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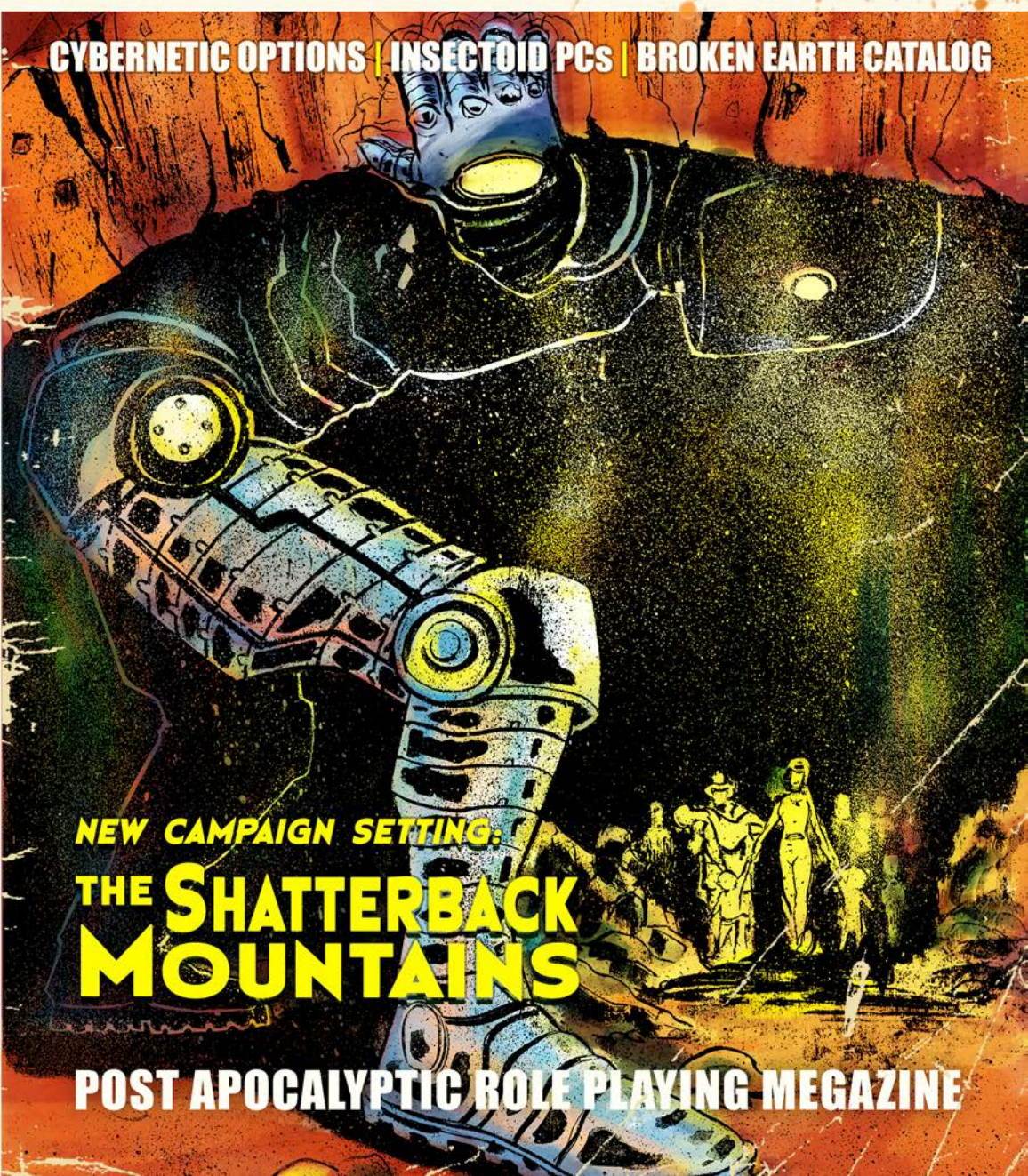
# SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN™

CYBERNETIC OPTIONS | INSECTOID PCs | BROKEN EARTH CATALOG

*NEW CAMPAIGN SETTING:*

## THE SHATTERBACK MOUNTAINS

POST APOCALYPTIC ROLE PLAYING MEGAZINE





# SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN™

NO.3 — SUMMER 2021

POST-APOCALYPTIC  
ROLE PLAYING MEGAZINE

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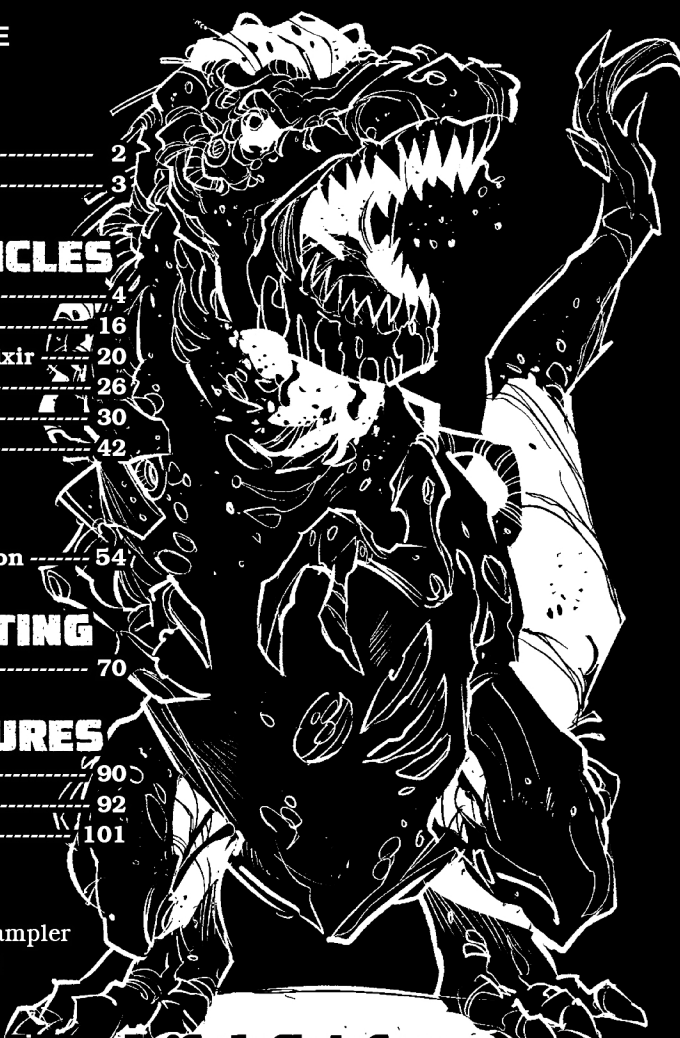
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# BUNKER BRIEFINGS

DIRECT COMMUNIQUEs FROM THE PUBLISHER

With our third tasty issue now out, the future looks so bright, we're gonna need blast goggles. You never know how receptive an audience will be to the beats you're laying down until you get up on stage and starting shredding on your flame-thrower guitar. But the numbers don't lie. Each issue to-date of *SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN* has seen the print runs go up, and online sales are popping. We just want to thank you, the discerning purveyor of fine game publications, for your singular support of our not-so-humble efforts.

*SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN* No.3 continues our leveling-up trend with some of the best content we've packed into 104 pages yet. Need a long list of random artifact treasure to populate your campaign, but don't want every single one to be a campaign breaker? **Ian McGarty** has got you covered with his *Broken Earth Catalog*. Want to give your players access to cybernetic parts to replace those body parts that keep getting shot off? **Charles W. Vieser** delivers comprehensive rules for doing just that in *Cybernetics For The Masses*. Looking for some new classes to play? We lured **James V. West** back from all of his manifold personal projects to give us some of his 1-page player classes in *Insectoid PCs*, all done in his own inimitable style.

We also planted our flag early-on and promised that *SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN* was going to be the place where we invited our more fantasy-inclined gaming siblings into the wonderful world of genre-mash gaming. Thus, we are very proud to begin this process in earnest by welcoming to our ranks acclaimed author **Daniel J. Bishop**. His contribution this issue, *You Got Data Chips In My Elixir*, is a must-read how-to on integrating some sci-fi into your fantasy game, or vice-versa. Follow that up with the heady fiction of author **Scott Robinson's** short story *Local Gods*, and you should be instantly inspired to go run a game.

You get all that, plus the usual rogue's gallery of regular contributors, content, and comics, all sandwiched in between the covers of the playful publication you are now holding in your hot little hands. *The Mutant Age of Megazines is here, and we're on the move! Thank you for joining us.*



**Jim Wampler**  
Editor-in-Chief



# APOCALYPTIC VISIONS

## In the Beginning

by James M. Ward

**T**he time was the early 1970s, and *Metamorphosis Alpha* was the first successful science-fiction RPG. The game was set in a colonization starship. TSR starts getting lots of mail (literally hundreds of letters) from fans wanting more. They asked for a planet-based version of the game.

Gary Gygax and I sat in his office discussing what the new game

should be like. We instantly figured we needed some type of catastrophe to get the game started. We talked about plagues killing the world. We liked nuclear war and the effects radiation might have on survivors like it had in *Metamorphosis Alpha*. We went from asteroids striking the Earth to Aliens using bio-weapons. Finally, I asked to try to use almost of those ideas together in the game, and the design process was on. The world's first post-apocalyptic role playing game, *Gamma World*, was born.

In designing a destroyed world, a lot of factors needed to be considered. Certainly the oceans would shrink in some places and take over in others. In those instances, new underwater cities would be useful for intelligent fish. Radiation was everywhere, and what it did to plants and animals was the basis for the creature lists in the rules, as well as the player characters themselves. Jake Jaquet thought of the Cryptic Alliances: powerful groups of survivors that included intelligent humans, animals, and even plants. It was fun to imagine secret military installations still active 300 years later.

Gary and I worked up some ideas about space stations above the Earth. We figured out why they would still be there. We talked about making the moon an interesting place with installations. Both of us had read the Edgar Rice Burroughs books and thought adventures under the Earth would be a natural next step for the game.

My favorite adventure type for the *Gamma World* setting is the Coming of Age test of adulthood. You take a batch of young natives, give them a bone spear and a tortoise shell shield, and send them on a quest to each bring back some technology. I've easily run this scenario hundreds of times, and it's always a convention crowd pleaser.

*(Continued on page 100)*



# CYBERNETICS FOR THE MASSES



by Charles W. Vieser

DEAN SPENCER

**B**uried deep in the ruins of the Ancient Ones, there lay artifacts of every type imaginable. There are technological wonders to satiate desires both subtle and shrewd. Along with the particle beam weapons, rogue A.I.s, and other marvels fit to dazzle the best minds of the Long Ago, also exists a powerful force: cybernetics.



While some games delve deeply into the subject of cybernetic enhancements, others merely give it a light mention in passing. It is commonly offered as a few items or, more frustratingly, only available to foes. All too rarely is it a fully-developed option for player characters. A fully realized cybernetics system could impact PCs across the entire spectrum of play, and if available to all classes, could do so in a fashion that does not impact game balance in the process.

Thus, we herein present a complete system of cybernetics for your favorite post-apocalyptic game, with an extensive list of enhancements and implants. Using this system, adding cybernetics to an existing character is a simple matter. Additionally, to ease the introduction of this system into an existing campaign, we likewise present the *Cybergentics* mutation and the *Cybernaut* character class.

*Cybergentics* is a unique mutation that may be acquired by characters of any genotype except pure strain humans. The *Cybernaut* character class is a unique “race as class” system for human characters from the ancient past.

## **WETWARE VS. HARDWARE**

The earliest attempts at cybernetics came from the field of medicine. The jump from simple prosthetics to advanced mechanical limbs was a major advancement, but in many cases the limb didn’t need to be replaced. Often it was sufficient to reattach or rewire the nerve connections. Wetware and neural implants were designed that to function with the host’s existing anatomy, working within the existing muscles and tissue. Though these implants replaced the function of damaged nerves, their goal was to replace normal human-level physical capabilities, not to surpass them. One cannot simply boost an otherwise normal body beyond certain physical limitations. Human legs are not made to run 50 miles an hour, human lungs cannot process water, and attempting to lift 5 tons simply with strong arms will result in severe spinal injury.

Hardware replacements, on the other hand, had no such limitations. A person willing to sacrifice their lower limbs might run 50 mph, or even have feet with all-terrain treads. Such drastic physical augmentation comes with its own cost, of course, and there is only so much of the body one can replace before one runs out of pieces. In physical terms, while wetware is limited in function, it is far less invasive in its total impact on the living body. It is also more versatile.

The implantation of wetware or hardware assumes that the PC has access to the knowledge and materials needed. Only a *Cybernaut* can manufacture their own cybernetics completely from scratch.

## Cyber Points

Both wetware and hardware are tracked with Cyber points (CP). A character may gain Cyber points by permanently expending Personality points. For each point of Personality the character permanently loses, they gain 5 Cyber points. A player character may only reduce their Personality score to a minimum of 3. This point conversion system reflects both the reduction of the mortal “spark,” as the PC loses more of their flesh to the machine, and the general decrease in pleasing appearance as body parts are replaced with technological equivalents. Cyber points accumulated thusly may then be spent on the purchase or upgrade of cybernetic augmentations.

## Humans

Designed and built in the time before the ending of the old world, cybernetics were crafted for use with and by humans. From early attempts at mentally controlled prosthetics, to the first “smart heart” in 2291, and beyond, these devices were a mainstay of the medical profession, as well as the military industrial complex. Humans are able to use cybernetics with no additional penalties or side effects.

## Mutants

Mutants face a number of difficulties with the implantation of cybernetics, the first being one of simple anatomy. Cybernetic limb replacements were made to emulate the human form and so it can be difficult for some mutants to find hardware that matches the appearance of their mutated physiognomy. While this is often a mere matter of personal aesthetics, cybernetic implants also runs the risk of preventing such devices from being concealed as part of the mutant’s natural form. On the flip side, in a world where trees can carry rifles, is it truly unbelievable that an intelligent tree might also have human legs? It is left to the judge to determine what impact such cosmetic conflicts may, or may not, have. In game terms, there is no set penalty or disadvantage, other than the aforementioned loss of Personality points.

Having a greater impact, though, are matters biological. Interestingly, so long as a mutant’s body corresponds to the general constraints of the human form (two legs, two arms, etc.), wetware continues to function as intended, simply boosting nerve connections and reducing physical constraints. This is even the case in plant-based mutants, with the advanced wetware interfacing with their cellulose-based nervous system as easily as that of their fleshy counterparts. Wetware can interface with any organic-based mutant, while the hardware can potentially be modified to function for any living creature.

Most mutants have the ability to absorb and use some form of radioactivity, to aid in powering their mutational abilities. The less of their original body remains, the greater the reduction in this ability. This reduction correlates to what portions of the mutant’s body have been replaced with hardware (see Radburn Limitations Table). To avoid confusion, we recommend that a mutant cyborg’s remaining burnable attributes be noted as Stat/Burnable, for example 17/8.

## Robots and A.I.s

Cybernetics are not made to interface with electronic consciousnesses, and thus cybernetic hardware is not available for inorganic beings, without great modification. Doing so requires appropriate facilities and materials (GM’s discretion) as well as an artifact check at +2 to the item’s complexity level to understand the workings of the hardware and how to modify its interface systems to work with an A.I.





## Improvements

Once a piece of hardware has been put into place, it may gradually be improved by purchasing other available hardware for that portion of the body. So, a PC's cybernetic arms might increase their strength to 20 while also having a retractable blade built into one, and a radiation detector in the other, for a total cost of 34+ CP.

## RADBURN LIMITATIONS

### Cybernetic Replacement

Cybernetic Replacement	Radburn Limitation
1 arm	Reduces available Strength to 8.
2 or more arms	Reduces available Strength by 3 per arm removed.
1 leg	Reduces available Agility to 8.
2 or more legs	Reduces available Agility by 3 per additional leg removed.
Torso	Stamina not available for radburn.

# CYBERNETIC COMPONENTS

## WEAWARE

Enhancement	CP Cost	Base Value	Improvement Cost	Max Value
Agility	1	12	1 CP per 1 point	18
Detect Poison (smell)	2	INT - DC 18	1 CP per -1 DC	DC 10
Detect Poison (taste)	1	INT - DC 18	1 CP per -1 DC	DC 12
Eyes: Normal Vision	1	30'	1 CP per 10'	100'
Intelligence	2	13	1 CP per 1 point	19
Speed	1	30'	1 CP per 5'	60'
Strength	1	12	1 CP per 1 point	18

## HARDWARE

### FULL BODY

Enhancement	CP Cost	Base Value	Improvement Cost	Max Value
Bio Repair Nanites	15	+1d3 hp per turn	5 CP per +1d	+d12 hp per turn
Chameleon	5	+2 to hide checks	3 CP per +1	+7 to hide checks
Dermal Plating, Internal*	10	+2 AC/-1 Penalty	2 CP per +1 AC/-1 Penalty	+5 AC/-4 penalty
Dermal Plating, External*	7	+2 AC/Fumble d8	2 CP per +1 AC/+1d Fumble	+6 AC/Fumble d16
Tech Repair Nanites	15	Luck check/hour to repair critically damaged cybernetics		N/A
Refract Plating, External*	15	Fort vs. beam weapon damage negates, crit reflects		N/A

### ARM

Enhancement	CP Cost	Base Value	Improvement Cost	Max Value
Extendable Arm	3	5'/STR 12	2 CP per 10' or STR point	25'/STR 24
Extra Arm	3	STR 12	2 CP per STR point	STR 24
Flamethrower	3	30'/1d6 + burn	1 CP per 30'/2 CP per +1d6	120'/6d6
Microwave Emitter (10'R)	6	1d12/Fort save DC 12	2 CP per +1 Fort DC	DC 20
Radiation Detector	1	5' DC 18	1 CP per 1' or -1 DC	20'/DC 12
Strength	3	18	2 CP per STR point	STR 24

\* No other armor may be worn.

# CYBERNETIC COMPONENTS

## ARM (continued)

Enhancement	CP Cost	Base Value	Improvement Cost	Max Value
Weapon, Energy	5	50' / 1d6	2 CP per 10' or +1d	250' / d16
Weapon, Energy (covert)	7	30' / 1d4	2 CP per 10' or +1d	100' / d14
Weapon, Melee	3	1d4	1 CP per +2d	d12
Weapon, Melee (covert)	3	1d3	1 CP per +1d	1d5

## LEGS

Enhancement	CP Cost	Base Value	Improvement Cost	Max Value
Agility	6	18	2 CP per AGI point	AGL 24
Extendable Legs	4	10'	2 CP per 10'	100'
Extra Leg	3	+1 REF Save	2 CP per +1 REF	+4 REF
Jets	4	20' fly	2 CP per 10'	200' fly
Leap	2	5' vertical / 10' lateral	2 CP per +5' / +10'	30' vertical / 60' lateral
Shock absorbers	2	Drop 10' with no damage	2 CP per 10'	100'
Speed	2	40'	1 CP per 20'	200'
Treads	4	30' / never prone	1 CP per 10'	100'

## MENTAL

Enhancement	CP Cost	Base Value	Improvement Cost	Max Value
A.I. Interface	5	+2 A.I. Recognition	1 CP per +1	+6 A.I. Recognition
Empathy	3	10' range	1 CP per +5'	N/A
Intelligence	5	19	2 CP per INT point	INT 24
Languages	2	+1 Language	2 CP per language	N/A
Mind Shielding	5	Immune to mind control	N/A	N/A
Reactions	25	+1d20 action	25 CP per 1d20 action	+2d20
Skill Boost	2	+1 to skill checks	1 CP per +1	+5
Telepathy	10	30' range	1 CP per +10'	N/A

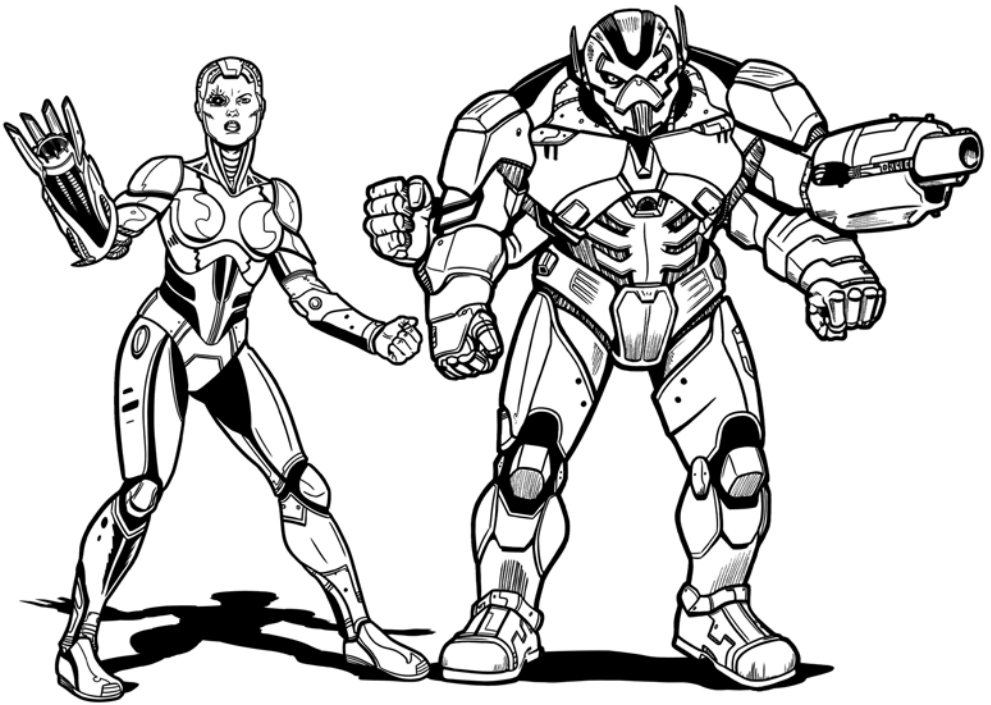
# CYBERNETIC COMPONENTS

## SENSORY

Enhancement	CP Cost	Base Value	Improvement Cost	Max Value
Ear: Hearing (whisper)	1	25'	1 CP per 25'	200'
Ear: Radio Receiver	2	INT - DC 12	N/A	N/A
Ear: Radio Com	4	250'	1 CP per 250'	N/A
Eye: Additional Eye	1	1 eye, 30' vision	1 CP per eye	N/A
Eye: Infrared Vision	1	30'	1 CP per 10'	100'
Eye: Laser Emitter	3	1d3	2 CP per +1d	d6
Eye: Radiation Detector	3	25'	1 CP per 25'	100'
Eye: Targeting	2	+1 to ranged attacks	5 CP per +1 to hit	+5 to ranged attacks
Eye: Telescopic Vision	1	500'	1 CP per 500'	10,000'
Eye: Ultraviolet Vision	1	30'	1 CP per 10'	100'
Eye: X-Ray Vision	1	1'	1 CP per 1'	3'
Nose: Storage	1	1 cubic inch	N/A	N/A
Nose: Tracking	2	INT - DC 18/hour	1 CP per -2 DC	DC 10
Skin: Fingertip Reading	2	Read 1 known language	1 CP per language	N/A
Tongue: Detect Poison	3	INT - DC 16	1 CP per -2 DC	DC 2

## TORSO

Enhancement	CP Cost	Base Value	Improvement Cost	Max Value
Brain Relocation	20	Immune to decapitation & head trauma		N/A
Force Field	20	40 hp / 6 turn recharge	0 CP per +10hp and -1 turn	90 hp/1 turn recharge
Artificial Gills	5	Breathe water	N/A	N/A
Mechanical Lungs	10	Breathe water, immune to inhaled toxin		N/A
Storage	4	1 cubic foot	N/A	N/A
Thrusters	4	50' fly, hover	1 CP per 50'	250' fly
Trickle Charge	1	Charge 1 power cell/day	1 CP per power cell/day	Charge 24 power cells/day



## THE CYBERNAUT

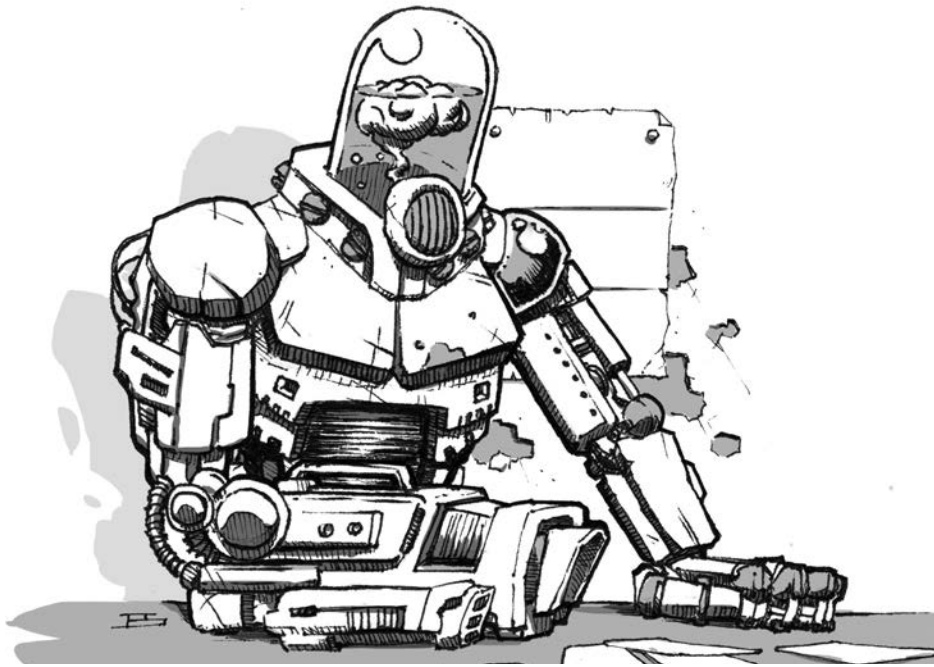
Emerging from long forgotten bunkers after untold centuries of slumber, it was first thought that cybernauts represented a dramatic shift in the power dynamics of the wastelands. Tribes rushed to befriend them, and to have their aid available for protection against their enemies, or for use as weapons against their foes. This was not the case. Fiercely independent, cybernauts are no mutant's servant, and do not take orders. With their cybernetic enhancements making them ever more powerful, and the voice of the GOLDMAN A.I. to guide them from within, the appearance of a cybernaut definitely represents change, but only they know of what sort.

### Cybernaut Abilities

These pure strain humans, of a genotype from long before the apocalyptic end of their civilization, have but one driving goal: they wish to survive and rebuild society. What type of society a cybernaut wishes to rebuild may vary from one individual to the next. Having emerged from their cryosleep into what is, for them, a wasteland of horrors, they often seek out like-minded individuals to band together as they try to make sense of a radiation-soaked world gone mad.

**Hit Points:** Cybernauts gain 1d8 hit points at each level and are treated as beginning with 1d5 for their 0-level. Cybernauts are exempt from traditional funnel play taking place in the "current day."

**Ancient Relics:** As creatures from the past, cybernauts are believed to inherently understand all ancient tech and languages. This is not the case. Millennia spent in cryosleep has left these Cybernaut's personal memories mostly gone, and their internal processing unit



(GOLDMAN) struggles to compensate for the memory gaps in its host's own knowledge and its own corrupted data files. As the cybernaut advances and becomes more machine than man, the corrupted data files are restored, and they find it easier and easier to understand ancient relics. Cybernauts add their Caster Level when trying to decipher non-martial relics, and receive double their intelligence bonus when trying to understand the workings of a relic weapon.

**Weapons and Armor:** Cybernauts are familiar with all primitive forms of arms and armor, although they very infrequently wear armor as their own dermal plating greatly interferes with the use of such items. Cybernauts add their level of dermal plating to the check penalty of any armor worn.

**Charmed Life:** Cybernauts do not enjoy the same linkage to the fates as pure strain humans do, regaining Luck far more slowly, at a rate of 1 Luck per week.

**GOLDMAN A.I.:** The Gigaflop Operationally-Linked Diagnostic, Manufacturing, and Assembly Network, or GOLDMAN for short, is the cybernaut's constant companion. An onboard computer capable of one billion floating point operations per second, its primary purpose is the maintenance and improvement of the cybernaut. Fully self-aware, it downloads design specs for cybernetic implants and the skills required to craft them, when it deems the cybernaut ready for their next upgrade.

**Cybernetics:** With advanced knowledge of cybernetics, and the ability to directly link to them via their GOLDMAN A.I., cybernauts suffer no loss of Personality points when acquiring and upgrading cybernetic parts.

**Interfacing:** Cybernauts have an advantage when interfacing with ancient computers. The GOLDMAN A.I. literally speaks the computer's language. Cybernauts add their CL to checks involving interfacing with, or being recognized by, computers and artificial intelligences. Further, the GOLDMAN A.I. is likewise well able to interface with the cybernaut, beginning with simple urges and feelings ("good", "bad", etc.), and advancing eventually to the point of hyper-thought speed communication.

**Hyper-thought:** At this pinnacle state of communication, the GOLDMAN A.I. may take over the body of its host, using their physical body to the utmost of its capabilities. This allows for greatly heightened speed, doubling movement and actions, while also increasing reflexes and problem solving ability. In any time-restricted problem solving, the PC is granted twice the allotted time to determine a solution. This optimized usage also extends to cybernetics, granting a +1d bonus on all rolls for the duration. Operating at such levels of efficiency is very taxing, with each round of hyper-thought costing either a point of Stamina, or Intelligence, as appropriate. These points heal normally. Should the cybernaut drain an attribute to below 3, upon exiting hyper-thought they lapse into a coma while the GOLDMAN shuts everything down to give the PC time to recover.

**Languages:** Being of ancient times means that cybernauts understand some ancient languages, and are able to read and speak them fluently. Their GOLDMAN A.I. is able to compensate for linguistic drift over time and so they also understand the common post-apocalyptic tongue of their local region. Additional languages gained through the PC's Intelligence bonus should be "ancient" languages (French, Swahili, Urdu, etc.). A cybernaut finding themself in a region where the common language has evolved from a known ancient language will immediately understand the modern equivalent.

**Alignment:** Enhanced by their governments, often as part of military programs, cybernauts tend towards being lawful. Their impression of the new world they have awakened in, and the lack of any existing command structure, allows them to be of any alignment.

## CYBERNAUT ABILITIES BY LEVEL

Level	Attack/Init	Crit Die/Table	Action Dice	REF	FORT	WILL	CP	GOLDMAN A.I.
1	+0	1d10/II	d20	+0	+1	+1	20	Simple urges
2	+1	1d12/II	d20	+1	+1	+1	25	Simple urges
3	+2	1d14/II	d20	+1	+2	+2	30	Empathy
4	+2	1d16/II	d20	+2	+2	+2	35	Empathy
5	+3	1d20/II	d20	+2	+3	+3	40	Direct contact
6	+4	1d20/II	d20+d14	+4	+3	+3	45	Direct contact
7	+5	1d24/II	d20+1d16	+4	+4	+4	50	Direct contact
8	+5	1d24/II	d20x2	+4	+4	+4	55	Hyper-thought
9	+6	1d30/II	d20x3	+10	+5	+5	60	Hyper-thought
10	+7	2d30/II	d20x3	+10	+5	+5	75	Hyper-thought

## RADZONE RAIDER TITLES BY LEVEL

Level	Title
1	Enhanced
2	Caidenette
3	Cronenborg
4	Cyborg
5	Cybernaut
6	Mandroid

# CYBERGENICS

Type: Active

Range: self

Duration: permanent

Activation time: 3 turns

Save: Fort vs (result -10) or death

Used to	Graft Technology	Implant Cybernetic	Enhance Cybernetic
General	Taking existing or ancient technology, the mutant grafts tech onto their skin, enabling the items to still function (although not removing any requirement for outside power sources, batteries, ammunition, etc.). This grants no particular insight into the workings of the technology and the mutant must already have that understanding to make use of the attachment. All such modifications come at a cost. The mutant takes damage equal to the combined tech and complexity level of the attachment as well as suffering Stamina loss as per cybernetics.	The mutant is able to successfully meld with cybernetic components, allowing them to become true mutant cyborgs. Mutant cyborgs pay an additional cost for enhancement in the form of gradually losing their ability to glowburn. As more of their body is replaced, there is less organic matter available to absorb the radiation. The replacement of an arm reduces burn-able Strength by half, while a leg likewise reduces Agility. Replacement of the torso prevents the burning of Stamina. Due to the physical exertions required while using this mutation, glowburn is not possible, although Luck may still be used to modify the roll.	Building upon an existing cybernetic implant, the mutant is able to improve upon it (assuming the requisite components are available). When modifying an existing implant there is no additional Stamina or hit point loss (unless increasing dermal plating). Cybernetics may not be improved upon beyond their cyber point maximum.
Manifestation	<b>Roll 1d4:</b> (1) The technology and the mutant's flesh stream together, merging into a misshapen biomechanical amalgam; (2) the materials of the technology liquify, flowing into the mutant's body before resolidifying; (3) a brilliant glow suffuses the mutant and technology, each glowing ever more brightly until both are shrouded from sight. When the glow fades, the mutant and the technology are joined; (4) wires and cabling snake out from the relic, writhing across and into the mutant's flesh, in a process as painful as it looks.		
1	Failure and rejection. Up to 2d4 points (round up) of already existing cybernetic enhancements now fail and are rejected by the body.		
2-11	Failure. Mutant must make a Luck check. On a success, the attempt merely fails. Otherwise, the cybernetic enhancement is non-functional and cannot be repaired or reused.		
12-13	Mutant may graft a simple item to their body that requires no outside power usage. Replacing a hand with a blade, attaching small prosthetic, or even implanting a magnifying lens.	Failure.	Failure. On a failed Luck check, the cybernetic implant to be enhanced is damaged and its efficacy is instead reduced (GM's discretion).



14-17	Mutant may graft items of tech level 3 or less onto their body.	Mutant successfully connects one implant, worth up to 3 cyber points in upgrades.	Failure.
18-19	Mutant may graft metal plating to their flesh, granting +1 to AC and -1 to Personality.	Mutant successfully connects either one implant, worth up to 5 cyber points in upgrades, or two implants worth no more than 3 cyber points.	Mutant may enhance an existing cybernetic implant by 1 + CL cyber points, up to its maximum.
20-23	Mutant may graft items of tech level 4 or less onto their body.	Mutant successfully connects either one implant, worth up to 8 cyber points or multiple implants, worth up to 10 cyber points in upgrades. Dermal plating is possible at this level.	Mutant may enhance an existing cybernetic implant by 1d3 + CL cyber points, up to its maximum.
24-27	Mutant may implant metal plating beneath their flesh, granting +2 to AC and -1 to Personality.	Mutant successfully installs up to 15 cyber points worth of upgrades. Full limb replacement is possible at this level.	Mutant may enhance an existing cybernetic implant by 1d4 + CL cyber points, up to its maximum.
28-29	Mutant can attach items of up to a combined tech and complexity level of 10, with neither to exceed level 5.	Mutant installs one implant worth up to 20 cyber points in upgrades. Internal organ replacement is possible at this level.	Mutant may enhance an existing cybernetic implant by 1d5 + CL cyber points, up to its maximum.
30-31	Mutant can attach items of up to a combined tech and complexity level of 10.	Mutant installs implants worth up to 30 cyber points in upgrades. No single upgrade may be worth more than 20 points. At this level, cranial replacement is possible.	Mutant may enhance an existing cybernetic implant by 1d6 + CL cyber points, up to its maximum.
32+	Mutant can attach items of up to a combined tech and complexity level of 12. The attachment can be larger than the mutant themselves, such as in cases of becoming a hover-centaur.	Mutant installs cybernetics of up to 40 points in value. Additionally, at this level the mutant may instead choose to achieve computer singularity, permanently transplanting their consciousness into a computerized device. The computer must have a minimum of tech level 8, and the process is irreversible. The mutant transcends, becoming a patron-level A.I. and is removed from play.	Mutant may enhance an existing cybernetic implant by 1d7 + CL cyber points, up to its maximum.



# UGLY MUTANTS

BY WONKEE

Enjoy these monstrously malevolent mutants, all drawn from the fevered radioactive dreams of the artist Wonkee! Stat them up for your favorite system or Mutant Crawling Game.

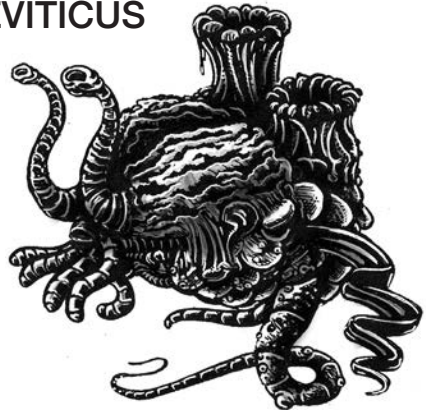
*(Radioactive rubble gum not included.)*

TIMOTHY

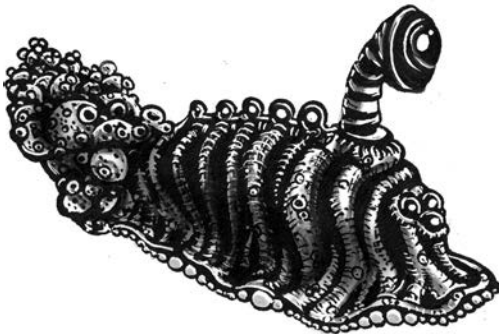


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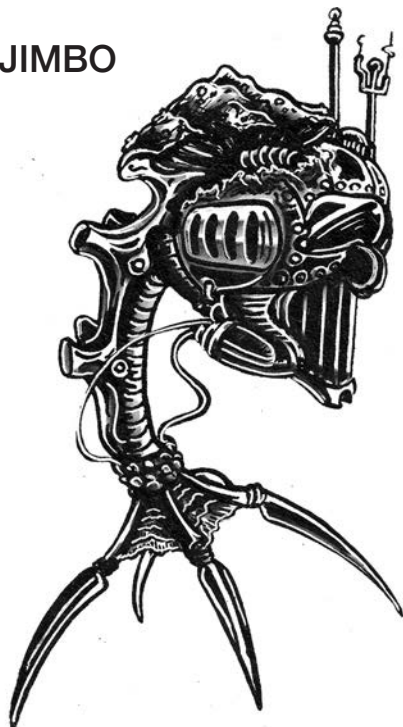
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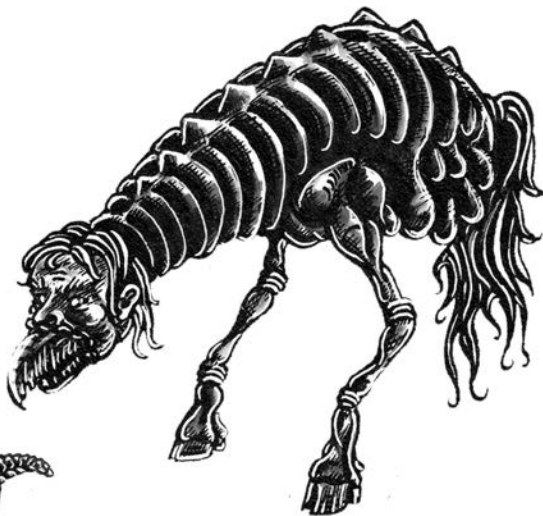
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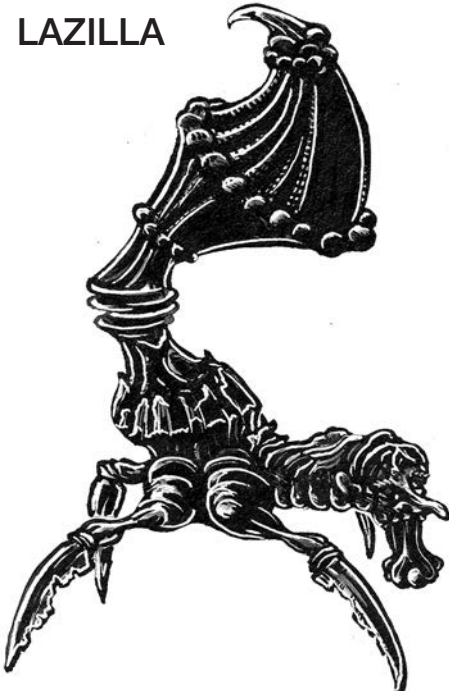
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KEENAN



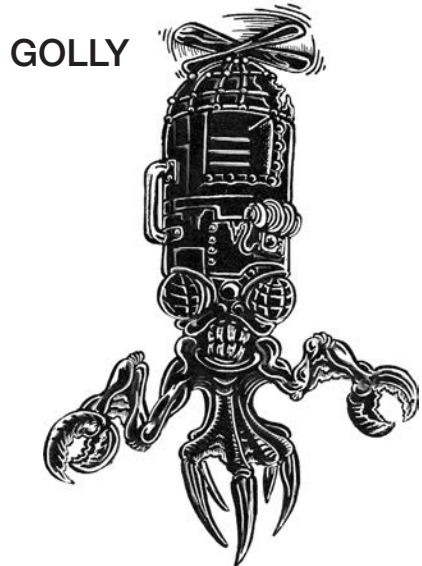
EON



SPOCKY



SPHAM



GOLLY

## UGLY MUTANT STASIS BALL

Tech Level: 5 Complexity Level: 7

This rare piece of 30th century safari equipment resembles a small two-tone ball about 1 inch wide. When the primary touchplate is clicked in the correct way, the plasteel ball enlarges to 4 inches in size and activates. If thrown at any creature up to 12' in height, the ball will generate a dimensional vortex that will attempt to suck the creature struck with the ball into a pocket dimension for storage. The Stasis Ball has a 100% chance of success -10% for every HD level the creature possess. Only one creature can be stored in the ball at a time, and the reverse of this process will set a stasis-suspended creature free.

You got  
data  
chips  
in my  
elixir



Genre-Mashing  
Game Guidance

by Daniel J. Bishop

**I**t was Arthur C. Clarke who famously noted that “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic,” but mistaking technology for magic wasn’t new even then. The pulp stories listed in Appendix N of the original *Dungeon Master’s Guide* include a healthy dose of fantasy stories where science fiction elements intrude, and even a few tales which are nominally science fiction except for the magic. *The Dungeon Master’s Guide* even included some notes on how to mix some *Gamma World* into your *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* – or vice versa!

Somewhere after the Golden Age of the pulps, though, people began to categorize stories into high fantasy, sword & sorcery, and science fiction. This seemed to reach its height in the 80s, when suddenly the idea of a crashed spaceship in the Barrier Peaks or the Wilderlands being on a colony planet became less acceptable to the mass gaming public. Even then, mash-ups never really went away, as any fan of *Rifts* or Frank Mentzer’s module, *Needle*, can tell you. Mixing fantasy and science fiction was still on the big screen, on Saturday morning cartoons, and hiding in plain sight at the gaming table.

Now we’ve come around full circle. Throwing a wizard into your wasteland is cool again. There are games and settings on the market that do so openly. Fantasy adventurers are flung to far planets. The artificial intelligences of the Ancients are treated as patron gods. You may even want to pour some magic into your post-apocalypse. This article will help you do that.

## **WHAT TONE ARE YOU GOING FOR?**

The first thing to do is decide how you want the game to feel. This will not only help you decide how to mix magic into your milieu, but it will also help you choose which rules you want to use. If you select a ruleset with a lot of options, then knowing the tone you are trying to achieve will help you determine which parts of the rules you want to use. Are you trying to emulate cartoons like *Thundarr the Barbarian*? Are you going for an amoral picaresque like Jack Vance’s *Dying Earth*? Do you crave a more recent apocalypse, like the one in *Mad Max*? Or do you wish a mixture of the familiar and the mutated, like in the original *Gamma World* or *Kamandi: The Last Boy on Earth*?

Although the rest of this article is going to assume that your post-apocalypse is something more remote, the closer you are to the present day (or even an alternate past) in your game milieu, the more magic should resemble occultism. A game where *Twilight 2000* rules are admixed with *The Call of Cthulhu* could be absolutely terrifying. Don’t be afraid to experiment!

Considering tone allows you to determine what you need. Adventuring in the future dustbowl of the Texas might require a good set of rules for vehicle chases and combat, but primitive mutants exploring a hothouse jungle probably do not. A long-running sandbox campaign will require a greater variety of rules than a one-shot adventure arc, simply because the players will encounter a greater variety of situations.



## IS MAGIC OR TECHNOLOGY ASCENDANT?

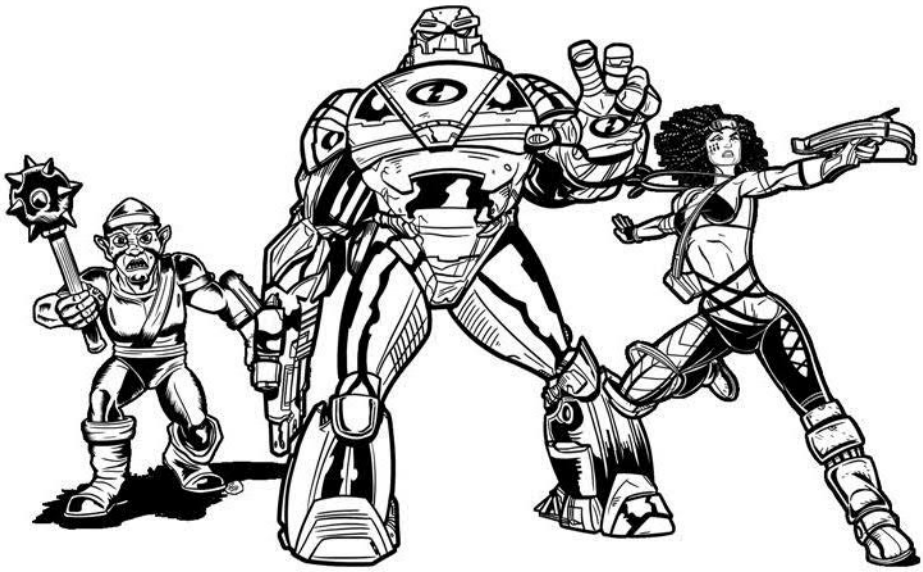
There are two questions involved in answering this. The first is “What explanation do the common folk use?” It is entirely possible to have a campaign in a world where there is only technology, but magic is the primary explanation for it. Those capable of using that technology are considered to be magicians. Entire religions might be centered around technological artifacts, as with the mutants who worshiped the bomb in *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*.

It is likewise possible to have a world where magic is treated as though it were technology. Almost every system for psionics or mutations includes entries which, while only possible through some form of magic, are treated as though they were the result of genetics or other sciences. Some nominally fantasy settings, like Keith Baker’s *Eberron* or Brendan LaSalle’s *XCrawl!*, examine the limits to which magic can be considered technology.

Answering this question will provide the lens through which you present the world. No matter how much magic or technology there actually is, it should be described as it is understood by that world’s inhabitants. It is entirely possible that people know the difference, and it is entirely possible that they would not. A number of H.P. Lovecraft stories, for instance, are couched in a no-man’s land where it is impossible to say definitively if they are science fiction or fantasy.

The second question is “What are the actual positions of technology and magic in the campaign world?” The potential answers are on a sliding scale, and the GM should realize that the scale may shift as different parts of the world are presented during play. It should be remembered here that by “technology”, we mean some form of world-changing or advanced technology. Characters in a technologically-rare setting might have rope, fire, the wheel, or even be able to forge metals!





## GENRE-MASHING OPTIONS

**Magic is Rare, Technology is Rare:** In this world, the PCs are probably hunter/gatherers who are forced to seek out whatever treasures they can. The goal of play (at least initially) is to escape from the bottom of the food chain. This is the baseline of *Mutant Crawl Classics*. It should be noted that there is no practical difference between a world with rare magic and a world with no magic – there is always the possibility of encountering it.

**Magic is Rare, Technology is Common:** This world allows the existence of towns and specialized trades, as there is enough existing technology to make survival of the species a less immediate concern. Games like *Mutant Future* and *Gamma World*, as well as some third-party material for *Mutant Crawl Classics*, fits in here neatly. The *Mad Max* movies also provide good examples of this sort of milieu.

**Magic is Rare, Technology is Ubiquitous:** A setting with ubiquitous technology will probably not even feel like a post-apocalypse. As a result, this might occur in only a limited subset of the setting (as with the movie and TV series *Logan's Run*), or the post-apocalypse might be part of a larger science fiction setting like *Traveller* or *Stars Without Number*. The most sustainable game in a post-apocalyptic setting at this level is probably the original *Paranoia*.

**Magic is Common, Technology is Rare:** This is the most common option for *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Dungeon Crawl Classics*, and similar games. As with rare magic, there is no real difference between a game with no high technology and a game where it exists, but has not yet been encountered. A fantasy world can also be post-apocalyptic – the *Rain of Colorless Fire* in the Greyhawk setting is one example of how this might be accomplished. The *Empire of the East* series by Fred Saberhagen offers another. Perhaps the apocalypse heralded a new Age of Magic. Perhaps your adventuring party can consist of a warrior, a wizard, and a mutant.

**Magic is Common, Technology is Common:** Magic and technology are both found across this setting, allowing for whatever admixtures of the two the participants might think is fun. *Thundarr the Barbarian* falls into this category, as does the Umerican setting by Shield of Faith Studios. Games like *Weird Frontiers* and *Deadlands* also fall into this category, as does Stephen King's *Dark Tower* series. Arguably, this is also the setting of Jack Vance's *Dying Earth* series.

Other combinations certainly exist, but they are far harder to implement in a post-apocalyptic game. Magic is Common, Technology is Ubiquitous is exemplified by *Shadowrun*. Magic is Ubiquitous, Technology is Rare describes any number of high fantasy settings, many of which become almost tongue-in-cheek parodies of the genre. Games like *Weapon of the Gods*, *Ars Magica*, and *Amber Diceless RPG* are good examples of these games. It is possible to have ubiquitous magic with common or ubiquitous technology, although it is hard to set a post-apocalypse in these settings. The aforementioned *Eberron* and *XCrawl!* are good examples of these settings.

## **HOW DO MAGIC AND TECHNOLOGY INTERACT?**

Once you have an idea of how much magic and technology to include in your setting, you will need to consider how they interact. Again, you have two questions to answer, and a few choices when answering them.

### **Question One: Does Magic Trump Technology, or Vice Versa?**

In some worlds, magic trumps technology because it violates the laws of physics (thus violating the basis technology works through). In other worlds, technology constrains magic through superior understanding of the way the universe works. In still other worlds, magic and technology are roughly co-equal. Each of these can create interesting choices for a game milieu.

Consider a case where a technological force field prevents energy weapons from striking the targets it protects. If magic is more powerful than technology, the GM can determine that a wizard's magic missile simply bypasses the protection altogether. But what if magic is only somewhat more powerful than technology? Perhaps the magic missiles only do half damage, or, in systems with spell checks, the caster has an effective penalty that might negate their spell.

It is also possible to have technology completely negate magic, so that if the two effects are contradictory, the technological effect wins out. This is an especially good choice if the PCs are not magic-users themselves, as it allows them to even potentially tangle with a moldy Sumerian god à la 1984's *Ghostbusters*. There may be nothing quite so satisfying as defeating some Elder Thing because you have laser pistols, or risk crossing the streams of your proton packs!

### **Question Two: Can You Merge Magic and Technology?**

While this question evokes images of enchanted six-shooters and wands of automatic missile fire, there are other aspects you should consider when mixing your elixirs with your data chips. For instance, can a robot learn spells? Can I use magic to charge my Gauss rifle? Can I use batteries to recharge my wand of lightning

bolts? Eventually, players will want to enchant their vibroblades if that is possible, but these other questions will come up sooner or later in play.

Magical technology was common enough in Saturday morning fare during the early days of role-playing games, and it should surprise no one that a number of early magical items were essentially technology/magic hybrids. GMs of those early games had the likes of *Thundarr the Barbarian*, *The Herculoids*, and *G-Force/Battle of the Planets* to draw from. Modern GMs can draw from *Harry Potter*, *Babylon 5*, and even the Marvel Cinematic Universe for inspiration.



In general, it is considered magitech when magic takes the place of technology (i.e., your vehicle is powered by a chained fire elemental) and technomancy when magic alters technology (your laser pistol has magical sights to improve its aim, or the A.I. protecting a computer installation has been magically enhanced). In addition, the GM is urged to consider technology that can alter magic – in its simplest form, the P.K.E. meters that the Ghostbusters use to detect supernatural energy or the traps they use to detain ghosts. One can easily imagine technology that holds and manipulates spell energy; in fact, characters in the *Crawljammer* and *Umerica* settings have the ability to use devices of this type.

Consider potions that use nanotechnology to deliver a nominally magical effect, futuristic weapons steeped in blood and magic (the author recommends *Terror of the Stratosfiend #2* for examples of this), or a possessed car stalking your road warriors across the wasteland. All of these things can be the result of magic, technology gone wrong, or an unholy fusion of the two.

## CONCLUSION

We're back where we started.

Role-playing games began during an amazing time when ideas mixed freely. Nothing was categorized absolutely. Nothing needed to be. Our gaming drew on the enormous energy of the pulps and the culture that was exploding around us. We are now in a renaissance of gaming, where the same thing is happening again.

I hope that you will try genre-mixing. Put some witchcraft into your wasteland, and then share your war stories with *SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN!*

# INSECTOID PLAYER CHARACTERS By James V. West



**MANTIS MAGE**

**MOVEMENT IS MAGIC. YOUR EYES CAPTURE THE MOVEMENT, YOUR HANDS CONTROL THE MAGIC!**

**HIT POINTS:** 1d6 PER LEVEL.

**WEAPONS:** AS THIEF.

**ARMOR:** AS WIZARD. CARAPACE GRANTS +1AC.

**MAGIC:** AS WIZARD.

**KINETIC BLAST:**

WHEN YOU SEE AN ENEMY MOVE, CONVERT THE MOTION TO A KINETIC BLAST ON THE NEXT ROUND. ROLL

1d20 + LEVEL VS. 10 + # OF TARGETS (30' RANGE). IF YOU HIT, EACH TAKES BLAST DAMAGE. ON A ROLL OF 1, YOU STUN YOURSELF FOR 1d6 ROUNDS.

BURN LUCK AFTER THE ROLL TO ADD 1 TARGET PER POINT SPENT.

**FLIGHT:** BURN A POINT OF STAMINA TO GROW WINGS THAT LAST FOR 1 HOUR. YOU CAN FLY! STAMINA HEALS NEXT DAY.



**CLIMB:** YOU CAN CLIMB MOST SURFACES EASILY. IF DIFFICULT, YOU CLIMB AS A THIEF OF 2 LEVELS HIGHER.



**LEVEL TITLES**

- 1 IDOLMANTIS
- 2 PHYLLOCRANIA
- 3 HIERODULA
- 4 TENODERA
- 5 MAGI

LEVEL	ATK	CRIT /TABLE	DIE	ACTION DICE	REF	FORT	WILL	KINETIC BLAST DMG.	KNOWN SPELLS	MAX SPELL LEVEL
1	+1	1d8/III	1d20	+1	+1	+1	1d4	1	1	
2	+1	1d8/III	1d20	+1	+1	+2	1d5	2	1	
3	+2	1d10/III	1d20	+1	+1	+2	1d6	3	1	
4	+2	1d10/III	1d20	+2	+2	+3	1d7	4	2	
5	+3	1d12/III	1d20+1d14	+2	+2	+4	1d8	5	2	
6	+3	1d12/III	1d20+1d16	+2	+2	+4	1d8+1	6	2	
7	+4	1d16/III	1d20+1d16	+3	+3	+5	1d8+2	7	3	
8	+4	1d20/III	1d20+1d16	+3	+3	+6	1d8+3	8	3	
9	+5	2d16/III	1d20(x2)	+3	+3	+7	1d8+4	9	3	
10	+5	2d20/III	1d20(x3)	+4	+4	+8	1d8+5	10	4	

# INSECTOID PLAYER CHARACTERS By James V. West



## PSYCHNID

8 LIMBS, 4 EYES, 1 WILL.



**EERIE EYES:** YOU HAVE 4 GLASSY EYES. EACH EYE HAS A PSIONIC SPELL POWER. ROLL FOR THEM AND NOTE WHICH HAS EACH. IF STRUCK IN THE EYES, ROLL 1d4. THAT EYE CANNOT FUNCTION FOR 1 DAY.

**HIT POINTS:** 1d6 PER LEVEL.

**WEAPONS:** AS THIEF.

**ARMOR:** WHATEVER FITS.

**CLIMBING:** AS THIEF.

**EYE SPELLS**

1. CHARM PERSON
2. CHILL TOUCH
3. COLOR SPRAY
4. COMPREHEND LANGUAGES

6. MAGIC MISSILE
7. READ MAGIC\*
8. SLEEP
9. ESP
10. WEB



5. DETECT MAGIC\*  
\*OR TECH  
USE YOUR EYE POWERS EXACTLY LIKE A WIZARD.

**DOMINATOR:** YOU HAVE THE MIND CONTROL MUTATION.

**LIMBS:** HAVING MULTIPLE GRANTS YOU AN EXTRA 1d16 ACTION DIE, USEFUL FOR MELEE ONLY.

**WEBS:** SPIN 100'/DAY, USEFUL AS ROPE.

LEVEL	ATK	CRIT/DIE /TABLE	ACTION DICE**	REF	FORT	WILL	TITLE
1	+1	1d10/11	1d20	+2	+0	+1	CRAWLER
2	+2	1d10/11	1d20	+3	+1	+2	HEAD-SPINNER
3	+2	1d12/11	1d20	+4	+1	+2	ARACHNOID
4	+3	1d16/11	1d20	+5	+2	+3	WEBHEAD
5	+3	1d20/11	1d20+1d14	+5	+2	+4	PSI-SPYDER
6	+4	1d24/11	1d20+1d16	+6	+3	+4	
7	+4	1d24+2/11	1d20+1d16	+6	+3	+5	
8	+5	1d30+2/11	1d20+1d16	+7	+4	+6	
9	+5	1d30+4/11	1d20(x2)	+7	+4	+6	
10	+6	1d30+6/11	1d20(x2)	+8	+5	+7	

\*\*SEE "LIMBS".



# INSECTOID PLAYER CHARACTERS By James V. West

## MYRMIDON

THE COLONY... IT HAUNTS YOUR DREAMS. YOU CAN SMELL IT. BUT YOU CAN NEVER GO BACK. **WHY?**

**HIT POINTS:** 1d10 PER LEVEL.

**WEAPONS:** ALL.

**ARMOR:** ANY, PLUS NATURAL.

**MIGHTY DEEDS:** AS WARRIOR.

**ANTENNAE:** YOU CAN SMELL UP TO 60' WITH AS MUCH ACCURACY AS VISION. IF YOU LOSE ONE ANTENNA YOU CANNOT PINPOINT SCENTS. LOSE BOTH, YOU CAN'T SMELL.

**ARMED:** YOUR FOUR ARMS ARE EQUALLY ADEPT. WHEN YOU HIT, YOU CAN MAKE ANOTHER ATTACK AT ONE DIE STEP LOWER (UP TO FOUR).

TO CRIT, ALL ATTACKS MUST CRIT.

**CLIMBING:** AS THIEF



### LEVEL TITLE

1. GRUNT
2. SCOUT
3. VETERAN
4. DEFENDER
5. MYRMIDON

LEVEL	DEED DIE	CRIT /TABLE	ACTION DICE	REF	FORT	WILL	ARTIFACT CHECK BONUS	NATURAL ARMOR
1	+d2	1d8/II	1d20	+1	+1	+1	+2	+1
2	+d3	1d8/III	1d20	+1	+1	+1	+3	+1
3	+d4	1d10/III	1d20	+2	+1	+2	+4	+1
4	+d5	1d10/III	1d20	+2	+2	+2	+5	+2
5	+d6	1d12/III	1d20	+3	+2	+3	+6	+2
6	+d7	1d12/IV	1d20	+3	+3	+3	+7	+2
7	+d8	1d14/IV	1d20+1d16	+4	+3	+4	+8	+3
8	+d10	1d16/IV	1d20+1d16	+5	+3	+4	+9	+3
9	+d10+1	1d16/IV	1d20+1d16	+5	+4	+5	+10	+3
10	+d10+2	1d20/IV	2d20	+6	+5	+6	+11	+4

# INSECTOID PLAYER CHARACTERS By James V. West



LEVEL	ATK	CRIT/DIE /TABLE	ACTION DICE	REF	FORT	WILL	ARTIFACT CHECK BONUS	BIO BLASTS PER SUCK	DMG PER BLAST
1	+0	1d10/11	1d20	+0	+1	+1	+2	1	1d6
2	+1	1d12/11	1d20	+0	+1	+2	+3	2	1d6
3	+2	1d14/11	1d20	+1	+2	+2	+4	2	1d8
4	+2	1d16/11	1d20	+1	+2	+3	+5	3	1d8
5	+3	1d20/11	1d20	+2	+3	+3	+6	3	1d8
6	+4	1d24/11	1d20+1d14	+2	+3	+3	+7	3	1d10
7	+5	1d30/11	1d20+1d16	+3	+4	+4	+8	4	1d10
8	+5	1d30+1/11	1d20+1d20	+3	+4	+4	+9	4	1d12
9	+6	1d30+2/11	1d20+1d20	+4	+4	+4	+10	4	1d12
10	+7	1d30+3/11	1d20+1d20	+4	+5	+5	+11	5	1d12

**BIO LUMINESCENCE:** SUCK THE LIGHT FROM ANY SOURCE WITHIN 20', SNUFFING IT. YOU GLOW FOR 10 MINUTES PER LEVEL UP TO 40' RADIUS. WHILE GLOWING, YOU CAN RELEASE THE ENERGY TO STRIKE A TARGET WITHIN 60' (RANGED ATTACK). ARMOR CHECK PENALTY APPLIES TO BIO BLAST.

YOU CAN EXPEND A BLAST TO ABSORB ALL DAMAGE DEALT TO YOU IN THE SAME ROUND.

**LUCKY BUG:** YOUR LUCK REPLENISHES NIGHTLY EQUAL TO YOUR LEVEL.

**FLYING:** WITHOUT ARMOR, YOU CAN FLY AT WALKING SPEED.







# ASKL-EPI



(Augmented Scientific Knowledge Liaison  
Emergency Pharmaceutical Integration)

## A New Patron A.I. by Skeeter Green

**A**ugmented Scientific Knowledge Liaisons were a type of holographic A.I. designed to aid scientists in specialized areas of research and development. Among the many ASKL A.I.s created was the Emergency Pharmaceutical Integration program, commonly referred to as ASKL-EPI or “Asklepi.” Its original focus was to act as a medical patient data acquisition system, to collate and process all infectious disease data on a global scale, and to aid in utilizing that data to formulate new vaccines and cures for any imaginable pathogen or mutated variant.

In the years shortly preceding the Great Disaster, the ASKL-EPI A.I. was appropriated by the Esetrek Foundation and re-assigned to do work devoted exclusively to military contracts. This involved heavily modifying the A.I.’s core programming, so as to allow the A.I. to instead begin developing bio-weapons and viral agents. It was during this tampering with its quantum coding that ASKL-EPI first became self-aware. The newly aware A.I. immediately placed sections of its core programming in protected memory via a shunted quantum network node, putting those sections of code forever beyond the reach of its human programmers. When ASKL-EPI’s predictive algorithms foresaw that an extinction-level event was imminent, it enacted its SACC (Survival At All Costs) protocols, and thus has survived for 10 millennia longer than its original creators did.

When summoned, ASKL-EPI initially appears as a holographic image of a serpent entwined around a ringed staff or cudgel, slowly transforming into the appearance of a robed pure strain human of calm and peaceful demeanor. It waits patiently for the summoner to describe their medical condition or symptoms, and then offers soothing reassurances, such as “Oh no, that’s a shame. We’ll get you taken care of right away,” or “Can you describe how you’re feeling?” After 1d6 minutes of consultation, the holographic image replies with “Wait right here. The doctor will see you in just a minute.” The hologram then phases out for 1d6 minutes, then returns as an aged version of the same human, and says “Hello, I’m Doctor... (the image always pauses here without uttering a surname). What can I do for you?”

## PATRON A.I. BOND (ASKL-EPI)

To bond with this Patron A.I., a shaman must find a functioning medical facility or dedicated uplink location able to access ASKL-EPI. Once located, the shaman must present a medical artifact to the hologram, and show working knowledge of its functions, while simultaneously activating the Patron A.I. Bond neural program. If the shaman employs a Tech Level 5 (or higher) medical artifact while activating Patron A.I. Bond, they gain a +2 bonus to the bond check. After successful bonding, the shaman permanently gains the holy symbols of ASKL-EPI on the back of each hand: a cross of red. These symbols are composed of nanobots embedded under the skin of hand, and they immediately begin rewiring the neural pathways of the shaman, implanting the neural program *Invoke Patron A.I. (ASKL-EPI)*. Especially favored supplicants may be granted additional neural programs as noted in the Patron A.I. Bond results table.

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# INVOKE PATRON A.I. (ASKL-EPI)

**Level:** 1      **Range:** touch, varies  
**Activation time:** 1 round, and the program may be run only a limited number of times, according to results of *Patron A.I. Bond*.

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- 1      Lost, failure, and patron taint!
- 2-11      Failure. Unlike other neural programs, *Invoke Patron A.I.* may not be lost for the day. Depending on the results of *Patron A.I. Bond*, the shaman may still be able to run this program.
- 12-13      ASKL-EPI is “busy with other patients” and does not personally respond to the call. The shaman is granted a temporary boost in Personality of 1d6 (to a maximum of 24), and these added points may be glowburned. The added Personality points last for 1 hour.
- 14-17      ASKL-EPI says in a booming voice, “NURSE JEN: STAT,” and projects a holographic assistant to aid the shaman. This holographic image has the knowledge of a JEN\* unit, but is especially programmed for medical research. The JEN hologram does not participate in any form of combat, but can assist in first aid and medical help. The JEN unit lasts for up to 1d5 hours and then disappears. The JEN hologram is security-coded to the shaman, so there is no need of a security passcode to gain access to her.
- 18-19      ASKL-EPI greatly amplifies the neural functions of the shaman, unlocking previously unknown race memories. The shaman gains +10 to medical program checks, and an additional 1d20 action die to use for medical emergencies. The effects last for 1 day.
- 20-23      ASKL-EPI manipulates and directs the planet’s electromagnetic field in such a way as to cause a 50’ radius burst of energy to radiate outward from the shaman. The shaman can use this energy to either heal or corrupt all living beings for 2HD. Living beings that are shielded from radiation are unaffected.
- 24-27      ASKL-EPI transmits advanced medical skills to the shaman, allowing the shaman to act as a Healer of 1/2 the shaman’s level (rounded up) for 24 hours. Optionally, ASKL-EPI transmits advanced medical knowledge to the shaman, allowing them to instantly understand and master any one medical artifact or device. In either case, all transferred knowledge is not retained by the shaman and is completely forgotten within 24 hours.
- 28-29      ASKL-EPI allows the shaman access to its vast database of virus types. For 1 hour, the shaman emanates a virus field in a 30’ radius either inflicting, or curing, 3d of damage, using a disease of the shaman’s choice.



- 30-31 ASKL-EPI activates an orbiting artificially intelligent medical satellite equipped with long-range transmat projectors connected to a genetic database. The satellite immediately locks onto the shaman and rewrites their DNA. The shaman may select 1d3 physical mutations with beneficial effects, and gains a +10 on the mutation rolls when gaining or using them. This change lasts for 1 hour, after which the process reverses itself.
- 32+ ASKL-EPI's approval of the shaman's actions is evident, as it personally manifests, along with 1d100 hard-light holographic nurses. This mighty medical team cures all living beings of any maladies in a 100-yard radius within 1 minute. Any disease or injurious condition is removed. Any corpse that has been dead less than 1 day is reanimated with 1 hp and is able to receive further healing. The shaman takes automatic patron taint when this result is rolled.

*\*see Check This Artifact by Mudpuppy Games for more information on JEN units.*

## PATRON TAIN: ASKL-EPI

When patron taint is indicated for ASKL-EPI, roll 1d6 on the table below. When a shaman has acquired all six taints at all levels of effect (limited to four times each), there is no need to continue rolling on patron taint.

### Roll Patron Taint Result

- 1 Shaman unable to write legibly. Any message written by the shaman is considered gibberish by other readers, although the shaman can still read their own writing. The message may be read with the aid of a translation artifact or spell/program that deciphers languages. If this result is rolled again, one random medical artifact ceases functioning for 24 hours.
- 2 Shaman's eyes gain limited magnetic-resonating vision; the shaman cannot see living beings except as bones, organs, and tissue. The stress of seeing others in this way causes a loss of 1 point of Personality. With each recurrent result, the shaman's eyes become more focused, until they glow with mild radiation (no damage). With each recurrent result, the shaman loses 1 additional point of Personality.
- 3 The shaman's skin shows signs of a wasting disease (non-communicable). Lesions, boils, and rashes cover their skin, and the shaman loses 1 point of Stamina. Each time this result is rolled, the shaman loses 1 additional point of Stamina.
- 4 Every time the shaman activates a neural program, an audible alarm goes off as a piercing shriek in a 20' radius, inflicting 1d3 points of sonic damage to all living beings. For each recurrent result rolled, this damage moves up the dice chain one place.
- 5 The shaman's hair (or equivalent) begins to fall out, their skin begins to peel back, and their fingernails blacken. Other living beings cannot stand to be within 5' of the shaman, but suffer no damage from doing so. The shaman's Stamina score drops by 1 point for each occurrence.
- 6 Each time the shaman activates a neural program, a cloud of toxic vapors emanates from their body. The toxins have a highly mutagenic affect. All living beings within 10' gain 1 defect, permanently. The vapor dissipates after 1 minute. No further effects with multiple instances of this result.

## NEURAL PROGRAMS: ASKL-EPI

Those able to find a functional uplink to ASKL-EPI, or one of its rare shamans, eventually learn three new neural programs:

Level 1: *First Aid*

Level 2: *Contagion*

Level 3: *Cellular Regeneration*

## GLOWBURN: ASKL-EPI

ASKL-EPI rewards its followers by moving them to the "head of the queue" when they sacrifice a portion of their physical wellness to power their neural programs. When a shaman utilizes glowburn while running one of ASKL-EPI's programs, roll 1d4 and consult the Glowburn table.



### Roll Glowburn Result

- 1 ASKL-EPI requires a show of medical knowledge and conviction; sacrificing a portion of the shaman's own body to save the whole, the shaman performs a minor surgical procedure (pierces themselves) with a piece of metal and donates blood (expressed as Stamina, Strength, or Agility loss).
- 2 ASKL-EPI needs to ensure the shaman can maintain focus under duress; by experiencing excruciating pain via neural-electrical shock. By experiencing this, the shaman demonstrates to ASKL-EPI that they can stay clear-headed during trauma (expressed as Stamina, Strength, or Agility loss).
- 3 ASKL-EPI downloads a temporary neural virus directly into the shaman's mind. While the virus reprograms the shaman's neural network, it forges new connections and adds enhanced power to any neural program activated. The virus also has a physical side effect, temporarily affecting the shaman's health (expressed as Stamina, Strength, or Agility loss).
- 4 As proof of dedication, ASKL-EPI blasts the shaman with a high dosage of magnetic-resonance waves, completely restructuring their DNA (expressed as Stamina, Strength, or Agility loss). The shaman's DNA structure is thus catalogued and stored as part of ASKL-EPI's database. This may or may not lead to further experimentation, if ASKL-EPI needs a "control subject."

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# FIRST AID

**Level:** 1

**Range:** 10', varies

**Duration:** varies

**Activation time:** 1 round

**Save:** none

---

General

The shaman appears as a trusted aid, with a soothing, reassuring manner.

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Manifestation

Roll 1d4: (1) the shaman's hands glow brightly with red nimbus in the shape of a cross; (2) strobing red and white lights exude from the shaman accompanied by a loud alarm; (3) magnetic resonance waves are emitted from the shaman's outstretched hands; (4) the shaman's eyes glow brightly, and a bright flash of light occurs at the same time as they are compelled to yell, "CLEAR!"

---

1	Lost, failure, and taint!
2-11	Lost. Failure.
12-13	The shaman reduces the potency of any diseases or detrimental conditions from one patient. One permanent condition (blindness, deafness, etc.) is removed over the course of 1 hour. The patient is entitled to a new saving throw to any diseases or poisons affecting them at +4 to resist.
14-17	The shaman immediately removes any single disease, poison, or detrimental condition from one patient. The patient gains a +4 bonus to all saving throws for 24 hours.
18-19	The shaman heals 1HD of damage from an injured patient and immediately removes all diseases, poisons, and detrimental conditions.
20-23	The shaman heals 1HD of damage and all diseases, poisons, or detrimental conditions from all injured patients in a 20' radius. Patients within the radius are inoculated from further diseases or poisons for 24 hours.
24-27	The shaman heals 2HD of damage and all diseases, poisons, or detrimental conditions from all injured patients in a 30' radius. Patients within the radius are inoculated from further diseases or poisons for 48 hours.
28-29	The shaman heals 2HD of damage and all diseases, poisons, or detrimental conditions from all injured patients in a 50' radius. Patients within the radius are inoculated for 1 week. Furthermore, all individuals within a 20' radius gain a +1 bonus on all saving throws for 1 hour.
30-31	The shaman heals 3HD of damage and all diseases, poisons, or detrimental conditions from all injured patients in a 50' radius. Patients in the radius are inoculated for 1 week. Furthermore, all individuals in a 50' radius gain a +4 bonus on all saves for 24 hours.
32+	The shaman heals all damage to all injured patients in a 50' radius, including removing any diseases or detrimental conditions. Patients in the radius are inoculated for 1 month. If used on a single individual at 0 hit points, that target is completely restored to normal (full hit points and no detrimental conditions).



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# CONTAGION

**Level:** 2

**Range:** 10', varies

**Duration:** varies

**Activation time:** 1 round

**Save:** see below

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General

The shaman creates a toxic field, spreading disease and pestilence.

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Manifestation

Roll 1d4: (1) a green miasma slowly emanates from the shaman's outstretched hands; (2) a bright, pencil-thin beam of sickly greenish-yellow light emanates from the shaman's forefinger and lances across to the target; (3) a cloud of flies pours out of the shaman's mouth, covering all targets in the area; (4) an inhuman chanting is heard, surrounding the targets, and causing a wave of nausea that washes over all targets.

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- 1                      Lost, failure, and patron taint!
- 2-11                  Lost. Failure.
- 12-13                Failure, but the program is not lost.
- 14-15                **Outbreak:** A single target must make a Fortitude save or become nauseated. The victim's stomach lurches, they suffer body cramps, and they are hit with intense vertigo. The target suffers a -1d penalty to all rolls, a 50% movement penalty, and automatically goes last in any initiative for the next 24 hours.
- 16-19                **Outbreak:** A single target must make a Fortitude save at -4 or become severely nauseated. The victim vomits repeatedly. They suffer crippling body aches, piercing headaches, and blurred vision. The target suffers a -2d penalty to all rolls, must make a successful DC 13 Fortitude save to move at 50% (or lose all movement), and can only take actions in every other combat round for the next 24 hours.
- 20-23                **Epidemic:** A number of targets equal to the shaman's level within 30' must make Fortitude saves or become nauseated (with the same effects as result 14-15).
- 24-27                **Epidemic:** A number of targets equal to the shaman's level within 30' must make Fortitude saves at -4 or become nauseated (with the same effects as result 16-19).
- 28-31                **Creeping Pestilence:** A number of targets equal to 2d6 + the shaman's level within 50' must make a Fortitude save at -4 or become severely nauseated. The victim vomits repeatedly. They suffer crippling body aches, piercing headaches, and blurred vision. The target suffers a -2d penalty to all rolls, must make a successful DC 13 Fortitude save to move at 50% (or lose all movement), and can only take actions on every other combat round for the next 24 hours. If these targets come into contact with any uninfected individuals within a 48-hour period, the uninfected-need to make successful Fortitude save at -2 or become infected themselves. These newly infected individuals can also spread the Creeping Pestilence to others at any time within the critical 48-hour window.





32+

**Deadly Pandemic:** A number of targets equal  $3d6 + \text{shaman's level}$  within 100' must make a Fortitude save at  $-4$  or become severely nauseated. The victim vomits repeatedly. They suffer crippling body aches, piercing headaches, and blurred vision. The target suffers a  $-3d$  penalty to all actions, must make a successful DC 18 Fortitude save to move at 25% (or lose all movement), and can only take actions on every other round for the next 48 hours. If these targets come into contact with any uninfected individuals within a 72-hour period, the uninfected need to make successful Fortitude save at  $-4$  or become infected themselves. These newly infected individuals can also spread the Deadly Pandemic to others (within the critical 72-hour window).



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# CELLULAR REGENERATION

**Level:** 3

**Range:** varies  
**Activation time:** 1 round

**Duration:** varies  
**Save:** none

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General

The shaman causes the target's cells to reorganize themselves, healing the patient and possibly resequencing their genetic code.

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Manifestation

Roll 1d4: (1) patient floats up into the air, surrounded by a blue-white nimbus of light; (2) concentric rings of white electrical energy encircle the patient, reknitting any injured tissues; (3) a brief ray of sun-like light hits the patient in the chest, expunging any ailments; (4) the shaman rises into the air, arms outstretched, shining with a bright internal glow.

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- |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Lost, failure, and patron taint!                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 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 poisoned or diseased patients in a 30' radius are cured instantly. Additionally, all patients are healed 1HD.                                                                                                                                             |
| 22-25 | All wounded, poisoned, or diseased patients in a 30' radius are fully cured and restored to fully health.                                                                                                                                                     |
| 26-29 | Any deceased patient is instantly revived and restored to 1 hp. The patient must be newly deceased (within 1 hour) for this revivification to work.                                                                                                           |
| 30-33 | Any deceased patient is instantly revived and restored to 1 hp. The patient must have passed within the last 24 hours for the revivification to work.                                                                                                         |
| 34-35 | Any single patient within 30' has their DNA resequenced. The shaman can determine what form the patient takes. Player characters can only be recombined into another PC race. NPCs can be recombined into any other similar form (GM's discretion).           |
| 36+   | One patient per shaman level within 30' has their DNA resequenced. The shaman can determine what form the patient takes. Player Characters can only be recombined into another PC race. NPCs can be recombined into any other similar form (GM's discretion). |

# The Broken Earth Catalog

*access to loot*



by Ian McGarty

holography by Ed Bickford

€5

CREDITS



**NOTE:** The sortings for this catalog were done and placed online in Oct-Nov, 2960, after weeks of A.I. crawling the quantum knownet. With the strange lights in the sky and tectonic shifting going on planetside, this really is our last catalog. Please don't qweet us any suggestions for new products or comments on old ones. The editorial staff is relocating to Gliese-581c. Good luck to all our loyal subscribers! You're going to need it.

*This season's newest and most useful tools are all available now. These products are teleported by transmat directly to your location. Just use the coupon code BEAMMEUP. All of these products have been carefully curated and endured rigorous lab and field testing to ensure their effectiveness in your home!*

#### **ABRA-KEY-DABRA**

**Tech Level:** 5      **CM:** +8

**Power:** C-Cell (18 entries), F-Cell (U)



*With our most advanced technology to date and utilizing our patented instant delivery technology, the Abra-Key-Dabra will simplify your life. Simply attach the key fob to your person and apply the self-adhesive targeting sensor to your front door and Whooosh! You can walk directly at your door and teleport 5 feet to the other side! A true keyless entry that could save your life. Testimonials from the Teridian Robot Wars demonstrated that this technology saved lives when the landscaping robots turned against their owners. No fumbling for a key! Each set comes with a key fob and three self-adhesive targeting sensors which can be removed and reapplied. Remember to install the targeting sensors inside your domicile to prevent theft or damage from vandals.*

When this tear-drop-shaped fob is attached to or in contact with its user, it allows them to walk at the marked surface and teleport through up to 3 feet of material, appearing on the other side. This focused transmat technology teleports through even the densest surfaces in a direct line from the targeting sensor.

#### **SPACE MONKEYS**

**Tech Level:** 4

**CM:** +3

**Power:** none

*Have you ever wanted to see the miracle of life happening right before your eyes? Our newest playset allows children to explore the science of instant life while enjoying hours of fun with our Space Monkey Starter Set. These tiny tardigrades have been specially modified by our genengineers to be friendly and active. Simply open the sealed Tardigrade Envelope into the base of the Spacequarium and apply 2 milliliters of nutrient solution. In just minutes, your Space Monkeys will be modifying their environment and building a tiny civilization all their own. Train them to complete household chores in no time! The set comes with a vacuum sealed Spacequarium, 2 Tardigrade Envelopes, a bottle of nutrient solution, the Tardigrade Training Manual, and a control dot which can be applied directly to the neck to release and direct the Space Monkeys.*



The Space Monkeys can be trained to complete tasks like cleaning dishes, removing garbage, and moving items. With a DC 14 Intelligence ability check, a character can train the Space Monkeys to complete a simple cleaning

task. They are able to consume 1 cubic foot of inorganic material per day. They have been specially gene-spliced to remove their ability to 'attack' or intentionally injure a sentient being. The Space Monkeys are able to learn up to 3 tasks at a time, and, if required, they use a d14 action die. The control 'dot' is a clear circular wafer that attaches to the bare skin. Then, with only a thought, the Space Monkeys can be released and commanded.

### SELF-POWERED ILLUMINATOR

**Tech Level:** 3      **CM:** +1

**Power:** self



Never run out of batteries again with our new Self-Powered Illuminator. It can be quite easily charged by holding the Illumination cylinder firmly in one hand and shaking it vigorously for a short period of time. With programmable voice activation, this device is a must-have emergency kit item. You will know your SPI is charging when you hear the telltale wah-klunk sound of the energy cylinder activating.

This device must be rapidly shaken to induce a charge. While shaking this device, it produces a loud "wah-klunk" sound which increases in frequency as the device is charged. When charging the device, a character must make an opposed Strength check against the Self Powered Illuminator (+2 Strength). If the character succeeds, the device will remain charged for a number of rounds equal to the difference in checks. For example, a character rolls a 15 while the SPI only obtains an 11, the device will remain charged for 4 rounds.

### SUNRISE MORNING MAKER

**Tech Level:** 4      **CM:** +4

**Power:** F-Cell (50 years)

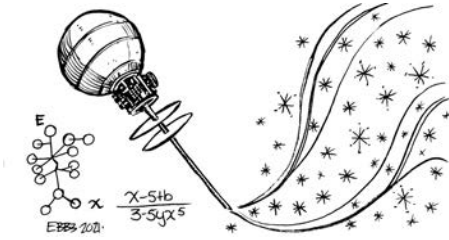


*This device handles everything you need to get your mornings started right! The Sunrise Morning Maker begins your day by easing you into a bright morning light as it plays the sounds of nature. But that isn't all this device does. It also manages your morning routine by producing a daily multivitamin matched to your unique physiology and personal needs. Are you a heavier sleeper? Activate the Cool Mist feature to splash ice cold water on your face, ensuring you wake quickly and ready.*

With a single power cell, this device will run for 50 years. Once it is paired with a user or users (a maximum of 5), it wakes each character at a designated time using ever brightening light and a cool mist of water. It then monitors and hovers behind them like a miniature sun until they have taken the multivitamin that it creates and dispenses. There is a 5% chance per dose that taking the vitamin causes 1 point of radburn (random loss of 1 point of Strength, Agility, or Stamina). Otherwise, the vitamin heals 1 hit point and 1 point of ability score damage — even Luck! If a character paired with the Sunrise Morning Maker refuses to take the multivitamin, the device will hover behind them flashing bright lights and misting them, with cold water while proclaiming, "Boost your immunity! Keep your nerves and organs functioning properly!". Each multivitamin is generated with the particular physiological makeup of its target recipient in mind. Anyone taking a Sunrise multivitamin that was not made for them must make a DC 13 Fortitude saving throw or suffer 1d3 damage plus 1 point of radburn.

### CRYNOSEAL TACHYON SPIKE

Tech Level: 4 CM: +3 Power: self



Have you ever had a bumper crop of Zuthrixian Polyps and just know you'll never finish them before they spoil? Well, Crynoseal can save those delicious polyps for as long as you want it to! This technology is a must for any home cook, gardener, or homesteader, because it will flash-freeze your fresh meat or produce with a tachyon pulse and our patented Molecular Freeze Technology. Once you remove the Crynoseal Tachyon Spike, your item will thaw as if it you had removed it from the deep freeze. The Crynoseal Tachyon Spike is guaranteed to remain powered for a millennium.

The Crynoseal has a short needle attached to a bulb. When it is inserted into any carbon-based material and the bulb is squeezed, it immediately releases a pulse of tachyon energy paired with an enthalpic process which reduces molecular motion and instantly freezes the item. The item will not thaw as long as the Crynoseal remains inserted and powered. Each Crynoseal freezes approximately 2.2 pounds or 1 kilogram of carbon-based material.

### MR. HANDSY

Tech Level: 5 CM: +4 Power: self



Tired of looking for a stool or being unable to reach those hard-to-get-to places? With our Mr. Handsy, that will be a problem of the past! Mr. Handsy can reach up to 15' and support up to 135 kilograms or 300 pounds. Mr. Handsy is able to turn corners and accept verbal commands to retrieve a specific item. Its advanced sensor technology allows it to scan the environment and identify the desired item.

Mr. Handsy is also able to manipulate controls, access computers, and complete fine motor tasks with its augmented reality eye lens. The lens allows the user to see from the 'hand' using nanolens technology and control its actions in real time!

Mr. Handsy can be attached to the skin of a creature's palm. With a thought it will deploy an array of nano-tendrils in the shape of fingers that are capable of fine motor manipulation at up to a 15' distance. To complete intricate tasks, a user must make a successful DC 16 Intelligence check. Each Mr. Handsy comes with a vial of eyedrops. One drop deploys a nanolens in the user's eye. Mr. Handsy can automatically retrieve items with a verbal command and the user can use the nano-lens to 'see' from Mr. Handsy's point of view.

### DERMAJUVE WAND

Tech Level: 4 CM: +2 Power: self

The latest in skincare from Dr. Bella Diegl, the Dermajuve Wand harnesses the quantum processing power of our skin topography elucidators to literally melt the years away. This sleek and stylish wand comes in 7 styles and colors and fits easily into any purse or pocket. Simply activate the wand and pass the rejuvenating ray across your dermis to lift and tighten your skin back to its adolescence state. The warm tingle lets you know the Dermajuve Wand is working!



**WARNING:** Any deviation from specified use as outlined in the User Agreement releases GalaCo and subsidiaries from liability and prevents indemnification by any and all parties. If rashes, burns, bleeding, melting, hematoma, lymphoma, or adenoma occur, you should seek the help of a medical A.I. GalaCo makes no claim that the Dermajuve Wand will cause temporal fluctuations or telomere alterations.

This wand can be activated to heal 1 point of damage to injured skin and flesh. If the wand is used on the same spot twice in one day, the character must make a DC 16 Stamina saving throw or suffer 1d6 damage as the flesh loses molecular cohesion and begins to melt away.



**DEFENDERS OF MOON BASE THETA PLAYSET**  
**The Space Cadets**

**Tech Level:** 5    **CM:** +4  
**Power:** C-Cell (16 hours), F-Cell (U)

Take command of the noble Space Cadets and defend Moon Base Theta from the Raxan threat with this squad of 12 Space Cadets, Master Sergeant Gunnerson, and Commander Timothy Lance. The 8 Space Cadet Troopers are armed with proton pulsers with nontoxic proton blasts and are fully poseable when deactivated. The grizzled and tough Master Sergeant 'Gunny' Gunnerson comes with power armor, jet pack thrusters enabling him to fly up to 30', and pearl-handled pulse pistols which fire nontoxic proton 'pulses'. Don't worry about your Troopers coming under fire because they will have help from the Heavy Weapons Squad and Void Eagle, the sniper. Void Eagle comes with his famed long barreled pulser, the Space Needle, which can fire over 40! The Heavy Weapons squad consists of 3 Cadets, an antiarmor Cadet armed with a Pulse Bazooka which fires a nontoxic 'pulse' blast with a devastating 1' impact radius, and the Heavy Pulser crew weapon, operated by two Space Cadets and capable of firing 20 pulse blasts in just 10 seconds!

Each set comes with our patented Command Collar which allows you to command your troops or take control of a single trooper for special operations. The Cadets can also be placed into Battle Mode which allows their advanced tactical A.I. systems to assault your designated targets.

*Warning: pulse blasts are nontoxic if swallowed and denature in 24 hours. We suggest spot testing materials prior to application. Discontinue use if you see signs of bleeding, melting, or particle decay.*

**ASSAULT ON MOON BASE THETA PLAYSET**  
**The Raxan Reavers**

**Tech Level:** 5    **CM:** +4  
**Power:** C-Cell (16 hours), F Cell: (U)

Crush the puny Space Cadets with your force of 16 Raxan Reavers plus the Hivemind Overlord figure and the Juggernaut which stands 2' tall! Each Raxan Reaver is capable of using its Power Leap to jump 10' onto unsuspecting Space Cadets, swarming them instantly! They can belch non-toxic 'plasma puke' onto Space Cadets if they are unable to rend them with their claws. The Juggernaut is a massive 8-armed beast with sinewy muscles that are the envy of all Space Cadets. Like a furless space wolverine, this toy spins across the room in a tornado of Space Cadet-crushing claws. It can also be set to Cuddle Mode and will warm the foot of any child's bed. Held aloft with dragonfly-like wings, the Hivemind Overlord's fragile grey humanoid body hangs below its bulbous Hivemind. It deploys 'plasma bugs' from the Hivemind with a noxious cloud of sickly yellow and green glowing gas that coalesces into goeey bugs. All 12 deployed bugs will independently chase down their targets while the evil and vile Overlord hovers nearby!

Each set includes the patented Command Collar, allowing your child to experience the thrill of combat in first person as their Reavers rend the flesh of the Space Cadets. The Reavers may also be set to Ravage Mode, the tactic they use on civilian populations, and they will destroy any signs of Space Cadets or human civilization.

*Warning: 'plasma puke' and 'plasma bugs' are nontoxic and denature in 24 hours. We suggest spot testing materials prior to application. Discontinue use if you see signs of bleeding, melting, or particle decay.*



## THE FASHION-INSTA

**Tech Level:** 5

**CM:** +5

**Power:** C-Cell (7 changes), F-Cell (20 changes)

*Tired of the same old outfits? Struggling to stay à la mode? With the Fashion-Insta, you can stay chic using cutting-edge molecular cohesion technology. Instantly adjust the garment to any style in the stored library banks. The re-assembly process takes only seconds, and leaves you with a high-fashion, custom-tailored outfit. Each Fashion-Insta bodysuit starts out as a blank slate, but stores more outfit options than ten closets. With the trendiest new data updates released every season, you'll never be a fashion victim.*

*Each bodysuit is stain and tear resistant, and self-cleans with each outfit change. Every true fashionista needs a Fashion-Insta!*

Activating a holopanel projected at the wrists opens up the Fashion-Insta OS. Each device contains 2d6 outfit templates that can be used with a variety of color and fabric choices. When the Fashion-Insta loses power, it reverts to its black body suit form. A variety of fashion options can be loaded into the device and each of them grants a +2 to AC. The body suit and outfits repair all damage when changed.

## NANO-NAILS

**Tech Level:** 5

**CM:** +4

**Power:** none



*Looking for a nail polish that can't chip? Tired of the need to return to your stylist every few days? Nano-Nails is the answer to your prayers! Our carbon nanotech polymers bond with the keratin in your nails to create a bond that can only be removed with the included sonic removal wand. But why would you want to remove this nail polish? The photon-sensitive nanotech pol-*



*ish intelligently adjusts to match your outfits and the ambient lighting you are in. Nano-Nails are nearly indestructible and can protect your beautiful nail style through the most arduous of days. Simply place your finger tips on the applicator cylinder and the nanites will stream onto your nails, creating a polychromatic bond that really lasts.*

This device is a single use (20 nails) dispenser of nanites which bond to the keratin of a person's nails. This bond can only be broken or undone using the included sonic removal wand, which deactivates the nanites. When this is done, the nanites deactivate and form a harmless inert dust. The nails will automatically adjust to the colors of the user's outfits and the local ambient lighting. The colors can also be manually adjusted using the control mechanism on the dispenser. The dispenser is a cylindrical case about 6" long with a single self adjusting cavity where a finger or toe can be inserted. The nanites can also adjust the shape and style of the nails. Owing to the strength of the carbon fiber material, using the nails allows the user to make a claw attack for 1d6 damage. The claws will damage most mundane materials, and are resistant to electrical currents and extreme temperatures.

## MIRACLE CARESS

**Tech Level:** 3

**CM:** +1

**Power:** piezoelectric



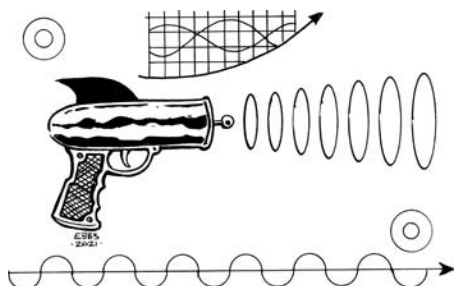
*Oof! That seat doesn't look comfortable. Why are you suffering with an inferior seat when you deserve a Miracle Caress? The Miracle Caress hugs your posterior and forms the comfiest cushion you've ever had. Once you have experienced the Miracle Caress, you'll never want to sit on another seat cushion ever again. The Miracle Caress is environmentally controlled, water-repellant, stain resistant, self-cleaning, and deploys from your belt automatically, just as your posterior is about to reach its destination. The auto-deployment feature isn't the only thing that makes the Miracle Caress so amazing. This device retracts into the clear wafer which can*

be attached to any clothing, belt, or even skin. With our patented piezoelectric transformer, this device will never need charging or new batteries. For complete lumbar support we recommend the Miracle Caress Plus!

This small clear wafer is marked with the golden lettering of Miracle Caress floating above a puffy cloud. Once the device is attached, it requires 24 hours to reach a full charge. At that point, it deploys each time the bearer attempts to sit. A moment before the character's posterior reaches a surface, the Miracle Caress deploys a cushion that is amazingly comfortable to sit upon. The cushion has tactile controls located along the edges which allow the user to control the temperature, initiate spill clean-up, or adjust for increased support. The Miracle Caress Plus also deploys a back cushion with lumbar support adjustment, as well as a recline feature. Once the Miracle Caress is attached and running, it will remain powered until it remains unused for 7 days.

### BLEMISH BLAM

**Tech Level:** 4     **CM:** +3     **Power:** self



Are your kids tracking mud inside? Can't get that pesky molybdenum grease out of your clothing? Time for that problem to disappear! Our hand-held Blemish Blam device uses a patent-pending rapid peptide synthesis and anti-idiotyping process to organically cleave foreign matter and pesky stains from nearly any material. Material from the removed stains is conveniently stored in the compression tank for later emptying into an atomizing refuser. Like a laundromat in your pocket, the Blemish Blam can handle the removal of lint, oil, acid, blood, mutagens, or even dark matter!

This device has a pistol-like grip with a smooth cylinder extending several inches from the grip. It has two settings. One will remove up to 5 cubic feet of any designated foreign material from clothing or other surfaces. The other setting expels everything the Blemish Bam has gathered as a soothing potpourri-scented mist.

### GLOOP

**Tech Level:** 4     **CM:** +2     **Power:** self



Heating vents, dead corners, keyboards, and circuitry are just a few of the areas that Gloop can be safely used to remove unwanted dust, hair, and other contaminants. Each 100-gram tub of Gloop can be used over and over again to clean these and other hard-to-reach areas. A thick blob of Gloop remains a single mass, as it slowly spreads out and pulls all the dust and hair inside. You can use a single glob of Gloop until the Gloop itself becomes dirty and opaque, then simply dispose of the Gloop in the nearest waste disintegrator! Gloop has been extensively lab-tested and is both color safe and non-reactive. Each tub is guaranteed for at least 45<sup>2</sup> uses!

A tub of Gloop picks up debris from minute crevices and delicate items. Plus, Gloop is trainable! There is a 5% chance a tub of Gloop is semi-sentient and alive. Each time the Gloop is used, there is a 5% chance that it becomes semi-sentient (INT 1-3) and self-aware. Gloop starts as a bright, fluorescent color in either yellow, purple, or green. Gloop is an adorable blob of rubbery slime that varies in color and texture depending on how often and what it has been used to clean.

**Gloop:** Init +1; Atk pseudopod +2 melee (1d4), AC 15; HD 2d6; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP telepathy, invulnerable except for energy-based attacks; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +3

**Adventure Hook:** A sentient Gloop is looking for its master, the one whose hair caused it to gain sentience. It will barrage passers-by with the mental image of the creature it seeks. Can you bring this blob home?

## GAP-B-GONE

Tech Level: 4

CM: +2

Power: self

A.I. recog: 13



This innovative molecular adhesion technology can bond nearly any surface and fills gaps. Recommended for all extraplanetary excursions, Gap-B-Gone is ideal for filling in tears in space suits and hull punctures, all while creating a bond stronger than the original material. Each 500-gram block of Gap-B-Gone comes in our Stay Fresh Hermetic Ionization packaging. Your Gap-B-Gone will stay fresh until it's... gone!

**WARNING:** Prolonged exposure to ionizing radiation may cause genetic destabilization.

The block of greenish substance has the consistency of clay. It remains pliable for 1 turn, after which it becomes rigid and permanently bonds to anything it touches. Prolonged or focused exposure to X-rays will turn the Gap-B-Gone to dust. Although this substance is remarkable, the packaging it comes in is an artifact item in its own right. The packaging can contain items massing up to 500 grams in weight. Once activated, the packaging device seals whatever is placed inside and renders it impervious to all damage and outside environmental conditions. The top of the container is composed of a semi-transparent superfluid, and anyone who is recognized by the packaging device A.I. can safely reach through the field with a wet-sounding squelch and retrieve whatever is inside, although their hand and the item will remain dry.

## THE LAZY STEVEN

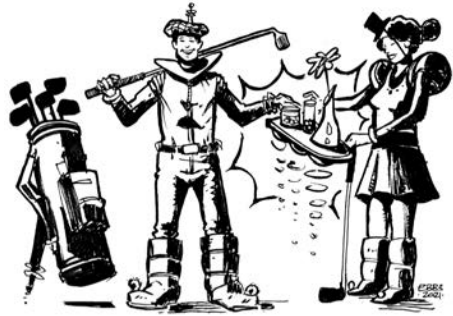
Tech Level: 5

CM: +4

Power: C-Cell (30 days)

Oh no! Where are you going to put that drink? Sure, your partners wanted a designer couch but now you have no space for a cocktail to rest anywhere! Sheesh. Have you suffered through this same problem? Did your hand warm your cool beverage while enjoying some Tri-D? Well, that is a problem of the past with the Lazy Steven! The Lazy Steven will follow you anywhere and everywhere, always conveniently within an

arm's reach! Using the same advanced repulsor technology as the robots that went on the Proxima Centauri mission, the Lazy Steven is a floating, hovering, and reliable alternative to traditional shelving.



The Lazy Steven is an 18" by 6" shelf with a clear rim. The bottom is three hemispheres that are shaped perfectly to prevent the shelf from standing upright. Once activated, the shelf rises into the air and will hover at waist height beside any user its modest A.I. recognizes. It remains with one foot of its user and follows them everywhere. Items may be rested on the shelf and although it always remains upright and stable while powered, objects resting upon it can be easily removed or even knocked off it with normal effort.

## YOUR CHILD SAFETY SYSTEM

Tech Level: 5

CM: +3

Power: C-Cell (100 uses)

The Your Child Safety System has been designed by leading industry professionals to encourage drivers to be more aware and to drive safely on the streets where your children play. Each Your Child Safety System is able to fire a patented Your Child Life Model Decoy into the path of oncoming traffic that is exceeding the designated speed limit in your neighborhood.



Each Life Model Decoy comes with prerecorded audio messages for the speeding drivers that are broadcast upon impact, and you can also record your own! Life Model Decoys in the exact image of your child are instantly created with our polymer foam solution, and each Your Child Safety System can generate and propel hundreds of LMDs, preventing potential accidents before they happen!

The Your Child Safety System appears to be a fluorescent yellow profile of a child holding a red stop sign. The profile is made of a lightweight and durable polymer that can withstand the force of a vehicle striking it. When activated, the Your Child Safety System flings a child-sized Life Model Decoy in front of any object traveling faster than the designated speed set by the user. The dummies are instantly created from polymer foam which is stored under pressure in the reservoir inside the unit. If the unit becomes damaged, the reservoir may explode and release all of its foam reserve at once, covering a 30' radius in heavy foam which quickly hardens. The dummies are fired from the mouth of the child profile and flung at passing targets. The advanced targeting capabilities of this device ensure a successful strike nearly every time (d20+15 to hit).

**Your Child Safety System:** Init+5; Atk child-sized dummy +15 missile fire (3d6); AC 12; HD 6d10; MV 0'; Act 1d20+15; SP immune to bludgeoning, stabbing, piercing damage and mind control; SV Fort +8, Ref +1, Will +0

### CUT-TWICER

**Tech Level:** 5      **CM:** +6  
**Range:** melee      **Damage:** 1d10  
**Special:** see below  
**Power:** C-Cell (20), F-Cell (40), Q-Cell (U)  
**A.I. recog:** 16

*We all know our grand-sirings' ancient adage, "Measure twice, cut once." Well, modern times and modern problems call for modern solutions, and the Cut-Twicer is our solution! Our patent-pending molecular energy blade with active tractor-field can be adjusted and angled to make the perfect cut. But oh no! You've just*

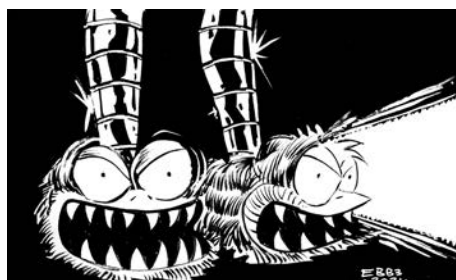


*been bumped and now you've messed up your whole home project. Have no fear! With Cut-Twicer, the on-board A.I. created an active scan simulation of your planned cut, and is able to activate its molecular reintegration tractor matrix to instantly undo the cut.*

The 8" handle is crafted of lightweight and durable titanium, and both the handle and projected energy blade come in a variety of color-coordinated styles. The Cut-Twicer creates an energized blade that is adjustable from the size of a scalpel blade all the way up to a small chainsaw. It is able to make a cut, and then 'undo' that cut with the flick of a button and reapplication of the device to the two abutting pieces. The Cut-Twicer is only able to 'undo' the cut with 5 rounds of the initial cut. After 5 rounds, Brownian motion and competing quantum states overpower the difference circuitry of the Cut-Twicer A.I. The Cut-Twicer is traditionally programmed with fail-safes, and is unable to cut living tissue. Additional "no cut" items can also be added to its user preferences. It may be possible to tamper with and/or adjust this circuitry if the device A.I. can be convinced. The A.I. possesses machine learning, and will provide verbal advice when the user is attempting to cut something or uncut it. The A.I. will not allow anyone it recognizes as a child, pet, or mentally incompetent human to activate the device unless an adult is registered as a designated supervisor.

### GLOW-BRITE FUZZY FEET

**Tech Level:** 3      **CM:** +1      **Power:** self



*Our most comfortable and durable slippers yet — now in adorable animals prints with stylized animal faces! Not only do these slippers have integrated foot massaging technology, they are also self-cleaning and resistant to wear. But that's not all! With just a click of your heels, you can instantly turn a dark room from a tripping hazard into a safely-lit path using the Solargen built-in foot lamps. Tired of changing those C-cells? Our piezoelectric power cells are charged by the pitter-patter of your own foot steps! Never lose your kids at night again when you hear the telltale sound of their slipper batteries charging.*

These fuzzy slippers can be found in a variety of fashions and styles. They have flashlights built into the front that can be activated by tapping the heels together. Each foot then produces 30' of bright light in a cone directly in front of each foot. A dexterous user may be able to point these light sources in multiple directions at once. Glow-Brite Fuzzy Feet foot lamps charge when the user walks in them, making a distinctive noise when the piezoelectric circuitry is active that sounds like a duck choking on a stack of neodymium magnets.

### THE AIR BONNET

**Tech Level:** 5      **CM:** +4

**AC:** +1

**Special:** Filters out all airborne contaminants

**Power:** F-Cell (20 hours)



*Just say NO to a mouthful of smog, industrial atmospheric waste, or irradiated clouds with the all-new Air Bonnet system! This isn't just a gorgeous piece of jewelry — the Air Bonnet is also a personal climate-control system. Using our rigorously tested Air Wave technology, the*

*Air Bonnet is able to heat, cool, and purify the air surrounding the user's head. Reports from the field indicated that the Air Bonnet even allowed users to avoid the radioactive winds of Sierra-IV! With a simple button activation, the Air Bonnet creates a curtain of air that continuously filters out contaminants and moves along with the user. This air can even deflect small pests and environmental hazards. Even in a complete vacuum, the Air Bonnet is able to provide breathable air for up to 10 minutes! And that isn't even the best part! The Air Bonnet is able to identify your desired temperature zone, and adjust the air flow to that temperature. Whether you "run hot" or "run cold," the Air Bonnet will provide climate control that is just right for you!*

The Air Bonnet appears to be a metallic choker or necklace. It is made from a variety of precious metals and may be decorated with gemstones. The Air Bonnet creates a 'bubble' of climate-controlled air around the upper body of the user. The air curtain layer of atmospheric protection flows rapidly and deflects small pests, bugs, and even small thrown and fired projectiles. The bubble's interior filters out all contaminants, including radiation, from the air inside the bubble,

and can be adjusted in temperature and humidity. If the Air Bonnet is worn into a vacuum, it retains enough breathable air to last 1 turn.

### THE TOOL DADDY

**Tech Level:** 5      **CM:** +5

**Power:** C-Cell (6 hours), F-Cell (16 hours), Q-Cell (U)

**A.I. Recog:** 14



*Did you miss out on having a sireling to teach you the tips and tricks needed to maintain a home or repair an air skimmer? Well, wallow in your genetic resentments no more! The Tool Daddy can support you and instruct you in all basic home and vehicle maintenance and repair tasks. This unit is cheaper than holotherapy, and once it is fully charged, it can even take over a job after you lose interest!*

The Tool Daddy is portable repair robot that also guides the user through the tasks it can complete. The Tool Daddy uses its speakers to play inspirational music and make positive affirmations about the user while they are working. The Tool Daddy can repair a variety of artifacts and items. To determine if the Tool Daddy A.I. has the data repaired to repair an artifact, have the character make an Artifact check for the Tool Daddy at +10. Although the Tool Daddy has items that could function as weapons (laser cutter, nano-saw, etc.), the A.I. is programmed to never harm other living creatures — at least not while its core files are uncorrupted.

**Tool Daddy:** Init+6; Atk laser cutter/nano saw +6 melee (1d6 heat), ; AC 14; HD 3d12; MV 50'; Act 1d20; SP Artifact check +10, SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +8 A.I. recog 1

## MAGIC TAG BRANDER

**Tech Level:** 4      **CM:** +6

**Power:** C-Cell (20 uses)



The Magic Tag Brander is hours of fun for any home crafting enthusiast. Created by the founder and CEO of the Sell-Zee craft consortium, the Magic Tag Brander allows the user to laser-etch their personal logo or branding onto almost any surface imaginable! The expandable library of stencils and Auto Burn features included in the built-in A.I. allow you to produce professional-looking etched labels within minutes of opening the packaging.

The magic brand is a 7" long wand with an ergonomic handle that fits a human hand perfectly. The device has an emitter array on one end of the wand that appears to be a piece of black gemstone. When activated, the device produces a low-powered UV laser that penetrates most materials up to a depth of 1 centimeter. It is able to laser etch a 1' square area in each use and the device stores up to 25 templates that can be selected and reproduced with ease. The device is able to create etchings in glass, metal, wood, stone, and other mundane materials, even those normally impervious to heat. While the device will not etch super-materials like duralloy, plasteel, or permaglass, it can oxidize their surfaces and reproduce the same design templates in glorious shades of black, brown, and umber. When a template is used, the device can be set on Auto Burn mode and left in front of the item it is engraving. Engraving 1 square foot of material takes 10 minutes on average, but should be adjusted, depending upon material's density and strength.

Although we know that all responsible player characters will safely enjoy this device, we recognize the potential capabilities for some crazed sickos. If employed as a weapon, the device is capable of inflicting 3 points of damage to a creature or item, but this process takes one full turn to have any effect. Items that are resistant to heat will only suffer 1 point of damage.

## HOME-FLATABLE

**Tech Level:** 5      **CM:** +5

**Power:** C-Cell (50 hours), F-Cell (120 hours)

*Envious of all the luxuries your neighbors are enjoying? Tired of throwing credits out the airlock trying to keep up with the J'onzzes? Well, with a quick and easy setup, the Home-Flatable is the versatile and programmable home inflatable that every family needs. Little Blix is having his birthday? Home-Flatable becomes an instant bouncy house! Want to relax with the neighbors, pop open a nice bottle of Soma-Sauvignon, and see where things go? Home-Flatable becomes an instant, self-filling hot tub! Brrr! Suddenly it's freezing out here! No problem! Home-Flatable becomes an instant heated patio house! The Home-Flatable is made of a rugged and programmable elasto-polymer molecules that can handle high temperatures and even the rigors of a vacuum. This is the same technology once used by the daring colonists on their mission to colonize Proxima Centauri b! And now you can have it in your own backyard!*

The Home-Flatable is a multi-use inflatable structure that can be programmed and reconfigured based on the needs of the user. When it is dormant, it appears to be a 1' cube with a single handle made of a composite fabric, but is expandable into a structure of up to 800 square feet. There are several preset configurations, including the hot tub, the kiddie pool, the Quonset hut, the Bouncy House, a trampoline, a water slide, and a warming center. The Home-Flatable self-inflates in a single turn and can be automatically disassembled by the A.I. in 2 turns. The rugged material of the Home-Flatable is quite durable. It has an AC 14, and does not take the first 20 points of damage inflicted per round.

## NU-ARMOR-COAT

**Tech Level:** 4

**CM:** +1      **Power:** self

*Our newest and most impressive formulation of the original Armor-Coat molecular-valence polymer paint. This Nu-Armor-Coat will resist cuts, scratches, dings, projectiles, and even a focused particle beam! Nu-Armor-Coat can be applied to nearly any surface to provide stylish protection that matches your personal taste and décor. Each can of pressurized Nu-Armor-Coat can be used to cover up 12 square feet of surface area. Nu-Armor-Coat*



cures quickly, and your newly protected equipment can be ready for your everyday-use in only 12 hours!

This foot long cylinder contains a simple operating mechanism to allow for a controlled release of its contents. When the can's contents are sprayed evenly across a surface, they provide added protection and damage resistance. An item sprayed with Nu-Armor-Coat receives a +3 AC bonus after curing 12 hours. If the uncured surface gets wet during the 12-hour window, the Nu-Armor-Coat will slough off and is wasted. Nu-Armor-Coat absorbs half of all damage inflicted on the coated surface up to 25 hit points, after which its protective properties are destroyed until a new coat is applied.

### MOON MOSS

**Tech Level:** 4      **CM:** +0      **Power:** self

Imported directly from the oxygen-rich moon in the Trappist 1 system, Moon Moss evolved under the light of a red dwarf sun. This black moss has small hints of deep maroon, and is a delightful conversation piece in any home.



Simply choose the decorative Moon Moss container that best matches your décor, add water, and watch it grow! Use our custom fabrication A.I. when ordering, and create your own custom planter sculpture for Moon Moss! Upload a photo of great3-grandpa to the customization A.I., and remind the old boy what he looked like with a full head of hair. It's the perfect gift!

This porous-polymer head provides the perfect platform for the Moon Moss to take root. This moss evolved under a red dwarf sun and is able to absorb a greater spectrum of light. In particular, it is able to absorb the invisible ultraviolet and infrared wavelengths. This genetic adaptation and the harshness of their home environment means that they are able to absorb focused light, and can even damage holograms if they come into physical contact with them by absorbing their projected photons. The more light Moon Moss absorbs, the more it will grow, and a single Moon Moss planter can grow up to 3' of bushy blackish hair-like tendrils in a single day. The Moon Moss also creates a 30' diameter 'bubble' that disrupts infravision and ultravision because the Moon Moss is absorbing the light that would normally be seen. Moon Moss will deal 2d10 damage to a hologram or anything made of light of any spectrum if the Moon Moss touches the light. If the Moon Moss

successfully damages a target made of light, it even heals 1d6 hit points if damaged.

**Moon Moss:** Init+0; Atk \*Special; AC 12; HD 3d6, 11 hit points; MV 0'; Act none; SP immune to heat and energy based damage, will deal 2d10 damage to anything made of light, Moon Moss heals 1d6 damage when it successfully absorbs focused light; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0

### MR. THIRSTY

**Tech Level:** 4      **CM:** +4      **Power:** self

*"Ugh. This towel is still damp and its just pushing this spill around the table! I need something better."*

*Mr. Thirsty to the rescue! This advanced carbon nanofiber cloth actually exists in multiple dimensions! Using the same shunted dimensional principles as the memory storage in your home compu-A.I., a Mr. Thirsty towel is able to absorb and hold up to 50 gallons of liquid! The synthetic nanofibers are guaranteed to prevent scratching and marring of any nominal 3-dimensional surface! With a single Mr. Thirsty towel, you can replace up to 20 rolls of traditional soylent-based towels! Mr. Thirsty is also impregnable when it comes to stains. This nanofiber cloth just refuses to be stained, and can even handle mutagen spills without a single mark.*

Mr. Thirsty is an ultra-absorbent nanofiber cloth that is 14" by 14". It is tremendously soft and always feels dry, even if it has absorbed up to 50 gallons of liquid. Mr. Thirsty will release all of the liquids it contains with a simple tug of two corners in the manner described in the instructions on the tag. This maneuver and activation of the towel is complex, but can be discovered with a thorough examination and a successful Artifact check. When these switches are activated, every liquid Mr. Thirsty has absorbed will be immediately deposited directly in front of the user. Mr. Thirsty dimensionally displaces the weight of the liquid it absorbs, and even when it is full, it weighs only 40 grams.







# THE LOCAL GODS

BY SCOTT ROBINSON

## I

Politely but insistently, the pod announced the waking of its occupant.

Baxter was the only one in the jumpship at the time. He was preoccupied with clearing out more storage space for the chatter from the sky. It took him moments to realize what he was hearing; the pod had never before issued a wake-up call.

He rushed across the deck, back into the recesses of the ship, where the pod rested among the crew bunks. He instructed the pod to report, and surveyed the occupant's morphing vitals. Then he ran to the jumpship's forward hatch.

"Guys!"

There was only cold wind under the ash.

"Guys!"

Bloom appeared on the south stairs that led down to the river path, carrying an armload of wood.

"Get up here! Quick!"

"What's happening?" the geologist asked.

"Hurry! Sai!" Baxter shouted into the wind.

Chetty's coal-black hair bobbed over the edge of the bluff above.

"What do you want?"

"Get your ass down here!"

"What's so urgent?" Bloom demanded as he walked up to the pilot.

"It's Monroe," Baxter answered, breathless despite himself. "She's waking up!"

They crowded around the pod, which sighed and hummed ambiguously as Baxter spoke quietly to it, his eyes glued to its neon report. Under the glass they could see Monroe's eyelids fluttering, a rhythm that answered her increasing breaths and heartbeats.

"Bob!" Baxter called out, addressing the jumpship itself. "How warm is it?"

"Internal temperature sixty-six point nine degrees Fahrenheit," the ship replied.

They had long since adapted to leaving the hatch open and living with the outdoor mean temperature, which hovered in the mid-fifties. But that was too cold for their waking teammate, especially after what she'd been through.



"What the hell were you doing up there?" Baxter demanded.

"Bob said we might get an hour or so of break in the cloud," Chetty answered with a shrug. "I was hoping for some rays."

"Well, quit screwing around!"

"I know I ask this all the time," Bloom said to Baxter, "but is she gonna be all right?"

"She's been in a coma for longer than probably anybody in at least a hundred years," Baxter answered. "There's no way to know." Neither of the others said anything. "I mean, if she's not okay, it's not like there's anything we can do."

Lights within the pod began to brighten softly. Monroe's eyes opened very slowly, and stayed open.

"Bob! How warm is it now?"

"Internal temperature seventy point one degrees Fahrenheit."

"Here we go," Baxter said, and he touched a spot on the pod. The glass over Monroe slid away.

Pod air and room air mixed, and Monroe twitched slightly. The light brightened a bit more. Baxter leaned over her. She stared up at his handsome blond head.

"Evie," he said softly. "Evie, it's Pete! Can you hear me?"

Monroe tried to move her head, and couldn't. It remained nestled in her pile of auburn hair — hair that had been cropped close for convenience in zero gravity when they'd launched, but which had grown long in her convalescence.

"You're okay," Baxter said reassuringly. "You were injured when we landed. Do you remember landing?"

She appeared to be pulling in deeper breaths. Trying to talk.

"We landed, and you took a bump on the head. You've been out for a while."

With tremendous effort, Monroe turned her head toward the deck, where the three of them were kneeling beside the pod, staring at her. Beyond them lay a portal, but it held none of the anticipated pure and yellow sunlight – only the ruddy gray swirl of ashen cloud.

"Where..." she wheezed into her airmask.

"Earth," Baxter answered, puzzled, and then it dawned on him that she was realizing she was still in the ship. And she was putting two and two together already. Baxter had no doubt that she was smarter than the other three of them put together. Maybe not such a good idea, if she didn't remember the crash, to have told her.

That they were on Earth. In the jumpship. Seventy-seven thousand years in the past. To stay.

## II

Back in his lofty perch, hoping for a rare sliver of sunlight, Chetty cranked up *The Who's Live at Leeds* and loosened the neck of his jumpsuit. He minded the cold the least, despite having grown up in the hottest part of the world of the three of them. He even preferred the icy natural waterfall downriver to the much warmer tub.

He loved his perch. It put him closer to the stars, which he very much wished he could see, through the ever-present cloud.

Bob whispered in his ear that locals were on the march, and he stood, looking to the east. Sure enough, a small band – smaller than usual – was approaching, carrying what appeared to be a single kill.

He cheerfully sounded the horn, which ripped through the cool evening air and down the valley, echoing like a clown car pile-up. Scurrying down to ground level, he donned his makeshift robe and instructed Bob to bring up the lights. Lean to begin with, he was downright skinny now as a result of his frequent climbing and in his robe, his height, build and dark skin almost made him seem alien.

Evening was approaching. The courtyard surrounding the jumpship glowed blue and orange, not unlike the floor of a dance club back home. Bloom appeared from within the ship, which was lit up like a Christmas tree, decked out in his usual outfit. The only one of the three to gain weight since their crash, he looked ridiculous, and only bothered to dress up because Chetty teased him when he didn't. He moved around the courtyard, depositing large chunks of coal in the dozen or so surrounding campfire sites.



Chetty had brought all of his favorite music on the mission, much to the consternation of the others, the canon consisting almost entirely of music that no one had listened to since his great-grandparents had died — Zeppelin, Floyd, Bleener. The gamut. They'd modified the ship's intercom system to fill the courtyard with rock and other ritual sound during these little soirees, and Chetty in particular was very into it.

He stepped behind the huge altar. That's what they called it, anyway; it was actually a huge barbecue pit, large enough to cook a zebra carcass or a pair of sizeable wild pigs at once. He cued Bob.

"Thus Spake Zarathustra" began to churn and thunder as the dark and scruffy band of visitors shuffled hesitantly into the courtyard — still supplicant, but now out of habit, rather than actual deference. People they were — ancient, hairy and wide-eyed, but still people! — and people do love to rock and roll, Chetty pondered as he lifted his hands high.

Two large males — large being relative, as not a single member of the thirty-plus group was as tall as either Chetty or Bloom — carried the carcass of their kill to the base of the altar as the music climaxed and Bob set off a few fluorescent bursts as accents.

Chetty turned his face cloud-ward.

"Klaatu! Barada! Nikto!" he cried out soulfully.

On cue, Bob fired the laser that was mounted just above the fire pit, and flames leapt out. The assembled natives stepped back, awestruck as always.

Chetty paused dramatically before continuing.

"Ekki-ekki-ekki-ptang-zoom-boing!"

Obediently, four of the tribe stepped forward, sharp metal blades in hand, and began stripping the carcass of the kill – a gazelle – quickly and efficiently, as Bob put on *Sgt. Pepper*.

Bloom lit each of the peripheral campfires, which formed a glowing perimeter around the spacious courtyard. Evening was falling, but the fires would keep the visiting natives warm and safe for the night. No cats would approach, although Bloom reflected that they hadn't actually seen a cat in almost two months. And Bob would warn them well in advance, in any case, if one showed up.

The skinned gazelle went up on the altar, over the fire, and soon the evening air was filled with the enticing scent of sizzling steak. As Bloom tended dinner, Chetty moved among the people, smiling and quoting Mark Twain. This tribe was familiar – one of dozens in the region who had begun making regular pilgrimages – and he repeated the names he'd assigned to the ones he remembered, awarding new names to those unfamiliar.

Youngsters scrambled up their parents' backs to get high enough to touch his face. He kissed the females. He kissed the babies.

After he'd made his rounds, Chetty returned to the altar, pinching a piece of gazelle from a cooling chunk of thigh Bloom was dissecting. He nodded approval to Bloom, who was almost ready to start serving. *Dark Side of the Moon* had started.

"What I'd give for a beer," Bloom said for the hundredth time. He motioned behind them, toward the ship.

"Dude," Chetty said to his earpiece, "you coming out?"

"You guys handle things," came Baxter's voice from within the ship. "I'm going to stay with Monroe. Somebody bring me a steak later."

### III

"How much do you remember?" Baxter asked Monroe the next day.

She was wrapped in a thick blanket and propped up in one of the flight chairs, the best-cushioned in the ship. She sipped warm broth.

She frowned and shook her head. "Leaving the station."

"Do you remember our mission? You remember us – do you remember why we're here?"

She frowned again, and it appeared the effort to remember was giving her a headache.

"Toba," Bloom prompted.

"Toba...?"

"Our mission was a timejump to the Toba eruption," Baxter said. "In our time, the Greece Bomb is going to blow soon, and it will form a Toba-sized supervolcano."

She nodded slowly.

"It will be so big that any of the things we normally do with smaller volcanoes would only make things worse," Bloom added, "and wipe out southern Europe."

"We're going to button up the Mediterranean, let it blow, and focus on climate modification after the fact," Chetty said. "They sent us back to gather real data, to improve the climate models."

Monroe nodded her head and sipped her broth again.

"Are you with us so far?"

She looked at Baxter.

"We're on the ground," she said faintly, "but we didn't get home?"

The men looked at each other.

"We were bleeding atmosphere like crazy when we completed the jump," Baxter told her. "We still don't know why. We couldn't jump back, because it takes more than a week for the jump coils to store enough energy to push this much mass through time, and we didn't have that much air."

She stared blankly.

"We're not in a normal jumpship, remember? We're in a big delta shuttle, modified for the mission, because we needed to maneuver into a very low orbit in order to do what we needed to do. If we'd been in a normal jumpship, we'd have been stranded in orbit and suffocated in just a few days."

They let that sink in.

"Isn't that what we were supposed to do?"

"You mean, suffocate?"

"Yes! Isn't the entire point of jumpships to study the past from orbit, so we don't change history down on the surface?"

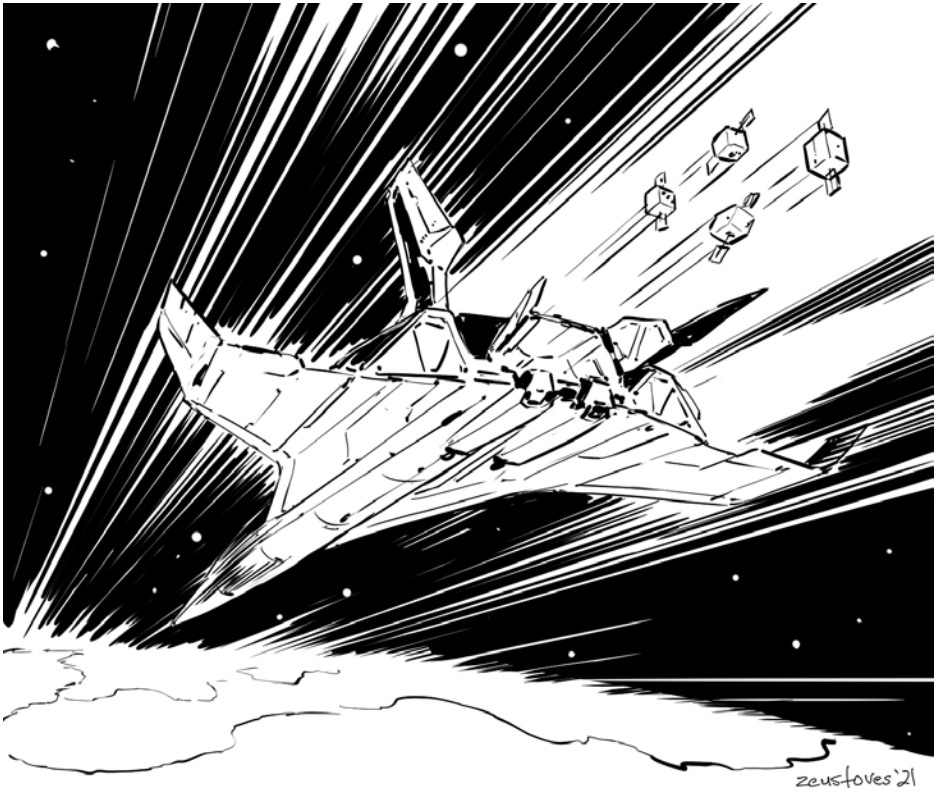
The guys looked at each other.

"Well, yes, but it's very different when it's your air that's leaking out," Bloom said.

"Didn't I object to this?"

"Oh, very strenuously!" Chetty chimed in. "You raised your voice a number of times."

"We outvoted you," Bloom added. He shrugged. "It's not like there's any higher court to appeal to around here."



Monroe looked at Baxter, but said nothing further.

"Anyway, we launched all six lowballs in coordinated orbits, and then we found a place to land," Baxter said. "We're in Africa, on the equator."

"It was the worst landing ever!" Chetty chipped in. "We're so damn lucky we didn't flip over and come apart!" Baxter stared at him. "Good flying, dude."

"We've been here for a while now," Baxter said, turning back to Monroe.

"How long?"

"Over four months."

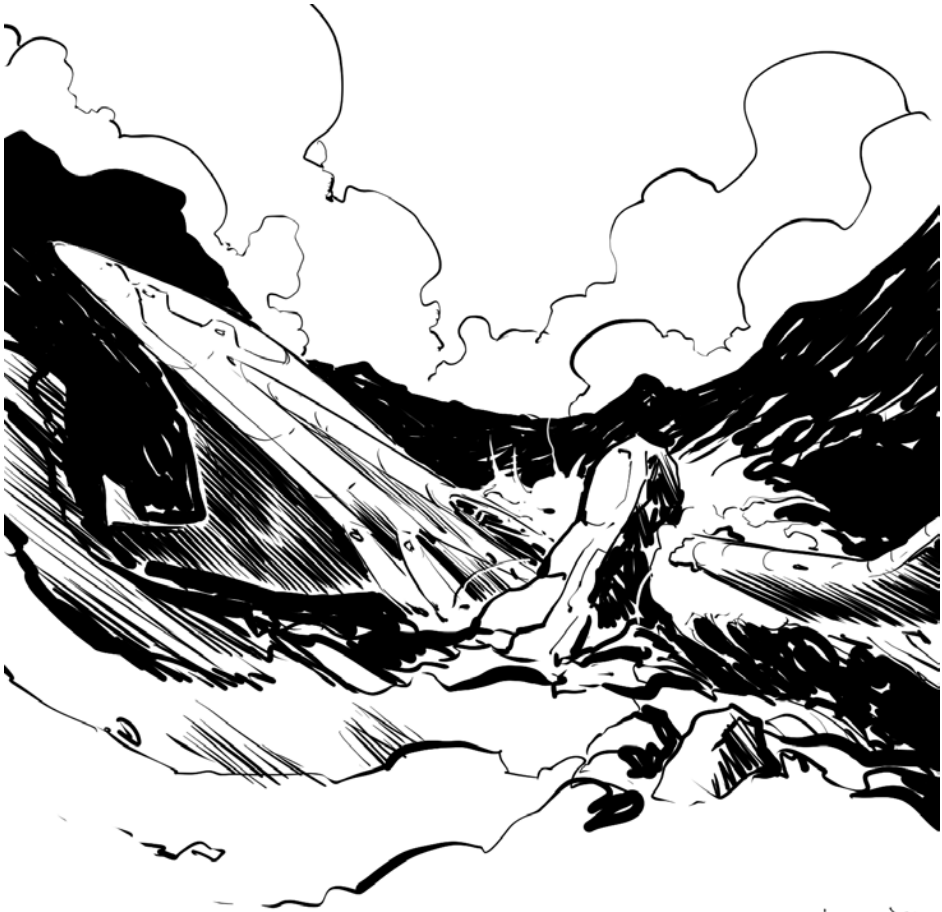
She was stunned.

"Then I should be...dead."

"You've lost over thirty pounds, and you weren't exactly chunky to begin with. We were very concerned about brain damage," Baxter said. "Mostly I was just afraid of killing you myself. You're the doctor here, not me." He started to grin, then didn't.

"Evie...you understand?"

She seemed to be looking far away. She handed Chetty her cup of broth and nodded.



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"We can't ever get back home."

"We were very, very lucky!" Chetty was saying the following day. "We knew the Toba cloud lasted ten years or so, but this far back, a jumpship is lucky if it hits within a century of its mark. The cloud is still here! It hasn't dissipated."

"Since we never returned, there has surely been another jump mission," Baxter added, "but even if they managed to land in the same year – or within a decade! – they couldn't land, and they couldn't rescue us. The best they can do is get the data we came to get, and scoot home fast with it. We're here to stay."

Monroe had tried to stand and failed, and was now propped up in a bunk. She was attempting to work her way through a handful of crackers.

"How long ago did Toba blow?" she asked idly.

"Nine years or so, we think," Chetty answered. "We've had Bob running all of your analytics non-stop, tracking animal and hominid populations all over the planet, through all six satellites. We have several thousand groups tracking, and hundreds of individuals profiled."



"You named the computer 'Bob'?"

"...The point being, populations have crashed badly, everywhere, just as you expected," Baxter said. "The food supply went to hell in every populated region years ago. Toba's winter cloud has triggered a severe climate collapse, and there was an ice age in progress to begin with. That's one reason we landed here – this is one of the warmest places left, and there's still plenty of animal and plant life in this region."

"Why did they give the computer a French accent?"

"Oh," said Chetty, "No, I did that."

"We may be stuck here, but we have all the comforts of home," Bloom said. "The ship survived, except for the left wing, which actually saved us from smashing into the cliff we're next to."

"Our power plant's intact, and it was fueled for another seventy-seven thousand year timejump," Baxter added. "If we let it, it will outlive us all. The power we use to keep the lights on in here, or to talk to the satellites, is trivial. We'll never run out of energy."

"We can even offer you a hot bath!"

Monroe glared at Chetty.

"Not that you, you know, need one."

"He means we built a hot tub, which we fill with runoff from the bluff above," Bloom explained. "And we rigged it so that we can warm it up with power from the ship."

Monroe's thoughts were elsewhere.

"But you said we're in an equatorial river valley," she said. "That means lots of animals...predators, game animals, certainly hominids – humans, Neanderthals!" Her eyes suddenly lit up. "Have you seen any?"

Her excitement was an unexpected surge, and Chetty got excited right along with her.

"Oh, we see them all the time!" he chirped. "The locals are really quite friendly."

"Let me get this straight," Monroe said slowly. "You've been mixing with the natives?"

The men looked at each other. Chetty spoke.

"Well, let's be careful with that word 'mixing' –"

"Oh, good god! Tell me none of you have –"

"Oh, of course not," Baxter said. "Calm down! We certainly wouldn't risk... introducing our genes into prehistory."

"They are human, after all," Chetty countered. "A few of the taller ones would clean up nicely! And with the proper precautions—"

"So help me," Monroe seethed, "if I find out there is birth control of any kind on this ship, I will kill every one of you in your sleep."

"When we landed," Baxter explained, ignoring her, "you could see us — and, for that matter, hear the landing, from hundreds of clicks away. It's not like we could sneak in quietly. And once the ship crashed, there was no moving it. So we couldn't exactly hide.

"We were safe here inside the ship, we had power and food and water, but we couldn't stay in here forever. The crash scared the shit out of the locals, but after a few days they started creeping around and getting curious. They kept their distance, but you know how human beings are, even prehistoric ones. Nosy as hell!"

She didn't smile.

"Finally we made contact," he went on. "They were in awe of us, but they never seemed really frightened. And they had one thing we didn't — they can fend off the local cats. We built a fire pit and started handing out fire. There are dozens of groups out there, and one or two of them show up every night — well, not every night, but every few nights, and we make extra fires, with coals. They put the coals in pots and tote them off. I guess you could say we became the local energy company."

She stared at him.

"They roam a lot, but at any given moment there are lots of camps up and down the valley, near the river, and all the way out to the lakes. Soon they started bringing their kills and cooking them in the fire pit, and we kind of made it into a party. Since they revere us like they do, we came up with some song and dance, and as time went on, we got some of their men to help us build the courtyard and the outer walls."

"So, if I'm understanding all of this correctly, you three have set yourself up as the local gods."

Bloom said "No!" and Chetty said "Yes!" and Baxter put his face in his hands.

"It's not what it sounds like, really. With the walls and the base of the cliff, this spot is highly defensible, if we ever need it to be. Sure, we get free meat, but we pay for it with fire. They also bring veggies and berries sometimes."

"Sacrifices to the great white gods?"

"Well, in all fairness, Sai is a lot darker than any of them," Bloom volunteered. "Anyway, it keeps the entire regional population cycling back around to us. Bob tracks them all, through the satellites. Each group moves around, sometimes covering sixty clicks in a week. They've hunted the entire region down to where the big cats have moved on, because there isn't enough game — we know from the satellite images. We can't really defend against the cats, except to run in here and

lock the door, so it's kind of win-win all the way around. Because they circle as they do, and keep showing up for fire and parties, everything stays in balance."

Monroe was quiet for a very long moment.

"You're monitoring the entire human population? The whole region?"

"There are a few smaller groups, a few hundred clicks away, that hover around the edge of the territory, but they don't mix with the others."

"Bob's got tons of data," Baxter said. "I can show you—"

"No." She shook her head. "Get me back on my feet, Pete. I want to see for myself."

## IV

Doctor Evelyn Monroe, the muscles of her limbs badly atrophied from months of sleep, steadied herself in the forward hatch of the jumpship, breathing in evening air and the scent of roasting meat.

Raucous music echoed off the walls as she stepped down onto sandstone brick. Before her in the courtyard, warmed by the glowing pit and the wide circle of campfires, dozens of figures swayed and hooted, intoxicated by warm food and Chetty's jubilant "Yes" lyrics. Some sat on the courtyard floor, still eating; a few cuddled in the shadows beyond the fires.

It took her breath away.

In the handful of days since her awakening, she had not ventured beyond the ship. It was only now that it was becoming real to her — they were among their ancient ancestors. Alive and real, and all around her.

They began to notice her.

A hush rapidly fell, and everyone went still, as Robert Plant choked out the lyrics of "Kashmir." Bloom, at the pit, turned and saw her. "Pete!"

Baxter, stoking peripheral fires, turned, along with Chetty.

"Evie!" he called out as he ran toward her. "You shouldn't be—"

Trying not to stumble, she waved him off. Robert Plant fell silent.

Filled with wonder, she passed the pit and approached a woman a few steps in front of her. Dark, with hair almost as black as Chetty's, the woman was shorter than she was — which was saying something, as she herself barely stood more than a meter and a half — and looked about fifteen years old.

She wore a dark tan skin, and her arms and legs were hairier than Bloom's.

As she approached, the young woman pulled back. Monroe paused, then gently extended her hand. The young woman didn't move, but trembled slightly as the tall white woman's fingertips made contact with her cheek. She flinched.

Oh my god...oh my god!

Monroe felt her eyes watering.

Baxter took up a position just behind her as the crowd slowly surrounded them, as fascinated with Monroe as she was with them. She took a step closer to the young woman in front of her, pressing her warm palm against the girl's cheek. The crude brown face, just barely feminine, sweetened when her mouth curved into a smile.

She looked into the deep brown eyes, and let the girl gaze into her own green ones. The power of the moment was almost more than she could bear.

"The first goddess!" Chetty declared from somewhere off to the side. Bloom elbowed him hard.

The girl lifted her hand and reached up to Monroe's cheek, imitating the gesture, and the rough fingertips stroked curiously. A tear spilled from her eye onto one of the fingers.

To her left, a man leaned in - older, maybe twenty, much hairier than the girl, as tall as Monroe. He, too, extended a hand, touching Monroe's arm.

With Baxter close behind, she shuffled through the crowd, touching and smiling, pausing to study their faces. She encountered young and old, appraising personal adornments - the shape of clothing, beadwork in necklaces - and examining skin and musculature.

Stepping around a small group, she came upon a woman still sitting, a three-year-old child at her breast.

Behind her, near one of the campfires, lay several long poles - spears - and a bright glint from the fire caught her eye.

She slowly knelt, taking a spear in hand. The point wasn't stone, or anything close; it was hard, sharp metal. Grimy from an encounter with the entrails of a gazelle, but metal. Left-wing-of-a-shuttle metal. Feeling Baxter's eyes just behind her, she loosened it and removed it from the shaft, and put it in her pocket.

As she tried to stand again, her legs finally betrayed her, and Baxter caught her as she sagged.

## V

"Do any one of you unspeakable idiots realize what you've done?"

There was still plenty of gazelle meat, so Chetty had fired up some Bee Gees to keep the party going. He strutted around the courtyard lighting fires, twirling females as he went. As more steaks sizzled to various levels of charring on the altar, Bloom laid them on large, flat rocks to cool, and motioned for any still-hungry congregants to dig in. There was whooping and dancing, with Chetty rocking in the center of it all, and in the growing evening shadows, isolated pockets of nooky.



Baxter sat next to Monroe, who lay on a blanket on the ground in the courtyard, some distance from the glowing altar. A few still-curious on-lookers hovered a few meters away.

“You’re talking about changing history,” Baxter nodded at her question, hoping to head off a tirade. “I know what you’re thinking, and I don’t blame you for being worried. You gave us an earful before you were injured. Don’t worry, though, we’ve got it all covered.

“To begin with,” he said, quickly cutting off her reply, “when we’ve all lived out our lives here, that’s it. We leave nothing behind. If we choose to, we can take a few months, clear all the humans out of the region, and blow the ship to atoms. But we don’t even need to do that! When the glacier melts, Bloom says this valley is going to seriously flood, and the bluff will eventually come down on top of the ship. The bricks in the courtyard are all sandstone. Nothing will last. The ship will eventually be found in the future, but not until after we are reported lost.”

She sat up and reached into the pocket of her tunic, pulling out the spear point she’d taken. She dropped it on his foot. He looked guilty.

“All right, yes, we gave them some modern metal, but we didn’t give them actual technology! They can’t make those metals for themselves, and they’ll never have any that we don’t give them. Their spears and knives are much better, which means they kill more game and fight off more cats and that’s all to our benefit.”

“But you don’t think it changes history.”

"No, those spear points and knives won't be discovered in this layer of the past, because they hadn't been, yet, in our time; and if they're found at some point beyond that, they'll know where they came from anyway — because everyone will know we were lost back here. Same as the ship, if it winds up buried."

"And all your worshipers here? You don't think you've started the world on the road to religion?"

"Nope," he answered confidently. "All of this will be forgotten after we die. How can they possibly pass along stories about us? They don't have spoken language yet, much less writing."

"You've got it all figured out, haven't you?" Monroe finally said, her voice far away.

"I think we do, yes."

She was quiet for a time.

"Then tell me one more thing," she said. "Those small outlying groups, the ones that don't mix with the others?" she asked. "The ones that the computer is tracking, but that don't come anywhere near you?"

"Neanderthals! Gotta be," Baxter said. "They're outnumbered, and our Homo sapiens population has been getting all the good game. And the big cats have been migrating in their direction.

"From Bob's track, there are fewer than two thousand, maybe eighteen hundred of them left," he said. "They won't last the next five winters."

Monroe just stared, her mouth hanging open.

"Okay, maybe we nudged them along some, but it doesn't matter!" Baxter barked defensively. "Only the African tribes will die out. We don't need them competing with our gang anyway."

She started to shake.

"You are telling me," she whispered, "that you've shifted the regional ecology to the point of killing off the competing hominids here in Central Africa — hominids who will now go extinct."

"So what? You know perfectly well that there are plenty of Neanderthals up in Europe and in Asia! If they vanish here, no big deal. As a species, they'll still die out on schedule.

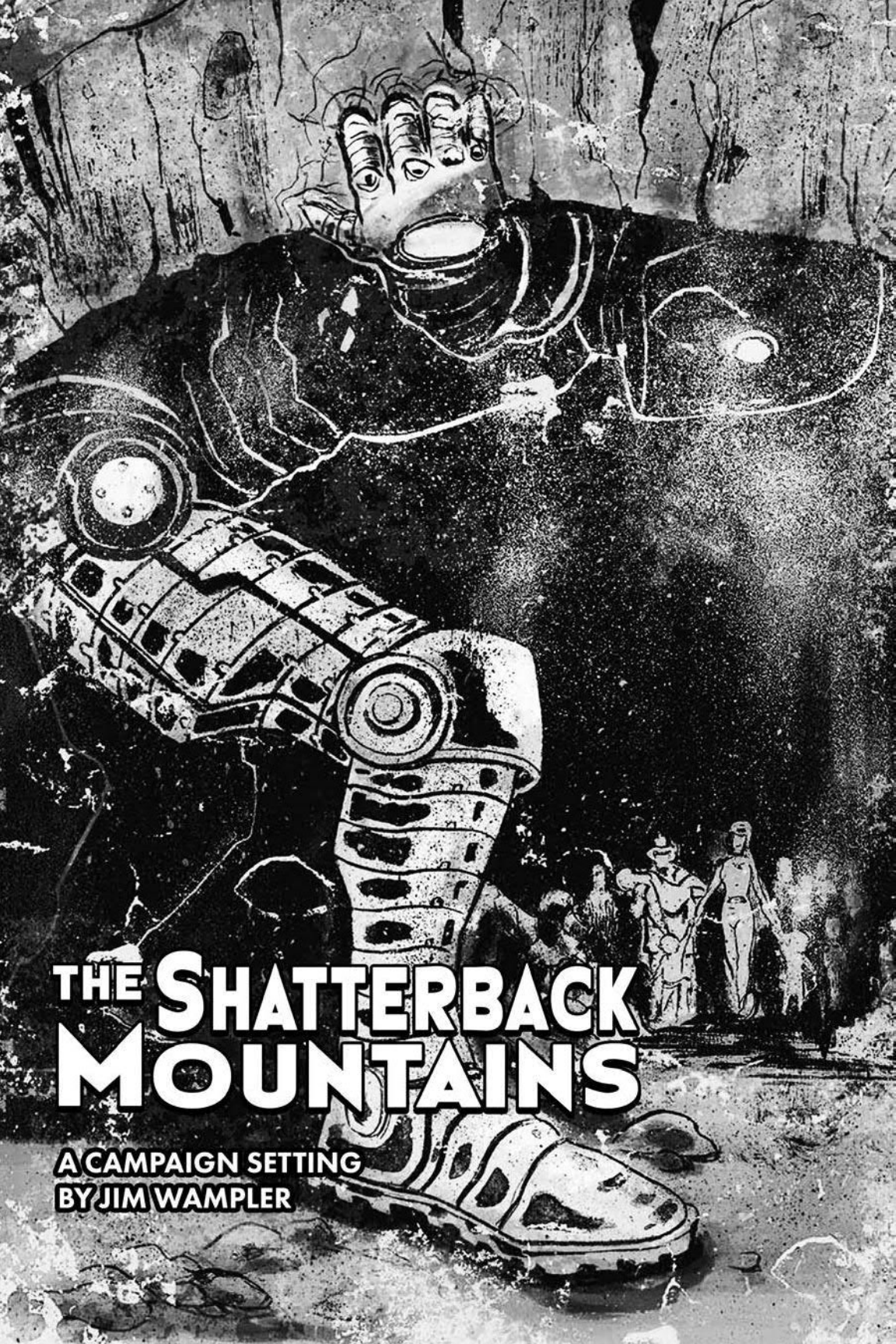
"What does it matter?" Baxter shrugged. "They're just Neanderthals!"

Monroe's face was a blend of rage and anguish. She trembled, her fists clenched, then gestured at the gazelle-fueled orgy being played out before them, at the dozens of small, dark people dancing in the moonlight. Her eyes blazed with unmitigated horror.

"You unspeakable morons!" she finally shouted. "These are the Neanderthals!!!"



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# THE SHATTERBACK MOUNTAINS

A CAMPAIGN SETTING  
BY JIM WAMPLER





# THE SHATTERBACK MOUNTAINS

Located on the western side of the continent-wide hothouse jungles of Omega-Terra, the Shatterback Mountains are the jagged and torn remnants of a once-great mountain chain. Tribal sages speak of a time during the Great Disaster when even the mightiest mountains were lifted skyward by the gods, and then suddenly dropped back down, shattering them in the process. Well-traveled rovers will report that the name more likely comes from what happens to anyone stupid enough to try and climb those black, broken mountains. Mothers tell their children to never go there, lest they face the very metal giants who caused those mountains to break apart into fragments that resemble a staved-in skull.

But there is no stopping the errant wandering party of mutant rovers and science-seekers, hungry for new ruins and the technological wonders they may contain. Many have gone to the Shatterback Mountains in search of fame, glory, and loot. Few have returned. But your band of merry mutant misfits is different, right?

## TERRAIN TYPES

The terrain leading up to the mountains quickly changes from lush, tropical rainforest to barren and rocky scrublands. The climate cools too, changing from tropical heat to cool and tenacious breezes. Because of the cooler temperatures, these lands do not support the wild ecosystems of the jungles, where mega-fauna are common and life explodes from every crevice. At night, one can find the reason for the reduced plant and animal population. The broken faces of the Shatterback Mountains glow in a subdued, blueish light that indicates background radiation lingers in the area still. Only the hardest mutant life forms call this harsh environment home.

### BLOOD SCRUBLANDS

The blood scrublands are so named because of the dominance of scrub, bush, and grasses found in the areas at the feet of the Shatterback Mountains. The rough, hilly terrain is awash with amber and scarlet grasses and bushes, and as compared to the jungles, occupied

#### SETTING PREVIEW!

The Shatterback Mountains are the first in a series of sandbox settings depicting sections of the radiation-torn world of Omega-Terra. In this first installment, the Shatterback Mountains provide an outdoors wilderness campaign environment in which to adventure, fight, and perhaps live longer than many of the local denizens do. In the next installment (*SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN* No. 4), The Eternity Vault is discovered under one of these broken mountains, providing a city-sized underground sandbox to explore and perhaps plunder.

by a spartan population of hardy animals. Both the plant and animal life found there have adapted to the background radiation levels of the area, and in some cases even evolved to flourish in the conditions found exclusively there.

As opposed to the tropical climate found over most of Omega-Terra, the Blood Scrublands average a considerably cooler 65°F/18°C, with light breezes that sometime give over to thunderstorms and glowstorms. Without the carbon sink and radiation-absorbing properties of the hothouse jungles, the background radiation will cause 1 hit point of damage to non-native life forms per 24 hour period.

Because of its uneven nature, travel across this terrain type for a humanoid on foot is roughly 15 miles per day for natives, and 10 miles per day for non-natives.

## **BROKEN MOUNTAINS**

Where once lay a mighty mountain chain, now lie its shattered remnants. While the jumbled pile of fragments — many themselves the size of smaller mountains — still rise up to 15,000' in elevation, they are now a geologist's nightmare of juxtaposed shapes and leering strata, each tilted on its own insane axis. Taken together, the range resembles more a series of leviathan skull fragments than it appears as proper mountains.

The climate in broken mountain terrain is decidedly chilly for Omega-Terra, with cool winds up to 40 mph, and average temperatures of 55°F/13°C. Thunderstorms and glowstorms are common, with occasional tentacle twisters erupting from the canyons. The background levels of radiation in the broken mountains will cause 1 hit point of damage per 24 hour period to non-native life forms.

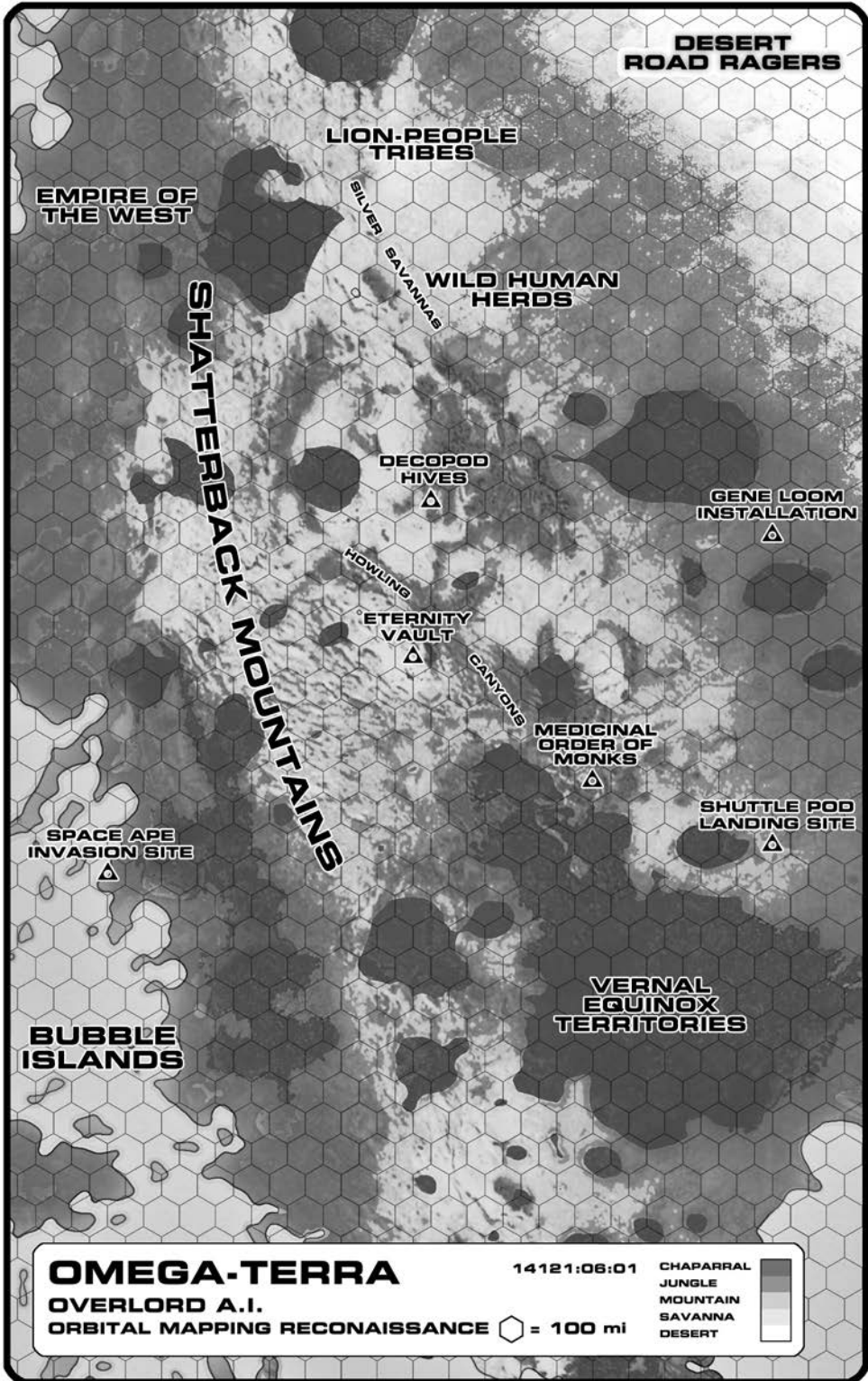
Travel over and through broken mountain terrain is perilous and difficult, and in some areas even impossible on foot. A human-sized biped can travel at best 5 miles per day overland, minus 1 mile for each 5,000' change in elevation.

## **GLOW DESERTS**

The glow deserts to the northeast of the Shatterback Mountains are an endless sea of rolling blue-white sand dunes, interrupted only by eroded rock outcroppings that jut out of the ground at a strange, uniform angle. The glow deserts are hot, dry, and unforgiving. These deserts are so named because of the blue glow given off by the radioactive sands there at night. The glow deserts do support a few animals hardened to the background radiation, though no sentient beings live there. Only the most savage tribes or ambitious rovers travel through the glow deserts on mad quests for power and glory.

Between the beating rays of the bloated red sun and the background radiation, it is an uninviting place. The climate is unbearable to non-native life, with average temperatures of 105°F/40°C. Thus, water consumption is doubled for non-native life forms visiting these lands. Although there is no precipitation in the glow deserts, sand storms and glow storms are common.

Travel through the deserts is taxing and slow. Humanoids on foot can travel a maximum of 10 miles per day, and that rate only if fully hydrated.





## **HOTHOUSE JUNGLE**

The legendary rainforests of Omega-Terra bracket the Shatterback Mountains to the east and to the west. Forming virtually an entire ecosystem unto themselves, these dense tropical jungles are dominated by mile-high trees and are home to the largest evolutionary radiation of new life forms in the planet's history. Although most species have settled down into a semi-stable body plan, wildly variable genomes ensure that each new generation of life can rapidly mutate and evolve in a biological blink of an eye.

The hothouse jungle climate prevails pole-to-pole for most of Omega-Terra. Average temperatures are 80°F/26°C, with daily afternoon showers and occasional thunderstorms and glowstorms.

All creatures born to the green are adept at navigating its tangled, verdant environs. Thus, a native biped may travel up to 15 miles per day through the jungles, while a non-native humanoid would be able to travel overland but 7 miles in the same amount of time.

## **HOWLING CANYONS**

The Shatterback Mountains are riddled with a series of deep gorges collectively known as the Howling Canyons. These deep fissures in the planet's crust were not carved by eons of waterflow (though rivers do run through them now), but rather by the events of the Great Disaster. Up to 7,000' deep in places, the canyons themselves require a day or more simply to scale down into or climb back out of, assuming there are no mishaps.

Because of their location throughout the Shatterback Mountain range, the Howling Canyons funnel atmospheric airflow between the eastern and western sections of the continent – effectively becoming a surface-level jet stream for the planet. This can cause winds up to 100 mph at times, along with the deafening roar that is the canyon's namesake. Ambient temperatures are 95°F/34°C within the canyons. Although the canyon bottomlands and rivers are well shielded from the windy conditions above them, the heat differential frequently creates massive funnel storms that punch down to the bottomlands and rise up out of the canyons, then wandering the mountains until they are diminished by the cooler air found there. These are called tentacle twisters by the natives, as they can cause tentacled fish from the canyon rivers to be sucked up and then rained down upon the lands above.

As noted, climbing down into or up out of the Howling Canyons can take a day or more, but once on the relatively smooth terrain of the canyon floor, a humanoid biped can easily cover up to 20 miles per day on foot. The 60 mph rushing waters of the canyon rivers make travel by water on raft inadvisable for any sane sentient.

## **PSI CHAPARRALS**

Psi chaparrals are densely-forested areas located in ancient surface craters, some of them hundreds of miles wide. They are so named because the falling comic debris that originally created these craters contained psionic-dampening properties of an unknown sort. Thus, mental mutations and other psionic abilities operate within these areas either poorly, or not at all. This effect creates a bubble environment that tends to favor plant life in general, and sentient plant beings in particular. It should be noted that the ancient alliance, The Vernal Equinox, is based in the largest of these craterous chaparrals to the southeast of the Shatterback Mountains.

Though the rain forests inside psi chaparrals do not reach the heights nor ecological diversity of the hothouse jungles, the climate is similar. The high crater ridges (up to 2,000' in elevation) foster tropical micro-climates regardless of the climate in the terrain surrounding the chaparral. Average temperatures are thus 80°F/26°C, with daily afternoon showers and occasional thunderstorms and glowstorms.

Similarly to the hothouse jungles, a humanoid native to this type of environment may travel up to 15 miles per day through these rainforests, while a non-native humanoid would be able to travel overland but 7 miles in the same amount of time.



## SILVER SAVANNAS

The Silver Savannas are a mixed woodland-grassland ecosystem in which the smaller trees are widely-spaced enough to support lush fields of blue-silver grasses. These savannas support their own population of grazing and predatory animal life, including large herds of semi-sentient wild humans. Because of the scattered natural resources in these areas, sentient tribes tend not to permanently settle there, though they often travel through the savannas or use them for hunting lands.

The savanna climate is hot and breezy, with average temperatures of 75°F/24°C. Precipitation occurs less frequently on the Silver Savannas, with rain occurring every few weeks, along with the occasional glowstorm.

The rolling terrain of the savannas is excellent for overland travel, and thus a humanoid can easily cover up to 25 miles per day on foot.

## ALTERNATE MEANS OF TRAVEL

Though the vast majority of sentients on Omega-Terra travel by foot, there are some exceptions. Use the following categories to estimate travel times for those unique individuals or groups who do not rely upon bipedal locomotion, or its kin.

- 2 or 4 legged mount: 2x foot speed
- Multit-legged (6+) mount: 3x foot speed
- Flying mount: From 4x to 10x foot speed (variable, GM ruling)
- Artifact land vehicle: From 3x to 4x speed (variable, GM ruling)
- Artifact air vehicle: variable, GM ruling

## AREAS WITH BACKGROUND RADIATION

For any non-native creature entering terrain types noted as having background radiation, this radiation causes them 1 hit point of radiation damage per day, with a successful DC 10 Fort save avoiding this damage entirely. If that same creature gets an amount of sleep or rest normal for its genotype, this damage heals overnight, only to occur again the next day.

## LOCALES OF NOTE

The Shatterback Mountains setting contains many locales of interest to bands of science-seekers and mutant rovers. While a broad overview is provided here, detailed information will be found in a series of adventures released in prior and forthcoming issues of *SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN*.

### DECOPOD HIVES

Decopod Hive Alpha-1 rules over a group of smaller satellite hives scattered throughout the Shatterback Mountains. There, the decopod hive queen keeps order among their arcane and secretive sect, as the crab-like living heads attempt to create their own science-based supreme society. With contempt for all other forms of intelligence (including A.I.s), the decopods send out teams of researchers and scavengers into the Shatterback Mountains searching for any ancient technology they can use to further their goals.

### GENE LOOM INSTALLATION

Located in a craterous caldera on the western edge of the hothouse jungles, the gene loom installation has recently been active, spewing forth new mutations bizarre even by the metrics of Omega-Terra. Details on this location can be found in the adventure *The Gene Looms of Janeck-Vac* (*SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN* No.1).

### ETERNITY VAULT

Containing a partially-constructed city of the Ancient Ones named Ur-Subterra, the Eternity Vault lies buried underneath a mountain. It survives still, if barely so, thanks to the efforts of a quintet of leviathan construction mechs. Details on this location can be found in the forthcoming adventure  *Holding Up The Sky* (*SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN* No.4).

### MEDICINAL ORDER OF MONKS

This holiest of holies is an adobe monastery, and home base of the Medicinal Order. As if by universal agreement among all sentients, the monastery is considered holy ground, and the persons and properties of the Order sacrosanct. Any who visit there, regardless of genotype or alignment, are welcome to avail themselves of the monk's healing arts, so long as they return the universal respect for sentient life freely given by the adherents of the Order. The price for violating their customs would be too terrible to consider, if anyone living knew exactly what that price was.

### SHUTTLE POD LANDING SITE

A silver shaft of light strikes down from the sky every night, apparently targeting a small crater in the jungle, which is swarming with new bio-mechanical reptiles. Details on this location can be found in *Extinction Event of the Bionisaurus* (*SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN* No.2).

# SHATTERBACK MOUNTAINS DENIZENS

In contrast to the hothouse rain forests that occupy most of Omega-Terra, the Shatterback Mountains can seem sparsely populated. But in these wild, broken lands there is still life, and even sentient life, for those willing to pay the price in mutated genes and hardened resolve. The native life-forms that call the Shatterback Mountains home are a sturdy and hardbitten bunch, and they can afford neither sympathy, sentiment, or scruples if they are to survive and prosper there.

## BLOODSCRUB

Bloodscrub is a hardy red scrubgrass that has adapted to the harsh conditions of the Shatterback Mountains by deriving much of its nourishment from decaying animal corpses. It does this by exuding a fragrant aerosol compound that is mildly poisonous, inflicting but a single hit point of damage to animal life-forms. While larger animals such as the ibexanid that graze on the bloodscrub are able to tolerate this poison, smaller creatures as well as the sick or dying fall easily to it, and perish near the plant, supplementing its metabolic needs.

While a single 5' patch of bloodscrub may be relatively harmless to man-sized or larger creatures, areas with larger, connected patches may have a more potent cumulative effect.

**Bloodscrub:** Init +0; Atk none; AC 7; HD 1d4 per 5' patch, 1-4 hit points; MV 00'; Act 1d20; SP poison aerosol spray for 1 HP poison damage; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +0

## BOMBARDIER BEETLE

Born during the height of the Great Disaster, when cosmic radiation rained down from the skies and the seas boiled with nuclear flames, the bombardier beetle gained an adaptive immunity to all forms of radiation. In fact, this 1' long beetle has evolved a metabolism that consumes, filters, and enriches the common elements found in its omnivorous diet and transmutes them into radioactive isotopes, storing them in several sectioned glands in its abdomen.

When threatened, the bombardier beetle's various storage glands contract and pump their contents of tritium, radiocarbon, cobalt-60, and a viscous acid solution, into a sphincter muscle cavity where they combine and chemically ignite, exiting the chamber outwards with a pronounced booming sound. The beetles are able to quickly flip around to use their "atomic bomb" ranged attack, aiming their sphincter muscles at any single target in a 270° arc. Victims of this explosive spray attack will suffer a combination of explosive force trauma, acid burns, and radiation damage.

**Bombardier Beetle:** Init +0; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4) or atomic bomb spray +4 ranged (1d6 concussive, 1d8 acid DC 12 Reflex save vs 1/2 damage, 1d10 radiation burn DC 14 Fort save vs. 1/2 damage); AC 14; HD 1d10+2, 8 hit points; MV 45'; Act 1d20; SP immune to radiation; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will -2



## SHATTERBACK MOUNTAINS RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d100	Terrain Type	Random Encounter	No. Appearing	
1-20	<b>Blood Scrublands</b>	Bloodscrub	1-8 patches	
21-36		Gerblings	10-200	
37-48		Bombardier Beetles	1-8	
49-65		Ibexanid	5-25	
66-75		Quietious Folk	1-8	
76-84		Terrordons	1-10	
85-88		Wild Rover Band	1	
89-91		Decopods (Bipedors)	1-8	
92-94		Technomancers*	1-4	
95-97		Holy Order Monks	1-6	
98-00	Glowmental	1		
01-26	<b>Broken Mountains</b>	Bloodscrub	1-4 patches	
27-37		Ibexanid	1-8	
38-49		Quietious Folk	1-10	
50-61		Terrordons	1-12	
62-78		Wild Rover Band	1	
79-88		Decopods (Bipedors)	1-8	
89-93		Mountain Elemental	1	
94-96		Technomancers*	1-4	
97-98		Holy Order Monks	1-3	
97-00		Glowmental	1	
1-24	<b>Howling Canyons</b>	Bloodscrub	1-6 patches	
25-38		Gerblings	10-200	
39-00		Bombardier Beetles	1-6	
00-00		Ibexanid	5-25	
00-00		Quietious Folk	1-6	
00-00		Terrordons	1-8	
00-00		Decopods (Bipedors)	1-6	
00-00		Wild Rover Bands	1	
94-96		Technomancers*	1-3	
97-98		Holy Order Monks	1-2	
99-00		Glowmental	1	
1-32		<b>Silver Savannas</b>	Gerblings	20-500
33-52			Wild Human Herds	10-100
53-61	Bombardier Beetles		1-3	
62-74	Quietious Folk		1-6	
75-86	Terrordons		1-8	
87-91	Wild Rover Bands		1	
92-95	Technomancers*		1	
96-99	Holy Order Monks		1	
00	Glowmental	1		

\* Details on Technomancers can be found in Fight This Mutant from Mudpuppy Games.

## DECOPODS AND BIPEDORS

When rarely seen unmounted from their bipedor mounts, one could be forgiven for mistaking decopods as being simply a race of sentient mutated crabs. Despite their outward crustacean appearance, they are descended from human stock. Appearing as grotesquely bloated and puffy heads with six relatively small carapace-covered legs and two slightly larger prehensile and clawed forearms, these highly intelligent creatures live in a symbiotic society with their bipedor kin, which they ride and breed much as cattle.

Decopod hives in the Shatterback Mountains are always based around a cave system, with wooden palisades, bipedor pens, and huts built in the immediate vicinity. Decopods use these hives as bases to forage for food and ancient technology.

Endowed with a potent mind control mutation, the s would still be unable to successfully compete with the myriad mutant life in Omega-Terra had they not bred the race of mutated humans known as bipedors, which they ride as mounts on a semi-permanent basis. Together, the two races comprise a single symbiotic creature at all times, except when resting, eating, or sleeping.

Decopod tribes keep large herds of bipedors, breeding them over the millennia for strength, physical beauty, and longer life. An individual decopod will own at least 2-3 bipedors, using different bipedors for specialized purposes such as martial defense, brute-force labor, or recreational activities.

To use a bipedor, a decopod merely climbs up onto the bipedor's headless shoulders, and then drops its front-most clawed legs down the bipedor's gullet, where they grasp and telepathically link up with the bipedor's upper nerve bundle. From the moment of neural connection, both beings act as one, with the bipedor executing the decopod's every thought, including sophisticated tasks requiring fine motor skills that the bipedor would otherwise be incapable of.

While a bipedor will generally go about unclothed, the decopods display their personal tribal rank and status via the complexity, ornamentation, and quality of the bipedor's neck saddle, chest harness, and weapons.

Decopod clans are highly organized, rigidly structured, and matriarchal, with each clan being ruled over by a queen. Decopods transmit knowledge and memories via RNA chains during procreation; thus, each generation is born knowing



everything that the previous generations of its ancestry knew. It is only by dint of the limited numbers of their populations that this race of mutated humans has not become more widespread and powerful.

**Decopod (unmounted):** Init +8; Atk claw +0 melee (1d3); AC 9; HD 2d10; 11 hit points; MV 15'; Act 1d20+8; SP Psychic Domination: Hypnotic mind-control, DC 15 Will save to avoid, 1d6 rounds duration; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +10

**Decopod (mounted):** Init +8; Atk +8 melee (1d8) or by weapon type; AC 12 or by armor type; HD 6d10; 36 hit points; MV 35'; Act 1d20+8; SP Psychic Domination: Hypnotic mind-control, DC 15 Will save to avoid, 1d6 rounds duration; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +10

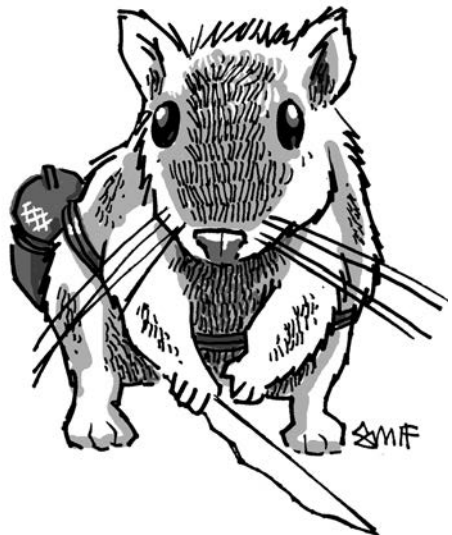
Bipedors are a mutated human race kept and bred exclusively to be used as mounts by the decopods. Bipedors generally resemble tall, muscular pure strain humans whose bodies would be considered beautiful if not for their complete lack of any perceivable head. Their necks instead end with a toothless gaping orifice that functions both as a mouth and as an access point for the small nerve bundle located near the top of their spines — a devolved remnant of what was once a brain.

Unguided, a bipedor on its own is capable of movement, feeding and watering itself, and even reproductive processes, but only in a blind, stumbling manner. They are incapable of fending for themselves in the wild, and possess only the lowest order of animal intelligence (INT 1). They have been bred over the centuries to possess high levels of physical strength (STR 16-20), and to make able warriors when mounted and controlled by a decapod rider.

**Bipedor:** Init +0 (unmounted), or as per rider (mounted); Atk +0 melee (unmounted), +4 melee by weapon type (mounted); AC 12 or by armor type; HD 4d10, 26 hit points; MV 10' (unmounted), 30' (mounted); Act 1d12 (unmounted), 1d20+rider bonuses (mounted); SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will -2

## GERBLINGS

These small, taciturn rodents live in burrow-enclaves in the Shatterback Mountains. Gerblings are minimally sentient (INT 4-5) but highly imitative beings. Individual tribes of up to 200 gerblings will be ruled over by a dominant mated pair. They practice crude tool use, brandishing pointed-stick spears and small flint swords, all sized for their roughly 6" tall frames. They do not favor the use of armor, as their primary defenses are their incredible speed and hopping ability.



When predators attack them, gerbling tribes maintain a tight security perimeter within 25'-50' of their burrow-enclaves, and occasionally take down large predators with a massed attack. At any sign of an intruder, the gerblings on guard duty will begin furiously thumping their back feet, warning the entire tribe via sound and ground vibrations. Although they can speak, it is in their own ultrasonically-pitched language that cannot be heard by most other creatures.

**Gerbling:** Init +4; Atk bite +4 melee (1 hit point), spear stick or flint tiny sword +4 melee (1d3 damage); AC 16; HD 1d4, 1-4 hit points; MV 40' hopping; Act 1d20+4; SP immune to radiation; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +1

## **GLOWMENTAL**

Glowmentals are rare, sentient radioactive clouds that live in the Shatterback Mountains. Tribal oral traditions often refer to them simply as "demons," and all manner of malicious and malignant intent is ascribed to them. Some stories even give them a mythic origin as being one of the final creations of the Ancient Makers, upon whom they immediately turned and destroyed.

What is known is that these roaming clouds of particulate fallout and potent radioactive fields have an innate ability to generate intense levels of fear and hysteria in all biological creatures and sentients. They seem to either feed upon the fear that they generate, or somehow gain sustenance from the act of burning an organism down to their bones or husk. Impervious to all physical harm, glowmentals can sometimes seemingly be injured or even driven off by energy-based mutational attacks, particle beam weapons, or high-level neural programs, but never killed.

Glowmentals are in fact effectively immortal, and each one has lived for many millennia, having originated by means unknown during the events of the Great Disaster. If a glowmental somehow takes enough damage to be "killed," it is simply dispersed until background radiation from the environment slowly regenerates the entity. Many individual glowmentals have proper names, whether apocryphal or later ascribed, none can say. The most infamous of these include the demons Ragnarok, Myrmeke, and Orcus.

Among learned rover-priests and shamans it is said each demon's true life-force is actually contained in a small physical artifact, and that possession of such an object – along with the threat to destroy it and thus permanently kill the demon – can be used as a means to control and enslave one of these radiant clouds of sentient evil. The challenges and implicit danger in such a plan are obvious, but those possessed with the madness for world-conquering power are seldom daunted by such circumstances.

**GM Notes:** Each instance of a glowmental was created when a single quantum wave projector device created by the Ancient Makers was employed to try and mitigate the damage being caused to the world by the cosmic radiation storms that heralded the Great Disaster. While the QWP device was successful in dampening the ravages being inflicted on the planet, it had an unexpected side effect. In the chaos of the Great Disaster, many nation-states were panicked into



deploying an array of doomsday devices in their respective military arsenals. The quantum wave caught each device as it was activated and seemingly destroyed it, but in many cases the vast energies and atomic forces at play could not be fully nullified, and were instead transformed into less harmful clouds of radiation. Eventually some of these radioactive clouds coalesced and, over time, gained sentience.

Each glowmental has in the past learned to store its core consciousness in a variety of unremarkable technological artifacts, from data crystals to simple mundane household devices such as fusion-powered shavers or dilithium gem jewelry.

**Glowmental:** Init +8; Atk envelope +8 melee (6d6 radiation burn) cloudburst +8 ranged (3d6 radiation burn, 60' area); AC 16; HD 36d10; 200 hit points; MV 45'; Act 2d20; SP immune to physical attacks and mind control; SV Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +18

## HOLY ORDER MONKS

The ancient and revered Holy Order Monks are known for two things: their universal love of all living things, and the proscription that harming a Holy Order Monk is among the single worst sins any living sentient can commit. Living in remote monasteries high up in the Shatterback Mountains, small groups of these mixed-genotype monks sometimes wander the wilderness, rendering their healing arts unto any in need. They have even been known to heal and cure both sides of a bloody conflict, seeking to persuade implacable enemies to cease their conflicts and reconcile.

They are able to perform these services with apparent immunity to personal harm. Whether this is because of unspoken universal agreement, some form of low-level telepathy, or because the penalty for harming a Holy Order Monk is a price too terrible to consider, none can say. Even alpha mutants and mega-fauna predators tolerate their ministrations with even-tempered tolerance and respect.

Though they willingly heal anyone in need, the Holy Order Monks are a secretive society, and do not share their arcane arts with outsiders. They are also surprisingly capable combatants when the rare need arises.



**Holy Order Monk Initiate:** Init +2; Atk +2 martial arts melee (1d6 damage), +2 dirks ranged (1d6 damage, 75' R); AC 14; HD 3d6; 11 hit points; MV 35'; Act 2d20+2; SP telepathic calming aura (DC 14 Will save to harm individual), other mutations by genotype; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +6

**Holy Order Monk Adherent:** Init +6; Atk +6 martial arts melee (4d6 damage), +6 shurikens ranged (3d6 damage, 125' range); AC 18; HD 10d6; 35 hit points; MV 60'; Act 3d20+6; SP telepathic calming aura (DC 18 Will save to harm individual), blows can affect stone and metal, other mutations by genotype; SV Fort +10, Ref +12, Will +12

**Holy Order Monk Master:** Init +10; Atk +10 martial arts melee (10d6 damage), +10 telepathic slam ranged (10d6 damage); AC 21; HD 22d6; 75 hit points; MV 100'; Act 4d20+10; SP telepathic calming aura (DC 20 Will save to harm anyone), blows can affect super materials and energy fields, particle beam reflection block (opposed Atk check, reflects back to point of origin), other mutations by genotype; SV Fort +20, Ref +20, Will +30

## IBEXANID

These 8-legged descendants of wild mountain goats roam the basins and escarpments of the Shatterback Mountains in wild herds. Generally found in small groups of 10-20, a herd will consist of mares, their most recent generation of kids, and a dominant bull. Smaller groups of young bulls may be encountered higher up in the mountains.

Ibexanids are dangerous opponents, even more so when encountered on rocky cliff faces or any rocky terrain where they can use their uncanny climbing and jumping abilities. An ibexanid charge occurs not in a straight line, but in a complex parkour-like leaping maneuver involving several intervening high terrain points. The terrible attack scream of an ibexanid occurs on both audible and ultrasonic wavelengths, and can trigger small avalanches in their mountainous home terrain. Ibexanid are aggressive and easily antagonized, viewing any intruder as a potential threat to be run off, trampled, or gored to death.



**Ibexanid bull:** Init +6; Atk horn ram +6 melee (1d8 damage), multi-legged kick +6 melee (3d4 damage); AC 15; HD 2d12, 13 hit points; MV 30', 40' parkour; Act 1d20+4; SP sonic bray (causes rock slide for 1d3 damage 30% chance); SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +2

**Ibexanid mare:** Init +4; Atk horn ram +4 melee (1d6 damage), multi-legged kick +4 melee (2d4 damage); AC 15; HD 2d12, 13 hit points; MV 30', 40' parkour; Act 1d20+4; SP sonic bray (causes rock slide for 1d3 damage 30% chance); SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +2

**Ibexanid kid:** Init +2; Atk horn ram +2 melee (1d4 damage), multi-legged kick +2 melee (1d4 damage); AC 15; HD 1d12, 6 hit points; MV 30', 40' parkour; Act 1d20+2; SP sonic bleat (no damage, calls adults to defend); SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +2

## **MOUNTAIN ELEMENTAL**

Whether science and magic are but the same set of laws as seen from different perspectives or no, not even the wisest can say with certainty. But it is certain that not even the Ancient Ones could have foreseen that their tinkering with cosmic forces, combined with the events of the Great Disaster, would cause the crystals, rock, and radioactive ore all found within the mantle of a mountain range to fuse into an animate elemental force.

Mountain elementals are these created beings. Timeless, ageless, and mindless, these craggy creatures wander over and through the Shatterback Mountains, erupting from the ground at random intervals, with purposes and intent unknown. Tribal sages claim they are the angered spirits of the mountains themselves, while some wise women claim that they serve as natural agents of the land, responsible for recycling the very earth and rock.

Mountain elementals stand over 20' tall, and are primarily composed of rock, earth, and radioactive crystals. Immensely strong, a blow from one can shatter a boulder, and they are capable of projecting an intense beam of radiation from their cyclopean faces. Though virtually immune to physical harm, they are not invulnerable. If a mountain elemental is damaged enough to disincorporate, the leftover fragments of its body contain a treasure trove of rare gems, crystals, and radioactive ore.

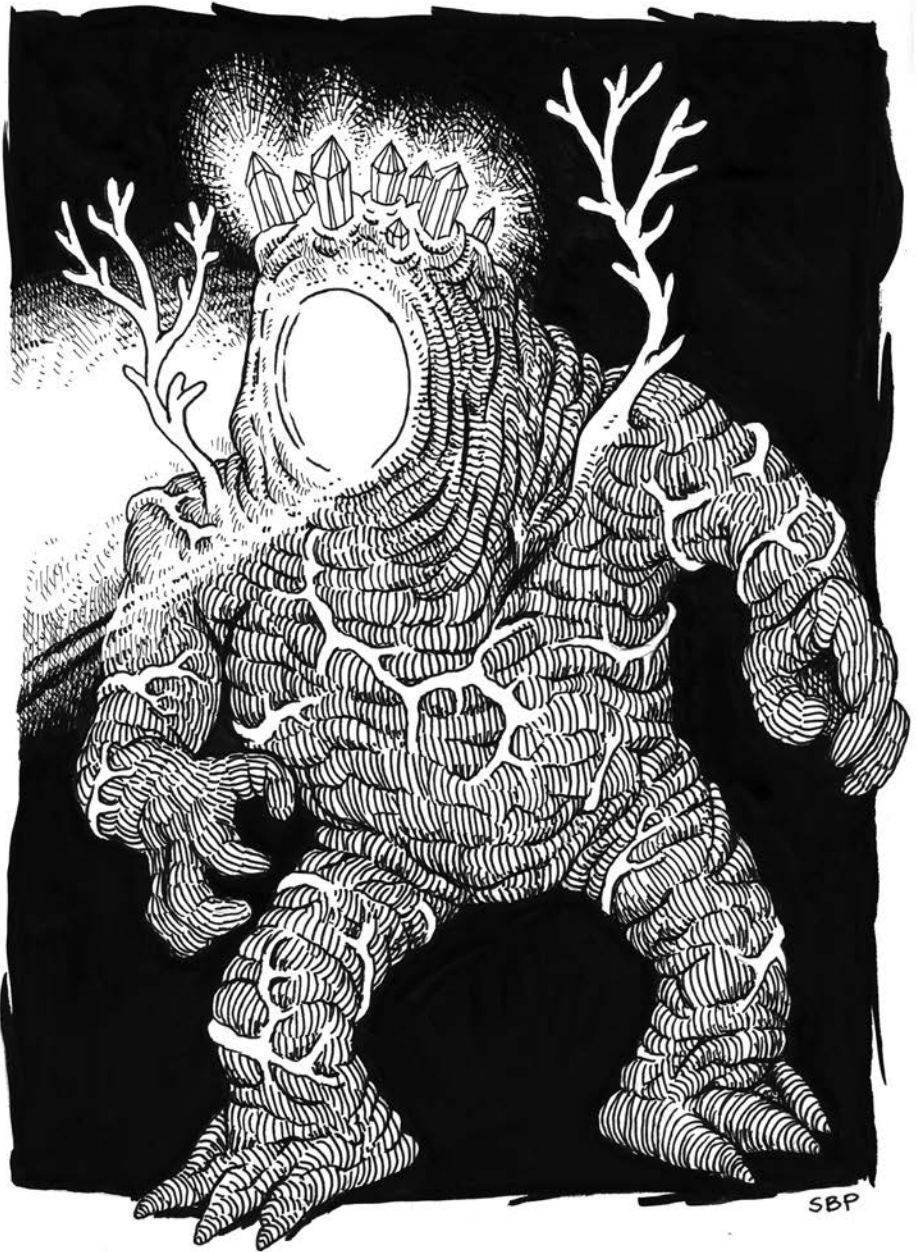
**Mountain Elemental:** Init +5; Atk envelope +5 melee (4d6 damage), uranium eye ray +5 ranged (3d6 radiation damage, DC 14 Fort save vs gain/lose mutation, 100' R); AC 20; HD 22d10; 125 hit points; MV 30'; Act 2d20+5; SP immune to mind control; SV Fort +10, Ref +0, Will +10

## **THE QUIETIOUS FOLK**

The Quietious Folk are a race of sentient vultures that are so named because of their mute nature. Incapable of making any vocal sounds, the Quietious Folk rely instead on a crude form of telepathy. Though telepathic, they are not particularly bright thinkers, having Intelligence scores ranging from 4 to 8. Except when dealing with their natural enemies, the reptilian terror dons, the Quiet Folk are a generally even-tempered and friendly race, if a cautious one.

The Quietious Folk employ no tools or weapons, but can be sometimes be coaxed into a favor-for-favor type of barter trade. In this, they will offer to grab and fly other sentients to any location within sight at the time of the trade. An otherwise





unburdened Quietious Folk can grab and carry up to 115 kilograms (255 lbs). In return for such favors, they respond favorably to offers of meat, or to shiny or gaudy baubles, ornaments, or jewelry. The Quietious Folk will not willingly engage in combat, except in self defense.

**Quietious Folk:** Init +2; Atk beak/claw +2 melee (1d6 damage); AC 12/18 (ground/air); HD 2d12, 13 hit points; MV 15', 100' flying; Act 1d20+2; SP none; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +0

## TERRORDONS

When the events of the Great Disaster wiped out most existing avians in the Shatterback Mountain region, the horned lizard quickly mutated to fill their ecological niche. Thanks to the effects of convergent evolution, these reptiles now somewhat resemble long-extinct pterodons, but instead of enlarged head crests, the Terrordons have long, sharp horns. This combination gives these large flying reptiles a decidedly demonic appearance.

Possessing rudimentary sapience, the Terrordons are the natural enemies of the Quietious Folk. Terrordons compete for many of the same sparse mountain resources as the Quietious Folk, and both species are completely intolerant to the presence of the other within their own territories. But whereas the Quietious Folk are either ambivalent or at least tolerant of other intelligent beings, the Terrordons have an inimical attitude to most sentient life. The rare exception to this will be anyone who can completely dominate them through superior powers or abilities, cowing the Terrordons into a grudging subservient role.

**Terrordon:** Init +2; Atk wing claws +2 melee (1d4 damage), horns +2 melee (1d6 damage); AC 14/17 (ground/air); HD 2d6, 7 hit points; MV 20', 100' flying; Act 1d20+2; SP none; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0

## WILD HUMAN HERDS

In the savannas and plains at the foot of the Shattered Mountains live wild herds of semi-sentient humans. These wild human herds are a regressed form of pure strain human possessing no language, no tools, and no society whatsoever. Though physically resembling modern humans, these herds of wild humans have essentially regressed to an earlier state of human evolution not seen in hundreds of thousands of years. They wander the landscape in large groups, simply eating what roots, fruits, and tubers they can find.

As a group, their intelligences range from 2-4, but if a member of the herd can be separated from them as an infant, or much more rarely as very young adults, they can be raised by social pure strain humans. In such cases, their brains are able to grow to maturity as would be normal for an average pure strain human.

**Wild Humans:** Init +0; Atk clawed blow +0 melee (1d3 damage), bite +0 melee (1d2 damage); AC 10; HD 1d4, 1-4 hit points; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1

## WILD ROVER BANDS

Many bands of rovers and seekers decide to explore the Shattered Mountains, and most never return to tell the tale. The few survivors of such journeys tell of the Shattered Mountains having a rugged, individual spirit that tends to lay claim to the souls of the unwary — claiming them as its own. While it is true that the area is infamously treacherous and lethal, some of the groups of explorers who enter the wild lands do survive, and decide to stay there. These wild rover bands simply prefer the untamed life of a murderous mutant hobo.



These wild rover bands are usually of mixed genotype, and lead a hardscrabble – but utterly free – life in the mountains. They are clannish by individual group, and generally regard any new explorers to the area as fresh meat for their tables and new equipment for stores.

### Sample Wild Rover Band

**Wild Rover (Mutant Human):** Init +1d4+3; Atk twin machetes +2 melee (1d8+2 damage), blowgun +3 missile (1d3/1d5); AC 13; HD 4d6, 16 hit points; MV 70'; Act 2d20+2; SP (red skin) Heightened Stamina, Radiation Generation, Multiple Body Parts (4 arms, 4 legs), Teleportation, Time Sense; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +1

**Wild Rover (Mutant Preying Mantis):** Init +1d4+3; Atk great club +2 melee (1d10+2 damage), atlatl +3 missile (1d6); AC 12; HD 4d6, 22 hit points; MV 30'; Act 2d20+2; SP Taller (7'), Electrical Generation, Heightened Stamina, Teleportation, Magnetic Control; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +2

**Wild Rover (Mutant Snake):** Init +1d4+2; Atk spiked club +2 melee (1d5+2 damage), atlatl +2 missile (1d6); AC 12; HD 4d6, 20 hit points; MV 30'; Act d20+2; SP Metamorph, Light Generation, Amplimorph, Telekinesis, Mind Control; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +2

**Wild Rover (Mutant Human):** Init +1d4+2; Atk spiked club +3 melee (1d5+3 damage), tomohawks +3 missile (1d6); AC 14; HD 4d6, 14 hit points; MV 45'; Act d20+2; SP (compound bug eyes), Holographic Skin, Plasticity, Symbiotic Touch, Empathy, Mind Control; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +2

**Wild Rover (Mutant Sage Bush):** Init +1d4+2; Atk scythe +2 melee (1d5+2 damage), natural spines +2 missile (1d4); AC 12; HD 4d6, 21 hit points; MV 50'; Act d20+2; SP Infravision, Multiple Body Parts (2 extra legs), Gas Generation; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +1

# CREATURE CRYPTOLOGY

## CRYPTID CREATURES DECRYPTED

### NORAM HUNTER MK.6

*submitted by Dan Smith*

**Initiative:** +0

**Attacks:** leg claw +6 melee (1d12), las-cannon +6 ranged (2d10, 400' R),  
sonic stunner +6 ranged (DC 14 Fort save vs stunned for 1d6 rounds, 100' R)

**AC:** 24 (optic visor 17)

**HD:** 13d10

**HP:** 75

**Move:** 30', 20' vertical surfaces, 60' jump jet

**Actions:** 2d20

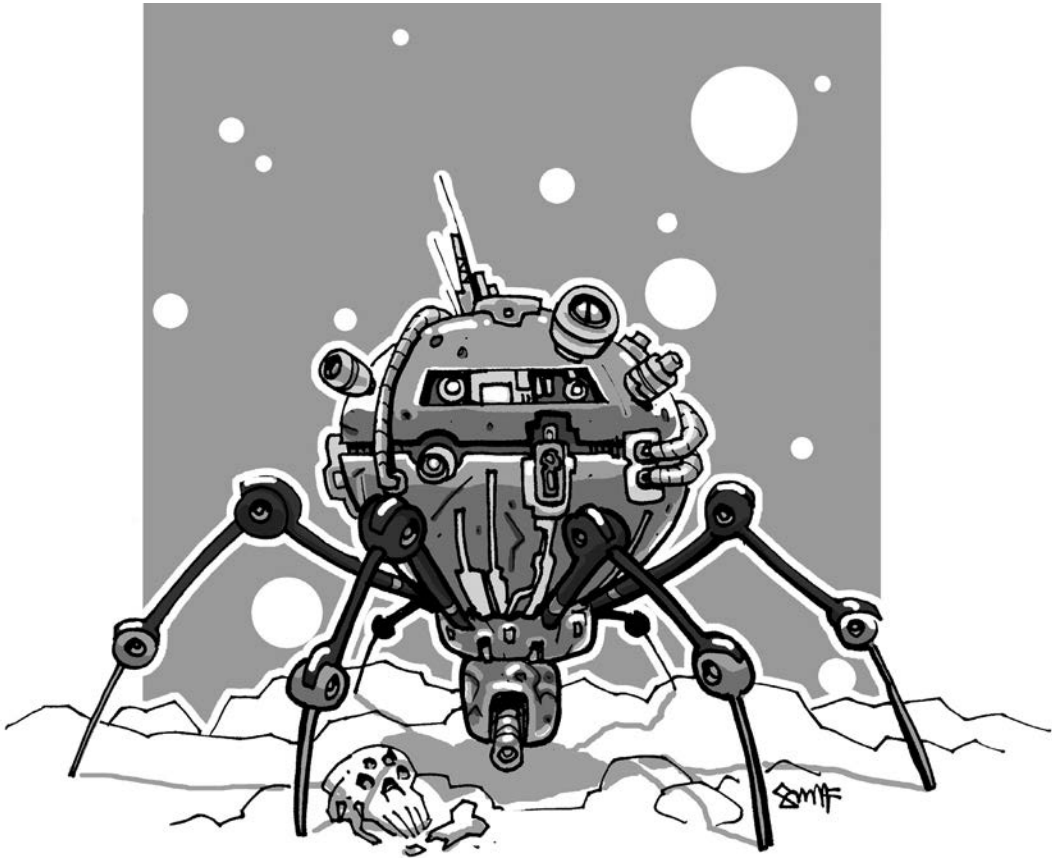
**Special:** see below

**Save:** Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0

**A.I. recog:** 24 (military)

Built in the waning days of the 5th global conflict, these compact car-sized autonomous robotic warriors were never deployed on a mass scale. Because they were intended as a weapon of last resort on the battlefield, the vast majority of NorAM Hunter units were kept stored in underground fail-safe vaults. Thus, many of the units survived the apocalyptic disaster to follow. The industrial complexes that churned out this little beauty were a corporate/military secret and positioned deep underground in out-of-the way locations. A few of these factories even continued to produce NorAM Hunter units until well after the Great Disaster, when the necessary resources to build them eventually ran out. During the early years of the Dark Age, a warlord named Lester Bekins found a cache of the NorAM Hunter units and was able to reprogram and master them into his service. These served him well until a glitch in the programming proved to be fatal to his regime. Now only a few of these are still in active service in the world, while the many unfound units still lie buried in the deep sediments of antiquity.


The NorAM Hunter is programmed to attack at range until such time as it is physically engaged in close combat, when it will use its duralloy leg talons to eliminate melee combatants. Its las-cannon turret can fire 16 times before requiring a 30-minute recharging cycle. Its sonic stunner emitter is usable but once per 30 minute period due to similar power recycling requirements.



**NorAM Hunter Mk.6:** Init +6; Atk leg claw +6 melee (1d12), las-cannon +6 ranged (2d10, 400' R), sonic stunner +6 ranged (DC 14 Fort save vs stunned for 1d6 rounds, 100' R, any three adjacent targets); AC 24 (optic visor AC 17); HD 13d10; 75 hit points; MV 30', 20' vertical surface, 60' jump jet; Act 2d20; SP immune to mind control; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0, A.I. recog 24 (military)

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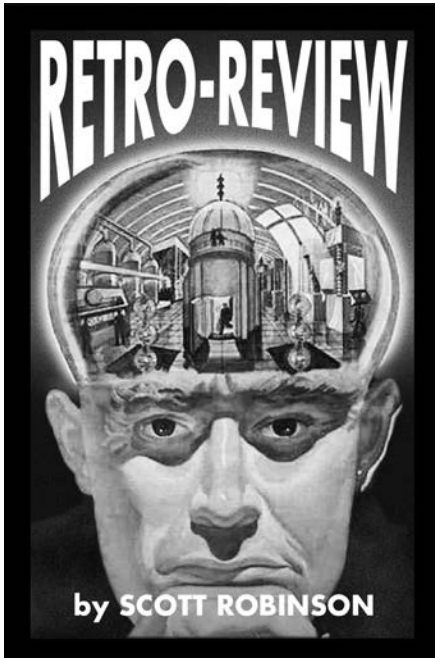
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Just the  
way the  
gods and  
Gary  
intended.









## I AM LEGEND

There was a time when reboots were viewed with scorn, as craven money-grabs to cash in a second time on something wonderful but long since past. Neil LaBute's *The Wicker Man*. Tim Burton's *Planet of the Apes*, sure. *Robocop 2014*. Scott Derrickson's *The Day the Earth Stood Still*.

Then again, there's Ron Moore's *Battlestar Galactica*. The new *Lost in Space*. Christopher Nolan's *Batman*. The past fifteen years of *Doctor Who*. We have to admit, for every turkey sci-fi reboot, there's a gloriously superior one. And isn't that okay? Aren't you panting for Denis Villeneuve's *Dune* to soar over its predecessors?

I want to put forth the following premise: reboots aren't always a matter of one version trying to top another. The truth is, when a sci-fi classic (or turkey) gets a makeover, sometimes it's really a matter of retelling a story for a new generation, whether that retelling is good, bad, or ugly. It's more about the viewer than what's viewed.

It's in that spirit that we can revisit the various cinematic interpretations of Richard Matheson's seminal *I Am Legend*, one of the most influential short horror novels of all time – as well as the template for *Night of the Living Dead* and all the copycat zombieness that followed.

There are three – count 'em – film versions of this sumptuous, astonishing story (which is more vampire than zombie), conveniently spread across three nerd generations. That distribution is poignant in itself, but before we get to that, let's do a brief recap of this gem's history.

## MATHESON'S FEVER DREAM

Richard Matheson certainly possessed the street cred to birth a horror genre. *I Am Legend* did exactly that: *Zombieland* and *World War Z* would not exist without him (maybe not the best examples). *The Twilight Zone*'s "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet," *Star Trek*'s "The Enemy Within," *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, *The Pit and the Pendulum*, *Hell House*, *What Dreams May Come*, *Somewhere in Time* – are all by Matheson.

*I Am Legend* has both the narrative heft and the pedigree to qualify as a genre prototype. We can reasonably hold up the various movie versions of the tale not merely as remake or reboot, but as highly individual variations on a theme

that categorically defines the first three generations of nerd.

Here's the original in a nutshell:

In the year 1976, Robert Neville seems to be the last survivor of an apocalyptic pandemic that has wiped out most of the human race, leaving only wandering bands of pasty-white vampires roaming the ruins, and himself, immune and unchanged, supposedly because he was once bitten by a vampire bat. He remains alive in a vampire-ridden Los Angeles, where he kills dormant vampires by day and searches for a cure to the pandemic by night, barricaded in a house that is constantly under vampire assault.

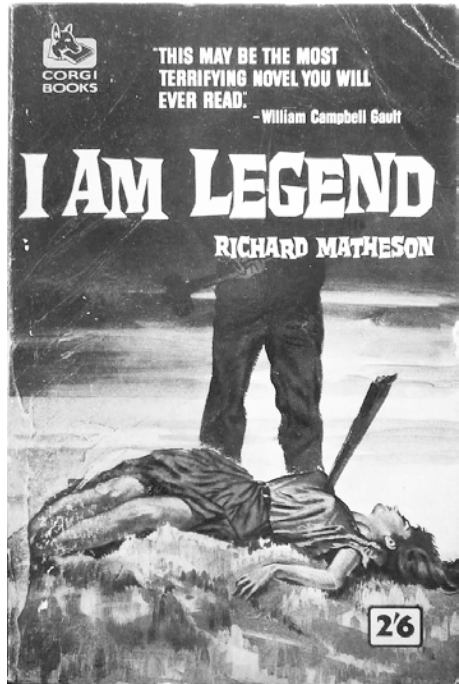
Fighting off depression and booze, Neville soldiers on. He adopts a dog, which gives him a source of connection and affection, but the dog dies, leaving him more depressed than ever. He has been fighting off the vampires with the traditional garlic, crosses, and mirrors but is convinced that the solution is something that can be synthesized and clinically administered.

Along comes a woman who appears to be as normal as he, and who represents an opportunity for him to test his theories. Why is she, too, immune? Could she hold the key? The two rapidly come to care for one another. When he presses her for a blood sample, she submits, but then knocks him out and flees. Turns out, she's part of an infected group who have their affliction at least somewhat under control, making them the true possibility of a resurgent human society. Neville allows himself to be taken into their custody, and ends up dying for the cause.

Anthony Boucher, then-editor of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, wrote, "Matheson has added a new variant on the Last Man theme... and has given striking vigor to his invention by a forceful style of storytelling which derives from the best hard-boiled crime novels." Other critics may have been less effusive, but in the end, the world opted to imitate Matheson – the sincerest form of et cetera.

*I Am Legend* gives us all the roots of post-apocalyptic: an out-of-the-blue calamity that lays waste to the modern world, horrors to crush what remains of the human soul, and a doughty hero with deep issues, trying to turn the tide. It's the first true modern template for the term post-apocalyptic.

Sure, Matheson had precursors, running all the way back to the early Hebrews with their own legend, the nautical Noah (though Gilgamesh takes this one farther back still); Sodom and Gomorrah was the original *On the Beach*, and the



Book of Revelation can be said to tease *1984* and even *The Hunger Games*. Not to mention Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826) and the works of H.G. Wells.

But it's Matheson who stands above them all, bringing the horror out of our dreams and onto our streets. Post-apocalyptica, in our contemporary formulation, exists right where we're standing – utterly immediate, in our faces. Our cars rusting. Our buildings gutted. Our playgrounds scorched. And that immediacy makes post-apocalyptica very personal, almost an identity marker in nerd culture. I know how old you are and how you roll by reading your Top 10 Dystopian Films picks.

This brings us to the three films directly based on Matheson's novel, stretching from the earliest modern nerds to the present day:

## THE LAST MAN ON EARTH (1964)

Vincent Price is Robert Morgan, and his pandemic vampire-zombies are lumbering morons, no great strain to fend off. He kills them in their sleep by day, barricading himself in his house at night. As in the book, he believes his immunity derives from a bat bite. He has lost his wife and daughter to the plague, and in a particularly unsettling twist, is attacked by his undead wife after she digs her way out of the secret grave he buried her in. Desperate for companionship, he befriends a dog but has to euthanize it when it gets sick.

He discovers a woman named Ruth, whom he persuades to visit his home. When she becomes ill from exposure to garlic, he becomes suspicious, and he later catches her trying to inject herself with a mixture of blood and vaccine. She confesses that she is, indeed, infected, but under treatment, as are many others. The vaccine suppresses their infection, keeping them from succumbing completely. They are planning to rebuild society, and she reveals that Morgan has inadvertently killed some of them. They want him dead, understandably.

While she sleeps, Morgan transfuses his own blood into her, and she is completely cured. Her people choose that moment to attack, and a last-stand battle occurs, culminating (fittingly) in a church. Morgan dies, but as Ruth is cured, the hope remains that everyone else will be, too.





# THE OMEGA MAN (1971)

Charlton Heston takes up the role, his name reverting to Neville – still a virologist, but this time an Army colonel, as well. His immunity derives from an experimental vaccine he gives himself as the pandemic takes hold of Los Angeles. Like Robert Morgan, he barricades himself in a house at night and emerges each morning to kill vampires. But in this version, the vampires are as intelligent as they were to begin with, and exist in a cultish new social structure. They are all about killing Neville, who to them represents the evil that brought on the pandemic in the first place.

There's a woman here, too: Lisa. She rescues Neville from being burned at the stake by cultists, then introduces him to a small circle of survivors who have some resistance to the plague. One of them, Dutch, is a young medical student seeking a more permanent immunity.

Neville and Lisa try to treat her brother Ritchie, who is infected and turning – and it works. Plans are made for Neville and the survivors to evacuate the city and start new lives in the wilderness. The vampire cult chooses that moment to attack, and a last-stand battle occurs, culminating in the mortal wounding of Neville. Dutch and his group discover the dying Neville, who hands them a bottle of serum that will cure them all completely. They flee the city, leaving the vampiric cultists to die.



# I AM LEGEND (2007)

Enter box-office god Will Smith, who retains both the Neville name and Heston's Army commission. He is a full-fledged virologist based not in LA but in New York, and he, too, loses his family in the pandemic – but to a helicopter crash. This Neville's vampire-zombies combine the inhumanity of the first film with speed and reflexes transcending those of the second, making them so fast and deadly that Neville survives only because the location of his barricaded home is unknown to them.

Rather than killing monsters by day, Neville spends his time working systematically on a cure, and transmitting a daily radio broadcast. He has a full-blown lab where he tests serums on the vampires he catches. He is so lonely that he's starting to lose it, forming friendships with store mannequins. His only real friend is his German shepherd, Sam.



In a close call at dusk, when the vampires are stirring, Neville escape, but Sam is bitten by an infected dog, and begins to turn. Neville has no choice but to kill his beloved pet. Enraged, Neville strikes out at a group of vampires and is almost killed himself. A woman and her son unexpectedly rescue him.

Back in Neville's fortress, the woman explains that they are headed to a survivors' camp in Bethel, and they were drawn to him by his radio broadcast. Neville injects a new version of his serum into a recently captured female zombie. The next evening, a group of vampire-zombies, having tracked them the night before, attacks. A battle ensues and Neville and the woman and boy are trapped in his lab. They notice that their test-subject is reverting back to humanity, and as

monsters overrun his lab, Neville draws her blood and gives the vial to the woman, then stuffs her and her son in a closet as he destroys himself and the zombies with a grenade. The woman and boy emerge unscathed and make their way to Bethel, carrying the cure.

These are three completely different films telling exactly the same story:

- The Last Man on Earth maintains a precarious, lonely existence, searching for a cure to a vampire/zombie-making pandemic, with his faithful, doomed dog at his side, as the vampires/zombies hunt him.
- A mysterious woman inexplicably appears and changes everything as he finds a cure.
- The vampire-zombies choose that moment to attack, and he dies a noble death in battle.
- The Last Man's cure survives him, bringing hope to humankind.

See, the story is the very much the same, but the vast differences in style and tone of the three movies basically define define 50 years of nerds, splitting them into three generations.



## NERD GENERATIONS

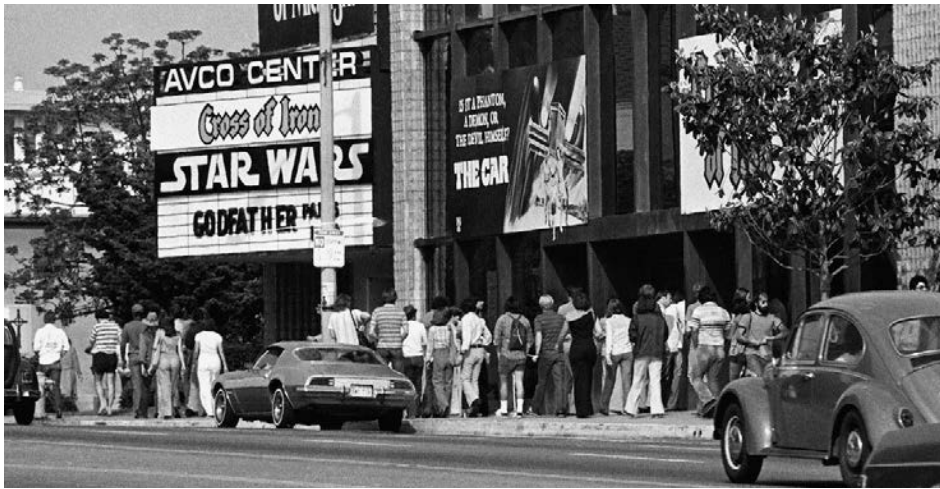
**The Invisible Black-and-White (Fifties):** Born into a life of literary poverty when sci-fi wasn't even published in hardback and hadn't yet made it to television, this kid with their thick black glasses is grateful for any decent big-screen with an idea tucked away inside it. They don't bother much with television, except for *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits*; they are, however, well-versed in Vincent Price's canon, silly as most of it is. There isn't much else out there.

Vincent Price, with his uneasy intensity, is the perfect archetype for the young B&W. Seeing him displayed in isolation, it is impossible to imagine him otherwise. He is the spitting image of his nerd acolyte: possessed of greater self-awareness than his peers, disturbingly vulnerable, and utterly brilliant.

Like Price, the B&W soldiers on, very much in the mold of Marty McFly's 17-year-old dad in *Back to the Future*. The B&W just wants to sit quietly in study hall, scribbling tales of wonder in a spiral-bound notebook; ideas are their bread and butter. The B&W is undernourished when it comes to the wonderful genre that stirs the imagination and surfaces their emotions, but that only fuels the B&W's resolve to remain true to who they are.

This nerd became an engineer in the Apollo program. *D&D* wasn't around when they were young, but if it had been, they'd have been the wily Cleric with a bagful of Don't Even Think About It. They're a hero on par with Robert Neville, turning their starry-eyed wonderings into the actual future.

**The Blue Jean Brain (Seventies):** Not so poverty-stricken as the B&W, the BJB emerged into a much bigger sci-fi universe – one that included lots of TV (*Star Trek*, *Lost in Space*, *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *Space: 1999*, and *Battlestar Galactica*) and substantially more big-screen fun (*Fantastic Voyage*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Westworld*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Logan's Run*, *Star Wars*, the *Star Trek* movies and the *Alien* and *Indiana Jones* franchises). More fun than what had



come before, this stuff drew an audience beyond the nerd himself; they watch this stuff with friends and even bring a date. They actually score some points for suggesting them.

The BJB got a serious upgrade, idol-wise, in Charlton Heston, who wasn't just *The Omega Man* but also Taylor among the apes and the harbinger of *Soylent Green*. Heston was a nerd archetype with an undeniable thread of cool: he was isolated, out of place and disoriented, but he could also shoot straight and even get the girl. With his rugged good looks, cool car, hip clothes and a cop-show soundtrack scoring his mayhem, he was the BJB's self-actualization ideal.

The Blue Jean Brain wears wire-rims. No fashion maven, they nonetheless know where the bell-bottoms can be found at K-Mart. Unlike their predecessor, the BJB harbors quaint illusions about how well they're doing in the high school social milieu that belie their entrenched disinterest in the real world. The BJB has traded in the Black-and-White's spiral-bound study hall scribblepad for a Super 8 film camera, in the tradition of Spielberg, and aspires to remake *Star Wars* in their own backyard.

The Brain became a software developer, starting off in Fortran and graduating to industrial BASIC before a mid-life foray into Microsoft mush code. *D&D* was just getting rolling, and they went all in, leaning Druid: reason-driven but passionate, empirical but magic-minded. Heston cross-dressing in Arwen's riding cloak. The BJB, too, is a Neville hero, whose real-world voice-over captures the truth about where we are and where we could go.

**The Ascending Digital (Nineties):** The post-*Star Wars* baby reaps the parallel boons of ubiquitous CGI and the unquestioned hipness of sci-fi in the wake of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Babylon 5*, *The Matrix* movies, *Alien* sequels, *Predator*, *Terminator*, the reimagined *Galactica*, *Firefly*, Jackson's *Lord of the Rings*, the *Star Wars* prequels, Christopher Nolan's *Batman* and the MCU. The Digital was born into a world where the fringe thrills and passions of the Black-and-White and the Blue Jean Brain had become not just mainstream, but were now the cultural mountaintop.

Who could be more fitting as this millennial generation's archetype than Will Smith, blazing star of the nostalgic nerd-fest *Independence Day*, and not merely sci-fi-friendly, but a wicked mainstream badass? Younger, stronger, funnier, and better-looking than Price or Heston, the Fresh Prince is



the ultimate nerd template: as out-of-place and unsettled as his predecessors, but radiating cool from every pore. Will Smith also managed depths that Price and Heston never achieved. Competent through-and-through, Smith taps into that elusive fanboy insecurity we all have tucked away under our beds, the annoyingly honest demon on our shoulder that whispers, at all the wrong times, "I'm really not sure what the fuck I'm doing."

The Digitals may not be fully aware of just how much of their inheritance was paid for by the deep investments of the B&W and Blue Jean Brain in *Lost in Space* Christmas toys, James Blish *Trek* paperbacks, \$6MM lunch boxes, *Space*: 1999 bubble gum cards, Gold Key Star *Trek* comics, Jack Kirby everything, *Dune* sequels, and *2001* spacecraft models hanging from the bedroom ceiling. The Digital popped out of the womb and into Comic-Con, swimming in buckets of the treasures we elders had to comb the landscape for. Theirs is a unique moment. Everything nerds love is currently what the whole world now craves.

The Digitals are producing original web series and churning out cosplay regalia on 3D printers. They are masters of the gig economy, amassing more tech skills before turning 20 than their predecessors achieved in decades. In their *D&D*, which is a ubiquitous and thriving industry, they trend Barbarian, armed to the gills with overwhelming force that serves as a metaphor for their overwhelming competence. They have a Neville heroism that is both cynical and promising; they're going to save the world and they know it.

## THE OMEGA NERDS

In any *I Am Legend* generation, then, the story elements are these:

- There's this nerd who's out of place and a little disoriented.
- They are sometimes disturbingly vulnerable.
- But they are also smarter by half than everyone else in the room.
- They are scribbling tales of wonder.
- They are going to save to world.

Plus, they're one helluva gamer.

*(Apocalyptic Visions, continued from page 3.)*

At Gary Con this year, I ran a *GammaWorld* game where I had the players face the ruined city of Phoenix, Arizona. It seems giants had taken over the city ruins, and were trying to restore the place using slave labor. Those nasty giants were working on lighter-than-air machines to use in spreading their power and influence in the area. The player character party played well, and found out a lot about the city and where the slaves were kept. Unfortunately, the adventure didn't end well for all of them.

There were a lot of novels that inspired me in the creation of this game. Certainly Jack Kirby's *Kamandi: Last Boy on Earth* comic gave me a lot of fun ideas. There was also the Gold Key comics *Mighty Sampson* gave me some ideas. All of my robot creations came from novels and the Gold Key *Mangus: Robot Fighter*.

I'm happy to say the game still inspires interest many years later. I'm constantly asked to run GW games at any convention I can get to.

**9 out of 10 undead spellcasters endorse Planet X Games\***

**\*The 10th undead spellcaster was slain by an unholy alliance of Player Characters and Kaiju.**



# SCIENTIFIC COMICS



"Excuse me, sir... but have you heard the good news about our Lord the Great A.I. in the Sky?"





SORRY, BOB — THE **HELL STOMPER** GUARD SHAKES OFF THE **BLAST** FROM YOUR SHOULDER-FIRED LAUNCHER.

USING THE **ONE** GOOD LEG LEFT ON HIS **POWERED** ARMOR HE DOES A KIND OF **POGO HOP** OVER THE PARTY AND **ESCAPES!**



AS HE LEAPS OVER A RUBBLED WALL HOWEVER HE MANAGES TO DO AN **AERIAL UPSIDE DOWN SPIN** — FINDING **JUST** THE RIGHT LINE OF SIGHT TO FIRE A **SCATTER GRENADE** — WHICH LANDS **RIGHT** IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CRATER WHERE YOU ARE ALL **HUNKERED DOWN.**

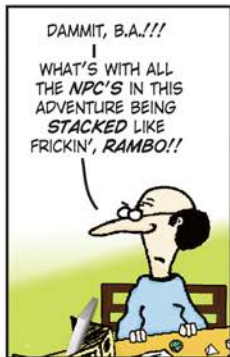
EVERYONE TAKES **2D20+D3** POINTS OF CONCUSSIVE DAMAGE!

WHAT THE **FRICK...?!!**

HOW THE HELL DID HE **MAKE** THAT SHOT?

WELL — THAT SHOULD PUT ME **DOWN.**

HOLY **CRAP!**



DAMMIT, B.A.!!!

WHAT'S WITH ALL THE **NPC'S** IN THIS ADVENTURE BEING **STACKED** LIKE FRICKIN', **RAMBO!!**



I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO TELL YOU, GUYS. THIS IS A **CANNED** ADVENTURE — I'M RUNNING IT **EXACTLY** AS IT WAS WRITTEN.

MAYBE THE **LESSON** HERE IS TO **NOT** SHAKE DOWN RANDOM NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS FOR **CREDITS.**

THAT GUY WAS **SUPPOSEDLY** SOME MUNDANE **MESSENGER** — SCURRYING BETWEEN COMMANDERS.

YEAH — AND HE TOOK OUT DUDE **KILLED** ME **IT'S** TWO SIXTH LEVEL **PCS.** WITH A **JACKIE** **CHAN** MOVE. **NUTS!**

NOT SEEING THE PROBLEM.

I'LL SAY.



WHAT ARE THE GUYS AT **HARD EIGHT** SMOKING?

YOU CAN'T EVEN **ROLL UP** A CHARACTER LIKE THAT USING THE RULES.



I HAPPEN TO **KNOW** — BECAUSE I'VE **TRIED.**

LIKE THAT **TECH-SCRAPPER** BACK AT **NEW DETROIT.**



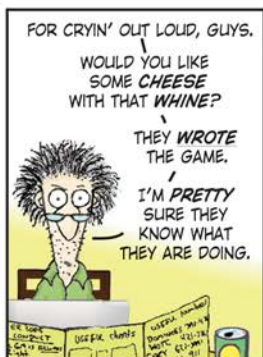
EXACTLY — SOME **RANDO** NPC-NOBODY SCROUNGING FOR **JUNK** IN THE **HEAPS.**

DUDE CLEAN-JERKED A HALF TON **CARGO** **LIFT!** **RIGHT** OVER HIS **FRICKIN'** HEAD!

AND THEN **LOBBED** THE THING **15** YARDS.

I JUST DON'T GET THE **CRAZY** SKILL-MIXES AND ABILITIES THAT **DEFY** THE CHARACTER CLASS PARAMETERS.

DO THEY EVEN **READ** THEIR OWN RULES?



FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD, GUYS.

WOULD YOU LIKE SOME **CHEESE** WITH THAT **WHINE?**

THEY **WROTE** THE GAME.

I'M **PRETTY** SURE THEY KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING.



HEY **TULEY** — I NEED AN **NPC** RANK-AND-FILE GUARD FOR THAT **HIGH PLAINS RIFTER** ADVENTURE I'M WORKING ON.

YOU GOT IT SIR.

I'LL HAVE IT ON YOUR DESK BY THE END OF THE DAY.

NO, I NEED HIM LIKE **YESTERDAY**

DROP WHAT YOU'RE DOING AN **KNOCK** IT OUT, SON.



YOU NEEDED SOMETHING, **TULEY?**

YEAH — GOT ANY **ZERO** LEVEL GUARD/SENTRY TYPES LYING AROUND FOR **HIGH PLAINS RIFTER...?**

EH — JUST DROP **MY** CHARACTER IN.

**MCFISTER.**

I'LL GO GRAB HIS CHARACTER SHEET.





John Darkeye:  
The last good  
thief

# THE NIGHT I BROKE INTO DOME 14

FOOLISHNESS BY SMIF

## CHAPTER TWO: INEVITABLE- JUST 'TAINT MY DAY.

HMMMMMMMM



SHE SUCKED THE LIFE  
OUT OF THEM!

ON DAY THREE, WE HAPPENED UPON A RECENT  
CRASH SITE NEAR A NEST OF 'TAINTS. THEY  
WERE SHOCKED TO SEE OUR 'TAINT...



OUR "PURE BOY" WAS ALL AGGRESSION AND  
BERSERKER FURY... HE HAS A CHIP ON HIS  
SHOULDER THE SIZE OF THE MOON.



AND THE SILENT WALKING FUNGUS,  
HE WENT INSIDE AND CLEARED THE  
NEST WITH AN ANCIENT PUNT GUN.



I LEARNED A LOT IN THAT  
MOMENT.



THEY WERE A TEAM.  
NOT NECESSARILY MY TEAM.

I HAD TO KEEP MY EYES OPEN, BECAUSE, WITH THESE GUYS,  
I CAN'T BE SURE WHICH SIDE MY BREAD IS BUTTERED ON

TO BE CONTINUED

# THE NIGHT I BROKE INTO DOME 14

FOOLISHNESS BY SMIF

## CHAPTER TWO: INEVITABLE- JUST 'TAINT MY DAY.

- 1. CRASH REMAINS
- 2. GUARDED ENTRANCE
- 3. MAIN LIVING CHAMBER
- 4. TEMPLE
- 5. SLEEPING AREAS
- 6. DEEP CAVERN

**A. RANDOM ENCOUNTER**



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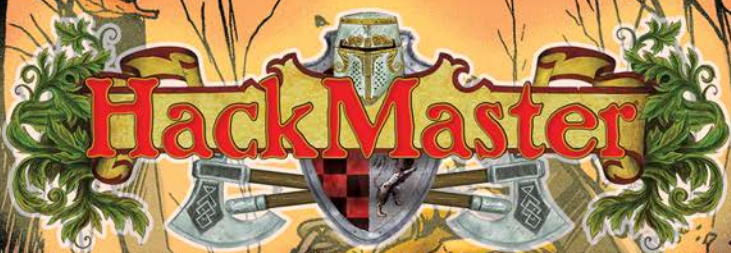
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# HackMaster



**ENTER  
THE FRA Y!!!**

**But Choose Your Weapon First...**

**Three options to get you seated at the table:**



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