

DEMONGROUND

The Electronic Fanzine of Dark Conspiracy

APRIL 1999
VOL 4

SIN CITY
PREVIEW
ISSUE!

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Plus:

The Mercenary Philosopher, New Equipment and
Vehicles, plus a lot more...



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MOVING WITH THE TIMES

by Marcus Bone

DEMONGROUND Editor-In-Chief

Welcome, and welcome again.

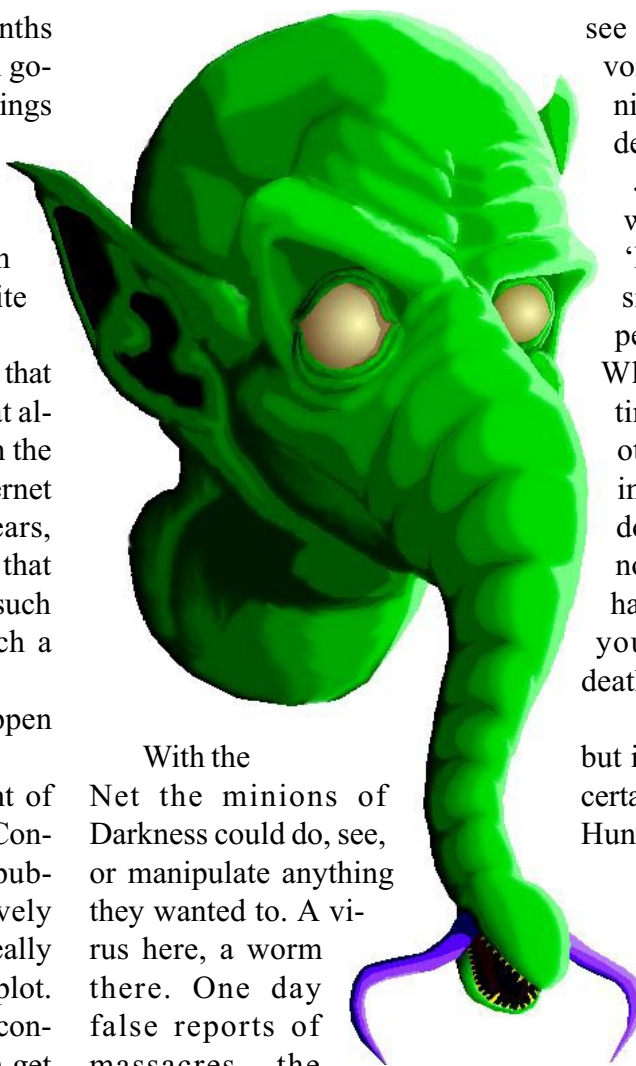
To be honest I never thought that we would make this far, however four issues and almost 10 months later **DEMONGROUND** is still going strong. From humble beginnings we have expanded to incorporate many regular writers, a number of good artists, and almost 200 subscribers. So all in all I say we are going along quite nicely.

It really is wondrous to think that there is technology out there that allows all of this to be a reality. In the past week I learned that the Internet is the grand old age of 10 years, which makes it scary to think that something like this can effect such a large group of people in such a short amount of time.

Just think what might happen within the next twenty...

This brings me to the point of this editorial, the Net and Dark Conspiracy. When DC was first published the Internet was relatively new and therefore was never really mentioned in the background plot. Now however the Internet is all consuming, if you want it, you can get it somewhere on the Net. Just think about that, an unlimited potential to share ideas, communicate and plan. Also as it covers the entire world there is little if any legislation gov-

erning it's content. Now if they ever were a target for the Dark wouldn't the Net be it?



With the Net the minions of Darkness could do, see, or manipulate anything they wanted to. A virus here, a worm there. One day false reports of massacres, the next a report about a world leaders latest digression. ET's tracking down the brightest minds, Dark Elves latching on to the most emotional. It really is a scary

thought.

And do you know what makes even scarier? The fact that you never see a face, nor do you hear their voice, all you ever do is communicate through a small box on your desk.

Just recently we have seen a world wide scare with the 'Melissa' virus. This program resides in your Browser, and allows people to see your personal files. What if we multiplied that 10 times, so instead of just allowing others to view your files it could in fact alter them? So now you don't exist, no benefits, no credit, no access to your money. If you have annoyed the Dark enough, you receive a fate worse than death... non-existence.

This all sounds pretty extreme, but it could happen... perhaps. It's certainly something for your Minion Hunters to keep an eye on.

Until the next time, watch the Net.

Marcus D. Bone



PREVIEW

The Shadow Falls - Sin City Volume 1

By Mike Marchi

Introduction

We gamers, as a rule, wait with baited breath for any new material to come out supporting our favorite game systems. And when those magical tomes finally reach the retail shelves, we eagerly snatch them up and start flipping through their pages. We take a quick peek at the art, we read the back cover, we try to get an overview for what's tucked inside - all in the name of evaluating a potential purchase.

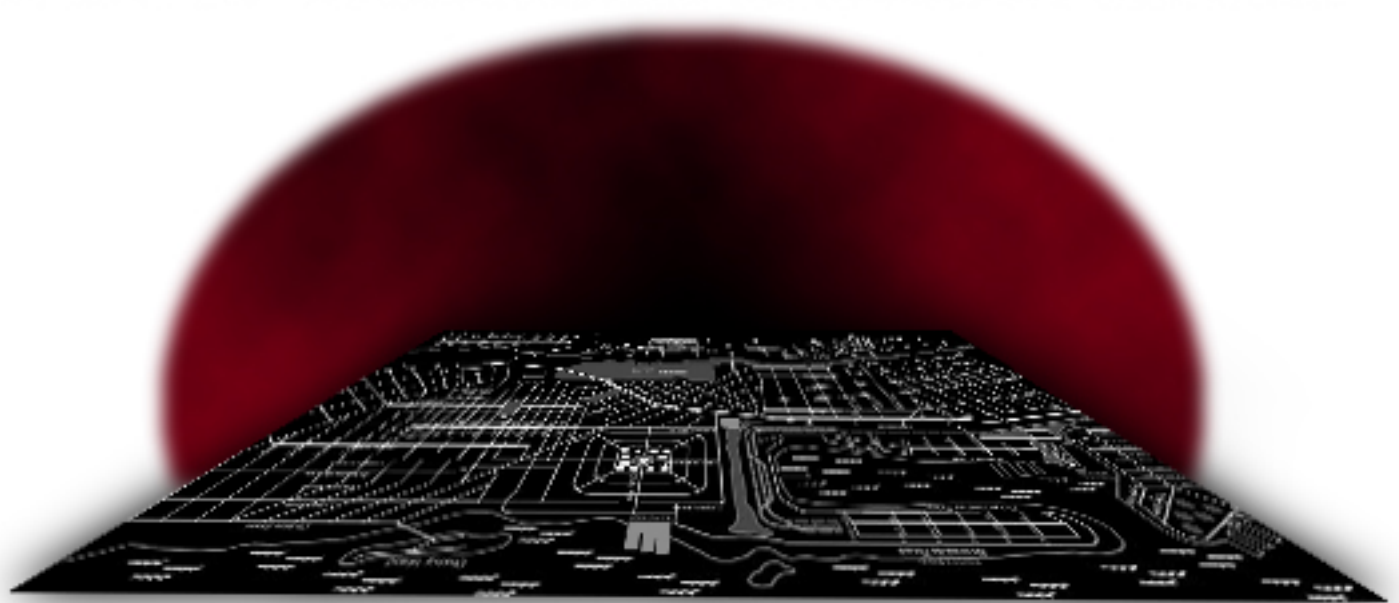
For anyone interested in getting their hands on the new *Sin City* line of sourcebook/adventures for Dark Conspiracy 2nd Edition, this is going to be a little difficult. For the time being, the six issue series will only be available directly from Dynasty Presentations - which means, ordering via mail, FAX or Internet. It also means that the people ordering the first book in the series, "The Shadow Falls - Sin City: Volume One" won't have the luxury of handling the book

before purchasing. Which is why this article appears before you. You are about to be taken on a guided tour of the first book by the person who knows it best ... the author ... yours truly.

Dark Dream

The plan to expand the Dark Conspiracy line with new material specifically for the 2nd edition has been in the works for a while; ever

NEW CENTENNIAL CITY



Something's going down ... May, 1999



since the new edition was first announced. Ken Whitman held several online discussions, looking for an answer to the age-old question: *"What does everyone want?"* After many hours of discussion and debate, the data was tabulated and reviewed, and not too surprisingly, the following answer came to light: *"Everybody wants something different."*

So much for the scientific method...

The data was reviewed again, this time with a broader eye and the following was the result: *"People want a consistent game environment in which they can run campaigns. They want the environment to be supported and expanded. They also want a cohesive back-story running as a common thread throughout each expansion."*

I got the call from Ken in late December. *"I've seen the stuff you've written for DEMONGROUND. You've proven you can write short adventures. Do you think you can handle a full-sized supplement?"* I was elated. This was exactly the reason we'd started DEMONGROUND in the first place: to showcase new talent. And here it was, actually working.

Philosophy

For the initial stages of the project, Ken met with myself, Geoff Skellams and Marcus Bone (your friendly neighborhood DG staff). He

revealed the basic design: *"There's this place called New Centennial City, but the people who live there call it 'Sin City'. This place is like a new Hong Kong. A trade center. It consists of a million or so inhabitants. And it can be located anywhere."* From humble beginnings...

We started out by looking at the adventures that had come before for Dark Conspiracy. Most of those adventures had taken place in a city or

that while each of the previously published works were good at conveying the adventure they presented, they did little else. There was no cohesive plot linking each of those stories with one another. The villains were different. The locations were different. The plot elements were different. The entire adventure line lacked continuity.

So we decided there would be continuity in the new line.



Continuity of Location

First, we decided that the adventures wouldn't jump all over the globe in a vain attempt to please someone (anyone), somewhere (anywhere). We're sure the people of New Orleans, New York and Moscow were very happy to have DC adventures set in their home towns, but the rest of us found it necessary to pull up our campaign stakes in order to run those adventures. So for Sin City, all six adventures will be located in one place. One city.

But which one? We didn't want to alienate anyone by declaring that the new DC campaign would be run in region X of country Y. So the decision was made early on, that New Centennial City would be designed so that the Referee could drop it anywhere in the world.

Continuity of Story

Second, we decided that there would be a consistent back story running through the books. Each adventure would follow, and build on the previous works. But they would also

other similar locale. They all had a map of the region, and a few pages that painted a vague picture of the city in question. Even the modules that used existing cities as a starting point gave very little detailed information. But alas, such is the nature of adventure modules. So we decided our books would have to explore this brave new world we were creating with the same level of detail as a sourcebook. We also noted,



have to be complete stories in and of themselves. To help accomplish this, the sourcebook section of each book would present a more detailed description of another aspect of life in New Centennial City. Because we were inventing a setting, we didn't have the luxury of using an existing city map, or drawing on the pre-existing details of any one place. We feel this has worked to our advantage. By providing the detailed history of how New Centennial City evolved to this point, and then following that evolution forward we've created a detailed environment, rich in history and background material that makes sense. The subject matter of the adventures aren't just dropped out of context. They are part of that ongoing evolving story!

Each book is really three books in one. A Dark Conspiracy Sourcebook, a Dark Conspiracy Adventure, and because of the underlying backplot, a Dark Conspiracy Story.

It's a Sourcebook!

As the introductory work in the series, Sin City Volume 1 contains *The New Centennial City Sourcebook*, the broad background piece of the series. There were many elements we wanted to incorporate into Sin City. We wanted a referee to be able to run any kind of adventure imaginable. If they wanted to run cyberpunk games, there had to be a strong corporate presence. If they wanted a more gothic feel, there

had to be dark elements built into the architecture and history that would lend themselves to that track. We looked at the elements that tended to appear in most modern adventures, and tried to make sure we either explicitly created them, or left it open for development by the Referee.

We start out by providing the history of New Centennial City, starting with its founding in 1876 as



the town of Centennial, and proceeding to the early 1990's where it had become a small city of around a quarter of a million inhabitants. Then we let the events outlined in the Dark Conspiracy Referee's Guide befall our town. What followed was an evolutionary process in which we expanded the population and borders into a DC metroplex with a population of over one-million people.

Next we presented different sections of the city, one by one, outlining how things have changed or how things have remained the same over the years. Each section of New Centennial City has a unique flavor, owing to the manner in which it was created. Whether it's the quaint, old-time charm of The Square, or the rowdy non-stop action down on The Strip. Whether it's the plodding routine of working down on the docks, or the dog-eat-dog corporate infighting of The Citadel. Whether you are describing the lifestyle of a well-to-do gnome with his house in The Burbs, or the penniless prole eking out an existence in The Projects. We've tried to provide as much descriptive text as possible to give you, the Referee a sense of what Sin City is really like.

But there's more. We give you personalities of Sin City inhabitants from all walks of life. Read their stories. Learn their connection to the city, how they came to be there, and where they think they're going.

Then learn about the political layout of the city. Who's in charge, and how do they maintain their control.

The New Centennial City Sourcebook covers everything the Dark Conspiracy Referee needs to begin an adventure campaign set in New Centennial City. In each of the five remaining books, we will expand on that information, providing even more details. By the time the series ends, you will have a living, breathing campaign environment that you can run Dark Conspiracy adventures in.



tures in for years to come!

But the vision behind the new books goes beyond that. We provide adventure too...

It's an Adventure!

The adventure portion of Sin City Volume 1, *The Shadow Falls*, serves many functions. The first (and most important) is to help introduce the Referee and the Players to New Centennial City and its people. Its second function is to serve as a benchmark - to provide a point of comparison, not too far removed from today's modern world. As the adventures in the series unfold, the descent of Sin City into Darkness will progress apace. Thus giving us a unique opportunity to provide you with something that has never existed in *Dark Conspiracy* before: the chance to watch a dark plot evolve, and really explore some of the possibilities that *Dark Conspiracy* has to offer.

New Centennial City is a city perched on the verge of chaos. Over half the population lives in housing projects perched on a polluted hillside overlooking the sprawl of the city below. Up in the Projects, hope is something that has long since been ripped from the hearts of the inhabitants.

But someone has come to Sin City, someone with a message that restores hope to the downtrodden masses. The message twists the ancient Mayan belief about the cyclical nature of the universe, and presents it as evidence that the long-prophesized day of reckoning is at

hand. The fourth age of mankind is coming to an end. The cosmos is about to hit a giant reset button. Everything is about to start over. Forget about your worries and troubles, because your karmic slate is about to be wiped clean. Everyone's situation is about to change for the better. It certainly couldn't get any worse! Or can it?

Some people aren't looking at the impending end of the world as a time to relax. They're looking at the



tapestry of their lives, and realizing that there are still too many things that they have yet to experience. Things that they've always pushed to the back of their minds, thinking that there will always be another day... Some of those things aren't very nice.

On the surface, the adventure is an investigation into a series of murders. But tracking down a serial killer in a city of one-million is like searching for a needle in a haystack.

It's going to take a lot of legwork, and more than a little luck to get on the right track. But for the wary adventurer, luck is just a simple matter of being in the right place at the wrong time. And time is a luxury that is about to run out for all of us!

It's a Story!

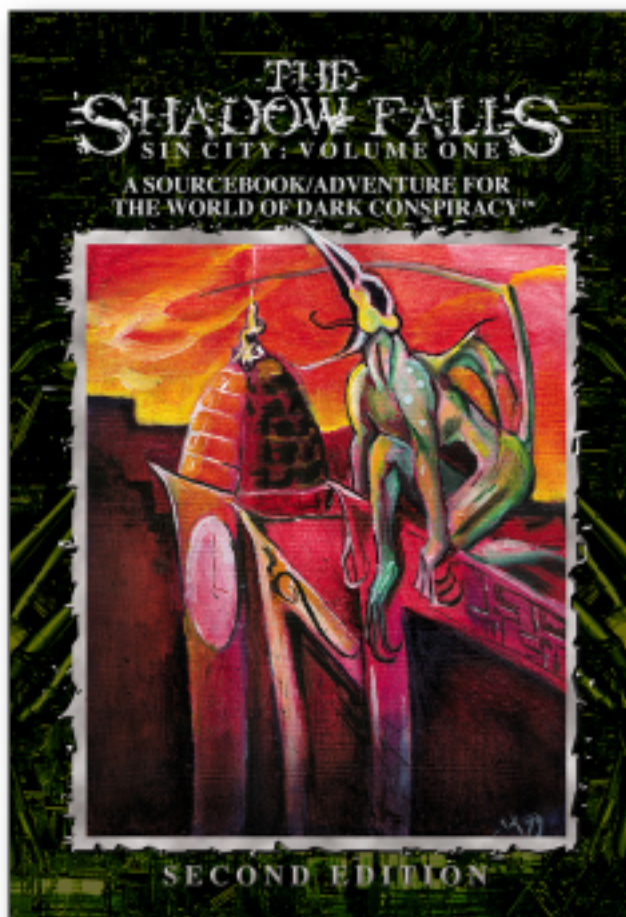
When did it all start? I'm not exactly sure. I suppose the first time I saw one of the Calendites preaching about the end of the world was back in February. It didn't strike me as odd at the time. I mean, everyone's got to have something to believe in, don't they? What's wrong with believing the world is coming to an end? At least you have the satisfaction of knowing that it will eventually come true. Besides, if it's not going to end, then that means we keep going. The way things are, the way they've become, it's hard to feel bad about that. I guess that's why so many people started taking the Calendites message to heart. They started believing that the end of the world was just around the corner. The trouble is, when you're sure the world is about to end, you stop thinking about consequences... Scratch that... You stop worrying about consequences.

The text of the adventure is peppered with small vignettes like this one. Think of them as slices of the larger story. They usually portray scenes that don't directly involve the player characters, but are presented for the Referee's benefit. We believe



this will help the Referee portray the back story of Sin City as an evolving process. Rather than have all the information packed together in one place, a Referee using the book as a guide will see the story text in its proper sequence along the back story timeline. Personally, I think they really help portray the mood of the adventure.

He got another one tonight. My new partner and I are increasingly convinced that the same individual committed all five of these attacks. In each case, some sort of necklace was ripped from the victim's neck prior to the attack. Until now, the killer had stopped as soon as the victim was dead. This last one was different. He appears to have kept hitting her. This would imply a higher level of rage against this fifth victim. We may have caught a break as well. We think we found the necklace. It's a locket - the same kind those Calendite cultists wear.



ORDERING INFORMATION

The Shadow Falls: Sin City, Volume 1 is currently at the printers, and will be available for purchase from Dynasty Presentations the first week in May.

DPI 1100
The Shadow Falls :
Sin City Volume 1
US\$16.00

The book can be ordered:

- 1) Online with a credit card at
<http://www.dynastypresentations.com/>
- 2) Via FAX with a credit card at
(414) 249-9456
- 3) Via mail with a check or money order

Dynasty Presentations, Inc.
P.O. Box 221
Lake Geneva, WI USA 53147

Also available for sale at GenCon '99



IT'S COLD IN SPACE

by Michael H. Wittek

Introduction

"It's Cold Space" is the second installment of an adventure series; however, it can be played on its own. The first adventure in the series is "Pines and Sunshine", which appeared in **DEMONGROUND** Issue 3.

The players will work for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and they take a ride into space for the purpose of investigating an alien spacecraft that is drifting past earth. In the process, they will find another part to the gate and a pack of trouble. It is assumed that you have or have access to the Masters' edition of the *Dark Conspiracy Player's Handbook* and *Referee's Guide* 2nd edition.

Game Master's Summary

Time Line and Adventure Series

For those Referees that are using "It's Cold in Space" as a continuation of "Pines and Sunshine," this adventure takes place three months after the conclusion of "Pines and Sunshine." For the referee's convenience, I included the original non player characters (NPCs), and I added some new NPCs and an underground cell. Further, the original NPCs have been modified to advance the story line.

If you choose to use this as a stand alone adventure, all the NPCs

are included for convenience, and use them as written. Be sure that NASA gives the player characters (PCs) the gate-component locator.

Synopsis

The adventure begins when a PC is contacted by NASA whether or not one of the players is a part of the agency. They will take a flight to Gold Coast, Florida, to meet with the Deputy Mission Director of NASA, and after making a deal, they will fly to Cape Canaveral, Florida, for training. They will be met by an underground cell known as "The Resistance" that will provide some added protection while the PCs are in training. It is rumored that the Dark wants something on the alien ship.

The dark elves most likely will attack the players while they are in training for their space journey. However, as stated later if the players are having too easy time of it, by all means have the dark elves dimension walk into the alien ship at some inopportune time.

After training, the PCs will lift off from Florida, for an uneventful ride to Freedom Spaceport to refuel their main tank then to their rendezvous point. Further, the shuttle will dock with the alien ship, or the players may space-walk to the alien ship. Space walking will give the players an easy chance to observe the battle

damage on the exterior of the alien vessel.

Entering the ship, the players will set off an automated security alarm, which will dispatch one of two sentry robots to search for the intruders. Assuming PC victory, the two gate pieces will be found with the last sentry robot standing guard. The PC can take the piece of the gate off the ship once they have dealt with the immobile sentry.

Having moved the gate parts to the shuttle, they try to return to Earth. However, the alien ship's automated defense systems will activate a ship-mounted-death ray, which fires its last bolt at the PC's shuttle. With a damaged shuttle, the players will be forced to land in Woomera, Australia.

In conclusion, the PCs will be flown back to Tampete, Florida, to collect their payment for services rendered, and they will have made some very powerful contacts. Also, the gate parts will be shipped to the Cohen Medical Research Center (CMRC) for further research by Dr. Karl West and his colleges.

Getting the Players Involved

Though not required, having an astronaut PC would be beneficial to the group; it would also make the storyline logically flow. Give the astronaut the contact letter from NASA. The PC astronaut may be



willing to do the mission more out of loyalty than monetary gain. Also, the REFEREE may opt to give some monetary reward, or perhaps have some of the character's criminal records cleaned up a bit. In either case, the group will make a solid contact at NASA.

If no one is playing an astronaut, use the provided NPC below. This requires that one player must use a U.S. government contact, be it foreign or domestic, depending on the nationality of the PC. Besides, this is a rare time when the players will be on a shuttle, so let the player with the astronaut fly the shuttle; otherwise, have the NPC fly them to their destination. Lastly, if the player messes up the flight rolls, well ...

do you remember the *Challenger*?

Keep It Moving

Referees tend to let their player take a dubious amount of time to discuss plans and actions. Once the players have commenced play, keep



their ability to discuss their actions "true-to-form" or "in character": Meaning, if the characters are dirt-side (on Earth) in their hotel rooms having pleasant conversation over dinner, let them talk tactics and strategy all night. However, if they are in a current fire fight with some dark elves, **do not** let the players have a thirty minute huddle session during combat.

If the players have been having an easy time of it, unleash the dark elves(see "Red Herring") on them while they are on the spacecraft. Perhaps, when the players are engaged with the robot sentries, have the dark elves attack. Whatever you decide to do, **do not let the players rest!** You have done your job if the

THE GATE

The complete gate consists of six components, shown above. The gate components are composed of a material best described as "super-dense matter." Molecules that make up the components have been artificially "compressed," allowing rapid energy transfer and a relatively small size. To offset the incredible density of the matter, each gate component generates an artificial gravity field. These fields prevent the components from simply plunging into the earth. This field also stabilizes the matter, preventing it from collapsing further (which could result in a nuclear reaction).

The gate's components are oddly colored and are best described as a "silvery black." Almost paradoxically, the gate components seem to "drink" light, while at the same time the components almost seem to sparkle. Material of the components is impervious to almost all forms of weapons, short of the application of nuclear weapons or other forms of energy strong enough to either destroy the material or cause the gravitational field to collapse.

Furthermore, the gate's smallest components, the two end pieces, are five meters tall and five meters wide. Thus,

this gate is a fairly sizable construct, although it is fairly small compared with other Vorceki gates.

These gate components have no apparent instrumentation. Their surfaces are not smooth; the surfaces are marked with various orderly, precise lines, circles, and raised surfaces. Direct mental contact operates the gates, and they are equipped so that even beings with relatively weak empathy (in game terms, any intelligent creature that has an Empathy score of at least 4) can use them.

When all the pieces are within 500 meters of each other and they are sent the combination signal, they will rise and form the gateway. In its entirety, the structure will seem to emit a faint, but powerful, hum. Further, the hum is purely mental and will not be recorded by sound recording devices. When the gate receives an initialization signal it will power up and present the user with a mental list of possible destinations. After that, the user can cause the gate to open to any viable destination. When activated, the destination appears as a "hole" in space time, between the main pylons.



The Vorceki

Three and a half million years ago the Vorceki ("The People") emerged as the dominant life forms on their watery home world. A curious and intelligent species, the Vorceki eventually achieved spaceflight and had the good fortune of finding ancient ruins on the fourth planet in their star system.

In less than one century, the Vorceki learned how to use the ancient gates left behind in the ruins and began their own exploration. At first, they were disappointed to find that each world they visited was a desolate and blasted ruin, with crumbling spires and decaying hulks that were once pinnacles of architecture. Finally, almost on the verge of giving up their searching, a gate opened onto a small blue planet, rich with a bewildering variety of life.

The Vorceki, having grown lonely in their search for another intelligent race, decided to create one by spurring on evolution. Using their advanced genetic techniques, the Vorceki kindled the fire of reason in otherwise unremarkable apelike creatures.

For nearly ten thousand years, the Vorceki expanded outward via their gates, sometimes finding dead worlds and sometimes encountering worlds that still lived. On these worlds, they encouraged the development of intelligent life. Finally, the Vorceki came across the greatest gate they had ever encountered. Even with their advanced sciences and experience, it took them nearly fifty years to discern its workings. This gate, it was found, leads to not merely another planet, but into another realm entirely. A band of explorers, well equipped to face anything, set out through the gate. They returned, but were not the same. These altered Vorceki turned against their companions and brought them through the gate. They were changed as well, adding to the swelling army.

Taken entirely by surprise (the Vorceki had not known war in centuries), world after world fell before these changed Vorceki, now known as the Terceki ("Ghosts"). Eventually awakening to the danger, the Vorceki counterattacked and were able to hold off the Terceki long enough to come up with a plan. The elders of the Vorceki decided to sacrifice themselves to spare the worlds they had seeded. Deliberately, they destroyed all their gates and cities, leaving behind only ruins and bones.

On earth, a few of the Vorceki and Terceki survived the destruction of the gate. Realizing they would not be able to survive on the earth as the food supplies ran out and their equipment fell apart, both sides sought desperately for a way to survive and defeat the other. The Terceki tampered with the genes of some of the proto-humans and embedded their DNA into the genetic code of these creatures. When these beings eventually evolved into intelligent life forms, the genetic codes would become active, triggering genetic "memories" and "programming." The surviving Vorceki learned of this plan when they finally defeated the last of the Terceki on earth. The Vorceki, weak and dying, could not find and destroy all the infected proto-humans, so they decided to counter by creating hybrids of their own. These proto-humans would bear in their genes the "memories" they would need to continue the fight.

Now, millions of years later, the tampering of the Terceki and Vorceki have borne fruit. Some humans, infected with now active Terceki DNA, have set out to find the parts of the ancient gate and reactivate it. Of course, this yearning on their part is subconscious, but is growing stronger. The descendants of those altered by the Vorceki are also being manipulated by their genes.

players are in fear of losing their characters, or they do lose a character or two.

Players' Introduction

Before the dawning of man, a war was being waged between two separate factions of the same species. A war brought on by the contact of the dark. A madness of death and destruction, the kind of madness gazing into the black soul of a Dark One would cause. The dark glance that brings insanity to some otherwise peaceful people. Space and Vorcekian worlds were the battlefields where the madness raged. As the death and destruction came to an apex, and the war was coming to a conclusion, the alien species decided to destroy and dismantle the gates which they had been using for centuries. This was in the vain hope to stop or at least slow their evil-tainted brothers. In one such mission, a Vorcekian star ship did not make its jump before a Tercekian corsair's missile found its target.

Having struck the star ship's jump drive, the missile caused the small star ship to misjump as their jump net came online. In the time of eight days, the Vorceki ship reemerged from jump space some seven sectors off course. The Vorceki ship was without



fuel, jump drive, or hope. They managed to escape their evil bothers only to find out that it's cold in space.

A ship floats endlessly in space with carbon scared surfaces, and a jump drive that is all but gone. A subtle reminder of battles fought long past.

Red Herring

Four or five dark elves are equipped with an H&K CAW shotgun, kevlar vest, and kevlar helmet will "Dimension Walk" in the general vicinity of the player for an ambush. Whether the dark elves are out having fun tormenting humans, or they belong to some unknown sinister group, it is up to the REFEREE's discretion. The dark elves can be found on page 70 of the *Dark Conspiracy Referee's Guide* 2nd edition.

The red herring is just that, and it is intended to hamper the progress and mislead the players. Perhaps, it could be a springboard for yet another adventure. You can place the encounter where you like; however, it is suggested that this encounter take place while the players are at the Kennedy Space Center during training. Though, if you want to give players a challenge, have the dark elves attack the PCs on the alien spacecraft.

Scene One: NASA

Meeting "The Resistance" of Tampete

Once the players decide to head

to the Gold Coast metroplex, they will be met at the airport by Dr. Eagon Spangler, the leader of "The Resistance" and his traveling companion/bodyguard, Wolf. After the introductions and pleasantries, Dr. Spangler speaks:

"Gentlemen, a mutual contact has sent me here to make sure that you get to where you need to be. It has come to our attention that your lives may be in danger. Because of the sensitive mission that you are considering, it had been decided that you would be escorted in and out of the Gold Coast metroplex until the threat can be neutralized or until you have completed your mission. We have a limousine wanting for us."

The characters are taken to the lower side of Dreamland and are checked into a comfortable hotel with all their expenses paid. Before their meeting with NASA's Deputy Missions Director, the PCs are given time to rest and get cleaned up.

Meeting the Deputy Missions Director

Jeff Cohen, the Deputy Missions Director, meets with the PCs at Kennedy Space Center. The PCs are taken to a high-tech conference room. The office wall's are lined with monitors that have every possible vantage point of the launch platform. An STS Shuttle Orbiter can be seen being readied for a mission. On the conference table, there are a computer keyboard and monitor at each seating position so that commands can be issued from this

room. Dr. Spangler and Wolf will attend the meeting with the PCs. Deputy Missions Director Cohen will just give general details about the mission and payment (see "Offers") until he is assured the players will do the job.

Offers

For payment, Jeff Cohen will be willing to train the players in the needed skills for the adventure at no cost, give them a reasonable salary, have all expenses paid, and have clemency granted for minor offenses. It is the REFEREE's soul discretion as to how far Jeff Cohen will bargain, and what you want the player's to have so that game balance is maintained.

The Conversation

If the players agree to do the mission, and a price is successfully negotiated, the Deputy Missions Director will go on to say:

"Since the preliminaries have been completed, let me go into further detail of the mission. At 0352 GMT, on April 1, the Hubble V space telescope photographed pictures of an alien spacecraft with a trajectory heading toward our sun. We have been tracking the alien spacecraft for the last two months, so we have come to the conclusion that it is a derelict ship. The path of Earth's orbit has brought us into arms' reach of this spacecraft. We have no idea from where this spacecraft originated, nor have we received any response from direct communication. Your job is to get



aboard the vessel and gather as much data as you can in within a two-hour window.

“After you conclude your training, you will take off in an STS Shuttle Orbiter from Cape Canaveral. You will precede to Freedom Spaceport for refueling. Then you will rendezvous with the alien spacecraft. The travel time will be less than 17 hours at which time you will dock with the alien craft. If it is determined that normal docking is not possible, you will space-walk to the alien ship’s airlock.

“You will have two hours to video, document, and remove as much as you can. If you delay longer than two hours, you will not have enough fuel to return to Earth, and you will be too far away to attempt a rescue. You will bring back whatever specimens and documentation that time will afford you. You will leave the alien ship, and return to Earth. Estimated time to Earth is 20 hours from your new location. Once you have done one orbit around Earth, you will reenter atmosphere and land at Edward’s Air Force Base in California.”

Give the players opportunity to ask any questions they might have. After the question session, Jeff Cohen dismisses the group.

The Training

The Referee uses this to lighten up the mood. Have the players make rolls against their Agility, Constitution, and Intelligence while they operate the simulators, riding the G-

force machines, and taking psychiatric exams. This is a good opportunity to roleplay and to learn some new skills. The degree of roleplaying and number of skills earned is up to the REFEREE.

Scene Two: The Ride & The Coupling

Become familiar with the space travel rules on page 379 of the *Dark Conspiracy Player’s Handbook* 2nd edition. A Piloting roll is made at liftoff, but the ride to Freedom Spaceport and the alien craft should be uneventful. A brief layover at Freedom Spaceport will allow the STS Shuttle Orbiter’s main tank to be refueled. Also, give the players some time to discuss and plan whatever action they want, for they do have a seventeen-hour ride in front of them. Additionally, they will not have the time once they are onboard the alien ship.

For brevity, you may allow the coupling of the alien ship and STS Shuttle Orbiter with a specially made ship-to-ship docking coupler. Have the pilot make at least one Piloting roll. If you want more realism, have your PCs space-walk to the alien ship. The chances that the alien ship is compatible with our technology are slim.

In either case, there is a studded panel next to the outer airlock doors. One stud glows with a bluish hue, and the other gives off an amber hue. The blue stud closes the airlock and pressurizes the airlock. An amber stud purges the airlock and opens the

outer airlock door. There is a pair of these panels for both the inner and outer airlock door. The air lock can hold four people with equipment comfortably. Lastly, both the inner and outer door cannot be open at the same time. If one door is open, the other will remain locked or the open door will close first before allowing the closed door to be opened.

Scene Three: In the Belly The Ship

Time has seen to it that the ship (see Figure 1) has seen its better days. Consequently, the ship maneuver engines cannot be activated without a serious overhaul if someone could figure out the alien technology. The jump drive was damaged beyond repair by a Tercekian battle corsair, and the nuclear batteries contain enough power for base life support. There is no lighting on the ship, so characters will have to supply their own light source, or have some special optical gear.

The exterior of the ship shows battle scars from a battle long over. On the port-stern, shards of sharp metal bent outwards surround the perimeter of the hole. Obviously, a large missile strike. So large in fact, it took a large section of the jump drive. This large hole will accommodate one character in a space suit at a time.

Since the ship’s life support is running at minimum levels, the air is stale. Further, if more than two characters stay on the ship longer

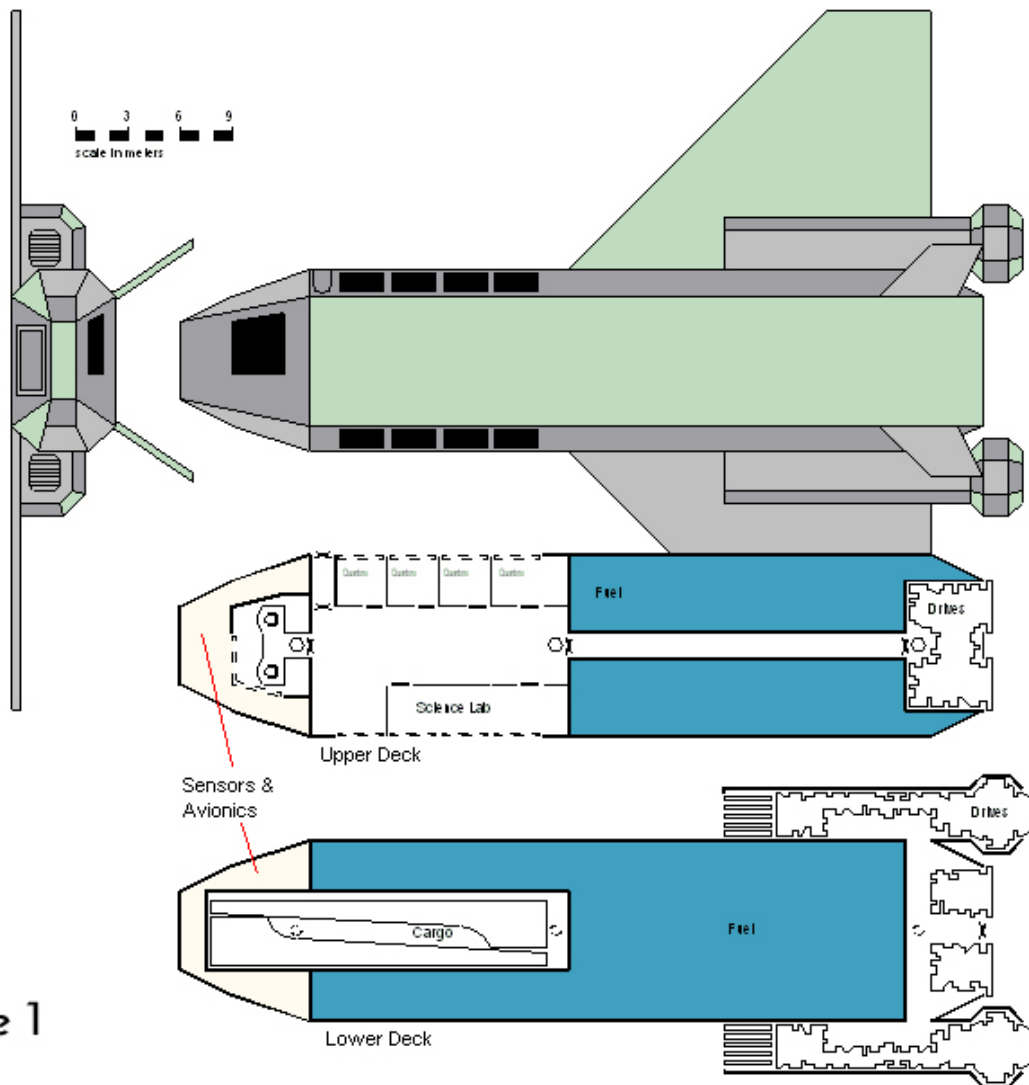


Figure 1

than an hour, the life support system will not be able to keep up with the work. The carbon dioxide will climb to dangers levels. Every three rounds after the first hour have each character roll an Easy: Constitution test, or they pass out. Every six rounds after the first hour, increase the difficulty level to stay conscious by one level.

The ship's computers use a touch screen or pad for all commands and input. There are no keyboards on the terminal site. Though

the players will not have a hard time touching the screens and pads, they will not recognize the symbols on the input or output devices. Since the players don't have the time to learn, trial and error as well as educated guesses will work the best here.

Lastly, the ship is lined with intruder detection sensors. The automatic security system will activate the robots in the cargo hold. One of the two guardian robots will start seeking the intruders. System activation happens in one of two ways

since the ship is so old. First, if the characters open the airlock, it will set off an alarm 50% of the time. Second, if the internal sensors detect gunfire going off, it will set the alarm off guaranteed.

The Bridge

In this room, you have a perfect view of the stars. There are only two round cushioned seats where normal chairs would be placed. Dust covers the chairs, floor and instrument panels. Just as you enter the bridge, an



Figure 2

access way is noticed on the floor that leads downward.

Assuming, the players activated security, and if the players search the instrument panels, they will notice a dimly lit panel on an Easy: Observation skill roll. If a player can manage to make a Difficult: Computer test then he activates a holo-monitor that repeatedly blinks the same message (see Figure 2). The message is “INTRUDER ALERT” in Vorcekian, but the character probably won’t be the wiser.

The Quarters

There are four like rooms on the starboard side of the alien ship. Dust covers everything in these rooms too. There are circular round beds and chairs in the rooms much in the same style as the bridge seats, but no pictures, artwork, nor personal effects of any kind. An eerie thought, the aliens kept no personal belongings. What kind of creatures are these?

If the players take the time to move the dust and look around, the players will find a computer terminal on an Easy: Observation test. A successful Difficult: Computer test will bring up a holographic image of a star system that is not of the Milky Way.

The Engine Room

A subtle reminder to the REF-EREE, the top engineer section has a large hole in the bulkhead. Consequently, both deck levels are complete vacuums! If the players are not in a spacesuit while on these decks, they are dead. Also, if they manage to open the iris valves before decompressing the ship, an explosive decompression will occur. Everything not nailed down will be sucked into space. Again, a hazardous proposition for a character that did not take the proper precautions.

Unlike the rest of the ship, the engineering decks are not covered with dust. Apparently, everything that was not nailed down had got

sucked out of the engineering decks. There are dead instrument panels and flat screened monitors that cover most of the walls and engines on both decks.

With an Average: Engineering skill test, a player can deduce that the jump drive is not repairable. Further, a Difficult: Engineering roll will conclude that the maneuver drive is offline without serious work. However, when the players are on the bottom engineering deck, they will see that the power plant still has a spark of life in its reactors. Some of the panels are dimly lit here. An Formidable: Engineering or Physics check is made to discover that the character is looking at a cold-fission-energy reactor. Even in the reactor’s run down condition, it is a marvel to behold for any engineer or nuclear physicist.

A Difficult: Engineering test will note that the power plant is coming to an end. Also, there is nothing that can be done to stop it. During a search of the lower engineer decks, another blinking light like described on the bridge flashes. If the players take the time to move the dust and look around, they will find a computer terminal on an Easy: Observation skill check. A successful Difficult: Computer skill check will activate a holo-monitor that displays a repeated message (see figure 1).

The Cargo Hold

Lying on their sides, two massive columns dominate the interior of the cargo bay. These columns drink up any light that the PCs shine



on the huge objects. If the players have the gate-component locator active, it will be read off the scale for a fixed location.

The parts to the gate are not the only thing that resides in the cargo bay. There are one or two warbots (see “The Wandering Robot”) guarding the great columns. One warbot remains in the cargo hold if the players had activated the security system while the other goes on a search & destroy mission. Else, if the PCs were successful at entering the ship without tripping the alarm, both will be here guarding the gate parts. The remaining warbot has damaged leg actuators, so it remains at the stern access way to the cargo hold. Close to the warbot, the computer terminal is located on the back wall of the cargo bay, so the player will have to contend with this crippled nuisance.

Lastly, the floor of the cargo hold is a huge door. If a player can manage a Difficult: Computer skill check, they will be able to open the cargo door into space. Power that is needed to open up the cargo door will deplete the power plant’s reserves to nothing, and the life support will fail. At that point, it is up to PCs’ ingenuity to load it on their vessel. REFEREE, remember about that vacuum thing when the players open the cargo doors.

The Science Lab

This room contains four circular round beds, chemist work bench, computer terminals on the port side bulkhead, a huge crystalline vat. Dust covers everything in the lab.

Close inspection and dusting of the vat will reveal a rather gruesome sight.

A submerged body floats in an off gold colored liquid; the body is not human. The body is cylindrical/disk in shape, and has four thick tentacles space equally around the median of the creature, and it has smaller tentacles between the larger. There appears to be two mouths one beneath and below the creature.

The vat’s crystal lattice is impervious to destruction short of the use of a large amount of explosives which would destroy the body for sure. Non moving, the lid of the vat is held in place by a hydraulic arm to which the lid is attached.

If the players take the time to move the dust and look around, they will find a computer terminal on an Easy: Observation skill check. A Difficult: Computer skill check will activate a holo-monitor that displays the anatomy of the creature that is floating in the vat.

The Wandering Robot

Statistics for the warbots can be found in the *Dark Conspiracy Referee’s Guide* 2nd edition, on page 353 and 354. A minor change is the warbots have small contra-grav plates built underneath their main chase. This only gives them the ability to slowly ascend and descend from one deck to another deck via the access ways. They still rely on their mechanical legs for horizontal locomotion.

Time has taken working legs away from one of the warbots. For-

tunately, if the players manage to activate the security systems, only one of the warbots can track down the ship’s intruders. Using the ship’s sensors, the security system can track the movement of the characters and send the information to the warbots until the warbot’s sensors are in view of the characters. Both warbots will be in the cargo hold if the players elude the security system.

Scene Four: A Lame Horse

Assuming the players have the gate parts, they will pack them onto their shuttle and begin their journey back home. Nonetheless, the alien ship fires its one and only shot from a ship-mounted death ray. The weapon’s high energy capacitors stored the energy during the last battle with the Terceki. Based on system reports, the character’s shuttle is slowly leaking fuel, so they will not be able to do a full orbit around Earth. The STS Shuttle Orbiter will have to reenter Earth’s atmosphere early, and will force a landing in Woomera, Australia. REFEREE NOTE: This hit is to damage the ship, and it is not to destroy the STS Shuttle Orbiter and kill the party.

The REFEREE should have the pilot check his Pilot skill roll at whatever difficulty level that you deem necessary. A miserably failed roll here will spell the end to the characters. So, watch the die roll carefully if a PC is piloting the STS Shuttle Orbiter.

Here is some dark history:

At Woomera, Australia, the



landing base was not more than a satellite launch facility in the late twentieth century. However, a freak accident occurred off the northwestern coastal waters of Australia dealing with a Los Angeles class nuclear submarine. A nuclear reactor melted down sending radioactive poisoned sludge into the Great Barrier Reef. Suing the United States, The World Court awarded Australia \$113 billion U.S. dollars for the wonton destruction of Australia's natural resources. American and Australian officials were puzzled how the Captain of the sub managed to run-around her sub so far into shallow waters. Further, the incident does not explain how the coral could have penetrated a titanium skinned ship, and damage the nuclear reactor.

Unofficial reports have come in about strange sightings in the Great Barrier Reef area. Accounts speak of mutant fish with two heads, Great White Sharks with three eyes, and Mermaids with four arms.

Scene Five: . . .Meet Again

If this is a standalone adventure, have the players flown back to Tampete, Florida with the pieces of the gate if they have them. However, if you are running this adventure as one of a series of adventures, have the NASA's Deputy Missions Director, Dr. West, Dr. Spangler, and Wolf meet the players in Australia.

Whether this is a standalone or ongoing adventure, have Major Reed watch the PCs. Major Reed is looking for the other parts of the gate.

Having gone insane by recent events, she has started a cult of eco-terrorists (see "Eco-Warrior" on p. 405, *Dark Conspiracy Referee's Guide*). Her cult is small, but they are fanatically loyal to the cause. The cause is to reassemble the gate's pieces. The story, Reed is selling: Reassemble the doorway to the heavens so that my brothers may come, and they'll save you and your planet from destruction!

Once the players have landed, Reed will have a spy looking for some evidence of another part to the gate. If the players have it, Major Reed will try to take it from the players while it is being transported to the States. This is the most opportune time to take the gate parts.

Conclusion

In the end, if the players successfully recovered the pieces of the gate, the Deputy Missions Director should give the players their reward for a job well done, not to say the least that they have made new contacts. REFEREE, if your players showed ingenuity, and they roleplayed well, you may give them some extra experience points and an initiative point. Lousy roleplay should be rewarded with negative experience points.

NPCs

The following are key NPCs that should not be killed if possible, for they will be involved in important roles in future adventures.

Dr. Blake Lansing

Strength: 8

Constitution: 9

Agility: 8

Intelligence: 10

Education: 10

Charisma: 9

Empathy: 9

Initiative: 3

Skills: Swimming 2, Electronics 4, Vehicle Use (Wheeled Vehicle) 2, Willpower 6, Computer Operation 5, Engineer 5, Physics 10, Leadership, 5, Luck 7, Persuasion 2, Empathetic Healing 1, Human Empathy 4, Foreboding 3

Description: Dr. Lansing is thirty-six years old. He is six feet tall and weighs 190 pounds. He has jet black hair and intense blue eyes. Blake is in excellent physical condition, handsome and has a deep, commanding voice.

Dr. Lansing is a Terceki-human hybrid. Fortunately for Dr. Lansing, the DNA combination is stable and has served only to enhance his physical and mental capacities.

At the age of 18, Dr. Lansing earned his doctorate in physics at M.I.T. After that, he worked in corporate research for five years and then took a teaching position at M.I.T. Throughout his life he was plagued by strange dreams. As he grew older, his dreams took on greater clarity. They revealed, in part, some of the truth of his situation.

At the start of the adventure, Dr. Lansing will be a brilliant scientist



who is concerned with finding out more of what lies behind his dreams. However, his heritage will begin to affect him. Eventually he will become obsessed with finding the gate components and will be willing to destroy anyone who stands in his way.

Major Janice Reed

Strength: 7

Constitution: 8

Agility: 8

Intelligence: 7

Education: 8

Charisma: 8

Empathy: 7

Initiative: 4

Skills: Heavy Weapons 2, Mechanic 1, Melee Combat (Unarmed) 5, Melee Combat (Armed) 5, Small Arms (Pistol) 6, Small Arms (Rifle) 5, Thrown Weapon 2, Stealth 5, Willpower 6, Computer Operation 4, Medical 1, Instruction 2, Leadership 6, Human Empathy 2, Project Emotion 2.

Description: Major Reed is thirty-three years old. She is five feet, eight inches tall. She has brown hair and brown eyes. Major Reed is in excellent physical shape and is good looking in a rough sort of way.

Major Reed is a Vorceki-human hybrid. Her genetic material is stable and gives her excellent physical and mental capabilities.

Major Reed was born to a poor family in the inner city. An athletic

scholarship supplemented with an ROTC scholarship gave her a ticket from her humble origins. She excelled in school, but had trouble with her temper and was arrested several times for fighting. After graduation she entered active military service and eventually ended up in a Special Forces team.

She has intense dreams that have revealed to her that she is meant for a higher purpose. Her dreams have also inspired her to do extensive research using her contacts in the intelligence community.

As time goes on, Reed becomes more obsessed with finding the pieces of the gate; she has started a cult in the gate's honor. She will begin to feel no remorse toward those that will hamper her ability to assemble the remaining parts of the gate

Dr. Karl West

Strength: 4

Constitution: 6

Agility: 4

Intelligence: 8

Education: 8

Charisma: 6

Empathy: 3

Initiative: 1

Skills: Climbing 1, Horsemanship 1, Vessel Use (Boat) 1, Vehicle Use (Wheeled Vehicle) 2, Willpower 2, Biology 7, Chemistry 7, Computer Operation 2, Medical 8, Physics 1, Instruction 2, Luck 4.

Description: Dr. West is forty-nine years old. He is five feet, eight inches

tall. West has thinning brown hair, a moustache and a beard. He is in reasonable good shape.

Dr. West is a normal human being. He received his M.D. from Ohio State University. Early in his career West had the misfortune of delivering a stillborn baby that was a horribly flawed hybrid. Horrified, yet curious, Dr. West decided to investigate further. To his horror, he found that there were an increasing number of such births.

Dr. West is a very compassionate and concerned man. The Doctor is dedicated to finding out what is going on and protecting humanity from what he fears is a great threat.

Robert "Wolf" Wolfgang Zimmerman

Strength: 10

Constitution: 7

Agility: 7

Intelligence: 2

Education: 4

Charisma: 7

Empathy: 3

Initiative: 4

Skills: Archery: 2, Heavy Weapons: 0, Melee Combat (unarmed): 5, Melee Combat (knife): 2, Small Arms (pistol): 2, Small Arms (rifle): 4, Thrown Weapon: 1, Climb: 1, Parachute: 1, Swim: 3, Vessel (boat): 1, Acrobatic: 1, Demo: 2, Electronics: 1, Stealth: 3, Navigation: 1, Observation: 4, Stalk: 1, Vehicle (wheel): 1, Vehicle (heavy): 1, Willpower: 3,



Survival: 2, Medical: 4, Instruction: 1, Lang (English) 10, Lang (German): 2, Leadership: 1, Luck: 2, Persuasion: 1, Foreboding: 1.

Description: Wolf is twenty-nine years old. He stands five feet, nine inches tall and weighs 202 lbs. His hair is light brown and his eyes are hazel. He keeps his hair in a traditional Marine high & tight. Wolf's favored weapons are the Mossberg M500 and Smith & Wesson Model 29 with a 16.5-inch barrel.

Strong as an ox and smart as a rock, Wolf found his talent best suited for the military. Leaving his MIKE roots, he spent four years in the U.S. Marine Corps. Seeing no immediate future in the civilian world, Wolf reenlisted in the Corps, and that is when things started to get interesting. He went back to training the first year to become a member of Force Recon.

Wolf made his first contact with the dark minions while on deep patrol of a Nicaraguan jungle. After that contact, he left the Marine Corps to funnel his gallant efforts in finding out what or who is behind the dark. So, he started his own bodyguard business to pay his bills, and he meets a wide variety of people and travels to many different places.

Hired by Doctor Spangler, Wolf proved to have the right skills that Doctor Spangler was looking to recruit for his underground resistance cell. Wolf was given several missions to test his combative skills and disposition toward the spreading

dark. Satisfied with what he had seen; Doctor Spangler offered Wolf the ability to join "The Resistance."

With a cool demeanor, little in the realm of the norm can shake Wolf. He takes the frontal approach when dealing with man or monster. Though a good man, he has no patients to deal with political rhetoric or posturing, gutter scum, or heretics. Wolf would rather fight with a leader of a street gang than have to look at him the second time.

With all that can be said about Wolf's combative prowess, his intellect is his downside. The dark minions having the ability to empathically manipulate Wolf's mind, will reign king over the great fighter. It is heavily suspected that Wolf was abducted by aliens not too long ago, but further tests are being done.

Doctor Eagon Spangler

Strength: 5

Constitution: 6

Agility: 6

Intelligence: 8

Education: 8

Charisma: 7

Empathy: 2

Initiative: 2

Skills: Psychology: 8, Persuasion: 4, Biology: 3, Chemical: 2, Leadership: 3, Medical: 8, Computer Operation: 1, Observation: 3, Foreboding: 2, Human Empathy: 2, Willpower: 4, Martial Arts (Unarmed): 4, Small Arms (Pistol): 2, Vehicle Use (Wheeled): 3, Luck: 1, Ani-

mal Empathy: 1.

Description: Doctor Eagon Spangler is thirty-seven years old. He stands five feet, seven inches tall and weighs 167 lbs. His hair is medium brown with some grey, and his eyes are brown.

Early in life, Eagon Spangler knew he had something different about himself, for he could feel what his childhood pets were feeling. Consequently, his push in life was to learn more about and master his mental talents. While an undergraduate studying psychology, he came in contact with a dark being from another dimension. Spangler made the mistake to make empathic contact with the vile creature, and he felt the cold-dark-malign nature of the beast. From that point, he has dedicated his life to ward off the dark; he made a small underground cell called "The Resistance." Doctor Spangler has some financial backing of some very rich and powerful individuals. However, the names of these individuals have remained a secret known only to him.

The Doctor is rather an aloof individual that takes his job very seriously. He can warm up to those he considers friends, but he has few that he calls friends. Truly empathic to those around him and the human race in general, the empathic contact with the dark creature wounded Eagon's psyche. So, Eagon rarely gets himself involved with others.



Technology

Gate Component Locator

The Gate Component Locator (GCL) looks like a tablet about the size of a coffee table book. It is made of the same material as the gate components and was manufactured by the Vorceki. The device is actually a sophisticated computer, but the only use that will be accessible to humans is the function it was last programmed for, namely locating gate components. Using the device requires an Empathy of at least 4. Using it effectively requires a Difficult: Computer skill test. If used suc-

cessfully, the user will receive a complex string of data and formulas that indicate the location of the nearest gate component. Interpreting the information into longitude and latitude is a Difficult: Intelligence skill check.

If the locator is within 10km of a gate component, it will create a "pull" in the mind of the user, enabling him to find the component. Think of it as sort of an alien dowsing rod.

Weight: 3kg

Price: N/A

Credits

I would like to thank:

Paul Jenard Schirf for the use of his original design of the Sprinter Class Star Ship.

Dr. Michael C. LaBossiere for the use of "Karl West," "Major Reed," "Blake Lansing," "The Gate," and "The Vorceki."

A. Shane Murphy for the use of "Eagon Spangler" and "The Resistance."

"Don't underestimate the willpower of a rock. Rocks keep secrets very well. The people of the past knew that. That's why they told their secrets to the rocks. If we could make them talk - to learn their secrets, we might have a chance at stopping this invasion. After all, it was stopped once before."

- Zena Marley

(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)



Player Handout: A letter to the PCs

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

NASA Headquarters
Jeff Cohen, Deputy Missions Director
300 E. St. SW
Washington, D.C.
(888) 555-1212

<date>

<player's name>

<player's address>

player's City, State/Province Postal Code

I would like to speak on the topic of strange occurrences at Cape Canaveral, Florida, on <date> at 1:00 P.M.. I was sent by a Doctor Lansing. I hope you will accept.

You will need further information regarding travel arrangements. Specifically housing or transportation, do not hesitate to call me.

Please call me at 1-888-555-1212 to discuss such details.

I appreciate this opportunity to share information and experiences with your group, and I look forward to it very much.

Sincerely,

Jeff Cohen



BIOFORM N-8

by Ian Sullivan

As creature:

Strength: 3

Constitution: 2

Agility: 8

Initiative: 4

Move: 5/10/20

Skill/Damage: 4/2

Hits: 5/10

#Appear: 1D6

Attack: 90%

Special: Toxin Spit. Treat as small arms combat with the N-8 having a skill of 2.

As N-8 controlled humanoid:

Strength: victim's + 1

Constitution: as victim

Agility: victim's original - 1

Initiative: 4

Move: as human (no run)

Skill/Damage: na/2D6

Hits: 15/30

#Appear: n/a

Attack: 90%

Controlled beings have no skills except Melee Combat Unarmed at level 2 and Observation at level 1. Toxin Spit attack is not possible for an attached N-8.

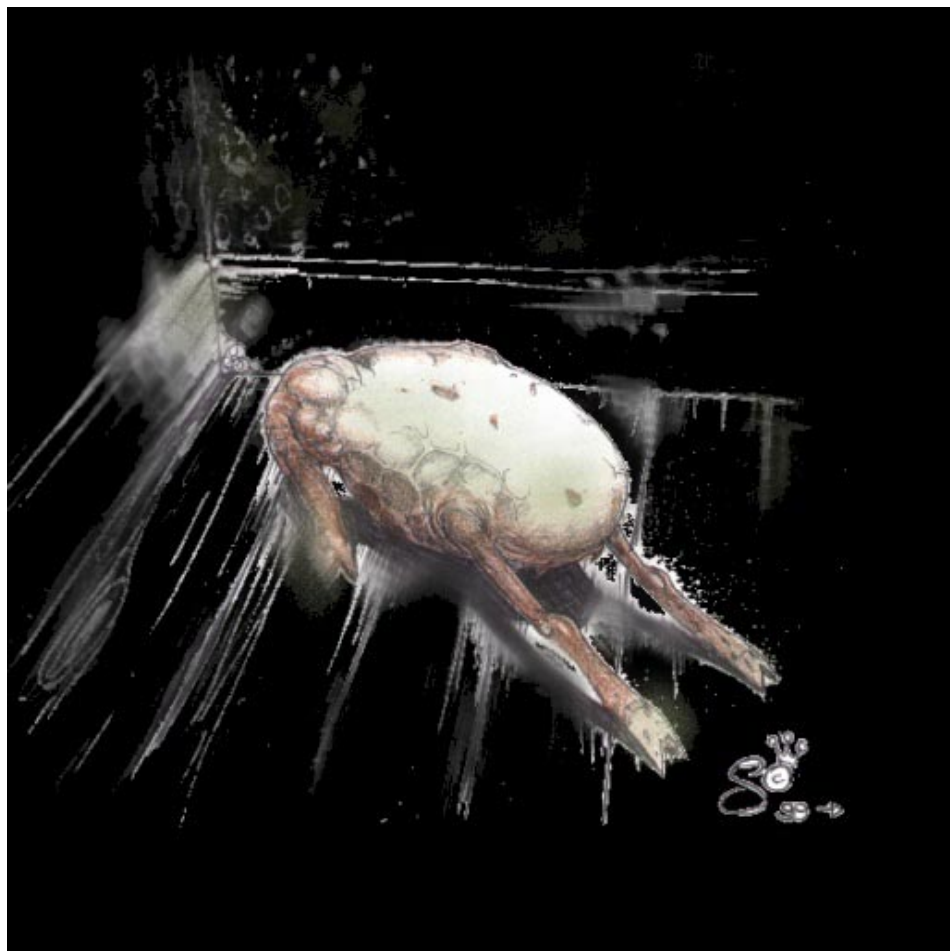
The creations known only as N-8 are biological Dark Tek devices. They are similar to Slaughterbots in that they replace the victims brain, but the N-8 is too large to hide inside the human cranial cavity as Slaughterbots do. Also, it seems that although the N-8 was designed as a

control device for zombie soldiers it is very ineffective when used as such.

Somewhere in the outer proto-dimensions there existed a Dark Lord who wished absolute dominion over a race of beings whose original evolution had been from what we would call dinosaurs. These beings were physically much larger than humans, and resisted the Dark Lords' attempt to conquer them for many years. The Darklings used their creative abilities to hatch a new

bioform to help eradicate the last few hundred who resisted them. This was the genesis of the creatures that have become known as the N-8. The name is a designation given to a specimen captured during a raid on a biotechnology corporation lab by the FBI.

An unattached N-8 bears a bizarre resemblance to a large oven-ready chicken (no, really) with four legs. The legs are long and bony, and each is tipped with a sharp talon. These creatures attack by leaping at





the victims head. Whilst leaping they also spit a noxious fluid in order to temporarily blind the target. If the attack is successful the N-8 attaches itself firmly to the head. Upon contact the creature will extrude a tendril of proto-flesh from its previously

concealed mouthparts. The tendril seeks out the victims cerebrum, burrowing through the nasal cavity into the skull. It effectively lobotomises the victim and takes control of the central nervous system. The N-8 then lives by gorging itself on the victims life force, until the victim dies and the N-8 falls away and dies itself.

A successful leaping attack causes 4 points of damage to the victims head from the talons grasping. After two combat rounds the skull drilling process begins, during which the hapless victim takes 2 points of internal head damage per combat turn. When the wound reaches critical level the target is fully under the control of the N-8.

Obviously other people may want to remove the N-8 from the victims head, but time is short as it must be done during the first two combat turns after attachment. On a successful Average: Strength roll,

two of the legs may be freed, but the victims face will be scarred. A critical failure will cause a further 4 points of damage to the victim, and urgent medical attention must be sought. After the second combat round following attachment the effects on the victim are completely irreversible, and the Dark Lords have a new minion.

However, it should be noted that an intended target has a relatively easy chance to avoid having an N-8 attach itself in the first place. A successful Agility test at Average task difficulty will avoid the leaping attack. Humans tend to be more agile than the large reptilian species the N-8 was designed to defeat.

Credits: Bioform N-8 inspired by the CD-ROM games 'Heretic II' and 'Half Life'.

"I can't abide stupidity. I can't keep you from making a mistake either. But I can insist that you make it as far from me and mine as possible."

- Zena Marley
(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)



MOULD

by Lee Williams

Years before the 1983 incident on Io, the race of Tentacular ETs were experimenting with dimensional travel on their home planet. An empathic probe accidentally broke through into a fragmentary proto-dimension which was full of greyish-white slime. The slime was in fact a colony of single-celled organisms which had lain undisturbed since the start of the universe. The energy influx caused this slime to evolve quickly, gaining a rudimentary direction finding sense based on an as yet unknown type of Empathy. Using this sense, the mould found the rift created by the ETs, and after working out how to move it slid over the portal into our universe.

After many more small evolutionary steps, a mould arrived on Earth. It eventually made its way over several decades to where it sensed the greatest amount of life energy, which was the city of London. The suicide of a young army officer at 50 Berkeley Square in the Victorian era was due to the activity of this mould. The presence of a ghost had long been reported in the house, and the police report stated that the man had taken his own life “due to the unnatural horror of the

apparition he must have witnessed”.

The reason that moulds are attracted to living beings is that when in our universe they require metallic elements in order to grow and divide. The elements must come from living tissues. In humans this means that the moulds drain all of the hemoglobin from the blood, as well as the metallic salts which are present in several major organs. Death is not instantaneous and is very unpleasant. If a mould can obtain enough metals its outer cell layers will ossify, turning into a shell rather like coral. The shell has an Armour Value of 1. It takes the elements from about 12 humans to allow the shell to form. Firearms attacks against a mould only cause minimum damage due to its nature. Fire does normal damage, and extreme cold will force the mould into a dormant state. Due to the plantlike nature of the cells comprising the mould, weedkiller can be used as an effective weapon. 10cc of undiluted weedkiller will cause 1d10 damage.

Moulds also have the ability to hide by spreading their cells thinly across surfaces, literally only a few cells thick. The structure of the

mould is then rendered almost totally transparent. It may however be sensed by use of Empathic powers, particularly if it is hunting. The mould is also able to paralyse its prey, especially if the animal (or person) is unaware or asleep. The dissolution of the prey by the mould causes 1d6 damage per turn to all locations touched.

Strength: 6

Constitution: 3

Agility: 2

Intelligence: 1

Education: 1

Charisma: 2

Empathy: 6

Initiative: 2

Move: 2

Skill/Damage: special (see below)

Hits: 30/30

#Appearing: 1

The damage caused by the Mould to a living being is 1D6 each turn to every location touched. It will also drain 1 point of Willpower per turn if the target being is asleep. If not, a Difficult level task roll is required by the target to resist.



STREET TALK IN THE REPUBLIC OF BRITAIN

By Lee Williams

In the early part of the 21st century, several sub-cultures in the metropolises have developed their own unique street languages. Many of these are distinct from one another, but there are only two which allow interaction between all gangs and sub-groups in North America. These are English and Spanish, though nobody likes to be heard speaking a normal form of language in public. It's not cool.

In Britain and Europe however, streetwise people have developed a new slanguage, which is based upon both the pidgin English used by early explorers and the derivatives of English used in the West Indies and the Indian sub-continent. This simple language was first conceived as an easy alternative to such artificial languages as Esperanto in the 1990s. Its biggest advocate was an eccentric British actor who wanted everybody to be able to speak a few words by the turn of the millennium. This language was named "Wol wantok", which

translates as One World Talking. The use of Wol wantok slowly spread through Britain and Europe, firstly

used by the academic community as a practical experiment in international communication but eventually diffusing down into street usage.

The key to using Wol Wantok is its simplicity. For example, rather than worrying about past present and future tenses, a phrase said without reference to a timeframe is always taken as occurring in the present. Reference to past occurrences is signified by using the word "bin", from the English "been", and future happenings are qualified by using "bianbie", from the English "on the bye and bye".

Trust me, actually speaking Wol Wantok is easier than explaining it !

Another advantage of Wantok is that a person who is not fluent in regular English can get their ideas across so long as they know the words. The order in which the words are placed does not matter as much in Wantok.





LOOKING GLASS

by Lee Williams

"And certainly the glass was beginning to melt away, just like a bright silvery mist."

Lewis Carroll

Looking Glass is a halfland with a Discontinuity of 2 and a special Assimilation process, detailed below. In appearance it is a pleasant wooded area, similar to a European oak forest in high summer. The trees and plants are not actually known species, but are similar enough to fool the untrained eye. This dimension is a flat disc in shape, approximately 50 kilometres in radius, and it has breathable air and a permanent late afternoon sun. It always seems to be four o'clock on a summers afternoon here.

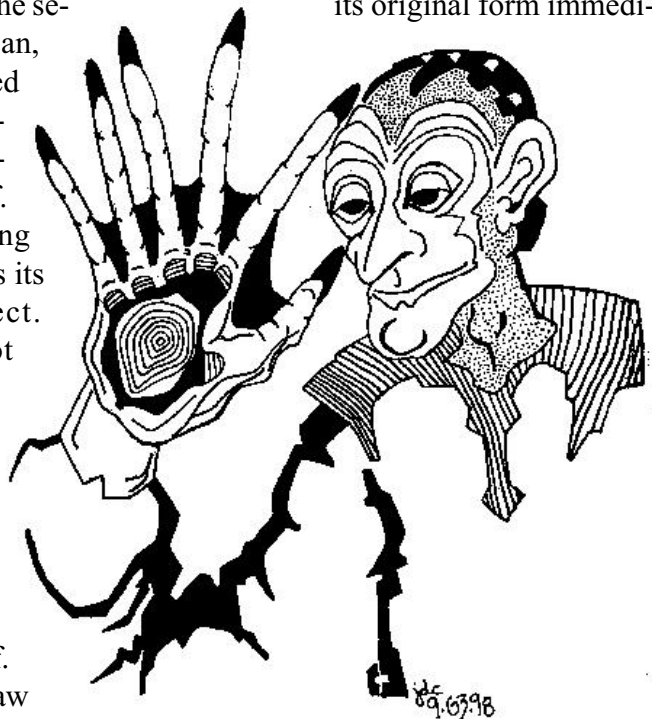
The story goes that in 1869 whilst deathly ill with pneumonia, a priest and mathematician named Charles Lutwidge Dodgson had a vision. He later wrote in his diaries that he had got up out of bed and walked over to his dressing mirror,

and in his somewhat dreamlike state wondered whether there was a world inside there. After his illness abated, Dodgson began to write down his imaginings as children's stories, and they were later published as *Through the Looking Glass and Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll.

There is however a rumour that Dodgson actually did travel to another dimension, using his previously unsuspected neuropathic Dimension Walk ability with the mirror as a portal. His true findings were put down in a volume entitled "A Commentary On The Unusual Properties Of Looking Glasses". The Catholic Church keeps the original under lock and key in the secret vaults of the Vatican, and it is widely believed by the most senior cardinals to be a description of Purgatory itself.

The strangest thing about Looking Glass is its assimilation effect. Dodgson wrote: "Not just writings and pictures, but Christian morality itself had been turned from left to right. Inside the mirror was the domain of demons, the anteroom of Hell itself. I saw Darkness, and I saw

unimaginable beings; humans with heads as big as carnival masks, creatures with hunched backs, dogs who spoke." Living beings and objects start to become distorted but they take no damage, though using an item that has been assimilated may not be a good idea. It is thought that these visible distortions are influenced by a beings' inner self or true nature, e.g. an overweight person would appear as egg-shaped like Humpty Dumpty, whilst a highly intelligent person might develop a larger skull etc. Many of the common distortions are similar to the effects one sees at a fairground Hall of Mirrors. A being or object which has become assimilated will resume its original form immedi-





ately when returned to its home dimension.

Another common effect is that anything casting a reflection whilst in this dimension is always seen in its original form. The reflection must however be caught in something that originates from Looking Glass, such as a pool of water or shard of ice. Using a mirror brought from another dimension will not work, as no reflection will be given. It is possible that this unusual property is the source of the stories about vampires having no reflections.

One other notable fact about Looking Glass is the complete absence of smells and scents. It is not

known why this is so, but in his original Commentary Dodgson speculates that this may be due to the fact that smell is not visible and therefore cannot be reflected in a mirror.

Any dimensional gateway that is used to access this dimension directly from Earth requires the use of a silver mirror. When correctly placed into the gate mechanism before a Dimension Walk is attempted the mirror will become the opening of the portal. The use of natural empathic Dimension Walk skill or the use of stolen DarkTek such as folder pods does not require mirrors, though mystic empaths sometimes

use them to aid concentration (reduce Task Difficulty by one level unless in immediate danger).

Several types of Darklings may be encountered here, usually Dark Elves or Pale. Glimmerings have also been sighted, as well as Ravagers. The Fey Folk have a particular affinity to Looking Glass that may be connected to their ability to create mystic changelings. After all, both the changelings and this dimension are flawed copies of an original.

Credits: Looking-Glass inspired by 'Mirror' by Graham Masterton.

"There is a school of thought that proposes that the proto-dimensions are simply physical manifestations of the subconscious of the empath visiting them.

"Others argue that they must be manifestations of the collective unconscious, for it is possible for many empaths to visit the same protodimension, time after time.

"I don't care what the hell they are. Going there screws with your mind. You're almost always going to have some sort of reaction to the place and the changes make you far more susceptible to the Dark Lords' influence.

"Yet people still insist on going. These people flit around like human tiddly winks and then have the gall to look surprised when some Dark Minion starts slurping on their brains.

"They might just as well have stuck a giant 'Kick Me' sign to their foreheads."

- Zena Marley

(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)



EARTH WALK

By Lee Williams

An ability using Dimension Walk. This ability is only available to Mystics and some Neuropaths.

Throughout human history there have been hundreds of stories of people with the ability to walk through rock, of holy men and spirits living inside the solid trunks of trees, and of men and women who could pass through walls. Academics say that the Druids in particular were closely associated with this phenomena, though in fact Earth Walking pre-dates them. According to Druidic stories, the people who created such great monuments as Stonehenge, Carnac in France and even Mystery Hill in the USA used

this power. Their holy men could stand at these sites and summon the stones from the quarry where they had been hewn, and the stones would “crawl” through the ground.

The ancient priests discovered how to utilise the natural currents of earth energy that run underground across the surface of the Earth. These are known as Telluric currents, or more commonly ley lines. These lines cross at many points, and modern day mystics call these minor crossings “intersections”. In certain places (eg. Silbury Hill or Stonehenge) the energy is stored or focused. These are called node points.

At a node point or intersection, an Empath with the Dimension Walk

ability can open a portal and pass literally INTO the ground. Their physical body takes on the structure of the surrounding soil or rock, becoming part of it, although they take no damage. They can then travel anywhere on Earth using the ley lines as pathways, passing through the ground as easily as if it were mist. It is very important to realise that the Earth Walk ability can only be started or finished at a node point or an intersection. Attempting to enter the Earth at any other place will result in a painful death as the person’s body is ground to a pulp. Any accidental premature exit from an Earth Walk results in the affected person or being becoming a motionless

EARTH WALK DIFFICULTY LEVELS

Starting from a node point:

Task Type	Difficulty	Skill
Total Security	Easy	Dimension Walk + Empathy
Relaxed	Average	Dimension Walk + Empathy
Normal Stress	Difficult	Dimension Walk + Empathy
Great Stress/Combat	Formidable	Dimension Walk + Empathy
Incredible Stress	Impossible	Dimension Walk + Empathy

Starting from a normal intersection:

Task Type	Difficulty	Skill
Total Security	Average	Dimension Walk + Empathy
Relaxed	Difficult	Dimension Walk + Empathy
Normal Stress	Formidable	Dimension Walk + Empathy
Great Stress/Combat	Impossible	Dimension Walk + Empathy
Incredible Stress	Impossible	Dimension Walk only



form, which could be taken for a statue. All powers are lost until and unless another Empath can either bring the affected person back into the Earth or negate the original Earth Walk, in which case they will revert to normal form but will remain unconscious for 1D10 hours.

Earth Walkers can only travel through the ground or through things which are permanently attached to it, such as the walls of buildings or the trunks of trees. If the ley line they

are following goes through a water course then they can pass freely with no penalty. Whilst in an Earth Walk a person cannot see normally, but they can sense what is around them to a 30 metre radius. An Earth Walker can breathe normally whilst in the ground, possibly through using the oxygen that premeates through the topsoil.

If a Dark being wishes to use this ability, it must first make some sort of blood sacrifice. Historically, the

chosen victim of those Dark Races who operate in Earth's dimension is a human, often a child. Since the darkness returned, disappearances have become more frequent, especially in certain areas where a sudden high level of paranormal activity has occurred.

Credits: Earth Walk inspired by 'Walkers' by Graham Masterton.

RAVENGER'S TEAROOM

Recently, &DarkConspiracy chatroom on ICQ was forced to close when the machine it ran on was removed from service. This left an unfortunate hole for Dark Conspiracy fans around the world - there was no place for them to congregate and talk about their game.

Fortunately, a club was created on Yahoo to fill the void. Called "The Ravenger's Tearoom", the club has both a chatroom and a message board.

Chat sessions are currently being organized for every Sunday afternoon, at 2pm US Central Daylight Time. At present, there are no prescribed topics, so just come along and talk about whatever is on your mind about Dark Conspiracy.

To get to the Ravenger's Tearoom, simply visit the club page at:

<http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/ravengerstearoom/>

You'll need to have a Java capable web-browser if you want to join in the chat session.





MANNANAN MAC LIR

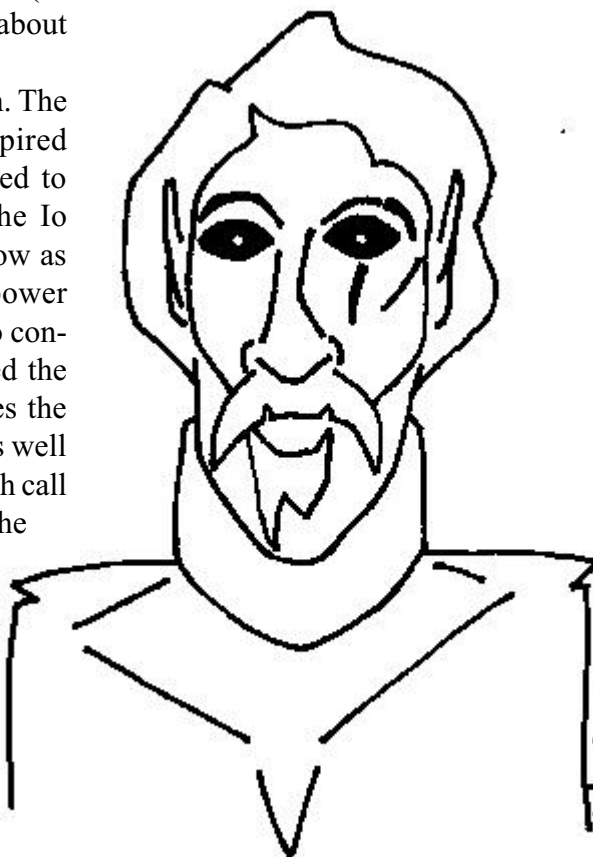
By Lee Williams

In Celtic mythology Mannanan Mac Lir was the god who ruled over the Irish sea. He was also said to be an ancient king of Ireland before taking the role of deity. He later gave his name to the Isle of Man. Legend also states that his father was Lir (or Llyr in Welsh), a Celtic god about whom little is known.

Mannanan now lives again. The one whose machinations inspired these ancient tales has returned to Earth's dimension through the Io portal. He is currently lying low as he struggles to rebuild his power base here. He has the ability to connect with what could be called the Celtic mindset, which involves the powers of music and poetry, as well as storytelling and what the Irish call "the craic". In ancient times, he would sometimes take the form of a bard, and he stalked the shores of Eirinn and the mountains of Cymru and the Western Isles, gathering his energy from the strong emotions that were generated by the bards tales and songs. In those times, a visit from a travelling bard was cause for celebration and feasting.

Mannanan's aspect is that of balance. Though requiring some dominion over living beings as most Dark Lords do, he is always careful not to tip the scales too much either

way. Indeed, he has in the past backed away from conflicts which he could easily have won, and has fought other Dark Lords' plans even though they did not affect him directly.



Confusion among humans is necessary to him. Confusion and conflict are caused by imbalances, and Mannanan's aspect of balance requires him to try and sort things out. If there were no confusions and

conflicts therefore, he would lose his influence and would become a target for the other Dark Lords. He has to cause imbalance in order to restore balance and therefore gain strength.

It can be seen from this that his original choice of the Celtic peoples as followers in ancient times was a good one. As the poem goes, "Heaven help the Irish, the men who God made mad, for all their wars are merry, and all their songs are sad".

Mannanan is much closer to humans in his outlook than most others of his kind, and enjoys playing games with those who would try and thwart his plans. Make no mistake however, he can be as deadly as the rest. Although not particularly vicious as Dark Lords go, Mannanan still retains the ability to do very nasty things to those who displease him.

The myths tell us that Mannanan had a magical boat which moved without the aid of sails or oars. In humanoid form he wore enchanted armour which protected him from all physical harm, and could even make him invisible if he wished it. In battle, he wielded a mighty sword which was indestructible and always found its mark.



MARLON HANSSON

By Eyal Faingersh

Marlon was once the youngest member of a pop foursome, who along with his three cute older brothers stormed the music charts across the world.

But that was ten years ago, and Marlon is no longer a teen. His brothers have long since left the music business and now carry on their lives in other successful directions. Yet all the while Marlon insisted on being a rock singer and yet the cute blond kid had grown into an adult man. No more angelic looks, the honeyed voice long gone, success no more. Next stop was failure and then right after, the slums.

The depression and anger that flowed from Marlon reached a dark elf, Kalaharn, he himself the only survivor from a trouble-making group of dark elves that had been destroyed by minion hunters several

days before.

Unlike the other dark elves on earth, Kalaharn had become the prey, radiating fear and frustration instead of absorbing it. He was starving to death, but unable to reenter human society in fear of being spotted by the minion hunters, or by his master, a Dark Lord who would punish him, with suffering beyond description, for his failure.

In that situation sharing a drink with the depressed young musician in the lousiest part of the big metropolis, seemed as a good an idea as any.

It was to become Kalaharn's lucky day; he found the young man emotions easy to manipulate and by playing on Marlon's desires. He quickly gained control of the musician. With a new puppet, a plan began to form in his dark mind...

groups and are scattered all over the world in small groups fanatical teenage fans, or as they are more commonly referred to, freaks. Thus, most of the time they are ignored for their new perverted and cruel fashion and way of life, making real problems hard to be noticed.

Kalaharn, now referred simply as Joe, stays behind the scenes as Marlon's manager, wearing the thick layer of makeup his puppet is famous for (his own face is a mystery, and it should remain so or else Kalaharn might be recognized by the minion hunters who are looking for him). Feeding off the emotional energy which flows from Marlon's fans, Kalaharn has never had such a good life. Kalaharn's master, however, demands more and already new plans are in motion...

Plot ideas:

1. A military adventure. A minion hunting contact of one of the PCs reveal to them Kalaharn's true identity, and the hunters just go 'a hunting'. Kalaharn, however, is not stupid, and may use his puppet, Marlon, and his fans to give the PC's some hard times. A list of ideas can be found under "dread sidhe" at Dark Races Volume I (pp 24-25) and the DC 2nd edition Referee's Guide (pp 55-57).
2. A group of radical Marlon fans

This article has nothing to do with my views on specific artists or current movements over the cultural world.

Ideas are borrowed from real life issues, but not for the sake of stating opinion, but rather for extracting a giggle or two from the reader.

Present Day

Today, Marlon Hansson is known as one of the most bizarre, perverted and repulsive musicians in the world. The leader of a radical new type of music known as Torture Hard Core Death Metal, he encourages the listener to inflict upon themselves and others physical pains and emotional disorders by using medicines and pills (samples provided with the CD's).

Most of Marlon's fans come from the Mike and Prole social



are planning to commit a terrible crime. Inspired by Marlon's lyrics and actions on stage (or even directly by Marlon or Kalaharn), they have decided to teach the world a lesson. The PC's are contacted by some of the parents of the young fans, and what them to find their lost children.

3. Kalaharn is using a new type of DarkTek to enhance Marlon's music (implementing it on the CD's or recording high and low frequency sounds that affect the listener's brain) to turn fans into zombies or planting commands in their subconscious to be triggered later by his will. It is up to the players to stop this threat before it affects more of the population.
4. Marlon revolts! But he can't work against Kalaharn directly, so he contacts the minion hunters to do the job. Kalaharn, however, is not stupid, and even highly empathic. He knows what Marlon is thinking and he is getting ready to take care of him and the minion hunters.

Marlon Hansson

Attributes:

As per novice NPC + Cha: 10

Motivations:

Both dominant characteristics of Marlon's personality were enhanced for the purposes of his new status as a most charismatic slave of the dark:

Diamond Jack, Coward:

Marlon knows very well who and what he is dealing with and fear is one of Kalaharn's methods of maintaining control over him, as well as a source of amusement.

Spades Ace, Charismatic:

Even if seems to be acting unnaturally, Marlon serves as attention magnet, a person with a twisted but most fascinating personality, both the fans and the media seem to love him.

Skills:

As for Novice NPC, plus:

Act/Bluff 8, Disguise 6, Leadership 7, Human Empathy 1.

Marlon has no Willpower skill.

Equipment:

Heavy makeup and non-rational gothic/punk clothing.

Kalaharn:

Attributes:

According to the Dark Elf monster type in the rule books.

Skills

According to the Dark Elf monster type in the rule books, plus:

Act/Bluff 8, Disguise 9, Willpower Drain 7, Business 7, Instruction 5, Small Arms (pistol) 7.

Equipment:

Heavy marlon-style makeup and appropriate garments. Kalaharn is always carrying Desert Eagle pistol and is well trained with using it.

Resources:

Kalaharn controls Marlon's bank accounts, and can access more than \$1,000,000 at any given time. Marlon's total possessions value is probably more than \$10,000,000, but most of it is tied up in fixed assets, which would take time to convert into ready cash.

"What do you mean 'Who is Zena Marley?' What a stupid question! Who the hell are any of us?"

- Zena Marley

(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)



WILLIAM VINCENT

By Lee Williams

William Vincent is known throughout the Republic Britain as a shrewd businessman, but friendly and charismatic with it. Using what little money he could raise in the economic depression before the SPP rule, he founded a discount store in a disused warehouse in the heart of

Birmingham city centre.

Now, some fourteen years later, Vincent's is a well established chain throughout the British Isles. Vincent's main company is called Viscount Trading, Viscount being a contraction of Vincent's Discount Trading Warehouse, the name of that first

store in Birmingham.

Vincent is also a founder member and fundraiser for an Empathic cell, who operate from within the infrastructure of his company. Indeed, most of the members are also employees of Viscount Trading. (see below)

William Neil Vincent is about 40 years of age. He is quite tall, with short fair hair greying a little. He has one of those "favourite uncle" type of faces, with a dry wit and a ready smile. He also has that indefinable "something" that lets you know he used to be a soldier as soon as you meet him. In fact, he was a young Private in Bosnia during the breakdown of the old Yugoslavia in the early 1990's.

His platoon were in charge of perimeter security at a UN forces supply depot in the hills near Banja-Luka. A nearby Serbian mobile artillery battery were issued incorrect target co-ordinates for a Bosnian supply dump, and their forward observers targetted the UN base by mistake due to early morning fog. Only five shells were fired before the mistake was realised, however one of them was on a time-delay fuse. This shell bounced to a stop a metre away from Vincent's dugout.

After realising that the shelling had stopped and they were still breathing, he and his two companions decided to lift the dud shell and

NEW EMPATHIC CELL - CAESAR

Goals: Information Brokers, Hunters

Methods: Any

Empathic Philosophy: Mixed

Organisation: Council

Assets: Superior Resources

Size: 30 members

Level of Activity: Highly dedicated

Relations with ETs: Cautious, although they haven't met any.

Relations with other cells: Caesar try to maintain good links with any other cells they might encounter, especially with regard to trading information.

Headquarters: Birmingham, England

Description: C-Ser 3A (full title Customer Services Department 3-A) is the front for William Vincent's own empathic cell. The members work by day in a modern office, above the real customer services offices. Using all kinds of information gathering techniques from tabloids to the latest computer corellation programs, they attempt to gain any insight into Darkling activities, especially in Britain and Europe. They have had some limited success recently, but they appear to be the only cell operating in the Republic at the moment. As such, they will consider any offers of help, including prospective members. The cell's nickname amongst members is "Caesar".



take it over to the Ordnance section for safe destruction.

They got about halfway across the vehicle compound when the shell started ticking. Vincent realised that he ought not to drop the shell, but also realised that he wanted to be elsewhere like his “friends” who had run away. The shell was very heavy for one person to hold, and Vincent knew that either he could hold onto it until hopefully the disposal team reached him in time, or he could drop it and try to run.

Just then, a Sergeant who he did not know came zooming into the compound in a Land Rover, read the situation at a glance and pulled up beside him yelling “stick it in here me old son”. They hefted the shell into the passenger seat, and the Sergeant jumped out and jammed the truck into gear. The Land Rover rolled across the now empty compound, through the perimeter fence

and fell down the side of the hill before the shell detonated about fifty metres away. That Sergeant’s name was Dave Marshall, who later became a taxi driver (see *Dave the Cabbie*, DEMONGROUD Issue 3) The two have been firm friends ever since.

It is possible that if player characters meet Dave and are having Darkling trouble, he will refer them to Vincent, swearing them to secrecy (although nobody would believe them anyway).

MOTIVATION

Nine of Hearts: Vincent has a strong sense of fellow feeling to other people. He feels he has a duty to protect the world from the Darkness.

Ace of Diamonds: He is willing to give whatever he can to stop the menace from claiming more

victims.

SKILLS

William Vincent is a Veteran npc. His skills are: Act/Bluff 3, Bargain 4, Business 4, Computer Ops 2, Foreboding 3, Human Empathy 3, Languages Japanese 2 German 2, Leadership 2, Luck 3, Armed Melee 2, Persuasion 2, Project Emotion 2, Psychology 2, Small Arms Rifle 4, Wheeled Vehicle 1.

EQUIPMENT

No matter when or how your player characters meet Vincent, he will be dressed and equipped for the situation. As a successful businessman, he always wears a kevlar vest for protection, as well as having a bodyguard with him in public life. Remember, he can afford almost anything within reason.

“Life as a minion hunter is a lonely one.

“Don’t think someone is going to pin a medal to your chest for stopping some Dark plot. It isn’t going to happen.”

- Zena Marley
(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)



NEW DARKTEK ITEMS

By Andrew Cain

This is a classified British Armed Forces document.

Private Memo: British Armed Forces
From: Doctor John Small, Research Director, Bureau 12A
To: All Military Personnel with 12A Classifications
Recovered Technologies Report 14.2

"We cannot understand the truly alien, and can only appreciate the strangeness in alien uses for familiar things, or alien things created for familiar purposes"

Dr. John Small, Expecting the Unknown: Royal Institute Christmas Lectures 2039

Solar Diffractor

Recovered by an infiltration squad investigating a recently constructed extraterrestrial base near Lake Vyrnwy, Wales.

An ingenious form of illumination, which requires little energy to run, this device produces a cloud of crystalline particles able to store light, especially sunlight, and release it slowly after the light source no longer affects the area.

The device itself is a small black box with a depression in the centre, in which is placed a small crystal 'tree' structure, connected by thin gold wires from its branches to connectors around the edge of the box.

There is also a thick, insulated wire which emerges from the base of the box. When electricity is sent into the device through the insulated wire, short pulses of that electricity are sent up the gold wire, causing small pieces of crystal to grow along the branches and then break off. A cloud of these particles then forms, which reflects any light entering the area between particles, sometimes for up to 5 hours, or in the case of sunlight, 10 hours. All of this reflected light means that the cloud will glow, with less intensity than the original source, but brightly enough to see by. A cloud is produced at a rate of 1 cubic foot per hour. It is easily dispersed by wind, and so is generally only used in permanent, sealed structures.

For humans, contact with the cloud will cause unfortunate side effects in approximately 25% of people, either skin irritation, breathing difficulties or both.

Inertia Transverter

ET device used in defence of areas of strategic importance to them.

This device is a backpack and weapon attached by a jointed arm with cables connecting the two. The backpack projects a field which leeches the inertia out of any object entering the edge of the field and

stores it. This energy can then be transferred to small metal projectiles stored in the weapon and fired as if they were normal bullets. any object already in the field, or leaving it, are unaffected by the inertia leeching, nor are explosions or energy weapons. The device uses energy at the same rate as it gains it, so once one has been fired at three times, it can fire only three times. Slower objects will not give the device enough inertia and will merely stop. Objects from which the inertia has been removed simply fall to the floor where they stopped.

The inertia transverter weighs 10 kilos and when fully charged will operate for 30 minutes.

Flash Shrapnel

This ET device was used to boobytrap the Lake Vyrnwy base.

Using an unknown method, a vast quantity of small metal barbs are teleported into an area causing severe damage to any organisms within the area of effect; both when they appear and also when removed from the targets, if proper medical care is not taken. The shrapnel in the Lake Vyrnwy Base was initiated by a laser tripwire placed in the centre of a corridor which was then filled by the shrapnel.

The area of effect is a 2 metre cube, and the shrapnel causes 2D6 damage to a random hit location.



Skitter Grenade

Autopsies of creatures recovered from site of successful raid by Morthr'ai allies on military convoy, heading out of Leeds, and eyewitness reports of survivors. The Morthr'ai involved were never found.

Although this artifact is used very much like a grenade, it is clear that it is a living being of unknown origin, and its abilities are too specialised to be natural.

The creature consists of a half-inch thick triangular body a foot along one side, with three spiderlike legs, one on each corner. When moving, it is believed that the points of the triangle come together, forming a 'bag' with the remainder of the body.

The two eyewitness survivors report a Morthr'ai and two unknown humans using these creatures like grenades, throwing them towards solidiers. The creatures then 'skittered' (the word used by both survivors) at high speed toward the nearest target, launching themselves when within range.

One of the survivors was actually a victim of an attack, and reported that the creature wrapped itself around his arm, and then vanished, taking part of his arm with it. Other victims were found with vital organs, limbs and parts of their heads missing.

Skitters target a random hit location, and if they hit successfully they grasp into the target and vanish. Effects are determined by the GM. Skitters have Hits of 5/10, Agil-

ity of 7 and Move of 40.

"The only thing worse than not knowing how something works, is not knowing who to ask how it does."

- Jacob Ireless, Research assistant at Optic Technologies, shortly before his dismissal.

Gravitic Enhancer & Organo-Magnetiser

These two devices were both found together, at the site of the 'Luton Triangle' crashes.

The device termed the 'Gravitic enhancer' was the cause of all three crashes, occurring over one month on similar flight-paths leaving and entering Luton airport. The device was found in a reinforced underground room, and consisted of a solid 5' tall, 1' diameter pillar of a marble-like stone, with a series of vine-like thorny growths spiralling around it. Approximately every 1.4 hours the pillar would enhance gravity by a measured 500 percent directly above the pillar for a single moment. This was enough to cause the planes to lose control and is believed to be responsible for the collapse of the first Telecom Tower in Birmingham five years ago. It is hoped that the effects end at the limit of the earth's atmosphere.

The organo magnetiser, found at the same site, is an ingenious death-trap. It is composed of four more pillars in the corners of the room, with the vine stretching between them. As soon as a living being enters the area, the cohesion between

its cells is gradually increased until the being implodes. Even those who manage to escape are often seriously wounded and take a long time to recover. The trap can be deactivated by severing all of the vines, three to a side, each side doubling the amount of time a human can remain in the area. The magnetiser takes 5 seconds to begin causing damage to living beings. It does 1D6 damage to all hit locations for every 15 seconds spent inside the area of effect.

"In your allies it is Noble Self-Sacrifice, in your enemies, Soldier's Blind obedience and Leader's Disregard for Life."

- Dehumanizing The Enemy : A guide to corporate politics (2nd Edition), Barrett & Miller.

Vengeance Harness

This device was first encountered in a suicide raid by an unknown terrorist faction.

This metal vest/backpack arrangement monitors the life signs of its wearer, and as soon as those signs stop (or the harness is removed, as was found when one of the raiders surrendered) the harness explodes in a blast of incendiary gas. Often one explosion will set off a chain reaction when wearers are clustered together. This device can be devastating: in one instance, a hostage situation on a London Underground train, a 10 man anti-terrorist squad and 50 innocents were killed by 3 terrorists wearing these harnesses. So far, no harnesses have been recovered for examination, but the device falls



under our brief as there has been evidence of links between the terrorists and an unknown non-human faction.

This device has a burst radius of 4 metres, Damage is C:12, B:12. Weight 3 kilos.

Fission Shield

Another Morthr'ai device, this one was used in a raid that destroyed one of our millitary research posts in Northumberland. So far, only the three that were used in that raid have ever been encountered, it is hoped that the Morthr'ai are currently unable to reproduce them.

The shield produces a hemispherical field of fissile material in

a state of plasmic activity, contained within an energy field of indecipherable structure. This field contains the material so that it cannot escape, unfortunately it does not contain the radiation produced. Anything coming into contact with the field is immediately reduced to its component atoms, providing the individual within with complete protection from material (and energy) attacks.

The field is produced by a heavy metal belt, the weight of which seems consistent with solid lead, and therefore is difficult to manouver in. The field is projected out and up from the belt, so that when walking, a gap is left under the field. The inside of the field, and to a lesser ex-

tent, the area surrounding it, is filled with enough radiation to cause serious radiation sickness in a human within 10 minutes, and death within an hour. The Morthr'ai have a much higher tolerance but are not immune to its effects.

Energy field radius is 2 metres, with deadly levels of radiation extending out for 5 metres. The fission shield weighs 20 kilos.

Notes

Information on Britain in the Dark Conspiracy era can be found in the article by Lee Williams in issue 3 of Demonground

Information on the Morthr'ai can be found in the same issue.

"The most potent weapon we have in the fight against the Dark Minions is the human mind.

"We would do well to remember that sometimes."

- Zena Marley
(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)



BREATH HOOD

By Lee Williams

The Breath Hood is related to both the Facedancer and the “Bodybag” (DarkTek sourcebook). It is used as an emergency breathing device by those Dark Races who require oxygen to survive. They will work in totally airless environments, as well as in poisonous atmospheres and underwater.

When inactive, the Hood appears as an egg-shaped gelatinous blob with a slight blue tint. When the Hood is placed onto the head or face, it stretches across the user’s

entire head to form an airtight seal. This stretching process takes about 10 seconds. It then begins to metabolise breathable air, converting its own mass as it goes. The standard Breath Hood weighs about 250 grammes and will supply enough air to keep an average sized human alive for 90 minutes.

After this time, the Hood’s cells are exhausted and it dies. The skin of the dead Hood then dries up and flakes off the users face. If the user requires another Hood a fresh one

can be applied immediately if necessary.

Breath Hoods are common equipment on Dark ET spacecraft and may also be found in Spaceswimmers. They are also used by aquatic Dark Races when taking prisoners or slaves.

User Cost : Detection, 100.

Weight : 0.25 kg

Price : N/A





MANO A MANO

Opposed Tasks in Dark Conspiracy Adventures

By Lester Smith

Surprisingly, while most role-playing games have rules for testing skills, and all explain how to run combat, few make provision for competitions of strength, speed, or skill between people. That fact is especially strange given the widespread tendency for humans to test their abilities by facing off against an opponent. Okay, so sports competitions aren't likely to turn up often in a role-playing session. Still, fiction abounds with examples of direct contests between characters, whether it's a matter of a friendly (or not-so-friendly) arm-wrestling match in a pub, or a footrace to the end of a storm sewer, or even a desperate attempt to cling to a roof's edge until your enemy loses his hold on your leg and falls. Here, then, are game mechanics for handling such situations in *Dark Conspiracy* adventures.

The Quick and Easy Method

Perhaps the simplest rule is simply to have the competitors each roll 1d10 and add it to their skill + attribute rating. The highest total then wins.

Example: Scirocco is trying to tail a mysterious figure through an outdoor market in Nornews. The referee has secretly determined that the figure realizes that Scirocco is following. Scirocco's player rolls a 2 on 1d10 and adds the character's In-

telligence of 7 and Stalking of 5, for a total of 14. The referee rolls a 6 for the NPC and adds that to the character's Intelligence rating of 6 and Stalking skill of 8, for a total of 20. Scirocco loses sight of the figure in the milling crowd of proles.

The Quick Skill-Test Method

In this method, players actually make skill tests for their characters in the normal fashion, and the referee compares their degree of success or failure. The character who succeeds by the most (if both succeed) or fails by the least (if both fail) is the winner.

Example: Scirocco is struggling to take a knife from a young man who has attacked him. Ultimately, only one of them will possess it. The referee calls for a skill roll of Strength + Melee Combat (Unarmed) from both. Both fail their roll, but Scirocco misses his by 4 points while his assailant misses by only 2 points. Rather than drag things out, the referee rules that Scirocco has lost his grip and the other fellow has the knife.

The More Dramatic Skill-Test Method

A slightly more involved, but still relatively simple method is to have the competitors make a skill test, and the character who first succeeds while his opponent fails is the

winner. If both succeed or both fail on the first attempt, roll for them both again, until one succeeds while the other fails. This system is great for events such as arm wrestling, where several game turns may go by with both characters straining until one eventually bests the other.

Example: The leader of a cycle gang has challenged Scirocco to an arm-wrestling contest—one of those macho stunts that thugs are so often impressed by. The referee decides to make these rolls purely against the Strength attribute. On the first turn, both characters fail at their rolls, and the referee describes the tension evident in their faces as they each strain to best the other. On the second turn, both succeed at their rolls, and the referee describes their arms as quivering and wavering back and forth. On the third turn, Scirocco succeeds at his roll, and the cycle gang leader fails at his; the referee explains that Scirocco suddenly gives a mighty push, and his opponent's hand slaps the table.

Conclusion

As referee, you may decide to use one of these methods for one situation, and another for a different situation. That's perfectly all right. Just be sure to let your players know ahead of time which method you'll be using for this particular event, to avoid confusion.



PHARMACEUTICALS

By Lee Williams

Drugs of various types are common in other cyberpunk/dark future style games, therefore I present this guide to a small selection of substances of different kinds, both common and rare. The author does not condone the abuse of drugs in reality, but these may help to add lowlife flavour to your gaming.

Combat *1

[street names:Rage,Red Mist]

Originally made by the US Government as a booster for troops entering hand-to-hand combat. The formula was soon duplicated in backstreet labs after being accidentally leaked onto the Web.

In game terms, this drug increases Strength and Constitution by one point each, as well as causing the user to fly into a terrible raging fury. The effects begin 30 seconds after taking the drug, and last for about ten minutes. When the effects wear off, the user takes 1D6 damage to the chest.

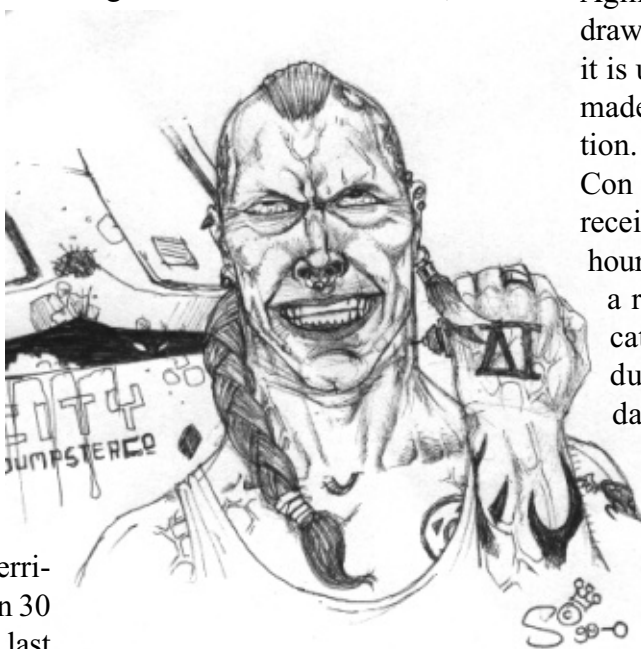
RPI *8

[street names:Astral]

Allegedly developed by Swiss neurochemists though there is a good chance that ET knowledge was used. It is not known precisely how this drug affects the brain. All that is known is that the user falls into a trance where they see visions. Some

have seen the future, some claim to have seen Heaven, some have become incurably insane. Many cults are led by people who have experienced Astral visions.

The trance lasts for 1D6 hours. The user must make a roll on Intelligence at Formidable level, or ex-



perience the absolute mother of all bad trips. They then make another identical roll, and if they fail the second they receive a permanent severe phobia at the referee's discretion. Note that if the first roll is passed the user receives a useful vision with no ill effects. Strangely this drug has no known connection with empathic abilities.

WTE

[street names:Quicksilver]

A totally illegal and dangerous substance, this is nonetheless very popular with streetgangs. Quicksilver boosts the users Initiative up to 6 for 3D10 minutes, and adds 2 to Agility. However, there is a serious drawback to Quicksilver. Every time it is used, a Formidable level roll is made on the character's Constitution. Failure means that a point of Con is lost permanently unless they receive medical attention within one hour. If the roll is critically fumbled, a randomly chosen body Hit Location is permanently paralysed due to severe nervous system damage.

PB-NE

[street names:Psyche]

Developed by Russian parapsychologists in the 1970s, PB-NE is a very rare and unusual substance. It works by stimulating the areas of the human brain which are thought to be linked to psychic activity. It may also help to awaken latent ability in certain subjects. PB-NE increases the user's Empathic level by two points for about an hour. Additional doses taken during this hour have no extra effects. People with no empathic ability at all are not affected by PB-NE.



Emphemerol*2

[street names:none]

A brand new drug, E*2 is used to help control the unfocused raw powers of newly awakened Neuropaths. Many of these people have no idea what has happened to them, and often turn to drink and hard drugs in an attempt to block out the mental “static” from other people. It has however been rumoured that E*2 can create empaths. If administered to pregnant women, the child may develop extraordinary powers in a very short time. It is said that an army thus created could take over planet Earth with relative ease. It is not known if there was any Darkling influence in the development of this substance.

Vasopressin*Y

[street names:Clear]

Originally developed as an aid to people with memory loss, this

drug is a powerful brain stimulant. It generates a feeling of incredible clarity of thought, and is used to heighten the person’s perceptions and current feelings.

One inhalation will raise a user’s Intelligence by two points for several seconds. This works especially well when trying to remember details of events and objects. Note that the high of this substance continues for D10 minutes AFTER the Intelligence boost has finished, so make sure that any information gained is written down or otherwise recorded.

Somnambutol

[street names:Snowball]

A popular sleeping drug, Somnambutol is also used by the authorities as a means of riot control. A high enough concentration will produce instantaneous sleep in a target. When used in this way the

subject will sleep for six to eight hours. Lower doses will make the subject docile, and somewhat easier to interrogate, although not to the extent possible with a “truth serum”.

Azaguanine 12

[street names:none]

Developed as another form of sleeping gas for riot control. Azaguanine was popular with British law enforcement agencies during the SPP riots until a serious side effect was revealed. The problem is that a large dosage (or several smaller ones) could cause memory loss, sometimes of a permanent nature. Though no longer used by law agencies it is supposed that some covert government departments use it to control information leaks.

Credits: Emphemerol*2 inspired by “Scanners”.

“Some people spend massive amounts of money on drugs to mess up their minds. All in the name of expanding their consciousness.

“They should meet a Dark Minion or two and have their minds messed up for nothing.”

- Zena Marley
(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)



NEW VEHICLES AND AIRCRAFT

By Lee Williams and Ian Sullivan

Bosar FF 900

A small, cheap and basic car from the Phillipines. Its main selling points are its cute bug-eyed styling and rust-free fibreglass body. The FF 900 is designed to run on alcohol fuels and is therefore gaining in popularity with those who can just about afford to buy a car but are not willing to buy Russian. Bosar vehicles, though basic by Western standards are known to be quite reliable in most circumstances. They are not fast however. The tiny three cylinder engine of the FF 900 is suitable for city driving and minor roads, but anyone driving one on the freeways will become very unpopular very quickly.

Price: \$4900
Fuel Type: A
Veh Wt: 700 kilos
Crew: 1 plus 2 passengers
Night Vision: Headlights

Cruise Speed: 80/15
Combat Move: 35/9
Fuel Capacity: 55
Fuel Consumption: 5

Combat Statistics
Config: Standard
Suspension: W(2)
HF (1)
HS (1)
HR (1)

The HiCycle Autogyro

HiCycle is a small, cheap and rugged autogyro. It is probably the easiest way for someone to get airborne on a small budget. HiCycle is very popular with police and Sheriff's departments. It carries a pilot and two passengers. Some versions are armed with single-shot grenade launchers for use with gas grenades and other riot control devices.

Price: \$10,000 (basic version)
Armament: Two 40mm launchers plus a pintel mount.
Fuel Type: G,AvG
Veh Wt: 200 kilos
Crew: 1 plus 2
Night Vision: Searchlight
Minimum Runway, Takeoff: 70 metres
Minimum Runway, Landing: 30 metres

Cruise Speed: 150
Combat Move: 25
Fuel Capacity: 120
Fuel Consumption: 20

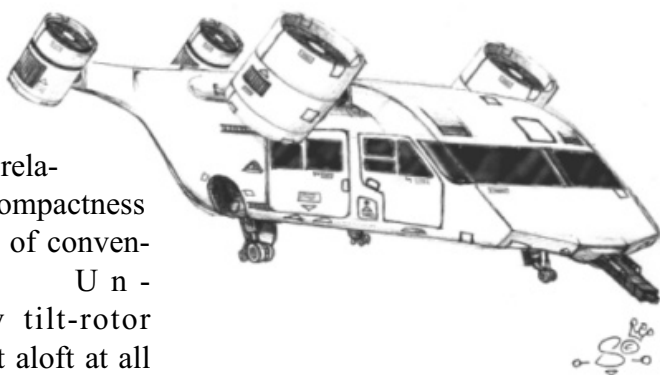
The Mitsubishi P-15

The P-15 is a ducted-fan aerodyne which is becoming popular with emergency services due to its relatively small size. This compactness is achieved by the lack of conventional control surfaces. Unlike the more bulky tilt-rotor aircraft, the P-15 is kept aloft at all times by the four shrouded propellers which can each swivel through an arc of 270 degrees. The body of the vehicle is aerodynamically shaped, providing extra lift during forward flight.

However, the P-15 is not capable of high-altitude flight as its flight ceiling is limited to 1,000 metres, although it can be piloted up the side of a hill or mountain. Armed and armoured versions are also now available.

Price: \$800,000
Armament: Two NATO standard mountings
Fuel Type: Liquid Hydrogen
Weight: 4.5 tonnes
Crew: 2 plus up to 10 passengers
Night Vision: Searchlights, passive IR
Minimum Runway, Takeoff: 15 metres
Minimum Runway, Landing: 15 metres

Cruise Speed: 300
Combat Move: 55
Fuel Capacity: 700
Fuel Consumption: 140





The M-100E Air Assault Vehicle

The M-100E is the advanced military version of the CV-27 Peregrine tilt rotor aircraft. Earlier versions were used to great advantage in the Third Cuban Invasion, the Terreblanche White Uprisings in Southern Africa, and most notably during the Oilfield Wars of 2020 between the forces of the Russian Confederation and the Islamic Republic of Kazakhstan, when the US Air Cavalry helped airlift casualties to hospitals through the heaviest AA fire seen since the 1991 Gulf War. The war was ended when a secret US force airlifted Russian Marines directly into the Kazakh headquarters.

The latest version is armed with an experimental weapon system, a fully automated railgun (US Army designation EMG-400). The engines are also much more powerful than previous versions, and crew protection is greatly improved.

Price: Classified

Armament: EMG-400 railgun plus any TWO weapons from the following

selection M 134 Minigun, M 214 Minigun, Mark 19 Grenade Launcher, Stinger IR Homing Missile Pod, M163 Vulcan Cannon, Browning M2HB.50, Hellfire Anti-tank Missile Pod, Cluster Bombs.

Fuel Type: AvGas.

Weight: 24 tonnes.

Load: 6 tonnes.

Crew: 3 plus 18 troops.

Night Vision: Passive IR, Low Light Imaging, Searchlights.

Min Runway, Takeoff: 24m (500 in plane mode)

Min Runway, Landing: 24m (600 in plane mode)

Cruise Speed: 600

Combat Move: 75

Fuel Capacity: 6,215 (+up to 13,200 in drop tanks)

Fuel Consumption: 540

Armour Values: 6 points at all locations.

EK-21 Wingship

Possibly the only commercially available wing-in-ground effect craft. Originally designed in complete secrecy by Russian military scientists, wingships are now thought by many to represent the future of intercontinental mass transport.

The EK-21 is typical of this type of vehicle, resembling a hybrid of air-

liner and powerboat. These craft are built to fly just a couple of metres above the surface of the water, using a self-replenishing air cushion, and can travel long distances at reasonably high speeds.

The main advantage for commercial operators is the relatively low fuel consumption in comparison with an aircraft of similar size.

Note that the Minimum and Maximum Runway values given below are actually the distances required for the wing-in-ground effect to begin and end.

Price: \$10,795,000

Fuel Type: AvGas

Weight: 141 tonnes

Load: 50 tonnes cargo

Crew: 2 plus 50 passengers

Night Vision: Active EM sensors, searchlights

Minimum Runway, Takeoff: 310 metres

Minimum Runway, Landing: 260 metres

Cruise Speed: 300

Combat Move: 56

Fuel Capacity: 10,000

Fuel Consumption: 600

ES 001 Patrol Craft

Another wing in ground effect craft, ES 001 is currently at the prototype stage. It is intended for high speed coastal security duties in European waters, providing backup for British customs and excise boats.

There are two slightly different craft undergoing trials, one armed with turreted twin Advanced Browning .50 HMGs and the other with a Rheinmetall 20mm cannon. Both are capable of carrying four fully equipped marines as a boarding

EMG-400 (Electro Magnetic Gauss Gun, Type 400)

Fully automated targeting systems (Easy Task to hit at all ranges)
The EMG-400 launches a 40 millimetre calibre 2.5 kilogram projectile at a maximum muzzle velocity of 5,100 metres per second. The weapon's empty weight is about 320 kilos.

Rate of Fire	Damage	Penetration	Magazine	Short Range
5	37	2-2-2	360	80m



party.

Although the appearance of armed surface craft in the busy English Channel may cause concern, the European governments involved decided that these speedy and agile vehicles were ideal in the war against drug trafficking and gun running. The unusual configuration of the prototypes has led to some people nicknaming them “flying tanks”.

Price: \$2,350,000

Armament: twin Advanced .50 HMGs in turret

Fuel Type: AvGas

Weight: 14 tonnes

Crew: 3 plus 4 passengers

Night Vision: Active EM sensors, search-lights

Minimum Runway, Takeoff: 70 metres

Minimum Runway, Landing: 40 metres

Combat Statistics

Configuration: Turret

Suspension: N/A

Armour Values: 6 points at all locations

Cruise Speed: 300

Combat Move: 56

Fuel Capacity: 600

Fuel Consumption: 60

SPACESHIPS

CA 92 Ferryman

A light shuttlecraft, specially designed for short hauls between orbital stations.

Type: Multi-purpose small craft

Source: Consolidated Aerospace

Price: \$45,000,000

Size: 0 (12 metres)

Payload: 15 (cargo version)

Launch: 0

Re-Entry: 0

Transfer: 2

Crew: 1 plus 4 passengers

Duration: 3

FREEDOM SPACEPORT

By Lee Williams

The first truly international space facility, Freedom Spaceport has grown to become a huge commercial hive of orbital industry. Massive investment by most of the corporations dealing in space-made materials has made Freedom the main cargo port in Low Earth Orbit. It is located at the heart of a cluster of orbital construction facilities and accommodation modules. Due to its importance to world trade, it is administered under the auspices of the United Nations.

The security forces stationed on Freedom are specially trained to deal with the possibility of terrorism or invasion. There is a platoon of elite forces aboard at all times, trained and equipped for combat in vacuum and zero gravity conditions. These troops are drawn from such regiments as the SAS, the US Delta Force or the Russian Spetznatz.

Those who can afford it come to Freedom merely as tourists, and there are some small hotel modules on board, as well as a public docking facility administered by Japan Air Lines who are the leading private passenger carriers into LEO.

Transfer between the differ-

ent facilities of the Freedom cluster is by means of automated mini-shuttles, which the inhabitants have nicknamed Trashcans due to their shape. Some of the closest habitation modules, though not physically part of Freedom, are joined to it with semi-permanent pressurised corridors. Freedom cluster is certainly a very interesting place to visit if you can get there.

Statistical Data : Freedom Spaceport

Type: Orbital Station

Source: Various

Price: N/A (Estimated Construction Cost \$150 billion)

Size: 4+ (Actual Dimensions 451m x 190m x 170m)

Payload: N/A (Estimated Mass 3,500 tonnes plus)

Launch: N/A

Re-entry: 0

Transfer: 1

Crew: 450 permanent, guest capacity 1850

Duration: Unlimited

Note: these figures are the estimated maximums. Freedom Port is still under construction. Crew figures refer to the maximum capacity of all the stations in the cluster.



MISSED

By Marcus D. Bone

Sitting at his desk, Colin wondered what was missing in his life. He wasn't young anymore, but, his home life was fine. He had a loving wife and two beautiful daughters. His job was fine, and secure. So all he did was shuffle paper from one department to another. Someone had to do it. The pay was good and it was stressless. He still had all his hair, and that was more than he could say about some of the other executives in the office.

But there was something missing, it was almost like some part of him was not there. Colin shook his head, what was he thinking. That sort of thing lead to a midlife crisis. He was happy and that's all that mattered... Wasn't it?

That night he drove home through the hordes of traffic, his mind slipped back to the thoughts that had bothered him earlier in the day. If his life was missing something what was it? A holiday, surely not. He and Rebecca had got away just last month, leaving the girls with a friend. He smiled as he remembered it, the sun, the sand, the passionate nights. He'd love another week or two like that, but he didn't need it.

Drifting away with his thoughts Colin didn't notice the car on the other side of road cross the median strip. It took him a long second to

realize what was going to happen. The car was going to hit him. It was almost as if the driver of the other car didn't see him. He flashed his lights, but it continued to drive towards him.

The impact was worse than he expected, a full head-on crash, which sent Colin first rocketing forward into the opening airbag in front of him, and then whipping back to snap his neck on the drivers head rest behind him. As a final act he shot forward again into the fully deployed airbag, smothering his face in the cold plastic.

His neck felt as like was on fire, and his abdomen and thighs pounded in pain. To make matters worse the airbag clung to his face, molding to his mouth and nose. He found that he couldn't breath, the plastic instead entering his mouth, stopping any air from getting through. He began frantically thrashing his head attempting to dislodge the material from his face. But, it still stuck strong. He tried to move his arms in a vain attempt to puncture the bag, but they did not respond to his commands.

His breath ran short, gulping in plastic, a vain attempt to get some oxygen into his lungs. The world around him began to shimmer and melt. He could not breathe! As his vision turned slowly red, he screamed a silent scream, trying so

desperately to tell the world of his plight. But no assistance came. Amongst the wreckage of his car, and trapped against the airbag, he was helpless, each painful twist and turn burying him deeper in the plastic.

After what seemed to be an eternity all seemed lost. The red fading slowly to black, his ragged breathing became no more.

'This is an odd one, Jimmy, this guy's cold already... maybe he died of a heart attack or something.'

The paramedic held the corpse by the wrist, his attempt to check for a pulse obviously futile.

'That's for the Doctors to decide,' his partner replied, 'now get on with it boy.'

Becky Harris was a mess. She'd come straight to the hospital of course, but still didn't know what had happened. The Officer had said there had been a car crash, and that Colin had been involved. What had happened? Was he okay? Was the car okay? What the hell had happened? And more importantly why wasn't anyone telling her anything?

She got up from her chair and once again accosted the nurse at the Accident and Emergency desk, in an attempt to learn anything. The Nurse just looked at her as she approached. The poor woman probably got a



dozen worried people in here a night.

"Excuse me..." the nurse looked away, examining something on the desktop. "I said excuse me". Now the nurse looked up again, attempting to smile in that reassuring way lawyers do, when you're about to lose your case.

"Sorry Mrs. Harris, I told you I can't tell you anything until the Doctor gets here. Besides anything I tell you would be pure speculation." The Nurse smiled again. "How about I get you another cup of coffee."

"I've had enough coffee...thank you," Becky could barely restrain herself, "can't you at least tell me how badly he was hurt when he got here? Anything? Please?"

"Sorry Mrs. Harris," now the nurse spoke more forcefully, "I must insist you wait for the Doctor, I assure you he will not be long." There was a long pause, and smiling again she said "Now, how about that coffee?"

Becky shook her head and sat back down on the seat she had spent the last hour on.

It was getting closer and yet no matter how much he twisted and turned he couldn't get his head to face the approaching noise.

Suddenly it was above him, a large head, gray and ugly. Large black eyes staring unblinking down at him trapped there helpless. It - he could only call the being an 'It' - was unlike anything he had ever seen before. Something from his darkest nightmares, his vilest dreams. Right there standing, towering above him,

its intentions unknown.

Slowly as though it was pushing through a wall of water the thing reached across Colin, feeling for one of the pulsing machines by his head. Fingering one of the smaller instruments with its long gray pocked fingers, it paused only for a second before taking it in its hand.

Unsure until now what this creature intended to do with him, Colin could only watch with a morbid fascination.

The thing placed its free hand on Colin's face and pressed down on his head, forcing his face to one side. Its fingers felt wet and cold on his face, and their touch alone made him want to fight back. Yet still his body would not respond.

Through the corner of his eye he watched the thing hold the device over his ear, and then twist the shaft slightly animating the instruments end. It had come alive, vibrating and humming, the teeth on its end opening and closing in rapid succession.

Slow but surely the creature lowered his hand, the pointed end of the device aimed into Colin's ear. Colin could do nothing but stare, focusing on the vibrating point that inched closer to his head. It was almost as if the device had eyes of its own. *My God, it did!* Just behind the point, a dark, beady eye stared back at Colin.

Then Colin screamed, not even the paralysis in his body could restrain the blood-curling scream that emanated from deep inside his chest.

The being did not stop, as

though it had heard these cries many times before. Continuing to insert the probe into his ear.

Colin felt the dark cold device enter his ear, and that was all. He would be thankful that his mind did not allow him to feel or see anymore...

Becky stood beside her husband's bed, Doctor Shavor beside her. Colin's scream had been heard across the entire floor of Central's recovery ward.

"Is it pain?" Becky's voice was cracking the pressures and stress of the day were being to show.

"No, I think it is more of the healing process. His mind doesn't know why it lacks control, but is trying so hard to do so," replied Doctor Shavor. "This is a good thing".

"How much longer Doctor, how much longer will he remain like this." Becky said angrily.

"I'm sorry to say that I can not tell. His mind is healing. But while he remains in this state we can tell very little." The Doctor turned and looked at Becky. "You have had a hard week Mrs. Harris. Go home and try to relax, we will ring you if there is any change in your husband's condition."

"Thank you Doctor. Yes I'll go home, the girls must be worried sick, their father in hospital, and mother never around." Becky turned to leave, "Promise you will call me if there is any change."

Shavor smiled, "I will...I will."

Once Becky had left though that smile turned into a grimace. He had



never before encountered a patient that slipped so readily in and out of their Coma State. It was almost like his mind was healed but it was still held back by something else.

Shavor looked at his watch, ten past 7. *Time to go home*, he thought. Ally would be wondering where he had got to, and then that appointment with Goddard. That man never stops.

He took a step outside his office door, and then stopped. *Harris*, he thought, *I'd better pop in on Harris before I go too.*

He made his way to the elevator and took the short trip down to the Recovery ward on level 3. The doors opened to a dark hall, with just the lights from the nurses night station on. All was quiet, but then it usually was.

He strolled to the nurse's station and poked his head through the door.

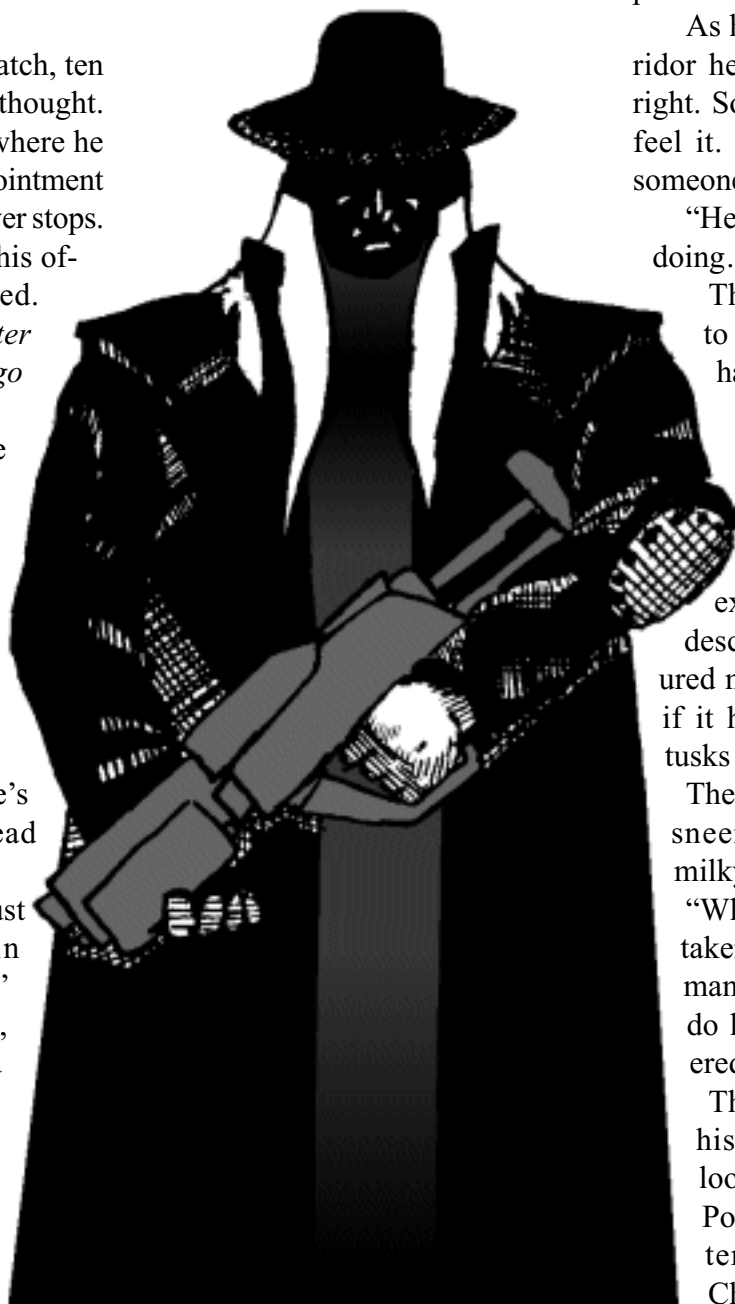
"Ah Nurse West, I'm just going to check on Colin Harris before I head home."

Nurse West replied, "Sure Doctor, haven't heard a peep from him all evening, looks like he's over his screaming match." She smiled at her own joke.

Shavor smiled back, "That's good to hear, maybe all the patients can get some rest now." He removed his head and turned to go to Colin's room. "Say

hi to Ray if you see him," he called as he left.

"Will do," replied Nurse West from in the night station.



Shavor walked down the hall, and then took the left through the smoke doors into the South section

of the Recovery ward; Harris' room was the last down this hall. They had placed him here so at least some of the other patients could recover in peace.

As he got to the end of the corridor he knew something was not right. Someone was here, he could feel it. Yes, there at Harris' door someone was trying to pick the lock.

"Hey, what do you think your doing... get away from that."

The figure rose, covered head to toe by a great coat it was hard to make out any features.

"What are you doing here. Visiting hours are..."

Shavor was cut off. The figure had pushed back his coat from around his face exposing what could only be described as a horribly disfigured man. His face was black, as if it had been burnt, and small tusks grew out of his cheeks.

The 'man' looked at Shavor and sneered. His teeth sharp and milky white.

"What the Hell?!" Shavor was taken aback by the sight of the man. For a long second he could do little but stare at its uncovered face.

The burnt man reached into his coat and withdrew what looked like a small matchbox. Pointing it at the Doctor he uttered the words, "Seesk Nak Char", in a deep husky voice.

Shavor had little time to react, even if he had known what was about to occur. He had barely turned to run back down the hall, when sud-



denly his back felt as if it had been ignited in flame. The sensation spread quickly throughout his entire body. One second Shavor was whole, the next he was reduced to a small pile of ash and charred remains on the hospital floor. His body was cremated in an instant.

The figure grunted and returned the box into his coat. Turning, he crouched down again to work at the lock. In another moment, the lock was open, and the lock picks tucked safely away inside the coat.

The figure stood again, and for a second time withdrew the small box. Opening the door, the figure stopped. Something wasn't right...another human was here.

The burnt man turned to see another figure standing in the doorway opposite Colin's room.

"Yes Beast, it's me," the new figure spoke.

The burnt man snarled like a trapped animal and raised the box towards the newcomer.

"Not so fast," the newcomer stated, and quite deliberately clapped his hands.

The burnt man spoke the words, but to his surprise no sound came from within. He spoke again but still to no avail.

The newcomer smiled, almost in delight, and then reaching into his own jacket exposed a shiny automatic pistol. He slowly and deliberately aimed it at the burnt man's chest. The Burnt man stood arms out offering, no resistance.

The newcomer squeezed the pistols trigger twice in rapid succession.

Almost immediately two large holes appeared in the burnt man's chest, although no sound had been heard.

The burnt man crumpled, crashing silently to the ground in a heap, dark black blood pouring from the two wounds.

Wasting no time, the man jumped over the body on the ground and pushed open Colin's door. On the bed Colin slept in a deep coma. The stranger surveyed the room around, and seeing all was returned his pistol to the holster in his jacket quite. Happy that it was safe enough he stretched up towards the ceiling, bringing his hands down to a position of prayer in front of his chest. Standing stock-still and closing his eyes the stranger began to hum quietly, the noise from his mouth now audible.

Colin stood in large tube, filled with a light green liquid. Around him four more of the humanoid creatures walked, each looked, to Colin at least, exactly the same. They seemed content in their own actions and seemed to take little notice of Colin.

But, something was out of place here. There in that corner was a man. Yes, a man. Oh, how he had longed to see another human being. But this one, this one looked oddly out of place. Even here where nothing ever seemed right to Colin.

The man walked towards him, and to Colin's surprise the humanoids ignored the intruder. After what felt like an eternity the man at last reached the tube where Colin was

forced to stand.

The man spoke, directly at Colin, "Well, are you going to stay there forever?"

Colin was taken aback, what was this man on about? Stay? He had no choice but to stay. Did he?

Again the man addressed him, "Come on, we don't have much time".

I am going mad, he thought

Tentatively Colin answered, "Are you talking to me?"

The man looked back at Colin, a little irritation flicking across his eyes, "Of course I am! Who else would I be talking to? Come on man, we haven't got time for this. They'll be here soon."

"Who will be here?" Colin asked with curiosity.

"Everyone. Look I will explain later, suffice, to say that if we aren't out of here soon, we will die. Would you prefer that?"

Colin looked back at the man and said, "I don't know if you have noticed but I'm stuck in this tube. If I could go with you I would, but as you can see, that is a slightly difficult at the moment..."

"Look, Colin. You are not trapped. This is a dream, or more precisely, a memory."

"A memory?" Colin was taken aback, "I have never been here before, this place would be hard to forget."

The Man sighed, "Trust me Colin, this is a memory, and if we don't get out of here soon, it may be your last memory. Look. Just tell you body to wake up... don't worry. It



wants too.

Colin looked at the stranger, and the stranger just stared back.

"Okay," Colin said, breaking the short silence, "what do I do?"

"Count to three Collin, that's all. Simple, right?"

Colin grimaced painfully, "Yeah right. Simple."

The stranger smiled back, almost with pleasure. "Right with me this time...One...Two..."

Colin closed his eyes and the stranger said, "Three."

Colin awoke with a start. His throat burned, his head hurt and

worst of all his neck felt as though it had been wrenched right off his head.

Clothes hit him in the face and beside him the man from the dream stood, quickly packing a bag.

"Jump to it man!" said the stranger.

"Dream... but you were..." Then it came flooding back to Colin, those last few seconds. "The crash... the car... Becky!" Colin voice was croaky and barely audible after a week of non-use.

"Look we can sort it all out soon, but for now can we just get out of here, please!" The stranger was acting very irritable.

"Okay... just give me a hand." Colin croaked back.

He pushed himself out of bed, the stranger reaching out a hand. Colin tentatively placed a first and then a second foot on the floor. Satisfied that they could take his weight, he pushed out from the bed. For a second his legs held. But then Colin discovered that in fact they were not going to respond.

His eyes closed Colin felt himself collapsing towards the cold hard floor and then, the sickening whack as his skull hit the ground. For a second all he could see was bright lights, and then mercifully, his consciousness faded away.

TO BE CONTINUED...

"Be careful whose advice you buy, but be patient with those who supply it. Advice is a form of nostalgia. Dispensing it is a way of fishing the past from the disposal, wiping it off, painting over the ugly parts and recycling it for more than it's worth."

- Mary Schmich

("Advice, like youth, probably just wasted on the young")



THE LOOSE ENDS

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Submissions

Like all fanzines, we need articles by you, the fans of *Dark Conspiracy*, to keep this magazine alive.

We're looking for articles solely related to the *Dark Conspiracy* universe. Any material that would help a new referee or player would be ideal.

Use the departments from this issue as a rough guide to the areas of material we are looking for. In particular, we need more:

Dark Races

Dark Conspiracy Related Fiction

Tabloid Articles

House Rules

NPCs

Milieu

If you think you can help, then please send your submission to Marcus Bone (MARCUS.BONE@xtra.co.nz).

We would prefer all submissions to be in a format readable by Microsoft Word 97. Our main preference is a Word 97 file.

If you are sending in tables, please send them as a word processor table or a tab-delimited text file. Do not send HTML files.

Please keep the formatting in your submissions simple. We will be responsible for formatting your submission when the magazine is being laid out. Fancy formatting makes our job that much harder.

We reserve the right to edit your submission and to correct spelling and grammar if necessary. If you have a problem with us doing this, please contact us and we will see if we can come to some sort of arrangement.

We look forward to seeing your submissions. Your involvement is important, not only to the success of this fanzine, but also to the continued survival of *Dark Conspiracy*.

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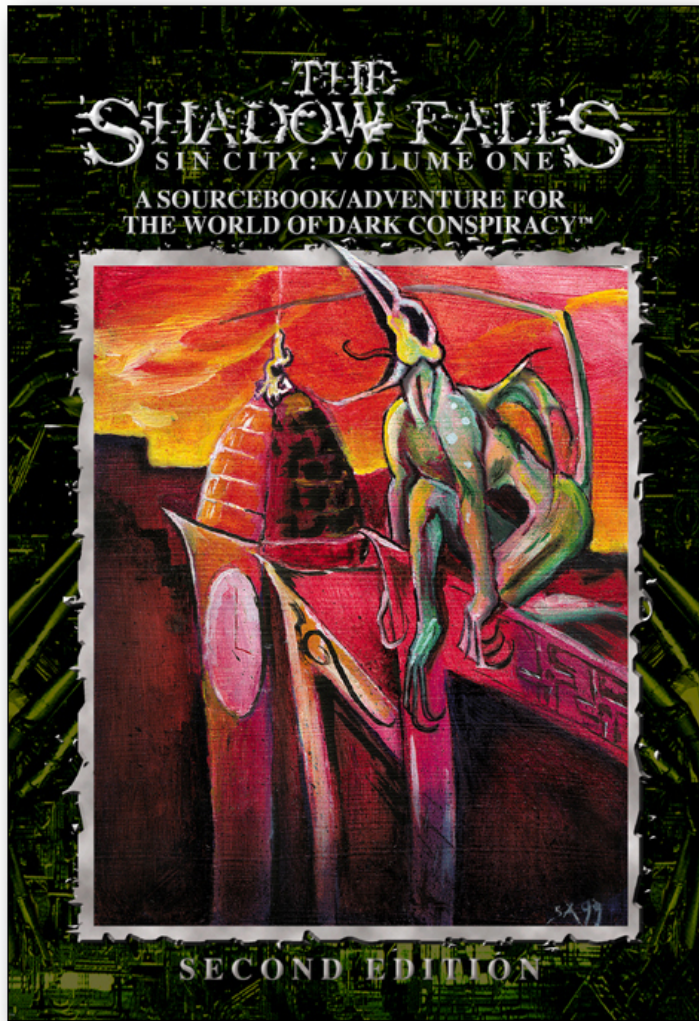
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