

G U R P S[®]

WAR AGAINST THE CHTORR[™]



BY C.J. CARELLA

BASED ON DAVID GERROLD'S CLASSIC NOVELS OF ALIEN INVASION

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

GURPS®

WAR AGAINST THE CHTORR

Can You Save the World? Can Anyone?

Based on David Gerrold's Classic Novels of Alien Invasion

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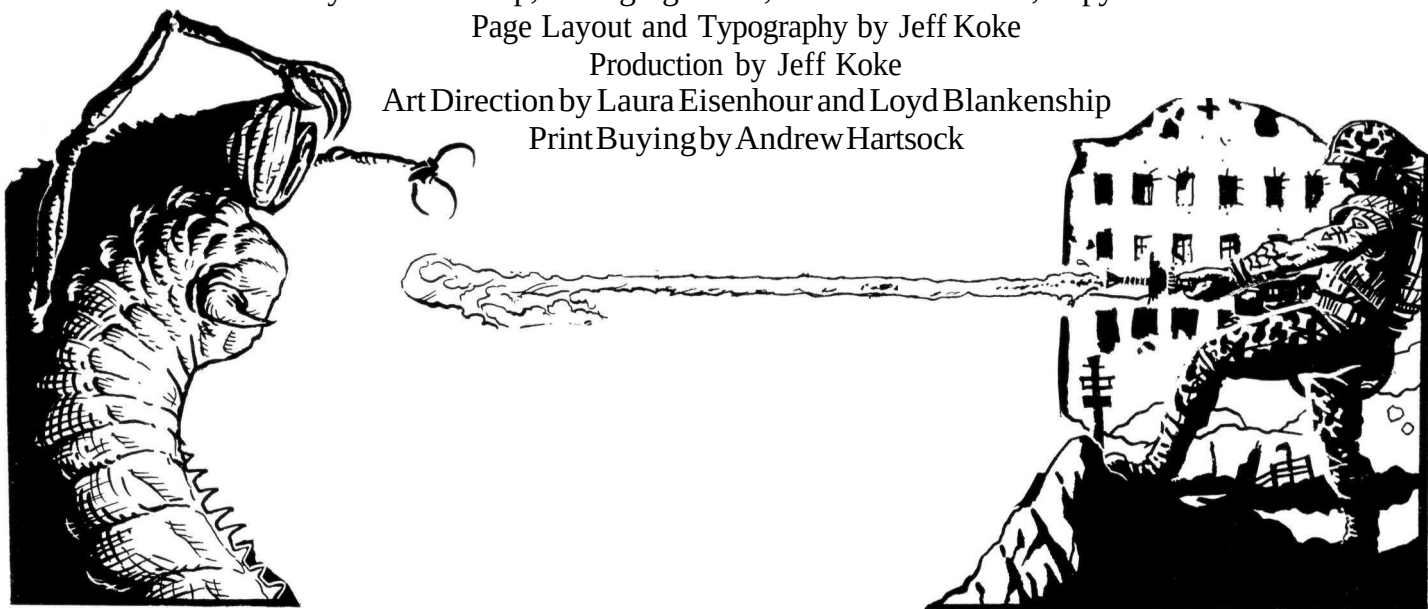
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ISBN 1-55634-246-2

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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INTRODUCTION

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the **GURPS** system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Pyramid Our bimonthly magazine includes new rules and articles for **GURPS**, as well as information on our other lines: **Car Wars**, **Toon**, **Ogre Miniatures** and more. It also covers top releases from other companies - *Traveller*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Shadowrun*, and many more.

New supplements and adventures. We're always working on new material, and we'll be happy to let you know what's available. A current catalog is available for an SASE.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us - but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all **GURPS** releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request.

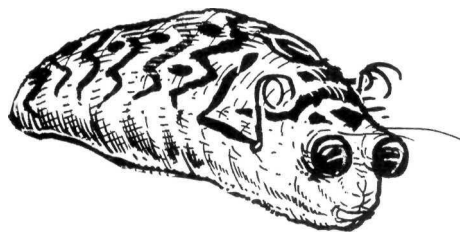
Q&A. We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

Illuminati Online. For those who have home computers, SJ Games has an online service with discussion areas for many games, including **GURPS**. Here's where we do a lot of our playtesting! It's up 24 hours per day at 512-447-4449, at up to 14.4K baud - or telnet to io.com. Give us a call! We also have conferences on CompuServe, GEnie, and America Online.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition**. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the **GURPS Basic Set** - e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the **GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition**. A reference that begins with a PS means **GURPS Psionics**. An SO refers to **GURPS Special Ops**. AUT indicates **GURPS Ultra-Tech**.



Since H.G. Wells penned *War of the Worlds* at the turn of the century, science fiction has been fascinated by the idea of alien invasions. Hundreds of variations on the theme have been tried, with varying degrees of success, from the subtle mind-controllers of Heinlein's *The Puppet Masters* to the stomping Snouts from Niven and Pournelle's *Footfall* to the cannibalistic lizard-men from the T.V. show *V*. David Gerrold's *The War Against the Chtorr* adds yet another twist to the genre: his invasion starts as a biological colonization effort.

Instead of relying on threatening UFOs or secret conspiracies, Gerrold's unseen aliens are taking over the planet by transforming its ecology. The war against humanity is being waged by animals and plants doing what comes naturally - growing, reproducing and *eating*. And they eat humans.

After a million years at the top of the food chain, humankind is once again stalked by dangerous predators. Our place as the dominant race on the planet is being contested by vicious carnivorous "worms," the Chtorr. The Earth has been devastated by a series of plagues that have killed the majority of the human population, and the scarred survivors are locked in a life-or-death struggle with the alien species - and with each other.

The *Chtorr* novels deal with an epic struggle, but also with the quest for personal growth. The protagonists of the stories must come to terms with their own internal demons before they can confront the overwhelming threat of the Chtorr. The combination is a perfect setting for a roleplaying game, whether it emphasizes high adventure or personal conflict.

Welcome to Chtorr-invaded Earth. Here you will find exotic aliens, sophisticated technologies, intrigue and conspiracies, and an almost hopeless cause. The prize is the continuing existence of humankind.

This is a world that needs everyone to be a hero. This is your chance to become one.



About the Author

C.J. Carella's love affair with **GURPS** began with the publication of *Man to Man*, and he has never looked back. C.J. has a B.A. in Medieval History from Yale University. His hobbies/obsessions include science fiction and fantasy, comic books and gaming, all of which he laughingly calls "research material." In the case of Gerrold's novels, he turned out to be right.

Born in New York, C.J. has lived in Peru, Venezuela and Connecticut, in that order. His writing credits include **GURPS Martial Arts**, **GURPS Imperial Rome**, and articles in *Roleplayer* and *White Wolf*. He has several novels on the back burner, but none are about alien invasions. He lives in New Haven with two Chtorrans masquerading as cats.

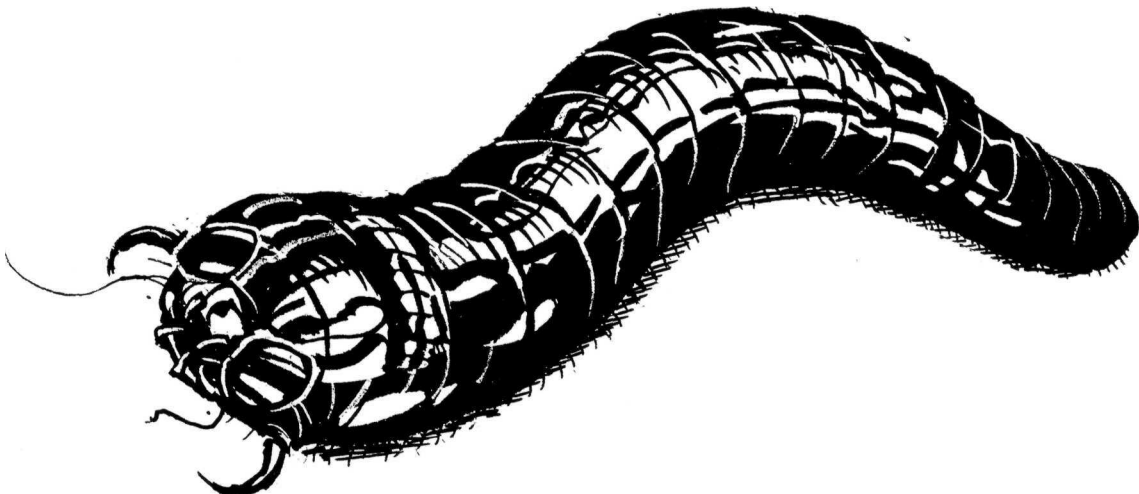
CREATOR'S FOREWORD

I've been living with giant red man-eating caterpillars since 1971. Possibly longer. That's when I started writing the story that grew into the first book in *The War Against the Chtorr*, *A Matter for Men*, but I'd been thinking about it for quite a while before. Just what would an invasion of the Earth *really* be like?

The truth about writers is that we are, first of all, *readers*. What we write is what we most want to read, but can't find in the library because no one else has written it yet. This is true of the Chtorr war. It grew out of a desire to have more of what most thrilled and interested me in that golden age of endless summers and glorious adventures. I wanted a story that wouldn't end too soon, one that had more action, more surprises, more interesting critters, more interesting weapons, and most of all, lots more of what I call *literary crunch* - lots more to chew on.

The *real* reason for writing a book is not to demonstrate what you know, but to demonstrate what you can *discover* in the process of writing it. Whenever I start a new book, I always have a pretty good idea of where I'm going and what has to happen on the way there - but what happens in the writing is that new pieces of the story invent themselves as you go. In the *War Against the Chtorr*, whole domains of ecology invented themselves, new weapons and defenses were called into existence, and the relationships between the characters transformed out of the characters' own growth. The story *always* evolves. For the storyteller, the act of creation is a profound process of discovering that there is so much *more* to this than I ever realized before.

So what has happened in the two-plus decades since the first worm crawled down out of the first tree - yes, that's right: in the first conception, they were tree-dwellers; I didn't discover they were hut-builders until the day I sat down to write the first chapter of the first book - is that the story has grown far beyond its original conception. On more than one occasion, I discovered that the size of the infestation is bigger than I thought. I have discovered that my characters are bigger than I knew. I have discovered that my vision extends farther than I had believed. It's a very satisfying process.



There are two compliments that a writer likes to receive. One is that satisfying feeling when the check clears the bank. There is nothing to compare with this particular acknowledgment, and it is the most treasured and cherished of moments - particularly if it occurs before the first of the month.

The second compliment is much less tangible, but no less profound. It is that moment when a colleague pats you on the back and says, "Attaboy!" or "Wow!" It is the acknowledgment of one who is able to recognize just how difficult the job really was. This is a large part of why I'm so delighted that Steve Jackson has turned *The War Against the Chtorr* into a roleplaying game. It's a great way of saying, "Hey, this is good stuff. We want to play in this universe. We want *more*."

Since the early days when *Car Wars* was still being sold in plastic bags, I have always regarded Steve Jackson as one of the very best gamers in the business - if not *the* best. What he has done with *The War Against the Chtorr* only confirms that opinion. Again. Previewing the game was a chance to revisit my own world through someone else's eyes. It was not just an opportunity to discover even more about my own world, it also gave me the rare opportunity to see it from the reader's side - to fight in the war *without* knowing what was going to happen next

An additional delight is that this game also includes the first serious attempt to catalog the known Chtorran species. I wish my own notes were in such good shape. In fact, on more than one occasion, I have found myself checking things against the Chtorran Bestiary as cataloged here, because I know how carefully this work has been checked against the novels - including access to the still-unpublished fifth book in the series, *A Method for Madness*, in which several of the largest mysteries of the Chtorran ecology are finally revealed.

Steve Jackson and his creative team of C.J. Carella and Jeff Koke have done something special here: they have stayed true to the original concept of the work while building a fascinating set of roleplaying scenarios that expand the vision even farther. This one is clearly a labor of love; it shows in the care for details, the commitment to accuracy, and the overall sense of terrifying believability. I'm more than impressed, I feel honored to have such attention bestowed on something I created. This is an incredible acknowledgment of the books.

If you've read the books, I think you'll find these adventures to be worthy extrapolations of the Chtorran-infested Earth. If this is your first contact with the Chtorr, you're going to need a lot of commitment just to survive - but it's well worth the effort. There's a lot here to discover. I ought to know. I made it up, and I'm *still* discovering.

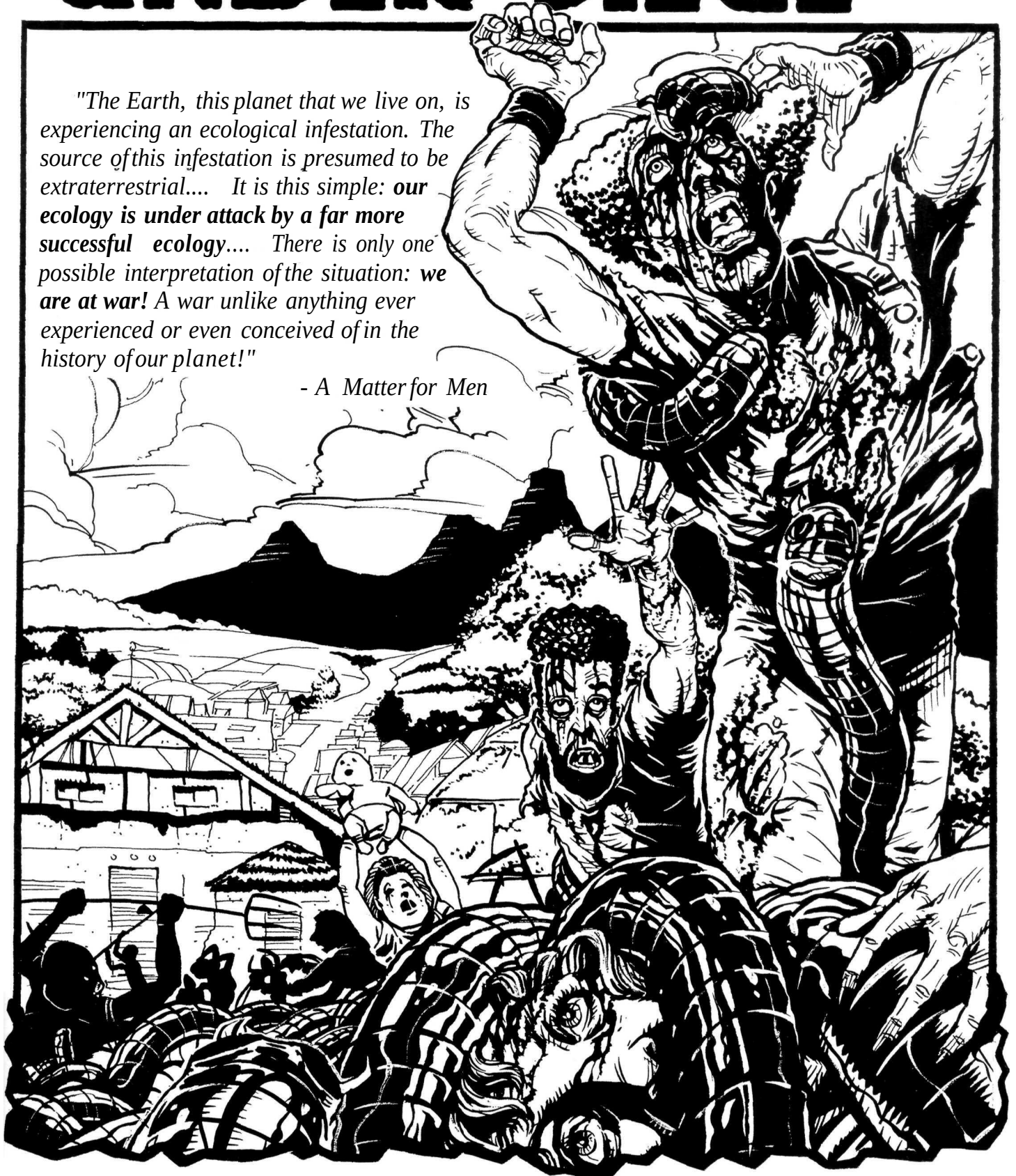
- David Gerrold
August 26, 1993

EARTH UNDER SIEGE

1

"The Earth, this planet that we live on, is experiencing an ecological infestation. The source of this infestation is presumed to be extraterrestrial.... It is this simple: **our ecology is under attack by a far more successful ecology....** There is only one possible interpretation of the situation: **we are at war!** A war unlike anything ever experienced or even conceived of in the history of our planet!"

- A Matter for Men





The U.S. Humbled?

The Earth of *The War Against the Chtorr* is a projection of current events into a terrifying future. The few mentions of the 21st-century Soviet Union in the earlier books are not relevant to the plot—the story works just as well with an independent Russia, allied with Muslim nations to the east - and, in fact, later printings of the first books will correct this.

Some GMs may disagree with the history of the world between the present date and the beginning of the *Chtorr* novels. In particular, the humbling of the U.S. may be hard to believe. However, the GM must bear in mind that a strong, fully militarized U.S. would have mobilized its troops when the plagues struck - and its army, like that of almost every other nation, would have been totally destroyed. What made the U.S. of the books so strong was its previous weakness.

Of course, other alternate histories are possible, leading to the same demilitarization of the U.S. and to the secret plans its leaders crafted to keep the nation safe. China could replace the Soviet Union in the Apocalypse. Perhaps the fall of the Soviet Union led to the massive sale of nuclear weapons and the creation of several nations with strategic nuclear missiles able to target the U.S. In that case, the ultimatums could have been handled by a Fourth-World coalition so well-armed that the U.S. would have risked millions of lives by standing up to it. This second option creates as many problems as it solves, however; a coalition of unstable nuclear-capable nations might have started a world war regardless of what the U.S. did.

The War Against the Chtorr depicts an Earth invaded by a relentless, lethal and very alien ecology. Billions of people died during the first few months of the onslaught, and billions more have perished since. Already there may not be enough human beings left to survive as a species. The aliens did not attack with weapons and technology, but have instead *infected* the planet with their own life forms, which are collectively called the Chtorr. These extraterrestrial creatures range from deadly viruses to gigantic man-eating monsters that have decimated the population and have established their own population on Earth.

The future of humankind, and the whole of Earth's ecology, is uncertain. The planet is being reshaped into an alien world more suited for the invaders. Almost every region has been infiltrated by the Chtorr, from the Rocky Mountains to the Amazonian rain forest to the depths of the ocean. Human technology is the only obstacle in the path of the invaders, and it may not be enough to stop them. The United States is leading the efforts to destroy or, failing that, control the alien infestation, but many nations of the world are less interested in dealing with the Chtorr than in fulfilling their own goals. Humankind, battered and divided, is facing its most dangerous enemy, and may not be able to survive.

Earth Before the Invasions

Before the coming of the Chtorr, the world seemed well on its way toward a bright future. Mankind had averted global war and was moving forward to new technological advances and the conquest of space. The invasion was, in one sense, just in time ... even a few decades later, and the Earth might have been capable of stopping the Chtorr before they gained a foothold.

The invasion takes place sometime between 2050 and 2120, on an Earth that has seen some surprising political twists. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the smaller, poorer nations of the world grew in power. Under the general banner of "the Fourth World," they built a great deal of political clout in the United Nations. At the same time, the United States - no longer seen as a counterpoise to Soviet ambition - gradually lost influence. Eventually, following a crisis in which America's leaders were seen to back down, the United States agreed to a series of treaties which stripped it of its military power, while keeping its economic might harnessed to serve other nations. Yet, though seemingly humbled, the U.S. was involved in a series of secret projects to maintain its power and its security.

The world had advanced scientifically: robotics, computer and satellite technology had made great strides. The U.S., although diminished politically, still remained the technological leader. New developments in psychology and sociology had inspired several experiments in model societies and self-improvement techniques; many people denounced these experiments as cults and gimmicks of little value, while others claimed that technology had finally begun to deal with social issues that had not seen improvements in decades.

In short, the Earth was a world of hope and possibilities - until the Chtorr arrived and destroyed in months a civilization that had taken thousands of years to evolve.

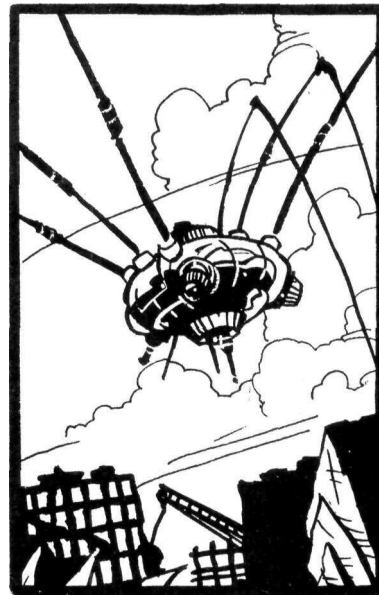
Technological Advances

The world was at TL8 in most fields and had reached TL9 in a few areas before the invasions struck. Satellites provided cheap, plentiful solar energy. Places as remote as the bottom of the sea and the moon had been colonized. Medicine had advanced dramatically, allowing the interface of man and machine through advanced prosthetics and mental augmentation. Artificial telepathy had been developed. The lifestyles of the population of the planet (at least in developed countries) had improved considerably.

■ Computers and Robots

Computer science had advanced by leaps and bounds. Even things as mundane as bus terminals were fully computerized, with screens showing the schedules and even the exact location of the bus on a grid map of its route. The average home had a computer with enough power to run a 20th-century bank. Artificial intelligence of a sort had been developed - the L.I. (lethetic intelligence) engines. L.I. engines could process information millions of times faster than humans, and were able to make deductive leaps; the only thing they still lacked was imagination.

Huge computer networks had appeared throughout the world, where millions of users could hold conversations or participate in large-scale shared-reality fantasy games. Virtual Reality systems allowed users to immerse themselves completely in simulated environments. By putting a helmet on, the user could see through the sensors of a robot, or go through a simulated training exercise as if he were actually experiencing the situations he was observing.



The Teamwork Army

"It sounds a lot like what the Germans had after World War One. They had all these work camps and youth camps and they drilled with shovels instead of rifles and they did public works and all that kind of thing. And all that was just a fake, because when the time came, these guys put down their shovels and picked up rifles and turned into a real army again."

"... I see. And thanks for being honest about it - that's good. So let me work with that for a second. Let's start with the facts about the Teamwork Army. These are men who are building things. People who build things tend to be very defensive about them. It's called territoriality. It turns out they make very good soldiers. Yes, the possibility is there. The Teamwork Army could be convened into a regular military force in ... oh, let me see, now - what did that report say?" He made a show of returning to his clipboard and calling up a specific page of notes. "Ah - twelve to sixteen weeks."

—A Matter for Men

The Teamwork Army devoted itself mainly to construction projects, helping the authorities in case of crisis or natural disasters, and handling jobs that no one else wanted to do. No actual military training was offered, so it complied with the international agreements. It was forbidden to mobilize under almost any circumstances, so it tended to stay isolated from the rest of the nation. As a result, when the plagues came, the U.S. "military" stayed in their camps instead of marching to the major cities to help in civilian control, which would have caused it to be decimated by the plagues - like those of every other nation in the world. While the Teamwork Army survived almost intact, most other countries lost their military along with their civilian populations. The Teamwork Army has now fully rearmed itself. It is now on a war footing, although the enemy it is facing is not the one it had been designed to meet.



Ape City

"Ape City was run by the biggest bunch of crazies east of California.... The theory . . . was that we couldn't be very good at being human beings, or whatever human beings are supposed to be, because we hadn't mastered being apes yet. That is, we're trying to leap beyond our own evolution, and that's a mistake — we should understand what kind of apes we are and learn how to be that kind of ape, so that we can build on it to be human beings, who are complete instead of at war with ourselves and the society we live in."

—A Matter for Men

Ape City is a perfect example of the experimental societies that sprang up all over the world toward the turn of the century. The community was best known by non-members as a nudist colony - one of the first steps in learning how to be an ape involved dealing with being a *naked* ape. Clothing was outlawed in Ape City. Rumors to the contrary notwithstanding, this did not lead to constant sex orgies. Although the dwellers of Ape City were certainly more liberal about sexual preferences, that was not the main focus of the community. Along with clothing, most pieces of "cultural baggage" (television, music, most forms of popular entertainment) were also proscribed.

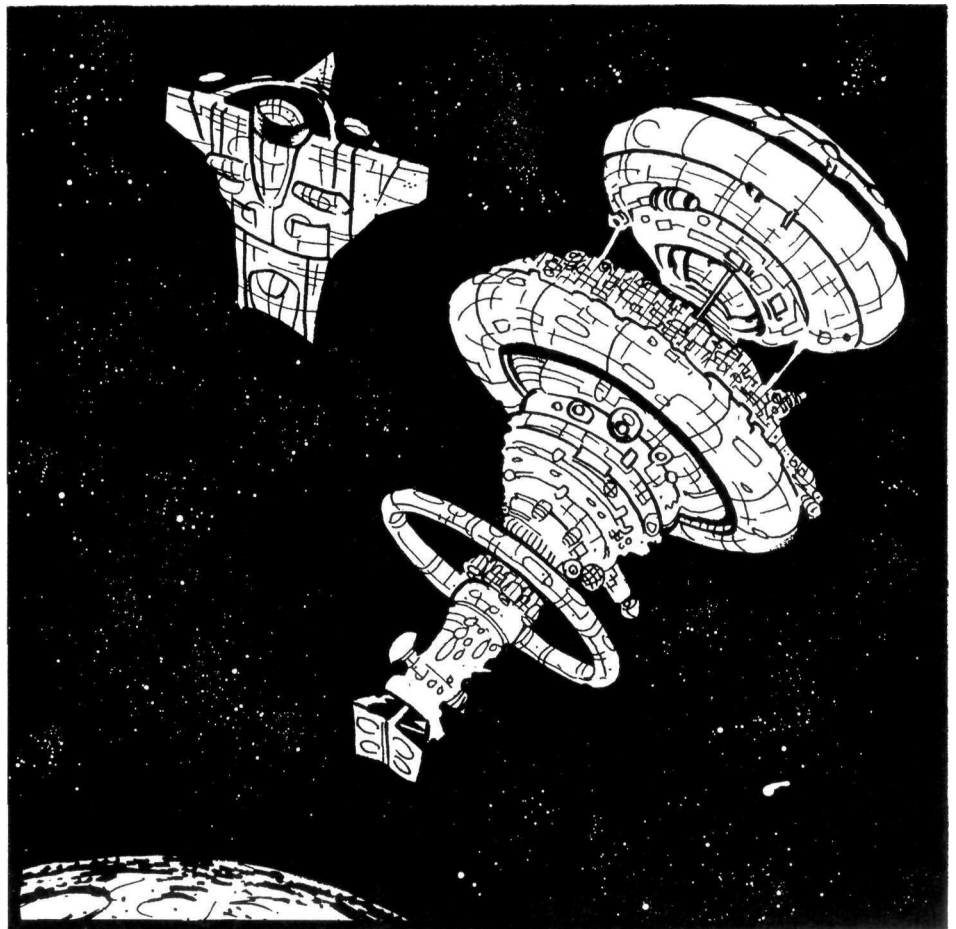
Philosophical discussions were the norm in Ape City. Its founders wanted their children to grow up free of the biases and conditioning that existed in the outside world. Ultimately, the experiment failed - many of the founders' children felt tempted by the outside world and left. On the other hand, those raised in Ape City were free of many of the prejudices affecting the general population. For one thing, they were curiously relaxed about sex; having had plenty of sexual experiences seemed to have damped the almost desperate craving that mainstream society members often feel. Former Apes are also more prone to physical displays of affection like hugs and kisses, and are extremely open-minded about private matters.

Ape City members will get a +1 bonus on reaction rolls pertaining to romantic involvement; their attitude towards sex seems to attract people. On the other hand, their reputation as members of a orgiastic nudist colony often earns them a -1 on general reaction rolls.

With advances in computerization and artificial tissue technology, the use of robots became more widespread. The wealthy could afford artificial maidservants and bartenders. Hazardous jobs in different industries could now be performed safely by remotely-controlled drones or by programmed machines. The military used robots as scouts, combat vehicles and expendable soldiers in dangerous missions. Sometimes the robots were controlled directly by humans, using cameras, remote control and Virtual Reality systems. The more sophisticated machines could be programmed to deal with a variety of situations, and were able to perform complex tasks on their own. The latest generation of robots possessed artificial intelligence and were taught instead of being programmed; these intelligent robots could learn from experience and deal with new situations. Intelligent robots were still in the experimental stage when the invasions started.

Direct links between man and machine were possible; prosthetics were fully interfaced with the human brain. Bionic limbs became possible, although their use was not widespread. Other implants allowed humans to interact directly with computers, and to augment their brain power through links with L.I. engines.

Even more impressive than bionics, a global "telepathic" network was developed; volunteers were implanted with computerized transceivers that allowed monitors complete access to all their senses. These "telepaths" were also able to switch their consciousnesses from one implanted body to another. A secret organization, the Telepathy Corps (see p. 93) became the most powerful spy network on the planet; all its agents could be anybody - in *any* body - at a given moment. Telepathy had a disturbing side effect, however; the members of the link would eventually lose their individuality and join a group consciousness whose goals and desires were becoming increasingly alien to non-telepaths. The chaos caused by the invasions has allowed the Telepathy Corps to grow in power and influence unchecked, and it remains to be seen whether the corps will be an asset or an additional enemy in the coming war.



■ Entertainment

We had 300 channels of entertainment and music. Our work was piped in too, so we never had to go out if we didn't want to. ... We endured, we waited - and we ran to the television every time a really interesting crisis or plane crash occurred, because at least that gave us the vicarious thrill of participating in something meaningful.

- A Season for Slaughter

In the fast-paced world of the 21st century, the quest for entertainment continued to be an important priority. The advances in communication technology made international TV networks possible, so programs could now be seen simultaneously across the planet. As leisure time increased (among other things, because computer technology made it possible for people to work out of their homes without having to travel to their place of employment), the demand for more entertainment grew.

As the population became jaded from exposure to all types of TV programs, movies and books, new sources of amusement were developed. Interactive shows that allowed the audience to feel as if they were part of the story, or whose outcome actually depended on the choices the audience made, became very popular. The line between movies and computer games became blurred by the development of Virtual Reality - the watcher first became totally immersed in the scene being played, and later systems allowed him to actually affect the situations he was seeing.

"Real-life" television became more and more popular. One of the most popular shows ever broadcast, getting an audience of over one billion people, was a televised hostage situation culminating with the death of the hostage-takers - all seen through interactive media. After that, any situation that promised danger was usually televised live around the world. Earth had become a world of voyeurs.

■ Space Technology

This desire to see and experience things, coupled with the thirst for fast data transmission that resulted from the Information Age, had already encouraged the development of comprehensive space programs, mostly to launch communication and observation satellites. Later on, a new development gave another boost to space programs worldwide. Energy satellites were developed: they reflected and magnified solar energy through the use of gigantic mirrors, and transmitted it to receiving stations on the ground. This technology made it possible for every nation on the planet, no matter how poor, to have enough electricity. Energy satellites greatly increased the importance of space research and colonization.

By the turn of the century, man had colonized the moon. Small bases had been built there. They were able to pay their own way: next to the bases were magnetic mass drivers that allowed large payloads to be delivered to Earth. This made mining the moon economically feasible, and opened the possibility of using the moon as a staging area for further colonization of the solar system.

Just before the invasions, massive space stations were being built, the equivalent of cities in space. Work has recently resumed, because space may turn out to be humankind's only escape from the invasions.



Mode Training

"Right now, you are unconscious of most of your operating states. So they run you. If you were conscious of them, you could transcend them. And you could be more responsible for the results you produce in the world."

"The Training is about your relationship with your own life. . . . This is about your natural ability to make great leaps."

- A Rage for Revenge

Mode training is partly a cult, partly a self-help seminar, and mostly something unlike either of those things. Unlike most cults, mode training does not attempt to provide the subjects with easy answers. Unlike most self-help seminars, the training is rarely supportive or flattering. Most trainees do not like most of what they experience during Mode training — but many still consider it an invaluable experience. Graduates from a Mode training seminar are called "Modies"; more often than not, that term is used as an insult by non-Modies.

The training teaches its subjects to understand and analyze their *operating modes*, the processes through which decisions are made, actions are taken and most other sapient activities take place. After studying and understanding those modes, the trainee learns to go beyond them and to be able to switch from one to another at will.

Continued on next page...

Mode Training **(Continued)**

The most important mode studied is the *survival process*, whose only goal is the preservation of one's life at any cost. During the training, the subjects come to realize that the process is doomed to failure - we are all going to die, sooner or later. This paradox paralyzes or angers most people and makes them less useful to themselves and others. The training does not try to tear people out of the survival process (that is considered impossible or at least counter-productive, since one needs to be alive to achieve anything), but to make them see that they are operating in that mode. In theory, this realization will allow trainees to disregard impulses coming from the survival process when they get in the way of a desirable goal.

Another facet of Mode training is the sense of responsibility it instills on its subjects. Modies see themselves as *hosts*, not guests; if they see that something needs to be done, they don't wait for someone else to do it, or even expect that - they do it themselves, or lead the efforts to do it. This assumption of responsibility often offends other people, even if they were unwilling to take charge themselves.

The Training uses meditation and TL8 psychological techniques to relax, be patient, and understand oneself and others. A Modie will usually take control of most conversations or situations — if he considers them important enough to bother. Otherwise his participation in them will be minimal. Modies usually avoid getting angry over trivial matters that would infuriate normal people; this sometimes annoys non-Modies. On the other hand, if something that a Modie considers important is affected adversely, he will get mad, in the most intimidating, effective manner possible - if getting mad will help to get the job done. (For more information on the skills and advantages a typical Modie has, see p. 56.)

These are the ideals of Mode training, and reality often falls short of them. Many people view the training with suspicion. The fact that many people in the highest military and governmental circles of the post-plague world have undergone Mode training, and that the chief sponsor of this philosophy (see Dr. Daniel J. Foreman, p. 65) is an important advisor to the President, has led many to claim that there is a conspiracy to subvert world leaders.

■ ***Undersea Habitats***

Developments in engineering and bio-technology also allowed humankind to establish itself in the last remaining frontier. Implants allowed people to breathe underwater. These so-called "gill-men" could work in sea-farming and sea-mining projects much more easily than normal crews. Two large submarine communities named Atlantis and Nemo were established. It seems likely that if the invasions had not struck, more such communities would have been built.

Society

The social sciences had long lagged behind other fields of human knowledge, but progress finally was made there as well. Innovators devised dozens of different approaches to deal with the pressures of the modern world and with the spiritual vacuum left by the materialistic society of the late 20th century. Many older techniques and institutions, from psychotherapists to televangelists, continued to thrive. A myriad of model communities, cults, psychological systems and philosophies appeared. Despite all these efforts, many people still found the rapid change of technology overwhelming.

■ ***Divorce Laws***

One change in society's outlook on family values was clearly shown by the new divorce laws passed at the turn of the century. These laws extended the right to end a relationship to children as well as to married couples. A minor who could prove that his parents had been guilty of abuse or negligence could now sever all ties with them. By the same token, parents could also absolve themselves of the responsibilities of caring for their sons and daughters. If one of the parties involved was a minor, evidence of familial breakdown had to be presented. If both parties were already adults, either parents or children could bring about the divorce, which was accompanied by orders restraining the divorced party from even trying to contact the ex-family member. While many people decried this change as a severe blow to traditional values, others believed that the laws put more responsibility in the hands of the people, allowing them to separate themselves from dysfunctional families.

■ ***Social Experiments***

Also notable were the dozens of movements and fringe groups that appeared throughout the world in the decade preceding the plagues. Some examples included Ape City (see sidebar, p. 10), Mode Training (see p. 11), the Spiralists, the "Blue Mass" and many others. Traditional religions tried to adapt to changing times, but were often upstaged by smaller, fanatical cults, including the Revelationists, a collection of apocalyptic religions, each having a different way to deal with the world's impending doom. The massive deaths that the invasions caused only served to fuel the most fanatical cults.

Common to many of these movements was the belief that "normal" society had a corrupting effect on people. Each cult varied on which causes it blamed for this corrupting effect; it could be society's restriction on perfectly natural impulses, or its emphasis on material gain, or its permissiveness or restrictiveness or any other number of reasons. As a result, most model communities tried to live in remote areas away from mainstream society, in order to prevent foreign ideas from corrupting their worldview. As a result, cult members were more likely to survive the first wave of invasions.

This means that a large proportion of the survivors are radicals who wish to change society and have little respect for pre-existing institutions, people who have little desire to interact with the rest of the world, or actually deranged individuals.

The Apocalypse

"It was a terrifying time. The world was paralyzed, waiting to see if they would drop any more bombs. We were all sure that this was it - the big one."

- A Matter for Men

Some 15 years before the appearance of the first Chtorran invaders, a war broke out between Israel and several Middle Eastern nations. Other nations sent troops to participate in the conflict, including the Chinese and several African nations. Russia was backing Israel's enemies, and the U.S. was involved in the war, seemingly on Israel's side. Actually, the war had been started to protect U.S. interests, with Israel acting as a proxy. In effect, just as they had done a century before, the U.S. and Russia were fighting it out through client nations.

The war went badly for the U.S., mostly because the Eastern nations sent more direct aid to the countries they supported. In an attempt to end the conflict quickly, the American government instructed Israel to use nuclear weapons. For the first time since the end of World War II, atomic bombs were detonated in an act of war.

The world's reaction was swift and overwhelmingly negative. Israel and the United States were condemned by almost every other nation in the world. Finally, Russia and her allies handed the U.S. an ultimatum, stating that any further nuclear attacks launched against Russia's allies would be considered to originate in the United States, and would be answered in kind. The two superpowers prepared for World War III. During a midnight cabinet meeting, as his top advisors discussed the consequences of the upcoming nuclear exchange, the U.S. president refused to accept nuclear war as inevitable. He sued for peace instead. In doing so, he prevented global war, but surrendered much of the U.S.'s international powers. Or at least, that *seemed* to be the result.



Surviving the Plagues

Several viral strains struck humankind at the beginning of the Chtorran invasion. Most of them had three things in common: they were incredibly infectious, they took effect quickly, and they were extremely lethal. The actual symptoms varied with each plague, and even within the same strain of one plague; any symptom from most Earth diseases was present in at least one plague.

If a campaign is set in the plague years, the PCs risk infection. Use the contagion rules on p. B133, but make all HT rolls at -4! For instance, avoiding all contact with possible victims will allow an unmodified HT roll, instead of the customary HT+4; touching a victim briefly will require a HT-3 roll to avoid catching the plague. This is for the average Chtorran plague; the most virulent forms may have modifiers as high as -7.

Symptoms can occur in 4d hours; the Chtorran plagues are faster-acting than most human diseases. With the first symptoms the victim loses 1d HT, or 2 points from HT and two other stats. (This is the GM's choice; a nerve-damaging virus would reduce IQ and DX, for instance, whereas one that wracked the victim's body with nausea would reduce ST and DX.) Recovery rolls are made at least daily, but the deadliest plagues require *hourly* rolls against HT. Failed rolls result in the same HT or other attribute loss as before. Critical failures result in death. There is always a penalty to these HT rolls, ranging from -1 (for the most "benign" of the plagues) to -9 for the most vicious ones.

Those few who manage to survive a plague are often disabled by it. If any attributes other than HT were reduced by the plague, the person must make a roll to recover from crippling injuries (see p. B129) for *every point* lost in an attribute. Failed rolls mean the reduced attribute will be recovered in 1d months; failing a roll by 3 or more means the loss is permanent.

Example: a plague reduces a victim's DX by 4; he must roll against HT four times. He rolls successfully twice, misses his HT roll by 1 once, and misses the roll by 5 the last time. His DX will be reduced by 4 until he heals all HT damage, will remain at -2 DX for 1d months, and will have the stat permanently reduced by 1 thereafter.



Subtle Plagues

Some plagues did not kill their victims outright. During the first years, the escalating death tolls obscured these subtler plagues, and they were not discovered until years had passed. Most of these diseases struck people's minds, as though tailored for target species.

The chances of catching these plagues are the same as for the lethal ones (see sidebar, p. 13). These strains tend to be more infectious; HT rolls to avoid contract them are at -5 or -6. Effects include blindness, paralysis, sterility and, most importantly, mental damage. In some cases the victim loses 1 to 3 points of IQ permanently. Other diseases, like the "slimy sweats," cause the victim to gain 1d levels of Weak Will (counting against any previous levels of Strong Will first) and the disadvantages Laziness and Short Attention Span (see p. 59). Time-binding abilities are impaired; the sufferer forgets things that are out of his sight, and his memories come and go like that of the worst victims of Alzheimer's Disease.

The subtlest of these plagues was only recently discovered. The "herding" phenomenon (see p. 26) that has been taking place among some survivors may be the result of a virus that has weakened certain areas of the brain while sending chemical signals that reinforce the natural herding tendencies that exist in all humans. This plague must have been designed to turn the last remaining humans on the planet into calm and subservient cattle.

■ The Moscow Treaties

"[The president] went to Moscow, hoping that it would be seen as a gesture of sanity. Instead, they saw it as a capitulation and forced him to accept a crippling peace, a debilitating compromise. Oh, he looked like a hero ... but he knew what he had given away: America's right to protect her foreign interests."

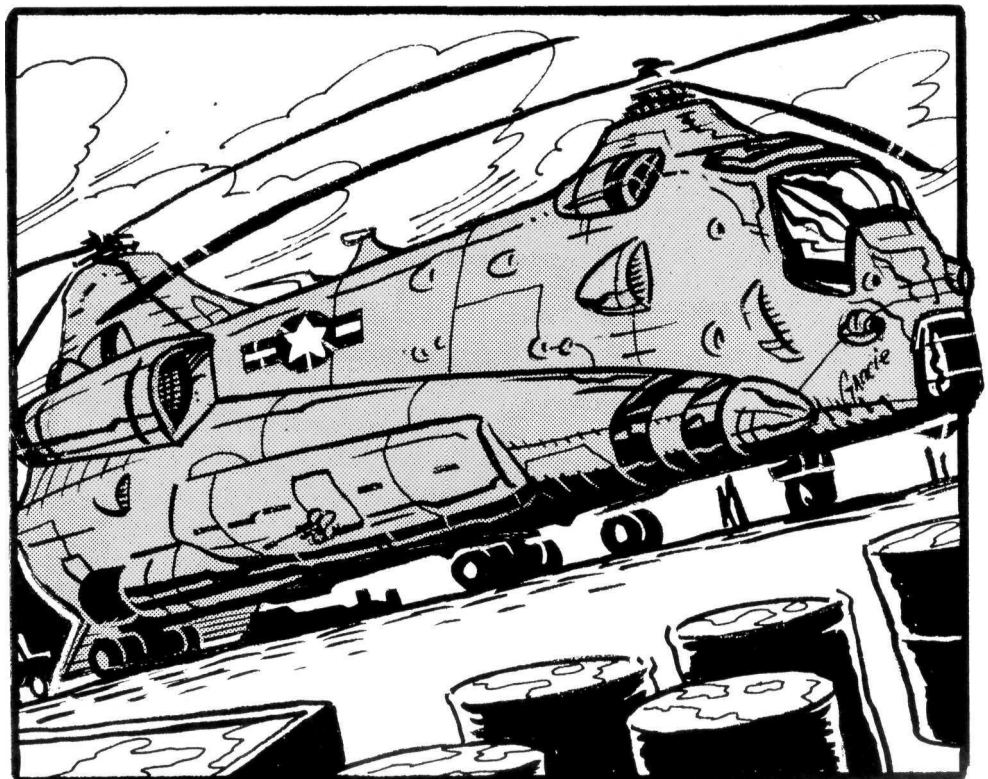
- A Matter for Men

The Treaties were not limited to the issues raised by the war in the Middle East. Instead, many of their stipulations dealt with the United States' role in world affairs. The Fourth World claimed that the U.S. had been selfish and exploitative with world resources, and had to be reined in. Billions of dollars in reparations, technological assistance and territorial losses were extracted from the States. The use of nuclear weapons was outlawed, and the U.S. military was scaled down and restricted. Many existing weapon systems were to be sunk to the bottom of the sea. America was warned against intervening in any other international conflict.

The standing of the country suffered greatly with the Treaties. To the rest of the world, it seemed that America had surrendered its power without putting up a fight. However, recent evidence has revealed that, even as the U.S. government readily agreed to the terms of the Moscow Treaties, a secret plan was being carried out. The plan was designed to guarantee the future safety of the nation and to maintain its position in the world, but in a subtle manner (see p. 15).

■ Pakistan

Some years after the Moscow Treaties, and about a decade before the Chtorran invasions, the United States became involved once again in another nation's war, this time in Pakistan. This war saw the use of several new technologies, which included the extensive employment of satellite espionage and space warfare. The U.S. did not use most of its secret weapons, however, and was unable to gain a quick victory. Another ultimatum threatening nuclear retaliation was delivered, this time by the Chinese. Once again, the U.S. capitulated, and another set of treaties was drafted.



The Fourth World called the Pakistan conflict a "Victory of Righteousness." The international agreements that followed denied the U.S. the right to have a national army. Its military was stripped down to a minimal defense force, in much the same way that Germany was demilitarized at the end of the first and second world wars. The closest thing to a national militia was the Teamwork Army, a non-military government program that employed volunteers in construction projects (see sidebar, p. 9).

The manufacture of weapons in the U.S. was outlawed, although many weapon components, such as the computer chips that were used in everything from jet fighters to assault rifles, continued to be built there.

The basic tenet of these new treaties was that the United States would be permitted to exist only so long as it was no threat to any other country. International committees would oversee America to enforce the various prohibitions and restrictions. The Pakistan conflict seemed to mark the end of the U.S. as a world power. But appearances were deceiving, thanks to American plans that had been set in motion years before.

■ Global Ethics

Global Ethics was the only mandatory course taught at American high schools before the plagues struck. The course also officially inducted the people taking it into the Teamwork Army (see p. 9). The official purpose of the course was to teach history, mostly dealing with the Apocalypse, its causes and the reasons why the U.S. lost the war. The avowed goal of this U.N.-sanctioned course was to instill in young minds the desire to prevent another Apocalypse from ever happening. This satisfied Fourth-World observers, since the course seemed to be another way to browbeat the U.S.

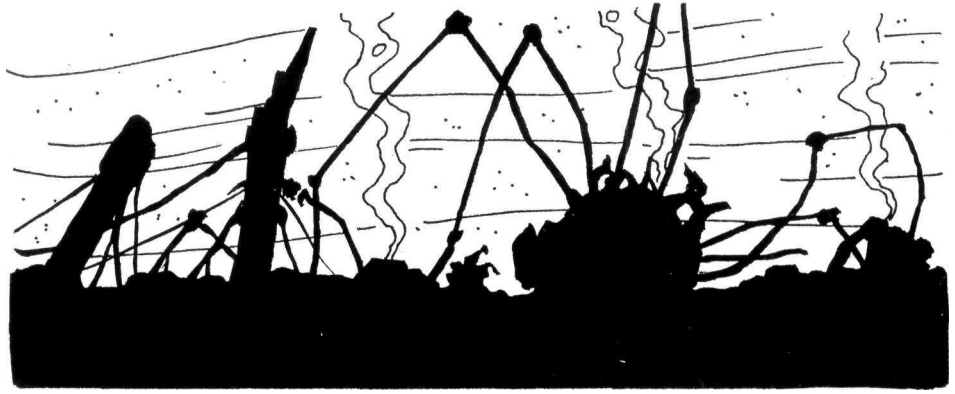
In reality, however, the course was taught by rather unconventional teachers, most of whom had ties with the military. In its lessons, it hinted that the U.S. was planning to win the next war - without fighting it. The instructors subtly showed the unfairness of the Moscow Treaties, and the reasons why the U.S. needed to use intelligence, rather than force, in its dealings with the rest of the world. The Global Ethics program was one of the subtle measures the United States was taking to preserve its identity.

■ U.S. Secret Policies

It made a crazy kind of sense. I could imagine the President saying, "What if we only pretended to lose?"

- A Matter for Men

The United States complied faithfully with the letter of every agreement signed between the Apocalypse and the Pakistan War. While doing so, it violated the spirit of the treaties, and thereby ensured that its power would not diminish. Weapon systems were sunk in the sea - but they were sealed in plastic first, so they could be pulled out and used again if need be. Reparations were paid, but in food and machinery, making the recipient nations dependent on the U.S. for both. At the same time, American technology had to improve in order to produce that food and equipment while still supplying internal demands; this pressure to modernize put the U.S. in the lead of the technological race. Educational assistance was given through American teachers who exported American values as well as technological know-how.



Show Low

"These pictures were taken in Show Low last year by a Mr. Kato Nokuri. Mr. Nokuri apparently was a video hobbyist. One afternoon he looked out his window - he probably heard the noise from the street - and he saw this. "Dr. Obama passed the hard copies across...."

I looked. I almost dropped the picture in horror.... "The quality of the photography is pretty good," she remarked. "Especially when you consider the subject matter. How that man retained the presence of mind to take these pictures I'll never know, but that telephoto shot is the best one we have of a Chtorran feeding."

Feeding! It was rending the child limb from limb! Its gaping mouth was frozen in the act of slashing and tearing at the struggling body. The Chtorran's arms were long and double-jointed. Bristly black and insect-like, they held the boy in a metal grip and pushed him towards that hideous gnashing hole. The camera caught the spurt of blood from his chest frozen in midair like a crimson splash...

"Uh, ma'am - what happened to Mr. Nokuri, the photographer?"

"The same thing that happened to the boy in the picture - we think All we found was the camera -"

- A Matter for Men

Show Low was a town in Arizona, one of the first population centers that was attacked by gastropedes. There were no survivors. The pictures that Mr. Nobuki took were kept a secret from all but members of the Special Forces and high-ranking government officials, probably to prevent panic. Some people believed that the incident was manufactured by the Army to create public outrage. It wasn't until several other documented attacks surfaced that the photos were taken seriously by those outside the Army.

All Special Forces soldiers were briefed with the Show Low pictures. This helped them realize how deadly worms were. The pictures also instilled in many a fanatical hatred of the Chtorr.



The Ecological Impact of the Invasions

Earth ecology before the invasions was already in a precarious position. Most nations had only recently started to put real thought and effort into preserving the environment, and many species had already become extinct due to carelessness and greed. Still, higher technology and the adoption of non-polluting energy sources such as solar power were helping maintain a cleaner, healthier planet.

The Chtorran invasion changed all that. On the one hand, the plagues, by wiping out the majority of the human population, removed the most dangerous threat to the environment — human civilization. On the other, the Chtorran species proved to be an even worse danger. After the first years of the infestation, Earth ecology as it was known before had ceased to exist.

The infestation must have started at the lowest levels of the food chain - the decay processors, such as bacteria and mold, which transform animal waste into useful food. Chtorran microorganisms replaced most of these simple decay processors to assure a food supply for the rest of the alien species. At this point, Earth ecology is so deeply infiltrated with Chtorran organisms that destroying all the alien beings might cause the extinction of *all* life on the planet. The native ecology has been weakened to the point that it may not be able to sustain itself.

The process becomes more damaging every passing day. Every time a Terran species becomes extinct and is replaced by a Chtorran one, the ecology then *needs* the replacing Chtorran species to function normally, and removing the invader might do more harm than good. In the war against the Chtorr, safeguarding the native ecology must be one of the main goals. Regrettably, the urgent business of keeping humankind alive has (understandably) taken precedence.

America was the first nation to develop energy satellites (see p. 84). Part of the reparations included the grant of satellite-beamed energy to poor nations, which gave two distinct advantages to the U.S.. First, the Fourth World became dependent on this energy, and on American technicians for the maintenance of groundside receiving stations. Furthermore, the world now had a vested interest in the space program, and it allowed the U.S. to pour money and energy into it. American space technology was able to use funds that had been earmarked for defense expenditures before the Treaties; thus it became superior to any other country's. Moon bases were built. Electromagnetic mass drivers on lunar bases allowed the delivery of huge quantities of raw ore from space, for the benefit of all. Additionally, the mass drivers could, at a moment's notice, become weapons more devastating than nuclear bombs; thousands

of tons of metal impacting at hypersonic speeds would be as destructive as a multi-megaton atomic explosion. The unsuspecting Fourth World had allowed the U.S. to build the largest weapon system in its arsenal!

Even the restrictions on weapon production and the elimination of the army were made to serve the best interests of the U.S. The challenge to overcome these restrictions sparked new technological developments. Industry became heavily computerized and versatile; a factory could be programmed to manufacture very different products with minimal changes. So, for instance, a factory that built buses during peacetime could be reconfigured to assemble attack helicopters in a matter of days. And the paramilitary Teamwork Army could be converted into a real army in less than four months.

These policies had an even more covert, and darker, side. If it came to a war that threatened the security of the nation, the U.S. was ready to outfight the enemy. A secret weapon, too important to reveal during the Pakistan conflicts, was developed and perfected for the next 20 years.

■ The Trojan Horse Chips

By the time of the Apocalypse, computer chips were present in almost every weapon system in existence. After the war was lost, American computer chips were manufactured with a secret device built into them; since American technology continued to dominate, almost every weapon built after the turn of the century had these "Trojan horse" chips built in.

The altered chips had two functions. First of all, they emitted a low-level electronic signal that could be picked up by transceivers. The signal was almost impossible to detect unless one was looking specifically for it. As a result, the U.S. could track the movements of almost any army in the world, simply by locating their equipment. This made surprise attacks against the United States almost impossible.

The other function produced more direct results. The special chips were also programmed to malfunction or self-destruct if a specific signal were received. Rifles would explode, jet planes would crash or malfunction catastrophically, targeting systems would stop working. Over a third of the world's weapons could be destroyed in a matter of hours if the U.S. decided to do so. The secret was kept until after the Chtorran invasion, when the disastrous attack of the Army of Economic Liberation was launched against the U.S. (see p. 31).

So, not only was the U.S. never truly disarmed or powerless, but the nation became more powerful as a result of the Apocalypse. This may turn out to be the only hope of salvation for the Earth, as the U.S. was able and ready to meet the new enemy.

The Chtorran Invasions

Beneath the chopper was a dazzling vision of the floor of Hell. Bright orange bushes leapt upward like flames. Tall sequoias, smothered in red, looked like plumes of crimson smoke. Purple streamers hung from trees like shabby cobwebs. Below were large spidery growths - they crouched in shadowy places. Red creepers stretched across the ground; they looked like grabbing claws.

The ground was pink.

. . . The pines - what was left of them - were stark black spires, pointing accusingly up from the ground. They looked as if they had been burned raw. I saw the ruins of buildings - a scattering of hollow shells, crumbling beneath coats of crimson ivy.

We'd crossed into a whole new world, a world from which the color green had been entirely banished - and everything else that lived in that green world too.

. . . I was staring into time. Beyond the bubble was a vision of the future of the Earth. How many years away? It didn't matter. We were not a part of it. Not even bones. There would be no place for humanity. Not here.

- A Day for Damnation

The Chtorran invasion of Earth was not a *War of the Worlds* scenario, with UFOs flying in and blasting away at people. Humanity has yet to meet the invaders face to face. For almost two years after the first blows were struck, even after billions of deaths, the people of Earth were totally unaware that there had been an invasion. Even for some time afterward, many refused to believe that the near-destruction of civilization was the product of an alien attack.

The Chtorran invasion of Earth is far more subtle and dangerous than an overt attack. We don't even know if the invaders will ever arrive in person; perhaps they do not have to, or are unable to come to this planet. The attack on the planet was launched by the aliens' *ecology*, not their weapons. First, a wave of alien viruses struck humankind, killing billions. This was followed by a horde of new species which attacked the native ecology. The Earth is being reshaped into a world more to the invaders' liking. Alien species are steadily and violently replacing our own, destroying all Terran life forms or changing them into new shapes. There are no natural defenses against this ecological takeover; the alien species are more sophisticated, vicious and efficient than the native ones.

Only humankind has the technology and capabilities to stop this destruction. The invaders were obviously ready for this obstacle, however. The first step of the invasion was the unleashing of several plagues which killed most of the humans on the planet and wreaked havoc with civilization. The shell-shocked and demoralized survivors now have to contend with the alien species, some of which seem to be designed to use *humans* as their main food source.

Mapping the Invasion

The GM may want to provide the players with maps showing the alien infestation. This gamebook provides no such maps, for two reasons.

In the first place, the Chtorran infestation spreads so quickly that maps become out of date within months, if not weeks. An area that is perfectly green and untouched in January may be "pink" - infested with dangerous Chtorran species - by February, and "red" - completely taken over, with nesting worms - by mid-April. This is true even if there was no infested area nearby ... The spread of the invasion is not well understood.

And in the second place, "official" maps of the infestation, at least in the United States, are lies. The government has decided that to reveal the true severity of the alien spread would cause panic. Therefore, its official maps, even those supposedly downloaded in realtime from satellites, grossly understate the size and severity of many Chtorran infestations. The government would rather lose citizens traveling into supposedly safe areas than admit how much territory it has lost.





The Nuclear Option

"The United States Ecological Infestation Advisory Board has reluctantly advised the use of low to medium yield nuclear weapons on selected sites . . . I have accepted that report. Reluctantly, I must agree with the conclusions of the Advisory Board. I have therefore signed the order authorizing the United States Army to use nuclear weapons in those areas designated as Critically Infested. As I speak to you, our bombers are already in the air and on their way to the target sites."

- A Rage for Revenge

With that speech, the President of the United States announced to the world that nuclear strikes would be used against the Chtorr. Several areas in the United States, Canada and Mexico were scorched by atomic bombs. Hundreds of thousands of worms, Chtorran animals and human renegades were killed in the attacks. The largest Chtorran nests were destroyed.

This desperate measure was not a victory, however. The infestation in the United States has continued unabated. In a matter of months, there were almost as many Chtorrans as before. To make matters worse, the bombed-out areas, which were stripped of all life, Terran or Chtorran, became an easier target for the alien life forms, since there was no competition from terrestrial species!

The U.S. government may use nuclear weapons again if the infestation continues to threaten cities, but eventually bombing will do as much damage to the environment as the Chtorr, if not more. If mankind has to escape the planet (see sidebar, p. 19), it is possible that massive nuclear bombing of the planet might be undertaken to strip the world of *all* life. The sterilized planet would then be reseeded from genetic pools taken into orbit.

The future of the planet seems bleak. All attempts to neutralize or destroy the invaders have unsuccessful so far. Some of the survivors are unable to contribute to society or, worse, are beginning to work for the invaders. The war for control of the planet may last for centuries, and there are no guarantees that humanity will win it.

The Plagues

"Almost sixty percent of the members of the dominant species of this planet have been excised as neatly as a surgeon cutting out a cancer with a laser."

- A Matter for Men

The Chtorran plagues were the worst disaster ever to strike humankind. In less than two years, almost five billion people were dead, most national and local government had ceased to exist, and civilization had collapsed in large portions of the world. The shocked survivors then had to come to grips with the realization that the plagues were caused *deliberately*, as part of an effort to subdue or eliminate humankind. Even now, new plagues or new outbreaks of previous ones continue to claim lives. New discoveries indicate that some plagues do not kill humans, but instead *transform* them into creatures with a place in the Chtorran ecology.

■ Early Outbreaks

The first outbreaks appeared in Africa and spread to Asia and India. The rest of the world was not concerned at first - plagues were common in poor, overpopulated nations. When European cities started to be struck, things moved too quickly for anyone to stop them. A second plague appeared in Brazil and spread northwards. Both waves spanned continents in a matter of weeks. The first plague hit the U.S. east coast and spread rapidly, carried by fleeing refugees and airplanes. More plagues followed; researchers have isolated seven major plagues and nine minor infections.

The plagues seemed to be more deadly to certain human ethnic groups than to others. Asians were the hardest hit, with the highest mortality rate. Caucasians were a close second, with blacks and other races suffering a slightly lower death rate. The plagues also seemed to have a higher fatality rate among men than women. As a result, racial and gender ratios have changed considerably among the survivors.

The diseases were so contagious and swift that whole planeloads of people showing no symptoms would be sick and dying before the flight landed at its destination. Some plagues could be transmitted by a sneeze, or by touching a contaminated object. In some cases, the entire population of a town or city died in a matter of days. The survival rate among people who contracted any of the major diseases was zero; the lifespan of the sick was sometimes measurable in hours. More often people lingered for days, or were healthy enough to move for some time, which only helped spread the disease.

The plagues tended to spread in a predictable manner, usually following the trails of people fleeing infected areas, but often they seemed to appear out of nowhere. Outbreaks occurred in isolated cities and towns. Any large population center was at risk. Later investigations suggested that several outbreaks of the same plagues appeared independently in different areas.

As people died by the millions, the authorities were unable to maintain order. In many instances, the people in charge of government were the first to run; soon there was nobody in charge. Terrified people rioted and looted, seeking to escape the plagues; millions more died in such incidents even before the plagues reached some areas. A firestorm destroyed the city of Los Angeles, for example, when panicky residents ran amok.

Health care organizations collapsed completely. Doctors and nurses were of necessity more exposed to contaminated individuals; over 80% of all medical professionals died in the plagues. Of the rest, most were under suspicion of dereliction of duty.

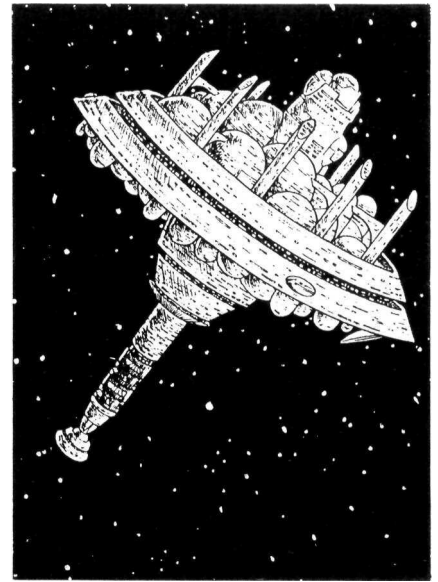
■ The First Six Plagues

It was the end of the world - and it just kept on happening.

- A Matter for Men

By the time the third plague struck, most governments were in crisis, with cities under martial law and local authorities doing their best to quarantine their territories. People trying to flee into clean areas were turned away violently, or even killed outright. Even these desperate efforts were not enough, and a fourth and fifth plague managed to spread throughout the world. Almost all cities suffered from these, many of them disappearing from the map. The sixth plague appeared, but could not spread very far - the population density was already too low to allow it.

Some areas escaped the worst effects of the plagues. Isolated, small communities were the most likely to escape unscathed (this led to the survival of a disproportionate amount of people who could not fit in with "normal" society before the plagues). The lunar colonies survived intact, but were cut off from their home bases, and had to provide for themselves. Facing starvation, the lunar base personnel sent down as many people as they could on their remaining ships, and then tried to survive and make the most of their resources. Observers predicted that the bases would survive for little more than a year without groundside support, but they have lasted for years, although only a hundred or so survivors remain.



Escape Into Space

If we have to, we can evacuate to the moon and the L5 station... We estimate we can salvage maybe ten to fifteen percent of our ecology, plus germ plasm of maybe another ten or fifteen percent. Figure we'll lose the rest . . .

"How many people?" I asked.

"About five hundred thousand. And sperm samples from ten million more. The species' genetic heritage will be saved."

"But not the species."

"Not the species, right."

- A Rage for Revenge

Despite all efforts, the Chtorran ecology has established such a firm foothold on the planet that preventing its expansion seems impossible. Most projections show that the war has already been lost. All that humanity's efforts can accomplish is to buy time, time for developing new technologies that might stop the invaders - or time to escape the doomed planet. At the end of the fourth book of the series, the lunar base was still on its own, and construction was barely beginning on the L5 space stations. Space evacuation is still years away.

When more space installations are in working order, humankind will have more of an edge against the invaders. Reclaiming the moon would allow the Terran forces to use the lunar mass drivers as weapons of destruction. A multi-ton rock thrown from the moon will produce the same Shockwave as a nuclear explosion, but it will not produce long-lasting radiation. This might help keep the infestation centers under control.

A possible future for the besieged planet would be that the Chtorr would take over almost all the world; a string of city-fortresses would house the remaining human population, which would supply the people in space. The spacers would in turn provide fire support from orbit, preventing the Chtorr from overwhelming the last human strongholds.



The Special Forces Warrant Agency

The Special Forces are made up of elite trained troops rather like the Special Ops soldiers of Delta Force and the Green Berets. These forces were disbanded, along with the rest of the U.S. Army, due to the Moscow Treaties. The Special Forces were created to take their place. The mission of the Special Forces was to deal with any threats to the nation security. The soldiers that made up the Agency were for the most part veterans of the Pakistan War (see p. 14).

These soldiers were among the very few American soldiers with full military training and experience before the plagues. As a result, the Special Forces have taken over most of the military operations against the Chtorr. In the post-plague years, the Special Forces are the striking arm of the U.S. Army. The enemy cannot be met on a conventional battlefield; instead, search-and-destroy missions are launched on the ground or by air (see p. 30).

New recruits to the Forces are given full military training, concentrating on heavy weapons like flamethrowers and rocket launchers but also including ultra-tech skills like robot operation. For a full list of Special Forces troops' skills, see p. 61. These soldiers are the most likely people to come into frequent contact with the Chtorr - and live to tell the tale. The world's foremost Chtorran expert, James E. McCarthy, started his career as a civilian scientific advisor to the Special Forces, and then joined the Forces as a lieutenant. His exposure to the Chtorran ecology has allowed him to make observations that most scientists behind the lines cannot match. With this exposure comes the realization that the Chtorr are a danger to all Terran life, a fact that escapes many people off the field.

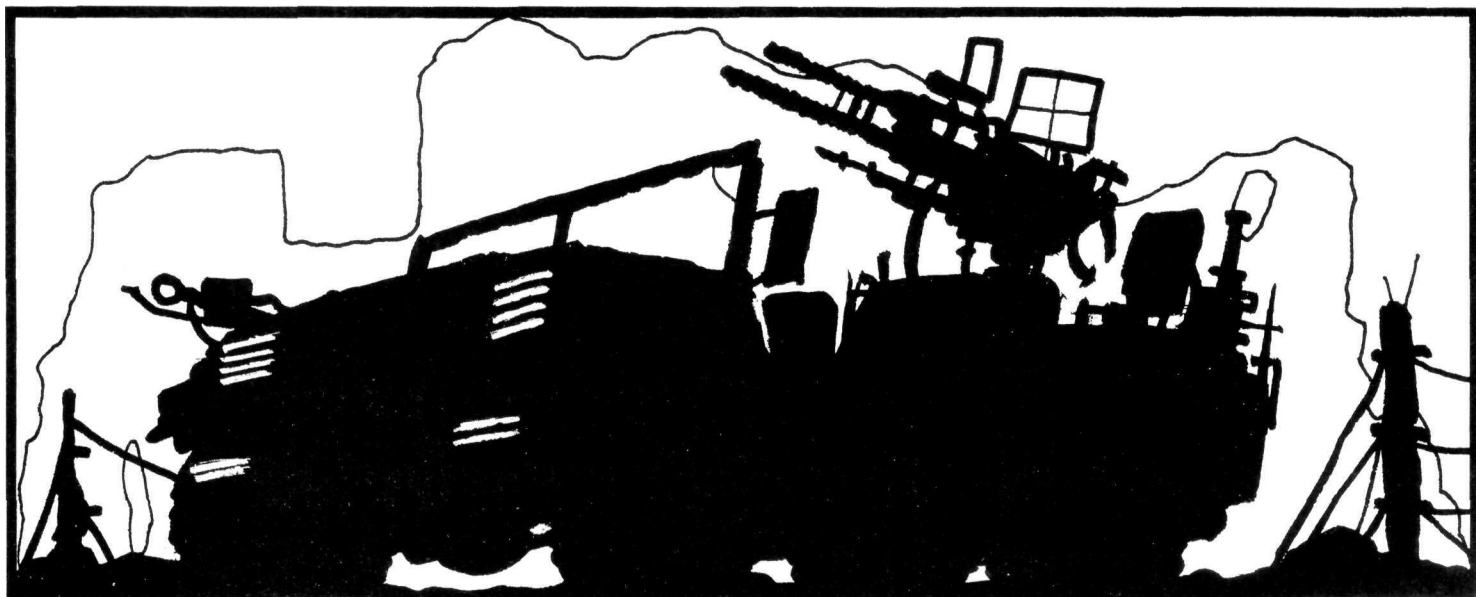
Even after the plagues started to abate, the dying continued. Since travel and commerce had collapsed, most food distribution systems were interrupted, and starvation became widespread. Riots, and fires set to destroy the homes of the sick, caused more. At least two cities in Russia suffered nuclear meltdowns when power plants were left unattended. With the loss of health care services, normal diseases like typhus and cholera ravaged the survivors. Something as simple as appendicitis was a death sentence in a world without doctors. To make matters worse, many of the survivors were too emotionally scarred by the experience to survive. Mass suicides became commonplace. Many others were too shell-shocked to take care of themselves, and died of exposure and malnutrition. Children who had survived the plagues had no one to take care of them, and either perished or went feral.

Eventually, vaccines were developed to fight the plagues. Even the second generation of vaccines was only 60% effective, however, and there were not enough technicians to manufacture them or doctors and nurses to deliver them. Vaccines were given to those who were considered valuable enough to deserve them, with military personnel having a higher priority. The rest of the survivors had to take their chances.

■ New Outbreaks

A year after the first onslaughts, vaccines were readily available, at least in the larger cities and to military personnel, and society started regrouping. Then new plagues struck. Some had appeared with the first outbreaks, but had been overlooked, because they were not invariably deadly; infected people could survive, but often were permanently crippled in some way. Others were new strains, just as lethal as the previous ones. Millions more died, but those nations that had managed to pull together were better prepared to deal with them; if nothing else, the lower population density and the breakdown of travel slowed the spread of disease. In some cases, however, the plagues caused panic and riots, which killed still more people.

After two years, the worst plagues were being contained; outbreaks were limited to the more remote or less civilized parts of the world, and the massive die-outs had stopped. There was never a complete end to the plagues, however. There are still dozens of new diseases running rampant through the human population. Furthermore, it has been recently discovered that another Chtorran virus may have weakened the rational processes of a large proportion of the survivors (see p. 26).



The Chtorran Infestation

If you were to look at a map of the Earth, with overlays representing all of the different constituent species of the Chtorran infestation, showing every manifestation of their progress, where all the myriad species have spread, where they have settled or where they have been sighted, or even simply where traces of Chtorran presence have been detected, the map would clearly demonstrate that there is no longer anyplace on Earth that may be presumed uncontaminated.

- A Season for Slaughter

The survivors of the plagues eventually started looking for a cause, and for someone to blame. The first thought many had was that the plagues were caused by some bio-war experiment gone awry, or, even worse, the purposeful use of bioengineered viruses by some international super-power or terrorist group. Accusations started flying wildly, many of them aimed at the United States.

Then, reports of strange creatures started trickling in, multiplying rapidly. New animals and plants were occupying the areas left empty by the plagues. Soon the evidence could no longer be ignored, although some nations, especially those of the Fourth World, did so until the aliens literally crawled over them: the Earth was being invaded by creatures from another world!

The infestation has spread rapidly. Hindsight now shows that alien animals had started appearing before the plagues became widespread, but the early sightings were not believed. In the last few years, a large proportion of the planet's surface has been completely infiltrated; in these areas there are almost no native species left, and those who have survived have often been altered by the invading ecology into new forms.

The best known of the alien creatures is the dominant life form of the alien ecology, the enormous, carnivorous Chtorran *gastropede*, a giant worm-like creature with a voracious taste for human flesh. At first, it was thought that the worms, as they are called, were the intelligence behind the invasion. However, this theory has come under fire, since the worms have not shown any signs of technological know-how. Whether they are the invaders or another tool of the invaders, the gastropedes have become the symbol of the enemy humankind must fight.

■ **The Worms**

"We've analyzed the protein requirements of an average-sized worm and measured it against the amount of millipedes and other Chtorran life forms it would have to consume to generate that amount of protein, and the ratio is simply unworkable. The worms can't eat enough millipedes and shambler bushes and libbitts to survive.... If there is a food chain as we understand it, then there are links missing from this food chain.

"And that brings us to the very important question: If the worms are supposed to be predators, then where -or what- are the creatures supposed to prey on?"

"Dr. Abato has advanced a very interesting hypothesis - albeit an unpleasant one - that we are the intended prey.

-A Day for Damnation

The Chtorran gastropedes are giant caterpillar-like creatures. They are covered in bright red, pink and purple fur, with huge eyes, many small feet, and two long arms ending in clawed fingers. A Chtorran's most noticeable feature is its mouth, a gaping tunnel covered with row after row of long sharp teeth. These creatures can mass several tons apiece, and often measure as much as fifteen feet in length and seven in height; bigger ones have appeared in later years.

Unlike Terran predators, worms are not afraid of humans. In fact, worms seem to prefer humans as prey, although they eat almost anything, from trees to elephants. The Chtorr are always hungry; it takes an enormous amount of biomass to



The Uncle Ira Group

I'd never thought about the Special Forces — they were just another military unit, one specifically trained for crisis deployment. I guess I'd thought that meant natural disasters and riots. I hadn't realized there was a second Special Forces hidden in one place nobody would think to look: inside the regulation Special Forces.

-A Matter for Men

A secret inner core within the Special Forces had the mission of dealing with threats to national security - by any means necessary, whether in accord with the Moscow Treaties or not. This "inner circle" of the Special Forces had authorization to undertake covert operations of which the civilian government had very little knowledge - the better to deny them if they ever became public.

This secret segment of the Special Forces is known unofficially as the Uncle Ira Group, named after Colonel Ira Wallachstein, the military commander of the inner circle. Colonel Wallachstein does not appear in the official rosters; he is a non-person whose name makes soldiers snap to attention and obey orders, even outrageous ones. The Uncle Ira Group is currently concentrating on the Chtorran invasion, working to stop it, and to remove any obstacles to the international alliance that is necessary to stop the invasion. This makes the Fourth World nations part of the "enemy."

The Uncle Ira Group and Colonel Wallachstein himself arranged the Chtorran incident during the Continuing International Conference on Extraterrestrial Affairs (see p. 28). Wallachstein died in the incident, or so most people believe, including most members of the Uncle Ira Group. In reality, he is alive and continuing his work under an assumed identity.

The Uncle Ira Group is engaged in several covert operations against Fourth World nations, especially those who seem likely to work with the Chtorran ecology instead of against it.

Anti-Chtorr Missions

Operations against the Chtorr started on a small scale. Special Forces were stationed in makeshift camps near infested areas. After satellite or aerial drone reconnaissance identified a worm nest, a force was dispatched to destroy it. This force was made up of four-man teams, usually one team for each possible enemy. The teams were armed with flamethrowers, grenades and high-capacity assault rifles (see p. 96), and occasionally supported by small robots carrying EMP weapons (see p. 98).

These search-and-destroy missions were not very successful. The worms proved to be resourceful and cunning; one worm attacking by surprise had a good chance of wiping out a whole team of soldiers. In the face of mounting casualties, the Special Forces teams were armed more heavily, and acquired combat robots for support. These huge spider-shaped robots had enormous firepower and could stand up to a worm (see p. 101 for some robot descriptions).

An air campaign was also conducted against the worms. Jets and helicopters bombed infestation centers. The main obstacle to air warfare was the lack of trained pilots, but soon computer-guided gunships allowed one pilot to control a whole wing. Every day, hundreds or even thousands of missions are flown against Chtorr infestation areas. Despite this, there are not enough planes, or enough ordnance, to destroy the largest nests. Also, human renegades in the nests have access to military weapons and have attacked Air Force sorties.

So far, neither tanks nor artillery have been used extensively against the Chtorr, mostly because the aliens have expanded primarily in heavily forested mountain areas where armored infantry cannot maneuver. As the gastropedes expand their range, however, they may be met in the field with those types of weapons. Even a tank division may be overwhelmed by several tens of thousands of Chtorrans, however.

The latest counterattack tactic involved the exclusive use of robots. Military spiders are scattered through a defense perimeter with orders to bum on sight any Chtorrans and human renegades. Robots have become more sophisticated and versatile, and they are taking over most ground missions (see p. 101).

None of these measures has managed to push back the Chtorr. Every year, the areas catalogued as Unsafe grow in size, and human-controlled territory shrinks.

keep a gastropede well-fed. Hunting parties of gastropedes prowl the newly-abandoned countryside, from lone predators to armies of thousands. Chtorrans will attack humans on sight.

The gastropedes do not carry weapons or tools, but do not seem to need them. They are incredibly fast and vicious. A charging Chtorran can reach speeds up to 60 miles an hour. Its multi-layered teeth can rend a human in a matter of seconds. Handguns are almost useless against them; a medium-sized Chtorran can walk through massed small-arms fire unharmed. Only explosives, flamethrowers and other heavy weapons work. One large worm can kill dozens of people in a few seconds. Whole towns and even cities have been destroyed by hordes of gastropedes.

■ The First Sightings

Nobody I knew had seen a Chtorran. No reputable authority had ever come forward with any proof more solid than a blurred photo, and the whole thing sounded like another Loch Ness monster or Bigfoot or Yeti....

"It's the technique of the 'big lie' all over again. By creating the threat of an enemy from outer space, we get to be territorial. We'll be so busy defending our turf, we won't have time to feel despair...."

That was his theory. Everybody had an opinion - everybody always does.

- A Matter for Men

The first documented sighting of a Chtorran gastropede took place a year before the plagues. A girl and her horse were attacked by a worm in the forests of northern Canada. The press made light of the incident, giving it the same tongue-in-cheek treatment they gave UFO sightings. The breakdown in communications that followed the plagues made it impossible for the authorities to record any new cases for about a year. During that time, it is possible that thousands of people in remote areas were killed by the first worms. By the time the U.S. government had been restored, cases of worm attacks were widely known, although the worst such incident, the Show Low massacre (see p. 15) was kept secret for some time.

During the first few years after the plagues, many people refused to acknowledge the danger the Chtorran worms posed. It was thought that the U.S. military had fabricated the worm threat to justify its renewed importance. Some scientists believed that the gastropede, like a man-eating tiger, had to be either sufficiently provoked or be suffering from some sort of nutritional problem before it turned against human beings. Even after the Show Low photographs were made public, several people insisted that gastropedes were violent only because the U.S. Army had been hunting them down first! All serious studies show that the worms routinely attack and eat humans, however.

■ The Gastropede Threat

More research indicates that the worms are either designed to eat human beings, or that their natural prey has not been delivered to Earth, forcing them to use the closest equivalent - humankind. By now it is a given that humans traveling through worm-infested areas are in severe danger, unless they are among the rare few who have managed to establish some sort of relationship with the gastropedes (see p. 28).

The gastropedes' numbers are expanding, even after drastic measures were taken against them (see p. 18). At first, gastropedes were found in small groups of three or fewer individuals, or as single predators, with a few exceptions. Individual nests with three or four members eventually started forming seven-nest mandalas, and then small Chtorran "towns" with six or more mandalas clustered around a larger dome were observed. The largest centers of Chtorran activity have

tens of thousands of worms and millions of other animals. From these centers the Chtorr can launch raids including thousands of worms. Such armies have overwhelmed whole cities.

The worms seem to be the highest life form of the Chtorran ecology. They hunt down herd animals and humans, and level forests to construct their nests. A worm-infested area is soon wiped clean of all Terran animals and plants, which are either replaced with their Chtorran equivalents or, more recently, *transformed* into Chtorran-like life forms. Left unchecked, the gastropedes will colonize all of the planet's land masses.

■ The Ecological Invasion

What we have so far observed is not an ecology - not yet - it is not even the beachhead of an ecology. What we have documented to date is only the first infestation of biological tools; these are the tools which will build the tools which will build the tools which will ultimately allow an adapted Chtorran ecology to establish itself permanently here on Earth. What we are seeing is the process of adaptation and evolution accelerated a million-fold.

The process is not accidental. It has been designed into the infestation so as to guarantee that the invading ecology will be able to overcome all biological obstacles, regardless of any conditions that may develop on the target world.

-A Season for Slaughter

Less obvious than the worms, but much more dangerous, is the replacement of Earth's ecology. All native species are in danger of becoming extinct due to the attacks of the Chtorran creatures. Almost every alien species is deadly to at least one terrestrial organism. Chtorran parasites and predators are quickly destroying every animal and plant on the globe. Human countermeasures are rarely effective; usually anything that will kill a Chtorran plant or animal is even more dangerous to the environment than the creature is.

The Chtorran ecology is unbelievably hardy and persistent. It is believed that the planet Chtorr has had a longer lifespan than Earth's. These creatures are the product of an ecology that is millions of years older. A similar situation occurred in Australia, where more sophisticated species from Europe and Asia were imported by settlers during the late 19th century, and quickly wiped out and replaced the local species. The same process is taking place on a planetary scale.

The seas, the largest reservoirs of life on this planet, are being laid waste by poisonous sludge and Chtorran creatures that viciously infect, hunt down or starve the local fauna. Even human traffic across the oceans is now endangered by Enterprise fish, gigantic monsters able to sink aircraft carriers (see p. 40). The Enterprise fish may have driven whales into extinction; there have been no recorded

Bikers

With the collapse of authority, banditry did not take long to appear. The U.S. highways, now largely deserted, became a haven for rampaging biker gangs. These gangs are not too interested in robbery (after all, there are plenty of goods to be found in abandoned cities), but seem to enjoy raping and murdering for their own sake. The military authorities have left them alone for the most part, believing that the Chtorran ecology will take care of them. In many cases, that policy has worked; Chtorrans and their renegade allies have systematically destroyed biker gangs encroaching on their territory.

There are still vast areas of land unclaimed by either the Chtorr or the U.S. government, and there the biker gangs still thrive, adding yet another danger to ground travel. The gangs are armed with looted military equipment, ranging from assault rifles to motorcycle-mounted rocket launchers. A gang will range in size from ten to over 100 members, including noncombatants like pregnant women and young children. GMs could set an *Autoduel* variant campaign in biker-ridden areas (see p. 111).



Joining a Herd

"This whole thing is dangerous. It sucks energy. Even studying it is dangerous. Any attention at all we give it is dangerous. It's a kind of social cancer. It grows and it eats. It turns healthy cells into sick ones - and then the sick cells have to be tended, so more healthy cells have to be exposed. It's a never-ending process."

— A Day for Damnation

The biggest danger of coming into contact with a herd is being seduced into *joining* it. People who stay near a herd for too long may lose their will and become naked, mindless herd members. The people who tend the herds (nicknamed "cowboys") are not allowed to deal with the herds more often than a day per week, and even so several cowboys have been lost to the herd. The song of the herd is perhaps the most powerful weapon it has; somehow, it affects every human that hears it, appealing to some deep instinct that hears its call and wants to join in.

When someone stays with a herd for a period of over one hour, the risk of being sucked in becomes real. After 1d hours of contact with the herd, the character must make a Will roll. On a success, he is unaffected. A failed roll means he becomes slightly dazed; reduce his IQ, and IQ-based skills, by 1. A critical failure puts the newcomer in an almost trance-like state; reduce IQ and IQ-based skills by 1d, and require a Will-2 roll (using the reduced IQ) for taking any action other than observing the herd.

Every hour after the first roll, the character must make another Will roll (using his *current* IQ level), whether he was successful in the first roll or not; results are as above. If his effective Will roll is reduced to 6 or below, he completely forgets himself and wanders into the herd. Unless he is stopped, he will become a full herd member in Will-8 days.

Add 2 to the Will rolls if the character is around other people and is engaged in conversation with them, 3 if he is slapped or otherwise shocked after becoming dazed. Subtract 1 if he is alone, 2 if he hears the song of the herd, and 1 for every hour of exposure to the herd after the first roll.

Anyone who joins the herd becomes a near-mindless creature. No skills are remembered; IQ is reduced to 6 or IQ-4, whichever is worse. Language skills are usually lost, although once or twice a day he may have brief moments of lucidity (roll 1d; on a roll of 1 the character regains language skills for 2d minutes). Most reactions to unexpected situations will be of the fight-or-flight variety, and for the most part the herding will only be concerned with eating and having sex.

Continued on next page ...

whale sightings for over a year. It is impossible to determine how many other species may have been wiped out. On the land, any Earth species that was in any danger of extinction is probably gone, and many formerly-common species are now endangered or lost.

Scientists are still trying to find ways to stop the infestation from spreading. At this point every continent except Australia has lost a large portion of its territory to the invading ecology. In the U.S., the military has adopted a "slash-and-burn" policy which has only slowed down the establishment of the alien life forms. Other nations are now trying to find ways to live with the new species (see p. 29).

The most discouraging possibility is that these alien species could be only the first wave of the invasions, and that even more complex, aggressive and dangerous species may follow. Many experts believe that this is a certainty. Given that humankind has been unable to stop *this* wave, our chances to halt further invasions seem nonexistent.

■ Chtorran Species

"When we look at the overall pattern - the stingflies, the night-stalkers, the red kudzu, the sea sludge, the bacteria that caused the plagues, even the, ah, Chtorrans themselves - we find that there is a pronounced tendency toward voraciousness, as if all of these life forms have evolved in a much more competitive ecology, not only surviving, but succeeding in that environment. Here on Earth, without their natural predators - all the checks and balances of a stable ecology - these life forms cannot help but run wild. We're seeing it happen all over the planet."

"We expect to find that none of these creatures are harmless to the Terran ecology - especially not the ones that look harmless. They're the ones that represent the biggest danger, because they're the ones we're most likely to underestimate."

- A Matter for Men



Besides the gastropedes, hundreds of other animal and plant species are part of the invading army. These Chtorran creatures are the scouts and advance forces of the alien ecology. Their mission is to establish beachheads from which the rest of the alien species can spread to the rest of the planet. Some of the species seem almost tailor-made to destroy Terran species; whether this was done purposely or simply because the Chtorran species fill similar ecological niches is unknown. No one knows if the alien creatures were transplanted to Earth in their natural state or whether they were first bioengineered to fit in and succeed on our planet.

Whatever the answer, the Chtorran creatures are all very hungry, very active, and very dangerous. Pound for pound, almost every Chtorran animal or plant consumes more resources than its terrestrial equivalents. As a result, even a small number of Chtorran species can quickly damage the ecology of an area by exterminating all native flora and fauna.

Other than the gastropedes, some of the best-known Chtorran creatures include: yard-long black millipedes only slightly less dangerous than the worms themselves; pink furry humanoids commonly known as "bunnydogs"; walking trees -"shamblers"- that travel in packs; and the gargantuan Enterprise fish. Detailed descriptions of these and other Chtorran creatures can be found in Chapter 4.

■ **The Great Recede**

*"Now we're going into the recede. The **real** recede. It's the aftershock of the crash. But it's a lot more than that too. Believe it or not, the human race may have been knocked below the threshold of viability. There may not be enough of us left to survive."*

- A Matter for Men

Even with the plagues over, humanity is still in danger of extinction. The Earth's population is still dwindling steadily. The new dangers posed by the Chtorran ecology, the lack of medical resources in many areas, and the psychological damage suffered by many of the survivors have stopped population growth. Instead of increasing, the human population has continued to decline. In a matter of years there may not be enough humans to support the technological level of the planet - and that may cause the extinction of humankind, or its absorption into the Chtorran ecology.

This creates an enormous dilemma for the governments of Earth. On the one hand, human life has become incredibly precious. There are not enough people to do the jobs that need to be done, so everyone has an increased responsibility to be as productive and useful as possible. The people who assume responsibilities quickly work themselves into exhaustion. Scientists in particular suffer tremendously from stress; there is always a huge backlog of observations and specimens and new theories to be analyzed and studied. Knowing that a delay in processing that information can cost thousands of lives or even lose the war makes the pressure on all technical workers even worse.

On the other hand, many survivors are too damaged and dysfunctional to contribute to society (see below). Caring for these people may drain so much in human resources that the chances of recovery will be even worse than before. Some hard choices are being made in many nations ... it may not be too long before drastic measures are taken to "deal" with those who cannot contribute to the war effort. Already in the U.S., hardened criminals, feral children and the hopelessly insane are coldly executed under the Emergency Euthanasia Bill. Whether the walking wounded are killed or cared for, however, the recede will continue.

The authorities hope that this trend will be reversed once a safe haven from the Chtorran is found, and that humankind will grow again.



Joining a Herd (Continued)

Herd members enjoy a limited form of Empathy, and might be able to communicate basic thoughts and emotions to the rest of the herd. The song seems to act as a communication device in the same way the Chtorran worms' song works (see p. 79). In some ways, the herd becomes a hive mind, and each member is a mindless drone.



Rescuing a Victim from the Herd

If the new herd member has friends that know of his plight, he might be rescued. The first challenge consists of finding the person among the wandering herd. A small wilderness herd is easy to track (+3 to Tracking rolls), although it will be impossible to tell if the target is with the herd until the search party spots him. Strangers approaching a wilderness herd will be greeted with suspicion and might trigger a stampede. Finding a herd member among the thousands in the San Francisco herd is almost impossible (roll 2d every day of the search, at +1 per five people searching, for a maximum bonus of +3; on a modified roll of 11 or higher, the quarry is found).

Snapping out of the mindless state becomes more difficult the longer the subject is exposed to the herd. Once the victim is removed from the herd, isolated, and treated, he must make a Will roll, at -1 per day spent with the herd. If the subject spends more than Will days among the herd, he will be mindwiped, and no longer human. Add 3 for a painful shock (some people have spontaneously become normal after breaking bones, for instance; repeated slapping might do the trick); add 4 if the people assisting him make a Psychology-2 roll, and 3 if a successful Hypnosis roll is made by one of the rescuers. If the first roll is failed, repeated attempts to bring the patient back can be tried, but they are at a cumulative -1 per attempt - when the cumulative penalty is greater than the Will of the patient, it means that he is forever lost.

Making a successful Will roll means the victim has snapped back to reality, but he is not out of danger yet. For the next 24 hours he must make an IQ roll to remember *anything*, including his name, what he is doing there, etc. If he falls asleep at any time during those 24 hours, he must make a Will roll at -1 for every 2 days he spent with the herd; on a failure, he has lost all language and memory abilities again.

■ **The Walking Wounded**

One of the consequences of the plagues was the severe shock they dealt to the survivors. Since at least half of all the people on the planet died, almost every survivor lost relatives and friends. Grief, survivor's syndrome and the sheer magnitude of the invasion has put most of the survivors on the edge of madness.

Insanity is the new plague affecting the planet. "Everybody's crazy" is a common catch phrase that is not far from the truth. Suicide is now the most common cause of death. Many others work themselves sick, while some give up altogether and abandon themselves to debauchery and substance abuse. Children and young adults were hardest hit by this; many had to fend for themselves after their parents died or abandoned them. Some became feral: growing up without any human contact, they lost all social and linguistic skills and became little more than animals. Many children have also been abused and exploited by opportunistic adults. All in all, millions of young people need help to rejoin society - and the resources to help them are very scarce.

The first post-plague years created a society that was suicidally decadent. Many survivors were concerned only with participating in orgies, trying new drugs, and enjoying themselves in every possible way. Others expressed their reaction to the plagues in even more bizarre ways. A cult-like group of women, called "funeral groupies" by the media, spent their time going to other people's funerals and seemed to identify themselves with death! Most of these funeral groupies committed suicide.

Eventually the walking wounded who could not or would not take care of themselves died off - or were dealt with summarily (see p. 19). The remaining survivors are still suffering from mental and emotional problems.

■ **Mass Insanity**

"It is now an act of deliberate will to be an intelligent and rational being."

-A Day for Damnation

Outright violent madness has also become more common. There have been several instances where riots started for no apparent reason. It is not known how common cases of outright psychosis are - since there are not enough psychiatrists to check on everybody. There are plenty of "normal" reasons for the outbreaks of madness, but these are compounded by the possibility that some Chtorran viruses have weakened certain areas of the human brain, making people more susceptible to bursts of irrationality.

It is possible that the renegades (see p. 28) who are helping the Chtorr are also showing symptoms of this same insanity - although they would argue that it is the rest of humanity who is showing signs of madness - after all, they are resisting the inevitable victory of the alien invaders.

■ **Herds**

"Whatever it is that's happening to the human race, the herds are one of our possible futures. We're being trained or mutated or transformed into . . . lunch that doesn't fight back. . . . And in return, the worms will guarantee that our species will survive.... It's the same arrangement we have with cattle and chickens and sheep."

- A Day for Damnation

This phenomenon was at first thought to be a reaction to the plagues, another form of insanity like the ones described above. The herds are groups of humans, ranging from two dozen members to over 2,000, that seem to have given up on civilization and rational thought. They wander around mindlessly, slowly discarding clothing until all members are naked, eating whatever food they can find. Herd

members lose all sense of self and all consciousness. Psychologists have determined that the memory and language functions of herd members are severely impaired, and eventually disappear altogether. They walk aimlessly, eat and have sex, and do little else. They seem to be happy with their existence, however, and they are not zombies. In some ways they act like little children, looking at everything as if it were the first time they have seen it. Many observers are fascinated by the sense of innocence encountered in the herd.

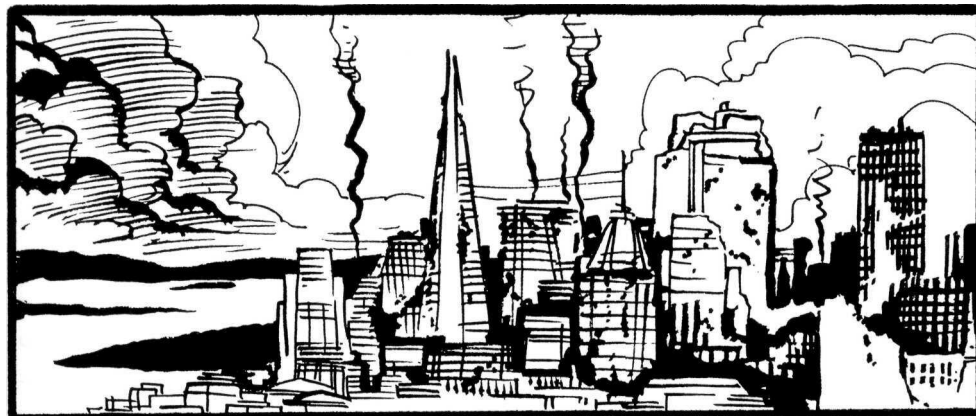
Herd members are not directly dangerous to humans. Herd members are capable of violence, but for the most part the most aggressive of them will only make threatening noises, just like gorillas and other apes. The growls and angry gestures continue until one party submits or goes away. If many herd members are frightened at once, a stampede may occur, and anyone in its path may get trampled. The real danger of the herd, however, is the attraction that it holds for other humans. Normal people who spend too much time with a herd end up as part of it.

Each herd has a song, a rhythmless chorus that builds up as every member joins in. This song is hypnotic to observers. It provides a communication channel for herd members, and is very similar to the songs of the Chtorran gastropedes (see p. 79). Humans can become entranced by it (see sidebar, p. 24); many researchers studying the herds ended up joining them. Once a person has joined a herd, it is difficult to recover him. A severe shock or physical trauma (breaking his leg, for instance) may snap the person out of the herd state. The longer one is in a herd, however, the less likely it is that he will recover.

Recent research has shown that this herding response may be the result of a previously unnoticed Chtorran plague. A Chtorran viral agent affects chemoreceptors in the human brain, damaging its ability to carry messages. Higher memory functions are damaged in this way, and the instinctive herding tendencies that exist in all human beings are exaggerated by the disease. This may be the reason why contact with the herd can push individuals over the edge, transforming them into herd members. The herd song is an almost telepathic network between members and increases the herding impulse even more.

It is now believed that the herds represent the invaders' intended future of humankind. Chtorran gastropedes use herds as cattle; they have been sighted driving them to their nests for food. It seems that the herd song acts as a call for the worms, delivering the simple message, "Dinner's ready." After several months, herd members also become infected with several Chtorran parasites, particularly the neural symbionts that act as the Chtorran nerves (see p. 71). Eventually, herds cease to be human at all and become another Chtorran species.

Herd members who lose even the will to be part of a herd become *zombies*. Zombies completely lose their time-binding capability. Things only exist for them as long as they can be perceived, and are forgotten immediately. These unfortunates are almost catatonic and have a life expectancy measurable in weeks.



Fashion

In most respects, the fashion of the 21st century is not too dissimilar from that of the late 20th, with two exceptions. Scottish-style kilts are all the rage with the younger crowd, both men and women. Some people, soldiers especially, have also resurrected the Indian custom of wearing warpaint, stripes of colored pain applied to the cheeks and forehead.

A man in a kilt, or anyone in warpaint, will usually get a -1 reaction roll from conservative people. Men in a kilt *and* paint will have a -3 reaction.

Solomon Short

Solomon Short is the pen name under which Dr. Foreman (see p. 65) writes daily quotes on the world computer network. Solomon Short's sayings are always biting, irreverent, and to the point. People often quote them. Listed below is a brief sampling of Solomon Short quotes.

"Life is hard Then you die. Then they throw dirt in yourface. Then the worms eat you. Be grateful it happens in that order."

"A hero is a man who consistently violates the law of conservation of energy."

"A little ignorance can go a long way."

"Good. Fast. Cheap. Pick two."

"I do not believe that an increase in intelligence represents real progress for humanity. It is much more likely that it will only enable us to make a higher class of mistake."

"It's easier to believe in God than to accept the blame ourselves."

"Of course, this is the best of all possible worlds. I'm in it."

"Paranoids tend to persecute free men."

"Reliable information lets you say 'I don't know,' with real confidence."

"Rome didn't fall in a day either."

"The hardest pan of a war is staying out of it."

"The human race never solves any of its problems. It only outlives them."

"There is no such thing as absolute truth. That is absolutely true."

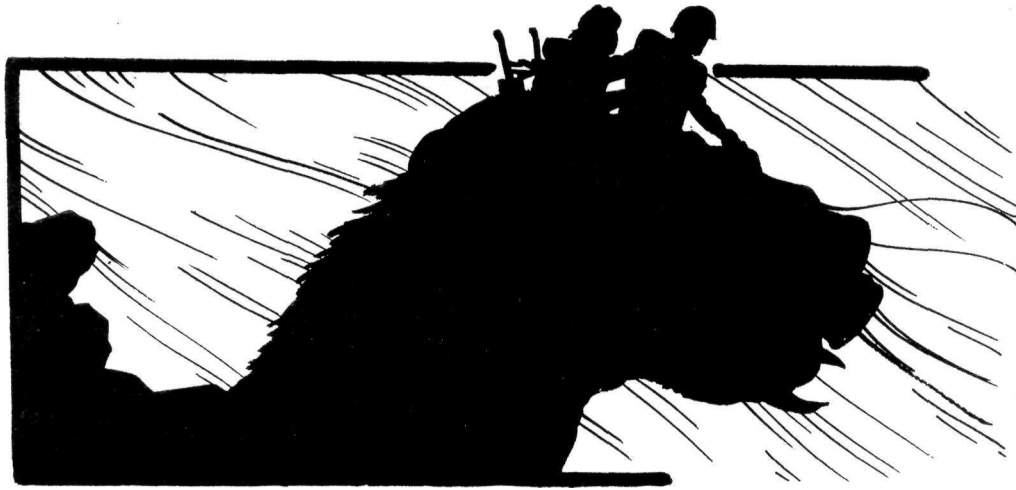
The Continuing International Conference on Extraterrestrial Affairs

This world conference was held in Denver, Colorado. Representatives from all around the world were gathered to hear presentations on the Chtorran invasion. Dr. Moyra Zymph (see p. 66) gave a terrifying speech on the effects and future consequences of the plagues and the ecological invasion. The message the U.S. was sending was that the world must unite to confront this threat, or the whole planet would fall prey to the Chtorr.

However, the atmosphere of the conference was very unresponsive to that message. The Fourth World nations were not willing to listen to the facts, which they claimed were exaggerations or outright lies fabricated by the U.S. to justify its violation of the Moscow Treaties (see p. 14). Some Fourth World speakers argued that the Chtorran gastropedes were peaceful vegetarians, and that tales of attacks on humans were either the result of bizarre circumstances or the product of hysteria or propaganda. Attempts to use facts to refute these allegations were met with skepticism. It seemed that the Fourth World would ignore the Chtorran threat and concentrate on other issues, like seizing U.S. property for world distribution.

One of the last presentations changed all that. A Chtorran specimen was displayed before the entire delegation. The Chtorran, a medium-sized worm, managed to escape and attacked the front rows, tearing people apart in a berserk rage. Only the intervention of a Special Forces soldier, who managed to cripple the worm, prevented the deaths of over 100 people. As it was, there were 37 deaths. The Chtorran was responsible for 23 of them; the other 14 were trampled to death in the panic. The Fourth World delegations happened to be seated in the front rows; most of the deaths were among their ranks.

Unknown to all but a handful of people, the worm's escape was *intentional*. Members of the Special Forces' Uncle Ira Group (see sidebar, p. 21) orchestrated the massacre. It was a deliberate assassination of the most radical Fourth World delegates, and an attempt to adjust the attitude of the survivors. The videos of the Chtorran killing innocent people by the dozen, and of the single human soldier who brought it down with an assault rifle, were distributed worldwide and made a lasting impression. The Fourth World is still anti-American, but it has never again been so profoundly pro-Chtorran.



■ Renegades

"Here's the question, Captain. In your experience, are the renegades still human?"

"Uh . . . Ma'am, I've seen them in all different kinds of situations. I've seen them celebrate birthday parties for their children, giving their kids worm-back rides. . . . But that isn't all I've seen. . . . I've seen humans directing worms against other humans as if they were military weapons. I've seen humans sorting children into pens for use as food for worms. . . . There's a point at which their identification with the worms is so complete that they have lost touch with the rest of humanity."

-A Rage for Revenge

With the collapse of governments around the world, it was natural for isolated groups to form their own. When the central authorities were back in charge, many of these groups refused to recognize the legitimacy of the new governments and retreated into the wilderness. With the resources of many empty cities and towns at their disposal, these renegades were able to arm and equip themselves. Many of those groups have died off, killed by the Chtorr, biker gangs (see p. 23) and the many new dangers of the post-plague years. Other groups, however, are living in collaboration with the worms!

Humans were found living in worm nests as early as the first year of the war. Later on, there were reports of renegade bands using tame worms in their raids. Even more disturbing were the sightings of large human settlements within the enormous Chtorran mandalas (see p. 81), where humans used advanced weapon systems to attack aircraft conducting bombing raids against the worms.

Some renegades seem to regard the worms as gods, and themselves as their loyal servants. They often hunt for the worms, providing them with fresh meat, including human flesh if necessary. There have been reported instances of renegades sacrificing their own children to the gastropedes. In some ways the renegades are a slightly more advanced form of the herd (see above); they are food that not only serves itself but also helps bring in more food.

Observation of renegade tribes in large Chtorran settlements also suggests that, after several months of exposure to the Chtorr, the renegades start to change biologically. The first sign of change is the appearance of the Chtorran pink or red "fur," which is not hair but a symbiotic organism composed mainly of nerve tissue. Each strand of Chtorran "hair" burrows into human flesh and connects to the nervous system of the human. In some cases infected people are able to see, hear, smell and taste through those nerve strands (see p. 71). More advanced cases result in the total transformation of the individual into something not unlike a bunnydog (see p. 39). Eventually, it seems that most people living among the Chtorr will lose most of their rational capabilities, and will be little more than herd animals for their new masters.

The Human Response

"The war against the Chtorr is going to last anywhere from fifty to three hundred years - if we win. That's our window for a best-case approximation."

"And- ? What's the worst case?"

"We could all be dead within ten years. . . . Every day that passes without a program of unified resistance to the Chtorran invasion pushes the window of possible victory two weeks away. We're rapidly approaching the point where the window becomes totally unattainable. We don't have any time."

- A Matter for Men

The surviving governments of the Earth are faced with the most difficult challenge in the history of humankind. First of all, there is the matter of reconstructing pre-existing societies after the deaths of over half their members. This problem, which is already beyond the abilities of most nations, is only made worse by the invading Chtorran environment. Many countries have dealt with the second problem by ignoring it or minimizing its importance. Others, like Japan and Brazil, are trying to use the Chtorran environment as a way of bringing back prosperity. The United States and her allies are leading the struggle against the Chtorr, but often stand alone. Since no single nation on the planet has the resources to stop the invasion, international cooperation is necessary . . . but has yet to happen.

The United States

"The United States is one of the few nations left on the planet that can still muster the human resources necessary to meet this challenge. . . . At least the United States still has a workable military organization. That's because this country did not mobilize the military for civilian population control during the plagues. We were forbidden to mobilize, so we kept our units isolated and as a result most of them survived. We now represent a reservoir of ability that the international community of nations needs to draw upon . . . despite the fact that it would require the one thing that a majority of the nations in the UN are opposed to: an extraordinary American military reconstruction! But that's what's needed if we are to mount realistic opposition to this invasion."

- A Matter for Men

The United States, after the Apocalypse, was the most powerful nation on Earth. This, of course, meant little in the face of the Chtorran infestations. America has taken the lead in the war against the Chtorr, much to the resentment of the rest of the world. Old fears and hatred have conspired to turn several nations against the U.S.; some of them would rather deal with the alien invaders than with the American government.

Ironically, the old U.S. will probably not survive the invasions, regardless of the outcome of the war. By the fifth year of the invasion, the United States had all but ceased to exist. A new political institution has appeared, the North American Operations Authority. This new governing body controls the military and scientific operations of Canada, the United States and Mexico. Beyond the political changes, the nation is fragmented and can only claim to control a fraction of its territories; the Chtorran ecology and its human allies dominate the rest. The U.S. is a nation in a state of war, and as a result many constitutional rights have been temporarily suspended; considering that the war may last for centuries, these "temporary" changes may last longer than the old United States itself!

Chtorran Jokes

Q: What's the Chtorran word for friend?
A: Lunch.

Q: What do Chtorrans call a traffic jam?
A: Lunch.

Q: What do Chtorrans call an elevator?
A: Lunch.

Q: What do Chtorrans call Chicago?
A: Lunch.

Q: What do Chtorrans call New Jersey?
A: Hardtack.

Q: What's the Chtorran version of the Heimlich maneuver?
A: Eating Dr. Heimlich.

Q: What do Chtorrans call a cemetery?
A: Jerky.

Q: What would a Chtorran get if it ate a tank?
A: Its minimum requirement of iron.

Q: Where does a 500-pound gorilla sleep?
A: Inside a Chtorran.

Make your own Chtorran joke:

Q: _____?
A: Lunch.





The U.S. and the Fourth World

"[A Fourth World representative] was going to minimize the Chtorran problem in favor of a global reconstruction plan — it would have been a very attractive plan, too, because the United States would have ended up paying for most of it. Essentially, we would be shipping out every unclaimed machine in the country, every vehicle, computer, airplane, TV set, and toaster. And if we wouldn't do it fast enough, they'd send in volunteer troops to help us."

-A Matterfor Men

Many countries in the Fourth World only see the U.S. as a potential source of wealth and a possible threat. They are violently opposed to the rearmament of America, even though there is little they can do about it. They resent the leadership role that the country is taking in the war against the Chtorr, despite the fact that the great industrialized nations (of which the U.S. is now the leader) are the only ones that can muster the necessary manpower and technology to resist the invasion. They want the United States' help, but hate their need and the U.S. at the same time.

A diplomatic solution is unlikely at this point. Centuries of abuse, real and perceived, shape the minds of the leaders of those countries. Any positive action the U.S. takes is seen as either a sign of weakness or a trick, and any defensive posture is immediately denounced as imperialistic and aggressive.

The United States is also to blame for the situation, and some of its actions are not improving it. Among other things, a lot of information about the Chtorr is being kept from Fourth World countries, including information that would allow them to fight the gastropedes and their ecology more successfully. This is being done in the hope that when the Chtorran problem becomes desperate they will turn to the United States for help and will be willing to make concessions in return. On the other hand, by the time some of the more stubborn nations relent, it may be too late to stop the encroaching aliens.

■ **Government**

Right after the plagues, the military took over the government. A new governing body, the Military Congress of the United States, dealt with the administration and law enforcement of the devastated nation. The capital moved to Denver, Colorado. Eventually, a new civilian government was elected, but the military influence never diminished. The President's advisors are almost evenly split between scientists and soldiers, with a smattering of politicians. In the third year of the invasion, the President signed the Military Jurisdiction Bill, which put local government under the control of district military governors. After the Chtorran gastropedes became a direct threat to Denver, the nation's capital moved to Hawaii, one of the few U.S. territories still untouched by the invasion.

With the creation of the North American Operations Authority, the power of the civilian government has been severely reduced, especially since all adults in the United States are theoretically considered part of the Army (see below). The U.S. government dedicates most of its energy now to helping the survivors of the plagues and to the establishment of safe areas where they can live. The most resource-intensive operation, the actual war against the Chtorr, is no longer directly in its hands.

■ **The Armed Forces**

The former Teamwork Army is now a fully militarized and battle-hardened organization, dedicated to the defense of the United States (and also of Canada and Mexico) and to the destruction (or at least containment) of the Chtorr. New weapons and tactics are constantly being developed. In the future, most of the war will be fought by robots (see p. 101) - there aren't enough human soldiers left to fight.

The regular Army is mostly in charge of administrative and technical functions, as well as static defense. Most of the fighting is being conducted by the Special Forces Warrant Agency (see sidebar, p. 20), a secretive, very independent organization. This is not to say that those behind the lines are safe, since there are no rear areas. The Chtorran environment can strike anywhere; the soldiers in charge of defending the Safe Zones (see p. 35) are only marginally safer than the Special Forces troops in the field.

■ **The War**

When the new U.S. government finally realized that alien life forms were taking over parts of the country, the military mobilized to take on the threat. Special Forces teams were deployed in the wilderness near the worst infestations, and launched search-and-destroy missions against the Chtorran gastropedes, which were perceived as the worst threat to the nation. The first documented worm attacks against humans were kept secret. The most notable of these was the Show Low incident (see sidebar, p. 15). The secrecy was meant to prevent panic, but it led to disbelief about the worms' danger, and may have caused the deaths of many civilians unaware of the threat.

Search-and-destroy missions soon proved to be insufficient; there were not enough people to kill the worms. More often than not, whole Special Forces units were destroyed; either the gastropedes proved to be tougher and more resourceful than first thought, or other species in the Chtorran ecology unleashed lethal surprises on the unwary soldiers. Every bit of information about the worms, such as their near-invulnerability to bullets and conventional weapons, or the number of gastropedes in a nest, was gained at the cost of dozens or hundreds of lives.

While the military launched attacks against the worms, civilian areas were given some protection. Barriers and traps were designed to stop or at least slow down the worms. Communities that received government aid were required to

distribute "lucky charms" among their members. Each "charm" contained ground glass and a number of poisons, radioactive and biological agents, designed to kill the worm that ate its wearer. That will at least kill one worm every time a human life is taken - the situation is that desperate.

The military and the government soon started diverting more manpower and energy to the destruction of the worms. The Air Force started conducting massive bombing raids on infested areas, using everything from explosives to poison gas and defoliants. Millions of worms were killed, but the infestation was only slowed. For a while, after the third and fourth years of the invasion, it seemed that the military had gained the upper hand; there were fewer nest sightings, and it seemed that their population was thinning out. Then thousands of nests started appearing, and the worm population shot up. Whole states became unlivable, and worms started raiding on the very streets of Denver, the capital.

Coupled with the upsurge in the infestation was the disturbing alliance between renegade tribes and the Chtorran invaders. Human bands started cooperating with the worms and living in their camps. Many soldiers and robots were lost when they unsuspectingly came upon hostile humans. Eventually, it was assumed that any human encountered in a Chtorr-infested area was a renegade, and treated as such.

Faced with this incredible threat, the president of the United States decided to use nuclear weapons. This action went against the Moscow Treaties (see p. 14), but at that point there was little the world could do to enforce them. Nuclear attacks destroyed the largest worm camps in several states, including Colorado, California, Oregon, Washington, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. More bombs were used in Canada and Mexico, and other nuclear-capable nations around the world followed suit shortly thereafter - they had been waiting for somebody else to do it first.

This desperate measure only served to gain time. The Chtorran species were back to their previous population levels in less than a year; devastated areas in which terrestrial life forms could not have survived were overrun more quickly, since there was no competition. Since fallout from the bombs made Denver uninhabitable, the U.S. capital was moved to Hawaii, one of the few areas of the world where the Chtorran ecology had still not established a secure foothold.

Most of the actual operations against the Chtorr are now being conducted by robots under the supervision of humans. One human controller can be in communication with hundreds of independent robot units. Mechanized spiders patrol the countryside, burning worms and their human allies on sight. They are being gradually replaced by the new-generation "proowler" robots (see p. 102), near-sentient machines with enormous capabilities. The question remains whether the military can produce enough robots to handle the Chtorran invaders.

■ Diplomatic Overtures

"Some people want to talk to these creatures - and some people want to kill them . . . But you do think there may be an alternative to killin' them?"

. . . "Yes, sir - I'm willing to try."

" . . . Let me tell you somethin', Lieutenant. The problem with that kind of thinkin' is that it diverts precious resources of time and materiel. If we can just talk to the agency that's behind the Chtorran infestation, p'haps we can work out some kind of negotiation. I've even heard some people talkin' about sharing the planet with them."

"Sir -?" I started to say.

"Share!" he continued over my protestations. "Why the hell should they? They are already winnin' the whole ball game! Why should they stop to negotiate a draw?"

The Army of Economic Liberation

Several years after the plagues, several Fourth World nations staged an invasion of the Gulf coast, near Houston. The force, several divisions strong, was nicknamed the Army of Economic Liberation. Its goal was the seizing of United States land and goods for "redistribution."

This international looting raid ended in a spectacular failure. The U.S. Army, using the secret transmitters built into most American-manufactured weapons (see p. 16), knew about the invasion as it was being prepared. When the first enemy units entered American territory, radio messages were beamed to the secret microchips. The message ordered those chips to self-destruct; over half of the invaders' equipment malfunctioned, some of it explosively. The shocked survivors landed - and were struck by a wave of robotic warriors, secret cybernetic creations that the U.S. had kept ready for years. Casualties among the Army of Economic Liberation were well over 50%. The U.S. Army had few troubles clearing the few survivors out of the invaded areas.

The revelation that the U.S. had the capacity to cripple an undetermined percentage of the world's weaponry (undetermined because many weapons not built by American factories still had American-made *parts*, especially computer chips) shook the Fourth World. It is unlikely that any attacks against the United States will be made in the near future, at least until the Fourth World replaces all its sophisticated weaponry with untainted equipment - which is unlikely given that most countries have a lower tech level than they did before the plagues started.





The USS Nimitz and the Enterprise Fish

The attack on the USS *Nimitz* is a grim reminder that the seas have also been lost to the alien invaders. The venerable aircraft carrier was attacked by an Enterprise fish (see p. 40), a giant monster at least twice as long as the ship. The *Nimitz* was severely damaged before the Enterprise fish was driven off by barrages of missiles. The monster survived enough firepower to sink a battleship.

This incident was just one of the many depredations by these behemoths. Three nuclear submarines have been sunk or disabled as well, and perhaps as many as 60 merchant vessels, all of which have disappeared mysteriously at sea. Human ships are not the only targets of these creatures: coastal installations have also been destroyed, and whales seem to have been driven to extinction by the devouring Enterprise fish. The submarine community of Atlantis (see p. 12) has been wrecked. The oceans are no longer safe for human travel.

"Maybe they don't know we're here!" I flustered. "Maybe they made a mistake. Maybe-"

"You don't kill five and halfbillion human beings by mistake!"

-A Day for Damnation

Most of the efforts conducted by the U.S. since the invasion have been of a military nature: the goal was the elimination or containment of the Chtorran threat by force. This has understandably upset the scientific members of the government, many of whom argue that those policies make it difficult to study and understand the aliens. There are also many people who claim that there may be a way to reach an accommodation with the invaders. As shown by the conversation above, between James McCarthy (see p. 63) and an old-style general, the military takes a dim view of such ideas. The facts that the gastropedes attack people on sight, have a taste for human flesh, and do not show any signs of having a government as we understand it, have all made the military point of view more popular.

The only major diplomatic effort on the U.S.'s part was an attempt to communicate with another Chtorran species, the bunnydogs, humanoid bipeds vaguely resembling teddy bears (see p. 40). The initial sightings of the bunnydogs seemed to indicate that they had a relationship with the worms, and that perhaps the bunnydogs were the intelligence behind the invasion. A scientific mission tried to establish communication with the bunnydogs. The mission then discovered that the relationship between the worms and the bunnydogs was the same as the relationship between humans and cows - or worse. The bunnydogs seemed to willingly offer themselves as food to the gastropedes. The mission was considered a total failure. Since then, no other overtures have been made.

It might be possible to communicate with the renegade bands living in Chtorran nests, but the U.S. government has not tried to do so; renegades are considered guilty of treason and are hunted down as fiercely as the Chtorr themselves.

■ Universal Service

The Universal Service Obligation had been rewritten - twice - by the New Military Congress of the United States. Four years of uniformed service. No exceptions. No deferments. No "needed skill" civilian classifications. And this means you. You were eligible on the day you turned sixteen. You had to be in uniform before your eighteenth birthday. Very simple.

- A Day for Damnation

The Universal Service Obligation was one of the ways the government tried to channel the manpower available into productive ways. The original law had been passed during the days of the Teamwork Army (see p. 9). In theory, everybody became enlisted when they entered the Global Ethics course (see p. 15) in high school. After the plagues, the mostly symbolic enlistment became very real.

This step was still not considered enough, and some time later the Universal Service Bill and a series of Mobilization Acts were passed. These bills effectively inducted humans of all ages, as well as robots and all resources, into the Armed Forces. In theory, by the fourth year of the invasion, every person in the United States was a member of the military. In practice, the majority of the population is still in civilian positions, although they are under the supervision of the military.

This militarization has caused discontent among many people, especially since most of the U.S. population distrusted the military since the Apocalypse. There was some protest, but the government silenced critics abruptly. This may have driven some people into the arms of the renegades.

■ Chtorran Research

Several U.S. agencies are studying the Chtorran problem. The National Science Center created a special Extraterrestrial Division, and all the information obtained by Special Forces teams and other observers was sent to them. This division was later replaced by the U.S. Ecological Agency, chaired by the leading student of the Chtorran ecology, Dr. Moyra Zymph (see p. 66). Later on, the name of the organization was changed to the Chtorran Control Agency; this is the organization in charge of studying the alien menace.

The first years of the invasion passed without much scientific research; many scientists had died, and the survivors were too busy assisting the government deal with the post-plague troubles to dedicate much effort to the first alien reports. When the invasion threat became apparent, the shell-shocked scientists were bombarded with a deluge of information. There has never been enough time to inspect, let alone analyze, all the reports, sightings and surveys made in the past years. Computers are processing existing data, and artificial-intelligence machines are trying to do the humans' job, but so far information has accumulated faster than the scientific agencies can deal with it. A new generation of scientists is being trained to fill the gaps, but there may not be enough time.

Furthermore, the increased militarization of the U.S. has made it more difficult to conduct research. Many military leaders are not interested in studying the Chtorran ecology; they just want to burn it down wherever it is found. The fact that conventional military means have not been successful has not changed their minds. Resources for investigation have been cut in recent years. The last major scientific expedition was the *Hieronymus Bosch* trip to the Amazon (see p. 36); it is unlikely there will be others.



A Hopeless Struggle?

One of the problems a GM may face when running a **Chtorr** campaign is that the enormity of the crisis may dishearten his players. Players used to destroying BEMs by the truckload with their X-ray Gatlings may not enjoy struggling to save a seemingly doomed Earth. On the other hand, some gamers will find the challenge refreshing. Still, the GM must try not to paint too grim a picture.

If the GM feels that the PCs (or the players) are giving up, he should take action before the campaign collapses. For instance, he could have the PCs undergo Mode training (see p. 11) to give them a better perspective on their situation and responsibilities. Or have them achieve some sort of victory - saving a small community from a Chtorran nest, destroying a large renegade enclave, or discovering a way to neutralize some Chtorran parasite.

A few things the GM should emphasize to uplift the players' spirits:

The Chtorr (so far, at least) do not have a technological foothold on Earth. Science may find a way to defeat them once and for all (and the PCs may be instrumental in this).

The Chtorr may be the ultimate development in their ecology's evolution, but humans are the ultimate adapters and predators of ours. We have defeated every threat on Earth, and if we stick together we can defeat these latest competitors.

The price for losing the war is enormous . . . the extinction of humankind, or worse, humans becoming the Chtorr's cattle. On the other hand, if humans defeat the Chtorr, they will have created a united Earth government, will make great advances in space technology, and will inherit a less populated planet. Great risks are compensated by great rewards.



New Laws

Besides the changes in government and military eligibility, a series of new laws have been enacted. Some are designed to deal with the aftereffects of the plagues. The Emergency Euthanasia Bill, for instance, defines the circumstances under which human lives can be terminated; they include the incurably insane and criminals who are beyond the possibility of rehabilitation. In essence, anyone who cannot take care of himself or who presents a threat to society can be legally killed. This cold-blooded approach has become necessary in the face of diminished resources; there are simply not enough people to take care of the catatonic or the insane, not if the species is to survive.

Other legislation deals with the issue of all the abandoned property that was left after the plague. Whole cities lie empty, a tempting target for plunderers. To regulate this, the Reclamation Laws were passed. A company trying to bid for a piece of land must set up an escrow account equal to one percent of the claim's value. The government then grants a license to the company to exploit that area. This amounts to regulated looting, but it is better than *unregulated* looting. In any case, the increased danger of the Chtorran environment makes all reclamation schemes risky enterprises at best. Unscrupulous con men have set up phony reclamation companies and fooled investors into lending them money for the escrow accounts.

In international law, the most important change is the disregarding of the Moscow Treaties (see p. 14) by the U.S. Although they have not been set aside officially, the Treaties have been bypassed through the creation of the Authority, which is not bound by the Treaties. The United States Congress is ready to officially declare the Treaties null and void, should the President ask them to do so.

Another reason for this cutback is that many scientists are interested in finding ways to *communicate* with the Chtorr, while most soldiers want to find ways to destroy them, and do not appreciate any deviation from that objective (see above). The problem is compounded by the fact that almost no scientist has had any field experience with the Chtorr; this makes scientists less likely to realize how real the danger of the alien ecology is, and it makes military leaders contemptuous of the scientists and their "rear-echelon" view of things. The scientist, on their part, look down on the military for their seemingly brutish and stupid attitude. This rivalry has caused many problems in conducting the war against the Chtorr.

The Rest of the World

*"The bad news is that the common enemy of this ecological invasion has **not** united the nations of Earth. On the contrary, if anything, it has exacerbated all our many differences. All the economic and political issues that existed before the invasion are still unresolved; and in the post-plague reformation, what we're discovering is that power has not passed in an orderly manner in many places, but has been seized by extremists who are placing greater priority on their own local agendas than they are on the multi-national cooperation to resist the infestation."*

- A Season for Slaughter

The United States seems to have been able to organize itself to resist the invasions better than any other nation in the world. With the exception of Australia, then, the situation in the rest of the planet is worse than it is in the U.S. Many countries have simply ceased to exist and have been completely taken over by the alien ecology. Others are trying different approaches in dealing with the invaders, trying to find a use for them rather than just attempting to destroy them.

■ **Fourth-World Policies**

The Fourth World is a term used to describe all nations that are still underdeveloped and which for the most part were colonies of European nations until the 19th or 20th centuries. Over the last century, the Fourth World observed the supremacy of the United States with suspicion, fear and hatred. The occasionally high-handed foreign policy of the U.S. instilled a great deal of resentment among those countries, and they gleefully participated in the disarmament policies that followed the Apocalypse (see p. 13).



The lack of resources of the Fourth World caused some nations to disintegrate during the plague years. Poor countries with only rudimentary health care programs were unable to do anything for their populations, and their governments were unable to regain control after the worst plague waves were over.

The plagues and the invasion have not changed the attitude of the Fourth World. Many leaders are unable or unwilling to understand the magnitude of the problem. Instead they are concentrating on ways to prevent the United States from becoming an international power once again. They believe that the invasion is being used as an excuse for America's rearmament and disregard of the Moscow treaties. This belief has continued even after the dangers of the invasion have been made clear. An incident during the Conference on Extraterrestrial Affairs (see p. 28) caused some countries to rethink their views, but much enmity still remains.

Some impoverished nations also view the depopulated U.S. with hungry eyes. The Fourth World insisted that American surplus machinery and equipment be turned over to the rest of the world. They even offered to send volunteers to help with the redistribution process. When the U.S. refused, several countries banded together and attempted to launch a massive amphibious raid against the Gulf coast. This "Army of Economic Liberation" failed catastrophically (see sidebar, p. 31).

The failure of the attack against the United States has only angered the Fourth World. Only the fact that all the U.S. borders are now secure has prevented an international war. Meanwhile a cold war punctuated by covert operations and espionage is constantly being waged between several Fourth-World nations and the U.S. Some Fourth-World countries will go so far as to use the Chtorran environment as a weapon against the United States.

■ **Mexico and Canada**

The other two nations of North America have suffered from secession and many political woes add to the problems of the invasion. In Canada, the French-speaking portion of the nation seized power in Quebec, which declared itself an independent republic. The insurrection was violent but ended with the victory of the separatists, who established an independent nation. Both Canada and Quebec are now part of the North American Operations Authority.

Mexico also divided into two portions. Northern Mexico maintained a friendly relationship with the United States, but the government of South Mexico was fanatically pro-Fourth World. It allowed the Army of Economic Liberation to use its territory as a staging base. Members of the U.S. Congress pushed for a declaration of war, but were refused by the president. South Mexico also declined the offer to join the North American Operations Authority. Six months after the refusal, the government of South Mexico mysteriously collapsed. To protect the population of South Mexico, the nation was annexed by the Authority. Many Fourth-World nations have accused the U.S. of engineering the collapse of South Mexico.

■ **South America**

South America was in shambles after the plagues. For over two years there was no communication with those nations. Finally, the survivors in some countries managed to rebuild and establish a measure of order. In many instances, however, power was seized by groups and individuals who were unable or unwilling to deal with the problems confronting the whole world and who would instead work only to further their own agendas.

The nations of South America are still independent, but have organized themselves under an international coalition, the Latin American Security Council; the Council is dominated by Brazil, the most powerful nation in the continent. Brazil's



Population Centers

As the gastropedes continued expanding, normal cities and towns proved to be indefensible. There were not enough troops to defend every population center; local militias were not trained well enough to deal with worm bands, not to mention bandit packs and renegade tribes. An incident in Bismarck, North Dakota, proved how vulnerable towns were; the pictures taken at that site were even worse than those of the Show Low incident (see sidebar, p. 15).

The U.S. government started working to set up a chain of Safe Zones. These zones would be linked by the highway system; vehicles would travel in heavily armed convoys for protection, and each Safe Zone would be less than two hours away from the next. The zones would be fortresses, with most dwellings built underground to minimize danger. Concentrating the people in those areas made it easier to protect them (and to *control* them as well, something that must have crossed the minds of the people designing the plan). The plan has not been implemented yet; sites are being secured and modified to fit the needs of the zones.

So far the only relatively safe areas in the United States are Hawaii, where the Chtorran organisms are still rare, and desert states like Arizona, where the gastropedes often starve to death or suffer from dehydration. It is possible that the majority of the population will be evacuated to those areas, and eventually most of the continental U.S. will be abandoned to the enemy.

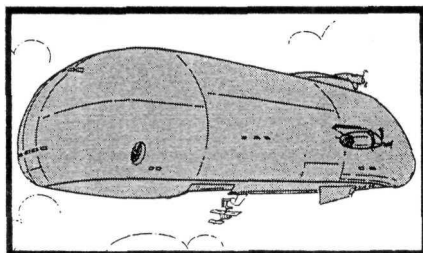
When the Safe Zones are fully established throughout the nation, it will be much harder for the gastropedes to find food. This may lead to increased aggressiveness and ingenuity on their part, and even the Safe Zones may not be enough to deal with them. No city-fortress would withstand the assault of 50,000 hungry worms, for instance. Unless a new way to control the gastropedes' expansion is found, the U.S. will be lost to the invaders.

The Hieronymus Bosch Expedition

This expedition was the last large-scale scientific mission sponsored by the U.S. government. A large team of scientists was dispatched to the Amazonian jungle to study the enormous Chtorran communities there. Since no gastropede city of that size had been allowed to develop in the United States, the Amazon infestation offered researchers a unique opportunity to examine the expansion of the Chtorran aliens. The mission was to travel in the enormous airship liner *Hieronymus Bosch*, which was painted to resemble a gigantic gastropede. Previous incidents showed that the worms were struck by something like religious awe when confronted with airships that resembled giant Chtorrans. It was thought that camouflaging the airship would minimize the danger of Chtorran attacks.

The mission was plagued with problems from the start. The Brazilian government was unwilling to let U.S. observers into their territory: they had been researching the exploitation of the Chtorran ecology, and had a vested interest in keeping it alive and well. Even after the government relented, the Brazilian personnel on board engaged in espionage activities.

The *Bosch* contacted one of the largest infestation centers, and tried to communicate with the Chtorr by playing recorded worm songs (see p. 79). The Chtorr in the community were driven berserk by the song, and killed each other in a furious battle that exterminated half a million worms. The Brazilian government then tried to cancel the mission. The *Bosch*, following U.S. orders, carried on, however, and the Brazilians did not dare to attack the ship directly. As things turned out, they did not have to; the *Bosch* gas envelope was pierced by millions of stingflies, a Chtorran insect that feeds on gastropedes and which had also confused the airship with an enormous worm. The airship eventually crashed a short distance away from the Colombian frontier; the survivors were attacked by a massive column of worms that had been following the *Bosch*. Many scientists were killed by the crash and the worm attack. The mission was still successful in revealing several new facts about the Chtorran invasion, but it is unlikely to be repeated.



government is composed of rabid extremists with nothing but hatred for the United States and little desire to deal with the invasion. Brazil was one of the leaders of the Army of Economic Liberation (see sidebar, p. 31).

To make matters worse, Brazil also holds the largest infestation on that continent, in the Amazon. The rain forest is being systematically destroyed by expanding worm communities with hundreds of thousands of individuals per mandala. The Brazilians have been experimenting with ways to exploit the Chtorran environment, using alien plants and animals as food and fuel resources. There are also indications that Brazil is hoping to train the Chtorran worms to use them as a weapon against the United States, or in a war of conquest across South America.

■ **Europe**

Europe was severely hit by the plagues, due to its high population density. Over the past few years, however, many old nations have resurfaced, and most renewed their ties with the United States. The former Soviet Union is now a collection of semi-independent states. Many cities were lost or destroyed during the plagues. Nuclear plants, left unattended, went into meltdown; several areas in Russia are now radioactive wastelands.

■ **Asia**

Asia was the area hardest hit; the plagues had the highest mortality rate among Asians, and the high population density in many of these countries allowed the plagues to spread more quickly. No existing Asian government can claim to control more than a fraction of its former territory. Many countries have fragmented into small feudal states, which war among themselves as well as with the Chtorr.

Japan seems to have been the only Asian nation to weather the plagues with some measure of success. The Japanese are currently involved in several projects to exploit the Chtorran ecology. Gastropedes have been discovered to provide an excellent substitute for whale oil (which is convenient for the Japanese, since whales are apparently extinct), and there is now a market for worm sushi! These projects may help reduce the Chtorran population as more people are motivated to hunt the aliens down, but it may cause some groups to have a vested interest in preserving the Chtorran ecology instead of destroying it.

■ **Africa**

Africa, with its history of violence for the last century, is in total collapse. Although the plagues were slightly less lethal to people of Negroid ancestry, most African nations were unable to cope with the massive deaths. The surviving nations have embarked upon wars with their neighbors. The Chtorran ecology was able to gain secure footholds there easily. It is very likely that most of Africa's endangered species have been exterminated by the invading aliens.

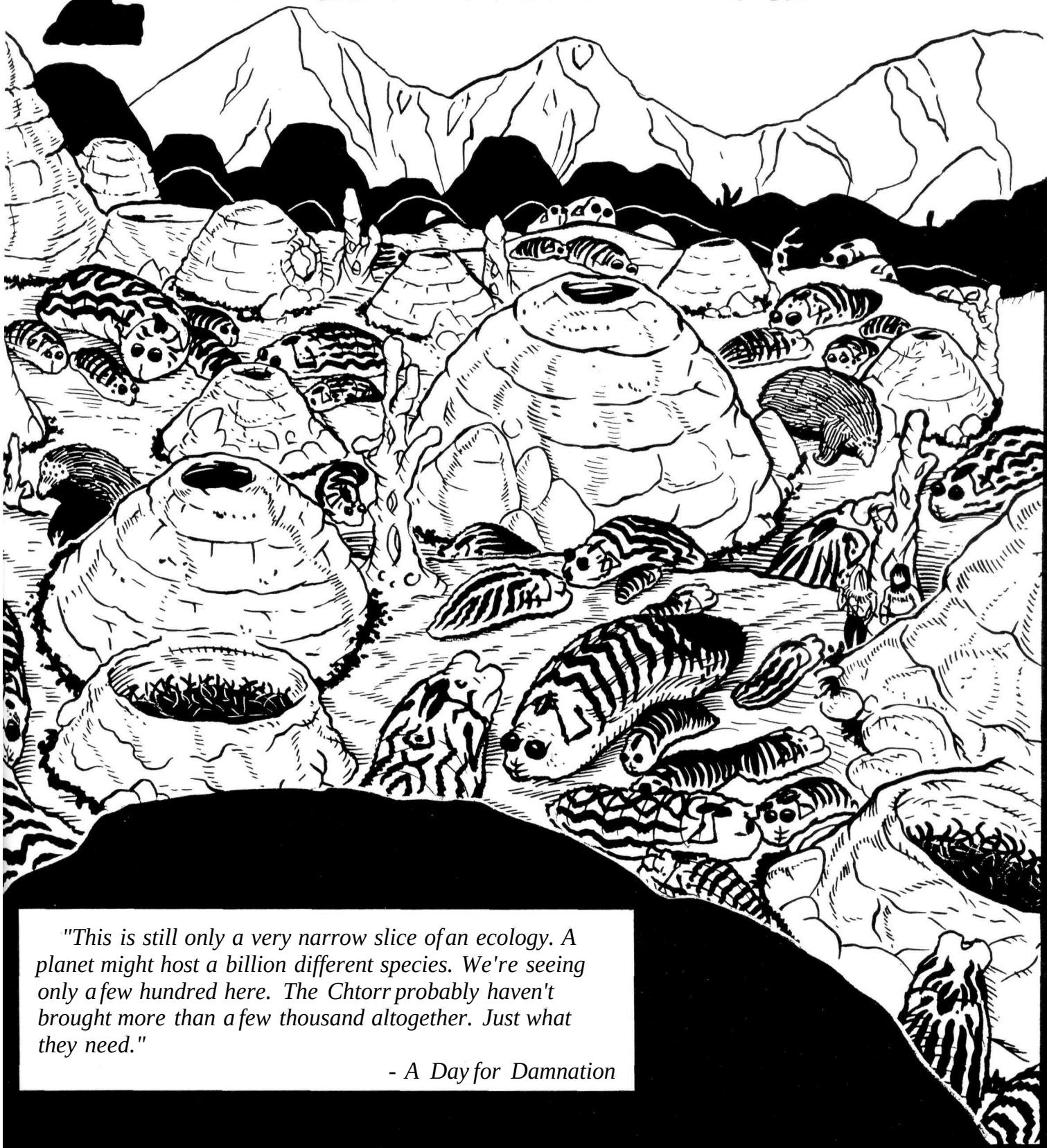
The U.S. has exported thousands of combat robots to those African nations that will accept such aid, and they are trying to hold the line against the worms.

■ **Australia**

Australia did not escape the plagues, but it seems untouched by the ecological infestation. No Chtorran life forms have established themselves there, and the Australian authorities are taking stern measures to keep them out. There soon may be problems with refugees from the devastated Asian mainland.

The U.S. and Australia have close political ties. Eventually, a large percentage of the U.S. population may be relocated there, along with most of the U.S. industrial base. The Australians will welcome such a move, since it will greatly increase the continent's chances for survival against the Chtorr. It may well be that Australia will become the last refuge of humanity.

CHTORRAN 2 BESTIARY



"This is still only a very narrow slice of an ecology. A planet might host a billion different species. We're seeing only a few hundred here. The Chtorr probably haven't brought more than a few thousand altogether. Just what they need."

- A Day for Damnation

The Chtorran species described below are but a sampling of the hundreds of creatures that the invaders have used to infest the Earth; many more have yet to be discovered, and still more will start appearing when the Chtorran ecology becomes more stable. GMs wishing to create new creatures can refer to the guidelines below.

Habitats are indicated by the following letters:

A = Arctic

D = Desert - any dry area, including scrub woodlands

F = Forest - any temperate forest

FW = Fresh-Water Aquatic

J = Jungle - any tropical forest

M = Mountain

P = Plains - any grasslands, including prairie (largely flat land), steppes (rolling hills) and savannas (dotted with trees)

S = Swamp

Sub = Subterranean (e.g., inside worm nests)

SW = Salt-Water Aquatic

New and Changed Species



Young Adult Chtorran

The only hard and fast rule about Chtorran creatures . . . any Chtorran creatures . . . is that they change. Every species seems mutable. In most cases we're not even sure what a "species" is! Not only can the same creature take very different forms at different stages of its life, but often two very different creatures can look alike.

And Chtorran creatures seem to be infinitely changeable. They change appearance, abilities and behaviors astoundingly quickly. Worms, in particular, can pass learned behaviors across a *continent* in just a few weeks. But even the humblest of the invaders can change radically in a few generations, and Chtorran generations come *quickly*. Natural selection provides immunities to chemical weapons, and behavior that bypasses defenses, with deadly speed.

And, as we are beginning to learn, many Chtorran creatures are actually *assemblages* of several different symbionts. Subtract one from the recipe . . . or add a new one . . . and a worm or a bunnydog might turn into something entirely different. The Chtorran ecology is constantly introducing such apparently random changes, as well as "conventional" mutations, to produce new adaptations. And some observers suspect that, somehow, not all these changes are random.

In game terms, this means that the GM is entirely free to introduce new creatures, or to change existing creatures, any time. And specifically, he may do so to *counter the tactics the players develop*. This is not cheating . . . this is what happens in the books, and it's one reason the Chtorran invasion is such a deadly threat. Every Chtorran species is a moving target.

Chtorran Gastropedes

Chtorrans vary widely in size and power; the difference between a newborn gastropede and an adult one is huge. A listing for each age group is given below. For more information on the abilities of the Chtorran gastropedes, see p. 71.

■ Newborn Chtorran

ST: 1-10	Move/Dodge: 6-14/5	Size: <1
DX: 9-12	PD/DR: -	Weight: 1-50 lbs.
IQ: 6-8	Damage: 1d-2 imp.	Habitat: F, J.
HT: 11/4-20	Reach: C	

A newborn Chtorran, right out of the egg, grows very quickly if it gets enough food. Anything less than a hex in size can be considered "newborn," with the GM setting stats appropriate to its size from the ranges given above.

■ Baby Chtorran

ST: 20	Move/Dodge: 15/6	Size: 1
DX: 13	PD/DR: 1/5*	Weight: 100-200
IQ: 8	Damage: 1d+2 (5) imp.	Habitat: F, J.
HT: 13/20-30		

■ Young Chtorran

ST: 30-60	Move/Dodge: 30/6	Size: 2-3
DX: 14	PD/DR: 2/10*	Weight: 300-600
IQ: 8	Damage: 3d+2 (10) imp.	Habitat: F, J.
HT: 14/100-200	Reach: C, 1	

■ Young Adult Chtorran

ST: 70-150	Move/Dodge: 30/5	Size: 3-4
DX: 14	PD/DR: 2/15*	Weight: 800-2,000
IQ: 8	Damage: 6d (10) imp.	Habitat: F, J.
HT: 14/200-300	Reach: C, 1	

■ Adult

ST: 200+	Move/Dodge: 30/5	Size: 5+
DX: 14	PD/DR: 2/15*	Weight: 2,000+
IQ: 8	Damage: 8d (10) imp.	Habitat: F, J.
HT: 14/300+	Reach: C, 1, 2	

The habits of the Chtorr are described on pp. 71-81. The damage given above is for the Chtorran's bite. The number in parentheses is an armor divisor; divide the DR of body armor or light vehicles (less than half the weight of the charging Chtorran) by that number before subtracting the DR from damage. This is due to the incredible strength of the Chtorran jaws, as well as its weight. Large land vehicles have their normal DR. If a Chtorran bites a human-sized or smaller target, it will not be able to let it go (see p. 76); the swallowing action will do half the biting dam-

age every turn until more than (3xHT) damage is inflicted. At that point the victim has been completely swallowed (note that a very large Chtorran can swallow a normal human in *one bite*). If the Chtorran does not want to swallow the victim, it will pull it out of its mouth with its hands; this action does bite damage once more and takes one second.

Bunnydog



Bunnydogs/Bunnymen

ST: 4-9	Move/Dodge: 5/6	Size: 1
DX: 10	PD/DR: 0/1	Weight: 50-75 lbs.
IQ: *	Damage: 1d cut	Habitat: F
HT: 11/7-12	Reach: C	

Bunnydogs are bipeds, three to four feet tall, with oversized feet and floppy ears. They are covered with a thick coat of fur, usually red, pink or light brown. They have stubby snouts and large, round dark eyes. In short, they are living teddy bears, and most people are captivated by them (+3 to reaction rolls).

Bunnymen tend to be in the upper end of the size range, and are completely hairless; they look like grotesque naked rat-men, and are not cute at all.

Bunnydogs, bunnymen and libbits (see p. 41) are all members of the same species. Bunnydogs and bunnymen are two stages of the male gender, and libbits are female. Bunnymen are the mature stage (not all bunnydogs "grow up" to become bunnymen, for reasons that are not clear to scientists). If one bunnymen mates with a libbit, it will give birth to more females, whereas if two bunnymen mate with the libbit, it will deliver bunnydogs.

Bunnydogs and bunnymen behave like a combination of small children, circus clowns and Greek satyrs. They are curious, imitative and playful, and can be trained and taught tricks just like monkeys. They also seem to have an insatiable sexual appetite, engaging in intercourse with each other, libbits, other animals and even humans, if allowed.

Bunnydogs seem to communicate by singing and dancing. The ritual produces a form of group consciousness that allows them to transmit information to each other and to the gastropedes. One such song, for instance, basically means "dinner is served" - at

the end of it the gastropedes sweep over the clustered bunnydogs and start eating!

One fact that has puzzled several scientists is the bunnydogs' short life span. Comparable creatures have a life expectancy of 10 to 30 years, but bunnydogs' lives are much shorter than that. Bunnydogs may have been bioengineered to die before reaching full maturity, perhaps as a way to prevent them from becoming fully sapient - which might pose a threat to the Chtorr.

One Chtorran infection turns humans into creatures disturbingly like bunnymen and libbits; see p. 41.

■ **Bunnydog Intelligence: GM's Options**

The IQ of the bunnydogs has been left blank. It is up to the GM to decide whether the creatures are trainable but unintelligent animals (IQ 5-6) or are sapient or presapient (IQ 7-9). If bunnydogs are sapient, bunnydogs might even be used as PCs (see sidebar, p. 51). Perhaps the bunnydogs were originally members of an alien civilization that was conquered by the Chtorr and transformed into their current, debased form. The fate of the bunnydogs may be shared by humans one day.

Army Spiders

ST: 3-7	Move/Dodge: 6/10	Size: <1
DX: 12	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 1 lb.
IQ: 2	Damage: *	Habitat: F
HT: 13/2-5	Reach: C	

"They can grow as big as your foot. Imagine a swarm of giant red tarantulas, only leaner, meaner, and hungrier. They're eight-legged vampires. They weave huge webs of very sticky silk. The slightest nudge on it will bring the whole nest of them down on you. The poison will paralyze you, but it won't kill you. . . . You'll be conscious the whole time they're feeding."

-A *Season for Slaughter*

Anyone passing through an army spider web will trigger the swarm. If the intruder has not encountered this species before, he must make a Survival (Chtorran) roll at -5 to realize the possible danger; a Vision roll (modified downward by lighting conditions) will spot the webs. A victim passing by the edge of a web will be attacked by 1d spiders; if the victim passes through the thick of the web, 3d spiders will fall on him. Each spider's bite does no damage, but injects a paralyzing venom. The victim must make a HT-2 roll, or he will temporarily lose 1d DX. Every time another spider bites him, he must make another roll, at a cumulative -1 - most people will be downed in a few seconds. Clothing and armor will protect the victim for 1d seconds per spider. The spiders will bleed a paralyzed victim to death slowly; he will lose 1 HT per hour until dead. If rescued, DX will be regained at the rate of 1 point per hour.



Army Spider

Chtorran Boa

ST: 30-40	Move/Dodge: 6/6	Size: 2-8
DX: 13	PD/DR: 2/3*	Weight: 180-350 lbs.
IQ: 3	Damage: 3d crash*	Habitat: Sub
HT: 14/20-30	Reach: C	

These black snake-like predators live in Chtorran nests, and usually prey on jellypigs (see p. 41). They will not turn down other prey, however, and anything wandering a Chtorran tunnel that is smaller than a gastropede will probably be attacked by these creatures. Chtorran boas attack by crushing their victims. Non-rigid armor offers no protection. Chtorran boas have the same resistance to damage as gastropedes (see p. 38): divide physical damage by 4 before applying it to hit points.

Eggworms

ST: 2-8	Move/Dodge: 3/5	Size: <1
DX: 10	PD/DR: 1/1*	Weight: 1-10 lbs.
IQ: 3	Damage: 1d cut	Habitat: F
HT: 13/9-15	Reach: C*	

Eggworms resemble Chtorran gastropedes, but have no arms and smaller eyes. These burrowing creatures live underground most of the time, and hunt small animals. Damage done to an eggworm is divided by 3 before being applied to hit points, except for damage from the same weapons gastropedes are vulnerable to (see p. 77).

Enterprise Fish

ST: 10,000+	Move/Dodge: 20/0	Size: 600-1,000+
DX: 7	PD/DR: 5/1,000*	Wt: 1,000,000 tons+
IQ: 2	Damage: 6dx200*	Habitat: S
HT: 25/10,000+	Reach: C*	

This sea-dwelling creature is the largest living animal ever encountered by mankind. The largest ones are twice the size of an aircraft carrier. It is mottled gray; its shape is roughly fishlike, only hundreds of times bigger.

This creature is virtually indestructible. Its outermost layers are made of thick (several dozen yards in depth) layers of flesh and cartilage, with a pudding-like interior. Its central organs are so big and widely dispersed that enormous amounts of damage must be done before it even notices. Divide any damage that goes past its DR by 100 before applying it to hit points.

Example: An 11,000-HP Enterprise fish is hit by a shell from an 8-inch gun doing 6dx60 damage. The explosion inflicts 1,500 points of damage, reduced to 500 by the creature's DR. The remaining 500 points are then *divided by 100* for a total damage of 5; only 10,995 points to go!

Only two Enterprise fish have been destroyed, both by submarines using low-yield nuclear warheads. Others have been driven away after half-hour-long bombardments. They are considered a prime target for mass-driver bombardment from the moon, when and if such attacks are ordered.

However, some scientists now believe that the Enterprise fish is simply an overgrown, hairless, seagoing form of gastropede, which means the menace cannot be ended until the worms themselves are destroyed.

And the menace is huge. There are over 30 officially identified Enterprise fish in the oceans. They eat anything in their path, from whales and schools of fish to ocean vessels. The damage listed above is used for the fish attacking boats and other large objects, like coastal installations, ships or mecha. If the target

weighs less than 200 tons, its DR is divided by 5 against the ramming attack. If a human is in the Enterprise fish's path, he must make several Swimming rolls at -5 or he will be sucked in and eaten.

Finger-Babies

ST: -	Move/Dodge: 1/3	Size: <1
DX: 10	PD/DR: -	Weight: <1 oz.
IQ: 3	Damage: -	Habitat: F
HT: 10/1	Reach: -	

These small Chtorran creatures have an uncanny and disturbing resemblance to human beings - but they are only an inch or two long. They look like miniature naked pink babies with frog-like eyes. So far all finger-babies observed have acted like unintelligent, insect-like life forms; they eat, they reproduce, and then they are usually eaten by a larger life form. Earth animals as well as Chtorran ones find finger-babies a tasty, helpless treat. Some human communities have also added the creatures to their diet, although most people are revolted by the idea.

It has now been reported that finger-babies are embryonic gorgs (see p. 41), which makes the idea of eating them even more revolting...



Fugglies

ST: 2-3	Move/Dodge: 1/3	Size: <1
DX: 7	PD/DR: 0/0*	Weight: 1-21lbs.
IQ: 2	Damage: *	Habitat: F
HT: 10/4-10	Reach: C	

A typical fuggly has been described as "a piece of red slime with a bad cold." These creatures serve no discovered purpose in the Chtorran ecology. They are not very edible, or at least palatable; most animals (even Chtorran animals) leave them alone. It is possible that as they grow in size, fugglies become predators. Their most likely attack would be some poisonous or corrosive secretion; GMs can use the following examples or design other attacks. A typical contact poison would do 2d damage if a HT-2 roll is failed, 1d if the roll is made; the poison only works if the secretion touches unprotected skin. A corrosive liquid would do 1d per turn for 2d turns until washed off; armor would protect 1 turn per point of DR it has.

Furballs

ST: 1-6	Move/Dodge: 5/5	Size: <1
DX: 11	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 1-2 lbs.
IQ: 3	Damage: 1d-2 crush.	Habitat: F
HT: 12/2-5	Reach: C	

These fuzzy creatures superficially resemble meeps (see p. 42), but they are capable of movement, and they eat insects and small animals. Their mouths act like small vacuum cleaners, inhaling anything in their path. Small internal teeth then crush the victims to death.

Gorps (also Gorths or Ghouls)

ST: 35	Move/Dodge: 1/3	Size: 2-4
DX: 8	PD/DR: 3/3	Weight: 300-500 lbs.
IQ: 3	Damage: 2d+1 cut*	Habitat: F
HT: 15/32	Reach: C	

A gorp was a sloth-shaped tower of hair. It had a barrel chest, a flexible prognathous snout, numerous small nasty eyes, and an attitude almost as bad as its smell.

—A Season for Slaughter

These scavengers are a combination of bear, sloth and skunk, raised to the fifth power. They are enormous, standing up to 13 feet tall. Their name comes from one of the two sounds they make: "Gorp?" is a questioning sound, and "Gorth!" is a warning growl. They are too slow to be a real danger to humans, although they will make short work of anybody foolish enough to approach them. This is not likely, since the *smell* of the gorps is horrible enough to be dangerous. Unprotected people exposed to the fresh stench of a gorp pack must make a HT-4 roll or suffer some debilitating physical effect of the GM's choice, from nausea to unconsciousness, depending on how badly the roll failed. Exposed characters may carry the stench around for days, giving them a -4 on most reaction rolls.

Like many large Chtorran creatures, gorps are highly resistant to damage; divide any physical damage the gorp takes by 3 before applying it to hit points. Fire and energy weapons do normal damage, plus an additional 2d of damage (see p. 77).

Hair-Pullers

ST: 1	Move/Dodge: 5/7	Size: <1
DX: 11	PD/DR: -/-	Weight: 1 lb.
IQ: 3	Damage: 1d-5 crash	Habitat: F
HT: b	Reach: C	

These Chtorran insectoids have been described as "moths with claws." They flutter about, eating other insects and falling prey to larger Chtorran predators. A single hair-puller will only scratch a human being, and will be killed if it takes a point of damage. A hair-puller swarm does 1d per turn and is dispersed by 5 points of damage. The size of a swarm is 1 to 3 hexes.

Jellypigs

ST: 8-15	Move/Dodge: 4/4	Size: 1-2
DX: 9	PD/DR: 1/2	Weight: 1-20 lbs.
IQ: 3	Damage: 1d-1 to	Habitat: Sub
HT: 13/4-19	1d+2 cut	Reach: C

Very quickly, as the [gastropede] family establishes itself within its nest . . . a new symbiont appears - one which seems specifically designed for tunneling and maintenance. For lack of

Gorp



a better name, the creature is called a "jellypig." It has been described as "an obese, blobby thing with a mouth on one end and not much else in the way of distinguishing characteristics."

In actuality, the jellypig is something like a fat gray slug with feet. It resembles nothing so much as a hairless gastropede mounted on a millipede chassis, leading some observers to suggest that it is closely related to either one species or the other. If either of those cases, then it is most likely a metamorphosed millipede.

—A Season for Slaughter

Jellypigs are found in Chtorran nests (see p. 80), where they literally chew new tunnels for the gastropedes. They eat dirt and then excrete it outside the nests. Jellypigs can number in the thousands in large nests, and they travel in groups, expanding old tunnels and digging new ones. The reproduction system of a jellypig is, to quote the Red Book (see p. 79), "simply bizarre." Jellypigs are actually born pregnant, with several egg clusters; jellypig embryos eat their way out of their parents, who may or may not survive the birthing.

Kites

ST: 8-15	Move/Dodge: 10/6	Size: 1-2
DX: 13	PD/DR: 1/2	Weight: 6-12 lbs.
IQ: 3	Damage: 1d+1 cut	Habitat: F
HT: 12/6-15	Reach: C	

These flying predators feed on both terrestrial birds and insects and on small Chtorran fliers. As their name suggests, they resemble large kites; they swoop down on their prey like eagles. They are unlikely to attack healthy adult humans, but are known to feed on dead and injured people.

Libbits

ST: 6-8	Move/Dodge: 5/5	Size: 1
DX: 10	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 30-60 lbs.
IQ: 3	Damage: 1d-4 crush	Habitat: F
HT: 10/8-10	Reach: C	

These pig-like fuzz-covered creatures are actually the female form of the bunnydogs (see p. 39). Libbits seem to be much less intelligent than their counterparts, having the temperament of

cows or sheep. They appear to be four-legged; however, the forelegs can be used as arms and can even grip objects. In some mandalas, libbits tend to get fatter and more sluggish. It is possible that in their natural form libbits have the potential to be as intelligent as bunnydogs, but somehow the presence of the gastropedes turns them into the mindless animals they appear to be.

Meeps



Meeps

ST: 1	Move/Dodge: 2/3	Size: <1
DX: 10	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 4 oz.-1 lb.
IQ: 3	Damage: 1d-5 cut	Habitat: F
HT: 10/1-4	Reach: C	

Meeps are small creatures resembling balls of fur without any distinguishable features. They are usually pink, although they also come in red, purple and light brown. They seem to do little except purr and make small squeaky noises. They are almost irresistibly cute (+4 to reaction rolls). The "cuteness" may be more than appearance; it has been suggested that meeps release "love pheromones" or something equivalent. Nursing mothers from Terran animal species actually prefer meeps over their natural offspring; the nursing meeps will eat the babies of the Terran animal and then proceed to nurse the mother to death. It is easy to tame meeps; as long as they are kept fed, they will do little more than purr contentedly. It is quite possible that, like a similar fictional species of cute furballs, meeps can multiply rapidly and become a nuisance or a danger.

Millipedes

ST: 10-20	Move/Dodge: 5/6	Size: -1-2
DX: 12	PD/DR: 2/2	Weight: 1-30+ lbs.
IQ: 4	Damage: 1d-1 to	Habitat: F
HT: 14/4-16	ld+3 cut plus *	Reach: C

Millipedes are pseudo-insects, easily recognized by their black segmented exoskeletons. Some millipedes have red scales on their bellies. Their size ranges from less than a foot to three-meter-long monsters. The Chtorran "worms" often keep dozens

or hundreds of millipedes in corrals next to their nests, raising them as food.

The millipedes' appetite is as voracious as that of the worms; millipedes eat constantly, and their usual reaction to any unusual or strange element in their environment is to bite it. Millipedes will eagerly eat anything even vaguely organic, from meat to wood to plastics. Once a millipede bites something, its jaw mechanism prevents it from letting go; it must swallow the object whole, sever it, or die trying. If a human limb is bitten by a millipede, the creature will continue eating it (doing normal biting damage) until the limb is severed (4-in-6 chance of crippling damage being done).

Furthermore, a millipede's bite can infect its surviving victims with any of a number of virulent diseases. One such disease literally causes blood cells to explode. Anyone bitten by an infected millipede must make a HT-4 roll. On a failure he has contracted the disease. A high fever reduces his ST, DX and IQ by 2d (roll each day to determine the penalty); each day the victim must make a HT-2 roll. If he fails, he takes 1 point of damage; a critical failure results in the loss of 1d HT. This continues until the victim makes his HT roll five times in succession or until he dies. Medical care reduces the HT roll penalty to -1.

Millipedes are very hard to kill. All physical damage that gets past DR is *divided by 5*. Fire and energy weapons do normal damage plus 2d. Flamethrowers are the most effective weapons against millipedes. There are a couple of very effective millipede repellents: the creatures will avoid anything that smells like Chtorran waste products, or like their own eggs. Chtorran corrals consist of two layers of organic paste sandwiching a layer of excrement; millipedes chew through the first layer of the wall, reach the waste product, and move away.

■ Millipede Swarms and Hordes

Millipedes are often found in large groups. Chtorran settlements have millipede corrals, and large swarms of millipedes roam freely in the wild. An unlucky human running into either type of group may find himself swamped by dozens or hundreds of millipedes of diverse sizes.



Millipede

A swarm is made up of small individuals (under a yard long; use the lower end of the stats above); larger millipedes are treated as individual attackers. A millipede swarm consists of 6-12 millipedes, with a Move of 6. It does 2d+1 cutting damage every turn. Armor is only temporarily effective against millipedes. Even Kevlar fiber will soon be chewed through. The DR of most armors is reduced by 1d-3 points every round. A hex of millipedes is dispersed by 15 points of damage per hex. Physical damage like trampling, bullets, etc. is divided by 5 (in other words, a human will be unable to trample millipedes). Flamethrowers do normal damage+2d and are not affected by the divisor.

A millipede horde has a base size of 5 hexes, and probably includes some full-size 2-yard-long millipedes (which attack individually). Larger hordes are not unknown.

Nerve-Burners

ST: 1	Move/Dodge: 3/5	Size: <1
DX: 12	PD/DR: -	Weight: <1 oz.
IQ: 2	Damage: 1d-5*	Habitat: F
HT: 10/1	Reach: C	

These creatures are often compared to ants, because they live in large colonies, build hills, and bite. But they're far more dangerous than any Terran ant.

An individual nerve-burner is about two inches long, bright red, with eight legs. Its nasty-looking jaws are only pincers, with which the nerve-burner holds on to an enemy. Then it stings. The sting does 1 hit of damage, but if this penetrates armor, it does 1d poison damage, and causes intense pain; make a Will roll to avoid screaming, and lose 1 point of DX for the next hour. That is the penalty for each individual sting, and nerve-burners always come in swarms.

A nerve-burner swarm does a net 6 dice of damage per turn. However, armor protects fully; the creatures are too big to get in through military armor. Improvised armor made of heavy clothing will protect against them for 12 turns and then allow only a 1-in-6 chance of one sting per turn. A swarm can be dispersed by 8 points of damage. The soft-bodied creatures are easily killed by swatting and trampling.

A 1-hex swarm may be encountered patrolling for food anywhere within 100 yards of a nest. Attacking a nest (even accidentally, by walking near it) will trigger a swarm 3d hexes in size.

Nerve-burners are deadly both to livestock, which they can drive mad and kill, and to the small creatures they harvest from the area near their nests.

Fire, purple smoke and various poison gases are effective against nerve-burners.

Night-Stalkers

ST: 3-6	Move/Dodge: 4/6	Size: <1
DX: 13	PD/DR: 1/1	Weight: 1-3 lbs.
IQ: 3	Damage: 1d-3 cut	Habitat: F
HT: 14/3-6	Reach: C	

This insectoid creature stands on its rear legs, and is enveloped in a black shell-casing that looks like a cape, giving it a sinister appearance. The night-stalker mostly eats insects, terrestrial or Chtorran, although the larger ones will also include birds and frogs in their diets. They seem to fill the same ecological niche that birds do, and compete with them for food. The night-stalker will not attack humans unless it is cornered or attacked first.

Nerve-Burner Nest



Pipe-Cleaner Bugs

ST: 2-3	Move/Dodge: 4/6	Size: <1
DX: 10	PD/DR: 1/2	Weight: 1-2 oz.
IQ: 2	Damage: 1d-3 crush	Habitat: F
HT: 10/2-3	Reach: C	

This creature has an exoskeleton covered with white "fur" that is made up of neural symbionts (see p. 71). They are mostly harmless to humans, but are voracious eaters of cotton candy plants and terrestrial leaves ... each bug eats twice its own weight every day. A horde of them can strip a forest bare in weeks.

Night-Stalker



Screaming Meemies

ST: -	Move/Dodge: 5/6	Size: <1
DX: 11	PD/DR: -/-	Weight: 8 oz.
IQ: 2	Damage: -	Habitat: F
HT: 8/1	Reach: C	

These Chtorran bugs have an oversized air bladder that allows them to produce a loud howling noise. Anyone hearing a screaming meemie for the first time should have to make a Fright Check, probably with embarrassing consequences.

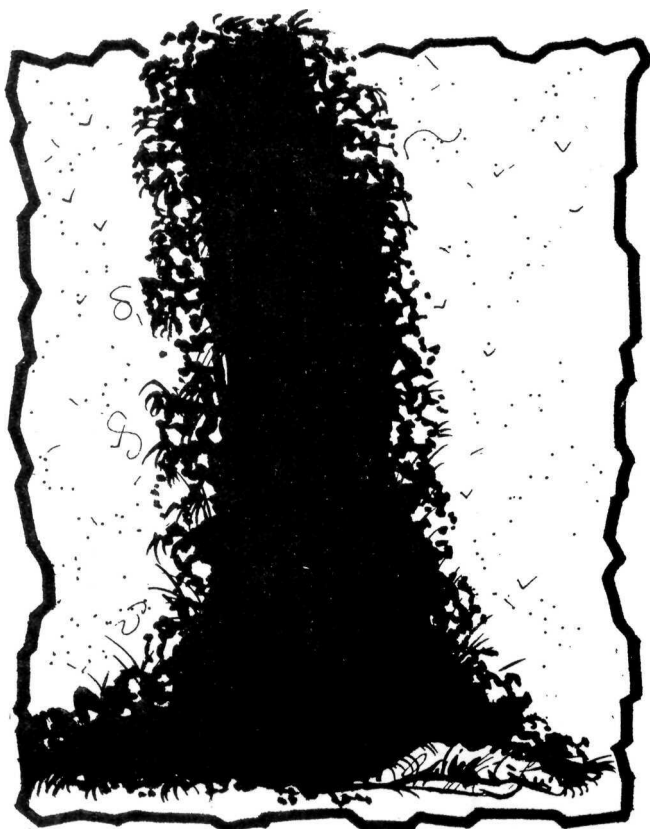
Shambler Tenants

ST: 3-30	Move/Dodge: 10/6	Size: varies
DX: 10	PD/DR: 1/1 - 3/5	Weight: 1-25 lbs.
IQ: 2	Damage: *	Habitat: F
HT: 13-14/2-30	Reach: C	

There are dozens of "tenant" species in the wandering shambler trees (see p. 48). They range in size from tiny spider-like creatures to huge ribbon-like flying animals. When a large enough creature activates the shambler's root-feelers, all the tenants of the tree explode toward the intruder. Individual tenants will do between 1d-2 and 3d cutting damage. Some will have poisons, mostly paralyzing agents (roll HT-4 or lose 2d DX; if DX reaches 0, the victim cannot move). Some of the larger ones also divide all physical damage done to them by 5, like millipedes (see p. 42).

A tenant swarm does 2d+2 cutting damage every turn, and is dispersed by 15 hits per hex. An average copse of shambler trees will produce a 5- to 20-hex-wide cloud of tenants. But some shamblers have no tenants at all; on a roll against Survival (Chtorran), an observer can tell the difference from a distance.

Shambler Tenants



Snufflers

ST: 8-10	Move/Dodge: 2/3	Size: 1
DX: 8	PD/DR: 2/2	Weight: 30-50 lbs.
IQ: 2	Damage: -	Habitat: Sub
HT: 10/12-20	Reach: -	

At first I thought it was a dog. Then an ape. Or a headless chicken the size of a child. . . . It was chest high and it shambled slowly up the ramp. . . . It didn't have a head. It was yellowish-red, smooth-skinned, and oily; it looked like a slug on two legs. Half its body was tail, the other half was neck. It didn't have a head. At the end of the neck was - a mouth. A nozzle. A collar of tiny eyestalks ringed the place where the neck narrowed.

—A Day for Damnation

Snufflers are Chtorran vacuum cleaners. They live in gastropede tunnels, eating small bugs, refuse and carrion - anything that is not useful to the nest. They mindlessly wander the tunnels, snuffling everything they encounter, and sucking small objects through their nozzles. Snufflers do not pose a threat to humans, and they are left alone by gastropedes and other nest predators most of the time.

Spiders

ST: 1-7	Move/Dodge: 4/8	Size: varies
DX: 11	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: varies
IQ: 2	Damage: *	Habitat: F
HT: 12/1-6	Reach: C	

There are several spider-like creatures in the Chtorran ecology. Some look like Earth spiders, but have too many legs - ten to twelve. Others look like giant daddy-long-legs. One particular species, the Army Spider, is described on p. 39. Other varieties exist. Many are poisonous, injecting venoms that do 1d to 3d damage if a HT-3 roll is not made.

Silver Ribbons, or Flutterbys

ST: 2-16	Move/Dodge: 10/6	Size: 1-5
DX: 14	PD/DR: 1/2*	Weight: 1-20 lbs.
IQ: 2	Damage: 1d-5 to	Habitat: F
HT: 13/3-20	1d cut*	Reach: C

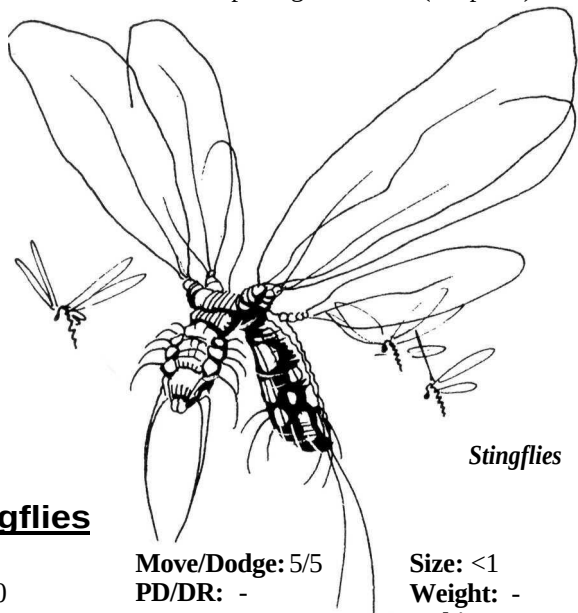
These Chtorran fliers look like flying metallic strips. They vary widely in size and strength; the smaller ones content themselves with hunting insects, and are in turn preyed upon by Chtorran kites (see p. 41). The largest ones are several yards long, and will attack cattle and humans. They are known to be attracted to rhythmic noises, such as engine sounds, and have been blamed for aircraft crashes. The given Move of 10 is an average; little ones might go only half that speed, but big ones could be faster!

Silver ribbons wrap themselves around their targets (roll on the *Parts of the Body* table, p. B203, to determine where each one lands on a victim), and attach themselves with small suckers. Their ends seek any body orifice they can find, and burrow in, sucking the victim's blood. Besides draining the blood, the ribbons suffocate and choke their victims.

Ribbons strike from the air, usually catching their victims unaware. On the turn they land, and every turn thereafter, the ribbon will do the listed damage to the victim; armor and Toughness protect normally. A ribbon's victim must win a Quick Contest of ST with the ribbon; the victim is at -5 ST in the contest if the ribbon is wrapped around a limb or the neck, because of the awkward angle. If the ribbon is attacking the face or the neck, the

victim starts to suffocate (see p. B122). The ribbon creature will penetrate the victim's body 1d turns after it lands on him; all damage after that is *impaling*, and armor does not protect.

To make matters worse, ribbon creatures are very hard to kill; divide any physical damage by 4 before applying it to the ribbon creature. Fire is the best weapon against them (see p. 77).



Stingflies

ST: *	Move/Dodge: 5/5	Size: <1
DX: 10	PD/DR: -	Weight: -
IQ: 2	Damage: *	Habitat: F
HT: 8/1-2	Reach: C	

Stingflies are mosquito-like Chtorran animals. When they hatch, they are gnat-sized, but they can grow rapidly until they are about as big as dragonflies. They must feed within three hours of hatching, or they will die. Their average lifespan is less than a week.

They prefer to feed on worms and other large Chtorran animals, but will gladly prey on humans as well. A single stingfly's bite does no appreciable damage to humans, but can transmit disease. It is suspected that Stingflies were one of the original vectors of disease for the plagues (see p. 18). A swarm of Stingflies, on the other hand, can kill an unprotected man in a matter of minutes. Treat it as a swarm doing 1d-2 hits per turn, and dispersed by 5 hits per hex. Hordes covering *hundreds* of hexes are found above Chtorran nests.

Fortunately, there are many easy ways to protect against Stingflies. The stingfly bite will not penetrate fine-mesh cloth, let alone armor. Oil-based salves also protect the wearer from being stung, and several perfumes repel the creatures.

Stingflies reproduce by injecting their eggs into wormberries (see p. 48); they mate after every feeding. When an animal eats the wormberries, the stingfly eggs hatch and live inside the victim's digestive tract, attaching themselves to the stomach lining with claws, and feeding on the stomach's contents. Three to four weeks after hatching, the grubs let go, surround themselves with an indigestible cocoon and are evacuated normally. A day later they hatch into adult Stingflies.

These creatures can hatch inside gastropedes, gorps and bunydogs, among others. Inside Chtorran animals, the grubs act as symbiotic organisms, helping the aliens digest food. Humans, cattle and domestic animals can also be infected. Terran animals infected by stingfly larvae will suffer damage to the stomach lining, as it is punctured in multiple places by the clinging grubs. This will lead to ulceration, infections and even death. Anyone infected by stingfly grubs must make a HT-2 roll every day of the infection. A failed roll results in the loss of 1 HT; a critical failure

results in the loss of 1d+1 HT. The victim will not recover this HT without medical care.

Toe-Hoppers

ST: 1	Move/Dodge: 2/5	Size: <1
DX: 10	PD/DR: -	Weight: 2 oz.
IQ: 3	Damage: 1d-5 cut*	Habitat: F
HT: 12/1-2	Reach: C	

"Toe-hoppers?"

"Goblins. They're tiny little things. They look a bit like monkeys, but they are small enough to sit on your hand; only they are not real cute. They're just weird. Big feet, big ears, oversized claws and heads. Very tiny bodies. Short stubby limbs. But they have faces like — I don't know — bulldogs, I guess; they're so ugly and grotesque they look like little gargoyles."

—A Season for Slaughter

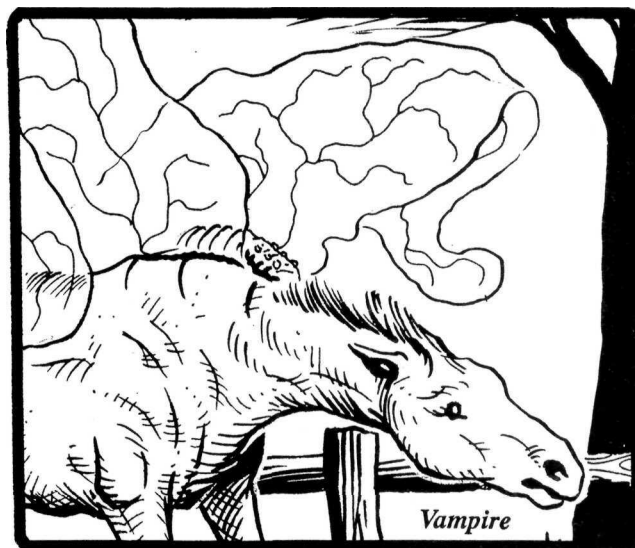
These small creatures live in forests, where they feed on insects and small animals. Individually, they are not dangerous to humans, but they often live in shambler trees, where they multiply unmolested, and form swarms that can number in the hundreds of thousands. A toe-hopper swarm will attack any living thing in its path: it does 1d+1 cutting damage every turn, and takes 6 points of damage per hex to disperse. Swarm sizes range from 1 to dozens of hexes.

Vampires

ST: 7-10	Move/Dodge: 4/5	Size: 1-2
DX: 12	PD/DR: 1/1	Weight: 1-3 lbs.
IQ: 3	Damage: 1d-2 cut*	Habitat: F
HT: 11/6-10	Reach: C	

These shroud-like creatures glide through the air. They hunt at night, dropping onto sleeping mammals, especially Earth cattle. When the vampire lands, it attaches itself to the victim's skin, and extends multiple feeders into its body, becoming part of the target's circulatory system. During that time, it filters the blood of the victim, robbing it of nutrients. When satiated the vampire detaches itself and flutters off. The feeding does 1 point of damage to the subject, which is also infected by several Chtorran parasites and microbes.

Vampires seldom attack humans, unless they are part of a shambler tree's tenant swarm (see p. 44). In that case they will feed on any victim the other tenants have knocked down.



Chtorran Plants

Cabbage-Growler

ST: -	Move/Dodge: -	Size: <1
DX: -	PD/DR: -	Weight: 1 lb.
IQ: -	Damage: *	Habitat: F, J
HT: -	Reach: C	

This blue-white cabbage-like plant is unusual among Chtorran growths . . . it's good to eat, and usually harmless. The plants make a loud froglike noise, deeper as they get bigger; a nearby footstep will set off a chorus. This can require a Fright Check, and can also attract predators . . . but its purpose is to attract attention to the cabbage-growler, so it can get eaten and spread its seeds. The plant is actually quite nutritious; it may harbor parasites, but cooking, or even a good shaking, will get rid of them.

Chtorran Sludge

ST: -	Move/Dodge: -	Size: n/a
DX: -	PD/DR: -	Weight: -
IQ: -	Damage: *	Habitat: SW
HT: -	Reach: C	

This red algae-like organism spreads across the surface of the ocean. It stains the waters it inhabits, and chokes out other life forms. The sludge also secretes an oily substance that is lethal to terrestrial life. Fish and normal algae are destroyed by the sludge; the smaller life forms are killed first, with the result that larger species, deprived of their food supply, are doomed to die soon anyway. Humans who are exposed to the sludge oil must wash it off quickly, because the substance clogs pores and effectively suppresses the skin's ability to breathe. Anyone who swallows sludge water must make a HT-4 roll; on a success he is wracked by nausea and diarrhea, which put him at -3 DX and IQ for 15-HT hours (minimum 1 hour). A failure brings about the same symptoms, plus 1d damage, and he must make a new HT-4 roll in 15-HT hours. A critical failure kills the victim. The GM can modify the severity of these rolls by the amount of sludge water swallowed (ingestion would almost always be accidental, since sludge-infected water feels nastily oily and stinks terribly as well). If the victim only got a mouthful as he was swimming, the roll would be made at HT-2; being rolled in the surf of a sludge-infested beach might increase the penalty to -6. Quick action by the victim or his friends may also help (inducing vomiting would reduce the HT roll penalty to -2).

The sludge's destruction of the food chain may end terrestrial life in the Earth's ocean - which would utterly wreck the planet's ecology. Millions of square miles of sea surface have already been turned into lifeless red water by the sludge. So far the most effective way to destroy sludge is to pour crude oil on it and then set it on fire. Scientists are working on biochemical agents to destroy the sludge without further poisoning the waters.

Cotton Candy Plant

ST: -	Move/Dodge: -	Size: 1-30
DX: -	PD/DR: -	Weight: -
IQ: -	Damage: *	Habitat: F, M
HT: -	Reach: C	

This creature, also known as the manna plant, looks like a pink puffball. It is about as light as a dandelion gone to seed, and

grows rapidly. Balls often reach watermelon size, and plants as big as a small house have been seen. The cotton candy plant is completely edible, made mostly of protein and sugars that give it a sweet taste.

Within three or four days after their blossoming, the manna plants shrivel and die; the dried-out balls blow apart like dandelions, leaving a tiny cloud of dust - the plant's spores - floating in the air. This dust is carried by the wind somewhere else and the process starts all over again. Each spore unravels into microscopic threads, which link up with others, until they form a huge pink cloud that drifts in the air. The cloud can grow in size until it fills up the sky; this is the origin of the pink storms (see sidebar, p. 77). Cotton candy clouds carry not only the spores of the manna plant, but the seeds and bacteria of several other Chtorran forms, spreading the alien ecology as fast and far as the wind will carry them.

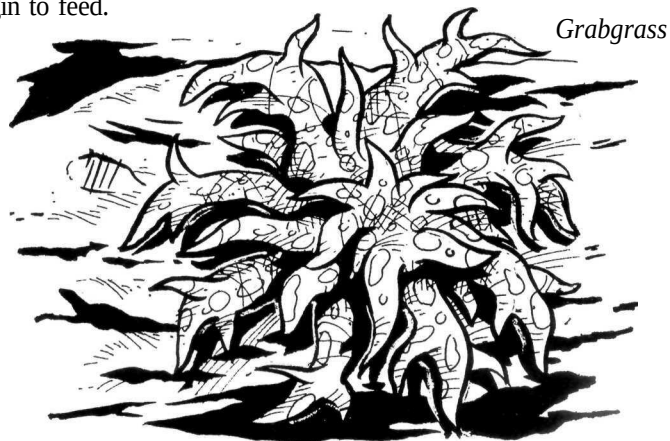
The super-fine dust is also a deadly threat to sophisticated machinery, particularly aircraft; not only does it clog up air vents and choke moving parts, but it is also highly flammable. A jet flying into a pink cloud will malfunction catastrophically at best; at worst, it will explode. A Piloting roll will be necessary to ditch safely. The dust is also harmful to unprotected humans and animals (see *Pink Storms*, p. 77).

The cotton candy plant may have been one of the first Chtorran species to appear in the planet; there are references to edible mushrooms much like the manna plants in science journals dated years before the plagues. As one of the most basic elements of the Chtorran food chain, the cotton candy plant would have been a perfect choice to spearhead the invasion.

Grabgrass

ST: -	Move/Dodge: -	Size: 1
DX: -	PD/DR: -	Weight: -
IQ: -	Damage: *	Habitat: F, P, J
HT: 6	Reach: C	

This plant seems to function as a scavenger and recycler in the Chtorran ecology, but on Earth it can be dangerous to living animals - and humans - if they are tired or wounded. The main body of the plant is an underground tuber which puts up dark magenta leaves. But when triggered by nearby warmth - as of a dead or sleeping animal - it rapidly sends out tendrils. Reaching their target, the tendrils first envelope it in tough strands; this takes 1d+2 hours. The tendrils then begin to digest the victim! This is acutely painful, like having acid dripped on one's skin, since that is exactly what is happening. If the victim is dead or helpless, the tendrils will soon bore into the softened flesh and begin to feed.



Grabgrass

However, a living victim will probably awaken and try to escape. Breaking away from the tendrils requires a roll against ST, at a penalty if the grabgrass plant was very big or if the tendrils came from more than one plant. The victim takes 2 hits of damage from the digestive acid, plus 1 more hit for every turn he failed his ST roll to escape. If it is not possible to wash the acid off immediately, the victim takes another hit for every minute the acid stays on his skin, up to 5 extra hits.

Clothing and armor do not protect; the tendrils crawl under clothing and secrete their acid next to the skin. Of course, totally sealed armor would protect completely.

Iceplants

ST: -	Move/Dodge: -	Size: 1
DX: -	PD/DR: -	Weight: -
IQ: -	Damage: *	Habitat: F, M
HT: -	Reach: C	

Iceplants are either pink or blue in color, and look like a web of tentacles. These rootless plants can grow in almost any environment, and feed on anything they happen to encounter, from ordinary fertile soil to other plants to toxic waste. Like the cotton candy plants, iceplants flake off into floating fragments after dying, and spread with the wind. These flakes, and the plant itself, produce powerful hallucinogenic chemicals. Anyone ingesting or breathing an iceplant flake will be affected for 1d hours. He will suffer from hallucinations and delusions; the GM should pick them based on the victim's mental disadvantages. This is one of several species collectively called Revelation Plants (see right).

The iceplant quickly eats or chokes Earth vegetation. So far, there is no reliable way to permanently clean out an infested area.

Land-Coral

ST: -	Move/Dodge: -	Size: huge
DX: -	PD/DR: 1/8	Weight: -
IQ: -	Damage: *	Habitat: P, F
HT: -	Reach: -	

Like Earthly coral, this is not actually a plant, but a solid, immobile structure created by millions of tiny animals. However, Chtorran coral develops on land. It has been observed in "reefs" up to 20 meters high, twice as thick, and several miles long.

Land-coral reefs are full of cavities which host dozens of Chtorran species, from bug-sized to cat-sized or larger, and some of these species are very dangerous.

Land-coral itself is not actively harmful, but because it is so tough and jaggedly sharp, it is dangerous to climb. A fall on land-coral does 1d-2 cutting damage. The only way to destroy a reef is to blast it with dynamite and remove *all* the pieces . . . and often the tenants object.

Lizard-Grass

ST: -	Move/Dodge: -	Size: n/a
DX: -	PD/DR: -	Weight: -
IQ: -	Damage: *	Habitat: P
HT: -	Reach: C	

This blue-green thin-bladed plant grows in small, close-set clumps to eight feet in height. The clumps are connected by underground runners. Alive, lizard-grass is no hazard, though it attracts Chtorran animals. However, each clump lives only a short time, and the dried leaves become razor sharp, doing 1d-3 damage to someone who pushes through them for *each* hex crossed. Clothes protect for only a short time - then they are cut to ribbons.

Red Kudzu

ST: -	Move/Dodge: -	Size: 1
DX: -	PD/DR: -	Weight: -
IQ: -	Damage: *	Habitat: F, M, S
HT: -	Reach: C	

This parasitic ivy-like plant is bright scarlet in color, with white veins on the leaves. It originally appeared in marshes and shallow water areas, but is now seen in any type of well-watered terrain. Wherever it spreads, the kudzu destroys local plant species. The vines multiply rapidly, spreading at the rate of two yards a week when unchecked. Burning red kudzu is useless; its roots will survive and the plant will regrow in a matter of days. Every part of the plant, no matter how small, will sprout roots and try to re-establish itself. The plant is also resistant to all but the deadliest poisons - which would kill any Terran plants anyway.

Revelation Plants

ST: -	Move/Dodge: -	Size: 1
DX: -	PD/DR: -	Weight: -
IQ: -	Damage: *	Habitat: F, M
HT: -	Reach: C	

This is a general name for several plant species with hallucinogenic properties, the iceplant among them. The name comes from the use of these plants by Revelationist renegades (see p. 28) in their rituals.

Eating Revelation plants, or even exposing one's skin to large quantities of them, will cause hallucinations. For the most part, these hallucinations will tend to make the sufferer more tolerant of and attracted to Chtorran things, although completely unrelated "trips" are also possible. There is some evidence that these plants may create a psionic or mystical link with gastropedes. Many people who have tried or been accidentally exposed to the Revelation plants claim to have had visions where they felt they could understand the gastropedes, and in which the worms' and humans' place in the universe made perfect sense. These episodes can easily create the delusion The Worms Are Our Friends/Gods.

Scales

ST: -	Move/Dodge: -	Size: <1
DX: -	PD/DR: 1/1	Weight: 6 oz.
IQ: -	Damage: *	Habitat: F, J
HT: 10/1	Reach: C	

Scales grow on the ground or on other plants; they look like broad, dark leaves, shading from light gold at the edges to dark brown at the center, and deep red underneath. They like human body heat, and can be smoothed onto the body . . . where they will stay, retaining heat. They can even worn instead of clothes. They are usually harmless, and keep the body oiled, repelling stingflies.

Occasionally scales will take some blood from the wearer, though not enough to be dangerous. However, *mimic-scales*, which have pink bellies instead of red, will feed until they burst, once the wearer goes to sleep. Each one will take 2 hits' worth of blood if left on overnight. A roll vs. Survival (Chtorran) is required to identify scales in the wild, and another is required to tell the difference between scales and mimic-scales until the individual has actual experience with both.

Shambler Trees

ST: 8-50+	Move/Dodge: *	Size: 1-20+
DX: -	PD/DR: 2/3	Wt: 80-1,000+ lbs.
IQ: 1	Damage: *	Habitat: F, M
HT: 15/10-100+	Reach: C	

Shamblers are treelike plants that can actually move about. They travel in herds. Individual plants range in size from immature bushes shorter than a man to huge trees 60 or even 100 feet tall. The shambler is not really a tree, but a network of smaller trunks, carrying a variety of symbionts. Leaf color varies widely, usually black or purple, but sometimes silver, white, blue and scarlet.

Their average speed is about half a mile *a day*; an observer will only realize a shambler has moved after watching for several minutes. The plant "walks" by pulling its rear roots/legs forward and leaning against them to keep from toppling over; the mechanism is more like controlled falling than real walking. As they move, they leave behind pieces of roots; these grow into stationary plants that form a trail for new shambler herds and which provide a refuge for many Chtorran life forms.

A shambler herd contains from six to several dozen trees. Only young shamblers travel alone, until they link up with a herd. Most shambler herds consist not only of trees, but of dozens of other Chtorran animals and plants, all of which live in the trees and travel with them. These tenant species have a firm symbiotic relationship with the shamblers. They use the trees as a refuge, and in return they protect the herd and provide it with food; the trees often feed on the corpses of animals the tenants have killed. For general stats of the shambler tenants, see p. 44.

Besides their walking ability, the shamblers have other decidedly un-treelike abilities. They can release many different smells, which vary depending on the population of the area. In Chtorr-infested areas, the odors exuded by the plants will be attractive to the alien life forms; many of these smells are offensive to humans and other terrestrial species. In minimally infested areas, however, the odors are attractive, seemingly designed to attract native animals to the trees and their hungry tenants.

The shamblers also send out a network of creeper-nerves, appendages that feel vibrations and send the information to the herd. When a large enough animal triggers a creeper-nerve close to the herd, the shamblers send a signal to the tenants, which swarms toward the victim. A tenant swarm will devour most animals within minutes. Humans who wander too close to a shambler herd can escape if they walk away *very slowly*; one step or two per minute will reduce the amount of stimuli the shamblers feel, and will not trigger the tenant swarm attack. The GM should require a series of DX rolls, at a penalty of at least -2, to escape! A Will roll may also be required to avoid panic . . .

Lone shamblers without tenants are not dangerous. The standard way to deal with them is to topple them (a Quick Contest of ST is necessary; a shambler will usually have ST 1 per every foot of height). Fallen shamblers cannot right themselves. Once the tree is toppled, it can be burned at leisure; flaming it is the only way to destroy it without allowing it to reproduce. Shambler herds are usually dealt with from the air, with napalm bombs and similar heavy ordnance.

Shrike Vines

ST: 7-20+	Move/Dodge: -	Size: 1-10+
DX: 14	PD/DR: 2/2	Wt: 20-100+ lbs.
IQ: 1	Damage: 1d imp.	Habitat: F, M
HT: 13/10-40+	Reach: C, 1-2	

This carnivorous plant is a part-time tenant of the shambler herds, but is often encountered on its own as well. Shrike vines are clusters of thorny limbs, which are draped either around a shambler tree or a larger Terran tree. The plant reacts instantly to movement, lashing out and draping itself around the victim. The thorns tear into the target's flesh, causing it to bleed to death. The shambler host feeds on the blood, while the vines suck all other nutrients from the body. Treat the attack as a Grapple (see p. B111); on a success, the target is grabbed and takes the listed damage. Once the victim is snared, it can try breaking free (Quick Contest of ST); attacks on the vine will be at -3 while the target is grappled. The vine will inflict an additional 1d-2 damage every round, as a result of bleeding from multiple puncture wounds and the victim's struggles.

Young shrike vines prey on small animals, including human children. Fully grown vines abandon the shambler host to lurk on an Earth tree. They are fully capable of taking adult humans and large animals. Monster shrike vines with a ST of 30-40, doing 2d to 3d impaling damage, exist in the worst-infested areas.

Wormberries

ST: -	Move/Dodge: -	Size: 1-7
DX: -	PD/DR: -	Weight: -
IQ: -	Damage: *	Habitat: F, M
HT: -	Reach: C	

These fruit plants are an important part of the gastropedes' diet. They are edible, although not to most humans' taste (they are tart, sweet and sour all at the same time, a taste described as "kind of like cherries with sauerkraut"). They are not safe to eat in the wild, however, as wormberries usually carry the eggs of stingflies inside them (see p. 45). Eating an infected wormberry can lead to disease and even death. Still, several plans are underway to introduce wormberries as a food staple.



CHARACTERS



In most *Chtorr* campaigns, all characters will have one thing in common; they will be involved in some way in the struggle between the native Earth life forms and the Chtorran invaders - if only as potential victims. Aside from that, a great deal of variety is possible, from Special Ops super-soldiers to Just Plain Folks.



Character Points

Chtorr-invaded Earth is a very tough place: the survivors are the hardest, smartest or luckiest people in the world. Also, PCs trying to deal with the problem of the invasion will be facing a deadly, insidious enemy. To help compensate for that, GMs may consider allowing a higher character point total. Remember that a 300-point character will go down a Chtorran's throat as quickly as a 25-point one!

When assigning a character point total, the GM must think about the challenges he is planning to give the PCs. People in the forefront of the war will be far more capable than those on the sidelines. On the other hand, the most routine military assignment in this Chtorr-ridden world can turn extremely dangerous without notice. Even a low-key recon mission, such as a scouting trip to locate buildings suitable for habitation, can turn into a terrifying ordeal, as evidenced by the beginning of *A Rage for Revenge*.

Roleplaying Renegades

Renegades are humans who reject the government's goals and who are actively working against them. More importantly, the renegades have managed to reach an agreement with the Chtorr and are able to coexist peacefully with them. If the GM allows renegade PCs, he and the players must take into account some of the facts presented in the novels. First of all, the most fanatical renegades think very little of sacrificing themselves or their children to satisfy a Chtorran's hunger, and the Chtorr have even fewer compunctions about eating their former companions. Secondly, the evolution of Chtorran settlements indicates that all human renegades are doomed to become mindless, dehumanized animals like the bunnydogs (see p. 39). Within that context, a few roleplaying possibilities can be explored.

The renegade PCs can be idealistic, gullible people deceived by the words of cult leaders like Jason Delandro (see p. 65). They honestly think that they are working toward a better world, one where the gastropedes and humans will be able to coexist as equals. When the cult starts sacrificing humans to feed the Chtorr, they will probably be horrified and might decide to abandon or betray the renegades.

Alternatively, the characters might be radical fanatics, fully convinced that the Chtorr are gods come to Earth, and that humankind's fate is to be their servants. These cultists will do the unthinkable without batting an eyelash; unless all the PCs are of a similar disposition, there will be dissent, and probably violence, among them. An interesting variation is the seemingly committed zealot who recants when *he* (or his child or other loved one) is earmarked for sacrifice.

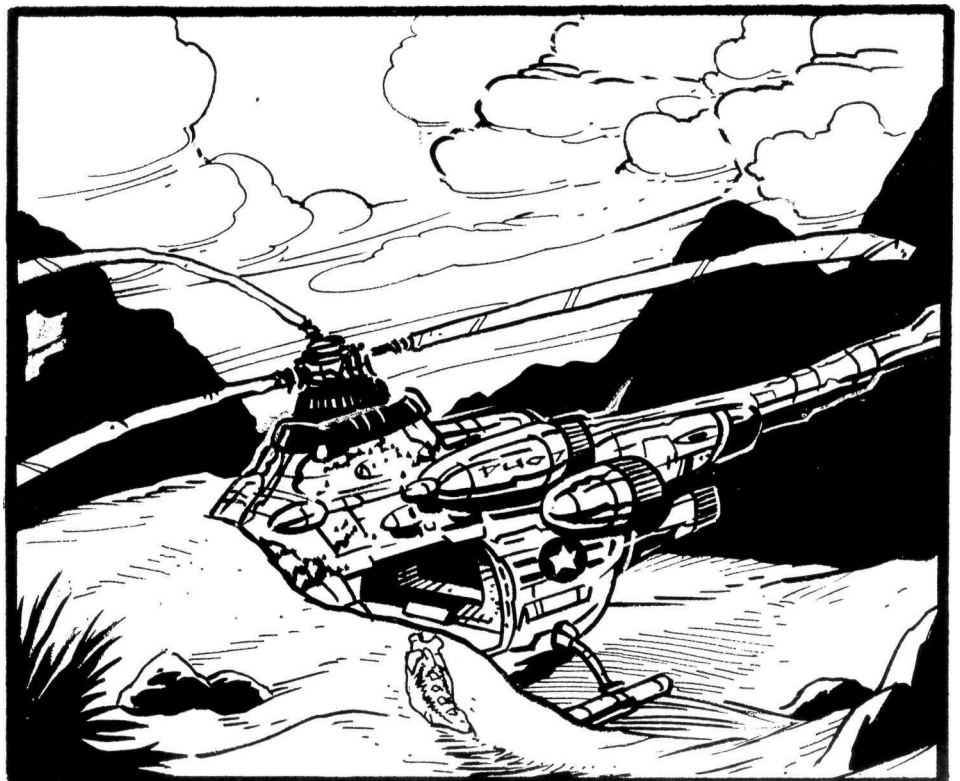
Depending on how the GM plans to conduct the renegade campaign (see p. 118), the PCs should be given a reasonable chance to turn against the renegades, especially if the campaign is faithful to the books. Witnessing the casual way in which worms treat humans as food is the surest way to change their minds.

Realistic Characters

PCs in a realistic campaign should be built on 100 points (although a higher disadvantage total may be allowed - see below); they can be beginning researchers, young recruits, or civilians. The GM might raise the starting point level to 150 or 200 points for more experienced scientists, high-ranking soldiers, etc. For these higher point levels, use the guidelines given for Special Forces soldiers, below, or use other point restrictions, such as limiting the maximum attribute level to 14 or 15, or only *one* attribute at 14 or 15. This will keep the characters realistic.

Special Forces Characters

Soldiers of the Special Forces Warrant Agency (see p. 20) are elite, highly-trained troops with almost superhuman skill levels. The GM may wish to use the rules from *GURPS Special Ops* in creating characters belonging to that organization or to similar elite units. Briefly, Special Forces characters are built with 300 to 400 points, with the following restrictions (for more information, see p. SO45).



Most of these points must go into skills, not attributes. The high point totals do not reflect superhuman abilities, but very intensive training. For this reason, no more than 100 points (or even 80) should be spent in attributes. Furthermore, the minimum HT level for a Special Forces character should be 13, to represent the physical conditioning that elite soldiers undergo. The soldiers must pick a specialty from the skill template on p. 61, and learn all the skills listed for the specialty at the minimum level shown there, spending at least 1 character point on each skill.

These guidelines are for *fully trained* Special Ops soldiers. After the Chtorran invasions, however, the military has had to rely on younger recruits who have not undergone the training of traditional elite soldiers; there is simply not enough time to train these soldiers fully before they are needed in the field. GMs who want to keep starting character points down can do so by making all the PCs young Special Forces soldiers. Young recruits would have a point value of 100 to 250 points, with the same restrictions as their higher-point counterparts. Their minimum HT should be 12.

Cinematic Campaigns

In a cinematic campaign (see p. 109), the GM can reduce or eliminate the restrictions on point expenditures mentioned above, and point totals can be 150 points or more. If balance is important for the campaign, this option should not be used, because superhuman characters can be easily created this way. On the other hand, the Chtorran ecology and ultra-tech weaponry are a great equalizer; unless the PCs are supers, no amount of character points will save someone, even if all his stats are at 20, once a giant worm grabs hold of him and starts chewing.

■ *Everybody's Crazy: Disadvantage Totals*

"In addition to everything else, the plagues have done irreparable damage to the mental health of the survivors. We are all still in shock. We're all waking wounded. How do you mourn the death of a planet?"

- A Matter for Men

The surviving remnants of humankind have been traumatized by the plagues and the invasions. Almost everyone has lost family or friends; even if that is not the case, the temporary collapse of civilization, the violence of the Chtorran invasion and the sheer magnitude of the disaster should be enough to scar most psyches (anybody who would be unaffected by all this was probably not very sane to begin with).

In consideration of this fact, the GM can allow a higher disadvantage point total, up to 80 points in any number of disadvantages, or one mental disadvantage at *any* value. The extra disadvantages should be mental: common afflictions are listed on p. 57, along with a few new mental disorders.

On the other hand, GMs and players with an affinity for randomness could have the PCs roll a Fright Check at -20, and then check on the Fright Check table: ignore all effects except new Disadvantages and Quirks. The GM may make the PCs roll several times, each roll representing a severely traumatic event in their lives.

When using either of these options, the GM must keep in mind the fact that if the characters have too many mental disadvantages, they may become not just three-dimensional, but also *dysfunctional*. A severely phobic manic-depressive with a 15-point Delusion and a couple of Compulsive Habits may be no good to anyone, least of all himself. And society cannot care for those who cannot care for themselves; extremely dysfunctional people are subject to the Emergency Euthanasia Act (see p. 34).

Alien PCs

There are three possibilities open to players wishing to play alien PCs in a Chtorr campaign. The GM should decide beforehand which, if any, will be available in his campaign. Playing alien PCs presents a difficult situation, since most of the novels deal with people committed to the eradication of all alien life from the planet; they are very unlikely to associate with non-humans.

The first possibility is to allow one or more players to play Chtorran gastropedes. That option is fully discussed on p. 73. Unfortunately, most campaigns will find it hard to accommodate a Chtorran PC; the creatures are too powerful and potentially dangerous to be allowed in most environments, and that restricts their playability.

Another likely alien PC is the Chtorran bunnydog (see below). Bunnydogs are seemingly as intelligent as monkeys, but the GM can allow extraordinary ones to be brighter. Bunnydogs have been kept as pets by renegade tribes. Scientists may eventually train bunnydogs to work with humans, and they might make comic-relief characters. See p. 52 for a full listing of Bunnydogs' advantages and disadvantages. A problem with bunnydog PCs is that they seem to be linked to a group consciousness that expresses itself in songs and dances (see p. 39). If this song rules them, they will never be independent agents, and would not make good PCs.

Finally, the GM could design one or two new alien species. They might be other Chtorran creatures (perhaps one of the alleged "true Chtorrans" behind the invasion) or even non-Chtorran aliens. After all, once one alien race is encountered, it seems extremely likely that others exist.

Introducing non-Chtorran aliens into the campaign should be done carefully, however. Too much emphasis on a different alien race will dilute the main thrust of the Chtorr setting, which emphasizes the life-and-death struggle between humankind and the invaders.

Bunnydogs as PCs

The bunnydog species is fully described on p. 39. The racial cost below assumes that these bunnydogs have been reared by humans and are somehow removed from the group consciousness of "wild" bunnydogs. The cost to be a bunnydog is -15 character points. The average bunnydog is built on 10 points and PCs should not have more than 50. This will probably mean that non-bunnydog PCs will have a lot more starting points, unless the GM is running a 50-point campaign.

Continued on next page...

Bunnydogs as PCs **(Continued)**

Advantages and Disadvantages: Bunnydogs have ST-3 (-20 points), IQ-3 (-20 points), HT+1 (10 points) and -3 Hit Points (-15 points). Their skin provides DR 1 (5 points). The neural symbionts that cover their bodies give them the equivalents of Alertness +5 (25 points), Empathy (15 points) and Peripheral Vision (15 points). They have sharp teeth that do thrust+3 cutting damage (15 points). They have Night Vision (10 points). The creatures' natural cuteness gives them the equivalent of 44 Charisma (20 points), but most people react with distrust toward all Chtorran creatures, which gives them a -4 Reaction (most people, on a roll of 10 or less, -5 points). Bunnydogs are naturally Curious (-5 points), Impulsive (-10 points) Lecherous (-15 points), have a Short Attention Span (-10 points), and are Gluttonous (-5 points). They are also TLO primitives (-40 points).

Skills: Bunnydogs can be trained in some basic skills, but their short attention span will make them useless at any complicated task. Most bunny dogs' skills will be limited to Brawling, Stealth and Gesture. It might be possible to teach them a language, but it seems unlikely. It is also possible that a bunnydog could be trained in weapon and vehicle skills, but that might be hazardous to both the bunnydog's health and that of the humans around it.

Women In the Military

Even before the invasions, the role of women in the military had changed since the 20th century. Women flew combat missions in the Pakistan conflict (see p. 14). Ground units included women, though the officer corps was still male-dominated and few women saw direct combat. The Special Forces tended to be male-dominated until after the invasions; most of its members, and almost all combat personnel, were men.

The depopulation caused by the Chtorran plagues (see p. 18) removed the last sex-role distinctions in the military. There were not enough *people* left to do all the jobs the military needed done, let alone enough men. Also, the plagues had killed more men than women, further skewing the gender ratio. The Universal Service Obligation (see p. 32) had already inducted all men and women into the military, and soon women joined the Special Forces teams. Now a woman is as likely as a man to be in any military position, from front-line grunt to military governor. For instance, "Lizard" Tirelli is a general, and flew regular combat missions right up until her last promotion.

Sample Character: Terry Connor

Age 16; 5'11", 180 lbs.; athletic build, gray-blue eyes, red hair, freckles.

ST 9, DX 12, IQ 13, HT 15.

Basic Speed 6.75, Move: 6 (8 running).

Dodge 6, Parry 6.

Advantages: Strong Will +4.

Disadvantages: Impulsiveness; Paranoia; Stubbornness; Stuttering; Youth.

Quirks: Dislikes crowds; Distrusts the government (even more than a "normal" paranoid); Loses his temper when people cannot understand him; Occasionally lapses into bunnydog behavior; Uncomfortable around women.

Skills: Dancing (Bunnydog)-13; Driving-10; Guns (Flamethrower)-14; Guns (Rifle)-14; Running-12; Singing (Bunnydog and Herd style)-13; Stealth-14; Survival (Forest)-14; Survival (Chtorran)-12; Traps-13.

Terry is 16, but he has already seen and experienced more than most 30-year-olds have - or would want to. A child of the plague years, Terry has been a semi-feral child, a renegade, a herd member, and a Chtorran hunter. Very little is left of the content, well-adjusted Terry who lived before the Chtorran invasion.

The invasions took place when Terry was ten years old. One morning, his father and mother packed and they all left in the family car, fleeing the plagues spreading from the East Coast. They weren't fast enough; both his parents contracted a virulent disease and died two days later. The child wandered along the highways for several weeks, living off plundered food; the plagues had spread so fast through the area that there was almost no looting. Finally, on the brink of insanity by shock and loneliness, he was found by a tribe of renegades. Their leader was a woman, a radical pacifist who believed that the plagues were the result of secret U.S. military experiments. She and her motley band taught Terry to hate and fear authority - except, that is, that of the leader of the tribe.

The band spent the next two years hiding from civilization, living in remote wilderness areas. Their first encounters with Chtorran life forms cost them several lives, and taught them to fear the creatures, which were believed to be bioengineered weapons released by the government. The band did adopt several bunnydogs it found in its travels, and Terry learned to like the creatures. He became particularly adept at imitating their dances and songs.

Disaster struck when four gastropedes attacked the camp shortly after the band's bunnydogs started their collective song. Terry dived into a car and sped away - he was the only survivor. When his car ran out of gas, Terry wandered the forests alone, his sanity slowly ebbing. The next group of people he found had surrendered their humanity; they were a wild herd (see p. 26). Terry abandoned himself to the herd song.

That would have been the end of Terry, if he hadn't triggered a bear trap set by a hunter that lived in the area. The pain and shock snapped Terry out of the trance state, and he screamed for help. The hunter rescued Terry, and he and his wife adopted the boy. It has not been an ideal relationship, though: Terry's behavior is often unpredictable, and his time alone has made him willful and stubborn. He has a speech impediment, and quickly loses his temper when people cannot understand him.

When the government started offering bounties for killing Chtorrans (see p. 53), Terry and his father started hunting the creatures, using looted army equipment. One of Terry's favorite tactics is to use the herd's song to lure Chtorrans into traps - he made the connection between the song and the gastropedes (see p. 79) years before government researchers did. The family has had to move three times in the last two years, as the infestation spreads. Terry just turned 16, and his adopted father has convinced him to join the military. It was a hard decision for Terry; he still harbors fear and distrust of the government, and of most individuals.

Character Types

Described below are some character types appropriate to a **Chtorr** campaign.

■ **Bounty Hunter**

The U.S. government offers a million-casey bounty for killing a worm, and a 10-million reward for live captives. This bounty is paid when the worm's mandibles are delivered to a government office. Some communities and individuals have started hunting worms for profit. This is, of course, a *very* dangerous profession. Besides the Chtorr themselves, would-be hunters may have to contend with renegade tribes armed with military equipment, or even stumble into a Special Forces operation. Still, there will always be some people crazy enough to try to make a living this way.

Eventually, whole corporations might turn their energies to the systematic mass killing of worms. They could field well-trained and well-equipped private armies, as efficient as their military counterparts. How the government might view this development is hard to determine, although most military leaders would no doubt oppose it. In Japan and Brazil, active exploitation of the Chtorr ecology has begun (see p. 35). Chtorr-hunting is an organized endeavor in those countries.

Besides combat-oriented types, a party of bounty hunters might have medics, technicians, business managers and other noncombatants. A "great white hunter" type would be interesting to play in this context.

Advantages: Comfortable Wealth or better may be good to provide the initial investment in weapons and equipment; a Patron (a wealthy individual or a corporation, for instance) would do the same thing. All combat-related advantages would help.

Disadvantages: Overconfidence or On the Edge would make sense as motivations, as would Fanaticism (Revenge against the Chtorr). Greed would be common.

Skills: Besides weapon skills, Tracking, Survival and Electronics Operation (Sensors) would be useful. Survival (Chtorr) and Xenology may be learned after a few harrowing experiences in the alien wilderness.

■ **Civilian**

A survivor of the plagues and the invasions, he tries to deal with the crisis as best he can. While officially everyone is a draftee in the war against the Chtorr, a sizable percentage of the human population is involved in nonmilitary activities. That does not make them immune to the war, of course; only the largest cities are more or less safe from Chtorr attacks. For many civilians, it's business as usual; others, overwhelmed by the disaster, spend an inordinate amount of time enjoying themselves.

Advantages: Luck may be common.

Disadvantages: Alcoholism, Gluttony, Lecherousness and diverse Addictions may be symptoms of even more severe mental disadvantages. Compulsive Carousing, Manic-Depressive and one or two Delusions and Phobias are depressingly common.

Skills: Professional Skills, including at least one that is directly useful to the war effort. If the civilian did not have any at the end of the plagues, he would have been trained in one afterwards.

■ **Criminal**

The near collapse of civilization has not stopped unscrupulous men and women from trying to turn a fast buck by deceiving the gullible or exploiting the crisis in illegal ways. Fake reclamation

projects or memberships in model communities are peddled by con men. Black marketeers steal, smuggle and sell hard-to-find foodstuffs and medicines; sometimes the product is spoiled, or worse, a cheap imitation with dangerous side effects. Outside the cities, biker gangs launch raids against small settlements or attack lone travelers.

Criminal PCs are possible. They can be deceiving themselves into thinking the Chtorr crisis is a government ploy that should be exploited, or they may simply not care. Their illegal activities could be the consequence of mental problems, or old-fashioned greed. While there are plenty of opportunities to profit from the situation, criminals will be confronted by a military government with little time or sympathy for wrongdoers; if con men and thieves get in the way of the military, they will be removed, quickly and usually permanently.

Advantages: Con men will find Charisma useful. Violent criminals could have any combat-related advantage.

Disadvantages: Greed, Megalomania and Delusions about the current situation are all appropriate. An Enemy (the military authorities) is bound to appear sooner or later.

Skills: Fast-Talk, any Thief/Spy skill, Scrounging and combat skills for biker types.



■ **Cultist**

This is a member of one of the myriad fringe groups that have sprung up among the survivors of the plagues, as well as those that existed before. These include Ape City, the model community where no clothing is allowed; funeral groupies, who make death their social event of choice; distorted versions of every mainstream religion; the Revelationists, who believe the end of the world is at hand (and many of whom worship the Chtorr - see *Renegades*, below); and many others. A cult is not necessarily evil or destructive, although many are; some people consider Mode training (see p. 11) to be a brainwashing cult. Almost any group that creates a bond among its members while explicitly excluding nonmembers can be considered cult-like.

A party whose members include both cultists and "outsiders" may be beset by tension and distrust, particularly if the cult is very exclusivistic or deviant.

Advantages: A Reputation among fellow cultists, if they are numerous enough to matter, is possible. The rest of the cult can provide Allies and even a Patron.

Disadvantages: Fanaticism is typical. An unpopular cult might have a collective bad Reputation or even Enemies.

Skills: Leaders with Psychology, Bard and Fast-Talk can more easily control the rank and file. Many cults will have a Theology or Philosophy that members would be at least conversant with.

■ **Renegade**

A member of one of the groups that do not acknowledge the authority of the U.S. (or, for that matter, any nation's) government. They live in small bands or tribes in remote areas; now that the majority of the world's population has been wiped out, there are many such areas. Some are fighting both the Army and the Chtorran invaders, although those bands are being slowly exterminated. Others have managed to reach an agreement with the invaders: Chtorran-human communities are appearing all over the world. Part of this agreement includes the regular sacrifice of at least some members of the human community to their Chtorran masters.

While most people believe that the renegades who side with the worms are the worst traitors to the human race, others think the renegades may have the only answer that will allow humanity to survive at all.

Advantages: At least one renegade leader (Jason Delandro) had Mode training; others may follow.

Disadvantages: Renegades have a -2 to -4 Reputation among most normal citizens, as well as having the Army as an Enemy. Many suffer from Delusions and Fanaticism as well (or, put more kindly, a Sense of Duty to their group or even to the Chtorr).

Skills: Weapon and Survival skills, Camouflage, Scrounging and Stealth will stand a renegade in good stead.

■ **Scientist**

People with science degrees have become the most important resources of mankind, since dealing with the Chtorr will require technological breakthroughs in all branches of sciences. But many scientists and technicians were lost to the plague, so most research efforts are understaffed, and are sometimes conducted by unqualified people.

A scientist PC will find himself recruited into the war effort, and may end up working in some area outside his specialty, simply because no one else can do the job. Besides Chtorran research, other important projects include the space program and weapon development.

Advantages: Eidetic Memory can be useful. Intuition may help cinematic scientists in making dazzling discoveries.

Disadvantages: Many archetypical scientists are Absent-Minded and Workaholic.

Skills: One specialty at high levels, with several other secondary scientific skills. Research is also necessary to keep up with the literature.

■ **Soldier (Regular)**

The regular Armed Forces are mostly concerned with keeping the peace and with reorganization and rebuilding after the plagues. Much of its personnel is not fully trained in military matters (see the Teamwork Army, p. 9); most of the actual combat is left to members of the Special Forces Warrant Agency. Still, a soldier's job puts him (or her) closer to the front lines of the war against the Chtorr.

Advantages: Rank is especially useful.

Disadvantages: Any mental disadvantage - normally, the Army would screen out people with severe mental problems, but the shortage of manpower makes that impossible except in the most severe cases. Highly dysfunctional troops will not be allowed to hold important positions, though.

Skills: Some basic weapon skills, Driving and diverse technical and craft skills will all be sought.

■ **Soldier (Special Forces Trooper)**

An elite soldier, highly trained in the techniques of infantry combat, infiltration of enemy territory and, lately, battling alien monsters. All the Special Ops units of the past have been reorganized under the Special Forces Warrant Agency, and training and goals have been unified. The Special Forces are in charge of destroying Chtorran nests, capturing specimens for study, and in general acting as the striking arm of the Armed Forces.

Advantages: All combat-oriented advantages are helpful. A high Rank is common.

Disadvantages: Youth and Age: new recruits are often in their teens, while veterans with pre-plague battle experience are pushing 50 years or more; the lack of trained personnel makes both types too valuable to dismiss. Fanaticism, Bloodlust and On the Edge are common. Severe mental disadvantages which would interfere with the trooper's duties will eventually be detected and will lead to a discharge, or a transfer to another section of the service.

Skills: The skill template for Special Forces troops is on p. 61.

■ **Spy**

The plagues and the Chtorran invasions have not ended the international tensions that existed before. The Fourth World nations (see p. 34) are particularly active in attempts to seize new territory and to undermine other governments. To deal with these enemies, the U.S. maintains a large group of espionage and covert operation agents. These shadowy operatives may have been behind the fall of Southern Mexico (see p. 35) and may even now be spying on and sabotaging other dangerous countries.

Although no espionage operations are fully described in the *Chtorr* books, there is always an understanding that secret agencies are working behind the scenes. The Uncle Ira Group (see p. 21) is in charge of intelligence gathering and secret operations. **GURPS Espionage** would be very useful for a GM allowing spy characters in his campaign, or running a spy-oriented campaign.

Advantages: Intuition and Luck may be helpful. The employing agency can be a Patron. Military-intelligence types (and with the military controlling most aspects of national security, there are few other spies) will have a Rank. Note that if you have the Mechanical Telepathy advantage (see below) you are a telepath

first, and a spy second . . . the first loyalty of a telepath is to the mass mind.

Disadvantages: Fanaticism is common. Some spies are Compulsive Liars, even when they don't have to be; it's good practice! Agents from the other side (or even whole enemy agencies!) make good Enemies.

Skills: All Thief/Spy skills, as well as Acting, Disguise, Cryptology, Computer Hacking and Electronics (Security Systems).

■ Telepath

Telepaths are not people with psionic powers, but volunteers with electronic implants which put them in complete communication with a global network. Members switch bodies with other network telepaths the way a normal person changes clothing. They are the ultimate spies, able to change their looks, skills and knowledge in a flash.

A member of the Telepathy Corps (see p. 93) could make an interesting character. On the other hand, most full members of the Corps soon lose all sense of individuality, as they enter the strange new world of the mass mind. Eventually, most telepaths lose the ability to tell what is real and what is someone else's experience. The hard core of the Telepathy Corps has become a hive mind, as alien in its own way as the Chtorr.

There are degrees of involvement, however. Some telepaths remain very much their own persons for several years, and even engage in pranks and petty abuse of their abilities (see *Carpetbagging*, p. 94). Others are part-time couriers, occasionally lending their bodies to others, while leading a mostly normal life. And there are those who have been implanted without their knowledge, who do not realize that strangers may be looking through their eyes, or even taking control of their bodies without their permission . . .

Advantages: Besides Mechanical Telepathy (see p. 56) at the appropriate point level, many telepaths develop Empathy; this may be the first step toward developing true psionic Telepathy.

Disadvantages: Carpetbaggers will have some Odious Personal Habits; most telepaths develop a Sense of Duty to the Telepathy Corps.

Skills: Acting and Body Language are developed by telepaths as they become used to "being" different people. Disguise is also learned for the same reasons; even in the same body, they can act like someone else altogether - because they probably are!

■ Thief/Looter or Professional Salvage Operator

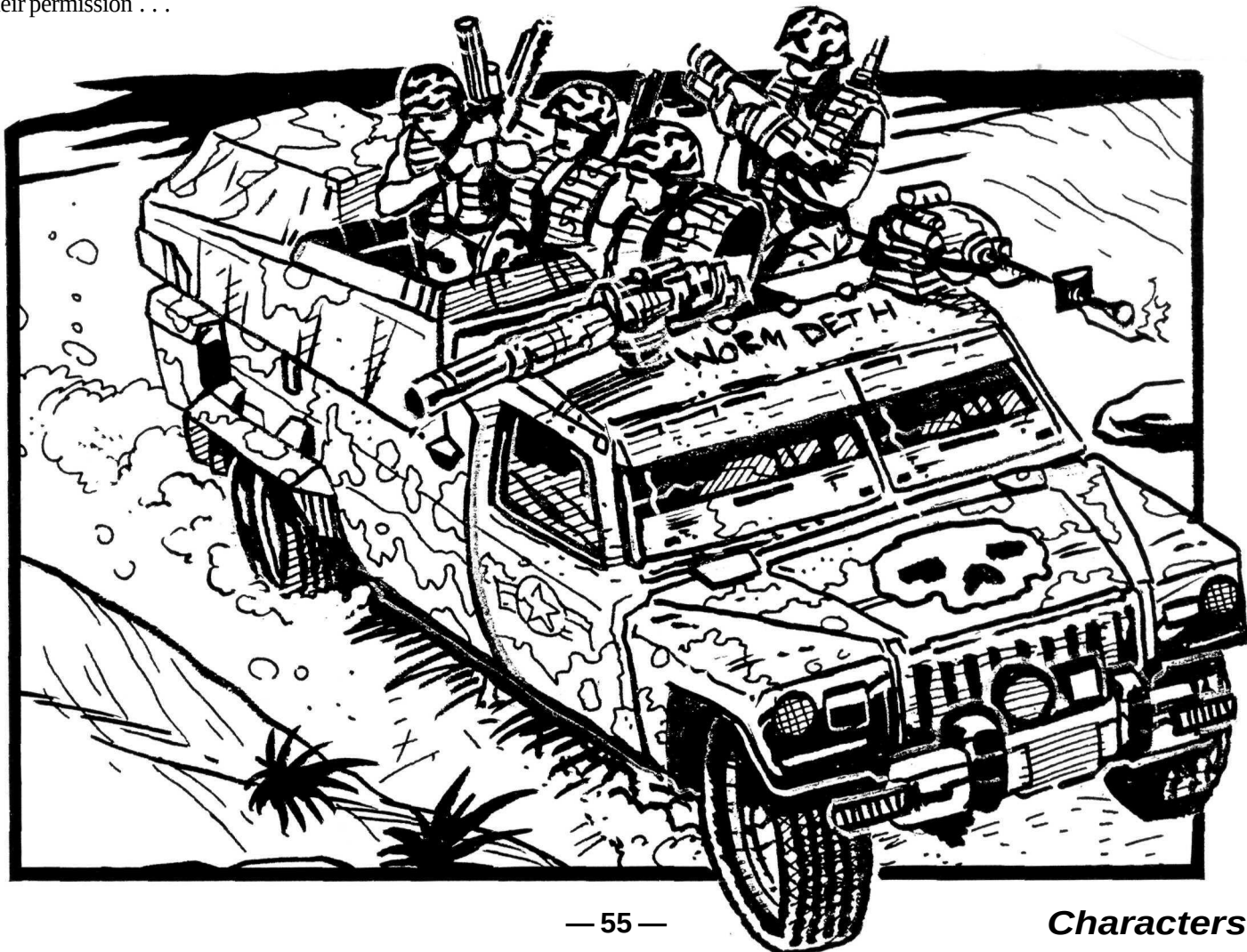
With over two-thirds of the world suddenly bereft of human beings, whole cities have been abandoned. Fortunes in abandoned equipment, food and vehicles can be found by someone greedy and bold enough.

There are many obstacles and dangers to this endeavor, of course. Empty cities can still be plague reservoirs. Chtorrans are likely to prowl the abandoned cities or the wilderness around them. The military may have sealed the area and may be involved in their own salvage operations. Large-scale looters must overcome those difficulties and then come back with enough goods to justify the effort.

Advantages: A powerful Patron might help city looters in obtaining equipment.

Disadvantages: Greed is an obvious choice. The authorities will become Enemies sooner or later, unless the salvage venture is a licensed one.

Skills: Scrounging and Survival (Urban) allow looters to sift through ruins in search for wealth.



Advantages, Disadvantages and Skills

Some of the existing *GURPS* advantages, disadvantages and skills are especially important, or have different implications, in

the *Chtorr* universe. A number of new mental disadvantages and skills are appropriate for this background, too.

Advantages

■ **Animal Empathy**

See p. B19

This advantage works with Chtorrans, to an extent. While it will not help against a wild Chtorran, Animal Handling rolls to deal with a tame one are possible. A person with this advantage, however, will be even more susceptible to the seductive power that the Chtorr have over humans (see p. 79). A character with this advantage who has been in peaceful contact with Chtorrans must make a Will-1 roll to participate in any action that will harm the gastropedes.

■ **Empathy**

See p. B20

Telepaths and Modies (see pp. 55 and 11) often have this advantage. It is possible that the telepathy implants and the training that accompany them may awaken latent psionic powers, which would lead to Mechanical Telepaths becoming true psis.

■ **Immunity to Disease**

See p. B20

This advantage will protect a character against the plagues. In fact, a high percentage of the survivors probably have this advantage, and GMs might want to require it, or at least recommend it.

■ **Patron**

See p. B24

The Uncle Ira Group is a likely choice as a Patron. For most of its members it would appear fairly often (on a roll of 9 or less). It's a very powerful organization, because it has contacts throughout the whole U.S. military, so it's worth 25 points. This is reduced by -15 points for the constant duty required of members, or -20 points for the Extremely Hazardous Duty (p. 58) required of field operatives!

However, the patronage of the group would only be available to a character whose abilities were significant. Uncle Ira has to expend his assets all too often; he can mount a massive operation to help an individual soldier, but first he has to make a cold-blooded decision about whether he can afford to.

The mysterious Telepathy Corps would make an interesting Patron, but the details would be up to the GM. Clearly the organization is very powerful, but how often it would intervene to help an individual member is not clear. (In the books, there is a clear suggestion that McCarthy is implanted, and we know that once the T-Corps *did* step in to help him save Lizard. But we don't know why ...)

Note that the regular Army, or even Special Forces, is not worth points as a Patron. The Army has gotten all too used to writing its troops off.

New Advantages

■ **Mechanical Telepathy**

120 points

Mechanical Telepathy is a TL8-9 invention using cybernetic implants that link the recipients to a huge communications network that spans the planet. This ability is a form of the Mindshare advantage described in *Fantasy Folk*, with the racial advantage Secret Communication. Each telepath is a sentient member of a huge network that shares all the information and experiences of the group. Each agent can have his personality switched from one body to another.

When a telepath character is created, his physical stats are bought for his original body. After some time in the Corps, this body may be never "seen" again, although many telepaths tend to spend a large amount of time inside their old body. When inhabiting someone else's body, the telepath will retain his IQ and all mental advantages, disadvantages and skills, all unchanged. Physical skills will be based on the new body's DX.

GM's note: When a character is designing a telepath, there might be some temptation to concentrate most points on IQ and skills, keeping physical stats at average or lower levels. Keep in mind that the Telepathy Corps is a military organization that will demand some minimum physical requirements from its members. A ST 6, HT 8 character, for instance, would never be allowed into the Corps . . . unless that *body were needed for some specific mission*.

■ **Mode Training**

10 points

Mode training (see p. 11) enables a person to understand the processes of decision-making better, both in themselves and in others. The training also teaches people to assume responsibility



for their actions and to reach sensible decisions; it also leads to a "take charge" attitude. This is done by studying the processes by which decisions are made, and by studying the forces that drive these processes. A Modie is better able to "read" people by recognizing what sort of process they are using at a given time.

Critics argue that "Modies," as they are sometimes called, are arrogant and egocentric. This is often true; the sense of responsibility that Modies feel tends to make them overbearing. People with disadvantages like Bad Temper and Bully will be able to channel those attitudes more effectively with Mode training - their anger will be even more primal, and their bullying much more intimidating (in game terms, a Modie who roleplays a disadvantage will earn *double* the normal reaction roll penalty from non-Modies). It is harder for a Modie to lose his temper or act inappropriately (see below), but when he does he will be devastatingly offensive.

Disadvantages

Besides the disadvantages outlined below, the following disadvantages are common in the **Chtorr** world: Alcoholism, Gluttony, Lecherousness and Split Personality.

■ **Addiction** see p. B30

There are many substance abusers among the survivors of the plagues. Several Chtorran plants produce hallucinogenic effects, and there is already a drug market for Chtorran substances.

■ **Bloodlust** see p. B31

This disadvantage might be gained *during play*, if the character is exposed to too much violence. If, in the GM's opinion, the character starts becoming murderous in combat, he might rule that circumstances have scarred the character's psyche to the point that he is unlikely to spare an enemy or accept an enemy's surrender. Some characters might only feel bloodlust against Chtorran creatures, which is understandable and easier to forgive. Bloodlust (Chtorrans Only) is worth -5 points.

■ **Delusions** see p. B32

The severe shocks encountered by *every* survivor of the plagues and the Chtorran invasions can be sources of delusion. Many people also have beliefs about the Chtorr which are not only false but quite dangerous under the wrong circumstances.

Some examples include: "Anyone I care for will die and leave me alone, so I will care for no one" (-5 points); "Chtorrans are harmless unless provoked" (-10 points); "The Chtorr are the new gods, come to judge us; worshipping them is the true path to salvation" (-15 points); "No one else is real; I'm the only real person" (-15 points).

■ **Fanaticism** see p. B33

Some common types of Fanaticism include hatred of the Chtorr, national patriotism (particularly among Special Forces troops), and, in renegades, the belief that the Chtorr are gods. This can be taken either as Fanaticism or a Delusion as above, but *not* as both.

■ **Overconfidence** see p. B34

Some survivors have emerged from harrowing ordeals believing that if they could live through something like that, they can now survive anything. Circumstances often prove them wrong, however.

A character with Mode training has a +1 bonus in Psychology, Fast-Talk, Leadership, Interrogation, Intimidation and Detect Lies. The training gives them a +2 to all Will rolls. The character must also take, and pay for, the Empathy advantage if he does not already have it.

Most Modies have a Sense of Duty (Humanity), but this is not a mandatory disadvantage, and if taken it *will* count toward the character's disadvantage maximum. A Sense of Duty worth at least -5 points *must* be taken, to reflect the Modie's increased sense of responsibility.

The advantage of Mode training *can* be added during play; the training requires 6 weeks in a major city. The training is not available to everyone, but is often offered, not as a *reward* for good performance, but as a recognition that someone is an important participant in the fight against the Chtorr. Important participants need all the tools they can get, so they can work harder and better - that's the philosophy of the Mode.

■ **Paranoia** see p. B35

This mental disadvantage is not only common among secretive military types, but among traumatized children as well. Many children exposed to the horrors of the plagues and the crisis that followed have become intensely suspicious and afraid of adult abandonment and mistreatment, as well as of Chtorran attack.

■ **Phobias** see p. B35

Characters with entomophobia (fear of insects) subtract 8 from their Will rolls when confronted with gastropedes - not only are Chtorrans *very* large, they are known to be dangerous and everyone is already scared of them. The same applies for a swarm of Chtorran millipedes (see p. 42), or any other gathering of alien creepy crawlers.



New Disadvantages

Most of the disadvantages listed below are mental, and represent typical results of the post-plague trauma that affects most survivors.

■ **Compulsive Carousing** -5 points

You are a party animal. You must go in search of a social gathering at least once a day, and participate for at least an hour. You will try almost any mind-altering substance without a second thought, and aren't particularly picky about your romantic partners - you like your music loud and your women (or your men) hot! You are likely to start the day with beer and cornflakes.

If you encounter a party that you should avoid for some reason, you must make a Will roll to keep from joining (Will+2 if it's a private party you would have to crash). Once you are there, you must stay for at least an hour (you can roll against Will every hour to leave), unless you are evicted.

You get a +1 reaction (or more, if you are very entertaining) from other carousers, and a -1 or worse from sober-minded citizens.

This disadvantage combines aspects of Alcoholism, Addiction and Lecherousness - without being as extreme as any of the three. It could certainly lead to any of them, however!



■ **Extremely Hazardous Duty** -20 points

This is an increased level of the Duty disadvantage described on p. B39. The character is "on duty" almost all the time, and risks death or serious injury more often than on ordinary duty. There are significant penalties for failure to perform the duty when demanded: dismissal in disgrace, imprisonment, perhaps even death. This is a mandatory disadvantage for special operations soldiers who are in active military service. Special operations training is as dangerous as many battlefield situations.

Other character types for whom this degree of duty is appropriate include police officers on patrol duty, scouts, explorers, full-time spies or intelligence agents, and bodyguards. In the **Chtorr** world, anyone who must expose himself regularly to the Chtorr-infested wilderness qualifies.

■ **Guilt Complex** -5 points

This advantage is similar to Sense of Duty and can be taken in addition to a standard Sense of Duty. The difference lies in the fact that someone with a Guilt Complex is ready to assume responsibility if anything happens to people or institutions to which he feels an obligation, even if there was no reasonable way he could have averted it. If *anything* goes wrong, the sufferer behaves as if the occurrence was his fault, and will be morose and depressed for (15-Will) days (minimum 1 day); during that time, he will have to make Will rolls to undertake any actions, as he will be wracked by anxiety and guilt, and even if he succeeds, he will be at -1 to all rolls. If he is actually to blame for the mishap, the depression will last for (20-Will) days (minimum 2 days), and Will rolls to perform any activity are at -3.

Others who make successful Psychology or Fast-Talk rolls can - perhaps - help the victim overcome the guilt feelings. This should be roleplayed, with bonuses or penalties to the rolls depending on how convincing they sounded!

■ **Flashbacks** Variable

In a stressful situation, you may experience a *flashback*, a vivid hallucination, full-participation replay of memories, or any other similar phenomena. The player may choose, at the time of character creation, what *type* of flashback he will experience, but the content of each episode is up to the GM. The point value is determined by the severity of the flashback.

Flashbacks are very appropriate as results from failed Fright Checks; roll for a flashback *whenever* you miss a Fright Check, *or make the Fright Check roll exactly*, regardless of other results. In any other situation which the GM feels is stressful, he may roll 3 dice; on a 6 or less, you have a flashback.

-5 points: The flashback lasts only 2d seconds; attendant hallucinations do not seriously impair skills (-2 on all skill rolls), and accompanying delusions are minor - you know that you're having a flashback.

-10 points: Lasting 1d minutes, the hallucinations seriously impair skills (-5 to all skills); delusions *seem* real.

-20 points: For 3d minutes, hallucinations are so severe that they preclude all skill use; the flashback seems completely, 100%, real, and can be potentially fatal, as you are receiving no input from the real world.

■ **Manic-Depressive** -20 points

Your moods are on a see-saw - you bounce back and forth between bubbling enthusiasm and morose withdrawal. At the beginning of each play session, roll one die. On a 1-3, you are in

your manic phase; a 4-6 indicates depression. Every five hours of game-time thereafter, roll 3d. A 10 or less indicates that you begin a mood swing. Over the next hour, you will shift from your current phase into its opposite. You will remain in the new phase for at least five hours (after which you roll 3d again).

In the manic phase, you suffer from Overconfidence (see p. B34). You will be friendly, outgoing and excited about whatever you're doing. In the depressive phase, the Overconfidence is replaced with Absentmindedness (p. B30) and Laziness (p. B34). You will not be interested in doing anything except lying in bed, sitting in a dark room and moping, or similar activities. If forced by companions to do something, you will be at a -5 on all skills.

■ **On the Edge** **-15 points**

Sometimes you don't care whether you live or die. You are not actively suicidal, but you will take unreasonable risks when in mortal danger. When you face a life-threatening situation (piloting a burning vehicle, assaulting a Chtorran nest, staring down a street gang while armed only with a toothbrush, etc.) you must make a successful Will roll before you can retreat (attempt it once per turn; a 14 or higher fails automatically).

Each turn that you are in combat, make a Will roll to avoid making an All-Out Attack (or any other insane, suicidal type of behavior). You are avoided by most sensible people (-2 reaction from anyone who realizes that you're crazy) - but primitives or lowlives might respect your disregard for your life, mistaking it for bravery (+2 to reactions).

■ **Short Attention Span** **-10 points**

The character has trouble concentrating on any one object or task for more than a few minutes. Roll vs. IQ to maintain interest in something for an extended period; failure means automatic failure at that phase of any long task.

Several survivors of Chtorran diseases (see p. 13) suffer from this problem. Some semi-feral children are also likely to have short attention spans.

Skills

The 21st-century educational system puts a heavy emphasis on technology-based skills. Almost every person born before the plagues will know Computer Operations at IQ, at least in developed countries. Most people will also be proficient at some form of Electronics Operation. Unless noted otherwise, all the skills listed below are at TL8.

■ **Riding** **see p. B46**

Riding (Chtorran) is available to renegades. Rolls to stay mounted (see p. B137) are at +1 if mounted on a large (over four hexes long) Chtorran.

New Skills

■ **Computer Hacking (Mental/Very Hard)** **No default**

This skill is used to "hack" into a computer system. Passwords or 1D. numbers are needed to enter most secure systems. A character trying to break into a normal computer system must make a roll against Computer Hacking-5 in an attempt to find one of the more commonly used passwords; a secure computer system requires a roll against Computer Hacking-10. Once you are

■ **Workaholic**

-5 points

This is a form of Compulsive Behavior; the affected character drives himself past his limits, and finds it very hard to relax and turn away from his work. Victims of this problem risk burning out. This affliction is very common among the leaders of the war against the Chtorran; the importance and seeming hopelessness of the situation drives them into self-destructive, obsessive efforts.

A person with this disadvantage will work as long as he can (at least half again as much as a normal working day); he will rarely have any pastimes or hobbies unless they are in some way related to his job. Most people may regard him with respect at first (+1 to reaction rolls), but eventually workaholics will meet with a -1 or -2 reaction, especially from friends and loved ones who rarely get to spend time with them. Workaholics will often miss a lot of sleep, especially if assigned to an important project (see p. B134 for fatigue loss). After missing several hours' worth of sleep, IQ-based skills have a -1 or worse penalty. Characters with the Overconfidence advantage, a common companion to Workaholic, would not notice this immediately.



■ **Survival**

see p. B57

Survival (Chtorran) is available to Special Forces troops, renegades and people who have spent some time in Chtorran-infested areas and lived to learn from the experience. The alien environment is very tricky; defaults from either Naturalist or other Survival skills are at -6, not the usual -3. When encountering an unfamiliar situation (and new alien species appear almost monthly), rolls to deal with them are made at Survival (Chtorran)-4, with default skills rolling at -10!

inside a system, a roll against Computer Operations is necessary to look up a particular piece of information, or against Computer Hacking to alter information. These rolls are modified by the size of the system, and by internal security programs (see *GURPS Ultra-Tech* and *GURPS Cyberpunk* for more information). A skilled hacker can manipulate computer data, altering and falsifying it, or gain access to restricted information. Special Forces soldiers receive some training in hacking.

■ **Cryptanalysis (Mental/Hard)** No default

This is the ability to recognize, analyze, and break into tactical encryption systems. Note that some codes will be effectively unbreakable; the NSA has had Cray supercomputers working full-time for years on some high-level diplomatic systems, without success. Computer equipment is extremely helpful in conjunction with this skill, if available. The availability of other decrypted messages (plaintext) in the same encryption system is an asset; however, message brevity is a serious impediment to decryption by even the most skilled cryptanalyst.

Add from 1 to 5 for the use of computer equipment, depending on how powerful the computer is: a home computer would be +1, an average mainframe +3 or 44 and a supercomputer +5. (This is at TL7; at TL8, add +1 to all the modifiers - even a personal computer has enough capacity to be helpful.) The services of a skilled operator will be necessary, unless the user has Computer Operation skill at 15 or better. Needless to say, decryption software must be available.

Add 5 for decrypted plaintext in the same system, but subtract 5 for messages of fewer than 25 words.

This skill can be enhanced by the Mathematical Ability advantage.

■ **Forward Observer/TL (Mental/Average)** Defaults to IQ-5

Directing fire from artillery or aircraft onto a target includes the use of map, compass and terrain features to locate targets and the tactical skill of matching ordnance to target for best effect.

Special Forces troops are more likely to use air support than conventional artillery, since they operate in remote wilderness areas. (The skill is the same.) Observers are at -1 for no binoculars, -3 for no map, -5 for neither map nor binoculars, and -1 for each 500 yards from the target (-3 per 500 yards without binoculars). Using laser range-finder equipment, or, even better, laser illuminating systems (both widely available at TL8) adds 5 to the roll. Failures miss the desired target without harming the enemy; critical failures do something embarrassing or dangerous. The very worst critical failures (GM's choice) drop the ordnance on the observer's position.

A more detailed treatment of air and artillery observation is found in *GURPS High-Tech*, pp. 78-84.

This skill is useful for directing air strikes against Chtorran nests or hunting parties. If the PCs are stranded in the wilderness and surrounded by hungry worms, this skill can mean the difference between life and death!

■ **Intimidation (Mental/Average)** Defaults to ST-5 or Acting-3

This is a social "influence" skill, used for persuasion. The essence of intimidation is to convince the subject that you are able and willing, and perhaps eager, to hurt him. It is very useful in obtaining cooperation from reluctant civilians, or in replacing some Leadership rolls in military situations: if your soldiers are more afraid of you than of the Chtorr, you have a good Intimidation skill.

Intimidation may be substituted for a reaction roll in any situation, though it is at a -3 penalty when used in a request for aid. A successful intimidation roll gives a Good (though not friendly) reaction. A failed roll gives a Bad reaction. Most people will remember an intimidation attempt, whether successful or not, for a long time; it can permanently affect an NPC's attitude.

When Intimidation is used against a PC (or, at the GM's option, against an NPC), this can also be rolled as a contest of Intimidation vs. Will. See *Influence Rolls*, p. B93.

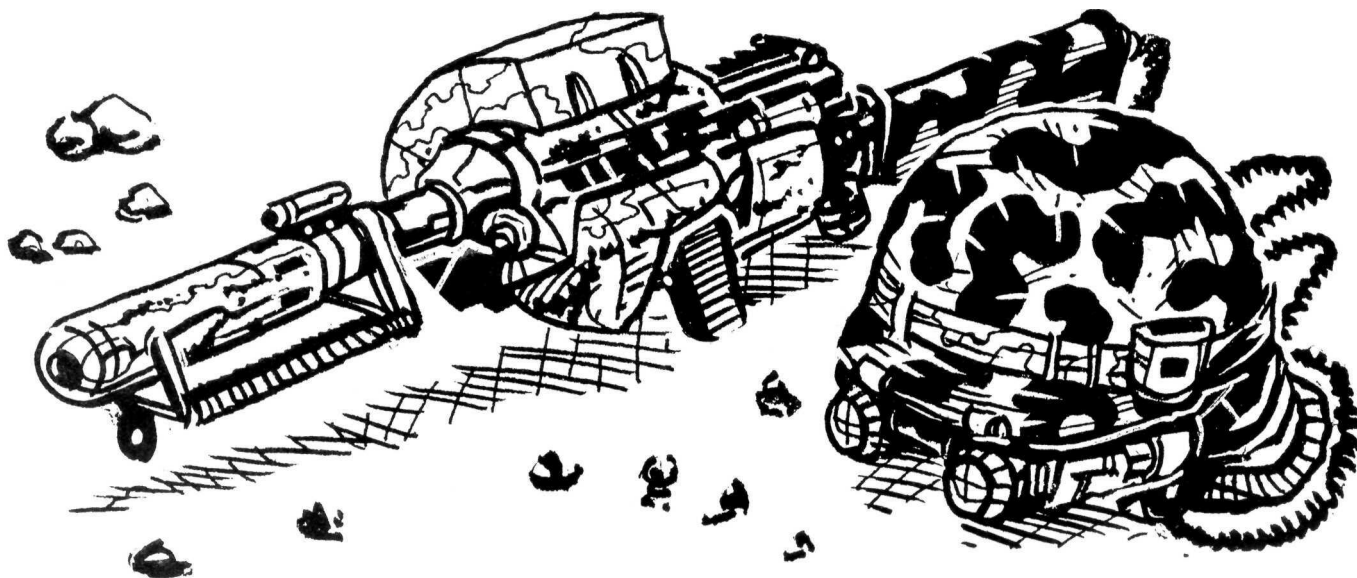
Add up to +2 for displays of strength and bloodthirstiness. Appropriate Reputation modifiers will certainly count! Add 1 for every 6" of height you have over the subject; subtract 1 if you are shorter (2 if you are more than 6" shorter). Add 2 for hideous appearance, 1 for witty or frightening dialogue, but the GM should apply a penalty instead if the player's statements are clumsy or inappropriate.

Interrogation skill can default to Intimidation-3. It will not help you tell a good answer from a bad one, but it will get people to talk.

■ **No-Landing Extraction (Mental/Average)** Defaults to IQ-6

There are several systems for getting things from the ground into or onto flying aircraft without landing. They all require considerable preparation and equipment by the ground element (GM's decision or 2d hours to get everything ready for the pickup). Failures result in no pickup, or damage to the cargo or passenger (GM's decision). A critical failure always causes cargo loss, or passenger death or critical injury.

See *Rescue Pods*, sidebar, p. 94, for a no-landing extraction system that requires no effort or skill by the ground element. To collect a rescue pod, the only skill roll required is by the pilot... a single Piloting roll for the aircraft, at -2.



■ Nuclear-Biological-Chemical Warfare/TL (Mental/Average) Defaults to IQ-5

This is the ability to operate in a nuclear, biological, or chemical warfare environment with appropriate protective gear. Without this skill the user runs a considerable risk of misusing the protective gear and exposing himself to contamination. The skill requires proper equipment; the GM may require a skill roll to improvise protection, but at -5 or worse!

The Chtorran environment is full of surprises, even for prepared Special Forces troops. When first encountering a dangerous Chtorran bio-agent, rolls to deal appropriately with it are at -2 to -6 (GM's call).

■ Orienteering (Mental/Average) Defaults to IQ-5

This is the ability to locate oneself with respect to terrain (the U.S. military calls this "land navigation"). Orienteering rolls are at -1 to -10 (GM's discretion) for being in an unfamiliar area. (It is a lot harder to locate oneself in a Chtorran forest after a pink storm than in downtown Cleveland.)

Orienteering skill rolls get a +1 modifier for an accurate map, a compass or clear view of the sun or stars and at least one hour to make observations (these positive modifiers are not cumulative).



■ Xenology (Mental/Hard) Defaults to IQ-6

In the Chtorran world, use this skill to deal with the Chtorran gastropedes and bunnydogs. With this skill, a person can predict the behavior of a Chtorran under previously encountered conditions. At a -4, one can make a guess about their behavior in a new situation.

Special Forces Troops

Special Forces characters use the rules from *GURPS Special Ops*. They use a "skill template," which lists the skills a trooper must have to be accepted into the unit. The character must spend at least 1/2 point on every skill on the appropriate template. He must spend enough character points to have all the skills on the template at the minimum level listed at least. If the 1/2 point at his attribute will give him a skill level above the minimum, he must still invest the 1/2 point and take the skill at the higher level.

Special Forces

Skills	Type	Wpn	Com	Med	Demo	Intel
Administration	M/A	10	10	10	10	10
Armoury/TL8 (Guns)	M/A	13	14	13	13	13
Brawling	P/E	14	14	14	14	14
Camouflage	M/E	14	14	14	14	14
Climbing	P/A	14	14	14	14	14
Computer Operations	M/E	12	12	12	12	14
Computer Hacking	M/VH	12	12	12	12	13
Cryptanalysis	M/H	—	—	—	—	14
Demolition/TL8	M/A	12	12	12	14	12
Diagnosis/TL8	M/H	—	—	14	—	—
Driving (Tracked Vehicles)	P/A	12	12	12	12	12
(Wheeled Vehicles)	P/A	12	12	12	12	12
(Hovercraft)	P/A	12	12	12	12	12
Electronics Operation/TL8 (Communications)	M/A	12	14	13	13	13
(Robots)	M/A	13	13	12	12	12
Engineer/TL8 (Combat)	M/H	8	8	8	12	8
First Aid/TL8	M/E	11	11	14	11	11
Forward Observer/TL8	M/A	12	12	12	12	12

Skills	Type	Wpn	Com	Med	Demo	Intel
Guns/TL8 (Anti-Armor Infantry Weapons)	P/E	14	13	13	13	13
(Assault Rifle)	P/E	15	14	14	14	14
(Flamethrower)	P/E	15	14	14	14	14
(Grenade Launcher)	P/E	14	13	13	13	13
(Machine Gun)	P/E	14	13	13	13	13
(Pistol)	P/E	14	13	13	13	13
Intelligence Analysis	M/A	12	12	12	12	14
Interrogation	M/A	12	12	12	12	14
Jumping	P/E	13	13	13	13	13
Knife	P/E	14	13	13	13	13
Leadership	M/A	14	14	14	14	14
Lockpicking	M/A	—	—	—	—	13
Mechanic/TL8	M/A	10	10	10	10	10
NBC Warfare/TL8	M/A	13	13	13	13	13
No-Landing Extraction	P/A	13	13	13	13	13
Orienteering	M/A	14	14	14	14	14
Parachuting	P/E	13	13	13	13	13
Photography	M/A	8	8	8	8	13
Savoir-Faire (Military)	M/A	12	12	12	12	12
Scrounging	M/E	14	14	14	14	14
Spear	P/A	13	12	12	12	12
Stealth	P/A	15	15	15	15	15
Surgey/TL8	M/VH	—	—	15	—	—
Survival (Desert)	M/A	12	12	12	12	12
(Jungle)	M/A	13	13	13	13	13
(Mountain)	M/A	15	15	15	15	15
Swimming	P/E	13	13	13	13	13
Tactics	M/H	14	14	14	14	14
Teaching	M/A	13	13	13	13	13
Thrown Weapon (Hand Grenade)	P/E	14	14	14	14	14
Traps/TL8	M/A	13	13	13	14	13
Underwater Demolition/TL8	M/A	—	—	—	10	—

Economies

At first, the plagues that killed over half of the planet's human population made the survivors wealthy - there were more resources and fewer people. The scarcity of skilled labor, the breakdown in transportation services and the Chtorran plagues that targeted several staple foods all contributed to balance out this "wealth." In most ways, the survivors of the plagues are worse off than their predecessors.

Currency

Before the plagues struck, the United Nations had developed a new unit of international currency, the United Nations Federal Kilo-Calories, called *caseys* for short. The population crash has drastically devalued the value of the casey with respect to other currencies like the U.S. dollar; the current rate of exchange be-

tween caseys and dollars is about 100 to 1, and the casey is still falling. Most stores prefer or even demand payment in plastic dollar counters or paper bills. Most governments continue to make payments in caseys, but people convert them into "real money" or commodities as soon as possible. Prices and salaries below are given in dollars.

Starting Wealth

Starting wealth in a *Chtorr* campaign is \$10,000. All but some \$2,000 of that money will be tied up in household, clothing and other non-adventuring equipment. Even the renegades' wealth will be mostly used in *community* equipment like vehicles and houses. Use the Cost of Living table on p. B191 for monthly expenses.

Prices

The combination of technological advances and plague consequences has affected prices. Electronic equipment is much cheaper than it was in the late 20th century, while many staples like coffee, sugar and chocolate have almost disappeared and can only be had at incredible prices. Coffee prices have soared since

a bean-rot plague destroyed most crops; a pound of ground coffee is now worth hundreds of dollars. Medicines are also expensive and hard to find. Many people must turn to the black market to find scarce items, paying even more money.



Job Table

Job (Required Skills), Monthly Income	Success Roll	Critical Failure
■ Poor Jobs		
Welfare Recipient (sick or disabled), \$200	8	-2i/Euthanized
■ Struggling Jobs		
Shop Clerk (Merchant 9+), \$300	PR	LJ/LJ, 1d
Soldier (Technical Skill 10+, Guns (Rifle)-10, Savoir-Faire (Military) 10, First Aid 10), \$650	Best PR	1d/4d
■ Average Jobs		
Journalist (Research 12+, Bard or Writing or Photography 12+), \$50 x best skill, plus \$200 per +1 general Reputation	Best PR	-2i, 1d/LJ, 3d
Lab Assistant (Computer Operation 10+, Research 11+, any science skill 10+), \$100 x worst PR	Worst PR	-1i, 1dVLJ, 3d
NCO Soldier (Rank 1-2, skills as Soldier, but at 11+, and Leadership 11+), \$1,000	Best PR	1d/4d
Special Forces Trooper (skills from p. 61), \$1,500	Best PR	3d/6d
■ Comfortable Jobs		
Scientist (Computer Operation 12+, Research 13+, any Science Skill 14+), \$200 x best science skill	Worst PR	-2i/LJ, 2d
Army Officer (Rank 3+, skills as Soldier plus Leadership 12+), \$2,000 x Rank	Best PR	-1 Rank or 3d/LJ or 6d
Local Politician (Status 1+, Administration 10+, Bard 11+, Politics 11+), \$2,000 x Status	Politician + Reaction-2	-2/LJ, Reputation-1

Characters

CHARACTERS FROM THE NOVELS

James McCarthy

ST: 11 IQ: 15 Speed: 6.25
DX: 12 HT: 13 Move: 6
Damage: Thrust 1d-1; Swing 1d+1
Dodge: 6 Parry: 9 (Brawling)

Point Total: 330

■ Advantages

Ally (Lizard Tirelli)
Appearance (Attractive)
Empathy
Intuition
Luck
Military Rank 4 (lost during the fourth book of the series)
Mode Training
Patron (the Uncle Ira Group)
Reputation (+3 as *the* expert on the Chtorran invasion, all the time)
Wealth (Wealthy)

■ Disadvantages

Bad Temper
Enemies (several high-ranking military officers)
Extremely Hazardous Duty
Guilt Complex
Impulsiveness
Intolerance (Homosexuals)
Reputation (-4 as a homosexual, renegade and/or Modie, large group of people, most of the time)
Sense of Duty (Humankind, but especially towards children and the helpless)
Workaholic

■ Quirks

Impatient
Low self-esteem
In love with Elizabeth Tirelli
Composes limericks
Distrusts modern technology
Fascinated by all things Chtorran

■ Skills

Administration-14; Armoury/TL 8(Guns)-14; Brawling-14; Camouflage-14; Chemistry-14; Climbing-14; Computer Hacking-16; Computer Operations-15; Computer Programming-17; Demolition-14; Driving-13; Ecology-17; Electronics Operation (Communications)-14; Electronics Operation (Robots)-14; Engineer (Combat)-13; First Aid-15; Forward Observer-13; Genetics-15; Guns (Anti-Armor Infantry Weapons)-16; Guns (Assault Rifle)-16; Guns (Flamethrower)-17; Guns (Grenade Launcher)-16; Guns (Machine Gun)-14; Guns (Pistol)-14; Hobby Skill (Limericks)-15; Intelligence Analysis-14; Interrogation-15; Jumping-13; Knife-13; Leadership-15; Mechanic-13; Naturalist-16; NBC Warfare-14; No-Landing Extraction-15; Orienteering-



15; Parachuting-13; Photography-14; Physiology-14; Psychology-15; Research-17; Savoir-Faire (Military)-14; Scrounging-14; Spear-12; Stealth-15; Survival (Chtorran)-18; Survival (Desert)-13; Survival (Jungle)-13; Survival (Mountain)-16; Swimming-13; Tactics-15; Teaching-14; Thrown Weapon (Grenade)-15; Traps-15; Xenology-20.

James McCarthy was a high school student whose talents lay in the fields of computer programming and biology. He was spared from the plagues by the foresight of his father, who hid the whole family away from civilization in a mountain cabin. Shortly after the U.S. government was restored, McCarthy, like most able-bodied young men, was drafted and assigned as an attached scientist to a Special Forces unit.

This unit was an elite covert group; McCarthy was sent there by mistake. He soon became well-known for making courageous and intelligent decisions under pressure, but also for behaving in unpredictable and dangerous ways. The Uncle Ira Group (see p. 21), faced with this impulsive and brilliant man, was at a loss to deal with him. He was finally posted as a guard during the Conference of Extraterrestrial Affairs incident (see sidebar, p. 28), where it was hoped the rampaging Chtorran unleashed on the delegates there would also get rid of him. To their surprise, McCarthy was able to single-handedly defeat the gastropede. The Special Forces reconsidered; McCarthy was given full Special Forces training and became a valuable soldier in the war against the Chtorr.

McCarthy's scientific skills, his sharp mind and his constant contact with the Chtorran ecology soon made him the leading expert on the invasion. His reports are now required reading for all high-ranking officials dealing with the Chtorr. At the same time, his fits of anger and his knack for making enemies in high places eventually led to his (official) removal from the Army.

McCarthy is a confused individual, with several contradictory feelings battling inside of him. He is fascinated by the Chtorr,

although he passionately believes that they must be destroyed. He has very little patience for anything or anyone that stands in the way of results, an attitude that has made him many enemies. He is a very compassionate individual who can also act with total cold-bloodedness when he feels it necessary. The stress the war has put on him is enormous; only his relationship with "Lizard" Tirelli keeps him sane.

General Elizabeth "Lizard" Tirelli

ST:11 **IQ:**14
DX:13 **HT:**13
Damage: Thrust 1d-1; Swing 1d+1
Dodge:7 **Parry:**11 (Brawling)

Point Total: 399

■ Advantages

Appearance (Beautiful)
 Combat Reflexes
 Military Rank 7
 Mode Training
 Patron (Uncle Ira Group)

■ Disadvantages

Bad Temper
 Extremely Hazardous Duty
 Sense of Duty (Humankind)

■ Quirks

Blunt
 In love with McCarthy
 Feels guilt about nuking the Chtorr

■ Skills

Beam Weapons-15; Brawling-15; Computer Operations-15; Computer Programming-14; Diplomacy-15; Ecology-15; Electronics Operation (Communications)-16; Electronics Operation (Robots)-14; Electronics Operation (Sensors)-17; Forward Observer-15; Gunner-18; Guns (Anti-Armor Infantry Weapons)-15; Guns (Assault Rifle)-15; Guns (Flamethrowers)-15; Intelligence



Analysis-16; Interrogation-16; Intimidation-17; Leadership-17; Naturalist-15; NBC Warfare-14; No-Landing Extraction-18; Piloting (all specialties)-18; Politics-15; Research-15; Savoir-Faire (Military)-16; Strategy-16; Survival (Chtorran)-12; Survival (Desert)-14; Survival (Jungle)-13; Survival (Mountain)-12; Tactics-16; Xenology-15.

Elizabeth Tirelli was a veteran of the Pakistan War (see p. 14), a career Air Force officer as well as wife and mother. She lost her husband and her child during the plagues. She has risen high in the inner circles of the U.S. government, and she sits with the top Presidential advisors.

She is a complex personality, both loving and combative. Few people suspect that she has a tender side at all, let alone a sense of humor. She flew one of the first missions to drop nuclear bombs on the Chtorr, performed perfectly, and was then wracked with near-suicidal guilt. She supports McCarthy in his battles with the brass, even at the risk of his own career, but takes it out on him afterwards in bitter fights.

Theodore Andrew Nathaniel Jackson

ST:12 **IQ:**12 **Speed:** 5.25
DX:10 **HT:**11 **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-1; Swing 1d+2
Dodge:5 **Parry:**6 (Brawling)

Point Total: 256

■ Advantages

Appearance (Attractive)
 Charisma +2
 Empathy
 Mechanical Telepathy
 Military Rank 3
 At the GM's option, he may have a powerful Patron in the Telepathy Corps.

■ Disadvantages

Compulsive Carousing
 Duty (Telepathy Corps)
 Lecherousness
 Social Stigma (Bisexual)

■ Quirks

Carpetbagger (see p. 94)
 Practical joker
 Social climber

■ Skills

Acting-16; Brawling-10; Carousing-14; Computer Operations-12; Ecology-12; Fast-Talk-15; Guns (Assault Rifle)-11; Guns (Flamethrower)-11; Intelligence Analysis-12; Psychology-16; Research-12; Savoir-Faire-15; Sex Appeal-14; Xenology-11.

Note: All of Ted's physical skills will change when he is in another body, and he may have learned many new skills since he joined the Corps.

Theodore Jackson was another attached "scientist" in the Special Forces unit McCarthy was assigned to (see above). Like McCarthy, Ted was a young, relatively inexperienced high school graduate. Ted had been raised in Ape City, a model community best known for its nudist practices (see p. 10). His uninhibited

sexual behavior and preferences shocked McCarthy, but the two became friends. Ted later joined the Telepathy Corps (see p. 93), and his personality has been largely immersed in the group consciousness that the Corps has created.

Ted's personality is complex. Behind the cynical, loud-talking practical joker is a sensitive person . . . and sometimes, behind that, there's a really cold-blooded manipulator. Of everyone in the world, Ted loves Ted best, but he really cares for McCarthy too - as much as he can care for anyone.

Jason Delandro

ST:12 **IQ:**16 **Speed:** 5.25
DX:10 **HT:**11 **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-1; Swing 1d+2
Dodge: 5

Point Total: 179

■ Advantages

Ally Group (renegade band numbering dozens of individuals)
Charisma +5
Empathy
Mode Training
Voice

■ Disadvantages

Enemy (U.S. Government)
Fanaticism (Worm Supremacy)
Intolerance
Megalomania

■ Skills

Bard-20; Driving-11; Ecology-16; Fast-Talk-17; Guns (Pistol)-13; Intimidation-16; Leadership-18; Psychology-18; Stealth-10; Survival (Chtorran)-18; Tactics-17; Teaching-18; Xenology-19.

Jason Delandro was a former Modie turned renegade leader. He was convinced that the Chtorr are a superior life form and that man's destiny is to serve them in order to become closer to them. He rejected the U.S. government's authority and its campaign to turn back the infestation. Delandro was a genius who knew more about the Chtorran ecology than anybody working for the U.S. government, McCarthy included. Delandro even managed to tame and breed several gastropedes.

He and his band, which included several worms, roamed through the West Coast, looting Army supply caches and destroy-



ing other communities. Whenever the renegades took prisoners, Delandro gave them two choices: live and stay with the renegades or die right then and there. Those who chose to live were inducted into the tribe; Delandro then used his considerable charisma and Mode training techniques to brainwash the newcomer.

After escaping from Delandro's group, McCarthy eventually trapped and destroyed them.

Dr. Daniel Jeffrey Foreman

ST:9 **IQ:**17 **Speed:** 5.5
DX:10 **HT:**12 **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d-1
Dodge: 5

Point Total: 286

■ Advantages

Alertness +1
Charisma +1
Common Sense

Empathy
Intuition
Longevity
Mode Training
Reputation +3 (as Mode Training creator, advisor to the President and leader of the Core Group)
Status 4
Strong Will +3
Wealth (Very Wealthy)

■ Disadvantages

Enemies (Several opponents and detractors around the world)
Reputation -4 (among a small group, those who believe he has seized control of the government)
Sense of Duty (Humanity)

■ Quirks

Always gets the last word.

■ Skills

Administration-17; Bard-18; Carousing-13; Computer Operation-17; Computer Programming-19; Detect Lies-17; Diplomacy-17; Ecology-18; Economics-20; History-20; Leadership-19; Politics-17; Psychology-20; Research-18; Teaching-18; Writing-19; Xenology-16.

Dr. Foreman is a multi-talented genius whose achievements include writing dozens of science fiction novels and television scripts, helping to develop artificial intelligence in computers (see p. 9), and creating the controversial Mode Training (see p. 11). Under the pen name "Solomon Short," he writes an influential column of witticisms (see p. 27) which encourages people to see life realistically yet not give up. He is currently leading the Core Group, a team of people from all walks of life and all parts of the world who are committed to fighting the infestation; he is also part of the Chtorran Control Agency, and personally advises the U.S. president. His obvious influence over several high-ranking members of the government has led to accusations that he is leading a plot to take over the country, or even the whole world.

Most of all, Dr. Foreman is concerned with results. Mode training and most of his philosophy are geared to changing the



perception people have of themselves and of the world around them into one that produces both results and a commitment to producing results. His charismatic, cynical style puts off as many people as it charms.

Dr. Moyra Zymph



ST:9

DX:10

Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d-1

Dodge: 5

IQ: 15

HT:10

Point Total: 178

■ Advantages

Eidetic Memory
Patron (U.S. Government)
Reputation +3 (as expert on the Chtorran problem)
Status 4

■ Disadvantages

Appearance (Ugly)
Enemies (High-ranking officials in the military and in the scientific community)
Paranoia
Workaholic

■ Quirks

Concerned about secrecy
Humorless

■ Skills

Biochemistry-21; Chemistry-19; Computer Operations-16; Diagnosis-17; Ecology-19; Genetics-18; Naturalist-20; NBC Warfare-16; Physician-18; Physiology-18; Research-20; Surgery-12; Xenology-19; Zoology-17.

Dr. Zymph is the head of the scientific arm of the anti-Chtorran effort. Her previous work was mostly in biological warfare and other top-secret projects. As a result, she tends to be secretive about her research; many scientists resent this, since the availability of information is the only way to avoid duplicating

much scientific research at a time when time and manpower are scarce. A brilliant scientist, Dr. Zymph has very little charm, and is personally liked by very few people. She is considered to be the leading academic expert on the Chtorran infestation, although she has had no field experience in dealing with the aliens.

Captain Archibald "Duke" Anderson

ST: 13 **IQ:** 12 **Speed:** 6.75
DX: 13 **HT:** 14 **Move:** 6
Damage: Thrust 1d; Swing 2d-l
Dodge: 6 **Parry:** 12 (Brawling), 7 (Spear),
8 (Knife)

Point Total: 385

Advantages

Combat Reflexes
Military Rank 4
Reputation +3 (military personnel)
Strong Will +4

Disadvantages

Age
Bad Temper
Bloodlust (Chtorrans Only)
Extremely Hazardous Duty
Intolerance (Civilians and homosexuals)
Sense of Duty (Nation)

Quirks

Has difficulty expressing feelings
Has absolute distrust for all Chtorran things
Doesn't want to get close to anybody

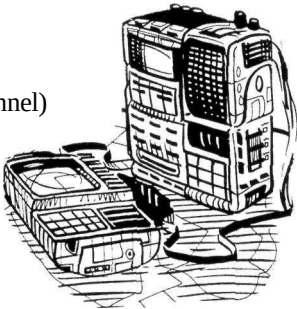
Skills

Administration-11; Armoury/TL8 (Guns)-14; Brawling-17; Camouflage-15; Climbing-14; Computer Hacking-12; Computer Operations-12; Demolition/TLL8-15; Driving (Tracked Vehicles)-

12; Driving (Wheeled Vehicles)-15; Driving (Hovercraft)-12; Electronics Operation/TL8 (Communications)-14; Electronics Operation/TL8 (Robots)-13; Engineer/TL8 (Combat)-12; First Aid/TL8-13; Forward Observer/TL8-13; Guns/TLL8 (Anti-Armor Infantry Weapons)-17; Guns/TL8 (Assault Rifle)-17; Guns/TL8 (Flamethrower)-18; Guns/TL8 (Grenade Launcher)-17; Guns/TL8 (Machine Gun)-16; Guns/TL8 (Pistol)-16; History (U.S.)-14; Intelligence Analysis-14; Interrogation-14; Intimidation-17; Jumping-13; Knife-15; Leadership-17; Mechanic/TL8-11; NBC Warfare/TL8-14; No-Landing Extraction-14; Orienteering-14; Parachuting-13; Photography-10; Savoir-Faire (Military)-15; Scrounging-14; Spear-13; Stealth-15; Survival (Chtorran)-13; Survival (Desert)-14; Survival (Jungle)-14; Survival (Mountain)-17; Swimming-13; Tactics-16; Teaching-14; Thrown Weapon (Hand Grenade)-16; Traps/TL8-14.

Duke Anderson was a Pakistan veteran and long-time Special Forces soldier, working with the Uncle Ira Group (see p. 21). An incident during the Pakistan War made it impossible for him to advance beyond the rank of captain. Despite this, he continued to serve. The war against the Chtorr has cost him most of his friends and loved ones; he tends to be reserved and unemotional, except when it comes to showing anger. He harbors an intense hatred for all of the Chtorr, and will not accept any compromise with the aliens.

During a reconnaissance flight over Chtorr-infested areas, Duke, McCarthy and Tirelli crash landed in the midst of a pink storm (see p. 77). In an encounter with Chtorrans, Duke was horribly burned by his own flamethrowers. As a result, he lost both legs and an arm, and was crippled for life. He apparently committed suicide with a grenade that McCarthy provided for him.



Dr. Lois Fletcher

ST: 10 **IQ:** 14 **Speed:** 5.25
DX: 10 **HT:** 11 **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d
Dodge: 5

Point Total: 155

Advantages

Appearance (Attractive)
Patron (U.S. Government)
Status 3
Strong Will+1

Disadvantages

Bad Temper
Duty
Sense of Duty (Friends)

Quirks

Sarcastic

Dislikes military paranoia
Low tolerance for arrogance or stupidity

Skills

Animal Handling-13; Bard-13; Computer Operations-16; Diagnosis-13; Driving-11; Ecology-14; Electronics Operation (Sensors)-14; Forensics-13; Genetics-15; Hypnotism-13; Intimidation-14; Naturalist-14; Physician-13; Physiology-17; Psychology-17; Research-18; Xenology-16; Zoology-17.

Dr. Fletcher is a top scientist at the Chtorran Control Agency. She has overseen several research projects on the trainability and intelligence of gastropedes, and on ways of communicating with them. She oversaw the first and last attempt to communicate with the gastropedes through their client species, the bunnydogs (see p. 39). The experiment ended in disaster, and her reputation has suffered as a result. A very capable scientist, Dr. Fletcher does not deal well with any behavior she considers stupid, and she will cheerfully use her sharp tongue on offenders.



4

THE CHTORR

SHOW LOW

Chtorr (ktor), *n.*

1. The planet Chtorr, presumed to exist within 30 light years of Earth.
2. The star system in which the planet occurs; possibly a red giant star, presently unidentified.
3. The ruling species of the planet Chtorr; generic.
4. In formal usage, either one or many members of the ruling species of the planet Chtorr; a Chtorr, the Chtorr. (See **Chtor-ran**)
5. The glottal chirruping cry of a Chtorr.

Chtor-ran (ktor 'in), *adj.* 1. Of or relating to either the planet or the star system, Chtorr. 2. Native to Chtorr.
n. 1. Any creature native to Chtorr. 2. In common usage, a member of the primary species, the (presumed) intelligent life form of Chtorr. (*pl.* **Chtor-rans**)

- *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language Century 21 Edition, unabridged.*



The Earth of *The War Against the Chtorr* is not just being invaded; it is being transformed into a world suitable for Chtorran ecology. In effect, the Earth is being "terraformed" by an alien species. The plagues were tailored to reduce the numbers of the planet's dominant species - humankind. It is believed that the Chtorran life forms are designed to finish the job, eliminating all native species or incorporating them into the Chtorran food chain.

Hundreds of species have been catalogued, and there may be hundreds more. The most notable alien is, of course, the great carnivorous worm, usually called Chtorran or gastropede. This powerful creature is at the top of the Chtorran food chain - at least for the time being. Some theorists believe that the current species are only the first wave of a series of invasions, and that the next "batch" of Chtorran species will be even more vicious and sophisticated.

Known Facts

Despite years of frantic research by the surviving scientific community, there are precious few facts available to the students of the Chtorran ecology. The chemistry of Chtorran animals and plants is almost identical to that of terrestrial species, which allows the aliens to survive on Earth and feed on native creatures. Chtorran animals cannot be classified according to traditional biological categories, however; they are not reptiles, mammals or insects, although individual species have characteristics from some of those families. Some clues about the planet of origin of the Chtorr have been gleaned from the characteristics of the species, but we have very little factual evidence.

The Chtorran Homeworld

Studying the alien species that have invaded our planet has provided some clues as to what type of world they originated from. Chtorran animals seem to favor red light over other types. Their habits indicate that bright yellow sunlight is not attractive to them, probably because they are not used to it. Their structure and behavior also help to show what kind of planet evolved them.

It is widely believed that the Chtorran homeworld is a large, dense planet with higher gravity than Earth's (between 1.1 and 1.5 G). It rotates around an old red star, probably close to total collapse. This would indicate that the planet Chtorr may not be habitable for long, which might explain the reasons behind the invasion. Chtorr's atmosphere is denser but has a lower concentration of oxygen than Earth's. A human visitor would find himself on a misty world surrounded by a deep reddish haze, due both to atmospherical density and the color of its star.

Having evolved on a planet like this, most Chtorran animals are tougher and stronger than might be guessed from their size. They are also more efficient breathers, since their systems are designed to extract oxygen from a poorer atmosphere. The low light conditions created by a red sun explain the superior night sight found almost universally among Chtorran creatures, as well as their dislike of bright sunshine. Still, whatever discomfort they feel in Earth's sunlight rarely deters them from going about their business (which usually entails *eating*).

The Chtorran Ecology

The Chtorran Ecology was eating us alive.

The microorganisms alone had killed billions of people. Those of us who survived still had to deal with the sea sludge, the stingflies, the bladderbugs, the red kudzu, the oilworms, the "grabgrass," the binnies, the libbits, the meeps - and ofcourse, always and inevitably, the worms.

- A Day for Damnation



Where Did They Come From?

Everyone agrees that the Chtorr are an extraterrestrial species; they are too alien and too complex to be either mutations or the result of native bioengineering techniques. There has been no concrete evidence of an alien presence on the planet, however - no confirmed spaceship sightings, no traces of alien technology, no signs that we have been visited from another planet have been found.

The most likely possibility is that the Chtorr invasion was launched in unmanned probes, each containing the seeds for the Chtorran ecology. The ships did not even have to travel faster-than-light; this would mean that the aliens were planning for the long-term survival of their species (also, it could mean that the masterminds of the invasion are millions of years dead). The seed ships would crash-land on arrival, or break up and release small capsules, each containing Chtorran lifeforms.

One of the most recent discoveries about the Chtorran ecology supports this theory. Before the discovery, the biggest problem scientists had in explaining the mechanism of the invasion was the delivery system. How could anyone make sure that the whole invading ecology would arrive safely on the targeted planet? If even one piece were missing, there would be a significant chance that the whole Chtorran invasion would fail. And fertilized eggs, even those of tough creatures like millipedes, are very fragile things. An unmanned ship could not be expected to make a gentle entry through a planet's atmosphere. Most embryonic life forms, Chtorran or terrestrial, would die in the process of getting here.

Many things were answered when a Special Forces team discovered a *stationary* shambler tree herd (see p. 48). Beneath the shamblers was a huge underground complex, a complex made up of biological components that regulated the pressure and temperature of the deeper chambers. At the bottom of the complex the team found a biological factory - a place that gave birth to every Chtorran species. The shambler trees were, in effect, the "mothers" of all Chtorrans.



Where Did They Come From? (Continued)

"See, a shambler tree seed is one of the few things you can drop from space with a reasonable expectation of it surviving intact. It sheds its outer skin, layer after layer, like a series of drogues. . . . If conditions are right, it grows into a shambler bush, later a tree . . . pretty soon, you have a herd of shamblers prowling around the countryside. What are they looking for? A place with the right combination of sunlight and water and soil and probably even prey animals for the tenants. The grove of shamblers takes up a position, they sink their roots, they link up and begin growing a large central underground chamber . . . That's when some of the organs of the shambler start maturing . . . they grow into this stuff, all these tunnels, pipes and tubes. . . . The big red blubbers are egg factories. All the other things are the support systems. . . . These groves - all over the world - are how the infestation started."

-A Season for Slaughter

Now that it is known that shambler groves are infestation factories, they will be targeted for destruction. It is, of course, too late to stop the already mature Chtorran animals from reproducing themselves, but at least this will stop the original source of alien animals from replenishing the ranks of the invaders.

The seedships that delivered the Chtorr to Earth must have been small and slower than light, to prevent detection. It might be significant that some of the first sightings of Chtorran species (like the cotton candy plant - see p. 46) occurred shortly after a spectacular meteor shower. The only good thing about the theory that the seedships were slower than light is that the real Chtorrans will have no control over the invasion. On the other hand, maybe they are so confident of the results that they felt no need to supervise the process.

Even though there are hundreds of catalogued alien species on Earth, they are still far too few to form a complete ecology. It is suspected that the species introduced to Earth are designed both to produce a simplified version of the Chtorran ecology and to eliminate or dominate native life forms. Scientists believe that the Chtorran creatures come from an ecosystem that is half a *billion* years older than ours; as a result, they are much more advanced. Left to its own devices, our ecology is helpless against the Chtorr's. Only human intelligence may stem the tide.

Wherever Chtorran species manage to gain a foothold, they soon dominate the area. Chtorran predators are tougher, faster and more voracious than Terran ones; they quickly starve local predators out, or hunt them down. Alien herbivores destroy the native flora, driving out grazing animals. Chtorran parasites are some of the first invaders to arrive, and their effects are fast and profound; an organism that is a minor nuisance (or even beneficial) to a Chtorran species is usually deadly to native creatures. Trees are covered by red kudzu (see p. 47) and soon choke to death; Chtorran plants, led by the migratory shambler tree (see p. 48), establish themselves in place of the victims. Many alien plants produce chemical by-products that are poisonous or hallucinogenic, at least to Terran animals; this leads to more casualties among the native life forms, emptying ecological niches that the Chtorran species are all too ready to fill.

Several minor alien species form a definite food chain (see below). One frightening exception is the Chtorran gastropede: no alien species can serve as its only source of food. In fact, the only species on the planet that is plentiful and nutritious enough to satisfy the Chtorran's needs is *humankind*. The scientific community now believes that Chtorrans are designed to feed on humans to finish the job that the plagues started.



Chtorrans

The gastropedes resemble giant caterpillars covered in shiny metallic hair. Their hair color ranges from light pink to deep purple; color changes according to the gastropedes' mood. The angrier the Chtorran gets, the "redder" he becomes.

The size of a Chtorran varies widely; the younger ones are smaller than dogs, while the largest specimens are over nine feet tall and 30 feet long. Fortunately, the largest Chtorrans seem to be unable to move very far or very fast. The average size of Chtorrans increased with time, but it seems to have peaked. During the third and fourth years of the invasion, they tended to stand less than five feet at the shoulder and measure six to ten feet in length. In later years, this average has grown to almost eight feet in height and 20 to 25 feet in length.

■ Chtorran Fur

Chtorrans seem to be covered with metallic hair. This "hair," however, is actually made up of small creatures that grow in the Chtorran; these neural symbionts live in partnership with several Chtorran species. The symbionts burrow into the worm's flesh and connect to its nerve clusters. The creatures themselves, especially those that are pink in color, are made up mostly of sensory nerves. Equipped with these symbiotic nerve strands, the Chtorran is capable of smelling and tasting its environment with every inch of its body. A Chtorran uses all five senses in ways no terrestrial animal can imitate.

These enhanced senses allow Chtorrans to track by smell, sight and taste. The fur also seems to give Chtorrans a good sense of the emotions of any being touching them, or even near them; Chtorrans react to those emotions accordingly.

If a Chtorran loses its pink fur (some antibiotics like Gerromycin can cause this), its intelligence decreases drastically, and it does not move or react to outside stimuli. In two or three weeks, the red and purple hair takes over, and the worm becomes insanely violent and active. The pink fur may be the equivalent of the human brain (see below). Sadly, there has not been enough research on the subject.

The neural symbiont that forms the Chtorran hair is found on dozens of other species, including bunnydogs (see p. 39). This symbiont can grow on Terran animals and even humans (see sidebar, p. 71).

Intelligence: GM's Options

Whether or not the Chtorran gastropedes are the ruling species of their environment is still unknown. Many scientists believe that they are a semi-intelligent partner species of the true Chtorran sentients, their equivalent of dogs or dolphins. Others assert that all Chtorrans found on Earth are "feral children," actual sapient beings who have gone wild. It might even be possible that the worms' behavior reflects Chtorran growth into maturity: the larger (and presumably older) worms seem to be better able to communicate and control their environment. Every year the patterns of invasion get more sophisticated; could this be because the Chtorran "youngsters" are learning more as they grow up? The latest theory assumes that the Chtorr have a group or hive consciousness which is itself intelligent, although individual members are not.

The evidence so far is very sparse. Autopsies have not revealed any large organ corresponding to the human brain, or even an animal brain; a Chtorran seemingly does not have enough brains to feed itself. Instead, there is a very large cluster of ganglia which seems to take care of most involuntary functions. It may be that the neural symbionts (see p. 71) that grow on Chtorrans are the center of intelligence in the worm; when deprived of its fur, a Chtorran usually becomes a mindless slug and loses its sanity. All in all, no one knows whether a worm thinks, or even if it *can* think.

Chtorran "Hair"

The red, pink and white strands that coat Chtorran gastropedes, bunnydogs and countless other alien animals are not hair, but neural symbionts, little creatures, made mostly of nerve tissue, that burrow into the host body and connect to its nerve endings (see maintext). The relationship between the neural symbionts and their host has become permanent among Chtorran species, which cannot function normally if deprived of their sensory hair.

Through these hairs, the Chtorr smell, taste, see and hear their whole environment with an intensity that no Earth animal can match. Worms are superb trackers because they can *taste* tracks with their whole body, allowing them to follow chemical traces too faint to alert a bloodhound. It is almost impossible to sneak up on a worm; although it has not been clearly proven that the gastropedes can see through their hair, their other senses do have a 360-degree coverage, and they can hear and smell someone coming from any direction. It also seems possible that the symbionts are necessary for Chtorrans to communicate with each other (see p. 72). A Chtorran that loses his hair becomes mindless and apathetic at first, and then insane.

The neural symbionts can survive on Terran animals. Dogs, cattle and other domestic animals have been infested with the symbionts; the infected victims are soon covered with a thick coat of pink fur. Humans are also susceptible to infection. Humans covered with Chtorran fur are able to sense through their skin. They may not notice it at first, but their whole sensory perception will change.

Humans covered in Chtorran hair will get +5 Alertness, cumulative with any previous sensory bonus. If the neural symbionts cover a significant area of their body, they will acquire the equivalent of 360-degree Vision, at least when they are unclothed. On the other hand, they will face several problems - clothing, for one. The affected person will *taste* it on his skin, and most fabrics were not designed for flavor. The character will feel stifled by anything that covers the symbionts. Most people will react to the victim at -3, with the possible exception of renegades, many of whom willingly infect themselves with the neural symbionts. Long-term exposure to the symbionts may also have other side effects. The behavior of herd members (see p. 26) changes after they acquire a thick coat of Chtorran hair. And some people living with Chtorrans also have their whole body altered; perhaps the neural symbionts trigger a series of physiological changes.

Tame Chtorrans

It has been demonstrated that gastropedes are able to learn quickly, and that they can learn to recognize and obey verbal commands. Renegade tribes have been able to train worms to work and fight alongside humans. It is not clear whether the worms were tamed or whether they *chose* to work with the renegades.

If the gastropedes can be trained, the human forces could use them to fight other worms. It has been shown that Chtorrans have no compunction about attacking and killing each other; tame Chtorrans could do this for their masters instead of for their nest. Unfortunately, captured worms, although willing to play along with psychological tests, have not been truly "trainable," and cannot be trusted not to kill and eat humans on sight.

Renegades that train worms usually start with newborns. They hold and remain in constant contact with them in some sort of imprinting process. The baby worm learns to recognize the people who raised it and accepts them as part of its family. It seems that those worms are reluctant to attack the humans that imprinted them, and the worms and renegades work together quite well.



The GM has several choices, even when faced with players who have read the novels. The worms might be cunning, non-sapient animals, members of a smart but not fully developed partner species, extensions of a hive mind or a group of hive minds, or the wild version of the aliens who planned the invasion. The first option is the one with the least support from the novels: the continual unpredictability of the worms argues against their being simple predators. Making the Chtorr semi-intelligent creates both a challenge for the players and offers the hope that the worms could be trained to work for mankind instead of against it. The hive mind alternative is explored in the fourth book, and might be the correct assumption. The capabilities of a Chtorran group consciousness are never determined, and the GM will have to decide how intelligent the Chtorran mass-mind is. The last option is the most frightening, especially since the worms are getting older: can tool-using Chtorr (and gigantic Chtorr at that) be too far behind?

The biggest argument against Chtorran gastropedes being the sapient beings behind the invasion is simple: the worms are so well adapted to survive that they should not *need* to be intelligent. On the other hand, maybe the environment on the planet Chtorr is so harsh that even this formidable being needs brains as well as brawn to survive. After all, humans trying to terraform a planet would not introduce Earth's most dangerous predators, since they would probably not be useful to the process. Who knows if beings exist that consider the *gastropedes* a tasty treat?

Chtorran Communication

One of the big mysteries about the gastropedes is their ability to communicate. Whenever a new weapon or tactic has been introduced against the worms, it worked very well at first; after a few months, weeks, or days, depending on the effectiveness of the attack, the gastropedes developed countermeasures. When the same tactic was used on a different area, however, the worms there reacted *immediately* against it. This happened, for instance, when three weapons were tried first in Tennessee and then in Canada. The Canadian worms already knew how to deal with the weapons. This clearly indicates the gastropedes can transmit information to each other, even across vast distances.



Another sign of communication is the Chtorran "dance." When two Chtorrans meet, they will usually twine around each other and remain, locked motionless, for seconds or minutes. Experiments have shown that this dance allows knowledge to be transferred between two worms. Two captured Chtorrans were given a puzzle to solve. The first worm solved it after several tries. The two were then allowed to meet, and they engaged in the hugging ritual. At the end of it, the second Chtorran unhesitatingly solved the puzzle, as if it had been told the solution.

■ **Chtorran Psionics**

One possible means of communication among Chtorrans might be psionic telepathy. Current research is not exploring this possibility (the study of psionics has been discredited and the appearance of technological telepathy has reduced interest in parapsychology), but the possibility that the Chtorr have psionic abilities would answer many of the questions posed above. The Chtorran dance might be a form of full communion (see p. B169). The hypnotic effect of Chtorrans on some humans might be the result of some subtle telepathic manipulation, and even the paralyzing fear that a charging gastropede instills may be partially psionic. This psionic potential might explain how Chtorrans share information over great distances (see above).

The GM may decide to give the Chtorr psionic powers. In that case, a Telepathy Power level and skill may be assigned to each size of worm. Babies and young adults should have a Telepathy Power of 5-12, with Telesend, Telereceive, Suggest, Mind Shield and perhaps Aspect (see p. PS20), all at IQ or IQ-1, and Emotion Sense (free from the Empathy Advantage) at IQ level. Older Chtorrans might have a much higher power level, and even more psionic skills. In general, most Chtorran powers should be used mostly for inter-Chtorran communication. The alienness of human minds makes Chtorran attempts to communicate or to read a human mind (should a Chtorran try, which is as unlikely as a human trying to have a conversation with a steak) very difficult, with a penalty of at least -8. The same penalty would apply if a human psi tries to communicate or otherwise deal with a worm.

Advantages and Disadvantages

This section assumes that the Chtorr are members of a sapient species who act in a wild and primitive fashion because they have not been raised in a "normal" environment (see above). The point cost is given in case the GM wishes to create Chtorran NPCs, or if he wants to allow Chtorran PCs (see sidebar); the point costs for the advantages and disadvantages follow the rules from *GURPS Aliens* and *Fantasy Folk*. If Chtorran PCs are allowed, GMs may consider reducing the Hit Point cost from 8 points to 3 points; this is in consideration of the fact that TL8 weaponry make Hit Points less of an advantage in this background than in most others. Even with this reduction, the only possible alien PCs in even a cinematic campaign would be baby Chtorrans, unless the GM is prepared to allow two different point costs for human and Chtorran PCs, or is running a *Supers* campaign; for that reason, only the point cost of the youngest worm is given (see sidebar).

Chtorrans vary widely in size. The smaller ones are about a yard long and weigh less than 100 pounds. The largest mobile Chtorrans are bigger than a Greyhound bus. All Chtorrans have the following advantages: High Pain Threshold (10 points), Immunity to Disease (10 points), Independently Focusable Eyes (15 points), Night Vision (10 points), and three levels of Enhanced Move (Move x 4, 30 points). Their "hair" is actually an extremely sensitive nervous network: Chtorrans feel and taste all they touch, which gives them Acute Taste and Smell



Chtorrans as PCs

Players seeking a challenge might want to play a Chtorran gastropede in a campaign. The decision to allow Chtorrans as PCs should not be taken lightly. For one, the gastropedes, even baby ones, are extremely powerful creatures and likely to unbalance the campaign. Furthermore, a Chtorran has very few options in most campaign settings: most humans will be trying to kill it, and the gastropede will never be allowed to roam freely in a populated area, but will instead most likely be confined and carefully guarded by the authorities.

The easiest campaign for a Chtorran PC is one where the human characters are part of a renegade band (see p. 118). In that campaign, the Chtorran will be another team member, well-liked by its companions, and even worshipped as a god. Another setting could be the near future, with the assumption that the Chtorran Control Agency finally learned how to tame worms, and that now some gastropedes work for the Special Forces.

That only leaves the problems of point cost and intelligence. A baby Chtorran can be played in a cinematic campaign with 250-point characters, but any older gastropede will be worth hundreds of points, or even thousands. Also, the GM needs to determine whether the Chtorr are truly sapient beings or merely cunning animals (see p. 71). In the latter case, Chtorran PCs should not be allowed.

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Chtorrans as PCs **(Continued)**

The GM should either allow only baby Chtorrans as possible PCs, or give the PC a young adult Chtorran and 25 points to put into stats, advantages and skills, modified by disadvantages. Skill points should not exceed *three times* the creature's age, which will usually be between one and three years at most. A Chtorran PC is also limited to what skills it can learn. Tracking, any Survival, Stealth and Brawling are all allowed; technical skills, in general, are not. Gastropedes may or may not be able to understand a language, but it is most likely that their comprehension of verbal commands is only a little more sophisticated than a dog's. Chtorrans have not been depicted wielding weapons, but it is theoretically possible that they could be trained in their use, if a weapon system were designed to be used by their oversized hands (see sidebar, p. 75).



+5 (10 points), as well as a +5 bonus to Tracking rolls. They can also sense hostility and emotions from humans around them (Empathy, 15 points).

Something in a Chtorran's internal structure greatly reduces the damage bullets can do to them: all kinetic attack damage (from hand-held weapons, bullets, grenade fragments, etc.) that penetrates a Chtorran's DR is divided by 10 (round down) before being applied to its Hit Points.

Example: A 7mm Weatherby round hits a Chtorran with DR 10 and does 33 points of damage; 23 points get through, which are then divided by 10, so the Chtorran takes only 2 points of damage - almost no damage at all.

This advantage is worth 90 points. Additionally, they regenerate damage at the rate of 1 Hit Point per hour (Regular Regeneration, 25 points). Their bite attacks do impaling damage (10 points).

Chtorrans get a -4 reaction from most human beings (-20 points). A Chtorran must eat almost constantly (1/10 its mass in meat every day, or 1/3 its mass in tree bark or vegetable material); this counts as a Dependency on Food (daily, lose 1 HT per hour after missing a daily dose), costing -30 points. They are compulsive eaters, continuing to consume food even when satiated (Gluttony disadvantage, -5 points). In combat, they go into insane rages if wounded (Berserk disadvantage, -15 points). They are also vulnerable to fire: all fire attacks (including the hot jets from shaped-charge explosives) do an extra 2d of damage (-30 points; the GM may rule that lasers and energy weapons also do this extra damage; see sidebar, p. 76). This is mainly because the fire destroys the neural "hair," which apparently causes intense pain and seems to destroy the Chtorran's ability to think!

So far, all Chtorrans found on Earth have the Primitive disadvantage at TL 0 (-40 points).

The arms of a Chtorran are thin in comparison to the rest of its body, but they are very strong. They have no bones, being made of cartilage and muscle tissue, which makes them very flexible and hard to break. They end in clawed hands that can manipulate objects and tools. It might be possible for a Chtorran to learn to use hand weapons and equipment.

■ **Newborn Chtorrans**

Newborn Chtorrans are only 6 to 8 inches long when they come out of the egg. They grow very quickly, and can be considered "baby" within a month if properly fed.

Newborns have no significant skills or combat abilities, though they could deliver a nasty bite (1d-2 damage). Hit points depend on size.

A "big newborn," not yet baby-sized, could be treated for combat purposes as a millipede of equivalent size - see p. 42.

■ **Baby Chtorrans**

Baby Chtorrans are one hex or less in size, and weigh between 100 to 200 lbs. Use the weight of a human of the same ST (without the Increased ST modifier). They look cuddly and harmless (+1 to reaction rolls, reducing normal reaction rolls to -3, or +1 when observed by humans who do not know about Chtorrans, 5 points). They are *not* harmless, however. Baby Chtorrans have one level of Increased ST (50 points) for a beginning ST of 20, IQ-1 (-10 points), HT+2 (20 points), ten Extra Hit Points (80/30 points) and their skin gives them a DR of 5 (25 points). Unlike the bite of most Terran animals (see p. B140), their bite does impaling damage, due to their sharp, multi-rowed teeth. Baby Chtorrans can be quite formidable adversaries.

The cost to play a baby Chtorran is 255 points (205 points if using the option on p. 74).

■ Young Chtorrans

Young Chtorrans range in size from 2 to 3 yards, and mass between 400 and 2,000 lbs. Their ST ranges from 30 to 50, and their Hit Points from 50 to 200 (for a full description of young Chtorrans, see p. 38).

■ Adult Chtorrans

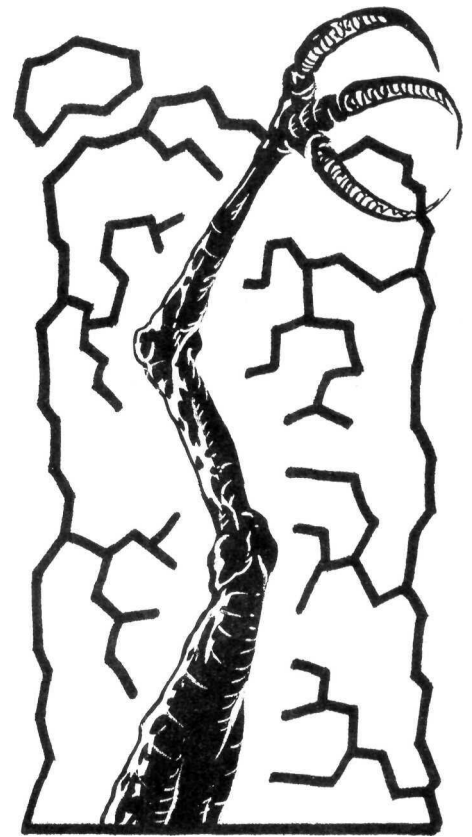
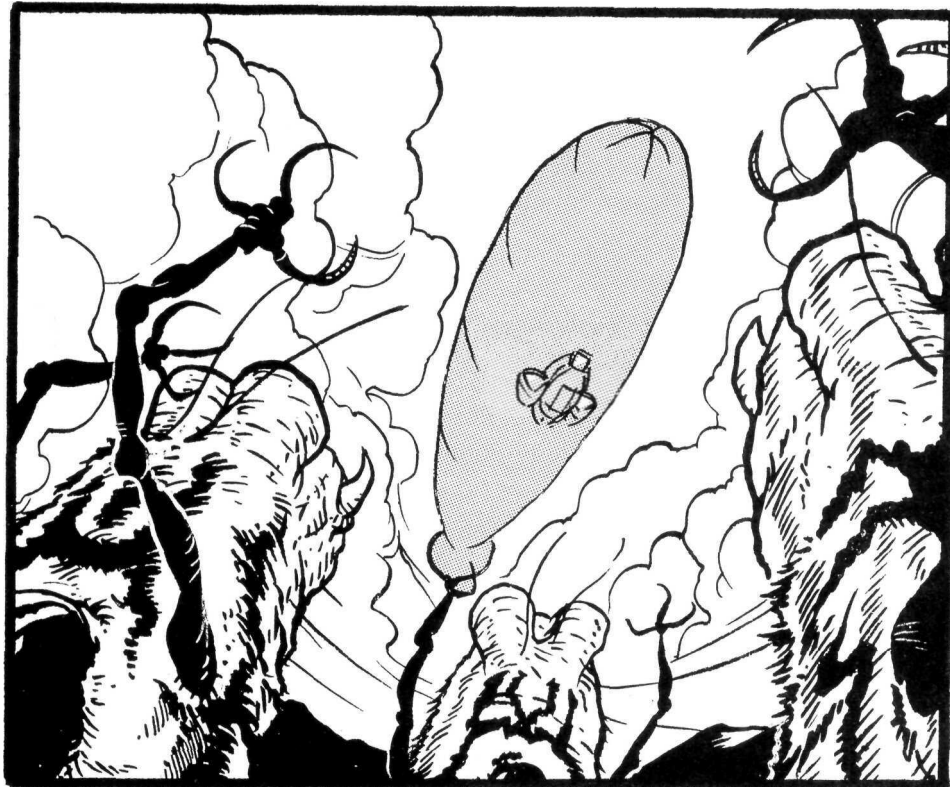
It is not clear how big a Chtorran can get; some Chtorrans as big as buses have been observed, and in *A Rage for Revenge*, McCarthy glimpses an even bigger worm. Their length starts at 5 yards, and their weight at one ton. The strength of the largest Chtorrans can be as high as 300; they can rip through military vehicles. See p. 38.

Some Chtorrans eventually grow too large to move on their own. At that point they weigh between six and eight tons, and simply cannot consume enough food to get the energy they need to move. These "big papas" retire to their nests, where they subsist for a while on a syrupy concoction that fills a special chamber prepared just for the elder Chtorran. When they die, the nest breaks down the Chtorran into useful materials.

Eating Habits

Worms have a voracious appetite that has quickly become legendary. They can eat any Terran or Chtorran animal or plant, and seem to prefer meat, due to its higher energy content. A "tame" Chtorran will not eat someone it has come to recognize as a friend - unless nothing else is available. For the most part, they prefer fresh meat, alive if possible. Although Chtorrans will kill other Chtorrans in inter-nest wars, there are no well-documented cases of a worm eating another worm.

Chtorrans track their prey by smell; they are attracted to human scent and have also learned to recognize and track the smell of human equipment and machinery. It is almost impossible to shake off a pursuing Chtorran, except in a very fast vehicle.



Chtorrans and Technology

With their manipulative ability and quick comprehension, it is very likely that Chtorrans can learn to use tools and weapons. On the other hand, the gastropedes might not feel any desire to learn; after all, their bodies are super-efficient killing machines, and their pets and symbiotic organisms take care of construction and most complicated chores, leaving the gastropedes free to do the only thing they seem to want to do ... hunt down and eat prey animals. Still, since renegades and gastropedes continue working together, and if the U.S. government succeeds in taming worms, someone will eventually try to mate Chtorrans with equipment. A gun-toting Chtorran would be a terror, rushing toward its target at 60 miles an hour while pouring fire into them. Weapon systems could be designed to fit the Chtorran's hands, which are more than dextrous enough to pull triggers and press buttons. Maybe suits of armor could be designed to fit the worms.

These developments are not likely to take place in the U.S. even if worms are tamed; there is far too much hatred and suspicion of the Chtorran ecology for that. American military leaders are likely to prefer their robotic worms (p. 92) to the real thing. There are several Fourth World countries that would be inclined to equip gastropedes, especially if they could be used against the U.S. in any way.



Chtorrans and Other Weapon Systems

The novels do not show how energy weapons work against Chtorrans, and they do not deal with ultra-tech TL9+ weapon systems, because they do not exist in that setting. GMs wishing to set a *Chtorr* campaign in the far future will need to decide what effects ultra-tech weapons will have on the Chtorr. Some options are outlined below.

Lasers: Lasers do normal impaling damage, which is *not* divided by 10.

Blasters: Blasters work like fire against Chtorrans, doing +2d damage, and not subject to the damage reduction.

Flamers: These plasma throwers do *triple* damage against the Chtorran physiology, plus the +2d damage all fire weapons do against it; in a far-future setting, they might be the weapons of choice.

Electrolasers: These "zap-guns" are almost useless against Chtorrans. They do no damage to the worms; on the Kill setting, they will stun the worm if it fails a HT roll. Otherwise they just make it mad.

Screamers and Sonic Blades: They work normally against the Chtorr.

Disruptors: These microwave emitters do normal damage.

Gauss Needlers: These weapons are unlikely to penetrate the skin of a Chtorran, and will do no damage anyway (damage is still divided by 10); they would be useless. Gauss slugthrowers (see p. UT51) work as well (or as poorly) as any other slugthrower.

Paralysis Guns: These weapons are resisted by the Chtorr by a HT+2 roll; a failure means that the worm is at -2 to DX and IQ, and a success means that it is unaffected.

Force Swords: They do normal damage.

Monomolecular and Vibro-Blades: Any damage that penetrates DR is divided by 10..

The teeth of a Chtorran are very sharp and arranged in multiple rows. When their mouths are closed, the teeth aim inward; biting down forces the food in, where other rows of teeth continue rending the food. The problem with this tooth arrangement is that a Chtorran literally cannot stop eating something after it is in its mouth: the object is snagged in the sharp teeth and drawn further inside with every shredding gulp. The only way to stop the chewing is for the Chtorran to pull the food out of its mouth with its arms; if the victim is still alive at this point, pulling it out of the Chtorran's mouth will tear it to pieces!

Chtorrans in Combat

An attacking Chtorran is a fearsome sight: a massive, richly-colored worm, moving with uncanny speed while loudly bellowing "Chtorr!", is enough to freeze or panic even experienced soldiers. People who have not had extensive dealings with the worms have to make Fright Checks at -3 when confronting a charging Chtorran. Their speed is incredible for creatures of their size; a charging Chtorran will travel at almost 60 miles per hour (a Move of 30!). The gastropede's favorite tactic is to rear up the upper third of its body and then smash down on their foe, crushing it and biting it at the same time.

The worm rolls against DX to hit; the only possible defense is a Dodge, although a Block with a shield might stop the bite attack. (If the block is successful, use the Damage to Shields rule on p. B120; the bite does no damage, but the slam may shatter the shield and perhaps break the arm holding it and even crush the target anyway!) The slam does Thrust damage, based on the Chtorran's ST, followed by bite damage. Against a human, this is almost invariably fatal. Body armor protects with only 1/10 of its normal DR, due to the weight and size of the Chtorran, so characters trying to make themselves immune to attack by wearing a Second Chance Hardcorps System (see p. B211) are out of luck. If there is no room for a slamming bite, the Chtorran will simply try to bite the victim.



■ **Attacking a Chtorran**

Hurting a Chtorran is not easy. Bullet damage is negligible (see above) unless the vulnerable spots are targeted, as discussed below. Thousands of lives were lost to get this information.

Of course, a Chtorran can simply be shot to pieces. It can be knocked out if it is reduced to 0 HT. The worm has to make HT rolls to stay conscious normally, and is killed when it reaches -5xHT.

Eyes: Blinding a Chtorran is only partially effective, due to the neural symbionts that cover its body; a blinded Chtorran will be able to find targets by sound and smell, and will be at only -2 DX to hit.

Eye Base: Actually a better target than the eyes - easier to hit and just as vulnerable. Destroying this area will take out both eyes. But only professional Chtorr-killers will realize this.

Braincase: A misnomer: this is actually the hard point that anchors the Chtorran's arms. Damage here counts as damage to the arms, divided evenly between them, and it is easier to hit.

Arms: Either of these is crippled if it takes over 1/10 the Chtorran's Hit Points (round down). Note that while this keeps the worm from grabbing things, it doesn't affect its bite-and-slam attack in the least.

Mouth: A rocket down the mouth will do much more damage, depending on the type of rocket fired; see individual weapon descriptions. The Chtorran's mouth is always open in combat, but there is still a penalty to hit it. The table below assumes that the Chtorran is charging *you* - if it is attacking someone else, the GM may assess an additional penalty because the mouth isn't dead-on to you.

■ **Chtorran Target Points**

	Eyes (each)	Eye Base	Braincase
<i>Newborn</i>	-12 to hit, no DR, 1 HP	-8 to hit, no DR, 1 HP	-7 to hit, DR 1
<i>Baby</i>	-8 to hit, no DR, 3 HP	-6 to hit, DR 1, 3 HP	-5 to hit, DR 2
<i>Young Adult</i>	-4 to hit, DR 2, 6 HP	-2 to hit, DR 2, 6 HP	-1 to hit, DR 4
<i>Adult</i>	-1 to hit, DR 4, 8 HP	+1 to hit, DR 2, 8 HP	+2 to hit, DR 4

	Arms (each)	Mouth
<i>Newborn</i>	-13 to hit, DR 2	-10 to hit
<i>Baby</i>	-9 to hit, DR 4	-5 to hit
<i>Young Adult</i>	-5 to hit, DR 6	-3 to hit
<i>Adult</i>	-1 to hit, DR 6	-2 to hit



■ **Flamethrowers and Explosives**

A flamethrower is the most effective weapon against the gastropedes. There is no need to choose a point to aim at. The damage is not divided by 10, and three or four seconds of a steady flame jet will kill most Chtorrans. Of course, the worm may reach the attacker in less than three rounds, in which case it may be able to take its killer with it.

A big enough rocket or grenade will neutralize a charging Chtorran - sometimes. Explosive damage is also divided by 10 after penetrating DR, but a grenade or other exploding ordnance that goes off while in contact with a Chtorran will do *double* damage before being reduced. A conventional explosive going off *inside* a Chtorran (an armor-piercing explosive round or a rocket, for instance) will do *five times* its normal damage and that damage is *not* reduced. Normally, the only way to achieve this is to shoot the rocket down the charging worm's mouth. Cold rockets (p. 98) do triple damage if they go off inside the mouth.

The only weapon that can achieve 100% immediate kills on gastropedes is an EMP grenade (see p. 98), and those are equally fatal to unshielded humans in their radius of effect.



Pink Storms

Chtorran "storms" are a biological, not meteorological, phenomenon. The pink clouds are actually the remains of millions of dead Chtorran plants. The storms are followed by a feeding frenzy among all Chtorran species, and are one of the few ways to gorge a group of worms. They are also harmful to human bodies and equipment.

The storm begins when billions of cotton candy plants (see p. 46) explode and become airborne. They create enormous clouds until they gather enough moisture to become heavier than air and begin "snowing" copiously. Hundreds of square miles can be covered by this pink snow. This powder is so fine that it plays havoc with jet engines and any complex machinery: unless they have been very well insulated, aircraft and other vehicles will break down minutes or even seconds after being exposed to a candy cloud. The powder is also very flammable, and hot engines may ignite it on contact.

Visibility is greatly reduced. Rolls to notice anything are at -1 per 2 yards of distance (modified by the size of the object to be seen). After the dust settles, this is no longer a problem.

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Pink Storms (Continued)

Humans and Terran animals who inhale the dust must make a HT roll (at -1 to -5 depending on the severity of the exposure; being out in the open without protection for half an hour or longer will call for a HT-5 roll) to shake off its effects. On a success, the person still takes 1d-3 (minimum 1) points of damage to his lungs; breathing will be labored and wracked by coughing (-2 to DX, double all Fatigue suffered from physical actions) for 18-HT hours. On a failed roll, the person is affected as above and also acquires "pink lung disease"; HT hours after exposure, the person's ST and DX are reduced by 8, and he may die. Unless treated by TL6+ medical equipment within 24 hours, the victim has to make a HT-6 roll: on a success, he takes 5d damage. On a failure, he will die in HT hours; if medical treatment is made available before then, the patient will survive, but will still take 2d damage. On a critical failure, the person will die in HT/2 hours, and even if treated, will lose 1 HT permanently from lung damage. Survivors who fail a HT+2 roll will also be infected with the Chtorran neural symbionts (see p. 71).

When the "snow" settles down, it can accumulate to the depth of several feet. Pink storms have completely buried some cities. The mass of pink powder will smother most terrestrial life forms in the area. If it rains, the dust will turn into mud and then will dry into a concrete-hard, sugary coating which some Chtorran creatures can eat ... but which destroys any Earthly life underneath.

If it does not rain, the Chtorran ecology has a sure way to clean the dust off. Within hours after the dust has fallen, Chtorran animals start flocking to the area to eat the dust. Small creatures like pipe-cleaner bugs and finger babies are among the first to arrive. Then night-stalkers and other small predators come to the feast and start feeding on the first arrivals. They are followed by the predators that eat the predators and so on, a speeded-up and concentrated replay of the entire Chtorran food chain. At the end of it, of course, the Chtorran gastropedes arrive and eat everything else, including any humans caught in the storm.



Psychology

Individual Chtorrans have distinct personalities; other than their voracious appetite, there are few common traits. Some Chtorrans are friendly and cuddly to their human "friends," while others behave rudely to them. Since all Chtorrans found so far are only a few years old, it is unknown how mature or intelligent they can become. Some Chtorrans in the novels have evidenced a sense of humor, curiosity, bad temper and other "human" traits. They also seem to be able to understand human language, or at least the basic meaning behind some phrases. They care for each other, and some worms will fly into berserk rages if a fellow Chtorran is killed or hurt.

Some gastropedes also seem to care for their human and bunnydog companions. On the other hand, whenever they are hungry, they seem to feel no compunction about grabbing and eating a nearby human or bunnydog. At most, gastropedes seem to feel for humans what humans feel for cattle; maybe some affection, but nothing that will stop them from butchering the animals for dinner.

■ Chtorran Dancing

The two worms goggled their eyes at each other, chirped, and trilled. They circled each other like boxers. . . . The two worms suddenly leapt at each other and writhed together like snakes, turning and tumbling across the floor of the chamber. First one, then the other, was on top. It looked almost like a combat to the death. . . . Suddenly, the two worms froze in position. They were wrapped rigidly around each other. They held like lovers at climax; their bodies were as tense as steel.

- A Day for Damnation



A little-understood Chtorran behavior is their dance or mating ritual, in which two or more worms link with each other and start a series of elaborate movements. It is believed that this is a form of advanced Chtorran communication (see p. 72). Whenever Chtorrans encounter each other, they participate in the dance if they can. This is probably to exchange "news." The whole dance usually takes a few minutes or less, although longer dances have been seen. Occasionally, worms will lie together in their nest for hours on end, wrapped around each other and moving once every few minutes, in a slow-motion version of the dance.

Humans witnessing this slow dance can become hypnotized by it. Unless the human makes a Will roll, he will be entranced by the beauty of the dance and will be unable to interrupt it. This may indicate that the dance has some empathic components that affect other sapient species. Usually, the Chtorr are not aggressive while dancing, so humans can actually approach them in relative safety (a sudden flurry of movement on the part of the dancing Chtorr can accidentally crush a nearby human, though).

■ **The Chtorran Song**

I could feel the song of the worms. It vibrated up my arm, through my spine and around my heart. It filled me with emotion - sadness and yearning and hope. . . . The song of the worms filled my eyes and my ears - I vibrated with it. The hum came rumbling up through my chest. It came out my mouth. I found the note and crooned it back to them. Mmmmmmm. So beautiful. So happy. I could die here -

- A Matter for Men

Along with the dance, Chtorrans also engage in a communal "song." The song has little rhythm at first, until all the members of the nest or mandala have taken it up. Some observers have compared it to a gigantic "Om" chant, where all the singers are joined as one. This song changes from mandala to mandala, and it may be a way to provide an identity for each Chtorran community.

During a research mission in the Amazon, a huge airship resembling a giant worm flew over an enormous community of hundreds of thousands of worms. The worms started singing at it. The airship broadcast the song of another community to the worms. Some gastropedes started singing the new song, while others tried to drown them out with their own. Suddenly, the new singers started fighting with the others, and a berserk fury seemed to engulf the whole Chtorran city. The worms tore each other, and everything within reach, to pieces. The whole community killed itself in a blind, furious combat.

What Do We Know?

Information about the Chtorr, both from field teams and from lab researchers, is being coordinated as fast as possible. The U.S. government collects its hard data - and a lot of its best guesses - in a hyperstack called *The Red Book*.

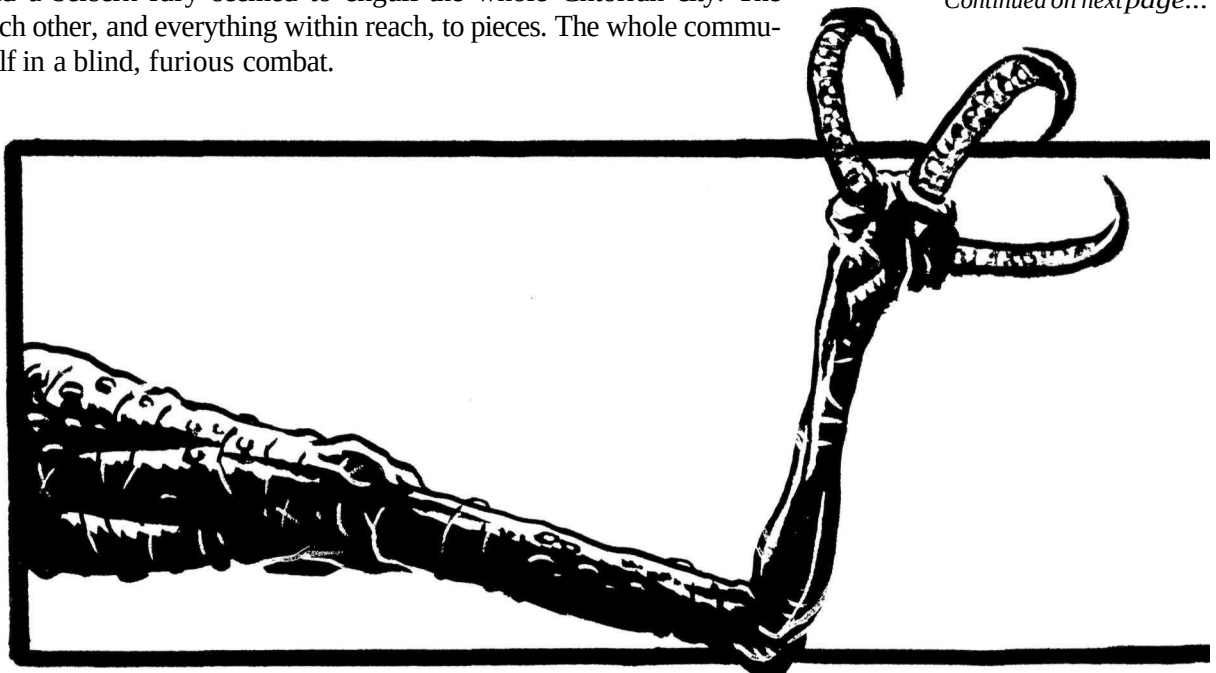
Versions of the *Red Book* are available to anyone - even civilians. However, because it is a data hyperstack rather than just a text file, it is very easy to classify bits of information without the reader ever knowing. The *Red Book*, as seen by a civilian, is very different from the "same" book as seen by a general.

The *Red Book* is not just text; it includes maps, drawings, photographs, even moving pictures. And, of course, the *Book* is constantly updated, as new material comes in and old theories are tested and changed. In fact, material like maps and statistics is updated in realtime . . . if it's read on the Net rather than from a storage cube, it will call actual satellite photos, databases and so on for the most up-to-date material available at the reader's security level.

While there is no one author of the *Red Book*, Jim McCarthy is probably the single most important contributor. Whole "chapters" started with his raw field notes.

In game terms, a copy of the *Red Book* will give at least a +1 to all Survival (Chtorran) or Xenology rolls . . . if the user has time to scan through it! The higher the user's clearance, and the better the computer he's using to "read" it, the better the modifier it will give and the faster it can be used. The maximum bonus would be +6, in 5 minutes, for a top-clearance user with realtime access to the L.I. engines of the Net.

Continued on next page...



What Do We Know? (Continued)

The White Book

When James McCarthy returned from the Amazon (*A Method for Madness*), he started work on a new database, which was codenamed the *White Book*. It is more than an update of the *Red Book* - it challenges most of the basic assumptions there, including many of McCarthy's own, earlier notes. Dr. Foreman, General Wallachstein, and McCarthy's other superiors feel the *White Book* notes are far too valuable to ignore . . . but far too terrifying to release, or even to base serious planning upon, until they can be independently tested and verified. So far, anything in the *White Book* that can be tested has passed the test . . . but its most important conclusions will take decades to check out, and mankind may not have decades.

A copy of the *White Book*, at least in the first year after McCarthy started working on it, would be in effect an appendix to the *Red Book*, available only to very top-level people. It would be worth an *additional* +4 to Survival (Chtorran) or Xenology rolls, over and above the top *Red Book* bonus . . . in the unlikely event that someone cleared to read it was in trouble in the field.



What this means is not yet clear. Maybe each community has its own identity, and a different identity cannot be tolerated. This indicates that large Chtorran populations may war against each other.

The seductive effect of the song is even greater than that of the dance. The vibrations of the singing overwhelm most people and make them want to join in. To resist, a listener must make a Will-4 roll (unmodified Will roll for someone Fanatically opposed to the Chtorr).

Chtorran Nests

Gastropedes build dwellings to live in; at this point most scientists believe this is an instinctive behavior, much like bees building hives. As the numbers of gastropedes in a community increase, the number, size and complexity of dwellings grow accordingly. Chtorran communities tend to be organized in geometric patterns.

■ First Stage: Nest

A Chtorran house is a dome-shaped structure, about 12 feet high and 50 feet wide. The walls are made out of a wood foam that the Chtorr produce by digesting tree bark and then regurgitating the processed material. This foam is lightweight and sturdy, a bioengineered equivalent to shelterfoam (see p. 100), and is often two to three feet thick. The outer walls have DR 3, HT 50; bullets will pass right through, but without damaging the integrity of the nest. There is a large doorway on one side. The roof of the dome has a skylight, so the first level is not very dark.

Several Chtorran plants grow around the dome. Next to the nest is a corral with seven- to nine-foot-high walls. It usually holds millipedes (see p. 42), although in some communities humans and Terran livestock are housed in similar structures.

Most of the nest lies below the dome, built underground. The gastropedes and their client animals dig enormous chambers below the dome, connected by spiraling corridors. Several different types of Chtorran plants and fungi grow on the walls of the corridors and the chambers, producing many disconcerting sights and smells. The Chtorran moss that covers most corridors is sticky and gooeey; its purpose is still unclear. There are doors in the corridors, living doors that open and close like organic valves. There are at least two corridors, one spiraling clockwise, the other counterclockwise. The corridor leading to the living quarters of the worm is hidden by one of the valve doors, which looks just like the wall (a



Vision-5 roll must be made to spot it) until someone touches it and it flubbers open (if this happens by accident, it would probably cause a Fright Check).

A normal-sized nest has several rooms used for storage, living quarters for the gastropedes and their subordinate species, and other purposes, many of which have not been discovered yet. As the nest grows in size, dozens of other Chtorran species make their homes there, serving the gastropedes in many ways, from digging new chambers to cleaning waste from old ones. And, of course, every Chtorran animal can serve as a snack for a hungry gastropede.

Though new nests may have fewer, there are always four worms to a mature nest. The oldest, largest member tends to stay inside, while the other three do most of the hunting and scrounging. As the nest grows older, younger siblings leave to start new nests (see below) and the elder Chtorran grows bigger and bigger, until it has to retire to a special chamber, which it never leaves again.

Outside the nest is a "totem pole," a seven-foot-tall, melted-looking stick. The pole has several holes in it; these have been discovered to represent the number of creatures in the nest, and their rank in it. The Chtorr are represented by four holes at the base of the pole, a large central one with three others, each slightly smaller than the previous one, placed above it. The largest hole represents the founding elder of the clan, and the others the remaining three gastropedes, possibly ranked according to age. The many tiny holes probably record the number of clients in the nest.

■ **Second Stage: Mandala**

A successful nest soon grows in size. New Chtorrans, either the siblings of the first elder or "adopted" ones, leave the main nest and build a new one next to it. The cluster always uses the older nest (which continues growing in size) as its center. A typical *mondala* consists of six nests around a central dome. Corrals are placed between the nests in a precise spacing. Instead of one totem pole, there are now several, each representing the population of one nest.

A second-stage community has at least eight adult Chtorrans, and may hold as many as twenty-eight before the group expands again. Besides the gastropedes, the mandala will hold dozens of bunnydogs, libbits and other animals, as well as thousands of millipedes. Attacking a second-stage colony on foot is suicidal with less than a company-sized force; most attacks on this type of nest are made from the air.

■ **Third Stage: Mandala Ring**

The mandala ring is a large-scale version of the second-stage nest. Several second-stage nests are placed around a central mandala, or a huge dome that has grown to encompass the original mandala. The pattern keeps repeating itself, hexagonal rings themselves forming into hexagonal patterns. The gastropede population of a full-size third-stage nest ranges from around 200 to several thousand. Third-stage nests are likely to have a *human* population as well, either renegades or captured slaves. In the former case, the renegades will probably be well-armed with anything from automatic rifles to anti-aircraft missiles.

■ **Chtorran Cities**

The largest Chtorran communities can only be called cities. They hold hundreds of thousands of worms, and many more bunnydogs, renegade or enslaved humans and other "domesticated" Chtorran animals. There are hundreds of domes, some of them hill-sized. Labyrinths of tunnels lie below, with enormous underground chambers for the whale-sized old worms. Corrals on the surface hold millipedes and human livestock, although many humans also live underground.

And the infestations continue to grow. Who knows what stage may follow the "cities," or what monsters will appear next?



TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT



The Earth of *The War Against the Chtorr* was somewhere between TL7 and 9 when the invasions started. Satellite technology is at TL8; communications are high TL8 or even TL9, in the case of mechanical telepathy (see p. 90). Weaponry is at high TL7 to TL9, with most other fields spread between TL7 and 9. Given time and peace, it is likely that FTL travel might have been developed in a generation or two. The plagues have thrown many areas into primitive barbarism, with living conditions at TL6 or worse. On the other hand, weapon technology, robotics and bioengineering have made great advances, as humanity puts most of its resources into these fields to fight off the invasion.

Satellites

Space technology had come into its own in the years before the invasions. A great deal of wealth could be made in space, and the United States, barred from military endeavors by the Moscow Treaties (see p. 14) devoted much of its energy to this field. Hundreds of specialized satellites orbited the world, delivering information, communications and even light. Just before the plagues struck the Earth, two large-scale space stations in low-Earth orbits were being completed. Construction has been renewed as the chances of defeating the Chtorr diminish; space may be the only escape for humankind.

■ Communications

Communication satellites have become far more complex and versatile. Enormous amounts of information are routinely transmitted around the planet. A Special Forces team in Mexico can be in communication with Denver or Hawaii in a matter of minutes, transmitting data or consulting with a group of experts. This communication can consist of computer data, real-time or photographed images, or voice communications.

Cellular telephones also take advantage of the satellite network. As long as a person has a cellular telephone, he can talk to any place in the world. By the fifth year of the war, most military vehicles have telephone and radio links. The only limiting factor to communications is manpower: there simply are not enough people to monitor every call. Soldiers in the field can only make calls if the situation is important enough to merit it; otherwise people may die while waiting for a monitor to come on line.

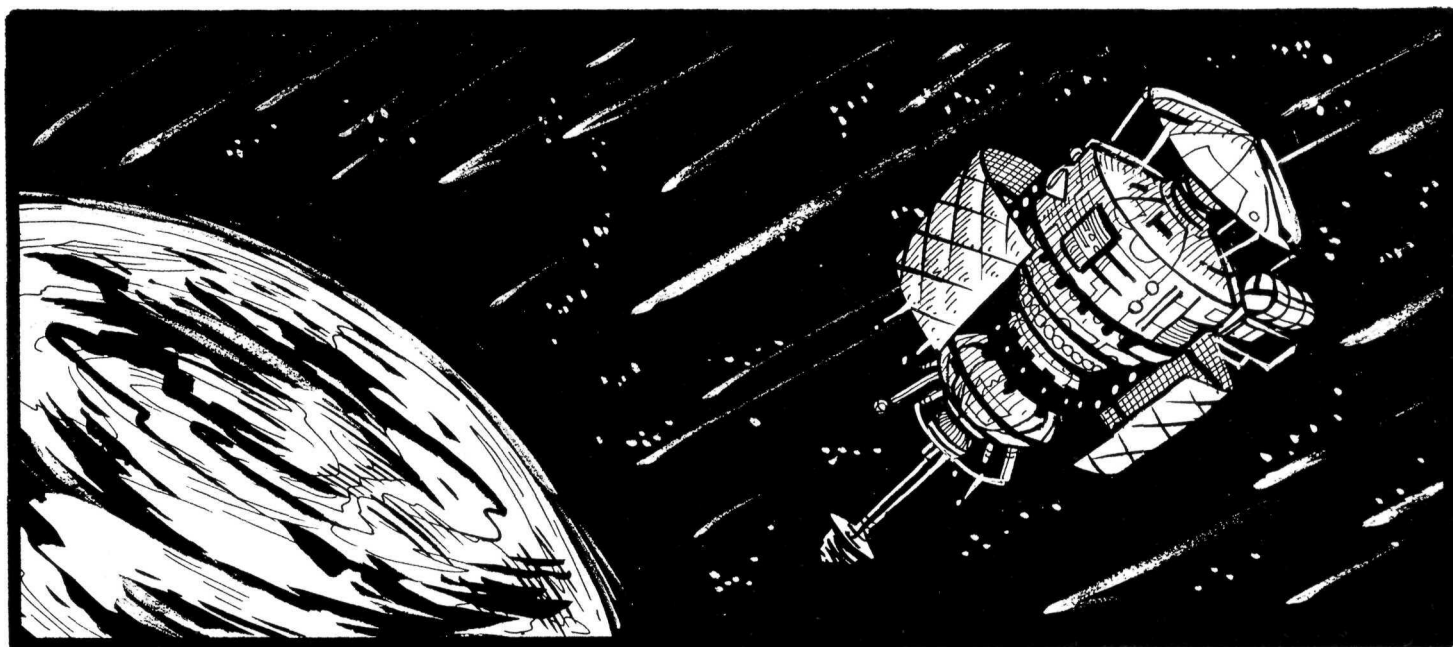
Equipment Availability

Not all the equipment listed in this chapter will be readily available to PCs. Many resources are very scarce in post-plague Earth; things that could be easily purchased at a supermarket before the invasions can now only be obtained at great cost through the black market, or are available only to authorized or high-ranking military personnel.

When a starting group of PCs is outfitted, the GM must assess the party's potential resources. A Special Forces team will get state-of-the-art hand weapons and vehicles, but those will be made available only if their mission requires it. During their free time they will be issued a sidearm and little more. A group of independent bounty hunters might have been able to loot a supply cache shortly after the plagues, or may purchase their equipment. Flamethrowers would be readily available for sale, but missile launchers and combat robots would not.

Renegades, of course, might have any equipment from the best to the worst, but resupply would be chancy!

Scarcity is always a problem. Medicines will be in short supply: the plagues consumed a large amount of medical supplies, and production levels are still low. Furthermore, most of what is produced goes to the military. Civilians never have enough medicines, except for the invaluable "brown stuff," which is mass-produced and distributed free. Vehicles and scientific equipment are also monopolized by the government, and civilians often have to improvise to meet their needs.



Mass Drivers

And the space program — as long as we had mass-drivers on the moon, there wasn't a city on Earth that was safe. We didn't need atom bombs - we could drop asteroids.

- A Matter for Men

Once the Moon is recolonized, humanity will have at its disposal an awesome weapon for the war against the Chtorr. Mass drivers - magnetic accelerators that can throw enormous weights toward the Earth - have colossal destructive potential. A large enough mass, hitting the Earth at the speeds a mass driver can generate, will cause a detonation comparable to that of a multi-megaton warhead. A bigger asteroid — the so-called "dinosaur killer," after the alleged comet or asteroid that struck the Earth millions of years ago and caused the extinction of the great reptiles - could dramatically alter the Earth's weather pattern. If a huge asteroid hit the oceans, for instance, it would vaporize billions of tons of sea water, which might obscure the sun long enough to trigger a mini-ice age.

If it became necessary to retake the Earth from space, mass drivers would be the ideal weapon to destroy Chtorran "cities." The rocks would obliterate the targets without turning areas into radioactive wastelands. Given enough energy and dedicated observation satellites, automatic "lunar cannon" could track the movements of groups of gastropedes and drop medium-sized rocks on them. Mass drivers could also be used to re-seed the planet, dropping slower payloads with bioengineered micro-organisms designed to attack Chtorran life forms and restore Terran ecology.



■ **Observation Satellites**

"Spy" technology has also advanced rapidly. Almost every square mile of territory in the United States is constantly recorded by Earthwatch and Eyeball Reconnaissance satellites. The rest of the world gets only marginally less observation. Once again, there is more data available than there are people (or computers) to sift through it. People with the appropriate clearance, however, can request a visual record of any region of the country simply by dialing from a public terminal (see p. 85) and requesting a display. The resolution of the satellites is very good, and the observer can zoom in on specific areas. Frames are taken one minute apart, allowing observers to follow the movements of people (and worms).

■ **Solar Mirrors**

To provide cheap energy, huge (50 miles wide) mirrors have been placed in orbit. These mirrors focus solar energy and beam it toward receiving stations. Additionally, they can illuminate areas at night, providing instant artificial sunshine. A person with enough authority and contacts can call for satellite illumination at will. Anyone with a 15-point or better military Patron or rank 4 or higher can attempt to call the satellite; availability at any given time is up to the GM. An area several miles wide can be illuminated, eliminating all darkness penalties.

■ **Microwave Beams**

These satellites can deliver a deadly beam of microwave radiation to the Earth's surface, killing everything in a 30-yard radius within about 10 seconds, to an underground depth of at least 20 feet. Worms much farther underground may be killed if the beams are held in position long enough. A person with a 15-point or better military Patron, or rank 5 or higher can call for satellite support - for instance, to take out a large nest of worms when there is no question of rescuing humans from the nest. Availability at any given tune is up to the GM.

Computer Technology

Computer hardware and software were extremely sophisticated prior to the invasions, and progress has continued despite the ravages of the plagues. Computer technology is at TL9, bordering on TL10; artificial intelligence has been developed, and some models are portable enough to install in man-sized robots. While these AIs are very versatile, they are still unimaginative, so human supervision is needed for most tasks involving unpredictable situations.

Computers pervade everyday life, especially after the plagues, since human labor is so scarce. Most middle-class households have computers running their utilities, communications and, with domestic robots, housekeeping chores. Phone booths have been replaced with terminal booths, from which a person can not only make calls but also download information, call up a movie, or even link with a spy satellite (if he has the proper access codes, that is).

For more information on computer technology, see *GURPS Ultra-Tech* or *GURPS Cyberpunk*.

■ Computer Complexity

Computers are rated in terms of *Complexity*, relating to the programs that they can run. Complexity 1 is the simplest; Complexity 6+ computers may be sentient. Each Complexity level represents processing power an order of magnitude greater than its predecessor. A Complexity 3 computer is ten times faster than a Complexity 2 Computer and 100 times faster than a Complexity 1 computer.

Most computers in the *Chthor* world are Complexity 2 or greater. The terminal booth is a Complexity 3 computer with an integral modem that lets it connect to other terminal booths as well as to larger data nets run by Complexity 5+ mainframes. Some examples are listed below.

Hand Computer: Also known as an electronic clipboard, this is a portable Complexity 1 computer usually dedicated to word processing and a few other functions, like keeping a schedule book, with a limited storage capacity; it can also run other simple programs. It costs \$50.

Personal Computer: This slightly bigger model, at Complexity 2, costs \$500.

Minicomputer: This is the household computer described above, available for \$2,500.

Microframe: A Complexity 4 computer, used in larger households, and also to run small businesses, it is often used as a communication node, linking several smaller computers or terminals. It sells for \$10,000.

Mainframe: Used for control and systems-monitoring functions for major businesses, manufacturing complexes or laboratories, its average Complexity is 5, but systems with Complexity 6+ are also common. They are also used to run the computer network.

Megacomputer: These Complexity 7+ systems are commonly known as Lethetic Intelligence engines (see p.87).

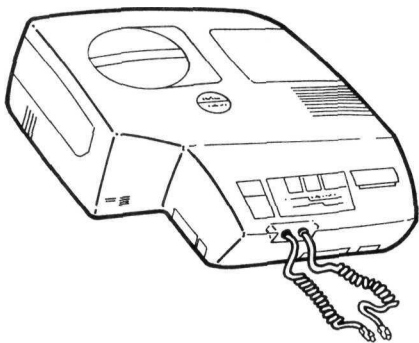
Computer Games

The advances in computer technology have affected entertainment as well. Computer games have become increasingly more complex and absorbing. Before the plagues there were immensely intricate games that could be accessed by dozens or hundreds of users at the same time. Even after the plagues, new technologies have made games even more attractive. The computer network that spans the planet lets thousands of people from all parts of the planet participate in the same game simultaneously. Since the processing capacity of computers has increased by several orders of magnitude, a game could have so many options that it could simulate intelligence and unpredictability to a degree previously unimagined.

For instance, computer games and motion pictures have become one through the invention of interactive entertainment productions. Virtual reality allows people to directly *experience* the events of a movie, and computer technology now lets the viewer participate in the action.

It is not surprising that many become addicted to the fantasy worlds projected into interactive entertainment productions. Before the plagues, many people spent their free time in front of a computer monitor - which also doubled as their T.V. and telephone. After the plagues, many survivors would spend their whole lives in those games, if they were allowed. Only the cost of entertainment keeps many of these "game junkies" in the work force in order to earn enough money to go back and play.





Software Entities

That was the nice thing about software entities. You could create the most interesting legal monsters and turn them loose upon society, where they would be loose cannons for decades to come.

- A Day for Damnation

Software entities are computer programs, with elements of artificial intelligence, corporations - and the worst ambulance-chasing lawyers. Like corporations, they have a legal status comparable to that of an individual, and can invest money, initiate lawsuits and enter into contracts. These software entities are usually created to act as "guardian angels" over the interests of minors, or to act as trustees of foundations; they are seen as more trustworthy than human trustees.

Software entities are Complexity 4+ programs that approach artificial intelligence; they have expert skill levels (skill-18+) in the fields of Economics, Financing and Law. Furthermore, they are completely dedicated to furthering the ends of their charges, *by whatever means necessary*. Only the most ruthless human lawyers begin to match the relentless and unscrupulous drive of software entities. A software entity will sue anybody for the flimsiest legal excuse if its cold computer mind decides there is some profit to be made in the bargain. Sometimes the software entities are given some parameters to prevent excesses, but, like the demons of myth, the entities will push the letter of the parameters to its utmost extreme.

A good software entity can multiply the value of a trust a thousandfold in a few years, and defend it against all comers - including other software entities. On the other hand, putting one's money under the care of a software entity effectively means surrendering control over it, and the program may end up doing things the human user never intended or desired to do, like suing relatives and loved ones for ridiculous (but legal) reasons.

The average software entity is a Complexity 4 program with all appropriate skills at 18. It can be "hired" through the computer network for \$20,000.

Household Computers

Personal computers are as common in the *Chtorr* milieu as telephones are in the late 20th century. The equivalent of the terminal booth described above can be found in every urban home; it has Complexity 3 and costs \$5,000. More sophisticated home computers can have a complexity of 4 or even 5. But with the development of the computer network this is no longer necessary; a home computer can link with a larger mainframe (see p. 85).

Mail

Most mail is now delivered electronically. Messages do not even have to be written down; audio and visual "letters" can be sent just as easily. When a message is delivered electronically, the next time the recipient logs into his home computer he will get a chiming red flag on the screen to let him know that he has mail. Legal papers are served in this manner; if the person fails to acknowledge receipt of the legal documents, they become legal in seven days. That means that people who know they are being served with a lawsuit have a week to figure out a solution before starting the process.

Access Codes

Most systems, from household computers to military mainframes, have security systems controlled by an access code. The more secure the system is, the harder it will be to break in. The average Security program will give a -1 to -2 penalty to Computer Hacking rolls (see p. 88). More complex systems will have a penalty ranging from -3 to -6.



The Computer Network

The linking of computers by telephone has led to the development of a gargantuan computer network that spans the globe. This allows users to exchange information, access more sophisticated computers and programs, and do most of their work from their homes. A home computer can link up with a huge mainframe and effectively become a terminal of the mainframe, enabling the user to work with Complexity 5+ programs from a "mere" Complexity 3 personal computer.

Lethetic Intelligence Engines

Lethetic Intelligence (L.I.) computers are one step below true Artificial Intelligence, but are more complex than any other system. They can synthesize data and make deductions based on it. L.I.s can learn from experience and change their patterns of behavior based on those experiences. They can analyze data from hundreds of different perspectives, including some too unconventional for most human minds to consider. At this point, a huge network of L.I.s is working full time on the Chtorran problem.

The smallest L.I. units have Complexity 6, weigh 200 lbs. and cost \$1,000,000. They are installed in vehicles and advanced robots (see p. 101). The largest units are Complexity 8, weigh 1 ton and cost \$5,000,000 or more. Only the government and the largest corporations can afford one.

Virtual Reality Systems

Virtual Reality (VR) is a sensory system that gives the wearer the illusion of being fully in contact with the images being projected into his display. The computer simulates all sensory input from the chosen environment and transmits it to the wearer of the VR unit. Most VR units consist of a helmet that gives the user the visual and auditory input. If the user turns his head sideways, the display changes at the same rate, as though the wearer were inside the projected image.

VR systems are very useful for entertainment and training purposes. They are also used to control and monitor robots; the wearer of the VR helmet sees and hears literally through the robot's sensors and can react to anything that the robot sees. A Complexity 4+ computer is required to run VR software.

One problem that users of VR systems face is the chance of *sensory overload*: the operator tries to absorb too much too fast, and it overwhelms him. This is especially true when the input is very unusual or intense. An affected person can go into convulsions or epileptic seizures; insanity or even death are possible. If a VR user is exposed to extreme stimuli, he must make a Will roll, modified as the GM sees fit. Prolonged exposure makes the user more vulnerable, adding a -1 for every two hours of constant use of a VR helmet. Multiple sources of input, such as several dozen Chtorran species all singing and flying and fighting each other, would have a penalty of -2 to -5, depending on the intensity of their visual and auditory impact. Treat a failed roll like a failed Fright Check; refer to the table on p. B94. In addition to the results on the table, the user will try to remove himself from the VR system, and will not be able to use it again for 1d minutes without suffering the same effects. A critical failure is more serious; roll on the Fright Check Table, but add 10 to the roll, which means that the consequences will be long-lasting.



Boswell Programs

With a Boswell program, anyone can be a writer. Boswells are the descendant of spelling-checker and text-editor programs. A Boswell program can take any written input, as long as it has some sort of coherent meaning, and turn it into clear, well-organized, readable prose.

The process isn't automatic. The human writer must work with the program, answering its questions, and correcting it when it "fixes" text in a way that introduces an error. Usually, three drafts are required to create a finished piece of work. And no program will produce an interesting piece of writing if the subject is pointless . . . or if the human writer is totally boring. But if all the human lacks is grammar, spelling and organization, the Boswell can easily provide that. Thus, any expert or eyewitness, regardless of his own writing skills, can pass on his knowledge in an interesting, readable fashion!

The program can produce output in a wide variety of styles, from grade-school to gosh-wow-Sunday-Supplement to college textbook. It can also translate a text into another language.

A Boswell can also be set to scan a specific database—or the whole world network—for relevant information to footnote in the report, or to present to the writer for his evaluation.

A typical Boswell is a Complexity 4 program with Research and Writing skills at 20. Military officers are required to use a Boswell to create their after-action reports. Civilians can buy a good Boswell for \$1,000.



Netrunning and Cyberspace

The *Chtorr* milieu has several "cyberpunk" elements (see sidebar, p. 110). Among them are the familiar themes of a worldwide computer network, advanced technologies joining men and machines, and the possibility of adventurous ultra-tech hacking. Rogue programmers can and do engage in data theft and manipulation, and they have to deal with sophisticated defenses.

Despite the presence of these elements, however, the "traditional" *cyberspace*, the electronic reality that only programmers with direct links to computers can reach, does not exist in this world. The closest thing to *cyberspace* is the telepathic mass-mind (see p. 93), and that electronic reality does not allow much freedom of action; the minds and perceptions of all members are easily reached and accessible by the group consciousness that exists there.

Neural interfaces - direct links between the human mind and computers - have yet to be developed. The potential for them exists (mechanical telepathy already uses a similar technology), but they have not been introduced. The closest thing to neural interface is the use of Virtual Reality (see p. 87), and although VR could conceivably be used for computer programming, it would be unlikely to work faster than normal means of access (in fact, it *should* be slower, since the computer would have to translate its information into VR images before transmitting it to the user, causing a time lag that a normal system would not have).

GMs wishing to make hacking an important element in the campaign could use the realistic network rules from *GURPS Cyberpunk* (p. CY62). The *cyberspace* rules could be incorporated in a *Chtorr* campaign set a few years in the future, since the development of neural interfaces could occur at any moment.

Medicine

Medicine before the plagues was at TL8. After the plagues, medical care has declined in most civilian areas, which now have an equivalent of TL6-7 in most respects. Military personnel have full access to TL8 medicine and equipment.

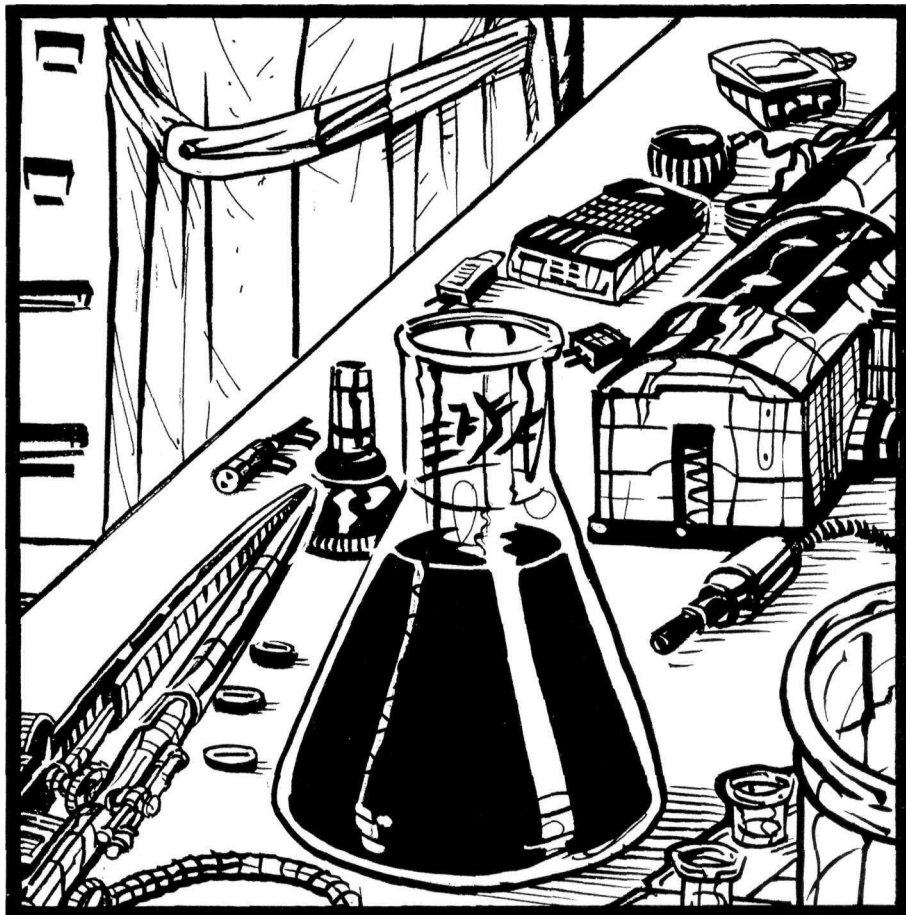
■ **Medi-Kits**

Most military vehicles have a medical computer with Diagnosis-13, First-Aid-15 and Physician-13, which can link via satellite to a medical mainframe adding 3 to all those skills. The computer can monitor one person's body functions, and react to changes in his condition by injecting drugs and trying to keep the patient stable. While the medicine supply of the medi-kit lasts, the person under treatment is considered to be under the care of a physician (see p. B128). Most vehicles have enough antibiotics and other medical supplies to take care of the crew for 1d days.

■ **Brown Stuff**

*The most effective way to kill every dangerous bug swimming in a volume of water was to make brown stuff out of it. You could leave an uncovered container of brown stuff standing in a field full of Chtorran parasites for a year and come back to find that nothing, **absolutely nothing**, had grown in it. What brown stuff did to your internal plumbing was every bit as wonderful. The technology of antisepsis had advanced light years.*

- A Season for Slaughter





"Brown stuff" - more formally Powder, Antiseptic, Anti-Chtorran, Formula-tion BRS - was developed by the military but is distributed to civilians at no charge. It is credited with saving more lives than any other measure except the plague vaccines. It did not appear until the fourth year of the invasion.

Mixed with water, brown stuff creates a terrible-tasting but nearly perfect antiseptic. It is hostile to all Chtorran life and to most dangerous Terran microorganisms. It will not protect against those Chtorran plagues which are viral in nature, but a regular user of brown stuff will be protected against almost everything else. In game terms, whenever a HT roll is required to avoid some Chtorran parasite or infection, a brown-stuff user will fail only on a critical failure.

Someone who is not a regular user will still get a +3 on HT rolls if he takes a big drink of brown stuff, and sponges off his skin with it, following exposure to a Chtorran biohazard.

■ **Gerromycin**

This antibiotic has proven to be deadly to the Chtorran nerve symbionts. A good dose of Gerromycin will kill the symbionts growing on someone exposed to a pink storm . . . or, for that matter, the full growth of "hair" on a renegade. In the latter case, though, it can cause disorientation and even madness. A worm dosed with a little Gerromycin becomes vicious and frenzied. A bigger dose turns it into a bald, apathetic slug, but not quickly enough to be useful as a weapon.

■ **Sober-Ups**

These drugs help people shrug off the effects of alcohol in their systems. The sober-ups break down alcohol in the user's system, accelerating the assimilation process. A person taking sober-ups will nullify the effects of drinking in (15-HT) minutes, longer if the subject was drinking a lot (GM's choice, or use the advanced intoxication rules from *GURPS Callahan's Crosstime Saloon*).

■ **Sleepytime Bag**

This device is used both as a security and medical tool. A person in a sleepy-tune bag will be flooded with narcotic drugs that will render him unconscious. It is helpful in transporting severely injured people, and also in controlling prisoners when there are no adequate facilities to hold them. The sleepytime bag will work for (48-HT) hours.

■ **Vat-Grown Transplants**

Some transplant organs can be vat-grown rather than taken from donors. These replacements are not as extensive as in most TL8 game-worlds; limbs and complex organs cannot be cloned and replaced easily. A crippled arm or leg can be restored to normal by replacing lost or shattered bones and muscle tissue, as long as the damage is not too extensive. It is possible to be hurt too badly to be restored to normal.

New Developments

Technology has not remained still since the invasions. On the contrary, the urgent need to deal with the aliens has spurred a host of new developments, especially in the fields of weaponry robotics and bio-technology. Some new equipment that may become available in the near future is listed below.

Panicle-Beam Weapons: Particle-beam weapons are already available as vehicle-mounted guns. Hand weapons may be used in the future, since they would be more effective against Chtorrans than slugthrowers. Use the stats for blasters from *Ultra-Tech*.

Battle Armor: While in the future soldiers will not be sent out to fight Chtorrans on the ground, it is impossible to guarantee that the Chtorr will not break through perimeter defenses and force human personnel to engage worms in close combat (close being anything within 100 yards, which the worms can cross in a couple of seconds). The same technology that designs sophisticated robots could provide soldiers with battlesuits that would increase their survivability when fighting Chtorrans. These suits would enhance the wearer's strength and give him a high level of protection (DR 100+; note that human-sized objects struck by large Chtorrans have their DRs divided by 5), allowing him to carry heavy weapons, which might even be built in.

Personal Battle Pods: This small aerodyne would allow a soldier to have the maneuverability of a helicopter and the protection of a small tank. From the battle pod, one soldier could direct an army of drones and robots, while still keeping directly in touch with the battlefield situation. The battle pod would have a high DR (at least 500), and would pack as much firepower as a heavy robot (see p. 101). It would also have Virtual Reality controls allowing the pilot to command dozens of prowlers and other combat machines. The pod would usually hover some five to 20 feet off the ground, flying nape-of-the-earth for close examinations, or gaining altitude to have an overview of the situation. An on-board L.I. engine would help coordinate orders and organize and digest information.



New Developments (Continued)

Improved Flamethrowers: Napalm sprayers are relatively effective worm-stoppers, but they still face the problems of a limited range and a rather small supply of ammunition. More efficient flamethrowers will be sought. These developments may result in the creation of plasma projectors like the ones described in *GURPS Ultra-Tech*.

Telepathy Helmets: The advances in machine-human interface made in recent years may lead to the development of indirect connections. Instead of needing implants, telepathy could be achieved through headset communicators. This might allow non-telepaths to communicate with the mass-mind more easily.

Cloning: So far, cloning techniques are not as advanced as they are in other TL8 societies. If new breakthroughs were made on this field, it would be possible to ensure that people who are vital to the struggle can be assigned clone replacements (cloning would probably be too expensive to be used extensively). Furthermore, the government might decide to make replicas of several people so they can handle more than one job at once! It would be likely that such an option would be kept secret; there might be six or seven James McCarthys (see p. 63) working in several parts of the country, each unaware that the others exist.



Telepathy

te-lep-ath (te lep ath'), *n.* 1. Any individual with a microchip transceiver implanted in his or her brain; the microchip, powered by body heat, translates brain functions into multi-channel digital data streams, which are linked by satellite into a global network, to allow the transmission and reception of data and experience. 2. A person who reads minds and communicates with others by extra-sensory means (obs.)

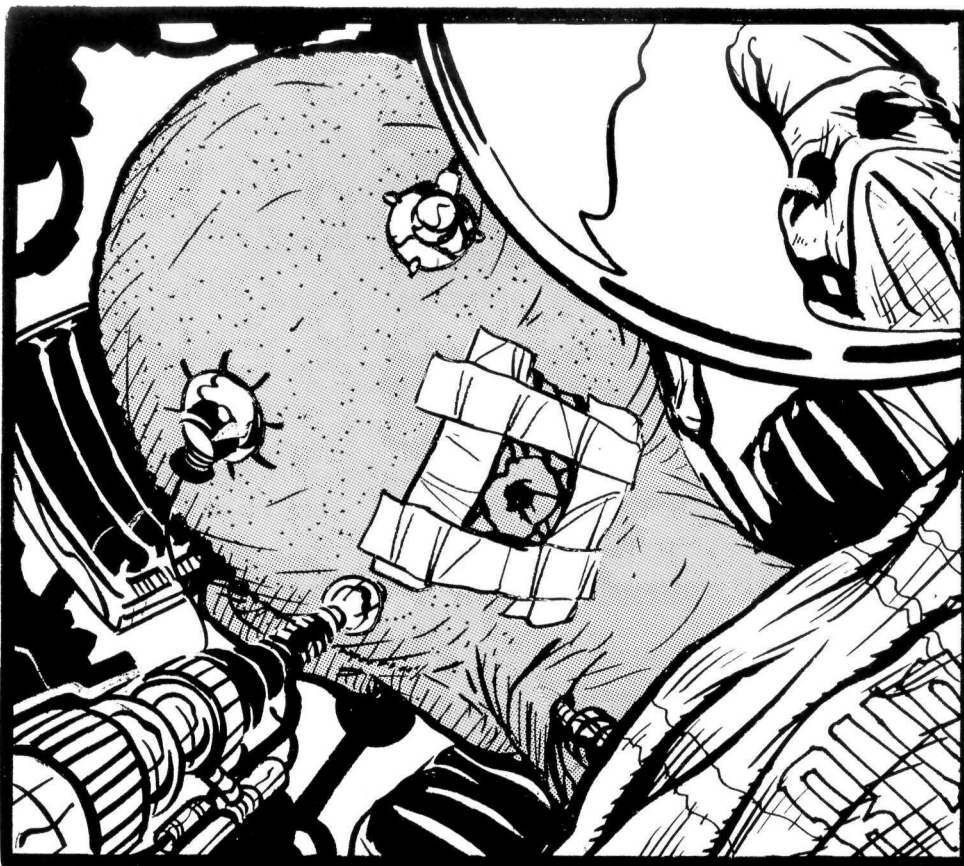
- *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, Century 21 Edition, unabridged.*

Advances in computer and bionic technology by the turn of the century allowed for full interface between man and machine. Electronic transmitters could tap directly into the human nervous system, and broadcast its input into a television screen, for example. Furthermore, the same transmitters could also transfer information into the subject's brain. This technology has been used mostly to produce prosthetic limbs that react to nerve impulses like normal ones, and to create the Telepathy Corps.

The Telepathy Corps (Teep Corps for short) is a military intelligence agency. Volunteers have the transceivers implanted into their brains; originally, the operation was done with conventional surgery, but advances in nanotechnology have made it possible to implant the transmitter by making a microscopic incision in the patient's skull and letting the micro-machines seep in and build the computer chip inside.

The transmitter has many functions. First, it allows the telepath to communicate instantly with the Corps without a radio or cellular telephone. Also, the Corps can monitor all sensory input; everything the telepath senses can be experienced by another telepath, or *all* telepaths, if they all want to pay attention. Monitors are checking on every member at least some of the time; with the latest advances in computer technology, it is likely that there is at least automated monitoring going on around the clock. Besides being able to observe and communicate, the Teep Corps can have a member take over another member's body. The personalities and memories of the two people are switched around. Telepaths are trained to act naturally and comfortably inside other people's bodies (see below).

Mechanical telepathy was in existence before the plagues. The technology had been developed in the U.S. as a weapon, a way to develop a super-spy network around the world. With the ability to switch bodies, telepaths could use several different agents, each with different skills, *all in the same body*. A young female secretary working in an enemy government's agency could suddenly be able to crack safes, speak a hundred different languages, and have the combat skills of a karate master - depending on which telepath was using her body at the time. As long as one person with a telepathic implant was in the area, all the telepaths in the network could observe, analyze and participate in the event. A darker side of this technique would involve implanting an unwilling or unwitting person, and then having his body taken over by telepaths. A foreign head of state, for instance, could be "possessed" by a telepath trained to sound and act just like him. This technique has opened up several frightening possibilities (see p. 95).



Implants

"The whole thing only takes a couple hours. They drill the tiniest little hole, slide in a few CC of nanobugs, plug up the hole and wait for the nanos to find their sites and link up and begin sending. You end up with a network of filaments strung along the whole inside of your skull; you become a walking antenna."

-A Season for Slaughter

Telepathic implants are a high TL9 product, bordering on TL10. They are similar to the braintaps described in *GURPS Ultra-Tech* (p. UT78), but are even more advanced, allowing not only sensory reception but mind-switch capabilities. Each implant has a range of 1,000 miles, which allows it to link to communication satellites that effectively give the telepath global range. Most obstructions will not disrupt the transmission, but large amounts of surrounding metal, or a metal helmet, will block the signals. Secure rooms can be designed to block telepathic signals.

Anyone with a telepathy implant can contact the monitors at will (no roll is necessary; in many cases the monitors will already be observing). Switching bodies is a more complicated process, usually requiring authorization from the telepath's superiors (as the Corps becomes more of a mass-mind, these decisions are made much more quickly, since consensus is achieved almost immediately; see below). Usually a telepath is assigned a body as part of a mission or long-term task.

Monitoring facilities are never fully described in the novels, but at first they must have been massive structures full of the most sophisticated communications and computer equipment available. There are indications that the Telepathy Corps' consciousness now inhabits some sort of electronic limbo that can be reached only through electronic communications. See *GURPS Cyberpunk* for some ideas on representing this electronic domain.

Cerebral Augmentation

Her hair was so short it was almost buzz-cut; and surrounding her entire brain case, she wore a shining cage of wire, a framework of thick rods like a bicycle helmet. I'd seen pictures of cerebral augments; I'd never seen one in person.

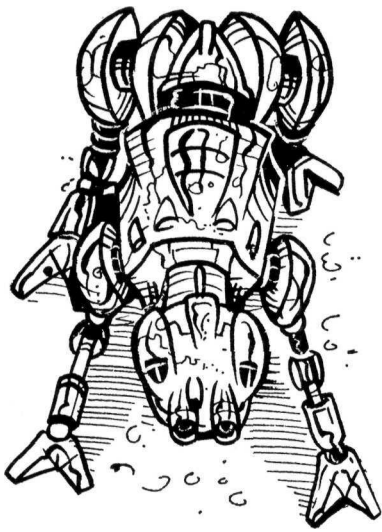
-A Season for Slaughter

Cerebral augmentation is a technique that implants a computer into a person's brain. The implant greatly increases the person's information-storage abilities, memory and processing power. Cerebral-augmented people can also communicate directly with other computer networks, and with the telepathic mass-mind; in fact, the augments include telepathic implants. Cerebral augmentation does not increase the person's ability to make intuitive leaps, however; for the most part it allows people to know a lot of information, but does not teach the person what to do with it.

In game terms, the augmented character acquires Eidetic Memory (second level) and an effective skill of 20 in any scientific discipline - insofar as the skill is used to deal with pure information. The augments will not help the character draw conclusions or have insights.

The process also damages the emotional stability of the person. The deluge of information is overwhelming to most people. It seems that cerebral augmentation works best with mentally-retarded subjects, or people with Down's syndrome.





Chtorran Robots

Rumor had it that the next generation of prowlers would look and act just like worms. The micro-prowlers would be millipedes. I hoped it wasn't true. I didn't want humans working with worms of any kind, not even machanical ones.

-A Season for Slaughter

The robots now being designed have body types along Chtorran lines. For one, the Chtorran body shape is extremely versatile and efficient. For another, these "cyber-worms" might fool Chtorran animals, allowing infiltrator units to be sent into alien zones. Despite all these advantages, many people feel an aversion to working alongside creatures that resemble the enemy they are fighting. Described below are some possible statistics of these cybernetic Chtorrans.

Cyber-worm: A combat robot with the armor of a tank, enormous firepower and hydraulic-press jaws, it stands six feet tall and would be some 30 feet long, weighing eight to 20 tons. It has DR 1,500, HT 1,200. It has four heavy flamethrowers, two machine guns, and five missile launchers. Its jaws do 6dx20 cutting damage and its arms do 6dx25 cutting damage, enabling it to shred a worm in a few seconds. Their speed would at the very least match that of the fastest worm, and would probably top 100 mph. It would mount an L.I. engine and a full sensor suite. Like other prowlers, it would have several auxiliary limbs to allow it to take samples.

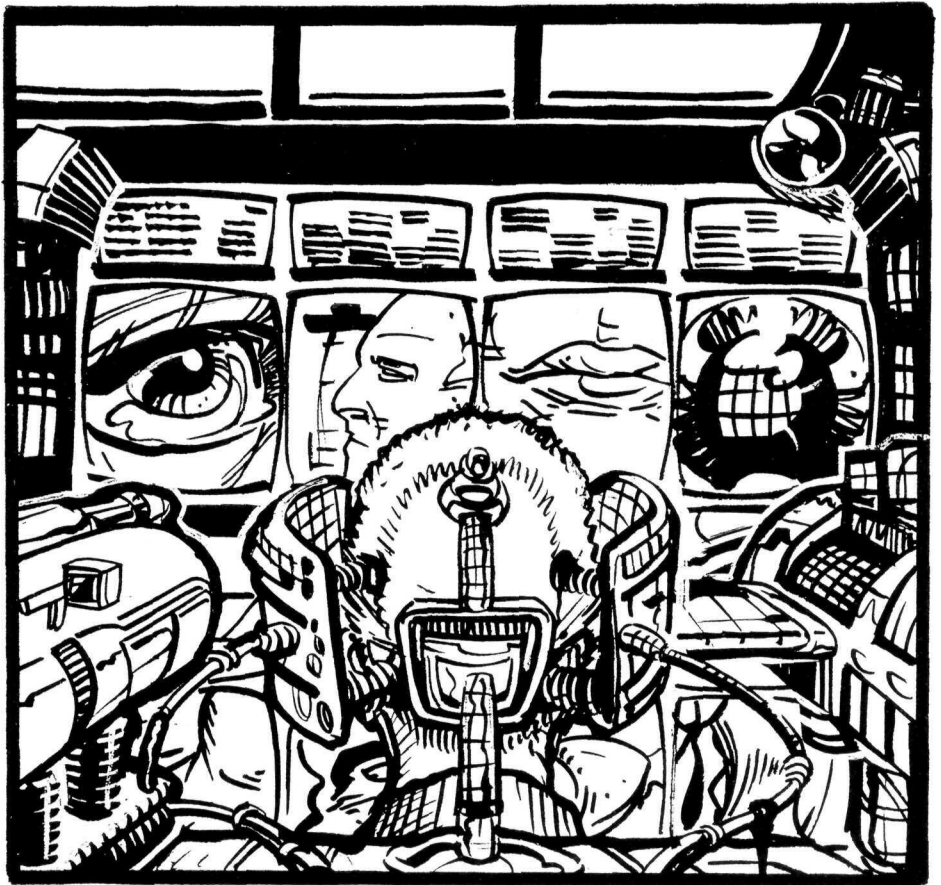
Millipede: This small robot would be ideal for penetrating small areas. It is built along the lines of a 1.5-yard-long millipede, and it has DR 20 and HT 15. Its top speed is 20 mph. It would have to be remotely operated most of the time, although its Complexity 3 computer brain will allow it to perform simple tasks unaided. Its eyes will house sophisticated sensor arrays.

Training

Telepaths are trained to adapt to the challenges involved in body-switching. They are also prepared for the eventuality that they may lose their old bodies. As a result of this training, telepaths soon lose all attachment to their former selves, and eventually lose their individual identity and become part of a group consciousness almost as alien to normal humans as the Chtorr.

Recruits are first given access to a "library" of taped experiences. There they are exposed to a myriad of experiences, from the taste of vanilla ice cream in someone else's mouth to the sensations of death and childbirth. These experiences feel real, but are not quite as intense as what the telepath will feel in someone else's body; the taped experiences are used to prepare the telepath for the unusual sensations he may be exposed to later on. While the recruits are experiencing this, their bodies are often put to use by more experienced agents.

This first stage is also designed to weed out people who cannot deal with the strange sensory input. Characters training for telepathy must make Fright Checks (pp. B93-94) when first exposed to intense experiences at the library. A failed roll with serious results (acquiring a new Quirk or Mental Disadvantage) may disqualify the candidate, or it may lead to his becoming a "local" telepath, who only leaves his body once in a while (see below). The Fright Checks are modified according to the character's personality. For instance, experiences that touch on personal phobias or biases will have a severe penalty; this leads to the Corps seeking out open-minded and fairly balanced people in the first place. On the other hand, very few people are mentally stable after the plagues (see p. 26), so the Corps settles for open-mindedness. Still, characters with any Intolerance (see p. B34) are unlikely to be accepted to the program, because a telepath may be assigned to any body, regardless of its color, gender or ethnic origin.



Trainees are also allowed to observe while their bodies are being used by someone else; they can feel and see through their bodies normally, but someone else is controlling their actions. This is designed to create detachment from one's body, but can be a traumatic experience. A Fright Check at -2 is necessary the first time the new telepath feels his body being taken over; success means he has been able to deal with the situation and will not have to roll again. A failed roll means the telepath will have to make another Fright Check at -3 the next time a "possession" takes place; each failure increases the penalty for the next experience by -1. A badly failed roll will result in expulsion or "local" status, as described below.

Missions while trainees are "on board" their own bodies are usually routine (or at least are *expected* to be routine). Many of them involve "dirty jobs," like participating in orgies, engaging in substance abuse, and so on. In theory, bodies are not supposed to be damaged in these activities, but abuse often happens. Recruits exposed to these situations may have to make Fright Checks at higher penalties.

After the candidate has undergone these initial experiences, he is assigned to a training group. At first the group is made up of people of the same gender. They practice switching bodies back and forth. Training also teaches them to identify people by their mannerisms, even when they are in another body. This teaches them to "read" people's body language and to disguise their own, until they are able to act naturally in a strange body. The next step involves placing the recruit's mind in the body of a person of the opposite sex. This shocking experience results in a Fright Check-5. The candidate is kept in that body for several weeks.

By the end of the training, the prospective telepath has learned Acting. The trainee has also been overwhelmed by the sensory input. Those who survive without major mental trauma have a much-diminished sense of self; their bodies are seen as little more than temporary dwellings. This perception applies to *other* people's bodies as well; many telepaths are totally ruthless in the physical world, using and abusing people at will, whether they are other telepaths or not (see *Carpetbagging*, below).

The Telepathy Corps

The organization that controls mechanical telepathy is a military institution. The Teep Corps controls and supervises the activities of all known telepaths in the world (though it is possible that other nations have developed their own telepathic networks). Lately, the goals of the Telepathy Corps have become unclear, and the telepaths may become as big a threat to humankind as the Chtorr.

■ *Types of Telepaths*

There are two basic types of telepaths: hardcore, roving agents and "local" ones. The hardcore telepaths have lost touch with their original bodies. They might not even know where their body is, or even if it is alive - and they don't care, either. Their personalities have all but disappeared into the mass-mind. Local telepaths tend to stay in their original bodies; their work requires them to stay in one location, and they are simply monitored by the network. Local telepaths are required to "go worldwide" periodically (between one and three times a month, usually). During that time, their body is in the "pool" and any telepath with business in the area can take it over.

Some hardcore telepaths have no regard for local ones, who they see as little more than sensory organs, as opposed to full members of the Corps. Locals distrust the hardcore members, and hate the abuse they inflict on their bodies (see *Carpetbagging*, below).

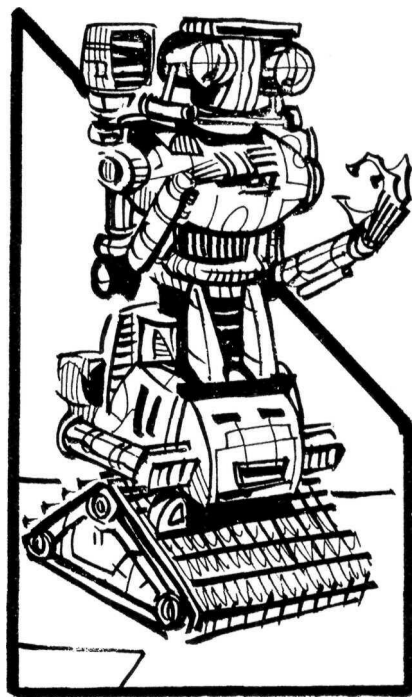
Other Robots

Robots can be found filling dozens of jobs in the post-plague world. Listed below are other models characters are likely to meet.

Desk Clerk Robot: Basically, this is a talking Complexity 3 computer that replaces receptionists, desk clerks and the like. It will greet people, take their names and notify the human in charge. In other situations, it will direct people to the places they wish to go. Desk Clerk robots have a very limited repertoire of responses, and will get repetitive after a few phrases. DR 2, HT 10.

Gardening Robot: This is basically a semi-intelligent lawn mower, although the more sophisticated models can do complex chores like pruning hedges following pre-programmed patterns. Their maximum Move is 10, but they usually travel at less than 5 miles an hour. Their cutting implements could be dangerous if someone accidentally ran into them (1d+1 cutting damage). DR 4, HT 20.

Spybirds: These new-generation robots, using the same technology as the prowlers, are designed to resemble small winged creatures. They carry extensive sensor systems; they can operate independently, or a VR operator can control them at a distance. They are used primarily for scouting missions, since they are too small to carry heavy armament. A typical spybird has a Move of 20 and can stay in the air for 6 hours. Some larger units, meant to operate at very high altitudes, use solar cells for power and can stay aloft indefinitely. DR 6, HT 10.



Rescue Pods

Lopez was the first to reach the pod. It was the size of a small bus, only with landing skids instead of wheels. She punched the red panel next to the door, popping it open — she flipped up the activation switch and the pod's door fell outward. . . . "Goddammit! Somebody punch the launch button!"

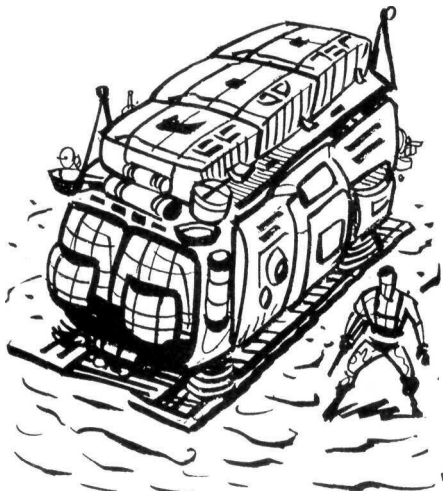
Somebody did. I felt the module jerk sharply. The first of the lift bags was inflating. Another two thumps and the second and third bags began filling with helium. When all three silvery balloons were bulging like ripe melons, the pod would lift aloft and be carried high above the rolling roof of pink. If need be, the lifters would pull us all the way into the stratosphere.

-A Season for Slaughter

Rescue pods have been developed to deal with the pink storms (see p. 77) which make conventional aerial rescues impossible. The pods are dropped by ultra-high-altitude aircraft; the balloons in the pod will take the survivors outside the storm's range, where the plane can fly by and snag them. The pod is armored to survive the landing and to provide the users with some protection - after all, they wouldn't be needing a rescue pod if the situation were not dangerous; the pod has PD 4, DR 75. It can accommodate eight people and their equipment, although more than six people will make for cramped quarters.

Anybody can enter a rescue pod and push the red button to close it up and inflate the balloons. To pick up a rescue pod, the only skill roll required is by the pilot . . . a single Piloting roll for the aircraft, at -2. A regular failure gives another chance. A critical failure pops the balloons, dropping the pod and destroying all its contents.

If not plucked out of the air by a rescue plane, a pod will stay aloft for (1d + 24) hours before sinking to the ground. It will float if it hits water. The sealed pod will normally sustain life for a total of 24 man-days before it *must* be opened. It's up to the GM what the survivors find when they open the doors.



■ **Carpetbagging**

"They take over your body, your house, your life for an evening. They get your body drunk, they take your body to bed with strangers, they get stains on your best silk dresses, they get sticky marshmallows all over your sheets and rugs, and then they disappear in the middle of the night leaving you with a hangover, scraped legs, chafed elbows, a sore back, and three days of cleaning. Not the least of which is explaining it all to last night's trick."

- A Day for Damnation

Many hardcore telepaths take undue liberties with local agents' bodies, wreaking havoc on their lives. One disadvantage to training telepaths not to care for their bodies is that most of them end up not caring for *anyone's* body. Extreme cases of abuse resulting in severe injury or even death may occur, and it is unknown whether the Corps polices these abuses or what kind of punishments it applies to offenders, if any. The Teep Corps is doubtlessly aware of its members' transgressions, but it may not be concerned with them (or might actually enjoy those escapades as something else to watch).

The regular authorities are totally helpless; how can you prosecute someone who could be anywhere and *anyone* for allegedly making a person's body do things the person did not want to do? What if a person commits a crime and then claims that "a telepath made me do it?" The possible complications of telepathy were not foreseen, and most people are still oblivious to them.

■ **The Telepath's Mission**

The Teep Corps was designed to be the ultimate intelligence agency of the world, a group where the information obtained by every member was immediately available to all, an organization whose agents could become anyone, at any time. The plagues and the Chtorran invasions were threats that the Corps was not equipped to handle. For the most part, the Teep Corps continues to work in the field of espionage, working for U.S. interests against hostile nations of the world (see *The Fourth World*, p. 34). The Corps has also attempted to infiltrate the human renegades that collaborate with the Chtorran gastropedes (see p. 28), but most attempts have been unsuccessful; the Chtorr or the modified renegades are somehow able to detect or subvert telepaths, unless the agents themselves are not aware that they are telepaths (see *Covert Implanting*, below).

In fact, *it is not clear* what the Telepathy Corps' long-term mission is. It is very hard to supervise its activities; the only sure way to do so is to become a telepath, which usually leads to losing touch with the physical world. In fact, it sometimes seems that the telepaths are more interested in experiencing new sensations than in carrying out any specific mission. It is possible that the Corps is now nothing more than a depraved group consciousness engaged in large-scale voyeurism.

■ **The Mass-Mind**

Over the years, the Telepathy Corps has undergone a subtle, but significant, transformation. Its hardcore members have become a mass-mind, a group consciousness with its own identity and its own goals. People who are not connected to the telepathic network are seen as not quite real, and since physical bodies are seen as little more than vehicles, the mass-mind's concern about human life is minimal.

This is not to say that the Telepathy Corps is necessarily evil. The Corps' survival depends on humankind's survival, after all, so the basic goals of both are still the same. However, the Corps has become an alien institution, and it may be impossible to control it.

■ **Covert Implanting**

Recently, local military units in Oregon took out a renegade camp. Autopsies were performed on the bodies of the renegades and some soldiers they had captured and killed. The autopsies revealed that three of the corpses had telepathy implants. This led to the discovery that the Telepathy Corps has been implanting people without their knowledge for years. It seems that tens of thousands of people are unaware that they can be monitored at any time by the Telepathy Corps. Even worse than this is the fact that in many instances, like the one mentioned above, the Corps has been aware of dangers threatening implanted people and has done nothing to help them, preferring instead to observe their deaths to gain more information.

This revelation led to public outrage, and a series of secret hearings and legal wrangles followed. The issue has still to be resolved. This much has been settled: the military has the right to use all members of the service, and recent laws have effectively drafted the entire population of the United States (see p. 32). It is impossible to detect the telepathy implants. Scanning will only detect an active transponder, and the Teep Corps can easily deactivate the implant whenever it suspects a scanning is imminent (since they can sense anything the subject sees or hears, it is hard to outwit them). The only way to stop them is to wear a metal helmet to block transmissions.

The implications of this are enormous; the Teep Corps might be effectively controlling the world, able to spy on and even take over anybody. Not even the wildest Illuminati theory has granted an institution so much power. Fortunately, the Teep Corps seems to be content with the current situation, and collaborates with the U.S. government as it is supposed to. However, the Corps obviously has its own agenda and interests, and individual lives mean very little to it.



Psionics and Telepathy

The training the members of the Telepathy Corps receive may eventually lead to the development of psionic telepathy, the ability to communicate — and read — minds without artificial devices. The massmind into which the Telepathy Corps has evolved is a prime candidate for "psionic-hood." GMs wishing to incorporate the rules from **GURPS Psionics** can give the Corps and its members some psychic abilities.

The consequences of this would be far-reaching. *Nobody* would be safe from the Corps' intrusion (except the privileged few who had some degree of resistance to psionics); the massmind would be able to take control of the world with ease. Of course, that is already possible (see maintext), and it hasn't happened yet (as far as anyone knows). Also, the Teep Corps might be able to monitor the Chtorrans without risking implanting a gastropede with telepathic transceivers. If the Chtorrans had psionic powers of their own (see p. 73), a telepathic war might ensue.

Another way to mix the two types of telepathy would be to allow standard **GURPS** psis, unassociated with the Teep Corps. Psionic telepathy might become the only way of communication that the Teep Corps cannot eavesdrop on; after all, psionic powers are *extrasensory* and the Corps is limited to what normal senses experience. An interesting scenario could form around a secret war between a league of psis and the Corps for world control, which would make it a three-way war. The PCs would all be psis who have taken steps to protect themselves from the Teep Corps' powers, and who must fight the massmind secretly, since they cannot trust anybody. This type of campaign is recommended to GMs who own **GURPS Psionics** and **GURPS Illuminati**.

A "true" telepath can tell if a person's body has changed minds with a successful *Telereceive* roll. True telepaths would be ideal bodyguards for important people; they could not only tell if their charge's mind has been switched, but they would be the only ones with any hope of finding it again! *Telescan* (**Psionics**, p. 26) can locate a switched mind, no matter whose body it's in.

A problem the psi would face is that the massmind could switch minds at will, severing a contact the psi was maintaining at that time. For example, suppose a psi was *Telecontrolling* an implanted subject; if the subject's mind was suddenly switched, the psi might now be controlling a paraplegic a hundred miles away (provided the range was within his power), and facing an unaffected mind in control of the body of his enemy! A character with *Electrokinesis* (**Psionics**, p. 11), on the other hand, could disrupt or neutralize the implants, causing the mechanical telepath to become trapped inside one body, cut off from the massmind. The experience might be crippling or even fatal for a member of the Corps.

Personal Weapons

The field of weaponry has reached TL8 in Chtorr-invaded Earth. Explosives, slugthrowers and flamethrowers are all much more advanced than in other TL8 worlds, thanks to the Chtorran threat, which has spurred inventiveness in this area of technology and pushed military development into a frenzy.

Slugthrowers

The quest for firepower has led to the development of weapons with a rate of fire and accuracy an order of magnitude greater than that of the 20th-century assault rifle. Beyond that, no more advances in slug-throwers have been made; since Chtorrans are almost immune to bullets (see p. 74), most new weapons use other means to deliver energy to the target.

■ AM-280

The AM-280 is a state-of-the-art assault rifle/portable machine gun. It fires high-velocity 18-grain needles at a rate of 2,300 to 3,000 rounds per minute or more - a RoF of 40! With the advanced laser-sighting system provided with an EV helmet (see p. 99), it allows for accurate automatic fire.

Each needle does 6d+4 crushing damage; the steady stream of bullets will chew right through a brick wall. Needles can be treated with chemical and bacteriological agents; every hundredth round of loads used against Chtorrans is usually modified with these poisons. Explosive needles have been developed lately; they do 6d-3 crushing damage, but once they sink into Chtorran flesh, they explode for an additional 1d. This damage is doubled if the needle explodes on the surface of the target, or multiplied by 5 if it explodes *inside* the target (see p. 77 for the effect of explosives on Chtorrans).

■ 7mm Weatherby

This is a typical hunting rifle that Special Forces troops use as a sniper weapon. It has great range and stopping power against humans, but it is useless against Chtorrans. Unless field troops are going up against renegades and bandits, they are rarely issued Weatherbys.

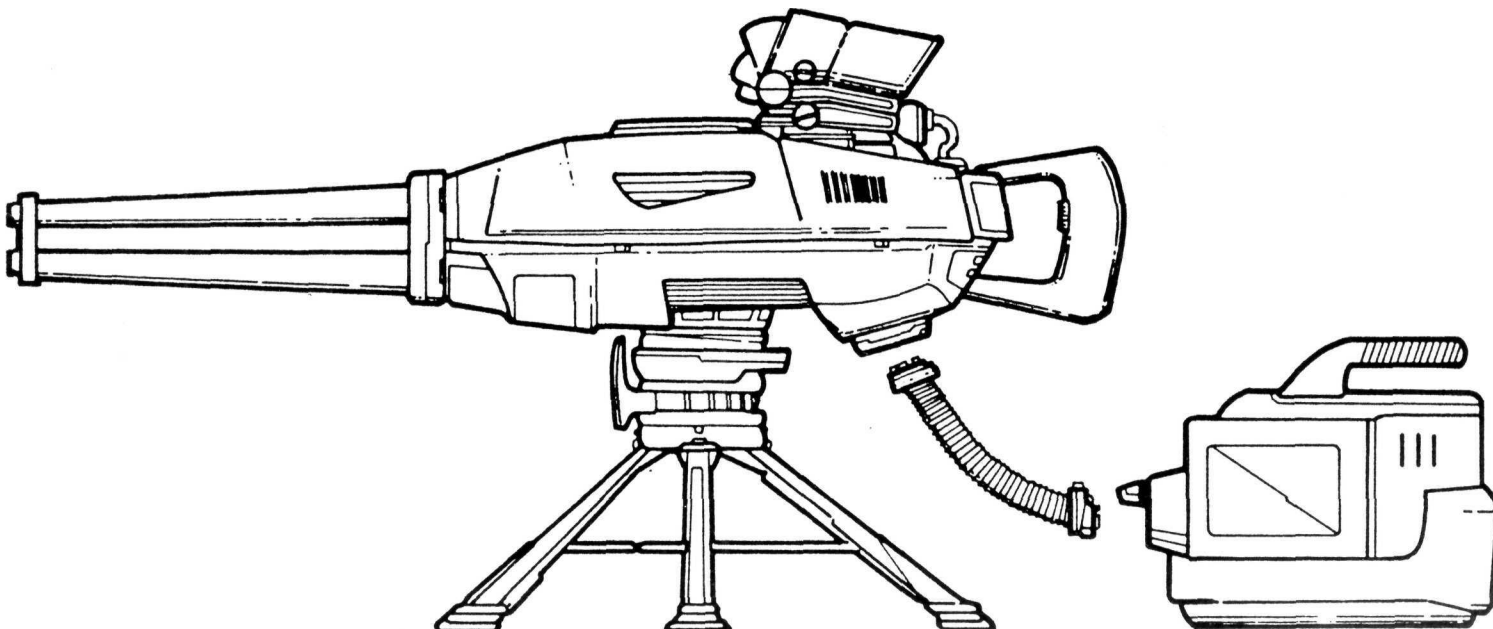
Beam Weapons

Both laser pistols and particle-beam weapons are mentioned, but never described, in the *Chtorr* novels. Laser hand weapons would not as effective against the Chtorr as conventional weapons (see sidebar, p. 76).

Particle-beam weapons are too big to be carried by a soldier or even a robot. A vehicle-mounted particle-beam device would be a good worm-stopper, though, with more range than a flamethrower. A typical device, carried on a Jeep or simply mounted on a guard tower, would do 2dx6 damage, doubled against Chtorrans. Larger ones could be mounted in stationary positions, or perhaps carried on very large aircraft. The biggest problem with a weapon this heavy is that it doesn't track quickly . . . and Chtorrans move very fast.

The "20/E" notation for the Jeep-mounted version on the Weapon Table means that this weapon gets 20 shots from a large "E-cell" battery. Such a cell costs \$2,000 and weighs 20 lbs. Of course, a weapon mounted on a guard tower would be linked to a power feed and could keep firing indefinitely.

PB weapons are *not* very useful against Chtorran encampments. They were, at one time . . . for about six weeks. That is how long it took for Chtorrans worldwide to start incorporating bits of shredded metal into the wood-foam of their nests. A PB attack against such a nest does only 1/5 damage . . . which is still very destructive, but usually gives the inhabitants time to counterattack or dive below ground.



Flamethrowers

The discovery that Chtorrans are particularly vulnerable to fire prompted the revival of some illegal weapon systems, including flamethrowers, which had been outlawed by the Moscow Treaties (see p. 14). The most common flamethrower model fires a high-pressure stream of napalm; the stream does 3d burn damage, with a RoF of 4. Use the table for number of hits in a burst on p. B120; damage from all shots that hit is counted as one unit. For instance, three shots of a burst hit a Chtorran; they would do 9d of damage, applied to its skin armor as a unit.

Only sealed armor protects fully against the jet of napalm; non-sealed armor provides only 1/5DR. Vehicles that are not fully sealed also protect with only one-fifth of their DR. Once it hits, the napalm sticks and continues to burn for 10d rounds, doing 1d damage per second (armor does not protect). Only total immersion in water or burial under lots of earth will extinguish the fire.

Flamethrowers can be loaded with explosive pellets; they add +2 damage per die, and increase the half-damage and maximum ranges by 50%. They also create a splash area, which does 1 less die of damage per hex of distance from the target center.

Nitrogen Sprayers

This weapon is issued to Special Forces troops when the mission involves collecting a (more or less) intact Chtorran corpse for dissection. The jet of nitrogen will freeze the target, allowing its dissection later on. It is much less popular than a flamethrower, mainly because its range is much shorter and no one wants to wait until a Chtorran is within 30 yards before starting to shoot (remember that a charging Chtorran will cover 30 yards in *one second*). Most sprayers can only sustain the jet of cold gas for a handful of seconds, so it is of limited use against more than one Chtorran. The freezing stream does 10d damage per round; when the target's HT or Hit Point total (whichever is *higher*) is reduced to 0, it is frozen solid. A critical success on a HT roll indicates that the target has survived and is in suspended animation; otherwise it is dead.

Even if the target is not killed in the first round of being sprayed, the intense cold causes physical stun; roll vs. HT. The stun is automatic if the target takes more than half its Hit Points in damage; roll against HT every round to recover. Body armor does not protect. Sealed armor halves damage.

Using a nitrogen sprayer requires the Guns (Flamethrower) skill. Those who are only familiar with a normal



flamethrower will suffer a -2 unfamiliarity penalty, which can be eliminated with 2 hours of practice.

Explosives

Explosives are another effective weapon against gas-tropedes. Their main problem is that most explosive weapons are not suited for close combat, and sometimes Chtorrans are not spotted until they are very close.

■ Grenade Launchers

Portable grenade launchers are issued to soldiers in the field. The early models were single-shot weapons, but later models have a magazine with up to five grenades. Most grenades fired from a launcher explode on impact, or very shortly thereafter. Against Chtorrans, launched grenades have been designed to first penetrate the skin and then explode. They do 4d crushing damage, and if they overcome the Chtorran's DR they explode inside the Chtorran, doing 5 x damage rolled.

■ Grenades

All grenades weigh one pound. Earlier models have a manual pin like TL7 grenades; later models are activated electronically. Grenades have either a time delay for detonation, or explode on impact.

Chemical Grenades: These come in many varieties. The most common ones release anti-Chtorran smoke (see p. 99), creating a cloud with a radius of 6 hexes.



Concussion Grenades: These are similar to frag grenades, but fragmentation is limited to that picked up from the ground at the site of the explosions - see pp. B121-122.

Fragmentation Grenades: Frag grenades do 6dx2 concussion damage and 6d cutting damage. This damage is *doubled* if the grenade explodes against the target, or multiplied by *five* if it detonates inside the body.

Shaped-Charge Grenades: Used against heavy armor, these are fired from grenade launchers, and only detonate on impact. The explosion does 4dx2 (10) damage (divide the DR of the target by 10).

■ **Cold Rockets**

These rockets release nitrogen much like the sprayer described above. They usually do this after penetrating the target's flesh, and so are much more efficient stoppers. These weapons are employed mostly in areas where conventional explosives are too dangerous to use . . . any area covered by a pink storm (see p. 77), for example.

The cold rocket does 4d crushing damage and creates a freezing explosion that does 6dx2 damage, tripled if it explodes inside the target. Other effects are as for the nitrogen sprayer, above.

■ **Light Missile Launchers**

Light missile launchers can be mounted on and shot from backpacks. Two rockets can be mounted in this way. They are activated by a control panel worn on the wrist. Light missiles do 6dx6 (10) damage. The missiles can be aimed manually or guided by laser.

■ **Heavy Missile Launchers**

These are used against vehicles, robots and Chtorrans. They do 6dx10 (10) damage. Heavy missiles must first achieve a lock-on; roll against Guns (Anti-Armor Infantry Weapon) and aim for one turn. A successful roll (modified by range/speed and the launcher's accuracy) means the missile can be fired.

EMP Weapons

Electro-magnetic pulse weapons produce a burst of wide-spectrum high-energy radio pulses. On living things, it works like a very powerful microwave oven. It also disrupts unshielded electronic equipment.

A living being in the active area of effect of an EMP weapon is *automatically* reduced to -3xHT. Even if it survives, the target will also suffer massive radiation damage that will be lethal in HT hours if advanced anti-radiation treatment is not administered. Only sealed armor with anti-particle shielding protects.

Cover provides some protection. A target with cover between him and an EMP weapon makes a HT-6 roll, modified as follows: +1 for every foot of earth between him and the EMP weapon, or +3 for every foot of concrete. If he fails the roll, he takes damage. Beyond its effective range, an EMP weapon will still produce some dangerous radiation, the equivalent of 2dx50 rads in an area with a radius double the main area of effect.

The range of EMP weapons is a military secret. A standard EMP grenade has a kill radius of 20 hexes; the EMP burst on a Mobe has a kill radius of 30 hexes. The military is known to have much larger weapons.

Chemical Weapons

Several anti-Chtorran measures have been developed over the years. The only problem with chemical weapons is that most substances that will kill or disable a Chtorran are too toxic to be safely released into the environment.

■ **Smoke**

Anti-Chtorran "smoke" is a very fine powder made mostly of diatomaceous earth. Diatoms are microscopic one-celled organisms that dwell at the bottom of the seas. Their bodies form an extremely fine dust when they die. The dust is organic and has no toxic effects on humans, but it clogs up alien mouths and breathing holes; it also gets in the exoskeleton joints of most insect-like Chtorran creatures, reducing their mobility and even causing injury and severe infections. The smoke has a bluish-purple color, and even though it is harmless, its smell is quite offensive to humans.

■ **Aerogel**

Aerogel is a polymer with incredibly low density; one barrel can cover an acre of surface. The polymer strands are also very strong and sticky. Aerogel is used as a defense against worms. Dispensers spray a "wall" of aerogel several feet tall around a perimeter. When a worm walks through the aerogel, it gets tangled in it; if enough aerogel is in the area, it will immobilize the worm completely, and the gastropede will be helpless, doomed to starve to death or be killed by humans or other predators.

Common Equipment

Most of the equipment listed here is military, and cost will not be relevant to authorized users. It is relevant, though, to renegade characters who get their starting equipment by raiding a military warehouse . . .

Communications

Short-Range Communicator: This hand-held radio communicator is the size of a cigarette lighter. It has an effective range of 10 miles. It may also be linked with a larger comm net to reach other radio communicators. It costs \$50 and weighs 2 ounces.

Medium-Range Communicator: This unit is larger, the size of a man's palm. It has an effective range of 100 miles. It can be linked to a comm net. It costs \$200 and weighs 1 pound; with a video unit, it costs \$400 but weighs the same. An optional booster unit doubles the cost and weight and allows it to reach any satellite equipped to pick up its signals.

Long-Range Communicator: This unit is carried on a shoulder strap; it is the size of a desk dictionary. It has an extensor mike and a headset for private listening. It has an effective range of 1,000 miles, and is able to reach satellites in standard orbits. It costs \$600 (\$700 with video display) and weighs 10 lbs.

Armor

Easy-to-wear, truly effective combat armor has not been developed in the *Chtorr* setting. Body armor is of limited use against Chtorran animals anyway (see p. 76).

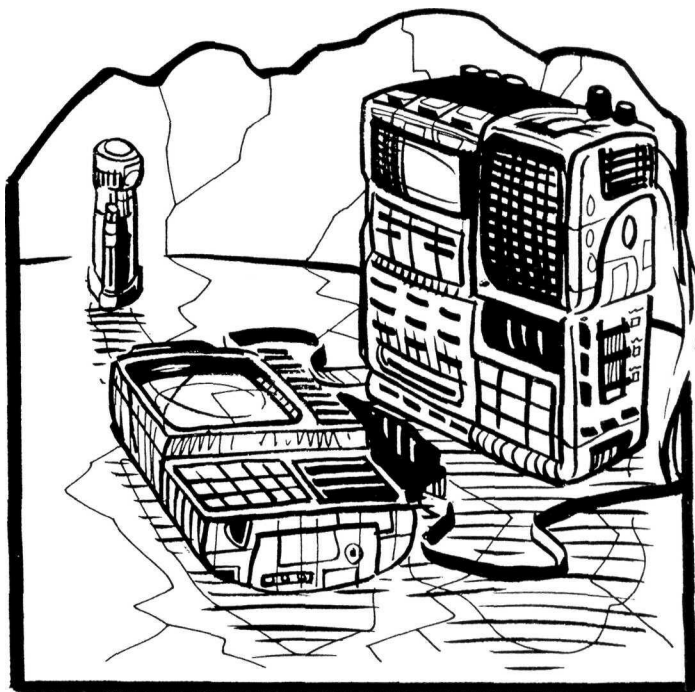
The jumpsuits worn by Special Forces troops offer some protection: PD 2/1, DR 4/2, just like regular Kevlar. They are also fire-retardant, with a DR of 8 against flame attacks. The jumpsuit covers the torso and limbs (areas 6-11, 17-18). A hood with a gas mask can be fitted to the jumpsuit, providing PD 2, DR 3 on the head and face (areas 3-5).

Weapon Accessories

Any TL7 or TL8 weapon accessory is available in the *Chtorr* setting.

■ **EV Laser Sights**

This is a very specialized laser sight, which requires a weapon mount and a special helmet. It switches its location in the spectrum hundreds of times per second. Only the user, wearing the helmet visor that switches frequency in the same random pattern, can see the beam. Nobody else, not even somebody with a similar helmet, will see more than a flash every once in a while; this means that snipers cannot track the source of the laser and return fire. The helmet visor shows the world in surrealistic colors; the scanner allows the wearer to see in low-light conditions, but it colors things differently. As a result, there is a -1 penalty to Vision rolls, but no other penalty for darkness. The steady, solid beam allows for greater accuracy than normal laser sights. Weapons equipped with an EV laser halve their SS number and get a +4 bonus to Accuracy.



Cellular Telephone: The average person can own a cellular telephone able to link by satellite to anywhere in the world, giving him the ability to call anywhere, from any place. The only problem with cellular phones is that calls made through them can be traced and monitored, making them unsuitable for military communications. It costs \$50 and weighs 1 lb.

Probe: Special Forces teams carry dozens of these; recon prowlers (see below) have their own stock on board. A probe is a full multisense "bug." It has enough bandwidth to support Virtual Reality (p. 87) if desired. A probe also contains a laser which will do 2d shocking damage to anyone molesting it, and a self-destruct charge that turns it into a 4d grenade. It costs \$200 and weighs 2 lbs.

Survival Equipment

Shelterfoam: This fast-hardening mixture comes in a spray can and is used to build shelters quickly. It is issued to soldiers in the field as well as to pilots, but is available to civilians as well. To build a small hut, a balloon is inflated, then sprayed with the foam. After it dries in 2d minutes (1d+1 minutes in cold weather), an entrance can be cut; the resulting shelter looks like an igloo.

One layer of shelterfoam has DR 4 and HT 12. Multiple layers add +1 DR and +5 HT, although if there is not enough support the whole thing will collapse. Up to 4 layers can be applied on a surface.

A single can, enough to make one hut, costs \$20 and weighs 3 lbs.; it comes with two hut-balloons 6 feet in diameter. The military also has shelterfoam sprayers in sizes from Large to Ridiculous.

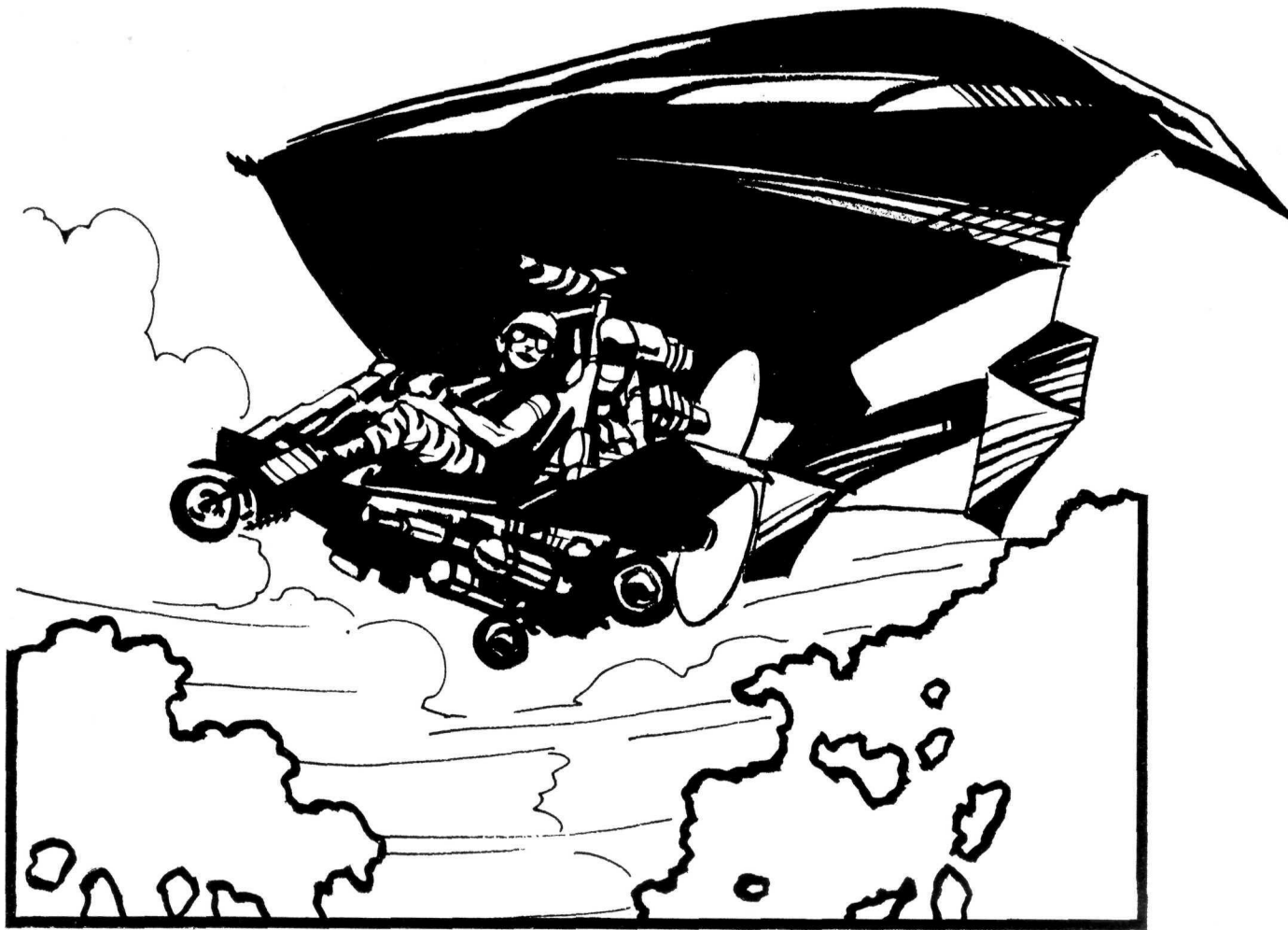
Silent Rope Ladder: This ladder is not really rope at all - it is made of linked elliptical rings of ceramic material. The material is self-damping, so its unfolding makes very little noise (Hearing-3 roll if it is close by, with a higher penalty the further away it is). The material is also well insulated and resistant to damage (DR 8, HT 12). It will support up to 300 lbs. It costs \$100 and weighs 5 lbs. per 20 feet of ladder.

Cameras and Audiovisual Equipment

Digital Camera: The camera takes full-color stills or motion pictures recorded on standard computer media; no "developing" is required. A good camera can hold as much as eight gigabytes of memory. Some Special Forces soldiers carry helmet-mounted cameras. It costs \$500 and weighs 2 lbs.

Binoculars: TL8 binoculars have automatic zoom, depth correction and anti-vibration qualities. They cost \$100 and weigh 1.5 lbs.

Electronic Clipboard: This is a dedicated micro-computer that allows the user to take notes, record appointments and perform other simple tasks; a laser printer is included. They can also be used as portable video and audio players. Mass-produced for the civilian market, they cost \$50, weigh half a pound, and are about the size of this book.



Robots

Before the plagues, robots were only used to perform tasks too dangerous or distasteful for humans. Many organizations, from labor unions to humanist groups, opposed robotization on the grounds that it would hurt human workers. The depopulation caused by the plagues changed all that; the need for skilled labor far outraced its availability. Therefore, robotic development has soared. Robots now act as servants, soldiers and scouts for humankind.

■ Household Robot

This model can do basic household chores, from vacuuming the floors to making the beds. Some machines can also double as bartenders and waiters. The typical household robot has PD 1, DR 4 and HT 8. It has the equivalent of DX 10 and Professional Skill (Housekeeping)-12. It is slow, with a Move of 3. Household robots are not programmed to fight; if attacked or damaged, they emit a distress call - a shrill electronic shriek that can be heard throughout a house (Hearing+4 roll).

Household robots weigh 100 to 200 pounds, and cost \$500 and up.

■ Gort

This is a general name for any sort of immobile watchdog/receptionist robot. There are used in places where a human watcher would be good . . . but there's no available manpower. The intelligence of gorts, and the weaponry they have available, varies widely.

Combat Robots

The early combat robots were cumbersome, clumsy creations, usually nothing more than remotely-operated tracked vehicles. Recent advances in computer technology have greatly increased the sophistication of these machines.

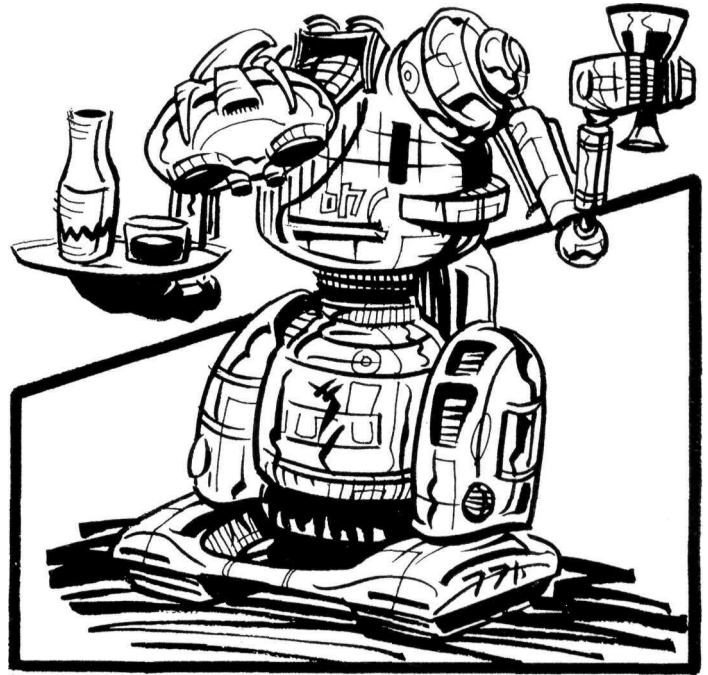
■ Mobe

One of the earliest models, this combat probe is basically a yard-tall box on tracks. It has a sensor array that detects heat signatures, and it is programmed to trigger its weapon systems when it is within range of a signature that matches its accepted-target profile. Its usual weapon is an EMP charge (see p. 98). The Mobe has PD 1, DR 15 and can take 20 points of damage before being disabled. It was a Move of 6. It has cameras that transmit to a remote unit, so a human operator can look through them and guide the probe toward the target. The same remote unit that guides the probe also arms and disarms the EMP charge. While the EMP charge is on, the Mobe flashes a bright red light so humans know it is unsafe to approach it.

A Mobe weighs 350 lbs. and costs the government \$2,000.

■ ARAC Military Spider

This is a small, low-to-the-ground spider used mostly for reconnaissance missions; the ARA spider was created for industrial work, and the ARAC is a quick redesign for com-



bat purposes. It has eight legs; each leg has a waldo that allows it to function as a hand. The ARAC stands less than four feet tall. The robot is controlled directly by an operator with a Virtual Reality helmet and gloves (see p. 87) that allow him to move the spider's waldos. Verbal commands activate different parts of the spider's sensor array, which includes the full visual spectrum, as well as sonar. The robot has a Move of 10, and a DX equal to the operator's Piloting (Robot) skill (maximum 15).

The robot has PD 3, DR 30 and can take 60 points of damage before being disabled. Each leg has DR 10 and 8 hit points.

An ARAC weighs only about 400 lbs. and costs the government \$18,000.

■ Marauder-Class Spider

This battle robot stands on six spider-like legs. It is typical of the first generation of robots built specifically for combat. It will listen to and reply to verbal commands, and it can recognize programmed targets and fire at them. At its full height, it stands 10 feet tall. Its armor is good enough to stop small arms fire and light explosives, providing it with PD 4, DR 200; 150 points of damage will disable the robot. The legs have PD 3, DR 40 and each will take 20 points to cripple; their slenderness makes them difficult targets - they are -5 to hit.

The Marauder has an effective DX of 12, and a programmed Guns skill of 13. It has a move of 12, reduced by 2 for every leg lost. The robot can continue to operate until four of its legs have been destroyed; then it will "kneel" and continue fighting from a stationary position. If the robot was running at the time, it must make a DX roll at -4 or it will topple.

The Marauder has two machine guns and two grenade launchers. Use the stats for the AM-280 and the grenade launchers described on p. 97.

A Marauder weighs 900 lbs. and costs the government \$26,000.

■ **Vigilante-Class Spider**

This combat robot is a more heavily armored version of the Marauder, about 11 feet tall. Its armor will stop anything smaller than a rocket launcher, and its heavy armament makes it more than a match for a worm, or even several worms. Vigilantes are often programmed for police and anti-riot purposes. Its loudspeaker can yell threatening commands, and it can be programmed to arrest or attack anyone who does not speak a specific password. This makes the robot ideal for guarding sensitive areas.

The robot has DX 13 and all weapon skills at 15; it has four "eyes" that can see all around it. The sensor array is primarily visual, and it has laser targeting abilities to lock its rockets on target. It has a move of 24 at a full run (about 50 miles per hour). The Vigilante has PD 4, DR 500, and it takes 200 points to disable. Shaped-charge weapons divide this DR by 5 instead of 10, due to its laminated armor. The legs have PD 3, DR 150, and are crippled after taking 80 hits; their slenderness makes them difficult targets (-4 to hit).

For weaponry, the Vigilante carries three flame throwers, two heavy rocket launchers, and two machine guns, all with overlapping arcs of fire that allow it to cover every side.

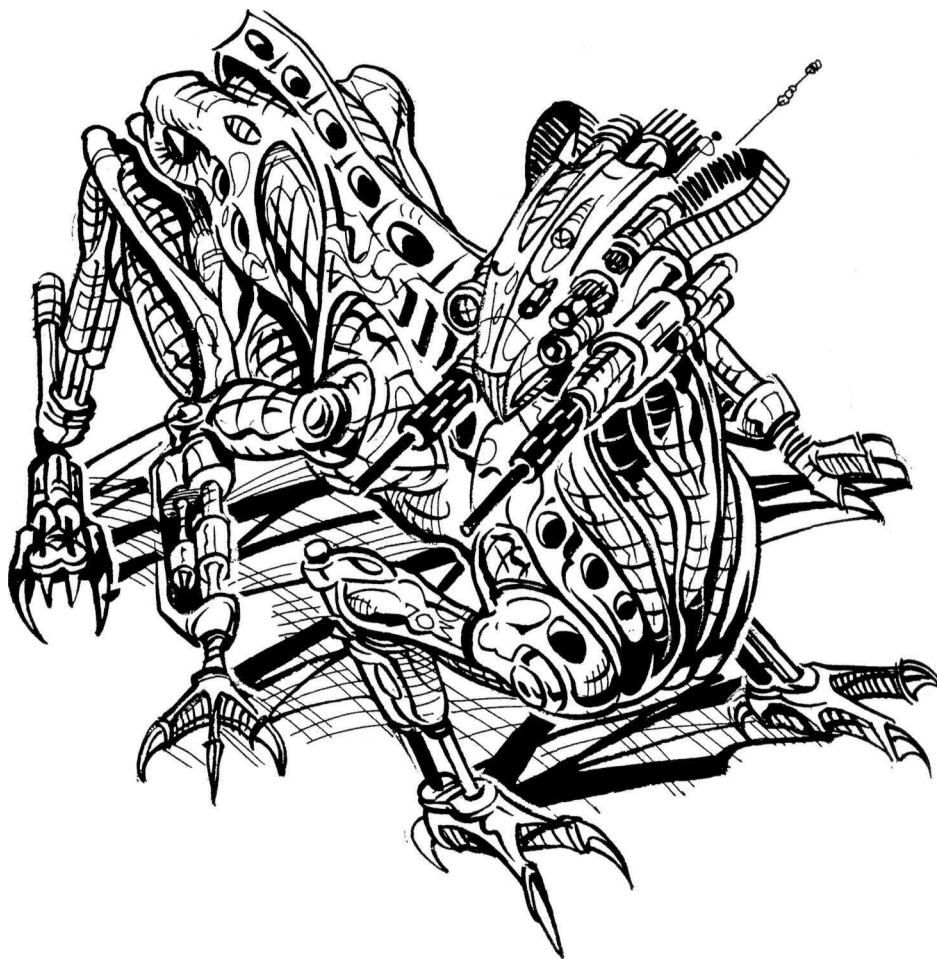
A Vigilante weighs 2,100 lbs. and costs the government \$30,000.

Prowlers

Low and panther-like, the P-120s had six slender legs and looked like the disjointed mating of an elongated cheetah and a titanium snake; but the uplifted head was larger and more sinister - its jaws were gun barrels.

Originally designed for armed reconnaissance, the P-120 prowlers had been recently retrofitted for going down into worm nests; they had the most advanced L.I. ever put into a cyber-beast. The creature's nervous system had enough processing power to handle the data network of a small government, or a large corporation. The density of nerve endings through its body - especially in its metal musculature and polymoid-armor skin- was greater than that of a living creature. Prowlers weren't programmed. They were trained.

- A Season for Slaughter



Prowlers are the next generation of robotic technology. They are much more sophisticated than spiders and other programmable robots. Their intelligence and versatility makes them extremely deadly. Cyber-beasts vary widely in size and capabilities; the future battlefields of Chtorr-invaded Earth will resemble Japanese animated features, with robots large and small fighting unearthly monsters. Prowlers called "torpedo-fish" (obviously seagoing) and "balrogs" (giant human shapes?) have been mentioned but not described.

GMs wishing to go into further detail may wish to purchase the upcoming **GURPS Mecha** and **GURPS Robots**, which deal with sophisticated war-machines.

■ **P-120 "Cheetah"**

The P-120s are scouting and anti-guerrilla robots now used to search and destroy worms. Their complexity means that they require constant maintenance, usually needing to be checked out every few days. Because of this, prowlers are usually sent out with a human party for short-term missions. A Lethetic Intelligence engine (see p. 87) is built into them, with a Complexity Rating of 7. They have a full sensory array, able to see in infrared and ultraviolet; it can

even perceive radio emissions. Its hearing is also very advanced (Hearing and Vision rolls of 20). The robot can take and analyze chemical samples, and store them in special compartments. The robot can produce tiny limbs to grab and manipulate small objects.

The P-120 has DX 14 and all appropriate weapon skills at 16. It has the equivalent of skill 14 on all biological and chemical scientific fields. Its full Move at a run is 30. It can also move very quietly, with an effective Stealth of 18. The robot can operate on its own, or can be directed by a human through a Virtual Reality link (see p. 87). The link allows the human to see and hear what the prowler does. Even the sense of touch can be duplicated at need. Smell is not duplicated, but indicated via instruments.

The Prowler's titanium/ceramic body has PD 4, DR 150, and 200 hit points. The legs have PD 3, DR 60 and 30 hit points each. The head has PD 4, DR 75 and 50 hit points.

Vehicles and Travel

Any TL7 vehicle is available, although very sophisticated or exotic models may have disappeared in the chaos that followed the invasions. Before the plagues, air-cushion automobiles were being designed, but they were never mass-produced and no efforts are being made to introduce them on the open market. Military vehicles include airships, jeeps, rollagons (armored personnel carriers with scientific equipment), helicopters and jet planes. Before the plagues, super-jumbo jets carrying hundreds of passengers linked all the major cities of the world. The collapse of civilization has drastically reduced air travel. Most civilian travel is done on roads; travel off the highways is difficult and hazardous.

Costs and weights are not given for vehicles other than the rollagon; these are only generic descriptions. GMs may use whatever figures they like, or allow the players to build specific vehicles using the **GURPS Vehicles** rules.

Airships

Airships are used extensively by the military, especially after the pink storms (see p. 77) became common; using cold thrusters, an airship can go through storms that would destroy a vehicle flying faster in seconds. They are also good for delivering large amounts of cargo by air, or for depositing large teams of men. Their only problem is their

Sensor outlets are less well-armored, but they are redundant, so destroying a few will not reduce the robot's capabilities. Assume that 50 points of damage from attacks specifically aimed at the sensors will reduce the robot's Alertness rolls by half, and that 150 points will completely blind it. Attacking sensors is done at -3 penalty; components have an innate DR of 4.

Prowlers have a flamethrower and a machine gun in their mouths. Use the stats for the AM-280 and the Remington flamethrower. The gun is loaded with explosive bullets. Furthermore, the prowler's teeth are razor sharp, and it can bite for 15d impaling damage. If destroyed, the prowler will explode, doing 6dx50 concussion damage and 12d fragmentary damage.

A P-120 weighs 2,600 lbs. and costs the government \$50,000.

vulnerability to enemy weapons - which is not much of a problem against Chtorrans, unless they are being supported by human renegades.

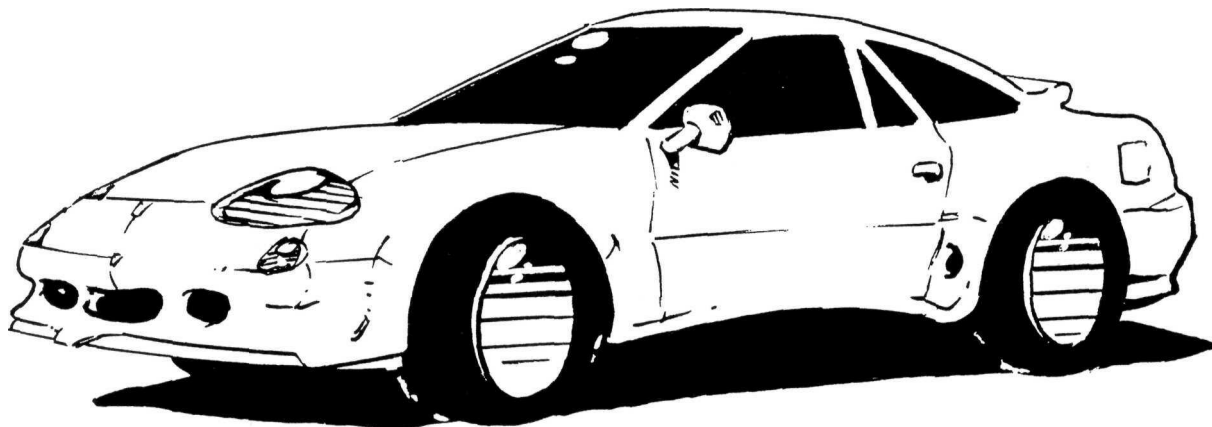
Another advantage of using an airship, especially if it is painted red or purple, is that gastropedes seem to be in awe of what looks like a giant flying worm (see p. 36). On the other hand, they *will* follow it . . .

Combat Motorcycles

Motorcycles with weaponry attachments have been used by outlaw bikers and renegades. The standard model is a standard heavy bike with two side-mounted rocket launchers, with a payload of four missiles.

Scout Van

This is an armed-and-armored van with sophisticated communications equipment. It has an on-board Complexity 5 computer, with programs that allow it to drive on its own over good terrain, identify military vehicles as well as Chtorran organisms, and uplink via satellite to larger networks. Its armor is good enough to stop light-caliber weapons, but not to survive a Chtorran attack: PD 4, DR 50 in most spots. It has a missile launcher that can engage ground and air targets.



Rollagon

This is the workhorse of the Special Forces. These all-terrain vehicles are used by reconnaissance and scientific teams. A rollagon has two prowler robots (see p. 102), several smaller drones and spybirds (see p. 93), a Complexity 6 L.I. engine with the ability to uplink with the world computer network, a Virtual Reality control deck to access the prowlers' senses, full life support and food supplies, and a small armory. Each rollagon can accommodate seven people comfortably. A rollagon is as well-armored as a light tank, with PD 6, DR 700 at its thickest points. They have heavy flamethrowers, missile launchers and assorted weaponry.

A standard rollagon weighs 13 tons and costs the Special Forces \$380,000, *without* its load of prowlers and other equipment.

Gunships and Other Helicopters

Attack helicopters are the weapon of choice against Ahtorran communities. Their combination of maneuverability, hover capability and firepower make them ideal to attack the huge mandalas that worms build. The average combat helicopter has dozens of weapon systems, from incendiary "madball" bombs that bounce around, spraying napalm wherever they ricochet, to huge 1,000-lb. high-explosive bombs, as well as defoliants, poison gas, machine guns and guided missiles. Their on-board computer system (Complexity 5) allows one pilot to fly and fight the ship by himself - an important consideration given the lack of trained personnel. With advanced remotes, one pilot can actually control a whole wing of gunships, as long as the operation does not demand too many aerial acrobatics.

The Army has a variety of helicopters for different missions, including the light Banshee-6 gunship, the mid-sized Valkyrie 111 and the heavier Scorpion. There are also big-lifter helicopters for delivering large loads quickly.

Weapon Table

■ Slugthrowers

Weapon	Malf	Type	Dmg	SS	Acc	½D	Max	Wt.	RoF	Rcl	Shots
AM-280	Ver.	Crush	6d+3	14/7	10/12	500	1,500	15	40	-1	500
7mm Weatherby	Ver.	Crush	8d+2	15	12	1,000	3,000	10	2	-3	5

■ Flamethrowers

Weapon	Malf	Type	Dmg	SS	Acc	½D	Max	Wt.	RoF	Rcl	Shots
Remington Flamethrower	Crit.	Spcl.	3d	—	8	40	75	20	4*	-1	24
Heavy Flamethrower	Crit.	Spcl.	4d	—	8	50	100	45	4*	-1	48
Nitrogen Sprayer	Crit.	Spcl.	10d	—	6	—	30	30	1	-1	20

■ Grenade Launchers

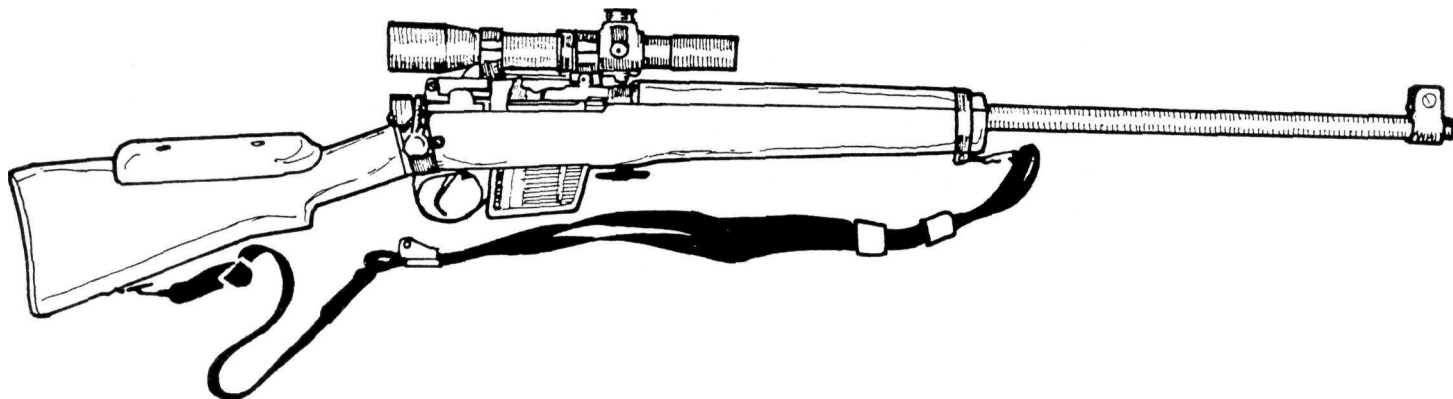
Weapon	Malf	Type	Dmg	SS	Acc	½D	Max	Wt.	RoF	Rcl	Shots
Grenade Launcher	Crit.	Spcl.	Spcl.	10	7	—	500	10	1	-1	5

■ Missile Launchers

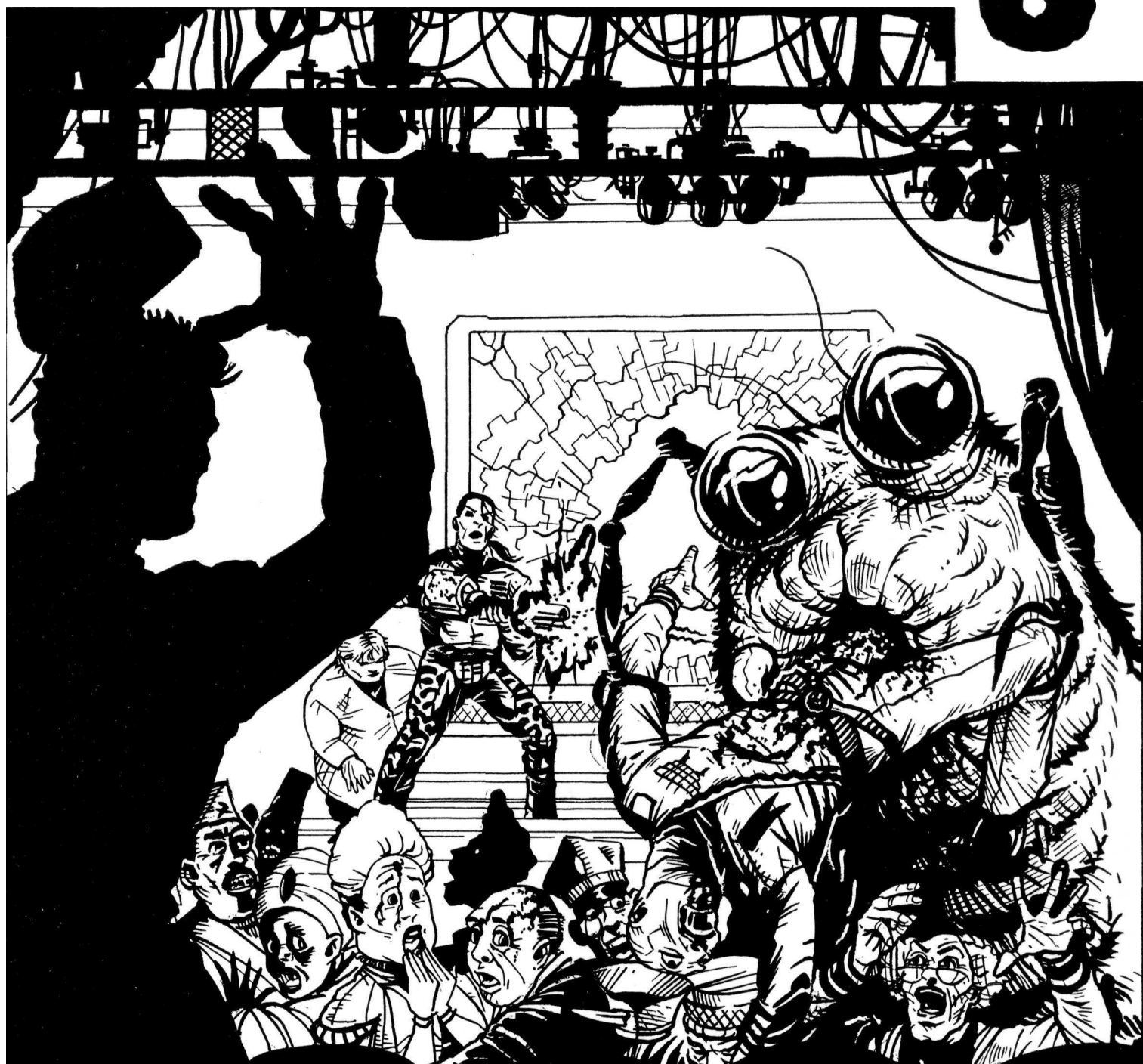
Weapon	Malf.	Dmg	SS	Acc	Min	½D	Max	Wt.	RoF	Rcl	Shots
Cold Rockets	Crit.	Spcl.	14	10	5	300	500	10	1	—	1
Light Missile Launcher	Crit.	6d×6(10)	14	12	8	300	500	10	2	—	2
Heavy Missile Launcher	Crit.	6d×10(10)	15	15	10	400	750	10	1	—	1

■ Particle Beam Weapons

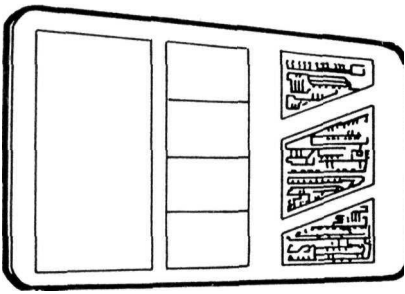
Weapon	Malf.	Dmg	SS	Acc	½D	Max	Wt.	RoF	Shots
Tactical PB	Crit.	2d×6	15	10	450	800	300	1	20/E
Fixed PB	Crit.	4d×6	16	10	750	1,500	500	1	10/E



CAMPAIGNS 6



A *Chtorr* campaign is different from the average SF or fantasy campaign. The PCs are not tramping through dungeons or discovering new worlds while blasting nasty BEMs with impunity. This Earth is on the brink of extinction. The characters are still reeling from the deaths of two-thirds of humankind. The PCs may only be able to slow down disaster - sometimes not even that. The *Chtorr* *can* be blasted away (although this is more dangerous than it appears), but their ecology is still winning. This is a grim struggle, and the odds are very much against humanity. Many have already surrendered or even joined the enemy.



The Far Future

The GM may also wish to set his campaign not in the next few years after the books, but much later - decades, even centuries after the last novel ended. This means that the GM will have to decide who won the war, or whether it is still going on. In the books, projections predicted that the war would not be won for at least 300 years, if it could be won at all. By extrapolating from the situation in the *War Against the Chtorr* novels, a new background set a few hundred years later can be developed. This would have the advantage of being totally unfamiliar to players who have read the novels; the events in the books would be known as ancient history (some PCs might want to play the great-grandchildren of McCarthy and Tirelli, carrying on their ancestors' struggle).

During that time, all sorts of technological breakthroughs will take place. (Consider that 300 years ago, the Earth was at TL4; taking into account the pressure to invent caused by the Chtorran threat, the planet might have reached TL10 or 11 in several fields two centuries after the invasion). Maybe robots with almost-human intelligence will become the front-line soldiers in the war. Special Forces troops might wear battlesuits having ultra-tech camouflage screens, and carry plasma guns instead of flamethrowers.

On the other hand, the last free humans might be living on the moon, Mars or Venus, or in space stations, while the Chtorr freely roam the Earth. The survivors might have to conduct raids on their former planet to acquire valuable gasses and elements they cannot find in space. Meanwhile, scientists born in artificial satellites would try to find a way to recapture their parents' home planet.

Campaign Crossovers

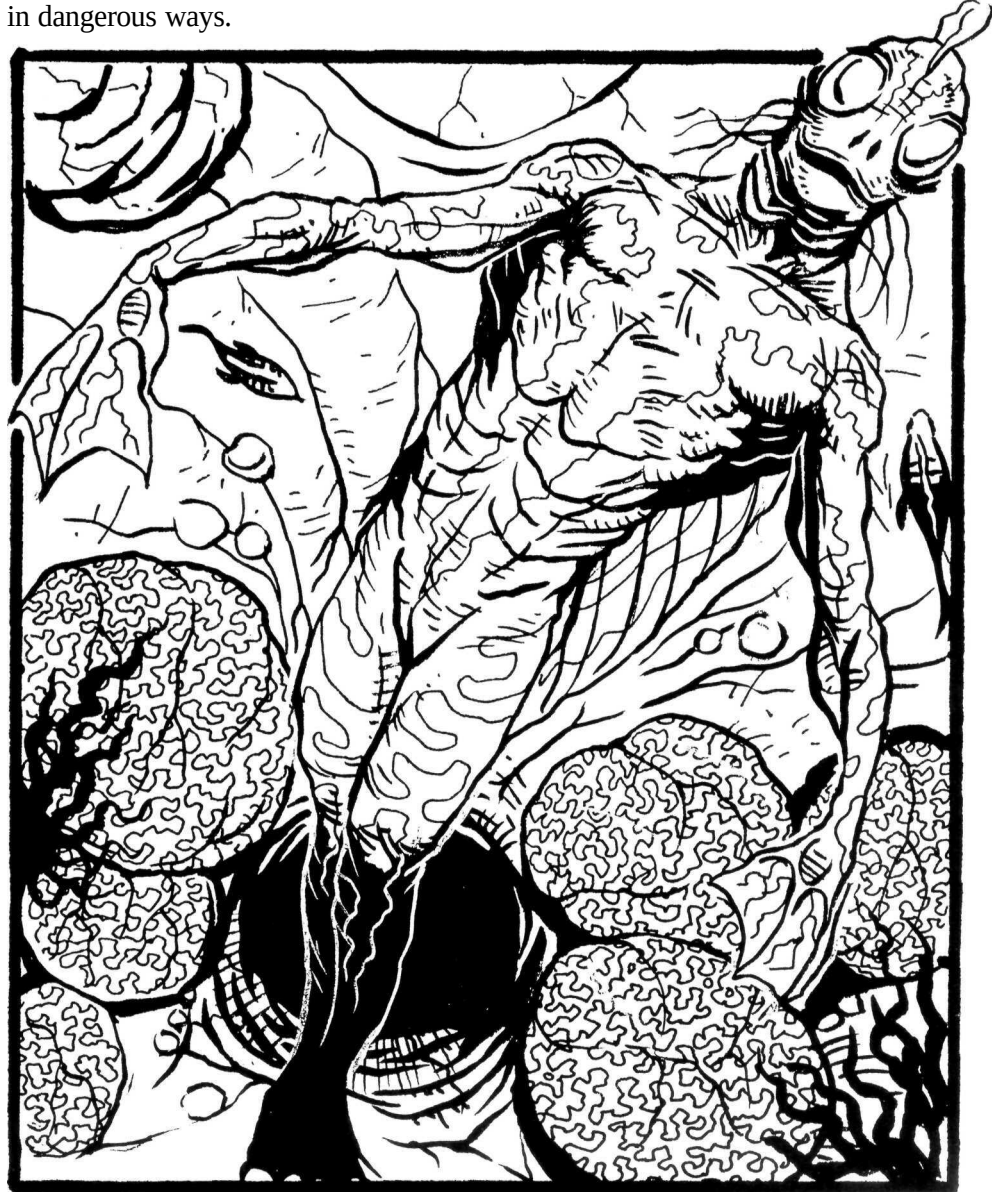
The following sidebars explore some "What if?" options as outlined on p. 120. They contain ideas for GMs trying to mix genres, either by introducing some new elements in the *Chtorr* setting, or by using the basic premise of the novels in a different campaign world. The GM can use these ideas as inspiration for even more fanciful crossovers.

On the other hand, this struggle is a perfect background for heroic adventure. Humans have to live up to their reputation as the meanest, smartest and most enduring species on the planet. Every person on Earth (including the PCs) has a stake in this struggle, and a role to play in it.

Campaign Scope

GMs designing a *Chtorr* campaign can choose any viewpoint in the struggle, from placing the PCs in the thick of things, where they know as much about the invaders as anyone on Earth, to sending them to the trenches, as line soldiers or civilians who know very little and who are playing a small (but hopefully important) role in the war for Earth.

The first approach will work best if most of the players have read the *War Against the Chtorr* series. The players would know as much about the Chtorr as James McCarthy or the U.S. President, so the GM might as well let the PCs know the same facts. The second option is more appropriate if the players have not read the books; the GM can recreate the unexpected events of the books, springing surprises on the players as well as on the characters. Any new knowledge will be earned the hard way. Or, if the GM wants to use the second approach and the players *have* read the books, simply change some elements of the stories, and overconfident players will find out that the facts they "know" are wrong, perhaps in dangerous ways.





■ Flavor

The War Against the Chtorr shows an Earth on the verge of defeat; the survivors are shell-shocked, and new developments keep demoralizing them. Attempts to communicate with the Chtorr in a meaningful way have failed. There seems to be only one place for humans in the Chtorrans' world - as *their food supply*. So far, conventional means have proven insufficient to fight them; despite massive military attacks, the infestations have continued to spread. There is not enough manpower available to fight the creatures: there are not even enough resources to pursue all research possibilities. All in all, the situation is desperately bleak, with little chance of improving.

The main character of the series, James McCarthy, is in the forefront of the struggle. He rises quickly from rather humble beginnings through a combination of accidents and personal ability. By the end of the first novel he is an important officer in the Special Forces, and one of the leading Chtorran experts in the world. The view from the top is terrifying, the more so because the government is keeping the most disheartening facts from the majority of the population. Only people in positions of authority - and those on the front lines - have an idea of the disaster's magnitude. On the other hand, those are the people with the best chance of devising solutions to the Chtorran threat. PCs in this position will be dealing with the likes of Drs. Zymph and Foreman (see p. 66), either bringing new information to them or working at their side.

The books are grim descriptions of struggle, both against the invaders and the inner demons that plague the main characters. The survivors have the responsibility to save the planet and keep their damaged psyches together. From a roleplaying standpoint, this setting offers great opportunities in the areas of character development, problem-solving and action adventure.

■ Duration

The length of the campaign is an important consideration in its design. One-shot campaigns can last as little as one game session: the PCs are given a task or a challenge, and it is resolved without much thought about the consequences or the previous history of the background. In the *Chtorr* universe, the best one-shot campaigns are military missions - burn this nest, destroy *X* amount of worms, take *Y* casualties. The PCs can plan the strike, choose their equipment, and then move in.

In general, however, a continuing campaign set in this background should be more interesting. The Chtorr will not be defeated or destroyed in one adventure; they are still well-established and spreading their influence after four novels. A long-term campaign will allow the PCs to learn and interact in the dangerous world of *The War Against the Chtorr*. The GM will be able to fully develop the background and fulfill its terrible potential.

Space

Any *Chtorr* campaign set in the future will have to deal with space exploration and colonization. Humankind may conduct the war from bases on the moon or from satellites in low Earth orbit. If FTL travel was developed, humankind could flee the solar system altogether and look for a new home. Missions might be sent in search of the Chtorran world to seek revenge.

The Chtorr could also invade worlds in a far-future setting, like the TL10 worlds described in the *GURPS Space Atlas* books. While a fully developed TL10 planet could easily shake off the aliens, many colony worlds are more primitive. The PCs could be scientists dispatched to the infected worlds to help stop the Chtorrans' spread or to study the alien life forms, mercenaries hired to exterminate the gastropedes, or citizens of the invaded world.

This, of course, assumes that the Chtorran ecology can be controlled more easily at TL10+. This does not have to be the case. Maybe the Chtorran colonizers can tailor their ecology to deal with different tech levels, or perhaps the ecology is a lot tougher than the novels hint. The invasion could be an *interstellar* one, with plagues and the alien ecology appearing in dozens of worlds within a few years. The invasions could lead to a "Long Night" (see p. S13) - a period of chaos and anarchy where much technology might be lost.

See p. 76 for a section describing the effects of ultra-tech weapons on Chtorrans.

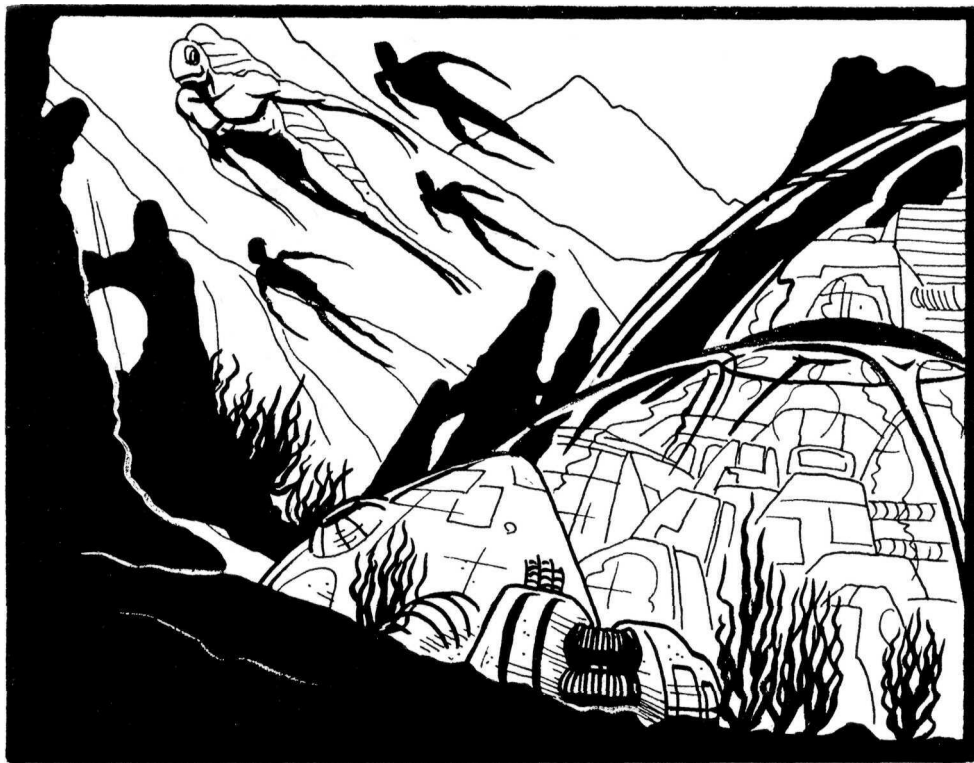
Special Ops

Unconventional warfare is the order of the day in the *Chtorr* setting. Highly skilled troops with limited support undertook hundreds of missions in the first years of the invasions. Even now, soldiers are being dispatched on scouting and intelligence-gathering missions against the Chtorr and possibly against unfriendly Fourth World nations. GMs planning a military campaign will find *Special Ops* useful as a guideline to developing and planning combat missions realistically.

Horror

With only a slight emphasis on the most terrifying aspects of the novels, a *Chtorr* campaign can be given the flavor that characterizes **Horror** adventuring. Lethal monsters, insane cultists, mass insanity and constant danger all exist in the books. Any theme from giant monster movies, dark post-apocalypse works, and other horror genres (see below) can be adapted to Chtorr-beset Earth.

For instance, the invasion can be given a mystical undertone. The best example of apocalyptic dark fantasy is Stephen King's *The Stand*, where a man-made disaster (bioengineered plagues are accidentally released) leads to the struggle of Good versus Evil (the survivors are divided into two camps, each led by people with supernatural abilities). The Chtorrans' seductive powers (see p. 79) may be able to trap men's souls as well as their minds. From among the survivors, men and women with mystical abilities start appearing, who must engage the Chtorr in supernatural battle. Themes from a fantasy campaign (see p. 116) can also be incorporated in a horror scenario.



Campaign Styles

The GM has to decide how to deal with the facts of a campaign set in Chtorr-infested Earth. Both the realistic and cinematic approaches are possible in this game world; the novels have elements of both.

■ **Realistic Campaigns**

In a realistic campaign, the PCs' abilities are kept at reasonable levels: no superhuman stunts will work. Rambo clones charging into a nest will become worm food. Even if the heroes are careful, they may not survive against the unforgiving Chtorran ecology. Perhaps most importantly, there will be limits to what the characters can accomplish.

A depressing example of this realistic viewpoint occurs at the beginning of *A Matter for Men*: a Special Forces squad observing a Chtorran nest see a child playing by the nest, and a worm approaching her. The squad does not have the weapons to kill the worm; to attack it would be suicidal. The only thing they can do is to shoot the child to save her from the horrible death of being eaten alive.

■ **Cinematic Campaigns**

On the other hand, the main characters of the series seem to live charmed lives; they survive incredible ordeals, and manage to accomplish a lot even against the Chtorr. GMs trying to recreate this part of the series may favor a more flamboyant style. PCs can be at the top levels of their professions, and their character point totals would reflect this fact. Heroic actions will be the order of the day. In this type of campaign, the GM can occasionally use *deus ex machina* solutions to save the PCs from certain death. Last-minute rescues, desperate missions and impossible escapes are part and parcel of the cinematic style.

This type of campaign is not incompatible with the realistic focus above; the *overall* situation is still desperate. The world needs real heroes: not killing machines, but capable, dedicated people willing to sacrifice everything to save the human race. If the players want to use characters with that level of commitment, then a higher point level is appropriate.



Choosing a Setting

Two of the most important questions for a GM designing a *Chtorr* campaign are "when" and "where." The invaded Earth has become a very divided place; communities are for the most part isolated from each other, and the conditions in one area (including the types of characters that would logically exist there) will vary from place to place. The specific *time* during which the campaign takes place is also an important consideration.

Time

The novels cover a period of six years so far, from the beginning of the plagues to the decision to use nuclear weapons against Chtorran strongholds, the evacuation of the U.S. government to Hawaii and the last large-scale scientific expedition, the doomed trip to the Amazon. The plagues began in the early years of the 21st century. No matter where the GM sets the campaign, events will move very rapidly, but the specific beginning will determine how much the PCs will know about the Chtorran threat.

■ Before the Invasions

This campaign is set on Earth before the plagues. This futuristic background is marked by the apparent downfall of the United States as a world power (see p. 14), improvements in communications, robotic and computer technology and Fourth World dominance in international politics. This period is not fully fleshed out in the novels, but can make an interesting setting for a campaign (see the *Cyberpunk* and *Terrodyne* sidebars on pp. 110 and 112 for more information on that type of campaign). GMs might even dispense with the Chtorran threat altogether, and deal with the secret plans of the U.S. and the expansion into space.

Starting a *Chtorr* campaign at this point would work very well for players who have not read *The War Against the Chtorr*. The PCs could be part of the covert arm of the U.S. military (see p. 30), for instance, and the first adventures could play like a futuristic *Special Ops* campaign - until the first reports of massive plague casualties.

■ The Plague Years

In less than one year, half of humanity died in the devastating plagues that preceded the main Chtorran infestations. This is a time of chaos and anarchy: most governments collapsed after the sudden deaths of millions of citizens. The victims tried quarantines, or fleeing the cities, but most fell to the diseases anyway. Without law and order, outlaws and looters preyed on the dying and the dead even as they themselves were struck down.

Civilian PCs have to deal with the disaster any way they can. Escaping to isolated areas and keeping refugees out is an adventure in itself. Still, this period is extremely dangerous; unless the PCs have the Immunity to Disease advantage, some or all of them may die.

A military campaign set during this time will put a lot of responsibility on the PCs' shoulders; as the only institution that survived the plagues more or less intact, the Army had to work to re-establish order, bury the dead and re-organize the survivors.

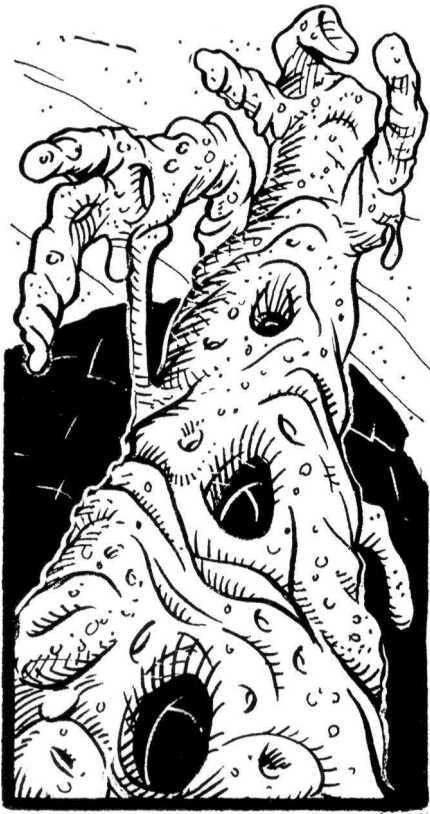
Chtorr = Cthulhu?

Considering the alienness of the invaders, the horrifying way in which over two-thirds of the world's population has died, and the use of the letters "CH" in the creatures' name, it would take very little effort to give the whole *Chtorr* setting a Lovecraftian flavor. Perhaps the Chtorr come from a place both unimaginably far and yet too close to Earth. Maybe some experiment in fourth-dimension physics unearthed some Thing Man Was Not Meant to Know. This is not an invasion conducted by a rational species, but the first steps of god-like beings with unknowable purposes. The renegades who worship the Chtorr are in some ways right: the worms are the heralds of dark gods. Maybe evil rituals are being conducted by the Chtorr and their slaves, rituals designed to call to Earth more powerful and destructive beings.

All scientific research on the Chtorr and their lesser cousins will be doomed to failure, as science will face creatures that human minds cannot comprehend. Only a handful of mystics and occultists know the arcane formulae and rituals that might slow down or even stop the demonic creatures, but their outcries are lost amidst the babbling of the insane victims of the plagues. Only when truly monstrous things appear, making the threat of the Chtorr pale by comparison, are the mystics' words heeded. But when a monstrous, shambling, putrid mound vaguely resembling a 400-foot koala stalks across the Canadian tundra, followed by a host of worms and mindless human slaves, it may be too late.

GMs who own Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* game could easily give the invaders this supernatural background. PCs can compete with cultists and their monstrous allies in the search for ancient books of power in deserted cities, or confront the monsters in their lairs to stop them from bringing forth yet greater evils.





Cyberpunk

As a TL8 setting with advanced computer technology and some cybernetics (like the telepath implants), the world of *The War Against the Chtorr* has many elements of cyberpunk literature. Hacking and Virtual Reality, two cyberpunk staples, are also part of the books. On the other hand, the struggle against the Chtorr lacks some of the ambiguity and chaotic dynamics of most cyberpunk worlds.

Still, it would be easy to run a standard *Cyberpunk* campaign by concentrating on areas that are appropriate: the ruined, half-empty cities with their insane orgiastic cults and the intrigue between the U.S. and the Fourth World; the biker-infested roads between the cities; the unfeeling military machinery that will crush anyone who stands in its way. Telepaths are the ultimate netrunners, traveling in a "net" of thousands of human brains.

If other cyberpunk settings (such as *GURPS Cyberworld*) are invaded by the Chtorr, the GM can mix traditional cyberpunk elements with the increased sense of hopelessness caused by the aliens. Megacorps may try to exploit the aliens for their own purposes, and national governments are unlikely to be strong enough to stop them. Cybernetically-enhanced warriors may lead the battle against the gastropedes.

■ **Early Infestations**

The first sightings of Chtorrans were dismissed by most people as delusions or mass hysteria. After the plagues, the infestation became apparent. The giant worms and other creatures from the Chtorran ecology started to claim large areas of the world. The first massacres of human settlements went unnoticed amidst the disastrous plagues; others, like the Show Low incident (see p. 15) were kept secret by the government.

A campaign set during this period can have the PCs, still reeling from the plagues, meeting the voracious Chtorrans for the first time and trying to fight them off. Attempts to report them to the authorities (if any are around) may be met with incredulity or hostility. Aggressive characters will discover that most conventional weapons are useless against gastropedes.

This is a good beginning for most campaigns. The early encounters with the Chtorr will teach the PCs to respect and fear the creatures. As the infestation spreads, the challenge of controlling or exterminating the worms will only grow.

■ **Striking Back**

This setting follows the human counterattacks against Chtorrans, as detailed in the first four novels of the series. The survivors, at least those who have not succumbed to insanity and despair, are confronted with the spread of the Chtorran menace and the new forms it takes as it continues to surprise and kill. Scientists are busy trying to develop ways to fight *and* communicate with the aliens, while the military launches constant attacks against the nests. The struggle becomes more desperate when large numbers of human renegades join the Chtorr, providing the worms with sophisticated weapons and a spy network.

The struggle is a losing one so far. At first, the Chtorran infestation seemed at a standstill. But the aliens' numbers suddenly rose; four years after the plagues, the U.S. President ordered nuclear strikes against the worst areas of infestation. The U.S. capital moved to Hawaii, one of the few parts of the world still uninfested by the Chtorr. By the fourth novel, the mind-set seems to be one of grim acceptance. Many leaders of the struggle have decided that the invading ecology cannot be contained, let alone destroyed; their goal now seems to be ensuring humanity's survival in the face of this fact.

This is the "default" campaign setting for *GURPS Chtorr*.



■ The Aftermath

This campaign addresses the question: "What happens next?" and deals with events after the fourth novel. The possibilities include a mass evacuation into space (this would save only a fraction of the remaining population, however), a retreat to Australia, the development of chemical and bacteriological weapons against the Chtorr, or the discovery of the Chtorrans' origins. Or, perhaps, the "true" Chtorrans, the intelligence behind the invasions, will show up.

This setting gives free reign to the GM's imagination. He can pick his favorite theory on the Chtorrans' origins and weaknesses (or he can make up his own) and surprise his players, including those who have read the books. The campaign can start a year or two after the events in *A Season for Slaughter*, or even much farther in the future (see the sidebar on p. 120).

Place

The location of the campaign will also be influential on the campaign. The amount of resources available to the protagonists, the gravity of the situation and other factors will change depending on where the campaign is set.

■ The United States

The United States is the only detailed background in the *Chtorr* novels: most of the events in the books occur in different areas of the U.S., which makes it the easiest place for the GM to develop. The GM can even pick his hometown and decide what its fate would be in Chtorr-infested Earth. Maybe the area has been completely overrun, or a safe zone has been built there. Either way, using familiar surroundings in this disturbing situation may help the players get more involved in the game.

The U.S. is also the leader in the struggle against the Chtorr. Most of the new weapons and tactics developed against the invaders have been designed here, and are shipped to other parts of the world. The best anti-Chtorran technology is available in America. On the other hand, people who want to find a peaceful answer to the Chtorran problem will make little headway in the U.S. The military mind-set seems to be dominant; scientific research is being relegated to a secondary position as resources are concentrated on finding ways to destroy or at least slow down the invaders.

■ The Fourth World

The impoverished and underdeveloped nations of the world seemed to have come into their own shortly before the plagues and the invasions. Decades of distrust and hatred toward the U.S. have yet to disappear, and the invasions, instead of bringing the world together, have widened the rifts. Many nations of the Fourth World see the invasion as a U.S. excuse to achieve world supremacy.



Autoduel

GURPS Autoduel deals with the chaotic world of the *Car Wars* game, a near-future setting where the highways are battle-grounds.irate motorists, rampaging bikers and security-conscious truckers all drive armed and armored vehicles, and spectator sports include battles to the death between specially designed combat cars. As with any cyberpunk world, the *Autoduel* setting already has many similarities to the pre-plague Earth of *The War Against the Chtorr*.

What happens if the GM decides to unleash the Chtorr invasion on the unsuspecting Earth of *Car Wars*? The plagues might have a harder time spreading, since communities tend to be more isolated, but casualties would still be enormous. The already-fragmented U.S. might have a tougher time reunifying itself to expel the invaders, but on the other hand the hard-bitten people of the car-warring 21st century would be better prepared to fight the Chtorr. After all, a worm is just another big nasty thing trying to kill you and blocking the highway, and you have enough ordnance under the hood to deal with it. Fortress towns are good Safe Zones (see p. 35), and a much higher percentage of the population knows how to fight. By the same token, of course, so would the renegade humans who decide to serve the worms.

It is unlikely that simple violence will be more successful in the long term than it was in the original setting. To win the war, the PCs will have to make the same hard, thoughtful choices that they would in any other *Chtorr* campaign.

Terradyne

GMs owning *GURPS Terradyne* could easily combine both worlds; there are enough similarities to easily adapt the world of the novels to the *Terradyne* setting - and enough differences to add spice and variety to a *Chtorr* campaign.

The Earth of *Terradyne* has expanded to the moon and Mars, both of which house millions of inhabitants. The megacorp that owns space, Terradyne, is at odds with the governments of Earth. If that world had been struck by the Chtorran invasion, the plagues would have decimated the Earth's population. But the moon and Mars would have a good chance of escaping unscathed, especially if Terradyne executives had the foresight to quarantine their installations at the first signs of mass plagues. From its safe haven, Terradyne could then try to save the Earth - or could retreat into space. For the survivors on the ground, the struggle would be as grim as in the novels, with the added anguish of knowing that the escape route has been closed.

On the other hand, the invasion might also strike at the other planets. Maybe a specially designed breed of Chtorran worm could be unleashed on the red sands of Mars, or vacuum-resistant creatures could prey on humans in the lunar cities.

Espionage

There is plenty of potential for spy vs. spy action in the *Chtorr* setting. The U.S. and the Fourth World are locked in a covert war, in which intelligence gathering plays a major role. *GURPS Espionage* provides several real-life examples that GMs can use for inspiration in designing their own plots.



The Amazon jungle is an interesting area to visit. Some of the biggest Chtorran communities in the world exist in this area, which is swiftly being destroyed by the invaders. The local government is trying to exploit the Chtorran ecology. The PCs can be working for the Brazilian government or its Japanese allies, or might be U.S. secret agents trying to stop their dealings with the aliens (see p. 30).

■ **Australia**

Australia is the only continent that has been spared the horror of the Chtorran ecology. The novels do not describe conditions in that part of the world beyond that, so GMs can give free rein to their imaginations. The continent can be the base of operations for the PCs. They may have to deal with ways to prevent the infestation from reaching Australia, helping the nations of Asia overcome their problems, or even trying to prevent refugees from swamping the country.

■ **Space**

By the fourth novel of the series, at least two major space stations and the lunar base are functional once again. This setting is also not described in detail; GMs might find *GURPS Terradyne* useful (see sidebar).

The Chtorr

The role of the Chtorr in the campaign can vary according to the taste of the GM. The alien creatures dominate most of the novels' action, but even there they are not the central factor throughout, and a campaign set in the game world can focus on other aspects some or even all the time. Still, the invaders' role in any campaign will be important, if only to provide background.

■ **Monster Mash**

Too much emphasis on Chtorran ecology may turn the campaign into a high-tech version of hack-and-slash: the PCs go out, shoot/burn/blow up a nest of Chtorrans/a renegade clan/a millipede horde, and return home with their treasure (the reward for Chtorran mandibles). Also, if the PCs are exposed to Chtorrans too often, they will become jaded to the alienness of the invaders; the sense of dread will be lost.

One way to deal with the Chtorr is to follow the pattern of the novels: each incursion against the Chtorr is a horribly risky enterprise. After a few such experiences, the PCs (and the players) will learn that every encounter with the invaders results in casualties, often permanent ones. They may be less eager to go into the field, and welcome any alternate plan of action the GM throws their way.

Also, the GM should deliver the full impact of the Chtorran invasions slowly. After the PCs are used to first-stage nests, hit them with a second-stage one. Bring in other Chtorran creatures, like bunnydogs and millipedes, at the least expected moment. Instead of always having the PCs go out and hunt Chtorrans, the Chtorr might go after the PCs for a change. Having the aliens strike a supposedly safe zone (a military base, for instance) will throw the characters off-balance.

■ **The Fun's Just Beginning**

Once all the details of the first four books have been revealed to the PCs, the GM can try to come up with new developments. Maybe some renegades are becoming human-Chtorran hybrids - a more advanced case of the Chtorran hair-growth (see p. 71) with other physiological changes, perhaps including the low vulnerability to bullets and conventional weapons. What will the PCs do when they put 50 rounds into a renegade *and he doesn't fall down*?

The Chtorr and their hybrid servants could start launching massive coordinated attacks on human installations. The nuclear strikes the U.S. launched may slow this development, but the invaders seem to recover at an alarming rate. Instead of search-and-destroy missions, the PCs will be involved in last-ditch defenses, trying to delay the invaders while anything that can be salvaged is evacuated from threatened areas.

These are only a few possibilities. Keep in mind that, whether by instinct or design, the Chtorr seem to be good at seizing initiative. If the humans seem to have the upper hand, the aliens will come up with a way to turn things around.



Time Travel

It is very likely that the war against the Chtorr has already been lost - so the only way to win it is to go back and fight it all over again! What if humankind had to escape the planet, and now the last survivors are huddled in space and lunar stations that cannot support their populations much longer? What if one of their last major discoveries was a system to travel back in time? The PCs could be agents sent to the time before the plagues, carrying vaccines, information and warnings of the upcoming doom. They will face disbelief from all quarters. Once they are believed, they must deal with resistance from the Fourth World, which will refuse to empower the U.S., although this may be the planet's best hope. And eventually the invaders themselves will appear. Will the time travelers' efforts be enough to change history?

Another way to combine the two sourcebooks is to use Chtorr-infested Earth as a parallel world from the Infinity Unlimited campaign world (see p. TT84), a TL8 Earth that has discovered a way to travel to parallel worlds in other dimensions. If Infinity Patrol agents discover the Chtorr-invaded world, it is very likely that they will try to help. Care will have to be taken not to transmit the plague viruses (which were powerful enough to crumble a TL8 civilization). The PCs can be members of Infinity Unlimited assigned to help this parallel world, I-Cops trying to prevent smugglers from taking Chtorran life forms to other parallels, or natives of the parallel world, now faced with unexpected help in their war for survival.

By the same token, the Infinity Unlimited world could be the target of the Chtorran invasion. The plagues might devastate the primary world while people in the other realities watch with honor, or they might be carried to a dozen worlds by panicky refugees. After overcoming the plagues, the survivors will have to deal with the Chtorr; unlike the people from the original books, they will have the resources of dozens of planets, and can, if necessary, evacuate the whole planet and go to a different reality.



Supers

In physical terms, the Chtorran worms are formidable opponents even against a super. But, more importantly, the assault against Earth's ecology is a threat of cosmic magnitude. The ability to punch through walls or to fly will seem insignificant against the forces that have killed most people on the planet and are transforming or destroying the rest of the world. The PCs' actions will be flashier, but they will still have to face a daunting challenge.

An interesting possibility for creative GMs would be to create a campaign world combining *GURPS Chtorr* and *International Super Teams*. The IST world is very much like our own, with the exception that supers exist there and the United Nations has almost managed to form a world government. What would happen if the Chtorran infestation happened there? Would the plagues be as devastating with the existence of psionic healers (or maybe psionic healing is ineffective, or the disease is so widespread that the healers find themselves overwhelmed)? Maybe the ISTs become the nucleus for the Earth's resistance. Humanity might have a slightly better chance.

■ The Next Wave

Another issue the GM may wish to deal with is the next stage of the invasion. With the Earth's population drastically reduced and contained by the Chtorran ecology, this might be the time for the intelligence behind the invasion to show up. Some scientists believe that the worms are "feral children," immature versions of the real Chtorrans. Imagine if their parents come as an army of even larger worms, equipped with ultra-tech equipment. Their numbers would not be great (if it had been possible for large numbers of mature Chtorrans to be brought to Earth, it would have happened already), but their arrival could tip the balance once again in the aliens' favor.

Or perhaps the "true" Chtorrans are nothing like the worms; they might be more evolved versions of the bunnymen (see p. 39), or an altogether different race. They could be a race of instinctive cowards (in a world heavily populated by the Chtorran worms, it might be one viable way for a species to develop intelligence), which would explain their roundabout tactics in displacing humans from the planet. Or they might be already extinct, the invasion a pre-planned attempt to begin anew somewhere else, an ultra-tech Noah's ark aimed at Earth. This possibility is the most comforting (it would mean that once the enemy is beaten, there will be no reinforcements).

Campaign Themes

Described below are some campaign "themes," central ideas around which a campaign is built. A campaign does not have to limit itself to one theme. In fact, most campaigns will probably progress from one to another. A Worm Burning campaign can eventually become a Saving the Planet one, when the PCs rise enough in rank to be responsible for dealing with the Chtorran problem on a strategic level.

■ Worm Burning

The simplest *Chtorr* campaign involves the Special Forces' search-and-destroy missions. The characters would be part of a squad- or platoon-strength force settled in an isolated firebase, usually supplied by helicopter. Teams will go out periodically to root out centers of Chtorran infestation, with the help of aerial and satellite reconnaissance. The team members would be well-supplied with weaponry, robots and vehicles, supplemented with any new weapons and technology that the government sends to be tested in the field.

The best way to keep such a campaign from becoming monotonous is for the GM to gradually introduce different Chtorran threats. After burning a few first-stage nests (see p. 82), the PCs can run into a millipede horde, or a larger nest with more Chtorrans. The worms will get bigger as they get older. Other alien creatures, like the bunnydogs and bunnymen (see p. 39) will add variety, and the sudden onslaught of a pink storm (see p. 77) can change the pace of the campaign for several sessions.

Advantages: The PCs will be well-equipped and trained, and will have a concrete mission. The GM can slowly introduce them to all the dangers of the Chtorran ecology without endangering their lives too much.

Disadvantages: Unless the GM is very creative in introducing new challenges, the campaign will start playing in the same way every session. This might be realistic (in the novels, the violence that surrounds the hunt for worms acquires a horrible monotony) but not very satisfying for the players. The easiest solution is to upgrade the campaign to a new theme at that point.

■ Research and Development

The PCs are scientists, soldiers and technicians concerned with the longer viewpoint. They are exploring ways to stop the invaders over the long term. This includes attempting to communicate with them, learning how to make human areas safe from Chtorran attacks, saving the Earth's environment, and helping humankind deal with the problems that have appeared after the plagues. A good deal of the campaign will consist of digesting new facts about the invasion, dealing with diverse branches of the government and with foreign nations, and trying to come up with new ideas to solve the issues in the novels. Researchers may also have to make "field trips" for first-hand observations of the Chtorran problem, and these will be as dangerous as the GM wishes them to be.

Researchers might raise baby Chtorrans to observe their communication patterns, learning abilities, and to discover their strengths and vulnerabilities. There is always the danger that the research subjects might escape or become violent - a half-ton, very tough and fairly intelligent creature is a lot harder to handle than your average lab rat. Members of the research team might supervise the capture of live Chtorrans, working side by side with Special Forces troops.

Advantages: This setting provides a chance to learn about the aliens in a (relatively) safe environment. Players who have read the books before will have the opportunity to deal with any "what if" questions they may have had. This is a perfect chance to do all the things you wish the novels' characters had tried.

Disadvantages: The environment may be too safe and removed from the real action for the flavor of the game world to be effective. A creative GM can easily offset this, however.

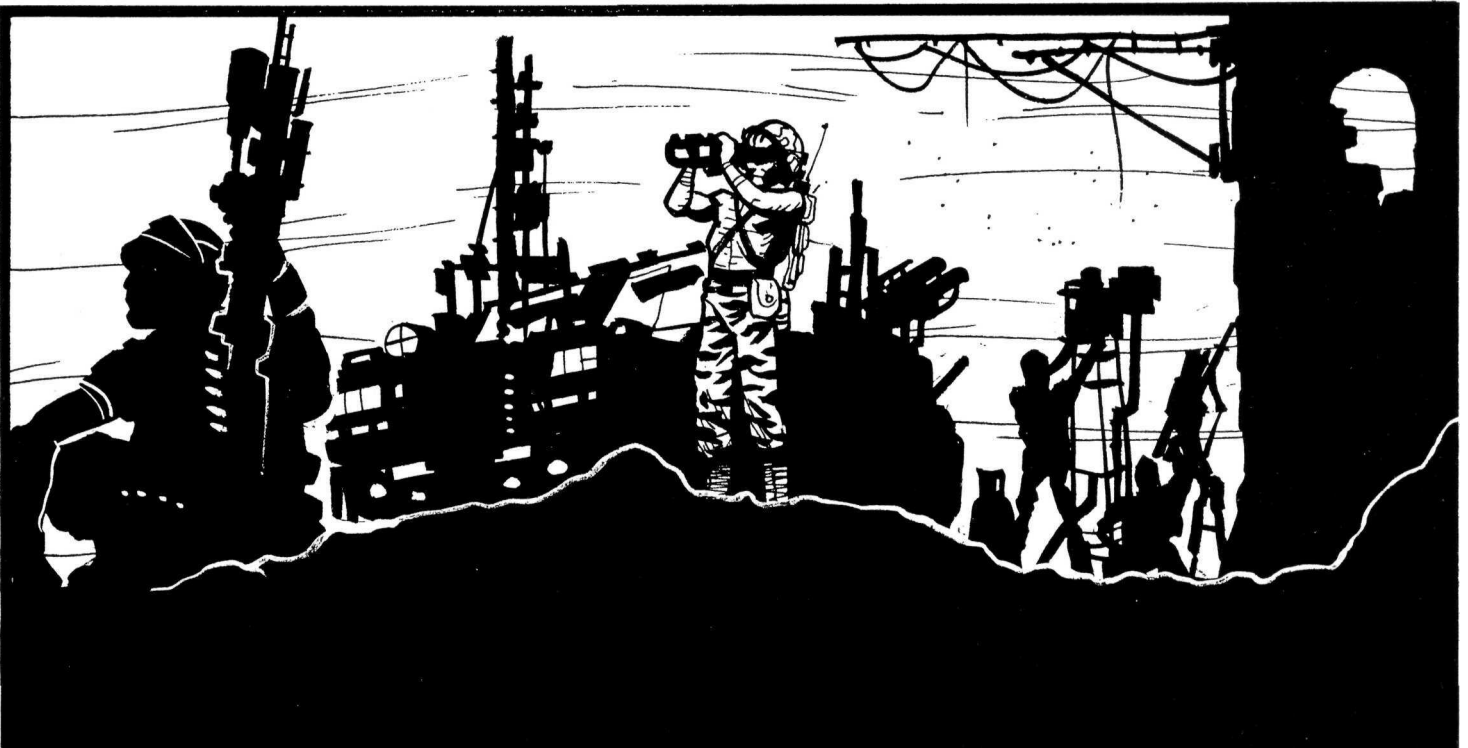
■ Soldiering

This campaign deals with the reorganized Teamwork Army, now very much a military institution. Most of the army is not actively involved in fighting the Chtorr directly, except in the defense of large population centers. Instead, it is dedicated to maintaining order, salvaging goods and equipment from abandoned towns, and moving the survivors to safer areas. The army has to deal with the psychotic population of the cities, the remnants of the plagues, and the increasingly frequent Chtorran onslaughts.

Illuminati

Instead of UFOs, there are giant purple caterpillars roaming the countryside and eating people. To replace the Orbital Mind Control Lasers, you have the friendly Telepathy Corps, who for all you know have already implanted your brain with a transmitter and are even now listening through your ears and seeing through your eyes (better start wearing that metal cap). The U.S. government has got a war to fight, and pity the poor souls that get in the way. Then there are the Modies, self-assured, take-charge types who have the ear of the U.S. president, generals and other powerful people from all over the world. And dozens of agencies, each wielding enormous power, are embroiled in convoluted plots to further their ends. Fnord.

There is enough material in the *Chtorr* novels as they are to satisfy the most avid paranoiac imagination. But this is not to say that a GM might not want to stir things up a bit more. From the beginning, people have been accusing the U.S. military of having unleashed the plagues and created the Chtorr as a way to seize control of the country and the whole world. What if that accusation were true? Someone stumbling across evidence to support that theory will have a hard time convincing anyone, though, and if he makes too much noise something might just happen to him. He could disappear. Or he might show up one day making light of the whole affair and returning to his normal life, although there are some ever-so-slight changes in his behavior, almost as if there were someone else in his head...



Fantasy

Visiting the Chtorran invasion on the stereotypical fantasy setting might seem a bit cruel. After all, a TL3 society, even backed by magic, may not be able to resist, or even understand, the ecological infestation. Each gastropede is as deadly as a full-sized dragon; warriors with swords and shields will be helpless against them. It could be argued that the Chtorr are too much challenge for a fantasy world.

Some worlds may be able to deal with the alien threat, however. Elves, the Faerie folk and other races with a link to nature may understand the danger to the ecology (a fantasy world where the Earth itself is a sentient entity would be better-informed about the danger than the high-tech setting of the novels). Since the novel does not touch on magic or mysticism at all, the GM can decide what the aliens' relationship to magic is. The GM could rule that the Chtorr, for instance, being non-magical beings, are very vulnerable to sorcery; spells and enchanted weapons would do as much damage to the Chtorr as fire (see p. 77). The right magical ritual or formula could expel the invaders from a large area, or from the whole planet! In the latter case, though, the formula should be *very* hard to find; perhaps only legends of it exist — a worthy quest goal.

If the Chtorr are thrown into the fray, a cinematic fantasy campaign would work best. The PCs had better be *very* good at sword-swinging and spell-casting if their enemies are going to include shamblers' tenant swarms, millipedes and Chtorran worms. Since the PCs in most standard **Chtorr** campaigns are either elite soldiers or the world's movers and shakers, fantasy PCs should be renowned knights and mystics.



Advantages: The military is involved in *every* aspect of life. The GM will have a wide variety of situations to throw at the PCs.

Disadvantages: Being a part of the military establishment will mean that the PCs are not in full control of their actions, but will be ordered around by their superiors. This allows the GM to steer the campaign more easily, but players used to the semi-anarchy of most RPG campaigns may chafe under the restrictions.

■ ***Saving the Planet***

This is a Research-and-Development campaign on a broader scale, with politics added. The PCs are either high officials in the U.S. or world governments, or people who have the ear of such individuals (an example of this is the novels' "Lizard" Tirelli; see p. 64). Their ideas and beliefs will shape the policies of whole nations or even mankind. The characters will have access to the latest facts on the invasions, and will control many resources, from armed forces to the most advanced satellite surveillance equipment.

This campaign might be best started *after* a campaign of another type has progressed for a while. This would have the double advantage of letting the PCs deal with the Chtorr on a more personal basis first. . . and giving them the feeling that they have *earned* their power and responsibilities.

Advantages: As for Research and Development, but even more intense. This is the campaign where the whole war against the Chtorr can be won or lost.

Disadvantages: Players who prefer combat to politics and abstract issues won't like this campaign.

■ ***Survival's the Game***

This campaign is set at the beginning of the plagues. The PCs are normal people (they might even wish to play *themselves*) who are faced with the swiftly spreading diseases. The GM should give the PCs a bit of an edge; perhaps they are paranoid enough to leave for the wilderness early enough. Besides the usual elements of a *Survivors* campaign (looking for supplies, dealing with rival survivalist groups, starving and diseased mobs approaching the PCs' safe haven),



they will have to deal with the first outbreaks of the Chtorran ecology. If the players haven't read the books (or didn't see this worldbook in your hands), they will be in for a big shock the first time you describe the giant pink caterpillars walking through the forest! They may go through all the stages that the people did in the novels: Are they mutants? Bio-weapons?

Advantages: The GM does not have to tell his players that this is the *Chtorr* universe, saving the nasty surprises for the last moment.

Disadvantages: The plague years are brutal and deadly times; the players may feel that their characters have very little control over their situation.

■ **Bounty Hunters**

The PCs are civilians looking for the reward money paid for Chtorran heads (see p. 53). They could be a small group of adventurers living in some remote community, or members of an organized large-scale effort to kill worms. In the first case, the PCs will have to cope with limited access to equipment and resources; they might start out with obsolete or improvised weapons. Employees of a large organization will be better supplied, but may have to contend with petty bean-counters and greedy, heartless executives.

Chtorran hunters may also be working for Japanese corporations. Chtorran meat and oil are now a valuable commodity, and the PCs would be treated like the crew of a whaling ship - only these "land whales" are a lot less helpless than the usual quarry.

Advantages: This campaign deals with non-military issues and allows more leeway for the player characters.

Disadvantages: The goals of the PCs may (rightly) seem very short-sighted and egotistical when the whole planet is in danger.



Yrth Under Siege

It all started in Sahud and the Nomad Territories. A mysterious plague struck thousands down; only magical healing helped, and there were not enough healers to help everyone. The plague spread and hit several border cities in Megalos. Fortunately, several Mages' Guilds gathered and managed to cast massive spells that halted the plagues before they hit other nations. Over the next few months, tales from the terrified refugees of plague-ridden lands started to filter south, stories about giant monsters and alien plants and animals dotting the landscape.

Other plague outbreaks hit Megalos, but the mages were prepared and the diseases did not spread far. With the outbreaks came a number of newcomers - men and women from Earth. The Ministry of Serependity (see *GURPS Fantasy*, p. 9) interviewed these newcomers and discovered that Earth is being invaded by alien creatures that are slowly transforming the planet. And it seems that a series of Banestorm manifestations is just now starting, bringing to Yrth plague viruses, humans from the beleaguered Earth - and Chtorran creatures.

Yrth does not have to cope with the massive invasions of Earth, but if even a few Chtorran immigrants breed, they will become a real threat. If enough Chtorran creatures are gated in to start a semi-stable ecology, Yrth might follow its sister plane. The authorities of Yrth can try to find and destroy infestation centers, discover a magical way to stop the new Banestorms (which may be yet another attempt of the Dark Elves to rid the world of "inferior" races), or even send an embassy (or a spy team) to Earth to learn ways to stop the aliens.

In the meanwhile, there are new random encounters in the wilderness of Megalos and Caithness; something has eaten whole herds of sheep (shepherd and sheep dogs included), leaving long and twisting blood trails into the forest. A whole village has been butchered, the lone survivor speaking of hordes of yard-long millipedes that swarmed over his neighbors. And at sea, tales of a huge monster able to swallow whole ships with one bite are beginning to become commonplace. Yrth has become just a little more interesting.

Other Historical Periods

There are many **GURPS** sourcebooks dealing with different historical periods, from the Ice Age to the Wild West period, including the Middle Ages, Rome, the swashbuckling era, etc. The Chtorran invasions could take place in any of those periods. In all fairness, however, any setting with a TL below 6 will be easy prey to the aliens; the plagues alone might kill *all* human beings, or so many that the survivors could not maintain a civilization. Without high technology or magic on their side, humans would be no hope.

This option is therefore not recommended, unless the GM tones the Chtorr down to a level that a relatively primitive society can cope with. Eliminating the plagues, for instance, and moving right on to the ecological infestation would give a pre-TL6 society a chance. In a cinematic campaign, PCs could spearhead new inventions to deal with the Chtorr; even a realistic campaign could see interesting innovations, brought about by the pressure to devise new ways to destroy the aliens. Necessity is the mother of invention.

A TL4-5 period, for instance, could see the development of balloons, steam-powered armored cars, and flamethrowers (a re-inventing of Greek fire, perhaps), due to the Chtorran threat.

A truly ambitious GM could decide on a historical date for the invasion, and then start his campaign ten or even a hundred years *later*, taking into account all the possible changes in history caused by the invasion. For instance, the invasion could have occurred in the late 19th century. Historical inventors like Thomas Edison, Louis Pasteur and Marie Curie would have had to use their wits to face the invaders, working side by side with people whom circumstances propelled from otherwise historical obscurity into the limelight (the PCs).



Campaigns

■ Cloak and Dagger

This campaign would keep the Chtorran infestation in the background for the most part (although the alien ecology is bound to make violent entrances on the scene from time to time) while dealing mostly with the struggle between the Fourth World and the U.S. There is a world to be saved out there, and the petty conspiracies of the Fourth World endanger the efforts of others to fight the Chtorr. The PCs can organize covert operations, spy on enemy countries and topple governments. At the same time, the danger of the Chtorran environment can provide unexpected complications. Picture the complications the PCs would face if a pink storm (see sidebar, p. 77) struck the foreign city they were trying to flee. They are carrying a microchip with vital information and the enemy nation's security forces are on their heels - until everyone is stranded under several feet of pink powder and the Chtorr start swarming in ...

Advantages: The GM has more leeway, since this area is not explored in detail in the books. Ultra-tech espionage opens many new vistas. The enemy will be for the most part human, and can be outwitted and bargained with more easily. If some of the agents are Telepathy Corps members, literally any skill is available to the team, and they'll never be truly out of touch.

Disadvantages: Players looking forward to the struggle with the aliens may be disappointed at being deployed against Fourth World nations.

■ City Life

On post-plague Earth, just living can be an adventure. Decadence, crime, insanity and constant danger from Chtorran organisms are part of city life. PCs in charge of administering a Safe Zone have to deal with dangers from without (biker gangs, gastropedes and renegades) as well as within (debauched cults, con men, outbreaks of hysteria). The PCs might be part of the military, or they might be regular people trying to rebuild their lives while the world collapses around them.

Advantages: The GM does not need to deal exclusively with the Chtorran menace. This setting also provides more room for dealing with the private lives of the PCs, which allows for more roleplaying.

Disadvantages: Players who want to deal directly with the Chtorran threats may feel frustrated.

■ Renegades

This can be an unusual campaign. The PCs are members of a renegade tribe. Their enemy is not the Chtorran ecology, but the U.S. government, which first seeks to imprison and later tries to exterminate them. The renegades may have tame Chtorrans with them - in fact, GMs might even allow one or two of the PCs to *be* tame Chtorrans (see p. 72).

The PCs have to help organize, protect and supply the band. They must be constantly on the lookout for government troops and robots. As they grow in numbers and become more successful, it will be harder to hide from their enemies. And they may be called to offer the ultimate sacrifice to their Chtorran allies.

Advantages: This campaign offers a different viewpoint from the standard "Chtorrans are the enemy" campaign.

Disadvantages: Unless the GM makes some profound changes in the elements of the books, the PCs will ultimately become the unwitting slaves of a species that considers them little more than self-preparing food. Few players will want to accept that. On the other hand, roleplaying the renegades as they come to this realization and turn against the Chtorr would create an interesting campaign. The campaign would then change, as the PCs decided what to do with their lives. They could join the U.S. Army, bringing with them invaluable information they gained in their former lives. But they would still have to live with the distrust of soldiers who feel that all renegades are traitors to the human race.

GURPS Vampire: The Masquerade

The Earth of *War Against the Chtorr* is a dark, unpleasant world . . . billions dead, monsters wandering the countryside, a government embarked on a crusade for the survival of humankind, a place where most citizens know only that people in power are not telling whole truth and that the world has become an uncertain, dangerous place.

This world could be made one more shade darker. What if, even before the invasions, and unknown to most mortals, monsters *had* been wandering the streets and countryside? The *Chtorr* world already has some elements of the Gothic-Punk atmosphere of **GURPS Vampire**. Handled skillfully, the combination of alien invasion and an undead menace can make for a powerful campaign.

In **GURPS Vampire**, the PCs are Cainites, creatures of the night condemned to immortality and dependent on the blood of mortals for survival. Ancient elders battle rebellious anarchs, all the while hiding the existence of vampires through a carefully contrived Masquerade. How would these creatures react to the coming of the Chtorr? The alien threat can utterly destroy humankind, and without humans vampires cannot survive. The Cainites may have to put tier plots aside and try to assist the mortals in their battle. Just as the nations of the Earth do not seem to be able to work together, however, the vampires would also fragment into rival factions. Some groups, such as the Sabbat, might try to forge alliances with the alien monsters, or try to control and modify the Chtorr to use them as weapons. Some vampires might ignore the conflict, and concentrate on their usual business - the hunt. The Safe Zones (see p. 35) will soon become the havens of the undead.

For an even more unusual campaign, some Cainites might break the Masquerade and offer their services to the mortal governments (or might instead control them from within). Or maybe the post-plague upheavals destroyed the vampires' anonymity: vampirism might seem as some sort of Chtorran disease, and the "sufferers" would be hunted down. Ironically, some of the weapon systems developed to fight the Chtorr (such as flamethrowers) also work beautifully against vampires!

GMs would have many options open in deciding how the alien ecology would interact with the undead. Vampiric animal control powers might or might not work on the Chtorrans. Some vampires might even develop shapeshifting Disciplines that allow them to transform into gastropedes! The supernatural makeup of vampire physiology might make them resistant to the plagues and Chtorran parasites, or it might lead to Chtorran-vampire hybrids. Bunnydogs might become a vampire delicacy, and it might be possible to Embrace the creatures and turn them into alien vampires.



■ **Telepaths in Action**

This campaign focuses on mechanical telepathy (see p. 93). There are two ways to handle this. The first is to deal with the PCs as individual telepaths. In this campaign, all or most of the PCs are telepaths, switching bodies for every mission and running espionage capers around the world.

The second one is much more ambitious. The players can collectively roleplay the Telepathy Corps' mass-mind, and their opinions and desires must reach a consensus before a decision is made. This is much harder to roleplay and organize, however, and is only recommended for very experienced players.

Advantages: The campaign will offer a great deal of power and a variety of challenging situations to the PCs.

Disadvantages: If the first option is used, the PCs will slowly find themselves losing their sense of individuality. The second option requires the players to try to roleplay a group consciousness made up of thousands of individuals - quite a leap from playing one character!

Alternate Realities

GM of a *Chtorr* campaign also has the option of changing the history described in the novels. This has the double advantage of keeping players who have read the novels from "guessing" right every time, and of giving full rein to the GM's imagination. Anything is possible, from a total rewrite to changes in a few key events. Or the GM can simply set the campaign several years after the events of the last novel, with new developments that were not covered in the series. (Of course, as soon as the next story comes out, this immediately becomes an alternate history.)

Another type of altered campaign consists of using the same premise (an alien ecological invasion) and even the same "villains" (the Chtorr), but changing the target. Maybe it's 20th-century Earth, not the futuristic one in the books. Or it could be a completely different world; a GM might even try to combine premises from two fictional settings, having the Chtorran ecology invade Andre Norton's *Witch World* or the *Wild Cards* milieu (both also available as **GURPS** worldbooks), or the alternate-history Earth from Gibson and Sterling's *The Difference Engine* (soon to be another **GURPS** sourcebook). The sidebars on pp. 110-118 give some ideas for this type of campaign.

GURPS Werewolf: The Apocalypse

This upcoming **GURPS** version of the popular White Wolf game depicts the Garou, the shapeshifters, as the age-old defenders of Gaia, Mother Earth. They fight the depredations of humankind on Nature, but their chief foe is the Wyrms, a godlike entity of decay and destruction that with its minions tries to destroy life on the planet. The links between this setting and **GURPS Chtorr** are obvious. In a war to save the planet, the Garou would be on the front lines.

GMs can give the alien invaders a supernatural origin (see sidebar, p. 109), perhaps making them the direct creations of the Wyrms - what better father of the worms could there be? Even a pack of werewolves would find one gastropede a deadly threat, and the damage to the ecology caused by the aliens would be anathema to the Garou. Perhaps their mystical abilities can turn the tide.

To set up a *Chtorr-Werewolf* campaign, the GM needs to decide what role the aliens and the Garou play in it. If the Chtorr are creatures tainted by the Wyrms (or perhaps an equivalent entity from another planet), they may have some mystical properties (such as spiritual forms); some of the Chtorran effects on humans might be of a supernatural, instead of psychic, origin. By the same token, the werewolves should be able to inflict extra damage on the gastropedes (the Chtorr should be as vulnerable to the Garou's teeth and claws as they are to fire, for example).

The werewolves from *The Apocalypse* can travel through the Umbra, an astral-like plane of existence that permeates and mirrors our world. It might be possible for a group of Garou to travel astrally to the Chtorr's homeworld, and perhaps try to deal with the evil source of the invasion there. The worms might have astral equivalents, able to fight the Lupines in the magical plane as well as on normal reality. On the other hand, attack the infestation from the Umbra may result in less devastation than trying to eradicate the alien ecology physically.

Back on Earth, roving packs of werewolves would have to deal with the gastropedes and their renegade allies. They would face the same problems that Special Forces troopers do, but they will have some advantages over their mortal counterparts. Some Lupines could join the Special Forces and carry on the fight there, although most mortals fly into a mindless panic when they see Garou in their inhuman shapes. Some governments might try to ally with the Garou, but others would see them as yet another alien life form, and try to destroy them.

What If . . . ?

What if . . . ? campaigns deal with alternate versions of the *Chtorr* world. What would have happened if the plagues had started 20 years earlier, or 20 years later? What if the Earth had already developed FTL travel? A punitive expedition could be sent to the worlds most likely to have started the invasion. Or, if the Earth had already contacted other alien species, they might have information on the Chtorr, and on ways of dealing with them; the aliens might offer aid and data freely, or charge an exorbitant amount, which might include colonization rights on Earth itself (a devious campaign might end up revealing that the helpful aliens were the ones who unleashed the Chtorr in the first place!). There are numerous possibilities inherent in the "what if" framework.

To develop a "what if" campaign, the GM has to decide which factors will change, and how those changes will affect or be affected by the plagues and the ecological infestation. Changes in technology and in the political situation (a global government would be much better equipped to deal with the plagues and the invasions, for example) would make the most difference. A TL7 Earth might have a much worse chance of success; a TL4 or lower one would be almost certainly doomed, unless some other factor (magical or psionic powers) were introduced. A TL10 world might be able to deal with the invasion before the plagues even struck; in that case, the Chtorrans would have to be tougher and more resourceful. On the other hand, the plagues could be the product of TL12+ biotechnology, and not even a more advanced society would have escaped them; a more sophisticated civilization might actually suffer more from its collapse, because its members are even more dependent on technology than the people of a TL8 society. A TL10 Earth might be more devastated than the one of the *Chtorr* novels.

The Chtorrans themselves can be altered. Maybe either the gastropedes or another species is obviously intelligent and starts using weapons and tools to speed the invasion process. Diplomacy might be attempted from both sides, and the aliens might be able to fool some people (including the leaders of the Fourth World; see p. 34) into forming an alliance with them. Having intelligent aliens directing operations opens up whole new areas of campaigning. Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle's alien-invasion novel *Footfall* is recommended for inspiration for this type of campaign.

The Future

Then there is the "What happens next?" campaign. The most likely outcome is a massive exodus off-planet. As the aliens "Chtorraform" Earth, humankind might start terraforming Mars or Venus or colonizing the Moon. New, advanced robots might continue the war of extermination against the gastropedes. Perhaps a new weapon proves to be effective enough to halt the Chtorran invasion; then the slow, tortuous process of cleaning the invaders off the planet would start; it would be hard, but at least it would be possible! This provides a ray of hope in an otherwise unwinnable situation.

Some of the changes mentioned in the "What if?" scenarios can also be applied to the future. Maybe the Earth is visited by another alien race; they may be sympathetic, or they might wish to profit from the planet's misfortune in some way.

A future campaign will have to deal with the fate of humanity and of its Chtorran rivals. Whether the two races have reached a stalemate, or one has won an unambiguous victory over the other, both will probably change a great deal during the struggle. The GM should try to extrapolate those changes and introduce them in the campaign.

ADVENTURING

7



■ **Terror In the Forest**

This adventure occurs a few months before the plagues. The PCs are in a remote forest area in the northern part of the U.S. or in Canada. They can be campers, forest rangers, hunters, loggers, etc., in a small rural town. A number of disappearances and strange occurrences have disturbed the tranquil community. A family of five, camping in the woods, has vanished without a trace. The mutilated and partially eaten corpse of a bear is found by a party of hunters. The local town eccentric has arrived in town babbling incoherent nonsense about purple monsters.

The PCs may become involved in the investigation, or may be stranded in town after a series of mishaps (a mysterious helicopter crash, for instance, preceded by the pilot's frantic message that he was flying through a "pink cloud") make it impossible to leave the area quickly. Some frightened tourists try to leave by car; their torn-up vehicles are discovered not too far away from town, covered with lots of blood but no bodies. More sightings of purplish, crawling creatures are reported. An old Indian townie starts muttering things about ancient local spirits coming to life once again.

The town is being menaced by a large family of Chtorrans (six young gastropedes) which have effectively isolated their food and are now preparing to move in for the kill. An initial encounter between a Chtorran and a scouting party (including some PCs) may reveal the worms' imperviousness to bullets and normal attacks and (maybe) their vulnerability to fire. The PCs have to either devise an effective defense against the creatures or find a way to evacuate the frightened townspeople.

■ **Search and Destroy**

The PCs are members of a Special Forces team early in the invasion. They and the rest of a 12-man team are sent on a fairly straightforward mission: a Chtorran nest has been spotted via satellite and the team is to go eliminate it. Military Intelligence has determined that there are three worms present, the alleged normal number of gastropedes to a nest.

Complications soon arise, however. First of all, part of the team approaching the nest stumbles into a shambler grove (see p. 48) and is slaughtered by its tenants. The survivors (mostly PCs) then have to deal with the sudden discovery that this nest *has four* worms!



■ **Siege!**

The PCs are being sent to a research facility in the forests of northern California. They can be either scientists or Special Forces troops sent to reinforce the garrison - a mysterious fire killed the facility's commander and several soldiers. Soldier PCs are there to fill the gaps made by the casualties, investigate the fire and make sure the base is secure (a major infestation lies a couple of miles north).

The research center has two Chtorran worms; the gastropedes are being studied closely by most of the scientific staff, from biologists to behavioral psychologists. The scientific director, Dr. Grant, is one of the leading experts in Chtorran communication, and is clearly fascinated by the creatures.

A day after the PCs arrive, the first major pink storm (see p. 77) takes place, smothering northern California. The base is soon buried by tons of pink powder. Although not in immediate danger, the PCs have to deal with the feeding frenzy that will soon be coming their way. To make matters worse, Dr. Grant (who purposely infected himself with neural symbionts to facilitate communication with the worms) has gone insane, armed himself, and released the creatures inside the facility. As the voracious swarms of Chtorran creatures start ravaging the outside of the facility, the PCs must neutralize the internal threat before the whole staff is killed.

■ **Field Test**

Researchers at Houston have come up with a new weapon to use against the Chtorr. This "Chtorran Stunner" uses radio waves at a frequency that tends to paralyze Chtorrans. Scientists believe that this radio signal creates a state of "insane terror" on the worms. If the weapon works, it can be added to flamethrowers and other systems; in theory, a charging Chtorran will be frozen in its tracks by the signal, and can then be disposed of at leisure.

The PCs can be either low-ranking members of the research team, accompanying the practical test team, or the soldiers who will use these weapons on the first tryouts in the field. For this purpose, an isolated nest has been chosen. The team will approach the nest and wait for the worms to charge. A larger team will provide support.

A number of things can go wrong. Maybe the weapon does not work at all as expected; in the wild, it triggers an insane rage in all Chtorran life forms, even normally harmless ones like meeps. The expedition is suddenly swamped by hundreds of angry animals, including the gastropedes, who have been driven into a berserk rage. Alternatively, the weapon works fine on gastropedes, but it turns bunnydogs into deadly predators.

■ **The Carpetbagger Murders**

The PCs are part of the military government of a mid-sized city. A series of murders has occurred in the city during the last four days. Eight people have died in the brutal attacks, which were committed by five separate individuals. They all have two things in common: all the murders were committed in exactly the same grisly fashion, and all the killers claim they were possessed by an outside force that took control of their bodies. The initial investigation reveals that three of the perpetrators are part of the Telepathy Corps; the autopsy of the fifth murderer (killed during the commission of the last murder) reveals that he also had telepathic implants.

The killer is an insane telepath, a former native of the city who is now murdering people at random, using local telepaths' bodies as his murder weapons. He is also taking advantage of the fact that thousands of people in the city have been unknowingly implanted. The PCs may be police officers investigating the situa-

tion, relatives or friends of one of the victims or alleged murderers, or telepaths themselves, trying to track down the renegade. The Teep Corps is offering very little aid or information. Has the murderer somehow become independent from the official network, or is he somehow serving the Corps' goals? If the GM wishes to complicate things further, one or more of the PCs could be unknowingly implanted with telepathy receivers, and could become the next victim of the insane telepath. Watch the movie *The Hidden* for inspiration.



■ **Publicity Stunt**

This adventure takes place shortly after the events in *A Matter for Men*. The PCs' strike team has been selected to accompany a TV reporter in an investigative documentary on the invasion. The military is trying to raise popular support for the war. The reporter is stereotypically nosy, stubborn and pig-headed; she believes that the Chtorran threat is a hoax designed to justify the military's increased role in government.

The mission is a routine search-and-destroy operation. The PCs' team, with the reporter and her robot cameraman, will fly by helicopter to a small nest in an isolated area. The chopper will drop the team two miles away so that the worms are not alerted. The reporter will broadcast live as the PCs destroy the worms. The assault team has more than enough firepower to deal with the four worms presumed to be in the camp.

What the PCs don't know is that the small camp hides a much larger Chtorran community holding 16 worms! A high-ranking military officer has kept this information secret, and is basically sending the team on a suicide mission. Since the broadcast will be live, the reporter's brutal death will be transmitted to millions of American homes - stark proof that the Chtorran problem is very real.

The PCs will have a chance to realize how big the camp really as they approach. If they do, they may opt to retreat. The reporter will insist they push on, and will claim that the whole thing is a hoax if they refuse. If the PCs decide to attack the camp, they will have to carefully think out tactics to prevent the worms from overwhelming them. If they manage to at least hold out long enough, the military will have to send choppers to rescue them. Whatever happens, the military will have won a victory - unless someone discovers or figures out what the secret plan was.

■ **Saboteur**

A Safe Zone (see p. 35) has been suffering a series of unexplained mishaps. Machinery breaks down for no apparent reason, and there have been a number of accidents and computer screw-ups, some of the them resulting in fatalities. To top it all, a combat robot suddenly went berserk and killed a dozen people before it was destroyed. The military government has been unable to explain the mysterious accidents. The population, already dealing with the pressure of being cooped up in the mostly underground environment, has grown restless. There have been a few disturbances, and riots seem likely.

The PCs can be in charge of the investigation, or they can be locals who have lost friends and relatives in the accidents and want revenge. The cause behind the accidents is a Fourth-World agent, a master computer programmer and hacker charged with destroying the morale of the Safe Zones. He and his agents have been planting virus programs in several parts of the Zone. He plans to start a panic in the city, which will cause thousands to flee its safety. Then he will move on to other Safe Zones, thereby destabilizing the U.S. government.

The PCs have to find and deal with the saboteur ring, and then track the master hacker to his lair, which is well defended by a small army of reprogrammed and well-armed gardening robots.

■ **Just Passin' Through**

The PCs are part of an investigative mission to a series of small communities in the Midwest. These communities have somehow managed to survive the Chtorr, and the group must discover what weapons and tactics were used to achieve this.

The first community they meet is the town of Haven, a religious commune led by the Reverend Horace P. Edwards. From the beginning, things will look funny. All these people seem too *happy*: they are always smiling, and everyone, from the youngest child to the Reverend himself, seems absolutely certain that the world is headed toward a better future. The soldiers in the team are praised for their efforts, but there are hints that the salvation of Earth is in the hands of a greater power.

Haven is actually in the hands of the Reverend's son, Taylor, a young man who is often referred to but never seen. Taylor has been infected by Chtorran neural symbionts and other Chtorran organisms, and is barely human anymore. He has seven young gastropedes under his command. The PCs and the rest of the team are being sized up for capture, so they may be offered to the worms in a grotesque parody of the Eucharist ("This is my body . . ."). The smiling townspeople will use drugs, ambushes and trickery to capture the team. The PCs will have to escape or outwit the cultists or become next Sunday's Host.

■ **Diplomatic Mission**

There have been a number of unusual sightings in a remote mountain area. A number of tall bipeds resembling bunnydogs (see p. 39), but much larger, and *equipped with tools and weapons*, have been seen by several people over the past two weeks. The area was considered to be relatively uninfested until these reports started coming in. The Chtorran control agency has dispatched Dr. Fletcher (see p. 67) to lead a hastily-assembled team of scientists, escorted by a crack Special Forces team. The PCs can belong to either group. The mission is to discover these humanoids, determine if they are sapient, and try to establish contact with them.

The GM has several options. The whole thing could be a deliberate hoax by either renegades or Fourth-World agents. Maybe the plan is to lure high-ranking scientists to this remote area, where they can be murdered with relative impunity. Or perhaps

this indeed is a new Chtorran species - maybe even the "true" Chtorrans, come to oversee the invasion in person. In that case, the PCs might end up dealing with a group of ultra-tech aliens. Alternatively, this is simply another version of bunnydogs, with very little intelligence, but more aggressiveness and strength.

■ **Infiltration and Counter-Infiltration**

The PCs are all Special Forces operatives or telepaths. Their mission is to let themselves be captured by renegades and pretend to join them. The objectives are to learn as much as possible about the Chtorran-human relationship, and then to use the telepaths to call military forces down on the renegades. Live Chtorran and human prisoners are desirable, but not essential.

The targeted renegade tribe lives is presumed to have about 100 human members and three Chtorrans; they have raided a few towns and military depots. Little else is known about them, other than the fact that they seem willing to recruit new members from among prisoners. The PCs are sent on what seems to be a routine scouting mission, in the hope that they will meet the renegades.

The plan works as expected - at first. The PCs meet the renegades, are overpowered and given the choice of joining in or dying. However, after the agents join the band, they make several startling discoveries. First, all the renegades have telepathic implants! They are wired to an independent telepathic network. Furthermore, they use advanced scanners to detect any implants the PCs may have, and have the means to jam any telepathic messages.

The "infiltrators" are taken to a highly sophisticated facility hidden beneath a mountain. The place used to be a secret research and development laboratory for an electronic communication producer. The renegade leader is a former employee of that corporation, a genius in the field of electronics who has fallen under the spell of the Chtorr. He has implanted several tame worms, and can actually inhabit the body of a worm! The PCs are to be implanted; they will be in mental communion with the Chtorr. The effects of this communion are up to the GM: the alien hive-mind might overwhelm the PCs, or the hard core of their personalities might survive. In either case, the implanted PCs will be sent back to the Special Forces - to infiltrate the human military.

■ **Moby Dick 2000**

A Japanese corporation is trying to find a way to exploit the Enterprise Fish (see p. 40). New weapon systems are being developed for this purpose, especially a sonic emitter will maybe cause the creature to beach itself on a selected deserted island, where a few thousand workmen can strip the enormous creature at leisure. The corporation projects that even if they only manage to salvage 10% of the monster's meat and oil, the enterprise (no pun intended) will be a success.

The PCs can be part of the hunting expedition, which is traveling in airships (this is one whale you can't hunt from a boat!). Jobs include exobiologists (perhaps former U.S. experts lured to Japan by a competitive salary), flier pilots for scouting, and security experts. The character could also be American spies sent to observe and even sabotage the project.

In any case, the corporation will fail to realize that they are dealing with the Chtorran ecology, and something will go disastrously wrong. A new species of animal (Chtorran flying sharks, for instance) will attack the airship and either damage it severely (causing it to crash-land on inhospitable and Chtorran-ridden land) or destroy it altogether, causing it to fall into the sea. Adrift in a ocean of monsters, the PCs have to find a way to reach a friendly shore.

■ **Apocalypse Then**

A highly decorated military governor in charge of a very dangerous area has been behaving erratically for some time. At first, his eccentricities were ignored, but when an evacuation order was issued (the area had become to heavily infested to defend), he ignored it and has not answered any communiques in the last week.

The PCs are sent to investigate. A direct flight to the city in question is impossible. For one thing, there has been a recent pink storm (see p. 77), and air travel is still dangerous. For another, the governor has access to many advanced anti-aircraft weaponry - and he has managed to somehow disable or block its built-in Trojan Horse chips (see p. 16). The PCs will be landed close to the area, and will have to continue on foot and by boat. On the way, they will take a close look at life on the front lines - small fortified towns, constantly attacked, desperate site officers begging the PCs to ask their superiors for more robots, more ammo, more *anything*, soldiers who become more and more insane with each passing day, acts of brutality against human renegades, and the renegades' own savagery. Maybe the PCs witness or participate in the wholesale slaughter of a Herd (see p. 26). The trip should be a surrealistic excursion into the horrors of war in general and the new horrors of *this* war in particular.

When they reach their target, they meet a charismatic, brilliant leader who has gone totally insane. He is building his own private kingdom, and has developed a warped philosophy to make sense of the invasion. He sees it as a test for the survival of the fittest, and does not want to stand in the way of evolution. Unless the PCs are very well-armed and careful, they will be captured and forced to undergo bizarre ordeals, some involving Chtorran animals and hallucinogenic plants, to test whether they are "fit" or not. They must escape and put an end to the madman's menace.



GLOSSARY

Apocalypse: The international crisis originating in Israel that almost led to World War Three. The U.S. chose a diplomatic solution at the last moment, which cost the nation much of its global power.

Bunnydog: A small bipedal alien resembling a pink or purple teddy bear. See p. 39.

Bunnyman: The same species as the bunnydog, but older and with less of a fuzzy covering, giving them the appearance of humanoid rats. See p. 39.

Chtorr: The name given to the alien world the invaders come from; derived from the war-cry of the gastropedes. Also, a plural form of *Chtorran*.

Chtorran: A gastropede, or any alien life form.

Fourth World: The underdeveloped countries of the planet, most of which were former colonies of European nations until the 19th and 20th centuries. The Fourth World wielded considerable political power before the invasions.

Gastropede: The standard classification of the Chtorran worm (see also *Worm*).

Gill-men: Modified humans that can live underwater; they dwell in sub-oceanic communities like Atlantis (now destroyed) and Nemo.

Great Recede: The name given to the human population decline following the invasions.

Herds: Groups of humans wandering mindlessly through the ruins of cities or wilderness areas, without regard for dress or shelter. This phenomenon is believed to result from a combination of the plagues' psychological shock and yet another plague, which weakened certain areas of the brain. See p. 26.

L.I. Engines: Short for Lethetic Intelligence engines - advanced computers with limited sapience and great processing capacity.

Mobes: Ambulatory robots or drones, often equipped with sensor arrays and weapon systems, which preceded the modern combat robots currently in use.

Mode Training: A psychological technique that allegedly allows people to understand their thinking and decision-making processes, enabling them to become more efficient and productive. See p. 11.

Modie: Nickname given to people who undergo or support Mode training.

Plagues: The series of epidemics that killed the majority of the world's population in the space of two years. They were the first overt step in the Chtorran invasion of Earth.

Red Book: The U.S. government's hyperstack of data about the Chtorr and the Chtorran ecology. See p. 79.

Revelationist: Member of one of the Apocalyptic cults that have sprung up since the invasions. Most of these cults claim that the end of the world is at hand. Others believe that the Chtorr are new gods that must be worshipped and tended if humankind is to survive.

Safe Zones: City-fortresses used to house and protect the surviving civilian population from the Chtorran threat.

Sober-Ups: Medicines used to shake off the effects of alcoholic consumption. See p. 89.

Spiders: Multi-legged robots used by the military. See p. 101.

Telepathy: A communication system in which electronic implants are installed in the subject's brain, enabling him to project his consciousness into other bodies and to have all his sensory input monitored by other telepaths. See p. 93.

Uncle Ira Group: A secret agency hidden inside the Special Forces Warrant Agency. Very few people know exactly what the Uncle Ira Group does, but the mere mention of Uncle Ira will get the unquestioning cooperation of most military personnel. See p. 21.

Worm: The common nickname of the Chtorran gastropede, the giant carnivorous "caterpillar" that is perceived as the most dangerous alien species.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Book Summaries

David Gerrold's *The War Against the Chtorr* series includes four books as of 1993, with at least three more planned. (Gerrold has called it "the longest damned trilogy I've ever written.")

Book I: A Matter for Men: The first book depicts McCarthy's coming of age, as the young plague survivor is inducted into the Special Forces and begins to learn about the Chtorr, the nation he serves, and himself.

Book II: A Day for Damnation: The second novel chronicles the adventures of McCarthy, now a lieutenant in the Special Forces, as he deals with the first pink storm (see p. 77), the herd phenomenon (see p. 26), bunnydogs and an attempt at diplomacy with the Chtorr.

Book III: A Rage for Revenge: Two processes are examined in this novel. The first deals with McCarthy's brainwashing at the hands of a renegade tribe; the other shows the Mode Training as experienced by McCarthy. The background is one of despair: the Chtorran invaders seem to be unstoppable.

Book IV: A Season for Slaughter: The most recent book of the series includes a vital discovery about the origins of the invaders, and the last major U.S. scientific undertaking, the trip of the *Hieronymus Bosch* through the Amazonian jungle, where new insights into the nature of the Chtorr are bought at an awful cost.

Book V: A Method for Madness: In the next book, currently set for a 1994 release, McCarthy will learn a great deal more about the invasion . . . from the inside.



Related Works

Listed below are several books that may be helpful to GMs and players involved in a *Chtorr* campaign.

Day of the Triffids, by John Wyndham. Mankind is nearly wiped out by an artificially-created species of mobile, semi-intelligent plants, after a mysterious accident blinds most of the human population. An excellent inspiration for doomsday scenarios, alien creatures and strange societies.

Footfall, by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle. This recent novel describes a relatively low-tech invasion of Earth, by an alien race with a technology only decades ahead of our own. This book is an excellent tool to aid GMs in designing a "Coming of the Chtorr" campaign. And if the GM would like to introduce two alien threats instead of one, the Snouts depicted in *Footfall* would make an interesting addition - what would the elephantine aliens make of Chtorr-invaded Earth? Would they try to conquer it anyway, fighting humans and Chtorrans at the same time, or would they forge some sort of alliance with one side?

The Mist, by Stephen King. A thick fog sweeps down on a Maine community - and dwelling within the mist are unimaginable monsters. This doomsday scenario has several elements reminiscent of the *Chtorr* books, and can be a good source for new Chtorran beasts.

The Stand, by Stephen King. This apocalyptic horror novel starts with a plague that kills over 99% of the population. It is a good source of inspiration for campaigns based in the plague years, or to understand the horrible shocks that the survivors of the plagues would have suffered. The mystical Good-versus-Evil tone of the last half of the book might be of interest for GMs trying to incorporate fantasy elements into their campaigns.

The War of the Worlds, by H.G. Wells. This is the classic alien invasion book, the one that started it all. Interesting, if only to draw a contrast between a direct attack as envisioned by Wells and the subtle Chtorran invasion. And in Wells' novel, biology ended up working *against* the aliens . . . This is also an excellent reference book for a GM who would like to unleash the Chtorr on Victorian Earth instead of the next century.

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WHAT DO THE WORMS EAT?

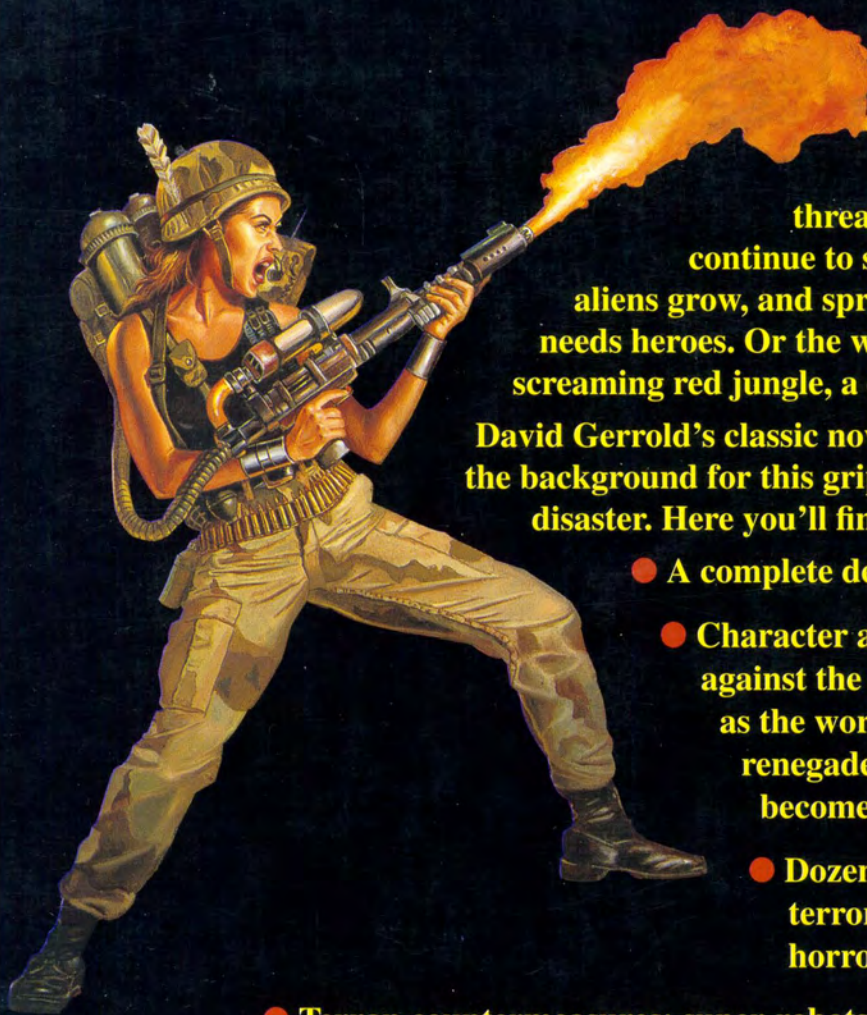
Bushes. Trees. Dogs. Cows. Cars. And people. Especially people. The worms eat *everything* slower than they are. And the worms are *very* fast.

The worms grow up to six feet long. No, ten. Twenty. Thirty . . . They just keep getting bigger and hungrier. They're the spearhead of an alien invasion . . . an ecological invasion. There seems to be no guiding intelligence – just *thousands* of different alien plants and animals, cooperating with each other as they destroy Terran species. More than half of the world's population has fallen to alien diseases, and the rest are becoming worm food.

So mankind unites against the threat . . . No, it doesn't. Earth's nations continue to struggle against each other, even as the aliens grow, and spread, and multiply, and eat. The world needs heroes. Or the world will be *gone*, turned into a screaming red jungle, a duplicate of the invading planet Chtorr.

David Gerrold's classic novels of *The War Against The Chtorr* form the background for this gripping game-world of heroism and disaster. Here you'll find:

- A complete description of the post-invasion Earth.
- Character and campaign ideas. Will you fight back against the invaders, or prey on your fellow humans as the world changes? Or will you become a renegade, helping the worms as your own body becomes alien?
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- Terran countermeasures: super-robots, Lethetic Intelligence machines, and the Telepathy Corps.
- Chtorran jokes. ("What does a Chtorran call a pacifist? Lunch.")



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