

NO.2 / WINTER 2020-21

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# SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN™

APOCALYPSE TITANS | PROGRAM PILLS | DOCTOR TEMPUSAUR

NEW CHARACTER CLASS:

THE **RADZONE  
RAIDER**

POST APOCALYPTIC ROLE PLAYING MEGAZINE

# SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN™

POST-APOCALYPTIC  
ROLE PLAYING MEGAZINE

NO.2 — WINTER 2020-21

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# BUNKER BRIEFINGS

## DIRECT COMMUNIQUES FROM THE PUBLISHER

For those who bought and devoured *SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN* No.1 and have now shown up for a second helping, welcome back! To those just joining us, boy do we have a megazine for you.

This time, we have many returning authors from our first incredible issue, including post-apocalyptic kaiju from **Levi Combs** (Planet X Games), programmatic pills from **Skeeter Green** (SGP Games), a satirical editorial by **Tim Kask** (*Dragon magazine*), and short fiction from **James M. Ward** (*Metamorphosis Alpha*, *Gamma World*). With that luminous lineup alone we could nearly call it quits for this issue, but you know us.

*SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN* No.2 also introduces two new writers to our radioactive ranks! First up is **James M. Spahn** (*The Hero's Journey*, *The One Ring*) who contributed this issue's mini-adventure: *Extinction Event of the Bionisaur*s. If a post-apocalyptic adventure that has giant cyborg dinosaurs and an orbital science installation doesn't grab you by the short spines and make you want to play, then you may want to go back to your games shelf and grab *Chutes and Ladders* instead.

Also joining our titanic team of writers is **Charles W. Vieser**, who took the simple directive to give us a new character class based on the movie *A Boy and His Dog* and knocked it out of the park, across town, and into the outfield of a completely different ballpark. Don't let the deceptively small word count of this brand new character class fool you. Charles delivered a consummately balanced set of class rules for the Radzone Raider that are playable anywhere, anytime, any system.

Still not enough? Comic strip writer/artists **Jolly Blackburn** and **Travis Hanson** are back with more *Knights of the Dinner Table* and *Onto the Wastelands*, and **Dan Smith** debuts with his comic *John Darkeye: The Last Good Thief*. Our retro-reviewer **Scott Robinson** takes on the 1974 movie *Zardoz* in a critical analysis that is frankly too good to be printed in a mere gaming publication — but we did not let that stop us from doing it.

All this for less money than it takes to have a pizza delivered, and you get to hang onto it for longer too. *Who says this isn't the Scientifically Barbaric Age of Wonders?*



**Jim Wampler**  
Editor-in-Chief





# APOCALYPTIC VISIONS

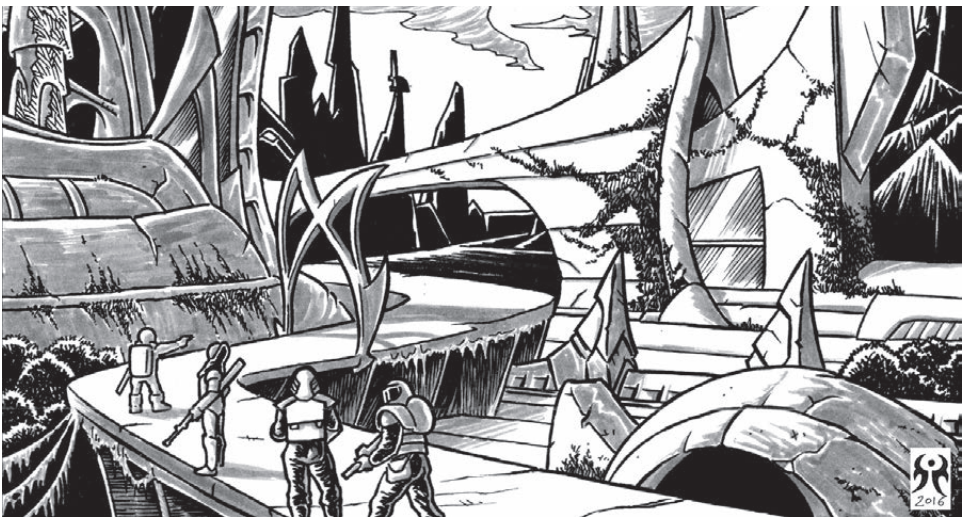
## The Same Old Apocalypse Blues

by James M. Spahn

**B**y now we've pretty much seen it all. Between TV, movies, comics, and novels we've experienced countless tales of how the world ends. You know the drill: nuclear war, zombie outbreak, technological revolt, plague, and so on. The apocalypse, to be frank, has gotten boring and predictable. But it doesn't have to be. I'm delighted to tell you that humanity can destroy itself and the world we live on in many more fun and exciting ways if you just stop and think about it for a second.

This is gonzo sci-fi, so make it gonzo. Instead of a robotic uprising, what if a specific protein inside the human body suddenly mutates, gains sentience, and begins to devour 90% of the population from the inside out? Instead of a nuclear war ravaging the landscape, what if the Earth's core doesn't quite explode, but creates enough pressure to crack the planet's crust and now we live in a world of erratic weather, sudden meteor storms, and islands floating in seas of boiling lava? Heck, what if science is completely wrong and the entire planet was actually the eyeball of some cosmic giant that suddenly fell from its socket and is now spinning through a reality-ripping cosmic void? You're not limited by a movie budget, a rubber-stamped Hollywood script, or a line editor telling you what is and is not appropriate for your game. Because that's what your game is — your very own broken, battered, individually screwed up little world. So make it your own and make it fun.

The post-apocalyptic genre is about what comes after and how no matter what that "after" entails, we will survive. We will mutate, adapt, and change to survive damn near anything. Hell, that's what humanity has always done. The apocalypse isn't any different, so get as strange as you want with it. Your players will find a way to survive. More importantly, they'll have a helluva good time doing it in this strange new world you've just laid to waste and ruin.







# APOCALYPSE TITANS

DOOMSDAY KAIJU FOR YOUR POST-APOCALYPTIC GAME

by LEVI COMBS

Beneath the red, bloated sun of Omega-Terra, where the only rule of law is might, there exist colossal god-beasts of absolute power and savagery. All sentient species flee in terror at the coming of these monolithic giants, and even wildly-mutated mega-fauna are dwarfed by these titanic creatures. These are the **apocalypse titans**.

Apocalypse titans are the alpha monsters of Omega-Terra — considered gods by some, living extinction events by others. These behemoths slumber for decades at a time and often awaken only to go on a ravenous rampage of gluttony, devouring everything that crosses their path and ruthlessly destroying anything that gets in their way. They are living cataclysms that can lay waste to whole regions if left unchecked. Reasoning with them is often difficult (or downright impossible) and their inscrutable motives are entirely their own.

From glow deserts to hothouse jungle, across radioactive seas and volcanic crater countries, there is little that can withstand the onslaught of an apocalypse titan. When these monstrosities become enraged or otherwise moved to action, they can lay waste to huge swaths of territory.

If left unchallenged, an apocalypse titan is capable of obliterating entire cultures. Squaring up to one in face-to-face combat is considered suicide at best, as only others of their kind stand any real chance of survival.

Apocalypse titans are each singular and there is nothing else on Omega-Terra quite like them.

Presented herein are three new apocalypse titans for your post-apocalyptic or fantasy genre-mash game.



# DEADEYE

## THE APOCALYPSE ENGINE

**A** gargantuan beast of metal towering above the hothouse jungle canopy, Deadeye was once a doomsday machine of unmatched potential, but was laid low by some unknown cataclysm amid the Great Disaster. Though felled by this mighty onslaught, it did not perish but instead began systematically repairing itself at a snail's pace, as thousands of years rolled by. Will this monstrous engine of war ever rise again?

**Current Status:** Awake but silently biding its time.

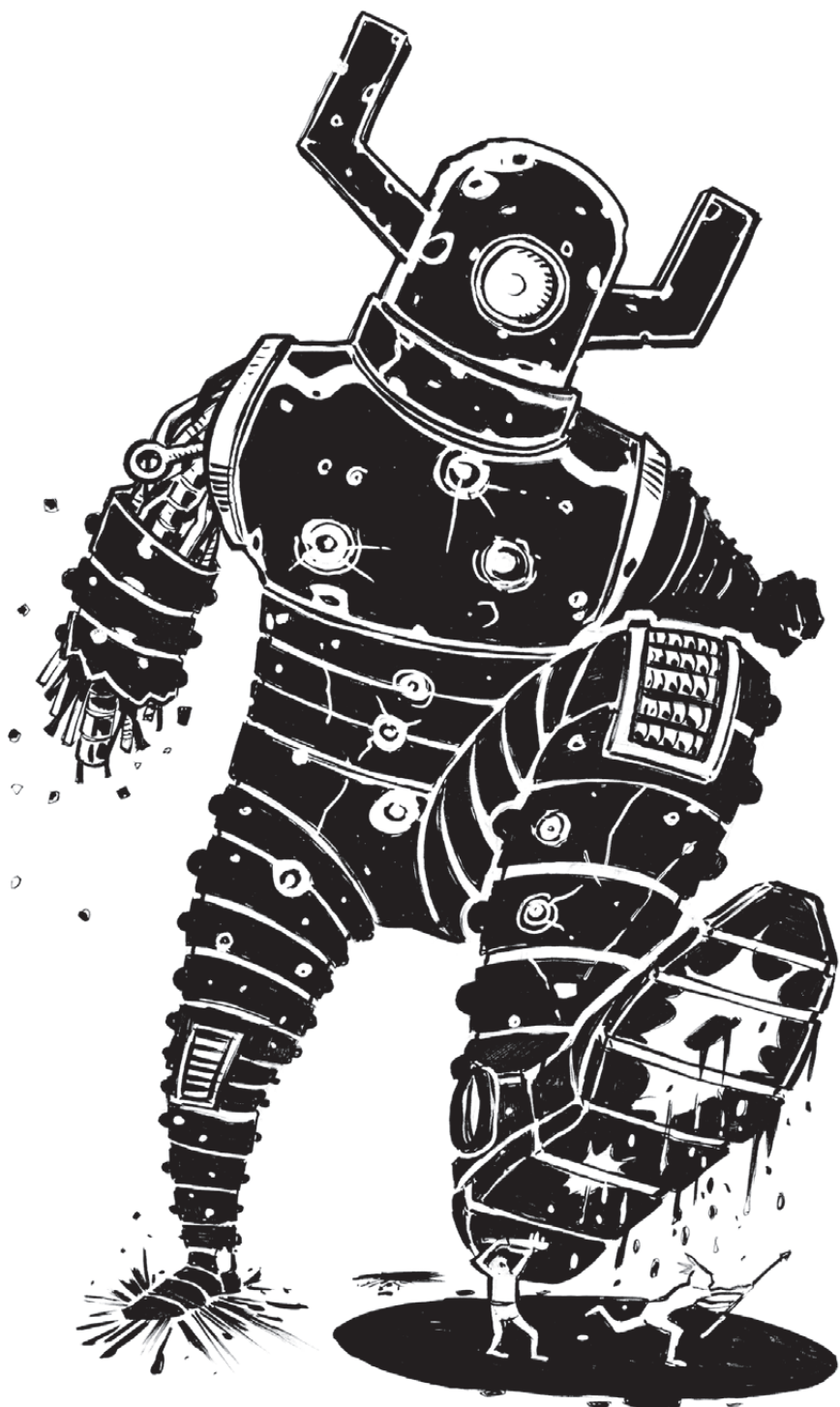
**Description:** So named for the massive atomic cyclotron that dominates its head, Deadeye is a gigantic humanoid construct that towers some 200' tall. Before the damage occurred that wrecked its armored form, Deadeye was a gleaming robotic being of impenetrable metal capable of tearing a full assault vehicle apart with its bare hands. Now it appears to be nothing more than a rusted hulk, ravaged by both the passage of time and great wounds no biological being could have survived.

Over the centuries, the titan's body has been patched in places with materials scavenged from a post-cataclysm world. The door to an old train car patches a hole in its arm, while steel beams taken from a bombed-out building serve to prop up a damaged interior. Bolts and rivets of all sizes cover the smooth exterior resulting in a patchwork appearance.

**Lore:** Before the Great Disaster, even shamans and sages are unsure of just what Deadeye's original purpose was, though almost everyone who has ever laid eyes on it agrees that it was a war machine created by the Ancient Ones in anticipation of some final judgement day. The truth behind its origins are lost to the ages, but the titan is operated by an A.I. of capable, though flawed, intellect. Due to the dolorous passage of time and its near-catastrophic war wounds, the A.I. suffers from a split personality in its programming which has resulted in its logic becoming deeply flawed. One half of the A.I. clings to its original programming to fight and protect, while the other half has come to believe the chants and whispers of those that now worship it. It hears the fawning praise around it and computes, "Is that for me? Am I a god?" This results in occasionally unpredictable behavior that is uncommon for an artificial intelligence of this magnitude, as Deadeye wavers somewhere between dutiful programming and the belief that it is a supreme being.

Deadeye's existence is somewhat ironic. Though it waits patiently in a verdant cradle of life teeming with plants and living creatures, and surrounded by all sorts of fawning worshipers, the great war engine can likely never be whole again. The technology and scientific know-how required to repair it and bring it back to full strength have long ago passed into history, leaving Deadeye a war-torn relic of a lost age. If it were somehow provided with the opportunity to make itself whole again, who knows what this technological titan would do?

**Lair:** Deadeye rests near the place it fell long ago and seldom moves from there. Entire lifetimes pass before it deigns to rise or even move. Because of this, entire ecosystems have sprung up around it, living, dying, and living again during the thousands of years that it has lain dormant. Covered by creeping jungle vines, mud slide washouts and



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decades of vegetative growth, it appears as little more than one more outcropping in the sprawling green canopy of the trackless jungle.

Its worshipers, the Uk-Jebli (which means "Children of the Eye" in their native tongue) stay close to their great god, keeping watch over it and bringing it any recovered relics they think might help restore it. Primitive dwellings exist all about the base of Deadeye's hulking form, both on the ground and built into the trees nearby. Since Deadeye rarely moves in the lifetime of one of its worshipers, these structures are all fashioned to be permanent. The Uk-Jebli fear little as they sleep in the shadow of their towering deity.

**Tactics:** Stories passed down about Deadeye from one tribal savage to the next refer to it as a "great god made of smart metal that lies sleeping in the depths of the jungle" and as "a cleaver of mountains and leveler of cities" capable of "reducing entire tribes to drifting ash on the wind with a flash of its great red eye." While these statements may have once been true, Deadeye is no longer capable of such wanton, widespread destruction and its tactics reflect this.

Having suffered massive amounts of damage to its robotic form, Deadeye is crippled in comparison to the atomic juggernaut it once was. While it can stand and move about if need be with a shambling, jerky gait, it does so with trepidation. Much of its back has been torn off, gutted by some great force. It is missing its right arm from the mid-bicep down and it has been primitively repaired to cover over the many holes in its torso. Deadeye's worshipers have done what they can to patch the metal monstrosity where possible, so that some ragged holes may be covered by long sheets of oddly-cut metal in one spot or jury-rigged with a rusting elevator door in another. Understanding these weaknesses all too well, Deadeye bides its time — with immortal patience — until it can be repaired to a more serviceable (and imposing) state of being.

Make no mistake, Deadeye is still quite capable of incredible feats of destruction should it be roused to action. Its cyclopedic eye-beam can atomize even the hardest of foes and level entire tribes should they raise up arms against it. Its left arm is still intact, ending in a grooved, pincer-like claw that can pluck a bubble car from mid-air and crush it with ease. Creatures fleeing before it are just as likely to be stomped into paste by its massive feet as they are to be ignored as inconsequential nuisances.

Deadeye's most powerful weapon is its atomic eye-beam and it will make full use of this potent energy blast before closing the distance to finish off its foes with brute force. The titan is methodical in such attacks, keeping up a relentless, sustained pace that few other beings can match. Deadeye's A.I. is very cunning and will often use the eye-beam to weaken the structural supports on surrounding buildings, causing them to collapse on those it deems as a threat. Its tactics are measured and calculating, and the titan is not above perpetuating a large-scale disaster (such as causing a massive landslide or raging wildfire) to force others into retreat.

**The Uk-Jebli (Deadeye's Cult of Worshipers):** The Uk-Jebli appear outwardly as a fairly primitive tribe with many stone age-era customs, but they are both aware and capable enough to make the best use of scavenged items that they can understand. Over time, many in their ranks have gained knowledge that has allowed them to make crude repairs to Deadeye's blasted form, while other have an array of mutations that allow the repairs to be more easily accomplished. In the case of the primitive Uk-Jebli, appearances are definitely deceiving.

They paint their bodies with a slightly euphoric white paste and wear crude-looking helmets that represent the great red eye of their slumbering deity. The men of the Uk-Jebli wear simple sashes and loincloths, while the women dress in crudely woven sari-like garments. They are typically armed with primitive weapons, along with an assortment of pistols or rifles. Many of them have mutations, both useful and otherwise.

A spiritual folk, the Uk-Jebli believe that a day is coming when their god will rise from its slumber and lead them to great victories, providing succor and protection to those who worship it. The original myth-cycle ascribed to their robotic god has slowly transformed, becoming bastardized over the centuries. The stories range from Deadeye as a benevolent being that fell from the heavens in a rain of fire to that of the perpetrator of the Great Disaster who will one day rise to lead the Uk-Jebli and conquer the world. While none of these tales are based in fact, past generations have patiently waited for Deadeye to awaken. The last few generations of the tribe have instead come to believe that it is their solemn duty to bring about Deadeye's awakening, so they bring the titan things they believe may help their fallen god regain its strength more quickly.

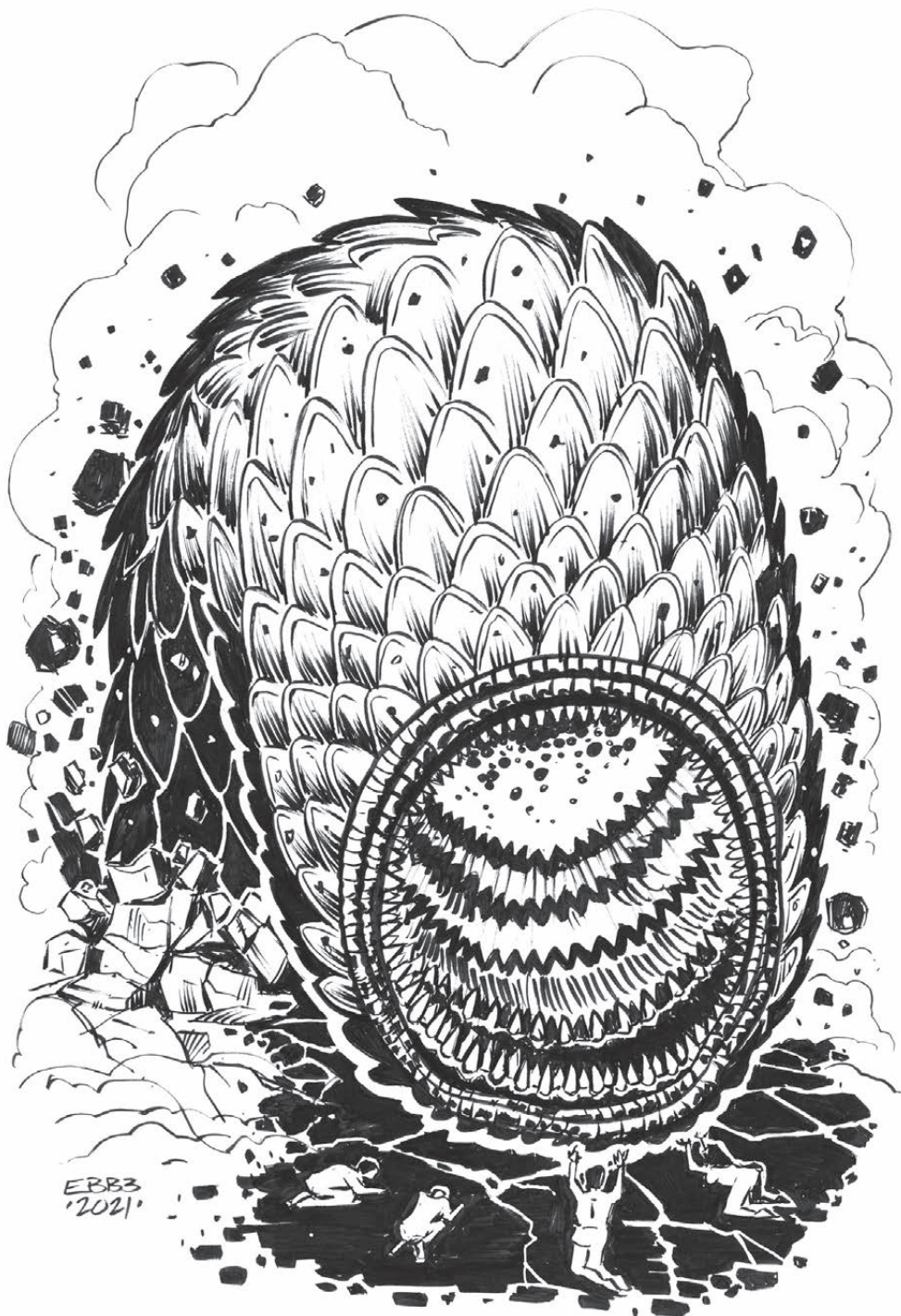
The Uk-Jebli serve as curators and protectors of a sort, doing what they can to patch Deadeye's wounds and bringing it scavenged materials from the surrounding lands. In their minds, they are both its protectors and its children, keeping it safe from outside threats but constantly living under the shadow of the great eye. More than once, an enthusiastic cult member has come before Deadeye's cold, atomic gaze in hopes that something it has found in the jungle could be of use to the great titan, only to find out that the ground car steering wheel they held in their hands was of no consequence.

**Plot Hooks:** The following plot hooks are useful for inserting Deadeye into an adventure:

- A garbled transmission or hologram from Deadeye's A.I. makes its way to the characters, revealing the location of an underground hangar in a nearby military installation that was swallowed up by the jungle. Deadeye promises the characters wealth, supplies, and weapons should they retrieve a power core from the ruined bunker. Unfortunately, the hangar is still controlled by a dangerous A.I. and many servitor robots, all of which are very much aware and operable. Deadeye hopes that the characters will be successful and bring it the power core, but will consider their failure acceptable should they only weaken the bunker's defenses enough for its own worshipers to successfully plunder it.
- The Uk-Jebli are searching for a specific item or material that could prove vital in repairing Deadeye's war-ravaged form. They are willing to strike a deal with the characters for either assistance in locating the prize or just seizing it outright. If it is brought to them, the tribe will be true to their word, although if the characters happen to carry something that may also be of use to their god, the tables may turn quickly.
- The characters hear a rumor or are otherwise alerted to the existence of Deadeye and realize that if they eliminated the tribe surrounding it they could seize the titan for themselves and become unstoppable. Have the characters stumbled onto a brilliant new idea, or are the rumors just a part of the A.I.'s long-reaching plan to abandon the Uk-Jebli and seek repairs in the hands of those better-suited to make it whole again?

**Deadeye, the Apocalypse Engine:** Init: +10; Atk atomic eye-beam +20 ranged (heat 15d6, disregards anything but force armor or disintegrate 20' radius DC 20), fists (+20 melee, 15d6); AC 20; HD 75d6, 275 hit points; MV 50' (damaged); Act 4d20; SP force screen (40 hp, regenerative), immune to mind control; SV Fort +20, Ref +20, Will +20; A.I. recog 20 (former military)





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# UTU-HAGAL

## THE CINDERMAW

**A** horror of the volcanic wastes, Utu-Hagal is unmatched by any force of nature. He is a living embodiment of the age of apocalypse. He is a roiling, unstoppable force of pure destruction that bursts from the desert sands to lay waste to all that moves. The savage tribes of the wastes do everything they can to keep Utu-Hagal from waking, for they know that where he goes, nothing but decimation follows.

**Current Status:** Asleep, but stirring.

**Description:** Utu-Hagal is a monster in every sense of the word. A lumbering, worm-like behemoth of more than 200' in length, his body is covered in golden-hued, armored plates, each one the size of a grav sled. The titan's vast, circular jaws are lined with row upon row of massive, spine-like teeth. A dull red glow throbs rhythmically from deep inside his gullet. At night, the titan can be observed from miles away thanks to this rhythmic, radioactive pulsing.

**Lore:** A ravenous force of annihilation unparalleled in the oral history of Omega-Terra, Utu-Hagal fortunately spends most of his time in a deep digestive slumber following rampages where he literally devours everything in sight. His rage is boundless and what he cannot devour outright he burns in a radioactive hail of fire from his cavernous maw. These long bouts of torpor are fortunate for the inhabitants of the wastelands, as few creatures are capable of opposing this titan's raw power.

The name Utu-Hagal translates roughly into "mouth of cinders" in the native Idimmu tongue, and for obvious reason. The titan's deadly atomic breath reduces almost anything caught in its path to glowing slag and embers, a trait that gives even other apocalypse titans pause should they cross his path. Thanks to his singular biology, this radioactive breath springs forth from the fusion of desert sands and rock inside of Utu-Hagal's massive body, creating a scouring, white-hot breath weapon that leaves behind a thin sheet of blast glass once it cools. Wary travelers can always identify Utu-Hagal's feeding ground by these curious landmarks.

**Lair:** Utu-Hagal makes his den deep within the rocky and inhospitable terrain of the wastelands, inside a massive cavern from which many burrowed tunnels radiate. He is capable of burrowing through even the hardest bedrock with ease, swimming through the desert sands as if it were an ocean. It is in this underground lair that Utu-Hagal lies comatose for generations at a time, waking only to feed in a mindless rampage.

The interior of the lair and many of the outlying tunnels are coated with the glossy, greenish residue of atomic glass. Roughly half of Utu-Hagal's nest is filled with sand, in which the creature coils and rests his immense bulk.

The titan's unique biology destroys just about anything he eats, but once every twenty years or so, he passes a hardened lump of collected indigestible material from his body. This opaque, lustrous material is known as selivack and is as dense and resilient as the strongest known power armor. Despite its durability, it can be harvested to make weapons or armor

by those with the requisite skills. Its value to the Idimmu folk is nearly priceless, and they will do almost anything to obtain even a shard of this rare material. Any other valuables in Utu-Hagal's lair are unlikely and if present are completely incidental.

**Powers and Abilities:** Aside from his staggering size, strength, and armored carapace, Utu-Hagal possesses several abilities that have helped him maintain his status as the undisputed apex predator of the radioactive wastelands of Omega-Terra.

The great worm is capable of unleashing a blast of super-heated atomic sand from deep inside his gullet that can quickly reduce even the toughest foe to scattered atoms. If the damage from this blast exceeds that character's hit point total by 10 or more and that character's size is Large or smaller, it indicates that the character has effectively been disintegrated. In such cases, nothing is left behind in the wake of Utu-Hagal's breath save an atomic glass shadow on the ground.

While burrowing through solid rock or swimming through desert sands, Utu-Hagal navigates by means of sensitive vibratory organs located throughout his body. This allows him to locate prey in a similar manner, as well as to avoid danger. As he moves through the sand, gill-like organs underneath his armored plates allow him to replenish the sand inside his gullet's cold fusion digestive tract. It is through this bizarre process that his atomic breath weapon is sustained.

**Tactics:** Utu-Hagal's evolutionary directive is to consume, eating anything and everything in his path. On the rare occasion he is prevented from doing so, the great beast flies into a destructive rage, thrashing about and rolling over anything smaller than himself with little or no notice. If a barrier presents itself that cannot be eaten, Utu-Hagal will either burrow under or around it, and failing that may unleash his atomic breath until nothing remains that is blocking his path.

While mostly a gluttonous leviathan of destruction when feeding, Utu-Hagal is not without cunning. The behemoth's coming is always preceded by earth tremors and the shifting of the sands, so the beast does not surprise his prey often. When he does, he attempts to swallow them whole, letting the titanic musculature and atomic furnace raging within his innards finish off struggling meals. If a creature proves too elusive to swallow, Utu-Hagal thrashes about in an attempt to crush his quarry. If truly threatened, the titan simply burrows his way back into the glow desert sand in search of a new meal.

**Utu-Hagal's Worshipers:** The Mul-Gud-Idimmu folk (often shortened to "Idimmu" by outsiders) worship Utu-Hagal not so much as a god, but as the living embodiment of the wrath of the wastelands, and have done so for as long as anyone can remember. They believe that for every boon the desert provides there is a price to be paid, and that price is Utu-Hagal. They are a brutal people in a savage land, seeing themselves and their culture reflected in the ravenous appetite of the marauding titan they revere.

The Idimmu have lived among the rocky crags and desolate canyons of the wastes for countless generations. They model their entire society around the sleeping patterns and ecology of Utu-Hagal, and fear that any straying from these patterns could result in the titan's waking early. When the time does come for Utu-Hagal to rouse from his slumber, the Idimmu hide themselves away in specially prepared and well-stocked secret con-claves until the behemoth once again falls into torpor. In the wake of his rampages, they form raiding parties to scavenge anything that remains behind, planning for the next generation-long cycle.



The Idimmu vigilantly patrol the territory around Utu-Hagal's lair, making sure that no one ever comes close enough to wake the great beast. They know that if the titan wakes early, he will undoubtedly devour everything (including their tribe) before they can hide themselves away in their rocky safe holds. They occasionally make parlay with those they deem strong or particularly well-armed, but will more often than not slay or disable trespassers with rockfall traps and sniper-attacks. Those who survive are often finished off by the wastes and their bones picked clean by the Idimmu. When cornered, they fight to the death.

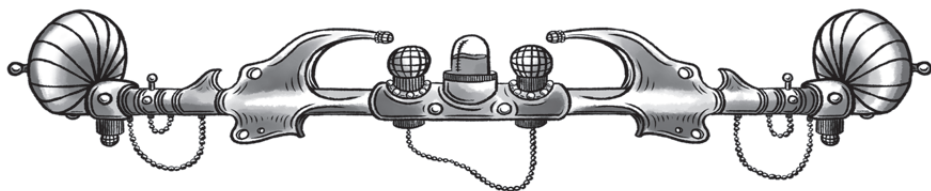
The Idimmu typically use weapons and tech scavenged from others, along with some rare weapons and armor fashioned from selivack. Crude melee and ranged weapons of all types are common, they have a particular love of rifles. While primitive in many ways, the Idimmu can be industriously clever and have advanced enough to learn how to repair and maintain most of their armaments.

**Plot Hooks:** The following plot hooks are useful for inserting Utu-Hagal into an adventure:

- Earthquakes have been wracking the land — an occurrence well known amongst the savage folk of the Idimmu as the events preceding the awakening of Utu-Hagal. While they hurry to make final preparations, a band of deep-wastes raiders has arrived and begun snooping around some ruins near the behemoth's lair. If these raiders inadvertently wake Utu-Hagal, it could mean destruction for their entire tribe. If the characters are willing to quietly eliminate the raiders, not only will they earn the respect of the Idimmu, but a boon from them as well.
- The characters stumble across a large piece of rust-gold chitin jutting from the ground, recently uncovered by the ceaseless blowing of the desert sands. Unfortunately, the Idimmu have their eye on it as well, for it is a chip from the hide of Utu-Hagal! Only one side shall claim this rare prize.
- An esoteric cryptic alliance (determined by the referee) is willing to pay quite handsomely for a tooth from the great worm of the desert. They are offering both wealth and technology to any who dare the perils of the wastes to retrieve this prize. Are the characters bold (or foolish) enough to do so, and what's so important about this tooth?

**Utu-Hagal, the Cindermau:** Init: +10; Atk bite/swallow +20 melee (15d6), super-heated sand breath (20d6, chance of disintegration, DC 18 Reflex save to avoid); AC 23; HD 50d10, 300 hit points; MV 75' (burrow 150'); Act 4d20; SP immune to heat/fire attacks; SV Fort +20, Ref +20, Will +20

**Selivack:** Diamond-hard and opaque, this substance is derived from the collective indigestible matter that slowly passes through Utu-Hagal's massive bulk every two decades. The titan's unique internal biology transforms the material, leading to its impossibly resilient qualities. Selivack is comparable to duralloy, and can only be worked by use of a fusion torch or other high-level technologies of the Ancient Ones. Even a small shard of this material is priceless to the Idimmu and they will do whatever they can to lay their hands on it.



# GROMUGG

## THE BEAST OF CRATER LAKE ZERO

**A** terror once unleashed from the spawn vats of the Ancient Ones, Gromugg has been left unchecked and unopposed to grow to monstrous size over many millennia. Capable of unleashing devastation on a cataclysmic scale, Gromugg typically emerges every few decades to go on a rampage that is the stuff of nightmares. The frog-titan swiftly gobbles up anything in its path, eating everything in sight and devouring even the largest creatures whole. Entire tribes have disappeared into that flabby, tooth-lined mouth followed by a thunderous croaking of exultation!

**Current Status:** Awake and feeding!

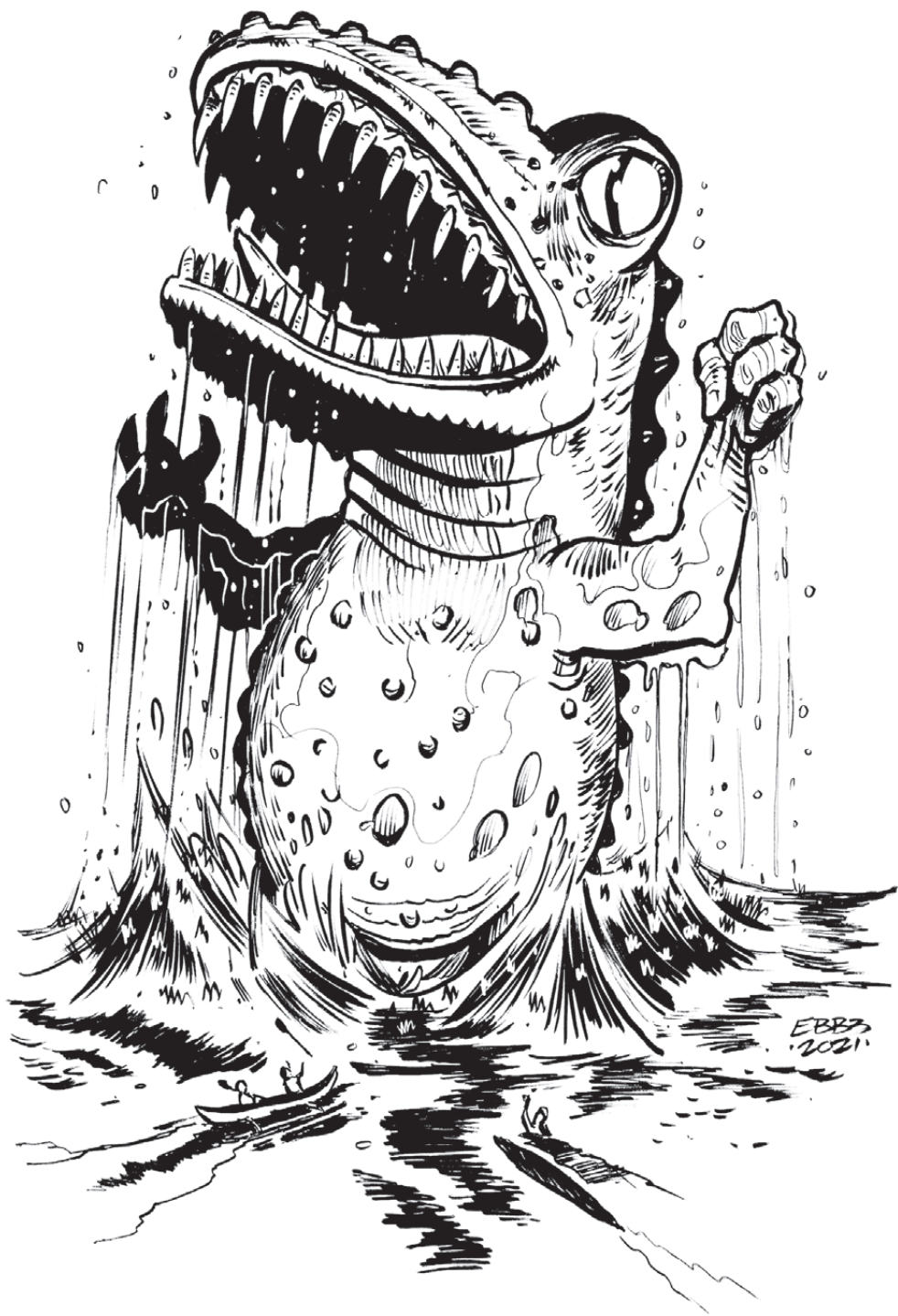
**Description:** A giant, hulking creature caught somewhere between a flabby-mouthed frog, a barracuda and an impossibly long-armed humanoid, Gromugg stands a monstrous 180' tall, even when hunched over. Gromugg has a disproportionately large head and overlong arms that drag the ground, ending in wicked-looking claws on webbed hands. The titan's mouth is incredibly long and wide, filled with row after row of pointy teeth the size of harpoons. It moves in a hunched gait, with a grotesque pot belly and bowed legs. Its coloration ranges from mottled green to a filthy olive color, with its belly shading from bright yellow to a pale white.

**Lore:** Before the fiery cataclysm of the Great Disaster, the Ancient Ones had become decadent and unmindful in their genetic experiments, growing bolder and bolder as they played god with their gene-splicing technology. They grew organic abominations in their spawn-vats, splicing and manipulating genes at a whim. The genetic nightmare that would become the apocalypse titan Gromugg was one such abomination.

During the Great Disaster, the widespread devastation razed the science installation that Gromugg was grown in to the ground. Despite the considerable wounds this inflicted upon Gromugg, the genetic monster limped away into the adjoining crater lake and nursed itself back to health, growing strong in the irradiated waters. As it fed and grew stronger, the radiation from the glowing lake caused it to flourish unchecked, enhancing its already considerable genetic mutations. As the centuries passed, Gromugg eventually grew to titanic size.

Gromugg is amphibious, able to survive both in and out of water. The titan seems to prefer being underwater, however, and always ends its rampages by returning to the crater lake near the ruins of the old genetic labs that gave it birth.

**Lair:** Gromugg spends almost all its time in deep hibernation beneath the waters of a large, glowing crater lake that still bears the taint of heavy radiation. The crater is only a few miles from a much larger body of water and when Gromugg awakes, it often goes there first to feed. Anything above or beneath those waves becomes food when the titan enters this alpha-predator mode, as Gromugg devours anything and everything in its sight.







After feeding, Gromugg invariably retreats back to its deep crater lake lair, falling into a deep, years-long torpor until it once again feels the urge to feed. Once it has filled its massive potbelly with the irradiated flesh of Omega-Terra's denizens, little can stir it from its slumber.

Nothing is left of the original facility which gave birth to Gromugg save a few old stones. Even most of the subterranean levels have collapsed and lie buried under tons of stone, and are completely inaccessible. Despite this, Gromugg continues to be instinctively drawn to the area, squatting there before and after its rampages, croaking hideously at the skies.

**Tactics:** Gromugg is a fairly simple-minded combatant, making use of its natural weapons to great advantage. It is an improbable creature not meant for this world and doesn't have an equal on the field of battle, much less any natural predators. It is the alpha-mutant of its region and when he emerges to feed, anything with common sense and a desire to live flees for their lives.

If given the chance against a foe of large size or smaller, Gromugg will use its tongue to swiftly grapple, squeeze and then swallow its prey whole. Once a creature is drawn into that flopping, many-toothed maw, their chances of survival plummet to almost zero. Gromugg can also attack with its long, over-sized arms, smashing stone and rending steel with considerable ease.

Gromugg is capable of leaping great distances with the use of its powerful hind legs, usually destroying anything it lands upon. It is also extremely nimble when moving about in water deep enough to accommodate its great bulk and can swim with surprising speed.

**Gromugg's Cult:** Gromugg has no cult. Over the centuries there have been those who have attempted to worship the great beast but all have met their doom in its ravenous jaws. The titan seems not to care if it is worshiped or followed and sees anything smaller than itself as nothing more than prey.

**Plot Hooks:** The following plot hooks are useful for inserting Gromugg into an adventure:

- Gromugg has emerged from the glowing waters of the crater lake, ravenously hungry and headed to the nearest settlement. The locals have no way of destroying the great beast but a plan has been hatched to lure it away using a local pack of bulladillos as bait. Of course, someone will need to entice the bulladillos so that the thrashing of the unwary creatures can in turn attract Gromugg. That's where the player characters come in...
- Despite the fact that Gromugg has made short work of every single "worshiper tribe" that has ever attempted to idolize it (devouring them by the handfuls, regardless of their intentions), a new group of ragtag individuals has arisen, seeking after their new god. While most believe that they will befall the same fate as the others, information comes to the player characters that there is one among them who possesses a powerful mutation capable of bending others to his will and that they plan to do so with Gromugg. Controlled and focused, an apocalypse titan could reshape an entire region to its master's whims. Can the player characters discover the truth behind this new cult in time and halt yet another gluttonous rampage by Gromugg?
- There is a series of secret chambers somewhere beneath the ruins where Gromugg was born. These underground chambers hold the same gene-splicing technology and spawn-vats that originally begot the monstrous creature. A renegade group of technologically savvy madmen seek to raid the lab and claim the ancient machinery for themselves. Can the player characters stop them or even perhaps seize it for their own plans?

**Gromugg, the Beast of Crater Lake Zero:** Init: +13; Atk bite +21 melee (18d6, swallow whole), tongue +21 grapple (7d6, grapple), fists (+21 melee, 15d6); AC 20; HD 50d6, 250 hit points; MV 100' (swim 200'); Act 4d20; SP amphibious, great leap, immune to radiation attacks, some sort of significant regeneration; SV Fort +20, Ref +20, Will +20

# NEURAL PROGRAMMATIC PILLS

by  
**Skeeter  
Green**



**R**ecently discovered by a spare few of the the shamans, healers, technobites\*, and technomancers\*\* who roam the wastelands, neural programmatic pills are incredibly rare artifact capsules that allow a consumer to obtain an instant neural program, avoiding the necessity to appease or be connected to any patron A.I. Using these pills is not without risk, but the potential rewards are also great.

Each capsule is filled with an encyclopedic-understanding learning agent (or E-ULA), delivering knowledge directly to the consumer at a molecular level, bypassing the need for a connection to an A.I. These pills are created in a laborious process involving the extraction of the encephalic fluids of powerful shamans, combinations of rare chemicals, and a lab specifically designed for pharmaceutical enhancements.

While many of the NPPs have similar properties, they vary extensively in their power and use. Each NPP contains cognitive nucleic acid (CNA) that temporarily alters a consumer's neural pathways, allowing them the single use of a neural program. How long a consumer can use the program, and the effects of the program, are shown in the NPP Program Effects Table.

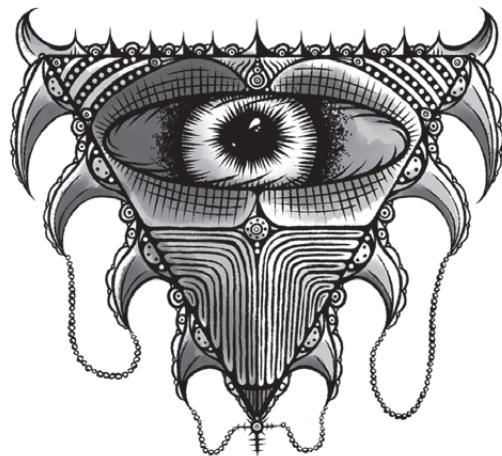
**GM Notes:** NPPs replace scrolls as one-shot “magic items” in a post-apocalyptic game setting. They can have varied effects as desired by the GM. The main benefits of the NPPs are their near-immediate use, and the unknown nature of each pill's effect. The NPPs are also an easy way to introduce new neural programs into your campaign.

*\*New in the forthcoming Cryptocodex from SGP*

*\*\*In Fight This Mutant from Mudpuppy Games*



**Using NPPs:** A pill needs to be consumed to be activated (not necessarily by mouth — the details of intake are left up to the player and GM). After consumption, the consumer must make a DC 12 Fort save. Success indicates the CNA bonds with the consumer's genetic code long enough to make use of the program. Failure indicates an upset stomach (or whatever digestive system the consumer possesses), and some unknown incompatibility of bonding with the program, i.e. it just doesn't work. Only NPPs that bond with the consumer's genetics grant the ability to use the neural program.



Next, roll on and consult the NPP Programs Effects Table. Assuming the NPP works, the consumer makes the appropriate program check, acting as if they were a same-level caster able to access the program to determine the results. Once an NPP is consumed, it is gone. Neural programmatic pills are all single-use items.

**Random Prescriptions:** NPPs are powerful additions to any wasteland walker's equipment. They should not necessarily be found in random loot; their inclusion could change the trajectory of any scenario, for good or for ill. If the GM wants to include NPPs, the individual programs can be drawn from any A.I.s that grant neural programs, or even new ones the GM chooses to add to their campaign. If randomly determining the level of a NPP, roll a d8: 1-4 = Level-1; 5-6 = Level-2; 7 = Level-3; 8 = Level-4 or 5 (if available; otherwise treat as Level 3).

## EFFECTIVENESS MAY VARY

Warning: not all NPPs are created equally. Some ancient alche-pharmacists created NPPs that were specifically underpowered, or which contained powerful addictive agents, to keep their customers coming back for more. "The first one is free" was a common mantra for these nefarious creators in the Before Times, who knew that their products were easy to consume, could be addictive, and were often a powerful tool to manipulate others. Let the wasteland consumer beware.

When a character consumes any NPP — even similar pills from the same batch — consult the NPP Program Effects Table to determine initial reactions to the pill, after determining if the pill's effects "stick." Consumers can add Luck to the roll to avoid disastrous effects.



## NPP PROGRAM EFFECTS TABLE

Roll d6	Effectiveness
1	<b>Expired:</b> The pill's components have gone inert. This may stem from any number of reasons (age of pill, environmental conditions, bad molecular chemistry, etc.).
2	<b>Toxic:</b> The pill's components create a mild toxin in the consumer's system. The pill has no in-game effect, except for an allergic rash covering the consumer's entire exterior (skin, shell, etc.) for 24 hours.
3	<b>Addictive:</b> The pill works normally, but the consumer NEEDS more pills. If the consumer does not consume at least 1 pill every 24 hours, they must make a DC 15 Will save. If successful, the consumer can ignore the cravings. If failed, the consumer seeks out other pills, begs their friends for some, or approaches strangers looking for more. This result may be outside the normal comfort level for some gamers, and the GM should feel free to substitute another result.
4–6	<b>Normal Effects:</b> The NPP works normally.
7+	<b>Superior Reaction:</b> The NPP is much more effective for this consumer. When performing a program check, the player can roll twice, and take the preferred roll.

## DO NOT COMBINE WITH OTHER PILLS

**Admixing NPPs:** Due to the differing molecular chemistry involved in fabrication (even 2 or more pills with the same general effects), if an ingester consumes 2 or more NPPs at the same time, or consumes a new NPP while a previous NPP is still functioning in the consumer's system (i.e. they can still access the neural program), a potential admixture occurs. If this situation arises, consult the NPP Admixture Table to determine the result. A player may burn Luck to affect the die roll when determining results.

## REPRODUCING RESULTS

**Reproducing Found NPPs:** Attempting to replicate the effects of neural programmatic pills frequently has disastrous results. To recreate new NPPs based upon a sample pill will require a shaman, technomancer, or other qualified individual to have access to functional laboratory equipment and appropriate raw materials (GM's discretion). Using the proper equipment and materials, the adventurous would-be scientist takes one NPP of ancient manufacture, disassembles it (destroying it in the process), and attempts to create 1d3 additional versions of that same NPP. The base chance of success in this endeavor is 10% per level of the shaman or technomancer. Further pills cannot be created from an NPP that was created via this process.

**NOTE:** The creator will not know if they have succeeded or failed in their attempt to recreate additional NPPs. The only way to know for sure is by clinical trials (i.e. testing the pill upon a live subject).

## NPP ADMIXTURE ATTEMPTS

### Roll d100 Admixture Result

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| 1     | <b>Atomic Kaboom!</b> The individual components readily mix creating a disastrous effect. The components either set off a small-scale fission reaction resulting in an explosion, or create a tiny but powerful implosion forming a temporary black hole (50% chance for each occurrence). Whatever the result, the effects are the same: the consumer must make a successful DC 20 Fort save to avoid the results. Failure indicates instant death with no chance of revival, while a success inflicts 10d12 points of damage to the victim as parts of them are alternatively blown up or sucked into the void. Anyone within 20' of the pill consumer must also make a DC 18 Fort save. Failure indicates suffering 5d8 points of damage, with success lowering the damage to 3d8. Characters between 20' and 30' away can make a DC 15 Fort save. Failure results in 3d6 points of damage, with success negating all damage.    |
| 2-10  | <b>Toxic:</b> The components mix into a lethal poison, instantly killing the consumer (no saving throw). The poison is gaseous and erupts from the consumer's orifices, creating a toxic cloud 15' in diameter. Anyone within the toxic cloud must make a DC 15 Fort save. Failure inflicts 6d10 points of damage, with a successful save halving the damage.   |
| 11-20 | <b>Mutagenic:</b> The admixture creates a virulent mutagenic sludge inside the consumer. The consumer inherits one of the following properties, determined by a d5 roll: (1) Rubber-gel limbs: the consumer cannot move their limbs on their own, they are functionally quadriplegic; (2) Transparent flesh: the consumer appears as nothing more than a skeleton with floating organs. Depending on the situation (GM's discretion) this adds a +2d or -2d to NPC reactions; (3) Giant size: the consumer's size triples, but they do not gain the appropriate strength to support themselves. They suffer a -2d to attack and damage rolls and movement is halved; (4) Invisibility: the consumer is permanently invisible even to themselves; (5) Can hear the music of the spheres: the consumer knows the answer to 1 question per day, and this knowledge can be accessed at any time desired. The effects last for 1d7 days. |
| 21-35 | <b>Mildly Toxic:</b> The consumer must make a DC 15 Fort save or suffer 2d10 points of damage. A successful save halves damage.   |
| 36-55 | <b>Weak Mix:</b> The effects of both pills work, although their program effects last for half as long, and the program checks are made at a -4 penalty.   |
| 56-75 | <b>Weakened Compatibility:</b> Both pills function normally, but at one-half duration. If the program's duration is instantaneous, there is no change.  |
| 76-90 | <b>Compatible:</b> Both pills work, and their durations are extended by 50%. If the program's duration is instantaneous, that neural program instead gains a +4 to the program check.   |
| 91-99 | <b>Good Mix:</b> One pill's effects are doubled, while the other pill's effects are eliminated. Roll randomly to determine which pill's effects are doubled.  |
| 100+  | <b>Eureka!</b> This admixture is blessed by the universal order. Only one pill's effect functions, but the effect lasts for 24 hours. The GM may need to determine the effects of some programs, and some substantial side effects may be accompany unintended results as well.   |



**Failed Reproduction:** If a shaman or technomancer attempting to duplicate an NPP fails to successfully complete the concoction, roll on the following table to determine the actual results. Luck can be used to modify the result.

## NPP REPRODUCTION ATTEMPTS

Roll d10	Result
1	Duplication fails, creating a toxic mixture instead. The consumer must make a DC 20 Fort save or die. If the save is successful, consumer takes 3d8 damage instead, and loses 1 point of Stamina permanently.
2	Duplication fails, causing psychic trauma resulting in a split personality. Consumer gains the Dual Brain mutation, rolled at +12. Each brain considers the other a rival and tries to become the Primary Intellect while attempting to hinder and ultimately destroy its rival. The PC now requires a DC 18 Will save to behave normally, rolled every 4 hours. The Dual Brain mutation lasts for 1d7 days. When the consumer is unconscious, no roll is required.
3	Duplication fails, causing a “Jekyll and Hyde” transformation instead. At sunset each day, the consumer is subjected to 1d3 physical mutations beyond their control. Only roll the random new mutations once.
4	Duplication fails, and a mutagenic effect is created instead. Roll on the Defects table. This defect lasts 1d7 days.
5	Duplication fails, and the consumer is cursed. Consumer suffers a 1d6 point Luck penalty and all die rolls made at -1d for 1d3 days.
6	Duplication fails, DC 20 Fort save or incapacitated for 1 day (cannot take any actions).
7	Duplication is successful, 50% chance of normal effect and duration, 50% chance of one-half effect and duration.
8	Duplication is successful, normal effects with a -15 modifier on the program check.
9	Duplication is successful, normal effects with a -10 modifier on the program check.
10+	Duplication fails, no other ill effects.

## YOUR RESULTS MAY VARY

While the well-read GM may create many neural programmatic pills for their game using any program or spell from their favorite source book or system, we present the following two brand-new neural programs especially for healers, just to get you started.

### First Aid Neural Programmatic Pill

The First Aid NPP is a large, chalky white pill with an engraved cross or plus sign on one side. The opposite side has several illegible ancient runes inset on it. The pill can be chewed or swallowed whole, and its effects activate on the round following consumption.

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# FIRST AID

<b>Level:</b> 1	<b>Range:</b> 10', varies	<b>Duration:</b> instantaneous
	<b>Activation time:</b> 1 round	<b>Save:</b> none

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General	The consumer is able to heal many medical conditions in a target patient, including diseases and poisons.
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Manifestation	Roll 1d4: (1) The consumer's hands glow brightly with red cross symbols; (2) Strobing red and white lights exude from the consumer accompanied by a loud wailing sound; (3) Magnetic-resonance waves are emitted from the consumer's outstretched hands; (4) The consumer's eyes glow brightly, and a bright flash of light occurs at the same time as they say, "CLEAR!"
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1	Lost, failure, and reverse effects happen to the consumer!
2-11	Lost. Failure.
12-13	The consumer is able to reduce the potency of any diseases or detrimental conditions for one patient. One permanent condition (blindness, deafness, etc.) will be removed over the course of 1 hour, or any diseases or poisons affecting the patient allow a new saving throw at +4.
14-17	The consumer is able to immediately remove any single disease, poison, or detrimental health condition from one patient. The patient gains a +4 bonus to all saving throws for 24 hours.
18-19	The consumer heals 1HD of damage and immediately removes all diseases, poisons, and detrimental conditions from a patient.
20-23	The consumer heals 1HD of damage and immediately removes all diseases, poisons, or detrimental conditions from all injured patients within a 20' radius. Patients in the radius are inoculated from further diseases or poisons for 24 hours.
24-27	The consumer heals 2HD of damage and immediately removes all diseases, poisons, or detrimental conditions from all injured patients in a 30' radius. Patients in the radius are inoculated from further diseases or poisons for 24 hours.
28-29	The consumer heals 2HD of damage and immediately removes any diseases, poisons, or detrimental conditions from all injured patients in a 50' radius. Patients in the radius are inoculated from further diseases or poisons for 24 hours. Furthermore, all individuals in a 20' radius gain a +1 bonus on all saving throws for 1 hour.
30-31	The consumer heals 3HD of damage and immediately removes any diseases, poisons, or detrimental conditions from all injured patients in a 50' radius. Patients in the radius are inoculated

from further diseases or poisons for 24 hours. Furthermore, all individuals in a 20' radius gain a +4 bonus on all saving throws for 24 hours.

32+

The consumer heals all damage to all injured patients in a 20' radius, including removing any diseases, poisons, or detrimental conditions. Patients in the radius are inoculated from further diseases or poisons for 24 hours. If used on a single individual at 0 hit points, that target is completely restored to normal (full hit points and no detrimental conditions).

### **Cellular Regeneration Neural Programmatic Pill**

The Cellular Regeneration NPP is a medium-sized capsule that contains a suspended Cognitive Nucleic Acid coded with a powerful neural program. The outside of the capsule is imprinted with a holy symbol of two snakes intertwined around a staff. The capsule must be swallowed whole, and its effects activate on the round following consumption.





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# CELLULAR REGENERATION

<b>Level:</b> 3	<b>Range:</b> touch, varies	<b>Duration:</b> instantaneous
	<b>Activation time:</b> 1 round	<b>Save:</b> none

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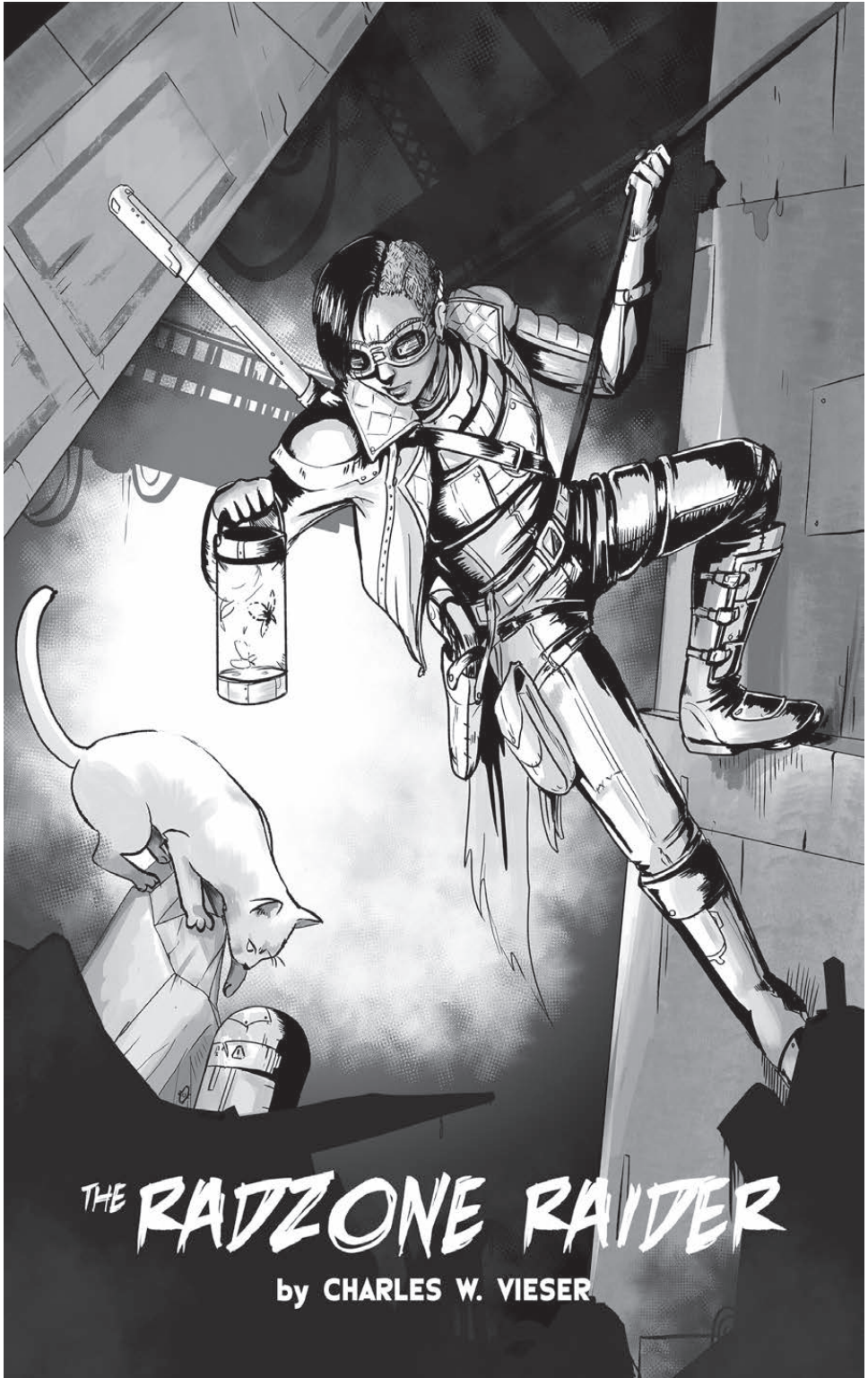
General	The consumer is able to cause a target patient's cells to reorganize themselves, healing the patient and possibly resequencing their genome and regenerating their cellular structure.
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Manifestation	Roll 1d4: (1) Patient floats into the air, surrounded by a blue-white brilliant nimbus of light; (2) Concentric rings of white electrical energy encircle the patient, re-knitting any damaged tissues; (3) A brief ray of sunshine hits the patient in the chest, expunging any ailments; (4) The caster rises into the air, arms outstretched, glowing with a bright internal light.
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1	Lost, failure, and reverse effects happen to the consumer!
2-11	Lost. Failure.
12-15	Failure, but the program is not lost.
16-17	All poisoned or diseased patients in a 30' radius are cured instantly.
18-21	All wounded, poisoned or diseased patients in a 30' radius are cured instantly.
22-25	All poisoned or diseased patients in a 30' radius are cured instantly. Additionally, all patients are healed 1HD.
26-29	Any deceased patient is instantly revived with 1 hp. The patient must be newly deceased (within 1 hour) and the body must be 90% intact for the revivification to work.
30-33	Any deceased patient is instantly revived with 1 hp. The patient must have died within the last 24 hours and the body be 50% intact for the revivification to work.
34-35	Any single patient within 30' has their DNA recombined. The shaman can determine what form the patient takes. PCs can only be recombined into another PC race. NPCs can be recombined into any other similar form of the same genotype.
36+	One patient per shaman level, within 30', has their DNA recombined. The shaman can determine what form the patient takes. PCs can only be recombined into another PC race. NPCs can be recombined into any other life form (subject to GM approval).



# THE RADZONE RAIDER

by CHARLES W. VIESER

# THE RADZONE RAIDER

## A NEW CHARACTER CLASS FOR THE RADIOACTIVE WASTELANDS

**O**ften dismissed as myth, radzone raiders are endlessly travelling wanderers, tracking wherever the radioactive winds of fate take them. Adept with the technologies of the Ancients, and always accompanied by their trusted animal companion, radzone raiders are indefatigable, any weakness of body or spirit having long been burned away by scorching sun and corrosive rains. These humans exist as a force for change outside the purview of the computerized gods of Omega-Terra, relentlessly attentive to the task at hand, never wavering.

## RADZONE RAIDER ABILITIES

These hardiest of pure strain humans often find themselves at odds with their more delicate fellow tribespeople. How are they to know that the fruit that they just ate safely is poisonous to others? If pushed too far into alienation by their clan, they may set off on their own, becoming a radzone raider. Setting off alone, or with a small group of eventually expendable companions, the open wastelands are their homes, and the shattered sky their roof.

**Hit Points:** Radzone Raiders gain 1d10 hit points at each level.

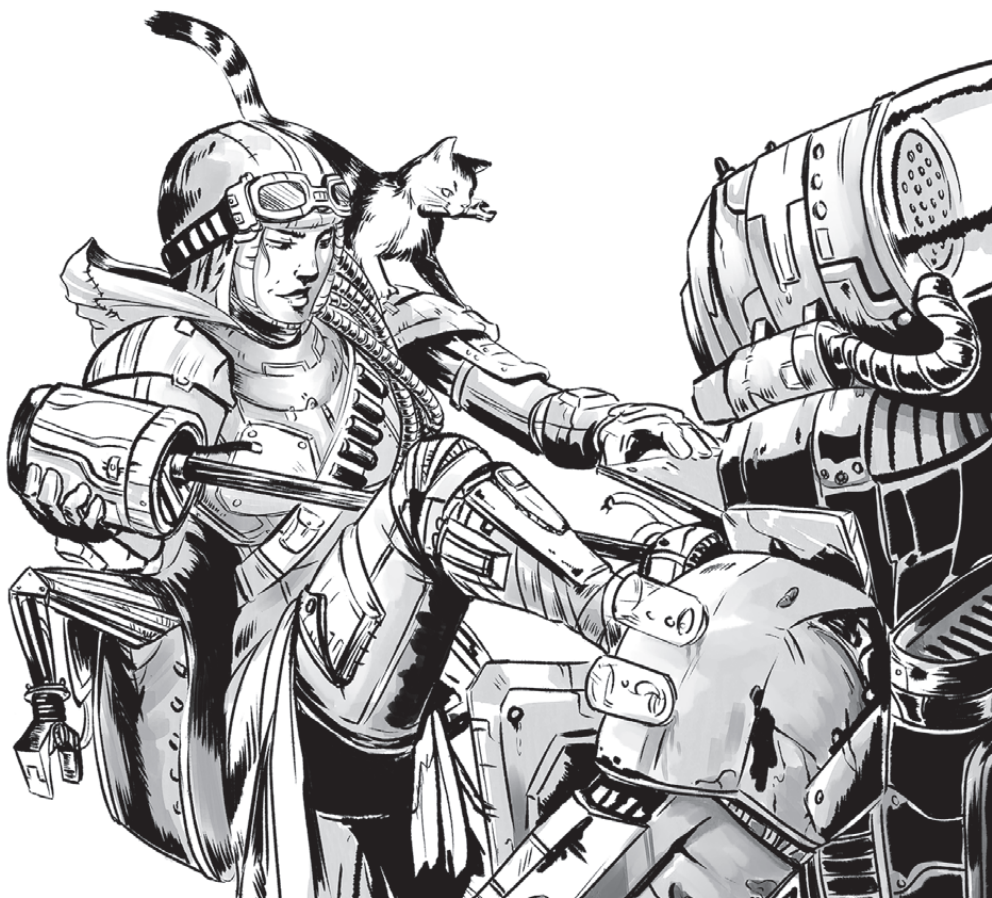
**Ancient Relics:** Radzone raiders are obsessive tinkerers and have a knack for taking things apart to see what makes them go tick-tick-boom. Because of this, they have a deeper understanding of the workings of ancient relics of the long ago, and gain a considerable bonus for understanding them.

**Improvised Weapons and Armor:** Radzone raiders are adept at cobbling together piecemeal weapons and armor from whatever gubbins are on hand. If a radzone raider has access to scrap technology and a multitool or equivalent device, they can spend 6 hours creating a melee or ranged weapon that has a base damage of 1d4 + their attack bonus (which will then stack with their normal attack modifier when the weapon is used by them), or spend 12 hours fashioning a custom set of piecemeal armor that will add a base AC bonus equal to their attack bonus.

**Charmed Life:** Untainted humans tend to live charmed lives, and radzone raiders regain spent Luck at the rate of 2 points per day.

**Animal Companion:** Radzone Raiders travel with a telepathic animal companion who is generally amenable to the wishes of the human, although it is not a slave nor technically a pet. It has its own needs and desires as well. Unless intentionally mistreated, the animal will always remain with its human (or nearby). The telepathic communication of the companion is conversational, in the character's primary language, and has a range equal to the companion's HD x 10'. At 3HD, the animal can begin to telepathically "read" other beings' presence in an area at the same range as well. Should a companion be killed or driven off by mistreatment, the radzone raider may not befriend a new animal until the next level up, and even then it is likely to be a lengthy quest to locate an unattached telepathic animal.



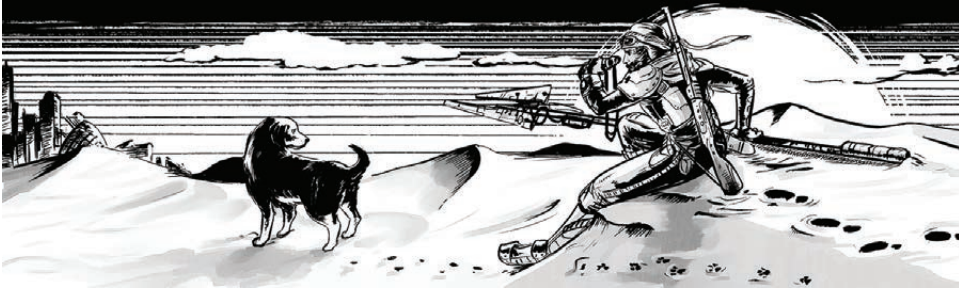


**Interfacing with A.I.s:** Humans in the wastes still greatly resemble their forbearers, so much so that most computers are more likely to mistake them for one of the Ancients (gaining a +3 bonus to checks to interface with an A.I.). Military computers are not so easily fooled, and the radzone raider gains only a +2 bonus when attempting to communicate with them.

**Wasteland Tracking:** Relentless in their pursuit of their quarry, radzone raiders can follow trails and signs left behind that are up to a number of days old equal to their class level. Their tracking check is  $1d20 + \text{INT Bonus} + \text{Level}$ . Success allows the radzone raider to follow their target for up to a day, or until the terrain becomes more difficult (requiring a new roll). If the tracker loses the trail, they may rediscover it with a successful Luck check after 2 hours of searching. Radzone raiders who travel with a dog may roll both their tracking as well as their companion's (so long as the dog is willing).

The tracking DCs are as follows: mud/snow DC 5, sand/grasslands DC 10, forest/jungle DC 15, dunes/rocky DC 20, stream/ice/hard-pack DC 25.

**Alignment:** While perhaps best defined as Chaotic-Introvert, radzone raiders may be of any alignment.



### RADZONE RAIDER ABILITIES BY LEVEL

Level	Attack/Init	Crit Die/Table	Action Dice	REF	FORT	WILL	Artifact Check	Companion HD
1	+0	1d8/III	d20	+0	+3	+0	+3	1
2	+1	1d8/III	d20	+0	+4	+1	+4	1
3	+2	1d10/III	d20	+1	+5	+1	+5	2
4	+2	1d10/IV	d20	+1	+6	+2	+6	2
5	+3	1d12/IV	d20+d14	+1	+7	+2	+7	2
6	+4	1d14/IV	d20+d16	+2	+8	+3	+8	3
7	+5	1d14/V	2d20	+2	+9	+3	+9	3
8	+5	1d16/V	2d20	+3	+10	+4	+10	4
9	+6	1d20/V	2d20	+3	+11	+4	+11	4
10	+7	2d12/V	2d20	+4	+12	+5	+12	5

### RADZONE RAIDER TITLES BY LEVEL

Level	Title
1	Rad Rat
2	Scav
3	Tinker
4	Drifter
5	Itinerant
6	Rumor

### RADZONE RAIDER TELEPATHIC ANIMAL COMPANIONS

d30	Animal	Base HD	Attack	Special
1-10	Rat	1hp	Bite +0 melee (1+HD)	Climb +10, eats anything organic
11-14	Bird	1d2	Peck +0 melee (1d3+HD)	Fly 40'
15-18	Cat	1d5	Claw +1 melee (1d3+HD)	Stealth +10, low light vision 60'
19-22	Dog	1d6	Bite +2 melee (1d5+HD)	Track +10, low light vision 60'
23-25	Snake	1d4	Bite +1 melee (1hp+poison)	Fort vs. DC 5+HD or die
26-28	Horse	1d8	Kick +2 melee (HDd8)	May be ridden at MV 60'
29-30	Swarm	1d3	Sting (1d3+HD) 10' radius	Fly 30'. If killed, reforms 24 hours later

# DOCTOR TEMPUSAUR

**A PATRON DEITY FOR ALL CLASSES**

**by Jim Wampler**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Endless is he, that wandering, lonely wizard of space and time. An outcast from his own race of elder beings, Doctor Tempusaur wanders the length and breadth of all creation in his never-ending quest to preserve the primary timeline. He collects names and sobriquets as though they were wildflowers. He is variously known as The Space Lizard, The Wizard-Lizard, Iota-Tau, and the Temporal Tempest.

Although often assigned the attributes of a cosmic god, Doctor Tempusaur does seem to have a corporeal existence. He appears as an 7' tall sentient reptile, closely resembling a bipedal Gila Monster. He is usually paradoxically dressed in both a spacesuit with an open helmet and the ornate robes of a wizard. His space-suit is festooned with myriad devices and implements, many of which seem to be simultaneously technological and arcane.

Doctor Tempusaur's eternal mission is one of preserving a hypothetical "primary" timeline, though to mere mortals the ultimate ends of this goal are often beyond their mundane perceptions. While he is known to often be of mercurial temperament, his intentions generally are seen to align with that which creates the most good for the most mortal beings.

*(Continued on page 32)*







If you have met him in his travels throughout time and space, and you have any thirst for adventure whatsoever, it's likely that you were drafted into his service. The innumerable assistants and allies he has left behind always carry a psychic impression of his spirit within them for the rest of their days. They are members all of the Warriors of Time.

Doctor Tempusaur is a Patron Deity for any class in your post-apocalyptic, fantasy, or genre-mash game. While serving his cause does come with certain conditions and rules, he does not distinguish between warrior or wizard, or between human, mutant, or A.I.

## PATRON REQUIREMENTS

To become a disciple of Doctor Tempusaur, a character must meet the following requirements:

- an Intelligence score of 12 or higher.
- a Personality score of 9 or higher.
- have a personal commitment to the goals of Doctor Tempusaur.
- have a personal commitment to never use ranged weapons.
- have or find a sign of Doctor Tempusaur's journeys through Time and Space.

The last requirement on the list can be almost anything — from a historical holo-disk of Doctor Tempusaur's intervention to a physical item carried by him, such as an especially advanced multitool or tractor field-wand. The item must be a physical object with a built-in A.I. that contains the *A.I. Deity Link* neural program.

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## A.I. DEITY LINK (DOCTOR TEMPUSAUR)

Level: 1

Range: none

Duration: permanent

Activation time: 24 hours

Save: none

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General

The potential initiate to the Warriors of Time must commune in solitude and privacy with an object or device carrying Doctor Tempusaur's psychic imprint for 24 hours, seeking a telepathic connection to him across space and time.

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- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 1     | Failure and temporal drift!  |
| 2-11  | Failure. A momentary telepathic link was immediately severed by temporal tidal forces, and 7 days must pass before the timelines synchronize again and another attempt may be made.  |
| 12-13 | The caster establishes a momentary telepathic link with Doctor Tempusaur, but is granted only a single use of the <i>Timeless Negotiation</i> program with which to prove themselves worthy of further program use. Should they fail in that endeavor, that program will not reappear in their memory and they must attempt a new casting of the <i>A.I. Deity Link (Doctor Tempusaur)</i> neural program after 7 days have elapsed. |
| 14-17 | The caster establishes a subconscious telepathic link with Doctor Tempusaur and is granted the use of the <i>Timeless Negotiation</i> program but once per day.  |
| 18-19 | The caster establishes a stronger subconscious telepathic link with Doctor Tempusaur and is granted the use of the <i>Timeless Negotiation</i> program but once per day with a +1 bonus added to the program check.  |
| 20-23 | The caster establishes a robust subconscious telepathic link with Doctor Tempusaur and is granted the use of the <i>Timeless Negotiation</i> program. Additionally, at class level 3 the caster gains the use of the <i>Hidden Weakness</i> program once per day. Both programs gain a +1 bonus to the program check.  |
| 24-27 | The caster establishes a mighty subconscious telepathic link with Doctor Tempusaur and is granted the use of the <i>Timeless Negotiation</i> program. Additionally, at class level 3 the caster gains the use of the <i>Hidden Weakness</i> program, and at class level 5 the caster gains the <i>Reverse The Polarity</i> program. All programs gain a +1 bonus to the program check.   |
| 28-29 | The caster establishes an enduring subconscious telepathic link with Doctor Tempusaur and is granted the use of the <i>Timeless Negotiation</i> program. Additionally, at class level 3 the caster gains the use of the <i>Hidden Weakness</i> program, at class level 5 the caster  |



gains the *Reverse The Polarity* program, and at class level 7 the caster gains the *Regeneration* program. All programs gain a +1 bonus to the program check.

30–31 The caster establishes an everlasting subconscious telepathic link with Doctor Tempusaur and is granted the use of the *Timeless Negotiation* program. Additionally, at class level 3 the caster gains the use of the *Hidden Weakness* program, at class level 5 the caster gains the *Reverse The Polarity* program, at class level 7 the caster gains the *Regeneration* program, and at class level 9 they gain the *Time Can Be Rewritten* program. All programs gain a +1 bonus to the program check.

32+ The caster establishes a timeless subconscious telepathic link with Doctor Tempusaur and is granted the use of the *Timeless Negotiation* program. Additionally, at class level 3 the caster gains the use of the *Hidden Weakness* program, at class level 5 the caster gains the *Reverse The Polarity* program, at class level 7 the caster gains the *Regeneration* program, and at class level 9 they gain the *Time Can Be Rewritten* program. All programs gain a +2 bonus to the program check.

## LIFEBURN: DOCTOR TEMPUSAUR

Doctor Tempusaur is known to favor those among his followers who give of themselves above and beyond the call of duty. Whenever a follower of Doctor Tempusaur casts a program and willingly contributes their own life force to aid in the casting (deducting points of Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina in the process), they may add these points to the program check on a one-for-one basis.

## NEURAL PROGRAMS: DOCTOR TEMPUSAUR

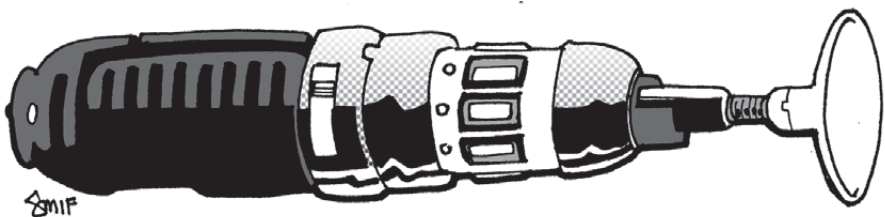
Level 1: *Timeless Negotiation*

Level 2: *Hidden Weakness*

Level 3: *Reverse the Polarity*

Level 4: *Regeneration*

Level 5: *Time Can Be Rewritten*



# NEURAL PROGRAM TEMPORAL DRIFT

The ultra-complex neural programs granted by Doctor Tempusaur enter the caster's memory as perceived ripples in the space-time continuum. Each formulaic equation is noted in circular glyphs that must be recited in his species' native language of High Lacertian. This can be very difficult for those who do not possess the larynx, tongue, and brain of a 7' tall hyper-intelligent lizardoid. When the formulae are misspoken badly enough, disastrous temporal effects can occur.

When required, use the table below to determine how badly the miscast neural program impacts the timeline of the caster.

## NEURAL PROGRAM TEMPORAL DRIFT

### d20    Temporal Drift Effect

- 1    **Time Travel Event!** The caster's physical form begins to strobe in and out of view, gradually fading completely as they are transported forward or backwards in time 1d10 years (50% chance of either direction). They will reappear on the same physical spot in whatever time direction they journey.
- 2-11    **Temporal Drift!** The caster's misspoken formula causes them to immediately shift forward or backward in time 1d6 hours (50% chance of either direction). If the temporal shift is to the past, they appear in the same physical spot, but cannot risk interfering in the events participated in by their past self. Any direct interference in the life events of their past self will break the Laws of Time and cause both temporal versions of themselves to vanish into a paradox vortex.
- 12-13    **Time Lock!** The caster's misspoken formula creates a temporary time lock, suspending them in time for 1d6 rounds. Although the caster cannot act or perceive events while they are time-locked, neither can they be harmed or in any way affected by normal events which transpire around them.
- 14-17    **Time Wipe!** The caster's mind accidentally slips into a past timeline before they were patroned to Doctor Tempusaurus, temporarily causing them to forget meeting him and any neural programs he granted them. This temporal amnesia lasts for 1d6 hours.
- 18-19    **Time Switch!** The caster's mind accidentally slips into a future timeline while casting, causing them to cast another randomly determined neural program currently available to them instead. The new neural program executes at the 20-23 result.
- 20+    **Time Crash!** The caster's misspoken formula has caused a singular rip in the time-space continuum such that a past version of themselves appears from 1d6 days ago. Because of the unique nature of a time crash, their past self is temporarily free from the restrictions of the Laws of Time, and may interfere with present events as they choose. The past self will only remain in the present for 1d6 rounds before being returned to their native time with no memory of what has transpired.

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# TIMELESS NEGOTIATION

<b>Level:</b> 1	<b>Range:</b> hearing distance <b>Activation time:</b> free action	<b>Duration:</b> 1 round/CL <b>Save:</b> Will save vs effects
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General	The caster raises their voice and gesticulates dramatically, while everyone within communication range stops whatever they were doing and pays complete attention to the caster's oration.
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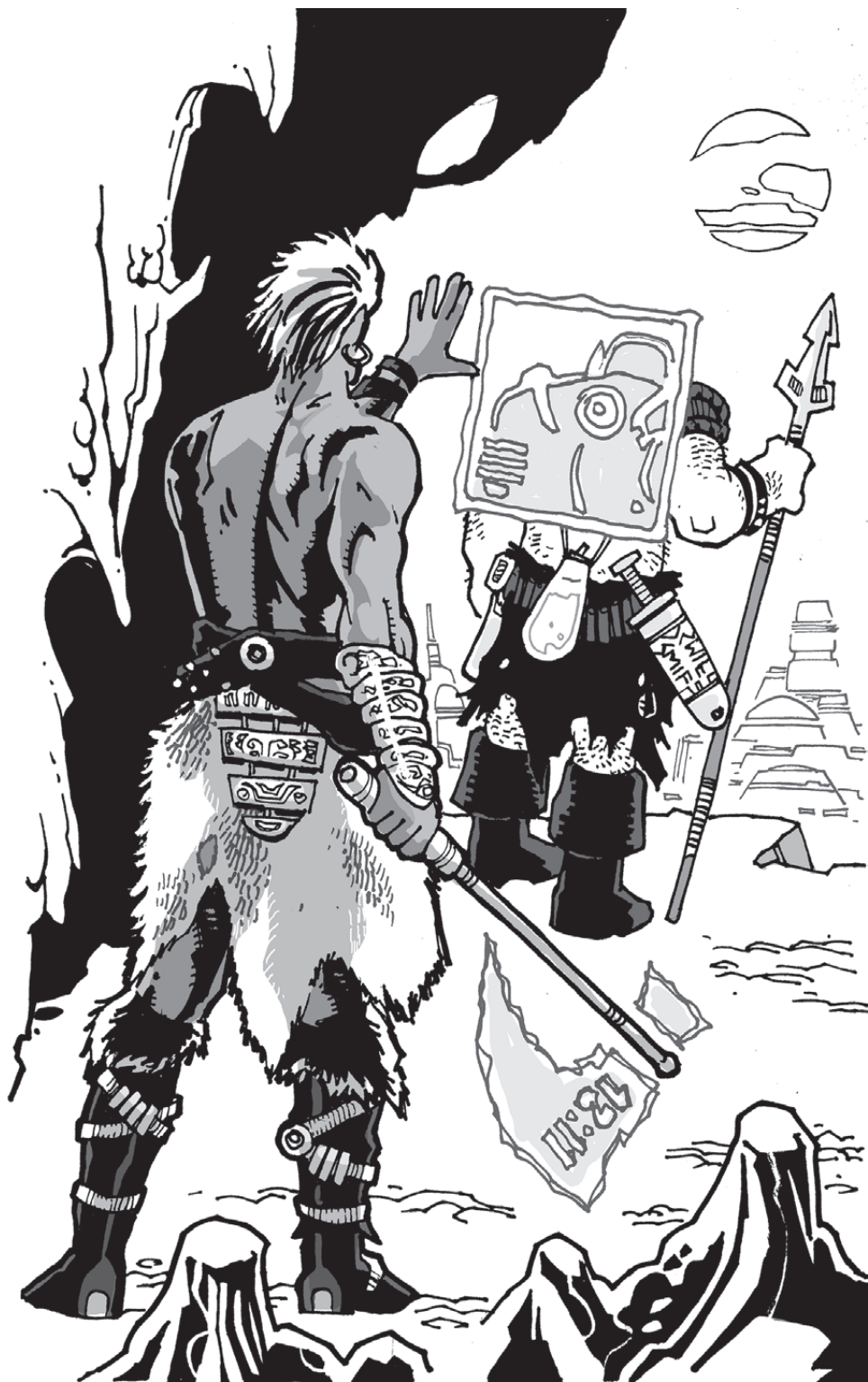
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1	Failure. Program lost for the day and temporal drift!
2-11	Failure. Program lost for the day.
12-13	The caster is able to cause a single target to pause their actions long enough to listen to anything the caster has to say. If the target is naturally prone to negotiation, they become willing to do so now.
14-17	The caster is able to influence a single target with the suggestion of a slight alteration in their planned actions. The target of this neural program will not change sides, allegiances, or goals, but may now be open to minor modifications to methods used to achieve those same goals. If the GM is sufficiently impressed by the player's role-played speech, they may elect to bump this outcome to the next level of effect.
18-19	The caster is able to influence 1d6 targets with the suggestion of a minor change in their plans. The targets of this neural program will not change sides, allegiances, or goals, but may now be open to some changes in how they achieve those same goals. If the GM is sufficiently impressed by the player's role-played speech, they may elect to bump this outcome to the next level of effect.
20-23	The caster is able to influence up to 1d20 targets to cease all hostilities or disagreements and consider a mediated compromise to any conflict. Possible compromises include trading goods in a bargain instead, an exchange of prisoners, or simply choosing to simultaneously walk away from a conflict.
24-29	The caster is able to temporarily cause a single target to change sides and become a staunch ally. This new ally will defend the caster and take up the their cause, but will not otherwise act drastically outside of their own personal allegiances and ethos.
30-31	The caster's speech is able to reach down into the heart and soul of a single target and cause a fundamental emotional and psychological rearrangement of the caster's choosing. Targets are entitled to make a new saving throw versus this effect once per week until they eventually succeed, but depending upon original allegiances or goals may elect not to do so (GM's discretion, however player characters are always entitled to the saving throw).



The caster is able to target all within earshot, and persuade them to temporarily abandon all plans while the caster speaks. Unless the targets succeed in their saving throws against this program, their decision to abandon their short-term plans becomes a permanent and life-changing one. Targets are entitled to make a new saving throw versus this effect once per week until they eventually succeed, but depending upon original allegiances or goals may elect not to do so (GM's discretion, however player characters are always entitled to the saving throw).





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# HIDDEN WEAKNESS

**Level:** 2

**Range:** 20' / CL

**Duration:** 1d6 rounds

**Activation time:** 1 action

**Save:** Reflex save vs effects

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General

The caster's perceptions sharpen and a hidden weakness in their foe is suddenly revealed to them and them alone. This program requires the use of a multitool or sonic spanner to serve as a conduit for its power.

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- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 1     | Failure. Program lost for the day and temporal drift!  |
| 2-11  | Failure. Program lost for the day.   |
| 12-13 | Failure, but the neural program is not lost for the day.   |
| 14-15 | The caster is able to determine a single target's weak spot, lowering their subsequent armor class and saving throws versus the caster by -4.  |
| 16-19 | The caster is able to determine up to 3 targets' weak spots, lowering their subsequent armor class and saving throws versus the caster by -4.  |
| 20-23 | The caster is able to determine a single targets' weak spots, lowering their subsequent armor class and saving throws versus the caster by -6.   |
| 24-27 | The caster is able to determine up to 3 targets' weak spots, lowering their subsequent armor class and saving throws versus the caster by -6.  |
| 28-31 | The caster now understands where and how to strike at a foe for maximum impact, and may convey this information to allies verbally, if possible. All attacks and actions directed at this enemy by the caster or informed allies now happen at +8. Enemy saving throws against such actions correspondingly happen at a -8 penalty.  |
| 32-33 | The caster now sees the hidden weakness of any enemy present, and all attacks or actions against such adversaries gains a +10 bonus. Additionally, these enemies will make all saving throws versus any actions or attacks made by the caster at a -10 penalty.  |
| 34+   | The caster is able to see the secret weakness of all adversaries present. Any hidden vulnerabilities or arcane susceptibilities possessed by their enemy is now known to them, and may be verbally shared with allies if possible. Any attacks made by the caster while this program's runtime is in effect become automatic successes with at least the minimal results, though higher results may of course be rolled for program checks and weapon damage. Allies gain +10 to all attacks versus the targets of this program. |

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# REVERSE THE POLARITY

**Level:** 3

**Range:** 120'

**Duration:** 10 rounds or special

**Activation time:** 1 action

**Save:** none or special

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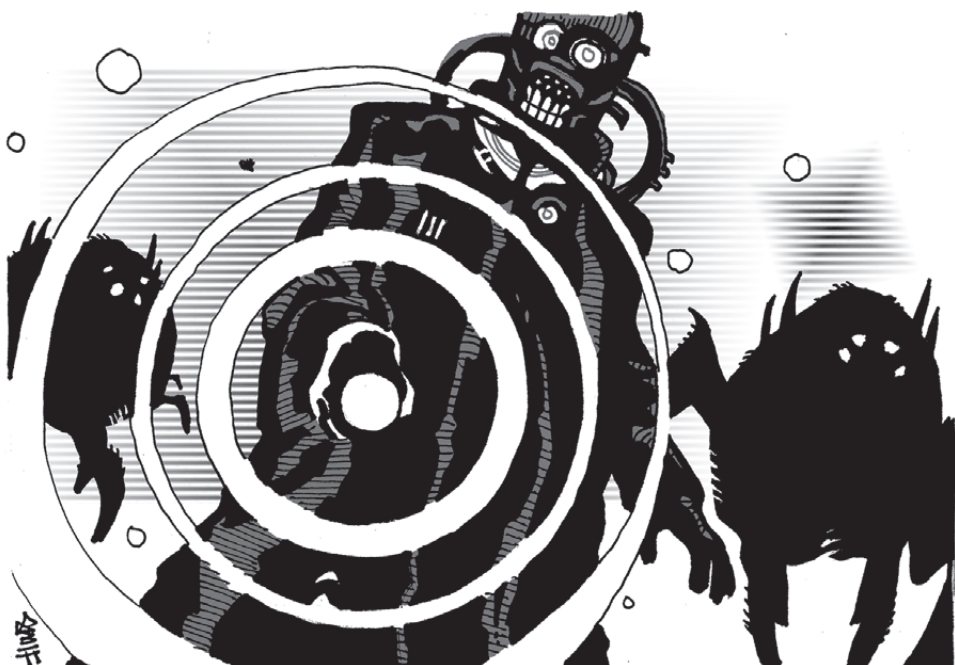
General

The caster causes the function of any one handheld artifact to inverse its basic functionality: particle beam weapons discharge on the wielder instead of the target, medical technology harms instead of heals, force fields drop, locks unlock, etc. This program requires the use of a multitool or sonic spanner to serve as a conduit for its power. If the target is handheld, the possessor of the target is entitled to a Reflex save versus the effects. If the target is itself intelligent, it is entitled to a Will save versus the effects.

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- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 1     | Failure. Program lost for the day and temporal drift!  |
| 2-11  | Failure. Program lost for the day.   |
| 12-15 | Failure, but the neural program is not lost for the day.   |
| 16-17 | The caster is able to cause the kinetic forces employed by a single mundane or purely mechanical weapon, tool, or object to momentarily reverse. A thrown rock boomerangs back against its hurler, a sword strike hits its wielder instead, a locked door opens or an open door locks, etc.  |
| 18-21 | The caster is able to cause the technological or arcane energies of any single weapon, wand, or device to reverse its focus so that it discharges upon its own wielder instead when next used.   |
| 22-25 | The caster is able to cause any mundane or purely mechanical vehicle up to the size of a galley ship to temporarily reverse its course and direction, regardless of other outside factors. The reversed movement in and of itself will not cause any damage to the vehicle, but some damage may occur based on other external circumstances and obstacles.   |
| 26-29 | The caster is able to cause any technological or arcane means of transport up to the size of a grav-car or space shuttle to temporarily reverse course and direction. In addition to vehicles, any portals or teleportation attempts are similarly reversed, sending travellers back to their points of origin. These reversed movements in and of themselves will not cause any damage to the vehicle or means of transport, but some damage may occur based on other external circumstances and obstacles. |
| 30-33 | The caster is able to temporarily reverse the flow of time, causing a temporal stillpoint. This temporal stillpoint freezes all actions and events in time for the duration of the program runtime, but sentient creatures and beings are mentally awake and aware of  |





what has happened. While no physical actions are possible during the temporal stillpoint, mental communication via telepathy or other similar means is possible. Other purely mental mutations or magic may be invoked during the stillpoint, but the effects will not happen until the program duration expires.

34-35

The caster creates chaos! By reversing the local morphic field, the caster causes all living creatures, undead, demons, and A.I.s within range to lose all memories connected to self-identity. This creates chaos as any opposing factions can no longer remember who they are or which side of any contention or combat they represent. The caster is unaffected, and intelligent beings are entitled to a Will save versus the program check. Singular and exceptional beings such as a Deity A.I., a godling, or a demon prince may be immune to the effects of this program (GM's discretion).

36+

The caster invokes Armageddon! By reversing the polarity of the neutron flow, the caster is able to cause any single device, no matter how large or complex, to fail utterly and to begin a countdown to self-destruction. If possible, the technological device or magical artifact will begin to announce its own countdown to oblivion, which will take place in 1d30 minutes. The damage inflicted by the self-destruction of the device and range of that damage is highly variable dependent upon the target device, but a minimum of 10d6 at a 100' range is recommended. Singular and exceptional items such as a One Ring or a Deity A.I. may be immune to the effects of this program (GM's discretion).

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# REGENERATION

**Level:** 4

**Range:** touch

**Duration:** permanent

**Activation time:** 1 free action

**Save:** none

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General

The caster causes themselves or another follower of Doctor Tempusaur to defy death by regenerating their dying bodies into a completely new form. The body regenerated must be freshly dead (30 minutes or less) and consist of at least a portion of intact tissue (a hand or a head). The new form is determined randomly except for Intelligence and Personality scores, which remain the same. The new randomly regenerated body is not restricted by gender or genotype. In order to run this neural program, the caster must power it by sacrificing 50% of their current hit point total.

**NOTE:** The recipient of this program's effects must have accepted Doctor Tempusaur as their patron, although a conversion to this patron is possible after death because such appeals are timeless in nature. As a free action, the caster may use this program upon themselves while at death's door.

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- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 1     | Failure. Program lost for the day and temporal drift!  |
| 2-11  | Failure. Program lost for the day.   |
| 12-17 | Failure, but the neural program is not lost for the day.   |
| 18-19 | The caster gives a single intelligent creature's dead form enough regenerative energy to heal all wounds and bring them back to life, although they will suffer a loss of 1d3 stamina points from the ordeal. The subject does not fully regenerate into a new body.   |
| 20-23 | The caster grants a single creature's dead form enough regenerative energy to cause their cells to spontaneously heal and transform into a brand new form. Although the new form will be fully healed, the target of the program will suffer from temporary amnesia that lasts 1d3 days. The new form is a randomly determined creature from the local ecosystem, which may affect their new hit point totals and abilities, although original Intelligence and Personality scores are retained.               |
| 24-28 | The caster imbues a single creature's dead form with enough regenerative energy to cause their cells to spontaneously heal and transform into a brand new body. Although the new body will be fully healed, the target of the program will suffer from temporary amnesia that lasts 2d12 hours. The new body is a randomly determined genotype normally available to the player, which may affect their new hit point total and abilities, although original Intelligence and Personality scores are retained. |

29-35

The caster bequeaths a single being's dead form with enough regenerative energy to cause their cells to spontaneously heal and transform into a brand new body. The new body is the same genotype as the prior form, although only Intelligence and Personality remain the same — all other abilities are generated anew.

36-37

The caster bestows enough regenerative energy to heal any wounds in the target being and bring them back to full life exactly as they once were. The subject will experience no cognitive interruptions whatsoever, and all abilities remain intact and exactly as they were. The subject will retain a surplus of regenerative energy for the next 6 hours that can be used to heal themselves or others from subsequent wounds with but a touch for 1d6 hit points.

38+

The caster channels the collective energy of the very stars to cause any being's dead physical form to regenerate into a fresh, new body. The new body can be of any gender or genotype possible (GM's discretion). The new form will contain a surplus of regenerative energy for the next 12 hours that will instantly heal any further wounds or damage received. This surplus energy may optionally be discharged at any time as a destructive force, either as an energy ribbon +10 ranged attack (200' range, 15d6 energy damage) or as a radial energy wave +8 ranged attack (100' range, 10d6 energy damage).



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# TIME CAN BE REWRITTEN

**Level:** 5

**Range:** infinite

**Duration:** varies

**Activation time:** 2 actions

**Save:** special

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General

In a single blinding moment of temporal clarity, the caster is able to see the future and past light cones that connect them personally to the block universe. The caster uses this knowledge to create a timeline reset of variable scope that causes events to repeat themselves, but the caster is now armed with the foreknowledge of what is to come.

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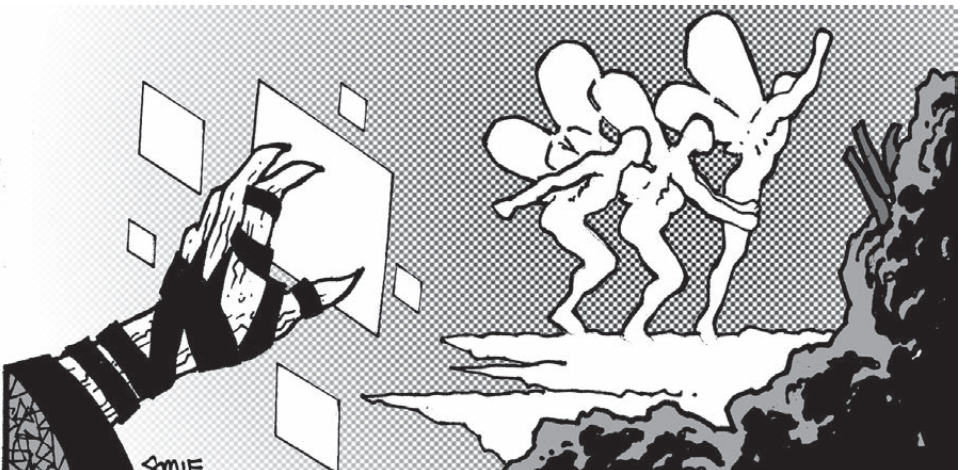
- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| 1     | Failure. Program lost for the day and temporal drift!   |
| 2-11  | Failure. Program lost for the day.  |
| 12-17 | Failure, but the neural program is not lost for the day.  |
| 18-19 | The caster travels back in time 1 combat round. While the caster is unable to communicate any foreknowledge of future events in so quick a moment, they are personally free to act differently than they did before.  |
| 20-23 | The caster travels back in time 1d6 combat rounds. If the caster stepped back more than 1 combat round, they are free to communicate any personal knowledge they have of the immediate future.  |
| 24-28 | The caster is able to reach back into their own light cone and pull a past self from the last 24 hours forward to the present moment for 10 combat rounds. The temporal doppelgänger will be able to instantly grasp the situation at hand via a telepathic connection with the caster. At the end of 10 rounds the caster's summoned past self returns to the instant from which they were pulled, with all memory of their actions and events that took place in their future wiped clean by the timeline re-synchronizing.   |
| 29-35 | The caster is able to temporarily reverse the flow of time within their line of sight, causing events to rewind for 1d20 rounds. All beings and creatures within the area of effect are aware of what is happening to them, as they see events play out in reverse, although non-sentient creatures will be greatly confused by what they experience, and it may even cause intelligent beings and entities to pause when the program effects cease. A successful DC 12 Willpower save must be made to remain unaffected by this confusion, with a failure indicating 1d3 rounds of inaction by any affected creature or being. |
| 36-37 | The caster is able to reach far back into the past to pluck a creature or being from their original timeline and permanently bring them to the present to aide their cause. The summoned creature or be-  |



ing cannot be fully sentient (such beings being able to resist the temporal call) nor important to the overall integrity of the prime timeline. The temporally summoned creature or being remains in the present for 1d20 rounds or until killed, then they (or their remains) return to the past. The caster must focus solely on the actions of the summoned entity in order to control its actions, and any break in concentration will result in the creature attacking the caster. The stats and abilities of the summoned creature may vary, but it will have a minimum of 10HD and a 10d6 attack of some form and function. To determine what is summoned, roll 1d6: (1) an air elemental; (2) a military android with blaster rifle; (3) a T-rex; (4) a radioactive giant moth; (5) a fire-breathing dragon; (6) a rogue warbot.

38+

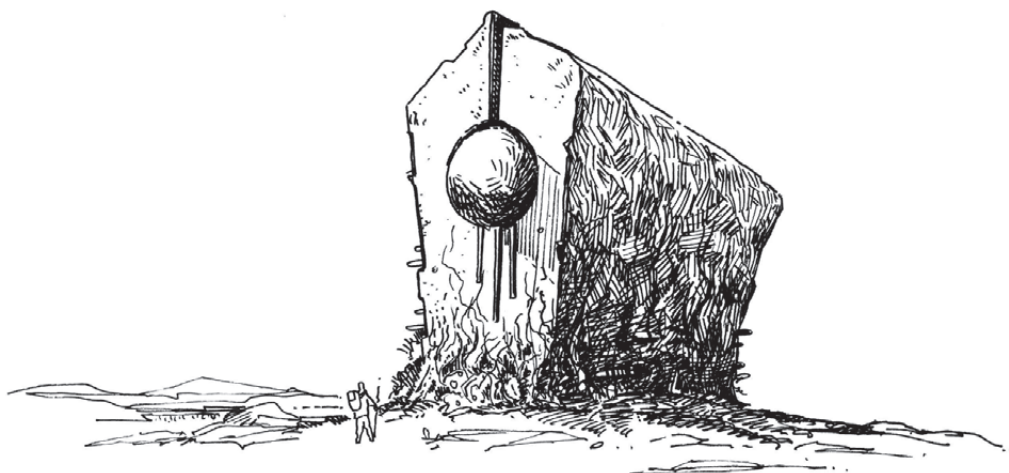
The caster and all allies travel back in time 1 day, able to relive the last 24 hours as they see fit. Tiny alterations to the new, branching timeline are inevitable by virtue of quantum fluctuations in the fabric of space-time, even if all affected decide to replay events as precisely as possible. Minor changes to the timeline such as different decisions made or alterations to small events ("I ready a different weapon" or "we go to this place first") require a successful DC 10 Willpower save by the participating individuals, with failure indicating that events play out the same as before. Major changes in decision-making when replaying events ("We don't go into that room" or "we avoid that battle") require a successful DC 15 Willpower save to execute. Massive or drastic alterations to the timeline that will affect large numbers of beings, whole civilizations, or planetary-scale events require a successful DC 20 Willpower save to execute. In some rare exceptions, an event will be discovered to be a fixed point in history that cannot be undone or changed (GM's discretion), and in such cases, although the events may play out in altered form, the ultimate outcome remains the same.





# EXTINCTION EVENT OF THE BIONISAURS

A LEVEL-0 FUNNEL ADVENTURE  
BY JAMES M. SPAHN



## INTRODUCTION

*Extinction Event of the Bionisaurus* is an adventure for 16 to 24 0-level characters, or 4 to 6 1st level characters. If this adventure is being run for 0-level characters, then each player will control four characters, and if they're clever, hardy, and more than a bit lucky, they may walk away with a single survivor to walk the wastelands of the world below. Players should not read the contents of this adventure so as not to spoil the surprises herein. Judges should prepare by reading the entire adventure so they are familiar with the material. Each location opens with italicized text which can be read or paraphrased to players by the Judge when they enter that location.

## BACKGROUND

It was a paradise made up of unfettered genius and unimaginable science in the sky. It was here that genius paleontologist, geneticist, and cybernetic engineer Dr. Anning Horner masterfully blended advanced technology and extinct predators. Before humanity, they had ruled the Earth, and if Dr. Horner's theories could be proven as fact, they would return again as slaves to mankind. The Brontosaurus, Triceratops, Velociraptor, and the impossible T-Rex would bow to the will of man. From his great lab in the sky, chosen to avoid such paltry things as scientific ethics, he experimented endlessly with ancient genetic strands and advanced computer codes before realizing Mother Nature presented only limited options. It would take artificial intelligence and cybernetic enhancement to achieve the same greatness that humanity had achieved — to give the grand beasts lost to time the return they deserved as servants to the new masters of the world. Alone in his sky lab, Horner toiled for years, written off by the world below as a hermit and a madman. A century soon passed and he was forgotten.

By blending genetic science and advanced cybernetics, creatures long extinct were reborn and flourished in his secret labs orbiting the world. Using these advanced cybernetics, he enhanced his genetic creations. They were smarter, faster, and stronger than any flawed creation of nature, and though they would hunt and slay one another as in ancient times, by their programming they would bow before the





diminutive masters that had returned them to life. Then, in what he believed to be a true act of generosity, he would return them to the world to serve as guardians, protectors, and laborers. These creations, the bionisaur, would change the world forever.

But the creations turned upon their creator and in a last desperate act, Dr. Horner fled the orbital lab that had been his home and his life's work. Fleeing into a shuttle pod, he plummeted towards the Earth just as the apocalypse struck — and he was not alone. Small and clever bionisaur had infiltrated even his secure escape vessel and devoured him soon after launch. Crashing to Earth, the bionisaur survivors fell for eons into a strange slumber before awakening and roaming the irradiated jungle that somehow rang true in their memory.

## PLAYER INTRODUCTION

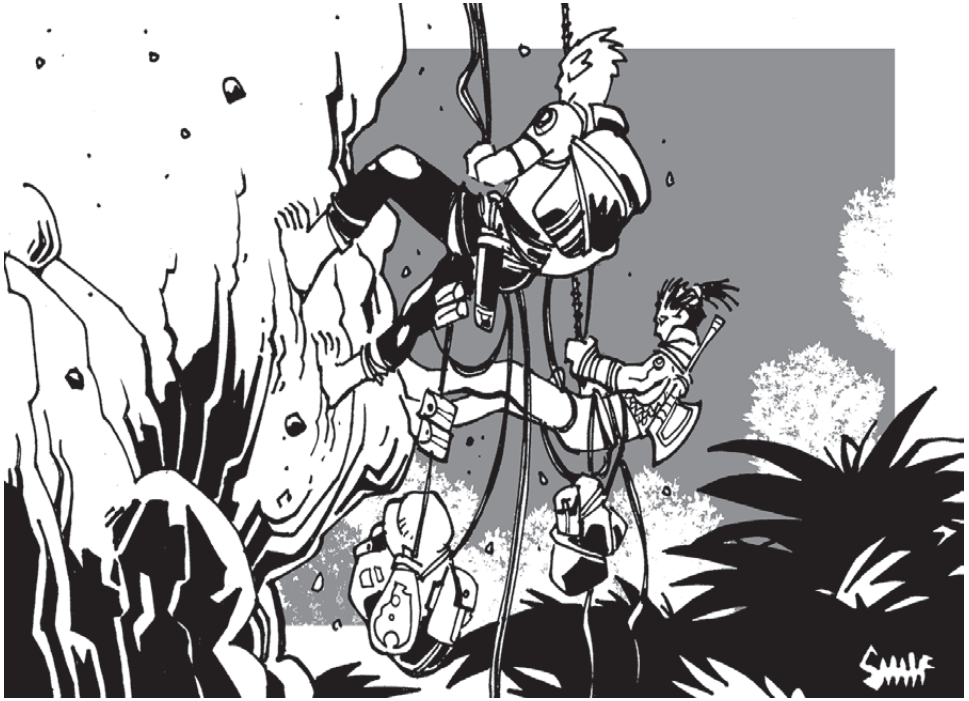
*The hunt has never been easy. But in recent days it has become all the more horrific. Brutal creatures, swift and clever with strange lizard-like bodies have been devouring the people of your tribe. Smarter than any beast and hungry for blood, your tribe has tasked you with finding their lair somewhere deep in the jungle and destroying them. The only clue to their nature is the strange silver light seen shooting into the sky each night several miles from the crude caves and huts your people call home. Now with little more than a few spears and a hope for earning your place as a Rover in your tribe, your small band of hunters sets forth along a narrow, meandering game trail towards where you believe the beasts are making their lair. Leaving at sunset, you hope to see again that silver light shooting into the sky, but fear what exactly you will discover.*



# JUNGLE ENCOUNTERS TABLE

## Roll d7 Result

- 1 **Radspores:** The character with the lowest Luck has stepped on a patch of radspores hidden in the dense jungle brush, causing a cloud of radiation-infused spores to burst out from under the foot of that character. To determine the effects, roll 1d6: (1) spore cloud seems to have no effect; (2) spore cloud blinds target for 1d6 rounds, DC 10 Reflex save to avoid; (3) spore cloud blinds and stuns target for 1d6 rounds, DC 12 Reflex save to avoid; (4) spore cloud blinds for 1d6 rounds, inflicts 2d6 poison damage, DC 14 Reflex save for half damage; (5) spore cloud blinds up to 3 targets for 1d6 rounds, inflicts 3d6 poison damage, DC 16 Reflex save for half damage; (6) spore cloud blinds everyone within 20' for 1d10 rounds, inflicts 4d6 poison damage, DC 18 Reflex save for half damage.
- 2 **Gamma Squirrel:** A massive purple squirrel, easily the size of a horse, with glowing green eyes appears and begins watching the player characters. It then hops down from its tree and scurries towards a random PC. It sniffs at the player character and if that person has no metal in their possession, it moves on to sniff another person. If the character does have metal, the squirrel can smell it and indicates through scurrying about and crude gestures (which can be deciphered with an Intelligence check, DC 13) that it wants the metal. If the metal is surrendered, it takes the scrap and runs off. If denied, it retreats into the jungle and ambushes the party later in 1d4 hours.  
*For stats, see New Creatures section.*
- 3 **Half-Eaten Corpse:** The player characters stumble upon the corpses of several of their own tribesmen, ripped to shreds with strange targeted burns on their flesh. Characters can search the corpses to find a single random item that was left on the bodies. Roll 1d6: (1) bone necklace; (2) flint fire starter kit; (3) paints and dyes; (4) bag of sea shells; (5) wooden bow and 10 arrows; (6) magic sticky rock (lodestone).
- 4 **Talkative Tree:** A thick, vine-covered tree suddenly opens its eyes and coughs. It then politely apologizes to the player characters and attempts to strike up a conversation. If treated politely and asked about any strange creatures it will remark that "walking types" need to be careful, because it has seen metal lizards that attack in groups and are never alone. If the players act rudely towards the strange creature, it lets out a strange cry similar to the bionisaurs and 1d3+2 Raptor-Chromes arrive 1d4 rounds later and attack the party.
- 5 **Holo-Cloak with Faulty A.I.:** The character with the highest Luck who succeeds in a Luck check (DC 16) stumbles across a Holo-Cloak tangled in the underbrush that has a faulty A.I. (Int 13, Ego 9). The A.I. is an absolute coward and advocates its use loudly and regularly, especially in the face of even the slightest danger. If this result comes up more than once, the Judge should re-roll.
- 6 **Bionisaur Tracker:** A single Raptor-Chrome breaks through the jungle, locks eyes on the player characters, and then flees into the jungle one round later. The next time the player characters roll on this table, add +2 to the result.  
*For stats, see New Creatures section.*
- 7+ **Bionisaur Ambush:** A pack of Raptor-Chromes ambush the party. There is 1 of them for every 1st-level member of the party or 1 for every 4 0-level members of the party. *For stats, see New Creatures section.*



## Run Through the Jungle

**Area-1 — Run Through the Jungle:** *After spending most of the day scouring the jungles for signs of the terrible beasts that have been slaughtering your tribes-people and leaving pieces of their mangled corpses strewn about the wilderness, you've finally found signs of a small trail. At first it seems to go nowhere. Only as the sun sets do you see it, several miles off — the strange silver light shooting into the sky ahead of you. You begin plodding through the sweltering tropical heat and thick foliage, eyes darting about and waiting for danger to strike at any moment, whether it be from these terrible predators or from one of the many other dangers of the jungle.*

*To say you find this all unsettling would be an understatement.*

The trek through the jungle to the source of the strange silver light requires the player characters to make three successful tracking or wilderness-focused skill checks (DC 13). Each check repre-

sents approximately one hour of travel in the jungle. If any of the three checks are failed, the Judge should roll 1d7 and consult the Jungle Encounters Table.

## The Crater

**Area-2 — The Crater:** *The jungle suddenly drops away and reveals a massive crater in the earth, easily 15 feet deep and 300 feet across. On all sides the wilderness rises up to meet it, but there in the center of its upturned soil you see a fang of chrome, shining and unblemished, shoved into the earth. It blinks with silver light, casting the light you've seen for days up into the sky.*

*Not a speck of dirt can be seen on it from this distance, only a single, circular hole in the side of it at ground level, leading into the interior.*

The crater walls are quite steep. Climbing down the side of the crater without precautions requires a successful Strength or Agility check (DC 13).

Those who fail, lose their footing and fall, suffering 1d6 damage in the process. Characters making use of a coil of rope or vines from the jungle add +4 to their check. The crater itself is 300 feet across with flat, uneven ground and the strange chrome pod at the center. Any character that tells the Judge they are making an examination or paying close attention to the crater walls can make an Intelligence check (DC 15) to notice several holes dug into the rich soil that go easily unnoticed in the dark — dozens of them.

When the first of the PCs gets within 120 feet of the shuttle pod, strange red lights appear in pairs in these dark holes and 2d6 Raptor-Chromes come darting out, charging from all directions. One round after that another 2d8 come out, and one round after that 2d10 come out. There are hundreds of Raptor-Chromes in total, so wave after wave pours forth each round. All of these Raptor Chromes are out for blood, and with the player characters surrounded, they're eager for the kill.

The only safety from the bloodbath is for the player characters to flee into the pod at the center of the crater. The pod itself is not terribly large, being 30 feet across and 10 feet high. The only opening is the strange circular portal at ground level through which the player characters can enter, and with the exception of a console at the center of the room, the interior is covered in dials, switches, lights, and diodes. Bloodstains both dry and old splatter it, and the fossilized skeletal remains of a humanoid is slung across the top of the central console.

Unless the player characters want to turn the pod into a killing box, they'll need to seal the door before too many of the bloodthirsty creatures get in-

side. This requires an Artifact Check to seal the doors (Tech Level 4, Complexity Level 2). Obviously, if the player characters want to do this in time to remain alive they are best off spending a Luck point and making a Combat Artifact Check (which happens instantly versus the 10-30 minutes a normal Artifact Check might take). Once the doors are closed, the entire pod begins to rumble and the doors cannot be opened again for 20 minutes. There is a feeling of lift and the player characters find themselves thrown to the ground under the force of a sudden thrust. What exactly is happening remains unknown to them, but it is certain that the pod is somehow moving.

After about 20 minutes (during which time the console does not respond to any use, but the players can otherwise act normally) the shaking stops and the door opens to reveal Area 3 — The Cryo-Chamber.

## **The Cryo-Chamber**

**Area-3 — The Cryo-Chamber:** The pod's hatch spirals open to reveal a new, strange location.

*A blast of cold air blows towards you and as you look out, you see a massive chamber lit by sterile, white light. Giant tubes mounted by metal fixtures to the floor and ceiling, running thirty feet high and nearly as far across, half a dozen deep and three across on each side of where the pod now rests. Frosted over on the outside, you see only vague shades of brown and silver inside. On the far side of this strange chamber is a large metal door set in the wall. Beyond these bizarre cylinders you see the strangest thing of all: a great field of stars as bright as the night sky, filled with drifting gray rocks of every imaginable size and shape, and beyond those, a great green and blue pockmarked sphere.*

**EXTINCTION EVENT OF THE BIONISAURS  
ORBITAL GENETICS LAB**

**Area-4: Genetics Lab**

**Area-3: Cryo-Chamber**

**Power Core**

**SHUTTLE POD  
HATCH**

**SMIF AFTER  
-WALKER-**



Player characters that state they are taking a closer look at their environment without stepping outside of the pod can make an Intelligence check (DC 15) to notice a large network of tubes, wires, and circular nodes running across the ceiling of this massive chamber. Those who exceed a DC 18 Intelligence check also notice several small chrome orbs sticking out of the wall on long hoses at various locations, sweeping about from their position mounted to the wall.

Unknown to the player characters until they step out of the pod is that there are two sleeping security-bots mounted in alcoves above in the ceiling, or that the small chrome orbs along the wall are, in fact, surveillance devices.

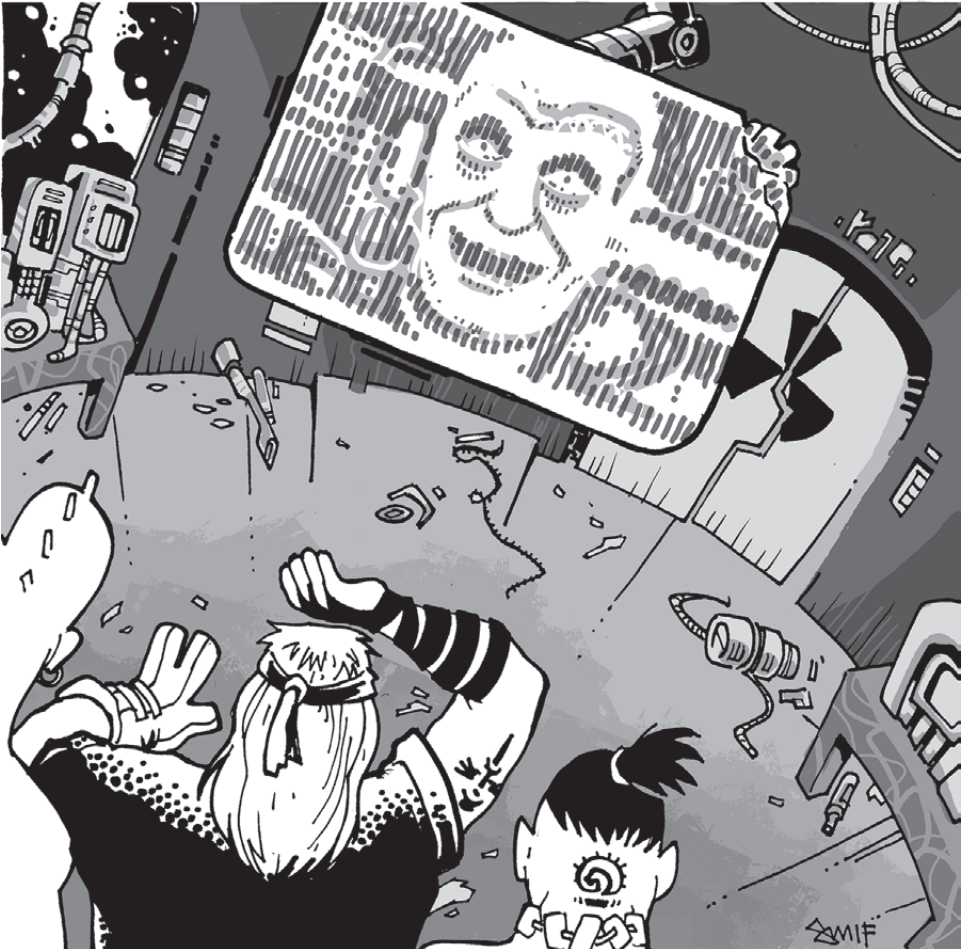
As soon as one of the PCs steps out of the pod, one of the orbs opens and a tiny bulb glows, projecting a soft light hologram that takes the form of a 1950s style diner waitress. She walks towards the player characters. "You are identified as unauthorized personnel. Please identify yourself."

This hologram introduces itself as D0RIS-15 (Designation Zero: Robotic-Interface Servant, Mk 15), and asks the player characters what their business is with Doctor Horner. Regardless of what they say, whether they say they have no business at all or that they have an appointment, she does not believe them. After three explanation attempts by the PCs, D0RIS-15 apologizes for their imminent termination, and moves to open one of the massive cryo-pods in the chamber. The pod will open in 1d4 rounds. If, before the pod opens, the players ask if they can speak directly with this Dr. Horner, she will halt the release of the creature and politely ask them to wait while she consults with him. She will then disengage her hologram, return to her orb, and then reappear a few rounds later.

She politely tells them that Dr. Horner is most interested in seeing them. If at any point the player characters engage in unprovoked violence against D0RIS-15, the two security-bots hanging in sockets in the ceiling descend and attack.

There are a total of 12 massive cryo-tubes in this chamber and each one contains a Rex-Bot. D0RIS-15 will warn the player characters against fooling with any of the control panels set into each tube, but if they insist on toying with them, she will activate the security-bots. Attempting to activate or use the cryo-tubes requires an Artifact Check. The cryo-tubes have a Tech Level of 4 and a Complexity Modifier of 4. Once they are understood, they can either be deactivated (killing the creature inside) or opened (releasing the Rex-Bot). Rex-Bots that have been released will not attack the being who released them unless that being attacks them first, but they will view any other living beings beside Dr. Horner as a hostile force. If an attempt to use the cryo-tubes fails, the Judge may ask for a Luck check (DC 8) on the part of the operator. A failed Luck check on top of a failed Artifact Check causes the tube to malfunction and open without any failsafes activated, and the Rex-Bot inside attempts to kill every living thing in its path.

Attempting to open the door into Area 4 – The Genetics Lab without the authorization of D0RIS-15 requires an Artifact Check. The Tech Level is 3, and the Complexity modifier is 2.



## The Genetics Lab

**Area-4 — The Genetics Lab:** The chill of the previous chamber gives way to a sticky, wet heat. The room before you is wide and shallow, running one hundred feet deep, but only thirty feet wide. Scattered across the room are polished stainless steel tables of different heights and sizes and bubble-faced computers running endless equations. A hive of robots is buzzing about the ceiling twenty feet above you as they pluck the very metal from the walls and ceiling and shuttle about the room on some mad errand. Half of the bulkhead panels are already gone, exposing wires and circuits that flicker and spark in a strange state of electrical purgatory. The entire monstrous room is lit by the

sickly green glow of a massive monitor that covers a full teen feet of the ceiling, hanging from thick metal tubes. Suddenly the screen turns in a herky-jerky motion towards you and you see the flickering verdant image of a human man with an impeccably clipped mustache. His voice echoes in all directions and seems to come from no single source. "Greetings, my new friends! I was expecting you! But where are my manners?

Dr. Anning Horner, at your service."

The monitor manages a stilted bow on its thick cables and metal armature.

As should be no surprise, the real Dr. Horner has been dead for thousands of years. It's his fossilized corpse in the

## So You DRANK IT TABLE

### Roll d8 Result

- 1 No effect, but it sure does taste good!
- 2 **Technological Insight:** The character gains strange new insights into the matters of advanced technology, permanently increasing their Artifact check by +1.
- 3 **Big Brain:** The character's brain swells inside their head, while their skull expands to fit their new cranium. Permanently increase Intelligence by +1, but reduce Personality by -1.
- 4 **Muscular Degeneration:** The character suffers a permanent -1 to Strength.
- 5 **Extra Finger:** The character's hands each grow an extra finger, though it is distorted and stunted. They suffer -1 to any Agility checks related to fine motor skills.
- 6 **Scaled Skin:** The character's skin changes to dinosaur hide. Permanently increase their AC by +1, but decrease Agility by -1.
- 7 **Mutation!** Character instantly gains a new mutation. Make a Mutation Check on the Mutation Table of the Judge's choice.
- 8 **Defect!** Character instantly gains a Mutational Defect. Make a Mutation Defect check on the Mutation Table of the Judge's choice.

pod described in Area-2. This mad artificial intelligence was created to store his vast knowledge of genetics, cybernetics, and paleontology. But it was so complex that it eventually became self-aware and took up the work of its creator by any means necessary — even if that meant cannibalizing the ship that serves as its body to do so. With the arrival of new life forms and having long depleted its previous genetic resources, the Dr. Horner A.I. is eager to begin his experiments anew, even if they are upon strange bipedal creatures who are not true dinosaurs.

The Doctor will begin by offering them a beverage, as would any host with visiting guests. If the player characters accept, the strange worker robots buzz about, disappearing into the missing panels of the roof before returning with a strange bubbling liquid which smells sweet and tastes like a carbonated mint tea. If the player characters are 0-level and consume this beverage, this will be what induces their eventual genetic mutations into blossoming upon reaching 1st-level. If the PCs are 1st-level and drink the beverage, the Judge should roll on the So You Drank It Table to see what happens.

The Doctor then attempts to engage them in polite conversation, asking them about their lives as well as their physical capabilities and a few simple logical questions. He is polite, but cold. During the interrogation, characters looking for anything out of the ordinary can make an Intelligence check (DC 13) to realize they are being questioned and prodded for information about their strength, intelligence, and abilities. Those paying more attention to the room than the conversation can succeed at an Intelligence check at the same DC to notice the robot workers seem to be preparing the tables and are no longer simply buzzing about randomly.

After five rounds of questioning, the Doctor tells the characters “I think you’ll be most suitable! Take them, my loyal servants.” Panels in the wall open up, dropping half a dozen bulbs which spring to life as 6 soft light holograms (similar to DORIS-15) armed with stun pistols, while the buzzing worker robots will fall to the floor and slither together to begin assembling themselves into a long, patchwork robotic dragon. This transformation takes the worker robots 3 rounds, and any PC studying the process closely (succeeding at a DC 12 Intelligence check) will notice that the robotic assemblage greatly resembles the shuttle pod they arrived in except with a reptilian head and wings. As for the gigantic monitor screen with the face of Dr. Horner, it will observe the party. If at any point the PCs appear to be winning the battle, he will grow enraged. His face will twist into a horrible expression and he will fire a huge plasma blast from his screen in an effort to atomize the player characters (see Doctor Horner A.I. in the New Creatures section).

Unfortunately, the first time Dr. Horner fires his blast it, drains enough energy from his orbital lab’s power core that it causes an announcement to begin echoing through the entire structure: *“Power level critical. Self-destruct initiated. Station detonation in T-minus one minute.”* The triggered self-destruct will cause a sequence of events to occur:

**Round One:** Dr. Horner goes mad and tries to atomize the player characters by blasting single targets from his face-monitor. Because of the station-wide power failures, each subsequent plasma blast does 1d less damage on the dice chain than the prior, until he is finally down to 4d1 damage.

**Round Two:** Lab computers announce self-destruct programs have been initiated.

**Round Three:** All robots and holograms powered by the station begin to experience glitches, suffering a -1d drop on the dice chain on all actions.

**Round Four:** The cryo-tubes in Area-3 begin a shut-down sequence.

**Round Five:** A Rex-Bot is accidentally released from cryo-sleep and begins to run amok in Area-3.

**Round Six:** Another 2 Rex-Bots are released and they start to organize, attempting to hammer open the lab door.

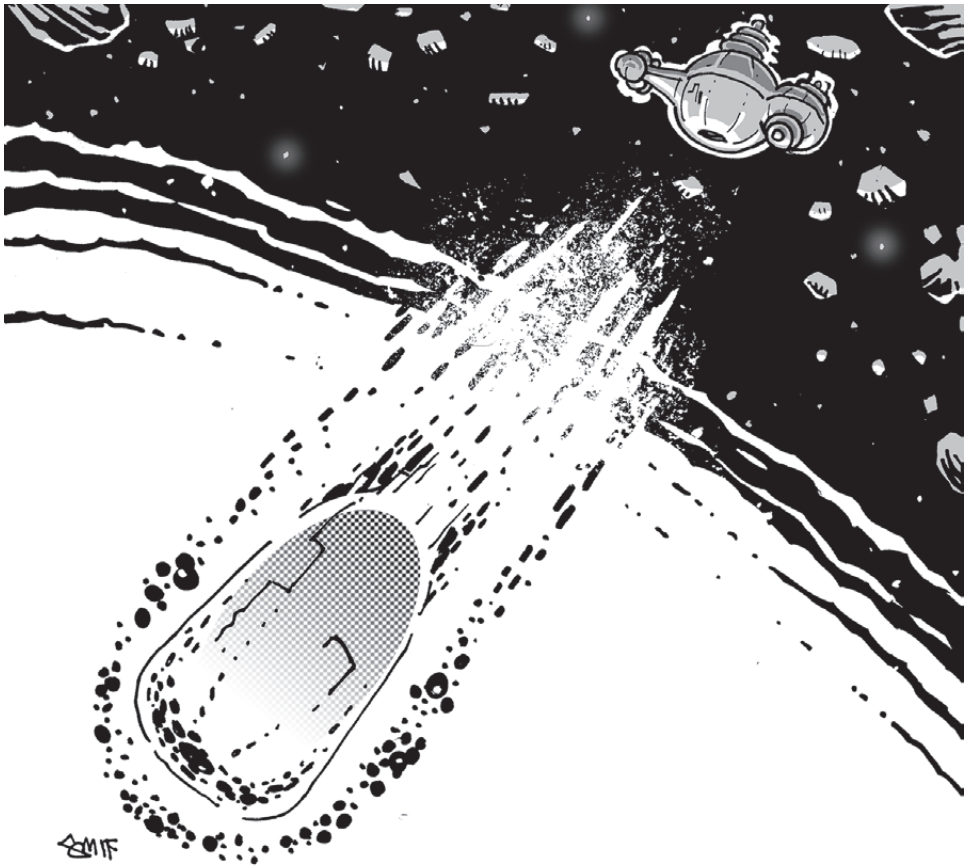
**Round Seven:** The Robotic Dragon seizes up and shuts down due to insufficient data from the central computer system.

**Round Eight:** The Rex-Bots breach the door and enter the lab, running wild and attacking anything that moves.

**Round Nine:** Dr. Horner and any remaining soft holograms shut down in a cry of defeat. The walls of the station begin to rupture and the vacuum of space begins to rip the atmosphere from the station — all actions done at -1d unless inside the pod or Robot Dragon.

**Round Ten:** The space station explodes, killing everyone aboard.





## **Destruction and Escape**

In order to escape the mad A.I. scientist and his horrid creations, the player characters have two options:

**Option 1:** The PCs can attempt to flee back to the shuttle pod in Area-3 and get it operational, but that will be no easy task, as they'll have to charge into a small army of Rex-Bots and then figure out how to activate the pod. Initiating the shuttle pod's autopilot for a return trip to the surface of the planet requires a Combat Artifact Check (Tech Level 4, Complexity Level 4).

The good news is, once successfully activated, the autopilot guides the shuttle pod back to the surface of the planet exactly where the players started.

**Option 2:** Characters looking around for another option can make an Intelligence check (DC 13) or Luck check (DC 15) to notice that the newly formed Robotic Dragon appears to have assembled itself into a crude duplicate of the shuttle pod, perhaps having based part of its design on the same blueprints. If the PCs can disable its attacks by reducing it to 0 HP (or wait until it shuts itself down on round 7 as noted earlier), they will be left with a crude but functioning shuttle pod. They have only to flip open the hatch and slip inside.



Piloting the Robot-Dragon Amalgam shuttle pod through a crumbling space station is no easy task, however. It requires yet another Combat Artifact Check. The amalgam shuttle pod has a Tech Level of 4 with a Complexity Modifier of 4. Given the limited air and cramped space, the characters would be wise to aim the pod through the asteroid field towards the planet below. One character must be designated the pilot. Navigating the asteroid belt without incident requires an additional successful Combat Artifact Check at the same tech and complexity levels, but the pilot may add their Agility modifier to the roll. Failure means an asteroid slams into the ship, inflicting 1d12 damage against the Robot Dragon's hull hit points. The characters enter the asteroid field one round after lift-off and it takes three rounds to cross it.

One round after the station explodes, a new horror reveals itself! The massive monitor of the Dr. Horner A.I. screen comes hurtling towards them from the explosion, a cascade of tentacle-like wires flying out behind him. Screaming madly but silently into space, he fires his plasma beam at the robot/shuttle pod in an effort to blow them out of the sky. If another character other than the pilot makes a Combat Artifact Check, they will discover they can manually operate the robot dragon's laser-breath attack and its long neck allows them to fire it in 360 degrees!

Regardless, within 5 rounds after clearing the asteroid field, the shuttle begins to break atmosphere and any remnants of Dr. Horner's A.I. monitor burn up. Unfortunately, atmospheric reentry heats up the robot dragon too, requiring every character to make a DC 8 Fort save or suffer 1d4 damage as the scalding metal they sit on burns their flesh.

The landing is a rough one. The Judge should ask for one last Combat Artifact Check from the pilot. If this roll succeeds, the robot/shuttle pod lands with all on board banged up but otherwise unharmed. A failure indicates everyone on board suffered 1d4 impact damage.

## The Aftermath

With the Dr. Horner A.I. defeated, all of the Bionisaurs on the surface of the planet fall dormant and their biological bodies are soon consumed afterwards by jungle predators and scavengers.

As for the player characters, where they crashed (or landed) can be determined by the Judge depending upon future campaign needs. They can land near the crater that was their initial launch site, on the other side of the planet, or even on another planet entirely! This is an opportunity for the Judge to reset their campaign in any location they desire. Scavenging the remains of the Robot Dragon can yield enough components to put together a functioning Lazer Rifle and two F-Cells if a successful Artifact Check is made against a DC 18. Otherwise the escape vessel is charred scrap, though clever players may cobble the metal plates for pieces of armor and spear heads.

## Rewards

0-level characters who survive *Extinction Event of the Bionisaurs* should be permitted to advance to 1st-level. In addition to the rewards and advanced tech recovered from their expedition, player characters may receive bonus points of XP if they showed cleverness when dealing with some of the seemingly overwhelming threats they faced during the course of their strange expedition.

## NEW CREATURES

### Gamma Squirrel

These massive purple-furred squirrels grow as large as a mundane horse. While not innately hostile, they can become aggressive if attacked or provoked. They feast on metal; the more irradiated the better. They are highly intelligent animals and will use chittering noises and hand gestures as a form of crude communication in an effort to get others to give them metal scraps or metallic items they possess. If extraordinarily hungry, they will attack targets carrying metal, which they can smell at a distance of up to 120 feet. One in six Gamma Squirrels has consumed enough irradiated metal to have gained a mutation. Rumors speak of some tribes of survivors who have trained these creatures to act as companions and mounts, leaping from tree to tree astride their allies, raining down purple, fuzzy death.



**Gamma Squirrel:** Init +2; Atk +3 bite melee (1d8) ; AC 14; HD 3d8, 13 hit points; MV 35', climb 35'; Act 1d20; SP sense metal 120', 1-in-6 chance of mutation, limited communication; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +0



## Raptor-Chrome

Appearing as velociraptors with strange, bulky metal plates protruding from seemingly random locations on their scaly hides, Raptor-Chromes are the creation of an ancient scientist named Dr. Anning Horner. They were designed to be perfect hunters, working in small squads that sync up via radio waves from their cybernetic implants and attacking with both their bite and their laser-breath that billows forth in a narrow, red-hot beam as they charge forward with blinding speed.

**Raptor-Chrome:** Init +6; Atk +3 bite (1d6+1) melee, or +3 mouth laser (2d6, range 30'); AC 16; HD 2d8+2, 11 hit points; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP share senses with other Raptor-Chromes within 30'; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1

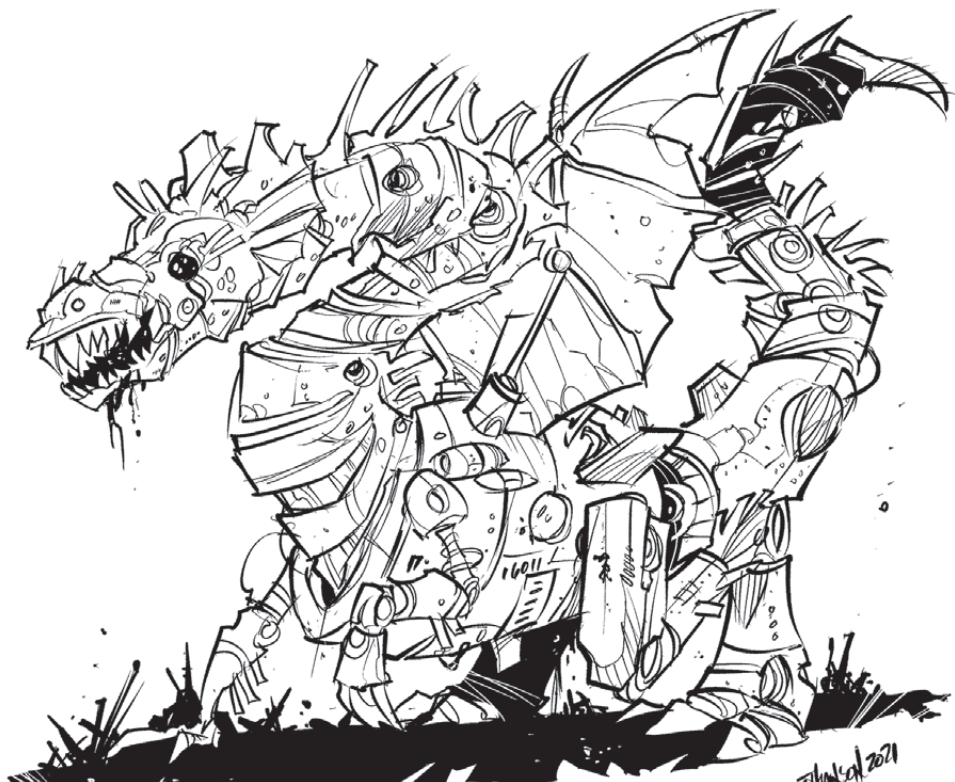
## Rex-Bot

Quite literally a vat-grown tyrannosaurus rex with cybernetic muscles and a tactical A.I. brain implant, these terrible creations of Dr. Horner are 40 feet tall. They are ten-ton killing machines with razor sharp metal teeth capable of tearing metal like paper and standing up to an ungodly amount of punishment while they calmly disembowel their foes.

**Rex-Bot:** Init +0; Atk melee +9 bite (3d10) or melee +5 stomp (5d12); AC 13; HD 8d12, 52 hit points; MV 40; Act 1d24; SP tactical implant (can select one target per round and gain +1d to all attacks against that target, takes 1d3 rounds to select another target); SV Fort +7, Ref -2, Will +1







## Robot-Dragon Amalgam

Large, bulky, and crudely assembled from the whole forms of lesser robots, the Robot Dragon is an amalgam robot created by Dr. Horner as a last ditch security measure to protect his space station. More a shell than an actual creature, it is nevertheless capable of fully surviving in zero-g conditions (which allows it to protect the station from external threats) and can even be controlled by slipping inside its massive hollow body. It is — for all its mass and glory — a crude, but deadly creation.

**Robot-Dragon Amalgam:** Init +0; Atk ranged +4 laser-breath (3d8); AC 12; HD 3d12, 18 hit points (robot) / 32 hit points (as shuttle pod hull); MV 30' (240' in zero-g); Act 1d20; SP internal shell (30 x 30); SV Fort +8, Ref -1, Will -2

## Dr. Horner A.I.

This is not the actual genius scientist, but rather a fragment of his intellect contained in an A.I. that is bound inside the central processing unit of a suborbital space station. Dr. Horner interacts by projecting his “human” face on a large monitor in his lab. That monitor is armor-plated and capable of serving as a plasma projector which can fire deadly beams at those who draw his anger.

**Dr. Horner A.I.:** Init +0; Atk ranged +5 plasma blast (4d10); AC 14; HD 8d8, 36 hit points; MV 0' (fly 240' in zero-g); Act 1d24; SP hive mind (can see through the senses of any bionisaur, robot, or hologram that originates in his lab across any distance); SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +5



by Timothy J. Kask, Dh.d.

*Kask University Gaming Studies Institute*

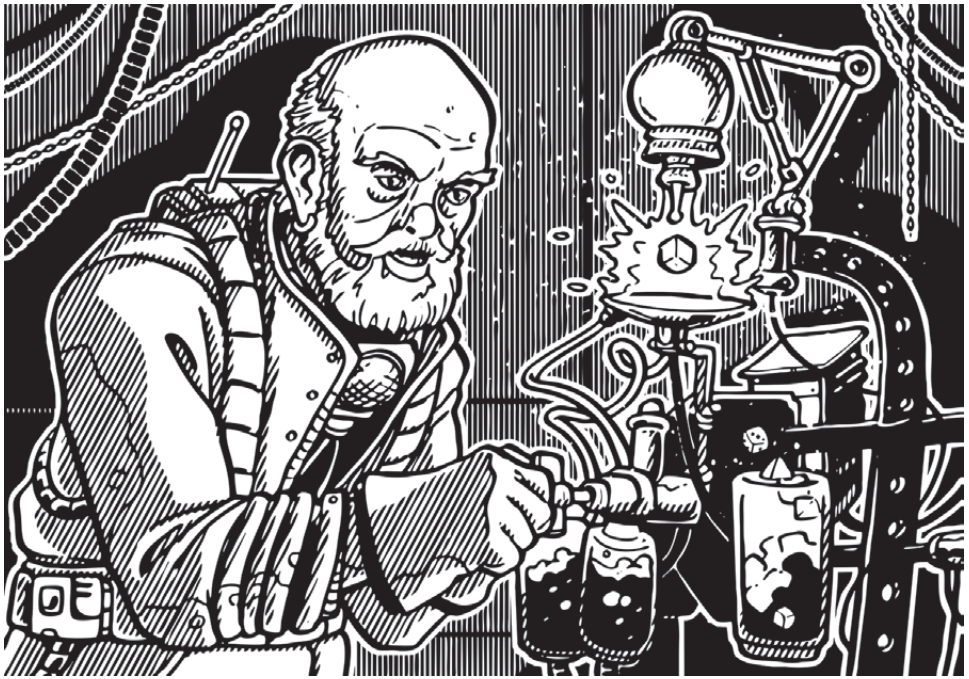
Why do otherwise smart, methodical, knowledgeable, and avid RPGers seem to occasionally lose 60 IQ points when they pick up polyhedral dice? To what factor can we attribute this baffling behavior? Researchers at Kask University's Gaming Studies Institute (KUGSI) are attempting to pinpoint the cause. As will be revealed, we believe the cause to be a psychic disorder we have named Dice Driven Dementia (or DDD).

We should note at the start that for purposes of this study we at the Institute did not recognize nor test the validity or use of non-platonic solids as dice. Platonic solids alone were tested because, after all, these were the shapes noted by Plato as geometrically perfect.

A case in point, or the tipping point for this author, was observation of a game run by Jim Ward, Gamemaster Extraordinaire. The event in question took place a few years back at the North Texas RPG Con. We were invited to sit down and observe a portion of the adventure he was running for his game *Metamorphosis Alpha*.

The group consisted of six or seven players, Jim, and myself strictly as a mute observer. The players were exploring and had come across a bunch of creatures best described as big white eggplants with no visible mouth parts, arms or feet, let alone eyes, ears, or noses. They were about two feet tall and ten inches around on the bottom. They were motile and very slowly seemed to have surrounded the party, or else the party had blundered into their midst. No matter; the party decided that they must wipe these "threatening" creatures out. Keep in mind that the creatures had made no threatening gestures up to that point — but when attacked they emitted a burst of radiation. All of the PC's got their roentgens. Yet they did not get the message. Keep also in mind that there were about six or seven of these schmoos for every PC.

The PC's then attacked, but they did not all kill a schmoos. Each round the circle tightened and the creatures continued to splash roentgens around everywhere, while the PCs continued to attack, with mixed results. This went on for five or six rounds, and by the end that landing party of PCs was glowing like the Rockefeller Christmas tree and were just as dead.



These critters could have been stepped over. They could have been “run away” from with a brisk stroll. So why did these supposedly experienced game players lose their minds? The group I witnessed was by no means unique. Anecdotal evidence from dozens of long-time DMs, GMs, SMs — take your pick — tell a very similar tale.

This phenomena is not limited to any one genre, as we have seen instances in fantasy, post-apocalyptic, science fiction, and pseudo-historical games. One apocryphal tale that is said to have originated in a back room in Muncie is another example of DDD and bears scrutiny.

In another observed game session, a very new group of fantasy RPGers were feeling full of themselves. It seems that their relatively low-level group had been set upon by a desperate band of mendicants, but after a brief tussle had seen the wretches off back into the fens from whence they had come. They were boasting to one another of their prowess when they entered the local tavern.

Whilst nursing their single sour beers for hours and earning countless foul glances and muttered epithets from the barkeep, they gained many nuggets of information. Small livestock were going missing all over one area of the shire very near to the dread forest, with signs suggesting some wolves of large size. Folk in another part of the shire were complaining of being plagued by goblins. There were persistent rumors of a hippogriff building a nest in the ancient ruins atop Bone Tor.

Of course, the group chose to go after the hippogriff, which was an opponent not yet within their reach. Because so many groups go for the hippogriff, we at KUGSI have taken to calling it the ‘Griff Effect,’ or the big GE.



We set out to see if we could find out what was going on. It had to be something connected with the dice – they are the only mutually connecting element unique to this strange behavior.

Our first set of experiments and observations dealt with the colors of the dice used. Psychological studies have proven that certain colors can trigger certain emotions in most people. We observed hundreds of game sessions where KUGSI supplied all the dice in careful allotments. We tested dice of the same color, e.g., all blood red or all daffodil yellow and so on. We tested for the brightness of the dice. We tested mixed-color sets of dice and noted the precise color combinations. We tested for opacity, translucency, and clarity. We even studied the colors of the pips or numbers. No definable patterns emerged; no conclusions offered themselves.

When the color theory was disproved, we cast about for more possible causative factors related to illogical in-game behavior. Next, we settled on studying the size of the dice. Perhaps the size of the dice vis-à-vis the pressure points known by all acupuncturists to be in the hand and fingers had some influence.

The dice tested ranged in size from 52mm down to 7mm. The proposal to test dice of 3mm size was scrapped when a number of players complained of headaches and blurry vision when enough magnifying glasses or jeweler's loupes could not be procured. Each size die was supplied in two different weights. These dice were all of a corpse-white color with deep gray pips and numbers to eliminate outlying factors. We could find no contributing factors related to dice size (other than the headaches and blurry vision of micro-dice). Some of the players using the heavy 52mm dice did, however, later complain of minor wrist pains.

Our enquiring minds then turned to the materials and substances employed in dice manufacture. The vast majority of dice are made of one form of plastic or another. It is a fact that some RPGers accumulate mind-boggling numbers of dice. Some players even collect them. There are dice made of meteorites and petrified



wood. We immediately ruled these exotic materials out of our testing due to the extreme costs. There are dice made of semi-precious materials, both stone and metal. Dice have been made from the bones of sheep as well as the bones of men. Dice have been fashioned from lead musket balls and ivory. No gamer is going to risk bouncing part of a \$3K set of dice off the table.

So we restricted our research to varying types and qualities of plastic. Whether high-impact or ancient crumble dice, we could find no cognitive connection to the material used in dice manufacture.

Our next line of inquiry dealt with the numbers of dice involved and/or rolled. Some RPGers bring large numbers of dice to their games while others use their most-trusted or favorites only. For this part of the study, we devised several variations on a simple game of our design and learned it is astonishingly easy to get participants if you tell them they are play testing the next Big Deal. Better still, they will do it for no pay. We varied the games so that some rolled lots of dice and some very few. Once again, no clear answer jumped out at us.

Our next line of research dealt with the actual polyhedron shapes. Once again waving that playtest carrot, we set up games that only used one type of die, e.g., d4, d6, d8, d12 or d20. Various groups used different numbers of their assigned die. While we could draw no useful data for purposes of our study, we did make some interesting observations. Players using only d4s complained vociferously that there was no consistent pattern to the numbers on the solid, nor one standard way of reading them — some showing numbering conventions “upside down” in relation to the others. And they pointed out that they were awful to step on. Players using d6s and d8s had few opinions or observations and seemed quite happy using them. The games involving the d12s often devolved into house-ruling and rule changing. Those using d20s exclusively were seen to have a higher percentage of nitpickers and weasellers.

We decided next to study the mechanics of rolling dice. Were they rolled onto the table by hand, or did they pass through a dice tower? Did the table have a hard or soft surface? It was our observation that hand-rolling gave the greatest degree of satisfaction to most subjects by providing an immediacy and physical connection to the game. It also provoked the most severe mood swings and audible outbursts. Perhaps we were finally on to something?

It was also our observation that those favoring dice towers or similar devices where the dice are subjected to impersonal randomization were more stable and stoic as they cast the dice on their fate. They suffered fewer emotional spikes and plummets while showing a greater degree of equanimity at the results.

Much to the chagrin of the lead researcher in this part of the study, we could find no causative link between the observed mood swings, or lack thereof, with the general and noted lack of strategic or logical thinking that accompanied any dice use in a game whatsoever.

That left only one area to explore: sound. Might there be some hitherto unknown combination of sound, both the actual decibels as well as the tones/notes, or the pattern of those sounds, that could account for this theorized Dice Driven Dementia?

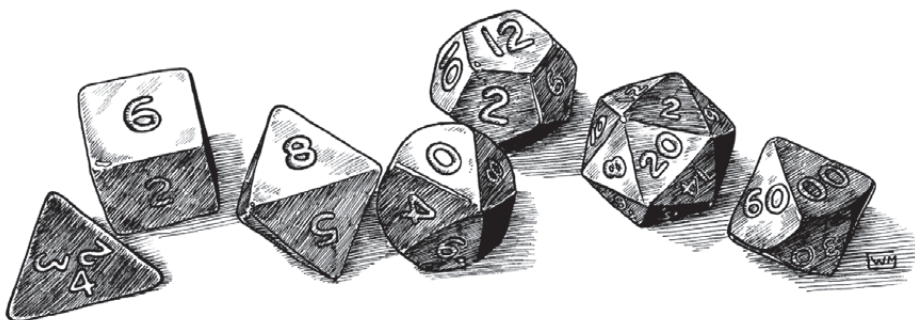
The strongest indication of the effects of dice sounds was found to be when the GM started idly rolling dice behind the GM screen or just rattling them in hand. Anxiety levels spiked around those tables with more shifting of pencils, paper, and butts in seats observed. We noted that the sound of thrown dice do vary with the surface they are thrown against. The sound of dice rolled on a wooden table versus plastic or metal varied greatly, as did the physics of the die bounce and roll. Dice rolled upon a surface covered in felt versus an old oak dining room table produced a greater variance still.

It took five months to derive an algorithm that would let us look for a correlation between ambient dice-rolling sounds and the mind-losing behaviors we have named Dice Driven Dementia. It took 18 months to test the theory combining numbers of dice, by hand or through dice towers plus the varying surfaces rolled upon. We wore the edges off of more than a thousand dice. In the end, we noted no correlation between dice-produced sounds and DDD. We got bubkes.

In desperation, KUGSI took a completely different tack and looked into physical locality. We collected and reviewed over ten years of convention data from 15 conventions, large and small. We factored in time of year, average temperatures and rainfall (where they had rain—that eliminated a couple of conventions from the Southwest). We looked at the amenities available, from quality of area hotels to food available to the attendees. We even compared average distances walked to toilet facilities, eventually discarding the potential of a P factor. We looked at clothing and found it to be generally casual and devoted to the advertising of various game products and companies. We even tried to look into hygiene, ruling out the possibility that DDD may have something to do with pheromones and olfactory senses. It did not, though we may wish it had.

The only potentially useful finding extracted from this survey of convention data was that DDD seemed to happen less often in small conventions with a regional attendance. The larger the convention size, the higher incidence of DDD, both in numbers and as a percentage of the whole. After consideration, KUGSI has named this the Herd Effect.

Sometimes science is only able to disprove theories and show the results as a means to frame future research. After three years of comprehensive research and voluminous testing, KUGSI is now prepared to release its final conclusions on the matter of Dice Drive Dementia: *We don't have the slightest idea why otherwise intelligent people lose their shit like this.*



# FACE FRONT, FRANTIC ONES!

DOWN TO YOUR LAST HIT POINT? ALL OUT OF SPELLS?  
DID SOMEONE STEP ON YOUR FAMILIAR? **DON'T WORRY!**



## THE MUTANT MISFITS AT MUDPUPPY GAMES HAVE GOT YOUR BACK!

THIS GENUINE ARTICLE MUDPUPPY GAMES  
PLAYER COUPON ENTITLES THE BEARER TO  
ADD ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO THEIR  
VERY NEXT ROLL OF THE DICE.

# NO-BONUS!

COUPON GOOD AT ANY TABLE OR FOR ANY SYSTEM.  
VOID WHERE PROHIBITED BY LAW OR COMMON SENSE.

**WILL** THIS COUPON SAVE YOUR ASS? NO IT WILL NOT.

**BUT** PRESENTING IT TO THE GM WILL BUY YOU PRECIOUS  
MOMENTS TO THINK OF A NEW PLAN THAT MIGHT ACTUALLY WORK!

## MIGHTY MUDPUPPY IS ON THE MOVE AGAIN!







# NO WAY OUT

## -A LESSER VALLEY APOCALYPSE STORY-

by James M. Ward

Donny Normal loved to hunt. His twin brother Johnny Normal loved to hunt as well, but he didn't appreciate his brother's style. Johnny hunted with the most up-to-date hunting rifle and pistol that the year 2021 could give him. It was easy for Johnny to pick off a deer at 150 yards. His brother Donny shot a deer at 250 yards with a 200 hundred pound-pull long bow. To add insult to injury, Donny would often hunt rabbit and coyote with an atlatl and ten tungsten javelins. Johnny couldn't hit a barn door at 50 yards with the atlatl.

While they had their differences, they did love to hunt together. Successful businessmen, they built an underground prepper-style home in the forest above a valley in the Wisconsin north woods. It was far away from civilization. The brothers had spent extra cash making sure it was self-sufficient, and one whole chamber of the home was filled with spare parts for repairing its many machines.

Today, Donny did one of his favorite things: he drove Baby up to the hunting lodge. His brother Johnny had some business to attend to on the other side of the state. Johnny equipped Baby with everything they needed for a three day hunting trip in their favorite woods. Donny was to bring Baby to the party and his brother would drive up later.

Baby was a tricked-out Tesla Cybertruck with every conceivable bell and whistle imaginable. Donny jumped in the contoured bucket seat, turned on the seat warmer, activated the satellite dish and set it for a British podcast he really liked listening to, and away he and Baby went.

Two hours later, he was navigating a forest path in the worst lightning storm he could remember being in. Lightning was striking everywhere. Donny prayed the new satellite dish at the top of the truck wouldn't attract a lightning strike. He had no idea what such a strike would do, but he was willing to bet it wouldn't be pretty.

He breathed a sigh of relief when he pulled up to the underground home. However, the rain was coming down in buckets and Donny didn't feel like getting drenched. He leaned the very comfortable seat back and took a nap until the rain eased off. He felt calm knowing his lodge was just ten yards away. No matter what happened, he could be safe and dry in mere minutes. He thought seriously about building an awning for the door. Closing his eyes, he did what kids all over the world did in such a storms: he counted the seconds between the thunder and the glare of the lightning strikes.

**BOOM!**

He counted, one, two, three, and the blast of lightning burst on his closed eyes. He knew from that strike the storm was close.

**BOOM!**

Even louder now, he counted one, two, and the blast of lightning burst on his closed eyes. The storm was coming toward him fast.

**BOOM!**

He sat up, not pleased, as the storm got even louder. Out loud, he counted one. The blast of lightning hit very close and almost blinded him. The storm had to be just over-head.

**KA-BLAM!**

The blast of thunder shook Baby, making the vehicle rock back and forth on its suspension. Lightning came down and covered the vehicle from bumper to bumper in super powerful forces. It opened a doorway and the vehicle to fell through it. The shock knocked Donny unconscious and blackness filled his mind.

\* \* \*

He woke up feeling pretty good, considering lightning had just knocked him out. He tried to open his door and it wouldn't budge. That was strange. As he wound the window down, the fresh breeze of the forest felt great on his face. He looked out and instantly noticed the wheels and bottom of his door were now buried deep in the earth. He crawled out of the window to look things over.

Something was very wrong, but he couldn't pin it down. He went to the back of Baby and took out his brother's AR-15 and loaded a magazine of 15 rounds. Just for fun he took out his atlatl throwing stick and the quiver of 10 tungsten javelins. Maybe it would be necessary to kill something quietly. The atlatl was good for that.

As he approached the door to the underground cabin, he noticed something else wrong. There must have been at least three inches of sod blocking the closed door. Sighing in frustration, he went to the back of the truck and got out the camping shovel he knew would be there. It was then he noticed the extra cases and magazines of ammo for the AR-15, the Glock 17, and the Barrett shotgun. It looked like his brother had planned on doing some target shooting this weekend.

The sharp shovel made short work of the inches of sod blocking the door. Finishing his digging, Donny pressed the buttons on the auto-lock. Nothing happened. Could there be a power failure from the solar panels? He walked up the hill and was shocked again. The black panels were covered in sod. How on Earth could that have happened? He started digging and noticed the winter tarp was still over the solar panels. All he had to do was strain a little and lift the sod up using the tarp. In minutes, the inches of sod were all thrown over the hill. The black panels grew warm as they started absorbing the sunlight. These had been the very best panels money could buy and had a thousand-year life span.



Once down the hill again, he went up to the door. The green active light was already shining on the door's lock panel. He put in the door code 6969, and the door clicked open. With the door open, he stuck his head in. The place smelled musty. With all the air processors in operation, that should have never happened. It was another thing he would have to check out. He shut the door and walked over to the kitchen table. There were three unopened newspapers and a letter from his brother. He read the letter.

*Donny,*

*If you are reading this, I'm dead. The plague that killed over half the population on the Earth has taken me as well. 2031 really is turning out to be a crappy year.*

*Maybe it's silly after ten years, but I can't help thinking you will eventually end up here in our beloved Fortress of Solitude, as we liked to call it. I've left three of the major papers that covered the disasters of the past year. You will be amazed. All I can do now is wish you the best. I know you will do well in the new world you find yourself in.*

*Love you, brother,  
Johnny*

"Johnny, Johnny what happened to you? Why are these newspapers dated ten years in the future? Look at them. Plague kills half the population of the Earth. Asteroid falls from the sky causing vast destruction. Nuclear countries launch their missiles causing a Nuclear Winter," Donny mumbled as he began scanning the headlines.



Donny read through the articles, horrified. If the articles were true the Earth was screwed. He got up and wandered through the rooms, wondering if he should just put a bullet in his head. Coming to the bedroom, all thoughts of suicide left his mind. There was Johnny, dressed in his favorite hunting vest. His paper skin was stretched tight over his bones. Old Blue, their Irish Setter hunting dog, was dead at his master's feet.

Donny sat on the bed for a long time with tears running down his face. He couldn't help but wonder why fate hadn't let him die with his brother. Whatever happened to him, he would at least bury his brother and dog up on the hill where the two had talked about wanting to be placed when they died. He wrapped his brother and their dog up in the bed sheets and used zip ties to seal them up. A wheeled cart made it easy to take the bodies outside.

\* \* \*

As he opened the door, he heard a woman's scream. Picking up the rifle and his atlatl, he raced toward the sounds of a struggle. Rushing into a glen, he stopped short. There in front of him was a giant golden oak tree. Climbing up that tree were five of the largest red ants he had ever seen. They were warrior ants, at least five feet long with huge pincers for jaws. But the strangest sight of all was the woman. She was huge. Very muscular, she was holding off the ants with some type of huge stone ax. The weapon looked to weigh at least a hundred pounds. Using both hands, she swung it as if it was a pound instead of the obvious hundred pounds in her large grip.



He threw a javelin through the head of the ant closest to her in the tree. She looked over to see him. The other ants paid no attention. With four more throws all the ants were dead and she came down from the tree. As she walked closer in her fur armor and winning smile, Donny realized she was almost seven feet tall and her flesh and long hair were all shades of green.

She put her big hand on his cheek and her thoughts came into his mind.

*"I am Delsenoria of the Fire Clan. Who is this She Hulk you are thinking about?"*

Donny stepped back and broke the telepathic connection. *"Err, she was a famous person in my world. It seems I'm not of that world any more. We don't have huge ants and women as lovely as you."*

She raised her hand to his cheek again. As she smiled, he noticed she had no tongue.

*"You think I'm as pretty as this She Hulk?"*

*"Yes, indeed I do,"* he thought back catching on to this style of communication.

*"My clan has been fighting the ant people for many years. When I bring you back as my husband, they will be pleased to know you. I have never seen a flying weapon like you have."*

*"Husband! Things might be going a bit too fast here."* He did admit to himself he found her perfect form pleasing. *"Why do you think we should be husband and wife?"*

*"I can be second wife, if I must. But I sense you are recently alone. So very alone it makes my soul ache. What happened to you?"* she thought to him.

*"I was gone for a bit and when I came back I found my brother dead. I was about to bury him when I heard you scream."*

*"Bury him? You can't do that. The great worms swarm and tear a grounded body apart. We wrap our dead and place them in high branches in the trees. In that way we can come back and think on their spirit."*

*"Let's do that then,"* Donny thought, *"When in Rome, do what the Romans do."*

*"What is this Rome you are thinking about? I have never heard of that tribe. Is it to the north or south?"*

They placed Johnny and his dog in the high oak tree with the dead ants as spiritual guardians. He brought her back to his home. They unloaded the Tesla and she became amazed as he made her tea and thought to her about his world. In turn, he was amazed to discover there were ruins of a great city in the valley below. Her tribe lived in part of it and fought with other beings for the right to explore the ruins and glean whatever they could from the things of the ancients.

The more he heard her thoughts, the more he liked the idea of being her husband. Tomorrow, he would show her how to use his long bow and they would take the Tesla down into the valley. She thought she knew a wide animal path, but she had no idea why it was so wide. She was in for a bit of a surprise.

**THE END**

# CREATURE CRYPTOLOGY

## CRYPTID CREATURES DECRYPTED

### VECNOID

*submitted by Daniel J. Bishop*

**Initiative:** +2

**Attacks:** grasp +4 melee (1d8+4) or bite +0 melee (2d8+4 + swallow whole)

**AC:** 15

**HD:** 8d8+16

**HP:** 52

**Move:** 30'

**Actions:** 3d20

**Special:** see below

**Save:** Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +10

These horrid creatures seem to be all hands and teeth, with a single burning eye and a pulsating, partially exposed green-gray brain. They stand 12' high and are roughly 20' in diameter. They are rare even in the world of Omega-Terra, but have ranged into the depths of space and into more fantastic worlds.

Whether they are the creation of the mad science of the Ancients or the flesh-vats of immortality-seeking wizards, they are intelligent and dangerous.

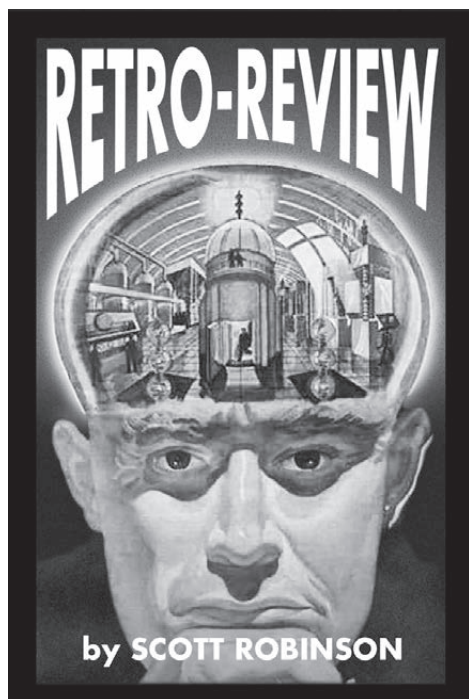
A Vecnoid's greatest strength is also its greatest weakness. The powerful brain of the Vecnoid is exposed, where it may be targeted by attacks. A successful Mighty Deed, Critical Hits which strike the head, or normal attacks, if made with a -1d penalty on the dice chain, may strike the exposed green-gray matter. This causes double damage to the Vecnoid. For every 10 points of damage caused by such an attack, the Vecnoid's Mental Mutation checks are reduced by -1 until the damage is healed.

A man-sized or smaller being bitten by a Vecnoid must succeed in a DC 15 Reflex save or be swallowed whole. The swallowed victim takes an automatic 1d7 damage each round, and can only attack if they had a small weapon in hand when swallowed. Even then, the creature has a -1d shift on the dice chain to its attacks. Being inside the Vecnoid, however, does grant it a +1d shift on damage with any successful attacks!

**Vecnoid:** Init +2; Atk grasp +4 melee (1d8+4) or bite +0 melee (2d8+4 + swallow whole); AC 15; HD 8d8+16; 52 hit points; MV 30'; Act 3d20; SP +8 mutation checks (life force reflection, mental blast, mental shield, and telekinesis), exposed brain vulnerability, swallow whole; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +10



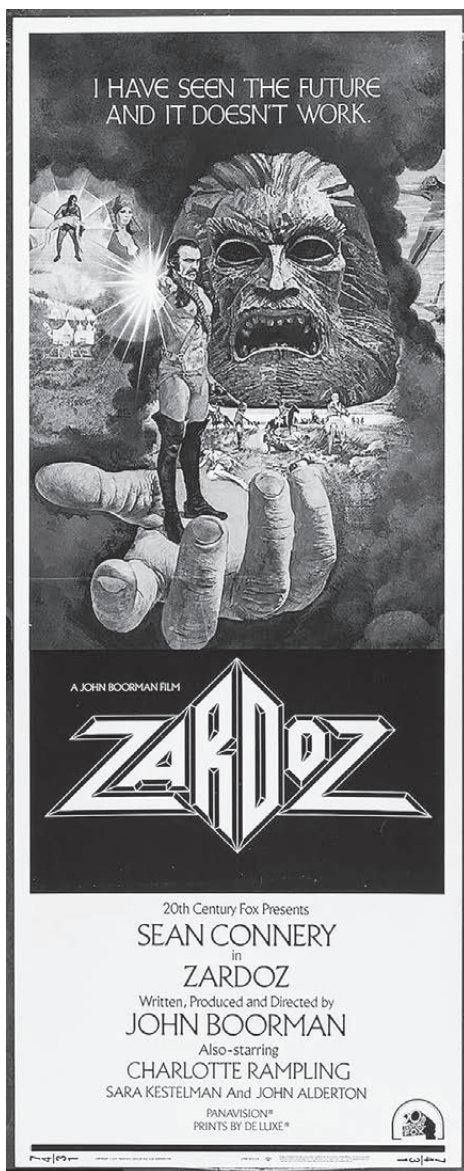




For tens of millions the world over, the passing of Sean Connery is no small sorrow. The Scottish screen icon's singular voice narrated three nerd generations, animating some of the most beloved cinematic documents of the past half century, garnering unparalleled affection and admiration. We all have our favorite Connery moment. For many, it was his purloining of the Red October as Marko Ramius; for others, his romancing of Audrey Hepburn as an aging Robin Hood. For still others, it might be his turn as John Mason, once of Alcatraz, in *The Rock*.

And for the seething masses, it's the tweedy Professor Henry Jones, father of Indiana, or the supernaturally elegant super-spy James Bond, both of whom we can safely consider immortal. But not me. Nope! Not this boy. For me, the departed Connery's finest moment arrived in 1974, in a breathtakingly bold and quirky little sci-fi adventure called *Zardoz*.

If you've never seen *Zardoz*, you're part of an overwhelming majority. If you've never even heard of *Zardoz*, you're in a greater majority still. The film barely made back its budget, which was paltry to begin with, and was no critic's darling. Roger Ebert called it "a trip into a future that seems ruled by perpetually stoned set





decorators,” and his pal Gene Siskel (who gave it one star in four) wrote, “a message movie all right, and the message is that social commentary in the cinema is best restrained inside of a carefully-crafted story, not trumpeted with character labels, special effects, and a dose of despair that celebrates the director’s humanity while chastising the profligacy of the audience.” Pauline Kael bemoaned the script’s “unspeakable dialog” and called Connery “a man who agreed to do something before he grasped what it was.”



Director John Boorman confers with Charlotte Rampling and Sean Connery on the set of *Zardoz* (1974).

Yet for all this, *Zardoz* stands alongside *The Omega Man*, *Logan’s Run*, *Silent Running* and the *Apes* sequels as one of the shining gems of the pre-Star Wars sci-fi cinema of the Seventies. It was a bold era, when no less an artisan than Stanley Kubrick had made science fiction both cool and mind-blowing, and the imaginations of filmmakers were allowed to run wild and free, unconstrained by studio meddling or any real financial risk. Even today, those movies inspire a unique endearment that is absent in the ham-fisted monster fests that preceded them and the digital orgies that followed, an endearment born of fresh takes on ancient notions, daring social explications, and shocking characters who shamelessly pandered to our most base and limbic reflexes. *Zardoz* proudly served up all three.

A bit of context, for those unfamiliar: *Zardoz* was the brainchild of John Boorman, the British filmmaker who made *Deliverance* (cinema’s most disturbing buddy movie), the visually stunning *Excalibur*, and the British World War II gem *Hope and Glory*. After the landmark *Deliverance*, which earned 25 times its budget at the box office, Boorman had carte blanche and decided to leverage his newfound cred to make *The Lord of the Rings*. Studio accountants were quick to quash that idea, but Boorman was nonetheless determined to do an elaborate fantasy — so he wrote one himself, and then proceeded to produce and direct it.

## **Pay No Attention To the Man Behind the Curtain**

It’s the year 2293, and in an emphatic nod to H.G. Wells, humanity is divided into haves and have-nots — the Brutals, who populate a post-Apocalyptic wasteland, and the Eternals, who enjoy immortality in the posh Vortex. The Brutal population is controlled by Exterminators, precursors of the Sandmen of *Logan’s Run*, whose job it is to collect food from the poor sods and to terrorize them with hand-me-down weapons provided by their god Zardoz, who gives them their marching orders. Zardoz, a disembodied bobblehead that floats around in cloudy skies issuing booming orders and ominous, cultish incantations, is



really just a façade for the melodramatic and well-meaning Arthur Frayn, a brilliant everynerd whose real agenda surfaces later in the film.

Connery is Zed, an Exterminator who stows away inside Zardoz and enters the Vortex, there to discover the Immortals and their decadent, pointless paradise, where not much happens and nothing really matters. In a borrow from the *Trek* shelf, an A.I. named Tabernacle runs the place, and we know how well that always turns out. Discovered, Zed is at first considered a threat by the Immortal Consuella (Charlotte Rampling), but May (Sara Kestelman) and Friend (John Alderton) have Zed spared and made a menial worker.

That the Vortex is breathtakingly sterile and the pinnacle of human inconsequentiality quickly becomes apparent to Zed, whose mind serves up puzzles for Consuella and May as they probe it, and whose genes serve up still more surprises when analyzed. Zed is actually

Arthur Frayn's idea of a Kwisatz Haderach, a genetic superman Frayn long planned to send into the Vortex to relieve the inhabitants of their eternal curse — boredom, to be dispelled by means of death. This Zed serves up, having a showdown with the A.I. and then rallying his fellow Exterminators to the cause, and thus carnage ensues. Zed knocks up May and a few of her besties, and the film signs off with Zed and Consuella shacking up and having a baby, there to live long and decompose.

### **Impossibly Ambitious and Pretentious**

The story is a delicious stew of familiar sci-fi themes, conventions, and tropes, all spiced heavily with shockingly over-the-line sex and violence and more than a little sociopathic kink. Most critics thumbed down, but more than a few found much to love: the *Chicago Reader* declared it "John Boorman's most underrated film — an impossibly ambitious and pretentious but also

highly inventive, provocative, and visually striking SF adventure with metaphysical trimmings," while *Variety* delivered the verdict, "direction, good; script, a brilliant premise which unfortunately washes out in climactic sound and fury; and production, outstanding, particularly special visual effects which are among the best in recent years and belie the film's modest cost." Charles Champlin called the film "a tribute to creative ingenuity and personal dedication. It is a film which buffs and would-be filmmakers are likely to be examining with interest for years to come." In this, he was spot-on.

Indeed, *Zardoz* was, for its time, exemplary filmcraft, marshalling not only its creator's considerable powers but those of the venerable Geoffrey Unsworth (2001: *A Spsace Odyssey*, *Superman*) behind the camera. Beethoven's 7th is sprinkled liberally throughout the proceedings, and David Munroe's original score eschews cliché by including an array of old-world instruments. Add to this special effects that were, for their time, arresting, and *Zardoz* sums up as a compelling piece of work, one that Champlin called "a technically ingenious and provocative manifestation of cinematic language."

### **Stunting the Growth of Adolescent Minds**

If there's one aspect of *Zardoz* that causes it to stand apart from its early-Seventies siblings, it's its broad range of themes. This wasn't particularly common back then; most of these movies had a single moving part and it worked well for them. *Silent Running* was about the fragility of life. *Soylent Green* was about overpopulation. *The Andromeda Strain* was about humanity's helplessness before the dangers of the void. *Westworld* was the modern version of *Frankenstein*. Only *A Clockwork Orange* stands out as multi-themed story, riding disturbing social satire through a moral landscape that challenges free will, validates vengeance, and authenticates psychology as a weapon of the state.

*Zardoz* reaches further still, and manages to go as too-far as Kubrick. Zed, firmly positioned as the story's good guy and hero, pretty much pillages and rapes his way through both landscapes — and until *Zardoz* this was something we had never seen before. It's unsettling enough to watch Sean Connery parading around in a bright red oversized thong, sporting chest hair and 'stache worthy of Harry Reems, killing and fucking everything that moves. What's really tough is realizing,





then accepting, that the man who brought 007 to life never rises above the level of a prop in service of this pastiche of dark motifs and theses. Granted, Bond himself was the quintessence of moral ambiguity, and racked up considerable body counts himself; but no Bond movie ever stared us down with an actual moral dilemma, let alone existential puzzles, and Bond's copious matings were mercifully consensual. *Zardoz* hijacks the brain, mind-swarming its ideas like murder hornets, and renders its star a misplaced narrative minion in order to achieve it.

Which brings me to my point (and I do have one) — the effects of all this intellectual legerdemain on the minds of the tens of thousands of 14-year-old boys who formed the core congregation for this entire genre (of whom I was, of course, one of the most faithful). True, I was a bit older than that when I first caught the movie on late-night television, but was I — were any of us — possessed of enough knowledge, experience, and literary acumen to fully process any of these themes, let alone all of them? Really?

It's one thing to be presented with Sara Kestelman's quite noteworthy breasts without a smidgen of warning, and find ourselves saying, Jenny who? It's another to see Darby O'Gill putting babies into women tangled in fishing nets without their permission and understand that, in context, he's actually doing them a favor. The adolescent male brain takes in the sight of naked women sealed in baggies and can't leap to the required understanding of the exigencies of class struggle taken to alarming extremes with quite the nimble dexterity Boorman seems to assume.

We can even say, with the assurance of hindsight, that were the movie not such a relentless action feast and visual smorgasbord, that core congregant, with his acne and his social ineptitude and his tenuous grasp of situational ethics, might actually absorb some of the true substance of the tale, and wind up, well, a little scarred.

Some of that substance is benign enough, to be sure. The over arching theme of humankind's connection to nature, lifted with all its glorious nuance from *Deliverance*, does the mind of the young teenage boy no harm. The less subtle theme, "The penis is bad!" (also lifted, with far less nuance, from *Deliverance*), is another matter entirely. This from a movie underscoring somewhat forcefully the brutal truth that whatever else sex is, it's mostly about making babies. Thank you, John. That's definitely where young minds want to go.



Less benign is the no-less-immediate theme of humankind's connection to the machine, once again a *Trek* nod that also extends to much of the sci-fi of the day. The computer that runs the world is a problem. No kid grew up in the early Seventies without knowing this one backwards-and-forwards. But never before (nor even with the Skynet and the Matrix and the Alien Mother yet to come) had we seen an A.I. as morally twisted as this one, implementing make-work laws and attaching the horrific penalties of aging and death on transgressors, just to give itself something to do.

What was I supposed to do with that? This is narcissism on a gargantuan scale, portending not just the perils of power in the wrong hands, but a chillingly inhuman snapshot of cruelty's rock bottom, served up for youngsters who have yet to grapple with the reality and lessons of the Holocaust. Again, John — thanks for that!

But the big theme is, of course, the perils of immortality — again, a familiar path offered up with a fresh layer of gravel. We'd picked up on the unfortunate truth that immortality consists largely of boredom from many sources, from TV to Heinlein to comic books; but where those sources had all tended to emphasize that the solution is to give

life new meaning, *Zardoz* did a 180° turn. The problem admits of no solution, and the obvious answer is not to enhance life, but to end it. This horrific conclusion kicked off our existential dread years ahead of schedule, undermining our inevitable future quests for meaning with the back-of-the-mind shadow that whispers, "It's all ultimately pointless." Grazie, John Boorman.

## Off To See A Wizard

Yet for all this quibbling, *Zardoz* does serve up a bit of wonder that is tailor-made for that young teen in the crowd. Embedded in Zed's memories are the books Arthur Frayn equipped him with for his eventual mission. Of these books, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* in particular is one of the big reveals of the entire movie. This is the book from which Frayn took his god name, and from which he lifted the entire man behind the curtain concept that allowed him to orchestrate the end of the Vortex with Connery's Zed as his testosterone-ridden Dorothy.

There's some honest-to-goodness magic in that, and the wide-eyed teen is primed for it. It's a deployment of those truly special analogia that live within us from our earliest childhood readings: the ensorceling connections that books and stories and fairy tales





serve up to equip us for the buffeting winds and rolling thunder of maturity. That Arthur Frayn nurtures his murderous creation with such readings, building his entire humanity-saving scheme around this profound and very relatable attribute, is the stuff of true prestidigitation — and it's in the mind of the star-gazing, future-glimpsing nerd boy that it most readily thrives. I should know!

Decades exist between my most recent reading of *Zardoz* and the one before, though it sits on my DVD shelf with all the other Seventies treasures. I find my perception of it has morphed greatly in that interregnum. I wouldn't have written this same review in my twenties. But while my perceptions have shifted, my enjoyment of the film has not. I think it's goofy, glorious, chilling, provocative, and overcooked — just horrible, and just marvelous. And that's what I think every single time I see it.

One final thought occurs to me: With its A.I.-as-ruler and floating-head-as-deity and rulings on the nature of life and deep emphasis on the importance of baby-making, it now seems to me a terribly humanist film, for all its violence and deprecation. It's saying to me, pretty clearly and loudly, that We Are God, and as such, we have certain responsibilities — making babies, of course, but also preserving meaning in our existence, and making that existence about something more than the elitist voyeurism that keeps the Immortals from drifting away altogether. Something more than this thing we do in our own Vortex, the one we carry in our pockets and keep open in our web browsers. Well, that's a message I can get behind. Yes. We Are God. And as such, we're about preserving all those things that give us meaning.

Or is God in show business, too?





**URSPACE**

by Chuck Whelon



*Fedorova and Wampler*



*"Hey guys! Check it out. The bloated red sun is up!"*





# SCIENTIFIC COMICS



## Nights of the Dinner Table

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

AFTER COMING ACROSS A DERELICT ALIEN SHIP DRIFTING IN DEEP SPACE - THE PARTY BOARDS THE DEAD HULK TO EXPLORE.

IT IS IMMEDIATELY APPARENT WHEN YOU STEP INTO THIS ROOM THAT SOMETHING ABSOLUTELY HORRIFIC HAS TAKEN PLACE HERE.

ALL THE CONSOLES, PANELS AND BULKHEADS ARE PITTED, CHARRED AND COVERED IN SOOT.

BITS OF TWISTED METAL, CONDUIT AND WIRE HARNESS HANG FROM THE CEILING HERE AND THERE LIKE SOME SURREAL FOREST.

AND - THERE ARE BODIES!!

DOZENS OF DESICATED CORPSES STREWN ABOUT... IN A CENTRIFUGAL PATTERN OF SORTS.

APPEARING AS THOUGH THEY WERE THROWN BACK VIOLENTLY BY AN ENORMOUS FORCE.

LITTLE MORE THAN HUSK'S NOW - SOME LOOK TO HAVE BEEN BRIDGE PERSONNEL, OTHERS MEDICAL SPECIALISTS AND OTHERS STILL SOME SORT SECURITY OR SOLDIER TYPES.

ALL WEARING THE SAME FAMILIAR SHIP UNIFORM.

THE WAY THEY ARE VIOLENTLY TWISTED AND CONTORTED -

OR WHAT'S LEFT OF THEM AT LEAST.

GEEZUS - I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM?

PRIMING MY PULSE RIFLE HERE, SARA.

DOING A LOW LEVEL SCAN HERE, SARA.

BRIAN, YOUR SCAN DETECTS A VERY LOW FORM OF PULSATING ENERGY. IT SORT OF EBBS AND FLOWS.

IT'S COMING FROM A SMALL, STRANGE-LOOKING DEVICE.

SITTING ON AN EXAMINATION TABLE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM.

JUDGING FROM THE ASSORTED TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS AROUND IT -

IT APPEARS IT WAS BEING EXAMINED WITH GREAT INTEREST.

EVEN FROM WHERE YOU STAND - YOU CAN SEE THAT A PROTECTIVE PLATE HAS BEEN REMOVED ON ONE SIDE - REVEALING A BRIGHT, RED BUTTON!

A BUTTON...? HOW BIG IS THIS "DEVICE"...

OH, ABOUT THE SIZE OF A CONCRETE BLOCK.

HEY - THIS MUST BE THE RELIC! THE ONE MENTIONED IN THE SHIP'S LOG.

COOL BEANS!

THE BUTTON ITSELF STARTED TO GLOW WHEN YOU ENTERED THE ROOM.

UHT OH.

WHOLE - THERE'S OUR ANSWER, FOLKS.

THEY FOUND THIS THING ON A FROZEN PLANET - BROUGHT IT ON BOARD... AND - AS WE SUSPECTED THEY TAMPERED WITH IT.

AND IT DESTROYED 'EM.

QUESTION IS, WHAT IS IT?

WELL WHATEVER IT IS - IT'S GOTTA BE WORTH A BUTT LOAD OF CREDITS, RIGHT?

WAIT - YOU'RE NOT SUGGESTING WE BRING IT BACK ON OUR SHIP.

THAT WOULD BE A VERY BAD IDEA.

ARE YOU?

WHOA - SLOW DOWN. WE'RE GOING TO PROCEED VERY CAREFULLY.

WE GOTTA BE SMART ABOUT THIS. I AGREE, BUT WE HAVE TO TAKE IT.

SURE.

BUT WE DON'T TOUCH IT. AND WE DON'T GO NEAR IT - UNTIL WE HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH.

SEVERAL MINUTES OF BRAINSTORMING LATER...

WELL HOW 'BOUT THIS THEN... WHAT IF WE FABRICATED SOME SORT OF VAULT - FROM THE BLAST SHIELD PLATING IN THE STORES... AND THEN WE USED ONE OF THE DRONE SHUTTLES TO FERRY IT OVER AND PLACE IT IN THE BAY.

I'M STILL NOT COMFORTABLE WITH IT BEING ON OUR SHIP.

SAY - HERE'S A THOUGHT - WE JUST LEAVE THE DAMN THING IN SITU. YOU MEAN LEAVE IT BEHIND?

NOW DUMMY, WE BRING THE ENTIRE WRECK ALONG WITH.

SO - WE TOW IT.

EXACTLY. WE WON'T BE ABLE TO JUMP - BUT WE COULD CONTINUE TO STU...

YO, SARA.

I PUSH THE BUTTON!

YES, DAVE. WHAT IS IT?

-SPUTTER-

DAVE!!!!

WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU DOING...?

WHY...???

I-I HAD TO KNOW! I'M SORRY.

GAAA!!

DUDE - WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

WAIT... WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

WAIT, SARA...? HE DIDN'T MEAN...

UM W-WHERE ARE YOU GOING...?

OH, I'LL BE BACK.

I JUST NEED TO GRAB MORE DICE FROM MY BACK PACK.

-SIGH- THE ONE THING EVERY GAMEMASTER CAN RELY ON WITH CERTAINTY...

YEP. EVERY SHINY-GLOWY BUTTON WILL GET PUSHED.

WITHOUT FAIL.





John Darkeye:  
The last good  
thief

# THE NIGHT I BROKE INTO DOME 14

FOOLISHNESS BY SMIF

## CHAPTER ONE: INCONCEIVABLE- I GOT CAUGHT BY SOME LOWLIFE GANGERS

IT WAS THE WELL GUARDED MOTOGANG LAIR &  
I WAS LOOKING FOR SOME SWAG. IT WAS A  
DECENT TEST FOR MY ABILITIES...

I EVEN BYPASSED SOME  
MOTION DETECTORS.

SOMEHOW, THEY FOUND ME, AND EVEN MY DARK  
EYE HAD NO EFFECT ON THEM... I WAS GOING  
TO BE USED AS A HOOD ORNAMENT.

BUT I IMPRESSED THEM, HAVING  
GOTTEN SO FAR WITHOUT DETECTION.  
THEY HAD AN OFFER FOR ME.

NOT A CHOICE, REALLY.  
A JOB.

BUT WITH A CREW: THEY  
DON'T TRUST ME MUCH.

A "WOODY"  
PLANT BASED BIPED

A "SAPIEN"  
PURE HUMANOID

AND BY THE ANCIENTS,  
A 'TAINT! UGH!!!

TO BE CONTINUED

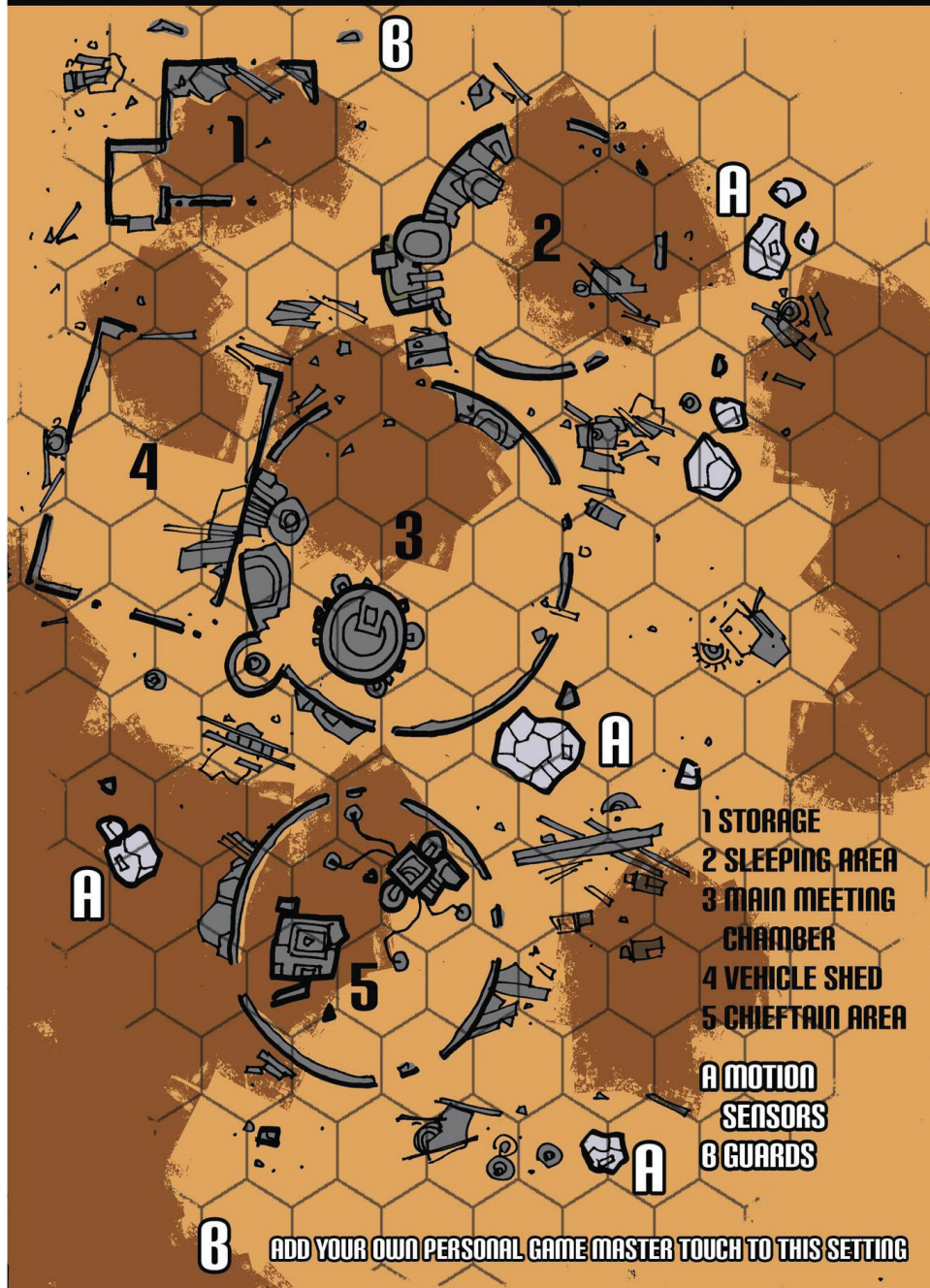


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# THE NIGHT I BROKE INTO DOME 14

CHAPTER ONE: INCONCEIVABLE- I GOT CAUGHT BY SOME LOWLIFE GANGERS



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STARTING IN THIS ISSUE OF SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN

# The Adventures of JOHN DARKEYE "THE LAST GOOD THIEF"



WHO'S THAT?!!

AN ALL-NEW CONCEPT  
IN THE COMIC STRIP FORMAT

## THE GAMEABLE COMIC!

WHAT'S THAT? SORRY, BUT TELLING WOULD  
BETRAY THE GM'S CODE. YOU'RE GOING TO  
NEED A HIGHER INITIATIVE ROLL FOR THAT!  
(LIKE LOOKING INSIDE THIS ISSUE)

RETRO-FUTURE FOOLISHNESS FROM

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