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# VORTEXT

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ISSUE

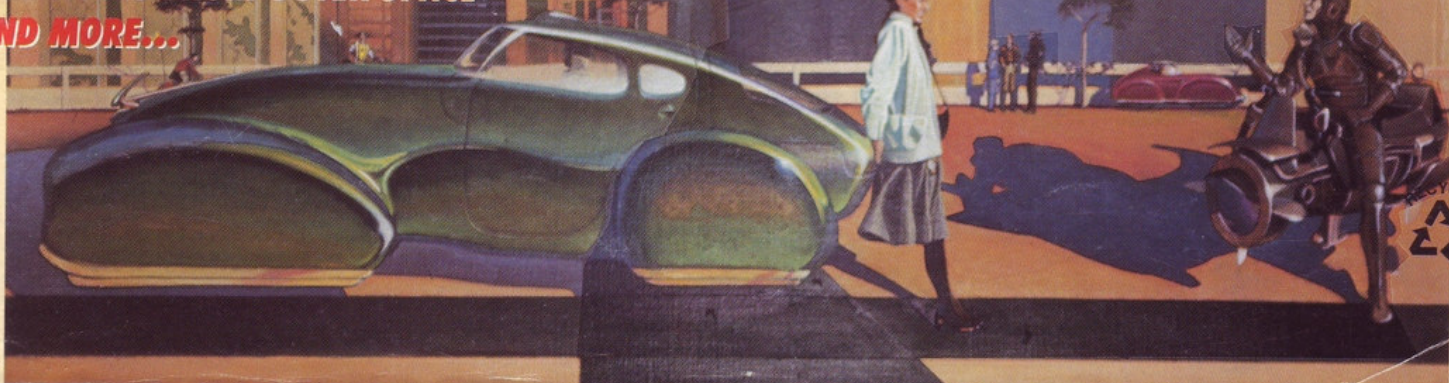
## IN THIS ISSUE:

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DARK CONSPIRACY

TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE

AND MORE...





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# VORTEXT

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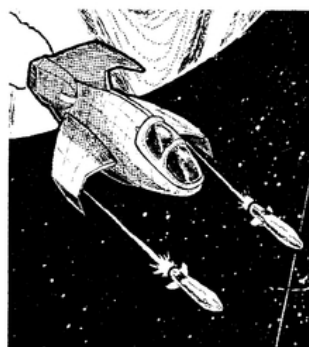
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#### On the Cover:

Summa Nulla: The  
crossroads of the galaxy.  
"Cityscape", an original  
piece by Alan Okamoto,  
captures the image of our  
feature adventure.

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## A Message from the Guidance Ro-Man

First, an apology. In the last issue we printed a story titled "Meeting Someone New" for White Wolf's *Vampire* RPG. The story was written by a lady named Rebecca Ruch. We were very pleased with the story, and you'll be seeing more of Rebecca's work in upcoming issues. But, boy did we feel stupid when Rebecca wrote us to point out that her name was in fact Ruch, with an R, and not Buch, with a B, like we printed it. OOOOPSS! Rebecca, I'm sorry that we didn't catch that mistake before the issue went to the printers. Rest assured that it will not happen again.

Apart from correcting our error, Rebecca had some interesting feedback for us. She wanted to see a Letters to the Editor column and a Gamers' Classified Section. Well, as to a Letters to the Editor column, I would very much like to run such a feature, but I don't receive enough mail for it. Most of the letters I get from my readers are requests for my submission guidelines (not that I mind them; keep those requests coming), actual submissions, subscriptions, or just short notes. I have received some longer letters—those of you who have written know who you are—but they are few and far between. If more of you would like to see a letters column, then you should write me letters to print. Second, a Gamers' Classified Section has also been considered. At the moment, none of us here are sure that it would be a very useful thing for our readers. We only publish four times a year, so your ad might not get seen very often. If there is sufficient interest in a classified section we will consider it in more detail. Let us know what you think.

Next, just after the last issue came out we—Janice, Daniel, and myself—made a pilgrimage to MECCA. No, not the center of Islamic religion. This MECCA is in Milwaukee. Yep, you guessed it—GENCON! It was the second GENCON for **Vortex**, but it was the first time any of us had ever actually gone to the show. Wow. GENCON is an impressive show. If you've never been, go. I didn't get a whole lot of actual gaming in myself, unless you count the demo games I ran for R. Talsorian Games, but there were a lot of impressive games being run out in open gaming.

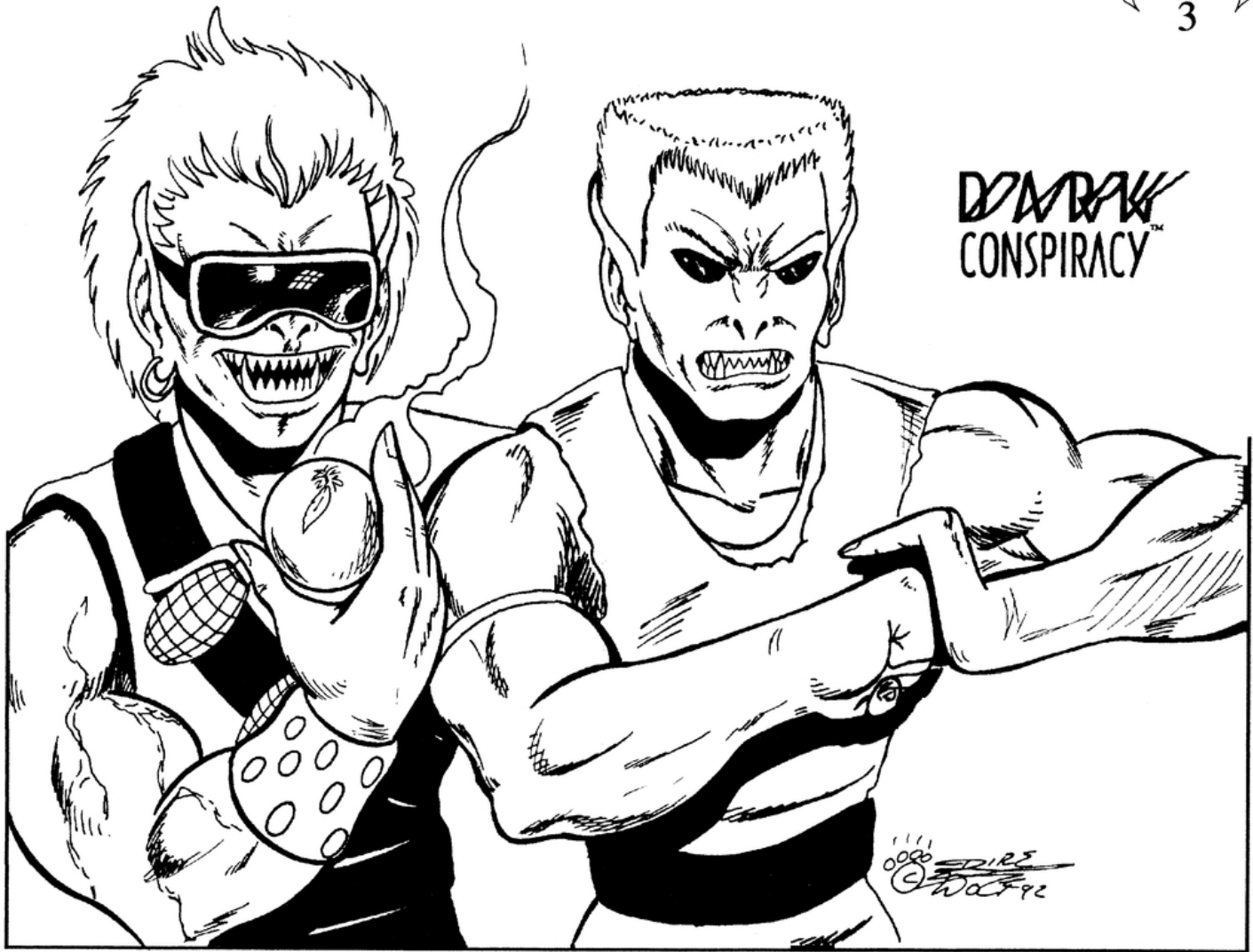
On the whole it was a very good trip for us. We met a lot of artists who will be working with **Vortex** in upcoming issues, notably Larry Elmore (we bought a piece from him for issue #8), Susan Van Camp (issue #9), and Mark Poole (issue #10). We also put faces to almost all of the names that we deal with over the phone. Good to meet you all. In honor of our first anniversary we held the first **Vortex** birthday party, complete with MST3K movies. Although only 25 or 30 people showed up, a good time, as well as pizza, soda and cake, was had by all. Attendance was down, largely because the White Wolf party was being held at the same time. But those people who went to WW's party and then came to ours said that our party was "the happening place to be." Thanks. **Vortex** wouldn't have made it this far if it weren't for you. Apart from going to the show, we went to see a Brewers game. County Stadium is a pretty cool stadium for baseball. By the way, the Brewers won.

Now, I'm sure you're all eagerly awaiting the results of the Mystery Science Theater "Match the Movie" contest we ran in issue #5's MST3K column. Well, the winner is ... NOBODY. Nobody? you say. Yes, nobody won. Not because the contest was too hard, but because that's how many of you bothered to enter. Nichts, nada, nil, zilch, zero, bubkus, goose egg, the empty set, the BIG BAGEL! Pretty simple math. We were all, especially Janice (who writes the column), pretty disappointed. Could it be that none of our readers watch MST3K? Is it that the contest WAS too tough? What is it? Let us know. Of course, some of this problem stems from the lack of letters I referred to earlier ...

And, before we get on with the show, I'd like to announce a couple of changes. Last issue (#5) we bumped the page count from 32 to 36. Next issue (#7, due in Feb. '93) we're going to bump to 44. (Yea!) Unfortunately, we are also going to bump the cover price to \$2.95. (Boo!) But the subscription rate will remain the same. (Yea!) The price increase will help us to fill those extra eight pages with really cool articles and artwork, so that **Vortex** will continue to be the best magazine we can make it. I hope none of you will stop buying **Vortex** because of it. On with the show!

Chris Williams





# On a Dark Desert Highway

Highway encounters for  
GDW's *Dark Conspiracy*™

by Keith Craxton

**S**o I was cruising down the I-15 from Las Vegas, when suddenly this red, I mean red, Edsel comes out from behind the billboard and blocks the road. And the thing is, there's this huge, I mean huge, guy driving this car. He's so bu-mongous that the car had a hole at the top for him to stick his head through! No need for air conditioning, I guess.

This is a list of developed encounters for the *Dark Conspiracy*™ road-tripper. They are meant to spice up a long highway journey, making those long drives between cities a little more "interesting."

## Goblin Gridiron

Two goblins, who call themselves Spikey and Mikey, have made off with a Pontiac Penguin, a car which should be treated as having the same stats as the Chrysler LeBoeuf. They have since painted it dirty brown, and even spray painted (in red) the word "Worg" on both sides of the Penguin.

The goblins have fitted the car with a number of gadgets they salvaged from a deserted military outpost. There is a loudspeaker connected to a microphone at the steering wheel, through which Mikey will speak to his victims. A switch at the

side of the dashboard will drop a 20' stream of oil on the road. A shotgun has been affixed just outside the driver's window, which Mikey can use to fire at oncoming traffic. The engine has a nitrous oxide attachment for those times when more acceleration is required. Next to Spikey is a pull-rope which drops a canister of gas from the trunk. This can explode into an 80 cubic foot yellow opaque cloud which can induce a coughing fit (use rules for tear gas). Finally, there is a sun roof, which allows Spikey to fire his assault rifle at other vehicles.



The goblins will approach the players' vehicle from behind, shoot bullets into their car and then try to overtake it, using the nitrous oxide if necessary. They will then dump the oil and use the gas canister in hopes of making the driver panic. After that, they will drive around their target, firing their guns, creating more oil slicks and generally trying to wear their opponent down.

Mikey will use the megaphone to make silly threats at the players. He will tell them that they are doomed, and that the Worg will bite them and chew them up (complete with demonic laugh at the end). He also has a Desert Eagle pistol with one full load of ammunition and a fragmentation grenade, just in case he finds himself out of his car.

Spikey wears large goggles to keep out the dust the car kicks up. His G11 has two loads of ammunition, and he has two fragmentation grenades as well. He also has some rotten tomatoes which he will throw at opponents. Goblins:

**St: 4 Con: 3 Agil: 7 Int: 6**  
**Edu: 2 Cha: 6 Emp: 10**  
**Init: 5 Move: 3/10/20/35**  
**Skill/Dam: 7/4 Hits: 9/18**

Both the goblins also wear flak jackets.

## Skeleton Shift

A police car with its siren blaring suddenly appears and tries to chase down the players' vehicle. The driver and passenger are actually both skeletons, but they are still dressed in policemen's uniforms. They have been animated by some dark minions to terrorize other motorists.

The police car will sideswipe the players' vehicle(s) and try to force it into the path of an overturned sedan



that is located just past a curve or slope in the road. Instead, the referee may want to place this encounter on a cliffside road, with the skeletons trying to force the other vehicle off the edge of the precipice.

The skeleton driver is considered to have a Vehicle Handling skill of 5. Both carry loaded Colt M1911A1's, and there are a pair of still operational walkie-talkies on the back seat. Other stats are as per the *Dark Conspiracy* rulebook.

## Glider Grenades

The players hear a whirring sound above them, and look up to see a glider overhead. Suddenly it drops an object and the ground explodes in front of the players' car. The glider is dropping grenades!

The glider will fly in loops, dropping one grenade on the players' vehicle(s) with every pass it makes. It carries a payload of four grenades. The glider is so small and fast that it is considered to be one class harder to hit, and any roll indicating crewmember or passenger damage on the Hull Minor Aerospace Craft Damage chart is ignored.

The controller of the glider, which might be human or a dark minion at the referee's discretion, is considered to have a Piloting skill of 6 in flying the glider. It is remote controlled, so scrambling radio waves may have some effect on the glider. It has the wingspan of a man's arm, and is white with red stripes. The hull of the vehicle is cigar-shaped, with the grenades located beneath the wings.

## The Maneater

The driver sees in the rearview mirror that a figure is running towards the car. It is an emaciated man, dressed in ragged clothes and wielding a long, sharp knife. If the players try to outrun him, they will see him speed up. His feet spin in a blur, and he is actually gaining on the car.

The man is George Reynolds, an occultist who delved in the magic arts and accidentally attracted the attention of a group of dark elves. After submitting him to numerous punishments, they decided not to kill him straight off, but to torture him slowly with their magic.

George's body was made stronger and his bodily processes sped up,



which is why he can move so quickly. He is thin because of the speed at which his body consumes food. The elves have also used their magic to keep him alive, but he will suffer hunger and pain just like anyone else.

This gnawing hunger has driven George quite mad, and he constantly repeats, "So hungry. So hungry." It is pretty obvious what his intention of stopping the car is ...

If the players open fire on him, he will seek shelter or take a short cut to meet the car further down the road. As he gets closer to their vehicle, he will weave to and fro, and try to use his knife to puncture the tires of the car. He may also ram through the car windows and try to kill someone with his knife.

George has the following adjusted statistics:

**St: 7 Con: 10 Agil: 10**  
**Init: 10 Move: Special**  
**Knife Skill: 8 Hits: 14/28**

His whole body is covered with arcane symbols that the elves drew on him, but these symbols should be meaningless to the players.

## The Hitchhiker

A hitchhiker tries to thumb down the players' vehicle(s). He is dressed in a denim jacket and jeans, a Jimi Hendrix T-shirt and dark sunglasses. He introduces himself as John Polanius and says that he is a wandering documentary maker by trade. His luggage consists of a small, expensive video camera and a bag of clothes. He asks for a ride into the nearest town, wherever that may be.

John is a bit of a pain, and arrogant as well. He is chauvinistic, and likely to make passes at any females in the group. He thinks he is still good-looking, when in fact his hairline is receding and his breath smells like rotten vegetables. He will give endless suggestions on how the players should do everything, and gets frustrated if they do not listen to him.

When they do succeed with their own ideas, he will say, "Well, my plan would have been better." If they fail, he will rant and curse at them for not

paying attention to him ("You should listen to me!"). If the players try to drop John off on the road, he will get extremely violent and draw out his Colt Python. He will then start to whine, and demand that the players not leave him ("You're not leaving me out here! No way!").

The tape presently in the camera is a movie about killer tomatoes attacking Earth. At the film's end, there is a three minute long insert showing a group of grub-shaped aliens attacking and devouring a man. After he captured this on film, John went quite mad. He ran away before the aliens detected his presence, and had been wandering aimlessly for the previous couple of days before he saw the players' car.

John has an incomplete recollection of the event, but has a severe phobia of worms, maggots and other crawling things. If questioned about where he filmed it, he will say that he does not remember. He only recalls going into the desert in a jeep with Dave, the man who was eaten in the film, and then finding himself alone.

## The Urchins

The players are driving on the road at night, when suddenly a young boy jumps out twenty feet in front of their car and lies down on the road. The vehicle is going too fast for it to brake in time to avoid hitting the child, but at the very last moment before impact, the boy jumps up and sprays the fender of the car with a spray can he is holding. Various youthful voices can be heard proclaiming, "Well done! Good job! Hah-hah, Zim, that's five you got so far!" from the roadside.

The boy belongs to a group of fifteen young urchins who perform this daredevil stunt for every vehicle that passes by them on the road. At the present time, Zim has made the most sprays, and is thus their leader.

The urchins will run off if the players try to talk to them, hiding behind the wreckage of cars and whatever vegetation there is in the area. However, some of them can be attracted back by the lure of food or toy-like things.

The urchins are vagrants, orphans and abandoned children who now perform various wild feats for kicks. More than one of their members has died a horrible death. One was crushed to death by a truck, another was swept off the top of a train, and yet another was blown to shreds in a minefield. No matter what the fatalities, the urchins continue with their stunts.

They have a small lot half a mile from here where they keep chickens and grow potatoes. They also have a small power generator which they use for lighting and cooking purposes, and an old Winnebago trailer serves as their home and sleeping area.

The urchins will not want to go to the cities, but Zim will ask the players to take his "sister", Rena, and put her in a better place. He will try to bargain with the party good-humoredly in order to obtain something in return for her. Initially, he will ask for a gun, and will work his way down from there. He will settle for food as a last resort.

The other urchins can not be persuaded to leave with the party, and most will begin to lose interest in the whole situation. They will run off, even if someone in the party is talking to them.

Rena seems to be of mixed African-Latino blood. She has sad eyes, yellow-ribboned braided hair and a thin, reluctant smile. Dressed in a dirty green sweater and torn jeans, she holds on to a Raggedy Ann doll she calls Emma. Her only other possession is a silver Kennedy coin that Zim gave her for good luck.

She has no recollection of her parents, and is not even sure if Zim is truly her brother. Her first memories are of sleeping in the trailer with all the other urchins watching over her; she can not recollect anything previous to that. Remarkably intelligent for her age, she has the skill of Human Empathy at level 7, though she does not realize it.

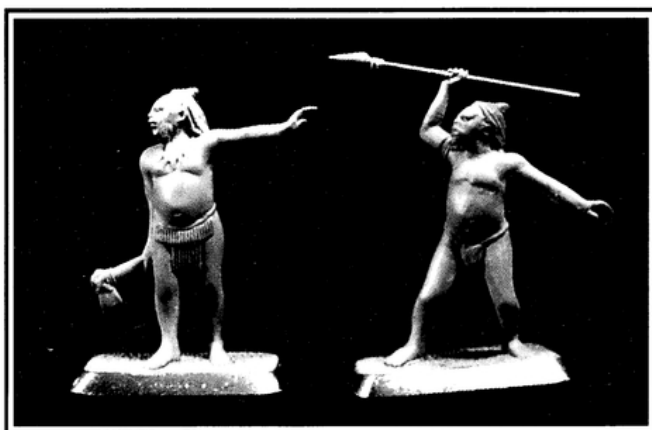




# The Ancient Folk

**D**uring the Second Age the men of Numenor sailed from the Island of the Star to the coasts of Middle-earth and made many settlements. They cleared the great forests that then occupied the north west of the land, and prized its timber for their shipbuilding, paying little heed to the small indigenous people of the area, whom they drove from their forest dwellings to more secluded areas inland. The Woses, as these small secretive folk were later known, originally occupied a great tract from the point where the White Mountains curve down into the peninsula of Andrast, north and east to the gap of Rohan and east again through all the wooded uplands of the Ered Nimrais. Their woodcraft, unexcelled by any other race of man and by few of the Elves, together with their shyness of other peoples, soon made them a folk of legend in the minds of the newcomers, and eventually their existence as a real race was doubted by many. In the late Third age their numbers were very few and their settlements small and isolated: that in the Druduan Forest at the eastern end of the White Mountains, probably being the largest.

The Numenoreans settled in the Second Age, in north west Middle-earth, and buried their noble dead in round barrows on the North Downs, which later formed the northern boundary of the successor state of Cardolan. An Edain burial place in the First Age, the Barrow Downs were used extensively in the Second and Third Ages by the Numenoreans and their successors, as a resting place for their departed Lords. Then in the year after the great plague, (1637 T.A.), a great evil entered the place from Angmar. A supernatural foulness and pestilence, worse than the plague itself, seeped into the land, and transformed the sleeping dead into the terrible Barrow-wights. The awful forms of the dead nobility of Cardolan, Arthedain and Numenor, animated by the foul magics of the Witch-king, turned the downs into a place of dread, especially at night, when the wights held dominion above ground as well as beneath.



**M248 Ghan-Buri-Ghan and Wose spearman**

Ghan was the old chieftain of the Woses during the War of the Ring. He gave safe passage and escort to the Men of Rohan, through the Druduan forest on their ride to the relief of Minas Tirith. Like all his folk, he is small and squat in stature, with little in the way of clothing and ornamentation. His necklace of animal teeth is probably connected in some way with the animistic religion of the Woses. His weapon is a primitive stone axe, though what his people lack in technology, is easily compensated by their incredible skill in tracking and subterfuge, making them formidable opponents on their own ground. His companion is a hunter carrying a flint headed spear, a light weapon designed for speed and distance, to slow its prey in the chase, rather than to kill outright.

Although not represented on the figures, the Woses, whilst wearing little in the way of clothing, often decorate their bodies with dyes and tattoos, the patterns of which are stylised animal and plant shapes.



**M251 Undead warrior**

Countless warriors have fallen on the battle plain of Dagorlad, or in the western marshes, throughout the long and numerous wars of the Second and Third Age. Similarly, the dead warriors of the noble houses of Arthedain and Cardolan, have been laid to rest for many years in the barrow graves in Eriador. This figure represents either the animated wight of such a warrior in the Barrow Downs, a lesser noble, still attired in mail and war gear, or a long dead warrior from the Battle plain, possessed and hideously re-invigorated by the pestilential spirits of the Dark-lord in Mordor.

**M250 Corpse candle**

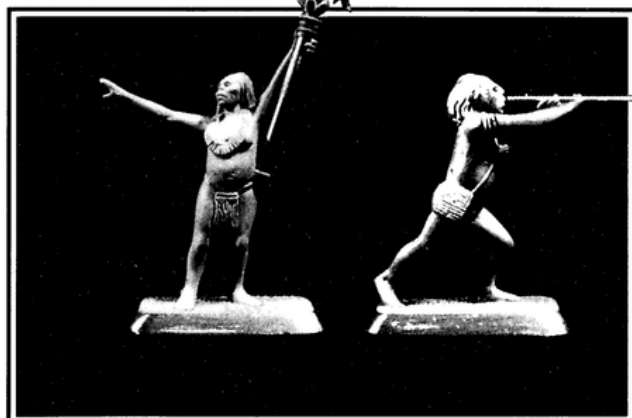
In the same manner as the foulness of Angmar has seeped into the barrow-downs, so the evil and baneful spirits of Mordor have leached into the neighbouring regions, from Dagorlad and "The Dead marshes" to the area of swamps where the Mouths of the Entwash meet the Great River. Lurking in the putrid and stagnant pools the Corpse Candles appear to travellers both above and below the water. Their hair is entwined with weed and their faces are baleful and horrifying. They exude a pale light with which to draw their living victims toward them. Once entranced, their victims meet a watery death.



**M249 Wose warrior and Wose priestess**

The blowpipe, along with the light spear and the bow, is one of the favoured weapons of the Woses. For a people whose plant knowledge is as great as theirs, poisons and toxins of many kinds are known and used in this weapon. It is silent and if required, deadly. The "Gorgun" - or Orcs - and the Men of Rohan, who of old were wont to hunt them for sport, are their traditional enemies and memories of maltreatment at the hands of both races, have made the Woses cunning and effective opponents. Succession among the Woses is through the females who probably hold an important place in the religious organisation of this people. The priestess is depicted carrying a totem wand which has a carved head similar to that of the stone carved animals. Her body would probably be decorated with pictograms of such animals on ceremonial occasions.

"Pukel-men". Their religion is closely year and probably with their prey decorated with pictograms of







Staying on the right side  
of the law in your  
Superhero campaign

# Superheroes on Both Sides of the Law

by Steve  
Feuelleman

**H**ow do you handle players who keep killing your favorite villains instead of arresting them? What can you, as a player, do to keep on the right side of the law within a superhero world? The first half of this article will discuss the relationship between the legal system and the player character.

In dealing with criminals and the law, it is best to remember that player characters are usually vigilantes, not police, and that even guilty people are entitled to certain legal rights. Since most hero-types are just private citizens in the eyes of the law, the only arrest they can make is a Citizen's Arrest. The rules for this are simple:

**1)** You must have certain personal knowledge of a crime. This means that you must have seen the crime committed, and the person who committed it. Seeing a person running from the scene is not enough. An eyewitness account is not enough. If you encounter such a situation, get the witness to perform the Citizen's Arrest, since you can't. You can help restrain or subdue such criminals for the person who is making the arrest, but you cannot make the arrest yourself.

**2)** You must identify yourself, and tell the person that they are being placed under Citizen's Arrest. If you fail to do this, they can accuse you of assault and battery. How could they surrender, if you never ask them to, or tell them why they should? How do they know that you aren't just some costumed nut starting a fight?

**3)** You may use "reasonable and necessary force" in making the arrest. This means using the minimum force needed to make the arrest. Typically, normal people should be dealt with more carefully than super-powered



opponents: Force which is "reasonable and necessary" for bringing in Dr. Devious' Killer Robot would be neither reasonable nor necessary in apprehending a drunk driver. If an opponent uses a deadly weapon, such as a knife or a gun, you may respond with similar force if, and only if, you are acting in defense of your life, or the life of another person. - Generally, when dealing with normal opponents, if you hurt them enough to put them in a hospital, you probably used too much force.

Note that once you have placed someone under Citizen's Arrest, you should summon the police. The officer *must* cooperate with you, and take the person in. You will have to prove your case to the court, but you don't need to prove it to the police. That's the law.

"But what if we don't actually see the crime committed?" you ask. In that case you should call the police and start gathering evidence. If you're lucky, the villain will start shooting

when he sees you, giving you cause to arrest him. Shooting at you is also a crime, called assault with a deadly weapon. In any case, pictures of the scene and tape recordings or notes made on the scene are very useful to the police. Follow the suspect, so you can identify him to the police. *Do not* attack, interfere with, or threaten these people. You could be the one who lands in jail.

In dealing with the courts, there are a few difficult spots. First, the person you are testifying against has the legal right to face his or her accuser, and to cross examine witnesses. This means that you may be called upon to answer any question the defense attorney cares to ask, if he can show that it is or might be relevant to the case. It also means that you may be ordered to appear without mask or disguise, and give your real name. This is a needed part of the legal process, since it gives innocent people a chance to imply that a person is lying on the stand by showing a reason for him to lie. Perhaps that masked superhero works at the same



company, and is hoping to get the accused person's job. The only common exception to this rule is in the case of a witness whose life may be endangered if their true identity is revealed. Typically, once a Hero has established a reputation, he will be permitted to testify under his Hero name under this ruling.

The other point of confusion in dealing with the courts is the one of admissible or inadmissible evidence. Technically, since you are not officers of the law or of the court, you don't need search warrants to gather evidence. Records you obtained from a criminal's safe may well be admissible as evidence, but you can find yourself in jail for trespassing, breaking and entering, and burglary because of the way that you got them. So it is for your protection that the courts will often treat illegally obtained evidence as if it had been obtained by the police, declare it inadmissible, and forget about charging you with the crimes (unless you showed a truly blatant disregard for the law).

In an interesting sidenote, most cities have a law against what is called an "unclassified misdemeanor." An unclassified misdemeanor is, among other things, attempting to disguise or conceal your identity. That's right, wearing a superhero mask in public is against the law in most places. This leads us to the final point: Trying to run role-playing superheroes under the laws of the real world doesn't work too well. Responsible behavior on the part of player characters is a must, but if you end up being afraid to do anything for fear of losing the character to a prison cell, there is a problem with your game.

Dealing with the law, and the legal system, in superhero games can be an interesting sidelight. It should not, however, be allowed to become a dominant theme.

## Superhero Characters Outside the Law

"Why can't I just kill him? I know he's been pushing drugs to children, selling weapons to Iran, and smuggling classified information to foreign

governments. If I arrest him, he'll just get a fancy lawyer and get off. Why waste the time?" Have you ever heard this type of complaint? Perhaps you have made this complaint yourself. How can you deal with rich criminals who seem beyond the reach of the law, without running afoul of the law yourself? Read on. This section will deal with running and playing in a vigilante-type superhero campaign.

To begin with, what are the advantages of running a character who operates outside the law? It turns out that there are only a few, since your character must still stay heroic enough to keep the GM satisfied that you aren't running a villain. Remember that you still have to make a fair effort to bring criminals in alive. Even the most bloodthirsty referee will balk at a wholesale slaughter of his villains, if only because creating a constant supply of villains is hard work.

One of the advantages would have to do with the acceptability of evidence you gather. Nobody expects a "criminal" to obey the laws regarding search and seizure of evidence, and none would consider the character to be an officer of the court. If you leave a set of pictures and ledgers on the front door of the police department, with or without the criminal, they will likely be accepted as evidence without regard to whether you were trespassing when you took the pictures, or whether the ledgers were



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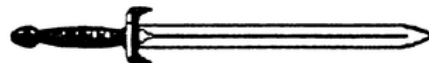
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stolen. The police have every right to search their own front doorway, and they have no way of knowing how the evidence was gathered.

The counterpoint to this is that you must gather even more evidence than a respected hero would, since you can't take the stand to testify against the criminals you catch.

The other big advantage in operating outside the law is that you do not need to be quite so careful of a criminal's rights. If the criminal thinks you are a crook too, he isn't about to start asking for a lawyer, or insisting on the right to remain silent.

The problem with this is you must be even more careful that you have the right person, since you can't beat information out of a person who doesn't have any. GMs get upset when PCs torture innocent bystanders.

The final problem with running an unsung hero is that the police, and other superheroes, will try to arrest you at every opportunity. You could find yourself in a shootout with people you really don't want to hurt. You will get very little cooperation from the public, and none at all from the police. You can't even tell your mother what you do in your spare time!

From the GM's point of view, vigilante characters pose a different problem. To incorporate them into your game you must either run solo adventures for the vigilante, or else the rest of the characters will have to ignore the fact that one of their teammates is a wanted criminal. The only other alternative is to run a game where everyone is a hunted criminal. This seems to be the best overall solution.

The general problems with such a game is that players may start to go

bloodthirsty on you. Villains who look like they might get away will often be killed out of hand, and any who start arguing that there is no evidence will have a life expectancy measured in seconds. This can make your life miserable. Not only does this destroy any kind of game continuity you might have, it also means that you have to keep inventing new villains all the time. In some game systems, that can be a lot of work!

To keep this from happening, let the characters run into people who aren't really guilty of anything except being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Let the PCs' "street contacts" send them after the wrong person once in a while. If the players start butchering opponents, then the opponents should start shooting to kill also. Why should someone surrender, when they know they will be killed anyway?

As a final barrier to mass murder, enforce a rule that states that any truly "villainous act" can result in a player's

character becoming an NPC villain. This means that killing people who have surrendered, or who are unconscious, is cold-blooded murder, and will get them in trouble. Disposing of witnesses, imprisoning bystanders who "know too much", or generally nuking a neighborhood is a serious no-no. It doesn't matter whether the crime can be proven in game terms or not. The final arbiter of this rule is *you*, the GM, and there is nothing that happens in the game that can be hidden from you. Issue a warning on the first offense, and perhaps even the second. On the third time, however, thank them for giving you such an effective villain, take the character sheet, and start planning. Some players don't like having to track down and capture or kill one of their own creations.

It takes an honest PC to live outside the law. It can get hairy sometimes, but it is never dull.



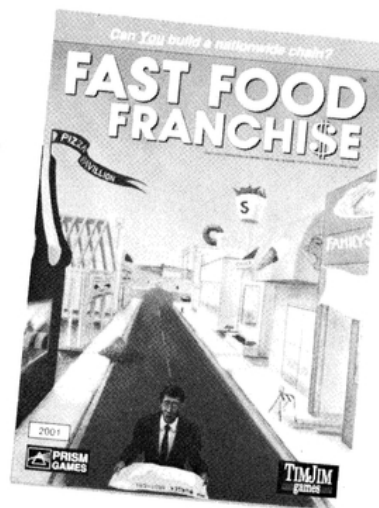


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The praise for **Fast Food Franchise** keeps rolling in... Alan Bigos from Michigan writes: "It plays fast yet still requires strategy. This is the game Monopoly™ should have been." Tomohiko Tagami from Japan tells us: "This game like Monopoly™. This game like Acquire™. I love both." Kristin Looney from D.C. says: "I'm hooked! I want to play it again and again..." **Vortex** magazine concludes: "Fast Food Franchise is a fun game with a lot of replay value."

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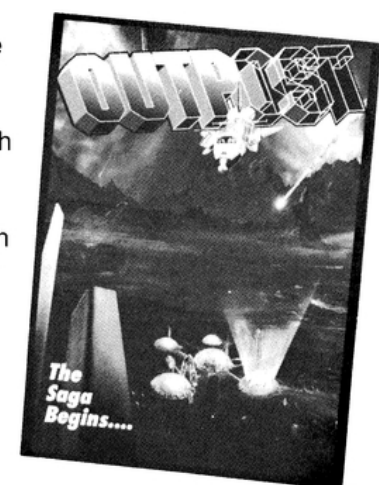
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# Convention News

**DALLASCON '92 WINTERFEST**, November 20-22, 1992. The largest gaming convention in the southwest will be held at the LeBaron Hotel in Dallas, Tx. There will be over 200 gaming events including tournaments in *AD&D*, *Axis & Allies*, *Battletech*, *Star Fleet Battles*, *Talisman*, *WH40K*, and others. Other activities include a dealer room, movies, seminars and an auction. For more info write to: DallasCon, P.O. Box 867623, Plano, Tx 75086.

**WINTERGAMEFEST '93 - PART V**, January 22-24, 1993. Held once again at the South Towne Mall Community Center in Sandy, Utah. Tournaments include *Abalone*, *AD&D*, *Battletech*, *Dark Conspiracy*, *GURPS*, *Mythus*, *SFB*,

*Space Marine*, and *WH40K*. Lots of game demos are planned including *Amber*, *Car Wars*, *Ogre* and *Space Hulk*. Other events include miniature painting contest, open gaming and a gamers swap meet. The GDW demo team will be on hand and Michael Stackpole will be making a guest appearance. Pre-registration is \$7 for all three days; \$10 at the door. For more info call (800) 571-8923 or write to IGC, P.O. Box 512, Roy, Ut 84067-0512.

**WARCON® '93**, February 5-7, 1993. This, the 19th occurrence of the WarCon® convention, will be held in the Memorial Student Center, Texas A&M University, College Station, Tx. Registration fees are \$12 pre-reg, \$15 at the door. There will be prize tour-

naments in *AD&D*, *Advanced Civilization*, *ASL*, *Battletech*, *Car Wars*, *Diplomacy*, *1830/1835*, *SFB*, *Torg*, and *Victory in the Pacific/War at Sea*. In addition there will be a large dealer room, Japanese animation, 24-hour open gaming, and a games auction. For more information contact: MSC NOVA, Box J-1, Memorial Student Center, Texas A&M, College Station, Tx 77844.

**DUNDRACON XVII**, February 12-15, 1993. For the second year in a row, DunDraCon will be held at the San Ramon Marriott off of I680. Call the Marriott at (800) 228-9290 and mention DunDraCon for special rates. There will be tournaments, seminars, a painting contest, a flea market, SCA

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## WE'RE HERE, LIVE ON THE SCENE OF ANOTHER TRAGEDY IN THE LOS ANGELES METROPLEX...



Medias are the focus of our latest issue of **INTERFACE Magazine**. In this issue we cover Medias in *Cyberpunk 2020®*, *Media Profiles*, *New Media Tech*, *Alternative Media Packages*, and *Pirate Media* in 2020.

In addition, we offer GM's a few alternatives to letting the players walk away from a scenario richer and happier than when they started; after all, players should be *Fading the Consequences* of their actions. We also have variant rules on character classes in general. And yes, we still have reviews of barely viewable cyberpunk movies, letters from the braindead masses, and stupid survey forms nobody wants to fill out. We're still not perfect. **INTERFACE** will be on sale in August. Sold in fine games stores near you.

NOT.

Subscriptions to **INTERFACE Magazine** are \$16.00 for four issues. Make checks payable to Prometheus Press, Inc. 919 C Santa Clara Avenue, Alameda, CA 94501-3429. Residents of California, please add 8.25% sales tax. Please indicate the issue you are starting from.

# INTERFACE

The Magazine for the Cyberpunk™ Enthusiast



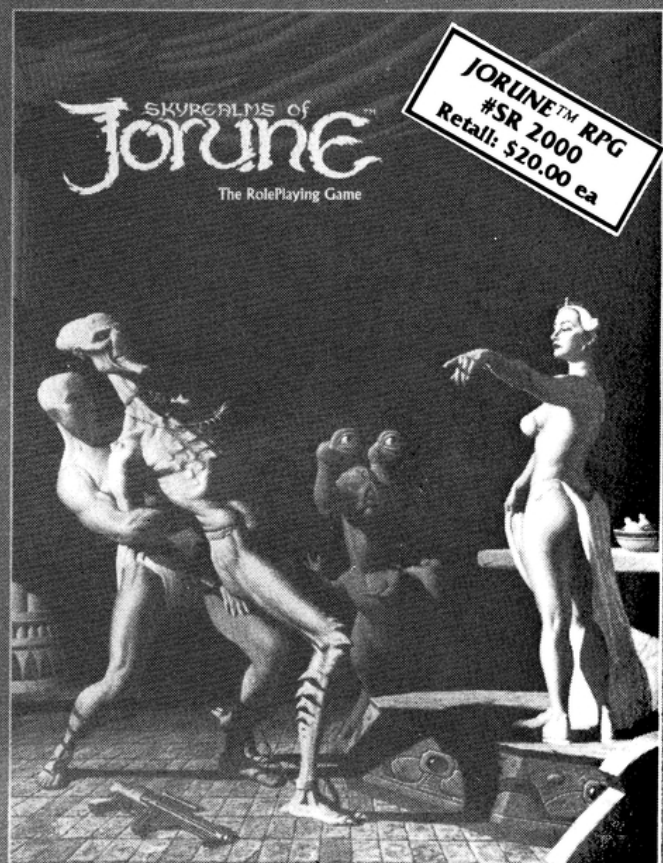
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demos, arcade games, and more. Registration is \$25 before February 1 and \$30 at the door. For more info, write to DunDraCon Inc., 1125 Neilson St., Albany, Ca 94706.

**ORCCON 16**, February 12-15, 1993. This convention will be held at the L.A. Airport Hyatt Hotel. Events will include all types of family, strategy and adventure board gaming. You can find bargains at the flea market, auction, and exhibitor areas. There will also be seminars, demonstrations, and special guests such as Larry Elmore and Joe Miranda, the editor for S&T. Contact StrategiCon, P.O. Box 3849, Torrance, Ca 90510-3849 or call (310) 326-9440 for more and immediate details.

**HURRICON**, February 26-28, 1993. Held at the Holiday Inn in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, this convention is loaded to the gills with special guests. You can see Ray Aldridge, George Alec Effinger, Margaret Weis, Douglas Niles, David Dorman and Larry Elmore. Events will include an

SCA demonstration, open and tournament gaming, video rooms, a USAF Space Command demonstration, and more. For room information, call the Holiday Inn at (800) HOLIDAY, and mention HurriCon to get reduced rates. Convention registration is \$25 until February 1, and \$30 at the door. There will also be daily passes available! For further information, please write to Steven Earl Yoder, c/o Bards Tales Book Shoppe, 109D Racetrack Road, Fort Walton Beach, Fl 32547, or call (904) 862-7323.

**JAXCON '93**, February 26-28, 1993. This convention will be held at the Radisson Inn at the Jacksonville International Airport in Jacksonville, Florida. All kinds of games will be featured from wargames to live action role-playing. Other activities include a painted miniatures contest, an award ceremony, a flea market, a dealer area, and lots of door prizes. Registration: \$12/weekend before Jan. 31, 1993; or \$18/weekend, \$8/day for Friday or Saturday, or \$6 Sunday at

the door. For more information write to: JaxCon, P.O. Box 4423, Jacksonville, Fl 32201; or call (904) 778-1730.

**ORIGINS '93**, July 1-4, 1993. The annual National Gaming Convention and Exposition comes to Fort Worth, Texas. It will be held at the Tarrant County Convention Center. There will be over 200 booths, hundreds and hundreds of gaming events to choose from, seminars by the industry's notables, a giant auction, and lots more. For more information write to: GEMCO, P.O. Box 609, Randallstown, Md 21133.

Announcements must be sent in a minimum of four months before a convention takes place. **Vortex** is not responsible for errors in convention announcements.

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A Ruby/TFOS adventure  
for six teens, one ref,  
two 2-litre bottles of  
coke and a 1/2 pound  
bag of M&M's

# What I did on my Summer Vacation

by Michael MacDonald

## Where This Stuff Comes From

*All of the settings in this adventure come from the ZBS Foundation action/adventure/drama/comedy radio series "The Adventures of Ruby" and "The Adventures of Ruby 2." They were used with the express permission of Tercel Inc. Thanks are due to Lex Nakashima of Tercel and Tom Lopez of ZBS for their help. The "Ruby" series are a great deal of fun and very entertaining. The author highly recommends that you obtain a copy of the series, available directly from ZBS, a not-for-profit arts organization. You can write them at RR#1 Box 1201, Fort Edward, NY 12828, or call them at (800) 395-2549.*

## Welcome to Summa Nulla

Summa Nulla (the high point of nothing) is the crossroads of the Galaxy, possibly the single most popular planet (other than Earth) in the entire area of known space, at least with the grown-ups. While Earth remains a retreat for alien teens, the planet Summa Nulla was a haven for "serious minded" adults fleeing from the madness of the invasion of the teens.

Summa Nulla has six moons, of which three are visible in the sky at any one time. A large area of the planet is covered by the Great Zee-boos, a dense jungle which holds the lost cities of the Nullians, the ancient culture that once lived on Summa Nulla.

Summa Nulla is about a three-day spaceter ride away from Earth, and now it's summer vacation. The adventure is set on the planet of Summa Nulla during the first week of summer vacation. The plotline follows the abduction of the Android Sisters, the most popular singing duo in the known universe.

## The M&M Rule

Yep, that's right, the M&M's are actually part of the adventure. Keep a sharp eye on the bag, though; I assure you that the players will soon be attempting to sneak a few from you.

**How to use the M&M's:** Every time one of your players makes a joke,

or does something funny, or contributes to the plot in any way, give him an M&M:

- \*A Tan or Brown one if the joke is feeble.
- \*A Red one if it gets at least one person (other than himself) to laugh.
- \*A Yellow one if he gets a chuckle out of multiple people.
- \*An Orange one if everyone laughs some at the joke.
- \*A Green one if he really cracks everyone up.

Remember that the M&M's are for actions in the game as well, if a character's player comes up with something really cool or funny.

Make sure all the M&M's are displayed on the table, well within sight of everyone in the game.

### But don't let them eat them!

Tell the players that the M&M's are to be kept intact until the end of the game, that they will be important to cash in at the end of the adventure. Keep an eye on possible M&M forgeries, and be cautious of sudden trips to the local store during a break in the game.

By the way, at various points during the game there will be an M&M reward, listing a certain number and color of M&M's to be given to players who react the way that they should in a TFOS game – funny. And remember, this is a comedy after all, so encourage your players to ham it up ... it just might pay off.

## Background

The Teens are approaching Summa Nulla, the Club Med of planets, for their summer vacation. Their parents have already flown on, leaving the Teens to follow in their own spaceter. The summer stretches out like an endless expanse of non-stop partying.

Summa Nulla has the reputation of having something for everyone – the Digital Circus, a high tech band of Gypsies for the technically minded, the Casino City on the Monarch Isles for those looking for action. And, of course, the opening act of the Android Sisters' galactic tour.

The players know that the Android Sisters are a pair of female androids both named Angel. The Sisters specialize in "songs" of electronic despair, although their songs are little more than strange recitations set to electronically synthesized music. Some people consider the Sisters to be inane and stupid, but if you really listen to the lyrics of their songs you'll find a deeper meaning.

Typical Teeners' attitudes towards the Sisters are as follows:

**Male PCs** – The two most desirable "women" in the world, you would give your entire Sega game library to kiss one of their little plastic toes.

**Female PCs** – Two gaudy robots built by some horny nerd, no talent and less brains.

It's a good bet that all of the male PCs are there to catch the opening act



of the tour (their parents got tickets through a lottery). The female PCs may be there to keep an eye on their boyfriends, or even to make time with the Aurorians (handsome and classy aliens, known to sail on the solar winds of Summa Nulla.)

All italic text is stuff to read to the players.

## Crash Landing

As the players, packed into their spacer, are heading for the landing bays at the Hotel Nullian, they see the following:

*Across your bow suddenly shoots a sleek pink spaceship, with the logo "Android Sisters Galactic Tour ... We are watching you" stencilled near the cargo door. This first ship is followed by three black ships, who are shooting at it.*

The Android Sisters! Under attack! Pile heaps of shame and disgrace on any red blooded male Teen who does not instantly leap to the rescue.

*As you turn your ship to aid the Sisters', you see a small dark form bail out of the pink rocket. It seems to plummet screaming toward the Great Zeeboos. It's too far away to see if it was one of the Sisters.*

The players now have two choices, to either go after the form that bailed out, or fight the black ships attacking the Sisters' ship.

① If they attack: The enemy has a Driving Stat of 5, and a "Blast Interloper" Knack of 3, and there are as many of them as are needed to shoot down the spacer. Go to the next section (but run the fight anyway, just to make your players feel like they have a chance).

② If they descend: Just as they are nearing a clearing to land, a blast comes from one of the enemy ships and takes out the spacer's thrusters. The Teens plummet toward the jungle far below.

**Insert panic and screaming here.** To the best panic and about-to-die scene, reward one green M&M.

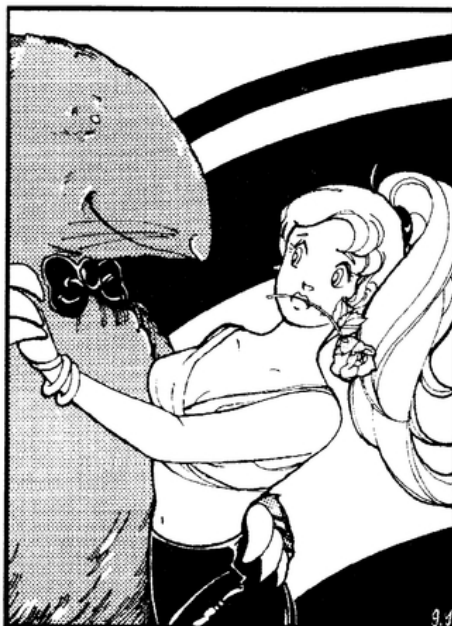
Then read them the following description:

*As the buzzards perch on the blasted wing of the spacer, and the*

*skeletal figure in the black robe in the back seat begins to chuckle, the spacer slams into the ground in the Great Zeeboos and goes right through it. The buzzards flap off in disappointment and the figure in the robe picks up his scythe and politely steps out the back door. You realize that you are plummeting down what appears to be a deep shaft, with layers of a huge underground city passing by on either side!*

## In the Great Zeeboos Tango with the Moles

Eventually, the players will notice their spacer slowing to a near stop, about a mile down. As the crippled remains of the spacer seem to come to a rest on a large landing pad, the Teens notice that they are surrounded by a legion of man-sized Moles!



*The Moles are about 6 1/2 feet tall, with long sharp claws on their hands and feet. They seem to be standing around a large machine that looks like a cross between a mix-master and a '57 Chevy.*

The largest one, who seems to be their leader, steps forward to address the Teens. At first his attempts at communication will be unintelligible grunts. Fnord. Some of the other Moles will then produce items which look like old style hair dryers and mo-

tion for the players to place them on their heads.

These devices are translators and will allow the players to communicate with the Moles. Play up the mysterious aspect; for all our heroes know these devices may be hair dryers. Then again, they may be some sort of hideous mind control device. The Moles are not forceful, but are very insistent that the players put these things on. How long are their claws...? Award any Teen who volunteers to put one on a red M&M.

Once the translators are on all of the players the head Mole will speak. "Let me MOLEify your fears, we are not MOLEicious." (All the Moles laugh.)

The Moles speak slowly, choosing their words with care, and frequently use bad Mole puns. The best way to earn their friendship is by coming up with the best (worst?) Mole puns the players can. Remember, give M&M's for really good ones.

After a long discussion (Make it up. You're the referee, remember?), the Teens will be invited to the Festival of the Moles, a celebration that this group of Moles was going to when the players dropped in on them. There they can talk to Molierre, the chief Mole. He can answer any questions that the Teeners have.

If asked what the machine is, the Moles will reply that it's an ancient Nullian game called "Cosmic Pachinko," and that it's been broken for some time.

When the players reach the center of the city (about three hours walk with the Moles), they begin to hear music. They enter a large chamber with about one hundred Moles, all doing the tango!

*The Moles seem to be having the time of their lives, dancing their feet (claws?) off. They are all dancing the tango, and before any of you can react, you are swept up into the dance as well.*

(M&M time: Give any of the players that go along and dance with Moles two red M&M's.)

Stats for an average Mole

Smarts: 4 Bod: 6

R.W.P.: ? Luck: 3

Driving: 1 Looks: 2 (4 to Moles)

Cool: 4 Bonk: 6

Powers: Dig through anything

Knacks: Dance the Tango: +3

Make Mole Pun: +6

Traits: Jovial and Friendly

After the first round of dances is over the players will be introduced to Moliere, the tallest of the Moles here at 7 feet +.

He has the following information (which is best received by the players engaging him in a Mole-pun conversation):

- \*The Android Sisters are due to appear at the Digital Circus in two days.
- \*The ships that attacked the players belonged to the Slimys, a race of genetically engineered assassins.
- \*Slimys always work for hire.
- \*The person who bailed out of the Android Sisters' ship was a Kapoorian named Rodant (pronounced Roh-DAHNT).
- \*The Kapoorian is being brought to the chief Mole even as they speak.
- \*The Moles have a tunnel that leads to a spot near the Digital Circus.

By the end of the conversation Rodant makes his entry.

*There is a commotion near the back of the chamber, as two large Moles drag a rat-faced little man forward to Moliere. Rodant is whining and whimpering about his broken tail (which is bent at about a 90 degree angle). As he approaches the spot where Moliere is talking to you, he spots you all and seems to toughen up.*

Rodant will then put on a tough act for the Teens and Moliere, and tell them the following story.

*"I am the agent and booker for the Sisters on their latest tour, and I was making final arrangements for the concert tomorrow night when I heard a noise come from their dressing room.*

*"I entered to find this note." He hands you a note, covered in a light green slime. It reads:*

*To whom it may concern:*

*I have the Sisters, and if you try to warn anyone I will cut them up for spare parts. I want 500,000,000.00 or you will never see them again.*

*The Villain.*

*Ha Ha Ha*

Rodant will then attempt to hire the PCs to escort him back to the Digital Circus, offering them:

- \*1000 dollars each in cash (on arrival)
- \*A date with one or both of the Sisters (to the male PCs)
- \*A shot in the Sisters' back-up band (for any with dreams of stardom)
- \*Any other outrageous lie the Teeners will be suckered into falling for.

If asked why he was shot down by the Slimys, he will tell the PCs that he assumes that they are working for whoever kidnapped the sisters.

Stats for Rodant

Kapoor:

Smarts: 3

Bod: 2

R.W.P.: 4

Luck: 3

Driving: 4

Looks: 2

Cool: 1

Bonk: 4

Powers: None

Knacks: Whine to Annoy: +6,

Doublecross +4

Traits: Sneaky

Notes: Rodant speaks in a soft nasal voice similar to Peter Lorre's. Generally he will be sly and unctuous, but when in

pain or danger he tends to shriek. Rodant is motivated in all his actions by his insatiable desire for money. He hates to be called rodent instead of Rodant, and will loudly correct anyone who makes that mistake.

If the PCs agree to join Kapoor, Moliere will lead them to the entrance to the tunnel that goes to the Digital Circus. He will wish them luck, and give them an invitation to return whenever they wish. This invitation does not extend to Kapoor.

## Look Out Behind You!

The long trip down the tunnel is disturbed by only two events. For the first read the following to your players, after about three hours of walking.

*Rodant stops to take a rest, and when he does so, he attempts to sit where none of you can see him.*

Have all players make a Smarts roll. If they beat a 7, read the following. If not, go on to "Cave-in."





Rodant sits with his back to you. He seems to be talking into a walkie-talkie. Near the end, you hear the words, "Don't worry, no one will find them."

If the Teeners confront Kapoor, he will deny ever making the statement. If they harm him, or threaten him in any way, his eyes will get wide with fear, and he'll say: "Look out behind you!"

If the players look, he will drop a bonk grenade, and run down the tunnel toward the Circus. If the players don't look, the Slimys behind them will open up with their Smith-Hitachi Godzilla blasters. (Don't ya love this game?)

Stats for an average Slimy:

Smarts: 3      Bod: 6  
R.W.P.: ?      Luck: 4  
Driving: 3      Looks: 1 (5 to Slimys)

Cool: 3      Bonk: 3  
Powers: None  
Knacks: Terrify Victim +4,  
Blast Things +3  
Traits: Slimy and Nasty

There are as many Slimys on the attack as there are Teens. If the Slimys win the fight, the Teens are dragged off to their lair. (Get out a copy of the Aliens boardgame and play "Escape from the Slimys", then come back to the adventure at the Digital Circus).

If the Teens win, by the time the fight is over, all that will be left of the Slimys will be a thin layer of goo all over the Teens and the tunnel, and Kapoor will be long gone.

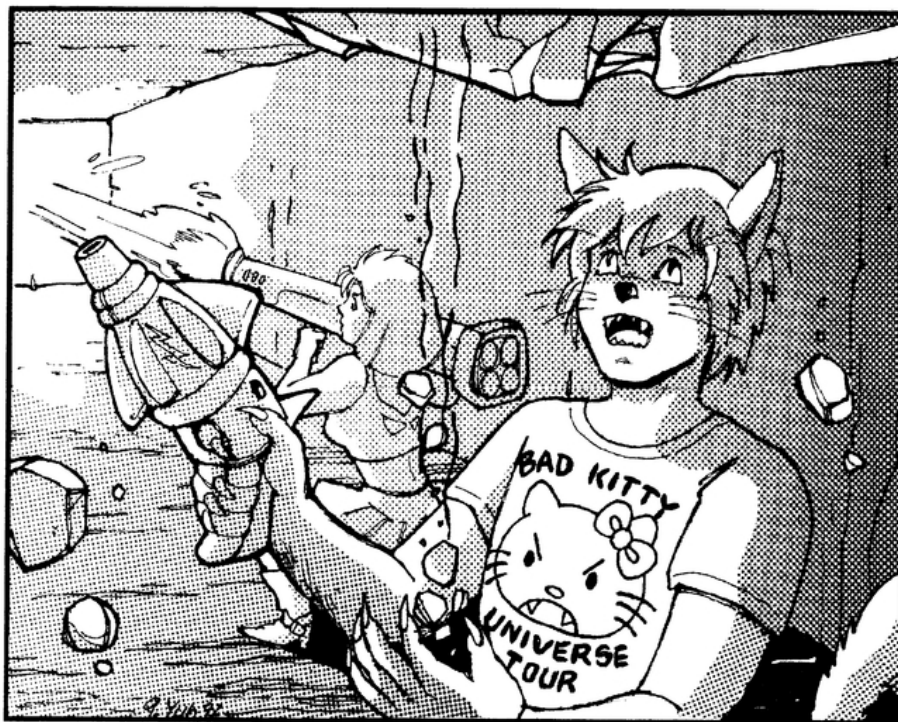
## Cave-in

If Kapoor is still with the Teens, Read the following:

*Kapoor walks off to "freshen up." Just as he rounds the corner, you hear a blood-curdling scream. "The Slimys!"*

The Teens have two options: run or fight.

① If they run: *You run as fast as your legs will carry you. Soon you see a speck of daylight ahead, and then you sprawl face first into the workshop of a startled young man who is working on a robot.*



② If they fight: There are twice as many Slimys as last time (see Look out behind you!), and as the battle rages, the ceiling in the tunnel begins to crack.

At this point wing it. Hopefully the falling ceiling will crush the Slimys, and the PCs will make it to the same exit as described above.

If Kapoor was caught in "Look Out Behind You!": *As you walk you begin to see a spot of light ahead, and hear the sounds of machinery.*

*It's the Digital Circus! You're home free!*

*Then you here Kapoor's voice, whining from the darkness, "You won't spoil my employers' plan. The Android Sisters will never sing again!"*

There is a large explosion, and the tunnel begins to collapse. If wisdom is with them, the Teeners will run, to exit in And/Or's lab.

## The Digital Circus:

The Teeners will exit the tunnel into the workshop of And/Or (pronounced Andor), a young tech at the Digital Circus. He is young and handsome, and does regular business with the Moles. He will ask the characters how they came to be in the Mole tunnel in the first place.

Stats for And/Or:

Smarts: 6      Bod: 3  
R.W.P.: 3      Luck: 4  
Driving: 3      Looks: 5  
Cool: 4      Bonk: 4  
Powers: None  
Knacks: Fix Anything +6,  
Make Anything +6  
Traits: Friendly

And/Or has the following information:

- \*The Android Sisters haven't been seen in two days.
- \*If the concert doesn't happen, the media on Summa Nulla will take a serious financial loss.
- \*Kapoor was not the Android Sisters' agent. Their agent is still in the Circus.
- \*The Concert is tonight!

And/Or is willing to give the players whatever help they need. He will also take them to meet with the Android Sisters' agent.

The Digital Circus is a huge technology stockpile. Should any players need to replace any lost gadgets, they can buy them here.

Once again, the players have two options:

① Forget the whole thing: Chide your players on how dull they are,



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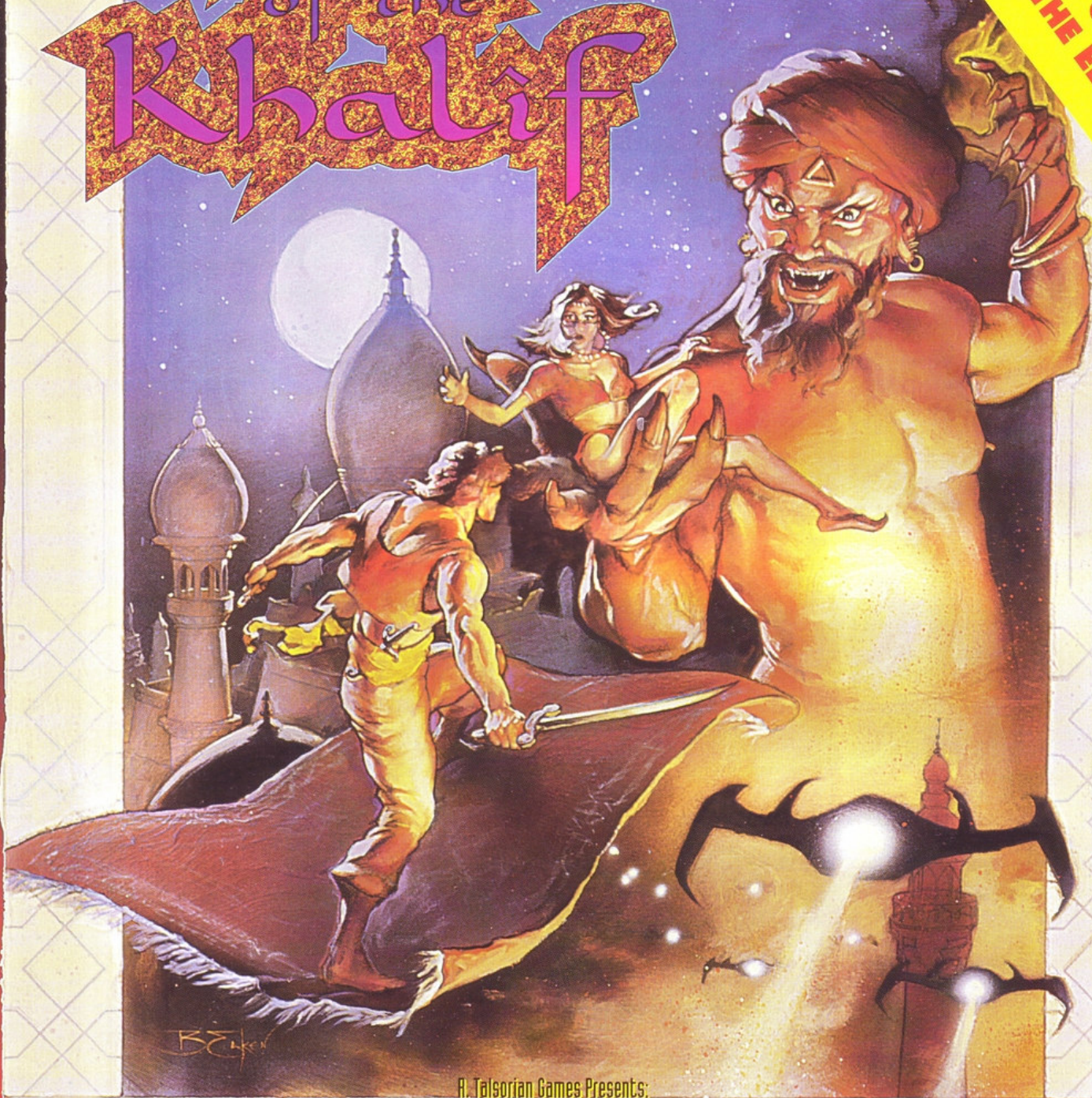
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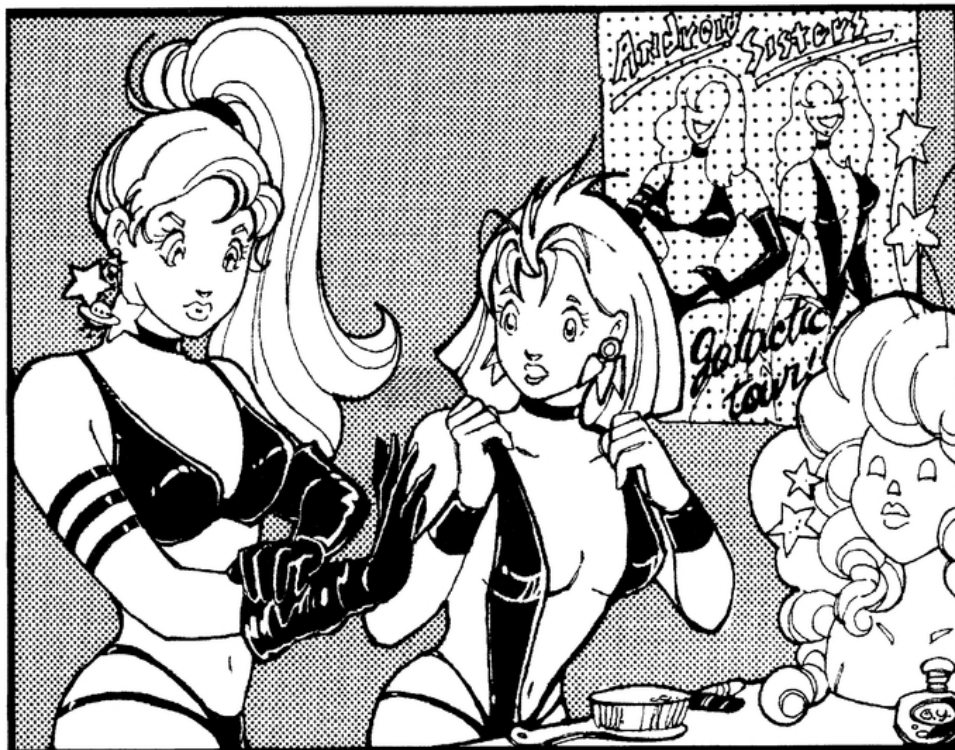


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and threaten to turn the weekly gaming session into a cribbage game.

© Talk to the agent: Any decent Teenager's option (Give whoever thinks of it two green M&M's).

## Talking to the Agent

Read the following description as the players enter the Android Sisters' trailer.

*Scattered about are articles of what pass as clothing for the Android Sisters, mostly stuff a barem girl would blush at wearing. Sitting in the middle of the trailer is a Tookah with four tentacles, three eyes and a thin blue mustache; he is wearing a tan fedora.*

*There are bottles of some powerful drink lying around, some of which seem to be eating a hole in the floor. "Two hours", he wails. "Two hours, and the media's reputation will be ruined." He turns to the Teeners and says piteously, "Please help me."*

Really play up the pathos (the Tookah is going for max effect).

If there are two female Human or Near Human PCs in the party he will go on.

*"I've got it!" The Tookah stands, and slides his tentacles over the two*

*girls' shoulders. "You can be the Android Sisters!"*

The Tookah will try everything in his power to get the girls to agree to go on stage. First he will use bribes of money and power. Then he will put the power of the media behind him, and start making threats. Do everything in your power as the referee to get the girls to go on stage. If they do, give them two red M&M's each. If they volunteer, give them three green M&M's each.

If there is only one or no girls in the group, the Tookah will say:

*"If only we could pass someone off as the Sisters, some outsiders ..."*

*He looks evilly at the two boys with the lowest Body and asks, "And/Or, do you still have the boy/girl gun?"*

Again he will use bribes of money and power. Then he will put the power of the media behind him, and start making threats. Do everything in your power as the referee to get the "guys" to go on stage.

If they do, give them four red M&M's each. If they volunteer, give them six green M&M's each (a small price for the sacrifice). If any of the Teens agree, then the Tookah leaves the trailer to let the girls get dressed. He will go and announce that the An-

droid Sisters are safe, and that the concert will go on.

## The Concert

Read the following to the players:

*The main tent of the Digital Circus is hushed; the lights are off. Then suddenly, the lights come on, and you see (Player 1 & Player 2), dressed as the Android Sisters, trying not to catch cold in the skimpy costumes. The spotlight shines on them, and they begin to "sing."*

The thing to keep in mind is that the worse the Android Sisters sing, the better they are. So if the characters have no singing skills at all, they should be just fine, and everyone will just chalk it up to another stellar performance by the Android Sisters. If the two can really sing, it will be heralded as the best show ever put on by the Sisters. And no one in the audience seems to notice the switch.

As the Concert begins to wind down (after about 1 1/2 hours), another spotlight appears across from the players, and standing in the glowing circle are the real Android Sisters, covered in mud and dripping with swamp water. They try to cut over the false "Sisters" and outing them.

This should lead to a confrontation between the real and false Android Sisters, a singing duel. If the "Sisters" involve themselves with the duel, award them two green M&M each. Have the Android Sisters make their singing rolls based on a knack of "Sing to please +6" vs. whatever skill the Teeners have.

If the characters win:

*The real Android Sisters are booed off the stage, and the two pathetic, dripping Androids stifle a tear and turn and skulk off the stage.*

*The lights dim and the crowd roars. The Tookah and two large men wearing dark sunglasses approach the Teeners. They seem to be carrying the New York City phone directory. They place it under the two Teeners' noses, and the Tookah says, "Sign here, and you'll be rich and famous beyond your wildest dreams."*

The papers are a lifetime contract with the Metro Galactic Media Gargantuan, the media of Summa Nulla.



If the Teeners are actually stupid enough to sign the contract, then award them 4 green M&M's each (they won't help the Teeners where they're going.) The Teeners are then bundled up and hauled off to the "Medium", where they are brainwashed, and spend the rest of their pathetic lives selling useless patches of the Zeeboos jungle in little sing-song voices on late night TV. But, they are rich and famous! Their friends (the other PCs) never see them again, except at shopping mall openings, and even then the girls' eyes seem glazed and vacant.

If the characters don't sign the contract:

Award them 2 red M&M's (for showing some amount of native cunning.) But the Tookah and his goons are very insistent, and try to force the girls into a waiting limo, saying things like, "You see things differently once you go through the Medium!"

If this scares the PCs, good. It should. The goons are very tough, and have 6 Bonk and the Knack "Pound interfering Teener into mush, +5." The Teeners should be in for a tough fight to ditch these goons and rescue their freinds.

The Teeners will probably lose the fight, and just as the two girls are pushed into the car, a dart comes out of nowhere and strikes the Tookah in the back. He then seems to puff up and explode. Turning, the players see an older gentleman, wearing a safari outfit and a pith helmet, surrounded by a group of Moles. The man turns to the female PCs and says in a dapper voice, "The name's Teru, TJ Teru. Is that plastic you're wearing?"

The thugs, looking at the remains of the Tookah, lose their nerve and flee. Go to the Wrap Up.

If the Android Sisters win:

*The crowd is silent for a moment, then a rousing cheer is let out. The Android Sisters then come over and introduce the PCs to the crowd as Angel and Angel, the Android Duo. They go on to explain that the Teeners were simply the opening act for the Sisters, and that the mud and slime are all part of the act. The crowd eats it up.*

As the four girls are on stage, taking a series of bows, there is a sound

of blaster fire, and the Slimys attack once again. There are twelve Slimys, bent on dispatching both the real and the false Android Sisters.

About halfway through the fight, the entire top of the Digital Circus' tent is engulfed in flame, and a figure sweeps in riding a pair of solar wings and settles amid the carnage. A hush falls over the crowd. And/Or simply whispers the name "Ruby." and hits the floor. Any wise Teeners follow his example. In the following moments, the firepower released is equal to the combined destructive force of two World Wars and a small super nova.

As the Teeners regain their feet, they see Ruby is the only person standing. Any sharp-eyed Teens will see Rodant cowering in a corner of the tent. He shrieks in terror as Ruby turns toward him and says "Well, RF, I know you're responsible for this. What's going on?"

## The Wrap Up

Remember those M&M's? The ones sitting on the table, in front of the players that are making the most jokes.

Have all the players count them—1 point for a brown, 2 for red, 3 for orange, 4 for yellow, and 5 for green. Have all the players tally their points, then go on to the rest of the finale.

If Teru came to the Teeners' aid:

*The old man walks up to the Teeners and explains what has been going on, at least as far as he and the Moles know. Apparently, the media has been trying to buy out the Android Sisters, to use them to sell cheap land on late night TV. The Sisters refused. The media decided to replace the Sisters as favorite personalities, and to do that, they needed to get rid of them.*

*They bought out the Tookah and gave him orders to get rid of the Android Sisters. The Tookah then hired Kapoor to pilot the Android Sisters' rocket into a Slimy ambush. The rocket was shot down, but the Android Sisters survived, and started a long walk back to the Digital Circus.*

Teru managed to beat all of this out of Rodant, who had mistakenly wandered back into the Mole city.

If Ruby showed up:

*Ruby slowly walks over to the trembling Kapoor, points the end of her Woopie Bazooka at his head, and simply says, "Talk."*

Rodant falls into hysterics too long to print here. If you really need text for it, find a teenaged girl who has just been grounded the Saturday night of a big concert she had tickets to. Anyway, he (after about 30 minutes of whining, and threats by Ruby), tells his story.

It seems that Rodant was hired by a mysterious benefactor to remove the Android Sisters. He was to kidnap them and then fly them to a remote part of the Zeeboos to meet with his employer. He abducted the Sisters (by pretending to be a lingerie salesman) and was going to fly them into the Zeeboos to hand them over to his employer. He was ambushed by the Slimys and bailed out. He assumed that the Sisters were destroyed in the crash.

After splitting with the Teens after the Slimy attack, he made his way to the Digital Circus, where he was hiding out, hoping his employer wouldn't catch up with him. As it turns out, the Slimys were the ones that hired him in the first place, in an attempt to destroy the Sisters, not kidnap them.

After Ruby twists this info out of him, Kapoor whimpers, and runs off into the crowd.

## The Big Finish

Ruby/Teru will thank the Teeners, offering them friendship. The Android Sisters will come up to the possessor of the most M&M points, and ask if they would be interested in necking under the Hubba-Hubba trees (if male) or interested in joining the act (if female).

Don't worry if the end doesn't make too much sense, or there are a lot of unanswered questions when all is said and done, because that's how it usually ends up in the series too. Suffice it to say that Evil is defeated and the players finally get to eat all their M&M's.



# Muskets and Fencing

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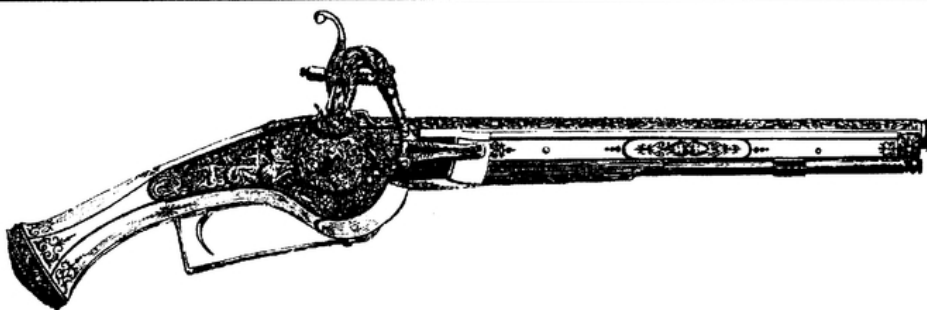
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by James M. LeDuc

I find it hard to accept that in a society where there is such a prevalence of magic, as in AD&D®, that the population would be living in the dark ages. The mages and their magic would inevitably fill the same role that the modern day scientist and engineer do now. Magic would be used for rapid, near instantaneous communication over great distances; in the event of war, a powerful wizard could open a gate from a staging area to a point on the other side of the continent, and a well organized army could quickly pass through it to face an enemy. With this in mind, the government would not be bound by those forces that made a feudal system desirable in our history, and a renaissance-era world with magic becomes a possibility.

This is how it is in my game, and the following are rules that developed as a result. The society of which the characters are a part is in a renaissance period, and is roughly the equivalent of seventeenth-century Europe, with a few variations: The darker races are an ever present threat, the gods walk among men, there is extraplanar travel on occasion, magic is a power, and exploration is in vogue. This exploration has brought with it many discoveries, among them the use of gunpowder. Some changes associated with this discovery are the abandonment of heavy armor and monster weapons in personal conflicts.

Table I							
Weapon	Range/feet Damage				Wght (gp)	Reload turns	Cost (gp)
	Pnt Blk	Sht	Med	Lng			
Arquebus	75 5d6	175 4d6	350 3d6	700 2d6	90	5	650
Blunderbuss	10 9d6	25 8d6	40 6d6	55 4d6	110	5	350
Derringer	40 4d4	80 3d4	150 2d4	300 1d4	10	4	350
Horse Pistol	65 6d6	130 5d6	250 4d6	500 3d6	60	5	850
Musket	100 7d6	25 6d6	450 5d6	900 4d6	200	8	900
Pistol	50 6d4	100 5d4	200 4d4	400 3d4	45	5	750



Gunpowder creates a whole new form of self expression for people, as they now have access to guns and grenades. Guns have some unique qualities: They are easy to learn how to use, they can be used at great distance, and they completely ignore armor. Guns and grenades are usable by any class of character except the cleric, as they are both known to draw blood.

The guns in my campaign are all individually hand made by a skilled gunsmith, muzzle loaded, and expensive. They are all matchlocks and wheellocks. Table I shows the guns along with their ranges, damage, weight, reload time, and cost.

The existence of muzzle loading guns creates a need for new equipment and the supplies to maintain them (see Table III).

Table II													
Weapon	Lgth	Spc	Spd	AC Adj								Wght	Dmg S-M/L
				10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	
Epee	42"	3'	4	+2	+1	+1	0	0	0	0	-1	-2	35 2-7/2-8
Foil	5'	4'	3	+1	0	0	0	+3	+5	0	-3	-4	35 1-6/1-8
Rapier	5'	3 1/2'	4	+2	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+2	-3	-4	45 1-8/1-12
Saber	42"	3'	5	+2	+1	+1	0	0	0	0	-1	-2	35 2-8/2-12





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Grenades are also available in my campaign; they are not as fancy as the modern ones, but are effective nonetheless. They are 4" diameter hollow lead balls filled with gunpowder, plugged with lead, and have a fuse sticking out. The fuse can be used as a timer. It burns at a rate of 3"/round. A grenade can be thrown twice the character's strength in yards. It will do explosive damage (as a fireball) of 6d6 at the center. A grenade costs 70 gp and weighs 10 gp.

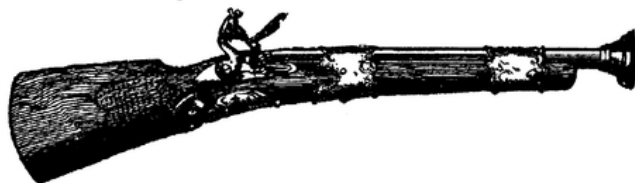
The use of gunpowder greatly changes the picture of combat in *AD&D*®. As armor is no longer useful, it is discarded and new methods of protecting oneself are adopted for melee combat. The primary method in my campaign is fencing. Fencing is considered a weapon proficiency and is usable only with a foil, rapier, epee, or saber.

A foil is a 5' long round-bladed sword used only for thrusting. A rapier is a 5' long bladed sword used primarily for thrusting, but it can also be used to cut. An epee is a 42" long foil, and a saber is a 42" heavy rapier (see Table II).

If a character is proficient in fencing, and is using one of these weapons, he gains the following advantages:

☞ Once per round he may parry an opponent's attack. If the opponent is using a weapon which is twice as heavy as his, he must make a saving throw or his weapon breaks.

☞ He may use a dagger, a main gauche, or a buckler to parry a second time. This is only true if he is also proficient in the second weapon.



☞ He may also feint (fake an attack). If successful, he reduces his opponent's chance to parry on the next, and only the next, melee round. For every point he rolls above what he needed to hit, he may subtract one from his opponent's chance to parry.

☞ He may add his dexterity bonus to his chance to hit and to his damage, as this style of combat and these weapons rely on finesse as much as strength.

Table III

Equipment/Supplies	Cost	Weight (gp)
Gunner's Pouch	2 gp	10
Powder Horn	1 gp	6 empty 20 full
Packing	2 cp dozen	Negligible
Shot	5 cp shot	1/2
Ramrods	2 gp	2
Cleaning Kit	50 gp	20
Shot Mold	5 gp	10

A fencer may also choose to use his cloak in combat, if he has taken cloak as a weapon proficiency. A cloak can be used to parry or to entangle an opponent's limb. It can also be thrown over an enemy's head. Be forewarned: You go through a lot of cloaks this way!



Fall 1992

# Stood Up in Time

A different  
view of time  
travel

by David S. Moskowitz

**D**elightful, simply delightful. Beirut, Cuba, Atlantic City—they've all gone to hell. But Paris made it to 2150 and is still gorgeous, especially in mid-March.

What a way to spend my eighteenth birthday. Or at least that's how old my body was. After all, I was born when those cities were at their peaks.

No, I'm not a vampire, so put that cross down. Besides, even Catholics now use the Orthodox ones with two horizontal pieces.

You see, I have the ability to kill time without killing myself. All I have to do is lean my head back and let my mind go. And time passes.

While I'm in a time "phase", my body vanishes from the physical plane and doesn't age, but I do maintain a low level of consciousness. This means while I don't get bored, I can passively absorb information. Using this technique in university classrooms, I have learned twelve languages, and have observed and invested in enough economic cycles to amass a fortune of 1.2 billion dollars, which is more than enough even with inflation.

Surprisingly little has changed since my birth. Even after the Communists lost control, the U.S. and Russia still found justification to use underdeveloped countries to fight out their aggressions; however, due to weapons reduction agreements, they fight with weapons of the 1st Korean War vintage.

And, of course, they're still shouting "Death to America" in the streets of Tehran, but to liven it up they added street musicians several years back and it eventually evolved into an art form in itself.

Another thing: Elvis, Jim Morrison, and John F. Kennedy were exhumed and finally proven dead.

Unfortunately, while all of this knowledge went into my head, some sanity escaped.

While remembering everything I passively saw, I had no way to prioritize the information. This meant I remembered my professors' ties as clearly as their lectures.

Finally I couldn't stand all of this useless information filling my brain. I tried to stay out of phase. But I'd get bored and slip back into phase, forcing more useless facts into the 90% of my brain which nobody else has any use for. Sometimes the slip was intentional, but most of the time it was accidental—or was it subconscious? Regardless, I knew I was addicted.

Unfortunately, Schick hadn't expanded its treatment programs to include breaking the known laws of physics.

I finally decided that the man to see was Dr. Ahmed Scott, a Nobel laureate in physics teaching at the University of Paris. He'd combined Einstein's theories on relativity with the latest work on sub-atomic particles and then put them in the context of his own theories of existence. Most of the Nobel committee hadn't fully understood his work, but those who did threatened to resign if he didn't win.

Obviously, one just can't make an appointment with such a man. When he wasn't in the lab with half a dozen colleagues or in the lecture hall, he was with a mistress. I may have been losing my mind, but I hadn't lost my manners.

The "old" guy had six or seven women scattered around the city whom he visited whenever he wanted to. This was pretty impressive for someone with Peter Lorre's looks and a cologne which reminded me of Los Angeles, circa 2006. But then, no matter how long I live, I'll never understand women.

It took about three weeks real time (with about fourteen hours actually not in phase) to learn his schedule, the shift schedules of the university security, and the keycodes to most of the locks.

I decided to spontaneously appear in his office about 1:00 a.m., one of the few times he worked alone. Originally, I had feared this might give him a heart attack, but that was before I'd observed his social life.

Unsure of how he would react, I came equipped with a few choice historical items, including two 70-year-old bottles of cognac made from the very finest Texan grapes. In case things got out of control, I brought a tranquilizer gun stolen from the university's vet labs.

I materialized in Scott's desk chair just as he was sitting down. He leapt up in surprise, hit his head on a file cabinet, and fell to the floor.

Waiting for him to wake up, I opened the cognac.

Scott eventually awoke and, ignoring his bleeding scalp, asked in French tainted with a heavy Iranian accent, "Who are you?"

"Long story," I replied, using my perfect Sorbonne accent. "Have a drink."

He drained two mugs of cognac as I wiped the blood off his forehead with my shirtsleeve. "Where did you get such wonderful cognac?" he asked.

This time I replied in Farsi. "I picked it up in Amarillo—before the meltdown."

While the Nobel laureate counted on his fingers, I filled his mug half way and drained the rest of the bottle myself. It was so smooth, I almost opened the other one.

"Your age, your appearance in my office, how?" Scott muttered as the cognac hit him.



"A long story." I took his mug away and summarized my entire life, including what was to me the most disturbing detail: Whenever I came out of phase, I was completely prepared for my new environment. My clothes were in style, my currency was fresh and negotiable—even my driver's license was up to date.

Scott silently lowered his head and remained motionless for a long time, even by my standards. I was contemplating going into phase or opening the other bottle of cognac when he finally spoke: "The world seemingly adjusts to your periodic visits because you do not exist."

Well, I was not satisfied with that. "What do you mean I don't exist?" I shouted.

Dr. Scott clarified. "In your phase periods, you exist, and you do not exist. You are a paradox which by

definition means the universe which you occupy should instantly destroy you. Or destroy itself. But it has done neither. It has bent to conform itself to you, which is why you have clothes you do not recall buying, investments you do not remember making, and, I would not be surprised, children by women you don't remember meeting."

"Well, I want to remember them!" In case he didn't believe my sincerity, I grabbed his shirt lapels. "I get so bored I can't help but go into phase, but every time I do, I come closer to going completely insane. You have to find a way to help me stop this!"

"Stop it?" Scott looked horrified. "You're asking me to eliminate the most important scientific discovery since the splitting of the atom!"

"Fine, we'll argue about that when the time comes. But in the meantime,

we're not even going to have the option to stop it without first finding out its cause."

Scott nodded in agreement and picked up his phone. Within two days he had assembled a team of the most prominent (and poorly dressed) scientists in the world. He had physicists, biologists, psychologists—even a botanist who insisted that I sleep under an ultraviolet light.

I first encountered his little gang of thugs in the university physics lounge, where they were busily arranging themselves into groups according to who spoke what languages. Scott was getting ready to address them all when someone out in the hall started pounding on the door.

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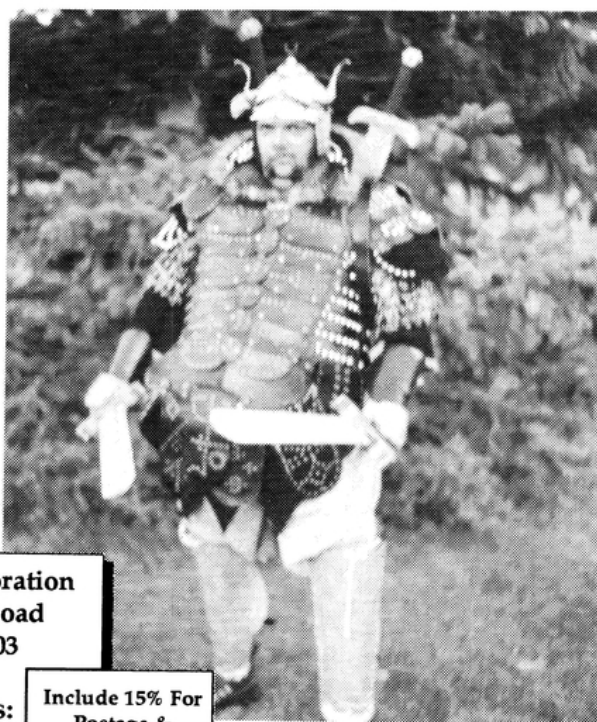
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"Quiet!" Scott whispered loudly. The pounding continued.

"Scott!" screamed the person outside. "I know you're in there! You can't do this! I'm cutting off your funding!"

"Quick!" Scott said to me. "Go into phase, count to twenty, and then come out."

I vanished and Scott opened the door.

A balding man in his mid-sixties burst into the room. Even in phase, I was sure I recognized him.

"What the hell do you think you're doing here?" the intruder raged.

"President Falkenstein," Scott said calmly, "this is simply an informal gathering of my friends and colleagues. Certainly there is nothing wrong with that?"

"Nothing wrong? Do you realize what the press has been saying about this? They're convinced this 'informal gathering' is about some secret weapons project. Now you have—"

I phased in, and the president passed out.

Now fully conscious, I understood why I recognized him. On the floor with his mouth open, the family resemblance was unmistakable.

"The blonde who lives on Boulevard St. Michel," I began, "that's her fath—"

"Shut up!" Scott snapped. He was as red as Falkenstein was pale.

Seeing half of the other scientists also passed out on the floor, I realized that Scott was the only one of them who had actually seen me phase.

"What did that prove?" I asked him as we splashed water on their faces.

"Falkenstein's got too much to hide. I'll tell him how you contacted me, and let him draw his own conclusions."

"Pretty good," I said. "The Pentagon could have used thinking like that during Yalu-gate."

"During what?" Scott asked.

"Sorry. Before your time."

The start of testing was delayed for a week while the University threw

an elaborate celebration for Scott's 76th birthday, which had actually occurred two weeks earlier, but which provided sufficient cover for the gathering of scientists.

It wasn't until the first day of experiments that I realized this was going to be neither easy nor pleasant. After spending the entire morning sticking needles and wires into me, the Torquemada team handed me a piece of paper and left.

The heading read "Directions for Intersynapse Radioscopy." Instructions followed. The first one was to take an elevator several hundred feet down below the ground. Apparently, they wanted to maintain a safe distance, while I conducted the tests myself. They really weren't in any danger from me—except for the one who wanted to see how much voltage he could pump into me. At the day's end, when the elevator returned to the university, Scott was the only one waiting for me.

"You don't seem happy," he said through the speaker in his protective suit.

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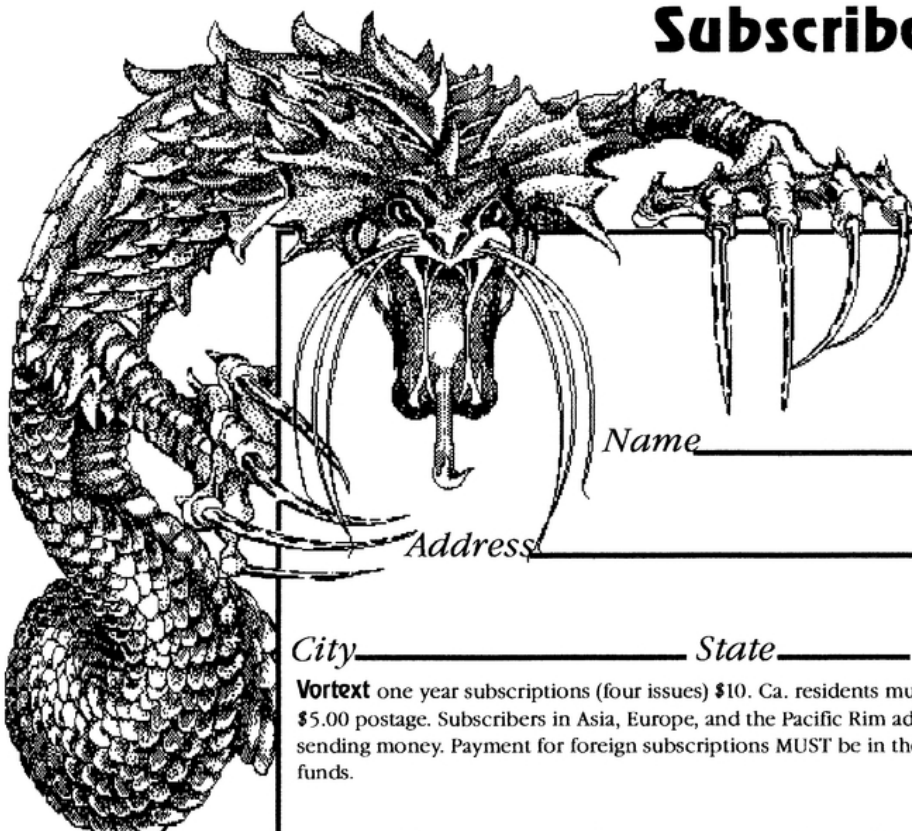


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If you could win the Nobel prize for stating the obvious, Scott was good for at least two more.

"How did you guess?"

"During the more painful tests, you managed to insult everyone's mother in the proper languages with flawless accents."

"That really wasn't fair," I admitted. "I'll remember to mention your fathers next time."

"You'll get your chance." Scott turned away from me. "One of the capacitors was accidentally inverted. You'll have to repeat everything tomorrow."

The tests didn't get any better after that. The biggest problem was that the tests were so tedious that I kept slipping into phase. But that was when they were actually conducting tests.

Most of the time they argued over which tests to perform first, in case I died mid-battery. I have seen many bizarre things in my extended life, but nothing could have prepared me for the physicists versus chemists round-robin arm wrestling tournament which ultimately determined the schedule.

Finally, about three months after our first meeting, Scott cancelled the morning tests—another series of pain response measurements—and called me into his office. MRE's covered most of his walls.

"Those me?" I asked.

"Yes, they are."

Scott approached one of the torso shots and pointed to small white circles running up and down the spine.

"We believe these white regions, leading from the cerebellum to the end of the coccyx, power your transitions in and out of the time stream. We also believe this energy is what keeps your body alive during phase periods."

I understood the physics well enough, but my immediate concern was less complicated. "So do any of you want to try to do something, like remove the batteries?"

Scott shook his head. "Too risky. What the MRE's picked up was only residual leakage. If some of my plasma physics theories are correct, the only thing more incredible than

the energy itself is what's keeping it under control."

"Then what can we do?"

"From what you've told me, it's not merely your concentration that helps you phase. You always lean your head back, which I believe aligns the power sources and makes the phase possible. It wouldn't be too hard for us to surgically prevent such an alignment from ever happening again."

"So you'll do it?" I couldn't remember the last time I was so excited.

Scott turned away. "I'm sorry, but the procedure would be irreversible, and the potential for scientific knowledge is simply too great."

**... nothing could  
have prepared  
me for the  
physicists  
versus chemists  
round-robin arm  
wrestling  
tournament ...**

I hadn't absorbed two hundred years of history without learning a few skills. "You perform the procedure," I quietly said, "or I will slip into the time stream and begin killing your loved ones until you agree. Remember how my perspective on death could have changed, given my view of time."

Still looking away, he asked, "And what if I kill you on the operating table?"

"You won't risk releasing the energy, or it simply burning out upon my death."

Scott laughed. "I keep forgetting I'm not dealing with an eighteen year-old." He paused. "You win. We operate in an hour."

The operation was a success. I was unable to phase no matter how

hard I tried. I did stay on at the university for a few more weeks to adjust to continual living and to allow Dr. Scott to perform follow-up tests.

Unfortunately, neither of us had counted on another flare-up in Central America. The U.S. government had complete records of not only my existence but also of my residence in Paris.

The bastards drafted me.

I suppose I could have tried to escape it, but I'd decided it was time to start leading a normal life, even if it seemed more bizarre than my previous one. And by this point I didn't think I was afraid of death. In hindsight it was the dumbest thing I did since investing in that sushi-to-go chain.

We'd already been on the front lines for three weeks and had suffered only one injury in our unit. That's when our idiot of a 2nd lieutenant insisted that we use mortars to flush the enemy out.

You see, the arms agreements and defense cutbacks of the time were so stringent that not only were most weapons of a 1950's design, they were often simply reconditioned surplus items from that same decade.

I didn't see the damn thing explode, but I heard it, along with the screams of my buddies.

I also felt it. Most of my lower right leg was blown off, and my spine shattered as I went down.

As I felt the blood pour out, I realized that the fractures allowed me to phase again. Surprise: I was still afraid of dying and I slipped back into the time stream.

I figure that once I come out of it, I'll have about two minutes before I bleed to death. In the meantime, I get to wait for someone who could save me within that time frame to come near my body—provided I don't go completely insane by then. And considering that I'm at the bottom of a trench, I think it's going to be a little while before I can safely leave phase.

Lovely, just lovely.





## In the Not Too Distant Future...

by Janice Sellers



This issue we are featuring something seasonal: lyrics to the Thanksgiving Day Hymn from Turkey Day '91 and to A Patrick Swayze Christmas. Get in that holiday spirit!

### Thanksgiving Day Hymn

We gather together to watch cheesy movies  
At Comedy Central on Thanksgiving Day  
On Mystery Science (breath) Theater 3000  
It's thirty straight hours, and it's called Turkey Day.  
(gobble gobble gobble) ©Comedy Central 1991

### A Patrick Swayze Christmas

Open up your hearts and let the Patrick Swayze Christmas in  
We'll gather at the roadhouse with our next of kin  
and Santa can be our regular Saturday night thing  
We'll decorate a bar stool and gather 'round and sing

Let's have a Patrick Swayze Christmas this year  
or we'll tear your throat out and kick you in the car  
It's my way or the highway this Christmas at my bar  
'cause I'll have to smash your kneecaps if you bastards touch my car

I got the word that Santa has been stealing from the till  
I think that ripe old jolly old elf better make out his will.

Oh, let's have a Patrick Swayze Christmas one and all  
And this can be the haziest / This can be the laziest  
This can be the Swayziest Christmas of them all  
Fa la la la la - Buy Bonds ©Best Brains, Inc. 1991

### November 1992 MST3K Schedule

Date	Film Title
6	First Spaceship on Venus
7	Hercules against the Moonmen
13	Godzilla vs. Megalon
14	Magic Sword
20	Godzilla vs. the Sea Monster
21	Hercules and the Captive Women
25-26	Turkey Day runs from 6:00 p.m. 11/25 to midnight 11/26
6:00 The Beatnicks	10:00 Santa Claus Conquers the Martians
8:00 Master Ninja I	12:00 The Magic Sword
10:00 Space Travellers	2:00 Teenagers from Outer Space
12:00 The Lost Continent	4:00 Hercules Unchained
2:00 City Limits	6:00 The Uncarthly
4:00 Viking Women and the Sea Serpent	8:00 Gamera vs. Guiron
6:00 The Giant Gila Monster	10:00 Fire Maidens of Outer Space
8:00 King Dinosaur	
27	Cave Dwellers
28	Crash of the Moons

Comedy Central is also running a behind-the-scenes special this month on the making of MST. "This Is MST3K" runs 30 minutes and airs at the following times: 11/14 11:00 p.m., 11/21 noon, 11/24 9:00 p.m., 11/25 3:00 a.m., 11/26 midnight, and 11/27 2:30 p.m.

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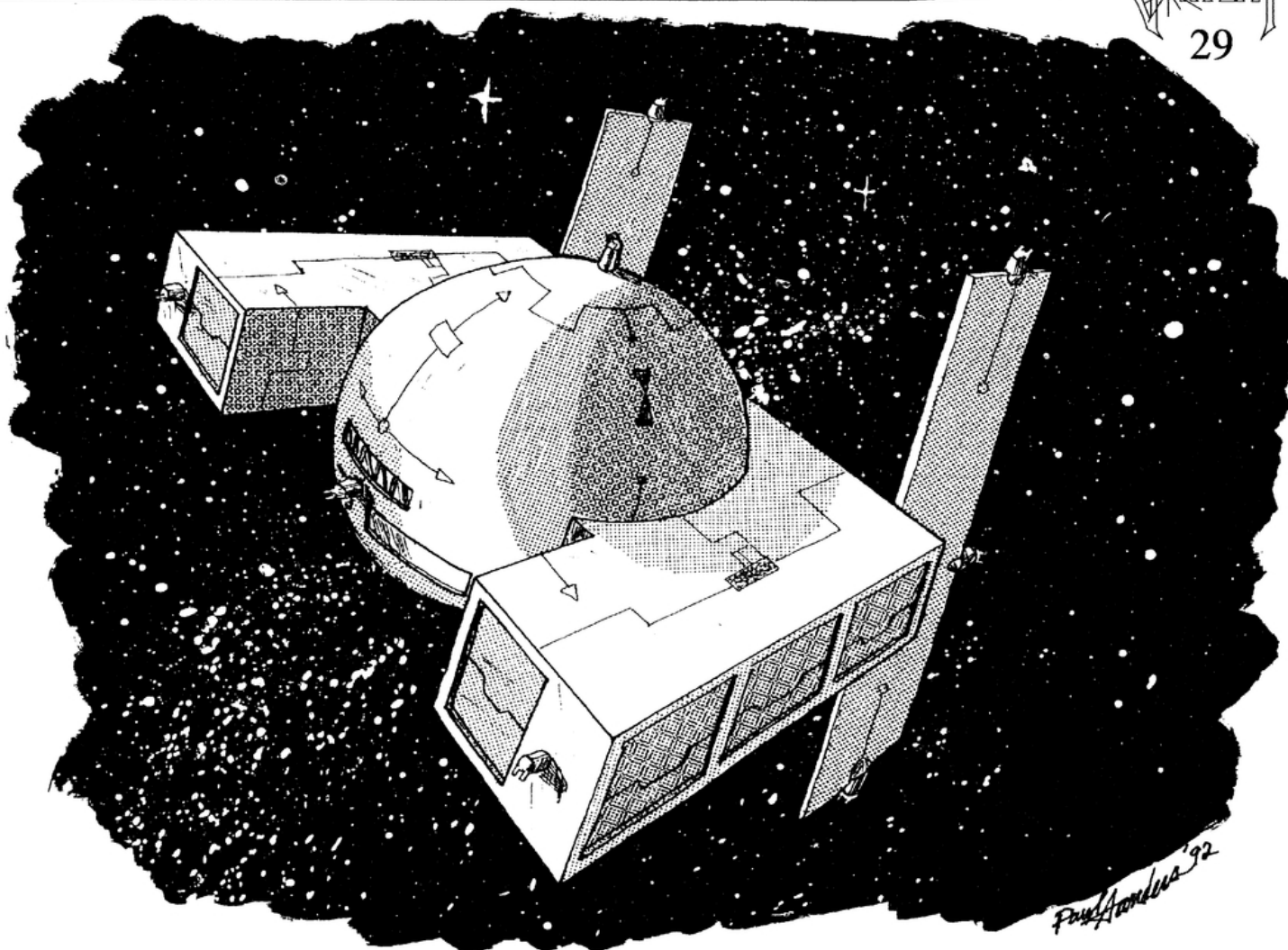
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Two fighter  
carriers of the  
Kafer Wars

# New Ships for 2300 A.D.

by Michael Bolda

## The Imperial Manchurian Fighter Carrier Manchukuo "Manchuria"

The Manchurian military had never really committed themselves to the Kafer conflict, even during the siege of Beowulf. The Manchurian forces instead formed a conglomeration in the Terra system in a position from which they should have been able to intercept any incoming opposing force. The blockade was set up in the vicinity of the orbit of Pluto toward the direction of Nyotekundu (Wolf 359). The Nyotekundu system is the only transit point from the French Arm to Earth, and any ship trying to

reach humanity's homeworld would have to transit this general route.

A Kafer scout force did manage to slip past the blockade. The violation of this denied space was directly due to a lack of quick reaction patrol craft. Although the Manchurian force was quite substantial, the lack of fighter patrols almost resulted in the Kafer ships reaching Earth.

Whether the xenophobic Manchurian government realized the deficiency in patrol craft or felt intimidated by the rapid buildup of other carriers is unknown. Either way, a Manchurian carrier program began in late 2302 following the embarrassment of the blockade.

The Manchukuo "Manchuria" was hastily laid down in January 2303 and completed less than one year later on December 12, 2303. The carrier

breaks the mold of most Manchurian ships, which are cheap and simple. The Manchukuo utilizes fairly state of the art equipment.

The main hull is a twenty-six meter diameter sphere. The aft section of the sphere contains the ship's drive, engines, fighter fuel, and cracking stations. The forward section of the hull contains the bridge and TAC, sensors, remote weapons, screen generators, hull masking, and cargo hold. Overall the carrier is seventy meters wide, thirty meters high and forty meters long.

With an average complement of ten fighters, all of the fighters can launch in one minute. With a full complement, there is a five minute (five round) delay before the second flight can be launched. Flanking the

outboard sides of the hangar, as well as on the forward and aft sides, are ten hangar doors, allowing each fighter its own launch and recovery door. The entire hangar bay is an open space design, exposed to vacuum. Fighter crews and technicians are required to wear heavy environment suits for their own protection while conducting maintenance.

The final hull section is the spin habitat. Directly aft of the spherical main hull is the ship's habitat for the crew. Spaces for 160 personnel have been allotted in this thirty meter diameter double hull structure. Access to the habitat is via a ten meter long access tunnel, and from there a turbolift takes personnel up or down to the habitat ring. Each of the ship's standard 152 crew members have been allotted twenty-five cubic meters, even though up to 160 persons can be carried in relative comfort without crowding. It is, however, not uncom-

mon for many of the crew to share bunks, especially if two fighter wings are carried.

The Manchukuo's design uses common components found on most Manchurian ships. The power plant chosen was a fifty megawatt fission reactor. This type of power plant was chosen because fission engines do not require an exhaust port that could interfere with launching or retrieving fighters.

The Manchurian government routinely supplies its ships with fueling tankers, but because a large amount of fuel is needed for continued fighter operations, one hundred fuel cracking arrays have been provided. Slowly but surely the arrays can refill the 2200 tons of fuel carried in a little more than a week.

Anticipation for an active array, screens and lasers would reduce the output of the power plant by fifty percent, so in the interests of saving money, a new twenty-five megawatt military stutterwarp drive was

installed. This gives the vessel a maximum stutterwarp speed of 1.84. This is not overly impressive, but is quick enough to keep up with a battlegroup.

The ship's sensors include three communication dishes. One of these is dedicated to planet-to-ship communications, while the other two are strictly for drone and/or missile control. When the fighters are not patrolling, the ship relies on a Deep System Scanner and Gravitational Scanner for long range detection. Medium range detection is covered by one active sensor array with an excellent range. No passive sensors have been installed. Short range detection and targeting is accomplished by ten Target Tracking Arrays (TTA's), which are tied into the ship's ten energy weapons.

The ship itself has a good damage potential from energy and remote weapons, as well as the fighter complement. The energy weapons are ten lasers, which are the rough equivalent to the French LL-98 x1+0 type lasers.

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They are mounted on gun towers, which give the best area of fire. The laser's configuration on the hull gives good all-around firing capability.

The ship's remote weapons are two bow-mounted Fantan missile packs, each containing four missiles. The missile installation initially caused the United Nations to reevaluate the ship's design. Manchuria was informed that the ship would be classified as a missile cruiser with a large fighter complement, rather than a carrier. Manchuria's rebuttal defending the fighter carrier designation was that even though the ship normally carried only ten fighters, equipment and crew allocation were designed for carrying twenty fighters, two per hangar. A compromise was reached, with the final classification being CVG, or a guided missile-carrying fighter carrier. For energy weapon defense, a moderate particle screen generator was installed.

The ship has a small cargo hold that is dedicated to spare parts for the fighters. This hold is only 918 cubic

meters in volume, and when filled holds 2756 tons of material.

Originally the hull was going to be constructed from metallic material, but this was later changed to composite material to cut down on the ship's reflected signature. The hull was also armored to give it a higher survival factor than any other carrier built. The Manchukuo would come very close to battlecruiser status, if not for the large number of fighters carried.

### Star Cruiser Stats Manchurian "Manchukuo" class Fighter Carrier

**General Information:** *Warp Efficiency:* 1.84 with cargo, weapons and sensors powered, *Range:* 7.7 unlimited, five years, *Mass:* 13855.4 tons (unloaded), *Cargo Capacity:* 16611.38 cubic meters, *Comfort:* 0, *Quality:* 0

**Ship Status Sheet Information:** *Movement:* 4, *Screens:* 3, *Radiated Signature:* 3/6, *Radial Re-*

*flected:* 15, *Lateral Reflected:* 12, *Targeting Computer:* +2, *Radial Profile:* 3, *Lateral Profile:* 2, *Armor:* 4, *Passive Sensors:* none, *Active Sensors:* 16 range, *Hull Hit Capacity:* 292/146/59, *Power Plant Hit Capacity:* 60/12

#### Surface Fixture Hits:

2 x1+0 (B, PBQ, PB, PSQ, S)  
2 x1+0 (PBQ, PB, PSQ, S, SSQ)  
2 x1+0 (PB, PSQ, S, SSQ, SQ)  
2 x1+0 (PSQ, S, SSQ, SB, SBQ)  
2 x1+0 (B, PBQ, PB, SB, SBQ)

#### TTA's and Submunitions:

*TTA's:* 10, *Communicators:* 2, *Fantan Pack:* 2, *Active Sensors:* 16, *Passive Sensors:* n/a

**TAC:** *Active Operators:* 1, *Passive Operators:* 0, *Fire Control:* 10, *Flight Controllers:* 10, *Remote Pilots:* 22

**Bridge:** Captain, Navigator, Communications, Helm, 2 Computer, 2 Engineering

**Damage Control:** 24 (8 groups)

**Ordnance:** 2 Fantan missile packs (8 5x2 detonation missiles)

**Fighters:** 10 Punyuang



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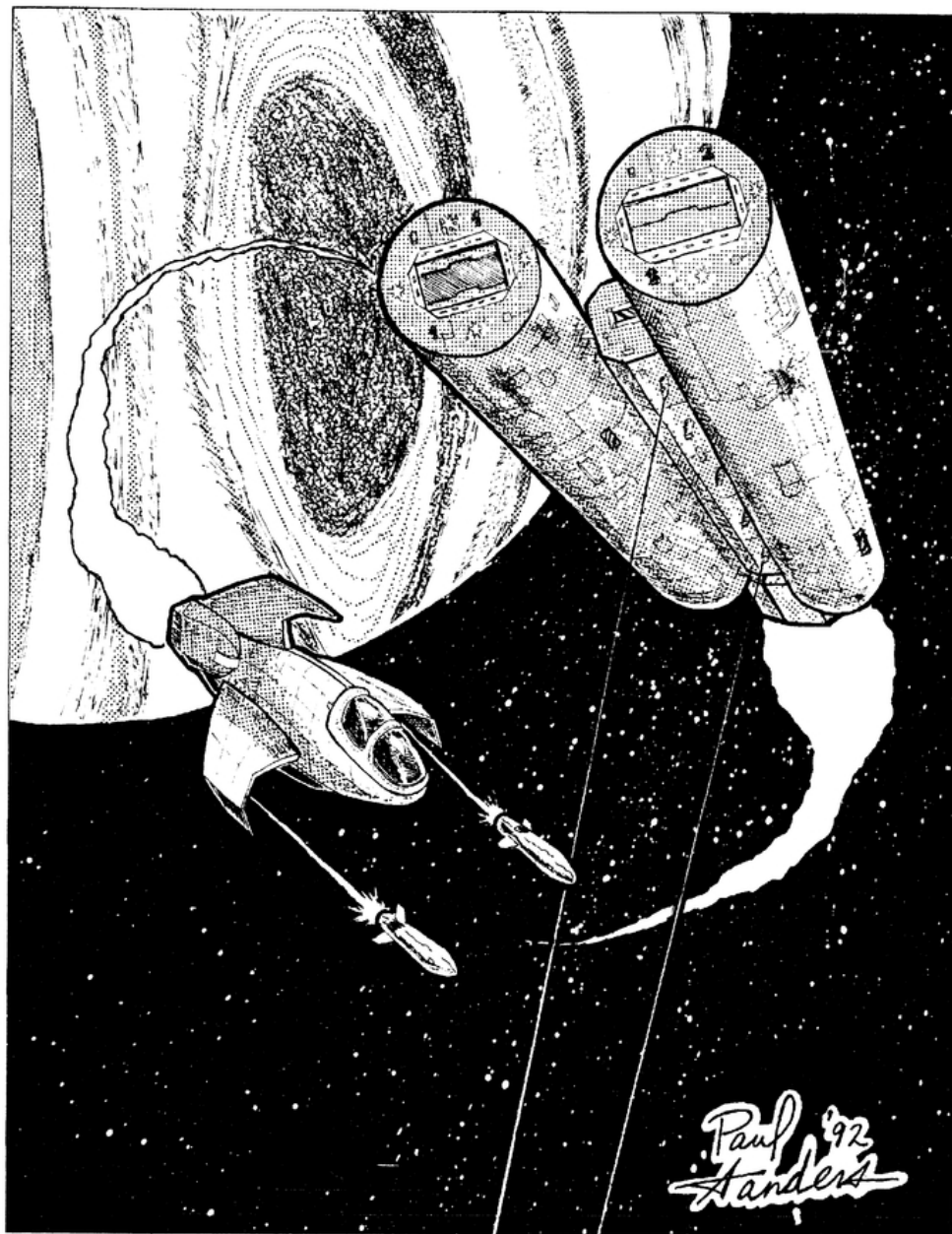
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## The German Imperial Navy (Reichsmarineamt) Fighter Carrier Graf Zeppelin "Earl Zeppelin"

The German space fighter carrier Graf Zeppelin is named in honor of Germany's lighter-than-air airship pioneer Count Ferdinand August Adolf von Zeppelin (1838-1917). The German carrier is actually a dual-role ship that can carry fighters into a combat area or be used as a lander transport and catapult.

At the very start of the Kafer conflict, the German navy realized that their current fleet was not going to be able to defeat the Kafer armada as it began to press along the French Arm. Ever since the First and Second Battles of Tithonus 2298, the German military realized the disadvantage of not having a fighter contingent to deal with the Kafer fighters, which were deployed from almost every ship in their fleet.

The Bismarck class battlecruisers only carried four Gustov fighters. The battlecruisers Bismarck, Guderian and the newly commissioned Kohl could therefore only carry twelve fighters all together. The Hamburg cruisers were later (in 2302) modified to carry two fighters each. With only three battlecruisers and six Hamburg cruisers scattered along the French Arm, the Germans were incapable of dealing with even a moderate Kafer battle-group.

In 2300 construction began on a dedicated fighter carrier which would be able to directly deal with any Kafer fighter contingent. Early in 2295, during the end of the German reunification war, the German fleet began construction of a lander transport ship for Space Marine Interface Corp. Under the design proposal a transport group would station itself over a planet, where a large number of combat landers would then deploy from modified transport ships.

For a quicker combat drop to the surface and to cut down on waste of valuable reaction fuel, a system was designed using a linear accelerator of the same design as used on the British Dalton class mining vessel. A lander would maneuver into one end of the mass driver, where it would be accelerated to about 3G's toward the surface of the planet. During tests over Earth dropships could be maneuvered into place by their pilots and launched in under one minute. This procedure also cut down orbit to surface time by a third.

A total of six drivers were purchased from Britain for use on a single new construction transport prototype. Due to the accelerating war with the Kafer, the program had to be augmented. Under a new construction proposal, the craft would be a dual-role warship designed to carry fighter craft in its primary role, but able to be used effectively as a combat lander transporter/catapult as combat missions dictated.

The final ship design far surpassed the original design plans. The ship is constructed of three main hulls. The center hull is rectangular and contains the internal hangar and an octagon-shaped engineering hull section.



Flanking the hull are the two linear accelerators, which are surrounded by a double hull spin habitat. These enormous habitats are designed to hold a large number of troops if the ship is used in its secondary role. A reinforced regiment of 1504 troops can be deployed on a single carrier.

Since only twenty-five troops can be transported by the French style landers carried, when the ship is acting in a troop carrier role, dozens of cargo ships will transport the pre-loaded landers. Once the carrier takes up a geostationary orbit, the cargo ships will debark the landers close to the carrier. They can then be catapulted, or loaded with troops and catapulted, to the drop zone by the carrier. Loading of elite troops takes no more than one minute. Green troops often take five minutes to situate themselves before the rough ejection planetside occurs.

The main body of the hull is centered around the engineering section and hangar. The hangar is a 10m high, 22m wide and 70m long hull. To the rear of the hangar is a tapered section which leads to an octagonal space which is 30 meters across by 30 meters deep. This space is occupied by engineering and the cargo hold.

The hangar is designed to hold two flights of fighters, while a third flight is mounted externally to the outer hull. Five Wespe (Wasps) and nine Gustov fighters are carried internally, while up to eight Udet fighters are mounted on external braces. Plenty of room has been allotted to the interior of the hangar, so two fighters can launch each minute. All of the external craft can be launched at one time. The external braces are designed so that either landers or fighters can be serviced from them.

There are four hardpoints located on the engineering section and two hardpoints located on the top and bottom of the hangar. The landers are the same design found on the French Suffern class cruisers. Each lander is capable of carrying one full combat platoon of twenty-five men, plus its combat transport vehicle or one heavy tank.

The engineering section contains the 8320 tons of fuel needed by the

landers or fighters, hull masking equipment, and the ship's power plant. A simple 50MW fission engine is all that is needed. An estimated 10MW is allotted for the energy weapons, and 20MW to power the linear accelerators. The remaining 20MW power the ship's new military stutter-warp drive.

Two communication dishes are used for ship-to-ship sensor data links, while a third is used strictly for planet-to-space station communications. A deep system scanner as well as a gravitational scanner are common on a ship of this size, and are included in the basic hull design. As the ship is not designed for combat, only a passive sensor suite has been installed. A backup for this system helps track multiple targets. Short range targeting is controlled by ten TTA, since the Germans have no UTES program of their own.

The ship's weapons are centered on a low-powered, very accurate targeting computer and laser system. The ship has ten retractable gun towers mounted above and below the hangar bay. The lasers are double mounted, which increases their hit probability. This combines to make an excellent laser defense system.

The hull is made of high tech advanced composite material. It is not armored, but contains a lot of material. Overall the ship is 140m long, 104m wide and 34m high.

The Germans call their carrier a Raumkampfungszeugschiff, which roughly translates to a "space fighter plane carrying ship." The carrier hull designation is R-01; the ship is easily identified by its name in bright blue letters across the front.

The Graf Zeppelin's sister ship R-02 Manfred von Richthofen, named after the WWI flying ace, was completed five months after the first hull. This vessel has been kept in reserve status at Earth until her fighter wing is completed and embarked. Combat readiness should occur by mid-2304.

A third and probably final hull has begun fitting at Earth, and will probably be dedicated to an interface assault group being formed to retake German colonies still under Kafer occupation. This ship will probably be

reclassified by the United Nations and German navy as an LPA (Landing Assault Ship) or an LSS (Landing Support Ship).

## Star Cruiser Stats German "Graf Zeppelin" class Fighter Carrier

**General Information:** *Warp Efficiency:* 1.35 with cargo, weapons and sensors powered, *Range:* 7.7 unlimited, five years, *Mass:* 24891 tons (unloaded), *Cargo Capacity:* 43393.5 cubic meters, *Comfort:* 0, *Quality:* 0

**Ship Status Sheet Information:** *Movement:* 3, *Screens:* 0, *Radial Signature:* 6/3, *Radial Reflected:* 15, *Lateral Reflected:* 14, *Targeting Computer:* +2, *Radial Profile:* 3, *Lateral Profile:* 3, *Armor:* 0, *Passive Sensors:* 12, plus backup sensor, *Active Sensors:* none, *Hull Hit Capacity:* 148/74/30, *Power Plant Hit Capacity:* 60/12

**Surface Fixture Hits:**  
3 x1+1 dbl (B, PBQ, PB, SB, SBQ)  
3 x1+1 dbl (PB, PSQ, S, SSQ, SB)  
4 x1+1 dbl (B, PBQ, PB, PSQ, S)

**TTA's and Submunitions:**  
*TTA's:* 10, *Communicators:* 2, *Active Sensors:* n/a, *Passive Sensors:* 12 plus one backup

**TAC:** *Active Operators:* 0, *Passive Operators:* 2, *Fire Control:* 10, *Flight Controllers:* 2, *Remote Pilots:* 22

**Bridge:** Captain, Navigator, Communications, Helm, 2 Computer, 0 Engineering

**Damage Control:** 45 (15 groups)

**Ordnance:** none

**Craft:** *Fighter role:* 5 Wespe, 9 Gustov, 8 Udet; *Lander role:* 8 Suffern style landers



# Shapeshifters

A review of Fat  
Messiah's new  
game

by Chris Williams

## Shapeshifters

Number of Players: 2-4

Approx. Playing Time:

30 min-1 1/2 hrs.

Suggested Retail: \$8.00

**A**s I've said before, small companies are the backbone of this industry. *Shapeshifters* is the first outing from Fat Messiah Games, the newest vertebra in our hobby. The basic concept behind the game is similar to the old Metagame *Wizard*. Two or more wizards meet on the field of battle each intent on the death(s) of the other(s). Much like its predecessor, *Shapeshifters* is quick to learn, fast to play, and enjoyable.

The game comes packaged in a ziplock bag. Inside you will find a 16 page rule booklet, a color map with hexes, 63 black and white counters, and the Taxonomy Flow Chart. The map, though simple, is easy to use with the different terrain types clearly delineated. Only nine of the booklet's pages are devoted to rules, which are fairly straightforward with only one or two rough spots. The remaining pages are taken up by scenarios, designers' notes, and needed charts.

The Taxonomy Flow Chart (I'll come to its actual function soon enough) is very well laid out. Each of the different "Realms of Form" is clearly separate from the others, and each form within any given realm is easily found. Each form contains its own vital statistics and a silhouette of the form making record keeping simple and helping players to visualize their current form. Other necessary information, such as players' hit points, initiative scores, and magical battery levels, is also provided on the flow chart.

The rules, for the most part, are fairly standard: movement points, attack and defense ratings, terrain cost and combat results charts. Anyone who has ever played wargames should be familiar with these terms.

What sets *Shapeshifters* apart from other games of this format is the players' ability to alter their forms, and hence their combat and movement capabilities, from one turn to another.

Each player has two important statistics, determined by how powerful a wizard he is playing: his charge rating and his maximum battery level. A wizard's charge rating is the number of spell points which he receives at the start of every turn. Unlike movement points, which cannot be saved from one turn to another, unused magic points are not wasted. Magic points which a player does not spend in any given turn may be saved in his magical battery up to his maximum battery rating.

Why is all this important? Because it costs magic points to change from one form to another, or to maintain a form which is not the sorcerer's natural form. Some forms are quite expensive (like Dragon) while others (like Rat) cost nothing.

This is where the Taxonomy Flow Chart comes in. The flow chart is laid out into general categories—Realms of Form, as I call them—birds, fish, insects, mammals, plants (sometimes useful), and reptiles. Within each realm there are various creatures to choose from. There are some creatures which are realms unto themselves: Dragon, Hydra, and Griffin. Each form has its own advantages and disadvantages. For example, the Rat may not be able to attack most other forms very effectively, but it can hide from other creatures more easily than most and it costs no magic points to maintain. On the other hand, the Dragon is probably the most powerful form a wizard can change into, but it costs at least 19 magic points to become one and 12 points just to maintain the form on subsequent turns.

Each form has lines flowing into or out of it. In order to change from one form to another a wizard must move along these lines, and pay the

printed costs to move along them. No matter how many magic points a wizard has available to spend he may only move a number of forms along the chart equal to his wisdom. In order to move from one realm to another a wizard must move from one node to another. Nodes are the base form of any given realm. Each node has a cost printed next to it. This is the number of magic points which a player must spend to jump into that node.

All of these costs and limitations on shapeshifting combine to limit the number of possible changes a wizard may make. Players make their shifting choices in secret and reveal them to each other at the same time. This adds an almost chess-like quality to the game as players try to outguess each other and choose the most advantageous form to change into.

Since various forms have differing types of movement to choose from (flight, land, swim, or dive), it may not always be possible for one wizard to initiate an attack against another. For example, a piranha cannot initiate an attack against an eagle. However, it is always possible for a wizard which is attacked by another to counterattack. In the above example, if the eagle were to attack the piranha, then the piranha could counterattack.

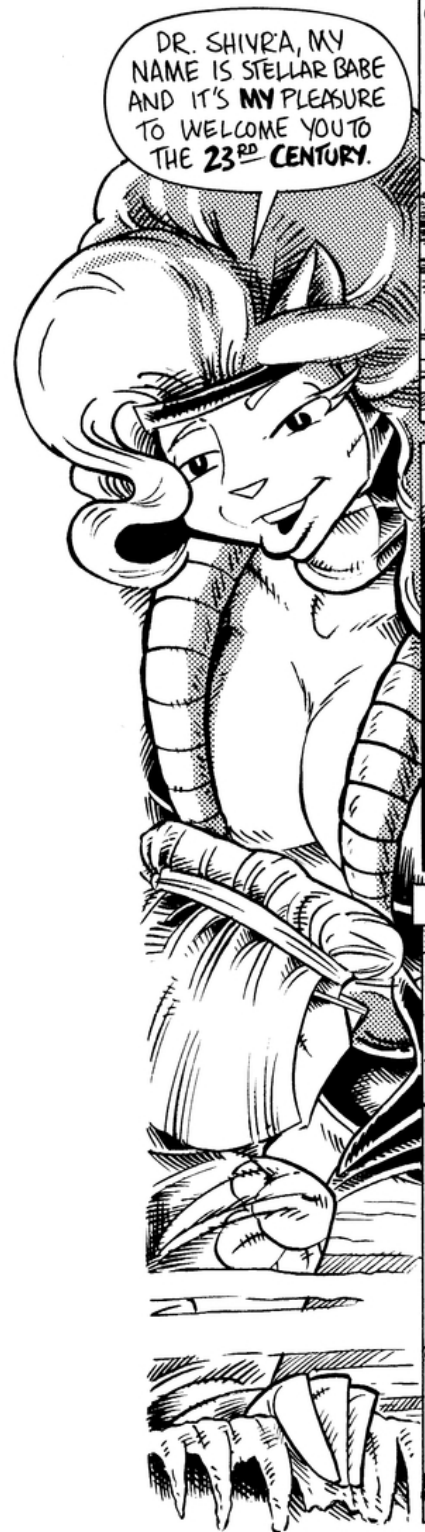
On the whole, I recommend *Shapeshifters*. The only real drawbacks to it as it stands are that the number of scenarios provided are pretty limited, and the map gets familiar quickly. However, both of these are problems which are easily overcome with just a little imagination and some blank hex sheets or a battlemat. The rough spots in the rules are corrected in an errata sheet which is available from Fat Messiah; just drop them a line and a SASE and they'll be happy to send you a copy. Fat Messiah Games, PO Box 341136, Los Angeles, CA 90034.





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# FLASH FROM THE PAST



DR. SHIVRA, MY NAME IS STELLAR BABE AND IT'S MY PLEASURE TO WELCOME YOU TO THE 23<sup>RD</sup> CENTURY.

GASP! TELL ME HOW LONG I'VE BEEN FROZEN AND IF MY FELLOW SCIENTISTS HAD SURVIVED.

275 YEARS AND YES, YOUR FRIENDS ARE ALIVE AND IN GOOD SHAPE!

HEAVY! 275 YEARS IN THOSE CRYOGENIC PODS. MAY I SEE A BIT MORE OF THIS NEW WORLD?

VERY WELL DR. SHIVRA. THE WORLD HAS GROWN UP SINCE YOUR GROUP LAST SAW IT IN 1969!



WE ENTERED AN ERA OF PEACE & PROSPERITY.

ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY TOOK US TO THE STARS!

THEN THE STELLAR PATROL WAS FORMED TO KEEP THE PEACE!

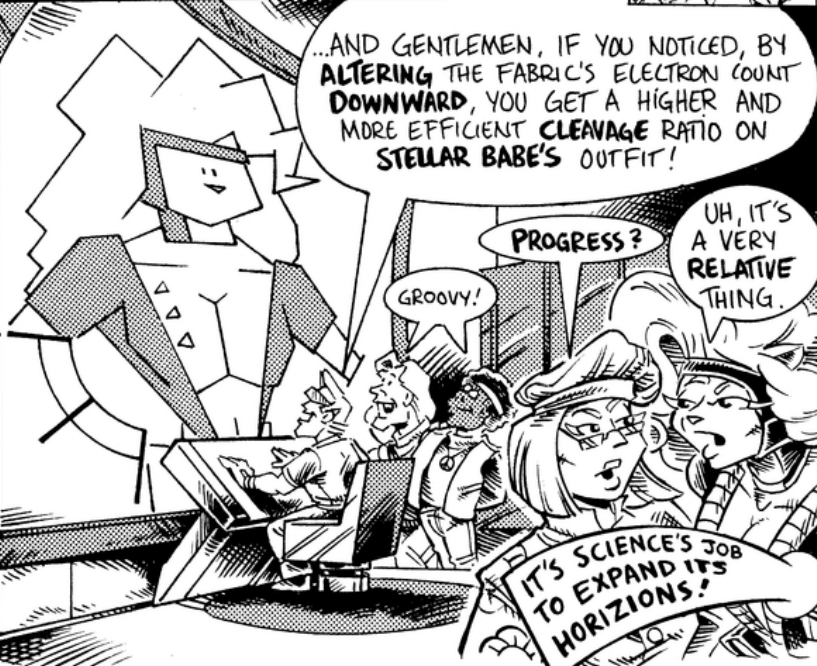
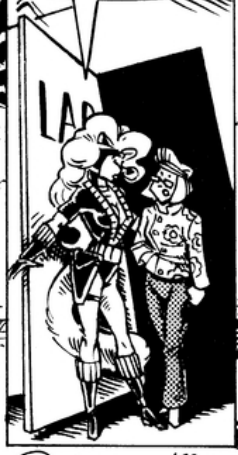
A CORP THAT I'M PROUD TO BE A MEMBER OF!

NOW LETS GO MEET YOUR FELLOW SCIENTISTS.



SOON...

DR. AEON WILL BRIEF YOU ON ALL THE WONDERS OF OUR ERA!



...AND GENTLEMEN, IF YOU NOTICED, BY ALTERING THE FABRIC'S ELECTRON COUNT DOWNWARD, YOU GET A HIGHER AND MORE EFFICIENT CLEAVAGE RATIO ON STELLAR BABE'S OUTFIT!

PROGRESS?

GROOVY!

UH, IT'S A VERY RELATIVE THING.

IT'S SCIENCE'S JOB TO EXPAND ITS HORIZONS!



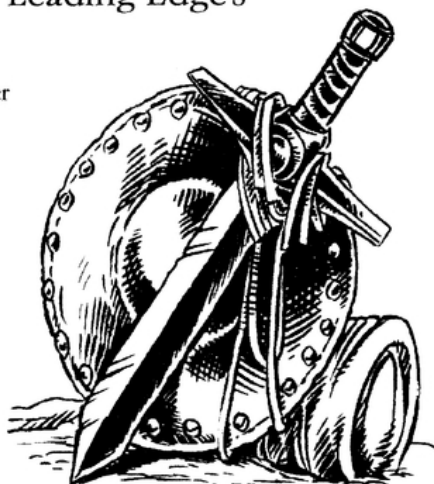
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*Aliens: Tribes* is the first in a series of graphic story albums from Dark Horse Comics." **Vortex** is proud to bring it to life for Leading Edge's *Aliens* role-playing game.

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P.M.

*Duel*: A new multi-genre role-playing game from Nightshift Games. In our next issue we will feature an article with: New spells? New character races? Or was it new source material for the *Duel* fantasy world? We're not sure what this article will be about, because Nightshift wouldn't tell us. *But it better be good!*



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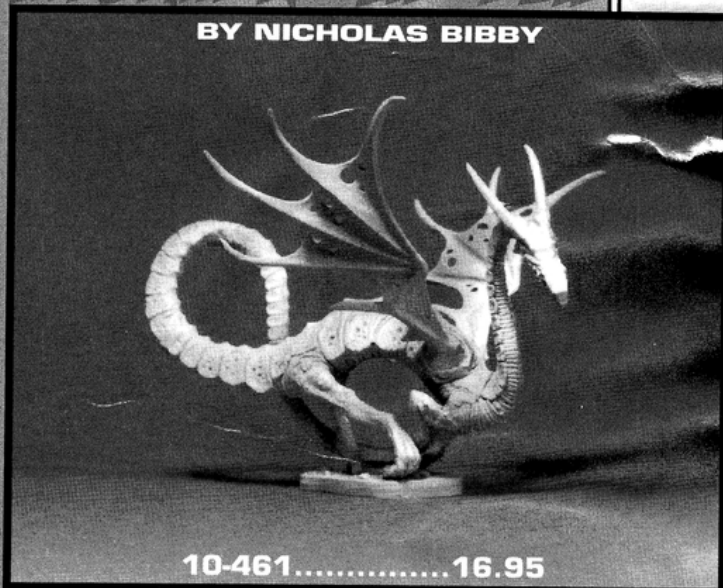
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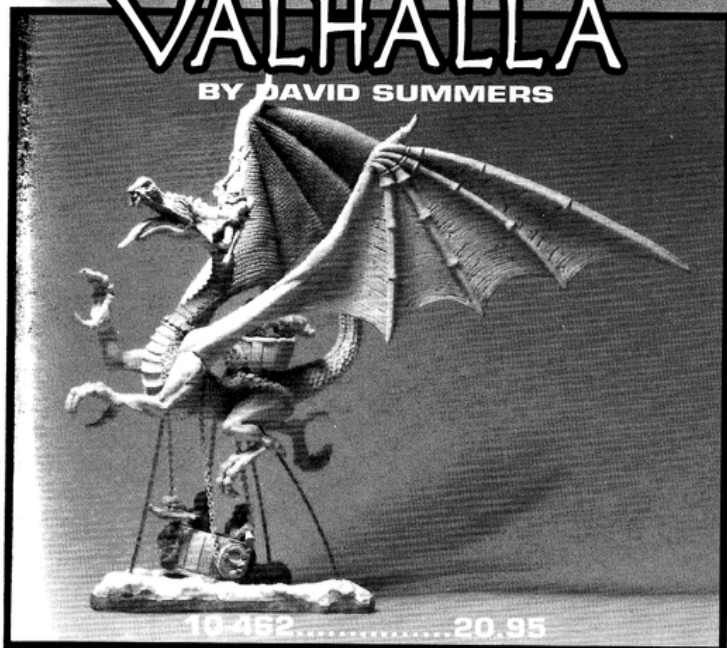
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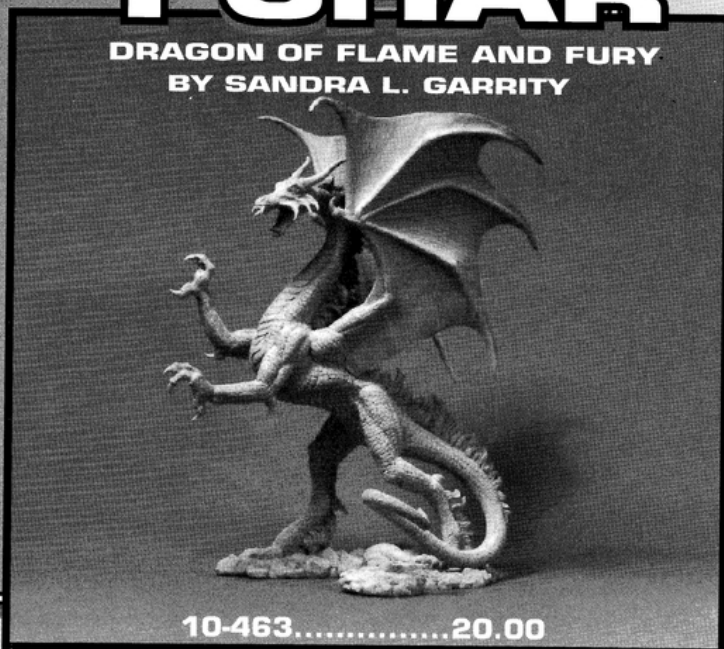


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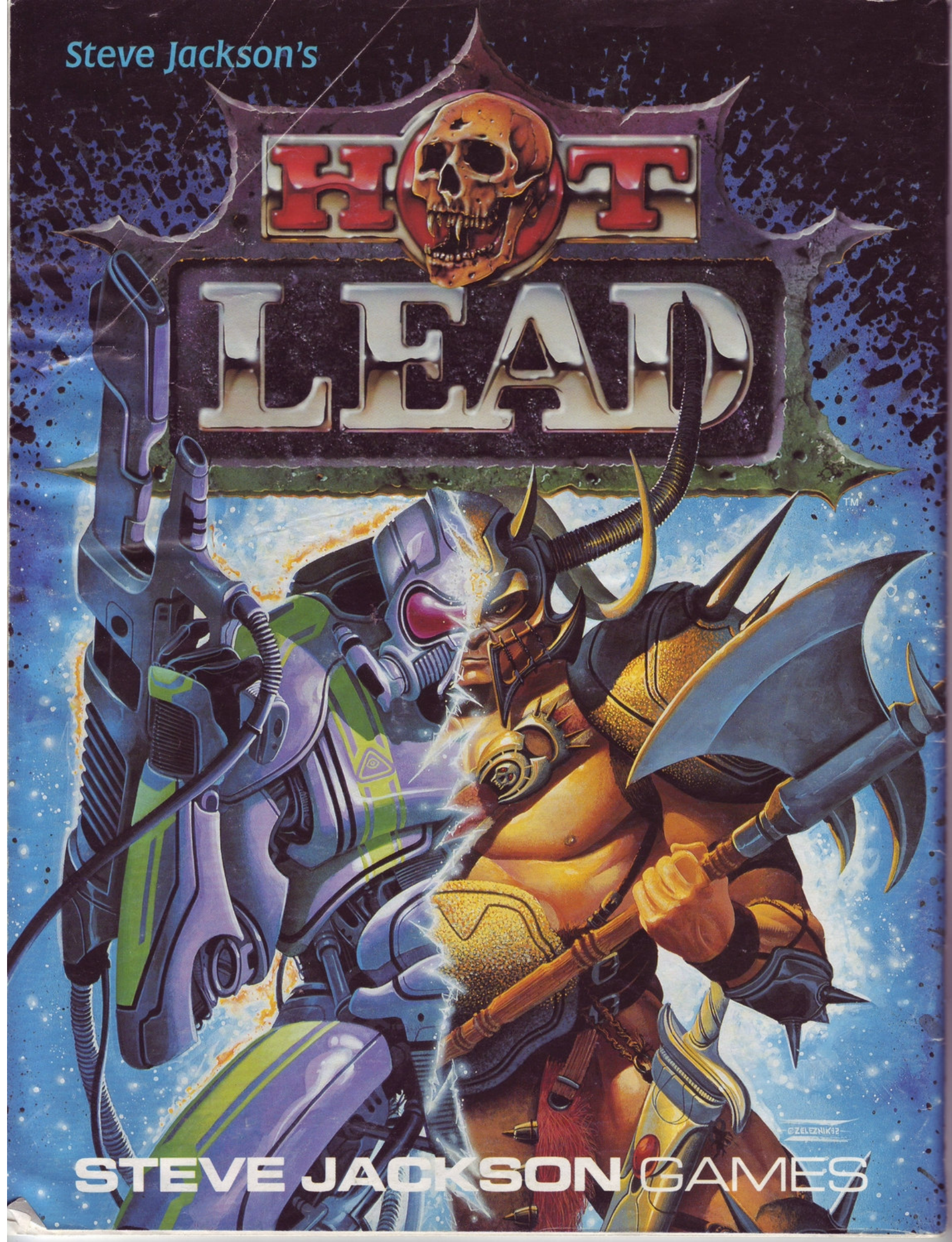


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