

DEATHWATCH PROGRAM

Lester W. Smith

**GDW**

The Fate of the Global Net is in Your Hands

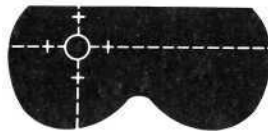
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Hunger...

DEATHWATCH PROGRAM

The Key to Global Ruin



Lester W. Smith

2300AD

SINCE 1973



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Bloomington, IL 61702-1646

Deathwatch Program is an adventure near Earth for the 2300 AD science-fiction role-playing game and the **Earth/Cybertech Sourcebook**.

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Introduction

An important technique to use when running players through adventures in the cyberpunk genre is to keep them off balance. If they are constantly being confronted with new revelations, new events, and new dangers, your players will be very busy just trying to make sense of what is happening to their characters, trying to solve the puzzle that is the complex reality in which their characters live. The result of such refereeing will be the evocation of a world in which things are constantly moving and changing. This reflects well the cyberpunk emphasis on social conventions and mores which are running a desperate race to keep up with the rapidly evolving nature of technological development.

The adventure you hold in your hands is intended to help you promote that sense of fast-paced, almost out-of-control action. Some of the technology the players encounter in it will be very familiar to them, and some will be brand new. Similarly, the adventure draws upon the basic rules in 2300 AD and the "cybertech" rules of the Earth/Cybertech Sourcebook. But it also goes beyond those rules somewhat, applying them in some new ways. Most importantly, the adventure confronts the players with a mixture of events, some of which have direct bearing upon the problem of the Deathwatch program their characters will discover, and some of which are almost completely unrelated.

The result should be that your players are constantly stretching to come to grips with the things that are occurring around their characters. They should always be guessing about what will happen next. But as referee, you cannot afford to be. This synopsis, then, will give you what you need to know concerning the secrets that underlie the events in the adventure.

GETTING THE PCS INVOLVED

The player characters become involved in this adventure as a result of having been invited to help out in a mission to transfer a passenger from a small oil corporation in Corpus Christi, Texas, to an even smaller one in Monterey, Mexico. During the course of their introduction to this mission, the PCs will get a chance to wander about Corpus Christi a bit. As a result, they will meet a number of people, some related to the mission, some unrelated to anything in particular, and one who will later get them targeted for murder. At this point in the adventure, however, the PCs have no way of suspecting that danger (their minds being taken up with the possible dangers of their upcoming mission).

THE COURSE OF THEIR MISSION

After this introduction, the PCs set out to conduct the mission itself. The first half of their trip goes by pretty smoothly, marred only by a series of delays that should serve to promote tension in the players.

The second half of the trip is a different story, however. Suddenly, the PCs find their range truck being chased by armed bandits in a pair of hovercraft. The bandits have more speed and firepower than do the PCs, which should make the players worry (but the referee knows that the bandits are much less experienced than the PCs).

When the PCs radio in for help, the Mexican corporation sends in air support, and a few minutes later, air support arrives from the Texan corporation as well. Unfortunately, the two corporate pilots begin a dogfight with each other, and when some official Mexican aircraft join in, the PCs find themselves in a virtual maelstrom of combat.

**In order
to preserve
suspense,
players should
read no further.
What follows
is for referees
only.**



Eventually, however, they escape and deliver their passenger. After some initial confusion, things are sorted out and the PCs are back on their way to Corpus Christi, their mission completed.

BEHIND THE SCENES

But that's only half the book. The second half concerns the *real* adventure, you might say. It's something of a case of the old bait and switch. Just when your players get to thinking that they know what to expect from the adventure, suddenly their mission is over, and they are embroiled in a series of events they have little control over, the reasons for which they have no way of knowing.

What has happened is that while they were on their way to Monterey, "Harefoot" Pike, a woman the PCs met earlier, used their hotel room as a base of operations for a netrunning mission of her own. She infiltrated the computer files of one of the most powerful secret societies on the face of the Earth and stole from them a document that has global consequences. Unfortunately for the PCs, she was traced to their hotel room, and a series of assassins are being sent to deal with the theft.

The first one arrives in time to find Harefoot, but she gets the drop on him and kills him. Then, certain that there are more assassins on the way, she runs.

A Nice Mess

The PCs return to their hotel room to find a dead assassin, a note of apology from Harefoot, a lobby full of police come to investigate the shots that were heard, and (although they do not realize it immediately) another assassin come to kill the thief in their room.

Unfortunately for the PCs, the assassins do not know just who it was that committed the theft, so they have been ordered to kill anyone they find in the room. As the room is reserved by the PCs, they become a natural target for the assassins.

No matter where the PCs go, someone follows and tries to kill them. The only hope they have of stopping the murder attempts is to find Harefoot and learn from her just what set off the whole sequence of events.

A Ray of Hope

A little bit of investigation around town (while dodging assassins, of course) reveals to the PCs that Harefoot has headed for Gateway to catch a space flight for Tirane, the inhabited planet circling Alpha Centauri. Spending most of the money they earned for their mission to Monterey, they purchase their own transportation to catch up with that flight. It seems that Harefoot and the answers she holds are almost within their grasp.

An Attack in Space

But the assassins follow them even into space. As the small cargo ship the PCs have hired comes within sight of the passenger liner, an unmarked fighter craft overtakes the apparently helpless cargo vessel and begins firing upon it.

Fortunately for the PCs, the captain of the cargo ship is smuggling a pair of detonation missiles, and he has had a command station wired into the vessel's bridge for just such an occasion. Launching the missiles, he manages to damage the fighter and drive it away long enough for him to dock with the passenger liner.

Some Strange Discoveries

Next, the PCs look up Harefoot in her cabin on the liner. But the assassins struck even here. Harefoot lies dead in the cabin—to her credit, two dead assassins and a dead netrunner are with her—and it seems for a moment that the answers the PCs were searching for are now lost to them forever.

But then they inspect her cyberdeck, which apparently has killed the unknown



ANOTEABOUT REFEREEAIDS

For the sake of clarity, most of the maps, diagrams, tables, and NPC descriptions in this book are included with the chapters to which they apply. However, for the referee's convenience, the final pages of the book also contain a full list of Important NPCs and weapons to be used during the course of the adventure. In this way, the referee can use the NPCs from chapter to chapter without having to search for the full descriptions in order to do so.



netrunner. In its circuits, the PCs find a hidden block of memory, protected by a recording of Harefoot's persona. Not only does this block of memory contain the answers the PCs need, the recording program they discover protecting that information is invaluable.

Final Rewards

In Harefoot's cybermodem, the PCs discover just what it was she had stolen. The Deathwatch program is a detailed plan for bringing about economic chaos in the Sol system, out of which the shadowy figures who designed the plan would emerge as rulers of the Earth.

The reach of those shadowy figures was long, but it does not stretch all the way to Tirane. The PCs deliver their information to authorities on Tirane, and the events of the Deathwatch program are countered.

The PCs finish the adventure having ended the attempts on their lives, gained renown for their work, and obtained a unique cybermodem that contains the personality of a dead friend.



The Setup

The mission Introduced in this chapter is intended to get the player characters involved In the events of Deathwatch Program without their realizing it. In this chapter, then, the PCs are given a short mission to complete. In the course of performing that task, not only will they find themselves in the midst of excitement and danger, they will also, unwittingly, meet the woman who is going to bring the wrath of a secret group of financiers down upon their heads.

A JOB OFFER

As the adventure opens, the player characters are approached by a former boss and asked to take part in a lucrative mission, acting as intermediaries between two Terran corporations that wish to make an exchange of "resources." It will be up to the referee to decide just who this former superior might be: It should be someone from one or more of the player characters' pasts, perhaps a former superior officer, an ex-employer, or even an old friend. In making his decision as to the person's identity, the referee should ensure that this person has long ago resigned from the position in which the PC(s) knew him and has gone on to establish his own trouble-shooting operation, on a very small scale. This is where the PCs come in; this former boss trusts them enough to want them to serve as a second team for a contract he has just settled—that is, the fellow has taken on a task that requires more manpower than he usually uses, and he wants the PCs to fill the need.

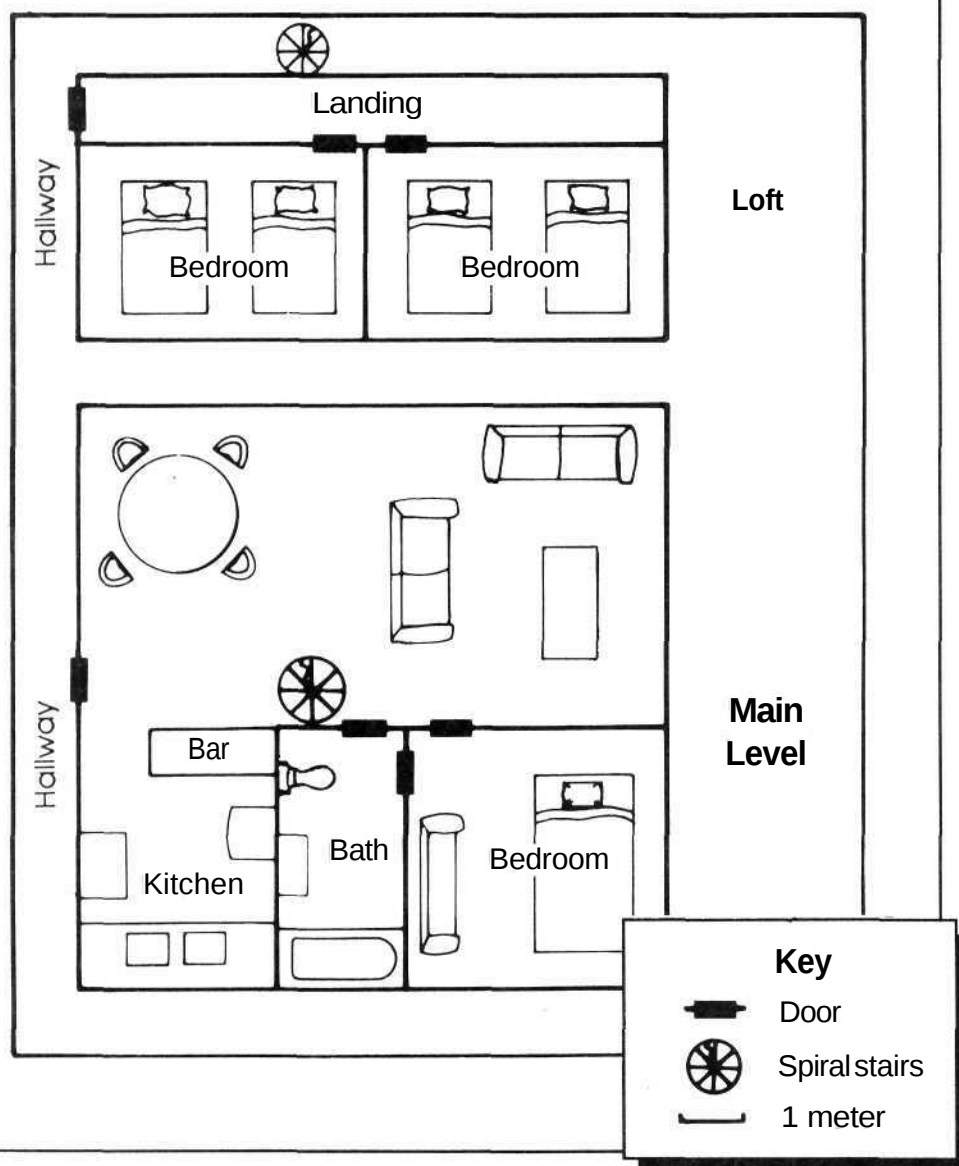
If the referee does not have a good candidate at hand to play the part of the PCs' former boss, he can use Milo Strunk, the NPC described in the next chapter, modifying as necessary the history listed there.

SOME MISSION DETAILS

When pressed for details about the mission, the PCs' friend explains, in a rather long-winded style, "There's this Mexican corporation that's trying to update its technology, and there's this Texan corporation that is willing to sell them this young, hot-stuff engineer that they, the Texans, have (they're willing to sell his contract, that is). But neither of the corps really trusts the other, and they're both afraid that if the Texan or Mexican governments catch wind of it, they might step in and try to tax it or something, especially considering the historical rivalry between the two nations. So the two corps decided to hire a neutral third party—that's me—to carry out the swap. The money they offered is really good—Lv50,000 for one day's work, plus expenses for a couple of days while the switch is set up. Only problem is, I'm a small-time operator—there's just me and three employees—so I don't have enough people to carry the thing out. If you figure two teams are required, one at each end of the switch, with about four people per team, that makes eight people, which is right at twice the force I've got. What I was hoping was that you all would be interested in working with me on this one. Me and my people would be one team, and you all would be the other team, and I'd be willing to split the money nearly even—figured I'd take 60 percent for me and mine, which would leave you 40 percent to split amongst yourselves. So what do you say?"

The fellow is willing to dicker over the division of the money (he wants the job so much that he will go so far as a 50/50 split if he is really pressed), but he refuses to give any details as to the corporations involved or the specifics of the time and place of the trade until the PCs actually sign a contract agreeing to operate as his second mission team. He will, however, explain to the group that no trouble

PCs' Hotel Suite



AT CORPUS CHRISTI

When the characters arrive at their hotel in Corpus Christi, they discover that a suite of rooms has been registered in their names, prepaid for a total of five days. A letter from their old friend also waits for them. The letter explains that the corporations have assumed that the PCs will need the hotel rooms for two days while the final details of the exchange are settled; there will be one day to actually perform the mission; and he negotiated the remaining two days as time for the group to recuperate after the mission while they decide where they wish to go next. Also in the letter are credit account chips for entertainment expenses incurred during the PCs' stay at the hotel. These chips authorize the purchase of food, drink, and entertainment at establishments in the vicinity of the hotel (but they will not pay for weapons or other hardware).

The next few pages contain maps, descriptions, and encounters for the referee to use in running the adventures the PCs have in the two days they spend in Corpus Christi while waiting for their mission to begin. If the PCs visit the night spots in the vicinity, the referee may wish to introduce them to Marielle "Harefoot" Pike (the woman who is to inadvertently involve them in the Deathwatch program) during this time. (See *An Unexpected Visitor* on pages 18-19 for details.)

is expected in completing the trade, and that all the equipment necessary for their part in the mission—including a ground vehicle, some small weapons, and expense money—will be supplied.

It is assumed that the player characters will wish to take this old acquaintance up on his proposal; after all, the money being offered is quite good (as referee, you can adjust the amount if necessary to make the offer irresistible). You need not worry that the payment will unbalance your campaign, however, as the PCs should end up spending a good portion of it just to stay alive long enough to solve the mystery that is soon to fall into their laps—the mystery of the Deathwatch program.

After the player characters agree to play the part of his second team, their old friend will give them the address of the Blue Aster Hotel in Corpus Christi, Texas, and will instruct them to meet him there in one week. (If your group is more than a week's travel from Earth when they talk to this fellow, you can adjust this period upward, or if they are already on Earth when they receive the job offer, you can decrease the amount of time.) When he meets them in Corpus Christi, their friend explains, he will fill them in on the full details of the mission.

HOTEL ENCOUNTERS

While the PCs are wandering about the hotel, the referee can roll occasionally on the table below for encounters they might have. A good time to use such encounters is to perk the players up if things begin to bog down in the adventure.

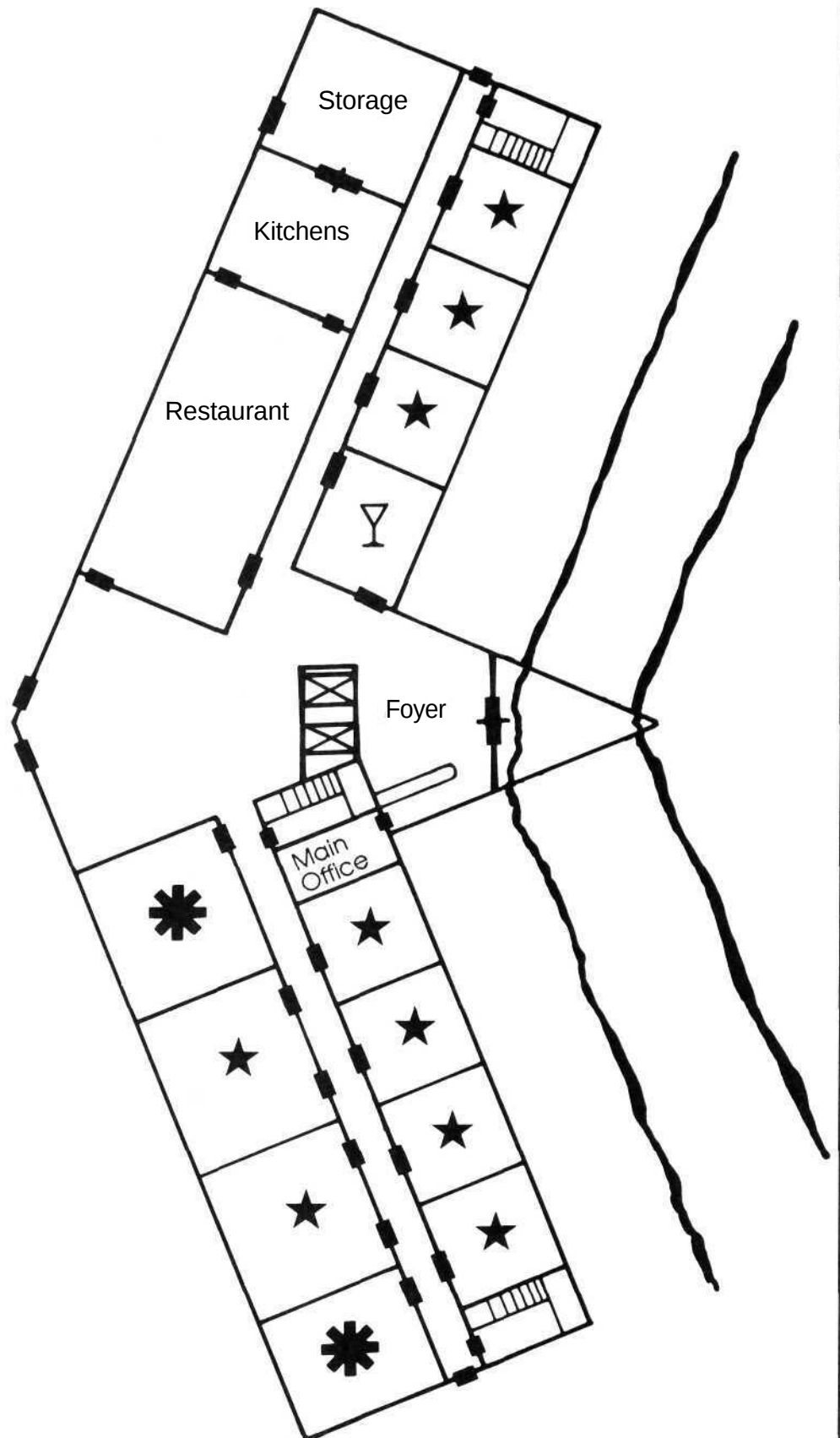
The items listed here are intended as a spur to the referee's imagination. If you roll something that doesn't seem appropriate at the time, simply ignore it and roll again.

Roll	Encounter
1	Nosy neighbor
2	Hotel employee
3	Noisy drunks
4	Crowd
5	Loose animal
6	Security guard

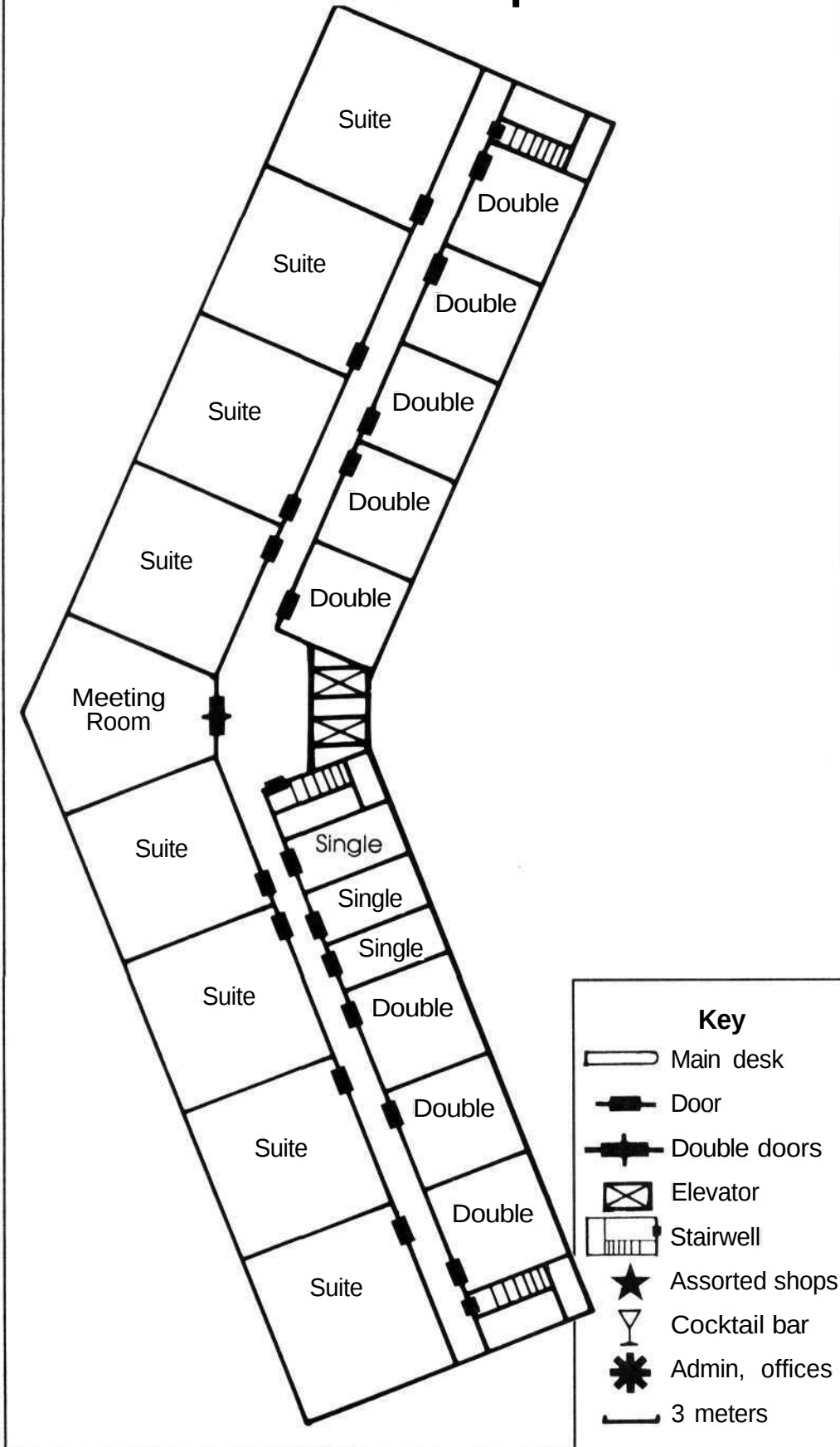
Nosy Neighbor: Someone—another guest on the PCs' floor, a diner at the next table, or whatever—takes a great interest in what the PCs are doing at the moment.

Hotel Employee: If the PCs are in their suite, this might be a maid bringing towels. If they are in the lobby, it might be porter returning a key they dropped.

Blue Aster Main Floor



Blue Aster Sample Floor



Noisy Drunks: They're conventioners; they're here to have a good time; and they want everyone else to know it. A PC might be the butt of one of their jokes or the target of a political/religious/sexual tirade.

Crowd: The elevator is full; the lobby is jammed with people; or a chatty group blocks the hallway. This can be loads of fun if the PCs are trying to get someplace in a hurry.

Loose Animal: Sometimes a dog gets loose. Sometimes a bird flies in a window. Or it might be an ugly-looking insect. Such events are sure to startle the panicky and draw curious onlookers.

Security Guard: Someone has made a complaint to the hotel's management (possibly about one of the other items on the table), and a security guard has been sent around to see if the other guests have been affected by the event.



MEETING HAREFOOT

It is a good idea to have the PCs meet Harefoot during the two days they have to wander about before beginning their mission for Milo. Of the places described on this page, Harefoot frequents Slasher Flick, The Night Owl, and The Racetrack. As well, Milo occasionally meets her at Martin's when he is in town, and the referee might use Milo to introduce her to the PCs.

During the time the PCs are waiting at the Blue Aster for their mission to begin, they may desire to get out and see the city. If they simply want to visit sporting goods stores, food markets, and the like, the referee can assume that during the daytime multitudes of such places are open. But during the evening, when the daytime businesses close, the PCs may wish to check out local night spots to pick up gossip and make friends. The map on page 13 identifies the location of nine establishments near the Blue Aster. Descriptions for those establishments are given below, along with that of the Blue Aster's restaurant.

1. Martin's: Martin's is the restaurant and bar located on the first floor of the Blue Aster Hotel, where the PCs are staying (see the hotel maps on the previous two pages). Like most any restaurant at most any hotel, its prices are slightly inflated, but its food and drink are better than average. The establishment has a piano bar, of course, and the PCs can meet other guests of the hotel, primarily business people, here.

2. Delmonico's: This small bar (maximum occupancy approximately 100) is extremely clean and quiet, with an elegant, old-world, Spanish style. It is a good place to go to talk over business if you do not want to be interrupted, but not a good place to go if you want to meet people.

3. Slasher Flick: Slasher Flick, a favorite hangout for punkers. Is one of the rowdiest places in the city. Originally a small warehouse, almost no work has been done to the interior, and the furniture consists almost entirely of electrical spools and heavy crates. Giant auditorium speakers hang near the high ceiling, far out of reach, blasting razor rock at the crowds below. The drinks are plain but cheap and are served in battered aluminum cups. Considering the fact that the place hosts a major brawl almost nightly, the inexpensive decor makes a lot of sense.

4. The Night Owl: The Night Owl is a 24th-century chain of coffee shops where a person can buy a simple meal, as long as it consists of food that is either grilled or deep-fried, at any time of the day or night. Most of the Corpus Christi Night Owl's business occurs between the hours of 1 a.m. and 9 a.m., when most other places are closed.

5. Harry's: Harry's is a country and western nightclub. It is only open from 6 p.m. until midnight, and its clientele consists of cowboys, cowboy wannabees, and the type of women who like such men.

6. Tray Sheik: This is a newly opened cheap cafeteria that seems to be hoping that its faux Arabian decor will attract the interest of the locals. It serves your basic steam-table food and plastic-wrapped individual portions of mass-produced desserts like tapioca pudding and flavored gelatine. During the day, the place is about half full of retirees, and it closes at 7 p.m. each evening.

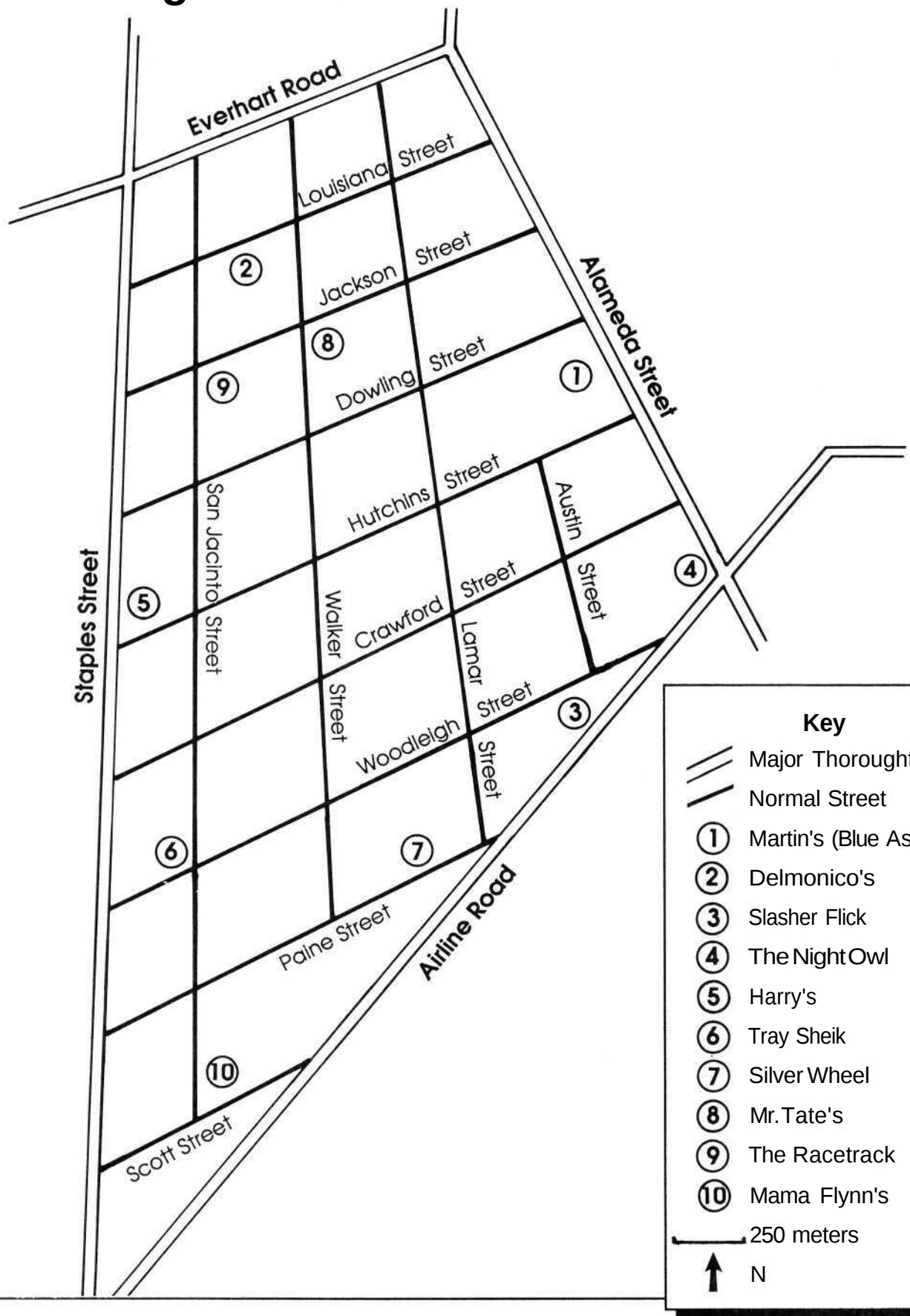
7. The Silver Wheel: A small restaurant specializing in traditional Greek foods, the Silver Wheel is nicer than the Night Owl but not as nice as Martin's. There is almost always a waiting line from 6 a.m., when the restaurant opens, until 11 p.m., when it closes. Like Delmonico's, the Silver Wheel is a good place to go if you want to talk business in a quiet setting.

8. Mr. Tate's: "Stainless steel and mirrored glass" pretty much sums up the appearance of Mr. Tate's. It is a favorite spot for business lunches and dinners. It is also an excellent place at which to hire professional muscle, although this fact is not widely advertised.

9. The Racetrack: This dim bar and grill is one of the few places in the western hemisphere to have linoleum tile flooring. The place contains slightly over a dozen ancient-looking, leather-upholstered booths in various dull colors, a counter fronted by bolted-down stools, and two antique wood-blade ceiling fans. It is a favorite haunt of netrunners and other types of jacked characters, and it never seems to close.

10. Mama Flynn's: Mama Flynn's is an incredibly tiny eatery crammed into one corner of a multistory building otherwise devoted to offices. It is filthy, but it is a favorite drinking spot among sailors, fishermen, and off-shore oil riggers.

Neighborhood of the Blue Aster





Operation Wild Goose

In this chapter, the PCs get off on a tense start to their mission, after seemingly endless delays.

THE MISSION BRIEFING

The night before the corporations' exchange is to be made (the evening of day two of the PCs' stay in Corpus Christi), the PCs' old friend and his team show up at the Blue Aster and explain to the PCs the plan for the next day's mission. The fellow reveals that the two corporations involved in the trade are Macrodyne Industries, a Texan oil corporation famous for turning played-out wells into big producers, and Petroleos Minatitlan (PetroMin), a new Mexican corporation operating in the Tehuantepec Isthmus region. PetroMin wants to acquire some Macrodyne Industries talent, in the person of Scott Landes, a bright young engineer contracted to the Texan corporation, and Macrodyne is willing to sell Landes' contract but wants to be sure that it receives payment before Landes crosses the Mexican border. The two corporations hired the PCs' old friend as a third party to set up a mutually acceptable trade arrangement.

The plan he proposed to them involves the use of two small, separate mission teams to carry out the trade. Team one (consisting of the PCs) will begin its mission by picking up Scott Landes at Macrodyne headquarters in Corpus Christi; team two (the PCs' friend and his teammates) will meet PetroMin representatives at Monterey, Mexico (a point roughly equal to Corpus Christi in distance from the Mexico/Texas border) and receive from them a valise containing Lv500,000. After establishing, by computer net, that the items to be traded have been picked up, team one will travel to Monterey to deliver Macrodyne's engineer, and team two will carry its case to Corpus Christi. Both teams are to travel via Laredo/Nuevo Laredo (see the map on the next page for the route to be travelled). Their speed should be held to approximately 100 kph, and they are to establish radio contact every hour to ensure that they both reach the border at the same time, even taking such care as to pass each other on the bridge between the two towns. The teams will then travel at the same pace, continuing periodic radio contact, finally reaching their destinations simultaneously, where Macrodyne and PetroMin will take possession of the items they are trading. Before turning its package over to the corporation at its delivery point, however, each team is to collect from that corporation a payment of Lv25,000, half of the PCs' old friend's total charge for conducting the operation.

As the total distance to be travelled is roughly 400 kilometers, the travel itself will require approximately four hours time. Given an hour for team one (that led by the PCs' friend) to travel to Monterey by airfilm train, another hour set-up time prior to the mission's beginning, and an hour to tidy up afterward, the entire mission should require only seven hours to complete.

Their old friend informs the PCs that their equipment for the mission is stored in a locked facility at the Macrodyne complex and can be claimed in the morning when they pick up Scott Landes, the Macrodyne engineer they will be transporting to PetroMin. (A full description of that equipment is given on page 15.) Team two's members will receive similar equipment from PetroMin when they arrive in Monterey.

After the mission is completed, the two teams are to rendezvous at the PCs' hotel in Corpus Christi, where the money they received is to be pooled and divided, and where a post-mission debriefing can be conducted. Following

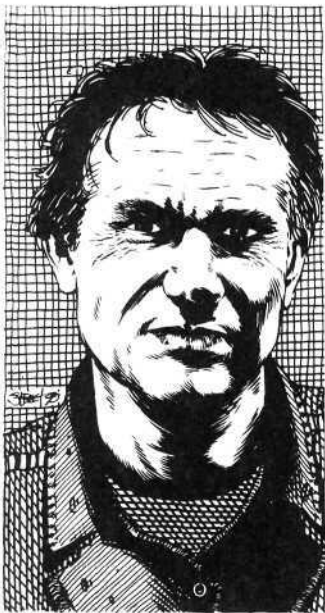


that, the PCs are free to enjoy two more days in Corpus Christi at the corporations' expense.

THE MISSION EQUIPMENT

To accomplish the mission, the PCs will be given (1) a range truck carrying the Macrodyne logo (a silver "M" on a black, triangular field) and mounted with a DunArmCo Mini-12 autogun with five cassettes of ammunition—it can also be fitted with a neural jack connector, if the PCs so desire; (2) one suit of full-body, non-rigid armor per teammember, in company colors; (3) one Mueller-Rivera P-3 laser pistol per teammember; (4) two medkits; and (5) one vehicle communicator with a scrambler attached—a linking station in Laredo will double the communicator's range, allowing the two teams to maintain contact throughout the mission. (Descriptions and statistics for this equipment—except the neural jack link and the communication scrambler—can be found in the 2300 AD *Adventurer's Guide* on pages 30,42,44,52, and 56. Stats and rules for use of the medkits can be found on page 6 of the 2300 AD *Equipment Guide*, and a description of the communication scrambler is given on page 16 of that publication. An explanation of the use of neural jacks can be found on page 76 of the *Earth/Cybertech Sourcebook*.)





Because of his affability and the steady, though not flashy, success that he has had in his career, Milo tends to inspire great confidence in his followers.



Most people, when they first meet Zobrowski, are struck by her very serious demeanor. It is only later, when they catch one of her unexpected smiles, that they realize just how beautiful she really is.

MILO STRUNK AND HIS TEAMMATES

The PCs may not have had enough adventures thus far to have an old friend who could involve them in this mission. In that case, the referee may wish to use Milo Strunk, simply explaining that Strunk was an old drill sergeant or some such thing. As an aid to the referee, then, Milo and his teammates are described in some detail here, in order to give the referee a basic understanding of those NPCs' capabilities and personalities. As well, the referee may wish at a future date to use some of these NPCs again (for example, if he needs a familiar figure to pitch another mission to the PCs).

Note that from this point on in the book, whenever the team leader is referred to, it will be as the NPC Milo Strunk.

Milo Strunk

Milo is one of those people whom virtually everyone seems to like. His personality is pleasant, but not overbearing. He is intelligent, but not threateningly so. His features are restful to the eye without being really good-looking. Nothing terrible ever seems to happen to Milo, but neither does anything amazingly good. All in all, then, Milo seems a very average sort of person. And people seem to instinctively trust him.

This aura of averageness, however, hides a better-than-average mind. Milo is a very perceptive individual, although few of his acquaintances ever recognize the fact. As a result of his calm, watchful attitude toward life, Milo is often able to achieve the best out of situations that he encounters. His open ear has made him a wise judge of character, and the resultant understanding of human nature makes Milo a hard bargainer without his seeming to be pushy.

Because of his affability and the steady, though not flashy, success that he has had in his career, Milo tends to inspire great confidence in his followers.

Milo is a Veteran ground military NPC, and he is mentally oriented.

NPC Motivation Results: *Heart Jack*: Milo is wiser than many people give him credit for, and those who rely upon him find that he generally offers very sound advice. *Spade Seven*: He has a natural desire to take on responsibility, and this has led him into business on his own.

Deb Zobrowski

Deb Zobrowski is Milo's vehicle expert. As a teenager, she joined America's space military, and she was on the 2299 mission to Arcturus. As a result of dissatisfaction with that action, she left the military and struck out on her own. She met Milo in Libreville at a bar that catered to service members, and decided almost immediately that she loved him. Milo recognizes her affection, but he believes that she deserves someone younger.

Most people, when they first meet Zobrowski, are struck by her very serious demeanor. It is only later, when they catch one of her unexpected smiles, that they realize just how beautiful she really is. But Zobrowski shows no romantic interest in anyone except Milo.

Zobrowski is a mentally oriented, Experienced interface military NPC. She has a neural jack implanted in her right temple for use when piloting vehicles.

NPC Motivation Results: *Heart Queen*: Zobrowski is deeply in love with Milo Strunk. Unlike most people, she is completely aware of the above-average nature of Milo's wisdom and intelligence. She just cannot understand why he doesn't use that wisdom to realize how happy they could be together despite the difference in their ages. But she is completely willing to wait for him to do so. *Spade Six*: Like Milo, Zobrowski has a desire to achieve something important in her life. Being an integral part of Milo's team is fulfilling that desire nicely.

Wilson "Sarge" Donovan

Wilson "Sarge" Donovan is an old army buddy of Milo, and when he learned that Strunk had started his own business, Donovan wanted to be in on it. He has



been with Milo for two years now, longer than either Zobrowski or Williams, and he considers himself to be Milo's right-hand man. As a result, he is jealous of the attraction that he senses between Strunk and Zobrowski, and he is downright resentful of Williams' posturing as Milo's bodyguard.

Donovan is a Veteran ground military NPC who is physically oriented.

NPC Motivation Results: *Club Ten*: Donovan is proud of his natural strength, and he enjoys a good brawl. He tends to look down his nose at people like Williams, who rely on bio-enhancements to bolster their fighting ability. *Heart Seven*: He has a strong sense of loyalty to the team he is part of, but because of his personality conflict with Williams and his slight jealousy of Zobrowski, he tends to focus that loyalty on Milo.

Billy "Ice" Williams

Billy "Ice" Williams grew up in a tough neighborhood, and because he was rather small as a child, he was constantly the target of bullies. As he grew older, he picked up the height and weight he had never had as a kid, and with it, he developed something of a bad attitude toward anyone who tried to tell him what to do. This led to a countless number of mean barroom brawls, as well as expulsion from police training for insubordination.

Recently, a great aunt died and left Williams a small fortune, which he quickly spent on bio-enhancements. His goal is to be the baddest individual of any he has ever met. Despite Williams' faults, Milo believes that there is a good core to the young man that can be encouraged with a little patience on the part of others.

Williams is a Green law enforcement NPC. He is physically oriented, with a bonus of one to that rating due to muscle implants and neural sheathing. He also has wrist blades in both arms, as well as flash-proof, low-light, bionic eyes.

NPC Motivation Results: *Club Ten*: Williams lives to prove himself in fights. *Spade Two*: He is something of a braggart about his abilities, which grates on Donovan's nerves.



Wilson "Sarge" Donovan... considers himself to be Milo's right-hand man. As a result, he is jealous of the attraction that he senses between Strunk and Zobrowski, and he is downright resentful of Williams' posturing as Milo's bodyguard.



Recently, a great aunt died and left Williams a small fortune, which he quickly spent on bio-enhancements. His goal is to be the baddest individual of any he has ever met.



THE MISSION BEGINS

On the day of the mission, Milo and his teammates take an early train to Monterey, and by 0740 hours, they arrive at the small warehouse PetroMin has rented as an endpoint for the mission. (If you are unfamiliar with the military time system referred to in this adventure, please see the explanation given in the sidebar on page 19.) At 0745, Milo calls the player characters at their hotel room and informs them that his teammates are beginning an inspection of the equipment PetroMin has provided for them, and he suggests that the PCs leave now for Macrodyne headquarters in order to check their own equipment. Milo explains that he will expect a first radio call from the PCs at 0900 to inform him that they are beginning their trip, at which time he and his team will leave Monterey as well. If, for some reason, the PCs discover that they will not be able to leave at precisely 0900, they are to radio him as early as possible to inform him of the trouble.

This is where the referee can have some fun and increase the players' tension about the mission without actually putting their characters in any danger. All the referee needs to do is introduce into the course of the adventure a number of delays that threaten to push the PCs' starting time past 0900 hours. As the starting hour approaches and the PCs find themselves hard pressed to even locate all of their equipment, let alone give it a thorough inspection, the players' tension will rise, ensuring that their excitement about the mission will rise as well. (The referee should be careful, however, not to push the players' tension to the point of frustration.)

The first delay the player characters encounter is the appearance of an unexpected visitor.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR

Just as the player characters are preparing to leave their hotel suite, they hear a knock at their door. When they open the door, they discover Marielle "Harefoot" Pike waiting there, an acquaintance of one (or more) of the PCs. The referee can introduce this young woman to the PCs in one of two ways: She can be introduced as an old friend, in much the same way as Milo was, or if the PCs spent any time visiting the night spots near the Blue Aster during the two days prior to the mission's beginning, the referee may have already introduced her as a new acquaintance during that time. As well, Harefoot is acquainted with Milo, which may be of some help to the referee in making her introduction to the PCs seem more natural. (A full description of Harefoot is given on page 19.)

When the door is opened, Harefoot smiles charmingly and asks, "May I come in?" If the PC at the door hesitates, or if anyone objects, she plaintively says, "C'mon guys, I need to talk to you for a few minutes." If the referee judges that the PCs are not actually holding the door against Harefoot, she will simply slip into the room and drop into the nearest chair.

Once she is seated, Harefoot explains to the PCs that she has decided to leave Texas and that she has bought a ticket on a plane leaving town this evening. The purchase of the ticket has just about depleted her funds, however, and she has not slept in slightly over 24 hours (it took some time to scrape together the money for her ticket), so she thought she would ask the PCs if she could please crash on their couch until it is time to catch the plane. When she discovers that the group is leaving "on business" for the day, Harefoot acts very surprised, but she argues that she will not harm anything while they are gone. In fact, she explains, as her plane is not leaving until nearly midnight, she assumes that they will be back before she has to leave.

Chances are, the PCs will agree to let her stay while they run their mission, especially if they are eager to get away and if they are leaving nothing of value in the suite while they are gone. If, on the other hand, they absolutely refuse to let Harefoot stay, after some wheedling and turning a forlorn look on

each of the PCs, she will leave, sighing dejectedly. After they are gone, however, she will use her Electronics skills to break into the suite anyway.

In actuality, Harefoot knows that the player characters have some sort of mission to do (she learned this accidentally during a conversation with one of Milo's teammates the night before), although she does not know (or really care) what that mission is. But Harefoot has a cyberspace run she wants to make, an attempt to crack an especially secretive corporate mainframe, and she has decided not to start the run from one of her usual haunts. As she has never been to this hotel before and she has no official ties to any of the PCs, and since the PCs are going to be gone for the day, their suite seems like the perfect place for her to make her run. If something goes wrong during the run and her intrusion is traced back to the PCs' suite, she reasons, she can leave, confident that the PCs will be more able to deal with any retribution than she would be, especially as they can prove that they were away at the time.

What Harefoot does not know, of course, is that on the cyberrun she will stumble across a plot so sinister, and involving such powerful figures, that it will thrust her and the PCs into more danger than they have ever encountered before. But more about that later,

MARIELLE "HAREFOOT" PIKE

No one knows for sure just where Marielle Pike got the nickname "Harefoot," nor does anyone know whether it is intended to reflect the fact that she is quick or that she is lucky. But virtually everyone knows that she answers to nothing else.



Harefoot is unnaturally tall for a woman, and her height is accentuated by the fact that she is thin to the point of emaciation. As well, her complexion is extremely pale, which adds to her gaunt appearance. She has very pale blue eyes and keeps her bleached hair cut in a tall crew cut, with the very top blackened slightly. Harefoot typically dresses in a white T-shirt, a black vest, black silk pants with blousy legs, and pointed, black suede half boots.

Harefoot is a Veteran thief NPC, with increased skills of Computer-7, Security Systems-4, and Sidearm-4. She has a neural jack just behind her right ear, and she carries a battered old WBM cyberdeck (see below) and a Traylor Model 57 pistol.

NPC Motivation Results: *Diamond 7*: Harefoot's first concern in life is money, and although she would not actually sell out a friend for profit, she might very well put a friend in a dangerous position if she thought the rewards would be great enough. *Heart 5*: She is a pleasant companion who is apt to become emotionally attached to those whom she gets to know, and she knows a lot of people. This quality tends to counterbalance her love for money.

Harefoot's Cyberdeck: This cyberdeck has a worn casing which bears the emblem "Wallace Business Machines" (WBM), a now-defunct corporation that almost no one remembers any more. According to specifications listed on a plate riveted to its right side panel, the deck's design is pretty much standard. But Harefoot has spent a great deal of effort, and money, in boosting the machine's capabilities.

Speed: 6 Accuracy: 5 Offense: 7 Defense: 9 Volume: 110 Programs: Fast Forward (three copies), Leaper (two copies), Second String (two copies). Free Volume: 79 (plus 60 of Second String).

This cyberdeck also has a hidden block of 80 points of Volume dedicated to holding a specific AI program called Cold Storage. More is revealed about this program on pages 54 and 55.

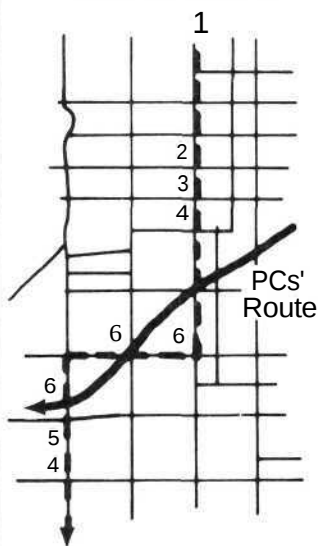
MILITARY TIME

The military time system is based upon a 24-hour clock, rather than a 12-hour one. Each time consists of four digits, the first two being the hour and the second two being the minutes past that hour. The first hour is 1 a.m., which makes midnight the 24th hour of the day. Times just after midnight but before 1 a.m. are expressed with a double zero, instead of 24, for the hour.

Military Time	Civilian Time
0100	1:00 a.m.
0200	2:00 a.m.
0300	3:00 a.m.
0400	4:00 a.m.
0500	5:00 a.m.
0600	6:00 a.m.
0700	7:00 a.m.
0800	8:00 a.m.
0900	9:00 a.m.
1000	10:00 a.m.
1100	11:00 a.m.
1200	Noon
1300	1:00 p.m.
1400	2:00 p.m.
1500	3:00 p.m.
1600	4:00 p.m.
1700	5:00 p.m.
1800	6:00 p.m.
1900	7:00 p.m.
2000	8:00 p.m.
2100	9:00 p.m.
2200	10:00 p.m.
2300	11:00 p.m.
2400	Midnight

Parade Route

Parade Route



ENDLESS DELAYS

The referee should assume that the player characters have been delayed approximately 10 minutes by Harefoot's visit (unless they have been either extremely curt with her or extremely gracious, in which case the referee can adjust the delay time down or up as necessary). This leaves them just about 65 minutes to travel to Macrodyne headquarters, collect their equipment, and begin their mission. As mentioned earlier, during this time the referee has a perfect opportunity to build a sense of tension by delaying the characters.

This portion of the adventure can be viewed as consisting of several stages. First, the PCs take an elevator to the lobby of the hotel and procure some sort of transportation: hail a cab, take their own vehicle (if they have one), or whatever. Second, they travel across town to Macrodyne headquarters. Third, they are stopped at the front gate of Macrodyne while their entry authorization is checked, after which they meet their contact and are taken to the bay where their hovercraft is waiting. Fourth, they assemble and inspect their equipment. Fifth, they are introduced to their passenger, Scott Landes, and they make last-minute preparations to leave. Sixth, they are cleared to leave the complex. They then radio Milo and leave the city.

During any or all of these stages, the player characters may encounter some sort of delay. At the beginning of each stage, the referee should roll 1D6, and on a roll of 3 or less, the delay described occurs. To determine how much time is lost, the referee should have one of the players roll the number of dice listed for the particular event. Instead of rolling for each stage, the referee may simply wish to choose which delays occur, but he should still roll the die in order to instill in the players the sense that luck is simply against them. In any event, it is recommended that the players roll to determine the amount of time lost.

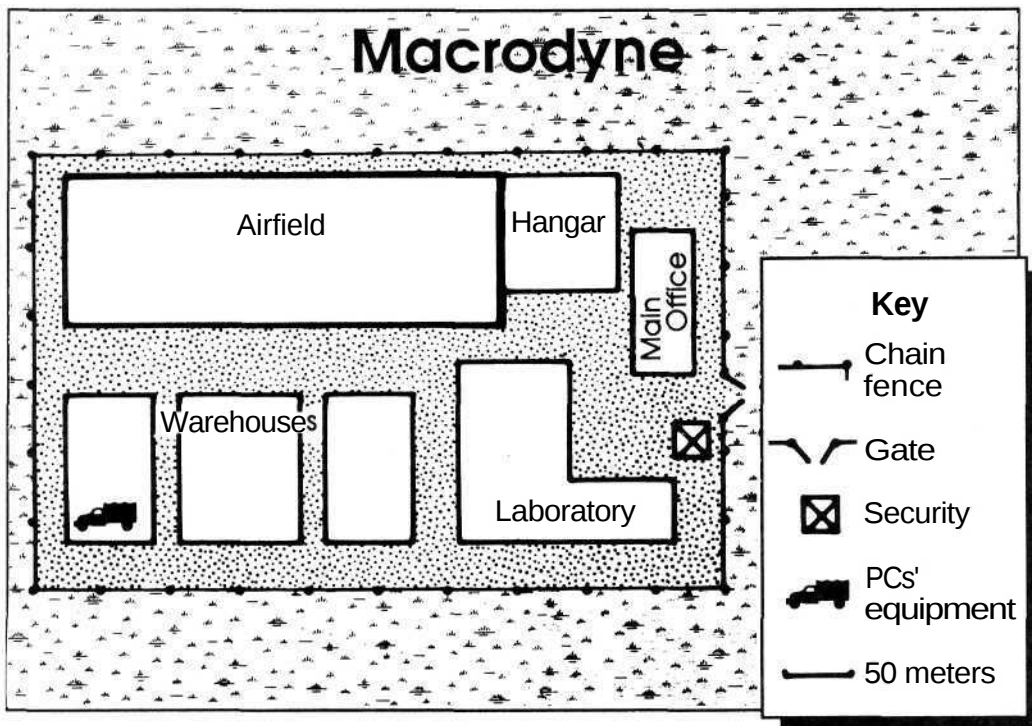
The Trip to the Lobby

If the PCs encounter some sort of delay on their way from their suite to the lobby, the referee should have a player roll 1D6 for the number of minutes lost. One possible delay might consist of hotel workers struggling to carry bulky cleaning equipment out of the elevators, forcing the PCs to either wait or take the stairs. Even if the PCs are able to get into an elevator, someone on an earlier floor may have pushed all of the buttons, in which case the PCs will end up stopping on every floor. Another delay that the group might encounter is a pack of rowdy conventioners blocking a hallway or even the foyer,

Travel Across Town

Delays during cross-town travel can range in length from 1D6 minutes (an average of 3.5) up to 3D10 minutes (an average of 16.5), depending upon exactly what the PCs encounter. Perhaps the best delay the referee could choose would be some sort of snag in traffic. Examples are a vehicle that has stalled and is blocking passage, an accident, road work, or even mechanical failure with the PCs' own vehicle. Such events can help convey to the players a sense of the day-to-day reality of the world through which they move.

If the referee wants to make something of a mini-adventure of this trip, the PCs may find that part of the route they had planned to travel has been closed off temporarily for a parade. If the players decide to wait for the parade to pass, just have them roll as above for lost time. But if they prefer to work their way around the parade, use the diagram in the sidebar to run the event. Note that some of the intersections are marked with numbers. When the PCs reach such a corner, the referee should roll 1D6. If he rolls the number listed or above, the parade has passed by the time the PCs reach that intersection, and they can proceed on their way. To determine how many minutes elapse during this travel, the referee should have a player roll 1D6 every time the group covers two blocks. If this seems excessive, remember that it takes a while for traffic to clear after being backed up by a parade.



At Macrodyne's Gate

Once the PCs arrive at the front gate of the Macrodyne complex (see the diagram above for a general layout of the facility), they are delayed for 1D6 minutes while a guard checks their passes against the log and runs a quick electronic scan over their vehicle. This delay occurs automatically; the referee does not roll for it.

As soon as the group has been cleared, the gate is opened, and the PCs can proceed into the visitors' parking lot, where they are met by Wilson Forbes, an assistant vice president for public relations, who walks them through the complex to the warehouse where their equipment is stored. The walk takes a flat 10 minutes.

Inspecting Equipment and Meeting Landes

Once the PCs have reached the bay that houses their equipment, Forbes excuses himself to go get Scott Landes, the young engineer the group is to deliver to PetroMin. If a delay is rolled at this point, it represents the fact that some of the PCs' equipment is either missing or malfunctioning. The referee should roll on the table in the sidebar to determine how many items are affected. If items are missing, the PCs can do nothing until Forbes returns with Landes. The only Macrodyne employees within sight are a pair of guards standing at the door to the warehouse's main bay, and they can do nothing about the missing items. If the equipment malfunctions, the PCs can try to fix it on the spot. The referee should create a task statement based upon the equipment that needs to be repaired, but the difficulty should always be set at Simple or Routine, and the time statement should be 30 seconds or less.

It will take Forbes 3D6 minutes to return with Landes. If the PCs confront him about missing or defective equipment, it will take him 1D6 minutes per item to have a replacement located and delivered. If the PCs are running short on time, they have the option of leaving without all of their equipment.

Clearance to Leave

When the PCs finally decide they are ready to go, it will take 1D6 minutes for them to receive clearance from Macrodyne security to drive the armed range truck across corporate grounds to the back gate. While they are waiting for

MISSING AND DEFECTIVE EQUIPMENT

To use the table below, the referee should first roll 1D6 to determine how many items are affected. Next, he should roll on the table below to determine just what those items are. Finally, he should roll 1D6 again for each item revealed: On a roll of 1-4, it is defective; on a 5-6, it is missing. If a result includes multiple items, a further roll can be made to determine how many of them are affected.

Roll	Equipment Type
7	Range truck
2	DunArmCo Mini-12
3	One or more suits of armor
4	One or more laser pistols
5	One or both med-kits
6	Communicator



clearance, the PCs might be receiving last minute deliveries of missing equipment, and they can radio Milo to let him know that they are on the verge of heading out. During this time, Scott Landes acts very nervous, as if he does not at all look forward to the trip.

FROM CORPUS CHRISTI TO LAREDO

After leaving Corpus Christi, the PCs find that the first half of their trip goes by relatively uneventfully. They travel along secondary roads across the western part of Texas for the first hour with very little companion traffic, making their way through Alice and San Diego, and they are approaching Freer when it is time for the first hourly radio check with Milo. The referee should remind the players that Macrodyne and PetroMin are listening in on the broadcasts to remain assured that everything is going well.

The First Radio Check

When the PCs make their call to Milo, they discover that his team is somewhat behind schedule, having been held up at the outskirts of Monterey by a constable who was extremely suspicious of four Americanos in a range truck that sported a machinegun on its roll bar. Only after radioing dispatch and checking Milo's vehicle registration and weapons permit twice was he willing to allow the group to travel on, and in the interim, he insisted that Milo's teammates leave the vehicle and lay down along the roadside where he could watch them. As a result of the delay, when the PCs call, Milo's team has just left Sabinas Hidalgo, which means that it is running about 10 minutes behind schedule. Milo instructs the PCs to slow down a bit and take about 70 minutes to reach Laredo, rather than the previously planned for 60. He signs off saying that he will expect to hear from them in 70 minutes, when they reach the outskirts of Laredo. If he reaches the sister city of Nuevo Laredo before then, he will initiate the radio contact.

For the next several minutes, Milo fields anxious questions from Martin Fitzgerald, the CEO of Macrodyne, and Simon Olvidos, the president of PetroMin. But eventually he is able to put their minds at ease, and radio silence closes over the PCs' vehicle.

The Second Radio Check

A little over an hour later, the PCs find themselves approaching Laredo. When they radio Milo, he informs them that his group is now about 20 minutes behind schedule, having suffered a flat tire just over 10 minutes ago. The team has just finished changing the tire, and Milo asks the PCs to stop someplace once they enter the city. They are to wait for him to radio back with news that he has entered Nuevo Laredo before they proceed to the Rio Grande.

No sooner does Milo finish instructing the PCs to wait than Olvidos breaks in and insists that the PCs park outside the city, because a suspicious person might believe that Milo's delays had been purposely engineered to give the PCs time to meet a contact in Laredo who could hide Landes for them after Milo had nearly reached the border with the money he is carrying.

As soon as Olvidos finishes his message, Fitzgerald joins the fray and insists that the PCs park neither inside the city, where one sort of suspicious person might worry about the mission team hiding Landes, nor outside the city, where another sort of suspicious person might believe that a hypothetical Mexican group might attack the PCs and take Landes before Milo could clear the border with the payment. Instead, Fitzgerald insists, the PCs must park precisely at the outskirts of the city, and once there, they must call him on a public vidphone to prove that they have followed his instructions.

Olvidos responds, rather icily, that such, of course, is the only way to do business, and Milo, with an audible sigh, orders the PCs to comply. The referee should leave it up to the players to argue just precisely where the outskirts of a city



The referee should remind the players that Macrodyne and PetroMin are listening in on the broadcasts to remain assured that everything is going well.

begin, but if they are foolish enough to radio and ask, he should subject them to a few more argumentative interchanges between Fitzgerald and Olvidos before the former corporate head finally decides to leave it to the PCs' discretion, subject to his official approval once they make their vidphone call.

Shortly thereafter, the referee should inform the players that their characters have reached the outskirts of Laredo and that they discover a fuel station with a public vidphone along the side of the road. When they make their call, Fitzgerald approves their choice,

Milo's Call

Approximately 20 minutes later, Milo transmits a radio message that he and his team are a quarter of a mile outside of Nuevo Laredo, and that he expects it will take 20 to 25 minutes to cross town and reach the Rio Grande. The PCs are now to head to the border station on the Texan side of the main bridge, so that both teams can cross the river at the same time.

The PCs have no problem travelling across Laredo in this amount of time. Macrodyne and PetroMin have both contacted the border stations at each end of the main bridge, and as a result, neither Milo's team nor the PCs have any trouble in crossing the border.

As the two teams pass each other on the bridge, Milo's teammates wave wildly to the PCs, while Milo radios Macrodyne and PetroMin, informing them that the first half of the trip is completed, and the "packages" should be safely delivered in just a little over two more hours.



The Cooked Goose

In this chapter, the PCs' mission, which has passed relatively uneventfully to this point, suffers a sudden turn for the worse.

ON THE ROAD TO MONTEREY

Once the PCs have crossed the bridge, they encounter no difficulties in passing through the Mexican border station. Within minutes, their registration is entered into the station's computer; their papers are stamped; and they are on their way. Retracing Milo's route, the PCs work their way across Nuevo Laredo and take old Route 85 southwest toward Monterey. In all, it takes them roughly 30 minutes to get from the bridge to the open Mexican countryside. Milo stays in radio contact with the PCs throughout this period, signing off once they have reached the Nuevo Laredo city limits. Their next radio contact is to be made in an hour,

The Third Radio Check

Twenty minutes out of Nuevo Laredo, the PCs pass from the Mexican state of Tamaulipas into Nuevo Leon. They travel onward across open plains dotted with desert shrubbery. Their range truck runs smoothly, and the wind of their passage helps to cool them from the heat of the day. The Sierra Madre Occidental mountain range looms on the horizon, and the land slowly rises as they travel. The country they are passing through is desolate, but beautiful.

The end of an hour finds the PCs about 20 miles from Sabinas Hidalgo, right on schedule. Milo radios, stating that his team has almost reached Freer, and after hearing the PCs' report, he signs off happily.

And the PCs travel on. Another 35 minutes finds them through Sabinas Hidalgo, where the local inhabitants eyed them warily as they passed, and on the last leg of their journey.

Amboscada (Ambush)

Just west of Sabinas Hidalgo, Route 85 enters a rough section of terrain and makes a 90-degree turn to the southeast. Hidden behind a ridge, two hovercraft lie in wait for the Americanos and their human cargo. (A map of the encounter area and statistic sheets for the vehicles involved are included on pages 26 and 27.) These banditos have picked up one of the PCs' radio transmissions and have decided to step in and help themselves to the "cargo" the PCs are carrying.

Fortunately for the PCs, the amboscadores are rather inept. During the 45 minutes or so since the PCs' last radio transmission, the bandits have grown inattentive, and as a result, they do not even notice the PCs until the range truck has already passed them by. In a rush, the bandits fire up their engines and begin a frantic pursuit.

The Bandit Forces

The bandit group consists of six NPCs in two hovercraft, three persons per vehicle. In terms of game statistics, they are physically oriented, ground military NPCs, all of Experienced level. The hovercraft are of a make unknown to the player characters, but the referee can use the statistics for the Bridgeport Swift Songbird (*Adventurer's Guide*, page 57). Each vehicle has a mounted MG-7 autogun (*Adventurer's Guide*, page 42). The NPCs all wear steel helmets and rigid breastplates (*Adventurer's Guide*, page 52), and they carry Arno Five-

Fifteen handguns (*Adventurer's Guide*, page 42).

As well, one bandit in the lead vehicle has a Guiscard Blindicide-3 anti-vehicle missile (*Adventurer's Guide*, page 50). In fact, the first indication the players have that their characters are being attacked is when this fellow fires off his missile. He has never used such a weapon before, however, and when he fires it, the noise startles him so much that he forgets to keep the launcher sights on his target. As a result, the missile fails to hit the player characters' range truck and instead impacts upon the road 50 meters beyond. The referee may wish to roll a die secretly to make the players think that it was just an unlucky shot.

After the missile explodes, the PCs will know that they are being pursued. The hovercraft are faster than the range truck, and they have full mobility off-road, but the NPCs will not attempt to push their vehicles to double speed unless the player characters get out of weapons range. Consequently, if the PC driving the range truck regularly passes the task roll to drive at double speed, he can slowly outdistance the pursuers. Also, if the PCs use autofire upon their attackers, there is, of course, a chance that the NPCs will duck. If the driver of a hovercraft ducks, the referee should treat his ducking as driving at half speed for one turn, again resulting in the PCs increasing distance between themselves and their pursuers.

The referee should be careful to run this part of the adventure as a chase. The bandits have plenty of time to pursue the PCs before reaching Monterey, and their primary purpose is to take the PCs' cargo as much intact as possible. They would not be averse to capturing the PCs alive and holding them for ransom, and they would certainly enjoy scavenging equipment from the range truck, if possible. Therefore, the bandits are not out to destroy the truck and everyone in it, nor do they want to put their own lives in too much danger. As a result, they will follow the PCs along, taking occasional shots to try to cripple the range truck. If the PCs' shooting gets too accurate, the bandits will back off to long range, hoping to get the PCs to waste their ammunition. Whenever the bandits close to attack, they do so in concert.

The referee should also understand that, although their chances of hitting the range truck are very slim, if the bandits succeed. It is possible that they may damage or destroy the vehicle or its occupants. In such a case, the referee may wish to give the PCs some chance to save themselves in the event of a Catastrophic hit. He may allow the players to make a Difficult task roll with their characters' Strength, Dexterity, Endurance and/or applicable skills as modifiers. If they succeed at this task, the referee might describe such a hit as blasting a tire off the range truck, putting the vehicle in a roll and throwing the PCs clear. The PCs would take damage from Impacting with the ground, but the referee can handle this as if it were concussion damage with a value equal to 1/100th the speed at which the range truck was moving. (For example, if the truck were moving at its full combat movement of 300 meters per turn, the DPV would then be 3.)

Escaping from the Bandits

The bandits' MG-7 has an effective aimed-fire range of 900 meters (because it is mounted), which translates into an extreme aimed-fire range of 3600 meters. If the PCs manage to maintain a gap of more than 3600 meters between themselves and their attackers for five turns, the referee may consider them to have escaped.

It is also possible, of course, that the PCs might destroy the enemy vehicles. Alternatively, the PCs might find their own vehicle disabled and be forced to battle the bandits on foot. If this occurs, there is a possibility that the PCs might capture one of the hovercraft for their own use. In such a case, the referee should have the authorities at Monterey react very suspiciously when the PCs show up there without the proper registration papers and with obvious evidence of having been in a firefight.

After the missile explodes, the PCs will know that they are being pursued. The hovercraft are faster than the range truck, and they have full mobility off-road.

Vehicle Data

Type Range Truck		Mass/Weight 800kg	Crew Driver	Armor Suspension:0.3 All Faces: 0.4
Combat Movement 300m		Evasion 2	Sensor Range Not applicable	Signature 2
Max Speed 140 kph	Cruise Speed 100 kph	Cargo 5 passengers and 300kg	Endurance 16hrs	Price Lv3000
Comments This is the PCs' vehicle. Off-road mobility halved. Mounted DunArmCo Mini-12 autogun.				

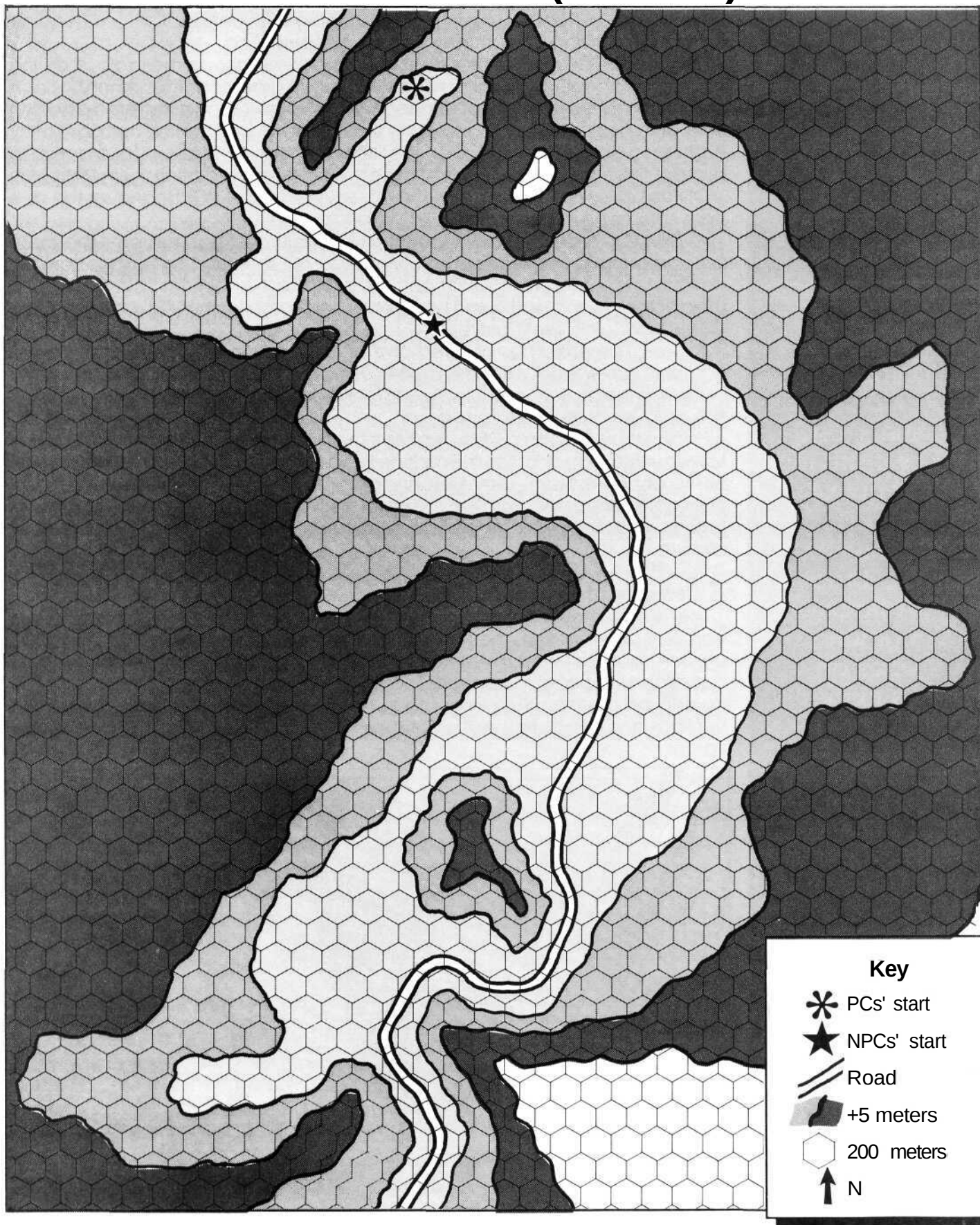
Vehicle Data

Type Utility Hovercraft		Mass/Weight 1000kg	Crew Driver		Armor Plenum: 0.3 All Faces: 1
Combat Movement 500m		Evasion 9	Sensor Range Not applicable		Signature 1
Max Speed 240 kph	Cruise Speed 200 kph	Cargo 6 passengers and 1000kg	Endurance 12hrs	Price Lv20,000	
Comments Driver and two passengers: Experienced, physically oriented, ground military NPCs. Steel helmets, rigid breastplates, and Arno Five-Fifteen handguns. Mounted MG-7 autogun. This vehicle carries one Guiscard Blindicide-3 anti-vehicle missile.					

Vehicle Data

Type Utility Hovercraft		Mass/Weight 1000 kg	Crew Driver		Armor Plenum: 0.3 All Faces: 1
Combat Movement 500 m		Evasion 9	Sensor Range Not applicable		Signature 1
Max Speed 240 kph	Cruise Speed 200 kph	Cargo 6 passengers and 1000 kg	Endurance 12 hrs	Price Lv20,000	
Comments Driver and two passengers: Experienced, physically oriented, ground military NPCs. Steel helmets, rigid breastplates, and Arno Five-Fifteen handguns. Mounted MG-7 autogun.					

Amboscada (Ambush)



The PetroMin gunship...spots the PCs and their pursuers, and makes a strafing run against the bandits.... Suddenly, the gunship breaks off its attack on the ground vehicles and climbs to meet what it perceives as a new threat, Macrodyne's fighter.

Calling For Help

If, while fleeing from the bandits, the PCs radio a report of the attack to Milo, they will inadvertently put into motion a chain of events that should certainly draw more attention than they might have preferred.

First, Simon Olvidos, the president of PetroMin, comes on the radio, shouting something about Texan traitors and swearing to protect his investment in Scott Landes. There is a moment of stunned silence, followed by a stuttered assertion by Martin Fitzgerald, the Macrodyne CEO, that his corporation has absolutely nothing to do with the attack on the PCs, and that he, also, will take action to protect the engineer in hopes of maintaining friendly relations with PetroMin.

Olvidos does not answer, and the next message the PCs hear over the air is from Milo as he rather soberly wishes them good luck.

At Olvidos' order, PetroMin launches its single combat aircraft—the close support gunship (*Adventurer's Guide*, page 59) that carried Olvidos from Minatitlan to Monterey for the exchange—and within five minutes it is in the general area of the ground battle and begins a visual search for the PCs' assailants. The PCs will certainly see it arrive.

As well, Fitzgerald has ordered one of Macrodyne's conventional frontier fighters (*Adventurer's Guide*, page 59) to the area. It takes one minute to scramble the aircraft, and it takes another seven minutes for the fighter to reach the ambush area at full speed.

Finally, the Mexican military registers the flight of the two aircraft and sends its own vessels, a pair of first-line multipurpose fighters (*Adventurer's Guide*, page 60) to confront them. The Mexican fighters take less than a minute to travel from a base near Monterey to the ambush area, but it takes nearly 10 minutes to scramble them, which means that they will arrive after both of the corporate aircraft.

A Comedy of Errors

The referee should direct this part of the adventure as a bizarre and confused comedy of errors. First, the PetroMin gunship arrives and begins scouting the area. After a few short minutes, it spots the PCs and their pursuers and makes a strafing run against the bandits (coming dangerously close to the PCs' range truck in the process). Suddenly, the gunship breaks off its attack on the ground vehicles and climbs to meet what it perceives as a new threat, Macrodyne's fighter.



The Macrodyne pilot is initially unprepared for the gunship's attack, but he quickly recovers and begins firing back. At just about this time, the official Mexican fighters arrive and demand that the two combatants cease fire, surrender, and accompany them back to base.

To conduct this aerial conflict, the referee should have the players run the two corporate aircraft and should run the other two himself. Then, using the map and vehicle statistics sheets on the next two pages, and the additional aerial movement rules listed in the sidebar on this page, the referee can conduct aerial combat with the players. Notice that the significant skills of the various pilots are listed on the vehicle statistics sheet as well. Use the third set of statistics to represent both of the Mexican fighters. See page 59 for more information.

Pilot motivations should be kept in mind while conducting this combat. After the players have decided who is going to run each of the corporate aircraft, the referee can reveal these motivations to the appropriate players in secret. (That is, only the player(s) running the PetroMin gunship should know that pilot's motivations; only the player(s) running the Macrodyne fighter should know that pilot's motivations; and only the referee should know the motivations of the Mexican pilots.)

The PetroMin pilot wants to: (1) keep his craft safe for PetroMin (which includes escaping from the Mexican jets, if possible), (2) prevent the bandits from stopping the PCs' mission, and (3) destroy the Macrodyne fighter—in exactly that order of importance. The Macrodyne pilot wants to: (1) protect the PCs, (2) avoid fighting with the PetroMin gunship, and (3) escape from the Mexican fighters—in that order of importance. The Mexican pilots want to: (1) escort the corporate aircraft back to the Mexican airbase, where the corporate pilots will be arrested and their crafts seized, or (2) blow the corporate aircraft out of the sky—and they are not picky about order of importance.

If more information concerning the pilots becomes necessary, the referee should check the NPC statistic sheet on page 59.

For each turn of aerial combat, the referee should also remember to run one turn of ground combat between the PCs and the bandits in the hovercraft. Note that the aerial map on page 31 has the location of the ground combat marked on it. Whenever the battling aircraft are in the vicinity of the ground battle, the referee should describe any missiles or shells that miss during the air battle as passing dangerously close to the ground vehicles during the ground battle,



TURNING RULES

When running the aerial combat in this chapter, the referee should determine how many hexes each aircraft can travel in an action based upon its combat movement rating, and should then consider each hexside an aircraft turns as using up one-eighth of that possible movement. Note, as well that an aircraft is not required to use its full movement rating.



Vehicle Data

Type X-Wing Ground Attack Craft		Mass/Weight 6000kg	Crew Pilot		Armor <i>All Faces: 3</i>
Combat Movement 1600m		Evasion 16	Sensor Range 200km		Signature +1
Max Speed 800 kph	Cruise Speed 600 kph	Cargo None	Endurance 3hrs	Price Lv500,000	
Comments PetroMin's gunship: Pilot is a Veteran interface military NPC. 25mm autocannon. Eight missile launcher hardpoints: Ohu missiles.					

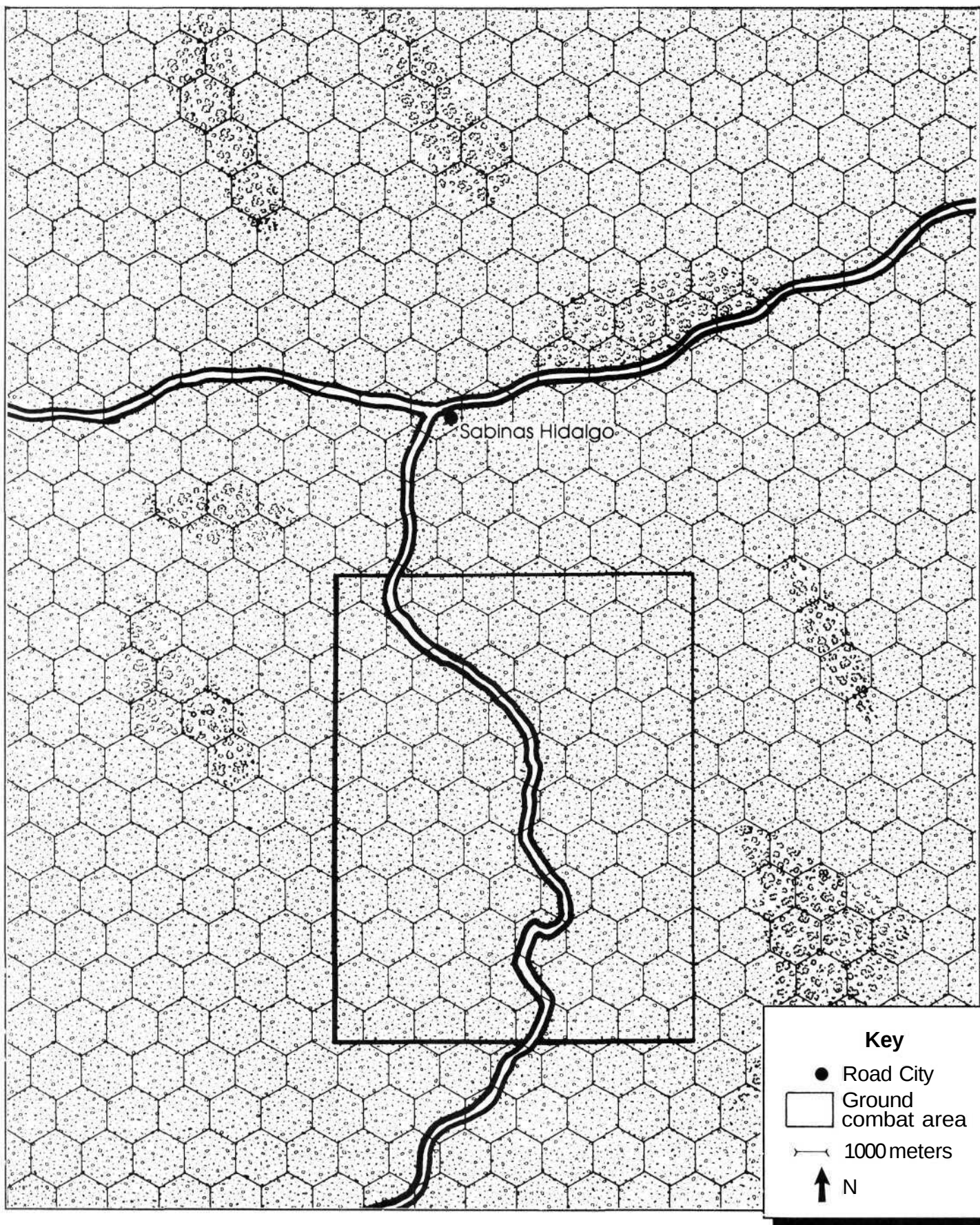
Vehicle Data

Type		Mass/Weight	Crew		Armor
VSTOL Fighter/Bomber		8000 kg	Pilot		All Faces: 4
Combat Movement		Evasion	Sensor Range		Signature
3000 m		20	400 km (+2)		-2
Max Speed	Cruise Speed	Cargo	Endurance	Price	
1500 kph	1000 kph	None	5 hrs	Lv2,000,000	
Comments					
Macrodyne's fighter: Pilot is a Veteran interface military NPC. Twin 25mm autocannons. Four missile launcher hardpoints: Guiscard Aero-27 missiles. Four bomb hardpoints: 200kg WASP bombs.					

Vehicle Data

Type		Mass/Weight	Crew		Armor
Supersonic Fighter/Bomber		8000 kg	Pilot		All Faces: 6
Combat Movement		Evasion	Sensor Range		Signature
4000 m		19	500 km (+3)		-5
Max Speed	CruiseSpeed	Cargo	Endurance	Price	
2000 kph	1600 kph	None	5 hrs	Lv3,000,000	
Comments					
Mexico's fighters (two): Pilots are Experienced interface military NPCs. Twin 25mm autocannons. Four missile launcher hardpoints: Ohu missiles. Six bomb hardpoints: 200kg high-explosive bombs.					

Air Combat





AFTER THE BATTLE

Because of the large number of variables involved in the ground and air battle near Monterey, there are also a large number of possible outcomes. The PCs may simply outdistance their pursuers. Or the bandits might be destroyed by the PCs and/or by fire from the aircraft that are sent to help. The PCs' range truck may be disabled, but the PCs may be able to capture a hovercraft. The PCs might even be captured by the bandits, only to escape later. Because of the number of variables involved, the referee will have to exercise some creativity in directing this part of the adventure.

Captured by the Bandits

If the PCs are captured by the bandits, the referee will need to ad lib events for awhile, inventing a hideout and a ransom demand. It is suggested that after a relatively short period of time as captives of the bandits, the PCs be given an opportunity to escape with Landes and complete their mission. Do not let this escape take too long in terms of game time; remember that in order for the PCs to become involved in the events of the Deathwatch program, they will have to return to their hotel suite in Corpus Christi before their reservations expire. It is suggested that the PCs be held by the bandits for no more than 24 hours before getting their chance to escape—less than that. If the referee knows that they will be detained by PetroMin as well (if the gunship was damaged or if Landes was injured or killed, as explained below).

The capture and escape will ensure, however, that the PCs arrive at Monterey much later than expected. In order to direct this part of the adventure, the referee should refer to the descriptions of PetroMin's possible reactions given in the next section.

Escaped from the Bandits

As explained earlier, the PCs could escape from their ambushers in many different ways: The PCs might outrun the bandits; they might destroy the bandits; the aircraft might drive the bandits off (as inept as the bandits are, they will certainly flee the second time a strafing run is made against them); the PCs might lose their own vehicle but capture one of the bandits' hovercraft; or the PCs might be captured, only to escape later.

If Landes is Dead: If Scott Landes is killed in the battle, the PCs have a serious problem on their hands. If they go on to Monterey and contact PetroMin, Olvidos will be furious about Landes' death and will have the PCs held under guard until a new agreement is worked out with Macrodyne. He will insist, at first, that Macrodyne refund the entire fee paid for Landes' contract, but will eventually agree to accept half that amount in the face of Macrodyne's argument that it will not take the losses for the operation fully on itself.

If the PCs delivered Landes' body, they will spend one tense evening under guard before PetroMin and Macrodyne reach agreement. If the PCs did not deliver Landes' body, each corporation will be somewhat suspicious of the other. As a result, it will take them longer to reach an agreement, which means that the PCs spend a full 24 hours under guard. In either case, immediately after the agreement is reached the PCs will be escorted to Monterey's airfilm station and put on a train for Texas.

If Landes is killed and the PCs do not report to PetroMin, they will have to work their way back to the Rio Grande and cross into Texas with PetroMin searching for them and using what influence it can to mobilize Mexican police forces as well.

If Landes is Alive: If the PCs eventually reach Monterey and deliver Scott Landes to PetroMin, the reception they receive at Monterey will depend upon how the ground battle turned out.

If the PCs escaped with no damage to their range truck, they will have no trouble entering the city and justifying their presence to any curious policia



they might encounter, This means that the PCs will be able to deliver Landes on time, and as a result, they will be free to take the very next available airfilm train back to Corpus Christi (PetroMin takes the range truck and equipment to replace what it sent Milo's team off with). The PCs will arrive back at their hotel before midnight.

If the range truck shows evidence of damage from weapons fire, or if the PCs are driving one of the hovercraft that belonged to the bandits, local police in Monterey will stop them and demand to see their authorization for the vehicle and its weaponry. At the very least, the police will delay the PCs for half an hour while checking with police headquarters, city hall, and eventually Simon Olvidos at PetroMin before allowing the PCs to go on.

If the PCs are delayed, whether as a result of combat, of being captured by the ambushers outside of Sabinas Hidalgo, or of being questioned by the Monterey police, Olvidos will be very wrought up when they finally deliver Landes, and he will demand that the PCs remain in Monterey overnight in case he needs to question them.

If the PCs radioed for help during the bandits' attack and as a result PetroMin's gunship got involved in the combat, Olvidos will, again, insist that the PCs remain in Monterey through the evening in order to answer questions and write a full report of the day's events for Olvidos' later use in justifying to PetroMin's other board members his decision to scramble the gunship.

If Scott Landes was injured, or if the PetroMin gunship was destroyed or confiscated by the Mexican military, Olvidos will be so angry that he will have the PCs locked up and guarded for a full 24 hours before finally agreeing to release them.

Taking Payment

The referee should ensure that the PCs are delayed in Mexico no later than dawn of the last day of their hotel reservations in Corpus Christi. This will give them barely enough time to catch an airfilm back to the hotel and meet Milo in order to collect their payment. One of Milo's teammates, Sarge Donovan, will be waiting in the hotel's lobby when the PCs arrive, and he will escort them directly to Milo's room. Milo will debrief them, pay them the amount agreed upon, and tell them to keep in touch—he hopes to work with them again someday. Immediately after the debriefing, Milo will call his team together and leave the hotel, heading out for another mission.

If Landes is killed and the PCs do not report to PetroMin, they will have to work their way back to the Rio Grande and cross into Texas with PetroMin searching for them, using what influence it can to mobilize Mexican police forces as well.

NEW PROGRAMS FOR NETRUNNING

In the sidebars on pages 35-37, the three programs that Harefoot tangled with are listed. Referees may wish to use them in future adventures.

Note that Maze and Molasses must normally be initiated by a hostile system, but in this adventure they have been linked to be triggered by the Claxon program.



Interlude

During the time the PCs have been off on their mission to Monterey, Mexico, events have been occurring at their hotel room in Corpus Christi that draw them ineluctably into association with the Deathwatch program, a sinister plot perpetrated by a handful of powerful people to tighten their control over the Terran economy at the price of terrible suffering by billions of Earth's citizens. In order to run this portion of the adventure most effectively, the referee will need to be familiar with the events in the PCs' hotel room, as well as with the facts surrounding the Deathwatch program.

HAREFOOT'S RUN

The referee will remember that just before the PCs left on their mission to deliver Macrodyne's young engineer to PetroMin, Marielle "Harefoot" Pike, a cyber-jockey of some renown, appeared at the door to their hotel suite and asked for a place to rest until her plane was to leave that evening. Unknown to the PCs, Harefoot had determined to use their hotel room as a very temporary base of operations (as will be explained below). Therefore, if the PCs allowed her to stay, they played into her hands. If they did not agree to let her stay, Harefoot waited until just after they left, and then she used her Electronics and Lockpicking skills to break into their suite.

The explanation for Harefoot's decision is as follows. During a jaunt in the world-wide computer net a few days earlier, while tiptoeing her way through some restricted passages of the computer system of the One World Bank's Zurich branch, Harefoot stumbled upon something that piqued her interest. In a "corridor" of files dedicated to holding decades-old real estate transactions, there lay one particularly tightly secured file. A closer examination revealed a closely woven protective program sealing the file, a program which Harefoot had never encountered before. She was certain that the file had only recently been stashed here, and suspecting that it contained something very important, and was therefore worth a lot of money, she made a copy of the pattern of the protective program's outer surface and returned "home" to analyze that pattern in hopes of raiding the file.

After more than 24 hours of careful analysis, Harefoot determined the file's protective program to be an alarm of some kind, interwoven with two other unidentifiable programs. Certain that the programs took up too little Volume to be a serious threat, and confident of her own abilities to analyze and defeat them once she had penetrated the file, Harefoot planned a raid on the file. But considering the possibility that her line might be traced back to her point of origin, Harefoot decided to play it safe and make the run from some location other than her normal haunts. Having met the PCs during the intervening time, and believing them capable of handling themselves if someone traced her in the net and sent investigators to the hotel they were staying at, Harefoot determined to make her run from the PCs' hotel suite while they were out. When she discovered that they were to be leaving on a mission, she decided that the signs were right for her to make her raid.

Once the PCs were gone and she had settled into their suite, Harefoot jacked into the hotel's computer network and began her own mission. Flashing through the world-wide net, she re-entered the Zurich computer, slipped into its real estate files, located the new file, and carefully wormed her way inside. Skimming through the file's contents, she discovered the Deathwatch program. The implications of the file horrified her.

THE DEATHWATCH PROGRAM

The Deathwatch program is primarily a timetable of hundreds of events to be brought about at various spots around the globe over the course of a two-year period. The program reveals that there is a 94-percent chance that the cumulative effect of these events would be the collapse of the Western economy. The collapse would begin with France and Japan, and spread rapidly through the other Western nations, then on through Asia, Africa, South America, and Australia, as well as the communities off-Earth but within solar orbit. Even the world of Tirane (at Alpha Centauri) could be expected to suffer severely, and the colony worlds would find themselves cast even further upon their own resources. The situation would be a grim one for Earth and all its colonies.

Concurrent with the events listed in the Deathwatch program is a plan for the program's designers—referred to in the program only as "The Coven"—whereby they could consolidate their own financial holdings, ride out the coming economic storm, and stand over the resultant wreckage as masters of the world order that would emerge.

The program does not reveal its designers' identities, but they might be discovered by a close examination of its contents.

Perhaps most chilling is the fact that almost a dozen of the events directed by the plan have occurred by the year 2300, and several others are on the brink of taking place.

A DIFFICULT ESCAPE

Harefoot decided to make a copy of the Deathwatch program. Intending to take it to the authorities in hopes of thwarting the plot. (Considering the fact that the plot involved highly placed public figures, she was not sure just what authorities she could trust with the evidence, but that was a problem to be dealt with later.)

Shortly, the copy was completed, and it seemed that her invasion had not been noted yet. Harefoot headed back through the file's seal. Something seemed to impede her movement, as if she were wading through molasses, but she pushed on through.

An alarm rang through the system.

Cursing mentally, and now truly frightened, she poised to fly through the corridors in a quick run for the exit, but a glittering mist began to spread from the seal, and as it swept over Harefoot's deck, vertigo and disorientation came boiling along with it. She felt a stubborn fury rise up in her; she wasn't going to let the scum who had created the Deathwatch program keep her prisoner in here, and she wasn't going to let them get away with their scheme for world domination either. Grimly, she set out in what she believed was the correct direction.

Again she felt as if she were swimming through something thick and sticky, but she pressed onward. As she travelled, the mist slowed her progress, confusing her at branches. And the claxons had brought patrol systems out to search for the intruder. Three times she fought a desperate battle for her life against roving guards, and each time her deck reacted sluggishly, as if it were working in slow motion.

It seemed an eternity later that she stumbled through the system access point and out into the clean reaches of cyberspace. The claxons and the mists were left behind. Harefoot travelled back along the path connecting Zurich and Corpus Christi, still feeling the effects of the third program slowing her deck. Finally, she reached the hotel and jacked out. She re-entered the waking world to find herself soaked with sweat, her deck cradled to her chest, and tears of relief standing in her eyes.

It had seemed an eternity. In reality it had been six hours, and the first assassin was well on his way.

Claxon

Claxon programs come at various ratings, reflecting their levels of sensitivity to intruders. When a Claxon program detects an intruder, it sounds an alarm that rings throughout the entirety of the computer being invaded. To pass a Claxon program without alerting it, a netrunning character must roll for the task below.

Price: Simple, Lv50; Routine, Lv150; Difficult, Lv400; Formidable, Lv1000; Impossible, Lv3000.

Task: To pass a Claxon without alerting it: Variable. Computer and Accuracy. Instant.

Referee: Claxon programs are rated by the level of difficulty required to pass them unnoticed.

Claxon programs are at times called "screamers." They have a Volume equal to the number required to pass them.



Maze

Maze scrambles a netrunner's perceptions. As a result, when faced with a branching of paths, victims of Maze will often take the wrong path without realizing it. That is, they will honestly believe that they have turned right, when they have actually turned left, and vice versa.

To correctly choose a direction when under the influence of Maze, a character must roll for the task below.

The effects of a Maze program, once it is encountered, last until the netrunner exits the computer in which the Maze program is contained. Maze programs come at varying levels of efficiency. Maze is a one-shot program with a Volume requirement equal to three times the number required to pass it.

Price: Simple, Lv130; Routine, Lv500; Difficult, Lv900; Formidable, Lv2700; Impossible, Lv4800.

Task: To avoid disorientation (Uncertain): Variable. Computer and Accuracy. Instant.

Referee: Maze comes in varying levels of effectiveness, as is reflected in the variability of the difficulty level of the task roll.



RETRIBUTION

Harefoot had stumbled across an incredibly important item. In finding the Deathwatch program, and the shadowy figures behind the scheme could not afford to let her get away with it. But neither could they afford to draw too much attention to the situation, lest the media discover the program and expose its existence.

But during the six hours that Harefoot battled to exit the computer in Zurich, cyberjockeys working as agents of The Coven traced her entry point to the PCs' hotel room in Corpus Christi. The Coven moved swiftly to alert agents nearer to that area, and by the time Harefoot finally jacked out of cyberspace, the first of those assassins had reached the hotel.

Unfortunately for The Coven, Harefoot escaped their computer before the assassin could ice her. Discovering her free, The Coven panicked, and to prevent Harefoot from using the Net to pipe her copy of the Deathwatch program to anyone else, it had its corporate hackers kill all power and communication to the Blue Aster Hotel.

That was more than enough warning to Harefoot that they were on to her location. When The Coven's first assassin slipped through her door, she was waiting for him.

A CORNERED BEAST

When you make a living stealing information from the powerful and selling it on the street, you learn quickly that the world can be a dangerous place. Harefoot had practiced long and hard with her pistol, and she trusted that being jacked to the gunsights would give her the edge she'd need against the boosted reflexes of a corporate assassin. Even then, if it had not been for The Coven's unintentional warning in cutting the hotel's power and the assassin's desire to enter the suite silently, she would have been lost.

But luck was with her. The door swung slowly open; the assassin, an obvious muscle job with loads of bionic enhancements, slipped into the room; and even



as his low-light vision revealed the terrified woman crouched behind the couch, Harefoot put a bullet through each of his Lv4000 eyes.

TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY

Harefoot hesitated just long enough to scrawl a message on the assassin's back with lipstick—"Sorry for the mess," accompanied by a bunny's head—and then she ran. With her cyberdeck cradled in her left arm and her pistol, still jacked, in her right hand, Harefoot hit the hallway running and headed for the stairwell. Viewing the world through the pistol's swinging sights, she felt dizziness seize her, and she stumbled against a wall. Again luck was with her. The assassin's backup, an unenhanced low-life with a sniper rifle, had squeezed off one round from the opposite end of the hall, but he missed her when she stumbled. His second shot clipped her left shoulder. The impact spun her around, and she emptied her magazine in the sniper's direction. That was more than enough to deter him from further attacks. Without a second thought, he fled.

With her pistol empty, Harefoot jerked the weapon's neural link loose and jammed the pistol into a vest pocket. With the neural link broken, the return to normal vision brought Harefoot a wave of relief, but her wounded shoulder ached like someone had clubbed it with a branding iron. She retrieved her cyberdeck from the floor and continued to the stairwell. She followed the stairs all the way to the hotel's subterranean garage, and from there she took a back exit up into an alleyway.

She encountered no further pursuit, but she was certain that other corporate agents would be on their way. It seemed a good thing that she had planned on leaving town, but she knew The Coven would have already discovered that she had reserved a ticket on a flight out of town, and she knew better than to show up for that flight. Taking the subway across town, she went to visit an old friend who could get her alternative transportation, and who could give her a new ID. Within an hour, she was on her way to San Antonio, where she caught a late scramjet flight to Gateway.

Molasses

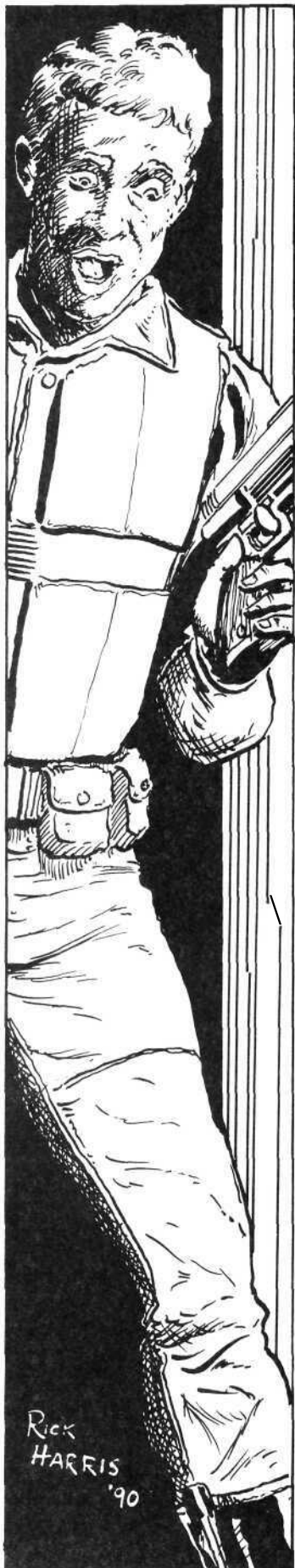
Molasses is an impeding program that slows a cyberdeck's speed.

When a Molasses program is initiated, all decks except for that of the initiator have their speed reduced to half normal until cyberspace is exited and a task roll is made to clear the deck of the program's effect.

Molasses is a one-shot program with a Volume of 20.

Price: Lv4000.

Task: To clear Molasses from a cyberdeck: Routine. Computer. 3 minutes.



Hooked

In this chapter, the PCs inadvertently find themselves implicated in a murder, suspected of a computer invasion, believed to possess dangerous knowledge, targeted by a series of assassination attempts, and desperately searching for the woman who got them involved in the whole mess in the first place.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

As the referee will recall, immediately upon returning to the Blue Aster Hotel after their mission to Monterey, Mexico, the PCs were met in the lobby by Sarge Donovan and escorted to Milo Strunk's room, where they received their share of the payment for the mission. Immediately thereafter, Milo and his teammates left town for another mission. It is now time for the referee to reveal to the players the mess that Harefoot has gotten their characters involved in. This revelation can take one of two forms: Either the PCs find the dead assassin in their suite, or the Corpus Christi police confront them with the news.

If the PCs Find the Body

If the PCs experienced little delay in completing their mission (in other words, they managed to outrun the ambushers outside of Sabinas Hidalgo and were able to deliver Scott Landes to PetroMin on time), and if they did not delay in returning to Corpus Christi, the entire trip should have taken them approximately seven hours (one hour to prepare to leave, five hours to deliver Landes, and approximately another hour to return to Corpus Christi by airfilm train), which puts them back at the hotel by 1400 hours (2 p.m.). In this case, they will discover the body in their suite before the hotel staff or the police do. The gunfire was reported by other guests on the PCs' floor; hotel staff found bloodstains from Harefoot's wounded shoulder and bullet holes in the walls from her pistol and the second assassin's rifle.

The Corpus Christi police were called immediately. But the police will not quite have arrived before the PCs return (in fact, Harefoot will have been gone from the building for less than half an hour by that time), and no one has thought to look for anything in the PCs' suite, as it appears that the fighting all took place in the hall. As the loss of electrical power and computer service occurred just before the gunshots were heard, the hotel management assumes that the events were related in some manner, but the management's attention has since been devoted to calming frightened guests.

If, then, the PCs return to their suite before the police arrive, the first clue they receive that something is wrong is when they open their door (which Harefoot pulled closed as she exited). Immediately, they are struck by the smell of death in the suite's main room. Turning on the lights, they find the assassin's muscle-bound body lying face down just inside the door, with a yard-wide bloodstain in the carpet surrounding his head like a grotesque halo. Harefoot's message, written with lipstick on the assassin's back—"Sorry for the mess," accompanied by a drawing of a bunny's head—is also very obvious. The players should have little trouble figuring out who was responsible, although they might be mystified as to exactly what happened while they were gone (especially if they refused to let Harefoot stay, and she had to break in).

The referee should assume that the PCs have about 15 minutes before the police arrive and another 45 minutes after they arrive to investigate things on their own. The referee can play much of this investigation by ear, relying upon his own knowledge of what has happened to guide him. If the PCs question



other guests on their floor, they should discover that two shots were heard at first, followed by a dozen or so more a few minutes later, and that the lights went off several minutes before the first shots were heard. One of the people they question should also reveal that the hotel computer system went down just before the lights went out,

What the players make of this information is not really important—by the end of the adventure they will learn what actually happened—but what *is* important is that they get the sense that something very "big" is going on and that their characters are in the middle of it. One way the referee can help them to this realization is by having the PCs questioned closely by the police when they arrive. It was, after all, in the PCs' suite that the one body was discovered (unless the PCs have done something to prevent that occurrence, and even then, they should be hard pressed to hide the bloodstain). It is possible, of course, that the PCs leave the hotel before the police recognize the need to question them.

If the Police Find the Body

If in completing their mission to Monterey, the PCs were delayed from returning to the Blue Aster until eight hours or more past the time they left the hotel on their way to Macrodyne headquarters, the Corpus Christi police will have arrived at the hotel and discovered the assassin's body before the PCs have a chance to. (If the referee prefers, and if the PCs are not awfully late, he can decide that the police are in the hotel lobby, or even that they are investigating the bullet holes in the hallway on the PCs' floor, but that they have not, as yet, found the body in their suite. This can be great for increasing the players' tension.)

Note that in this case, Milo will certainly know that something strange is going on in the hotel, but he will not know what it is, and under no circumstances will he want to get involved in it. Remember that Milo's major goals at the moment are to pay the PCs off and to head out for his next mission.

The police will certainly want to question the PCs. As a consequence, they will reveal Harefoot's message to the PCs, and the PCs will learn from general gossip that a large number of shots were fired, and that the hotel's computer system and then electrical power were lost just a few minutes prior to the shooting.

The police will understand that the PCs were out of town all day and could not have been directly involved in the killing, but they will suspect, of course, that the PCs have been indirectly involved, and they will want the PCs to remain available for questioning. Just how much they will want to restrict the PCs' movements is up to the referee, but the referee should keep in mind that events will soon begin to push the PCs to leave town on the trail of Harefoot.

Turning on the lights, they find the assassin's muscle-bound body lying face down, with a yard-wide bloodstain in the carpet surrounding his head like a grotesque halo.



MARKED FOR BOUNTY

By the time the player characters discover the dead man in their hotel suite, The Coven has discovered the PCs' identities, and it has targeted them for assassination. For the first 24 hours, only corporate assassins are sent after the PCs, as The Coven wants to ensure that the stolen copy of the Deathwatch program is recaptured or destroyed. After that first 24 hours, The Coven will discover from the Corpus Christi police files that the PCs were out of the city when the netrunner in their suite invaded the Zurich computer. Realizing that the PCs are not the actual perpetrators of the raid, The Coven will no longer send corporate assassins after them. But because it believes they must have had some relationship with the cyberjockey who stole the Deathwatch program, and because it believes in always tying up loose ends, it will put word out on the street that there is a bounty of Lv2000 (each) to have the PCs killed.

During the first 24 hours, then, the PCs will be the targets of only a few, but very professional, attempts on their lives. Fortunately for them, expert assassins are hard to come by and very expensive. As well, the assassins have to travel some distance to reach the PCs. These two factors combine to keep the professional attempts on the PCs' lives to a minimum.

After the first 24 hours, things should get very interesting for the PCs as every sort of human vermin imaginable begins to come out of the woodwork looking for them and hoping to score an easy bundle of cash. The longer the PCs remain in one place, of course, and the more people discover who they are, the more frequent attacks by bounty hunters will become. Also, while The Coven will be devoting the majority of its resources to finding Harefoot, it will keep one eye on movements of the PCs. As a consequence, trouble will tend to follow the PCs even as they change geographical locations. Of course, the more they stay on the move, the farther behind them will be the news of the bounty on their heads, and the less trouble they should have in staying alive.

LOOKING FOR HAREFOOT

It is possible that the PCs will begin looking for Harefoot entirely on their own initiative, either from simple curiosity, from a desire to help her out, or from suspicion that they might be next on the list of whoever it was that she rubbed the wrong way. If their own initiative is not sufficient to get them moving, however, the first few attempts on their own lives should be enough to point them toward her in the hope that they can discover why this is all happening to them.

Pounding the Pavement

Perhaps the most logical place for the PCs to begin looking for Harefoot is at her usual haunts. The referee can use the area map and key on page 45 for this search. Note that several of the locations on this map may be familiar to the PCs from their earlier jaunts in the area around the Blue Aster (compare this map to the more local one on page 13).

Searching the Net

It is possible that the players will want their characters to conduct a computer search for Harefoot. They will almost certainly remember that she told the PCs she had a flight out of town for the evening. And if the PC group includes someone adept with computers, particularly a netrunner, a computer search might seem a logical place to begin, or at least a reasonable investigation to conduct concurrent with the investigation of Harefoot's normal haunts.

A computer-using or netrunning PC, then, will most likely want to access the Corpus Christi Municipal Airport computer system first. To run this event, the referee does not need a map of the computer net. Instead, he can simply play the part of the computer being accessed, having the PC roll for the tasks in the sidebar when appropriate.

The sequence of events when the PC contacts the airport computer, then,



will most likely run something like this: The PC contacts the airport computer and asks for information concerning Harefoot, and the computer responds that it is unable to give out such information without a passcode verifying the questioner's authority to receive such information, but that it will page the party being searched for, if the PC so desires. Then the PC attempts to bypass the requirement for a passcode. If successful, the PC runs a quick search of the evening's flights, looking for Harefoot's given name.

Besides the municipal airport, other places the PCs might check would be the city's train station and its bus depot. The sequence of events when checking these two places will be nearly identical to that described for the municipal airport, with the exception that the task to bypass the bus depot's passcode is one level of difficulty lower than are those for the train station and airport. PCs might also decide to run a check on car rental businesses (as many as the referee cares to invent), and, if the players are really creative, even boat rental businesses. (If it is after 5 p.m. when the PCs check, some of these businesses will be closed, but their computers can still be accessed.)

The PC can check each computer as many times as desired, provided a Mishap is not rolled, as explained in the sidebar.

Task: To bypass the passcode: Variable. Computer. 30 seconds.

Referee: The bypass task difficulty is Formidable against the airport and train station's computers. Difficult against the bus depot's, and somewhere from Simple to Difficult (referee's option) for the car and boat rental places. If a failure is rolled for. Superficial Damage applies to the PC's deck; a Minor Mishap means that authorities have noted the computer invasion and are initiating a search for the PC; and a Major Mishap means that some sort of security system has backlashed through the PC's deck, doing the damage indicated.

Task: To search the files for Harefoot (Uncertain): Variable. 7 minute.

Referee: See the note above.



MEDUSA ARRIVES

When the first assassin The Coven sent (the one Harefoot killed) failed to report back, The Coven immediately sent another. Like the first, this one was instructed to go to the suite in the Blue Aster where the netrunner had been tracked to. Once there, the second assassin was to destroy or recapture the stolen copy of the Deathwatch program, kill the netrunner and anyone with him, and find out what happened to the first assassin, in that order of importance.

The first assassin had been from St. Louis. The second is from Chicago, and she is something of a specialist with explosives.

Patty "Medusa" Borden

Patty Borden is a professional assassin who operates by the code name of



"Medusa," in reference to her deadliness. A small, rather petite, young woman, Borden does not appear to be dangerous. Her innocent looks and peaceable demeanor have gotten her out of more than one scrape, even getting her past police squads that were investigating explosions that she had caused.

Borden is an expert with explosives, which she believes to be the ideal tool for assassinations. As she has explained to former employers, "Explosives kill so much more thoroughly than knives and guns do, and they have the added benefit of destroying almost all evidence that could lead police to the assassin."

Patty Borden is an Elite field agent NPC with Demolitions skill enhanced to 6. She is mentally oriented. Borden does not carry a hand weapon because she believes that to do so would take away the mental edge that relying upon her looks and personality provides.

When she is on the job, however, Patty does carry two concealment grenades and a concussion grenade

in a shoulder bag, along with her plastic explosives.

NPC Motivation Results: *Spade Queen:* Borden is totally centered upon herself, and in her case, this takes the form of pride in her image as a deadly assassin. She will let nothing detract from this image and occasionally puts herself in unnecessary danger to ensure that whatever mission she is on is carried out successfully. *Club 6:* The only time that her carefully maintained shell of professionalism is allowed to slip is during the actual moment of an explosion she has set. Borden loves to watch things blow up, especially when she is responsible.

Patty and the PCs

Borden arrives at the Blue Aster Hotel by 3 p.m., when the police are just beginning to investigate the PCs' suite. Hanging around the hotel's bar for about 15 minutes, she picks up the basics of what has happened, discovering that the first assassin is dead. If the PCs have made it back from Mexico by this time, she will also discover who they are. If not, by smiling nicely, she will find out their names from the desk clerk, who is caught up in the excitement of there

having been a gunfight in the hotel.

The plan Borden formulates is to plant explosives in the PCs' personal vehicle (if the PCs have one) as well as in their suite after the police have left it.

The Car Bomb: If the PCs have a personal vehicle, Borden uses her influence with the desk clerk to find out where in the hotel's subterranean garage it is parked. Then she plants half a kilo of Plastique-9 directly under the car's passenger compartment and wires it to the ignition system.

The concussion effects alone of that much explosive are likely to kill anyone within five meters of the car when the engine is started. In terms of fragmentation effects (pieces of the vehicle's underbody), the burst radius of the explosion is slightly more than 15 meters. As the 2300 AD explosive rules explain (*Director's Guide*, page 55), anyone within 30 meters will have a slight chance of being hit as well.

While the PCs might actually live through such an explosion, it is unlikely that they will be in any shape to continue the adventure, and it is certain that the players will not be very happy about the situation. While Borden's purpose in planting the explosives is to kill the PCs and destroy their copy of the Deathwatch program (at least the one she thinks they have), in game terms, the true purpose of this explosion is to let the players know without a doubt that someone is trying to kill their characters. The intent is to give them an initiative to seek out Harefoot.

To accomplish this effect without killing the PCs, the referee should explain to the players when their characters go to use their vehicle that when they get within 30 meters (they should certainly be more than 15 meters away), they spot an auto thief breaking into it. Just as the PCs begin to react, the thief slides behind the wheel and fiddles with the ignition, at which point the vehicle goes up in smoke. The referee should roll for concussion and fragmentation damage to the PCs, remembering that other vehicles are likely to provide some cover. If the referee has been careful, the PCs should receive little or no damage, but the danger should have seemed very real to the players.

The Suite Explosion: If the PCs do not have a vehicle in which to plant explosives, Borden will resort to booby-trapping their suite. Ideally, if the PCs do not arrive back from their mission until after the police have discovered the body in their suite, Borden will be able to plant the explosives after the police have left the suite but before the PCs get a chance to enter it. Remember that if the PCs were late coming back from their mission, the police would have detained them in the lobby for questioning.

The trap Borden sets up consists of half a kilo of Plastique-9 strapped to the inside of the main door and rigged to explode when the electronic lock is keyed open. Again, the concussion and fragmentation radii will be as described above. And again, the real purpose of this event is not to kill the PCs, but to make the players aware that their characters are in danger. For this reason, the referee should have a group of police officers entering the suite one last time to check for clues. Just as the PCs enter the far end of the hallway on the way to their rooms, the officers key the lock, and the door explodes in their faces.

One note of humor that the referee can add to the resultant situation is that after the gunshots earlier in the day and now the explosion, the other guests on this floor (at least) will be checking out of the hotel in droves.

If All Else Fails: If there is no way for Borden to plant either of the bombs described above, she will be forced to lure the PCs into an alley and explode a trash can or to create some other such trap. This will require the use of a radio-controlled detonator, and as Borden does not want to be too close to the explosives when she sets them off, she will have less control over how close the PCs will be to the center of the explosion. The referee can assume that she botches things somewhat and the PCs do not get close enough to be killed. Afterward, a bit of thought about the implications of a mysterious figure luring them into a trap should give them pause to think, however.

ATTACKS

After Borden makes her abortive attempt on the PCs' lives, The Coven contacts her once again and sends her looking for Harefoot. Borden ends up following a false lead to New York and is effectively out of the story from this point on.

As mentioned earlier. The Coven's new action concerning the PCs is to put word out on the streets of Corpus Christi that there is a bounty on their heads. This is primarily to give the referee a means of getting the PCs moving again if they begin to slow down. Any time the referee believes that the PCs are spending too much time in one location, he can simply have some nameless person or persons show up and begin firing at them all. The referee should base the bounty hunters' abilities upon how much the PCs can safely handle.



OUT ON THE TOWN

When the PCs try to track Harefoot down in hopes of finding out why attempts are being made on their lives, the referee will need to be familiar with the locations that Harefoot tended to frequent. Besides those locations near the Blue Aster where the PCs could have originally met Harefoot, she frequented numerous other places about Corpus Christi. Eight of the most important of these are indicated on the map on the next page and are described in some detail below.

Frankenstein's: If the PCs go to Slasher Flick or The Racetrack (see the descriptions on page 12) searching for Harefoot, they will hear that another favorite hangout for punkers, wireheads, and bionics is Frankenstein's. When the PCs check out this nightclub, some smooth talking and a little bit of cash will reveal the information that, yes, Harefoot is well-known there, that she lives at Phyllis' Rooming House, and that she sometimes sleeps at "tubetown" (local slang for the E Z Rest).

Phyllis' Rooming House: This establishment is a very old apartment complex run by an ancient-looking Japanese man who answers to the name of Phyllis. Phyllis will absolutely refuse to let the PCs into Harefoot's room, but for a little bit of cash, he will tell them that Harefoot frequented the Big R Discount Store's cafeteria for lunch, and that she often visited the Silver Platter and Dusty's Pawn Shop.

E Z Rest: The E Z Rest is a collection of 1200 horizontal plastic tubes, each a meter and a half in diameter and two meters long, stacked 20 high, 20 wide, and three deep on what was obviously once a corner parking lot.

A complex arrangement of scaffolding provides access to the tiny door in each tube's end. Inside each tube is a bed, a small toilet, and a flat-screen video screen. The charge for a night's stay is \$10, plus \$1 if a computer hookup is desired.

When the PCs get to the E Z Rest, they find it attended by a teenage boy who says that he remembers Harefoot quite well. For a price, he reveals that he seems to remember her having mentioned Lizzy's and Monkeyshines a couple of times.

Lizzy's: This is a sleazy topless bar that the young attendant at the E Z Rest would dearly love to get into. No information concerning Harefoot can be found here.

Monkeyshines: This is a more normal bar, and Harefoot has visited it a few times in the past to meet someone on business. The bouncer here remembers her from her description, but he knows next to nothing about her.

The Big R Discount Store: There is very little that needs to be said about this establishment. It is the 24th-century equivalent to a dime store, with a cheap cafeteria included. When money was tight, Harefoot would take some of her meals here.

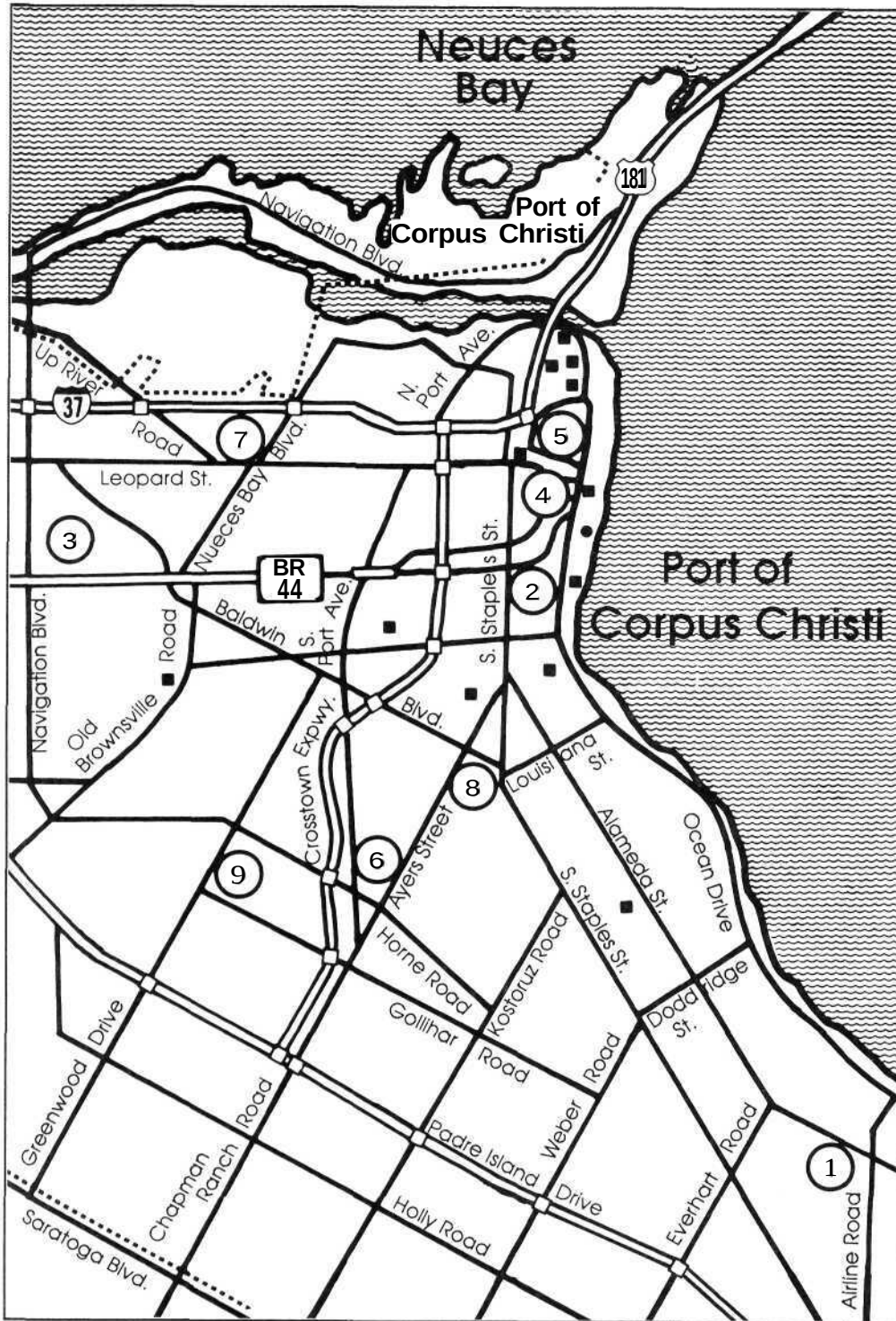
Silver Platter: This is a special kind of antique store, one that carries only books and records. As the 24th-century's electronic expertise has reached the point where nearly all music and literature is disseminated by computer, real books, phonograph records, and magnetic tapes are only of interest to collectors. Harefoot browsed through this store quite often, finding that it soothed her nerves to do so.

The proprietor will not be able to tell the PCs anything about Harefoot's haunts, other than that they might find her at Frankenstein's with the other wireheads.

Dusty's Pawn Shop: This is the location the PCs need to discover. Frank Wright, the owner of the place, is a very trusted friend of Harefoot, but he is naturally reticent with strangers. This is partly because his pawn shop business actually serves as a front for a more lucrative black market business in electronics and electronically stolen information.

Frank is something of a computer expert himself, and it is to him that Harefoot ran after escaping the assassins. He bandaged her shoulder, cashed in her

Corpus Christi



Key

1. Blue Aster
2. Frankenstein's
3. Phyllis' Rooming House
4. E Z Rest
5. Lizzy's
6. Monkeyshines
7. Big R Discount Store
8. Silver Platter
9. Dusty's Pawn Shop

1 kilometer

↑ N

plane ticket by computer, and got her another ticket first to San Antonio, from there to Gateway by scramjet, and finally on a passenger ship from Gateway to Tirane (Alpha Centauri), where she could safely turn her information over to the authorities.

The PCs will need to gain Frank's trust in order to gain any information from him. They need to learn from him where Harefoot went and how they can follow. If they think to ask, he will make all of the travel arrangements for them himself, for a very reasonable fee.

Odd Pursuits

In this chapter, the PCs follow Harefoot to Gateway, planning to accompany her to Tirane (Alpha Centauri), but they soon find themselves involved in a space battle before their journey has half begun.

WRIGHT'S AID

Once the PCs talk with Frank Wright at Dusty's Pawn Shop (see page 44) and ascertain that Harefoot has gone to Gateway to catch a passenger ship for Tirane, they will need to follow her if they are to discover the answer to the mystery that has pinpointed them as targets for assassination. Wright can be of great help in sending them on their way.

Normally, the cost for a passenger to go to orbit is Lv3000 by scramjet or rocket plane, or Lv4500 by shuttle (a more comfortable ride), and the cost of a standard passenger ticket on an interstellar liner is Lv100 per light-year, which translates to about Lv450 from Earth to Tirane. Thus, a ticket from the Earth's surface to Gateway, and then to Tirane totals Lv3450. But normally, people purchase those tickets well in advance of the time they plan to leave. The PCs, however, need to leave immediately, and that pushes the price upward somewhat.

If the PCs ask Wright to get the tickets for them, as he did for Harefoot, he will be able to do so for 20 percent above the normal cost, a total of Lv4140 per person. The referee should note that this will eat up the majority of the money that the PCs received for their mission to Monterey.

Also, the PCs will need to learn the fictitious name under which Harefoot's strip was booked. Wright purchased her tickets under the name Mary Pinchon.

But the PCs have a more serious problem with catching up to Harefoot. By the time they reach Gateway, the *Columbus*, the *New Orleans*-class passenger liner carrying Harefoot, will have already begun its trip to Tirane. Wright has a solution to this problem, however. He has an old friend at Gateway, he says, who owes him a large favor. Considering how much Harefoot means to Wright, he is willing to call in that favor if it means that the PCs will be able to catch up with Harefoot and help protect her from the enemies she has made for herself this time.

The name of Wright's old friend is Amos Pickering. Pickering runs a cargo hauler out of Gateway (occasionally with a less-than-legal load), and if the PCs can get there in a hurry, he should be willing to ferry them out to the departing passenger liner for a minimal fee—say Lv1000, total.

If the PCs do not ask Wright's aid in putting together the tickets for this trip, but instead attempt to do so on their own, the total cost per person should be closer to Lv4500. Wright will still call in his favor from Pickering to help the PCs on their way, and the cost for that portion of the trip will remain the same.

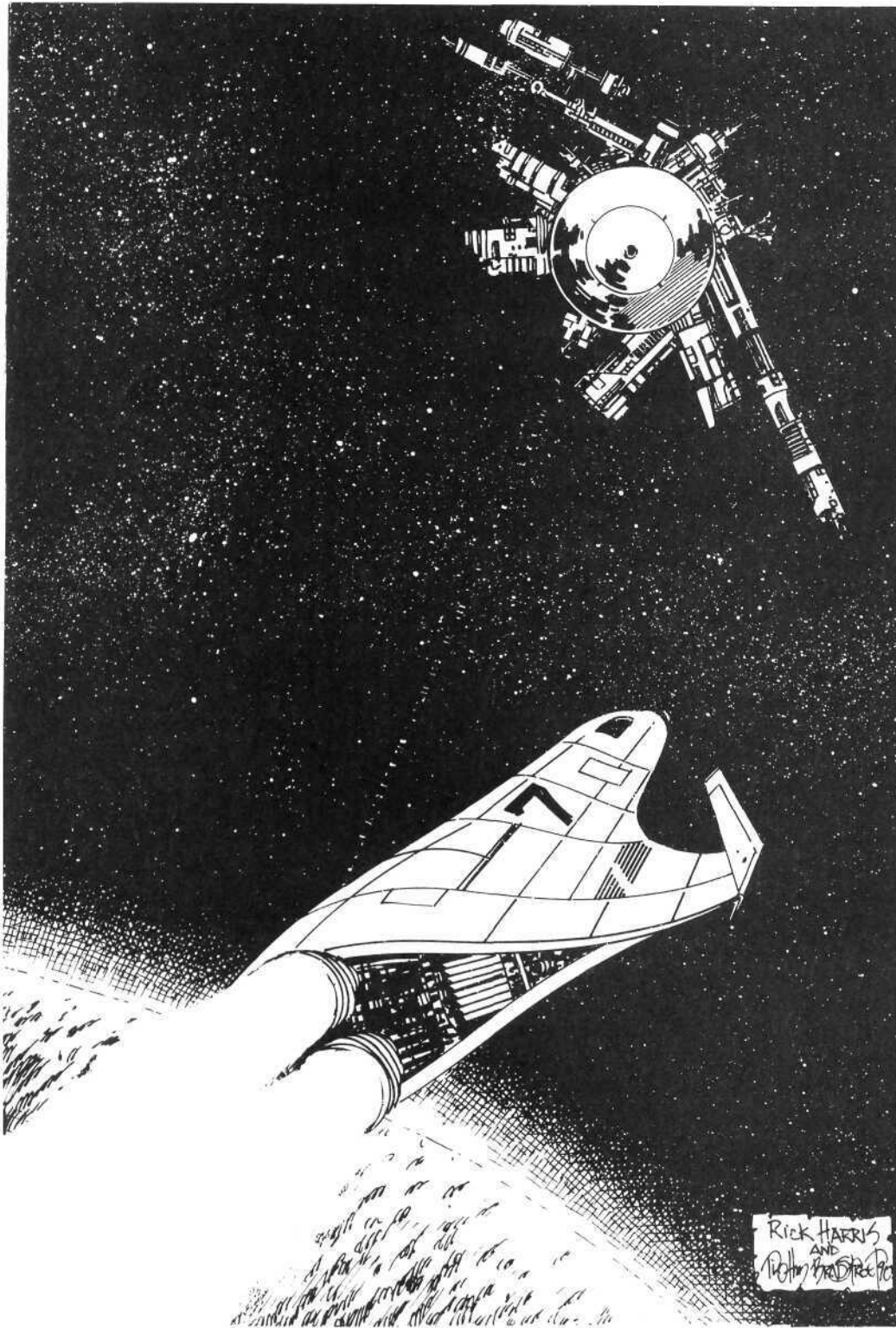
THE TRIP TO GATEWAY

After talking to Wright, then, the PCs set off on a hurried trip to catch up with Harefoot.

The first part of the journey consists of a ride via airfilm train to San Antonio. That trip takes the player characters less than an hour from the time they leave Dusty's Pawn Shop until the time they finally arrive at the scramjet field in San Antonio.

In San Antonio, the PCs must wait for two hours, while the ground crew finishes preparing their scramjet for the trip to orbit. The trip itself requires another two hours.





When the scramjet arrives at Gateway, it takes half an hour to be cleared to dock. After this, it only takes a few minutes for the PCs to be cleared to disembark. Another few minutes are spent as the PCs work their way down the weightless docking facility to reach the gate at which Pickering's cargo vessel, the *Daisy May* (a Commercant-class ship—see ***Ships of the French Arm***, pages 42 and 43) is docked. Another 45 minutes are required to clear the *Daisy May* for departure, and then the player characters are on their way to meet the *Columbus*, which has been informed of their intent. Little do the PCs know that the fireworks are about to begin again.



STATISTIC SHEETS

The statistic sheets in this chapter are in the format given in the 2300 AD role-playing game. For those referees who would like to use *Star Cruiser* (GDW's boardgame of space combat in the 2300 AD milieu) to run this combat full statistic sheets for that game are included on pages 60 and 61 of this book.

AMOS PICKERING

Amos Pickering, owner of the *Daisy May*, is a portly man in his late fifties who came to space late in life. He sought the challenge of attempting to set up a smuggling operation under the nose of Orbital Quarantine Command (commonly called simply OQC), the multinational organization devoted to protecting Earth from contamination by non-terrestrial organisms. OQC insists on examining absolutely everything that comes to Gateway headed for Earth, which makes smuggling items to the planet difficult, if not completely impossible. Items leaving Earth are not subjected to such intense scrutiny, however.

In his younger days, Pickering built up something of a fortune smuggling items between his native England and the continent, and he has used a good portion of that money to purchase the *Daisy May*. Pickering has been in space for two years now, slowly building up his expertise in smuggling things off planet. He dreams of someday managing to smuggle something in the opposite direction, simply for the admittedly irrational pleasure of having thwarted the ultimate authoritarianism of OQC.

A BATTLE IN SPACE

The *Columbus* is a large and lumbering vessel that will require slightly over seven days to travel the 4.5 light-years between Earth and Tirane. This vessel left Gateway almost three hours before the PCs set foot there. Pickering's *Daisy May*, when unloaded as she is now, is a bit more than three times as fast as the fully loaded *Columbus*. Consequently, Pickering expects to overtake the *Columbus* in a little under 90 minutes, just a bit beyond the orbit of Mars.

Unfortunately for the PCs, a third vessel will soon to join the race, a small fighter craft that is roughly twice as fast as the *Daisy May*.

Just before the *Columbus* left Gateway, The Coven tracked Harefoot to the passenger liner. Calling upon its farthest-reaching resources, The Coven also managed to recruit a few agents at Gateway itself and sent them on the *Columbus* to silence Harefoot once and for all before she could get proof of the Deathwatch program to authorities on Tirane.

But then The Coven learned that the PCs had eluded all attempts to kill them and were on their way to the *Columbus* as well, intending to help Harefoot in her self-appointed mission. Unless the PCs could be stopped, the agents on the *Columbus* would find themselves outnumbered before they knew it.

So The Coven stretched its resources to the utmost and pulled a few more strings. Shortly thereafter, an unmarked Mistral-IIIbis-class warship left a secret base on Luna and headed to intercept the *Daisy May*. Its mission—to destroy the cargo hauler and do away with the PCs. The crewmembers of the fighter expect an easy kill, as the cargo vessel is not armed—or so they think.

Actually, Pickering's ship is not totally devoid of cargo. The *Daisy May* is carrying two black-market Hyde Dynamic one-mission definite-kill missiles linked to an unauthorized missile control station on the vessel's bridge. When the fighter makes its attack, Pickering will not hesitate to deploy one or both of the missiles.

Running the Battle

Page 49 contains a map for use when running this space battle. The points marked are the positions of the *Columbus*, the *Daisy May*, and the unregistered fighter. Pages 50-51 contain statistics sheets for the *Daisy May* and the *Mistral-IIIbis-class* fighter. The *Columbus* has no attack capability, so no sheet is provided for it (but any attack on the passenger liner will bring swift retribution in the form of a score of military vessels sweeping the area for the attacker).

The referee should allow the players to run the *Daisy May*, and he should run the fighter. If, after the first missile has been fired, the fighter seems to be in danger of being disabled or destroyed by the second missile, or if the *Daisy May* enters the same hex as the *Columbus*, the referee should have the fighter break off its attack and return to Luna.

Space Battle



Key

-  Starship
-  Liner
-  PCs
-  Fighter

Starship Data

Ship Name <i>Daisy May</i>	Class <i>Commercant</i>	Movement 3
Registry (or Armed Force) Pickering Cargo Co.	Nationality American	Year Built 2253

Sensor Operator Skill Level None	Passive Signature 3	Passive Sensors None
	Active Signature 7	Active Sensors None

Hull Hit Capacity 6/2/3	Sensors None
Power Plant Hit Capacity 12/2	Computer
Crew <i>Off Bridge:</i> two engineering. <i>Bridge:</i> one command, one navigation, one communication, one engineering, one computer (no backup crew).	Remote Station
	Weapons Mount None
Screens None	Continuing Damage

Damage Control

List characters and skill levels of damage control personnel.
 Julie Tummons: Electronics-2, Mechanical-2, Ship Drive Engineering-2.
 Herb Keeran: Electronics-1, Mechanical-1, Ship Drive Engineering-1.

Weapons

List weapons with their gunner's skill, targeting bonus, damage.
 None

List remote objects and Remote Pilot skill.

Two Hyde Dynamic one-mission, definite-kill missiles: *Movement:* 7 *Passive Signature:* 1 *Active Signature:* 1
Active Sensors: 5 *Passive Sensors:* 8 *Hull Hits:* 1/1/1 *Power Plant Hits:* 1/1/1 *Weapons:* 1 *Detonation Laser:* 10x2.
 Janet Kreig: Remote Pilot-0.

Starship Data

Ship Name Unregistered	Class <i>Mistral-IIIbis</i>	Movement 6
Registry (or Armed Force) Unregistered	Nationality French (assumed)	Year Built Unregistered

Sensor Operator Skill Level Sensor-2	Passive Signature 3	Passive Sensors 10
	Active Signature 2	Active Sensors None

Hull Hit Capacity 2/.1/1	Sensors
Power Plant Hit Capacity 3/1	Computer
Crew One pilot, one weapons officer.	Remote Station None
	Weapons Mount
Screens None	Continuing Damage

Damage Control

List characters and skill levels of damage control personnel. None
--

Weapons

List weapons with their gunner's skill, targeting bonus, damage. <i>Guiscard LL-98: Damage: x1 Targeting: +0 Targeting Computer: +1 Gunner Skill: 2.</i>
--

List remote objects and Remote Pilot skill. None
--

Late Arrivals

In this chapter, the PCs board the *Columbus* and encounter Harefoot in the flesh one last time.

ABOARD THE COLUMBUS

Once The Coven's fighter craft is driven off or destroyed, Pickering has his crew dock the *Daisy May* with the *Columbus* to let the PCs board the passenger liner. He then bids the PCs farewell and wishes them luck in whatever it is they are doing that is so important it requires them to be ferried to a liner that has already "set sail."

The PCs are welcomed aboard the *Columbus* and ushered to their cabins, after which they are free to do as they please.

The *Columbus* is an extremely large vessel, capable of holding 1000 passengers. A fairly thorough description of its sister ship, the *New Orleans*, after which the class was christened, can be found in "Terror's Lair," the introductory adventure included in the 2300 AD *Play Aids* book (In the basic set), as well as In Ships of the French Arm.

Finding Harefoot's cabin, however, is no trouble. The PCs have only to ask one of the ship's stewards (remembering to use Harefoot's pseudonym, Mary Pinchon, of course).

Task: To pick the lock on Harefoot's door: Routine. Security Systems. 3 seconds.

Inside the Cabin

When the PCs check at Harefoot's cabin, however, they receive no answer to their knocking. If they ask a steward to open the door for them, he will unlock the door and open it a crack, then call out for "Ms. Pinchon." Receiving no reply, he will push the door open a bit further and stick his head inside. Almost immediately, he will pull his head back, and with a visibly pale face relock the door and set off at once for another steward. If, at any time, the PCs decide to pick the lock on their own, it will be fairly easy (see the task in the sidebar) for them to do so.

Inside the cabin are four bodies. One is Harefoot. A quick examination of her body will reveal eight darts stuck in her torso, and later tests will prove them to be poisoned. Two of the other bodies are of bionically enhanced individuals, and a quick examination of them will reveal that they have both been shot to death, apparently with the pistol that Harefoot has clenched in her hand and still jacked to her head. It will also be obvious to anyone who may have heard of implanted wrist guns that these two bodies each have one implanted in their right wrists. The fourth body is of a slender, young man who is jacked into Harefoot's WBM cyberdeck. Other than some blistering around the neural jack in his left temple and some blood draining from inside his left ear, he appears to be uninjured. That he is dead is obvious, however, from his lack of pulse and the dull fixedness of his open eyes.

Dealing with the Authorities

If the authorities have found out about Harefoot's death—if the PCs had a steward open the cabin door for them, for example—the PCs will have to do some fancy talking to be allowed to examine anything in Harefoot's room. If they have accumulated any renown points in previous adventures, this would be a good time to use them. Also working for them will be the fact that the *Columbus'* captain would like to clear up the mystery of what happened, and the fact that they have seven days of travel in which to convince him of their



usefulness in doing so. Ultimately, the referee will have to be the judge of how well the PCs argue their point, but he should be somewhat lenient.

Of course, if the authorities have not found out about the deaths, the PCs have plenty of time to investigate.

Exploring the Cyberdeck

It should be obvious to the players that their characters are not going to learn anything from Harefoot. Consequently, if they want to find out what the motivating force has been behind the attacks on them and behind Harefoot's death, someone is going to have to access Harefoot's cyberdeck. It should be equally obvious that the last person to do so died in the attempt.

Ideally, to effectively investigate Harefoot's deck, one of the PCs should be a netrunner. Considering that the last person to jack directly into the deck apparently had his brain fried as a result, it should be obvious to a netrunning PC that jacking into Harefoot's deck is a bad idea. The referee should explain to the PC that it would seem possible to enter Harefoot's deck via another cybermodem, exactly as if entering a larger computer system. If the netrunning PC does so, the referee can run the event as a combat in the small network mapped out on page 56.

In this run, initially the PC will only encounter the passive resistance of the deck's defense. To simulate this, the PC should roll for the task in the sidebar each time he attempts to pass through a node and go deeper into the system (there is no resistance to movement out of the system, so no task roll need be made in that case).

After having reached the Volume level of the deck, the netrunning PC will encounter something of a mystery. That mystery is that there is a 20-point block of Volume, the boundaries of which can be perceived, but with no perceptible point of entry. The answer to this mystery is that this 20-point block of Volume contains the copy Harefoot made of the Deathwatch program, and she tied the access point for this block to the tail of the hidden AI Cold Storage program. That AI now holds a recording of her persona, the last remnant of Harefoot. (Details of the Cold Storage program are given on pages 54 and 55.) Only by first discovering the access to the AI program and then by getting past Harefoot's recorded persona will the PC be able to access the copy of the Deathwatch program. To discover the secret block of Volume that holds the Cold Storage program, the PC must roll for the second task in the sidebar.

Task: To pass a node: Variable. Computer and Accuracy. Absolute (1 action).

Referee: The defense level of the deck is the target number. Each time the task is failed, add one point to the difficulty number to pass that particular node.

Task: To detect the secret Volume: Difficult. Computer and Accuracy. Absolute (1 action).

Cold Storage

Electronic storage of personalities is a closely guarded secret held by a select group of the most powerful of Earth's citizens.

These people hope that one day medical science will be able to grow clones of their original bodies and graft their recorded personalities into those clones, ensuring them a type of immortality. There have even been a few attempts to graft recorded personalities on to other human beings, a sort of body stealing.

Task: To evaluate Harefoot's deck: Difficult, Computer. 20 seconds.

CONFRONTING HAREFOOT

The next portion of the adventure requires the referee to role-play the recorded persona of Harefoot. In order to do so, the referee will need to be familiar with the nature of the Cold Storage program.

The Nature of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence is a very common concept in the cyberpunk genre, as can only be expected once the idea of a direct mind-to-computer interface has been established. The AI program described below is based upon a self-replicating mathematical model that can incorporate input into its matrices and thereby adapt itself to that input. In effect, these programs can "learn" how best to tackle a problem to which they are assigned.

The problems with such programs are threefold. First, they are of such complexity that they are extremely expensive. Not only are a lot of time and expertise required to create the programs in the first place, the very fact that they are very rare serves to inflate the prices they command. Second, AI programs typically require a lot of memory to store. For cyberjockeys, this translates into less space remaining in a cyberdeck for other programs that might be needed on a run. Finally, the mathematical models upon which these AI programs are based are prone to crashing unexpectedly. A healthy program "pulses" in seemingly random patterns, indicating its openness to further input. An unhealthy program crashes in one of two ways: It either enters a "lapsing" pattern in which it fades to nothing, or it enters a "loop" from which no exit is possible (although any files stored in a looping program can be read and copied).

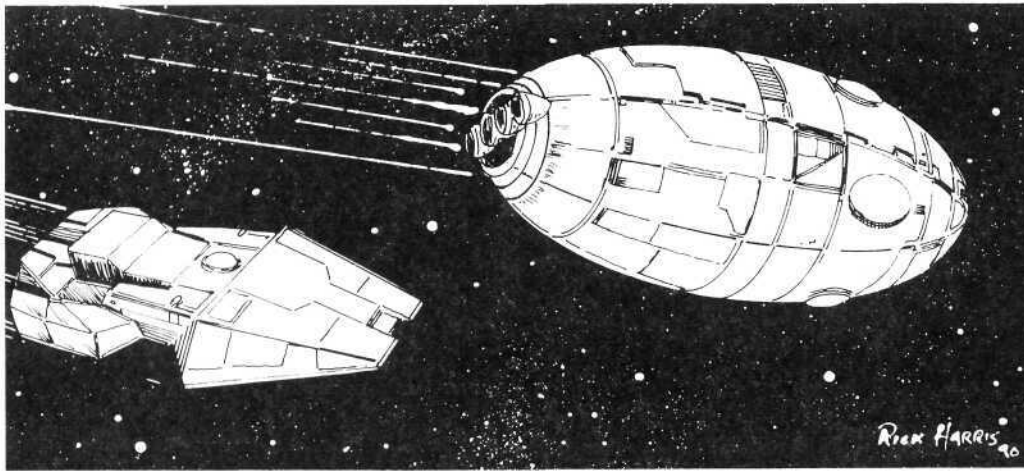
The Cold Storage Program

In the middle decades of the 20th century, a few people attempted to cheat death by having their bodies frozen before all signs of life were extinct. It was their hope that in future ages, when medical science had advanced, they could be thawed and brought back to life. With the development of direct brain-to-computer interfaces, a new method of cold storage has been developed—the recording of brain activity in a computer program.

Because of the incredible number of connections in the human brain, only very sophisticated AI programs are complex enough to record brain activity. But as explained above, AI programs are prone to crashing. In the case of the Cold Storage program, there is a chance that the program will crash any time it is used, including just after the initial recording procedure, as well as the (as yet unsuccessful) grafting procedure. For this reason, multiple recordings are usually made. In the hopes that at least one will remain viable throughout the entire process. It is possible for such a recording to be accessed by cybermodem, allowing a cyberjockey to communicate with the recorded personality, for instance, but this use also runs the risk that the program may crash.

Whenever a Cold Storage program is used in any manner, a check should be made to see if it crashes immediately afterward. The target number to be used for this check is 8. A roll below the target number means the program "lapses"; a roll of exactly the target number means that the program "loops" (and another recording could be made from this one, if there is another Cold Storage program to record to); and a roll above the target number means that the program "pulses" and remains viable. (However, because of her computer expertise, Harefoot is fully aware of the fragility of AI programs, and even as a recording, she understands how to avoid some of the patterns that would push the Cold Storage program into a crash. Therefore, the referee should add Harefoot's Computer skill rating of 7 to the roll.)

The Cold Storage program requires a Volume of 80. Note that while such a program could be recorded in pieces (such as in three Second String programs), it can only be run (to copy a personality, graft that personality to a living brain,



or allow that personality to be communicated with) In a system that can contain it as a whole. The price is Lv10,000,000 or more.

Harefoot's Recording

Harefoot discovered her copy of the Cold Storage program some months ago during another illicit run, and she grafted it into her cyberdeck, thinking that it might come in handy some time in the future. While waiting for Frank Wright to make her connections to Tirane, she decided to record her personality onto the program as a final protection for her copy of the Deathwatch program, and as a chance for revenge should the assassins finally kill her and try to access her deck.

The last thing the recording remembers, then, is having visited Frank Wright. Although it suspects that the original Harefoot must be dead, it does not know for sure, and this is one of the topics that the recording will choose to avoid for fear of crashing the Cold Storage program.

Accessing Harefoot's Recording

If a netrunning PC discovers the access to the secret block of Volume that holds the Cold Storage program, Harefoot's recording will be poised just inside, on the alert for intruders. It will hesitate for one action when the PC enters, recognizing the PC as a potential friend. Of course, if the PC is terribly upset at Harefoot for having gotten the PC group mixed up in this mess, the feeling of friendship might not be mutual.

If the PC tries to talk to the recorded Harefoot, she will explain to him everything that has occurred up to the time she went to Frank Wright's. Also, she will let him enter and read the Deathwatch program, but only if he jacks out of his own deck and jacks directly into hers (thus precluding any chance of stealing the program from her).

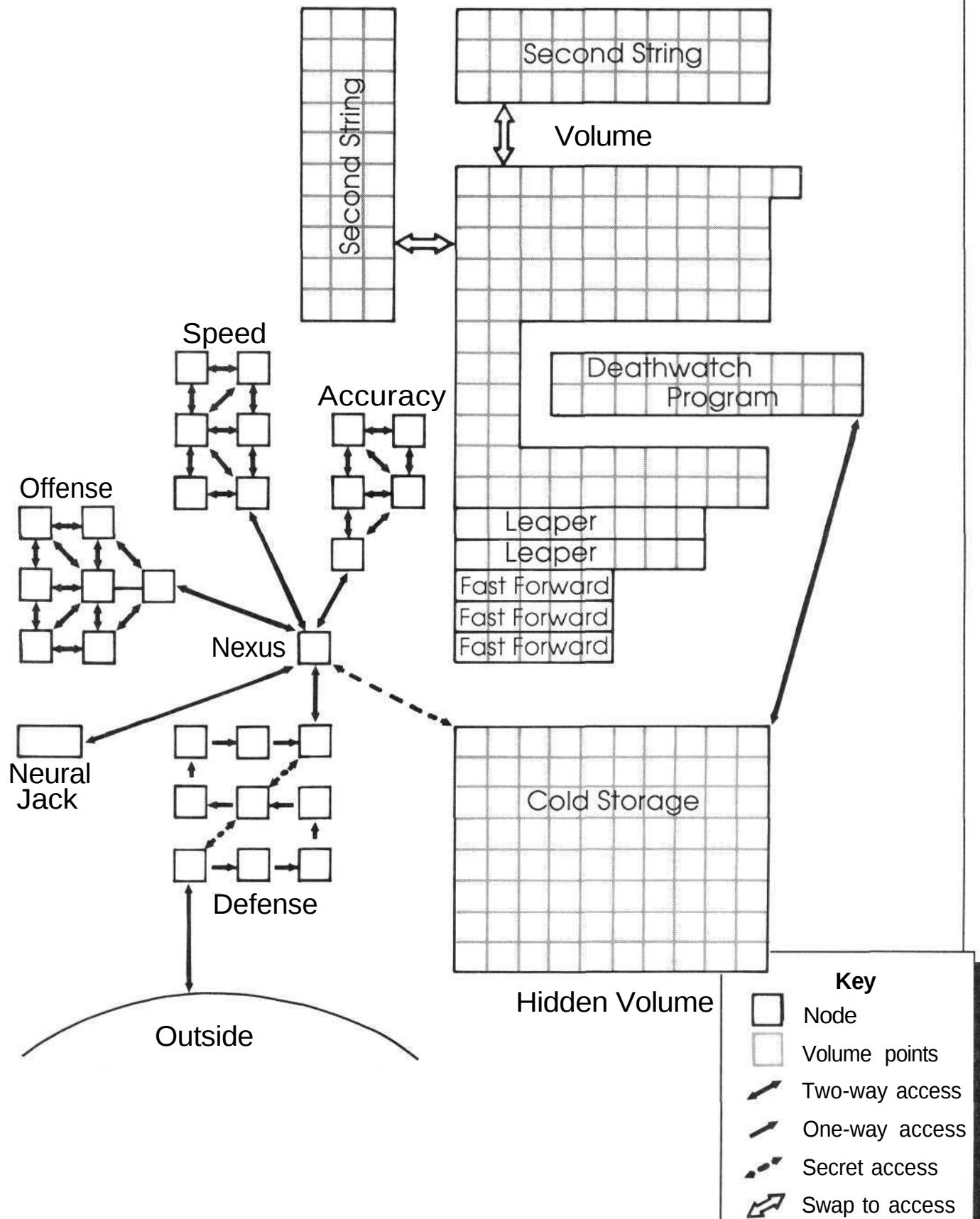
If, at any time, the PC attacks the recorded Harefoot, she will use the utmost of her abilities to drive him out.

If There Are No PC Netrunners

If none of the players are netrunners, the successful use of Computer skill to evaluate Harefoot's deck (see the task in the sidebar on page 54) will reveal that it seems as if someone is still accessing it, from the inside. (That should startle them!) But the PCs will have to wait until they reach Tirane to hire a netrunner to enter the cybermodem and check it out for them before they can learn about its contents. The referee should remember, as well, that a hired netrunner will not be recognized as a friend by the recorded Harefoot, and consequently he will be attacked upon entering the secret block. The PCs will have to think of some sort of message to have him leave in the cybermodem that will convince Harefoot he is an agent of theirs.



Harefoot's Cybermodem



Conclusion

The Coven has reached the limits of its influence. After the PCs find Harefoot's body, they will have the remainder of the seven-day voyage to analyze Harefoot's cybermodem, make plans for contacting the authorities on Tirane, and recuperate from any damage they have taken. The referee should describe the relative peacefulness of the voyage. After the intensity of their experience, the PCs should appreciate the chance to wind down.

UPON REACHING TIRANE

When the *Columbus* docks at Tirane, the PCs will need to get their copy of the Deathwatch program to some sort of official so the plot's originators can be exposed and the economic danger ended. Whatever plan the PCs have and whoever they approach—police, media, or government officials—the results will be about the same: After some skepticism, the official will be convinced of the validity of the evidence and will usher them on to the next official.

The PCs might not want to reveal the entire contents of the program until they have met with someone with enough power to act against the plot. Some lower officials may try to separate the PCs from their evidence, wanting to accept the accolades for bringing the Deathwatch program to light. If the PCs raise enough of a ruckus, however, these officials will acquiesce to their demands to personally accompany the evidence wherever it goes. Of course, if the PCs refuse to give the whole story until they have reached the top, revealing along the way only enough information to pique the interest of those they meet, they will have ensured that the story is not separated from them.

The PCs should not reveal the Cold Storage program containing Harefoot's persona. The program itself is worth nearly as much as the details of the Deathwatch program, and while the Deathwatch program will cease to have any value once The Coven has been exposed, the Cold Storage program will retain its value for decades, at least, as a possible opportunity for immortality.

For the PCs to pass on the details of the Deathwatch program, they will have to come to terms with Harefoot's recording. She wants to be kept secret until the PCs discover some means of giving her a new body, if possible, or until a less fragile AI program can be developed to protect her existence. In return, she will accompany the PCs as a sort of secret advisor on future missions.

THE FRUITS OF BRAVERY

The players will feel good about having averted an economic catastrophe that would have caused suffering for millions, including their characters. But they may want something more tangible as well. If the PCs have come to terms with Harefoot's recording, the referee should stress her potential importance as an ally, though she will undoubtedly complain every time they contact her (because of the chance of the AI program crashing). Any netrunning PC should feel fortunate to use Harefoot's souped-up cybermodem on future runs. The deck can safely be used without accessing Harefoot, but Harefoot will act as a guardian angel for the netrunning character, reaching out of the Cold Storage program to offer aid on a computer run if the PCs' situation ever becomes critical (although the referee should not inform the player of this ahead of time).

The PCs will be reimbursed for expenses but will not receive other cash awards. They will get employment offers from various sources, depending on who they took the Deathwatch program to. In addition to Experience points, the PCs should receive at least one or two renown points for their work.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

There are many possibilities for using this adventure as a launching point for others. Certainly any members of The Coven would still appreciate a chance to get revenge on the PCs—the referee can assume that not all of them were uncovered when the Deathwatch program was brought to light. As well, the Cold Storage program the PCs have come across might make the PCs want to search out other such programs.

One other adventure possibility that should be mentioned, however, is that of expanding upon the events in this conclusion. A sneaky referee might want to assume that, considering how slow the *Columbus* is, The Coven was able to send a faster vessel to Tirane to drum up a "welcoming committee" for the PCs. Therefore, after the brief respite on the passenger liner, the PCs might find themselves embroiled in another fight for their lives while trying to get their information to the proper authorities.

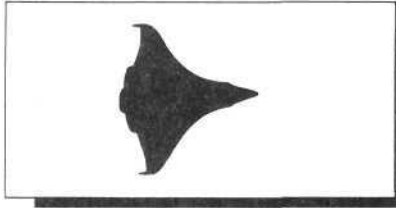
Weapons Data

[illegible]

NPC Data

[illegible]

Ship Status Sheet



Mistral-IIIbis

Ship Name

Fighter

Ship Type

France (assumed)

Owning Nation or World

Movement

6

Radial
Reflected

1

Radial
Profile

-3

Screens

0

Lateral
Reflected

2

Lateral
Profile

-3

Radiated
Signature

2

Targeting
Computer

+1

Armor

0

Hull Hits

Minor	
Major	

Power Plant Hits

Inoperable	
------------	--

Surface Fixture Hits

—Weapons—						—TTAs and Submunitions—																					
1. ☒	2. ☐	3. ☐	4. ☐	5. ☐	6. ☐	1. Communicator	2. ☐	3. ☐	4. ☐	5. ☐	6. ☐	7. ☐	8. ☐	9. ☐	10. ☐	11. ☐	12. ☐	13. ☐	14. ☐	15. ☐	16. ☐	17. ☐	18. ☐	19. ☐	20. ☐	21. ☐	22. ☐
—Active Sensors—						—Passive Sensors—																					
Primary						Primary						10															
Redundant						Redundant																					

Critical Hits

—Computer—						—Tactical Action Center—						—Bridge—																													
Primary	2. ☐	3. ☐	4. ☐	5. ☐	6. ☐	Active Operator	2. ☐	3. ☐	4. ☐	5. ☐	6. ☐	Passive Operator	2. ☐	3. ☐	4. ☐	5. ☐	6. ☐	Captain	2. ☐	3. ☐	4. ☐	5. ☐	6. ☐	Engineer	2. ☐	3. ☐	4. ☐	5. ☐	6. ☐	Navigator	2. ☐	3. ☐	4. ☐	5. ☐	6. ☐	Communications	2. ☐	3. ☐	4. ☐	5. ☐	6. ☐
—Life Support—						—Drive—						—Hangar Deck—						—Missile Bay—						—Continuous—																	

Damage Control

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	----	----	----	----	----	----

Ordnance

(record ordnance load and type)

Crew

Comfort	0
Crew Quality	+2



Conversion Notes

At the time this adventure is being written, there are very few cyberpunk role-playing games out on the market. R. Talsorian's *Cyberpunk* is the oldest of them, and its line includes a few Sourcebooks that expand upon the system and its environment. FASA's *Shadowrun* has recently been released, followed by a *Shadowrun* referee screen with a short adventure included, and *Mercurial*, a full-fledged adventure for the line. The only other cyberpunk role-playing game on the market at present (besides 2300 AD's *Earth/Cybertech* Sourcebook, that is) is BTRC's *SpaceTime*, with its supplemental set of rules for running adventures in the computer net. A great number of other companies have expressed the intention of publishing cyberpunk games in the not-too-distant future, and by the time this adventure reaches press, a few of those games may be on the market as well.

But a problem every cyberpunk referee is sure to face for awhile to come is the scarcity of cyberpunk adventures. For that reason we give you the following guidelines for adapting *Deathwatch Program* to whatever system you may be running at present.

THE 2300 AD UNIVERSE

2300 AD is a game of humanity's first exploration among the stars. Although the game is set 300 years in our future, two centuries have been virtually lost in recovering from a limited nuclear war that occurred at the end of the 20th century. As a result, the dawning of the 24th century finds humanity no further than 50 light-years from its home.

The game system is intended to reflect "hard" science fiction without becoming hopelessly complex. There is no artificial gravity in the 2300 AD universe, and although there are lasers and a few plasma weapons, the majority of humanity's fighting still relies upon gunpowder weapons.

Battle is a grim business in this system. Although player characters have a few advantages that non-player characters do not (the choice of whether or not to duck when under autofire, for example—NPCs must roll versus a Coolness rating), death in combat is a constant possibility for PCs as well as NPCs. When combat involves vehicles and heavier weapons, the chance of PC death is even greater.

Combat turns take 30 seconds in 2300 AD, and each character acts twice during that period of time. Turns in the computer net last 10 seconds, and it is not unusual for characters to get four actions during that period of time.

Event resolution, from picking a lock to firing a starship weapon, is based upon a task system. Tasks are rated in ranks of Simple, Routine, Difficult, Formidable, and Impossible. A character with a skill that reflects passing familiarity with a subject will succeed at a Simple task 90 percent of the time, a Routine task 50 percent of the time, a Difficult task 10 percent of the time, and will have no chance of succeeding at Formidable tasks or higher. Skill levels range from 0 (some very basic knowledge) to 10 or higher, with the average PC's best skills falling somewhere around level 4 or 5.

Knowing a few other things might be helpful when converting this adventure to another system. One is that most measurements are metric. The combat movement for the ground and air vehicles in the book are in meters, for example. The movement ratings for the starships are in hexes, each hex equaling 200,000 kilometers (one light-second). And each turn of space combat equals one minute of time. Also, the detonation laser missiles that the cargo vessel



carries are each one-shot weapons; they explode and lase through a multitude of lenses in a shotgun type of pattern. It should be noted as well that because of the speeds and distances involved in space combat, a vessel has to be within one hex of its target before it has any chance of hitting—within the same hex is best. Finally, the FTL travel in this universe is based upon a "stutter-warp" effect, which is to say that vessels jump thousands of times per second, but only a few hundred yards per jump, rather than disappearing at one end of their voyage and reappearing at the other. The result is a fluid-seeming movement that simply travels faster than light. Also of note is the fact such travel involves no momentum.

MAKING THE CONVERSION

Understanding the 2300 AD universe should give the referee a good base from which to begin converting this adventure to another game system. The conversion itself actually involves two separate topics: mechanics and background.

Converting the Mechanics

Rather than attempting to slavishly duplicate the effects of the 2300 AD mechanics in the target system, it is recommended that referees simply replace them with those of the other system. That is to say, don't try to translate Harefoot's Computer-7 directly into an equal statistic in your system; instead, simply recognize that Harefoot is darned good with a computer, and create a character profile that reflects that. Similarly, instead of trying to create starships that simulate the abilities of the ones mentioned in this adventure, simply choose a lumbering craft for the passenger liner, something smaller and faster for the cargo hauler, and something tiny and swift for the fighter craft.

This is really the secret of any conversion. Simply choose something that feels about the same, and go with it. Your players will never know the difference (unless, for some reason, you run them through the same adventure in many different game systems).

Adapting the Background

The best guideline for adapting the background of Deathwatch Program to your own system is similar to that of adapting mechanics. Be faithful to your own system because the adventure will bear the strain of translation well if you use a little bit of creativity.

For example, if your system does not have faster-than-light drive, and if humans have not colonized Alpha Centauri, choose another location, such as a moon base, for the liner to be going to. Is there no reason for a passenger liner to go to the moon? Change the liner to a big ore hauler. Use your imagination, and the problems will go away pretty easily.

TWILIGHT: 2000

The discussion of the 2300 AD universe mentions that in that game's background history there was a limited nuclear war at the end of the 20th century.

Persons interested in that topic are referred to Twilight: 2000, GDW's role-playing game of survival in a devastated world.



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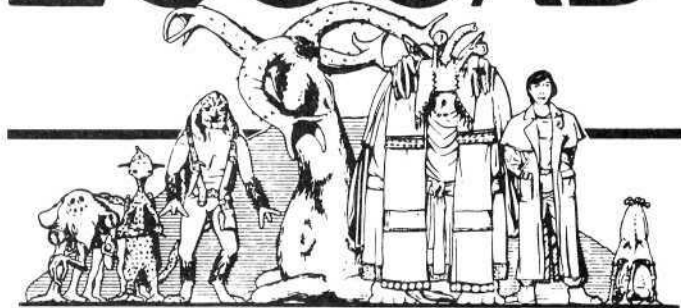
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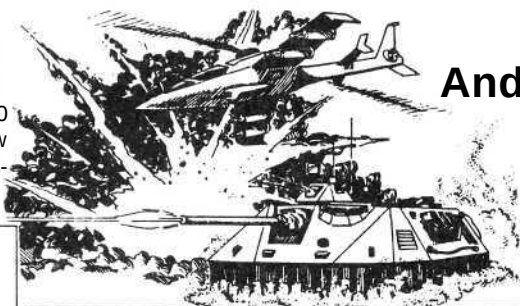
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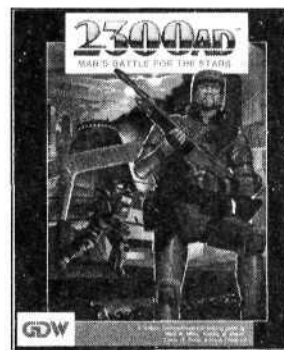
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