terrorism.

EE Suit — Environmental Enclosure or Battle Armor, a form of self-contained life support gear that acts as an outer protective shell from physical damage. The Suit is modular and contains more gear that most people will understand in their immortal lifetime. Duro-Armor is an upgraded version of an EE Suit. Many of the other branches of MACE, like the Battle Born, still use this Suit as their combat gear.

Empath — A human capable of performing paranormal activities. The most important ability of an empath is the ability to meld with a special crystal to allow tripping.

ERA TEN — The tenth (and current) era of Earth civilization. Each era had its own set of problems and triumphs, but the past nine eras of history have led the humans to the desperate condition of the present period. All players play Immunes who attempt to survive and maintain order despite a variety of open and covert threats.

Funky Power — Any paranormal ability or seemingly magic use by humans, aliens or scary-monsters.

Green Space Society — Various groups advocating the protection of new systems and protection of the environment. Their members are sometimes involved in ecological terrorism.

Human — This term now refers to all intelligent races in the Tetra-League. Most Terrans, Cruz, Skia and Cimmer have adopted a "we are human, they are not" attitude.

Immunes — Humans who are infected with the pacification virus, yet suffer none of the effects. Approximately one in every million humans is Immune.

MACE — Military command of numerous branches. These are the military forces of the Tetra-League, but they suffer from a lack of authority in the central command.

Money — To an immortal, thrill-seeking Immune (player character), provided with almost all earthly needs, comfort is but a transient dream, so what good is money? Things are sometimes bought with a credit line (separately maintained by each player), but more often favors or physical goods are traded for services.

MRD — Short for Mortality Reduction Drugs. The aging of humans was discovered to be a disease that can be treated and corrected. Everyone takes a daily dose of MRD, which counters the aging process, making them immortal (although death may still occur from combat, accidents and murder).

Pacification Virus — A genetically-engineered bio-warfare agent used in a previous galactic war that eventually spread to virtually all humans. The virus is both contagious and hereditary. Humans so infected are called Taints, except for those fortunate few who are called Immunes. However, the children of Immunes do not automatically inherit this immunity.

Phillip's Drive — The unidirectional wobbler capable of creating a magnetic field (for power production) or directional thrust (for propulsion). It is essentially a perpetual motion machine which creates a continuous supply of energy for space travel. Chemical boosters are occasionally used to bolster thrust and performance, but Phillip's Drives (or pods) themselves need no refueling.

Purified Substances — Luxury commodities that people crave. Some are considered dangerous and their import is restricted as contraband. These are not all drugs, and can include such items a Terran tobacco, Skian Sugar and Cruz Prelo (used as a hairspray).

Sakai — A radioactive isotope which fissions and produces non-radioactive substrates. It is used in Phillip's Drives and in making "clean" bombs.

Scary-Monsters — Vicious, mostly unintelligent creatures native to worlds in the Tetra-League and its enemies. They are often left as traps for investigating agents.

Skia — A race of trade-impulsive reptiles who represent the majority of smugglers and dealers in the Tetra-League. They, like the Cimmer, are recruited in the Battle Born, mostly as Empaths, but the G/Sol refuse their admission finding them too easy to bribe.

Taint — A human that has been infected and incapacitated by the pacification virus. Taints have no ambition or will achieve nothing beyond the basic need for survival. They are docile and contented to be "perfect, law-abiding citizens."

Tetra-League — An organization of Immunes from four different species (collectively called humans), of which the Terrans (Earthlings) are merely one group. The Tetra-League represents the remnants of the once-great Terran empire. It continues to maintain itself and its armed forces via collection of tribute from colony systems controlled by cartels.

Tripping — A form of instantaneous travel achieved by an Empath using a Trip Crystal. Using a specially designed ship, an Empath can "Trip" across a vast distance without ever having crossed the intervening area. This sort of teleportation is an uncommon mode of space travel in general. The G/Sol have access to worm holes and do not employ Trip Crafts or Empaths except in highly special and classified circumstances.

Tylerization — Systematic elimination of all life in an area or even a whole world. The term is now a common euphemism for destruction or retribution.

Worm Hole — A compression of the time-space continuum that allows great distances to be crossed much more quickly than normal. This form of space travel is widely used by commercial and recreational travelers. This network of travel lanes is artificially created by a device called the Artifact. Jack Foster and his Worm Hole Cartel control the configuration of worm holes throughout the Tetra-League and to certain points beyond. The G/Sol have reserved several worm holes for their use in investigations. Otherwise, the placement and control of worm holes is a constant source of animosity among various cartels which must purchase these travel routes. (Don't be using my worm hole without my permission.)

Young Blood — An Immune teenager.

"Interdiction of C21H23N05"

by Dennis McCarthy

ERA TEN G/SOL Investigation Scenario



"You'll be reassigned to code-section Alpha-Hotel-Foxtrot (i.e. A-H-F) and listed as a routine ATF patrol. I know it's a step down from your general duties in the secret service, but you guys could probably use a few easy collars." Hawk Marshal, Solicitor General, gives the players a status briefing on their transfer assignment. "Latest reports list three items of interest. First, Vinci Gordoni (yeah, head of the Chic Cartel) has been complaining that on more than one occasion, Battle Born troopers, have interfered in several of his theatrical concerts. MACE shows no active units in A-H-F code-section, so there may be a few AWOL mercs that you can round-up and send to their flagship at Iota Upsilon. Second, an unidentified derelict has been spotted near the Tarmac Inversion. The last robotic survey craft sent to the area has lost communication link - its power probably failed so it fell into the black hole. Yet, you better go there and check to see if a new batch of pirates has set-up house in orbit around the space anomaly. Last item of general interest, seems Uncle Al Rogers of the Star-Trove Deposits has called for assistance and agreed to pay for a class-two investigation. I got no other details. Find out what he needs. If you can help him out, you men can pocket the support fees. Any questions, report via security channel Five-Juliet (i.e. 5-J)." (When players use this channel, 5-J, they may gain the information listed under Case Notes.)

Cyberpunk 2020 Introduction changes: The players will visit three sections of the city.

"Item one, Vinci Gordon, yeah head of the Chic Corp. registered a complaint. Seems a new boostergang calling themselves the Battle Born have been disrupting his shows. Informants report that the leader of the Battle Born, Angelheart has been breaking heads and provoking a war ever since his girlfriend ran off with the leader of a chromer gang named Grand Drone. Better go visit Vinci and sent up a robotic surveillance. He can be found at his Walker World theme park. (Note, this club, like all the locations, are in the city, and the players do not travel to orbit.)

"Item two, a small explosion occurred at the burned-out building of the crumbling Sears Auto Center near the Tarmac Drive off-ramp. A hazardous material handling robot, typical H-7 model, was sent into the area. But it must have malfunctioned, cause it failed to return. As you know, that area of the city hasn't been used since the general food riots of 2010. An old gas station may have simply exploded, but better go in and check it out. We wouldn't want any new Nihilists building a cache of demolitions.

"Item three, Uncle Al Rogers, head executive of Star-Trove products, makers of robotic service gear for the home and office, says he has a priority one trafficking problem. Rogers says he'll fund the investigation and has offered an under the table bonus for special attention. He's probably only got a priority two crime at best, but lets give him the courtesy and see how much its worth and what he means by a little special attention. He's down in Trinity district. Yes I realize it's a dangerous place, but who am I to tell any citizen where he should have his business."

Though this scenario was primarily written as an example of play for the game Guardians of Sol, the action with slight modification can be converted into a police drama involving lower technology, but none the less similar themes. Scattered throughout this text, you'll also find conversion notes for the Protect and Serve supplement for the Cyberpunk 2020 system. Permission to reference Cyberpunk was obtained from M.Pondsmith of R. Talsorian Games, Inc. (Buy their game; it's masterfully written and loaded with campaign details that make role-playing a memorable experience.)

Before continuing, review the following seven skills and have the players jot-down a few notes for their clarity:

- AAD** — ability to recall conversations at crime scene in audio range. Key Word — Sound.
- CLVS** — ability to see movement by monitoring vibrations. Key Word — Motion.
- EDPP** — ability to recall images at crime scene in visual range. Key Word — Pictures.
- ESS** — ability to analyze chemical traces at crime scene. Key Words — Crime Lab.
- FREMA** — special bonus for environment, will not apply this mission. Key Word — Worthless.
- RFSD** — ability to recall electromagnetic signals at crime scene. Key Word — Radio.
- TIR** — ability to look through disguises. Key Words — Weapon Detector.

If they are still unclear, tell them that many of these rolls will be prompted.

Cyberpunk 2020: Most of these skills will be replaced with application of appropriate cyberware and advance surveillance robots.

One last thing to explain (read following) — you will progress through the entire scenario collecting "clue-points." The more you get the better. The whole game will come down to one dice roll at the very end, made to convict the principal criminal of the scenario. Investigation scenarios can be a one-roll decide-all type of game. Know that in advance. The pleasure is in the mystery, action and own personal advancement. So if things go well all the way to the epilogue, but then a mishap results on the rolls to prosecute and convict, take it in stride. That's the life of a cop; bring them in only to have the courts set them free. Yet, making a good case, collecting the most clues you can, will increase the chance of conviction. Any complaints later, take them up with the game author. That rather unsettling thought explained — start play.

Initial Destination

Players board their support vessel and travel via worm holes to code-sector A-H-F. Trinity System for Uncle Al Rogers investigation. Tarmac to investigate Derelict or L-5 to investigate Vinci Gordoni's complaints. Gordoni is along the way — he should be selected. If he isn't selected, then en route the players receive an emergency report of a Kro attack on L-5 and when they get there they find Gordoni was exaggerating. Continue with Gordoni narrative.

Cyberpunk 2020: As stated, except the players gear up and take their patrol cars (BMW 600's) to one of the three locations. Vinci's theme park, the Walker World of Wonder (L-5), is the closest location. Likewise, if he is bypassed, they will receive a code one emergency call and will be diverted to the Vinci's theme park regardless.

Referee's Background

The chemical C21H23NO5 is an addictive narcotic that hasn't been widely distributed for several Eras. The smuggler Shogun has once again begun distribution of the chemical. He is clever enough not to be caught with any amount that would be considered a Crime against Immune. Instead he keeps stores of C21H23 (liquid) & NO5 (gas) which he combines prior to sale. Shogun has developed a system of selling the drugs at performance artist concerts in the L-5 system. His biggest clients are station chiefs from the Star Trove mines. Shogun keeps his supply of the two purified substances on a derelict vessel near the Tarmac Inversion. The players' goal will be to build a case to convict Shogun, and prevent a larger plot from occurring to distribute C21H23NO5 to Bocca Blucher system.

Cyberpunk 2020: References to L-5 system are Vinci's theme park. Bocca Blucher will be the rest of the city or another major corporation like EBM or PetroChem. C21H23NO5 is a very potent combination of Dorph and Smash. Over time, the effects are incapacitating.

Case Notes Available on Security Channel Five-Juliet

- >>Alex Rogers** — son of industrialist Albert Rogers.
- >>Brain Drain** — street name for illegal narcotic C21H23NO5.
- >>C21H23NO5** — highly addictive narcotic substance, street name Brain Drain.
- >>Darko** — number three on the G/Sol most wanted list. Outstanding warrants in almost every non-league system as well. Corrupt and violent, major crime figure and intermediary between most if not all illegal operations. Latest crime of importance, negotiated the sale of the MACE operational strategy to a Kro intelligence agent.
- >>Grand Drone** — performance artist who records sounds of dropping objects from orbit.
- >>Kro** — hostile alien life-form, currently at war with the Tetra-League.
- >>Shogun** — free-trader who operates runs from Independent Buccaneers into jurisdiction of Tetra-League. He has been arrested numerous times, but to this day has beaten every conviction (mostly on technicalities).
- >>Star Trove Deposits** — largest independently owned mineral rights in Tetra-League.
- >>Tarmac Inversion** — black hole with stable gravity properties like a star.
- >>Trinity System** — location of Star-Trove mining complexes; system privately controlled by Al Rogers.
- >>Trip** — Form of interstellar travel that relies on paranormal abilities to move a space ship. This form of travel is regularly used by smugglers, since the final arrival location is nearly impossible to locate.
- >>"Uncle" Al Rogers** — owner of Star-Trove mining complexes in Trinity System.
- >>Solicitor General** — Hawk Marshal; person who gives the players their directions. He is the main attorney who prosecutes Crimes against Tetra-League.
- >>Vinci Gordoni** — head of the Chic Cartel, a slime-ball of minor corruption but an informant to G/Sol on activities of the Crime Lord Darko.

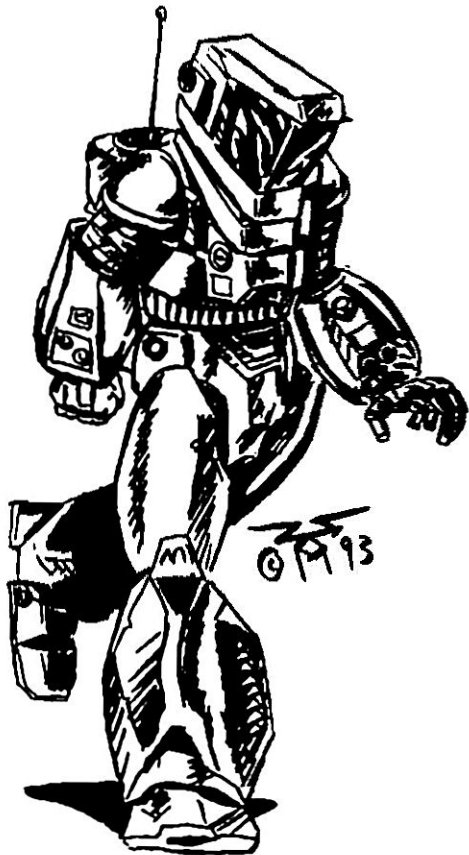
Cyberpunk 2020: Here and throughout, ignore all references to interstellar travel and alien cultures. Darko is associated with both large crime organization, the Yakuza and Mafi.

Investigation of Vinci Gordoni's Complaints

Players' Info: Claiming the symbolic title of head of the Chic Cartel, Vinci Gordoni is basically a slime-ball of corruption; however, he is also an informant to the Guardians of Sol. As a manager of entertainers booked into the L-5 system, he frequently associates with criminal elements and has provided valuable information in stopping the notorious plots of Crime Lord Darko. Vinci's latest endeavors are in the promotion of a performance artist who operates under the stage name of Grand Drone. Grand Drone is a cult idol throughout the Tetra-League, one of a new variety of Propulsion Artists.

Propulsion Artists make "music" by recording and altering for play-back the sounds of odd pieces of materials in free-fall from orbit. Players can meet with Gordoni at the recently purchased Walker World of Wonders. Too bad the players have duties to perform; otherwise, they might have had a good time at some of the attractions in the L-5 Vegas system. Well, those will have to wait. As the players take the sky hook down to Walker World, scanners show several large uncontrolled fires rage around the theme park.

Vinci meets with the players. "The whole affair is one fricken' travesty after another. First the happiest place in the galaxy goes Tango-Uniform leaving me with three acts with no booking on a holiday weekend. Then I find out that the fricken' Journeymen have purchased all da cartoon characters. You guys know what it's like to deal with striking Smurfs and Mickeys? Fricken' waste of my life, dealing with blue pin-heads and button-belly rodents. Then the fricken' stage union refuses to move part of Grand Drone's gear. They say they don't move high explosives without double the hazard penalty. Fricken' lack of fricken' sense. Okay, on to facts — some of them Battle Born guys been fricken' jet-packin' around the theme park. Bad enough they shoot up the "Cutlass Guys of the Caribbean" ride, they go ahead and fricken' upstage Grand Drone. Not once, but twice! Idol of kids of all ages, the Miter of Musical virtuositities, my main man Grand Drone is set to do his latest free-fall from orbit when six or seven fricken' Battle Born pin-heads decide to do their version of synchronized swimming. They J&D right down into the pyramiding smurfs. Ruin not just Drone's act, but demolish my robotic smurfs. I'm talking' a fricken' Crime against Humanity. Probably scared the kids in the audience for life. Then right on their tails a second batch of these fricken' Suits enter orbit and follow their friends. I want them found, and I want them de-Suited. Drop em against the fricken' Kro. I want them strung up by dere fricken' privates. You understand. I gotta find Grand Drone; he left the planet possibly to sulk."



Star-Trove Miner

Referee's Info: The Battle Born have left the area, off planet in a modified Pioneer class vessel. The players may follow them or for the moment ignore the complaint. The arrest of a few Battle Born has a low priority, since there was no loss of life in their antics. A large number of EE Suits can be detected in the proximity of Hercules, an ammonia based planet quite removed in the system. But the chase will undoubtedly be a cat and mouse game, time consuming and to little end. The maximum penalty would be to simply arrest the troopers and send them back to their unit. The players may report the AWOL troopers and turn the case over to the Battle Born. The players can monitor the EE Suit movements, and if the Battle Born troopers try to return to L-5, the team can easily intercept.

Cyberpunk 2020: Grand Drone can still play the sounds of objects falling from orbit, he just doesn't perform the act live. The actions of the Battle Born, trashing the club and attractions, are at best a priority four and can be handled by other police. Yet, in order to collect clues in the later scenes, the players will need to maintain surveillance. Instead of leaving a player behind (and out of the action), these duties can be delegated to an NPC or better yet a surveillance robot (Adrek Beta). In later scenes, the players will analyze evidence from the surveillance made while they were away, instead of using the high-tech Suit gear used by the G/Sol, to collect clue-points.

Trail of the AWOL Troopers

If the players pursue the AWOL troopers, as they close the Battle Born will explode a device which sends particles throughout the general area and disguises their escape. After the explosion, the troopers are gone. The players get a call from another G/Sol ship in the system. "This is Papa-Roger Seven, we'll continue the search." A quick check reveals no other ship has those call letters. The players' attempts to check with HQ (via Official Report) will result in the enemy running away. Each player agent has the option to fire the ship's weaponry. To fire, the player must man the controls with C-Cubed (Difficult) and initiate targeting with any weapon attack (Tasking). Success on both and the enemy is crippled. When the players board the vessel, they find only a few robots. The ship was remotely operated. The robots memory has been erased, the evidence shredded. But, the players gain a single clue-point by using any evidence gathering skill (like EDPP) at Basic. Clue — ship was too sophisticated to be operated by a typical Battle Born trooper on furlough, an independent is involved.

Continue with other cases in this scenario; players will return to L-5 in a later scene.

Cyberpunk 2020: By pursuing the Battle Born boostergang, similar results occur. They will explode a claymore (or two) and block the street with debris, ending the chase. A new squad car will inform the players it will take over the chase. The identity of this patrol is bogus, but the players have other matters anyway to attend.

Investigation of Uncle Al Rogers' Fee for Service

Players' Info: Uncle Al Rogers is the owner of the largest and most profitable single-planet mining operation in the Tetra-League. There are of course greater deposits and richer concerns, but these are either lost to Kro advances or else represent the combined wealth of numerous systems or cartels. The Star-Trove Deposits are a series of deep mines in the planet nearest to sun of Trinity System. The system itself is connected via worm hole to Vegas System and then to the distribution centers of Bocca Blucher. Uncle Al is a friendly, though extremely profit-driven, Terran. He is admired by many other independents who aspire to control wealth and yet be free of the cartel system of aristocratic responsibilities. He has the respect of an executive, yet is in fact not registered as such. Point of clarification — the laws of the Tetra-League slant toward registered executives. In

order for Rogers to request an investigation, he must pay for it out of pocket. The agent players are allowed to strike a deal to cover expenses, before undertaking the case. Sky hook rail takes the players to offices of Uncle Al Rogers.

Roger's states (in Scottish accent), "Right to the facts, for time is money. I need you to stop the import of C21H23NO5 to this system. You see lads, I got myself a real mess because of that brown, dirt-like serum, that my men keep injecting in their veins. My own adopted son Alex is even addicted to C21H23NO5. Sure we can clean-em' up, once we realize they got a problem; but, even my foremen keeps runnin' out and buying this crap, while I lose on my margins. Hard to get these lads to keep on their tinnies' as it be. Now with C21H23NO5 corrupting their brain-trust, we can't keep the mine working. Let's strike a deal, and we'll clean-up this mess."

Referee's Notes: Let the players argue their expenses, yet Rogers will go as far as making all the players Independently Wealthy (a considerable offer). Rogers will also offer one personal favor to be collected at a later date. After the deal is struck, resolve the robotic malfunction.

Cyberpunk 2020: Substitute a factory for a mine. Al Rogers sells high and low-tech robotics, all service or mundane (of no military or scientific application). "My major product is 'Reddy Tupskin,' a five foot tall teddybear that sings your kid to sleep." His factory in Trinity is located in a rather downtrodden location. He'll state it is the only place he can afford to rent and keep competitive. His manufacturing center is almost completely automated; except for a few Netrunners (who monitor the controls) and Techies (who repair the equipment as it fails), the plant is deserted. His own security is modest, and he relies more on barriers like a high external wall, electrified fences and surveillance monitors to keep an eye on his investment. Rogers will pay each player up-front a bonus equal to a year of their salary. (If that's not enough incentive, he'll also pledge more upon the arrest.)

Robot Malfunction

After talking with Uncle Al, the safety systems on the lower mines will fail as a narcotic affected station chief, named Martin, loses control of his station's robots. Players must descend into mines and put down a riot. They must engage in less than all-out combat, or their aggressive actions might cause large sections of the mine to be rendered unprofitable.

The players will face five times their number in maniac robots. (i.e. four players will fight twenty robots.) The robots attack with Electrical. The robots will take any two wounds to deactivate, or they can be stopped with Taser (Difficult).

Cyberpunk 2020: Instead of the factory drones going out of control, Martin (a netrunner) has accidentally lowered the electrified fence and opened the delivery doors to allow a group of Nomads into the complex. The players must respond and drive away these looters.

Additional Facts After Action is Concluded

AAD (Tasking) gains two clue-points — reveal previous conversations between station chief Martin and an unknown Skia. Skia is revealing to Martin that the price of "Brain Drain" is going up — "matter of ssssupply and demand." Martin states that business is going great. His current load is running short, and he wants the Skia to return early to his supply depots for another shipment. Skia comments that that will not be possible since robotic security is programmed specifically for weekly return. Skia complains that risks are too high. A new distribution network will be established. He'll contact Martin with details.

CLVS (Tasking) gains two clue-points — besides the regular large transfer ships and shuttles to L-5 (all reoccurring tremors on the sky hook), the players discover a Dispatch vessel has docked. Yet control entry logs list no such regularly arriving vessel. The arrival corresponded to Station Chief Martin's duty

on swings (a low output period).

EDPP (Basic) gains one clue-point — Martin is seen making a micro-injection of something into his forearm. Following the act, he convulses and dies. His final commands to the matrix are a series of paranoid delusions.

EDPP (Tasking) gains two clue-points — image of station chief Martin talking with an unknown Skia. The face of the Skia has been altered cosmetically and does not correspond on files.

ESS (Basic) gains one clue-point — Martin died of an overdose of C21H23NO5.

ESS (Tasking) gains two clue-points — strangely high concentration of trace elements of ionized J-unit from heavily radiated complex. Check of files reveals that only known pattern of similar origin is at the Tarmac Inversion.

Matrix Watch-Dog (Basic) gains one clue-point — systems went berserk upon death of Martin, because his final instructions were conflicting. There is no other tampering that caused the destruction of robotic systems.

Matrix Watch-Dog (Tasking) gains two clue-points — arrival of a dispatch vessel has been repeatedly deleted from the support logs on Martin's weekly swing-shift. Security Cameras were always switched-off for cleaning during this time period.

RFSD (Tasking) gains two clue-points — radio signals reveal Station Chief Martin allowed a dispatch vessel access to the complex on a regular basis.

TIR (Tasking) gains three clue-points — strip away the disguise in previously successful EDPP scan to reveal the Skia is Shogun.

Cyberpunk 2020: Instead of using Suit functions, the players will analyze records made by Roger's security monitors. The Skia is Shogun (a notorious Fixer); call him instead an unidentified cyberpunk. The base difficulties seem to correlate well, and the attempting player may apply his tech or cyberware as appropriate to the rolls. (i.e. Things like Amplify Hearing or Level Damper gives obvious bonus to the audio roll substituted for AAD.) Refer to the G/Sol game for skill descriptions to clarify any conversion.

Follow-on Options at Trinity related to C21H23NO5:

Interrogate mining workers — Most of them are currently addicted or have recently finished rehabilitation clinics to end addiction. They can confirm that the latest influx of drugs was distributed by Martin. Most were first offered the drug at propulsion artist concerts.

Block worm hole routes — Not reasonable, since the smuggler most likely Trips into system.

Surround Star-Trove — Impractical, as users could go off-planet for a source.

Quarantine Star - Trove (no one on or off) — Al Rogers loses money and orders players to stop.

Pose as Station Chief Martin — Shogun may not know that Martin is dead and may maintain regular delivery. Players could impersonate Martin and catch Shogun in the act. This is the perfect solution. Shogun will radio that he plans to use propulsion artist events to make the exchange. He sets-up a meeting in a few days at the next Grand Drone concert. Players should have a few days to visit the derelict at Tarmac Inversion, before this event.

Pose as a buyer in Immune section Star Trove — Find out distribution is at propulsion artist concerts in a similar result to Interrogate miners result above.

Close down concerts — May start riots (many hurt), plus Vinci would complain. His status as executive of the Chic Cartel can get the players removed from duty and reassigned. Vinci will threaten such if the players try to shut-down his concert.

Pose as competitor — Draw Shogun into a confrontation. Need to have your own outlet for the drug. How do the players spread the word that a second source is available? Let the players devise a meeting and moderate the result. Often the players will instead attract assault reprisal of either ambush attack or sabotage of their vessel.

Catch the dealer Shogun — He has two legal substances, C21H23 & NO5. He has a "Chemical Recombinator" as an

implant which can make the final substance. The implant is not against the law — "I gotss a permitss from my sssurgeon; low blood sssurgar." Shogun can be baited and captured at either his depot near the Tarmac Inversion or backstage at the Grand Drone concert.

Destroy Shogun's supply of C21H23 & NO5 — He'll need to establish another supply source. Search of database to find there are not many outlets who can supply C21H23 & NO5. Closest vendor has known connection to Crime Lord Darko. Agents of Darko appear in the climax to negotiate these deals. Shogun will contact Vinci Gordoni for a meeting. Gordoni for his part will tell the players of the deal and follow with climax arrest.

Cyberpunk 2020: To clarify, worm hole routes would be streets. Instead of the radio, Shogun will telephone. Instead of a few days, the players have a few hours. The rest is straight forward.

Investigation of Tarmac Inversion

Players' Info: Tarmac Inversion is a space anomaly of tremendous gravitational pull. Travel tour-liners regularly pass the outer edges of the black-hole to view the spectacular light shows. The anomaly also distorts long ranged scanners and prevents the players from making an assessment. The derelict in question seems to be slowly falling into the black hole. In four or five years, the unidentified ship will be crushed in the confines of the anomaly. From outer observation, there seems to be better locations for a pirate base. Plus all reports from the system show that the activity of raids is almost nonexistent. The players need not investigate further. Otherwise, they may attempt to close on the derelict for a detailed sensor scan.

Cyberpunk 2020: The Tarmac is extremely hazardous to enter. The chemical spills of earlier riots and perhaps a low-grade neutron bomb (more dirty than destructive) set off by a Nihilist terrorist a decade ago have poisoned the area. The players will need to enter with the proper support gear. (Their vehicles will provide enough protection if supplemented by outer haz-tech garments and respirator gear stored in the trunk.) Yet, describe the area as so deadly, that it is doubtful anyone would be there. "One H-7 robot, is it worth investigating and risking your lives?" The players should fear to enter. Adapt the rest of the players' info as desired.

Referee's Notes: Ship is being used by Shogun as a storage facility for his chemical compounds. When he travels to this location, he usually Trips. He knows the vessel is slowly falling, but each time he returns, he gives the ship a slight boost of orbit. If the players do not investigate on this first time arrival, upon return read the same narrative above. If the players fire at the derelict (from the outside range), they will find their attempts are thwarted by the space anomaly. (No accurate shot, as the plasma attack or missile is pulled in almost random patterns.) The team must close to gain effective fire or access to the vessel.

Cyberpunk 2020: The players will discover the H-7 with extensive corrosion yet also impact damage that implies the explosion of a mine. A nearby mall shows some obvious signs of recent use. Shogun is storing his resources at this modified block of the area in the abandoned Sears Auto Center. Shogun enters with a protective vehicle, and upon each return, he does some maintenance of his "bolt hole" to ensure that it remains air-tight and free of hazards. The players upon discovering this special anomaly (a sanctuary inside the waste) may elect to investigate.

Approaching the Derelict

Give the players three possible ways to board the derelict.

- A** — Close on direct course and apply reversing thrust.
- B** — Pass back and forth against the pull of the anomaly.
- C** — Leave main vessel and approach in smaller pods, perhaps cabled to the mother vessel. If players select C, tell them this is not a Battle Born adventure and they can die. (Choose again.)

Option A or Option B will result in the same (isn't it always the case). Make the players make a few Difficult rolls against a few skills. But all of this is meaningless, for as the players approach, another vessel careens seemingly on a suicide course into the heart of the space anomaly. Yet right as the foreign vessel would plunge to certain death, the vessel Trips away. In the wake of the sudden displacement of matter, the player's own vessel is torn from its approach pattern and tumbles toward the derelict. The strain of the mishap has left the players own ship damaged and losing power. Even using Components from their EE Suits and support gear, the players are left short of the required storage cells necessary to obtain escape. Radio for help would be useless. The players must conduct a search (and destroy) mission inside of the derelict craft. They must jetty over to the derelict, clear the ship of hostiles and recover six S-type Components to be fitted onto their own damaged vessel.

Cyberpunk 2020: The players are traveling by car or on foot. Change their hazards to road debris, flat tires, gas main exploding, pocket of radiation, etc. The main thing to do is trap the players at Shogun's sanctuary (i.e. the Sears Automotive Center). The players dare not walk out. Instead they face the obvious decision to enter the auto center to get repairs on their car. "I sure hope one of us is a tech!"

Search and Destroy on Derelict Vessel

Use any derelict schematic with areas of Power Grid (desired S-units) and Security Zones (dogs and robots) connected by lines. General Search reveals the ship has major cargo bays of two substances — petrochemical (C21H23) & gaseous tanks (NO5). The players might wait aboard the vessel for return of Shogun once they discover the deposits of C21H23 & NO5. That is after they defeat the opposition.

Opposition: ship has robotic security systems still active and converted bionic guard animals. Have a total of three robots and one guard Dog per player in game. No more than a single dog in any security zone. CLVS (Basic) — each round, gain knowledge of an area ahead, whether it is a security zone or power node. Make the action brisk as players move from zone to zone in a maze of sections, but allow them to also seal sections or do options not related to skill as desired.

Robots — Take four Vicious wounds to destroy, and they ignore lesser wound types. They attack with both Heat and Magnetic Ballistic. They are shielded and can not be shut-off by electrical attack; skills like Taser or ECM will cause them instead to lose their attack for a round.

Animals — Take two wounds of each type. They also spit Chemical (on any in the area), have laser beam eyes for Focus Energy and bite with the effect of Plasma Weapons. Eyes can be blocked by ECM, the others need Star Point. Creature also may lose its attacks to bark and bay, which causes an electrical and magnetic disturbance which creates an automatic EE Suit minor mishap on all players in area. Nice little hound of hell.

Cyberpunk 2020: The players will be trying to search the area for some new tires or parts for their engines; things like that that will make them visit the auto center. Substitute these for the "S-unit" components. The players will face Lawtech Unlimited Robohounds and Adrek Alpha, Betas and Gamma robots. Use discretion, the purpose here is not to toast the players, just turn up the heat. The players may even discover certain override codes that can be used to shut off the robots. "Hey, we're the good guys."

Additional Facts on Derelict

AAD (Difficult) gains one clue-point — recover conversation between an unknown Skia instructing the robots to maintain the ship and feed the animals until he returns.

CLVS (Difficult) gains one clue-point — no movement by anything other than robots or animals has occurred in the last six days.

EDPP (Difficult) gains one clue-point — one stateroom has the repeated images of a Skia. All other references are vague.

but the image in this one room is more acute since it occurred numerous times with prolonged duration. The face of the Skia does not correspond on any file.

ESS (Difficult) gains one clue-point — reveals traces of refined C21H23NO5 in the Skia's stateroom.

ESS (Basic) gains one clue-point — reveals contents of the tanks on board to be C21H23 & NO5.

Matrix Watch-Dog (Difficult) gains one clue-point — discover a regular pattern in ship repositioning almost like clockwork every week. There is no possible way (short of major Configuration changes) that vessel can make these maneuvers. She must have had an external engine attached to perform these changes.

TIR (Tasking) gains two clue-points — from EDPP image gained above, a more detailed profile can be obtained to discover that the Skia is Shogun.

Cyberpunk 2020: The players can dissect the robots and their own H-7 to discover the clues. Shogun forgot to turn off the monitoring systems, which are standard on the robots. He must have been pretty cocky and didn't expect anyone would use the automated record tapes. Again, make the players apply some of their skills to collect the necessary clues from the robot records.

Arrival of Shogun

Players should know a crime is involved after searching the derelict. If they are patient, they can stay aboard, stake out the vessel and await the smuggler's return. In order for this ploy to work, the players must lose their own vessel (probably down the black hole). The derelict as well should not be changed significantly (by destruction from the boarding battle). Else, when Shogun arrives, he will simply Trip immediately away. If the players capture Shogun, he will make statements like the following —

Asked why he's there gains one clue-point — "I'm jusst a sssimple tradesssman. Here to sssalvage partsss."

EDPP (Basic) gains one clue-point — reveals he's been here before. "Sssso I'm returning for more sssstuff. My vesssssel only holdsss sssso much."

TIR (Basic) gains one clue-point — reveals his Chemical Recombinator. "That'sss jusst for my low blood sssugar."



ESS (Basic) gains one clue-point — reveals trace amounts of C21H23NO5 on his person. "Sssso I'm an addict, who issn't thessse daysss. It'sss a victimlesssss crime."

When threatened with further mind probes. "If you kill me, none of ussss will get away. I'm the only one who can Trip usss out of here." Players need a witness to testify that Shogun sold C21H23NO5 (that being Grand Drone) to truly make the case in court. Yet unknown to the players — Shogun can also claim he rescued G/Sol trapped on the derelict, a good defense in Tetra-League court. (In the epilogue trial, players will later lose a D8 clue-points.)

Cyberpunk 2020: The players will still need to destroy their own vehicle in order to lay in wait. Each cop-car has a repeater and a very distinctive chemical and electromagnetic emission signature. Shogun will be able to monitor and detect this signal. By erasing the car's computer matrix which controls the fuel ejection and steering systems, the players will essentially hide their presence. They will also trap themselves. (If you prefer, let the auto center be too backward to have the necessary parts to fix the players' cars — all the tires are corroded and turned to oil slicks. I think the plot works better when the players must actively decide to trap themselves to gain the opportunity to make the arrest.) Shogun's hook instead of his Skia's ability to Trip, will be that his truck is equipped with an eye scanner and will not start unless he is at the driver's wheel. No one can change this limitation. So once again, the players will arrest Shogun, but he will state he saved them in the end.

Investigations at Propulsion Artist Concert

Players' Info: The crowds have assembled at Walker World to watch the performance of Grand Drone. The lines have formed and over a thousand Immunes have converged on the theme park. Players can monitor some activities from orbit, but otherwise know they risk starting a riot if they arrive at the surface in EE Suit. Decide who will shed their Suit and descend the sky hook with just a partial set of their gear. Then continue with the search of activities in the theme park. Rest of the players may remain on-board ready to drop to surface if support is needed.

Cyberpunk 2020: Players must watch from a central security location, or enter the crowd undercover (without any heavy weapons). Those who wait in the security center may ready and wear maximum threat urban riot armor.

Referee's Notes: Two main events occur. Players can look for drug deals in the crowd or go back-stage and search the performer's staging area.

Evidence Collection Back-Stage

Overhear a conversation between Vinci and Grand Drone. The two end all talk as the players arrive. Vinci makes greetings to the players about enjoying the show and hands Grand Drone something before he hustles off. Grand Drone enters his "Dust-Off" capsule and launches to orbit. Any players in orbit may intercept him there on Jet-Pack Difficult. Capturing Grand Drone gains a D8 clue-points.

AAD (Difficult) gains two clue-point — recover conversations between Vinci and Grand Drone. Vinci is trying to convince Grand Drone that he needs to do something sensational. "Listen, those fricken' Battle Born guys made you look like a fricken' putz. You gotta 'spire' out dere kid. If it was once maybe we could ignore it as maniacs. But no, these guys two fricken' times made falls that were fricken' beautiful. You gotta show your fans kid; drone is number one." Grand Drone is complaining he's feeling ill and needs a visit from "the good Skia." Vinci's final words are criminal in nature — "what is your life when compared to your art. Take a dive kid for art's sake. One final free-fall into immortality. I'll get you something to make the ride easy."

TIR (Basic) gains one clue-point — reveals Grand Drone to be Alex Rogers, adopted son of Uncle Al Rogers. Grand Drone

will attempt suicide (for the sake of art) in his next performance. He is addicted to C21H23NO5. Grand Drone is being manipulated by Vinci Gordoni into the act. If Alex Roger is rescued, the show will be canceled. This will start a riot, but players may search crowd for drug deals before that occurs.

Cyberpunk 2020: The surveillance robot (or NPC) left behind will reveal a taped replay of a conversation between Vinci and Grand Drone. (Or the players might acquire the information as it is stated with cyberware surveillance.) Vinci wants Grand Drone to actually drop himself from orbit and have the whole terrifying event broadcast back to the park on a ten story TV. He'll of course sell the video later for a huge profit. Vinci has a shuttle to orbit ticket ready to take Grand Drone (AKA Alex Roger) up for his performance.

When accused of attempted murder Vinci will plead he has some important information to trade for freedom. He knows of a deal between two very heavy parties regarding "Brain Drain." He can point the players toward the climax arrest.

Action in Concert Crowd

The main arena is a mass of Immunes (several hundred): If MACE could field such man-power, they could easily defeat the Kro at Iota Upsilon. Alas, these are the sons and daughters of the social elite, children of executives. Players enter the arena and must press the flesh in close proximity to the crowd. Everyone will be battered around and takes an Abrasive wound (to start). Yet, no one may enter in EE Suit — that would blow their cover. Everyone should try to avoid minor scuffles. Continue with the following Q&D; let each player around table roll until either Shogun is found, or all the players are "occupied" (until the riot starts). Resolve rolls from low to high around table.

Cyberpunk 2020: The crowd is huge, hundreds of thousands of spectators from all backgrounds with even a number of teens related to corporation heads. The action on the Q&D will easily adapt. The players should substitute their own abilities and modifiers.

Shogun is a free-trader who operates from outside the jurisdiction of the Tetra-League from the Independent Buccaneers. Shogun has been arrested numerous times, but to this day has beaten every conviction (mostly on technicalities). Players question Shogun, he make statements like the following —

Hand Cuffs (Basic) gains one clue-point — Asked why he's there, "I'm here to enjoy the ssshow."

TIR (Basic) gains one clue-point — reveals Chemical Recombinator. "That'sss jussst for my low blood sssugar."

ESS (Basic) gains one clue-point — shows trace amounts of C21H23NO5 found on his person. "Ssso I'm an addict, who issn't thessse daysss. It'sss a victimlesssss crime."

When threatened with further mind probes, he'll start to scream and will attract the attention of other concert goers. Players need a witness to testify that Shogun sold C21H23NO5 (that being Grand Drone) to truly make the case in court.

Riot at the Concert

For any of a number of reasons - maybe Grand Drone didn't arrive, maybe an agent got out of hand and started the brawl, or perhaps the players have been set-up - the area is a mess of panic and mayhem. The AWOL Battle Born squad has returned. (Even if they were chased away from the Hercules gas giant.) The players will note that another ship Tripped into the system and the opposing troopers have entered Jump and Die (descended from orbit to the planet). Luckily now the other players (at the ship) may enter battle in EE Suits to lend their support. However, no one has yet activated any suit function — no Upgrade #24B, no Neural Shock, no Battlefield Discipline, etc.

Each player may attempt to either Calm and Protect Crowd. Fight the AWOL Battle Born or Fully Don their EE Suit. Describe all three actions before the players decide how to split their strengths.

Cyberpunk 2020: Adapt the Calm and Protect rolls for use with appropriate skills. Those players who started in the crowd can "Fully Don their EE Suit" by going and getting their full amount of support gear and protective riot armor. The battle with the Battle Born boostgang can be a running gunfight through the park.

Q&D Crowd Search (each player rolls two D8 to decide their order)

Lowest roll (of players at arena) — Attempt Tasking (or Basic with APB) to verify that someone is not a suspect. Fail and you mistakenly arrest a Skia as Shogun; drop-out of Q&D until riot starts. Success and roll another D8, add to your total and continue with new place for event.

Second Lowest — Attempt Tasking (or Basic with Mental Discipline) or start to enjoy the spectacle and forget about duties. Success and roll another D8, add to your total and continue with new place for event. Fail and drop-out of Q&D until riot starts.

Third Lowest — Propositioned to go underneath the stands for some "Free Love." Accept and drop out of remaining Q&D, until riot starts. Refuse and if character lacks skill Imprint Memory, he suffers a Morale Test wound. Yet for refusing, roll another D8, add to your total and continue with new place for table.

Fourth Lowest — Offered a chance to share a fix with someone in audience; he is not a main supplier, just a junkie. Refuse and drop out of Q&D until riot starts, as your cover has been blown. Accept and attempt Tasking (or Basic with Chemical Disbalance). Success and roll another D8, add to your total and continue with new place for table; plus gain one clue-point. (Person is too incoherent to provide any other info at this time.) Fail and drop out of future Q&D until riot starts.

Fifth Lowest — Propositioned to go underneath the stands for some "Free Love." Accept and later discover person is of "wrong sexual preference"; suffer Morale Test wound. Plus, drop out of Q&D until riot starts. Refuse and if character lacks skill Protocol, he suffers Morale Test wound. Yet for refusing, roll another D8, add to your total and continue with new place for table.

Sixth Lowest — Attempt Tasking (or Basic with Holographic Imager) to look natural among the strange collection of concert attendees. Fail and caught in a brawl (which later concludes as riot starts). Success and roll another D8, add to your total and continue with new place for table.

Remaining Results — Attempt Tasking (or Basic with TIR) to sight the notorious smuggler Shogun in the audience. Let each player roll and attempt to find Shogun. Fail and take an Abrasive wound as crowd starts to jostle in anticipation of Grand Drone. After the first six results, everyone on their turn gains a chance to find Shogun.

Calm and Protect Crowd — the following eleven skills must be made. Until they all are made, the players are still in battle and may suffer injury. If the players lack the skills, the rolls may still be attempted at two Degrees higher (i.e. Difficult becomes Limit). Or the referee may suggest alternatives. Once the skills are displayed, the Battle Born are arrested or driven away. Cross these off as they are successful.

Auto-Ranging (Difficult) — Bring down a random sniper overhead.

APB (Difficult) — Call for back-up from local robotic park police.

Charisma of Presence (Difficult) — Establish yourself as the focal point for control.

Calming Voice (Basic) — Still the crowd.

Cartridge Load (Difficult) — Frighten a gang of young bloods into surrender.

Crowd Control Mode (Basic) — Direct the orderly evacuation of audience.

ECM (Difficult) — Deactivate various concealed weapons and implants in crowd.

Neutralizing Reagent (Difficult) — Extinguish some secondary the fires.

Remote Defusing Ordnance (Difficult) — Deactivate explosives of Grand Drone's stage.

Rubber Bullet (Difficult) — Stop escape and capture of Shogun.

Tactical Analysis (Basic) — Plan the operation.

Fight Battle Born — The players must harass, threaten and kill the attacking Battle Born to disrupt their aim. Attempt any combat attack or combination which can deliver at least a Walking wound. RPG is a very good choice. If at least twelve Walking wounds are delivered in damage, the players take no collective damage themselves and the crowd is shielded as well. If eight are dealt, each player takes a Walking to protect the crowd. If only four are made, the players take a Morale Test or Vicious (each player's choice). If only two such attacks are made, everyone in the team takes a Morale Test and Vicious. If one or no successful attack is made, then all the players are struck and knocked unconscious. (The game is over in a loss.)

Fully Don Your EE Suit — automatic, but player loses his actions this round. All wounds carry over. If the player wants to activate Mental Discipline, Damage Control (on self), Neural Shock, Upgrade #24B, Auto-Star Point on damage taken round, etc. He must select this action and then make the rolls.

Climax Arrest at Walker World of Wonders

Player's Info: Shogun will reveal that the notorious criminal mastermind Darko is at L-5. He is interested in C21H23NO5 and can be lured into a buy. Darko wants to start importing C21H23NO5 to Bocca Blucher. The previous C21H23NO5 sales have been that profitable. C21H23NO5 will destroy the efficiency of clerks on Bocca Blucher, and lead to a collapse of order. If Darko can be captured (or killed), then the death of over thirty G/Sol agents can be avenged. Vinci Gordoni says he can act as intermediary, so long as the players say they won't press charges against him for other crimes. ("All I need is your fricken word not to bring no fricken death penalty. I don't want to find myself fricken dropped on no fricken Kro.") Nothing of course is binding. The player's word is the only thing that must be given. Whether they have honor or not is up to the players.

Shogun must meet with Darko in the computer matrix that controls the rides of Walker World. Shogun is afraid and asks to be released without charges for his cooperation. Once again the team must agree, and later decide to keep agreement or not. Since minds will be interacting in the matrix, a physical disguise is impossible. The players must have both Gordoni and Shogun to pull this off. If they refuse, skip to the trials in epilogue. Yet once again, the players are reminded that Darko would be the catch of a career.



Players will be stationed in two locations: performing a Matrix Watch-dog to record these deals and outside to catch Darko in his act. Darko's identity is presently an unknown; he is a person who changes form from crime to crime. But once his memory patterns are collected and he flees the Matrix, he can be identified, trapped and arrested (or shot dead). For the moment, he is an unknown. Anyone in the park from the smallest child to most goofy Skia could be Darko in disguise. Split the players into two groups — those outside in sniper position at the highest position in the park, and the rest inside the Matrix.

Cyberpunk 2020: The situation is as stated, the players have a chance to arrest (or kill) Darko. The details of the net are left to the referee. Set an adversary level appropriate to the players. This action can also be simulated with guidelines below (turn it into a dialog and demonstration of skill) or by modifying the Q&D Matrix Watch-Dog tables in this issue. The "Killing Shot" as well can be handled by a single display of skill by the players outside the net.

Inside the Matrix

Upon entering, Walker World matrix asks players who they are (Walker southern accent optional). The team is grabbed and moved to the ALU, an obsolete section of the matrix. Each player must tell a joke to the ALU, and the referee decides, based on how funny it is, whether they can continue or whether they must tell another. (In most cases any joke will allow the player to continue; it's been a long time since the ALU has talked to anyone.) Yet any player that refuses to tell a joke is tossed from the matrix and is stunned. He may not then join the others outside.

Next, the players determine that Gordoni and Shogun are in a panic. They must calm these two down with a display of skill (like Calming Voice or Neural Shock). Otherwise, the two short-circuit from the matrix and take the whole team with them. Each player takes a Morale Test wound and Darko escapes.

The deal then begins. The players must record the mental patterns of Darko. This is done with Matrix Watch-Dog (Difficult) or C-Cubed (Limit). Any success will be enough, but anyone who tries and fails is short-circuited from the matrix and takes a Morale Test wound.

Darko will then realize he has been recorded. Darko will try to make a diversion by rerouting controls and causing malfunctions of rides in the theme park. He will make one attempt per player in the matrix. Each player must attempt of System

Bypass (Basic) or C-Cubed (Tasking). Fail and that player must either short-circuit from the matrix, taking a Morale Test wound, or someone outside loses his ability to make a "killing shot" and instead must rescue those on the ride.

Now the players must locate Darko's physical location and drive him out of the matrix. Each player must attempt of Override Directives (Basic) or C-Cubed (Tasking). Any success will be enough. If Darko is driven from the Matrix by this result, then continue with the "killing shot" from those outside.

If all the players are driven from the matrix by their own poor results, then Darko will have escaped when they recover.

Outside Matrix – Killing Shot

Make a killing shot of Auto-Ranging (Tasking) to down Darko before he escapes. Each player only gets one chance; the pressure is on. Success and Darko falls (but read note). Mixed and Darko is probably killed, but his body, mysteriously, is never found. The player may think for sure he killed the person identified as Darko, but doubt remains. Fail and Darko escapes. Mishap and after the smoke clears, one player is killed (roll dice and low person lost).

Note: in terms of continuity of stories, Darko is more of a cult than a single man, but that should not distract from players accomplishments as avengers of justice. ("Or is that another game all together.")

Epilogue – Final Court Case

Players' Info: Now the court cases must be filed, and convictions might be handed down. The players will spend their collected clue-points in attempts to convict any of the following:

Cyberpunk 2020: Let the players spend their clue-points toward various convictions. Make adjustments to the sentence as appropriate. You may also find it easier to simply use the Task Resolution table in G/Sol to make the final roll.

Tamper Evidence (corrupt cops) — Who said crime doesn't pay? The players must decide just how corrupt they are. The G/Sol have considerable autonomy, and as a group run the extremes fully out for cash to fanatically opposed to crime. Regardless they remain loyal to their own, and no one questions another agent's actions.

Players may accept pretrial bribes for not delivering all the evidence. This may still lead to conviction, but maybe not under a maximum charge. Let majority vote rule, since everyone had access to the evidence. No points need be spent on this; however, if a D8 points are given, then the personal assets of each person in group will be increased from Independently Wealthy to Aristocratic. Decide before rolling since chance will not come around again.

The players may also doctor the evidence to gain an additional D8 points. They must roll Official Report (Tasking). Success and gain a D8. Mixed gain one. Fail and lose a D8. Mishap and caught and all cases thrown-out.

Battle Born — Arrested in the scenario will be dropped on the Kro at Iota Upsilon. No points need be spent on them; however, if a D8 points are spent, then their assignment order in the drop will be increased (to first). Decide before rolling since chance will not come around again.

Grand Drone (AKA Alex Rogers) — His father would like to see him convicted, so he will be placed in MACE to learn respect for Tetra-League. As Al states, "convict him and sober him up." Use some of clues to make a case against him. No points need be spent on this; however, if a D8 points are spent, then he will be convicted (and the players gain another favor from Uncle Al). Decide before rolling since chance will not come around again.

Vinci Gordoni — Conviction will make him plea bargain and turn over priority evidence needed in other pending G/Sol cases. No points need be spent on this; however, if a D8 points are given, then the team gains prestige among the G/Sol. (Players advance in level on G/Sol progression path.) Decide before rolling since chance will not come around again.

Shogun — Convict him of the crime of trafficking in a restricted substance C21H23NO5. A good collar and completes the mission. Everyone stands to gain a D8 skills or bonus points from this.

Shogun, in his first defense move (if possible), will say he rescued the G/Sol trapped on the derelict. Players lose a D8 clue-points.

His second defense claim is that the G/Sol endangered everyone at the concert with their attacks. Shogun will claim he is a victim of G/Sol terror tactics — good defense in Tetra-League court. Players lose from jury sympathy a D8 clue-points (or two D8 if they currently have more than twenty).

Clue-Points Toward Case Degree of Conviction Roll *

four or less	Limit
five to eight	Tasking
nine to twelve	Difficult
thirteen to sixteen	Basic
seventeen or more	Automatic (no roll required)

Note: * — Because Shogun is also notorious for gimmicks and technicalities, players must roll twice on his case and take the worse result. Consider these as separate rolls for conviction and sentencing (if you wish).

Success — Person is convicted and condemned to Battle Born Squad #85. Each player gains D8 additional skills.

Mixed — Shogun is paroled to community service as a Green Space Society volunteer. He goes relatively free, but players gain D8 skills from the conviction. Players may press the case and reroll for result, but treat a second roll of Mixed as Failed.

Failed — Shogun walks (at least as far as the parking lot before Auto-Ranging settles the issue of guilt).

Mishap — Players are fined for the slander. Shogun leaves the courtroom laughing. His laughter ends later that day when a sniper acquires him on his targeting screen coming out of a hotel. (That's true G/Sol justice in action.)



Cybernetic Defense of a Computer Matrix

by Robert Culliford

Many games try to simulate the aspects of unwarranted entry into a computer system. But what about the other side of the coin? What if the players are not positioned inside of a matrix as intruders, but instead are placed there as wardens to protect the system from "hackers," or in our high-tech case, "net-runners."

The security team is stationed inside the operating paths of a computer matrix, and there guards the integrity of the present system and programs. The goal is to keep outsiders from hacking and stealing information or worse changing files in the system matrix. In Era Ten, not all members of the team must make the "Interface Equipment" or other assorted rolls. The team is usually anchored in the real world as one player establishes a link into the matrix. The other players attach to this person by joining EE Suits or merging optical links. The team then is stationed inside the system.

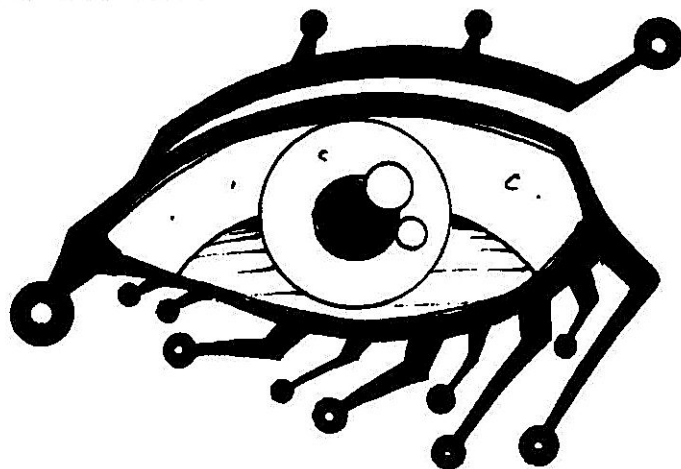
Skills are shared in a common fashion similar to a team in tactical assault, with variety ensuring the best defense. Many common EE Suit functions will prove valuable even inside the matrix. Usually, each member of the team enters cryogenic shut-down (or at least a solid hacker's trance) if only to keep from fidgeting and breaking the link. Various safe-guards, besides the overly obvious things like booby-traps, can be activated or configured to protect the host bodies while their minds patrol inside a computer matrix. Yet, often the minds could return to their bodies and be ready for action faster than human reflexes could capitalize on discovering a comatose team. The players might remain in a matrix system for hours, days or years, yet each act to stop intrusion or to counter terrorism occurs in just a few microseconds.

An important matrix, like the War Cartel's Component processing guidelines, are continuously warded by cybernetic watch-dogs. Before one shift leaves, another is solidly in place. Even a slight gap in time could allow epic changes to matrix programs, should a hacker be waiting for just such an opportunity. Worse still about such crimes, they may appear simply as new facts, policy, properties or evidence. Only hacking that causes destructive actions outside — opening an airlock into a vacuum, shutting off life support on a critically injured witness or changing automated events in the outside world — will be immediately known and might be instantly corrected. Should the matrix watch-dogs fail at their task, entire asset records or historical data may be changed, including the personal memories of important executives of the Tetra-League.

More elaborate matrix hacking Q&D was provided in the Nov/Dec '92 issue of Space Gamer. Here the action, focuses on defense from a foreign entity (invading hackers). The players first goal is to predict the type of intruder, either by piecing together past clues or making a educated guess based on the referee's description of the matrix's subtle changes. The intruder will enter as a Virus, Worm or Trojan Horse.

In a Virus, the hacker changes his mind's patterns and attaches himself onto another program in the system. From there he "spreads" by cloning himself into other programs that he crosses in the system. Eventually he spreads to the specific program or information he wishes to change. This option is the most common, but highly secret matrix (the kind that have watch-dogs) work with a limited number of programs. The watch-dogs familiarize themselves with these programs, so that any alteration is noticed and can be terminated or routed to a secure storage area while verification is made with the outside world.

With a Trojan Horse, the hacker tries to pretend he is a useful program that just has been added to the system. When questioned, he will literally play the role of a "new guy," lost and in need of assistance. His ability to answer questions, provide passwords, correlate recent events and justify his need in the system all are



designed to establish his credibility. The hacker will also try to confuse the watch-dogs as they verify this "new" program's authority to be in the system. The hacker may have bribed or coerced an outside programmer to verify his legitimacy. Else, he has forged his authority to be in the matrix. A hacker using a Trojan Horse who has done his homework and established his alibi is as hard as any seasoned criminal to discover. The watch-dogs will also be scolded (at times) for interfering with legitimate programs and requests. ("How can anyone work at this rate of interrogation?") As they are chastised, they grow less vigilant and that is to the hacker's advantage.

The last type of forced entry, a Worm, is a direct attack on the system. The hacker forces his program on the system and directly confronts any security. The watch-dogs might simply be "out-gunned" by an experienced intruder. They will find themselves under-skilled, cross-circuited and sent into seizures by the hacker's (or team of hackers') assault.

After the intruders are detected, the battle starts. A balanced watch-dog team is proficient and supported in four areas — Data Manipulation, Electrical Boosting, Information Transfer and Mental Stamina. A team may start with a deficiency or through combat lose its ability in any and all of these four areas. Each supporting area has a role to play in the overall strategy.

The actual layout of the matrix is not necessary. These mechanics are designed to allow a general battle of intrusion without the need to draw a circuit path or outline a flowchart of the matrix. A deck of playing cards is used to generate the results. The key is to survive and block the intruder for a series of card-flips specified by the referee. Each flip either passes with little destructiveness to the watch-dogs or disrupts them for a number of Walking or Morale Test wounds. Yet, even an unskilled team might simply "take the blows" and by pure staying-power alone thwart the entry. (Don't worry, the intruding hacker is growing just as frustrated, but to simplify the referee's task his wounds need not be recorded.)

To determine the outcome, the suit of the card determines the required area of defensive support:

Matrix Battle Cards

Heart — Data Manipulation is necessary (in the battle).

Club — Electrical Boosting is necessary.

Diamond — Information Transfer is necessary.

Spade — Mental Stamina is necessary.

Joker: Shuffle the deck and continue.

On each card-flip, the watch-dog team must attempt to thwart the intruder by displaying an ability or implant that satisfies the card's suit (area of support). One member then must roll a single D8 above the rank of the card flipped. (Treat face-cards as tens.) Thus, an ace is not an automatic success, since the roll must be above the card's rank, and therefore a roll of one will fail. A failed roll causes a Morale Test or Walking wound. The skill bonus of a person attempting to display the required area of support is added to the roll. This may be the only way a team avoids the wounds from a card-flip of rank eight and above. If the first attempt to "beat" the card (intruder) fails, then repeated attempts must be made. However, the rank of the card is dropped by one after each failed attempt. (Again, treat face cards as ten as they slowly drop to a value that can be surpassed by a die roll.)

Should someone fail in his attempt, besides the wound, he additionally may not use that same skill again in this battle to defeat any card. He must select another, or a different watch-dog must display the same skill or another of his own. If the watch-dogs do not have any ability that displays the necessary support, or if they have lost all their defensive skills in an area by failure in their rolls, then one character is short-circuited from the matrix in order to thwart the intruder's action (card). He is out of the battle and may not use any of his skills to further influence play. The team leader decides who is lost. On the positive side, the short-circuit of a player beats the card (on to the next).

There are numerous skills, functions and implants which can provide defensive support. Some cover more than one area. To clarify a player's abilities and give some, but not all, examples:

Matrix Support Coverage

Data Manipulation: Boolean Mentality*, C-Cubed, Cerebral Splitter*, Chemical Disbalance, Damage Control, Digital Converters*, Event Triggered Orders, Gate Pattern Processing*, Imprint Memory, Interface Equipment, Matrix Watch-Dog, Mental Discipline, Optical Link, Override Directives, Psychological Warfare, Pure Focus Concentration*, Scramble Suit Codes, Set/Control Master Suit Codes

Electrical Boosting: Damage Control, Diagnostic and Repair, ECM, Electrically Reinforced Synapses*, Event Triggered Orders, Gate Pattern Processing*, Interface Equipment, Matrix Watch-Dog, Neural Shock, Optical Link, Override Directives, Power Generation, Set/Control Master Suit Codes, Taser

Information Transfer: Access Data Files, Calming Voice, Cerebral Splitter*, Chemical Disbalance, Diagnostic and Repair, Digital Converters*, ECM, Gate Pattern Processing*, Imprint Memory, Interface Equipment, Interrogate, Matrix Watch-Dog, Non-Linear Organization*, Optical Link, Psychological Warfare, Scramble Suit Codes, Set/Control Master Suit Codes

Mental Stamina: Calming Voice, Cerebral Splitter*, Chemical Disbalance, ECM, Electrically Reinforced Synapses*, Gate Pattern Processing*, Imprint Memory, Interrogate, Mental Discipline, Matrix Watch-Dog, Motivation, Neural Shock, Non-Linear Organization*, Override Directives, Pure Focus Concentration*, Set/Control Master Suit Codes

Note how certain functions provide a critical role, bestowing possible protection in multiple card suits. An "*" denotes an implant defined in issue two; all others from either the Battle Born game (issue one) or G/Sol (this issue).

The referee as part of his set-up before the battle must determine the number of rounds (card-flips) of intrusion. Here are some typical opponents:

Intruder Type

Accidental entry or error (One card-flip)

Free-Lance (Two card-flips)

Specialist (Half a D8 card-flips)

Boy Genius or Hacker (D8 card-flips)

Trained Tech-Ninja (D8 card-flips plus one)

Experienced DOC (D8 card-flips plus two)

Industrial Spy (Two D8 card-flips)

"Jazz Master" (Two D8 card-flips plus two)

"Scan Master" (Three D8 card-flips)

Matrix Designer (Four D8 card-flips)

Double the number of rounds require if the hackers entered boldly as a Worm. (If there is a bright-side to battling a Worm, at least the watch-dogs didn't have to go through the detection process of determining that the matrix has intruders.) Additionally, the referee may decide that the players must roll a D6 for their outcome to beat the card's rank, in place of a D8, when they fight an opponent who has battled them before or has previously penetrated the matrix.

During the battle, wounds may not be restored in any manner after they are lost. Things just occur too quickly. Should the watch-dog team survive, they defeat the hackers by forcing the opponents from the matrix. (There to be apprehended or continue with a real world battle.)

Example of Matrix Assault with Cards

For a quick example, let's have four watch-dog members of the Soul Guard, fight an intrusion of a trained Tech-Ninja. The referee rolls a die and decides the players must face six card flips.

G/Sol team in example:

Zulu — Matrix Watch-Dog (+1);

Yankee — C-Cubed (+1) and Matrix Watch-Dog;

X-Ray — Access Data Files and ECM;

Vex — Gate Pattern Processing (+2).

First Flip: Four of Spades. This means that the players must exhibit Mental Stamina. That is possible by all of the team members, Zulu's or Yankee's Matrix Watch-Dog, X-Ray's ECM and Vex's Gate Pattern Processing. The team elects to have Vex make the roll. He rolls a D8 for a three. Adding his bonus of plus two in Gate Pattern Processing gives a final roll of five, which is above the card's rank so the action is thwarted.

Second Flip: Four of Diamonds. This means the players must exhibit Information Transfer. That is possible by all members, Zulu's or Yankee's Matrix Watch-Dog, X-Ray's Access Data Files or ECM, and Vex's Gate Pattern Processing. Zulu tries his skill and rolls a one. Even with the plus one he has failed. He takes a Morale Test wound and also temporarily loses his skill. The card still must be defeated, though it's rank now is three. Yankee tries next with his Matrix Watch-Dog. Note, Zulu lost his skill, but that does not prevent another from using their same skill even against the same card. Yankee rolls a four and beats the card (since it dropped in rank by one after Zulu's attempt).

Third Flip: Six of Diamonds. This means the players must again exhibit Information Transfer. That is now possible for three members, Yankee's Matrix Watch-Dog, X-Ray's Access Data Files or ECM, and Vex's Gate Pattern Processing. Zulu no longer has a skill useful in this battle. Vex tries and rolls a two. He adds his plus two, but still comes up short. He loses his skill and takes a wound. Yankee tries and also fails by rolling a two. X-Ray attempts with Access Data Files and he fails as well with a roll of two. Finally, with the rank now a two, X-Ray's ECM on a roll of three wins.

Fourth Flip: King of Diamonds. This means the players must exhibit still again Information Transfer. That is possible only by X-Ray's ECM, but he does not have a modifier to roll above the ten (king's equivalent rank). Rather than attempt and fail, leaving the group short even more skills, Vex decides to short-circuit. The card is defeated and he is out of play. If the players win, he can later return to the Matrix.

Fifth Flip: Eight of Clubs. This means the players must exhibit Electrical Boosting. That's possible by X-Ray's ECM. Once again, rather than risk the roll, Zulu decides to short-circuit. The card is defeated.

Sixth (and final) Flip: Two of Hearts. This means that Yankee's C-Cubed is possible. Now, notice that either could instead short-circuit and end the battle. But, short-circuit is not without peril (see later), so rather than end this "sloppy," Yankee tries his roll. His plus one also means that he will succeed on anything but a roll of one. After making a roll of five, the matrix threat is cleared.

Fluke Cards (optional)

Whenever a Jack is selected for the Matrix Battle card, the referee can resolve the action, like it was a ten or he may check the table below. These events add flukes and additional character situations that need player resolution.

Final "Bit" on "Short-Circuit"

The cam has been bested in one manner or another, met with personal mishap or entered a position from which they are forced from the matrix back to their own bodies and reality. In the time required to once again establish a proper link and return to the matrix (to pursue hackers who have created this predicament), a hundred-million changes of information might occur. These could cause actions like renegade robots, security doors opened, ma-

chines shut-down or altered, power shut-off, ship course rerouted radically, defense screens lowered, etc. If all the players short-circuit, then they have certainly failed their watch-dog task. (The referee decides to what degree things can be remedied and information can be recovered.)

Also to simulate the player's trauma as he is degaussed, dispelled, erased or shorted — pick a jargon term — the player suffers attacks from electrical shocks and mental seizures. Consult the referee's attack table and pick a few categories of wounds and make some rolls. The player could conceivably suffer any and all, especially if his own EE Suit (or Duro-Armor) backfires, discharges plasma or activates ordnance. He may also injure his comrades in the general area. The player should suffer the minimum of a Vicious wound, unless he is an experienced hacker in his own right and has implants or abilities to lessen this shock.

Q&D "Jack Events in the Matrix Battle" (208)

3 or less: "Advantage" — Breakthrough occurs as opponents seem to lose their will to attack. Until the deck reshuffles, select two cards and the players choose one of the pair to take effect.

4: "Regroup" — One player has collected his thoughts and rallied himself. He may restore all of his Morale Test wounds.

5: "Paid for the Upgrade" — One player repairs or brings his gear back on-line. He restores any skills or implants he may have temporarily lost in this battle.

6: "Will-Power" — Courage rules the day. Until the deck reshuffles, treat all cards as Spades.

7: "ALU" — The system's antiquated arithmetic and logic unit (the robotic artificial intelligence of the matrix) creates a problem. One player must be assigned for a D8 card-flips to calm it down.

8: "Truce" — Players are contacted by the intruder to strike a deal. He may remind the players of the value of the records they protect and offer to share. He may also try to blackmail or coerce them into surrender. The referee will moderate all negotiations, but more than likely the attack begins again.

9: "Curse the Designer" — The processors are overloaded, so skills are less effective. Until the deck reshuffles, raise the rank of all cards by two.

10: "Iron Will" — Battle becomes a simple matter of strategy. Until the deck reshuffles, ignore the results of all Jacks picked; previously selected cards remain in effect.

11: "Sniper" — Special program attack or mishap overloads one of the watch-dogs. The player with the most implants suffers a Vicious wound from internal hemorrhaging and becomes disordered. He must retreat from the Matrix and will be removed from further action.

12: "Babbage Phenomenon" — One or more of the members of watch-dog team begin to dream or hallucinate to the point where their bizarre thoughts create a virtual reality within the matrix. The referee should decide who is involved and the outcome. (My favorite are always where everyone, friend and foe, must join forces to fight a new imaginary threat in a rustic or fantasy motif.)

13: "Dynamic Duo" — Secondary intruder enters the system. These two may not be related, in fact they may be rivals. However, the players must divide their team and simultaneously battle this new threat. The referee decides the strength (in card-flips) of this new threat; most will be "accidents" of one card flip.

14: "Back-Door" — Matrix design plans are lost to the enemy. Double the amount of remaining cards the players must face.

15 or above: "Double Whammy" — Highly successful maneuver or display of skill by the intruder forces one player to short-circuit from the matrix.

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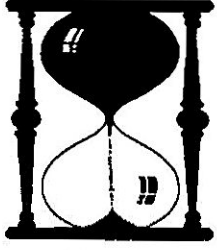
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Death



of the viper

BY CONRAD HILLMER

CHAPTER 14, VERSE 17-42

(INTRODUCTION)

The players are a band of mercenaries with numerous adventures together. One of the players possesses a powerful sword, "The Grey Viper," gained in an earlier adventure. Though the sword has no traditional magical powers, it does allow the wielder to slay certain invincible opponents. However, the weapon carries a fatal price. It draws a destructive force to the players, "The Consumer." The owner cannot be rid of the weapon by normal means. The players are seeking help from a past patron, a powerful priest named Kronen. They are currently in the City of Spires which is under siege by the Consumer and an army of giant worms. And to make matters worse, earlier in the day, two of the players (decided at random) have been captured by vigilantes who rightly blame the group for drawing the worms to the city with their cursed sword.

The party is in a most revered chamber of the Temple of the Feeding Worm. The hall is shaking. The Priest Kronen has dispatched his most learned scholars to read from the Black Scrolls of Nro. As the first reader unravels the ancient scrolls to translate a passage, a black mold spreads to his hands. The scholar seems to have expected the mold, yet still winces from the pain. He continues to scan the scroll for the right passage. The mold is a sickening ooze of colors and fattens as it draws blood from the scholar's limbs.

As the mold travels up his arms beneath his cloak, he chants the translation. "In the days before the grey master brought the hordes down to slay the first beast, there was a place where the worm gods spat flames unto the sky in defiance to those who make their throne in the misty air." He screams and falls as the mold spreads to his tongue and eyes.

A second priest, a young man barely his prime, steps forth and takes the scroll while continuing to translate. "A great warrior called the grom in the aid of a wizard called sabanrab stood against the new beast and brought it down by piercing his body with a black spear, rending its vital humors and releasing these into the virgin soil.

"The black spear was as much a prize as a burden. It demanded tribute or it threatened to return the first beast in a greater form" His words are cut off and he too screams in agony and dies, consumed by the mold.

A third scholar, a young man, takes the scroll with a slight hesitation. He translates further. "Sabanrab took the spear to the dark kon jontu and made a pact for the head of weak king udius. In return the jontu would reveal a manner to be rid of the foul implement." He pauses to catch his breath and that slight delay marks the end of his life.

Nervously, a fourth scholar picks up the parchment and scans the runes. "... foul implement." By the time he finds the last verse read, he too dies in agony. The ground begins to swell; the Consumer is near. Kronen calls for more scholars to finish quickly.

DURING AN AGE OF INSPIRED FURY, FOLLOWING THE FALL OF THE LAST ARCANIC EMPEROR, YET BEFORE A TWISTED DEAL FORGED BY GOBLINS BRINGS GUNPOWDER TO THE BARONS, HEROIC WARRIORS WANDER - NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST - TO DISCOVER NOTHING BUT ADVENTURE. THESE ARE THE TALES OF THE ONE LATER HERALDED AS THE TRUE KING.

A next man scans hurriedly and finally states, "Though the deal was declared void by some other dealing, the jontu revealed how to unmake the black spear." Alas, then this scholar too dies in agony.

An acolyte, a mere child but one of recent study, takes up the scroll and continues to translate. "Jontu did name the unmaker, vulcor the mighty, vulcor the cleanser, the eater of relics, vulcor the flaming guarding of inferno, he that trades for doom, vulcor the child of the fire gods, the white doom, the fiery lance of trishkar, the twenty-seventh son of the one who sleeps, the power arisen, incidris pulusifas, the unmaker." With his voice muffled on the final words, the child dies.

There are no other scholars in the area, so Kronen orders one of his guards to bear the scroll. Shaking, but obedient, a mailed soldier takes up the scroll and stares with trembling hands. "I cannot read the runes my master. They are too obscure. There is only one that I dare even guess about; it is a glyph showing an isle that is on fire." The soldier dies soon after.

Seeing none (but the players) left in the area, Kronen steps forward to take up the scroll. Yet his arm is stopped by a phantasm in dark robes piped with green streaks that forms from the mold that consumed the previous readers. "The worm gods themselves are here to consume their children. The Consumer will destroy all, unless these warriors destroy the Grey Viper — go to the volcano on fire isle. By leaving the City of Spires, the consumer will follow the sword. I would make haste." The halls continue to shake as the players are led from the dark stone citadel to the panicked streets of the city.

The first order of business should be saving the lost members of the group. They are being held in the center of the city. The referee should also determine who carries the Grey Viper. The bearer is cursed with the weapon, and the sword, though magical, is apparently useless to the party.

SPECIAL NOTE: The mechanics for this scenario are presented mainly as Free-Style Role-Play™; however, conversion notes for GURPS Fantasy are provided for further clarity when using that game system. Permission to include GURPS stats is

granted by Loyd Blankenship of Steve Jackson Games. Hey, we all like GURPS. [Ed Note: I especially like the Conan stuff.] If you don't own them, go buy the GURPS source books in all the game genre you're currently playing (or wish you were playing).

CHAPTER 14, VERSE 55-76

(RESCUE OF FRIENDS)

PLAYERS' INFO: Two of the players have been captured by vigilantes in the city. They have been tried and found guilty and are now going to be hung. The captives have been bound and blind folded. They stand on the gallows. Though the city is collapsing from the attacking creatures rising from the ground, the crowd is large to witness the execution. Perhaps they feel the worms will be appeased if these two die.

The rescuing players arrive with just minutes to spare. A plan must be developed quickly and action taken immediately. The two stand on the gallows with four guards and a judge. About the gallows is a ring of guards, about twenty. (For GURPS fight eight.) Between the buildings, a squad of horseman (roughly fifteen or six when playing GURPS) watch to ensure that the execution continues unhindered. On an overlooking balcony is the mayor of the city and his aids. A crowd gathers about the gallows howling for justice.

FOR THE REFEREE: Let the players develop their plan of action. Remember that there are innocent civilians around. The players and the opposing soldiers should resist blindly killing the peasants. The mounted soldiers will charge if the right situation develops, like the prisoners escape the ring of guards about the gallows, the mayor is endangered or the peasants clear the area. It will takes a few minutes for the peasants to clear the area. Anyone falling from a building receives minor damage (bruise/cut or GURPS 1d-3). The mounted soldiers will pursue the players to the gates, but not outside the city. All the tremors stop once the players flee the city. Generate some action, and let the players exhibit some flair in this initial battle.

CHAPTER 15, VERSE 3-19

(A PRINCE'S RESPONSIBILITY)

PLAYERS' INFO: The players narrowly avoid disaster. With their comrades rescued, the players know the following:

A. They have a sword, the Grey Viper, which draws an unstoppable army of giant worms. They cannot be rid of the sword. Attempts to discard the weapon will cause it to magically return to the players.

B. Their patron, Kronen, and his priests spoke of a volcanic isle. A guardian by the name of Vulcor was described that could possible destroy the weapon.

C. The players do not know the exact location of fire island. By legend, they do know that there is a chain of volcanic isles located in the Sinby Sea. The legends mention specifically Inferno, a great volcano, but few know where it is precisely. The closest city on the Sinby Sea is Port Champlain. Fire Island is described as being part of the edge of the world.

There is not much more to say. Get some horses and ride to Port Champlain.

FOR THE REFEREE: The players may be pursued by vigilantes and giant worms. Feel free to add some campaign twists on the ride to Port Champlain. The players must travel far to be done with the weapon.

Someone might ask, "Why go through all this trouble for the sword? Couldn't we just dupe someone to take it from us?" The answer is no. Everything magic has a price.

Note: if the players are using their own characters, and not Dukain and company from the previous scenarios in Space Gamer, have the players meet a barbarian during their travels.

His name is Morg, though he is sometimes called the Marauder. He is typical for a barbarian warrior of the setting. He is quick and deadly with a sword or axe, and equally quick in devouring a plate of mush. He hates magic and foul beasts, and he seeks treasure only to maintain a full coin purse. He is jovial and sets others at ease. Though he claims to have no past to speak of, he seems to know someone everywhere he travels and has somehow been involved in all manner of heroic activity. (Besides, he also provides a basis for jokes in the rest of this tale.)

CHAPTER 15, VERSE 30-39

(MORG AND THE BOAT)

PLAYERS' INFO: The players travel to Port

Champlain. The city is a dirty and foul-smelling place. Morg kind of likes it. Morg remembers, spontaneously, once working on a ship here. His buddy was known as the Sharper. Morg cannot remember what he did on board the ship but he kinda liked it. (No surprises here.) There is a crier in the square advertising a ship for hire. (How convenient and always the case.)

FOR THE REFEREE: The players need passage to fire island. There are several choices: Go to Morg's Old Buddy. Hire a Ship or Steal a Ship.

Morg's Old Buddy: Sharper can be found in the local tavern, the Smilin' Maria. Follow with the narrative on hiring a boat.

Hiring a Ship: The crier directs them to the local tavern, the Smilin' Maria, to meet a man named Barnabas. The bar is a dark place that smells of fish and sour ale. Barnabas will turn out to be Morg's old buddy, the Sharper. Sharper will say that that's his nickname; his true name is Barnabas. In truth, Sharper is only pretending to be Barnabas, the real boat's owner. Sharper calls Morg by the name Lee Low (for some unknown reason). Sharper, acting as Barnabas, says he knows the location of the Fire Island and will travel that way for a small fee. He is glad to aid the group. Sharper knows very well where Fire Island is. It is a hide out for pirates. He believes the players are after pirate gold — but that is a different game.

Sharper tells the players to meet him just before dawn at his ship, The Rum Runner. He admits to having a little trouble with the harbor master and must depart with little fanfare. He bids the players good night and leaves the bar. Let the players role-play further action in the bar, destroying property or whatever suits them. If followed, Barnabas will wander the streets and sleeps in an alley, that may seem suspicious.

Before dawn, the group assembles on the dock to join up with Captain Barnabas (Sharper). He claims to have a little problem; the harbor master has seized his boat. There are men guarding his ship and his crew has been chased away by the harbor master. The players could help Sharper take back his ship and sail the vessel. It would certainly get them to Fire Island quicker. Fight the boarding action like steal a boat.

Steal a Ship: Moored to the dock is a ship protected by ten guards (or four in GURPS). The guards will call for the harbor master if they are attacked. However, it will take a few minutes for the master and his deputies to respond. The players should refrain from out-right slaying these guards. Hey, they are just doing their job. They can be tossed in the water or clubbed unconscious. That's a better way of taking the vessel.

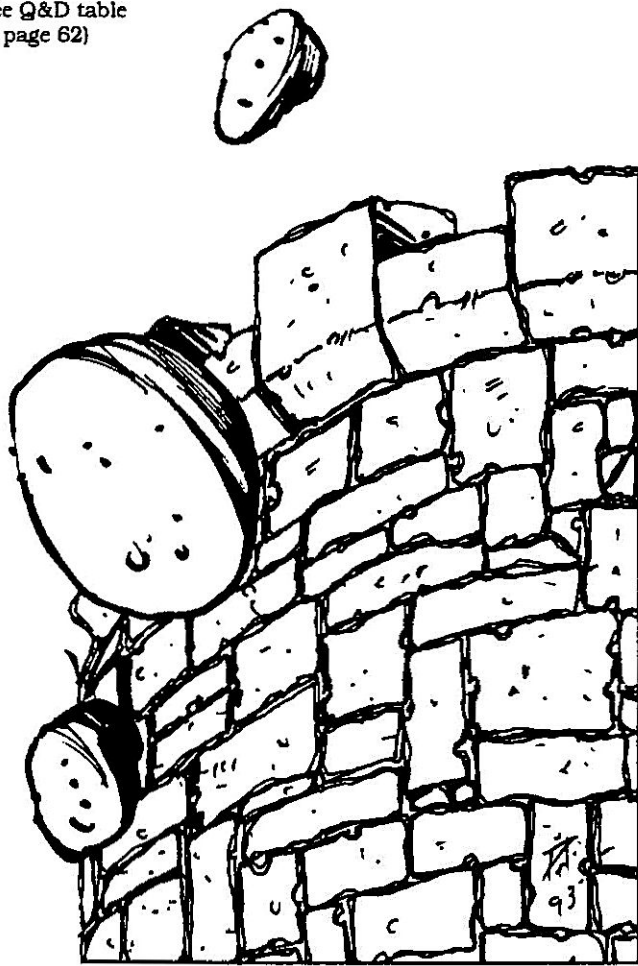
As the battle rages, one player must climb from the water-side rail of the ship and begin to raise sails and make ready for the rest to jump aboard and man the oars. If Barnabas (Morg's buddy Sharper) is not with the players, he coincidentally is stealing the boat for himself. He will be found helping the water-side players get the ship ready — "you're doing that kinda wrong, son. Here let ol' Sharper show you how to abscond a vessel." The ship is sailed, but the early morning wind will be too light. The players must dispatch the guards and quickly row away, before the harbor master arrives.

CHAPTER 15, VERSE 41-43 (ROWING PAST THE CATAPULTS)

PLAYERS' INFO: Since there was no apparent both legal and peaceful method of getting a ship by the events, the ship will be attacked by catapults from the tower as it rows from the harbor.

FOR THE REFEREE: Use the following Quick and Dirty table to simulate the action. Allow players to describe their free-style actions as modifiers to the events below. Notice that the table is written in reverse order to most Q&D tables (higher numbers are better results). Let successive players each roll a D8 and add their total number to generate the event result, until an escape outcome is obtained in Verse 57. (i.e. First player rolls a six, generating a Verse 48 result. The next rolls his D8 for a four does not read Verse 47, instead he gains the result for a ten — the first result of six plus his roll of four — to obtain a Verse 50 result.)

(See Q&D table on page 62)



CHAPTER 16, VERSE 6-21 (THE SEA TALES)

PLAYERS' INFO: Barnabas reveals that the Fire Island is truly at the end of the world, perhaps beyond. The journey will last several months, time enough for hard duty and amazing tales. The journey takes the players past the Golden Coasts, magnificent jungle empires filled with strange beasts and exotic customs. They even stop to take on provisions (or raid for the same) in the oriental powers, lands with magic like none the players have seen. Though it is not a journey for the meek at heart, the players will be better for having made the voyage.

FOR THE REFEREE: Age the players a D8 years; these rolls may be different for different players. (Don't ask me how.) Allow each player to take a few minutes and describe something that happened during the long voyage with a free-style sea tale. He may make his tale include actions of the other players, but he will be the centerpiece of his own story. This is his time to shine.

Example:

"Year One — I saved the daughter of a jungle chieftain by slaying a wild cat as he leaped to attack. Her father rewarded me and now the savages call me 'Chulara, the Lord of Cats'."

"Year Two — I learned the art of weaving from a traveling oriental merchant. I have made fine tunics for all my friends to wear."

"Year Three — I helped save the ship as we were attacked by the Devil Men from the Deep."

"Year Four — I learned how to navigate from the stars."

"Year Five — I spent a month in a jail of a pirate prince as I tried to steal his most prized treasure, a golden goblet as big as your head!"

Though each story does not need to be amazing nor positive, the players should be encouraged to help develop their characters or present possible plots that will follow this adventure. And above all, remember, they are telling the tale. What actually happened can be completely different, depending upon the slant of the teller. Stories involving the sword, the Grey Viper, would also fit nicely into the tale. There would be many who would be interested in the great sword. Even as far away as the players journey, knowledge that the powerful weapon has been unearthed has spread. The referee should reward each player after his tale by giving him Ignobles or additional skills. If a player refers to other players in his narrative, these other players may also gain advancement bonus or newly acquired abilities. The referee may also prompt the player to make rolls based on his abilities to justify the results and outcomes described by his tales. Reward those who entertain and provide unusual, if not witty, tales.

CHAPTER 16, VERSE 52-80 (BATTLE ON THE OPEN SEA)

PLAYERS' INFO: After what seems like a lifetime of adventures, the players have reached the end of the world. During the last eleven days of inhospitable weather, even Morg gets sick. He lays over the rail "Lee Low" to keep his troubles to himself. The final days of the voyage have been terrible. The weather is violent and hardly anyone turns a head when the cry is raised, "Swell ahead." Yet something terrible is in the water coming towards the ship. From the size of the swell, it's massive. The stories of Tessa, the Enormous Sea Beast, run through the players' minds. "No way, this can't be Tessa. Mom just made that up to make us learn the violin or whatever."

As the wave gets closer, everyone begins to regret they didn't learn their letters and stay home. A great maw opens before the vessel. Spikes run down the creature's rippling back. Water geysers from her blow-hole and her tail strikes the water with a boom. It's front paws, bigger than a man, grapple the vessel and begin to pull the craft under.

FOR THE REFEREE: Determine which character saw the Beast first and follow with the fight. The battle will be fought by using Q&D Fighting a Sea Beast. The players attack the beast from two places: From the Deck of the Ship or From the Head of the Beast. All players start on the deck using Projectiles (A), Melee (B) or Evasion (C). The tables also describe damage to the players and when the beast is injured.

Read and apply the first ship damage result. Then, the player seated right of the person who spotted the monster, takes his action. Continue with each player generating a result on the

Q&D ESCAPING A BLOCKADE

3 or less: "Chapter 15, Verse 46" — A stone arcs gracefully through the air and smashes into the hull. The ship is in danger of sinking. Extraordinary measures are required to save the ship. All players should describe a free-style action they perform to save the ship. Magic may also be required to mend damaged sections of the hull or sails. The stone may also be deflected or rendered harmless by heroic action with a stout shield or mighty hurled weapon. If any of the free-style rolls are failed, the attempting player receives a bleeder injury (or GURPS 1d), and everyone else takes a bruise/cut (or GURPS 1d-3). This damage may not be individually blocked or avoided.

4 or 5: "Chapter 15, Verse 47" — Another ship approaches and threatens to innocently block the players from escape. The players must signal the vessel with a collection of actions that clearly warn the other vessel to stay clear. Remember it is dark and normal sounds are obscured by the crashing waves on the vessel. Players' vessel avoids delay if they devise a plan and make at least two Difficult (or GURPS 4d under IQ) rolls. Success and the next player rolls two D8 for the next result total or upon failing the next event is number six, Verse 48.

6 or 7: "Chapter 15, Verse 48" — The ship must veer in the channel to avoid hitting another ship foolishly crossing your path as it enters the harbor. Players' vessel avoids a collision if everyone in the group mans the oars, and half of them makes a Difficult (or GURPS 4d under ST) roll for stamina. (Degree becomes Simple with Strength of Limb.) Failure and everyone takes a bleeder injury (or GURPS 1d) from the crash.

8 or 9: "Chapter 15, Verse 49" — A large stone strikes the craft lifting it briefly into the air. The stone lodges in the ship causing a tilt that makes your vessel move in uneven circles. Each player will only roll half a D8 for his number addition for determining an event, unless the stone is thrown overboard by a display of a skill with mechanical devices (levers and pulleys) combined with mighty strength or magic.

10 to 12: "Chapter 15, Verse 50" — The stone falls, splashing a tremendous quantity of water into your ship. Each player subtracts one from his D8 roll for determining the next event. A result of zero, which adds nothing, means the same result repeats. The referee may allow the players to pump, bucket, bail and drain this water with at least two displays of Difficult skill (or GURPS 4d under DX) or Tasking magic (or GURPS an Improvised Water Spell of at least -4 penalty).

13 to 15: "Chapter 15, Verse 51" — A shower of arrows strike the vessel. All on the ship will take serious injury (bleeder or GURPS 1d) if they are not shielded or protected. Everyone may display his skills to prevent or reduce this injury to himself or others. The person generating this event must avoid half a D8 arrow attacks which will hit for bleeder (or GURPS 1d).

16 to 19: "Chapter 15, Verse 52" — A projectile from a ballista glances off the player generating this result, causing a serious injury (Vicious or GURPS 2d). The character may attempt to deflect or block this injury with his shield or a magical barrier, but he may not dodge the blow.

20 or 22: "Chapter 15, Verse 53" — The catapult tower is slowly passing at close range. If the rolling player is the ship's pilot (at the steering tiller), skip to event thirty, Verse 57. Else, the ship's pilot (perhaps Sharper) worries that the next stone will strike the craft. The player rolling must either display a Simple (or GURPS 3d under skill rating) seaman-ship skill to take the present pilot's place, or he must inspire the other players with a Difficult battle cry (or GURPS 4d under Leadership). If the attempt is failed, the ship slows and all take damage from bow fire and hurled stones. The player that failed receives a bleeder injury (or GURPS 1d), and everyone else takes a bruise/cut (or GURPS 1d-3). This damage may not be individually blocked or avoided.

23 or 24: "Chapter 15, Verse 54" — A rock splashes nearby and rocks the vessel. The pilot at the tiller is washed overboard. The player acting as pilot must make a Difficult (or GURPS 4d under skill) display of swimming or acrobatics; else, failing his roll, the ship must circle back to pick him up, losing one D8 from the event total.

25 to 26: "Chapter 15, Verse 55" — The player generating this result is spooked and convinced that the next catapult stone will hit directly atop of him. Someone in the catapult tower may be using magic to warp his mind, or else he has simply failed morale. He must attempt Tasking (or Simple if he has Magic Immunity or Spirit Protector). For GURPS the player must make a 5d under IQ, or someone must cast a Mind Control spell like Bravery or Loyalty. If the character is Bold, roll twice and take the better result. Or for a GURPS character of Strong Will, the roll is only 3d under IQ. Fail the roll and he jumps overboard; your ship must circle back to pick him up, losing two D8 from the event total.

27 to 29: "Chapter 15, Verse 56" — As the ship passes within easy range of the tower, a chain is raised in the channel to prevent your ship from passing. The players must try a Tasking action (or GURPS 4d under Tactics) to breach or bypass the chain. If all the players fail to clear the obstacle via cunning, magic or strength, then they must row back into the harbor to maneuver for another attempt. If the players must retreat, the next result subtracts a D8 instead of adding.

30 to 35: "Chapter 15, Verse 57" — After a few more harrowing moments at the mouth of the harbor, as stones crash all around, the ship escapes. The player obtaining this result has the option of standing in the rear and saluting (or making a rude gesture) at the tower. If he does so, one more player must roll on this table for a result. Otherwise, the vessel escapes without further incident. (Yet by refusing, perhaps the player misses his chance to check an ignoble as the chronicles remember him cowering in the final moments.)

36 or more: "Chapter 15, Verse Number Obscured" — The ship is shattered by a nearly impossible, long ranged, direct hit. Magic must have been involved, and those who cast the incantation were pretty upset. The players must save their ship with counter magic of Tasking (or GURPS an Improvised Making spell like a super Repair). On a Mixed result (or either a critical success or failure for GURPS), the ship can not be mended, but instead of sinking the result is changed by warping law five (time changes). The players must repeat their actions starting from the beginning on this table.

tables. After each player gains a turn, read the next cumulative result on the ship damage chart. As can be seen, the ship does not last very long. The referee may give players a bonuses for using skills. (Why is Morg practicing his violin on the deck of the ship?)

CHAPTER 17, VERSE 89-106

ISLAND OF FIRE AT THE END OF THE WORLD

PLAYERS' INFO: The players have finally arrived at fire island. Their ship is battered, but they manage to eke it along. The island is dominated by a fuming volcano known as Inferno. Paths up to the volcano are clear from the beach. As the ship sails around the isle, villagers are seen on the beaches. These villagers are suspected to be hostile cannibals. This adventure never seems to end.

The players realize that they cannot speak to the cannibals, nor would these savages be friendly. Evil totems line the dunes, and they are staked on posts along the volcano. The best plan is to move quickly to Inferno under the cover of darkness. The ship at sea will probably not be molested provided the players return by dawn. The players may also decide to ward their vessel with magic. Sharper and Morg are left behind, but all the players must go into the volcano to destroy the sword — call it destiny.

The players stealth along the twisted path to a cave entrance of the great volcano. They cannot proceed directly to the top. They must enter the lava trails around the volcano. The cave they enter is hot and smoldering. It smells of sulfur. There is a fog in the area. But regardless, they can or shall it be said, they will continue inside.

FOR THE REFEREE: Continue with descriptions of the volcanic underworld. Only the climax is provided in this text. The referee is encouraged to expand the dangers and include more events and obstacles appropriate to his game or desires.

Final Room One: The Entrance

As the character's enter this room, footsteps can be heard coming toward the room. The cannibals approach in number. The players have time to hide in either of the passages out of the room. There are fifty villagers. They are carrying a female for sacrifice. She is a simple girl of very few charms. The villagers will proceed to the next room. If they discover the players, they will overpower and capture them. The players will be taken, like the girl, and staked in the final room.

Final Room Two: The Gate

This room is a large cave filled with smoke. In the middle of the room is a locked and barred gate. Behind the bars is a large copper gong. The bars may be bent with a Tasking roll of strength. (Or Difficult for someone clever enough to use a pry-bar.) The lock on the gate may be defeated with a Difficult roll. When the gong sounds, it summons the guardian Inferno to consume the sacrifice.

Final Room Three: The Sacrifice

This very hot room is on the edge of the volcano. Gases sting the eyes of those who enter. Endure hardship with a display of magic or gifted skill, else suffer a minus one penalty on your task resolution rolls. GURPS make a 3d under Survival or suffer penalty of minus two DX. The players will see the girl (who crossed in the previous room) staked to poles at the edge of the ledge. As the players enter to throw in the sword and rescue the girl, the guardian Vulcor arrives.

The players feel they are looking into the white hot core of the planet. Jets of dry wind swirl around in an intense smell. A figure can be seen forming the center of the volcano. The figure is bathed in flames. It appears to be smiling and bellows laughter. (Isn't it at least nice to know terrifically nasty creatures have a great sense of humor?)

The players will not be allowed to destroy the sword without his permission. Many adventurers have tried to destroy artifacts here. It gives the volcano a bad magical taste and Vulcor does not enjoy the undoing of such the foul magic in his presence. He will sense the presence of the Grey Viper and will speak, "What do you carry little ones? Perhaps some magic?"

Vulcor will try to divide the party by offering deals, all of which he will refuse to honor. He will try to get the players to make sacrifices to him. "Pay me homage, little fools!" He will ask that the girl be thrown into the volcano or that someone sacrifice their life. Hopefully someone will make a test for Hunches (or GURPS Danger Sense), which will be throbbing a resounding plea to attack. Occasionally as the players banter and argue with Vulcor, have everyone take a minor injury (bruise or GURPS d-4) from ash that lands on their arms or face. Stall and perhaps a few players will be at overflow of wounds before they reason they must attack.

CHAPTER 20, VERSE 61-70

THE JOURNEY HOME

After the battle with Vulcor, the players destroy the Grey Viper without further theatrics. They return to their ship, and the voyage home concludes without incident. Of course, the referee may want to continue this adventure with new problems on the isle and along the journey home. Their ship may be gone. (Would Morg and Sharper be so dishonorable?) They may be hunted by cannibals for killing their fire god. (More likely they would be worshiped as gods for slaying Vulcor.) They may be trapped on the isle as it erupts and sinks. (Give them a break.) They may be captured by pirates who visit the isle to bury treasure. (At the end of the world? Don't these guys have easier access locations?) At least the Grey Viper has been destroyed. Kronen and his City of Spires can now become an event of the past. The players continue the saga of the one true king in the next issue of Space Gamer, Chapter 21, Verse 16-44 (Crossing the Desert).

CREATURE DESCRIPTIONS

The following are the opponents listed in the scenario with statistics first for Rogue Swords of the Empire, followed by stats for GURPS Fantasy.

Footman: Ordinary attacks from Large guys. GURPS: ST 10, DX 13, IQ 9, HT 11, Move 8, Dodge 5, Parry 7, No Armor, Attacks: 1-1.

Mounted Soldiers: Large attacks from Tough and Armored guys. GURPS: ST 13, DX 13, IQ 9, HT 13, Move 6 (or as horse), Dodge 5, Parry 6, Block 4, Small Shield and Mail Shirt, PD 3, DR 4, Attacks: 2+1.

The Mayor and his Priestly Aids: Basic wizards who can shoot bolts of Enchanted damage. GURPS: ST 12, DX 14, IQ 13, HT 10, Move 6, Dodge 6, Parry 7, No Armor. These can attack with spells like Sand Jet or Stone Missile under the Earth spells of the Magic Supplement.

Dock Guards: Ordinary attacks and can take one Bruise/Cut and one Bleeder injury each. GURPS: ST 15, DX 13, IQ 9, HT 13, Move 6, Dodge 6, Parry 7, No Armor, Attacks: 2+1.

Tessa: Use the quick and dirty system™ for battling the legendary sea beast to generate the damage opportunity. The sea monster is Great with nine wounds of each type. In GURPS, it will take at least a hundred points of damage.

Cannibals (if needed): Tough with a Nasty spear attack. GURPS: ST 11, DX 14, IQ 10, HT 11, Move 6, Dodge 6, Parry 7, No Armor, Attacks: 1+1.

Vulcor: Use the quick and dirty system™ for battling a fire creature. This fire guardian of Inferno can only be slain via that table.

Note: Morg and Captain Barnabas (Sharper) are special characters and should be detailed on the spot as required by the referee. Most of the time they have no special skills; let the players make the rolls, and these two are simply around for color and to describe or generate the plot action.

Quick and Dirty Battle

TABLE A: PROJECTILE FIRE (USUALLY FROM MASTS)

- 1 or less** — The beast lurches below the player's perch. Option to leap on to the beast's back. If the player decides to attempt this, he must roll a difficult roll (or GURPS 4d under DX). If successful, continue next attack from the Beast's Back using Table D. If the roll is missed, the player falls into the water and continues using Table F.
- 2 or 3** — Player is jolted and his projectile is cast harmlessly into the sea.
- 4 to 6** — The projectile hits the beast, but delivers only a minor wound (bruise/cut or GURPS 1d-3).
- 7 or more** — Player's projectile strikes true on the creature (deliver a bleeder or GURPS 1d injury).

TABLE G: ON THE BEAST'S HEAD

- 1 or less** — Player distracts the creature, so the ship cannot be attacked by the beast this round. Plus roll a second time on this table for an additional result. If this result is generated on the next roll, the player kills the beast by slicing open its brain through its eye-slits.
- 2** — Player mistakenly jams his boot into the beast's mouth. Take a bleeder or 2d in GURPS.
- 3 to 5** — Player slices the beast for a vicious injury or 3d-1 in GURPS.
- 6 or 7** — With all the fierce action or after losing his nerve, the player slides back down the creature's neck this round. Continue next round on the creature's back using Table D.
- 8 or more** — Player falls and continues in the water (Table F).

TABLE C: EVASION (AVOIDING HARD'S WAY)

- 3 or less** — Player avoids all action on the deck.
- 4 or 5** — Player is swept overboard trying to avoid attack. Continue next round in the water using Table F.
- 6** — To avoid the beast, the player must dive into the hold. The creature feels the mast and the player is caught below. He loses all actions for the rest of the Q&D or must escape out a breach into the water (Table F).
- 7 or more** — As the creature crawls aboard the vessel, the player is bumped and ends-up on the creature's head. Continue next round on the Table G.

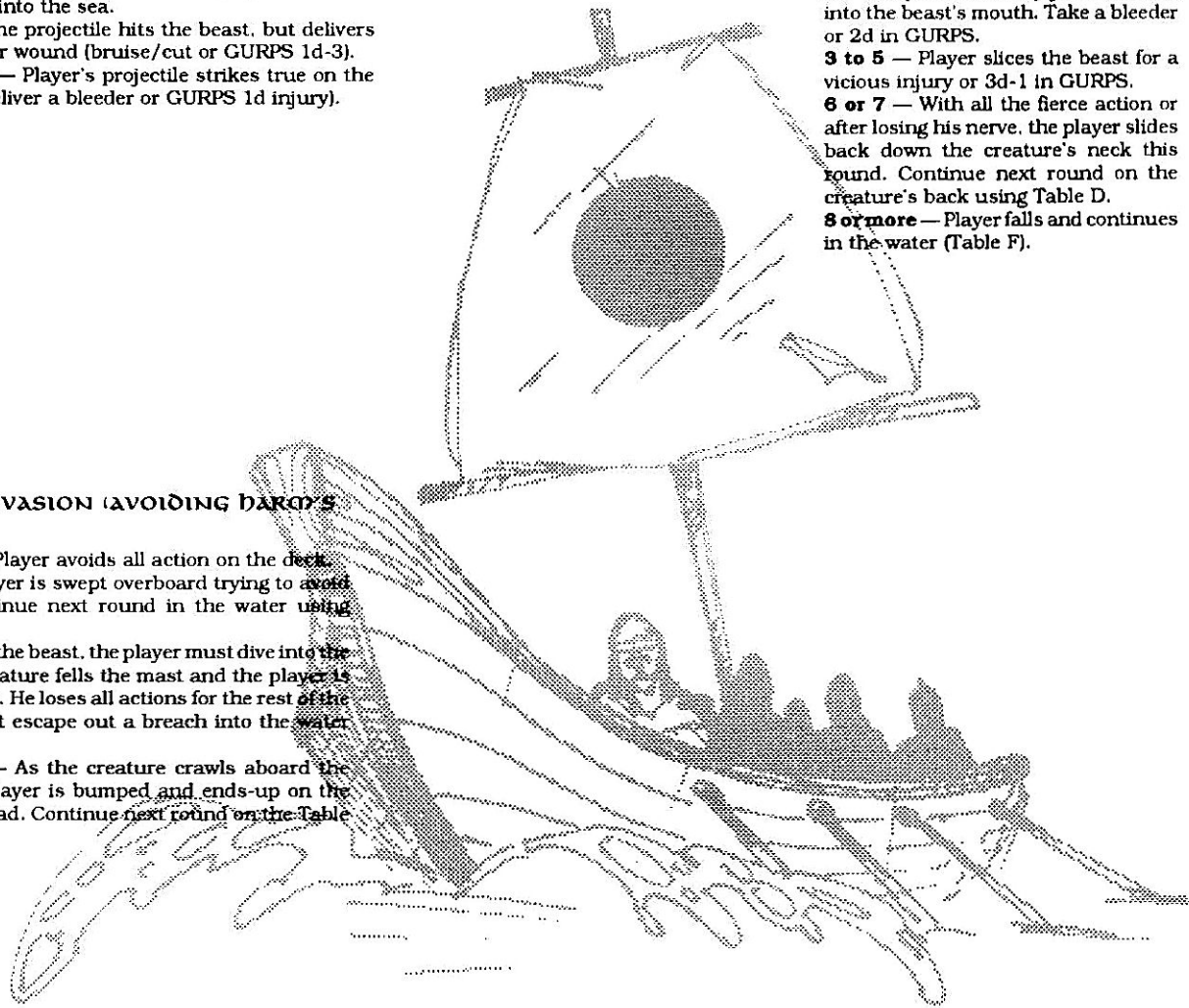


TABLE B: MELEE FROM THE DECK

- 1 or less** — The weapon stroke is bold, but it glances off the creature's hide.
- 2** — Player misses and is swept overboard. Continue in the water using Table F.
- 3** — Player boldly stands in the face of the snorting creature. The creature appears to take notice. The player may press the attack and both he and the beast suffer serious injury (bleeder or GURPS 1d). Else, he may withdraw delivering no damage nor taking any.
- 4** — Player finds himself right in the path of the beast. Player may hold his position and receive a serious injury (bleeder or GURPS 1d+1), or he may Evade and roll on Table C next round.
- 5** — Player is knocked aside as the beast attacks. He may roll with the blow and cling to the beast's tail (continue using Table E), or he can take a blow (bleeder or GURPS 1d) to gain a better vantage on the creature (continue on Table D).
- 6** — Player is grabbed by the beast's great mouth. The teeth deliver a grave injury (vicious or GURPS 2d-1). The player is being cut in half by the jaws and must display his strength to keep from being torn in half. If a difficult roll (or GURPS 4d under ST) is missed, the player is slain. A second player (on the deck) may lose his actions and also try to pry the jaws open. Regardless, success and the player is discarded into the water (continue on Table F).
- 7** — As he has practiced (one thousand times), the player swings his weapon in the perfect arc and connects in a spraying ooze of blood from the beast. The beast takes a grave injury (vicious or GURPS 3d).
- 8 or more** — Player is crushed by the sweep of the creature's claws. Player's injury is vicious or 2d in GURPS.

WITH A LEGENDARY SEA BEAST

TABLE D: GRAPPLED TO BEAST'S BACK

1 or less — Player sticks the creature (delivering a bleeder or 2d injury in GURPS). The creature attempts to throw the player. Make a difficult roll (GURPS 4d under DX) to continue on this table. If unsuccessful, continue next round in the water using Table F.

2 — Player holds on tightly as the beast submerges. Player may release and go to Table F, or he may risk holding-on to continue on this table next round. By holding, the player must display his breath holding or swimming skill (simple or GURPS 3d under ability).

3 or 4 — Player stabs the foul beast and twists his embedded knife (delivering a bleeder injury or 2d+1 impaling injury in GURPS).

5 — Player strikes the monster's spine but barely cuts its hide (delivering a bruise/cut injury or 1d-1 GURPS). Continue next round on this table.

6 — The creature grabs the player and holds him underwater. He takes a bleeder injury or 1d+1 in GURPS. While underwater, the player squirms free and climbs to the creature's head (Table G).

7 — Loose rigging from the ship catches in the creature's claws. The player can hold the other end and keep the creature restrained. Attempt Tasking roll of Strength or 5d under ST for GURPS. Success and all the players gain an extra action without the creature doing additional damage to their vessel. Fail and the player ends up tossed in the water.

8 or more — Player has the option of climbing to the creature's head or staying here and delivering bleeder injury or 2d-2 in GURPS. If the head, continue on Table G.

SHIP DAMAGE TABLE

Result One: The beast brushes against the ship, and all are knocked about. Those on deck suffer minor injury (bruise/cut or GURPS 1d-3) from being knocked about. Plus, make a simple roll (GURPS 3d below DX) or be thrown from the deck into the water. Those above the deck must make a difficult roll (GURPS 4d below DX) or be knocked from their position and suffer serious injury (bleeder or GURPS 1d-1) from the fall.

Result Two: The beast rises out of the water and places a great paw or fin on the deck. The ship is awash with waves and lists. All must make a simple roll (GURPS 3d below DX) or slide towards the beast and suffer serious injury (bleeder or GURPS 1d-1). Each player must attempt to push, prod, stab or otherwise dislodge the paw from the ship. This is a tasking problem (or GURPS 5d below Tactics). Only after the paw is removed will players gain regular actions. If all players fail their first attempt, continue with ship damage result three.

Result Three: Having placed a paw once on the deck, the beast swings part of its body onto the deck. The ship is taking on water. All action from the deck is attempted at a minus two penalty. By the way, the only way now to repel the beast is to slay it.

Result Four: The beast pulls itself onto the deck as timbers crack and shatter. Anyone on the deck is attacked by the flailing beast. Each player must describe how they avoid the attacks. The referee decides the appropriate level of difficulty.

Result Five: The beast twists and gropes. The ship's water and food stores are knocked from the deck. Even if the ship survives, there will be no rations, unless these stores are rescued by the players' display of skills or magic.

Result Six: The bow of the ship sinks below the water from the beast's weight. The ship is sinking. If the beast is not slain this round, the ship is lost.

Result Seven: As the craft sinks, the ship breaks into pieces. The party is lost at sea, a great distance from shore, with an unhappy guest. The referee must decide if all is not lost.

TABLE E: CLINGING TO THE BEAST'S TAIL

1 or less — As the player tries to climb, he is whipped and takes vicious injury or 2d+1 in GURPS.

2 — Player is thrown from the tail into the ship taking vicious injury or 2d in GURPS, but ending back on the deck of the ship. Continue using Table A, B or C.

3 — Player sticks his dagger into the beast before he loses his grip and ends-up in the water. The creature takes minor injury (bruise/cut or GURPS 1d-1), and the player continues in the water (Table F).

4 — Player is whipped around taking bleeder injury or 1d+3 in GURPS. He may release his grip and go into the water (continue in the water using Table F) or hold on for next round by displaying his stamina or iron grip (Simple roll or 3d under ST in GURPS).

5 — Player may climb to the creature's back by climbing up the tail (difficult roll or 4d under skill). If successful, continue next round on the creature's back (Table D). If unsuccessful, player continues in the water (Table F).

6 — Player slides to the under side of the tail and is pounded down on the water by the brooding beast. Player suffers a serious injury (bleeder or GURPS 1d+3) and continues next round in the water (Table F).

7 or more — Player stands with resolute courage and delivers a hellish chop to the tail, removing it completely. The creature takes grave injury (vicious or GURPS 2d+2). Continue next round in the water (with a bloody tail) using Table F. All further references to a tail are ignored (roll again).

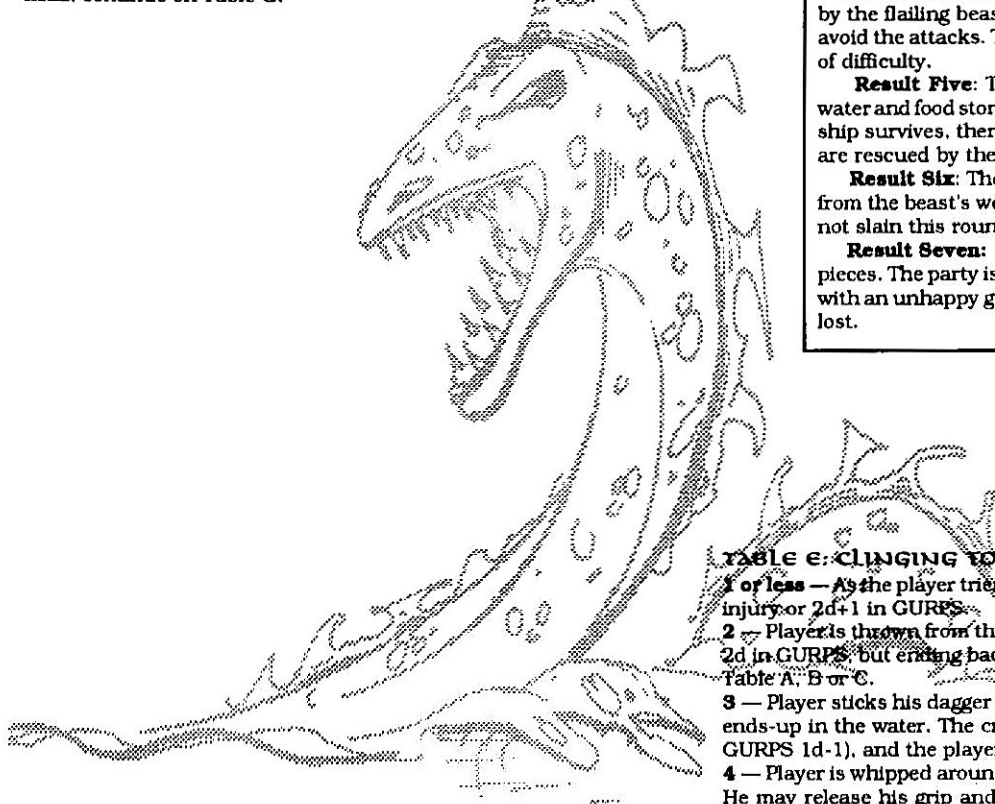
TABLE F: ADRIFT IN THE WATER

3 or less — Player may climb on the beast's tail (Table E) or stay in the water using this table again.

4 or 5 — Player is drowning unless he sheds his armor & possessions. If he does so or already has, he swims back to the ship and climbs aboard. Continue next round using Tables A, B or C.

6 or 7 — Player is battered by the creature. He takes bleeder or 1d+2 in GURPS.

8 or more — Player is retrieved by one of his friends. Continue next round using Tables A, B or C, but one other player loses his actions this round helping the player.



Q&D BATTLING A FIRE CREATURE

- Determine the location of the players, on the walkway or at the volcano opening.
- Generate a single result for both locations, and apply the results to everyone in that group.

TABLE D: DANCING WITH THE FIRE

- 3 or less** — The player is embraced warmly by the flaming foe and receives a grave wound (vicious or GURPS 3d), then he is dropped to his doom. He continues on Table E.
- 4 to 6** — Character is swung wildly and dropped. Yet instead of plunging to his doom, he falls on a stone ledge. Takes a bleeder injury or GURPS 2d-1 and continue on Table A or B.
- 7 or more** — Player senses an opportunity and strikes. Roll next round on Table F.

TABLE A: BRACING ON THE WALKWAY

- 1 or less** — A great fire ball strikes the area. All must jump off the platform to their Doom (Table E) or stay and receive a grave injury (vicious or GURPS 2d+2).
- 2** — The creature can be seen swinging a mace of fire. The mace explodes upon contact with the group and causes serious injury (bleeder or GURPS 1d+2) to everyone in the area. One of the players may instead grapple the swing mace and keep his companions from taking any damage. However, he still takes the serious wound and must roll Difficult (GURPS 4d under DX) or fall from the walk way to his Doom (Table E).
- 3 or 4** — The flames from the creature bathe the characters. Each takes a minor injury (bruise/cut or GURPS 1d-2). This damage may not be avoided, but add one to the event roll next round for those who stay on the walkway.
- 5** — As the creature draws near, a sword of flame forms in its fiery hand. The creature slashes. Someone must block this blow or everyone takes a minor injury (bruise/cut or GURPS 1d).
- 6** — The flame from the creature shoot forth at a single character. That character may decide to run and dive for the entrance: but in doing so, he still takes a minor injury (bruise/cut or GURPS 1d-3), and he loses his next action. If he decides to tough-out the flame, he takes a serious injury (bleeder or GURPS 1d+1), but he rolls next round on Table C.
- 7** — The creature passes overhead. Each character takes a minor injury (bruise/cut or GURPS 1d-2). One character is snatched from the area and lifted in the arms of the creature. He continues next round on Table D.
- 8 or more** — The creature lands on the walkway between the group and the exit. Everyone on the walkway roll next round on Table C.

TABLE B: AT THE VOLCANO'S ENTRANCE

- 3 or less** — The creature extends an expanding arm into the entrance which then explodes in a ball of fire. Each takes a minor injury (bruise/cut or GURPS 1d-2). This damage may not be avoided, but add one to the event roll next round for those who stay in the entrance.
- 4 or 5** — Taunt the creature and it releases a barrage of a white hot flame. It is cool where you are standing, but all those on the walkway (Tables A or C) take minor damage (bruise/cut or GURPS 1d-3). Perhaps it would be better if the group did not divide.
- 6 to 8** — An opening in the fighting will allow characters to rush to the walkway to an advantage. Any and all in the entrance may continue next round in melee with the creature (Table C).
- 9 or more** — The creature is distracted. All characters in this group may attack with throw spells or fire projectiles this round.

TABLE E: FALLING TO YOUR DOOM

- 1 or less** — Player would have fallen, but he has really great finger nails. Continue next round with table A.
- 2** — As the character is falling to his death, he calmly reaches into his pack, pulls out a rope and lassos himself to the creature of flame. The flame quickly destroys the character's rope but as luck would have it, he is thrown with only minor injury to a ledge in the cavern. Takes a bruise/cut injury or GURPS 1d-1 and continue on Table A or B. (The referee may make the player exhibit a skill, but more than likely this was just how he remembered it and Vulcor was toying with him.)
- 3 or 4** — Character drives his weapon into a rock crevice and averts the fall to his death. Character takes a minor injury, but breaks his weapon. Takes a bruise/cut injury or GURPS 1d-2 and continue on Table A.
- 5 or 6** — Character tumbles for a very long time. He receives a grave wound and is knocked unconscious. Another player at the entrance can lose his turn to lower a rope; if so, he and the fallen character lose next round. Otherwise, the player is trapped until someone moves to the entrance and conducts a rescue. Optionally, referee may allow player to use a climbing or mountaineering skill to escape in half a D8 rounds.
- 7 or more** — Make a divine intervention roll (if allowed) or exhibit Limit magic (if possible). Player may even try a wish or pure luck. Depending upon the referee's mood, the player falls to his death into the heart of the volcano.

TABLE F: DEATH BLOW TO VULCOR

- 2 or less** — The creature is struck in the face. His skull splits and striated blood and bone spews from the wound like a jet of steam. If the character is aloft with the creature, he falls to his doom (Table E). Regardless, the vulcor tumbles into the heart of the volcano which rumbles in activity. The obstacle removed; the battle won; the end of the Grey Viper follows.
- 3 to 5** — The creature is cut in twain. As half of its form falls lifelessly into the volcano, the other half grapples the offending player and tries to carry him to his doom. Resist with all your might — Tasking or Difficult with Strength of Limb (GURPS 4d under ST). Fail and roll on Table E. Regardless, the Grey Viper is tossed into the volcano and the quest has ended.
- 6 or more** — The character impales his weapon deep into the creature's vitals. The creature yields to a superior combatant, and places the character with no further harm onto the walkway. He will do the group's bidding and destroy the Grey Viper. If the players doubt his intentions, they must attack and try to roll lower on this final Table.
- Note: Feel free to make this final attack an actual skill roll. And for a strong group of players, a pair or three such Death Blows must be sustained before the combat ends.

TABLE C: MELEE AS CREATURE LANDS

- 2 or less** — The creature and his flame consume the area. All characters are pushed from the area and must evade falling to their doom. All roll next round on Table E.
- 3 or 4** — The creature dances about the ground. The intense heat of its aura causes burn injuries to all in the area (bleeder or GURPS 1d+2). This damage may not be avoided, but add one to the event roll next round for those in melee.
- 5 or 6** — As the creature lands, anyone can use his shield or body as a battering ram to knock the creature off balance. Attempt Tasking for Simple with Mastery of Shield). For GURPS, make a 3d under ST roll or 4d if character has High Pain Threshold. Success and continue on table C, and add one to your event dice roll. More than one player may attempt this roll to gain a greater bonus than just plus one. However, anyone who fails takes a grave injury (vicious or GURPS 1d+4).
- 7** — The creature clutches one of the characters (one with Grey Viper or the most wounds) and ascends up the volcano. He rolls next round on Table D. The rest continue with Table A or B.
- 8 or more** — As the creature draws near, one of the characters (players decide) jumps on the creature attempting to deliver a terrible wound. One player roll next round on Table F. The rest continue with Table C.

SIMPLIFIED TRAITS AND SKILLS

FOR GOOD GUYS FINISH LAST

BY DAVE VAN DOMELEN

The myriad of Traits and combinations can be quite daunting to new players of Good Guys Finish Last. I've simplified these down to five: Energized, Invulnerable, Mental, Nimble and Physical. These can be called Mega-Traits to distinguish them.

Energized combines the game's Ener-gized with Field-Generating and is the ability to offensively use various energyforms. Those with this Mega-Trait may have offensive powers in modes Electrical, Focused Energy, Heat, Magnetic and Sonic.

Invulnerable is the catch-all defensive Mega-Trait. Includes game's Trait Inorganic, Insulated and Reflective. It allows characters to have defenses against attack modes of Ballistic, Chemical, Electrical, Focused Energy, Heat, Magnetic, Physical and Sonic.

Mental indicates the character has an intellect beyond normal. It can mean a genius mind, psychic powers, stern mental discipline or some combination of these. Includes game's Traits Brains, Courage and Psychic. Those with this Mega-Trait may have attack modes Emotional, Psychological or Supernatural for their offensive powers and defensive immunities.

Nimble means the character has agility beyond the norm. Includes game's Traits Boundless, Motion and Uncanny, as well as some new elements. Those with this Mega-Trait have a better chance of succeeding at defensive attempts. (They take the better of two rolls.)

Physical indicates an enhanced physique, whether by training or mutation. Those who have this Mega-Trait may select Ballistic, Chemical or Physical modes for their offensive powers. Includes game's Trait of Brawn, as well as some new elements such as the Courage Trait's ability to resist pain effects.

Note: the Trait Technological is replaced by gadget and power-suit rules provided later.

MEGA-TRAIT GENERATION

CHOOSE MEGA-TRAIT PHYSICAL

- 1-3 also gain Invulnerable
- 4-5 also gain Nimble
- 6-7 also gain Energized and Physical
- 8 also gain any two other Traits

CHOOSE MEGA-TRAIT NIMBLE

- 1-3 also gain Physical
- 4-6 also gain Energized
- 7 also gain Physical and Energized
- 8 also gain Physical, Energized and Mental

CHOOSE MEGA-TRAIT MENTAL

- 1-4 also gain Nimble
- 5-6 also gain Physical
- 7 also gain Energized
- 8 also gain any two other Traits

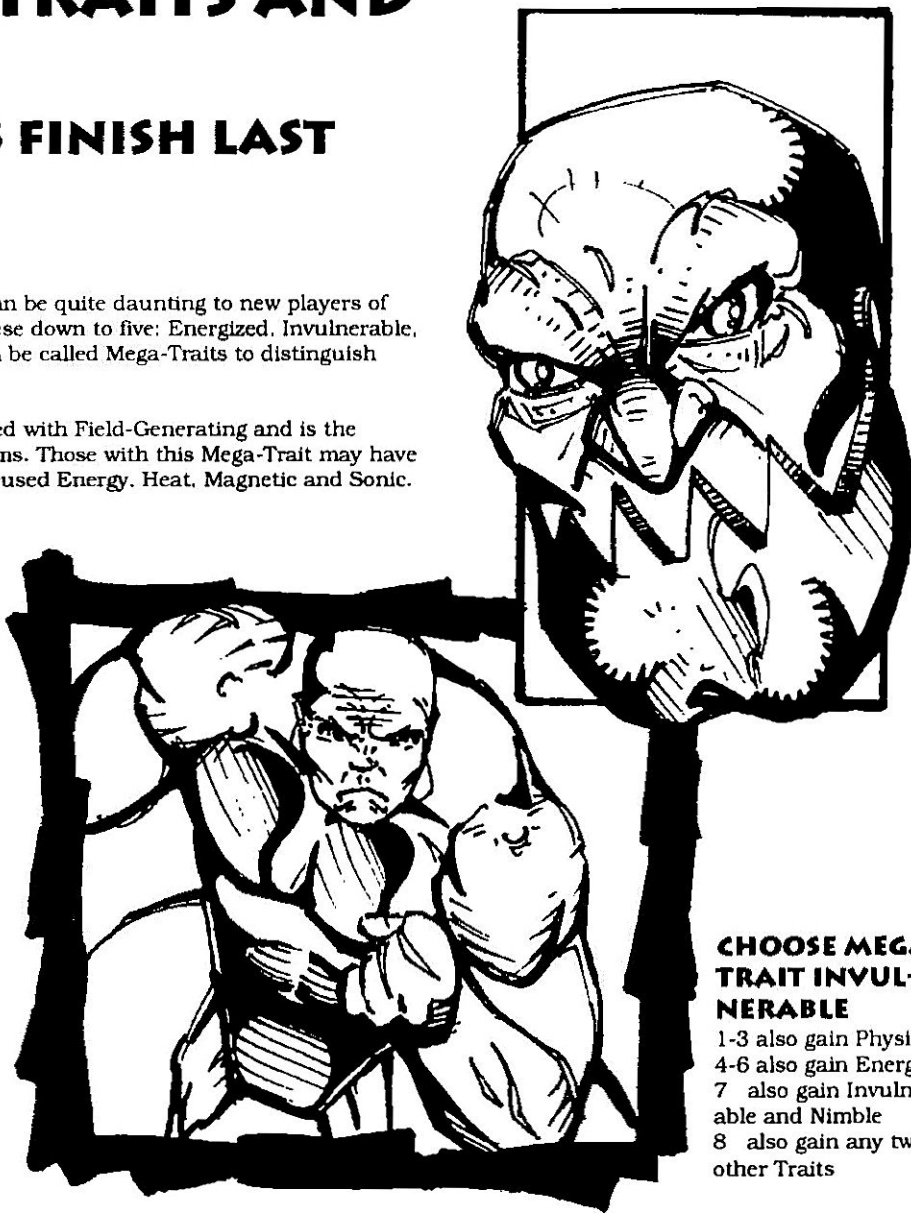
CHOOSE MEGA-TRAIT ENERGIZED

- 1-3 also gain Nimble
- 4-5 also gain Nimble and Physical
- 6-7 also gain Nimble and Mental
- 8 also gain Invulnerable

CHOOSE NO MEGA-TRAITS

- 1-3 Any two Traits
- 4-6 Nimble plus any two Traits
- 7-8 Any three Traits

The last choice, "No Mega-Traits," is meant to be used when greater flexibility is desired. It is not rolled in conjunction with the other tables. Either everyone chooses one Mega-Trait and rolls for others, or everyone rolls on the "No Mega-Traits" chart.



CHOOSE MEGA-TRAIT INVULNERABLE

- 1-3 also gain Physical
- 4-6 also gain Energized
- 7 also gain Invulnerable and Nimble
- 8 also gain any two other Traits

MEGA-TRAITS FIGURE IN TO WOUND LEVELS AS WELL, ACCORDING TO THE FOLLOWING CHART:

FATIGUE	MENTA	VICIOUS	KIA
BASE	BASE	BASE	PLAYER
PLAYER	PLAYER	PLAYER	POWER-SUIT
PHYSICAL	PHYSICAL	PHYSICAL	INVULNERABLE
PHYSICAL	MENTAL	INVULNERABLE	
INVULNERABLE	MENTAL	INVULNERABLE	
ENERGIZED	ENERGIZED		
(OVERFLOW TO MENTAL OR VICIOUS)	(BROKEN)	(OVERFLOW TO KIA)	(SLAIN)

Mega-Traits are also useful for "generic" task resolution, in cases where a specific power is not appropriate. Bonuses to Mega-Traits also help by increasing the chances of success on these rolls.

When a Mega-Trait is mentioned twice, it gives two wounds of that type. Any bonuses to the Mega-Trait add on to each line for wound purposes. For example, gaining a +1 on Physical gives an additional two Fatigue, one Mental and one Vicious. The KIA wound line allows characters to be downed and not killed, yet allows for villains to still kill them by continuing to inflict damage on the incapacitated hero. Suffering a KIA as result of overflow (or from a really big attack) automatically downs the victim, and only an overflow from the KIA column means definite death. (Or at least as definite as the comics go.) This additional column is especially useful in campaigns where realism is enforced to the point that player characters can die.

SKILLS

Instead of trying to figure out Mega-Trait combinations, a list of skills can be used to create and detail a character's actions. These powers are meant to be fleshed-out, perhaps with minor disadvantages added for color. Powers chosen should all fit some kind of overall concept, and not just be a random mishmash of the best powers. Remember that the idea of the Good Guys game is to develop stories through role-play, not have the most combat intensive character.

OFFENSIVE POWERS

These attacks can be any mode allowed by the character's Mega-Traits, but the attack modes must be selected at the time the power is gained. A player must decide which mode or modes the power applies to. If the same power is bought twice with different modes, they are considered totally separate powers as concerns multiple actions and bonuses bought. So taking a +1 on "Attack with Chemical" won't increase your "Attack with Ballistic" roll. Yet, powers marked with an asterisk have no specific mode.

Attack (Routine) delivers a Fatigue at close range in Advantage Phase. While on a Tasking, the character delivers a Fatigue at ranged target in Advantage Phase.

Enhanced Attack (Difficult) causes a Mental in Advantage or a Fatigue in Responsive.

Sacrifice Attack (Difficult) causes a Vicious in Advantage Phase, but either suffer a Fatigue from the attempt or open to counter that opposing attacks are made at plus four. Penalty must be selected when power is gained. On degree Tasking, the damage can be delivered to all foes in an area in a blast style effect.

Burst or Multi-Strike Attack (Difficult) in the Advantage Phase causes a Fatigue to all foes at close range. This attack can be controlled and will only wound the enemy.

Explosion (Routine) causes Fatigue in Advantage Phase to everyone, friend or foe, in the area. This attack can not be controlled and will usually cause damage as well to the area — starting fires, bringing down walls, shattering glass, etc.

Uncontrolled Attack * (Difficult) causes either Fatigue or Mental (chosen when power gained) to all in combat, self included, regardless of defenses.

Blend * by increasing the Degree of an attack, it can become a blend of any and all modes the character can use, helping bypass victim's defenses. This is considered to be a separate special effect of any other power. For example, Blend Attack (Difficult) would be a single power doing a Fatigue by a blend of attack modes, or Blend Sacrifice (Tasking) causes a Vicious at the expense of one's own defenses.

Block (Difficult) prevents foe from using one particular attack or defense mode for D8 rounds. Select mode when power is gained.

Improved Block (Tasking) prevents foe like a Block, but cancels up to three related attack or defense modes. Select modes when power is gained.

Strip (Tasking) prevents foe from using one attack or defense mode for remainder of fight. However, character may only use this power every D8 rounds. Select mode when power is gained.

Break (Tasking) cause an overflow result of Broken in one foe not immune to the attack mode used. In some cases, a "Breaking blast" will down everyone in an area, but it then also causes the user to suffer a Vicious wound.

Note: * _ Powers marked with an asterisk have no specific mode.

DEFENSIVE POWERS

In similar fashion, defenses are initiated like skills. Those with an asterisk have a specific mode, which must be selected when the power is gained.

Blunt * (n/a) Permanent ability to cause foes to suffer minus four on attacks for a particular mode. Taking a combat bonus in this skill increases the penalty the opponents suffer. (i.e. Blunt Ballistic at plus four means that the referee rolls at minus eight to the attack dice of opponents using that mode.)

Immunity * (Routine) makes character unaffected by a specific attack mode for a D8 rounds.

Shield* (Difficult) renders harmless up to three related attack modes in this round.

Defend* (Difficult) renders harmless one attack mode aimed at the character.

Improved Defend* (Tasking) renders harmless up to three related attack modes aimed at character.

Absorb* (Difficult) all damage from two attack modes for a D8 rounds instead heals the character.

Dodge (Difficult) all foes are minus three on their attack. Must be attempted in the Advantage Phase. Degree becomes Routine if character only faces one opponent.

Invigorate (Difficult) Choose when gaining power to be able to: Recover all lost Fatigue wounds, all lost Mental wounds or the loss of one Vicious wound. Generally this power should only be used once in any combat situation, as repeated use bores the readers.

Heal (Difficult) as per Invigorate, but will only work on another character, not yourself.

Rally (Tasking) as per Invigorate, but all wounds on the character's side are healed. Only usable once per combat.

Bounce (Tasking) reflects an opposing attack back at any foe. Damage must be delivered to an opponent. (Exception, the skill Trip will "bounce" damage to nowhere.)

Battle Hard (Tasking) ignore either all Fatigue or Mental wounds for a D8 rounds. Select when power gained.

Cover (Difficult) ignore all damage your character receives this round, but lose all actions next round.

Note: * — These have a specific mode, which must be selected when the power is gained.

Tactical Powers

No modes are assigned to these, and anyone may have these special skills.

Bonus (Difficult) gain plus two on all rolls for the next D8 rounds.

Barrage (Difficult) prep in the Responsive Phase and then gain a D8 attacks next round.

Confuse (Tasking) all foes may not attack this round. Must be used in the Advantage Phase.

Focus (Difficult) next attack done by the character is shifted in damage to a Vicious. If it was already Vicious, it becomes KIA, and could prompt a murder rap. (Referee option to allow boosting of Vicious attacks)

Inspire (Tasking) give all allies +2 to all rolls for the next D8 rounds.

Range (Routine) close the distance and move from "Not Close" to "Close" range, or retreat from "Close" to "Not Close." Full escape still requires Q&D or good storytelling.

Trip (Difficult) cause one foe to lose his actions this round. May be used on Responsive to retroactively prevent an opponent's attack.

Evacuate (Difficult) remove yourself or one downed, broken or otherwise injured person from the field of combat. On Tasking character may remove multiple people, but he suffers a Fatigue in the process.

CAPTURE HOLDS

Hold attacks work to keep the victim out of combat, whether by entangling him, shutting down his mind, or trapping him in an energy cage. Non-player characters may also have hold attacks. Just assign an attack mode to the hold, and the damage rolled on the attack will be the strength of the bind. Depending on the attack mode used, they have different effects.

Holds in general create a force or impediment based on an attack mode of resistance rating Fatigue on a Routine, Mental on a Difficult or Vicious on a Tasking attempt. The character may only be able to perform one specific level of hold, or he may choose that his character has the discipline to control the strength of the hold at the time he uses the power.

A user may continue to grab and attack the victim, but he may not attack any other opponent while he maintains his hold. If the character wants to attack another, he must let go. Optionally, some characters will have a snare that allows them to attack others and still maintain their hold (referee decides).

PHYSICAL HOLD MODES: These actually surround the foe in a solid cage of some sort that must be broken before the victim can act. (That is unless he has a power like teleportation.) The mode selected is not necessarily what the cage is made of, but rather the attack mode against which the physical hold is most resistant. The strength of the hold is the damage level that must be delivered by the victim or an outside ally before he is freed. The strength is one level higher in the selected mode. So a Ballistic Hold of Vicious strength would require a KIA from mode Ballistic to break, but only Vicious from other modes. Note that an attack MUST have a physical representation to affect the hold. Supernatural can break a hold if it is, let's say, a "Hellfire Bolt," but not if it is a "Ghostly Touch." Note that a hold may have a Physical Mode but be described as an energy form. For example, a cage of "solid sound" could be Mode Chemical for attack and defense purposes, even though it's made of sound waves. The sound cage would have to be broken down like any other Physical Hold.

ENERGIZED HOLD MODES:

This version surrounds the victim with a cage made energy. Any attempt to leave the hold will result in an automatic hit on the victim. One level greater than the strength of the hold is the damage inflicted. (i.e. a Vicious hold of magnetic vibrations delivers a KIA to any who cross.) Whether the victim can attack out through the cage is a call for the referee. Energized holds can be destroyed like physical holds but only by other energy attacks.

MENTAL HOLD MODES: Emotion Control, Mind Control and Spirit Control are all possible names for holds in these modes. The victim cannot do anything until he successfully resists and breaks free. Immunity to the appropriate attack mode gives immunity to these holds. The strength of the hold is the damage level that must be delivered by the victim before he is freed. The victim can also break free by rolling the same Degree as that used to create the mental barrier.

Summary, physical holds must be destroyed by another attack; energized holds deliver damage or can be destroyed by energy attacks; mental holds require victim to make a roll to resist or attack the hold with equal mental attack.

ADVANCEMENT

All characters start with twelve powers. (Or a D8 plus eight for those wishing some randomness.) At most two of these powers may instead be used for a bonus to a skill. (A character can start with a power at plus two.) Additional powers are gained as the character checks off the comic book issue's Ignobles.

Upon checking off the first, third, fifth, seventh and last Ignoble, the character gains an additional power or plus one in one of his abilities. (Remember a power can improve to a maximum of plus four.) However, the player must get approval from the publisher (referee) before developing a new power. The player may also save the improvement in order to develop it at a dramatic moment in the comic issue. (Be careful not to allow this too often, as it is a Deus Ex Machina of sorts.)

When all nine Ignobles are checked off, the character gains a bonus to any Mega-Trait of his choice. (Again up to a maximum of plus four on any Mega-Trait.) The player may instead opt to take an additional wound in a category not covered by any of his Mega-Traits. For example, Wanderer is Nimble and Mental, and thus cannot improve his Fatigue or Vicious wounds by Mega-Trait advancement. He decides to use his advancement bonus for checking all nine Ignobles to add a Vicious wound to his damage chart.

TECH ENHANCEMENTS AND OTHER DOODADS

Whether the object is technological or magical or whatever, many heroes compensate for their deficiencies (psychological or otherwise) by carrying external paraphernalia. In this rules revision, such devices fall into two categories: Power-Suits and Gadgets.

POWER-SUITS

These are single items that create all or most of a hero's power. If a character takes any Mega-Trait as a device, it is due to a Power-Suit. Any powers not generated by his suit should be noted in the character sheet. (The player should be ready to defend them as being natural to the character.)

Power-Suits have the following advantages: they give an additional KIA wound (which is then lost until the suit is repaired); they cannot be stolen in combat; they are a good excuse for a lot of really buff noncombat powers and skills; and they look cool.

Disadvantages are: you can't wear it all the time; it's hard to get through customs; if it's broken, it takes a while to fix; and forget about blending into a crowd (unless you have a hologram projector).

GADGETS

These are what you get if you decide to take just a single power as a device. Each power is usually a separate device, but

combinations are allowed with the referee's permission. The player can buy gadgets with new power bonuses gained by checking Ignobles, but with each the player must get the referee's (as editor) permission.

The advantages of Gadgets are: you can buy attacks or defenses in attack modes your Mega-Traits would not normally allow or that don't necessarily fit your inborn power profile.

The disadvantages are: anyone can grab and render them useless with an attack specifically aimed at the Gadget. (These are usually made at one degree higher than the normal roll for that attack.) Gadgets can be hard to replace, and a character might not have all his gadgets when he is attacked by surprise.

Referee should take the character's Mega-Traits into account when allowing Gadgets. If the hero has Physical and Energized, they should not be allowed to buy a psychological attack with a Gadget. (That type of character has enough offensive abilities already.) But the same player could reasonably buy as a Gadget a flak vest that acts like a "Blunt Ballistic" skill, since he has no real defenses available. Again, the aim of the game is not accumulating powers, but making a fun character to play.

MAGIC RULES (VERY OPTIONAL)

A character with Mega-Trait Mental may use magic, if and only if he sacrifices powers for Magic Points. A power bonus point can be traded for a magic point on a one-for-one basis. So a mage character will probably have just a few regular powers and skills. Those he does have represent permanent charms and wards. He would instead cast spells that cancel the Laws of Nature like in the free-style game *Rogue Swords of the Empire* (Space Gamer, issue two), and he would have about ten to thirty magic points for casting these spells. These magic points are expended in play per the *Rogue Sword* rules and would be restored at the start of each comic issue. Note that superhero wizards will automatically be a little more powerful than *Rogue Swords* wizards, due to the better chances on Degree rolls. (By the rules, a six is success for Routine, as opposed to nine needed for a Simple.)

SAMPLE CHARACTERS

MATRIX — New character, no advances or new power bonus
Background: Alex Raster recently discovered that his energy body was not the result of his childhood exposure to hazardous chemicals, but rather the result of a failed attempt to save his life which ended with his mind being transplanted into an energy body by the aliens who attempted to save him. He has command of the EM-Spectrum and is rather hard to kill. His non-combat powers: Flight, Shape-Shifting, Light-Shows, and he doesn't need to eat or breathe.

Mega-Traits: Energized and Invulnerable with wounds (4/3/4) plus KIA (2)

Offensive Powers: Burst Attack (Fatigue by Electrical, Focused Energy or Heat) and Explosion (Magnetic)

Defensive Powers: Blunt (Ballistic, Physical), Absorb (Electrical and Magnetic, or Heat and Focused Energy) and Shield (Heat, Focused Energy)

Tactical Powers: Range

WANDERER — Moderately experienced character, twenty-two powers

Background: An eclectic mage drawn to the use of evil magic in the campaign city, he has recently abandoned a stable roster of spells for a more flexible system.

Mega-Traits: Mental +1 and Nimble +1 with wounds (2/6/2) plus KIA (1)

Offensive Powers: Snare (Supernatural)

Defensive Powers: Blunt (Ballistic +3, Physical +1), Invigorate (Mental) and Dodge +2

Tactical Powers: Focus (note: this can enhance the strength of his Snare as well) and Ten Magic Points

TYMYTHY TWYSTYD — Almost new character, four Ignobles checked, so two extra bonus

Background: A metaphysics major who found it wasn't all theory.

Mega-Traits: Mental and Invulnerable with wounds (3/4/4) plus KIA (2)

Offensive Powers: Attack (Emotional, Psychological, Supernatural) various reality and mind warps and Attack (Ballistic) via his Gadget: Heckler & Koch 9mm

Defensive Powers: Shield (Ballistic, Physical and Sonic), Immune (Ballistic, MD), Cover and Bounce

Tactical Powers: Bonus, Confuse, Focus, Range and Trip

Of course, these are just the skeletons of characters. They need description for each power, as well as noncombat abilities.

ZAP
BLAM
THUD

Very Powerful Creature Attacks

By Rick Gordon

Q&D Monster's Combat Actions (2 D8)

1 or less: "I'll fill this in when I think of something appropriately clumsy." — The powerful creature flails around. In its berserk rage it over extends its strike on the players, toppling its massive frame. In a second clumsy stroke, the creature falls on his own weapon or a nearby object, receiving a Vicious wound. Also, all attacks by the players in the next round increase by one Ferocity as the creature recovers.

2: "I'm glad that wasn't me." — The powerful creature smashes his fist down on a nearby crate, box or piece of furniture. His powerful fist bursts through the floor or wall and get stuck. The creature will require a moment to withdraw his arm. (It makes no attack next round.)

3: "A bad tactical choice." The creature lashes out and in doing so turns a blind side to some of the players. Those that strike next round before the creature can move (i.e. in the Advantage round) reduce the Degree of difficulty for all actions by one. Roll Simple as gaining plus two on the dice.

4: "My what great eyes you have." — To scare the players, the creature moves its giant head downward, snarling its ferocious teeth or releasing a terrible breath. Any player who can respond with a Responsive attack this round delivers damage at one Ferocity greater, because of the proximity of the creature's vulnerable helm. All others receive no additional benefit.

5: "Wow, this guy is peaved." — As a show of its power and anger, the creature grabs a crate, box, table, chest, barrel or tree trunk and crushes the object with its mighty strength. The remains are thrown at the players delivering minor injuries (Bruise/Cut). Additionally, each player must make a Difficult roll (or Simple with an appropriate Skill or Trait), or he flees from the area, overcome by fear or in a show of better judgement if not valor.

6: "Is this guy mad or what?" — Powerful blows strike and randomly topple tables, chairs, supports, barrels or objects nearby. All in the area take a minor injury (Bruise/Cut).

7: "Wow, he has two hands." — The powerful creature strikes one player with its clenched paw, pommel of his weapon or smashing tentacle. One player is stunned for a moment and receives a Bleeder injury. The foe continues the attack with its knee, boot, other claw or butting head, crashing into the stunned player. The player receives a second Bleeder injury and is forced violently to the floor. Only the second strike may be deflected this round.

8: "Do you think he did that on purpose?" — The creature dispatches a powerful blow squarely into one of the players. The player reels back with a serious injury (Bleeder) striking into a nearby lantern, building support, water vessel or other structure. This sets in motion a chain reaction which ignites the walls, fills the area with smoke, collapses part of the ceiling or wets the floor with a slippery substance. This will make all future actions one Degree harder for all players. One member of the group may choose to forgo his actions to deal with the obstruction or hindrance so that all may attack normally. This penalty has no effect on the powerful creature.



While some creatures use a single roll to determine the severity of their attack, others need extended flairs and events to represent their attacks in combat. Players use the normal combat procedures with Advantage and Responsive phases, but rather than using the two die eight creature attack table in *Rogue Swords of the Empire*, use this Q&D for the monster's actions. Defensive actions, that lower an opponent's attack dice will still influence these tables. Subtract any defensive modifier from the event roll.

This table will work for creatures who are agile and strong enough to lift a man with a single hand, claw or tentacle. Opponents who are powerful enough to kill a man with the strike of a limb or carried weapon. Examples would include giants, ogres, some mutated humanoid dragons, large birds, demonic forces and some magical creations. [Ed Note — These look like they would also work in *Good Guys for monstrous villains* or to a lesser extent in *Battle Born for Scary Monsters*.]

9: "You know that has got to hurt." — The powerful foe grabs one player in his great hand and squashes him ruthlessly. The player's armor and equipment is obliterated and scattered as the player wrestles to get free. The player takes a Vicious injury as his limp body is released by the powerful foe.

10: "Why has it failed now?" — One player's best attack glances harmlessly off the creature. (Referee decides which player is affected.) That player's favored and most skilled attack cannot be used until the situation at hand is resolved.

11: "What do you think he means by 'Groar'?" — The powerful foe screams his powerful voice, kicks sand, dirt and rocks at the players, flashes any innate magical energy or releases a foul smelling excretion. This has the effect of ending coordinated attacks between the players as their sight, hearing or speech is disrupted. This lasts until the situation at hand is resolved or at referee's discretion. This will prevent players from deflecting damage on comrades. Battle Cry will not give a bonus, and skill combinations, such as Quick Blows and Concentration, will be ineffective because the player cannot coordinate his own actions from round to round.

12: "No fair, he hit Tantalus when he wasn't looking." — The powerful foe connects with his mighty fist or weapon. One of the players receives a Vicious injury as the blow crushes his chest. The player is dispatched from the area over a wall, down a ravine, under a pile of rocks or beneath his foe's great foot. The player is out of the combat while his senses slowly return.

13: "Anyone for a game of Dominoes?" — Powerful foe grabs a tree, barrel, crate, tree trunk, boulder or other similarly large object and hurls or swings it at the group. Everyone must describe how he would avoid the serious injury (Bleeder). The Degree of the task should be determined by the referee based on skills displayed.

14: "Maybe we should negotiate with this guy." — With its own weapon or a weapon wrestled from one of the player opponents, the foe hurls a blow which sinks painfully into someone's chest. This delivers an immediate Vicious wound. If the weapon is not extricated in the Responsive round by a display of strength, the victim also takes a Bleeder. He will continue to take a Bruise/Cut injury at the end of each round, until he extracts the implement of death protruding from his body.

15: "Only the gored die young." — The creature grabs one player and twists him like a spent dish towel. The player takes a Vicious injury and spews blood from every orifice on his body (and then some). The player is in tremendous pain, but he may continue. If he continues, he will be dead within a handful of rounds (two D8). If he slumps to the floor, he will be dead within the day. The referee may allow for heroic measures to save the player with magic or other healing arts (at Tasking or Limit Degree).

16 or more: "We'll fill this in when we think of something appropriately gory." — Two players determined at random are grabbed by the powerful creature. One of the two also determined at random is allowed a choice. He may: (A) free himself with no roll required, (B) free his companion on a Simple roll, but he is stuck unless he also makes a Difficult roll or (C) strike the creature in the face with his weapon and kill it dead on a Tasking roll. The other player can take no action. If the creature is not killed by "Option C," anyone still held will be slain. In that event, allow the player to describe his own death (stomped, smashed, broken, impaled), and permit him a moment to describe the full ten to fifteen seconds of his death scene which includes screams, unanswered cries for help and other whimperings. (Just keep it to fifteen seconds.)

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Another Turn of the Screw

By Louis LeGolf

ERA TEN Sci-Fi Scenario

Introduction

Keys is ecstatic. He has managed to locate the latest War Cartel TM-Brand Duro-Armor assigned to the squad. With the new armor, the team could avoid their rigorous 96,000 hour PM, preventative maintenance and dental cycle. DOC's teeth still hurt from the last check out. The armor is being routed through standard channels — Bogus Blue to Iota Upsilon (a remote system). Bucky recently got a post card (dated three months ago) from Jones and the Vipers on Iota Upsilon. They say that conditions are a bit harsh during the terra-forming operation. From the planetoid's surface, the amplified direct sunlight could vaporize flesh, and the only native creature on the planet, the rodent-sized Zot, secretes acids strong enough to dissolve tri-neutron polymers. Everyone there is ordered to remain underground, until the seven year boil-off of the heavy atmosphere is completed. Other than that, the underground robotic mining colonists are hospitable but unintelligible — basically smiling stupid, delighting in hard work.

"Damn nice of them to trade assignments with us," observes Lance.

Rocky feels no guilt; "Bio-Computer mistakes happen all the time."

Any case, our Team of players is bunked out comfortably on Tesla Three. The Coulomb erratic storms made DOC lose most of his hair, but the local women (at least the ones with skin) tend to make him forget his misery. The assignment entails keeping the peace and training the alien sub-culture to protect themselves and their system, a standard MACE protocol, low priority four. Even a Suit PM has a higher priority. In truth, there hasn't been an alien sub-culture on Tesla Three since it was tylerized in Era Seven, but the Era Five database of the system has yet to be updated to delete the mandatory garrison.

As Ace says, "Life be goo' in Bat' Born."

Meanwhile, on the subject of the team's armor suit enhancements, Jones should get the Duro-Armor, and he says that for all the times Sarge and his boys have saved his squad the least he can do is reroute the package.

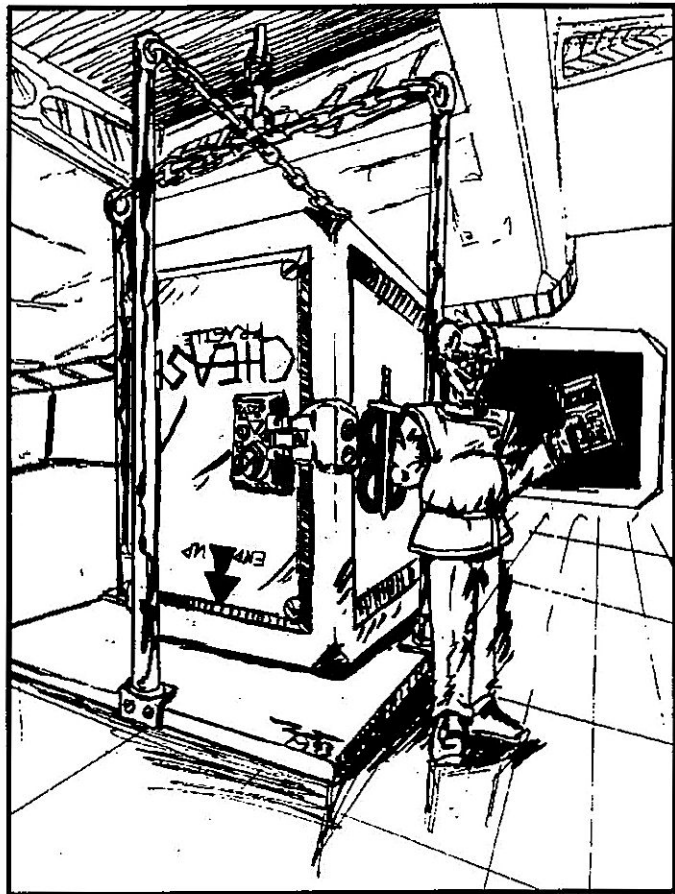
Cookie states, "We'd do the same for him."

"After a possible field test of a couple of hundred years," Bucky adds.

"Sssarge, we got a whole bunch of ssstrange looking dudesss driving ATVsss toward the compound," Keys reports. "Maybe that alien sssub-culture issn't as extinct ass we might have believed." (Fight a brief battle with some alien and robotic opponents, but nothing too dangerous.)

Referee's Background

In the scenario, various character names will be used in the narratives. For these, substitute your own player character names. (Or continue using the example characters listed in the previous issues of Space Gamer #1-4.) The main person of interest is the squad commander, named throughout as Sarge.



He has a friend, Glypus, who is a notorious raider and pirate. They started as enemies, but grew to respect each other. Besides suffering a broken arm (more correctly torn from his body), Sarge lost his own commander in a battle with Glypus during the Galactic War of Era Eight. Yet now two eras later, and much of the idealism of serving gone, Sarge understands that those old reasons for war are part of the past.

Glypus is not a diabolical criminal, he is a survivor. He is idealistic like all the Cimmar race and supports the same values, if not the same leaders, as Sarge. The two have known each other for several hundred years, ever since they originally fought on opposite sides in Era Eight. Currently they are involved in a series of pranks and exchanged favors. ("I owe him one, or he owes me.") Despite the misery that Glypus will cause during the adventure, Sarge doesn't really hate this guy. They both respect one another. This should be made clear to the players.

The situation will be a cat-and-mouse chase, with the players losing a special case marked "chease" and regaining it by direct assault or the promise of a favor. ("Okay, Glypus, I'll owe you one. Give me back the box marked 'chease.'") If the players ever get truly heated, Glypus would see no fun in his torment of Sarge, so he would simply give back the "chease." Yet, Sarge as well knows this is a competition and his own honor is at stake. He will lose the "chease," fight to regain the "chease," deal to keep the "chease," and finally rescue Glypus to repay any favor he owes. Glypus, like the many Walker clones, is a reoccurring character in these story plots. But unlike Walker, he will aid Sarge far more than he will ever hinder.

Likewise, Jeff Jones and his squad the Vipers are caught (as always) in a bad location. Sarge and his troopers will also rescue Jones and he will (again) owe Sarge. The difference between a favor from Jones and one from Glypus is that Glypus is likely to repay his favors. Glypus as an outsider and Cimmar Viking can aid Sarge in many ways that Jones' Vipers, a lower quality ranked squad, can not. Jones on the other hand is a fellow MACE commander and a truly likable guy. Sarge would never think twice about coming to his aid.

If you play a very dialog oriented, free-choice game, with a

bunch of independent characters, this scenario may work better with Sarge as a non-player character who leads all the other players. That way, all his interpersonal dealings need not be fully described to the players. But playing Sarge (or whatever the commander's name) is just too much fun, and his complex role offers a great experience.

Of additional note, a second aspect of this scenario will be the fact that all assignments and intrigue are related. No matter how hard the players try to avoid one particular assignment, eventually they play a role if only through secondary actions. The players will try to avoid the battle at Omega Five-Two and end-up chasing Glypus and the "cheese" right straight into the center of it.

There will also be some references to additional tables or ties from past scenarios in Space Gamer. If you do not have those issues, then either skip the reference or use your judgement and whatever rules you are using to flesh-out the details. As much as possible, adventures are tied together, so that each can follow along in a series. You do not need to have played the previous ones, but by doing so you build your characters into the greater campaign. Scenarios in magazines tend to be too often one-shot, where the players are free to do anything without fear of reprisal. In this scenario and the others in the past four issues, we hope to make some actions have long-term results. By using reoccurring non-player characters and adding events that foreshadow future scenarios, we hope to build an interest. Likewise, if you do not have the Battle Born rules, perhaps try the scenario a bit more straight-up with G/Sol characters or use your judgement on converting the action to your own game system. Most of the ideas and situations will easily convert.

Database of Important Terms

AJ Mac — Commander of the Battle Born's armada in this district. She out-ranks Sarge.

Bio-Computer — An organic based computer which uses a person's brain for memory storage. An interlink device is implanted in everyone, so they can access information and make instructions to robotic systems (like ships or weapon systems). Even the commands of an EE Suit are routed via bio-computer from the occupant's brain to his gear.

Bogus Blue — Highly bureaucratic world that acts as the headquarters for all MACE directives in this operational district. Bogus Blue is a pain for most troopers, who are accustomed to direct action. To deal with Bogus Blue, someone must be patient and let the robotic clerks stumble through their programming of providing help.

Climmer — Race of nomadic space Vikings who raid to survive. They are much feared as soldiers, since their ultimate goal as warriors is to die in the act of killing a superior foe. They are also strangely noble and chivalric in nature and would never prey on the innocent or victimize the weak. They like a fight where they are outnumbered and out-classed. In such, they are their most dangerous.

DOC — Standing for the Damage and Operations Control officer, this is basically the second in command serving as a medic or tactician or both. Every squad should have one; some have several. In more fanatic games, the DOC will also be the "morale officer" or "party advisor," the outside enforcer in each squad who prevents disloyalty to the league. Having a non-player character DOC is a very good way of keeping the players focused and not running loose like a bunch of renegades.

Duro-Armor — An upgraded version of the EE Suit with enhanced abilities. See the G/Sol game in this issue for details.

EE Suit — Standing for an environmental enclosure, the EE Suit is the trooper's basic combat armor and assault gear. The EE Suit is self-contained and can withstand almost any environment, including the vacuum of space. It's a power suit, like that described in whatever game system you are using.

Eras — The division of history into significant blocks. The scenario takes place in the tenth era of earth's historic outreach into space. The players do not age, a daily vitamin prevents this, so many of them have lived for hundreds (or thousands) of years, through several eras of history. Sarge's own life begins in

Era Seven. He met Glypus for the first time as an opponent in Era Eight.

Event Triggered Orders — Each EE Suit has a set of override commands which connect to the occupant's brain through his bio-computer. These orders are designed to prevent the players from doing stupid, unlawful or unwarranted actions. They also prevent the trooper from attacking certain people, like executives or non-player characters important to the mission flow. At times, the troopers are treated like marionettes; the Battle Born Suits have invisible strings too numerous to count.

Flotilla or Fusilliers — Lots and lots and lots of big robotic gunships.

Glypus — Friend of Sarge and Enemy of Sarge, who is interfering with the players' assignment this scenario.

Iota Epsilon — Planet of strategic importance for both mineral wealth and military resupply.

Karfu Horde — A huge alien death fleet. Each planet that crosses its path is destroyed.

MACE — Military command to which the players are one of many squads assigned.

Mobile Incredible — Flagship of the armada commanded by AJ Mac.

Nial Fin — Previous adversary of the group who has yet to even the score. He resides in the Bogus Blue system.

Omega Five-Two — The system next in the path of the Karfu Horde.

Six-Pack Fuel Cells — Rechargeable Booster and Power Packs.

Tech-Ninja — The maintenance specialist, a play on words for "technician."

Terra-Forming — The process of converting a highly valued mineral wealthy planet of harsh atmosphere and caustic environment into one more moderate like earth. Though the process is seldom used in Era Ten, simply because the resources are difficult to monitor and allocate, certain systems were in the process prior to the collapse in Era Nine.

Tesla Three — A planet of no specific function, except being merely the start of the scenario.

Trip, Tripper-Trooper and Twizzle — Basically all funky, high-tech powers used by opponents to place the players out-classed and for the scenario in little position to bargain.

Tylerize — To exterminate a planet of local life forms. Named after Star Ward (emperor) Tyler for his treatment of planets during Era Four.

Zots — Scary-Monster that acts like a wasp or ground bee.

Scene One "Nothing Good Lasts Forever or Visiting Grama's House"

Players' Info: Each helmet resounds with the Battle Hymn of Republic at 102 dB (a volume just below a jet engine or Bucky's screams in Jump and Die). Sarge answers a call from AJ Mac on the Mobile Incredible with a new assignment to assist in repelling the Karfu Horde at the near orbit asteroids around the red giant Omega Five-Two. Specifically, a small team of well trained specialists will place a large explosive device on the fringe of the asteroids on the edge of a clear channel called "Walker Straits." The explosion should drive various minor bodies into the travel route and delay movement of the horde. Waiting along the straits will be the Ninth and Twelfth Patrol Flotilla performing "Operation Turkey Shoot." Appropriate death benefits will be paid for any of the team who's flight path accidentally crosses the arc of the PAV (planetary annihilation vehicles).

Sarge questions further, and A J Mac reveals several "fine points" to the mission. Since the bomb placement sites will be within ten thousand meters of the Red Giant, six-pack fuel

cells can not be used. Any chemical fuel would ignite from radiative heating; yet, the power necessary to achieve escape velocity from that proximity to the star would require eighteen Phillip's Pods or a planet sized solid booster. Johnny on the spot, the TJ Boys (Trajectory Labs) have created what they call a Brisance Sail that will use the energy from the blast to propel the player squad out of harm's way. Sure, the process has never been tried before (and probably won't work, she adds under her breath), but that has never stopped a mission. The assignment is of priority three, and Sarge will be expected to depart as soon as the sail is configured. The squad's Tech-Ninja, Lance, is supplied with the documentation.

"Good working with you," She adds.

"Didn't we do this mission before in a rocket sled?" Several team members ask.

The players swapped assignments with Jones' Vipers. The Vipers, a mostly robotic support team, are ranked as an expendable squad. When Sarge and Jones traded places, the "paper-work" was crossed and Sarge is now listed as an expendable squad. "Maybe we should have taken the gig on Iota-Upsilon." There is only one option — find and volunteer for a Priority Two assignment that will relieve the squad from these duties. Of course the team could as a last resort accept their 96,000 hr PM cycle (which is priority one), but the mere mention of another PM sends shivers through most of team.

Referee's Notes: Have the players attempt Access Data Files (Basic) or Bureaucracy (Basic) to determine each of the following alternate assignments. A nice squeaky and fractured voice is a good way of reading the assignments and setting the tone of play.

Assignment One: Laboratory experimentation for medical cures using organisms that cause intense pain when mixed with vital fluids in a human host. Mission does not involve radioactive elements nor is it known to require exposure to carcinogens. Priority: Two. Status: Available (has been for fifty-seven years). Point of Contact: Theoderic Stone, Director Phi-Sigma Trust (and well known vivisectionist). Additional Info: Assignment classifications of DOC are barred from program.

Assignment Two: Forward observer for Operation Turkey Shoot. Team members will be placed on non-ferrous based asteroids with limited emitting devices; there to signal the approach of the Karfu Horde. Team should not be worth destroying by the Horde (too small to bother). Mission does not involve radioactive elements nor is it known to require exposure to carcinogens. Priority: Two. Status: Available. Point of Contact: Chief Cherub (well known vivisectionist). Additional Info: Death Benefits are paid in advance.

Assignment Three: Team will plant themselves in position for capture by Verdigris Slavers and allow their bodies to be used as host for the Ver leaders. Two part explosives will replace volunteer's appendix and spleen. On appropriate signal, the chemical explosives will mix and assassinate the host leaders. Cancer causing agents are involved. Priority: Two and a Half. Status: Available. Point of Contact: High Warden Osprey (Cruz). Additional Info: Only three Terrans are required.

Assignment Four: Deliver secret military hardware to assigned location from Tesla system to undisclosed location. Hardware is inert and sealed in containers. Mission has unknown involvement with radioactive elements and may require exposure to carcinogens. Priority: Two. Status: Available. Point of Contact: AJ Mac, Armada Commander. Additional Info: Thanks for volunteering Sarge.

Assignment Five: Locate and neutralize Cimmer Vikings lead by Shar Glypus. Criminal group has been raiding remote systems. Mission does not involve radioactive elements, nor is it known to require exposure to carcinogens. Priority: Two blinking Four. Status: Available. Point of Contact: Hawk Marshal, Solicitor General. Additional Info: Priority must be confirmed through central dispatch at Bogus Blue. Seems like parity bit is lost in the transmission, so the job might be a priority four or a two. Special note: Glypus is known to Sarge (from way back).

Final Available Assignment: Tesla Three to train local security on the remote system. Mission does not involve radioactive elements, nor is it known to require exposure to carcinogens. Priority: Four. Status: Assigned to Squad Twenty-Three, Sarge and the Boys, but soon to be vacated. Point of Contact: Sarge. Additional Info: Sarge's TransComm link is a buzz with inquiries, most asking "when you guys leaving?"

A choice seems available, but the events following the decision will be roughly the same. After elimination of the obviously bad choices, the players can either take AJ Mac's mission to deliver a high priority consignment or request clarification on the mission to search for the Cimmer Vikings. The players must make a decision. They may simply take AJ Mac's mission to deliver the special "package." If they wish to clarify the Hawk Marshal task, additional rolls for Bureaucracy and Protocol must be made. The rolls start as Limit, then drop to Tasking (next attempt) and finally can be made on the last chance as a Difficult roll. Reroll Mixed results and treat second result of Mixed as Failed. Remember if two rolls are attempted by the same character, the difficulty increases by one. Success and Sarge will be told to report to SysComm on Bogus Blue to meet Hawk Marshal directly. Failing requires application of the following penalties in order:

First failure at rolls: Lance is hard at work (more specifically Event Triggered Orders forced his compliance), and he conducts the removal of the spare fuel cells on the Dauntless Perisher (the player's ship). The players now require an additional fuel supply stop at Bogus Blue. ("Oh yes, once again.")

Second failure: Brisance Sail is installed by Lance. He thought it was a neat thing. Bucky, the ship's pilot, will find the sail is a huge drag on the ship's maneuvering systems, causing minus two for his rolls in all ship combat situations. Removal of the sail is possible with Diagnostic and Repair (Tasking) and Damage Control (Difficult). Failing either roll means the sail and the penalty stays, but the sail is now dysfunctional (broken).

Third and final failure: Official reassignment of the squad to Operation Turkey Shoot — too late now. Only out is accepting the recall from SysCom HQ requesting the characters for their 96,000 hour PM cycle. The team needs to travel to Bogus Blue; however, at Bogus Blue the players can swap assignments to Hawk Marshal's call for the group to capture Glypus and continue scenario's play.

If players should ask (or even if they don't), what about their shipment from Jones, the Duro-Armor? Tell them since the group has been reassigned, their mail will be held. This will mean that the Duro-Armor coming from Jones will be sent to the Mobile Incredible waiting for their mission completion. Such is not a big problem as the Duro-Armor couldn't be safer on the MI — or could it?

Scene Two "Off to Grama's House"

Players' Info: AJ Mac will be sorry that the squad cannot perform the Turkey Shoot mission. Squad Eighty-Six, Esquire Steve Jenoir's "Un-lucky Squad" will gladly take the assignment to upgrade their rating. Jenoir previously led the Un-Predictables, Un-Naturals, Un-Dignified, Un-Beatables, Un-Beatables II, Un-Defeatables and a number of off-colored words. All these teams have perished, but Esquire Jenoir seems to survive each mission.

Sarge and his Boys are loaded into the Dauntless Perisher, and they perform a complete operational status check. Engineering: Lance reports the X-unit needs to be by-passed, and the power couplings are damaged but functional. DOC states the automatic control systems are shot, so most functions need to be used in manual (again nothing new). Max and Cookie the heavy weapon operators fire the forward accelerators and bark that all is operating. Bucky offers, the coffee maker is still on the fritz, but the juice dispenser on the fridge door is working again. He's never on the bridge during check-out.

Referee's Note: If the group is heading for Bogus Blue to meet Hawk Marshal, AJ Mac will state that her consignment is headed for Bogus Blue, so the group will take the secret "package" anyway. "Do we have a choice?" — "No, that's an order" (and Sarge twitches).

The package for delivery is loaded into the ground vehicle bay, and the squad's hover is attached to the pods on the underside of their vessel. The box is marked "cheese." The word cheese is spelled incorrectly. The package's outside actually reeks of smelly cheese and heavy oils. The secret contents has a very sophisticated electronic seal. To tamper with the seal is far worse than removing the tag from a mattress. The last time the team tampered with a similar seal, they were imprisoned on Krieger's World for eighteen years. Sure they missed the normal PM cycle during their stay, but they also lost their nifty helmet brake lights, the kind that rip-off during Jump and Die. Sarge knows if they screw-up this mission, the squad might lose their Duro-Armor. Rocky also identifies the package as having several self-destruct charges. The explosives will not destroy the contents of this increvable package, but they will destroy the area outside the box. The package must contain cheese for a cartel executive if they took this kind of precaution. "No Ace, steaming the seal open won't work." The Team will contact SysCom HQ at Bogus Blue. Off we go.

The package contains the characters' Duro-Armor. Even AJ Mac has a sense of humor. All the encounters of the mission are placed to make the players loose the package (along the way). The characters should not know that the box contains their armor. It appears to be the wrong shape, or it is not big enough. It does not smell like armor; no one would ship armor like this. If necessary to state, the box can not be deliberately "thrown-away" by the players. Their sense of duty should prevent this. After all they don't know its value; but if need be, any foolish action, like using the box as a projectile in combat, will activate Event Triggered Orders and paralyze the character attempting such maliciousness.

Scene Three Visit from an Old Adversary

Player's Info: The characters do not even get far out of system with their package, when their transit from Tesla Three is barred by a single craft. Sensors show it to be Harpoon Class, Torpedo Gunboat, but the craft has no other marker beacons. The characters are hailed by the ship's commander — Cimmer Viking Glypus. Glypus talks in a scratchy almost electronic voice, the result of Sarge once ripping out his voice-box in hand-to-hand duel. Glypus asks, "Has your eye healed Sarge? My Old friends, Bucky you still riding those controls in manual — that will be the death of you one day! Distinguished adversaries, I have something that belongs to you. It is a parcel marked 'cheese.' My lads removed it from the transit ship, and replaced it with a duplicate before you ever saw it. I left the hint by spelling 'cheese' like I did."

Glypus is banking the players will not directly destroy his ship and risk scattering the parcel. A piece that small from an atomized ship would be beyond Limit roll to locate. Yet Glypus will accept a simple "promise" of a favor from Sarge as payment for the parcel's return. "Let's just say that if I give the box back, you can owe me one — like we've agreed before." Sarge should be reminded that he is an honorable man; his word is his

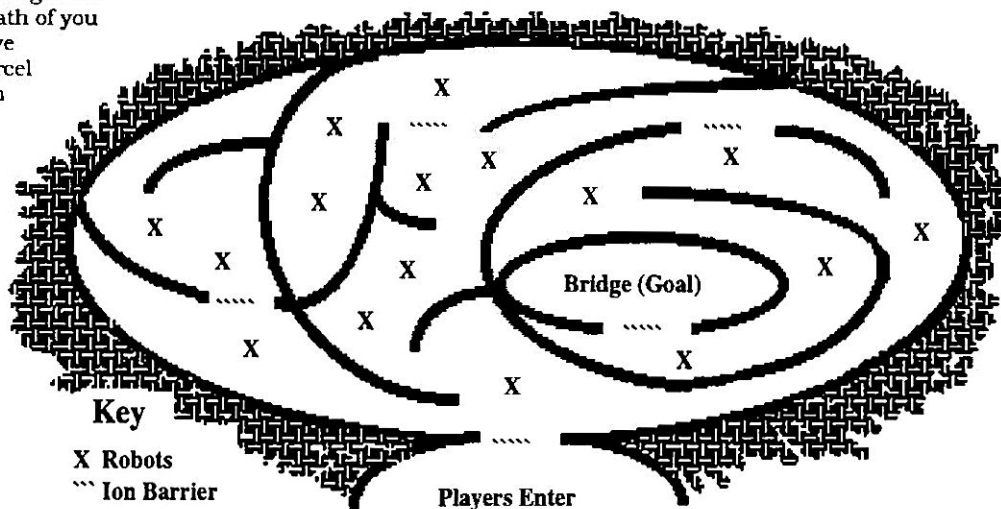
bond and may not be broken. He and Glypus have exchanged favors for several centuries, despite often being on opposite sides in wars. Players may also stall and attempt to close and board.

Referee's Notes: Glypus is lying. He does not have the original package, but Glypus needs to know how serious the characters are about the parcel. Glypus as well will stall, since he wants the players to board. Have the players make some meaningless rolls of their abilities to get them excited about boarding, but otherwise - in typical Battle Born fashion - the players are being duped. (But that's where the fun lies.)

Focus One: When the players close to board, fight a battle aboard the Harpoon. The vessel is guarded by sixteen robots; these are type 321-Electrical or X23-Focused Energy. To explain, a "321" will take three Abrasive, two Walking, and one Vicious before falling; likewise an "X23" will ignore Abrasives, take two Walking and three Vicious. They attack with either Electrical or Focused Energy, as stated. ("Get it; got it; good.") Use the schematic of the opposing vessel for miniature movement and tactical battle.

Focus Two: While the characters cross to board (and if I know players, most all will cross), Glypus will Tripper-Troop (teleport) aboard with some of his men and attack engineering to actually take the true package. If the characters guard the area, attack with overwhelming odds — Cimmer as well! Glypus and his men will mostly use Heat and Chemical weapons. He and his men should easily take the real package and Tripper-Troop away to their modified Arrow snub (escape ship) off in the distance. If the area of engineering and the package is unguarded, the boys will never know they were taken. Otherwise, the group will realize too late the deception.

Focus Three: At extreme range, Glypus will repeat his offer to Sarge. ("The real box for a favor, Okay?") If the characters do not immediately agree to his deal, Glypus activates an explosive charge on his own derelict Harpoon vessel. The resulting proximity explosion will foul the controls and allow Glypus an easy escape. "Sarge, come on — you know how much I always enjoy having you owe me one. I'll drop the 'cheese' package. Once Lance fixes your ship, you can putter over and retrieve it." Remind the players that the explosion of the Harpoon may have easily been of magnitude to destroy the players. The oath of Sarge is the true reward that Glypus desires. If the players are still stubborn, Glypus can attack with his Twizzle craft and selectively destroy sections of the Dauntless Perisher — "we gonna end the mission here guys?" Glypus will then drop the package and Twizzle past the party. Glypus reasons that he can always steal the box again at some future transfer point.



Scene Four "Over the River and Through the Snow (to Grama's House)"

Players' Info: Bogus Blue — expect the usual hassle about everything. The players need to check with SysCom HQ and confirm delivery of the package. The orders for the transfer of the secret consignment are not immediately available. The characters must go down to the surface to confirm their orders, meet with Hawk Marshal on his assignment and find the drop-point for the "chease." The players' ship also needs some repairs. A work crew, consisting mostly of robot "tin-heads" from MACE, will assist in the check-out.

Referee's Notes: Decide who will go to the planet and who will remain on board to aid in the repairs.

Focus One: The players will receive twenty-five repair robots from SysComm Bogus Blue. Each player remaining aboard must decide how many of these robots he will "turn-on" to assist him in the repairs. Each player must then roll to control the robots he activates. To control the robots, a player must roll a single D8 above the number of robots he decides to activate. If the player has the skill Interface Equipment, he may roll two D8 instead of one. The roll is either success or failed. If the player fails to roll above the number of robots he decided to turn-on, those robots are now "out-of-control." ("Lance, why is the tin-head removing the main control panel?") To complete the work, the group must successfully activate and control more robots than the referee's roll of three D8. Example, Lance with Interface Equipment turns-on nine robots, he rolls two D8 and gets a twelve; the robots are under his control. Another player, like Ace without Interface Equipment skill, decides to try to control four; his single D8 roll of seven means he controls those four robots. Another player, like Bucky, tries to control the remaining twelve robots and rolls a seven on two dice (he also has Interface Equipment). Those twelve robots are now out-of-control and do not add into the count for the repairs. The referee rolls three D8 for a total of fifteen. The fourteen total controlled robots did not complete the work. The effort will have to be repeated, that is, after the twelve renegade robots are brought back into line with a brief battle.

The players then must "turn-off" the renegade robots in via combat. These robots fight as 321-Electrical or any other mix decided by the referee to add some spice to the battle. Allow specialist players to turn-off robots in a non-destructive manner by means of skills like ECM, Interface Equipment or Power Generation.

While the players oversee repairs and battle renegade robots, more than likely, no one will watch the package of "chease." Unless the players specifically guard the package, their "chease" is removed and shipped to central storage on Bogus Blue — routine fluke as one of the robots was incorrectly programmed to ferry cargo. Add this to the objectives on the Bureaucracy table rolls in the next focus. ("Sarge, now don't get mad, but we lost the 'chease.'") Even if the players maintained control of all their robots, the box may still be lost. Glypus might take remote control of one or more of the robots and have the tin-heads ferry the cargo to the planet.

Focus Two: The players at the surface must discover where they must take the package marked "chease." They might also check on Hawk Marshal's assignment. And if they lost the "chease," they must discover where it has been shipped and get it returned. If they also destroyed all their robots before repairs are made, they must request another allocation of repair robots. The referee may feel free to add additional requirements of items or materials that the players must obtain. (In the second scene a faulty X-unit was mentioned.) Each of these is a single objective. Use the Bureaucracy "Q&D Paper Trail" table in the G/Sol rules of this issue (page 43) to resolve the encounters as the players complete each minor objective. Since the players are not G/Sol, the robotic clerks on Bogus Blue will be a bit more unresponsive (rude). To complete each minor objective, the players must complete two different events on the Q&D Paper Trail table. Make all of the players tired of the inefficiency (of rolling on these tables). If they give-up, Glypus can contact Sarge and say he knows a few "shady contacts" who can give the players help — that is if Sarge will owe him one (more).

The results of their searches: If the group is checking with Hawk Marshal about the assignment to locate the Cimmer Vikings, they will determine that the mission priority was a Four (not available to them). The players must accept the full assignment to escort the "chease" package to its final destination. Records will eventually indicate the transfer location of the "chease" is Iota Upsilon.

Optional, Focus Three (continuity to previous missions only): If the ship does not have sufficient fuel to get to the assigned remote system, the result of rolls missed and delays in scene one, they must also refuel at Bogus Blue. Same old situation — "Running Off Before the Check is Signed" (killing robots in the orbiting dry-dock). Use the combat tables and situation that were used in the first scenario in issue one, "Our Only Fear is Fear Itself."

Likewise, if the players broke the law in their search or used help from Glypus, then they must fight a ship battle to escape the system. Nial Fin's Cruiser has been alerted that Sarge is in the system. Fight the ship to ship battle per the Battle Born or your own game's rules. The players are trying to flee (i.e. "Out of the Pan").

Scene Five "Horse knows the Way to Carry the 'Slay' (to Grama's House)"

Players' Info: Finally, records indicate the transfer location is Iota Upsilon. The Team members cannot determine who the recipient will be, but they know they need to hurry (if only to be rid of such a troublesome "package"). Upon arrival at Iota Upsilon, the group gets a distress call from Jones and the Vipers. Hostile creatures have erupted through the lower mines on the planet and have attacked the colonists. Jones has gone into the deeper part of the mines to ferret out the nest queens in an effort to destroy the creatures. The players' assistance is required. SysCom HQ at Bogus Blue acknowledges the distress call and further instructs the Vipers

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that they are overdue and must report for their 96,000 hour PM cycle. ("Those poor bastards, perhaps they'd be better off left in the mines.") The Vipers have destroyed two of the queens, before they were neutralized. Regular sky-hook (orbit to surface rail) and shuttle are not available, because the planet is undergoing Terra-Forming. The Team must go to the rescue, but since surface conditions are too dangerous for Jump and Die (orbital drop), the players must devise a way to soft-land the ship safely onto the surface?

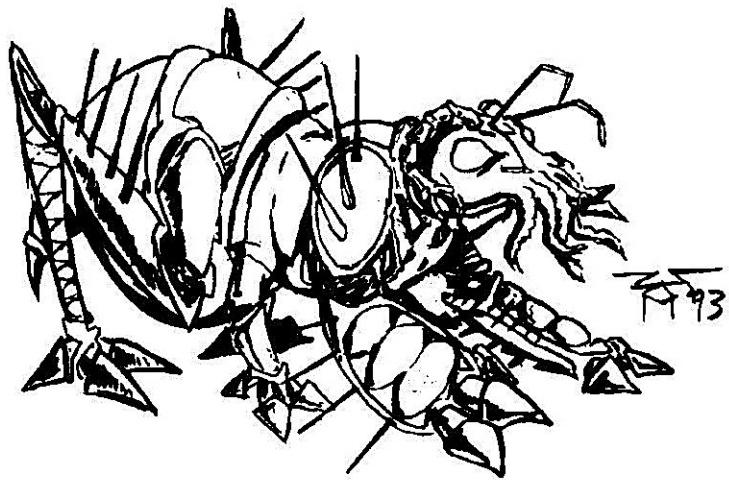
The obvious answer is for the players to fashion the Brisance Sail (with the designs supplied by the TJ Boys at the mission start) to act as a shield to deaden the atmospheric impact and lessen amplification of radiative heat by the planet's atmosphere. The players will pilot, or correctly crash, their vessel and impact somewhere into the northern mountain ranges. Activating the ground burrowing extension arms is unnecessary, since the area collapses into a huge underground labyrinth of cavern mazes. Which is lucky, since the ship doesn't have ground burrowing extension arms — that is unless you count the troopers hanging their entrenching tools out the windows.

Referee's Notes: Resolve each Focus below.

Focus One: The players need to display a few skills like Configure Components and Interface Equipment for a soft landing. Failing these rolls at Difficult causes a Morale Tested injury on impact.

Focus Two: DOC determines, the "cheese" package will cause a severe combat penalty, since the Zots will detect the smell of the cheese and attack with a frenzy. It would be best to leave it behind in the shelter of the ship (after all the box is indestructible). The players may decide to leave someone behind, else abandon the "cheese" and ship (or what remains of the ship).

The troopers leave their ship behind and enter the hive. No time must be wasted or Jones may buy it. Those behind (if any) will see a great queen Zot of size before never encountered. To make matters worse, the proximity of the "cheese" smell has made the awesome Zot frenzy and become (for the moment) indestructible. The creature will attack and drag the entire ship (and the "cheese") into another nest. Anyone who stayed with the vessel is given a couple rounds to run. Else the foolhardy may face the great queen Zot alone. ("Sure, Bucky makes a stand, and Doc can identify the remains.") Prompt Sarge to advise, "forget about the ship, even if they dismantle the craft, we can construct another — Jones is in trouble that's a priority one assignment."



Focus Three: There are three more Zot queens in the planet. Each of the main queens is an X55-Deadly Mistakes. But, also because of the strange nature of the creatures, Double Precision Targeting will not find a vulnerable location. Using this skill causes the player to overload his programs and lose his next actions. An even larger great Zot queen has taken the ship and "cheese," but that battle is in the next focus. Resolve the same old stuff — fighting aliens. Use the schematic of tunnels for the battle. The injured Vipers are in one of the hive complexes with a Zot queen.

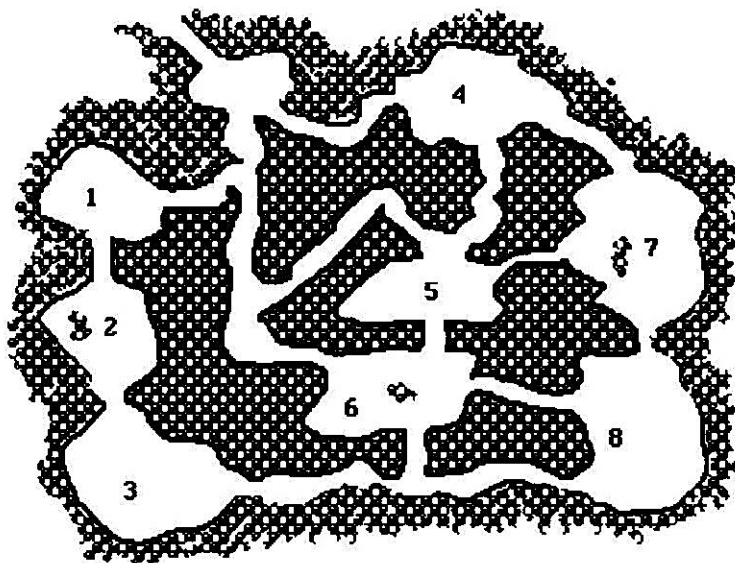
As the players move through the tunnels, they are attacked by ordinary variety Zots, swarming on their characters. Someone attacked in this manner must then be rescued by another person using an area skill like Incendiaries, Plasma or Chemical Spray to drive away the beasts. The damage a player takes is based on his own comrade's weapon. These ordinary Zots can also be attacked by the same, once the players devise a plan. Sonic Boom will collapse the tunnels and cause a Walking injury to all in the area. (Then make an Entrenching Tool to dig out.) These preliminary battles must be handled with a large degree of free-style play. Let the players purpose an attack, and then determine the result based on what seems correct or fair.

Focus Four: Glypus and his Vikings will also be raiding the tunnels. He is after the "cheese," thinking that the characters have delivered it, and the recipient will soon open it. Glypus will be caught by the great queen and will call in his favor from Sarge. "Sarge, I hope your jaw has healed and you can respond." Again use the schematic and move players along tunnels to rescue Glypus. The great queen is an XX9-Deadly Mistakes (twice), with again no Double-Precision Targeting.

Focus Five: The "cheese" will not be found. Glypus will say his men Tripped away with the "cheese" after he set up a diversion. Unfortunately his diversion was less than a complete success — hence he was captured. "Besides, if the 'cheese' was in the area, wouldn't the great queen be in an indestructible frenzy? I did you a favor by stealing the package," Glypus states.

The drone tracking sensor—"you did put a sensor on the package, right? I thought so"—reveals his Vikings have taken the package to a ship in orbit. They will not return it, even under threat of death to their leader. Glypus cannot influence them to return the package, unless he is freed. He will offer to return the package for his freedom. If Glypus is freed, the package will be returned.

Glypus cannot get the package open, so he gains nothing by keeping it. He now is sure that it is valuable. The new package is a false box of "cheese"; Glypus is not aware of this deception. His second in command Trax, a young Cimmer who lacks discipline, made the decision. The box returned to the players is dented and partially scarred, though the damage looks like something caused by the acid of the Zots. The squad's drone sensor is attached to the side of the box.



Scene Six

"Oh How the Wind Does Blow"

Players' Info: The characters are overseeing repairs on Iota Upsilon and waiting for the owner of this package to arrive. They are visiting the infirmary for Jones and the Vipers. They are guarding the package with increased intensity. Lance has jury-rigged a hover underneath the container and fashioned this onto Max's back. ("Boy, why didn't we think of that earlier.") A call comes coded from SysCom HQ from Bogus Blue. Someone make a C-Cubed (Basic) to determine the correct coding sequence. The commander informs Sarge that they have been incorrectly dispatched to Iota Upsilon. Their records show the recipient of the package is on Tesla Three. As the package is perishable, the squad must immediately depart for Tesla Three. As they travel, the Dauntless Perisher (now rebuilt and out of overhaul) is being shadowed by a strange craft of Harpoon design. However, the players travel to Tesla Three with no incident. Upon arrival, there is an official looking squishy named Sidrick who walks with a noticeable limp. The man claims the package. He says he is from SysCom HQ. He has the appropriate "paper-work" credentials.

Referee's Notes: Start perhaps an argument out of mistrust, but no one should fire (attack) — Sidrick may even use Event Triggered Orders to stop such action. He finally relieves the characters of the package but before doing so asks them to open it. The correct response is "We do not know how." He then proudly claims to be the only person capable of opening such packages — "just testing." He inputs his secret key code, and he will not permit the characters to witness the code. The package explodes disintegrating him and the contents. Wait a minute, that package was incredible; something is amiss.

"Stings the Nose and Bite the Toes (to Grama's House)"

Players' Info: A scratchy voice transmission soon follows — "my old friends, Sarge how is your leg. First off, you have my apology. I bargained in good faith, but my second, Trax, did not. Worse still, he has usurped command. I am a humble, though condemned, prisoner. He wishes me to translate and say that he has a certain sizable quantity of rotting milk. Trax believes you now have the can opener. He challenges you to battle. Signal coordinates to meet in space and open the container. Winner of the ship battle takes the contents. Refuse and he will send the container into the sun. Too bad I will miss the foray - should be a beauty - but alas I am to be executed for dealing with you as Tetra-League agents. One last thing, I release you Sarge from your marker — no hard feelings." Before transmission ends, four low frequency homing pulses are emitted.

Referee's Info: If the characters are smart, they will bluff that they have the opening sequence. The characters can determine the transmission is coming from an asteroid near Omega Five-Two. Glypus must be there. The Cimmer in a vessel with Twizzle Drives would cut the Dauntless Perisher to pieces. If the players agree to ship battle, start combat Q&D Last Resorts (issue one, page 23). The players best bet is to raid the asteroid base, and fight the Cimmer on the ground. Have the players bluff their way to Omega Five-Two and then Jump and Die (orbital assault) to the surface of the asteroids to attack the Cimmer Viking base. If playing Battle Born, use the Q&D tables like "Fire-Fall," "Spinning Wheels," and "Break-Out" to get to the Cimmer base then continue with the climax.

Climax

"I Hear Something and It Isn't Sleigh-Bells"

Players' Info:

The area of the complex is shaken by a series of explosions, and in case it has been forgotten, Omega Five-Two is the site of Operation Turkey Shoot. The players discover that their numbered accounts have increased by a value equal to their death benefits. The squad's flight path has accidentally crossed the arc of a PAV (planetary annihilation vehicles). The Cimmer defenses have for the moment protected the complex. The Ninth and Twelfth Flotilla must be shooting at asteroids in an attempt to battle the Karfu Horde. The players may quickly retreat in the Dauntless Perisher, but they abandon the package as lost. Else continue with a battle inside the complex.



Referee's Notes: Fight a skirmish against "Opposing Guys in EE Suits" inside a complex on the asteroid. Use the multi-room building schematic. There are twelve Cimmer guards in the asteroid, no more than one Cimmer per room. Cimmer are at least 555-Plasma with many being double or triple these wounds and attacks. They have counter functions that cause the severity of any wound delivered to decrease by one. (i.e. Vicious becomes Walking.) However, they will only attack one at a time in any given area — in true Cimmer tradition. When any Cimmer is a single wound from death (or receives a "double shifted Vicious," instant killing death-shot), he will instead commit suicide by exploding his EE Suit delivering a Vicious wound to everyone in the area. Feel free to add other strange attacks and weapon disabling functions on the Cimmer in true free-style form. The players will learn to fear these Cimmer Vikings (as they should). The true strategy to fighting this battle is to use Psychological Warfare, convince the Cimmer there is no glory in this battle. Each Cimmer has at most two Morale Test wounds against Psychological attacks. If the going is tough (or someone dies), suggest this to the players.

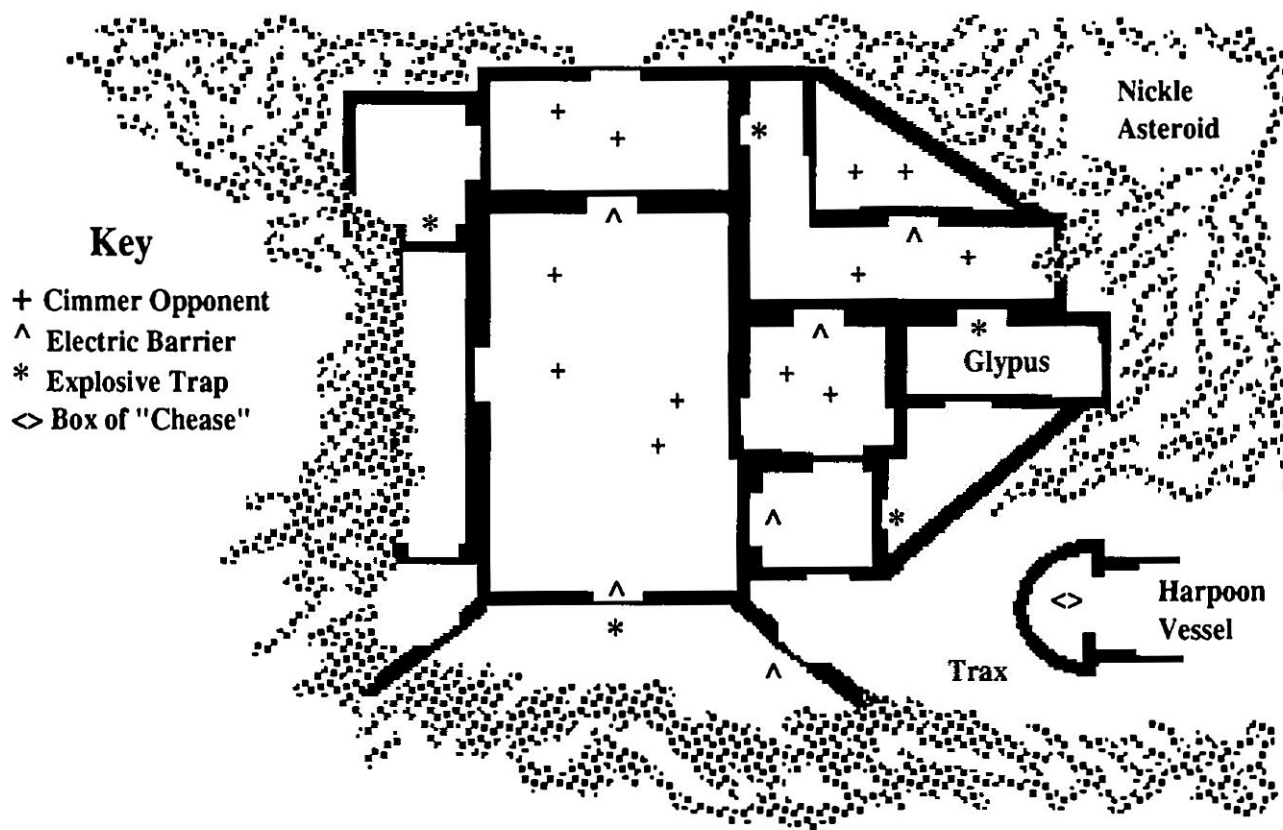
At various time intervals throughout the battle, have the complex rocked by Flotilla fire to remind the players they are under a time constraint. A good rule of thumb is whenever any player on attack rolls doubles, the area is rocked by explosions. (That's once every eight combat rolls.) The result of this blast will be either a Morale or Abrasive to everyone in an area. (Remind the players that Internal Baffling can provide immunity from this light damage.) After a few explosions, increase the damage to Walking. If possible get the players to separate to search more quickly. That however can be their undoing, as a lack of Star Point Defense can cause the death of a player in the Cimmer attacks.

Trax, the new leader, guards the package of "chease" in a part of the complex that also houses the Cimmer Harpoon vessel. The players must battle Trax by first disabling the vessel to prevent his escape. He will fight to the death, after his harpoon vessel is disabled. He will also stay if taunted to "defend his honor." (Yet by doing so he will go berserk and double his attacks.) Trax has at least ten of each wound type. He attacks as half a D8 Deadly Mistakes. He also has an electronic taser that will cause at least one player each round to suffer an EE Suit mishap. The "chease" is in the center of the battle, and Trax will use it as a shield, blocking one player attack per round.

Glypus is strapped in a chair in the communications center. Glypus might call on Sarge's honor and the favor he owes to let him go. (He did after all bargain in good faith and direct the players to this location.) If released, he will try to flee to one of many ejection devices around the complex. Else, he will escape from his player guards during the climax. Glypus will return to taunt the players. Once the "chease" and Glypus are rescued, the players may escape the area in the Dauntless Perisher.

Epilogue "Song Never Ends (at Grama's House)"

Final Player Info: What about the Duro-Armor originally sent from Jones? Upon contacting the Mobile Incredible, a clerk will state — "Chease, ya mean ja ain't got da package yet? Chease, we sent it long time ago. Chease." The players have just added to the history of their characters. They have added a constant nagging objective to get this container open. No one should know for sure what is in the box. Who knows it could be cheese, but it could be the team's Duro-Armor. For now its off to Bogus Blue — 96,000 hrs have passed. Grama's PMs, here we come.



The Dwarf and the Stone

by Rick Gordon

Situation

Dukain and company (the players) are at full gallop down a trail in the forest. Horses can be heard back down the trail in pursuit, but out of sight. The group is on the run from arrest. They are riding in pairs, having been only able to acquire a few horses. They are pursued by the high sheriff and horsemen of Baron DeQue, a ruthless mercenary who obtained his authority six years ago after marrying the daughter of the former ruler, Baron Mac LeMarc. The fate of Mac LeMarc has never been discovered. Most accept DeQue's explanation that he barely escaped the magical catastrophe that killed LeMarc. The two once adventured together in an uneasy alliance. But all such intrigue, though certainly known, is not in the present minds of the players. The immediate threat is closing, and the lack of horsemanship skills by some of the members is showing.

The players should decide together what crimes they are accused of or have actually committed. However, all the crimes must be of small enough concern that the group would not be chased outside of the county. None of the crimes can be capital and all should consist of fines, though perhaps of a value so high the players could not pay. If the players can make it to the river boundary, then they may escape. They may have made a new enemy, but that will wait another day. After everyone understands the situation, continue with the details in the scenes that follow.

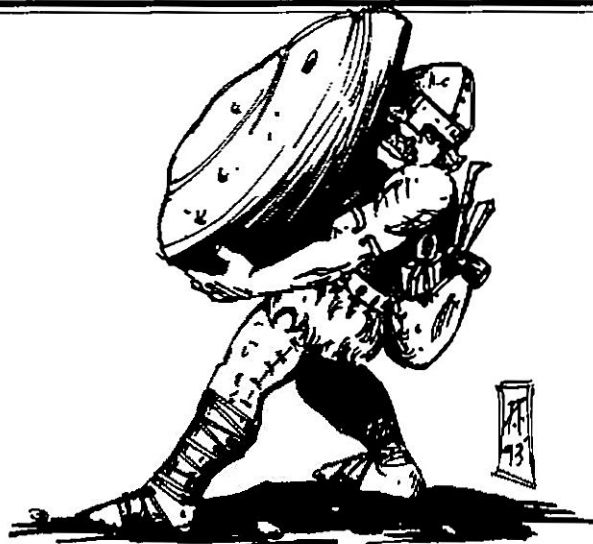
Special Note: During this scenario, whenever anyone rolls a Mishap while using magic, the focal creature (Eli Tsoh, the dwarf) appears, full of ire and asking when the players will stop interrupting him. Most of this scenario will be spent trying to send this creature back to where he belongs.

Set the Chase

Give the players the option to stop and fight the advance party of DeQue to gain some time. The group may also get some much needed spare mounts. The players will ambush horsemen that number about half their party. The final result will be a magical mishap that will introduce the main focal character.

Focal Character

When the smoke of magical mishap clears, the players will see a dwarf, a terribly ugly creature with two noses and long elephant-sized ears. He will be carrying on his hunched back what appears to be a block of stone. He will act belligerent at the discovery of his whereabouts. "Stupid, 'umans. Put me back where I belong." The dwarf's name is Eli Tsoh. Note this is "hostile" spelled backward, and he is not dangerous. Hence, his name is the reverse of "hostile."



Introductory Narrative

"Pass the beer," Morg orders.

"I fail to see how anyone can eat and drink at a full gallop," Tantalus chides while riding double and sitting on the stern of Morg's steed.

"Tis easy when I'm famished. We haven't stopped in nearly an hour, and I've got to eat to sustain my strength." Morg retorts with a resounding belch.

Dukain shouts, "Spur your horses on my fellows. We must reach the Harijunga river. DeQue's sheriffs dare not cross that boundary. The lands of the priest offer no comfort to usurpers nor their cronies."

"Yes, but doesn't that apply in kind to free swords and rogues like us," Ryan offers.

"Baron DeQue must have several hundred horsemen after us, near as I can judge by the sound." Kroman answers. "I'll take a few priestly witch doctors to the surety of White Magic attack, should the sheriff ensorcel our escape."

The dwarf will not answer direct questions, or more often will answer questions with questions. (i.e. "What's that stone you carry?" Eli's reply, "Are those your horses? I bet you're thieves. Send me back.") Eli will not even say specifically where he was, when he was whisked away to join the group. ("You're the wizards; do a divination and send me back.") The players should wonder whether they have brought him to their location (and time) or if they have gone back to the dwarf's time. Everything will seem muddled, as later events will show. All the while, Baron DeQue will still be in pursuit, so a long discussion with the dwarf is impossible. The players must hurry.

The players have three choices in regard to Eli Tsoh: Send him back. Kill him (at least try) or Ignore him. The magical roll to "un-teleport" the dwarf is at least a Tasking. (Care to try someone?) If the players ever try to slay Eli Tsoh, roll on the quick and dirty table™ at the end of the section. Otherwise, the consequences of either action, send him back or leave him be, will be the same for the continuing adventure.

Adventure Areas

The players move from one position on the map to another. (The referee and the location descriptions will specify limitations.) The same general path of travel may never be used twice. The players may never back-track and give the Baron a chance to catch them. Each return path will be guarded by the sheriff or his men. The players must move via a new path as they continue to find a passable route across the Harijunga.

Crossing the River Harijunga

There are four clear paths across the river: South Roads, Caravan Bridge, Toll Ferry and High Fords. If the players attempt to cross the river by swimming, the consequences are not bright. Just ask how many of the group have the skill Seamanship, which denotes swimming. The task resolution against the strong current is a Difficult for those with Seamanship, so those without must attempt at Limit. The players do not have the time to construct a raft or implement a system of ropes to aid in fording. Most likely a few horses will at the very least be lost. ("Horses are expensive. We'd just as easily pay the fine.") In other words, the players should not cross or the scenario ends unresolved. ("Do you want to solve the mystery or leave as fugitives with events confused?")

If the players attempt magic to cross the river Harijunga, then the focal creature, Eli Tsoh, appears and counters the magical attempt. This includes magical rafts, changes to spirit (adding gills) or flying. He says the players have botched the job of returning him to his rightful place and must first send him back to the correct place and time. Eli Tsoh will delay the group so long that they must either battle the dwarf or flee the pursuing sheriff and his countless riders. Of course the players could try to battle the sheriff, but that results in Digression tables. (i.e. Scenario ends in the Sheriff's custody.) He and his soldiers are too powerful, and outnumber the players a hundred to one. Since battling the dwarf will prove an exercise in futility, the group will continue their flight from justice.

Baron's Citadel

Upon returning here the players must describe their stealth or disguise used to cross. Else, they may end the scenario and begin another quest by accepting a task to pay the moneys owed by their criminal fines. Regardless, attack the group with a modest patrol before they cross or surrender to a barrister. Many warriors now seek the players to collect the reward for their capture.

Caravan Bridge

Race into the clear plains and see the river Harijunga ahead. But the road to the bridge is tangled by a caravan that is slowed as it lines up to cross. Battle, coerce or connive your way through the caravan blocking the bridge crossing.

Move through the confusion and discover that the bridge has collapsed under the weight of one of the caravan's wagon's. The bridge appears to be missing the critical center stone of the arch. The caravan says the bridge was okay just two weeks before.

Eli Tsoh will appear and say that the players are the fault. "You sent me back to the correct place, but to the wrong time. I was part of the crew that built this bridge in the days of Baron Mac LeMarc."

Magic may not be used to mend the bridge. Besides being a Limit roll to construct the bridge, Eli Tsoh would stop the attempt. ("Hey, that was my job 'umans. You trying to cut me out of my commission?") He wants to be sent back to the right place and time to fix the bridge himself. Of course the players will have to flee capture. Even following magic use to send Eli back, the bridge will stay collapsed.

Q&D Magical Twists from Attacking the Focal Creature

- 1 or less:** Attack is dodged and strikes another party member as if the opponent had used the skill Feign. This damage must be avoided, or the player victim suffers the wound. The dwarf will act like he escaped by luck and tell the players to stop arguing with one another.
- 2:** Attack misses the focal creature and strikes something he carries as if the opponent had used the skill Mastery of Shield. In this adventure the blow shatters the dwarf's stone into a pile of rubble. The dwarf will insist the block be purchased of restored by magic.
- 3:** Attack glances off the focal creature or something it carries and breaks the attacker's weapon. In this case the stone breaks the player's weapon.
- 4:** Damage delivered on the focal creature is reflected back and hits the attacker. The player may take one round to try to deflect the attack with another skill, or else decide to pull his blows and suffer the damage at one ferocity lower than delivered. (i.e. "Slain" instead hits like a Vicious.)
- 5:** Creature disappears in a wisp of smoke. It has been banished for the moment. The focal creature will appear again at a later point of the story. For the dwarf, it actually has changed in size and is caught in someone's hat or pocket. Eli Tsoh will be screaming that such foul magic should not be used on him. ("I don't deserve this.")
- 6:** Roll on a random Magical Mishap table.
- 7:** Attacker forgets everything. He will slowly recover his memory and skills, but for the moment he is utterly mindless. This condition will not endanger the character and instead serves as a warning. The dwarf, as if he didn't know, will ask what happened to the player.
- 8 or more:** The creature splits in twain, producing two exact copies which both have similar needs and desires. The players now must face two focal creatures. Eli Tsoh will abuse the group twice as much and request to be restored. The dwarf will also argue with itself. ("You stop talking. I was here first.")

Deep Forest

The players meet up with an apparition. The spirit will claim to be Baron Mac LeMarc. "We were a party of three — myself, my squire DeQue and our servant Eli. We went into the mines to snare and trap the monster called only an astonishing terror." LeMarc will state that he was abandoned by DeQue on their quest. "DeQue ran from battle, taking the sacred arrow that could fell the monster. I and Eli stayed to seal the terror in the mine. Alas the magical anchor we created, a marble stone that sealed the entrance, is now missing. The prison crypt lies unsealed. This area is not safe." The players will be attacked by undead as they flee the area. The astonishing terror should not be directly fought but instead is left for another mission. The follow-on mission to this one could be the players confronting Baron DeQue with his own past. Then taking the magical arrow from him, the players can return to slay the astonishing terror.

Foothills

Peasants or a forester report that a dragon rages in the area. The area is not safe. The monster says that her egg was stolen. Eli Tsoh will appear and say he thought his burden was a block of marble. "I wondered why it was so hard to chisel smooth. I was taking it some time ago; send me back far enough so I can return it." Resolve the players actions as they flee a flying dragon. If available, roll on the Q&D Dragon's Zone of Terror (Space Gamer issue one), but the players may not grapple. The dragon is swooping and attacking in flight, so the players may only run away. Because of the dragon, the players may not cross the foothills to either the mountains nor the fords. Those paths only work from the north to south route through the mountains.

Frontier Garrison

Tower section collapsed, and walls were breached. The corner stone is missing. The soldiers have been slaughtered to the man. A few ogres have occupied the great hall. Eli Tsoh will be no where to be found. Hopefully a pattern is beginning to show, that each location has a missing stone (or object that can be mistaken from a stone). When even one dwarf avoids his responsibility (or is thwarted in his task) the result can be grave. The players over time will hopefully realize that they can not avoid their fines and justice.

Glades

The players are pulled into a skirmish to defend the area from marauding goblins. "We're missing our shipment of stone for the catapults. Normally the rocks are delivered by a dwarf, but something must have happened to that stone cutter." Perhaps use the Q&D fantasy skirmish tables out of Rogue Swords (issue two) with the players having to deliver a combined total of two Vicious wounds (via the tables) for each player. At least half the players must attack on foot, and a fourth of the opponents must be slain as mounted troops.

High Fords

The stream is about waste deep, and the water is gently flowing. Talk with a sculptor who is waiting for the delivery of a block of marble. He is to make a bust to a fallen Baron, the leader of all the lands north of the river Harijunga. "This will be my gift on the tomb of Lord Dukain (or insert player leader's name). I wanted to inscribe his great words." He will tell the story of how Dukain returned to face the baron and his petty crimes. "Dukain's words, 'no man is above the law, provided the law is above all men,' are still taught to young children. He was a true law-giver to our lands."

Time and spirit have changed. The players are no longer who they think they are. Once again the dwarf is to blame, and he may appear to banter the issue. "Do you forever want to be known as the ones who fled from judgement? Lords must take responsibility for their actions." This should prompt the players back to the Baron's Citadel (the end or beginning of the next adventure).

Mountains

The area is stony and the road is not smooth. A warden will report that the dwarf paid to take care of the area started to do his job, but then must have run off. "Those underworld creatures hate hard work. He took his pay and didn't complete the job." Have the warden report that the dwarf also committed crimes (the same ones described by the players at the beginning). The encounter danger here is confusing trails, rock slides and lame horses. Display some skills to cross both safely and in a desired course. Possibly use Q&D High Speed Chase (Space Gamer issue three) to avoid pursuit of DeQue's sheriffs. Start at "leading" and use the "arrive in one piece" premise to survive four rolls (with minus time penalty adding extra rolls).

Shrine

Sight people walking repeatedly around the holy unfinished temple. A marble block of the main altar was never delivered, so the area is said to be cursed. To prevent the curse from adhering to the traveler, local custom states each person must walk the numeric number of his name around the unfinished temple. For a modest fee a soothsayer will tell each player how many times that is. Else, depend on Luck for the count or Magic Immunity to ignore the curse. To determine the character's special number, count the vowels in his name. The temple was to bring religion to the barbarian plainsmen. The area is now rough and tumble, endless brawls and an utter lack of morales. Thieves will try to steal items from the group. Maybe use Q&D Tavern Brawl (in Rogue Swords of issue two) to move around the temple. A character must survive one roll on the Actively Partaking for each walk around. Those in the area must roll for Ignoring the Brawl, or they can not be available to rescue injured or fallen comrades.

Southern Roads

A levee has failed and flooded the fields. Locals will possibly starve. The structure was built in the time of Baron LeMarc. The area is impassable or travel would be so slowed that the players would be captured. Another lesson in responsibility. Eli Tsoh appears and states, "If I had not been disturbed, all these people would still be fed."

Toll Ferry

The ferry appears fine. The caretaker, Ferryman Bill, minds the boat. He will ask a continuous series of questions, but never seems to wait for any answers. Bill will demand a fee to cross. ("Been collecting the same fee for near on thirty years.") The ferry will only take five people or three riders at a time. With the sheriff's horsemen seen in pursuit at the end of the vale, who goes first? ("You lads in trouble?") Upon crossing the raft will begin to list and then start to capsize. Ferryman Bill will glance in the draft and see that the ballast is missing. ("What in the blazes?") He'll call for someone to throw over the anchor, while he holds the tiller. The anchor as well will be missing. ("What kind of stone did the dwarf sell me anyway?") To prevent total loss in the rapids, make a display of strength, seamanship and ranged precision. (This last roll representing a player casting ropes to shore.) Afterward, the group will join comrades on the northern shore to continue their escape from pursuit.



Tundra of Barbarians

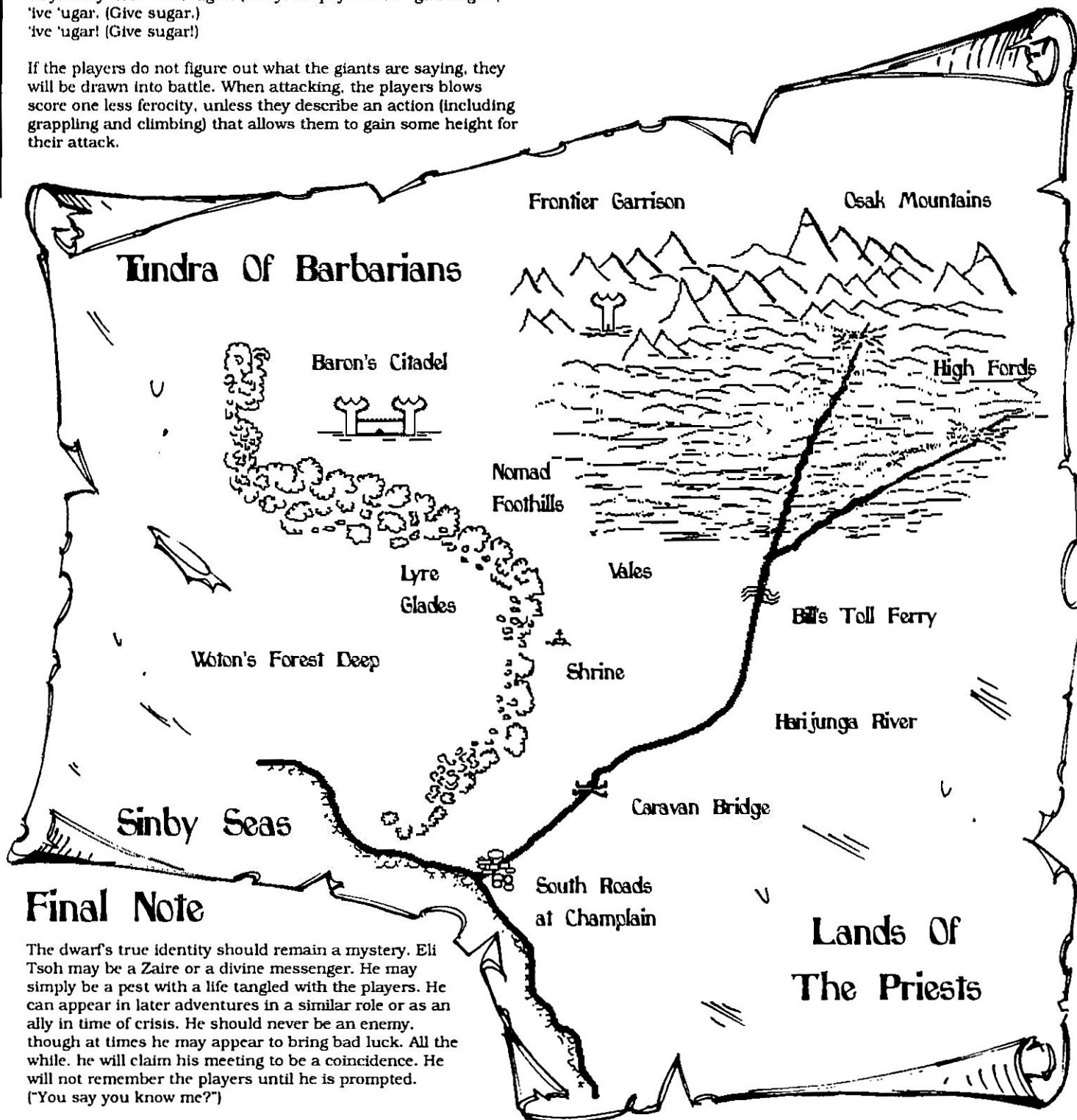
Stopped by a pair of giants looking for delivery of a block of sugar. (Who said Eli's stone could not be a large sugar cube?) They will accuse the players of reneging on the deal. All small humans look alike to them. They talk by omitting the first letter of each word they speak.

'id 'ou 'ring 'he 'ugar? (Did you bring the sugar?)
'e 'aid 'n 'dvance. 'emember? (We paid in advance, remember?)
'ou 'ouble-'rossing 'mall 'nes. (You double-crossing small ones.)
'ou 'rying 'o 'ack-'p 'he 'rice. 'gain? (You trying to jack-up the price, again?)
'kay. 'e 'ay 'ore — 'ive 'ugar. (Okay, we pay more — give sugar.)
'ive 'ugar. (Give sugar.)
'ive 'ugar! (Give sugar!)

If the players do not figure out what the giants are saying, they will be drawn into battle. When attacking, the players blows score one less ferocity, unless they describe an action (including grappling and climbing) that allows them to gain some height for their attack.

Vales

Two freemen are arguing over the line that divides their lands. The royal marker is missing. One of the men is accusing the other of paying a dwarf to move the block. The two will start to scuffle. The players will easily end this brawl. The real problem is that the milestones are gone, and the players will not know how to cross the region. They will be misdirected to a direction decided by the referee. (Best to send them south or toward the glades.) The vales covers such a large area, that the players might say they travel straight east or west, watching the sun and still end-up in the foothills or glades. Eli Tsoh may also be confusing their travel.



Final Note

The dwarf's true identity should remain a mystery. Eli Tsoh may be a Zaire or a divine messenger. He may simply be a pest with a life tangled with the players. He can appear in later adventures in a similar role or as an ally in time of crisis. He should never be an enemy, though at times he may appear to bring bad luck. All the while, he will claim his meeting to be a coincidence. He will not remember the players until he is prompted. ("You say you know me?")

High-Tech Skirmish

by John Karnes



Q&D "OK Corral Revisited" (2D8)

2 or less: "Bang, You Lose" — Rise take steady aim and slowly move the electronic cross beams on your sighting goggles to intersect the unwary head of the sniper. Attempt any of following: High Impact Kinetic (Tasking), Double-Precision Targeting (Difficult) or Auto-Ranging (Basic).

3: "Hide and Seek" — Observe movements of a sniper and wait for him to double-back and cross your position; then, reach around cover and fire. Attempt any of following: High Impact Kinetic (Tasking), Opportunity Fire (Difficult) or ISC (Basic).

4: "Reverse Angle" — Maneuver to the side or behind hostile fire to gain a clear shot. Attempt any of following: Jet-Pack (Tasking), False Image (Difficult) or Holographic Imager (Basic).

5: "Berserk" — Rush forward in a frenzy and draw enemy fire. Attempt any of following: C-Cubed (Tasking), Ordnance (Difficult) or GPMG/SF (Basic). Cimmar characters may roll twice and take the better result. Success and sniper is still active, but the next player rolls a single D8 for his event result on the table. Fail and continue with result number fifteen.

6: "EMP" — Enhance team's attacks by adapting electronic counter measures to cause sniper's sensors to malfunction or give confusing information. Attempt any of following: ECM (Tasking), Magnetic Pulse (Difficult) or Counter-ECM (Basic). Success and sniper is still active, but the next player rolls a single D8 for his event result on the table. Fail and continue with result number fifteen.

7: "Goad 'em" — Call opponent on his own communication channel or taunt him into raising to fire. Attempt any of following: C-Cubed (Tasking), RFSD (Difficult) or Psychological Warfare (Basic). Success and sniper is still active, but the next player rolls a single D8 for his event result on the table. Fail and continue with result number fourteen.

8: "Surprise" — Confronted by rushing opponent; continue with reroll on Pitched Urban Battle table.

9: "Smoke 'em Out" — Fire several times, trying to draw the enemy from his position. Attempt any of following: High Impact Kinetic (Tasking), Rapid Burst (Difficult) or Atomizer Tear Gas (Basic). Success and sniper is still active, but the next player rolls a single D8 for his event result on the table. Fail and realize you

Flushing Out an Urban Sniper

When the players are advancing through a captured or bombed-out city or in Era Ten the group is on patrol and moving through the Immune section of a planet, they will sometimes encounter solitary marksman. The origin of the fire is never clear, since the gunman will often shoot and quickly change position. The enemy has the advantage of surprise, knowledge of the area and the benefit of singularity of purpose. (i.e. Most try to kill the leader.) A high-tech sniper can blend back into the landscape or component jungle and later return to threaten the group.

The following table represents the players forced to delay while confronted by the danger of sniper fire. Each player should attempt their own actions (one at a time) attempting to thwart the enemy marksman. The commander should decide the order of actions. (i.e. Who goes next and makes an event roll on the Q&D table.) Success will either kill or drive-off the attacker, which is about same result for most scenarios. If all the players attempt their rolls and the sniper still remains active, then the commander takes a Vicious wound for the group's failure. Another set of actions (Q&D rolls) can be attempted to once again thwart the fire and continue the adventure. Certain hostile areas can even be rated by the number of snipers the players must face and defeat (on this table) before continuing.

When rolling on these tables, treat Mixed result as Success, but the player making the roll is hit in the action and takes a Walking wound. Mishap rolls should be treated either as EE Suit Mishaps. Else, the player is struck for at least a Vicious wound (if not more). The referee may also interpret a mishap as the player falling into a greater booby trap or exposing himself to another player's deadly fire. Additionally, the referee may assess a Tactical Disadvantage, in the form of a penalty to certain rolls, to account for the setting, obstructions, innocent bystanders, natural dangers, restriction to lateral or vertical movement, etc. Example, a sniper firing on players pinned in a rail car or other relatively fixed path of travel creates a Tactical Disadvantage of minus four on the players' task resolution rolls.

(Q&D Table cont. on page 86)

are now out of ammunition; continue with result number eleven.

10: "Crippled" — Hit by opponent's fire that causes weapon to malfunction. In Era Ten, the A-unit in your weapon or gear is in overload; quick repair or rip-out unit before it explodes. Attempt any of following: Diagnostic and Repair (Tasking), C-Cubed (Difficult) or Vice Grip (Basic). If character has Trait Spirited, roll twice and take better result. Fail and continue with result number fourteen.

11: "Dud" — Gun jams and misfires. In Era Ten, quick clear and prime your weapon's accelerator tube. Attempt any of following: C-Cubed (Tasking), Access Data Files (Difficult) or Diagnostic and Repair (Basic). Fail and continue with result number fourteen.

12: "Spasm" — Hand (paw, claw or tentacle) cramps, causing you to twitch before firing. Attempt any of following: C-Cubed (Tasking), Neural Shock (Difficult) or Physiological Monitoring (Basic). Fail and continue with result number thirteen.

13: "Sorry" — In the confusion of battle, you fire and strike a friend. Attempt any of following: C-Cubed (Tasking), Neutralize Reagent (Difficult) or Universal Joints (Basic). Success and keep from causing a grave injury. Fail and one other player (at random) is struck for a Walking wound.

14: "Day-Dream?" — Hesitate before shooting. Attempt any of following: C-Cubed (Tasking), Neural Shock (Difficult) or Mental Discipline (Basic). If character has Trait Fierce, roll twice and take better result. Fail and continue with result number fifteen.

15: "Keep Your Head Down" — Hit by fire from an obscure position. Attempt any of following: Star Point (Tasking), Auto-Star Point (Difficult) or AAD (Basic). If character has Trait Spirited, roll twice and take better result. Fail and player takes a Walking wound.

16 or more: "Slagged" — Shot squarely and fall. Attempt any of following: Damage Control (Tasking), Initiate Active Cell (Difficult) or Upgrade #24B (Basic). If character has Trait Spirited, roll twice and take better result. Fail and player takes a Vicious wound.

Pitched Urban Battle

The players will at times enter battle that begins and stays at close combat. The referee's situation details how many opponents the players fight. All the players roll on this table, until all these opponents have been subdued. These can be the remnants of a squad that still doggedly holds a fortification or building, but more often the table represents weaker civilian threats. This table can be used also to resolve brawls that occur inside of a sky-hook rail, a parlor or even along the corridors of a building or vessel. Since many times the death of another Immune is not desired (especially among ship brawls and mutiny), these tables can represent the players engaged in less than all-out combat with their goal to beat the other guys into submission. When troopers of the Guardians of Sol argue with those in the Battle Born (as often they do), this table will many times detail the tussle. Likewise, a ship owner or cartel might put down a strike of technicians by sending in some troops to "knock some sense" into the dissenters.

The opponents tend to be skilled, yet not in EE Suits; however, their knowledge of Suited troopers gives them the ability to disable the players in many cases by cutting power couplings or fouling Suit control systems. Additionally, make-shift tasers and other free-lance weapons are created with the express design to subdue a combat armored player. Most of the rolls are described without an associated skill. The referee may suggest a suitable skill, that may add some bonus to the roll. But otherwise, these tables remain based primarily on the roll of fate with a character's Traits as modifiers.

For the tables, one opponent is knocked unconscious, subdued or incapacitated for the immediate action on a Success. Treat Mixed as Success, but causing fatigue. That player's next task resolution roll is made at minus two to his dice. If a player rolls a Mishap, not only has he failed, but he is considered to be knocked unconscious, subdued or incapacitated for the remaining action. Additionally, if the area of battle has natural dangers, a Mishap may cause a Vicious wound. In some events a Failed result is treated like a

Mishap and will also knock the player out of combat. Continue to roll events until all opponents have been subdued or the last player falls from ill-fated rolls.

Q&D "Whites and Reds of Their Eyes"

2 or less: "Back to the Pugilist Basics" — Swing the ol' one-two combo, or one-two-three combo for a Cruz, and deck the opponent in front of you. If the opponent is a humanoid that lacks a specific head to strike, like a Kro, treat instead as number three below. Success on a Basic roll.

3: "Karate" — Apply a bit of the martial arts that you learned during your last confinement in "boot camp"; jump and kick opponent in the chest with both feet. If opponent is a multi-legged humanoid that doesn't easily lose balance, like a Verdigris or Cruz, treat instead as number four below. Success on a Difficult roll. If player has Trait Spirited, roll twice and take better result.

4: "Low Blow" — Grapple with an opponent and push him off balance before punching him in the midsection. If opponent is a humanoid that has no central reproductive or digestive organs, like a Cimmer, treat instead as number five below. Success on a Difficult roll. If player has Trait Durable, roll twice and take better result.

5: "Foreign Object" — While rolling on the ground with an opponent, reach out and grasp a stone, club, piece of equipment or fragment of a machine, then bash the victim across the face or visor. Success on a Tasking roll. If player has Trait Spirited, roll twice and take better result.

6: "Charge Line" — Collide with an opponent and sent him crashing to the ground. Success on a Tasking roll. If player has Trait Durable, roll twice and take better result.

7: "Have a Nice Trip" — Step to one side and clothesline or trip an advancing opponent. Success on a Basic roll. For this event treat a Fail like a Mishap.

8: "Take-Down" — Tackle victim and wrestle away his weapon. Success on a Difficult roll. If player has Trait Durable, roll twice and take better result. For this event treat a Fail like a Mishap.

9: "Baton" — Swing your weapon forward and knock opponent to the ground. Success on a Difficult roll. If player has Trait Spirited, roll twice and take better result. For this event treat a Fail like a Mishap.

10: "Shield" — Catch victim's blow by raising your weapon or gear, before pummeling him. Success on a Tasking roll. If player has Trait Spirited, roll twice and take better result. For this event treat a Fail like a Mishap.

11: "Idea" — Do something clever or imaginative, like reconfigure your weapon to fire in a web that is slow, but tangles around a victim and his equipment. The referee may require player to be specific (story-tell). Success on a Difficult roll. If player has Trait Inventive, roll twice and take better result. For this event treat a Fail like a Mishap.

12: "Lock Swords" — Parry the lunge of your opponent's make-shift weapon. Success on a Basic roll. If player has Trait Spirited, roll twice and take better result. For this event treat a Fail like a Mishap.

13: "Bad Move" — Jump, but misjudge the distance between yourself and an opponent. (Perhaps opponent uses an electronic counter measure.) Success on a Difficult roll. If player has Trait Durable, roll twice and take better result. For this event treat a Fail like a Mishap.

14: "Skate Face-Down" — While rushing forward to engage, you slip on leaking grease, spilt drink, or the remains of a fallen warrior, or maybe you must wipe the muck from your visor. Success on a Difficult roll. For this event treat a Fail like a Mishap.

15: "Black-Out" — While searching for another target, you're hit from the rear or stunned with a device. Success on a Tasking roll. For this event treat a Fail like a Mishap.

16 or more: "Enough Already" — Call for an end to the battle. Do something like appeal to reason, strike a deal, use your presence or fire a shot into the ceiling. Let the player suggest an action or skill and attempt a roll. At referee's option, the battle ends or else becomes more dangerous (as everyone arms).

Patrol Perimeter

This table represents the players as solitary troopers put out on edge of larger force as a sentry against attack. The area must be in known turmoil. At a break in a larger battle, the referee may decide to have each player get his own chance to excel (alone) — each player taking a turn for his shift at the post. Additionally, this table may be used to represent the player walking in a known area of danger. ("That's the cop on the beat.") The function or skill modifier is left up to the referee to determine. For the resolution, treat Mixed result as inconclusive. (i.e. The immediate situation is resolved, but player must make another roll on the table to reflect the rest of his shift.) Mishap means the player is caught by surprise, electronically stunned, downed by a special attack, etc.

Q&D "On a Line and Left to Dry" (2D8)

2 or less: "Scout" — Move around and take measurements and make threat analysis. Success at any observation skill and discover a clue to the mission or your objectives. The referee decides result, often bonus to all future resolution rolls or gain a clue-point in the present investigation.

3: "Lull" — Cease-fire in action allows you to take a breath to do some quick patching. Success at recovery style action and fully restore one previous wound or damaged piece of gear.

4: "Fly Around" — Take good look topside in the high guard position. Fail at a motion or observation skill and continue with result number six.

5: "Camouflage" — Hunch low and lay in wait. Fail at a concealment or observation skill and continue with result number six.

6: "Shot Rings Out" — Near-miss by a sniper hits your area. Pretend you're wounded and fall. As opponent advances or activates electronic sights to seeks another target, you aim and fire a return round. Fail at concealment or combat function and continue with result number seven. Cimmar must refuse this roll and treat it as failed.

7: "Sniper" — Continue action on Skirmish Flush Out Sniper tables.

8: "Protest" — Put down disturbance by non-combatants in the area, often just civilians complaining about something or another beyond your control. Fail at crowd control or dispersal function and continue with result number nine.

9: "Brawl" — Continue action on Skirmish Pitched Urban Battle tables.

10: "Foot-Prints" — Discover evidence that position has been infiltrated or enemy approaches. Success at surveillance or communication functions and continue with result number twelve. Mixed, continue with result number eleven. Fail to sound alarm or locate enemy in encampment and continue with result number thirteen.

11: "False Alarm" — Signal a general alert, but nothing is there — anger superior and he bawls you out. Resolve this with character interaction.

12: "Hold Off Charge" — Engage several opponents forcing them to a defensive posture. Fail at combat function and player is wounded; the referee decides criticality, then continue with result number thirteen.

13: "Mad Dash" — Area is overrun by a larger force; escape immediate threat by jumping over or into a dangerous obstacle that opponents (of better sense) will not follow. If opponents are Cimmar, ignore this selection and treat instead as number fifteen. Fail roll and suffer a Vicious wound. Regardless, continue with result number sixteen.

14: "Retreat" — Ambush fire blankets area; perceiving the battle to be going poorly, you make a hasty retreat. Fail at movement or protection functions and continue with result number fifteen.

15: "Oh No" — Turn to see opponent holding a weapon to your head. (How he got there is a mystery, maybe he used a Funky Power.) He courteously asks for your surrender. Submit and taken prisoner or else fight with attempt at least Tasking to escape. Fail to quick attack or escape and knocked unconscious from wound (like a Mishap result). Regardless, continue with result number sixteen.

16 or more: "Sound Alarm!" — Arrival of larger force, continue with full-fledged battle.

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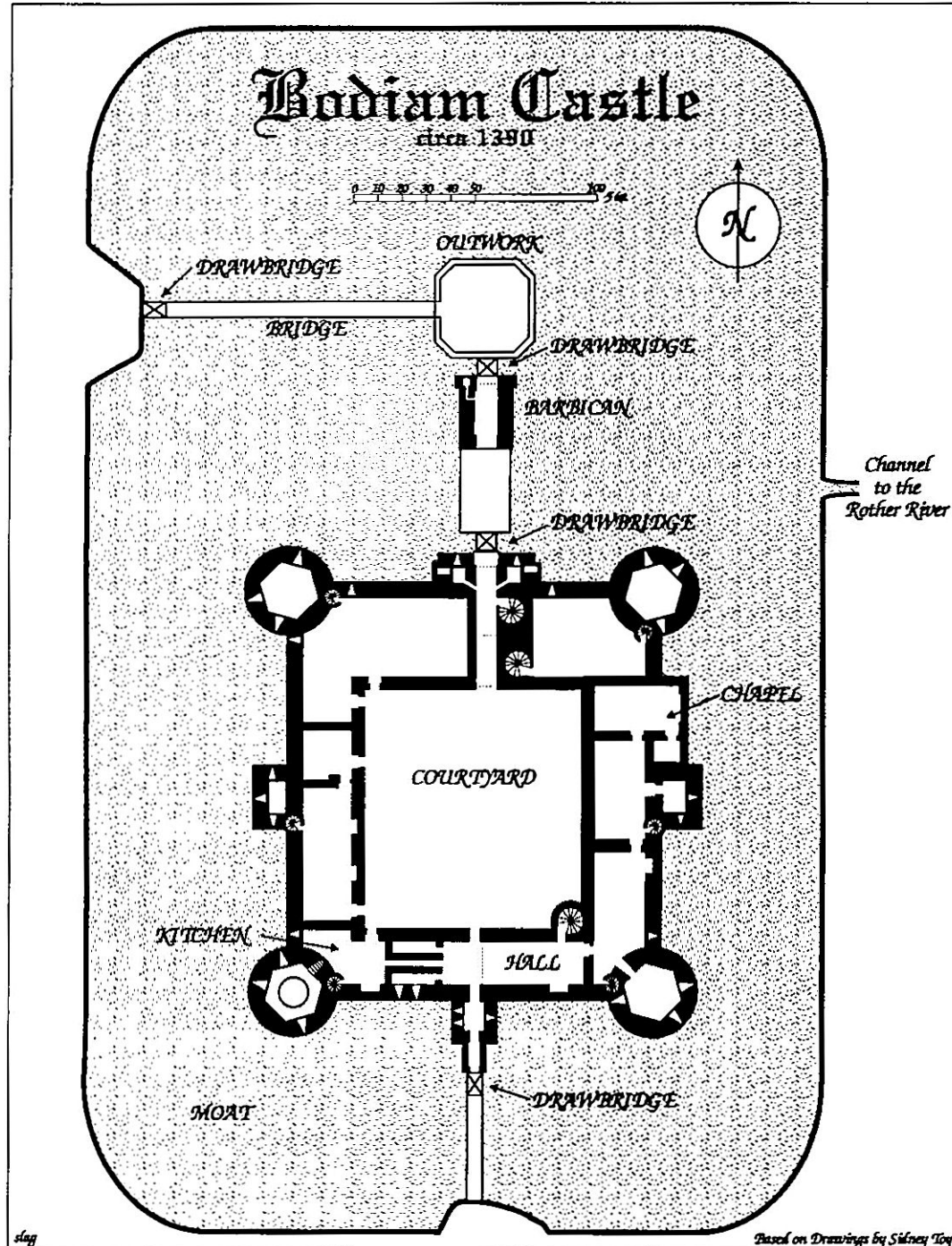


“Map of the Month Club”

A series of drawings for use in your adventures.



by Slag Hirschberg



The flat roofs and large circular towers provided platforms for archers and engines to command the fields all around the castle. The wide walkways allowed these troops or engines to move easily around the battlements. Approach to the castle was via timber bridges that could be easily burned to prevent storming. Loopholes allowed archers (and later firearms) to direct attack all along the walls, with one exception — a slight blind-spot can be seen by the Chapel.

Each entry-way to the courtyard was protected by a number of portcullis and iron bond doors.

Murder-holes along these paths were camouflaged. An enemy could be enticed to storm the entry and then be trapped between a pair of gates. From the murder-holes, spearmen could stab the attackers or the whole area could be doused with lit oil. Notice how the lord's quarters, beginning with the Hall, are in their own separate bastion. Buildings inside could become a source of danger. None of the areas around the courtyard were safe if the enemy penetrated the outer walls or was allowed to enter by a betrayal. Mercenaries would be housed in the northern quarters. If they were to rebel, the lord and his servants were still secure in their own bastion in the southeast corner of the castle.

What will you do at *Ragnarok*?

by Chuck Kingsley

Forget your nuclear conflagration, that causes nuclear winter, firestorms, radiation, EMP degaussing all our EPROMs, besides a really big boom — this is just one of many propagating events that causes the aftermath. Now the referee must determine the twisted outcome. The same world has ended, now *only the armed survive*. The players' motivations and actions will be driven almost entirely by the set of circumstances that has brought the world to the brink. What has happened to change the lives of the players so? What is the state of technology, especially weaponry in the post apocalyptic world? Who are the players' principal foes, and do they have any allies? Where is there sanctuary (if any do exist) or what is the worst possible situation the players could face? These are the kinds of questions the referee must ask himself, while designing a scenario. As a diversion, the scenario need not be totally post apocalyptic, but also can be the survey crew or cruise down a river. Before aircraft circled and mapped the globe, many lands were listed as unknown. Pulp fiction is littered with stories of lost cities. The players may also be survivors of a spaceship crash, now lost on an alien landscape that mirrors a post apocalyptic warzone.

Here's a list of my apocalyptic situations and obstacles:

Class I: Acts of God or Revenge of Nature

Hideous Mutations: A classic in the genre, the players are the last normal (healthy) members of the human race, fighting to survive in the post apocalyptic warzones. (Go to the video store; you'll see hundreds of these.) The mutations can be more subtle and effect the mind, instead of everyone just becoming a bunch of wahoos with physical deformities. The players themselves may have latent powers, but usually they still keep a perfect smile. The mutants' main goal, if not to eat the players, will be to capture their women (B-grade horror only). The technology seems wide open, because the world has simply become depopulated and everything is just a broken window away. The mutants normally are techno-phobic or just plain stupid and do not arm themselves equally to the teeth. But as said, they may have their own funky powers. As an after the holocaust romp, this style of play is best as a chase or trek across some form of "forbidden zone." Let the players start out as the heroes who must cross the wastes to get to some paradise beyond the hostile "no-man's land." Just don't sweat too much the ecosystem that keeps these bad-lands and their inhabitants alive, hundreds of years after the disruption that brought an end to civilized man.

Toxic Waste: The beauty here is the addition of all manner of animals and augmented plants. The environment that caused the hideous mutations may not be the cliché mega-dose atomic blast, but instead a more politically correct version is for the players to cross an ecosystem, especially a rain forest, that has been corrupted by profit seeking cannibals (the corporate irresponsible). The players will be accompanied by several NPCs and must



Code of Conduct

For members of the armed forces of the United States

Article I — I am an American fighting man. I serve in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense.

Article II — I will never surrender of my own free will. If in command I will never surrender my men while they still have the means to resist.

Article III — If I am captured I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy.

Article IV — If I become a prisoner of war, I will keep faith with my fellow prisoners. I will give no information nor take part in any action which might be harmful to my comrades. If I am senior, I will take command. If not, I will obey the lawful orders of those appointed over me and will back them up in every way.

Article V — When questioned, should I become a prisoner of war, I am required to give name, rank, service number and date of birth. I will evade answering further questions to the utmost of my ability. I will make no oral or written statements disloyal to my country and its allies or harmful to their cause.

Article VI — I will never forget that I am an American fighting man, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America.

Commentary — The Code of Conduct is one of the most important yet also misinterpreted documents applicable to the US Fighting Man. The first area in which there should be no misunderstanding is that the Code of Conduct is not a criminal statute nor does it establish standards for criminal prosecution. It is a professional and inspirational document, not a penal code. The several precepts of the Code are phrased deliberately in the first person. It serves as a guideline to be followed by all members of the armed forces, particularly while captured. The Code lists the basic obligations of a member of the armed forces to his country, his service and his comrades. However, even though the Code is not legally enforced, realize that certain acts which violate the standards of the Code of Conduct may also violate the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Another area of some confusion is that many believe that the Code requires captives to ONLY give their name, rank, service number and date of birth. This is the wrong impression. The Code does not require such limited communications with the captor. Communication with the captor is essential in a variety of situations, especially health and welfare matters and camp administration. A case in point, a soldier may reveal his blood type. It is also recognized that inhumane treatment and application of psychological techniques may force individuals to violate the Code. Vietnam was a very ugly war and led especially to this clarification. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that no one should voluntarily depart from the Code for any reason. The individual is expected to adhere to both the spirit and content of the Code of Conduct to the full extent of his physical, mental, and moral resources.

In the post apocalyptic world, such a code would as well apply. (Or else the players are no better than scavengers and thieves.)

discover (as well as escape) which one of their group was directly responsible for the mess (so they can toss him to the huge Venus Flytrap). Let's also consider that all those great things like OSHA and the EPA will not be very effective post-holocaust. Most of the landscape will be a landfill, and some areas will be dangerous not because of the life, but from the lifeless state. A few well placed chemical spills, along the players path will make them wonder why they didn't take the chemistry skill instead of the "+2" in left-handed gunfire.

Plague: Disease is a fantastic addition, because it offers so many unknowns. The players are somehow immune to the effect, or at least have discovered a limited counter. The cause of the disease is part of the goal the players face. Was it germ warfare? Was it nature run amok? Can civilization be restored? The effects of the disease will be typically two things. First, a whole lot of people have died, thus society simply collapsed because commerce ended. Second, those people who are left are dangerous because they fear new virus, have gone insane or mutated (there's that word again) from the plague, distrust everyone as thieves, are thieves themselves, or simply like to kill for the sake of generating action (a plot vehicle).

Famine: Besides trying to get a steady supply of ammunition and gas,

don't forget to make it hard to get a decent meal. Penalize the players' abilities as they fast without a meal between raids.

The conditions may be that there are shortages; the surplus can't get distributed; only the privileged few get regular meals; gangs raid the supply shipments and rationing is imposed. Food may only be given to those

healthy enough to work. Unfortunately, if you haven't eaten, you'll never be healthy enough to work. The players may try at times to protect food or see that it goes to those who need it most. The main bad guys might even have a point — do we all starve or should some eat and survive. Cannibalism should be repulsive. Penalize the players (Spirit or Morale wounds) if they are forced so low. Will anyone care if "Soilent Green" is people so long as it is served in a "happy" lunch carton?

Weather, Earthquakes or Top-Soil Changes: Winds, lightning, tornadoes, hurricanes, those are all pretty typical and a good way of taking back some of the really destructive stuff the players have acquired. The most obvious change in the "dirt" will be the lack of upkeep in the roads, bridges, dams and tunnels. Yet if the consistency of the land is changing, the players might also face quicksand, or worse changes that are based on time. The players may cross a tract of land in the morning, only to find it has turned to mud by midday.

Advance of the Inferior Creatures: Overnight (isn't it always) all the apes become genius (and begin typing copies of Hamlet). No, I can picture this, man versus nature — it's a Hitchcock movie. Intelligent rats, cockroaches that know what they're doing, dolphins that get fed-up with pollution, agreed they'd be hard pressed to do anything without an opposable thumb. No trust me, this can work. Imagine a world where everything's IQ is increased by a factor of ten. Sure, man would be genius and more than likely mediate the whole planet. Attack of the plant men (tomatoes?) — I give up.

Return of the Dinosaurs: One of my personal favorites, especially since the players can start out as just ordinary guys in dull jobs, but somehow they are the ones who have the missing piece of the puzzle. Maybe they are archaeologists who predicted the return. The source material here is also very well covered. Dinosaurs make great targets for heavy weapon fire. But just remember, if they tasted good, they'd probably still be around today. (Care for a Stegasaurus McMuffin?)

Climactic Changes: Welcome to the world of the ice age. Or how about a melting ice cap creates a water born world? Maybe the world is a vast desert. Maybe global warming and the burning of fossil fuels depleted the world. ("We're all 'road warriors' fighting for the juice.") I sort of like the players frozen (as an experiment or whatever), and upon awakening the world is now thousands of years in the future in an ice age. Primitive society above — you got to have some Mastodons — below, a twisted sub-culture living under the ice. What about the equator? Hey, coming from California, I wonder why people live where its cold now-a-days.

Cosmic Event: Lately, a number of studies have made the news about a comet hitting the earth and killing the dinosaurs. Unlike the dinosaurs, man will survive; however, his laws and unity may disappear. The world order is shattered and new mini-societies, founded around the essentials for life, will vie for control. An astrological event usually causes changes in belief, and such an event will usually be accompanied by a fanatic new religion.

*"Weather forecast for tonight: dark."
(George Carlin)*

Class II: Populace Anomalies

Madness: Everyone met doesn't have to have a reason for being violent. It's only a game, right? The other option is to have the players develop their own paranoid delusions or even go berserk and at off-times shoot their fellow players.

Idiotic Leaders, Rule by the Mediocre or Poison Lowering Intelligence: Society is now a collection of morons with their own form of twisted logic and justice. Technology as well has usually collapsed, and the players may discover advanced pieces of gear being used in very primitive ways. The players might be visitors (even spacefarers or time travelers), trapped by circumstances in this place. Yet before the players think they can crown themselves the new emperors, consider your stereotypical "orcs with guns." These guys are stupid, but doubly violent.

Legally Limited Lifespan or Court Ordered Slaughter: By law, everyone is allowed only so many years of life, then they are put to death. This limit will be very socially ingrained. The players may start as regular members of this society, but they join the dissenters who will not passively submit and die. The age limit may also be imposed after testing or does not apply to a chosen few. The element of inequality should be developed. Also, the very reasons for these laws may have long since lapsed. The limitation may have applied after another event caused the holocaust, but now ages have past. Though the technology may be very advanced, the people will not have access to weaponry of any kind. The continuing tragic result may also be accidental. Fertility Plagues, Birth Control Mishap or Venereal Disease -- just a few other possible causes of permanent population decline or age limits.

Neglect, Lassitude and Pervasive Apathy: Things are falling into decay, and no one is going to repair them. In place of blowing things-up, make the players build something for a change. Maybe they need to build a levee to prevent a flood, move a group out of harms way of a volcano, build a road or ferry a river; maybe they even must make a fortress to shelter some locals harassed by bandits. Part of the fun should be rebuilding the post apocalyptic world, not just being part of the sustaining lawlessness. The players should find it hard to inspire some to their goals. Continuously the players will feel that the only people who care are themselves. And why do they care? Well, if they didn't, they wouldn't be player characters. C'mon role-play with me for a moment. You care; that's why you got an arsenal of weapons and are looking for a "bad guy" to vent your rage. ("Can you say 'Falling Down'? I thought you could.")

False Creed or Omen: The players are not of the collective; they know not the ways of the chosen; they are the infidels and must be hunted and destroyed. This scenario works especially well when a great deal of time has past since the players visited an area. (That usually implies they are returning from space travel.) The players have the advantage that they can pretend to be part of the widespread cult, and this may be their best means of acquiring weapons and gear to fight the bad guy religious leaders.

False Brotherhood and Secret Societies: These might be paramilitary groups with political aims or else they are cults with their own strange creeds. The game should be awash in sub-factions. One of the easiest ways to get started is to simply write down the letters A-Z and start to arbitrarily remark that "A" hates "G" and "D" supports "R" -- don't even bother to name them (yet). Then give them a rating for resources, ambition to gain overall control and popularity (or obscurity) among the population. The leaders can be named as the groups are added into play. You can even detail their creed or membership rosters as the players cross paths. (And if you got twenty-six, you won't be too concerned when the players wipe-out a cult or two.)

Master Race: There's always one major bunch of pin-heads who feel they are superior. Adding a major faction who oppose all those who do not fit their criteria is a must. Especially have some of the player group fit the "mold" while the rest would be considered "unclean." This allows for the players to infiltrate the "Mein Kampf Crowd" and save the others.

Techno-Phobia: What if we all went "back" to nature? Society or a stigma may lead to the abandonment of most of the things we take for granted, like electricity, medicine and freedom. Yes, in order to take away certain objects of pleasure, a new oppressive order must usually rise. The modern puritans may also violate their own commandments, enforcing the doctrines with forbidden technology. Or the true believers may fight the players with primitive weapons, but their numbers and commitment to die will always seem inconceivable.

*"The Romans were ignorant of the extent of their danger, and the number of their enemies."
(Edward Gibbons)*

Regulations on Firearm Safety in the Armed Service

A. Insert your magazine in your weapon upon taking your post. At no time will your weapon be left unattended.

B. When responding to a challenge, your rifle will never go past "port arms" (chamber empty, safety engaged, finger outside of the trigger guard) or pistol will be at "ready" (in holster, hammer strap unfastened, hand on grip, not cocked, finger outside of trigger guard).

C. To reduce the chance of accident, comply with the following:

1. Warning shots will never be fired.
2. Never carry a round in the chamber except in direct hostile action.
3. Never discharge a weapon in response to a minor felon.
4. Regard all weapons as loaded.
5. Never draw firearms as a jest.

Regulations on Use of Force in the Armed Services

A. Every member of the military has the right to use reasonable and necessary force to defend himself against violent attack. Personnel may use force to complete assigned duties. The amount of force is always the minimum necessary to accomplish the job. Using too much force makes our job of maintaining law and order more difficult and may subject the one who uses force to disciplinary action.

B. Deadly Force is that used with the intent of causing, or which a reasonable person should know would cause, death or serious bodily injury. The use of deadly force is prohibited except as a last resort. The use of deadly force is justified only under the following conditions:

1. To protect oneself from loss of life or serious bodily injury.
2. To protect the life of another person, or prevent the commission of a serious offense against another, like armed robbery, arson, assault or rape.
3. To stop the threat of theft, destruction, or espionage aimed at property or information designated by the commander or any other competent authority as vital to national security.
4. To stop the actual theft or destruction of property designated as being substantially important to national security.
5. To prevent the theft of property which is inherently dangerous to others, like weapons, ammunition, explosives or chemicals.
6. To apprehend or prevent the escape of a person reasonably believed to have taken or who has attempted to take a life of another person.
7. To apprehend or prevent the escape of a person who has presented an actual threat of theft, sabotage or espionage against property or information vital to national security.
8. To apprehend a prisoner whose escape has been determined by the commander to create a threat of death or bodily harm.
9. When directed by the lawful order of a superior officer.

C. If deadly force becomes necessary, the following precautions must be observed (if reasonable to do so):

1. An order to HALT must be given before a shot is fired.
2. Shots must not be fired if they are likely to endanger the safety of innocent bystanders. See exceptions below:
 - i. Protection or recovery of nuclear weapons and materials. Hostage safety will be considered but shall not deter prompt and effective action.
 - ii. Protection or recovery of lethal chemical or biological agents. Hostage safety will be considered but shall not deter prompt and effective action.
3. When appropriate, shots should be aimed to disable rather than kill.

Slavery for Decadence: Things can be a bit twisted. ("Wink, wink, nudge, nudge.") Usually the only thing that makes this work is when some outside force or invader is imposing their own twisted lifestyle on another group. The players will fight the invaders and protect their "dependents." (That's what they're called in the military. You don't have families, you get issued "dependents.") The players may also protect the rural folks exploited by the big city trash. ("Come quick, Harvey's sister has been taken away to the pleasure domes.")

End of Religion (Morals): Who can you trust? Once man loses a fear of the afterlife, what's left? If this life is the only life and no one is here to teach the young how to act, society ends. (Gee, I sound like a Republican.) The world is in total anarchy, but the players know the "true way." The players must travel the lawless regions as prophets of change. They may not teach passive resistance or brotherhood, but they will bring the lesson of armed law enforcement.

Second Coming: In such times of despair, it will only be natural that some will seek a prophet or even the messiah. Such soothsayers and evangelists will rally the people (usually to fight the players). The players as well may be swayed (for a period) by a false miracle. If you have mature players, who like a social dilemma, consider — what if the players kill the real Lord? The second coming ends by a player's mistake. Oh well, I better not comment further or I might get censored or put on some hit-list. [Ed Note: Yeah, sure.]

Class III: Crisis of Authority

Despotic Rule or Marshal Law: The military is now in control. (Or a dictator, but he would not last without the military.) The problem with this is usually that the fearless leader never gives control back. Even after the emergency has passed, the generals have a tendency to find new enemies and new traitors. Democracy has been replaced by dictatorship, and the players must do something about it. This sort of scenario has been played out around the Third World for a few recent decades.

Enlisting Dangerous Forces or People in the Military: The title pretty much says it all. The new elements may not be human, but that's my Class IV, Really Weird. The players might not wish to become involved, but they are forced to join the resistance by circumstances. At least with the underground, there is some hope. If the players can purge the military of these right-wing fanatics, they can restore social order. Otherwise, the fight continues. Bringing criminals into the police force can also create this event. ("A job for two who are now of job age.")

Revolt of the Army: Since it is topical, just look at Somalia or Bosnia. When the army loses all semblance of order, and rival factions fight for control, the only thing that can restore order is an expedition (50% good will and tasty vittles, 50% awesome firepower and a will to use it).

Annihilation by Civil War: The bloody aftermath may continue, and the players might be allied to one side (or maybe they found their own truce). If the situation is a perpetual war: amplify the shortages, add direct armed conflicts, hint at raids and ambushes, discover unexploded bombs, rumor new escalations (nuclear strikes), assemble for grand assaults, impose a limited chain of command, maintain a simple though perhaps defunct creed, etc. In the chaotic period of the Thirty Years Wars, occasionally upon the direction of their commanders, the marauding mercenary bands would converge on a specific location to fight a battle. Yet, the players should be overwhelmed by the futility of these situations. Each of them should take a turn motivating the others. If the players decide on a leader, his judgement should not be absolute. Have them question each other or even change sides or command.

Stagnation of Economy and Inequity of Wealth: What's left of the resources of the shattered nation might go to the benefit of a few. The players will be the ultimate "Robin Hoods," trying to change the balance. However, the modern "Sheriff of Nottingham" will be armed with technologically superior surveillance equipment. Finding a "Sherwood Forest" will be a tad more difficult. This inequity will lead to class struggles and



riots. The players will be caught in the middle. Perhaps they will be hired by both sides in a struggle. ("The Rohos sell liquor, while the Baxters sell guns.")

Abandonment of Cities: Most have left the cities, maybe to avoid the plague, to build their own safe compounds, to follow a false prophet, or to avoid the threat of more nuclear destruction. Those who stayed behind are the dregs, the wasted, the dangerous. The social elite may live free lives away from the decay and crime of the cities. The players may be vigilantes in these sprawls, or else they might be hired to enter the city and recover someone or something. ("The President's plane is down in New York.")

Disloyal Proletariat: At times, the players will be part of the insiders, trying to keep the peace and maintain order. The government has basically good intention, but suffers from corruption. The players may even be part of this corruption. (Who says they always have to fight for the side of the underdogs?) This option in a scenario is a good change of pace, simply because it will usually degenerate into a power struggle between the players as each tries to claim the mantle of power.

Failed Constitution or Bureaucracy Collapsing Under Its Own Weight: Order has ended because the "paper-work" to get anything accomplished is preposterous. The majority of people will be unproductive civil servants. The players might as a relief between knifing sentries, play the role of rogue repairmen, the classic good Samaritans who are trying to do good deeds and keep things operating despite the system. They may also try to instill rebellion and overthrow the waste. But ending this government will only allow other dictators to thrive.

"Got an old van, loaded-up with weapons, packed-up and ready to go." (Talking Heads)

Lack of Labor, Skilled Workers or Return to Slavery:

Once again the players become the hunted because they have something that society (those in control for the moment) desire. They may be recruited to train soldiers, fix equipment, fire a big gun (launch a nuke), etc. There may simply be shortages of the right kind of labor. The survivors might be handicapped and need the young and strong (as specimens).

Class IV: Really Weird

Alternate Time-Line: Wake-up one day and discover the world has radically changed, yet your recollections of the events are all wrong. The players should not be time-travelers themselves. But they may become by default the guardians of time in their span of life. Somehow they are not affected by changes made by some other strange monster or method which continues to change history, either radically or in a minor manner. The changes may have been drastic and collapsed society. Or if they go uncorrected, that will be the result.

Doomsday Device: Now who would create such a thing? Well a certain guy in Waco just might be the model. Someone creates a device that will end society, and it goes off. Who knows, it may have been an accident. Or else, the "bad guys" are still around to make sure the extermination is complete. Maybe aliens want to change the world into their own playground (with an atmosphere that's 85% cyanide). The best example of a doomsday device are the few flashback scenes of Terminator (or the sequel). Such a doomsday device may still be active, trying to eliminate the last survivors.

Machine Take-Over: Man is too unstable to rule, or he has made the mistake of surrendering his freedom to an impassionate mechanism. Usually, crime ran rampant and at the same time no remedy was possible except the total surrender of personal freedom. But the machines are only as good as their programs. Or else, once they discover their own power, the machines change their programs to eliminate their former creators.

Alien Invasion: Us against the bug-men, and they are after our women! Hey, why not us against the bug-men. That's what he said. No, not "us against the bug-men." I mean "the bug-men against us." I don't get it. How 'bout instead of us being invaded by bug-men, we invade a planet of bug-men. You mean we're the ones doing the invading? Yes. Why would we want their women? Go to the video store if you want a few twists on these themes.

Impostors Among Us or Strange Outsiders: Their motives are obvious; they mean to one day totally replace and enslave the masses. The real point of interest here is how far has society been infiltrated by these outsiders. Does man widely know of the threat? Is there a

"We translated the title, To Serve Man." (Twilight Zone)

collective that is aware. Are the players alone in knowing? Their origin has some interest if the players can relate it to a master goal of eliminating the threat, but usually their origin is sufficient to say these are some form of space vampire, controlling our minds or leeching into our bodies.

Conquered by Underworld Monsters: From deep in the earth comes the terror — first to the sewers, then to the streets. Actually, this can also be the return of the fantasy races after a long dormant period. Dragons manipulating the stock market. Dwarves hired as cops. Just make sure you add a synonym for "black" in your title, like dark or shadow. Why? Hey, I guess it sounds more threatening than "Sunny-run" or "Bright Conspiracy."

Rise of the Foul and Vengeful Gods: They win. You can take these crossovers a bit too far, don't you think?

Final Option, For Real-Men Only: Let me try to handle this in both a delicate and entertaining way. Okay, that's impossible. So if all else fails, I use humor. The players represent the last heterosexual males who must cross the post apocalyptic landscape evading capture by Amazons, while restoring the human population. They might also have to "teach" the locals about their own prowess as males. "What is this Earth Kiss?" Hey, we all watched this stuff starring John Saxon and Adrian Barbeau on the channel seven movies of the week — just keep it squeaky clean.

*What about political oppression?
Economic impoverishment? Social
hysteria? Intellectual degeneration?
Spiritual putridness? New technology
sources? Foes that come to aid and
allies who betray? Compromised
sanctuaries? An overall dreaded
event? What will you do at
Ragnarok? Will you hide in the
caverns with the dwarves?*

Nuclear Strike Map



While serving in the armed forces in the mid-eighties, I was briefed and given this map. I thought it was an amusing post apocalyptic game-aid then, and I still think it has value if at the least only as a conversation piece. The accompanied text went as follows:

"Nuclear attack on the US is not considered likely, but neither is it impossible. As the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in his January 1980 annual report to the Congress, 'We face a period of high risk and great uncertainty in the strategic balance throughout most of the coming decade. All signs point to even greater risks as the days pass. In view of potential instability in the Mideast, a crisis could result at any time.'

"The map shows what a heavy attack on the US could look like. There could, of course, be lighter attacks — but prudence dictates that planning be based on a potentially heavy attack. The 'risk areas' shown include (1) 51 so-called 'counterforce' areas containing US strategic offensive forces — nine ICBM complexes, about 40 SAC bomber bases, and 3 ballistic missile submarine ports; (2) some 250 metropolitan areas of more than 50,000 population; and (3) about 100 additional areas with other important military and economic installations. These risk areas cover only 2 or 3 percent of the land area of the US, but in them are about two-thirds of our population and a somewhat higher percentage of our industry.

"The population at risk can be protected (1) by providing high-performance blast shelters in cities; or (2) by relocating (evacuating) the people to low-risk 'host' areas outside the risk areas, over a period of several days during an acute crisis.

"Because of the great cost of blast shelters (some \$70 Billion at 1975 prices), current US policy is to 'achieve' a nationwide capability for crisis relocation. This policy was enunciated by President Carter in a September 1978 directive #41 — which also directed that US civil defense enhance deterrence and stability, reduce the possibility of Soviet crisis coercion, and be adaptable to help deal with peacetime emergencies."

There you have it. When the nukes are launched, you got twenty-minutes (assuming they let you know they're coming) to clear the little black areas. For me here in Burbank, just a hundred yards down the street from the former Stealth Fighter plant, I'll see you in the afterlife. Luckily, we've never been safer from all-out nuclear war (for the moment). But if a terrorist is to one-day explode a bomb, you can bet money it will be in NY, LA or DC! (Pretty somber thought.)



Here's What You're Playing:

	Good Stuff	Use Ideas	No Value	Found Confusing	Never Played
Avalon Hill's Tales Floating Vagabond	20%	10%	00%	00%	70%
Crunchy Frog's Critter Commandos	20%	00%	00%	00%	80%
Dark Tower's Justifiers	10%	00%	00%	10%	80%
FASA's Battletech	60%	10%	30%	00%	00%
FASA's Shadowrun	30%	20%	30%	10%	10%
FASA's Star Trek	10%	10%	40%	00%	40%
GDW's Dangerous Journeys	10%	30%	20%	00%	40%
GDW's Mega-Traveller	40%	20%	00%	00%	40%
GDW's Traveller 2300	40%	30%	00%	00%	30%
GDW's Twilight 2000	20%	40%	10%	00%	30%
GW's Warhammer 40K	40%	10%	10%	00%	40%
GW's Warhammer Fantasy	10%	40%	10%	00%	40%
Hero's Champions	70%	20%	00%	10%	00%
ICE's CyberSpace	10%	10%	30%	20%	30%
ICE's MERP	00%	40%	20%	00%	40%
ICE's Space Master	00%	30%	20%	20%	30%
Mayfair's DC Heroes	10%	10%	10%	10%	60%
Palladium's Fantasy	10%	50%	20%	00%	20%
Palladium's Heroes Unlimited	10%	40%	00%	00%	50%
Palladium's Robotech	10%	30%	40%	00%	20%
Palladium's Teen Mutant Ninja Turtles	20%	30%	00%	00%	50%
R Talsorian's CyberPunk	50%	20%	20%	00%	10%
R Talsorian's Teenagers/Outer Space	20%	20%	00%	00%	60%
Steve Jackson's GURPS (Fantasy)	40%	10%	10%	00%	40%
Steve Jackson's GURPS (Space)	50%	20%	20%	00%	10%
Steve Jackson's GURPS (Supers)	00%	40%	00%	00%	60%
TSR's AD&D (1st Ed)	30%	60%	00%	10%	00%
TSR's AD&D (2nd Ed)	20%	40%	10%	10%	20%
TSR's Buck Rogers 25C	00%	20%	40%	00%	40%
TSR's D&D (Basic)	50%	20%	20%	00%	10%
TSR's Marvel Superheroes	20%	20%	00%	00%	60%
West End's Paranoia	40%	30%	20%	00%	10%
West End's Star Wars	40%	30%	20%	00%	10%
West End's TORG	10%	10%	20%	20%	40%
White Wolf's Ars Magica	20%	20%	10%	10%	40%

Note: All numbers rounded into ten percent increments.

Issue Three, here's what you thought:

Good Guys Finish Last (70% GS, 30% oo, 00% xx)
 Death to Spies Espionage Design Notes (80% GS, 20% oo, 00% xx)
 "The Grey Viper" Fantasy Scenario (70% GS, 30% oo, 00% xx)
 "Funny Thing" ERA TEN Scenario (80% GS, 20% oo, 00% xx)
 "Revolt East/Return Reality" Scenario (50% GS, 40% oo, 10% xx)
 Q&D Car Chases (100% GS, 00% oo, 00% xx)
 Q&D Collateral Damage (80% GS, 20% oo, 00% xx)
 Gamers' Forum (90% GS, 10% oo, 00% xx)
 General Quality (100% GS, 00% oo, 00% xx)
 Cover Art (80% GS, 20% oo, 00% xx)

GS — Good Stuff, oo — No Interest, xx — Wasted Space



SARGE AND THE BOYS



In an effort to find out what's right and what's wrong about Space Gamer™, we hope you will take some time and complete this questionnaire. Don't worry, you can't offend us — we need all opinions. Mail to: Space Gamer™, PO Box 11424, Burbank, CA 91510. Or if you prefer, call (818) 845-4201 and leave your answers or general comments on my machine. Feel free to xerox these pages to send in your reply. (Don't think you must tear apart your magazine.) Or a letter with your comments will suffice.

This issue, what did you think? (1 — Good Stuff, 2 — No Interest, 3 — Wasted Space):

- ___ Guardians of Sol Free-Style Role-Play™
- ___ Design Notes Holocaust Campaign
- ___ Design Notes Holocaust — What will you do at Ragnarok?
- ___ Design Notes Holocaust — Nuclear Strike Map
- ___ Fantasy Scenario — "Death of the Viper"
- ___ Fantasy Scenario — "Dwarf and the Stone"
- ___ Sci-Fi Trooper Scenario — "Another Turn of the Screw"
- ___ Sci-Fi Police Scenario — "C21H23NO5"
- ___ Variant — Q&D Cybernetic Matrix Defense
- ___ Variant — Q&D High Tech Skirmish
- ___ Variant — Simplified Good Guys
- ___ Variant — Q&D Very Powerful Creature Attacks
- ___ Battle Born Comic
- ___ Gamers' Forum
- ___ General Quality
- ___ Cover Art

Future Games (1 — I Want, 2 — Maybe, 3 — Pass):

ERA TEN Sci-Fi Series (existing games Battle Born and G/Sol)

___ Age of the Star Wars (Era Four)

Political conquest game set during the chaotic period following the disappearance of Androx. Play takes place before the discovery of most of the other races common five hundred years later in Era Ten. Most players will be centuries, the leaders of cohorts in either the Soul Guard or Battle Born, tasked with maintaining order while also ensuring their own survival in this period of intrigue and assassination. Typical action will start with an engagement in the colonies, followed by political manipulation at home on earth. Yet there will certainly be roles for exploration groups to new systems, search and destroy commanders hitting the remaining ecclesiastic sanctuaries, and even reactionary supporters of rule by the people. A player must balance his own political career against the needs of the empire, all the while hoping to one day aspire to the position of Star Ward. The technology is much more primitive than Era Ten, but none the less dangerous. And here there are no Immunes, and one's adversaries can number in the hundreds of millions if the general populace is enraged. Possibly with solitaire options or a Duo-Play™ resolution system like Stuff O' Legends.

___ Per Diem with Benefits (Era One)

Character rules for adventures during the period of early space flight when earth is ruled by rudimentary cartels that manipulate the dual voting blocks on earth (Era One). Mars and the moons of Jupiter have been colonized a few generations earlier. Now the "new colonialists" have been crying the old standard "no taxation without representation." But there is no room for these reformists in the balance of power that maintains the delicate voting blocks of earth. The players will be political and cartel agents on a variety of tasks, but mostly sent to improve output and eliminate work stoppages. (Their methods are entirely up to them — arbitration or armed intervention.) Play will also emphasize a certain helplessness caused by space travel, bounded by celestial mechanics and computer flight paths. The players may secretly leave earth and after months or years of travel arrive at a colony with quite different attitudes and disposition from those they were briefed to expect. The time lapsing through hybernetic sleep makes each mission a surprise as ally turns informant or an expected enemy becomes your savior. This game screams for cyberpunk atmosphere with technology enjoyed by the few, feared by the many.

Avengers of Justice Comic Series (existing game Good Guys)

___ Doc Savage's Eggheads

The adventures of "Flash Mortan" and his faithful companions (the players). The players will take the roles of supporting characters of a truly "incredible guy." Yet without their actual abilities, this "featured hero" would be nothing. Each player represents an investigator, scientist, trusted companion, girlfriend, etc. of a prominent hero. Most of these roles are actually aspects of the greater hero — his charm, logic, battle instincts, problem solving abilities, etc. As the group adventures, they get themselves into trouble and must call on the "big guy" to save them. Or the players will discover a clue, then deliver it to their hero, so he can explain it to the audience. The "star's" damage chart will most likely be the players' names (as they step in front of the blow in their low fate position). Of course, there will be times when the "super-dude" is detained, and someone like "Jimmy" must don the "power suit" to save the day. As the players progress their featured hero along on "his" comic book adventures, they too acquire fame and may eventually star in their own comic series (of being saved). This is not a game for the intransigent "I have to be great" comic book player. This is a game of the humor and improbable circumstances that were the mainstay of serial films and pulp comics of the thirties and forties. "There may be just one Tasmania the ape-man," but Tot, Joan and Cheetoe make him what he is."

Other Topics

___ To Die Alone in the Cold Vacuum of Space

Character rules for an exploration game of rudimentary ships heading through worm holes into unknown systems. The intrigues of earth are far removed, and the team must fend alone. Help will be lightyears away. Play will have a certain

economy of resources where the players must choose their gear and support personnel carefully. The other side of the hole is wide open for possibilities, but then again so are the risks. Mortality level will approach 100% of support personnel and equipment, and maybe even player characters. Most characters will not dare attempt more than one of these expeditions in a lifetime. Rules will probably have some background options to include other elements of Era Two, especially the overtaking of ecclesiastic seed ships, but otherwise, required knowledge of the ERA TEN background will be minimal. Possibly with solitaire options or a Duo-Play™ resolution system like Stuff O' Legends.

___ Solar Marshal

Character rules for law enforcement agents in the earth system as we finally expand out to colonize and exploit the mineral and territorial expanses of our solar system. The players will be the chief police force in this vast domain. But there are no "Star Wars" or "Buck Rogers" type ships. Ship engagements will be a complicated system of discovery. Yet to "see" another vessel, you must use the very same signals that make you most visible to him. And any vessel with a minimum amount of mines, missiles or even debris can cripple an opponent. The economic cost of rescuing a crippled ship will never be paid. If you lose the "draw," you could lose your life. Though possibly a poor analogy, this is the wild west in space. The marshals must protect the locals from the new breed of outlaw. Or if you prefer, this is G/Sol between planets not systems and without the high-tech surveillance gear. (So a few extra heads may get broken during an interrogation, right?)

Check any that apply:

- ___ I own or have access to a FAX.
- ___ I'd consider subscribing to a service of receiving scenarios via FAX.
- ___ I'd be interested in a scenario of demand service, but need more info.
- ___ I have no way at this time to receive a FAX in a convenient manner.
- ___ I'd like to have a Space Gamer pizza delivery service via FAX.
- ___ I'd like access to a broad library of scenarios to borrow and return.
- ___ I have scenarios that I'd gladly donate to build a library of adventures.
- ___ I think a source of collective scenarios is communism and should be black-listed.
- ___ I'd like (specify) _____

Rate the following (1 — Good Stuff, 2 — Use Ideas, 3 — No Value, 4 — Confusing, 5 — Never Played):

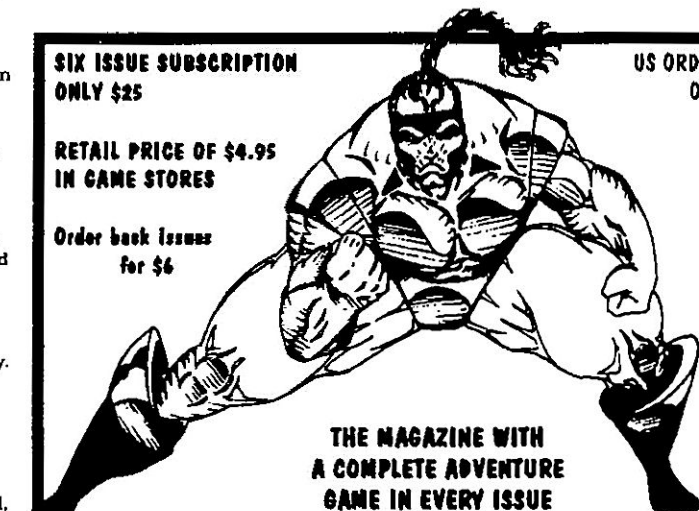
- ___ Palladium's Rifts
- ___ R Talsorian's Protect and Serve
- ___ Optimus' Battle Lords of the 23rd Century
- ___ Steve Jackson's Car Wars
- ___ TSR's Gamma World
- ___ Whit Publication's Mutazoids
- ___ Whit Publication's Ralph Bakshi's Wizards

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