

MONGOOSE PUBLISHING PRESENTS

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system™

# Signs & Portents

Roleplayer

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## Arcane Hybridisation

Delve into the grotesque theories of crossbreeding in this OGL Steampunk Article!

## 20,000 Clones Under The Sea!

WARNING: A Paranoia adventure destined to doom, daze and drown your players!

## Port Bax

The second part of the continuing article detailing the famed Lone Wolf city!

Plus... New B5 Campaigns, Gamers' Symposium, Slaine: The Nisse, Jonny Nexus and lots, lots more!

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# Signs & Portents Roleplayer Contents

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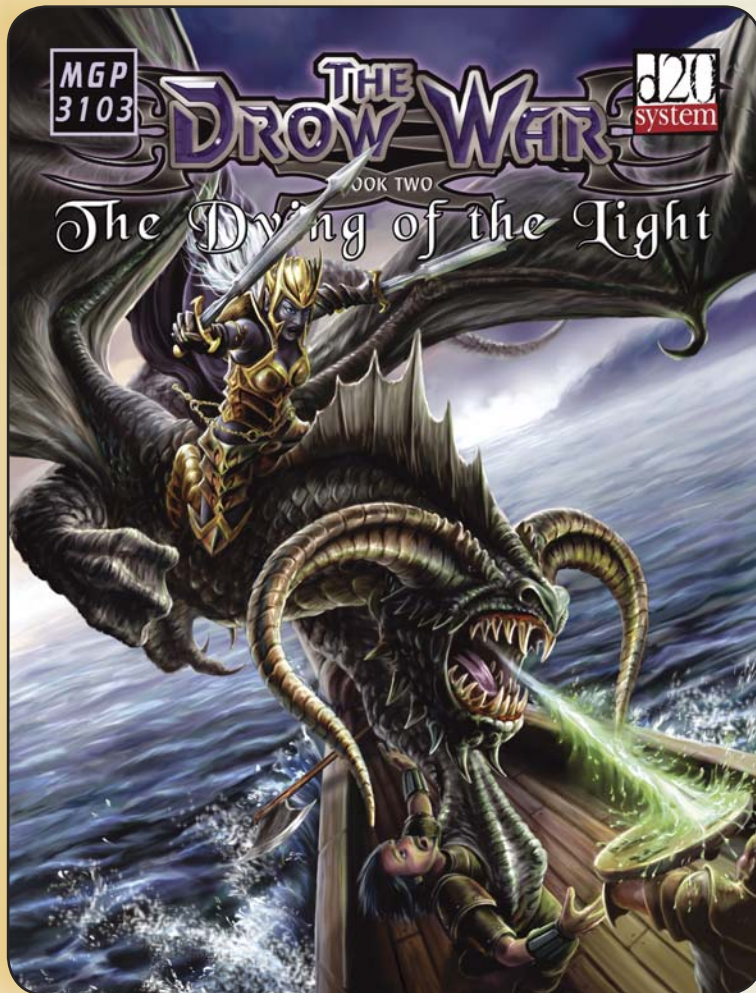
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# EYE ON MONGOOSE

*Forthcoming Releases*



## **DROW WAR II: THE DYING OF THE LIGHT**

The story of the Drow War continues where it left off, in the aftermath of the war for Caldraza. A mysterious messenger brings the news that the threat of the drow is by no means wiped out. A strike from below will come any day now. Powerful friends wait to aid the Player Characters in the city of Crom Calamar, the unconquered capital of Jehannum, nation of warriors.

The long road to final confrontation with the drow takes the Player Characters to deep, accursed deserts, cities where the memories of the dead walk, mines deep underground where traitors plot and scheme, across and beneath the churning oceans, and ultimately to distant peaks where only dragons dwell.

Somehow, the Player Characters must unite the free nations against the drow, if they have the wit and the will to do so. In this series of adventures, the heroes are doing more than avoiding traps and killing monsters. They must mobilise armies, hold counsel with kings and give the orders that, as every oracle knows, always lead to death. Whether the Player Characters prevail or the Dark conquers all remains to be seen; there are no set endings and no certain answers.

The adventure arc in *The Dying of the Light* is structured to take the Player Characters from 10<sup>th</sup> level to 20<sup>th</sup> level. Naturally, this outcome is not guaranteed!

*The Dying of the Light* is the second in a linked series of three 256-page campaign books. This book continues the vast and immersive storyline initiated in *The Gathering Storm* and finally links on to the last in the series (*The Darkest Hour*). Each one contains a single epic story broken into ten parts, thus making thirty discrete adventures in total, all tied into one overarching saga.



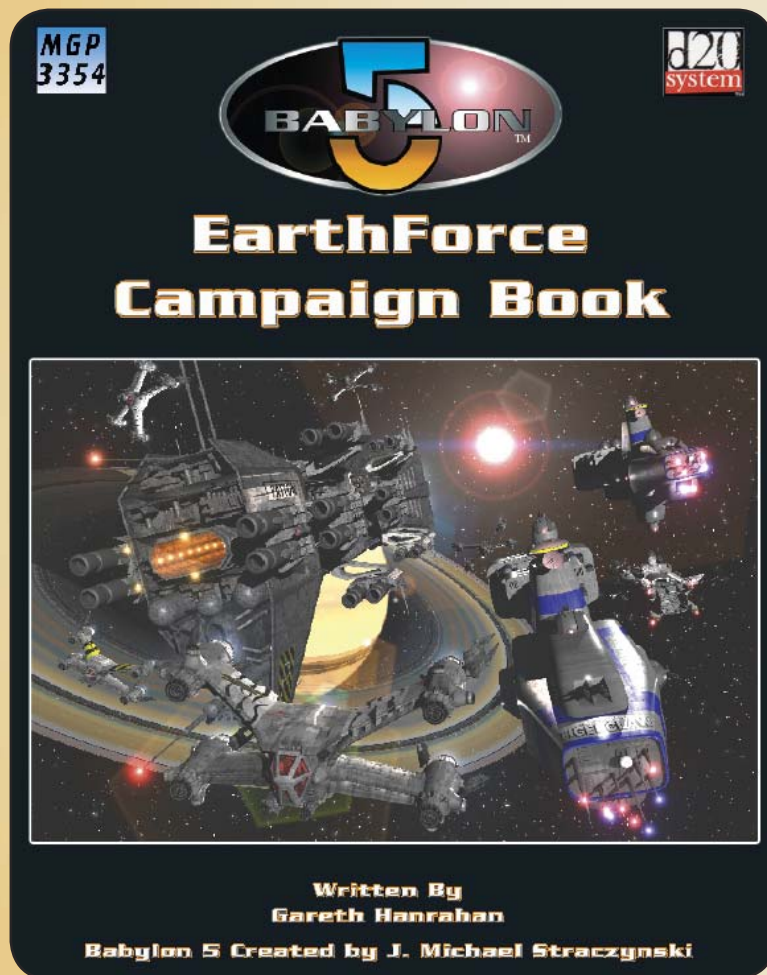
## Babylon 5 Ship Plans: **HYPERION**

And here you have it – a complete tour of one of the Earth Alliance’s finest warships. The magnificent Hyperion-class cruiser, in all its glory: the good, the bad and the not particularly roomy.

While the Hyperion has some of the most cramped conditions reported outside of Narn space, the vessel is an impressive sight both from the inside and out. Not only does the Hyperion look intimidatingly powerful, it houses so many redundant systems and backup controls that it can take the most punishing of poundings and keep fighting.

The Hyperion has been serving for over forty years with distinction. Many of them were sacrificed to turn back the Minbari armada in the Battle of the Line. Many say it was the fierce resistance of ships like the Hyperion that convinced the alien force to surrender in the first place.

*Hyperion Ship Plans* take you through every aspect of this workhorse of the Earth Alliance – every bulkhead, generator, highlight and design flaw. Painstakingly researched from both the B5 canon universe and real-life naval and space vessels, *Hyperion Ship Plans* are an invaluable and comprehensive insight into both the shipboard life and the EA’s technical expertise.



## Babylon 5: The EarthForce Campaign Book

The Earth Alliance has risen from an obscure minor race to one of the powers of known space, the equals of the old Lion of the Galaxy or the Narn Regime. Even the mighty Minbari failed to defeat the Alliance.

The Alliance's strength is founded on EarthForce. The fleet's Hyperions and Omegas patrol the human colonies, while Explorers push out towards the rim. GROPOS troopers have fought on a hundred alien battlefields to keep humanity safe. Starfuries patrol the space above every world from Ceti Gamma to Sinzar. As the Alliance grows and the alien races grow more jealous of humanity, the need for military strength grows ever greater.

EarthForce needs you.

*The EarthForce Campaign Book* describes the history, deployment and organisation of EarthForce, complete with ranks, regulations, equipment and missions for everyone from the lowliest groundpounder to the Joint Chiefs. It also includes a full campaign structure that can be used as a once-off adventure or a fully-fledged epic campaign centred on EarthForce.



1

**Collapsed**



2

**Sabotaged**



3

**Destroyed**



4



5

**Disappeared**



The logo features a large, stylized 'B5' in a blue, metallic font with a glowing effect. The 'B' is composed of two thick, rounded strokes, and the '5' is a single, thick stroke. The number '5' is positioned to the right of the 'B'. The word 'BABYLON' is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font across the middle of the '5'. The background is a dark blue with a radial light effect emanating from the center.

# BABYLON

**Faith Manages**  
Second Edition

**Due**  
**March**  
**2006**

The new *Babylon 5* Roleplaying Game 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition rulebook is packed full of new rules and updates for your favourite science fiction roleplaying game.

# Arcane Hybridisation

## Sinister Supernatural Hybrids for OGL Steampunk

Josh Cole

'He was the ugliest damned snake breeder I'd ever seen, and the biggest. Ten feet tall if he was an inch, coiled and nasty looking, with a moustache as long as your arm and teeth almost that size. I figured him for a constrictor hybrid. Then he opened that nasty old mouth and belched out more fire than an inventor's last experiment.'

Mercenary Captain Luther Briemont,  
'Report on the Pedley Factory Uprising'

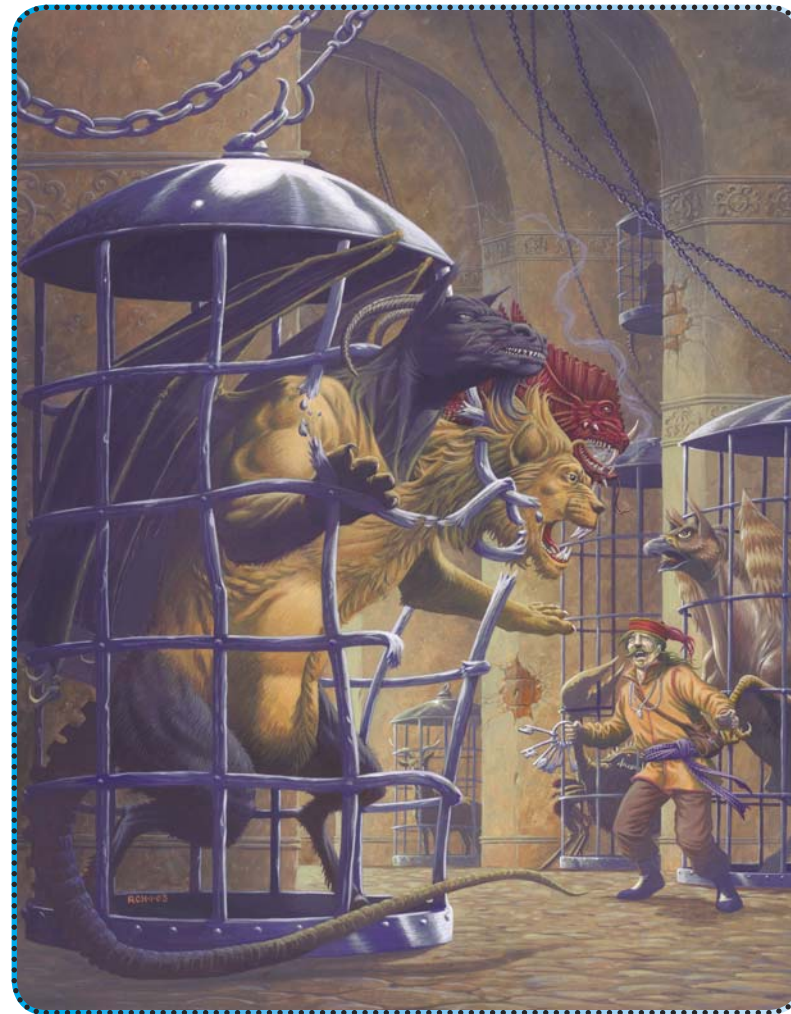
The standard, animalistic hybrids have become a recognisable, if not always accepted, fact of life in the steampunk world. But before the hybrid project closed its doors, allegedly on the heels of the development of cogs, darker, more arcane experiments took the hybrid race in a new direction.

Few of the resulting hybrids survived the experiment. Those who did remained the property of their sinister creators, who preferred to keep their prize creations as stealthy as possible – the better to launch them against an unsuspecting world.

Mistakes were made, though. They always are. Stories began to circulate of hybrid assassins whose strange visages bore little resemblance to natural creatures. Eventually, a few of these arcane hybrids escaped enslavement.

Today, arcane hybrids keep a low profile, either serving enigmatic masters or hiding from same. They exist in the shadows of the steampunk world, an unnatural fusion of arcana and artifice. Few ordinary folk ever even imagine they exist; those who know better usually fear and despise them.

A handful of arcane hybrids have managed to make their way in the world by impersonating ordinary hybrids. Three of the most common varieties – insofar as any such anomalies can be considered common – are the reptilian basilisk



and dragon and leonine manticores. Only in the direst circumstances do these formidable creatures reveal their true powers.

## Game Rule Information

To fully master the path of arcane hybridisation, a character must be born into one of the arcane breeds and then focus his trait selection on improving his powers. Both the racial information and the traits associated with arcane hybridisation are included below.

### Arcane Hybrid Racial Information

Arcane Hybrids possess all the racial traits of ordinary hybrids, except as noted below.

#### Basilisk

Perhaps the most dangerous of all hybrids, the basilisk breed inherited a version of its ancestor's deadly gaze. Basilisk hybrids are squat, almost dwarfish reptilians with features best described as skink-like. Most are slow moving and somewhat slow-witted, but extremely tough. Their baleful gaze exerts a very subtle petrification effect, but a few specimens have developed it to its full potential.

Most escaped basilisk hybrids followed the lead of other, more energetic allies. They rarely take the initiative, or the lead, but reliably provide a stolid backbone to any endeavour.

A typical basilisk hybrid seeks adventure only as a last resort, preferring a life of quiet and ease. Unfortunately, adventure often finds even the most unwilling arcane hybrid.

#### Dragon

Dragon hybrids exhibit almost as much variation within their breed as the rest of the hybrid race combined. Some dragon hybrids are sinuous and serpentine, others are as bulky and muscular as a bull crocodile. Most are hairless, but a few exhibit long and elegant whiskers.

Regardless of their appearance, dragon hybrids share similar traits. They stand tall amongst the largest hybrid breeds, their size matched only by their personalities – and often their egos. Dragon hybrids are intelligent and personable as well as powerful. Many take leadership roles, especially if they escape from their creators.

A dragon hybrid may adventure for power, for knowledge or simply to explore the limits of his formidable potential.

#### Manticore

Unusual amongst hybrid breeds for their man-like faces, manticore hybrids resemble a cross between a human and a lion but emphasise the former. A manticore hybrid's flowing mane, usually dark, sets off his craggy, half-human features from his massive body, which is often covered with black or tawny fur. His powerful batlike wings mark him as a truly unnatural creature.

Manticore hybrids tend to be violent, paranoid and secretive. They are few in number, as their creators seem to have judged them too dangerous and unpredictable. However, more manticores have escaped than any other breed of arcane hybrid, perhaps because they refuse to accept orders and dictates from anyone or anything.



Manticore hybrids take to a life of adventure because they have no other even semi-legitimate way to survive. Those who struggle against their volatile natures see exploration and battle as better outlets than crime and a quick death.

Arcane Hybrid	Background Cost	Statistic Modifiers	Size Category	Specials
Basilisk	4	-2 Dex, +6 Con, -2 Int	Medium	Baleful Gaze, Scales
Dragon	4	+6 Str, +2 Con, +2 Cha	Large	Glide, Scales
Manticore	3	+4 Str, +2 Dex, -2 Wis	Large	Glide, Tail Spikes

## Basilisk Hybrid Racial Qualities

**Cost:** 3 background points

- ☞ +6 Constitution, -2 Dexterity, -2 Intelligence
- ☞ **Medium:** As Medium-size creatures, basilisk hybrids have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- ☞ **Baleful Gaze:** Basilisk hybrids possess a limited form of their arcane ancestor's gaze attack. Any creature meeting the hybrid's gaze must make a Will save (DC 10 + half character level + Charisma modifier) or be Dazed for one round. A creature can only be affected by a basilisk hybrid's gaze once per encounter.
- ☞ **Scales:** Due to his thick scales, a basilisk hybrid has a +2 natural armour bonus to defence.
- ☞ **Favoured Class:** Journeyman

## Dragon Hybrid Racial Qualities

**Cost:** 4 background points

- ☞ +6 Strength, +2 Constitution, +2 Charisma
- ☞ **Large:** As a Large creature, a dragon hybrid suffers a -1 size penalty on Defence, a -1 size penalty on attack rolls, and a -4 size penalty on Hide checks. He gains a +4 bonus to grapple checks and his lifting and carrying limits are double those of a Medium character.
- ☞ **Glide:** A dragon hybrid's wings are not strong enough for flight, but they grant a +4 bonus to Jump checks, and the character's maximum Jump distance is calculated as if he were a Huge creature.

- ☞ **Scales:** Due to his thick scales, a dragon hybrid has a +2 natural armour bonus to Defence.

- ☞ **Favoured Class:** Noble

## Manticore Hybrid Racial Qualities

**Cost:** 4 background points

- ☞ +4 Strength, +2 Dexterity, -2 Intelligence
- ☞ **Large:** As a Large creature, a manticore hybrid suffers a -1 size penalty on Defence, a -1 size penalty on attack rolls, and a -4 size penalty on Hide checks. He gains a +4 bonus to grapple checks and his lifting and carrying limits are double those of a Medium character.

- ☞ **Glide:** A manticore hybrid's wings are not strong enough for flight, but they grant a +4 bonus to Jump checks, and the character's maximum Jump distance is calculated as if he were a Huge creature.

- ☞ **Tail Spikes:** A manticore hybrid can use his tail spikes as weapons. Unlike a true manticore, he fires the spikes as a single ranged attack with a range increment of 20 foot. The spikes do 1d6 points of piercing damage. A manticore hybrid that gains iterative attacks due to his base attack bonus may make additional tail spike attacks.

- ☞ **Favoured Class:** Adventurer

## Traits

Their unique heritage grants arcane hybrids access to new traits. Ordinary hybrids may benefit from a few of these traits, but the specialised trait trees for each arcane hybrid are unique to that breed.

## Arcane Hybridisation Traits

Arcane hybrids possess certain powerful abilities that set them apart from other races, including conventional hybrids. In addition to the abilities that typify their ancestry, they can increase their overall effectiveness by developing common traits.

**Race:** Hybrid

**Traits:** The Arcane Hybridisation tree has the following traits.

**Improved Scales:** The hybrid's scales grow thicker and tougher. His natural armour improves by 4.

*Prerequisites:* Scales racial quality



**Powerful Wings:** The hybrid's gains a fly speed of 40 ft. (Poor manoeuvrability).

*Prerequisites:* Glide racial quality

**Terrible Roar:** The hybrid can draw upon his arcane ancestry to unleash a terrifying roar. All enemies within 60 feet of the hybrid must make a Will save (DC 10 + half character level + Cha modifier) or be Shaken for one round.

*Prerequisites:* Hybrid, Str 18+, Large size

### Baleful Gaze Traits

As a basilisk hybrid grows older and more powerful, he increases the power of his baleful gaze.

**Race:** Hybrid (basilisk)

**Traits:** The Baleful Gaze tree has the following traits.

**Controlled Gaze:** The hybrid can choose to resume or suppress his baleful gaze as a free action.

If he possesses more than one gaze attack – for example, by acquiring another trait in this tree – he can choose which gaze attack he wishes to activate each round.

**Hardening Gaze:** The hybrid's baleful gaze causes its target's limbs to harden and his joints to stiffen. The target gains +1 natural armour. However, he can only take a single move or standard action each round and his base movement is reduced by 10 ft. The target gets a Fortitude save (DC 10 + half character's level + Cha modifier) to resist this effect. This effect lasts for one round per level of the basilisk hybrid.

*Prerequisite:* 5<sup>th</sup> level, Stunning Gaze

**Petrifying Gaze:** The hybrid's baleful gaze turns its target entirely to stone. If the target fails a Fortitude save (DC 10 + half character's

level + Cha modifier), his body is petrified. He is effectively Dead and can be restored to life normally, but his body does not decay.

*Prerequisite:* 10<sup>th</sup> level, Hardening Gaze, Stunning Gaze

**Stunning Gaze:** The hybrid's baleful gaze causes its target to freeze in place, his body partially petrified, for a short period of time. The target suffers the Stunned condition for the next round. He gets a Fortitude save (DC 10 + half character's level + Cha modifier) to resist this effect.

### Dragon Breath Traits

Some dragon hybrids learn to tap into the iconic power of their reptilian ancestors – a magical breath weapon.

**Race:** Hybrid (dragon)

**Traits:** The Dragon Breath tree has the following traits.

**Dragon Breath:** The hybrid develops his draconic heritage to gain access to a breath weapon.

The hybrid's breath weapon deals 1d6 points of damage per two character levels, to a maximum of 5d6. It affects a 10 ft. cone per two character levels.

The hybrid can use his breath weapon once per day.

The hybrid chooses a single energy type (fire, acid, electricity, cold or sonic) to associate with his breath weapon. This cannot be changed later, nor can he select this trait again to gain a different energy type.

*Prerequisite:* 5<sup>th</sup> level

**Improved Dragon Breath:** The hybrid's dragon breath becomes more powerful with practice. He deals an additional 1d6 points of damage with his breath weapon, and he can use it one

additional time per day. This trait can increase the hybrid's breath weapon damage beyond 5d6.

The hybrid can choose this trait multiple times. Its effects stack.

*Prerequisites:* 5<sup>th</sup> level, Dragon Breath

### Tail Spike Traits

Over time, mantichore hybrids increase the effectiveness of their deadly tail spikes.

**Race:** Hybrid (mantichore)

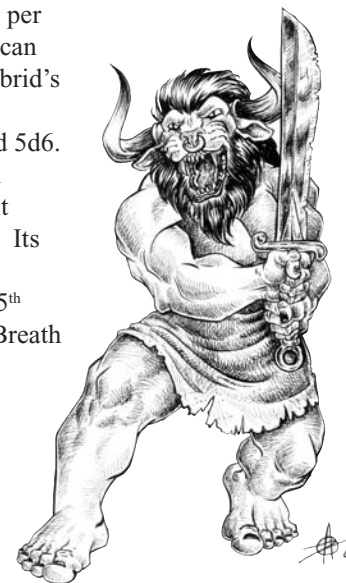
**Traits:** The Tail Spike tree has the following traits.

**Improved Tail Spikes:** Like antlers, the mantichore hybrid's tail spikes grow longer and harder with time.

The damage die for the hybrid's tail spikes improves by one step – from 1d6 to 1d8, 1d8 to 1d10, 1d10 to 1d12, 1d12 to 2d8, and 2d8 to 2d10.

The hybrid can choose this trait up to five times.

**Melee Spike:** The mantichore hybrid learns to use his spiked tail as a melee weapon. In addition to his other melee attacks, the hybrid can make a single tail spike attack at –5 to hit. Alternately, he can use his tail spikes as his primary melee weapon, in which case he suffers no penalty to hit and may make iterative attacks with his tail.



# Autumn 2005

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## EarthForce Campaign Book



Written By  
Gareth Hanrahan

Babylon 5 Created by J. Michael Straczynski

## Be All You Can Be

# Alternative Babylon 5 Campaigns

## CAMPAIGN MODELS: THE ACTION CAMPAIGN

Darrin Drader

Combat in the *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game*, as written, is extremely deadly, which is by design. The purpose of the roleplaying game is to emulate the TV series in terms of storytelling, plot pacing and danger level. While combat on the station was far from unheard of in the TV show, because the station was well policed, it was normally short-lived and of a limited scope. Because most of the plot, and by extension the game play, revolves around diplomacy, detective work and interpersonal relationships, it is important that characters not have a large number of hit points. If they were to receive a large number of hit points every time they gain a level, they would typically not be challenged or face the possibility of character death in a typical game session.

Outside of the *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game*, the typical roleplaying campaign involves numerous opponents, frequent combat and challenges that go beyond other humanoid creatures. Characters in such games may be forced to challenge immensely powerful monsters, deadly robotic constructs, well-armed aliens or other terrifying and powerful creatures. However, as mentioned above, the *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game*, as written, is not the typical roleplaying game.

Despite this, there are other modes of play that you may wish to explore, which do not easily fit within the usual parameters of the *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game* as it is currently designed. You may wish to focus on action or exploration rather than diplomacy. Instead of playing ambassadors and personnel aboard the station,



you may wish to run a campaign that focuses on the exploits of ground pounders (aka GROPOS), combat specialists who are called upon to board hostile starships, or crack commandos who conduct dangerous missions that rely on stealth and infiltration. The violence level in these games is much higher than that normally found in civilised areas, and is closer to that in a standard roleplaying game.

In such games, unless you do not mind losing numerous characters along the way, you will need another method of handling a character's ability to sustain damage. The solution is to introduce one of the sets of alternate rules listed below.

The first portion of this article contains optional character rules that can be used in an action oriented Babylon 5 game, while the second portion of this article provides advice for Games Masters running these games.



## Alternate Rules

The most important thing to remember if you use these alternate rules is that they apply across the board. If you boost the number of hit points of the characters in the game, the Non Player Characters must similarly be boosted. Throughout the books in the *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game* line are numerous characters that appeared in the series. If the Player Characters encounter any of the Non Player Characters that appear in the books, the hit points of those characters must be recalculated. This is done according to the guidelines listed below. For every character level the Non Player Character may have, he receives an average number of hit points for the Hit Dice he has. For example, an agent normally receives +2 hit points per level. Since +2 hit points per level is the same as a d8 hit point increase per level, that character receives 5 hit points plus his Constitution modifier per level (the average of a d8 is 8 divided by 2, plus 1). Every character receives the maximum number of hit points possible at first level.

If you decide to adopt any of these alternate rules, these changes apply throughout the entire

campaign. It is not appropriate to adopt these rules for one session because it will be tougher than usual, and then switch back to the standard *Babylon 5* rules for the next session when the characters enter a well-policed city or space station.

**Determine Lethality:** By adopting the standard rules for hit points, you may wish to greatly decrease the deadliness of the game, or you may just want to bump things a small amount in that direction. The easiest way to fine-tune this is to determine where you want to set the massive damage threshold. In the *Mongoose Modern Pocket Guide* rules, massive damage occurs when a character suffers a single attack that deals an amount of damage equal or greater to her Constitution score. In the *Mongoose Pocket Player's Handbook*, massive damage occurs when a character suffers fifty points or more in a single attack. The former can be adopted in order to make for a combat system that is still very deadly while the latter can be used for a more heroic game. For a game that is slightly, but not considerably, more deadly than that of the standard game, set the massive damage threshold to 50 points of damage, but that is the amount of damage that is absorbed in a single round rather than the amount of damage from a single attack.

Lethality	Method
Lethal	Standard <i>Babylon 5</i> Rules
Moderately Lethal	Massive Damage = Constitution
Somewhat Lethal	Massive Damage is combination of hits = 50 hp in a round
Least Lethal	Massive Damage is 50 hp damage in a single attack

**Hit Point Conversions:** In order to run a combat oriented game, the predetermined number of hit points a character gains by level for each class is exchanged for a Hit Dice. There is now a range in the increase of hit points per level. At first level, rather than taking the number of hit points granted by the class, you instead roll the Hit Dice and add your Constitution modifier. It is possible that this will result in a first level character with fewer hit points than under the standard *Babylon 5* rules. Like a standard game, characters receive the maximum number of hit points possible at first level. The hit point conversions are as follows:

Listed Hit point Increase By Class	New Hit Dice
+1	d6
+2	d8
+3	d10

For your convenience, the hit points for the core classes in the main book are listed below:

Class	Hit Dice
Agent	d8
Diplomat	d6
Lurker	d8
Officer	d8
Scientist	d6
Soldier	d10
Telepath	d6
Worker	d6

## Vitality and Wound Points

Another possible option for the *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game* is to use the vitality and wound point system. Similar to the methods mentioned above, the idea behind this system is to make combat somewhat less lethal. However, where the above system is designed to simply make combat less deadly, this system is a more cinematic way of handling damage. This system allows characters to improve the amount of punishment they can withstand as they go up in level, while still allowing for a single lucky attack to take down a character.

### Vitality Points

Vitality points are a measure of a character's ability to turn a direct hit into a graze or glancing blow with no serious consequences. Like hit points in the standard rules, vitality points go up with level, giving high-level characters more ability to shrug off attacks. Most types of damage reduce vitality points.

Characters gain vitality points as they gain levels. Just as with hit points in the standard rules, at each level a character rolls a Vitality Die and adds his Constitution modifier, adding the total to his vitality point total. Just as with hit points, a character always gains a minimum of at least 1 vitality point per level, regardless of his roll or Constitution modifier. A 1<sup>st</sup> level character gets the maximum vitality die result rather than rolling.

### Wound Points

Wound points measure how much true physical damage a character can withstand. Damage reduces wound points only after all vitality points are gone, or when a character is struck by a critical hit. A character has a number of wound points equal to his current Constitution score.

### Critical Hits

A critical hit deals the same amount of damage as a normal hit, but that damage is deducted from wound points rather than from vitality points. Critical hits do not deal extra damage; for that reason, no weapon in this system has a damage multiplier for its critical hits.

Any critical hit automatically overcomes a creature's damage reduction, regardless of whether the attack could normally do so.

Most weapons retain their normal critical threat range. If a weapon normally has a critical multiplier greater than x2, the weapon's threat range expands by 1 point per additional multiplier, as indicated on the table below.

<b>Multiplier</b>	X3	X4	X5
<b>New Threat Range</b>	19-20	18-20	17-20

## Adventures

An Action Campaign places the characters into the thick of the great conflicts that plague the galaxy. While the leaders from each side of a given conflict can call the shots from within an armoured bunker, the command and control centre of a space station or the bridge of a starship, the characters in this style of campaign are thrust time and time again into the middle of chaotic battle. As such, it may not be possible for all races to be represented in the party makeup. While alliances do exist, an enemy is often one of the other governments, and their forces consist almost entirely of a single race, or a small number of aligned races. A game set during the Earth – Minbari war will likely have a party consisting of only humans or only Minbari. Similarly, a game that explores the Narn – Centauri conflict is unlikely to have Centauri and Narn working within the same group.



Despite the large ground battles that often occur, the *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game* does not have a mass combat system for ground battles, nor is one necessary. Rather than making the characters participate as part of a much larger army, it is far more manageable for them to comprise a Special Forces unit. While the battle rages on elsewhere their job is to perform a special mission, upon which the success of the battle may depend. Below are several suggested types of scenarios for this type of game. Each one can be the focus of an entire game session. Alternatively, a single mission may require combining two or more of these in order to accomplish the mission objective.

**Assault a Position:** One of the most basic and straightforward types of missions a group of GROPOS might be sent into is to assault an enemy position. This may be done by stealth, or through a straight-on frontal assault. However, if it is a frontal assault, the enemy will amass its defences at the entrances to that position, so this is only recommended for a higher level party and lower level defenders. The target position may serve any number of functions from occupying a strategic position, to containing important information. The types of resistance the Player Characters are likely to encounter include enemy soldiers, reinforced barriers such as doors or gates, and mines or other areas rigged with explosives.

Once the assault has concluded, the Player Characters may have a number of secondary objectives. They may be required to defend the position. This may last until a specific military objective has been met elsewhere, or they may simply need to defend it until the army that they belong to reinforces it with additional soldiers.

**Acquire Intelligence:** More of a stealth mission, it is the job of the party to sneak into an area the enemy occupies, acquire information from the enemy, and then sneak back to their base undetected. The key to success lies in moving about undetected by the majority of the enemies at that location. Any enemies that catch sight of the Player Characters must be stunned or killed, and their bodies must be placed in a location where they are not easily found. One of the important factors in this type of mission is accomplishing their objectives quickly. The longer the Player Characters stay in an area occupied by the enemy, the greater the chance that they will be discovered.

Generally speaking, these types of missions are conducted against larger targets, including enemy bases with a number of troops in the hundreds, or even thousands. The objective is not to destroy the base, or even cause a disruption, but rather to acquire vital military intelligence, such as where the enemy plans to strike next, information on weapons that they might be developing, and records on troops sizes and movements. Once the mission is complete, the Player Characters must escape the area and return to a friendly base. Should they fail to do this, they could alert the enemy of their presence, and any information they acquire may become useless.

**Artillery Spotter:** This is one of the few missions that the Player Characters can do during a full-scale battle. While the rest of

the ground troops may be engaged in close-quarters fighting, the Player Characters are sent on a mission to survey enemy artillery that is deployed on the battlefield. Their job is to manually target hostile guns, ground assault vehicles and other strategic targets. Once a target is spotted, they hit it with an invisible laser, which beams back its exact location. This information is then either sent up to an orbital platform, or to an atmospheric craft, which uses powerful ordinance to eliminate it. This type of mission normally continues until the end of the battle or until all of the enemy's heavy artillery on the ground has been destroyed. During such operations, it is important to avoid the majority of the fighting. Any hostile force encountered is a threat to the success of the mission.

**Capture or Eliminate a Person of Importance:** This type of mission requires the Player Characters to infiltrate a position for the purpose of assassinating or capturing a person of importance. Normally these types of missions involve a stealthy entrance into a fortified enemy base, although if the base is small enough, the Player Characters may decide to engage in an open assault. Some important considerations in this type of mission are cutting off the enemy's escape routes and locating the position of the targeted individual. If the objective is to capture this person, the Player Characters must get this person out of enemy territory alive. The captured person may prove valuable as a guide, although the information provided might be purposely inaccurate in order to lead the party into a trap, an ambush or some other situation where he can make an escape attempt.

**Defend a Strategic Position:** Offensive missions may be straightforward, but defence is equally important. Just as the Player Characters army may go to great lengths to acquire enemy territory, the opposite is also true. The enemy will launch missions to attempt to recover lost

ground, and they will go on the offensive to acquire important positions belonging to the army the Player Characters fight for. When this happens, the Player Characters must stand and fight, or they will lose what they have fought so hard to acquire. This type of mission begins when they are given the order to defend, and it does not end until all enemy threats have been eliminated, or they have lost the battle and must flee in order to survive.

**Escort a Person of Importance:** Often times important people find themselves near a battlefield. This may be a high-ranking official from a civilian government, it may be a general, or it may be a person with some information vital to the cause. In any case, it is the job of the Player Characters to see this person or people through a hostile location to a place of safety. If the enemy is aware of the presence of this person, they will likely attempt to either kill or capture him (see Capture or Eliminate a Person of Importance above).

The way that the person responds to danger is an important factor to consider. This is a person or being that reacts to situations as an individual. Even if the soldiers order this person to stay down under cover, he may react differently when faced with danger. He may become panicked and attempt to run to a safer location, he may decide that this is his moment of glory, pick up a weapon and engage the enemy, or he may do something else entirely. The job of the Player Characters is not only to eliminate enemy threats, but also to keep this person from getting himself killed.

The person the Player Characters must escort need not be someone with no combat training. One of the things that frequently occur is a commanding officer obtaining his position through their connections rather than through merit. This is especially common in the

Centauri military since the powerful houses rule their government. Such an individual may pass through the training academies and then be placed in a position of command without any real combat experience. Worse yet, those under his command may be held responsible by the family that placed him in his position should he fall in combat.

**Lower the Enemy's Defences:** One way to win a battle is to disable an enemy's ability to defend itself. While this can be accomplished by pounding the target with orbital bombardment, sometimes these locations are too well defended to handle in such an efficient manner. In these cases it becomes necessary to take down these defences from within. Such missions involve infiltrating or fighting into a target location, and then powering it down or blowing it up. Sometimes this can be done using explosives carried in by the Player Characters, though the target may have explosive components that can be used against it. Energy reactors can be overloaded, ammunition can be blown up and energy fields can be turned inwards. Once the defences are lowered, the Player Characters must safely exit the location. Depending on the type of defences being disabled, this could easily be the difference between the success and failure of the military operation.

**Patrols:** One of the primary operations conducted during wartime are patrols. These typically take place in areas that are friendly or have been cleared of hostile forces. The purpose of these expeditions is to spot approaching forces, ensure that the area is free of enemies, and firmly establish control of an area. Typical patrols in any given conflict do not often result in fighting unless the enemy is easily able to sneak into the area undetected. Normally patrols are not roleplayed unless it is likely to include contact with the enemy.

**Reconnaissance:** Sometimes called scouting, reconnaissance missions involve entering enemy territory to find out what is there. The goal of this type of mission is to find enemy bases, equipment and troop movement. The goal is to avoid enemy contact whenever possible, although it may become necessary to fight should they be discovered. Normally reconnaissance missions do not involve encroaching too deeply into enemy territory.

**Reconnaissance in Force:** Similar to simple reconnaissance missions above, reconnaissance in force is a type of reconnaissance where the group enters hostile territory and engages any enemies they encounter in combat. The purpose behind this type of reconnaissance is simply to reduce enemy headcount through direct means. Like standard reconnaissance, these types of missions do not involve encroaching too deeply into enemy territory.

**Rescue Prisoners:** During wartime, each side almost always manages to take prisoners from the opposing side. These prisoners are normally kept alive by either side in order to use them later as a bargaining chip. It is often desirable to rescue them rather than allow them to remain captives in order to remove this bargaining power from the enemy.

Prisoners that have been brought back from the front lines of the conflict are normally held in high-security areas in well-defended locations. Because of this, the best time to mount a rescue mission is immediately after the prisoners have been captured and before they are moved to a more secure facility. Once they have

been moved, a rescue mission is more likely to involve stealth rather than straightforward attacks.

**Sabotage:** Enemy defences are not the only things that can be fouled up with some well-placed explosives. Supply lines, research facilities, bridges, command centres, spacecraft and bases can all be targeted for sabotage. This operation need not be stealthy, although it often helps.



**Seize Control of Enemy Spacecraft:** One of the more difficult operations to carry out is seizing control of enemy spacecraft. The easiest way to do this is to manoeuvre a personnel carrier through enemy fire and grapple the enemy ship on the hull of the spacecraft. The Player Characters must then compromise the hull and enter the interior of the ship. This is usually accomplished by attaching to a section of the hull with an extendable airlock

that latches on with a magnetic seal, and then cutting through the outer plating of the ship with torches. Typical entry points include airlocks, engine rooms and command centres. Once the hull is compromised, the Player Characters enter the enemy ship and proceed to neutralise any resistance they encounter until they seize control of the ship's bridge. Once the Player Characters have asserted control over the bridge, they must then do a sweep throughout the ship to eliminate or imprison any of the ship's personnel who would actively resist them.

**Support Missions:** Absolutely necessary to the success of a military action are support missions. An ancient adage states that an army marches on its stomach. This is no less true in the Babylon 5 universe. Food, ammunition, and supplies must reach the front lines for the war to continue. Every military commander knows this well, which is why opposing forces often target supply lines. To ensure that supplies reach their destination, these shipments are backed up with military power.

**Survive in Hostile Territory:** The supply line has been cut, the local support has been routed, and the Player Characters find themselves in hostile territory with no support. At this point, their primary goal becomes leaving their positions and surviving the long trek back to base. The area is likely under surveillance by the enemy and routinely patrolled. Worse yet, the base may be off world, and requires them to commandeer a starship to leave the system. This mission works similar to other stealth missions, except that the enemy is most likely aware that there are forces nearby.

## Conflicts

An action Babylon 5 story arc most likely takes place within one of the periods of war. Listed below are the major wars that are important to the TV show. In addition to these, the military is frequently called in to settle conflicts on the various colonies or corporate controlled worlds.

**The Dilgar War:** In 2228 the Dilgar began a crusade to conquer and enslave the neighbouring races. They were opposed by many of the races of the League of Non-Aligned Worlds as well as the Earth Alliance. This struggle encompasses battles in a number of theatres, both on the ground and in space. Characters in a story arc set during the Dilgar War may be human, as well as virtually any of the races of the League of Non-Aligned Worlds.

**The Minbari War:** Started by miscommunication during a first contact mission, the Minbari war forced the Earth Alliance into its first impossible predicament. Because of their superior technology, the minbari were virtually unstoppable. The minbari vowed to rid the galaxy of the humans, and they accomplished this in battle after battle until the unexpectedly surrendered on the eve of their victory at the battle of the line. Characters in this story arc are either minbari bent on the slaughter of humans, or humans who are so badly outmatched that they will likely die when first encountering their enemy. Because the humans won only a single battle in this war, and this is one of the most badly mismatched wars in the history of the Babylon 5 universe, this is not the best war for most games of this type.

**The War of Retribution:** In this war, the centauri took back what they believed to be their rightful place in the galaxy by conquering the narn, subjugating their homeworld, and occupying their homeworld and colonies. Characters in this conflict are almost definitely

of either narn or centauri since few other races became involved. Conquering the narn was done primarily via ship-to-ship engagements and planetary bombardments. The real conflict occurred during the occupation of the narn homeworld. Narns struck against the centauri troops in any way they could. Since they were unable to engage in standard military battles, they instead employed guerrilla warfare, striking at strategic locations, killing as many centauri as possible in their attacks. Characters in this story arc are either the narn freedom fighters, or centauri troops attempting to maintain order against impossible odds.

**The Shadow War:** Arguably the focus of the entire show, the shadow war nearly encompassed the entire galaxy. The shadows and the vorlons influenced a number of races into starting wars with one another while they themselves stayed out of the conflicts whenever possible. Several small wars broke out between league worlds while the shadows laid waste to entire worlds. During this time John Sheridan, operating from the neutral ground of Babylon 5, and with the support of the rangers, managed to unite the majority of the races and take the battle to the shadows themselves. Characters in this conflict may be of any race since this sees them working together for the first time.

**The Earth Alliance Civil War:** Reinforced by the shadows and the Psi Corps, President Clark turned government of the Earth and its colonies into a totalitarian regime. Only Sheridan, several branches of the military, and a few allies opposed the president. Characters in a story arc set during this time period are most likely humans, although they may also be rangers. The available races include minbari, narns, centauri and virtually any other race from the league of non-aligned worlds.

**The Drakh Plague:** Several years after the remains of the alliance forged during the Shadow War became the Interstellar Alliance, the drakh – former servants of the shadows – struck against Earth in their attempt to become masters themselves. The drakh plague threatened to destroy all life on Earth unless a cure was found. During this time, the drakh became a common enemy of both the Earth Alliance and the Interstellar Alliance. Numerous battles were fought on a variety of fronts while the cure for the drakh plague was sought.

## Keeping it Fresh

One of the tricks of running an action oriented Babylon 5 game is keeping the players interested. Unlike many other action oriented games, Babylon 5 never consists of kicking in the doorway and battling the monsters within, although it may consist of overriding the security access to the hatch and engaging the enemy in PPG fire. Although many players love the thrill of non-stop combat, others quickly tire of the typical routine of entering a new encounter area, checking initiative and then resolving battle. There are a number of tricks that are useful to keep things fresh and new in the players' minds.

**Don't Forget About Roleplaying:** While it is true that an action oriented game focuses more on combat than the standard game, that does not mean that there are no opportunities for interesting character interaction. Although the characters may report to their commanding officer to be briefed on their next mission, there are a number of ways that they can have meaningful roleplaying experiences after the scenario has begun. Each of the races from the Babylon 5 universe has its own unique way of perceiving the universe, and interacts with others in culturally defined ways. There is a danger that this can lead to some races appearing stereotypical, as long as the Games Master

ensures that each Non Player Character is an individual rather than a caricature with statistics, their inclusion in the game can be both engaging and memorable. A drazi is just as likely to be a mercenary grunt on the opposite side of the conflict as he is to be an informant who passes on the security codes the Player Characters need to breach a fortified compound they must assault. If they are extremely lucky, the Player Characters may encounter a vorlon in their dealings. What are this vorlon's motivations? Can they be discerned at all? Moreover, what is its ulterior motive for aiding the Player Characters in the first place? Those are all questions that the Player Characters must answer for themselves during their dealings with the vorlon.

**Unique and Interesting Locations:** As long as the focus of the game is combat, it is important to keep updating the imaginary sets. Players are used to rooms, so when using an enclosed setting for combat, one thing to consider is what makes one room different from the next. This can be challenging especially aboard a space station or starship, where most rooms are designed with utility rather than comfort and design in mind. If the Player Characters must explore a series of like rooms, what separates one from the next? For instance, John Sheridan's quarters might appear Spartan and utilitarian. His bed is likely to be neatly made, military style, his clean clothes hanging up in his closet while his dirty clothes are neatly stored in a laundry basket, and the remainder of his furnishings are orderly and arranged in as functional and utilitarian way as possible. The one thing that displays his personality might be a bowl of oranges. On the other hand, Garibaldi's quarters are likely to be the exact opposite. From the Daffy Duck poster on his wall to the seldom-made bed, Garibaldi is a slob unless he has someone over who he wants to impress. Each room should have character.

One important thing to keep in mind is to keep changing the Player Characters locations and the physical appearance of each area. A ship's bridge, or a station's command and control centre may have areas where the floor varies in height, which allows the commander to more easily oversee the actions of those directly under her command and optimises communications between crew members staffing the various stations. For combat purposes, this creates an interesting circular or oval shaped area where characters may suffer slight falling damage when flung from the upper area. Likewise, the stations channel a great deal of energy, which may be violently discharged and cause additional damage when one of the combatants accidentally smashes it with his melee weapon.

Heights are another factor that can be easily added to make an area unique. Great bridges may be built at dizzying heights above a constructed technological wonder, as in the Great Machine on Epsilon 3. Immense balconies may hang suspended over open air on one of the buildings in a scenic alien city. The characters may find themselves on a platform that is suspended hundreds of feet above the engineering section of an immense ship. Heights make for interesting roleplaying situations because they represent clear danger that references one of the primal fears that most players possess. At the Games Masters discretion, anyone forced over the side may be assumed dead, which makes this an interesting feature to combatants who wish to quickly eliminate their enemies while reducing their chances of taking physical damage to a minimum.

Just as varying encounter traits is important, it is also helpful to vary the types of venue where the adventure take place. The default setting for the *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game* is the Babylon 5 space station. As noted earlier, however, Babylon 5 is rarely the scene of full-on conflicts, and is

not recommended as the primary location in this type of Babylon 5 campaign. Instead, the Player Characters should be forced into hostile locations on a regular basis. These locations may be space stations, buildings, cities, mountains, open plains, wooded glades, deserts and even the vacuum of space. The natural dangers faced vary a great deal depending upon where the game is set. Aboard a space station or a starship, the Player Characters face the risk of depressurisation, should a certain type of ammunition explode into the wrong wall. An urban setting is compelling because the Player Characters may suddenly face a large number of opponents with the possibility of little cover if their identities are discovered. Natural environments can present a nice change of pace as well as other challenges inherent in the type of terrain. For example, a desert may contain sinkholes; a lack of water and few hiding places while a mountain may contain bodies of water, steep cliff sides and zones that are subject to landslides.

**Maybe a Few Monsters are Alright After All:** 'Monsters' in the *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game* are usually alien life, though they can also be humanoids that have been genetically modified, strange and deadly alien creatures and even intelligent alien species with strange and deadly physical characteristics and incomprehensible mentalities. Examples from the series include the Ikarran warrior from the episode 'Contagion,' the Na'Ka'Leen feeder from the episode 'Grail,' the soldiers of darkness from 'The Long Dark' and others. Due to their nearly incomprehensible power, even the vorlons and the shadows can be considered monsters. Individually these alien creatures have proven challenging to deal with, imagine a large number of these concentrated in the same area. Alien creatures also make for worthy allies for the villains of the game. Monsters should not be overused, but they do make for an interesting diversion from time to time.



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# GAMING SYMPOSIUM

## NEW ANGLES ON ADVERSARIES

### PART TWO: TERROR AT THREE FEET

ROBERT  
GRIFFIN

In the previous article we examined the drives and uses for elves and dwarves as foils for a party, and as a source for outside adversity they stand supreme. Both races are willing to stand toe to toe with their enemies, challenging them in combat on the field or in more personal combat as part of a vendetta of honour. But where the elder races excel at combating a party from without they do not even begin to compare for the abilities of the halflings and gnomes for turning a party against one another, striking from hiding, and confounding and confusing the players until they make a mistake. Moreover, when they do make a mistake, these diminutive foes make sure to take advantage of it.

### THE YOUNGER RACES: GNOMES AND HALFLINGS

Both races excel at guerrilla tactics, attacking from where they are least expected and, more often than not, in ways unimagined by the party. This allows them to focus on very specific tactics, each drawn from the very nature of the race itself to deal with the enemies that oppose

them. In turn, allowing the Games Master to open up a very unusual bag of tricks to use against the players. The quiet and seemingly harmless nature of the halfling and the jovial, prankster nature of the gnome, makes each race an easily overlooked and underestimated enemy.

If the Games Master needs a stand up, direct enemy for his players, dwarves are ideal. A cunning and condescending foe to bring the party low, nothing fits the bill better than the elves. But if one is looking for an enemy to keep them confused, off-balance and second-guessing themselves, look no further than the gnomes and halflings. While the elder races stand supreme as outright enemies, the younger races can serve a number of functions both within the party as a foil and without as an adversary determined to make the players remember the consequences of their actions.

So let us take a look at our miniscule miscreants and see what they have to offer us. Just like the elves and dwarves, the halflings and gnomes can serve as excellent sources of tension and turmoil for the players. These races hit the players

when and where they least expect it while still maintaining their alignments as good races. Of the demi-races, the gnomes and halflings are much less likely to cross the line between adversary and outright villain and should be played as such. It is easy to have a vengeance crazed dwarf cross the line or have an elf's natural arrogance expand to outright egomania, but the younger races should rarely do so.

This is not to say that there are no evil gnomes or halflings or that the elves and dwarves go slipping into chaos and villainy at every turn. Nevertheless, the elves and the dwarves by virtue of their natures are extreme creatures. The dwarves love for justice can be corrupted and the elven belief in their own superiority can lead to actions that begin stressing their racial alignments and occasionally outright breaking them.

Halflings tend, as a race, to be more grounded, less mired in the highfaluting belief structures and social mores of either the elves or the dwarves and much more concerned with everyday matters. The gnomes' curious and impulsive nature and almost infectious humour

help to keep them from taking themselves or others too seriously and serve to keep them from falling prey to the honour vendettas their mountain-born cousins can find themselves drawn into. Nevertheless, despite these tendencies the Games Master will rarely find more intractable foes or more annoying adversaries.

Having had said that, it is difficult to imagine what would bring a halfling or gnome into conflict with the players. While it is not as easy as setting the party against an elven Lord, it is really not all that difficult as long as the Games Master understand the way both races think. To start off we have to take a look at the smallest and most easily disregarded of potential enemies, the halflings.

### *The Halflings*

Despite the advent of the more adventurous, curious and capable halfling in recent years, the picture of a slightly rotund, friendly homebody content to brew some ale and make a little cheese still comes easiest to the minds of most Games Masters. It is hard to shake this image easily; after all, some of the strongest examples of halflings in literature are contented homebodies being forced into adventures by rough and ready dwarves and inscrutable wizards. While the latest generation of halflings have gotten a little more adventurous than their ancestors, a few things have not changed and that is where we can begin to understand what could bring them into conflict with our players. When looking at using halflings as potential foils for the players, the Games Master has to examine both varieties in order to understand their uses and motivations.

### *The Halfling Mindset*

At the core of every halfling is a strong sense of community and a desire to remain unobtrusive. Regardless of the halfling, this sense of fellowship and a longing for togetherness drives their actions. Being the smallest of the good races, the halflings have always been at the mercy of their neighbours, and as such have always gone out of their way to not attract their attention. With very few settlements and lands of their own, the halflings have often mixed, milled and lived right alongside the big folk, while still trying to stay out from underfoot. Those halflings that have managed to maintain villages of their own fiercely protect them and strive to keep them intact as bastions of the halfling way of life. Despite this, many halfling townships have found their small, simple villages intruded on as neighbouring human cities expand and eventually engulf the shires of the smaller race. This has led to two distinct types of halflings: the Homebody and the Wanderer, each with their own points of view and ways of interacting with and adapting to the other races that surround them, while maintaining an identity that is wholly halfling.

Both Homebody and Wanderer philosophy revolve around the same core concept: community. For the Homebody halfling, the focus lies in maintaining the halfling way of life, the concept of family and clan, home and hearth, and insuring that it still exists, unchanged for those wandering halflings when they return. For Homebodies, nothing



exemplifies the halfling ideal like a cosy home, warm fire and a full larder. The community is central to that philosophy. Each halfling in a village knows that they can count on each other if things get rough. Unlike in the massive human cities, homeless halflings are virtually unknown. The very idea flies in the face of the halfling way of life. If a halfling is down on his luck, another will be there to help pick him up, brush him off, fill his belly and give him a place to stay. That is just how things are done, after years of dwelling in close proximity to the larger, more fast-paced races. The only people that can make time for a halfling are other halflings. Most do this willingly. After all, the majority of halflings in an area are related to one another, whether by blood or marriage, and to not help out a fellow would be denying a member of their own family. That is something most halflings just will not tolerate.

Even as the humans and other races began to annex their lands, the halflings realised that their clans and families were going to see them through the upheavals in their otherwise passive existence. Therefore, even as village after village was absorbed into the neighbouring human community, the halflings clung to their clans, insuring that their sense of identity was not erased by the sudden influx of new people and new ideas. While the dwarves have their mountains and the elves their forests, halflings have their hearth and home as their kingdom. The halfling reputation for hospitality stems from the sense of importance they place on community. A guest in a halfling's home will be treated like family. For the time they are within the home they are considered family by their host. This is due in no small part to the halflings' willingness to include their new neighbours as part of their communities and it was in this the way the halfling insured their way of life survived.

The small folk realised early on that what humans valued they would seek out, and what they sought they inevitably protected. So as halfling villages began being subjugated, annexed or outright swallowed up by human towns, the halflings made it a point to begin making the humans desire what the halflings had to offer: their hospitality. Halfling chefs cooked, brewers brewed and halflings of all shape and size showed what kind of hosts they could be. Slowly but surely, those that had come to make the halfling their subjects ended up becoming the halflings' guests instead. As the halflings had predicted, this made them valuable. As they took the other races into their communities, the other races began to come around to respect the halflings' close-knit mindset and recognise how it made all the other good things the halflings could do for them possible. While this did not slow the humans down or bring them around to the halfling way of life, it did give them an appreciation for the halflings' lifestyle. The halflings needed this understanding if they were going to insure the continuance of their preferred lifestyle.

This plan was twofold. The first part was to make the other races value them. The more sedentary halflings accomplished this. The second part was to be carried out by the wanderers, those halflings that were willing and interested in going out into the big world



seeing what was out there. Their task was to make the halflings seen. To insure that the little folk were out there everywhere, so common in fact that they would go virtually unnoticed. They succeeded beyond their wildest dreams. Everywhere a party goes they can find halflings, from their cooks, stewards and innkeepers, to the skilled rogue that lends a hand getting past traps in ancient ruins. There are very few places the players can go and not find a halfling. By sending the wanderer halfling out into the world, the halflings insure that their community goes with them and that if anything should threaten a halfling, his people know about it. The omnipresent nature of the halflings is what makes them so potentially good as foils and adversaries for the players.

Halflings are seen as being the most harmless seeming of all the player races. They are small, unobtrusive and friendly. While they have a reputation as thieves, the halflings have worked so hard at maintaining their appearance as affable homebodies that players still have a hard time not instinctively trusting this small congenial race. They are underestimated and they would not have it any other way. People worry about offending an officious elven noble or a fiery tempered dwarven warrior, but few players give a thought to angering a halfling and they should.

A wronged halfling has a support network that exists, unseen, in the heart of virtually every human kingdom. A massive web of friends, spies and informants that the average player never thinks about, lies hidden in every halfling home. There are few places a character can go where a halfling cannot find them. That is why they worked so hard to insure that their sense of community survived, it is their ultimate defence against the depredations of their bigger neighbours. By nature, halflings are not a violent race, but if they are threatened they can be just as deadly as dwarf or elf and just as willing to deal with their enemies. They just choose a different path than the elder races. Where the dwarves will challenge a man and strike him down over a point of honour, the halflings believe they know a better way.

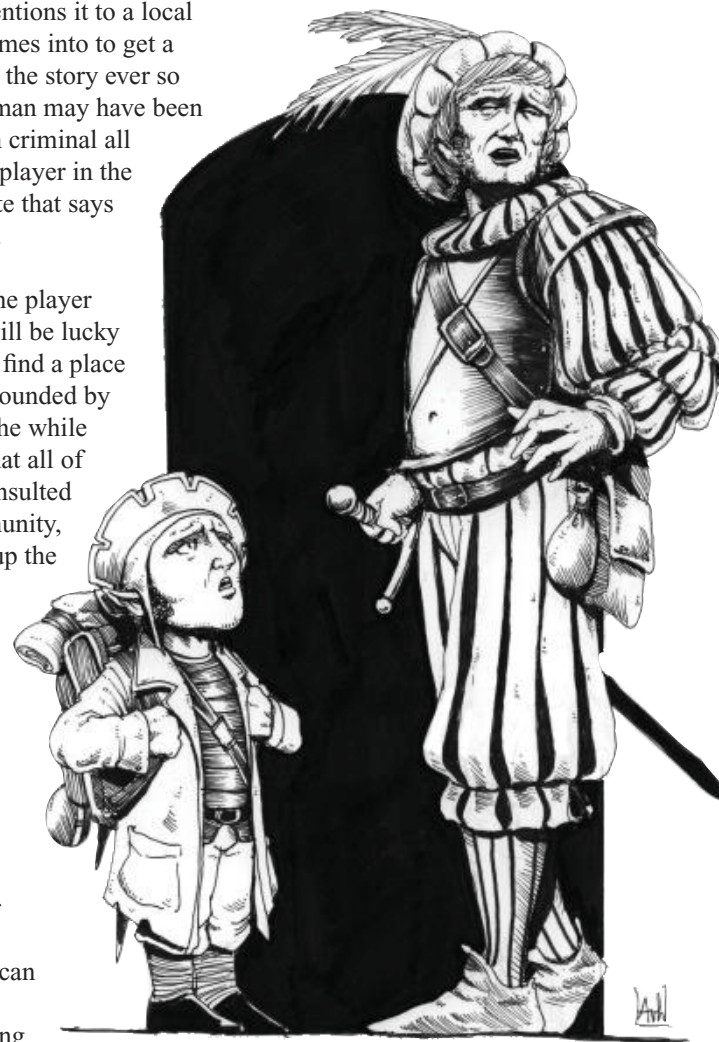
If a player threatens a halfling he is not going to turn around and try to outfight him - most halflings do not have the training or the inclination. Instead, he will apologise and rapidly attempt to remove himself from the situation. It is then that the halfling network goes to work. That halfling will mention the incident to his wife that night over dinner. She will in turn tell her sister the next morning at the market, of course letting any of the halfling

merchants who work there know what happened. Her sister, of course, will bring it up in passing when she stops in at the inn her son works at. He would bring it up in passing to his boss the innkeeper, explaining how the incident took place nary a stone's throw from the inn and how fortunate they are that the player is not staying here and how much he pities the innkeeper who chose to give such an obvious ruffian shelter for the night. The innkeeper tells the other local innkeepers, one of whom mentions it to a local town guardsman when he comes into to get a drink for the night, adjusting the story ever so slightly as to imply that the man may have been armed or resembled a known criminal all of which firmly cements the player in the guardsman's brain with a note that says 'troublemaker' attached to it.

By the end of the next day, the player (and most likely his party) will be lucky if they can make a purchase, find a place to stay, or keep from being hounded by the local authorities and all the while being completely unaware that all of this trouble came from one insulted halfling. Subtlety and community, the two elements that make up the core of any halfling, though while not as potentially lethal as angering a dwarf clan lord, a cross halfling can make a party suffer in ways they never imagined.

Those that escape the halflings' influence still have not really escaped. Where the wanderers go, so go their stories. Any person who has incurred the ire of a halfling can count on word of their deeds following them and tormenting

them until the halflings decide that things are even. Halfling rogues may take a special liking to the party, insuring needed items disappear when needed. Wanderers that have a habit of finding trouble seem drawn to these sorts of parties, figuring if they have time to pick on someone as insignificant as a halfling they must be really bored. They will attach themselves to



the offending character going out of their way to inject some spice into their lives in order to relieve their boredom. Of course, should the offending player or party realise what has caused their sudden streak of bad luck and apologise, everything will end as if it never started. Halflings are not particularly cruel, they just insist on being treated like everyone else.

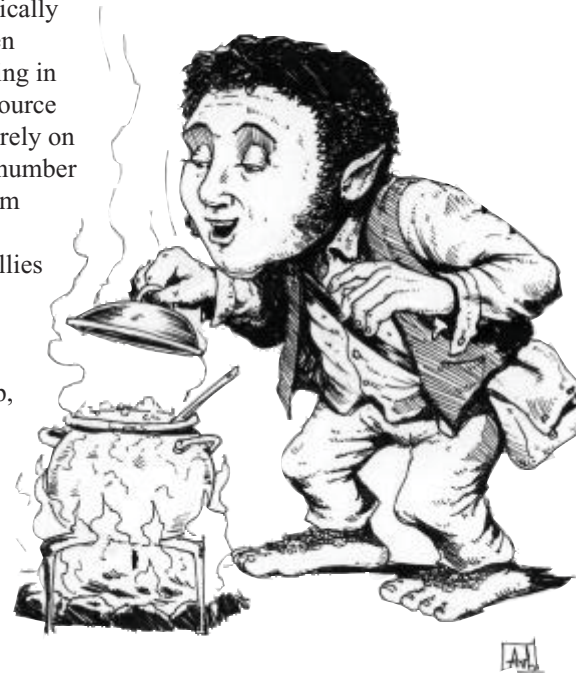
A halfling can make a very different type of enemy for the party, not so much a stand up and fight kind of opponent, as they are a hide, harry and irritate their foes into submission. Because of their nature and the fact that they will rarely directly do anything to harm a target, it forces the players to have to find whole new ways of dispatching an enemy instead of simply wading in with swords at the ready.

*The Quintessential Halfling* has a number of character concepts and prestige classes that fit this subtle and cunning race and while normally used as Player Character tools work just as well for the party as against it:

- ⌘ *The Aristocrat* is a prime example of a halfling who is not going to stand for being treated as anything less than what they are, namely a noble. A player who chides, looks down on, or tries to take advantage of a halfling aristocrat has made an enemy with both the resources and network to insure that an apology and proper recompense is made. The Aristocrat's extensive connections within the halfling community makes it easy for them to keep tabs on opponents who have caught their attention as well as a ready supply of potential aid in the form of other halfling nobles with time and their hands, who would love nothing better than to bring a party of adventurers down a peg or two.
- ⌘ When things have gotten out of hand and beyond the communities ability to deal with a problem, the *Halfling Avenger* is sent to settle the issue. An attack made against the clan is responded to swiftly and finally, whether it is a pack of scavenging goblins or a party of adventurers who unwittingly destroy a halfling village in the course of dealing with another threat. While not without mercy, the avenger tends toward being single minded. A party framed for a crime committed against halflings may very well find them to be as tenacious as anything they have ever faced.
- ⌘ *The Halfling Allfriend* is an ideal Non Player Character to throw in the path of players who have gotten themselves in trouble with local halflings. The Allfriend knows every halfling in the area, and those he does not he quickly introduces himself too. While the Allfriend's role is typically diplomatic, an Allfriend who has been asked to take up the cause for a halfling in a human community can serve as a source of no end of trouble for players who rely on the halflings' small size and smaller number in human communities to protect them from their wrath. Few people in the community have as many contacts, allies and influences as the well-connected Allfriend. A player who makes an enemy of the Allfriend could easily find sources of information drying up, merchants unwilling to trade with him and the town guard eyeing him suspiciously.
- ⌘ *The Master Chef*, while not immediately obvious as an opponent, exemplifies the unobtrusive nature that halflings prize so much. While he lacks little

appeal as a long-term opponent, a Master Chef who is turned against the party by another halfling or who has been personally insulted or wronged by the players is a potentially deadly adversary. He could potentially strike at anytime, while rarely would he sully his art with a lethal concoction, but a soup that makes a player get ill in front of, or even better over, a noble during a special social function, well that is a different story all together.

This is only the beginning. Halfling come in all shapes and sizes, and while the sneaky halfling rogue is the obvious choice to use in opposition for the party, there are hundreds of other possibilities. Their quiet, unobtrusive, friendly and harmless appearance can be used to conceal a wealth of trouble and harassment, all lurking behind the facade of a nice, quiet, little town.



## THE GNOMES

Few things seem to define gnomes better than their insatiable sense of curiosity and their equally insatiable love of humour. Where their cousins the dwarves are serious and even dour, gnomes as a whole are friendly, open, naturally inquisitive and the last race most players would think of when making a threat list. While most races tend to only see gnomish humour as an irritant but utterly harmless, if we look a little deeper we can see a pattern to their mirth that can serve as a very special type of adversary for the players that will leave them begging for mercy.

### THE GNOMISH MINDSET

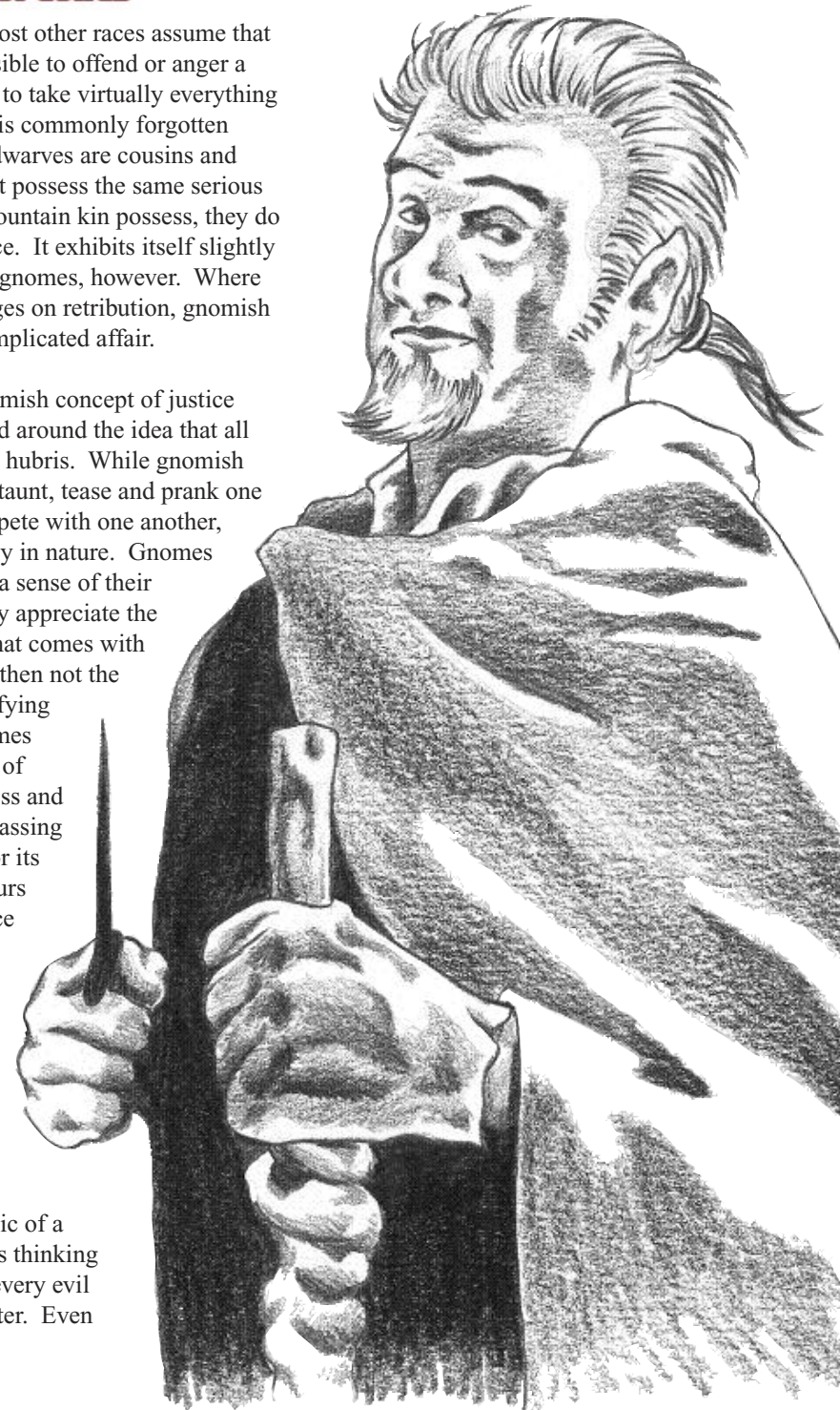
Gnomes love a good joke like few other races. Whole aspects of their society are built around their natural innate senses of humour. The social status that gnomes gain from a properly prepared prank or spectacularly delivered joke is widely held in disdain among the other races and even less frequently appreciated. However, what the other races view as mindless pranks are in actuality cunning mind games and the gnomes desire to maintain their own humility.

The first lesson a gnome learns is that anyone is a target. Social standing, age and gender are no barriers to gnomish pranking. In fact, the higher one's status the more likely one is to be a target. Those are the people, so reason the gnomes, which most likely need the reminder of where they came from. This attitude pervades all of gnomish society from the bottom up, going as far as to have an intricate system of social status and coup counting called 'prankstige' that help a gnome to determine his standing amongst his peers.

From the outside, most other races assume that it is virtually impossible to offend or anger a gnome, as they tend to take virtually everything with a smile. What is commonly forgotten is that gnomes and dwarves are cousins and while gnomes do not possess the same serious outlook that their mountain kin possess, they do share a love of justice. It exhibits itself slightly differently amongst gnomes, however. Where dwarven justice verges on retribution, gnomish justice is a more complicated affair.

The heart of the gnomish concept of justice and injustice is based around the idea that all injustice stems from hubris. While gnomish inventors will often taunt, tease and prank one another as they compete with one another, this rivalry is friendly in nature. Gnomes are rarely driven by a sense of their own ego. While they appreciate the acknowledgement that comes with success, more often than not the trip was just as satisfying as the reward. Gnomes pursue from a sense of natural inquisitiveness and a desire to learn, amassing wealth and power for its own sake rarely occurs to the diminutive race of seekers. For this reason, among many others, gnomes prank.

By gnomish logic, if someone cannot handle being the butt of a joke it is symptomatic of a larger problem. This thinking applies to virtually every evil that gnomes encounter. Even



inveterate villain's primary crime is a lack of humility. It is their ego that drives them to take the actions they take and so they need to be humbled. The greater the crime, the more devastating the humiliation the gnomes bring on the perpetrator. This is not to say that gnomes are unwilling to take up arms to protect themselves and others against evil. Gnomes are skilled combatants and are perfectly willing to defend themselves if the situation warrants it. However, gnomish tradition and culture demands that it be done with a sense of humour in the hope that the gnomes' enemies will realise the error of their ways, recant their hubris and withdraw.

Gnomes prefer to use confusion, misdirection and outright deception in place of brute force. A gnome adversary will lead an enemy astray, confound and befuddle them all with the intention of frustrating them into inaction. If they refuse to learn their lesson, gnomes use their skills at subterfuge to place the enemy in a situation where their own ego and unwillingness to back down gets them killed. By gnomish thinking, the gnomes themselves were not responsible for the death; it was their enemies' own overconfidence that led to their death. This goes hand in hand with the gnomish desire for knowledge. If a foe cannot learn, then he perishes.

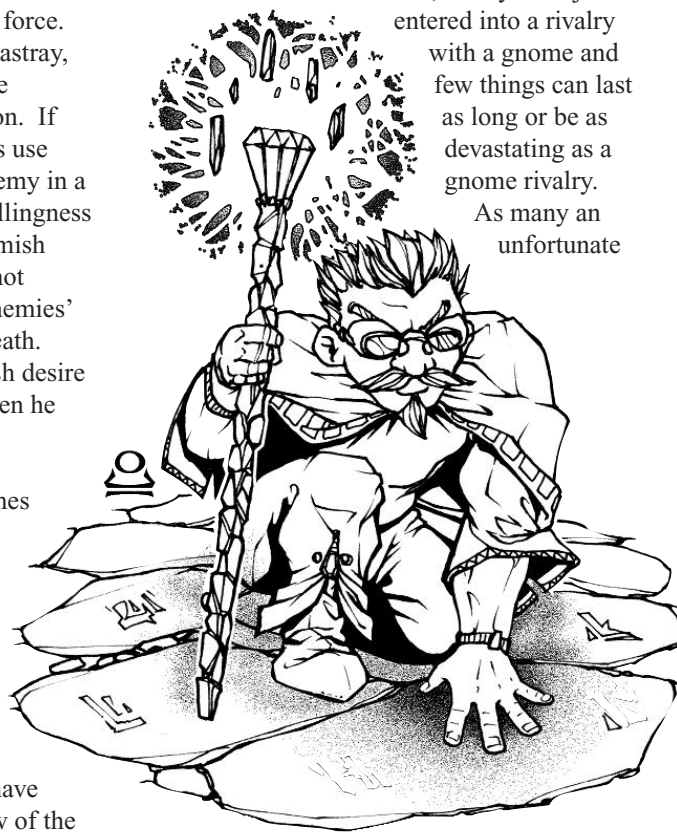
This is the crux of the issue when it comes to gnomish/party conflict. A party that has gotten too full of pride and ego will often find themselves running afoul of a gnome determined to teach them a lesson. From an overblown mage to a self-satisfied noble, no one is safe from a gnome determined to steer them off the path of hubris. However, in their attempt to save the one, others have a tendency to get caught in the undertow of the

excitable little fellow. This often makes for bad feelings, riled tempers and, fairly often, physical violence, all being brought to bear against the hapless gnome.

Nearly as dangerous as the gnomish sense of humour is their legendary curiosity. Gnomes love hoarding knowledge like their relatives under the mountain hoard gold. Few things will make a gnome throw caution to the wind like a tantalising piece of knowledge just out of reach. A gnome on a quest for knowledge will put every ounce of their natural deviousness and skill for distraction to work for them. If another player stands between them and what they seek, the challenge is on. While the player may not

realise, it they have just entered into a rivalry with a gnome and few things can last as long or be as devastating as a gnome rivalry.

As many an unfortunate



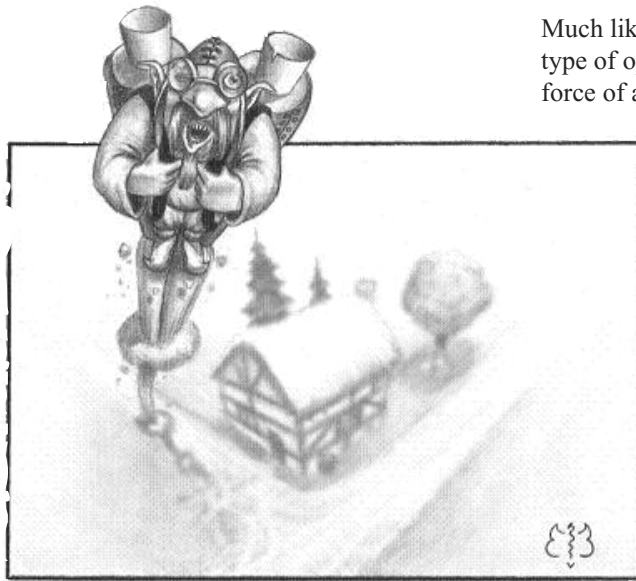
adventurer can attest, a gnomish rival can come from any class and any discipline.

Gnomes seek to unlock the mysteries of the universe through the pursuit of all fields and believe that there are secrets to be plumbed from the depths of any class. Gnomish warriors seek out lost and forgotten martial techniques. Gnomish rangers practice their skills amongst the forbidden places hoping to use their skill to chart the unknown and unlock the secrets of these hidden places. In short, there is not a field that somewhere some gnome is not trying to perfect. Between gnomes this kind of rivalry is not only expected, it is desired. Only by challenging each other and forcing them to excel under the most adverse conditions do gnomes believe they will truly succeed, achieving all they are capable of.

Unfortunately, not all races see things the same way. When a gnome finds someone in their field, it inspires them to initiate a rivalry. This is not only to drive the other person to achieve but to inspire the gnome himself. Sadly gnomes tend to try and inspire one another through an intricate and escalating series of pranks and practical jokes. This can go on for years as each gnome attempts to one up the other, all the while continuing on their personal pursuit of mastery in their chosen field. While this does tend to drive gnomes on, pushing them to perform, most other races find it irritating at best. Attempting to ignore the offending gnome is simply inviting a more complicated and grand prank as the gnome attempts to determine how the last one failed to have the proper effect. Of course, this can also lead to a different kind of no win situation. Most other races do not spend as much time playing pranks and require time to plan a truly masterful gag. If they take the time to actually focus on getting revenge on the gnome and succeed, it only inspires the

gnome to try more impressive jokes. Worse yet, if the gnome realises that his chosen rival has diverted his attention away from his own pursuit of wisdom, the gnome will simply redouble his efforts to 'inspire' him, and so the cycle continues. The non-gnome will be completely unaware of why *nothing* he does will dissuade the maddening gnome prankster.

This is why, ideally, gnomes work best as foils and rivals for players. They can be taxing and irritating but they typically do not go around killing their rivals. Now this is not to say that they cannot, just that they see it as an easy way out. Anyone with a sword can kill but it takes skill to get an opponent to admit defeat without laying a hand on them. Few things can be more frightening to a player than a gnome who has put all joking aside and has chosen to pursue a vendetta on a player's character. With their natural affinity for illusions and trickery combined with their racial preference for becoming bards and the sheer single-mindedness



a gnome can bring to bear when focused on a problem, they can be the most treacherous of combatants.

A gnome's natural cunning comes shining through when put in a situation when they know that combat is unavoidable. They will use every wile and trick at their disposal. One of the most intimidating aspects of the gnomish nature is their ability to improvise. The time spent during their formative years enduring prank after prank from their peers has taught the average gnome to think on their feet to a degree that would be the envy of the most seasoned bard. Given enough time the gnome will try to make sure they have control of the battle field ahead of time, preparing it with traps, illusions and snares. Bardic gnomes tend to work at taking control of the battle right in the midst attempting to break morale and sow confusion amongst their enemies. Many go as far as to begin working their contacts and spreading lies, rumours and slanders about their foes well before the battle even begins in an effort to rattle their opponents.

Much like halflings, gnomes represent a different type of opponent for players. One that simple force of arms is not going to overcome, at least not easily. To have a gnome rival is to have a rival for life, and despite the fact that most other races do not recognise it; it is also the highest compliment a gnome can give to a non-gnome. Gnomes consider it an honour to be pranked by others in their field, as it signifies both the importance of their work and that, by gnomish standard, they have arrived. The fact that other races do not appreciate the 'honour' that is being bestowed rarely registers on the average gnome.

Like the halflings, elves and dwarves, *The Quintessential Gnome* possesses an excess of character concepts and prestige classes for the Games Master to take advantage of when outfitting their Non Player Character gnomes:

- ⌘ The *Prankster* is the consummate gnomish joke-meister, taking the natural predilection for practical jokes and elevating it to an art form. While most Pranksters pursue their work simply for the entertainment of others, a select few take it up as a serious calling. Dedicating themselves to finding the most overblown targets, the most self-absorbed individuals and those most in need of being laughed at to prank. Some even see this as a nearly spiritual calling as they attempt to deflate the egos of their targets before excessive self-confidence corrupts into becoming something truly dangerous. These gnomes make no distinction between the head of a temple; a king of a land, or a fighter with an overdeveloped sense of himself and any player who has a series of lauded success may have a visit from a Prankster in his future.
- ⌘ Heroes rely on their reputation and the players are no exception. Few bards spread tales with the same verve and panache as a gnomish *Talespinner*. A player's reputation can be made or broken by the slightest turn of phrase from this talented word weaver. Most Talespinners seek noble patrons and their ability to put the right words in high placed ears can mean the difference between getting hired and spending another day looking for work for an adventuring company. By the same token a player who has offended a Talespinner can find it difficult to even gain admittance to certain cities or find themselves hunted down by bounty hunters, paladins and the like.

- ⌘ Adventurers are always a mixed bag and few enemies can truly compensate for the myriad of abilities a fully manned party can bring to the table. That is when a true villain finds a *Troubleshooter*. They are the pinnacle of the gnomish ability to improvise on the spot and make an excellent wild card to throw at a party. By making it clear at the on-set that the Troubleshooter is not necessarily a disciple of the villain, merely a hired hand, the role-playing possibilities for a party willing to attempt to try and sway him to their point of view. The Troubleshooter is a valuable ally. After all, the average Troubleshooter does not agree with his employer one hundred percent, but like most gnomes he is looking to achieve perfection in his chosen field. Until the players convince him the path to that perfection lies with them he can serve as a wonderful foil and deterrent for the party as well as a less lethal form of persuasion for a more sophisticated villain.
- ⌘ The *Overconfident* is the reason most gnomes prank each other. They realise that with their skills, intelligence and resourcefulness, they all have the potential to become so blinded to their own failings that they could become the Overconfident. This type of gnome makes a perfect recurring foil for the players. Not so much actually evil as he is just insufferable, the Overconfident will accept any challenge, rise to any occasion, in an effort to demonstrate how much better they are than those around them. If the party has thwarted them in past or beat them in even the slightest way, the Overconfident will pursue them to the ends of the earth in an effort to 'one up' his newest rivals.

- ⌘ Like the Wanderer among halflings, a gnome *Troublemaker* is an invitation to a Games Master to make the players lives interesting. Drawn to greater and bigger prey, the Troublemaker is never satisfied with his last prank or challenge. He is always on the lookout for a new more prestigious opponent. If he is part of the party he can serve as a wonderful tool to drag the players into situation way over their head as he pursues new prey. As an adversary the Troublemaker is drawn to characters slightly higher in level than he is, seeing them as a worthy challenge. As such he can also serve as a wonderful recurring Moriarty to the players' Holmes, always looking to best them, to turn up when he is least expected to inject just enough extra difficulty into any situation to make it truly 'interesting'.

The sky is the limit where gnomish antagonists are concerned. They make an excellent cerebral challenge for the players but are still diverse enough to allow for all kinds of foes, from the perfectionist warrior looking for a challenge to the uncontrollable prankster looking for a new target.

### TERROR AT THREE FEET

Gnomes and halflings are among some of the most diverse enemies a Games Master can use against his players and are the perfect opponents for the group whose strengths lay strictly in the martial arena. While they excel at frustrating and confounding their enemies, neither race is particularly mean or vindictive, but both are willing to fight using whatever means at their disposal for what they believe in.

While either race is easily underestimated, neither is as regal as the elves or as fierce in battle as the dwarves, they are a different kind of adversary for a different kind of challenge. Both are dangerous in ways that neither the dwarves nor elves can match. The halflings ability to harass an opponent and deny them the things that they need or want should never be underestimated. The average party will think twice about mouthing off to a gnomish prankster who has decided to make the party his newest 'special project' for a few months.

### WHO KNEW GOOD COULD BE SO DEVIOUS?

Games Masters are always on the lookout for new challenges, threats and opponents for their group. By going to the source and fleshing out some good antagonists from the races contained in *Core Rulebook I* the Games Master has the opportunity to breathe some new life into the same old, same old 'good' races. He can force his players to have to think differently about the races all players know so well as well as make them have to adjust their tactics and find new and different ways to defeat these unusual threats. Eventually given enough time these non-evil antagonists can take their rightful place alongside the pantheon of villains in his game as cunning opponents and groan worthy enemies. In addition, someday soon, he may see the look of fear in the eyes of his players when they realise they have just insulted a halfling. He may watch as awareness dawns throughout the group and they share a collective chill.

And he can just smile.



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# The Nisse

*Hunted by hawks and falcons,  
Menaced by trolls and gnomes,  
Wenching with crazy women –  
Lies and damnable dreams!*

*Henrich Ibsen, 'Peer Gynt', Act 2  
Translation: R. Fjelde*



**N**isse are those vetter, or spirits, who have attached themselves to a farm or tribe. In Midgard, many farmsteads possess one or other El creature. These gnome-like folk are sourly and indeed have reason to be so: at the dawn of creation they were cast out of the El worlds for stealing copious amounts of food from a celestial kitchen and so were declared outcast and destined to live amongst those able to provide them with the sustenance that they required. In order to make the best of a disastrous situation, nisse eventually gravitated towards humans.

They are little creatures, not much bigger than small children. They are quite ugly to behold: squinty little faces, wrinkly noses and gnarled tiny hands that continually reaching out for food greet the unwary human. They wear drab clothing, often ash blue or grey. If formal dress, or bunads, are worn by the family on special occasions, a nisse

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**Stanley Barnes**

will similarly expect one. His costume will be somewhat plainer than his adopted family's dress – just the way he likes it!

The nisse usually make their presence known around the time of great feasts. A nisse will approach the father of the homestead and will request that he be taken in as one of the family. This is only a formality – any farmer not wishing to be cursed will wholeheartedly agree! The ceremony commences around dawn of the following day. The head of the household places a boot or shoe onto the floor and then places his right foot into it. The nisse does the same, followed by the rest of the family. The nisse is now a fully-fledged member of the household. After which, everyone gets drunk and resorts to wild cavorting...

From then on, the vetter will take up residence in the farm's barn, or stabbur. A nisse will look after the animals and farmstead, and will do little odd jobs or chores for the family from time to time. Further, he will attack other nisse who encroach on the land and will always do whatever it takes to defend the homestead. In return for this help, the farm's nisse expects to be treated well. The family needs to leave him vast amounts of food and they should appreciate what he does for them. If he is offended, such as being given spoilt food for example, bad luck will befall the whole farm. In fact, he will willingly seek revenge if he is ever or even mistakenly wronged!

## Nisse

**Small Outsider (El, Vetter, Evil)**

**Hit Dice:** 1d6+1 (4 hp)

**Initiative:** +3 (+3 Dex)

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**AC:** 15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural)

**Attacks:** Flint knife

**Damage:** Flint knife 1d3

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Qualities:** El subtype, Eyes like Cythraul, Little One's Walk, Surprise Lob, Vetting Curse, Vetting Subtype

**Saves:** Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +3

**Abilities:** Str 7, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 16, Cha 10

**Skills:** Gather Information +2, Handle animal +4, Heal +2, Hide +6, Knowledge (nature) +2, Listen +4, Spot +4

**Feats:** -

**Earth Power:** 15 (12 base EP, +3 Wis)

**Climate/Terrain:** Midgard farmsteads

**Organisation:** Solitary

**Advancement:** By character class

## COMBAT

Nisse attack ferociously, much like starving wolves. They will stop at nothing to destroy their foes. Trickery and downright sadistic measures are always perfectly normal options, and will never be dismissed. It is not uncommon to find a nisse pouring scalding hot water into the ear of a young child who stole his supper that evening! Equally disturbing is the practice of crucifying and torturing - for days - any foreign nisse that invades his lands.

**Vetting Curse (Sp):** Through the use of words and gestures too vile to mention, a nisse can cast the following spell-like abilities at will (subject to available EP points): *flea infestation*, *invisible horrors*, *ill luck*, *lesser ill luck*, *ligature*, and *muscle to blubber*.

**Little One's Walk (Ex):** A nisse can move in complete silence at will and is never surprised by an animal or human.

**Surprise Lob (Su):** By picking up anything of between fine and tiny size, a nisse can lob it up into the air at a dizzying speed. This is usually too fast to see by an untrained eye (Spot check at DC 20). It will return 1d6 rounds later and surprise a designated target. Treat this action as a ranged attack.

**Eyes Like the Hell of Cythraul (Su):** A nisse's eyes glow like pinpoint smouldering embers at night time. This has the same effect as the extraordinary ability of Darkvision. They can see in the dark up to 50 feet. Darkvision is black and white only, but it is otherwise like normal sight, and nisse can function just fine with no light at all.

**El Subtype:** Creatures with an el subtype gain a +2 to all Will saves. They can fight on as normal even when below zero hit points as long as they make a Fortitude saving throw each round



(DC = 15 + damage taken after being reduced to zero hit points). Failure indicates they are unconscious and dying as usual. If 'killed', they do not return to their own El world but are not destroyed. If by some chance of fate they are ever attacked on their home El world, they suffer +2d6 damage from iron weapons of any kind.

**Vetter Subtype:** Creatures with a vetter subtype are cursed creatures, destined to wander Tir Nan Og for all eternity and never given the opportunity to return home to the El worlds. In return, they receive the ability to curse others. If 'killed', they are not returned to their own El world, but are reincarnated as another nisse who will return in 1d6 days. If they consume even slightly spoiled food or drink they suffer from a poison effect, as detailed below.

Poison	Type	Initial Damage	Secondary Damage	Price
Spoilt food & drink	Ingested DC 20	1d4	2d4 Con	0



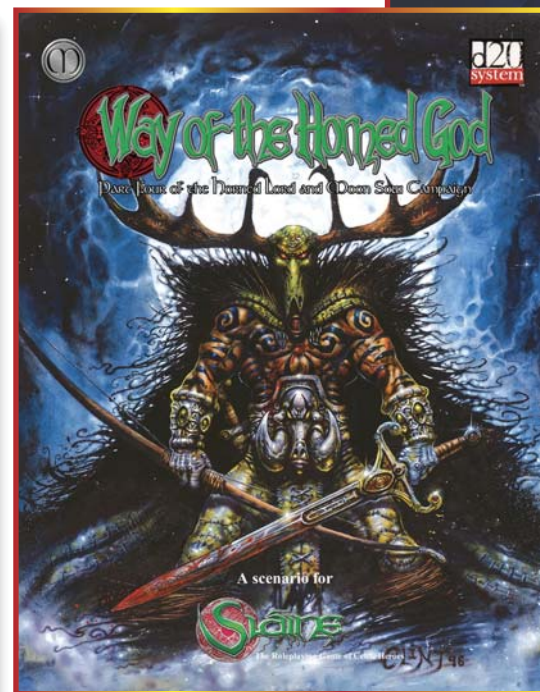
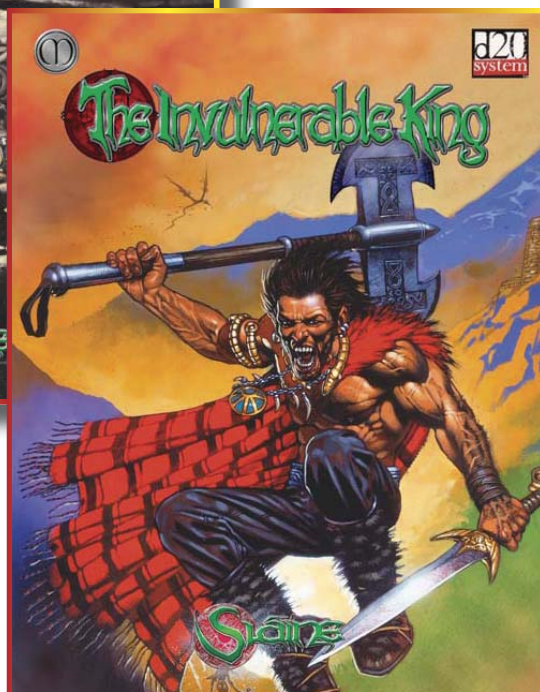
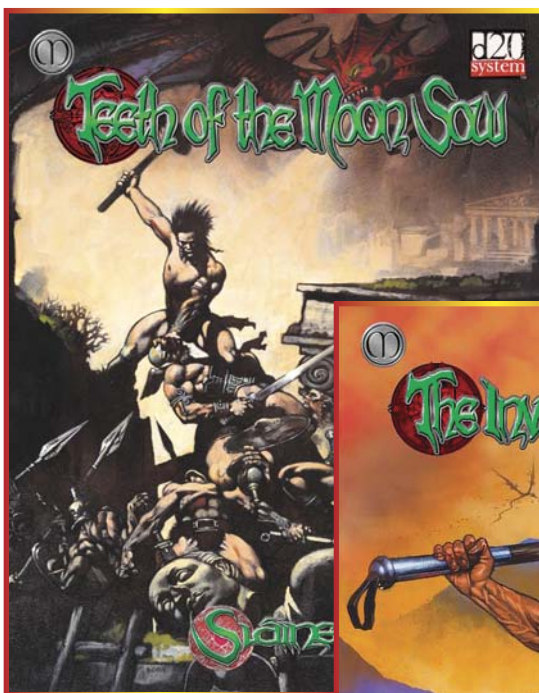
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# PORT BAX

## THE 'DIAMOND OF DURENOR', A CAMPAIGN SETTING FOR THE LONE WOLF ROLEPLAYING GAME, PART II

DARREN 'THE WOLF' PEARCE

### THE CITY:

#### COMMONER'S CIRCLE

The rough cobbled streets of the southern area of the port begin to smooth a little as the road leads on towards the wall of the Red Gate. Before this place is reached, there is the Commoner's Circle, the affectionate name given to the central portion of the city where most of the normal folk make their homes.

Strong houses and several tall towers dot this area along with a satisfying mix of various taverns and inns. A number of these provide a fair rate for food, drink and accommodation but they pale in comparison to the Port Inn. A magnificent white-stone and red-roofed building that dominates a good part of the Commoner's Circle, the Port Inn provides facilities for numerous special functions as well as stabling for horses and a safe layover for coach parties.

The fabled Avenue of Trees begins just before the Commoner's Circle and bisects it from south to north terminating a few feet or so before the mighty wall that separates the naval quarter of Port Bax from the rest of the city.

### THE PORT INN

The traveller pauses upon his journey to survey the building before him. Its many slanted or sloped rooftops are covered in red slate tiles. The building is made from white-stone and stands quite tall. A small flag depicting the war-fleet of the Durenese navy flutters in the wind high above upon a pole. The whole building is surrounded by a high stone walled enclosure and has a pair of heavy wooden gates ready to admit coaches and horses. The sign makes it out to be the Port Inn.

The gates are ironbound and have a sturdy lock; the lock is of excellent quality and hard to break.

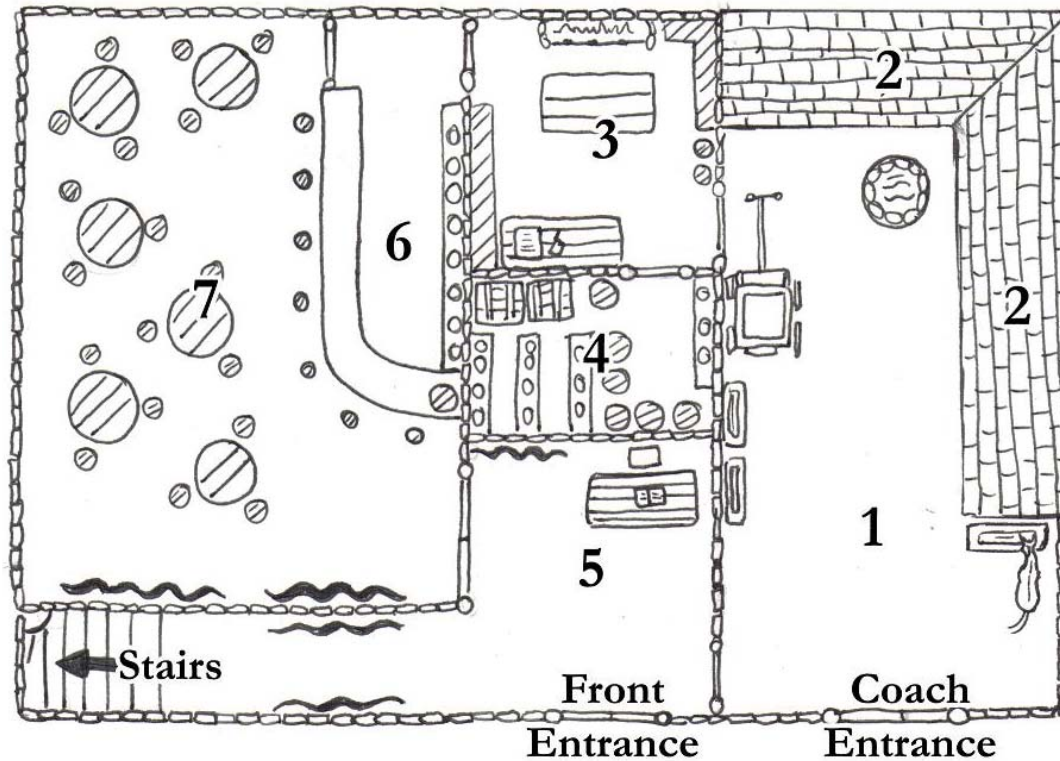
The Inn is three storeys high and provides an excellent mid-range place for folk to spend a good night's rest. The rooms are all kept clean and in a near-pristine condition. The owner is a

man called Felstaff Blackmane, a dabbler in the magical arts.

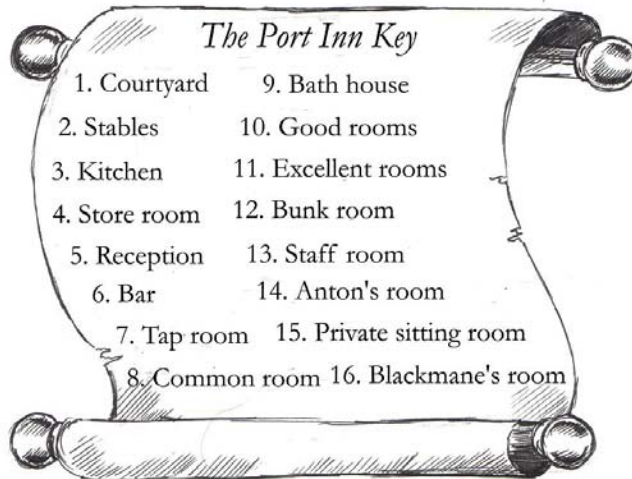
All the doors and windows are made of the finest materials and their locks and latches are of the best quality. To protect his residents both from the unwelcome attentions of folk that might wish to do them harm and the quick fingers of the Ratter's Guild, Blackmane has sunk a great deal of money into his inn.

Although passengers disembark in the rear courtyard all clients are shown in by the front door by immaculately dressed men and women. Blackmane ensures that his inn prides itself upon service and quality.

As they step off the coach a young woman in a black and silver tabard greets them. She ushers the travelling party through the front door of the building. Inside the Port Inn the main hall floor is covered with a rich burgundy plush carpet and the walls are decked out with oaken panels. Several fine paintings add more than a touch of class to the décor. A broad shouldered man waits behind a desk with a friendly smile, ready to enter their names into the guest-book.



### Port Inn: Ground Floor



The first face that visitors often encounter is a young woman known as Hilde. Hilde is of Durenese descent and always tries to please Blackmane to the best of her abilities. She is around twenty summers of age and is extremely helpful. She leads guests to the front door and into the capable hands of Anton the scribe who awaits them in the main hall.

Anton Regale is a portly, broad shouldered giant of a man who hails from close to the Kai Monastery. He used to be a farmer's son until he met up with Blackmane and they began a long adventuring career together. This ended after an accident left Anton with a false leg and a deep melancholy. His companion decided in a fit of inspiration, that using their gold from adventuring they would retire to Port Bax and set up a friendly coaching inn.

A massive hand extends in the travellers direction as they are ushered closer to the desk. A clean-shaven fellow with a big grin on his lips shakes the first mans hand heartily and then sits back down with some effort favouring his left leg.

'My name is Anton, and let me be one of the first to welcome ye to the Port Inn, now to business, how long will you be staying and do you require a tab?'

He is dressed in the same black and silver tabard as the young woman that greeted the group. He still appears to loom even whilst seated.

### Anton Regale

4<sup>th</sup> Level Warrior (Staff at the Port Inn)

End Dice: 4d8+1 (+4 End for Toughness)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 25 ft (-5 ft for false leg).

Armour Class: 11 (+1Dex), flat-footed 10

Base Combat Skill: +7

Attack: Sword (1d8+4 damage, +8 to hit)

Full Attack: N/A



**Space/Reach:** 5-ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** N/A

**Special Qualities:** None

**Willpower:** N/A

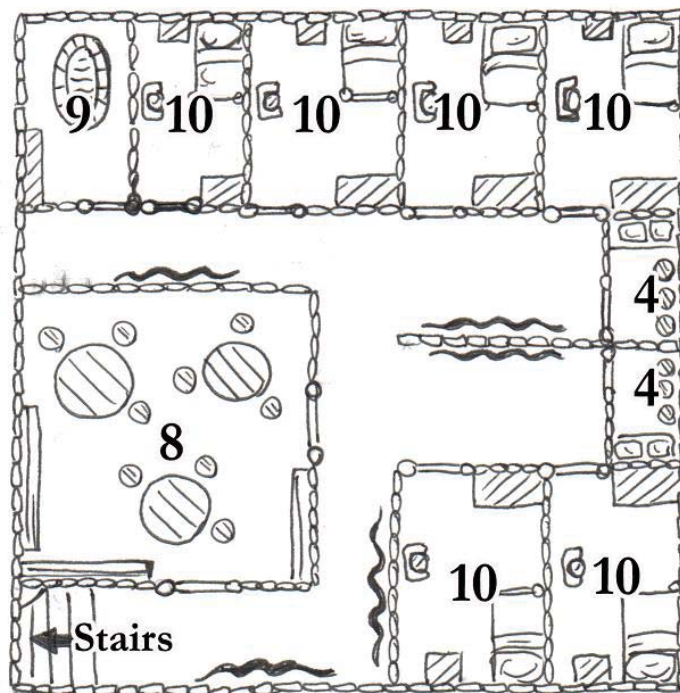
**Saves:** Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +2

**Abilities:** Str 16, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 12

**Skills:** Athletics +8, Climb +8, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Knowledge: Nature +7, Knowledge: Warfare +7, Ride +6, Survival +6

**Note:** Due to his warrior's weapon of choice, Anton gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls with his axe. Toughness grants him: +1 End for levels 1 through 4.

**Background:** Anton was a farmer's son with no love for the farming life. At a very early age he enrolled himself in a local fighting school. The school was set up to act as a feeder for the Kai Monastery, but less restrictive. Many young men and women flocked to it to learn the rudimentary lessons of armed and unarmed combat. Anton struck out from the school and began to act as a guard for many caravans and traders that plied the dangerous roads between the villages, towns and cities of Magnamund.



## *The Port Inn: First Floor*

He earned a great deal of coin for his actions and also met and befriended a dabbler in the magical arts: Felstaff Blackmane, a man that never quite made it into any of the orders of magic. Both he and Felstaff began a lucrative adventuring career that brought them quite a bit of fame and fortune. Sadly, this all turned sour when Anton lost his leg (nearly losing his life in the process) and was forced to retire from adventuring. His friend, sorrowed by this event had the idea of opening a coaching inn in Port Bax with their gold. Now Anton works there and supports his friend to the best of his ability, still dreaming

of the glory days but content to live out his life amongst the many visitors to the Port Inn.

**Appearance:** Anton has lost much of the good looks of his youth, he is a portly fellow...a little on the overweight side from eating too much fine food from the Inn. He still has the muscle of his former occupation and this reflects in his overall build. When seated he seems to still loom over most folk, topping an easy six foot five. He wears the typical black and silver leather pants and tunic/tabard of the Port Inn's staff.

The Inn is a clean and tidy place full of wily staff. Several doors lead off from the main hall and go further into the building. One is clearly marked 'Taproom'. The other is often ajar, showing a set of wooden stairs that lead off into the upper floors of the Inn.

## TAPROOM

The sound of music reaches your ears as you head into the taproom and the smell of beer and roast meat assails your nostrils and makes your mouth water. Burgundy coloured crisp tablecloths shroud the dark oak tables at which a number of patrons sit either enjoying a fine meal or playing a game of chance or two. A small bar serves food and drinks both night and day. Serving staff attired in the standard black and silver tabard costume weave elegantly in and around the tables.

Food/Drink/Lodging prices can be found on page 123 of the *Lone Wolf Roleplaying Game*.

Felstaff Blackmane can often be found in the taproom of the Inn tending the bar, those that approach the wooden structure will see a stern but regal looking male in his late forties.

The man before you does not look like the typical kind of fellow that you think would tend bar. His pitch black eyes chill those he looks upon to the bone. His medium length hair is neatly pulled back into a ponytail, secured by a small silver clasp. He wears a black shirt and leggings and wears a tooled leather belt around his waist. Despite his lack of stature, he is only five feet three inches tall; this man bears himself as someone of importance.

### Felstaff Blackmane 5<sup>th</sup> Level Adept (Owner of the Port Inn)

**End Dice:** 5d6+1

**Initiative:** +3

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Armour Class:** 13 (+3 De), flat-footed: 10

**Base Combat Skill:** +2

**Base Magical Combat:** +3

**Base Magical Damage:** 1d8

**Attack:** Sword (d8+1, +3 to hit)

**Full Attack:** N/A

**Space/Reach:** 5-ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** N/A

**Special Qualities:** None

**Willpower:** 23

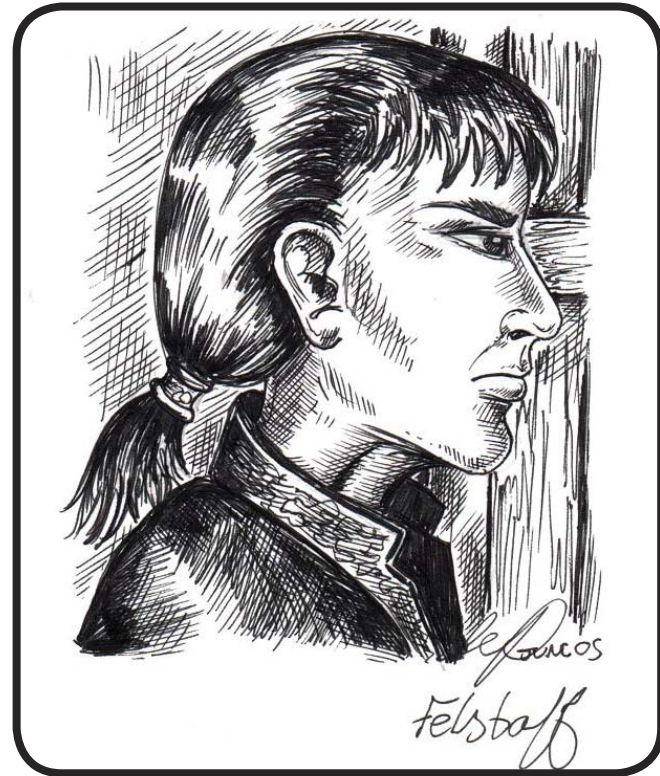
**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +7

**Abilities:** Str 13 +1, Dex 16 +3, Con 13 +1, Int 17 +4, Wis 15 +3, Cha 15 +3

**Skills:** Concentration +9, Craft: Woodcarver +8, Handle Animal +8, Heal +11, Knowledge: Arcana +12, Knowledge: Dungeoneering +12, Knowledge: Geography +9, Knowledge: History +9, Occult +12, Profession: Tavernkeeper +8, Survival +11.

**Note:** Partial Magical Combat, Talent (Brotherhood Spell), Willpower (Fuels magical arts)

**Spells:** All tiers of **Lightning Hand** as per the Talent section in the Adept listing.



**Background:** Felstaff Blackmane wanted to join the Brotherhood of the Crystal Star when he was a child. However, he witnessed something that prevented that – some trauma that remains unsaid, but it did not stop his dabbling in the magical arts. He opened books and studied all he could until he simply became bored and went out into Magnamund to explore. He met and befriended Anton Regale and together they embarked on a successful adventuring career, using Felstaff's magical talent and Anton's skill with a sword. When Anton suffered his accident it was Felstaff that came to his aid. He managed to get the man to a powerful healer and saved his life. Now both he and his companion look after folk in the Port Inn. Felstaff put most of his money into building the coaching inn to help keep his friend's mind off his troubles.

**Appearance:** Felstaff is not a tall man, only around five feet three inches in height, but what he loses in stature he makes up for in personality. Blackmane is a man that prides himself on his appearance. His thin build is stereotypical of a wizard with a jet-black close-cropped beard and regal features. His medium length hair is kept pulled back by a silver clasp and his pitch black eyes seem to chill most folk to the bone when he looks at them. He is attired in black trousers and a black shirt, with a tooled belt. Over this he wears his black and silver tabard.

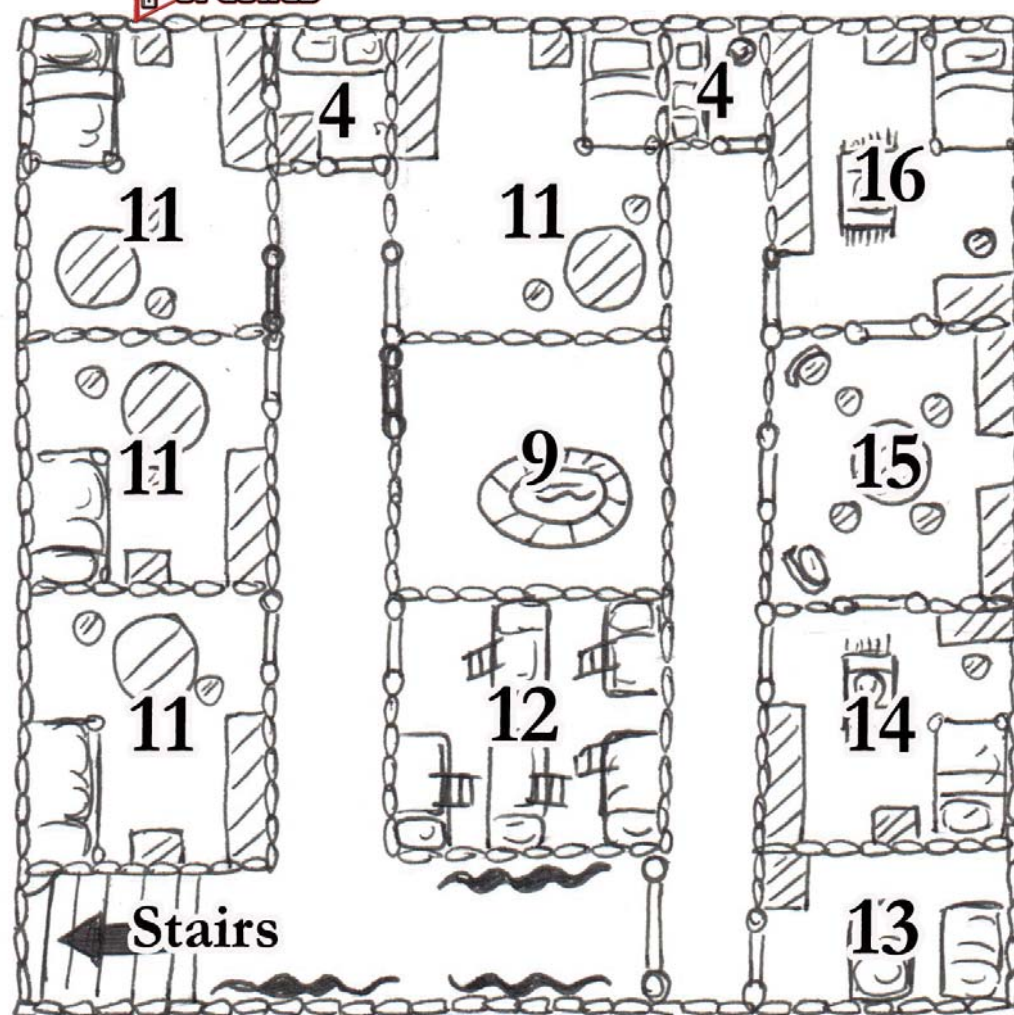
## UPPER STOREYS

The upper floors of the Inn are reserved mainly for guest quarters. All of the Port Inn's accommodations are of good quality. Several of the rooms on the third floor are of extremely high quality. These cost up to twice or three times the normal listed price and come with several spells/wards that offer the best protection for the guest in question.

Upon the second and third floor there are also several rooms that merit further mention. Blackmane offers these additional services to paying customers.

## COMMON ROOM

This is a comfortable medium-sized room that contains many chairs and tables. A small gathering of folk sit and while away the hours. Their conversation accompanied by the sounds of a fountain in the far corner providing a magical spectacle of light and soft music.



## *The Port Inn: Second Floor*

### BATH HOUSE

A large inviting sunken bath, its edges are composed of fine marble. It is obvious that the owner has spared no expense in the creation of this bathing area. Large white towels are looped over silver rails ready to preserve modesty.

## THE CITY: THE AVENUE OF TREES

Those who wish to enter Alin Square must first pass through the Red Gate. This particular feature sits at the end of the Avenue of Trees. The Avenue itself is a pathway that runs from South to North and cuts right through the Commoner's Circle.

The Avenue also sports another important building, the City Hall. This can be found just midway along the Avenue and slightly off to the east.

The sea wind rises to tug at your clothing as you make your way along the tree-lined avenue. Strong branches and thick leaves provide ample shelter for various animals and several people can also be seen sitting in the shade. As the path continues to the north a large building of some note can be seen off to the east. Just before the path opens out a sign reads:

### CITY HALL

To the east of the Avenue a large white-stone domed building with wide steps can be seen. The sign points in its direction. It is the City Hall. The building itself has several large columns that support a small, arched triangular structure that sits above the entry. Beneath it can be seen a pair of sturdy double doors made from solid oak and reinforced with iron bands.

It is here in the depths of the halls of power that the various government officials make their daily decisions for the running of the Port City.

Various trainers can also be found in the depths of the City Hall. They will give the appropriate services to the Player Characters for a suitable fee.

Several officers of the City also maintain their offices in this building. They deal with such aspects of law and order that do not require a larger Court. Player Characters can expect to meet these faceless, harsh bureaucrats if they step out of line and are caught causing a minor affray by the Watch.

The Mayor of Port Bax has his office within the confines of the City Hall. Several guards wait at his beck and call. He is not an unfair man but he can often be a little on the abrupt side. This abruptness has earned him the enmity of Ratter's Guild.

The current Mayor of the City is a man known as Oswald Ryen.

A thin almost emaciated figure sits behind a desk, his hawk-like features denote a scholar of some kind. However, there is a haunted gleam to his brown eyes that indicates a troubled man. This is unsurprising as he is the fellow that everyone comes to with most problems within the City. His fine clothes denote that he is a man of breeding. He wears a rich shirt of cream coloured silk, his leggings are fine brown leather. Over this ensemble he wears his dark purple robes of office, trimmed with silver thread.



The City Hall is the perfect place from which the Games Master can springboard adventures and provide the party with a few helpful (Or not so helpful) Non Player Characters to make their lives interesting.

### THE WATCH HOUSE

At the end of the tree-lined avenue the road continues to turn to the left or the right. Just to the right there is a large white-stone tower, guarded by a couple of tough-looking armed and armoured men. This is the Port Watchtower and the sign that hangs just outside confirms this. Just beyond the Watchtower is the large Red Gate that is portal to Alin Square itself and the Naval Quarter of the City.

## SCENARIO SEED

## MISSING!

One of the daughters of a Sommerlending Judge vanished a few days ago. The Watch will be on the lookout for suspicious looking characters and any odd behaviour by the players may lead them to be considered to be part of this plot. If the Mayor finds out there are Adventurers in his City he may well send for the players and enlist their help in unravelling this mystery.

- ❖ The girl has been kidnapped by a Helghast. Unknown to the players they are trying to gain a foothold in Port Bax. By holding her hostage the forces of darkness believe that they may well coerce the Judge into serving them.
- ❖ Ratter has taken her prisoner and plans to use her in some sort of scam or revenge against the Mayor. If he can discredit the man then perhaps he can cause him to resign.
- ❖ She wandered off and has not really been kidnapped. She fell down a hole in one of the slum areas and has been trapped without food and water for a day or so now.
- ❖ A slaver has taken her prisoner to sell for a tidy profit. There are various clues that lead to the group – who have now fled the City and managed to escape further into the world. This could be a set up for a chase scenario and is rife with all sorts of opportunities.



It is here that the traveller can purchase a White pass for trade reasons or a Red one to allow further access to Alin Square and the fabled Consulate of Sommerlund.

The stone hall inside the Port Watchtower is decorated in a simple clean style. A few tables and chairs have been placed to accommodate visitors. A heavy barred door leads to the deeper recesses of the building – cells and guard chambers. There are two doors that are of interest however, one marked White Passes and the other Red Passes.

Behind the White Pass door players will find a Watch officer that will sell them a Trader's White Pass for the sum of 10 gold coins. This will allow the character to operate a trade stall in the Market Quarter of the City. White Passes can be used to springboard adventures in a number of ways.

Behind the Red Pass door players will find a Durenese Naval officer. He will inquire upon the nature of their business in the Naval Quadrant. As a rule players should only be allowed beyond the Red Gate if they have pressing business or are about to take a ship from the harbour itself.

A man dressed in the regalia of a Durenese Naval Officer is seated behind a desk in this room; around him are various charts and maps. He looks up as you enter and furrows his brow for a moment, studying you with a practised gaze.

'What business do you have beyond the Red Gate?'

If the players have the correct documentation, either from a contact in the City or the Mayor himself regarding a quest they will be issued

with a Red Pass and then abruptly asked to leave. The man behind the desk is not one for idle chitchat.

## THE RED GATE

The Red Gate is the last barrier that separates the Naval Quarter from the rest of the City. It is a bright red wooden and ironbound door that sits in a large stone wall, just to the right of the Watchtower. Beyond the wall you can see the masts of various ships bobbing upon the sea. The Red Gate is guarded by two heavily armed and armoured men replete in the clothing and armour of the Durenese Navy. As you approach one of the larger men steps forwards and booms in a bass voice.

'Halt – only those that have a Red Pass may enter.'

Beyond the Red Gate and the stone wall is the Naval Quarter of Port Bax. It is here that the high nobles and minor lords and ladies of the City are protected by the most adept of guards. Just over the wall the flag of Sommerlund can be seen fluttering in the breeze high above the Sommerlund Consulate building.

## THE CITY: ALIN SQUARE

Through the Red Gate, Alin Square is populated by the finely dressed nobility and guards of the various noble homes that dot the area. Several tall lamp-poles line the quayside off to the left and lead down to the shore and harbour. This is where the Sommerlund Navy ships are moored. A large stone building with many white marble pillars outside it stands off to the right and near centre of the Square. The flag of Sommerlund that flutters above it on a sturdy wooden pole indicates that the building is the Sommerlund Consulate.



## SCENARIO SEED

### OLD MAN

Whilst in the City the players are approached by a kindly old man with a sad story to tell. He claims that he does not have long to live and has decided he is going to live the remainder of his life in quiet solitude far from the City. He lacks the funds to do this so must sell most of his belongings. This is where the player characters come in – they can purchase a White Pass and sell his goods for him.

- ✘ The old man is genuine and will reward player characters that help him out of this dilemma.
- ✘ The old man is a con man in disguise that works for Ratter and has picked the players as an easy mark. The goods he gives them are in fact stolen and he is hoping to use the player characters as hapless scapegoats to fence the goods for him.
- ✘ The same as the above but with the added twist that the Watch happens to recognise some of the items that the players are selling and are not convinced that they are helping out an old man. If the Watch are convinced then the old man will not show up at the predetermined meeting place and the players could find themselves in more hot water.

Fifty years from now Lone Wolf will walk through the gate and embark on another leg of his perilous quest to save the world from the forces of darkness. For the moment, though, the air within the Square is usually one of relaxed but watchful scrutiny. Travellers are paid little mind unless they happen to be of importance or one of the Kai.



keep watch and prevent possible trouble. The Port Authority maintains a small building at the top of the longest pier.

## SOMMERLUND CONSULATE

The symbol of Sommerlund flutters high upon a pearl-white flagpole atop this massive building, which is a palatial structure of gleaming white marble and golden trimmings. A large domed roof curves down towards an arched balcony, again composed of the same gleaming brilliant-white marble. The arch is supported by twelve pristine columns and between them runs a set of darker grey marble stairs. These lead to a large oak door inset with the symbol of the Sommerlund. A plethora of guards stand in regimental guardianship over the area. Each of them is armed and armoured with the best weapons and equipment.

No look at Port Bax could be complete without a mention of this grand building. It is the governmental seat of Sommerlund and the focal point for its political power. In approximately fifty years time Lone Wolf will conclude part of his perilous journey here and meet the famous Lord Rhygar. Together they will set off for the City of Hammerdal.

The interior of the Consulate is just as impressive as the exterior. It is likely that the players will only see this majestic building if they have pressing business with the Sommerlending government. There are many

Through the Red Gate you can see the majesty of Alin Square itself. The buildings are made from fine stone and marble, and are covered in flags and heraldic symbols. Several enclosures mark the territory of the nobles of the Naval Quarter. These enclosures are guarded day and night by brightly dressed armoured guards. The square has a direct path that is lined with lamp-poles all the way down to the quayside and beyond to the harbour. The tall masts of the Durenese Navy vessels bob upon the waters as they sit in dock. Finally, the sight of the Sommerlund flag perched above a large stone building catches your attention, the pillars outside supporting a curved arch of stone. This is the Sommerlund Consulate and the seat of the Sommerlending government.

## THE HARBOUR

Off to one side of this path the road leads to a small set of steps. Down here you can see the lower area of the harbour and the docks themselves. The various Galleons of the Durenese Navy sit in the calm waters and bob softly upon the surface. From the various masts of the ships flutter a colourful cornucopia of flags. Dockhands move to and fro upon their business day and night, shifting cargo and tying off lines for the smaller vessels that occasionally come to dock here.

Players can embark on new adventures or take a quick trip to other areas of interest from here. Ships can be hired for the right price and dockhands are always on hand to help with carriage and other tasks. Several armed members of the Durenese Navy are on hand to

## SCENARIO SEED

### SABOTAGE!

One of the Navy ships is badly damaged during the night and the Mayor sends for the player characters. Knowing that they are within the City and a cut-above the rest of his population, he appeals to them and asks for their help in solving this obvious act of sabotage.

- ✘ It was an accident and one of the oil lamps aboard the ship at night leaked its contents over the floor. The resulting mess caught fire and the deck and railings were badly burned before the fire could be put out.
- ✘ Agents of the Dark Lords sabotaged the ship. They were hoping to catch more than one vessel in the conflagration but the quick-witted dockhands and crew of the aptly named 'Endurance' were able to stop the blaze in time. Several incriminating pieces of evidence have been left that point to the ship's Bosun. The man is falsely accused and the player characters must discover his innocence and bring the true perpetrators to justice.
- ✘ It was not an act of sabotage at all. It was the act of a drunken Captain aboard a merchant vessel. In a fit of rage he fired his own ship due to trouble paying off his debts. The resulting blaze caught one of the Navy Vessels and gutted half the ship which is badly damaged and listing in the water. The player characters must solve this puzzle and track down the Captain of the merchant ship for questioning.

offices and chambers within the Consulate. Each is home to an important dignitary, one who serves the best interest of the people, noble and commoner alike.

There are many works of art upon the finely decorated walls, statues of all shapes and sizes compliment these artworks and depict great heroes from Durenor and Sommerlund's past. Robed figures move to and fro through the large central 'main' hall and go about their business; they scarcely pay you mind at all. It is such a grand building that for a moment you have to stop and take stock of the surroundings. Many doors lead deeper into the Consulate and one particular door seems to lead into a reception area of some kind.

## RECEPTION AREA

Just past a small door and within a simple office is the Consulate's main reception area. There are a few leather-covered chairs that provide adequate comfort for those waiting to speak to a representative or perhaps make an appointment. Behind numerous large desks covered in reams of paperwork sit harried looking bureaucrats, quills in hand, ready to answer questions and so forth.

Many people look after the well being of guests and visitors to the Consulate. However, the first port of call for any new visitor is always the reception area. Here a member of the reception staff will take down details and fill in any number of forms. The wheels of bureaucratic power never stop turning and it has long since

been assumed that most governments produce and consume vast quantities of parchment to keep them going.

Any number of Experts (see page 177 of the Lone Wolf Roleplaying Game) will be on hand in the Reception area to deal with the player characters and any questions they might have.

If they wish to meet with anyone else within the Consulate then the Games Master is advised to use the Aristocrat (see page 174 of the Lone Wolf Roleplaying Game) to determine the skills and abilities of any important bureaucrat they might interact with.

There are numerous reasons that the characters might wish to seek the advice of the Consulate, or meet with a representative within. They could be similar to Lone Wolf himself and be fleeing some kind of attack or bringing important information of the Darklords movements, Helghast sightings or any number of reports before the Consulate.

## SCENARIO SEED

## CONSPIRACY!

Someone inside the City approaches the characters and tells them that one of the members of the Consulate is really a Helghast in disguise. This individual claims to have proof that a number of people who have opposed this person have ended up missing or turned up dead in the slums.

- ✘ The person is telling the truth and there really is a Helghast that has duped his way into the Consulate. How can the characters oppose this threat and bring the creature to justice without being arrested in the process?
- ✘ The person is attempting to discredit a rival and is a servant of the Darklords. If they can have the Consular removed and someone else put in their place, they will have a powerful ally within Port Bax.
- ✘ The person in question wants to settle a score with the Consular. They feel as though he has wronged them in some way and they are hoping to dupe a group of do-gooders into doing their work for them.

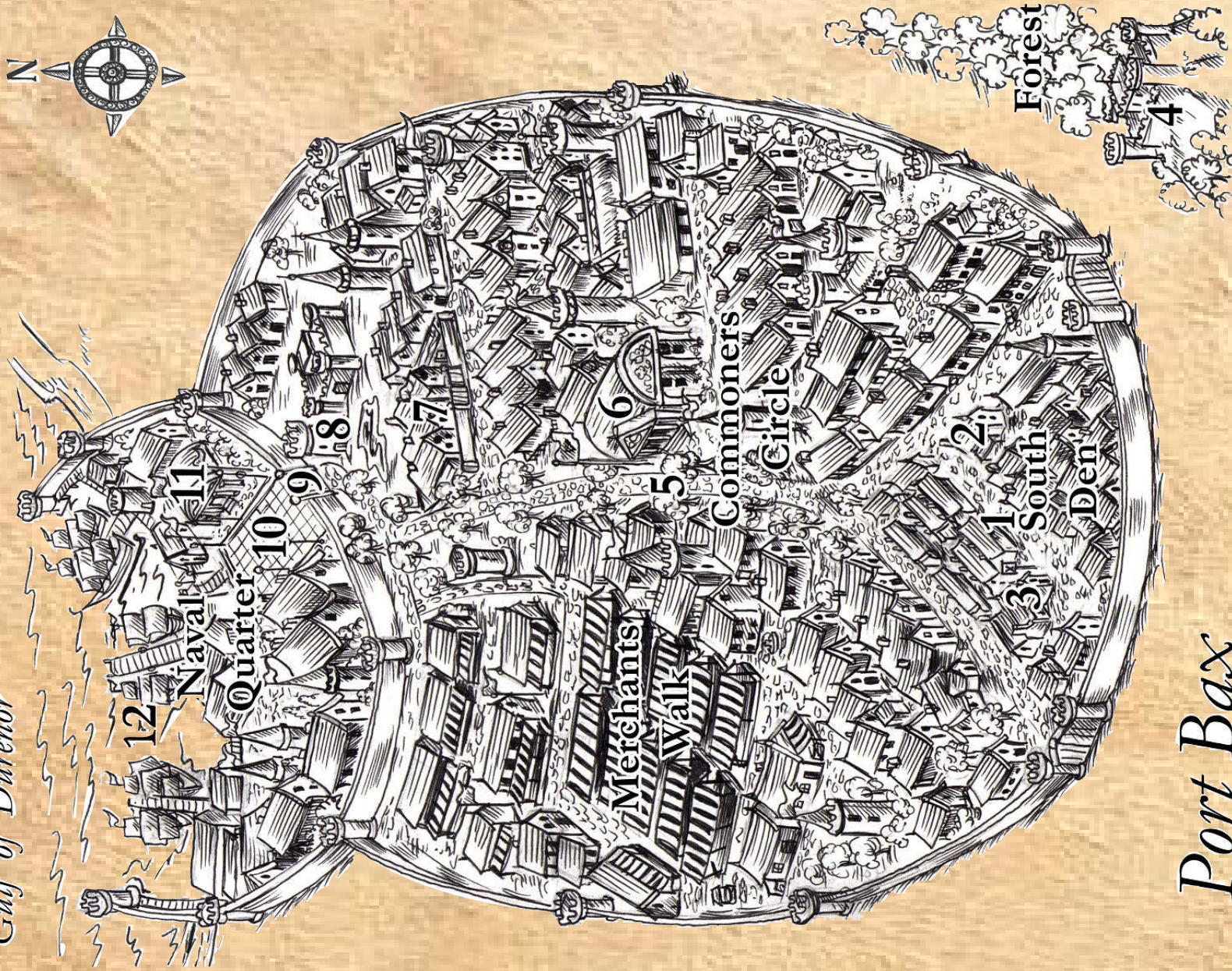
This has been a short overview of Port Bax. There are numerous other locations within Bax that could be detailed. However, to do so would require a source book in its own right. The Game Master is encouraged to put as many twists and turns into this overview as they wish. The details within it are not set in stone and it certainly is not the be-all and end-all description of Port Bax. It was created from extensive research both off and on-line from the works of Joe Dever. I would like to take a moment to thank Joe for bringing us the wonderful world of Magnamund and the stories of the Kai.



### *Port Bax Key*

1. Street of Shales
2. Misha's Pawn Shop
3. The Rusty Cutlass
4. The Watch Castle
5. Avenue of Trees
6. City Hall
7. Port Inn
8. Watch Tower
9. The Red Gate
10. Alin Square
11. The Sommerlund Consulate
12. Docks

*Gulf of Durenor*



*Port Bax*



# The Jonny Nexus Experience

## The Day I Nearly Killed a Player

A few months back I chanced upon a newly created thread on ENWorld ([www.enworld.org](http://www.enworld.org)) whose title asked GMs if they'd ever killed a player. Well I immediately fired off a reply which first cautioned the author against committing homicide and then went on to warn other thread participants that descriptions of serious real-world crime (and I think killing one of the guys at your gaming table counts as a serious crime) might contravene the ENWorld codes of conduct.

It turned out he was actually referring to the killing of player *characters*, which does make a bit more sense. But it did succeed in reminding me of the time when I could cheerfully have throttled one of the guys in my gaming group.

\* \* \* \* \*

This incident occurred some ten years ago, when I had a weekly group consisting of Bog Boy (now in my Thursday group), TAFKAC (now in my Sunday group), Bill (a.k.a. the man who couldn't stop dying) and Ben (Bill's brother).<sup>1</sup>

After many years as a player I'd decided to try my hands at GMing, and had decided to stick with the only genre, superheroes, that I'd ever managed to successfully GM. I was determined to make a success of this campaign, and came up with what I believed was an original and rich setting.

## The Mars Campaign

When Percival Lowell thought he saw canals on Mars, people ridiculed him. But when 1930s US Army engineers found a 20,000 mile long magical portal/tunnel connecting the deserts of New Mexico to a Mars boasting a breathable atmosphere, canals and an ancient but dying civilisation, he was proved right.

Three other gateways were quickly found, in Australia (British), in Libya (Italian/German), and in Soviet Kazakhstan. After a tense standoff, the Martian legions attacked the US troops encamped outside their capital and were annihilated. Mars now belonged to man.

It is now the year 1959, and the Emperor is nothing but a US puppet, his world divided between the supposedly independent Soviet Martian Republic, the independent German Free Martian Republic, the British Martian Colonies, and New New Mexico, the 49th state of the USA.

Mars is dying, and Earth is dying with her. Superheroes are about to come to Mars, and only they can save their two worlds.

Or to summarise: Lowell/Bradbury/Burroughs Mars meets Grease/Happy Days. With superheroes.

The players took different approaches to creating characters. Bog Boy fancied playing some kind of mystic, which happened to dovetail neatly with a role I wanted one of the PCs to play – that of a human who'd got involved with a nomadic Martian tribe, learned their ways, and would take the mantle of their prophesied Messiah or Champion. Thus was born Hank Ryan, archaeologist and anthropologist, a.k.a. Red Sabre. (Note: although we'd defined the superhero character, play started before Hank Ryan had become the Red Sabre).

TAFKAC created a US Navy pilot called Tom Jenson who'd been given a secret suit of powered armour and become Panther (named after his US Navy jet), with an assignment to protect the New America colony and its heart, New New Mexico.

We had a few problems with Bill, as the following, slightly paraphrased, conversation indicates:

**Bill:** Can I play a character like Spider-Man?

**Me:** No. [Proceeds to go into sixty second explanation explaining why I hate 'cloned' characters, and why I want all the characters to be an original creation].

**Bill:** Okay, how about I create a character whose powers are based on spiders, but who's totally different from Spider Man? Say his wall crawling comes because he has little hooks on his hands and his webs... [proceeds to give a detailed description of a spider-based superhero that's totally different from Peter Parker].

**Bog Boy:** [Waiting until Bill finishes his explanation] What? Like Spider Man 2089?

**Bill:** Dammit!

Eventually though, he came up with a kid called Chuck Kowalski, who'd gained his powers when he crashed his car during an illegal drag race and was hurled, near-death, into the nest of a Martian Razorback spider where the alien juices healed and altered him. He could now transform into a giant sized Razorback with humanoid features. (Note: Standard sized Razorback spiders were a Martian delicacy – Hank Ryan had a special eating hammer to crack Razorback shells – which lead to many jokes whenever Chuck met any natives).

Ben didn't really create any specific problems during character creation; he just didn't seem that bothered. But he did come up with a theme, a singer, and so I created Kirk Richards for him, a.k.a. Resonance, an aspiring rock 'n' roller with a sonic scream and a sound based forcefield.

Creating the characters took all of one evening, and most of a second, but finally, we were ready to play.

Now I think one of the hardest aspects of starting a campaign is explaining/arranging/rationalising just why the player characters are travelling around in a group, and with a superhero campaign – where characters generally wear masks and have secret identities – this can become a near impossible task.

(I remember playing in previous campaigns where we were so paranoid we had to communicate via Interflora, because no one trusted anyone enough to exchange phone numbers or addresses).



In previous campaigns, I'd just hand-waved this away in a 'three months ago you met up and got on really well and agreed to form a superteam' sort of way. I didn't want to do that for this campaign. But equally, I didn't want the ten sessions worth of paranoia and secrecy that I'd seen in other games.

You see, I'd put a lot of effort into this campaign. I'd written pages and pages of setting notes and back story, with an overall plot arc set around a Martian political dispute already more than 40,000 years old. My head was full of images and ideas. I wanted this to be an epic campaign with an epic feel, and I very much wanted to hit the ground running in the first session.

So I went for the good old brute force option of a them being on a mission from God.

I started with a bit of new-age hippy visualisation. This wasn't part of the session itself. But I wanted to give them a feel of the setting, so I turned the lights off, told them to lie back and close their eyes, and then started to describe a scene. I described a 50s style diner, with a cheery blond waitress dispensing wisecracks and apple pie to good ol' boy patrons who sat at Formica tables. I described the dusty parking lot outside, with its parked cars, covered in chrome and decked with long sweeping fins. And finally, I described the desert landscape of red dirt and scattered alien vegetation, with lizard like birds gliding across a pink sky.

As I finished speaking I was pretty sure I'd hit the mark. 'Do you get it, guys?' I asked quietly. Three heads nodded. One didn't.

Ben? Ben? BEN?

Yep. My visualisation technique had been so effective that he'd fallen asleep.

'Sorry, guys. I've been working really hard at work this week,' he explained.

We then moved onto the first session proper. I knew I really had to nail this one. I had about thirty minutes of game time to introduce the characters to each other, form them into a united team, give them their mission and give them an insight into the challenges they faced.



I started off by describing to each one in turn what their character was currently doing. Hank Ryan (Bog Boy) was undergoing the final part of the ritual that would make him a fully-fledged member of his Martian tribe. Tom Jenson (TAFKAC) was flying a US Air Force jet out near the Sov border. Kirk Richards (Ben) was walking out of the New Los Angeles gateway station after a forty-day trip through the gateway, seeing before him a modern American city with the ancient Emperor's Inner City beyond. And Chuck Kowalski was driving his beloved Thunderbird at high speed along Highway One, the endless desert stretching out on either side.

One by one I described how a blue light came from the sky and filled the air around them – and then they were gone, finding themselves floating weightless in an empty void, with three other people around them. I described the four of them (it was them, in their ‘civvy’ getups). Then a voice spoke directly to each of their minds, a voice that introduced itself as ‘The Guardian’ and that I described as talking to God. It told them they were heroes, and that only they could save Mars.

Then they found themselves being taken on a journey, clad now in their superhero costumes, the God-like voice in their heads speaking all the while. I took them first to the distant past of Mars, 60,000 years ago, when the legendary General Q’Lann unified the Martian nations into one Empire. They saw him offer his sword and helm to his Emperor, the same sword and helm that Hank Ryan now found himself wearing. The Mars they saw here was warm and wet and with a blue sky.

Then I showed them a later Mars from the nearer past of just 8,000 years ago, with dry sands and a pink dusty sky. Before them was a canal being constructed by an army of slaves driven by the beatings of savage overseers. This was a cruel and dying Mars. Finally, I showed them a future Mars, with a sterile surface set under a black airless sky, witnessed only by anonymous space-suited figures.

The Guardian explained that as Mars died so too would the Earth die. Only they could save the two worlds. It was both their duty and their destiny.

Then, one by one, the blue light burned once more, and they returned, one by one, to the world. I told Ben that he opened his eyes to find himself lying sprawled on the station’s steps with anxious passers-by shouting at him; when he sat up, they told him he’d fainted and been unconscious for more than five minutes.

TAFKAC awoke to find the radio blaring a controller’s screams of ‘turn heading nine-zero degrees NOW!’ as he came within a mile of overflying the Sov border. (I confess that the whole fainting thing was partly me being unable to resist a bit of mischievous fun).

Bog Boy awoke to find the camp deserted and his tribe departed. Left behind was a note, explaining that his destiny did not yet lay with them, and a Bloodwood box. He opened the box and found the Red Helm and Sabre that he’d worn while away in the other place. Putting it on, he felt great powers, and after experimenting learned to teleport. He set off for New Los Angeles.

And then we got to Bill, who had somehow failed to realise the implications for his character of the fact that the other three had all fainted for the five minutes that the visions took. At least I’m guessing that he failed to realise the implications, because when I described how he was laying battered and bruised on the desert floor, some distance from the highway, and surrounded by burning pieces of car – well he seemed surprised. (A fact that caused some amusement to myself and the rest of the group).

There was one final part of the session. When each character arrived home, they found a polished crystal hidden in their bed, and when they touched it they found themselves in telepathic contact with the other team members.

I was pretty pleased with myself. I’d delivered an extremely atmospheric session in which the PCs had not only been introduced, but been introduced in such a fashion (being recruited by a ‘God’ who showed them both their hero and secret identities) that the usual issues of trust and desire were rendered obsolete. I mean, God had said that the four of them were destined to work together and save two worlds, and Gods don’t generally make mistakes about things like destiny. I’d also introduced the setting, dropped a teaser about the plot arc, and given the heroes a means of communicating. It’d been pretty epic, even though I say so myself.

And I have to say that the players themselves had been great: enthusiastic, and showing some excellent roleplaying. They were still buzzing as they headed out through my front door, when Ben turned back to tell me something he’d just remembered.

‘Oh, I won’t be able to make the roleplaying any more because I’ve changed shifts at work. This was my last session.’

I really, seriously, could have killed him.

<sup>1</sup>Bill and Ben are pseudonyms to protect the guilty. As previously mentioned, Bill and myself are now very much not on speaking terms (and since recently being informed that he works at one end of my road and lives at the other, my morning walk to the tube station has been a stressful event involving lots of head turning).



# 20,000 Clones Under The Sea

A Paranoia Scenario. Fun is mandatory for all. Are you having fun, fun, fun, citizen? The Computer is your friend.



In an effort to repel the oncoming Red Tide of the Communist Menace, the Computer in its infinite wisdom has recently announced the opening of the OCN sector. This new network of domes is surrounded entirely of water, which the recent HPD&MC campaign has taught us is nothing the average Citizen should be afraid of: 'It's like blood, only thicker.'

To protect this new sector from Communist Encroachment, the Armed Forces, Power Services, and R&D have combined to create a top secret ultimate super-weapon: a nuclear submarine called Blue Velvet. The Troubleshooters have been reassigned to the OCN sector to guard this new super-weapon and make sure it does not fall into the wrong hands.

Some of you may remember the first undersea voyage in Lucky the Leaky Wonder-Sub from *Into the Outdoors with Gun and Camera*. For those of you that survived, you probably wondered where were all the nuclear submarines, underwater cities, and scantily clad mutant fish-girls? Wonder no longer!

## Clones Who Live in Glass Domes...

Most of OCN sector consists of glass domes connected by glass tubes. Outside of the glass is water. LOTS of water. So much water in fact that if one of those domes or tubes were to crack, well... can you say 'Fish Food'?

Fortunately, the Computer has prepared for this type of accident. Each tunnel section has watertight reinforced bulkhead doors that will automatically seal off a section that is flooding. Citizens in the OCN sector can rest easy without any fear of flooding, because once closed,

## Darrin Bright

not even a team of trapped troubleshooters could force them open. What about the troubleshooters? Relax, citizens. Every team of troubleshooters is handpicked and specially trained to avoid such a clumsy Communist trap.

Should a firefight break out stray shots could shatter the glass walls and flood the chamber. Lasers are safe but every time someone fires a projectile weapon and misses the target, ask the player how much he missed his target number by. Treat this as a successful attack roll against the glass walls. The walls are fairly thick; so treat them as having an armor rating of 1 for the purposes of damage. It is up to you whether or not the walls shatter and how many turns the troubleshooters have before the tube or dome fills with water, but if you'd like to keep track of the damage, here's a short chart: *(Do not be alarmed. With the aid of all new EFFICIENCY Systems, the chart can be located on page 53. Citizen Ed-I-TOR)*

## Holding Your Breath

Under ideal conditions, a clone can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to his Violence/Agility skill. After that, the clone starts drowning, and every round must make a successful Violence/Agility roll to remain conscious. If the clone fails, he blacks out. After a few minutes without oxygen, his brain dies and his next clone activates.

There are a couple other consequences of being completely submerged. Unless there's an airspace in front of a clone's eyes, he cannot

## DOME DAMAGE TABLE

Okay	Nothing happens, the lucky bastards
Lightly Damaged	Nasty, ominous cracks spider web their way up the wall, but it holds
Impaired	Water starts leaking in. On the next round, the doors close. The chamber fills up in 1d20 rounds. For every subsequent Impaired result, divide the number of rounds in half
Heavily Damaged	Water gushes in. The doors immediately close and the chamber completely fills with water on the next round
Busted	The chamber collapses and instantly fills with water, but the doors close in time to prevent any adjacent chambers from flooding. Trapped clones are slammed by debris or into walls (S2K, projectile attack), but they can try to swim out
Junked	The chamber collapses and the adjacent chambers are flooded. All clones are instantly killed
Vaporized	The chamber collapses, setting off a chain reaction that collapses the adjacent chambers, and so on throughout the sector. All clones are instantly killed. Hopefully, their replacement clones were not in any of the collapsed areas...

see anything more detailed than his hand in front of his face. Worse, if the chamber just flooded, then the lights probably shorted out, plunging the chamber in darkness. Also, water can be difficult to move quickly through, so actions that require speed either cannot happen or are heavily penalized. If a clone cannot see what he's doing or is trying something that requires speed, apply a -4 penalty to any skill check.

### Firing Weapons Underwater

Lasers generally work fine underwater, but the higher refraction index of the water causes the beam to spread, reducing effectiveness of the damage by one step (E1 amour).

Slugthrowers CAN fire underwater (gunpowder includes its own oxidizer) but

the fluid resistance of the water is so great the bullets slow down almost immediately after a meter or so and then sink harmlessly. The only effective way to use them underwater is to hold the barrel point-black against the target's body, in which case they do full damage.

Explosions are another story entirely... water is much harder to compress than air so the concussion shockwave does not dissipate as quickly as it does in air. For explosive weapons like cone rifle shells and grenades, increase the minimum damage by one step and reduce the boost by 1. Thus, a grenade would become a M2K weapon.

### Opening the Watertight Bulkhead Doors

If some clones miraculously survive the initial collapse of a chamber, they may try to open the bulkhead doors to get into a chamber that has not flooded yet. This involves unscrewing the access panel next to the door, draining the hydraulic lines, and manually forcing open the doors. This requires at least two successful Hardware, Habitat Engineering, or Mechanical Engineering rolls followed by a successful Violence/Agility roll. Frantic clones might substitute Violence rolls for the Hardware/Engineering rolls.

Once through the door, the clone is now in another chamber that is flooding (roll 1d20 to see how many rounds this takes), and can make a Violence/Agility roll to run through another set of doors before they close as well.

Another possible escape might involve skipping the doors altogether, swimming out of the collapsed chamber (watch that broken glass!), and trying to find an entrance through another chamber or dome before running out of air. This requires the clone to make a successful Hardware/Habitat Engineering roll to locate an entrance nearby. Fortunately, these entrances are designed to open from the outside, but unfortunately they may be rusty. A couple Violence/Agility rolls may be necessary to unscrew the wheel lock, and then the clone has to re-close it before he can activate the air pumps to push out the water.

Convincing the security system on the inside door to open may be more complicated... does the troubleshooter have the proper security clearance to use this airlock? When did he receive authorization to exit Alpha Complex? Why is he not with the rest of his troubleshooter team? Does he have any information on why there is a considerable amount of unauthorized liquid on the other side of the door?

## Episode 1 — Awooga! Awooga!

The clones receive the mission alert on their PDC:

From: Pos@INDIGO.don.plc  
Subject: [MISSION ALERT] IDCode: SNORKEL  
Ref#: DP-0000FF-C

Report immediately to OCN Sector Briefing Room DV-JON35, Lock 'R'. Board Transbot at Transfer Tubeway 1DR-C Platform 5. Threat code elevated to <MOIST>.

The troubleshooters may not all be close to Tubeway 1DR-C, but assume after a couple transfers they all pile into the same transbot headed for OCN sector. The transbot whisks off through metallic corridors lit by flickering argon lights. Then it turns sharply downward, the clones are suddenly engulfed in bluish-green light, and their ears 'pop' as the air pressure increases. As the clones watch (and maybe wonder about what security clearance bluish-green is supposed to be), the bluish-green glow darkens, their ears pop again, and they are plunged into inky blackness for a couple minutes. The transbot then grinds to a halt, red argon lights flicker on, and they find themselves in the OCN sector Main Transit Station. Directions to the briefing room are provided by their PDCs.

OCN sector looks distinctly different than other areas of Alpha Complex due to a lack of right angles and corners. Tunnels have round cross-sections, and the glass walls are transparent. At this depth the water outside is black, usually denoting INFRARED clearance,

but other higher security colors appear on doors or painted as stripes along the tunnel walls. The residents appear normal enough, but there does seem to be a preference for reflex armor and energy weapons even among the higher-ranking clones.

### The Pos-I-DON Encounter

Briefing Room DV-JON35, Lock 'R', is a large dome-shaped chamber with a clamshell-shaped throne in the center of the room. Several pools of water have been sunk into the floor throughout the chamber, and dark shapes appear to be swimming around in them, but from where the clones are standing, none of them can see very deeply into any of the pools.

A large, elderly gentleman is seated on the clamshell throne. He is wearing regal-looking INDIGO robes and a fishbowl-shaped helmet. As the clones get closer, they can see the fishbowl is full of water. Pos-I-DON does not seem to have any trouble breathing, but all that water makes it difficult to understand him. Wiggle your finger across your lips or gargle water whenever he speaks. Pos-I-DON raises a hand to greet the players, and says:

'W-W-W-el-c-c-om-m-e, tr-r-ou-b-b-bl-e-sh-oo-oo-t-t-er-rz-z...'

Luckily Pos-I-DON does not like to talk much, and prefers to communicate with enigmatic gestures and nods. Here's a non-gargling translation of what he has to say:

'The Computer has assigned you all to protect and defend a top-secret super-weapon, a nuclear submarine called Blue Velvet. It is absolutely vital to the continued security in the OCN sector that the Blue Velvet is not damaged or stolen. Your mission objectives have been uploaded to your PDCs. PLC will deliver your equipment here to save time. Please turn in your RED reflex armour and laser barrels.'

Here are the Mission Objectives:

- ✦ Proceed to R&D Dome C4 (C4:40:FA:TM) and report Service Service firm KL-Haulers. Pick up three crates containing experimental equipment.
  - ✦ Deliver the three crates to Dome D6 (D6:BL:00:MN) Dock 1.
  - ✦ \*\* PRIMARY OBJECTIVE \*\* Protect advanced nuclear-powered aquatic attack vehicle 'Blue Velvet' at Dome D6 (D6:BL:00:MN) Dock 1. It is VITALLY IMPORTANT that under NO CIRCUMSTANCES should 'Blue Velvet' be disabled, damaged, or stolen. The Computer has officially authorized this objective may be fulfilled BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY.
  - ✦ Total Mission Time 12 hours 35 minutes.
- As the troubleshooters try to understand Pos-I-DON, two YELLOW assistants roll a few crates into the room. Inside the crates is the following equipment:
- ✦ RED kevlar body armor for all troubleshooters
  - ✦ RED slug-throwers and lots of solid, AP, dum dum, HE and HEAT ammo for all troubleshooters
  - ✦ A box of 20 grenades
  - ✦ 2 Cone Rifles with solid, AP and dum-dum shells
  - ✦ Multicorder I and assorted tapes
  - ✦ Docbot I

The Multicorder I includes the usual assortment of tapes, like Docbot Repair, Tunnel Polishing Made E-Z, the latest Teela-O HoloDay Special, and a Bass Fishing video. The docbot identifies itself as 'Bobo The Clown' and has a serious giggling problem. Someone has even painted a goofy clown-face on Bobo, complete with a rubber nose. Bobo thinks just about everything is pretty funny, especially anything that involves pain and suffering. The troubleshooters may discover later on that Bobo is not waterproof, but considers the idea of drowning and electrocution to be extremely funny.

The yellows ask the troubleshooters for their laser barrels and reflec armor, and Pos-I-DON gets suspicious if they are reluctant to give them up. If the troubleshooters ask about why they need to turn in their laser barrels or why they are being given weapons that normally require higher security clearance, Pos-I-DON explains:

'Due to inventory shortages and surpluses, the PLC has recalled all laser barrels and reflec armor. To compensate, they have reclassified several weapons and kevlar armor as RED.'

If the troubleshooters willingly give up their laser barrels and reflec armor, Pos-I-DON smiles happily and asks them:

'Is there anything else you need?'

He's serious about his offer for any further equipment, but if the clones do not ask, they will not get anything. However, as Pos-I-DON will point out, there are some supply/demand issues unique to OCN sector. Residents were quick to notice that lasers and stun guns were safer than higher-security projectile weapons. Energy weapons and reflec armor in OCN are extremely scarce and only available at grossly inflated prices. Likewise, supplies of slugthrowers, cone rifles, explosives, and kevlar are at an all-time high. In short, everything that can shatter glass is dirt cheap and readily available. Feel free to let the clones upgrade their slug-throwers to semi-automatics, or encourage them to ask

## Secret Missions

After the mission briefing, it is customary for everyone to duck into the 'little clone's room' to receive information from their secret society. Here are the various secret missions by society:

Secret Society	Mission
<b>Anti-Mutant Death Leopard</b>	A mutant known as Jock-V-STO may have tampered with your mission orders. 500 credit bounty has been offered if you can find and terminate him.
<b>Communist Psion</b>	A mutant known as Jock-V-STO may be sympathetic to our cause. If you should meet up with him, lend him any assistance you can.
<b>Computer Phreaks Corpore Metal</b>	The docbot known as 'Bobo the Clown' used to be owned by a high-level programmer. We have uploaded a virus into the docbot that will cause it to blurt out secret information. Make sure absolutely everything this docbot says is recorded so we can analyse the transcript later.
<b>Pro Tech FCCC-P</b>	Enemy agents have infiltrated your team and are planning to destroy the Blue Velvet. Find out who they are and terminate them.
<b>Frankenstein Destroyers PURGE</b>	Make sure the Blue Velvet is destroyed. If you succeed you will be promoted and given a 10,000 credit bonus.
<b>Free Enterprise Illuminati</b>	Collect as many laser barrels as you can. We will pay you three times the market value for every barrel collected.
<b>Humanists Sierra Club</b>	Your orders are to ensure that absolutely no animals are harmed during the course of this mission. If you succeed, you will be promoted and awarded a 500 credit bonus.
<b>Romantics Mystics Psion</b>	A clone named Jock-V-STO may have tampered with your mission orders. He has a new mutation that no clone has developed before. Find this mutant and obtain a sample of his DNA for a 500 credit bonus.

for HE/HEAT ammo for the cone rifles. The yellows will bring in the requested equipment at a nod from Pos-I-DON.

Refusing or arguing about handing over their equipment only leads to grief. Pos-I-DON can produce the necessary authorization and can call in a squad of Vulture Troopers to ensure

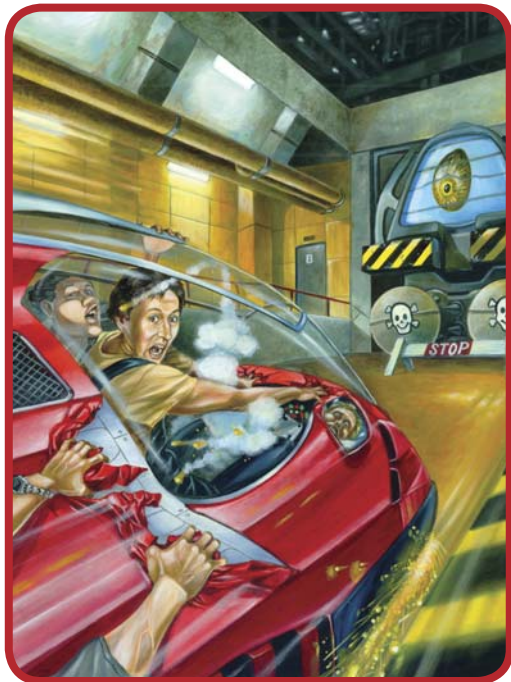
compliance. Perhaps the next batch of clones will be more cooperative.

If the troubleshooters manage to get away from Pos-I-DON, or their replacement clones try to sell their laser barrels and reflec armor on the IR market before they report for duty, they can get as much as five times the market value

for them. Going directly to the PLC service firms does not help... they are fresh out of energy weapons, and why have they not picked up their assigned mission equipment? If they refuse to return to the briefing room and pick up their equipment, Pos-I-DON pockets the equipment for himself, reports it as 'stolen', and issues termination vouchers for the irresponsible troubleshooters that allowed such valuable equipment to disappear.

Replacement clones that show up later on in the mission either show up already equipped with a slugthrower and kevlar armor, or may still be carrying laser barrels and reflex armor (make an Arbitrary Justice roll if you prefer).

If the troubleshooters manage to conclude the mission briefing without gunfire erupting, Pos-I-DON wishes them well and orders them to report to Barn-I-CLE in R&D for their Service Service duty. Directions to R&D are on their PDCs.



## Episode 2 — Run Silent, Run R&Deep

OCN's R&D sector has a large dome all to itself, most of which is taken up with a large pool of water full of a tangled collection of docks and all sorts of watercraft. Around the edges of the dome are collections of buildings and offices, but for the most part R&D resembles a busy yacht club gone mad.

The address for KL-Haulers leads to a narrow dock wedged between two large gleaming white racing yachts. A small **INDIGO** desk sits at the end of the dock. As the troubleshooters step onto the lurching dock, an **INDIGO**-clad clone named Barn-I-CLE walks up and addresses them. Think Longjohns-I-LVR here... peg leg, eye patch and mechanical parrot that lets out a metallic \*squawk\* every once in a while.

'Ar, me maties, thar ya be. I'm Barn-I-CLE, and I gots yer haul right here. Mind you, just sign the usual forms and ye'll be on yer ways...'

A flatbed trundlebot rolls up behind him with three crates of experimental equipment already loaded onto it. The troubleshooters are welcome to examine the crates, verify the contents against the invoice, and ask Barn-I-CLE about the items inside. Barn-I-CLE is perfectly willing to describe how everything works (except malfunctions) or give a little demonstration. If the troubleshooters show interest in any of the items, he may even offer something like:

'Arrr... now, me good mates... ya seems like such fine lads, I might just be all persuaded-like to take that there invoice, and for a small fee, ye understands... well, I could double-check all them fiddly numbers-and-such, most careful-like, so as there might be an extra item or so...'

Barn-I-CLE's service firm KL-Haulers has fallen on hard times, a casualty of Pos-I-DON's strong-arm tactics at the PLC. Contracts have dried up, and to make matters worse, his staff was reassigned to the rival firm DOS-BOOT, forcing him to outsource delivery jobs to troubleshooter teams. He's short on cash and not above selling a few items 'under the table'. If the troubleshooters ask for specifics on the 'small fee', he'll start out around 800-1000 credits but after considering the typical **RED** salary he'll drop down to 200-500 credits with a little persuasion or an appropriate Management skill roll.

The contents of the crates are as follows:

### **CRATE #1: ROCKET-POWERED TRI-WHEELED PERSONAL MOBILITY UNITS (6 TRIKES)**

These contraptions strongly resemble Old-Reckoning tricycles, except these have two rocket pods mounted under the seat. Buttons on the handlebars activate the rockets, which allows a clone to move double his normal movement. On a malfunction, roll or pick something appropriate: The rockets could sputter out big clouds of smoke (1-5), veer suddenly into a wall (6-10), kick in the afterburners (11-15), or just explode (16-20, Violence 15 W3K Impact).

### **CRATE #2: GURGLE-GENERAL UNDERWATER RESPIRATORY GEAR FOR LIQUID ENVIRONMENTS (5 SUITS)**

These suits are almost identical to SCUBA gear (normally security clearance **VIOLET**) except they are painted **RED**, and the pressurized tanks are full of carbon monoxide gas. Any clone attempting to breathe from this equipment immediately falls unconscious, and if left alone will asphyxiate in a few minutes. Just wearing the heavy awkward suit incurs a -3 penalty to any action skills that require a lot of movement.

**CRATE #3: ULTRA-GLYCERINE SOLUTION (144 BOTTLES)**

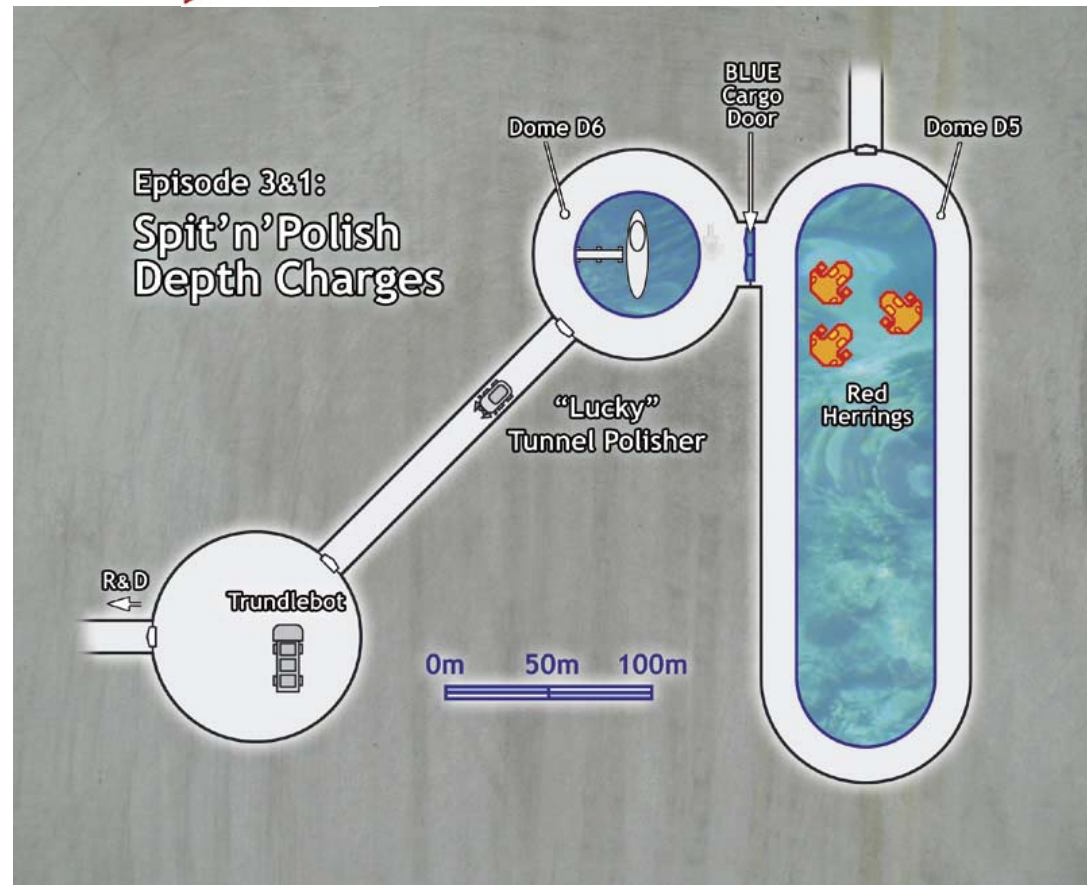
Each plain white bottle contains about a liter of a transparent iridescent solution. A plain white label offers minimal instructions: 'Add 1 cap per 5 gallons of dihydrogen oxide'. If this solution is mixed with water, it creates a frothy bubble bath. A few capfuls is enough to entirely fill a tunnel in 2 rounds, and the whole bottle could fill one of the larger domes in half an hour.

The flatbed trundlebot has an open cab up front that can seat two, and there's room on the back for a few clones to sit on the tailgate, but the trundlebot's maximum speed is a brisk walk. The basic AI responds to simple commands like 'Forward', 'Back', 'Left', 'Right', 'Stop', and 'Follow me'.

**Episode 3 — Spit 'n Polish**

Directions to Dome D6 are available on the clones' PDCs. However, as they get to the only tunnel that connects to Dome D6, they encounter a problem. A malfunctioning tunnel polisher has broken down at the other end of the tunnel. The two INFRAREDs responsible for operating the tunnel polisher stand glumly nearby, enjoying a pack of 'cancer-lite' cigarettes.

The tunnel polisher is a large bot that barely fits inside the tunnel and is armed with an array of scrub brushes, soap blasters, wax sprayers, wiper pads, and blow dryers. The despondent AI answers to 'Lucky', and might be an old acquaintance to some of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition players who encountered him on previous adventures as a multi-terrain vehicle (*Into The Outdoors With Gun and Camera*) or mixbot (*More Songs About Food Vats*). Right now Lucky is bemoaning his fate as a 'worthless'



tunnel polisher and refuses to respond to commands while cleaning fluid leaks into a puddle around him. A Hardware/Chemical Engineering roll identifies the fluid as an alcohol-based glass cleaner.

If the troubleshooters try to fix Lucky themselves, an appropriate Hardware or Software roll that has something to do with bot/vehicle maintenance or programming manages to convince Lucky to resume polishing, and the troubleshooters can squeeze around or climb over the bot to get on the other side. The two INFRAREDs climb aboard Lucky and guide him out of the tunnel. Just before they leave, one of them tosses his cigarette butt into the

trail of alcohol left behind Lucky, setting off the fire alarm system inside the tunnel. Loud claxons go off as the watertight bulkhead doors automatically close and the tunnel is flooded with water to put the fire out.

If the attempt to repair Lucky fails, or if Lucky recognizes one of the clones from a previous encounter, he cries out, 'NO, NO, NO!' and goes into a berserk clone-killing rage. The two infrareds immediately bolt out of the tunnel, dropping their cigarettes. This, of course, sets off the fire alarm as above, except that now the troubleshooters have to deal with a giant homicidal tunnel polisher advancing on them. Lucky has enough attachments to attack all the

clones that do not immediately get out of his way.

If the troubleshooters try talking to the INFRAREDs to find out why the tunnel polisher is malfunctioning or why they have not tried to fix it, the infrareds shrug and ignore them. They'd much rather enjoy what they consider a well-earned break, and refuse to help repair Lucky or even give their names. If the troubleshooters order them to do something or threaten to report them, they run away, tossing their cigarettes and setting off the fire alarm. Lucky panics and attacks.

## Lucky the Tunnel Polisher

Management 6

Hygiene 10

Stealth 6

Violence 10

Hand Weapons 14

**Weapons:** Various cleaning attachments (S4K Impact)

**Armour:** Metal plates (1)

The tunnel completely fills with water after 3 rounds. A successful Hardware/Habitat or Mechanical Engineering roll on the fire alarm system will disable it and stop the water flow, but Lucky will then crush the clones against one end of the tunnel in another 2-3 rounds. If a clone tries to crawl past Lucky, Lucky gets a free attack and the clone has to make a successful Violence/Agility roll or Lucky shoves him back.

Clever troubleshooters might draw Lucky out of the tunnel and then junk him, but more likely Lucky or the tunnel will get flooded or destroyed. If the tunnel is still intact but full of water, the tunnel can be drained in about an hour. Destroying the tunnel or losing the crates incurs fines at the end of the mission.

## Episode 4 — Depth Charges

Dome D6 is 100 meters across and half that high. On the other side of the dome is a large **BLUE** cargo door. In the middle of the dome the top deck and conning tower of a submarine are visible sitting quietly in an excursion pool. The submarine itself is 40 meters long and bright blue. The excursion pool is 60 meters wide, surrounded by a 20-meter wide staging area where stacks of boxes and other nautical equipment have been scattered. A narrow dock extends from the edge of the pool out to the deck of the submarine.

This submarine is not, in fact, the Blue Velvet, but an empty metal shell of a decoy designed to fool any would-be thieves, saboteurs, or innocent troubleshooters. Anyone who takes a close look and makes a Hardware, Vehicle, or Nuclear-related skill check realizes it is hollow and completely non-functional.

## What's really going on

The troubleshooters have been unwittingly duped into guarding a meaningless decoy so that the real villain, Jock-V-STO, can steal the real Blue Velvet, which is sitting in a much larger dome on the other side of the **BLUE** cargo door. To make sure the real guards are suitably distracted, Jock-V-STO has manipulated the Armed Forces into staging a 'mock combat exercise' to test the effectiveness of their defenses. Rather than risk damage to the real Blue Velvet, the Armed Forces set up a decoy in a nearby dome. They do not know that Jock-V-STO has ordered the troubleshooters in to 'guard' the decoy, or that they are armed with slughtrowers and cone rifles.

The Armed Forces team storms into Dome-D6 just as the troubleshooters are settling in. (If the troubleshooters flooded or destroyed

the tunnel they came in, then the Armed Forces come through the **BLUE** cargo door.) The team consists of 10 orange grunts led by a yellow sergeant, Beluga-Y-UHL. Instead of real weapons, they are equipped with paintball guns and protective goggles. When Beluga-Y-UHL sees the **RED** troubleshooters, he assumes they are the **RED** team assigned to guard the fake submarine, and orders his grunts to attack.

## Beluga-Y-UHL

Management 6

Intimidation 10

Stealth 8

Sneaking 12

Violence 10

Energy Weapons 14

Projectile Weapons 14

**Weapons:** Paintball Gun (O5W Impact)

**Armour:** none

## ORANGE Grunt (10)

Management 5

Stealth 7

Sneaking 11

Violence 9

Energy Weapons 13

Projectile Weapons 13

**Weapons:** Paintball Gun (O5W Impact)

**Armour:** none

If the troubleshooters manage to avoid gunning down the **ORANGE** grunts or talk their way out of a 'simple misunderstanding', then one of the **ORANGE** grunts pulls out a hidden Energy Pistol (W3K) and opens fire. Whatever happens, make sure somebody gets killed, in which case Beluga-Y-UHL immediately contacts Armed Forces security and orders a group of **GREEN** Vulture Troopers to 'pacify' the troubleshooter team. In Armed Forces parlance, 'pacify' means 'kill anything that moves'.

**GREEN Vulture Troopers (12)**

Management 5

Stealth 8

Violence 15

**Weapons:** GREEN Laser Rifle (W3K), Energy Pistol (W3K)**Armour:** Light PlasFlec (2)

As it happens, these twelve Vulture Troopers were guarding the real Blue Velvet... now that they've been called away; Jock-V-STO seizes the opportunity to act. If any of the clones gets close to the BLUE door while fighting off the Vulture Troopers, they may hear muffled explosions on the other side. These are the sounds of Jock-V-STO's troops stealing the real nuclear submarine.

It does not matter whether the troubleshooters slaughter the Vulture Troopers or vice versa. Even a well-worded 'unconditional surrender' or timely Bootlicking check could save the troubleshooters a couple clones. In any case, once the dust settles (or the flooded chambers are pumped out), the BLUE cargo door opens and the troubleshooters are ordered to report to Dome D5. Domin-O's delivers backup clones directly to Dome D5 for anybody who did not survive the battle.

## Episode 5 — The Hunt for the Blue Velvet

D5 is a much larger oval dome, about 100 meters wide and 300 meters long. When the



troubleshooters arrive, they find an extremely irate Pos-I-DON looking at an empty excursion pool (big enough to accommodate a 100-meter nuclear submarine) and a few smoking corpses. Pos-I-DON is so angry the water in his fishbowl appears to be boiling. After incoherently screaming bubble-talk at the troubleshooters

for a minute, he delivers the following ultimatum: 'Find that submarine! Bring it back, or you'll all be ERASED!'

As Pos-I-DON simmers, three small RED submarines surface in the excursion pool. A YELLOW assistant explains these three RED Herring-class 'sport utility' submersibles can be used to track down the missing Blue Velvet, and the troubleshooters are ordered to hop inside and start searching immediately. Pos-I-DON does not really care if the clones all pile inside one sub or split themselves up among multiple subs.

### Red Herring

About the size of a minivan, the Red Herring can seat four clones somewhat comfortably, five in a pinch and six if one of them is willing (or forced) to endure extreme agony. There are four duty stations inside the Red Herring:

#### 1. HELM CONTROL

A wheel mounted on a yolk that controls pitch and yaw (up, down, left, and right) and a throttle lever controls speed (forward and back). The controls are obvious enough to anyone who makes a Violence/Vehicle Combat or Hardware/Vehicle Ops roll.

## 2. WEAPONS CONSOLE

This station has a targeting screen and three buttons:

- Fire Homing Torpedo
- Deploy Haywire Drones
- Release Magnetic Mines

## 3. COMMUNICATIONS

There's not a lot to do here, other than contact Alpha Complex, but Jock-V-STO may contact the troubleshooters later.

## 4. SONAR

A large screen with a rotating green bar displays a lot of unidentifiable squiggles. There's a pair of headphones here and two buttons:

- Active
- Passive

Finding the Blue Velvet requires using the SONAR station. Pressing the 'Active' button causes a very loud 'PING!' The operator rolls his Hardware/Vehicle Ops skill, and if successful, any nearby targets shows up on the SONAR screen. The SONAR operator can then direct the Helm or Weapons operators to steer towards a target or fire at it. Hitting the 'Active' SONAR button also causes the Red Herring to light up like a Christmas tree on the target screen of everyone in the area. The Blue Velvet, lurking nearby, promptly launches a Homing Torpedo (Violence 12, W4K), which attacks the offending sub on the next round.

Pressing the 'Passive' button does not trigger such a deadly response, but it takes longer to locate the Blue Velvet. Three successful Hardware/Vehicle Ops rolls locates the Blue Velvet, unless it recently fired a Homing Torpedo, in which case just one success will do.

Once a target has been identified, the Weapons operator can press one of the three buttons:

<b>Homing Torpedo</b>	Uses a computer AI to home in on target, but takes one round to get there. On next round, roll Violence/Vehicular Combat. W4K impact damage.
<b>Haywire Drones</b>	Electronic countermeasure devices deployed to reprogram homing torpedoes. Roll Software/Hacking 12 and treat as an attack roll on the torpedoes. If successful, torpedoes are disabled. If the margin is 5 or more, torpedoes are sent back to the vehicle that fired them with a Violence 10 on the next turn. Drones last for 2 rounds. If both sides deploy haywire drones, they interfere with one another and have no effect on torpedoes.
<b>Magnetic Mines</b>	Unguided and thus immune to haywire drones. Getting close enough to use them requires the pilot to make a successful Violence/Vehicular Combat roll to pull in front or cross the path of the target, then the Weapons operator can make an attack roll. M3K impact damage.

The Red Herrings each have four torpedoes, three haywire drones, and six magnetic mines. The Blue Velvet has the same weapon systems but unlimited ammunition and a thicker armor rating of 1. Pilots may use 'evasive maneuvers' to avoid Homing Torpedoes or Magnetic Mines, but doing so prevents firing any weapons that round. The pilot rolls his Violence/Vehicular Combat skill, but torpedoes are particularly hard to shake off so the pilot's skill is halved. A successful roll negates the attack.

Use the chart below as a guide to resolve damage. Damaging objects is usually cumulative (e.g., a 'Wounded' sub that is 'Wounded' again is now 'Maimed'), but choose a result that makes the combat more interesting if you prefer.

The Blue Velvet continues to lurk around the Dome D5 area until all three Red Herrings have been destroyed. Jock-V-STO gets away, and the remaining troubleshooters can report to debriefing. If you prefer a more dramatic ending, Jock-V-STO cracks the authorization codes on the nuclear warheads and launches an attack. The OCN sector is vaporized along with all of the remaining troubleshooters and their backup clones.

<b>SNAFU</b>	One occupant stunned next round.
<b>Wounded</b>	One or more occupants stunned and one system (helm, one weapon, communications, or sonar) inoperable may be repaired with skill check.
<b>Maimed</b>	Mobility impaired. Sub can no longer turn right/left, starts to sink, fill with water, and so on.
<b>Down</b>	Sub immobilized. One or more occupants killed.
<b>Killed</b>	Sub destroyed, everyone inside killed.

If the Blue Velvet is Maimed (and you may want to reduce Down or Killed damage to Maimed to move along to the next episode), it breaks off the attack and limps back to Jock-V-STO's secret underwater base. The troubleshooters can follow it or attempt to board it.

Boarding the Blue Velvet requires two Violence/Vehicular Combat rolls to dock, and then a successful Stealth/Security Systems, Hardware/Vehicle Ops, or Software/Hacking roll to open the hatch. Once inside, a narrow corridor runs the length of the submarine, with a bridge towards the front and an engine room towards the back. The crew consists of four GREEN commandos, three up front and one in back.

### GREEN Commandos

Management 9

Stealth 9

Violence 12

**Weapons:** GREEN Laser Pistol (W3K)

**Armour:** GREEN Reflec (E1)

If the troubleshooters take over or destroy the Blue Velvet, Jock-V-STO contacts them on a secure communications channel and asks them to join his plan to create his own underwater private paradise:

‘Greeteengz! I am Jock-V-STO. Hev vee not all suvvered enough from zee murderuz tyrannee uv zee Compewter? Must vee bee anemonees? Join me, and vee shall beeld oor own underzee paradize! Eef you pleez, come to my baze, and zee for yourzelves.’

He can give the location for his secret base directly to the troubleshooters or they can find it by checking the destination in the navigation computer.

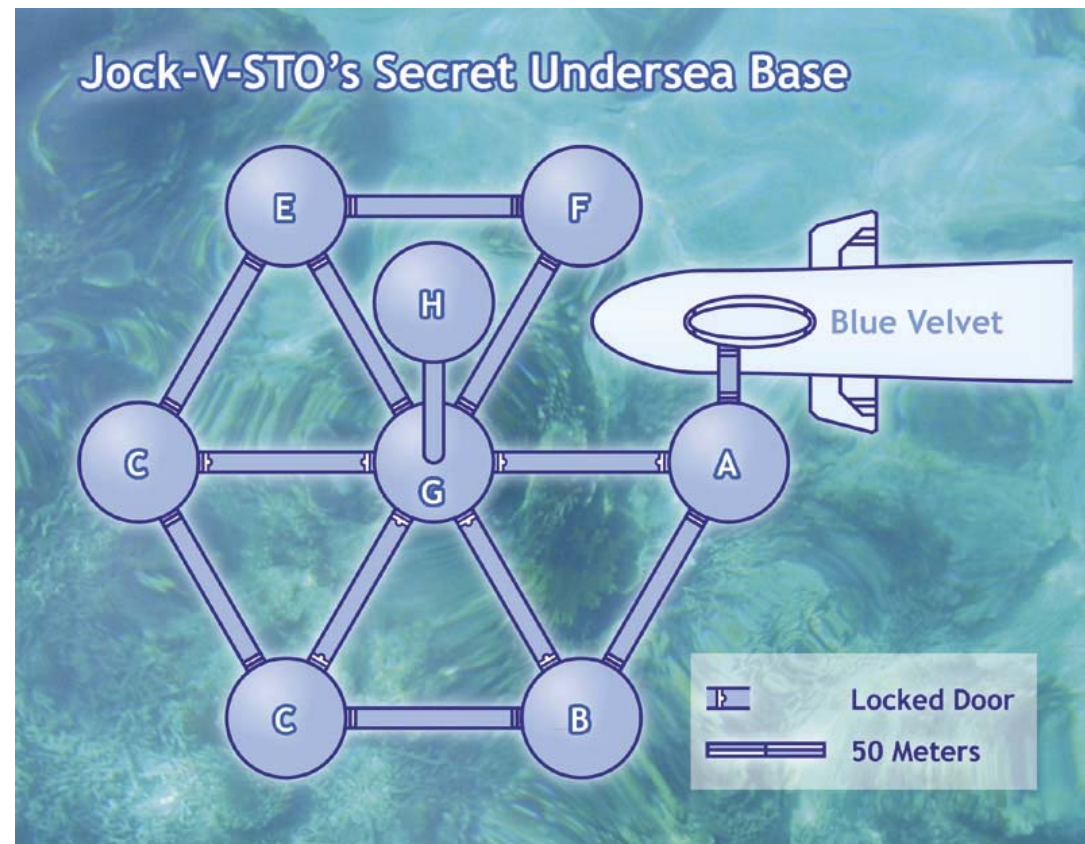
If the troubleshooters undeniably Down or Kill the Blue Velvet, they may return triumphantly to Alpha Complex as heroes... at least until they get hit with the fines for destroying Computer property. Jock-V-STO remains at large, plotting a suitable revenge.

## Episode 6 — Dome Sweet Dome

This episode involves locating Jock-V-STO’s secret underwater base and either raiding it or destroying it. If the troubleshooters have no interest in this, because they may have captured or destroyed the Blue Velvet, Pos-I-DON orders them back to the base to capture or terminate the sub-stealing traitors. If the troubleshooters never discovered the location of Jock-V-STO’s base, then you may give them a break and allow them to search the ocean floor near the OCN sector. Three successful Active Sonar rolls locates the base.

Jock-V-STO’s secret base consists of six domes arranged around a central column of two domes. There are tubes connecting all six external domes to the central column, but they’ve all been locked except for the tubes in domes E and F. The locked tubes can be forced open with a Stealth/Security System or Software/Hacking roll, but the security system is particularly tough. All attempts to force open the doors are at a -5 penalty. If the clones want to capture or terminate Jock-V-STO but cannot get any of the tubes open, then they’ll have to fight their way through to domes E or F.

If the troubleshooters still have torpedoes or mines left, they may decide to just skip exploring the base entirely, bombard it



from a safe distance and pick through the debris later. This is probably the easiest way to deal with Jock-V-STO's undersea base, and you may want to reward such clever troubleshooters by letting them get away with it. If you'd rather not make things that easy, then Jock-V-STO has a tac-nuke with a dead-clone switch that goes off when the base is destroyed. This vaporizes everything within a few kilometers, including the troubleshooters. Anyone with clones left over can report to debriefing.

### DOME A — DOCKING BAY

The Blue Velvet, if still intact, is docked next to this dome. It can be safely boarded, but the controls have been locked and the keycard to unlock them is missing. Bypassing the security lock or hotwiring the controls is particularly difficult, requiring a successful Stealth/Security System, Software/Hacking, or Hardware/Vehicle Ops roll at half the troubleshooter's normal skill level (round down).

Dome A also contains an excursion pool that can accommodate the Red Herrings. Stacked around the edges of the dome are shipping crates, mostly empty. A few contain useless equipment: PowerKelp energy bars, tanks of helium, tuna-safe dolphin nets, and tubes of UltraBake sunscreen.

The dome is otherwise empty without any visible defenses or guards. There are two doors. The first, which is open, leads to Dome B. The second, which is locked, leads to the central Dome G. Like most of the doors leading to Dome G, breaking through the security system is difficult, requiring a Stealth/Security System or Software/Hacking roll at half the troubleshooter's normal skill (round up).

### DOME B — BARRACKS

This communal living area has been ransacked. Clothing, undergarments, and other

personal effects have been scattered around the floor. All of the beds have been arranged into a fortress-like structure on one edge of the dome. As the troubleshooters enter, the barrel of a GREEN laser rifle pokes out from behind the beds and a strained voice calls out:

'Who are you? Identify yourselves!'

### Francine-G-UPY

Management 9

Stealth 9

Violence 10

Energy Weapons 14

Mutant Power 8 (Mental Blast)

**Weapons:** GREEN Laser Rifle (W3K),  
Neurowhip (S5M)

**Armour:** GREEN Reflec (E1), wall of  
mattresses (2)

This is Francine-G-UPY, and after what happened to her companions in the next dome, she's a little unhinged. She's perfectly willing to shoot things out with the troubleshooters, but can also be talked out of her MaxiSleepPad fortress (armor value 2) with a successful Management skill check. Francine is jittery and will overreact to any loud noise or sudden movement. If asked about what happened to her, what's in the next dome, or where anyone else in the base is, she screams:

'NO! NO SINGING! STOP THE SINGING! They're... they're eating... EATING them! Singing means feeding... FEEDING, SINGING... Don't go in there, they'll kill you... eat you... SINGING MEANS FEEDING!'

Francine is not much help beyond that. She lost her keycard and does not know how to open any of the tunnels or unlock the controls of the Blue Velvet, but is rather enthusiastic about leaving. She knows Jock-V-STO is in his headquarters above Dome G, but turns homicidal if anyone tries to take her into Dome C or asks her what is in there. If the troubleshooters take

her along as a witness or hostage, she flees at the first opportunity and heads for the escape pods in Dome F.

Francine has a small stockpile of valuables tucked away in her fortress. This includes:

- ✦ Two GREEN laser rifles and four GREEN laser barrels
- ✦ ORANGE Sonic rifle (S3W)
- ✦ 12 bags of 'Tripple Cheeze' flavored CruncheeTym Algae chips (Y)
- ✦ 'Teela-O' Duffel Bag full of 17 packages of Cancer-Lite Cigarettes (O)

Like the previous dome, there are doors leading to the adjacent domes and a third leading to the central Dome G, but this last one is locked.

### DOME C — SIRENS

This dome is full of hip-deep water, fake rocks, wooden piers, and fake seagulls. It resembles the stage for a dolphin or seal show at an amusement park featuring performing marine animals. A smooth concrete platform circles the edge of the dome and a set of steps in front of each door leads down into the main pool.

Resting on an island in the center of the main pool are six of Jock-V-STO's more successful genetic experiments. Using a couple stolen cloning tanks and a Blend-O-Mix gene sequencer, he's managed to cook up six mutant mermaids. Unfortunately, while Jock-V-STO was busy organizing the raid to steal the Blue Velvet he forgot to feed them... so the mermaids decided to feed themselves with a few GREEN commandos. Francine-G-UPY managed to get away and hole up in Dome B. The mermaids are still working on the corpses of two of her companions when the troubleshooters enter. The

mermaids are intelligent and can speak, but are not particularly friendly.

Aside from the razor-sharp teeth and claws, two mermaids are armed with **GREEN** laser rifles and two with **GREEN** laser pistols. As the troubleshooters enter, the mermaids slip into the water or behind rock outcroppings for cover. These mermaids have a unique mutant ability called Enchant, a more powerful version of the Charm mutant power that only works on male humans (see box text). One mermaid sings while the others attack. Using the rocks as cover gives them an armor value of 2, while those out in the open dive under the water (E1 against lasers, GM Fiat against slugthrowers).

## Mutant Mermaids (6)

Management 7

Stealth 9

Violence 11

Unarmed combat 15

Mutant Power 12 (Enchant—see box text)

**Weapons:** **GREEN** Laser Rifle or Pistol (W3K), Claws/Bite (S4K)

**Armour:** Fake rocks (2), Water (E1/Fiat)

Talking or reasoning with the mermaids is difficult. They do not like or trust humans all that much, have never met the troubleshooters, and are defending their home. If the battle goes badly for the mermaids, the survivors head for a hidden escape tunnel at the bottom of the main pool. A captured mermaid cannot open any of the locked doors in the base, but the commando corpses have **GREEN** keycards that will open the tubes to Dome G. The only other thing of value in this dome is a metal bucket full of seashells the mermaids use for tossing out garbage. A collector back at Alpha Complex could pay 2,000 - 5,000 credits for them.

## New Mutant Power: Enchant (NPC Female Only)

Whenever the mutant sings and makes a successful mutant power check, any male human within earshot must drop whatever he is holding and mindlessly move toward the singer in rapturous adoration. The victim can try to resist this effect by concentrating and making a successful Management/Moxie roll, but that's all he can do for that round. The mutant can continue to sing as long as she has Power points left, spending 1 per round (in Zap, it works as long as the mutant can keep rolling equal or under her Power rating). The effects last one round after the singing stops, so the mutant has a chance to attack, run away, or start singing again.

## DOMED — PINGER ATTACK

The decorating theme here is similar to Dome C. This is the home for some of Jock-V-STO's not-quite-so-successful genetic experiments... giant mutant lobsters. Two meters in length and covered with thick armored plates, they have not been fed either. As the troubleshooters move into the room, eight lobsters pop out from behind the fake docks and attack.

## Giant Mutant Lobsters (8)

Management 4

Stealth 4

Violence 10

Unarmed combat 14

Mutant Power 8 (Electroshock) Note: if used while under water, the electroshock hits everybody within 3 meters. This has no effect on the lobsters.

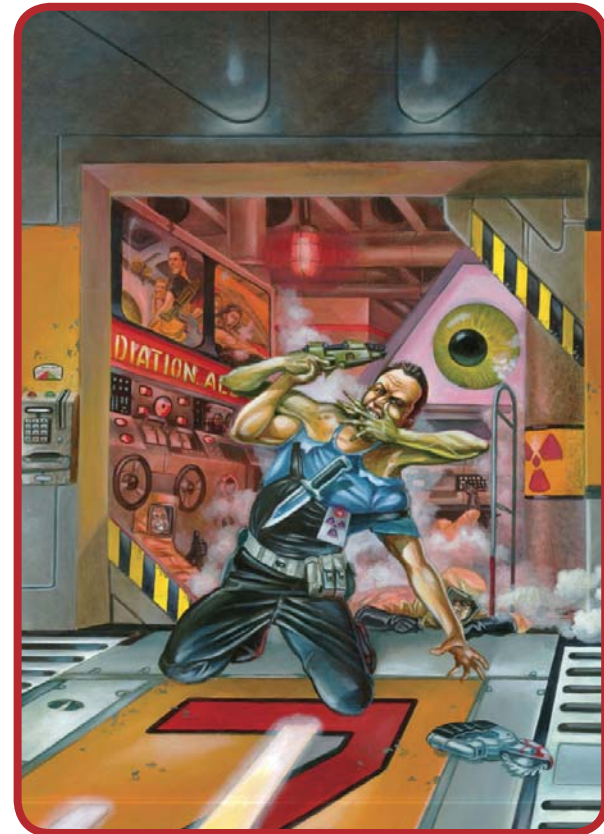
**Weapons:** Claws/Bite (S3K)

**Armour:** Hard shell (1), Water (E1/Fiat)

The lobsters are not particularly smart, cannot talk, and do not have any strategy beyond eating whatever they get their claws on. If they are tossed something to eat, like a corpse from Dome C, PowerKelp energy bars from Dome A, or even a few bags of Algae Chips from Dome B, they converge entirely on the

food and can be avoided or gunned down from a distance.

Like the previous domes, there are three doors but the door to Dome G is locked.





### DOME E - STORAGE

This dome contains all of the supplies Jock-V-STO has been able to beg, borrow, or steal for his underwater base. Most of the crates are empty... the base is running low on supplies. A thorough search turns up a few crates with interesting equipment:

- ✦ 49 used laser barrels in assorted colors **RED** through **VIOLET**, all with exactly one shot left.
- ✦ 'Build-Your-Own-Warbot!' kit (batteries not included, some assembly required)
- ✦ 17 gas-powered chainsaws (W4K), fuelled up and ready to go

- ✦ 136 bottles of Novacaine body lotion
- ✦ 8 cans of 'Autumn Twilight' **VIOLET** psychotropic paint (extremely rare and insanely expensive, each can could sell for a couple 100,000 credits on the IR market)

Unlike the previous domes, the door leading to Dome G is unlocked.

### DOME F - ESCAPE PODS

The outside wall of this dome is lined with hatches that lead to individual bubble-shaped escape pods. The number of escape pods left is equal to one less than the number of troubleshooters. If anyone actually tries to use the pods, make an Arbitrary Justice roll to see if there's enough air or fuel to get back to Alpha Complex.

Like Dome E, the door to the central Dome G is open.

### DOME G - CENTRAL COLUMN

This dome is filled with hip-deep water. On a raised platform in the center of the dome is an enclosed elevator shaft leading up to Dome H. The dome is otherwise empty... except for the giant octopus lurking in the water.

### Giant Octopus

Management 4  
Stealth 4  
Violence 10  
Unarmed combat 14  
**Weapons:** Tentacle (S1S), Bite (W2K)  
**Armour:** Water (E1/Fiat)

The giant octopus gets eight tentacle attacks, and if any of them succeed, then one of the entangled troubleshooters is bitten at the

end of the round. A successful Wound result or better on a tentacle severs it, and the octopus retreats through a hidden underwater tunnel after it loses four or more tentacles.

The elevator is not locked and has no visible security system or defense mechanisms. It takes the troubleshooters straight up into Dome H. There are six other exits around the outside of the dome, but unless the troubleshooters managed to unlock them earlier, the doors to Domes A, B, C, and D are locked.

### DOME H - JOCK-V-STO'S HEADQUARTERS

The elevator opens up into a spacious control room full of gleaming display panels and stacks of blinking computer banks. Directly in front of the troubleshooters is a high-backed purple chair, which spins around to reveal their nemesis: Jock-V-STO. He is a waifish older man with thinning white hair, dressed in **VIOLET** robes and holding a fish-shaped raygun. He stands up and raises his arms magnanimously as he launches into the traditional 'Join my insane plan or DIE!' speech:

'Welcome! I am Jock-V-STO, and diz iz my underzea paradize. Az you can zee, zee area around uz iz teaming with life, but every-ver, ve zee zigns uv Capitalizt encroachment... doon't you zee, vee could be vree of zee iron greep of zee murderuz Compewter! Join me, and vee could beeld oor own verld heeyer under zee zee! Nozzink in zee voorld can schtop me now!'

The offer is genuine, and if accepted, Jock-V-STO announces:

'Exzellent. Virst, vee must reed ourselves uv ziz meddlezum Compewter. Now zat I hev zee Blue Velvet, zeez eez eeze to do. Follow me.'

He leads the troubleshooters back to the Blue Velvet, unlocks the controls, and sets a course back towards Alpha Complex... a collision course. Now that his computers back

at his base have had a chance to decrypt the arming codes for the nuclear warheads, he arms them all, locks the controls, and shoots anyone who interferes. Jock-V-STO, Blue Velvet, the troubleshooters, and everything in the OCN sector is vaporized.

Much more likely, if the troubleshooters refuse or open fire, Jock-V-STO snorts:

‘Vezy well, you hev choozen death!’

## Jock-V-STO

Management 12

Oratory 16

Gloating 16

Stealth 12

Sneaking 16

Pull Extremely Useful or Dangerous

Item Out of Robes 16

Violence 12

Energy Weapons 16

Shoot Two Pistols At Once 16

Mutant Power 10 (ichthydialosis... yes, he has the completely useless ability to talk to fish... now you know why he turned evil)

**Weapons:** Energy Blaster (M3K), Hand Flamer (S3K)

**Armour:** VIOLET Robes with Kevlar/Microwire Lining (2)

If a firefight breaks out, Jock-V-STO pulls another pistol out of his robes and uses his ‘Shoot Two Pistols at Once’ skill to attack twice every round. In addition to the monitors and computer banks spread throughout the domes, there are two cloning tanks containing Jock-V-STO’s latest genetic experiments. The first contains Ham-R-HED, a shark-human hybrid, and the second contains Wall-R-USS, a walrus-human hybrid. Instead of converting the bottom half into an animal as was done with the mermaids, Jock-V-STO is trying out the top half as animals.

If things go badly for Jock-V-STO, he runs behind these two tanks and releases the two mutants to deal with the troubleshooters while he escapes. Or if things are going well he could release them to finish off the troubleshooters while he gloats. Or stray shots could break the tanks open, releasing the mutants. Of course, destroying the tanks would be a terrible tragedy... on the IR Market; an unlicensed fully functioning cloning tank could go for several *million* credits. Even the parts from a wrecked tank could bring in a couple hundred thousand credits.

## Ham-R-HED

Management 5

Stealth 5

Violence 10

Unarmed Combat 14

Eat Weapon 14

Lock Jaws and Turn Wounded Into

Maimed or Worse 14

Mutant Power 14 (Matter Eater)

**Weapons:** Jaws (W4K)

**Armour:** none

## Wall-R-USS

Management 5

Stealth 5

Violence 10

Unarmed Combat 14

Ignore SNAFU Damage 14

Impale With Tusks After Bodyslam 14

Mutant Power 10 (Regeneration)

**Weapons:** Bodyslam/Flippersmack (W4K)

**Armour:** Thick Skin (11)

Jock-V-STO fights until he’s Maimed (choose an arm) and then runs for the elevator to get to either the Blue Velvet or the



escape pods. Allow any clones trying to follow him make a Violence/Agility roll to get into the elevator before the doors close, otherwise they’ll have to wait until the elevator comes back up. If nobody shows much interest in pursuit, Jock-V-STO activates the base’s self-destruct program on his way out. He can move through any locked door and the remaining mutants in the base may help him escape by attacking his pursuers (Arbitrary Justice roll).

If the troubleshooters manage to kill Jock-V-STO and search his robes, they find a keycard that will open any door in the base and unlock the controls on the Blue Velvet. The remaining mutants may try to avenge his death or just leave the base in complete indifference (Arbitrary Justice roll).

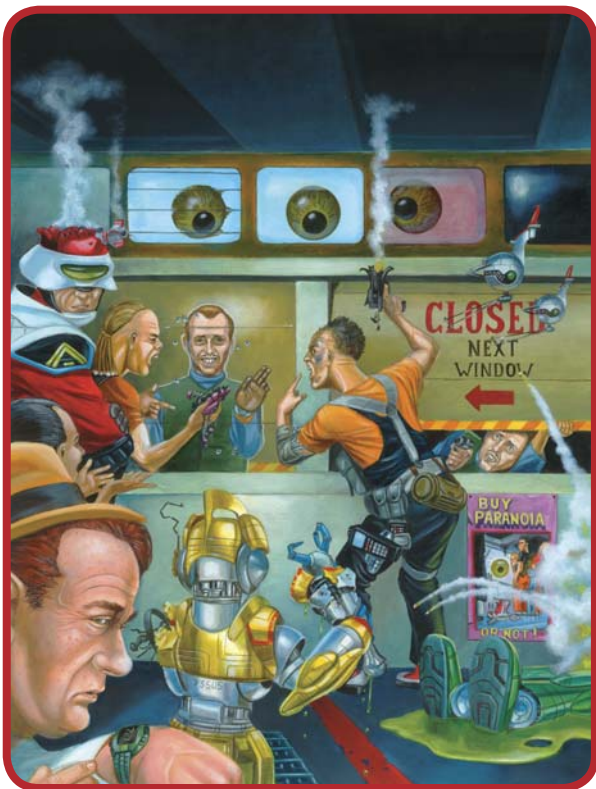
## Episode 7—Are We Dome Yet?

In the unlikely event the troubleshooters defeat Jock-V-STO, reclaim the Blue Velvet, and triumphantly return it to Alpha Complex, Jock-V-STO has one last surprise lurking inside the nuclear submarine. As the Blue Velvet approaches the OCN sector, a computer virus inside the submarine's operating system locks the controls on a collision course with OCN's main dome and arms all of the warheads onboard.

The troubleshooters have five rounds to stop the submarine. Disabling the virus and regaining helm control requires three successful Software/Hacking or Vehicle Programming rolls.

Another way to stop the submarine would be to rush to the engine room (successful Violence/Agility roll to avoid tripping in the narrow corridors) and destroy the engine turbines or the drive shaft with weapons fire (requires two Heavily Damaged results or better) or one successful Demolitions skill check. This leaves Blue Velvet dead in the water, but if the virus is still active it will detonate the warheads anyway. Make an Arbitrary Justice roll to see if OCN's main dome collapses and takes the rest of the troubleshooters' backup clones with it.

Creative troubleshooters may come up with some other method to stop the submarine. Administer Arbitrary Justice if necessary, with the following caveat: the more troubleshooters killed in the process, the higher the chances of succeeding.



### Debriefing

The troubleshooters return to Pos-I-DON's throne room for debriefing. These rewards or fines are awarded to each surviving troubleshooter. However, if any of them want to make Management/Bootlicking or Moxie rolls to pin the credit or blame on one particular clone, that's perfectly acceptable.

Returning the Blue Velvet intact	5,000 Credits
Disabling Blue Velvet, but still salvageable	2,000 Credits
Capturing Jock-V-STO	1,000 Credits
Terminating Jock-V-STO	500 Credits
Discovering Jock-V-STO's base	500 Credits
Delivering the crates to Dome D6	100 Credits

The troubleshooters may also incur the following fines:

Destroying the Blue Velvet completely	-250,000 Credits
Destroying a dome or tube in OCN sector	-5,000 Credits
Allowing Jock-V-STO to escape	-2,000 Credits
Destroying or losing a Red Herring submersible	-1,000 Credits
Destroying or losing a crate (each)	-500 Credits

If Pos-I-DON considers the mission a success, any surviving troubleshooter in good standing is promoted to the next security level. He could be persuaded to consider destroying the Blue Velvet a success, since technically it is no longer in the hands of a Computer-hating mutant traitor, but will need to pin the 250,000 fine on a suitable scapegoat. Adjust the rewards/fines as you see fit.

If Pos-I-DON considers the mission a failure, then he and everyone involved shifts to an 'implausible deniability' strategy to avoid being blamed for the fiasco. Pos-I-DON deducts all of the fines without explaining what they are for. If anyone asks about the mission, he denies that Blue Velvet ever existed or a mission alert was ever sent. Anyone who insists otherwise or asks too many questions is immediately reported to Internal Security for a fresh brainscrub. He issues every troubleshooter a 'Teela-O Commemorative Appreciation Necklace' (packed with explosives and a rudimentary 'loyalty detection' program), makes sure they put them on, and then dismisses them. Everyone is promoted a security level for no apparent reason, but this necklace beeps ominously whenever they try to talk about or think too much about the mission.



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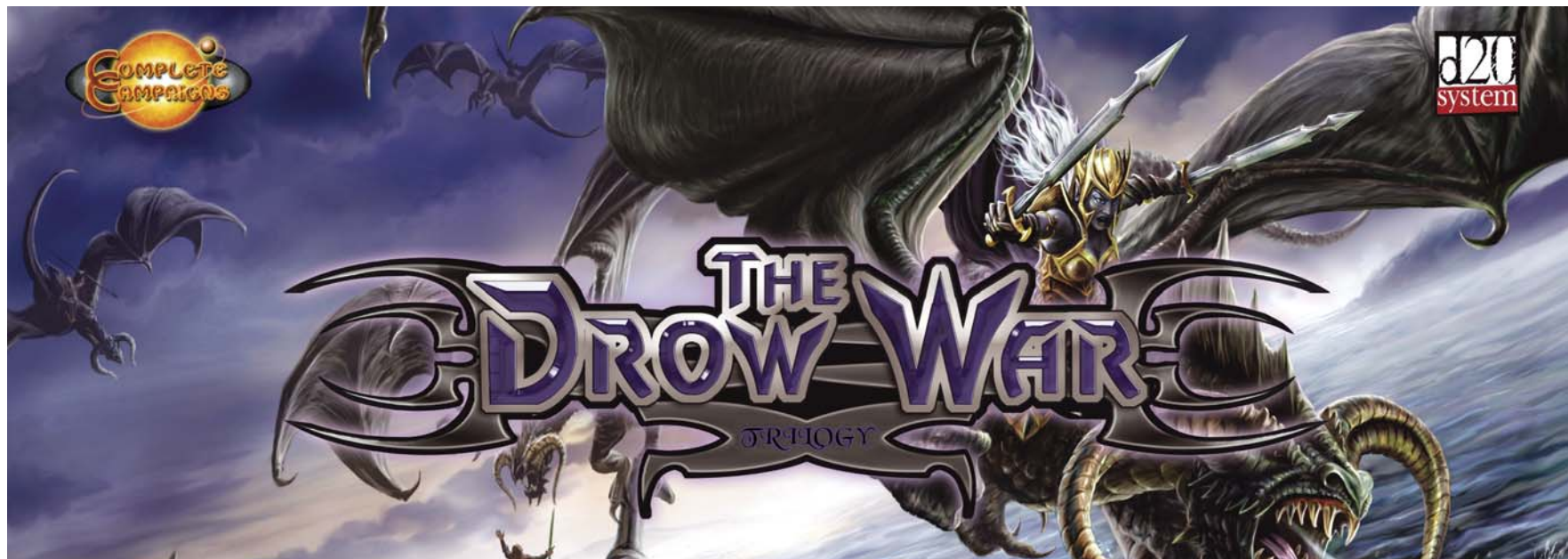
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