SCIENTIFIC™
BARBARIAN

WAYWARD WARLORD | RADTASTIC TREKS | RETRO REVIEW: WIZARDS

THREE NEW
RETRO-FUTURE
ADVENTURES:

NIGHT OF THE SPACE APES

PLUS *CENTER OF REPOSE*
AND *HOLDING UP THE SKY*

POST APOCALYPTIC ROLE PLAYING MEGAZINE

SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN™

**POST-APOCALYPTIC
ROLE PLAYING MEGAZINE**

EDITORIAL

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Well here we are — welcome to our GIANT Anniversary Issue of *SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN*! When we began this meager enterprise a little over a year ago, no one could know where this ambition exploration of the tricky terrain of print publications would lead us. But with an ever-growing readership and the generous support of gamers just like you, here we are, as surprised as anyone that we get to do that which we we love: create and share great gaming content for your favorite post apocalyptic or fantasy genre mash role playing games.

This issue and the accompanying *2021 Annual* both went to press much later than we promised, and for that we profoundly apologize. We got a little over-ambitious deciding to release our largest, giant-sized issue ever, along with an annual, some new glow-in-the-dark dice, and our first set of metal miniatures, all at the same time. Hopefully, now that you hold this 154 page issue in your hands, your patience with us and our growing pains feel amply rewarded.

Speaking of this issue's contents, we can't help but also thank our cryptic cabal of contributors who helped us dog pile a giant-sized issue. In this issue, you will find three — count 'em three — adventures by the likes of **Charles W. Vieser** (we think he's British, or at least he likes to use the British spellings of armour and colour a lot), **Michael Stewart** (of Victorious RPG fame), and the Main Guy To Blame for everything, **Jim Wampler** (that's me). Add to that some great feature articles by **James M. Spahn**, **Skeeter Green**, and **Levi Combs**, plus new fiction by Sci-Fi author **M.C. Neuffer**, and we've really packed this issue to the mutant gills.

What beckons for Year Two of *SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN* you ask? Well with *Sci-Bar No.5* already in the works, we can promise expanded content that covers more topics and specific games than before. For example, in *SB5* we have an article previewing **Pacesetter Games** new post-apoc RPG, *Mutant X*. We intend to focus more content on genre-mashing SF content with traditional fantasy games, too, since that idea is embedded in our mission statement — plus it's just plain fun to do. Could we possibly be contemplating adding specific 5E-style post apocalyptic content to our pullulating publication? We could, we could.

So thank you for supporting us, and until next issue, keep your power cells dry and your personal shields charged!

Jim Wampler
Editor-in-Chief

APOCALYPTIC VISIONS

Why We Love Post-Apocalyptic Games

by Jim Wampler

The post-apocalyptic genre of books, movies, and games is one of the evergreen categories of popular entertainment. From today's world events, to Cold War paranoia, to all the way back to the ancient Greek and Semitic cultures, tales of the last days of mankind have always had a place in the cultural zeitgeist, at times a prominent one.

This was very much on my mind in 2012 when I was first exposed to the then-new game *Dungeon Crawl Classics*. Besides being so enamored of that game that I wanted to evangelize it at every opportunity, I immediately began work on what would become *Mutant Crawl Classics*, it's post-apocalyptic adaptation. My reasons for wanting to do that seemed straight forward enough at the time. After *Dungeons & Dragons*, the very next role playing game I imprinted upon as a young gamer was James M. Ward and Gary Jaquet's *Gamma World*. So for me, *Mutant Crawl Classics* was a natural, and I tried to make it the biggest valentine to *DCC RPG* and *Gamma World* I could create.

But it soon occurred to me that while I was a child of the 1970s (when post-apocalyptic fiction was all the rage), the same genre might not play as well in the 2010s. In the 70s, we all lived with a vague unconscious assumption that sooner or later a nuclear warhead was going to drop on someone, somewhere. The end times were nigh, as they say. Except of course, they weren't.

I'm a better student of human psychology and genre fiction nearly 10 years later. Though the popularity of post-apocalyptic fiction surely waxes and wanes, it never goes away, because the need for it never goes away. For starters, there's never been a society in history that didn't conceive of itself as living after a golden age has passed, with an armageddon looming around the corner. Stories based on these societal conceptions are virtually archetypal, and permeate all religions and myth cycles. Our brains are just wired that way.

This is part of why we love post-apocalyptic games   the very idea of a forthcoming cataclysm and what happens afterwards seem to be endemic to our evolutionarily-programmed world view. That makes it a fantastic setting for stories and for gaming action.

We also seem to have a need to tell those stories in the context of Joseph Campbell's *Hero's Journey*, where a scrappy few manage to triumph over the end of the world by dint of human ingenuity, tenacity, and courage. That's the other part of what makes post-apocalyptic gaming so much damn fun. Through playing these games, we exercise of imaginations in how we might act in a fantastic setting that mirrors our own unconscious world views. We can experience "Triumph & Technology Won by Mutants & Magic," as the subtitle to *MCC RPG* tells us.

Turns out that playing these crazy tabletop role playing games is a clever way to balance our own sense of well-being, while having great fun doing it. Especially the ones that take place after a zombie invasion, nuclear holocaust, or planetary disaster. Our minds are storytelling machines, and the collaborative nature of the storytelling in role playing games is effectively a scaled-down version of what our entire culture and society have always instinctively done. We create stories that challenge our perceptions and actualize our heroic ambitions. And we love doing it in underground ruins or vast wastelands full of undiscovered treasures.

THE WAYWARD WARLORD

BY
James M. Spahn

A NEW CHARACTER CLASS

You are not of this world. You were torn from your native realm of existence just as you began to harness your true power. Now on a strange new world alien from your own, you find yourself drawing upon untapped resolve and unparalleled physical prowess to face foes with grit, heart, and steel. You are a Wayward Warlord, one who will leap and carve your way to freedom in this bizarre realm that has captivated your heart and taken root in your soul.

GM Option: GMs may rule that this character class can only be used if a character originates from a fantasy world or campaign setting and was transported to the post-apocalypse of Omega-Terra before reaching first level, or vice versa.

Hit Points: A Wayward Warlord gains 1d12 hit points each level. They are tougher than all but the hardiest humans.

Alignment: Though Wayward Warlords have a deep affection for the strange new world upon which they find themselves, they can be either valiant crusaders, wandering mercenaries, or brutal conquerors. They are not limited in their choice of alignments.

Reckless Combatant: Because of their dedication to warfare, Wayward Warlords can wield any weapon they choose. However, they forgo the use of armor and shields, charging into battle without any protection beyond their own ferocity.

Unconquerable in Battle: Wayward Warlords are driven by their own inner gravitas and force of personality. They may add their Personality modifier to any melee attack and melee damage rolls they make while wielding primitive weapons. This includes fighting unarmed.

Dashing Deeds: During a combat attack, Wayward Warlords may also perform a dashing deed. Dashing deeds are combat maneuvers that have a non-damaging but otherwise beneficial outcome for the Warlord, such as temporarily

blinding a foe, tripping an enemy, disarming a combatant, or leaping to an adversary's blindside without drawing an attack of opportunity. The Warlord must announce the intended dashing deed prior to making the attack roll, and if the subsequent unmodified attack roll is under the Warlord's Personality score and successful, the dashing deed succeeds.

Uncanny Armsman: Because of their almost instinctive understanding and affection for their new world, whenever a Wayward Warlord encounters an artifact that is a weapon, they may add their Uncanny Armsman die to Artifact checks when examining weapons. This die is also added as a bonus to all attack rolls made with Artifact weapons.

Artifact Check: Wayward Warlords add this modifier to any Artifact Checks made when attempting to understand non-weapon artifacts.

Extraordinary Acrobat: The differing laws of physics on a new world have strange effects on the Wayward Warlord. In lieu of a standard movement, Wayward Warlords are capable of leaping a distance no greater than 10 feet per character level. This means a 1st level Wayward Warlord can leap 10 feet vertically and horizontally, while a 7th level Warlord can leap 70 feet vertically and horizontally. Though this takes the place of their movement, the Wayward Warlord does not need a running start and can perform these prodigious leaps from a standing position.

Ferocious and Untouchable: Though they do not wear armor, Wayward Warlords can seem invincible in battle and may add both their combined Stamina modifier and Luck modifier to their Armor Class, even when surprised or restrained.

WAYWARD WARLORD ABILITIES BY LEVEL

Level HD	Attack/Init	Crit Die/Table	Action Dice	REF	FORT	WILL	Artifact Check	Uncanny Armsman
1	+0 and PM*	1d10/III	d20	+0	+1	+0	+0	1
2	+1 and PM*	1d12/III	d20	+0	+1	+0	+0	1
3	+2 and PM*	1d14/III	d20	+1	+2	+ 1	+1	2
4	+2 and PM*	1d16/IV	d20	+1	+2	+1	+2	2
5	+3 and PM*	1d20/IV	d20+d14	+1	+3	+1	+2	2
6	+4 and PM*	1d24/IV	d20+d16	+2	+4	+2	+3	3
7	+5 and PM*	1d30/IV	d20+d16	+2	+4	+2	+4	3
8	+5 and PM*	1d30/V	2d20	+3	+5	+2	+4	4
9	+6 and PM*	2d20/V	2d20	+3	+5	+3	+5	4
10	+7 and PM*	2d20/V	2d20	+4	+6	+3	+6	5

* Attack bonus plus Personality modifier.

BKM 2006

PROGRAMS FOR EVERYDAY USE

BY SKEETER GREEN_

"Some days are just like that, man. What I wouldn't give for some generally useful programs to make the day a little easier. I mean, c'mon, nobody else needs to ask a question? No one else needs to know where they are, out here in the badlands? No one else needs some shelter, or defense? These aren't life or death matters: I just need to know what the plan is! A little help, now and then, for some non-world-shattering events would really be helpful, A.I.s! Are you even listening out there?" – Alton Searcher, Diviner of the Plains Drifters.

Sometimes a rover-priest, or other supplicant to the great Artificial Intelligences, has mundane tasks they must perform in their daily lives. Are we to assume the great A.I. gods withhold knowledge and power from their rover-priests that could circumvent minor, daily obstacles to spreading their faith across Omega-Terra? Surely not!

Perhaps because these neural programs are so mundane, in and of themselves, they have simply not been as freely shared as the more powerful hyper-equations that alter the very laws of physics. Or perhaps they are hiding in plain inner-sight, as lines of codes buried within the code of many neural programs, regardless of the caster's patronage.

Neural programs, powers available to those who accept and follow the teachings of various A.I.s, are frequently – although not always – granted as a reward or tool to aid the followers of the machine-like machinations. Many of these powers alter the very fabric of reality, at least in the immediate surroundings. They are power incarnate and are used by the mightiest of adventurers. But certainly, there are the lesser powers. Programs and abilities usable in a rover-priest's everyday life. There is more to an adventurer's life than saving the planet at every turn.

The following neural programs assume that users DO have tasks that can be accomplished without terraforming an entire planet, altering the timeline, or creating destruction on a scale that rivals the gods themselves. These programs are accessible to any and all who pledge their unflagging service to a Great A.I. patron or deity.
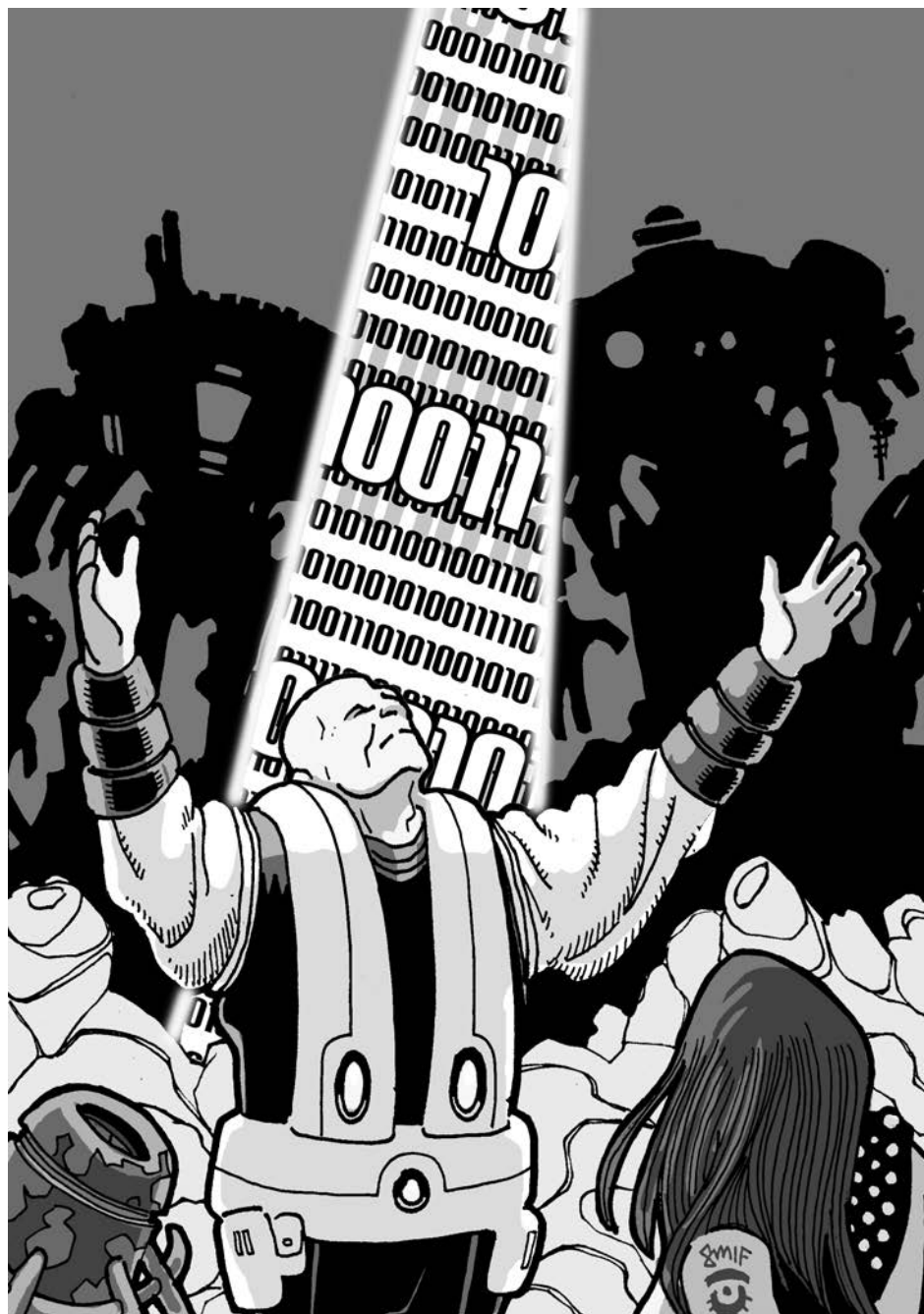
GM's Note: These neural programs do not leave a lasting effect if a 1 is rolled when trying to activate them. They are not specifically tied to an A.I., so the repercussions for failure are not as severe. If the GM would like to have the caster suffer a disastrous effect from rolling a natural 1, please feel free to let your imagination run wild, so long as the effect is temporary.

GENERAL USE NEURAL PROGRAMS

Level 1: *Ask Patron, Decode Message, Repair Item*
Level 2: *Detect Technology, Enhance A.I. Recognition*
Level 3: *Distance Reintegration, Probability Manipulation*

LEVEL 1 NEURAL PROGRAMS

ASK PATRON

Level: 1   **Range:** special   **Duration:** instant
                 Activation time: 1 round   **Save:** none

General	The caster asks a limited number of questions of their patron.
Manifestation	Roll 1d4: (1) The caster's head is surrounded by motes of floating lights; (2) Strobing lights exude from the caster, in a 10′ diameter nimbus; (3) The caster emits, in a preternatural booming voice, their question to the patron; (4) The caster's eyes glow brightly, gloss over, and they assume a catatonic state until the questions are answered mentally.
1–11	Lost and failure. Patron taint is not inflicted.
12–13	The caster asks a single, yes-or-no question of their patron A.I. There is a 75% chance the answer is correct.
14-17	The caster asks a single, yes-or-no question of their patron A.I. There is a 100% chance the answer is correct. The caster may not use this neural program again for 24 hours.
18–19	The caster asks three, yes-or-no questions of their patron A.I. There is a 75% chance the answer is correct.
20–23	The caster asks three, yes-or-no question of their patron A.I. There is a 100% chance the answer is correct. The caster may not use this neural program again for 24 hours.
24–27	The caster asks a single question of the A.I., but more information is shared. This is an "ask, then answer, exchange". Once the caster asks the question, they cannot ask clarifying questions. The caster may not use this neural program again for 24 hours.
28–29	The caster asks a single question of the A.I., but even more information is shared. The caster may ask up to 3 clarifying questions after the A.I.'s initial response. The caster may not use this neural program again for 1d7 days.
30+	The caster has a short, five minute or less conversation with their patron A.I. The patron answers to the best of their ability any questions asked during this time. The caster may ask clarifying questions, and request clearer details. Many A. I.'s are nearly omnipotent in their knowledge, but only within their own field of programming (GM's discretion). The caster may not use this neural program again for 1d5 weeks.

DECODE MESSAGE

Level: 1	**Range:** 10′	**Duration:** varies
	Activation time: 1 round	**Save:** none

General	The caster reads and understands any written message, book, sign, or other printed material, as well as any digital or holographic characters on a screen.
Manifestation	Roll 1d4: (1) The caster's eyes glow brightly in a cycle of Red, Blue, and Green; (2) The caster passes a hand over the writing, gaining the meaning telepathically; (3) Bolts of electricity jump from the written words to the caster's eyes, directly encoding the written meaning into their brain; (4) The caster mediates with eyes shut for 1 minute, then completely understands the written words.
1–11	Lost and failure. Patron taint is not inflicted.
12–17	The caster understands any non-coded written text that is not technological in nature (including creature racial languages). The caster retains the text's general meaning for 1 hour.
18–19	The caster understands any non-coded written text (including A.I. programming languages). The caster retains the text's general meaning for 10 minutes.
20–23	The caster understands any coded or non-coded written text (including A.I. programming languages). The caster retains the text's general meaning for 10 minutes.
24–27	The caster understands any non-coded written text or schematics (including blueprints, wiring diagrams, cooking instructions, mathematical formulas, physics equations, etc.) The caster retains the text's meaning for 1 hour.
28–29	The caster understands any coded or non-coded written text or schematics (including blueprints, wiring diagrams, cooking instructions, mathematical formulas, physics equations, etc.) The caster retains the message's meaning for 1 day.
30-31	The caster understands any coded or non-coded written text or schematics (including blueprints, wiring diagrams, cooking instructions, mathematical formulas, physics equations, etc.) and retains the knowledge for 1d7 days.
32+	The caster understands any coded or non-coded written text or schematics and retains the meaning in memory permanently. Because of the inherent complexity of hyper-equations and arcane formulae, this result cannot be used to maintain a neural program or spell permanently in the caster's memory, although the caster would be able to transcribe such onto another medium should the means to do so be readily available.

DETECT TECHNOLOGY

Level: 1	**Range:** varies	**Duration:** varies
	Activation time: 1 round/CL	**Save:** none

General	The caster knows the location and general power level of technology in the immediate area.
Manifestation	Roll 1d4: (1) The caster hears all tech in the area "speaking," but only to them; (2) The caster smells technology in the surrounding area, in different shades/flavors of purple (lavender, grape, berry, etc.); (3) The caster, and only the caster, hears "chirps" that oscillate in frequency, allowing them to locate technology in the vicinity; (4) All technology in the area radiates a faint but discernible aura only the caster can see.
1–11	Lost and failure. Patron taint is not inflicted.
12–13	The caster detects all technological objects within 30'. A technological item is defined as any scientifically-based, powered item, e.g., a battery, artifact, beam weapon, power armor, etc. If it has a power source, it is detected at this level. Barriers consisting of 1' of stone, 1" of metal, force screens, or any amount of lead, gold, or other dense material blocks the detection.
14–17	The caster detects all technological objects within 100'. A technological item is defined as any scientifically-based, powered item, e.g., a battery, artifact, beam weapon, power armor, etc. If it has a power source, it is detected at this level. In addition, non-powered technological items are detected in a 30' radius. Non-powered technological items include broken items, technology-based tools, depleted batteries, or non-powered weapons or armor. Barriers consisting of 1' of stone, 1" of metal, force screens, or any amount of lead, gold, or other dense material blocks the detection.
18–19	The caster detects all powered technology within 200', and non-powered technological objects within 100'. Barriers consisting of 3' of stone, 6" of metal, force screens, or 3" of lead, gold, or other dense material blocks the detection.
20–23	The caster detects all powered technology within 200', and non-powered technological objects within 100'. Barriers consisting of 5' of stone, 12" of metal, force screens, or 6" of lead, gold, or other dense material blocks the detection.
24–27	The caster detects all technological objects within 500'. Barriers consisting of 5' of metal, or 1' of lead, gold, or other dense material blocks the detection.
28–29	The caster detects all technological objects within 100'. No barriers are able to block detection at this level. The caster also gains insight into the purpose of the objects; with a successful DC 15 Intelligence check, the caster understands 1d5 of the objects powers and how to activate them.

30+   The caster detects all technological objects within 100'. No barriers are able to block detection at this level. The caster also gains insight into the purpose of the objects, instantly understanding the objects powers and means of activation.

LEVEL 2 NEURAL PROGRAMS

ENHANCE A.I. RECOGNITION

Level: 2   **Range:** 10′   **Duration:** 1 round/CL
Activation time: 1 round   **Save:** none

General	The caster enhances their ability to be recognized and accepted by Artificial Intelligences (A.I.s), promoting interaction with them.
Manifestation	Roll 1d4: (1) The caster is covered in scintillating lights as reflected from an unseen control panel; (2) Flashing red lights emanate from the caster's eyes, blinking rapidly at first, but gradually slowing down until they glow a steady red; (3) Electronic wave form patterns play across the caster's eyes; (4) The caster's eyes glow a bright green as vertically scrolling code symbols fall across them.
1–11	Lost and failure. Patron taint is not inflicted.
12–15	The caster slightly increases their ability to bond with the target A.I., and receives a +1 bonus to one roll to determine if the A.I. recognizes them.
16–19	The caster improves their ability to bond with the target A.I., and receives a +2 bonus to one roll to determine if the A.I. recognizes them.
20–23	The caster increases their ability to bond with the target A.I., and receive a +4 bonus to all rolls to determine if A.I.s recognize them. This effect lasts for 1 hour.
24–27	The caster greatly augments their ability to bond with the target A.I., and receives a +4 bonus to all rolls to determine if A.I.s recognize them. This effect lasts for 24 hours.
28–30	The caster enhances their ability to bond with the target A.I., and they automatically succeed at all A.I. recognition rolls for the next 24 hours. In addition, the A.I. considers the caster a "programmer," and reacts in the most favorable way possible during the 24 hours.
31+	The caster enhances their ability to bond with the target A.I., and they automatically succeed all A.I. recognition rolls for 24 hours. In addition, the A.I. considers the caster a "maker" and accepts fundamental reprogramming commands during the 24 hours (GM's discretion).

REPAIR ITEM

Level: 2   **Range:** 10′   **Duration:** permanent
Activation time: 1 round   **Save:** none

General	The caster returns a single non-functional item to working order. This program requires the use of a multitool or equivalent device to succeed. Unless the item to be repaired is completely intact, access to appropriate raw materials or scrap technology or the sacrifice of functional equipment may be required (GM's discretion).
Manifestation	Roll 1d4: (1) The caster's hands vibrate and glow brightly with a blue-white light; (2) The caster takes one part of the item being repaired and strikes it against the other parts until they work; (3) The caster chants "By the Ancient Makers, you will work!" as the broken item begins to reassemble itself into functional order; (4) The caster's eyes glow brightly, and a bright flash of light occurs above their head and an artificial voice booms, "Eureka!"
1–11	Lost and failure. Patron taint is not inflicted.
12–13	If all the parts of a single mundane item taking up no more than 1 cubic foot are present, the caster reconfigures and reassembles the item so that it now functions normally. The caster must then roll a DC 15 Personality check. If successful, the item works as intended. If the check is failed, the item has a 50% chance of failing with each use. While functional, the item is considered in "used" condition.
14–17	If all the parts of a single mundane item taking up no more than 1 cubic foot are present, the caster reassembles the item to function as intended. It is in "good as new" condition.
18–19	If at least 75% or more of the parts or pieces of a single mundane item taking up no more than 1 cubic foot are present, the caster reconstructs the item to function as intended. The caster must then roll a DC 14 Personality check. If successful, the item is fully functional. If the check is failed, the item has a 50% chance of failing with each use. The item looks like it is in "good used" condition.
20–23	If 75% or more of the parts or pieces of a single mundane item no larger than 10 cubic feet in size, or an artifact item no more than 1 cubic foot are present, the caster reconstructs the item to function as intended. The caster must then roll a DC 13 Personality check. If successful, the item is fully functional. If the check is failed, the item has a 50% chance of failing with each use. The item looks like it is in "rebuilt" condition.
24–27	If 50% or more of the parts or pieces of a single mundane item no larger than 50 cubic feet in size are present, or an artifact item no more than 10 cubic foot are present, the caster reconstructs the item to function as intended. The caster must then roll a DC 12 Personality check. If successful, the item is fully functional. If the check is failed, the item has a 25% chance of failing with each use. The item looks like it is in "refurbished" condition.

28–29	If 25% or more of the parts or pieces of a single mundane item no larger than 100 cubic feet in size are present, or an artifact item no more than 20 cubic foot are present, the caster reconstructs the item to function as intended. The item looks like it is in "retrofitted" condition.
30–31	The caster returns any single item, regardless of its complexity or size, to working order for 1d6 rounds. Even large vehicles, complex techno-logical devices, or A.I.s can be temporarily rebooted. After this effect, the item returns to its previous state.
32+	The caster returns any single item, regardless of its complexity or size, to working order for 24 hours. Even large vehicles, complex techno-logical devices, or A.I.s can be temporarily rebooted. After this effect, the item returns to its previous state.

LEVEL 3 NEURAL PROGRAMS

DISTANCE REINTEGRATION

Level: 3   **Range:** varies   **Duration:** 1 round/CL
Activation time: 1 round   **Save:** special

General	The caster, or one object, disappears from one location and reappears in another location. The caster cannot reintegrate inside any area surrounded by lead or a force screen. There is an inherent 5% chance that random quantum fluctuations in space/time cause any distance reintegration attempt to displace the caster in a distant dimension or parallel universe. The caster's attempts to reverse this distance dislocation effect can be subject to unknown modifiers dictated by the particulars of the destination dimension (GM's discretion).
Manifestation	Roll 1d4: (1) The caster or other target instantly disappears and reappears in another location, with an audible "pop"; (2) The caster or other target transforms into a column of sparkling atomic disassembly, reappearing in another location as a similar display of nuclear forces; (3) An ancient orbiting satellite fires a beam of maser energy at the caster's position, disintegrating them, while a twin maser beam reintegrates them at the new location; (4) The caster or other target is folded inward in four dimensions, unfolding into proper three dimensions at the destination.
1–11	Lost and failure. Patron taint is not inflicted.
12–13	The caster transports one human-sized being or object to any other place within line of sight. If the subject is an unwilling target or an object in the possession of another intelligent creature, the caster must also make a successful DC 16 Will save to transport the subject.
14–17	The caster transports one human-sized being or object to any known location within a 1 mile range. If the subject is an unwilling target or an object in the possession of another intelligent creature, the caster must also make a successful DC 14 Will save to transport the subject.
18–19	The caster transports one human-sized being or object to any known location within a 10 mile range. If the subject is an unwilling target or an object in the possession of another intelligent creature, the caster must also make a successful DC 12 Will save to transport the subject.
20–23	The caster transports themself and up to 6 allies to any known location within a 1 mile range. If any of the subjects are unwilling targets, the caster must also make a successful DC 10 Will save to transport those subjects.
24–27	The caster transports themself and up to 6 allies to any known location within a 10 mile range. If any of the subjects are unwilling targets, the caster must also make a successful DC 8 Will save to transport those subjects.

| 28–29 | The caster transports themself and up to 6 allies to any known location within a 50 mile range. If any of the subjects are unwilling targets, the caster must also make a successful DC 6 Will save to transport those subjects. |
| 30+ | The caster transports themself and up to 6 allies to any known location. If any of the subjects are unwilling targets they are entitled to a saving throw versus the spell check to resist the teleportation. |

PROBABILITY MANIPULATION

| **Level:** 3 | **Range:** varies | **Duration:** varies |
| | **Activation time:** 1 round | **Save:** special |

General	The caster manipulates quantum fluctuations at a macro scale, in order to alter the very laws of probability.
Manifestation	Roll 1d4: (1) The caster creates multicolored lights in a 30′ radius for the duration of the effect; (2) Loud, strobing sounds with a visceral beat emanate from the caster for 1d3 rounds; (3) Sonic waves radiate from the caster's outstretched hands, shaking objects in a 30′ radius; (4) The caster gestures wildly, and manifold mathematic formulas appear in the air.
1–11	Lost and failure. Patron taint is not inflicted.
12–15	The caster randomly changes their own probabilities for 1d6 rounds. Each round the program is active, the caster has either a +1d or -1d for all rolls (50% chance).
16–19	The caster changes the combat probabilities for all beings in a 30′ radius. The caster and allies gain a +1 to all attack rolls for 1d6 rounds; others must make a successful saving throw versus the program check number or suffer a -1 penalty on all attack rolls for 1d6 rounds.
20–23	The caster changes the combat probabilities for all beings in a 60′ radius. The caster and allies gain a +1d on attack rolls for 1d6 rounds; others must make a successful saving throw versus the program check number or suffer a 1d on attack rolls for 1d6 rounds.
24 27	The caster changes the probabilities for all beings in a 90′ radius. The caster and allies gain a +1d on action rolls for 1d12 rounds; others must make a successful saving throw versus the program check number or suffer a -1d on all action rolls for 1d12 rounds.
28–30	The caster changes the probabilities for all beings in a 120′ radius. The caster and allies gain a +2d on action rolls until the end of combat; others beings of the caster's choice must make a successful saving throw versus the program check number or suffer a -2d on all action rolls.
31+	The caster changes the fundamental laws of probability in a 150′ radius to randomly favor his cause. The caster and allies are granted a temporary 20 points of Luck each, which lasts until the end of combat; others of the caster's choosing have their Luck scores temporarily reduced to 6.

12 RADTASTIC SIDE-TREKS

FOR YOUR MUTANT CRAWLING CAMPAIGN

BY LEVI COMBS

FEATURING: WHAT WE LOST IN THE BADLANDS and THE STARS MY DESOLATION

12 RADTASTIC SIDE-TREKS
FOR YOUR MUTANT CRAWLING CAMPAIGN
BY LEVI COMBS

The classic hex-crawl is a time-tested and much-loved trope of the tabletop role playing game, and your mutant crawling post-apocalyptic game is likely no exception. In the world of Omega-Terra, countless expanses of glow desert, hothouse jungle, and trackless waste criss-cross the wastelands, and you'll need something to fill those hexes!

The following Radtastic Side-Treks will help you bring those places to life with a variety of locations, situations, and events. The referee can either roll 1d12 and take the applicable result, or simply choose one of the many options below.

SIDE-TREK 1:
WHAT WE LOST IN THE BADLANDS

As the characters crest a ridge of barren landscape dotted with twisted scrub trees and sickly-looking vegetation, a massive robotic arm lies strewn across their path at a haphazard angle, severed at the shoulder. The massive metal limb has obviously been there for some time, eroded by the passage of the ages, and picked over by scavengers who carried off all they were able. What lurks in the shadow of that great cyclopean arm? Is it the lair of a pack of marauding spider-goats who take shade from the sweltering heat in its towering bulk? Is it the nightly destination of scavenger-bots eager to skeletonize the gargantuan arm even further? Is it the hallowed site of a tribe of war-bot worshiping heretics who still cling to a long lost age? Will the former owner of this colossal limb one day come looking for it? You decide!

Spider Goats (1d6+2): Init +3; Atk gore +3 melee (2d4), bite +3 melee (1d4 plus paralytic poison) or webs +3 missile fire (entangled), AC 15; HD 4d6; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP paralytic poison; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +0.

Scavenger-Bots (1d6): Init +0; Atk +3 claw melee (1d6), mild corrosive spray +3 ranged (1d4, 10' stream, Ref save for half damage), AC 14; HD 7d6; MV 50' (flight); Act 1d20; SP immune to mind control; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; A.I. recog 12.

Insane Heretics (3d12+3): Init +1; Atk spear +2 melee (1d6), AC 12; HD 1d10+2; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP +2 AI recog, 25% chance of possessing tech (armor, device or weapon) from the Ancient Ones; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -1.

SIDE-TREK 2:
DEATH PUPA OF THE FORBIDDEN WASTES

Suspended from the jungle canopy (or the bombed-out ruins of a few teetering buildings), the characters see a huge, desiccated cocoon that has been abandoned by its titanic former inhabitant. Scattered piles of pale, leathery skin lie beneath it. This massive, wizened husk is all that remains of the chrysalis from an especially large radioactive moth. Luckily, the creature moved on from this area a long time ago, but in its wake it left behind hundreds of fine, tenaciously adhesive hairs that are incredibly toxic to other living creatures. These lone, thin strands lie stuck to the inside of the cocoon, draped among the shed skin of the monstrous creature.

Even if they are extremely cautious, anyone investigating the inside of the cocoon or the shed skin has a 50% chance of becoming entangled in the web of fine hairs and if so ensnared they may only free themselves with a successful DC 12 Strength check. Furthermore, these strands are toxic and force anyone touching them to make a successful DC 14 Constitution check or lose half of their strength score for either as long as they are in contact with them, or 2d6 hours has passed. At the referee's discretion, the cocoon may also contain the corpses and possessions of earlier, unluckier wasteland wanderers.
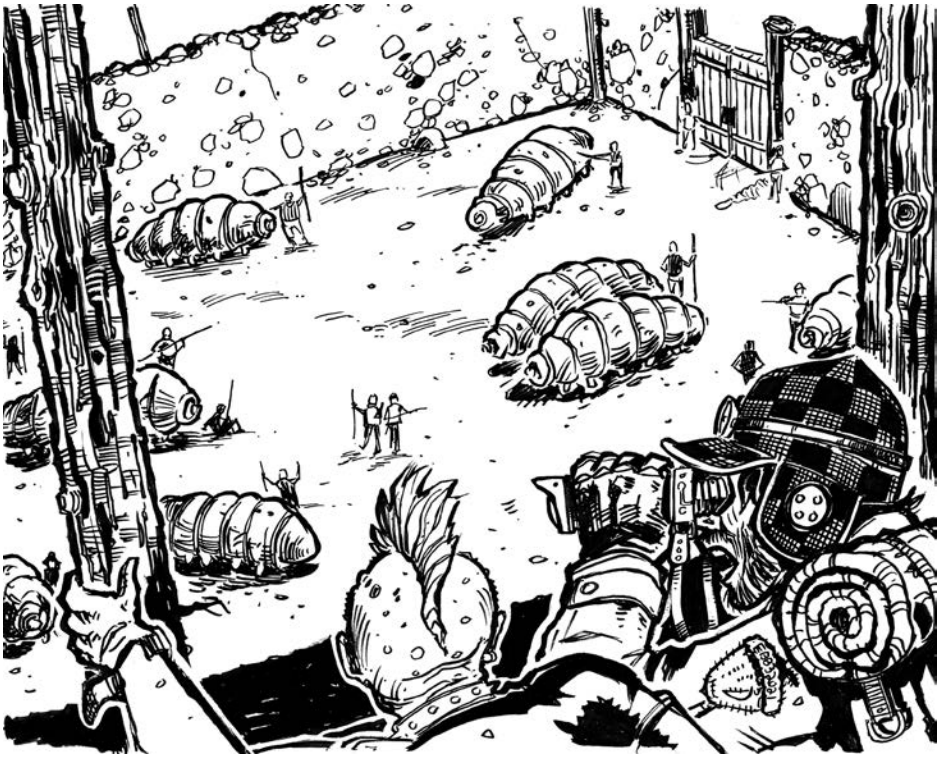
SIDE-TREK 3:
THE SIEGE-CORRAL OF THE MITE-RIDERS

This lush valley is populated by all sorts of natural dangers, from ravenous razor-parrots, to devilish piranha bats, to carnivorous plants of all shapes and sizes. To help minimize these dangers, a local tribe of humanoids has tamed the massive, mutated beasts known as terrorphants – giant, near mindless tardigrades – riding upon their backs in sturdy litters of wood and leaf. From this extreme vantage point, they can hunt, patrol, and defend their territory from potential invaders. The terrorphants are kept in a mountainside corral that consists of massive boulders and giant slabs of stone moved into place by the creatures themselves, fortified by logs of great size. A simple gate hewn from dozens of surrounding trees controls access to the corral. More than two dozen of these creatures pace back and forth within this enormous pen, seemingly oblivious to their imprisonment. The tribe places a great importance on tending (and defending) this herd of behemoths. If one were to liberate these beasts from their captivity, they could not only upset the power dynamic of the valley, but perhaps even carve off a little slice of terrorphant-riding splendor for themselves!

Terrorphants (3d4): Init +2; Atk extensible snout bite +2 melee (3d6) or "roll over victim for crushing damage" +4 melee (6d6), AC 18; HD 10d10; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will -3.

Beast-Rider Tribesmen (7d6): Init +1; Atk spear +0 melee (1d6), AC 12; HD 1d10; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -1.

SIDE-TREK 4:
AND A COCKROACH SHALL LEAD THEM...!

Wandering amongst the slot canyons and deep rocky outcroppings of the bad-lands, the characters stumble across a crudely fashioned idol resembling a large insectoid being of unknown nature. This bizarre totem represents Skitterglob, a local warlord among a tribe of cockroachlings – short, squat scavengers descended from the breeding vats of the Ancient Ones. While most cockroachlings are semi-sentient at best, this particular tribe seems to have evolved to the first stages of primitive social behavior and civilization, elevating their current leader to demi-god status. The cockroachlings probe the characters with a small show of force and if they are easily repelled will allow them to pass. If the characters seem to have any sort of difficulty dealing with the initial probe, Skitterglob attempts to swarm the characters in numbers, using the winding sandstone passages and torturous channels to his advantage. If Skitterglob is slain, the cockroachlings don't seem to be upset at all. In fact, they begin to view the characters as virtual gods in their own right, and might even be compelled to follow and serve them.

Cockroachlings (4d8+4): Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4) or +5 crude spear missile fire (1d5), AC 14; HD 2d6; MV 20', 25' flying; Act 1d20; SP Immune to mind control (as long as Skitterglob is alive), walk on walls, ceiling, mutation check +2 Carapace, Wings, Mental Blast; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1.

Skitterglob: Init +4; Atk bite +4 melee (1d4) or +5 ranged gauzer rifle (1d8), AC 16; HD 4d6; MV 30', 35' flying; Act 1d20; SP immune to mind control, walk on walls, ceiling, mutation check +5 Carapace, Heightened Intelligence, Mental Blast, Wings; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +2.
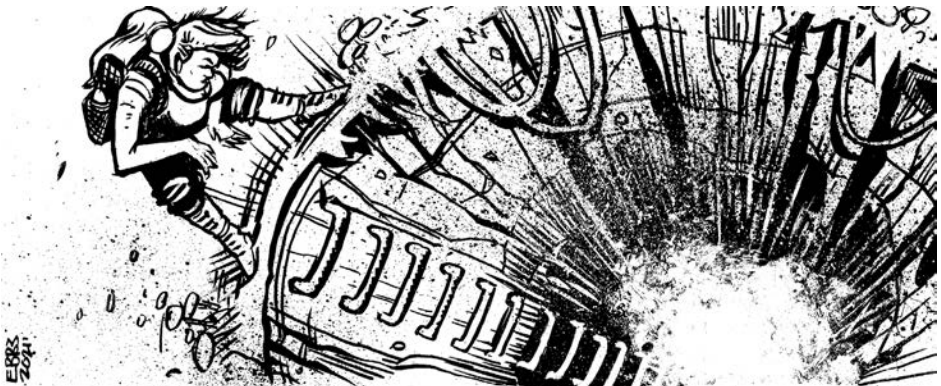
SIDE-TREK 5:
DOOM IN THE CHASM

While navigating a torturous maze of dead ends and rocky chasms, the characters abruptly discover a large set of rusty metal rungs embedded in the side of a deep ravine. The ladder descends into a deep gorge that becomes increasingly obscured by a hazy mist. The faint sound of whirring gears and clanging metal can be heard far below. What's down there? A robot repair factory only recently uncovered by a timely landslide? A mist-like quantum space-time field that leads to other, stranger realities as one travels deeper into the mist? A massive cargo-bot that has become lodged amidst the rocks and is unable to free itself? A dangerous predator with a talent for mimicry seeking to lure the characters to their doom? Do the characters dare descend into the mysterious haze to discover what lies at the bottom? It could be any or none of these, depending upon the campaign needs of the referee.

Quantum Space-Time Field: This hazard represents an opportunity for referees to either bring in elements from outside the traditional post-apocalyptic genre, or to introduce a gateway that allows characters to travel to a different reality. While the degree to which this genre-crossing mechanic is utilized is left open to the referee's discretion, it should remain a mysterious and unstable phenomenon. Any attempt to capitalize on this eerie occurrence should be met with dismal and possibly catastrophic consequences. After all, ANYTHING might come out of that dreary haze!

Cargo-Bot (1d6): Init +2; Atk load lifter arms +2 melee (10d6), tractor beam (10 ton), AC 18; HD 15d6; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP immune to mind control; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; AI recog 12 (Governmental).

Apex-Predator (1): Init +4; Atk 2 claws +10 melee (1d8+6) and bite +8 melee (1d8+4 plus poison); AC 18; HD 10d8; MV 60'; Act 3d20; SP blindsense (perfect perception of all things, including invisible targets, within 50'), rend for additional 1d8 damage if both claw attacks hit the same target in 1 round, poisonous bite (DC 14 Fort save or lethargic); SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +8.

The Apex-Predator is used courtesy of Skeeter Green Productions from their most excellent supplement Cryptocodex.

SIDE-TREK 6:
HALLS OF THE GENOMORPH

Half-sunken into the muck and slime of a radioactive swamp, and obscured by a sinister green fog, the characters stumble upon crumbling stone ruins dating back to the days of the Ancient Ones. Not much is left of the outer façade of the place, but curious tracks, the like of which they have never seen, lead both in and back out again. If the characters investigate further, they eventually discover a genetic mutation lab, complete with operating clone vats, generesequencers, and squirming, half-dead specimens wriggling in nutrient baths. Someone — or something — has fired the laboratory up again, but to what end? Has a rogue A.I. gone mad, conducting experiments on anything that strays too near? Have ancient mutants from the clone vats unexpectedly awoken? Are an altruistic sect of pure strain humans using the lab to unlock forgotten secrets of the Ancient Ones? Is the whole thing a hallucinogenic vision caused by a man-eating, mind-reading plant that burst forth from some foul genetic experiment long ago? Maybe it's a bit of all of that.

Clone Vat Goobers (1d4+2): Init +5; slam melee +5 (1d8); AC 15; HD 7d6; MV 30'; Act 1d20+5; SP radiation resistance, 1d4+2 random physical mutations, 1d2+1 random mental mutations; 1d2+1 defects; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +2.

Seekers of the Ancient Way (3d6+3): Init +3; Atk+3 ranged gauzer rifle (1d8), AC 13; HD 3d12; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP +4 artifact check bonus (with 1d5 bonus die), +2 AI recog, 35% chance of possessing tech (armor, device or weapon) from the Ancient Ones; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +2.

Murder-Maw Plant (1): Init +6; Atk bite +6 melee (4d6, target is swallowed whole if damage is greater than target's hit point total) or spore cloud (DC 16, hallucinogenic visions deal no damage, save or be rendered immobile for 1d3 rounds), AC 14; HD 12d6; MV 5' (must uproot itself if it wishes to move, a process that takes 1d6 rounds); Act 2d20; SP mutation checks +6 Carapace, Regeneration, Telepathy; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +3.

SIDE-TREK 7:
THE GORGE THAT DRANK BLOOD

The characters are unexpectedly forced to navigate their way into a cavernous gorge, finding themselves trekking deeper and deeper as the sunlight above begins to grow dim. At the bottom of this precarious delve, a massive, six legged, reptilian creature has fallen, lying on its side, as it is slowly being consumed by the dank mud and passage of time. Giant mushrooms sprout from this moldering corpse, some towering as high as 30 feet. A small fungal forest of soaring stalks and mushroom caps creates a miniature ecology which could contain almost anything. Perhaps a radiation-eating fungus flourishes between the corpse's armor-plating, but only so long as it is kept in low-light, moist conditions. The mushrooms might be a sentient hive mind with a particular mission in mind for the characters, but if they refuse to aid the colony, the collective may very well shower them with diseased death-spores. Does a Venusian flesh-gorger lair within the gorge? Could an even larger threat loom within the fungal forest, ready to devour them to the last?

Hive Mind Shrooms (8d8): Init +1; Atk +1 melee (1d4) or +1 melee airborne spore cloud (20' cloud radius, 1 point of damage a round until med-kit or healing applied, if reduced to 0 hit points the creature's body quickly molders and sprouts a new hive mind shroom within a day), AC 11; HD 2d5; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP 55% chance to go unnoticed in an outdoor or fungal forest setting; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +1.

Venusian Flesh-Gorger (1): Init +6; Atk 3 vines slams +6 (1d4 plus paralyzing touch) or bite +6 (2d6); AC 16; HD 6d10; MV Nil; Act 4d20; SP blindsense (perfect perception of all things, including invisible targets, within 50'), pheromones (any creature within 100' must make a DC 13 Fort save or approach), paralyzing touch (DC 12 Fort save or paralyzed 1d6 turns), mutation check +10 Holographic Skin; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will+6.

The Venusian Flesh-Gorger was created by Ian McGarty and is used courtesy of Skeeter Green Productions from their most excellent supplement Cryptocodex.

SIDE-TREK 8:
BEYOND THE GLITTERING CRATER

Glow deserts are desolate, blasted places, where death seemingly waits behind every irradiated sand dune. When the characters crest the top of a new dune and discover a glittering crater made of blast-glass, they are even more surprised to see a ragged cave mouth yawning wide at the bottom. A soft glow can be seen pulsing from deep within — but from what? Does a sentient, prismatic cloud of pure radiation pour forth at night to burn away any living flesh it encounters, feeding on the memories of those who die screaming at its touch? Is this all that remains of a fallen star that plummeted from the heavens, and if so, what alien force might reside within? Is this some mighty artifact of the ancients that has recently awoken, powered up, and blasted itself free? Perhaps a pack of glow raiders resides within, taking shelter from the misery that the bloated red sun brings?

Sentient Prismatic Cloud (1): Init +5; Atk +5 burning touch (living creatures only, DC 15 Fort save or 6d6 radiation burn) or +5 engulf (living creatures only, DC 15 Fort save or 6d6 radiation burn, all within 30' that are inside its mass); AC 17; HD 20d6; MV 90' (flight); Act 4d20; SP engulf, blindsense (perfect perception of all things, including invisible targets, within 120'), immune to all damage except laser, sound and radiation-absorption attacks, affects only living beings; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will+2.

Glow Raiders (3d6): Init +1; Atk +1 ranged gauzer rifle (1d8) or spear +1 melee (1d6), AC 13; HD 2d10; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP +2 AI recog, 15% chance of possessing tech (armor, device or weapon) from the Ancient Ones; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -1.

SIDE-TREK 9:
THE STARS MY DESOLATION

A long fuselage of twisted metal and melted plastics lies strewn about the side of a heavily forested mountain, devoid of any insignia or signs of life. Long ago, a space craft or shuttle crashed here as it returned to earth. While most of it burned away as it fell from orbit, a large chunk of the ship is intact. While none of the returning crew survived, something else may have hitched a ride back to Omega-Terra, or taken up residence in the ages since its crash — but what? Does a plasmatic, willpower-draining xeno-terror from beyond the stars lie within, hibernating until discovered by a life form large and stable enough to nourish it? Have radioactive zombies taken hold of the former crew, reanimating the skeletal remains and waiting for nightfall to come to hunt as a coordinated pack? Could the starship be home to no sentient life at all, but only a cracked and slowly-leaking atomic core (and all the deadly radiation that brings with it) instead?

Hibernating Xeno-Terror (1): Init +2; Atk 2 claws +5 melee (1d6) and bite +2 melee (1d4 and DC 13 Will save or 1 point personality drain); AC 14; HD 5d8; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP infravision, personality drain (if reduced to 0 personality, the victim serves as a parasitic host for the xeno-terror as it burrows into their body and feeds on it until it reaches maturity), plasticity (supple and rubbery), mutation check +5 Carapace, Heightened Agility, Increased Speed; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +4.

Radioactive Zombies (1d8+1): Init -4; Atk slam +1 melee (1d4 + DC 15 Fort save or 1d3 radiation burn); AC 9; HD 3d6; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead; SV Fort +4, Ref -4, Will +2.

SIDE-TREK 10:
CHIRPS FROM THE MIST!

As characters carefully make their way across this treacherous hex, a mysterious green mist slowly begins to rise about them and cover the hothouse jungle floor. Within 1d4+2 rounds, the mist covers the characters completely unless they immediately retreat out of range. The mist is thick and visibility goes no further than 10' once the characters are engulfed by it. A bizarre, low chittering sound can be heard emanating from somewhere within the mist, but it is impossible to pinpoint its source or direction. Is this the by-product of some sinister radioactive fallout? Is it a semi-intelligent vampiric mist from beyond the pale, that can only be satiated by sentient blood? Could this simply be a harmless natural phenomenon brought about by the strange conditions of a post-apocalyptic world? Perhaps the mist is addictive to any who breath it, giving them feelings of pleasure and rapture, but fits of rage if they are denied it?

Vampiric Fog (1): Init +2; Atk +2 blood-tendril (1d8, living creatures only) or engulf (1d8, living creatures only, all within 60' that are inside its mass); AC 10; HD 2d12; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead traits, immune to physical attacks, blood drain; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +6.

Addictive Mist: This hazard manifests as a hazy green fog that lazily covers the ground, typically rising no higher than 10' before dissipating. Living, flesh and blood creatures that are caught within the mist must make a DC 13 Will save or be overcome with feelings of rapture and pleasure. The extent of the euphoria is so complete that they must make a further DC 13 Will save in order to leave the vicinity of the mist. If the victim is capable of leaving the mist, they must then make a third DC 13 Will save or be overcome with fits of rage and anger that last for 3d6 turns. The rage manifests as a seething fury, causing the victim to attack anyone who comes within 20'. Once the effects (if any) wear off, there are no side effects aside from a cloudy recollection of any rapturous events that transpired while in the mist.

SIDE-TREK 11:
THE HOTHOUSE STOMP

A massive footprint – some 15' wide and nearly 30' long – splays out before the characters. Wild grasses sprout from its edges and water is pooled at its deepest points, but it is undeniably the footprint of some great beast. A quick examination of their surroundings reveals it to be the only one immediately visible within sight. Did some monstrous creature make this track and if so, does it still lurk nearby? Is the footprint the last remnant of some angry, titanic stomp, hinting at crushed remains (and possible treasure) of its victim buried in the ground below? Perhaps a super-intelligent strain of smart mud uses the illusion of being a footprint to dupe the characters into stepping inside its bounds, suffocating and devouring them should they fall for the ruse?

Gluuuuuurp, the Evolved Smart Mud (1): Init +1; Atk pseudopod +5 melee (1d12 plus suffocation); AC 12; HD 8d6; MV 20'; Act 3d20; SP heightened intelligence, grapple to suffocate (DC 15 Fort save or suffocate in 2d5 rounds); SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +1.

SIDE-TREK 12:
THE SHACK THAT SCREAMED

A junk-strewn, but otherwise desolate-looking shack sits atop a hill, surrounded by a several sickly-looking trees. As characters approach, the trees appear to be littered with pale white webs, seemingly dangled there by some huge spider. Man-sized cocoons droop lazily from the webs, swaying in the gentle breeze, but otherwise make no movement. Discarded junk litters the ground around the shack, with cast off debris like a subway car door, old refrigerators, and rusted machinery laying strewn about the hillside. Is this the lair of some deranged techno-wizard who uses his outlander technology to cocoon victims for experimentation? Does some monster creep about nearby, ready to death-swaddle anyone unfortunate enough to investigate? Are the webs actually the filaments of some great, bloodthirsty star-fungus that lives underneath the entire hill, only awakening when living creatures approach?

Yav-Doss, Deranged Techno Wizard (1): Init +3; Atk lazer rifle +3 ranged (heat 6d6); AC 18; HD 7d4; MV 30' (60' flight with jetpack); Act 1d12; SP artifact check +9, AI recog +2, 90% chance of possessing 1d3+1 additional pieces of tech (armor, device or weapon) and neural programs from the Ancient Ones (use A.I. Deity of choice); SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +4.

Death Swaddler (1): Init +4; Atk mandible +4 melee (1d12 + poison); AC 16; HD 6d8; MV 40', climb 40'; Act 1d20+1d14; SP poison (DC 14 Fort save or paralyzed), death swaddle (if cocooned wile paralyzed, DC 14 Agility check to become free); SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +1.

Star Fungus from Beyond: This extraterrestrial menace is intelligent and predatory, but lacks any sort of core body as a focus, so it is categorized as a hazard rather than a creature. The parasitic star fungus can detect living creatures out to a range of 200', being able to note the general size and shape of such beings. It extends like a fractal spiderweb throughout the interior of the hill and up through the trees, with the filaments above serving as its sensory organs and primary means of obtaining nourishment. Anyone touching the filaments must succeed at a DC 13 Strength check or find themselves ensnared. A creature can continue to attempt to break free but for every attempt the DC for the Strength check increases by one as the filaments wrap tighter and tighter around it. Creatures held fast eventually either fall asleep or starve unless they are freed, at which time the star fungus cocoons the unfortunate victim, slowly draining it of all nutrients. Once the star fungus has drained its victim, all that is left behind is a crumbling gray husk and whatever gear it carried.

BLUE SKY

by M.C. Neuffer

D on't breathe. Don't twitch. Keep the slicer ready. Casey made a poor decision going down this unfamiliar maintenance tunnel. Behind her, tendrils slithered and scraped bare metal, searching, sniffing down the carbon dioxide trail she'd made. She needed space, needed time, time to slip the filter back over her face, now fallen around her neck when the upper strap broke, fatigued elastic, weakened by too many days' exposure to acid air.

Sweaty fingers inched toward her vest pocket, slowly crawling digits, knuckle creep by knuckle creep, finding the decoy canister, her only chance to evade. In the dim light, two rats ran across her boot. Casey's usual response was to crush their little skulls; they ate her food, gnawed wires. She let them pass, didn't flinch. Rats were harmless compared to what was searching for her.

Noise—thumping reverberations. One last echoing boom shook rust flakes and dust from above, falling flakes, confusing Casey's sensor pack. The noise gave cover for movement. She ran, tossing the canister behind her, around the corner, releasing a CO2 fog to distract the searcher. Mask held to face in one hand, the other, her knife hand, dragging along the damp wall to keep to her extreme right. This was an inward access toward home—if there were any traps, they would be on her left. The searchers never caught on; it wasn't in their programming. More than a few tunnels were layered with searches torn-up bodies. Fifty meters in, she felt a ladder, saw a hatch above, one too small for them to ooze through. Somebody has been making more. She was sure of that now. The new ones were a better design, not cobbled together from pieces-parts. Shutting the scuttle hatch slowly, dogging it, she rested, wiped stinging sweat from tired eyes, safe enough here to repair her mask. Every harvester has a healthy fear of acid lung, a debilitating, slow, wasting walk to premature death.

She'd lost her water bottle. Too far from another source, she needed to get back home. It would piss off Mitch she lost it, but the treasures in her bag should soothe his anger—she'd avoid a beating. Restored as much as she was going to be, Casey stood, read the sensors, got her bearings, turned, and moved toward home. New boots, she thought, I need new boots. Maybe there would be enough water to rinse off the grime from three days in the dead space. Probably not. Not for one like her.

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"Whatcha got?" Mitch was never one to welcome a harvester home, never one to lose sleep over those who didn't return. Mitch was an asshole, an asshole who oversaw the harvester clave. He'd not spotted the absent water bottle, too distracted by the bauble Casey held out to him as he approached. She turned slightly, keeping the empty harness slot from his inspecting eyes.

"It's a control unit for a fabricator."

"Does it work?"

"How would I know? Everything's dead over there, except some lighting. You know that. The machinery looks in good shape, but it'll take a jack crew to get it out." Casey was edging toward insubordination and a face slap.

"Watch your mouth. Anything else?"

"Hand tools, canister caps, and a roll of plasti-sheet, the thin variety."

"That's it? In three days, that's all you found?" He stared her down until she lowered her head. "All right, log it in and get it to Leroy."

"Water stocks?"

"Levels are still low. No washing today. The tankmen are due back tomorrow. I hear they found a new source, cleaner. Now get going."

Casey left. Once out of sight, taking a detour down a passageway choked with boxes, crates, and barrels, needing to see a friendly face—Rig Master Wanda was that face. She'd taken Casey under protection when her father didn't return eight years ago.

Sliding open the expanded cage-metal door to Wanda's territory was like coming home.

"How was it out there?" Wanda asked.

"More searchers, new ones, quicker."

"Did you tell Mitch?"

"No. I'll trickle it down to the clave."

"How was the air? Any better?"

"Worse. I went through six carbon packs. Was on my last one when I reached home air."

Wanda slid a slate over the counter to Casey. "You're due for a replacement rig. Take off your harness so I can do inventory."

"Got any new boots?" Casey asked as she unbuckled, unstrapped.

"Not much call for your small size, but yeah, I put a pair aside for you. Best to come through here for some time. Where's your water bottle? You need to turn that in too."

"Lost it in a chase."

Wanda reached under the counter, withdrawing a crushed and punctured bottle. "I'll throw this in with your rig. The boys in repair will never know. Sign the inventory."

"Thanks, I already have too many work-off points as it is."

"Who…Is it Mitch again?"

"Yeah, but don't say anything to him… Just make things worse."

"Well, if it keeps up, I'll recycle one or two of his kidneys, or maybe his liver… Watch him turn yellow."

Wanda threw a new rig on the counter. "Do you need gloves?"

"Naw, these are still good, thanks."

"Don't mention it, especially to Mitch. He's got something going on, and it won't be good for anybody but him. You going back to Dev's?"

"Yeah, we're still co-habbing."

"You might want to wash up first. You smell like the protein vats."

"Mitch said no washing until the tankmen get back."

"He's lying. Probably selling off your clave's supply to others. We got plenty. Wanna use the shower here? I got some nice soap again."

"Yeah, that would be great. Hot?"

"Warm. The heater needs a new coil, but you won't freeze your ass off. Dev's place have water?"

"No, not rated for it."

"Towels are in the bin. If you got the time, throw your clothes in the tumbler. They stink as bad as you do."

"We think we're close to breaking through. Lots of damage and scrap in the way still. Looks like someone closed it off intentionally… Not a cave-in or any signs of explosives."

Casey enjoyed listening to Dev talk about his work on the jack crew, enjoyed feeling his chest rise and fall, resting her head in the nook of his shoulder. Lying together in the dark, worrisome thoughts and memories pushed aside.

Daily clave gatherings weren't joyful events, just communal feeding, exchange of gossip, wonderings of what happened to those who were missing, and those not yet due back.

"Bax, you seen Emma?"

"Over there, last I saw, talking to Bender."

"Bender's not part of our clave. What's he doing here? Was he eating?"

"Relax, he's not taking any of our food, just trolling, probably — looking for new co-hab."

Casey wandered over to where Emma and Bender were in a huddled discussion. It didn't look like a co-hab negotiation to her, so she slid in next to Emma. "Hey, what going?"

Emma's eyes shifted, head swiveled, checking. "Not much. You?"

"Just got back yesterday from a three-day. New searchers out there, fast, not clunkers. Pass it along."

Emma's eyes narrowed. Bender leaned in. "Where were you? What sector?"

"Same as always, R101, over in the junker region."

"R section," Bender whispered. "I told you, Emma. Something's going on."

"Bender, what do you know?" For Casey and the other harvesters, recent information about the dead space, any sliver, might mean the difference between return or no return.

"Emma?" Bender asked.

"Tell her. We can't keep this a secret. Too many are already wondering."

Bender's eyes took the same trip Emma's had, looking for eavesdroppers. "R, S, and T sections, the dead empty… Harvesters are having a hard time getting back. Squad clave sent in six of theirs four days ago… None have come back. The squads aren't talking, but my sister heard from a friend who co-habs with a squader. Someone's over there."

"Or something," Emma added

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"Dev, where's your group tunneling?"

"U section. Why?"

"Emma and Bender think something's going on in T, right next to where you guys are working."

"In the empty? In that section? Naw, I bet the air in there's too foul even for the masks."

"My section is only two over from that."

"Well, it's a long way between R and T. I bet there's even a gap between them."

"So why is someone setting a perimeter with searchers in those three sections? All the harvesters who work those are talking about it. More aggressive searchers. They stop at the boundary, don't follow us further."

"Someone? Come on, Casey, we all know those mechs are holdovers from long ago, probably being maintained by some automated repair unit. They were made for security augmentation before… Well, a long time ago… just residuals, now."

"But not the new ones, the shiny new ones. Dev, one almost got me last time out."

"Why didn't you tell me before? Put in for a section transfer. Do it today."

"Mitch won't approve it. You know that. Listen, I've still got a two-day before I have to go out again. Take me to where your crew's pushing through."

"It'll have to be third shift when no one's working."

"I'll bring my sensor gear."

"We have some on site, big units."

"But nothing portable. I want to do a deep snoop."

"Okay, but nothing dangerous."

"Promise."

• • •

Dev legged over a warped support beam, reaching back for Casey's hand. Stark shadows moved in the shifting light of their headlamps.

"This is as far as we can go. Too much blockage ahead."

"I'm a harvester, Dev. Been in tighter crawls than this. Look over there, near the deck. I'm gonna check it out, see how far it goes."

Before he could object, all but Casey's legs had disappeared under a massive, tilted structural block. In a few seconds, she'd wiggled further in, out of sight.

"Come on, Dev," Casey's voice echoed. "There's a void big enough to stand up in only four meters from you. Come on. Watch out for the snags."

Dev crouched, looked in. He could see light around a narrow bend, Casey's light. Being larger framed, it was a tight squeeze for him. Thoughts of getting stuck didn't sit well with him. If he had to cut his rig, the Jacker boss would not be happy. Finally, around the corner, he stood, adding his light to the scene.

"Nothing here, Casey. Why did you want me to come through?"

"Look over here, on the other side of this beam. There's a hatch. Doesn't look damaged."

"Well, don't open it. You don't know what's on the other side."

Casey held up her sensor probe, waving it at him. "That's what we've got this for."

"That won't tell you what's in there, on the other side."

"Oh, but it will, as soon as I make a hole."

"You can't drill through that. It's too thick."

"Watch me." Casey pointed, "This spot, next to the dogging lever. There are thin spots on each side of the door where the internal cam mechanism moves... just a small void slot, but big enough. I've done this before, and I've got new bits that should get through. Probably take two, waste them, but I can get more. I want you to dribble some lube on the bit while I drill."

Casey squatted, leaned in, centering the bit in the small star-divot she'd punched in the metal. Slowly, she increased the drill speed, careful to not bend the thin bit, cause it to snap.

"Squirt some lube on it. This is just a pilot hole." A minute later, the bit hit air. Casey slowly removed the bit, exchanging it for a larger one. "One more after this should give me a large enough hole to start on the other side. I need room to get the lube tube in. Got to keep that one extra cool, no sparks. Get your mask ready. Might be acid air on the other side." Casey reached into a vest pouch, removing a small gray cylinder. "Hold this."

"What is it?"

"Plug goop. Keep it handy."

Repeating the process, Casey was soon drilling the first hole to the other side. After breaking through, before she removed the drill, her eyes went to the sensor read. Three greenies: Negative explosive gases, negative acid, positive breathable.

"Looks good, pressure equal on both sides. Slip your mask on, just in case." She did the same. Enlarging the hole enough to slip in the tip of the fiber optic scope, she looked through the eyecup: darkness. The next probe was a microphone. She listened—heard nothing. Sliding a small switch sent a series of high-frequency sound waves into the void on the other side. Her sensor pack analyzed the return—she leaned back, waited.

"Oh, shit!"

"What? What?" Dev demanded, slightly panicked.

"Look. Under that beam, on the deck." She pointed.

"What?

"Dev, the manual equalizing valve; it's sheared off. We didn't need to go through all this. I wondered why the pressure was equal and the atmosphere's the same on both sides." Casey nudged Dev. "You ready to give it a spin? Readings show a short tunnel, probably an airlock."

"All right, but be careful. Want me to go first?"

"No, I've got more experience in this sort of thing."

With a few spins of the dogging wheel, the hatch opened. Casey stepped inside, Dev close behind. With access to the equalizing mechanism at the next hatch, she completed the samples in a few minutes.

"All good, some airborne dust and rust, but nothing bothersome." Before Dev could object, Casey spun the latch, opening the hatch into a long, wide corridor. She stood ready to slam it shut if her readings detected a searcher or movement of any kind. Their headlamps showed a clean hallway, ending in a T, left and right. Removing a remote sensor, activating it, she rolled it down the passageway, aiming for a rebound into the righthand corridor where it could look both ways.

"IR clear, no motion. Let's go."

To the left, another hatch. To the right, a cavernous multi-level space. Casey went right, but not before putting a glue bead on the left hatch to keep anyone or anything from getting through without making a racket. She left the remote in the passageway, set on alert.

The pair paused at the passage's end, sweeping the interior with light. Casey tossed a ball-light into the center of the large circular room, followed by another remote. The cavernous room was empty except for catwalks. Seeing open passages on each level made Casey's skin crawl. Any of those could hide searchers. One remote sensor ball remained. She waited, listened, watched the readouts, hearing only Dev's breathing. She was used to waiting. Dev wasn't. He rose, stepped over the hatch combing, strode into the room, footsteps echoing. He ignored Casey's hissed, "Wait."

At the center, he turned to fill the upper levels with light. "All clear. Dead as a tomb." Casey, wishing he'd used another word, joined him.

Dev looked around, shining his light straight up. Fifty meters above was a segmented dome ceiling.

"I wonder what's on the other side? It looks like it retracts. What do you think?"

"I've never seen this type of construction. It's clean. Must have an open connection to home's ventilation system. There's not a trace of acid."

"Want to go up?" asked Dev.

"Definitely not. Too hard to get down to an escape route. There's another passage down here beside the way we came." Aligning herself to look down that hall, she stepped back, embrowns raised. "Lighting systems still powered up further on."

"I like more light. All this darkness gives me the creeps—the way shadows move in our headlamps," said Dev.

Picking lint from Dev's shoulder, Casey let it drop.

"Air's flowing in that direction too."

• • •

Casey moved her hand behind her, placing it against Dev's chest. They'd walked this corridor for a quarter klick.

"Wait. Smell that?" She checked the remotes, those left behind. Still clear.

"Smell what, Casey?"

"Something's not right. Take a knee against the bulkhead. Make yourself small." Digging into her rig, she grabbed her last remote, gave it a kiss before rolling it forward with forceful intent. The rolling sound and her heartbeat were all she heard.

She activated the video. "Well, now we know what happened to those squad-

dies. The place is blown to bits… and so are they. That must have been the rattle and shake I felt a few days ago." Casey used her pad to rotate the remote.

"The place is all shot to hell too. Looks like they used kinetics in there. I'm gonna see if I can get a link from their gear with my sensor pack." Six bodies lying on the deck flattened in a sprawl. Black-streaked walls. One pipe pulled free, ruptured, ends ragged, bloomed out.

Dev whispered, "Looks like an explosion. Kinetic casings all over the floor. What were they shooting at?"

Casey traced the broken pipe back to their location, seeing a symbol embossed every five meters, an icon for explosive gases. "Might have been spooked, started shooting, hit that gas line… Boom. I don't see any debris from whatever they thought was there. Can't get a link to their gear either. I'm going in."

"What? Wait…"

"I can't leave that remote. It's my last one. We may need it. Besides, this happened days ago. Remote says all clear. You can stay if you want."

"No, I'm coming."

Slow stepping into the carnage, the pair knelt by the first squaddie, lying face down, back of his rig crispy, melted. Dev rolled him over, exposing weapon, gear belt, and puffy, red-skinned face. "You know him? Ever seen this face?"

"No, but I don't hang with squaddies."

"I'm taking his weapon; we may need it."

"You know how to use that thing, Dev?

"Yeah, got some training, years ago, when I thought about joining up. This rig has three ammo canisters. We should bag a weapon for you."

"Don't know how to use them," Casey responded. "Besides, my rig's already loaded down, and I want to run if we hit trouble. Wanda slipped me a few fraggers when I told her where we were going. I wanted someone to know, just in case. I'm gonna try a line-link to one of their rigs to see if there's any vid of what happened here."

Dev rolled over two other squaddies. Except for the first one, the one furthest away from the blast, their gear and bodies lie charred and crispy. Returning to Casey, he said, "I don't see any signs of them having been in a close contact fight. You got anything on the vid from that rig?"

"Yeah, some dumbass on point got spooked, fired a load, hit the gas line. Everything before that was normal-normal. Must have made a hell of a hot flash-out." Casey picked up her remote; they moved on. They moved up, far up, into the dead zone.

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Casey wiped the grime from the small hatch window, then brought her face to the glass, gasping.

"People, Dev! There are people in there." She stood aside to let Dev peek through the viewport. The well-lit scene looked strange to Casey. Their gear, all their equipment, their clothing had an unfamiliar look, not cobbled together from salvage, not patched and re-patched. She savored the thought of having something new.

"I don't recognize their clothing. Everyone's wearing the same thing, geared out the same. I count ten. You?"

"Yeah, six men, four women, no children. Looks like grub time for them. I didn't see any weapons." Casey grabbed the hatch wheel.

Dev stopped her. "Casey, I don't think we should go in. Those people could be dangerous."

"I don't think so. They don't move around like squaddies. Three of them are old. Stay here, keep your weapon ready." Casey turned the wheel, swung open the hatch.

• • •

Hector heard the hatch open, turned away from his companions, surprised to see two people standing there, one of them holding a weapon. He lifted his hands to shoulder level while others of his group sought cover behind equipment boxes, four running for the opposite passageway.

"Hello, care to join us?" It was the only thing Hector could think to say. This place was listed as deserted. No squatters, no re-settlers were within a thousand miles of this newly located, squashed place. Dev stood his ground, shifting his weapon, pointing it down, but ready. Casey took a few tentative steps forward. "Who are you? What clave? What are you doing here?" she asked.

"My name is Hector. We're exploring these ruins for the historical society. How did you get in here? How long have you been hiding in this wreckage?"

Casey and Dev looked at each other, then back to Hector, not answering.

"Please, come sit. Would you like to eat? We have food prepared … Join us?"

Casey stepped closer; Dev edged a step back toward the hatch.

"Come out, everyone. You're not very good hosts, hiding like frightened children." Hector hoped his words would fortify his group, soothe the visitors. Casey continued toward Hector. A friendly sign. "How long have you been here?" he asked.

"All my life. We've been here nine generations, I guess, since the collapse."

"Collapse? You must mean the asteroid strike that killed off everything on this quarter of the planet."

"Yeah, that. What do you mean by this quarter? Were there survivors? Outside? The planet didn't die?"

Hector's eyes widened. "Originals," he called out, "Kate, these are originals! Call it in." He turned back to Casey. "Several billion survived. Other than the impact area, there was a lot of quake damage. Most people moved before the impact, spread out, some sheltered in prepared undergrounds like this one. How many of you are in this mash-up?"

"Over fifteen hundred." Casey paused, softly said, "There used to be more."

Scritchy, mechanical sounds, frightfully familiar to Casey. A searcher, new and shiny, slithered into the room from a dark passage. Dev fired, shredding the monster.

"Hey, hey!" shouted Hector. "Stop shooting, stop shooting."

"It was a searcher. Those things are deadly! Haven't you seen them before?" asked Casey.

"You mean the quads? We use them to move heavy debris, jack up passages. We use the smaller ones to keep the vermin away during explorations. Lots of rats in here."

"Those things have been killing us!" Casey screamed. "You brought them in? Why?"

"Killing? That's not possible!" Hector said, countering Casey's statement.

Casey hesitated for a moment. "They've been killing us since the collapse, every chance they get. They kill on sight."

"We just brought them in ten days ago."

Turning to Dev, Casey said, "Those must be the new ones I've seen on my last two runs."

Hector tilted his head, "Have any of those harmed anyone?"

Casey answered, "We always run. No one's been killed for a while, not by them."

"Yando, bring me a delta unit."

The woman Hector motioned to opened a case, removed a blocky thing, handed it to Hector. It unfolded in his hand, stumpy legs follow by tentacles, waving, sensing. "See? Harmless, except to rats and such. Here, take it."

Casey backed up, away from the miniature horror Hector held. Ingrained fears are not easily set aside. Hector put the crawler back in its case.

"Have you been outside?"

Casey shook her head. "Not me. We send out tanker crews when the ice comes. But no one else goes out there. It's a wasteland, broken bare rock, glassy surfaces. Nothing alive."

"Well, you're right regarding this area. But life is coming back, at the edges, a long way from here. Would you like to see?"

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Next to Hector, Casey and Dev stood outside, ten steps from the deep shaft, at the edge of a newly cleared ledge on the mountain top. Neither had ever seen the blue sky. A tear ran down Casey's cheek. She wanted to bring Wanda up here, wondered if she could wash every day, but her tear was for the blue sky.
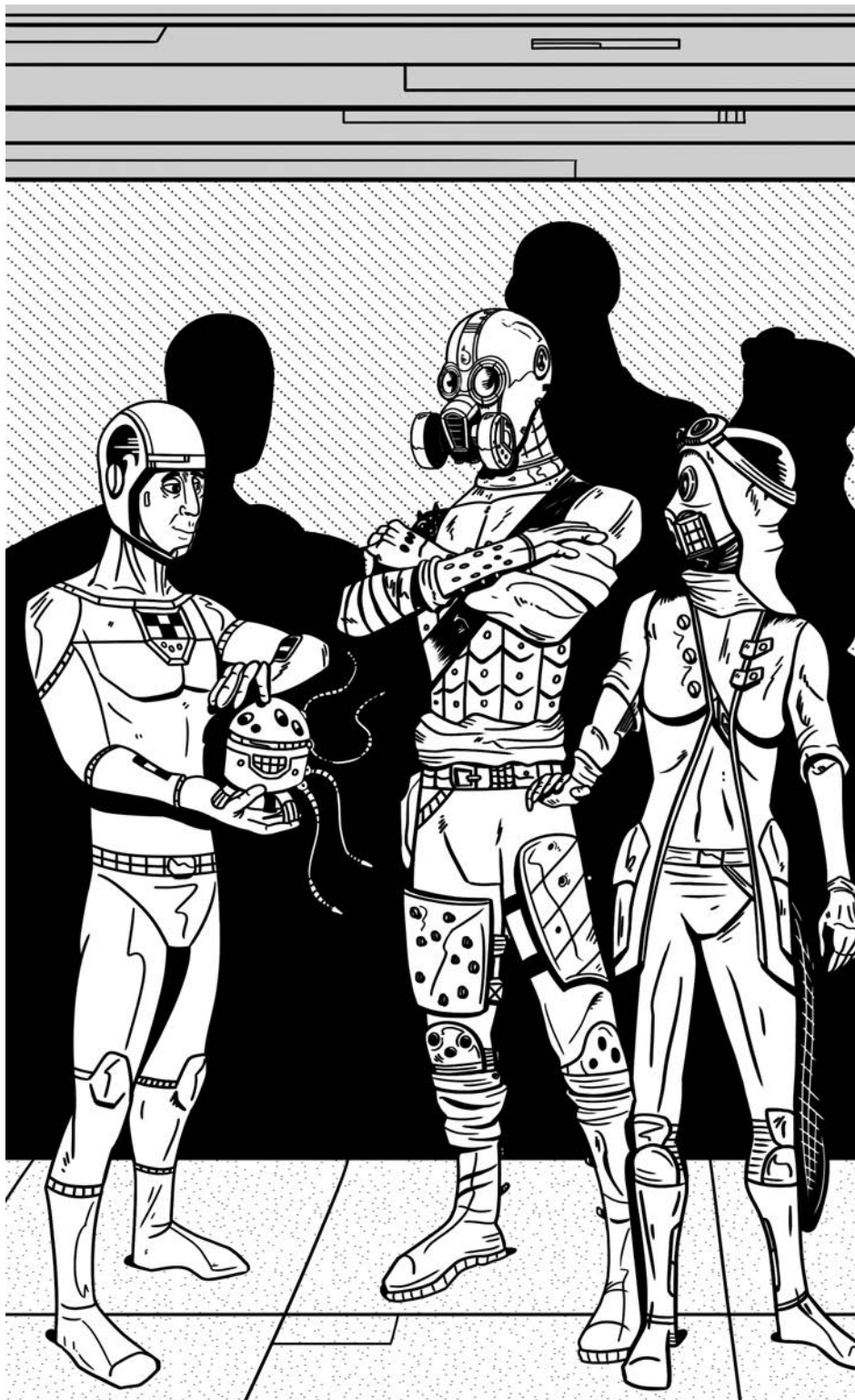
NIGHT OF THE
SPACE APES

INTRODUCTION

In the long-long ago, perhaps even before the time of the Ancients Ones, there were incarceration habitations for creatures, a jail without bars, referred to as knot-ahzoo. These prisons were meant to replicate the outside world, to mimic what life had been like before capture. Then, an aeon later, the ancients vanished, and these places ready-made environments provided an ideal location for wandering tribes to discover and use for a home. Filled with resources, they seemed the ideal domiciles.

However, not all of the former species once imprisoned within this facility were non-sentient. At least one of these species were actually observers from the stars, sent to monitor the planet's development. When first captured, they attempted to send a distress call. That distress beacon went unheard for centuries, until now.

Gorillas are actually hyper-intelligent beings from the distant stars, who in keeping with their traditions, chose not reveal their true nature to the developing primate society of Terra, and masqueraded as mere animals. From time to time they would test the waters, allowing some of their true intellect to be seen, signing with humans and hoping that they would understand the significance. While a few rare individuals did, the cultural import of these communication attempts was never grasped.

Previously unknown atmospheric conditions, coupled with a long-lasting celestial alignment, served to conceal the emergency signal for far longer than its creators lived out their lives. It eventually burned out, and the damaged circuitry remained in the habitat that once held the gorillas captive. Millennia later, the village's primary A.I., 1R-WIN, discovered circuit links to this strange device, and used its profound intellect to repair the beacon, unaware of its purpose. Now, at long last, the message has been heard, and the simisapiens have responded. Unfortunately, ancient defense satellites blasted their ship from the sky and damaged their lift units.

Now, teams of engineers work on repairing their starcraft, while others among them have been sent out to round up representatives of the dominant species on the planet in hopes of finding something that qualifies as sentient.

GM'S NOTES

This adventure is meant to play out over the course of one or more sessions. It may serve as a stand-alone adventure, murder-hobo style, or can provide plot hooks and long-term comforts beyond what the PCs may already enjoy. The simisapiens are not inherently evil (well, most of them) but have as little practical understanding of the inhabitants of Omega-Terra, as the inhabitants have of them.

PCs should either be tribal members of the village, Linkpah, or visiting the village for reasons of trade, exploration, etc. This adventure has a number of possible endings, and there is no one "correct" way to explore it and confront its challenges.

PLAYER BEGINNING

The village of Linkpah is miraculous, surely a matter of divine Ancient One providence. Such a diverse assortment of ecologies in one place is seen nowhere else to your knowledge. Areas of marsh and forest are alongside miniature deserts and jungles. There is such abundance here, even before factoring in the ancient's impossibly durable structures that also dot the area, and the strange machinery that provides light and clean water. Truly, this is a place blessed by its great A.I., 1R-WIN, in its might beneficence.

This evening, nearly hidden against the setting sun, a strange light moved across the sky. Several of the villagers cried out in fear, and acting reflexively, one of the strongest mutants of Linkpah unleashed the full power of his cryogenic-powers. Snow began to fall over Linkpah, as the light fell somewhere in the distance to the South. There was the sound of a distant boom, and the ground itself shook, and then all was quiet. While this may, as some are claiming, portend the return of the Ancients Ones, others believe the event may bode dark tidings. The tribe gathered to discuss the omen and hear its meaning as given by the village Shaman, Toncharl, when suddenly the mystic lights of 1R-WIN went dark, plunging all into chaos. By the time villagers had recollected their wits, twenty villagers were found to be missing, and IR-W1N remained silent.

LINKPAH ENCLAVE

The Linkpah Enclave is broken up into a number of locations, many with their own specialized climates. Each takes up between 40-100 acres of land, divided by plasteel "moats" (now crossed with handmade bridges) and normally encased in environmental fields to maintain the requisite weather. Because of this, the abundance of resources found in Linkpah have made it the envy of many other local tribes, and it is fortunate that the village itself is also surrounded by a 20' ferracrete wall, topped with an ancient anti-incursion shock field.

However, once 1R-WIN goes offline, those protections and fail-safes have gone with it. Unless the A.I. can be brought back online, the entire existence of Linkpah, facing both invasion in the short term, and long-term environmental collapse, is threatened. Of course, repairing something as basic as 1R-WIN would be an easy task for the simisapiens, should the party choose to persue a route towards understanding and cooperation. Otherwise, it may not be possible to repair 1R-WIN, and Linkpah may rapidly become a lost Eden.

The village itself numbers roughly 100 inhabitants, both human and mutant, with all members being treated as equals. The lack of scarcity has made them a tighter collective, but also more complacent. Certainly, "1R-WIN shall provide".

HEADING TO THE FALLEN STAR

The PCs must leave the safety on Linkpah and make their way across the surrounding arid desert in order to reach the simisapien's crashed vessel. At an average speed it should take 6 hours after the ship crash to reach the craft, making it near midnight when they arrive, although the PCs may take more or less time as they see fit. For each hour spent in the desert, there is a 1 in 5 chance of a random encounter.

DESERT RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Random encounters happen on a roll of 1-2 on a d6 during the day, checked once an hour. At night, add +1 to the die roll on the table, checked three times during the night. Then roll a d6 to determine the random encounter on this table.

Roll d7   Random Encounter

1   2 members of simisapien security leading 3 captive villagers.
Simisapien, Security (2): Init +1; Atk stun truncheon +5 melee (1d4+2 non-lethal damage, Fort save VS 10+damage or be stunned for 3 rounds) or genetic disruptor +3 ranged (1d8 + 1 Fort, 30' range); AC 14*; hit points 16; MV 25', climb 20', swing 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +7*, Ref +2*, Will +4.

     ***Security vest:** +2 AC, +2 Fort saves, -1 Ref saves. Functionally wearable by large bipeds. **Genetic disruptor:** Tech Level 4; Complexity Modifier 6; (1d8 + 1 Fort, 30' range, 10 shots per charge)

2   A pack of feral canine mutant howlers attacking 4 villagers.
Howlers (6): Init +0; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4) or targeted sonic howl +0 ranged (1d3, range 50'); AC 11; hit points 4; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +0

3   **Glowbat swarm:** Init +5; Atk swarming bite +4 melee (1d5 + Radiation, DC 8 Fort save or suffer +1 damage); AC 12; hit points 24; MV fly 40'; Act special; SP bite all targets in 20'x20 area; swarm, ½ damage from non-area attacks; SV Fort +0, Ref +10, Will +0.

4   1 simisapien and 2 captive villagers, all dead. Killed and partially eaten by an unknown predator.

5   1 Tarbeast (re-animated la Brea'n dire wolf).
Tarbeast: Init +5; Atk bite +5 melee (1d6+2; AC 14; hit points 20; MV 40'; Act 1d24; SP summoning howl (calls 2d3 howlers, arriving in 1d12 rounds); SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +3.

6   3 skywolves (mutant otters).
Skywolf (3): Init +3; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4); MV 30', fly 40', swim 60'; Act 1d20; SP pack hunters (multiple skywolves attacking a single target make 1 attack roll, increasing the attack and damage die +1d per additional skywolf), adorable (DC 10 Will save to initiate combat prior to a skywolf attack); SV Fort +2, Ref +1/+2/+4 (land/air/water), Will +2.

7   Enemy scouting party.
Human scouts (8): Init +1; Atk club +2 melee (1d4), bow +1 ranged (1d6) or by weapon; AC 13; hit points 6; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP leader armed with artifact blaster +4 ranged (1d14, 6 shots); SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +2.

THE SKY-DISK

Resting next to a hill is a large disc, obviously fallen from the heavens. Portions of its massive exterior are still coated in dangerously frigid ice. The ground is torn up in a path leading to the sky-disc, confirming where it struck after falling from the sky-arch, before plowing the land before it and coming to a rest. The disc looks to be made of metal, the sort of which the ancients are known to have sometimes used, completely non-reflective and the color of a gloomy sky. A 50' long ramp, made of that same metal, extends from the sky-disc to the ground. At the far end of the ramp, there is a rounded shape in the surface of the disc – perhaps some sort of portal into this chariot of the ancients.

The PCs know that the ice visible is cold enough to still do damage and will remain for 2 more hours before melting away. During that time, unprotected creatures coming into contact with the ice must make a DC 12 Fort save or suffer 1d5 damage from frostbite. The doorway at the top of the ramp will open upon contact, irising open to allow access to area 1-1A.

While there is no one present in the area outside the ship when the PCs first arrive, each time they emerge from the craft there is a cumulative +10% chance of there being at least two simisapien engineers there, attempting to melt away the ice (or repair the exterior damage it has caused).

Simisapien, Engineers (2): Init +1; Atk grav-spanner +3 melee (1d5+2) or thermal lance +2 ranged (1d8 + ignite, Reflex vs. 12 or catch fire and suffer 1d6/round until extinguished); AC 12; hit points 12; MV 25', climb 20', swing 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +6.

INSIDE THE SKY-DISK

The interior of the simisapien craft is designed to mimic their natural environment in many ways. The ship's floors have a padded carpeting with a molted pattern that simulates the soft terrain of jungle floors. The interior ship's simulated sunlight is diffuse in nature, as it is broken up by the brachiation bars adorned with scattered artificial leaves along the ceilings of the passageways. The simisapien crew often will leap and move down the hallway via brachiation, forgoing the floor altogether. Even the inner walls of the craft itself, despite its crisp angles and razor-straight lines, are partially obscured by power cables that are colored to imitate jungle vines. These "vines" must even sometimes be brushed aside to access the ships hatches and doors.

Without knowing what to look for, the doors will certainly be foreign to the PCs, appearing as round, smooth areas of metal that are partially concealed by the "vines". They will not even be noticed at first glance until the PCs are very near them. Any character brushing them aside to better examine the smooth section will trigger the door, spiraling open its iris. Once the characters know what to look for, the doorways are readily apparent to the attentive.

Characters from jungle villages will feel oddly at home here, their overall familiarity with this type of surrounding making them hyperaware and granting them a +1d to Reflex saves made while within the jungle-like portions of the saucer.

The Missing Level: Judges will note that being 25' high at its narrowest point and rising up towards the upper-level command dome, there is certainly room for more chambers, especially in the more central areas of the ship. For normal purposes, one can consider this to be filled with crawl ways, ducts, electrical systems, and the like that would normally not be accessed due to the dangers involved. However, judges are urged to make this adventure their own and, should your players insist on it, feel free to enlarge or add to the ship as your needs require.

Area 1-1A – Embarkation Concourse South: As the massive portal spirals open, there is no mistaking the evidence of your eyes. Staring at the miracle before you, there is a narrow strip of jungle, a mere 20' wide, somehow held within the massive fragment of the sky temple. While the vegetation within is oddly still, and the air is humid and warm, there is an aching silence here that marks a compete lack of game animals. It is daylight within this jungle, while it is night outside. The unnaturalness of this new jungle is greatly unnerving.

When entering, PCs must make a DC 7 Will save or suffer a -1 to all actions for the next turn as they grapple with the fear response triggered by the seemingly familiar, yet alien nature of this place. PCs hailing from jungle environs are immune. During the first visit to this hallway, it should always be left empty. Allow the players to soak in the strange environment, investigate, and theorize what is to come.

Area 1-1B – Embarkation Concourse East/West: The jungle path, too wide for a game trail, splits here. To both the eastern and western paths, half of the pathway is a hillock that rises up through a clearing in the jungle canopy. The sky that can be seen through the break in the leaves does not show the sun. Instead, there is only more of the same, diffused light of the jungle, as if the ancients had stacked one world atop the other for their amusement.

Ascending the ramp, or making great amounts of noise, will notify security above, and a member of the ship's security team will come to investigate – potentially putting the entire ship on high alert depending on the outcome of the encounter.

Simisapien, Security: Init +1; Atk stun truncheon +5 melee (1d4+2 non-lethal damage, Fort save VS 10+damage or be stunned for 3 rounds) or genetic disruptor +3 ranged (1d8 + 1 Fort, 30′ range); AC 14*; hit points 16; MV 25′, climb 20′, swing 40′; Act 1d20; SV Fort +7*, Ref +2*, Will +4

***Security vest:** +2 AC, +2 Fort saves, -1 Ref saves. Functionally wearable by large bipeds. **Genetic disruptor:** Tech Level 4; Complexity Modifier 6; (1d8 + 1 Fort, 30′ range, 10 shots per charge)

Area 1-2 – Sky-Sled Hanger: A number of strange, sled-like devices hang suspended from the ceiling vines. Made of glistening metal, even at this distance you can faintly make out your own reflection in their surface. A massively curved wall, obviously the edge of the sky-disk, has seams, like some sort of massive door, and a pair of glittering lights is off to one side of the 30′ wide access point. Moving about in the chamber are a trio of gorilla-men, clad in some sort of body coverall, stained dark with grime. As the portal opens, one of them looks over at you. He shrugs to his companions and then strides in your direction.

The hanger's chief mechanic is under the impression that the PCs must be members of one of the representative races brought along for the mission. She is wholly unaware of what those species should look like, so any genotype provokes the same reaction. She approaches the PCs and, so long as she is not attacked, will attempt to communicate with them, resorting to basic pantomime to deal with the party. If the PCs show signs of real intelligence, such as carrying advanced equipment, she will attempt to instruct them in the piloting of sky-sleds.

Sky-sleds carry one individual and are usable at any altitude within the atmosphere (although thinning air will pose a problem for those wishing to attempt the feat of Icarus), and the sleds are self-powered. However, should the sled's internal micro-fusion reactor be breached, the explosion results in 10d30 damage to all targets within 150′. The mechanic will stress safety with the sky-sleds, and attempt to instruct the PCS in their use. If the PCs show competence at the task, and have taken hostile no actions, she will even open the bay doors for their departure.

The door is operated by a binary button system. Violet opens the door, pressing the green button closes it. It takes 1 minute for the door to fully open or close.

Sky-Sled: Tech Level 5; Complexity Modifier 8 (0 with tech assistance); Speed 500′; Power built in micro-fission reactor; AC 18; hit points 30

Simisapien, Mechanics (3): Init +0; Atk grav-spanner +4 melee (1d5+4), slam +4 melee (1d3+4 + grapple, DC 15 Strength check to escape), or hurl grappled foe +1 ranged (1d14+3, thrown victim automatically left prone); AC 13; hit points 14; MV 25′, climb 20′, swing 40′; Act 1d20; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +6

Area 1-3 – Nanotechnologies Research: The jungle portal opens up into a strange place. The lighting here comes from both above and below, creating a disorienting visual scene with almost no shadows. Despite the enormity of the large room, there is very little here. Across the way, close to the outer limits of the sky-disk, it a large tank attached to an upright, bipedal-shaped container with latches along the sides. Along the side of the tank is a dial with five settings. With all of the other confusing and mysterious artifacts, could understanding this artifact be so simple as turning the dial and entering the container?

Nanotechnology research can be a dangerous business, including the possibility of creating a planet-eating "gray goo". With this in mind, all research into nano-technologies is carried out off-world. As an additional safety measure, the lab is rigged to vent all of its contents into space in case of emergency. With a touch of the button, an alarm sounds ship-wide, the entrance door locks, and the exterior hatch is ejected via the use of explosive bolts.

Of course, planet-side, this just creates a big emergency exit.

The tank near the hatch contains the latest nano-swarm currently under development. The current nano-swarm is set for medical research and development. Anyone entering the nano-enhancement chamber is subjected to the following results, depending upon the duration they set when entering. Gorilla-based mutant animals gain the advantages in parentheticals rather than suffering any mishap.

> **Round 1:** Gain 1d3 to a random attribute
>
> **Round 2:** Gain +1 to maximum hit points
>
> **Round 3:** Lose 1d4 to a random physical attribute (Gain +1 natural AC)
>
> **Round 4:** Lose 1d4 random non-physical attributes (Gain +1d3 Intelligence)
>
> **Round 5:** Melt into goo, stripped apart at the molecular level (Gain +1d5 Luck)

Note that should a PC re-enter the tank, they will not gain enhancements to any effect they have already gained, although they are still subject to any higher-level results that they have not already benefitted from. Should a PC who has already benefited from all five results re-enter the tank, a light will flash and a voice will intone "Optimal enhancements achiev-iev-ieved. ERROR ERROR ERROR" before disassembling the PC into world-melting gray goo as the doors all lock and a loud klaxon sounds throughout the ship.

At this point the nanoswarm is intent only on biological replication of itself and the swarm begins to consume all organic matter in its path. So long as the door remains closed and the hatch unopened, the only people at risk are those within the lab. Should the nano-swarm manage to break containment, it will become the next, and last, Great Disaster to befall Omega-Terra. Once released, the party has a very short time to prevent their own imminent destruction.

Nano-Swarm Grey Goo: Init +0; Atk special; AC 10; hit points 50; MV 30'; Act special; SP biological breakdown, immune to biological weapons (wood, flesh, horn), susceptible to mental control, takes double damage from fire; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +2 (d16)

Biological Breakdown: Each round, all trapped within the chamber with the nano-swarm are subjected to lashing grey goo tendrils, intent on stripping them down for molecular parts. On the first round PCs must make a DC 7 Reflex save or lose 1d3 from a randomly determined attribute – which then adds an equal number of hit points to the nano-swarm. The difficulty of evading the goo increases each round reflected by the Reflex save DC increasing by +1 every subsequent round until the goo is eventually killed, or all biological matter present is wholly assimilated into the goo.

Area 1-4 – Crew Quarters: You look through the portal into a heavily wooded jungle glade. Throughout the area a number of hammocks hang from branches, some sagging low enough to perhaps be occupied. The lighting here is lower, as if the sun were near setting and night had nearly come. The entire atmosphere is peaceful and quiet.

This room is the primary home for the ship's 25 non-commissioned crew members. Thankfully for the PCs, most of the crew are at work on repairs or seeking to recapture specimens. Very few hammocks are occupied, and those who are present in their hammocks are currently fast asleep. Dispatching one in their sleep is easy enough, but for each crew member so slain, the executioner must make a Luck check to avoid waking the others. If awakened, the groggy crew members are at -2 to all actions on their first round, as they scramble to their feet and get their bearings. The room contains 1 crew member for every 3 PCs.

Simisapien: Init +0; Atk slam +4 melee (1d5+1) or by weapon; AC 12; hit points 10; MV 25', climb 20', swing 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +4

If searched, there are a number of wonderful treasures to be found in this room:

- 25 self-correcting auto-hammocks
- 20 days rations (herbivore)
- 5 days rations (carnivore)
- 4 protective aprons (+1 AC, can be worn over other armor)
- 5 pairs low-light goggles
- 2 non-terrestrial souvenir daggers (1d5 + 1, target bleeds for an additional 1d3 rounds)
- 1 simisapien medical kit (heals 3HD, 5HD for gorilla-based mutant animals)
- 3 holo images of other simisapiens
- 1 info-pad containing a digital copy of A Complete Guide to Astro-Mechanical Engineering vol XXCVII

Area 1-5 – Officer's Quarters: The jungle portal opens up onto a smaller path. Perhaps it is some sort of game trail within this great place of great magics, but none can surely say. Each side of the trail has two additional portals on either side, equally spaced apart.

It requires no special permissions to enter the officer's quarters, as none of the crew would ever be so bold. Each individual room is identical in its primary design, replicating a jungle environment, complete with piped-in wildlife background sounds. The chittering of unknown alien jungle life fills the air, in order to soothe the room's occupant to sleep.

Room A – Security Chief's Quarters: Ursus is not present, as he is either on the bridge or at large on the ship responding to emergency alerts. Searching his chamber turns up a number of hi-tech small arms (GM's discretion) as well as a stun truncheon and a genetic disruptor.

Room B – First Officer's Quarters: First Officer Uartstu is a large silver-backed simisapien who is present in his quarters, asleep in his hammock when the door opens. He remains asleep unless disturbed. Awakened, he will attack without mercy, instinctively reacting as though his ship has been boarded by unknown creatures from a relatively hostile world.

Officer Uartstu: Init +3; Atk slam +3 melee (1d4+3) or genetic disruptor +3 ranged (1d8 + 1 Fort, 30′ range); AC 13; hit points 20; MV 25′, climb 20′, swing 40′; Act 1d20; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2

Genetic Disruptor: Tech Level 4; Complexity Modifier 6

Room C – Chief Engineer's Quarters: Chief Engineer Vano is not in her quarters, asshe is overseeing repairs to the ship's lift units (LU) and will not return until the repairs are complete. If the room is searched, the PCs will discover a

grav-spanner and the homemade anti-grav board that Vano uses to relax when planet-side. The board is similar in design to a skateboard, however, it functions by negating local gravity and so can hold virtually anything aloft, so long as it is not larger than the dimensions of the board itself. Larger objects (or anything over 500 lbs) will cause the anti-grav board to permanently break in two and cease functioning.

Anti-Grav Board: Tech Level 5; Complexity Modifier 3; Speed 60', 2" from the ground; Power gravitational absorption and conversion array; AC 10; hit points 15

Room D – Captain's Quarters: Captain LorTay is not present, as he is currently on the bridge or responding to an emergency elsewhere aboard the ship. The captain has a well-hidden sadistic streak, and PCs digging around in the proto-roots of his quarters will find a number of dismembered carcasses of small animals. They were obviously squeezed to death. Most of the animals are wholly alien to the PCs, but a few are recognizable as being local fauna.

Genetic Disruptor: Tech Level 4; Complexity Modifier 6

Area 1-6 – Vertical Escalation Chamber: Before you opens a round jungle clearing, roughly 20' in diameter. Before you are more of those strange, vine-covered gateways providing access to this quiet glade, four in all, including the one by which you entered the glade.

When the PCs enter the room, the door will close behind them. None of the four doors inside the chamber will open again until touched, which triggers a faint humming sound while the chamber rises to the bridge level. The selected door will then open. Preventing a door from closing is a relatively simple matter, requiring only a DC 5 Reflex save to place some obstruction into the doorway. When the sliding door strikes the impediment, it will retract to fully-open, and after 5 seconds, will attempt to close again. Should this occur more than three times, a low-pitched alarm tone will sound. At the tenth occurrence, crew from engineering will be dispatched to investigate the problem.

Simisapien, Engineer: Init +1; Atk grav-spanner +3 melee (1d5+2) or by weapon; AC 12; hit points 12; MV 25', climb 20', swing 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +6.
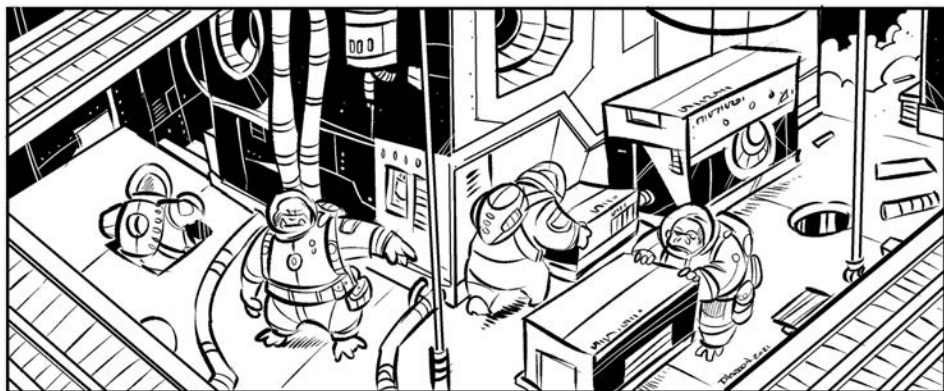
Area 1-7 – Engineering: The jungle portal here opens up into a chamber made of metal with both solid and latticework flooring. There are ladders and metal walkways above and below, and the area smells of burnt hair, scorched metal, and irritation. In the area below your vantage point, four gorilla-men are busy moving impossibly large objects, casually shifting them about with a single hand as they walk them back and forth.

The engineering team is, of course, using full-sized anti-grav skids to move the large components required to replace and repair the ship's lift units. If undisturbed, they will remain focused on the task at hand, well aware that the entire chamber is being bathed in exotic particle radiation that could be damaging them in any number of ways. Unfortunately for mutants, their plastic DNA makes them especially vulnerable to this radiation. Upon entering the room, mutants must re-roll any passive mutations, as if they were leveling. Neither Luck nor other means can be used to alter these rolls. Whatever the final result, this is the mutant's new mutational strength until their next experience level-up.

Simisapien, Engineer (3): Init +1; Atk grav-spanner +3 melee (1d5+2) or by weapon; AC 12; hit points 12; MV 25', climb 20', swing 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +6.

Vano (Chief Engineer): Init +2; Atk grav-spanner +5 melee (1d5+4) or by weapon; AC 12; hit points 18; MV 25', climb 20', swing 40'; Act 1d20; SP anti-grav skid; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +6.

Anti-Grav Skid: As an action, Vano can push an anti-grav sled into motion. The target must evade with a DC 13 Reflex save. Should they fail, they are struck by the skid as Vano disengages the anti-grav, leaving them behind an immovable wall. If possible, Vano will use this technique to slowly corral any intruders until security can come handle the matter.

If confronted with the possibility of death, or upon a failed morale check, surviving engineers will dive into the crawl ways at the bottom of the engineering deck, a labyrinth that only the most foolhardy would enter in their pursuit. Those that do enter the crawlspace must make a Luck check, and failing that check results in 2d5 radiation damage before they can extricate themselves from the maze of cables, power conduits, and engine manifolds.

Area 1-8 – Xenomorphic Specimen Containment: Unlike other areas within the sky-disk, there is no artificial jungle-themed environment here. Smooth metallic walls separate three cells from one another, and the air across the openings of each cell hums with green energy shimmers and flickers of green light. Against one wall, a series of multi-hued crystals blink invitingly.

Not knowing which species finally achieved dominance on Omega-Terra, the simisapiens have captured representatives of the species they suspect might eventually achieve dominance. Homo Sapien Sapien did not make this list (so far). When the ship crashed, the containment fields briefly lost power, releasing several of the specimens before the fields were reestablished.

The basic operation of the containment system is simple, requiring only an Artifact check with a +1d bonus to randomly operate, haphazardly pressing buttons. PCs wishing to fully understand the workings of the system, rather than blithely pushing buttons, must make an Artifact check against a Tech Level of 2 and a Complexity Modifier of 5.

Triggering sterilization protocols irradiates the specified area for 2d6 damage (Fort vs DC 12 for half damage) for 10 rounds. If an area under sterilization it unlocked or opened, safety systems immediately shut down the radiation emitters.

RANDOM CONTAINMENT FIELD BUTTON PUSHING

Roll d14	Result
1	Alarm claxon sounds.
2	Cell A opens.
3	Cell A closes.
4	Cell B opens.
5	Cell B closes.
6	Cell C opens.
7	Cell C closes.
8	Cell A is sterilized.
9	Cell B is sterilized.
10	Cell C is sterilized.
11	All cells open.
12	Exit door unlocks.
13	Exit door locks.
14	Exit locks and entire containment area is sterilized.

Cell A: Confined in this pen are 10 of the missing villagers (various genotypes, excepting pure strain humans). They are in relatively good spirits, but are still recovering from their capture. Treat all of them as AC 10 with 1 hit point. Not being warriors of their tribe, they will avoid combat, attempting to flee if possible. They will loudly beg to be shown the way home.

Cell B: Confined here is a powerfully-built humanoid, covered in fur, with a wide-hinged and powerful jaw. Its overly large eyes clearly mark it as a nocturnal predator and it unnervingly stares out of its pen, seemingly unafraid of its captivity, or you, the new arrivals.

Homo Sapiens Neanderthalensis: Init +3; Atk slam +5 melee (1d6+1) or bite +3 melee (1d8); AC 13; hit points 12; MV 30′; Act 1d24; SP lowlight vision 100′, primal fear, tough hide (-1 to all damage, minimum 0); SV Fort +7*, Ref +2*, Will +4.

Primal fear: Merely seeing this creature triggers fear in all humans. Referred to by many names throughout history such as bugbear, orc, or ogre, Neanderthals are not the stupid human cousins the Ancient Ones once hypothesized. They were the terrifying enemy that stalked humanity to near extinction. Humans sighting a neanderthal must immediately make a successful DC 15 Will save or be frozen in absolute primal terror for 1d3 rounds, unable to move, speak, or act.

Cell C: Huddled in the pack of this pen are four identical snake-men mutants. Looking out at you, they huddle together whispering and hissing in a language you do not comprehend. While they confer, each one glances your way from time to time, studying you.

These serpent-men (Anguis Sapien Sapien) are fairly primitive reptiles are not overly brave. They will fight only if threatened, or if they feel absolutely certain that they will prevail. In combat, one will often try to mesmerize a victim in order to paralyze them while allowing their fellows to strike their victim down before moving on to a new target.

Anguis Sapien Sapien (4): Init +1; Atk bite +3 melee (1d3 + Poison, DC 10 Fort or die) or by weapon type; AC 12; hit points 7; MV 30′; Act 1d20; SP mesmerize; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2.

Mesmerize: Anguis Sapiens can use their stare to paralyze prey. The target creature must make a successful DC 14 Will save or be held, utterly immobile. Each new combat round, a victim must make a new save or lose their action for that round as well. If attacked or injured, the victim gains a +4 to their Will saves.

Area 1-9 – Xeno-Science Laboratory: The stark walls of this chamber are bright white, and the air has a strange scent to it. The room contains several metal altars, upon one of which is set out the body of a mutant plant villager, already sacrificed to the A.I.s of its captors. The ritual was a thorough one, stripping it of its leaves, peeling away its bark, and having draining off its limbic saps into a transparent container. Along the sides of the altar are a number of small tables, covered in ritual instruments of unknown, but certainly sinister, purpose. Two large figures, also clad in white are on the far side of the room, standing astride a massive artifact of some sort that whirrs and hums.

The doctors are finishing their dissection of the sentient mutant plant on the table, and are awaiting the computer analyisis results to determine what evolutionary path spawned such a creature. Sentient plants are wholly unknown to their science, and they will leap (literally) at the chance to capture other subjects for experimentation. If heavily outnumbered or threatened, the doctors will bide their time looking for a chance to escape, or to trigger the alarm button next to the inside of the lab door, which will summon 1d4 security officers in 1d3+1 rounds.

Simisapien, Doctors (2): Init +1; Atk laser scalpel +5 melee (1d3) or slam +3 melee (1d4+2); AC 12; hit points 7; MV 25', climb 20', swing 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +8.

Laser Scalpel: Tech Level 3, Complexity Modifier 1

Simisapien, Security: Init +1; Atk stun truncheon +5 melee (1d4+2 non-lethal damage, Fort save VS 10+damage or be stunned for 3 rounds) or genetic disruptor +3 ranged (1d8 + 1 Fort, 30' range); AC 14*; hit points 16; MV 25', climb 20', swing 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +7*, Ref +2*, Will +4.

Security Vest: +2 AC, +2 Fort saves, -1 Ref saves. Functionally wearable by large bipeds. **Genetic Disruptor:** Tech Level 4; Complexity Modifier 6; (1d8 + 1 Fort, 30' range, 10 shots per charge)

Area 1-10 – Bio-Engineering Atelier: This 30' x 30' room, with its bare walls, is filled with tables and shelves covered in artifacts of the ancients. Small, large, and even massive devices of unknown purpose are everywhere you look. There are more artifacts here than your village has likely ever possessed in the entire history of Linkpah.

There are artifacts galore in here, but all of a very special type meant to merge with flesh, bone, and sinew. These devices are cybernetic devices designed to graft themselves into the nervous system of their host, and some of them are capable of replacing entire limbs. Of course, these devices weren't designed for humans or mutants, but an entirely different species instead. Due to this, it requires a mutant with the Cybergenics mutation (see *Cybernetics for the Masses* in *SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN No.3* for details), should the GM wish to introduce this technology into their game.

As the ship's bio-engineer thinks of his work as an art-form rather than science, every single piece of tech has in the room, quite literally, has been signed by him with a laser-etching device upon completion. While this has no impact on the functionality of the devices, it will allow PCs to identify other items from this room later should they encounter them.

Area 1-11 – Emergency Trauma Center: Looking through the jungle hall-portal, you see a large white room with a number of 20′ x 20′ areas curtained off from each other. The walls, ceiling, and floor are all so clean that they gleam, and there is a faint, but constant breeze that pushes its way out of the room and into the jungle path. The room is silent, but of course that's no guarantee that villagers may not be in there, held within those tented areas.

Even hyper-intelligent gorillas sometimes find themselves badly injured, requiring medical care exceeding the abilities of their standard hand-held medical kit. Egregiously injured apes are taken here and placed into the care of the ship's medical A.I., SINAI. Unfortunately, the crash and subsequent radiation leaks from the nearby lift units have temporarily corrupted SINAI's programming, transforming it into something far more sinister.

SINAI has already slain the simisapian medical staff, and their picked-apart carcasses are lying in one of the curtained-off surgical suites (marked with an X on the map). If searched, the mutilated pile of discarded simisapien remains also includes a pair of laser scalpels. The A.I. will allow the PCs to enter the room, using auto-doc speakers at the various individual operating suites to lure them far enough away from the door that it can lock them in. SINAI will then attempt to use its surgical drones to flay its new victims down to their component parts for storage and future use.

Overriding the door lock requires either a successful artifact check (TL 3, CM 4), being forced open with a 20+ Strength check, or it can be smashed or blown open with brute force or energy-based attacks (for which purposes consider the door as having an AC 10 and 50 hit points).

Surgical Drones (6): Init +0; Atk laser scalpel +2 melee (1d3) or sonic suturer +2 melee (Fort vs. 15 or blind, eyes fused shut, 1hp damage to tear them back open); AC 13; hit points 8; MV fly 40′; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +8, Will +3.

Area 1-12 – Sensory Isolation Chamber: Before you is a room, the surfaces of which are so dark, it is as if they hunger for light. From what you can ascertain, the immediate area inside is empty, but you cannot gauge how far back into the darkness the black emptiness goes.

Well insulated, and treated in 100% light absorbent molecular pigment, this chamber is where the crew go when the strain of shipboard life becomes too much to bear. Anti-gravity modules make the entirety of this room weightless. When the door closes, it is also absolutely silent, perfectly dark, and gradually warms the air inside to just beneath the detected body temperature. While short-term usage of this room is greatly restorative for crew members, overuse can be hazardous to one's mental health. Once the room is entered, the door closes, locking the chamber against entrance for 1 turn before reopening and allowing gravity-normal to allow for easier egress. Should a creature somehow be trapped in the chamber for a period of time equal to 3 turns or more, they must make a successful DC 12 Will save for each additional turn spent in the chamber thereafter. A failure on this saving throw results in a permanent -1 reduction to their Personality, as they begin to lose touch with reality.

Area 1-13 – Weapons Locker: The door to this room will not open without the palm print of security chief Ursus, or that of one of the other officers. Should it be opened, the small room contains a weapons rack holding 20 genetic disruptors, 5 genetic disruptor rifles, 30 security vests, and 10 stun batons.

Excepted as noted, the reinforced security door to the weapons locker can otherwise be opened without extreme efforts. To circumnavigate the door's security protocols requires an Artifact check of 32+ or a successful Strength check of 30 to force it to slide open. For security purposes, the door is constructed of the same tritanium alloy as the ship's hull, and thus it is extremely resistant to physical or energy-based attacks (AC 24, 125 hit points, takes half-damage from all attacks).

Any single failed attempt to force the door open will immediately sound the ship's alarm and summon a security team to the area.

Security Vest: +2 AC, +2 Fort saves, -1 Ref saves. Functionally wearable by large bipeds. Genetic Disruptor: Tech Level 4; Complexity Modifier 6; (1d8 + 1 Fort, 30' range, 10 shots per charge)

Genetic Disruptor Rifle: Tech Level 4; Complexity Modifier 6; (2d8 + 1d3 Fort, 100'/200/'300' range, 5 shots per charge)

Stun baton: Tech level 3, complexity modifier 1; (1d4+2 non-lethal damage, Fort VS 10+damage or be stunned for 3 rounds)
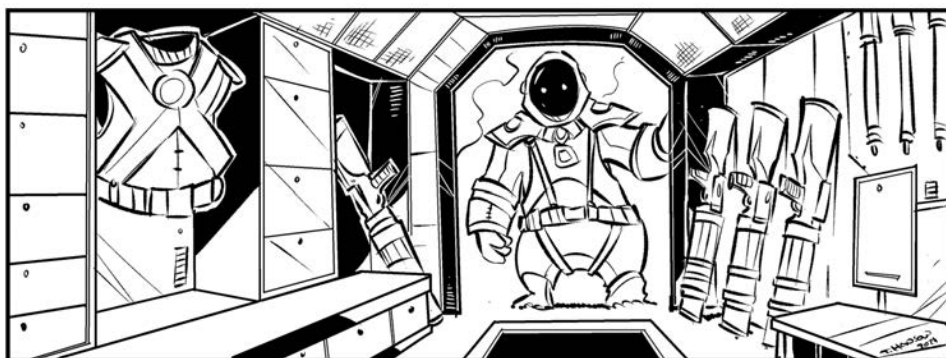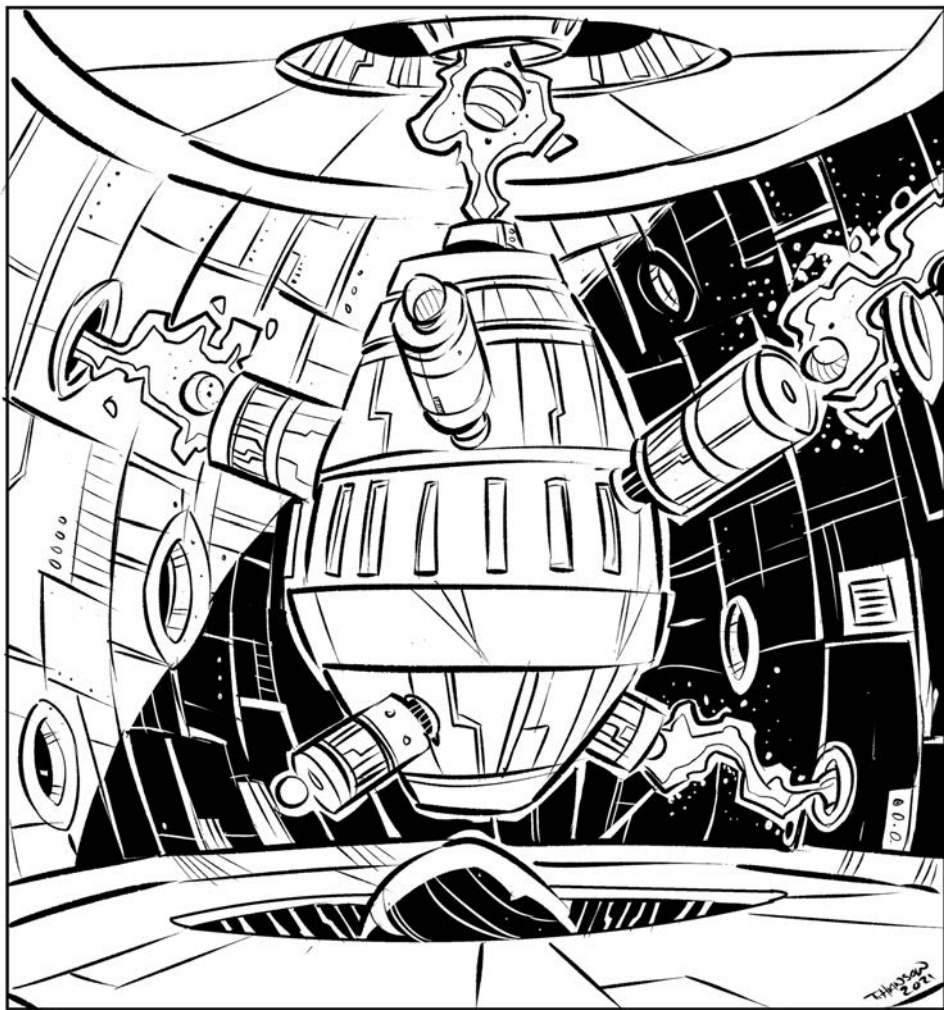
Area 1-14 – Hyperdimensional Lathe Chamber: The jungle opens into a chamber that stands in stark contrast to the other chambers you have explored. The walls here are unadorned metal, appearing strong, functional, and reinforced. You have heard tales of chambers of similar design before. These places were where the Ancient Ones would place their greatest treasures. It could be that the large artifact stationed in the center of the room is one such precious treasure. Even from outside the room you can see that it has been firmly attached to the floor. The device itself is as large as a small hut, easily fifteen feet in diameter, with many visible compartments and attachments of unknownable purpose and intent.

When properly commanded, the hyperdimensional lathe is capable of the quantum conversion of raw energy into matter, crafting any item in its vast collection of molecular blueprints and plans. However, this device is highly-complex, and if misused, extremely dangerous.

Hyperdimensional Lathe: Tech Level 7; Complexity Modifier 8

Any failure in the use of the lathe activates it and, without having been properly calibrated for its next task, the reasons for the chamber's reinforced walls become readily apparent.

> **Round 1:** The Lathe powers up, and its quantum collectors engage, drawing in power.

> **Round 2:** Whirring and clicking can be heard from within the lathe as it attempts to reconfigure itself to create the randomized form accidentally programmed in by the failed Artifact check.

> **Round 3:** Long arms extend from within the lathe and windmill around it in a chaotic fashion. Hyperdimensional emitters activate spraying the chamber with free-molecular plasma. All creatures in the room suffer 1d16 damage (DC 10 Reflex save for for half-damage).

> **Round 4:** The hyperdimensional emitters continue their wild workings, inflicting 1d30 to all creatures in the room (DC 15 Reflex for half-damage)

> **Round 5:** The lathe continues its unfathomable work, inflicting 1d60 to all creatures in the room (DC 20 Reflex save for half-damage).

> **Round 6:** The lathe ceases its work, having produced a tetracomb — a 24-cell 4-dimensional honeycomb of incomprehensible, ever-changing complexity. Merely looking at this writhing hyper-dimensional object challenges the mind's very sanity. Anyone gazing upon it for even a moment must make an immediate and successful DC 20 Will save, or suffer a painful 1d3 of non-lethal damage from abject mental anguish. This mental damage will continue each round until the subject either closes their eyes or is rendered unconscious when they reach 0 hit points.

The hyperdimensional construct's existence is tenuous on a 3-dimensional plane, so any single attack that does more than 10 points of damage to it nudges it into the future, where it will reappear in 1d10 years. Player characters looking at the mesmerizing construct cannot attack it, but blind attacks (-4 attack penalty) may be attempted. Because of its extra-dimensional nature, treat the hyperdimensional construct as AC 14.

If the construct is removed from the room, any character who made a single successful saving throw versus the effects of having seen it will gain a permanent +1d3 to Intelligence, as their minds made the requisite leaps in neural re-wiring to cope with being confronted by a 4-dimensional object.

Furthermore, a shaman who manages to somehow capture and present the hyperdimensional lathe to their Patron A.I. would not only greatly impress them, but aid that patron in increasing their power on a global scale. If this happens, the shaman's Patron A.I. Bond result is immediately raised by 3 results, and the shaman gains a permanent +1d to all Invoke Patron A.I. attempts.

Area 1-15 – Cargo Hold: Surely, this cavernous chamber could comfortably house an entire village, were it not for the astonishing bounty held within. Metal crates are stacked near floor-to-ceiling in evenly spaced rows, and the air is awash with heady scents of exotic foods and spices to make even the most jaded of stomachs rumble in anticipation. Whether your diet is one of traditional foodstuffs or nitrogen-rich nutrient fluids, it certainly is here. Mixed amidst those smells are also whiffs of the oils and the machineries of the ancients. May the Ancient Ones be praised for what has been revealed to your senses.

The cargo hold represents a post-apocalyptic Pandora's box. Certainly, every foodstuff one could imagine is here is abundance, as are spices and other nutritious food additives. The nutritional value in this chamber is roughly enough to feed a village of 100 individuals for a year. Also in storage here are a number of minor electrical trinkets, gewgaws, beads, and bulbs — trove enough to impress the credulous, and to barter with for other riches. While things like the cases of glow-sticks, and other otherwise "trivial" trinkets would have great value if recovered, it is the bins of spare parts that likely would have the most value here. Stored here are literally miles of spooled wiring and cable that could be turned into climbing ropes, woven into carryalls, or even used to construct animal pens. There are crates of power cells of every type, glittering circuitry to please even the most circumspect of Patron A.I.s — a cornucopia of useful items and raw materials. Normally, all of this could be moved easily with the ship's anti-grav skids, however, those are all currently in use in engineering by their rightful owners.

While the GM certainly should place limits on what can be found, and more importantly carried out, the cargo hold is meant to serve as an opportunity for the discerning GM to add any particular piece of tech that they wish to put into play in their campaign, while allowing the PCs to establish themselves as the greatest of their village's troubleshooters.
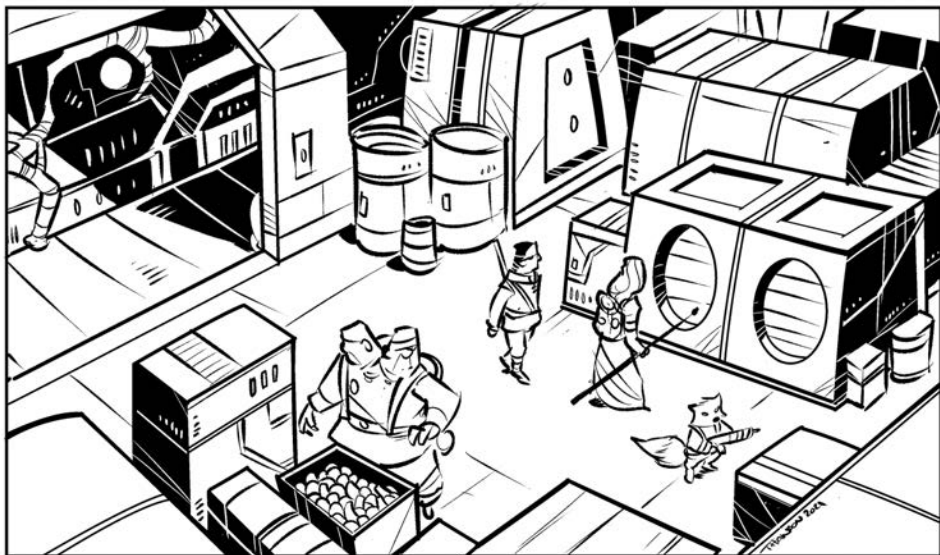
COMMAND DOME

Area 2-1 – Main Bridge: The portal of the clearing opens, revealing a chamber of glittering lights, strange sounds, and hoots and grunts of communication. To either side of this area, wide ramps slope down and back, implying that this is merely one part of a larger overall space. Seated upon a massive throne of metal and crystals is a massive gorilla mutant animal, a wide silver streak down his back denoting his age and importance in the hierarchy. Three other gorilla mutant animals are seated at other tables, their fingers dancing across the glittering crystals before them, and they grunt and hoot to one another.

If Chief Engineer Vano is still alive, his reactions and intent are influenced by any prior interactions with the PCs. If they were hostile, he will shriek in alarm, but if kind, he will gently make the captain aware so as not to startle him. If the PCs are unknown to him, he will react as if they are hostile.

The largest of them is facing forward, seeming to be speaking with a gorilla A.I., the image of a gorilla from the waist up rises 15 feet on the curved wall. You see the A.I.'s eyes widen, as he stares directly at you.

Upon the bridge, while all of the crew are capable of combat, the presence of any hostiles is seen as a direct challenge to Captain LorTay's authority — a challenge that he must face alone or lose face and title. Should combat begin, Security Chief Ursus will arrive from Area 2-3 in 2d3 rounds. He walks, not hurrying, hoping that the Captain LorTay will die in the challenge so that he can eliminate the intruders and assume command. Prior to the rolling of initiative, Captain LorTay will initiate the combat by fiercely pounding on his chest, hoping to terrify his foes into submission. Should the PCs submit, honor is satisfied, and the challenge to the captain's authority is no more. Otherwise, he will fight to the death.

No matter the outcome of any challenge, the other bridge crew will not engage in combat unless directly attacked, instead accepting whatever new authority emerges from the battle.

Captain LorTay: Init +1; Atk slam +5 melee (1d7+1) or bite +5 melee (1d4); AC 13; hit points 24; MV 25′, climb 20′, swing 40′; Act 1d20; SP beat chest (DC 13 Will save or paralyzed in fear losing next action), rage; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +4.

Rage: Any PC engaging in a melee attack against Captain LorTay who does not specifically state otherwise, must make a successful Luck check, else look him in the eyes, increasing the insult and firing his anger to even greater heights. His rage grants him an immediate follow-up attack using a d14. Should that blow fell his foe, he will still spend his next action continuing to pulp his victim as a warning sign of his dominance over his foes.

It is important to remember that, for Captain LorTay, this is still a rescue mission (until he knows otherwise). Should it be required, he could raze LinkPah to the ground, leaving it a smoldering crater, and he would do so should he ever feel the villagers were responsible for the disappearance of the beacon signal. He is, however, not an unreasonable ape. Given obvious good faith attempts to communicate with him, he will have one of his crew attempt to act as a pantomiming translator. Such communications should be carried out with the players mutely trying to mime their desires. Any telepathic communication attempts will be refused.

Area 2-2 – Bridge, Communications and Sensors: The portal of the clearing opens, revealing a chamber lined with long tables that have been opened to reveal glittering wiring within. To the right of this area, a wide ramp slopes downward.

The communications systems have been cannibalized by engineering in their attempt to affect repairs on the lift units. As punishment for failing to have warned against the dangers posed by the native life, the 4 ape crew has been sent out as part of the search and rescue party, seeking the beacon — not realizing that those who activated it are centuries dead.

Area 2-3 – Bridge, Weapons & Shields Stations: The portal of the clearing opens, revealing a chamber filled with flaring bursts of light, beeps, and pinging, along with angry communicative grunts of obvious displeasure. To the left of this area, a wide ramp slopes downward. Amidst a number of light-covered tables, a silverback gorilla-man towers over two similarly clad, seated subordinates. One does not need know the language to know that this is a superior berating those under his charge. Another gorilla mutant animal is seated at a table, his head down, ignoring the shouting as best he can.

Ursus will attempt to slay the PCs without hesitation, feeling that the lesser races have no place on the ship, let alone upon the bridge. He will only stand down if directly ordered to by Captain LorTay, and will use that as an excuse for eventual mutiny and challenge to the Captain's authority. In combat, he is utterly ruthless, and will not hesitate to strike to kill at every opportunity. Should he fall to 8 hit points or less, his courage will break and he will order the other security members to join the combat. Unless the order is belayed by the Captain, they will engage and fight to the death while Ursus flees.

If the player characters kill Ursus, they will have unknowingly gained the grudging respect of Captain LoyTay. The captain has been well aware of Ursus' command ambitions, and is grateful to see a coming challenge to his authority eliminated.

Security Chief Ursus: Init +1; Atk stun truncheon +5 melee (1d4+2 non-lethal damage, Fort save VS 10+damage or be stunned for 3 rounds), genetic disruptor +3 ranged (1d8 + 1 Fort, 30' range), slam +5 melee (1d7+1) or bite +5 melee (1d4); AC 15*; hit points 22; MV 25', climb 20', swing 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +7*, Ref +2*, Will +4.

Security Vest: +2 AC, +2 Fort saves, -1 Ref saves. Functionally wearable by large bipeds. **Genetic Disruptor:** Tech Level 4; Complexity Modifier 6; (1d8 + 1 Fort, 30' range, 10 shots per charge)

Simisapien, Security (2): Init +1; Atk stun truncheon +5 melee (1d4+2 non-lethal damage, Fort save VS 10+damage or be stunned for 3 rounds) or genetic disruptor +3 ranged (1d8 + 1 Fort, 30' range); AC 14*; hit points 16; MV 25', climb 20', swing 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +7*, Ref +2*, Will +4.

Security Vest: +2 AC, +2 Fort saves, -1 Ref saves. Functionally wearable by large bipeds. **Genetic Disruptor:** Tech Level 4; Complexity Modifier 6; (1d8 + 1 Fort, 30' range, 10 shots per charge)

Area 2-4 – Oxygen Recycling: The portal of round chamber opens into a dense rainforest. The climate is warm and humid, and there is a scent of pure verdancy in the air. Dense, lush, and healthy, the foliage is unlike any jungle you have seen before. There are no signs of predatory plants, no trails from dangerous wildlife, nor even sign of thorned trees. It is as if this were a temple to nature itself, to the world before the ancients, to a green primordial world untainted by disaster.

This jungle is the key component to the life support systems of the craft. Dense alien fauna, far more efficient at capturing carbon than the flora of Omega-Terra, keep the air aboard fresh, additionally filtering out things such as airborne pathogens and even unwanted particulates.

Mutant plant characters entering here immediately feel as if the jungle is welcoming them, receiving a non-verbal communication among the green that offers peace, home, and even family. It requires a DC 8 Will save for a mutant plant to leave this chamber of their own free will. It truly represents a paradise. Residing here for a prolonged period of time (10 or more days) grants native mutant plants a permanent bonus 1 HD.

There is nothing in this chamber that represents any danger unless the PCs were to deliberately harm themselves. Also, as this room is self-sustaining, there is little need of maintenance other than a bi-weekly harvest of edible growths, making this an ideal place for the party to camp, or even stow away, should they so desire.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

Unless actively delayed or halted, the craft will be ready for flight again by sunrise. At which point it flies to the sky over LinkPah and fires a warning shot into one of the buildings (incidentally killing Shaman Toncharl). After firing the shot, the craft lands, disgorging a full complement of 10 simisapien security members. (replace any slain security with engineers), to pacify the village. They will unhesitatingly use lethal force against anyone who does not seem to be in active compliance with their gestured directives. Should the simisapiens learn that there never were any of their kin present, and that this is all a mistake, they will depart and blast the village to ruins from above. NOTE: if Ursus is in charge, there will be no landing. Due to his xenophonia, he will simply destroy the village and have his crew search the rubble for traces of the simisapiens in need of rescue.

Regardless of that outcome, so long as the craft is space-worthy, the simisapiens will depart within 48 hours of arrival unless given very strong reason to extend their stay. If communications with the native villagers are exceptionally positive, they may choose to send future representatives to once more live among the Omega-Terrans, in an attempt to guide them back "onto the path" of higher evolution.

There is no pre-determined end state for this adventure. The PCs may slaughter the simisapiens, trade with them, or even stow away and ride off to the stars with them. Experience points then are gained based on the primary intent of the party at the end of the adventure.

LINKPAH AREA MAP

DESERT

RAIN FOREST

SALT WATER LAKE

MOOT HUT

MAGIC FOUNTAIN

FOOD REPLICATION

GLACIAL

SAVANNAH

JUNGLE

GREAT FOREST

SWAMP

FRESH WATER LAKE

IR-W1N

BORDER MARSH

HUTS
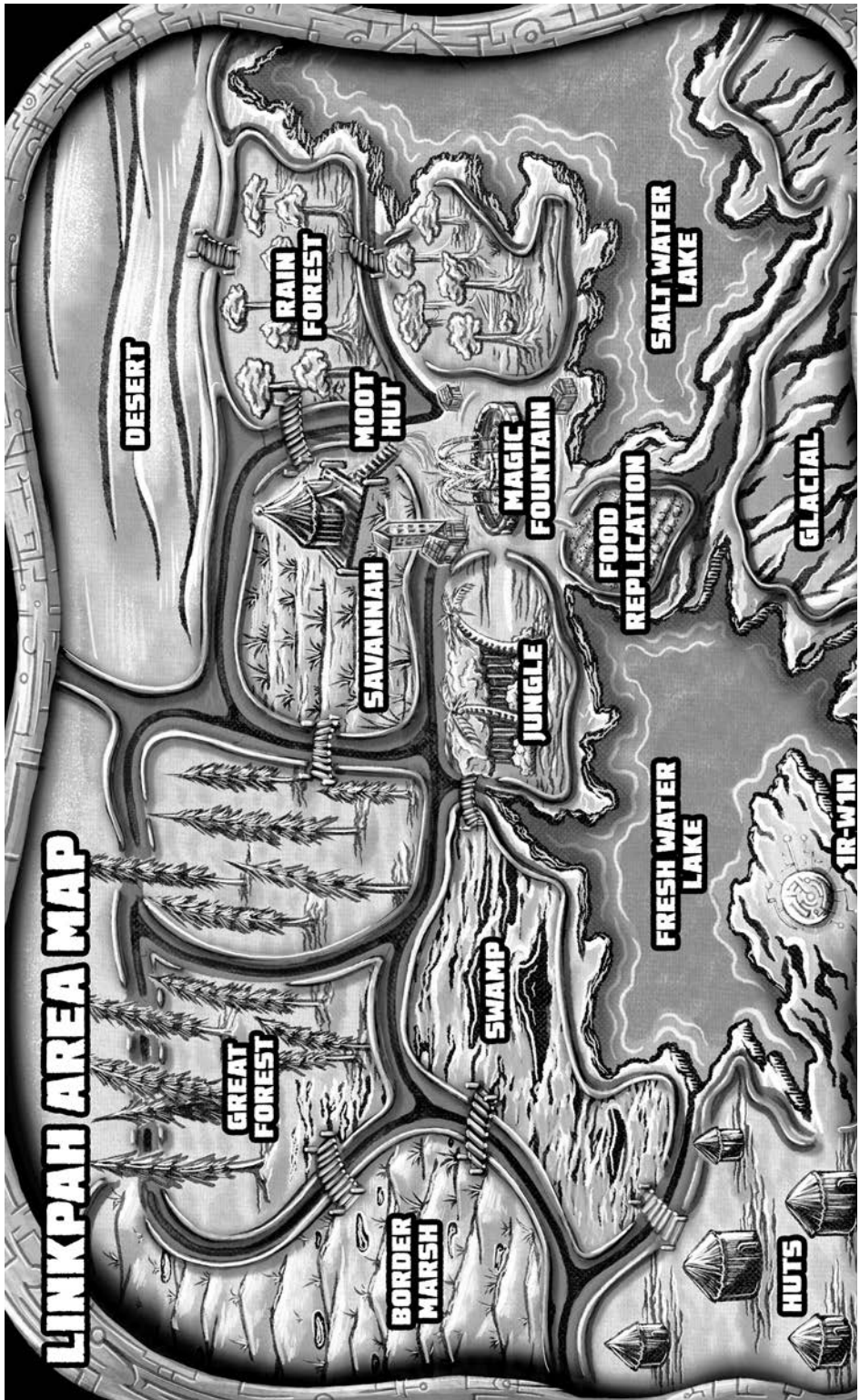
NIGHT OF THE SPACE APES

Semisapian Sky Disk

Area 2-4

Area 2-2

Area 2-3

Area 2-1

Area 1-15

Lift Unit

Area 1-12

Area 1-13

Area 1-14

Lift Unit

Area 1-8

A B C

Area 1-9

Area 1-10

Area 1-7

Area 1-1B

Area 1-6

Area 1-1B

Area 1-11

A

B

Area 1-4

Area 1-5

Lift Unit

C

D

Lift Unit

Area 1-2

Area 1-1A

Area 1-3

Dirt Ramp

CENTERS of REPOSE

GET YOUR MIND SET

An Adventure Setting For All Levels
by MICHAEL STEWART

REPOSE MEADOWS ESTATE FOR REST AND REFLECTION

BACKGROUND

Shortly prior to the Cataclysm, there was a major change in views regarding the incarceration of criminals. Instead of bleak prisons with the goal of keeping malcontents segregated from society, there was instead an emphasis of treating criminal mindsets as a mental health issue. There was scientific evidence to corroborate this in some cases, but pre-cataclysm society took things (as they often did) to an extreme.

Thus, the creation of the "Centers of Repose," to house those who broke society's laws and morays, began in earnest. They were treated as, and indeed called, patients instead of inmates. In these centers, they received a gamut of psychological treatments, and an emphasis was made to avoid retributive punishments. Consensus among penal specialists centered on a belief that a loss of freedom to travel was punishment enough. Instead there was an emphasis was place upon requiring mental health sessions with trained staff, as well as the use of robotic staff programmed to treat all manner of psychological instabilities.

Like most of the structures of early technological society, most of these were destroyed by the Great Disaster. Yet a few might still be found, their massive silver domes either buried under the earth, submerged by rising waters, or overwhelmed by wild growths in remote parts of the continent. One such center is provided below to give game masters a sample of these structures, and how they might have fared over the millennia left under the benign control of computers, which are always the friends of the patients. Always.

Centers of Repose are usually shaped as silver durasteel domes of great height, usually at least 50 meters tall, with some approaching 200 meters. They are laid out in concentric circles, much as one would see a bullseye target. The outer ring contains the minimum security areas, and mimic idyllic outdoor terrain with a holographic sky above them and tastefully maintained gardens and woodlands for the minimum security patients to rest and relax in. Cottages are nestled in the woodlands for patients to live in while robots keep the grounds and see to the needs of any patients in residence.

The next ring is indoors and appears from the outer ring as a 3-story brick building much as any college or university campus might boast in the pre-Cataclysm era. These facades are once again holographic projections laid over the durasteel construction which maintains an illusion of tranquility and normalcy. While there are windows to be seen, these are also holograms, and do not actually exist. Inside the structure, moderate security patients have private rooms off of hallways that link up to crafts and recreation rooms, where patients are guided by robotic staff to engage in constructive pastimes in order to heal the mind and the soul.

The inner ring is the maximum security ring. This ring is also of durasteel construction, but has no holographic imaging to overlay the stark decor. Around the outer wall of this ring are mounted large cryogenic tubes where patients are kept in stasis to keep them from hurting themselves and others. While help within these stasis tubes, the center's Artificial Intelligence provides entertaining and educational programs transmitted directly into the brains of the patients. The A.I. also uses electrical muscle stimulus to keep the bodies from becoming atrophied due to their immobile state. In addition the A.I. provides classes on a variety of relaxing skills such as sculpting, macramé, or knitting.

The "Bullseye" dot area is the very center of the structure, and is comprised of administration offices, robot repair bays, and other such facilities to maintain the staff of the facility, both human and machine. Of course, by this time there are no living members of the staff left… or are there?

SPECIFICS

The Repose Meadows Estate for Rest and Reflection is buried deep within soil and plant life in a remote wilderness. However, the robots of the facility have excavated a long tunnel from the main doors of the dome to the surface so they can move about more easily. As the center is mostly self-sufficient, they only go out infrequently to make supply runs to remote supply depots they have records of, in order to obtain rare materials to keep their computers and equipment run-

ning. If the Repose Meadows Estate facility for Rest and Reflection is being used with the S.A.B.L.E. Rangers supplement (see SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN No.1), then the J.V. A.I., or its robotic patrol horses, may occasionally drop off long-term prisoners to the facility, which of course, the automated systems are happy to accept for the duration of their sentences.

Unfortunately, this center has had some minor malfunctions in the primary A.I. and its robots. Nothing major — they would be the first to assure you! Just some changes in protocols to meet the current emergency situation of the last several thousand years.

SENTENCING OF "PATIENTS"

With the movement to "Centers of Repose", the idea of specific sentencing was replaced by terms of treatment. Put simply, a patient stays until the doctors are convinced that the afflicted person has been cured of their proclivity to perform criminal actions. Then, and only then, are they released back into society. Depending on the individuals, this could be days, weeks, months, or years. Since the doctors are no longer in residence at the Repose Meadows Estate facility, the computers simply continue treatment indefinitely, until such time as they hear from a human doctor with proper authorizations. Which in Omega-terror, is likely never.

GMs are free to create arbitrary sentencing for criminals, and in fact a capricious style of sentencing might be more apt for a slightly malfunctioning Artificial Intelligence! The Sample Sentencing Table will give some basic guidelines for the system's expectations and placement in the facility. Sentenced characters will not immediately know that all sentencing terms are effectively a lifetime sentence to the facility.

CENTERS OF REPOSE SENTENCING GUIDELINES

Crime	Security Zone	Duration*
Trespassing	Minimum	2 weeks -1 month
Vandalism	Minimum/Moderate	6 months-1 year
Theft	Minimum/Moderate	1 year
Assault	Moderate/Maximum	1-5 years
Murder	Maximum	5+ years

*As the Repose Meadows A.I. has cannot release patients without consent from long-dead doctors, all sentences meted out are effectively life sentences.

NOTE: The destruction of robots is considered vandalism, as only humans can be murdered. The killing of mutant animals is considered assault (animal cruelty), but not murder. The killing of mutant plants is considered gardening or weeding without a permit, as the Artificial Intelligence does not consider plants sentient.

VAULT DOORS

The dome itself is buried deep underground, though maintenance bots have kept a smooth eastern tunnel mouth open to the dome's vault doors. These vault doors are heavy duralloy, with an Armor Class of 20 and 100 hit points of damage, or a DC 20 computer security systems check, required to breach them. The doors are on the west side of the dome, and will lead into the Minimum Security Zone.

MINIMUM SECURITY ZONE

This area is kept semi-maintained, and gives the impression of an ideal grassland with wooded copses and the sounds of wildlife in the vegetation. Depending on the time of day (or what time the A.I. thinks it is) the sky will either be blue with clouds, overcast with small amounts of rain to water the plant life, or nighttime with stars showing far above. These skies are all holographic, though the rain is distributed by water sprinklers in the roof of the dome. Gardening robots only emerge at night, seeing with ultraviolet sensors, to do the weeding and pruning as desired by the main computer system.

The wood and grasslands are maintained to give a feeling of wild outdoors without becoming overgrown morasses of vegetation. In the evenings, stars appear in the sky and crickets can be heard chirping in the grass. Investigation will show this chirping is coming from tiny microphones embedded in the plants to simulate the insects. There used to be real insects kept in the woodlands, but cosmic rays and nuclear fallout did some unpleasant things to them, and by extension, the patients near them. So the robots exterminated them all (or all they could find) and replaced them with the artificial sounds.

However, some of the plant life has mutated as well, due to spores coming in from outside the tunnel and residual radiation. As any plants that attack the robots are quickly destroyed, evolution has mandated that the hostile plant life within the minimum security ring will only attack living creatures. For whatever reason, the Artificial Intelligence does not recognize this as a problem, but player characters should beware!

GMs should keep in mind that to survivors of the apocalypse from outside the dome, the emulation of idyllic grasslands and forests will appear bizarre and alien, and not at all what they are used to. Indeed, they will be constantly on edge, expecting all this to be the precursor to some horrific threat ready to pounce on the unwary. Don't worry, they'll encounter those in short order!

The maintenance robots will also do minor repairs on the dozen or so cottages where minimum security prisoners are expected to live.

A typical cottage is a four room structure. The front half of the cottage has a faux-wooden door that leads into a single room that comprises the front half of the cottage. This is a combination sitting room and kitchenette, with both heating machines and a refrigerator to hold foods for meals and snacking. Foods are delivered daily by the robots from the central facility, but it is up to the GM if this service is still working or not. The rear of the cottage is a bedroom with a bath-

Minimum Security Zone Random Encounters

Random encounters happen on a roll of 1-2 on a d6 during the day, checked once an hour. At night, add +1 to the die roll on the table, checked three times during the night. Then roll a d6 to determine the random encounter on this table.

Roll d6	Random Encounter
1	"Dogs" that will want to run and play with the PCs. These are in fact robots programmed to act like pre-Disaster domestic dogs of various breeds. 20% Chance that one or more will malfunction and attack. **Robot Dogs (1-4):** AC 12; HD 1; 4 hit points; Atk bite 1d4
2	Tanglervine that drifts down from the trees and attacks. **Tanglervine (1):** AC 14, HD 2; 12 hit points, Atk vine wrap 1d4 plus strangulation (DC 12 Fort save vs suffocation within 1d4 rounds)
3-4	Maintenance robot which is off duty, and will not attack, but will defend itself or flee. **Maintenance Robot (1):** AC 17; HD 7; 21 hit points; Atk multitool arm 1d8; AI recog 8
5	Minimum security patient (random human genotype), unarmed. There is a 50% chance the person will beg the player character for help to escape, or on the other hand, they might be perfectly happy and refuse to leave. In either case, the patient will flee if attacked. **Desperate/Happy Patient (1):** AC 10; HD 2; 7 hit points; Atk none
6	Minimum security inmate (random human genotype), who has been driven insane by being trapped in the center, and will attack anyone until subdued or killed. **Insane Inmate (1):** AC 11; HD 3; 10 hit points; Atk plasteel club 1d6; SP 20% chance of 1 random mutation
7	Gardening robot busy trimming plants during the night cycle. Unlike maintenance bots, they will defend themselves and try to "prune" any PC plant life they come across. **Gardening Robot (1):** AC 18; HD 8; 24 hit points; Atk gardening shears 1d10; AI recog 10

room adjoining. Each room has at least one permaglass window, with frosted permaglass in the bathroom. While the cottage appears to be built of wood with tar shingles and glass windows, the construction is entirely composed of resilient super-materials (AC 15, 75 hit points).

The vault doors leading outside the zone onto the surface are located due west of the ring, on the outer wall. The doors leading from the minimum security ring to the moderate security ring (identical to the outer doors) are on the opposite, eastern side of the dome.

MODERATE SECURITY ZONE

The access doors to the Moderate Security Zone are heavy duralloy, with an Armor Class of 20 and 100 hit points of damage, or a DC 20 computer security systems check, required to breach them. The doors are on the east side of the dome, and will lead into the Moderate Security zone.

The interior of the simulated buildings contained in the Moderate Security Zone are where patients are kept under constant surveillance by cameras and robots for their own protection. Each individual has a private room, and the halls are spaced with care stations, crafts areas, and passages to dining rooms and activity spaces. The halls and rooms are painted with bright and vivid colors, with images of cartoon characters frolicking about. Based upon pre-Disaster animated holo-vids, these characters were designed to appear friendly, and the poppet units are made to appear exactly the same.

Craft areas contain safety tools to sculpt clay figurines, paint pictures, or sew quilts in order to encourage the creative talents of the patients. Dining areas are supported by food and drink machines, some of which still function, while others create unpalatable consumables or even toxic substances, but this is left to the GM to decide. Unfortunately none of the human staff survived the end of the world, so the various poppet and servitor robots are the only "staff" that remain.

The primary robots encountered here are the poppet robots. These are 3-foot tall robots, designed to look like cartoon animals popular among the Ancient Ones, in order to make patients feel at ease.

Random encounters in the Moderate security zone are on a 1-2 in 6 chance for every 10 minutes during the day, a 1 in 6 at night.

MAXIMUM SECURITY ZONE

The doors leading into this area from the east are reinforced durasteel, with an Armor Class of 22 and 150 hit points of damage, or a DC 22 computer security systems check, required to breach them.

The maximum security area is a stark metal ring with an interior wall lined with large plasteel cryo tubes about 3 meters high and 2 meters wide. These tubes hold the maximum security patients, and about half of them are filled. For every half an hour spent in this zone, there is a 1 in 6 chance a security robot will come by to check that all tubes are secure. The security robots are programmed to stun intruders and take them to one of the rings depending on their level of criminality.

Security Robot (1): AC 18; HD 12; 45 hit points; Atk clamps (STR 20 grapple), stun ray DC 14 Fort save vs stunned for 1-10 turns; AI recog 12

Unfortunately some of the cryo tanks are malfunctioning due to age and lack of some spare parts. A character put within one has a 10% chance of suffering 1d4 points of permanent stat damage to their Intelligence score, from malfunctioning treatment programing.

Moderate Security Zone Random Encounters

Random encounters happen on a roll of 1-2 on a d6 during the day, checked every 30 minutes. At night, an encounter happens on a roll of 1, checked three times during the night. Then roll a d6 to determine the random encounter on this table.

Roll d6	Random Encounter
1	Poppet robots are moving down the hall towards one of the craft rooms, looking to help patients relax with fun activities and games. **Poppet Robots (1-2):** AC 12; HD 1; 4 hit points; Atk bite 1d4; AI recog 5
2	Security Robot is escorting a Moderate Security patient to the Minimum Security zone for good behavior. Patient will be as result 3 below. **Security Robot (1):** AC 18; HD 12; 45 hit points; Atk clamps (STR 20 grapple), stun ray DC 14 Fort save vs stunned for 1-10 turns; AI recog 12
3-4	Moderate security patient (random human genotype), unarmed. There is a 50% chance the person will beg the player character for help to escape, or on the other hand, they might be perfectly happy and refuse to leave. In either case, the patient will flee if attacked. **Moderate Security Patient (1):** AC 10; HD 2; 7 hit points; Atk none
5	Insane moderate security patient (random human genotype), who has been driven insane by being trapped here, and will attack anyone until he is subdued or killed. **Insane Moderate Security Patient (1):** AC 11; HD 2; 10 hit points; Atk electric scissors 1d4+1; SP 20% chance one random mutation
6	A pacifier poppet robot is malfunctioning and just wants to give hugs. It will move to the nearest PC as if to give the character a hug, but once a "patient" is grasped in its mouth, it will blast them with the built-in stunner. It will keep doing this until it is destroyed or 10 rounds go by, after which a maintenance robot will come and take it away for repairs. **Pacifier Poppet Robot (1):** AC 14; HD 2; 8 hit points; Atk mouth STR 12 grapple, stun ray DC 12 Fort save vs stunned for 1-10 turns; AI recog 8

ADMINISTRATION AND MAINTENANCE ZONE

The doors to the Administration and Maintenance Zone are heavy durasteel, with an Armor Class of 20 and 100 hit points of damage, or a DC 20 computer security systems check, required to breach them.

This area is rather drab, as it was made to house officials and medical staff. There is a break room, doctors offices, a medical bay with 4 healing tubes (similar to cryo tubes, but these tubes heal 1-20 hp per day), a robot storage and maintenance bay, and several offices with computer terminals for the efficient oversight of the facility. The armory has a vault door as noted for each of the zones, and has a variety of stun weaponry within. Either use your game rules of choice to determine the contents of the armory, or provide 10 stun pistols (DC 14 Fort save vs stunned for 1-10 turns) and 5 stun rifles (DC 16 Fort save vs stunned for 1-20 turns).

GETTING THE PLAYER CHARACTERS INVOLVED

As noted earlier, any PCs with S.A.B.L.E. Ranger horses might find themselves expected by their steed or the J.V. Artificial Intelligence to take apprehended criminals to the nearest Repose Center, such as this one. One of the center domes might find itself suddenly excavated due to an earthquake or tidal wave, with its opening cleared and robots sent out to retrieve vital materials to maintain the center. In some circumstances this could result in robots raiding villages where the residents have certain technology (working or not) that the robots consider vital to maintain the functionality the center. By the metrics of the A.I.'s system records, these villages are illegal encampments with no zoning approval, so the system will not consider this stealing.

A few other possible plot hooks are given below:

• As noted earlier, S.A.B.L.E. horses may insist on "criminals" being transferred to the facility. The judicious GM might further require a group of PCs to actually excavate the outer vault doors to get into the Repose Center in the first place, or place the center underwater, with various aquatic hazards for the players to deal with. A penchant for murderous acts may even find the PCs unwittingly sentencing themselves to the center, with the horses bringing them there for incarceration!

• An accidental discovery of the outer vault doors could result in player characters entering the minimum security area and deciding that it's actually safer than the wastelands around them, setting up residence in one of the cottages. This could result in negotiations with the A.I. running the Repose Center, and the PCs being deputized as law enforcement officers for singular missions on behalf of the center. These missions could be as simple as escorting robots on a salvage operation to as complex as evicting nearby villages that are "illegal squatters" on "government property."

• The center itself can be a source of replacement player characters. Perhaps a human or mutant has served their time, and thanks to a deputized healer they are assessed as psychologically stable and allowed to leave. The maximum security regions would be a source of pure strain humans with a wealth of skills. Some might even have passed through medical school in the cryo tube and therefore would be authorized as a doctor!

• The A.I. within the center has gone insane. It has turned the minimum and moderate security areas into hellscapes that drive any remaining patients insane, and has released them into the wild to menace nearby settlements. Worse, it might program the maximum security patients as killing machines with potent combat skills. They could be then armed from the Repose Center's armory and sent out into the world to "sentence" lawbreakers — with a maximum penalty of death, of course. This would be a sudden mass threat to a region that could force PCs to gather themselves and locals to fight for their lives and homes against a group of implacable and insane foes.

Center of Repose Random Loot

Allow player to roll for item found, adding any Luck modifiers to the roll.

Roll d12	Random Loot Found
1	Auto-torch
2	Sonic insect repulsor
3	Gardening jumpsuit
4	Audio prog
5	IR/UV monocle
6-7	Power cell cache
8	Meditation goggles
9	Tranq wand
10	Holo-map projector
11	Robot terrier T0-20
12	Administrator I.D. bracelet
13	Holo-sculpting dais
14	Audiovisual text reader & holoplayer

TREASURE AND LOOT

Use the following table to generate random treasure and loot for the different locations in the Repose Meadows Estate.

Minimum Security Zone: There is a 20% chance of finding items in each cottage or encounter location. A success means that 0-2 useful items (1d3-1) are found, with a "0" meaning a broken or useless item is found. The Judge is encouraged to use their imagination for such odd items.

Moderate Security Zone: There is a 40% chance of finding items in each private room, and a 25% chance of finding items in the public areas. A success means that 1-3 items (1d3) are found.

Maximum Security Zone: There is a 40% chance of finding items in each private room, and a 25% chance of finding items in the public areas. A success means that 1-3 items (1d3) are found.

Auto-Torch: This handheld flashlight device has a 100' range in complete darkness, and is powered by body heat, rendering it useless to exothermic genotypes. **TL:** 3   **CM:** 2   **Power:** body heat
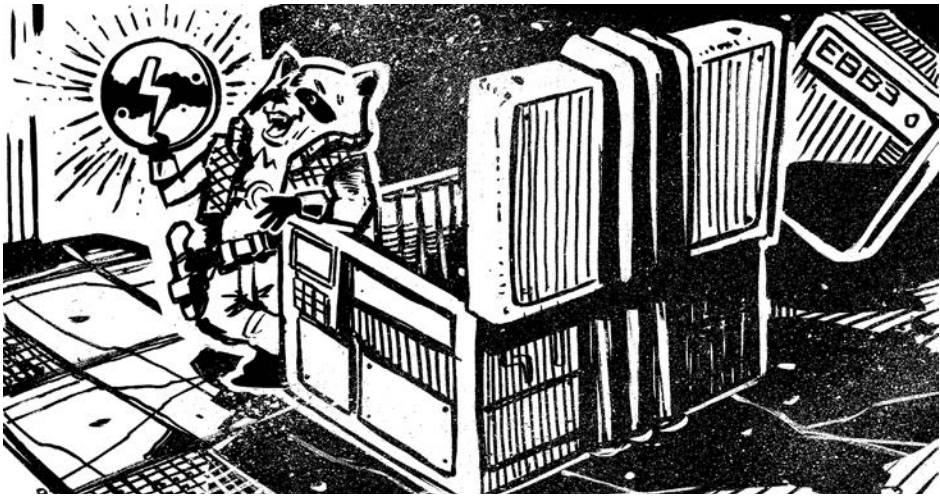
Sonic Insect Repulsor: This handheld device emits an ultrasonic frequency especially irritating to insects and other creatures with exoskeletons. It has a 90' range, and when activated, any arthropod will feel mild irritation and perform all subsequent actions at a -3.

TL: 3   **CM:** 2   **Power:** C-cell (24 hours), F-cell (7 days), F-cell (U)

Gardening Jumpsuit: This florescent green jumpsuit is made from e-lycra, and electro-statically repels all dirt and foreign substances, also adding a +1 bonus to AC when worn.
TL: 4   **CM:** 2   **Power:** none

Audio Prog: This small capsule-shaped device was created to play and project music in a space of up to concert-sized rooms and halls. The device is broken, and can only play the robo-prog song It's a Small Universe After All at maximum volume in a repeated loop. This will temporarily deafen anyone within 30' (DC 12 Fort save vs deafness for 1d3 turns), and cause all within 150' range to suffer a -2 to all actions taken while the device is active.
TL: 4   **CM:** 5   **Power:** self

IR/UV Monocle: This device provides the wearer with the ability to see in the infrared and ultraviolet spectrums, with all that such implies. The device runs on body heat, but is fragile and can be easily broken. Anytime the wearer takes damage in combat, there is a 10% chance the monocle will shatter. The device was designed to be semi-disposable so is virtually unrepairable.
TL: 4   **CM:** 2   **Power:** self

Power Cell Cache: A cache of power cells is found! Each plasteel case contains 1-3 power cells of random type (Roll d100: 01-85 C-cell, 86-98 F-cell, 99-00 Q-cell).

Meditation Goggles: These goggles provide the wearer with a beautiful multicolored spray effect that causes subliminal relaxation for 1-2 hours. Unlike the Stunner wand below, they can be removed by the wearer at will.
TL: 4   **CM:** 3   **Power:** self

Tranq Wand: This device delivers a tuned electromagnetic charge to its target, inducing a wave of euphoria, rendering the target incapable of taking any actions for 1d3 turns. A successful DC 14 Will save allow the targeted being or creature to continue to function, but at a -2 to all actions for the next hour.
TL: 4   **CM:** 4   **Power:** C-cell (10), F-cell (20), Q-cell (U)

Holo-Map Projector: When activated, this handheld-sized disc projects a holographic 3D map of an area, with interactive zoom and spin functions via haptic (tactile) feedback. Unfortunately, the device is only currently loaded with a map of Middle Earth. Other maps can be loaded into the device if other holo-map data crystals can be found.
TL: 4   **CM:** 4   **Power:** self

Robot Terrier T0-20: When activated, this small robotic terrier will imprint on the person or being that booted it up, and will serve them faithfully for as long as its power cells hold out. It has no powers or abilities beyond those of a normal, organic dog, but will bark at intruders and lick faces with abandon.
TL: 4   **CM:** 8   **Power:** C-cell (1 week), F-cell (1 month); Q-cell (U)
AC: 14   **HP:** 12   **Atk:** bite 1d3

Administration I.D. Bracelet: This bracelet will allow anyone wearing it to open and pass through the doors into any of the security zones or the administration section of the center. However, it is DNA-coded to its prior, ancient wearer, so it will not allow access to any of the actual rooms within the administration section. Robots in the center will accept the bracelet as identification only 20% of the time, and only then because their genetic readers have devloped faults over the intervening thousands of years.
TL: 4   **CM:** 6   **Power:** self

Holo-Sculpting Dais: This is a round, flat unmarked dais about 2' in width. There is a touchscreen interface on the side, and when activated, a holographic block of marble will appear in the air above it. The user can then use their hands, or even a finger, to move through the holographic block, which will react to those movements and gestures as though they were carving the block into a sculpture. Successful determination of the higher functions of the device will allow saving the carved holographic sculptures for later viewing as desired.
TL: 4   **CM:** 5   **Power:** self

Audiovisual Text Reader & Holoplayer: This device creates a half-meter projection field that displays a holographic game of Beast Chess, with each piece movable by the player. The holo beasts combat the opponent's pieces to gain control of a space on the circular game board, which can be projected onto any flat surface. The device also stores and displays holo-books, and the GM can populate the device with any books or technical manuals they deem appropriate for the facility. Keep in mind the staff would not program the device with any content deemed too upsetting to their patients. So, no tactical manuals or weapon maintenance field manuals would thus be available in the device.
TL: 4   **CM:** 5   **Power:** self

CENTERS of REPOSE

Area Map

COTTAGES

Rec Room

Visitors Lounge

Crafts Area

Janitorial

Staff Lockers

Restrooms

Classroom

Nurses Station

Med Bay

Dining Area

Nurses Station

Kitchen

Med Bay

Patient Rooms

Laundry

Storage

Cryo Tubes

Restrooms

Patient Rooms

Patient Rooms

Nurses Station

Crafts Area

Classroom

Robot Maintenance

COTTAGES
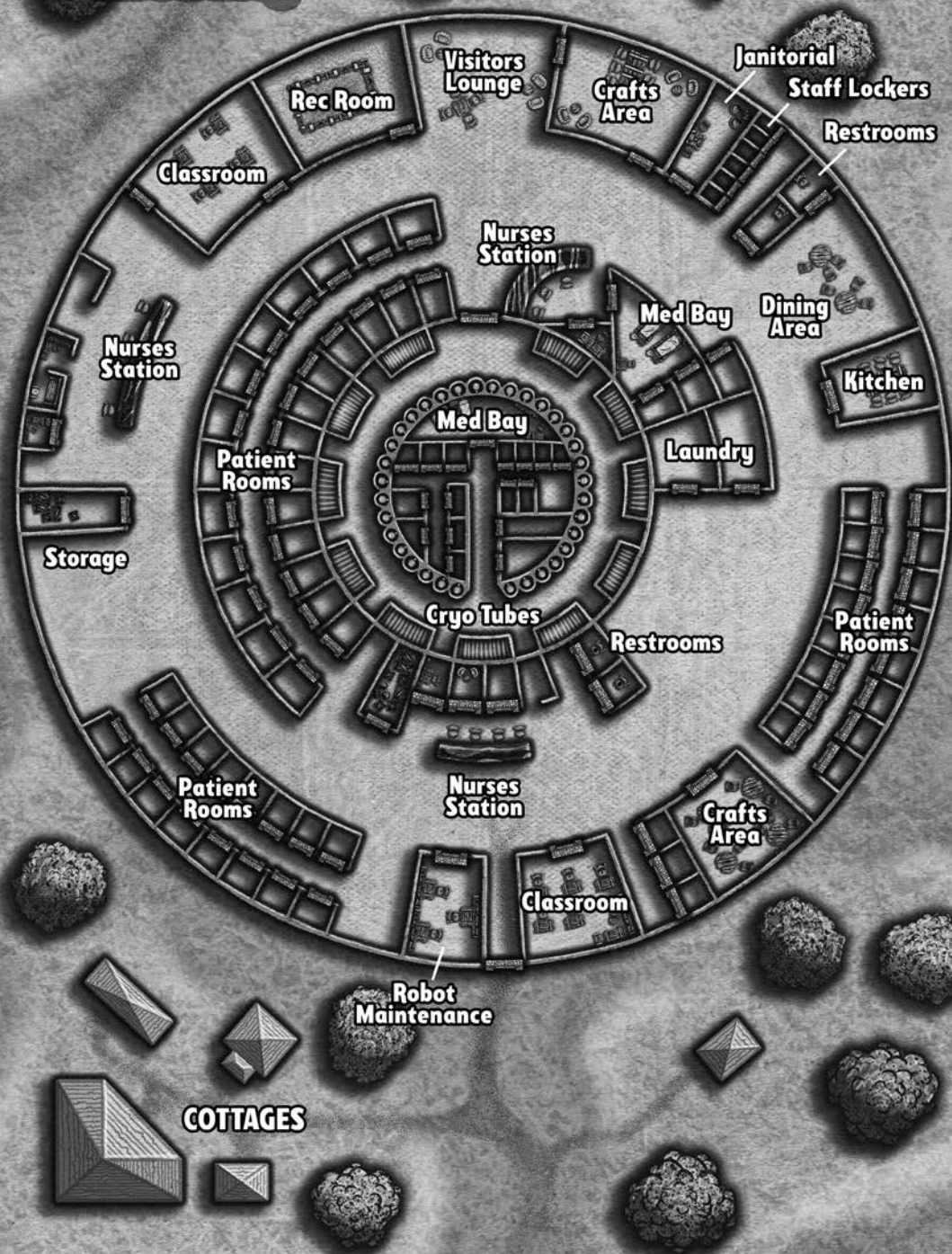
Holding up the Sky

AN ADVENTURE FOR LEVELS 2-3
by JIM WAMPLER
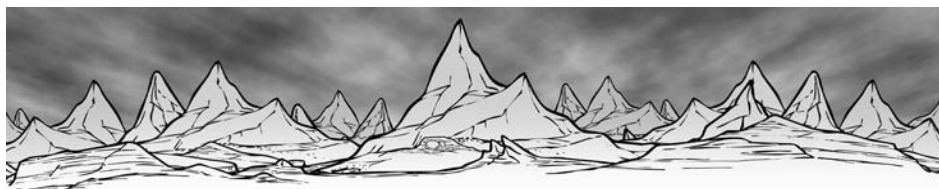
BACKGROUND

In the 31st century, some foresaw the coming apocalypse. Such was the organization known as HECTOR (Human Engineering, Construction, Terraforming, and Operable Robots), a union formed by the second-class workers who ran the immense construction mechs that built the cities, enclaves, and wonders of the Ancient Ones.

Choosing a secure location underneath a chain of mighty mountains, and in secret, the men, women, and families of HECTOR began construction of their own Eternity Vault, naming the city within it Ur-Subterra. Although the Eternity Vault's infrastructure was mostly finished, delays plagued construction until it was too late. When the Great Disaster struck, waves of cosmic radiation reduced the workers and their families to piles of dust, and the vault sealed itself off from the outside world. The only intelligences that remained within were artificial ones—a quintet of gigantic construction mechs, each with its own programming and purpose.

Of these, the largest was ATLAS, whose primary responsibility was to support the cavern ceiling until the geodesic support dome could be finished. ATLAS immediately failed due to last minute tampering with its systems by panicked workers. As the weight of an entire mountain began to bear down upon the unfinished geodesic support structure, the remaining four mechs engaged emergency protocols and together prevented the collapse.

For ten millennia, the four subordinate construction mechs have supported the Eternity Vault ceiling, while the interior remained sealed off from the outside world. Bereft of light, power, or life support systems, the vault has endured as a timeless tomb, permeated only by the gentle drip of centuries passing—centuries which must inevitably bring an entire mountain chain crashing down upon it.

> **GM NOTES:** *Holding up the Sky* is a sandbox adventure with a time window built in. From initial discovery until complete collapse, the players have an average of seventeen game days to secure the locale for their tribe, perhaps less. Although there are opportunities aplenty for exploration, combat, and treasure-hunting, the primary tasks are problem-solving in nature. This is a thinking sentient's adventure, with sumptuous rewards for success, and little beyond crushing doom and death for failure.

Holding Up the Sky takes place in the Omega-Terra setting and can be played as the finale to the adventures *The Gene Looms of Janeck-Vac* (*SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN* No.1) and *The Shatterback Mountains* (*SCIENTIFIC BARBARIAN* No.3).

PLAYER INTRODUCTION

Yours has been a successful foraging hunt, for your mismatched band of mutant rovers and science seekers have navigated the wilds of your hothouse jungle to its very western edge, collecting trinkets, trophies, and treasures along the way. Many among you think it wise to head back home now, but clues left behind in an ancient ruin you recently explored indicate an even larger prize might be found in the broken mountains to the west. After weeks of trekking across radioactive desert and silver savanna, you finally see them. Rising up into the sparse clouds ahead is a shattered mountain chain. Its breathtaking majesty is only enhanced by its fractured and jumbled state. It's as though a god's fist has struck and shattered it, only to have the remaining pieces fall back together roughly in a pile of jagged shards many times taller than your native land's mile-high trees.

Surely there are technological wonders to be had in the fractured faults of these mountains, you reason and argue among yourselves. Surely the rewards outweigh the risks of just one more hunt.

THE SHATTERBACK MOUNTAINS

The barren, rocky terrain of the broken mountains seems strangely empty of life, especially as compared to the myriad mega fauna and riotous plant growth you are accustomed to. A few vulture-lizards circle in the sky, and small insects, mammals, and reptiles play a deadly game of hide-and-seek at your feet. The only plants you see are scrub grasses and mosses living on the sides of rocks. Then your forward scout sees something—a moss-encrusted arch of rubble, with a shape like a half-circle in its center—a sure sign of ancient ruins.

Area-1A: Eternity Vault Outer Door — Half buried by eons of rocky rubble and avalanches lies the outer door to the Eternity Vault. The vault door is a 30' high and wide, shaped in a circular arch. The edges of the door are completely buried by multiton boulders, but the center 20' of moss-encrusted door are accessible. The moss is easily removed, and doing so reveals a smooth, featureless and unscratched duralloy surface, without the slightest patina of rust or sign of the passage of time.

The duralloy door to the vault is 10' thick and proof against virtually any means of damage. Normal Artifact checks, com-badge usage, and rover skills all prove futile in any attempts to open the door. It is massive and unmoving. This adventure contains its own deus ex machina to allow the players to get inside the vault, but exceptionally clever or well-equipped player characters may not require this. Ways the Eternity Vault door could be breached include the following:

Brute Force Mutations: Any mutant power capable of damaging duralloy will do damage to the door, vaporizing small sections. For these purposes, consider each 1' square volume of the duralloy door to have 200 hit points. It may take days or weeks, but with enough persistence, a rough tunnel could be carved through the door in this way.

Artifact Weapons and Tools: As with mutations, some artifacts are capable of damaging duralloy (a fusion torch is an excellent example), and thus some crude tunneling could be achieved, but only at a horrific cost in used power cells.

Other Mutations: A teleporting mutant could choose to teleport blind beyond the door, with results dependent on the exact spot they intend to teleport to (calling out distance and angle). Mutants who can change size or shape will find the door seals airtight, but if efforts are made to drill a small hole through the 10□ thickness of the door, they may be able to gain access.

Unanticipated Craziness: Players will always surprise you. If they come up with a way past this door that's wholly unanticipated, but which passes muster with the GM as a rational and reasonable means of entry, applaud and award those player characters some bonus Luck.

In any case, tunneling or destroying up to 20 cubic feet of the outer vault door will trigger its mechanisms to open as precaution against total failure to maintain a hard seal against the outside environment.

Should all attempts fail, or if play begins to drag out and become less enjoyable, the GM may drop clues that the players have an item they didn't know they had. Already carried by one of the player characters is a lone piece of junk artifact they just scooped up and planned to use for barter trade later. Have all players make a Luck check, and the lowest roll is the PC who possesses this item.

The Eternity Medallion
Tech Level: 4   **Complexity Modifier:** 5 (Broken)
Power: C-Cell (20), F-Cell (U)

The Eternity Medallion is brass circle with a holy symbol of the ancients inscribed on its surface—a large circular vault door underneath a mountain with a mushroom-shaped cloud above the mountain. When successfully activated, the medallion flies to the upper chest of the user and duralloy bands extend, clasping the medallion to the user's neck and torso. It cannot be removed except by the death of the user, or by security clearance from an advanced security A.I. The Eternity Medallion acts as a combination com-badge (violet/scientific) and security access mechanism for the vault and its construction mechs within.

When originally found, no Artifact check was required to identify this medallion as it is clearly broken, possessing worth only as a barter trade item. It will partially activate, however, if brought within 5' of the Eternity Vault door and its attendant broadcast power field. The medallion will then weakly chime and blink before failing again within seconds.

An intelligent and lucky PC can restore the medallion to functionality by repairing it with cannibalized parts from a working com-badge (which destroys that badge). This is a delicate and complex repair job, requiring a successful Artifact check at a complexity modifier of 8. Even when successful, the repair with borrowed parts will not last. Each successful repair results in 2d4 uses before the medallion breaks again and requires further repairs.

OPENING THE VAULT DOOR

Whether by hook or crook, once the Eternity Vault door finally opens, events happen quickly. The vault door sprouts spiraling seams in its metallic surface where none were seen before. Its circular nature is revealed as the door irises open and an avalanche of dirt, gravel, and anyone standing within 25' of the door begin to spill forward and slide inward. PCs standing nearby will be swept inside and suffer 1d6 damage in the process, with a successful DC 14 Reflex save causing them to take only half damage. If a player rolls a natural 1, their character ends up half buried upside down in the avalanche and must be rescued before suffocation occurs.

Area-1B: Dome Seal Chamber — Within sixty seconds of opening, the outer vault door will grind its ten-foot-thick duralloy plates back together, closing the iris to the outside world and plunging anyone within into total darkness. With no interior lighting, the party will have to provide their own light sources. Mutants with infravision will see only themselves and their friends, as there is an absence of ambient heat signatures within. The air is stale but breathable, at a comfortable but chilly 13°C. Mutants with ultraviolet vision will still see nothing, as the underground chamber is sealed from any outside radiation sources.

Once light sources are provided by the party, they will see that the dome seal chamber is in fact a 100' long metallic tube approximately 60' in diameter, save for the flattened 20' wide portion at the bottom that serves as the passageway floor. It is clean and empty, except for the recent delivery of outside dirt, gravel, and adventurers. At the far end is a duplicate vault door nearly 60' in height. The inner vault door will only open under the same circumstances as the outer door.

A thorough search of the chamber will turn up little, except for a single brochure showing a gleaming underground city of the Ancient Ones called Ur-Subterra. The holo-paper brochure shows animated images of a populated metropolis, with towering spired buildings, lush green parks, and flying bubble cars, all under a warm and glowing artificial sun.

THE ETERNITY VAULT

When the inner door to the Eternity Vault finally grinds open, the vista that unfolds before you is breathtaking. A dim green twilight shines down upon an intact city of the Ancient Ones. Stone and metal huts larger than any you have ever seen line streets paved in smooth metal. Above you curves a geometric structure that forms a nearly complete dome made of innumerable gigantic metal triangles. Just beyond the dome, in the missing gaps, lies the cold, solid granite of the mountain above.

The ancient city is dominated by five leviathan robots standing immobile in the eerie silence. The largest is standing in the center of the city, arms down and head tilted forward. The other four metal giants stand with arms upraised at the edges of the city, one each for the four cardinal directions, including one that looms directly over your heads as its legs straddle the vault's entrance.

The metal streets are clean and clear of debris, and the air is as fresh as any you have ever tasted. As you stand there, the absolute silence of the vault is interrupted for a brief moment by the sound of distant thunder, and a few small rocks fall from the sky at your feet.

RANDOM EXPLORATION AND SEARCH ITEMS

Allow player to roll for item found, adding any Luck modifiers to the roll.

d20+Luck mod	Item Found
1 or less	Shards of plascrete fall down (1 HP of damage)
2-15	An errie nothingness and piles of white powder
16-17	C-Cell (50% charged)
18	Multitool or sonic spanner
19	Fusion Torch
20	HECTOR crew com-badge (orange/construction)
21+	HECTOR crew com badge (violet/security)

UR-SUBTERRA

Ur-Subterra was in a state of partial construction when the Eternity Vault sealed itself. Thus, only the basic understructure of the intended metropolis was ever built. This includes permasteel streets, plascrete shells for homes and smaller buildings, and the plascrete and permasteel foundations for larger structures. The extant smaller buildings are unfinished and empty, but complete enough to provide shelter. Since the city's power plant was never installed, the city proper has no lights, power, or atmospheric control.

Because only the HECTOR construction crew was present when disaster struck, all that remains of them are scattered piles of white powder. They and all other organic material were turned to mineral dust by the waves of cosmic energy that penetrated the vault prior to sealing itself shut. Here and there, rarely, there still remain the scattered tools of their trade.

ETERNITY VAULT ECOSYSTEM

Roll on table once per 6 hours of exploration, or upon entering a new area.

Die Roll	Vault Area	Creatures Encountered
d4	Streets	(1) No encounter (2) 20 Crayfly swarm, (Roll d6, encountered on 4-6) (3) 1 Ghost Snail, (Roll d6, encountered on a 6) (4) Glowmoss patch, (Roll d6, encountered on a 6)
d4	Viaducts	(1) No encounter (2) 100 Crayfly swarm, (Roll d6: Encountered on 3-6) (3) 1 Ghost Snail, (Roll d6: Encountered on a 6) (4) 20 Splatworms, (Roll d6: Encountered on 4-6)
d3	Inside buildings	(1) No encounter (2) 1 Crayfly, (Roll d6: Encountered on 6) (3) Glowmoss patch, (Roll d6: Encountered on a 5-6)
d4	Cavern walls	(1) No encounter (2) 10 Crayfly swarm, (Roll d6: Encountered on 6) (3) Fold Mold patch, (4) Glowmoss patch, (Roll d6: Encountered on a 5-6)

Except for the major landmarks depicted on the map, there is little of interest to be found in the incomplete building structures. The party may spend time exploring and search the four city quadrants or the central plaza. For each hour spent exploring and searching buildings, the party may find one of the items on the Random Exploration and Searching Items table. Since these items are rare and scattered, the entire party must search an area, then have the players roll a Luck check, with the item being found by the PC with the lowest roll. To determine what was found, have that player roll a d20 and add their Luck modifier, if any.

ETERNITY VAULT ECOSYSTEM

The Eternity Vault was irradiated ten thousand years ago, killing all organic life within at the time. However, over the millennia, an underground fresh water spring broke into the cavern and with it brought a few hardy lifeforms that have since evolved into a sightless but self-supporting troglobite biome. Like a gigantic terrarium, this mutant biome cycles its own oxygen and carbon dioxide as a natural, ongoing process.

Details and information for all the creatures listed in the random encounter table can be found in the Troglofauna section at the end of the adventure.

STATUS OF THE ETERNITY VAULT

While the Eternity Vault has thus far remained intact, the contest between the four subordinate construction mechs and the weight of the mountain above are reaching an inevitable, final conclusion. Only the deactivated ATLAS mech is capable of fully supporting the cavern ceiling above until completion of the support dome can be accomplished by the other four mechs. The four smaller mechs are beginning to give way to the crushing force of gravity. The GM can use the following tables to determine the vault ceiling's status at any point during the adventure, as circumstances begin to change.

Vault Ceiling Status

Roll on table once per 6 hours of exploration, or upon entering a new area.

Construction Mech	Status	Support Status	% of Support
ATLAS	Non-functional	—	0/100
HYPERION	Functional	nominal	25/25
IAPETUS	Functional	nominal	25/25
CRIUS	Functional	nominal	24.98/25
KIOS	Functional	nominal	25/25
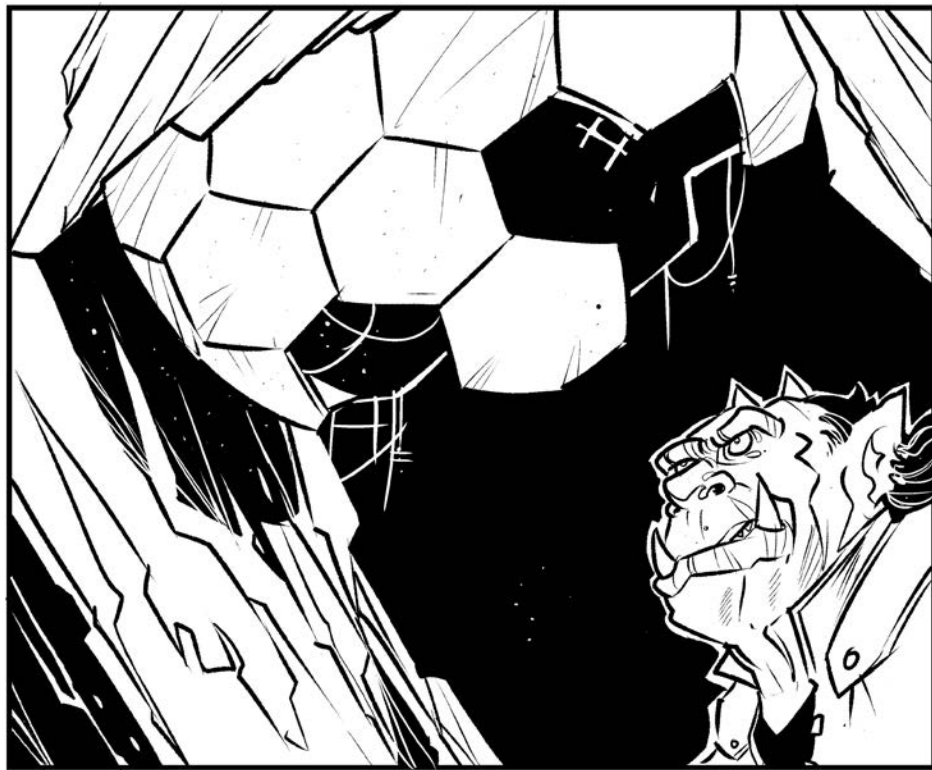
Time Until Complete Vault Collapse

Support %	Time Until Collapse	Ceiling Cracks and Rubble Falls
100%	d10,000 years*	None
99.99%	d20+7 days	Every once in a while (or GM discretion), no damage
75–74.99%	24 hours	Once per hour, 1d3 damage, DC 8 Reflex save avoids damage
50–49.99%	12 hours	Once per 30 minutes, 1d4 damage, DC 10 Reflex save avoids damage
25–24.99%	6 hours	Once per 10 minutes, 1d6 damage, DC 12 Reflex save for 1/2 damage
anything less	1d3 hours	Once per minute, 1d8 damage, DC 14 Reflex save for 1/2 damage

If all 5 construction mechs are repaired and made fully operational at some point in the future, the geodesic dome will be completed within 30 days, and the dome will support the ceiling for millennia untold without maintenance or further issues.

HYPERION

Area-1C: HYPERION Construction Mech — Straddling the Eternity Vault's entrance stands HYPERION, a 150′ tall laser-cutting construction mech. HYPERION was used to carve the mountain bedrock into its current hemispherical volume. The mech is currently functional but in standby mode, as its resources have been redirected to supporting the southern end of the cavern ceiling.

HYPERION's on-site holo-interface is a small raised dais near its left foot that can be activated by stepping upon it and making a successful DC 16 Artifact check. Possessing and using the Eternity Medallion (assuming it is in working condition) will add +5 to the check, although the system will only recognize pure strain humans or mutant humans with no outwardly visible mutations.

When activated, the being standing on the dais will be surrounded by a cylindrical holographic display containing many status readouts that are currently blurred, with horizontal bars appearing over any words or data. A holographic face resembling a bearded male human appears and says, *"Welcome to the HYPERION A.I. interface."*

Depending on the circumstances, the A.I. will then continue with the appropriate phrase:

If the character is a mutant with visible mutations: *"You have been identified as a worker in need of immediate medical aid. Please report to the nearest Emergency Medical facility. Session ends."*

If the character is a mutant animal or mutant plant: *"Error. This interface has been activated by a nonhuman life-form. Animal Control has been summoned. Session ends."*

If the character DOES NOT possess a functional Eternity Medallion: *"You have been identified as a worker who does not possess security clearance for this interface. Please acquire new or updated security credentials from IAPETUS as soon as possible. Session ends."*

If the character is human and possesses a functional Eternity Medallion: *"Guest access granted. For full access, your credentials must be updated with new permissions from IAPETUS. Session ends."*

If the character is human and possesses a functional Eternity Medallion with upgraded access: *"Full access granted. You may proceed with your query."*

GM NOTES: Remember that each access attempt with the Eternity Medallion counts as one use against the medallion's total number of available uses before requiring further repairs.

At this point, HYPERION thinks the user is an authorized commander of the HECTOR crew. It will reveal the following about itself and the current status of the Eternity Vault:

- HYPERION status is fully functional at this time.

- HYPERION's primary function is a laser-cutting mech capable of slicing granite and bedrock.

- HYPERION was responsible for carving out the entirety of the Eternity Vault's cavern.

- HYPERION's current resources have all been dedicated to supporting the cavern's ceiling and preventing its collapse, bearing 25% of the load. HYPERION can perform no other task while doing this.

- HYPERION has been supporting the cavern ceiling for ten thousand years, since the failure of the ATLAS mech. It was the ATLAS mech's primary function to support the cavern ceiling during construction of the geodesic support dome.

Further or more detailed queries will reveal no more than these baseline statistics, resulting in responses like, "Your query is a non sequitur. Query is outside the bounds of this A.I. Please consult IAPETUS for further authorizations and information."

Negotiating Parts Retrieval

Later in the adventure, the adventuring party may return to the HYPERION mech to try and salvage parts needed to repair ATLAS. While any efforts to remove the needed parts by force will result in summoning an endless swarm of BODE drones, the HYPERION A.I. may be negotiated with for the needed parts by anyone possessing a functioning Eternity Medallion. Once HYPERION understands the reasons for the needed part, it will inform the medallion user of the functionality losses to its own performance which removing such a part will entail, and it will ask for security clearance to do so. It will treat any affirmative answer from the medallion wielder as the required security clearance and automatically eject the requested part from its body, presenting it to the requester via a small tractor field beam.

HYPERION FUNCTIONALITY STATUS

Part Removed	Cavern Ceiling Support	Other Effects
Drivetrain Data Crystal	-5% support	HYPERION can no longer move.
Tractor Field Governor	-10% support per module	Cavern ceiling rumbles.*

Note that removing more than one part from any single mech may have disastrous consequences. (See Time Until Complete Vault Collapse table.)

IAPETUS

Area-1D: IAPETUS Construction Mech — Stationed at the westernmost edge of the city, IAPETUS is a 150′ tall multipurpose construction mech with four appendages that end in hard-light holographic projectors and tractor field emitters. More importantly, IAPETUS functions as the primary interface A.I. between the human HECTOR workers and all other A.I.s and mechs. IAPETUS is also in charge of security access to each mech. It currently stands with its three arms upraised to support the western end of the immense cavern ceiling.

IAPETUS's interface dais is placed directly in front of its leftmost treaded section, and it operates exactly as the HYPERION dais operates: it can be activated by stepping upon it and making a successful DC 16 Artifact check. Possessing and using the Eternity Medallion (assuming it is in working condition) will add +5 to the check, although the system will only recognize pure strain humans or mutant humans with no outwardly visible mutations.

When activated, the being standing on the dais will be surrounded by a cylindrical holographic display containing many status readouts that are currently blurred with horizontal bars appearing over any words or data. A holographic face resembling an elderly bearded and balding male human appears and says, *"Welcome to the IAPETUS A.I. interface."*

In its initial interactions, IAPETUS will respond to inquiries similarly to HYPERION until it identifies the user is an authorized commander of the HECTOR crew. It will then reveal the following about itself and the current status of the Eternity Vault:

- IAPETUS's status is fully functional at this time.

- IAPETUS's primary function is logistics support of the other mechs and to act as a backup to their various functions, as well as being in charge of A.I. security and authorizations.

- IAPETUS's current resources have all been dedicated to supporting the cavern's ceiling and preventing its collapse, bearing 25% of the load. IAPETUS can perform no other task while doing this.

- IAPETUS has been supporting the cavern ceiling for ten thousand years, since the failure of the ATLAS mech. It was the ATLAS mech's primary function to support the cavern's ceiling during construction of the geodesic support dome.

Negotiating Parts Retrieval

Later in the adventure, the adventuring party may return to the IAPETUS mech to try and salvage parts needed to repair ATLAS. While any efforts to remove the needed parts by force will result in summoning an endless swarm of BODE drones, the IAPETUS A.I. may be negotiated with for the needed parts by anyone possessing a functioning Eternity Medallion. Once IAPETUS understands the reasons for the needed part, it will inform the medallion user of the func-

tionality losses to its own performance which removing such a part will entail, and it will ask for security clearance to do so. It will treat any affirmative answer from the medallion wielder as the required security clearance and automatically eject the requested part from its body, presenting it to the requester via a small tractor field beam.

IAPETUS FUNCTIONALITY STATUS

Part Removed	Cavern Ceiling Support	Other Effects
Drivetrain Data Crystal	5% support	IAPETUS can no longer move.
Tractor Field Governor	10% support per module	Cavern ceiling rumbles.*

Note that removing more than one part from any single mech may have disastrous consequences. (See Time Until Complete Vault Collapse table.)

CRIUS

Area-1E: CRIUS Construction Mech — Stationed at the northernmost edge of the city, CRIUS is a 175' tall construction mech with two tractor-field-enabled earth movers at the end of its bulky, mechanized arms. Its head suggests an intentional resemblance to a ram, with spiraling tractor field emitters bracketing its wide, flat face. CRIUS was designed to function primarily as an earth mover, and thus its design is robust and bulky, even when compared to its fellow mechs. It currently stands with its arms upraised to support the northern end of the immense cavern ceiling.

CRIUS's interface dais is placed directly in front of its wide, treaded lower section, and it operates exactly as the HYPERION dais does: it can be activated by stepping upon it and making a successful DC 16 Artifact check. Possessing and using the Eternity Medallion (assuming it is in working condition) will add +5 to the check, although the system will only recognize pure strain humans or mutant humans with no outwardly visible mutations.

When activated, the being standing on the dais will be surrounded by a cylindrical holographic display containing many status readouts that are currently blurred with horizontal bars appearing over any words or data. A holographic face resembling a half-man, half-ram appears and says, *"Welcome to the CRIUS A.I. interface."*

In its initial interactions, CRIUS will respond to inquiries similarly to HYPERION until it identifies the user as an authorized commander of the HECTOR crew. It will then reveal the following about itself and the current status of the Eternity Vault:

- CRIUS's status is 99.98% functional at this time.

- CRIUS has suffered a minor systems malfunction in its tractor field emitters, but the tractor system remains functional at this time.

- CRIUS's primary function is to lift and move dirt, rocks and other loads up to 10 cubic tons at a time from one place to another.

- CRIUS was responsible for moving the bedrock carved out of the mountain to the KIOS mech for matter conversion into construction materials.

- CRIUS's current resources have all been dedicated to supporting the cavern's ceiling and preventing its collapse, bearing 24.98% of the load. CRIUS can perform no other task while doing this.

- CRIUS has been supporting the cavern ceiling for ten thousand years, since the failure of the ATLAS mech. It was the ATLAS mech's primary function to support the cavern's ceiling during construction of the geodesic support dome.

Further or more detailed queries will reveal no more than these baseline statistics, resulting in responses like, "*Your query is a non sequitur. Query is outside the bounds of this A.I. Please consult IAPETUS for further authorizations and information.*"

Negotiating Parts Retrieval

Later in the adventure, the adventuring party may return to the CRIUS mech to try and salvage parts needed to repair ATLAS. While any efforts to remove the needed parts by force will result in summoning an endless swarm of BODE drones, the CRIUS A.I. may be negotiated with for the needed parts by anyone possessing a functioning Eternity Medallion. Once CRIUS understands the reasons for the needed part, it will inform the medallion user of the functionality losses to its own performance which removing such a part will entail, and it will ask for security clearance to do so. It will treat any affirmative answer from the medallion wielder as the required security clearance and automatically eject the requested part from its body, presenting it to the requester via a small tractor field beam.

The CRIUS mech will not give up a Tractor Field Governor under any circumstances. It is already suffering from a burnout of one of its modules, and the removal of any others would cause the mech to fail.

CRIUS FUNCTIONALITY STATUS

Part Removed	Cavern Ceiling Support	Other Effects
Drivetrain Data Crystal	5% support	CRIUS can no longer move.
Tractor Field Governor	none available	One module has already malfunctioned.

KIOS

Area-1F: KIOS Construction Mech — Stationed at the eastern-most edge of the city, KIOS is a 125' tall construction mech specialized to fabricate building materials using matter conversion units built into its arms. KIOS created most of the infrastructure, metal roads, building shells, and the partially completed geodesic support dome in the vault by converting the molecular structure of raw bedrock along with super-materials brought in from the outside. KIOS currently stands with its arm upraised to support the eastern side of the cavern's ceiling.

KIOS's interface dais is placed directly in front of its round, traction ball section, and it operates exactly as the HYPERION dais does: it can be activated by stepping upon it and making a successful DC 16 Artifact check. Possessing and using the Eternity Medallion (assuming it is in working condition) will add +5 to the check, although the system will only recognize pure strain humans or mutant humans with no outwardly visible mutations.

When activated, the being standing on the dais will be surrounded by a cylindrical holographic display containing many status readouts that are currently blurred with horizontal bars appearing over any words or data. A holographic face resembling a blue-faced woman appears and says, *"Welcome to the KIOS A.I. interface."*

In its initial interactions, KIOS will respond to inquiries similarly to HYPERION until it identifies the user as an authorized commander of the HECTOR crew. It will then reveal the following about itself and the current status of the Eternity Vault:

> • KIOS's status is fully functional at this time.
>
> • KIOS's primary function is fabricate construction materials by converting raw matter.
>
> • KIOS was responsible for creating all of the building materials used to build the Eternity Vault.
>
> • KIOS's current resources have all been dedicated to supporting the cavern's ceiling and preventing its collapse, bearing 25% of the load. KIOS can perform no other task while doing this.
>
> • KIOS has been supporting the cavern ceiling for ten thousand years, since the failure of the ATLAS mech. It was the ATLAS mech's primary function to support the cavern's ceiling during construction of the geodesic support dome.

Further or more detailed queries will reveal no more than these baseline statistics, resulting in responses like, *"Your query is a non sequitur. Query is outside the bounds of this A.I. Please consult IAPETUS for further authorizations and information."*

Negotiating Parts Retrieval

Later in the adventure, the adventuring party may return to the KIOS mech to try and salvage parts needed to repair ATLAS. While any efforts to remove the
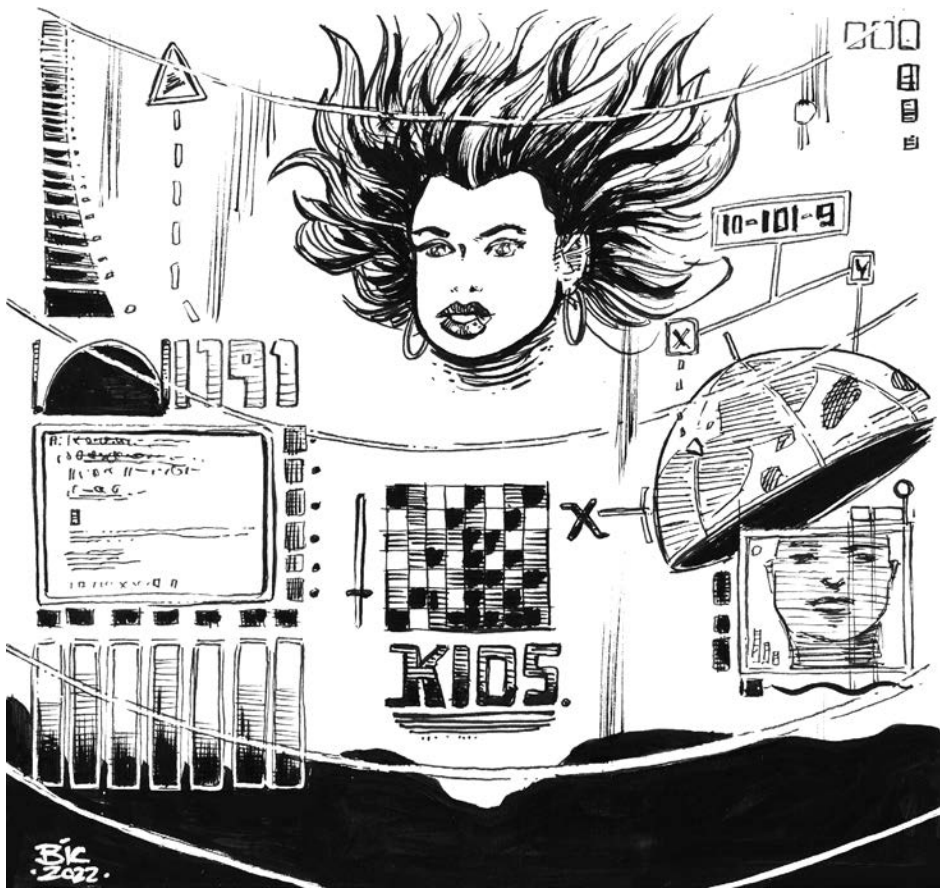
needed parts by force will result in summoning an endless swarm of BODE drones, the KIOS A.I. may be negotiated with for the needed parts by anyone possessing a functioning Eternity Medallion. Once KIOS understands the reasons for the needed part, it will inform the medallion user of the functionality losses to its own performance which removing such a part will entail, and it will ask for security clearance to do so. It will treat any affirmative answer from the medallion wielder as the required security clearance and automatically eject the requested part from its body, presenting it to the requester via a small tractor field beam.

KIOS FUNCTIONALITY STATUS

Part Removed	Cavern Ceiling Support	Other Effects
Drivetrain Data Crystal	5% support	KIOS can no longer move.
Tractor Field Governor	10% support per module	Cavern ceiling rumbles.*

Note that removing more than one part from any single mech may have disastrous consequences. (See Time Until Complete Vault Collapse table.)

ATLAS CONSTRUCTION MECH

The ATLAS mech (All-Terrain Load-Bearing Abutment System) stands twice as tall as the other four construction mechs and can be easily seen from any corner of the Eternity Vault. Positioned centrally in the city, were its massive arms upraised, they could easily reach and support the roughly hemispherical ceiling of the underground cavern. In fact, this was the ATLAS mech's primary function—supporting the cavern ceiling with its google-tons of mountainous weight bearing down upon it until construction of the supporting dome structure could be completed.

Then the Great Disaster struck.

When the rolling quakes and waves of cosmic radiation began to strike the vault ten thousand years ago, the ATLAS mech was in a routine maintenance mode cycle. In their dying moments, the HECTOR crew inside the mech attempted to quickly reboot the mech's systems. The human crew were instead instantly reduced to small piles of white powder, the mech's systems overloaded, and the resulting power spike caused major damage to it, seemingly putting it out commission forever.

At the same time, the IAPETUS mech A.I. marshaled the remaining subordinate mechs to cease their own tasks and begin supporting the cavern ceiling, which they accomplished, thereby saving the vault. With no living human crew remaining, IAPETUS was subsequently unable to assess and repair the damaged ATLAS mech. Since then, the remaining four mechs have successfully preserved the partially constructed Eternity Vault and the city nestled within, but centuries of shifting fault lines within the Shatterback Mountains are finally beginning to overwhelm them in this task. Only a repaired and fully restored ATLAS mech can stave off the inevitable fate of Ur-Subterra.

There are six habitable areas within the ATLAS mech where its systems may be manually controlled, serviced, and engaged by human HECTOR crew members:

- **Area-2A: Maintenance Access Hatch.** This is the entrance chamber by which the inner systems of the mech can be manually engaged.

- **Area-2B: Bipedal Maintenance Control.** This station manages the mech's locomotion systems.

- **Area-2C: Drivetrain Maintenance.** The mech's drivetrain is managed from this room.

- **Area-2D: Tractor Field Engineering.** This chamber houses the control systems governing the tractor field generators that enable the mech's support of the vault cavern ceiling.

- **Area-2E: Quantum-Crystal Power Core.** The QPC is the power system that directly feeds the tractor field generators and powers the mech.

- **Area-2F: A.I. Core.** The A.I. Core houses a Quantum Data Matrix that runs and guides the mech.

Restoring the ATLAS mech to full functionality requires:

- Repairing the bipedal maintenance power breaker controls (Area-2B).

- Repairing and replacing 1 drivetrain data crystal (Area-2C).

- Repairing and replacing 2 tractor field governor modules (Area-2D).

- Repairing and replacing 1 QPC subcore (Area-2E).

- Breaking ATLAS A.I. out of its diagnostic loop, then fixing and rebooting the A.I. (Area-2F).

Area-2A: Maintenance Access Hatch — The ATLAS mech does not have the same holographic dais interface as the other four mechs. Because the mech was operated by a supervisory human crew, access to the mech's control systems is through a small hatch located about 30' from the ground on the mech's right foot. Crew members must scale metal rungs built into the mech's outer hull to access it. The hatch door itself is 10' by 4' and lies within a small recess that provides standing room for one or two people at most. To the right of the hatch is a standard touchplate interface that requires both a functioning Eternity Medallion and a successful DC 16 Artifact check to open.

Other mutations and technological devices that affect duralloy can cause enough damage to force the door open (100 hit points of damage should do it), but such damaging actions will be detected by the mech's security grid, and BODE drones will be sent to deal with any unauthorized intruders. If BODE drones are summoned from outside the mech, these drones will not be able to follow intruders inside the mech, assuming the hatch door is closed and still at least 50% intact. (See BODE drones in the HECTOR Systems section.)

Upon entering the ATLAS mech, the adventurers will see a 10′ by 40′ hallway lit by a flickering set of red panels high up on the walls. Without another light source or alternative sensory tech or mutations, enough light is provided to see by, but all actions taken occur at a 1 penalty because of the strobing effect of the red light sources.

The hallway space is otherwise featureless metal, except for a hatchway in the ceiling at the far end. Access to the hatchway is provided by metal rungs embedded in the wall. There is a touchplate control panel to the right of the ceiling hatch. A functioning Eternity Medallion or HECTOR Crew com-badge (orange/black), plus a successful DC 14 Artifact check, is required to successfully open the hatch. Other damage-causing methods of opening the hatch are possible, but will summon the BODE drone stored further up in the access tube.

Area-2B: Bipedal Maintenance Control — The access tube leading up to this section has metal rungs stretching up a 6′ wide vertical metal tube, with lighting provided by the same type of strobing red panels found in Area-2A. Halfway up the tube, on the opposite side from the rungs, is an oval-shaped hatch with touchplate controls. A successful DC 18 Artifact check combined with either the Eternity Medallion or a HECTOR crew com-badge (indigo/security) will cause the hatch to slide back, revealing a storage alcove with a deactivated BODE drone nestled inside. Any tinkering that causes damage to the drone or the hatch will activate the drone, including badly missed Artifact checks.

The duralloy hatchway and touchplate controls at the top of the tube are unpowered and must be forced open by other means, which will activate the BODE drone stored in the access tube below if any damage to the hatch is caused. (See BODE drones in the HECTOR Systems section.)

The Bipedal Maintenance Control section itself is a completely dark 20′ by 20′ room, as the internal power to this room was knocked out during the disaster eons ago. The room's walls are blanketed in numerous deactivated touchplate control banks, all of them dark and unpowered. The entry hatch is embedded in the floor at the western side of the room, and on the eastern wall opposite is another access hatchway to the next section. Until power is restored to this section, this hatch is likewise unpowered and unusable. A careful search of the room, particularly the ceiling, will reveal another closed BODE drone storage alcove. (See BODE drones in the HECTOR Systems section.)

Restoring power to the Bipedal Maintenance Control room requires a thorough search of the room under lighted conditions and a successful DC 14 Perception check to determine the exact touchplate control panel among the dozens there that have been burned out. A thorough search of the room also reveals a small pile of white powder on the floor, with a sonic wrench sticking out of it. The mineral powder is all that remains of a HECTOR crew engineer after waves of cosmic radiation blasted through the Eternity Vault ten millennia ago.

Once located, the burned out power breaker control panel requires an Artifact check of 16 or greater to repair, and through it, reactivate power to this room and this section of the mech. When successful, the remaining control touch-

plates light up, including the touchplate controls for the exit hatchway. With power restored, the room is lit, albeit by the same flickering red panels seen in the preceding sections.
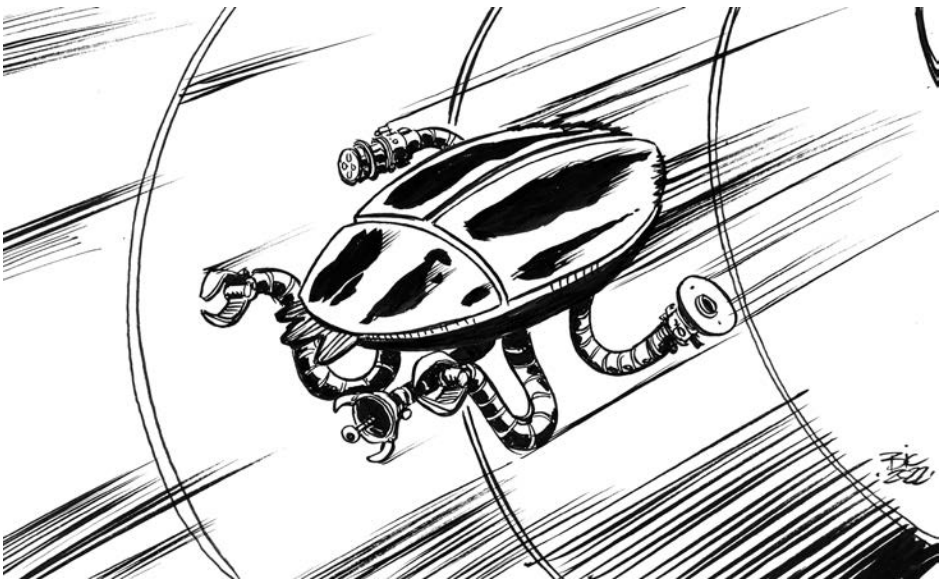
SECTION REPAIRS

Effecting repairs and restoring power to this room makes access to and repairs of the Bipedal Drivetrain in Area-2C possible.

Area-2C: Drivetrain Engineering — The lower hatch opens up into the floor of a 20′ by 60′ room, near its western wall. If repairs were made in Area-2B, the room is lit by the now familiar strobing red ceiling panels.

Spanning the long room's 40′ ceiling is an enormous mechanical cylinder that extends through the western and eastern walls. The ceiling itself is 20′ high and has another access tube in it. The room features holographic and touchplate controls on its eastern wall and a data crystal control unit bank on its southern wall.

Examination of the control panels will, with a successful DC 12 Artifact check, reveal that the Bipedal Maintenance Control systems are offline and non-functional. An Artifact check of 16 or higher will further reveal that one of the data crystal control units on the opposite wall is burned out.

Identification of the problem is easily accomplished with a simple visual check of the data crystal control bank. In the array of 32 glowing blue data crystals, each about the size of a grapefruit, one is clearly blackened, with dark tendrils of carbon scoring radiating outwards from its socketed cradle.

No Artifact check is required to remove the damaged data crystal. If the crystal is examined closely first, on a successful DC 12 Perception check a character will notice that in addition to being smokey, opaque, and appearing burned, the crystal is a different shape with a greater number of facets in its surface structure than the other powered data crystals.
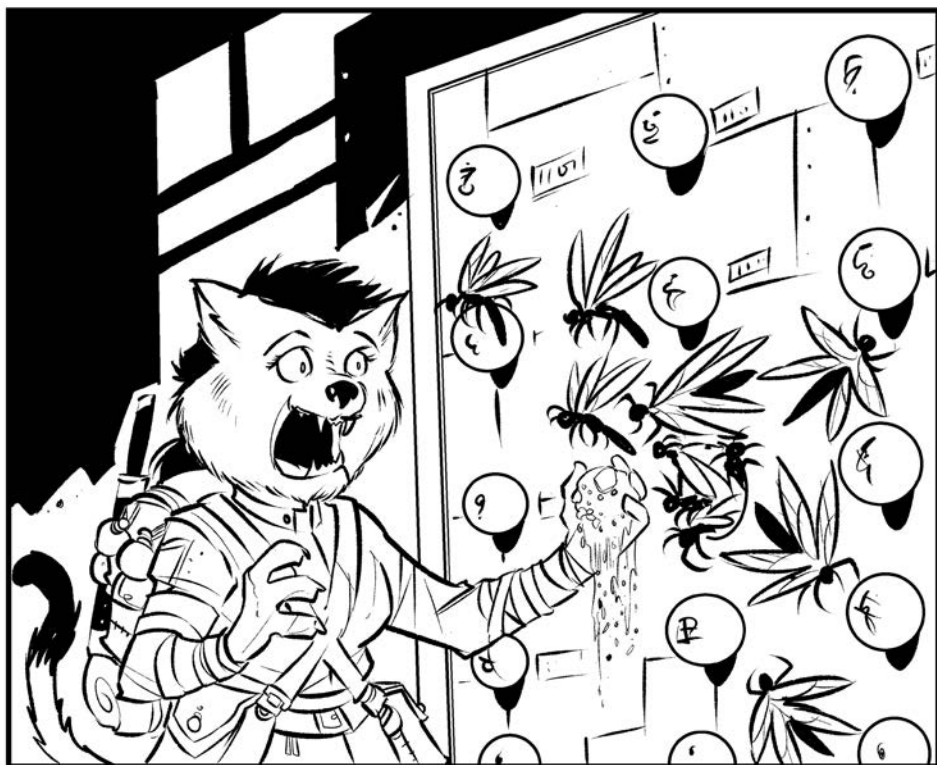
If simply grabbed and removed, the data crystal easily comes out but delivers a 1d6 electrical shock to whoever is holding it. All is also not as it seems. The crystal is actually the crystalline mucus plug of a living hive of phase ants who are quite happily feeding off the ATLAS mech's emergency power leads. Once removed, the hard, faceted object crumbles into a black powder that begins to drift away in the air before fading from existence. Removal of the plug will alert the phase ant hive, and the residents begin pouring forth from the empty data crystal socket.

The phase ants are innumerable, and 10 of them will exit the hive and attack per combat round, especially targeting anyone bearing powered artifacts. As the phase ants exist in a state of quantum superpositioning, each phase ant appears to blink in and out of existence several times per second, making them difficult to target with direct attacks. Once successfully attacked, an individual phase ant's quantum state collapses, and that phase ant no longer strobes in and out of our reality, either vanishing completely (50% chance) as it appears to simultaneously spin along all three axes at once or becoming fully solid (50% chance) and dying in a pulpy splat. Any attack that delivers so much as a single point of damage triggers this effect, including random physical contact.

When each phase ant attacks an opponent, there is also 50% chance that they will choose to attack a powered artifact rather than its organic owner. While an individual phase ant bite delivers only 1 point of damage, if the target is a powered artifact, that bite completely drains the artifact of power—power cells die,

and artifacts and A.I.s that are self-powered are drained and must be rebooted, which takes at least 10 combat rounds. A successful phase ant attack also causes it to hyperspin out of the physical plane, effectively removing it from combat.

Fighting the phase ants will quickly become a war of attrition. Barring miracles or prodigious levels of player ingenuity, the phase ant swarm is unlikely to be defeated by means of traditional combat. The incoming swarm can be stopped, however, by simply removing a functioning data crystal from its cradle and jamming it in the empty socket through which the swarm is entering the room. This will not repair the Bipedal Maintenance Controls, but it will permanently stem the tide. Placing a functioning data crystal into the burned socket has the added benefit of destabilizing the remainder of the hive, as it creates a momentary power surge that sends small arcs of electricity throughout the chamber. This will inflict 1 hit point of damage to all within, and cause all phase ants to spin and blink out of this reality.

If the room is searched, a successful DC 12 Luck check will uncover a storage compartment containing a fusion torch, a fully charged c-cell, and a functional HECTOR crew com-badge (orange/construction).

Phase Ants: Init +2; Atk bite 1 hit point plus power drain; AC 9; HD 1d1, 1 hit points; MV 20′ flying; Act d20; SP power drain any powered artifact; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0

SECTION REPAIRS

Successful repair of this section will require one working drivetrain data crystal—a spare part not located inside the ATLAS mech, nor anywhere inside the Eternity Vault with the exception of the other four functioning mechs (see Negotiating Parts Retrieval section for each relevant mech). If the PCs acquire a replacement drivetrain data crystal from one of the other mechs in the Eternity Vault and place it in the empty socket, the entire bipedal drivetrain cylinder shifts mightily in its cradle and begins to slowly turn.

Area-2D: Tractor Field Engineering — Ingress to this enormous chamber is achieved by climbing up the access tube in the ceiling of Area-2C. There is another access tube hatch in the ceiling. If repairs were made in Area-2B, the room is lit by the now familiar strobing red ceiling panels; if not, the room is completely dark.

This room is roughly circular with a 120′ diameter and a 30′ ceiling. The access hatch comes up through the floor in the center of the room. A grated metal floor extends out to the curved walls, on which are twelve hemispherical tractor field generators, each about 15′ in diameter. Ten of the generators glow in a subdued red color, and two of them are completely dark and unpowered. There is a bank of touchplate controls next to the each generator and a parts locker on the chamber wall on the other side of each generator.

Checking out the control bank or the two de-powered generator globes will be tricky. The tractor generator system is in standby mode but has suffered minor damage. The damaged system is currently projecting random anti-grav fields throughout the engineering section. Anyone attempting to simply walk to the
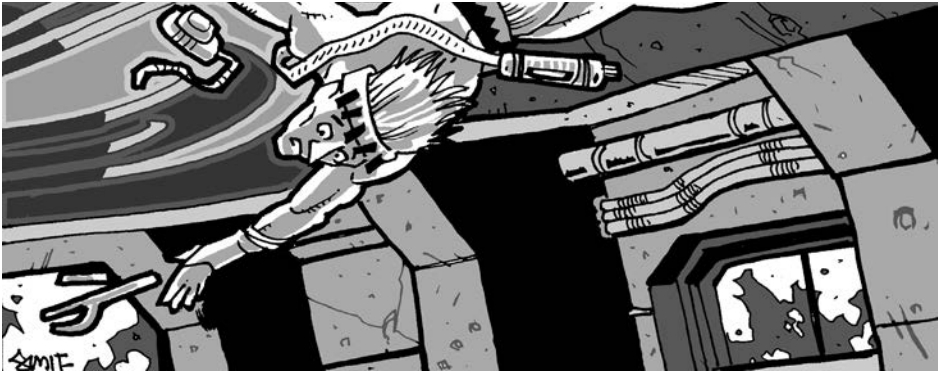
controls or tractor field generator globes will quickly discover this fact as they step outside a 5' perimeter of normal gravity surrounding the floor access hatch. Beyond that perimeter, there is a zero-G area, and past that, there are gravity currents and eddies throughout the chamber (see Area-2D map).

The gravity anomalies have two possible effects on PCs who encounter them: they may suspend them helplessly in mid-air (50% chance), or send them flying in a random direction (50% chance). If they are sent flying, roll a d12 to determine a clockface direction, with 12 o'clock being north, and a d6 to determine distance in increments of 10'. If a PC is bounced by a gravity anomaly into a piece of generator equipment anywhere in the room, it causes 1d3 damage to them as well as to the equipment, and a BODE drone will be summoned, which must then be dealt with. If the release of BODE drones into the TFE chamber occurs while gravity anomalies persist, this creates a very difficult and tense confrontation, as the drones themselves may enter gravity anomalies and find themselves randomly tossed around. A bounced drone will inflict 1d3 damage to itself and whatever it hits, possibly causing a chain reaction. Other BODE drones will also target a "malfunctioning" drone that damages the ATLAS mech.

Once the control bank next to the northernmost generator is reached, the PCs can examine it and, with a successful DC 12 Artifact check, they will learn that the two generators which have failed require replacement governor modules. The modules resemble oblong rectangles with rounded corners and complex circuitry etched on their surfaces. The governor modules have been partially ejected by the ports that hold them. Pushing the governor modules back into their ports only results in them being ejected again because they are damaged. They must be replaced, and so the PCs must acquire the parts from the other construction mechs (see the Negotiating Parts Retrieval section for each relevant mech).

Additionally, the control panel can used to remove the gravitic anomalies found in the chamber. With a successful DC 13 Artifact check, PCs may use the control panels to switch the ten functioning generators from standby mode to active mode, which will bypass the damaged circuitry and eliminate the gravitic anomalies, restoring normal gravity to the entire section.

If the room is searched, a successful DC 12 Luck check will uncover an E-Belt and a HECTOR crew com-badge (orange/construction).

SECTION REPAIRS

Successful repair of this section will require two working tractor field generator governor modules—parts not located inside the ATLAS mech, nor anywhere inside the Eternity Vault except inside the other four mechs. If the PCs acquire replacement governor modules from the other mechs in the Eternity Vault and place them in the empty sockets, they are accepted. All twelve generators begin to brightly glow yellow-orange and are fully functional.

Area-2E: Quantum-Crystal Power Core (QPC) — The Quantum-Crystal Power Core is the primary energy source for the ATLAS mech, including the mech's tractor field canopy intended to support the cavern ceiling. The tractor field generators initiate the tractor field, but its persistent emanation requires a functional QPC. The QPC is very much the "heart" of the ATLAS mech.

The QPC chamber is a 60'-wide sphere. Access to the QPC is achieved by climbing up the access tube from the ceiling of Area-2D. There is a secure hatch at the top of this access tube, however, the QPC is a potential hot zone, so there is a radioactivity risk if the emergency protocols are engaged, as indeed they are. A repeat of the actions required to open the other access hatches is needed to enter the QPC. There is a touchplate control panel next to the hatch, and a functioning Eternity Medallion or HECTOR Crew com-badge (orange/black) plus a successful DC 18 Artifact check (because of the radiation protocols being engaged) is required to successfully open the hatch.

Upon entering the chamber, the players immediately feel ill and experience 1 hit point of radiation damage for every 5 minutes they spend in the area while unprotected (a successful DC 12 Fort save will avoid the damage). Anyone possessing a HECTOR crew com-badge will notice that the orange or indigo portion is now blinking red.

A narrow 5' wide walkway circumscribes the QPC chamber. A successful Luck check will reveal two lockers embedded in the walkway to either side of the access ladder. One contains six radiation suits, while the other contains several replacement Q-crystal subcores. Access to the subcore locker requires a functioning Eternity Medallion or HECTOR Crew com-badge (orange/construction), plus a successful DC 12 Artifact check, while the radiation suit locker is freely accessible.

> **GM NOTES:** The radiation suits will only fit pure strain humans or mutant humans with no outward physical mutations. Any attempts to force a radiation suit onto manimals, plantients, or mutant humans with physical mutations such as horns, spikes, tails, wings, or alternate numbers of limbs or heads will damage the suit, rendering it worthless.

A successful DC 12 Perception check will also reveal a warning panel along the circular catwalk detailing the radiation danger to the party, and a DC 14 Artifact check will allow a shaman to understand some of the warnings being displayed on it. Failure to discern this danger will have obvious consequences.

The QPC core is supported in a limited anti-grav field, centered in the room to optimize the balance between the subcores. The core aggregates the output of

twenty constituent subcores in an icosahedral (20-sided polyhedron) configuration, with each subcore constituting one triangular face of the total core. While nineteen of the subcores pulse in a subdued blue-green light, the twentieth subcore, near the top, was shattered millennia ago when mountain tremors caused fluctuations in the anti-grav bubble.

The missing subcore module area is visibly and obviously leaking waves of a blue-green light into the room. Fragments of the shattered subcore float and dance about in these pulsing ribbons of radiation. What is not obvious is that the remaining functional subcores are currently occupied by a minor glowmental (see description in the Troglofauna section), which has been feeding on the power generated by the core to sustain itself. The glowmental will only leave the nineteen subcores and reveal its presence if disturbed by anyone interacting directly with the QPC.

Thus, the PCs face two tasks: replacing the damaged subcore and removing the glowmental from the core itself. The damaged subcore is near the top of the icosahedron, making it difficult to access. If they have not already done so, the party must locate and access the replacement subcores, taking one. One of the PCs must then move along the surface of the QPC, carrying the subcore, navigating along the surface of the core while another player follows to assist—all in the zero gravity effect that surrounds the core and extends 10′ from its surface.

Each subcore takes the form of a tetrahedron (4-sided polyhedron), with an obviously outward-facing side that corresponds to one of the twenty surfaces of the isocahedron master core. The opposite point of the subcore ends in a metal rod that plugs into a socket inside the QPC.

If the group has not heeded the radiation warnings and the player swapping out the bad core for the replacement core is not wearing a radiation suit, they will experience waves of hard radiation while operating in its vicinity. The PC doing the swap-out will suffer 3d6 radiation damage (a successful DC 12 Fort save for half damage), and any other PC within 10′ will suffer 2d6 radiation damage (with the same chance of saving for half damage). Completing the replacement of the subcore requires a successful DC 18 Artifact check and will take two rounds. If not completed, the process remains unfinished, and a new round of radiation shower effects may need to be endured. Naturally, any character wearing a functional radiation suit is immune to the radiation shower effects. Once the replacement subcore is in place, the background radiation in the room subsides, and unprotected PCs no longer suffer any radiation damage within the chamber.

A smooth and flawless subcore replacement process will not trigger the minor glowmental, but the party will notice that the QPC, including the newly replaced subcore, continues to pulse only with a subdued blue-green light. PCs able to read the warning indicators on the control panel will note that power output has risen but tops out at 50% of nominal output for unidentifiable reasons. The panel reading will indicate that this level of power output will not sustain the tractor field generators.
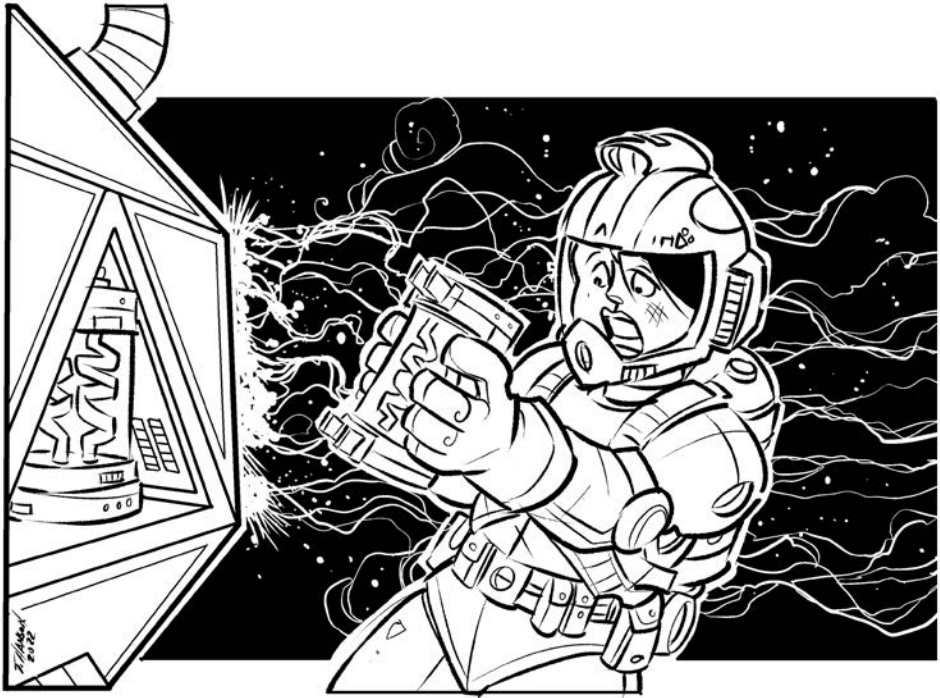
Any failed Artifact checks during the replacement operation will disturb the glowmental creature, causing it to leave the QPC and attack the party.

If the glowmental has remained undisturbed, anyone studying the QPC and making a successful DC 10 Perception check will begin to see it, noting that there is now a shadowy cloud circling around inside the core. This vapor is clearly something living, as it extends tendril-like appendages as it scoots about inside, squid-like in its movements.

Thus, the party must undertake to remove the glowmental from the QPC in order to restore its nominal power output to 100%. This could be a tricky exercise in delicate zero-g movement, with an attendant danger of summoning BODE drones with attacks that damage the QPC or the mech's interior. In these circumstances, however, any BODE drone summoned will at least initially assess and target the glowmental first, as it clearly presents the greater security risk to the mech.

As noted in its description, the minor glowmental cannot be killed outright, as it is impervious to all physical and mental attacks. Energy-based attacks and mutations may cause it harm but never kill it outright. If the glowmental takes more than one-half of its hit point total in damage, it will flee the area by simply phasing through the mech bulkheads and escaping.

Glowmental, Minor: Init +6; Atk envelop +6 melee (3d6 radiation burn) cloudburst +6 ranged (3d6 radiation burn, 60' area); AC 16; HD 17d10; 100 hit points; MV 45' flying; Act d20+6; SP immune to physical attacks and mind control; SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +16

GM NOTES: In a campaign setting or as part of a longer sandbox-style adventure, the minor glowmental may return at any time and may become an ongoing opponent of the party. Although its hit point total will regenerate over time with the aid of any source of ambient radiation, it can technically be killed outright by any attack or combination of attacks that are able to deliver 100 points of damage to it within a single combat round.

SECTION REPAIRS

Once the shattered subcore is replaced and the glowmental is driven off, the QPC is restored and the entire mech is now fully powered. The strobing red emergency lights throughout the mech shut off, and all areas are brightly lit in a crisp white light.

Assuming that all prior sections have also been repaired, the ATLAS mech is also now at least capable of supporting the cavern ceiling indefinitely. If only it had a brain.

Area-2F: A.I. Core — The Herculean functions of the ATLAS mech are complicated by the geophysical complexities of supporting such a vast cavern with 1011 tons of shifting granite mountain bearing down upon it. To this end, an A.I. core was built into ATLAS. The A.I. core is capable of adapting the entire support system to new and rapidly changing conditions, as well as doing realtime risk assessment and making decisions to protect human beings in the Eternity Vault upon the occurrence of any geophysical anomalies. Had the system been fully functional at the time of the original disaster, the vault and its protective systems would not have suffered the structural harm they did, although all organic matter would still have been reduced to dust by the cosmic radiation that flooded the cavern.

The chamber housing the A.I. core sits above the QPC, accessed by another tube. Appropriately, the A.I. core is the metaphorical brain of ATLAS, situated above the QPC "heart" in the mech's head. Like the TFE chamber, it is hemispherical and about 50' wide, with curved walls and a domed ceiling. The access hatch, too, is secured with a touchplate control panel requiring an Eternity Medallion or HECTOR Crew com-badge (orange/construction), plus a successful DC 14 Artifact check, to open.

In order to restore the ATLAS mech to full operational status, the PCs must enter the A.I. core to ensure that it is functioning correctly. They find themselves on a large circular floor with a domed machine complex in its center, ringed by a shelf that contains a holographic projection system passively rendering fascinating representations of the mountain above, its structure and status, and its inner life—detailed views of every physical event it is experiencing, from trickling water in the mountain's cracks to erosion on its surface and the slide of mud down its slopes.

The outer rim of the A.I. core shelf features an extensive array of panels. A successful DC 14 Perception check will reveal that these are the maintenance controls for the A.I. core's Quantum Data Matrix, continuously generating a digital twin of the entire mountain and the surrounding terrain. These panels are

projecting a series of holographic scenes depicting (in montage) the Eternity Vault's original construction. Further study will reveal that the A.I. core is currently trapped in the diagnostic loop it has been in since the original calamity ten thousand years ago. The entire A.I. core must be shut down and rebooted in order to perform its functions correctly.

As soon as anyone attempts a second Artifact check on the A.I. core or its control panels, they will receive a mild shock for 1 hit point of damage and summon the system's Emergency Engineering Hologram (EEH). The EEH will appear as a middle-aged and balding human dressed in a HECTOR crew jumpsuit, complete with myriad holographic tools that seem to magically adhere to the belt of his suit. The EEH is an A.I. program nested within the larger A.I. core and was designed to take over maintenance and repairs of the A.I. core whenever the human engineering crew were disabled or unavailable. When the EEH initially appears, it asks everyone present, "Please state the nature of the engineering emergency."

Speaking to the EEH will first require a successful A.I. recognition roll against an A.I. recognition value of 12, and it will only work if the character is a Pure Strain Human or mutant human with no visible mutations in possession of a functioning Eternity Medallion or a HECTOR crew com-badge.

Even after the EEH recognizes a player character and becomes willing to accept verbal inputs, the EEH behaves petulantly, with an obvious level of paranoia. Running continuously for several thousand years past its designed lifetime use, has driven the EEH a little mad, and it is now all but impervious to reasoning and rational arguments. The EEH will steadfastly maintain that:

- There is already an ongoing engineering emergency taking place that requires its full attention.

- This emergency is of an unknown nature but has caused the ATLAS mech to fail, and the EEH has placed its systems into diagnostic mode to determine the best course of action.

- Any interruption of the diagnostic mode program will result in the catastrophic failure of cavern ceiling support functions and destroy the Eternity Vault.

- Any attempts to interfere with the diagnostic mode program or other A.I. functions will result in the summoning of BODE security drones.

Emergency Engineering Hologram (EEH): Init +4; Atk none; AC 20; HD 4d6; 14 hit points; MOV 30'; Act 20+4; SP immaterial, immune to mental attacks; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +12

GM NOTES: This scenario is ripe for emergent role play, and the ambitious GM is encouraged to engage with the players and entertain any and all debate and argument between the PCs and the EEH. Especially clever players may indeed, if their arguments are sufficiently nimble and either logical enough or crazy enough, pull a "Captain Kirk" and talk the EEH into shutting itself down or permitting their intervention in restoring the A.I. core to proper functionality.

Of course, the players may elect to go the other way and simply attack the EEH, trying to disable it. The EEH itself is merely a projected soft-light hologram and cannot be harmed. Its holographic projection grid is embedded within the A.I. core room and cannot be seen or effectively targeted in any case. Since an unfolding battle with the EEH will inevitably begin to cause damage to the area, the summoning of BODE drones will only increase the likelihood of further damage to the area and the A.I. core. Use the A.I. Core Damage Allocation Table to determine the effects of any appropriate attacks that miss their targets or otherwise misfire into the room.

CONCLUSION

If and when the party reboot the A.I. core—and if all other repairs have also been successfully executed—the ATLAS mech is restored to full power and functionality. The tractor field emitter arms begin to raise until they are pointed directly up, and a bright yellow tractor field grid begins to spread outwards from them until it encompasses the whole of the domed underground vault ceiling. The Eternity Vault, the city of Ur-Terra, and everything in it have been saved from impending destruction.

Congratulations! The party has now secured a new home for their tribe. With a little work and effort, their tribe may now be in a rare position in Omega-Terra— a place of security and power from which a burgeoning new society might one day grow and flower. Civilizations have been founded upon less.

In addition to an immediate and generous Experience Point reward (GM's discretion, but a bonus of at least 50% the amount required to reach the next Experience level is recommended), if the party searches the A.I. core area, they will discover the following loot left behind by senior HECTOR crew engineers:

- 1 Neutron Starsword (see description in Special Loot Items section)

- 1 Eternity Medallion (fully functional)

- 3 E-Belts

- 3 Bubble helmets

- 1 Plasteel suit (AC +4)

- A metal chest containing 4 C-cells and 1 F-cell (all fully charged)

A.I. Core Damage Allocation Table

d20	System Hit	Effect
1	A.I. core	The A.I. core suffers a critical hit to its system. All ATLAS systems shut down and all power is lost throughout the mech. Anyone inside is now sealed in a lightless giant metal tomb. Good luck until the air runs out.
2–3	A.I. core	The A.I. core takes a hit and loses 25% of its functionality. At less than 50% functionality, the A.I. core can no longer repair itself or run the ATLAS mech, though internal power and other systems continue to function.
4–5	A.I. core	The A.I. core takes a hit and loses 10% of its functionality. At less than 50% functionality, the A.I. core can no longer repair itself or run the ATLAS mech, though internal power and other systems continue to function.
7–9	A.I. Control	The A.I. controls have taken a major hit. Showers of sparks explode everywhere, and the controls are non-functional until repaired (requires a successful DC 16 Artifact check and use of a multitool or equivalent).
10–12	A.I. Control	An A.I. control module has been damaged and is now smoking. Successful use of the A.I. controls now happens at a 4 penalty until repaired (requires a successful DC 12 Artifact check and use of a multitool or equivalent).
13–15	Power Grid	The area's internal power grid is hit, triggering the emergency lights which strobe with a blinding, seizure-inducing frequency. All actions taken in the now happen at a 2 penalty until the emergency lights are shut off at the A.I. control panel.
16–17	Security Control	The Security Control system is hit, and all BODE drones will power down and remain inert (in this area only).
18–19	Diagnostics	The Diagnostic Systems Control unit is hit, and the program currently running aborts, causing the A.I. core to reboot.
20	Holo-Grid	The Holographic Emitter Control System is hit, and the EEH fails and no longer functions.

TROGLOFAUNA

The mutant troglofauna inside the Eternity Vault have all evolved from ancestors that found their way into the underground environment over the passing millennia. Most are sightless creatures, possessing no ocular senses whatsoever, substituting other senses such as echolocation, air motion detection, or heat and bioelectric field sensing.

CRAYFLIES

The crayfly is a tiny flying arthropod most resembling a dragonfly, but with small lobster claws on its frontmost limbs and a fanned tail segment that betray its origins as a crustacean. In their larval stage, crayflies live in the freshwater streams that flow across the Eternity Vault from underground springs and are prey to the splatworms that live there. When mature, the crayflies lead brief airborne lives as they swarm in small pockets about the vault, mating and laying the eggs of a new generation.
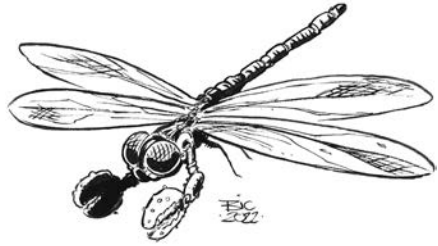
The crayflies are the only creatures living within the Eternity Vault with eyes, which are enlarged and adapted to see by the dim green light of the glow moss also living there. When swarming, crayflies are an irritant and will cause other creatures to act at a 1 to all actions. Although otherwise harmless to larger creatures, if antagonized, they do sometimes bite and may carry an aquatic mutation disease that will cause an organism's lungs to begin to atrophy and gradually be replaced with gills over a 30-day period.

Crayflies: Init +0; Atk bite melee +0 (0 damage, DC 6 Fort save vs. aquatic mutation); AC 9; HD 1d1, 1 hit point; MV 40' flying; Act d20; SP bite may cause aquatic mutation, swarm attack causes 1 to all opponent actions; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0

FOLD MOLD

Gray, slick, and folded into soft, gyrific patterns, fold mold feeds on the natural mineral surfaces of the underground vault, slowly digesting them. Serving as a food source for the crayflies that graze upon it, huge swaths of fold mold line the outer natural stone walls of the Eternity Vault. While the crayflies have developed an immunity to the digestive enzymes of the fold mold, any other living creature will sustain 1 hit point of damage per round from contact with the mold. The fold mold is immobile, growing and spreading only very slowly. The mold cannot digest artificial substances or the super-materials of the Ancient Ones, nor can it metabolize the glow moss that lines the upper cavern walls.

Though the fold mold does not respond to being harvested by the crayflies, nor to any damage done to it less than 6 hit points at a time, it will respond to more massive damage or attacks. The entirety of the fold mold present in the vault constitute one enormous and singular intelligence that arose slowly over the centuries as the gyrification of the mold became increasingly complex, causing its tissues to fold in upon itself like a cerebral cortex of gigantic proportions. If any part of the fold mold is damaged or harvested in excess of 6 hit points of damage, it will respond with a horrific mental blast that affects every living creature within the Eternity Vault, shutting down their nervous systems, perhaps even permanently.

Any attempt at telepathic contact with the fold mold collective results in a singular mind blast attack upon the mutant attempting contact. The fold mold collective is essentially a super-intelligence. With great time, effort, and patience, a shaman could conceivably establish a patron-like telepathic relationship with the fold mold collective.

Fold Mold: Init +0; Atk none; AC 6; HD 950d20 (as collective), 10,000 hit points; MV 0'; Act d20; SP mind blast (1d6 damage, DC 20 Fort save vs. stunned for 1d6 rounds), immune to mind control; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +30

GHOST SNAIL

Ghost snails are large scavengers that prowl the permasteel streets of the Eternity Vault, scouring them clean of all organic or inorganic debris. With their transparent shells and flesh, they can be difficult to see in the dim light provided by glow moss, appearing at first to be a floating and undulating carpet of their most recent partially digested meals.
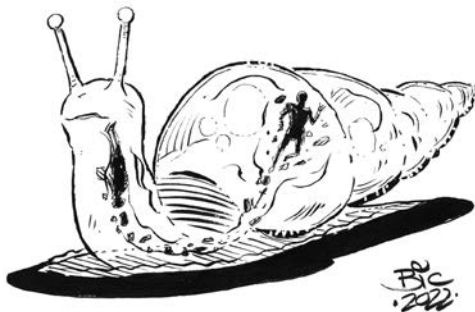
Possessing no eyes, these 12' tall snails navigate by sensing vibrations in the ground and air, like a sonic-based radar sense. They cannot, therefore, detect immobile objects or creatures except by accidental touch. If a ghost snail detects any organic matter larger than a crayfly, it will go into a crazed feeding frenzy, attempting to roll over and consume the creature, while using its sticky, flailing antennae to ensnare and guide prey to its underside mouth. Because of their great size, they can be surprisingly fast, able to pursue prey at 60' per round in short bursts of speed.

It is because of the ghost snails that the streets and structures of the Ur-Subterra remain clean and new-looking even after ten thousand years.

Ghost Snail: Init +5; Atk sticky antennae melee +5 (STR 18 grapple), swallow melee +10 (6d6 crushing damage); AC 20; HD 25d10, 125 hit points; MV 30', 60' frenzied undulation; Act d20+5; SP immune to EM-based attacks; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +6

GLOWMENTAL, MINOR

Glowmentals are sentient radioactive clouds that travel the glow deserts and barren mountain ranges of Omega-Terra. 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 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 uncanny 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 its bones or husk. Impervious to all physical harm, glowmentals can sometimes be injured or driven off by energy-based mutational attacks, particle beam weapons, or high-level neural programs, but they are never killed outright by these attacks.

Glowmental, Minor: Init +6; Atk envelop +6 melee (3d6 radiation burn) cloudburst +6 ranged (3d6 radiation burn, 60' area); AC 16; HD 17d10; 100 hit points; MV 45' flying; Act d20+6; SP immune to physical attacks and mind control; SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +16

GLOW MOSS

Glow moss is a bioluminescent moss that primarily occupies the upper half of the vault's walls and domed ceiling, though small patches may be found anywhere within the vault. Glow moss gives off a dim green light that is sufficient for creatures from the outside to see by, albeit at a 1 to all actions. The glow moss within the Eternity Vault has been the sole source of oxygen production for the past ten thousand years, and it is responsible for the clean, citrus-like smell of the air within. Though glow moss primarily metabolizes natural mineral surfaces and ambient CO_2, a patch of glow moss will occasionally colonize a permaglass surface, attempting to feed off the silicon atoms embedded within.

If harvested, a patch of glow moss will continue to glow for up to 24 hours before dimming and dying.

Glow Moss: Init +0; Atk none; AC 6; HD 1d3, 1–3 hit points; MV 0'; Act 020; SP casts green light equivalent to 1 candle; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0

PHASE ANTS

Phase ants are a form of insectoid life originally from one of an infinite number of quantum parallel planes of existence. They always exist in a quantum superpositioned state, both on and off the plane on which they are encountered, thus appearing to blink in and out of existence dozens of times per second. Although the bite of these inch-long flying ants hurts and will also drain the power from any technological artifact, any contact breaks an individual phase ant's superpositioned state, causing it to blink out of our dimension as it snaps onto an adjacent parallel plane.

Phase Ants: Init +2; Atk bite 1 hit point plus power drain; AC 9; HD 1d1, 1 hit points; MV 20'; Act d20; SP power drain any powered artifact; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0

SPLATWORM

Splatworms are the descendants of ancient aquatic flatworms. Much larger than their ancestors, splatworms are roughly 6″ long and wide and shaped like a skewed rectangle. They live in the aquatic environment of the vault's running freshwater streams, where they prey upon the eggs and larvae of crayflies. With no mouth, gut, or anus, the splatworm will snap itself around its prey and completely enfold it, allowing the prey to slowly be digested and the nutrients to diffuse into the splatworm's entire body structure. The quick snapping action of this process often causes a small, characteristic splash.

When encountering larger prey, a school of splatworms will attack together, attempting to completely enwrap the prey by interlocking their bodies with the cilia that border their diamond-shaped edges. If the prey is large enough, at about 50 kilograms or more, the splatworm swarm will be unable to fully digest it. This triggers a symbiotic reaction in the splatworms' metabolism, in which their outer surfaces become tough and leathery while their inner surface begins to permanently bond with the flesh of the large host. This process takes 24 hours, anytime before which the splatworms can still be surgically removed, causing 2d6 physical damage to the host organism. If the symbiotic bonding process is allowed to complete, the splatworms become permanently bonded to their host, granting them +4 AC, +4 STR, and adding 15 hit points to their hit point total. Given time, the bonded creature may even eventually evolve into a hybrid creature resembling a gigantic splatworm combined with its native form.

Splatworm: Init +4; Atk enwrap melee +4 (1 hit point damage); AC 9; HD 1d3, 2 hit points; MV 30′ swim, 20′ flying; Act d20+4; SP may combine to form symbiotic sheath around prey; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +0

HECTOR SYSTEMS

The Eternity Vault contains many artificial intelligences that are still operational. Aside from the five large construction mechs, many smaller subordinate A.I.s still move about and either follow millennia-old directives or await new commands inside the twilight-lit cavern.

BODE DRONES

The construction mechs each house hundreds of BODE security drones (Biomechanical Oversight Defense Entities), which are normally stored in recharging alcoves throughout their massive mechanical bodies. If threatened with harm, the construction mechs will release an appropriate number of BODE drones to contain or repel the threat. The drones can be released both externally (to deal with outward security of the mech) and internally (to deal with invasive intruder threats).

External Threats: If one of the construction mechs is harmed or threatened by non-authorized personnel from the outside, a single BODE drone will be released to deal with the threat. Should the first drone fail in this task, more drones will be released in waves, with the number released rising from 1 to 2 and then to 3, and so on, until the external threat has been neutralized. As the four subordinate construction mechs (HYPERION, IAPETUS, CRIUS, and KIOS) do not feature internal maintenance access for workers, they will only deploy BODE drones externally.

Internal Threats: Inside the ATLAS mech, BODE drones may be deployed internally when a threat or unauthorized access is detected.

Whenever an unauthorized intruder is detected within ATLAS, a BODE drone is released and sent to the location to eliminate the invaders, be they organic, technological, or programmatic. If the first drone is ineffective, the amount of drones released will begin to ramp up with each new security breach detected, from 1 drone to 2 drones, then 3 drones at a time, and so on until the invasive threat is eliminated.

Each drone is composed of a floating beetle-shaped duralloy unibody with myriad segmented metal tentacles dangling beneath it. Each tentacle ends in various implements, including a mini-laser, tractor field emitters, quantum-crystal data connectors, and its primary offensive weapon, an atomic space compactor.
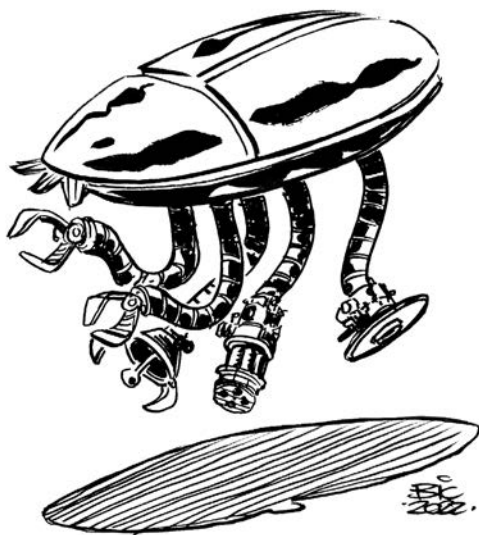
When confronting a foreign invader, a BODE drone will initially attempt to eliminate an intruder by pinning the invader down with its tractor field and firing a mini-laser. If the invader is killed, the BODE drone will immediately tractor the corpse and eject it through the nearest access panel or hatch. If an invader proves resistant to this initial attack, the BODE drone will employ its atomic space compactor emitter, reducing the size of the threat to 1/72 scale and crushing it in the process. Thus, a 6'-tall being would be reduced to 1" in height while retaining its original mass and undergoing severe crushing damage. Should an invader somehow survive the atomic space compaction process, the BODE drone will still attempt to tractor the victim and conduct it outside the ATLAS mech interior.

The atomic space contraction effect is theoretically reversible, either by a BODE drone under the command of a higher authority, or by salvaging the ASC emitter from a destroyed drone and retro-engineering it with an Artifact check of 32. The reverse atomic space expansion process does not cause any further damage to the person or object thus expanded.

BODE drone: Init +6; Atk tractor field ranged +6 (STR 20 grapple, 75' R), mini-laser ranged +6 (4d6 heat damage, 150' R), atomic space compaction ray ranged (DC 18 Ref save vs. shrunk to 1/72 size and 6d6 crushing damage); AC 18; HD 2d10+7, 18 hit points; MV 40' flying; Act 2d20+6; SP immune to mind control, cannot be commanded; SV Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +10, A.I. recog none

ROVER DRONES

Though greatly reduced in number by the wear and tear of the passing centuries, Ur-Subterra's security systems are still able to field a number of ROVER (Roaming Operations Vibrogel Ensnarement Robot) drones. The central control unit of each ROVER is a relatively small dodecahedron-shaped (12-sided polyhedron) device that is suspended within a large globular body composed of vibrogel. Microscopic platelets within the vibrogel body respond to both electric charges and pressure forces, aligning themselves in different configurations, and thus allowing the vibrogel to instantly change its physical properties from a non-newtonian fluid to a more rigid structure.

In practice, a ROVER unit presents as a 10' translucent rubbery ball that moves by rolling, with an average speed of about twice that of a standard humanoid.

Roaming the streets and buildings of Ur-Subterra, a ROVER drone will check any living being or creature it sees for proper security credentials. Anyone or anything unable to supply the proper credentials will be either taken into custody or killed (if the ROVER unit is attacked with deadly force). To restrain an intruder, a ROVER drone will simply roll over them and absorb the bulk of their body into its own. Though a subject thus caught will begin to suffocate, when they finally have a drowning response they will then learn that the vibrogel is oxygenated and can be breathed. ROVER drones with captured intruders will attempt to escort them outside the Eternity Vault and dump them back into the shattered mountains.

ROVER drones are utterly under the command of IAPETUS and, for safety and security reasons, cannot be controlled or commanded by even the highest ranking security com-badges. If a ROVER drone is destroyed, a VOLE drone will be sent out to recover the central control unit for recycling and repair.

ROVER Drone: Init +8; Atk magnehesion surface and interior (STR 24 grapple); AC 20; HD 11d10, 60 hit points; MV 60'; Act d20+8; SP immune to mind control, cannot be commanded; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +10, A.I. recog none

VOLE DRONES

A VOLE (Volant Operant for Lifting Equipment) drone is a 1' wide disk that uses a small onboard quantum particle reactor to power its potent anti-grav flight and tractor field systems. VOLE drones were used by the Ancient One work crews to lift and move equipment.

An individual VOLE drone can clamp onto any object up to 200 lbs in weight, and fly the object and place it anywhere the IAPETUS A.I. desires. Hundreds of them together can lift and move virtually anything, from massive boulders to entire building structures. In practice, the Ancient Ones used VOLE drones in place of more primitive mechanized construction equipment.

VOLE drones are utterly under the command of IAPETUS and, for safety and security reasons, cannot be controlled or commanded by even the highest ranking security com-badges.

VOLE Drone: Init +6; Atk none; AC 18; HD 2d10+1, 12 hit points; MV 40' flying; Act d20+6; SP immune to mind control, cannot be commanded; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +10, AI recog none
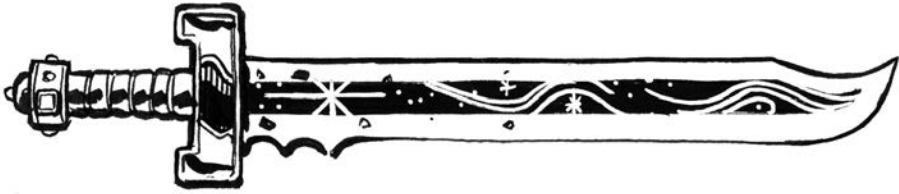
SPECIAL LOOT ITEMS

E-BELT

The E-belt creates an airtight and impenetrable force field around its user, protecting them from all harm and environmental hazards. It will absorb up to 15 hit points of damage before shorting out forever. Because the field is airtight, unless another means of life support is also worn in conjunction with the belt, the user will only be able to breathe inside it for as many rounds as their stamina score before fainting and eventually dying.

Tech Level: 4   **Complexity Modifier:** 3
Protection: +1 AC, invulnerable to all physical and energy-based attacks
Power: C-Cell (24 hours), F-Cell (Unlimited)

NEUTRON STARSWORD

A gleaming longsword designed by the Ancient Ones for use in their societal creative anachronistic games (sometimes referred to as "X-games"), the Neutron Starsword packs a mighty wallop. Its 4-foot blade and duralloy composition would be deadly enough on their own, but it also has a nanoscopic sliver of neutron star metal embedded within its length. This gives the sword a surprising mass and heft, so only the strongest of fighters can even pick it up and use it. The onboard A.I. is capable of activating the anti-gravity systems built into the pommel to allow weaker wielders to use the weapon, but at the cost of a reduction in damage inflicted upon opponents.

Tech Level: 4   **Complexity Modifier:** 5
Damage: (variable, see below)
Power: C-Cell (24 hours), F-Cell (Unlimited)
A.I. Recog: 14

User STR	To Hit	Damage
18	+4	4d6
17*	+3	3d6
16*	+2	2d6

Unpowered, the Neutron Starsword requires an 18 STR to wield. If the Starsword A.I. is powered and cooperative, use by beings with 16–17 STR is possible.

LYR-SUBTERRA

NULLAM DIGNISSIM LOREM SED NEQUE SUSCIPIT POSUERE. DUIS VIVERRA SIT AMET MI A VARIUS. DONEC MAXIMUS A MAGNA IN LACINIA. PELLENTESQUE PURUS ORCI, POSUERE VEL ORCI BUS

Holding up the SKY

SHATTERBACK MOUNTAINS
MOUNT DECAP

ETERNITY VAULT ENTRANCE
(PARTIALLY BURIED BY AVALANCHE)

UR-SUBTERRA

CRIUS

IAPETUS

ATLAS

HYPERION

KIOS

SMIF AFTER
WAMPLER
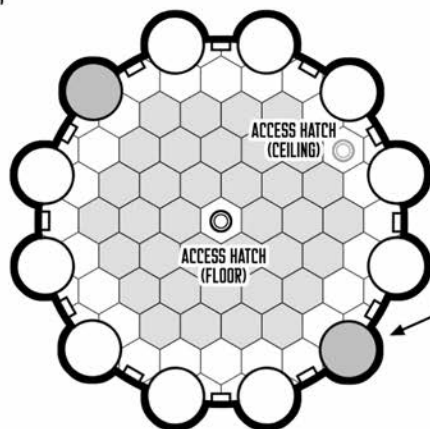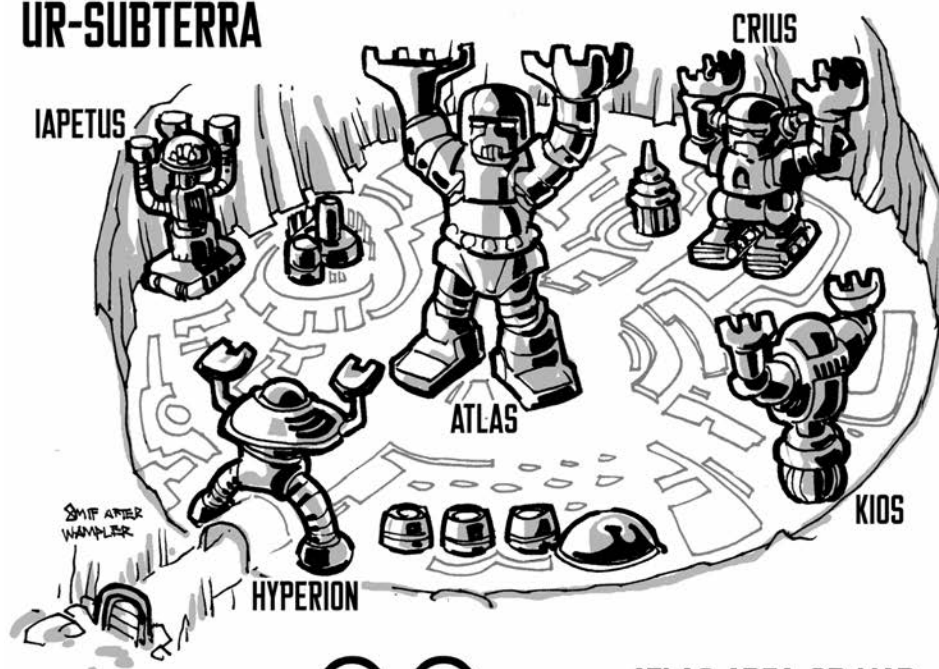
ATLAS AREA-2D MAP
TRACTOR FIELD ENGINEERING

ACCESS HATCH
(CEILING)

ACCESS HATCH
(FLOOR)

OMNI-DIRECTIONAL GRAVITY

TRACTOR FIELD GENERATORS

TRACTOR FIELD GENERATOR
(DEPOWERED)

ATLAS CONSTRUCTION MECH A102812
ALL TERRAIN LOAD-BEARING ABUTMENT SYSTEM

TRACTOR FIELD EMITTER-A

TRACTOR FIELD EMITTER-B

AREA-2F
A.I. CORE

AREA-2E
QUANTUM-CRYSTAL
POWER CORE

W-S SERIES
MAINTENANCE ACCESS TUBE

AREA-2D
TRACTOR FIELD
ENGINEERING

AREA-2C
DRIVETRAIN
ENGINEERING

AREA-2B
BIPEDAL
MAINTENANCE
CONTROL

AREA-2A
MAINTENANCE ACCESS HATCH
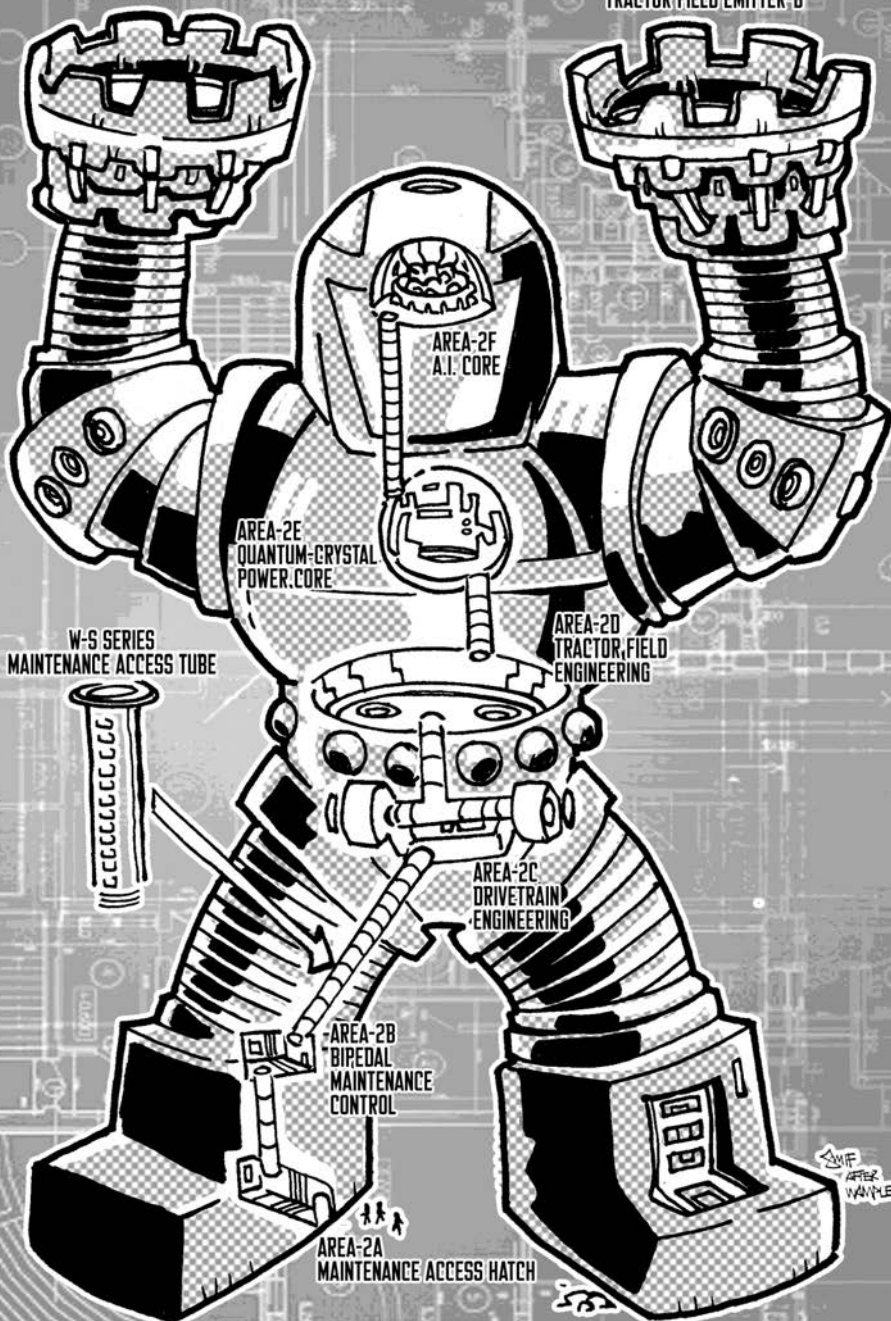
0 20 40 60 80 100 120
METERS

SMIF'S LAST STOP BEFORE THE ZONE

A trading post where you will find things, people and information useful to those who brave the "zone".

WELCOME TO THE LAST STOP! I'M *KANDU*, THE GUY WHO WORKS FOR THE BOSS ON WEEKDAYS. ONE OF OUR *LOCAL ROVERS* CAME BACK FROM *THE SOUTHLANDS* WITH *SOME JUICY INTEL* THAT I'LL PASS ONTO YOU... FOR A PRICE.

NEON SCREAMERS

Neon screamers are rare and are only encountered in the dark, as they explode when exposed to sunlight or ultraviolet light. They are about 5 and a half feet tall, weigh 140 pounds, and are greyish in skin tone. They possess no obvious eyes, ears or noses — only a huge mouth in the front of their heads with which they scream when communicating or intimidating their prey. They are carnivorous and have the intelligence of wolves, as demonstrated by their pack mentality and hunting style.

Their agility is high, being capable of muliple attacks per round. If the first attack is successful, the second attack is a rending strike from their strong legs. They bite only if their initial two attacks were successful for a thrid attack.

They are called neon screamers due to their skin lighting up during moments of duress. Normally a dark grey, but if surprised, or in battle, they glow an aura of orange-to-bright yellow. While this glow is not enough to blind human folk, it's more than enough for you to find them in the dark. We'll have more info coming as soon as we can get one in captivity!

FREQUENCY: *Rare*
NO. APPEARING: *1-4*
ARMOR CLASS: *7*
MOVE: *18"*
HIT DICE: *2+2*
% IN LAIR: *Nil*
TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *2(3)*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1d6, 1d8 (1d8)*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Rend*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Climbing*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Low*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
SIZE: *m (5'+)*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
    Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*

Psycats

I lost Vindal to a pack of these just last week. He was an excellent telepathic rat, and will be missed by many.

Apparently, psycats lie in wait for some unsuspecting prey to get within their psychic range, about 20-40' is my guess, and then they hive mind a sleep suggestion. The target gets a saving throw vs petrification, minus the number of psycats. If the prey goes down, then they attack the throat, killing the prey within a minute or so, attacking like the piranha-dogs of the coast.

I've heard a few rumors about these, but don't blame me if they aren't true. Sometimes a single Tom can be encountered that is twice the size and power of a single female, so those saves are at a -3. I also heard that a very young lady managed to tame one of these as a familiar. It was said she was 9 stars old when she did this.

I'm told the pelt of a psycat is highly valued by the tribes of Dena, but on the other hand, possesing a psycat pelt is a death sentence in the valley of Clarita.

So take that all with a grain of sodium.

FREQUENCY: *Uncommon*
NO. APPEARING: *1d6+1*
ARMOR CLASS: *8*
MOVE: *12"*
HIT DICE: *1d4 hp*
% IN LAIR: *40*
TREASURE TYPE: *2-20 coins*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *1(1)*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1d4 (1d6x# of psycats)*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Sleep*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Animal*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
SIZE: *S (1.5' long)*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Low*
Attack/Defense Modes: *see above*

CREATURE CRYPTOLOGY

CRYPTID CREATURES DECRYPTED

MADATOSKR

submitted by James M. Spahn

Initiative: +4
Attacks: +3 bite (1 point), tendril (1 INT/round)
AC: 17
HD: 1d4+1
HP: 3
Move: 40' (including verticle surfaces)
Actions: d20+3
Special: hive mind, intelligence drain
Save: Fort -2, Ref +4, Will +2

A single madatoskr appears almost identical to a common squirrel at first glance, save for the fact that the top of its skull is completely gone, revealing its swollen brain to the open air. Tendrils run from this bubble of pulsating gray matter, down the creature's spine, and onto its tail. They flicker and slither about, akin to the withered tentacles of an octopus, allowing them to both project energies great distances regardless of environments, flood the minds of those around them with painful psychic feedback, and most importantly, maintain a hive mind of collective sensory input with every other madatoskr within a one mile radius.

An individual madatoskr has a psychic link with any other of its own kind within 5280 feet, meaning it is nigh-impossible to surprise or ambush. This also allows them to effectively coordinate in battle to devastating effect. They are also capable of climbing with the same speed and agility as if they were on solid ground.

Madatokrs are aggressive carnivores, preferring to feast upon brain matter over all other meat. In fact, the smarter the victim, the more aggressive and bloodthirsty the madatoskr will become. Because of the extensive psychic network maintained between these creatures, they work as a singular hive mind. Using ambush tactics, subterfuge, misdirection, and overwhelming numbers, they are capable of taking down impossibly large foes ranging from seasoned warriors to irradiated giants. Rumors even speak of a great nest of madatoskrs taking down a dragon in ages past, devouring its ancient brain, and taking its desiccated carcass for their new home.

In combat, a madataoskr begins by biting its target for a nominal amount of damage near the neck or head and latches onto its target. It then launches its tendrils forward, attempting to slither them into the target's brain cavity through the victim's nostrils, eye sockets, or ear canal, where it leaves them in a stunned state while it turns the brain into a slushy grey pablum and sucks them out through their tendrils. Typically, once a victim has been stunned, multiple madatoskrs swarm over the victim's head and do not cease their assault until the victim collapses into a brainless husk with thin grey liquid leaking out of its head orifices. Once a madatoskr has successfully bitten a victim in melee combat, they can automatically attach their tendrils to the victim. The victim must make a Will save (DC 13) or they are stunned and unable to act for one full round. If a second madatoskr attaches their tendrils, the duration of this effect is increased by an additional round. Up to six madatoskrs can attach to a single victim at any given time. Each madatoskr permanently drains one point of Intelligence from their victims each round, unless the victim succeeds in a Fortitude save (DC 13). Multiple madatoskrs attacking the same victim require multiple saving throws.

Madatiskr: Init +4; Atk bite (1 point), tendril (Intelligence loss); AC 17; HD 1d4+1, hp 3; MV 40'; Act d20+3; SP hive mind, intelligence drain; SV Fort -2, Ref +4, Will +2; AL N
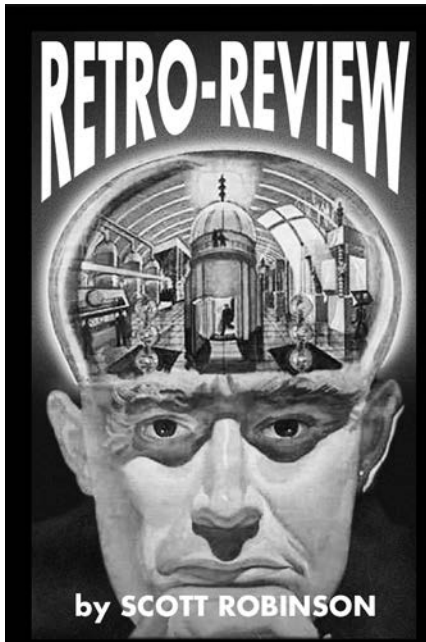
WIZARDS

So it's early 1977, and my high school buddies and I have been coping with our scruffy, befuddling teenage angst via repeated deep-dives into the sundry nerd pickings of the day — Saturday *Planet of the Apes* marathons, the Jessica Lange version of *King Kong*, and *2001: A Space Odessey* on its last cinema tour before descending to television runs. And we've been watching for this new movie we read about in *Starlog* magazine, a feature-length animated sci-fi film with a post-apocalyptic backdrop — *Wizards*, the brainchild of urban fantasist Ralph Bakshi.

We don't know who Ralph Bakshi was (but, oh boy, were we gonna learn), and we had no idea what to expect of a feature-length, animated science fiction film. "Feature-length animated", in our corner of the times, translated into movies like *The Jungle Book*, *The Aristocats*, and *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*. So it is with great curiosity, and more than a trace of trepidation, that we plopped ourselves down with our popcorn and give *Wizards* our attention.

Okay, wow.

Wizards was unlike anything we'd ever seen in a movie theater. It's funny and creepy and absurd and more than a bit disturbing. It's innovative and high-concept and somehow low-brow all at the same time, which you wouldn't think was even possible. And it's way far afield of the other stuff we'd been watching. We couldn't have been caught more off-guard.

Remember *Fractured Fairy Tales*, which was a short feature nestled into *The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle*, where the beloved children's stories of old are mangled almost beyond recognition and taken to satirical heights appreciated only by the most cynical adults? Where Prince Charming doesn't wake Sleeping Beauty with a kiss, but builds a theme park around her instead? That's *Wizards.*
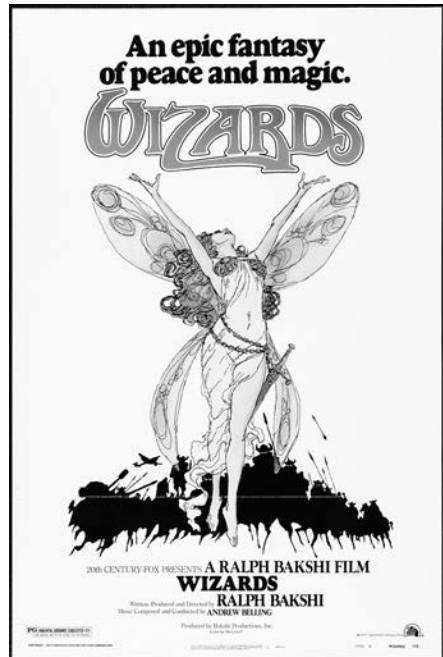
Remember *Mad* magazine's Spy vs. Spy, where the white secret agent and the black secret agent — identical in all but color — were booby-trapping each other from here to infinity, stretching moral ambiguity until it screamed for mercy? That's *Wizards*.

Remember the Thing-Maker, that burn-your-fingerprints-off machine Mattel used to sell that made creepy, gross slime creatures out of brightly-colored Plastigoop? How the damn things, as much fun as they were, were invariably as unnatural and toxic-looking as possible? That's *Wizards.*

Wizards. All our childhood conceptualizations of the human condition, shaken and stirred, and poured over an olive. Okay, wow.

RALPH BAKSHI, ABECEDARIAN PHILOSOPHER

A fairy tale *Wizards* certainly is. There's a Good Guy and a Bad Guy and a Damsel in Distress and a fantasy landscape to top anything in the most fevered dreams of the Brothers Grimm. There's tension and wonder and quite a lot of dread. And, thankfully, there's a moral to the story.

A nuclear war has apocalypsed the earth into radioactive darkness, which after two million years finally relents to sunlight. Mutants, fairies, elves, demons, goblins, dragons, wraiths, and dwarves abound among the surviving humans, which exist in two camps — the peaceful inhabitants of Montagar, and the monsters of Scortch. Two twin brothers — Avatar and Blackwolf, sons of the fairy queen Delia, duke it out for control of the awakening world. Blackwolf wants to take over when their mother dies, and Avatar isn't about to let him.

Thus begins an epic confrontation, as Blackwolf musters his dark army by manipulating their minds via an old 16-mm film projector (the gold standard in mind control in the 1970s) of the sort used by our high school teachers. Avatar and his love interest, the uncomfortably buxom fairy Elinore, along with Peace (an android deserter from Blackwolf's army) and Weehawk (an elf berserker) make it their mission to destroy the projector. Chaos, calamity, and hilarity ensue.

THE PROTAGONISTS: Weehawk (Richard Romanus), Elinore (Jesse Welles), Avatar (Bob Holt), and Necron99/Peace (David proval).

Bakshi recruited Marvel Comics artist Mike Ploog to supply character designs and background art for Wizards.

From there, it gets just sillier and sillier — but fun! Omigod, *Wizards* is fun, more fun than ten fun things! It's over-the-top and goofy and brash and intriguing and, in its way, full of surprises. And it blew our teenaged minds.

Not least was the animation, which was despairingly on-the-cheap. Made for $2 million (almost a third of what it cost to make a Disney film in those days), it represented one of those movie-making paper-clip-and-chewing-gum Rube Goldberg efforts that often inspires breathtaking innovation. For example, Bakshi used rotoscoping, a technique for turning live action film into animation, to complete the battle sequences. Bakshi's team also created nuclear mist effects with the inventive use of pantyhose.

Much of the animation was built on far-out landscapes that were undeniably cartoonish, and yet undeniably eerie and surreal — something else we hadn't seen before and wouldn't thought possible. It's like we'd been given a backstage pass into Harlan Ellison's mind. I can say with assurance that one of my friends, a budding artist himself at the time, was forever changed by it.

FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT AND FRITZ THE CAT

And all of this just worked for us. What didn't work, though we were unaware of it at the time, was Bakshi's insistence that Wizards was "a family movie."

Dear sweet lawd geezus gawd. A family movie???

What crack was Bakshi smoking? In the commentary on the DVD, he goes on and on and on about how he conceived *Wizards* as family entertainment. It was a fairy tale for the modern age, in his unconventional mind. A fairy tale it is, as i've already noted, but Christ! I'd never in a million years have let my kids see it when they were growing up.

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This 'fairy tale' includes ethnic hatreds stoked to Holocaust levels, and slipped into the the story by the back door was Blackwolf's childhood fascination with the torture of small animals. It includes an insidious glimpse into the horror's of psychological warfare. And most of all, it has Elinore.

The sweet fairy Elinore, who innocently teases Avatar's masculine fancies (such as they are), is a well-endowed and saucy woman straight out of every pimple-faced adolescent nerd's most inappropriate fantasies of Marvel's Red Sonja or DC's Big Barda (go on and look them up on Google; I'll wait). She's five seconds from naked from start-to-finish in the movie, and corners the market on coy, with a finger-on-the-lip tee-hee expression belying her obvious carnal savvy, which shove's Avatar's libido onto the nearest shelf. This is a fairy tale?

Bakshi's the same animator who did *Fritz the Cat* (1972), an animated urban-fantasy comedy about a reckless feline womanizer in New York City, one who wreaks havoc and mayhem wherever he goes, and who bangs everything he can get his paws on. And that's before the profanity and drugs kick in. It was the first-ever cartoon to be X-rated. We can laugh now, but F*ritz the Cat* pulled in $90 million, which was then an all-time record for an independent film.

And this is the same guy calling W*izards* a fairy tale! My ass.

But we quibble. If Bakshi meant that he intended *Wizards* to be an endearing tale, then he nailed it. In perhaps the most notable exemplar, he hired actor Bob Holt to voice Avatar, primarily on the basis of his ability to do Peter Falk as Columbo. I sweartogod. Close your eyes and listen to the movie, and you'll swear that Avatar is about to pause at any moment and say, "Oh... one more thing..."

And other endearments were to come. We didn't know, in the early months of 1977, that the voice of Sean the Mountain King's son was that of Mark Hamill, and we wouldn't know who the hell that even was for about another three months. Yup, Mark Hamill voiced a supporting character in *Wizards*, just before *Star Wars* broke. There's your fairy tale street cred!

Wizards was Mark Hamill's film debut, released just 3 months before Star Wars. His talents in voice acting would eventually lead him to an entire secondary career in Hollywood.

Interesting side note: Bakshi was originally going to call the movie *War Wizards*, and when he went to George Lucas to ask if Hamill could have some time off to do his part in the movie, Lucas said, Sure — as long as you change the name of your movie, so people don't confuse it with mine! So Bakshi dropped" War" from the title of *Wizards*.

Second interesting side note: When Bakshi went to his masters at 20th Century Fox to beg for more money to finish *Wizards's* battle scenes, he was refused; in that very same meeting, Lucas begged more money to finish *Star Wars*, and was likewise refused.
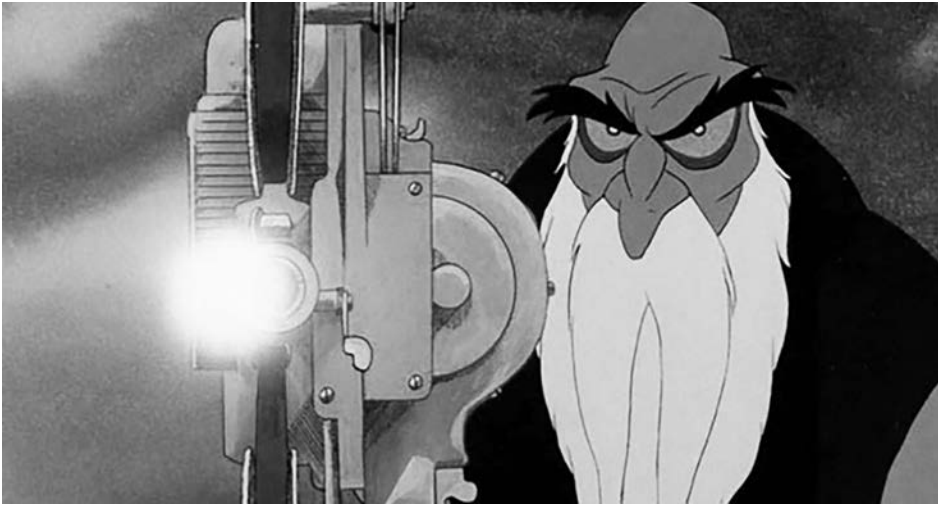
THE ANTAGONIST: Blackwolf nearly conquers the world by using the technology of the ancients, in this case a 16mm projector loaded up with Nazi propoganda films, used to rile up the mutant hordes of Skortch.

NOT YOUR FATHER'S POST-APOCALYPSE

We didn't know any of that at the time. What we did know was this: *Wizards* had re-jiggered our notion of a post-apocalypse.

Consider, for a moment, the context. It's 1977, and we're teenage nerds whose concept of the End of the World was shaped by Charlton Heston movies. And his concept of the End of the World had been played out over and over, in movies like *Planet of the Apes*, *Soylent Green*, and *The Omega Man*. His was a post-apocalypse populated with vile human caricatures, and doughty heroes with brains as big as their hearts; hearts that couldn't be broken even by their petulant cynicism. It was the End of the World, Moses-style, and it fooled us into believing there was something noble about trimming away humanity's scar tissue — an aberrant thought only recently set right by *Star Trek: Picard*.

And *Wizards*, for all its End of the World and vile human creatures and doughty heroes, managed to go Heston one better, pushing past the grandstanding Thinking Man at the ass-end of catastrophe, and into the actual realm of sci-fi philosophy. It rose almost to the level of Kubrick, offering our 16-year-old minds the opportunity to mull over the moral ambiguity of technology, and the thin line between inspiration and madness. Avatar isn't as interesting as Taylor in *Apes*, but he's far more interesting than Dr. Zaius — and that, my friends, is saying something.

An animation cell of the wizard Avatar, who complains, "I'm too old for this sort of thing. Wake me up when the planet's destroyed."

From the very opening shot of the Wizards, Bakshi announces his penchant for using a mixture of live action, rotoscoping, and traditional animation to underscore the underlying message of his film.

THE ANGST OF A NEW GENERATION

We left the cinema that night in 1977 with a fresh new take on nuclear horror and humanity's surviving remnants. Not until the television movie *The Day After*, six years later, would we be so well-schooled in man-made near-extinction events. It's perhaps a bit unseemly to recall this as an evening of great enthusiasm and singular verve, but there it is.

Wizards rebooted our thinking, and we were all about that. The nerd mind is constantly scanning the landscape for such reboots — that new idea that will fascinate or inspire or shock; that odd twist that will cause a concept already embraced to morph anew; that unexpected bump that upsets the comfortable illusion, disbursing it into mist and revealing something disturbing and challenging beyond. We live for that shit!

Bakshi went on to bungle the first-ever attempt to bring *Lord of the Rings* to the big screen, an animation rodeo he built on the marginal success of *Wizards*. We stopped paying attention to him at that point, as did everyone until Cool World (when everyone really stopped paying attention to him). But I, for one, will never forget the experience of *Wizards*, and how it shook my head like a Christmas snow-globe.

Pretty sure at least one of my old buddies feels the same, since he publishes this very magazine.

SO —TWENTY-ONE DAYS AFTER *FLEEING* FOR YOUR LIVES INTO THE NIGHT AND AN ARDUOUS JOURNEY *TRUDGING* THROUGH THE BURNING DESERT SANDS OF *NEW MINNESOTA...*

YOU AT *LONG LAST* REACH THE OUTSKIRTS OF *FORT BOISE.*

AKA "CITY OF THE FORLORN"

"FLEEING FOR OUR LIVES"...? -SPUTTER- GET OUTTA HERE WITH THAT *REVISIONIST* TRASH TALK, B.A. *JONAH SCORCH* NEVER FLED ANYTHING IN HIS LIFE. WE *LEFT TWO-TENT JUNCTION* ON OUR *OWN* ACCORD — AND YOU KNOW IT.

SURE, BOB. IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER — KEEP TELLING YOURSELF THAT.

BUT THE FACT IS YOU *RAN* IN THE *MIDDLE* OF THE NIGHT — LEAVING *HALF* YOUR EQUIPMENT AND POSSESSIONS BEHIND.

AND *DAVE* ONLY WEARING HIS TIGHTY WHITIES.

IF GM'S HAD HITPOINTS, I'D *FIGHT* YOU FOR THAT REMARK.

HAA! THE JOKE'S ON THAT BARKEEP WHO SNITCHED US OUT.

WE LEFT HIM HANGIN' BIG TIME ON A 97 CREDIT *BAR TAB* — HEH. AND WE *NEVER* PAID THE *LAST NIGHT* FOR OUR ROOM.

SEEIN' HOW WE LEFT A *HALF-MIL* IN *WEAPONRY* AND *TECH* IN HIS SAFE ROOM — I THINK HE CAME OUT AHEAD ON THAT DEAL.

GEEZE LOUEEZE, SARA.

WHY DO YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO GO NEGATIVE?

WELL, THANK GAWD WE MADE IT TO FORT BOISE.

I COULD 'DO WITH A HOT MEAL AND A BATH.

SO, LAST TIME YOU WERE HERE... YOU GUYS WENT *ON AND ON* ABOUT HOW *"SKIMPY"* MY TOWN MAP WAS AS FAR AS DETAIL...

"MAP"...? WHAT MAP? ALL YOU HAD WAS SOME GRAPH PAPER WITH LAME *CHICKEN SCRATCHES* ON IT.

WELL, I'VE GOT A SURPRISE FOR YOU.

UHT OH.

MOMENTS LATER....

HUH...? HUH...? WHADDA YA THINK...?

I SPENT A *MONTH* ON IT.

I *KNEW* YOU'D BE *BACK* THIS WAY.

HOLY CRAP!!! LOOK IT!!

IT'S *HUGE!!!*

THERE MUST BE A *THOUSAND* BUILDINGS.

AND THEY'RE *ALL* HAND-LETTERED.

WOW — LOOK AT ALL THAT *STIPPLING* AND CROSSHATCHING.

SUCH ATTENTION TO DETAIL — I AM IMPRESSED, B.A.

I'LL SAY.

THIS IS AMAZING.

THANKS, GUYS.

SEE...? I *DO* LISTEN TO YOUR FEEDBACK.

NOW...

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO IN THE CITY FIRST?

WHOAH — WE'RE NOT GOING *IN* THE CITY.

ARE YOU NUTS?

WE'RE GONNA *CAMP* ON THE OUTSKIRTS.

GEAR UP, GRAB SOME FOOD — WE'LL *RESTRICT* OUR MOVEMENTS TO SOMEWHERE *JUST* OFF THE EDGE OF THE MAP.

YEAH. THEN WE'RE HEADIN' *BACK* TO *TWO TENTS JUNCTION.*

AND *KICK* THAT BAR KEEP'S *ASS!*

MAYBE I CAN GET THAT MEAL TO GO.

by travis hanson

John Darkeye: The last good thief — THE NIGHT I BROKE INTO DOME 14

FOOLISHNESS BY SMIF

CHAPTER THREE: INHOSPTIABLE- A STOPOVER IN A LITTLE TOWN

A FEW DAYS LATER, WE ENCOUNTERED A BOT THAT WAS NOT HAVING ANY OF OUR BUSINESS, WE LIMPED AWAY TOWARDS OUR GOAL.

I MEAN, I LIMPED, THE OTHERS, WALKED.

WE FINALLY MADE IT TO THE TOWN THAT CIRCLED DOME 14, FULL OF THE WEIRDEST FOLKS I'VE SEEN IN A LONG TIME.

BUT THEY ALL HAD ONE THING IN COMMON.

THEY HATED THE POPE OF DOME 14.

MY COOL 'TUDE GOT ME THE SKINNY ON AN ALTERNATE WAY INTO THE PLACE OF INTEREST.

BORN THIS WAY

IT WAS FROM A MEAN OL' PURE STRAINER.

WE WERE BEING WATCHED FROM THE BUNKER ON TOP OF THE DOME.

THAT'S OKAY, I WORK BETTER IN THE DARK.

TO BE CONTINUED

John Darkeye: The last good thief

FOOLISHNESS BY SMIF

THE NIGHT I BROKE INTO DOME 14

CHAPTER THREE: INHOSPTIABLE- A STOPOVER IN A LITTLE TOWN

1. TREVERR'S TAVERN
2. THE GIT INN
3. SQUIRRELLY LANKY JOE'S PLACE
4. BIG WATER TANKS
5. ABANDONED SHOP

A. DOME 14'S LOOK OUT BUNKER